Although the interrelationship between oral (or performing) and written traditions in Chinese popular literature is an issue that concerns practically everybody who reads or teaches Chinese literature, surprisingly it has never been properly treated in a scholarly forum before. For that reason alone, this volume is especially important and deserves serious consideration from scholars and students in the field.

Through subjects ranging from Ming vernacular fiction to popular prints and contemporary storytelling and folk ballads, this volume examines the interplay of oral and written traditions in China from interdisciplinary perspectives. Exploring the traditions of professional storytelling and popular entertainment literature in China, the authors offer enquiries into new material and give astonishing responses to old controversies. In going beyond the simple binary oral versus written, the essays in this volume ask not whether a text bears a relationship to the oral tradition but how and to what extent.

Written by contributors well versed in their subject, these essays are highly scholarly and analytical treatments of the issues. Through their more detailed knowledge about Chinese verbal art in performance, or first-hand understanding of living traditions, the authors provide fresh insights to the understanding of how the oral and the written interact.

The subject of these essays concerns practically everybody who reads or teaches Chinese literature, but to the best of my knowledge it has not been treated before on this scale. The value of the volume is not that it answers all the questions we have but that it will act as a stimulus to new research.

Patrick Hanan, Harvard University

On the interrelationship between oral or performing and written popular items in traditional China, this important book is theoretically infused, with many new ideas and perspectives. Beautifully written and edited, it will add significantly to the literature, not only on Chinese performing arts but also on its society, especially since the Song dynasty (960–1279).

Colin Mackerras, Griffith University

Six leading scholars offer enquiries into new material and give astonishing responses to old controversies.

Vibeke Børdaahl
Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen

Anne E. McLaren
Asia Institute, University of Melbourne

Boris Riftin
Department of Asian and African Literature, Institute of World Literature, Russian Academy of Sciences

Margaret B. Wan
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Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Notre Dame (Indiana)

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Department of Languages and Literature, University of Utah

An examination of the interrelationship between oral (or performing) and written traditions in Chinese popular literature by contributors well versed in their subject and writing with authority.
The Interplay of the Oral and the Written in Chinese Popular Literature
NORDIC INSTITUTE OF ASIAN STUDIES
NIAS Studies in Asian Topics

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22 Mongolia in Transition Ole Bruun and Ole Odgaard (eds)
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44 Lifestyle and Entertainment in Yangzhou Lucie Olivová and Vibeke Bør Dahl (eds)
45 iChina: The Rise of the Individual in Modern Chinese Society Mette Halskov Hansen and Rune Svarverud (eds.)
46 The Interplay of the Oral and the Written in Chinese Popular Literature Vibeke Bør Dahl and Margaret B. Wan (eds)
THE INTERPLAY OF THE ORAL AND THE WRITTEN IN CHINESE POPULAR LITERATURE

EDITED BY

VIBEKE BØRDAHL AND MARGARET B. WAN
This book is dedicated to

André Lévy

extraordinary scholar and translator
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Preface

This book grew out of an invitation-only symposium, entitled *The Interplay of Oral and Written Traditions in Chinese Fiction, Drama and Performance Literature* and held at the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters in Oslo on November 5–6, 2007. The Nordic Institute of Asian Studies hosted this symposium, which was sponsored by the Research Council of Norway as the closing activity of the research project ‘Traditional Oral Culture in the Modern Media World of Asia – The Case of Chinese Storytelling’, directed by Vibeke Børdahl under the Cultural Studies Program (KULFO). The research database of the project, managed by Jens Christian Sørensen, is accessible on the website *Chinese Storytelling* www.shuoshu.org.

The subject of the Oslo symposium, stressing the role of oral performance for the formation of Chinese popular literature and *vice versa*, has never been treated in a conference before, although the interplay of the oral and written verbal arts is of concern to everybody who reads or teaches Chinese literature. The event was attended by researchers, storytellers and students from four continents: Asia, Australia, North America and Europe. The invited scholars whose essays are collected here have all been engaged in research in this general area of study, some over many years. The book aims to make this scholarship available to a wider readership, and to foster the burgeoning discussion of these issues so crucial to our proper understanding of the tradition of Chinese vernacular literature in its oral and written transformations. It is our sincere hope that this initiative may act as a stimulus to new research.

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V.B. and M.B.W.
Contributors

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Liangyan Ge is Associate Professor in the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures, University of Notre Dame, Indiana, USA. He has published in the areas of Chinese fiction and China–West cultural relations, including a number of studies of narratological issues in Ming and Qing novels. Ge is also a co-author of the language textbook series Integrated Chinese (Cheng & Tsui). His book Out of the Margins: The Rise of Chinese Vernacular Fiction (University of Hawaii Press, 2001), discusses the orality–writing dynamics in pre-modern China that led to the vernacularization of Chinese narrative literature.


Vibeke Børdahl is Senior Research Fellow at the Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen, Denmark. Her research is focused on

*Anne E. McLaren* is Associate Professor at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne, Victoria, Australia. She has published on orality–writing dynamics in forms ranging from Ming chantefables to contemporary women’s script and bridal laments; on the oral and ritual culture of Chinese women; and on print media and popularisation in late imperial China. Her book *Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables* (Brill, 1998) shows how these ballad texts drew upon their audience’s knowledge of performance and ritual culture. More recently, her study *Performing Grief: Bridal Laments in Rural China* (University of Hawaii Press, 2008) employs fieldwork in a living oral tradition to address similar issues.

*Boris Riftin* is Director of the Department of Asian and African Literature, Institute of World Literature, Moscow, and Academician of The Russian Academy of Sciences. He has published widely on East Asian and Central Asian folklore, epic and popular literatures, with special focus on the interaction of Chinese folklore and the novel. His pioneer work, *Sanguo yanyi yu minjian wenxue chuantong* [The Romance of the Three Kingdoms and Folk Literature Traditions] (Russian edition 1970, Chinese edition 1997), demonstrates the debt the novel owes to folklore and previous popular literature. In more recent years his research on Chinese popular prints, nianhua, mainly published in Russian and Chinese, provides a new perspective on the interaction between oral, written and pictorial folk culture in China.
Notes to the Reader

Chinese words and proper names are transcribed in *pinyin* romanization. Chinese characters are rendered in the traditional *fanti*繁體 form.

In order to distinguish between names of oral repertoires and titles of published editions (often sharing the same names) titles of oral repertoires referred to in this book are in **small capital letters**, while book titles are written in *italics* as usual. When neither book titles nor oral repertoires are meant, but just the idea of the subject matter of a certain ‘story’, we use the English translation and write it in ordinary letters, for example *Water Margin* (referring to the saga of the outlaws of the Liangshan moors), versus *Water Margin, Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (the novel) and *Water Margin, Shuihu* 水滸 (oral repertoire).

In this book we use the word ‘audience’ in its broader sense, incorporating both listening and looking audiences as well as reading audiences (readerships). When we use the word ‘readership’, only the reading audience is meant. In some instances a ‘reader’ may read aloud to others and thus become both a reader and a performer of a text.

Tables that occur in the main text of a chapter are numbered according to the chapter. Thus Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 point to the first and second table in the main text of Chapter 4. Tables in the appendices are numbered according to the chapter (1, 2, 3, etc.) and the letter of the appendix (A, B, C etc.), with individual numbering at the end. Thus one finds for example Table 4.B.1 and Table 4.C.2 indicating tables in the appendices to Chapter 4.

References in the book chapters are given as family name of author(s) + year + page number, corresponding to the entries in the general Bibliography at the end of the book. For Chinese authors both family name and given name are stated for each reference.

Since we hope that the Introduction may serve as an overview of the field, the referencing system is here expanded with a view to a more reader-friendly format, providing on first occurrence both author’s name and title of work + year + page number, with full bibliographical information in the Bibliography.
Introduction

Vibeke Børdahl and Margaret B. Wan

‘Orality’ and ‘literacy’ are not two separate and independent things; or (to put it more concretely) the oral and written modes are not two mutually exclusive and opposed processes for representing and communicating information. On the contrary they take diverse forms in differing cultures and periods, are used differently in different social contexts and, insofar as they can be distinguished at all as separate modes rather than a continuum, they mutually interact and affect each other and the relations between them are problematic rather than self-evident.

Ruth Finnegan (1988: 178)

How oral and written traditions interact in Chinese popular literature is a question of almost incredible breadth and complexity. While the topic could easily include studies of the earliest Chinese folk songs as found in The Book of Odes, *Shi Jing* 詩經 (1000–600 BC), the old songs and ballads inspired by folk music collectively known as ‘music bureau poetry’, *yuefu* 樂府 (100 BC – AD 400), popular ‘transformation’ narratives of Buddhist inspiration, *bianwen* 變文 (AD 700–1000), and the drama-initiating *chantefables*, *zhugongdiao* 諸宮調 [all keys and modes] (AD 1200),¹ this volume focuses on vernacular genres from the last seven hundred years, the late imperial and modern periods. These popular genres, ranging from prosimetric ballads² to drama and novels, most urgently beg the question at hand – their written existence seems fundamentally dependent on their oral counterparts in performance. On the other hand, when studying the rise of the oral entertainment arts or the development of single repertoires, one frequently encounters signs of influence from written sources. It is not the fact of mutual dependency between the oral and the written that is particular to these genres, but the way the two aspects of language intertwine between and within them. These are also the genres where the particularity of China’s case becomes most apparent.


On questions of orality, China differs from the West in several important respects. First of all, many forms of traditional oral performance are still alive in China, while similar forms are largely extinct in the West. Although some Chinese forms might be on their last legs as they confront the challenges of a rapidly changing lifestyle and the modern media, they persist and allow researchers a first-hand understanding of living traditions. Secondly, the genres of vernacular literature that raise the most intriguing questions about their relationship to oral traditions appeared well after writing was firmly established in China. Thus these genres are not instances of literature sprung from ‘primary orality’, rather, the oral models themselves could have been influenced by writing as they formed. Early accounts of storytelling from the Song dynasty suggest that at least some of the oral tales were composed based on sources written in classical Chinese. An eighteenth-century anecdote from Yangzhou provides another intriguing example of the influence of writing on oral genres. The self-made storyteller Pu Lin had stories read to him; after one hearing, he would expand upon and retell them in a manner that would move his audience to laughter and tears.

The dominant language of written communication until the modern era was classical Chinese, wenyan 文言, not the vernacular, baihua 白話. The accepted written language differed from the spoken as much as Latin from Italian. Vernacular Chinese went through a long process of evolution in the Tang, Song, Yuan and Ming dynasties (AD 10th–17th centuries) before becoming a viable written language. It was first used to record genres that were close to the spoken idiom, such as records of Buddhist masters, yulu 語錄, or folksongs, where the oral verbal form was important or could not be easily substituted for reasons of rhyme or metre. From the Song period (960–1279) professional storytellers were active in the entertainment quarters, telling repertoires that in the following centuries found a counterpart in stories and novels, written in baihua. The evolution of Chinese drama also went hand in hand with the creation of the vernacular

3 ‘Oral theory’, growing from the pioneer research by Milman Parry and Albert Lord on the ancient Homeric epics and Yugoslav bards active during the 1920-30s, cf Lord, The Singer of Tales, 1960, has doubtless also played an important role for studies of Chinese oral-related literature. However, while research in oral tradition in Europe is mainly devoted to ‘orally derived’ works from antiquity to the Middle Ages, the field of study in China covers not only ‘lost’ traditions, more or less ‘reconstructable’ by written evidence, but also the still living traditions.
4 Walter Ong, Orality and Literacy, 1982: 6, 31-75.
7 See Jerry Norman, Chinese, 1988. For the long process of vernacularization, see Liangyan Ge, Out of the Margins, 2001. See also the seminal works of André Lévy, Le conte en langue vulgaire du XVIIe siècle, 1981,
written idiom, presenting a mixture of high-style wenyan and low-style baihua with interesting patterns of distribution according to period and genre. The later presence of written vernacular fiction did not ‘replace’ the professional storyteller, however, or reduce him to a pseudo-oral vocalizer of texts. Pu Lin, being self-taught, remains atypical, and even he apparently recreated the stories significantly. The main traditions of storytelling (such as Yangzhou pinghua) were and are not dependent on written texts, but learnt by ear.

The interplay of oral and written traditions is a subject that concerns anyone who reads Chinese literature. Unlike early novels in the West, which modelled themselves on decidedly written genres including diaries and exchanges of letters, the simulated context in traditional Chinese vernacular fiction is a storyteller speaking to his audience. While this distinguishing feature was ‘natural’ to Chinese literary critics, it was puzzling to their Western colleagues. But from the beginning of modern scholarship in this area – the 1920s to the 1960s – there was a general consensus, following the lead of the great writer and literary historian Lu Xun (1881–1936), in considering these stories, huaben, ‘plain tales’, pinghua (also called ‘folk books’), and early editions of novels to be essentially equivalent to real scripts for performance by storytellers.

Western studies from the 1960–80s worked to show the literary nature of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ in vernacular fiction. While Patrick Hanan’s work on the seventeenth-century novel Jin Ping Mei (also translated as The Plum in the Golden Vase) and the vernacular short story argues against any simplistic interpretation of these works as de facto ‘storyteller’s scripts’, in The Chinese Vernacular Story (1981) and ‘The Composition of the P’ing Yao Chuan’ (1971) he discusses the possible relationships of early novels and short stories to oral performance traditions. In Études sur le conte et le roman chinois (1971) and

and Patrick Hanan, The Chinese Vernacular Story, 1981, both discussing the functions of the vernacular versus the classical in Chinese vernacular fiction.

12 Lu Hsun, A Brief History of Chinese Fiction. 1964 [1923, 1959]: 414-18. The way Lu Xun formulated his views on the huaben and pinghua texts was by no means simplistic, but they seem to have generated a lopsided discussion about the relationship between the early texts and storyteller’s memory books.
Le conte en langue vulgaire du xviie siècle (1981) André Lévy takes up with special emphasis the oral sources and the striving for a new writing style, ‘une écriture vulgarisante’. Boris Riftin devoted pioneer studies to these questions as they relate to the novel Three Kingdoms, Sanguo yanyi 三國演義, basing his analysis on folk literature from the time before the formation of the novel as well as on storytelling traditions up to the twentieth century.15 These studies were imbued with an attitude of respect and admiration for Chinese professional storytellers that was not ‘en vogue’ at the time.16

Andrew Plaks’s Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel (1987) rejects the ‘oral’ argument as irrelevant and views the finished great Ming novels as purely ‘literati’ creations. While Plaks acknowledges that most of the four novels evolved in popular traditions over a period of time, he argues that the full recensions, fanben 繁本, of these novels are qualitatively removed from the popular traditions. Until very recently, most scholarship in the West has followed his lead, analyzing the literary texts of these novels and largely ignoring any relationship they might have with oral tradition. Liangyan Ge in Out of the Margins (2001) explicitly critiques such either-or approaches to orality and literacy, as he demonstrates how the novel Water Margin, Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳, evolved over a long period of time through a continuous interchange between oral and written traditions. Ge argues that there is no intrinsic contradiction in the situation: Shuihu zhuan can be both a great work of art and a product of oral inspiration and imitation. He seeks to put Shuihu zhuan back into the oral contexts in which it evolved. Once one goes beyond the simple binary oral versus written, the question is no longer whether a text bears a relationship to the oral tradition, but how and to what extent.

Ge does an admirable job of piecing together the remaining bits of evidence of oral precursors to the Shuihu zhuan. In this effort Ge’s work joins Anne McLaren’s study Chinese Popular Culture and Ming Chantefables (1998) and her work on the novel Three Kingdoms, Sanguo zhi yanyi 三國志演義.17 Anyone researching pre-modern materials faces the difficulty of answering these questions definitively with only texts to go on. One can demonstrate the relationship of

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particular stories and novels to extant *chantefables*, as Patrick Hanan, Margaret Wan and Susan Blader have done. These studies reveal much about the process of transformation and the aesthetics of the respective genres. They provide important pieces of the puzzle, since the relationship between *chantefables* and certain novels remained close through the late Qing. The question remains: How do the *chantefable* texts that have survived in print and manuscript relate to oral performance tradition?

The answers are far from simple. Work on lute ballads, *tanci* 彈詞, by Hu Siao-chen and Nancy Hodes emphasizes the distance between performance-related lute ballads and the oral tradition. Even those that seem close to the conventions of performance are still ‘fakes’, written to be read. Blader’s work on the *Sanxia wuyi* 三俠五義 [Three heroes and five gallants] makes similar observations about the relationship of storytelling and the novel, in one case focusing on the editorial process and what is lost when a modern oral storytelling performance becomes a text.

Storytelling plays an important role in Chinese popular culture, in a contemporary as well as in a historical perspective. Storytelling is here understood in its wide sense, equivalent to the performed narrative arts, ‘telling and singing arts’, *shuochang yishu* 說唱藝術. More detailed knowledge about the storytellers’ verbal art *in performance* may provide a key to some of the much disputed questions of the oral origin of certain documents in the history of vernacular literature and bring out in high relief the continued interaction between the oral narrative milieu and the culture of print.

Recent work by Vibeke Børdahl investigates the living tradition of storytelling and what it can tell us about the interplay of the oral and the written. For example, her analysis of true ‘scripts’, *jiaoben* 腳本, in the hands of professional storytellers shows that the scripts are far from being word for word notations of what the storytellers perform; rather, they prove to be condensed *aides mémoire* that are recreated in a much expanded fashion in the telling. Her work also demonstrates the high degree of independence that Yangzhou storytelling had from similar material in the well-known Chinese novels.

storytelling opens up many questions that she addresses in this volume. How widespread is the ‘storyteller’s manner’? Historically did it have any connection with oral performance? We will return to these issues below, but one significant finding of her re-examination of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ is the demonstration of its wide variation from genre to genre.

This serves as a reminder of the importance of understanding individual performance genres. The line between professional and non-professional oral performance is not by any means absolute and easy to draw, and the study of Chinese folk songs, epics and laments borders closely on the shuochang yishu.22 The distinct regional forms of ballads and the oral performing arts influence everything from performance style to the presence or absence of verse, not to mention issues of dialect. On top of that, considerable variation in textual format and style correlated to the intended audience exists within many of these traditions. For example, two groups of lute ballads, tanci, are widely recognized: literary lute ballads, wenci 文詞, with elite female authors and intended readers, and those closer to performance, changci 唱詞.23 Cantonese ‘wooden-fish tales’, muyushu 木魚書, also range from those considered fit reading for proper women to others performed in brothels.24 The same may well be true of many other genres of performance texts.25 Scholars have laid the groundwork for understanding most of these genres, but only a few recent studies have addressed issues like readership and textuality.26


25 The most significant collections of Chinese performance literature from the late imperial and modern periods are the Chewangfu collection in the Capital Library in Beijing and the collection in the Institute for Historical Language Research of the Academica Sinica in Taiwan. The Academica Sinica collection is also available on microfilm; the index is Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo suocang suqu zongmu 目. Much of the collection is reprinted in Wang Fansen 王汎森 et al. Su wenxue congkan 俗文學叢刊, Taibei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 2004. The Chewangfu collection is reprinted in Qing Menggu Che wang fu cong qu ben 清蒙古車王府藏曲本, Beijing gu ji chu ban she, 1991. Much relevant material also survives from the bureaux in charge of entertainment in the Palace in Beijing; see the reprints in Gugong zhenben congkan: Qing dai Nan Fu yu Sheng Ping Shu 功宮珍本叢刊:清代南府與昇平書劇本與當案, Haikou: Hainan Chubanshe, 2000.

During the most recent period, the issue of the sound of oral art, the voice of the singer of tales, as well as that of ‘sound in text’ has come into the foreground. Studies of oral arts are often accompanied by CD editions where the reader can listen to examples. The possibility of recording large repertoires on CD and video has opened new roads for the study of the major genres, such as epic and storytelling, where performances are continuous for long periods of time.

With subjects ranging from Ming vernacular fiction to popular prints and contemporary folk ballads, the six chapters of this volume examine the interplay of oral and written traditions in China from interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. Literary criticism, linguistic analysis, fieldwork, folklore studies and the exploration of visual sources all tease out vital perspectives on central questions: How do we estimate the distance between written editions of performance literature and their orally performed counterparts? How are we to define the ‘oral’ or ‘literary’ character of a text or of certain portions of a text? How do we tackle the question of ‘the author’ in texts that belong to orally transmitted traditions or are side-products of such traditions? How does oral performance relate to texts or pictures derived from it? How do novels, drama and storytelling on similar subjects interact with and influence one another and the popular imagination? The essays of the Oslo symposium enter into a mutual debate on these and related questions. Exploring the common ground of popular entertainment literature in China, they offer enquiries into new material and give astonishing responses to old controversies.

André Lévy’s essay in Chapter 1 ‘Jin Ping Mei and the Art of Storytelling’ shows what is at stake by giving an overview of literary criticism on the early seventeenth-century novel Jin Ping Mei and demonstrating how views of this famed and defamed work have been strongly coloured by scholars’ individual criteria for greatness, largely neglecting the novel’s relationship


28 From 2001-2003 the great roman-fleuve repertoires of four Yangzhou storytellers were registered on video under the project ‘Large-scale Registration of Chinese storytelling’, 160 hours of storytelling on video are presently available for research in the Library of Congress, Washington D.C., as well as libraries in China, Taiwan and Europe, cf Vibeke Børdahl, Fei Li and Huang Ying, Four Masters of Chinese Storytelling, 2004.
to storytelling. As summed up in Lévy’s original abstract of the present essay:

After some reminders emphasizing the awkward position of the accursed and famous novel in a traditionally despised genre, early modern and most recent controversial positions are recalled, underlining radically opposed views. Nothing has fundamentally changed in the gap between the depreciative stance and the apologetic one, though meanwhile literary values have to a large extent been westernized. Both stances tend to neglect the aesthetics of the art of storytelling in their negative or positive appreciation, of which a few examples are given. The inconclusive search for a ‘great author’, worthy of a ‘great masterpiece’, overshadowed most other considerations leading to an undervaluation of the part of storytellers.

Lévy demonstrates the implications of our stand on the relationship between oral and written literature in China for our understanding of this important novel. Like most of the early vernacular fiction, short and long, *Jin Ping Mei* appears to come out of the blue. In spite of many clues around it, how the novel came about remains wrapped in mystery. The way scholars interpret the clues is not without consequences. Some of the best experts consider the work as ‘obviously’ of ‘one mind’ – one single creator, a genial and/or unscrupulous literatus. Others point out the lack of coherence of the novel and other ‘weaknesses’ reminiscent of works originating in the context and setting of oral narrative. Our stand on these matters may produce a rather different view of the history of Chinese vernacular fiction and its involvement with theatre, storytelling and other oral arts. By reviewing major scholarship on *Jin Ping Mei* from the seventeenth century to the present, the chapter brings out how the two camps that either praise or deride *Jin Ping Mei* both neglect to examine its ties to storytelling and the oral traditions of its day. In so doing, Lévy argues, they fail to appreciate the novel on its own terms.

Liangyan Ge and Margaret Wan both explore the relationship between ballad texts and their contexts to suggest where they fit on the orality–writing continuum. Ge looks at early *chantefables*, *shuochang cihua* 說唱詞話, and the beginnings of the textualization process, while Wan considers the degree to which the reading practices revealed by late Qing drum ballad texts, *guci* 鼓詞, require an active knowledge of oral performance traditions. Ge’s essay in Chapter 2 ‘In Search of a Common Storehouse of Convention: Narrative Affinities between *Shuihu zhuan* and the Judge Bao *cihua* Cluster’ focuses on the novel *Water Margin*, *Shuihu zhuan* (and early Water Margin tales) and the Judge Bao *chantefables* as known from a cache of eight fifteenth-century pieces. Each of the Judge Bao *cihua* tells a story that is self-contained and
non-contingent on the actions in any other story in the same cluster. On the other hand, all these cihua clearly belong to the same story complex, as there are frequent cross-references among them reaching further into the world of the outlaws from the moors of Liangshan, the theme of the sixteenth-century novel *Shuihu zhuan*. This group of texts may thus indicate a most intriguing stage of the evolution of the Judge Bao story-cycle. While each cihua story may have developed along its own course and undergone its own process of textualization, the reciprocal oral–literary transmission brought these stories into close contact with each other and with other storytelling repertoires, such as the tales of outstanding heroes in Water Margin. The cihua at that particular juncture remained separate narratives for the performers or storytellers, as we can tell from the conflicts among them in the time scheme and in the narrative plots, but an ‘inter-textual consciousness’ or ‘common storehouse of convention’ that makes itself felt in these texts signals the initiation of a synthesizing process based on a further orality–writing dynamic.

In Chapter 3 ‘Audiences and Reading Practices for Qing Dynasty Drum Ballads’, Margaret Wan combines literary and historical methods to demonstrate how the material texts of Qing drum ballads, guci, hold clues to how these prosimetric ballads or chantefables were circulated and read. How much do the drum ballad texts rely on a knowledge of the conventions of the living oral performance tradition? Have they become outright ‘desktop’ entertainment, or verse novels? While we know that elites enjoyed reading ballads, would the format of the drum ballad make it accessible to less educated readers? Despite its enormous popularity, little attention has been paid to drum ballad texts in China or the West until quite recently. Thus this study helps paint a fuller picture of the range of fictional practices available in late imperial China and their relationships to each other, their audiences and the broader culture.

Vibeke Børðahl and Anne McLaren both consider living oral performance observed in fieldwork as well as extant manuscripts and printings of a given story. In Chapter 4 ‘Storytelling, Stock Phrases and Genre Conventions: The Case of Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, Børðahl takes up the inter-relationship between orally performed genres and written genres of popular literature by looking at conventional meta-narrative phrases from the store of so-called ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’. This particular feature is explored from the earliest written sources to recent professional storytelling in orally preserved recordings. The chapter is based primarily on a collection of oral and written versions of the famous story ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, *Wu Song da hu* 武松打虎, from the Water Margin tales in fiction, drama and storytelling over the course of seven hundred years. In the first part the study explores a range of possibilities for the usage of meta-narrative markers in genres that antedated
the novels, namely the fourteenth century ‘plain tale’, pinghua, the early Ming chantefable, shuochang cihua, and the early story, huaben. The findings of Boris Riftin (1970/1997) on the early plain tales, of Anne McLaren (1998) on Ming chantefables, and of Liangyan Ge in his present essay concerning the narrative affinities between Judge Bao cihua and embryonic Water Margin tales play an especially important role for the analysis. While the markers may have sprung from earlier forms of storytelling (the usual theory), their usage in the plain tales, pinghua, could likewise have been designed as ‘literary’ pedagogical aids for moderately literate readers. It is possible that they were, from the outset, intimately bound to formulaic and metrical patterns in cihua, where they seem to have had an outspoken ‘oral’ existence, since – if left out during vocalizing – the rhythm of the verse tale would suffer. In the second part, exploring the material of oral and written versions of the ‘tiger tale’, Børdahl points at the genre-dependence of these features and concludes by establishing that the set of phrases usually associated with the ‘storyteller’s manner’ is intimately bound up with long and short fiction. In the oral performance genres and the genres for both reading and performance such phrases occur only sporadically.

In Chapter 5 ‘Folk Epics from the Lower Yangzi Delta Region in China: Oral and Written Traditions’, Anne McLaren examines some recently-discovered epic verse narratives. Since China has long been held to have no epic of its own, these texts immediately gain great significance, although they are as yet little studied. Beyond this, they also reveal local attitudes of the Wuxi region and the complicated relationship between oral performance, manuscript versions and the editing process. The Wuxi verse narratives contain many stories about love and marriage and are noted for their anti-Confucian focus on the expression of marriage by choice as opposed to arranged marriage. This paper focuses on one of these colourful stories, the story of Xue Liulang [Xue Sixth Son]. The narrative is striking for its alternation of scenes to do with both marriage and death and for its intimate relationship with Wuxi folk customs involving marriage, funerals and mourning. Two of the practices condoned by the narrative, levirate marriage and ‘locked door marriage’, were lower class or local lower Yangzi practices. This chapter combines insights gleaned from fieldwork in the region with a comparison of manuscript and published transcriptions of the story from the mid-nineteenth century to the 1980s, taking into account variant forms of the story and its circulation in written form as well as in oral performance. McLaren delves into the implications of who transcribes the texts derived from oral performance and for what purpose. She shows not only the local culture that created long ‘epic’ narratives in the lower Yangzi region, but also the differences in how one story is told in versions that range across eras and classes. Thus the values put forth sympathetically in some versions are clearly counter to Confucian norms. The textual versions are clearly
the product of editing, although with different agendas. It is intriguing how the textualization of a Qing ballad in the form of a ‘songbook’, changben 唱本, might somehow distance it from the oral tradition on which it drew. This text that takes the story but not the form of the folk song tradition of shange 山歌 [mountain songs] might be aimed at a different and wider audience than that of the local milieu from which it apparently came. The modern version collected by Chinese folklorists on the basis of the living oral tradition of shange as recorded in the 1980s, on the other hand, has preserved much of the oral and local form, while the contents apparently have been adapted to modern morality in a process of cooperation between singers and folklorists.

In the final essay of the volume, ‘Chinese Performed Arts and Popular Prints’, Boris Riftin turns to the question of the interplay of drama, novel and oral performance through the lens of popular pictorial prints, nianhua 年畫, from the Qing and Republican eras. Two types of nianhua are examined: prints that portray storytelling activities and prints that depict scenes from stories. The prints that deal with storytelling per se reveal details of performance practice that would otherwise be lost to us. The depiction of the contents of stories sometimes exhibits features that point to the particular origin of the artist’s inspiration through details that are only present in one version. Riftin’s meticulous analysis of the prints and his comparison with known novels, drama librettos and storytelling show the cross-fertilization of genres in the depiction of a particular story.

When Riftin discusses which stories are prevalent in nianhua, the list is revealing. The sixteen novels whose stories show up frequently in nianhua are almost identical to those which he finds had a presence in storytelling in northern China. One might add that most of these stories are found in regional storytelling genres across China. Some share themes with the great novels Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, Journey to the West, Xiyou ji 西游記, and Dream of the Red Chamber, Hong lou meng 紅樓夢;29 others depict episodes from military romances, court-case fiction, martial arts novels and a few love stories. About half of these stories were incarnated in novels that were the ‘best-sellers’ across the nation in Ming–Qing China.30 Three-quarters of the stories on Riftin’s list were published as novels in rural Sibao, Fujian, another indicator of their wide popularity.31 Cheap editions of novels, popular prints, local drama and oral storytelling epitomize ‘popular culture’ in the sense that, being available to all, they could transcend boundaries of social station and education. Certain

29 Also known as Story of the Stone, Shitou ji 石頭記, according to the excellent translation (1973-1986) by David Hawkes and John Minford, based on an alternative title of this work.
30 Robert Hegel, Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China, 1998: 65.
31 Cynthia Brokaw, Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods, 2007: Appendix G.
regional practices Riftin discusses, like the recently discovered ‘folders’, *shuxiazi* or *shubenzi*, given to women when they married, confirm that popular prints were collected by women. Most of these are based on drama, and the stories depicted include Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, and Journey to the West. On the other hand, some of the Southern popular prints show a more regional focus by depicting stories from the *tanci* storytelling genre.

While some of the topical prints show the influence of a particular form of these stories, most show a mixing of attributes from the novel, drama and storytelling. This presents a fascinating view of how these stories were known, visualized and transmitted. They were first and foremost known as stories, and the creators of the prints rarely stuck to one version or distinguished novel from drama from oral storytelling. The ongoing interchange of oral and written as seen through the eyes of these prints is inescapable.

**While the nature of Chinese vernacular literature** makes the above issues central to a true understanding of Chinese literature, they are to date understudied. André Lévy in his essay for this volume has put it succinctly and to the point:

> The art of storytelling in China early reached a maturity which calls for a more positive assessment. Its shortcomings may be argued as its strengths. Its import in Chinese fiction needs more investigation.

By stressing the interaction between oral tradition and written heritage, these essays go beyond a simple oral/written dichotomy and explore the complexities of the relationship between the two modes. Even if findings in contemporary oral storytelling can only be suggestive for earlier periods, they have the potential to illuminate significant questions and approaches. China today still offers the possibility to study a wealth of time-honoured oral performance arts, on the one hand as living traditions in their original local setting, and on the other hand as performance literature, *shuochang wenxue*, collected throughout the twentieth century by pioneers of the vernacular movement and adherents of the concomitant re-evaluation of folk literature. If there is one theme that stands out from the essays in this collection, it is the importance of the inter-relationships between oral performance and written text in Chinese popular literature and the need for more research.
CHAPTER 1

_Jin Ping Mei_ and the Art of Storytelling

André Lévy

_May this first chapter stand as just an appetizer! It is presented before the courses of the main meal which is to follow. My aim is to remind readers how much the controversies around _Jin Ping Mei_ were conducive to the neglect of the role of the art of storytelling. Mention of the famous novel was made around 1800 by the Catholic mission at Peking, but it was really brought to the attention of learned spheres when quoted by the first Western sinologist, Abel Rémusat (1788–1832), two years after he was promoted to a chair at the _College de France_ in 1814. Let me quote some of the few lines which sent the Western world dreaming of forbidden treasures:

. . . moral corruption is as widespread in China as in any other country . . . There are a great many books in which the most outrageous cynicism prevails . . . Here we have a book of tales which can be classed in this respect next to Petronius and Martial . . . _Jin Ping Mei_, a famous novel, is said to be above, or rather below anything licentious produced by decadent Rome or modern Europe. I know it only by repute, and although it was condemned by the court in Peking, it did manage to find a translator, one of the brothers of the famous emperor Kangxi; and this prince’s version in the Manchu language is regarded as a masterpiece of elegance and fidelity._

So far as I know, the earliest explicit prohibition of the Manchu version was somewhat later, in the Yongzheng reign. But the Chinese original is said to have been specifically condemned only as late as 1867. Of course, there was an implicit prohibition which incited daring publishers to multiply rare and costly editions. The Manchu authorities in fact tried to stop any attempt to translate it as early as 1635, even before the conquest of China, but to no avail under a more liberal reign, as Kangxi’s version, printed in 1708, did exist and a copy of that translation fell into the hands of the German scholar Hans Conon von der Gabelentz (1808–1874) who started putting it in German between 1862 and 1869, leaving us a manuscript forgotten till 1998._

1 See Rémusat 1939: 97.
2 See Gimm 2005. Conon was the father of the better-known sinologist Georg (1840–1893), the author of the famous _Chinesische Grammatik_ (1883). He and his brother Albert (1834–1892) worked with his father who produced _Eléments de la grammaire mandchoue_ in 1832.
Retranslation via the Manchu language was fairly common among the few early sinologists, but disappeared with the following generations. However retranslations from Chinese through other languages were admitted as fair game much later, till my own time. Chinese was reputed to be so much more difficult! Of course that was some forty years ago. Etiemble (1909–2002), late professor emeritus of comparative literature at the Sorbonne chaired the jury before which I had to talk about the rise of vernacular short stories in seventeenth-century China. He thought that he had found at long last a fellow who could give him a more complete translation of Jin Ping Mei than those then available in French. In short, the novel was a work he admired as free from the Christian prejudices which afflicted Western society. He planned to get such a translation included in the prestigious collection of world literature called La Pléiade, near and after its soon to be published cousin, so to say, Shuihu zhuan, called in French Au bord de l’eau (1978). First Etiemble asked me if I could read German. Somewhat taken aback, I said yes. Then, later, he introduced me to the aging head of the Gallimard family and mentioned acquiring the rights to translate into French the brothers Kibat’s German version. It was a complete translation of the at that time current edition of Jin Ping Mei established at the end of the seventeenth century by Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡. In fact it was not yet entirely published at the time, but was in production by the Swiss firm Die Waage in Zürich. The fifth and last volume was to appear in 1982. The first was published in 1967, and was in fact a reissue of the ones burned in Hitler’s Germany when I was about ten years old, in the thirties. I had to object that precisely in the thirties, a different, more ancient edition had been discovered in China, and that besides I was the lucky owner of a Photostat of a slightly better copy of the same rare edition, this time found in Japan. Third, I pointed out that this cihua edition was likely to be closer to the original manuscript3 and was not yet translated the world over, but only in Japan where the objectionable portions were left in the original Chinese.4

Had I to add that I felt more at ease with Chinese than with German? The arguments hit their target. That is how I was drawn into battling with the not always easy Chinese of the Jin Ping Mei cihua text for seven years, pretty long ago. Perhaps the Fates had decided it even earlier. Is it not a strange coincidence that I had translated some ten years earlier two pieces5 which happened to be those cleverly woven into the beginnings of the cihua? They do stress what the novel is to talk about, the dangers of sexual indulgence. But it reminds me that I share now some of the ailments old Zhang found himself afflicted with after he

3 See Wrenn 1964.
4 Ono Shinobu and Chida Kuichi 1960.
acquired as a new young concubine, Golden Lotus. Let me just mention that my hearing is getting dull and will need your forbearance. I have to confess that seven years translating *Jin Ping Mei* while teaching and managing the centre for Far-Eastern studies at Bordeaux was a pretty short time, requiring often a regrettable hurry. Fortunately in a way, the novel was not yet a good field of research to be associated with. So I was spared a lot of precious or futile readings. After the publication of my translation in 1985, studies on *Jin Ping Mei* which resumed on the mainland by the eighties turned into an outpour I was unable to cope with as I had to handle many other successive jobs. The level of critical sophistication reached new heights I dared not climb. Still, after twenty years of estrangement from *Jin Ping Mei*, it seems that no radical changes have taken place in this field, so that I do not yet feel that the introduction to my translation written a quarter of a century ago is completely obsolete. I seems to me that a radical polarization has taken place between two opposite camps, the one depreciative, and the other laudatory. In fact the two incompatible poles were already germinating much earlier, nearly one century ago.

Students of early westernization of China may be aware of the long exchange of letters between Qian Xuantong 錢玄同 (1887–1939) and Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962). It took place in 1917 and the letters were published with Hu Shi’s writings in 1921. Let us cut short the details of their arguments, however worth considering. From a literary angle, free from common prejudices, Qian Xuantong gave first place to *Jin Ping Mei*, a verbal monument, an exposure of social hypocrisy, putting it above even *Honglou meng*, as did the aging Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 (1898–1986) when I was privileged to meet him in the early eighties, praising the forcefulness, the *qi* of *Jin Ping Mei*. Did not Zhang Zhupo 張仲璞 draw on the same line of arguments at the end of the seventeenth century with his *ku shuo* 苦說, the thesis of bitterness as the drive to produce such a work? For Hu Shi, on the contrary, *Jin Ping Mei* belongs to the sort of book devoid of any value from a literary viewpoint. Why? Because, he thought, it was of the sort which induces no aesthetic pleasure, no ‘feeling of beauty’. Though both were for ‘complete modernization’ along Western lines, they handled different parameters of questionable validity. Hu Shi called for more translations of foreign stuff, while hoping for an indigenous production some fifty years ahead. Here we may pinpoint the roots of a present day rather confusing state of affairs regarding this object of contention.

6 See page 27 of David Roy’s translation (1993), and page 32 of mine (Lévy 1985), in the first chapter of *Jin Ping Mei cihua*.
8 若拋棄一切世俗見解，專用文學的眼光去觀察，則金瓶梅之位置故亦在第一流。Hu Shi 1953: 50.
9 此種書即以文學的眼光觀之，一殊無價值，何則？文學之一要素，在於《美感》。請問先生讀金瓶梅，作何美感？Hu Shi 1953: 43.
16 André Lévy

Why this astonishing paradox of a ‘number one’ masterpiece still unavailable in its integrity in its own country? A way out is to deny it any value as did young Hu Shi ninety years ago. Is it not the same stance taken today by the veteran scholar Liu Shide? After a talk on the enigma of Jin Ping Mei’s author held this year in February and relayed by People on line, Professor Liu Shide was asked by a female member of the audience why Jin Ping Mei, which requires the attention of so many scholars, was still prohibited. He replied by reiterating the axiomatic saying that a ‘great work’ (weida) must come out of one great mind and one great artist, denying the qualification of ‘great’ for a work of such a low value. Is this stance personal rather than official? Whatever the case, the Encyclopedia of Chinese Classical Fiction directed by the same Professor Liu Shide has nevertheless a sizeable entry for Jin Ping Mei signed by Liu Hui. If Jin Ping Mei is not to be counted among the great masterworks, why should it be neither cumulative, jileide, nor collective, jitide? Professor Liu Shide emphatically denied such

10 See my review of Sun Shuyu’s aesthetics of Jin Ping Mei, Lévy 1986: 528–32, where I pinpointed this paradox, which apparently is keenly felt in China.

possibilities. He did not elaborate on this point that he considered obvious though he proffered a relentless scepticism about some fifteen personalities worth mentioning among the fifty to sixty candidates for authorship so far presented in so many inconclusive studies: a quadrupling, I am afraid, since I wrote my introduction a quarter century ago.

There are now two places where the famous *roman-fleuve* is said to have been composed. One is at Yixian 邑縣, formerly Lanling 蘭陵, in Shandong: there you may see the tree above a small cascade under which Jia Sanjin 賈三近 wrote the masterwork. I saw the spot being built with my own eyes, when I participated in the first or second international conference on *Jin Ping Mei* in the mid-eighties. The other place, in Huizhou 徽州 district, Anhui 安徽 province, is a more recent location. I confess I have not seen nor read the report of the discovery of Gou Dong 苟洞 a few years ago. This attribution to a Wang Daokun 汪道昆 is ignored by Professor Liu Shide, but the tourist attraction in construction is mentioned by the newspaper map introducing Professor Liu Shide. Does it add a touch of ridicule to this fancy idea of how *Jin Ping Mei* was conceived? Professor Liu Shide concludes humorously that it would be better to apply the term *Jinxue* for the studies of Jin Yong 金庸’s wuxia xiaoshuo and create the term ‘scoffing studies’, Xiaoxue, for those on *Jin Ping Mei*, since the obscure author of *Jin Ping Mei* calls himself Xiaoxiaosheng 笑笑生 and most studies of *Jin Ping Mei* are in search of a likely author.

Jin Yong (Louis Cha, 1924– ) himself used to say that most writers, since the Hu Shi–Qian Xuantong controversy, produced only Western fiction in Chinese, while he alone continued to compose real Chinese novels, the secret of his immense popular success. Whatever the stand to be taken regarding this dictum, it recalls a break with traditional fiction which cannot be ignored. Several factors which favoured the rise of fiction in the West were present in China much earlier. This fact is commonly recognised. Even if all of them were similar, it would be fallacious to expect products with Western features as the end result of a regular evolution. I am afraid today critics do not take sufficiently into account the specificities of different cultures or civilisations. The art of storytelling reached quite early in China a degree of refinement and maturity unknown in the West. But it was an art of entertainment confined to despised ranks of society. Vernaculars did not succeed in pushing out the classical culture before Western intrusion. Europe drew from its multilingual and multicultural landscape incentives which added to its dynamism. Did China find something equivalent in its literature of entertainment in the vernacular? Was the seventeenth century but an abortive turning point? Well, no simple answers may fit questions so crude. Still, Qian

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12 Zhang Yuanfen 1983.
Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804) was not taking xiaoshuo, fiction, so lightly. For him, though despised, it was a vehicle of evil pervading all ranks of society.\(^{13}\) Would such a complaint, uttered at the end of the eighteenth century, apply in the sixteenth century? Why not, if we challenge the accepted idea, idée reçue, of a progressive evolution towards a Western model of fiction?

Negative as well as positive evaluations are legitimate as long as we remain aware of their references to extraneous criteria. They are not irrelevant but in both cases are of questionable propriety. Is it not by a misappropriation of a sort that *Jin Ping Mei* is passed off as a ‘literati novel’? Let us quote at some length Andrew Plaks before dealing with this notion:

\[\ldots\] my readings of these ‘amazing books’ are based on the conviction that they yield the most meaningful interpretations when viewed not simply as compendia of popular narrative materials, but as reflections of the cultural values and intellectual concerns of the sophisticated literary circles of the late Ming period. I believe that the fullest recensions of each of these novels were composed by and for the same sort of people who gave us the startlingly original achievements of Ming ‘literati painting’ and the gems of the contemporary ‘literati stage’, which is why I speak of them with the somewhat pretentious and perhaps misleading term ‘literati novels’.\(^{14}\)

It is true that small but influential circles of literati expressed an unusual interest in many kinds of popular arts. Can we say that by putting their finger on that sort of stuff, they turn it into the gold of higher literature? I am afraid we have here a response though not an answer to the depreciative posture of C. T. Hsia’s epoch-making critical introduction to *The Classic Chinese Novel* published by Columbia University Press in 1968. His blunt critical weapon fell harshly on *Jin Ping Mei*. Let us quote from page 166: ‘Its generous inclusion of songs and jokes, of mundane and Buddhist tales, constantly mars the naturalistic texture of its narrative so that, from the viewpoint of style and structure, it must be rated the most disappointing novel we have thus far considered.’ From page 169: ‘In a sense, the novel is almost a poetic anthology within a narrative framework.’ Professor Hsia rejects any attribution to a ‘great’ author among the literati as no ‘genius could have fathered a book of such low culture and ordinary mentality’ (168).

How to explain that less than forty years later the presentation of the novel in an important compendium should testify to a complete reversal of this

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\(^{13}\) See several derogatory remarks in his *Shijiazhai yangxin lu* 十駱齋養心錄: ‘After the Song and Yuan period scholars who could boast of their abilities considered it shameful to produce it (fiction) . . .’ 宋元以後士之能自立者皆恥而不為矣. What follows is even more clearly disparaging for storytellers. Cf the remarks in *Guisi cungao* 戚已存稿; both are reprinted in *Kong Lingjing 1982*: 258–59.

\(^{14}\) Plaks 1987: ix.
depreciative judgment shared by both professors C. T. Hsia and Liu Shide? Forgive me for citing at length the entry on *Jin Ping Mei* in the *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* edited by Gaëtan Brulotte and John Phillips. Though not signed, it follows fairly faithfully the views of David Roy, the great translator of the *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, now an enterprise in its final stage:

*Jin Ping Mei*, first published in 1618 or shortly thereafter, is the first major Chinese novel to have a cohesive narrative, to be written by a single author, and to be an original creation. It is unlike almost all earlier novels – which developed from the repertoire of professional storytellers – engaging in new modes of representation. *Jin Ping Mei* is acutely aware of its divergence from the established form of the vernacular novel in China, which allows it to incorporate an almost encyclopedic range of texts and genres, such as jokes, popular songs, comic skits, and short stories, which were all made available to a wider audience than ever before because of the boom of commercial publishing. . .

*Jin Ping Mei* is also a milestone in the development of narrative fiction in world literature. With the possible exception of the Tale of Genji (1010) and Don Quixote (1615), there is no earlier work of prose fiction of comparable sophistication and depth. . .

Elsewhere, in the introduction to Professor Roy’s translation, *Jin Ping Mei* is said to be reminiscent of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Nabokov’s *Lolita*. 16

Would you allow a few comments? Abel Rémusat wrote that it was a Chinese *Petronius*; inspired by a Marxist approach, some Chinese critics evoked a Chinese Zola. I am not sure that such comparisons do justice to the Chinese masterwork. I do not think that the significance of *Jin Ping Mei* can be negated as flippantly as Professor Liu does, but I do not feel that it should be overstated the way Professor Roy suggests. There is no need to quibble about the different meanings of *Weltliteratur* since the time when Goethe was among the first to handle this notion in his talks with Eckermann in 1827. The status of a milestone can be acknowledged, but should not imply that *Jin Ping Mei* fathered similar offspring or that a kind of Chinese Cervantes conceived and penned this verbal monument seated at his desk or crouched under a tree. The importance of the *Odyssey* in our Western culture does not require us to believe it sprang fully-armed from a single mind. Since the eighteenth century the Homeric question testifies to this unsolved enigma. Is some degree of comparable sophistication to be found in *Jin Ping Mei* and Joyce’s *Ulysses*? I am not inclined to think that the significance of *Jin Ping Mei* would be in the least impaired by dragging it out of the prejudiced clutches of literati, whether prac-

16 See the inner jacket of the first volume of David Roy’s translation of *Jin Ping Mei* (1993).
titioners of Chinese traditional high literature or Westernized critics. Should we agree that the established form of the vernacular novel in China allowed Jin Ping Mei to incorporate an almost encyclopedic range of texts and genres, such as jokes, popular songs, comic skits and short stories, which were all made available to a wider audience than ever before because of the boom of commercial publishing? Yes indeed, but to impute to Jin Ping Mei an acute awareness of its divergence seems a not very meaningful subjective judgment. I am afraid that the impulses to magnify the novel by reducing the role of storytellers and their art have had a rather negative effect. We may not be fully aware of the extent of our ignorance. Testimonies are very fragmentary throughout the ages, limited to what came randomly to us from popular oral or written materials. How much do we know of those countless popular kinds of entertainment of the past? Probably very little.

After all, Jin Ping Mei offers us the first case of so much information about its prepublication stage and so little about its birth as to generate endless speculation. To declare it ‘written by a single author, and an original creation’ may not be conducive to its understanding in a sphere of entertainment dominated by storytellers and all sorts of jugglers of words. Let us try to sum up the case in this sort of cryptic way: a small group of eminent literati in the cultural sphere over two decades in the late Ming exchanged and copied impressive manuscripts which never amounted to a complete set. At least two sets were prepared, perhaps three. One was completed differently by two different publishers, the earlier perhaps in ten instalments. The other, in twenty, not yet ready, never went into print. There is not the slightest hint that in fact the author could be a member of the group of literati interested in its publication. The first scholar to mention a manuscript, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568–1610), found its reading relaxing and jocular. Later his younger brother, Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道 (1570–1624) thought its content highly incorrect; better to hush it up.17 There is some irony in the fact that the owner of the first part first mentioned of the manuscript, Dong Qichang 董其場 (1555–1636), was himself the target of a slanderous book which ‘soon became popular’ and ‘found its way into the repertoire of the wandering minstrels’.18

I do not mean that we should jump to the conclusion that Jin Ping Mei belonged at the start to this genre of slanderous literature, almost entirely lost, though fairly common at the time.19 It is not an unlikely possibility. Early connoisseurs mentioned it. Oral or written sources? The one does not preclude the other. Those items circulated long before in manuscripts, occasionally printed, often

17 About this manuscript stage, see Hanan 1962, especially pp. 39–42.
19 See the preface of Ling Mengchu to the Erke Pai’an jingqi (1633).
suppressed. In the West, as for example in France, roughly at the same time, they had equivalents of a sort in the *nouvelles à la main*, ‘handwritten news’, mostly scandalous. There must have been an abundant literature, printed or not, sung or told, which is now completely lost, but in a tenor more or less reminiscent of *Jin Ping Mei*. We may even imagine a reversal of the rather conservative thesis of Zhu Xing 朱星20 defending an originally pure *Jin Ping Mei*, stuffed with obscenities by commercial publishers. *Youxi wenxue* 遊戲文學, sketches, skits, jokes of a sexual nature, typically vulgar, may have been the nutshell, so to say, the magnet attracting the venomous story stuff contained in chapters 23 to 27 of the *Shuihu zhuan*.21 When Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1689) remembers listening to a tale told in the Northern slang from *Jin Ping Mei* in 1634, can we be sure that that was a part of our novel, as it was so jocular that the audience bent over and fell down laughing?22 Must we consider the few *zidishu* 子弟書 we know of by the titles, as without a doubt derivative, extracted from the written novel, and not from a tradition of oral materials? More investigations are needed.

I am afraid the quest for finding a ‘great author’ for a great work has led us away from the main problem. Should we take the masterpiece as fallen out of the blue fully equipped, before turning every stone likely to explain its birth? Why should oral literature tarnish it? Negative as well as positive appreciations fail for this reason to do full justice to this question. It has been said that Zhang Zhupo gave *Jin Ping Mei* a second skin.23 Trying to substantiate the comparison with Joyce’s *Ulysses* may give it a third one, likely to distort it further. Of course these skins are not be despised, they bring new vistas and deserve due appraisal for their sophistication. But are they not misleading? Are they not liable to divert us from a proper understanding of the complex interconnections between oral and written literature? The market for popular books began thriving in China much earlier than in Europe. There were already centuries of obscure inter-relationships when Zhao Qimei 趙琦美 (1563–1624) told how he found a rare copy of Duan Chengshi’s 段成式 *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 in his preface to this work, dated at about the time when *Jin Ping Mei cihua* appeared, the first printed copy of which, by the way, was discovered in the far North, in Shanxi:

At the busiest place of the shops-market in the center of Suzhou, documents are always displayed under people’s eaves, the so-called bookstalls. What they sell are but short stories, ‘affairs behind the door’, songbooks and the like. So-called

20 Zhu Xing 1980.
23 See Ding Naifei 2002: 121.
‘affairs behind the door’ are entirely of the sort sung and told by boys and girls in the women’s quarters . . .

Wùzhòng gùshì mèi chāo yù jù yǒu shū bì jiè liè rén jì jué liè, tiáo zhī shū bān zǐ, suǒ yù zhě shì xīn xiào wèn shì chēng běn zhī lèi. suǒ yù wèn shì, dōu mén zhōng ér nǚ zǐ suǒ shàng tā shuō yě.

I am not sure of my translation, nor of the authenticity of the text as I found it, but it says enough to evoke the complexities of the cultural surroundings in which Jin Ping Mei was born.

Let us admit it: the more noticeable the presence of the storyteller in a vernacular story, the more likely is its conventional nature; the more skilful the re-appropriation of the storyteller’s language, the more likely is it to be an imitation without real oral sources. In any case it is a testimony of the influence of the art of storytelling, direct or indirect, on traditional fiction in the vernacular as a whole. After all, some half a century ago John Bishop denounced its limiting effects. Whether felt as negative or positive, these effects are not to be appreciated as if traditional Chinese fiction was born to grow into our sort of modern fiction. Surely, we have to allow a written stage and a printing stage. But it is not in our agenda to deal further with this here.

Of course imitation is more frequent than direct oral origin. By producing a contrario to this kind of naïve argument, Pan Kaipei’s plea for an oral origin of Jin Ping Mei has easily been dismissed. Almost all the reviews of the studies on Jin Ping Mei in the last half century mention his failure with a nostalgic tinge. The tale of Wu Song and the tiger is commonly held to have been copied from an unknown edition of the written novel Shuihu zhuan, but in her study of the drum tale, Vibeke Børdahl points out that a borrowing from the oral tradition is more likely. Besides, any unbiased reader would admit a stylistic gap between Li Yu’s Rou putuan and Jin Ping Mei. Should it be explained by time passing? Hardly likely, if they are less than half a century apart, whether or not we accept David Roy’s attribution to Tang Xianzu. Patrick Hanan pointed this out in the preface to his masterful translation of Rou putuan, The Carnal Prayer Mat. The differences from Jin Ping Mei are so patent that they need no

27 See Liu Shide 2007: section 6: ‘After the refutation by Xu Mengxiang,徐夢湘, the controversy was ended until Xu Shuofang revived it.’
29 See Hanan 1990: xi.
elaboration. That is why Xu Shuofang’s hypothesis sounds more plausible after all: a refraction and emendation of older storytellers’ materials by Li Kaixian 李開先 (1502–1568).30

Let us accept that: the sheer size of the two most famous pornographic fictions in China makes them hardly comparable. In a way the plot of The Carnal Prayer Mat is much more intricate than that of Jin Ping Mei. It sounds like an invention of literati for literati. At the other end, the intrigue of Jin Ping Mei could be the plot of a xiaoshuo in the Song meaning of storytelling, told in one session. The amplification to some eight hundred thousand characters in one single jump seems all the more unlikely. An oral stage of some length is not to be excluded, nor a leap or a glide from one genre of storytelling to the other. Perhaps some genre belonging to xiaoshu 小書, Xiaoshu, meaning minor tales, minor as concerning minor affairs, is defined in opposition to dashu 大書, about major historical events. Both were pretty long genres. I remember Yao Xinnong 姚莘農 (1905–1991), the playwright of the ill-fated Qinggong yuan 清宮怨 [Tragedies at the Qing Court], telling me long ago in Hong Kong how a storyteller spent three months with the heroine of his tale remaining on the staircase.31

Before putting an end to this rather senseless guesswork, let us point out that oral arts tend to be verbose, while good written prose in the Chinese tradition should be terse. The verbosity of Jin Ping Mei cannot be denied, nor its connection with oral entertainments of all sorts.

To wrap it in its first skin, publishers had to gather the manuscripts painstakingly and hurriedly. There were several of them in the competition, hoping to make money or fame. A certain number of misprints, mistakes, incoherencies, double endings and so forth may be there on account of haste. They never got the complete set. As no ancient manuscripts have come to us, we can hardly guess the extent of the tampering needed to produce a book in the neat number of one hundred chapters. The word ‘cohesive’ instead of ‘coherent’ in the article from The Encyclopaedia of Erotic Literature may be a cover for these inconsistencies, but I would take it rather as an avowal of the verbal rhetoric of the storyteller which pervades the book. Its qualification as cihua, whatever the extension of the term, underlines its relation with the rhetoric of prosimetric narrative usually called chantefable. Its link with the art of storytelling cannot be more clearly stated. The storytellers’ point of view explains better the wealth of details and extended descriptions which pervade the novel than drawing a

30 See articles published in Xu Shuofang 1983: 133–178. Two of these articles are to be found in Jin Ping Mei yanjiu 1984: 150–164.
comparison with a Western literary movement like naturalism, let alone with such masterpieces written in parody of Western literature like Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* or Joyce’s *Ulysses*.

Lack of *qing*, excess of *se*, gang of rascals, lascivious lass wallowing with profligates, horses, food, drink, dresses, an encyclopaedic ambition of details all seem to carry on the narrative when irony does not verge on the burlesque. The role of verses is to create or strengthen a mood. The suspense of the story is called for in order to induce the listeners to come back, listeners who are to some extent spectators, as the term *kanguan* seems to imply, though it is readily confused with *kan*, meaning silent reading. It is not a novelist speaking to us, but a tale being told through a storyteller putting us in the proper mood.
In this light we may disclaim as a Western-inspired fallacy the criticism of minor disgraceful discrepancies as in this quotation from C. T. Hsia:

Early in the novel, Ximen Qing runs his hands over Lotus’ naked body and finds her *mons Veneris* hairless. This brief scene, however, is immediately followed by a poem in praise of her private parts with due reference to her pubic hair. It is such discrepancies of detail that make the reader lose confidence in the novelist. What has happened here is that, in quoting a jocular poem to support his prose description, he has not bothered to check if the two accounts tally. Such oversights may appear trivial and they are certainly common in traditional Chinese novels...

In fact, we may deny that this is an oversight and argue that the poem ‘which brings the testimony’, *you shi wei zheng*, celebrates the attraction of the naked female body in poetical images, but does not specifically describe Lotus.

32 For the scene referred to here see *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, chapter 4, Dai’an facsimile pp. 98–99, prose: 西門慶摸見濱戶上並無毳毛猶如白馥馥鼓蓬蓬軟濃濃紅縐縐緊秋秋, verse: 薄草崖邊是故國. See also translations by LEVY 1985: 95 and ROY 1993: 91.
33 See HSIA 1968: 173.
For her, the prose turns lyrical, a Chinese way of showing the arousal inside the mind of Ximen Qing. Something similar occurs in our opera. We may claim that the so-called lack of coherence of the storyteller’s manner has good points: it enlarges its impact and enlivens the characters by showing contradictory qualities. As the British novelist E. M. Forster would say, they succeed in becoming ‘round’, though a Li Xifan 李希凡 may have complained that the bad Ximen Qing is not bad enough.34

The art of storytelling in China reached early on a maturity which calls for a more positive assessment. Its shortcomings may be argued as its strengths. Of course, granted the contributions of the storyteller’s manner, Jin Ping Mei as a

34 See Li Xifan 1959: 185–200, especially 197. See also E. M. Forster 1962/1927: 67: ‘We may divide characters into flat and round.’
A written piece of fiction is a book which had an author, an editor and a publisher, a trinity in one or several persons, who successfully put together diverse sorts of materials. As a number of manuscripts are referred to, but none has come to us, we are reduced to more or less wild guesses. For example, in chapter 51, just after the middle of the novel, was it the impulse of the editor to have stuffed in somewhat too many events or the long-windedness of the storyteller to add this joke told by Ximen Qing to Lotus after making love to her? Or both? In David Roy’s translation:

‘Fivew’, said Hsimen Ch’ing. ‘I have got a joke to tell you, which I heard from Brother Ying the Second. . . .’ (From Jin Ping Mei cihua, facsimile reprint, Hong Kong: Taiping shuju, 1992)
threw his wife into consternation and she replied, ‘Brother, if you undertake this journey, I fear that you may not be allowed to return, and what would we do then? Just leave it as it is, and I’ll gradually learn to put up with it.’

We may observe that this joke, probably well known at the time, fits well into the story as Lotus had suffered from the effect of the aphrodisiacs Ximen Qing has taken. On the other hand, it may be taken as a hint at Lotus’s lasciviousness, which will lead Ximen to death in chapter 79. So the shadow of a genial author who has cleverly woven all these threads reappears. It could be somebody fallen into oblivion, from which there is hardly any hope of retrieving him, whether a learned associate of a despired profession or an unmentionable member of the imperial family who had wealth, leisure, taste for popular entertainments and no literati training. Certainly Jin Ping Mei, and traditional fiction at large, owed a lot to the storyteller’s manner.

Rather than dwelling on its limitations, is it not more vital to investigate its contribution? It can be argued that the early appearance of printing and the refinements in the art of storytelling were both factors shaping a tradition of fiction quite different from, though similar to the Western one. When we come to think about it, starting with the Homeric epos of battles and seafaring, could such different roots give similar branches? Is it possible? Yes and no. The way we look at Jin Ping Mei does involve a quite different conception of the evolution of traditional fiction. Did it by its own synergy evolve into a genre of world literature deeply infected by Western traditions? Was Jin Ping Mei a sort of meteorite fallen from another planet? Our doubts do not entail a denial of the turning point which stamped the appearance of the novel. Jin Ping Mei is a masterpiece, whatever the criteria involved in judging it ‘great’ or ‘not great’. It is a masterpiece through its link with the art of storytelling and on the same level with the other three ‘amazing four books’, Si da qi shu 四大奇書, and above them. Why? Perhaps more patient research, more new discoveries might help

35 See Roy 1993 vol. 3: 239. David Roy points out that the anecdote was known to Li Kaixian; see 3: 568 note 29. Bu Jian infers from it the likelihood of his part in the authorship of Jin Ping Mei. See Bu Jian 1988: 277. For the original text see Da’ian facsimile vol. 3, p. 280: 西門慶笑道五兒我有個笑話兒說與你聽是應二哥說的一個人死了閻王就拿驢皮在身上交他 變驢落後判官查簿籍還有他十三年陽壽又放回來叻他老婆看見渾身都變過來了只有陽物還是未變過來那人道我往陰間換去他老婆慌了說我的哥哥你這一去只怕不放你回來怎了聼我慢慢的挨罷。

to anchor that inescapable feeling. The role of the art of storytelling has to be recognised more fully. An immense field is to be prospected.

The rambling thoughts I have presented to you are not meant to lead to any conclusion. And I will not conclude. If I have not put you in a too sleepy mood, I shall be satisfied to have aroused your keen interest in so many topics that are to follow. Xianhua xiufan 閒話休繁: sorry to have put your long patience to task.
CHAPTER 2

In Search of a ‘Common Storehouse of Convention’

Narrative Affinities between *Shuihu zhuan* and the Judge Bao *cihua* Cluster

Liangyan Ge

Exounding the recurrent narrative scenes and thematic patterns in early Chinese vernacular fiction, Patrick Hanan observes: ‘There seems to have been a common storehouse of convention from which the early vernacular fiction drew. To judge from its nature, this convention must have belonged initially to oral, not written, literature’ (Hanan 1973: 197). That there was a ‘common storehouse’ of fiction-making material is evidenced by the extensive thematic parallels among the early vernacular stories and between some of those stories and the early full-length novels in vernacular prose, especially *Shuihu zhuan* [Water Margin]. Yet the oral provenance of the conventional fiction-making material seems harder to prove. The reason is simple: if we have any access at all to any pre-modern Chinese oral genre, that access inevitably exists only in written texts that are putatively associated with that genre. Registering voice in writing and transforming the dynamic and protean storytelling events into static and fixed symbols in print, these texts perpetuate orality while also terminating it. Precisely because of this ‘crippling paradox’ about oral literature (Amodio 2005: 5), it is often difficult to determine, especially in the case of a text of a relatively late date, how much of it is derived from genuine orality and how much is the writer’s deliberate simulation of orality. That ambiguity often leaves one wondering whether certain recurrent narrative patterns shared by different works should be taken as residues from a popular oral tradition or simply as instances of literary pseudo-duplication. If one hopes to certify that the ‘common storehouse of convention’ in early Chinese vernacular fiction was initially built on the soil of oral literature, it may seem that that effort would inevitably end up in an impasse, that is, in the prison house of texts.

A case in point is the relationship between *Shuihu zhuan* and the eight chantefable texts of *shuochang cihua* 說唱詞話 centring on the legendary judge
Bao Zheng包拯, based on the historical eleventh-century official of that name and referred to in the texts as Bao Daizhi包待制 or Bao Longtu包龍圖. These texts were printed in the 1470s and, along with nine other texts, unearthed near Shanghai in 1967.¹ They form a textual assemblage of stories that once belonged to the same popular Judge Bao tradition. Here are the abbreviated titles of these *shuochang cihua* texts:

- ‘Youth of Judge Bao’, *Bao Daizhi chushen zhuan*包待制出身傳
- ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, *Chenzhou tiaomi ji*陳州窯米記
- ‘Emperor Renzong Acknowledges His Mother’, *Renzong renmu zhuan* 仁宗認母傳
- ‘Crooked Black Pot’, *Wai wupen zhuan*歪烏盆傳
- ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’, *Cao Guojiu gong’an zhuan*曹國舅公案傳
- ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, *Zhang Wengui zhuan*張文貴傳
- ‘White Tiger Demon’, *Baihujing zhuan*白虎精傳
- ‘Story of Liu Dusai’, *Liu Dusai zhuan*劉都賽傳

Because of the homogeneous nature of these texts, I call them the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster. If an oral-derived text catches only one ephemeral moment of a lasting and changing oral tradition, as oralists often complain, this *cihua* cluster recuperates multiple instances of the Judge Bao story-cycle and therefore presents a multi-dimensional picture of the tradition in the popular performance genre of *shuochang cihua*. As is typical with narratives that emerge from a popular oral tradition, the economy of narrative-making in these stories is heavily dependent on a number of recurrent thematic sequences. In five of the stories,² for instance, part of the narrative is based on the same sequence of ‘departing from home’, formed by a group of ‘themes’ in a fixed order:

1. Allure of leaving home
2. Family’s advice against leaving home
3. Departure from home
4. Encounter with peril

¹ For details about the discovery of the sixteen *cihua* texts along with the text of a *nanxi*南戲 [southern play] in a suburb of Shanghai, see Zhao Jingshen 1972: 19–22; McLaren 1998: 15–31. All the seventeen texts are collected in the facsimile reprint volume *Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua congkan*明成化說唱詞話叢刊, published in 1971 by the Shanghai Municipal Committee for the Preservation of Cultural Relics and the Shanghai Museum, followed by two more facsimile editions in 1979, by Shanghai Wenwu Chubanshe and Taiwan Dingwen Shuju (Yang Jialuo 1979) respectively.
More relevant to my purpose here, however, is not the web of recurrent narrative patterns within the cluster, but a larger web that reaches other works in early vernacular fiction, especially *Shuihu zhuan*. As this study will demonstrate, the Judge Bao *cihua* stories present significant similarities to *Shuihu zhuan* in terms of the narrative scenes and thematic patterns. If these shared narrative-making materials were originally from a ‘common storehouse’ in oral literature, what was the most likely realm of oral literature in which the Judge Bao tradition and the *Shuihu* tradition could have had close contact with each other? To ask that question in a slightly different way – was it possible that some of the early antecedents of *Shuihu zhuan* had a mode of existence in popular orality similar to that of the antecedents of the Judge Bao *shuochang cihua*? If the answer is positive, then what was that mode of existence?

One would perhaps think of *cihua* 詞話 as the most likely candidate for that shared mode of existence. Indeed, Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 once declared that ‘It is beyond any doubt that the precursor to *Shuihu zhuan* was a *cihua*, *Shuihu zhuan qianshen ying shi cihua wuyi* 〈水許傳〉前身應是詞話無疑 (*Sun Kaidi 1965: 124). But that hypothesis will not carry us far. Sun of course proposed that hypothesis before the 1967 discovery in Shanghai, and what he referred to as *cihua*, as made clear in his article *Cihua kao* 詞話考 [Studies on *cihua*], was very different from what we see in the *shuochang cihua* texts. Even if *Shuihu zhuan* had a former existence in *cihua*, it remains unknown to us, until textual exemplars are found, whether that *Shuihu cihua* was affiliated with the same realm of oral literature as the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster. Nor do we have any reason to believe that the evolution of *Shuihu zhuan* was monolinear. The novel was, at least in part, the final product of a long process of conglomeration of materials from multiple sources in popular culture. Even if the historical existence of any *Shuihu cihua* becomes one day certified, it does not disprove the novel’s antecedents from other sectors of oral fiction.

In this study, I look into the possibility that the *Shuihu* story-cycle had a close contact with the Judge Bao tradition before the latter’s existence in *shuochang cihua*. I propose that some of the earliest Judge Bao stories and their *Shuihu* counterparts could have coexisted within the realm of the early oral story type of *gong’an* 公案 [court case] as described in such sources as Naide Weng’s 耐得翁 (pseud.) *Ducheng jisheng* 都城紀勝 [Recording the Splendors of the Capital] (1235) and Luo Ye’s 鄧漵 *Zuiweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄 [Excerpts from

3 Sun seems to consider *cihua* as a general term for popular storytelling during the Yuan and the early Ming. He proposes that *cihua* should be taken as a Yuan equivalent of the term *shuohua* 說話 that had been used during the Song. Toward the end of the article, he discusses possible formats [*tizhi* 體製] of *cihua*, where he mentions virtually all prosimetric forms of Chinese storytelling (*Sun Kaidi 1965: 97–108). Since the discovery of the *shuochang cihua* texts, Sun’s speculation on *cihua* has lost ground. Li Shiren 李時人, for instance, has called Sun’s theory into question (*Li Shiren 1986: 72–78).
the Conversations of the Old Drunkard] (thirteenth century), which may explain some of the narrative affinities between Shuihu zhuan and the Judge Bao cihua cluster. In what follows, I first examine the parallels in narrative-making ingredients between the novel and the cihua. After that, I situate both of them in a context of early Chinese vernacular literature. In particular, possible affiliation with the gong’an story type will be explored through two separate but related measures: (1) textual features as remnants from an earlier stage of each tradition are examined for the purpose of determining whether the evolution of the tradition can be traced back to a point where it could possibly interact with gong’an as a storytelling genre; (2) narrative affinities (especially in Shuihu
zhuan) to the extant early gong’an stories are evaluated to see whether the conjectured historical kinship with the gong’an story type can be substantiated. The purpose of the study is not to prove anything conclusively. By reading both Shuihu zhuan and the Judge Bao cihua as traditions rather than texts only, this study is intended to shed some light on the possibility that some of the narrative conventions shared between them may have indeed ‘belonged initially to oral, not written, literature’.

SHUIHU ZHUAN AND THE JUDGE BAO CIHUA CLUSTER

To be sure, Shuihu zhuan may not seem immediately commensurate with the Judge Bao cihua cluster, the former being a full-length narrative in prose and the latter a group of relatively short stories in the prosimetric format, primarily in verse and only interspersed with vernacular prose. Indeed, the dearth of prose in the cihua texts precludes any meaningful verbal correspondences to Shuihu zhuan. On the level of story making, however, there are plentiful similarities. To begin with, most of the Judge Bao cihua start with a formulary introduction, which extols two emperors of the Song period – Taizu (r. 960–975), founder of the dynasty, and Renzong (r. 1023–1063), ruler of its halcyon days – and then goes on to sing praise of two officials, Bao Zheng and Di Qing (or Yang Wenguang 杨文广) as embodying respectively exemplary civil and military services. The same line is followed in the yinshou 引首 [preamble] of Shuihu zhuan, where those two emperors are said to be gods descended from Heaven and Bao Zheng and Di Qing, respectively, incarnations of the ‘Civil Affairs Star’, Wenquxing 文曲星, and ‘Military Affairs Star’, Wuquxing 武曲星. This parallel is significant, especially since Shuihu zhuan is, of course, neither about Bao Zheng nor about Di Qing. While the yinshou is supposed to be the introduction to the entire novel, it seems most pertinent to the opening chapter, which is the only part of the novel that is set in Renzong’s reign. Yet even the opening chapter does not seem to be well attuned to the yinshou. While Bao Zheng is said to be the official that tries to save people from the rampant plague in the yinshou, he is nowhere to be seen in chapter 1, in which Renzong

4 The only exception is the text of ‘White Tiger Demon’, in which the narrative is completely in verse.
5 The chapter division of Shuihu zhuan in this study is based on the 100-chapter ‘full recension’, fanben 繁本, version of the novel represented by the Rongyutang 容与堂 edition. In Jin Shengtan’s 金聖嘆 (1608–1661) truncated 70-chapter edition, the yinshou and the opening chapter from the 100-chapter version become merged to form a new introduction called a ‘wedge’, xiezi 楔子. By doing so, Jin created a self-contained unit in the novel that tells the story of the plague during Renzong’s reign, and set it apart from the main body of the novel, which is set in the later Xuanhe 宣和 period (1119–1125). As a result of this reorganization, chapters 1–70 in the Jin edition correspond respectively to chapters 2–71 in the Rongyutang edition.
discusses the disaster in the capital with his other top counsellors: Zhao Zhe 趙哲, Wen Yanbo 文彥博 and Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹. To explain this apparently misplaced yinshou, one may have to consider it as derived from what was once a storytelling convention to start a story set in Renzong’s reign. There could have been a story about the plague – which later became incorporated into the Shuihu cycle – that faithfully followed that convention, just as did those Judge Bao stories that later assumed the form of shuochang cihua.

Manifest in the Judge Bao cihua is a strong interest in estates of country squires. The sequence of departing from home starts with a formulary description of a ‘wealthy and influential’, haofu 豪富, household of landed gentry. In ‘Youth of Judge Bao’, Bao Zheng’s own family is depicted in a similar vein, even though that story does not feature the sequence of departing from home. Furthermore, in the cihua ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, the account of Judge Bao’s journey to Chenzhou presents a picture of a rural society with a predominant presence of manorial estates. When the judge and his companion Old Tang put up for the night in a cart outside a manor, they are attacked and hung up by vassals of the manor armed with staves, until the manorial lord, Old Squire Zhao 趙太公, intervenes and sets the travellers free (Yang Jialuo 1979: 334–336). Later in the same cihua, it is another country squire, Third Uncle Tian 田三叔, who gets the disguised judge released from jail and invites him to stay at his manor (Yang Jialuo 1979: 344–345). These events are completely absent from the Yuan zaju 雜劇 [variety drama] entitled Chenzhou tiaomi 陳州糶米 [Selling Rice in Chenzhou] that is based on the same subject matter, but they are strongly reminiscent of Shuihu zhuan, where manorial estates frequently serve as the locus of action for a great portion of the novel. The thematic pattern in which the traveller is roughed up at a manor until the intervention of a benevolent manorial lord, like Judge Bao’s experience in the cihua ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, recurs frequently in Shuihu zhuan. The heavily utilized manor scenes in both the Judge Bao cihua and Shuihu zhuan not only indicate a parallel in narrative-making economy but also suggest a possible Song inception of both popular traditions, as the centrality of manorial estates in the cihua and the novel is remarkably consistent with what historians know of Northern Song agrarian communities.6

In the narrative stretches in the cihua cluster that are based on the sequence of departing from home, the characters embark on the road for the purpose of either taking the examinations in the capital of Bianliang (‘Crooked Black Pot’, ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’, ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, and ‘White Tiger Demon’) or seeing a lantern show in town (‘Story of Liu Duosai’). The sequence paral-

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6 Using the descriptions of the numerous manorial estates in Shuihu zhuan as his point of departure, Paul Jakov Smith uncovers a military subculture in the Northern Song rural society (Smith 2006).
lels a number of Liangshan bandits’ experiences in *Shuihu zhuan*. Unlike his counterpart in the *cihua*, however, the *Shuihu* figure leaves home not in search of adventure but to avoid a disaster, as in the cases of Shi Jin (chap. 2–3), Lu Zhishen (chap. 3–5), Song Jiang (chap. 21–22, after killing his mistress Yan Poxi), and Lu Junyi (chap. 61, in compliance with a fortuneteller’s advice); or to be exiled to a remote destination, as in the cases of Lin Chong (chap. 8–10), Wu Song (chap. 27–28), Song Jiang (chap. 36, after surrendering himself to the police), and Lu Junyi (chap. 62, when framed by his unfaithful wife and her lover). In a broader sense, Liangshan Marsh 梁山泊, where the rebels eventually congregate, is the ultimate destination of each bandit hero’s trek away from home. To that extent, *Shuihu zhuan* can be considered an assembly of multiple
home-leaving stories, even though not exactly in the same narrative scheme as the sequence of departing from home in the Judge Bao *cihua*.

In both the *cihua* cluster and *Shuihu zhuan*, the road for a traveller is extremely treacherous because of the rampant robbers and brigands. In ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, Zhang, on his way to Bianliang for the examinations, is captured by bandits. He is taken to their lair, where the chieftain orders that his heart be prepared as an *hors d’oeuvre*, before the despot’s daughter sets the poor student free (YANG Jialuo 1979: 567). The theme of cannibalism takes on similar forms in *Shuihu zhuan* – in chapter 41, where the Liangshan bandits capture Song Jiang’s nemesis Huang Wenbing and eat his flesh; in chapter 27, where Wu Song narrowly escapes being chopped into filling for dumplings; and in chapter 36, where Song Jiang is almost skinned alive. One thematic pattern that appears in several Judge Bao *cihua* is the traveller taking lodging for the night. In the sequence of departing from home, the scene of taking lodging invariably heralds a drastic turn in narrative action. In *Shuihu zhuan*, staying at an inn, a manor, or a monastery for lodging or for a drink is one of the most frequently recurring scenes. Among them are Lu Zhishen’s stay at Peach Blossom Village 桃花村, where he annuls a forced marriage with his superior martial prowess (chap. 5), Wu Song’s sojourn at the tavern of Crossroads Rise 十字坡 (chap. 27), and Song Jiang’s stopover at Jieyang Ridge 揭陽嶺 (chap. 36). In chapter 37, Song Jiang, along with his two police escorts, is allowed to stay for the night at a manor, only to realize with horror that the manorial lord is none other than the father of his newly encountered foe. A similar scenario is in the Judge Bao *cihua* ‘Crooked Black Pot’, where the young scholar Yang Zongfu stays for the night at the house of an old woman who turns out to be the mother of his soon-to-be murderers (YANG Jialuo 1979: 407–10).

The episode of Lu Zhishen’s stay at Peach Blossom Village mentioned above is one of multiple narrative stretches in *Shuihu zhuan* about dissolving a forced marriage or sexual relationship. In chapter 6 and chapter 31, Lu Zhishen and Wu Song, respectively, kill a crooked priest when catching him in a dubious situation with an abducted woman. In the *cihua* ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, Judge Bao accomplishes a feat quite similar to that of Lu Zhishen at Peach Blossom Village: when the son of a county magistrate takes a village girl from her father by force, the judge reunites her with her father by sending the magistrate a warning letter (YANG Jialuo 1979: 339–40). More elaborate and amplified versions of the same pattern are to be seen in the *cihua* ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’ and ‘Story of Liu Duosa’, each containing an extended stretch based on the same sequence of the malefactor seizing a woman. Both stories in turn bear a notable resemblance to

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7 The last two scenes have been mentioned above as expressions of the theme of cannibalism.
In Search of a ‘Common Storehouse of Convention’

the episode in *Shuihu zhuan* about Gao Qiu’s foster-son coveting Lin Chong’s wife and scheming to take Lin’s life (chap. 7–8). Indeed, in both the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster and *Shuihu zhuan*, retribution for violations of the penal or moral code on sexual behavior is repeatedly emphasized. That fact alone makes both the *cihua* and the novel comparable to the *gong’an* story type, for it is quite consistent with the heavy concentration on sexual offences in many of the early *gong’an* stories delineated in *Zuiweng tanlu* and *Lüchuang xinhua* [New Stories by the Green Window] (MA Y.W. 1979: 207–209).

Affinities between the Judge Bao *cihua* and *Shuihu zhuan* are also quite noticeable in the descriptions of the city of Bianliang. In the *cihua* ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’, a young scholar and his wife arrive in Bianliang and spend the next morning touring the city. Based on historical sources such as *Dongjing menghualu* [Recording Dreams of the Prosperity in the Eastern Capital], Anne E. McLaren has found the *cihua*’s descriptions of different locations in the Northern Song capital, such as Donghuamen East Gate and Xihuamen West Gate, to be strikingly accurate (McLaren 1998: 80–81). The same can be said of *Shuihu zhuan*. In chapter 72, Song Jiang and a number of his men sneak into Bianliang in disguise, and the novel presents detailed descriptions of the topography of the city. Just as in the *cihua*, the novel mentions places such as Donghuamen. A number of place names such as Taipingqiao 太平橋 may be too common and therefore may not pertain exclusively to the Northern Song capital, but several others, such as Fengqiumen 封邱門, Tianhanqiao 天漢橋 and Fanlou 樊樓, correspond unequivocally to locations in the historical Bianliang. If both the *cihua* and the novel were texts that had crystallized from popular traditions, such accurate topographical descriptions were perhaps not based so much on writers’ knowledge of history as on the transmission of the traditions from earlier generations of storytellers.

8 In the section of *Xuanhe yishi* [Previously Unrecorded Events during the Xuanhe Period] about the courtesan Li Shishi 李師師, Donghuamen and Xihuamen are cited as two of the most notable landmarks in the Northern Song Bianliang. When Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–1125), disguised as an examination candidate, visits the courtesan, he claims to be a resident in the district ‘to the west of Donghuamen, east of Xihuamen, south of Houzaimen 後載門, and north of Wumen 午門’ (Ding Xigen 1990: 2.311). In *Xuanhe yishi*, the Li Shishi section is not integrated with the *Shuihu* section, but, just like the latter, it features a language style distinctly more vernacular than the rest of the work. That could suggest some type of connection to popular storytelling.

9 Fengqiumen was one of the city gates of the so-called ‘older capital’ [jiu jingcheng 舊京城] within Bianliang (Youlan Jushi 1985: 8). The plaza outside of the gate was a famous site for New Year celebrations (Youlan Jushi 1985: 33). Tianhanqiao was a bridge over the Bian River 汴河. It pertains to Bianliang specifically during the Xuanhe period of the Northern Song, as the bridge was burnt down in a big fire in 1126, the year right after the end of the Xuanhe reign (Tuvo Tuo 1985: 5.1380). Fanlou was one of the most popular taverns in Bianliang where, according to Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1298), the number of customers often topped one thousand (Zhou Mi 1985A: 3.141).
Urban life is presented in strikingly similar ways in the Judge Bao *cihua* and *Shuihu zhuan*. Taverns and inns appear as venues of action as consistently in the *cihua* as in the novel. Even the courtesan Lady Zhang (Zhang Hangshou 張行首) in ‘Youth of Judge Bao’ bears a notable resemblance to the famous courtesan Li Shishi 李師師 in *Shuihu zhuan*. Each woman is presented as a facilitator of the cause of the man – Bao Zheng and Yan Qing respectively – who sojourns briefly with her; and in each case the sexual nature of the relationship is foreclosed by the pledge of the man and woman to become sworn brother and sister. A special occasion in urban life is the lantern show during the Lantern Festival, which has a prominent presence in both the *cihua* and the novel. The glamour of the festivities is assiduously demonstrated, which appear to be just as alluring to the Liangshan warriors as to the suburban woman Liu Duosai. But truly heightened in both the *cihua* and *Shuihu zhuan* are the perils hidden beneath the dazzling spectacles of celebration. In the *cihua* cluster the courtesan Lady Zhang (‘Youth of Judge Bao’) and Liu Duosai (‘Story of Liu Duosai’) suffer the same misfortune of being abducted during a lantern show. In *Shuihu zhuan* Song Jiang is captured by his enemy while viewing the lantern display in the town of Qingfengzhen (chap. 33), and later in the novel Song and his gang barely manage to free themselves from the palace guards amid the lantern festivities in Bianliang (chap. 72). In both *Shuihu zhuan* and ‘Story of Liu Duosai’ the term *aoshan* 鳳山 [turtle mountain] is used in association with the lantern exhibition, although in the novel it refers to the lantern configuration while in the *cihua* it becomes part of the name of the monastery – Aoshansi 鳳山寺 – where the lantern show is held.

It is also interesting to note that some conventional names are shared between the Judge Bao *cihua* and *Shuihu zhuan*. Dong Chao 董超 and Xue Ba 薛霸, the names of two *yamen* runners in three Judge Bao *cihua*, appear repeatedly in *Shuihu zhuan* as the names of the two police escorts for Lin Chong (chap. 8–9) and later for Lu Junyi (chap. 62). Additionally, the bandits in ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’ have their lair in the Taihang Mountains 太行山 (Yang Jialuo 1979: 564), which may also have been the locus for the rebellion in an early stage of the *Shuihu* story-cycle, as indicated in Gong Shengyu’s 龔聖與 (1222–1304) *Song Jiang sanshiliu zan* 宋江三十六贊 [Encomiums to Song Jiang and the Gang of Thirty-six], *Xuanhe yishi* 宣和遺事 [Previously Unrecorded Events during the Xuanhe Period], and the Rongyutang 容與堂 edition of *Shuihu zhuan*.11

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10 The three *cihua* are ‘Youth of Judge Bao’, ‘Crooked Black Pot’, and ‘Emperor Renzong Acknowledges His Mother’. In the text of ‘Emperor Renzong’, the given name of Dong Chao appears in a homophonic substitute, written as 朝 instead of 超.

11 The name Taihang 太行, misprinted as 大行, appears in Gong Shengyu’s quatrains on three of the thirty-six Liangshan figures in his *Song Jiang sanshiliu zan* (Zhu Yixuan and Liu Yuchen 1981: 21–24). In *Xuanhe yishi*, Sun Li and his eleven comrades ‘went to the Taihang Mountains to become bandits there’
To sum up, there are indeed considerable parallels between the narrative-making materials in *Shuihu zhuan* and those in the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster, and the parallels are obviously too extensive to be attributed only to their shared Northern Song setting. As both the *cihua* and the novel were products of their respective long processes of evolution, we now look into the two traditions for a possible explanation of these narrative parallels.

**JUDGE BAO ** *CIHUA* AND **JUDGE BAO ZAJU**

Where and when could the kinship between the Judge Bao tradition and the *Shuihu* tradition have been engendered? Where in popular orality could the trajectories of these two traditions have possibly intersected with each other? To answer those questions, let us first focus on the Judge Bao tradition. Apart from the *shuochang cihua*, another performance genre that gave significant expression to the tradition was the *zaju* 雜劇 drama that flourished during the Yuan period (1279–1368). According to George A. Hayden, eleven extant Yuan *zaju* plays feature Judge Bao as a character of some significance. What was then the relationship between the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster and the Judge Bao *zaju*?

Despite the difference in genre format, there are plenty of similarities. Part of the plotline in the *zaju* *Pen’er gui* 盆兒鬼 [*A Pot Ghost*] – which is based on the same story as the *cihua* ‘Crooked Black Pot’ – bears significant resemblance to the sequence of departing from home in the *cihua* cluster. In the play, the young merchant Yang Guoyong, equivalent of the student Yuan Wenzheng in the *cihua*, has to leave home to avoid a hundred-day calamity predicted by a fortune-teller, an episode also quite similar to what happens to Lu Junyi in chapter 61 of *Shuihu zhuan*. On the road, Yang lodges at an inn, where he is murdered by a potter and his wife (Zang Jinshu 1989: 4.1389–1393). A similar

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12 George A. Hayden’s list includes: *Hudie meng* 蝴蝶夢, *Houting hua* 後庭花, *Huilan ji* 灰欄記, *Lu Zhailang* 魯齋郎, *Shengjin ge* 生金閣, *Chenzhou tiaomi* 陳州糶米, *Hetong wenzi* 合同文字, *Liu xie ji* 留鞋記, *Pen’er gui* 盆兒鬼, *Shennuer* 神奴兒, and *Ti sha qi* 替殺妻 [*Killing the Sister-in-law on the Brother’s Behalf*] (Hayden 1975: 149–50). With the exception of *Ti sha qi*, which has a Yuan version, all these plays are available only in their late-Ming versions, collected in Zang Maoxun’s *Yuanqu xuan* [Selected Works in Yuan Drama]. No one should take it for granted that the language in the plays, especially in the prose *binbai* [lines to be spoken], had remained unchanged from the plays’ original Yuan versions, but I am assuming here that the plays’ basic plotlines were much less susceptible to changes.
sequence of action is followed in the early portion of another Judge Bao play, *Shengjin ge* 生金閣 [The Magic Music Box], where a student and his wife, on their way to the examinations, meet a dandy [*yanei* 衙內] at a tavern. The student presents his magic music box to the villainous *yanei*, who invites the couple to his residence, where he kills the student and forces the latter’s wife to become his concubine (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 4.1717–1722). The action of inviting disaster by presenting a magic treasure to a stranger is akin to what happens in the *cihua* ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, where Zhang shows off his magic treasures to an innkeeper, who afterward murders Zhang for the treasures (YANG Jialuo 1979: 583–586). Furthermore, what the *yanei* does to the student and his wife is strongly reminiscent of the sequence of the malefactor seizing a woman in the Judge Bao *cihua*, which constitutes a large portion of the narrative in both ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’ and ‘Story of Liu Duosai’. Also in parallel to that narrative sequence is part of the plotline in the Judge Bao *zaju* *Lu Zhailang* 鲁齋郎, where the titular villain tears apart two families and forces the women to become his concubines (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 2.842–849).

In a number of Judge Bao *cihua*, the judge sends his detectives on a seemingly impossible mission. In both ‘Crooked Black Pot’ and ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’, the judge orders them to ‘subpoena the swirling wind’ [*gou xuanfeng* 勾旋風] (YANG Jialuo 1979: 417–418, 482–484), and in ‘White Tiger Demon’ he wants them to catch the demon and bring it to court (YANG Jialuo 1979: 645). A similar action pattern is seen in the *zaju* *Shengjin ge*, where Judge Bao orders one of his retainers to subpoena to court [*gou* 勾] a headless ghost (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 4.1729–1731). In three Judge Bao *cihua* – ‘Youth of Judge Bao’, ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, and ‘Emperor Renzong Acknowledges His Mother’ – the judge travels incognito, which unfailingly lulls the wrongdoers into dropping their guard. In the *zaju* *Chenzhou tiaomi* 陳州糶米 [Selling Rice in Chenzhou], which is based on the same subject-matter as the *cihua* of the same title, Judge Bao enters the city of Chenzhou disguised as an old peasant, leading a donkey for a prostitute who is visiting two villainous officials, the son and son-in-law of a venal courtier. The judge is kept in detention by the two scoundrels, until one of his retainers arrives (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 1.47–50). However, Judge Bao’s repeated gambits for fooling different local bullies with his disguise, which we see in the *cihua* ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’, are all absent from the play. The result is a more coherent and less rambling plotline in the drama.

Such shared thematic patterns leave little doubt that both the Judge Bao *cihua* and Judge Bao *zaju* were rooted in the same popular tradition. What we face is then the question of priority: should the Judge Bao *zaju* be considered a precursor to the Judge Bao *cihua*? It may seem that a positive answer can be taken for granted, since the *cihua* texts were printed in the middle of the
Ming, considerably later than the heyday of zaju. But the problem may not be as simple as that. Despite all the parallels between the cihua and zaju, there are also significant differences in thematic patterns. For instance, one of the most salient narrative sequences in the cihua, the sequence of the judge feigning illness, which is apparently most dramatic in nature, has no parallel in the plotline of any of the zaju. Indeed the judge in the plays simply does not have to feign illness to trick his enemy, because, unlike in the cihua, none of the malefactors in the drama is a royal relative or an official evidently of a higher rank than the judge himself. The most powerful villain in any Judge Bao zaju is perhaps Lu Zhailang 魯齋郎, who apparently has some sort of clout with the emperor. But even the case of Lu Zhailang requires only a ploy from Judge Bao much more frivolous and convenient than feigning illness: he writes a memorial to the emperor about the heinous crimes of a certain Yu Qiji 魚齊即, acquires the imperial authorization for the criminal’s execution, and then adds a few strokes to the name of the criminal in the warrant to change it to Lu Zhailang 魯齋郎 (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 2.853).

The inconsistency concerning Judge Bao’s birthplace may be particularly revealing about the relationship between the cihua and the zaju. In the cihua ‘Youth of Judge Bao’, Bao Zheng’s family is presented in a clearly conventional manner, consistent with the descriptions of the other families of landed gentry in the cihua cluster. Bao Zheng is said to be from ‘Little Bao Village by the Phoenix Bridge, eighteen li from the city of Luzhou’ [lile Luzhou shiba li, Fenghuangqiao pan Xiao Baocun 禦了盧州十八 里, 鳳凰橋畔小包村] (YANG Jialuo 1979: 292). In the zaju, however, Judge Bao introduces himself in a soliloquy when taking his debut on stage, and the account about his family origins, while being one of the few things consistent in most of the Judge Bao zaju plays, is markedly different from that in the cihua. Here he announces that he is ‘from the Old Fellow Village, Broad Vista District, Golden Cup County, Luzhou Prefecture’, Luzhou Jindoujun Siwangxiang Lao’ercun 盧州金斗郡四望鄉老兒村.13

Yet the most fundamental difference between the cihua and the zaju lies in the relations among the individual works within each group. As my term ‘cluster’ is intended to suggest, the Judge Bao cihua stories are a remarkably cohesive group, sharing with each other numerous scenes and thematic patterns. Much of the economy of story-making in the entire cihua cluster is based on a number of largely stereotypical sequences, each assuming multiple morphological forms in different stories.14 The dramatic plotlines of the Judge Bao zaju plays, in

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13 See, for example, Lu Zhailang (ZANG Jinshu 1989: 2.853).
14 Major narrative sequences in the cihua cluster include: the sequence of departing from home, the sequence of the malefactor seizing a woman, the sequence of the judge travelling incognito, the sequence of the detective going on a mission, and the sequence of the judge feigning illness.
contrast, are considerably more divergent among themselves. Only two extant zaju plays, Chenzhou tiaomi and Pen'er gui, are based respectively on the same subject-matter as the cihua stories ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’ and ‘Crooked Black Pot’, but even these two cihua have more in common with others in the cluster than with their zaju counterparts. One therefore has reason to believe that all the cihua in the cluster had been rooted in the same matrix and traversed the same course of evolution as a whole. While these two cihua texts, like the others in the cluster, were printed at a relatively late date of the 1470s, they do not seem to have been based on the zaju models. Without completely barring the possibility of mutual influence, one may consider Judge Bao cihua and Judge Bao zaju as separate and parallel lines of development following an earlier stage of the popular Judge Bao tradition. While the story-making economy in the Judge Bao cihua clearly suggests an oral and traditional mode of composition, the Judge Bao zaju, on the other hand, might have relied heavily on the playwrights’ ingenuity for novelty, resulting in much more diversified plotlines and much more refined styles.

15 Of course there could be other Judge Bao cihua stories and zaju plays that have been lost. The opening lines in ‘Emperor Renzong Acknowledges His Mother’ enumerate Judge Bao’s many exploits (Yang Jialuo 1979: 358–9), most of which are not narrated in any of the extant cihua stories. In ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’, the Elder Royal Nobleman also mentions several of the judge’s feats (Yang Jialuo 1979: 496). They form a list different from that in ‘Emperor Renzong’, and none of them corresponds to the subject-matter in any of the stories in the cluster. Indeed there could have been a much larger repertoire of Judge Bao stories in the genre of shuochang cihua than this cluster of eight extant texts. Significantly, none of the judge’s exploits mentioned in these two cihua correspond to the plotline in any of the extant Judge Bao plays, with the sole possible exception of ‘Solving the Case of Lord Lu in Zhengzhou’, Zhengzhou ceng duan Lu guanren [鄭州曾斷魯官人] (Yang Jialuo 1979: 496), which could refer to the same case as in the zaju Lu Zhailang [魯齋郎]. Non-extant Judge Bao zaju plays, on the other hand, may be much fewer in number. In Laguibu xubian 錄鬼簿續編, a bibliographic source attributed to Jia Zhongming 賈仲明 (1343–?), on Yuan and early Ming drama, the title of an anonymous Judge Bao play Sanjian bao [三件寶] is listed, followed by a couplet that reads: ‘Emperor Renzong of the Song solves the case of Six-Flower Prince/Judge Bao captures three treasures with a clever ruse’, Song Renzong yu duan Liuhua Wang, Bao Daizhi zhi zhuan sanjian bao 宋仁宗御斷六花王, 包待制智赚三件寶 (Jia Zhongming 1959–1960: 2.296). The title of the play, Sanjian bao, may remind one of part of the plot in the cihua ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, where Zhang loses both his life and three magic treasures to the treacherous innkeeper Yang. Apart from that, however, what the couplet suggests is very different from the content of the cihua. At any rate, based on the available information, it seems safe to say that the repertoire of the Judge Bao cihua may have had only a marginal overlap with that of the Judge Bao drama.

16 At the end of the text of ‘Crooked Black Pot’ the date of the print is indicated as the eighth year of the Chenghua period, or 1472. As all eight Judge Bao cihua texts appear largely consistent in format, it is reasonable to assume that they were printed together at the same time. The other cihua texts that were unearthed along with the Judge Bao cihua cluster are dated 1471 as the earliest and 1478 as the latest.


18 The Shuihu zaju 水滸雜劇 and Sanguo zaju 三國雜劇 may have been in similar relationships to the ongoing Shuihu and Sanguo popular traditions. They tended to deviate from the established story-cycles, shunning materials that might have become too familiar to the audience and counterbalancing tradition with novelty. For a brief discussion of this topic, see Ge Liangyan 2001: 42–43.
THE JUDGE BAO CIHUA AND THE GONG’AN STORY TYPE

The fact that the Judge Bao cihua texts appear in a mid-Ming print, after the heyday of the zaju, can be somewhat misleading. It tends to obscure another fact that most of the extant texts of the Judge Bao zaju as we have them today, despite the names of their Yuan authors, actually were from a seventeenth-century print, approximately one and half centuries later than the cihua texts. Once again, this situation reminds us of the tricky and elusive nature of dating in China’s early vernacular literature. In the case of the Judge Bao cihua, we cannot completely preclude the possibility of earlier but non-extant prints. Even if no such prints can be certified, the known date of the print as we have it, the 1470s, is not the only date that matters. As in the case of so many other works in early Chinese vernacular fiction that were associated with an oral genre, the date of publication usually was considerably later than the date of the manuscript form of the text, which in turn could be preceded by a long period of oral transmission of the narrative. If the Judge Bao cihua are no exception, they could likewise have traversed a long course of evolution before appearing in print.

Now the question becomes: Did the Judge Bao cihua have a former existence in the oral storytelling tradition of the gong’an type, as proposed at the beginning of this article? Among the seventy-nine clipped and sketchy stories in the main body of Zuiweng tanlu, sixteen, according to Y. W. Ma, can be considered as gong’an stories. While sixteen happens to be also the total number of the gong’an titles listed in the opening chapter, under the headline Xiaoshuo kaipi 小說開闢 [Origins of the xiaoshuo], of Zuiweng tanlu, none of these stories actually corresponds to any of those titles. Based on the storylines of these sixteen exemplars, Y. W. Ma offers a definition of a gong’an story as ‘a tale of the violation of the law or of the accepted code of behavior and morality, and the ensuing disposition of the case through a legal channel’ (MA Y.W. 1979: 207). Measured by that definition, the Judge Bao cihua are beyond any doubt gong’an stories. That identification is confirmed by the fact that the full titles of some of the Judge Bao shuochang cihua texts actually feature the term gong’an zhuan 公案傳 [gong’an story] in them. Indeed, Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 classifies all but

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19 Zang Maoxun’s anthology of Yuanqu xuan was published 1615–1616.
20 Zhao Jingshen suggests that the cihua texts of Hua Guan Suo 花關索 that were excavated along with the Judge Bao cihua could be a reprint of a Yuan prototype (ZHAO Jingshen 1972: 20).
21 See MA Y. W. 1979: 204–5. That these two sizable groups do not share one single story in common can perhaps be taken as a sign of the enormity of the gong’an repertoire at the time, or the remarkably large number of the circulating stories that could be classified in the gong’an type.
22 The full title for the cihua text of ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’ is Xinkan shuochang Bao Longtu duan Cao Guojiu gong’an zhuan 新刊說唱包龍圖斷曹國舅公案傳 [Newly-printed and spoken-and-chanted gong’an story...
one Judge Bao shuochang cihua text, including those that do not feature the term gong'an in their titles, unequivocally as gong'an stories.23 However, when we attach the label gong'an to the Judge Bao cihua, we should remind ourselves of the ambiguity of the term, which refers on the one hand to a particular oral storytelling genre described in Zuiweng tanlu and other sources and the texts of early stories associated with it, but also on the other hand serves as a designation for later imitations of that early model of fiction, such as the stories collected in the late sixteenth-century work Bao Longtu baijia gong'an. To say that the Judge Bao cihua are gong'an stories, therefore, does not automatically mean they had historical ties to the early gong'an story type in popular oral storytelling. Yet one of the stories mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu may serve as a link between the Judge Bao tradition and the gong'an story type. San xianshen 三現身 [Three Apparitions], which is classified in the gong'an category (Luo Ye 1957: 4), may well have been a Judge Bao story, if indeed it was, as Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧 has suggested, an oral precursor to the story San xianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan 三現身包龍圖斷冤 [Judge Bao Solves the Case of Three Apparitions] collected in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 Jingshi tongyan 警世通言 [Common Words to Warn the World].24 Tan's suggestion seems to be confirmed by Patrick Hanan's classification of San xianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan as an ‘early’ story in Group B.25 Yet the story San xianshen alone, even though it was most likely a Judge Bao story, does not constitute irrefutable evidence for the Judge Bao cihua’s former existence in the gong'an type. After all, none of the extant Judge Bao cihua tells the same story as San xianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan.

23 The only Judge Bao shuochang cihua text that Zhao Jingshen does not identify as a gong'an story is ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’, which Zhao puts in the class of chuanqi-lingguai 傳奇靈怪 [stories of the outlandish and the spiritual], presumably on the grounds of the supernatural ingredients in the story (Zhao Jingshen 1974: 21–22). The different classification of that single cihua, however, is less than convincing, simply because there are many mythic and uncanny elements in some of the other Judge Bao cihua stories as well, especially 'White Tiger Demon' and 'Crooked Black Pot'.


25 In Patrick Hanan’s time scale for dating the short stories, the ‘early’ period spans from ca. 1250 to 1450, the ‘middle’ period from ca. 1400 to 1575, and the ‘late’ period from ca. 1500 to 1627. ‘Early’ stories are in turn classified into three groups, Groups A (earliest), B (middle), and C (late). Hanan classifies ‘San xianshen Bao Longtu duanyuan’ as an ‘early’ story in Group B, but ‘closest’ to Group A (Hanan 1973: 166).
In Search of a ‘Common Storehouse of Convention’ 47

Since there is no doubt that the Judge Bao *cihua* are *gong’an* stories, whether they can be associated with the early *gong’an* story type depends on whether their evolution in popular culture can be traced back to the time of the popular storytelling as described in sources such as *Zuiweng tanlu*. One can reasonably assume that the oral story typology described in *Zuiweng tanlu* corresponds to the storytelling in the late Southern Song period (1127–1279).26 Given the usual time gap between the circulation of an oral story and its textualization after literary editing, this assumption is largely consistent with Patrick Hanan’s dating of the ‘early’ stories as spanning from ca. 1250 to 1450. Indeed, the early Judge Bao stories, just like many other stories that are set in the Northern Song (960–1126), may have come into existence during the Southern Song period.27 Bao Zheng was already a legend in his own lifetime,28 but it was during the Southern Song that the stern and stringent official became a favourite figure in the imagination of popular culture. In *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類 [Sayings of Master Zhu], Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) is said to have admonished his disciples on the proper way of socializing by citing a Judge Bao anecdote from ‘a book of miscellaneous notes’, *zalu cezi* 雜錄冊子.29 At any rate, it seems certain that by the late

26 There is a scholarly consensus that *Zuiweng tanlu* can be dated roughly to the early Yuan period, which makes it very likely that what is described in the work is popular storytelling during the late Southern Song period in the capital of Hangzhou. In the opening chapter, there is a reference to *Lüchuang xinhua* 綠窗新話, a collection of sketchy short stories compiled by the pseudonymous Huangdu Fengyue Zhuren 皇都風月主人. As some of those stories are based on Northern Song sources, *Lüchuang xinhua* is probably a Southern Song work, which, according to *Zuiweng tanlu*, some storytellers were familiar with (xu huan *Lüchuang xinhua* [they needed to be familiar with New Stories by the Green Window]) (Luo Ye 1957: 3). However, in his preface, *qianyan* 前言, to a modern edition of *Lüchuang xinhua*, Zhou Lengjia 周楞伽 suggests that *lüchuang xinhua* in *Zuiweng tanlu* should be read as a phrase that has the same meaning as *fengyue jiahua* 風月佳話 [romantic stories]. Instead of referring to an earlier work with that title, that phrase in *Zuiweng tanlu* was later borrowed by Huangdu Fengyue Zhuren, who used it as the title of his book (Huangdu Fengyue Zhuren 1991: 2–3). If Zhou’s theory stands, it would make the date of *Zuiweng tanlu*, as well as the time of the popular storytelling described in it, considerably earlier. Yet Zhou’s theory has two major difficulties. First, nowhere else in traditional Chinese literature was *lüchuang xinhua* used as a set phrase referring to love stories. Secondly, in *Zuiweng tanlu*, *Lüchuang xinhua* is juxtaposed with *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志, *Xiuying ji* 瑊瑩集, and *Dongshan xiaolin* 東山笑林, all of which are book titles.

27 Patrick Hanan has noted the time gap between the setting in an early story and its composition, and he suggests that many of those stories that are set in the Northern Song were typically composed orally during the Southern Song: ‘we need not be surprised if, during most of the Southern Sung, oral fiction of the *hsiao-shuo* variety was preoccupied with the Northern Sung, the Five Dynasties, and the T’ang’ (Hanan 1973: 173).

28 Bao Zheng’s biography in *Song shi* contains this account: ‘It was said that Bao Zheng’s smile was as rare as clear water in the Yellow River. Even women and children knew his name, and called him Bao Daizhi 包待制. Popular in the capital was this saying: “Bribery gets you nowhere, for the Yama-like Old Bao is there”’, *guanjie bu dao, you Yanluo Bao lao* 關節不到，有閻羅包老 (Tuo Tuo 1985: 30.10317).

29 See Wang Yunwu 1968: 2.43. As the anecdote has it, Bao Zheng, as a student, once stayed with his friend in a monastery preparing for the examinations. Near the monastery was the residence of a man of wealth. Each time he invited the two students to visit him, they found some excuse to decline it. One day, he again invited them to dinner. Bao Zheng’s friend was about to accept the invitation when Bao said sternly: ‘He is
Southern Song there must have been a significant number of Judge Bao stories. To be sure, apart from *San xianshen*, none of the other *gong’an* titles in the opening chapter of *Zuiweng tanlu* offers sufficient information to be associated with the Judge Bao tradition, but that certainly does not mean *San xianshen* was the only circulating *gong’an* story about Judge Bao.

Indeed there is internal evidence in the Judge Bao *cihua* texts for an early inception of the stories, as some of the textual features can be considered as remnants from a Southern Song antecedent. Anne McLaren has noted that these *cihua* texts ‘transmit some stock material which may well derive from storytelling at the Song capital’, especially because the different locations in the city of Bianliang ‘are presented in considerable detail and are essentially accurate’ (McLaren 1998: 80). This conjecture about an earlier incarnation of the Judge Bao *cihua* is corroborated by some peculiar language elements in the texts. Four stories in the *cihua* cluster contain the scene of a young scholar reading an official proclamation about the metropolitan examinations, and the phrase *kai nansheng* [to open the Southern Department] appears in each occurrence of the scene.\(^{30}\) *Nansheng* 南省 was another name for *shangshusheng* 尚書省 [Ministerial Department], one of the three branches of the central government during the Tang and Song periods.\(^{31}\) It was called *nansheng* [Southern Department], simply because it was housed in the south end of the complex of government buildings.\(^{32}\) It was a typical Song practice to refer to the metropolitan examinations as *nansheng shi* 南省試 [Examination of the Southern Department], because the list of the successful candidates’ names was posted at the *shangshusheng* after the examinations.\(^{33}\) Also of interest to us is the term *guanli* 官里 [sovereign], which is frequently used to refer to Emperor Renzong in all the four *cihua* stories where the emperor appears as a character of some significance.\(^{34}\) *Guanli*, like its cognate form *guanjia* 官家, was a term typically used during the Song times to refer to an emperor of that
Both usages of *kai nansheng* and *guanli/guanjia* faded away after the Song; they never appear in any of the Judge Bao *zaju* plays, and were rarely used by Ming writers. Like the detailed descriptions of the city of Bianliang, dynasty. Both *guanli* and *guanjia*, for instance, are frequently used in the late Southern Song writer Zhou Mi’s 周密 (1232–1298) *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 [*Past Events in Hangzhou*], especially in juan 7 which, based on *Dehongong qijuzhu* 德壽宮起居注, is about Emperor Xiaoong’s 孝宗 (r. 1163–1189) life in the inner palace (Zhou Mi 1985B: 467–76). The term *guanjia* does not appear in any of the Judge Bao *cihua* texts, but it appears, even though not as frequently, in *Shuihu zhuang*, where Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–1125) is referred to as Zhao Guanjia 趙官家.

36 The phrase *kai nansheng* appears in the interpolated section in chapter 9 of *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [*Journey to the West*] about Chen Guangrui 陳光蕊 and his son Jiangliu 江流, who later becomes the scripture-seeking
the frequent incidences of these terms in the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster should be most properly considered a sedimentary deposit from an earlier stage of the enduring Judge Bao tradition. Furthermore, in the prose portions of these *cihua* texts there are stylistic features that are obviously inconsistent with each other synchronically.\(^{37}\) This stylistic medley – an array of elements from different periods in the evolution of the spoken language – can be explained in terms of the ‘alluvium effect’ of a protracted process of textualization based on the dynamic interaction between writing and orality. Everything seems to suggest that the Judge Bao *cihua* had evolved from an earlier form of existence. Since they have already been identified as *gong’an* stories, based on the nature of their storylines, that earlier form of existence would have most likely been the oral story type of the *gong’an*.

**EARLY SHUIHU STORIES AND THE GONG’AN STORY TYPE**

If the antecedents of the Judge Bao *cihua* had existed in the form of the *gong’an* story type, was it possible for some of the early *Shuihu* stories to be in close contact with their Judge Bao counterparts in that realm of oral literature?

The section of *Xiaoshuo kaipi* in the opening chapter of *Zuiweng tanlu* mentions the titles of four tales which may well have belonged to an early oral complex about the Liangshan bandits: ‘Sun Li the Stony Man’ [*Shitou Sun Li* 石頭孫立], ‘The Blue-faced Beast’ [*Qingmian shou* 青面獸], ‘Wu, the Untonsured Monk’ [*Wu Xingzhe* 武行者], and ‘The Tattooed Monk’ [*Hua Heshang* 花和尚], most likely about the *Shuihu* figures Sun Li, Yang Zhi, Wu Song and Lu Zhishen respectively. However, these four tales were classified in different story types: while *Shitou Sun Li* is listed as a *gong’an* story, *Qingmian shou* is labelled monk Xuanzhuang 玄奘. That interpolation, which was not included in the earliest known version of the novel, the Shidetang 世德堂 edition (1592), was probably written by the late Ming scholar Zhu Dingchen 朱鼎臣, and the phrase was used perhaps to help conjure up a Tang aura in the story. For discussions of the origins of the interpolation, see Yu 1975 and Dudbridge 1969. The terms *guanli* and *guanjia* are seen in Tian Rucheng’s 田汝成 (1503–?) descriptions of Southern Song emperors’ inner-palace life in his *Xihu youlan zhi yu* 西湖遊覽志餘 [Sequel to The Record of the West Lake Tour]. Those descriptions, however, are based on Southern Song sources, especially Zhou Mi’s *Wulin jushi*.

37 Typical examples include the speech-introducing verbs which appear in a variety of forms: frequent appearances of *yue* 曰 and *yan* 言, which are regularly used in Classical Chinese; occasional instances of *dao* 道, which is the staple form in premodern vernacular fiction; and a low incidence of *shuo* 說, which is to become the standard form in Modern Chinese. More idiosyncratic variations include *daoyan* 道言, *yanshuo* 言說, *gaoyan* 告言, etc. The plurality suffix in personal pronouns appears in an irregular alternation between *mei* 每 and *men* 門, e.g., *womei* 我每 and *women* 我門, *jiang* 將 and *ba* 把, which are used exclusively as prepositions in modern Mandarin, are confined to their older and interchangeable usages as verbs (to take or to bring) in the *cihua* texts. But there is also a low incidence of *qu* 取, a later equivalent of the verbs *jiang* and *ba*. 
as a podao 朴刀 [broadsword] story, and both Wu Xingzhe and Hua Heshang are categorized as ganbang 桿棒 [staff] stories.38

Yet, as anyone familiar with the characters in Shuihu zhuan would be quick to point out, the stories of Yang Zhi, Wu Song and Lu Zhishen, unless their basic plotlines were drastically different from those in their later forms in the novel, could have been easily classified as gong’an stories as well. Yang Zhi is first sentenced to exile for killing a street ruffian, and then, while serving his exile, 

38 In Zuiweng tanlu, eight different types of oral stories, including gong’an, podao and ganbang, are listed under the rubric of xiaoshuo 小說. For each type, a number of story titles are given as examples. See LUO Ye 1957: 3–4.
gets into even bigger trouble for losing General Liang Zhongshu’s birthday presents for his powerful father-in-law, Chancellor Cai Jing.\(^3^9\)

Wu Song kills his adulterous sister-in-law Pan Jinlian, and then, during his exile, perpetrates several more killings. To escape from the police, he has to masquerade as an itinerant monk. Lu Zhishen is listed as a wanted criminal for killing Butcher Zheng and has to seek refuge at a Buddhist monastery. Just like the story of Sun Li, a police chief who breaks into the jail to rescue two prisoners, each of the other three stories has an evident legal dimension. The only reason for the different classification of these stories in *Zuiweng tanlu*, it seems, was the weapons used by the main characters. Obviously the typology of *gong'an* should not have been considered mutually exclusive with either podao or ganbang, for it was perfectly possible for the protagonist in a *gong'an* story to use a podao or a ganbang as his weapon. The category of *gong'an* in *Zuiweng tanlu* may therefore seem too narrowly delimited. In contrast, Naide Weng adopted a more inclusive approach in his *Ducheng jisheng*, dated perhaps slightly earlier. He presented podao and ganbang, along with *faji biantai* 發跡變泰 [stories of the upstarts and nouveau riches], as subdivisions of *gong'an* rather than categories parallel to it.\(^4^0\)

Naide Weng did not list any titles of exemplary *gong'an* stories as Luo Ye did in *Zuiweng tanlu*; had he chosen to do so, he would have placed all four *Shuihu*...
tales mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu under the rubric of gong’an. But the bond of the Shuihu tradition to the gong’an story type may have extended well beyond those four stories. It does not take a meticulous reader to notice that at the core of each of the episodes in the embryonic Shuihu narrative in Xuanhe yishi – the Yang Zhi story, the robbery of Cai Jing’s birthday presents by Chao Gai and his cohorts, and Song Jiang’s killing of his mistress Yan Poxi – is a court case. The same can be said of several other stories in Shuihu zhuan that are neither mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu nor included in Xuanhe yishi. In those sections of the novel, the protagonist typically gets involved in legal trouble before he finally joins the rebellion in Liangshan: Lin Chong is lured into the forbidden White Tiger Hall and then sentenced to exile (chap. 7–8); Shi Xiu is wrongly accused of making sexual advances to the wife of a sworn brother but vindicates himself by brutally killing both the adulterer and adulteress (chap. 44–46); Chai Jin, a scion of the imperial house of the fallen Latter Zhou 後周, finds himself in jail after a violent real estate dispute with a local bully emboldened by his powerful connections (chap. 52); Lu Junyi, a respectable man of wealth, is sent to jail by his wife and her treacherous lover on a fabricated charge of treason (chap. 62). Like those tales mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu and the Shuihu episodes in Xuanhe yishi, each of these sections in the novel revolves around some kind of a criminal case, and could well have had a former existence within the boundaries of gong’an, or at least in proximity to it.

The date of Xuanhe yishi, probably an early Yuan work, was not far removed from the time of storytelling described in Zuiweng tanlu. That makes the link between the the Shuihu episodes in Xuanhe yishi and the gong’an story type all the more likely. But the compiler of Xuanhe yishi evidently did not attempt to assemble all Shuihu stories of his time. If the stories of Wu Song and Lu Zhishen, both mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu, were left out of Xuanhe yishi, one has reason to hypothesize that some of the stories that appear only in Shuihu zhuan also could have already been in circulation by the time of Xuanhe yishi. In corroboration of that hypothesis, as many as thirty-six Liangshan bandit heroes were mentioned in the thirteenth-century artist Gong Shengyu’s Song Jiang sanshiliu zan as well as Xuanhe yishi itself.41 Apart from the four tales mentioned in Zuiweng tanlu, some of the other Shuihu stories may also have had a pre-print history going back to a point where it was possible for them to interact with the oral story type of the gong’an.

41 Gong Shengyu celebrated each of the thirty-six Shuihu figures in a short poem, which was originally attached to a portrait of the rebel. In Xuanhe yishi, Song Jiang receives from the Ninth-Heaven Goddess, Jiutian Xuannü 九天玄女, a ‘celestial book’, tianshu 天書, which carries in it a list of ‘thirty-six captains’, sanshiliujiang 三十六將.
In a fit of rage, Song Jiang kills his mistress Yan Poxi when she threatens to report to the authorities Song’s connections to the Liangshan outlaws. After the murder the local magistrate orders Song to be arrested, but he escapes with assistance from his friends in the police. Much of the narrative in chapters 32–42 is about the aftermath of this murder case, including Song Jiang’s roving as a fugitive, his capture by the police and exile, and his eventual participation in the Liangshan rebellion.
The use of Taihang Mountains as a term for a bandit lair can serve as further evidence for that tentative dating. That term was not only used in the Judge Bao cihua and the early stage of the Shuihu story-cycle, as mentioned earlier, but also in the shuochang cihua text Hua Guan Suo chushen zhuan 花關索出身傳 [Story of Hua Guan Suo’s Youth], where Guan Suo and his sworn brothers go to become ‘outlaws in the Taihang Mountains’, Taihangshan shang caoqiangren 太行山上草強人 (YANG Jialuo 1979: 9). In Sanguo zhi pinghua 三國志平話 [Plain Tale of the Three Kingdoms], when Zhang Fei kills an official in a fit of rage, he and his two sworn brothers flee to the Taihang Mountains and stay there briefly as bandits (DING Xigen 1990: 2.768). Evidently there was a period of time when the Taihang Mountains served as ‘a storyteller’s conventional term for a bandit lair’ (McLAREN 1998: 243). We do not know exactly when that convention was formed, but we know both Song Jiang sanshilu zan and Xuanhe yishi, in which the term is used, can be roughly dated to the late thirteenth century and that Sanguo zhi pinghua was published between 1321 and 1323. Given the possible time slippage between an oral story and the textual version of that story, that conventional term in these texts may well correspond to the storytelling practice of the late Southern Song.

Based on Y. W. Ma’s definition of a gong’an story, which has been cited earlier, both the antecedents of the Judge Bao cihua and the early Shuihu stories could have fitted fairly well in the gong’an type. There is, however, a difference between the Judge Bao cihua and many of the Shuihu stories as they appear either in Xuanhe yishi or the novel. Apparently one of the major characters in a Judge Bao story is the judge himself, even though he does not always appear early in the story. To that extent, the cihua cluster is closer to the sixteen sketchy gong’an exemplars in Zuiweng tanlu, of which ‘one of the most prominent features’ is the ‘judge-centered device’ (MA Y.W. 1979: 207). In the Shuihu stories, on the other hand, there is usually a magistrate who functions as judge, but he customarily plays either a marginal or even a negative role. Consequently, justice is often not served by the ‘disposition of the case through a legal channel’, and in the end the wronged hero takes the case into his own hands and becomes the one to mete out the penalties for evil. In that sense, the Shuihu stories can be read as a mockery of the legal procedure, as the real role of the judge is actually played by the victim and justice, ironically, has to be served through unlawful means. However, the realm of the gong’an story type must have been large enough and elastic enough to allow that difference within it. Evidence is seen in Zuiweng tanlu itself. Even in its narrowly delimited category of gong’an, San xianshen [The Three Apparitions], most likely a Judge Bao story, is juxtaposed with Shibou Sun Li [Sun Li the Stony Man], a story about a jail-breaker.42

42 In Xuanhe yishi Sun Li kills Yang Zhi’s police escorts and frees Yang from his exile. He is not quite a jail-breaker as he is in Shuihu zhuan, where he breaks into prison to free the jailed Xie brothers, Xie Zhen
SHUIHU ZHUAN AND EARLY GONG’AN STORIES

Shuihu zhuan, more than any other full-length works in early vernacular fiction, has a close relationship to some of the short stories whose textual forms appear in Ming anthologies such as Hong Pian’s 洪楩 Liushijia xiaoshuo 六十家小說 [Sixty Stories] (more commonly known as Qingpingshantang huaben 清平山堂話本 [Stories from the Qingping Mountain Pavilion]) and Feng Menglong’s San yan 三言 [Three Words]. But exactly what are those stories that have the closest ties with Shuihu zhuan? If they are ‘early’ (ca. 1250–1450) gong’an stories, it will shore up our conjecture about the affiliation of the early stage of the Shuihu tradition with the gong’an story type. As is now clear, these are the short stories that feature the most extensive thematic parallels to Shuihu zhuan:

‘Demon of the Locust Woods’, Zaojiaolin dawang jiaxing 皂角林大王假形

‘Fourth Master Song’ (m), Song Sigong da’nao “Jinhun” Zhang 宋四公大鬪禁魂張 (m: main story)

‘Yang Wen, the Road-blocking Tiger’, Yang Wen ‘Lanlubu’ zhuan 楊溫攔路虎傳

‘Wan Xiuniang Takes Her Revenge’, Wan Xiuniang choubao Shantinger 萬秀娘仇報山亭兒

‘The Filial Son of the Ren Family’, Ren xiaozi liexing wei shen 任孝子烈性為神

‘The Exposure of a Bogus God’, Kan pixue danzheng Erlangshen 勘皮靴單証二郎神

Among these stories, ‘Fourth Master Song’ (m), ‘The Filial Son of the Ren Family’, and ‘The Exposure of a Bogus God’ are all gong’an stories (MA, Y. W. 1979: 209). ‘Yang Wen, the Road-blocking Tiger’ and ‘Wan Xiuniang Takes Her Revenge’, based on the typology in Zuiweng tanlu, can be classified respectively as a ganbang and a podao story, but both would belong to the gong’an type as more broadly delimited in Ducheng jisheng. ‘Demon of the Locust Woods’ does not fit well in any of the story types described in Zuiweng tanlu. A story about a criminal case in which both the perpetrator and the ‘detective’ are spirits, it may be called a cross between the story types of gong’an and lingguai 靈怪 [the

and Xie Bao. But one can say that the portrayal of Sun Li is largely consistent in both works, as he plays basically the same role as a challenger to the legal system.

43 For details of the thematic parallels between these stories and Shuihu zhuan, see HANAN 1973: 198–99; GE Liangyan 2001: 114–15.
supernatural]. Also relevant to our purpose here is the dating of these stories. Based on Patrick Hanan's findings, ‘The Filial Son of the Ren Family’ is the only story in this group that is dated to the ‘middle’ period. All the others are ‘early’ stories, with ‘Fourth Master Song’ (m), ‘Yang Wen, the Road-blocking Tiger’ and ‘Wan Xiuniang Takes Her Revenge’ all belonging to Group A and both ‘Demon of the Locust Woods’ and ‘The Exposure of a Bogus God’ to Group C.

‘Letter from a Monk’ (m), Jiantie heshang 簡帖和尚, is another story that commands our attention. As mentioned earlier, Dong Chao 董超 and Xue Ba 薛霸 are two conventional names for yamen retainers in both Shuihu zhuan and the Judge Bao cihua. In ‘Letter from a Monk’, the same names are given a little twist to become Dong Ba 董霸 and Xue Chao 薛超, still names for two yamen runners. Also in ‘Letter from a Monk’, a criminal in custody, a former bandit ringleader, is nicknamed Jingshan Dawang 靜山大王 [Overlord of the Tranquil Mountains] (Hong Pian 1991: 8–9). That same nickname is given to the bandit chieftain in the Judge Bao cihua ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’ (Yang Jialuo 1979: 568). Again, Patrick Hanan classifies ‘Letter from a Monk’ as an ‘early’ story in Group A. It obviously belongs to the gong’an type because it is one of ‘just three “real” detective stories, in the sense that the criminal’s identity is hidden from the reader until the dénouement’.44

Equally revealing are the verbal correspondences across the textual boundaries. None of the short stories feature verbal correspondences of any meaningful extent to the Judge Bao cihua, probably because the cihua are narrated primarily in verse. Shuihu zhuan, however, presents significant verbal parallels to some of the short stories. The account of Wu Song’s escape from being chopped into dumpling filling at the tavern of Crossroads Rise (chap. 27) shows verbal similarities to a portion of ‘Fourth Master Song’ (m), where the thief Zhao Zheng has a similar narrow escape at a bun shop, mantou dian 饅頭店. I have previously noted a number of instances of verbal correspondence between Shuihu zhuan and four other short stories: ‘The Exposure of a Bogus God’, ‘The Filial Son of the Ren Family’, ‘Judge Bao Solves the Case of Three Apparitions’ and ‘The Case of Fifteen Strings of Cash’, Shiwu guan xiyan cheng qiaohuo 十五貫戲言成巧禍 (m) (Ge Liangyan 2001: 115–17). Significantly, all these stories belong to the gong’an type (Ma Y. W. 1979: 209), and ‘Three Apparitions’ is of course a Judge Bao story. Both

44 Hanan 1973: 172. W. L. Idema has suggested that both the prologue and the main story in ‘Jiantie heshang’ could have been adaptations of early zaju, because each can be conceived as narrated in four scenes, corresponding to the act division in a zaju play. See Idema, Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period (Idema 1974: 64–63). Obviously the story’s bond to the gong’an story type and the influence from an early zaju do not have to be mutually exclusive.
‘Three Apparitions’ and ‘Fifteen Strings of Cash’ are ‘early’ stories, in Groups B and C respectively, while the dates for the other two stories have been mentioned above. It has become clear by now that most of the short stories that may have been in closest contact with the Shuihu cycle are those that are dated ‘early’ and can be classified as gong’an stories, as it is with them that the novel shows significant thematic and verbal affinities. We have formerly been informed that some of the short stories ‘come from the same realm of fiction that ultimately produced the Shui-hu chuan’ (HANAN 1973: 204), and it now seems fair to say that that particular realm of fiction may most likely have been the early oral story type of the gong’an.

CONCLUSION

So the Shuihu tradition and the Judge Bao tradition, in their respective early stages, could have been not only concurrent but, more importantly, coexisted within the same realm of oral fiction. The gong’an story type may have served as a paradigm for story-making in the early antecedents of the Judge Bao cihua as well as those of Shuihu zhuans. For that reason, the same ambiance of popular storytelling and the same genre conventions that had influenced the earliest Judge Bao stories could have had a similar impact on some of their Shuihu counterparts. In short, it could be their shared history in popular storytelling that was responsible for the textual affinities between Shuihu zhuans and the Judge Bao cihua.

If we consider the early storytelling genre of the gong’an – with its ambient setting in popular culture, its genre requirements, and the expectations from its audiences – as based on a more or less stereotyped model of story-making, then individual gong’an stories of the time, including those that were early manifestations of the Judge Bao and Shuihu traditions, can be seen as specific variations of that model. To be sure, those variations were different from each other, and the differences between the variations of the model in the Judge Bao tradition and those in the Shuihu tradition of course could be even greater than the differences within each tradition itself. Nevertheless, the shared model of that storytelling genre would have exerted a centripetal force. The result was identifiable affinities among all those variations, as some of the most salient features of that storytelling tradition – the manor scenes, the tavern/inn scenes, the scenes of lantern festivities, the theme of cannibalism, the stereotyped personal and place names – remained more or less recognizable.
Obviously, historical affiliation with *gong’an* does not answer many other questions about either *Shuihu zhuan* or the Judge Bao *cihua* cluster, but the idea of a ‘common storehouse of convention’ in the realm of oral literature seems most useful in demonstrating the operation of narrative-making in early Chinese vernacular fiction and the role of popular storytelling involved therein.
CHAPTER 3

Audiences and Reading Practices for Qing Dynasty Drum Ballads

Margaret B. Wan

Drum ballad texts, guci 鼓詞, form a large corpus of popular literature in the Qing dynasty. They circulated in manuscript, woodblock, and eventually lithographic editions. The volume of texts is quite considerable. Drum ballad manuscripts comprise more than half of the enormous Chewangfu 車王府 collection by length (Chou Jiang 2000: 58).1 By the Republican era, including printed drum ballads, more than 2300 known titles existed (Li Yu 2006). Despite their great numbers, drum ballad texts have garnered little scholarly attention beyond a few cataloging efforts.2 What are these texts? Who read them? What significance does their form as drum ballads have to how they were read? More specifically, what can the material texts of these drum ballads tell us about their audiences? How much do these Qing drum ballad texts rely on knowledge of the conventions of the living oral performance tradition? Have they become purely ‘desktop’ entertainment, reminiscent of European verse novels?

In order to answer these questions, we must understand more about the audiences and reading practices of Qing drum ballad texts. In this chapter, I will consider six drum ballad texts: two versions of Lü mudan 綠牡丹 [Green Peony], three of Shi gong’an 施公案 [Cases of Judge Shi], and one of Liu gong’an 劉公案 [Cases of Judge Liu]; see the Appendix to this chapter for information on editions.

The stories on which the ballad texts were based are little studied, but were hugely popular in their day. All three of these stories probably formed around

1 The Chewangfu collection, held in the Capital Library in Beijing, consists of over 1600 titles and around 5000 manuscript volumes, ce 册, primarily local opera scripts, drum ballads, zidishu [scions’s tales] and miscellaneous songs. Most of the collection was bought from a street stand in 1925; some of the drum ballads were acquired a few years later. The collection is believed to have belonged to a Mongolian prince who lived in Beijing. See also the limited edition photo-reprint series, Qing Menggu Chewangfu cang quben 清蒙古車王府藏曲本 1991.
2 Besides Li Yu’s index, see Zhao Jingshen’s pioneering Guci xuan (1959), and the descriptions in two articles by Hu Hongbo 2001 and 2003.
the turn of the nineteenth century. Green Peony was published in the form of a novel in 1800, but since the novel was adapted from a drum ballad, the ballad must have been the earlier form of the story. References within the *Liu Gong’an* drum ballad suggest that it took shape between 1797 and 1804. *Liu Gong’an* refers to *SHI GONG’AN* as a story being told in the marketplace, so at least in storytelling *SHI GONG’AN* must have preceded *Liu Gong’an*. The novel *SHI gong’an* carries a 1798 preface, but the earliest known edition was published in 1825. The three drum ballad stories on Cases of Judge Shi that are under study here were all printed in undated woodblock editions: (1) *Shi an qi wen* 施案奇聞 [Strange Hearsay about Shi’s Cases] in the Moscow Library, (2) *Hongqigou* 紅旗溝 [Red Flag Ravine], and (3) *Luomahu* 落馬湖 [Luoma Lake] both from the Academica Sinica collection.

For the next century, these stories were extremely popular. The novel *Lü mudan quan zhuan* 綠牡丹全傳 [The Complete Tale of Green Peony] was reprinted more than two dozen times in the Qing, putting it on a par with *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 in the number of editions, while in the Qing and Republican eras a dozen editions of drum ballads on Green Peony were published, as well as others being rented out and sold in manuscript versions. Cases of Judge Shi was nearly ubiquitous; it was printed fifteen times as a novel and six times as a drum ballad, as well as circulating in at least one huge manuscript series. (Li Yu 2006: 340–342) Shorter drum ballads on parts of the story of Judge Shi also circulated separately and are not included in this count. For instance, *Hongqigou*, another title under which...

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3 The priority of the drum ballad is established in Wan 2004.
4 This range of dates is suggested, since the text refers to Liu Kang as being alive, and it refers to Gaozong as being on the throne. See *Liu Gong’an* in Yan Qi 1990: 6. This is also noted in the preface to this edition, ibid. 1.
5 *Liu Gong’an* also contains a specific reference to Cases of Judge Shi on pp. 215–16; an audience objection suggests the storyteller lifted the description of martial arts from those associated with Huang Tianba, and the storyteller defends himself. *Liu Gong’an* provides realistic description on performing arts, including *SHI GONG’AN* (Chou Jiang 2000: 59).
6 The earliest dated edition of *Shi gong’an* listed in Otsuka is from 1820. However, that date proves to be a copying error for 1830. Thus apparently the earliest extant dated edition is from 1825, although the preface suggests an edition was printed in 1798 (Han Cao 1993: 98–99). Cf the entry for *Shi an qi wen* in Otsuka 1987: 169–71.
7 The collection of popular literature in the Fu Ssu-nien Library 傅斯年圖書館的俗文學資料 of the Institute of History and Philology of the Academica Sinica, Taipei 台北中央研究院歷史語言研究所 is the largest of its kind at over ten thousand volumes, 冊. It was collected primarily during the early years of the Republic (1917–1930) and brought to Taiwan with the Nationalists. The texts range from the eighteenth century to the 1940s. They are also available through microfilm at Harvard University, Cornell University, and the University of Chicago. For more about the collection’s history, contents and availability, see Vibeke Børdahl 1999. Many of the texts have been reprinted with short introductory notes in the series edited by Wang Fansen 2004. The Moscow Library also owns a corpus of drum ballads that were collected prior to 1917. For a sense of relevant holdings in Russia, see RiffTin 1993.
8 Cf the table of ‘Frequently Printed Novels of the Ming and Qing’ in Hegel 1998: 65. For drum ballad editions of Green Peony see Li Yu 2006: 139, 240–41.
the story of Judge Shi circulated in drum ballad, was printed twelve times in the Qing and Republican eras (Li Yu 2006: 134–135). In addition, in the late Qing the novel *Xiuxiang Shi gong’an zhuan* [Illustrated Tale of Cases of Judge Shi] inspired nine sequels and provided material for the stage. (See Figure 3.1.) The drum ballad *Liu Gong’an* was printed a dozen times in the Qing and Republican periods, and inspired one sequel. During the late Qing and early Republic, *SHI GONG’AN* and *LÜ MUDAN* were also performed in oral storytelling genres, such as Yangzhou storytelling, *Yangzhou pinghua* (cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 113).

Although the popular nature of these *chantefables* and novels has often led scholars to dismiss them as being commercial and of little literary value, from another perspective their popularity suggests they merit a closer look. The multitude of versions of these stories in oral performance, drum ballad texts, drama and even popular prints suggest a significant linkage between these written texts and oral culture. The specific nature of this relationship in each case is my focus below.

9 In addition, another seven drum ballad titles feature Huang Tianba (Li Yu 2006: 157–58).
10 At least two other late Qing drum ballads also treat part of the story of Judge Liu (Hu Hongbo 2003: 225).
11 Jane Tompkins voices a similar thought regarding American sentimental novels (TOMPKINS 1985: 124).
‘BESTSELLERS’ AND THE LOCAL

In *Commerce in Culture*, Cynthia Brokaw (2007) argues that commercial printing in the Qing allowed book culture to spread into even the hinterlands and across all social and educational strata. She proceeds to differentiate between a ‘select’ strata of specialized texts aimed at the small segment of highly educated men throughout the empire; a ‘core’ of ‘bestselling’ reading material which extended socially across all literate levels and geographically across the Chinese empire; and texts largely of ‘local’ interest. Her model considers factors such as print quality, geographic distribution, and how accessible the language of the imprints was. Brokaw’s model is helpful to determine where these novels and drum ballads fall on the spectrum in late imperial China and who the readers of these narratives would be in terms of education, social status and geography. By considering the production and distribution of texts as material objects, Brokaw’s model provides a realistic way to hypothesize who the readership for particular texts might have been. In this scheme, most novels would be ‘bestsellers’ appealing to a national readership, while cheap ballads printed in dialect epitomize the ‘local’ (Brokaw 2007: 8, 557–558).

My research so far tends to confirm this model. Like most successful novels published in the Qing dynasty, *Lü mudan quan zhuan* 綠牡丹全傳 [The Complete Tale of Green Peony] and *Xiuxiang Shi gong’an zhuan* 繡像施公案傳 [Illustrated Tale of Cases of Judge Shi] spread from their local origins to be published for a national readership. While the location of the first printing of *Lü mudan quan zhuan* is as yet unknown, the novel was printed in Xiamen (1829), Beijing (1831) and Nanjing (1831) within a few years of each other, and eventually was reprinted in Chengdu (1858), Shanghai (1892) and rural Sibao, Fujian.12 The novel *Xiuxiang Shi gong’an zhuan* was printed in Xiamen (1830), Jinchang (金阊, 1829), Beijing (Jingdu, 1839), Yantai (1899) and Chengdu (n.d.).13 The constant reprinting of these novels in commercial editions across the country argues for a wide national readership. The ‘bestsellers’ in general crossed social boundaries and were read by all literate segments of society throughout the Chinese empire. Green Peony and Cases of Judge Shi were known to ‘elites;’ they are both mentioned in *Ernü yingxiong zhuan* 兒女英雄傳 [Moral heroes and heroines], whose author was from a prominent Manchu family and served as an official (Wen Kang reprint [1990]: 4:1981). *Lü mudan quan zhuan* was even appreciated by nobility. The 1831 preface for the novel

Lü mudan quan zhuan is signed Ailian jushi, a Manchu nobleman, and one of the most famous authors of the Manchu chantefable form ‘scion’s tales’, zidi shu. Thus the readership for these novels ran the gamut of Qing society; they really were national bestsellers.

But what of the other, less studied category of ‘local’ texts? What can we know about their geographic reach, or the social composition of their intended or actual readerships? Compared with the novels, the drum ballads seem to target a more local audience. For example, the drum ballad Liu Gong'an in the Chewangfu collection pinpoints both the teller and the presumed audience. The narrator’s explanation refers at one point to ‘our Baoding county’, zamei zhe Baodingfu, suggesting that the primary audience for this drum ballad may have been from this town about fifty miles north of Beijing. It also frequently compares or contrasts the customs and administration in Jiangnan, where much of the ballad is set, with Beijing as the familiar norm. The Liu Gong’an drum ballad assumes that some of the audience has travelled to the area around Nanjing when it appeals to them regarding the veracity of the details invoked in the tale.

Two very different manuscript versions of drum ballads on Green Peony also give us specific locales and an idea of their reading audiences—in this case the two poles of Beijing society. One drum ballad version, Chaoben Lü mudan 抄本綠牡丹 [Manuscript Green Peony], survives in the Palace Museum in Beijing, in the collection of the Nan Fu 南府 or Shengping Shu 升平署, the office responsible for dramatic entertainment for the Qing palace from the Kangxi period on (Figure 3.2). Thus, as Brokaw is quick to note, ‘local’ does not necessarily mean non-elite; songbooks could be appreciated by local elite. Indeed, our Manchu nobleman Yi Geng admired the versions of both Green

14 Yi Geng, also known as He Lü, was an imperial grandson and attained a first-rank title through his father’s hereditary privilege, but this title was revoked when his father was stripped of office. As an adult, Yi Geng served as a third-rank official, but left office after about five years and never returned to officialdom. The date of the preface to Lü mudan quan zhuan corresponds to Yi Geng’s first year in office, so at the time he would unquestionably be counted among the legally privileged educated elite. However, since it seems he had not yet begun writing chantefables, he probably would not be famous enough to warrant forging his name on the preface. (Kang Baocheng 1999)

15 Liu Gong’an, 1.4.1. The use of dialect in this drum ballad apparently corroborates this locale. For the plural suffix, Liu Gong’an often uses mei instead of men, which reflects the local pronunciation. Yan Qi 1992: 1. References to the main narrative of Liu Gong’an hereafter will give the volume number, chapter number and page number in the 1992 reprint edition edited by Yan Qi.

16 It also speaks familiarly of Beijing, the capital: ‘Audience, if you go to other places, little counties and villages are different from this capital (cidi jingdu 此地京都)’ (Liu Gong’an, 14.1.21). Throughout the ballad, the narrator frequently uses Beijing as the norm to explain differences in administration in Jiangnan, where much of the tale is set. (Liu Gong’an, 8.2.123–24, 18.1.274)

17 Brokaw 2007: 556–59. On the different ways a text might be read, see Brokaw 2005.
Figures 3.2a and 3.2b: Two pages from Chaoben Lü mudan drum ballad, from the Palace files. The top page shows the volume title and the title couplet for chapter seven. The bottom page shows verse passages in five-syllable and ten-syllable lines. Reprinted as Guci huitu Qin Ying Zheng Xi. Guci chaoben Lü mudan, in Gugong zhenben congkan vol. 712 (Haikou: Hainan chu ban she, 2001).
Peony and Cases of Judge Shi that were sold by the Beijing manuscript vendor Baiben Zhang 百本張.18

Still in Beijing, but at the humbler end of the social spectrum, another drum ballad version of Green Peony, *Lü mudan wushiyi* 綠牡丹五十一 [Green Peony Fifty-one], was rented out at a corner shop, Xing Long Zhai 興隆齋, which also sold steamed buns. The audience for that version appears to have included women.19 Three different stamps on the cover of the Xing Long Zhai manuscript explicitly warn both men and women not to damage, lose or rent out the book to others (Figure 3.3). The most detailed stamp reads:

Our studio rents manuscript *gong’an*. It is clearly stated they are to be exchanged once a day. If they are not exchanged after two weeks, the deposit will be forfeited, and if not exchanged after a month, you will be fined for each additional day. Those who rent and use the books to placate their children, tearing off the covers, tearing out the bindings, tearing the paper to use, writing or doodling in them or irresponsibly changing the words, the men are bandits and the women harlots, the children of prostitutes – gentlemen, don’t blame us.

It is hard to know if women were readers of many of these drum ballad texts. In *Liu Gong’an*, Judge Liu is surprised on two different occasions when a woman is able to write. This suggests that women’s literacy, or at least the ability to write, was not the norm to the audience of *Liu Gong’an* (*Liu Gong’an*, 2.1.21, 2.2.24). It also distinguishes levels of literacy among men. At one point it notes that a grain merchant could ‘recognize characters’, *shizi* 試字, but could not ‘really read’, *wenlishang butong* 文理不通. (*Liu Gong’an*, 15.3.237) While this drum ballad is a bit harder to place on the social spectrum, internal evidence provides some clues to its imagined audience. A recurring speech lamenting the difficulties of being a merchant might suggest that they constituted part of the audience of *Liu Gong’an* (*Liu Gong’an*, 9.3.147, 11.2.171). The overall social focus of this drum ballad is fairly plebian.20

18 In one of his *zidi shu*, Yi Geng mentions ordering copies of *Lü mudan* and *Shi gong’an* from Baiben Zhang, so as to surpass the storyteller Shi Yukun. Quoted in Guan Dedong 2000: 483. Since Baiben Zhang was primarily a purveyor of drama and *chantefable* manuscripts, this probably refers to the drum ballad versions of Green Peony and Cases of Judge Shi.
19 The one surviving volume, entitled *Lü mudan* and numbered 51, in the rare book room of the Beijing Normal University Library is an example of late Qing drum ballad treatments of this story. Stamps on the cover identify it as having been rented by Xing Long Zhai; writing in a different hand dates it to the Guangxu reign period (1875–1908). This is quite plausible; Fu Xihua dates the activities of the Xing Long Zhai rental shop to the Tongzhi-Guangxu reign periods (1862–1908). See Fu Xihua 1954: 317–31.
20 In Patrick Hanan’s discussion of the social focus and ‘Hangzhou realism’ of the vernacular short story, *huaben* 話本, he notes that they rarely portray characters of a social station above the merchant. See
The drum ballad *Shi an qi wen* gives us less direct information about its intended audience. It was published by Hongwenge 宏文閣, which one source identifies as one of thirteen publishing houses in Beijing that published Manchu books. If this is reliable, it points to Manchus as another important group of potential readers. In fact, the locations in which the other two woodblock drum ballads under consideration here were printed also suggest Manchu ties. The *Hongqigou* drum ballad woodblock edition in the Academica Sinica collection was printed in Kuancheng 寬城, Hebei, which is north of Beijing, close to Chengde. It was primarily a Manchu area, so it is interesting that in this particular ballad Judge Shi is said to be fluent in both Chinese and Manchu. *Luomahu* was printed in Shenyang, the second Manchu capital. In addition, as we have seen, Green Peony was also known to Manchu audiences, as both a novel and a drum ballad.

**READING IN PARTS**

The material texts also hold clues to how these drum ballads were circulated and read. Many Chinese songbooks in the Qing dynasty were produced in cheap, short booklets. For example, the surviving volume of the Xing Long Zhai drum ballad, *Lü mudan wushiyi*, is typical at twenty-six pages in manuscript, and in the Guangxu era a volume like it would have rented for about nine cash, *wen*, or sold for around 100 cash. The fact that the songbooks circulated in parts also resembles Western chapbooks. We know that Xing Long Zhai and other such shops in Beijing rented long works by dividing them into independent volumes intended as daily instalments, *yitian yihuan* 一天一換 [exchange once a day]. Similarly, almost every one of the volumes comprising the drum ballad *Hongqigou* runs to only twelve printed pages, and each carries an independent title page, with a separate title indicating the events of that volume and the title of the whole work in the middle. *Luomahu*
uses a similar format (Figure 3.4). This suggests the volumes may also have been sold or circulated separately.

Several clues within the text support this possibility. Two lines at the end of the first section, *bu* 部, of *Hongqigou* say, ‘If you want to know who came, ask Mr. Xu for the next section’, *Ruo wen laile nayige, xiabu qu wen Xu Xiansheng* 若問來了那一個? 下部去問徐先生 (1.1.14b). This raises the question – was Mr. Xu a storyteller, or a bookseller? An advertisement incorporated into the verse at the end of another volume of *Hongqigou* drum ballad suggests an answer. It states,
‘Having told this far, let’s stop. / To read the next section doesn’t cost much. / Fu Sheng Bookstore has newly changed their name / look and recognize it at Great Eastgate North Street’, Shuodao cichu zhuxiaba / zai kan xiabu qian buduo / Fusheng Shufang xin gaihao / kanrenle Dadongmen □ Beijie zhuyou 說到此處 / 住下罷 / 在看下部錢不多 / 福盛書房新改號 / 看任了大東門□北街住有 (2.2.12B).24

This indicates that ‘volumes’ ce 冊 and possibly even ‘sections’ bu, of Hongqigou were sold and circulated independently. It also pitches it as a work for reading, even though it keeps the simulated ‘storyteller’s manner’ of a tale being told.

The structure of the text also corroborates this idea. For example, the beginning of section five of Hongqigou spends nearly six double pages recapitulating what happened in the last section (5.1.2b to 5.1.8a). It assumes little knowledge of the story and only requires basic knowledge of the characters, for instance that Huang Tianba works for Judge Shi.

The above observations have focused on the internal structure of Hongqigou and what it can tell us about sales and reading practices. In addition, a blurb at the end of Hongqigou advertises the work to follow by title: ‘This is the fifth volume of Hongqigou; next comes Shuangbiao Huai’an cheng 雙譜淮安城 [A Pair of Guards at Huai’an City].’25 Thus this publisher conceived of Cases of Judge Shi as an overarching story or series, composed of multi-volume works that carried independent titles, and within those came volumes that could be sold independently.

While the other drum ballads are less explicit about how they were sold, several appear in a format that suggests comparable practices. The structure of Liu Gong’an (Chewangfu drum ballad) paints a similar picture. The work is divided into sections, bu, which carry titles, and within that into chapters, hui 回, which do not. The numbering of the chapters starts over with each section. Sometimes the same title is used for more than one section. All the cases in a particular section (or group of sections) end up being related. As some of the cases are settled, one still hangs unsolved to keep the reader’s interest. Since the cases are often divided across chapters, most of the time the essentials of the case are repeated in each chapter – by judge, testimony, yamen runners or whomever. If the ‘chapters’ circulated independently this would make sense, either as a refresher or to orient people who had not read the whole case.26

24 □ marks an illegible character.
25 If that is the same as Shuangbiao ji 雙譜記, there were apparently at least ten editions. See Li Yu 2006, 356–57.
26 Hu Hongbo notes that the structure of the lithographically printed Liu Gong’an drum ballad is quite loose, and suggests that it may have been pieced together from other drum ballads that circulated independently. See Hu Hongbo 2003: 225. Miao’s study of court case novels analyzes long term versus short term suspense as a function of the context or demands of storytelling. See Miao Huaiming 2005: 101–2. I would suggest that at least in the case of the drum ballad texts it could just as well be a function
The absence of chapter titles would, however, suggest that the unit of sale was probably the section; so the frequent extensive recapitulation may have more to do with reading practices, suggesting that this tale was consumed in short segments.

The Moscow *Shi an qi wen* drum ballad carries a separate title for each section, *bu*. Within it, each volume, *juan* 卷, also has a title, but the volume divisions do not correspond to story divisions. Instead, each volume runs to
precisely nine double pages, and the story often ‘spills over’ onto the first page of the next volume. To me this suggests the unit of sale for this text was the section, bu. This ‘spilling over’ and ‘misplacement’ of end of volume markers may corroborate the evidence presented below that this is a less visually oriented print.

These songbooks might be a closer parallel to Western ‘chapbooks’ than the Chinese novels to which scholars have applied that label. The physical format and circulation of the Chinese songbooks resembles the cheapest literature in Europe. The fact that the drum ballads circulated in parts also resembles Western chapbooks. Indeed, the parallels between these drum ballad manuscripts and chapbooks in Europe are striking. In regard to the structure of European chapbooks, Roger Chartier notes,

The books of the Bibliotheque bleue in France and chapbooks in England offered texts that had already been published in other forms and for other readers, but by giving them a new form, they put such texts within the economic and intellectual reach of new readers, who did not read in the same ways as learned readers. The new public’s reading style called for brief, self-contained sequences clearly separated from one another . . . It required repetition more than invention: each new text was a variation on already known themes and motifs. (Cavallo and Chartier 1999: 279, bolding MBW)

The difference here is that in the Chinese case, the drum ballads on Green Peony, Cases of Judge Liu and Cases of Judge Shi are new works in a thematic genre that had a conspicuous renaissance at this time: the martial arts or court case adventure.27 Court case themes and short stories were already familiar to Chinese readers at this point, but not as long continuous narratives.28

It is worth noting that in contrast to novels, which generally include a preface which helps place them both in terms of intended readership and vis-à-vis other narratives, most drum ballad manuscripts and woodblock editions do not carry prefaces.29 What does this absence tell us? People must have known of the stories by some other way to know what they wanted to read.

27 Earlier court-case narratives tend to be in collections of individual tales or vernacular short stories. It is around the turn of the nineteenth century that long court-case novels took shape in China. Many of these incorporated martial heroes as the judge’s helpers, forming court-case adventure novels that beg the question of their relationship to martial arts novels. See Wan 2009A.
28 See Y. W. Ma 1979, and Liangyan Ge’s chapter in this volume.
29 When the drum ballads were printed in Shanghai, this changed. For example, the lithographic edition of Huitu Lü mudan guci quanzhuan printed by Jinzhang shuju, Shanghai, carries the same preface as the novel.
Thus far we have established that the drum ballads under consideration here were rented, sold or copied to be read. That they had a function as entertainment reading seems beyond dispute. But how far did these Qing drum ballad texts rely on knowledge of the conventions of the living oral performance tradition?

While this is an under-explored area, a quick look at the presentation of these six martial drum ballads demonstrates how the format suggests reading practices. Clues can be found in titles, the format of the verse, homophonic substitution, and the presence or absence of dialogue markers, chapter titles, and end-of-chapter formulae like ‘if you don’t know what happened, see the next chapter’. Together, these can give a sense of whether the text was organized to appeal to the eye or the ear.

For example, the six drum ballad texts under consideration differ significantly in the presence or absence of dialogue markers like ‘he said’ or ‘she thought’. If one interprets these dialogue markers as a guide to the reader, serving a function analogous to punctuation, then one would expect to find them less often in texts closely related to performance, and more often in texts that are primarily for reading.30 In other words, since such tags are unnecessary in performance, a reader familiar with the conventions of performance would not need the tags.31 I would suggest that as the drum ballads become texts for reading, however, this kind of assistance becomes increasingly necessary.

In the Liu Gong’an drum ballad, dialogue markers are often absent. They tend to be omitted in the prose when Judge Liu is giving orders or summoning people in court. The reader deduces from context which lines are whose. In verse the rhythm often determines whether or not dialogue markers are used. Although dialogue markers still pervade this text, the relative frequency with which they are omitted is significant. The reader could do without them. This

30 The analogy of dialogue markers to punctuation I make here is inspired by a study of the reading contexts of Old English verse. ‘In a study of the ways in which Old English poetry is accommodated by and assimilated within the literate frameworks of the transmission of information, the presence and distribution of points [punctuation] directly measures a need for increased visual information in the reading of verse.’ Early practice did not need punctuation because of its close relationship to performance – ‘the early paucity of pointing speaks to a tacit understanding that a reader of verse brought the necessary interpretive information to the text, aided by memory and by a deep familiarity with the formulaic conventions of Old English verse. Increasingly consistent pointing in the manuscripts of Old English verse indexes the growing textuality of the verse and the distance of the reader from vital oral tradition.’ O’BRIEN O’KEEFE 1990: 153–54.

31 Vibeke Bordahl’s work on actual storyteller’s scripts of Yangzhou storytelling supports this point of view. In the two true aides-memoire she studies, dialogue markers are absent in one. In the other they take the classical form yue 日. In performance tags marking dialogue are absent. BØRDAHL 2005: 249, 255, 265, 269. The use of such dialogue markers may be genre-specific. See the discussion of dialogue markers in a drum tale, dagu 大鼓, text in BØRDAHL 2007: 80–82.
suggests a relatively high familiarity with the conventions of drum ballad performance (see Table 3.1 below). *Shi an qi wen* is quite similar in this regard. In *Hongqi gour*, however, dialogue markers appear consistently in the prose. Still, the verse in *Hongqi gour* often omits dialogue markers. *Luomahu* rarely omits dialogue markers in prose, and only occasionally omits them in verse. In contrast, the Xing Long Zhai *Lü mudan wushiyi* and the Nan Fu *Chaoben Lü mudan* regularly employ dialogue markers. The Nan Fu *Chaoben Lü mudan* approaches the conventions of the novel; it uses tags like ‘she said’ in the prose to introduce speech and regularly indicates any change of speaker in the dialogue. This suggests it may have been primarily intended for reading. The consistent inclusion of such tags may serve to orient the reader less familiar with the tradition of drum ballads.

Table 3.2 below shows the presence or absence of end-of-chapter formulae in each of these texts. Most of the chapters in the *Liu Gong'an* drum ballad end without any storyteller’s phrases, and not on a note of suspense. The same phenomenon is found in Ming chantefable texts, and Anne McLaren explains,

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32 Only less than a third of the chapters in *Liu Gong'an* end with any kind of suspense, and they concentrate heavily on two particular cases.
Audiences and Reading Practices for Qing Dynasty Drum Ballads

‘It did not occur to the authors of the chantefable texts that natural divisions of the sung narrative, culminating in moments of suspense and storyteller questions, could be connected typographically to segments of the text’ (McLaren 1998: 112–113). This points toward an aural rather than a visual orientation. One of the rare chapters of Liu Gong’an to conclude with an end-of-chapter formula says, ‘If you want to know how Xu Wu’s case ended up, I’ll tell you tomorrow’, mingzhao jiaodai 明朝交代.33 This is definitely not the conventional tag used by most novels, but it finds a parallel in the Xing Long Zhai manuscript of Lü mudan wushiyi, which ends the volume by stating in verse, ‘Today it’s getting late / tomorrow morning/ come early and I’ll tell it clearly.’ jinri yijing tianse wan / mingri zao / zao jiang guanglin wo bi cong 明日已竟[經]天色晚 明日早 早降光臨我必從□講分明.34 What really makes this kind of end-of-chapter marker unusual is the reference to the story recommencing the next day. Novels may invoke the trope of listening, but they rarely tell their readers when.35 One is tempted to take this as evoking or imitating something from

33 Liu Gong’an, 4.4.70. There is another instance, ‘Come tomorrow and I’ll tell it’, at the end of the chapter on 14.3.221.
34 Xing Long Zhai Lü mudan wushiyi: 26.
35 It is interesting that quite a number of the end-of-chapter formulae can refer both to the situation of reading and to that of observing a performance.
oral performance, but such formulae are rarely used by actual storytellers. (See Vibeke Børdahl’s chapter in this volume.) In addition, the correlation of the formula with the end of a chapter or volume gives it a visual orientation as well. As noted above, the sections, *bu*, of *Liu Gong’an* carry titles, but the chapters, *hui*, do not; thus the visual marking of divisions in this text is rather minimal, something that also corresponds well with the lack of titles for daily performances in oral traditions such as *Yangzhou pinghua*. The section titles are quite brief, usually a place name and a section number, rather than the descriptive title couplets found in many of the printed drum ballads. The section title on the Xing Long Zhai volume is even briefer, simply *Lü mudan wushiyi*. Similarly, the layout of *Luomahu* shows few concessions to visuality. Even though it has thirteen end-of-chapter formulae, they do not correspond to the physical layout of the book, but come at various points within the chapter or ‘section’ (Figure 3.5).

*Shi an qi wen* raises similar issues; it pairs chapters and chapter headings, with no internal distinction, e.g. chapters 3 and 4 read as one chapter (Figure 3.6). This shows the beginnings of a visual orientation, but the lack of division within each dyad makes it incomplete. The Nan Fu *Chaoben Lü mudan* regularly includes end-of-chapter formulae, although it omits them in seven of its thirty-two chapters. Thus the ‘visual’ layout is also not perfect, as the inclusion of at least four end-of-chapter tags in the middle of chapters demonstrates.36

Among the six drum ballads considered here, the *Chaoben Lü mudan* is the only one with consistent chapter titles (as opposed to section titles). I suspect that the *Chaoben Lü mudan* manuscript in the palace collection is a copy of a printed text. At the beginning of each fascicle, the small title just before the text begins reads *Xiuixiang Lü mudan* [Illustrated Green Peony] (see Figure 3.2a). Since there are no illustrations, and such a title is unusual for a manuscript but conventional for printed works, it suggests a printed text may have been its source. In addition, the text is almost verbatim the same text as a lithographic edition of *Huitu Lü mudan guci quanzhuan* [Illustrated Green Peony Drum Ballad] printed in Shanghai. Finally, the *Hongqigou* drum ballad consistently uses end-of-chapter formulae, and the title couplets for each ‘section’ serve the same function as chapter titles. This shows a visual orientation.

One title of the *Hongqigou* drum ballad is ‘Newly carved Cases of Judge Shi telling and singing drum ballad’ *Xinke Shi gong’an shuochang guci* 新刻施公案說唱鼓詞. Does ‘telling and singing’, *shuochang* 說唱 in the title suggest a

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connection with performance or amateur performance? The format of this drum ballad places ‘padding’ words or extrametricals, chenzi 襯字, at various positions in the line – which may imply that it notates which words were sung that way. The same thing happens in the Moscow Shi an qi wen drum ballad and in Luomahu. If these do notate rhythm, that would show an aural orientation. In contrast, neither of the Lü mudan drum ballads double up padding words this way, so there is no indication of which syllables might be extrametrical.

Tables 3.1–3.3 summarize the data for each text. Each of the tables places at the top the text that seems most ‘aural’ based on the criteria being analyzed, in the middle those with mixed signals, and at the bottom of the table those which seem most ‘visual’.

As we can see, examining these clues suggests different reading practices or different degrees of familiarity with performance in each of the six drum ballad texts. From these tables, it immediately becomes apparent that most texts fall differently on this continuum depending on the criteria. However, some generalizations can be made. The Liu Gong’an drum ballad relies the most on knowledge of the performance tradition; it shows little visual orientation and few concessions to reading. The Moscow Shi an qi wen drum ballad comes close; its chapter headings and end-of-chapter formulae mark it as slightly more visually oriented than Liu Gong’an. The Hongqigou and Luomahu drum ballads fall in the middle, while the two manuscript drum ballads on Green Peony from Xing Long Zhai and the Nan Fu show the most tailoring for reading.

To return to the chapbook analogy, would the format of the drum ballad make it accessible to less educated readers? Probably. Most of these drum ballads make extensive use of shorthand characters, suzi 俗字, and homophonic substi-

Table 3.1: Use of Dialogue Markers in Drum Ballads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of drum ballad</th>
<th>Dialogue markers present</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liu Gong’an (Chewang Fu)</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi an qi wen (Moscow), juan 1–2a</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luomahu (Academica Sinica), 1–3</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hongqigou (Academica Sinica)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lü mudan wushiyi (Xinglong zhai)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaoben Lü mudan (Nan Fu)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a In 3% of the prose and 6% of the verse in Shi an qi wen, the characters where dialogue markers would be are missing or illegible.
tution, in which ‘simpler characters substituted for more complex homophones’. Discussing another songbook tradition, Brokaw interprets the frequent use of homophonic substitution to suggest ‘that the songbooks . . . are used more as phonetic guides to the singing of the text (the story of which is widely known) than as real representations of meaning’ (Brokaw 2007: 504). To the extent that these homophonic substitutions appear, they indicate an aural orientation.

Table 3.2: Use of End-of-Chapter Formulae in Drum Ballads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of drum ballad</th>
<th>Total chapters</th>
<th>End-of-chapter formulae</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Liu Gong'an</em> (Chewang Fu)</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Luomahu</em> (Academica Sinica)<em>a</em></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shi an qi wen</em> (Moscow)<em>b</em></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chaoben Lü mudan</em> (Nan Fu)<em>c</em></td>
<td>32</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hongqigou</em> (Academica Sinica)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Lü mudan wushiyi</em> (Xinglong zhai)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Even though *Luomahu* has thirteen end-of-chapter/section formulae, they come at various points within the physical sections of the book, never corresponding to the end. One page is missing, so 7% is unknown.

*b* *Shi an qi wen* pairs chapters and chapter headings; each pair has one end-of-chapter formula. If we count each pair as one unit, it would raise the ratio to 100%. The whole text comprises 40 volumes, but at present I only have access to part in photocopy. With one exception, each volume ends with an end-of-chapter formula.

*c* In addition, end-of-chapter formulae sometimes come in the ‘middle’ of numbered chapters in the Nan Fu *Chaoben Lü mudan* drum ballad, e.g. pp 177, 205, 299, 324.

Table 3.3: Use of Chapter and Section Titles in Drum Ballads

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of drum ballad</th>
<th>Chapter Titles</th>
<th>Section Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Lü mudan wushiyi</em> (Xinglong zhai)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Liu Gong'an</em> (Chewang Fu)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Shi an qi wen</em> (Moscow)<em>a</em></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Luomahu</em> (Academica Sinica)<em>b</em></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hongqigou</em> (Academica Sinica)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Chaoben Lü mudan</em> (Nan Fu)</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* *Shi an qi wen* pairs chapters and chapter headings.

*b* Section titles correspond to the physical section divisions, but not to the internal divisions marked by formulae.
In addition, as Anne McLaren points out, ‘As a text for chanting, the common use of homophonic alternative characters in chantefables was an aid to reading, not a hindrance’ (McLaren 1998: 52). Moreover, the verse sections could be easier to read than the prose, since ‘the formulaic repetition and persistent end-rhyme were reassuring to the less literate reader’ (McLaren 1998: 52). McLaren cites Franz Baüml to suggest that ‘formulicity in a written text ... “conditions reading” in that the sheer redundancy of the material renders a text more accessible to a reader of limited literacy and easier to fix in the memory. For a reader familiar with the performing arts, the repetitions and formulae refer continually to the formulaic configurations of the oral tradition’ (McLaren 1998: 42). Thus, for example, Liu Gong’an consistently uses similar formulae to deal with recurring events like travelling through the streets or drinking tea. How far the repetition of these formulae might evoke the style of composition in performance, we cannot really know, but in a text their predictability would make reading easier. The visual layout and predictable line length of the verse could also assist with parsing, as punctuation would. Thus even if it cannot be proven that these songbook texts were actually performed, their format may have made them more accessible to the marginally literate.

Even if the drum ballads may have been easier than a novel for the marginally literate to read, one cannot automatically assume that was their only target audience.37 The drum ballad encompasses a range of texts.

CONCLUSIONS

When we look at the spectrum of drum ballad texts, it is tempting to divide them into easy binaries: manuscript versus printed, aural versus visual, crude versus refined. However, it is not so simple. Overall the manuscripts Lü mudan wushi yì and Chaoben Lü mudan actually show the most tailoring for reading, even more so than the three printed drum ballads Hongaigou, Luomahu and Shi an qi wen. On the other hand, the Liu Gong’an manuscript seems to be deeply informed by the conventions of performance, and shows fewer concessions to reading. In addition, it is quite formulaic or repetitive in its language, and makes the most use of dialect. The material texts of these drum ballads and what we can surmise of their transmission suggests a range of reading practices, of knowledge of performance, and of audiences. While either transmission or the narrative itself localizes each text to specific places – Beijing, Baoding, Kuancheng, or Shenyang – taken together they run the gamut of society from

37 Research has shown that scion’s tales, zidi shu, appeal to an elite, well-educated audience. For the audience and aesthetic of zidi shu, see Andrea S. Goldman 2001: 71–138.
the palace to the ordinary man on the street, and include women and Manchus among their imagined audiences.

The quite specific readerships for these ballad texts constitute part of their appeal as a research topic. Tobie Meyer-Fong’s review article on book culture noted that little has been done about publishing in the North; Jiangnan tends to stand as a synecdoche for China (Meyer-Fong 2007). Studies of drum ballads could help fill the gap, especially by trying to look at what is ‘local’ about these texts. In future work I will also be interested in exploring the implications when these drum ballads from the north were reprinted in Shanghai in the late Qing and early Republic. Did the previously ‘local’ drum ballads reach new audiences, becoming part of a more commercial, national culture?

By the Qianlong period drum ballads were widely printed or copied for reading,38 and it is as texts for reading that I am analyzing them. However, the format of most drum ballads could lend itself to a different reading experience from a novel. In the 1930s, Zheng Zhenduo noted that new drum ballads (or reprints of old ones) were appearing in waves; there was a drum ballad for nearly every well-known story. As Zheng stated, ‘From this you can see how much the Northern people love to read this kind of thing. They would not necessarily hear it performed; they could just hold it up and read it aloud to themselves to satisfy their craving.’39 The verb he uses, niannian 念念, can mean ‘read aloud, mumble, or chant’. This observation suggests that in Zheng’s time reading printed drum ballads could serve as a substitute for performance. From what I have seen of Republican era drum ballads, which were often lithographic editions printed in Shanghai, they would come out the most visual by our criteria – they even carried illustrations. Yet Zheng Zhenduo’s comment suggests that they still might be read aloud or chanted, the minimal performance. It serves as a reminder of the permeability of the aural and the visual, or ‘orality’ and writing.

38 The prolific vendor of performance texts, Baiben Zhang, set up shop in Beijing during the Qianlong era, and drum ballads were a significant category of his wares. See Cui Yunhua 2005: 149–50. Scholars have paid relatively little attention to drum ballad texts. The main discussion of written drum ballads concerns whether the earliest extant drum ballad texts were literati imitations. See Hu Shiyiing 1980: 2.373; Zhao Jingshen 1959: 3; and Ni Zhongzhi 1991: 307–12.

APPENDIX

Cases of Judge Liu

*Liu Gong’an* 劉公案 [Cases of Judge Liu] (1797–1804?):


Cases of Judge Shi

*Hongqigou* 紅旗溝 [Red Flag Ravine] (n.d.):

Kuancheng, Hebei: Yuhetang 裕合堂 and Wanfutang 萬福堂. Woodblock print drum ballad in the Academica Sinica collection Zhongyang Yanjiu Yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo suo cang suqu 中央研究院歷史語言研究所所藏俗曲, microfilm reel 89.

*Luomahu* 落馬湖 [Luoma Lake] (n.d.):

Shenyang: Yonghetang 永和堂. Woodblock print drum ballad in the Academica Sinica collection Zhongyang Yanjiu Yuan lishi yuyan yanjiu suo suo cang suqu 中央研究院歷史語言研究所所藏俗曲, microfilm reel 89.

*Shi an qi wen* 施案奇聞 [Strange Hearsay about Shi’s Cases] (n.d.):

Beijing: Hongwenge 宏文閣. Woodblock print drum ballad in the collection of the Moscow Library.

*Xiuwiang Shi gong’an zhuan* 繡像施公案傳 [Illustrated Tale of Cases of Judge Shi] (1830):


Green Peony

*Chaoben Lü mudan* 抄本綠牡丹 [Manuscript Green Peony] (n.d.):

Lü mudan wushiyi 綠牡丹五十一 [Green Peony Fifty-one] (1875–1908?):
Manuscript drum ballad, Xing Long Zhai 興隆齋. A single volume, labelled 51.
In the rare book room of Beijing Normal University Library.

Huitu Lü mudan guci quanzhuan 繪圖綠牡丹鼓詞全傳 [Illustrated Green Peony Drum Ballad] (ca. 1905):
Shanghai: Jinshang tushu. In Dartmouth library and The Drama Research Academy of the Chinese Academy of Arts. Lithographic edition; largely the same as the Nan Fu drum ballad.

Lü mudan quan zhuan 綠牡丹全傳 [The Complete Tale of Green Peony] (1800):
This chapter is essentially focused on one single episode from the storyteller’s repertoire, the tale about ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, *Wu Song da hu* 武松打虎.¹ The saga of the hero Wu Song – how he killed a tiger with his bare hands, took deadly revenge on his sister-in-law and her lover, was exiled, and after a number of further adventures ended up as an outlaw in the band of Song Jiang – has fascinated Chinese audiences and readers for more than seven hundred years.

The hero is mentioned for the first time in written sources under his nickname ‘Wu the Pilgrim’ *Wu Xingzhe* 武行者 in a source book on storyteller’s repertoires from the late Song (960–1279) or early Yuan (1279–1368).² His name is classified under stories about staff-fighters, probably a sub-category of the ‘case stories’, *gong’an* 公案 (cf Chapter 2 by Liangyan Ge in the present volume). The tale about his encounter with a tiger is among the preserved titles of Yuan drama from the late thirteenth century, *zaju* 雜劇,³ ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger with a Broken Shoulder Pole’ *Zhe dan’er Wu Song da hu* 折擔兒武松打虎.

¹ During the symposium *The Interplay of Oral and Written Traditions of Chinese Fiction, Drama and Performance Literature*, Oslo, November 2007, I profited much from the discussions with the invited scholars and other participants, and my ideas about the origin and usage of ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’ in Chinese oral and vernacular literature were considerably modified. After the symposium I was happy to continue fruitful discussions by letter with Liangyan Ge, Anne McLaren and Margaret Wan. Anne McLaren kindly supplied me with a full set of photocopies of the facsimile texts for the 15 *chantefables* reproduced in *Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua congkan* (1973, 1978). About the same time Göran Malmqvist generously donated the original tapes of a Sichuan storyteller’s performance of the tale of Wu Song Fights the Tiger which he had personally recorded in 1974, a most precious addition to my collection, cf text 18 of my Appendix. I had useful information about relevant studies of the Icelandic sagas from Lars Lönnroth. I am also grateful to Minna Skafte Jensen, Ivo Spira and the readers of this book’s manuscript for inspiring and useful comments on drafts of this essay.

² Cf Luo Ye 羅燁: *Zuïweng tanlu* 醉翁談錄 [Talks of the Old Drunkard], in *Zhongguo tonggu xiaoshuo ming zhu* (1958).

³ The drama is credited to a prolific playwright from Beijing, Hong Zi Li Er 紅字李二 [Red Tattooed Li the Second] (fl. 1295), cf Idema and West 1982: 128.
虎，但剧本丢失。武松再次提到他的绰号‘行者武松’，在一本平话，平话，名为《宣和遗事》（约1300年）。

最早的版本的老虎故事可以追溯到十六世纪末，且在传奇戏剧和所谓的‘简单版’中找到了，jianben 簡本，小说《水浒传》（水滸傳）中。该故事也是小说《金瓶梅》（金瓶梅）的起点，该小说在十六世纪末出版。在整个明代和清代（1644–1911）中，该故事在小说、戏剧和口述表演等文学形式中得到了流传，shuochang 說唱，其中许多延续到了二十世纪。

关于口述文学中词汇是否意为‘故事’的调查是更大项目的一个方面，该项目研究了叙述形式——老虎的故事——在四百多年中的各种变化。这些文章之间的互文性和内部对应关系被整理在一个研究数据库中。4 主要来源是口述和书面版本的武松故事，特别强调‘老虎的故事’，在小说、戏剧和故事中。讲故事在这里可以理解为广义的，即‘说唱艺术’，shuochang yishu 說唱藝術。5 讲故事在狭义上，shuoshu 說書，具有方言的子类别，如扬州评话，Yangzhou pinghua 揚州評話，特别关注。

武松和老虎的故事之所以被选中，不仅因为这个故事在各种口头和书面形式中非常广泛，而且在研究我的扬州评话（Børdahl 1996, 2006）中。

通过提供这个著名故事从开始到现在的语言和叙事变化的详细情况，是否有可能发现更多关于口头艺术作为口语和书面语之间的相互依存性？在这个章节中，我们再次考虑了‘讲故事者的股票词汇’问题。

4 The research database on Chinese Storytelling, designed and implemented by Jens Christian Sørensen, presently contains about hundred and fifty sample texts with contents from the Wu Song saga. One third of these take their subject from the encounter between the hero and the tiger: seven samples from Ming and Qing editions of the novel Shuihu zhuan (the earliest dated 1594) and three from Jin Ping Mei (the earliest Jin Ping Mei cihua from 1617). Drama versions include one text from Ming (the earliest 1599), and nine from late Qing, Republic and People’s Republic. Performance literature includes fifteen samples from late Qing, Republic and People’s Republic. Oral performances (more than one hundred samples) are from People’s Republic, with one sample from 1961, one from 1974 and the rest from the 1980s to 2003.

is taken up again, with background mainly in the material related to the Wu Song story, but for the early period before any written version of this story exists I undertake some excursions into material that has only a tenuous relationship to this tale.

**STORYTELLING AND STOCK PHRASES**

The Chinese novel and short story, handed down in printed editions from the Ming and Qing periods, are characterized by a narrative style referred to as the ‘storytelling form’, *shuoshuti* 說書體, the ‘storyteller’s manner’, the ‘simulacrum
of the oral storyteller, ‘écriture vulgarisante’, the ‘storyteller’s rhetoric’, etc. 6
Among the so-called ‘storytellers’ stock phrases’, taoyu 套語 or guding yongyu 固定用語, there is a group of words or phrases of meta-narrative function, serving as markers of the shifting of mode, time or focus of the tale. Standard examples include: hua shuo 話說 [the story says], que shuo 卻說 [meanwhile, let’s tell], hua fen liangtou 話分兩頭 [the story divides into two lines], and several others. They are generally considered to be among the most conspicuous characteristics linking written vernacular fiction to oral storytelling. The beginning, progression, digression and conclusion of the story may all have their typical formulaic markers. Appeal to the audience on the part of the narrator may also be indicated by formulaic expressions among this kind of stock phrase.

The shifting of mode, from prose to verse or from narration to dialogue, is typically introduced by pre-verse markers or dialogue tags. The shift from prose to verse is indicated by indenting the verse portions and/or adding pre-verse formulas, such as shi yue 詩曰 [the poem says], ci yue 詞曰 [the song says], or more elaborate expressions, such as you shi wei zheng 有詩為証 [there is a poem in testimony]. While the shifting between prose and verse is definitely considered one of the important features of the storytelling style, the pre-verse formulas of Ming and Qing fiction are sometimes treated on a par with other storytellers’ stock phrases, sometimes not.7 Tags for dialogue, such as ‘(he) said’ shuo 說, or

6 For the expression shuoshuti, see Meng Zhaolian 1998: 142. The Chinese discourse on this phenomenon in general applies the concept of huaben xiaoshuo 話本小說 [huaben fiction, or fiction in the style of storytellers’ talebooks], manifesting a tendency to conceive the ‘storytelling form’ as a ‘default’ form, so to say an a priori characteristic of the genre of ‘vernacular fiction’ in Chinese literary history, cf Hu Shiyong 1980, Yang Yi 2004. Boris Riftin has contributed a pioneer study on this subject, comparing the Three Kingdoms as textualized in the early plain tale, pinghua 平話, in the novel, yanyi 演義, and in modern storyteller books, pinghua huaben 評話話本 (Riftin 1970, 1997). The various Western designations of a storyteller’s style in Chinese fiction point to seminal studies by Western scholars: ‘The storyteller’s manner’ was coined by Wilt Idema in his study of the origins of vernacular fiction (Idema 1974, xii, 70). ‘The simulacrum of the oral storyteller’ refers to the ideas of Patrick Hanan in his studies of the vernacular story (Hanan 1967, 1973, 1977, 1981; for this expression, see Hanan 1977: 87). ‘L’écriture vulgarisante’ is the designation found in André Lévy’s study of the vernacular story of the seventeenth century (Lévy 1981: 123–31). ‘The storyteller’s rhetoric’ in Shushu zhuan is studied in detail in Deborah Porter’s PhD dissertation (Porter 1989), and this expression is also preferred by Anne McLaren who has written extensively on the Ming chantefables, shuochang cihua, of the late fifteenth century with their close relationship to performed oral genres (McLaren 1998: chapter 9). Liangyan Ge’s study of the textualization process of the Water Margin cycle is particularly relevant for this whole discussion (Ge Liangyan 2001: chapter 1–4). This style in vernacular fiction lasted until the impact of the Western novel at the beginning of the twentieth century. Not only its literary function, subtly changing through time in the hands of different authors, but also its enduring continuance as a genre-constituting framework have been explored from many angles (Zhao 1995; Rolston 1997). How the oral and written genres continually stand in a living relationship of give and take is one of the important topics in the studies of Margaret Wan around the chantefable and novel of the late Qing period (Wan 2004 and 2009).

7 In Deborah Porter’s study of Shushu zhuan and Anne McLaren’s study of the Ming chantefables these expressions are not treated among the inventory of ‘storyteller’s rhetoric’ (Porter 1989: 132; McLaren 1998: 271–78). In Boris Riftin’s study of the ‘plain tales’ from Yuan, they are, on the other hand, included
From a linguistic point of view, the stock phrases cannot be singled out or defined as a particular word class. On the contrary, the idioms that are usually counted as storytellers’ stock phrases of the vernacular fiction style belong to a number of word classes and grammatical structures, e.g. hua shuo is an N V sentence, que shuo is an A V sentence, hua fen liangtou is an N V O sentence. A fast and ready definition of the meta-narrative markers from the point of view of grammatical or morphological structure is not feasible.

The meta-narrative stock phrases are usually redundant in so far as they can be left out without making the rest of the utterance non-grammatical or unintelligible. In this sense they are superfluous, but from the point of view of marking the shift of mode, time or focus they are not. Some of the expressions have become lexical items and are manifested in a fixed form that allows neither variation nor insertion of other elements. Others have a relatively fixed form, bordering on becoming lexical items (but allowing limited variation). In both cases it is their patterns of occurrence in certain vernacular texts that justifies the idea of stock phrases, taoyu. However, the category evades a strict definition and the borderline between fixed stock phrases of meta-narrative function and expressions in free language with a similar function would be difficult to draw.

In this chapter I explore the characteristics of the ‘storytellers’ stock phrases’ of the written vernacular fiction in order to approach the question of their origin in oral storytelling. Their genre-constituting function for the novel and short story since the sixteenth and seventeenth century up to the twentieth is a fait accompli, but a similar or parallel function of meta-narrative markers is much less in evidence within the orally performed genres of storytelling that are still alive today, or from which we have audio-recordings from the twentieth century.

Since acoustic imprints of storytelling only became possible with the development of modern electronic equipment in the twentieth century, the argumentation about the storyteller’s manner had a tendency to be circular. As Wilt Idema argued way back in the 1970s, it used to be the form of the ‘plain tales’, pinghua, the early vernacular short stories, huaben, and the early novels of Three Kingdoms, Sanguo yanyi, and Water Margin, Shuihu zhuan, that were used to define early storytelling, and then that ‘vision’ of storytelling was used to prove the influence of storytelling on the vernacular genres (Idema 1974: xv-xxii, xxiv, 23, 71, 87, 122). In his study of the textualizing process of Shuihu zhuan, Liangyan Ge pinpoints this ambiguity:
'Since the storyteller–audience relationship in a vernacular narrative could be a genuine inheritance from an oral model in some cases and a deliberate choice by the writer as a simulated narrative frame in others, the nature of those formal characteristics in the ‘storyteller’s manner’ is ambiguous. They are therefore not reliable indicators of the narrative’s relationship to orality’ (Ge Liangyan 2001: 65).8

My first entrance into the world of Chinese storytelling was through the oral performances of Yangzhou storytellers. From the very beginning I was puzzled that the ‘real’ storytellers of this genre did not (or extremely seldom) use so-called storyteller’s stock phrases or equivalent formulas. What was considered the most obvious characteristics of the storyteller persona in Chinese vernacular fiction, the constant sprinkling of formulas at the beginning, at the end and at every point of transition in the narrative, formulas pointing to the narrating instance of ‘somebody telling’ (bua shuo, que shuo, etc.), was not part of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ in that time-honoured and famous tradition of ‘real storytelling’ that was still being performed in daily instalments in the storyteller’s house of Yangzhou. It was also surprising to me that the daily performance would not end with a suggestion to ‘return the next day’ or the like.9 Dialogue tags were also largely absent. The use of verbs like ‘said’ or ‘thought’ before a passage of direct speech or ‘inner speech’ (monologue) were so rare that such cases must be considered actions on a par with other actions, and their function was not simply as markers of dialogue (dialogue would always be marked by the voice quality of the storyteller and therefore such tags were inherently superfluous, cf Børdahl 1996: 199–200).

Such experiences gave rise to doubt about the ‘inborn’ orality – in particular storytellers’ oral habits – often automatically attributed to these types of formulas. Maybe such stock phrases were not, as usually assumed, necessarily from the outset markers of oral residue in the vernacular genres where they became standard? Or even though they were part of vernacular spoken style, would

8 Comparable formulas in the medieval Icelandic sagas seem to stand in a similar ambivalent relationship to oral and written tradition, cf Sigurðsson 2004: 40–41, 329. In Karl Reichl’s translation of the Turkic prosimetric epic Edige, performed by the Uzbek singer Jumabay Bazarov in 1993 and recorded with electronic equipment, certain ‘segmenting phrases’ reminiscent of the meta-narrative stock phrases under study here are mentioned in the analytic part under Scenic Patterning. The segmenting phrases mark the endings of major parts of the epic and other changes of scene or time breaks, as well as the switching from prose to verse. Reichl mentions that in epics of this tradition put down in writing such comments are rare. In Jumabay Bazarov’s recorded performance they are, however, not infrequent, such as the phrases: ‘Hear the news!’ or ‘Now what was it he was saying?’ or ‘Now look at...’, followed by a verse portion. The form of these narrator’s comments does not seem to be particularly formulaic (Reichl 2007: 124–26, 328, 337, 345, 357).

9 But there was another kind of stock-in-trade. According to the memoirs of old storytellers, the waiter in the teahouse, called the ‘tea master’, chafang 茶房, would shout at the end of the performance: ‘Ming’er qing zao!’ [Ming-a cin zaal!] 明兒請早, but I have never experienced this habit. See Børdahl 1996: 25.
Storytelling, Stock Phrases and Genre Conventions

they necessarily originate particularly with storytellers? And since storytelling was never just one single genre, what kind of storytelling would they have been derived from? Lacking audio-recordings of the early Chinese storytelling and being thus forced to rely largely on written sources, what kind of evidence can be adduced in support of a theory of the development of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ and its relationship to true oral storytelling in China?

The present investigation of stock phrases belonging to the type of meta-narrative markers is, as said, essentially restricted to the tale of ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’, Wu Song da hu. However, for the earliest period, discussed in Part I, texts with a more distant connection to this theme are also taken into consideration. A sampling of texts from the first vernacular written genres that show a certain usage of meta-narrative markers of the kind that later constituted the style of the ‘manner’ are compared: the so-called ‘plain tales’, pinghua, of the fourteenth century and the chantefables, shuochang cihua, of the late fifteenth century. For the pinghua particular attention is paid to the Xuanhe yishi, where the first narrative of the Water Margin thematics is found. In the chantefables the focus is on the Judge Bao stories, related to the Water Margin cycles through their highly probable common origin in the ‘case story’ genre, gong’an (cf Liangyan Ge’s chapter in this book). The genre of early huaben [story] is also highly relevant for the discussion, and again – lacking the Wu Song tale among the extant huaben – I make a short digression into the few stories related to the Water Margin theme of heroic staff-fighters, in particular because these stories belong to the earliest group (A), probably composed before 1450, as defined by Patrick Hanan.10

In Part II focus is on the tale of ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ as found in a number of transformations in various oral, oral-related and written genres through four hundred years. The existence and distribution of pre-verse formulas and meta-narrative phrases that mark introduction, transition and conclusion, as well as simulated dialogue (with the audience) and narrator’s comment are mapped out according to their occurrence in:

(1) genres for reading only, such as the novel
(2) genres for reading and for performance, i.e. drama and performance literature
(3) oral genres of performance (electronically recorded performances of drama and storytelling)

Four versions of the tiger tale from novels, three from drama, eight from performance literature and six from oral performance are analyzed and compared, cf

Appendix A: Twenty samples of ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ and two more Wu Song stories. On the basis of textual features of the meta-narrative markers (such as linguistic characteristics, printing conventions and distribution in the single text and over the genres) the function of the markers is analysed and the origin tentatively suggested.

Here a word of warning is in order. Vernacular texts from the period before the sixteenth century are scarce. The genres that the surviving texts represent may be quite random. The analysis in Part I is of necessity restricted by these circumstances, and no firm conclusions can be drawn from this ‘thin’ corpus of materials. However, comparing the findings from Part I with those from Part II, based on a wider spectrum of texts from the sixteenth century to the present – oral and written – a certain picture arises. My hope is that this study will further an understanding of the interplay between the oral and the written in the usage of meta-narrative stock phrases in storytelling and in oral-related written literature.

PART I: PLAIN TALES, CHANTEFABLES AND STORIES

Plain Tales

The history folkbooks or ‘plain tales’, pinghua 平話, printed during the fourteenth century (Yuan and early Ming) in a mixture of classical Chinese, wenyan 文言, and early vernacular, baihua 白話, are the earliest texts where the shifting of narrative mode, time and focus is marked by a relatively fixed set of meta-narrative formulas, similar to those later found as a standard convention of the storyteller’s style in vernacular fiction. The shift from prose to poems, songs and eulogies is marked with pre-verse formulas, such as ‘the poem says’, shi yue, ‘there is a poem in testimony’, you shi wei zheng, ‘the song says’, ge yue 歌曰, ‘the eulogy says’, zan yue 赞曰. Besides time expressions (which are also often coined in a formulaic form), formulas such as hua shuo, que shuo, qie shuo 且說 [let’s also tell], shuo 說 [it is told], hua fen liang shuo 話分兩說 [the tale divides into two accounts], and qie xiu shuo . . . que shuo 且休說 . . . 卻說 [let’s not tell more about this, let’s rather tell], serve

11 In the group of oral performances, two extra versions from other Wu Song tales are included.
12 In this study the words ‘textual’ and ‘text’ refer to oral as well as to written texts. An oral text is an electronically recorded performance.
13 I am indebted to Patrick Hanan, reader of the book manuscript, for pointing out how truly fortuitous our knowledge of the early vernacular literature is.
as markers of narrative progression. In his study of the plain tale and novel versions of the Three Kingdoms’ theme Boris Riftin has shown how these types of formulary expressions in the *San guo zhi pinghua* [Plain tale on Three Kingdoms] are integrated into the narrative text, serving as markers of narrative progression along with time expressions and names of persons, which are the most frequent initial elements of a section. However, the use of such markers varies both in frequency, number and distribution not only among the different *pinghua* texts, but also inside one single text (Riftin 1970/1997: 150–53). If these expressions originated with storytellers, they must have reflected a slightly different usage with each storyteller, or the various editors/authors had a varying conception of the storyteller style. Sometimes the usage differs inside the same text, signifying perhaps two editors/authors behind the work (Riftin 1970/1997: 151).

However, in the *pinghua* printed texts the function of these markers might be more of a technical, pedagogical nature, helping the reader to grasp the contents of the printed page. The readership for these texts supposedly had limited schooling, and the textual page was a compact mass of characters,
without punctuation or indentation. The pre-verse formulas are mostly set off in black cartouche, just like the titles of important episodes. This device seems to classify these markers as not belonging to the narrative, but having a function like ‘stage directions’ in the text, ‘silently’ indicating the mode of the text as verse. The meta-narrative markers of transition might serve as a kind of punctuation, further helping the reader to make heads or tails of the otherwise non-differentiated columns of characters. In this way both the pre-verse markers and the markers of transition would function as a correlative to the pictures, presumably also intended for easy consumption by semi-literate ‘limping readers’ (HEGEL 1998: 172). Therefore they could be an expression of editorial adaptation for the written format, rather than a reflection of oral storytelling habits. If one follows this line of thought, the reason for the differences in usage of such markers inside one and the same text could be the experimental stage of the editorial work. The uneven distribution of these phrases might reflect oral usage which came in handy for this type of easy-reader, but would the expressions necessarily originate with professional storytellers?

In the following section I take a closer look at one of the Yuan plain tales, namely the Xuanhe yishi.

14 For the Xin quan xiang San guo zhi pinghua 新全相三國志平話 [Newly edited fully illustrated Plain tale on Three Kingdoms], published in 1321–23, the original woodcut edition is preserved and accessible in facsimile (1976), something that allows us to study not only the words, but the technique of visual representation on the page, cf Riftin [1970] 1997: 139–65. The whole text is printed in continuous columns of characters, without indentation for paragraphs or poems. However, the shifting to verse is often, but not consistently, marked by the phrase ‘the poem says’, shi yue, ‘the song says’, ge yue, and ‘the eulogy says’, zan yue, set off in contrastive white on black cartouche, a method that is also, although irregularly, used to insert titles of various important episodes. Some other phrases of the same function are also set off in this way: ‘There is a poem in testimony’, you shi wei zheng (sometimes set off, sometimes not), ‘later there was a poem in testimony’, hou you shi wei zheng, ‘another poem’, you shi, ‘there is a sacred eulogy’, you miaozan, ‘and’, in this way the alternation between prose and verse is set off on the page. Curiously, at the end of the first volume, shang juan, a poem is placed on the page in indented position, but this typographical feature is not repeated at the end of the two other volumes or anywhere else. Phrases of transition are usually not placed in any specially marked place on the page, since paragraphs are not indented in this original edition. A few times, however, a white space (the size of one character) is left in the column before a new ‘paragraph’ starts, usually followed by: ‘Let’s, however, tell’, que shuo, the most frequent of the transitory phrases used in this text. After a white space, we also sometimes find the ultra short ‘let’s tell’, shuo, as the beginning of a new episode. Other phrases (not set off by a white space) are: ‘The story divides into two tales’, hua fen liang shuo, ‘The story says’, hua shuo, ‘let’s now tell’, shuoqi, ‘for the moment, let’s not tell . . ., let’s tell, however’, qie xiu shuo . . . que shuo. The printed style of this plain tale is not completely consistent. Sometimes there are titles set off in cartouche, but most often not; sometimes the tags for poetry are set off in cartouche, but not consistently; sometimes a new section is marked by an empty space and perhaps a formulary phrase of transition, but more often the change of focus is only marked by a formula, or only by an empty space, or not marked at all. The layout of the pages therefore displays a printing style that is remarkably sloppy, if it is not rather witness to an experimental stage.
Legends of the Xuanhe Era

The Xuanhe yishi 宣和遺事 [Legends of the Xuanhe Era (1119–1126)] (printed ca. 1300) is the earliest document relating the fate of a group of outlaws from Shandong, later referred to as the Water Margin saga. In this first text Wu Song is mentioned in the list of heroes, but his story that forms such an important part of the later novel is not told. Although this text does not carry the generic term of pinghua in its title, it nevertheless has the characteristic form of the plain tale and is usually treated on a par with these other texts. Unfortunately the text has only survived in later reprints and these do not have the layout with pictures above and text below, shang tu xia wen 上圖下文, that is so typical of most plain tales. Xuanhe yishi has a number of the meta-narrative formulas mentioned above, but meta-narrative expressions are also coined in less fixed word combinations, apparently with no obvious demarcation line between ‘stock phrases’ and free phrases of the same function.

One of the important characteristics of the plain tales, including the Xuanhe yishi, is the format of prose with poetry introduced by pre-verse expressions. Most of the verse-introductory expressions of the Xuanhe yishi are not particularly formulaic, but consist of free word combinations. This is obvious from Table 4.B.1 in my Appendix B, where the verse portions to be recited are announced in a variety of wordings that apparently form an open list where new formulations might be added at will. However, a significant part of the expressions do have a relatively short and fixed form and several of these shorter forms are frequently used in the text, so that they give that certain ‘stock phrase’ feeling to the text.

In the later vernacular fiction zheng shi, (dan jian), shi yue/yun and you shi wei zheng belong to a relatively small number of high frequency phrases, constantly used to indicate the verse portions and set pieces. The ‘storyteller style’ that a modern reader of Chinese novels associates with these expressions is therefore also easily transferred to the earlier period, when reading a text where these words are used. However, if we take the later novelistic ‘storyteller’s manner’ as a proof that the usage found in early texts such as the plain tales were actually typical of early oral storytelling, the result is obviously circular logic.

16 Cf Xuanhe yishi deng liang zhong 1993.
17 In my editions of Xuanhe yishi I have not been able to spot any instances of dan jian, but HANAN 1973: 109, and RIFTIN 1997 both mention one occurrence.
The alternation between prose and verse is undoubtedly a narrative style taken over from earlier Chinese oral performance traditions. A similar habit existed already in the Buddhist-influenced prosimetric performance tradition, transmitted in manuscripts called ‘transformation texts’, bianwen 變文, from the Tang period. Together with this format there was the tradition of using formulaic expressions to introduce the verse sections. Victor Mair has described the usage of pre-verse formulas in the bianwen, typically in combination with the showing of pictures, bianxiang 變相 (MAIR 1983: 6, 23). Mair observes that: ‘The nearer an orally derived text is to its source of inspiration, the more fluid and unstable it will be because the oral exemplar changes with each retelling. Conversely, a text that has been written, rewritten, and copied several times gradually takes on a fixed form.’ From this assumption, Mair infers that such formulas are in all likelihood not to be taken as ‘evidence of direct derivation from oral performance’, even though they may bear witness to ‘a reflection and stylization of actual phrases customarily but not compulsorily employed by picture storytellers’.

‘Fluid’ or ever-changing patterns of expression are traditionally seen as characteristic of written literary texts, in opposition to the ‘formulaic character’ of the oral performances and their ‘derived texts’. When certain types of phrases, such as those found in the position before verses, are manifested in ever-changing language and not coined in standard formulas, is this a sign of oral or literary custom? And on the contrary, when we find a set of standard phrases in this position, is it a signal of oral performance or literary convention? It is not likely that we can find universal answers to these kinds of questions. However, some evidence can be adduced by empirical investigation of storytelling forms in China that we are still able to observe in their oral manifestations.

In oral performance of the modern period the shifting between prose and verse is immediately felt from the tone of the recitation, rhythm and rhyme of the verse passages. The professional performer decides according to his mastery of the handed-down repertoire where to enter the verses. There would be no need in principle to announce the shift, certainly not for the oral genre of pinghua 評話 [commented tales] where only one storyteller performs without the assistance of musicians. Nevertheless, in oral storytelling from the twentieth century as exemplified by Yangzhou pinghua, shifts between prose and verse (including sayings in rhythmic form) are not infrequently announced,

19 For the etymology of this genre name and its connection to the genre of the plain tale (pinghua), cf LÉVY 1999.
sometimes with free phrases that declare a poem or set piece to be recited, only rarely with pre-verse tags. But usually verse passages are entered without any tag expression or declaration. The places where such tags or declarations are used belong to the transmitted tradition and they are not arbitrarily added or omitted. When such tags and declarations are used, they give special weight to the ‘quoted’ verses or sayings (BØRDAHL 1996: 268, 331).

There is a parallel in the usage of tags for dialogue, such as ‘he said’, to mark the shift between narration and dialogue. In oral performances of Yangzhou pinghua, as registered in the recent period, tags for dialogue are rare. Usually the shift from narration to dialogue is – just like the change from prose to poetry – indicated by a change of the timbre of the voice, since the storyteller impersonates the various persons of his tale. But these possibilities of the human voice cannot be transferred to writing, and in the printed editions of modern storytellers’ books, xin huaben, published since the 1950s, this feature is compensated by tags and/or punctuation markers, such as colon and quotation marks in modern print. The short phrases in the plain tales introducing verse might serve the same purpose. Perhaps at the outset they were added for the legibility of the written page and not necessarily because they reflected habits of an oral performance tradition.

The pre-verse expressions found in Xuanhe yishi can tentatively be classified into three subgroups: (1) quotation markers, dao shi, shi yue, you shi wei zheng, shi yun, you shi yun, ci yue; (2) exclamation markers, zhenge shi, que shi, zheng shi, zhen shi; and (3) verse presentations in free wordings of which there are dozens, cf Table 4.B.1, my Appendix B. The quotation markers (group 1) are short or strictly formulaic, mostly in wenyan, and in other plain tale texts, where the original page layout can be observed, they are placed ‘outside’ the narrative sequence, either in black cartouche or outside the regular columns. This feature seems to signal that they are a type of ‘stage direction’ and do not belong with the story as narrative. On the written page, in particular in a manuscript or a printed version from the period when there was no firm tradition of indenting verse or punctuating the text, these expressions would help a ‘limping reader’ considerably by indicating where the verse would start.

The exclamations (group 2) are also short, but in colloquial style, baibua, and – in contrast to the quotation markers – they seem to belong to the ‘vocalizable’ part of the narrative, adding a lively touch to the passages where they occur. They are never placed ‘outside’ the running text.

The verse presentations (coined in free word combinations, group 3) do not in Xuanhe yishi exhibit particular features of the spoken vernacular. Only a couple of them use the more colloquial dao. Most of them follow wenyan
grammar and end with the tag words *yue* and *yun*. Such pre-verse expressions coined in *wenyan* are found likewise in early Ming *wenyan* short stories with occasional verse continuing the genre of the Tang classical tale, *chuanqi*. In the story collection *Jian deng xin hua* 剪燈新話 [New stories written while trimming the wick] (1378) by Qu You 瞿佑 (1341–1427) (Xue Hongli 1981) poems are inserted quite often, preceded by expressions in *wenyan* identical with or highly reminiscent of the pre-verse presentations in *Xuanhe yishi*, such as ‘then he composed a poem as follows’, *nai cheng yi shi yue* 乃成一詩曰, ‘he recited two poems, chanting them for his friend as follows’, *kou zhan lüshi er zhang yinzeng youren yue* 口占律詩二章 吟贈友人曰 (cf Xue Hongli 1981: 16, 17, 19, 37). This would seem to have been a convention shared with the *wenyan* story as well as the large genre of anecdotal ‘jottings’, *biji* 筆記 [also translated as ‘note-form literature’].

The linguistic form of pre-verse expressions is, however, not in itself an argument against oral provenance, since both poems and their introductory passages might belong to the more formal part of an oral performance. As more or less solemn declarations of the verse portions to follow, such expressions might have been spoken in a high style form to fit the literary form of the poems. In modern Yangzhou storytelling both verse passages and tags for verse (when used) are spoken in high style ‘square mouth’, *fangkou* 方口, and coloured by *wenyan* succinctness (Børdahl 1996: 83–85, 94–96). A mixture of colloquial, dialectal prose with poetry, couplets and sayings in terse *wenyan*-flavoured language is, in fact, a feature of modern storytelling.

Next, let us consider formulary expressions of narrative transition in the *Xuanhe yishi*. This group of expressions consists of so-called ‘opening words’, *fayuci* 發語詞, occurring at the beginning of paragraphs and sections: *hua shuo, qie shuo, que shuo, qie xiu shuo . . . zhi shuo, xiu shuo . . . qie shuo*, etc. The list of formulaic expressions of narrative transition and progression in Table 4.B.2, my Appendix B, is fairly complete. Only one of the expressions is used more than once in the *Xuanhe yishi*, namely *qie shuo* (used six times). The formulaic character of the expressions is therefore not obvious from this source alone, but is based on the occurrence of the same type of expressions in other plain tales – and in retrospect their perpetuation in the later vernacular fiction.

20 Verse presentations in *wenyan* are also occasionally found in *San guo zhi pinghua*, and they are quite frequent in other *pinghua*, cf *Xuanhe yishi deng liang zhong* 1993.

21 In this case the modern forms of such tags could, however, easily have been taken over from the vernacular fiction of Ming and Qing, adding a literary flourish to the storyteller’s oral style.

22 Glancing through the pages, one or another expression might escape notice, but no expressions have been left out on purpose.
The linguistic form of these markers is coined in colloquial style, *baihua*. As already mentioned, these expressions might serve the purpose of structuring the printed page, but were they purely editorial or did they reflect storytellers’ oral habits of structuring performances?

To probe further into this question I first make a digression away from the Water Margin theme (and the Wu Song story) in order to look in some detail at the oral genre of *chantefable*, *shuochang cihua*, from which a corpus of printed booklets dating from the late fifteenth century has survived. Anne McLaren’s pathbreaking study of these texts (1998) is the foundation for the following excursion.

*Early Chantefables*

The Ming Chenghua *chantefables*, *Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua*, excavated in 1967 in the vicinity of Shanghai, represent a written genre of more or less ‘script-like’ texts that were closely connected to oral performing arts and were probably meant not just for silent reading, but for reciting for family members by alternating between telling in prose and singing in verse (McLaren 1998: 67–76). A set of thirteen of these prose-and-song texts, including one text in verse only, were printed between 1471–1478, but at least some of them are possibly from woodblocks that are more than a hundred years older, a dating that brings the genre close to the time of the plain tales. Like the plain tales these texts are illustrated with woodblock prints highlighting important situations in the tales. One of the texts has the same layout with ‘pictures above and text below’ as the plain tales, but the other texts all have full page text with pictures inserted on separate pages, sometimes with two illustrations on one page.

The shift from prose to verse is indicated by ‘stage instructions’: ‘Sing!’,*chang*, and ‘Tell!’, *shuo*, which are inserted into the text whenever the mode of performance changes. These short ‘orders’ are typographically set off from the rest of the text in black cartouche, probably in imitation of printed editions of drama texts. In contrast to the plain tales of the Yuan Zhizhi reign (1321–1323), in the printed *chantefables* the verse portions are further set off by indentation and spacing between the verselines. Therefore the stage instructions of ‘sing!’ and ‘tell!’ are redundant; indentation alone would be enough for the reader to

23 The expression *qie shuo* occurs also in dialogue passages in the *Xuanhe yishi*, corroborating the oral usage of this expression, cf. *Xuanhe yishi deng liang zhong* 1993: 50.
24 Cf Jiang Kun, Ni Zhongzhi 2005: 334. Zhao Jingshen 1972 was the first to suggest this in his article “Tan Ming Chenghua kanben "shuochang cihua’”, in *Quyi congтан*, Zhongguo quyi chubanshe.
see at a glance in which of the modes the text is to be vocalized.\(^{26}\) They do of course bear witness to the oral performance tradition of which the \textit{chantefable} texts are written counterparts.\(^{27}\) They are, however, obviously not parts of the text to be vocalized, but are silent markers just like the indication of the names of melodies in cartouche, inserted into the drama texts of the Yuan and early Ming period.\(^{28}\)

This type of stage direction apparently belongs with the printing technique of performance texts rather than with the vocalized linguistic usage of oral performance. Further, it should be noted that poetry in the \textit{shi} 詩 metre and eulogies in ten-syllable verses, \textit{zan} 贊, are likewise announced in the \textit{chantefables} by indicating in cartouche ‘The poem says’, \textit{shi yue} 詩曰, or ‘Ten-syllable eulogy’, \textit{zan shi zi} 贊十字. The quotation markers in cartouche format, often

\(^{26}\) In one of the \textit{chantefable} texts, \textit{Xin bian quan xiang Tang Xue Rengui kua hai zheng Liao gushi} 新編全相唐薛仁貴跨海征遼故事 [Newly printed fully illustrated story of Tang general Xue Rengui who crossed the sea to campaign in Liao], it is the portions to be told that are indented, and the verse portions are non-indented (but still with clear demarcation of the verselines by empty spaces after each line).

\(^{27}\) \textit{McLaren} 1998, chapter two, treats the question of reading/vocalizing/performing the \textit{chantefables} from the fifteenth century at length, see pp. 40–42, 50–51, see also p. 283–84.

\(^{28}\) The layout of Chinese printed drama texts has its own history. Stage directions were partly in cartouche, partly arranged in various types of parentheses, or set off by the size of the characters. Some of the earliest printed drama texts are rendered in facsimile in \textit{Li Xiao} 2005: 8, 59.
placed outside the column, obviously belong to the same group as the stage instructions of ‘Tell!’ and ‘Sing!’, namely silent signals meant for the eye, not meant for vocalizing.29 The other types of pre-verse phrases are not found in the chantefables.

The Judge Bao tales that make up an essential portion of the Ming Chenghua chantefables (8 out of 13 texts) are here considered in special detail because their content and the genre category of the tales, ‘case stories’, gong’an, is connected to that of the early Water Margin sources, as demonstrated by Liangyan Ge in this volume.

In Table 4.B.3, my Appendix B, the meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition found in the eight Judge Bao chantefables are listed.30 The markers occur predominantly in the verse portions, and mostly in pairs, such as ‘let’s not sing of . . ., but let’s sing of’, bu chang . . . qie chang . . . 不唱 . . . 且唱 . . . In a few cases there is only one marker without a corresponding marker in the following verse. Most of them consist of two monosyllabic words (or two characters in writing) placed at the beginning of the heptasyllabic verse line. These expressions form a formulaic language in themselves, with rich possibilities of paradigmatic exchange, so that if we consider each occurrence of such marking (whether by a pair of markers or by a single marker), there are almost no repetitions of the ‘same formula’ inside the single text. On the other hand, if we consider the words that make up the markers, they consist of a very small number. Apart from these verse-initial markers, there is another group of verse-final markers consisting of three monosyllabic words (three characters), such as ‘. . . is not what we shall tell’, dou xiu shuo, 都休說. This group also allows for much variation by shifting the negation or the verb, etc. Finally there are some four-syllable expressions that occur almost exclusively at the beginning of the verse, such as: ‘In the story we do not tell . . .’ Huazhong bu shuo 話中不說 (with some variant forms) and ‘Our story divides into two lines . . .’ Hua fen liangtou . . . 話分兩頭 . . . Although hua fen liangtou would later become a well-worn formula, it is not particularly stable as a formula in the chantefables, but the ‘forking of the tale’ is expressed by quite a few variants.31 Another group of four-syllable markers, such as ‘Let’s return to the story and sing of’, hui wen qie chang 回文

29 It is, however, noteworthy that a number of the meta-narrative pre-verse formulas found in the corpus at large, as well as in the plain tales and chantefables under discussion, seem to stand in a vacillating position between ‘vocalizable’ and silent ‘instructions’, as reflected sometimes by unsteady printing procedures for this kind of expression.


31 In the chantefable about Xue Rengui we find twice in the verse portions the form: ba hua tiaozuo (tiao chang) liang zhi fen 把話調做(調唱) 兩枝分. In the texts about Judge Bao, cf below, we find in verse portions: hua fen liangxia . . . 話分兩下 (text 2) and: hua shuo yizhi fen liangchu, yizhi paizuo liangzhi fen 話說一枝分兩處, 一枝排做兩枝分 (text 8), cf Appendix B, Table 4.B.3.
且唱，is variable like the disyllabic forms. In fact, the last two words in these longer markers belong to the disyllabic formulas, which constantly change. Only in a few cases do we find longer formulaic markers of meta-narration, but sometimes a four-syllable marker may occur in combination with a three-syllable marker to form a compound form that fills the heptasyllabic verse.

The prose portions of the chantefables rarely have meta-narrative markers of narrative transition. Most of the texts only have them in the verse portions.\textsuperscript{32} The few formulas found in the chantefables are the same that were found in the plain tale of Xuanhe yishi: hua shuo, qie shuo, que shuo, xiu shuo . . . qie shuo . . ., and a few more.\textsuperscript{33}

The meta-narrative stock phrases of the chantefables are part of both prose passages and metric verses, which means that they could not be left out (from the verses) in vocalizing without destroying the rhythm (McLaren 1998: 109, 262). This implies that these phrases are founded in spoken usage, and could not in this case be merely typographical aids, serving as textual markers of the printed page, such as the stage directions of shuo, chang and pre-verse formulas shi yue, zan shi zi.

That performers – whether professionals or laymen – used meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition in performance and ‘vocalizing’ activities is, however, not equivalent to regarding these formulaic phrases as originating in oral ‘creation-in-performance’ in the strictest sense. The oral origin of the Ming chantefables was questioned at an early stage by David Roy (ROY 1981), who considered the printed chantefables as ‘written formulaic literature’. From this point of view the meta-narrative phrases might be primarily influenced by written-formulaic conventions, even if the resulting texts were meant to be recited in performance for a smaller or larger audience. We may be arriving at a point where oral and written activities are barely distinguishable. On one hand, the language of the chantefables seems formulaic to a degree that would very likely facilitate ‘creation in performance’ and ‘oral transmission’; on the other hand, this kind of language could also serve as a suitable channel for ‘popular writing’, where the literary model was in popular oral performance and the intended reader likewise was someone who would have enjoyed this kind of performance. Both the performer and writer of shuochang cihua would be committed to the ‘same’ genre, both carrying the load of the formulaic language of this tradition, and both striving to satisfy their respective audiences of listeners or

\textsuperscript{32} The chantefable about Xue Rengui differs from the other texts in this respect as well as in other respects, cf McLAREN 1998: 198–101.

\textsuperscript{33} Interestingly the earliest form of hua shuo, as suggested in Hanyu da cidian, could be ‘this story tells about’ ciben hua shuo 本話說, which is found both in a verse and a prose section of the twelfth century zhonggongdiao 諸宮調 [all keys and modes] prosimetric version of Xixiang ji 西廂記 [Western Wing], cf DONG Jicyuan 1955: 17, 32, shang 3, shang 10.
readers/vocalizers which would essentially share the same expectations.\textsuperscript{34} Even if the oral manifestation of \textit{chantefables} of the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries will never be truly accessible, and their written representations cannot be taken as ‘transcriptions’ (Roy 1981: 115, 121), still it would be difficult to imagine that one could get closer to the linguistic form of any oral tradition from early times. The connection between oral art and written text would seem particularly close with a tradition so heavily dependent on verse.\textsuperscript{35}

With a view to the meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition one might speculate that originally they belonged with the \textit{metric} genres, since they are predominantly found in the verse portions, meant to be sung or chanted (McLaren 1998: 264–5). In the \textit{chantefables} these types of markers are coined in a large number of forms. They are intrinsically part of the formulary language of versification, and would be spotted as \textit{particular} formulas mainly on the background of the conventions of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ in vernacular fiction.

\textit{Two Early Stories}

The genre of the vernacular ‘story’, \textit{huaben}, is fundamental for the delineation of the genre conventions of early Chinese vernacular fiction. The story and the novel are the genres \textit{par excellence} that exhibit the features of the ‘storyteller’s manner’. I shall not go into the speculations about the status of some early \textit{huaben} as possible printed versions of storyteller’s scripts. Here my purpose is simply to demonstrate the occurrence of pre-verse expressions and meta-narrative markers of transition in two of the early stories that share thematic content with the Water Margin cycle of bandit tales. One story, TY 37: ‘Wan Xiuniang takes revenge at the mountain pavilion’ \textit{Wan Xiuniang chou bao shanting’er} 萬秀娘仇報山亭兒, is found in Song sources under the category of ‘broadsword’, \textit{podao} 朴刀 (Zuiweng tanlu 1958: 4), a subcategory of the ‘case stories’ that handle material closely related to Water Margin (cf Liangyan Ge’s chapter in this book). The other, KC 36: ‘Song Four causes trouble for Miser

\textsuperscript{34} In modern Beijing drum-singing as studied by Kate Stevens in the 1950s, written scripts play an important role (Stevens 1973: 104–111). The role of writing (scripting) for certain Chinese oral performance traditions should not be underestimated, but neither should the oral manifestation of these traditions (see also Iguchi 2007).

\textsuperscript{35} In Yangzhou storytellers’ scripts from late Qing and early Republic the verse portions are written in full in the way they are supposed to be memorized and performed, while the prose portions are rendered as abstracts (cf Chen Wulou (Si Su) 1962, Børdahl 2005). Poems, couplets and sayings are definitely among the most stable portions of performance in the orally transmitted repertoires of the Yangzhou storytellers (Børdahl 1996). The versification of drum tales and \textit{chantefables} is, however, not directly comparable to the sporadic poetry of the prose genres, since the verse of the prosimetric and metric genres of storytelling is obviously not meant to be completely static, but the metric form allows a high degree of improvisation within the given metre and rhyme (Iguchi 2007: 48–49, 53–55).
Zhang’ Song Sigong da nao Jinhun Zhang, is not mentioned in the early source books, but this story also has a plot reminiscent of the novel. Both are included in Feng Menglong’s San yan anthologies, and have been dated by Patrick Hanan as being among the earliest stories (Group A) as regards fundamental composition, not editing or printing (HANAN 1973: 239, 242).

In the stories all three groups of pre-verse phrases are present, as in the plain tales, cf Table 4.B.5, my Appendix B. The quotation markers (group 1), daoshi, you shi yue, you shi wei zheng, shi yun, and the exclamation markers (group 2), dan jian, que shi, zheng shi, yi si, zhenge shi, are nearly the same as those found in Xuanhe yishi. The verse presentations (group 3) are likewise the largest group, but differ from those in the Xuanhe yishi by their colloquial style. The meta-narrative markers of narrative transition are also partly the same as those found in the Xuanhe yishi and the prose portions of the chantefables, cf Table 4.B.6, my Appendix B. From the table it is obvious that the formulary status of these expressions cannot be demonstrated on the basis of just two stories. Even though the two early stories have a common style of vernacular prose with frequent insertion of versified or poignant words (poems, couplets, sayings) they share only a single pre-verse exclamation, dan jian, and two meta-narrative markers of transition: hua shuo and que shuo. Taken together they demonstrate a range of possible pre-verse phrases and transitional markers, some in formulaic short form, some in longer flexible wordings. The amount of formulaic forms is only about one third of the total of such expressions, but their formulaic force is sometimes enhanced by repetition inside the text. It is, however, only from an intertextual comparison based on a large corpus of stories that the conventional nature of most of the phrases would become apparent.

In Table 4.B.7, my Appendix B, meta-narrative markers of transition as found in nine early stories composed before 1450 (group A from Yuan and group C from Early Ming) and nine late stories, composed after 1550, are shown. Only the first five meta-narrative phrases of transition, que shuo, qie shuo, zai shuo, hua shuo, hua fen liangtou, occur with a certain frequency, and even these are not represented in all of the texts. As for que shuo and qie shuo, which can be considered variants, one or both are found in sixteen of the eighteen stories and in some of the stories repeatedly. Hua shuo is found in only seven stories. Zai shuo is the only marker that has a definitely higher occurrence in the later stories.

From the evidence of these eighteen stories, the habit of applying meta-narrative transition markers and phrases is evident, but as a genre convention there is

36 The two stories are studied according to the edition by Wu Xiaoling and others (1984).
a certain elasticity and variability. Just a few markers are relatively obligatory in their fixed form, but there is much room for wording in free language for this kind of remark. The phrases only partly overlap with the phrases of *Xuanhe yi-shi* and those of the *chantefables*, but the five high-frequency phrases mentioned above are in common for all three genres, even if not every single text has them all. The stories share a number of further phrases with the *chantefables* at large (but not the Judge Bao tales), such as *dan biao, dan shuo*, and *bu shuo . . . dan shuo . . .* (McLaren 1998: 271).

**Meta-narrative Expressions in Plain Tales, Chantefables and Stories**

The plain tales, *chantefables* and vernacular stories display a certain usage of meta-narrative expressions, some of which became standard ingredients of a long-term genre convention for vernacular fiction. Among the meta-narrative expressions, the pre-verse phrases and the markers of narrative transition are treated as two separate groups, both because the linguistic function and style is different, but also because the treatment of these two groups on the printed page is different.

Among the pre-verse phrases we find the three subgroups of quotation markers, exclamatory markers and presentations. The quotation markers (found in all of the three genres) are short and in *wenyan* (apart from *dao shi*), and in the original texts of the plain tales and the *chantefables* some of them are set off in black cartouche in a way that shows their function as ‘silent’ stage directions. Sometimes they are printed outside the columns so that they are likewise set off as not belonging to the narrative sequence of sentences. The exclamations (found only in the plain tales and the stories) are also short, but they are in *baihua*, adding a strong and lively emphasis to the verse, saying or setpiece that follows. The presentations (also found only in the plain tales and the stories) are longer phrases or sentences explaining something about the circumstances of the following verse passage. They are generally in *wenyan* in the plain tales, but in *baihua* in the stories.

The narrative markers of transition are always part of the narrative sequence. In the plain tales and stories they occur at irregular intervals at the beginning or, less frequently, at the end of a section, something that is occasionally marked with an empty space before such markers in the plain tales (facsimile editions). In the *chantefables* such markers are part of the formulaic language that is used throughout the verse portions. These markers have a high frequency and most often stand in verse-initial position, but also sometimes in verse-final position. Their frequency is however not conspicuous in the verses where formulaic phrases are rampant. In the prose portions they
are used in the same way as in the plain tales and stories, that is, much less frequently than in the verse portions.

In *Xuanhe yishi* meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition are few and scattered, but they are identical with or closely resemble the formulas found in the metric portions of the *chantefables*. Their rare occurrence in the plain tales is similar to their sporadic usage in the prose portions of the *chantefables*. The other plain tales likewise each have their own ‘set’ of some few selected formulas reminiscent of those in the *chantefables*, with many expressions in common between the plain tales as a group, but always some differences between the different texts (and sometimes differences inside the same text). This situation is parallel to what we see with the *chantefables*. Each text has a different profile of meta-narrative formulas, but here the impression is nevertheless highly homogeneous, since the linguistic patterns of the expressions are so very similar (built into the heptasyllabic verse) and also because a sufficiently large number of expressions are shared throughout.

There could be little doubt that the expressions that are similar or close to those of the later ‘stock phrases’ of vernacular fiction would actually be meant for vocalization in the *chantefables* and were part of the orally performable linguistic vocabulary of these texts. In the *chantefables* these phrases are part of the generally formulaic language of the verses. It is only in retrospect that one would single these expressions out and call them a ‘storyteller’s rhetoric’. In the *chantefables* the metric verse form invites an endless number of formulary expressions that fit with the number of syllables available at various points in the line, and this style as a whole might be called a ‘storyteller’s rhetoric of the *chantefable* genre’.

While we could in the case of the plain tales have reasons to doubt the ‘actualization’ (possible vocalization) of the meta-narrative markers of transition, and might consider them an editorial expedient for making the printed page easier to grasp (a kind of punctuation), the evidence from the Ming *chantefables* shows that the markers are in these printed texts an integral part of the ‘vocalizable’ text – the oral language of the putative performer. Here they cannot be considered editorial additions for the sake of readability. Even though the *chantefable* textual corpus is of a later date (1571–1578) than the corpus of plain tales (*Xuanhe yishi ca. 1300, other plain tales 1321–1323*), the oral tradition that the *chantefables* reflect is of much older provenance, probably Song and Yuan (McLaren 1998: 79–80, 94–97). The occurrence in the plain tales and the stories of a few formulas so strikingly similar to those abundantly woven into the completely formulaic verse portions of the *chantefables* might be a sign that these markers had their natural origin in Song and Yuan oral metric genres. Their sporadic usage in the prose sections of the *chantefables* does not seem to
have anything to do with editorial adaptation for the written page, but would rather seem to be a spilling over from the verse to the prose style. The meta-narrative markers of transition found in the plain tales and the stories might according to this line of thought be derived directly from ‘oral storytelling’, in particular from the metric or prosimetric genres that were the precursors of the *chantefables* as transmitted in the Ming Chenghua funeral offerings. This interpretation would not exclude that for the plain tales they served – perhaps primarily – the editorial purpose of marking the textual page for easy reading. This ‘written’ practice would, however, be based primarily on ‘oral’ habits of textual marking taken over from singers of tales. The origin of the meta-narrative markers of transition might therefore ultimately stem from the metric-formulaic language of ballad-singers since the Song and Yuan period, but their function in the later *pinghua* and *huaben* might be twofold: (1) as markers of an oral ‘storytelling’ style; and (2) as editorial markers for readability of the written/printed page.

Among the meta-narrative phrases found in the plain tale of *Xuanhe yishi*, the eight *chantefables* of Judge Bao case stories, and the two early stories, a number of those standard formulations typical of the full-fledged vernacular fiction style are lacking: (1) there are no formulas or other meta-narrative expressions pointing to the storyteller persona as an overt narrator (McLaren 1998: 266–69); (2) although the *chantefables* occasionally have concluding meta-narrative sentences leading over to future occasions of performance, there are in the materials under investigation from *pinghua*, *shuochang cihua* and *huaben* no particular formulaic expressions indicating the end of written units (*juan, ji, ben*) to mirror the end of performance units (*hui, chang*). The straightforward narrative where the narrator is taken for granted and does not need to be pointed out in explicit terms as a ‘storyteller’ is characteristic for all these texts. A ‘storyteller’s manner’ – that is, a *chantefable* storyteller’s manner – is obvious in the *shuochang cihua* where it permeates all of the highly formulaic text, and is not connected in particular to ‘stock phrases’ of meta-narration. In the *pinghua* and early *huaben* on the other hand the meta-narrative phrases reflect both *wenyan* and *baihua* models, and expressions that are decidedly

37 In particular as seen in the late sixteenth-, early seventeenth-century ‘full recensions’ *fanben* 繁本 editions of *Shuihu zhuan* and in the early seventeenth-century *Three Words, San yan* 三言 collections of Feng Menglong. The overt narrator type (*zijia* 自家) is, however, found in KC 15 among the early stories tested in my Appendix B, Table 4.B.7.

38 This feature might reflect a difference between the oral performance art and the printed form in the Ming texts in the form of volumes. A sixteenth century-reference to the use of chapter-ending formulas by oral storytellers mentions in particular the lute ballads in prosimetric form, cf Ye Dejun as quoted in McLaren 1998: 111–12. The lack of concluding formulas is also noted by Margaret Wan for the later printed *chantefables* of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, cf Wan 2004: 378.
vernacular and/or seem to originate with metric storytelling are comparatively scarce. Even if hua shuo, qie shuo and que shuo are in common between the three genres, it is clear that the pinghua only use a few such markers, while the variation of meta-narrative phrases of transition is quite pronounced in the huaben, in particular when looking at a broad sampling of texts. The expression une écriture vulgarisante would seem to describe the style of these texts better than the label of a ‘storytelling style’.

PART II: NOVEL, DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE
LITERATURE, 16TH–20TH CENTURY

Part II of this study focuses on the usage of ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’, that is, meta-narrative formulary phrases, in a score of versions of the tale about Wu Song and the tiger from novel, drama and performance literature spanning five hundred years. Besides the two types already explored in Part I, namely pre-verse phrases and markers of narrative transition, I also keep an eye on meta-narrative phrases pointing to an overt narrator in the guise of a storyteller and to dialogue between narrator and narratee. By exploring the usage/non-usage of such meta-narrative phrases in novel, drama and performance literature – oral and written – my hope is to arrive at a more specific understanding of the relationship of these expressions to storytelling in various forms.

Novel

The four novel editions considered here, the Chazeng jiaben (Stuttgart fragment), the Shuangfentangben, the Rongyutangben and the Jing Ping Mei cihua, are the earliest editions that contain the tale about Wu Song and the tiger. The chapter titles all include the half-couplet ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger on Jingyang Ridge’, Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu 景陽崗武松打虎. In the following each edition is briefly discussed with respect to the occurrence of meta-narrative phrases in the chapter containing the Wu Song story and in the edition at large.

The two simple recensions, jianben 簡本, from the end of the sixteenth century remind one of the Yuan/Early Ming plain tales in so far as they have only a few meta-narrative phrases and lack the explicit mode of the storyteller persona as an overt narrator who declares his function as a storyteller relating

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40 Bibliographical details and Chinese characters for the various versions of the Wu Song tale studied in Part II are found in my Appendix A.
Figure 4.4: A double page from the jianben, Stuttgart fragment, Chazeng jiaben, of Shuihu zhuan, late sixteenth century, Chapter 22, di nianer hui.

Figure 4.5: A double page from the jianben, Shuangfengtangben of Shuihu zhuan 1594 Chapter 22, di ershier hui.
the story. The Stuttgart fragment, the so-called Chazeng jiaaben (late sixteenth century),\textsuperscript{41} cf Table 4.C.1, my Appendix C, is considered by Y. W. Ma (2004) to be derived from a different and probably earlier line of jianben editions than the Shuangfengtangben (Pinglinben, 1594), Table 4.C.2, my Appendix C. While the Shuangfengtangben is according to Y. W. Ma (2004) a shortened and maltreated edition, even going further in this direction than the other jianben, this edition has more of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ than the Stuttgart fragment.\textsuperscript{42}

The layout of most jianben editions (including the Shuangfengtangben) is strikingly similar to that of the plain tales with ‘pictures above and text below’. The formulas are restricted to a couple of pre-verse markers and a concluding phrase. The few meta-narrative phrases are short and unadorned. The Stuttgart fragment of the Chazeng jiaaben, probably the oldest edition, is at one extreme. Poems are frequently inserted without a pre-verse formula, with just indenting. Apart from the sporadic usage of pre-verse tag words – two pre-verse exclamations (zheng shi, dan jian) and one pre-verse presentation (you pian gu feng dan dao) – this edition only uses one so-called ‘storyteller phrase’, xiahui fenjie, as an ending for the chapters. The chapter with the tiger story is representative of the whole edition: One does not find any further stock phrases, only a few variants for the initial words of the concluding phrase. The Shuangfengtangben 1594 uses a few more stock phrases, but generally they have a simpler form and occur far less frequently than in the fanben editions. In addition to the phrases in Chapter 22 of the Chazeng jiaaben listed above, the Shuangfengtangben adds one quotation marker (shi yue), placed outside the character columns,\textsuperscript{43} and

41 This fragment is among the oldest extant jianben editions, and it is probably the oldest where Chapter 22 containing the episode of Wu Song and the tiger is found. The fragment is situated in the Württembergische Landesbibliothek, Stuttgart, and often referred to as the Stuttgart fragment. Chapter 22 is found in juan 5, pages 10a-13b. Facsimile edition in Two recently discovered fragments of the Chinese novels San-kuo-chih yen-i and Shui-hu-chuan, edited by Hartmut Walravens, Hamburg: C. Bell Verlag 1982, with an introduction by Y. W. Ma
42 There is a long-standing debate about the precedence of the jianben or fanben editions. The main issue is whether the jianben are the simple forerunners of the later expanded fanben, or whether it is the other way round, that the jianben are later shortened and cheap versions of the fanben. For a summary of the debate, see GE Liangyan 2001: 106–9. Y. W. Ma has conducted the most detailed studies of the various jianben editions and is convinced that they are textually derived from a fanben edition closely related to the extant Rongyutangben (MA Y. W. 2004: 45, 60); see, however, Liangyan Ge’s arguments for the jianben as closely related to an oral milieu of storytelling and picture shows (GE Liangyan 2001: 108 and note 40). Here I am not entering into the debate of the priority of the specific texts that have survived, whether jianben or fanben. My interest is to discuss the usage of meta-narrative phrases, as well as the page layout and other features that may define the jianben as a special subgenre of the novel. The two subgenres of fanben and jianben seem to have coexisted over a long time. Whether the jianben as genre should be given priority to the fanben (as genre) is among the questions I discuss in the following. It should also be pointed out that inside the group of jianben editions, one may make a distinction between ‘fuller’ and ‘simpler’ versions, in the sense that some editions are more ‘simplified’ or ‘shortened’, jian, than others, cf MA Y.W. 2004: 45.
43 Pre-verse quotation markers that are placed outside the character columns or specially marked by parentheses, cartouche or the like are marked with an asterisk * in the tables, just like stage directions, cf
two markers of narrative transition (bu ti, que shuo). Thus this edition features at least three of the stock phrases well known from the later genre of the novel: que shuo, bu ti, and the concluding phrase zheng shi shen ren, qie ting xia hui fenjie. If one goes through a larger portion of this edition, a few variations can be added to the list of stock phrases: qie shuo, bu xia que shuo, bijing XX shuo chu shen me ren lai, qie ting xia hui fenjie. Wherever these phrases are found in the Shuangfengtangben edition, we find that they are lacking in the Stuttgart fragment.

The Rongyutangben (1610) represents the earliest authentic edition in the ‘full recension’ fanben group, cf Table 4.C.3, my Appendix C. There is only one other extant edition of Shuihu zhuan among the fanben, namely the Tiandu waichen edition that carries a preface dated 1589. The extant edition is, however, a Qing period reprint that may have undergone editorial changes likely to influence linguistic details such as various character forms and stock phrases. For this reason, the Rongyutangben is preferred for the present analysis. The stock phrases (fourteen in chapter 23) have the form that was to become the well worn ‘simulacrum of storytelling’, the extensively used formulas of the novel and short story. Apart from the pre-verse formulas of shi yue, you shi wei zheng, zheng shi, dan jian, you yipian gufeng dan dao, we find the pre-couplet formulas zhi jiao and you fen jiao, and further phrases of narrative transition: hua shuo, zhi shuo, bu zai hua xia, hua fen liang tou, the interjection shuoshi chi, na shi kuai and the chapter-concluding phrase bijing . . . zheng shi shen ren, qie ting xia hui fenjie. Further the storyteller appears in the text as part of ‘simulated dialogue with the audience’: ‘Storyteller, why did Chai Jin not like Wu Song?’ Shuohuade, Chai Jin yin he bu xi Wu Song. If a larger portion of the Rongyutangben is taken into consideration, there are a number of further formulas, including qie shuo, que shuo, hua xiu xu fan, and variations of formulas, notably the formula of appeal to the audience ‘Dear audience, listen . . .‘ kanguan ting shuo, and the interjection you hua ji chang, wu hua ji duan, as well as further formulas of folk wisdom changyan dao, zi gu dao, guren dao.

In the Jin Ping Mei cihua (1617, manuscript version mentioned 1596) where the tiger story is part of Chapter 1, the list of stock phrases (cf Table 4.C.4, my Appendix C) incorporates expressions that are in common not only with stock phrases in other chapters of the fanben editions of Shuihu zhuan, but also with the early Ming chantefables (dan shuo, dan biao) and short stories of the San yan collections (anxia, dan biao). Not only is a ‘storyteller’ explicitly mentioned

\[\text{Drama below.}\]

44 Cf McLaren 1998: 271. These are not found in the eight Judge Bao chantefables.

45 See also my Appendix B, Table 4.B.7.
as the narrator, but also his audience: ‘Dear audience, you may have heard . . .’
*kanguan ting shuo* (also found elsewhere in *fanben* editions). Another of the well
worn meta-narrative interjections is also part of this chapter: *you hua ji chang, wu hua ji duan*. The chapter-concluding phrase has the fullest form: *bijing wei zhi houlai he ru, qie ting xia hui fenjie*. So in this single chapter we find about
the whole arsenal of ‘storytellers’ stock phrases’ as used over and over again in
the genre of chapter divided fiction since the seventeenth century. However, not
all of the phrases frequent in *Shuihu zhuan* are part of *Jin Ping Mei cihua*. The
formulas *you fen jiao* and *zhi jiao* are with a single exception lacking in *Jin Ping Mei cihua*.46 In *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, formulas with *biao* [perform], such as *dan biao*, point to performance literature; these are absent in *Shuihu zhuan*.

**Drama**

Among the tiger stories in the genres for performance and for reading, the drama
versions generally only have stage directions, indicating various movements, role
types, the mode of performing (*chang* or *bai*), and names of melodies.47 The stage
directions are usually coined as short orders or titles and they often have their
own linguistic conventions. They are, however, not meant to be spoken during
performance or vocalized while reading aloud. They can only be understood
as silent instructions of the written page, just like those found in the Ming
chantefables. As such they form a subgroup of the meta-narrative markers in
written genres, marked with an asterisk * in the tables of my Appendix C. To
illustrate what kind of expressions are meant, Tables 4.C.5 and 4.C.6 containing
meta-narrative markers of this kind from two drama versions of the tiger tale are
included here: the earliest drama where the tiger tale is found, Act 4, ‘Subduing
the Beast’, *Chu xiong*, of the *chuanqi* drama *Yixia ji* 1599 by Shen Jing, and an
anonymous *kunqu* drama manuscript from the Qing period entitled *Fighting the Tiger, the Whole String of Episodes, Da hu quan chuan guan*.

In the *chuanqi* drama text, cf Table 4.C.5, my Appendix C, singing is indi-
cated by printing the characters of the verse in a larger type. There are no explicit
stage directions for singing versus speaking. The text only has the directions
of ‘enter’ and ‘exit’, together with the role types that are inserted before each
spoken or sung passage. Each special movement of the role types is described
with a few words concluded with ‘pose’, *jie*. The directive ‘stop talking’, *zhu kou*, is treated as a kind of ‘pose’. ‘Backstage’, *nei*, indicates a sound coming
from behind the stage.

46 At the end of Chapter 4 of *Jin Ping Mei cihua* there is, however, a single occurrence of *you fen jiao* 分交.
47 Some versions among the genres of *shuochang wenxue* share this feature.
In the *kunqu* drama text, cf Table 4.C.6, my Appendix C, stage directions ‘speaking’, *bai*, or ‘singing’, *chang*, are indicated in small characters after each shifting of role type; the melodies are also inserted into the mainline in small characters. Here the different size of the characters is obviously used to clarify which portions are part of the performance text and which are stage directions. The margins of the manuscript also contain information about the dialect style to be used by the different roles in different passages. However, meta-narrative markers for performance usage (to be vocalized) are not found.

*A Borderline Case between Drama and Performance Literature*

The genres of drama, *xiqu*, and performance arts, *shuochang*, have many points in common and sometimes the individual genres cannot be clearly placed in one or the other category. The genre *errenzhuan* 二人轉 [double twist] (with only two actors, a *dan* 但 and a *chou* 丑) is in the standard encyclopedia *Zhongguo dabaikè quanshu, xiqu quyi* (1983: 69–70), categorized as a *quyi* 曲藝 genre of the *zouchang* 走唱 [walking and singing] type, belonging in Northeast China. An *errenzhuan* version of the tiger tale is, however, published as ‘local drama’, *difang xiqu* 地方戲曲. In this version, cf Table 4.C.7, my Appendix C, meta-narrative phrases similar to those in the performance genre of the drum tale, *dagu shu*, are found, cf Table 4.C.14, my Appendix C. The actors of the *errenzhuan* take turns in narrating the story and only occasionally exchange dialogue. The narrative style is very close to the drum tale, but a few meta-narrative phrases are slightly changed into standard writing or modern variants, such as *zai shuo* 再說, *zai biao* 再表, *yao wen* 要問, in the *errenzhuan*, instead of *zai shuo* 在說, *zai biao* 在表, *ruo wen* 若問, in the drum tale (cf BØRDAHL 2007, where the *dagu shu* and the *errenzhuan* versions are compared).

*Performance Literature*

Performance literature, *shuochang wenxue*, comprises written texts related to the oral performance genres, *shuochang*. Since the mid-twentieth century these genres have also been referred to as *quyi* [the melodic arts or the variety arts]. These orally performed arts are usually in a smaller format compared to the theatre, in as much as there are rarely more than one to three performers, including musical accompaniment if any. The relationship between the oral performance tradition and the corresponding written genre differs from case to case. In the following the texts of the tiger tale chosen from performance litera--

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48 In Yangzhou ballad singing, *Yangzhou qingqu*, there is, however, a musical group of 4–5 players who accompany the singers.
ture are briefly introduced, again mainly with a view to the usage/non-usage of meta-narrative markers (including stage directions). Some of the performance genres as found in written texts show an inventory of meta-narrative markers that is quite elaborate, including a few expressions shared with the novel versions. Other genres have few such markers and those shared with the novel are rare, even exceptional.

The sample texts are arranged so that genres in prose with occasional verse are placed at the beginning (Tables 4.C.8 and 4.C.9, my Appendix C). Genres that have prosimetric form, with a balanced occurrence of verse and prose, follow (Tables 4.C.10, 4.C.11, 4.C.12 and 4.C.13, my Appendix C), and last come genres in metric form throughout (Tables 4.C.14 and 4.C.15, my Appendix C).

The Hangzhou pinghua version of the tiger tale, Table 4.C.8, in prose with occasional verse, is the first chapter of a written edition (1980), composed collectively by the Hangzhou storyteller Mao Saiyun and Professor Liu Caonan, Hangzhou University. The author-editors have chosen to render the oral tradition of Hangzhou storytellers into the form of a yanyi 演義 [romance]. This text, albeit ‘oral-related’, obviously has a relatively distant relationship to the language of oral performance, and dialectal features seem to have been streamlined into normalized Modern Standard Chinese. The author-editors’ ‘recreation’, zai chuangzuo 再創作, was admittedly based on both oral and written sources, including the book version of Wang Shaotang’s performances, mentioned below. The usage of meta-narrative phrases in this type of ‘new storyteller book’, xin huaben 新話本, could be very different from the linguistic habits of the Hangzhou storytellers in performance. The text features a set of meta-narrative phrases identical with those of the fanben version of the Shuihu zhuan, that is, hua shuo (used not only in this chapter, but as standard opening phrase for every chapter), qie shuo (highly frequent throughout the whole book), bu zhi . . . qie ting xia hui fenjie (standard closing phrase for each chapter). The text further features the pre-verse exclamation zheng shi, an overt storyteller-narrator, shuoshude, and an appeal to the audience, zhuwei. Meta-narrative phrases which are not in common with the novel (such as zheli xian biao, dai shuoshude lue biao jiju) might be the more authentic expressions reflecting the speech of Hangzhou storytellers. But since they show no apparent dialectal features, there is just as much chance that they – like the standard stock phrases reminiscent of the novel – reflect the editorial vision of storytellers’ language in modern Chinese aimed at a nationwide readership and with no special veneration for the authentic oral form.

50 Ibid. 388.
The Yangzhou pinghua version, Table 4.C.9, also in prose with occasional verse, is the first section of Chapter One of a xin huaben. This book was published as a two-volume work, Wu Song (1959), by a team of editors with a background in oral performance by the famous storyteller Wang Shaotang (1889–1968). The editors of this work are faithful to a certain degree to the dialectal spoken style of Wang Shaotang, while also editing according to their own sense of the required format for the book (cf BØRDahl 2003, 2004). This chapter has very few expressions belonging to the category of meta-narrative phrases, and only the exclamation zheng shi before a bon mot is reminiscent of the novel, but a few other candidates are listed (bu . . . bian ha, mo mang) which can be considered truly storytellers’ stock phrases of this genre, since they are also frequent in oral performances. If the whole book is scrutinized a number of other meta-narrative phrases are found to be sprinkled around, but it is difficult to know if they are added by the editors or belong to Wang Shaotang’s own performance language. None of them are similar to those of Shuihu zhuhan or other novels, but quite a few of them remind one of those found in the Wu Song yanyi introduced above, and since my own recorded material of Yangzhou storytellers contain no such formulas, I am inclined to interpret them as ‘editors’ storytelling mannerisms’. See also Wang Shaotang’s oral performance of the same episode, Table 4.C.16, my Appendix C.

The Fuzhou pinghua version, Table 4.C.10, is a lithographic print in proisometric form with balanced prose and verse (Late Qing/Republic). The genre has affinities to chantefable genres such as the Ming Chenghua shuo chang cihua and modern Suzhou tanci. Based on Fuzhou dialect, Min, the printed text occasionally retains dialectal traces, but it is far from being a transcription of performance in dialect. Before prose sections the stage instruction ‘speak’, bai, is inserted in cartouche, pointing clearly to a situation of oral performance. Two of the meta-narrative formulas, on the other hand, reflect the written format of the text (zhezhang shiqing an yibi [as for this chapter of events, let us hold the brush], qing kan xia ji . . . [please, read the following volume . . .]). The formula hua biao occurs at the beginning of each prose section (just after the stage direction bai), but most of the meta-narrative expressions are found in the metric sections, a feature reminiscent of the early chantefables (only anxia man

51 In oral tradition this repertoire, shu, is called Ten chapters of Wu (Song), Wu shi hui.
52 Certain structural features and voice registers of Fuzhou pinghua seem to have amazingly close parallels to descriptions of Tang transformations, bianwen, and Song storytelling, shuohua, cf CHEN Guanrong 1998: 54. For voice registers of performed Suzhou tanci, see BENDER 2003: 55–59.
53 The use of ru, rumen 汝, 汝們 for the second person pronoun singular and plural reflects for example an attempt to render dialect, CHEN Guanrong 1998: 103.
biao, dan shuo and zhe qie bu biao are in the prose sections). A couple of phrases are in common with those of Jin Ping Mei cihua (qie shuo, dan shuo and anxia man (dan) biao). Verse sections have no stage direction, but are only marked by indentation and an empty space between the verse lines.

The ‘fast tale’, kuaishu, is a sub-genre of the Manchu zidisuh, tradi
tionally performed with drum accompaniment in accelerating tempo. It is a prosimetric genre with a balanced occurrence of prose and verse, and several specialised vocalizing modes. The version with the tiger tale (Republic), cf Table 4.C.11, my Appendix C, contains a number of stage directions (marked *), not belonging to the performed text, but indicating the various modes (sung or spoken), melodies, rhythm and other special sections of the text. Only four meta-narrative phrases belong to the performance text, meant to be vocalized (biaode shi introduction, hua biao transition, zhen nai shi tag for bon mot, ni kan appeal to the audience).

The Shandong clapper tale, Shandong kuaishu, is a genre performed with clappers, predominantly in rhythmic metre, but with a number of vocalizing modes and occasional short prose passages. The tiger tale is from a collection in modern print by the famous clapper tale performer, Gao Yuanjun (1980), cf Table 4.C.12. Apart from the stage directions bai and pangbai there are three meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition in the metrical portions, that is, two of introduction and one of conclusion: xianyan suiyu bu yao jiang, biao yi biao, xia yi hui. In a modern parody of the tiger tale for performance in Shandong kuaishu (1980), cf Table 4.C.13, there is only the stage direction bai for the portions spoken outside of the clapper tale rhythm, otherwise no meta-narrative expressions.

The drum tale, dagushu, is a genre in verse only and with only one rhyme throughout. In the tiger tale version (Late Qing/ Early Republic), cf Table 4.C.14, five meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition are used (yan yi hui, yaxia . . . qie bu biao, zai biao, zhe shi XX yige duan and xia yi hui . . . zai xushang). There is also a weak form of simulated dialogue, ruo wen. All of these phrases are closely connected with oral performance as the setting for this performance text, none of them are in common with those used in the novel, but yaxia . . . qie bu biao, zai biao is similar to formulas of the Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua and the Fuzhou pinghua.

55 Hua biao is in common with Fuzhou pinghua.
56 For a detailed analysis of this text, cf Børdahl 2007.
The Yangzhou ballad, *Yangzhou qingqu*, is in verse throughout, featuring a number of different melodies, metres and rhymes, all of them vocalized as song. In the tiger tale version from a collection in modern print (1985), cf Table 4.C.15, apart from stage directions like *chang* and *shuban*, there is only one meta-narrative phrase, the exclamation *dan zhi jian*, before a striking ‘poem-like’ description (since the whole piece is in metre, one cannot speak of a ‘pre-verse phrase’ in this case). The printed version is very close to a performed version from 2000, also as regards meta-narrative expressions, see Table 4.C.22.

Oral Performances

The oral performances of performance literature, *shuochang*, recorded on tape or CD, belong to genres that are more or less closely related to the genres exemplified above in written texts, *shuochang wenxue*. Their inventory of meta-narrative markers is in most cases considerably less elaborate and only the exclamation *zheng shi* in Sichuan storytelling, cf Table 4.C.18, and *dan jian* in Yangzhou ballad singing, cf Table 4.C.22, is in common with the novel. The sample texts are arranged in the same order as the written texts of performance literature, that is, genres in prose with occasional verse are placed at the beginning (16, 17, 18) and those in prosimetric (19) and metric form (20, 21, 22) follow.
Yangzhou pinghua in oral performance is predominantly in prose with a few inserted poems that are recited, not sung. The tiger tale is rendered in two versions. One version is by Wang Shaotang from a radio broadcast (1961), cf Table 4.C.16, containing the first part of the tale, ca. 30 minutes, corresponding to one fourth of a full day in the storyteller’s house. Another version is by Wang Xiaotang, the adopted son of Wang Shaotang, and has the approximate length of ‘a day of storytelling’ (1992), cf Table 4.C.17. Occasional pre-verse presentations are not in formulaic form, and only two local meta-narrative phrases seem to serve the function of transition: ‘let’s slow down a bit’, qie man, and ‘if not . . . that’s the end (of the story)’, bu . . . bian ba. Interjections, such as qie man, mo mang 莫忙 [take it easy] (the latter not used in the two sample texts, but quite frequent in other recorded performances) are used not only to punctuate the narration, but also often in the dialogue between the characters.
of the tale. Obviously they are part of daily conversation in Yangzhou dialect, and not particular to a storyteller’s jargon.57

The performance of the tiger tale in *Sichuan pinghua* (1974) is by the performer Luo Shizhong from Guanxian (Dujiangyan) in Sichuan, recorded by Göran Malmqvist during a stay in this region. The performance of 30 minutes is almost exclusively in prose with only one single short poem inserted, preceded by the exclamation *zhenshi*, cf Table 4.C.18. The wakening board, *xingmu*, is applied at the start and with short intervals throughout the performance, in a significantly different way from that of *Yangzhou pinghua* where this item is used very sparingly.

The oral performance of the tiger tale in *Shandong kuaishu* (1999) is by the famous Shandong performer Sun Zhenye (b. 1944), cf Table 4.C.19. The performance is in spoken metrical form to the rhythm of the clappers with a few passages in non-metrical prose. The meta-narrative phrases are close to those of the written version according to Gao Yuanjun, cf Table 4.C.12. Here we find in the verse portions *hua shao shuo, zai biaobiao* and in conclusion *changdao ci chu suan yi duanr, dao xia hui ... jin jieshang*, reminiscent of the formulas of the Ming Chenghua chantefables.

The genre of *danxian* belongs to the large group of drum tale genres, where a singer accompanies himself/herself by beating the rhythm with a small hand-drum and is further accompanied by a player of the three-stringed banjo, *sanxian*. The two Wu Song stories (1999) performed by a famous Beijing artist, Liu Hongyuan (b. 1923), take their theme from the sequel to the tiger tale, the story about how Pan Jinlian first tried to seduce Wu Song when he came home after killing the tiger, cf Table 4.C.20, and after her failure became involved with Ximen Qing, cf Table 4.C.21. The two sessions, *hui*, are chanted in metric form with some passages narrated in prose. At the beginning and end of these performances we find stock-phrase-like expressions as part of the metric lines, reminiscent of the style of the Ming chantefables. The introductory and concluding phrases of the two *danxian* performances are not the same, but both mention the textual unit as *hui*. However, the second item uses both ‘session’ *hui* and ‘booklet’ *ben* as a name for the unit of performance, pointing to the existence of a written version or script as a basis for performance in this genre.

Yangzhou ballad, *Yangzhou qinggu*, is performed by a solo singer accompanied by a small group of musicians playing string instruments and beating the

rhythm on a porcelain plate with chopsticks. The tiger tale is here performed by the leader of the troupe Nie Feng from Yangzhou, singing in male voice (2000).
The oral version, cf Table 4.C.22, just like the written version, cf Table 4.C.15, uses no meta-narrative phrases of transition. However, one of the traditional pre-verse phrases (and a variation of it) is used inside the metric form to indicate a lively description, *dan jian* and *dan zhi jian*.

**Meta-narrative Phrases in the Wu Song Material**
The meta-narrative phrases investigated in the above twenty versions of the tiger tale, supplemented with two more Wu Song tales, can be divided into four main groups:

(A) Stage directions  
(B) Pre-verse phrases  
(C) Phrases of narrative transition (introduction, transition and conclusion)  
(D) Expressions signalling an overt narrator as storyteller and dialogue with the audience

The numbering from 1 to 22 in the upper line of Tables 4.1 to 4.4 indicates the individual texts which are found under the same number in Appendix A (bibliographical information) and in the Tables 1–22 of Appendix C.
Table 4.1: Stage directions in twenty-two sample texts (1–22)

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The stage directions are found mainly in drama literature, but a few expressions also occur in some genres of performance literature, i.e. *bai, chang*. These expressions are not meant to be vocalized in performance and as such do not belong to the strings of words that make up the text for performance as spoken/sung. In the 'double twist', *errenzhuan*, version, text 7, a type of drama that stands on the borderline between drama proper, *xiqu*, and performance literature, *shuochang wenxue*, we find, besides stage directions, also a few meta-narrative phrases of categories (C) and (D). Some stage directions are specific to certain genres of performance literature, e.g. text 11: *kuaisu* has a list of five expressions only used in this genre.
Table 4.2: Pre-verse phrases in twenty-two sample texts (1–22)

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The pre-verse phrases generally belong to the vocalizable part of the texts, but we should note that quotation forms such as *shi yue* and *ci yue* are usually arranged 'outside' the running text, as if they are not really part of the story and might be left out when read aloud or performed. As mentioned in Part I, these expressions are reminiscent of stage directions such as *chang*, *bai*, etc. It is obvious from the table that most of the pre-verse formulas are only used in the novel. They are absent in the drama versions. Only *zheng shi* and *danjian* are found outside the novel. In 'novel-like' editions such as *Hangzhou pinghua* (8) and *Yangzhou pinghua* (9) we find *zheng shi*, and in *Yangzhou qingqu* (15, 22) we find *dan jian* and *dan zhi jian*. The *zhen nai shi* of the *kuaishu* (11) is found in front of a final *bon mot*, and is reminiscent of the *zheng shi* formula. *Yangzhou pinghua* in oral performance has a pre-verse presentation in free form, but no pre-verse quotation formulas. From the material exemplified by the collection of tiger stories, it would therefore seem that pre-verse formulas are not important in Chinese storytelling (or drama), whether we are speaking about oral-related written texts, *shuochang wenxue*, or oral performances, *shuochang*.

a In cases where it just so happens that a certain phrase is not used in the chapter with the tiger tale, a circle o indicates that the stock phrase is otherwise regularly found in the given edition.
Table 4.3: Phrases of narrative transition (introduction, transition and conclusion) in the sample texts (1–22)


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From the materials under survey it appears that meta-narrative phrases of transition do not present a fixed set outside the novel (the difference between the jianben and fanben editions of the novel is also pronounced, as already discussed). The all-pervading chapter-final formula, xiahui fenjie, of the novel as a genre since the Ming is found as expected in every instance of the tiger tale in the novel versions, and further it is found in the Hangzhou pinghua chapter which is an edited version of storytelling into novelistic yanyi format, strongly adapted to the genre-conventions of the novel. Elsewhere, this formula is absent; we find it neither in shuochang wenxue, nor in shuochang. Other phrases of narrative transition from the novel (fanben and Jin Ping Mei cihua), hua shuo and qie shuo, are found in the Hangzhou pinghua version and the Fuzhou pinghua version. Jin Ping Mei cihua has a few phrases of transition that point perhaps to shuochang wenxue rather than to the novel (or short story), namely dan shuo and anxia . . . dan biao, which are close to formulas of Ming Chenghua shuochang cihua and Fuzhou pinghua (anxia man biao, dan shuo).
Table 4.4: Storyteller as overt narrator in twenty-two sample texts (1–22)

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In this table only formulaic expressions pointing to the narrator as storyteller or to his audience are included. However, in some genres (including the versions under study here) the narrator is overt in the sense that during performance the performer will mention himself/herself in the first person in the capacity of being the storyteller. (First and second person as used in performing the characters of the story are of course excluded from consideration here.) If, however, such references to the narrator (overt narrator type) are not coined in special formulaic form, they are not included in the table.

DISCUSSION OF THE WU SONG MATERIAL

In an attempt to break the vicious circle of defining the influence of storytelling on early Chinese vernacular fiction by defining early storytelling on the basis of this very same fiction, I try to look in detail at the function, linguistic style, distribution and frequency of what has for a long time been termed the ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’. The first stage has been to analyze the different kinds of expressions that make up the ‘stock phrases’ of the so-called storyteller’s manner in Chinese vernacular fiction, namely meta-narrative phrases used in pre-verse position and for narrative transition. In the next step I have made a survey of such phrases in the earliest texts where we find them, the pínghuā, shuochang cihua and huaben.

With the rise of the novel and the appearance of the ‘full recensions’, fānben, a convention of the ‘simulacrum of storytelling’ is consolidated in vernacular narrative. However, the so-called ‘simple’ recensions, jiānben, are apparently closer to the plain tale, pínghuā, as a genre than to the ‘full recensions’, fānben (including here the Wu Song tale as related in Jīn Píng měi cihua.) Even though there seems to be strong evidence that the extant jiānben editions were created as short easy-readers on the basis of an original that could not have been much different from the Róngyútángben edition,58 the evidence from the usage and non-usage of stock phrases – as well as other features, such as the abrupt style and the pictures in the upper part of the page – would put the jiānben editions in a genre category that would be (1) typologically earlier in so far as being reminiscent of the plain tales pínghuā of Yuan and Early Ming and the Ming chantefables; and (2) closer to the storytelling profession in so far as they exhibit a style similar to that found in extant storytellers’ scripts, jiāoben 腳本, from the late nineteenth/early twentieth century among storytellers of Yángzhōu pínghuā. It is the short, abrupt, unadorned, often sloppy and elliptical language

58 MA Yau-won (2004; see in particular pages 45 and 60) considers the earliest jiānben (from the late sixteenth century) versions to be condensed on the basis of a non-extant fānben version much reminiscent of the Róngyútángben 1610. The argumentation of Y. W. Ma does not, however, preclude the possibility that the fānben versions themselves were preceded by jiānben versions, cf PLAKS 1987: 299–301 and GE Liangyan 2001: 107–8. The known jiānben could have had two separate textual models, the fānben and the early jiānben prototypes that are not extant. My own study of storytellers’ scripts in the Yángzhōu pínghuā tradition lead me to consider the jiānben versions as probably much closer to a script tradition than the fānben. The storytellers’ own tradition for scripts could have created precedents for one kind of novel, the ‘script-like novel’, which was then transmitted in written tradition as the jiānben-line(s). In that sense the jiānben line would be primary vis-à-vis the fānben-line(s). According to my present view, it seems more likely that the jiānben format was the oldest format of the novel. The present day jiānben would, however, probably not represent a pure derivation from earlier jiānben, but they seem to be a later kind of jiānben novels, textually copying from former fānben editions, but taking their style and layout from the jiānben and pínghuā tradition.
that the *jianben* editions (and also the plain tale *pinghua* texts) have in common with storytellers’ scripts, but not with oral performance (Børdahl 2005).

In the full recensions, on the other hand, we find the narrating instance appearing as an overt narrator in the shape of a ‘storyteller’ and his narratee as the ‘listeners’ or ‘onlookers’, a device that is also much used in later stories, *huaben*. With the *fanben* novel we thus find the full-fledged literary convention of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ in vernacular fiction.

The focal tale of this study, Wu Song Fights the Tiger on Jingyang Ridge, is cast for the first time in writing that has survived to the present in the *jianben* and *fanben* editions of the *Shuihu zhuan*. With a study of this tale I try to approach the question of storytelling and ‘simulacrum of storytelling’ from another angle. Based on a survey of the ‘stock phrases’ (in the sense of meta-narrative pre-verse phrases, formulas of transition and expressions of an overt ‘storyteller’ narrator) as found in the Wu Song material I hope to show – if only spotwise – how this kind of expression has been used in Chinese storytelling in the broad sense of telling and singing arts, *shuochang yishu*, during the centuries that have passed since the ‘storytelling style’ was adopted as a literary convention.

The short pieces of the focal tale can only give a glimpse of the genre conventions of their respective genres, not a full picture, and we cannot necessarily expect the single texts (oral and written) to be representative of their given genre. Therefore conclusions drawn on the background of this material can only be tentative. Keeping this warning in mind, it is nevertheless interesting to see how the material corresponds with or deviates from the findings from the early period studied in Part I. The basic idea of this approach is that just like a reconstruction of earlier language stages is based on a projection of present-day languages, maybe a detailed analysis of present-day oral storytelling together with an analysis of various oral-related texts (texts with a connection to storytelling through time) can provide some reasonable arguments for how far the novelistic ‘manner’ should be considered a mirror of oral performance and how far it might be more dependent on literary influence or invention.

*Stock Phrases and Oral Culture*

The usage of meta-narrative phrases in the earliest texts, the plain tale of *Xuanhe yishi*, the *chantefables* of the Judge Bao tales and two early *huaben* of court case fiction, points in the main to their connection with oral culture. Their linguistic form, their placement in the page layout and their textual distribution all support this, and we find that they are largely coined in vernacular language, marked by grammatical structures from spoken style,
and mostly have no precedents in former written genres. In the *Xuanhe yishi* one part of the pre-verse phrases, the longer presentations, are, however, coined in *wenyan* terms with precedents from *wenyan* literature, while the shorter pre-verse exclamations are in *baihua*. This corresponds with the impression of many scholars that the plain tales, in particular the *Xuanhe yishi*, have a composite background from literary (historical) and vernacular (ultimately perhaps oral) sources. The *huaben* have the longer pre-verse presentations in *baihua*. The meta-narrative markers of narrative transition in all three genres are coined exclusively in *baihua*.

The evidence from the early *chantefables* is particularly interesting, because this type of text must have been more closely related to oral performance than any of the other genres. When meta-narrative phrases of narrative transition occur as a vital part of the formulaic language of the verse portions of this genre, such phrases were likely to belong also to the standard formulations of the oral performer. In the heptasyllabic verses of the *chantefables* these phrases enter into a completely organic structure with other formulaic phrases building up the verses. The metric forms of storytelling in Song and Yuan could have been the oral reservoir from which such phrases entered the vernacular prose genres. The source of such expressions in the plain tales could be direct observation and copying from oral performance, it could be via storyteller’s handwritten scripts, or it could be from still older texts that had developed a habit of using such expressions for narrative or editorial purposes. Since both oral and written precursors are lost, we cannot come further along this path.

In the plain tales the function of some meta-narrative phrases is sometimes obviously ‘editorial’ in the sense of being used for special effects on the written page. The pre-verse quotation markers in cartouche are examples of this, and the placement of meta-narrative markers at the beginning of a section (sometimes marked with a blank space) also seem to point to specific editorial practice, rather than narratorial habit. Here it is important to remember that expressions that clearly have their origin in literary sources (*wenyan*) may nevertheless be an ingredient in oral performance, and – the other way round – expressions that clearly show an origin in spoken language (and perhaps imitate a certain performance style) may nevertheless be used in written genres for explicit literary or even technical printing purposes.

Turning to the collection of Wu Song tales from the early Ming editions of the novel via Ming and Qing drama to Qing and twentieth-century performance literature, what kind of meta-narrative phrases are represented in the different versions? What is in common between the genres of this period and the early period? How far do the meta-narrative phrases represent a ‘convention’ of the storytelling genres?
From Table 4.1 (stage directions) it is immediately clear that, as expected, stage directions belong mainly to the drama versions. Only short orders like ‘speak!’, *bai*, and ‘sing’, *chang*, are also found in some of the texts of performance literature, parallel to ‘tell!’, *shuo*, and ‘sing!’, *chang*, in the early *chantefables*. The stage directions are only interesting for this study in so far as they show features of printing technique that are sometimes helpful for understanding the function of certain markers in the printed texts of performance literature. We can see the common features of stage directions like *bai/shuo* and *chang* with pre-verse quotation markers like *shi yue*, *you shi wei zheng*, etc. The latter seem to stand in a position between pure stage directions (silent) and ‘speakable’ markers, something that is clearly demonstrated in the original editions of plain tales. In Table 4.1 the usage of stage directions for the *kuaishu* version (text 11) further corroborates this view: the various differently performed parts of the text are announced by stage directions (*shipian, zhutou, xx ban, huabai, xx diao*) that form a link between drama and performance literature.

Table 4.2 (pre-verse phrases) shows that these phrases belong mainly to the genres in prose with occasional verse, but are exceptional in the prosimetric and metric genres. This pattern corresponds to that in the early genres, where pre-verse phrases are found in the plain tales and early *huaben*-stories but are absent from the *chantefables*. In the prose genres the pre-verse exclamations *zheng shi* and *dan jian* are found in all the four Ming novel versions as well as in the printed prose narrative of *Hangzhou pinghua* (edited into novel format *yanyi*), while in printed *Yangzhou pinghua* (also heavily edited) only *zheng shi* is found.59 The quotation forms *shi yue*, *ci yue* and *you shi wei zheng* are absent outside the novel. Longer pre-verse presentations are found both in the novel and in *Hangzhou pinghua* and *Yangzhou pinghua*. In the latter case we find such presentations not only in the printed book, but also in the oral performances. But such presentations do not have a special formulaic form, something that corresponds with the practice of the early *pinghua* and *huaben*. In the oral versions pre-verse formulas are extremely rare.60

Table 4.3 (phrases of transition) shows how this category is found mainly with the novel in the full recensions (in the *jianben* editions they are highly restricted), the novelistic edition of *Hangzhou pinghua*, and first and foremost with the prosimetric and metric genres of *Fuzhou pinghua, kuaishu, Shandong*

59 *Dan jian* and *dan zhi jian* are, however, seen in the metric genre of *Yangzhou qingqu* (both in printed edition and oral performance) as markers of emphasis before a lively description. *Zhen nai shi* is found in the prosimetric genre of *kuaishu* before a saying.
60 The exclamation *zheng shi* [indeed] is found (once) in the performance of Sichuan storytelling, but not in the versions of *Yangzhou pinghua* that are studied here. However, in oral performances of *Yangzhou pinghua* this exclamation is also occasionally used in pre-verse position, where it carries an overtone of ‘literary flourish’ or ‘loan’ (from vernacular fiction), cf BØRDAHL 1996: 171, and BØRDAHL 2003: 94.
This characteristic again corresponds well with the pattern we saw for the early genres: these expressions were an inherent part of the verse portions of the chantefables, with only occasional appearance in the prose portions. From Table 4.3 it becomes clear that the meta-narrative phrases of transition are to a high degree genre-dependent. There is very little overlapping in the usage of formulas. In Yangzhou pinghua (both in printed/edited format and in oral performance) we find a couple of formulary expressions specific to this genre (qie man, mo mang, bu... bian ba).

Table 4.4 (formulas pointing to an overt narrator as storyteller) shows that while the jianben editions do not expose the narrator as an openly declared storyteller, the full recension fanben and Jin Ping Mei cihua do. The material suggests that the storyteller persona is only embryonic (or truncated) in the jianben versions of Shuihu zhuan, but clearly brought out as shuohuade in the fanben and Jin Ping Mei cihua. Again the Hangzhou pinghua version follows the convention of the full-fledged novel (shuoshude), but in the other examples from performance literature this phenomenon is only weakly present. It is obvious from various rhetorical questions that there is a 'simulated dialogue' with the audience and in this way the performer ('storyteller') is pointing to his/her role as narrator, but standard phrases for this function are mostly absent. However, as mentioned above, the table does not register cases where the narrator points to himself/herself by the first person pronoun wo. This is regularly the case for example in Yangzhou pinghua, and therefore this genre does absolutely belong to the group where an overt narrator is found, but in the performances of the focal tale that are under analysis here, there are no formulaic phrases pointing to this function. The relatively weak appearance of the storyteller-narrator as a textual constituent in genres that truly have a close connection to oral storytelling corresponds well with the findings of Anne McLaren, namely that this characteristic is not strong in the performance texts of the chantefables, precisely because they were so close to oral performance (McLaren 1998: 265).

61 There is no overlapping between the genres of performance literature (including both the printed versions and the oral performances). Fuzhou pinghua shares a few phrases with Jin Ping Mei cihua, namely dan shuo, auxia dan/man biao, and qie shuo. The novelistic edition of Hangzhou pinghua shows a sprinkling of the phrases that are generally considered the 'norm' of the novel, i.e. hua shuo, qie shuo, qie ting xia bui fen jie. 62 In collections of pinghua and pingchu, edited into publishable form in the latter half of the twentieth century, stock phrases similar to or close to those of the novel are sprinkled more or less lavishly, but it is clear from the prefaces to the individual items that they were not based on transcription from oral performance, but on various kinds of written materials. Furthermore all such texts were diligently edited into a 'reader-friendly' format, and the novel was obviously considered the model, cf Zhongguo pingshu jinghua (1991).

63 In oral performances of Yangzhou pinghua the narrator in rare instances declares himself overtly as 'storyteller' shuohuade or 'I who tell the story', wo shuo de ren. But in the two performances of the Wu Song tale of the present study we find the more general situation where no such expression is used, cf Børdahl 1996: 193.
The intrusive ‘storyteller’ as a textual ingredient appears to have been a later development for the written vernacular fiction and from the material at hand one might be tempted to think that it never really belonged to the orally performed genres. Here we seem to be in a situation more like that which characterized the period of the Ming chantefables, before the novel was fully developed. When the storyteller or ‘vocalizer’ is close at hand, there is no pressing need to announce him in formulary words of performance.64 This need only arises as ‘fiction for reading’ is in demand and the ‘simulacrum of the storyteller’ becomes in the first place a phenomenon of paper, print and readership.

Stock Phrases and Genre Conventions

A glance at Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 above shows that there is no firm and stable common convention of meta-narrative phrases through time and across performance-related genres. The ‘simulacrum of storytelling’ found in the Ming novel and story has no hard and fast correspondence with conventions of performance-related literature or oral performance, as evidenced by the instances of the Wu Song tale. What is in common is the use of this type of expression to a varying degree in the performance genres as well as the novel.

The tables bear witness to a convention of using (sometimes) pre-verse phrases in the narrative genres of prose with occasional verse. But it is only for the novel versions that a ‘set’ of such phrases could be established.65 As for the transitional phrases, we have the same situation. Basically it is only the fanben version of the novel and the version in Jin Ping Mei cihua that display a ‘set’ of such phrases (and the editor of the Hangzhou pinghua version follows this convention to a certain degree).66 But apart from that, it is only the fact of the occurrence of this type of expression that links the other performance genres, not the actual formulaic phrases as such. Counting the Hangzhou pinghua text

64 In her study of chantefable and novel versions of stories from the eighteenth and nineteenth century, Margaret Wan notes as a genre-defining characteristic that the chantefables of this period also have a far less intrusive narrator-storyteller than the derived novel versions, cf Wan 2004: 374, 377.
65 Zheng shi, you pian gufeng dan dao, dan jian; with an additional shi yue/ci yue, you shi wei zheng for the fanben and Jin Ping Mei cihua.
66 The two jianben editions are both representative of their editions at large. They show a considerably more sparing usage of meta-narrative phrases than that of the fanben editions, as well as Jin Ping Mei cihua and later novels. Chapter 23 of the Rongyutang (fanben) edition of Shuihu zhuan is fairly representative of the whole edition (100 chapters), even if a collection of meta-narrative phrases of transition in the entire text would yield a number of further expressions. The same is the case with Jin Ping Mei cihua: the whole text would yield quite a number of further expressions of this kind, but the sample text of Chapter 1 seems representative in so far as it shows that this novel in part takes over the phrases of the fanben of Shuihu zhuan, in part uses meta-narrative phrases from the chantefable tradition. The set of expressions common to the fanben edition and the Jin Ping Mei cihua has: que shuo, huashuo, bu zai huaxia, hua fen liangtou, shuo shi chi, na shi kuai, qie shuo, hua xiu xu fang, you hua ji chang, wu hua ji dian, cf Table 4.3.
together with the genre of the novel, only a very few meta-narrative phrases are distributed across genres (dan jian, dan shuo, anxia dan/man biao, qie shuo) and these few are only shared between two genres in each case, cf Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4. While some of the phrases may be related in function, meaning and words that enter into the expressions, they are rarely exactly alike and do not form a list of clichés common to all the storytelling genres.

If the collection of Wu Song tales has a certain representative value for the genres exemplified, there is hardly any common convention for a ‘storyteller’s manner’ to be found in the usage of stock phrases in the oral-related and oral genres of Chinese storytelling. Conventions of meta-narrative comment would in their precise linguistic form be genre-dependent. The apparent ‘eternal storyteller’ of Chinese written vernacular fiction, long and short, would be a fiction in itself, with only a precarious foothold in the storytelling that came before and continues up to the present.
APPENDIX A

Twenty samples of ‘Wu Song Fights the Tiger’ and two more Wu Song stories

Note: For each sample the title of the unit that contains the tiger story is given, followed by the name of the genre and bibliographic information. Titles of samples that are separate booklets are written in italics, those that are part of a larger book are written in normal print with quotes, oral performances are written in small caps. The four samples from novels are each given a short title to indicate the edition in which the tiger tale is found. Drama, performance literature and oral performances are arranged according to genre. The collection of popular literature in the Fu Ssu-nien Library of the Academia Sinica, Taiwan, is abbreviated Academia Sinica Collection: ASC.

Written texts

Novel

1. Stuttgart fragment Chazeng jiaben
‘Di nian’er hui: Henghaijun Chai Jin liu bin, Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu’
第廿二回 橫海郡柴進留賓 景陽崗武松打虎


2. Shuangfengtangben
‘Di ershier hui: Henghaijun Chai Jin liu bin, Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu’
第二十二回 橫海郡柴進留賓 景陽崗武松打虎

Zhanghui xiaoshuo 章回小說, from: Jingben zengbu jiaozheng quan xiang Zhongyi shuihu zhuan pinglin 京本增補校正全像忠義水浒傳評林, 1594, 104 hui. Facsimile

3. **Rongyutangben**

‘Di ershisan hui: Henghaijun Chai Jin liu bin, Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu’

第二十三回 橫海郡柴進留賓 景陽崗武松打虎


4. **Jin Ping Mei cihua**

‘Di yi hui: Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu, Pan Jinlian qian fu mai fengyue’

第一回 景陽岡武松打虎 潘金蓮嫌夫賣風月


**Drama**

5. Shen Jing: *Yixia ji Chuanqi*

‘Di si chu: Chu xiong’

第四齣 除兇


6. Anonymous: *Kunqu*

*Da hu quan chuan guan* 打虎全串貫

*Kunqu* 崑曲, (Qing dynasty), ASC, Che Wang 車王 59 han 函 4ce 冊, manuscript, 8 pp.

7. Anonymous: *Errenzhuan*

*Wu Song da hu* 武松打虎

Performance literature

8. Hangzhou pinghua
‘Di yi hui: Toupingju Wen Kang mai jiu, Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu’
第一回: 透瓶居文康卖酒 景陽崗武松打虎


9. Yangzhou pinghua
‘Di yi hui: Jingyanggang da hu’
第一回: 景陽崗打虎

Yi, Jingyanggang da hu
一, 景陽崗打虎


10. Fuzhou pinghua
Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu
景陽崗武松打虎

Fuzhou pinghua 福州平話, ASC, 7 ce, 21-201, lithography, 74 pp.

11. Kuaishu
‘Wu Song da hu’
武松打虎


12. Shandong kuaishu
‘Wu Song da hu’
武松打虎


13. Shandong kuaishu modern parody
‘Wu Song he laohu’
武松和老虎 武松和老虎

14. *Dagushu*

*Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu*

景陽崗武松打虎

*Dagu* 大鼓, ASC, Ku I 9-175, woodcut, 9 pp.

15. *Yangzhou qingqu*

‘*Wu Song da hu*’

武松打虎


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**Oral performances**

16. *Yangzhou pinghua*

*Wu Song da hu*

武松打虎


17. *Yangzhou pinghua*

*Wu Song da hu*

武松打虎

*Yangzhou pinghua* 揚州評話, performed by Wang Xiaotang 王篠堂 (1918-2002), 80 minutes, Zhenjiang 1992, Audio Tape; recorded by V.B.

18. *Sichuan pinghua*

*Wu Song da hu*

武松打虎

*Sichuan pinghua* 四川評話, performed by Luo Shizhong 羅世忠 (b. 1943), 30 minutes, Guanxian 1974, Audio Tape; recorded by Gøran Malmqvist.

19. *Shandong kuaishu*

*Wu Song da hu*

武松打虎

*Shandong kuaishu* 山東快書, performed by Sun Zhenye 孫鎮業 (b. 1944), CD: *Shandong kuaishu* 山東快書, *Zhongguo quyi ming jia ming duan zhencang ban* 中國曲藝名家名段 珍藏版, China Record Corp. 1999, 14 minutes (date of recording not specified).
20. **DANXIAN**  
**XI SHU BIE XIONG**  
戲叔別兄 Seducing brother-in-law, taking leave of elder brother  
*Danxian* 單弦, performed by Liu Hongyuan 劉洪源 (b. 1923), 30 minutes, Audio cassette, *Qutan huicui* 曲壇薈萃16 [Eminent pieces from the scene of performed arts 16], Tianjinshi yishu yinxiang chubanshe, 1997.

21. **DANXIAN**  
**TIAO LIAN ZAI YI**  
挑簾裁衣 Lifting the curtain and sewing clothes  
*Danxian* 單弦, performed by Liu Hongyuan 劉洪源 (b. 1923), 25 minutes, audio cassette, *Qutan huicui* 曲壇薈萃16 [Eminent pieces from the scene of performed arts 16], Tianjinshi yishu yinxiang chubanshe, 1997.

22. **YANGZHOU QINGQU**  
**WU SONG DA HU**  
武松打虎  
*Yangzhou qingqu* 揚州清曲, performed by Nie Feng 聶峰, Yangzhou, Slender West Lake, 24 May 2000, Audio Tape; recorded by V.B.
APPENDIX B

Pre-verse phrases and phrases of narrative transition in early plain tale, *chantefable* and story.

Plain tale

Table 4.B.1: Pre-verse phrases from *Xuanhe yishi*.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Pinyin</th>
<th>English Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>zhenge shi</td>
<td>真個是</td>
<td>That was truly:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que shi</td>
<td>却是</td>
<td>It was really:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dao shi</td>
<td>道是</td>
<td>It said:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi yue</td>
<td>詩曰</td>
<td>The poem says:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zheng shi</td>
<td>正是</td>
<td>Indeed:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>zhen shi</td>
<td>真是</td>
<td>Truly:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ke wei shi</td>
<td>可謂是</td>
<td>It might be called:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you shi wei zheng</td>
<td>有詩為証</td>
<td>There is a poem that testifies to this:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hou you ren yi shi dao</td>
<td>後有人一詩道</td>
<td>Later generations had a poem which says:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shi yun</td>
<td>詩云</td>
<td>The poem as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shangxian yi shi</td>
<td>賞獻一詩</td>
<td>He offered a poem:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>you shi yun</td>
<td>有詩云</td>
<td>There is a poem as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sui cheng shi yun</td>
<td>遂成詩云</td>
<td>Then she made a poem as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>shang yin shi erju yun</td>
<td>上唸詩二句云</td>
<td>First she recited two lines of a poem as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hou you ren yi shi yun</td>
<td>後有人一詩云</td>
<td>Later generations had a poem as follows:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 The list of pre-verse phrases from *Xuanhe yishi* is not complete, but it includes the better part of these expressions and in particular all those that occur more than once. Among those that occur only once, there are about twenty more. The **bolded** expressions are found in the passage about Song Jiang and his men (Water Margin).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>條語</th>
<th>ci yue</th>
<th>The lyric says:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>作小詞自述云</td>
<td>zuo xiao ci zi shu yun</td>
<td>She made a small lyric and recited it as follows:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>口占一詞道</td>
<td>kou zhan yi ci dao</td>
<td>She recited a lyric saying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>遂作歌曰</td>
<td>sui zuo ge yue</td>
<td>Then he made a song saying:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>後再歌曰</td>
<td>hou zai ge yue</td>
<td>Thereafter still another song saying:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.B.2: Meta-narrative formulaic expressions of narrative transition in the *Xuanhe yishi*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>話說</th>
<th>hua shuo</th>
<th>The story says</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>qie shuo</td>
<td>Meanwhile, let’s tell (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卻說</td>
<td>que shuo</td>
<td>Let’s tell, however</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且休說...只說</td>
<td>qie xiu shuo... zhi shuo</td>
<td>Meanwhile, let’s not tell... , let’s just tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>休說...且說</td>
<td>xiu shuo... qie shuo</td>
<td>Let’s not tell... , let’s rather tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話且提過只說</td>
<td>hua qie tiguo, zhi shuo</td>
<td>It’s been said already, so let’s just tell</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chantefable

The eight Judge Bao chantefables are here numbered 1) to 8), and referred to in the short form of the titles as found in Liangyan Ge’s chapter in this volume.

1. ‘Youth of Judge Bao’ (Bao Daizhi chushen zhuan 包待制出身傳)
2. ‘Selling Rice in Chenzhou’ (Chenzhou tiaomi ji 陳州糶米記)
3. ‘Emperor Renzong Acknowledges His Mother’ (Renzong renmu zhuan 仁宗認母傳)
4. ‘Crooked Black Pot’ (Wai wupen zhuan 歪烏盆傳)
5. ‘Royal Nobleman Cao’ (Cao Guojiu gong'an zhuan 曹國舅公案傳)
6. ‘Story of Zhang Wengui’ (Zhang Wengui zhuan 張文貴傳)
7. ‘White Tiger Demon’ (Baihujing zhuan 白虎精傳)
8. ‘Story of Liu Dusai’ (Liu Dusai zhuan 劉都賽傳)

In the upper row of Tables 4.B.3 and 4.B.4 each Judge Bao text is indicated by its number, 1–8. The numbers in the columns below indicate the number of occurrences in the texts of the formula to the left. The formulas are arranged according to their occurrence in the texts, starting with the beginning of text 1) and ending with the end of text 8). When a formula occurs in several texts, the occurrence is marked also into the columns of the relevant texts.

Table 4.B.3: Meta-narrative markers of narrative transition in verse portions of the Ming Chenghua chantefables about Judge Bao.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Venture</th>
<th>English Meaning</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>Qie shuo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話分兩下人難聽只說</td>
<td>Hua fen liangxia ren nan ting, zhi shuo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...都休唱</td>
<td>... dou xiu chang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>聽說</td>
<td>Ting shuo</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話中休唱</td>
<td>Huazhong xiu chang... tiqi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說起</td>
<td>Shuoqi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不說...回文且唱</td>
<td>Bu shuo... hui wen qie chang</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>聽唱</td>
<td>Ting chang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>休唱</td>
<td>Xiu chang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...都莫唱</td>
<td>... dou mo chang</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...莫談論</td>
<td>... mo tanlun</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...都莫說</td>
<td>... dou mo shuo</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...無比論</td>
<td>... wu bi lun</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...都不唱</td>
<td>... dou bu chang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...休要唱</td>
<td>... xiu yao chang</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不唱...且說</td>
<td>Bu chang ... qie shuo</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(Table 4.B.3, cont.)

<p>| | | | | | | | | |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 莫唱... | <em>Mo chang... qie chang</em> | Let’s not sing... but let’s sing | 1 |
| 且唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 休唱... | <em>Xiu chang... hui wen ting chang</em> | Let’s not sing... in the next round listen to my song | 1 |
| 文聽唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 莫唱... | <em>Mo chang... hui wen ting chang</em> | Let’s not sing... in the next round listen to my song | 2 |
| 文聽唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 話分兩頭 | <em>Hua fen liangtou</em> | The story divides into two lines | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 不唱... | <em>Bu chang... ting chang</em> | Let’s not sing... listen to my song | 1 2 1 2 |
| 聽唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 不說... | <em>Bu shuo... qie shuo</em> | Let’s not tell... let’s now tell | 1 |
| 且說 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 休唱... | <em>Xiu chang... hui wen qie chang</em> | Let’s not sing... in the next round let’s sing | 1 |
| 文且唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 休唱... | <em>Xiu chang... ting tan</em> | Let’s not sing... listen to my talk | 2 |
| 聽談 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ...休要問 | <em>... xiu yao wen</em> | ...do not ask about this | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 莫唱 | <em>Mo chang</em> | Let’s not sing | 2 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 罷了閑言休要唱聽唱 | <em>Bale xianhua xiu yao chang, ting chang</em> | Enough of this, we won’t sing about petty details, listen now to my song | 1 |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 詞中莫唱 | <em>Cizhong mo chang... qie chang</em> | In the verses we don’t sing... let’s sing | 1 |
| ...且唱 |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| 莫唱... | <em>Mo chang... ting chang</em> | Let’s not sing... listen to my song | 2 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.B.3, cont.</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>詞中聽唱</td>
<td>Cizhong ting chang</td>
<td>In the verses listen to my song</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...都莫唱, 聽得</td>
<td>... dou mo chang, tingde</td>
<td>of this we won’t sing, listen to</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>話中不說 ...聽唱</td>
<td>Huazhong bu shuo... ting chang</td>
<td>In the story we don’t tell ... listen to my song</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>卻說</td>
<td>Que shuo</td>
<td>Let’s tell, however,</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話中休唱 ...聽唱</td>
<td>Huazhong xiu chang... ting chang</td>
<td>In the story we don’t sing ... listen to my song</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>休唱...回來再唱</td>
<td>Xiu chang... huilai zai chang</td>
<td>Let’s not sing... let’s in the next round rather sing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>且唱</td>
<td>Qie chang</td>
<td>Let’s now sing</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不唱...文聽唱</td>
<td>Bu chang... hui wen ting chang</td>
<td>Let’s not sing... in the next round listen to my song</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>莫唱...詞文聽唱</td>
<td>Mo chang... ciwen ting chang</td>
<td>Let’s not sing ... listen to my verses where I sing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>莫唱...文聽唱</td>
<td>Mo chang... hui wen ting chang</td>
<td>Let’s not sing ... in the next round listen to my song</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>不說...且唱</td>
<td>Bu shuo... qie chang</td>
<td>Let’s not tell ... let’s now sing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>話中莫唱 ...且唱</td>
<td>Huazhong mo chang... qie chang</td>
<td>In the story we won’t sing ... let’s now sing</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>不唱 … 回文且唱</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Bu chang… hui wen qie chang</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Let’s not sing … in the next round let’s sing</td>
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<tr>
<td>上頭不說別言語,只說</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Shangtou bu shuo bie yanyu, zhi shuo</em></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the beginning we won’t tell about other things, we’ll only tell</td>
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<tr>
<td>休言 … 回文聽唱</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Xiu yan… hui wen ting chang</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Let’s not talk about … in the next round listen to my song</td>
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<tr>
<td>權時莫唱 … 回文且唱</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Quan shi mo chang… hui wen qie chang</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>For the time being, let’s not sing … in the next round let’s sing</td>
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<tr>
<td>莫唱 … 回文又唱</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Mo chang… hui wen you chang</em></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s not sing … in the next round let’s then sing</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>莫唱 … 話唱</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mo chang… hua chang</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Let’s not sing… the story sings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… 文休論</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>… wen xiu lun</em></td>
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<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>… the text does not say anything about this</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不說 … 聽唱</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Bu shuo… ting chang</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s not tell … listen to my song</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>休說 … 回文且唱</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Xiu shuo… hui wen qie chang</em></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let’s not tell … in the next round let’s sing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.B.3, cont.

| 話說一枝分兩處, 一枝排做兩枝分, 聽唱 | Hua shuo yizhi fen liangchu, Yizhi paizuo liangzhi fen, ting chang | The story is now forking, one branch the tale divides into two, listen to my song | 1 |
| 話說 | Hua shuo | The story says | 1 |
| 不唱 ... 回文且說 | Bu chang ... hui wen qie shuo | Let’s not sing ... in the next round let’s tell | 1 |
| 話唱 | Hua chang | The story sings | 1 |
| 不唱 | Bu chang | Let’s not sing | 1 |

Table 4.B.4: Meta-narrative markers of narrative transition in prose portions of the Ming Chenghua chantefables about Judge Bao.

| 話說 | Hua shuo | The story says | 1 |
| 卻說 | Que shuo | Let’s tell, however, | 1 |
| 先說 ... 後說 | Xian shuo ... bou shuo | Let’s first tell ... later let’s tell | 1 |
| 且說 | Qie shuo | Meanwhile, let’s tell | 1 |
| 休說 ... 且說 | Xiu shuo ... qie shuo | Let’s not tell ... let’s tell | 1 |
| 不在話下 | Bu zai hua xia | Of this the story is silent | 1 |
Table 4.B.5: Pre-verse phrases in two early vernacular stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>But see</th>
<th>Dan jian</th>
<th>Behold</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ancient</td>
<td>Guren you yishou shi dao</td>
<td>The ancient had a poem as follows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It</td>
<td>Que shi</td>
<td>That was truly</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Said</td>
<td>Dao shi</td>
<td>It said</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeed</td>
<td>Zheng shi</td>
<td>Indeed</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really</td>
<td>Yuanlai shi</td>
<td>It was really</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A song</td>
<td>You yishou x x x dao shi</td>
<td>There was a song x x x as follows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was</td>
<td>Zende daban, qie kan</td>
<td>How was s/he dressed? Please, look</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformed</td>
<td>Jiao liangren bianzuo</td>
<td>The pair was transformed into</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Could</td>
<td>Guo wei shi</td>
<td>It could truly be called</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like</td>
<td>Yi si</td>
<td>It was like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truly</td>
<td>Zhenge shi</td>
<td>Truly</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>So-called</td>
<td>Suo wei shi</td>
<td>So-called</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged</td>
<td>Houren pingde hao</td>
<td>Later generations gave apt comment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A poem</td>
<td>You shi yue</td>
<td>There is a poem as follows</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Looked</td>
<td>Shengde</td>
<td>S/he looked like</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrote these four lines</td>
<td>... xie zhe siju yanyu</td>
<td>s/he wrote these four lines</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How was</td>
<td>Ruhe daban</td>
<td>How was s/he dressed?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How did</td>
<td>Ruhe jian</td>
<td>How did s/he look?</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
Table 4.B.5, cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TY37 KC36</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>種 x x 曲</td>
<td>Xie yizhi x x qu'er, daoishi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有詩為証, 詩云</td>
<td>You shi wei zheng, shi yun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.B.6: Meta-narrative markers of narrative transition in two early stories

<table>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>話說</td>
<td>Hua shuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卻說</td>
<td>Que shuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>當下都沒甚話說</td>
<td>Danxia dou mei shen hua shuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>Qie shuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>方才說…如今再說</td>
<td>Fangcai shuo…rujin zai shuo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不在話下</td>
<td>Bu zai hua xia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.B.7: Meta-narrative markers of narrative transition in nine early and nine late stories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TY HY H HY TY HY KC KC TY KC KC TY HY KC TY TY TY HY</th>
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<td>過了幾時沒話說</td>
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<td>方才說... 如今再說</td>
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<td>按下 xx 且說</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

Pre-verse phrases and phrases of narrative transition in twenty samples of Wu Song Fights the Tiger and two more Wu Song stories

Novel

Table 4.C.1: Chazeng jiaben (Stuttgart fragment) of Shuihu zhuang 16th century Chapter 22, di nian er hui

| 正是 | zheng shi | Indeed       |
| 有(一)篇古風 | you (yi)pian gu feng dan dao | There is an old ballad saying |
| 但見 | dan jian | Behold       |
| 正是甚人下回分解 | zheng shi shen ren hui fenjie | Who it really was is explained in the next session |

Table 4.C.2: Shuangfengtangben of Shuihu zhuang 1594 Chapter 22, di ershier hui

| *詩曰 | shi yue | The poem says |
| ...不題 | ...bu ti | ... we shall not speak more of this |
| 正是 | zheng shi | Indeed |
| 卻說 | que shuo | Let us resume our story |
| 有(一)篇古風 | you (yi)pian gu feng dan dao | There is an old ballad saying |
| 但見 | dan jian | Behold |
| 正是甚人且聽下回分解 | zheng shi shen ren qie ting xia hui fenjie | Who was it really? listen to the explanation in the next session |
### Table 4.C.3: Rongyutangben of Shuihu zhuan 1610 Chapter 23, di ershisan hui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>詩曰</em></th>
<th><em>shi yue</em></th>
<th>The poem says</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>話說</td>
<td><em>hua shuo</em></td>
<td>The story says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不在話下</td>
<td><em>bu zai hua xia</em></td>
<td>. . . of this no more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話分兩頭</td>
<td><em>hua fen liangtou</em></td>
<td>Here our story divides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有詩為證</td>
<td><em>you shi wei zheng</em></td>
<td>There is a poem in testimony of this</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>只說</td>
<td><em>zhi shuo</em></td>
<td>Let us just tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正是</td>
<td><em>zheng shi</em></td>
<td>Indeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>但見</td>
<td><em>dan jian</em></td>
<td>Behold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說時遲, 那時快</td>
<td><em>shuo shi chi, na shi kuai</em></td>
<td>It’s slow in the telling, but happens in a flash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有(一)篇古風</td>
<td><em>you (yi)pian gu feng dan dao</em></td>
<td>There is an old ballad saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>畢竟... 正是</td>
<td><em>bijing ... zheng shi shen ren qie ting xia hui fenjie</em></td>
<td>To know who it really was, you must listen to the explanation in the next session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說話的, ... 因何不</td>
<td><em>shuohuade, ... yin he bu</em></td>
<td>Storyteller, why did . . . not ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>直教</td>
<td><em>zhi jiao</em></td>
<td>It was destined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有分教</td>
<td><em>you fen jiao</em></td>
<td>It was predestined</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 4.C.4: Jin Ping Mei cihua 1617 Chapter 1, di yi hui

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>詞曰</th>
<th><em>ci yue</em></th>
<th>The lyric says</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>史官有詩歎曰</td>
<td><em>shiguan you shi tan yue</em></td>
<td>A historian made a poem bewailing the event</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>單說</td>
<td><em>dan shuo</em></td>
<td>Let us now tell only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有詩為証</td>
<td><em>you shi wei zheng</em></td>
<td>There is a poem in testimony of this</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 4.C.4, cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>說話的</th>
<th>shuohuade</th>
<th>Storyteller</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>正是</td>
<td>zheng shi</td>
<td>Indeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話說</td>
<td>hua shuo</td>
<td>The story says</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>但見</td>
<td>dan jian</td>
<td>Behold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有(一)篇古風(一篇)單道</td>
<td>you (yi)pian gu feng (yipian) dan dao</td>
<td>There is an old ballad saying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>按下...單表</td>
<td>anxia... dan biao</td>
<td>Let us postpone . . . , and let us now perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>古人有幾句格言說的好</td>
<td>guren you jiju geyan, shuode hao</td>
<td>Our forefathers had an admonition expressing this well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>qie shuo</td>
<td>meanwhile let us tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>看官聽說</td>
<td>kanguan tingshuo</td>
<td>Dear audience, as you may have heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>卻說</td>
<td>que shuo</td>
<td>Let us resume our story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話休絮煩</td>
<td>hua xiu xufan</td>
<td>... let's not go into boring detail</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>畢竟未知後來何如且聽下回分解</td>
<td>bijing weizhi houlai he ru qie ting xiahui fenzie</td>
<td>If you really do not know what happened next, please listen to the explanation in the following session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說時遲，那時快</td>
<td>shuo shi chi, na shi kuai</td>
<td>It’s slow in the telling, but happens in a flash</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>有話即長，無話即短</td>
<td>you hua ji chang, wu hua ji duan</td>
<td>When there’s a story, the tale gets long; when not, it is short</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Drama

Table 4.C.5: *Chuanqi*, Shen Jing: *Yixia ji* 1599 Act 4, *di si chu*

| 上 | *shang* | enter |
| 下 | *xia* | exit, exeunt |
| 淨 | *jing* | jing-role |
| 末 | *mo* | mo-role |
| 生 | *sheng* | sheng-role |
| 丑 | *chou* | chou-role |
| 介 | *jie* | pose |
| 内 | *nei* | backstage |
| 住口 | *zhu kou* | stop talking |

Table 4.C.6: Kunqu, *Da hu quan chuan guan* Qing Drama, *xiju*

| 白 | *bai* | speaking |
| 生 | *sheng* | sheng-role |
| 内 | *nei* | backstage |
| 上 | *shang* | enter |
| 唱 | *chang* | singing |
| 丑 | *chou* | chou-role |
| 介 | *jie* | pose |
| 下 | *xia* | exit, exeunt |
| 全白 | *tong bai* | speaking in chorus |
| 全下 | *tong xia* | exeunt |
| 全完 | *quan wan* | the end |
A borderline case

Table 4.C.7: *Errenzhuan, Wu Song da bu* 1981 One session, *yihui*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>旦</em></th>
<th>dan</th>
<th><em>dan</em>-role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>丑</em></td>
<td>chou</td>
<td><em>chou</em>-role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>XX腔</em></td>
<td>X X qiang</td>
<td>X X tune</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>抱板</em></td>
<td>baoban</td>
<td>Take the clapper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>單表</td>
<td>dan biao</td>
<td>Let’s only perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>要問</td>
<td>yao wen</td>
<td>If you ask</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且不表, 再說</td>
<td>qie bu biao, zai shuo</td>
<td>Meanwhile let’s wait performing . . . let’s rather tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>再表</td>
<td>zai biao</td>
<td>Let’s now perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下一回</td>
<td>xia yi hui</td>
<td>In the next round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Performance literature

Table 4.C.8: *Hangzhou pinghua: Wu Song yanyi* 1980 Chapter 1, *di yi hui*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>話說</th>
<th>hua shuo</th>
<th>The story says</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>這裡先表</td>
<td>zhi li xian biao</td>
<td>Let’s perform first</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>說書的</td>
<td>shuoshude</td>
<td>Storyteller</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>待說書的略表幾句</td>
<td>dai shuoshude lue biao jiju</td>
<td>Please, wait and let me, the storyteller, give a brief explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>諸位</td>
<td>zhuwei</td>
<td>Dear listeners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>qie shuo</td>
<td>Meanwhile let us tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正是</td>
<td>zheng shi</td>
<td>Indeed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不知...且聽下回分解</td>
<td>bu zhi... qie ting xia bui fenjie</td>
<td>As for how... please listen to the explanation of the next chapter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 4.C.9: <em>Yangzhou pinghua</em>: Wang Shaotang: <em>Wu Song</em> 1959 Chapter 1, di yi hui</td>
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<tr>
<td>不...便罷, bu...bian ba,</td>
<td>If not... that’s the end of the story</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>正是 zheng shi</td>
<td>Indeed</td>
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<tr>
<td>莫忙 mo mang</td>
<td>No hurry!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>前人有幾句 qianren you jiju</td>
<td>Our forefathers had some lines</td>
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<tr>
<td>有人要問 you ren yao wen</td>
<td>Somebody might ask</td>
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</table>

| Table 4.C.10: *Fuzhou pinghua*: Jingyanggang *Wu Song da bu* |
|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|
| Late Qing/Early Republic, First collection, shang ji |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*白</th>
<th>bai</th>
<th>speak</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>話表</td>
<td>hua biao</td>
<td>The story we are performing is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>書歸正傳說分明</td>
<td>shu gui zhengzhuangshuo fenming</td>
<td>Now our saga returns to the true story and we shall tell it clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>按下漫表...單說</td>
<td>anxia man biao...dan shuo</td>
<td>Let us postpone...let us now tell only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>道且不表</td>
<td>zhe qie bu biao</td>
<td>Let’s not perform this now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>只聽</td>
<td>zhi ting</td>
<td>Just listen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不表...再說</td>
<td>bu biao...zai shuo</td>
<td>I will not perform...but I will tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>道其詳</td>
<td>dao qi xiang</td>
<td>...tell the details</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>且說</td>
<td>qie shuo</td>
<td>Meanwhile let us tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>這章事情按一筆, 且說</td>
<td>zhezhang shiqing an yibi, qie shuo</td>
<td>Let’s postpone the chapter about these events and tell instead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>一時之人說不盡, 且說</td>
<td>yi shi zhi ren shuobunjin, qie shuo</td>
<td>I cannot mention all these persons here and now, but let me tell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>慢言...且表</td>
<td>manyan...qie biao</td>
<td>Let’s postpone...let’s now perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>不談...且表</td>
<td>bu tan...qie shuo</td>
<td>Let’s not talk of...let’s now perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>如今且說</td>
<td>rujin qie shuo</td>
<td>Let’s now tell about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>請看下集</td>
<td>qing kan xiaji</td>
<td>Please, read the next volume about</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.C.11: *Kuai shu*: ‘Wu Song da hu’ Late Qing/Early Republic One session, *yi hui*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>詩篇</em></th>
<th>shipian</th>
<th>poem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>注頭</em></td>
<td>zhutou</td>
<td>introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>表得是</td>
<td>biaode shi</td>
<td>Our performance is about</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>x x 板</em></td>
<td>x x ban</td>
<td>x x rhythm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>你看</td>
<td>ni kan</td>
<td>Look at him (audience appeal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>話白</em></td>
<td>hua bai</td>
<td>spoken part</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>話表</td>
<td>hua biao</td>
<td>The story we are performing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>x x 調</em></td>
<td>x x diao</td>
<td>x x melody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>真乃是</td>
<td>zhen nai shi</td>
<td>So it was, indeed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.C.12: *Shandong kuaishu*: Gao Yuanjun: ‘Wu Song da hu’ 1980 One session, *yi hui*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>閒言碎語不要 (多)講</th>
<th>xianyan suiyu bu yao (duo) jiang</th>
<th>No need for empty conversation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>表一表</td>
<td>biao yi biao</td>
<td>Let us perform</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*白</td>
<td>bai</td>
<td>speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*旁白</td>
<td>pangbai</td>
<td>narrator speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>下一回</td>
<td>xia yi hui</td>
<td>In the next round</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.C.13: *Shandong kuaishu*: Huang Feng: ‘Wu Song he laohu’ 1980 One session, *yi hui*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>*白</th>
<th>bai</th>
<th>speaking</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Table 4.C.14: Dagushu: Jingyanggang Wu Song da hu
Late Qing/Early Republic One session, yi hui

| 言一回 | yan yi hui | Let me tell in this session |
| 押下 ... 且不 | yaxia ... qie bu biao, zai biao | Meanwhile let’s wait performing ... let’s rather perform |
| 若問 | ruo wen | You may ask |
| 這是 x x 一個段 | zhe shi x x yige duan | This was the first part about x x |
| 下一回 ... 在上 | xia yi hui ... zai xu shang | In the next session the story continues about ... |

Table 4.C.15: Yangzhou qingqu: ‘Wu Song da hu’
1985 One ballad (no name for the unit)

| *唱 | chang | singing |
| *數板 | shuban | mixed rhythm |
| 但只見 | dan zhi jian | But just look |

Oral performances

Table 4.C.16: Yangzhou pinghua: Wang Shaotang:
‘Wu Song da hu’ 1961 First section, di yi duan

| 且慢 | qie man | Let’s slow down a bit |

Table 4.C.17: Yangzhou pinghua: Wang Xiaotang:
‘Wu Song da hu’ 1992 First day, di yi tian

| 不 ... 便罷, | bu ... bian ba, | If not ... that’s the end (of the story) |
| 我倒有幾句贊牠 | wo dao you jiju zan ta | In fact I have a few verses in praise |
### Table 4.C.18: Sichuan pinghua: Luo Shizhong: ‘Wu Song da hu’ 1974 One session (no name of the unit)

| 一路無書 | yilu wu shu | There is nothing to tell about this journey |
| 正是      | zhengshi    | Indeed                                      |

### Table 4.C.19: Shandong kuaishu: Sun Zhenye: ‘Wu Song da hu’ 1999 One section/session yi duan/yi hui

| 話少說     | hua shao shuo | Let’s stop chatting |
| 再表表     | zai biaobiao  | Once again let me perform                   |
| 唱到此處算一 段兒 | changdao cichu suan yi duanr | When we have sung this far, that counts as one section |
| 到下回...緊接上 | dao xia hui...jin jieshang | The next session follows right after |

### Table 4.C.20: Danxian: Liu Hongyuan: ‘Xi shu bie xiong’ 1997 One session, yi hui

| 這一回...我 奉敬 | zhe yi hui...wo feng jing | In this session I have offered you respectfully the episode of |
| 往下怎麼樣， 二本您再聽 | wang xia zemeyang, erben nin zai ting | What will happen after this? Please, listen to the next story |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>時間</th>
<th>翻譯</th>
<th>翻譯</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>這一回</td>
<td><em>zhe yi hui</em></td>
<td>In this session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>倘若是諸君要不信，您聽我演唱一個榜樣</td>
<td><em>tangruo shi zhujun yao bu xin, nin ting wo yanchang yige</em></td>
<td>If you, honorable audience, do not believe, please, listen to the example that I shall now sing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.C.22: Yangzhou qingqu: Nie Feng: ‘Wu Song da hu’ 2000 One ballad (no name of the unit)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>但見</th>
<th><em>dan jian</em></th>
<th>Behold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>但只見</td>
<td><em>dan zhi jian</em></td>
<td>But just look</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CHAPTER 5

Folk Epics from the Lower Yangzi Delta Region
Oral and Written Traditions

Anne E. McLaren

The lower Yangzi delta has long been recognised as the source of a significant Chinese song tradition known to scholars as *Wuge* [songs of the Wu area] and to the local people as *shan’ge*, [mountain songs]. In recent decades the known corpus of *Wuge* has been expanded by a series of important findings. My own interest in the performance traditions, *shuochang* [telling and singing], in the lower Yangzi delta dates from my earlier investigation of *chantefables* (1998), a type of prosimetric narrative popular in performance and written form during the late imperial period. More recently I have been exploring the bridal and funeral laments of the coastal region of Nanhui, a little studied type of performance art preferred by women (see McLaren 2008). In this chapter I discuss another significant discovery in Chinese oral and performing arts — the long verse narratives associated with the Lake Tai area in the delta hinterland. These sung narratives first came to public attention in the early years of the reform period (post 1978), when Chinese ethnologists actively sought out storytellers and singers to retrieve lost performance traditions before they vanished forever.

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1 I am greatly indebted to Chen Qijian, East China Normal University (ECNU), who introduced me to folk performers of the Lake Tai area and organised our trip to Wuxi in November 2004, where I met leading singers and folk ethnographers such as Zhu Hairong and Tang Jianqin. The Wuxi Culture Bureau presented me with three books of *Wuge* and related material. Zhou Xiaoxia, from ECNU, also provided assistance. My indebtedness to Chen and the work of his postgraduate students (such as Zheng Tuyou) and colleagues will also be apparent in my citations. I am also grateful to participants of the symposium ‘The Interplay of Oral and Written Traditions in Chinese Fiction, Drama and Performance Literature’, Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters, Oslo, 5–6 November, 2007, particularly the organizer, Vibeke Børstad, whose own work offers exemplary insight into the interplay of oral and written traditions in China. Thanks also to Kathryn Lowry, who sent me a copy of her valuable work on the history of *shan’ge* in the Ming period (Lowry 2006) and to Antoinet Schimmelpenninck, who sent me a copy of her indispensable study of Wu songs (Schimmelpenninck 1997).

2 Wu refers to the ancient kingdom of this name. The term *shan’ge* refers to folk songs, particularly those sung outdoors.
In studies of Wu songs, it is the short songs that are relatively well known. In the first half of the twentieth century, famous scholars of China’s folk culture such as Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 collected a treasure trove of folk songs in circulation amongst the commoner classes of the lower Yangzi delta. The performance of *shan’ge* was repressed during the early socialist period and the Cultural Revolution (ca. 1949–1978) to the point where the singing of these folk songs virtually died out as a living performance tradition. In the early

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3 These anthologies from the early twentieth century have been republished in *WANG Xuhua* (1999); see also *WuGe* (1984).
years after the founding of the People’s Republic of China, local enthusiasts attempted to continue the scholarly collection of folk songs. Jiang Bin notes that a 2,000-line sung narrative called ‘Baiyangcun shan’ge’, 白楊村山歌, was recorded by ethnologists in Fengxian County in 1960 (1982: 172). Local folklore specialists were aware of the existence of lengthy narrative songs but due to political conditions large-scale investigations were not carried out until the early reform period. The first major ‘discovery’ was of a song comprising 500 lines about ‘Shen Qige’ 沈七哥 [Shen Seventh Brother], sung by Zhu Hairong 朱海容 in 1981. Subsequently a much longer narrative song, ‘Wu Guniang’ 五姑娘 [Fifth Sister], comprising almost 3,000 lines, came to light. Local culture cadres toured the Lake Tai region collecting material from villagers who remembered narrative songs from the past and a series of significant narrative songs emerged, including such national favourites as ‘Meng Jiangnü’ 孟姜女, as well as a number of other narrative songs with local circulation (‘Zhao Shengguan’ 趙聖關, ‘Xue Liulang’ 薛六郎 [Xue Sixth Son] and others). By the early 1990s around thirty to forty sung narratives of varying length had been collected by enthusiasts of Wu songs.4 In the 1990s Western scholars such as Antoinet Schimmelpenninck and Frank Kouwenhoven produced important studies of Wu songs.5 By this stage, Chinese folklorists felt confident in asserting that the region was unusual if not unique amongst Han Chinese communities for its transmission of verse narratives of epic length, changpian xushi shi 長篇敍事詩, works that rivalled the better-known epic songs of non-Han Chinese peoples in the borderlands.

Many of the delta verse narratives are love stories where young people pursue their romances in violation of Confucian norms. Others deal with mythological or historical themes, such as the tales of Shen Qige 沈七哥 and Hua Baoshan 華抱山. The Wu verse narratives were not related by professional storytellers in urban areas, but by amateur performers amongst mostly illiterate farming communities.6 For this reason written renditions of lengthy verse narratives are rare and those extant date from no earlier than the nineteenth century. In the late

4 For the re-discovery of the folk heritage of the Lake Tai region and these narratives in particular see Qian Shunjuan (1997: 1–14); also the introduction to the anthology of ten verse narratives brought out by Jiang Bin and associates (1989).
5 See Schimmelpenninck and Kouwenhoven (1999) and Schimmelpenninck (1997). For reasons of practicality, their primary focus was on the short type of song. Schimmelpenninck’s study was based on actual recordings of shan’ge in elicited performance settings. She reports that her field-trips to a particular location were too brief to record the longer ‘epic’ narratives, which might well take weeks or even months for the elderly practitioners to recall and perform (1997: 222). She also notes that shan’ge were of highly variable length. Whether a shan’ge was long or short depended on what the performer was capable of and his or her receptive context (1997: 35, 71–2, 221). In another study, she notes the variability and unfinished nature of shan’ge singing: “There is always "more". If singers stop singing they often do so because “they cannot remember any more”, rather than because a song is finished” (1999: 87).
6 The most substantial study on the performative context of the lengthy narrative songs (here called ‘epics’) is the doctoral dissertation of Zheng Tuyou (2004A). See also his published articles (2004B, 2007).
imperial period, some literati appreciated Wu songs as the ‘genuine’ expression of the folk but authorities regularly condemned the unorthodox or licentious nature of these tales. The best known connoisseur amongst the literati was Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646), who actively collected the ditties of his local area and produced a volume entitled Shan’ge [Mountain Songs]. Feng’s anthology comprises short ‘folk’ songs on mainly erotic themes reflecting the patron–courtesan milieu of the waterways in the region of Lake Tai.\(^7\) In later centuries the Chinese state also took an interest in Wu narrative songs. In 1868 the Jiangsu Provincial Governor, Ding Richang 丁日昌 (1823–1882), promulgated an index of banned works of illicit songs and works of fiction, yinci xiaoshuo 淫詞 小說, including the tales of Shen Qige and Xue Liulang.\(^8\) Ding’s ban was aimed at the printers and book-sellers who made these subversive works available to the public. He called for books held in shops and woodblocks in printing shops to be sold to a government agency and then destroyed. According to another record by Ding, the banned works comprised 50 book titles, shu 書, and over two hundred song booklets’ titles, changben 唱本, (cited in Wang Liqi 1981: 149). This confirms that some of the best known Wu sung narratives were available in written or printed booklet form by the mid nineteenth century.\(^9\) Presumably educated men associated with printing shops adapted the narratives popular in the song traditions of the area for readers at the lower end of the book market. It is also possible that amateur performers with some literacy used these booklets to enrich their own repertoire, as Schimmelpenninck has documented for the twentieth century.\(^10\) Various nineteenth-century manuscripts have emerged in recent years, including an early manuscript version of ‘Xue Liulang’ that is examined here. According to one report, a Chinese scholar, Lu

\(^7\) Kathryn Lowry has examined Feng’s Shan’ge within the context of Wu dialect songs (2006: 249–328). Ôki Yasushi has completed a major study of the Shan’ge including a Japanese translation (2003). A complete German translation of Feng’s Shan’ge is given in Cornelia Töpelmann 1973. Schimmelpenninck notes the strong association between the verbal formulae and material of Feng’s Shan’ge and the contemporary Shan’ge she examined (1997: 37).

\(^8\) This prohibition together with the index of banned works is included in the compendium of Wang Liqi 1981: 142–49. ‘Shen Qige Shan’ge’ is listed on p. 147 and the story of Xue Liulang on p. 146. Che Xilun (1996) has completed a study of some of the items listed as Shan’ge in Ding Richang’s catalogue of prohibited works. According to Matthew H. Sommers, in pre-modern Chinese law, the term yin 淫 referred to sexual congress in breach of canonical ritual, li 礼. Actions deemed yin violated the rights of the husband’s or father’s descent line. He translates yinci as ‘licentious songs’, cf Sommers 2000: 35.

\(^9\) Ye Dejun’s study of song booklets of the late imperial period includes Shan’ge imprints of the late Qing. He notes that Ding’s prohibition did not succeed in suppressing the printing of Shan’ge texts, which he describes as rhymed narratives yunwen 韻文, cf Ye Dejun 1979: 760–61.

\(^10\) Some contemporary Shan’ge performers interviewed by Antoinet Schimmelpenninck reported that they or their teachers had relied on booklets (either in manuscript form or printed) to help them master the repertoire (see her discussion of Shan’ge texts and literacy, Schimmelpenninck 1997: 115–24). In the twentieth century, at least, a certain number of the (mostly male) Shan’ge performers had some literacy. One third of those interviewed by Schimmelpenninck 1987–1992 had functional literacy (1997: 119).
Gong, holds a 1898 printed edition of the verse narrative ‘Zhao Shengguan’, comprising around 2,000 lines (see Jin Xu 2004: 231). The Fu Ssu-nien Library in the Academia Sinica in Taipei, which preserves a treasure trove of popular literature, records around 470 items listed as *shan’ge*-type works.\(^{11}\)

The lengthy sung narratives thus present the researcher with the usual dilemmas of assessing the relationship between the oral and written traditions. Orally performed *shan’ge* narratives may have been influenced by material circulating in manuscript and print, and the *shan’ge* booklets so disdained by Ding Richang related to the oral performance tradition but underwent rearrangement by an editor. In the case of Wu folk songs, the researcher encounters three different kinds of texts that relate to the oral tradition in different ways. One type of ‘text’ is an elicited performance for scholarly purposes on a particular occasion and is thus unique. Schimmelpenninck’s study is based on tape recordings of individual performances she elicited from mostly elderly practitioners of remembered traditions and represents this kind of situation. However, the lengthy sung narratives were not included in her study. The second situation is where Chinese ethnologists have arrived at a manuscript or printed transcriptions of a song epic by relying on one master practitioner and supplementing perceived gaps in his or her rendition with material from several other oral and manuscript renditions. The ethnologists may also have carried out other editorial work in ‘rearranging’ the text. This is the general situation in the case of transcripts of Wu folk epics available in the scholarly domain, as represented by the leading anthology of ten folk epics compiled by Jiang Bin 1989. The third type of text is the manuscript or printed rendition dating from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century produced by either anonymous hands or popular presses. These texts circulated as reading material for those with an interest in *shan’ge* or as an *aide-mémoire* to assist with the mastery and performance of *shan’ge*.

Due to the relative inaccessibility of texts in the latter category, very little work has been done on comparisons between texts derived from contemporary elicited performances and the historical manuscript or printed type of text. My purpose here is to undertake an initial comparison between a text derived primarily from contemporary performance(s) and a manuscript dating back to the mid nineteenth century (that is, texts from categories two and three) in order to explore issues of orality and textuality in the case of the Wu folk epics. In comparing hybrid texts that blend oral and written traditions, it is pertinent to cite the insights of Ruth Finnegan. She notes that performance-related texts can have different attributes. For example, some are the product

\(^{11}\) As far as I know these texts have not been examined with regard to possible links with the *shan’ge* narratives discussed here.
of ‘composition-in-performance’ and derive from ‘a storehouse of known formulae and themes’ (Finnegan 1988: 169). This would be the case with the category two type of text, which in each case was an elicited oral performance by a noted practitioner. It was tape-recorded, transcribed, and in some cases, blended with other transcripts or texts to create a composite text that satisfied the contemporary need to view an aesthetically-satisfying, ‘complete’ example of the folk epic in question. Finnegan notes that performances elicited for the purpose of scholarship bring forth a whole set of problems concerning the authenticity of the material so elicited. Some texts produced under these conditions amount to ‘a new creation by the researcher’ rather than something that was present in the original culture (1988: 171). Elicited texts are usually removed from their traditional ritual or performative context and may thus lack what Jack Goody has called a ‘mnemonic framework’ that determines the sequence of events and the length of the performance (1987: 95).12 These issues are relevant to the case of Wu folk epic, as I discuss further. The nineteenth century manuscripts and printed texts proscribed by Ding Richang, on the other hand, were not produced from tape recordings of actual performances but derived at least in part from a recalled performance tradition that was then reshaped for specific readerships.13 They are examples of texts based on ‘prior composition’ (Finnegan 1988: 177), as distinct from performance-in-composition, and were designed to appeal to the reading market. Readers of the written shan’ge of the nineteenth century may have included rural performers with some literacy. However, the major market was almost certainly that class of readers who enjoyed tales of erotic romances, for which the Wu shan’ge were justly famous (or notorious).14

In this exploratory study of the narrative song tradition of the Wu area and its written derivatives, I adopt the useful framework of Stuart H. Blackburn, who has identified what he calls ‘folk epics’ of India (1989). In general Western usage, the word ‘epic’ is associated with a work that is narrative,

12 For example, Wu sung narratives performed in the paddy fields often had references to sunrise, the sun at noon and sunset, which demarcated periods within the work-cycle and also distinct stages in the performance of a particular shan’ge story. Formulaic traces of the daily work-cycle remain in elicited performance transcripts.
13 Jack Goody points out the differences between transcripts made from tape-recordings and performances dictated to someone making a written record. The latter is likely to be a more deliberate, less spontaneous and briefer performance (1987: 94).
14 For an interesting study of (non-narrative) song texts associated with Jiangnan brothels see Stefan Kuzay’s study on printed booklets of a song form known as shidiao xiaoqu, 時調小曲 [current popular songs]. The song texts are part of the collection of the Finnish scholar, Hugo Lund, who collected these between 1898 and 1901. Kuzay does not speculate whether the texts were written primarily for performance or as reading matter for either the women or their male clients. See Kuzay, ‘Life in the Green Lofts of the Lower Yangzi Region’, in Lucie Olivová and Vibeke Børda hl, eds., Lifestyle and Entertainment in Yangzhou, NIAS Press, 2009, pp. 286–314.
poetic and heroic.\footnote{Felix Oinas, cited in Blackburn 1989: 3.} This would generally exclude works dealing primarily with romantic themes. However, Blackburn distinguishes between three epic types in India: martial, sacrificial and romantic. His category of ‘romantic epic’ is of particular relevance here. He reports that these types of folk epics often portray strong female figures in the pursuit of freedom to make their own love matches in violation of social norms (1989: 5). As with the Indian folk epics, the Wu verse narratives reflect the social customs, local economies, mythologies and marriage systems of their region and thus project a sense of the communal identity of the performers and their audience. While these narratives are for the most part ‘oral’ with regard to composition, performance and transmission, some, as with Indian folk epics, were orally composed but transmitted in varying written and oral traditions (Blackburn 1989: 10). The recent discovery of folk epic performers in the lower Yangzi delta and the retrieval of historical manuscript and printed derivatives from these performances present the researcher with a wonderful opportunity to further explore the interplay of oral and written traditions in China. What are the characteristics of the shan’ge performed in the contemporary period and to what extent do these differ from historical shan’ge texts? Are the shan’ge really ‘epics’ or just a series of shorter songs? What is the relationship between the oral and written shan’ge? Do the written forms derive directly from the shan’ge or can one speak of mutual influence? In this study I limit myself to one representative example of the romantic type of folk epic, the story known as ‘Xue Liulang’, which is extant in a text dating back to the mid nineteenth century and was performed well into the twentieth century in rural areas of the delta.

\textit{SHAN’GE AND THE ISSUE OF FOLK EPICS}

First let me discuss what is known of the performative characteristics of shan’ge and the extent to which these lengthy narrative songs should be termed ‘epic’ in the Western sense. Qian Shunjuan has directly addressed this issue in her analysis of the folk epic, ‘Wu Guniang’. She points out that folklorists disputed whether this was really a sung narrative of epic length or a composition created by compiling a number of disparate songs together (Qian Shunjuan 1997: 14 ff). Initially, only short songs relating to the story were found amongst village performers in Jiashan and Qingpu, with a version comprising 2,000 lines of verse known only in Luxu. Furthermore, the more complete version of ‘Wu
Guniang’ has sections very close to other songs in circulation. Was the epic length narrative the product not of the singer but of the compiler, who gathered short songs and fragments to form one story cycle of epic length? Only one performer in the present day, Lu Amei 陸阿妹, was able to sing the ‘complete’ narrative.

To investigate this issue, Qian Shunjuan went several times to interview Lu Amei, and viewed the supposed site of the ‘Wu Guniang’ story, on the shores of Lake Fen. The folk epic reports the conflagration of the Yang residence by fire, which is borne out by oral histories of the region and remnants of the Yang residence. This would have taken place around one hundred and fifty years ago, the likely time of the creation of the story of ‘Wu Guniang’. Qian traced the lineage of the epic from its earliest creation by a famed local singer, Yang Qichang 杨其昌 (fl. 1821–61). From Yang it was passed down to Lu Amei’s father, Sun Huatang 孙華堂. According to Qian, the known lineage of the story of ‘Wu Guniang’ confirms the integrity of the transmission of this lengthy sung narrative over a period of one hundred and fifty years.

Qian’s investigations provide a useful genealogy for the transmission of this tale but do not demonstrate conclusively that the version performed by Lu Amei represented the length of the narrative in its earliest inception. However, the recent work of ethnologist Zheng Tuyou (2004A, 2004B, 2007) provides convincing evidence that rural singers were indeed able to create sung narratives that could be performed over several days and were of ‘epic’ length. Zheng interviewed a large number of shan’ge singers and thoroughly investigated the context within which the shan’ge were composed and performed. He argues that the lengthier shan’ge developed over time from simpler shorter ones in a composition method known to performers as ‘mixing shan’ge’, tiao shan’ge 調山歌, a term implying extemporising a longer song from known ingredients. Nonetheless, segments within the lengthier cycle were frequently sung on their own or as part of a suite, lian lao chang 連牢唱. Individuals might well know only certain segments; fewer people made the effort to master the entire ‘epic’.

Zheng notes three major contexts where short shan’ge were combined to form long versions of epic length – specifically while working in the paddy fields, while poling light skiffs along the waterways in the environ of Lake Tai, and while resting from the summer’s heat. Shan’ge performers in the paddy fields were regular villagers who had good voices and had mastered a certain repertoire. They were hired by landowners to sing shan’ge to their peers who laboured in the paddy fields. These performers had a high status, were paid much more than the regular labourers, and adopted a type of semi-professional

16 These terms were used by the famed singer Lu Amei, see QIAN Shunjuan 1997: 23.
status. In some areas they formed teams, *shan’ge ban* 山歌班, and performed in accordance with a schedule that allowed for singers to alternate and rest at specified times. In this region, two harvests of rice paddy was the norm, which required a very intensive form of communal labour. There was a belief that the performance of *shan’ge* during rice cultivation helped to raise work efficiency. The rhythms of *shan’ge* singing and the association of the content of many *shan’ge* with rice cultivation (planting, threshing, harvesting and so on) helped to relieve the tedium of this backbreaking labour. For example, the *shan’ge* ‘Shen Qige’ was noted for its segments relating to specific activities in rice paddy cultivation and was regularly performed in the fields. In a similar fashion, singing narrative songs while poling the flat-bottomed boats along the clogged waterways that formed the main means of transport in this area was also a popular pastime (ZHENG Tuyou 2006: 96–125). As Zheng points out, performers who could extemporise lengthy *shan’ge* as required were well fed, well paid and enjoyed a high social status in their community (ZHENG Tuyou 2006: 116). As for the means of composition, performers gradually mastered a number of formulaic segments they called *taoshi* 套式 which they could employ flexibly to form a large-scale narrative structure, *taolu* 套路 (ZHENG Tuyou 2004: 73–4). For example, the majority of lengthy narrative *shan’ge* dealt with the theme known as *siqing* 私情 [love affairs, illicit passion] and comprised several standardised stages such as the initial meeting, falling in love, suffering setbacks, and finally a happy conclusion (ZHENG Tuyou 2006: 74).

Zheng’s study provides invaluable first-hand information on the performative context of the singing of lengthy narrative *shan’ge*. He convincingly explains why village singers were motivated to master lengthy narrative songs, and the artistic means by which they acquired their complex repertoire. Needless to say, material included in the ‘epic’ rendition also circulated in short songs sung by villagers at boat races, during song competitions, during courting, on ritual occasions such as funerals, when resting from the summer heat, and so on. One could say of the Wu ‘folk epic’ what Stuart Blackburn has said of Indian folk epics: ‘Furthermore, even when an epic song is well known to the audience, the ‘complete’ story, from beginning to end is rarely presented in performance – or even in a series of performances. The full story is sometimes found in written and published texts, but we prefer to speak of an epic tradition that encompasses not only text and performance, but also what is unwritten and unperformed’ (1989: 11). In discussing ‘epic’ traditions, what is important is not the length of any particular rendition of a story-cycle but the poetic resources of the tradition and its potentiality to be performed at epic

17 Zheng’s analysis accords closely with the findings of Schimmelpenninck for the performative context of *shan’ge*, see SCHIMMELPENNINCK 1997, Chapter Three.
length under certain conditions. I will turn now to the story of ‘Xue Liulang’, also popularly known as ‘Zai Ayi’, 载阿姨, a prime example of the very popular *siqing* [illicit passion] type of story, and also representative of the sorts of conundrums posed by the relationship between oral and written traditions in the folk epics of the lower Yangzi delta.

**‘XUE LIULANG’: THE **SHAN’GE** **VERSION**

‘Xue Liulang’ has a complex history of transmission, involving both the oral and written traditions. Illiterate singers passed the tale on through oral transmission and men of some education recorded the tale in different form and content. The main material may well date back to the seventeenth century at least. For example, the *shan’ge* of Feng Menglong includes some material which appears to relate to the chief theme of this tale.18 However, a local legend offers a different story about the origin of the story. It is said that a literati version was devised by ten candidates for the imperial examinations who travelled to the provincial capital in the late Qing era. The candidates heard the story first from the boat hands and then decided to rearrange the tale as a *shan’ge* in verse form, with each of the ten responsible for a section. The boat hands added in two more sections. None of the ten candidates won a place at the examinations but the verse tale they devised became known throughout the Wuxi and Changshu area (Qian Shunjuan 1997: 56). While it is difficult to confirm the veracity of this report, today at least two types of texts are in circulation, one in manuscript transmission before the contemporary era (that is, pre-1949, the founding of the People’s Republic of China) and the other in oral transmission and written derivatives after 1949. The narratives also belong to different story traditions, one of which is regarded by practitioners as *hun* [meaty], that is, containing explicit erotic material, and the other as *su* [vegetarian], with no explicit erotic material (Qian Shunjuan 1997: 56–7).19 One finds similar bifurcations in song traditions elsewhere in China, for example, in the *hua’er* 花兒 songs of northwest China (Tuohy 1999: 68) and the folk songs of non-Han Chinese communities (Yang Mu 1998). My analysis here is based on two ren-

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18 *Shan’ge*, juan 4, see later discussion.
19 It is not necessarily the case that the contemporary texts are *su* and the pre-1949 texts *hun*. Further research is needed to determine the conditions governing each type. Qian Shunjuan has viewed 12 texts with different titles that relate this tale. Her texts 1–9 relate a variant close to the one included in Jiang Bin’s anthology discussed here. Her text No. 10, based on a manuscript of 1914, relates a version close to the 1854 manuscript discussed here. Nos 11–12 relate a variant of these two (Qian Shunjuan 1997: 56–7). Zheng Tuyou has also seen variant texts and his dissertation contains an analysis of plot differences (Zheng Tuyou 2004A: 59–60). However he does not specify the texts on which this analysis is based.
ditions: a manuscript version recorded in 1854 by unknown hands and printed in a modern anthology, and an edited transcript based on performances in the contemporary period included in Jiang Bin’s anthology (1989). I turn first to the shan’ge from the contemporary period.

This particular shan’ge transcription is derived largely from the performance of Qian Afu 錢阿福 as compiled by Zhu Hairong 朱海容. Qian Afu (b. 1908) was from Dongting in Wuxi County, Jiangsu province. Born into a poor peasant family, he was an illiterate man. At the age of twelve he went to Tangtuan to be a disciple of Zhang Rongbao 張榮寶, a veteran singer. He learnt everything Zhang had to teach him in two years and then sought out other teachers. The transcription used in this study is a composite one comprising 2,000

20 Included in Jin Xu 2004: 398–405. The manuscript belongs to Zhang Qisun 張琪荪 and was supplied by Zhang Fanglan 張舫澜 (Jin Xu 2004: 405) Images of three pages of the original manuscript are given (p. 405) but these are too small to read. From these images one can see that the manuscript includes some illustrations. According to the introduction, no changes were made in the printed reproduction of this manuscript except that some ‘wrong’ or alternate characters were corrected, p. 391.
lines from Qian Afu, 900 lines from Tang Jianqin 唐建琴, and 2,000 lines by Zhu Yongchang 祝永昌 and Zhu Bingfu 朱炳福. In addition, the editor, Zhu Hairong, referred to a number of historical and contemporary transcriptions in manuscript form and rearranged these, zhengli 整理, to produce the published form of the transcript (Jiang Bin 1989: 431, 339).

In common with other Wu songs, the lines are of variable line length with many ‘padding’ syllables. ‘Xue Liulang’ is divided into twelve titled segments, including Dragon Boat Competition, Assignation, Marriage, Going to get the Younger Sister, Wailing for the Departed, Return of the Soul, Discord in the Home, Collecting the Body, Double Veneration and Change in Marriage. These song segments draw from regional songs sung at particular occasions such as dragon boat races and mourning rituals, and in this way demonstrate the compositional principle of ‘mixing shan’ge’.

The opening is a conventional one and refers to the legendary hero of the Lake Tai region, Shen Qige, who is credited with teaching his people how to sing shan’ge:

Ever since Pan Gu set up Heaven and Earth,  
The sanhuang and wudi [legendary rulers of antiquity] ruled down to the present,
When Fu Xi created men and women,
Since the time of Shen Qige, *shan’ge* have been passed down.
At first there were monkeys, later there were people,
First there were *shan’ge* and later came plays (*xiwen*).\(^{21}\)
*Shan’ge* are sung for good reason,
One after the other, they move men’s hearts.
I sing not of routine things,
But of the Chen family who lived at the foothills of Longshan
[Huishan] by the shores of Lake Tai. 
In the Chen family there was a Chen Baiwan,
He owned so many strings of cash you could not count it all,
His estate spread over 10 *li*, and not an inch of soil belonged to
anyone else... 

The Chen family’s girls were worth a thousand pieces of gold,
They were heavenly immortal girls dropped down to earth.
The Seventh Sister was young and not yet matched.
Her older sister, Liuniang, was already married.
She was married to the Xue village by the shores of Lake Tai,
The Xue family had Xue Sixth Son,
Who was strong of hand and feet and an exemplary tiller of the
fields.

21 According to an annotation in the Jiang anthology (1989: 341), Wuxi people believe that *shan’ge* [songs] came before *xiwen* [plays] and have a saying about true *shan’ge* and false (fictive) *xiwen*. 
In this account, the hero, Xue Liulang, belongs to a poor labouring family. A daughter from the wealthy Chen family falls in love with him when she sees him performing in a shan’ge competition at the time of the dragon boat race at the summer solstice. By the shores of Lake Tai, young men line up to display their prowess in the dragon boats. Stripping off their upper garments, they descend to the boats. An old man tests their facility with shan’ge by asking them a series of riddles in song and they respond in song. (Song competitions amongst boatmen were a popular custom of this region.) The riddles all refer to landmarks, plants, birds around Taihu, and cultural knowledge such as the four famous beauties (e.g. Xi Shi 西施, Wang Zhaojun 王昭君, Diaochan 貂蟬, Yang Guifei 杨贵妃). Xue Liulang wins the competition and is hailed as the leading singer of shan’ge. Once the race begins, he also displays dazzling prowess at rowing. The handsome young man is spotted by the Chen family sisters and Liuniang 六娘 [Sixth Sister] takes a shine to him. While no one is looking in the clamour she wraps a bracelet up in a handkerchief and throws it to him. He catches it, and she makes a gesture to him with three fingers to signal an assignation after three days (pp 348–350). He turns bright red as if he’s swallowed three pints of brewed wine.

The narrative goes on to describe their assignation by the shores of Lake Tai. Xue Liulang protests his poverty and the imbalance in their rank. Liuniang counters this with expressions of admiration for his fine qualities:

‘Good Sixth Sister, with your virtuous heart,
Why do you not long for high rank and great wealth, why not seek marriage with the scions of noble families,
Why have you fallen for this hard-up tiller of the fields, who plucks mulberry leaves, plants bamboo and catches fish and prawns? . . .’

Sixth Sister blushed and held her head low,
With her hand she twisted a willow leaf, her eyes turned towards the centre of the lake, and with a soft voice and gentle manner she spoke,
‘Sixth brother, sixth brother, let me tell you,

22 This and the following translations are by the author from the Chinese texts in the editions mentioned.
I love you because your stomach is full of shan’ge, long and short, countless as the stars of heaven;
You responded to the shan’ge [competition] like the fine string that runs through copper cash;
Not like the stinking sons of those from noble and wealthy homes’ . . .

‘好六娘·賢德心’
你為啥勿貪榮華富貴, 勿想搭公子王孫結成婚,
偏偏看中仔我栽桑種竹, 捕魚捉蝦格吃苦種田人? . . .

六娘面露紅色頭低沉,
手撚柳葉·眼望湖心,細聲細氣末說分明:
‘六郎啊六郎講你聽,
奴愛你肚裏長短山歌像滿天星星數勿清,
對答山歌像銅錢眼裏捋串頭繩,
勿象豪門富戶中格臭子孫。 . . .


She urges him to use the strategy of Liu Bei at Ganlu Temple, of persuading the bride’s mother to consent to the marriage. Xue, for his part, vows that she is like Cui Yingying, the beauty of the famed play, *Xixiang ji* [Western Chamber], and he will be like her lover, Zhang Sheng. They then spend the night together but there is no mention of lovemaking. All we are told is that at the fifth watch the moon slowly sinks to the west, the morning star appears, and Liuniang accompanies Xue as he departs (p. 355).

The section called ‘Marriage’, ‘Chengqin’ 成親, deals primarily with the daughter’s attempts to persuade her mother to allow her to marry Xue Liulang. The mother argues that she cannot marry into poverty, but the daughter argues that ‘an entrapped dragon can also ascend to the heavenly chamber’, that is, luck can turn. Even some of the emperors grew up in poverty. She tells her mother that she gave herself to him for life by the shores of Lake Tai. The mother now realises there is no choice other than to allow the marriage to go ahead; but her father is furious and refuses. Liuniang cries and declares she will commit suicide. Eventually, the mother goes behind the husband’s back to agree to the marriage. The marriage is accomplished, the next three years pass happily and Liuniang gives birth to a son. Unfortunately, in the depths of winter she becomes ill, and Xue himself starts to waste away as he looks after both his wife and his baby. Sixth Sister tells Xue to go to her house and get her younger

23 This story, told in the novel, *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [Romance of the Three Kingdoms], and related plays, tells the story of how Sun Quan deceptively offers the hero, Liu Bei, his sister in marriage. His actual intention is to keep him hostage and force him to give back some conquered land. But Sun Quan’s mother meets Liu Bei at Ganlu Temple and detects signs of greatness in him. She then orders her son to accept that his younger sister should be given to Liu Bei in marriage.
sister to come and help them. Xue then sets off by boat to get the younger sister, Qiniang 七娘 [Seventh Sister]. The Chen father tries to throw him out of the house, describing Sixth Sister as already dead by virtue of her marriage to a poor labourer. But the mother overhears him as she is reciting her sutras and rushes in to enquire about her daughter. Qiniang overhears this conversation and joins them. Xue begs her to come and help, but Qiniang refuses, saying that her mother can go. Xue protests, how can an old person help? When the mother hears about the baby grandson she bids her daughter go and the latter complies. They get on the boat and Xue poles quickly away. At one point the boat rocks in the wind and Qiniang cries out and falls back into the boat. Xue supports her and finds that she is beautiful, but there is no further interaction.

The next segment, ‘Wailing for the Departed’, ‘Ku ling’ 哭靈, narrates the dying moments of Liuniang. When she is at her last breath, she takes hold of Xue’s hand and that of her sister, and then passes away. Xue and Qiniang lament loudly and neighbours go back to report to the Chen family. Only the mother journeys to Xue’s village. The mourning rites are described in detail. Neighbours come to bring a simple coffin and shroud, monks come for the funeral. The coffin is laid out in the rear chamber, a lamp set up, the mourners put on white garb and carry out the rite for ‘calling back of the soul’, zhaohun 招魂. In a manner reminiscent of delta funeral laments, they mourn by the coffin throughout the night.24 The mother hears Xue mourn for her daughter and hits on the idea of Qiniang marrying him in order to look after the baby boy. She cites the saying, ‘If the younger sister takes over from the older sister, then the child of the older sister will not suffer’, Ayi jie jiefu, waisheng wu chiku 阿姨接姐夫，外甥勿吃苦.

In the next segment, ‘Return of the Soul’, Huanhun 還魂, the ghost of Liuniang returns on the third day. She claws her way out of the coffin and through the gauze window sees the shadow of a man and a woman. She thinks, ‘What, my corpse is not yet cold and he’s taken a wife?’ Suddenly, her infant son cries out. Liuniang’s ghost hears a woman respond and feels a stab of jealousy – how could her husband be so faithless? She resolves to turn on him in anger but then realises that this woman is her own sister. She hears Xue say that both he and his wife in Hades would thank Qiniang for looking after the infant. Liuniang realises that she has wronged her husband. But her sister decides to depart, leaving the infant boy to his fate. Liuniang resolves to do something to stop her leaving. She hears her sister crying out, ‘Open up the door . . . I’m in here with my brother-in-law – just the two of us together; this will ruin our reputations’. At that moment the mother declares that she has

24 For delta funeral laments see McLaren 2008, ‘Making Heaven Weep’.
taken it on herself to marry them by the bolted door method, *ban niu qin* 扳鈕親, that is, she has bolted the door on their room and will not open it until they promise to marry (p. 395). The pair have no option but to agree and Xue says he will remain faithful to Qiniang all his life.

There are other twists and turns in the elaborate plot, including a villainous landlord who seizes the beautiful Qiniang for himself. However, in the end Xue manages to snatch her back and they live happily ever after.

In this transcription of the Xue Liulang story, as recorded from folk singers in the 1980s, the hero is a farm labourer and the two heroines are fine ladies from a wealthy family. Xue’s acquisition of the beautiful Liuniang and Qiniang is not due to trickery and seduction, and his mother-in-law essentially arranges his marriage with the younger sister, thus legitimizing this unorthodox act in the eyes of the local community. Embedded in the plot are two forms of marriage that were frowned upon in elite and conservative circles but which were quite prevalent in the lower Yangzi delta until the mid twentieth century. One was the sororate form of marriage, in this case, a man marrying two sisters in succession. The other was what I have termed in an earlier study, ‘abduction in marriage’, where a poor man simply seizes an unmarried woman and makes her his wife (McLaren 2001). The lower Yangzi delta was marked by a general shortage of women and an onerous bride price system which made it very difficult for poor men to afford wives (McLaren 2008, Chapter 2). When a wife died young in the delta region, the husband had to find the bride price for another wife. For the poorer classes a common solution was to marry the younger sister of his deceased wife. Since the two families had already exchanged bride price and dowry, there was no need for a further exchange of payments. However, for a younger sister to marry her elder sister’s husband, *jiefu* 姐夫, infringed orthodox kinship protocols that regarded such liaisons as incestuous.25 Marriage between non-blood kin on the death of one party was generally condemned by Han Chinese elites.26

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25 The practice has deep roots in south China. Wolfram Eberhard has noted cases of what he terms ‘sororate’ marriage, that is, a man marrying his wife’s sister after the decease of his wife, as far back as the Song period in regions such as Jiangxi, Jiangsu, Guangdong (Eberhard 1968: 181). Eberhard believes that the origin of the custom lies in the local culture of the Yao and aboriginal people of Guangxi, Hunan and Hainan and coastal regions of China (1968: 112).

26 The levirate (a woman marrying her deceased husband’s younger brother) was common amongst the Mongols and Manchus in the late imperial period. After the establishment of Confucianism as the dominant ideology in the Han period, levirate practices were regarded as abhorrent (Sheng Yi 1994: 231). The case of a widower marrying the younger sister of his wife was viewed with less concern than instances where he marries his father’s concubine or his older brother’s wife. Chen Guyuan, an early pioneer of the study of the history of Chinese marriage, even gives this type of marriage another name, *xujia* 續嫁 [marriage in succession], and notes its ambivalent status within levirate practices (Chen Guyuan 1916, reprint 1998: 69–70). However, according to Chinese protocols, for a widower to marry his deceased wife’s sister was regarded as an ‘inferior’ marriage because it confused the hierarchy of kinship relations and did not involve the usual exchange of bride price and dowry. In fact, it was often carried out precisely to avoid
story about the bolting of the door to compromise a young couple and force a marriage, reflected, in spite of elite condemnation, an actual practice in the delta region. Together with ‘abduction in marriage’, qiangqin 搶親, the custom of ‘bolted door marriage’ provided a means whereby a poor man could expeditiously obtain a wife without going through a matchmaker and paying a bride price. Both were accepted local customs that recognised the hardships faced by a man without a wife in the labouring classes of the delta region.

‘XUE LIULANG’: A NINETEENTH-CENTURY MANUSCRIPT

When one turns to a manuscript version of ‘Xue Liulang’ from the late imperial era the story is perplexingly different. The 1854 manuscript – as we have it in the modern typeset reprint – consists of a narrative told entirely in hepta-syllabic verse in a style known as ‘song text’, changben 唱本. In this earlier version Xue Liulang appears to be from the same relatively wealthy class as the two sisters. At any rate, he is never described as a farm labourer. The changben version relates a grim story that begins with the marriage between Chen Liuniang 陳六娘 [Chen Sixth Sister] and Xue Liulang. When Liuniang praises the beauty of her younger sister, Qiniang 七娘 [Seventh Sister], Xue wonders if he can win this beauty for himself. Jokingly Liuniang dares him to go and fetch her sister, promising he can marry her if he succeeds in luring her away. Xue takes her at her word and goes to the home of Qiniang. He tells his mother-in-law that his wife is ill and he needs to bring back Qiniang to tend to her. He takes her back in his boat and during their travels moors the boat amidst the reeds and tells her of his plan to consummate their ‘marriage’ there and then. Far from showing concern, Qiniang turns out to be a willing partner, even seducer. Their sexual union is described in explicit language and appears to be the raison d’être of the whole story. Once back at his home, Liuniang is horrified to hear about this act of betrayal by her sister and her husband and hangs herself from the rafters. Xue sends a letter to the mother who comes to collect her daughter’s body. He offers the mother servants and money if she will agree that he can wed Qiniang. She complies and the two marry.

The 1854 manuscript is not divided into sections and lacks the characteristic shan’ge poetic form with its variable line length, although the story is related in both the narrative and dramatic voice as in the shan’ge. It comprises 576 lines.
of hepta-syllabic verse. While the text is obviously reading matter, the final lines indicate it could also have been an aide mémoire for the performance of prosimetric literature. As the title is listed in Ding Richang’s mid nineteenth-century prohibition of booklets of ‘licentious songs’, one can assume that the story also circulated in print in the late imperial period. Manuscripts of the same story were in circulation in the early Republican years. Che Xilun has viewed a manuscript with a 500-line version dated 1914 (1996: 58). From Che’s summary, the story matter appears to be very similar to that narrated in the 1854 manuscript. This text is thus on the border between oral and written: it could have been used for performance, and may well be derived from performance, but circulated as written and printed material amongst rural and township communities of the Jiangsu region.

The erotic encounter between Xue and Qiniang is given explicit treatment in this changben, in sharp contrast to the performance-based modern shan’ge transcription discussed above. This could very well be due to contemporary singers’ avoidance of sexually explicit material in their performances. Antoinet Schimmelpenninck has discussed this issue at some length in her valuable study of contemporary shan’ge performance. Shan’ge were commonly sung during courting and contained erotic imagery (1997: 76–79). After the repression of the Cultural Revolution, the performers she interviewed were generally wary of singing ‘dirty’ songs but she nonetheless recorded the occasional sexually explicit song (see the example of Qian Afu, 1997: 169). Songs expressing longing by love-sick girls were very common, although, as Schimmelpenninck notes, they were generally sung by men (1997: 151). In most cases, sexual material was embedded in erotic imagery and was rarely explicit (1997: 164). Qian Shunjuan noticed a similar reticence on the part of her interviewees. She observed that in her handling of the ‘Wu Guuniang’ story, Lu Amei decided to change the nature of some of the key personalities. For example, she converted the male protagonist from a lewd seducer of women to an honest labourer and master of shan’ge (Qian Shunjuan 1997: 24). In addition, performers face pressures from the editors and compilers of transcriptions in the contemporary period, who are often amateur ethnologists of their own local traditions. The Wu songs, and particularly the ‘epic’ tales, bolster regional pride and enhance the standing of singers and editors in the local community. For this reason it is hardly surprising that the consensus opinion of those involved in Wu song compilation is that the tales related by the amateur peasant performers in the 1980s should be ‘healthy’ compared with the ‘salacious’ versions associated with literati from the late Qing period.

29 Qian Shunjuan (1997: 25) has discussed the anxieties of Wuje practitioners about singing stories with ‘sexual chaff’, xingai de zaopo 性爱的糟粕. She tells the story of Lu Amei who had to be strongly encouraged
issue of the balance between *hun* and *su* clearly remains a vexed one today and it represents one of the significant differences between the performance-based *shan’ge* of the contemporary period and the *changben* discussed in this study. The *changben* version of ‘Xue Liulang’ begins in the conventional manner of prosimetric tales:30

> Ever since Ban Gu set up Heaven and Earth,  
> Let’s not speak of loyal ministers and filial sons,  
> Let’s talk of a romantic story from Xue village,  
> Of how a man went by boat to bring back his wife’s younger sister.

自從盤古立乾坤，  
忠臣孝子莫談論，  
且唱謝村風流事，  
姐夫撐船載阿姨。  

*(Jin Xu 2004: 398)*

Next follows a standardised description of the wealth of the Chen household and the two sisters, Chen Liuniang and Chen Qiniang. Both sisters are good-looking but the latter is famed as a beauty. Then follows a scene where Xue Liulang is seeking respite from the summer heat together with his wife, Liuniang. They sit in their garden, enjoying the scent of summer flowers:

> Xue Liulang thought to himself,  
> ‘Such lovely flowers with no one to pluck them.’  
> He stretched out his hands to take off his clothes.  
> Liulang then spoke to Liuniang,  
> ‘The villages and byways are agog with the news  
> That you, Liuniang, are very beautiful,  
> With a hibiscus face to rival Guanyin.’  
> When Liuniang heard this she merely laughed,  
> ‘The people of the villages and byways are just commoners,  
> They’ve never seen the giant earlobes of the Buddha.  
> How have they seen such a beautiful woman!  
> Now my younger sister, Qiniang,  
> Is like an immortal come down to earth...  

> Her mouth like cherries and peaches, her eyebrows like willows,  
> Her peach-flower face smiles with spring passion.

30 For a discussion of stock material in prosimetric texts dating back to the fifteenth century see McLaren 1998: 154-191; for the conventional prologue see pp. 106-108.
Eyes like autumn ripples, nose straight and regular,  
Her water-caltrop three-inch [bound feet] tread lightly,  
Neither too thin nor too chubby,  
Only the Putuo Guanyin could be her match!  
Like Chang E leaving her moon palace,  
Or an immortal coming down to earth.’  
Liulang heard this with amazement,  
‘How could there be such a one in the world?  
If I could gain this younger sister in the canopied bed,  
Even if I died today I’d be content.’  
When Liuniang heard this she became angry.  
‘Why are you so unfaithful?’  
Liulang responded with a smile,  
‘Listen to me, my wife,  
I have thought of a plan to trap her.  
I will go by boat to bring back the younger sister.’  
‘My husband, you’re talking like an idiot!  
How could you be able to deceive my sister?  
If you are able to dupe her into coming here  
Then I will accept her as your wife!’

六郎肚裏便思量，  
個樣好花啥勿采，  
便伸手去脫衣裳。  
六郎說與六娘聽，  
前村後巷盡傳聞，  
多說六娘生得美，  
芙蓉美貌賽觀音。  
六娘聽說笑一聲，  
村巷儘是小出身，  
從未見過大耳佛，  
哪曾見過女佳人。  
我妹妹七姑娘，  
好似仙女在世上。  
口似櫻桃眉似柳，  
桃花面上笑春風，  
眼似秋波鼻又正，  
紅菱三寸步輕鬆。  
又勿瘦來又勿壯，  
普陀觀音世無雙，  
好像嫦娥離月殿，  
又似仙女下凡來。
This sets the scene for the story to come. Liuniang dares her husband to succeed in luring her beautiful sister and he is determined to do so. The *changben* describes at great length the making of the boat with which Xue is to bring back the younger sister. It is carved with scenes of couples made famous in storytelling, fiction and plays of the late imperial period such as the faithless lover, Cai Bojie 蔡伯喈, from ‘The Lute’ play; the glamorous play-boy, Tang Bohu 唐伯虎; the doomed pair, Liang Shanbo 梁山伯 and Zhu Yingtai 祝英台; and the famed lascivious couple, Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮 and Ximen Qing 西門慶. The carvings even include detailed renditions of Xue’s anticipated lovemaking with the younger sister: ‘Right in the middle was engraved a scene of illicit passion/ The younger sister making eyes at me/ With both hands I embrace her body’, 當中雕個好私情/小姨對我眉目做/雙手抱住阿姨身 (p.400). The boat description also circulated as a separate text, and potentially as a separate song. Che Xilun has viewed a historic but undated manuscript called ‘Building the Boat’, ‘Zao chuan’ 造船, which contains a 300-line narrative describing how the brother-in-law, jiefu 姐夫, builds an elaborately carved boat to bring back his wife’s younger sister, ayi 阿姨, (1996: 58). The intention of the boat description is to summon up one romantic story after the other, in an attempt to heighten the reader’s anticipation for the action to come. However, in this erotic encounter the reader is given no plausible insight into why Qiniang, portrayed as a virgin living in sequestration in her fine home, should accept Xue’s proposition so readily:

His hand holding the bamboo pole he slowly slowly pushed it along,
With one stroke he poled to the western bank.
Liulang spoke to Qiniang,
'It's not true that your sister is ill,
I've come here by boat to lure you away.'
He raised his head to look,
To the front and the rear few boats could be seen.
'I've been obsessed with the thought of you, younger sister,
Today I'm determined we will consummate our marriage!' (jie cheng qin 結成親)
The sister spoke to Liulang,
'Brother-in-law, listen carefully to me,
The boat is shallow and small, people will secretly watch
And when they see me I will be greatly mortified!'
The sister spoke to Liulang,
'Brother-in-law, let me explain to you,
Why not pole to your home,
We can stop there and freely consummate our marriage!'
Liulang heard this and laughed out loud,
'From what you say I'm not deceiving you...'

手拿竹篙慢慢撐,
一篙撐到西浜去,
六郎說向姐兒聽。
不是姐姐身有病,
撐船前來騙你身,
抬起頭來看一看,
前前後後少船行。
為你小姨想煞我,
今朝定要結成親。
姐兒說向六郎聽,
姐夫聽我說分明。
船淺船小人偷看,
看見之時羞殺人。
姐兒向說六郎聽,
姐夫聽我說原因。
何勿撐到家中去,
消停自在結成雙。
六郎見說笑一聲,
個樣說話騙啥人。

(Jin Xu 2004: 402)

Once again, he expresses his resolve to achieve his goal: ‘Whether you are willing or not /Today it is determined that we consummate our marriage’, 顧你今朝肯不肯/今日定然結成親. Qiniang thinks deeply for a while then says she is unable to flee and advises him to go to a remote spot on the waterways. Xue poles into the
reeds and moors the boat. Qiniang is described as the enthusiastic partner typical of male erotic fantasy: ‘Brother-in-law, don’t be impatient/Wait till I slowly remove my clothes’, 姐夫行事不要慌/等奴慢慢脫衣裳. Next follows an explicit description of the removal of her clothes, her willing display of her naked body, and their lovemaking. Little is left to the imagination: ‘In the muddy earth the stake is struck and slowly drills down.’, 泥地上打樁漸漸下 (Jin Xu 2004: 403).

After consummation, Qiniang tells him, ‘Secret passion (siqing) is a matter of fate/Those with destined bonds will certainly meet’, 私情本是前生定/不是冤家不聚頭. The length of narrative space given to the description of the boat and the lovemaking is in stark contrast to the mourning for Liuniang when she decides the loss of face is too great and hangs herself from the rafters (ibid: 404).

Unlike the elaborate mourning for Liuniang in the performance-based shan’ge transcription, the changben rendition passes over her death with great rapidity. Qiniang urges Xue not to reveal the true reason for Liuniang’s death and there is no elaborate depiction of her funeral and mourning ceremonies, although the younger sister (but not Xue) takes part in the Buddhist forty-nine-day ritual of mourning. There is no story about a ‘bolted-door marriage’, and Xue and Qiniang marry with parental approval in the usual way. The manuscript version concludes with these words of moral advice to the ‘educated gentlemen who buy this tale to sing’, 识字君子买去唱: ‘Good gentlemen, do not engage in affairs of the heart/Of all the multitude of sins, the worst by far is lust’, 仁君不作私情事/萬惡之中, 淫為首 (Jin Xu 2004: 405).

We have noted significant differences in plot and thematic material between the nineteenth-century song text version and the transcription based on the contemporary performance of the folk epic of the ‘same’ story. Both versions may be of considerable longevity. A suite of successive stanzas in Feng Menglong’s Shan’ge (juan 4) allude to variants of a tale of sororate marriage performed in seventeenth-century Jiangnan. In the first stanza, ‘The two sisters’, ‘Jiemei’, 姐妹, we hear about a passionate ménage-à-trois:

The older sister is willing, and the younger one too, The three of them did it together.31

姐要偷來妹咦要偷
三個人人做一頭.

The next stanza, entitled ‘The younger sister’, ‘Ayi’阿姨, is told from the point of view of the son-in-law in dialogue with his wife’s father. The former declares

that according to a fortune-teller, his wife (the older sister) will die prematurely. He now looks forward to a prospective marriage with the younger sister:

In the heavens above black clouds bear up white clouds,
The son-in-law poles the boat along bearing the father-in-law.
‘Your daughter had her fortune told: “In the green grass [of spring] you will become sick,
when the grass withers [in autumn] you will die.”
Be sure you do not promise her younger sister [in marriage] to another!’

天 上 烏 雲 載 白 雲,
女婿搖船載 丈 人,
你搭囡兒算命箇說道‘青草裏得病,枯草裏死,’
千萬小阿姨莫許子外頭人。

In the third stanza, the younger sister, now with her brother-in-law on the boat, is depicted as a willing participant in the violent ‘seduction’:

One water channel, two water channels,
In the third water channel the boat comes to a halt.
He raised the bamboo pole, removed the oars,
Grabbed the younger sister and pushed her down into the rear cabin.
The younger sister said, ‘Brother-in-law, don’t be flustered, don’t be in a hurry,
Let me get up and take off my clothes.
This small sister is like a pitcher of white rice wine kept at home,
Before the rightful owner has drunk from it, it is you who gets the first taste!’

一條浜,兩條浜,
第三條浜裏斷船行
揪起了子竹竿,撥起子橇
捉箇小阿姨推倒在後船倉
阿姨道,‘姐夫啊,你弗要慌來弗要忙
放奴奴起來脫衣裳
小阿姨奴奴好像寄做在人家一缸頭白酒
主人未 吃,你先嘗。’

In the final stanza, however, the seduction scene becomes closer to an act of rape and female resistance:
The brother-in-law tries to force himself on the sister-in-law. If you sieve rice by the pillow the bed will be full of husks.\textsuperscript{32}

The younger sister said, ‘Brother-in-law, just as you cannot re-dye something that is black, so you’ll never manage to stain me!\textsuperscript{33} [Shameless you are], your skin [on your face] thick as dumplings not cooked through!’

姐姐強横了要偷阿姨，
好像箇枕頭邊帥米滿床粞。
阿姨道，‘姐夫呀，皂色上還覆，教我無染處，
餛飩弗熟，你再有介一副厚面皮。

Feng’s selection of stanzas captures neatly the ambiguity in differing presentations of the story of the jiefu and ayi. Are we looking at a seduction scene, as in the ubiquitous stories of illicit love, siqing? The darker underside of this story is the ever-present threat that seduction becomes rape and brings tragedy to one or more of the participants. It appears to be a requirement in many versions of the story that the elder sister must die. She either becomes ill after childbirth and dies (as in the contemporary transcript discussed here and alluded to in Feng’s second stanza) or she is shamed by the seduction of the younger sister and hangs herself.\textsuperscript{34} In addition, Feng’s selection of stanzas on the jiefu–ayi theme could possibly allude to many differing presentations of this story, from a willing ménage-à-trois to the violent rape of the younger sister. The stanzas could thus be considered as rhetorical highlights from one or other variant forms within an epic tradition dealing with the multiple possibilities of sororate marriage in the delta. Feng’s stanzas in the Shan’ge are an indication that both the 1854 manuscript tale and the different story told in the contemporary transcript examined here contain thematic and formulaic material that was part of the linguistic resources of the epic tradition in the seventeenth century, if not earlier. It also appears that the tradition contained within it story versions that could contend and contradict each other. One of the central differences is the nature of the sororate marriage reflected in the story variant. Does the tale revolve around the death by sickness of the older sister and a commonsense arrangement to allow a felicitous marriage between the widower and the younger sister-in-law? Or is it the story of an enforced marriage preceded by trickery and an act of seduction or rape carried out on a boat? Depending on

\textsuperscript{32} According to Ôki the word for husks is homophonous in the local dialect with ‘wife’, qi 妻, hence ‘the bed is full of wives’ (2003: 548).

\textsuperscript{33} According to Töpelmann, the term you ran 有染 is a double-entendre for sexual relations (1973: 251).

\textsuperscript{34} In some versions not examined here the older sister is reborn after death as a bird and carries out vengeance against the younger sister (see Che Xilun 1996: 58–59).
the narrator or performer’s choice, the story could be considered romantic or coercive, and also relatively ‘meaty’, hun, or relatively ‘vegetarian’, su.

Since the differing versions of the delta ‘epics’ have been little explored, it is not possible to say how representative the narrative of ‘Xue Liulang’ is for the interplay of oral and written traditions in folk epics of the delta region in general. First, the version in Jiang Bin’s anthology discussed here may well reflect a local Wuxi regional variant within the performed epic tradition. More work needs to be done to ascertain how representative this version is of the village performance tradition in the delta generally. Nor can one say that the written shan’ge of the nineteenth century has necessarily derived in any direct way from the village performances, although clearly both types of shan’ge draw from a common storehouse of rhetorical formulae, motifs and stuff-material. I have mentioned various limitations in studies of epic songs in the delta area, not least of which is the death of the performance of the epics as a living tradition after the founding of the People’s Republic of China. All ‘performances’ since the 1980s have been elicited from mostly elderly practitioners. Very few unedited transcripts of elicited performances are available (Schimmelpenninck’s study of short shan’ge is a valuable exception). Current practitioners are likely to self-censor certain material, such as sexually explicit references, that may offend contemporary socialist sensibilities. The local ethnologists who transcribe and present the scripts to the outside world may have similar inclinations, although this too is slowly changing. The epic-length sung narratives in the scholarly domain today are almost invariably hybrid texts comprising the elicited performance of a respected practitioner supplemented by material from other performers and written material from past performances. There is thus no pristine oral epic tradition to examine in the Yangzi delta area. Of course, these methodological problems are common to the study of oral traditions worldwide in the modern period. My goal here is to offer an exploratory study of one particular story in order to lay a foundation for future work in this important area. For this reason, my findings are tentative and may need correction after further research.

**CONCLUSION**

What can one conclude from this study of two quite distinct versions of the Xue Liulang story? I would argue that this case study reminds us of the great

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35 **Hou Yang** argues that the story collected by Zhu Hairong from Wuxi (that is, the version discussed here) portrays the hero in a more positive light than other shan’ge versions performed in delta villages. He believes this is because of the greater prevalence of ban niu qin [bolted-door marriage] customs in Wuxi (1990: 82–85). This issue awaits further research.
importance of generic conventions and performative context in the recycling of stories in oral and written traditions. The folk epic version of Xue Liulang recorded in the modern period is much longer and more elaborate, with a stronger emotional and lyrical component. Unlike the *changben* manuscript version from 1854, it is sung by practitioners and composed in performance by drawing on the rich linguistic resources of the *shan’ge* tradition. The sung epic is also more artistically successful, and – to a modern reader – more satisfying in its depiction of the psychology of the main protagonists. The tale hangs together by its own internal logic and the reader is given convincing reasons for the eventual marriage between Xue and Qiniang, even though the ‘bolted door marriage’ form was highly offensive to general Confucian views of sexual morality. In the performance-based *shan’ge* it is the mother and the spirit of the deceased wife who in effect serve as matchmakers for the marriage of Xue to Qiniang. This offers a modicum of legitimacy to their sexual union, at least amongst the communities of the delta region. However, one suspects that the highly elliptical treatment of their sexual union by the shores of Lake Tai in the version discussed here might not be representative of *shan’ge*, which were noted for their raunchy treatment of sexuality. By contrast, the encounter between Xue and Qiniang on the boat in the *changben* version is described in the erotic style of assignations between prostitutes and their lower-class clients on the waterways of Lake Tai. During the late imperial period a very considerable ‘courtesan’ literature emerged in fictional writings by literati, some of it influenced by orally transmitted *shan’ge*. The unknown author of the *changben* text was presumably influenced by the erotic or even outright pornographic literature in constant circulation in Jiangnan. In this rendition the author/compiler sought to cater for a less-educated readership for which explicit sexual description was of greater importance than an elaborate romantic tale related in episodic fashion.

The narrative *shan’ge* songs of the Yangzi delta region offer a rich field of exploration into the beliefs, ideologies and practices of unlettered populations in pre-revolutionary China. Delta folk epics offer an interpretive framework

36 Sommers notes that in Chinese law of the late imperial era, the notion of *si* referred to an illicit or unauthorized sexual union (*Sommers 2000: 31*). Thus *shan’ge* about illicit passion, *siqing*, dealt with sexual liaisons that were condemned by both legal and canonical Chinese notions governing human sexuality. No doubt the ‘illicit’ nature of *siqing* stories helped to account for their enormous popularity.

37 According to Sommers, illegal cases of abduction and enforced marriage might be rendered ‘legal’ if the woman’s father agreed retrospectively to the marriage. The woman’s consent or resistance was immaterial and of no consequence (*Sommers 2000: 45, 65*).

38 On the *siqing* theme in orally performed *shan’ge* of the delta, see Yang Suoguang 2006.

39 See particularly the study of Lowry, who discusses the development of what she terms ‘a popular idiom’ of phraseology about sex and passion associated with Jiangnan courtesans and adapted into literati writings (*2006: 256–57, 271 ff*).
within which the ideas, beliefs and practices of the unlettered are explained and validated. *Shan’ge* dealing with illicit passion such as ‘Xue Liulang’ projected a sympathy for the talented but impoverished labouring man and his attempts to obtain a wife. As in many Chinese works of fiction, women in *shan’ge* play a strong role in pursuing love matches, in contravention of Confucian norms and expectations. The folk epics additionally reflect a range of marriage practices, such as thebolted door marriage and marriage by abduction, which violate the expected norms for ritual practice in China.

In this chapter I have distinguished between two types of narrative song text. The first type of ‘text’ was composed in performance in Jiangnan villages. The first *shan’ge* discussed here belongs to this category. The second category comprises texts based on prior composition that could be memorised to be performed to others, or could circulate as popular reading matter in manuscript or print. While both types may tell the ‘same’ story, there are clear distinctions between them. The village *shan’ge* were composed extempore in performance and draw on the poetic resources of that region. Rural performers sought to master the local repertoire of songs sung during rice cultivation, at boat races, song competitions, festivals and on ritual occasions such as marriages and funerals. To the extent that they achieved mastery of the repertoire they could then perform folk epics of almost infinite variation and flexibility. Their epics reflected the everyday practices of the village they lived and laboured in but not necessarily those of neighbouring areas. The rural *shan’ge* was performed in multiple variants of the Wu topolect, and village *shan’ge* were not always well understood even in adjacent rural regions, let alone Jiangnan urban settings. Villagers who sought to test their performance skills in townships found out quickly that people in urban areas had little interest in the content of village songs and did not understand the local dialect.\(^40\) It appears that these narrative *shan’ge* were only recorded and written down in relatively complete form in the contemporary era, although some of the formulaic material may well have been included in manuscript and printed *shan’ge* booklets that circulated in the late imperial period.

The narratives recorded in writing or print in the nineteenth century that were also commonly known as *shan’ge* did not require mastery of a huge song repertoire on the part of the people who recorded them, used them as an *aide mémoire* in performance, or read and transmitted them. Nor did they reflect the compositional techniques of *tiao shan’ge* (mixing *shan’ge*)

\(^40\) Discussed by Schimmelpenninck 1997: 70-71.
and the *taolu* (suite of songs with a narrative structure). These metrical narratives tended to have linear plots with less lyric elaboration. The poetic form tended towards a more or less uniform heptasyllabic verse form. Less use was made of expressions in the Wu topolect and booklets were designed to be comprehensible amongst literate groups in the Jiangnan region. The written and printed *shan’ge* of the pre-contemporary era were necessarily shorter than the type of folk epic performed over several days in the paddy fields. It appealed to a broader audience than the village *shan’ge* and caught the eye of publishers looking for attractive reading for less educated audiences. This analysis of the story of Xue Liulang demonstrates that within a particular folk epic tradition one can find variants offering quite distinct song styles, formulaic material, imagery and poetic resources. In this case, it appears that contending interpretations of the common practice of sororate marriage in a region with a chronic shortage of women underpinned striking variations in *shan’ge* song traditions.
CHAPTER 6

Chinese Performing Arts and Popular Prints

Boris Riffin

This chapter is about the depiction of oral storytelling (shuoshu 說書, quyi 曲藝, shuochang wenxue 說唱文學) in Chinese popular prints. The subject has not been studied except for a few brief articles: T. Vinogradova, ‘The tale of the folk picture nianhua’ (VINOGRA DOVA 1999: 251–54), Wang Shucun’s section on Beijing performing arts and popular prints (WANG Shucun 2002), and Ni Zhongzhi’s brief explanation of two Tianjin prints on performing arts (NI Zhongzhi 2008). Nowadays in China such pictures are called nianhua 年畫 [New Year’s pictures]. This name emerged due to the fact that the Chinese used such pictures to decorate their houses on the eve of the lunar New Year. The very term nianhua was used for the first time in Li Guangting’s work Xiang yan jieyi 乡言解颐 [Smile Recollecting Rural Expressions] (1849). Ordinary people preferred to use the term hua(r) 畫(兒) which means ‘pictures’. Nianhua was not used at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the Russian sinologist Vassily Alekseev collected popular prints in China. These popular prints were colour printed engravings, mostly printed from a few printing blocks depending on the number of colours used. In Yangliuqing, the famous centre of popular print production near Tianjin, carved wooden blocks were used to make prints of just a few colours, and the rest of the picture was coloured by hand. The most widespread were popular prints of the sizes of 30 × 50 and 50 × 100 cm. There were also vertical

1 I would like to acknowledge gratefully financial assistance for this project from the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation.
2 Roman Yakobson and Peter Bogatyrev have proposed in their well-known article to divide all folklore into two categories: actively-collective and passively-collective. Simply put, actively-collective means non-professional and passively-collective means professional. Folk songs, tales, legends, proverbs and other folklore phenomena not requiring any special training and available to each member of the collective belong to the first category. If the proper performance of the folklore art work requires long training (often within a family of performers), it belongs to the second category. See Bogatyrev and Jakobson 1929: 900–13.
3 This section in Wang Shucun’s Zhongguo nianhua shi 中國年畫史 is about three pages long, but except for the popular print ‘Shibuxian’, the other examples he discusses are probably songs (gequ 歌曲), not performing arts (quyi).
5 V. Alekseev was honoured as a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1929.
pictures in the form of paper rolls 100x20 cm depicting three episodes one under another.

The centres of popular print production were located in different provinces. The largest and the most famous of them were the workshops of Suzhou (some of which had probably existed since the seventeenth century), then the workshops in Yangliuqing (which emerged at approximately the same time), in Wuqiang county of Hebei province, in the counties of Weifang and Gaomi of Shandong province, in the town of Zhuxianzhen near Kaifeng in Henan province, in Mianzhu county in Sichuan province, and in Foshan near Canton. Other workshops with long traditions existed in other provinces, for example, in Fujian and in Taiwan, but they were less important than the above. If we compare this list of centres of popular print production with the list of the best known centres of oral storytelling tradition we shall see that they rarely correspond. For example, there were just a few print-houses producing nianhua in Yangzhou, the city well known for its oral storytellers. The majority of the well-known centres of nianhua production are not especially renowned for their oral storytelling tradition, but, certainly, in each of the above provinces there were storytellers and telling and singing genres featuring their local dialect and other local features.

The Chinese popular prints may be divided into two categories: the plotless type and the topical type (having a plot). Plotless popular prints include numerous types of fortune-wishing pictures (wishing riches, sons, longevity, etc.); pictures with images of various deities, especially door gods, menshen; various family scenes, for example, celebration of the New Year or lantern festival, engagements of various population strata, scenes of cities, and sometimes (rarely) landscapes. The second group of popular prints includes scenes from legends, popular novels, dramas and performing arts. These popular prints may be divided into two groups: direct illustrations of scenes from a story (usually existing as a novel and/or oral storytelling) and the same episode as depicted from drama performance. In the latter case the artist depicts a theatrical stage with its simple stage properties (a table, chairs) and, for example, a horse is symbolized by a whip in the actor’s hand, or a carriage is symbolized by two servants holding lowered flags with the wheels depicted on them. This group also includes pictures illustrating national legends, similarly subdivided into two groups: illustrations of episodes from legends and depictions of scenes of performance based on the subject of these legends. Some popular prints depict scenes from oral storytelling. We shall analyze them later.

6 Many dramas share their plots with novels. For example, of 150 plays on the Three Kingdoms story, only 15 do not have their plot in common with the novel, see Tao Junqi 1981. Most plays on the Water Margin theme also share their plots with the novel. This of course applies to later chuanqi plays; Yuan drama and Ming chuanqi are a different case. Luo Guanzhong used plots from Yuan plays; see Riftin 1970/1997.
What was the basis of these popular prints – texts of the novels, theatre performances or oral storytelling? What can we learn from the depictions of oral performance? Before addressing these questions, let us look at the creation and repertoire of these popular prints.

THE PRODUCTION OF POPULAR PRINTS AND THEIR THEMES

Unfortunately we know very little about the artists who created popular prints. According to academician V. M. Alekseev, who had specially collected popular prints in China in 1906–1909 (when he travelled together with E. Chavannes in 1907 across Shandong, Henan, Shaanxi and Shanxi and visited a number of well-known centres of popular print production), ‘the picture itself is drawn by the xiansheng himself, who combines features of the keeper of serious tradition and the keeper of popular beliefs’. Alekseev noted in his travel diary after visiting a popular print production centre, Zhuxianzhen near Kaifeng, and having a conversation with one of the artists:

These derailed losers [i.e. persons who failed at the county examinations B.R.] are no longer considered to be educated people and are perceived by Chinese society as ‘smatterers’ who had once studied, had forgotten everything they learned except for elementary writing requirements and some plain ideas circulating in their milieu. They also include artists whom I saw in the print-houses producing popular prints in Peking, Yangliuqing, Qufu and here [in Zhuxianzhen B.R.]. These half-scholars and half-craftsmen hold at the print-house an intermediate position: they are neither scholars nor craftsmen. The insecure condition of these people may be observed in all their production. They persistently stick to their ancient clichés ascending at times to Confucian ideals, but hardly taking into consideration the level of education of their illiterate consumers. Quite often they do not wish to use vernacular, baibua 白話, but they do not completely master literary style, wenyan 文言, so the half-educated artist inscribes pictures in a language which is a combination of incompatible modes, ‘half-a-bottle of vinegar’, ban pingzi cu 半瓶子醋, as the Chinese call it. One may find in the same picture old-fashioned characters not used in speech and untranslatable into modern Chinese together with quite simple popular verses.7

Professor Bo Songnian, researcher of Chinese popular prints, writes in his book Zhongguo nianhua shi [History of Chinese Popular Prints] that the majority

of the creators of popular prints were folk artists, and that professional artists took part in the creation of popular prints in the Ming dynasty, though he gives no proof in his book (Bo Songnian 1986: 65). There seem to have been very talented people among the artists and also ordinary peasants who drew and printed popular prints. The artists based their work not only on the black-and-white prints of pictures of the old masters or albums of pictures passed from father to son, but also used in their work historical scenes seen by themselves, or imagined, based on oral stories heard by them (which is especially important for my report) and performed in the theatres. Historical knowledge and impressions from the experience of performance merged in the artists’ minds and were depicted in their popular prints. Some evidence suggests that among the masters of popular prints there were also hereditary folk artists (Pan Lusheng 2005: 129–130). We know rather few names of the artists who drew popular prints. The tradition of inscribing the name of the artist on popular prints emerged only at the end of the nineteenth century in Shanghai, and often this name was just a pseudonym.

It is well known that the Chinese storytelling genre called bianwen [transformation texts], which developed during the Tang dynasty (618–910), was originally connected with Buddhist sermons for laymen and showing of pictures, bianxiang [picture transformations]. Researchers agree that it
was at that time that popular prints using carved wooden blocks appeared in China. The earliest popular prints were images of deities. It is noteworthy that Russian popular prints have also emerged as paper icons using carved wooden blocks. The first examples of Chinese secular popular prints were found by the Russian traveller P. Kozlov in 1907–1909 while excavating the dead Tangut city of Hara-Hoto (Chinese name Heicheng); these popular prints are kept now in St. Petersburg in the Hermitage museum. One is a picture with images of beauties of various eras and the other the first image of the Three Kingdoms (third century AD) hero and commander Guan Yu, who was deified in the Tang dynasty, but his image does not have any features of an icon. Both of these popular prints were printed in the twelfth century AD in the city of Pingyang in Shanxi province, which was at that time the centre of Jurchen publishing. These engravings are considered to be the forerunners of nianhua. They were created with such a great skill and grace that it may suggest the existence of a long tradition of engravings which has escaped our knowledge.  

In the picture by the Song dynasty artist Li Song (1116–1243) named ‘The first New Year day’, we may see hanging on both shutters of the door images of door gods, menshen, depicted as civil officials (they wear civil headdresses). There are some notes in Song (960–1279) writings testifying to the fact that Song dynasty Chinese used to glue printed images of deities to the doors to scare malicious spirits away (Bo Songnian 1986: 65). Rare copies of popular prints preserved from the times preceding the seventeenth century show that among the most popular subjects were images of various deities, for example, the longevity god Shouxing. Only from the turn of the eighteenth century may we speak of the existence of a wide variety of popular prints. The Kupferstichkabinet in Dresden has the earliest topical pictures, which were listed in the inventory book in 1738. Among them there is a picture drawn on the subject of the novel Journey to the West9 (Figure 6.1) and an unpublished picture ‘Wu Song captures Fang La’.

A description of Fang La being captured may be found in chapter 117 of the 120 chapter edition of Water Margin,10 but in the novel it is not Wu Song who captures Fang La, and it is not Fang La who cuts off Wu Song’s hand, but someone named Bao Daoyi. But the depiction of events exactly corresponds to the tradition of their description in historical plays. So it is clear that the

8 Both of the popular prints were published many times, see, e.g., Wang Shucun and Li Fuqing (B. Riftin) 1989: ill.1–2.
9 Schätze Chinas aus Museen der DDR 1989: 125.
10 Yuan Wu ya 袁無涯, Chuxiang pingdian zhongyi Shuihu zhuan 出像評點忠義水滸傳 (1614), reprinted as Yibai ershi hui de Shuihu Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1968.
picture was created according to the play,11 but the images of the picture do not show a theatrical stage with its simple stage props or the actors playing the roles of the heroes, but the actual characters of the story. We may mention also some other Suzhou popular prints of the eighteenth century, for example, the one I found in the collection of the Asian Art Museum in Berlin. The picture takes its contents from a Water Margin tale, entitled ‘Gongsun Sheng uses magic to win Gao Lian’, Gongsun Sheng kai fa po Gao Lian 公孫勝開法破高廉. Both of these pictures are not theatrical, but created under the influence of both plays and novel.12

If we address the large body of pictures made during the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century and kept in museums and private collections of various countries (it should be noted that nobody in China collected popular prints prior to the 1920s), we shall see that folk artists were creating plenty of works with motifs from popular novels and dramas sharing more or less the same subject matter. No list of the subjects of the pictures was ever made. By my own calculations pictures with episodes from 28 novels circulated. In both the major printing centres in China and also in Vietnam, the greatest number of pictures is related to the theme of Three Kingdoms. At least 500 pictures on this theme were created (RIFTIN 1999B). Pictures with episodes dealt with in the novels Xue Rengui zheng dong 薛仁貴征東 [Xue Rengui Campaigns against the East] and Xue Dingshan zheng xi 薛丁山征西 [Xue Dingshan Campaigns against the West], as well as in Sui Tang yanyi 隨唐演義 [The Tale of Sui and Tang] and Yang jia jiang yanyi 楊家將演義 [The Tale of the Yang Family Generals], enjoyed great popularity among the Chinese. Many pictures relating to novels of chivalry exist; the Water Margin stories inspired over 80 kinds of popular prints (by my count based on the results of investigations in museums and private collections in eleven different countries) and many prints related to the late novels Qi xia wu yi 七俠五義 [Seven Heroes and Five Gallants] and especially Xiao wu yi 小五義 [Little Five Gallants] exist as well. Among the fantastic novels the artists seem to have been inspired first of all by Xi you ji 西遊記 [The Journey to the West] (pictures on this novel were made in Vietnam as well) and Feng shen yanyi 封神演義 [The Investiture of the Gods] (the pictures related to the theme of this novel were most popular in Foshan). The artists liked also to depict gong’an xiaoshuo 公案小說 [court-case novels]: Bao gong’an 包公案 [Cases of Lord Bao], Shi gong’an 施公案 [Cases of

11 This drama is known in a few local genres; see TAO Junqi 1980: 255. In ZENG Bairong 1989: 689–90 it is stated that the text of the drama is preserved in the library of Beijing University, but I did not manage to find it.
12 I thank the famous Japanese specialist in Suzhou pictures Prof. Takimoto Hiroyuki for improving the dating of this picture.
Lord Shi] and Peng gong'an [Cases of Lord Peng]. Considerable attention also was paid to novels of love and everyday life like Lü mudan [Green Peony] or Er du mei [Plum blossoms twice]; many pictures exist on the novel Honglou meng [Dream of the Red Chamber]. Most of the pictures about legends were dedicated to scenes from Bai she zhuan [Legend on the White Snake], and I found both pictures directly illustrating episodes of this legend, including an erotic variant, and prints depicting scenes from plays derived from this tale. Less frequent are pictures about the legend of Meng Jiangnü, whose tears destroyed the Great Wall, and only a few prints depict the legend of the love story of Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai. Pictures based on the plots of huaben [Talks] from the famous collection Jingu qiguan [Marvellous Tales of the Past and Present] are rare, but there are a few, for example, about Li Bo writing a letter to barbarians. Short stories created in wenyan are represented in popular prints only by some rare pictures from Pu Songling's collection of stories Liaozhai zhiyi [Strange Stories from the Leisure Studio]. Among these pictures there are some illustrating scenes from the stories as well as some erotic popular prints on the same subject, intended for decoration of the kitchen as bihuotu [fire-preventing pictures]. The depicted copulation symbolized a cosmic joining of the male principle, Heaven, and the female principle, Earth, resulting in rain, and this rain could extinguish a fire.

STORYTELLING REPERTOIRES AND POPULAR PRINTS

If we turn to the repertoires of the oral storytellers, we shall see that according to my calculations the traditional repertoires of the northern Chinese storytellers consisted of oral stories, shu, with themes related to about 28 popular novels. This corresponds (again by my calculations) to the number of novels used for making popular prints.

In Beijing and Tianjin stories in wenyan from Liaozhai zhiyi were retold in oral storytelling in prose, pingshu. The same stories were used for popular prints. But it seems there was no storytelling based on huaben short stories. The list of novel titles used as a basis for oral storytelling and that of such stories used for popular prints are almost identical. So far I have not seen pictures related to the themes of four novels popular among storytellers: (1) Yong qing sheng ping [Complete Tale of the Everlasting Blessing of Peace], (2) San xia jian [Sword of the Three Knights], (3) Da hong pao [The Large Red

13 Prints on Dream of the Red Chamber were, however, popular in urban areas only, because villagers did not know this novel, and no folk artists told this story.
Robe] and (4) *Yu gong’an* [Cases of Lord Yu]. These novels are less well known and not especially widespread. From the four great legends (Oxherd and Weaver, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai, Meng Jiangnü, and White Snake), only White Snake is known to be in the storytellers’ repertoire.

This brief comparison shows an almost complete identity between the subjects of oral storytelling and those of popular prints. It seems obvious that the popular prints were created to illustrate the plots of numerous novels, plays and oral storytelling already known and favoured by common people. It should be taken into consideration that (as Academician Alekseev used to say) China was the country of theatre, and it seems that there was not a village in China unfamiliar with wandering groups of performers. Performances were staged at temples during religious holidays and the birthdays of various deities, accompanied by inviting the deities to watch the performance and statues of deities brought in palanquins from neighbouring temples. It is noteworthy that the greatest number of popular prints that share the plots of novels and dramas probably were drawn in the north, in Yangliuqing, Shandong and Wuqiang. The most important of the southern centres of popular print production were in Suzhou and to some extent in Sichuan (though this conclusion may be connected with poor preservation of the pictures produced in other southern centres). But what was the basis of the popular prints – written texts of the novels, theatre performances or oral storytelling? There is no simple answer.

A ‘story’ could exist not only as a novel but also in many other forms, including drama and renderings into various genres of popular literature, *su wenxue* 俗文学. For example, there existed not only the novel *Three Kingdoms* (referred to in the early editions as *Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi* 三國志通俗演義 [Popular Tale on the History of Three Kingdoms]), but also *Sanguozhi guci* 三國志鼓詞 [Drum Ballad on the History of the Three Kingdoms]. The latter existed in the form of a manuscript divided into about 150 small booklets; these booklets were rented for a small fee to visitors of steamed bun shops to read (Li Jiarui 2003: 134–138). The ballad also appeared in xylographic editions in 20 small books and, finally, in the form of several late lithographic editions printed in Shanghai. In addition, a version of *Three Kingdoms* existed in the form of a *tanci* 弹词, *Sanguo zhi yu xi zhuan* 三國志玉璽傳 [Story of the Three Kingdoms and the Emperor’s Seal]. This work was known earlier only in the form of a manuscript, and was published as late as 1986. In Canton there existed a version of the story in the local genre *muyushu* 木魚書 [wooden fish tales] circulating under the simple name *Sanguo zhi* 三國志 [History of Three Kingdoms], and we know of several xylograph editions. 14 Numerous other versions of this story existed

14 A woodblock print drum ballad entitled *Quan Sanguo zhi* [Complete Record of the Three Kingdoms], *Yongyuan tang* 永元堂, 20 vols., is in the collection of the author. There is also a Shanghai lithographic
in various local genres like *dagushu* 大鼓書 [drum tale], a form of oral storytelling accompanied by a drum placed on a high stand. Taking all this into consideration, it might be difficult to define what was used by the storyteller and the artist as the basis for their work. Furthermore, we hardly have sufficient records of oral storytelling performances to compare such traditions with the corresponding picture. But still it is worthwhile to begin some preliminary work in this direction.

**PICTURES OF PERFORMANCE SITUATIONS**

Popular prints connected with *quyi* (performing arts) can be divided into two groups: pictures depicting the actual performance of an oral story by a storyteller, and pictures showing episodes from an oral story. I have managed to find only a few samples of pictures of the first type. The earliest of this kind that we currently know of is a Qianlong (1736–1795) period popular print, *Shibuxian* 十不閑 [Ten non stop], from the famous Qi Jianlong print-shop in Yangliuqing (Figure 6.2).  

*Shibuxian* is a kind of performing art. There are different explanations of its origins. According to Wang Shucun, *shibuxian* originally was sung by young Manchus or bannermen in the early Qing; the lyrics were composed of folk wishes for happiness and good fortune (*fu xiang ji qing* 福祥吉庆) (Wang Shucun 1959: 1). Another explanation says *shibuxian* developed from the songs or flower drum songs, *huagu* 花鼓, of Fengyang 鳳陽. According to Ni Zhongzhi, because several of the instruments used, including drums and gongs, had stands, the folk artist’s term for *shibuxian* was ‘singing with stands’, *chang jiazi de* 唱架子的. In the popular print we see boys performing *shibuxian* and a big stand in the middle. Around the same time Qi Jianlong’s print house printed other similar works such as *Yangge xi* 秧歌戲 [*Yangge drama*] and...
Figure 6.2 ‘Shibuxian’ [Ten non stop]; Qianlong period colour print with hand colouring, *taoban shouran* 套版手染, from the Qi Jianlong print shop in Yangliuqing. From *Yangliuqing nianhua ziliao ji* (Compiled by Wang Shucun. Beijing: Renmin Meishu chubanshe, 1959).

Figure 6.3 ‘Tang kai wu shi tiaoyan shuanghuang’ [Five generations of one family watch a performance of *shuanghuang*]; late nineteenth century colour print with hand colouring from the Qi Jianlong print shop in Yangliuqing, in the Kunstkamera collection, St. Petersburg; reprinted in *Sulian cang Zhongguo minjian nianhua zhenpin ji* (Eds. Riftin and Wang Shucun. Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Meishu chubanshe, 1989).
Guixu shengping 桂序升平，１７ which both show six boys playing. These must form a series, probably the predecessors of the later popular prints on ‘children’s play’, wawa xi 娃娃戱. This popular print depicts a child striking the gong on a stand in the centre and others playing a brass instrument, laba 喇叭, and the sanxian 三弦. Whether this reflects actual practice is an open question. Perhaps children playing does not reflect the actual situation.

More information can be gleaned from an unusual manuscript describing customs in Beijing in 28 small booklets that are in the collection of the Russian State Library in Moscow. Unfortunately the first volume is missing, but since it only records events from the Jiaqing period (1796–1820), it is probably from the early Daoguang period. At the top of each page is an exact ethnology sketch made in pencil by a Westerner, and underneath it an explanation in vernacular Chinese written with a brush, maobi 毛筆. It contains several sketches and explanations of shibuxian. The first sketch of shibuxian is similar to the popular print discussed above: it shows a stand in the middle, with the words ‘Qingxi Tang 慶喜堂’ written on it, and gongs on either side. A woman is playing a gong, and below her is a story-drum, shugu 書鼓. Two women holding story-drums are in front of the stand to the left and right, while a man dressed as a clown, chou’er 丑兒, performs in the middle. The explanation says, ‘Shibuxian refers to beating drums, gongs and cymbals; the hands, feet and mouth are never idle, so it is called “ten non stop”’ (２１.８７８).

The manuscript includes six more sketches on shibuxian, with explanations discussing in detail the artists’ skills and social status, their relationship to patrons, and performance venues (halls, homes, streets and roving the alleys). １８ These sketches and explanations can fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge about shibuxian. Shibuxian merged with lianhualuo 蓮花落, but

１８The description compares shibuxian performers unfavourably with actors who played the role of a young lady, xiaodan 小旦, saying the shibuxian performers are cheaper to patronize, “lowlier”, and not as artistically skilled.

They also go to eat and drink with patrons and wait on them . . . When they play shibuxian in a hall, if someone asks them to sing a song solo, when they finish they are rewarded with one or two strings of cash, and they thank them from the stage. If they see someone they know, they will go down off the stage to greet them. There are also patrons who take them to eateries to dine, but it does not cost nearly as much as to take a xiaodan (２１.８７９–８８０).

If you are having guests and hire shibuxian or lianhualuo 蓮花落 to sing at your home, you can ask one of them to the study to drink with you and wait on you – those who play shibuxian are even lowlier than the xiaodan. Their patrons also include some who are wealthy, but like that kind of thing and love to associate with them (２１.８８１).

It suggests that those shibuxian artists who were skilled at playing female roles, dan jue 旦角, had: patrons who spend money on them. They only appear in halls, and do not go on the streets. Those who go to the streets are all ordinary (２１.８８３).

The sketch on page ８８２ shows a street performance: the stand is on a table, and the audience listens sitting on a long bench. The sketch on the reverse side of the page shows four male artists walking, two of them
in the Jiaqing period *shibuxian* was popular for a time (*Zhongguo minjian yishu da cidian* 1990: 645). This explains why this manuscript describes it in more detail than other forms of performance.

In the Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg there is a picture created at the end of the nineteenth or beginning of the twentieth century titled *Tang kai wu shi tiaoyan shuanghuang* 堂開五世調演雙簧 [Five generations of one family watch playing *paiban* castanets, two of them beating story-drums. The sketch on page 883 shows a man carrying their things on a shoulder pole, and the basket in front says ‘Qingxi Tang’.](image)
a performance of *shuanghuang* (Figure 6.3).19 The picture was created by the Yangliuqing print-house, Qi Jianlong 齊建隆, which had existed since the seventeenth century. It depicts the head of the family’s birthday celebration; the old man is drawn sitting to the right among his relatives of different generations. The family is wealthy so they have invited storytellers, who perform an oral story in the *shuanghuang* 雙簧 genre. This genre was widespread in provinces and cities throughout the north. *Shuanghuang* literally refers to the reed in wood-wind instruments, but this kind of oral storytelling has nothing to do with reeds and actually means ‘two Huangs’. This oral storytelling tradition is connected with a certain storyteller, Huang Fuchen 黃輔臣, who lived in the eighteenth or nineteenth century. He was famous for his performance of oral storytelling, *xuanzi shu* 弦子书,20 and his ability to imitate the voices of people, birds and animals. Later he lost his voice, but he was still invited to the palace to perform. He managed to find a solution by hiding his son behind his chair. The son sang for the father, and the father sat in front and played a *sanxian* 三弦 (a three-stringed instrument) and pretended to sing, making all the necessary gestures. So the name of the *shuanghuang* genre should be understood as ‘two Huangs’ because the story was performed by Huang and his hidden counterpart. And in fact we may see in the picture a larger table on which a smaller table stands. Behind the second table hides the second performer. The principal performer stands on the larger table and, lifting his hand, makes the necessary gestures, creating the illusion that it is he who performs the oral story. According to Ni Zhongzhi, the other person standing at the table is a servant awaiting instructions.

The detailed inscriptions hanging on the wall indicate the storytellers are performing a scene named *Pan’guan shou, Shou Pan’guan* 判官瘦 瘦判官, which means ‘a lean judge, the judge lean’. It is difficult to say what is meant – ordinary judges or the master of demons Zhong Kui 鍾馗 who was also called Pan’guan by ordinary people. The storytellers obviously perform a comic scene like a tongue twister (*raokouling* 繞口令) with constant recurrence of the same words in different combination. This may be seen not only in the name of the story *Pan’guan shou, Shou Pan’guan*, but also in the words denoting tablets for records of the sovereign’s commands (*hu*), which are used in the combination of words *Duan huban, huban duan* 短笏板 笏板短 ‘Short is the *hu* tablet, the *hu* tablet is short.’ Characters names also are played upon in similar ways: one character is named Yuan Yuanyan 袁圆眼, another Yuan Yanyuan 袁眼圆; the older girl is Fen Hongnü 分紅女, the second girl Nü Fenhong 女分紅. This tongue twister tells about a dispute between two judges.

20 Most accounts say he performed *pingshu* 評書; see Zhongguo da baike quanshu. Xiqu, quyi, 1983: 131. Here I follow Ni Zhongzhi’s explanation, since *pingshu* does not involve singing.
which turns into a fight with tablets. All this is explained in the inscriptions hanging on the wall.

Another picture in the Vienna Ethnographic museum was printed in Shanghai at the end of the nineteenth century in the Wang Wenya 王文雅 print-house. At that time in Shanghai there were many storytelling houses where women performed – they played the *pipa* 琵琶 (a musical instrument like a guitar) and sang arias from Beijing opera.²¹ Pictures circulated widely which were at the same time works of art and playbills, informing about the upcoming performances and listing the names of the invited performers. The picture in the museum is a poster picture of Beiyitai shuguan 北益泰書館 (Figure 6.4). Beiyitai shuguan was a Shanghai storytelling house. Unfortunately, no information on that story-

telling house is available. As in other similar pictures, inscriptions also hang on the posts to the right and left. The inscription to the right says: ‘There are especially invited from Gusu (i.e. Suzhou) Zhu Wenlan, Jin Sulan, Jin Molan’, and the inscription to the left informs: ‘There are especially invited from Gusu Cai Guixi, Yao Ruyu, Yao Rulan.’ At the table four women sit with a *pipa* in their hands; they are obviously performers of Suzhou *tanci* oral stories. *Tanci* were performed by one, two or three people. Each of the announcements tells of the invitation of three women performers. Four women with *pipa* are drawn at the table, to the right of the table there is the fifth woman sitting and tuning her instrument. One more woman sits to the left of the table with a *pipa* in her hands. Thus the picture depicts six women performers, which corresponds to the number of performers’ names mentioned in the announcements hanging on the posts. A servant woman stands to the left behind the performers with a hookah intended for rich listeners.²² It is evidently a poster and not an illustration of an actual performance of oral storytellers, just as we may see in the lithograph of 1894 reprinted in *Shuoshu shihua* [History of Oral Storytelling] (Chen Ruheng 1958: 209). Women storytellers listed in the poster were probably not well enough known for their names to be mentioned in the history of *tanci*, and the sources available to us reveal nothing further about them.

Another similar poster depicts the storytelling house Xiao guanghan 小廣寒, which was also a famous place in Shanghai where storytellers performed (Figure 6.5).²³ The composition of this picture resembles the previous one. Three women performers sit at the theatre table playing *pipas*, which exactly corresponds to what we know of *tanci* performance. To the right of the table we see not the woman servant with a hookah but one more woman performer. Her right hand is beating a small *shugu* 書鼓 drum, and the left one beats time with *paiban* castanets. Somewhat nearer to the spectator another woman stands to the left with a *pipa* in her hands, probably waiting for her turn to enter the stage. Next to her with her back to the spectators a woman singer stands facing the playing performers. Just as in the first picture, in the second one we see a woman sitting to the left of the table and playing the two-stringed instrument *erhu* 二胡. It seems that we see here a whole orchestra. The greatest expert on Chinese popular prints, Professor Wang Shucun who published this picture, believes that the picture depicts a performance of Suzhou *tanci* performers.²⁴

The inscription on the right post says: ‘Now we have especially invited to return

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²² The above-mentioned illustrated description of Shanghai specifically mentions maidservants in storytelling houses offering hookahs to the customers (ibid.)
²³ Two of these posters are extant: one in the Vienna Ethnographic Museum, and one in the Moscow Tret’yakov Picture Gallery. Xiaoguanghan is mentioned in the list of the storytelling houses of the Simalu street; see: Lichuang wodusheng 1905: vol. 3, juan 4, p. 8.
from Gusu to Shanghai tanci masters Zhu Wenlan and Wu Beiqing’, and the inscription on the left post promises, “Today the masters of oral storytelling will specially perform successively fragments from “Handful of snow”, “Plan of three doubts”, “Plum blossoms twice” and “Pictures of four beauties”. In both inscriptions we see the word qingke 清客. According to the dictionary Hanyu da cidian [Large Dictionary of Chinese], this term was used to denote masters who taught how to play wind and string instruments and how to sing (Hanyu da cidian 5.1309). In this context this word is believed to denote a master of oral storytelling. The situation looks more difficult if we look at their repertoire. It resembles a theatrical repertoire, not the list of tanci oral stories. We know about just one tanci of those titles listed – it is ‘Plum blossoms twice’. But all these names may be found in Jingju jumu cidian [Dictionary of the Beijing Opera Repertoire] and in other reference books.25

The editors of the book Pictures of Chinese Music History published an advertising picture Xiao guanghan and a detailed description of it. They believe that the

picture precisely depicts a tanci performance, but rather than telling stories the women storytellers shown perform pihuang 皮簧 arias from Beijing opera plays. The picture published by Wang Shucun and reproduced in the music history album was printed in Suzhou in Chen Tongshen’s print-house, which at that time printed a lot of popular prints. But the same picture, carrying the name of Shanghai artist Qiu Tian 秋田, is kept in the Vienna Ethnographic museum. The picture differs from the previous one only in some minor details, for example, by a different ornamentation on the cloth hanging down from the table, or a different ornamentation on the lamps hanging above the table, or the look of the sleeve cuffs of the woman sitting to the left (Qiu Tian decorated them with the points symbolizing flowers). Nevertheless the rest of these two pictures is the same. The question is: which picture was created earlier, who has borrowed the image? It is difficult to answer this question because Shanghai masters and local print-houses were closely connected with those in Suzhou. There are many instances of reprinting popular prints. For example, many pictures from the same museum in Vienna marked with the name of Dou Caifang’s print-house were also printed in (and marked by) the well-known Suzhou print-house of Wang Rongxing.
Figure 6.8 The outside of a *shubenzi* folder from Hongchuankou in Shandong Province. From the author’s collection.

Figure 6.9 Inside a *shubenzi* folder, a popular print by the Fuxingyong print house depicts a drum ballad performance. From the author’s collection.
In his book *Yinyue yishu* [The Art of Music], Wang Wenyao reproduced an illustration that looks like an image from a popular print. It depicts a standard *tanci* trio of women, two of them playing *pipas*, the third playing a *sanxian* (Figure 6.6). All three of them are sitting at the table standing on the stage. Three men sitting below listen to their performance. The picture is titled *Zhu Suqing performs yu-style tanci in Soufang telling-house* (WANG Wenyao 1989: 115). It seems that this picture depicts an actual *tanci* performance.

A picture in the article on *guci* (drum ballads) in the volume of *Da baike quanshu* [Great Chinese Encyclopedia] on drama and oral storytelling reproduces a Yangliuqing popular print dating to the end of the nineteenth century titled *Ciyan qu Chiangsha* 詞演取長沙 [Performance of ‘The Capture of Changsha’] (Figure 6.7). The title refers to a performance of a drum ballad based on the plot of Three Kingdoms. We know two types of oral storytelling performance accompanied by drums. In the first kind, the storyteller beats a small drum and tells the story. This type of oral storytelling was popular mainly in the villages. In the second case the storyteller uses not only a drum but a three-stringed musical instrument, a *sanxian*, as well. *Sanxian* used for performing oral stories alongside drums were called *shuxian* 書弦 – ‘oral story stringed [instruments]’. In the picture we see a woman sitting to the right playing the *shuxian*. The woman standing in the middle performs an oral story beating a small *bangu* drum on a three-legged stand. Another musician to the left of the performer sits on a chair and plays a bowed instrument, most likely a *huqin*. No descriptions mention performance of oral stories accompanied by this third instrument, but the picture most likely depicts the actual practice of drum ballads at the end of the nineteenth century or the beginning of the twentieth century.

Only at the end of the twentieth century did Chinese scholars discover ‘folders’, *shu jiazi* 書夾子 or *shubenzi* 書本子, popular in the Hongchuankou 紅船口 and Fanxiancheng 范縣城 areas of Shandong (the latter is now part of Henan). These are embroidered purses made of blue homespun, 30–32 centimetres wide and 22 centimetres high (Figure 6.8). Some call them shoe-pattern folders, *xiyang benzi* 鞋樣本子. These folders are related to local customs. When a girl married, her mother would put the folder in her makeup case as part of her dowry. Another explanation goes that when the bride arrived at her mother-in-law’s house, her mother-in-law would prepare this folder for keeping needles and thread and shoe patterns. Oddly, these folders contain many popular prints (Figure 6.9).

The most I have seen in one folder was 22 prints. These prints are not primarily auspicious subjects like ‘bear many sons in succession’, *liansheng guizi* 蓮

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Almost all prints are based on drama. The subjects include Three Kingdoms, Water Margin, Journey to the West, and local drama. The prints are pasted in, one by one. The ones I have seen and the ones in my collection use 1920s-1930s Los Angeles Evening News as inserts. The prints are pasted to backing paper, and the backing paper pasted to the American newspaper. Some say the paper used by American newspapers was sturdier than Chinese papers, and might have been sold as wastepaper from Shanghai. I do not know if this is correct.

Among these prints on subjects from drama there is one that depicts a drumtale performance, dagushu 大鼓書, printed by Fuxingyong 復興永 (unfortunately regarding this shop’s prints nothing is known). It is 13.5 × 26.6 centimetres. The people are wearing Qing period clothing and the women have bound feet; perhaps the draft of this print was made in the late Qing. It differs from the Yangliuqing print published in Da baike quanshu in that, in addition to portraying the folk artists, it also shows the audience listening to the drum ballad. The structure of most popular prints is divided into three parts. In the centre are the two female artists, one drumming, whose hand seems to be holding paiban clappers, the other playing the sanxian (in the Yangliuqing print there is another playing a huqin). Behind them is drawn a drama stage table with a red tablecloth. On the table is a large teapot, so the artists can have a sip of tea. It seems they are performing in a storytelling house, but grass is painted below them, and the men listening to the performance are not seated but standing.

The painter must have borrowed the table and chairs from prints on drama. Balance is very important in the structure of popular prints; on the right are drawn two men, on the left two women. This popular print is rougher than that of Yangliuqing, preserving an authentic flavour of folk art; Yangliuqing prints were influenced by professional art. The popular prints in these folders all were done by multi-colour printing. Not many colours were used, because each colour required a separate woodblock. This print uses two woodblocks, two colours: light purplish-red and light green, but the robes of the men on the right are red. What technique was used? I acquired this folder at the Panjiayuan antiques market in Beijing. The Taiwan collector of popular prints Zhong Jinshui 鍾金水 also has this popular print among his collection of folders, shubenzi; it is the same image, but the colours are a bit brighter.

These few popular prints depicting performing arts are new materials for the history of those arts. The prints depicting the performances of shuanghuang and drumtales are particularly important.

I did not manage to find other pictures depicting performance of oral stories, but in the course of my search a number of popular prints with images of huagu...
folk performance attracted my attention. A huagu [flower drum] is actually a small decorated drum used to accompany street performances. Plays named huagu xi were popular in the provinces of Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi and Anhui. In his well-known description of amusements in the city of Yangzhou, Li Dou (end of the eighteenth century) writes on huagu performances (Li Dou 1960: 131). These unpretentious performances are known of since the Ming Dynasty. In Shanghai at the end of the nineteenth century huagu xi performances were staged by both professional artists in the theatres and by homeless people and unemployed artists in the streets. Street performances were forbid-
These plays had an extremely simple plot. A rich man goes for a walk and meets a husband and a wife who earn their living by street performances. The rich man orders them to show their art and begins to make advances to the woman. She pretends that she likes it but thinks how to teach this impudent fellow a lesson. The advertising popular print (Abb 378) from the same Viennese museum (printed in a Shanghai print-house run by Wang Wenya) depicts a husband with his wife (Figure 6.10). The wife plays a small drum, and the husband beats *paiban* castanets. Both of them are drawn to the left, and to the right side of the picture we see a fat man who has obviously just jumped out of bed (he has a boot on one foot and a shoe on the other). We see his naked breast down to the navel. The impression is that he has jumped out of the house and is running toward the actors with a furious expression as if he wants to beat the husband. The picture is an advertisement of a performance, so

corresponding inscriptions hang on the posts. The inscription to the right says: ‘Our theatre has specially invited from Gusu the actor of the highest category, well-known Zhou Fenglin’, and to the left: ‘Our theatre has specially invited from Gusu known actors Jiang Shanzhen and Xu Zhenqing’. The picture is made according to the typical traditions of theatre popular prints which may be seen, for example, from the presence in the picture of a theatrical table (drawn in the background) and the curtains drawn apart (see also Figure 6.11).

The same idea is conveyed in a completely different way in the Yangliuqing picture titled 

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textbf{Shixing shier yue dou huagu} 詩興十二月鬥花鼓 \textbf{[Popular Songs on the Twelve Months as Flower Drum Performances, huagu];} late nineteenth century colour print with hand colouring from Yangliuqing, reprinted in \textit{Sulian cang Zhongguo minjian nianhua zhenpin ji} (Eds Riftin and Wang Shucun. Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Meishu chubanshe, 1989).\end{itemize}

above the pairs we see the text of the songs, each couplet corresponding to one month. For example the text of the song corresponding to the play on one episode from \textit{Dream of the Red Chamber} goes: ‘In the sixth month we give a performance

\footnotesize
29 \textsc{Wang Shucun and Li Fuqing (B. Riftin) 1989: ill. 169.}
with painted drums. Lotus flowers open on the waters. Jia Baoyu meets beauties Baoqin and Baochai. In the House of Red Delights he longs for the Xiaoxiang Consort...’ We do not know whether the picture shows a real situation – a performance of scenes from plays accompanied by painted drums. This picture is absolutely unlike the scenes of performing popular plays huagu xi.

PICTURES OF STORYTELLING EPISODES

We now turn to the pictures depicting the subjects of oral storytelling. The famous Suzhou tanci San xiao yinyuan 三笑姻緣 [Three Smiles Romance] was influenced by a huaben story in the Ming collection Jing shi tong yan 驚世通言 [Constant Words to Warn the World]. It tells the love story of the well-known artist Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470–1523) and Qiuxiang 秋香, the maidservant of the scholar Hua Hongshan. This plot is also known from other genres of quyi, including baojuan 宝卷 and zidishu 子弟書, but Suzhou tanci versions (which were published at the beginning of the nineteenth century – in 1802, then in 1813 and 1878) enjoyed the greatest popularity among the people (Figure 6.13). Nancy Hodes has analyzed several versions of this work in detail in her dissertation (Hodes 1990). The plot of the oral story is as follows. Tang Yin goes to Suzhou and meets in the Bantangsi temple a pretty maidservant of the high official Hua Hongshan who has arrived in Suzhou together with members

Figure 6.13 ‘Tang Bohu san xiao yinyuan tu’ [Picture of Tang Bohu’s Three Smiles Marriage Destiny]; colour print with hand colouring by Qi Jianlong print shop in Yangliuqing, from the author’s collection.
of the household and the servants. The maidservant Qiuxiang thrice smiles at Tang Yin, whom she recognizes by his face to be an unusual person. Tang Yin likes the beautiful maidservant and he thinks that her smiles are an expression of deep feelings. Then Tang Yin sees Qiuxiang once more while boating. Tang Yin has fallen in love with her, but he has had no chance to meet her, so he changes his name and serves in Hua’s house as a shutong, a young man serving in a scholar’s study. When Tang Yin’s friends come to Hua’s house, they recognize their friend Tang Yin and disclose the ruse. Hua Hongshan allows Tang Yin to marry Qiuxiang. Storytellers insert into this narration one more story, that of Tang Yin’s friend Zhu Zhishan and his wager with Zhou Wenbing. The latter disguised himself as a maiden and was kidnapped by someone named Wang Tianbao, who hid him at his younger sister’s, intending to make the kidnapped ‘woman’ his wife. He certainly could not imagine that Zhou Wenbing and his sister would fall in love with each other, and when the disguise was revealed they became husband and wife. This inserted story was named by storytellers Hangzhou shu [Narration on Hangzhou], because the place of action in both is Hangzhou.

We know of two Suzhou pictures on this story. One of them was published by Wang Shucun under the title San xiao yinyuan [Three Smiles Romance].

is a large sheet (35x74 cm) preserved only in the form of a black-and-white print. Wang Shucun dates it to the beginning of the Qing dynasty (i.e. probably by the eighteenth century). In the picture we see separate scenes from this romance, beginning with the meeting of the protagonists in the Bantangsi temple and going on to the scene of blessing the enamoured couple. They are kneeling and Hua, wearing the headdress of the prime minister, blesses their union. Among the scenes we see the meeting in the boats and the scenes of Tang Yin’s life in the Hua’s home. We see also an inserted episode of the kidnapping of Zhou Wenbing disguised as a woman. Like many other early Suzhou pictures with a series of scenes from one romance, these scenes are separated by either a wall of a household, a branching tree, or a vertical standing stone.

The second picture depicting the story of Tang Yin was created at the end of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century (Figure 6.14). Lines divide the sheet (34 × 52 cm) into eight squares, with each square illustrating one episode. Dividing a sheet into squares was characteristic in those years for Suzhou pictures, in particular for Wang Rongxing’s print-house, where this picture was printed. Like the other print on this topic just discussed, this one begins with the scene ‘Meeting a Beauty’. Below it we see a picture of Tang Yin in a boat looking at the next boat – in which Qiuxiang stands pouring water from a bucket into the river. In another square we see Tang Yin serving in the scholar’s study. He prepares ink for the younger Hua. One of the squares depicts the scene ‘Expression of Feelings’. In the foreground we see one of the younger members of the Hua family named Hua Zhong kneeling before old madam Hua; behind her Tang Yin and Qiuxiang, hidden by tall decorative stones, express their feelings to one another. In an episode named ‘Drawing a Portrait’ we see Tang Yin drawing a beauty and Qiuxiang standing nearby preparing ink for him. The last row of squares shows the final scenes of the love story. In the top square we see the friends meeting Tang Yin. Zhu Zhishan and Wen Qiming sit in front of the high official Hua and probably tell him who his servant really is. Tang Yin dressed as a servant stands beside them and listens to what his friends say. In the bottom square, titled ‘Choosing Qiuxiang’, we see Tang Yin coming to Qiuxiang and asking her to become his wife (or a concubine in some other explanations). The last scene shows two groups of women; the group on the left have brought Tang Yin with them, and those to the right have brought Qiuxiang with them. Unlike the previous picture, here we find no inserted story of Zhou Wenbing disguised as a woman. The artist limits himself to illustrating the principal line of the plot.

**Zhenzhu ta 珍珠塔** [The Pearl Pagoda] is another well-known Suzhou *tanci* story. This oral story was probably composed in the eighteenth century.
and was first mentioned in the foreword to other tanci in 1781. It was published dozens of times (Hu Shiying 1984: 45–46) and was performed by well-known Suzhou storytellers, including Ma Rufei 馬如飛, who performed in the middle of the nineteenth century. The picture of this story was printed by Wang Rongxing’s print-house. It consists of two sheets, with ten squares each, depicting twenty basic episodes of the oral story. Its contents are similar to many narrative products of ancient Chinese literature (Figures 6.15 and 6.16).

The plot of the story is as follows. Fang Qing 方卿, the son of a former official, goes from Henan to his uncle in Xiangyang 襄陽 for a loan because of a decline in his family’s fortune. He receives only ridicule from his aunt. In indignation, he leaves without saying good-bye. His cousin Chen Cui’e 陳翠娥 gives him a package with a pearl pagoda in it, saying it is just pastry for Fang’s mother. His uncle hurries to catch up with him at the Nine-Pine Pavilion and promises to marry his daughter Cui’e to him. On his way back, Fang Qing is robbed of the pearl pagoda. A passer-by named Bi Yunxian saves Fang Qing. The robber Qiu Liuqiao is arrested in a pawn-shop and sentenced to death. At the sight of the pearl pagoda, Chen Cui’e believes that Fang Qing has been murdered. Heartbroken, she falls ill. Fang Qing’s mother, since her son has not returned, goes to Xiangyang. So desperate is she on learning of her son’s death that she throws herself in the river. Fortunately, she is saved by a nun from the White-Cloud Nunnery. Cui’e goes to the nunnery on a pilgrimage and meets her prospective mother-in-law there. Fang Qing comes out first in the imperial examinations. He goes to Chen’s residence disguised as a poverty-stricken Taoist monk and sings ballads to shame his aunt. Later on he visits his mother. In the end Fang Qing and Chen Cui’e are married by imperial decree.

The artist begins with the scene of Fang Qing saying farewell to his mother as he goes to visit his uncle. The next picture shows Fang Qing with his aunt who refuses to help him. In the third picture we see how the cousin gives Fang Qing a small bag which contains a precious pagoda, so that Fang Qing can sell it to continue his studies and to prepare for the examinations. The text states that a robber took the precious pagoda away from Fang Qing. The artist draws the robber with a sword in his hand standing over Fang Qing and the latter lying on the ground. The text says that Fang Qing is rescued by a military commander, Bi Yunxian, who was passing by. Bi Yunxian lodges Fang Qing in his house and even proposes that Fang Qing marry his younger sister. The artist draws the scene of the military commander offering his sister as a wife to Fang Qing. Then the artist draws the robber coming to pawn the precious pagoda. He is seized and brought to the court, which is depicted in the following illustration. In the last picture of the first sheet we see the robber being taken to execution.
Figure 6.15 ‘Zhenzhuta qianben’ [The Pearl Pagoda, First Part], ten episodes in framed squares; late nineteenth or early twentieth century colour print by Wang Rongxing’s Suzhou print-house, from Suzhou Taohuawu muban nianhua (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 1991).

Figure 6.16 ‘Zhenzhuta houben’ [The Pearl Pagoda, Second Part], ten episodes in framed squares; late nineteenth or early twentieth century colour print by Wang Rongxing’s Suzhou print-house, from Suzhou Taohuawu muban nianhua (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji, 1991).
The pictures in the second sheet appear in a different order than in the first one, where the episodes go one under another. In the second sheet the pictures are placed in two rows. The first row of illustrations depicts scenes 11 to 15, and the second row includes scenes 16 to 20. The first illustration of the second sheet, named ‘Chen Cui’e Asks for Treatment’, shows his cousin Chen Cui’e ill upon learning that Fang was attacked. The artist illustrates all the basic episodes of the oral story, including the scene where a Buddhist nun rescues Fang Qing’s mother from the river. The artist also depicts the scene where Fang Qing, having won first place in the capital examinations and received the rank of zhuangyuan 状元, comes disguised as a Taoist monk to his aunt’s house and performs an oral story in the daoqing 道情 genre to shame the aunt who has offended him. This is followed by the scene where the mother is reunited with her son, and at last the joyful end of the story – Fang Qing marrying his cousin. The twentieth picture has no special name and consists of a red screen with the character shuangxi 雙喜, double happiness, meaning wedding, drawn on it.

**NOVEL, DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE LITERATURE AS INSPIRATION**

In the above cases there is no doubt that the popular prints show the influence of plots of the popular Suzhou story-singing tanci, but the situation is more complicated with the northern popular prints. The analog of tanci in the northern storytelling tradition was guci – drum ballad performances. Some guci plots were taken from popular novels; those on Three Kingdoms were and those with the same titles as historical novels probably were as well. Sometimes it is very difficult to establish whether a picture shows the influence of an oral story or depicts a scene from a corresponding novel. For example, Wang Shucun believes that the Yangliuqing popular prints which are kept in the Ethnographic museum of Kazan university depicting the three campaigns against the Southern Tang in the middle of the 10th century were influenced by the guci oral story SAN XIA NAN TANG 三下南唐 [Three Campaigns Against the Southern Tang]. However, this oral story was itself influenced by the novel of the same name, and has the same heroes and a similar plot, so it is difficult to say exactly what was the basis for the artist’s inspiration (Figure 6.17).

Things are not simple with the picture illustrating the story of Qin Xianglian 秦香蓮. Her husband went to the capital to pass the examinations and managed to take first place. He concealed the fact that he was married and had two children, and married a princess. When his parents died and his wife Qin Xianglian had no means of subsistence, she went to the capital to search
for her husband. But he did not acknowledge her and ordered her sent away, and sent a servant to kill her on the way home. The servant pitied her and committed suicide instead. Eventually Qin Xianglian complained to the governor of Kaifeng, the wise Judge Bao, who managed to overcome the protection of the empress and sentenced Qin Xianglian’s husband to death. When publishing a Shaanxi popular print on this plot, Wang Shucun refers to the *guci* oral story *Qin Xianglian*, but this plot was also used in many plays belonging to different local genres. Researchers of Chinese drama say that the source of the play was a *guci* oral story, but it is extremely difficult to say whether this popular print was created under the influence of a text of the oral story or on the basis of a well-known drama. The picture published by Wang Shucun has some traces of theatre (Judge Bao sits at a typical theatrical table), though as a whole this simple enough popular print is not evidently theatrical, because in its background we see mountains and some vegetation. Besides, we have no data on the existence of this *guci* oral storytelling in Shaanxi province where the picture was created. *Guci* performances were widespread in the provinces of Hebei, Henan, Shandong, Liaoning and also in Beijing and Tianjin. I would like to add that I have heard this story in Miliangchuan village in Kyrgyzstan from Central Asian *dungan* people, descendants of the natives of Northwest China (Gansu and Shaanxi province *Huizu* 回族), and in this village there was no one able to read Chinese characters. The performer explained that he heard the aria of Qin Xianglian from the play ‘Chen Shimei does not acknowledge his first wife’ (the name of this play in Sichuan and other areas). Being asked whence he had heard this story, the performer reported that he had heard it from a vagrant beggar. It is an indirect confirmation that this plot was known in Northwest China, and we cannot say for sure that the picture was created on the basis of a *guci*.

The same situation is found in the case of prints illustrating events that took place at the beginning of the seventh century. These events are described in the *guci* oral story *Po Mengzhou 破孟洲* [The Devastation of Mengzhou] and in the play with the same name, known also under the name *Luo Cheng mai rongxian 羅成賣絨絹* [Luo Cheng Sells Silk Thread]. All reference books assert that the source of this drama was a *guci* oral story. The plot of the oral story is rather complex. The hero Cheng Yaojin settles at Wagang, Tile Hill, with his comrades, who have rebelled against the Sui dynasty, and declares himself a king, *wang* 王. He wants a man of courage named Wang Junheng from Mengzhou to join him and sends thither a young warrior, Luo Cheng, disguised

![Figure 6.17 Characters from Three Campaigns Against the Southern Tang; a pair of black scrolls printed with brightly coloured figures from Yangliuqing, 1904–1905, in the Kazan University Ethnography Museum.](image)
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as a vendor of silk embroidery floss. On the way Luo Cheng meets the son of Xu Quan, the commander of the troops defending Mengzhou, and Luo Cheng deceives him, stealing his gold bracelet. Arriving in Mengzhou, Luo Cheng comes to Xu Quan’s house as a silk thread vendor. Seeing on Luo Cheng’s hand the bracelet which belonged to his long-lost son, Xu Quan decides that Luo Cheng is his son, so he takes the young man into his house and orders him to teach his daughter Liniang the military arts. When Cheng Yaojin approaches Mengzhou with his soldiers, Luo Cheng helps him from within and the city is taken. The picture printed by Yonghede print-house from Yangliuqing (kept in Kunstkamera in St. Petersburg, size 60 x 100 cm)\(^{32}\) depicts Xu and his wife watching Luo Cheng teach their daughter to fight with spears (Figure 6.18).

We find a more complex composition in Wuqiang 武強 pictures. Several kinds of pictures were created in Wuqiang on this plot. A picture produced at Yixinghao 義興號 print-house\(^{33}\) looks like a large sheet (54 x 78 cm) divided into four rectangles, and each rectangle is in turn divided into two equal parts, each of them containing a scene from the story about Luo Cheng. The artist has depicted eight different scenes, beginning with Cheng Yaojin ordering Luo Cheng to go to Mengzhou disguised as a silk thread vendor. The next image

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32 Wang Shucun and Li Fuqing (B. Riftin) 1989: ill. 69.
33 Zhang Chunfeng and Li Xiaojie 1996: 123, ill. 102.
shows Luo’s arrival at Xu’s house. Liniang with her maidservant comes out to meet him. Then we see Luo pretending to be Xu’s son. Xu introduces Luo to his commander-in-chief Hu Kui, in whose house Luo Cheng sees Hu’s daughter Jinchan. Luo thinks of her all the time and falls ill from melancholy. Luo makes a good impression on Hu, and the latter decides to marry his daughter to Luo, but on their wedding night Luo reveals while dreaming the true aim of his arrival to Mengzhou. Hu Kui decides to execute Luo, but his daughter says that she wishes to die together with Luo. Pitying his daughter, Hu agrees to surrender to the soldiers from Tile Hill. The artist has drawn Luo down on one knee before Xu, telling him the truth.

In the other picture we see one more line of the plot: Luo’s meeting with Wang Jinye – the daughter of the man of courage Wang Junheng. Luo has been sent to persuade Wang Junheng to join the rebels, and Luo agrees to marry Wang Jinye. The artist has drawn Wang Junheng, who obviously does not suspect Luo’s love for his daughter, allowing the silk thread vendor to stay at his house (later he introduces Luo to Xu Quan’s household, but this is not shown in the picture). It seems that the sheet was intended for cutting, otherwise it is difficult to explain the order of the depicted scenes (for example, the first episode – Cheng Yaojin sends Luo to the enemies’ camp – is located in the bottom left square of the sheet).

Wang Shucun has published another Wuqiang popular print on the same plot.34 This is a series of four pictures, 22 × 33 cm, each of them halved into rectangles. Each picture is numbered, but their order is strange. In the right half of the previous picture we see Luo’s arrival as a silk thread vendor in the house of Xu. We see a maidservant coming to the vendor and the young lady standing in the doorway. In the left square we see Luo bowing to Xu’s wife, who obviously takes him for her son. In the second picture to the right we see Cheng Yaojin sending Luo to the enemy camp. Once more the initial episode – just like in the above case – does not come first in the print. In the left part of the second sheet we see a scene where Luo meets Wang Junheng. The third picture is an unusual scene. Enamoured, Luo peeks from behind a fence at Hu Jinchan walking in the courtyard. It is not clear why next to Luo there is another young man looking in the same direction. Perhaps it is a man who has fallen in love with the maidservant accompanying the young lady.

The fourth picture to the right is titled Lu zhen qing Hu Jinchan fan mu 露真情胡金蟬反目 [Truth Revealed, the Spouses Quarrel]. The artist has drawn Luo down on one knee and Hu Jinchan threatening him with a sword in her hand. The last scene is titled ‘Execution of the son-in-law. The mother and the

daughter ask for it.’ We cannot tell for sure whether the picture was created under the influence of the *guci* oral story or the play, but the picture depicting events after Xu Quan has moved to the camp of rebels obviously was created under the influence of oral traditions such as the *guci* oral story, since these events were not described in the plays.

Still another picture (55 × 77 cm) was created in Wuqiang, too, and is titled *Hu Jinchan da zhan Yang Ling* (should be *Yang Lin*) 胡金蟾大战楊令 (林) [Hu Jinchan Fights with Yang Ling (Lin)]. In this picture we see how the fearless Hu Jinchan, who was skilled with weapons, together with Wang Jinye and other women warriors in Cheng Yaojin’s camp, are fighting against the mountain prince Yang Lin, who supported the Sui dynasty. Some male heroes also take part in the battle together with the women riders. Though this picture does not refer to theatrical performance, the heroines are dressed in theatrical attire and behind their shoulders we see *kaoqi* flags, which were ensigns of theatrical generals only. This picture is a good example of the creation of popular prints on the basis of oral storytelling, in this case probably *guci*.

At the beginning of my chapter I cited the opinion of Bo Songnian, an expert in Chinese popular prints. He states that while drawing these pictures the artists used both scenes from drama and from oral story variants simultaneously. I want to add one more idea to this opinion: it is possible to find the influence of oral storytelling tradition in the pictures made on the plots of popular novels. While researching Suzhou pictures consecutively depicting scenes of the life of the strongman Wu Song, the well-known hero of *Water Margin*, I found that some episodes which are absent in the novel were taken by the artist from an oral story. For example, the episode of Wu Song coming to a fortune-teller, wishing to learn about the reason for his elder brother’s death, existed only in the oral storytelling tradition. Not a word about this appears in the novel, but this scene is known from oral storytelling in the prose genre of Yangzhou *pinghua*. I have discussed this case in ‘Wu Song in Chinese popular prints’ so I shall not repeat it here (Riftin 2007).

**CONCLUSION**

I must emphasize that popular prints make relatively little use of the Chinese oral storytelling traditions. Pictures depicting performance of storytellers are extremely rare. Pictures influenced by the plots of popular oral stories are found principally in Suzhou and in the northern locations of Yangliuqing and

35 Ibid.: 80, ill. 64.
Wuqiang. Most of them are pictures with scenes found in popular novels and dramas. Owing to the fact that dramas often shared plot elements with novels and oral stories, in particular *guci*, it is difficult to know if this or that popular print was created on the basis of an oral story or popular drama. In addition, many oral stories (including Suzhou *tanci* and northern *guci*) were published, though they simultaneously existed in oral variants, so it is difficult to know if the artist learned the plot by reading or heard it from a storyteller. We have no access to many texts, the majority of which were not reprinted, or to records of oral storytelling variants, and this prevents us from completing a more detailed analysis.

Still, one can see that the artists who created popular prints were familiar with drama, novels, folk legends and the performing arts. They did not have a high level of education, so that popular prints are full of mistaken characters, but like most ordinary Chinese they knew the plots of stories of all kinds.

**From the examples discussed above** one can see that in the minds of the *nianhua* artists novels, drama and the performing arts continually mixed with one another, so that the contents of the topical popular prints are rooted in this amalgamation.
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