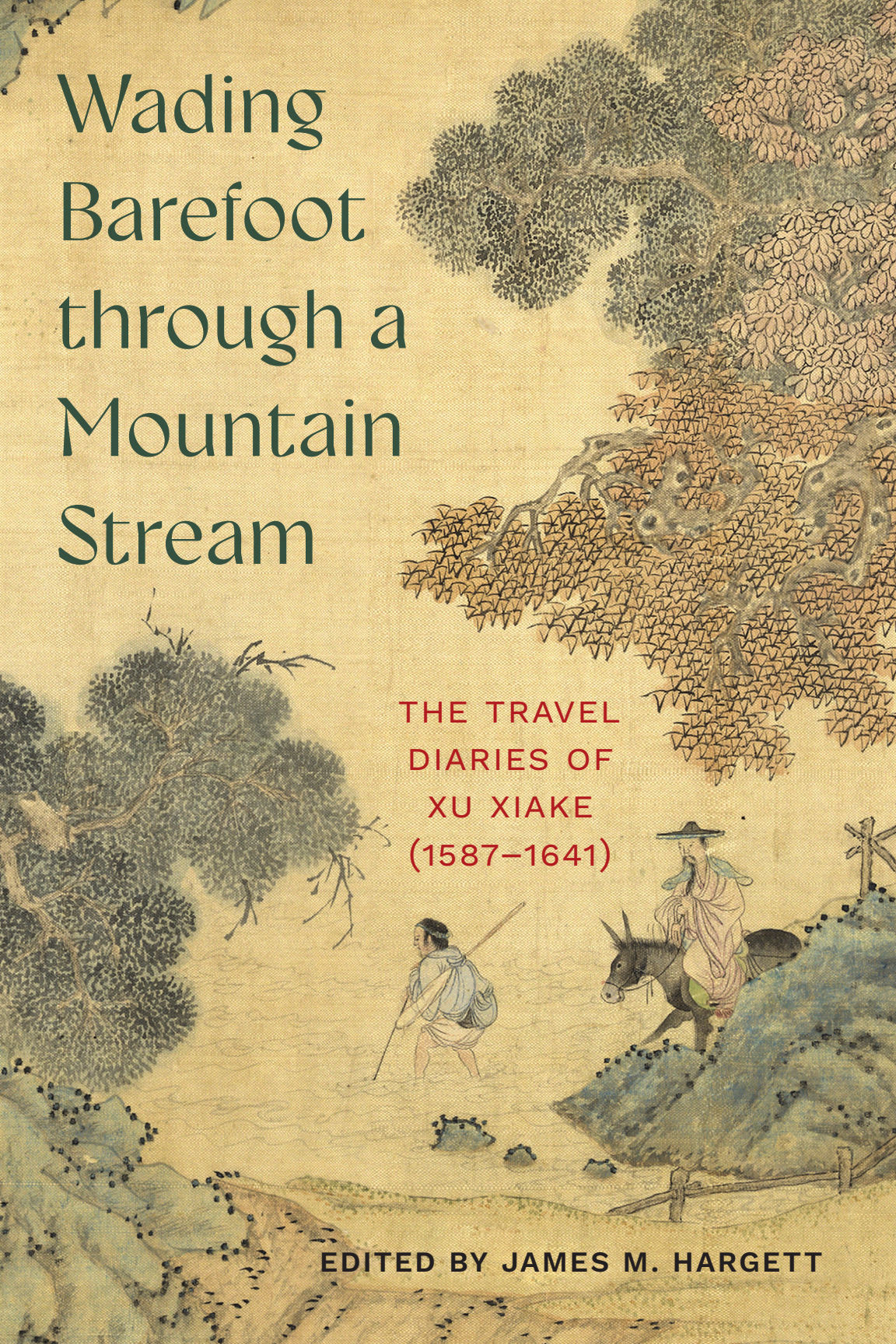
Wading Barefoot through a Mountain Stream

THE TRAVEL DIARIES OF XU XIAKE (1587–1641)



EDITED BY JAMES M. HARGETT

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UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON PRESS
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This volume is respectfully dedicated to the memory of Eugene Chen Eoyang (Ouyang Zhen 歐陽楨) (1939–2021), a caring and exceptional teacher, an adept translator, and an all-around swell guy.

師恩難忘，惠澤終生。

—James M. Hargett

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—James M. Hargett

Conventions

TRANSLATIONS AND TEXTUAL REFERENCES

The contributors/translators responsible for portions of the introduction and translated diaries are identified at the end of their respective sections. For readers who wish to consult the original Chinese text as they read the translations, an unnumbered note at the beginning of each diary provides the romanized (Hanyu Pinyin) diary title, volume, and page numbers keyed to the modern editions of *Xu Xiake youji* edited by Zhu Huirong (2017 rev. ed., abbreviated *YJJZ*), and Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou (2007 rev. ed., abbreviated *YJ*). Thus, the reference "*YJJZ*, 1:1–8" refers to the Zhu Huirong text, printed in simplified characters, volume 1, pages 1–8; "*YJ*, 2:757–58," refers to the Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou edition, printed in traditional, or full-form characters, volume 2, pages 757–58. Occasionally, we also gloss Xu Xiake's note on the geographical location of his travel destination.

NOTES

Notes provide information to help readers understand special terms, lines, and passages in the translations. They also identify and briefly explain references or allusions to earlier historical events or literary texts and identify and resolve, when possible, textual issues, such as missing Chinese characters in the original text or misprints in modern editions of the diaries, variant readings, and related matters. Generally, we do not cite secondary sources in the notes. Secondary sources on Xu Xiake and his travels are included in the selected bibliography.

CHINESE CHARACTERS AND ROMANIZATION

Traditional or full-form Chinese characters (*fantizi*) are used throughout this book. The general glossary-index includes Chinese characters for all personal names, titles of works, technical terms, and unique vocabulary. The place-name glossary-index includes all place-names mentioned in the introduction, translations, appendices, and notes. Chinese place-names consisting of two syllables are romanized, in Hanyu Pinyin, as follows: Mount Lu [廬山] is rendered as "Lushan," "Yellow Peak" [黃峰] is rendered as "Huangfeng," and so on. Place-names consisting of three or more syllables are romanized as follows: Mount Wutai [五臺山] is rendered as "Wutai Shan," Longevity Mountain's Blessed Realm [壽山福地] is rendered as "Shoushan Fudi," and so on.

NAMES OF PEOPLE

Keeping track of people's names can be challenging for readers unfamiliar with the Chinese language. This is because it is not uncommon for the same person to be identified by two or more alternate names. In addition to a family or surname (*xing*) and given name (*ming*; bestowed shortly after birth), educated men like Xu Xiake also had a courtesy name (*zi*; usually given to males when they came of age) and a nickname (*hao*). Xu's given name was Hongzu; his courtesy name was Zhenzhi. However, he is much better known by his nickname, Xiake (Traveler in Sunglow Clouds), given to him by his friend Chen Jiru (1558–1639), a literary celebrity and cultural icon of the Ming dynasty. To avoid confusion, we have tried, as much as possible, to refer to individuals by one name, usually their family name and given name. Contrary to standard sinological practice, however, we translate the names of Buddhist monks into English. In our view, this practice makes it easier to keep track of names while making the translations more reader-friendly. For example, the translated name of Xu Xiake's Buddhist friend and traveling companion Jingwen (d. 1637) is Tranquil Hearing.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND THEIR CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION RANKS

Numerous government officials, historical figures, and contemporaries of Xu Xiake are mentioned in the diaries. Aside from their names, officials are sometimes identified by the designation of the highest civil service examination they have passed, followed by the year they succeeded. There were three levels of examinations: local, provincial, and national. Successful exam candidates at the local level were called

shengyuan (lit., "novice functionaries") or *xiucai* (lit., "budding talents"); in English, men who passed local exams are also sometimes called "licentiate(s)." Those who pass the provincial-level triennial exam are called *juren* (lit., "elevated candidates"). Only students who passed the provincial-level examination could sit for the prestigious national-level exams (sometimes called the "metropolitan exam" in English), administered in the capital once every three years. Those who passed it were designated *jinshi*, or "advanced scholars," sometimes translated as "metropolitan graduates." So a reference in the diaries such as "Wang Qiyuan, a *jinshi* of the *renwu* year" means Wang Qiyuan passed the *jinshi*, or "advanced scholar" exam in the *renwu* year on the Chinese calendar. When references like this appear in the translations, we add the corresponding Western date, in this case 1622, in parentheses. On the counting system that generated two-character references for years, such as *renwu*, see the section below on the Chinese sexagesimal cycle.

PRONOUNS

Pronouns are used only sparingly in Classical Chinese, and Xu Xiake follows this practice in his diaries. When he does employ a pronoun, it is usually the singular, first-person *yu* 余, or "I." Throughout his many journeys, however, he rarely traveled alone. On many occasions, he had relatives, such as uncles and cousins, accompanying him. He also toured with servants and Buddhist friends like Tranquil Hearing and often engaged the services of local guides. Of course, first-person journey narration in English requires pronouns. However, we try to use them sparingly in our translations. Doing so helps to suggest Xu Xiake's travel narrative prose style. However, we still need pronouns, which begs the question: When the first-person "I" is *not* present in a passage, should we use singular "I" or plural "we"? Our rule of thumb is to use "I" as our default first-person pronoun in the translations. We employ the plural pronoun "we" only when Xu Xiake directly engages in an activity or conversation with another person or persons.

MAPS

Map 1 provides an overview of the significant places that Xu Xiake visited during his travels, including those featured in maps 2–27, which accompany the diaries translated here. Xu often mentions and describes places, especially mountains, that he viewed from a distance but did not reach in his travels. Key locations he passed or visited, and whose locations we have confirmed, are plotted on the maps. Other place-names are sometimes added as locators to provide context and help orient the reader.

PLACE-NAMES

The diaries are replete with place-names. During the Ming dynasty, the primary divisions of government units below the provincial (*sheng*) level, in descending administrative order, were *fu*, *zhou*, and *xian*. In translating these administrative units into English, we follow the standard practice and render them prefecture, subprefecture, and county, respectively. Occasionally, Xu refers to a "commandery" (*jun*). Although commanderies were abolished in China in the early Tang dynasty, the term continued to be used as an unofficial reference to *fu* and *zhou*, or prefectures and subprefectures. The corresponding modern locations of Ming dynasty government administration units Xu Xiake passed or visited are provided on their first occurrence. However, when he mentions the name of a prefecture, subprefecture, or county he did not pass through or visit, its current location is not identified. In the notes, modern administrative divisions in China, such as *shi* (cities), *qu* (areas), *xian* (counties), and *zhen* (towns), are identified in Hanyu Pinyin (e.g., Nanjing Shi, Huangyan Qu, Xiuning Xian, Wangkuai Zhen, and so on). Ming place-names of smaller geographic units are more challenging to locate precisely, so readers are advised to consult the maps. The place-name glossary-index includes all place-names mentioned in the introduction, translations, and notes.

GOVERNMENT OFFICE TITLES

In most cases, we follow the English translations for government offices, office titles, and related terms in Charles O. Hucker's *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. We have also consulted Zhang Ying et al., eds., *Chinese-English Dictionary of Ming Government Official Titles*.[1] Only titles that are unusual in English or refer to specific persons ("Shen, Investigating Censor") are capitalized, to clarify that they are titles.

THE SEXAGESIMAL CYCLE

The sexagesimal cycle was a key counting system in dynastic China. In Xu Xiake's travel diaries, it is used extensively to identify days and years. The sixty components in the cycle are formed by combining elements from two sets of counters called "stems" (*gan*) and "branches" (*zhi*), which combine in a fixed sequence of pairs that repeat after sixty years

1 University of California Irvine Libraries, eScholarship open access publications, https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2bz3v185.

(for details, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 548). In Xu's travel accounts, such dates often appear at the beginning of diary entries. For instance, the opening date in "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Tiantai" is identified as a *guichou* year, corresponding to 1613 on the Western calendar.

LUNAR CALENDAR TO WESTERN CALENDAR CONVERSION

Traditionally, the Chinese followed a lunisolar calendar based on astronomical observations of the sun's longitude and the moon's phases. Often, this calendar is identified as China's "lunar calendar." Year, month, and day references in Xu Xiake's diaries correspond with this calendar. In parentheses, we provide conversions of Xu Xiake's lunisolar calendar references to Western (or Gregorian) calendrical dates. Our date conversions are based on Xue Zhongsan and Ouyang Yi's *Liangqian nian Zhong-Xi li duizhao biao* 兩千年中西曆對照表 (*A Sino-Western Calendar for Two Thousand Years*: *1–2000* A.D.). We have also consulted the online source *Conversion between Western and Chinese Calendar* (*722* BCE*–2200* CE).[2] Most of Xu Xiake's diaries begin with a date reference, such as "Guichou *year, last day of the third month* [19 May 1613]."

DAYTIME AND NIGHTTIME REFERENCES

Daytime periods or hours are indicated in the diaries by general terms such as "dawn" (*chen*), "midday" (*zhongwu*), "afternoon" (*wuhou*), "sunset" (*mu*), and so on. Only rarely does Xu refer to specific "double hours" during the daylight hours (when he does, we add a note). As for the division of time during the nighttime hours, Xu uses the traditional double-hour "watches" (*geng*) system. In cities and towns, based on calendars and timetables promulgated by the government, local officials supervised the tolling of bells or beating of drums to announce daytime and nighttime "double hours." In villages, night watchmen often announced such time changes. Nighttime divisions break down as follows: first watch (7:00–9:00 p.m.), second watch (9:00–11:00 p.m.), third watch (11:00 p.m.–1:00 a.m.), fourth watch (1:00–3:00 a.m.), and fifth watch (3:00–5:00 a.m.). In the diaries, sometimes references are made to "first drum," "second drum," and so on. These "drums" (*gu*) correlate with the same double-hour divisions as the "watches." For more information on telling time in premodern China, see Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 587–92.

2 Yuk Tung Liu, "Conversion between Western and Chinese Calendar (722 BCE–2200 CE)," https://ytliuo.github.io/ChineseCalendar.

LINEAR AND AREA MEASURES

There are no precise, accurate English terms for Chinese linear and area measures, so the numbers below should be regarded as approximations. These are the most common measures mentioned in the diaries.

li	One *li* is about one-third of an English mile. Thus, thirty *li* is approximately ten English miles. In our translations, we render this distance measurement as "*li*."
chi	"foot"; a little over one English foot.
cun	"inch"; a little over one English inch.
bu	"pace"; a Chinese "pace" is usually two steps or paces.
zhang	"rod"; ten Chinese "feet," or *chi*, equals one *zhang*, or "rod." Thus, ten rods are about one hundred English feet.
ren	"fathom"; *ren* is a length measure of approximately seven or eight Chinese *chi*, or "feet." Unlike in English, a Chinese *ren* or "fathom" is not a measure used to indicate water depth.
mu	"acre"; *mu* (or *mou*) is a field area measure of about eight hundred square yards. This is roughly one-sixth of an English acre.

UNCERTAIN STATEMENTS MADE WITH A MEASURE OF CONFIDENCE

Quite often, in the original Chinese text of the diaries, Xu Xiake will begin a sentence with the initial grammatical particle *gai*, which we usually translate as "presumably." The final particle, *yun*, often appears at the end of a declarative sentence (with or without having an initial *gai*), which means something like "or so it is said" or "or so I was told." The repetition of these English terms and phrases in the translations may distract some readers. However, we must remember that in most cases, Xu is describing places he had never been to before. The information he derived from the travel accounts and gazetteers he carried with him on the road was not always accurate, nor were the reports he received from guides and strangers he met during his travels. So when he is reasonably—but not entirely—sure his information is correct, he alerts readers using *gai* and/or *yun*.

ELLIPSIS

We often use ellipses (. . .) to indicate lines or sections in the original Chinese text that have not been translated because we have deemed them extraneous or nonessential to the described activity or place. This makes the translated text more concise and enhances readability.

SPECIAL TERMS

CHANGJIANG

People outside China have called China's longest waterway the Yangzi (sometimes spelled Yangtze or Yangtse) for centuries. This practice continues today. In fact, "Yangzi" refers only to a short stretch of the river in Yangzhou, Jiangsu. In our view, using "Yangzi" as a synecdoche for the river is misguided. In ancient China, it was called "the Jiang" ("the River"). Today, in China, it is universally called the Changjiang (Great River). We refer to this great waterway as "the Changjiang."

TRANSCENDENT(S)

The Chinese term *xian* has different meanings depending on context, whether philosophical, religious, or mythological. In Western language works on China, *xian* is variously translated as "immortal," "fairy," "wizard," "genie," and "hermit," to name just five examples. We prefer, as others have done before us, to translate *xian* as "transcendent," referring to human beings who have been able to transcend the mortal world through alchemy, meditation, physical exercises, or some other practice and thereby reach a higher state of existence that leads to extended life or even immortality.

BUILDINGS AND MANMADE STRUCTURES

Precise English equivalents for types of Chinese buildings and structures often are lacking. One prominent example is the term *lou*, which often appears in the diaries and generally refers to a building with two or more stories. Following the practice of some China scholars before us, we translate *lou* as "loft," though we readily admit that this rendition is far from ideal. However, it is less cumbersome than a "multistoried building." In the diaries, *lou* sometimes refers to a lodge, inn, or tower and is translated accordingly. Xu Xiake's travel accounts also include numerous related terms, such as *ting* ("pavilion," a roofed structure supported by vertical beams with no walls, usually built for viewing scenic sights), *ge* ("belvedere," an attractive, two-storied building, usually with an open-air lookout or terrace on the second floor, with a door and windows only in the front), *xuan* ("veranda," an open-air lookout or terrace that has windows), *tai* ("terrace," an elevated, flat surface built of earth or one covered with brick used for gazing into the distance; also, an elevated and flat natural land feature), and *gong* ("palace," usually a Daoist abbey, sometimes also called *guan*). Buddhist monasteries are generally called *si* or *yuan* ("cloisters").

ROCKY BAMBOO SHOOTS

One of Xu Xiake's favorite descriptive terms is *shisun*, or "rocky bamboo shoot(s)." He often uses this term to describe elongated and slender landforms shaped like a bamboo shoot, such as stalactites and stalagmites in limestone karst caverns (for which, see below) or vertical columns of rock that emerge from land or bodies of water, usually near limestone cliffs.

PLUMS

Sometimes, it is not easy to distinguish in English Chinese trees and fruits that are botanically related, such as *li* and *mei*, which are mentioned numerous times in Xu Xiake's diaries. *Li* refers to plums with thin pulp (*Prunus salicina*); *mei* is a variety of apricot (*Prunus mume*) but is often translated as "plum" by Western scholars. Because the general reader would probably find distinguishing these names cumbersome and confusing, we follow the usual practice and translate both *li* and *mei* as "plum."

THE FAMILY NAME XU

On several occasions in the diaries, we encounter persons whose family name is spelled "Xu" in Hanyu Pinyin. Some of these people are relatives of Xu Xiake's or are persons who share the same surname, written 徐 and, in modern Chinese, pronounced in the second tone: Xú. But we occasionally encounter persons whose family name is also spelled "Xu" but written with a different Chinese character: 許 (in modern Chinese, pronounced in the third tone: Xǔ). This is potentially confusing, so we spell Xu Xiake's surname "Xu," but for people surnamed 許, we include the tone mark with their family name: "Xǔ."

CLIFFS, CRAGS, AND MOUNTAIN CAVES

Since Xu Xiake was fond of visiting scenic highland locations, it is no surprise that his diaries—especially his accounts of visits to famous mountains—are loaded with vocabulary related to landforms, that is, the physical features of the earth's surface formed through natural processes such as tectonic activity, erosion, weathering, and so on. Two vocabulary items relating to mountain environments that appear regularly in the diaries are *yan* and *ya*. These terms can and do refer to different geological sites. For instance, *yan* can indicate a cliff (a steep, vertical, or overhanging face of rock), a crag (a high mass of rock that juts out from the landforms around it), or a precipice (a cliff or rockface). During his extended visit to Guangxi in 1637 and 1638, Xu Xiake sometimes used *yan* when referring to that region's famous above-ground vertical limestone spires. However,

on other occasions, *yan* denotes a sizeable open cave on a mountain. As for *ya*, it is also used to identify a cliff, steep bank, or precipice beneath an overhanging cliff. Xu Xiake does not distinguish these and other related geographical terms with strict semantic precision, so his specific meaning is not always readily apparent. Another sometimes indefinite term is *jian*, usually translated as "stream," "mountain stream," or "mountain brook." However, it can refer to a raging mountain torrent, but in other contexts, it indicates a mountain ravine. In translating such terms, we rely on context to help guide us to the most appropriate, corresponding English word. When context does not help, we usually fall back on generic meanings. In the cases of *yan* and *ya*, the generic meaning we employ is "cliff." For *jian*, we use "mountain stream" or "stream" for short.

KARST CAVERNS

Aside from scenic highland locations, Xu Xiake was equally fond of exploring subterranean passageways, especially those infrequently visited by sightseers. He was keenly interested in surveying karst caverns (*rongdong*). "Karst" denotes a particular underground cavern formed by rock, primarily limestone. Over time, the limestone is dissolved in water, creating various, sometimes unusual, shapes and configurations. Stalactites and stalagmites—Xu Xiake's "rocky bamboo shoots"—along with deep sinkholes, dark grottoes, and a host of different rock formations, are created by this process. In the translations, these landforms are almost always named or identified as *dong*, or "caverns." When Xu Xiake refers to or describes a subterranean or interior mountain passageway that is not a karst landform, even if its name includes the word *dong*, these are translated as "cave." Again, in making our translations, we use context to help guide us to the most appropriate, corresponding English word. For instance, during his extended trip to the southwest between 1636 and 1640, almost all of the hundreds of cave complexes Xu visited in Guangxi and Yunnan were karst caverns, thus making identification much easier. Sometimes, he uses *xue*, a generic word for any opening in the ground, which we translate as a "cave." Usually, when Xu refers to a cave, it is dry and lacks a water source. Karst caverns, however, always have water sources.

—James M. Hargett

XU XIAKE IN HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY TRAVEL

Xu Xiake is not just a historical figure but a revered national hero in contemporary China. His influence is deeply ingrained in the culture, with a troop training ship in the Chinese Navy bearing his name and a

set of postage stamps issued in 1987 to commemorate the four-hundredth anniversary of his birth. His legacy has transcended time, inspiring television programs like *China in the Classics—The Travels of Xu Xiake* and serving as a muse for novels about dynastic China written in English, such as *Jade Dragon Mountain* by Elsa Hart (New York: Minotaur Books, 2016). The significance of the day of his first recorded journey, which began on May 19, 1613, is now officially celebrated annually as National Tourism Day in China. His statues appear at major sites he visited, which sometimes also host a Xu Xiake memorial hall/museum (*jinianguan*). The China Travel Service vigorously promotes tourism at these landmarks. Printed travel guides are also available to help modern sightseers locate the sites Xu visited.

Despite the time and expense of such expeditions, dedicated efforts have been made to revisit sites noted in Xu's diaries. In 2006, for example, a Nanning newspaper had reporters fan out across Guangxi to locate places he had visited and take stock of their current appearance. Some sites they found largely intact, while others suffered severe damage. Yet others—such as the Exalted Benevolence Monastery in Nanning (Chongshan Si), where Xu's monk companion Tranquil Hearing died—had disappeared practically without a trace. Some Western travel writers have followed portions of his itineraries and visited selected, notable places described in the diaries. Tony Perrottet, writing about his trip to Lijiang, Yunnan, in *Smithsonian Magazine*, described Xu as "China's Patron Saint of Tourism" and the Ming dynasty's "Indiana Jones."[3] Other enthusiasts have called him a "Zen backpacker" and China's "first travel blogger." Although such monikers attract media attention, they detract from the serious purpose behind Xu's journeys and the proto-scientific nature of many of his investigations.

The Center for Chinese Studies at the University of Heidelberg in Germany has published the most useful digital mapping work on Xu Xiake's itineraries.[4] The maps Nanny Kim and her colleagues produced in Heidelberg present valuable reconstructions of sections of Xu Xiake's southwest diaries relevant to identifying and geolocating mining sites in Yunnan. Perhaps one day, Xu Xiake's mountain and provincial travel itineraries will be reconstructed online.

—Allan H. Barr, Julian Ward, and James M. Hargett

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3 *Smithsonian Magazine*, "Retracing the Footsteps of China's Patron Saint of Tourism," https://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/retracing-footsteps-china-patron-saint-tourism-180954581.

4 See Kim's article "Xu Xiake's Yunnan Journey and the Expansion of Mining in the Far Southwest during the Ming," https://www.persee.fr/doc/etchi_0755-5857_2020_num_39_1_1682.

Chronology of Major Dynastic and Historical Periods

Xia (traditional dates 2070–1600 BCE)
Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE)
Zhou (1046–256 BCE)
  Western Zhou period (1046–771 BCE)
  Eastern Zhou (770–256 BCE)
    Spring and Autumn period (722–476 BCE)
    Warring States period (475–221 BCE)
Qin (221–206 BCE)
Han (206 BCE–220 CE)
  Former (or Western) Han: 202 BCE–8 CE
  Xin Interregnum: 9–25
  Later (or Eastern) Han: 27–220
Three Kingdoms (220–65)
  Wei (220–65)
  Shu-Han (221–63)
  Wu (222–80)
Jin 晉 (265–420)
Six Dynasties (Liuchao) (420–589)
Sui (581–618)
Tang (618–907)
Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907–79)
Liao (916–1125)
Song (960–1279)
  Northern Song (960–1127)
  Southern Song (1127–1279)
Jin 金 (1115–1234)
Xia (Xixia) (1038–1227)
Yuan (1271–1368)

Ming (1368–1644)
- Ming reign eras:
  - Hongwu: 1368–98
  - Jianwen: 1398–1402(?)
  - Yongle: 1402–24
  - Hongxi: 1424–25
  - Xuande: 1425–36
  - Zhengtong: 1436–50
  - Jingtai: 1450–57
  - Tianshun: 1457–65
  - Chenghua: 1465–88
  - Hongzhi: 1488–1506
  - Zhengde: 1506–22
  - Jiajing: 1522–67
  - Longqing: 1567–73
  - Wanli: 1573–1620
  - Taichang: 1620
  - Tianqi: 1620–27
  - Chongzhen: 1627–44

Qing (1636–1912)

Note: In this chronology, dynastic dates and historical periods follow Wilkinson, *Chinese History,* 4–5 (tables 1 and 2). Because Xu Xiake frequently mentions them, the Ming dynasty reign names (*nianhao*) and dates are also included. These are based on Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 885–86 (table 134).

Introduction

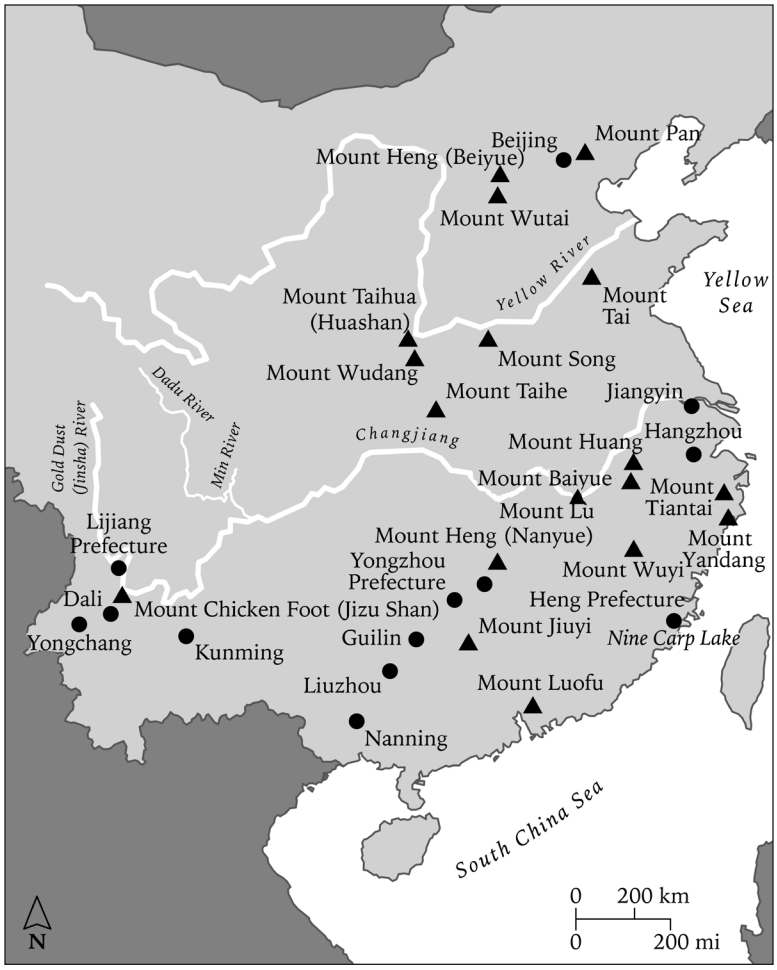
Xu Xiake (1587–1641) has been canonized as China's greatest traveler. In twenty-six separate journeys, he spent more than eighteen years traveling around China, visiting sites known for their scenic beauty and exploring places notable for their geographical, historical, and literary importance.[1] Xu's extensive travels took him to nineteen of modern China's twenty-three provinces, one of its four municipalities (Beijing), and one of its five autonomous regions (Guangxi). However, his reputation as China's "greatest" traveler is not based solely on the vast extent of his travels. Xu was also a prolific travel writer. The written accounts of his journeys, collectively titled *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake* (Xu Xiake youji), survive and have been circulated and published in hand-copied and printed editions since his death. According to Zhu Huirong (1936–2018), Xu Xiake's extant travel writings comprise more than six hundred thousand Chinese characters (in Zhu's modern edition, two hefty volumes).[2] It is almost certain that no Chinese travel writer, either before or after him, composed more written accounts of his experiences on the road.

FAMILY BACKGROUND AND LIFE

Xu Xiake lived during the final decades of the Ming dynasty, a period in Chinese history that has received much attention from historians and literary scholars. Most relevant to Xu Xiake and his travel experiences are two societal changes in the late Ming (roughly 1570–1644) that affected the development of travel writing. First, because of land and water

1 Scholars disagree on the total number of sightseeing trips undertaken by Xu Xiake. Here I follow Wu Qiulong, "Xu Xiake chuyou kaoshu," 26–31, who convincingly documents twenty-six journeys.

2 *YJJZ*, 1:4. Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou give the same figure. See *YJ*, 1:5.



Map 1. Xu Xiake's Travels, 1613–39. Based on *Map of Xu Xiake's Travels* in Ward, *Xu Xiake*, 80.

transportation improvements—driven by an expanding commerce-driven economy—all levels of society became more mobile than in any previous period of Chinese history. This improved mobility led to a tremendous rise in tourism. Sightseeing for pleasure flourished in the late Ming. To cite one often-quoted report dating from 1631 and written by one of Xu's contemporaries, up to twenty thousand people flocked to Mount Tai in Shandong every day during the peak tourist season in spring.[3] A significant, related development is this: before the late Ming,

3 Zhang Dai 張岱 (ca. 1597–ca. 1679), *Collected Works from the Langhuan Library* (Langhuan wenji 琅嬛文集) (Beijing: Gugong Chubanshe, 2012), 2.66.

the overwhelming number of persons who had the opportunity to travel regularly were government officials, who typically were reassigned to new government posts in the provinces once every three years. Over a career in public service, the average government official could visit notable places around China and sometimes even travel to sites in distant border regions. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, however, many people, including merchants, ordinary tourists, religious pilgrims, and even migrant workers, now had professional and personal reasons to travel. They did so in unprecedented numbers. Unlike in the past, there were no government restrictions on personal mobility. Moreover, private individual travel also became common during the late Ming era. Sometimes, these private travelers were highly educated men who chose not to pursue a career as a government official and instead preferred to devote their lives to other pursuits. Xu Xiake is one such person whose passion for geography and history inspired him to dedicate his life to travel and investigating extraordinary scenic sites.

Xu Xiake came from a family with a long tradition of producing government officials. According to Chen Hanhui (1589–1646), author of Xu's commemorative tomb biography, his distant ancestor Xu Gu (fl. early twelfth cent.), served as municipal governor (*yin*) of Kaifeng in Henan, the capital of the Northern Song dynasty.[4] When alien Jurchen Jin military forces invaded north China in the mid-1120s and later besieged and annihilated Kaifeng (the city fell in January 1127), Xu Gu and many other government officials fled to safety in the south, eventually settling in Hangzhou. A Song exile capital was later established in that city. Xu Gu's descendants, several of whom served as government officials in the south, settled in areas in and around modern Jiangsu. A fifth-generation descendant of Xu Gu, known as One Thousand and Eleven (Qianshiyi;

4 *Xu Xiake muzhiming*, in *YJJZ*, 2:1432; *YJ*, 2:1283. Chen Hanhui's account and the biographies of Wu Guohua (*jinshi* 1616) and Qian Qianyi (1582–1664) constitute the three primary contemporary sources of Xu Xiake's life. The biographies by Wu Guohua and Qian Qianyi are found in *YJJZ*, 2:1430–31 and *YJ*, 2:1181–82; and *YJJZ*, 2:1439–41 and *YJ*, 2:1191–95, respectively. Translations of the Chen and Qian biographies and a short gazetteer biography are included in appendices 2, 3, and 4. Among sources written in modern Chinese, the most useful is Ding Wenjiang's *NP1*, which is appended to volume 2 of *YJ* (following 2:1304 in separate pagination); and Chu Shaotang's *NP2*, which appears in Zheng Zu'an and Jiang Minghong, eds., *Xu Xiake yu shanshui wenhua*, 520–88. The best sources in English on Xu Xiake's life are both written by Julian Ward: *Xu Xiake (1587–1641): The Art of Travel Writing*, esp. 38–61; and his entry on "Xu Xiake" in the *Berkshire Dictionary of Chinese Biography*, 2:1042–54. The brief history of Xu Xiake's family genealogy that follows is mainly based on chapter 2 in Zhu and Ni, eds., *Xuxue gailun: Xu Xiake ji qi Youji yanjiu*, 54–60, and Zheng and Jiang, eds., *Xu Xiake yu shanshui wenhua*, 5–20. Both accounts are written by Wu Qiulong.

ca. mid-thirteenth cent.), also a government official, after the Mongol invasion took up residence in a village in Jiangsu near Jiangyin called Wucheng. Xu Xiake's branch of the Xu family supposedly descends directly from One Thousand and Eleven.[5] The family's history during the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) is not documented. Still, beginning with Xu Xiake's ninth-generation relative Xu Qi (1362–1445), we know that at least one family member was summoned to government service during the fourteenth century. Xu Qi did not take the civil service exams, but he responded to a government call to serve as a special envoy to Sichuan, where he convinced proto-Tibetan tribes to pledge loyalty to the Ming. After his triumphant return home, the Xu family's land holdings increased dramatically under Xu Qi's leadership, making it one of the wealthiest families in Jiangnan.[6]

Xu Xiake's great-great-grandfather Xu Jing (1473–1507), like his father Xu Yuanxian (1454–81) before him, passed the provincial civil service examination in Nanjing. This was in 1495. While there, he became good friends with Tang Yin (1470–1524), a brilliant young scholar from Suzhou who came out first in the provincial exam.[7] The two friends traveled to Beijing in 1499 to take the national-level examination. However, Xu Jing and Tang Yin were accused of bribing a servant of one of the chief examiners, who allegedly gave them the examination questions in advance. Both were thrown into prison. They were later released but barred from retaking the examinations, and the scandal cost the chief examiner his post. Although disgraced, Tang Yin was subsequently able to make a living selling his paintings, and eventually, he became one of the most famous painters in Chinese art history. Xu Jing returned to Jiangyin, where he lived in obscurity, waiting for a pardon until he died in 1507.[8] Whether Xu Jing and Tang Yin cheated is still uncertain (they allegedly confessed only after being tortured in prison). Still, it is reasonable to assume that the memory of Xu Jing's suffering and embarrassment cast a dark shadow over his descendants, none of whom served as officials in the Ming government. In any case, the scandal certainly affected the Xu family's social position and economic status in a negative way.

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5 "One Thousand and Eleven" was the oldest son of Xu Shoucheng, a local official in Wu County, Jiangsu, during the Qingyuan reign (1195–1201) of the Southern Song dynasty. One Thousand and Eleven's name was Xu Bo. Why he adopted the unusual moniker One Thousand and Eleven is uncertain, but the name may have been devised to preserve his anonymity and thereby avoid government service to the alien Mongol government. Xu Bo's second son, Xu Tan, was known as Qianshisi, or One Thousand and Fourteen.

6 During the Ming, the area of Jiangnan comprised Jiangsu and Anhui. Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 244.

7 *DMB*, 1:1256–59.

8 Chu-Tsing Li (Li Zhujin 李鑄晉, 1920–2014), "T'ang Yin," in *DMB*, 2:1256–59.

Xu Jing fathered three sons and two daughters, all of whom settled around the city of Jiangyin in Jiangsu. The family of his second son, Xu Qia (1497–1564), lived in a village near Jiangyin called Nanyangqi. Xu Qia was Xu Xiake's great-grandfather. Although he attended a government school supervised by the Directorate of Education (Guozi Jian), Xu Qia took and failed the national-level examination seven times. The oldest of his four sons, Xu Yanfang (?–1563), Xu Xiake's grandfather, had six sons, the third of whom, Xu Youmian (1545–1604), was Xu Xiake's father.[9] The acreage of family land inherited by Xu Youmian and his five brothers was less—probably much less—than that distributed to previous generations, resulting in a decline in revenue produced by those limited land holdings.[10] The famous painter, calligrapher, and government official Dong Qichang (1555–1636), in his commemorative tomb biography for Xu Xiake's father, remarked that the Xu family was in decline.[11]

This brief family history reveals that Xu Xiake came from a well-to-do family in Jiangyin that was distinguished because it had produced—over previous generations—scholars who had held public office. There is no doubt that Xu Youmian, like his father and grandfather before him, had received a traditional Confucian education aimed at preparing him for success in the imperial examinations and a distinguished career as a government official, which would have helped to repair the family's reputation and bolster its economic base. However, Xu Youmian never sought public office, preferring to remain home and enjoy managing the family gardens or taking his grandchildren on sightseeing trips to Suzhou and Hangzhou. He disliked government officials so much that he avoided them whenever they came calling at the Xu residence in Nanyangqi.[12] We do not know the source of his aversion to public service and distaste for government officials. Still, the Xu Jing scandal, which was undoubtedly a stain on the family's reputation, could have affected his thinking. Moreover, Xu Youmian's decision not to serve the Ming government seems to have influenced his son, Xu Xiake, who was only seventeen years old when his father was seriously wounded in an encounter with robbers during a home invasion. Xu Youmian later died from his wounds.

Xu Xiake likely took and failed the civil service examinations at a young age.[13] Even if we assume this to be the case, there is no evidence to

9 Xu Yanfang also failed to pass the civil service examination.

10 Decline in the family's land holdings was probably due to its parsing over multiple generations of male descendants. The precise decline in acreage is unknown.

11 *YJJZ*, 2:1486; *YJ*, 2:1245.

12 Dong Qichang's biography of Xu Youmian is included in *YJJZ*, 2:1486–88, and *YJ*, 2:1244–46, respectively. On Dong's comment about Xu Youmian's avoidance of visiting government officials, see *YJJZ*, 2:1486; and *YJ*, 2:1445.

13 The biographies of Xu Xiake, written by Chen Hanhui and Qian Qianyi, do not mention whether Xu ever took the civil service examinations. Wu

suggest that he sat for the exams a second time. Whatever the reason, this decision (or inaction) effectively ended the Xu family's prestigious reputation for producing scholar-officials (none of Xu's four sons served in government office). Although scholars have speculated about what may have driven him ultimately to reject a possible career in the Ming bureaucracy, his writings say practically nothing about personal matters. Perhaps the simple answer is that he did not have to follow such a career. However, it should be acknowledged that the late Ming was a politically risky time for officials, especially those who dared to criticize government policy. Xu Xiake's close friend Huang Daozhou (1585–1646), a high-ranking government official, was imprisoned for making candid remarks about the Ming emperor.[14] However, why did Xu Xiake devote his life to travel and exploration? What led him to follow such a course?

Few details are known about Xu Xiake's early years. We know that he received traditional Confucian schooling, the purpose of which was to prepare him for the examinations. However, he rejected this path. According to Chen Hanhui, as a young man, "Xu was especially fond of extraordinary books and spent excessive amounts of time reading extensively through historical and geographical accounts, illustrated works about the mountains and seas, and the entire corpus of accounts of transcendent beings and eminent recluses. Whenever he read these works, he would need to cover them with Confucian texts, under which he would then enjoy reading these extraordinary books. They made his spirit cheery and content."[15] It seems likely that Xu's taste for "extraordinary books" and lack of interest in Confucian classics could have emerged early, especially since his father had rejected an official career and died when Xu was just a teenager. His father's passing, in turn, may have lessened the pressure on him to sit for the exams. However, his chosen life path would have needed his mother's blessing.

By all accounts, Xu Xiake's mother, née Wang, was an extraordinarily capable woman. According to an account written by Li Weizhen (1547–1626), a high-ranking government official and leading writer and poet in the late Ming, after the death of her husband, Xu Youmian,

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Guohua's biography, however, does include a terse statement on this matter, saying: "When he was young, he took the examinations and failed to pass." *YJJZ*, 2:1430; *YJ*, 2:1181. Chu Shaotang says Xu took and failed the exams in 1602. See *NP2*, 524. No primary source corroborates either of these claims, but Wu Guohua was Xu Xiake's brother-in-law, so he would certainly have known about the matter.

14 Huang Daozhou was also a staunch Ming loyalist. Later, he was captured while fighting against Manchu forces and executed.

15 *YJJZ*, 2:1432; *YJ*, 2:1184. I use Julian Ward's translation of this passage in appendix 2.

> she took charge of matters inside and outside the home, succeeding in everything she did. She handled matters in a neat and orderly way, and there was no task she failed to accomplish. By nature, she was fond of planting, gardening, spinning, and weaving. Five of the family's ten acres of land were dedicated to the residence,[16] ringed by a bamboo fence on which beans were grown. She drew branches to stretch their tendrils and then spread silk sheets to form a net over them. She would get up before dawn and place her spinning wheel under a bower, where beans drooped and dangled, and the loom creaked and clattered. Decades seemed to pass in a single day.[17]

To generate revenue, she started a weaving business, which became the family's primary source of income. She, her daughter, and her daughters-in-law produced cloth that was known far and near for its high quality. This new and thriving business returned the family to secure financial footing, which would have helped finance Xu Xiake's travels.[18] His mother supported those travels. In an often-quoted passage, she reportedly once said to him, "It is the ambition of men to travel far and wide. The *Analects* (Lunyu) says: '[A son] away from home must always have a specific direction in mind.' It only asks that a son closely keep track of his distance and time away from home and should leave and return home at an arranged time. So, how could I force my son to stay cooped up like a pheasant inside an enclosure or a horse hitched to the shafts of a wagon?"[19]

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16 The phrase "a residence of five acres" (*wumu zhi zhai* 五畝之齋) is drawn from *Mencius* (Mengzi), 1:3, where the fourth-century philosopher remarks, "Let mulberry trees be planted about the homesteads with their five acres." Here Li Weizhen seems to be saying that half the family's land holdings were dedicated to the humble residence of Xu Xiake's mother. This is hyperbole. The land owned by Xu Xiake's family undoubtedly exceeded ten acres.

17 *YJJZ*, 2:1475; *YJ*, 2:1231. The translation of this passage is heavily indebted to Julian Ward's rendition in his *Xu Xiake*, 40.

18 Many modern biographical sources assume that Xu Xiake came from a wealthy, gentry family that could provide complete financial support for his travels. This was probably the case for his earlier, short-term, and less costly trips to destinations in or near Jiangnan. However, his later journey to southwest China, which lasted almost four years, required various strategies on Xu's part to pay for his long-term travel expenses. These strategies are discussed below in the section "Travel in Late-Ming China."

19 *YJJZ*, 2:1433; *YJ*, 2:1184. Again, I draw on Julian Ward's translation in appendix 2. The *Analects* is an essential collection of aphorisms and historical anecdotes attributed to followers of Confucius. The complete text of the line only partially quoted here from *Analects* 4:19 reads, "When father and mother are still alive, the son should never travel afar and always have a specific destination in mind." In other words, filial sons should never venture far from home when their parents are still alive so they can return home immediately if their parents are in need.

In 1607, after observing the customary three-year period of mourning for his father, Xu Xiake began his travels. His mother prepared his luggage and made a special hat for him. However, Xu was aware of his filial duties and thus felt uneasy about being away from home, especially as his mother grew older. At the beginning of his Mount Song [Songshan] diary, written in early March 1623, he remarks:

> Since childhood, I have cherished the ambition of visiting the Five Sacred Mountains. Because the Arcane Sacred Mountain [Mount Song in Henan] is regarded as superior among them, my admiration of it has been especially heartfelt. For a long time, I have planned to transit through Xiang and Yun, stroke Taihua with my hands, and then take the Linked Clouds Plankway [Lianyun Zhan] at Sword Belvedere [Jiange] as the first leg of my journey to Mount Emei. However, my mother is old, and my ambitions have changed, so I have no choice but to journey now to Mount Taihe, as I had planned earlier, which is a sightseeing trip that accords with having a specific destination.[20]

"Having a specific destination" alludes to the passage in the *Analects* just explained. Because of Xu Xiake's filial obligations to his mother, especially in her twilight years, he selected a closer travel destination (Mount Taihe in Henan) if he thought he might need to return home to Jiangyin on short notice. A journey to Mount Emei in faraway Sichuan would have taken him over 1,200 miles (1,900 km) from home and at least two to three months to complete.[21]

The following year (1624), when his mother reached her eightieth birthday, Xu Xiake was home to join the celebrations. To properly mark the occasion, his mother announced she would accompany her son on a sightseeing trip to nearby Bramble Stream (Jingxi, in modern Yixing Shi, Jiangsu), where they could explore some caves together. One report says she insisted on walking in front of Xu on the way to Bramble Stream to demonstrate her excellent health.[22] One observer remarked, "As for her second son's [that is, Xu Xiake] travels, of the so-called nine traditional divisions of China, his itineraries probably took him to eight of them, and this was accomplished all because Ruren [that is, his mother] made

20 *YJJZ*, 1:58; *YJ*, 1:39. For specific identification of the place-names mentioned in this passage, see "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Song," this volume.

21 This is a rough estimate. The time to travel upriver on the Changjiang from Jiangsu to Mount Emei in Sichuan would depend on the type of vessel, river conditions, the number of stops made along the way, and other influencing factors.

22 *YJJZ*, 2:1434; *YJ*, 2:1186.

it possible."[23] She passed away the following year (1625). Mindful of the customary mourning period for a deceased parent, Xu planned no other sightseeing trips. Over the next two years, an unstable political situation on a national level, instigated by the notorious eunuch Wei Zhongxian (1568–1627), led to the death by suicide of Xu Xiake's good friend Gao Panlong (1562–1626).[24] This and related events may also have kept Xu Xiake at home. The political situation finally stabilized after Wei committed suicide in 1627 and Emperor Xizong (r. 1620–27) died. When the new Emperor Chongzhen (r. 1627–44) assumed the throne, Xu Xiake was again on the road, heading south for a sightseeing tour of Fujian.

Xu Xiake's biographers usually divide his years of travel into two general periods. The first period extends from 1607 until 1633, when he traveled extensively throughout north and south China. Among his favorite destinations were famous mountains, such as Mounts Tiantai and Yandang in Zhejiang. Xu also traveled to Mount Huang [Huangshan] in Anhui and Mount Lu in Jiangxi. The written accounts of his visits to these and other famous mountains are translated in part 1 of this book. His four-year journey to southwest China, which began in 1636, constitutes the second travel period. Selections from Xu's trip to the southwest are translated in part 2.[25] This lengthy trip took him through the modern provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan. Tranquil Hearing and a manservant named Gu Xing accompanied him.[26] Until now, a rich, broad assortment of this material from the southwest diaries has not been available in English translation. Examples include Xu's account of a bloody encounter with murderous river pirates in Hunan, his spelunking expeditions deep into limestone karst caverns in Guangxi, and his observations of, and interactions with, various indigenous border peoples in Yunnan, a remote and sometimes dangerous area that few Chinese travel writers dared to visit during the Ming. One of Xu Xiake's primary destinations was Mount Chicken Foot [Jizu Shan] in Yunnan, on the distant southwestern border of the Ming empire. During the long journey to Yunnan, Xu and his traveling companions experienced numerous adventures and encountered severe

23 In high antiquity, China was divided into Nine Regions [Jiuzhou], supposedly established after the sage king Yu the Great (Da Yu) controlled the floods. *YJJZ*, 2:1487; *YJ*, 2:1245. Xu Xiake's mother was called Wang Ruren (1545–1625). Ruren (Model Confucian Dame) was a name given to her by some unnamed source. Her given name (*ming*) is not documented.

24 *DMB*, 2:701–10.

25 This chronological organization follows modern Chinese editions of Xu Xiake's travel diaries, where his oeuvre is organized into two general sections, one containing the mountain diaries (and Xu's single lake diary) and the other including the accounts of his later trip to the southwest.

26 Originally, a second servant named Wang the Second (Wang'er) accompanied Xu Xiake on his journey to the southwest, but he ran off shortly after the trip began.

difficulties and dangers. Many of his accounts describing these experiences are translated in part 2 of this book.

Even before his trip to the southwest, Xu had desired to visit Mount Emei in Sichuan. While in Yunnan, he also expressed interest in traveling to Tibet. But Mu Zeng (1587–1646), the chieftain ruler of the Lijiang Aboriginal Office in northern Yunnan who hosted Xu as a guest, prevented him from traveling any farther north because Mu feared danger from a local tribe and bandits along the road.[27] Xu's dream of climbing Mount Emei was also thwarted by poor health, which had seriously deteriorated by the end of his four-year trip to the southwest. Details about his journey home to Jiangyin are sketchy, but it seems almost certain that he did not reach Mount Emei. Mu Zeng arranged for Xu to travel from Mount Chicken Foot to Wuchang (near modern Wuhan Shi, Hubei) in a sedan chair, where he then boarded a boat on the Changjiang that took him downriver to Jiangyin. He reached home in the summer of 1640 and died there on 8 March 1641. He was fifty-four years old.

What explains Xu Xiake's lifetime devotion to travel and exploration? If we can believe the anecdotes in his biographies, even as a young man, he had a keen interest in geography and history and a corresponding lack of interest in government service. However, several of his closest friends, including Huang Daozhou, did serve as officials in the Ming bureaucracy. His father's example of not seeking a government post, however. may have inspired Xu to follow other pursuits, while his mother's support of his travels was undoubtedly influential. The early Qing travel writer Pan Lei (1646–1708), writing in his preface to an earlier version of Xu Xiake's travel writings, provides a somewhat cryptic yet fascinating insight concerning Xu Xiake's lifelong devotion to travel and travel writing: "So, after all, what is it that Xiake accomplished? He accomplished something only because he did not set out to accomplish something."[28] In other words, Xu Xiake was not driven by some lofty purpose or noble ambition to achieve fame. Instead, he was motivated by his passion for visiting places known for their matchless beauty and geographical or historical significance. This passion led him to spend decades traveling China's roads, trails, and waterways.

—James M. Hargett

27 *DMB*, 2:1076–79; *NP1*, 44.

28 *YJJZ*, 2:1503; *JY*, 2:1258. For a complete translation of Pan Lei's preface, see appendix 5. The English translation of these lines is that of Julian Ward.

THE DIARIES: TRANSMISSION AND EDITIONS

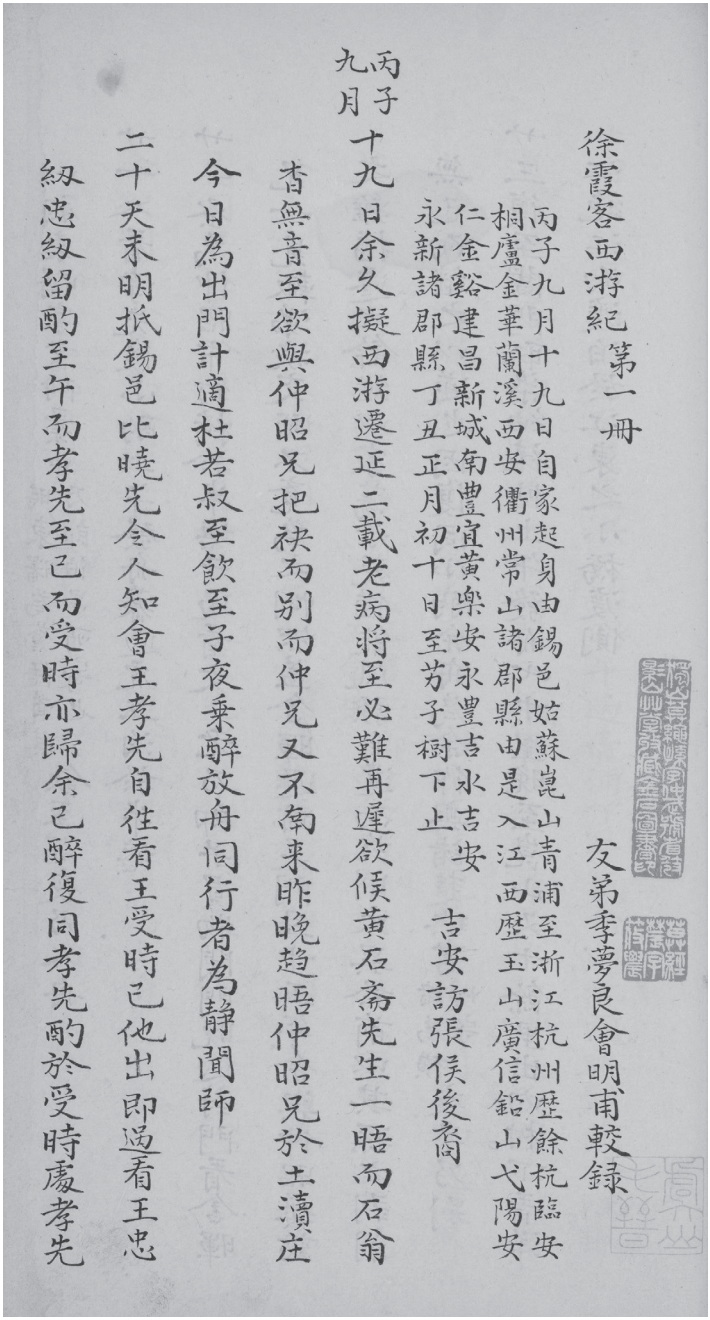
The history of transmitting Xu Xiake's diaries is far from straightforward. Indeed, during the chaotic state of the nation following the collapse of the Ming dynasty in the 1640s, the very survival of the diaries was, at times, seriously at risk. Hence, the first printed edition appeared in 1776, well over a hundred years after Xu's death. Before that date, the diaries existed only as hand-copied text. Most of our knowledge of the early versions of the diaries is based on the surviving prefaces of these versions as well as an essay written by Chen Hong (fl. 1776) titled "Overview of the Similarities and Differences Among the Various Editions [of *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*]" (Zhuben yitong kaolüe).[29]

Information about the last few months of Xu's life is scant, including his return from Yunnan sometime in the summer of 1640 and the time leading up to his death in his hometown of Jiangyin in March 1641. The following year, Ji Mengliang recorded that Xu had handed his diary over and asked him to edit it, saying, "I was compelled to write my diary every day. However, it is jumbled and lacks order."[30] The text then passed briefly into the hands of Wang Yongji (*jinshi* 1622), Xu's brother-in-law, before Xu's eldest son, Xu Qi (1615–45), returned it to Ji Mengliang, saying: "Without your help, Xiake's ambition cannot be realized."[31] Ji wrote, "I could see that Zhongren had arranged the manuscript carefully and put it in sequence. When I reread the text, I saw that it still contained many mistakes. I searched high and low for any more fragments to restore those parts of the text that Zhongren had not touched, compiling and editing it in a logical order and making it into a book to await the final revisions of a great scholar."[32] It was around this time that national events intervened. During military operations conducted by the Qing army, the town of Jiangyin was destroyed; Xu Xiake's original manuscript was burned, and Xu Qi, his oldest son, was killed.

Ji Mengliang then compiled a second copy of the diaries, titled *Diary of Xu Xiake's Journey to the West* (Xu Xiake Xi youji). Ji had to gather the material again, but some parts were missing. Ji Mengliang's second transcript contains just five volumes of Xu's journey to southwest China, ending with his visit to Guangxi. This version of the text was in private hands for many years before ending up in the National Library of China in Beijing.

There were several other critical early copies. The first one, not extant, was made by Cao Junfu (n.d.), who copied Ji's original version. Cao's copy was itself copied by Shi Xialong (n.d.), who spoke of looking for the

29 *YJJZ*, 2:1516–22; *YJ*, 2:1283–92.
30 *YJJZ*, 2:1500; *YJ*, 1:1.
31 For more on Wang Yongji, see part 2, note 1, p. 189.
32 *YJJZ*, 2:1500; *YJ*, 1:1. Zhongren was Wang Yongji's nickname.


徐霞客西游紀第一册

友弟季夢良會明甫較録

丙子九月十九日自家起身由錫邑姑蘇崑山青浦至浙江杭州歷餘杭臨安桐廬金華蘭溪西安衢州常山諸郡縣由是入江西歷玉山廣信鉛山弋陽安仁金谿建昌新城南豐宜黄樂安永豐吉水吉安永新諸郡縣丁丑正月初十日至芳子樹下止

吉安訪張侯後裔

丙子九月十九日余久擬西游遷延二載老病將至必難再遲欲候黄石齋先生一晤而石翁杳無音至欲與仲昭兄把袂而别而仲兄又不南来昨晚趙晤仲昭兄於土瀆庄今日為出門計適杜若叔至飲至子夜乘醉放舟同行者為静聞師二十天未明抵錫邑比曉先令人知會王孝先自往看王受時已他出即過看王忠紱忠紱留酌至午而孝先至已而受時亦歸余已醉復同孝先酌於受時處孝先

Figure 1. The first page of Xu Xiake's "Travels in Zhe" diary. From Ji Mengliang's (ca. mid-seventeenth cent.) hand-copied text, *Diary of Xu Xiake's Journey to the West* (Xu Xiake Xi youji), 1643. Courtesy of the National Library of China, Rare Book Reading Room.

text for many years before tracking it down in 1666. He wrote in his preface, "I hurriedly examined the manuscript. The scrawled and jumbled text was complicated to make sense of, and it was possible to make the text into a book only after extensive copying and editing."[33] Another copy, made in 1662 by Xu Jianji (1634–92), a grandson of Xu Xiake, which includes the journey to Guizhou and Yunnan, covers this latter part of Xu's long journey and is included in modern versions of the diaries.

The most important of the early hand-copied editions of the diaries was that made in 1684 by Xu Xiake's son, Li Ji (also known as Li Jieli, 1620/21–1691/92), which was based on a number of the earliest copies, including that made by Cao Junfu, and was used by many later compilers.[34] Li Ji included several short essays from around the start of Xu's visit to Yunnan, such as "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to Grand Splendor Mountain" (You Taihua Shan ji), "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to the Yan Caverns" (You Yandong ji), and "Investigation of the Pan River" (Panjiang kao).[35] However, notable gaps totaling around three months remained, including four weeks when Xu was in and around Nanning and a further three weeks when he traveled between Wuding and Yuanmou Counties. Ji Mengliang discussed this gap, pointing out that he had lent this section of the diaries to Ji Yangzhi (n.d.), a relative, who took it to the house of his uncle Xu Yuqing (d. 1645), where it was destroyed just days later in a fire resulting from the chaos surrounding the collapse of the Ming dynasty. The most complete extant hand-copied version of the diaries was produced by Yang Mingshi (1661–1737), who had served as an official in both Yunnan and Guizhou and was thus well placed to pick up any errors that had found their way into the copies made by others.

The first printed edition of the diaries, known as the Qianlong edition, appeared in 1776. Based on the Li Ji (or Li Jieli) volume, along with notes by Yang Mingshi and Chen Hong, this version was edited and has a foreword by Xu Zhen (fl. 1776–1806), a descendant of Xu Xiake:

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33 *YJJZ*, 2:1501; YJ, 2:1256.

34 Li Ji (courtesy name Jieli) was born to a servant, née Zhou, in the Xu household, with whom Xu Xiake had an affair. When Miss Zhou's pregnancy became known to the family, she was sold to a local man surnamed Li, who then became Li Ji's stepfather and raised him. The Xu family stipulated that the boy could never adopt their surname. For additional details, see appendix 1, "Chronology of Xu Xiake," entry for 1620. Li Ji's birth year is controversial among Xu Xiake's biographers. Here I follow Zhou Ningxia, "Xu Xiake jiating beiju ji Li Ji shengnian zai tantao," 224–25. Based on these birth and death years, Li Ji was the third of Xu Xiake's four sons: his oldest son, Xu Qi (already mentioned), was born to his first wife, née Xǔ (d. 1618); Xu's second son, Xu Xian 徐峴 (1619–?), was the progeny of his second wife, née Luo; while the fourth or youngest son, Xu Gou 徐岣[屻] (1624–78), was born to a concubine surnamed Jin 金. Each of Xu Xiake's sons, then, had a different mother.

35 The two sightseeing trips mentioned here are translated in "Travels in Dian 1," this volume.

> Wherever his steps took him, he would fashion the landscape into words that together would form a volume, collecting the volumes to create a book that people of an earlier age recognized as extraordinary. Unfortunately, he died before his work was completed. He relied on the Honorable Ji Mengliang to re-edit it into the shape of a book. Soon afterward, it was destroyed in a fire caused by rampaging soldiers. Only because Xu's son Jieli compiled the edition he picked up from visiting the Shi and Cao families of Yixing did the diaries again form into a book. As copies of the diaries were passed around as entertainment, changes were made, and more than one person introduced revisions. Now, one hundred and forty years later, although I have obtained the early edition hand-copied by Yang Mingshi, a local, and the later edition by the Honorable Chen Hong, there are more copies around. Mistakes have gradually increased. . . . I compared the two editions and made my hand-copied edition to verify for the present and transmit for the future. I recalled how these two gentlemen had carried out meticulous research, you could say, to preserve the genuine article for later generations, but as later copies were made, mistakes and omissions increased.[36]

The geographer Ding Wenjiang (1887–1936) produced the first authoritative modern edition in 1928. Ding consulted seven texts, relying mainly on the 1808 version edited by Ye Tingjia (1754–1832). Ding's edition included earlier prefaces, biographical essays, and poems by and about Xu Xiake, and for the first time, the essays written in honor of Xu Xiake's mother's eightieth birthday by Xu's friends and acquaintances. This was the basis for editions that appeared years before the discovery of the Li Ji hand-copied diary.

The study of the diaries was transformed by the discovery in the National Library of China in Beijing in the 1970s of a hand-copied version of the text edited by Ji Mengliang. In September 1976, Zhou Ningxia (1931–2005), senior editor of the Shanghai Chinese Classics Publishing House (Shanghai Guji Chubanshe), invited two locally based academics, Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou, to produce an edition of the diaries, the first to be published since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. On hearing this news, the renowned historical geographer Tan Qixiang (1911–92) showed them a fragmentary version of the diaries he owned. Based on Xu Jianji's copy, this text covered Xu's journey to Guizhou and Yunnan. Zhou, Wu, and Chu subsequently sent inquiries to many of the country's most important libraries and museums. This led to the discovery in the Beijing Library, now known as the National Library of China, of another fragmentary version covering the early

36 *YJJZ*, 2:1508–09; *YJ*, 1:1.

section of Xu's journey to southwest China as far as his visit to Guangxi. This was confirmed as part of the copy made by Ji Mengliang.[37]

This version added substantial amounts of new textual material for the early stages of Xu's journey to southwest China, covering the 573 days between 1636 and 1638 he spent in Jiangyou [Jiangxi], Chu [Hunan], and Yuexi [Guangxi]. The earlier version covered 351 days, while the Ji Mengliang manuscript had 507. In addition, many of the individual entries for this period in Ji's text are substantially longer than those in the earlier version. The most dramatic new material relating to the robbery on the Xiang River in present-day Hunan is translated in part 2.[38] That is not to say that gaps do not remain, the most significant being certain sections of Xu's visit to Guizhou and Yunnan.

Following examination and collation of several versions of the text, Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou's edition (*YJ*) was published in Shanghai in 1980, while Zhu Huirong's annotated version (*YJJZ*) was published in Yunnan in 1985. These editions have since undergone several reprintings as interest in the life and work of Xu Xiake has grown in China. Furthermore, between 2008 and 2009, Zhu Huirong and others produced a four-volume version of the diaries translated into modern vernacular Chinese, published in Guizhou.

The appearance of these greatly expanded versions of the diaries has led, over the last thirty-five years, to the publication of popular material aimed at attracting China's expanding domestic travel market, academic papers from scholarly conferences, and a biannual journal *Xu Xiake yanjiu* (Research on Xu Xiake).

—Julian Ward

XU XIAKE AND THE ART OF HIS TRAVEL WRITING

Xu Xiake's contemporaries often describe him as a *qiren* 奇人. They further define his travel writings as *qishu* 奇書 or *qiwen* 奇文. The Chinese character *qi* 奇 in these descriptive phrases is used as an adjective and embraces many meanings. China's oldest, perhaps most authoritative dictionary defines *qi* as "unusual" (奇, 異也).[39] Other lexicons gloss *qi* as "singular" (that is, without parallel), "extraordinary," "remarkable," "fantastic," or even "wondrous." For reasons that will emerge in the

37 For details of this remarkable discovery, see Zhou Ningxia, "*Xu Xiake youji* yuanshi chaoben faxian ji zhengli chuban jingguo shuyao."

38 Xu Xiake's account of the Xiang River robbery is translated in "Travels in Chu" (diary entry for 7 March 1637), this volume.

39 Xu Shen 許慎 (30–124 CE), *Talks on Single-Constituent Characters and Explanations of Composite-Constituent Characters* (Shuowen jiezi 說文解字) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1963), 101 *shang*.

following discussion, when translating *qi* into English, we favor the adjective "extraordinary." So when Xu's biographers and later literary historians praised him and his writings as endowed with the quality of *qi*, they said he was an "extraordinary person," and his travel accounts are likewise "extraordinary." However, what exactly is "extraordinary" about Xu Xiake and his writings? And what is the significance of this attribute today?

The extensive and irrefutable written evidence documenting the vast extent of Xu's travels led some modern literary historians to praise him with accolades such as "He was the first person in our country to devote his life to traveling" (*Woguo lüxing wei bisheng shiye de diyiren*).[40] "First" in this context could also be considered "greatest," meaning he traveled longer and farther throughout China than any other premodern person. Some historians have also proclaimed Xu as China's "greatest" travel *writer*, but this verdict is problematic. We believe associating a superlative such as "the greatest," in the sense of "most talented," is too subjective for application to literary endeavors. Such coveted accolades can be defined in different ways, depending on the intentions of the person using them ("greatest" compared to whom or what?). On the other hand, one can contend that an author's writing skills are *qi* or "extraordinary." Convincing evidence can substantiate such a claim successfully in the case of Xu Xiake.

With some notable exceptions, most travel writers before Xu Xiake preferred to compose shorter accounts—on average, just a few hundred Chinese characters in length—about brief, one-day journeys to scenic or notable destinations, such as a famous mountain, celebrated monastery, or historic landmark or monument.[41] Travel narration—that is, the compass directions followed during the journey, distances covered in *li* between itinerary stops, and so on—is usually limited. Xu's predecessors often focused on juxtaposing landscape descriptions with emotional expressions, especially regarding the scene observed. The examples below demonstrate that while Xu Xiake's travel diaries also mix landscape depiction with occasional personal commentary, this is just one aspect of his writing style. What immediately distinguishes Xu from earlier travel writers is the quantitative extent of his surviving diaries, which is "extraordinary" in the scope of his travels, the hardships he often endured, and the tremendous range in subject matter.

Since Xu was first and foremost a travel writer, it is no surprise that factual geographic description and empirical detail dominate many of his accounts, but there is much more. For instance, on numerous

40 Mei and Yu, *Zhongguo youji wenxueshi*, 300.

41 On the history of these shorter sightseeing accounts and other forms of Chinese travel writing, see Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*, esp. 1–56, and Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, esp. 93–106 and 145–51.

occasions, he provides remarkable literary descriptions of seventeenth-century China's most pristine mountain and riparian scenery, written in a lively and engaging prose style that rivals, if not surpasses, that of his most distinguished predecessors. Xu also provides reports of his many adventures on the road, such as his harrowing encounter with river pirates on the Xiang River in 1637. That incident, recounted in great detail in the Chu (or Hunan) diary, almost cost him his life. Moreover, in the account following the unexpected death in Guangxi of his close friend, the Buddhist monk Tranquil Hearing, we witness high drama as Xu tells of his encounter with two unscrupulous monks who try to seize Tranquil Hearing's personal belongings after the monk's death.[42] After much disagreeable negotiation, Xu finally manages to take custody of Tranquil Hearing's cremated remains, which, following his traveling companion's deathbed wish, he buries almost a year later on Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan. The diaries also reveal the many dangers facing travelers in the late Ming, not only the physical risks of climbing lofty mountain peaks and exploring deep, subterranean caverns but also threats posed by hostile tribes and human traffickers in border regions such as Guangxi, Yunnan, and Guizhou. In yet another incident, Xu was robbed and abandoned by his servant. Along with these accounts, we learn much from Xu's reports about the logistical challenges he faced during his travels, especially during his trip to southwest China from 1636 to 1640. For instance, on more than one occasion, he ran out of traveling money, so he had to secure loans from various "connections" he had through third parties or new friends he made while on the road. On another occasion, Xu was forced to sell some of his clothes to buy food. Xu provides detailed information on his itinerary, including distances between the places, the directions of his movements, various means of transportation, places where he spent the night and secured meals, weather challenges, and so on. This sort of information may sometimes seem tedious to the modern reader, but distance, direction, mode of travel, and related references are essential parts of Xu Xiake's travel writing. His readers, especially those planning travel, wanted to know where he had been, where he was going, and what he saw along the way. This is precisely the reason he records everything he witnesses and experiences.

Xu Xiake's prose style is eclectic in its use of different language registers, each designed to serve a purpose. No travel writer before or after him wrote in such a varied style. Understanding the function of his different language modes provides insight into what makes Xu and his travel writing "extraordinary." The survey below outlines the three major

42 Xu's encounter with the two "unscrupulous monks" from Nanning is translated in "Travels in Western Yue 1" (diary entries for 26 and 27 January), this volume.

types of language one finds in Xu Xiake's oeuvre. These styles are not mutually exclusive. Xu constantly mixes them in an almost seamless fashion. With familiarity gained from close, patient reading, the discerning reader will spot them. This in turn will help the reader to understand how Xu Xiake manipulates language for effect and why his prose is worthy of admiration and close, critical attention.

LANGUAGE OF MOTION

An essential quality of Xu Xiake's travel narration is his delineation of *movement through* landscape, as illustrated in the following passage from Xu's account of a sightseeing trip in 1620 to Nine Carp Lake [Jiuli Hu] in southeastern Fujian. Notice the preponderance of verbs (italicized here), many of which are related to *motion*.

> I only *passed* Blue Lake [Qinghu] in Jiangshan County today. Here, the mountains gradually begin to *merge*. Along the eastern spur *stand* numerous dangerous peaks and sheer barriers, while those in the west *crouch* down and stay low. When I *turned* my gaze to the far end of the eastern spur, south of it was a peak *towering* aloft that *rubbed* against the clouds and *poked* into the sky, poised as if it was about to *take flight*. Upon inquiry, I discovered this was Mount Jianglang [Jianglang Shan]. As I gazed at it, I *pressed on* for twenty *li*, *passing* Rock Gate Market [Shimen Jie]. Mount Jianglang suddenly *split* in two as I gradually *hastened* toward it and gradually *drew* closer. After I made a turn, it *split* into three sections. By then, the top of the mountain had *forked* into two halves, *split* straight down to the base. As I *pressed* toward the mountain, it became more pointed on top and restrained below, looking like it had *broken* in two and then *reconnected*. As I *moved* toward the mountain, with each step, its form *changed*, appearing just as illusory as the shapes of clouds![43]

In this excerpt, Xu Xiake is never stationary; he is always moving. His perspective changes as he "presses on" toward the mountain. It "splits," then "forks"; its summit then appears "more pointed," while the landscape below it is "restrained." Xu Xiake moves through the scene as he describes it. Nothing about his perspective is static. With each step, his view changes. Xu Xiake is a master of this writing style.

In the following example, Xu mixes movement with highly descriptive *literary* language, while his emotional reaction to the scene he just witnessed, described in the last line, reveals the sometimes highly personal and lyrical tone that serves as a coda to his landscape descriptions:

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43 *YJJZ*, 1:51; *YJ*, 1:33.

> Proceeded another fifteen *li* to High Rapids Post Station [Gaotan Pu], where the dark haze had completely scattered, where blue sky seemed to wash everything clean, where brilliant sunshine was dazzling and radiant, and where piled snow on the massed peaks seemed to be wearing jade bracelets. For it to snow in Min is extraordinary. For it to snow in late spring is especially extraordinary. Villagers and old ladies at the market basked in the sun while holding incense burners.[44] But for me, to jump and frolic about in my bare feet was positively fantastic![45]

LANGUAGE OF GEOGRAPHICAL INVESTIGATION

The purpose of geographical-investigative travel writing is to verify and correct errors in textual sources concerning geographical sites and waterways when appropriate. Although this variety of travel descriptions can be traced back to the Song dynasty, they reached fluorescence in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Wang Shixing (1547–98) and Xu Xiake are the two best-known practitioners of this writing style.[46] Like many of their contemporaries, both men were especially interested in geographical precision and exegesis. This concern for verification was in large part stimulated by numerous inaccurate geographical accounts found in the so-called orthodox works of geography, ranging from the authoritative "Tribute of Yu" (Yugong) chapter in the *Documents Canon* (Shujing), probably dating from the Qin or early Han periods to the massive *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming* (Da Ming yitong zhi), a geographic survey of the Ming empire published in 1461. During his travels, Xu Xiake carried a copy of the latter (or parts of it) in a trunk and usually consulted it before traveling to a particular site. On numerous occasions in his diaries, Xu points out the disparities between what he observed while traveling and the accounts he read in the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, many of which, he points out, had been copied from earlier geographical works without verification.

Xu Xiake's geographical-investigative writings fall into one of two broad categories: the first, written in an essay (not diary) format, concerns scrutiny of specific, unresolved questions related to geography and potamology (the scientific study of rivers). The second category mainly concerns investigations made in southwest China of karst topography

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44 Villagers and old ladies were basking in the sun for warmth and holding up incense burners (*tilu*) to welcome travelers passing through the village.

45 *YJJZ*, 1:91; *YJ*, 1:57. Note that in this passage, Xu Xiake uses the word *qi*, or "extraordinary," in the sense of "unusual" or even "strange."

46 On Wang Shixing, see part 2, note 15, page 405. On the geographical-investigative travel writing of Wang Shixing and Xu Xiake, see Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 157–75.

(*yanrong*). As for the first category, one of the most critical "unresolved" geographical questions for Xu was the Changjiang's source. Throughout most of Chinese history, the headwaters of China's longest river were thought to be in the Min Mountains [Minshan] of Sichuan. The legitimacy of this claim is based on a single line of four Chinese characters in the "Tribute of Yu" text. Xu challenges and then disproves this claim in his essay *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source* (Sujiang jiyuan). In that document, he correctly identifies the Gold Dust River [Jinsha Jiang] as the headwaters of the Changjiang. A translation of that essay is included in the appendices.[47] In his writings concerning unsettled geographical questions, Xu Xiake's proto-scientific approach is based on knowledge gained from close reading and comparison of textual sources such as geographies and gazetteers, information gathered from local scholars, guides, and informants, and, whenever possible, first-hand observation.

Geographical-investigative questions raised in Xu's travel diaries are presented within the general framework of travel narration. Modern Chinese and Western language sources uniformly praise his detailed comments and descriptions of limestone or karst topography in southwest China. An excellent example of this type of writing appears in the following passage, which describes his first exploration of Seven Stars Cavern [Qixing Dong] in Guilin [Guangxi]. During his visit to Guilin in 1637, Xu documented visits to more than one hundred karst caverns. One of his purposes for traveling to southwest China was to study the karst landscape's geomorphologic and underground features. Here is a portion of that account:

> The entrance to the cavern was hidden in the shadow cast by a Buddhist hermitage. Suddenly, the cavern's passageway turned and headed northwest, where it opened broadly. Above, it is open like a dome; below, it is flat. Numerous aligned rocky bamboo shoots hang down like suspended columns, chilly and cool, dripping and leaking. This is the upper cavern, which forms part of Seven Stars Cliff [Qixing Yan]. We descended some steps from the right and entered the lower section. This forms Nestled against Sunglow Clouds Cavern [Qixia Dong]. It is grand and luminous, bold and spacious. Its entrance also faces northwest. Looking out into the distance, the view is expansive and majestic. There is a crack stretching across the ceiling of the cavern. The carp-shaped rock up there seems like it is about to leap down through the

47 *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel its Source* is translated in "Travels in Dian 13," this volume.

> crack. Covered in scales from head to tail, even if someone had carved a rock to fashion such a carp, it could not be more lifelike. Next to it are intertwined carriage canopy pennants in the shape of coiling dragons, penta-colored and glistening. To the northwest, a tiered terrace rises high. I ascended the terrace along stone steps. This area forms Lord Lao's Terrace [Laojun Tai]. From the terrace, I headed north, where the cavern seemed to divide into two realms. The higher terrace proceeds west and then turns east, following the interior of a deep cavity. I proceeded along the terrace, passed an entranceway, and went straight north until I reached a dark area. Above is a boundless dome. Below is a sunken depression where a pool has formed. The boundless space here becomes precipitous and ruptured. Terrain that was flat before now suddenly turned treacherous.[48]

Nowhere in earlier Chinese travel writing do we find this degree of precise topographical detail. According to one modern scholar, Xu Xiake was the first to conduct a "real scientific exploration of karst and karst caves in south China." This same writer notes that Xu "also made ground plans of some caves, marked their entrances and described different shapes of speleothems" and was the first to discuss "different ways of climbing in caves and methods for cave research."[49] It is no wonder that Xu Xiake is regarded as the father of modern speleology and karstology in China and worldwide.[50]

THE LANGUAGE OF LANDSCAPE

Although modern scholars, especially in China, have devoted much attention to Xu Xiake's "geographical investigations" (*dili kaocha*) and the "scientific value" (*kexue jiazhi*) of his observations, he is still best known for his vivid and lively descriptions of landscape, especially those accounts in his diaries that chronicle trips to famous mountains. To many readers, these are his most memorable writings. Here is an example concerning a river known as Rocky Roar [Shicong], a scenic waterway that originates on the slopes of Mount Song in Henan:

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48 *YJJZ*, 1:379–80; *YJ*, 1:293–94. I follow the gloss on *hongtong* 鬨洞 ("boundless space"; note that 洞 here reads *tóng*) in *YJJZ*, 1:397n21. For a translation of Xu Xiake's first visit to Seven Stars Cavern, see "Travels in Western Yue 1," this volume.

49 Natasa Ravbar, "The Earliest Chinese Karstologist Xu Xiake," *Acta Carsologica* 32.1 (May 2003): 252–53.

50 Ravbar, "The Earliest Chinese Karstologist Xu Xiake," 253.

> Rocky Roar's movement is jarring and jerky, twisting and turning, always moving on lower ground. When it reaches here, it suddenly meets ferocious rocks. The rocks stand between a lofty knoll and a mountain gorge, poised as if guarding a mountain pass or holding a strategic position. The water seeps down to the lower side of the mountain, where water and rocks meld and mix and seem like patterned silk in countless different forms. The two cliff walls surrounded by water seemingly form into standing swans, form into geese walking in file; rocks perched in the center of the stream seem to form into rhinoceroses drinking water, form into tigers taking their repose. The rocks down low are like islets; those up high are flat like terraces. The higher you go, the farther the rocks are from the water. And so, those rocks even higher in the sky form cavities and form caves. I figured the distance of the rocks from the cliff to be eight feet; the distance of those up past the water to be several rods. The water moves between the rocks where they rise above the water, forming gestures, forming hues, forming skin, and forming bones, in every way stunning and beautiful. I never thought trudging through yellow grass and white reeds could take me to a place that would thoroughly wash my dusty eyes![51]

While passages like this are often cited and praised by literary historians, rarely if ever are readers informed—beyond vague phrases such as "such extraordinary writing!" (*qi wenzi* 奇文字)—about what specific language qualities make passages like this "extraordinary," or even "great."[52] To understand Xu Xiake's skill as a wordsmith, one must first be reminded that Xu's diaries are written *without* accompanying illustrations or maps. They are designed to be *read*, but their visual quality is essential to China's best travel writing. This quality is exemplified well in the Rocky Roar passage just cited. When Xu describes unusual or extraordinary scenes along Rocky Roar, he aims to create a graphic *word picture* to help readers imagine what it looks like. He does so by skillfully deploying language for *visual* effect. Immediately evident in the passage just cited is his heavy reliance on simile ("as if," "like," "seem to form into," and so on). The unusual rock formations along Rocky Roar are thus seemingly rendered into "pictures" through a series of similes that—in this

51 *YJJZ*, 1:59; *YJ*, 1:40. The expression "wash one's dusty eyes" (*xi chenyan* 洗塵眼) is commonly used to mean "provide a lavish dinner to welcome a guest from afar." However, Xu uses the expression figuratively; he never imagined that the scene at Rocky Roar would "welcome" him so warmly, especially after he had trudged through thick grasses and bushy reeds to get there.

52 The exception to this statement is Julian Ward's monograph. For a more detailed treatment of the various rhetorical ways Xu Xiake uses language, see Ward, *Xu Xiake*, esp. 108–25.

case—deftly liken their shapes to different birds and animals: "The two cliff walls surrounded by the river's waters seem to form into standing swans, form into geese walking in file; rocks perched in the center of the stream seem to form into rhinoceroses drinking water, form into tigers taking their repose." Descriptions like this are not common in Chinese travel writing; nor is it commonplace to describe water streaming through rocks as "forming gestures, forming hues, forming skin, and forming bones." Xu Xiake was enamored by the scenes he witnessed along Rocky Roar, but only a highly skilled wordsmith with a powerful imagination could weave word pictures like this. The creative use of simile is the foundation of his ingenious use of language.

In his depictions of landscape, Xu Xiake also favors the use of grammatically parallel quartets of Chinese characters, such as "water and rocks meld and mix" (noun-noun verb-verb) and "patterned silk in countless different forms" (adjective-noun adjective-noun). These balanced language constructions, standard in Chinese travel writing, help provide form and unity in the scene description. They also offer an economical means to delineate the landscape. In the hands of a skillful travel writer, they can help create breathtaking word pictures, such as this one, also culled from Xu's Mount Lu diary (the two quartets in this passage are italicized for emphasis). When read aloud in sequence, the cadence of the quartets sounds almost like poetry: "Below the peaks were *sprinkles of snow-like foam and grumbles of thunder, soaring into the sky as they quaked and trembled*. This scene made my eyes and ears wild with delight."[53] Moreover, in the Rocky Roar passage, note the preponderance of movement. However, the subject of the motion is not Xu Xiake in this case; it is the flow of Rocky Roar and its current's crashing encounter with "ferocious rocks." As seen here, Xu Xiake often does not "enter the picture" with a comment or reaction until his description is complete. As far as I know, no earlier prose travel writer in China ever remarked how a landscape made his eyes and ears "wild with delight."

Xu Xiake rarely shares intimate thoughts about himself or his worldview. However, while writing from a mountain height in his Zhejiang diary, Xu reveals some highly personal thoughts that distinguish him from those in "the toiling world below." The idea of being "cleansed" or "washed clean" by a pristine mountain environment, encountered earlier in the Rocky Roar selection, reappears and seems to suggest that Xu Xiake experienced some ritual of purification:

> As we reached the summit of North Mountain [Beishan], the sun was sinking in the sky. However, I saw a stretch of water shimmering in the far distance; I took it to be a bend in the Qu River [Qujiang], which lies in that direction. As the sun disappeared,

53 *YJJZ*, 1:38; *YJ*, 1:25.

> the moon rose, projecting light in its place. All was silent, and the world was washed clean, as though a jade pitcher had indeed bathed our bones, and it felt as though our shapes and shadows had assumed a different guise. I thought back to the toiling world below and asked myself, "Who down there could ever experience such a pristine setting?" One can climb to an upper chamber and whistle at leisure, imbibing wine by the riverside, but there is still a world of difference between that and us scaling alone the very pinnacle of the countless mountains, beyond all roads and paths and far from the realm of dust. Even if mountain goblins and strange beasts were to gang up and harass us here, there would be no cause for alarm, and how much less there is to worry about when they keep silent and do not stir as we roam freely in the empyrean![54]

Xu Xiake deserves to be ranked among China's most accomplished travel writers. Even from the handful of selections presented here, it is evident that his descriptions of place are deftly wrought and create striking word pictures that can—with a bit of imagination—help readers vicariously accompany him on his journey and experience what he observed in the physical world during periods of movement. His diaries provide a window through which even the modern reader can observe and experience the joys and highs and the trials and challenges Xu Xiake faced while traveling around China in the seventeenth century. There is undoubtedly a "self" revealed in his accounts, and as we have seen, he sometimes expresses intense emotion. Still, it is almost always voiced as a *reaction* to visual stimuli, especially remote and extraordinary landscapes. Unlike the Tang dynasty travel writer Liu Zongyuan (773–819) and some of Xu's Ming dynasty contemporaries, such as Zhang Dai, Xu Xiake rarely if ever uses descriptions of scenes to voice personal inner concerns or conflicts. Xu says very little about personal matters, with some notable exceptions, such as his filial responsibilities to his mother in her old age. He also steadfastly avoids mentioning contemporary political issues (of which he was aware) and abstract philosophical arguments. However, on several occasions in the diaries, he expresses an interest in Buddhism and sometimes even turns to divination when faced with a difficult decision. Xu was not the "patron saint of tourism" or "China's first backpacker," as some modern writers have described him. He was driven by an intense devotion to visiting places he knew

54 *YJJZ*, 1:154–55; *YJ*, 1:103–4. The English translation of this passage is that of Allan H. Barr and is excerpted from his translation in "Travels in Zhe," in part 2 (diary entry for 6 November 1636), this volume.

from books and to describing them in ways that would help readers "see" and "experience" them as he did. And in doing so, he generated new knowledge about China's geography. His lifelong devotion to this charge was complete and genuine.

—James M. Hargett

TRAVEL IN LATE-MING CHINA

Xu Xiake's diaries are often celebrated for their detailed descriptions of mountains, caves, and other features of China's physical environment, but they are equally interesting for the light they shed on the practical details of travel in late-Ming China, particularly in remote parts of the empire.[55]

FUNDING

Although Xu Xiake came from a well-established landowning lineage, neither he nor his immediate forebears had a conventionally successful career, and the family fortunes were in decline when he embarked on his celebrated travels. The shorter tours of more accessible sites in his younger years would not have imposed too much of a financial burden. During the time of his ambitious four-year expedition to southwest China, injections of funds from friends and supporters periodically boosted his travel budget, but daily expenses—and occasional thefts—depleted his savings, and more than once, he completely ran out of money.

Xu set off for the southwest in October 1636 with limited cash in hand, and at his first few stops, he picked up loans, gifts, and letters of introduction that might help secure further monetary or practical support at subsequent destinations. During his brief stays in Wuxi and Suzhou, he gathered letters from friends and relatives designed to establish links with officials serving in Guangxi. He planned to spend a good deal of time in Guangxi, and in Songjiang he collected a letter from the celebrated literatus Chen Jiru to two monks at Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan, who would serve as Xu's hosts when he arrived there. Chen Jiru also sent letters to other contacts of his, the powerful native official Mu Zeng in Lijiang and the gregarious Tang Dalai (1593–1673) in Kunming, both of whom would later take pains to see that Xu was well looked after during his stay in Yunnan.

55 For previous studies, see Zheng and Jiang, *Xu Xiake yu shanshui wenhua*, 383–436; Ward, *Xu Xiake*, chapters 2 and 3.

In parts of Guangxi, Xu Xiake benefited significantly from the support of regional commanders (*canrong*), who exercised a good deal of discretionary authority over transport resources in their jurisdictions. In Taiping Prefecture, through the good offices of a well-connected licentiate, Teng Zuochang, Xu gained access to a regional commander who expedited his travel as he headed west through areas administered by native chiefs. Teng also wrote letters of introduction to provincial officials of his acquaintance, further smoothing Xu's passage. On arrival in Xiangwu, Xu received a warm reception from the local administrator, Huang Shaolun, who showered him with gifts and offered to write letters of introduction to native officials still farther west. Later, learning that the regional commander of Sanli was a native of Zhenjiang, not far from Xu's hometown, Xu paid him a courtesy call. Their shared bond as fellow easterners would soon pave the way for Xu's comfortable and lengthy sojourn as the commander's honored guest and for continued logistical support as he made his way north toward Guizhou.

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Reading Xu's diary entries, one might come away with the impression that he usually traveled alone, but this was seldom the case. To be sure, from time to time he would embark on a solo excursion, but this tended to be not his preferred choice so much as a necessity forced on him by circumstances. Friends or family members often joined him on his early visits to famous mountains in China, and when he set off on his journey to the southwest in October 1636, he had no fewer than three helpers.

Of this trio, a retainer, referred to simply as Wang the Second, soon decided that the job was not for him and left without so much as a by-your-leave. Xu's other two companions lasted a good deal longer, but the rigors of the journey ultimately became too much for them, too.

The monk Tranquil Hearing, the most cultivated of the three, was a disciple of the monk Lotus Boat (Lianzhou) of the Welcoming Good Fortune Monastery [Yingfu Si] in Jiangyin. Lotus Boat, a friend of Xu Xiake's, had accompanied him on his trip to Mount Tiantai in 1613; now, his protégé would partner with Xu Xiake on his expedition to the southwest. Tranquil Hearing, a devout Buddhist who had written out the text of the *Lotus Sutra* (Chinese: Fahua jing) with his blood, was eager to make a pilgrimage to Mount Chicken Foot, and he cheerfully assisted Xu during the Zhejiang and Jiangxi portions of their itinerary. However, after suffering a stab wound in the brutal attack by bandits near Hengzhou in Hunan, he seems never to have regained full fitness. Although his interests overlapped with Xu's, Tranquil Hearing did not fully share Xu's passion for exploration. Over time, the divergence between the two men's priorities grew more apparent. Xu was exasperated, for example,

that Tranquil Hearing felt no sense of urgency about moving on from Hengzhou, where he relished the ready access to sutra readings, and in Guilin, he broke away from Xu's extended tour of the sights, preferring to relax and watch an opera performance instead. Tranquil Hearing fell ill in Guilin on 29 July 1637, perhaps partly as a result of strain and exhaustion amid the enervating heat of a Guangxi summer, and his health steadily declined over the next couple of months, culminating in his death in Nanning on 10 November.

Xu's third companion, the servant Gu Xing, appears to have been a younger man. He too was wounded in the bandit raid and at times suffered bouts of illness. Still, he always seemed to make a good recovery, and before long, he could resume his busy array of duties, including shopping, cooking, doing laundry, and running all kinds of errands. Xu depended heavily on Gu Xing, but as one year of arduous travel became two, and two became three, Gu Xing must have wearied of the constant demands made on him and hankered for home; he absconded in Yunnan on 5 October 1639, leaving Xu Xiake stunned at his abandonment.

Porters (*danfu*) were vital to Xu's mission because he was so heavily laden; his baggage included food supplies, cooking equipment, eating utensils, tea set, bedding, clothes, medicines, an extensive collection of books and writings and rubbings, umbrellas and other accessories, and souvenirs such as rocks, jades, and semi-precious stones. Finding and keeping porters was a never-ending challenge, for they had many objections to the job they were being asked to do—the pay was too meager, the sun was too hot, the road was too muddy, the route was too long or too dangerous, the luggage was too heavy, the hour was too late.

Porterage was a sideline activity. Men were usually unwilling to venture far from their homes and regular jobs, and they often flat-out refused to go beyond a certain distance; on one occasion, Xu's porters dumped the baggage in the open when they felt they had gone far enough and then ran away.[56] Travel by road typically required frequent changes of porters, sometimes as many as five or six times in a single day, with the inevitable delays that this entailed. In a best-case scenario, Xu Xiake might have as many as half a dozen porters, but often, he had to make do with just two. Once or twice, he had to carry some of the baggage himself.

At times, Xu also used sedan-chair carriers (*yufu*), mainly when travel tallies issued by sympathetic officials in Guangxi authorized the use of a sedan chair. In northern Guangxi, for example, he used two men as porters and two to carry his sedan chair. Sometimes, he resorted to using women or boys in the absence of adult male carriers.[57]

56 *YJJZ,* 1:629; *YJ,* 1:515.
57 *YJJZ,* 1:604–05; *YJ,* 1:492–93.

Now and again, Xu Xiake would hire for a period of a few days or weeks an attendant (*suifu*) to do odd jobs. As with porters and sedan-chair carriers, he usually did not identify such men by name, but we learn more about one such person, a certain Wang Gui, a native of Jingzhou in west Hunan. Xu Xiake first encountered Wang Gui in bandit-ridden northern Guangxi. There, Wang and his companions, observing that Xu was protected by a military escort, requested, for their safety, to join his entourage on the next leg of his journey. Xu agreed, but in the following days, he grew suspicious of the men's motives. At the same time, he was reassured by their helpfulness in carrying torches and ropes as he explored caves in the area. In his diary, Xu writes:

> After that, Wang Gui waited on me daily, expressing a wish to accompany me to Yunnan. My thinking was this: on the journey to Guangxi's border with Guizhou, I would have porters to accompany me, but once I entered Guizhou, I would likely have nobody to carry things, so I wanted to recruit one of the men. I made a deal with Wang Gui: "Here, I do not have any job for you to do, but since you are with me, I will give you one-hundredth of an ounce of silver each day. If you need to carry luggage, I will raise the daily wage to three and a half hundredths."[58]

Wang Gui accompanied Xu as far as Guizhou. Still, he slipped away one morning after helping himself to several taels of silver that Xu had stashed away in salt canisters, never imagining that this hiding place would be discovered.

FORMS OF TRANSPORT

During significant portions of his travels, Xu Xiake had access to navigable rivers, where traveling by boat (*zhou*) was the most convenient and comfortable option: room could be found on a boat for him and his companions, as well as their baggage. Occasionally, when exploring cave systems through which an underground river ran, he would use a bamboo raft (*fa*), custom-built for this purpose. When traveling through hilly terrain where boat travel was not an option, Xu Xiake sometimes rode a horse (*ma*, *qi*) or, in parts of Yunnan, joined a train of packhorses (*tuoqi*) led by a driver.

When exploring mountain areas, Xu typically traveled by foot (*buxing*); from time to time, if support from local officials made a sedan chair (*jianyu*) available to him (as in parts of Guangxi), he took full advantage of that option. According to reports, when he left Yunnan for home in

58 *YJJZ*, 2:770; *YJ*, 1:644.

1640, he was in such poor health that he had to be carried in a sedan chair to Wuchang, an arduous journey that took the best part of five months.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Xu Xiake lodged in a wide variety of places. The boats he traveled on usually offered a sleeping berth. When visiting cities or towns, he could stay in an inn (*dian*, *lüshe*, *nilü*, *lüyu*) or, if invited, at an official residence (*guanshe*). When traveling in the countryside, he often found accommodation in commoners' homes (*minshe*). Sometimes, he was invited, as in Guangxi, when a woman with paternal ties to Nanjing overheard Xu speaking in a familiar Jiangsu accent and promptly offered him a bed for the night.[59] However, in wilder areas, where security was poor, residents might close their doors to him, and he would have to force his way into a house if he wanted to have a roof over his head.[60]

Elsewhere he found accommodations at relay stations (*yi*), post stations (*pu*), Buddhist monasteries (*si*), Daoist abbeys (*guan*), Buddhist retreats (*an*), shrines (*ci*), roadside pavilions (*luting*), and army quarters (*yingfang*). Caves (*yan*) and caverns (*dong*) often provided shelter from the elements. On rare occasions, when neither manmade nor natural cover was available, Xu slept out in the open (*lusu*).

MEALS

From time to time, Xu Xiake enjoyed banquets hosted by local officials—in some cases, very lavish affairs—and when staying in monasteries, he could usually count on being treated to a wholesome vegetarian meal. During his travels in Guangxi, sponsorship by officials also enabled him to dine for free at post stations. In such places, Xu often seems to have found the food quite palatable, noting with apparent satisfaction that he was offered rice and boiled eggs, chicken, and fish. Still, sometimes he balked at the local specialties, on one occasion rejecting the squirrel he was offered in favor of a substitute dish, a quail-like bird.[61]

Xu Xiake enjoyed occasional lunches at noodle shops in bustling towns like Jinhua and Guilin. In the countryside, however, restaurants were thin on the ground. In parts of Yunnan, they were scarce: a village boasting a simple roadside eatery was somewhat unusual, resulting in local place-names such as Restaurant Village [Fandian Cun].[62] For much of the time, Xu could not count on eating in a commercial establishment, and given his tight budget, he might not have wanted to.

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59 *YJJZ*, 1:654; *YJ*, 1:539.
60 *YJJZ*, 2:770; *YJ*, 1:643.
61 *YJJZ*, 1:627; *YJ*, 1:513.
62 *YJJZ*, 2:1327; *YJ*, 2:1100.

Xu Xiake sometimes carried flatbreads that sufficed as a midday snack but preferred a hot meal if possible. At overnight stops in the countryside, he would commonly request temporary use of the host's kitchen stove, for which he might offer some nominal "fire money" (*huoqian*) and have his servant prepare dinner with the supplies carried with them. When he had no money to buy groceries, he would sometimes turn to barter; finding himself out of rice and vegetables in Hunan, he swapped a length of silk fabric for four tubes of rice; on arrival in Guizhou, where salt was in short supply, he was able to exchange salt for rice.[63] Xu would also forage for bamboo shoots, mushrooms, and other wild foods. In his Guangxi diary, he writes: "Our guide harvested bamboo shoots in the forest, while Tranquil Hearing picked several bamboo mushrooms and a jade fungus in attractive shades of yellow and white; I also picked several fungi. We went back down the mountain the same way we had come, and it was dusk when we reached the Liu residence. We had boiled mushrooms and stewed bamboo shoots for dinner that night."[64] Wherever he went, Xu would sample local produce that caught his eye; in his diary, he mentions a wide range of fruits, including melons, bananas, pears, persimmons, tangerines, and pomelos.

ORIENTATION AND GUIDANCE

Xu Xiake drew on various sources for information and advice about travel routes and destinations. For preliminary orientation, he regularly studied printed reference works, particularly the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, a voluminous work with ninety chapters. It is possible that Xu took with him only the sections about the provinces he planned to visit. He supplemented this general reference by consulting more detailed and up-to-date local gazetteers whenever possible and purchasing recent books about the places that interested him. In Guilin, for example, he made a point of buying a collection of miscellaneous notes compiled by the Ming scholar-official Wei Jun (*jinshi* 1604) when stationed in Guangxi and a similar volume written by Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624), who held office there in his final years. Such books furnished a level of detail about regional culture and local points of interest that he would not have found in the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*.

Xu Xiake also relied heavily on oral informants for advice and directions. These individuals included Buddhist monks and Daoist priests who often had lived for years in the remote, mountainous areas that Xu was keen to explore and a wide variety of residents—innkeepers, shopkeepers,

63 *YJJZ*, 1:335; *YJ*, 1:258; *YJJZ*, 2:746; *YJ*, 1:622.
64 *YJJZ*, 1:358; *YJ*, 1:276.

woodcutters, farmers, laborers, peddlers, and so on. He often recruited locals—or they would volunteer—to guide him through difficult terrain to remote but noteworthy sights.

A third source of guidance for Xu Xiake was divination (*qiuqian*), to which he turned in moments of acute distress and uncertainty to resolve his doubts about what course of action to follow. This practice is seldom in evidence in the early, relatively uneventful stages of his travels to the southwest, but soon after the Hunan robbery, a major setback, for the first time, Xu sought divine guidance on the best route to Yunnan. This was suggested by the brother of a man killed by the robbers, who had located the victim's body only after consulting an oracle. From November 1637 onward, as he worked his way through the unfamiliar territory of southwestern Guangxi, Xu Xiake, eager to proceed directly to Yunnan but hearing grim reports of dangers ahead, repeatedly turned to higher powers for advice. At their prompting, he abandoned the risky westward path in favor of a safer route north through Guizhou. On his return to Nanning, he again drew lots in front of an image of Buddha, this time to ensure he was doing the right thing in exhuming Tranquil Hearing's remains and carrying his ashes to Yunnan.[65]

LANGUAGE ISSUES

Despite the various dialects and accents that Xu Xiake would have encountered as he ventured far from home, he could usually communicate adequately. However, in remote border areas, he sometimes ran into difficulties. In a rural hamlet on the way to Xiangwu in southwest Guangxi, Xu found that his nonagenarian host was the sole Chinese speaker in the area. "I could not understand what the other villagers said," Xu notes. "The old man was the only person who could speak the Han language."[66] A misunderstanding that developed soon after, in Xiangwu itself, may well have stemmed from language differences: when Xu told the porters to get ready to set off, they took him to mean they were free to leave. They promptly disappeared into the hills to hunt for firewood, so his departure was postponed until the following day.[67]

Later, in the eastern highlands of Yunnan, then inhabited mainly by people of the Yi ethnicity, Xu's attempts at communication got him nowhere: "The men had all gone out, and the women were coarse and could not understand what I was saying. When I asked to borrow cooking implements, none of them made any response."[68] Near the Burmese

65 *YJJZ*, 1:646; *YJ*, 1:531.
66 *YJJZ*, 1:598; *YJ*, 1:490.
67 *YJJZ*, 1:606; *YJ*, 1:494.
68 *YJJZ*, 2:881; *YJ*, 2:725.

border, he likewise found an unbridgeable language gap between himself and the villagers.[69]

—Allan H. Barr

PREVIOUS TRANSLATIONS

Two complete translations of Xu Xiake's diaries have been published, one in Korean (Seoul, 2011; seven volumes) translated by Kim Un-hŭi and Yi Chu-no, and the other in Italian (Hangzhou, 2019; two volumes), produced by a team of scholars led by Giorgio Casacchia.[70] Both are bilingual editions. Two abridged English translations have been published in China: Wang Rongpei et al., trans., *The Travels of Xu Xiake* (Shanghai, 2011), and Li Weirong et al., trans., *Xu Xiake youji* (*Han-Ying duizhao*) (Changsha, 2016). Although both collections are bilingual editions, they are designed for Chinese readers. Notes on place-names and special terms, along with discussions of possible alternate English translations, are written in modern Chinese. As for other translations available to readers of English, aside from diary passages included in literary anthologies, book chapters, and journal articles, only one book-length, abridged translation has appeared in print: Li Chi's (Li Qi, 1902–89) *The Travel Diaries of Hsü Hsia-k'o* (Hong Kong, 1974). While Professor Li is to be commended for introducing China's most outstanding travel writer to English readers, the scope of her translation is limited to Xu Xiake's mountain diaries, which Li Chi contends are "the most important" among Xu Xiake's surviving travel accounts.[71] The result of this choice, however, is that English readers were not introduced to the engaging literary accounts and fascinating scientific observations made during the final sightseeing trip of Xu Xiake's life, which lasted from 1636 to 1640 and took him to the remote border regions of the Ming empire in what is now Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan. A second concern is that Li Chi's translation, completed in the 1950s but not published until 1974, is based on Ding Wenjiang's 1928 edition of *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*, which, as mentioned earlier, has now been replaced by the expanded, modern editions compiled by Zhu Huirong (rev. ed. 2017), and Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou (rev. ed. 2007). Thus, the Li Chi translation cannot be regarded as competing with or comparable to this rendition, which presents selections from the earlier and later periods of Xu's travels.

69 *YJJZ*, 2:1273; *YJ*, 2:1006.

70 Complete bibliographical citations for these and the other translations mentioned below are provided in the selected bibliography.

71 Li Chi, *The Travel Diaries of Hsü Hsia-k'o*, preface (n.p.).

OUR TRANSLATION PRIORITIES AND PRACTICES

The purpose of this volume is two-fold. First and foremost, we seek to provide an English translation that represents the broad and varied content in Xu Xiake's travel diaries. The mountain diaries have attracted the most attention from scholars and translators, and for good reason: Xu's accounts of his trips to Mount Tiantai, Mount Yandang, Mount Huang (or Yellow Mountain), Mount Lu, and several other notable peaks are chock full of fascinating and, in places, highly literate and emotionally moving "word pictures" of China's most renowned scenic environments. All of Xu's mountain diaries are translated in part 1 of this book. Until now, a rich, broad assortment of additional material, most of which dates from Xu Xiake's trip to the southwest in the late 1630s, has not been available in English translation. Examples of this include Xu's account of a bloody encounter with murderous river pirates in Hunan, his spelunking expeditions deep into limestone karst caverns in Guangxi, and his observations of, and interactions with, various indigenous border peoples in Yunnan, a remote and sometimes dangerous area that few Chinese travel writers dared to visit during the Ming. Representative selections of this material appear in part 2 of this book. The appendices include material that has never before been translated into English, including Xu's sequence of landscape poems on Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan; his critical essay on the origin of the Changjiang; a translation of Chen Hanhui's commemorative tomb biography of Xu Xiake (the most valuable primary source on his life and travels); a second biography written by the noted late Ming scholar-official Qian Qianyi; a set of verses mourning the death of his close friend, the Buddhist monk Tranquil Hearing; and Pan Lei's insightful preface to an early hand-copied version of *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*.

Second, we have made every effort to produce an English version of the diaries faithful to the original Chinese text and a rendition that approximates in English—as much as possible—Xu Xiake's narrative prose style. At the same time, we have endeavored to generate a translation that can be read and enjoyed by general readers and students, including scholars in North America and Europe who study travel writing but do not read Chinese. We hope that China specialists can also benefit from our translations, which provide a rare window through which the modern reader can view, and perhaps even vicariously experience, the challenges and difficulties of traveling around China in the late Ming.

Producing translations always presents difficulties of one sort or another. In preparing this volume, one challenge we have had to face is this: Xu Xiake never explains precisely what he sought to capture in his landscape descriptions, but on at least two occasions in the diaries, he mentions that genuinely outstanding scenery requires recognition of its

quality or essence, which he calls "spirit and texture" (*shenli*), and which the travel writer seeks to "capture" (*de*) in his prose.[72] Julian Ward has argued persuasively that in using this term, Xu Xiake sought to describe "both the physical state of the landscape and its metaphysical attractions."[73] We have tried to convey this ideal in our translations.

In our joint effort, we have held as our model the practice of the prominent translator of Chinese and Japanese literature Arthur Waley (1889–1966), as articulated in his *A Hundred and Seventy Chinese Poems*: "I have aimed at literal translation, not paraphrase. . . . Above all, considering imagery to be the soul of poetry, I have avoided either adding images of my own or suppressing those of the original."[74] Although Waley here refers to his approach to translating poetry into English, we have made every effort to follow his wise counsel in our translation of Xu Xiake's prose, the essence of which lies in the language and imagery he uses to narrate travel and movement through space, and in the word pictures he often paints to delineate landscape. Our approach to translation, then, is to not leave out elements and images that appear in the diaries' original Chinese text and to avoid inserting extraneous elements or images. At the same time, we are acutely aware that when a body of material is worked on by multiple translators, all of whom were trained by different mentors at different institutions and who, throughout their experiences and careers, have developed an approach to the explication of classical Chinese texts and translating them into English, it is inevitable that differences in diction, idiom, and English sentence structure will arise in the translations. The primary responsibility for establishing and preserving a consistent voice throughout the translation thus falls on the volume editor. Although every effort has been made to maintain a consistent prose style in the translations, the discerning reader may detect some (we hope subtle) differences in Xu Xiake's voice from diary to diary.

To assist the reader in following Xu Xiake's travel itinerary and gaining additional knowledge and context about the content of diary entries in places they deem appropriate, the translators have inserted brief, explanatory commentary into the main body of the translation. These comments and explanations are typographically distinguished by indentation and smaller type. We realize that this practice briefly interrupts the flow of Xu's travel narration, but at the same time, it is designed to help readers better understand the background and content of his descriptions.

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72 Xu Xiake mentions this term in "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Wutai" and "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Heng." Both diaries are translated in this volume.

73 Ward, *Xu Xiake*, 97.

74 1919; rpt., Sandwich, MA: Chapman Billies, 1997, 33.

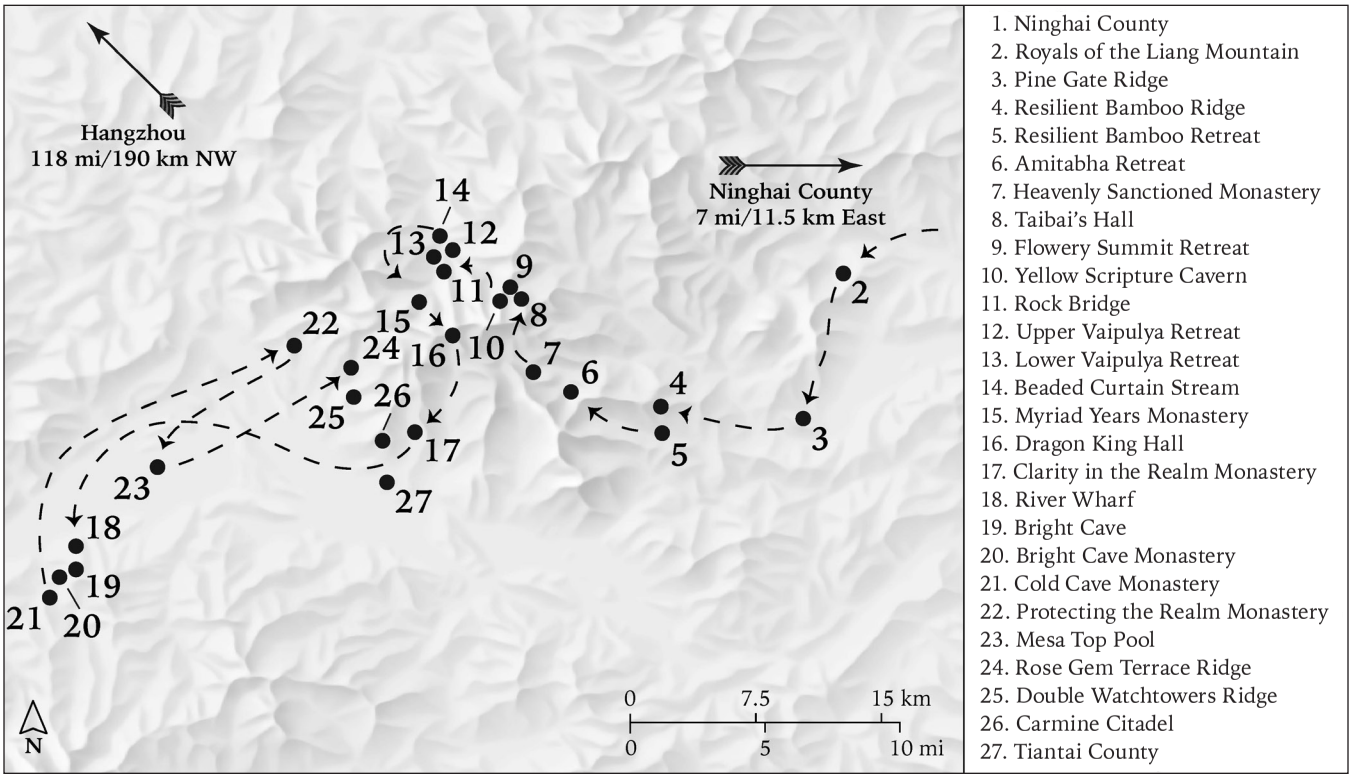
As mentioned earlier, there are two modern editions of Xu Xiake's travel diaries: Zhu Huirong's *Xu Xiake youji jiaozhu* and Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou's *Xu Xiake youji*. The editors of these collections have culled lines and passages from various earlier editions and the "lost" diary entries discovered in Beijing in the 1970s and have skillfully and painstakingly woven these recovered lines and passages into their new, modern editions, making the text of the diaries more complete than any previous version. Although recovered lines and passages are either placed in brackets or printed in smaller Chinese characters in these modern editions, we have not highlighted them in any way in our translations. Less clutter and fewer distractions in the translations make them more readable. At the same time, we sought to limit footnote content to information only necessary to clarify technical issues in the original Chinese text or to help the reader better understand the original text and our English translation.

—James M. Hargett

The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake

Part I

The Mountain Diaries
1613–1633



1. Ninghai County
2. Royals of the Liang Mountain
3. Pine Gate Ridge
4. Resilient Bamboo Ridge
5. Resilient Bamboo Retreat
6. Amitabha Retreat
7. Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery
8. Taibai's Hall
9. Flowery Summit Retreat
10. Yellow Scripture Cavern
11. Rock Bridge
12. Upper Vaipulya Retreat
13. Lower Vaipulya Retreat
14. Beaded Curtain Stream
15. Myriad Years Monastery
16. Dragon King Hall
17. Clarity in the Realm Monastery
18. River Wharf
19. Bright Cave
20. Bright Cave Monastery
21. Cold Cave Monastery
22. Protecting the Realm Monastery
23. Mesa Top Pool
24. Rose Gem Terrace Ridge
25. Double Watchtowers Ridge
26. Carmine Citadel
27. Tiantai County

Map 2. Mount Tiantai, 1613

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Tiantai

[SPRING 1613, TAIZHOU PREFECTURE, ZHEJIANG]

Mount Tiantai [Tiantai Shan] ranks among China's most important religious sites and is the home of Tiantai (Japanese: Tendai) Buddhism, founded there in the sixth century by the monk Wise Quietude (Zhiyi; 538–97). Today, it remains a popular destination for both Chinese and Japanese pilgrims. The main temple on the mountain is Clarity in the Realm Monastery [Guoqing Si]; to this day, Rock Gate [Shimen] and its cascading waterfall remain Mount Tiantai's premier sightseeing attractions.

Guichou *year, last day of the third month* [19 May 1613]: I departed from the west gate of Ninghai County.[1] The clouds scattered, and the sun shone brightly. My thoughts and the radiant glow of the mountains together created a joyous feeling. After thirty *li*, I reached Royals of the Liang Mountain [Lianghuang Shan].[2] I heard reports of tigers along the road, and that several scores of people had been mauled in recent months, so I decided to stop there for the night.

First day of the fourth month [20 May]: It rained in the morning. I proceeded fifteen *li* to a fork in the road, then turned my horse toward Mount Tai.[3] As the sky gradually cleared, I proceeded another ten *li* and reached Pine Gate Ridge [Songmen Ling]. The mountain was steep, and the trail was slippery, so I dismounted and went ahead on foot. Although one crosses several ridges coming this way from Fenghua County, all have paths along their foothills.[4] But after reaching Pine Gate Ridge, I followed twisting and turning trails along the crests of the mountains. The sky cleared after a shower. The gurgling of springs and glitter of

Source: "You Tiantai Shan riji; Zhejiang, Taizhou fu" (*YJJZ*, 1:1–8; *YJ*, 1:1–6). Taizhou Prefecture corresponds to Taizhou Shi, Zhejiang. Mount Tiantai is just northeast of modern Tiantai Xian.

1 Modern Ninghai Xian, Zhejiang.

2 This mountain is so named because two princes (or "royals") supposedly took refuge there during a rebellion in the closing years of the Liang dynasty (502–57).

3 That is, Mount Tiantai.

4 Modern Fenghua Shi, Zhejiang.

mountains faded in and out as sounds and colors transformed the landscape. Mountain azaleas (*shanjuan*) shone from groves of verdant green, which made me forget about the toils of clambering and trudging along the trail. I proceeded another fifteen *li* and then stopped for a meal at Resilient Bamboo Retreat [Jinzhu An] on the mountain's summit, where wheat is planted everywhere.[5] I proceeded south from Resilient Bamboo Ridge [Jinzhu Ling] toward the main trail to Clarity in the Realm Monastery.[6] By chance, I shared a meal with the monk Cloudy Peak (Yunfeng) from Clarity in the Realm, who told me the mountain trail to Rock Bridge [Shiliang] is dangerous and long, so carrying luggage is inconvenient.[7] He suggested it would be better to proceed with a lighter load. Porters could take the heavier bags to Clarity in the Realm and wait for me there. I followed his suggestion and had the porters accompany Cloudy Peak to Clarity in the Realm. The Superior One, Lotus Boat, and I headed toward the trail to Rock Bridge.[8] We proceeded five *li* and passed Resilient Bamboo Ridge. Along the sides of the ridge are numerous dwarf pines. Their old trunks are knotty and knobby, their roots and leaves verdant and exquisite, like my miniature potted plants in the Suzhou style.[9]

Proceeded another thirty-some *li* and arrived at Amitabha Retreat [Mituo An]. During my ascents and descents along the lofty ridges, I was deep in the mountains, which were desolate and still. Out of fear that the vegetation could harbor tigers, it has been burned away. A mountain

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5 The term "retreat" (*an*) appears often in Xu Xiake's travel narratives and usually refers to a thatched hut, cottage, or cave used as a hermitage by Buddhist monks.

6 Clarity in the Realm Monastery is just outside the wall of the Tiantai County Seat. Despite the singular noun "monastery" in its name, Clarity in the Realm was a massive monastic complex comprising numerous halls and pagodas. During the Tang dynasty, when many Japanese diplomats and religious pilgrims came to China, the eminent Japanese Buddhist monk Highest Transparence (Saichō, 767–822) arrived at Tiantai in 804, where he studied and mastered the Tiantai doctrine. Highest Transparence later returned to Japan, where he founded the Tendai School of Buddhism. The Buddhist traditions of East and Southeast Asia have all thoroughly integrated the teachings of the Tiantai/Tendai School, and its influence is still significant today, especially in Japan.

7 Rock Bridge, a natural granite bridge that spans above Mount Tiantai's famous cascading waterfall (*feibu*), is one of the mountain's most notable scenic sites. Travelers like Xu Xiake, who dared to cross it, found that at one point, the width of the bridge narrows to just a few inches. Xu remarks below that he was "terrified to the bone" when he walked across it.

8 Lotus Boat, of the Welcoming Good Fortune Monastery in Jiangyin, was a close friend of Xu Xiake. Superior One (Shangren) is a classification of Buddhist monks distinguished by their virtue, wisdom, and exemplary conduct.

9 In the Chinese text, Chang Gate [Changmen] is used here as a synecdoche for the famous city of Suzhou in Jiangsu, renowned for its gardens, canals, and—as noted here—miniature potted plants.

spring roared in a driving wind. No sightseers were on the trail. The retreat is in a hollow surrounded by countless mountains. The trail was desolate and long, and I had only made it halfway to my destination, so this was a fitting place to have a meal and spend the night.

Second day [21 May]: The rain did not let up until after breakfast. In due course, I passed by some rain-drenched trails and began clambering up a ridge. The rocks in the stream gradually became more striking. Proceeded twenty *li* and, at dusk, reached Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery [Tianfeng Si]. I thought about the morning ascent to the peak's summit as I lay asleep. I considered the bright and clear weather an auspicious omen, probably because the evenings had been clear for several days, but daybreak had not brought fair skies. At fifth watch, while in a dream, I heard a voice say bright stars filled the sky.[10] I was so thrilled that I could not go back to sleep.

Third day [22 May]: I got up at dawn. As predicted, the sun's rays were strikingly brilliant, so I headed toward the summit. Ascended for several *li* and arrived at Flowery Summit Retreat [Huading An].[11] After another three *li*, just as we approached the summit, was Taibai's Hall [Taibai Tang].[12] There is nothing much to see at either the retreat or the hall. I had heard that below the hall on the left is the Yellow Scripture Cavern [Huangjing Dong], so I followed a small footpath in that direction.[13] After two *li*, I looked down and saw a rock jutting out, which I felt was exquisite and elegant. Upon reaching the cavern, I met an un-tonsured monk who had constructed a retreat in front of it.[14] Fearing that wind from inside the cavern would blow out, he stacked rocks to block the entrance. I heaved a heavy sigh of regret over this. I then backtracked and ascended, arriving back at Taibai's Hall. Following the path, I climbed to the Ultimate Summit [Jueding].[15] The tall weeds there were blown about by winds, which are frigid on this lofty mountain. Frost about an inch thick had formed

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10 The fifth watch fell between 3:00 and 5:00 a.m. For a description of the various watches and drums of the nighttime hours, see the section "Daytime and Nighttime References" under "Conventions." Footnotes will not be provided hereafter when watches and drums are mentioned.

11 This retreat, constructed in 936, was just below Flowery Summit Peak [Huading Feng], the highest point on Mount Tiantai, which stands 3,602 ft/1,098 m above sea level.

12 According to legend, the famous Tang dynasty poet Li Bai (701–62), also known as Li Taibai, once studied in this hall. Hence the name "Taibai."

13 "Yellow Scripture" refers to the *Yellow Court Scripture* (Huangting jing), a Daoist divination text of unknown origin dating from sometime before the fourth century.

14 Buddhist monks in China are usually tonsured to express their religious devotion.

15 Ultimate Summit refers to Flowery Summit Peak, for which see note 11 above.



Figure 2. Rock Bridge [Shiliang/Shiqiao] (*circled*) at Mount Tiantai. From *Essential Gazetteer Accounts of the Transcendent Realm of Mount Tiantai* (Tiantai Shan fangwai zhiyao; 1767), "Tiantai shiliu jingtu," 5b–6a. Qi Shaonan (1706–68), ed. Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University, https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:5130388.

on the weeds. Light and shadows whirled on the mountains around me, while delicately wrought gem-like flowers and jade-like trees filled my gaze. In the corner of the ridge, mountain wildflowers were in full bloom, but none blossomed on the summit. This is presumably because of the limitations imposed by high altitude and cold.

Following the same route as before, I descended to the Flowery Summit Retreat. Passed a small bridge beside a pond, then crossed three ridges. Streams swirled, mountains joined; trees and boulders, dense and beautiful, were each as extraordinary as the next and especially pleasing to one's gaze. Proceeded twenty more *li* and passed Upper Vaipulya Retreat [Shang Fangguang An].[16] When I arrived at Rock Bridge [see figure 2], I performed a ritual ceremony to honor Buddha at the Dharma Flower Pavilion [Tanhua Ting]. Still, there was no time to make a detailed observation of the cascading waterfall there. Descended and then arrived at Lower Vaipulya Retreat [Xia Fangguang]. I saw Rock Bridge's cascading waterfall suddenly appear on the horizon. I heard on the trail that the scenery on Broken Bridge [Duanqiao] and along Beaded Curtain Stream

16 Vaipulya (Chinese: *fangguang*) is a Sanskrit term often used to describe lengthy, inclusive Mahāyāna sutras. On Mount Tiantai, there were two Vaipulya retreats located at different elevations. Hence, the distinctions between Upper (here) and Lower (mentioned below). In other places in his diary, Xu Xiake refers to these retreats as monasteries or retreat monasteries.



Figure 3. Qian Du (1763–1844), *Dream Journey to Mount Tiantai* (Mengyou Tiantai tu). Handscroll, ink on paper, 11.7 × 28.3 in. / 29.8 × 72 cm (detail). Cleveland Museum of Art. Gift of Jean-Pierre Dubosc 1975.75, https://www.clevelandart.org/art/1975.75.

A "dream journey" (*mengyou*) is an artistic conceit by which a painter would depict a place based on its fame as a travel destination, not from experiencing it.

[Zhulian Shui] is especially surpassing.[17] A monk said there was still time after a meal to go there and return, so I continued from Transcendent's Raft Bridge [Xianfa Qiao] toward the back of the mountain. Crossed a ridge and followed a torrent for eight or nine *li*. The waterfall raged down from Rock Gate, then twisted and turned through three bends of a mountain stream. Broken Bridge is on the upper level, where two boulders tilt toward one another and then join. Water smashes down and crashes into the rocks, then converges and forms a pool. On the middle level, two boulders stand against each other like a gate. The gate restrains the rush of the water, but its force is still quite vigorous. On the lower level, the entrance to the pool is quite broad; the place where the stream torrents down resembles a sluice. Its water slants down from a hollow. All three levels are several rods in height; each is most magical and extraordinary. However, following the different levels and descending, places that twine and twist are hidden by bends in the stream, so I could not gain a

17 "Broken Bridge" refers to a mountain of that name below the Rock Bridge. Beaded Curtain Stream is just north of that mountain. Readers should note that when Xu Xiake says, "I heard . . . ," he usually repeats information from another sightseer he met on the trail.

complete view. After about one more *li* was Beaded Curtain Stream. Where the stream inclines downward, it is flat and spacious. The stream gurgles and burbles as its force slows and scatters. In bare feet, I tramped over a grassy thicket, brushing against trees, following the edge of a cliff. Lotus Boat was not able to keep up with me. I did not go back until darkness had fallen. I halted at Transcendent's Raft Bridge to watch a sprawling rainbow where Rock Bridge's cascading waterfall spurted snowy foam. I almost felt like I did not want to go to sleep.

Fourth day [23 May]: Sky and mountains formed a single swath of blue-green as dark as kohl. There was no time for an early breakfast, so I immediately ascended to Dharma Flower Pavilion from Transcendent's Raft Bridge. Rock Bridge is just beyond the pavilion. The bridge is over one foot in width and measures three rods in length. It spans a hollow between two mountains. Two waterfalls cascade down from the left side of the pavilion. Upon reaching the bridge, they join in plummeting down a thousand rods with a thunderous roar like a river whose dam had burst. As I proceeded across the bridge, I looked down into the bottomless pool below and felt terrified to the bone. At the end of the bridge, the way was blocked by a huge boulder, so I could not reach the mountain up ahead. I then backtracked the way I came. Passed Dharma Flower Pavilion and reached Upper Vaipulya Retreat Monastery [Shang Fangguang An Si]. I followed the stream before the monastery and again arrived at the giant boulder blocking the way to the mountain. I sat down on the rock and observed Rock Bridge. A monk from Upper Vaipulya Monastery urged me to go there and have a meal, so I left for the monastery. After the meal proceeded fifteen *li* and reached Myriad Years Monastery [Wannian Si], where I ascended to the Sutras Depository Belvedere [Cangjing Ge].[18] The belvedere has two stories, one for northern sutras and another for southern sutras.[19] Before and behind the monastery are numerous ancient conifers (*shan*), all measuring the arm spans of three people in girth. Cranes nest in the nearby trees. Their calls and cries resonated clearly throughout the mountains.

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18 This once vast monastic complex, dating from the ninth century and rebuilt and renamed several times since, is north of the Tiantai County seat, at the base of the mountain from which it takes its name. In 985, more than five hundred arhat (*luohan*) statues were cast by imperial decree and deposited in the temple. In Buddhism, an arhat is a being who has gained insight into the true nature of existence and has achieved nirvana. Images or sculpted likenesses of arhats are familiar in Buddhist monasteries.

19 A sutra depository is a library of Buddhist religious texts. Usually, such depositories are closed with little or no public access, the idea being that the books held therein were for "show" only. The terms southern and northern indicate that one of the sutra libraries held texts associated with southern Hīnayāna traditions in Southeast Asia (based on texts in the *Pāli Canon*), while the other held works related to the northern or Mahāyāna tradition in China and Tibet.

On this day, I wanted to go to Paulownia Palace [Tongbo Gong] and search for Rose Gem Terrace [Qiongtai] and Double Watchtowers [Shuangque].[20] But I received much misinformation on the trail and so planned to head to Clarity in the Realm instead. Clarity in the Realm is forty *li* from Myriad Years Monastery. One passes Dragon King Hall [Longwang Tang] on the way there. Each time I would descend from a ridge, I would remark that we had already reached level ground, but then I would descend to several more levels of ridges. Not until you see that the landscape here never settles do you realize the loftiness of Flowery Summit, which is not far at all from the heavens above! I entered Clarity in the Realm at sunset, where I met up with Cloudy Peak. It seemed like a reunion with a dear, old friend. I discussed my interest in exploring remarkable scenic sites with him. Cloudy Peak said, "As for famous scenic sites, none can match the two caves.[21] Although far away, we can go there on horseback. First, we go to the two caves and then proceed on foot to Peach Source [Taoyuan].[22] When we reach Paulownia Palace, we proceed to Jasper Citadel [Cuicheng] and Carmine Citadel [Chicheng].[23] With just this one survey, we can take in them all!"

Fifth day [24 May]: There were signs of rain, but I was not concerned. I took the trail to Cold Cave and Bright Cave from the monastery, along the way heading toward the west gate to rent horses. When the horses arrived, so did the rain. Proceeded fifteen *li* to River Wharf [Butou].[24] When the rain stopped, we left the horses and proceeded another two *li* on foot, passing onto the mountain, where corded peaks reflected in mountain streams. The trees were exquisite, the rocks extraordinary. I was most delighted by this beautiful view. The force of one stream, which came from Dongyang County, was great, as mighty as the Cao'e River [Cao'e Jiang].[25] Looking around, I saw no raft, so I forded the stream by riding on my servant's back. The water came up above his knees. I then crossed a ravine, which took almost an hour. After another three *li*, I

20 Rose Gem Terrace and Double Watchtowers are the names of mountain ridges.

21 The "two caves" mentioned in this line are Cold Cave [Hanyan] and Bright Cave [Mingyan], both of which are described in the next diary entry.

22 The reference here is to the Peach Source Cavern [Taoyuan Dong], associated with the legendary figures Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao of remote antiquity, who supposedly "discovered" Mount Tiantai in 62 CE while gathering herbs on its slopes.

23 Carmine Citadel, so-called because of the dark red color of its soil, is a raised mound just north of modern Tiantai Xian. It rises to a height of 1,122 ft/339 m and is known for its twelve scenic caverns.

24 Reading Butou 步[埠]頭, or "River Wharf," as a proper noun, referring to a ferry crossing bearing that name.

25 Dongyang County, which was northwest of Mount Tiantai, refers to modern Dongyang Shi, Zhejiang. The Cao'e River is one of the largest waterways in Zhejiang Province.

reached Bright Cave, where Cold Mountain and Foundling once lived in seclusion.[26] The two mountains there turn and twist around. This place is what the *Gazetteer* calls Eight Inch Pass [Bacun Guan].[27] I entered the pass, and its cliff walls were as sheer as city walls in every direction. Far behind them is a cavern several rods deep, so spacious it could hold several hundred people. Beyond the cavern, on the left, are two caves halfway up the cliff wall. On the right are rocky bamboo shoots that rear up in clusters, ascending as high as the rocky wall, with only a thread's distance between them.[28] Green pines and violet flowers are deep and dense on this side and directly face the other cliff on the left, creating an unsurpassable and extraordinary sight.

I left Eight Inch Pass and next ascended a cliff to its left. When I got here and gazed below, it seemed as if there was just one crevice. But after I climbed to the top, I found it bright and spacious enough to hold several hundred people. There is a well on the cliff called Transcendent Being Well [Xianren Jing]. It is shallow but never runs out of water. Beyond the cliff is a prominent rock, several rods in height, which on top splits into upright shapes that look like two people. A monk pointed out they are Cold Mountain and Foundling, or so he said. I went into the monastery.[29] After I ate a meal, the clouds darkened, then scattered and dispersed. A crescent moon loomed in the sky. Some people returned to the summit of the precipice, where before them, clear moonlight brimmed over its rocky wall.

Sixth day [25 May]: I left the monastery before dawn. Proceeded six or seven *li* and arrived at Cold Cave. Its rocky wall shoots straight up as if split with a cleaver. Looking up into the sky, I saw numerous caverns and cavities. Halfway up the cliff is a cavern, eighty paces wide and over a hundred paces deep, which is open, flat, bright, and luminous. Following the right side of the cavern, I climbed up through a rocky defile. In a craggy depression on the cliff, two boulders facing each other thrust upward. They are separated at the base but connected on top, forming Magpie Bridge [Queqiao]. Its extraordinary physical features contend

26 Cold Mountain (Hanshan) and Foundling (Shide) are two figures who lived in seclusion on Mount Tiantai during the Tang dynasty, where they enjoyed each other's company far away from the hustle and bustle of the secular world outside. Both are popular figures in Zen painting, especially in Japan, where they are known as Kanzan and Jittoku.

27 The *Gazetteer*" (*Zhi*) in Xu Xiake's diaries usually refers to the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*. However, a check of the received version of that text failed to produce any reference to Eight Inch Pass.

28 The reference here is a stalagmite-like rock formation resembling a bamboo shoot. See the "Rocky Bamboo Shoots" section under "Conventions." This descriptive term appears often in subsequent diary entries.

29 Xu Xiake is referring to an unnamed monastery near Bright Cave.

with Rock Bridge at Vaipulya Retreat; it just lacks a cascading waterfall descending directly down. I returned for a meal in the monks' quarters, then searched for a raft to cross a mountain stream. Following the stream, I proceeded along the foot of the mountain. This area comprises jagged walls and scarped cliffs, overgrown with plants and trees twisting and dangling down from above. Among them are numerous pink crab apple (*haitang*) and Chinese redbud (*zijing*) trees, which cast their colors onto a shady stream. At a spot where a fragrant breeze wafted, magnolias [*yulan*] and other sweet-smelling plants appeared in endless procession. By then, I had already arrived at a mountain spur, where a rocky wall rose directly up from the bottom of a torrent. The torrent is deep; its flow is swift, and there is no margin of land along its bank. Notches are chiseled along the rocky wall to help travelers proceed along the bank. The notches are only big enough to fit half of one's foot. My soul shuddered as I crossed, my body pressed against the cliff wall.

From Cold Cave, I proceeded fifteen *li* to River Wharf, then took a small trail toward Peach Source. Peach Source is next to Protecting the Realm Monastery [Huguo Si]. The monastery is abandoned, and the locals know nothing about it. I followed Cloudy Peak along an overgrown path. The sun had already set, but we still had not found a place to spend the night. So I asked about the way to Mesa Top Pool [Pingtou Tan] and found it was only twenty *li* from River Wharf. So we took a small side trail to River Wharf rather than backtracking for more than thirty *li*. Spent the night there. The way to Peach Source is indeed confusing!

Seventh day [26 May]: I proceeded over thirty *li* down a winding trail from Mesa Top Pool. Crossed a stream and passed into a mountain. Proceeded another four or five *li* to where the mountain pass gradually narrowed. There is a guesthouse there called Peach Blossom Col [Taohua Wu].[30] I proceeded on, following a deep pool. The clear blue-green water and a cascading stream pour down from above. This is the Chiming Jade Torrent [Mingyu Jian]. The torrent follows the mountain's contours, so one follows the torrent as one proceeds. Both sides of the mountain are solid rock. Stacked tors hemmed in by blue-green are a real treat for the eyes. The scenery here is superior to that at Cold Cave and Bright Cave. Where the torrent ends, the trail disappears. A waterfall pours down from a mountain depression, its force bold and unrestrained. I left after having a meal in the guesthouse.

Following the col, I proceeded southeast. Crossed two ridges and searched for Rose Gem Terrace and Double Watchtowers, but as it turned out, no one knew the way. I discovered they were on the mountain's

30 The term *wu* 塢, rendered here and elsewhere in the diaries as "col," refers to a gap between two mountains. Xu Xiake uses this term often in his descriptions of mountain landscapes.

summit only after proceeding for several more *li*. Together with Cloudy Peak, I followed the trail. We clambered and pulled ourselves upward. Only then did we reach the mountain's apex. It was steep and sheer, ringing and rolling, just like the scene at Peach Source. But the blue-green cliff walls here, countless rods high, surpass Peach Source in the danger they pose. The peak divides in two, forming Double Watchtowers. Where Double Watchtowers narrows and rings around—this forms Rose Gem Terrace. Behind three sheer cliff walls, the terrace turns and immediately connects with Double Watchtowers. The sun had set when I faced the watchtowers, so there was no time to climb farther. But in one day, I had already experienced all the outstanding scenic sites here. So I descended the mountain and returned from the backside of Carmine Citadel to Clarity in the Realm, altogether covering a distance of thirty *li*.

Eighth Day [27 May]: I left Clarity in the Realm. From behind the mountain, proceeded five *li* and climbed up to Carmine Citadel. The circular cliff wall on the summit of Carmine Citadel rises prominently, and when one gazes at it from afar, it resembles a city wall. The color of its rock, however, is faded red. The caves on the cliff serve as monks' living quarters, but they are in disorder and disarray, concealing whatever natural appeal the scenery may have. What is referred to as Jade Capital Cavern [Yujing Dong], Gold Coin Pond [Jinqian Chi], and Purging Bowels Well [Xichang Jing] do not provide any notable scenic sights.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Yandang

[SPRING 1613, WENZHOU PREFECTURE, ZHEJIANG]

Xu Xiake next travels to Mount Yandang, about 56 mi/90 km south of Mount Tiantai, near modern Wenzhou Shi in Zhejiang. The two main scenic sites described below are Numinous Peak [Lingfeng] and the Big Dragon Splash Pool [Da Longqiu].

Ninth day [*of the fourth month*] [28 May 1613]: I departed from Mount Tiantai and reached Huangyan County on the tenth day [29 May].[1] Although the sun had already set in the west, I left from the south gate and proceeded for thirty *li*. Spent the night at Eight Flats [Ba'ao].

Eleventh day [30 May]: I proceeded twenty *li*, then climbed Winding Mountain Ridge [Panshan Ling]. I gazed at the peaks of Mount Yan [Yanshan].[2] Like flowering hibiscus plants, they poke into the sky in layer after layer. They almost seemed to tap against my forehead. I proceeded another twenty *li* and stopped for a meal at Big Thistle Relay Station [Dajing Yi]. I then waded across a stream to the south and saw a cluster of round rocks on a peak to the west. My servant pointed out this is Two Mendicant Monks [Liang Toutuo].[3] I suspected that it might be Venerable Monk Cliff [Laoseng Yan], but it did not look much like that cliff. Proceeded another five *li* and passed by the Zhang Family Inn [Zhangjia Lou].[4] Only then could I see the essential features of "Venerable Monk": "he" wore a cassock and had a monastic tonsure, appeared true to life, and stood perfectly upright, about one hundred feet high.[5] On his flank, Small Child hunches over reverentially behind him, who just now was

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Source: "You Yandang Shan riji; Zhejiang, Wenzhou fu" (*YJJZ*, 1:9–14; *YJ*, 1:6–10). Wenzhou Prefecture corresponds to modern Wenzhou Shi.

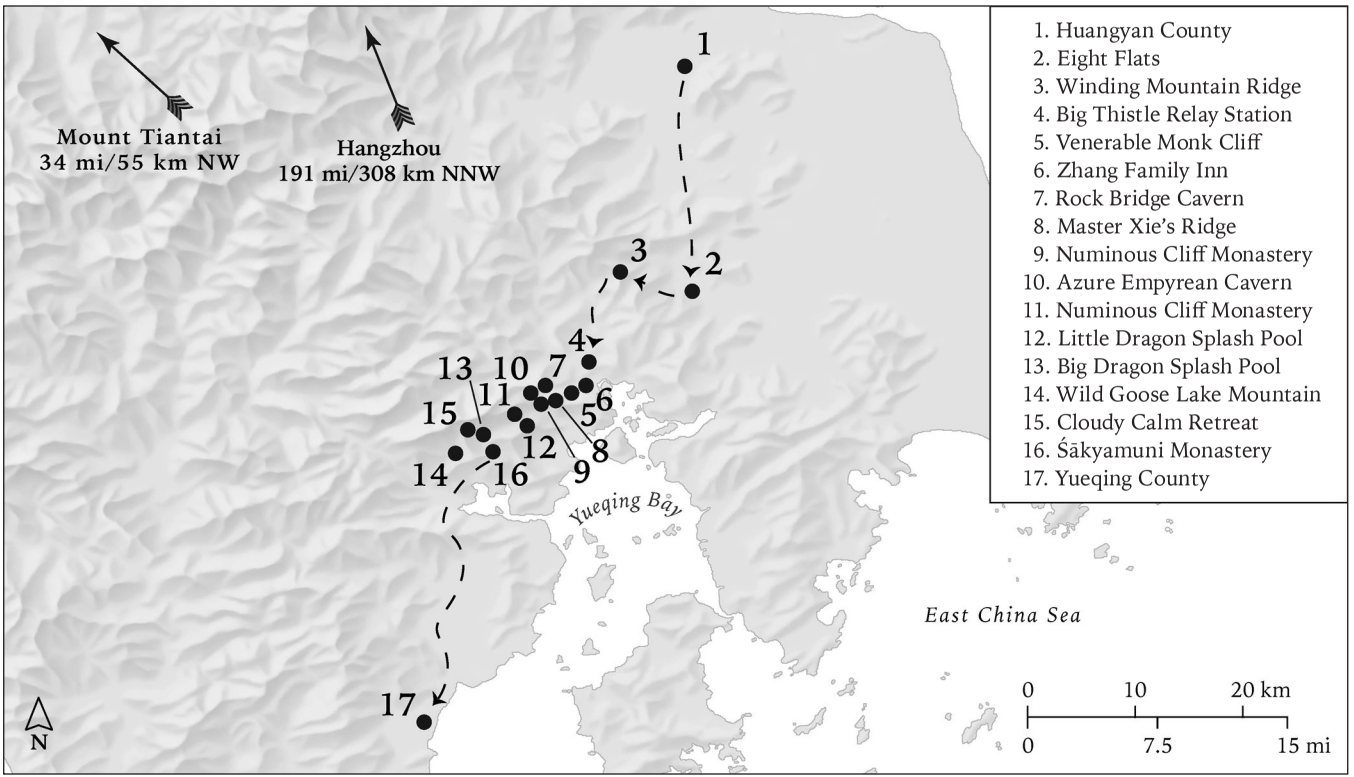
1 Huangyan County (modern Huangyan Qu, Zhejiang) is about 44 mi/72 km south of Mount Tiantai.

2 Yanshan is an abbreviation of "Yandang Shan," or Mount Yandang.

3 This is the name of a prominent cliff on Mount Yandang.

4 This structure, built by Zhang Yan during the Ming dynasty, was designed as a rest stop for travelers heading for Mount Yandang. Ni Qixin et al., trans., *Zhongguo gudai youji xuan*, 2:226n13.

5 That is, the "monk's" head was shaved on top with a crown of hair below.



Map 3. Mount Yandang, 1613

concealed by Venerable Monk.[6] Proceeded two *li* from the Zhang Family Inn and halfway up the mountain found Rock Bridge Cavern [Shiliang Dong]. The cavern entrance faces east. At the entrance is a rock bridge, which slants down from the summit and drives right down to the ground. It resembles a cascading rainbow plummeting downward. From the flank of the bridge, I ascended a flight of steps through a crevice, which soared high and was spacious. Sat for a short while, then went down the mountain. From the foot of a mountain on the right, passed over Master Xie's Ridge [Xiegong Ling], crossed a mountain stream, and proceeded west following that same stream.[7] This is the way to Numinous Peak.

As soon as you make the turn into the mountain gorge, two walls, rising steeply, extend into the sky. As for the jumbled piles of precipitous peaks, some seem like they have been pared with a knife; some seem like they are formed into clusters; some seem like bamboo shoots in pairs; some seem like protruding mushrooms; some seem to stand tall and erect like writing brushes; some seem like turbans tilted to one side.[8] Cave openings resembled drawn-up curtains; the pools were a deep shade of blue, like pure indigo. Double Simurghs [Shuangluan] and Five Elders Peaks [Wulao] fold their wings and join their shoulders.[9] It was like this for about one *li*. Reached Numinous Peak Monastery [Lingfeng Si].[10] Following the flank of the monastery, I climbed to Numinous Peak Cavern [Lingfeng Dong]. The peak is concave on top and stands prominently behind the monastery. On the flank of the monastery is a crevice that leads one up several scores of stone steps directly to the recessed summit, which is hidden, profound, and far-reaching, with a flat terrace that is circular and open. Inside the cavern are images of arhats. I sat and amused myself until dusk, then backtracked to the monastery.

Twelfth day [31 May]: After a meal, from the right foot of Numinous Peak, I searched for Azure Empyrean Cavern [Bixiao Dong], then backtracked along the earlier trail and reached the base of Master Xie's Ridge.

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6 The "small child" mentioned in this line refers to Small Child Cliff [Xiaotong Yan].

7 According to legend, this ridge is named after Xie Lingyun (385–433), one of the most prominent and influential poets of the Six Dynasties era, who supposedly once toured Mount Yandang when he served as prefect of Yongjia (modern Wenzhou Shi, Zhejiang) between 422 and 423.

8 The point is that some peaks protruded or extended outward on top, like a mushroom (*zhi*) cap. Each element in this string of similes refers to an individual peak.

9 "Simurgh" (*luan*) is a fabulous bird in China, often mentioned together with the "phoenix" (*feng*). The expression "fold their wings and join their shoulders" (*anyi lianjian* 按翼聯肩) means the two peaks were pared or tapered and stood close together.

10 This monastery, sitting in the gorge just below Numinous Peak, dates from the eleventh century.

Then I headed south and passed Echo Cliff [Xiangsheng Yan]. After five more *li* reached the trail crossing to Vimalakīrti Monastery [Jingming Si].[11] I continued and searched for Water Curtain Valley [Shuilian Gu] between two cliffs pressed close together. Water glides down from the summits of the two cliffs. Proceeded five *li* out of the valley and reached Numinous Cliff Monastery [Lingyan Si] [see figure 4]. Here, sheer cliff walls join on its four sides, which rub against the sky and cling to the earth, twisting and crooking as one goes through them, and finally seem to open out into an entirely different world. The monastery is inside it, facing south. The back of it faces the Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier [Pingxia Zhang]. The barrier's summit is well-proportioned and purple. Standing several hundred rods high, its breadth matches its height. On the left of the barrier's southernmost point is Unfurled Banner Peak [Zhanqi Feng]; on the right is Celestial Pillar Peak [Tianzhu Feng]. On the upper right side of the barrier, where it borders Celestial Pillar, first comes Dragon Snout Stream [Longbi Shui]. The opening at Dragon Snout goes straight up through a crack in the rock. It looks like Numinous Peak Cavern but is smaller. All the rocks in the opening are yellow and purple. Only the veins of the rock in the crack's slot are wispy, deep purplish-blue, reddish black, glossy smooth, and shaped like the scaly claws of a dragon. From the summit, I threaded my way to the bottom of a cavern, which slopes down on one end like a nose. A finger could fit into the end of its "nostril." Water from the inside drips down to form a rocky basin below. The area to the right of the barrier provides the most extraordinary scenery here.

To the southwest is Lone Elegance Peak [Duxiu Feng]. It is smaller than Celestial Pillar but is not inferior in height and pointedness. Below Lone Elegance is Upright Writing Brush Peak [Zhuobi Feng]. Its height is half that of Lone Elegance but is similarly pointed. From a hollow to the south and inside these two peaks, one hears the deafening roar of water streaming down into the Little Dragon Splash Pool [Xiao Longqiu]. Separating the Big Dragon Splash Pool and Lone Elegance, which are directly facing them, is Jade Maiden Peak [Yunü Feng]. On its summit are spring flowers, which seem to stick into the "maiden's" coiffure. From here, I passed Double Simurghs, the farthest point from Celestial Pillar. At the foot of Double Simurghs, two peaks rise together. Bowing Monk Rock [Sengbai Shi] is on the peaks' margin. With "his" cassock, hunched-back, and reverential posture, "he" is a true likeness! Where the upper left part of the barrier borders Unfurled Banner, first comes Quiet

11 Vimalakīrti (Chinese: Weimo; also known as Jingming) is a prominent figure in Mahāyāna Buddhism. He was said to be a layman renowned for his wisdom and skill in teaching the dharma—the nature of reality—as a universal truth taught by the Buddha. His story is told in the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sutra*, an important Mahāyāna text.



Figure 4. Numinous Cliff Monastery [Lingyan Si] on Mount Yandang, 2018. Photo by Meiqianbao/Shutterstock.com.

Meditation Valley [Anchan Gu]. This valley hosts the lower cliff of Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier. To the southeast is Rock Screen Peak [Shiping Feng]. In shape, it is like Sunglow Screen Clouds Barrier but is only half as high and wide. It rests precisely at the far end of Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier. On the summit of Screen Wind [Pingfeng] is Toad Rock [Chanchu Shi], which faces Jade Tortoise [Yugui].

I proceeded south from the barrier, where a footpath goes straight up into a mountain fold that flanks Unfurled Banner. But a stone threshold blocks the way at the end of the steps. From the threshold, I peeped down into an abyss. Above is a cavernous void. Beyond it are two circular openings. On the flank is a single, long space. Sunlight shot into the extended opening, creating a unique scene. This is the Celestial Perception Cavern [Tiancong Dong]. This ranks as the most extraordinary scenic sight among the peaks to the left of the barrier. Its pointy peaks rise one after the other, folding around to the left and right, fantastic and exquisite. This site is truly a wonder of the world! I passed through Celestial Pillar and Unfurled Banner along the lower reaches of the Little Dragon Splash Pool. A bridge spans above them; the monastery's main gate looks down from above. Beyond the bridge, Holding Pearl Cliff [Hanzhu Yan] is at the foot of Celestial Pillar; Summit Pearl Peak is above Unfurled Banner. Here, one also gets a different view of Numinous Cliff.

Thirteenth day [1 June]: I left from the main gate of the monastery, followed the mountain's base, then turned right. A sunglow flush and brilliant sunshine covered the spiky, spiny cliff walls along the trail. Plank

Barrier Cliff [Banzhang Yan] is a lofty and broad one. The one standing precipitously below it, pointy and narrow, is Little Shears Peak [Xiao Jiandao Feng]. Farther in front, on a layered crag, a single peak, tall and upright, pokes into the sky. This is Avalokiteśvara Cliff [Guanyin Yan]. On the flank of the cliff, Horse Saddle Ridge [Ma'an Ling] spans in front, twisting and turning like a bird-track trail.[12] Passing a hollow, I turned right, where the flow of a stream rushed and roared at the bottom of a ravine with rocks as flat as a whetstone. I followed the ravine deep into the mountains to where I was ten-some *li* from Numinous Cliff. After passing Constant Clouds Peak [Changyun Feng], I next came to Big Shears Peak [Da Jiandao Feng], standing next to the gorge. To the north of the peak, layered crags rise steeply. This is known as Linked Clouds Peak [Lianyun Feng]. From here on, the peaks circle around, then return and merge. As it turns out, this is where the peaks end.

The waterfall's roar at the Big Dragon Splash Pool is deafening as it falls and crashes into the pool below. The contour of the cliff is such that it is open and outspread, sheer and steep. There is nowhere for the water to go, so it bounds into the air, then whirls and heaves. This immediately made me dizzy and scared. There is a hall by the pool. Tradition says this is the spot where Nakula observed the waterfall.[13] Behind the entrance is a flight of steps going straight up, where there is a pavilion with wing-like eaves outspread like a bird. I crouched down to rest for a long time facing the waterfall, then went to the retreat for a meal.[14] A delicate, fine rain would not let up, but my spirit was already flying to the summit of Wild Goose Lake Mountain [Yanhu Shan]. So braving the shower, I reached Constant Clouds Peak, and halfway up the trail to the peak and beyond Pine Cavern [Songdong], I clambered up sheer stone steps for three *li* to White Cloud Retreat [Baiyun An]. No one was there, and the retreat was in ruins. A monk in the bushes saw that I had arrived but only glanced at me and left. I continued for another *li* and came to Cloudy Calm Retreat [Yunjing An], so I stayed there for the night. The monk Pure Reticence [Qingyin] has been bedridden for several decades but still could chat and laugh with me. I noticed it was cloudy, rainy, cool, and chilly in the mountains, so I could not help but worry about tomorrow morning's weather.

Fourteenth day [2 June]: The skies suddenly cleared and turned bright, so I urged a disciple of Pure Reticence to serve as a guide. Pure Reticence remarked that the lake bed on top of Mount Yandang is filled with

12 A "bird-track" trail (*niaodao*) is a dangerously narrow path, usually over rough, mountainous terrain. Xu Xiake uses this term often in his diaries.

13 Nakula (Chinese: Nuojuna) is the name of a famous arhat whom tradition says once resided on Mount Yandang.

14 The "retreat" mentioned here refers to the Numinous Peak Monastery.

vegetation and had already become an overgrown plot of weeds. The disciple had somewhere else to go, so he could only accompany me as far as the peak's summit. I thought that upon reaching the summit, I could find a place to sit by the lake. So we grabbed our walking sticks and clambered up through the deep vegetation. With each step, I gasped for a breath. I got through to the lofty summit only after proceeding for several *li*. White clouds in every direction formed an expanse of boundless haze, which had settled and unfolded below the peak. The peaks above collected into clusters, but only one summit was revealed, upon which sunlight shone like an icy pot in a gemmy realm where one cannot distinguish between land and sea.[15] But in the sea was a faint trace of Jade Bracelet [Yuhuan].[16] It almost seemed like I could bend down and pick it up. I looked down toward the north, where a cliff stood upright in a mountain hollow, in which rocky bamboo shoots were thick and profuse but irregular in appearance. Its scenery, encircled and enclosed on three sides by blue-green precipices, surpasses Numinous Cliff's. But its valley is secluded and thus cut off from the outside world. The only thing I heard was the sound of water gurgling and burbling, but I could not distinguish where it was coming from. Gazing all around, the peaks and tors, stacked and heaped, below crouched like little mounds. Only Constant Clouds Peak, rising majestically alone far off to the east, can rival them.

The guide told me he was now taking his leave. He pointed out that the lake was in a depression on a peak to the west, beyond three more pointed peaks. He provided directions, but the trail disappeared after the first pointed peak. After crossing the second pointed peak and climbing to the summit, I was already halfway into the heavens! I read the following in the *Gazetteer*: "The tarn is on the mountain's summit. The water for the Dragon Splash Pool comes from this tarn."[17]

> This next section of the diary entry for 2 June presents a vivid account of the lengths Xu Xiake would go—essentially risking his life—to reach a stunning, scenic landscape "where all traces of human presence have disappeared."

The mountain's contour gradually slopes down, but the upper reaches of the Dragon Splash Pool's water source originate on a lofty peak to the

15 In other words, the scene here distinctly glistened and was pure white, almost like the extraterrestrial realms inhabited by transcendent beings.

16 Jade Bracelet is an island in the East China Sea off the coast of modern Yueqing Xian, Zhejiang.

17 This line does not appear in the received editions of the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*. A tarn (*dang*) is a mountain lake or pond. The origin of Mount Yandang's name is usually explained in this way: there is a tarn on the summit of the mountain where wild geese (*yan*) stop to rest during their annual migration.

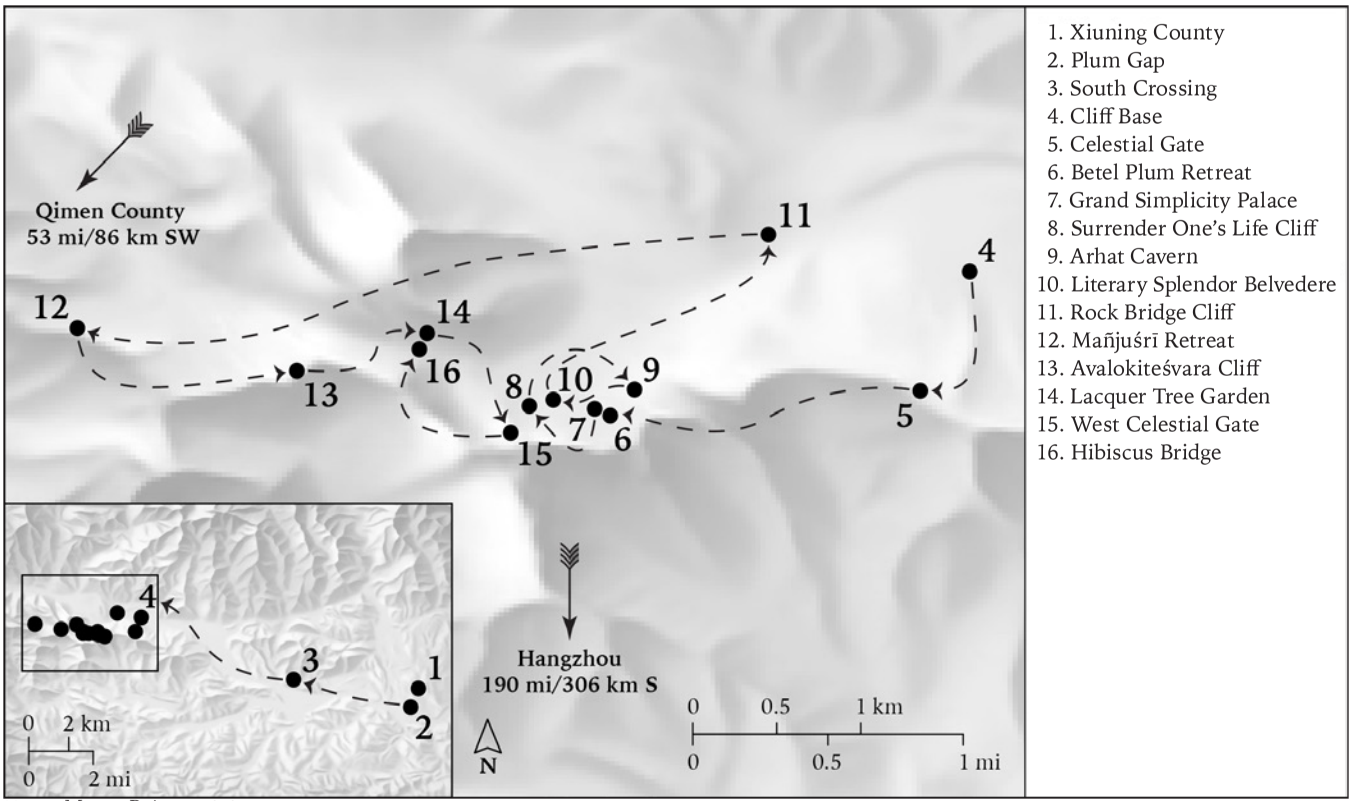
east, two valleys away. So I backtracked and then headed east. Gazing eastward, I headed for a high peak in that direction. Lotus Boat was exhausted, and so he did not accompany me. He descended following our former trail. With the two servants, I crossed two ridges to the east, where all traces of human presence have disappeared. A short time later, the ridges became narrower as the mountains rose. As the ridges on both sides stood high and pressed close together, it seemed like I was walking on the edge of a knife blade. Moreover, the rocky stretch ahead looked cruel and ruthless and seemed to rise in a rage. Each time I passed a ridge, a jagged peak would immediately appear. I clambered and pulled myself upward through a phalanx of "knives" and "swords." It was the same over the next three ridges, where looking around, there was no room for my feet. How could there be space for a lake up here? Later, when I got to the most distant point on the lofty summit, there was a boulder that looked like it had been cleaved in half. Earlier, I feared the sharp edges of the boulders could stab me. But when I reached the spot by the boulder, there were no sharp edges to put my feet on! I dilly-dallied on a cliff, not daring to retrace my former route. Looking down at the rocky wall on the south side of the cliff, there was a flight of steps. So I had the servants remove four of their leggings, which we tied together and dangled down from the cliff. One of the servants went down first, and I followed. We found a trail to clamber and pull our way along. But when we got down, there was only enough space for our feet, with no room to spare. I gazed down at how steep it was, hundreds of rods deep below the cliff. I wanted to devise a plan to return the way we came, but the cliff edge was more than three rods above us. Since we could not bound up there, we tried to go up by grasping a cloth tied to a protruding rock. But it suddenly ripped apart. I tried again and got it to hang down. We spent all our strength drawing and pulling ourselves up and managed to climb and ascend to the summit. We escaped danger and returned to Cloudy Calm Retreat as the sun sank slowly in the west. The clothing and shoes of both master and servants were torn to shreds. Such are the vicissitudes of my search for the lake! So I bade them farewell and descended the cliff, returning to the Dragon Splash Pool.[18] Then, after prolonged rain, the waterfall raged in anger as it gushed and poured down, fluctuating with tremendous force. As it spurted foam, it thundered and boomed at a volume double that of yesterday! I sat there until sunset, and it was dark before I left. Proceeded south for four *li* and spent the night in the Nengren Monastery [Nengren Si].

18 The referent of "bade farewell" presumably is the Buddhist monks at Cloudy Calm Retreat.

Fifteenth day [3 June]: I searched behind the monastery for square bamboo and found a few handfuls that were as thin as twigs.[19] Some new stems were in a nearby grove but were only one inch in diameter and too pliant to serve as a walking stick. I then crossed the mountain bend at Forty-Nine Turns [Sishijiu Pan], following the route south toward the sea. Crossed Kiln Flat Ridge [Yao'ao Ling] and headed toward Yueqing County.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

19 "Square bamboo" (*fangzhu*) is a unique variety of bamboo known for its square-shaped culms, or stems. Unlike typical bamboo, which has round stems, the culms of square bamboo have a distinctly angular, four-sided shape. They are often used to make walking sticks.



Map 4. Mount Baiyue, 1616

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Baiyue

[WINTER 1616, HUIZHOU PREFECTURE, XIUNING COUNTY]

During the Ming dynasty, Mount Wudang in modern northwestern Hubei was one of the holiest mountains in China. Xu Xiake visited there in 1623.[1] As the center of the Perfected Warrior (Zhenwu) sect of Daoism, it annually attracted millions of visitors. Its popularity inspired the creation of regional branches on other "Daoist" mountains. Among these heights, Mount Baiyue [Baiyue Shan], also known as Mount Qiyun [Qiyun Shan], is the most important. Mount Baiyue is in modern Xiuning Xian, Anhui, just 21 mi/34 km west of Mount Huang, where Xu Xiake will visit next. The name "Qiyun" (lit., "Matching the Clouds in Loftiness") is taken from the name of its central peak. Xu uses the names "Baiyue" and "Qiyun" interchangeably in his diary entries. During the Tang and Song dynasties, the religious orientation of the mountain was Buddhist. However, after the Southern Song, the influence of Buddhism declined, and the Daoist religious presence on the mountain became prominent, especially in the middle and late Ming, because of imperial patronage. Mount Baiyue later became one of China's Four Sacred Mountains of Daoism. Today, it remains a Daoist holy site.

Bingchen *year* [1616]: I reached Xiuning County in Huizhou Prefecture with my great uncle Xunyang on the twenty-sixth day of the first month [13 March 1616].[2] We then left through the county's west gate and followed the stream that approaches from Qimen County, which passes

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Source: "You Baiyue shan riji; Huizhou fu, Xiuning xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:15–19; *YJ*, 1:10–13). Huizhou Prefecture corresponds to modern She Xian in Anhui.

1 The account of Xu's visit to Mount Wudang is translated in "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Taihe," this volume. "Mount Wudang" is an alternate name for Mount Taihe.

2 The precise identity of Xu's great uncle Xunyang is a mystery. The kinship title *shuweng* 叔翁 usually indicates a paternal grandfather's younger brother (or great uncle). Still, it also seems possible that Xu Xiake is using the term as a polite form of address for a senior family friend or acquaintance. Xunyang might also refer to modern Jiujiang Shi, Jiangxi, perhaps indicating the "great uncle's" hometown (?). After leaving Mount Baiyue, "Great Uncle Xunyang" will accompany Xu on his next sightseeing trip to Mount Huang.



Figure 5. Leng Qian (1311–75), attrib., *Mount Baiyue* (Baiyue tu), 1343. Hanging scroll, ink on paper, 33.2 × 16.2 in. / 84.4 × 41.4 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2024. Open Government Data License, version 1.0, https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/DigitImageSets.aspx?sNo=04017358&lang=2.

This painting represents the earliest example of an attempt by a Chinese artist to combine a written travel account with a pictorial reproduction of what the artist saw on a journey.

through Mount Baiyue and then runs south, parallel to the county. After reaching Plum Gap [Meikou], it joins with a commandery stream and flows into the Zhe River.[3] Following the stream, we ascended twenty *li* and arrived at South Crossing [Nandu]. Crossed a bridge and continued for ten *li*, close to the mountain's foothills. Dusk had already settled when we reached Cliff Base [Yanxia]. Climbed five *li* up the mountain, then borrowed a lamp from a temple. Braving the snow and treading on

3 Following *YJJZ*, 1:17n5, and reading "Zhe" 浙 to refer to Zhexi Shui 浙溪水 or Zhe Stream River. "Commandery" in this line is used as an alternate name for Huizhou Prefecture.

ice, I proceeded two *li* and then passed Celestial Gate [Tianmen]. After about one more *li*, I went into Betel Plum Retreat [Langmei An]. The trail took me past the surpassing scenery at Celestial Gate and Beaded Curtain Stream, but there was no time to explore them. I only heard the clinking and clanking of icicles in the trees. After I went into the retreat, heavy sleet began to fall. Xunyang and the servants had fallen behind, so I slept in the mountain abode alone, without my companions. I heard water pouring down from the roof all night, so I could never fall asleep.

> In the next entry, Xu Xiake engages in a practice he will repeat in this and many subsequent diary entries: comparing landscapes at his current location with scenes visited previously at other sites. Here, he compares Mount Baiyue's Incense Burner Peak [Xianglu Feng] with the mountain summits he observed earlier at Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang.

Twenty-seventh day [14 March]: I got up and saw that the mountain was flooded with ice crystals and jade-white trees. A complete muddled blur! I was sitting in the loft just when Xunyang and the servants arrived.[4] We then climbed to Grand Simplicity Palace [Taisu Gong].[5] The palace faces north. As it turns out, its image of the Arcane Emperor [Xuandi] was constructed by a hundred birds that transported clay here in their beaks.[6] His complexion is glossy black. The statue was made in the Song dynasty, but the ceremonial hall here was rebuilt in the thirty-seventh year of the Jiajing reign [1558]. The inscription on the stele in the courtyard was commissioned on imperial order from Emperor Shizong (r. 1522–67).[7] On the left and right are ceremonial halls dedicated to Wang Lingguan and Supreme Commander Zhao [Zhao Yuanshuai].[8] Both halls are striking

4 "Loft" refers to Betel Plum Retreat, which provided housing for travelers like Xu Xiake.

5 Dating from the Southern Song dynasty, this is the main Daoist abbey on the mountain. Formerly known as the Qiyun Guan, or Matching the Clouds in Loftiness Abbey, an imperial decree bestowed this new title upon the abbey in 1540.

6 The statue mentioned here is a clay icon of Perfected Warrior, patron saint of the Zhenwu (Perfected Warrior) sect of Daoism, based at Mount Wudang. After Zhenwu's ascension to transcendence, "one hundred birds" supposedly carried clay in their beaks from Mount Wudang to Mount Baiyue/Qiyun to fashion the image mentioned here.

7 Shizong, referenced in the text by his ancestral temple name Shimiao, also known as the Jiajing emperor, was the twelfth monarch of the Ming dynasty and a generous patron of Mount Baiyue. A devoted follower of Daoism, it was Shizong who changed the mountain's name to Qiyun in 1558. The text composed by the emperor and inscribed on the stele mentioned here commemorates the name change.

8 Wang Lingguan and Supreme Commander Zhao are warrior-guardians of sacred Daoist space and their images commonly appear in Daoist temples.

and stunning. The back of the monastery rests against Jade Screen [Yuping]; in front, it overlooks Incense Burner Peak.[9] Incense Burner Peak rises abruptly for several scores of rods and resembles an inverted bell. Those who have never been sightseeing on Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang would probably find it extraordinary. I exited from the left of the temple and reached Surrender One's Life Cliff [Sheshen Ya].[10] From there, one next turns and then ascends Purple Jade Screen [Ziyu Ping]. Farther to the west is Purple Empyrean Cliff [Zixiao Yan]. Both are precipitous and towering, rising prominently. Farther to the west are Three Damsels Peak [Sangu Feng] and Five Elders Peak. Literary Splendor Belvedere [Wenchang Ge] nestles against them in front. The "Five Elders" stand shoulder to shoulder but are not sheer or steep. They somewhat resemble a rack for holding calligraphy brushes.

I backtracked to Betel Plum Retreat, following the trail I had come the night before. After descending the Steps to the Heavens [Tianti], I was surrounded by a rocky cliff on three sides. With a cliff covering me overhead and the trail recessed below, it seemed like I was walking down a covered corridor. Following the cliff, I proceeded on. A cascading stream plunges beyond the cliff—this is the Beaded Curtain Stream. The deep spot in the opening nearby is Arhat Cavern [Luohan Dong]. On the outside, it is open; on the inside, its ceiling is low. The depth of the cavern is about fifteen *li*. It leads southeast to South Crossing. The place where the cliff ends is Celestial Gate. The cliff's rock is hollow inside. People can go in and out. Lofty and proud, soaring and rearing upward, its entrance seemed just like Changhe.[11] Beyond the entrance are tall *nan* trees standing erect amid green vegetation and halcyon thickets.[12] Inside the entrance, where the rocky cliff above covers the entire area, and Beaded Curtain casts its spray—this is a most extraordinary sight. I backtracked and spent the night at the retreat. I made plans to visit the outstanding scenery at Fifth Well [Wujing] and Bridge Cliff [Qiaoya]. The Feathered Gentleman Wang Bohua agreed to accompany me early the following day.[13]

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9 "Monastery" here refers to the Grand Simplicity Palace. Zhu Huirong says this name should instead read Matching the Clouds in Loftiness Cliff [Qiyun Yan 齊雲巖]. *YJJZ*, 1:17n11.

10 The Buddhist term *sheshen* (lit., "surrender one's body") refers to suicide by throwing oneself off a cliff. Since *sheshen* is mentioned here as a place-name, it might mean the cliff was where a monk may have once leaped to his death.

11 Changhe is a portal, also called Celestial Gate [Tianmen], through which all communication between heaven and earth is made possible.

12 The *nan* or *nanmu* tree is a variety of evergreen unique to China, producing a highly durable softwood suitable for constructing buildings, furniture, boats, and coffins.

13 "Feathered gentleman" (*yushi*) is another name for a Daoist adept.

Xu and his servants wore wooden climbing clogs, probably modeled after those devised by Xie Lingyun.[14] The clogs had cleats and could be worn ascending or descending steep mountain slopes. They undoubtedly provided added traction when tramping through snow.

Twenty-eighth day [15 March]: In my dreams, I heard someone say "blizzard," so I urged my servant to get up and look. Snow filled the mountains and packed the valleys! So I insisted on staying in bed. At the *si* double-hour, marching with Bohua in my wooden climbing clogs, I proceeded two *li* and reached the Literary Splendor Belvedere, where I surveyed the earth and sky completely blanketed in white.[15] Although the weather prevented my sightseeing trip to Fifth Well, I benefitted even more from observing this extraordinary scene.

Twenty-ninth day [16 March]: The servant reported, "The clouds have cleared, and sunbeams are now drifting above the edge of the woods." I got up quickly and threw on some clothes. A vast stretch of blue sky is something I have not seen for the last half month! But the frigid cold was biting. I urged Bohua to join me for a meal. Heavy snow fell again when we finished eating, and it was a foot deep in no time. When I walked in front of the loft where we were staying, Incense Burner Peak stood right there! Another feathered gentleman, Cheng Zhenhua, came from behind the loft and chatted about the surpassing scenery at Nine Wells [Jiujing], Bridge Cliff, and Fu's Cliff [Fuyan].

Thirtieth day [17 March]: Heavy snow and thick fog. There was nearly a foot of snow. I could not see a thing. Bohua took some wine and accompanied me to Surrender One's Life Cliff, where we drank at Glancing at the Prime Belvedere [Diyuan Ge]. The belvedere is on the flank of the cliff, where icicles dangled and drooped down, the bigger ones a rod in length. The silhouettes of peaks and tors had vanished. It seemed as if Incense Burner Peak was nearby, but I could not see it either.

In the next entry, Xu Xiake describes sites west of Mount Baiyue. Rock Bridge Cliff [Shiliang Yan], named for the natural rock bridge there, is the best-known scenic attraction in this area.

First day of the second month [18 March]: A single wisp of clouds opened in the east, and it was already much brighter. Xunyang stayed behind at the retreat because his feet were frostbitten. With Bohua, I hastily treaded

14 On Xie Lingyun, see note 7, page 17.
15 That is, the period 9:00–11:00 a.m.

west to Celestial Gate, then descended. Proceeded ten *li* and passed by Double Streams Market [Shuangxi Jie], where the mountain landscape had already begun to open. But after five *li*, the landscape gradually closed again. The stream was now covered by a shiny, rocky glare, which doubled its attractive appeal. Proceeded three *li* and then, at the mouth of the stream, followed a small trail past a mountain. After two more *li*, I arrived at Rock Bridge Cliff. The height and extent of the cliffs on the flank of the bridge and beyond are similar to those on Mount Baiyue's Purple Empyrean Cliff. Ceremonial halls are built everywhere below, following the natural contours of the cliffs. All the rocks on the mountain are purple, but a single seam of limestone seems to wriggle and writhe like a dragon. Its head, over a foot long, drooped down and dripped water from its mouth. Known as Ambergris Spring [Longxian Quan], it is quite like Mount Yandang's Dragon Snout Stream.

There is a mountain to the right of Rock Bridge Cliff, the inside of which is hollow. This is the site of Rock Bridge. Its flying cascade droops down like a rainbow, while the open part of the mountain beneath the bridge is shaped like a half-moon. I sat down below it. In the distance, past the mountain, a height rose prominently, arching above Rock Bridge and surrounded by massed peaks standing side-by-side. The scene here is exactly like that at Mount Qiyun's Celestial Gate. Mount Tiantai's Rock Bridge is merely a single stretch of rock perched between two mountains, while here, the entire mountain is a lofty perch with half of it poised in midair. This makes it even more ethereal and magical! I made my way across the bridge and then continued. After about one *li*, I came to the inner section of the cliff. From above, a cascading waterfall tossed down a spray of water. The monk's retreat on the cliff looked superb.

I returned to the outer section of the cliff for a meal. Hired a guide and then, following the cliff, descended on the left side. The trail was unrelenting through brush and bush. We lost our way in the snow, where two mountains straddle a stream. Walking was difficult. The guide urged me to make for Fu's Cliff, saying there was no need to head toward Avalokiteśvara Peak [Guanyin Feng]. However, I feared that by doing so, I would be unable to enjoy the surpassing scenery of Chessboard Rock [Qipan Shi] and Dragon Well [Longjing], so I did not follow his suggestion. Proceeded two *li* and came to a stream deep in the mountain. Its dark blue water seemed bottomless. It is also known as Dragon Well. After another three *li*, the cliff grew sheer, and the stream ended. From a mountain depression, a cascading waterfall suddenly burst down from several rods above. The scenery inside the depression was also extraordinary.

I turned and climbed upward, proceeding along the mountain's crest for two *li*. Chessboard Rock stood erect on a mountain summit, shaped like an upright mushroom, measuring several arm spans in girth. I

climbed up to where the snowpack was as white as jade, then turned and gazed back at Fu's Cliff, which towered aloft on the cloudy horizon. It is not far from Fu's Cliff to Chessboard Rock, so I regretted not following the guide's suggestion. Next to Chessboard Rock is Mañjuśrī Retreat [Wenshu An], where bamboo and rocks glittered and glistened. I turned east, then headed south for two *li*, where I crossed two mountain ridges. Halfway up the mountain, I reached Avalokiteśvara Cliff. Its Chan cloister was clean and in good condition, but there was no extraordinary scenery.[16] It was especially regretful that Fu's Cliff appeared before me, but I missed the chance to go there. Following the same route, I crossed a ridge to the east, then descended into a deep chasm enclosed by rocks and mountain streams on four sides. Occasionally, I saw deep pools, some large and forming into deep whirlpools, some as small as a mortar, all of which are called Dragon Wells. I could not tell which was "Fifth" or "Ninth."[17] From there, in all, I covered three more *li*, where inside a rocky crag are veins of stone that are cloaked and concealed. The guide pointed out that one of them was a black dragon and another a white dragon. I just nodded and smiled. Also, I spied a single rock sunk and embedded into a sprawling cliff from which water gushed down. Beyond was a rock straddling it crosswise, like Mount Tiantai's Rock Bridge. Because it was getting late in the day, Bohua requested that we quickly follow the mountain stream and look for Big Dragon Well [Da Longjing]. We then unexpectedly came across a monk from Mount Huang, who said, "Continuing from here will take you to a big stream. If you continue your course, what else is there to see?" So I backtracked the way I had come.

Proceeded for over one *li*, then took a separate footpath toward Lacquer Tree Garden [Qishu Yuan].[18] As I proceeded through scarped rocks and turbulent streams, flecks of light shone into the deep woods, and the whole way was serene and beautiful. Proceeded three *li* and ascended to the apex of a peak. I thought its height was equivalent to Mount Qiyun, but I changed my mind when I saw Literary Splendor Belvedere towering even higher in the distance. Five Elders Peak rises directly across from it. To the east of Five Elders is Solitary and Aloft Stronghold [Dusong Zhai]. Following a depression, I came out at West Celestial Gate [Xi Tianmen]. To the west of Five Elders is Unfurled Banner Peak. The place where one crosses below is called Hibiscus Bridge [Furong Qiao]. I had come out from West Celestial Gate earlier, but now I was entering it through Hibiscus Bridge. Some sunlight still lingered as I gazed off to the side of Three Damsels Peak. So I climbed up the peak just when the

16 The Buddhist cloister mentioned here seems to have been inside the cave.
17 Individual dragon wells were probably numbered to differentiate the well water quality for brewing dragon well tea.
18 Lacquer Tree Garden is the name of a mountain peak.

setting sun's glow shone through the Five Elders. After I returned to the retreat, it was already too late for a meal. When I recalled my experiences today with the others, I realized that Big Dragon Well is located at the mouth of a big stream. My steps were already within reach of the well, but that monk from Mount Huang misled me. Such indeed is fate!

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Huang

[SPRING 1616, HUIZHOU PREFECTURE]

Mount Huang, known in English as Yellow Mountain or Yellow Emperor Mountain, is a scenic mountain range in southern Anhui, east-central China. The diary translated here chronicles Xu Xiake's first sightseeing trip to the mountain in late winter and early spring of 1616. A second trip was undertaken two years later because bad weather during the first visit had caused him to miss reaching some key scenic sights.[1] Mount Huang is well known for its spectacular mountain scenery, granite peaks, and unusual dwarf pine trees (*song*), which often emerge from clefts in mountain walls and the tops of pinnacled peaks. It is also famous for its thermal springs, described in detail by Xu Xiake, and its glorious sunrises and sunsets, ideally viewed from mountain heights above the clouds.

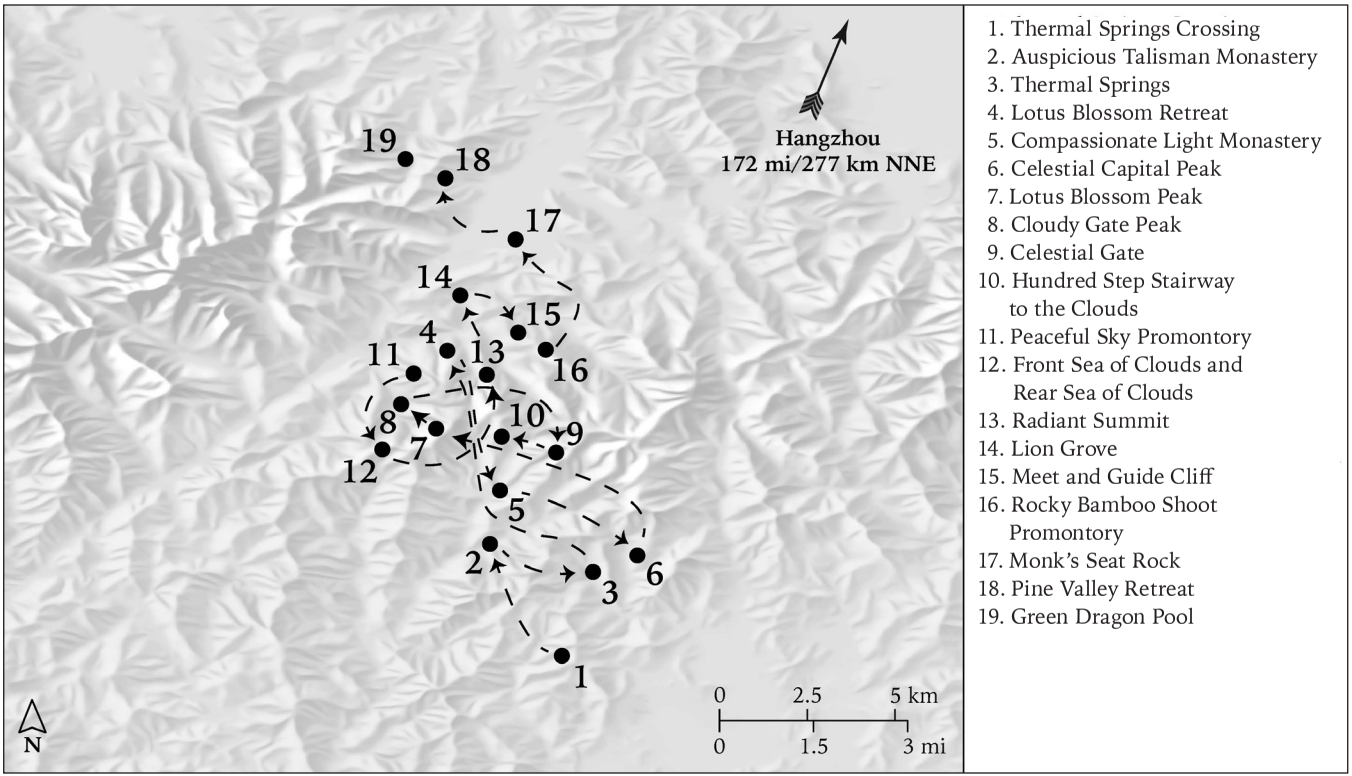
Second day [*of the second month*] [19 March 1616]: I descended Mount Baiyue. Proceeded ten *li* along the foothills and headed west to South Stream Bridge [Nanxi Qiao]. I crossed a big stream and followed another stream, holding close to the mountain as I headed north. Proceeded ten *li* to where two mountains stand sheer and adjacent like a gate, which curbs the stream's flow. Crossed the two mountains and descended into level farmland that was quite extensive. After another twenty *li* was Swine Hollow [Zhukeng]. I climbed up a small trail to Tiger Ridge [Huling]. The trail was steep. Proceeded ten *li* and reached a ridge; after five more *li* passed its foothills. To the north, I gazed at Mount Huang's peaks. The layers and levels of the peaks seemed like they could be peeled away. Three *li* farther on was Ancient Loft Depression [Gulou Ao], where the stream widened and swelled with water, and there was no bridge to get across. Pieces of wood filled the stream, so wading across it was difficult. Proceeded two *li* and spent the night at High Bridge [Gaoqiao].

During his many sightseeing trips, Xu Xiake often hired local people to serve as guides. In the next entry, he engages the guiding

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Source: "You Huangshan ri ji" (*YJJZ*, 1:20–28; *YJ*, 1:13–18.). Huizhou Prefecture corresponds to modern She Xian in Anhui.

1 The account of his 1618 visit to the mountain, "A Later Sightseeing Trip to Mount Huang," is translated in this volume.



Map 5. Mount Huang, 1616 (see also map 8)



Figure 6. Mount Huang scenery, 2009. Photo by Arne Hückelheim. CC BY-SA 3.0, via Wikimedia Commons, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:HuangShan.JPG.

services of a local woodcutter. Xu also stops for a bath at one of Mount Huang's thermal hot springs. The comment about "throngs of bathers" confirms that tourism flourished on Mount Huang in the late Ming.

Third day [20 March]: Following the woodcutter, I proceeded for some time, crossing two ridges, descending and ascending again, and then crossing another ridge. Both ridges are steep. They are called Double Ridges [Shuangling]. After proceeding a total distance of fifteen *li*, I passed River Village [Jiangcun]. After another twenty *li* reached Thermal Springs Crossing [Tangkou]—the outlet of the Fragrant Stream [Xiangxi] and Hot Springs [Wenquan]. The path twisted as I passed into the mountain's environs. Following the stream, I gradually made my ascent. The snow practically buried my feet. Proceeded five *li* and reached Auspicious Talisman Monastery [Xiangfu Si]. Thermal Springs [Tangquan] was across the stream, so I removed all my clothes and hastened to Thermal Bathing Pool [Tangchi]. The front of the bathing pool overlooks the stream; it nestles against the cliff wall behind it. On three sides is brickwork, while rocks ring above it like a bridge. The bathing pool is three feet deep. Sometimes bubbles congealed from the cold linger, while the spring water scent is pleasantly aromatic. Bubbles rushed and gushed upward from the bottom of the bathing pool—their smell was sweet and

refreshing. Huang Zhenfu (1558–1626) said that the hot springs on Mount Huang are not as good to visit as those on Mount Pan [Panshan] because of the convenient access roads at Thermal Springs Crossing and Scorched Village [Jiaocun], which invite disorderly throngs of bathers to Mount Huang.[2] When I finished my bath, I backtracked to the monastery. The monk Wipe Away the Seal (Huiyin) then led me on a climb to Lotus Blossom Retreat [Lianhua An]. Treading through the snow, we ascended, following a mountain stream. The direction of the stream turns three times and then pours into a deep expanse of water—this is called White Dragon Pool [Bailong Tan]. Farther up, where water seeps down among the rocks in a culvert—this is called the Cinnabar Well [Danjing]. There is a rock next to the well that rises prominently—this is called Medicine Mortar [Yaojiu]. It is also called Medicine Pot [Yaodiao]. We twisted and twined as we followed the stream. The crowded peaks ring around and cluster together, while trees and rocks are now hidden, now in view. It was like this for one *li*, where we next found a retreat. The monk Imprint Me (Yinwo) was away on some matter, so we could not climb up to his hall. But from a distance, I could see the incense burner and bell drum stand in the hall, which were made of naturally grown old wood roots. I backtracked to the monastery, where I spent the night.

Fourth day [21 March]: I sat idly in the monastery all day, listening to melting snow slide down.

Fifth day [22 March]: The cloudy weather was awful, so I insisted on staying in bed until noon. Wipe Away the Seal mentioned that the Compassionate Light Monastery [Ciguang Si] is nearby, so he had one of his disciples take me there. When we passed the bathing pool area, I saw a cliff with a bird-track trail between two waterfalls pouring down like streaming silk. As I began to clamber and ascend, the luster of the waterfalls and vapors of the clouds coiled and swirled around my robe. After I turned and headed to the right, there were thatched retreats above and below, along with tinkling sounds from a chime stone and smoke from burning incense.[3] We pushed through some rocks and came out at the Compassionate Light Monastery. The monastery's former name is

2 Huang Ruheng, courtesy name Zhenfu, was a native of Hangzhou and a well-known calligrapher and travel writer during the late Ming. The comment about "throngs" of visitors to the hot springs at Mount Huang is drawn from Huang's "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to Mount Huang" (You Huangshan ji), a copy of which Xu Xiake carried with him on his trip to Mount Huang. Mount Pan [Panshan] is about 40 mi/60 km outside modern Tianjin Shi. Xu Xiake visited that mountain in 1629. It is not extant if he wrote a diary account of his trip to Mount Pan.

3 "Tinkling sounds from a chime stone and smoke from burning incense" suggest the presence of a Buddhist monastery nearby.

Cinnabar Retreat [Zhusha An]. The monks there told me, "As for getting up to the meditation chambers (*jingshi*) on the summit of the mountain, the footpath there has been sealed off by snow for two months.[4] Someone was dispatched to deliver provisions up there this morning, but halfway up the mountain, they were in snow up to their waists, so they turned back." This considerably dampened my spirits. From the main trail, we then descended the mountain for two *li*. And so, we drew our bed covers and lay down to sleep.

> Celestial Capital Peak [Tiandu Feng] and Lotus Blossom Peak [Lianhua Feng] are the two primary sightseeing destinations for Xu Xiake and most other visitors to Mount Huang. However, traveling to these and other sites during the late winter and early spring was challenging because snow, fog, ice, and freezing temperatures made movement difficult and highly dangerous.

Sixth day [23 March]: The sky was quite bright. I hired a guide, and then, with bamboo walking sticks in hand, we ascended the mountain. Passed Compassionate Light Monastery, then ascended from the left. Rocky peaks, pressing close together, surrounded us. The stone stairs among the peaks, covered by the snowpack, seemed like a single expanse of white jade. Amid vegetation and trees, soft and pliant, I looked up to see a mass of tangled peaks. Celestial Capital stood upright, majestically alone. After a few *li*, the stairs became steeper and the snow deeper. In a shady spot, the frozen snow had turned to ice. The ice was so hard and slippery that we could not walk. I moved to the front and, grasping my walking stick, chipped a hole in the ice. Once the hole was made, I placed one foot forward into it, then made another hole to move my back foot forward. Following this method, those following behind me were able to cross.[5] We ascended to a flat ridge. Lotus Blossom and Cloudy Gate [Yunmen] Peaks could be seen vying in their wonder and contending with each other in their elegance. They serve as guardians of Celestial Capital. From here, we passed deeper into the mountain, where all the sheer, rocky projections and dangerous cliffs have peculiar pine trees that hang down, coiling into knots. The taller ones do not measure one entire rod in length; the shorter ones measure only a few inches in height. Their tops are flat; their needles are short. Their roots are twisted; their trunks are gnarly. The shorter they are, the older they are; the smaller they are, the

4 In Buddhism, meditation chambers (or quiet chambers) are specifically designed for meditation and contemplation. Typically, they are built in a tranquil and secluded area, and monks often reside in them.

5 "Those following behind me" probably refers to Xunyang and Xu Xiake's two servants.

more extraordinary they are. I never expected extraordinary creations like this to be found on this extraordinary mountain!

From among the glistening pines and rocks, slowly and steadily, a group of monks seemed to descend from the sky. They all clasped their hands respectfully and said:

> We have been isolated on the mountain for three months. In our search today for food provisions, we have come this far with great difficulty. How is it that the gentleman and his party have been able to come up this far?

They also remarked:

> Those from retreats in the Front Sea of Clouds [Qianhai] have descended the mountain. The mountain trail to the Rear Sea of Clouds [Houhai] still has not been opened.[6] The trail to Lotus Blossom Cavern [Lianhua Dong] is the only way to proceed.

A short time later, we clambered and ascended from the flank of Celestial Capital Peak, then descended through a rift between the peaks. Turning to the east is the trail to Lotus Blossom Cavern. I was anxious to see the surpassing scenery at Radiant Summit [Guangming Ding] and Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory [Shisun Gang], so heading north from Lotus Blossom Peak, we ascended and descended several times. We then arrived at Celestial Gate, where two vertical cliffs press close together.[7] The opening through was only wide enough for one person. It was several scores of rods in height. Looking upward as we crossed through, the ghastly gloom frightened us to the bone. Passing into the mountains, the snowpack was even deeper, so we ascended, chipping holes in the ice. After continuing onward, we came to a flat area, the so-called Front Sea of Clouds. From here, we ascended to a peak and reached Peaceful Sky Promontory [Pingtian Gang]. Radiant Summit is the portion of the promontory that suddenly and surprisingly towers up alone. Where one descends from the promontory is the so-called Rear Sea of Clouds. Presumably, then, the south side of Peaceful Sky Promontory is the Front Sea of Clouds; the north side is the Rear Sea of Clouds. As it turns out, Peaceful Sky Promontory is exceptionally high, with steep escarpments on all four sides. This is the only flat place. In front of the Front Sea of Clouds, Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom Peaks are the most pinnacled. The

6 "Front Sea of Clouds" refers to the area south of Celestial Capital Peak and Lotus Blossom Peak. "Rear Sea of Clouds" designates the general area north of Lion Peak (Shizi Feng).

7 "Celestial Gate" here probably refers to a rock formation on Mount Huang, also called "Golden Fowl Crowing at the Celestial Gate" [Jinji Jiao Tianmen].

area south of them falls under She Subprefecture in Hui Prefecture, while the north falls under the Taiping Subprefecture in Ning Prefecture.[8]

After reaching Peaceful Sky Promontory, I gazed eagerly at Radiant Summit and made my ascent. But after covering thirty *li* along the trail, I was starving, so I went into a retreat behind the promontory. All the monks in the retreat were squatting on rocks facing south to warm themselves. The head monk is called Wise Vacuity (Zhikong). Seeing that his visitors looked starved, the head monk provided us with some porridge. He added, "The new day is so clear and bright, but I fear it will not stay that way." The monk Guide to Causation (Yinzhi) told me, "If the gentleman has some strength left, he can climb to Radiant Summit and then have lunch. Then, today, you will still be able to reach Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory and spend the night in our abbot's quarters there." Following his suggestion, when I got to the summit, Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom stood side-by-side in front of me; Halcyon Haze [Cuiwei] and Three Seas Gate [Sanhai Men] circled me from behind. Looking down, where sheer cliff walls and jagged clefts are arrayed and arranged inside a col, one sees Prime Minister Flat [Chengxiang Yuan]. A single rock in front of the summit slowly retreats and rises again. From its shape, the rock seems like it is cracked in half. Alone, it projects outward from inside a col. Above the rock are some odd-looking pines, twisting and hanging down. Turning sideways, I clambered up and perched myself above the pines while Xunyang perched himself on the main summit, directly facing me. Each of us praised the outstanding and matchless scenery.

The yellow millet was already cooked when we descended and entered the retreat. After our meal, we headed north and passed a ridge. We shilly-shallyed about in some thick bush, then went into a retreat called Lion Grove [Shizi Lin], the place where Wise Vacuity suggested we spend the night. The head monk, Sunglow Light (Xiaguang), was already waiting for us in front of the retreat. Pointing to the two peaks north of the retreat, he said, "The gentleman can first fully enjoy this surpassing scenery." We followed his advice. When we looked down into the darkness, jumbled peaks, and arrayed heights rose and competed in their wonder. As we proceeded westward, we suddenly came to a cliff that was split in two, leaving a gap. Wooden planks have been installed, connecting the two sides of the cliff. Above is a single pine tree one can hold onto while crossing. This is the so-called Meet and Guide Cliff [Jieyin Ya]. We crossed the cliff and ascended through cracks in the rocks. Dangerously perched among jumbled rocks, planks have been joined to make a stall where one can rest weary feet, but this is not as good as

8 "Ning" refers to Ningguo Prefecture (modern Xuancheng Shi, Anhui). Taiping Subprefecture was north of what is now Huangshan Shi.

squatting on a rock and glancing down, where the scenery is even bolder and more surpassing.[9]

We descended the cliff, headed east for about one *li*, and came to Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory. The promontory's ridge is slanted and extends outward. Squeezed together on both sides, it seemingly hangs poised inside a col amid a jumble of peaks and an assortment of forests. To the west, you can see Meet and Guide Cliff. On the flank of the promontory, a single peak rises abruptly, with many extraordinary rocks and odd-looking pines. We climbed to the peak and looked down into a gorge. It provided a direct, opposite view of Meet and Guide Cliff, but our earlier view changed immediately after we circled some peaks and turned around some crests.

As we descended from the peak, the glow of the setting sun embraced the trees. This can be regarded as a portent of clear weather for tomorrow. We jumped with joy and then returned to the retreat. Tea was served to us in the sunglow light, and then we were led up the loft's stairs in front. To the west, we gazed toward traces of a single strand of deep blue sky. I suspect this was a shadowy outline of the mountains. A monk said, "The shadowy outline of mountains seems close when you gaze at it at night. This must be cloudy vapors." I fell silent, for I knew this was an omen of rain.

> The pine tree described in the next entry is one of Mount Huang's most famous knotty pines.

Seventh day [24 March]: Fog gathered in the mountains around us. A short time later, the skies northeast of the retreat had already opened, but in the southwest, the fog was extremely thick. If you take the retreat as a boundary line between the two directions, then Lion Peak could sometimes be visible while it was shrouded in fog at other times. After breakfast, I tramped through the snow and descended from Meet and Guide Cliff. Halfway through the col is a single peak that abruptly stands upright. On top, a pine tree emerges from a crack in the rock. Its trunk is immense but does not reach two feet in height. Slanted and drawing away, crooked and knotted, the tree's coiling emerald boughs were over three rods long. Its roots pushed through, up and down the rocks, reaching almost as high as the peak. This is the so-called Writhing Dragon Pine [Naolong Song].

While pausing momentarily to appreciate the scene, I gazed at Lion Peak, which had already emerged from the fog. With a walking stick in hand, I then headed west. The next peak, located southwest of the retreat, is Table Mountain [Anshan]. I proceeded two *li* and trod across its apex,

9 Following *YJ*, 1:15, and reading: 搆木為室 ("planks have been joined to make a stall").

where three sides are upthrust, standing inside a col. Below are forested peaks and arrayed heights. From the two cols hosting Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory and Meet and Guide Cliff, I twisted and twined my way here, where everything circles and joins, once again forming a surpassing scene. The heavy fog gradually lifted while I climbed and looked into the distance. So I quickly turned north and descended from Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory, taking the same gloomy footpath I gazed at yesterday from the top of the peak. As for the massed peaks, some are higher, some are lower, some are huge, some are slender, some stand straight up, and some are nestled against other peaks. I wound my way through them, moving forward. As I glanced downward and looked behind, each step produced a new, scenic wonder. But the gorge was deep and the snow heavy, so with each step, I was terrified.

Proceeded five *li* and found an opening emitting light in a depression on the peak to the left. This is called Sky Window [Tianchuang]. Farther ahead, beside a peak, a rock suddenly stands upright, deliberately facing the cliff wall. This, then, is Monk's Seat Rock [Sengzuo Shi]. I descended five *li* to where the footpath was somewhat flat—then proceeded on, following a ravine. Suddenly, along the ravine up ahead was a jumble of rocks across and athwart, blocking the trail. It took a long time to get across the rocks, where a gap revealed a recent landslide and where stretches and swathes of rock seemed like they were about to tumble down. Only then did I find the trail. Looking up at the peak's summit, there was a patch of yellow inside, which had green Chinese characters that were discernible. This is called Heaven's Signboard [Tianpai]. It is also called Transcendent's Placard [Xianren Bang]. Farther ahead is Carp Rock [Liyu Shi]. And still farther on is White Dragon Pond [Bailong Chi].

Next, I proceeded for altogether fifteen *li* to where a thatched structure appeared on the bank of a mountain stream—the former site of Pine Valley Retreat [Songgu An]. After five more *li*, following an east-west running stream, I continued. Next passed Five Streams [Wushui]. This is where Pine Valley Retreat is now located. Again, I descended, following the stream. Beside the stream, my arrival was greeted by a fragrant aroma. A single plum tree, standing straight up, was now sending forth its sweet scent. With the cold mountain and snow lingering, such a fragrance could only be found here. I arrived at Green Dragon Pool [Qinglong Tan], the depths of which are deep blue. Two merging streams feed it. Compared to White Dragon Pool, its landscape is more magnificently majestic; its huge boulders are rough and rugged, while the two streams gush madly. Massed peaks, far away and nearby, circle and ring around. This is also a delightful scene.

I returned for a meal at Pine Valley Retreat, then headed off to the retreat where I had previously spent the night. I suspected I was not on level terrain when we reached Pine Valley. Upon making further inquiries,

however, I discovered I still needed to descend two more ridges. We proceeded another twenty *li* before I found level terrain. I still had to cover another thirty-five *li* to reach Taiping Subprefecture, or so I was told.

Eighth day [25 March]: I had planned to search for the mysterious environs at Rocky Bamboo Shoot Depression [Shisun Ao], but in the end, I was denied by Heaven: thick fog had created a complete, muddled blur. When I reached Lion Grove, the wind became more robust and the fog thicker. I wanted to hasten toward Refining Cinnabar Terrace [Liandan Tai], so I turned southwest, proceeded three *li*, and then lost my way in the fog. By chance, I found a retreat and went in. Heavy rain followed, and so I spent the night there.

Ninth day [26 March]: It cleared up a little in the early afternoon. The monk Compassionate Illumination (Ciming) from the retreat boasted about the area to the southwest as having peaks and crests comparable to those at Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory, with heights bearing names such as Baldy Monk Heavenward [Tulu Chaotian] and Dharma Facing the Cliff Wall [Damo Mianbi]. As I held Xunyang's hand, we treaded through a turbulent stream and reached the canyon's interior. To the north were the rocky peaks of Halcyon Haze; to the south, the cols of Refining Cinnabar Terrace. These can compete with and surpass the scenery at Lion Peak but cannot rival Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory. The rain suddenly fell just after we reached here, so we hastily backtracked to the retreat.

Tenth day [27 March]: The rain seemed to pour down at dawn, but by noon, it had let up. With my bamboo walking stick, I proceeded two *li* and passed the Peak That Flew Hither [Feilai Feng], a ridge northwest of Peaceful Sky Promontory. The peaks and cliffs in a col to its south were thick-set and jagged, forming a perfect circle around Refining Cinnabar Terrace. Proceeded two *li* and reached the terrace. A single peak seems to droop down over its western side. The summit is quite flat and level. Its cliffs of lush green merge and crowd together on three sides. Up ahead, a small peak rises from inside a col. Halcyon Haze and Three Seas Gate stand side by side outside the col, like feet and legs. I climbed up and gazed at them for a long time. Proceeded southeast for one *li*, winding around and coming out below Peaceful Sky Promontory. The rain started to pour down again, so I hastily descended to Celestial Gate. The passageway between the two cliffs is narrow, and only one person at a time can fit through. Cascading waterfalls from the cliff's brow splashed down on my head. I left Celestial Gate and came to where precipitous cliffs hang down in layers, and trails skirt halfway up the cliff's edge. Compared to the area around the Rear Sea of Clouds, the thick-set peaks and sheer cliffs transform into a completely different scene. Sea Conch

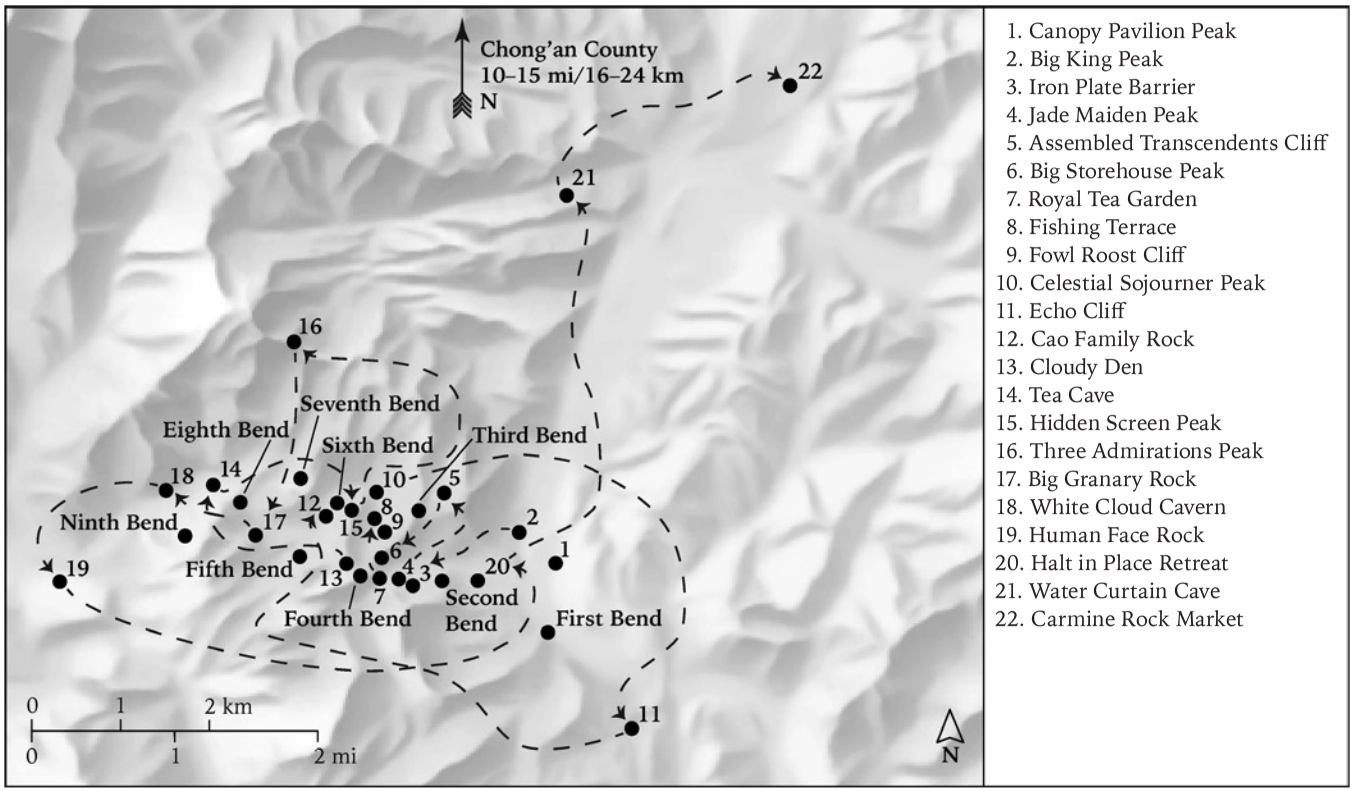
Rock [Hailuo Shi] is next to the cliff. Twisting and twining, it closely resembles its namesake. I did not notice it in my haste when I came by here earlier. But now, proceeding in the rain, I am familiar with its unusual nature. Only after I made inquiries did I come to know more about it. Although I was hurrying toward the Great Compassion Retreat [Dabei An] because of the rain, I rushed toward the retreat next to it, where I spent the night at the monk Aware of Vacuity's (Wukong) place.

Eleventh Day [28 March]: I ascended the Hundred Step Stairway to the Clouds [Baibu Yunti]. The stairway's stone steps seem to poke up into the sky. As I climbed, my toes reached my cheeks. The stone steps, sloping to one side, have cracks and crevices, are rickety and wobbly, and seem like they are about to shift any moment. When I descended, the snow covered the dangers posed by the steps. Reaching here now, I was frightened to the bone. When you ascend Stairway to the Clouds, you climb the trail up to Lotus Blossom Peak. Next, I descended and turned, then proceeded onward from the flank of the peak. This is the Mañjuśrī Cloister [Wenshu Yuan] and the Lotus Blossom Cavern trail. The rain had not yet stopped, so I descended the mountain and went into the hot springs compound, where I bathed again. After coming out of Thermal Springs Crossing, proceeded twenty *li* and reached Fragrant Village [Fangcun]. After another fifteen *li* reached the East Pool [Dongtan]. The stream was swollen, and I could not cross, so I stopped there.

The streams of Mount Huang, such as those at Pine Valley Retreat and Scorched Village, flow north from Taiping Subprefecture. Those with a southerly flow, such as the one at Thermal Springs Crossing, also turn north at Taiping Subprefecture before flowing into the River.[10] Only one stream west of Thermal Springs Crossing becomes mighty after reaching Fragrant Village. It rushes south toward Cliff Garrison [Yanzhen] and, upon reaching the northwestern area of the prefecture, merges with Meritorious Stream [Jixi].

> Ascent to the summits of Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom would have to wait until Xu could return to Mount Huang, preferably at a time of year when the weather was more favorable.
>
> —Translated by James M. Hargett

10 "River" here refers to the Changjiang.



1. Canopy Pavilion Peak
2. Big King Peak
3. Iron Plate Barrier
4. Jade Maiden Peak
5. Assembled Transcendents Cliff
6. Big Storehouse Peak
7. Royal Tea Garden
8. Fishing Terrace
9. Fowl Roost Cliff
10. Celestial Sojourner Peak
11. Echo Cliff
12. Cao Family Rock
13. Cloudy Den
14. Tea Cave
15. Hidden Screen Peak
16. Three Admirations Peak
17. Big Granary Rock
18. White Cloud Cavern
19. Human Face Rock
20. Halt in Place Retreat
21. Water Curtain Cave
22. Carmine Rock Market

Map 6. Mount Wuyi, 1616

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Wuyi

[SPRING 1616, JIANNING PREFECTURE, CHONG'AN COUNTY, FUJIAN]

Mount Wuyi is in northwestern Fujian along the border with Jiangxi. Separated from the main section of the mountain by about 20 mi/32 km is a spur roughly 6 mi/10 km in length called Nine Bends [Jiuqu]. This toponym derives from a stream of the same name that serpentines through a series of bends, connecting the mountain and spur. This is Wuyi's most famous scenic attraction. Sightseers like Xu Xiake typically take a tour boat through the Nine Bends, each with its unique set of scenic sites. From time to time, tourist boats would also stop to moor, allowing visitors to explore and investigate those places not visible from the stream.

Since at least the eleventh century, Wuyi has also been well known for its outstanding tea. Wuyi tea was so highly prized that loads were sent annually to the capital as tribute to the emperor. It should also be mentioned that since the Song dynasty, there has been a strong community presence of cults, beliefs, and legends on Wuyi associated with religious Daoism. Finally, one other aspect of Wuyi that has attracted attention in both traditional and modern times is the so-called boat coffins or Perched over the Gorge Boats (Jiahe zhou), which are inserted into natural cavities in many of Wuyi's cliff walls. Xu Xiake describes the coffins in his diary entries below.

Twenty-first day of the second month [7 April 1616]: I departed from the south gate in Chong'an County and hired a boat. One stream, approaching from Watershed Pass [Fenshui Guan] in the northwest, and another stream from Warm Ridge Pass [Wenling Guan] in the northeast, merge south of the county, then pass through the commandery and provincial capital before flowing into the sea.[1] Proceeded thirty *li* downstream, where I saw a peak spanning crosswise and sloping downward and another peak standing alone and towering aloft. I shouted out in amazement as I fixed my eyes on them. The one spanning crosswise is Canopy

Source: "You Wuyi Shan riji; "Fujian, Jianning fu, Ch'ong'an xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:29–36; *YJ*, 1:18–14).

1 "Commandery" (*jun*) refers to Jianning Prefecture, while *sheng* (province) denotes the provincial capital (modern Fuzhou Shi, Fujian).

Pavilion Peak [Manting Feng]; the one towering aloft is Big King Peak [Dawang Feng]. The stream south of the peak that heads east and flows into a big stream is Wuyi Stream [Wuyi Xi]. A peak next to Exalted Safekeeping Palace [Chongyou Gong] overlooks the stream. I was eager first to reach Ninth Bend and head downstream to explore and see the sights. So I abandoned plans to climb up to the palace and instead advanced upstream. The current was swift, so the boatman pulled the boat through the water barefoot. To the right of First Bend are Canopy Pavilion Peak [Manting Feng] and Big King Peak; to the left are Lion Peak and Avalokiteśvara Cliff. The site on the right edge of the stream is called Shimmering Water Rock [Shuiguang Shi]. Its surface is covered almost entirely with inscriptions. Iron Plank Barrier [Tieban Zhang] and Quill and Ink Cliff [Hanmo Yan] are to the right of the Second Bend. Helmut Peak [Doumou Feng] and Jade Maiden Peak are to the left. The cliff wall next to Iron Plank Barrier stands steeply erect. The three holes in the wall seem to form the Chinese character *pin* 品. To the right of Third Bend is Assembled Transcendents Cliff [Huixian Yan]; on the left are Little Storehouse Peak [Xiao Zangfeng] and Big Storehouse Peak [Da Zangfeng].

> According to legend, mountain gods used boat coffins to transport the souls of the dead to paradise. Made from hollowed-out trunks of *nan* trees, the boat coffins on Mount Wuyi date back to the Tang and Song dynasties. They were used as burial chambers for important individuals and members of their families. Placing the coffins into tall cliff walls helped protect them from looters and grave robbers.

Big Storehouse's rock wall stands one thousand fathoms high. Along the edge of its cliff are several cavities into which wood timbers, like those on a loom shuttle, are randomly inserted. A small boat is wedged into the opening, supported by the ends of timbers that extend out of the holes. These are known as "Perched over the Gorge Boats." To the right of Fourth Bend is Fishing Terrace [Diaoyu Tai] and Rare Truth Cliff [Xizhen Yan]; to the left are Fowl Roost Cliff [Jiqi Yan] and Feasting the Transcendents Cliff [Yanxian Yan]. Halfway up to Feasting the Transcendents Cliff is a cave. On the outside, it is narrow, but inside, it is spacious. Wood boards are inserted sideways for support, like perches in a henhouse. The deep and dark blue pool below the cave is the Recumbent Dragon Pool [Wolong Tan]. To the right are the peaks of Great Hidden Screen [Da Yinping] and Joined Bamboo Shoots Peak [Jiesun Feng]; on the left are the peaks of Changing Clothes Terrace [Gengyi Tai] and Celestial Pillar, the scenic sights at the Fifth Turn. The Master of Literary Accomplishment Academy [Wengong Shuyuan] is below Great

Hidden Screen.[2] Upon reaching Sixth Turn, on the right are Transcendent's Palm Cliff [Xianzhang Yan] and Celestial Sojourner Peak [Tianyou Feng]; on the left are Faced in Evening Peak [Wandui Feng] and Echo Cliff. I turned around and gazed back between Hidden Screen and Celestial Sojourner, where dangerous stairways and flying belvederes seemed to dangle from above. I could not help but feel enchanted by these sights! But our boat could not advance because of the swift current, so we returned to moor at Cao Family Rock [Caojia Shi].

Back on land, I went into Cloudy Den [Yunwo], everywhere passing lines of clouds and threading through rocks, then twisting and twining along sprawling cliffs until I found the trail. Behind Cloudy Den is Joined Bamboo Shoots Peak, parallel to Great Hidden Screen. Two lines span the peak's midpoint; hence, they are called Joined Bamboo Shoots.[3] I followed a rocky defile on its flank, then mounted several flights of stone steps. The mountains all around were enveloped in blue-green. Where there is lingering open space in the mountains that is flat like the palm of a hand—that is Tea Cave [Chadong]. One enters the cave from the west. South of the entrance is Joined Bamboo Shoots Peak; north of the entrance is Transcendent's Palm Cliff. East of Transcendent's Palm is Celestial Sojourner. South of Celestial Sojourner is Great Hidden Screen. The tops of the peaks are all steep and sheer, but below, they join together. There are no stone steps beyond them. The only trail is through a gap to the west, so the scene here is even more extraordinary and formidable than Bright Cave on Mount Tiantai! I continued to clamber and climb up to Hidden Screen. When I reached the highest point on its cliff wall, a large wood plank hung down to serve as a ladder. Clinging to the wall, it went straight up into the clouds. The ladder has three sections with eighty-one rungs in all. Where the rungs end, an iron cable spans across and connects to the cliff's midpoint. Below the cable, foot holes are chiseled into the rock. After pulling myself up the cable, I turned on top of the peak and headed west. Pressed between the walls is a ridge that serves as the boundary between them. The ridge looks like a dangling tail. I climbed using the chiseled steps. This is the summit of Hidden Screen Peak [Yinping Feng]. It has a pavilion and bamboo growing on it, with cliffs overhanging on all four sides. Looking down from the void, the true transcendents up here seemed so far removed from the mundane world below! Following the same route, I descended the ladder and

2 This academy is named after the Neo-Confucian scholar Zhu Xi (1130–1200). The Song imperial court posthumously conferred on Zhu the title "Wengong," or "Master of Literary Accomplishment."

3 In other words, the two lines or marks that span the peak's midpoint make it look like two joined "rocky bamboo shoots," or stalagmites.

reached Tea Cave. Looking back at the places I had just climbed, they stood prominently in the Milky Way.

The cliff north of the defile is Transcendent's Palm Cliff. Its cliff wall stands loftily and majestically on display. There are marks on the wall that look like the palm of a human hand. Marks an entire rod in length are aligned in several dozens of rows, which follow the cliff to the north and ascend to its apex. As the setting sun invaded the pines, the glowing light of the mountains and the twisting course of the stream's flow complemented the scenic display. I then turned south and proceeded into a narrow valley. At the end of the valley, I was unexpectedly able to pass through and come out on top of a peak, where walls stood upright on three sides. A pavilion sits on top. This is Celestial Sojourner Peak. This peak is near Ninth Turn but does not overlook the stream. Instead, the stream rings around it on three sides. When you gaze east, there is Big King Peak. The stream from the First Turn to the Third Turn rings around it. When you gaze south, there is Changing Clothes Terrace. Nearby to the south are the peaks of Great Hidden Screen. The stream from Fourth Turn to Sixth Turn rings around it. There is Three Teachings Peak [Sanjiao Feng] when you gaze west.[4] Nearby to the west are the peaks of Celestial Pot Peak [Tianhu Feng]. The stream from Seventh Turn to Ninth Turn rings around it. Only the north side lacks a stream. When the tiered and terraced mountains approaching from Water Curtain Cave [Shuilian Dong] reach here, they seem poised in midair. The one that looks down in front, providing a bird's eye view—this is Tea Cave. Looking at the distance from Tea Cave, one only sees sheer walls reaching up into the empyrean. From its flank, a spring pours down in torrents. At first, I did not realize that above us, there were other peaks where one could stop to rest. This peak must rank first among the scenic spots that do not overlook the stream but can provide a complete view of the Nine Streams.[5] Standing on a terrace, I gazed at the half disk of the setting sun. Peaks and tors, distant and nearby, were green and purple in countless shapes. Behind the terrace is Celestial Sojourner Abbey [Tianyou Guan]. I quickly took my leave from the terrace. By the time I reached the boat, dusk had already fallen.

Twenty-second day [8 April]: I went ashore, departed from Transcendent's Palm, and headed west. The trail I followed turned out to follow the right shore of the stream. On the opposite side is the left shore. To the right of Seventh Bend are Three Admirations Peak [Sanyang Feng] and Celestial Pot Peak. To the left is Citadel on High Cliff [Chenggao Yan]. Below Three Admirations is Little Peach Source [Xiao Taoyuan], where

4 The "Three Teachings" (Sanjiao) in this peak's name refer to Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism.

5 That is to say, the Nine Bends.

a rock gate has formed beyond a collapsed cliff and heap of rubble. I hunched down and went through the gate, then came to a tract of land circled and surrounded by mountains on all four sides. Inside is a flat plot of land with a winding mountain stream, surrounded by verdant pines and lush green bamboo, with chickens clucking and people talking, all within a swath of hazy blue. I left through a gate and headed west, which leads to North Corridor Cliff [Beilang Yan]. The cliff's summit is Celestial Pot Peak. Alone, it soars abruptly from Citadel on High Cliff on the opposite bank. It is sheer and steep on all four sides, like a city wall. There is a retreat on the cliff's summit. It, too, can be climbed by a ladder that hangs down, but I failed to get there because it was on the other side of the stream. To the right of Eighth Bend are Drum Tower Cliff [Gulou Yan] and Drum Cliff [Guzi Yan]. Big Granary Rock [Da Linshi] and Sea Squirt Rock [Haizha Shi] are to the left. I passed west of Drum Tower Cliff, broke off the trail, and proceeded north into a col. Clambering and pulling myself along, I ascended to the summit of a peak, where two boulders stood upright like drums. This is Drum Tower Cliff. The cliff is lofty and extended, like a city wall. Below the cliff is a deep depression, the entire area of which looks like a corridor. Inside is a framed structure with horizontal railings.[6] This is Drum Retreat [Guzi An]. I looked up at the top of the cliff, where wood boards were randomly stuck horizontally into holes in the rock face.[7] I turned behind the cliff, where inside its wall was a cave, deep and spacious. It is called Master Wu's Cave [Wugong Dong]. The stairway below the cave was in ruins, so I could not climb it. I gazed at Three Teachings Peak and then hurried along the stone steps by the side of the mountain. Thick-set trees mass and muster on top of the peak. I reached the peak, where a pavilion was perched on one side. From there, one can look east toward the peaks of Drum Tower and Drum Retreat. Three peaks stand on top of Three Teachings. Their rocky bones protrude as they stand together, side by side.[8] I ascended by treading up some stone steps through a crack in the rock. On a cliff to the side, I came to a pavilion, then pushed by the pavilion and passed through a rock gate formed by two cliff walls squeezed together and towering aloft. The walls stand upright and reach the sky. The passageway through was a single thread in width, measuring just over one foot. As you proceed through, you feel spine-tingling terror. Presumably, the three peaks cluster together and stand upright; the passageway here is a crack between two peaks. There are still two other cracks on their flank, but they are not as orderly and honed as this passageway.

6 The term "framed structure(s)" (*jiawu*) refers to buildings constructed over solid rock.

7 These wooden boards provided support for the boat coffins.

8 Xu Xiake often uses the expression "rocky bones" (*shigu*) to refer to vertically aligned and tapered rock columns resembling stalagmites.

After descending, I turned and went to the back of the mountain. The single peak facing Kitten Rock [Mao'er Shi] and towering aloft, turning and extending, is also like Drum Peak [Gufeng]—this is White Cloud Cavern [Baiyun Dong] on Numinous Peak. I reached the top of the peak, then ascended a flight of stairs through a rocky crevice. Its two walls pressed close together and stood erect like Celestial Gate on Mount Huang. After the steps ended, I twisted and twined my way down to the bottom of the cliff. Because the cliff has framed structures, it is also like Drum Peak. I climbed up to the second floor of a loft and gazed to the south, where I saw an islet along the upper reaches of the Nine Bends. The stream approaches from the west, divides, and rings around the islet, then merges again when it reaches the bend. Beyond the islet, two mountains gradually come into view. The Nine Bends end at this cliff. Layered cliffs in pleats and folds are found here, and the surrounding terrain is serene and pleasing to the eye. At the northern end of the cliffs is yet another cliff that is especially remarkable: from top to bottom, it is a complete, sheer wall. An opening in the middle of the wall runs across, with a gap only as wide as a thread, and so one must lay one's body prostrate and slither through like a snake. I moved forward by winding my way through an opening in the wall. Only then was I able to get through. I immediately proceeded through the opening, but a short time later, it gradually became lower, and gradually became more precipitous. Hunching over as I moved forward, the passageway became lower and narrower, so I crawled on my knees and slithered like a snake. When I reached a place in the opening where I had to make a turn, the gap between the top and bottom was only seven inches, while in width, it was a mere half a foot. Beyond the opening, the depth of the cliff reached countless fathoms. I crept and crawled to advance, my chest and back scraping against the top and bottom of the passageway. I twisted and threaded along for some time before I could get past the danger. As it turned out, the cliff is spacious and bright, tiered and terraced. I saw hatchet and chisel marks on the cliff. Someone wants to open a passageway but still has not finished the job.

Quite a while later, I backtracked to the cliff in front, then changed direction and reached the rear cliff. Just now, some new houses are being constructed, which are peaceful, spacious, and attractive. After I left, I headed toward Nine Bends Stream. Lion Cliff [Shizi Yan] is right there. Following the stream, I then backtracked. On the opposite side of the stream, I observed Human Face Rock [Renmian Shi] at Eighth Turn and Citadel on High Cliff at Seventh Turn, which I found quite amazing. Next, we moored the boat and went into Tea Cave through Cloudy Den. It is vaulted and arched, hidden and mysterious. Now that I am here a second time, I cannot leave! After turning left at Cloudy Den, I went into Fu Xi's Cave [Fu Xi Dong], which is quite dark

and extensive.[9] On the left, I came out to the south side of Great Hidden Screen, the site of Purple Solarity Academy [Ziyang Shuyuan], where I paid respects to the statue in His Honor's temple.[10] As the boat proceeded downstream to the sound of beating oars, the verdant and lush green cliffs on both sides flashed and swirled by. Contrary to what might be expected, I hated that the boat was moving so fast. After passing Celestial Pillar Peak and Changing Clothes Terrace, the boat moored on the south shore of Fourth Bend. I went ashore at the Royal Tea Garden [Yucha Yuan], wanting to go around and come out on Golden Fowl Cliff [Jinji Yan], but I got lost in some brambles and clusters of thorns and never found a trail. So I proceeded east by way of the major trail behind the cliff, hoping there was a side trail by which I could climb up to Big Storehouse and Little Storehouse Peaks, but again, I never found a trail. I went down the trail behind the cliff and came out next to a stream, where I was already below Jade Maiden Peak. I wanted to look for Single Thread of Sky [Yixian Tian], so I paced about for a while, but no one was around to ask for directions. As for the boat, it was moored below Golden Fowl Peak, far out of voice range.[11] So I searched for a trail along the stream, twisting and twining my way to the foot of Big Storehouse and Little Storehouse. This entire area has sheer cliff walls, which are lofty and soaring. Locals have planted many tea bushes where sandy soil has collapsed and formed banks. As I proceeded through the tender tea leaves and bush branches, I looked down at the stream far below, then looked up at dangerous cliffs above, but had no time to probe the so-called Transcendent Learning Hall [Xianxue Tang] and Concealing Transcendents Den [Cangxian Wo].

After reaching the Perched over the Gorge Boats, I saw an empty boat that appeared quite vividly. Compared to the perched boats I saw earlier along the stream, this one was much more vivid, with more details revealed. West of Big Storehouse, the trail gradually comes to an end. Ascending through thistles and thorns, I clung to the face of the cliff wall. Looking back at Big Storehouse's western cliff, I saw another boat perched. But the cliffs stand facing one another, so I could not reach that location. Suddenly, a boat showed up, having come upstream from Second Turn. I quickly descended the mountain and hailed the boat. The boat approached me, and the person onboard was a sightseer who had just arrived. We agreed that I would backtrack to Changing Clothes

9 Fu Xi (or Fuxi) was the first mythical emperor of China. Along with Nüwa, he is identified in legend as the progenitor of Chinese civilization.

10 "His Honor" refers to Zhu Xi, who supervised the construction of this famous academy.

11 In other words, if he shouted to someone on the boat for directions to the trail, they would not hear him because Xu was too far away.

Terrace and then, with him, survey Single Thread of Sky and the scenic sights around Roaring Tiger Cliff [Huxiao Yan]. Our two boats headed downstream after we got to where my boat was moored. If you want to ascend to Canopy Pavilion Peak and inquire about getting to Big King Peak, upon reaching Shimmering Water Rock at First Turn, you can arrange for a boat to wait for you at the mouth of the stream.

I went ashore and, after a short while, reached Halt in Place Retreat [Zhizhi An]. I gazed behind the retreat and saw a trail that could be ascended. So I hurried toward it, where I found a cliff on which a monk was reciting a sutra. This turned out to be Chan Cave [Chanyan]. I climbed the trail to the cliff's peak, still west of Halt in Place Retreat. Following the same route, I descended before the retreat and turned west. I climbed the mountain for about two *li* and reached the area below the peak. Amid a jumbled bamboo forest, I searched for Climb to the Transcendents Rock [Dengxian Shi]. A peak suddenly rises next to it, shaped like it is looking up and expecting something. Crane Form Rock [Hemo Shi] is in a crevice of a peaked wall. With frosty-white plumage and a vermilion crown, the cracks and veins on the walls seem like they have been painted. The side trail ended, but a ladder hung against the sheer cliff wall. I stepped on the ladder and ascended. It shook and swayed as if it was about to collapse. When I got to the top of the ladder, I found a cave where Transcendent Zhang's (Zhangxian) remains are thought to be preserved. The cave was halfway up the peak, and here I searched for Transcendent Xu's Cave [Xuxian Yan].[12] But there were rocky cliff walls everywhere and no way to get through. So I went down the ladder and searched for another trail but could not find one. As I treaded through the rocks, there was nothing but sheer cliff walls and no steps. Tracking through the wild grasses, they were all deep and thick-set, so I had no idea where to go. The porter up ahead found some broken stone steps and yelled that he had found a trail. My clothes were torn, but I did not care. I pressed onward toward Transcendent Xu's Cave but again could not advance. The sun was already fading in the west, so, grabbing hold of some hanging brush, I clumsily slid down and descended, then found a trail leading to a spot to the right of Myriad Years Palace [Wannian Gong]. I hurried into the palace, which was vast and spacious. A feathered gentleman greeted me, saying, "No one has been able to reach the summit of Great King Peak for a long time. The ladder to Transcendent Zhang's Cave [Zhangxian Yan] is intact. The six ladders on Great King Peak's summit and the ladder to Transcendent Xu's Cave have all rotted away. Transcendent Xu's remains have already been moved into the Assembled Truth Temple [Huizhen Miao]."[13]

12 The transcendents mentioned in these last two lines are not further identified.
13 "Feathered gentleman" is another name for a Daoist adept.

I left the temple and then turned right and passed Assembled Truth Temple. In front of the temple is a maple tree (*feng*) with dense leaves, lush and thriving, shading several acres.[14] In girth, it measures the embrace of several dozens of people. I bid farewell to the feathered gentleman and returned to the boat.

Twenty-third day [9 April]: When I landed to search for scenic sights at Exchange One's Bones Cave [Huangu Yan] and Water Curtain Cave, I gave instructions to the boatman to sail for ten *li* to Carmine Rock Market [Chishi Jie] and wait for me there.[15] I then went into Assembled Truth Abbey [Huizhen Guan], where I paid respects to the Lord of Wuyi (Wuyi Jun) and the remains of Transcendent Xu.[16] I left the temple and, following the eastern foot of Canopy Pavilion Peak, proceeded for two *li*, where I saw, behind that peak, three other peaks standing parallel. This was unusual, and so I asked about them. I was told this is Three Damsels Peak. Exchange One's Bones Cave is next to it. I gazed at the cliff, then pressed on.

I climbed a mountain for about one *li* to a flying waterfall that gushed as it poured. I looked below, where there was also a dangerous-looking cliff wall. A spring suddenly shot out halfway up the wall. Sparse bamboo, mingling with light and shadow, provided delightful appeal. But I had already climbed this high, so it was too late to backtrack. I ascended another one-half *li* from Three Damsels and reached Exchange One's Bones Cave. This is the rear cave of Canopy Pavilion Peak. There is a retreat in front of the cave. I climbed up to another cave on the two ladders hanging down behind the cliff. This cave is deep, but it wraps around the mountain's crest like a layered barrier. The locals have recently used wooden boards to construct houses along the side of the cave. Crooked and straight, lofty and low, the houses twine and twist along the contour of the cave. Passing through the cave's crevices, I clambered and traversed as I ascended. When I was about to reach Canopy Pavilion Peak, I stopped because the trail was blocked. I then backtracked to the foot of Three Damsels Peak, circled, came out behind it, and then again descended my earlier trail, reaching the spot where before I had looked down at the spring that suddenly shot out from the cliff wall. Where one crosses the mountain ridge from here—the way to Water Curtain Cave, from which one descends—is the way to the wall with the shooting stream. Earlier, when I looked down from there, I did not take in every aspect of the

14 The phrase "several acres" (*shumu*) here is hyperbole. Xu Xiake's point is that the shade cast by the maple tree covered a huge area.

15 The term *huangu* 換骨 ("exchange one bones") is an abbreviation for *tuotai huangu* 脫胎換骨, or "shed one's mortal body and exchange one's bones." In other words, become a Daoist transcendent.

16 Mount Wuyi derives its name from this legendary figure, who supposedly morphed into a transcendent on the mountain sometime during the Han dynasty.

marvelous scenery. Having reached the spot again, I found myself below it. I gazed up at the shooting stream halfway up the cliff wall. Next to it, water is drawn to serve as a watermill.[17] A ladder provides access to the mill, while a runnel has been chiseled into the wall to channel water from the stream. I climbed the ladder along the cliff wall and reached where the spring shot down. The depression it falls into only measures two rods, but everywhere above and below are perilous cliff walls. The spring comes down from the upper part of the wall and drops into the depression, and then, from inside the depression, it overflows and plummets farther down. Above and below, and on all four sides of the depression, no place lacks water. But inside it is a protruding rock upon which one can sit. I sat on it for some time, then descended the cliff wall, following a trail through some bamboo. Next, I crossed three ridges and proceeded about seven *li* along the midpoint of a mountain, then descended into a col. Next, passed through a rock gate, ascended for one-half *li*, and came to Water Curtain Cave. The precipitous cliff here is one thousand fathoms high. On top, it protrudes; below, it sinks deeply. A waterfall tumbles down from the cliff's summit. The cliff is bold and expansive; the spring is also lofty and far-reaching. In one thousand strips, ten thousand strands, the waterfall seems to hang in midair—this, too, is a magnificent sight! Its cliff is lofty, soaring, and sticks straight up, so below the cliff, several rows of houses have been built, while the flying waterfall still manages to come down just beyond the railings of the houses.

Earlier, while on the road, I heard the scenery at Behold the Belvedere Stronghold [Duge Zhai] is quite extraordinary. A Daoist disciple suggested that if I took the same trail as before and crossed over a mountain, I could reach it. I departed from Rock Gate. But because I was enthralled by the surpassing scenery around the stream in a col, I mistakenly took the trail to Carmine Rock Market. Someone on the road suggested that if I crossed the little bridge there and proceeded south, that route would also get me there. Following his advice, I climbed up the mountain and passed into a defile that pressed in closely between two mountains. Inside the defile is a cave and some houses. As it turns out, the tablet inscription on the mountain reads "Duxia Cliff" [Duxia Yan]. The locals have mistakenly passed down the name as Duge [Behold the Belvedere], simple as that. Next, I found another cave with a building nearby. Its winding railing was seemingly poised above me. I gazed at Carmine Rock Market, which was nearby. I next followed my former trail for three *li*, crossed a stream, and proceeded another *li*, which took me to a big stream at Carmine Rock Market. I went down to the boat. We hoisted the sail and proceeded for twenty *li*, which took me back to Chong'an County.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

17 The watermill mentioned here was used to hull grain.

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Lu

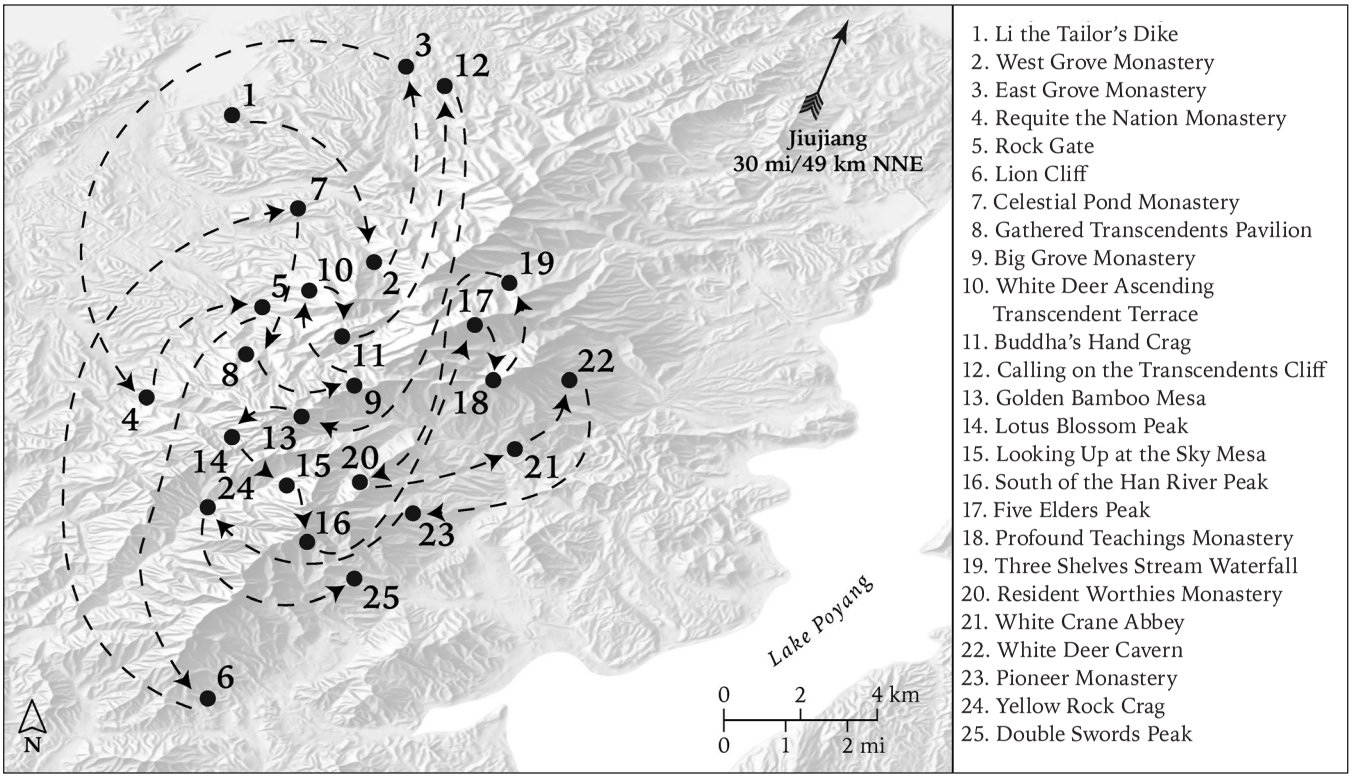
[FALL 1618, JIUJIANG PREFECTURE, JIANGXI]

Mount Lu is 22 mi/36 km south of modern Jiujiang Shi in Jiangxi, near the Changjiang and Lake Poyang [Poyang Hu] juncture. Its convenient location and attractive natural scenery—especially the mountain's magnificent waterfalls, eerie fogs, and ancient monasteries—have attracted countless sightseers for almost two millennia. Since at least the fourth century, Mount Lu has also served as one of China's most prominent Buddhist religious centers. Among its many notable peaks, South of the Han River Peak [Hanyang Feng] is the loftiest, rising to 4,836 ft/1,474 m. Its summit provides a panoramic view for several miles. The most massive height, however, is Five Elders Peak, which overlooks Lake Poyang. Both heights, on the south side of Mount Lu, are described in detail by Xu Xiake.

Wuwu *year* [1618]: With my cousins Leimen and Baifu, I reached Jiujiang Prefecture on the eighteenth day of the eighth month [6 October].[1] We changed to a small boat, followed the Changjiang south, and then passed into the Dragon-Opened River [Longkai He]. Proceeded twenty *li* and moored at Li the Tailor's Dike [Li Caifeng Yan]. After landing, we proceeded another five *li*, passed West Grove Monastery [Xilin Si], and reached East Grove Monastery [Donglin Si] on the north side of Mount Lu. To the south, the East Grove Monastery faces Mount Lu; to the north, it nestles against East Grove Mountain [Donglin Shan]. That mountain is not very high, but it is a passageway into Mount Lu from the outside. A big stream inside the passageway runs from east to west. East Grove Monastery overlooks the stream. The relay station road courses along the border of the stream and serves as a thoroughfare from Jiujiang

Source: "You Lushan riji"; Jiangxi, Jiujiang fu; Shan zhi yin wei Jiujiang fu; Shan zhi yang wei Nankang fu" (*YJJZ*, 1:37–45; *YJ*, 1:24–29). Jiujiang Prefecture corresponds to modern Jiujiang Shi; Nankang Prefecture is now modern Xingzi Xian.

1 Xu Xiake identifies his two traveling companions as *xiong* 兄, which usually means "older brother(s)." However, in this case, *xiong* is an abbreviation for *zuxiong* 族兄, referring to paternal male cousins older than oneself. *YJJZ*, 1:42n3, identifies Leimen as Xu Yingzhen (nickname Leimen, 1587–1635). Like Xu Xiake, he was a native of Jiangyin. Xu Yingzhen was a government official. The other cousin, Baifu, is not further identified.



Map 7. Mount Lu, 1618



Figure 7. Shen Zhou (1427–1529), *Lofty Mount Lu* (Lu Shan gao). Hanging scroll, ink and colors on paper, 76.2 × 38.6 in. /193.8 × 98.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei, 2024. Open Government Data License, version 1.0, https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/DigitImageSets.aspx?sNo=04025960&lang=2&Key=&pageNo=719.

This Ming artist often portrayed landscapes based on his memory of travels to famous places.

Prefecture to Jianchang County. After entering the monastery gate, you come to Tiger Stream Bridge [Huxi Qiao]. Its design and scale are vast. Its main ceremonial hall lies collapsed in ruins. To the right is Three Smiles Hall [Sanxiao Tang].

Nineteenth day [7 October]: We left East Grove Monastery and proceeded southwest, following the foot of the mountains. After another five *li* crossed Wide Crossing Bridge [Guangji Qiao]; only then did we abandon the government road. Following a stream, we proceeded east for another two *li*, where the stream bends and mountains merge. Mist drenched and doused us like rain. A man was standing at the mouth of the stream, and so I asked him for directions. He said that if we ascend from the east, we

come to the main trail to Celestial Pond [Tianchi]; if we turn south and climb up to Rock Gate Mountain [Shimen Shan], there is a side footpath to Celestial Pond Monastery [Tianchi Si].[2] I have long heard about the surpassing scenery at Rock Gate, but the path is treacherous, and no one can get up to it. So I asked if I could hire him as a guide. My two cousins agreed to take the footpath to Celestial Pond and wait for me there. So the guide and I headed south, crossed two streams, and passed Requite the Nation Monastery [Baoguo Si]. We clambered and advanced for five *li* by blue-green branches and fragrant lushness.

Looking up into the thick fog, I saw a pair of rocks standing bare and upright. This is Rock Gate. We entered the gate through a trail in a rocky crevice, where two more rocky peaks stand facing each other. I looked down at the peaks in the steep ravine where the trail twisted and twined through a crevice. The peaks stand tall and aloft next to Iron Boat Peak [Tiechuan Feng], shooting straight up from the ravine's base, standing only about a foot apart. Vying in majesty and competing in elegance, fog banks and thick hues of blue-green lucidly shimmered everywhere beyond them. Below the peaks were sprinkles of snow-like foam, and amid rumbles of thunder, they soared into the sky as they quaked and trembled. This scene made my eyes and ears wild with delight.

Inside Rock Gate, facing the peaks and nestling against the cliff wall, are multistoried buildings and steep watchtowers. Zou Changming and Bi Guanzhi, natives of Huizhou Prefecture, recently built a meditation chamber here.[3] The monk Embracing Completion (Rongcheng) burns incense and practices self-cultivation in the chamber. Following a small footpath from the rear of the retreat, we again came out at Rock Gate. Next, ascending along a rocky cliff, we clambered up, then trod down. When the stone steps ended, we moved higher by grasping hold of rattan stems. When there were no more stems, we climbed a wooden ladder. This went on for two *li*, after which we reached Lion Cliff. Below the cliff is a meditation chamber. Passed a ridge, where the trail is quite flat. Next, we ascended for about one *li*, where we found the main trail, approaching from the south of the commandery city.

After climbing successive flights of steps, we were already in front of the ceremonial hall. But because of the fog, I could not make out the hall. As we closed in on it, walking close to the hall, its vermillion columns and colorful ridgepoles revealed it to be Celestial Pond Monastery.

2 Rock Gate Mountain is one of the premier scenic attractions in the northern section of Mount Lu. Its twin stone pillars rise to form what looks like a gate. Hence the name. In the diary entries below, Xu Xiake has much to say about Rock Gate.

3 Zou Changming and Bi Guanzhi were probably local patrons of Buddhism who paid for the construction of the meditation chamber on the mountain. Huizhou Prefecture corresponds to modern She Xian, Anhui, near Mount Huang.

Presumably, this is a new temple rebuilt after a fire. We climbed up to Gathered Transcendents Pavilion [Juxian Ting] from a wing room on the flank of its right portico. A cliff juts out in front of the pavilion, overlooking unfathomable depths below. This is called Mañjuśrī Terrace [Wenshu Tai]. Following the major trail on the left, we left the temple and climbed to the Unveiling Sunglow Clouds Pavilion [Pixia Ting]. On the flank of the pavilion, where the trail forks, we ascended east to a mountain ridge, then continued for three *li*. From there, we proceeded east for another three *li* to Big Grove Monastery [Dalin Si], then twisted north and headed west to White Deer Ascending to Transcendent Terrace [Bailu Shengxian Tai]. Again, we twisted north, then headed east to Buddha's Hand Crag [Foshou Yan]. The ascent to Transcendent's Terrace has cliff walls standing on three sides. On all four sides are numerous lofty pines. The "Stele for Zhou Dian the Transcendent, Fashioned on Imperial Orders from the Lofty Emperor" (Gaodi yuzhi Zhou Dian xian bei) is on the summit.[4] A stone pavilion shelters it. The stele's design is much in the ancient style. Buddha's Hand Crag is dome-like and bounds aloft. Below it, there is an opening five or six rods deep. At the edge of the crag, a rocky protrusion sticks straight out. Thus, it is called Buddha's Hand.

Following the crag on the flank of the retreat, we proceeded to the right, where the crag has two layers of rock that project outward from inside a deep col. The upper layer is flat; the lower layer is slanted. This is the ruins of Calling on the Transcendents Terrace [Fangxian Tai]. Written on a rock behind the terrace are the three Chinese characters "Bamboo Grove Monastery" [Zhulin Si]. "Bamboo Grove" is a fairyland on Kuang's Cottage [Kuanglu], seemingly visible but out of reach.[5] In front of the terrace, in the wind and rain, one hears ringing bells and voices reciting scriptures from the nearby Buddhist monastery, which are associated with

4 Zhou Dian (real name unknown) was a native of Jiangxi who lived during the late Yuan and early Ming periods. Although quite eccentric—some contemporaries even called him a madman—he is said to have commanded extensive knowledge of herbal medicine. When Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–98; posthumously known as Hongwu; here referred to as the Lofty Emperor), the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty, became ill in 1393, Zhou Dian sent medicines that restored the emperor's health. The emperor then wrote a biography of Zhou Dian, which was inscribed on a stele and placed on the summit of Ascending Transcendent Terrace. Though badly worn, the stele survives today.

5 According to tradition, Mount Lu was called Kuang's Cottage in ancient times because a recluse surnamed Kuang once built a cottage on the summit, where he trained to be a transcendent. When the emperor heard about this, he sent several messengers to summon Kuang, but the recluse declined each invitation. His thatched hut was later found, but by then, Kuang had already transformed into a transcendent being and ascended to heaven. The comment "seemingly visible but out of reach" means visitors to the mountain might think they can see the Bamboo Grove from a distance, but it is only a fairyland or a mirage.

the Bamboo Grove fairyland. As clouds and fog formed a vast expanse of muddled haze, the scene inside the col was like that on the three mountain isles.[6] So what need is there to talk about a "Bamboo Grove"? On my return, I came out at Buddha's Hand Crag. I turned east on the main road and reached Big Grove Monastery. Peaks surround it on all four sides. In front, it embraces a stream. Along the stream are trees with girths as big as the arm spans of three people. Because the tips of their branches have clusters and bunches of fruit, they are neither juniper [*gui*] nor conifer. Tradition says these are "precious trees" from the Western Regions. Initially, there were two such trees here, but a storm uprooted one of them.

Twentieth day [8 October]: The fog had lifted by dawn. We left Celestial Pond and pressed on to Mañjuśrī Terrace. The cliff walls all around us stood countless fathoms high. When I looked down at Iron Boat Peak, I felt as if I was soaring through the air in the kind of slippers worn by transcendents. The mountains north of Iron Boat Peak huddled like swarming ants. Kuang's Lake [Kuanghu] extends and expands along the foot of the peak.[7] Below it, the stretch of Lake Poyang is boundless and limitless, while the Changjiang belts around it, reaching to the horizon. I wanted to make a second sightseeing trip to Rock Gate, so I proceeded three *li*, crossing the same dangerous places I passed yesterday. When we arrived, Embracing Completion welcomed us carrying a palm-leaf Buddhist sutra.[8] He was most pleased by our visit and guided us on a detailed survey of the peaks. We ascended to the right of Divine Dragon Palace [Shenlong Gong], where we twisted around and descended, then entered the palace. A rushing torrent rumbled like claps of thunder while pines and bamboo cast shade and shadows. The inside of the gorge was impenetrable and hushed. Following along our former trail, we reached the area below Celestial Pond. Following a fork in the footpath, we proceeded southeast for ten *li*, ascending and descending through layers of peaks and secluded ravines. Where there is no footpath without bamboo or shade without pines—this is Golden Bamboo Mesa [Jinzhu Ping]. The peaks here are hidden, shielded, and twice as secluded as those at Celestial Pond but not as spacious. Next, we proceeded three *li* to the south, then climbed up the flank of Lotus Blossom Peak. Once again, a heavy

6 According to the *Guideways through the Mountains and Seas* (Shanhai jing), a rich collection of accounts concerning ancient Chinese mythology, transcendents lived in the three fairy isles of Penglai, Fangzhang, and Yingzhou, which tradition says are in the Bohai Sea [Bohai] off the eastern coast of China.

7 Kuang's Lake is an alternate name for Lake Poyang.

8 The leaf blades of the palmyra palm (*beiduo*) were sometimes used as a substitute for paper, especially in producing sacred Buddhist texts.

fog moved in. This peak serves as an ancillary hill of Celestial Pond and is on the left wing of Golden Bamboo Mesa. On the summit of the peak are clusters of rocks that tower in tiers. Fog in the crevices of the rocks occasionally took the form of someone peeping at us. But because of the fog, I failed to climb up.

Crossed a ridge, headed east for two *li*, and reached Looking Up at the Sky Mesa [Yangtian Ping]. I planned to take in all the surpassing scenery on South of the Han River Peak, the loftiest summit on Mount Lu. The mesa here is the highest point where monks on the mountain dwell in cottages. On the northern, shady side of the mesa, all the rivers flow to the north from Jiujiang Prefecture. On the southern, sunny side of the mesa, all the rivers flow south down into the jurisdiction of Nankang Prefecture. I suspected that the mesa had to be close to South of the Han River Peak. But a monk said it was still ten *li* distant, with Peach Blossom Peak [Taohua Feng] halfway between. After we left the monastery, the fog gradually dispersed. From a mountain, we proceeded southeast to a col. Following Peach Blossom Peak, we turned east and passed Sun Dried Grains Rock [Shaigu Shi]. Passed a ridge and then descended to the south, where we again ascended to South of the Han River Peak.

> One fascinating feature of Xu Xiake's exploration of remote mountain environments is the people he unexpectedly encounters. It could be a woodcutter, hermit, fellow sightseer, or—as we see here—some Buddhist monks who live and worship on the mountain.

After about one *li*, we found a monk's retreat inside a densely lush bamboo grove.[9] The monk there with short hair covering his forehead, wearing a tattered vestment and in bare feet—this is Wisdom Lamp (Huideng). He was carrying some water on a pole and grinding some bean curd. Three or four other monks in robes and sandals greeted me in the nearby bamboo grove with a bow and hands clasped. All of them had come from far away to pay their respects to Wisdom Lamp. And there was another monk, barefoot with short hair, who had come down from the crag. I asked where he had come from. As it turns out, he was a monk from Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan. Wisdom Lamp has a disciple who built a thatched hut higher up on Mount Lu, and this monk

9 The Chinese character *kan* 龕 usually indicates a natural niche or cavity in the side of a mountain used as a shrine or sacrarium (a sanctuary holding idols or sacred objects). However, in this and subsequent diary entries, Xu Xiake uses the term more broadly to refer to the monk Wisdom Lamp's humble mountain retreat.

from Mount Chicken Foot had trudged across hanging cliffs to go up and visit him and had only just come back down the mountain. I immediately engaged one of the monks to serve as a guide. We clambered, pulled ourselves along for one-half *li*, and reached the monk's thatched hut. The nearby rocky cliff walls were sheer and steep. A ladder was poised in midair to get across. The single thatched hut looked just like Wisdom Lamp's retreat. The monk-disciple who lived in the hut was originally from a lay family at the foot of the mountain, but he also took up residence there to show his respect for Wisdom Lamp.

Upon reaching there, I looked above and saw South of the Han River Peak; below, I saw sheer cliff walls. I was so far removed from the world! Dusk had already fallen, so I returned to Wisdom Lamp's retreat to spend the night. He cooked some bean curd to provide us with a meal. The monk who had earlier served as a trail guide also arrived to join us. Wisdom Lamp cooks a batch of bean curd every two weeks, insisting he cooks for himself. He further insists that he cooks for his disciples. Among the disciples who arrived to join us was the monk from Yunnan.

Twenty-first day [9 October]: I bade farewell to Wisdom Lamp and treaded straight up South of the Han River Peak along a small footpath behind the retreat. Clambering through thatch grass and pulling my way through thorny branches for two *li*, I reached the peak's summit. I looked down on Lake Poyang to the south, where water and sky are vast and mighty, then gazed at Hukou County to the east, glimpsing Jianchang County in front.[10] The mountains are distinct and well-defined, and none fail to bow their heads as if they had just lost their mother.[11] Only Peach Blossom Peak on the north side stands up straight to rival and challenge them! This peak is supreme, soaring high into the empyrean, approaching the Milky Way!

I descended the mountain for two *li*. Then, following our earlier trail, I headed toward Five Elders Peak. South of the Han River and Five Elders Peak are mountains on the sunny or south side of Kuang's Cottage, facing one another like two horns, with Plowshare Pinnacle [Litou Jian] marking the boundary between them but a little behind.[12] Thus, while the two peaks are nearby, gazing at one another, to take the trail there, one still must reach Golden Bamboo Mesa, wind around behind Plowshare Pinnacle, and then come out by its left edge. By turning north,

10 Hukou (lit., "at the mouth of Lake [Poyang]") County (modern Hukou Xian) fell under the jurisdiction of Jiujiang Prefecture.

11 It is worth mentioning that the simile used here by Xu Xiake to describe the mountains around him: "none failed to bow their heads as if they had just lost their mother" is unusual in descriptive landscape accounts in Chinese travel writing. Here, it is undoubtedly surprising—perhaps even jolting—and yet it evokes a mental image that is visually palpable.

12 On Kuang's Cottage, see note 5, above.

you only get to Five Elders Peak. If you calculate the distance from South of the Han River Peak, it is about thirty *li*. When I first arrived at the corner of the ridge, the peak's summit looked flat and level from a distance, but I could not get a detailed view of the Five Elders' faces and eyes.[13] When I reached the summit, the wind gusted, and there was no sign of water. It was silent, and no one lived there. Only after a thorough tour of Five Elders Peak did I realize that the area to the north of these mountains is a single, linked ridge. To the south, the sheer summits of the mountains level out and lay open, aligning into five spurs. Those dropping down from midair are countless rods high. Beyond the peak, no folds of ridges or layers of barriers block the view, so one's field of vision is quite extensive. But if you gaze back and forth at the spurs, then Five Elders is arranged in a way that conceals itself. So one cannot take in all the spurs in one survey. If you only climb up one of the peaks, then from the abyss on both sides of you, peak after peak emerges, each remarkable and not yielding to the others in the slightest. Indeed, this bird's eye view is majestically broad in scope!

Following the same trail, I descended for two *li* and reached the corner of a ridge. Then I proceeded north into a col and, after about one *li*, went into the Vaipulya Monastery [Fangguang Si], a new monastery honoring the Five Elders. The monk Aware of Enlightenment (Zhijue) was familiar with the scenery around Three Shelves [Sandie].[14] He told me the trailway there was extraordinarily arduous and urged me to quicken my pace. After proceeding north for one *li*, the trail ended. We then crossed a torrent and proceeded west from its eastern side. A roaring flow of water poured from above into a jumble of rocks. Hemmed between two mountains are clusters of bamboo with long stalks. Above and below is a lush, verdant landscape. Occasionally, I looked up to see rocks that seemed to be flying in midair, abruptly embellishing the mountains. With each changing shift in one's perspective, this scene becomes more delightful. Later, the trail ended by the side of the torrent. I then proceeded through the torrent's jumbled rocks. The round ones were slippery; the pointy ones pierced my sandals. It was like this for three *li* until I found Green Water Pool, a deep blue-green pool. An angry flow of water pours down into it. Where the pool water was moving, it sprayed snow-like foam; where the water was still, it remained kohl-blue. I proceeded about one more *li* to Big Green Water Pool [Da Lüshui Tan]. When I reached here, the flowing water poured down with force

13 The term "face and eyes" (*mianmu*) means "detailed physical features." Xu Xiake uses this term repeatedly in the diaries.

14 The reference is to the Three Shelves Stream Waterfall [Sandie Quan Pubu], one of Mount Lu's best-known scenic attractions. In English, it is also known as the Three Stages Waterfall. Xu Xiake mentions below that the pool that collects water at its base is called Green Water Pool [Lüshui Tan].

twice that of the Green Water Pool and was much angrier. Around the pool are sheer cliffs, jumbled and towering, winding and crisscrossing, rising steeply like walls. When I looked down at the pool, it was bottomless, but I heard its thunderous roar echoing in a gorge, which struck my heart with awe and made my eyes dizzy. As for the waterfall, I do not know where it comes from or where it tumbles off. Since the trail along the torrent also ends here, I turned west and climbed a peak. Magpies took flight from the rocky terrace in front of the peak. On all four sides below, I saw tiers of cliff walls, with gloomy forests crowding their flanks. The Three Shelves Stream Waterfall was hidden and out of sight. I needed to get to the sheer cliff wall on the other side, and only then would I be able to take in all its surpassing scenery.

So, following the mountain ridge from the north, I turned east. Proceeded for two *li* and came out facing a cliff. Only when I looked down did I see the waterfall's first, second, and third stages, all in succession and visible. The cliff wall in the mountain col has two caves resembling a gate. The monks invariably point out this is the gate to the Bamboo Grove Monastery, or so they claim.[15] A short time later, a north wind blew in from Hukou County. The cold gave me goosebumps. I then hastily backtracked along my former trail and reached Green Water Pool. My close observation revealed that above is a cave that sags downward in a restrained-like way. A monk led me inside and said, "This is also one of the three gates to the Bamboo Grove Monastery." But the cave is initially formed by a rift in the rock. Inside is a passageway on its flank in the shape of the Chinese character "ten" [*shi* 十]. It is brightly lit in the north and south, while in the west, it goes down into what seems like a bottomless abyss before it stops. After coming out of the cave, I traced the stream. When I reached the Vaipulya Monastery, it was already dusky and dark.

Twenty-second day [10 October]: I left the monastery, crossed a stream to the south, and reached the sunny southern side of Plowshare Pinnacle. Turned east, descended the mountain for ten *li*, and reached the flank of

15 The Bamboo Grove Monastery mentioned here differs from the fairyland mentioned earlier bearing the same name. According to legend, at the end of the Yuan dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang—who eventually became the founding emperor of the Ming dynasty—fled to Mount Lu while being pursued by rebel forces opposed to the Ming. Just as he was about to be captured, the "Madman" Zhou Dian (see note 4, above) suddenly appeared to help Zhu take refuge in a monastery hidden in a bamboo grove. Later, Zhu Yuanzhang dispatched messengers to find Zhou Dian and the monastery where Zhu had taken refuge, but they only found the three Chinese characters for Bamboo Grove Monastery written on a cliff wall.

Laṅkāvatāra Cloister [Lengjia Yuan].[16] I looked far into the distance, where a waterfall flew and tumbled down from midair, surrounded by dazzling green and purple colors along the left edge of a mountain. It looked distorted and deformed as it pitched and plunged. This is indeed a majestic view!

Proceeded five *li* and passed Resident Worthies Monastery [Qixian Si]. The mountain's terrain does not level out until you reach here. Because I was in a rush to get to Three Gorges Torrent [Sanxia Jian], I did not go into the monastery. After about one *li*, reached Three Gorges Torrent. The rocks in the torrent press close together and stand erect, forming a gorge. The torrent's angry rush of water surges forward, which is then restrained by the gorge. But its flow then changes course and races onward, churning and gushing as it makes a thunderous roar through the mountain valley. From a bridge perched above the cliff's rocks, I looked down into the deep gorge, where the torrent sprays pearls and taps jades.[17] I crossed the bridge and headed east through a mountain path, then crossed a ridge and pressed on to White Deer Cavern [Bailu Dong].[18]

All the trails here are on Five Elders Peak's sunny south side. People's homes are scattered among fields high and low on the mountain. Across and through the bumpy and uneven mountain slope, I looked up at rows of barriers extending for three *li*, then went straight into the barriers and descended the peak to White Crane Abbey [Baihe Guan]. Next, I proceeded northeast for another three *li* and reached White Deer Cavern in a mountain col in front of Five Elders. Tall pines mix and mingle as they surround the mountain and belt the stream. I left the cavern and proceeded by way of the main trail, which is the way to the Pioneer Monastery [Kaixian Si]. Presumably, as for the topographical layout of Mount Lu, Ploughshare Peak is almost, but not quite, in the center. Resident Worthies Monastery is the true center. Five Elders juts out on the left. Below it is White Deer Cavern. Honking Crane Peak [Heming Feng] is the towering height on the right. Pioneer Monastery is in front of it. Thus, I headed west, following the mountains. I moved across the main trail that passes White Deer Cavern and Resident

16 This Buddhist cloister takes its name from the *Laṅkāvatāra-sutra* (Chinese: Lengjia jing), an influential Mahāyāna text that describes a teaching experience between Gautama Buddha and a bodhisattva named Mahāmati. This work is especially important to Chan (or Zen) Buddhism followers.

17 This is an excellent example of Xu Xiake's use of metaphor to describe landscape. In this passage, "sprays pearls" *visually* represent foamy, white caps of water churned up the torrent, while "taps jades" are designed to appeal to the *auditory* sense of surging water crashing against rocks in the torrent.

18 During the Song dynasty, the famous White Deer Academy (Bailu Shuyuan) was established near this cavern. The academy was founded by Zhu Xi, who served as prefect of Nankang Prefecture.

Worthies Monastery. Proceeded fifteen *li*, passed through Myriad Pines Monastery [Wansong Si], scaled a ridge, and descended. Pioneer Monastery is a lofty and majestic mountain monastery facing the south. From behind its ceremonial hall, I climbed the stairs of a loft to gaze at the waterfall—a single strand of water, dangling and drooping down, that was still five *li* distant and half hidden by mountain trees. The force of its slanted descent was no match for what I saw on the trail to Laṅkāvatāra Cloister. Alone, Double Swords Peak [Shuangjian Feng] stood pointy and pinnacled among the massed peaks, commanding a posture resembling a flowering hibiscus plant stuck into the sky. Incense Burner Peak looks like a round mound on top of a mountain. From the flank of the loft, I proceeded west down into a gorge. The rushing flow of a torrent rumbled as it poured out of rocks in the gorge. This is the lower reaches of the waterfall. When the waterfall reaches here, it turns and disappears. But the water in the gorge joins to form Dragon Pool [Longtan], which cleanses and dazzles one's heart and eyes. I sat on a rock for a long time until the mountains turned dark, then backtracked to spend the night at Crane Peak Hall [Hefeng Tang], west of the ceremonial hall.

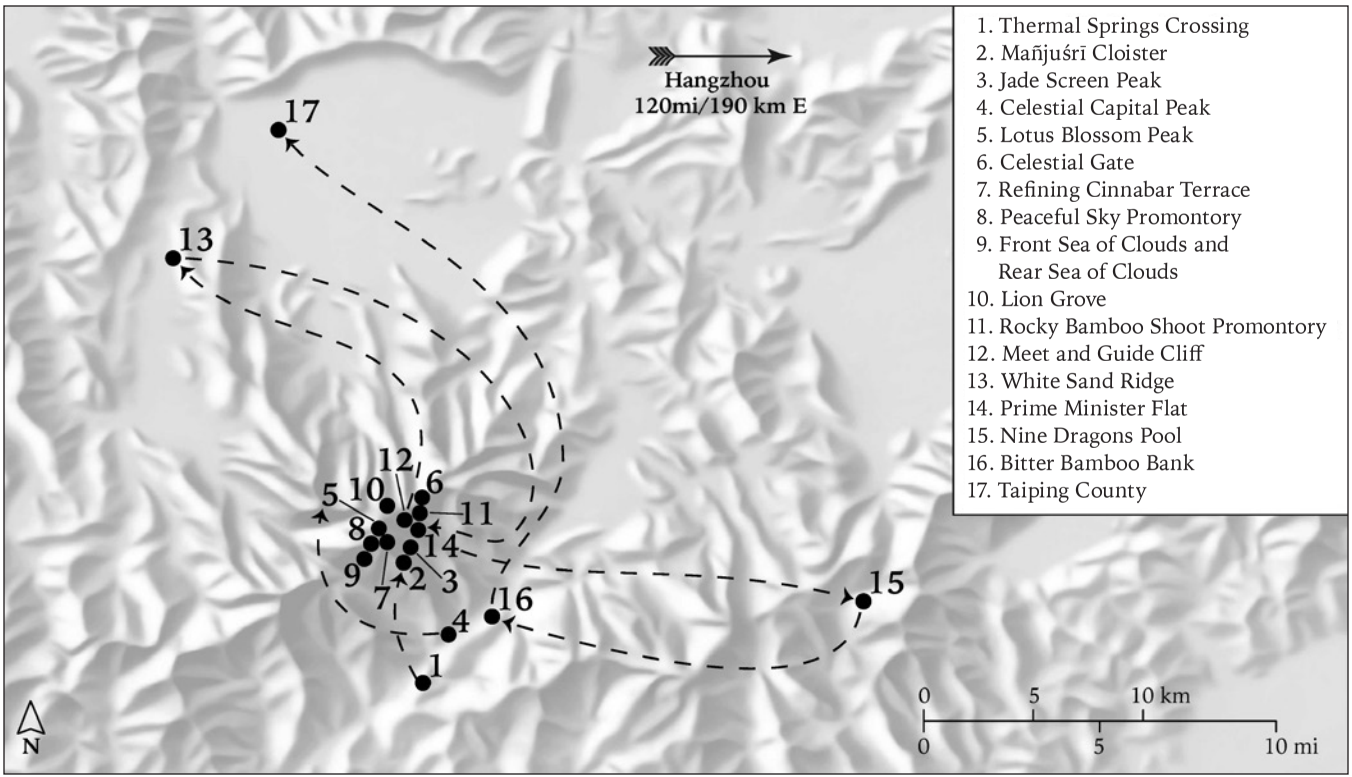
Twenty-third day [11 October]: I climbed up a mountain through a side path behind Pioneer Monastery, crossed a torrent that winds around a ridge, and then twisted and twined my way along the midpoint of the mountain. At a distance from the peak, I saw another waterfall plummeting down to the east. This is Horse Tail Waterfall [Mawei Quan]. Proceeded five *li* and then clambered up a pointed peak to its summit, the site of Mañjuśrī Terrace. Nearby is a lone peak that thrusts upward. It provided distant views in all four directions, but there was nothing to lean on for support. On the summit is Mañjuśrī Pagoda [Wenshu Ta]. On the opposite cliff, honed and standing countless fathoms high, a waterfall boomed and roared as it tumbled down. Separated from the terrace by only a single gorge, with one glance from apex to bottom, there was probably nothing I failed to take in. Had I not climbed up to the terrace, I would not have seen the surpassing scenery at this waterfall!

Descending from the terrace, I followed a mountain ridge in the northwest, heading upstream. This is the upper reaches of the waterfall. A single side path suddenly took me into a valley, where mountains wound around and valleys embraced me. We were at Yellow Cliff Monastery [Huangyan Si], positioned below Double Swords Peak. Crossed a gorge and again ascended, finding Yellow Rock Crag [Huangshi Yan]. The crag's rocks seem to jut out in midair, flat and layered like a grindstone. On the flank of the crag is a thatched belvedere measuring about one-rod square, serene and stylish and seemingly not of this world.[19]

19 "Belvedere" in this line is a euphemism for a retreat.

Beyond the belvedere are several stalks of tall bamboo, which lightly touch the massed peaks as they ascend. Together with mountain flowers and red maple leaves, they adorn and complement the borders of the peaks. Lake Poyang was just a dot in the distance, visible directly through the monastery window. As I strolled and stepped among the rocks in the mountain stream, I observed the surpassing scenery along the steep cliffs and narrow walls. As before, I had a meal at Pioneer Monastery and then took my leave.

—Translated by James M. Hargett



Map 8. Mount Huang, 1618 (see also map 5)

A Later Sightseeing Trip to Mount Huang

[FALL 1618]

In this diary, we again find Xu Xiake at Mount Huang in Anhui, two years after his earlier visit in the spring of 1616. This time, however, he reaches the mountain during autumn.

Wuwu *year*, *third day of the ninth month* [20 October 1618]: I left Betel Plum Retreat on Mount Baiyue and reached Peach Source Bridge [Taoyuan Qiao]. Descended to the right from a little bridge, where the trail was extremely steep. This is the same trail I took the last time I visited Mount Huang. Proceeded seventy *li*, then stopped to spend the night at River Village.

Fourth Day [21 October]: Proceeded fifteen *li* to Thermal Springs Crossing. After another five *li*, I reached Thermal Springs Monastery [Tangsi], where I bathed in the hot springs pool. Leaning on my walking stick, I gazed at Cinnabar Retreat and began climbing to it. Proceeded ten *li* and then ascended to Yellow Mud Knoll [Huangni Gang]. During my previous visit to Mount Huang, the peaks in the clouds gradually peeped through and appeared below my walking stick.[1] I turned at Rock Gate, crossed the edge of Celestial Capital Peak, and descended. The two Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom summits spread their exquisite charm through half the sky. A forking path on the side of the trail ascends to the east. As it turns out, I did not take this route during my earlier visit. And so, pressing forward, I climbed straight up, almost to the flank of Celestial Capital. Next, I ascended to the north through a crack in the rocks. The rocky peaks, in stretches and swathes, cling together as they rise while the trail twists and twines through the rocks. Where the way is blocked, passageways have been chiseled; where the way is steep, stairs have been built; where the way ends, framed plankways have been erected to provide passage; where cliffs overhang, ladders have been installed to connect them. I looked into a steep ravine and shady woods, where maple and pine trees intermix. Multicolored and

Source: "You Huangshan riji hou" (*YJJZ*, 1:46–50; *YJ*, 1:30–33).

1 In other words, during his first visit to the mountain, Xu climbed above the peaks visible below his walking stick.

profusely outspread, this scene is as resplendent as patterned embroidery. All my life, I have been mindful of the extraordinary vistas on Mount Huang and its extraordinary scenery. But when I think about what I missed during my previous tour, then during this trip, I indeed feel both elated and ashamed!

> Xu has begun heading to sites he missed during his earlier visit to Mount Huang. He most wanted to climb the two peaks, Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom.

The porters and servants fell behind because of the obstructed and dangerous path, so I also halted in my ascent. But as it turned out, there were extraordinary scenic sights along the entire trail, which unwittingly drew me to continue my ascent alone. After climbing up to the top of a peak, I came to a retreat, the design of which extends out like the wings of a bird. This is Mañjuśrī Cloister, a place I had wanted to climb to during my visit two years ago. On the left is Celestial Capital Peak; on the right is Lotus Blossom Peak. Jade Screen Peak [Yuping Feng] nestles behind the cloister. These two peaks—Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom—are exquisite in their appearance. Both seemed like they could be held in one's hand. When you look all around, extraordinary peaks intermix and align while masses of canyons spread across and athwart. This is truly the most surpassing scenic site on Mount Huang! Had I not made a second trip here, how could I have known Mount Huang has such extraordinary scenery?

By chance, I met up with the tour guide-monk Unsullied Source (Chengyuan). This encounter stimulated my spirits! It was already past midday when the servants arrived. Standing before the retreat, ways were discussed to reach the two peaks. A monk from the retreat remarked, "Celestial Capital is near, but there is no trail to get there. Lotus Blossom can be climbed, but the trail is long. The only sensible thing to do is gaze at Celestial Capital from nearby and climb Lotus Blossom tomorrow." I rejected his advice because my mind was set on touring Celestial Capital.[2] So, along with Unsullied Source and the servants, we descended along the same gorge trail, then reached the flank of Celestial Capital. Following the rocks in a stream, we slithered along like snakes and made our ascent, clambering through grasses and clutching at bushes. Where rocky slabs rise in clusters—we made our way through each slab; where rocky cliffs slant and stand sheer—we clung to each cliff. Each time we reached a spot where there was nowhere to place our hands and feet, Unsullied Source had first to climb up and then drop

2 Although Xu Xiake uses the verb *you* 游 [遊] (to sightsee, to tour) in this line, his meaning is clear: his heart was set on climbing to the summit of Celestial Capital Peak and enjoying its scenic view.

a hand to help me up. Each time I thought about the difficulty of our ascent, I wondered, how would we endure the descent? But in the end, I did not care. One by one, we got through each dangerous spot and then reached the peak's summit. A single rock on the summit's cliff wall rises several tens of fathoms above it. When Unsullied Source glanced at its flank, he found some stairs. He held on to me tightly so I could make the climb up. Of the countless peaks, none below us failed to crouch in submission. Only Lotus Blossom stands in defiance. From time to time, thick fog rolled in and then withdrew. Each time a fog bank reached us, nothing was visible in front. Looking into the distance at Lotus Blossom's peaks, I saw that most were shrouded in fog. Only when I ascended Celestial Capital and reached the area in front of it did the fog move behind me. And only when I crossed to the right of Celestial Capital did the fog appear on the left. As for its pine trees, some still twist around and stick out. As for the cypress trees (*bai*), although their trunks are seemingly bigger than a human arm, none fails to cling flatly like moss to the tops of the rocks.

This mountain is lofty, the wind is mighty, and there is no way to know when the fog will come and go. As I gazed at the peaks below me, they sometimes appeared as blue-green pyramidal peaks; sometimes, they sank into a silvery sea.[3] But looking farther down the mountain, the sunlight was bright and brilliant. This is a unique world. The sun was gradually setting, so with my feet in front of me and my hands on the ground behind me, I slid down on my backside. Whenever I reached a perilous place, Unsullied Source, right by my side, would lend me his hand. Once we were beyond the dangerous areas, we descended and reached a mountain depression. By then, it was already dark. Next, we crossed the plank walkway (*zhan*) from the gorge and ascended, then stopped at Mañjuśrī Cloister.

Fifth day [22 October]: At daybreak, from the depression at Celestial Capital Peak, I proceeded north and descended for two *li*. Rocky cliff walls towered aloft. Below them, Lotus Blossom Cavern stands face to face with Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory in the ravine ahead, both within a single, secluded col. I bid farewell to Unsullied Source, went down the mountain, and reached a forked path on the flank of the trail, then pressed on toward Lotus Blossom Peak. I proceeded west along a trail of precipitous cliff walls. In all, I descended twice and twice ascended. When I was just about to go down to Hundred Steps to the Clouds Ladder, there was a path straight up to the summit of Lotus Blossom Peak. Just after I began my climb, the stone steps ended. Suspecting I had taken the wrong way, I turned around and started back down. Then, I heard a monk shout from the opposite peak: "You are on the

3 In other words, the clouds below.

correct trail to Lotus Blossom!" So from the flank of a rocky slope, I tracked through its crevices. The footpath narrowed and became steep. On all the peak summits are huge rocks towering like tripod cauldrons, the insides of which look like empty rooms. From inside them, I ascended straight up, turned where the steps ended at a cavern, then twisted and winded through remarkable and extraordinary places as if we were going up and down stairs inside a storied building or belvedere, oblivious that I was on a precipitous height far beyond the heavens.

After another *li*, I reached a thatched hut inside a rocky crack. As I paced, wanting to continue my ascent, the monk who had shouted out to me earlier showed up. He is called Rising into Vacuity (Lingxu). He is the one who built the hut here. So arm in arm, we scaled the summit. On the summit is a rock two fathoms in length hanging down, blocking the way. The monk fetched a ladder, which we used to get across. The view from the apex of Lotus Blossom was open and boundless, expansive, and clear, with a deep blue sky all around. Even Celestial Capital bows its head in submission. This peak is situated in the very center of Mount Huang and stands out among all the other peaks. On its four sides are cliff walls circling and towering aloft. Encountering clear sky in the morning sun, fresh and shimmering, expanding in waves, makes one shout out like a madman and want to dance. After some time passed, we returned to the thatched retreat. Rising into Vacuity provided some porridge, which we shared. I ate one bowl, then began my descent. Reached the flank of a forking path, passed Great Compassion Summit [Dabei Ding], and ascended to Celestial Gate. After three *li* reached Refining Cinnabar Terrace. We followed the spur of the terrace and descended, where we observed Jade Screen Peak and Three Seas Gate rise steeply like cliff walls inside a deep col. Cinnabar Terrace is the single knoll that droops down among them. Neither extraordinary nor steep, it merely looks down on the back of some hazy blue hills in the distance. Peaks and tors in the col intermix and cluster together, reflecting light above, below, and all around. But from this vantage point, one cannot get a complete view of the surpassing panorama here. We returned the way we came, passed Peaceful Sky Promontory, descended into the Rear Sea of Clouds, and then went into Wise Vacuity Retreat [Zhikong An], where I bid farewell to Rising into Vacuity.

Proceeded three *li* and then descended to Lion Grove. Then pressed on to Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory and reached the top of the pinnacled peak I had climbed years ago. I sat down and leaned back against a pine tree, then looked down into a col where peaks and rocks seemed to whirl around and cluster together, filling my eyes like an ornately executed scene in a painting. Only then did I realize that Kuang's Cottage and Rock Gate might possess one unique feature but perhaps are lacking in another way: they cannot match up to this view's vast scope and rich profusion! After some time passed, I ascended Meet and Guide

Cliff, from where I looked down into a col below that was dark and eerie. I sensed there was something unusual about it. Next, I retraced my path and reached the flank of a pinnacled peak on a ridge. Stepping on rocks in a flowing stream, holding on to brambles and bushes, I followed the ravine and descended. The more I descended, the deeper it became. The peaks screened and covered one another, so I could not take in the entire scene in one glance. The sun was setting, so I backtracked to Lion Grove.

Sixth day [23 October]: I bid farewell to Sunglow Light, then descended seven *li* toward Prime Minister Flat through a mountain ravine.[4] When I reached White Sand Ridge [Baisha Ling], Sunglow Light reappeared. Because I wanted to view the scenery at Memorial Archway Rock [Pailou Shi], he thought there would be no one from White Sand Retreat [Baisha An] to guide me, so he has now caught up with me and will serve as a guide. Together, we ascended the ridge. He pointed to a slope across the ridge on the right, where rocks stood up in clusters, separated below, and joined on top. This is Memorial Archway Rock. I wanted to get beyond the ravine below, trace upstream, and reach the area directly below Memorial Archway Rock. The monk remarked, "That would get us lost in brambles with no trail; we certainly would not be able to proceed. If we descend directly to Prime Minister Flat through the ravine, there is no need to retrace our way back up this ridge; if we want to go on from Transcendent's Lamp Cavern [Xiandeng Dong], it would be better to head east from this ridge."

Following his advice, we proceeded along the edge of the ridge. The ridge stretches crosswise to the north of Celestial Capital and Lotus Blossom. It was extremely narrow, and there was no room for our feet on either side. On both sides, south and north, exalted peaks cast their reflections. We descended to where the ridge ends in the north, then looked up into the distance at Arhat Rock [Luohan Shi] on the peak to the right, which looks like two monks with round heads and bald crowns. Descending farther into the middle of a chasm, we then passed over a mountain stream to ascend. In all, I proceeded four *li*, then climbed to Transcendent's Lamp Cavern. It faces south, directly opposite the north side of Celestial Capital Peak. The monks erected a belvedere and then joined planks to connect it with the outside, and yet inside, it was still vaulted like a dome, so its natural appeal has yet to be completely hewn away. We retraced our way south, descended three *li*, and passed Prime Minister Flat. It is merely a strip of land squeezed between the mountains. The retreat there is in good condition, but when you look around, there is no extraordinary scenery, so we did not go in. We retraced our way south, proceeding along the midpoint of a mountain

4 Sunglow Light is the abbot at Lion Grove Retreat. Xu Xiake met him during his visit to Mount Huang two years earlier.

for five *li*, then gradually began to descend. The sound of a waterfall roared from a gully. From among some rocks, it poured down in torrents through nine levels. Below each level is a pool of deep blue. This is the so-called Nine Dragons Pool [Jiulong Tan]. Mount Huang has no other poised cascades or flying waterfalls, just this one. I proceeded another five *li* in my ascent and passed Bitter Bamboo Bank [Kuzhu Tan]. I then turned and followed along the road to Taiping County, proceeding northwest.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Sightseeing Trip to Nine Carp Lake

[SUMMER 1620, XINGHUA PREFECTURE, XIANYOU COUNTY, FUJIAN]

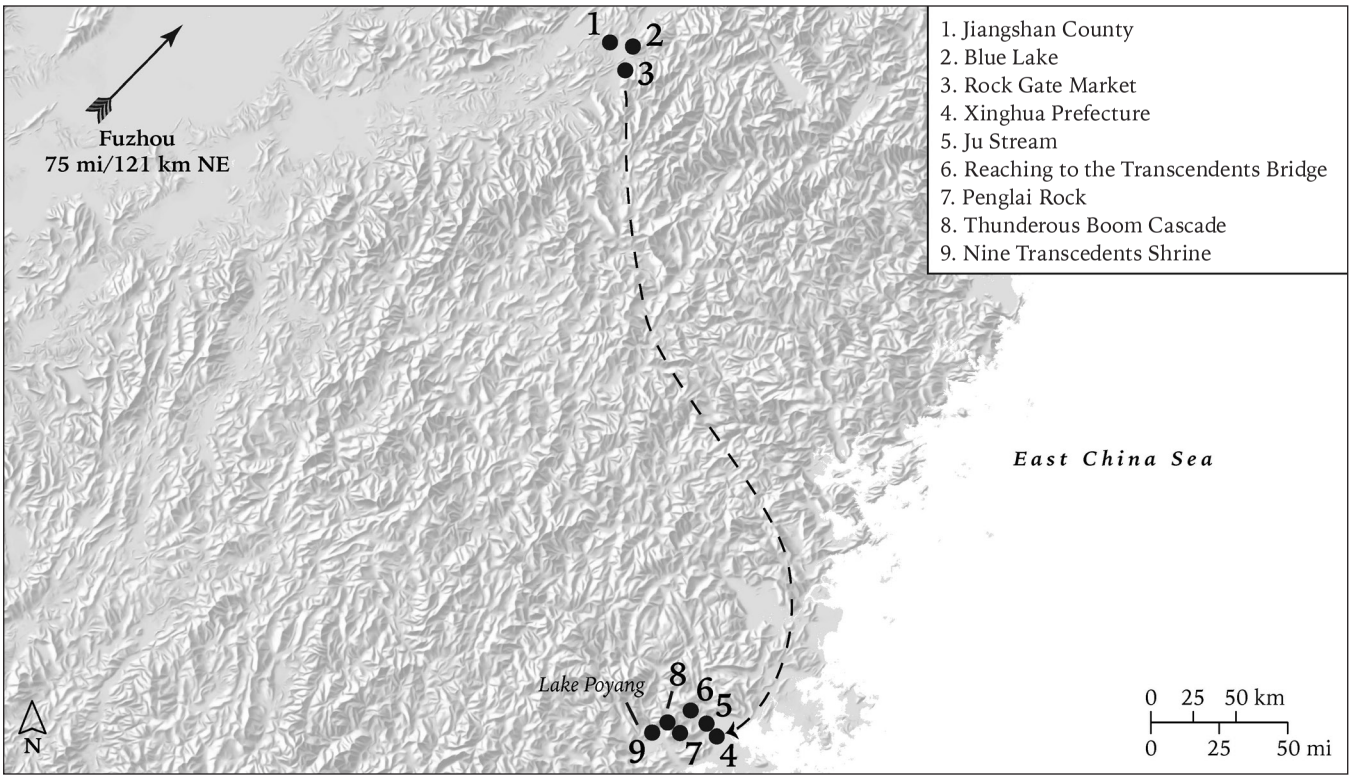
Nine Carp is a small mountain lake 8 mi/13 km northeast of modern Xianyou Xian in southeastern Fujian. According to legend, during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han (Han Wudi; r. 141–87 BCE), nine blind brothers trained at Nine Carp Lake to become Daoist transcendents. After mastering their life-extending techniques, each supposedly ascended into the heavens riding on a carp. The opening lines of this diary entry are important because therein Xu Xiake outlines his future travel plans, which will take him to destinations as far north as Mount Heng in Shanxi and Mount Hua [Huashan] in Shaanxi, as far southwest as Mount Emei in Sichuan, and as far south as the city of Guilin in Guangxi and Mount Luofu [Luofu Shan] in Guangdong.

My sightseeing trip to Zhe and Min took place long ago.[1] I aim to reach Mount Emei in Shu and Guilin in Yue, along with the mountains of

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Source: "You Jiuli Hu riji; Fujian, Xinghua fu, Xianyou xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:51–57; *YJ*, 1:33–37). Xinghua is the area's historical name in Fujian, where it is also known as Putian. Nine Carp Lake is about 8 mi/13 km northeast of modern Xianyou Xian in southern Fujian.

1 Zhe and Min refer to Zhejiang and Fujian. Xu Xiake's travels in those provinces and to Anhui had been undertaken four years earlier, in 1616. Since the comments and place-names mentioned in the next and subsequent lines reveal Xu Xiake's future travel plans, identifying these toponyms is in order. Mount Emei is in Sichuan, referred to here by the province's ancient name Shu. Guilin, still a popular tourist destination, is in Guangxi. Taihua, better known as Mount Hua, is in Shaanxi, about 75 mi/120 km east of modern Xi'an Shi. Among the Five Sacred Mountains, Mount Hua is also known as the Xiyue, or the Sacred Mountain in the West. Mount Heng, or the Sacred Mountain in the North, is in north-central Shanxi. Mount Luofu is in Guangdong, far to the south, and is known for its associations with religious Daoism. The second Mount Heng mentioned by Xu Xiake refers to the Sacred Mountain in the South [Nanyue] in Hunan. The Five Waterfalls are in Zhejiang (referred to here as Yue), while the Nine Cascades [Jiuji]—described in great detail by Xu Xiake in his diary entries below—are the main scenic attraction at Nine Carp Lake in Fujian (or Min). Shu, Guang, and Guanzhong refer to Sichuan, Guangxi, and the Central Shaanxi Plain (Guanzhong, or "the area within the passes"; bounded



Map 9. Nine Carp Lake, 1620

Taihua and Heng the Sacred Mountain in the North. Mountains like Luofu and Heng the Sacred Mountain in the South are next, after which come Five Waterfalls [Wuxie] in Zhejiang and Nine Cascades in Min. But to Shu, Guang, and Guanzhong, the road is far, and my mother is old, so a sightseeing trip to those places is a matter for the future. As for Mount Heng, the Sacred Mountain in the South and the Xiang River, I could visit them on the way to those other places, so I would not need to make a special trip.

Nine Cascades through Three Rocks [Sanshi] on Mount Jianglang is the closest among these sites. So on the day after the Dragon Boat Festival (Duanwu Jie) in the *gengshen* year [6 June 1620], I agreed to meet with my uncle Fangruo to begin our journey.[2] This was precisely when the lichees in Maple Pavilion [Fengting] had just ripened.

> Note in this next diary entry how Xu Xiake describes the changing appearance of Mount Jianglang as he moves closer to it from a distance.

Twenty-third day [23 June]: I only passed Blue Lake in Jiangshan County today. Here, the mountains gradually begin to merge. Along the eastern spur stand numerous dangerous peaks and sheer barriers, while those in the west crouch down and stay low. When I turned my gaze to the far end of the eastern spur, south of it was a peak towering aloft that rubbed against the clouds and poked into the sky, poised as if it was about to take flight. Upon inquiry, I discovered this was Mount Jianglang. As I gazed at it, I pressed on for twenty *li*, passing Rock Gate Market. Mount Jianglang suddenly split in two as I gradually hastened toward it and drew closer. After I made a turn, it split into three sections. By then, the top of the mountain had forked into two halves, split straight down to the base. As I pressed toward the mountain, it became more pointed on top and restrained below, looking like it had broken in two and then reconnected. As I moved toward the mountain, with each step, its form changed, appearing just as illusory as the shapes of clouds!

Numinous Peak on Yandang and Rocky Bamboo Shoot Promontory on Mount Huang stand in clusters, sheer, and upthrust, forming a superlative sight. Both lie within deep valleys. But with their various peaks set against each other, they lose their distinctiveness. The landscape features of Tripod Cauldron Lake Peak [Dinghu Feng] in Jinyun County, vaulted

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by mountains to the north and south; the modern city of Xi'an lies in the heart of this plain). The Hengshan mentioned in conjunction with the Xiang River, a major waterway in south China, refers to the Sacred Mountain in the South. Mount Jianglang is in southern Zhejiang.

2 The Dragon Boat Festival, honoring the courtier-poet Qu Yuan (fl. 300 BCE), falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month. One of the main activities on the holiday, still celebrated today, is races in dragon-shaped boats.

like a dome and rising alone, are even more imposing and pinnacled, but towering right next to it is Pacing the Void Mountain [Buxu Shan].[3] Neither mountain surrenders to the other. Gazing at them from a distance, they seem to form into a single mountain. They are inferior to this peak, which stands prominently above the nearby masses of mountains, and with each of its magical transformations reveals the sum of its wonders.

Seventh day of the sixth month [6 July]: I reached Xinghua Prefecture.

Eighth day [7 July]: I left through the west gate of Pu Commandery.[4] Proceeded northwest for five *li*, climbed up a ridge, and proceeded another forty *li*. After descending and ascending through many ridges, I reached Ju Stream [Juxi]. Ju Stream is the lower reaches of the Nine Cascades. I went by the Ju Stream Government Guesthouse [Juxi Gongguan] and then passed a stream from Rock Step [Shibu].[5] After another two *li*, the stream came to a westbound footpath leading into a depression. Next, to the north, I went to a flight of stairs, then turned and ascended the mountain. The mountain was steep, the sun cruel, and the trail devoid of human traffic. I got lost and needed directions. Since the water from Nine Carp Lake goes through the Nine Cascades as it descends, I assumed that there must be some extraordinary scenes as one ascends the steps. So I pressed on up the steps. Uncle and the servants dreaded and feared the high climb. They thought we had gone the wrong way. A short time later, the way gradually became more obstructed. Uncle and servants became even more convinced that we had gone the wrong way, but I became increasingly more encouraged. Not long afterward, as we ascended more, the higher we went. The trail was secluded, with seemingly no end to it. The scorching sun blazed and burned. I, too, was worn out and exhausted. After several more *li*, we traversed the top of a ridge and mistook it for the absolute summit.

We then turned and headed west. Above the mountain are still higher peaks twice the height of this one. Following the mountain, as it twisted and turned, we proceeded for three *li* to a stretch of level farmland, vast and extensive. I was sure we had made a wrong turn into Wuling, and was no longer aware that we were on the summits of countless mountain peaks.[6] Halfway to our destination, there is a pavilion, from which a path

3 The term "tripod cauldron" (*ding*) is mentioned often in Xu Xiake's travel diaries. Sometimes, as we see here, it is part of a place-name. At other times, it is used in landscape descriptions. A *ding* is a three-legged bronze pot with two loop handles on the sides and a removable lid used in ancient China for cooking and serving food. Jinyun County is modern Jinyun Xian, Zhejiang.

4 Pu Commandery [Pujun] is an alternate name for Xinghua Prefecture.

5 Following *YJJZ*, 1:53, and reading Shibu 石步 ("Rock Step") as a place-name.

6 Here, Xu Xiake references a famous poem and prose account by Tao Qian (or

to the west serves as the trail to Xianyou County. We took the eastern path. To the south, passed Reaching to the Transcendents Bridge [Tongxian Qiao], crossed a small ridge, and then descended to a guesthouse and Penglai Rock [Penglai Shi] and Bell and Drum Tower [Zhonggu Lou]. Thunderous Boom Cascade [Leihong Ji] is there. A mountain stream emerges from the side of Penglai Rock. The rocks in the stream bed are as flat as a whetstone that has been polished smoothly. Water spills evenly over the faces of the rocks, so that it looks just like a veil of thin gauze. As we descended a little farther down, the smooth spots became many depressions, among which were round holes that form "crucibles," "mortars," "goblets," and "wells," all of which take names related to cinnabar. These items are vestiges of the Nine Transcendents.[7] The stream's flow is calm until it reaches here, where suddenly it plummets down into Nine Carp Lake like countless horses at a first gallop, indeed with the force of a thunderclap. This, then, is the extraordinary scene at the first cascade.

Nine Transcendents Shrine [Jiuxian Ci] towers to its west. In front, it overlooks Nine Carp Lake. The lake is not vast and mighty but forms a clear blue expanse above the countless mountains, surrounded by blue sky and rolling, lush green vegetation. The collective spiritual power of the Fashioner of Things (Zaowuzhe) is extraordinary![8] To the shrine's right are scenic sites such as Stone Drum [Shigu], Prime Pearl [Yuanzhu], and Ancient Plum Tree Cavern [Gumei Dong]. Large, coupled rocks on the shrine's flank form Ancient Plum Tree Cavern. A rift in the rocks serves as its entrance. I passed through it and then ascended. This is the former site of the Nine Transcendents Belvedere [Jiuxian Ge]. In front of the shrine is the former site of the Water Crystal Palace [Shuijing Gong]. Today, both locations are in ruins. Where water plummets down across the lake, facing the shrine—this is the stream from the Second to the Ninth Cascades. I proceeded on, following the right side of the lake, until I reached Third Cascade. Then, together with Uncle Fangruo, I quickly backtracked. I told him, "We should calm our minds, rest our spirits,

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Tao Yuanming, 365–427) titled "Peach Blossom Spring" (Taohua yuan). This popular tale describes the chance discovery by a fisherman from Wuling of a hidden utopia populated by a village [Wuling] whose people had led an idyllic existence there for centuries, free from the political instability and the troubled nature of the world outside. The fisherman mistakenly found the utopia by following a stream lined with peach trees in full bloom. He found a cave at the stream's source, which led him to the village.

7 The various alchemical items mentioned in the previous line—all related to cinnabar—were used by the Nine Transcendents to concoct elixirs that helped them transform into transcendent beings.

8 The Fashioner of Things is a supernatural entity responsible for creating the *wanwu*, or "countless things." "Things" refers to everything from human beings to landscape features. Here, Xu Xiake extols the Fashioner's skill at creating the extraordinary scenery around Nine Carp Lake.

and quietly meet with the Nine Transcendents in our dreams tonight. Our minds and eyes have labored enough for today; let us wait until tomorrow to speak of more extraordinary scenic sights."

I backtracked to the shrine, then went to Penglai Rock, where I waded barefoot through a mountain stream. Its flowing water babbled over the soft, vast stream bed; its clear current was light and shallow. I felt like I was on the Ten Islets [Shizhou] and Three Islands [Sandao].[9] Eventually, I lifted my robe and waded across the stream. As I sat in the shrine that evening, the new moon hung above a peak's summit. Looking down, I bowed to the tranquil lake with my hands clasped. My spirit and emotions both felt serenely peaceful. Amid the silence, the stream water burbled and gurgled while the cascades occasionally rumbled like thunder. I prayed to the Nine Transcendents in my dreams that night in the shrine.

Ninth day [8 July]: After departing from Nine Transcendents Shrine, I descended to thoroughly probe Nine Cascades, roughly a few *li* from Nine Carp Lake. The trail down from Third Cascade has already been inaccessible for a long time. Several months ago, the libation official [*jijiu*], Lin Yaoyu (1558–1626), a native of Putian, ordered Lu Shan to restore the bird-track trail here to directly connect through the Nine Cascades and then come out at Ju Stream.[10] I regretted that we did not ascend by the flank footpath that traces back to yesterday's waterfall. As it turns out, we had taken a long way around on the main trail, so we missed seeing this extraordinary scenery. We thereupon packed up our things and changed to this new route. Eventually, we emerged at Nine Cascades. This waterfall is the Second Cascade. Located south of the lake, it is directly opposite the Nine Transcendents Shrine. The water at the end of the lake soars down from here into a deep gorge. Where the rocks in the gorge seem to part—two cliff walls stand countless fathoms high. When the water first comes out of the lake, it is checked by rocks and unable to reach full force. In a rage, it just tumbles down from midair, soaring and spraying, crashing and spurting. The water and rocks each make an incredibly majestic display. After you descend, next comes the Third Cascade's Beaded Curtain Waterfall [Zhulian Quan], the scenery of which is the same as the waterfall above it. The cliff on the right has the Viewing Billows Pavilion [Guanlan Ting]. There is a rock there called Natural Seat [Tianran Zuo]. A pavilion also shelters it. We ascended and descended over ridges and canyons from here, turning and twisting through gorges. The cliff walls in the gorges are hidden on top

9 The terms "Ten Islets" and "Three Islands" refer to imaginary ocean paradises inhabited by transcendent beings.

10 Lin Yaoyu was a native of Xinghua Prefecture, which Xu Xiake refers to here by an alternate name: Putian. The person, Lu Shan, is not further identified.

but peek out below. As for the water at Beaded Curtain Waterfall, it plummets down directly in front. The water of Jade Chopsticks [Yuzhu] gushes and brims over in a cloud of mist. The two waterfalls hang down, side by side. The bases of cliff walls in the gorge are sheer, like iron barriers surrounding it on four sides, which join with the sky on top. Like a pair of jade dragons dancing in the air, the waterfalls descend to the pool's rim below. The water in the pool is deep and hidden, clear and blue. The pool is smaller than Nine Carp Lake, but it is surrounded and bounded by cliff walls, where interweaving waterfalls gather their extraordinary qualities and assemble their surpassing scenes. At the so-called Fourth Cascade, this view is the most beautiful!

Uncle Fangruo was anxious to leave the gorge when we first reached the ravine base. So he sat down at the gorge entrance to wait for me and did not go in. I scaled the edge of the canyon's rocks and went in. I crouched to rest on a rock beside a pool and looked up at the twin waterfalls as they gracefully glided through the air. The cliff rocks overhead were shaped like the mouth of a jar. The rising sun, positioned precisely above the cliff's edge, joined with cascading waves and dashing billows hidden in vapors and a flowing radiance. As I looked up and down, taking in this scene, I could not drag myself away. Following the canyon, I retraced my path as I descended. Suddenly, sheer walls shot up between the two sides of a gorge, through which a river slanted and turned. This marked the trail's end along the mountain stream's right side. To the left, I gazed at wooden planks that formed a bridge over a dangerous jetty amid crumbled stone steps. I crossed the turbulent flow of the stream to where I could clamber and scramble forward. So on the left, where I waded across the mountain stream—this turned out to be Rock Gate at the Fifth Cascade. As for its two cliffs, their walls converge when you reach that spot, leaving only enough space for a single thread. They seem about to join, but they do not join; they seem about to open, but do not open. Below, a fleeting waterfall surges; above, cloud-like shadows block one's view. I apparently was destined to continue, so I scampered right over the wooden planks like a macaque. A cold wind blew. I shivered and shuddered with fear that the planks were about to collapse. The mountains had become deeper as we approached from Fourth Cascade, and the trails had disappeared. The secluded nature and sheer heights around us reached the extreme. But I heard only the trickling of spring water and the chirping of birds.

After I left the Fifth Cascade, the mountain landscape gradually began to open out. On the right side of the torrent, precipitous tors aligned like standing screens. On its left is Flying Phoenix Peak [Feifeng Feng], turning and soaring as it faces the tors. The turbulent flow of the torrent coiled around the base of the peak, sometimes forming into clear pools and at other times casting the peak's reflections. Just like Five Stars [Wuxing] at the Sixth Cascade, Flying Phoenix at the Seventh Cascade,

Chessboard Rock at the Eighth Cascade, and General's Cliff [Jiangjun Yan] at the Ninth Cascade, all have names according to their order. The charm of this area lies in the rising clouds and colorful mist, so I come here to enjoy the surrounding mountains and rivers. Why is it necessary, then, to pursue and then leave a mark on them?[11] Presumably, the rivers take advantage of the landscape where the gorges spread out, thus flowing about at will. Beside them are collapsed cliffs and fallen rocks. The rocks that slant and stick out form crags; those that are cross-angled and erect form chambers; those piled in layers become lofts; those that twist and turn become caverns. Water seemingly poised in midair forms waterfalls; water that flows in circles forms streams; water that collects in one place forms springs. One can sit, lie, rest, and wash in these places. And in the shade cast by bamboo and trees, one can frolic in clouds and mist. I could not take my eyes off these sights for several more *li*. All day long, I encountered scenes where my feet refused to advance! Whenever I descended to a place where I spotted another cave, I had to push through a crevice and go in. Inside, the caves are winding but unimpeded; the sides are spacious. It was impossible to take in the entire scene! As for Three Shelves on Mount Lu and the Dragon Splash Pool on Mount Yandang, some waters there are seemingly poised in midair, some are motionless, and some are in winged flight, pouring down in layers. Each has surpassing scenery with only one unique aspect, unlike this mountain, which is unassuming in stature but has it all.

I left Ninth Cascade. Following the torrent and holding close to the mountain, I turned and headed east for five *li*. Proceeded another five *li* and reached Rock Step at Ju Stream, where I came out onto the trail we had taken before. Only then did I come across families who tilled fields in the clouds and gathered firewood among the rocks. However, seeing that a stranger had arrived, all of them were surprised and amazed.

Tenth day [9 July]: Passed Garlic Ridge Relay Station [Suanling Yi] and reached Elm Stream [Yuxi]. I heard it was forty *li* to Transverse Route Relay Station [Henglu Yi], where I would find Rock and Bamboo Mountain [Shizhu Shan].[12] Its craggy rocks are its most surpassing scenic sight. It is also where the Nine Transcendents prayed to spirits in their dreams.

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11 This line marks one of the few times in Xu Xiake's diaries where he comments on the purpose of sightseeing. His rhetorical question suggests that a place's actual value lies in its landscape's natural beauty. At the same time, he questions the notion of seeking personal recognition by leaving one's mark at scenic sites. The term *keji* 刻跡 (leaving one's mark) refers to sightseers who leave graffiti on cliff walls or rocks to commemorate their visit to a notable place. Instead, Xu emphasizes appreciating places like Nine Carp Lake for their intrinsic beauty and value.

12 Following *YJJZ*, 1:56n15, and reading: "Rock and Bamboo Mountain" [Shizhu Shan 石竹山].

In Min, there is a saying: "In the spring, go sightseeing at Rock and Bamboo Mountain; in the fall, go sightseeing at Nine Carp Lake." Transverse Route Relay Station was another fifteen *li* from here, so I spent the night at Elm Stream. Although I failed to time our visit to the right season, we were so nearby that I could not pass up the opportunity. And, since we were in high spirits, we made the trip.

Eleventh Day [10 July]: Reached Glass Post Station [Boli Pu], where I followed a small path to sightsee at Rock and Bamboo Mountain.[13] Headed toward the mountains in the west for five *li*, then crossed a small ridge. After another five *li*, crossed a stream. This area is the southern foothills of Rock and Bamboo Mountain. Following the foothills, I turned west. Looking up, I saw peak summits and amassed cliffs, some of which seemed intact while others seemed split. I proceeded northwest for quite a while and came to a loft on a mountainside facing west, with a trail to climb up to it. Its stone steps were quite steep, and so, in my short jacket, I ascended, step by step. The stairway zigzagged in the shady foliage of trees and rocks. Gnarly branches and old vines intertwined on the tops of precipitous rocks leaning against the cliffs. Gibbons cried out above and below us, calling and responding to no end. Suddenly, a pavilion arose, perched on a precipitous rock, upthrust, lofty, and utterly matchless. This pavilion marks the midpoint of the mountain. I turned again, where the stone steps, tall and majestic, ascended straight up. When the steps ended, the eaves of flying crags covered me almost as if they were hanging poised in midair. After two more turns on the ascent, I went through the side entrance of a rocky cavern. You emerge from the other side at the Nine Transcendents Belvedere, which is spacious, expansive, elegant, and immaculate. On the left are cottages for monks, nestled against the mountain and standing loftily in the void, where one can linger and loiter and gaze far into the distance. Behind the belvedere, five or six sheer peaks stand side by side, several scores of rods high. Each peak is two or three feet distant from the next. The cracks between the peaks and their rocky walls look like they have been cut with a knife. The trail twists and turns through the cracks, penetrating and passing through to the summit of each peak. Pine tree branches hanging down and vines extending out made a dramatic scene as far as the eye could see. A monk served tea grown on the mountain that was fragrant and relaxing. I descended a side footpath and then reached a hanging crag. The trail on the left changed into another footpath. I said to the others: "There must be some unusual sights hereabouts." And sure enough, another rocky cavern was embedded in the void, standing erect. I pushed through the

13 Reading *boli* 波黎 in the name of this relay station as an alternate written form of *boli* 玻璃, or "glass."

cavern, began my descent, and immediately reached Mountain Midpoint Pavilion [Banshan Ting]. I descended the mountain and came out at Transverse Route Relay Station and then made my return.

This sightseeing tour lasted sixty-three days. I transited through two provinces and passed through nineteen counties and eleven prefectures. As for sightseeing tours to famous mountains, there were three.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Song

[SPRING 1623, HENAN PREFECTURE, DENGFENG COUNTY, HENAN]

Mount Song is a range of peaks in central China, stretching along the Yellow River's southern bank. The mountain has several alternate names, including Song the Sacred [Songyue], Arcane Sacred [Xuanyue], and Central Sacred [Zhongyue]. Because of its central location among China's Five Sacred Mountains [Wuyue], it is often regarded as the most important among them.

Daoist and Buddhist religious activity on the mountain began in the early Six Dynasties. Mount Song comprises two main peaks: Greater Chambers Mountain [Taishi Shan] and Lesser Chambers Mountain [Shaoshi Shan]. The Shaolin River [Shaolin He] demarcates these heights. The term "chamber(s)" (*shi*), as it is used here and in the diary, refers to a mountain with many rocky caverns (*shishi*).

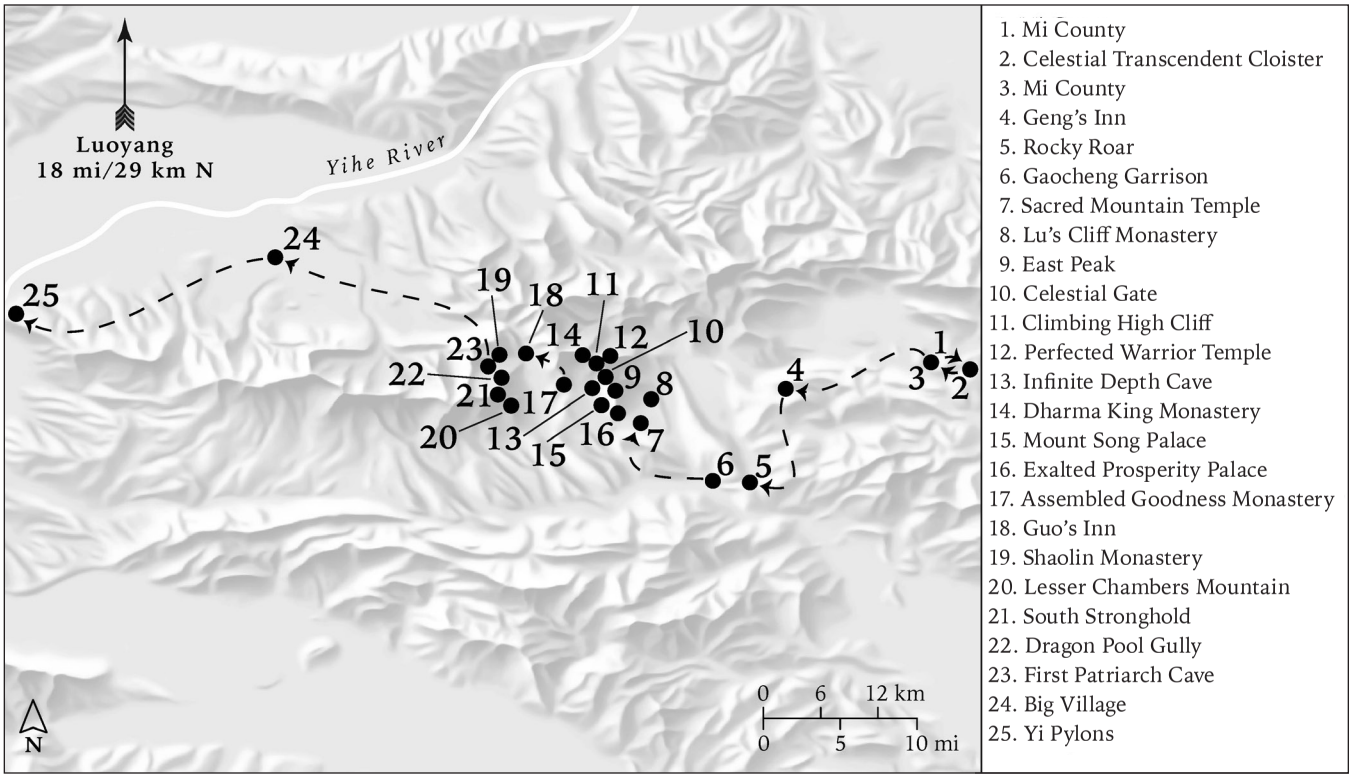
Since childhood, I have cherished the ambition of visiting the Five Sacred Mountains. Because the Arcane Sacred Mountain is regarded as superior among them, my admiration of it has been especially heartfelt. For a long time, I have planned to transit through Xiang and Yun, stroke Taihua with my hands, and then take the Linked Clouds Plankway at Sword Belvedere as the first leg of my journey to Mount Emei.[1] But my mother is old, and my ambitions have changed, so I have no choice but to journey now to Mount Taihe, as I had planned earlier, which is a sightseeing trip with a specific destination.[2] To head upstream

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Source: "You Songshan riji; Henan, Henan fu, Dengfeng xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:58–71; *YJ*, 1:39–46). During the Ming dynasty, the administrative seat of Henan Prefecture was in modern Luoyang Shi. Dengfeng County corresponds to modern Dengfeng Shi, about 46 mi/74 km southeast of Luoyang.

1 Xiang and Yun refer to Xiangyang and Yunyang Prefectures in northern Hubei, along the border with Henan. As noted earlier, Taihua, which Xu Xiake describes in his next diary, is another name for Mount Hua, also known the Sacred Mountain in the West. "Sword Belvedere" refers to Sword Belvedere Road [Jian'ge Dao], also known as Sword Gate Pass on the Road to Shu [Jianmen Shudao], a strategic passageway that connects Shaanxi and Sichuan. It is situated in a narrow gap between two mountains with high walls that resemble "belvederes." Traditionally, it was regarded as the "gateway" into Sichuan.

2 The diary of Xu's journey to Mount Taihe is translated below. The expression "sightseeing trip with a specific destination" (*you fang zhi you* 有方之游)



Map 10. Mount Song, 1623

along the Changjiang would prolong my journey for days. It would be better to proceed overland and return by boat, which would be faster and thus save time. So the plan was to move overland through Ru and Deng Subprefectures, about the same distance as the route through Shaan and Bian Subprefectures.[3] This way, I could simultaneously enjoy all the sights on Mount Song and Mount Hua and then pay court to Tai the Sacred Mountain [Taiyue].[4] So, in the *guihai* year, on the first day of the second month [1 March 1623], I decided to set out on the road to Song the Sacred Mountain. After nineteen days, I reached Huang Zong's Inn [Huangzong Dian] in Zheng Subprefecture, Henan. I climbed a rocky slope from the right side of the inn, where I saw Sage Monk Pond [Shengseng Chi]. Clear spring water fills the pond, which rises to the midpoint of a blue-green mountain. Below the mountain is a deep canyon of honeycombed terraces. These are dried-up riverbeds without a drop of water.

I descended the slope and proceeded along the base of the canyon. Following Incense Burner Mountain [Xianglu Shan], I zigzagged as I moved south. With its three-pointed peak, the shape of the mountain resembles an overturned tripod cauldron. Surrounded by a throng of mountains, its beauty is exquisite and enchanting. At the canyon's base is a jumble of rocks covering a purple and jade-green gulch. The rocky walls of the two mountains on each side twist and twine; they are finely textured and glossy smooth in appearance. I imagined that when a clear flow of water collects and pours down, showering the walls with pearls and coloring them deep, dark green, the scene would be even more spectacular than this! I proceeded ten *li* and climbed to Stone Buddha Ridge [Shifo Ling]. Proceeded another five *li* and entered the boundary of Mi County, where I gazed at Mount Song, which was still sixty *li* away.[5] From a spur along the trail, I proceeded southeast for twenty-five *li*. Passed Mi County, then reached Celestial Transcendent Cloister [Tianxian Yuan]. This cloister offers sacrifices to the Celestial Transcendent, the third daughter of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi).[6] As for the white pine tree in the central courtyard behind the shrine, according to legend, the third daughter exuviated her bones under that tree.[7] The pine tree is so large that it would take the arm spans of four people to embrace it. Like a tripod cauldron, its three trunks tower into the firmament. Its

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refers to Xu Xiake's filial responsibilities to his mother. As noted earlier, those obligations led him to choose a closer travel destination [Mount Taihe] if he needed to return home to Jiangyin on short notice.

3 The four counties mentioned here were all in modern Henan.

4 Mount Tai in Shandong is also known as Dongyue, or the Sacred Mountain in the East. "Pay court" means "to visit."

5 Modern Mi Xian, Henan.

6 In Chinese mythology, the Yellow Emperor is the first and most revered of five legendary emperors. He is also a mythical patron of Daoism.

7 In other words, she transformed into a transcendent.

bark is as smooth as condensed fat; its pure whiteness is greater than powdery makeup. Its winding branches curl and coil while its green mane dances in the wind. Like a jade stalk, it stands majestically in midair. Indeed, this is a remarkable sight! Surrounded by a stone balustrade, its covered veranda looks north. Inside the veranda, one finds a profusion of inscribed poems. I paced about for quite a while, then descended to observe water dropping from a cliff above. Upon reaching here, the canyon suddenly sinks; a portion of the cliff covers it from above. The dropping water slows to a trickle below it. I returned to Mi County, reaching its west gate. Proceeded twenty-five *li* and crossed the boundary of Dengfeng County, reaching Geng's Inn [Gengdian], where the trail heads south to Rocky Roar.[8] So I halted there.

Twentieth day [20 March]: I proceeded south for twenty-five *li* along a small footpath, seeing nothing but earthen ridges and disorderly field paths. After some time passed, I came to a stream. Crossed the stream, then proceeded south along the spine of a knoll. When I looked down, Rocky Roar came into view. I had entered Daliang, an open, flat land, vast and still. It was called Between Land and Sea [Luhai] in ancient times.[9] On its ground, it is challenging to find springs, and it is especially hard to find rocks where there are springs. Only as I approached Mount Song did I see its wiggling and writhing massed peaks. Thus, to the north flows the Jing and Xu Streams, while to the south flows the Ying River [Yingshui]. They all wind and crawl through earth and moraine. All by itself, some thirty *li* southeast of Dengfeng County, is Rocky Roar. As it turns out, its flow originates in a valley east of Mount Song. Soon after that, it flows down into the Ying River.

> Xu Xiake's description of various rock forms along Rocky Roar ranks among the most vivid landscape descriptions in his entire oeuvre. Note how he likens the different shapes of the rocks to animal shapes and how water *moving* through the rocks forms different postures and colors, including even human-like skin and bones.

8 Rocky Roar, also known as the Rocky Roar River [Shicong He], is a scenic waterway that originates on Mount Song. The beautiful landscape along the river has attracted sightseers since at least the Tang dynasty.

9 Daliang was the capital of the State of Wei (Weiguo) during the Warring States period. Later, this same name was used (as it is here) as an alternate designation for the area in and around modern Kaifeng Shi, Henan. Luhai refers to the region's location between the land (*lu*) and the sea (*hai*). The same area is known as the Central Plains [Zhongyuan].

Rocky Roar's movement is jarring and jerky, twisting and turning, always moving on lower ground. When it reaches this spot, it suddenly meets ferocious rocks. The rocks stand between a lofty knoll and a mountain gorge, poised as if guarding a mountain pass or holding a strategic position. The water seeps down to the lower side of the mountain, where water and rocks meld and mix and seem like patterned silk in countless different forms. The two cliff walls surrounded by water seemingly form into standing swans, form into geese walking in file; rocks perched in the center of the stream seem to form into rhinoceroses drinking water, form into tigers taking their repose. The rocks down low are like islets; those up high are flat like terraces. The higher you go, the farther the rocks are from the water. And so those rocks even higher in the sky form cavities and form caves. I figured the distance of the rocks from the cliff to be eight feet and the distance of those up past the water to be several rods. The water moves between the rocks where they rise above the water, forming gestures, forming hues, forming skin, and forming bones, in every way stunning and beautiful. I never thought trudging through yellow grass and white reeds could take me to a place that would thoroughly wash my dusty eyes![10]

I climbed onto some elevated farmland paths and proceeded west for ten *li*, which brought me to Gaocheng Garrison [Gaocheng Zhen]. In ancient times, this was the site of Gaocheng County.[11] Survey the Scene Terrace [Cejing Tai] is to its north. I proceeded twenty-five *li* northwest, which brought me to Sacred Mountain Temple [Yuemiao]. The sun had already set when I entered East Flower Gate [Donghua Men]. I thought Lu's Cliff [Luyan] had an alluring appeal, so by the temple, I proceeded northeast, following the mountain. I crossed several levels of bumpy and bouncy trails. After ten *li*, I turned and entered the mountain, where I came to Lu's Cliff Monastery [Luyan Si]. Several paces beyond the temple, I heard the clattering-like sound of flowing water plummeting into a rocky gorge. Profuse and plentiful mists on the two sides of the gorge formed into sunglow clouds. I headed upstream and reached the back of the monastery. At the base of the gorge is a tall cliff, ringing around like a semi-circle, sprawling on top and tapered below. A flying cascade

10 The expression "wash one's dusty eyes" (*xi chenyan* 洗塵眼) is commonly used to mean "provide a lavish dinner to welcome a guest from far away." However, Xu uses the expression figuratively; he never imagined the scene at Rocky Roar would "welcome" him so warmly, especially after he had trudged through grasses and reeds to get there.

11 Gaocheng is well-known in Chinese history. Before the eighth century, it was called Yangcheng and supposedly served as the capital of the Xia dynasty, founded by the legendary emperor Yu the Great, who tamed the great floods in remote antiquity. It is also the site of one of China's earliest astronomical observatories, which reportedly dates from the Western Zhou period.

descends through the air, dancing like a strand of raw silk. As its moist mist scattered and filled the entire valley, the scene seemed comparable to Water Curtain Cave [Shuilian Dong] on Mount Wuyi. Presumably, it is extraordinary to find such a stream in this environment. Moreover, one can indeed find rocks in the streams here. The rocks also help the streams and do not obstruct the water. They can also make streams fly forward. This scene, compared to the landscape at Mount Wuyi, is especially surpassing. I paced around the waterfall's base, where the monk Sanskrit Voice (Fanyin) provided me with tea and snacks. I then hastily backtracked to Sacred Mountain Temple, where it was already dusky and dark.

> Sometimes, in his diary entries, Xu Xiake provides explanatory footnotes. These are introduced by the verb "take note" (*an*). In the opening lines of this next entry, he alerts readers that Mount Song, in its role as the "Sacred Mountain in the Center" [Zhongyue], is the most important among China's Five Sacred Mountains and thus receives priority in the "ordering and prioritizing" of imperial sacrifices at sacred mountains.

Twenty-first day [21 March]: I paid my respects to the Sacred Mountain Thearch (Yuedi) at dawn.[12] After leaving the ceremonial hall, I headed toward the ultimate summit of Greater Chambers. Note: Since Mount Song is regarded as the center of Heaven and Earth, in the ordering and prioritizing of ceremonial sacrifices, it ranks first among the Five Sacred Mountains. So it is called Mount Song On High [Songgao]. Side by side with Lesser Chambers, it towers aloft. At its base, there are numerous caves and grottoes. Thus, Mount Song is also called Greater Chambers. The two chambers face each other from a distance like a pair of eyebrows, but Lesser Chambers is jagged and rugged, while Greater Chambers is bold and formidable, regarding itself as emperor and sitting as if "his" back is facing a screen.[13] Linked cliffs span crosswise, beginning from the hazy blue hills in the distance and moving upward. Those arranged in lines are like standing screens; those spread out are like banners. This scene made the mountain seem even more salient and striking. The revered Feng sacrifice to Heaven was first performed on Mount Song in remote antiquity.[14] Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty

12 The Sacred Mountain Thearch is the principal resident deity of Mount Song.

13 In ancient China, imperial audience halls were arranged on a north-south axis. The emperor sat in the northernmost section of the hall facing south, usually with a standing screen behind him. In court ritual, the emperor was regarded as the North Star, while everyone in the hall positioned themselves as stars to his south. The expression "face one's back to the screen" (*fuyi*) is a metaphor meaning "regard oneself emperor."

14 The Feng sacrificial ceremony to heaven was sometimes performed by emperors on the summits of China's sacred mountains, especially Mount Tai

regarded the calls echoing around Mount Song (Songhu) as extraordinary, so he made a special effort to build a sacrificial hall in the prefecture here. During the Song dynasty, when the imperial capital precinct was nearby, lavish celebrations and ceremonies were carried out on the mountain.[15] Even today, at the ultimate summit, the fame of sites such as Iron Beam Bridge [Tieliang Qiao] and Beating the Summer Heat Stronghold [Bishu Zhai] remains. I can certainly imagine the grandeur of the ceremonies once held on Mount Song in the past.

The southeast spur of Greater Chambers is called Yellow Lid Peak [Huanggai Feng]. The Sacred Mountain Temple is below the peak. In design and arrangement, it is extensive and grand. In its courtyard are steles on tall and upright stone slabs, all coming down from the Song and Liao dynasties. I climbed the sacred mountain by the main trail below Myriad Years Peak [Wansui Feng], south of Greater Chambers. Yesterday, while pressing on to Lu's Cliff, I first passed East Peak [Dongfeng]. A pinnacled tor exquisitely revealed itself along the trail. It is split down the middle, looking just like a gate. Someone suggested it is Jade Maiden Gully [Yunü Gou] on Golden Peak [Jinfeng]. There is also a trail from here where you can climb to the summit. So I found a woodcutter and arranged for him to guide me. Today, we set off on our ascent.

The trail gradually became more winding as we approached the place with the exquisite crack. We tried to avoid it, but the terrain was too treacherous and steep, so we could not track across it. We headed toward an earthen hill to the north. The trail was as narrow as a thread, with only room enough for me alone to clamber and traverse. After about twenty *li*, we crossed East Peak, then turned and emerged above the gate-shaped tor. Then headed west and tracked through a narrow mountain ridge. Gazing at the ultimate summit, we proceeded on. The thick clouds seemed like they were spewing black ink on this day, but that did not stop me. After reaching here, the mountain mist became heavier. When the sky opened a little, I looked down at sheer walls and folds of cliffs, which seemed like outspread silk and cut jade. When they joined, I felt like I was sailing on a great sea. After five *li*, we reached Celestial Gate. Above and below are rocky cliffs piled one on top of the other. Most of the trail was covered in snow. The guide pointed out that Big Iron Beam Bridge [Da Tieliang Qiao] is a steep and sheer spot in the distance.[16] We turned west for another three *li*, circled a peak, and descended to the south, where we came to Climbing High Cave [Denggao Yan].

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in Shandong, to honor and communicate with spirits and deities. Xu Xiake mentions in the next line that Emperor Wu of the Han (Wudi; r. 141–87 BCE) performed the Feng Sacrifice on Mount Song.

15 Mount Song is about 96 mi/155 km southwest of Kaifeng, the capital of the Northern Song dynasty.

16 Presumably, this is the same Iron Beam Bridge mentioned earlier.

In general, mountain caves in deep and secluded places are mostly inaccessible, while those that are accessible lack the scenic appeal of twists and turns and brilliant reflections. Above, the cave nestles against cliff layers; below, it overlooks an inaccessible gulch. On the ridge is a cave-like opening supported and protected by layered tors, while on the left and right, it is surrounded by, and nestled against, peaks that look like terraces and barriers. When one first enters the opening, it is cavernously deep, while the cave's walls are slanted and provide passage through. I pushed on for several paces. Then suddenly, we reached a five-foot gap, with nowhere to put my toes. The guide was an old, experienced woodcutter, wary and agile, just like a gibbon. He turned his body sideways and leaped across the gap to the opposite cliff, took two branches from a tree, and placed them across the gap to serve as a walkway for me. After I crossed, the cliff became vaulted like a dome, sprawling on top. On it were various surpassing sights such as Teat Spring [Ruquan], Cinnabar Crucible [Danzao], and Rocky Couch [Shita]. From the flank of the cliff, we mounted some steps and ascended, then came to yet another terrace, which on three sides hangs seemingly poised inside an inaccessible gulch. The guide remarked: "Here we can look down on Dengfeng County, as well as Mount Ji [Jishan] and the Ying River in the distance." However, dense fog surrounded us, and nothing could be seen. We left the cliff and turned north for two *li*, then came to the former site of the White Crane Abbey. It is on a mountain mesa, away from danger and close to level terrain. A solitary pine standing upright suggested a sense of isolation. We proceeded another three *li* before mounting the steps to the ultimate summit and the Perfected Warrior Temple [Zhenwu Miao]. It has three pillars in front. On its flank is a well with crystal-clear water. It is called Charioteer's Well [Yujing]. It was dug when the Song emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) came here to escape the heat of summer.[17]

We had a meal in the Perfected Warrior Temple and then asked about trails going down the mountain. The guide remarked, "The main trail is twenty *li* from Myriad Years Peak to the mountain's base. If we descend from West Gully [Xigou], where a small stream flies down in torrents, we can save half the time, but the trail is perilous and steep." I was pleased to hear this, for Mount Song is often described as lacking remarkable scenic sights simply because it lacks precipitous heights. Following directly behind the guide, I thereupon took my walking stick and headed forward toward the gully. Earlier, on the peak's summit, the wet mist was like rain, but when we reached here, it gradually began to clear, and the scene gradually became more extraordinary. At first, we held close to the

17 I have not been able to confirm that the Song dynasty emperor Zhenzong visited Mount Song "to escape the heat of summer," but we know that in 1013, he provided funds for substantial building projects on the mountain.

cliff and climbed over rocks, cutting a gap through thick bushes to descend. Not long afterward, while sliding straight down between two rocky gorges, I gazed up into the distance at a narrow cliff that pressed hard against the sky. However, everywhere along this steep gully are crumbled stairway stones. So no matter what, I was unable to proceed. But at the same time, I was unable to stop. The farther I descended, the more magnificent the physical features of the cliffs became. We would turn where one gorge ended, and there was another. I would neither let my eyes blink to the side nor let my feet find a place to rest. We reached flat land when we emerged from the gorge and came to the main trail, where we passed Infinite Depth Cave [Wuji Dong]. The trail was like this for ten *li*. Crossed a ridge to the west, pressed on through some thick brush, and after five more *li* came to Dharma King Monastery [Fawang Si].[18] The monastery has canary-creeper flowers (*jinlian hua*), a local specialty found nowhere else. A mountain rain suddenly began to fall, so I spent the night on a couch in a monk's hut. To the east, two rocky peaks pressed together, standing erect. With the arrival of each new moon, it comes out in the very center of the gorge. This is the so-called Awaiting the Moon at the Gate to Mount Song [Songmen Daiyue]. The gorges I passed on my descent are above it. Now, as I sit facing it, I only sense the presence of cloudy mists, appearing and disappearing. I could not believe I had just come down from way up there!

Twenty-second day [22 March]: I left the mountain, proceeded east for five *li*, and reached the abandoned site on the Southern Side of Mount Song Palace [Songyang Gong].[19] Only the Cypress Trees of the Three Generals [San Jiangjun Bai], thickly clustered like mountains, remain.[20] The trees were awarded this feudal title during the Han dynasty. The girth of the enormous tree measures the arm spans of seven people, the one in the middle five arm spans, and the smaller one three arm spans. North of the cypress trees is a hall with three columns in front, where sacrifices are offered to the two Cheng gentlemen.[21] West of the cypress

18 Reading Fawang Si 法王寺, or Dharma King Monastery, rather than Fahuang Si 法皇寺. Constructed in 71 CE, this is one of the oldest Buddhist temples in China.

19 This is the most famous religious site on the mountain, along with the Shaolin Monastery [Shaolin Si]. It was founded in 484 on a land plot that would later host the famous Southern Side of Mount Song Academy (Songyang Shuyuan). Xu Xiake used the name Songyang Palace here, which was adopted later.

20 Some sources report that Emperor Wu of the Han granted these giant cypress trees military titles when he visited Mount Song in 110 BCE.

21 The "two Cheng gentlemen" referenced here are Cheng Hao (1032–85) and his younger brother Cheng Yi (1033–1107), both of whom were prominent advocates of Neo-Confucianism during the Northern Song dynasty. They supposedly lectured on Mount Song during the reign of the Northern Song emperor Shenzong (r. 1068–85).

trees is a stone pillar from the ceremonial hall that used to be there. Inscribed on the pillar are the names of numerous figures dating from the Song dynasty. Most of it is underground. The only names I could make out were Zu Wuze (1006–85) of Fanyang, Kou Wuzhong of Shanggu, and Su Shunyuan (1006–54).[22] Southwest of the cypress trees is a majestic stele standing prominently. On all four sides are carved exquisite water krakens. To the right is a Tang dynasty stele with text composed by Pei Jiong (fl. 750s) and written by Xu Hao (703–82) in the *bafen* calligraphy style.[23]

Proceeded another two *li* east and passed the Exalted Prosperity Palace's [Chongfu Gong] old site, also known as Myriad Longevities Palace [Wanshou Gong]. This is where chief ministers during the Song dynasty appointed and designated government officials. Farther east is Mother of Qi Rock [Qimu Shi], which is as big as several rooms.[24] On its flank is a single, flat rock resembling a whetstone. I proceeded another eight *li* east, where I returned to Sacred Mountain Temple for a meal and looked at some Song and Yuan dynasty steles. Moved eight *li* west and then passed into Dengfeng County. Proceeded west for five *li* and continued northwest along a small footpath. After another five *li,* entered the Assembled Goodness Monastery [Huishan Si]. Inside a small verandah west of the monastery is a tea board (*chabang*). The inscription on it dates from the Yuan dynasty.[25] Behind it is a stone stele connected to the lower part of a wall, upon which is inscribed "Account of the Ordination Estrade" (Jietan ji) dating from the Zhenyuan reign (785–805) of the Tang dynasty, composed by Lu Changyuan (d. 799), Prefect of Ru Subprefecture, and written in the calligraphy of Lu Ying from Henan. Farther west is the abandoned site of the Ordination Estrade [Jietan]. The inscriptions and carvings on the stone steles are exquisite and skillfully wrought, but they all lay abandoned in grass and gravel. I proceeded southwest for five *li*, then exited the main trail. After another ten *li*, reached Guo's Inn [Guodian]. I then turned and headed southwest on the path to the Shaolin Monastery. Proceeded another five *li* and then entered the monastery. Spend the night in the monk Auspicious Light's (Ruiguang) quarters.

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22 Zu Wuze was a well-known Northern Song political figure. Kou Wuzhong is not further identified. Su Shunyuan (courtesy name Caiweng) was a noted artist, calligrapher, and poet.

23 When the stele was erected, Pei Jiong was Henan's municipal governor. Xu Hao was a famous Tang dynasty calligrapher. The *bafen* Chinese calligraphy style is a variety of clerical script (*lishu*) that is based on elements or parts of other styles.

24 Qi (dates unknown) was the son of Yu the Great, the first sovereign of the Xia dynasty. Qi later succeeded his father as king.

25 "Tea board" is a term related to tea culture in China. Usually, it ranks or lists tea-related items or experiences on a "board" or tablet. The tea board mentioned here was probably mounted on a wall.

In this next entry, Xu Xiake describes the Shaolin Monastery, traditionally regarded as the birthplace of Chan (or Zen) Buddhism. Built in 495 CE, the temple became associated with martial arts in the seventh century, when Shaolin monks—trained in kung fu (*gongfu*)—rescued an imperial prince who later became the founder of the Tang dynasty. Afterward, Shaolin expanded into a vast monastic complex and housed two thousand monks.

Twenty-third day [23 March]: The clouds and mists have completely disappeared. Went into the main ceremonial hall. After finishing a ritual ceremony venerating the Buddha, I began my climb to the South Stronghold [Nanzhai]. South Stronghold is on the ultimate summit of Lesser Chambers. Its height equals Greater Chambers', but its peaks and tors are steep and abrupt, bearing the collective name Nine Tripod Cauldrons Lotus Blossom [Jiuding Lianhua]. Looking down, Nine Teat Peak [Jiuru Feng] rings behind it, wiggling and writhing east until it connects with Lesser Chambers. The Shaolin Monastery is to its north. The monastery is orderly and beautiful. In its courtyard, new and old steles stand in ranks, forming rows, all in perfect condition. The two pine trees on each side of the monastery's flight of steps are lofty, magnificent, and orderly as if they had been measured to order. Lesser Chambers spans across and towers in front of the monastery. It is so high one cannot see the top. When sightseers stand facing the wall-like peak, they often mistakenly assume that Lesser Chambers is farther away and superior in height. When I entered the monastery at dusk last night, I immediately asked about the trail to Lesser Chambers. Everyone remarked that the snow was deep, and the trail cut off, so there was no way to go there. As a rule, when climbing mountains, the ideal time is when the weather is sunny and bright. When I climbed Greater Chambers, the clouds and mists were brimming and boundless. Some people take this to be a refusal of the mountain's spirits and transcendents to allow visitors, unaware that the mountain is imposing and colossal. One must hold off until only half its profile is revealed to see its true form. If the artistry of Lesser Chambers lies in how rocks and mists complement one another, then how could the presence of some minuscule clouds tinge and taint the mountain's beauty? Today, the skies have cleared up quite a bit. Having come upon this opportunity, how could anything stop me? So from the monastery's south, I crossed a mountain stream and began climbing Lesser Chambers.

After six or seven *li*, I came to Second Patriarch Retreat [Erzu An].[26] Upon reaching this part of the mountain, the earthen terrain ended

26 "Second Patriarch" (Erzu) is Wise Possibility (Huike, 487–593), the Second Patriarch of the Chan/Zen lineage in China. The First Patriarch, Bodhidharma (Chinese: Damo dashi; ca. fifth cent.), is mentioned at the beginning of the next diary entry below.

abruptly, turning to rock. Rocky cliffs plummeted down, forming ravines. Half of the ravines have waterfalls flying down to jutting rocks below. They are also called "beaded curtains" (*zhulian*). Leaning on my walking stick alone, I proceeded ahead. The farther I descended, the harder it was to find the trail. I reached the cliff only after some time passed. It is not as majestic and expansive as Lu's Cliff but is deeper and steeper. Below the cliff is a deep pool, hidden and cerulean, with hard-packed snow piled all around it. Continuing my ascent, I reached Refining Cinnabar Terrace. It stands alone, overhanging on three sides. Slanted and nestled against a blue-green wall, it has a pavilion called Little Bit of Heaven [Xiaoyou Tian Ting]. Climber clogs worn to explore deeply secluded spots have never reached this place.[27]

After passing through a rocky ridge, I climbed and clambered straight up some stone steps. On both sides are dangerous cliffs, countless fathoms high. The rocky ridge I was on stood poised among them. There probably was not even an inch of earth on the ground. I was only able to ascend by using both my hands and feet. I traversed the great peak only after covering seven more *li*. The peak's contour is broad and extended. When I was on a precipitous rock, suddenly everything turned to earth again. The perilous rocks ahead abruptly ended. Everything turned to soil. Amid bushes and brambles, thick and teeming, I ascended about five *li* to the south and drew near the summit of South Stronghold (Nanzhai). Only then did the layer of earth covering the rocks disappear. South Stronghold is actually on the northern summit of Lesser Chambers. But when described from the Shaolin Monastery, it becomes South Stronghold, or so I was told. Presumably, its summit is split down the middle, forming a horizontal boundary from south to north. The northern summit appears to be spread out like a standing screen; the southern summit, like an arrayed row of halberds, towers in front of it. The two summits are about eight to ten feet apart, with a deep cliff between them, which seemed to be split down the middle. Hemmed between the two cliffs, a single peak rises prominently from the base of a ravine, taller than the other peaks. This is the so-called Plucking Stars Terrace [Zhaixing Tai], the center of Lesser Chambers. Its absolute summit nestles near the north cliff, but its peaks are entirely cut off from one another, so one cannot cross. I gazed down below it and saw a single silk-thread trail. I took off my robe and followed it, climbing to the top. Then before me, standing like a forest, were the nine peaks of the south summit, while behind me, like a transverse barrier, was half the wall of the northern summit. Everywhere to the east and west were deep ravines. I looked down but could not see the bottom. Suddenly, a blast of wind arrived, and I imagined I was a feather about to fly away.

27 In other words, even the most capable sightseers, who wear special climbing clogs, have never reached this remote section of Mount Song.

From South Stronghold, I turned northeast, descended an earthen hill, and suddenly saw tiger tracks as big as a pint.[28] In the thick brush, I proceeded five or six *li* and came to a thatch grass retreat. I struck a flint and made some porridge from the rice I had brought. After drinking down three or four bowls, my hunger and thirst were quickly dispelled. I asked the monk at the retreat to tell me the way to Dragon Pool. I descended to a peak. The peak's ridge gradually narrowed, with earth and rock appearing alternately, covered by brambles and creepers. I grasped hanging branches to continue. Suddenly, I came to a rocky crag that tapered upward for countless rods, the landscape features of which made it impossible to cross. I turned and ascended a stone stairway, then gazed at a spot on the peak that seemed to wiggle and writhe, on which I hastened downward.[29] But the rocky crag tapered high, like before, so I went back and forth for no less than a few *li*, and only then was I able to bypass this obstruction by going through a mountain depression. After another five *li*, a trail appeared. This led to Dragon Pool Gully [Longtan Gou]. When I looked up and gazed at where I had previously gotten lost on the trail, all the precipitous cliffs nestling against rocky crags were above the cliff walls, countless fathoms high. Cascading waterfalls gushed and spurted between them. The cliff rock is darkly dense and steeply scarped and scatters to form a sunglow silk brocade. In the gorge, I held close to a ravine and then turned, where along the two cliff walls are some quiet monk cells that look like hornets and swallow's nests. In all, I covered five more *li*. The entire Dragon Pool area is a submerged pure, deep blue culvert. Its depth cannot be calculated in rods. Next, we passed through two places with dragon pools and emerged from the gorge. I spent the night at the Shaolin Monastery.

Twenty-fourth day [24 March]: I proceeded northwest from the monastery and passed Sweet Due Terrace [Ganlu Tai]. Next passed First Patriarch Retreat [Chuzu An]. Proceeded four *li* north, then ascended to Five Teat Peak [Wuru Feng], where I explored First Patriarch Cave [Chuzu Dong]. The cave is two rods deep and less than that in breadth. This is the place where Bodhidharma faced a wall for nine years.[30] The area below the entrance to the cavern overlooks a monastery, which faces Lesser Chambers. The land here lacks streams, so no one lives here. I

28 A Chinese "pint" (*sheng*) is roughly thirty-two cubic inches. Tiger tracks this size suggests an extremely large animal.

29 That is to say, a narrow trail.

30 Bodhidharma, the First Patriarch of Chan (or Zen) Buddhism, practiced a type of meditation called wall-gazing (*biguan*). According to legend, he sat facing a wall for nine years and cut off his eyelids to stay awake. Bodhidharma's place of origin is a mystery, but some accounts say he hailed from the Western Regions (Xiyu; regions west of China inhabited by non-Chinese people). Hence, Xu Xiake refers to him below as "the foreign monk."

descended and reached First Patriarch Retreat. In the retreat is the shadow rock wall that honors Bodhidharma. The shadow on the wall is less than three feet tall. Its mass is white, while its decorative pattern is black. In his image, the foreign monk stands solemnly. In the middle ceremonial hall is a cypress tree planted by the hands of the Sixth Patriarch.[31] It is already so large that in girth, it measures the arm spans of three people. The stele said that the seeds for the tree were placed in an alms bowl and then carried here from Guangdong. The two pines bestride the monastery's entrance staircase are inferior to those at the Shaolin Monastery. Shaolin's pines and cypress trees are tall and stately, unlike those at the Sacred Mountain Temple, which bend, connect, twist, and wind. The pines here are also like those at the Shaolin Monastery.

I descended and reached Sweet Dew Terrace (Ganlu Tai), where earthen mounds rise high. On them is the Buddhist Sutras Ceremonial Hall [Cangjing Dian]. I descended from the terrace and then transited through three ceremonial halls. The round- and square-topped steles are scattered, so I could only read some of their inscriptions. Behind the ceremonial halls is Thousand Buddhas Ceremonial Hall [Qianfo Dian], the majesty and beauty of which are rarely matched elsewhere. I left the hall to eat at the monk Auspicious Light's cottage. Whipping my horse, I hastened toward Dengfeng County, where I spent the night at Big Village [Datun].

Twenty-fifth day [25 March]: I proceeded southwest for fifty *li* and came to a sudden break in the mountain ridge. This is the Yi Pylons [Yique].[32] The Yi River [Yishui], approaching from the south, flows below it. It is deep enough to accommodate boats loaded with several heavy boulders. The Yi Pylons connect to the ridge crosswise from east to west. Above the river, planks have been strung together to form a bridge across it. I crossed the bridge and proceeded west, where the cliffs were even more precipitous and towering. The entire mountain is split into steep banks full of Buddhist images. There are several scores of large caverns, all of which are scores of rods in height. Outside the large caverns, a cliff wall leads directly to the mountain's summit, where small caves have been carved, and inside all those caves are carved images of Buddhas.[33] Even in those spaces measuring a hand's width, none fail to have images. I

31 The Sixth Patriarch was the Tang dynasty monk Wise Ability (Huineng, 638–713).

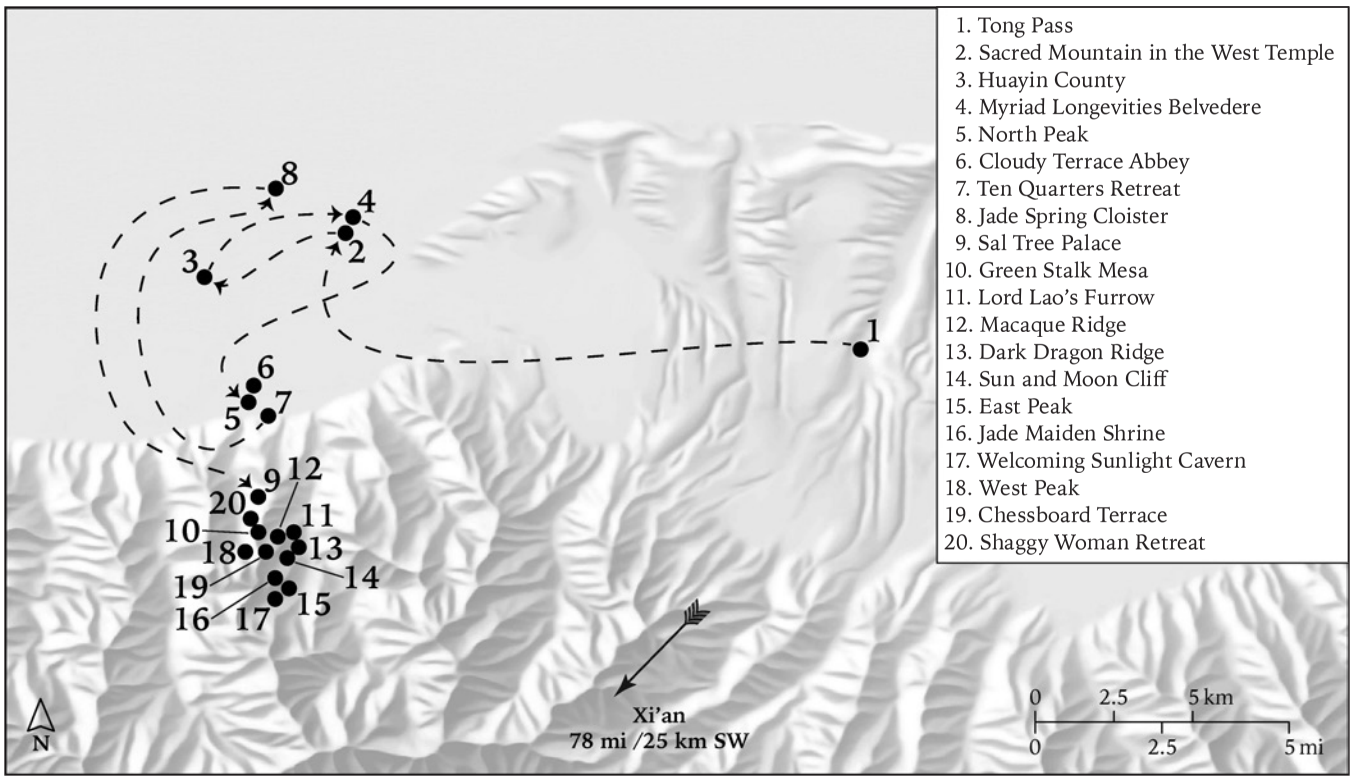
32 Also known as Dragon Gate Mountain [Longmen Shan], this marks the site of a famous battle fought in 293 BCE between the state of Qin and an allied force of Wei and Han armies. Qin forces prevailed, and afterward, the states of Wei and Han were forced to cede their combined territories to Qin.

33 Today, these caves, situated outside the city of Luoyang, are known as Dragon Gate Grottoes [Longmen Shiku]. They extend along both sides of the Yi River.

gazed at them but could not calculate their numbers. On the left of the caves, a waterfall flows down from the mountain, the water of which gathers to form a rectangular pool. The excess water then pours down into the Yi River. The hill's height does not reach a hundred rods, but the waterfall's clear flow—whooshing and swooshing—never stops. This is something hard to find in these parts. The Yi Pylons is where many people rub shoulders and converge at the carriage hub, the main road to Chu and Yu that transits through Guanshaan to the northwest.[34] From here, I will take the road to the Sacred Mountain in the West.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

34 That is to say, many people come and go through this area so heavy carriage traffic is a result. "Chu" probably refers to Hunan and "Yu" to Henan; "Guanshaan" is an alternate name for Shaanxi.



Map 11. Mount Taihua (Mount Hua; Huashan), 1623

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Taihua

[SPRING 1623, XI'AN PREFECTURE, HUAYIN COUNTY, SHAANXI]

Mount Taihua (Taihua Shan; lit., "Grand Flower Mountain"), known today as Mount Hua, is one of China's Five Sacred Mountains. Because of its location in Shaanxi, it is also known as the Sacred Mountain in the West. Its main scenic attractions—the so-called Three Peaks (Sanfeng; referring to Mount Taihua's East, West, and South Peaks)—figure prominently in Xu Xiake's diary entries below. Xu Xiake's mountain exploration begins at the Sacred Mountain in the West Temple [Xiyue Miao], 1 mi/1.5 km east of Huayin County on the north side of Mount Taihua.

Last day of the second month [30 March 1623]: Entered Tong Pass [Tongguan] and, after twenty-five *li*, halted our horses and rested at the Sacred Mountain in the West Temple.[1] The Yellow River courses south from the northern deserts. When it reaches Tong Pass, it cuts to the east. The pass directly faces the river and an entrance to a mountain defile. To the north, one sees the river coursing this way; to the south, it connects with Hua, the Sacred Mountain [Huayue]. This single stretch is the only major east-west passageway, and one hundred parapets lock it in.[2] To turn north from here, one must cross the Yellow River; to head south, one must head toward Martial Pass [Wuguan]. South of Hua, the Sacred Mountain, there is impassable terrain with jagged rocky walls and layered cliffs. Before entering the Tong Pass, one can see Mount Taihua towering above the clouds from one hundred *li* away. But upon entry into the pass, one's view is obstructed by hills and ridges. After proceeding twenty *li*, suddenly looking up, I saw stretch after stretch of hibiscus that

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Source: "You Taihua Shan ri ji; Xi'an fu, Huayin xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:72–78; *YJ*, 1:46–49). Xi'an Prefecture is the area around Xi'an Shi in Shaanxi. Modern Huayin County is just north of Mount Taihua.

1 Tong Pass is a historically strategic mountain pass in Shaanxi. It has served as an important transportation route since ancient times, connecting the Central Plains of China with the Western Regions. It has also played a strategic military role throughout Chinese history.

2 A "parapet" (*zhi*) is a section measurement of a city wall, measuring three *zhang* long and one *zhang* high. The point here is that the massive walls of Tong Pass "lock in" the Yellow River.

had already reached below the hills and ridges. Not only are the Three Peaks exquisite and matchless, but the various peaks to the east and west gather together, all with tapered cliffs overhanging in layers. Only to the north are there occasional earthen mounds. The mountain's bones (*shangu*) are entirely revealed, competing to become its most surpassing spot.[3]

First day of the third month [31 March]: We went into the temple to pay our respects to the spirit of the Sacred Mountain in the West, then climbed to the Myriad Longevities Belvedere [Wanshou Ge]. Then hastened for fifteen *li* south of the sacred mountain and went into Cloudy Terrace Abbey [Yuntai Guan]. I hired a guide at Ten Quarters Retreat [Shifang An] and entered the mountain through the mouth of a valley. Cliff walls stood erect on both sides of the valley. A single stream emerges from inside the defile. Jade Spring Cloister [Yuquan Yuan] is positioned on its left. Skirting along the stream, we proceeded through the valley for ten *li* to Sal Tree Palace [Shaluo Gong], where the trail started to become steep. After another ten *li* is Green Stalk Mesa [Qingke Ping], where the trail slightly levels out. Proceeded five *li* and passed Scanty Sunlight Bridge [Liaoyang Qiao], where the trail turns sheer. Holding on to an iron chain, I clambered up for a thousand feet, then ascended another hundred feet into a gorge. Turned left from a cliff, ascended to Lord Lao's Furrow [Laojun Ligou], and then passed Macaque Ridge [Husun Ling].[4] Five *li* from Green Stalk Mesa, a peak looms down from the north in a deep precipice with sheer walls on three sides. This is White Cloud Peak [Baiyun Feng].[5] Giving up on our route south, we then ascended Dark Dragon Ridge [Canglong Ling], passing Sun and Moon Cliff [Riyue Yan]. Proceeded another five *li* from Lord Lao's Furrow and began ascending the Three Peaks' foothills. We ascended toward the East Peak flank and paid our respects at the Jade Maiden Shrine [Yunü Ci]. We then went into Welcoming Sunlight Cavern [Yinyang Dong]. A Daoist adept surnamed Li had me stay overnight there. I thereupon had some spare time and ascended East Peak. At dusk, I backtracked to the cavern.

Second day [1 April]: From the northern foot of the South Peak [Nanfeng] ascended to its summit then descended an overhanging cliff to the

3 "Mountain's bones" here refer metaphorically to the essential rocky features of the mountain.

4 The "furrow" (*ligou*) mentioned here is a deep and treacherous ravine squeezed between steep cliffs, with over 570 stone steps. Legend has it that Laozi, the Supreme Taoist Deity, passed through this place and, seeing no way forward, used a green ox to plow overnight and create this mountain gully or "furrow." Macaque Ridge was at the top of the stone stairway. *YJJZ*, 1:76n5.

5 Also known as Cloudy Terrace Peak.

south, where we spotted a quiet and isolated hideaway. Next, we ascended, climbing directly to the ultimate summit.[6] There is a small opening on the summit. The Daoist pointed out this is the Looking Up at the Sky Pond [Yangtian Chi]. Next to it is the Black Dragon Pool [Heilong Tan]. We descended from the west and ascended the West Peak [Xifeng]. The rocks on the summit towered aloft. A slab of rock covered them like a lotus leaf. Next to them is Jade Well [Yujing], which is quite deep, concealed by a belvedere.[7] I do not know why. Returned for a meal at Welcoming Sunlight Cavern. Then ascended the East Peak. Hanging down from a cliff to the south, a small terrace stands sheer in the middle of a gulch. This is Chessboard Terrace [Qipan Tai]. After ascending the terrace, I bid farewell to the Daoist adept and descended along our previous footpath, where I observed White Cloud Peak and Sacred Mother Ceremonial Hall [Shengmu Dian]. Descended and reached Sal Tree Mesa. Dusk was closing in, so we quickly left the valley. I proceeded three *li* in the dark and stopped to spend the night at Ten Directions Retreat [Shifang An]. Departed from the left side of Green Stalk Mesa and ascended, where there are Cup Crossing Retreat [Beidu An] and Shaggy Woman Retreat [Maonü An]. Departed from the right side of Sal Tree Mesa and ascended, where there is Upper Vaipulya Peak [Shangfang Feng]. All of these places are on Mount Hua's branch peaks. The trail was sheer and steep everywhere. The sun was setting, so it was too late to climb farther.

Third day [2 April]: Proceeded fifteen *li* and went into the Sacred Mountain Temple [Yuemiao].[8] Leaving through the west gate of Huayin County, I followed a small footpath and proceeded southwest for twenty *li*. Then came out to Deep Valley [Hongyu], the third valley west of Mount Hua. The valley's two cliffs rise to touch the sky, and the space between them is quite narrow. A river flows swiftly between them. Turned at a ravine and proceeded south. Swiftly cut east then swiftly turned west. Presumably, the walls of the mountain are cut steeply, just like the jagged teeth of a dog. I proceeded through a gap in the "teeth," twisting and twining my way as if navigating a boat on a river. Proceeded twenty *li* and stopped to spend the night at Wooden Cup [Mubei]. On my way here from Sacred Mountain Temple, we had covered forty-five *li*.

Fourth day [3 April]: Proceeded twenty *li*. After thoroughly probing the mountain valleys, I ascended Deep Ridge [Hongling]. After treading ten

6 The ultimate summit of South Peak is the highest point on the mountain, at 7,086 ft/2,160 m.

7 According to Zhu Huirong, *YJJZ*, 1:77n10, there is no "Jade Well" on Mount Taihua. He suspects that some text is missing in this diary entry.

8 This is the same temple where Xu Xiake began his visit to Mount Taihua. He referred to it earlier as the "Sacred Mountain in the West Temple."

more *li* reached the apex of the ridge. I gazed at Greater Hua to the north, standing motionless beyond the skies. To the east, I looked off at a single peak, jutting and jagged, peculiar and striking. The locals call it Rival Hua Mountain [Saihua Shan]. Only then did I realize that Lesser Hua Mountain [Shaohua Shan], thirty-five *li* to the southwest, is this same mountain. Descended ten *li* to the south, where a stream approaching from the southeast surges to the northwest. This is the Huayang River [Huayang Chuan]. Proceeded upriver and east for ten *li*, then climbed Qin Ridge [Qinling] to the south, which marks the boundary between Huayin and Luonan Counties. Then ascended and descended for altogether five *li*. After ten more *li* is Yellow Snail Hamlet [Huangluo Pu]. Following the stream, descended to the southeast. After thirty *li*, stopped to spend the night at Yang Family City [Yangshi Cheng].

Fifth day [4 April]: Proceeded twenty *li*. The mountain did not open until I came out of Rock Gate. After seven more *li*, I cut to the southeast, then went into Apart from the Ordinary Valley [Gefan Yu]. Twenty *li* to the southeast are the valleys of Luonan County. After three *li* to the southeast, I crossed a ridge and proceeded through a valley. After ten *li*, I exited the mountain to where the Luo River approaches from the west and then flows east. This is the upper reaches of the river that crosses Henan. Crossed the Luo River and ascended to a summit called the Tian Family Plateau [Tianjia Yuan]. After five *li* descended into a valley where a river approaching from the south flows into the Luo River. I continued upstream for fifteen *li* to Prospect Village [Jingcun]. The mountain opened up, and only then did I see rice paddy fields. After passing the paddy fields, I continued upriver and entered a valley to the south. Proceeded south for five *li* and reached Grass Tree Gully [Caoshu Gou]. The mountain was deserted, and the sun was setting, so I put up for the night with a family on the mountain. From the Sacred Mountain Temple to Wooden Cup, you proceed southwest all the way. After passing the Huayang River, you then head southeast. South of the River, the streams gradually become wider while the mountains gradually open up. However, the peaks in front of you are towering and tall. I descended Qin Ridge and reached Yang Family City. The two cliffs there suddenly open and then suddenly close. Only occasionally do they appear at the same time. Moreover, unlike the cliffs in the valley at Wooden Cup, where the two cliff walls stand upright, they twist and turn with no openings or closings.

Sixth day [5 April]: Crossed two ridges, covering altogether twenty-five *li*, and then had a meal at Col Bottom Junction [Wudi Cha]. The walking trail west of there is the one that goes to Luonan. Next, proceeded ten *li* and passed the boundary of Shang County, which is more than seventy *li* from Luonan. Next, proceeded twenty-five *li* and ascended Dark Dragon

Ridge. I wiggled and writhed my way to the top of the ridge, where two streams curl and crook around it. After five *li*, I descended the ridge to where two streams meet and converge. I followed the stream and entered Lord Lao's Valley [Laojun Yu]. After ten *li*, sunset rain suddenly began to fall, so I put up for the night at the entrance to the valley.

Seventh day [6 April]: Proceeded five *li* and left the valley. A great stream approached from the west and then surged east. Following the stream, I proceeded ten *li* to Fine Horse Stronghold [Longju Zhai]. Martial Pass is ninety *li* east of the stronghold. West toward Shang County is the shortcut through Shaanxi. Merchants with horses and mules avoid the road through Tong Pass.[9] Flat-bottom boats heading down the river are superior to larger cargo craft. The river reaches here from west of Shang County, then passes south of Martial Pass, transits to Hu Family Village [Hucun], and reaches Xiao Jiangkou, where it flows into the Han River [Hanshui]. I hurriedly looked for a boat. When I had just found one, the rain started to pour down. It rained all day, never stopping, so the ship could not cast off.

Eighth day [7 April]: The boatman was dealing in the salt trade, so we did not set off for a long time. After the rain stopped, the angry stream rushed ahead like a galloping horse, sandwiched between two mountains, zigging and zagging, winding and looping around, where dangerous terrain roared into the earth like booming thunder, no different from Jian Stream (Jianxi).[10] A short time later, the rain resumed. By noon, we reached Shadow Rock Rapids [Yingshi Tan]. But the rain intensified, so we moored at Little Shadow Rock Rapids [Xiao Yingshi Tan].

Ninth day [8 April]: Proceeded forty *li*; passed Dragon Pass [Longguan]. After another fifty *li*, a single stream surged toward us from the north, from Martial Pass. Forty *li* north of there presumably lies the southern border of Shang County. By then, the floating clouds had already disappeared, and a bright sun rode high in the sky. The overlapping mountain mists competed in their elegance while an angry current sped the boat along. The two banks had abundant peach blossoms and gorgeous plum flowers, which danced in the shimmering light. Sitting at the boat's bow, I could not help but feel like I was a transcendent. After another eighty *li*, it was still not yet evening. The boatmen bartered their salt for firewood and bamboo, causing repeated delays. So we moored for the night by a mountain shore.

9 In other words, merchants prefer the shorter route.

10 Jian Stream is in Fujian and is known for its dangerous rapids. In his earlier diaries, Xu Xiake mentions Jian Stream several times.

Tenth day [9 April]: Proceeded fifty *li*, then descended the Lotus Rapids [Liantan]. Waves beat against the boat, drenching our bags and soaking our chests. After twenty *li*, passed the Hundred Surnames Rapids [Baixing Tan], where a peak towered abruptly to the right of the stream. Its cliffs, eroded by the water, are precariously perched and seemingly on the verge of collapse. After one leaves the Western Shu Loft [Xi Shu Lou], the mountain valleys open up a little. We had already passed into the territory of Nanyang Prefecture and Zhechuan County, which mark the border between Qin and Yu.[11] Proceed thirty *li* and passed Hu Family Village. After another forty *li*, we reached Stone Temple Bend [Shimiao Wan], where we went ashore and put up at an inn. Heading southeast from there leads to Jun County and farther up to Taihe County, another 130 *li* distant, or so I was told.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

11 Qin and Yu are abbreviations for Shaanxi and Henan, respectively.

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Taihe

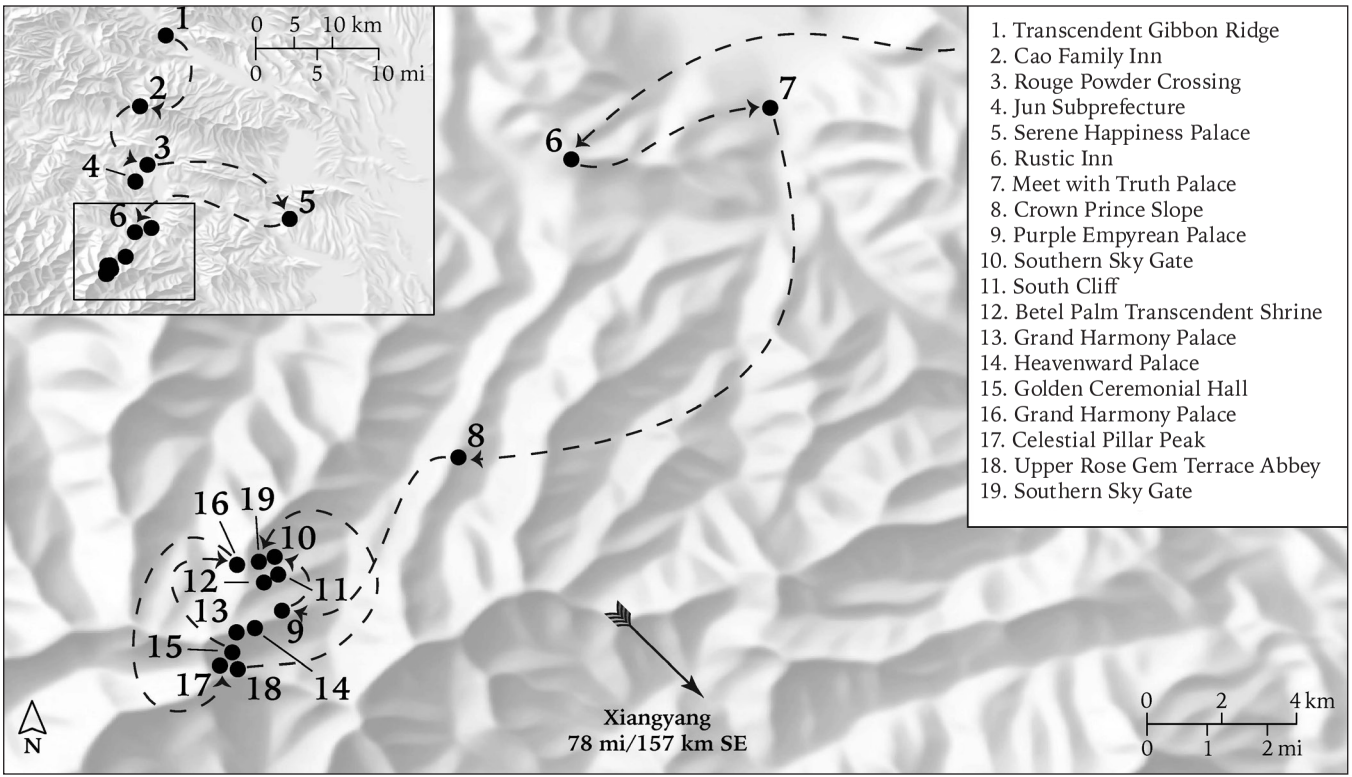
[SPRING 1623, XIANGYANG PREFECTURE, JUN SUBPREFECTURE, HU-GUANG]

Taihe (lit., "Grand Harmony") is an alternate name for what today is better known as Mount Wudang [Wudang Shan], a small mountain range southwest of modern Jun Xian in Hubei. It is best known for its association with Daoist religious traditions, specifically, the mountain's connection with the deity known as the Perfected Warrior (Zhenwu; also known as Xuanwu, or "Arcane Warrior"), who supposedly cultivated and achieved the Way (Dao) there, after which he then wielded magical and super-human powers. The more popular name for the mountain today, Wudang, literally means "martially worthy" and refers to the capability of the Perfected Warrior to reign as the patron Daoist god on the mountain and protect it from all forms of evil. During the reign of Ming dynasty emperor Yongle (r. 1402–24), the mountain received exceptional honors and lavish patronage because of the imperial family's interest in Daoism. During the Jiajing reign, by imperial decree, the mountain was officially conferred the title Prime Sacred Mountain [Yuanyue] to distinguish and elevate it above China's other sacred heights. Not surprisingly, the extensive Daoist monastic complex on Mount Taihe receives much attention in Xu Xiake's diary. But this was not because of any interest in Daoism on his part; most of the Daoist palaces and abbeys he mentions serve as guideposts to lead the reader along his itinerary in search of surpassing scenic wonders.

[*Third month*,] *eleventh day* [10 April 1623]: I climbed to Transcendent Gibbon Ridge [Xianyuan Ling]. After ten-some *li*, I came to a dried-up stream bed with a small bridge, which falls within the boundary of Yun County.[1] This place marks the border between Henan and Hu-Guang. I

Source: "You Taihe Shan riji; Hu-Guang, Xiangyang fu, Junzhou" (*YJJZ*, 1:79–87; *YJ*, 1:51–55). During the Ming dynasty, there were thirteen provinces or regional administration commissions in China. Among them, Hu-Guang corresponds to what is now Hunan and Hubei. Xiangyang Prefecture is now modern Xiangyang Shi in northwestern Hubei. Jun Subprefecture corresponds to modern Jun Xian, just north of Mount Taihe.

1 Yun was a county in Yunyang Prefecture, northwestern Hubei.



Map 12. Mount Taihe (Mount Wudang), 1623

proceeded east for five *li* and came to a pond called Blue Spring [Qingquan]. I could not spot its source above me, but the spring whooshed and swooshed as it flowed down. This area is also subordinate to Xichuan County.[2] Presumably, the boundary between the two counties crisscrosses back and forth across the trail. I held close to a mountain stream, twisting and crooking my way forward. This is the reason the trail makes its way through the two counties. Proceeded five *li* and crossed a small ridge, which still falls within the boundary of Yun County. Below the ridge are Jade Emperor Abbey [Yuhuang Guan] and Dragon Pool Monastery [Longtan Si]. A stream, swelling and surging, runs from southwest to northeast. Presumably, it comes from Yun County. I crossed the stream and, to the south, ascended Nine *Li* Knoll [Jiuli Gang]. After passing over its crest, I descended to Twisted Peach Tree Ridge [Pantao Ling]. Then, against the stream's current, proceeded for ten *li* through a col and reached Kudzu Nine Gully [Gejiu Gou]. Proceeded another ten *li* and climbed to Earthen Ridge [Tudi Ling]. The area south of the ridge falls within the boundary of Jun Subprefecture. From here on, I passed over mountain ridges, one after the other, through a riotous profusion of peach and plum blossoms. Mountain flowers along both sides of the trail were serene, seductive, and extraordinary. Inside a mountain col, cottages gazed across at one another. Along the stream's course, rice paddy plots descend from above in ranks like fish scales, different from those in Shanxi and Shaanxi. But the footpath along my route was narrow, and travelers were scarce. Moreover, I heard the tigers hereabouts are savage. Since the sun was setting in the west, I eventually stopped inside a col at Cao Family Inn [Caojia Dian].

Twelfth day [11 April]: I proceeded five *li* and ascended to Fiery Red Dragon Ridge [Huolong Ling]. Descended the ridge, followed a stream, and emerged from a gorge. Proceeded forty *li* and descended to Path Top Knoll [Xingtou Gang]. Proceeded fifteen *li* and reached Rouge Powder Crossing [Hongfen Du], where the Han River vigorously approaches from the west.[3] Below the shore, a gray-green cliff wall overhangs seemingly in midair while the river's clear current coils around its face. Following the Han River, I next proceeded east and reached Jun Subprefecture. Serene Happiness Palace [Jingle Gong] is inside the subprefectural seat. Its design and layout, reaching halfway across the city, are magnificent and orderly. I stored my luggage outside the south city wall and finalized plans to climb the mountain at dawn the next day.

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2 Xichuan County was created in 1470 and fell under the administrative jurisdiction of Nanyang Prefecture, southwest of modern Xichuan Xian in Henan.

3 The Han River, a major tributary of the Changjiang, flows past Jun Subprefecture.

Thirteenth day [12 April]: On horseback, I hastened south along a stone-paved road that is flat and broad. Proceeded thirty *li*, crossed a rock bridge, and came to a stream that surged west to east. This is where the stream from the base of Mount Taihe flows into the Han River. Crossed the rock bridge and came to Welcoming Grace Palace [Ying'en Gong], which faces west. In front of the palace is a stele with "Number One Mountain" (Diyi Shan) written in three giant Chinese characters. As it turns out, these characters are from the brush of Mi Xiangyang [1051–1107].[4] His calligraphy is soaring and vigorous and should indeed be regarded as "Number One." Proceeded another ten *li* and passed Rustic Inn [Caodian]. When the road from Xiangyang Prefecture reaches here, it joins with this one. Then it gradually heads west, passes Meet with Truth Palace [Yuzhen Gong], crosses below two defiles, and passes into a col. From here, I proceeded west for several *li*, hastening along the road to Jade Vacuity Palace [Yuxu Gong]. I then traversed and ascended a ridge to the south. This shortcut runs to Purple Empyrean Palace [Zixiao Gong]. I next climbed a ridge. It is altogether ten *li* from Rustic Inn to here, leading to Coiling Dragon Abbey [Huilong Guan]. I gazed at the sacred mountain's summit,[5] green and purple, poking into the sky. But I was still fifty *li* away. Tall trees fill the mountains along both sides of the trail, densely spread above and below. It seemed like I was passing under a green canopy.

I proceeded on from there, following the edge of the mountain. Descended and ascended for altogether twenty *li*, passing Crown Prince Slope [Taizi Po]. Next, I descended into a col and came to a rock bridge that straddles a stream. This is the lower reaches of Nine Crossings Stream [Jiudu Jian]. Above it is the Eighteen Turns of Flat Terrace [Pingtai Shiba Pan], which is the main trail running to Purple Empyrean Palace and from there to climbing Mount Taihe. I turned left and entered the mountain following a stream, which took me upstream along Nine Crossings Stream. These trails head toward Rose Gem Terrace Abbey [Qiongtai Guan] and Master Luo's Cloister of Eight Transcendents [Baxian Luogong Yuan]. I climbed steeply for ten *li* to Purple Empyrean Palace. The front of the palace overlooks Yu's Footprint Pond [Yuji Chi]; in the back, it nestles against Unfurled Banner Peak. The palace's tiered terraces and outstanding ceremonial halls are lofty, roomy, and unusual. I went into a ceremonial hall to express reverence and respect, then ascended steps from the right side of the ceremonial hall directly to the west side of Unfurled Banner Peak. On the side of the peak are

4 The reference here is the famous Song dynasty painter and calligrapher Mi Fu. Xu Xiake refers to him as "Mi Xiangyang" because Xu thought he was a native of Xiangyang in Hubei. Most sources now say Mi Fu was born in Taiyuan, Shanxi.

5 The mountain referenced here is Mount Taihe.

Crown Prince Cavern [Taizi Dong] and Seven Stars Cliff, but there was no time to ask about them. I proceeded for altogether five *li* and passed Southern Sky Gate [Nantian Men] at South Cliff [Nanyan]. I ignored it and headed west. I crossed a ridge and paid my respects at Betel Palm Transcendent Shrine [Langxian Ci]. The shrine stands facing South Cliff. In front of the shrine is a vast betel tree without a single inch of bark. Standing bare and parched, it towers aloft. Its slender buds had not yet opened. Beside it are numerous betel plum (*langmei*) trees that stand tall and towering.[6] The deepness of their blossoms' color resembles those of peach and apricot trees; their stems hang down like silk strands, forming the shape of crab apple blossoms. Plum and betel palm originally were two species of mountain tree. According to legend, the Arcane Emperor grafted a plum branch onto a betel palm tree, which then bonded with the plum, producing this distinct species, or so it is said.

Altogether, I proceeded five *li* and passed Tiger Head Cliff [Hutou Yan]. Proceeded another three *li* and reached Slanted Bridge [Xieqiao]. Projecting peaks and overhanging cliffs appeared time and time again. The footpaths mostly follow peaks above the crevices. Proceeded five *li* and reached Third Heaven's Gate [Santian Men] and passed Heavenward Palace [Chaotian Gong], from each of which are stone steps that zigzag as they mount upward. On both sides of the trail are iron posts with hanging cables. From Third Heaven's Gate, Second Heaven's Gate [Ertian Men], and First Heaven's Gate [Yitian Men], for the most part, I took the footpath through the peaks and chasms, where the steps seemed to be poised in midair as they went straight up. Although the way was steep and sheer, the stone steps are not only in good condition; the railings and cables are coupled and linked, unlike those at Mount Hua, where travelers seem to almost hang aloft in midair flight. Grand Harmony Palace [Taihe Gong] is inside Third Heaven's Gate. It was late afternoon, so I did my utmost to reach the Golden Summit [Jinding]. This is the so-called Celestial Pillar Peak. A mass of peaks on the mountain's summit, all of which look like inverted bells and standing tripod cauldrons, aligned and assembled, stand in formation. Celestial Pillar is poised among them. Alone, it emerges beyond the massed peaks. Its four sides are steep and sheer. The peak's summit has a level spot, across and athwart, but only reaching eight feet across. Golden Ceremonial Hall [Jindian] towers above it. Offerings are made inside it to the Arcane Emperor and Four

6 Betel plum is a tree that produces fruit sometimes called the "Chinese hackberry" or "Chinese Euscaphis tree" in English. It is valued for its hard, durable wood and sweet fruit. According to legend, the Arcane Warrior produced the fruit through a grafting process, explained later in this diary entry. As we see below, Xu Xiake was interested in collecting fruit samples. However, he does not reveal the motivation for his interest in acquiring the fruit until the last line of the Mount Taihe diary.

Generals (Sijiang).[7] The incense burner and worshipping table are both neatly arranged and made of gold. The hall is supervised by a thousand households [*qianhu*] official and a superintendent (*tidian*), who demanded incense and gold. This is nothing less than imperial extortion.[8] I went in, intending to kowtow hastily and hurriedly, but by then, the gate was already closed. So I descended and spent the night at Grand Harmony Palace.

Fourteenth day [13 April]: I changed clothes and ascended to the Golden Summit. After I looked up with reverence and then kowtowed, the heavenly precincts turned clear and bright. Looking down at the various peaks, those nearby stand erect like swans; those in the distance spread and stretch out. Indeed, this is a profound place untouched by man! So I descended into a gorge from a small footpath to the right of Third Heaven's Gate. The footpath has no stone stairs or cables. As the trail passes through them, the jumbled peaks stand side-by-side. How they stretched into the distance inspired the feeling that this was a secluded, surpassing scene. After more than three *li,* I reached the right side of Candle Peak [Lazhu Feng], where a mountain spring lapped lazily, brimming beside the trail. Then descended to Candle Ravine [Lazhu Jian]. Following the right side of the gorge, I proceeded for over three *li*. As the direction of the mountains turned, the peaks followed them. Below, I saw a flat hill with an open area on top. This is Upper Rose Gem Terrace Abbey [Shang Qiongtai Guan]. Next to it are several betel plum trees, all so big it would take outstretched arms to embrace them. The tint of their flowers floated in the sky and reflected off the mountains; their exquisiteness and elegance reached the limits of the cliffs. This place is not only secluded and sheer; the scenes here are also unusual and different.

> One fascinating aspect of Xu Xiake's diaries is his conversations with people he met during his travels. Here, he engages a Daoist adept to beg a favor.

When I beseeched him for some betel plum fruit, the Daoist adept in the abbey fell silent, not daring to respond. Afterward, he said, "These have always been forbidden objects. In the past, a person took three or four of them. As a result, several of the Daoists involved became implicated in legal cases that ruined their families." I did not believe the story

7 The Arcane Emperor's quartet of generals were charged with protecting Daoist rites and protocols on the mountain.

8 Xu Xiake makes a comment here about "extortion" (*xusuo*) because the two government officials supervising activities at the Golden Ceremonial Hall were forcing sightseers to pay an exorbitant admission fee in "incense and gold" (*xiangjin*).

and asked again with more vigor. He then came out and presented me with several, all already black and spoiled. Moreover, we agreed that I would not let anyone else know about this.[9] Later, after I had hastened to Central Rose Gem Terrace [Zhong Qiongtai], I beseeched the Daoists there for more betel plum fruit. The master of the abbey politely declined, saying he had none.

If I left Lower Rose Gem Terrace [Xia Qiongtai], I could go to Jade Vacuity Cliff [Yukong Yan], but then I would miss South Cliff and Purple Empyrean. But what is the point of getting to one place and missing two? This would not be as good as ascending by way of my former footpath and then crossing Candle Peak on the left. This should take me relatively closer to South Cliff. But just then, someone came chasing after me and shouting. It was a young yellow cap from Central Rose Gem Terrace with a summons from the abbot urging me to return to the abbey.[10] The master of the abbey took my hand and said, "The gentleman earnestly asked for the precious fruit. Fortunately, I have two. In a small way, they will satisfy the gentleman's desire. But severe punishment will immediately follow if word of this should leak out to others." When I got outside and looked at them, they were shaped like kumquat candied in honey, with the appearance of gold and the consistency of jade. This is no ordinary product. I expressed heartfelt thanks to the master and took my leave.

Next, I ascended for over three *li*, going directly into a col on Candle Peak, where the peaks are spiky and spiny, piercing and pointy. As I crossed the col, my shadow wobbled and wavered as if the mountain peaks seemed to be shaking. After I got through the col, I followed steep cliffs, twisting and twining, successively crossing over several of them. As they conform with the terrain, the earth and rocks on the tops of the peaks appear in different colors. Later, I heard a Buddhist chant. Then, looking up at the peak's summit, dim and distant, ascending and overhanging above, I had already come out on the right of Heavenward Palace. I ascended for eight *li* and reached Southern Sky Gate at South Cliff. I hastened on to pay my respects in the main ceremonial hall. I turned right and went into the rear of the hall, where high, steep cliffs are recessed into the sky, like overhanging corridors and covered trails, wiggling and writhing over the mid-point of the mountain. The area it overlooks below is boundless. This is known as South Cliff. It is also named Purple Empyrean Cliff and is the most outstanding among the

9 Li Chi says Daoists on the mountain were reluctant to part with betel plum fruit because "it was forbidden to the public, and officials were ordered to send the entire crop to Peking (Beijing) as tribute." *The Travel Diaries of Hsü Hsia-k'o*, 155–56. It would then seem that interest in the capital was sparked by the fruit's association with the Arcane Warrior.

10 Xu Xiake uses the term yellow cap (*huangguan*) as a synonym for *daoshi*, or Daoist adept.

mountain's thirty-six cliffs.[11] Celestial Pillar Cliff directly faces it. From the cliff, I returned to the left of the ceremonial hall, then transited along some stairs into a col. Its pine and conifer trees have trunks measuring several arm spans in girth. The continuous shade they provide is exquisite. A layered terrace hangs down alone. Its lofty peak looks off into the distance in all four directions. This is known as Flying and Rising Terrace [Feisheng Tai]. At sunset, I backtracked to the palace, where I bribed a young disciple to get me six more betel plum fruits. I asked him to search for more the next day but got none.

> In the following entry, Xu Xiake engages the services of litter bearers (*yuzhe*). Litter bearers are still active in China, especially in scenic mountain areas. The litter used by these sure-footed porters essentially comprised a basket-like chair mounted along the length of two poles, which would be carried by two bearers, one in front and another behind.

Fifteenth day [14 April]: I hastened to Thunder God Cavern [Leigong Dong] from the left side of Southern Sky Gate. The cavern seems poised in midair among cliffs. I wanted to backtrack to Purple Empyrean Cliff, then from Crown Prince Crag (Taizi Yan) transit to Not Two Retreat [Bu'er An] and reach Five Dragons Palace [Wulong Gong]. The litter bearers said that it is a roundabout route and inconvenient, and it would be better to descend from South Cliff to Bamboo Fence Bridge [Zhuba Qiao], where one can survey the surpassing scenery at Dripping Water Cave [Dishui Yan] and Transcendent Couple Cave [Xianlü Yan]. So I descended from North Sky Gate [Beitian Men], where the entire footpath is shaded by forest. Dripping Water and Transcendent Caves are on the left side of the trail. These soaring caves rise abruptly; spring water drips down inside them. Embedded in the caves are openings that serve as chambers. In each chamber are shrines dedicated to the Perfected Warrior. I reached Bamboo Fence Bridge and could only hear the flowing waterfall. But there was no way to follow the stream. So holding close to a mountain, I crossed a ridge. Along the trail are many jutting rocks and dangerous cliffs interlaced with jumbled vegetation and clumped lush greenery, with betel plum blossoms casting dazzling colors far and near.

I passed White Cloud [Baiyun] and Transcendent Tortoise [Xiangui] Cliffs, covering twenty-some *li* altogether. Then I took the steps straight down to the base of a canyon and reached Dark Sheep Bridge [Qingyang Qiao]. The water in the canyon is the lower reaches of the water that flows down from Bamboo Fence Bridge. Thick vegetation on the two cliffs hides the sun; the clear current of the stream winds and meanders. The bridge spans above it. I do not know where it flows to.

11 That is to say, the thirty-six cliffs on Mount Taihe.

When I looked up at the blue beyond, it seemed as if I was peeping through the spout of an earthenware jar.[12] I crossed the bridge and ascended directly to Crowded Sky Ridge [Zantian Ling]; after five more *li*, I reached Five Dragons Palace. Its design and layout are much like Purple Empyrean Palace on South Cliff. Behind the ceremonial hall, I climbed up a mountain for about one *li*, then turned into a col and came to Nature's Retreat [Ziran An]. After returning to the ceremonial hall's right side, I left the path and descended into a col. Proceeded two *li* and came to Rising into Vacuity Cave [Lingxu Yan]. The cave nestles against layered tors and overlooks an inaccessible gulch facing the mountains of Peach Source Cavern [Taoyuan Dong]. Its fine trees are especially deep and thick-set. Their purple, lush green colors reflect off each other like a painting. This is the spot where Xiyi practiced quietude.[13] In front is Transmitting Scriptures Terrace [Chuanjing Tai], which alone looks down into the gulch and can rival Flying and Rising Terrace. I returned and passed to the left of the ceremonial hall, then climbed to Betel Plum Terrace [Langmei Tai] and immediately descended the mountain to Cao Family Inn.

All four sides of Mount Hua are rocky cliff walls. Thus, the feet of the peaks lack trees with tall branches and unusual trunks. Straight to the peak's summit, most pine and cypress trees measure the outstretched arms of three people in girth. The pines are all five-pronged, with nuts as big as lotus seeds. Among them were some that had not yet fallen to the ground, so I picked and ate some. They were fresh, sweet-smelling, and truly outstanding.

Mount Taihe is enclosed and embraced by mountains on all four sides. Everywhere within one hundred *li* are thick-set trees and outspread forests, which hide the sun and reach into the sky. When you get within several scores of *li* of the nearby mountains, the unusual conifers and old cypresses measure the embrace of three people in girth and connect continuously inside the mountains' cols. Presumably, the state prohibits their harvesting.

As for Mount Song and Lesser Song, woodcutters have chopped down trees from the flat foothills to the ultimate summit until nothing remains.[14] Only the trees of the Three Generals stand majestically and prominently, and that is all. The mountains, valleys, rivers, and plains

12 In other words, Xu Xiake's view of the sky was restricted because high cliffs and lofty peaks surrounded him.

13 "Xiyi" refers to Chen Tuan (d. 989), who lived in seclusion on Mount Taihe. When he left the mountain in the early years of the Song dynasty, during the Taiping Xingguo reign (977–84), the Song Emperor Taizong (r. 960–76) honored him with the title Xiyi xiansheng (The Master Looked for, but Not Seen; Listened for, But Not Heard). Practice quietude (*xijing*) means "live a quiet and tranquil life away from the hubbub of the secular world."

14 That is, Greater Chambers and Lesser Chambers.

have the same climate but different weather. I saw green wheat fields only after I left Mount Song and Lesser Song. When I reached Shaan Subprefecture, the apricot blossoms were starting to bloom, while the color of the willow trees gently and gracefully greeted the traveler. When I entered Tong Pass, the relay station road not only became level but there were hanging willows along both sides of the road, as well as pear and plum trees here and there. When I turned into Deep Valley [Hongyu], ice layers and snow piles still filled the canyons and valleys. Indeed, this is a place where the spring wind does not blow. I saw apricot blossoms again when I passed Col Bottom Fork [Wudi Cha]. Peach rains and willow mist were everywhere when I left Dragon Colt Stronghold [Longju Zhai]. I suddenly remembered that today is the Clear and Bright Festival (Qingming Jie), which could not help but strike a chord in my heart.[15] I thereupon departed from Rustic Inn. After twenty-four days on the road, I arrived home on the day after Bathing the Buddha.[16] I presented the betel plum fruit from Mount Taihe to my mother to celebrate her longevity.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

15 The Clear and Bright (Qingming) Festival—sometimes called Tomb Sweeping Day in English—falls on the fifteenth day after the spring equinox, usually in early April on the Western calendar.

16 Xu Xiake's temporal reference to Bathing the Buddha (Yu Fo) is to the eighth day of the fourth lunar month when it was customary to bathe a small statue of Buddha to commemorate his birth. We know, then, that Xu Xiake arrived home in Jiangyin the following day, or 6 May 1623.

Earlier Travels in Min

[SPRING 1628]

When Xu Xiake returned home to Jiangyin in 1623 after his trip to Mount Taihe, his mother was over eighty. Mindful of his filial obligations, he planned no other sightseeing trips. His mother, however, had different ideas. Seeing that her son's wanderlust spirit had not waned, in 1624 she agreed to accompany him on a sightseeing excursion to some scenic sites near Jiangyin. She passed away the following year. Over the next two years, while he observed the obligatory mourning period for his deceased mother, an unstable political situation on a national level, instigated by the notorious eunuch Wei Zhongxian (1568–1627), led to the death by suicide of Xu Xiake's good friend Gao Panlong. The political situation finally stabilized after the suicide deaths of the Xizong emperor and Wei, both in 1627. Early the following year, under the reign of the new Chongzhen emperor, Xu Xiake headed south for a sightseeing tour of Fujian, or Min.

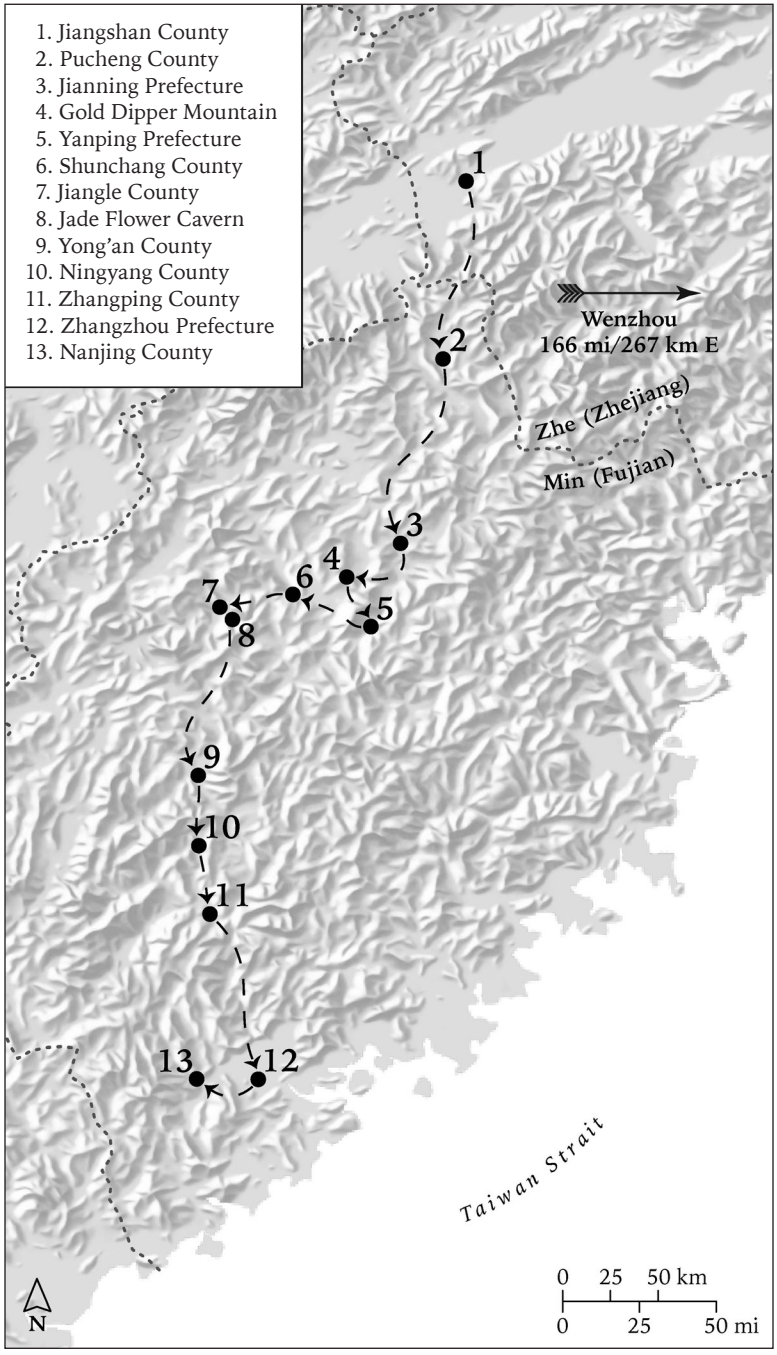
In the second month of spring in the *wuchen* year under the new Chongzhen reign [1628], I was in high spirits to undertake a sightseeing trip to Min and Guang but did not set off until the twentieth day of the [second] month [25 March].[1] Reached Blue Lake in Jiangshan County on the eleventh day of the third month [14 April], where I took the overland route into Min.[2] Proceeded fifteen *li* and came out at Rock Gate Market, which faces Mount Jianglang. It seemed like I was meeting up again with an old friend.[3] Proceeded fifteen *li* and reached Gorge Mouth [Xiakou] at sunset. Proceeded another fifteen *li* and then stopped to spend the night at Mountain Hollow [Shankeng].

Source: "Minyou riji qian" (*YJJZ*, 1.88–97; *YJ*, 1.55–61).

1 Reign-period names changed when a new emperor assumed the throne. The reference here is to the Chongzhen emperor, who came to power in 1627. When rebel troops reached Beijing in April 1644, he hanged himself on a hill behind the Forbidden City, thereby ending the Ming dynasty. Guang refers to modern Guangdong Province.

2 Jiangshan County corresponds to modern Jiangshan Shi in southwestern Zhejiang, on the border of Jiangxi.

3 Xu Xiake visited Mount Jianglang in 1620. See his "A Sightseeing Trip to Nine Carp Lake," this volume. This explains his comment about "meeting up again with an old friend."



Map 13. Min (Fujian), 1628 (see also map 14)

Twelfth day [15 April]: I proceeded twenty *li* and climbed to Transcendent Sunglow Clouds Ridge [Xianxia Ling] then proceeded thirty-five *li* and climbed to Red Maple Tree Ridge [Danfeng Ling]. The area south of the ridge marks the border of Fujian. Proceeded seven more *li*, where to the west is a trail that comes across a ridge. As it turns out, this is the road to Yongfeng County in Jiangxi. From here, there were still eighty *li* to Yongfeng. Following a stream, I turned and headed east for eight *li* and reached the foot of Plowshare Ridge [Liling]. Proceeded four *li* and climbed to its apex. Six *li* beyond there, I stopped to spend the night at Nine Shepherds [Jiumu].

Thirteenth day [16 April]: I proceeded thirty-five *li*, passed a ridge, and then had a meal at Transcendent Solarity Ridge [Xianyang Ling]. Transcendent Solarity Ridge is not very high, but its mountain azaleas are beautiful and adorable in the sunshine. After a meal, I found a sedan chair, and after riding thirty *li* reached Pucheng County before mid-afternoon.[4] At that time, all road traffic was diverting to Quanzhou Prefecture, while in Xinghua Prefecture, bandits were raising mayhem.[5] So going upstream to Yong'an County through Yanping Prefecture seemed best.[6] Since I have long been interested in visiting Jade Flower Cavern [Yuhua Dong], I hired a boat to Yanping.[7]

Fourteenth day [17 April]: The boat sailed for forty *li* and reached Before the Abbey [Guanqian]. The boatman was on his way to visit family, so we moored earlier than expected. I crossed a pontoon bridge and climbed Gold Dipper Mountain [Jindou Shan], following the left side of the stream. Its stone steps are in good repair; nearby tall pines and gorgeous grasses stealthily assailed my sleeves. Passed Three Pavilions [Santing] and went into Arcane Emperor Palace [Xuandi Gong]; then I climbed a ridge from the rear of the palace. Wobbling and waving, seemingly poised in midair, the mountains encircle and encompass the palace while the stream's swift flow belts around it. As the evening fell into darkness and the mist rose, I was more reluctant to leave with each step.

Xu Xiake now reboards the boat.

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4 Modern Pucheng Xian, Fujian.

5 Xinghua Prefecture is far south of Xu Xiake's location in northern Fujian. His travels there are described in his "A Sightseeing Trip to Nine Carp Lake," this volume. Quanzhou Prefecture is farther south.

6 Yanping Prefecture corresponds to modern Nanping Shi. Yong'an County (modern Yong'an Xian) was about 98 mi/158 km southwest of the prefectural seat.

7 This famous cavern, the largest limestone cavern in Fujian, is described in detail later in this diary. Xu Xiake's boat is heading upstream and southwest on Sand Stream [Shaxi].

Fifteenth day [18 April]: At the crack of dawn, the boat immediately set out, rushing headlong with the current to the beat of the oars. Proceeded 120 *li* and moored at a waterside promontory. Wind and rain lasted throughout the morning. The stream roared like thunder.

Sixteenth day [19 April]: Proceeded sixty *li* and reached Double Streams Mouth [Shuangxi Kou], where it joins with the Chong'an River [Chong'an Shui]. Proceeded another fifty-five *li* and reached Jianning Commandery.[8] The rain never stopped.

Seventeenth day [20 April]: The water level in the stream rose several rods, and all the boats traveling like ours had to stop, unable to proceed. I found a sampan in the morning, boarded it, and proceeded. After forty *li* is the Grand Peace Relay Station [Taiping Yi], and after another forty *li* is the Grand Transverse Relay Station [Daheng Yi], which we swiftly passed like a soaring bird. Another thirty *li* is the Dim and Dismal Rapids [Andan Tan], where the force of the water surges and gushes. During my earlier sightseeing trip to Nine Carp Lake, I only saw domed rocks and mountain bluffs towering aloft, through which boats passed. At first, I did not think the rapids to be dangerous. But now, with its white-capped waves and mountains standing erect and the outlines of the rocks completely submerged, it is twice as dangerous as when I was here before. After ten *li* reached Yanping Prefecture.

Eighteenth day [21 April]: With a light pack, I left Yanping through its west gate for a sightseeing trip to Jade Flower Cavern. Crossed a stream to the south. I had the servant take my traveling bags and go upriver to Yong'an County from Sha County, where he was to wait for me. I then proceeded overland for forty *li*, crossed Sand Stream, and headed west. The stream from Jiangle County, which approaches from the west, and the stream from Sha County, which approaches from the south, merge when they reach here, in the same way that Jian Stream merges in Yanping.[9] I then cut south and went into the mountains. Proceeded sixty *li* and stopped to spend the night at Three Links Inn [Sanlian Pu], on the border of the three counties of Ouning, Nanping, and Shunchang.

Nineteenth day [22 April]: Proceeded five *li* and crossed White Sands Ridge [Baisha Ling], which falls within the boundary of Shunchang County. Proceeded another twenty-five *li* and reached the county. The county overlooks the riverside. The river from Shaowu Prefecture approaches from the west and flows through to Guangze County; the river from Guihua County approaches from the south. They join at the southeastern

8 That is, Jianning Prefecture, which corresponds to modern Jian'ou Shi.
9 Modern Jiangle Xian in western Fujian.

corner of the Shunchang County wall. I gazed across the river at the county wall, where the current seemed to belt around the stream's embankment. Following the river south, I proceeded thirty *li* and reached Duyuan, where snowflakes as big as the palm of a hand suddenly began to fall. Proceeded fifteen *li* and reached the boundary of Jiangle County. It turns out this is the home county of Yang Shi (1053–1135).[10] Proceeded another fifteen *li* to High Rapids Post Station, where the dark haze had completely scattered, where the blue sky seemed to wash everything clean, where brilliant sunshine was dazzling and radiant, and where piled snow on the massed peaks seemed to be wearing jade bracelets. For it to snow in Min is extraordinary. For it to snow in late spring is especially extraordinary. Villagers and old ladies at the market basked in the sun while holding incense burners.[11] But for me, to jump and frolic about in my bare feet was positively fantastic! Proceeded twenty-five *li* and stopped to spend the night with a village family at Mountain Stream Crossing [Shanjian Du].

Twentieth day [23 April]: Crossed at Mountain Stream and proceeded south, going against the current of a big stream. Two mountains along the stream seem to form a gate called Ju Gorge [Juxia]. There was nowhere to get a foothold by the cliffs along the stream, so I followed the mountain's midpoint. After ten *li*, only when I came out at Ju Gorge Post Station [Juxia Pu] did the mountains begin to open. Proceeded another ten *li* and passed into Jiangle County. When I came out at a pass to the south, crossed a stream, and headed south. Then I cut east, passed into a mountain, and climbed Galloping Ridge [Tengling]. Proceeded south for three *li* to Jade Flower Cavern. Earlier, when I passed Galloping Ridge, I gazed at two peaks to the southeast, towering and standing erect, with blue-green cliffs in tier after tier, whose form, structure, and color are utterly different from the other peaks. When I reached the foot of these peaks, I could see that, like a single tail, they stretched and heaved, encircling and protecting the entrance to the cavern. The entrance is inside a mountain depression that is not open and spacious, but blue-green forests on its summit crisscross, while a clear stream flows out below it. Before I knew it, my spirit and bones had turned completely chill!

Halfway up the mountain is Bright Terrace Retreat [Mingtai An], from which one passes through to the rear entrance to the cavern [see figure 8]. I still had not eaten, so next, I emerged from the left side of the trail and climbed the ridge on stone steps embraced by pine trees. I made my way through the rocks for three *li*. The green hills, looking like hibiscus

10 Yang Shi (nickname Guishan) was a prominent member of the Southern School of Neo-Confucianism (Daonan Xuepai).

11 Villagers and old ladies were basking in the sun for warmth and holding up incense burners (*tilu*) to welcome travelers passing through the village.

flowers, immediately opened. The retreat is right inside them. I had a meal at the retreat, continued my descent, and reached the front entrance to the cavern, where I hired an experienced guide. He hacked and chopped off segments of pine knots and placed them into a bamboo basket, then carried the basket on a pole over his shoulder. He had an iron door bolt in his hand, into which he placed a piece of pine knot and lit it.[12] After the pine knot burned out, he would replace it with a new one. Upon entering the cavern, I descended the stone steps one by one for several feet. This spot marks the source of the stream in the cavern. Going against the current, I twisted and turned, crossing four wooden planks, which are now narrow, vaulted, rising, and descending. As for the color of the rocks, some are white, and some are yellow. As for the rocky bones, some hang down, and some stand vertically.[13] Only Lychee Pillar [Lizhi Zhu], Windy Teardrop Candle [Fenglei Zhu], Screening Sky Canopy [Mantian Zhang], Dharma Crosses the River [Damo Dujiang], Transcendent Being Field [Xianren Tian], Grape Umbrella [Putao San], Transcendent's Bell [Xianzhong], and Transcendent's Drum [Xiangu] are the truest to form. Ascending steps, seemingly poised in midair, I followed along the current until the stream ended. This is called Nine Story Tower [Jiuchong Lou]. As I gazed far off into the empty depths of the cavern, suddenly, I saw something that seemed like the first light of dawn. This is the so-called Fifth Watch Sky [Wugeng Tian]. This is the most extraordinary sight here, and it is precisely like Master Zhang's Cavern [Zhanggong Dong] in the way it changes from dark to bright.[14] Presumably, light can shine inside because of the diagonal opening at the entrance. Still, however, I could not see any blue sky. From the flank of the ridge, I looked up and fixed my gaze on a single crevice at the cavern's entrance, where a globe of bright light shone straight through. The cavern's entrance drops down from high above. Its expansive design embodies wonder and magnificence, just like Master Zhang's Cavern. When one considers Master Zhang's Cavern, it is seemingly poised above forests, eerie and beautiful, and is in a place that receives light. But this cavern dazzles in its artistry. It rivals other sites in its wonder and is

12 The term *tieluo*, translated as "iron door bolt," is drawn from the Min dialect of Fujian. Presumably, the inside of the door bolt was hollow, into which segments of pine tree knots—probably split at the top with wood shavings stuffed inside—were inserted and ignited. The resin inside the pine knot helped to maintain the torch's burn.

13 That is, the stalactites and stalagmites inside the cavern.

14 Master Zhang's Cavern is at the foot of Yu's Peak Mountain [Yufeng Shan] outside Yixing, Jiangsu. According to legend, during the Han dynasty, Zhang Ling (or Zhang Daoling; traditionally 34–156 CE), who is credited as the founder of an important sect of Daoism called "Way of the Celestial Masters" (Tianshi Dao), lived in the cavern. When Xu Xiake may have earlier visited that cavern is unclear.



Figure 8. Entrance to Jade Flower Cavern at Bright Terrace Retreat (*circled*). From *Jade Flower Cavern Gazetteer* (Yuhua Dong zhi), 1662–1735, 1.2b–3a. Liao Heling (n.d.) et al., eds. National Library of China, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/玉華洞志 - 康熙 雍正間 (1662–1735).pdf.

secluded and mysterious everywhere. At the same time, the doorway that leads into it is even more expansive. The similarities and differences between the two caverns are much the same, like that between older and younger brothers. I climbed stairs and ascended to the cavern's summit, where vaulted cliff walls taper into the sky. On the left and right, the walls seem like green jade and light-red skin, truly revealing a quality that Master Zhang's Cavern does not provide.

I descended the mountain to some ridged fields. The surrounding mountains ring around and lock in the fields, so water from the mountains has no outlet. It rapidly plummets down from inside the mountains. Presumably, the stream that flows inside Jade Flower Cavern was formed similarly. Again I climbed to the midpoint of the mountain and passed Bright Terrace Retreat. A monk at the retreat said, "The rocky bones of this mountain have sharp and severe edges. In places where they are revealed and exposed, layer upon layer, they look like pared jade and trimmed clouds. But frequently, they are concealed by grass and trees, so sightseers come to know about the cavern but not the peaks." So he led me up some stairs along a bird track, then through an opening into some jumbled vines, where we found Star Grotto [Xingku]. It has tapered cliff walls crowded together and overhanging on three sides

while it plummets down for several rods below. Beside the grotto are three wild sour peel tangerine (*ju*) trees, hanging down countless clusters of its fruit.

At the midpoint of the mountain, I turned right and proceeded for one or two *li*. Suddenly, at a place where the ridges of two mountains join, I was surrounded by thorns and bushes. Inside them are stone steps lined up neatly like teeth, which loop and coil between both sides of the rocks. I gazed up at the peak's summit, where an exquisite bamboo shoot-like thicket of trees stood alone. In due course, from the top of the vaulted wall behind the cavern, I again transited to Rock Gate, then descended to have a bath at the retreat. I spent the night there.

Twenty-first day [24 April]: Following the same route as before, I reached the south gate of Jiangle, where I took the road to Yong'an County.

Twenty-fourth day [27 April]: I did not reach Yong'an until today. My servant, who took a boat from Yanping, had not yet arrived.

Twenty-fifth day [28 April]: I sat and waited for the servant at a traveler's inn in Yong'an. I bought some Shunchang wine at a market and drank it downstairs in the inn. Suddenly, I heard a commotion that would not stop. It was the servant who had come from Yanping. So I made plans for us to head out early the following day.

Twenty-sixth day [29 April]: Following along the county wall and heading upstream, I proceeded twenty *li*, then turned south. After another twenty-five *li*, I climbed to Big Leak Ridge [Daxie Ling], which is towering and tall, and then proceeded through clouds and mist. It was like this for fifteen *li* until I found a flat embankment called Lin's Field [Lintian]. Lin's Field has two streams that approach from the south: the one to the east is muddy and red like blood; the one to the west is entirely green. When they reach here, their currents merge.

Twenty-seventh day [30 April]: I proceeded against the current of Carmine Stream [Chixi]. After some time passed, I abandoned Carmine Stream. I continued against the current of Transparent Stream [Chengxi]. Altogether, proceeded twenty *li*, crossed the upper and lower bridges at Hollow Source [Kengyuan], and climbed Horse Mountain Ridge [Mashan Ling]. I turned to ascend, then turned again to go even higher. The fog also became thick, like when I climbed Big Leak Ridge yesterday. Proceeded five more *li* and then made my way through that ridge, which serves as the border of Ningyang County.[15] Descended five *li* and had a meal at the top of the ridge. At the time, the glaring sunlight seemed about

15 Modern Ningyang Xian.

to reach its midday zenith, while the countless peaks seemed to be holding up mirrors in the light to reflect their faces. I gazed back at the ascending ridge already out of sight. But below me, massed peaks were in paired columns, none of which failed to display their forms below my sandals. Presumably, on the ultimate summit of Horse Mountain, the rocky peaks block and hide one another. I did not realize until now that this was the highest point in the vast terrain of the south. I asked some locals about it. Before Ningyang was established as a county, it still fell under the administrative jurisdiction of Yong'an. Now, all the rivers north of Horse Mountain Ridge that flow north fall under the administrative jurisdiction of Yanping. All the rivers south of the ridge that flow south fall under the administrative jurisdiction of Zhang Subprefecture. The jurisdiction of the rivers should undoubtedly be set up in this way so it conforms with the terrain of the mountains. Zhang Subprefecture's territory is thirty *li* south of Ningyang. To the west is Dragon Cliff [Longyan], which is in this commandery.[16] To the east is Big Field [Datian] in Yanping, or so I was told. It was not until I descended ten *li* down the mountain that, following a ravine, I proceeded onward. I crossed a bridge over a stream and headed south. Big Stream (Daxi), in due course, departed to the east. Passed over a ridge and again, following a small stream that approached from the west, proceeded twenty *li* and reached the eastern outer wall of Ningyang. I wound around to the north of the county wall and proceeded west. Then, the same Big Stream I saw earlier approached and passed south of the wall, merging with a small stream. Only then is navigation possible on that waterway.

Twenty-eighth day [1 May]: I was about to descend to the south when we received a warning about robbers. For two days, no boats departed.

Fourth month, first day [4 May]: Our boat did not sail until daybreak. The stream, by way of a mountain gorge, flows headlong down to the south. After ten-some *li*, I saw a peak jutting out to the west. It spans across and cuts off the stream, whose water diverts to the west and then cuts to the east again. Its force is like water pouring down from an overturned jar.[17] It is called Rocky Mouth Rapids [Shizui Tan]. Its jumbled rocks stand in clusters, through which is a single passageway, only big enough for one boat. Our boat plummeted down through the passageway with a drop of over one rod. With extra force, the boat twisted and turned, again falling down several rods. If you compare these rapids to those at Dim and Dismal and the other rapids, where rocks in the rapids are especially

16 That is, of Zhangzhou Prefecture.

17 Following *YJJZ*, 1:98n1, and reading *jianling* 建瓴 to mean *fuling* 覆瓴 (overturned water jar). The idea here is that the water in the stream flowed with the force of water plummeting down from an overturned jar.

prominent in how they stick out of the water, these are twice as dangerous. Crowds of boats reach here, lining up like fish scales to descend. Each time a boat descends, the people in the boat will disembark and climb up on the bank. Then, together, they will grab a thick rope and pull the boat backward and forward, releasing the rope only when the boat can proceed. After passing here, the mountain gorges became dangerous and narrower, while once again, mountain barriers poked into the sky. The stream zigzags through dilapidated cliff walls and then descends. Indeed, the stream seems to split the lush green mountains and pierce through the clouds.

Proceeded thirty *li* and passed Inn Head [Guantou], which serves as the border of Zhangping County, where yet another peak juts out to the east.[18] The current once more rings around to the east and then cuts west. This is called Gushing Water Rapids [Liushui Tan]. The peaks here link together; mountain barriers merge. It seemed like a massive wave from the Milky Way had flown to our boat. I felt I was now being held hostage in the Dragon Splash Pool.[19] A short time later, the landscape of the mountains opened a little. Proceeded twenty-some *li* to Rocky Wall Rapids [Shibi Tan]. Its rocks charge in from the south, restraining the current but not making it retreat. The force of the water thus continues to beat against and strike the rocks. As far as danger is concerned, these rapids are third behind Rocky Mouth and Gushing Water. When one descends from here, a stream comes from the northeast to merge with this one. Descending farther, Pincer Stream [Jiaxi] approaches from the northeast to join here. The stream's current becomes greater, but its force is milder. Proceeded east twenty more *li* to Zhangping County.

The streams of Ningyang County rush down swiftly and speedily, ten times faster than Jian Stream. Presumably, the stream from Pucheng enters the sea when it reaches Min'an, running more than eight hundred *li*. The stream from Ningyang that enters the sea when it reaches Haicheng County only runs three hundred-some *li*. The more forceful the watercourse, the swifter the current. How much more is this true when you descend to Yanping from Plowshare Ridge, which does not reach five hundred *li*? And when you ascend to Horse Ridge [Maling] from Yanping, it does not reach four hundred *li*, but it is steep. As for the height of these two ridges, the difference is like that between an older and younger brother. They are equal in height, but the distance to where they flow into the sea is shorter, so the force of the water's flow is more significant. As for the dangers when their thunderous roar moves over land, I should describe them here.

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18 Modern Zhangping Shi.

19 Xu Xiake refers to the Dragon Splash Pool at Mount Yandang. His point is that the passengers were so drenched with water that they felt stuck in place directly below a waterfall.

Second day [5 May]: I took the boat down to Huafeng County.[20] After sailing for several *li*, the mountain terrain again begins to close in. The tiered rapids and doubly swift currents, like at Grand Peace and Dim and Dismal along Jian Stream, are so numerous that they cannot all be counted. After sixty *li* reached Huafeng County. When North Stream [Beixi] reaches here, it rushes and runs over the spines of rocks. Boats cannot pass. So I abandoned the boat and crossed a ridge on foot. Generally speaking, the amount of water at the origin of a river can only brim over a single goblet, so not even a raft can float there. But if a waterway has been opened for navigation, instances where a boat reaches its lower reaches and is blocked are rare. The only case is the Assembled Crossing [Jijin] along the Three Gates [Sanmen] on the Yellow River, where boats can neither ascend nor descend. However, boat transport occurred on the Yellow River during the Han and Tang dynasties.[21] Remnants of the cables that were used then are still around. This cannot be compared with Huafeng County's rapids, which have never been open for navigation since antiquity. I intended to follow the current and see all the dangerous spots, but the residents only knew about crossing the ridge, so no one could guide me.

Third day [6 May]: I climbed a ridge, proceeded ten *li*, and reached the ridge's apex, where stream water again approached from the west, then descended and followed the foot of the mountain. I looked down but only saw a belt-like stretch of water. Proceeded another five *li*, where the belt of water sinks straight down for another two *li* and reaches a stream. The boat traveled eighty *li* and reached Stream Mouth [Xikou].[22] If we proceed southwest overland for thirty *li*, that will take us to Zhangzhou Prefecture; if the boat follows the current southeast for twenty *li*, that will take us to East of the River Crossing [Jiangdong Du]. As it turns out, this is the site of the relay station road that approaches from Quanzhou and Xinghua Prefectures in the east. If we flowed with the current for another sixty *li*, we would come out in Haicheng County, where the stream flows into the sea.

Fourth day [7 May]: I rode by sedan chair for twenty *li* and then entered the north gate of Zhangzhou Prefecture to visit my uncle, the administrator for public order [*sili canjun*].[23] His seal of office is in Nanjing County,

20 Modern Hua'an Xian.

21 Three Gates is a narrow gorge along the middle reaches of the Yellow River that divides into three channels. The dangerous rapids, rocky islands, and extensive sandbanks there have impeded navigation for centuries.

22 Here I follow *YJJZ*, 1:98–99n16, which says "West Stream" [Xixi 西溪] should instead read "Stream Mouth" [Xikou 溪口].

23 Zhangzhou Prefecture corresponds to modern Zhangzhou Shi. The uncle mentioned here is Xu Risheng (*jinshi* 1625). He was responsible for local judicial affairs and prison management in Nanjing County.

thirty *li* from the prefecture.[24] In the rain, I left by the south gate. That night, I went by boat to Nanjing.

Fifth day [8 May]: I did not reach Nanjing until daybreak because we had to twist and thread our way against the current. This stream, which approaches Nanping, reaches Nanjing after sixty *li*. It is more potent than West Stream and equally vast and mighty. The stream passes by the south gate of Zhang Commandery.[25] It also reaches Haicheng County, where it enters the sea. As for the fame achieved by Zhangzhou Prefecture, does anyone know which of the two streams takes the oxen's ear?[26]

—Translated by James M. Hargett

24 In ancient China, officials used seals (sometimes called "chops" in English) rather than signatures on government documents. So saying that his uncle's seal is in Nanjing means that the uncle's office is in Nanjing. Nanjing 南靖 County (modern Nanjing Xian, Fujian) should not be confused with the famous city of Nanjing 南京 on the Changjiang in Jiangsu.

25 That is to say, of Zhangzhou Prefecture.

26 This ultimate line in Xu Xiake's first Min diary vividly exemplifies his skill as a wordsmith. Instead of closing with the simple question, "Which of the two streams has contributed the most to Zhangzhou Prefecture's fame?" he instead draws upon an account in the *Zuo Tradition* (Zuozhuan) that describes a covenant made at a conference meeting of feudal lords during the Zhou dynasty. To seal the covenant, the leader of the conference cut the ear of an ox and then took the animal's blood and either drank it or smeared it on his lips to demonstrate his loyalty to the covenant. Afterward, "take an oxen's ear" (*zhi niuer*) came to signify "leader," or in this case, the stream that played a *leading role* in helping Zhangzhou prefecture to achieve notoriety.

Later Travels in Min

SUMMER AND FALL 1630

Xu Xiake visited Min (modern Fujian) five times. Diary accounts for three of those visits are extant. The first (1620), the Nine Carp Lake account, is translated earlier in this volume; the second (1628) is translated in the previous diary. What follows below is the third account, which chronicles a sightseeing trip south to Fujian in the summer and fall of 1630.

Spring of the gengwu *year* [1630]: My uncle, the administrator for public order in Zhangzhou Prefecture, has urged me to visit him at his government office. I had intended to put away my sightseeing sandals this year, but a steady stream of messengers from south of Zhangzhou came with invitations. My great uncle, Nian'e the Gaffer, who is advanced in age, came and sat in my home, braving the summer heat, and urged me to set off.[1] So I began my journey on the seventeenth day of the seventh month [24 August]. On the twenty-first day [28 August], I reached Wulin.[2] On the twenty-fourth day [31 August], I crossed the Qiantang River [Qiantang Jiang]. The waves were calm and without a ripple; I seemed to be strolling on level ground while crossing the river. On the twenty-eighth day [4 September], I reached Longyou County, where I hired a boat to take me to Blue Lake.[3] Since Quzhou Prefecture was still twenty *li* away, we moored at Camphor Tree Pool [Zhangshu Tan].[4]

Thirtieth day [6 September]: Passed Jiangshan County and reached Blue Lake, where I abandoned the boat and proceeded on foot. Following the stream, I searched for surpassing scenic spots and found a rocky cliff on the northern shoreline. The cliff overlooks the stream's rippling billows. A limpid pool laps against its base, while nearby crevices are adorned with dense trees. The rocks are dark green, while the trees are lushly luxuriant and bear the likeness of lotus plants emerging on the water's surface.

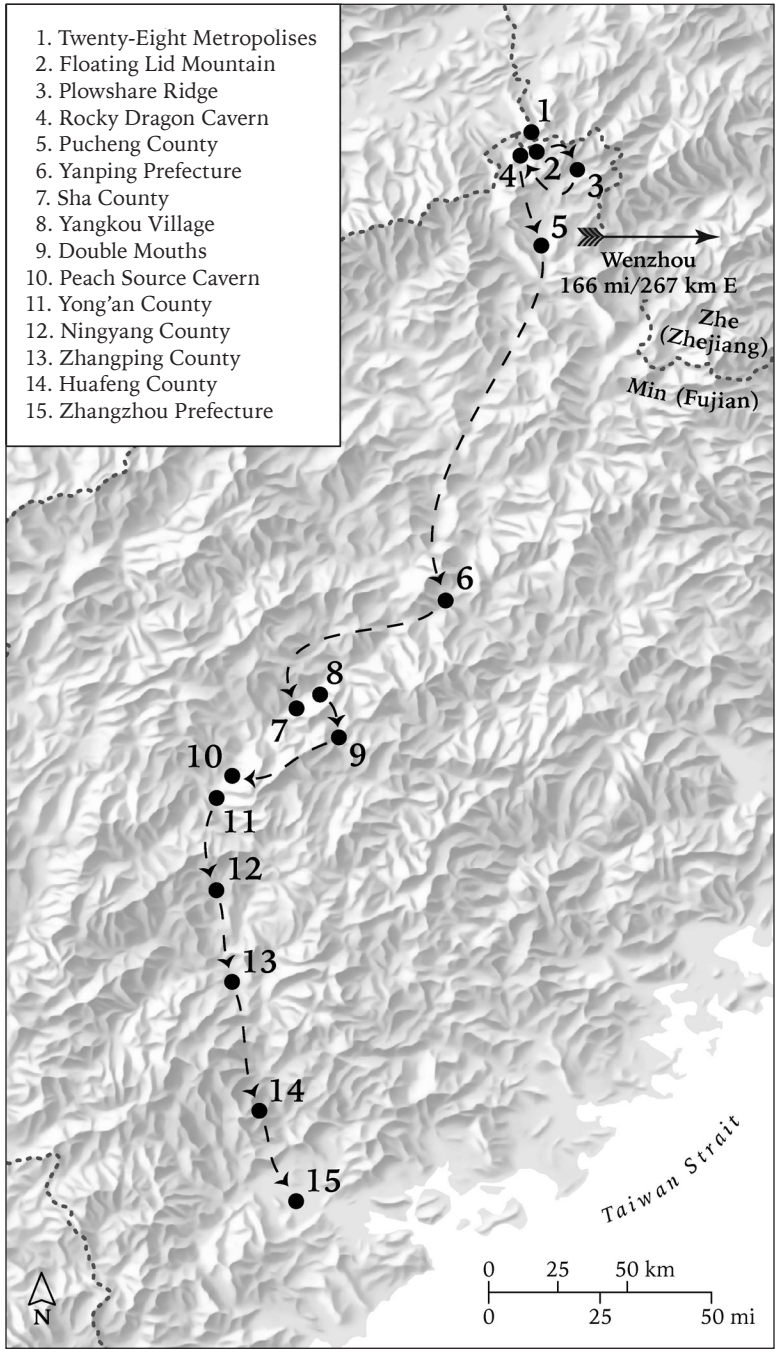
Source: "Minyou riji hou" (*YJJZ*, 1.100–108; *YJ*, 1.61–68).

1 Xu Xiake's great uncle Nian'e the Gaffer (Nian'e Weng) is not further identified. The messengers bearing invitations urging Xu Xiake to visit Fujian were presumably sent by his uncle, Xu Risheng. The uncle's government office was in Nanjing County, *west* (not south) of Zhangzhou Prefecture.

2 Wulin (lit., "Martial Wood") is another name for Hangzhou.

3 Modern Longyou Xian, Zhejiang.

4 Modern Quzhou Shi, Zhejiang.



Map 14. Min (Fujian), 1630 (see also map 13)

Monks have built dwellings against the cliff, creating quite an air of serenity and perfection.[5] I crouched down on a rock to rest and met Liu Duiyu, with whom I immediately became friends. He told me, "Twenty *li* north of Jiangshan is Left Hollow [Zuokeng]. The crag rocks there are extraordinary and eerie. As for your straw sandals investigating that remote place, you cannot go there just once." I then joyfully backtracked to where I was staying. Since it was already afternoon, I did not proceed any farther.

First day of the eighth month [7 September]: Braving the rain, I proceeded for thirty *li*. I gazed toward Mount Jianglang's rocky slabs the whole way but could not see them, even though I was nearby. I had planned to climb to its base earlier but failed when I reached the trailhead. Crossed Mountain Hollow Ridge [Shankeng Ling] and stopped to spend the night at Precious Peace Bridge [Baoan Qiao].

Second day [8 September]: When I climbed Transcendent Sunglow Clouds Ridge and crossed Little Pole Ridge [Xiao Ganling], the nearby fog had already lifted, but the distant peaks were only a blur. Proceeded another ten *li* and had a meal at Twenty-Eight Wards [Ershiba Du]. Southeast of there is Floating Lid Mountain [Fugai Shan], which straddles the three provinces of Zhejiang, Fujian, and Jiangxi and falls within the boundaries of the four prefectures of Quzhou, Chuzhou, Guangxin, and Jianning.[6] Perilous and towering is Floating Lid, which stands between Transcendent Sunglow Clouds and Plowshare Ridge [Liling].[7] It serves as the crown of the other peaks. Maple Ridge [Fengling] poises in the west; Terminus Ridge [Biling] is a barrier in the east. Plowshare Ridge, then, lies to the south. Its bizarre rocks seem to snatch the clouds; its sunglow clouds hover above tapered, lush-green peaks. Each time I headed south past Little Pole Ridge and to the north crossed Plowshare Ridge, I would look far off into the distance at Floating Lid's bounteous assembly, which I found breathtaking. After a meal, my excitement could not be held in check. I made numerous queries about the trail to climb the mountain. A cowherd told me, "If you ascend by way of Red Maple Tree Ridge—that is the main trail to the mountain, but that is the long way. If you cross the ridge to the left of the stream bridge at Twenty-Eight Wards, then pass over White Flower Cliff [Baihua Yan], that trail is narrower but closer." I was even more delighted to hear about White Flower

5 The expression "join together railings" (*jiejian*) is a synecdoche meaning "built dwellings."

6 Quzhou and Chuzhou are in Zhejiang, Guangxin in Jiangxi, and Jianning in Fujian. During the Ming, these prefectures were in the general area where the borders of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and Fujian intersect.

7 The original Chinese text uses *li* 犁 (plowshare) and *li* 梨 (pear) interchangeably. I follow *YJJZ*, 1:104n4, and regard "plowshare" as the correct reading throughout the text.

Cliff, even though I had to take a longer route, bypassing a shortcut! I then crossed south of the bridge and proceeded for several dozen paces, where there was a narrow trail from the left by which one could climb to the ridge.

After three *li*, I descended the ridge, left the trail, and headed south, crossing a stream. Proceeded another three *li*, then turned into a col to the south, where a village is at the northern foot of Floating Lid Mountain. Here, the stream divides, and the ridges mingle; bamboo and pine trees are fresh and serene. The village is called Golden Bamboo Cloud [Jinzhu Yun]. I crossed a wooden bridge and entered the village at the bamboo fence gate of a paper maker. Then, taking some small stone steps, I began my climb. At first, there were plots of fields everywhere, lofty and in folds, gradually mounting straight up to precipitous cliffs. Proceeded another five *li*, where rough and rugged giant boulders are like chess pieces positioned in starry nets, and pines and bamboo contend with rocks inside crevices. By this time, I had already entered the places with the most surpassing scenic sights. Where bamboo is thick and rocks turn away, a single retreat towers aloft. This is White Flower Cliff. A monk pointed to the ultimate summit of the mountain behind the cliff, where the rocks on the peak are quite extraordinary. The ridge to the right of the retreat rings and rolls around then moves left. This is Inner Mountain Retreat [Lishan An].[8] Crossed two lofty knolls through Inner Mountain, turned, and descended to the southern side of a mountain. This is Great Monastery [Dasi]. To the right is Plowshare Pinnacle Summit [Lijian Ding]; to the left is Rocky Dragon Cavern [Shilong Dong].[9] I looked down at Plowshare Ridge ahead, which seemed I could now bend and pinch it between my fingers. I then proceeded two *li* from the right of the monastery and stopped to rest at Inner Mountain Retreat. From Inner Mountain to Great Monastery is about seven *li*. The trail is small and steep, and one must first mount a knoll and proceed for about two *li*. The layout of the knoll droops down toward the north. I crossed east of the knoll, where the rivers below a col all flow east. This marks the border of Pucheng County. I ascended to the south for another *li*, crossed a knoll, followed to its left, and ascended. This is called Lion Peak. The fog was thick, and the trail was blocked, so I gave up on it. Passed over a knoll and descended to the west, then turned south again, ascended for two *li*, and crossed another knoll. From the left of the knoll, one can also ascend Lion Peak. From the right, one can climb to the summit of Dragon Cavern. I then headed south, went straight down for about two *li*, and reached Great Monastery, where bamboo cast shadows on fissures in the rocks. White Flower Cliff perfectly captures the unique shapes of

8 Following *YJ*, 1:62, and reading Lishan 裏山 ("Inner Mountain").

9 References in the text below to "Dragon Cavern" [Longdong 龍洞] seem to refer to this same cavern.

the shadows. And while other peaks and tors ring around and align, this one truly is unique in its surpassing scenery. Rain detained me in the monastery for two days.

Fourth day [10 September]: Braving the rain, I made a sightseeing trip to Dragon Cavern. With my monk guide, I chopped at trees to open a path. We clambered through jumbled scree and ascended. Fog billowed up; the thorns were like razors. Small rocks enveloping steep banks looked fierce and evil, like creepy ghosts. Through clustered rocks, we made our way to a gorge. Places that are gentle and graceful enhance the gorge's eeriness yet conceal its dangers; bare and hilly areas enhance its risks yet restrain its steepness. It was like this for two *li*. While stopped beneath a tree, I glanced sidelong and spotted a cliff. I clambered and crouched my way onto it. To the right are two cliff walls pressed closely together. The distance between them is only a foot. Above and below, they seemed to form a whole, just like places called a "single thread of sky."[10] I could not tell if it provided a way to reach the summit. Next, I lit a bamboo lantern and crept and crawled into a crevice. The crevice walls pressed close together and stood erect and high, which seemed like the "single thread of sky" I just saw outside. Comparing the two, the summit of the one outside is open and bright, while the one here is joined on top and dark.

When I first entered the cavern, even closed places above still allowed one or two light streams to slip in. However, as I went deeper into the cavern, it turned pitch black. The stream at the bottom of the cavern flows over a bed of sand. The stream drenched my feet, but the path was flat. Along the path, there is a flat rock. Like a tongue, it sticks straight up in the air, directly perpendicular to the cavern's walls. The flat rock is only three feet high. Both sides of it are attached to the cavern walls. The cavern walls not only pressed against my shoulders; my chest was right up against the rock. There was no way to clamber and tread forward. Passing through this cavern is the most difficult. I went farther, and the two walls pressed in even closer; my shoulders could not fit through. I advanced only after turning my body sideways. More rocky slabs, like those encountered earlier, blocked the entrance to the narrow passageway. They are twice the height of the earlier slabs. I could not climb farther, so the monk guide pulled me up. But after climbing up, the monk could not descend. He removed his outer jacket, twisted and turned for a long time, and got down. With my body still turned sideways, I hesitated, standing on a rock. Then I also took off my outer jacket

10 When describing an extremely narrow breach through rocky cliff walls, Xu Xiake often uses the expression "a single thread of sky" (*yixian tian* 一線天) to emphasize the narrowness of the opening. Sometimes, the expression designates a proper noun (place-name); at other times, as we see in this line, it simply refers to a narrow passageway through a rocky cliff wall.

and mustered all my strength. From the rocks below, the monk supported me with his arms so we could go farther into the cavern. Its interior walls are a bit more spacious, so we could stand shoulder to shoulder as we proceeded. The water in the cavern is relatively deep. This is called Dragon Pond [Longchi]. Facing upward, I looked at the top of the cavern. But it was too high; I could not see the ceiling. A dragon-shaped rock overhangs from the most distant point where it bestrides the walls. The color of all the other rocks in the cavern is reddish-brown. Only this one is white. The texture of the rock is coarse, like a grindstone, seemingly forming fish scales and shells. So the rock has been deified as a "dragon." I turned up the lantern wick, looked around for a while, and exited the cavern.

In this next section, Xu provides helpful information to future visitors to Dragon Cavern.

If you ascend the cavern from the rocky, narrow passageway, you are hemmed in; if you descend, you are blocked. When you enter the cavern, your body seems to dangle from above, but then you drop down. The physical contours of the cavern remain smooth. You turn your body sideways to get through when you come out from below. Your chest and back cling to and rub against the two walls, and your knees cannot bend and extend. The rocks stab your skin. No one can be close, either in front or behind you. Whenever one person passes another, the quicker he does so, the more likely he is to become stuck. It seemed like we feared we might meld together with the rocks. After we came out of the cavern, I was so joyous that I felt as if I had been reborn, while mountain mists suddenly dispersed, and our next destination in the empyrean came into my gaze. We proceeded on through the brightly lit gorge. Cutting and severing wild grasses and clearing away brambles, we did not go a half a *li* when we came to another cavern. The cavern was made up entirely of huge boulders, one on top of another, like multi-story lofts and double-layered belvederes. Inside, it was dry and fresh, with bright light passing through.

I paced about the cavern for quite a while, ascended the overlapping cliffs for two *li*, and climbed to the absolute summit. This is the highest place on Floating Lid. I perched myself on a rock and sat down. The fog in the northwest immediately lifted. Below, I saw Golden Bamboo Village [Jinzhu Li] one *li* to the east, where rocks collapsed into ravines and then plummeted into valleys. The layers of rocks seemed like emerald jade and light silk gauze, distant and near, in countless shapes. Only the area south of the summit was still out of sight. Following a ridge to the west, I descended. Then I realized this peak is the most distant one east of Floating Lid. From here, I proceeded west, wiggling and writhing over several peaks, twice lying low, twice rising high, all the way to the end

of Piled Rocks Retreat [Dieshi An], which, as it turns out, is in the western corner of Floating Lid. When you descend farther, this takes you to White Flower Cliff. After crossing two consecutive peaks, you come to what is the third knoll leading to the monastery on Inner Mountain. Occasionally, whenever I would pass a peak, the weather on the peak would invariably break and clear. All the rocks on the western peaks would then spread open and come into view. From the terminus to the west of the peaks, I crossed two more peaks, both of which had tiered and terraced rocks. Yet another peak, inclining toward the south and positioned among them, has two rocks in front towering high. One is slanted to one side and pointed. This is called Plowshare Pinnacle Rock [Litou Jianshi]. The two rocks are several scores of rods high. It seems fitting that they are offshoots of Mount Jianglang.

Everywhere below the crags are several layers of rocks clustered together, supported below by a flat, rocky dish. If one sits in a recessed, empty spot, they could linger and loiter for as long as they like. On the spur below and to the south of this peak, numerous rocks tower up in tiers. These are designated Twin Stalactite Men [Shuangsun Shiren]. Its branches are all the peaks that assemble and align to the right of Great Monastery. Scattered behind the peaks are five other peaks, rotating and ringing around. Hidden among them is a level tract of land where cottages could be built, which one rarely finds among lofty peaks. Farther to the west, I crossed two peaks. The central summit of Floating Canopy is formed from stacked and heaped flat boulders. Those below form the base; those on top form the canopy. Sometimes, several rocks together shoulder a single rock; sometimes, several rocks lay side by side on a single rock. They form into layered terraces and twin watchtowers everywhere above and below, so "Floating Lid on the Transcendent's Altar" [Fugai Xiantan] is not a misnomer. Its rocks are lofty, tapered, and without steps, so it was difficult for me to clamber up there. I climbed to its apex, where the masses of peaks were wholly revealed. Rocks on all four sides of the mountain's summit have moss, which seems graceful and charming, drooping into delicate greenery and floating mist. To the west, I gazed at the surpassing scenic sights of Piled Rocks Peak [Dieshi Feng] and Rocky Transcendent Peak [Shixian Feng], still three or four peaks into the distance. Since it was already noon, I backtracked to have a meal in the monastery. I then departed and descended to the south. Proceeded ten *li* and came to a main road. I was already at the foot of Plowshare Ridge. Climbed the ridge, passed Nine Shepherds, and spent the night at the Lower Market at Fisherman's Bridge [Yuliang Xiajie].

Fifth Day [11 September]: Headed down to Pucheng County by boat and, after four days, reached Yanping Commandery.[11]

11 That is, Yanping Prefecture.

Tenth day [16 September]: Next, sailing against the current, we ascended Eternal Peace Stream [Yong'an Xi] and moored at Banyan Tree Stream [Rongxi].[12] This area is the midpoint between Nanping and Sha Counties, each sixty *li* away. Before reaching here, the water in the stream from Pucheng County was minimal, but the stream from Yong'an County rages and swells. Thus, the boat moved as slowly downstream as it did upstream.

Eleventh day [17 September]: The boat proceeded southwest, winding as it followed the mountains. By jumbled rocks, sheer and steep, the racing current shot us along at great speed. After twenty *li*, the boat hit a rock. The boatman used bamboo fibers and cotton paper and stuffed in strips of wood to plug the leak, securing it with nails. This stopped water from pouring in any farther. Proceeded another ten *li* to where, on the right side of the stream, there was a mountain. It looks down on the stream like a crouching lion. The face of the mountain has two layers of cliffs, while a belvedere-like rock formation looks out from the top. Below the cliffs is a round rock several rods high, which juts out from inside the stream. Thus, we turned east for another ten *li*, landing on a beach under the moon. The boat moored in the old part of the county.

Twelfth day [18 September]: The mountains opened slightly. We proceeded northwest for twenty *li* and reached Sha County. The area south of the county wall overlooks Great Stream. As high as a man's shoulders, the county wall is a cliff along the stream. Many large boats were anchored in the stream. On the two sides of the stream are waterwheels, which control the water so grain can be threshed. Proceeded west for ten *li*, then cut south into the mountains. The rocky bones of the mountains on the right are scarped and tapered, while in a narrow spot on the left of the mountain, there is a waterfall resembling a jade chopstick poking down into a crack in a depression. Proceeded southwest for another twenty *li* and moored at Yangkou.[13] There is a road here that goes through to Youxi County.[14] To the east is a mountain called Lifeng, the most prestigious height in this prefecture. I saw it yesterday when our boat passed Crouching Lion Cliff [Fushi Ya]. Today, we sailed around it to the west, then headed south.

Thirteenth day [19 September]: Proceeded southwest for twenty *li* and gradually entered the mountains. After another twenty-five *li*, we reached

12 According to *YJJZ*, 1:104–5n14, this is an alternate name for Sand Stream, mentioned in Xu Xiake's first Min provincial diary (entry for 21 April), this volume.

13 This village corresponds to modern Yangxi Xiang.

14 Modern Youxi Xian.

Double Mouths [Shuangkou]. Then we turned and proceeded northwest for five *li* and reached Transverse Double Mouths [Heng Shuangkou]. To the right of the stream is a river that approaches from the north. The stream from Yong'an County comes from the south. The two streams merge when reaching here. The stream that approaches from the north can be navigated for about seventy *li* before reaching the front of the cliff. Another five *li* into the territory of Yong'an is the Xinling Post Station [Xinling Pu].

Fourteenth day [20 September]: Only after we entered the boundary of Yong'an did we hear the cries of gibbons. Proceeded south for forty *li* to Resilient River [Gongchuan]. We ascended some big rapids for ten *li*. As we proceeded southeast, gazing into the distance, I suddenly saw peak rocks protruding boldly on the right side of the stream. Not long afterward, as we directly closed in on the area below them, the rocks protruding boldly changed and became spiny and spikey, and collapsed rubble, all of which circled and ran crosswise, standing like walls, forming peaks, forming crags, forming screens, and forming pillars, one after another. Among them is a peaked wall that tapers to its base. Someone had written on it in large characters: "Ride Up to the Empyrean" (Lingxiao). Hence, as for elements in the extraordinary scenery on the left side of the stream, they also seemed to stand out and contend to be the most surpassing. By this time, the boat had already turned northwest. The cliffs on the left side of the stream are somewhat more unusual and different. But there is a sight even more outstanding than the scene on the left: Peach Source Cavern.[15] Its rows of peaks jut out south of the stream. Above, it ascends and closes in on the Layered Han [Cenghan]; below, it looks down on the meandering stream.[16] At the base of the peaks is a deep crack through which a flowing stream bursts. I looked up at the summit, where railings meandered and railings soared, which girdled around from far away and were all different. I immediately stopped the boat and climbed up there. I followed the ravine and then entered the cavern. There was only a single crack between the cliffs, where I saw bamboo casting shadows into the stream. I came to a bridge, crossed the ravine, and then ascended again. There is a gate here called Eternal Spring Garden [Changchun Pu]. As I hastily pressed on toward the gate, the peak south of the stream that I gazed at earlier was now north of the gate.

Next, I headed north and ascended. Beside the trail is a rock, square and as flat as a whetstone. As sunset hues filled the mountains, I came to

15 I follow *YJJZ*, 1:109n8, and read "Peach Source Cavern" (Taoyuan Dong 桃源洞). This same note marks the cavern 6 mi/10 km north of modern Yong'an Cheng in Fujian.

16 "Layered Han" denotes the Milky Way. "Han" refers to the Han River in the sky, another name for the Milky Way.

intersecting trails and could not tell which way to go. So I went to Great Master's Ceremonial Hall [Dashi Dian], where I found a Daoist to guide me. Following a cliff, we passed the Literary Splendor Belvedere as I accompanied him north. Turned and crossed two pavilions, which stood poised on the cliffs, embellishing its walls. From here, we turned into a narrow gap in the steep wall, which only measured the width of a thread. A gap cleaved through to the mountain's apex and, in the distance, pierced through to the mountain's north side. In the gap, there is not enough room for one's shoulders to pass. As it turns out, someone has chiseled away at the gap, making it passable, and built up steps that slant and ascend directly through it. I have never seen one as grand, confining, remote, and orderly among the several "single thread of sky" locations at Mount Wuyi, Mount Huang, and Floating Canopy.

Not long afterward, I came across an opening in the sky above, where peaks all around gathered and aligned. I ascended through the gap to a square and well-proportioned rock called Chessboard Mesa [Qiping]. Along the way, I next came to a terrace. On it is a tree rising high in the sky. Its roots coil around the terrace. Next, I came to a trestle bridge built between two cliff walls. The walls above and below are tapered. When I crossed the bridge, I felt poised in midair. Where peaks are gathered, and rocks are split in two, an abyss forms a cavern called Jade Ring [Huanyu]. After I came out of the cavern, next got through to a col in the west and ascended from the flank of Chessboard Mesa, where I came to a well with sweet and clear water. I next traversed the peak's northern corner with a very spacious pavilion. It is just that the stream from the north descends and winds around the peak and then narrows and tapers, so I could not look down at it. From here, I descended to the left and again came to a spring whose deep waters gathered to form a pool. As it was sunset, there was no time to go there.

Next, to the south, I ascended the ultimate summit, crowned with an octagonal-shaped pavilion. I descended the mountain by the western trail and came out at Nestled against the Clouds Pass [Yiyun Guan], where stone steps lead down steeply inside a gap, then descend for a hundred rods. Presumably, all four sides of the mountain are steep and sheer, with only a "single thread" as a stairway in the dark and "hundreds of rods of stone steps" as a ladder in the light.[17] Only when sightseers use the "ladder" to descend and the "thread" to ascend can they see all the extraordinary scenes. Aside from these, there are no other paths to the summit. We then returned to Great Master's Ceremonial Hall. It was dusky and dark, so we could not go out. The Daoist had one of his disciples chop some wood and make a fire, then accompanied me to the side of the stream, where our solitary lamp light passed through the

17 There were two ways to reach the summit: one through darkness, the other through daylight.

verdant col, almost like a will-o-the-wisp in a dark room. The Daoist said, "Two *li* distant from Eternal Spring Garden is Dustless Inn [Buchen Guan]. Next is Hundred Rods Cliff [Baizhang Yan], which has surpassing scenery. You can sightsee there." I nodded to him in agreement. I backtracked to the boat and urged the boatman that we travel by night. He refused, so I joined forces with my servants and punted the boat. Fortunately, there were no rocks in the rapids. The moon gradually became bright, and by the second drum, we had moored beneath an abandoned stone bridge. Proceeded on for twenty *li* and stopped just two *li* from Yong'an County.

Fifteenth day [21 September]: We reached a place below a bridge west of the county wall. The bridge is already in ruins. A big stream approaches from the west; the stream below the bridge approaches from the south. Both streams looked just like when I went sightseeing at Jade Flower Cavern.[18] Made a circuit around the western section of the county wall and proceeded south. I departed by proceeding against the stream that approaches from the south. Proceeded fifty *li* and reached Changqian, where the stream emerges from the right side of a mountain, and a trail follows the left side. So I abandoned the stream and climbed a ridge. Crossed two mountain ridges. And to the southwest, crossed a bridge over a stream.

Proceeded five *li* and to the south passed Murmuring Stream Bridge [Ximing Qiao]. After another five *li*, I approached a mountain's corner to the southwest. I thought, at last, I had reached the ultimate summit, but the top of the mountain was even more vaulted, like a dome. I ascended no farther. I proceeded south along the midpoint of the mountain, winding and cutting through the hazy-blue mist. I looked down at its base, where a stream curved, then twisted and turned. I could only hear the roar of its howling rage. But the mountain's base was so deep that I could not see any water. Presumably, the pinnacled, rocky peaks with tapered crests stand melded like joined teeth while rivers rinse their foundations below. Everywhere above are massed trees. But travelers only see a green lushness floating in the sky. They would probably think this was a single mountain if they did not hear the water. After some time, a meandering, swift current appeared in an opening between the trees. Its turbid, carmine color looked like blood. Proceeded another five *li* and came upon Carmine Stream. After another five *li*, we stopped at Lin's Field.

Sixteenth day [22 September]: I followed along a mountain for two *li* to where a peak directly descends from the south. East of the peak, there is a small stream. A larger stream forms in the west. Both join in the north

18 Xu Xiake's earlier visit to Jade Flower Cavern is described in his "Earlier Travels in Min" (diary entry for 23 April), this volume.

at Lin's Field and then surge to the west of Big Baleful Ridge [Dasha Ling]. Following a peak, I crossed a small stream, ascended to the south for five *li*, and reached Lower Bridge [Xiaqiao]. Winding about, I ascended southward for another eight *li*, where I came to Upper Bridge [Shangqiao]. Truly, it soars through the sky, seemingly poised in midair as it crosses the stream. On both sides are lofty peaks that poke into the sky. After I crossed the bridge, the trail became steeper. After ten more *li*, by way of a narrow through the mountains, I ascended to the south of two lofty peaks and up to the ridge's apex. When I turned around to look at the two lofty mountains, they were already below my sandals. I reckoned that, as for the loftiness and steepness of this ridge, Big Baleful and Floating Lid should rank below it. I descended south for thirty-five *li* and reached Ningyang County.[19]

Seventeenth day [23 September]: I set off by boat for Mount Huafeng [Huafeng Shan].

Eighteenth day [24 September]: We did not land until morning. I then gradually climbed a mountain slope. The stream runs along the right side of the slope. But because the rapids were high and rocks blocked the way, the boat could not advance. Proceeded on foot for another ten *li*, passed the foot of a mountain, then proceeded five more *li* and cut across the ultimate summit of Mount Huafeng. The stream cuts across below it, then departs to the west. I looked far off to the west for several *li*, where rapid rocks pile one on top of the other, and the force of the water dashes and surges. I reached an area with nothing but rocks. The most dangerous spot in the gorge is among the rocks that cut off the stream and where no water is visible. I recalled how I could not get there earlier because of the rain. Why should I miss the chance now? So I descended north for three *li* and came to a village in a col, which I thought was not far from the stream. I followed the col west for about one *li*, wanting to look down on the stream, but I could not find a trail. Only then did I descend through a sugarcane field. After passing through the field, I came to a place with vines. The flowers on the vines were like beans, while the thin pods had not yet formed. Next, I treaded along on the vines. The shifting sand under my feet reduced the traction of my sandals, so I just continued along, stepping on the vines. Soon afterward, I came to where the vines end. Now everywhere were thistles and thorns, vines and briars. They were so numerous that I could not go in them. At first, I turned my body sideways and shuffled my feet forward but could not tell if I was going up high or down low. Time after time, I fell into rocky clefts and got entangled in tree branches. Soon after that, I

19 Modern Ningyang Xian, Fujian.

suddenly came to a stream spanning right before me, with a main road following alongside it.

I proceeded west for three *li*, looking down at a stream before me. The roar of its rapids was deafening. I remarked that this must be the dangerous place I had gazed upon earlier that cuts off the stream. The main road went directly west, passing through Wu Garrison [Wuzhen] and Luo Wharf [Luobu]. I searched for a trail descending to the stream, but for a long time, I could not find one. Then I saw a small trail down low inside a thicket of brambles, so I crept and crawled toward it. At first, there were still shadows on the trail, but soon afterward, beneath me was nothing but a heap of leaves, about one foot high, covered with spider webs.[20] Above were brambles and brushes, dense and deep, which snagged my hair and snared my legs. Even though I tried every way I could think of, it was still hard to break free of the brambles. After I finally broke free, I saw headlong rushing torrents and surging streams, along with dangerous rocks, tiered and recessed on the way down. All the rocks pile straight up into the sky. Only after I climbed to the top of the rocks did I again see the stream. But the rocks did not provide any footing, so I turned and tumbled down into some dense brush. I figured I could not move forward, so I clambered over the rocks in the torrent water, then treaded through the current and got to the top of a rock. As big as a hundred houses, it sits sideways south of the stream. On the north side of the stream again are collapsed banks that dam up the water. The water then heads south and bypasses the gigantic rock. To the north, it surges through tumbled masses of rock, rushing and pounding with no resistance, leaping through rock gaps and descending. Upon descending, it immediately rises and falls, running headlong and precipitously, causing the water to gush backward and curl around, causing the banks to topple over. How could a boat get through such a place? I crouched down and sat on a huge rock.

Next, I clambered and crossed a stream with a protruding rock, where I sat down. I gazed up ahead, where the stream departs to the west. As for the force of its swift flow, there is no place more dangerous than this. For quite a while, I treaded over jumbled rocks against the current of a large stream. Terraced fields were patched together where I turned at a mountain along the stream. I did not find the road until I had gotten through the fields. I followed the road and then turned west. When I was about two *li* past the rock in the stream where I had crouched down, I heard the roar of the rapids that now heaved as they had before. I had come to another dangerous promontory. I proceeded two *li* west and found a small trail. Following the crest of a mountain, I looked straight down at the stream as I descended. Only then could I see the rapids along its upper reaches that had prevented our earlier descent. The rapids

20 That is to say, the trail's surface was still visible.

with nothing but rocks that cut off the stream I had gazed at from the top of the ridge are along its lower reaches. The spur of the ridge where I was standing seemed to be perched between the upper and lower reaches of the stream. Had I not reached that spot, the two runs of rapids would not have been visible. I passed over a ridge and descended to the boat. The next day, I arrived at the office of the administrator for public order in Zhangzhou Prefecture.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Later Sightseeing Trip to Mount Tiantai

[SPRING 1632]

As the title indicates, this diary chronicles a second or later trip to Mount Tiantai in Zhejiang, undertaken nineteen years after his first visit in 1613. For a translation of the first diary, see "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Tiantai," this volume.

Renshen *year, fourteenth day of the third month* [2 May 1632]: I set out from Ninghai County on horseback, proceeded forty-five *li*, then stopped to spend the night at Branch Road Crossing [Chalu Kou]. Fifteen *li* to the southeast is Mulberry Islet Relay Station [Sangzhou Yi], on the road to Tai Commandery.[1] Ten *li* to the southwest is Pine Gate Ridge, on the road into Tiantai County.

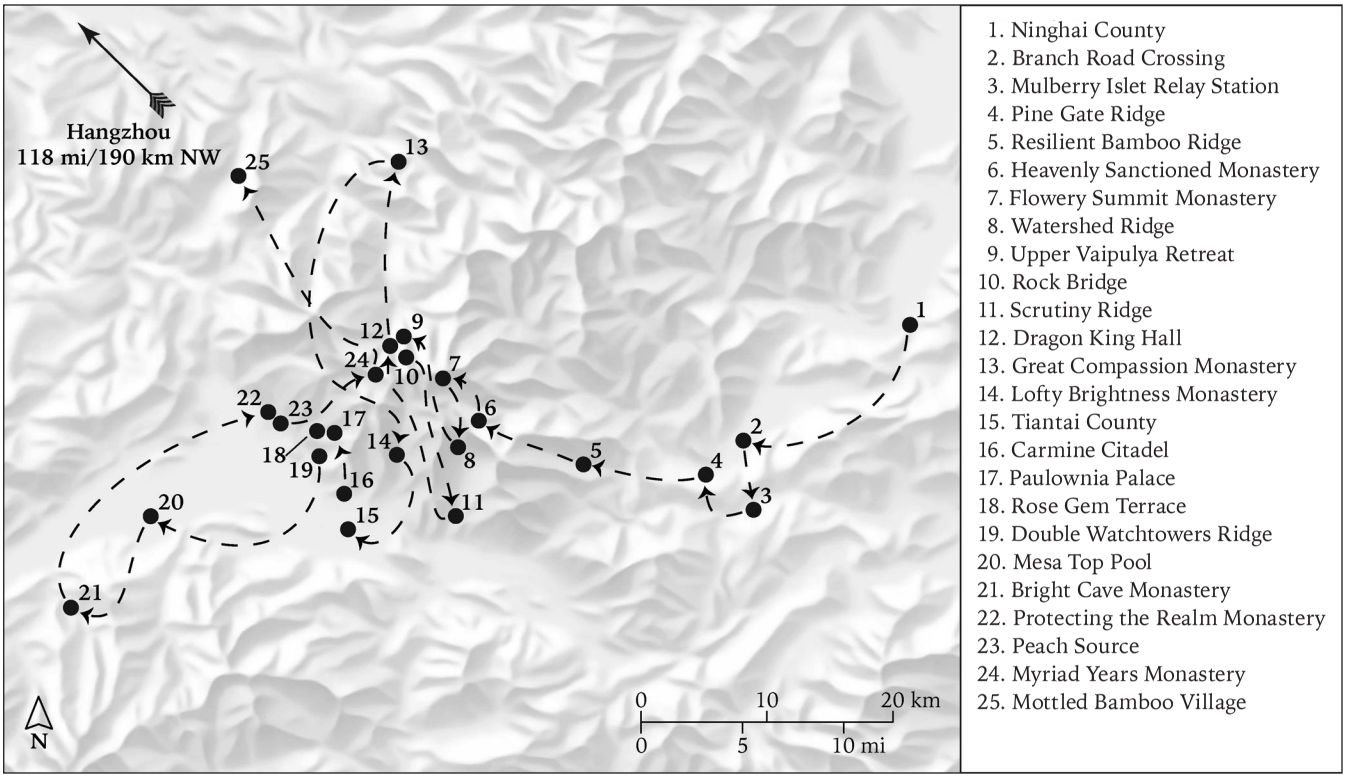
Fifteenth day [3 May]: I crossed Jellyfish Stream [Shuimu Xi], climbed to Pine Gate Ridge, and passed Jade Kindness Mountain [Yu'ai Shan], covering altogether thirty *li*. Then had a meal at the retreat on Resilient Bamboo Ridge, which forms the border of Ninghai and Tiantai Counties. Scaled a mountain ridge for thirty-some *li*, which was tranquil and had no sign of people. Even the Amitabha Retreat of former times was abandoned.[2] On the next ridge, amid a dim and dusky succession of mountains, I came across a village family who made tea for me. I drank it while sitting on a rock. After another ten-some *li*, passed a ridge and then went into Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery. Below Flowery Summit Peak, the site of this monastery is Mount Tiantai's most secluded spot. I dismounted my horse. Then, with the monk Lacking Excess (Wuyu), I ascended Flowery Summit Monastery [Huading Si], where I spent the night in the monk Pure Causation's (Jingyin) quarters.[3] The moonlight was bright and lustrous. The monastery site was still three *li* from the summit. Taking advantage of the moonlight, I ascended alone. But I

Source: "You Tiantai Shan riji hou" (*YJJZ*, 1:110–16; *YJ*, 1:69–73).

1 That is, Taizhou Prefecture.

2 In his earlier (1613) trip to Mount Tiantai, Xu Xiake mentions how the monk's quarters on Carmine Crag were in "disorder and disarray" (diary entry for 26 May), this volume.

3 In his first Mount Tiantai diary, Xu refers to this monastery as Flowery Summit Retreat (diary entry for 22 May), this volume.



Map 15. Mount Tiantai, 1632 (see also map 2)

mistakenly climbed to Gazing at the Sea Pinnacle [Wanghai Jian] on the eastern peak. Only after I turned west did I come to the trail to Flowery Summit. When I returned to the monastery, it was already past the first watch.

Sixteenth day [4 May]: Taking advantage of the moonlight at the fifth drum, I ascended Flowery Summit to observe the sunrise. My clothes and sandals were completely soaked, so I returned to the monastery to dry my clothes by a fire. From the right side of the monastery, I passed over a ridge, descended south for ten *li*, and reached Watershed Ridge [Fenshui Ling]. The river west of the peak comes out from Rock Bridge; the river east of the peak comes out from Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery. Following a stream, I turned north, where the rocks in the water gradually became more sublime. After ten more *li*, passed Upper Vaipulya Retreat and reached Dharma Flower Pavilion, where I observed the extraordinary beauty of Rock Bridge. It seemed like we were getting to know each other for the first time.

Seventeenth day [5 May]: As before, I came out at Watershed Ridge and proceeded south for ten *li*, then climbed to Scrutiny Ridge [Chaling]. The ridge is very high. Together with Flowery Summit, it marks the division between Mount Tiantai's northern and southern sections. Descended to the west and reached Dragon King Hall. This area is where the various roads meet and converge. Proceeded south for ten *li* and reached Cold Wind Watchtower [Hanfeng Que]. Then proceeded farther south, descended ten *li*, and reached Silver Land Ridge [Yindi Ling], the site of the Sage Pagoda [Zhizhe Ta]. It is now abandoned. Turned left and came to Great Compassion Monastery [Dabei Si]. Next to the monastery is a rock, which forms the place Where the Sage Honors the Sutras Terrace [Zhizhe Baijing Tai].[4] The monastery monk Persistent Compliance (Hengru) cooked us a meal. Next, our traveling bags were sent separately from Clarity in the Realm Monastery down to the county. My older brother Xu Zuntang (1583–1653) and I, taking our light luggage, descended to Lofty Brightness Monastery [Gaoming Si].[5] The monastery

4 The "sage" mentioned in this line and the last place-name refer to the Buddhist monk Wise Serenity (Zhiyi), who founded the Tiantai sect of Buddhism on the mountain in the sixth century.

5 Xu Zuntang (courtesy name Zhongzhao) is Xu Xiake's older paternal cousin. Not much is known about him, but as mentioned earlier, he helped with the editing of Xu Xiake's diaries after Xu's death, and he was one of the compilers of the *Chongzhen Reign Period Gazetteer for Jiangyin County* (Chongzhen Jiangyin xianzhi). Since Xu Xiake often refers to his cousin as Zhongzhao in the diaries, we make an exception in the translations and refer to him by his courtesy name.

was rebuilt by Measureless (Wuliang), the Elucidating Master.[6] To the right of the monastery is Sublime Stream [Youxi]. The scenic sites on the flank of the stream are called Circular Passage Cavern [Yuantong Dong], Pine Wind Belvedere [Songfeng Ge], and Numinous Echo Crag [Lingxiang Yan].

Eighteenth day [6 May]: Zhongzhao sat in Circular Passage Cavern while a monastery monk, serving as a guide, led me to explore the extraordinary qualities of some rocky bamboo shoots. Following a stream, I descended east and reached Snail Stream [Luoxi]. Tracing the stream, I ascended to the north, where sheer rocks stand along its two banks. A flying cascade pours water down profusely from the apex of the two banks. I stepped over rocks and treaded through the current for seven *li*, where a mountain curved around and a stream tumbled down. By this time, I had already reached the base of Rocky Bamboo Shoot Peak [Shisun Feng]. I looked up at the peak's face but could not see anything. This was because a wall on the right shielded it. From the flank of the wall, I passed through a gap and descended. Then backtracked and came out on top of Rocky Bamboo Shoot Peak. Only then did I see a single rock standing straight up in a torrent. The torrent's water pounded its base, forming a cascade seemingly poised in midair. This indeed is an extraordinary scenic spot. Following the stream, I turned north, where the two banks became even sheerer. As the stream descends, it forms a pool. This is Snail Pool [Luosi Tan]. Above it, cliff walls stand erect, while an abyss runs deep below it. I clambered along the flank of the bank, through overhanging vines, then crouched down on a rock and looked at the pool from afar. Above are rocky walls segmented into four branches, like a crossroads. Pool water scatters as it descends, so I could not glimpse its edge. In the very center of the pool is a single length of rock, spanning and recessed above the two banks, like a flying bridge. At the bridge, a waterfall plummets down into the pool from above. The height of the waterfall and the flying bridge are about the same. On all four sides are deep banks, winding and mingling, which may be gazed upon but not approached. This is not something the waterfall at Rock Bridge can equal. I had heard that Transcendent Being Shoes [Xianren Xie] is above the left of Cold Wind Watchtower, which I could have reached by passing over a ridge. But it suddenly began to rain, so I did not proceed. I returned to rest at Pine Wind Belvedere.

Twentieth day [8 May]: I reached Tiantai County. By the sixteenth day of the fourth month [3 June], I had backtracked from Mount Yandang and passed through all the surpassing scenic sites west of Mount Tiantai.

6 The title elucidating master (*jiangshi*) refers to someone who lectures on the dharma.

Proceeded seven *li* north and reached the foot of Carmine Citadel. I looked up and saw cinnabar-like sunglow clouds, unbroken and uninterrupted, and a Buddhist pagoda crowning its apex, transfixed in deep mist and gathered in lush green. I ascended one *li* and reached Central Cave [Zhongyan].[7] The Buddhist cottages near Central Cave are new and orderly, no longer dilapidated and falling apart as in the past. I was rushing to Rose Gem Terrace and Double Watchtowers, so there was no time to tread up the cliff again. So I crossed a ridge to the west and, from a small path, proceeded seven *li* and came out at Llama Bridge [Luoma Qiao]. Proceeded another fifteen *li* to the northwest and reached the left side of Waterfall Mountain [Pubu Shan], where I climbed to a ridge. Proceeded five *li* and ascended Paulownia Mountain [Tongbai Shan]. Crossed a ridge to the north, where I found a circuit of level farmland, surrounded and enveloped by swarms of peaks, where another world seems to have been created. Paulownia Palace is in the very center of the peaks. Only the middle ceremonial hall remains intact. The two stone statues of Boyi and Shuqi are still found in the chamber to the right.[8] The sculpting and carving of the statues are much in the ancient style. These are relics that pre-date the Tang dynasty. Yellow caps have not lived here for a long time.

Crowds of farmers arrived to greet us sightseers, all stopping their tilling to come over and ask questions. So I pressed one of them to serve as our guide. I proceeded west for three *li*, crossed two small ridges, descended into some layered banks, and climbed Rose Gem Terrace. Its single peak juts out, looking down into a deep ravine. All three sides are ringed and shrouded by dangerous banks. The stream on the right of the banks, approaching from countless mountains in the northwest, pounds directly into the base of the peak. This is Hundred Rods Cliff. At the bottom of the bank, torrent water reaches below the foot of Rose Gem Terrace. Its profound depths of blue are as dark as kohl. This is known as Hundred Rods Dragon Pool [Baizhang Long Tan]. Yet another peak rises in front of the peaks, standing tall like a pillar. Its height is equal to that of the walls around it. This is the site of Rose Gem Terrace. The back of the terrace nestles against Hundred Rods Cliff. In front, it stands directly facing Double Watchtowers. Tiered walls wind around beyond it, the sides of which are sheer and attached in tandem. Those who climb up to the terrace first plummet down in their descent, seemingly in midair, from the northern peak, cross at a spot along the spine of a

7 Reading Zhongyan 中巖, or "Central Cave," as a proper noun.

8 Boyi and his older brother Shuqi supposedly lived during the final years of the Shang dynasty. The two brothers refused to succeed their father as suzerain of the Shang vassal-state Guzhu for reasons related to what they regarded as proper filial piety. They likewise refused to pledge their loyalty to the Zhou dynasty, which had succeeded the Shang. Both decided to starve to death rather than live under the Zhou political regime, which they viewed as illegitimate.

chasm measuring less than a foot, then ascend by pulling themselves up by grasping tree branches and looking up as they scale the terrace, all amidst jagged rocks and shifting sands. There is simply no place to put one's foot.[9]

From the end of the terrace, I again clambered through and descended to the south, where rocks jut up. Among them, there is a cavity that forms a small shrine, which seems to have been fashioned by carving and hollowing out the rock. It is called Transcendent's Throne [Xianzuo]. As for the extraordinary qualities of Rose Gem Terrace, the center of it seemingly suspends in midair, while the gulch below is cut off, with amassed lush green coiling all around it. The Double Watchtowers, also beyond Rose Gem Terrace, coil among the banks facing it and do not farther ascend from the base of the torrent, so they cannot be climbed. I remember twenty years ago when, together with Cloudy Peak, I came here from Peach Source.[10] We traced a torrent outside the gulch and went inside it but did not deeply and exhaustively probe the mysteries of its inner recesses. Not until today did I look down to the edge of its cliffs, which are lofty and deep but lacking any other surpassing scenery.

I had a meal at Paulownia Palace, then continued my descent to the foot of the mountain. To the south, I crossed a stream from a small footpath, proceeded ten *li*, and exited the official road to Tiantai County at Barrier Ridge [Guanling]. Again I went south down a small footpath and through a crevice for ten *li*. Along the trail is a peak that stands transfixed like a celestial pillar. I inquired and learned that it is Green Mountain Abundance [Qingshan Zhuo]. Next, I traced a stream that approached from the south, then spent the night in a traveler's cottage at Mesa Top Pool.

Seventeenth day [4 June]: Proceeded southwest from Mesa Top Pool for eight *li* and reached the Chen Family Residence in Jiangsi [Jiangsi Chenshi].[11] Crossed a stream and proceeded left for another eight *li*, then cut south into the mountains. Scaled two small ridges and proceeded another six *li*. Where overlapping streams twist and merge, I suddenly came upon a rocky crag towering aloft. To its south is Cold Cave; to its east is Bright Cave. I had the boy servant race ahead to cook a meal for us in Bright Cave Monastery [Mingyan Si] while the rest of us headed south toward Cold Cave. On the left side of the trail are overhanging banks twisted and in ranks, among which is a tremendously deep cavern. The rabbit-shaped rock that crouches and hides in front has both a "mouth"

9 In other words, this is no place to be sightseeing.

10 On Xu Xiake's earlier exploration of Mount Tiantai in 1613 with the Buddhist monk Cloudy Peak, see "A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Tiantai," this volume

11 This place is not further identified.

and "ears." On the right side of the trail, a great stream twists as it moves along anxiously. Inside the cavern is a rock that sticks up like a raised lid. I was quite amazed by this sight. After entering the monastery, I asked the monks about looking for Dragon Whiskers Cavern [Longxu Dong] and Numinous Mushroom Rock [Lingzhi Shi]. They told me the rock I was asking about was the one with the raised lid I had just passed.

Cold Cave is behind the monastery. It is more than grand and spacious enough but falls short in exquisiteness and elegance. As I ascended from the cave's right, I saw that the Magpie Bridge had come out.[12] I proceeded for one *li* along the trail I had just taken, and on the right, entered Dragon Whiskers Cavern. The trail is blocked and hampered by brush and brambles, so I ascended for about one *li*, where it seemed like I had transited through the Ninth Empyrean [Jiuxiao].[13] The cavern is round and towering, bright and open. Inside is a tilted rock, which resembles Rock Bridge on Mount Yandang. The spring splashing water on top of the bridge seems to come from the same track as the one at Plantain Cavern [Bajiao Dong] near Precious Crown Monastery [Baoguan Si].

I descended the mountain and, as before, reached the trail crossing. To the east, I traced a small stream, then turned south and went into Bright Cave Monastery. The monastery is inside the crag, where rocky banks ring around it on all four sides. Only Eight Inch Pass on the eastern side provides a single-thread trail to get through. The caverns behind the monastery, gentle and graceful, are all different. To the caverns' right is a rocky bamboo shoot that rears up. Although inferior to the bold and magnificent ones at Numinous Mushroom Rock, they are still nicely scaled down, exquisitely detailed, and seemingly of fine craftsmanship. After a meal, taking our previous trail on horseback, I sped for thirty *li*, backtracking to Mesa Top Pool. Proceeded north for another twenty-five *li* and passed Big Stream, which approaches from Barrier Ridge in the west and forms Triple Thatch Grass Stream [Sanmao Xi]. Proceeded north for another five *li*, crossed two small mountain streams, and went straight until reaching the area below a mountain in the north. I went into Protecting the Realm Monastery and spent the night there.

Eighteenth day [5 June]: I hurriedly paid my respects at Peach Source at dawn. Peach Source is two *li* east of Protecting the Realm Monastery and only eight *li* west of Paulownia. Yesterday, when I was sightseeing at Paulownia, I thought I would save Peach Source for when I returned on the trail from climbing Myriad Years Monastery, so I chose to visit Cold and Bright Caves instead. But when I reached Protecting the Realm

12 In this line, Magpie Bridge refers to the Milky Way.
13 That is to say, the highest point in the sky.

Monastery, I realized that west of there is Exquisite Stream [Xiuxi], which goes down to Myriad Years Monastery and provides even more opportunity to take in the surpassing scenic sights at Nine *Li* Hollow [Jiuli Keng]. Hence, I made a special effort to press on to Peach Source. First I went into a ravine for about one *li* and came to Golden Bridge Pool [Jinqiao Tan]. I ascended from there. The two mountains on each side became more confining; their blue-green walls and vaulted banks stand in layered piles that zig and zag, with a stream interposed between them. Tracing the stream, it turned three times and ended where a waterfall, several rods high, poured into the stream from the left bank.

During my earlier visit, when I arrived below the waterfall, the trail ended so no one could ascend. I looked up at the vaulted banks towering aloft in the north. Along the left and right sides of the stream, the peaks, like hair buns, are exquisite and enchanting, clustering and resting upright. Where the misty lush green joins and glides on, I could not go there. But today, suddenly, from inside some clumped brush on the right bank, I sought out and found a footpath with layer upon layer of stone on it, and so with no time to shout out to Zhongzhao, braving the rain, I poked through the thorns and ascended. After the stone steps ended, I took a path with layered rocks and a transverse plank walkway. By the time I crossed to the left of the bank, I had already come out above the waterfall. Next, I traced deeper along the stream directly below a cliff to the north, where the footpath and stone steps both ended. Two waterfalls descend from the cliff, one on the left and one on the right. I looked into the far distance, where some stone steps remained to the left of the cliff. I followed them to where earlier rocks had been piled to make a bridge over the left waterfall. But the bridge's center had already collapsed into rubble, so I could not cross. I looked at the upper current of the waterfall, which approached from the northeast through cramped walls only big enough for a single thread. I was able to get through by treading the current. I figured that the surpassing scenery to the left of the waterfall was not as good as the one on the right, so I turned back and then ascended and climbed through some huge rocks leaning toward the northwest and reached the area below a cavity in a gorge, where I came to a deep pool that looked ghastly. Everywhere on all four sides, it directly approaches the bottom of the gorge, so I could not scale and climb it. But if you gaze west from inside the pool, you see there are rock gorges inside other rock gorges, and above the waterfall, there is yet another poised waterfall. They all approach from unseen places in the northwest that are obscure, dark, deep, and distant. When they reach here, in riotous profusion, they jumble and tumble down onto winding banks and tapered walls, where mist and sunlight are now hidden, now in view, and where even the color of the rock seems about to take flight. After a long time, I returned, coming out below the layered waterfalls. Because Zhongzhao could not find

the trail, he observed the waterfall alone. So together, we backtracked to Protecting the Realm Monastery.

I heard that at the mouth of Peach Source Stream, there is also a trail to climb up to the two monasteries, Compassionate Cloud [Ciyun] and Connecting to the Prime [Tongyuan]. We went down to Myriad Years Monastery, where the trail was somewhat shorter than the way we had come. I was especially eager to see the surpassing scenery at Exquisite Stream, so after a meal, we took the trail there as we had before. To the west proceeded four *li*, then cut north and down a stream. I traced the current for three *li*, then gradually turned and headed east. This area makes up Nine *Li* Hollow. When you reach the ravine's end, a waterfall smashes into the eastern bank and then plummets down. Above it, jumbled peaks and forest trees stand upright, but no trail could be ascended. So I clambered and ascended through the ridge to the west. I wound around and came out to its north, where I turned around and looked down at the back of a waterfall. Twin rocks resembling a gate stuck upward. Dragon Pool is inside them.

Next, ascended to the northeast for several *li*. After passing over a ridge, a mountain mesa suddenly opened, and five peaks surrounded and enclosed me. Inside them, I came to Myriad Years Monastery. I was now thirty *li* from Protecting the Realm Monastery. Myriad Years Monastery serves as the western boundary of Tiantai County, directly opposite Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery. There is a rock bridge on its grounds. Myriad Years Monastery has many ancient conifer trees. I had a meal in the monastery. Proceeded northwest for another three *li*, then passed over a lofty ridge behind the monastery. Next, heading toward the west, I ascended and climbed up the corner of a ridge, proceeded for ten *li*, and reached Galloping into the Void Mountain [Tengkong Shan]. Descended to Bull Ox Ridge [Niugu Ling] and reached the foothills after three more *li*. Next, I proceeded west, passed over three small ridges for altogether fifteen *li*, and came out at Joint Villa [Huishu]. The main road approaches from the south, where I gazed at Celestial Dame Mountain [Tianlao Shan]. I had already crossed and passed by the mountain, which I thought was Joint Villa! Joint Villa, as it turns out, is just a level piece of land and nothing more. Next, I descended northwest for three *li*, where a stream gradually formed. I followed the stream for five *li*, then stopped to spend the night in a traveler's cottage at Mottled Bamboo Village [Banzhu Cun].

As for the streams at Tiantai that I have seen, the Jellyfish Stream is due east. Northeast of Scrutiny Ridge and south of Flowery Summit is Watershed Peak [Fenshui Feng], which is not lofty. From the peak, the western tributary forms at Rock Bridge; the eastern tributary passes Heavenly Sanctioned Monastery. Jellyfish Stream winds around Plucking Stars Ridge [Zhaixing Ling] and heads east. It comes out at Pine Gate Ridge and then pours into the sea in Ninghai County. Due south is the

stream of Cold Wind Watchtower, which descends to Clarity in the Realm Monastery, merges with the watercourse from Buddha's Mound [Folong] east of the monastery and then flows into Great Stream from west of the county wall. East of Clarity in the Realm Monastery is Snail Stream, the source of which originates at Transcendent Being Shoes, then plummets down to form Snail Pool, comes out to join with Sublime Stream, then flows into Great Stream from east of the county wall. Farther east are the various watercourses of Oak Tree Stream [Youxi], but my straw sandals have never been there.

The large stream west of Clarity in the Realm Monastery is the Waterfall River [Pubu Shui], the course of which flows west from Dragon King Hall, then passes Mount Paulownia and forms Maiden Shuttle Stream [Nüsuo Xi]. It passes through three pools in front, then plummets down, forming a waterfall. This, then, is the source of Clear Stream. Farther west are the watercourses of Rose Gem Terrace and Double Watchtowers. Their sources should originate southeast of Myriad Years Monastery. To the east, they pass Arhat Ridge, then descend into a deep ravine to form Dragon Pool at Hundred Rods Cliff. They wind around Rose Gem Terrace and join Blue Stream [Qingxi]. The course of Peach Source forms farther to the west. Along its upper reaches are overlapping waterfalls, which enter from east and west to pour down. Its source should have come from somewhere around Connecting to the Prime Monastery, but I could not thoroughly probe its source. Farther west are the watercourses that form the Sublime Stream. Its source comes from the ridge at Myriad Years Monastery. It descends to the west and forms Dragon Pool Waterfall. Its western flow forms Nine *Li* Hollow, which comes out southeast of Sublime Stream and then departs. The various streams from west of Blue Stream all flow southeast into Big Stream. Farther due west are the streams of Barrier Ridge and King's Crossing [Wangdu], but my straw sandals have never been there. Farther north from here are the various watercourses of Joint Villa Ridge, which also, from due west of there and the northwest, pour into Xinchang County. Farther north are Blessed Stream [Fuxi] and Luomu Stream [Luomu Xi], both of which come out from the north of Tiantai County, while in the west, they form Xinchang County's Big Stream, but my straw sandals have never been there either.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

A Later Sightseeing Trip to Mount Yandang

[SPRING 1632]

The sightseeing trip to Mount Tiantai with my elder brother Zhongzhao took place in the third month of the *renshen* year (1632). By the twenty-eighth day of the fourth month [15 June], we had reached Huangyan County, where I paid a second visit to Mount Yandang.[1] We rented horses and departed from the south gate. Followed Square Mountain [Fangshan] for ten *li* then cut southwest for thirty *li*. Passed over Exquisite Ridge [Xiuling] and had a meal at Cliff Front Post Station [Yanqian Pu]. Proceeded five *li* to the border of Yueqing County.[2] Five *li* after that, we climbed Winding Mountain Ridge. A cloaked and concealed bouquet of hibiscus revealed itself amid clouds and mist in the northwest. This is Mount Yandang. Proceeded ten *li* to Zheng Family Ridge [Zhengjia Ling]. Another ten *li* took us to Big Thistle Relay Station. Crossed Rock Gate Stream [Shimen Jian], where recent rain had swelled the stream. The stream's water came up to the bellies of our horses. Spent the night at the Zhang Family Inn. This is in Mount Yandang's outer valley to the east. When the Zhang clan thrived here, they built this inn so the sandals of sightseers going to the mountain could rest. Its lodges and shops are now desolate and deserted, yet its name remains.

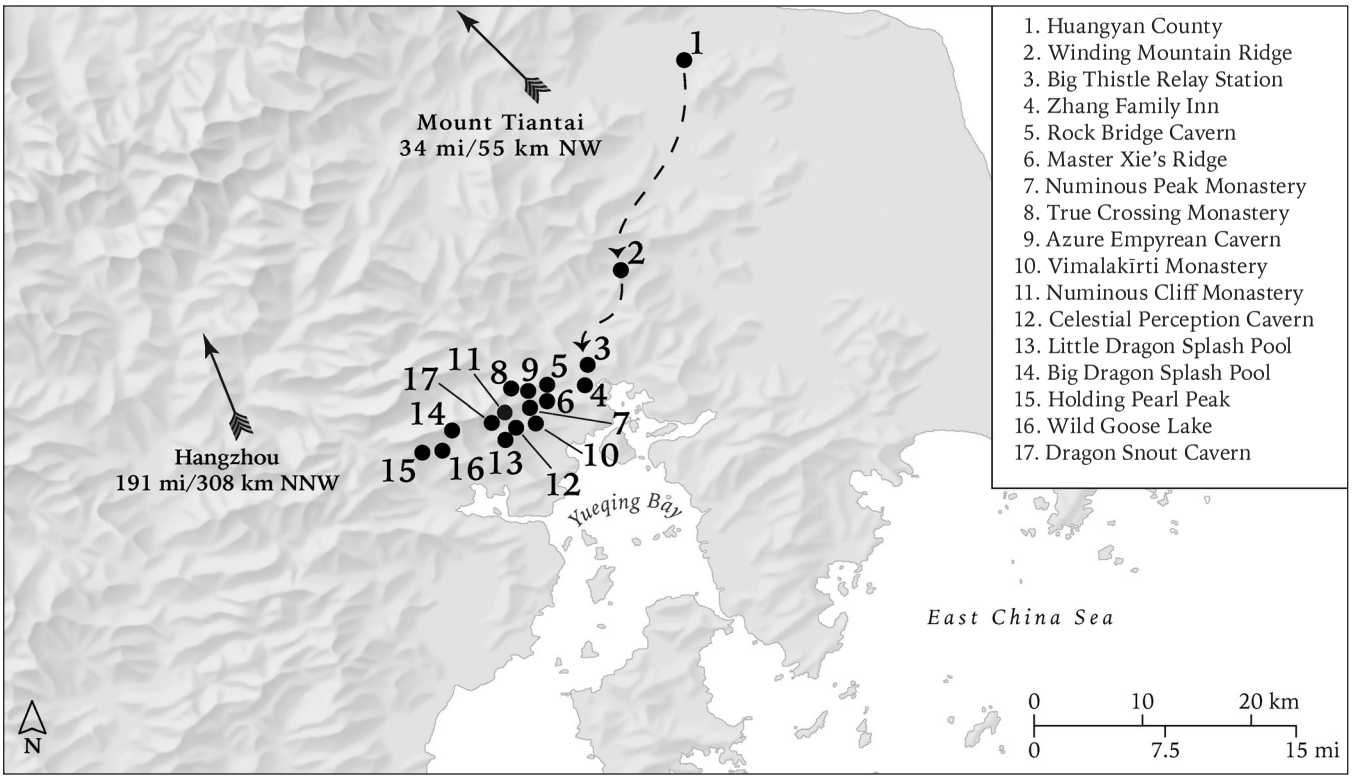
Twenty-ninth day [16 June]: I entered the mountain from the west and, gazing at Venerable Monk Cliff, pressed on. Proceeded two *li* and passed the foot of a cliff. After two more *li*, to the north, crossed a stream and ascended to Rock Bridge Cavern. I returned to the stream and proceeded east for two *li*, passing Master Xie's Ridge. Inside the ridge is the mountain's interior valley to the east. There is a stream below the ridge that approaches from the north. Everywhere on both sides of the stream are deep cliffs and odd-looking peaks, boldly protruding without an inch of soil on their surface, carved and cut into a hundred postures. I crossed the stream, cut north for about one *li*, and entered Numinous Peak Monastery. Peak after peak, remarkable and sheer, standing side by side, flooded the trail ahead. Behind the monastery, a single peak towers high

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Source: "You Yandang Shan riji hou" (*YJJZ*, 1:117–26; *YJ*, 1:74–82).

1 Huangyan County (modern Huangyan Qu, Zhejiang) is about 36 mi/58 km north of Mount Yandang.

2 Modern Yueqing Shi, Zhejiang.



Map 16. Mount Yandang, 1632 (see also map 3)

above. It is ruptured by a crack in the middle, which reaches the peak's summit. This is called Numinous Peak Cavern. I ascended, walking up a thousand steps. The rocky terraces overlap and are orderly in their arrangement. Arhat statues inside the cavern are all refurbished and new-like.

I descended for a meal in the monastery. With a monk, I crossed to the left of the stream by way of Shining Courage Pool [Zhaodan Tan], where I observed Windy Cavern [Fengdong]. The entrance to the cavern is a mere semicircle, from where a roar of wind bellows "boom-boom" to the outside for several paces. Next, from the left side of the stream, I explored the caverns inside the cliffs, one after the other. When I returned to Numinous Peak Monastery, it was raining heavily. Next, barefoot and holding an umbrella, I traced the stream and ascended north. Just as I was about to reach True Crossing Monastery [Zhenji Si], the mountains became deep-reaching, and the mists turned dark. Nothing was visible in this boundless expanse. So I returned, passing east of the stream, and entered Azure Empyrean Cavern. The Buddhist monk Safeguarding Foolishness (Shouyu) has a hermitage there. I sensed something extraordinary about him, so I had the servant return to the monastery and summon Zhongzhao, who came to join us. I regretted it was late by the time we met up. It was twilight, so we backtracked to spend the night at Numinous Peak Monastery.

Thirtieth day [17 June]: Braving the rain, we followed the current and cut west for two *li* to where a single stream approaches from the northwest to merge with this one, its force now even greater. Crossed the stream and headed west. Going upstream, proceeded northwest for three *li* and went into the Vimalakīrti Monastery. The rain became increasingly heavy. Amid clouds and mist, I looked up and saw two cliffs straddled by overlapping cliffs standing erect, which ascended layer after layer. I had no idea how far the sequence of layers extended. My clothes and sandals became soaked through. I proceeded increasingly farther into the far reaches of the valley to the west. Inside it are scenic sites such as Water Curtain Valley, Vimalakīrti Stone Chamber [Weimo Shishi], and Elucidating the Dharma Terrace [Shuofo Tai]. Proceeded two *li* and reached Echo Cliff. On the right side of the cliff are two caverns, the exteriors of which are covered by a flying waterfall. My sandals treaded through hazelnut thistles to make the dangerous climb to the caverns. One cavern is named Dragon King [Longwang]; the other is called Three Terraces [Santai]. In front of the two caverns is a cliff that juts out, which is sort of like an open platform and is accessible using a plank walkway. After leaving the cavern, I backtracked and looked into the distance at the top of Echo Cliff, where a single rock seemed to prick its ear to attach to the peak's summit. This rock forms Old Man Listening to Poems [Tingshi Sou]. Proceeded west another two *li* and went into

Numinous Cliff Monastery. When you turn west from Numinous Peak Monastery, there are tiered crags and linked barriers everywhere. One opening leads through the cliffs and barriers to Vimalakīrti Monastery. A separate fissure leads directly through them, called Single Thread of Sky. A second opening leads to Numinous Cliff Monastery, which is circled and ringed by tiered barriers, with the monastery positioned right in the center.

> This next diary entry is fascinating because it vividly describes the extreme dangers Xu Xiake would sometimes face when trying to reach remote scenic sites where "all traces of humans are severed and cut off."

First day of the fifth month [18 June]: Zhongzhao and I climbed to Celestial Perception Cavern together. From inside the cavern, we gazed east at two round caverns. To the north, we gazed at a long cavern. All three of them have openings through which bright light shines. It is just that Celestial Perception's sheer rockfaces descend directly down, so they are cut off and inaccessible. As a result, I turned around and went back down to the monastery.[3] Toting a ladder, I cut a path through the brush, leading the servant boy over another col directly to the area below the round caverns. We put the ladder in place to make the climb, but it needed to reach farther. I then chopped down some tree branches and inserted them crosswise between rocks. We stepped across the tree branches to ascend, but again, they would not reach far enough. I then used a rope to pull up the ladder, which I laid across some trees growing in the rocky crevice. When we could no longer use the ladder, we used the tree branches; when we could no longer use the tree branches, we used the ladder. When we could no longer use the ladder or tree branches, we pulled on the rope to work through the trees. In due course, we made it into the round caverns. I shouted to Zhongzhao at Celestial Perception Cavern, and we chatted while gazing at each other. Next, I treaded to the long cavern using the same method and descended. By then, it was already midday.

Heading west, I reached the area below the Little Dragon Splash Pool. I wanted to go and look for Sword Spring [Jianquan] but needed help finding the way there. I crouched down to rest on a pile of rocks, then looked up to see whirling mountain barriers pressing hard against the heavens. Sheer peaks seemed to stick into the ground upside down. Flying water currents from the spring seemed to hang in the air inside the peaks. Indeed, it seemed as though a stream of silk had been hauled down from the Nine Heavenly Realms (Jiutian). Heading farther west,

3 Xu returned to the Numinous Cliff Monastery to fetch the ladder mentioned in the next line.

passed Little Shears Peak. After that, we passed Iron Plank Barrier. The peak's barrier unfolds into a square, just like a standing screen. Standing tall, it pokes into the tops of layered cliffs; below it, there is a single gap that resembles a gate. Except for clouds and mist that come and go, all traces of humans are severed and cut off. Next we passed Avalokiteśvara Cliff. The trail gradually turned west, then gradually broadened, forming Ploughshare Pinnacle, which towers next to Constant Clouds Peak. Constant Clouds Peak descends to the south. It tumbles down but rises again, forming Capped Polestar Peak [Daichen Feng]. Where it tumbles down, there is a depression called Saddle Ridge, which divides the inner valley into east and west, with this ridge forming the boundary between them. From Numinous Cliff to Horse Saddle Ridge, it is about four *li*, along which tiered tors tower and rise high. It has more sightseers than it can accommodate. Passed over a ridge, where sunlight gradually faded behind Mount Yanzi [Yanzi Shan].[4] Proceeded two *li*, and to the west passed the mouth of the stream at Big Dragon Splash Pool. Proceeded another two *li* to the southwest and went into Nengren Monastery to spend the night.

Second day [19 June]: I searched for some square bamboo in a col behind the monastery, but there were no good ones.[5] Above me was the Dharma Flower Pavilion, which is secluded and tranquil. I departed from the right of the monastery, where I observed Swallowtail Spring [Yanwei Quan]. Where the stream's flow approaches from the Dragon Splash Pool, it divides into two courses and then drops down into some rocks. Hence, the name.

As before, I headed upstream for two *li* and, to the west, entered the stream mouth at the Dragon Splash Pool. Proceeded another two *li* to the west and went into some cliffs through Linked Clouds Barrier [Lianyun Zhang], where Big Shears Peak stands tall and upright inside a canyon. The rocky walls of its two cliffs turn and merge while water going down into the Big Dragon Splash Pool plummets from the sky. I sat and looked around at the Insufficient Pavilion [Buzu Ting]. In front, it faces the Dragon Splash Pool; in back, it bows to Big Shears Peak with hands clasped. I found myself with mountains all around me. I came out at Linked Clouds Peak, passed over Flowery Cliff Ridge [Huayan Ling] for altogether two *li*, and went into Arhat Monastery [Luohan Si]. The monastery had been abandoned for a long time. Abbot Recumbent Cloud (Woyun) recently renovated it. Recumbent Cloud is in his eighties.

4 Mount Yanzi, far to the west in Gansu, was believed to be the place where the sun sets.

5 As mentioned earlier, the culms of square bamboo have flat sides and rounded corners, giving them an almost square shape. They were often used to make walking sticks.

In physical appearance, resembling the Stone Arhat [Shi Luohan] at the Peak That Flew Hither, he is indeed the great force who founded this monastery.[6] I invited the abbot to join me in thoroughly probing the summit. The abbot accepted, and together, we ascended Constant Cloudy Peak. Wild Goose Lake [Yanhu] was opposite us on the mountain's western side, so it was more convenient to go by Rock Gate Monastery [Shimen Si]. Since it was already afternoon, we expected to reach Constant Clouds Peak the following day. So along with some of Recumbent Cloud's disciples, I passed over a ridge to the east and reached the outer valley in the west, covering four *li* altogether, then passed the abandoned ruins of Rock Gate Monastery. I followed the stream west and descended for one *li*, where two streams approached from the west and merged. These are the various watercourses of Rising into the Clouds Monastery [Lingyun Si] and Precious Crown Monastery. The two water courses merge, head south, and flow into the sea. Next, we proceeded against the currents of the two streams approaching from the west. Spent the night at Rising into the Clouds Monastery. The monastery is below Holding Pearl Peak [Hanzhu Feng], a lone peak that pokes into the sky. Suddenly, it split in two from the summit to heel, barely less than a foot apart. Inside, it holds a single round stone shaped like a pearl, which is especially extraordinary and unsurpassing. Following a stream to the north, I went into a rocky gorge. This, then, is the site of Plum Rains Pool [Meiyu Tan]. A flying waterfall surges down from a rocky cliff wall, which is quite magnificent and simply unlike the usual hazy mists and rainy hues.

Third day [20 June]: As before, proceeded east for three *li*, heading north and upstream, then went into Rock Gate Monastery, where we stopped and took off our loads at the Huang Family Tomb Hall [Huangshi Mutang].[7] We ascended north, one stone step at a time, to the summit of Wild Goose Lake. The trail is not very steep. Went straight up for two *li*. As we headed toward the mountains, they gradually hid from sight. Sea islets appeared before us. The more we ascended, the more the sea pressed below our feet. Ascended another four *li* and, in due course, passed by a mountain crest. The mountains, twisting and twining as they come in from the west, approach from the highest point in the northeast, then split into four branches. The composition of all these mountains

6 The reference here is to a well-known story in Buddhist folklore about a statue in a monastery on Mount Emei in Sichuan. After the statue was shattered during a violent storm, the head of the statue supposedly flew to a place near Hangzhou called the Peak That Flew Hither.

7 A tomb hall (*mutang*) is a family ancestral hall where tablets or plaques are placed to commemorate deceased family members. Family members visited the hall to pay their respects and perform traditional rituals to honor their ancestors.

changes from rock to earth. The ridges of the four branches, cloaked and concealed, bulge and rise. The spaces between them converge and form three hollows. Inside each hollow is another ridge, traversing north and south. In the middle, the ridges split the hollows in two. Altogether, these added up to no less than six hollows. Water has accumulated inside the hollows, forming places overgrown with dense and deep weeds that fill one's gaze and flood one's eyes. Visible in places from as far as the eye can see, this is called Wild Goose Lake. Where the water divides and plummets to the south, either it approaches from Rock Gate Monastery, coming out of Reaching the Clouds Monastery at Plum Rain Pool, or forms the flying waterfall at Precious Crown Monastery. Those that plummet down from the north are the watercourses from north of Mount Yandang, none of which have any connection to the Big Dragon Splash Pool. After passing over a ridge, I gazed south at the great sea, while to the north, looking down on the streams of South Postern [Nan'ge], all was unobstructed, far and near.[8] Only the peaks to the east still loftily emerge on the far side of the clouds. I wanted to make a separate descent to Precious Crown Monastery in the northwest, but there was nowhere to put one's feet in the overlying rocks and dense bush.

Next, we searched for our former trail that descends to Rock Gate Monastery. To the west passed Rising Into the Clouds Monastery. Proceeded two *li* beyond Holding Pearl Peak. Holding close to a stream, I visited Precious Crown Monastery. The temple is in an inaccessible col in a valley to the west, which has long been abandoned. In its deepest recesses, rocky walls turn and merge while the stone steps disappear entirely. A single cavern seemingly hangs poised above the foot of a cliff, with a slanted rock leaning against its entrance. The entrance is divided into two. The cavern is open and spacious, translucent and transparent. A flying waterfall spills down into the middle of it. Many banana plants (*bajiao*) are inside the cavern, resembling Fujian's cannas (*meiren jiao*).[9] Outside were new sheaths of bamboo shoots descending from above, gradually forming into a forest. Upon reaching the cavern, I heard the waterfall rumble like thunder, but the crag's rocky wall turned around and put up a shield so I could not see the water. So I descended the mountain, waded across a stream, and then turned around to gaze at the right side, where the crag rolled around and formed a crack. The waterfall plummets directly down from inside the crack. It descends to pound into a round flat, then leaps out of it to create a stream that flows away.

8 A "postern" (*ge*) is a secondary gate in a city wall. In reference to place-names on Mount Yandang, "postern" could thus also be translated as "gateway."

9 Cannas, sometimes called the "canna lily," is an invasive plant species native to many tropical and subtropical areas around the globe. Xu Xiake argues that the banana plants he saw on Mount Yandang grow in thickets, just like cannas in Fujian.

In height, it was second to the Dragon Splash Pool, but quite like it in its magnificence and surpassing quality. Thus, in no way is it a second-class attraction on Mount Yandang. I headed east on the trail I had taken before and spent the night at Arhat Monastery.

Fourth day [21 June]: Early in the morning, I gazed at Constant Clouds Peak, where hazy white clouds hid it from view. But this did not stop me. I urged Recumbent Cloud to accompany me on the ascent. We passed east over Flowery Cliff Ridge for two *li*, then climbed steps from the left of Linked Clouds Barrier and the right of Trail Pine Cavern [Daosong Dong], ascending for three *li*. When I looked down, Shears Peak was already below my sandals. Proceeded another *li*, where the mountain turned, and a stream emerged. This is the stream's upper reaches that go to the Dragon Splash Pool. We crossed the stream and passed two cottages of White Cloud (Baiyun) and Beyond the Clouds (Yunwai). Headed north and went into Cloudy Calm Retreat. Recumbent Cloud had his disciple gather some bamboo shoots and cook us a meal. After we finished the meal, the cloudy vapors above the various peaks swiftly vanished. Zhongzhao stayed behind to rest in the retreat while Recumbent Cloud and I climbed directly up the peak to the east. Proceeded another two *li*, where we gradually heard the sound of water. This was the water of the Big Dragon Splash Pool pouring down from inside the curling cliffs. The water emerges south of Ultimate Summit and north of Constant Clouds. Its source is hemmed inside a col.

Proceeding against the current, I ascended for two *li*, where the sound of the water gradually grew faint. Proceeded another two *li* and passed over a mountain crest. To the north, the crest nestles against the mountain's ultimate summit. It comes out to the south and divides into two branches. The eastern branch forms Avalokiteśvara Cliff; the western branch forms Constant Clouds Peak. The two branches join here. The area east of the main ridge forms Wu Family Hollow [Wujia Keng]. Near where its peak turns and aligns forms Iron Plank Barrier. It coils around and forms Numinous Crag; where it again curls around, it forms Vimalakīrti's Stone Chamber. And where it again curves around, it forms Numinous Peak. Beyond there forms Master Xie's Ridge, where the peaks end. The ravine west of the ridge forms the back of the Dragon Splash Pool. Where its peak turns and aligns, nearby it forms the cliff right in front of the Dragon Splash Pool, which next coils around to form Hibiscus Peak [Furong Feng], then next coils around to form Rising into the Clouds, and then finally coils around to form Precious Crown. Above it forms Li Family Mountain [Lijia Shan], where the peaks end. These are the various peaks on the southern side of Mount Yandang. But the two peaks, Avalokiteśvara and Constant Clouds, are in the center. They were already hidden below our walking sticks and sandals by this time. Only

the peak to the north seems to carry a standing screen on its back, which stands upright behind it.

We ascended two *li* to the north, where a single ridge, quietly towering aloft, is as narrow as an enclosing wall. Its two ends soar up, while to the north, its ridge submissively descends straight down. This forms the boundary of South Postern Stream's [Nan'ge Xi] transverse flow, unlike the encircling and crisscrossing streams on the mountain's southern side. As I climbed up to the western summit of the eastern apex, suddenly there arose a loud clattering and clanging sound, which was several dozen startled deer. The peak to its north was split down the middle like an axe had cleaved it. Inside it are rocky bamboo shoots, spikey and spiny. Amid a jumble of cliffs, a forest of trees stands upright, deep, dim, and seemingly bottomless. As they sped off, the deer plunged into it. I imagine that some were killed by falling into the trench. When the monks arrived, they threw rocks into the trench, which made a cracking sound like ripping silk. It took a long while before we heard the rocks drop to the bottom, which caused the deer to cry and wail even more without stopping.[10] I proceeded west from here to where the rocky ridge is split. The peak also gradually descends. To the northwest, I looked off at Wild Goose Lake, which, farther into the distance, descends even more. Twenty years ago, when I explored Wild Goose Lake and looked for the lofty peak toward the east, a steep wall blocked the trail.[11] This is the place where we hung a rope and descended.[12] Previously, I had gotten through from the west side of that wall. Today, I came out above it from the east. So now I have no regrets whatsoever! Backtracked and descended to Cloudy Calm Retreat. Following a stream, I reached the area above the Big Dragon Splash Pool, where I looked down at the Dragon Pool below. Circling, turning, and hemming in among the cliffs, the water curls through a wall and plummets into the pool, leaping up and then sending down a spray. The sunlight was so fantastic that one could not stare at it. Next, I passed a stream, ascended west, and came out at the wall directly opposite the Dragon Splash Pool. Transited through two peaks and then headed south. Their ridges are east of Rock Gate and west of Arhat Monastery. Where I came out to the south forms Hibiscus Peak. Where one descends farther south forms East Ridge. Hibiscus Peak, round and extended, standing prominently erect, is in the southwestern corner of the Arhat Monastery. You cannot find a trail east of the monastery until you reach the area below it. By the time the sun had set in the west, Zhongzhao had already arrived.

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10 Such behavior is atypical for Buddhist monks, who almost always strive to show compassion toward all living creatures.

11 "Lofty peak" probably refers to the ultimate summit of Mount Yandang.

12 This incident is described in Xu's first Mount Yandang diary.

Fifth day [22 June]: I bid farewell to Recumbent Cloud and left the Arhat Monastery. Following a stream for one *li*, I reached the mouth of the stream at the Big Dragon Splash Pool. In all, I covered four more *li*. Passed by Horse Saddle Ridge and then descended. To the north, I gazed below Avalokiteśvara Peak, where a breach in the rockface resembles a gate. It is tiered and aligned, and no part of it is the same. Zhongzhao had already headed off toward Numinous Crag, so I took the servant boy, proceeded north, and reached the area below the crag. Following a woodcutter's trail, I turned west and proceeded two *li* directly to the base of Avalokiteśvara and Constant Cloud Peaks. Only then did I realize that although the two peaks tower far apart on top, their rock walls link below and extend like a city wall. Next, following a cliff, I climbed for about one *li* to the east and came out above the rockface breach, where groves of trees are dense and shady, so I could not glimpse the scene. Rocky slabs on the edges of the cliffs seemed like canopies. On top, they are flat like a whetstone; on the bottom, they are hollow on all four sides. I sat down on one for a long time. Next, I descended and went inside it, following the rockface breach. The tiered crags jut out and are cracked, so I could grope through them all. Beyond the breach, a solitary peak rises prominently, diffuse and flat, like a stretch of clouds. With its round summit and folded flanks, it is as lofty as Venerable Monk Cliff and as rigid as a child standing respectfully with palms clasped together.

I came out to a corner of the trail where many people from the Wu family lived. Among them was one Wu Yingyue, who invited me to stay for a meal. I convinced him to accompany me, so we headed up the stream in Wu Family Hollow [Wujia Keng] between Iron Plank Barrier and Avalokitesvara Peak, which I had gazed down at from the Ultimate Summit. I wanted to ascend to the tiered Yellow Cliff Caverns [Huangya Dong] on the stream's left side. Its cliffs are west of Iron Plank Barrier; the caverns are left of the cliff. They seemed to be on two levels, one above and one below. I reached the lower level but could not ascend. When you come out above it, the cavern is between overhanging cliffs, so there was no way to get down to it. So following the cliff, I proceeded east, where I found another rockface breach. Gazing at the top of it, I saw it had several layers into which one could go. But I figured it was impossible to climb up there without putting up timbers to serve as a ladder. I descended to a small peak called Warbler Beak Crag [Yingzui Yan], where I bid farewell to Wu Yingyue.

To the east, I passed below the Iron Plank Barrier, where inside, I saw a rockface breach that was even bigger than the others. Below, it seemed as if water had flowed out from the cavern and formed a stream. Hastily, I proceeded against the current and went inside. When I reached the bottom of the cavern, jumbled rocks blocked the way, but to the left of the cliff, there was a trail that went straight up. Notches had been chiseled into the overhanging cliff wall, where dangling vines could be used

to pull oneself up. So I mustered my courage and bravely ascended. I took them off when my clothes hindered my progress; when my walking stick hindered my progress, I set it aside. I directly ascended the cliff, then transited to another cliff, then repeated this sequence. Next I did the same where a plank walkway was fashioned into a bridge. I then went inside the rockface breach. The rock walls faced each other like a gate. It was broad and expansive, and I found tiered stairs that allowed one to ascend. Next, I went into two more rock gates and looked above them, where the walls ring around and stand upright. A single frame of blue sky stood poised inside it. When I looked up, the view seemed like that from inside a well. I made my way into the cavern where the walls end. I found a wooden ladder at the bottom of the cavern, where sunlight penetrates. Like a gibbon, I nimbly climbed to the top, which seemed like I was ascending a storied building. From the "building," I turned left and came to a flat, large mound behind Iron Plank Barrier. Towering on high and aligned to the east and west, its precipitous cliffs ring around and make a circuit. To the south, it faces a rockface breach that descends and cowers, which is spacious and bright and turns and merges. Truly, this is the abode of transcendent spirits! Inside the breach is a single thatch grass dwelling, empty with no one living there. Along the cracks in the ground are many tea bushes. Thus, ladders are placed into notches in the rockface so the tea-pickers can come and go among the cracks. I descended and reached the side of a stream where people were living. Next, I crossed Little Shears Peak and proceeded east for two *li*. I met up with Zhongzhao after I went down to Numinous Cliff Monastery.

Sixth day [23 June]: I convinced a monk at Numinous Cliff Monastery to make a sightseeing trip with me to Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier. We clambered up to the top of a rocky crag on the right side of Dragon Snout Cavern [Longbi Dong] for one-half *li* and came to a quite extraordinary cavern. Ascended another half *li* to where the cliff ends, and the trail disappears. There was a ladder leaning against the edge of the cliff. Presumably, it was left by the charcoal burners.[13] We scaled the ladder and emerged atop the cliff, where three huge rocks spanned between two cliffs. These are covered by another rock, forming a chamber. The rocks that cut across and beyond form Transcendent Bridge. Its chamber is hollow, bright, impressive, spacious, and hidden on the flank amid overlapping crags. Although it is neither as extraordinary and exceptional nor as concentrated and massed as Iron Plank Barrier and Rock

13 "Charcoal burners" (*shaotanzhe*) are workers who engage in the ancient practice of making wood charcoal. After the necessary wood is gathered, it is burned in a charcoal pit. The process is labor intensive, taking anywhere from ten to fourteen days to convert approximately 9 lbs/4 kg of chopped wood into 2 lbs/1kg of charcoal.

Bridge, its sublime profoundness creates an entirely new world. Next, we made our way through and ascended to the left side of the cavern. We clambered by pulling ourselves up on vines, then transiting over plank walkways. In due course, we came out on the middle level of Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier, which we presumed to be the summit of Dragon Snout Cavern. At the end of its cliff, it is broad and dry enough to build cottages. The rear barrier still ascends to nestle against the Milky Way. Right of the wall is a crag rock that covers it. A waterfall descends in front of the barrier. From the right, we clambered, ascended through the cliff's rocks, and almost reached the barrier's summit, but the sheer rocks blocked us. On the flank of the rocks and to the right is a gap as narrow as a thread, covered and enclosed by plants and trees, on which one can place one's foot. So we followed through the gap and descended. Between the cliffs are many long vines and hanging creepers, some of which I gathered and took with me. Whenever the rockface was sheer and could not accommodate any trees, or when the trees disappeared, and there was nowhere to accommodate my sandals, invariably, I would dangle some vines to make my descent. It was like this as we crossed five rocky ridges to the west.

We descended and ascended continuously for several *li*. Only then did we drop to a place that overlooks an inaccessible mountain stream. This is the upper reaches of the Little Dragon Splash Pool. Its source comes out from the summit of Wild Goose in the southeast. On the right is Iron Plank; on the left is Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier. The interior of the two barriers drops down to form an inaccessible gulch where overlapping cliffs wane and hide, and above and below, there are no footpaths, so without hanging down a rope, one cannot bridge across. Next, we went into the gulch, stepped over rocks, followed the current, and proceeded east for about one *li*. A huge rock spans across and sits in the middle of the gulch. The stream water could not get by it, so it pounded against openings through the rocks below the huge one. The sheer walls on both sides are steep and erect, while the traveler's trail disappears. So we tied some tree branches together and made a bridge, on which we ascended to the end of the cliff wall. Next, we went down a rope to the stream's lower reaches in the front part of the gulch, where below the huge spanning rocks, I could see it was domed and so hollow that a banner pole ten rods high could stand like a tree inside it. The water behind the rock creates channels that surge, converging into pools overflowing their deep blue water. The water's carefree movement calms the mind. On the left and right are two precipices, both of which have caverns towering aloft. Up ahead is the place where the Dragon Splash Pool tumbles down. Twice before, when I had searched for Sword Spring, the monastery monks would invariably say, "It is above the Dragon Splash Pool; rare is the person strong enough to reach there." It was still nowhere in sight, so I realized it had disappeared long ago. I wanted to

move across from here and descend to two peaks to reach some rocky chambers from Transcendent's Bridge [Xianqiao]. So we chopped some tree branches and bound them together to make a bridge. Then we wound our way through steep hills, four in number, and looked down and saw the peaks of Lone Elegance and Double Simurghs, close to the soles of our sandals as we closed in on Transcendent's Bridge. The middle of the opposite precipice had broken off. The sun had already set in the west, and I was exhausted, so we backtracked and looked for our earlier way. Next, we passed through some rocky chambers on the flank of Sunglow Clouds Screen Barrier and backtracked to the monastery. After we picked up our bags, we continued. Passed Vimalakīrti Monastery and put up for the night at Numinous Peak Monastery.

Seventh day [24 June]: Traced the stream before the monastery, where I observed Azure Empyrean Knoll [Bixiao Gang] to the south, which is spacious and bright but otherwise unextraordinary. Proceeded three more *li*, turned west, and gazed upon True Crossing Monastery in a col north of the stream. This stream approaches from steep precipices and collapsed gorges in the west. The peak south of the gorge forms Five Horses Heavenward [Wuma Chaotian], which is exceptionally sheer and steep. On the two sides of the peak are narrow and cramped stone footpaths, along which no one lives and where thorns and thatch grass choke the trail. Proceeded for about one *li*, which was quite arduous. I could not get through the entire length of the gorge. To the north passed True Crossing Monastery. The monastery is secluded, occupying a place in the north valley. Sightseers do not go there.

From the right of the monastery, I traced a small stream for three *li*, then climbed Ma Family Mountain Ridge [Majia Shanling]. The trail is quite steep. Climbed to the apex, where I observed the summit of Mount Yandang, which angles and clusters in the shape of a lotus flower. To the north, I looked down at South Postern, which was already under my straw sandals. I swiftly descended in my flying shoes for more than four *li* and came to New Retreat [Xin'an]. I stowed my shoulder pole and load in the retreat and followed South Postern Stream to explore the peaks north of Mount Yandang. South Postern Stream originates at Ruoniao Ridge [Ruoniao Ling] northwest of Mount Yandang, which is more than thirty *li* from here, at the boundary of Yongjia County.[14] One can reach Furong and pass into Yueqing County by proceeding south from the ridge.[15] Proceeding west from the ridge, one can move to Fenglin and then down the road to Ou Commandery [Oujun].[16] South of the stream

14 Yongjia County fell under the jurisdiction of Wenzhou Prefecture.

15 According to *YJJZ*, 1:126n21, Furong corresponds to modern Furong in Zhejiang, north of today's Yueqing Shi.

16 According to *YHJZ*, 1:126n22, Fenglin was in the northern part of Yongjia

is the north side of Mount Yandang, where the mountain topography is tiered and extended, and bamboo and trees are lush and luxuriant: nothing like the sheer and sharp mountains on the south side. The large mountains to the north that twist and twine as they approach from Ruoniao Ridge all have tiered precipices and odd-looking peaks, changing and altering, closing and opening, and vying with clouds and mists in their illusory qualities. These end when they reach South Postern. Another stream to the north of the mountains approaches from North Postern [Beige] and merges with the one here; together, they descend east to Rock Gate Pool [Shimen Tan]. Inside the gate is a thousand acres of level farmland. All the people living there use the rock gate as the "door and window" to their homes. This is the source of the name "postern." The stream demarcates the directions of north and south. When you go in from the west, South Postern hosts the residence of Zhang Lun (1413–84) and such surpassing scenic sites as Stone Buddha Cavern [Shifo Dong], Sprinkling Water Cliff [Sanshui Yan], and Cavern Transcendent Cliff [Dongxian Yan].[17] North Postern hosts the former site of White Cliff Monastery [Baiyan Si]. Farther west is Wang Zijin's Transcendent Bridge [Wang Zijin Xianqiao], which is especially extraordinary.[18]

Braving the rain, I thoroughly probed South Postern. First I passed Gongyi's residence near the thriving community of his clan. I then traced the stream for five *li* and passed Plowshare Retreat [Liyou An]. To the south is Stone Buddha Cavern. But I could not go inside because the trail was overgrown with weeds. Proceeded forty *li* and reached Zhuang Col [Zhuangwu]. The people on both sides of the stream are all surnamed Ye. Sprinkling Water Cliff is located inside the north col. Its rocky precipice extends crosswise, from which a flying waterfall seemingly hangs in mid-air before it pours down. There is a small retreat where you climb the ridge on the left of the cliff. It was raining at sunset, so the locals put me up for the night at Zhuang Col, where they told me all about the surpassing sights at Cavern Transcendent Cloister [Dongxian Yuan].

County, on the eastern bank of Lingshui Stream [Lingshui Xi]. Since Wenzhou Prefecture was situated on the southern bank of the Ou River [Oujiang], sometimes—as we see here—it was also called "Ou Commandery."

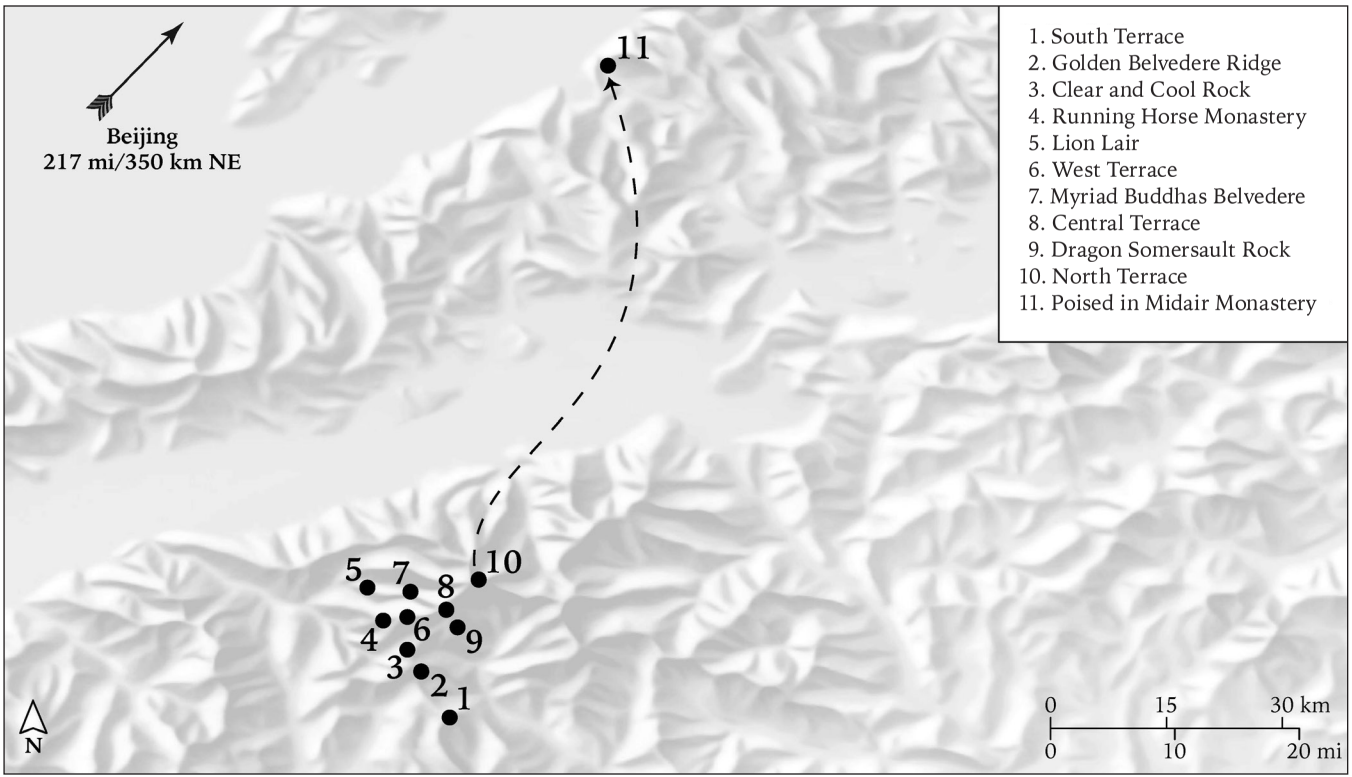
17 After passing the *jinshi* examination in 1439, Zhang Lun served in several government offices in the capital. But after twenty years of service with no significant advancement in his career, Zhang retired to his home in Yueqing County, where he spent his time exploring attractive landscapes and composing poetry. After his death, Zhang Lun was honored with the posthumous title "Revered and Resolute" (Gongyi).

18 Wang Zijin is a transcendent who supposedly landed on Mount Yandang while riding on a crane and playing a bamboo flute. The bridge mentioned here, named in his honor, is a natural rock bridge that measures about 328 ft/100 m in length and 65 ft/20 m in width.

Eighth day [25 June]: The rain still had not stopped. Tracing a stream west, I proceeded three *li* to where mountain ravines become more secluded. Following the stream, I turned and then headed west. Proceeded another two *li*. On the opposite side of the stream is a small footpath amid scattered clouds into which I entered, climbing some stone steps. Crossed the stream to the east and followed the footpath. Suddenly, the peak whirled, and the stream turned. I passed deeply into a valley with misty tors scattered and jumbled. The peaks stretch continuously from behind Zhuang Col to here, where another rocky crevice opens to display a magnificent and extraordinary scene. I stopped a local and asked him about it. He said, "As it turns out, this is Little Zuancuo [Xiao Zuancuo].[19] Cavern Transcendent Cloister still lies beyond it, along the upper reaches of Big Stream." Next, I departed and crossed the stream, proceeding for about one *li*. There is another stream that approaches from the east and joins this one. This is Cavern Transcendent Col Stream [Dongxian Wuxi]. Crossed Big Stream, then traced a smaller stream east and ascended, where peaked tors and thatch grass cottages were no different from those I saw earlier. Cavern Transcendent Cloister is right inside a precipice, nestling against a peak, facing north and covered by dense bamboo. Next, I broke through some brush and went into the cavern by going up a rocky crevice. At first, it was pretty narrow, but at the very top, it gradually became more expansive. As before, we came out at Zhuang Col and, to the east, returned to Ploughshare Retreat. Ultimately, I failed to find the trail to Stone Buddha Cavern. In due course, I came out and then passed South Postern. Paid a visit to Wang Zijin's Transcendent Bridge, which is at the base of North Postern, still some twenty *li* away. I remembered that Zhongzhao was at New Retreat, which is close by, so I returned there to meet up with him. It was already late afternoon, so there was no time to go sightseeing in North Postern. I then returned to the east, hastening back to Big Thistle Relay Station.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

19 The term *Zuancuo* 纂厝 appears to be a regional or dialect expression. Its meaning is uncertain.



Map 17. Mount Wutai, 1633

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Wutai

[FALL 1633, TAIYUAN PREFECTURE, WUTAI COUNTY, SHAANXI]

Mount Wutai [Wutai Shan] in Shanxi is about 240 mi/387 km southwest of Beijing. The mountain's name is sometimes translated as Five Terraces Mountain in English because its main section comprises five flat-topped (or terraced) peaks. These terraces roughly correspond to the four cardinal directions, with a fifth Central Terrace added in the middle. In his diary entries, Xu Xiake vividly describes his ascents to the South Terrace [Nantai], Central Terrace [Zhongtai], and West Terrace [Xitai] summits. Mount Wutai has long served as China's most revered Buddhist mountain, but Xu has little to say about its religious tradition. Instead, and as always, his main interest is visiting extraordinary and sublime landscape sites and then describing them to his readers.

Guiyou *year, twenty-eighth day* of the *seventh month* [1 September 1633]: I left the capital for a sightseeing trip to Wutai.[1] By the fourth day of the eighth month [6 September], I reached South Pass [Nanguan] in Fuping County,[2] where mountains approach from Tang County.[3] However, the mountains became dense only after I reached the Tang River [Tanghe]. But upon reaching Huangkui,[4] the mountains gradually begin to open out. As it turns out, the mountains here are not very dome-shaped. After crossing a rock bridge southwest of Fuping County, the various peaks again rise and fall. Following the left side of a stream, I proceeded north for eight *li*, where a smaller stream approached from the west, pouring into it. Next, I gave up on the bigger stream and headed upstream along the one from the west, where I then turned north. The mountain gorges gradually became more confined. After another seven *li*, I had a meal at Crown Prince Post Station [Taizi Pu].

Source: "You Wutai Shan riji; Shanxi, Taiyuan fu, Wutai xian" (*YJJZ*, 1:127–32; *YJ*, 1:82–86).

1 "Capital" refers to Beijing, which became the capital of the Ming dynasty in 1421. Xu Xiake had spent time there before his trip to Mount Wutai.
2 Modern Fuping Xian, Hebei.
3 Modern Tang Xian, Hebei.
4 Huangkui corresponds to modern Wangkuai Zhen in Hebei.

Proceeded north for fifteen *li* and suddenly heard the sound of a running stream. I looked back at the precipice on the right, the rock wall of which rose several scores of fathoms high. In the precipice is a depression that drops straight down like a melon sliced in half. Above it is another depression from which a waterfall had once brimmed over. It has dried up because of drought, so there is no waterfall, but marks from the waterfall remain on the walls inside the depression. Two or three feet away from the mountain stream, a spring swelled and surged out of a small hole inside the depression, which formed a running stream below it.[5] Continuing my ascent, I passed Saddle Ridge [Anzi Ling]. From the top of the ridge, mountain cols to the north are wide open. To the northeast and northwest, lofty peaks stand facing each other, like the palms of transcendents poking into the sky. The mountainous terrain only subsides to the north, where there is a gap. Beyond the gap, mountains span across in the distance. That is Dragon Spring Pass [Longquan Guan], which is still forty *li* from here. Below the ridge is a river that approaches from the southwest. At first, I followed it, proceeding north. A short time later, the stream disappeared into a gorge coming from the east. Next, I passed over a small ridge, where a big stream approached from the northwest.[6] Its force was mighty. It also disappears into a gorge that comes from the southeast. This must be the one that merges with the stream from the southwest and flows out north of Fuping County. At first, when I passed Fuping County, I gave up on the big stream and proceeded west, taking it to be the one from Dragon Spring. I had no idea the western stream came from the wall of a depression on Saddle Ridge. I passed over the ridge and again encountered the upper reaches of the big stream. This big stream is the one that comes out of Dragon Spring. The stream has a rock bridge called Myriad Years [Wannian]. I crossed it. Proceeding against the current, I gazed at the lofty peak in the northwest and pressed on. After ten *li*, I closed in on the base of the peak, shielded by some small hills, so I could not get a full view of its jagged and craggy terrain. I turned north toward the lofty peak I had gazed at in the northeast. The more I viewed it from a distance, the more prominent it became; the more I pressed on, the more distinct it became. Its sheer and steep form seemed to be chasing me from far away.

Over the next twenty *li*, I grew weary from taking in all the sights. This peak is called Five Cliffs Stronghold [Wuyan Zhai]. It is also called King Wu's Stronghold [Wuwang Zhai]. An old monk lives in a cottage

5 "Mountain stream" (*jian*) presumably refers to the stream Xu Xiake heard just before he "looked back at the precipice on the right."

6 According to *YJJZ*, 1:131n8, the "big stream" mentioned here and several times below refers to a waterway called the Sand River [Shahe] during the Ming. Today, it is called the Greater Sand River [Da Shahe].

on the cliff. A short time later, below a peak in the northeast, a stream spilled out and joined the big stream from Dragon Spring. The locals have built a stone bridge across it, but it does not lead to the trail to Dragon Pass. From the left of the bridge, I proceeded north for eight *li* until I encountered some crumbled-down cliffs rising abruptly along the banks. After another two *li*, I came to a double wall at the entrance to a mountain defile. This is Dragon Spring Pass.

Fifth day [7 September]: I entered South Pass and arrived at East Pass [Dongguan]. Proceeded north for ten *li*. Where the trail gradually ascends, the mountains gradually become more extraordinary, and the sound of the spring gradually grows faint. Not long afterward, where the steep rocky trail ends, the cliffs on both sides revealed majestic peaks and sheer walls, joined and heaped into a collective wonder. Trees and rocks in the mountains compete in their beauty, like exquisite brocades. No longer was I aware of the weariness caused by my ascent and climb. It was like this for the next five *li*. At a spot where the cliffs close in on each other, I came across two rocky passes, one after the other. Next, I ascended straight up for five *li* and climbed to the absolute summit of Great Wall Ridge [Changcheng Ling]. I gazed back at peaks in the distance, where even those of extreme height also cowered below my feet. Nearby peaks on both sides closed around protectively, with only a thread-like gap through the mountains approaching from the south, through which I could see for one hundred *li*.

On the ridge are majestic lofts, bold and imposing. This is the upper pass of Dragon Spring. Inside the pass is an ancient pine tree with boughs on high and luxuriant leaves. Its trunk stretching into the clouds presents an extraordinary feat of nature. West of the pass is the boundary of Wutai County in Shanxi. The downward slope from the ridge is quite level, not even one-tenth as steep as the ascent. Proceeded thirteen *li* and came to Old Trail Ridge [Jiulu Ling]. I was now already on level land. A stream approached from the southwest. It follows the mountains and heads off toward the northwest when it reaches here. I also followed it. After ten *li*, the Five Terraces River [Wutai Shui] approaches from the west to join with that stream. Together, they flowed into the Hutuo River [Hutuo Shui]. Next, I followed the northwest stream for several *li* and came to Celestial Pond Village [Tianchi Zhuang]. I then headed north in a col for twenty *li*. Passed White Head Retreat Village [Baitou An Cun], only twenty *li* from South Terrace. Looking at the mountain valleys, I still could not get a general idea of what South Terrace looks like. Next, I proceeded northwest for two *li* and came to White Cloud Monastery [Baiyun Si] on the left side of the trail. I cut south in front of the monastery, clambered and climbed for four *li*, then cut and ascended for three more *li* and reached Thousand Buddhas Cavern [Qianfo Dong], from

where I climbed the trail to Mount Wutai. Next, I cut and proceeded west, reaching the mountain only after I covered three more *li*.

> In the next entry, Xu Xiake climbs to the top of the South Terrace, where he comes across a reliquary shrine dedicated to the resident Bodhisattva of Mount Wutai, Mañjuśrī (Chinese: Wenshu).

Sixth day [8 September]: A gale began to howl. Every drop of water turned to ice. At daybreak, when the wind let up, the sun emerged like a fiery pearl surging and spewing inside a forest of verdant trees. Following along the mid-point of the mountain, I proceeded southwest for four *li* and passed over a ridge. Only then was the South Terrace right before me. Farther up is Lamp Monastery [Dengsi]. From here, the trail gradually becomes steeper. After another ten *li*, I climbed to the ultimate summit of the South Terrace, where a reliquary shrine is dedicated to Mañjuśrī.[7] The other terraces align around its north side in a circle. Only the southeast and northwest sides have areas with a few open spaces. Below it and due south is the old South Terrace. In the distance, the mountains of Yu County stand loftily like screens, while the sheer and steep mountains to the east connect with Dragon Spring Pass.[8] I descended from the trail on the right of the terrace. The path was smooth and thus fit for riding on horseback. Following the west ridge, I proceeded northwest for fifteen *li* and came to Golden Belvedere Ridge [Jin'ge Ling]. Next, following to the left of the mountain, descended to the northwest. After five *li*, I reached Clear and Cool Rock [Qingliang Shi]. The monastery there is secluded and gorgeous. High up and down below, it is like a painting. There is a rock there in the shape of a mushroom. Its length and width each measure nine paces. Four hundred people could stand on top of it. The rockface is flat, pointed on the underside, and barely connected to the rocks below. From the northwest, I ascended by transiting along a plank walkway and mounting a stairway for 12 *li*, then reached Running Horse Spring [Mapao Quan]. The spring is at the nook of a trail inside a mountain den. The gap through the rocks is only big enough for half a horse's hoof. Water spills out through the gap. The den is also flat and spacious enough for a monastery. But Running Horse Monastery [Mapao Si] is one *li* distant from the flank of the spring. Next, I descended eight *li* on a gentle slope and spent the night in Lion Lair [Shizi Ke].

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7 The faithful believe that Mañjuśrī sometimes appears on the mountain as a pilgrim, monk, or even a penta-colored cloud, but only devout followers may see him.

8 Yu County corresponds to modern Yu Xian, Shanxi.

Seventh Day [9 September]: I proceeded northwest for ten *li* and crossed Convey to Salvation Bridge [Huadu Qiao]. A single peak descends from Central Terrace; a flowing stream whooshes and swooshes on both sides. Serene and tranquil, it disappeared into the distance. Next crossed a bridge over a mountain stream to the right of the peak. Following the mountain westward, I ascended. The trail was extremely slanted. After another ten *li*, I climbed to the summit of West Terrace. The nearby peaks were dazzled by sunlight, each presenting marvelous forms. On the west side, Subjugating Demons Cliff [Bimo Yan] stands nearby; in the distance is Wild Goose Gate Pass [Yanmen Guan]. They were so clear it seemed like I could lean over and pick them up. Subjugating Demons Cliff was over forty *li* away.

Everywhere on the mountain are steep cliffs, twisting and extending, ascending layer upon layer, which makes this place fall into the "medium extraordinary" category.[9] I went into a shrine where one kowtows to Buddha, then immediately descended from the north side of West Terrace. After three *li*, I arrived at Eight Virtues Stream [Bade Shui]. North of the monastery, on the left, is Vimalakīrti Belvedere [Weimo Ge]. Beneath it are two rocks towering aloft. The belvedere is built on the two rocks. The length of its columns is uneven because they follow the irregular contours of the rocks. In some places, there are no pillars at all. Inside is Myriad Buddhas Belvedere [Wanfo Ge]. Its Buddhist statues are all painted green and gold and made of sandalwood. On display and outspread, shining and dazzling, there are no less than countless figures. In front of the belvedere are two buildings, each with three floors, which are ringed by structures that also have three floors. Double-decker passageways are constructed between them, on which people walk back and forth, seemingly in midair. Considering the hardship and danger one faces in these countless mountains, only divine powers could craft such wonders.

I proceeded northeast from the monastery for five *li* and reached a major trail. Then proceeded another ten *li* and reached Central Terrace. I gazed at the East and South Terraces, fifty or sixty *li* away. But Dragon Spring Pass on the periphery of South Terrace seemed to be even closer. Only West Terrace and North Terrace [Beitai] connect with Dragon Spring [see figure 9]. At that time, the breeze was fresh and the sunshine beautiful. The mountains opened and aligned tidily, like a mustache and eyebrows. I first hastened south of the terrace and climbed Dragon Somersault Rock [Fanlong Shi]. The grounds thereabouts are

9 This comment reveals that Xu Xiake had a ranking system for evaluating a landscape's visual appeal. "Medium extraordinary" (*zhongqi*) suggests a middle category above "less than extraordinary" though below "truly extraordinary" or "especially extraordinary."

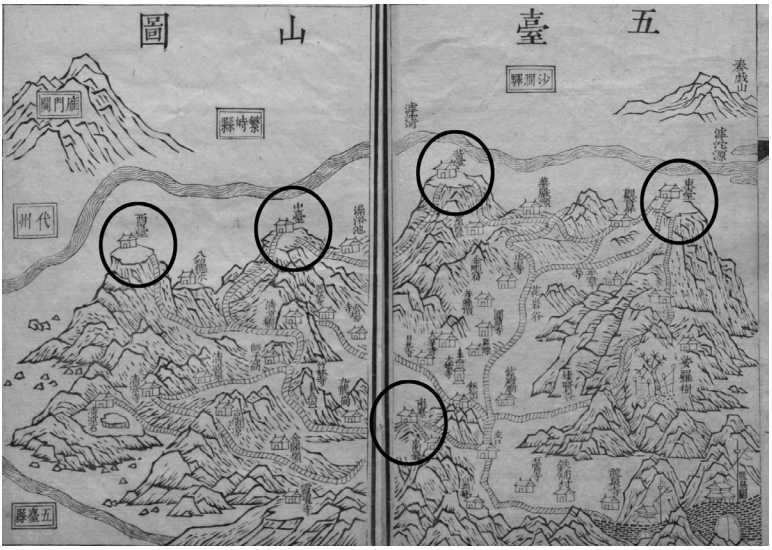


Figure 9. Map of Mount Wutai. From *New Gazetteer of Mount Clear and Cool* (Qingliang Shan xin zhi), 1701, "Tu," 1b-2a. Laozang Danba (1632–84), ed. Library of Congress, Asian Division, Chinese Rare Book Collection, https://www.loc.gov/item/2012402398/ (image 3 of Juan 1)/.

The Five Terraces (*circled*) are, from the left: West, Central, South, North, and East. The Hutuo River (mentioned in the 7 September diary entry) is visible beyond the peaks.

cluttered with countless rocks, which surge up to the top of the peak.[10] The peak looks down on an inaccessible col, inside which solitary piles of rocks seem poised in midair. Someone said this is where Mañjuśrī releases light to project his image. I descended from north of the terrace for four *li* to where ice hung on a dark cliff for several hundreds of rods. It is called Myriad Years Ice [Wannian Bing]. Cottages have been built inside the col. When I arrived, even though it had just started to turn cold, ice and snow could be found everywhere on the terrace. I heard snow fell on the twenty-seventh day of the seventh month [31 August], just when I left the capital. After four *li*, I ascended north to the Bathing Pool [Zaoyu Chi].[11] After ascending north for another ten *li*, I spent the night at the North Terrace. North Terrace is relatively more precipitous than the others. As the sun had not set yet, I gazed into the distance at the scene beyond the monastery. The sun had set when I entered the sanctuary; the wind blew strongly.

10 In other words, the summit of Dragon Somersault Rock.

11 According to mountain lore, Mañjuśrī sometimes bathes in this pool.

Eighth day [10 September]: When the venerable monk Rocky Hall (Shitang) was seeing me off, he pointed to the mountains one by one and said:

> At the foot of North Terrace, to the west of East Terrace [Dongtai], in the center of Central Terrace, and north of South Terrace, there is a col called Terraced Bend [Taiwan].[12] This is the approximate central point of the surrounding ranks of terraces. Due east and slightly north of there, where you see something green floating in the air and something pointy, that is Mount Heng.[13] Due west and slightly south, where you see a faint trace of extended mist, that is Wild Goose Gate. Of the mountains directly south, beyond South Terrace, only Dragon Spring stands majestically alone. Directly north, looking down inside and beyond both sides of the pass, the mountains look like flower buds. Only this mountain protects the north, where it stands sheer and steep, layer upon layer, with rocky contours that jut and jag. Only here is its complete panorama revealed. This is the general scene you can survey from North Terrace. It is forty *li* away from East Terrace. Flowery Cliff Ridge is between them. If one plans to explore the Sacred Mountain in the North, it is better to descend from north of the ridge. This saves forty *li* of climbing up and down.

I nodded in agreement. I departed and proceeded east, descending on a steep slope for eight *li*, then descended on a flat slope for another twelve *li*, arriving at Flowery Rock Ridge. The ground became flat after I descended ten *li* from the basin's north. One mountain stream flows from the north and another from the west. The two streams converge, where many peaks gather. One Pot of Sky [Yihu Tian] is in a deep gulch.[14] Proceeded twenty *li* northeast along a mountain stream and arrived at Open Country Market [Yezi Chang]. Daylilies (*tianhua cai*) grow for several dozen *li* from White Head Retreat [Baitou An] in the south to here. As it turns out, the daylily is not grown anywhere after you leave here. Next came two cliffs, arrayed like screens and standing upright like a tripod cauldron. Magnificent sheer cliffs in countless similar shapes continued for the next ten *li*. Upon overhanging and precipitous cliffs, where multistoried belvederes rise prominently, is

12 The name of this mountain col should not be confused with the island of the same name off the coast of Fujian province.

13 Mount Heng, also known as the Sacred Mountain in the North, is north of Mount Wutai. Xu Xiake will visit there after his Mount Wutai trip is completed. His Mount Heng diary is translated below.

14 This name probably refers to an opening in a rock formation that allows in a small amount of sunlight.

Poised in Midair Monastery [Xuankong Si]. The rocky cliff wall here is especially marvelous. This serves the guardian mountain beyond the North Terrace. If one fails to leave the mountain by this route, it seems that he will not be able to discover the spirit and texture of Mount Wutai, or so it is said.[15]

—Translated by Naixi Feng and James M. Hargett

15 On Xu Xiake's use of the term "spirit and texture" to describe those qualities of the landscape he seeks to capture in his writing, see introduction, page lx, and Ward, *Xu Xiake*, 97.

A Sightseeing Trip to Mount Heng

[FALL 1633, DATONG PREFECTURE, HUNYUAN SUBPREFECTURE, SHANXI]

Mount Heng is approximately 194 mi/312 km north of Mount Wutai in modern Shanxi Province. Xu Xiake left Mount Wutai on 10 September 1633 and arrived at Mount Heng a few days later. During the Qing dynasty, Hengshan was designated the Beiyue, or Sacred Mountain in the North, making it one of China's most revered heights. Its main peak, Celestial Vanguard Ridge [Tianfeng Ling], stands 6,617 ft/2017 m above sea level. The mountain's most notable scenic site is Poised in Midair Monastery. Perched on a precipitous cliff wall—seemingly poised in midair—a network of wooden plank walkways connects the monastery's ceremonial halls and other buildings. Mount Heng in Shanxi ("Heng" 恆 in this mountain's name means "constant") should be distinguished from China's Sacred Mountain in the South, also called Hengshan ("Heng" 衡 in this mountain's name literally means "stable") in Hunan, which Xu Xiake visited later in 1637.

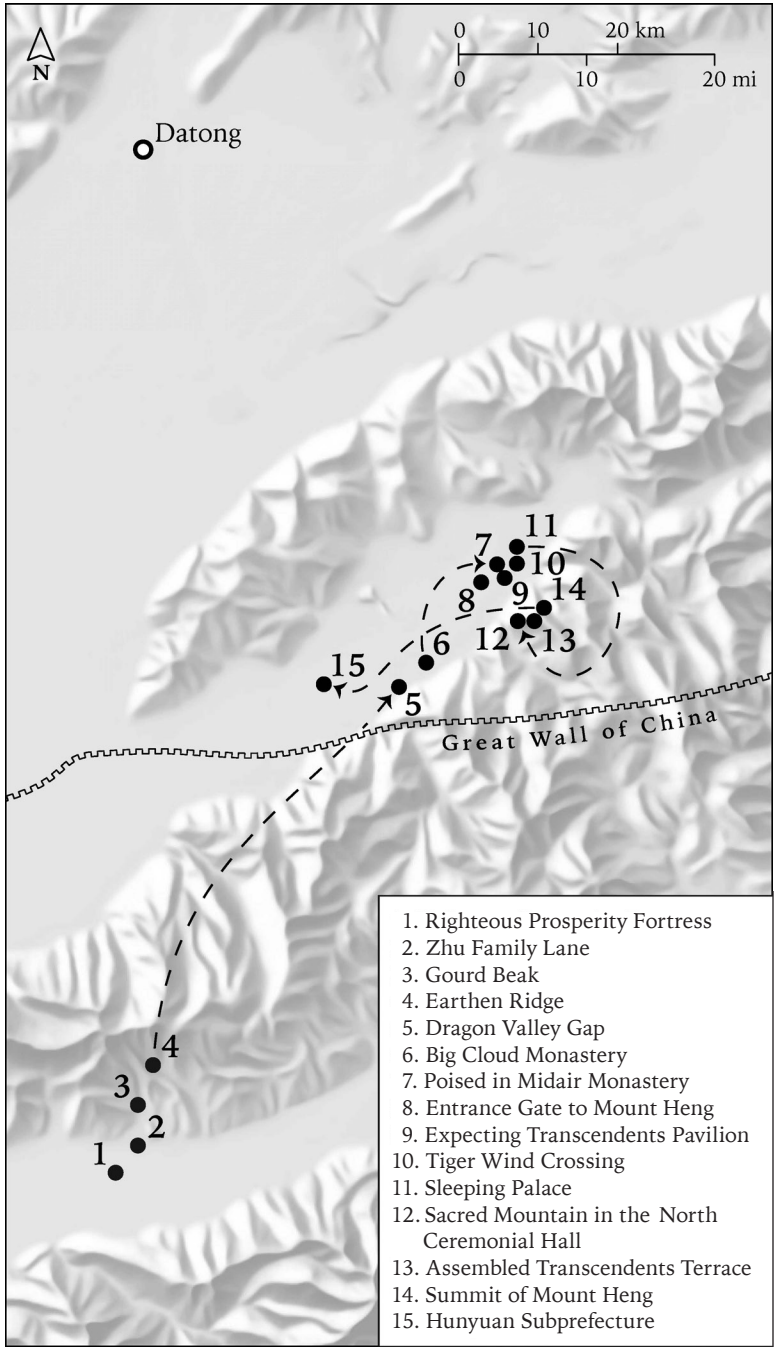
The mountains open once one reaches here, seventy *li* from North Terrace, called East Base Mountain [Dongdi Shan]. As it turns out, the northern extremity of Mount Tai falls under the jurisdiction of Fanshi County.[1]

Ninth day [11 September]: Departed from the mountains to the south. As for the big streams that approach from the mountains, they all depart to the west. Riding north on level land, I gazed at the mountains on my periphery, which in height are not four-tenths of those on Mount Wutai. These mountains are long and curly and coil like a low wall. They belt around Flat Mold [Pingxing] in the east and link with Wild Goose Gate [Yanmen] in the west.[2] I turned crosswise, followed a footpath for fifteen *li*, and reached the foot of the mountain in the north. Crossed Sand River, where one finds Sand River Bastion [Shahe Bao]. It nestles against the mountain and looks down on the flowing river. The

Source: "You Hengshan riji, Shanxi, Datong fu, Hunyuan zhou" (*YJJZ*, 1.133–38; *YJ*, 1.87–91).

1 Mount Tai is Mount Wutai. Fanshi County is modern Fanshi Xian, Shanxi.

2 Flat Mold (modern Pingxing Guan) and Wild Goose Gate [Yanmen Guan] are strategic mountain passes near Mount Heng.



Map 18. Mount Heng, 1633

bastion's brickwork is high and in good condition. If one proceeds northwest from the bastion for seventy *li*, they will come out at Little Rock Crossing [Xiaoshi Kou], where one takes the west road to Datong Prefecture. If one proceeds directly north for sixty *li*, one will arrive at North Road Crossing [Beilu Kou], where one takes the east road to Datong Prefecture.

From behind the bastion, I climbed a mountain and proceeded northeast for several *li*, then reached the entrance to a gorge. A river approaches from the north and heads south, then descends and pours into the Sand River. Following the river, I went into the gorge, twisting and turning with the river's course as I proceeded. The desolate valley is entirely uninhabited. Proceeded several *li* to Righteous Prosperity Stronghold [Yixing Zhai] and several more *li* to Zhu Family Lane [Zhujia Fang]. Next, after several more *li*, reached Gourd Beak [Hulu Zui]. I abandoned the gorge and climbed a mountain, then, following Gourd Beak, ascended. The terrain next formed into a col. I followed the stream's course, which serves as the border of Hunyuan Subprefecture. Next, I proceeded several more *li* and came to Earthed Ridge [Tuling], but I was still sixty *li* from the subprefectural seat. And, as it turned out, I was now fifty *li* from Sand River in the southwest. So I stopped to stay with some people who shared my family name.

Tenth day [12 September]: Following a mountain stream approaching from the south, I headed north for three *li*, where another stream came from the west and merged with it. Together, they then cut northeast and departed. Tracing upstream, I descended to the west, where another stream approached from the north. Then, coming from the west, I climbed a ridge. The trail was quite steep. I ascended north for six or seven *li*, then turned west. Next, to the north, mounted and ascended for five or six *li*, climbed two peaks, and reached their apex, called Arrow Shaft Ridge [Jiangan Ling]. From Sand River, I climbed mountains, waded across rivers, then twisted and threaded through mountain valleys. Every place I encountered was earthen hills and desolate mounds. I never thought that when I reached here, I would suddenly be mounting a vaulted dome.[3] Yet south of the ridge, everything remained simple, as before.[4] But once I passed north of the ridge, I looked down to the east and

3 That is to say, a mountain shaped like a vaulted dome.

4 Here, we encounter one of those rare and fascinating occasions when Xu Xiake mentions an account related to a historical figure to help delineate a landscape. "A-Meng" in the Chinese text—this name means something like "Simple Meng"—refers to Lü Meng (178–219), a military commander and strategist who served the state of Wu during the Three Kingdoms period. His supreme commander, Sun Quan (182–252), founder of the state of Wu, once encouraged Lü Meng to undertake a serious formal study of classical Confucian texts to gain knowledge that would complement his military

west, where the peaks are linked, and cliff walls are crumbling, adorned with lush-green vegetation and flowing streams of vermilion. Those that whirl in the air, ring around, and glitter are rocks, all covered with trees. The rocks are uniform in color, but in spirit and texture, each is alluring. The trees are different in color, but in intricacy and complexity, they form a brocade. The rocks with trees, jutting and jagging, pitched and precipitous, like a screen, are covered with a gilded embroidery that makes them even more extraordinary. The trees with rocks, sideways and extending outward, inverted and coiling round, seem especially ancient because they protrude boldly. It was like this for fifty *li*. Then I descended directly to the base of a large, earthen mountain, where a spring rushed through a gulch, surging from the south to the north. In due course, I followed the spring and came out at the entrance to a col. This is called Dragon Valley Gap [Longyu Kou]. A stronghold looks down on it from above.

> Since Xu Xiake would have had to cross the Great Wall before reaching Dragon Valley Gap, his failure to mention passing the largest man-made structure on the planet may seem odd to the modern reader. We should not forget, however, that Xu's primary motivation to travel was to visit places where he could observe and experience pristine and surpassing (*sheng*) scenic environments. Man-made objects—even the Great Wall of China—did not interest him enough to merit mention in his diary.

The village is thriving, with an abundance of plum and apricot trees planted, forming a forest that covers the foot of the mountain. When I came out of the valley, I next found level land. To the north, the level land is ringed by more mountains along its periphery. Stretching far into the distance, they also move from east to west. To the east, I was thirty *li* from Yunyuan Subprefecture; to the west, I was seventy *li* from Ying Subprefecture.[5] The way that Dragon Valley Gap overlooks the periphery, where sights are distant and faraway places are nearby, is the same way East Base Mountain looks down at the various heights at the mouth of Sand River Gorge [Shahe Xia]. Hence, following the mountains toward the east, I gazed east of Dragon Valley, where the mountains become

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skills. Lü did so and, in the process, succeeded beyond all expectations. Then later, when another Wu general named Lu Su (172–217) encountered Lü Meng, Lu Su was so impressed with Lü Meng's newly acquired scholarly knowledge that he reportedly remarked: "He is no longer the 'Simple Meng' from Wu that he used to be." Here Xu Xiake uses the term "A-Meng," or "Simple Meng," to describe the simple or one-dimensional landscape he spied "south of the ridge."

5 Ying Subprefecture is now modern Ying Xian, Shanxi.

more rugged and precipitous, steeper and more severe. I asked and found out these heights were Dragon Mountain [Longshan]. As for the name Dragon Mountain, the old books locate it in Shanxi, but I did not realize that it stands shoulder to shoulder with Heng, the Sacred Mountain.[6] Reaching here, not only have I forded into its inner precincts, but also to the north, I now survey its face and eyes. This visit to Dragon Mountain was coincidental. As it turns out, it should thus be regarded as a side benefit of my visit to the western part of Mount Wutai. Proceeded east for ten *li* and came to Big Cloud Monastery [Dayun Si] on Dragon Mountain. The southern side of the monastery faces the mountain.

> Given Mount Heng's remote location in northern Shanxi, relatively few sightseers probably reached there before Xu Xiake's lifetime. This situation had changed, however, by the late Ming when tourism in China flourished. As he approaches the mountain, Xu reports seeing "carriages and horses in endless procession." No doubt they were moving sightseers to and from the mountain.

Proceeded east for another ten *li* to where the main road goes northwest, directly to the foot of Mount Heng. So I broke off our trail and followed the road, still ten *li* from the foot of the mountain. I gazed at the mountain's two peaks, spanning aloft, through which came carriages and horses in endless procession, looking as if they were breaking through a wall. This was the main road from Datong Prefecture into Backwards Horse [Daoma] and Redbud [Zijing].[7] I followed it and reached the area below the mountain. The walls of the two precipices stand erect; a mountain stream flows between them. I made my way through a rock crack and passed into the mountain. The passageway was narrow and cramped and did not seem to go anywhere. It twists, cuts, ascends, and then descends in gentle and graceful curves. Twin Peaks on Yi's Watchtower and the Nine Bends at Mount Wuyi fall short compared to this scene. This was the dry season when the clear stream here had not yet filled, so I traced the stream. I am not sure what year it was when clefts were cut into both of the rocky precipices. They are four or five feet wide and reach one rod in depth. Above and below, the clefts are well-arranged and orderly. I guess lengths of wood were inserted into the clefts to make a plank walkway for when the water overflows, which have long since been abandoned. All that remains are two supporting lengths of wood, hanging high above which, like a ridgepole, stick out like thumbs. After

6 That is, Mount Heng.

7 Backwards Horse and Redbud are names of mountain passes north of Tang County, Hebei.

I turned three times, the gorge became increasingly narrower while the cliffs became increasingly higher. Halfway up the western cliff, where rows of lofts hang high, where curved pavilions incline and come to rest, and when you gaze at them, they seem like giant clams spitting out layers of terraces—this is the Poised in Midair Monastery. The northern canyon at Mount Wutai also has a Poised in Midair Monastery, but compared with this one, it is not as comprehensive in design. My spirit soared when I looked at it, drumming up my courage to climb to it alone. When I got up there and went in, lofts and belvederes descended from above, and paths with railings twisted and turned. Since the precipices stand so sheer, they rank as a huge wonder in the empire, while at the same time, the adornment and embellishment of the monastery bring this surpassing scene to perfection. As for those structures I have seen built against crags, this one is not hampered by craggy rock walls. The positioning and placement of the monk's cells are appropriate and orderly. In general, guests are provided accommodations in Buddhist shrine chambers, with bright windows and warm couches in spaces measuring less than a rod. Everything is elegant in this solemn scene.

After descending, I proceeded into a gorge, where I made three or four turns and then came to an expansive cavern entrance, through which tors and canyons are now hidden, now in view. This seemed to be a unique world. Proceeded for another *li*. There are three gates in succession east of the stream; above is a gate with a name board bearing a horizontal inscription aligned high up on an earthen mound. Below the gates are several hundred stone steps in levels that connect with the gates. This is the mountain gateway to the Temple of Mount Heng, the Sacred Mountain in the North [Beiyue Hengshan Miao]. I was still ten *li* from the temple. Everywhere on the left and right are earthen hills in tiers and terraces, but the Sacred Mountain's summit was only a blur in the distance. I stopped for the night at the home of some locals on the gateway's flank, where I planned to climb to the summit the next day.

Eleventh day [13 September]: The wind had wholly cleansed the sky, which was now clear blue, looking like it had just been washed. Leaning on my walking stick, I climbed the Sacred Mountain. Facing east, I ascended earthen ridges and shallow mounds, where there was no clambering or toiling from climbing. Presumably, Mount Heng comprises three folds of mountains that approach from Dragon Spring Pass. However, only the first fold of mountains from Dragon Spring is sheer and steep on the inner side, but beyond the pass, its earthen crests are flat and vast. Although the second fold from Mount Wutai is tiered and steep, its bone-like rocks are towering and upthrust, all where one exits the gorge around East Base Mountain. The third fold passes into the mountain from the entrance to a gorge and then goes north. To the west, it extends to the summit of Dragon Mountain; to the east, it reaches the

southern side of Heng the Sacred Mountain. All its folds are also like concealed weapons and restrained swords.[8] But as soon as they face north, peak after peak is steep and tapered, revealing each crag's appearance.

Proceeded one *li* and then turned north, where coal is everywhere on the mountain. It is not deep in the ground. With just a little digging, one can immediately find some. Proceeded for another *li* to where the earth and rocks are both crimson. On the side of the trail, coiling pine trees stand side by side, leading to a pavilion called Expecting Transcendents [Wangxian]. Proceeded another three *li* to where the precipice rocks gradually rose, and shadows reflected through pine trees and sieved through the darkness. This place is named Tiger Wind Crossing [Hufeng Kou]. Hence, the rocky trail wound and looped around, and only then could I follow the precipice, mount the jagged cliffs, and ascend. Proceeded three *li*, where an outstanding commemorative archway says: "Number One Mountain of the North Quarter" (Shuofang diyi shan). Inside are local government offices, complete with a kitchen and well. From the right of the archway, I headed east and ascended a stairway. Halfway up the precipice is Sleeping Quarters Palace [Qin'gong].[9] North of the palace is Flying Rock Grotto [Feishi Ku]. According to tradition, Mount Heng in Zhending Prefecture flew there from here.[10] I ascended to the Sacred Mountain in the North Ceremonial Hall [Beiyue Dian]. Above, it shoulders a sheer cliff wall; below, it overlooks local government offices. Below the ceremonial hall, steps leading into the clouds poke into the sky, with portico gates above and below and groves of domed stelae standing erect. I ascended from the right of the ceremonial hall, where a rock grotto has been converted into a chamber. It is called Assembled Transcendents Terrace [Huixian Tai]. Inside are statues of a group of transcendents arranged in a circle without as much as a crack between them. I wanted to mount the dangerous precipice and climb to the ultimate summit, so I returned the

8 In other words, the peaks of the third fold are not high and pointy but instead sit low and seem restrained.

9 This name probably refers to the sleeping quarters for residents or visitors to the temple or "palace."

10 Zhending Prefecture corresponds to modern Zhending in Hebei. The Mount Heng mentioned in this line should be distinguished from the Mount Heng visited by Xu Xiake in Hunyang. The matter concerning which of these two Mount Hengs is the historically legitimate Sacred Mountain in the North was controversial for centuries until 1661 when the Hunyang site was officially designated as the rightful Beiyue or the Sacred Mountain in the North. That Xu Xiake chose to visit Mount Heng in Hunyang was undoubtedly based on its outstanding scenery rather than any official designation for the mountain. As for the Mount Heng in Zhending "flying" from Hunyang, this is just one of several tales about the mountain and its mythic flight through space.

way I came and passed east of the Sacred Mountain in the North Ceremonial Hall. From there, I gazed where two cliffs had broken off and where thick brush hung down for a thousand feet. Here, I found a bypath to climb to the summit. So I took off my jacket and, clambering and treading, began the climb. After two *li*, I came out on the top of a dangerous precipice. Looking up at the ultimate summit, it stood prominently, occupying half the sky. Flooding the mountain are short trees, dense and deep, along with uneven branches and dried bamboo, which were able to hook my clothing and prick my collar. But as I clambered and trampled on, the branches and bamboo invariably broke and snapped. And although I worked hard, using all my strength, it seemed as if I had fallen into great waves, where I tumbled and turned and could not get out. I drummed up more courage to ascend, and only after some time, when the thorns disappeared, did I make it to the summit. The moment I arrived, the sunlight was clear and beautiful. I looked down to the mountain's north, where collapsed cliffs had randomly tumbled down, densely covered by a mix of trees. The earthen hills on this mountain have no trees. The rocky hills have trees, but all the rocks are on the north side. Thus, all the trees are to the north. One side of the Hunyuan Subprefecture wall is at the foot of the mountain. When you look down to the north, another fold of mountains, faint and far-off, stretches into infinity. To the south, there is only Dragon Spring; to the west, there is only Mount Wutai. Both blend harmoniously with the surrounding dense greenery.

Nearby is Dragon Spring's western span. Its branching peaks connect to the east, standing shoulder to shoulder, side by side as if descending to guard the entrance to the desert below.[11] Not long afterward, descending from the western peak, I searched for the dangerous precipice that earlier had led me into the gorge. Looking down into the daunting depths, I dared not descend. Suddenly, I turned around and looked toward the east, where a man was meandering across the top of the mountain. So I again ascended to meet him and ask about the way down. He pointed to the pines and cypress trees in the southeast. Gazing at them, I pressed on. Then, during my ascent, I came to the summit of a dangerous precipice behind Sleeping Quarters Palace. As expected, soon afterward, I found a footpath, which to the south passes through a forest of pine and cypress trees. At first, I gazed from the top of the summit, where pines and cypresses are scallion green like garlic leaves and blades of grass. But when you reach here, their thick trunks seem to touch the sky. The pines and cypresses at Tiger Wind Crossing are no less than one hundred times greater in size than these. I directly descended through a crevice in the cliff, just to the right of Sleeping Quarters Palace. This is

11 This is probably a reference to the Gobi Desert, far to the northwest of Shanxi.

Flying Rock Grotto. I saw this defile when I had made my ascent earlier. It is only separated from the precipice by a mere sliver. I descended the mountain for another five *li* and emerged from the dangerous cliff at Poised in Midair Monastery. After another fifteen *li*, I reached the area beyond West Pass [Xiguan] in Hunyuan Subprefecture.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

Part II

The Provincial Diaries 1636–1639

Travels in Zhe

[FALL 1636]

Xu Xiake's Zhe diary, referring to travels in Zhe, modern Zhejiang Province, chronicles the first leg of his lengthy tour of south and southwest China, which lasted from 1636 until 1639.

Bingzi *year, nineteenth day of the ninth month* [17 October 1636]: I have long intended to make a sightseeing tour of the west, but I have postponed this expedition for two years. With old age and illness soon to beset me, putting things off any longer is impossible. I wanted to wait until I could meet with Huang Daozhou, but I have received no news from him. I also wanted to say goodbye to Zhongzhao, but he has not come south, so last night, I made a quick trip up to Earthen Culvert Manor [Tudu Zhuang] to see him. Today, as I was preparing to depart, Uncle Duruo arrived. We drank till midnight, and I was still tipsy when the boat cast off. Accompanying me on this journey is the monk Tranquil Hearing.

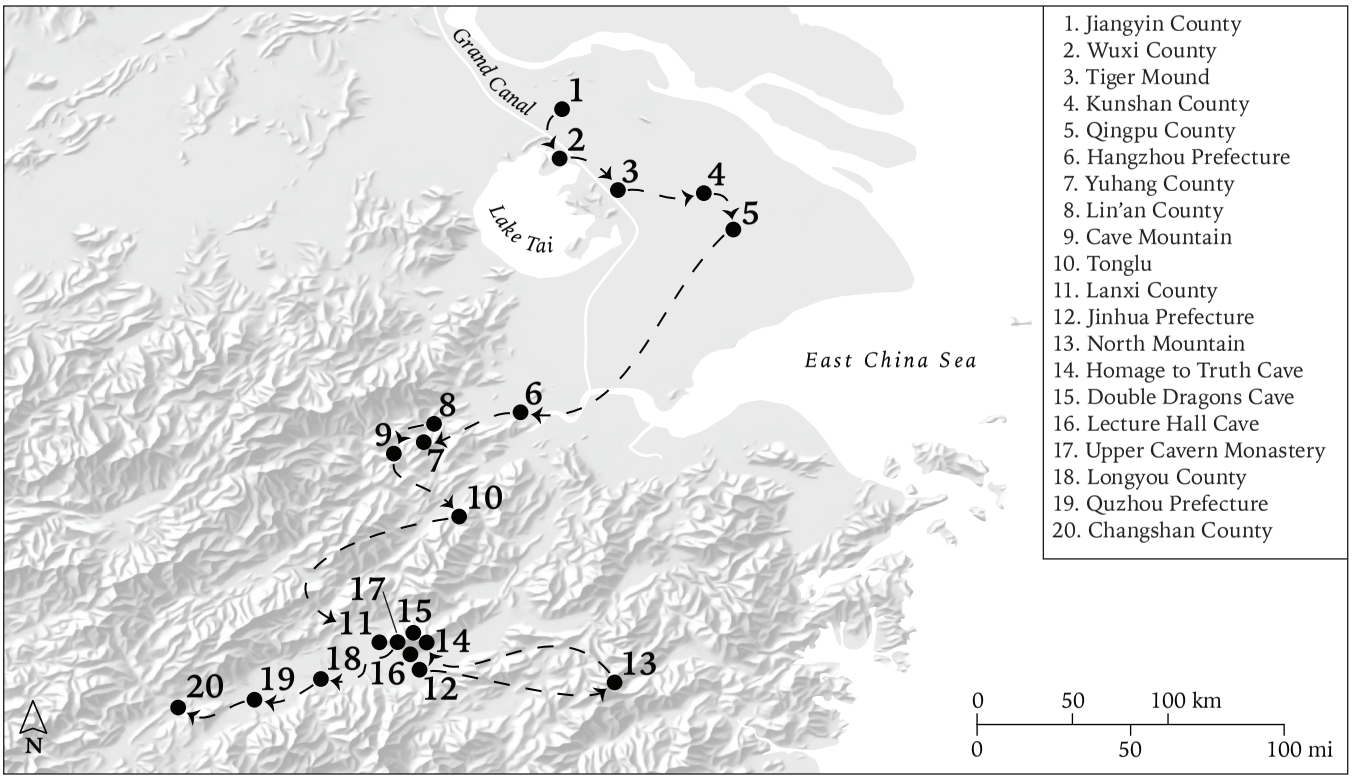
Twentieth day [18 October]: Arrived in Wuxi County before daybreak. At dawn, I first sent someone to inform Wang Xiaoxian of my arrival while I visited Wang Shoushi, but he had gone out. Then I went to see Wang Yongji, who kept me company drinking until noon when Xiaoxian arrived.[1] By the time we had finished, Shoushi had returned. I was already tipsy; Xiaoxian and I had further cups at Shoushi's home. Xiaoxian tucked a family letter to Gu Dongshu into my baggage. At this time, Dongshu is intendant of the Cangwu Circuit [Cangwu Dao]; the letter was written by his son Bochang.[2] We drank deep into the night until, in the end, I boarded the boat.

Twenty-first day [19 October]: Went to see Xiaoxian and once more stayed for a few cups. Cast off in the morning and the evening passed Tiger Mound [Huqiu], then moored at Half Dike [Bantang].

Source: "Zheyou riji" (*YJJZ*, 1:140–43; *YJ*, 1:93–94).

1 Xu Xiake's older sister had married into this distinguished Wang family. By this time, both she and her husband were no longer alive, but Xu was clearly on close terms with the three Wangs mentioned here, who all appear to have been nephews of his brother-in-law. Wang Yongji, courtesy name Zhongren, was a *jinshi* of 1622 who held several government posts in the late Ming.

2 Xu Xiake planned to visit Cangwu during his travels in Guangxi.



Map 19. Zhe (Zhejiang), 1636

Twenty-second day [20 October]: Early in the morning, I bought a bamboo chair for Zhongzhao in Half Dike, and in the early afternoon visited the sons of Wenwen the Elder (Wenwen Lao) and made purchases at Chang Gate.[3] In the evening went to the Feng Gate [Fengmen] to visit cousin Hanhui.[4] Tears coursed down his cheeks when he saw me, and I could not help feeling distressed. Hanhui has lived in seclusion in Suzhou for almost fifteen years, during which time Zhongzhao and I visited him several times. Although he had to move house and suffered family decline and the loss of his son, he could still find distraction in refined pursuits. But this time, his situation is a good deal worse because his grandson continually takes advantage of him financially and defies his wishes. We had several cups together on my boat, where he wrote a letter on my behalf to Zhu Chuyu, prefect of Hengzhou.[5] It was the middle of the night when he left.

Twenty-third day [21 October]: I returned to Chang Gate to pick up dyed silks and the artwork I had mounted. Cast off that morning. After seventy *li*, reached Kunshan County that evening.[6] After another ten or more *li*, left Inner Village [Neicun] behind and entered the Dark Sheep River [Qingyang Jiang], then crossed to the other side and moored next to a small bridge on the east bank.

Twenty-fourth day [22 October]: Set off at fifth drum. Only after twenty *li*, when we reached Green Reed Riverbank [Lüjia Bin], did it become light. At midday, passed Qingpu County, and in the afternoon, reached the north slope of Mount She [Sheshan].[7] I went ashore with Tranquil Hearing, taking a path that led to Pagoda Hollow [Ta'ao], and then carried on southward. First, we passed an abandoned orchard, the spot where, in mid-autumn eight years ago, there was singing and dancing at the so-called country villa of Shi Shaoxin (1588–ca. 1630).[8] That year, when Shaoxin had just decorated the garden and recruited singers, Chen Jiru and I went to visit—what a stunning and splendid event![9] But before

3 "Wenwen the Elder" is Wen Zhenmeng, courtesy name Wenqi (1574–1636), the top palace examination graduate of 1622, who had died three months earlier. *DMB*, 2:1467–70. Xu Xiake's family had close ties with the Wens. Chang Gate was the most northerly of the west gates of Suzhou, modern-day Suzhou Shi, Jiangsu. Feng Gate was the most southerly of the east gates.

4 This Hanhui, apparently a cousin of Xu Xiake, is a different person from the Chen Hanhui who wrote his commemorative tomb biography.

5 Heng Subprefecture, in Guangxi, lay ahead on Xu Xiake's projected route.

6 Kunshan, then a county, is now Kunshan Shi, Jiangsu.

7 Qingpu, then a county in Songjiang Prefecture, is now a district within Shanghai Shi. Mount She lies within what is now the Songjiang district of Shanghai.

8 Shi Shaoxin, courtesy name Ziye, was a prominent Songjiang poet.

9 As subsequent diary entries make clear, Chen highly regarded Xu and did what he could to support his travel projects.

three years were out, when Yingzhen and I passed by and went to look, although the place was little altered, its owner had perished, and we realized that the property had changed hands.[10] It was sold to Vice Minister of War (Binglang) Wang Sheng (*jinshi* 1616). And now it is just ruined pavilions and tumbledown walls; in three short moments, the place has thrice been utterly transformed—so rapid are the reversals in human fortune!

Passing Pagoda Hollow, I noticed the temple had lost its doors, and there was only a big bell hanging there among the trees; the Xu Villa on the south side of the mountains was also under new ownership. So I hastened toward Chen Jiru's Stubborn Transcendent's Cottage [Wanxian Lu]. Jiru, spotting visitors approaching, hastily beat a retreat. On learning I had come to see him, he reemerged, taking me by the hand and leading me into the woods, where we drank until late. I was about to leave, but Jiru wanted to write a letter for me to take to two monks at Mount Chicken Foot—their names are Profound Discernment (Hongbian) and Peacefully Humane (Anren). He pressed me to stay a little longer, so I did not resume the boat journey.[11]

Twenty-fifth day [23 October]: By early morning, Jiru had written the letter to the two monks and prepared a gift for me. After insisting I stay for breakfast, he wrote two poems to celebrate the birthday of Wang Zhongren's mother, and he also gave me a portrait of Avalokiteśvara and a sutra written with red fragrant rice.[12] It was midmorning by the time I set off. Up to this point, I had been making a detour to the east; now, I would begin my travels to the west.

> During the next three days, Xu Xiake proceeded by boat to Wuzhen, arriving in Hangzhou Prefecture on the afternoon of the twenty-eighth. On the twenty-ninth, he attended to correspondence.

Thirtieth day [28 October]:[13] In the morning went into town and bought ginseng to send back home. At noon, I returned to the boat and arranged for the heavier items of luggage to be shipped home. Tranquil

10 Xu and his cousin Xu Yingzhen visited Songjiang in 1631.

11 Xu Xiake planned to stay at Mount Chicken Foot, near Dali in Yunnan. I thank my colleague Zhiru Ng, professor of religious studies at Pomona College, for her advice on the English rendering of monks' names.

12 What Xu Xiake refers to as "red fragrant rice" (*hongxiang mi*) is more widely known today as "red yeast rice" (*hongqu mi*), a reddish-purple rice produced by fermenting white rice with the mold *Monascus purpureus*. Pulverized, the rice becomes a fine powder that when mixed with water or oil can be used as a colored ink or paint.

13 *YJJZ*, 1:145; *YJ*, 1:95.

Hearing and I then crossed the lake to the Gushing Gold Gate [Yongjin Men], where we bought a copper cooking pot, bamboo tubes, and other travel accessories.[14] Later in the day, we proceeded through the Heavenward Gate [Chaotian Men] to the Brilliant Felicity Monastery [Zhaoqing Si], where we bathed and spent the night. Today, I borrowed ten taels from Master Profound Harmony (Zhanrong) to supplement my travel budget.

First day of the tenth month [29 October]:[15] Very clear and crisp, but with a blustery northwest wind. Tranquil Hearing and I climbed to the top of Precious Rock Mountain [Baoshi Shan]. The massive boulder aslant the rocky summit is known as Falling Star Rock [Luoxing Shi]. The rocks on the western peaks stood out prominently, while looking southward, there was a view of the lake and a glimpse of the river; to the north, I could make out the Gaoting and Deqing Mountains, and to the east, I saw smoke rising from the countless kitchen fires of Hangzhou—every one of these sights was clearly visible.

Proceeding down the mountain for five *li*, we passed the Tomb of King Yue [Yuewang Fen] and after ten *li* reached the Peak That Flew Hither [Feilai Feng].[16] We ate in a street market and then explored the hillside grottoes. The mountain, an eastward extension of Maple Tree Ridge [Fengmu Ling], spreads like a screen in front of Soul's Retreat Monastery [Lingyin Si]. Here, the bones of the mountains are fully exposed, and boulders are exquisitely arrayed in the area next to the three grottoes, which are open and interconnected, with no deep recesses. In the olden days, the grottoes were disfigured by the carvings of Lama Yang, and now they are marred by the clamor of itinerant beggars, but at this moment, the beggars were not to be seen, and the hills and stones were spared the pollution of noise and hubbub, as though the mountain was bathing its bones and the sky was washing its face.[17] After roaming everywhere at ground level, I then scaled the peaks. Curious rocks pierced the air above the grottoes, and strangely shaped trees cast their shadows; straddling these wonders, one can imagine oneself at

14 The Gushing Gold Gate was on the east bank of the celebrated West Lake [Xihu]; the gate served as the main western access to Hangzhou, then and now the provincial capital of Zhejiang.

15 *YJJZ*, 1:147–48; *YJ*, 1:95–96.

16 Yue Fei (1103–42), a celebrated general of the Southern Song period, was posthumously awarded a royal title. The shrine erected in his honor on the shore of the West Lake remains a tourist attraction to this day. Legend had it that the Peak That Flew Hither had miraculously been transported all the way from India. Some Buddhist rock carvings dating back to the Tang and Song dynasties adorn its limestone grottoes.

17 Xu is referring here to the notorious Yang Lianzhenjia, a Tangut or Tibetan lama blamed for many cases of abuse in late thirteenth-century Hangzhou.

the top of Massed Jade Mountain [Qunyu Shan].[18] In the past, the peak belonged to the Soul's Retreat Monastery, but now it is the property of the Zhang family.

Once we went downhill and crossed the stream, the Soul's Retreat Monastery lay before us. On the middle terrace, an elderly monk sat silently in his robes, basking in the sun and never once blinking an eye. I entered the Dharma Wheel Ceremonial Hall [Falun Dian]. At the east end is the newly built Arhat Ceremonial Hall [Luohan Dian], housing only half of the entire five hundred statues—the other half are yet to be erected at the west end. On this day, two or three groups of beautiful ladies arrived close on each other's heels, casting their scent and exuding glamor—just as memorable a sight as the old monk meditating in the sunshine. I lingered here for quite some time.

In the afternoon, we climbed westward from the Bao Garden [Baoyuan] to Maple Ridge, then descended to the Upper [Shang Tianzhu Si], Middle [Zhong Tianzhu Si], and Lower [Xia Tianzhu Si] India Monasteries. After following the path farther, we came upon Three Lives Rock [Sansheng Shi], rugged in form, with a transparent, moist patina. I took stock of the rock's location and found it lies on the mountain's south slope, which screens Soul's Retreat Monastery. From there, as you proceed east to the end of the Peak That Flew Hither, the scenery is utterly delightful. Five *li* below the Lower India Monastery, we emerged at the Mao Family Promenade [Mao-jia Bu] and crossed the lake. The sun was setting, and the sky was dark when we reached Brilliant Felicity.

> On the second day, Xu Xiake headed west to Yuhang County. On the third day, he entered Lin'an County and began making his way southwest through the hills.[19]

Fourth day [1 November]:[20] At cockcrow made breakfast, and at dawn walked toward the west. . . . After crossing to the north end of Alms Bowl Bridge [Boyu Qiao], we turned east, and after one *li*, we made another sharp turn south. Three Nine Mountain [Sanjiu Shan] lies east of here, and Cave Mountain [Dongshan] to the west, encircling the valley. In both directions, we saw nothing but jagged peaks as black as lacquer, red maples and yellow ginkgoes (*baiguo*), emerald bamboo, and green pines mingling like brocade. Where streams had tumbled down from the rock faces, they had washed the stones as clean as snow. Although there had been a long dry spell and water was no longer flowing, the dark cliffs and

18 In legend, Massed Jade Mountain was home to the Queen Mother of the West (Xi Wangmu).

19 Yuhang and Lin'an, both counties in Xu's day, are now urban districts of Hangzhou.

20 *YJJZ*, 1:149–51; *YJ*, 1:97–99.

white canyons looked like hanging bolts of silk, and I marveled at the sight. After two *li*, we crossed the Li Wang Bridge [Li Wang Qiao] and reached the eastern slope of Cave Mountain, where we made haste to drop off our luggage at the Wu Family Ancestral Shrine [Wushi Xianci]. I told the pageboy to look for an eatery, but there was none to be found. Two members of the Wu family arrived, one cooking a meal for us and the other bringing candles for our visit to the caves. I reciprocated by giving them folding fans inscribed by Master Yu. . . .

Then Tranquil Hearing and I headed west to ascend the mountain, following a stream. Gurgling waters rinsed boulders bordering the stream, while rock slabs jutted out, sloping like humps or projecting like terraces, and bamboo and trees rose between the rocks, their roots hidden from view, canes and trunks filling every cranny. Climbing farther, we came upon a large stone block standing straight and square in the middle of the stream, its surface incised with a remarkable pattern of veins, like waves agitated by a whirlwind. Continuing the ascent, we came upon a newly built Suiyang Temple [Suiyang Miao] nestled among the bamboo; inside is the Snow Peak Sacrarium [Xuefeng Kan], also known as Soul's Retreat [Lingyin An].[21]

Behind the retreat, a sheer rock face extends, standing up straight like an emerald-tipped screen; to its south lies Bright Cavern [Mingdong], gaping open like a pavilion. Lining its outer rim are five stone columns, creating an effect similar to Mount Siming's [Siming Shan] "windows," though the rocks at Siming are of inferior color, and they do not cluster together in the same way.[22] One of the columns falls short of the upper rim, and from the rim hangs another rock that does not quite reach the column; they face each other, one above and one below, with only a tiny space separating them. Alongside, a tree rises tall, bending outward when it reaches the rim, its lush greenery brushing the crags as it climbs, the dark stone all the more striking in contrast.

Continuing south, we arrived at Hidden Cavern [Youdong]. The two sections of the cavern open next to each other, and the rock wall between them is a light red color, like a peach blossom. The cavern opening is tall, and inside, it feels like standing under the arch of a bridge. If you shout, the echoes go on and on, for the cavern seems to have no bottom.

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21 This temple is devoted to the memory of the Tang official Zhang Xun (709–57), who lost his life defending the town of Suiyang during the An Lushan Rebellion (755–63).

22 There is controversy over when Xu Xiake may have visited Mount Siming, which lies west of Ningbo. *NP1*, 7, dates the trip to 1613. Wu Qiulong, "Xu Xiake chuyou kaoshu," 29, says that Xu traveled alone to Mount Siming in 1632, just before his second trip to Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang. Judging from a passage in Chen Hanhui's *Commemorative Tomb Biography*, *YJJZ*, 2:1435, the correct date is 1632.

About twenty rods in, one wing of the cavern turns north, and another turns south. The northern cavern is dry, and one can ascend it on steps, like going upstairs. After thirty rods in, this branch takes a turn to the south into a small gallery, very dark.

The southern cavern is wet: even if the floor is uneven, with many rises, water is everywhere, neither flowing nor drying up. I had to move forward at an angle, and after some twenty rods, I suddenly heard the babble of running water. Proceeding through a small opening, I saw a little stream flowing from the south, and here it spilled into a bottomless sinkhole that I could only hear and not see. Tracing the stream toward its source, I crossed a gulch and made my way through another opening. From here on, I had to wade through the water, so I rolled up my gown and took off my socks, and after proceeding along the stream for thirty rods, I saw rocks dangling like lotus blossoms, their tips curled like elephants' trunks. On I went, over sandy patches and along narrow passageways, through galleries that were sometimes cramped and sometimes spacious, much like White Crane Cavern [Baihe Dong] in Bramble Stream, but White Crane Cavern lies at the foot of a mountain and is easily watered, while this cavern is high up near the summit, so the water here was all the more extraordinary.[23] Finally, the cavern ends at a place where water collects into quite a shallow pool, and I still do not know where it comes from and where it discharges. By the time I emerged, although I had just spent a few hours in the cavern, it seemed like an age since I was outside.

After coming down the mountain, we dined at the Wu Ancestral Shrine. Then we followed the stream that came from the south and after two *li* reached Grand Peace Bridge [Taiping Qiao]. To the west of the bridge lives a family named Gao, and to the east, a family named Wu—a branch of the Wu family of Li Wang Bridge. Here, there is also an ancestral shrine that is very spacious.

The sun was still high in the sky, but because the porters lived close by and wanted to return home for the night, they claimed we would find no inn at Horse Ridge, so we stayed in the hall that evening. On this day, we walked a distance of only thirty-five *li*, but the two caverns were a wholly unexpected find—what good fortune! That night, the wind howled, and clouds gathered, but by dawn, all was calm.

> On the fifth day, Xu Xiake proceeded over the hills and boarded a boat on the Watershed River [Fenshui Jiang], heading south toward Tonglu. By the evening of the seventh day, he had arrived at Lanxi County.[24]

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23 Jing Stream has its source in southwestern Jiangsu.

24 Lanxi corresponds to modern Lanxi Shi, a county-level city under the administration of Jinhua.

Eighth day [5 November]:[25] In the morning, ascended the pontoon bridge to find boats lined up row upon row on both sides. In deference to troops shortly arriving from Quzhou Prefecture, the bridge was closed, and boats were not allowed to pass in either direction.[26] So, I told Servant Gu to look after the luggage at an inn by the south gate while Tranquil Hearing and I went sightseeing at the three caverns in Jinhua Prefecture.

The mountains of Jinhua extend horizontally from east to west, with the prefectural capital to the south, Pujiang to the north, Lanxi to the west, where the mountains meet the plain, and Yiwu to the east.[27] The Wu River [Wushui], flowing from Yongkang in the southwest, passes the south gate of Jinhua and flows northwest to Lanxi, where it joins the Qu River [Qujiang]. At first, I planned to take a land route, but seeing there was a boat heading eastward, we boarded it. The stream flowed between sandy banks, and the mountains looked far away. Red maples dotted the landscape, as fetching as brocade, like cuttings from sunset clouds, splendid in their gleaming ranks. North Mountain [Beishan] thrust high into the sky as though carrying a huge screen on its back, but we were putting it behind us as the boat headed southeast.

"Where are the three caves?" I asked.

"To the north," was the answer.

"And the prefectural capital?"

"To the south."

Only then did I realize that there was actually no need to go to Jinhua to see the caves: if one traveled overland for one-half day, one could access them from a central route. But we were on the boat by this time, and it was too late. After forty-five *li*, we entered a narrower channel; by now it was dusk, and the moon was bright. After another fifteen *li*, we disembarked and looked for an inn by the wharf. But given the late hour, the inns had closed their doors and would not take us in. I met Mr. Wang, nickname Jingchuan, a native of High Bridge Wharf [Gaoqiao Bu]. He was about to make his way home by moonlight, but seeing that we had nowhere to sleep, he led us outside the west gate and stayed with us at an inn there.

Ninth day [6 November]: I rose early to find the sky clear. Entered the west gate—the "Lanxi Gate" [Lanxi Men]—with Wang Jingchuan and passed

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25 *YJJZ*, 1:152–58; *YJ*, 1:101–7.

26 That autumn, two Manchu armies had conducted raids into Chinese territory, pillaging cities as far south as Baoding in what is now Hebei. Ming troops were belatedly ordered north to shore up defenses. Quzhou, now a prefecture-level city, lay to the southwest, closer to Jiangxi.

27 Jinhua (modern Jinhua Shi) was a prefecture in Ming times; Pujiang (modern Pujiang Xian) and Yiwu (modern Yiwu Xianji Shi) were counties within Jinhua Prefecture.

the county offices, where there were many comings and goings because of the recent death of the magistrate Xiang Renlong of She County, a *jinshi* of the *xinwei* year (1631); in the space of five days, he, his father, and his son had all died of dysentery. Then went east and climbed Su Precinct Ridge [Sufang Ling], which is quite level and surrounded by street markets. Carrying east, we reached Four Memorial Archways [Si Paifang]. From Su Precinct Ridge to here, the streets and shops are bustling; head south, and you reach the local government offices. Together with Wang Jingchuan, we entered a noodle shop run by a Huizhou family. The noodles were so delicious that we all ate double portions.

After that, we exited the west gate and headed north. Wang was so reluctant to part from us that it was some time before we said goodbye. The road led us up and down ridges and hills, and after ten *li*, we reached Luodian. When I asked where the three caves were, I was told, "To the west," but I noticed how a sharp peak jutted out, and it was to the east. So I took a local aside and questioned him closely to be informed that "halfway up North Mountain is Deer Field Monastery [Lutian Si]. The spur that runs east from there has Hibiscus Peak [Furong Feng]—also called Pinnacle Peak [Jianfeng]—at its southern high point: it is the origin of the mountain ridge overlooking the city. But it is the spur that runs west that, on the south side, culminates in the three caves. West of the caves, you come to the border with Lanxi."

Since I planned to return to Lanxi from the three caves and did not want to miss any further sights on the east side, I headed toward Hibiscus Peak. After proceeding northeast five *li* from Luodian, I came upon Sage Monastery [Zhizhe Si]. Situated on the west slope of Hibiscus Peak, it is the principal monastery in the southern foothills of North Mountain, but now it is in poor repair. There is, however, a stele in the ceremonial hall erected by Lu You (1125–1210) of the Song, commemorating the reconstruction of the buildings by the abbot of the day, and the characters on the stele are written in Lu's hand.[28] On the reverse is carved the text of several letters that Lu You sent to the abbot. The script of the front of the stele is in regular style, while the text on the reverse side is in cursive; both forms have an appealing poise. I regret that no rubbing services were available, so I could not enjoy the pleasure of obtaining an impression.

To the east of the monastery is Hibiscus Retreat [Furong An]. From there, a path leads to Hibiscus Peak. Although the summit is sharp and round, it is less than half the height of North Mountain, so I chose not to take that path. I headed northwest up the ridge instead, and after scaling crests and descending gullies for some five *li*, I found myself at Clear View Retreat [Qingjing An]. There, Way Cultivator (Daoxiu), the resident monk, prepared a meal for us, and later, he showed us the way up to Yang

28 Lu You was a celebrated Song dynasty scholar-official and poet.

Family Mountain [Yangjia Shan], the second-highest peak after North Mountain. Hibiscus is the third highest.

We circled to the west and then climbed through the northern fold between two peaks. To the east is Yang Family Mountain, where several dozen families live, and to the west is Gaze in Vain Mountain [Baiwang Shan], where a transcendent once gazed at a white deer. After some seven *li*, North Mountain rises steeply in the rear, with Yang Family Mountain in front. Here, a level area opens out, and huge boulders project upward. Where stones have been laid to form a terrace and bamboo has been planted, one finds the hillside manor of Governor Zhu (Zhu Kaifu).[29] The rocks on the northeast side pile up in profusion, some as big as lions and elephants, some as small as deer and pigs, all crouching in the undergrowth. This spot is known as Stone Waves [Shilang], the place where Chuping shouted at stones to make them turn into sheep—can it be that now he has converted the sheep back to stones again?[30] Above the boulders stands Deer Field Monastery, which gets its name from the story of the Jade Maiden marshaling deer to plow a field. In front of the ceremonial hall stands a rock, dubbed the Tamed Deer Rock [Xunlu Shi] for its shape.

This monastery has been here for a long time, although more recently, its assets have been nibbled away by eunuchs. Prefect Zhang Zhaorui (*jinshi* 1568) of Haizhou built a ceremonial hall to preserve the stone sheep, and Tu Long's (1542–1605) account of his visit is carved on a tablet within its precincts.[31] By the time we arrived, it was afternoon. On inquiry, I learned that Cockfight Crag [Douji Yan] is to the east, so with Tranquil Hearing, I walked two *li* in that direction, crossing Mountain Bridge [Shanqiao]. One *li* farther, two outcrops stand side by side, with a stream flowing between them. On both outcrops, rocks stick up, tilted toward the stream like cock combs flaring in rage. With the stream gushing below, this is quite a wonderful spectacle. A few *li* east of the crag, in an eastern fold of Hibiscus Peak, lies Red Pine Palace [Chisong Gong], on a path that can be accessed from Jinhua's east gate.

A woodcutter named Zhao, who lives on Cockfight Crag, pointed out that there is a Chessboard Rock on the summit of North Mountain, and behind it, water from West Jade Pitcher [Xi Yuhu] pours forth; in times of drought, its water is used to pray for rain, and it is renowned

29 "Governor Zhu" refers to Zhu Dadian (1581–1646), who passed the *jinshi* examination in 1616 and served in several key provincial posts in the late Ming. Ten years after Xu's visit to Jinhua, Zhu died during the Qing assault on the city.

30 According to a legend recorded by Ge Hong (283–364), Huang Chuping performed this feat in the hills above Jinhua.

31 Zhang Zhaorui, a native of Haizhou in Jiangsu, served as prefect of Jinhua in the early Wanli reign. Tu Long was a famous scholar-official from Ningbo. *DMB*, 2:1324–27.

for its efficacy. By now, the sun was on its downward arc, so Tranquil Hearing and I quickly clambered up through the brush. After a while, I heard a yell, for Woodcutter Zhao had noticed we were mistakenly heading too far west—he pointed farther east.

We made our way through a thick mass of undergrowth, and after climbing straight for two *li*, we reached Chessboard Rock. In front of it was a flat terrace, with stones piled up behind; in the middle of the terrace stood a chamber housing a statue of the mountain god, and beneath the rear stone chamber, we found a pot of water—the water for the rain-prayer ceremony, presumably. Higher up, there was also a spring flowing down from the summit. By now, the sun was about to set, so we followed the stream upward to find a rocky gulch, like a gate, with water emerging from it, and above the gate, I found a level channel—this is what is known as West Jade Pitcher. I gather that to the east there is an East Jade Pitcher [Dong Yuhu]—it too is a gulch channeling the water that falls on the top of the mountain. Of the water from the West Jade Pitcher, what flows south after reaching Chess Board Rock empties underground into the three caves, while what flows north emerges in Lanxi by way of the Inner Water Source [Lishui Yuan]. Of the water from East Jade Pitcher, what flows south emerges from Red Pine Palace and flows out at Jinhua, what flows east emerges in Yiwu, and what flows north emerges in Pujiang. Such is the mountain spine from which Jinhua's streams divide. . . .

As we reached the summit of North Mountain, the sun was sinking in the sky. But I saw a stretch of water shimmering in the far distance; I took it to be a bend in the Qu River, which lies in that direction. As the sun disappeared, the moon rose, projecting light in its place. All was silent, and the world was washed clean, as though a jade pitcher had indeed bathed our bones, and it felt as though our shapes and shadows had assumed a different guise. I thought back to the toiling world below and asked myself: "Who down there could ever experience such a pristine setting?" One can climb to an upper chamber and whistle at leisure, imbibing wine by the riverside. However, there is still a world of difference between that and us scaling alone the very pinnacle of the countless mountains, beyond all roads and paths and far from the realm of dust. Even if mountain goblins and strange beasts were to gang up and harass us here, there would be no cause for alarm, and how much less there is to worry about when they keep silent and do not stir as we roam freely in the empyrean!

We lingered long, then descended two *li* to Flat Rock [Panshi], where we scrambled down through the undergrowth another two *li* to Cockfight Crag. Hearing the noise, Woodcutter Zhao opened his door and came out—he was sure that during all his years on the mountain, he had never encountered people like us. Then we walked one *li* westward to Mountain Bridge and two *li* west to Deer Field Monastery. Because we

had taken so long, the monks Auspicious Peak (Ruifeng) and Compliant Hearing (Congwen) had gone off in different directions, calling our names, and their voices echoed through the valley. After entering the temple, we bathed and went to bed.

Tenth day [7 November]: At cockcrow, rose and ate, then it was dawn. Auspicious Peak had prepared a bundle of torches; he shared the load with Compliant Hearing, and they followed us, torches on their shoulders. From the rear of Zhu Manor [Zhuzhuang], we walked west for one *li* then went north to climb the ridge, which was very steep. After about one *li*, a rock thrusts upward at the summit. From beside the rock, if you follow North Mountain to the east, you can reach Jade Pitcher; if you cross the summit and go north, you get to the Homage to Truth Cave [Chaozhen Dong]. The cave faces west on a high peak, overlooking a deep gorge in which houses are clustered. So remote is that spot that one might almost suspect the inhabitants are refugees from the Qin dynasty. When I inquired where they came from, I was told from the area outside Double Dragons Cave [Shuanglong Dong]. . . .

The entrance to Homage to Truth Cave is broad, and the interior slopes down. Clutching torches, we went deep inside, and to the left, there was a cleft, like a small chamber. We followed it as it turned, and where it ended, water was dripping, but the floor was dry, and I could not tell where the water drained. After leaving the side chamber, we kept going right to the bottom of the cave, where huge rocks lay strewn high and low. When I gazed upward, the ceiling arched like a dome, and looking down, I was struck by the cave's depth. Clambering over boulders, I came upon another chamber, and suddenly, from far above, a beam of sunshine shined down: like a tiny half-moon, a round stone was bathed in light. To see this illumination amid the gloom was like catching sight of a bright pearl or precious cresset.

After leaving the inner cave, I found two more caves on the left. The lower of the two soon ended, but the upper one curved round like the other chambers. On its right side was a hole, and when I looked down, I could not see the bottom; I think that may be the lowest point in the cave.

After leaving the cave, we climbed down from the rock-strewn summit in a southerly direction. After one *li*, we turned to the northwest, and after another *li*, we reached Ice Jug Cave [Binghu Dong], the next level down from Homage to Truth Cave. The cave entrance gaped upward like an open mouth. First I tossed a stick and a torch down the cavity; they rolled and rolled, and I could not see the bottom, so I entered, climbing over crevices and hugging the wall. Suddenly, I heard the roar of falling water and walked forward, torch in hand. In the middle of the cave was a cascade tumbling down from on high, like icy flowers and slivers of jade glinting in the darkness. The water splashes onto the rocks below, but it is unclear where it goes after that. When I took the

torch and explored in all directions, I found that this cave's incline was deeper than that of Homage to Truth Cave, but it had fewer twists and turns.

After leaving the cave and descending for one *li*, we came to Double Dragons Cave. It has two entryways. Auspicious Peak said, "This cave originally had just one entry; the south entry was formed in the Wanli reign when water triggered a collapse in the cliff face." One faces south, and one faces west; they lead to the outer cave. It is tall and grand, like a spacious mansion with a tall dome opening on all sides—no repeat of the winding chambers and vestibules. Here, stone tendons writhed, and stalactites dangled in all kinds of bizarre shapes—that is how the name Double Dragons originated. Two stelae are particularly ancient, a standing stele with the words "Double Dragons Cave" carved on it and a supine stele inscribed with the words "Ice Jug Cave." Both writers had put little ink on their brushes and employed the "flying white" style, omitting their names, so the steles can hardly be of recent vintage.

Water from the rear of the cavern flows out in a westward direction through an inner passage and then discharges through the outer cavern. Beneath the roof of the passage, there is only a foot and a half of clearance—it is like the left hill on Mount Dongting [Dongting Shan], where you must hug the ground to gain entrance; the difference is that there you have earth right underneath you, whereas here it is water.[32]

Auspicious Peak borrowed for me a washtub from Granny Pan (Panlao), an old woman living near the entrance who had supplied us with tea and fruit. I took off my clothes and put them in the tub, then waded naked into the water and entered the narrows, pushing the tub ahead of me. The narrows continued for five or six rods and opened into a tall, wide cavern. A stone platform lay horizontally, several feet off the ground; at its broadest, it extended several dozen rods, and at its thinnest, just a few inches. On the left, stalactites hung down, moist and mysterious, like columns of carnelian or jeweled curtains spread wide along the cavern; underneath, there were cavities and crevices, exquisitely twisting. As I followed the water down its channel, the tunnel grew tighter until it was impossible to squeeze through any farther. I noticed a little hole in the tunnel wall—just the width of a finger—from which water was dripping. When I caught the water in my mouth, it tasted exceptionally sweet and cool. The inner cavern, I would estimate, is even larger than the outer cavern.

In short, Homage to Truth Cave is splendid in its thin sliver of sunshine, Ice Jug is remarkable for its myriad stone pearls, while Double Dragons, with its two entryways and its heavy stone curtains, combines the marvels of earth and water and the wonders of darkness and light.

32 Xu Xiake explored this mountain near Suzhou in the autumn of 1632.

When we emerged from the cave, the sun was halfway through its daily passage, and Granny Pan had a pot of boiled yellow millet waiting for us. Touched by her thoughtfulness, we ate up, and I repaid her with an umbrella I had bought in Hangzhou. Then we said goodbye to the two monks.

We proceeded west, crossing a ridge and finding ourselves in a valley. We turned north and then east to a distance of five *li* from Double Dragons. After climbing one-half *li*, we reached Lecture Hall Cave [Jiangtang Dong]. It too has two entries, one facing northwest, the other facing northeast, broad and clean, higher than Double Dragons and not as dark—it is truly a place one could live and take one's ease. In ancient times, this was where Liu Jun (463–521) waved his whisk; now, an image of Avalokiteśvara has been placed here.[33] This appears to be the first spur on the southern flank of North Mountain; its sunny side circles the three caves, and on the north-facing slope, it has created this cave. The people who dwell in the valley below make a living burning limestone. Their stream is dry, with no bottom flow, so they climb the mountain to draw water from above Lecture Hall Cave.

We crossed the streambed, then walked west across the next ridge, the second spur on North Mountain's south flank. The valley beyond is very narrow, but a stream comes gurgling down from the north in the streambed. Crossing this and continuing west, we followed a ridge north and reached the third spur. After a narrow section and then a turn, we arrived at Honeycomb Crag [Linglong Yan], some six *li* from Lecture Hall Cave. Here we came across a string of houses in a natural canyon, quite equal to the Jin dynasty fisherman's Peach Blossom.[34] Turning to the west and crossing the next ridge, we entered Lanxi County. At the foot of the ridge is Niu Hollow [Niukeng], where several dozen households live. After one more ridge, we arrived at Sishan Shrine [Sishan Ci], on the fourth spur, some six *li* west of Honeycomb Crag.

By then, the sun was about to set, and when I asked the way to Cave Source Monastery [Dongyuan Si], one person said ten *li*, and another said five *li*. We followed the stream down for five *li* and at dusk reached Bai Hollow [Baikeng], a well-populated village with residents also engaged in lime production. Crossing Stone Pagoda Ridge [Shita Ling], the next ridge to the west, we reached the fifth spur. Cave Source Monastery is on the north side of the tall peak that lies beyond. From here the ridge crosses the trail and goes north, and after just one *li*, the main road

33 Liu Jun, courtesy name Xiaobiao, is famous for having written a commentary to the anecdotal compilation *A New Account of Tales of the World* (Shishuo xinyu), a fifth-century collection of historical anecdotes and biographical sketches.

34 On the famous legend of the Peach Blossom Spring, see part 1, note 6, pages 78–79.

runs past the lower cavern in front of the mountain. It seems this area also has three caverns: lower down is Water Source Cavern [Shuiyuan Dong], also called Surging Snow [Yongxue]; higher up is Upper Cavern [Shangdong], also known as White Cloud [Baiyun]; and in the middle is Purple Cloud Cavern [Ziyun Dong]. But the area is generally known as Water Source, so the single monastery is sometimes called Water Source or Upper Cave. However, the monastery and Water Source Cave are actually in two different places. Taking the ridge-top trail to the monastery is a matter of five *li*, but if you climb to the monastery only after descending from Water Source Cavern, the distance is over ten *li*. By now, it was so dark we could not make out the path, and there was nobody to ask, so we followed the main road down the mountain until we saw a footpath that descended westward, and I pressed Tranquil Hearing to follow it. Time passed, and we did not find the monastery—all we saw was a cluster of lime kilns ahead of us and a crisscross of footpaths. Just as we were wondering which way to go, we saw a faint light in the distance and headed quickly in that direction; it turned out to be a man operating a water-powered trip hammer.

"This here is Water Source," he told us. "If you head north, cross Flood Bridge [Hongqiao], and climb the ridge to the right, in three *li*, you'll reach Upper Cavern Monastery [Shangdong Si]."

Since hiking was difficult so late in the evening, we expressed a wish to stay with him.

"With the moonlight now, it will be as bright as day," he said, "and once you're on the trail, there are no forks, so you can carry on with confidence."

Only now did I realize that Upper Cavern Monastery is situated on the north side of this spur. So we followed the stream northwest to Flood Bridge, which must be some four *li* from Bai Hollow [Baikeng]. Having crossed the bridge, we climbed the ridge to the north. After one *li*, the path turned east, and after one more *li*, we finally reached the monastery, where we prevailed on the monks to let us lodge overnight. . . .

> Xu Xiake and Tranquil Hearing spent most of the next day exploring caves in the Lanxi hills. We join them that afternoon.

Eleventh day [8 November]:[35] . . . . The previous night, we had been given directions by the trip-hammer operator, and so now, following the west ridge, we left the valley and proceeded fifteen *li* to the southwest, arriving at Lanxi's south wharf. When we entered the inn, Servant Gu had yet to eat. He bolted his meal down and went out to look for a boat. Because army reinforcements were due to travel north, boats were requisitioned and forced to stay put, but even after a long wait, the troops had failed to

35 *YJJZ*, 1:164–65; *YJ*, 1:109–10.

appear. Suddenly, a boat arrived from the north, loaded with cloth, and we hastily arranged a ride. It was not yet ready to leave, but when the procurement agents came round again, the boatmen poled the boat five *li*, and we moored at Hengshan Wharf [Hengshan Tou].

Twelfth day [9 November]: At daybreak, we pulled out. After twenty *li*, we reached Green Grass Hollow [Qingcao Keng] on the south side of the stream in Tangxi.[36] It was midday, and given the shallow water and the boat's heavy load, we could only inch forward slowly. After fifteen *li*, we reached Qiu Family Dike [Qiujia Yan], where the boatmen arranged for a flat-bottomed barge to moor next to us. During the night, a light rain fell; the east wind was fierce.

Thirteenth day [10 November]: At daybreak, the clouds broke up, and the boatmen lifted a consignment of cloth and transferred it to the barge. The wind became more favorable; after twenty *li*, we reached Huzhen, and after another twenty *li*, we arrived in Longyou County. It was only afternoon, but we needed to wait to change barges, so we moored for the night.

Fourteenth day [11 November]: At daybreak, the passengers, frustrated by the slowness of the journey, demanded a refund and went ashore. Now the boat was lighter and more spacious, and although we had been delayed, I did not mind. As the early mists lifted, the distant mountains became visible on all sides, but now, with a headwind, we could not just skim over the sandbars with our sails unfurled. After four *li*, we came to Anren on the border between Longyou and Xi'an, and after another ten *li*, we moored at Yang Village, twenty-five *li* short of Quzhou Prefecture.[37] Today we traveled fifty-five *li* in total, and when we caught up with the boats that had set off earlier than us, we realized we were not the only ones affected by the hold-up. Water and sky alike were empty on the limpid river and beneath a radiant moon. I felt that at this moment all cares had been washed clean, that I was fusing with the village trees and the human scene to form a single piece of crystal that, with no gap between surface and substance, with all impurities erased, could leap and soar before my eyes.

Fifteenth day [12 November]: We snagged two sandbars in succession at daybreak. Now that relief troops had left the area, cargo boats were flooding the river, but the shoals narrowed the channel, and congestion slowed both the upstream and the downstream traffic. Earlier, I had

36 Tangxi corresponds to modern Tangxi Zhen, Zhejiang.

37 During the Ming, Xi'an was east of modern Quzhou Shi. This Xi'an should not be confused with the modern city of the same name in Shaanxi Province.

lamented the shortage of boats, and now we were suffering from an excess of them—such are the hardships of travel! After ten *li*, we passed Camphor Tree Pool [Zhangshu Tan] and reached Cockcrow Mountain [Jiming Shan]. Proceeding upstream with light sails, after another fifteen *li*, as noon approached, we reached Quzhou. There, we passed a pontoon bridge, and after going south for three *li*, we entered Constant Mountain Stream [Changshan Xi] with the wind right behind us and our sails trimmed. After two more *li*, we passed Sichuan Pepper Mountain [Huajiao Shan], where our eyes feasted on the greens of the tangerine trees and the reds of the maples lining the two banks. After another ten *li*, we took a northward turn and in five *li* reached Yellow Wharf Market [Huangbu Jie]. In every doorway, tangerines picked from a thousand trees filled basket after basket, and boats packed with newly purchased fruit came down the river in droves. I was about to board a boat laden with tangerines when, eager to take advantage of the wind, our boat lowered its sails and headed farther west. After five *li*, the sun went down, and we continued by moonlight for another ten *li*, mooring at Gully Stream Shoal [Gouxi Tan], just east of the Changshan County boundary.[38]

Sixteenth day [13 November]: The sun was bright at dawn, and the east wind blew all the more strongly. Rising at dawn, we passed Jiao Dike [Jiaoyan]. As the mountains jutted out, the river turned a bend; we had now reached Changshan. Where Xi'an has tangerines, Changshan has hills; Xi'an's flora is lush and colorful, but the trees of the Changshan hills are somber. Continuing upstream forty-five *li*, thanks to the wind in our sails, we reached the Changshan County seat in the early afternoon. I went ashore and engaged porters; we crossed the town from east to west. After ten *li*, we reached Xin Family Inn [Xinjia Pu], where the mountain paths were desolate, and we saw no house. Another five *li*, and we came upon a few barren homesteads. The sun was sinking in the west, and I feared there might be nowhere to stay if we continued, so we stopped here for the night. This place is called Fifteen *Li* [Shiwu Li].

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

38 Modern Changshan Xian falls under the jurisdiction of Quzhou Shi. To the west, it borders Jiangxi.

Travels in Jiangyou

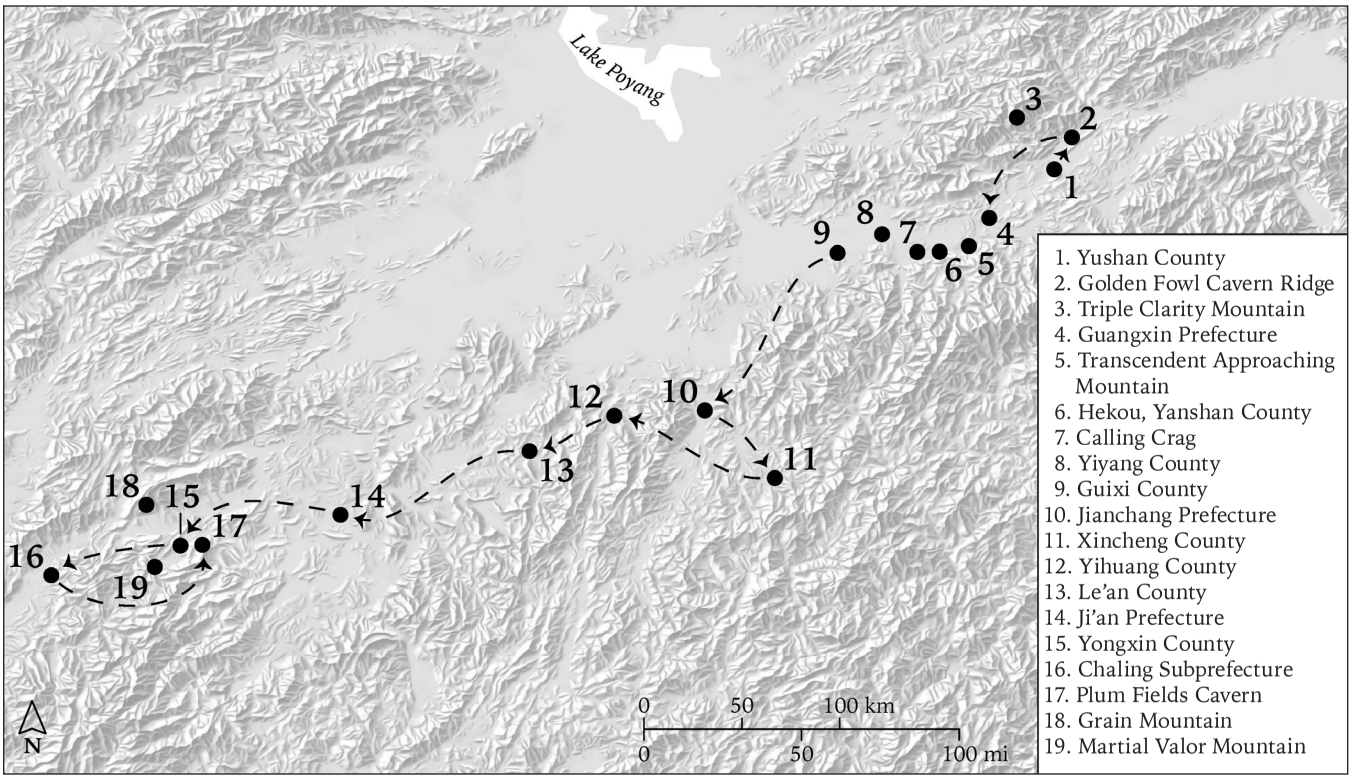
[FALL 1636 AND WINTER 1637]

From Changshan County in Zhejiang, Xu Xiake traveled a short distance west into Jiangyou, modern Jiangxi Province, where he spent almost three months sightseeing. We join Xu as he departs overland from Yushan County (modern Yushan Xian in northwestern Jiangxi).

Bingzi *year*, *seventeenth day of the tenth month* [14 November 1636]: At the first cock crow, I got up and had breakfast; at the second cock crow, I proceeded on my journey. After five *li*, the moonlight was clear and bright when I arrived at Jianglian Post Station [Jianglian Pu]. I turned and proceeded south, where the physical features of the landscape seemed to cluster around me repeatedly. Only then did I see some village dwellings. After another five *li*, I reached White Stone Bend [Baishi Wan] just at the first light of dawn. And after another five *li* reached White Stone Post Station [Baishi Pu]. Continuing, I turned and proceeded west for another seven *li* to the Grass Duckweed Official Guesthouse [Caoping Gongguan], which marks the boundary between the two counties of Changshan and Yushan. Long ago, there was a relay station here, but it has already been abolished. Next proceeded west for another three *li* to a mountain crest where the primary mountain range in the south crosses to the north. A spur of the ridge approaches from Twenty-Seven Wards [Ershiqi Du] in the Little Bamboo Mountain Range [Xiaohuang Ling] in Jiangshan County to the south. The spur then turns west and extends to the eastern border of Yongfeng County in Jiangxi, from where it twists and meanders its way to here.

On all the mountain ridges to the north and south, there are single, rounded peaks towering aloft, but where you cross at the base, the height subsides and is not lofty but rather narrow and not very wide. A mountain stream flows south from west of the mountain crest, the lower reach of which empties into Lake Poyang. Piled rocks form a gate west of the mountain stream. The areas to the south and north all connect to the mountains. This marks the boundary between the east and west. After another ten *li* is the Ancient City Post Station [Gucheng Pu]. Turning there and proceeding south, I then gradually left the mountains. After another

Source: "Jiangyou riji" (*YJJZ*, 1:167–81; *YJ*, 1:112–24).



Map 20. Jiangyou (Jiangxi), 1636–37

five *li* is Golden Fowl Cavern Ridge [Jinji Dong Ling]. Continuing, I turned and proceeded west for another five *li* to Mountain Dike Post Station [Shantang Pu], where a mountain unfolds broadly. Another ten *li* is East Crossing Bridge [Dongjin Qiao], a stone bridge that spans above a stream. It flows from north to south. The mountain towers aloft like a standing screen but is thirty *li* north of Yushan County. Presumably, this mountain crosses north from Grass Duckweed Official Guesthouse and towers aloft in the west. An alternate name for it is Big Ridge [Daling]; another name for it is Triple Clarity Mountain [Sanqing Shan]. North of the mountain is Dexing County of Raozhou Prefecture; to the northeast is Wuyuan County of Huizhou Prefecture; to the east are Kaihua and Changshan Counties of Quzhou Prefecture. Presumably, the waterways of Zhejiang, South Zhili, and Jiangxi are all diverted by this mountain.

Long ago, when I set out for Qiuli from Aibu, I took the trail through a valley to the southeast.[1] After crossing the bridge and proceeding west for five *li*, I entered the city through the east gate of Yushan County. After about one *li*, I exited through the west gate. Inside the city, it is extraordinarily desolate, while to the west, markets and shops gather outside the city because there is a wharf by the river. The river under East Crossing Bridge makes a circuit around the southern part of the city and then heads west. From here on, boat travel is possible. At the time, it was already afternoon. The river had dried up considerably, so I could not take one of the large boats. But I found a small boat going to Guangxin Prefecture, so I asked the boatman to cast off and take me there.[2] By the time we had covered twenty *li*, it was nightfall. Taking advantage of the moonlight, the boatman continued to pound the oars through the night. After thirty *li*, we passed Shaxi. And after another fifty *li*, when we moored at the south gate of Guangxin Prefecture, it was just the third drum. Even so, the markets and shops in Shaxi were bustling with activity. One by one, more than a hundred small boats drifted downstream. The sound of pounding oars along the riverbanks never stopped. But I heard that there were many bandits in this area. I saw some of these bandits, carrying their banners, wading across the stream in the moonlight. I must remain vigilant. Twenty *li* west of Guangxin is a stone bridge near the stream. Downstream, there is a pine tree with nine forked trunks. Its nine trunks grow from a single base. Reaching into the empyrean, they vie with each other in elegance. But by then, it was too late for me to climb a height and view any of them.

1 Xu Xiake is referring to one of his earlier travel itineraries, but it is unclear which one. Qiuli and Aibu are not mentioned anywhere in his extant diaries.

2 Guangxin Prefecture corresponds to modern Shangrao Shi, Jiangxi. Xu Xiake was now traveling southwest by boat on a waterway called Jade Stream [Yuxi].

Eighteenth day [15 November]: I got up early and as before looked for a boat going to Hekou in Yanshan County. I first intended to visit Numinous Mountain [Lingshan] from the northern side of Guangxin Prefecture. Moreover, I heard that the monasteries north of Numinous Mountain are numerous and prosperous. I wanted to go there and take in all the sights. But because I unexpectedly came down with an abscess, this hampered all physical movement. Since the boat here was going to Hekou, I asked the boatman to head out and take me there. Although I have twice passed by Guangxin, there has never been time to stop and visit. The commandery wall of Guangxin spans north of the stream. Its crenelations are not steep and imposing. The prefecture controls the homes and markets outside the wall, which constitute a large settlement in the mountain city.[3]

Numinous Stream [Lingxi] is east of the city and is fed with water from Numinous Mountain. Forever Abundant Stream [Yongfeng Xi] is west of the city and surges from Yongfeng County. We descended thirty *li* to the southwest, where a peak extends crosswise. It is reddish-brown in color, and its cliff wall twists around. It is called Transcendent Approaching Mountain [Xianlai Shan]. Earlier, when the boat passed below the mountain, I was still resting and did not get up to look. But when we passed Twenty *Li* Pool [Ershi *Li* Tan] and reached the area below Horse Saddle Mountain [Ma'an Shan], I turned around to gaze at it, but it was already too late to go there and climb it. On the way from Transcendent Approaching Mountain to Thunderclap Rock [Leida Shi], within a distance of twenty *li*, rocky mountains stand on both sides of the river in the shapes of overturned pots and crouching oxen, sometimes broken into pieces, sometimes wholly intact. Not only are the mountains unique and distinctive in shape, but they also lack wrinkles or creases. The mountains are so barren that they cannot hold a thin layer of earth or even a tiny plant. I next reached a place where the mountains end and the sands return, where traces of frost and the color of maple trees playing off village cottages appeared right before my eyes and where cracks between the rocks seemed to have undergone a process of embellishment.[4]

After another twenty *li*, we passed Pangluo, where to the south, I gazed at Goose Peak [Efeng], towering aloft on the horizon, pointy and precipitous, steep and sharp. This is where, long ago, I took a detour from Watershed Pass [Fenshui Guan] and scurried past Canopy Pavilion Peak.[5] Twenty years have passed in the blink of an eye! The duration of

3 Mountain city (*shancheng*) refers to the "large settlement" (*da juluo*) of people who lived in the mountains beyond the city wall.

4 The phrase "mountains end and sands return" (*shanduan shahui*) seems to refer to the area around the riverbank.

5 The reference is to 1616 when Xu Xiake visited Canopy Pavilion Peak in Chong'an County. For details, see Xu's account of his sightseeing trip to Mount Wuyi (diary entry for 7 April 1616), this volume.

human life has limits, but the rivers and mountains remain as they were yesterday, making one feel an inevitable sense of nostalgia![6] After another twenty *li*, we reached Hekou in Yanshan County. It was sunset, so the river's current had calmed, and the wind's direction reversed. At Hekou, a river from Watershed Pass in the southeast passes through Yanshan County, then reaches here, where it flows into Big Stream. The market shops, which are quite abundant, are on the left side of Big Stream. Presumably, larger boats can only navigate where the two streams merge.

Nineteenth day [16 November]: I hired a boat to go to Guixi County after breakfast. The boat was quite narrow. We finally set out only after waiting a long time for another traveler. That morning, dense clouds spread in all directions; a light rain fell occasionally. Proceeding west for 30 *li*, we reached Calling Crag [Jiaoyan]. Close to the riverside, rocky crags twine around and project outward. Below them is a deep pool as pure blue as indigo. Above are parallel caves that wind around the peaks, piercing through them as if they were walking down a corridor. Windows, lattice frames, and doors could all be distinguished. "Old Fisherman's Hideaway Lodging Place" (Yuweng yinci) is written on the cliff face in four huge Chinese characters. On the right side of the cliff, there are stone steps that seem to inhale the stream's waves below. I hurriedly called the boatman to stop the boat, then went on land. Through cracks and rocks lying across and athwart, I pushed through a gap and circled behind the cliff, where I saw a single pathway that turned into a footpath. Next, entering a gulch, I traced its origin. Behind the cliff, crowded peaks loop around and stretch across. The dense, lush green vegetation seemed to mesh together and magnify. I then realized that I had taken the wrong path and now wanted to search farther for the terminus of the mountain trail. The people living where the gulches change direction and the peaks twist around have dammed up a col and made it into a pond to raise fish. I traced a circuit around the mountain to the home of a mountain family, which lodged in the clouds and nested in lush green vegetation in a secluded and delightful way. I hastily went to the house and made inquiries, only to find out this area falls under Xing'an County's jurisdiction.[7] Flocking Fowl Rocky Ridge [Tuanji Shiling] is the round mountain in front that rises and stretches crosswise. This marks the western boundary of Yanshan County. Calling Crag Monastery [Jiaoyan Si] is west of

6 The phrase "making one feel an inevitable sense of nostalgia" is a loose translation of the original line *you bingzhu zhi si* 有秉[炳]燭之思, which means "to have thoughts while holding a candle." Xu Xiake is experiencing a flash of introspective thought like one might have while holding a candle. This suggests a moment of deep reflection, remembrance, nostalgia, or wistful longing for the past.

7 Modern Hengfeng Xian, Jiangxi.

Flocking Fowl. The front of the monastery overlooks Great Stream. Fisherman's Hideaway Cliff [Yuyin Ya] juts out on the left and faces another cliff that juts out on the right. In front of the cliff on the right, a round peak stands alone in the middle of the stream, just like the Gold [Jin] and the Scorched [Jiao] Mountains in the Yangzi section of the Changjiang and Little Solitary [Xiaogu], a hill in the Xunyang River [Xunyang Jiang].[8] Still, the peak here is even rounder and better proportioned. It is called Imprint Mountain [Yinshan]. The cliff rocks behind the monastery are hollowed out, with two protruding sides. A veranda is built on them, called Calling Crag Veranda [Jiaoyan Xuan]. The monastery conceals the crag. Delightful and expansive scenery is found at Fisherman's Hideaway, but not here.

Ten *li* west of Calling Crag marks the boundary of Yiyang County. Next, a square-shaped mountain stands erect on the right side of the stream, which looks like a standing screen properly aligned and in neat order. There is a Buddhist temple on the mountain, but I do not know its name. The boat was moving so fast that there was no time to go ashore and explore the mountain. Presumably, this is also an area with extraordinary scenery. After another thirty *li*, it was already sunset. After the sky in the southwest gradually cleared, I gazed at a lonely peak in the distance, poking into the horizon. I discovered it is Turtle Cliff [Guiyan], which is fifteen *li* south of Yiyang. It captivated my heart. But I have already hired the boat to go to Guixi County, so we cannot stop halfway. After another ten *li*, upon reaching the east gate of Yiyang, I entrusted my luggage to Tranquil Hearing and had him proceed with the boat. Servant Gu and I stayed at an inn outside the east gate and prepared for the next day's trip to Turtle Cliff. At midnight, the wind howled, and it started to rain.

Twentieth day [17 November]: I got up early, and the rain still had not stopped. At dawn, wearing a thatch-grass raincoat, I headed out, passing through the east gate of Yiyang County. The area south of the city wall overlooks the stream. When the stream reaches here, it lowers slightly and heads south. A tributary has been dredged as a moat when it approaches the city wall. Downstream, the tributary again merges with the stream. I passed in front of the county administrative offices in the rain, then next reached the southwest gate. I met up with a man from Turtle Cliff, surnamed Shu, who was on his way home, so I left the city with him. We crossed the bridge over the moat, proceeded three *li*, and then crossed Big Stream. On the south side of the stream is a tiered tower, which is the site of the estuary at Yiyang. From here on, we proceeded over mountain

8 Gold Mountain [Jinshan] and Scorched Mountain [Jiaoshan] are islands in the Changjiang near modern Yizheng Xian and Yangzhou Shi in Jiangsu. This stretch of the Changjiang was traditionally known as the Yangzi Jiang.

ridges, where collapsed rocks, above and below, have all formed into solid blocks with no striations and not even a single layer of earth nearby. At the time, it was raining more heavily. Drenched and dripping wet in the rain, I gazed at Turtle Peak [Guifeng], indistinct in the distance. Suddenly, I saw a peak at the road crossing, well-proportioned but small. I suspected this was the peak poking into the sky that had enchanted me the night before. I inquired and found out it is Ram Horn Ridge [Yangjiao Jiao], which is five *li* away from Turtle Peak. On my way there, from a distance, I gazed at a single peak split down the middle like a gate. A short time later, a rocky slab shaped like a jade tablet suddenly appeared south of the "gate." This is Celestial Pillar Peak. When you reach there, the trail suddenly heads south. I turned and proceeded east and first passed a dam. Water gathers south of the dam to form a pond called Catch and Release Pond [Fangsheng Chi]. Both sides of the crag are steeped in pond water. Holes have been drilled into the rocky wall along the crag's left side to make a plank walkway. This is Unfurled Banner Peak. Up above are precipitous crag walls; down below is a translucent pool. At the pool's far end, bamboo and trees spread luxuriantly, now hidden, and now visible in a gulch. From the two sides of the crag, flying waterfalls together poured down like jade dragons doing a crazy dance, just as if a rain god and mountain spirit had come together in a contest to display their magic. Upon entering the gulch, I suddenly saw a cave at the highest point on the southern crag, the interior of which was bright all the way through. It looked like an "ear" had been appended to its "skull," but I suspected it was a shadow cast by the white clouds. When I got closer, I realized it was a crevice in the rocks.

When I reached the Abbot's Monastery [Fangzhang Si], I noticed people standing and getting up in the monastery's courtyard. They were all different because the floating mist was so thick and dense that they were only intermittently visible. At the time, the rain became torrential. My clothes and sandals were soaked. The monk Linked Mind (Guanxin) hurriedly removed his clothes for me to change, then made a fire to dry my clothes. I then realized it was impossible to fight off the clouds and drive off the mists, so I no longer had the chance to appreciate the surpassing, massed peaks. It rained all day and night, so I composed the poem "Five Fates" (Wuyuan).[9] That evening, I rested in a meditation chamber at Shaking Out Clothes Terrace [Zhenyi Tai].

Twenty-first day [18 November]: I got up early, and it was freezing. The rain gradually let up, and the numerous peaks then all appeared. Clouds remained only on the ultimate summit southeast of the monastery. After having breakfast with Linked Mind, I immediately left the central courtyard of Abbot's Monastery, where the monk pointed out the surpassing

9 This poem is not extant.

scenery. Presumably, Stronghold Summit [Zhaiding] is directly south, standing alone. On the summit, a rock resembling a parrot's beak is also known as Parrot Beak Peak [Yingzui Feng]. Today, it is also known as Old Man Peak [Laoren Feng]. A domed rock protrudes prominently on the summit. It looks like an old monk facing south when gazing at it from below. Dressed in a cassock, "he" appears lifelike. This is why the peak is called Old Man. When you ascend Shaking Out Clothes Terrace and look straight ahead, the mountain peak gradually divides into two parts; when looking down from Double Swords Peak, its summit resembles a single stretch of connected leaves, one after the other. As for the ridges extending north of the peak, the first to rise is Arhat, and the second to rise is Parrot [Yingge]. The third to rise is Kalasa [Chinese: Jingping], the highest ridge descending to the north, and the fourth to rise is Avalokiteśvara, which is also steep. These make up the central spur, which faces Unfurled Banner in the north. Nan Tree Ceremonial Hall [Nanmu Dian] follows it.

From the southern summit, I proceeded west. The sheerest and steepest heights are Turtle Peak and Double Swords Peak. On Turtle Peak, three boulders stand erect, reaching to the top, side by side with Double Swords. On their lofty summits are layered boulders that resemble three turtles, one piled on top of the other. Because of this, Turtle is the main name for the entire mountain. Below the peaks, a crack in the rockface divides south from the north, forming a single thread of sky. A crack from east to west forms Moni Cavern [Moni Dong]. Behind it is Four Echoes Valley [Sisheng Gu]. I shouted toward one side of the valley, and the sound carried, echoing four times. Presumably, this is because of the sound circling and looping around the rocky cliff in Water Curtain Valley east of the peak. Stronghold Summit is the loftiest height east of the peak; the closest to the west is Holding Turtle Peak [Hangui Feng]. Below it is where the ridges of Stronghold Summit and Holding Turtle diverge. But Turtle Peak and Double Swords poke high above them, hidden by Holding Turtle. Thus, the crack is sometimes visible, while at other times, it is concealed. When concealed, the two sides together form a single barrier, which at times suddenly reveals a bright sky. This is what I suspected yesterday to be white clouds. Double Swords also stand together with Turtle Peak. At the bottom, Turtle Peak is split into three sections connected on top. The summit of Double Swords divides into two forks, but it is attached at the base. In huge Chinese characters, "Cliff Wall Standing Myriad Rods High" (Bili wanren) is written south of there, which refers to Stronghold Summit. The author's signature has already peeled away, but I was told it is that of Zhu Xi. These two peaks are in the middle of the ridge that passes southwest of Stronghold Summit and faces Censer Peak [Xianghe Feng] to the northeast.

In comparison, some former monasteries were constructed toward the two peaks. Holding Turtle Peak is first from west to north, among

the joined protective screens on the left. Below it is Shaking Out Clothes Terrace. Among the flat rocks poised below the screen is a trail to climb to Moni Peak [Moni Feng], which goes through a single thread of sky. Bright Star Peak [Mingxing Feng] is second. To the north, it connects with Double Sea Turtles Peak [Shuang'ao Feng]; to the south, it joins Holding Turtle. The peak due west is the highest. Above it, there are openings arrayed like stars. Double Sea Turtles is third. A translucent pool is wedged below the northern part of the peak, which is where I entered the valley and passed the southern cliff at Catch and Release Pond. These two peaks loop around high above the western part of the valley, but the Stronghold Summit spur extending to the northwest ends here. From the southern summit, I proceeded east. Those heights circling and ringing around are Battlements Peak [Chengduo Feng] and Folding Screen Peak [Weiping Feng]. These heights, behind layers of coiling peaks in the southeast, stand opposite Sea Turtle Peak in the northwest.

From east to north, sharp and spiky rocks align on the right. The one with the lid is Palanquin Top Peak [Jiaoding Feng]; the pointy one is Elephant Tusk Peak [Xiangya Feng]; the one crouching is Lion Peak. These peaks are on the valley's eastern side in close succession, but the spur of Stronghold Summit turns northeast here. Moreover, how the mountains are aligned parallel from the north seems to form the shape of a table. These three peaks revolve in a line around the north side of Four Echoes Valley. The flat one, and protruding is Censer Peak; the one that is magical and rising is Numinous Mushroom Peak [Lingzhi Feng], which faces the meditation room at Abbot Monastery. The one that is askew and extended is Unfurled Banner Peak. On the east side, it is high; on the west side, it is low. To the north and south, a cliff wall stands erect. To the south, the wall sticks into a translucent pool below the plank walkway where one enters the valley. These three peaks tower in an array in the north of the valley. Stronghold Summit's mountain spur to the southwest ends when it reaches here. These are all the mountain peaks inside the valley.

Beyond the valley, north of Unfurled Banner, is Celestial Pillar Peak, the forked mountain peak I gazed at yesterday from a distance that looked like a jade tablet. Next to it is Dog Peak [Gou'er Feng]. South of Lion Peak is Upright Writing Brush Peak. Chessboard Rock is south of Folded Screen in a deep gulch. South of Stronghold Summit also has Imperial Court Hat Peak [Chaomao Feng]. This peak separately rises aloft, standing alone behind Stronghold Summit. This is the peak I saw from a distance while in the boat east of Yiyang County. As I approached it, the peak was concealed by all the other peaks. Next, Meet and Guide Peak [Jieyin Feng] is between Stronghold Summit and Imperial Court Hat. West of Stronghold Summit is Paint Brush Peak [Huabi Feng]. Presumably, to the north and below Stronghold Summit are the peaks of Mount Arhat [Luohan Shan], which twist to the south

and skirt to the west, aligning to form a standing barrier. The one that comes out from behind Turtle Peak is Paint Brush Peak. On the peak's cliff is a spring called Water Curtain Cave. These are all the mountain peaks outside the valley.

Mountain peaks with lone caverns cluster on four sides of the valley. A single gorge slants toward the west. Two cliff walls stand erect, through which a stream flows out. A trail follows the stream. South of there, below Turtle Peak, west from the side of Lion Peak, and within the area north from Censer Peak and Celestial Pillar Peak, one can only cross after moving past peaks and climbing through mountain fissures. Indeed, this is an ethereal, surpassing scene between heaven and earth! Within this scene, a single spur from Avalokiteśvara Peak plummets north of Stronghold Summit, dividing into two valleys: the one in the west hosts the meditation room of the abbot's quarters. The trail to Shaking Out Clothes Terrace and Moni Cavern is at the valley's end.

The valley in the east is covered with thick vegetation. Leaning on my walking stick, I cut through thistles and entered the valley from the east, arriving directly below Folding Screen Peak and Battlements Peak. I looked up and saw the rock formation that constitutes the "Hungry Tiger Chasing Sheep" [Ehu Ganyang]. What a keen resemblance to the name! If the dense, tall grasses here were weeded out, stone steps built, and a ladder put in place, this would undoubtedly be a numinous passageway leading to profound, surpassing scenes that stretch forever. Unfortunately, the rocks were all jumbled, and the thorns were thick, so there was no possibility of going any farther. I then left the valley, following north of Lion Peak. Passed over a ridge and then turned south at the so-called Palanquin Summit and the peaks of Elephant Tusk. I looked at them from the west, where everywhere they were in piled layers and rising. Among them is a single peak resembling an upright writing brush that amazingly seemed to be writing in the sky! It is known by the name Upright Writing Brush Peak. This is no misnomer! You would never see such a thing unless you passed through here. Everywhere below the peak, there are rocky ridges that loftily span crosswise. To the east is a single spur of a rocky peak looming around Stronghold Summit and moving north. In the west, with the various peaks of Palanquin Top and Elephant Tusk, it loops around to form a valley. I proceeded directly south from the rocky ridges and reached the bottom of the rocky peak, where I exited through the jumbled rocks and thick thorns. I then moved west, passing over Elephant Tusk and Lion Peaks, whose ridges are slanting and sheer with barely anywhere to place your feet. I turned around and looked back at the interior of the valley. Indeed, it is quite another world. This is the first layer of peaks to the east, beyond the valley.

Next, following the mountain ridge beyond Four Echoes Valley, I proceeded east. Then I turned south for two *li*, going directly to the area behind Stronghold Summit. Chessboard Rock is here. A huge rock arches

aloft in the middle of the valley. Its top is as flat as a whetstone, while parts of it have been chiseled away on all four sides, where one can squat down and rest. I imagine this is where recluses made their home in the past. Today it is isolated and overgrown with brush, which should not necessarily be regarded as the legacy of transcendent beings! Southwest of there is Imperial Court Hat Peak; to the northwest is Stronghold Summit. Presumably, they are behind Folding Screen Peak. A single spur beyond that peak descends from Imperial Court Hat Peak, again loops around, then moves off to the east and forms a valley. However, all the mountains there are jagged and jogged, towering in circles, no longer resembling the mountains along the two spurs in the valley, formed from pared, solid rock. This is the second layer of peaks to the east, beyond the valley.

Between Stronghold Summit and the Imperial Court Hat Peaks, a single rock, several scores of rods in height, stands facing south. It is poised on the top of a peak, looking as solemn as Wengzhong.[10] Sometimes it is called Meet and Guide Peak; sometimes it is designated Stone Man Peak [Shiren Feng]. Gazing at it from Chessboard Rock, I unwittingly found it extraordinary.[11] I suspect that if I can scramble to the ultimate summit from here and make my way through the thorns to the area below the cliff, I would encounter overhanging cliffs and sheer boulders, and there would be no way to clamber and scramble forward. I backtracked along the earlier trail to Lion Peak, passed Censer Peak, climbed Numinous Mushroom Peak, and then gazed at the two peaks, Celestial Pillar and Dog, which stand straight up in the north valley. These then are the peaks beyond the valley. Unfurled Banner and the single peak north of it eventually loop around to form a valley.

Shortly after that, I proceeded southwest from Unfurled Banner. Then, directly to the east, I ascended to its summit. To the southwest, I gazed east of Imperial Court Hat Peak, where another split rock resembled Meet and Guide Peak, but Meet and Guide was hidden from sight. To the south, I gazed at Stacked Turtles [Diegui] and Double Swords, which seemed like a single cliff wall bending and ringing around, not even a one-inch crack between them. After descending Unfurled Banner Peak, I headed south on a plankway between the cliffs, followed along a pool, proceeded south, and exited behind Double Sea Turtles, Bright

10 After the First Emperor of Qin unified China in 221 BCE, he dispatched Ruan Wengzhong to lead a military campaign against the Xiongnu tribes in the north. Because of the campaign's success, a bronze statue of Wengzhong was cast and erected near the Outer Palace Gate in the Qin capital at Xianyang. Later representations of his image always portrayed him with a solemn look. Hence, the comment here.

11 This line literally reads, "Without knowing it, my soul took flight" (*bujue shenfei* 不覺神飛). The idea here is that when Xu saw Chessboard Rock, his mind or thoughts became so enthralled by its extraordinary appearance that he was no longer aware of his surroundings and the passage of time.

Star, and Holding Turtle. To the east, I spied three peaks. Their backsides were all covered with earth and could be ascended. But I gave up on that idea and proceeded farther south. Then, to the east, immediately continued on the side footpath to Stacked Turtles and Double Swords and directly descended along the trail to Shaking Out Clothes Terrace in the valley. But then I gave up on that idea and proceeded south, where I saw a trail ascending to the east. I knew without a doubt that this was the way to Stronghold Summit. I found the courage and began to climb. After two *li*, I saw Stacked Turtles and Double Swords to the west. Not until they were below my feet did I realize I had already come out above Water Curtain Valley. When I looked down into the valley, it turned and circled on three sides like a jade disk. There was an opening on one side. Only the north side directly faces Turtle Peak and Double Swords. On the western side of the valley, there is a crevice through which one can exit, but it is hidden and concealed, and its origin is unknown. This is the first layer of peaks to the south, beyond the valley.

Following the edge of the cliff, I ascended once again. A short time later, I gave up ascending from the left and switched to the right. Then, on a ridge to the southeast, I saw jumbled rocks surging upward. Some of them looked like pairs of mushrooms standing side by side. The mushroom "caps" were big, but the "stems" were small. On the bottom, they seemed attached to one stalk with holes in the middle. The rocks above them, which I cannot even begin to describe, seem shaped like they were dancing in the air. Next, I ascended for one *li*, then gave up climbing from the right and switched to the left. After pushing through a crevice and continuing my ascent, I turned southeast, where the summit was even more vaulted like a dome. Another summit rises in the north. These two summits squeeze together to form a gorge, which begins in the southeast and passes a ridge, then spills over to Water Curtain Cave in the northwest. The mountain then opens up to form two areas. When one passes over a mountain ridge to the southeast, there is a rock that, like a bridge, spans across to link the two summits. Collapsed cliffs rise steeply where the bridge ends. There was no way to climb there. I squatted down to rest on the ridge and then looked down the south valley. Collapsed and fallen cliffs were directly below, so I could see the valley floor. I only saw cliffs facing each other east and west, with mountain mists in the air reflecting lush green vegetation. I had no idea where the cliffs came from to get into the valley. This is the second layer of peaks to the south, beyond the valley.

After quite a while, when trying to find the trail to return, I suddenly saw a summit north of the gorge, where rocks that seemed like chiseled stone stairs ascended directly from inside the gorge. I thus closely examined the rocks above the south side of the gorge, where there are also similar stairs. Only then did I realize that the trail does not follow along the ridge but through the gorge. Presumably, people in the past

maintained a hold on this area, so stone steps were cut leading up to the nearby precipitous heights. The trail is engulfed in weeds today, while the remaining stone steps have yet to crack.

Next, following the steps, I descended north into the gorge, clambered up the steps from the gorge, and ascended to the north. After one *li*, I climbed east to where I reached a high place again. When I got to an even higher place far to the southeast, it felt like I was now standing shoulder to shoulder with Meet and Guide Peak and face to face with Imperial Court Hat Peak. The lone rock that stands side by side with Imperial Court Hat to the east is hidden and out of sight, while on all four sides, Imperial Court Hat stands poised and alone and cannot be climbed. Among them, Meet and Guide Peak stands poised on a ridge. Everywhere on both sides are mixed chunks of cracked rock. Not only can one not ascend there, but it is also impossible to descend. The valley that descends north of there is Rocky Chessboard. The valley that descends south of there is formed by the spur that loops around as it approaches from south of Imperial Court Hat. This is the third layer of peaks to the south, beyond the valley.

Only in the west is there no outer valley. As it turns out, the northern section of the ultimate summit is divided into Folding Screen Peak and Battlements Peak in the east and Parrot Beak [Yingkou] in the west. They are unusual. When I looked up from the bottom of the valley, I saw extraordinary scenery that vaulted like a dome. But when I looked down from above, it was the opposite: all seemed distant and removed, and it was hard to take in the entire scene. It was sunset, so I descended four *li* from the ultimate summit. Advancing to the east, I saw a trail leading to Water Curtain Cave. When I reached the area below Double Swords and Stacked Turtles it was dusky and dark, and I could not see a thing, so I hastily passed over the ridge and made my way to Abbot's Monastery.

Twenty-second day [19 November]: I got up at dawn and wrote out the poem "Five Fates" for Linked Mind, two pentasyllabic poems titled "Turtle Peak" (Guifeng), and one heptasyllabic poem titled "Presented at Parting" (Zengbie).[12] After breakfast, I moved past Shaking Out Clothes Terrace and ascended to reach the foot of Stacked Turtles, where once again I pushed through a single thread of sky and proceeded east. Next, to the north, I crossed Four Echoes Valley. Presumably, a crevice facing southeast is in the wall of Four Echoes Valley. Everywhere inside, its huge boulders are piled on top of one another, resembling a flight of stairs and suspended ladders, seemingly forming into lofts and belvederes that connect with the northwest. When you exit the valley to the northwest, you reach Moni Cavern. It overlooks Abbot's Monastery directly below. It provides a panoramic view of Avalokiteśvara, Kalasa,

12 Unfortunately, none of these poems have survived.

and Lion Peaks. I then descended the ridge to the southwest, and following the outer valley continued to Water Curtain Cave. Cliff walls ring it on three sides, whirling and twisting from the sky to face Turtle and Double Swords peaks in the north. A waterfall drifts and plummets east of the cliff, like flying pearls and twirling snow. This is the most surpassing scenery in this area. Presumably, the extraordinary tors and barriers on Turtle Peak are lacking on Mount Yandang, but the water vistas here are not as good. The only valley here with flying pearls and twirling snow is situated in the more remote valleys, which are especially unusual. However, although the cavern faces a waterfall, it is too bad that it squats down at the end of a cliff. Looking around the valley, its precipitous cliffs link together in all directions, which is notable. There is no need to use the notoriety of a single cave to make this place known. At the time, the north wind drove the waterfall to dance in the air. Its sounds and silhouettes were both unusual. Suddenly, the skies cleared; sunshine collected on the gorgeous cliffs and illuminated the water. I paced back and forth, unable to leave. After quite a while, I had another meal at the monastery, bid farewell to Linked Mind, and proceeded on my journey.

Following the same route, I left to the west along the plankway next to the cliff. After ten *li*, there is Arranged in Front [Paiqian]. After five more *li*, I came to Crossroads Pavilion [Fenlu Ting], north of First Graduate Bridge [Zhuangyuan Qiao]. The trail goes south from the bridge to Yellow Source Kiln [Huangyuan Yao]. I proceeded west for fifteen *li* to Abiding Estuary [Liukou], where I waded across the stream at sunset.[13] The area west of the stream serves as the border with Guixi County. The stream approaches from Yellow Source Kiln. When it reaches here, it flows into Big Stream, where all the market shops are on the west side of the stream. I found overnight accommodations there. While traveling from Arranged in Front to Abiding Estuary, I gazed back at Turtle Peak, but all I saw was Imperial Court Hat Peak standing solemnly, like a sheep's horn poking up into the sky. This is the view toward the west, which is not the least similar to the east side of Yiyang County. But only here, when I turned to gaze around, did I see a human-shaped rock standing straight up, which was even more unusual.

Twenty-third day [20 November]: I got up at dawn and crossed north of Big Stream. After eight *li*, just as I was about to reach the wall of Guixi County, suddenly south of the stream, I saw a bridge entrance erected high in the air. I thought it improbable that a city gate or a bridge's arches could span such a lofty height. I stopped someone on the trail, asked about it, and discovered it was Transcendent Being Bridge [Xianren Qiao]. It turned out to be a stone structure between two mountains and was not made of bricks. I found this most remarkable. I wanted to cross

13 The "stream" mentioned here is the Xin River [Xinjiang].

the stream, but there was no bridge. I then hastened on for two *li* and passed through the east gate of Guixi County. After two more *li*, I reached Jade Well Top [Yujing Tou]. When I found Tranquil Hearing at the inn, he still had not eaten breakfast. So he hastily had a meal, and then we left Guixi through the southwest gate. Crossed a stream and proceeded south, now on the road to Jianchang Prefecture. I reserved a cart and agreed with the driver to leave at dawn the next day. I then immediately proceeded east, wanting to visit Transcendent Being Bridge. The innkeeper Shu Longshan said:

> There is not just one surpassing scenic sight south of the mountain here. From the main south gate, go past Central Ward Crossing [Zhongfang Du] for one *li* to Elephant Mountain [Xiangshan], also known as Hanging Placard Mountain [Guabang Shan]. As it turns out, historical vestiges relating to the famous Song dynasty Neo-Confucian scholar Lu Jiuyuan (1139–93) are found there.[14] Admiration Pavilion [Yangzhi Ting] is also there. Two *li* southwest is Five Faces Peak [Wumian Feng]. On it is a Buddhist monastery; below is a single thread of sky. These are the most outstanding scenic sights here. One *li* south is West Flowery Mountain [Xihua Shan], which loops around and spans across, then ascends. Transcendents reside everywhere around here! Little Hidden Crag [Xiao Yinyan] is two *li* north of the mountain. Its former name is Strike the Tiger Crag [Dahu Yan]. After going beyond Little Hidden Crag for two *li* is Transcendent's Bridge. As it turns out, it is built in a way where it looks like it is poised in midair over a gulch. This is a general description of the various surpassing sights south of this stream. However, west of Five Faces Peak, a stream approaches from the south and then turns north to flow into Great Stream. There are no boats to take one across here, so following the same route as before, you must cross to the north and again by Central Ward Crossing.

By then I was already bubbling with excitement, which could not be suppressed. I had Longshan return home while I made inquiries on the side of the trail about how to proceed. Thus, to the south, I passed the grave of Zhang the Perfected One (Zhang Zhenren). The stele inscription was composed and written under the imperial order by Zhao Mengfu (1254–1322) during the Yuan dynasty.[15] A portion of the mountain was cut away

14 Lu Jiuyuan, a native of Fuzhou, Jiangxi, was a famous Confucian scholar in the Southern Song dynasty. He once lectured at an academy on Xiangshan, or Elephant Mountain, in Guixi County, so he was also known as Lu Xiangshan.

15 The reference is to the great Yuan dynasty calligrapher, painter, and scholar

to make walls, which loop around with the stele in the middle. I proceeded another *li* and crossed a small bridge. From a forking path to the side, I proceeded toward the stream to the east. The flow of a stream directly presses hard against the base of Five Faces Peak. Presumably, this stream originates from River Lake Mountain [Jianghu Shan]. It becomes navigable for boats after flowing from Flowery Bridge [Huaqiao]. Proceeded sixty *li* and arrived at Luo Dike [Luotang]. I reached here after another twenty *li*, then passed into a stream that is the main route into Min. All goods transferred north on this route are products such as paper and charcoal. Just at that moment, two boats with no passengers were moored beside the bank of the stream. Soon afterward, one of them came over, and I called out for a ride across the stream. Invariably, the boats here are rowed across. After proceeding east past the stream for one *li*, I passed into a defile from northeast of the peak. Only then did I realize that all the mountains here are rocky crags, winding and towering aloft. The massif opens up where it is split in the middle. The crags squeeze close together and rise. From far away and near, nothing looks the same, but when they are side by side, their contours seem to be similar. Following along the trail, I reached the area below a vaulted crag, where I abandoned the trail and ascended steps to a terrace perched on two cliffs, flat as the palm of a hand. The steps descending from south of there seem to dangle down to the bottom of a ravine. The steps ascending to the west directly skirt around to the apex of a mountain. I thought the stairs descending south led to a single thread of sky while those ascending west led to Five Faces Peak. First I went up to the peak, then clambered and climbed for about one *li* until I reached the ultimate summit, from where I looked down on West Flowery Mountain. To the east, I looked down on cliff walls squeezed together, and to the north, I looked down on various counties, all of which could be pointed out with a finger.

Suddenly, mountain rain began to fall. The monks detained me and provided some snacks, after which I slowly stumbled down the mountain. Next, I descended the stairway I took before to the single thread of sky, where cliff walls on both sides squeezed close together and ascended. Directly south, from where the area below the summit splits, a narrow, vertical gorge forms.[16] When the trail reaches the gorge, it suddenly turns and proceeds east, then moves through a crack in fallen rocks, where

Zhao Mengfu, nickname Songxue. "Zhang the Perfected One" is not further identified.

16 By "narrow, vertical gorge" (*zhixia* 直峽), Xu Xiake is probably referring to what is known in geological terms as a U-shaped valley, formed by glaciers carrying rocks and boulders through a pre-existing valley to form the U-shaped contour. By contrast, a transverse gorge (*hengxia* 橫峽), mentioned in the next line, likely refers to what is known as a flat-floor valley. In other words, a valley in a wide, flat area with little or no change in elevation.

again you come to a transverse gorge. Above and below both gorges are crag walls with distinguishable curved and straight contour lines. When I arrived in the area east of the walls, I once again came out into a col, where I no longer seemed to be in the mortal world. I proceeded south from the col, gazing at domed peaks and winding depressions, which seemed everywhere. At the most distant point south, I reached West Flowery Mountain. I stopped climbing since I had already looked down at it from Five Faces Peak.

Following the same route, I turned left through the single thread of sky and passed over a ridge. Then, after two *li*, turned and headed east, advancing to Little Recluse Crag. The crag is also a mountain that loops around and turns northeast. It runs continuously to the south but has openings to the north. The mountain is vaulted like a dome everywhere on top, while the base is in a low-lying area with spaces in the cracks. One could build a hut here and take repose inside it. Behind the crag, there is an inscription by Hong Chu (1066–1127?) of the Song dynasty that reads, "In a certain year during the Xuanhe reign (1119–26), I ascended from the crag for two *li*, where I next came to Shoot the Tiger Peak [Shehu Feng]."[17] I recall the name Xu Cave [Xuyan]. Earlier, while traveling by boat in Yiyang County, I already realized that it had some connection to my family, but by the time I reached here, I had forgotten all about it.[18] The writings on the wall seemed to remind me, so I hurriedly left the Little Recluse Crag and made some inquiries, but not a single person knew its location. A short time later, I heard that there was a mountain designated Emei, which is three *li* southeast of Little Recluse.[19] I thought this might be an alternate name for Xu Cave, so I immediately headed there. Next, along the main trail to Luo Dike, I passed a ridge. Only after turning north did I pass into the mountain, where the bamboo and trees are deep and lush, and craggy rocks are lofty and vaulted. However, Buddhist disciples and clergy have built houses and piled rocks into walls so that it will never again look as it once did. Moreover, I realized this was not Xu Cave.

Just as I was about to descend the mountain, it started to rain heavily again. At the time, it was already past noon, so I had a meal on the crag. By the time I had finished eating, the rain had stopped. I asked about the way to Transcendent's Bridge. By chance, there was someone who knew the way. He said, "There is a shortcut. Follow the mountain and proceed east. After going through a col, head north for four *li*, and you will arrive there." I followed his directions. The trail was quite desolate and secluded,

17 Hong Chu, courtesy name Jufu, was a scholar-official of the Northern Song dynasty.

18 That is to say, the peak's name is the same as Xu Xiake's family name.

19 This height should not be confused with the famous mountain in Sichuan known by the same name.

sometimes hidden, sometimes visible, while at other times, it forked, and I could not tell east from west. It seemed as if I had strayed off the correct path. Suddenly, I saw a natural rock bridge soaring high above, and it was quite close. When I reached the bottom of the valley and hurried toward the bridge, I found myself blindly lost and unable to find it. This is presumably because although it seemed close when I gazed at it, now at a distance from the cliff and separated from the col, directions changed in the blink of an eye, and suddenly, it was no longer easy to find. Shortly after that, I arrived directly below the bridge.

Presumably, a single stretch of rock spans loftily across the hollowed-out portion of the mountain. The upper part loops around like a circle; the middle opens to form a gate. On both sides, rocks twist down to the bridge's supports. The bridge's surface is flat and well-proportioned, like a terrace, just as if it had been built by hand. On the east side of the cliff, one can follow it to climb to the top; on the west side of the bridge, there is a single rock, three-some rods from the trail, perched beside it. It looks just like a person sitting there guarding the bridge. I first reached the area below the bridge, where I looked at it above me. Its lofty dome, round and well-proportioned, measures no less than ten rods. When I trudged up the stairs to the top, the bridge was long, broad, flat, and straight. I am afraid the skills needed to "ride a rainbow" and engage the "service of magpies" are no match for this.[20]

I proceeded two *li* west of the bridge. Just as I was about to reach Elephant Mountain, I asked about the mountain called Xu Cave, but as it turned out, I had yet to find it. Later, I ran into a gaffer, and he said:

> The trail to the south, behind my cottage, leads there. Today, Xu Cave is known as Homage to Truth Palace [Chaozhen Gong]. As it turns out, this is where Guigu cultivated the Way.[21] Today, it is overgrown and abandoned. You will never find it if you do not look for it in the early morning. Since it is already nightfall, you can instead ask about Elephant Mountain.

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20 The expression "ride a rainbow" (*jiahong* 駕虹) derives from a line of verse by the Tang poet Li Bai: "How could I find a penta-colored rainbow, / To serve as a long bridge on which I could ride to heaven?" *QTS*, 180.1834. The expression "serve as a long bridge" (*zuo changqiao* 作長橋) alludes to the famous folktale about the Cowherd (Niulang) and Weaving Maid (Zhinü), two lovers who were banished to the heavens and could reunite only once every year when a flock of magpies would form a bridge across the heavens to reunite the lovers for a single day.

21 Guigu, or Guiguzi, was a famous thinker and war strategist who supposedly lived during the Warring States period. He is also the reputed author of a treatise of the same name, which some consider to be influenced by Daoist thought.

Because I planned to head out early the following morning, I had Tranquil Hearing proceed ahead toward the mountain gorge in the south that I had gazed at in the distance. At first, there still was a trail, but as I gradually proceeded, it gradually disappeared. The cliffs on both sides receded deeply. Disregarding the brush and prickers, I descended directly to the gorge's base, where rocks were on both sides at the far end. It was narrow, with no room for one's feet. At the time, it was gradually turning dusky and dark. I could not make out the trail after treading and trampling through some thistles and prickers and passing into the valley. Presumably, this is the third col east of Elephant Mountain. I went into it but could not find the trail. At the time, I heard the sound of people in the distance, and after some time shouting back and forth, I realized that the trail led to the west, which I then found and followed. On the left side of the valley, lofty cliffs coiled around and extended. Once I entered the valley, there was a deep cave in front of which was a waterfall. There were two monks, both of whom had recently arrived to take up residence here. I asked them about Xu Cave, but they also did not know whether this peak was it. It should be at the same site now known as Homage to Truth Palace. As it turns out, this is the second layer of peaks east of Elephant Mountain.

After I emerged from the darkness, I proceeded west and south, searching for Elephant Mountain. Although the area around the mountain was dark, I could still follow the trail. Elephant Mountain's two crags projected out in front of me. The col between them is not deep, but it is steep. The col has a memorial arch towering aloft inside two halls. The shrine hall is situated in front. Its chambers are in ruins. The chambers in the back have not yet fallen into disrepair, but they are empty. I made my way inside. Then I heard human voices near the rockface, so I hurriedly trod the stairs to find out who it was. A door covered the cave's opening, and a man emerged from inside, holding a torch. He turned out to be a man surnamed Yang, who minds the shrine hall. He led me to climb to Admiration Pavilion from the right side of the cliff. The pavilion stands high up, poised on the crag's edge, seemingly embedded in the sky, surrounded by dazzling light. When you look up at Elephant Mountain's lofty peak and look down on its secluded canyons, it makes you halt and hesitate and forget about leaving. Because it had been dark for quite a while and the watch drum on the streets had already sounded, Mr. Yang was afraid there would be no one at the stream crossing to take me across, so he accompanied me in the dark for two *li*, all the way to the river crossing at Central Ward. He told me his father was already eighty-seven years old, still fond of eating, and had a good appetite. Presumably, Mr. Yang was a filial son and someone who knew about proper behavior, or so I observed. I shouted to the boatman across the stream for a ride. After I crossed, I continued to the south gate. After over one more *li*, I reached Shu Village Fair [Shusi], where I spent the night.

This sightseeing trip began when I came across the name "Xu Cave" among the crags. So in the dark, I traversed through all the traces of scenic sites hereabouts and surveyed every surpassing scene south of the stream. The two wonders of Transcendent's Bridge and Single Thread of Sky can be ranked first among all the scenic sights I have seen. They are not limited to ranking as the most extraordinary among the sights here.[22]

> The time between this last entry (20 November) and the one that follows (22 January 1637) was spent visiting additional scenic sites in and around Jianchang Prefecture, Xincheng, Yihuang, and Le'an Counties. We now rejoin Xu Xiake as he is about to sail from Ji'an Prefecture to Yongxin County.

[*Twelfth month*,] *twenty-seventh day* [22 January 1637]:[23] Our boat set out at dawn. After twenty *li*, we came to Transcendent Liao's Crag [Liaoxian Yan], where a rocky cliff overlooks the river. The south side of the cliff serves as the border with Taihe County; everywhere to the north is the territory of Luling.[24] From here on, our boat often altered its course as it proceeded north. Presumably, this is because the mountain stream[25] we were on approached from the west, but then it twisted and turned from south to north. After ten *li* is Yongyang and the great market in Luling, on the river's north bank. But along the river's southern bank, one must still travel ten *li* before reaching the jurisdiction of Taihe County. This way is longer simply because the boat must wind its way north.[26] After proceeding north for another fifteen *li*, we passed Wolf Lake [Langhu], a village in a col. It is not a lake. The people who live there are surnamed Yin. They have a large fleet of boats, which they use to make a living by fishing in the lake.[27] After proceeding another fifteen *li*, we moored at Fixed Sunlight Crossing [Zhiyang Du], where there is a village on the river's northern bank. On this day, we traveled sixty *li*. Over the last two days, altogether, we traveled one hundred *li*. Now, we were in Yongxin County.[28] Because of the numerous bends in the mountain stream,

22 That is to say, these sites would rank "extraordinary" in any location.

23 *YJJZ*, 1:221–27; *YJ*, 1:155–60.

24 Taihe County is modern Taihe Xian, Jiangxi. The territory of Luling is modern Ji'an Shi, Jiangxi.

25 "Mountain stream," mentioned here and again later in this diary entry, refers to the Grain River [Heshui].

26 This line does not appear *YJ* but is included in *YJJZ*, 1:221.

27 This line contains a textual corruption: the Chinese character *bei* 北, or "north," is misplaced. I follow the reading in *Diario di viaggio*, 1:249, and translate "make a living by fishing in the lake." The lake referenced here is probably Lake Poyang in northern Jiangxi, which the fishermen could have accessed via the Grain River.

28 Modern Yongxin Shi in western Jiangxi, on the border with Hunan.

Fusheng arranged for two horsemen and two porters to take me to the border of Chaling Subprefecture.[29] When I reached the local government office in Chaling, I saw that snow was looming in the sky, so I planned to continue by boat. Fusheng then hired a boat and two porters to help pilot it. By this time, the headwind was blowing with great force. The porters repeatedly went into the water to tow and lift the boat. I felt sorry for them having to endure the cold. Time and again, I rewarded their efforts by giving them some money for wine. In the afternoon, the thick clouds gradually scattered, and the sun began to shine brightly. Such is the power of the wind.

Twenty-eighth day [23 January]: We set out at dawn with the boat in tow. It was freezing. After twenty *li* reached Ao City [Aocheng], we only turned and headed south. We set the boat's sail for the next five *li*, then headed toward Yellow Bank Rapids [Huangba Tan]. Next, we cut north and passed into a gorge between two mountains. After five *li* came to Pillow Rock [Zhentou Shi]. We then turned and proceeded west with our sail still up. After three *li*, we ascended Yellow Ox Rapids [Huangniu Tan]. Its eighteen rapids begin here. Above the rapids is Tangled Silk Pool [Fensi Tan]. The pool's water is deep blue. The crags on each side project outward and bind together like a gate. We did not find narrow, towering crags and rocks that hindered the rapid and surging current until we reached here. Proceeded another seven *li* and ascended the second set of rapids, Zhou Plains Mountain [Zhouyuan Shan]. A vast canyon partially revealed itself in the mountains, where a village nestled against its slope. Everyone in the village made a living by selling firewood. Proceeded another five *li* to Painted Horn Rapids [Huajiao Tan]. Among the eighteen sets of rapids, this one is the longest. Proceeded another five *li* to Mesa Top [Pingshang], the border between Luling and Yongxin County. Those two counties share a border that is east of Mesa Top. We moored the boat west of Mesa Top.

Twenty-ninth day [24 January]: Set out at dawn. After twenty *li*, we came to where a bridge used to span the stream from south to north. Now it is in ruins. All that remains is a piled jumble of rocks that checks the stream's flow. I proceeded another five *li* to Return to Antiquity [Huangu], where I gazed at a vast mountain south of the stream. Below it are two small peaks that rise steeply and resolutely, which struck me as extraordinary. I asked about the two peaks, and the boatman said, "The taller mountain is named Decorum Mountain [Yishan].[30] For

29 Fusheng refers to Xu Fusheng, a relative who serves as a senior government official in Ji'an Prefecture (modern Ji'an Shi, Jiangxi). Chaling Subprefecture (modern Chaling Xian) is in southeastern Hunan, on the border with Jiangxi.

30 Decorum Mountain is about 7 mi/11 km southeast of Yongxin County.

locals, it is the so-called Bridge to Heaven [Shangtian Qiao]. Although it is huge, there is nothing extraordinary about it. The smaller peak is called Plum Fields Cavern [Meitian Dong].[31] Its caverns are at the foot of the mountain." I have been a longtime admirer of the surpassing scenery at Plum Fields Mountain. So I hastily insisted on having a meal and then began my climb to its rim. I had the boatman go to Yongxin County and wait for me there. With Tranquil Hearing, I proceeded five *li* south from Return to Antiquity and reached Plum Fields Cavern at the mountain's base, where amassed rocks towered in piles everywhere. The surface of the mountain lacks even the slightest bit of earth. The piled stones resemble towering and tall lotus blossoms emerging on the surface of a lake. People surnamed Long live at the base of the mountain. Facing east are three caverns; facing north is one cavern. Only the rocks on the northeastern corner of the mountain are in their natural state. The entire far end of the southeastern cavern and those facing northwest have been made into lime kilns.[32] Given all the chipping away by iron tools and ravaging with fire, seven-tenths of the honeycombed quality of the stones have now been lost.

The first cavern faces east below a domed cliff.[33] Left of the cavern, a rocky barrier sticks out on its flank. After you enter the cavern, it is vaulted like a dome, rising to over ten rods. The ceiling of the rear cavern seems to whirl suddenly in the air and ascend. Sheer walls on all four sides droop like hanging streams of silk, countless rods in length, seemingly enclosed by a silk tent drifting down from the sky. The cavities embedded in the walls above continuously belch mists, which form mirage-like balconies. A shaft among them pierces straight through to the mountain's summit. Sunlight plunges straight down to the bottom of the cavern, while shadows cast by the sun reach the upper level. When I gazed up, it seemed as if transcendents and spirits were frolicking at the top of the shaft. It is too bad that a ten-rod ladder was not available, for with one, I could have climbed way up inside the shaft.

From here, I advanced to the north. On the left and right were stone chambers that seemed to curl and whirl around, while stone doorways

31 This should probably read "Plum Fields Mountain" [Meitian Shan 梅田山] instead.

32 A lime kiln is used to calcinate limestone (calcium carbonate) to produce a form of lime called quicklime (calcium oxide). Although lime was initially used to produce mortar for buildings, later it was discovered that when quicklime was added to soil, it improved agricultural productivity. Kilns used in this process were dome-shaped. Layers of wood or coal were piled in the kiln, which was then kindled at about 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit/538 Celsius. The lime was cooled and raked out through the base when burnt through. Unfortunately, as mentioned in the next line, the extraction of limestone from the rocks on Plum Fields Mountain destroyed much of the honeycombed, rocky landscape that had originally been there.

33 This cavern is called Jade Vacuity Cavern [Yukong Dong].

were divided into segments. Some were like crouching beasts, others like hanging pennants, altogether too many to count. There are five levels at the entrance to the main cavern. The interior of the third level is supported by a stone pillar, which divides the entrance into two sections: the main entrance is on the left, through which sunlight shoots straight into the cavern. The side entrance is on the right. I advanced through the dark to another opening and reached the interior of the fourth level, which joins with the main cavern. By the time I went to the fifth level, I had already covered about one-half *li*. However, sunlight shoots in from far away because the cavern's entrance is a vaulted, vertical dome. After reaching here, the path suddenly turned to the left. I then passed through another level into complete darkness, where nothing could be seen. I just felt that the sounds heard in the empty cavern were more amplified and resonant than those heard in the bright section of the cavern.

I was about to exit the cavern, get a torch, and then go back in. Still, after I began walking around, the sights observed were even more spectacular than when I came in. Hanging stalactites and aligned pillars of all types and varieties filled the path, which I cannot even begin to describe. Without realizing it, my feet stopped moving forward. I found another cavern less than ten paces south of the cavern, which also took me directly north. Eventually, I also turned and left, immediately finding myself in darkness, where nothing could be seen. Comparing this scene with what we saw earlier at the first cavern, they are exactly alike, except this one is scaled down. In contrast, the scenes' fabulous, extraordinary, spacious, and gorgeous postures here do not even reach one- or two-tenths of that in the main cavern.

After exiting, I saw another cavern in the cliff wall to the right, next to a crevice towering high into the air like a gate. I turned my body sideways and went into the cavern. The entrance is five or six feet high but only five feet across. Above and below, the cavern is square and upright, as if it had been laid out by a carpenter's marking line and square. As for the configuration of the cavern's threshold and railing, these were irregular, as if they had been fashioned with an axe. The color of the rock inside the cavern is distinctly different from that outside. The round pores in the rock resemble moons; crevices on the side resemble jade scepters, clear, transparent, delicate, and exquisite. This place may only be accessible to snakes who swim in and gibbons that enter upside down along the ceiling. As the booming sound of wind came out of the round apertures, the cavern suddenly turned dim and dark. Nothing could be seen. Slithering like a snake, I then made my retreat.

After exiting the cavern, before I went ten paces to the south, I next reached the third cavern, which was vaulted like a dome and had two entrances, one facing east, the other facing south. This is named Joined Palms Cavern [Hezhang Dong]. It is also vaulted like a dome inside and is bright and luminous. At first, it leads directly north, then later turns

to the right. At the place where it turns, there is a spotlessly white stone pillar, like a cut piece of jade. The stone pillar hanging from the ceiling forms a bejeweled canopy, bordered with silk and covered with a net of pearls. In appearance, it is fabulous and extraordinary. After I turned east, it gradually turned dusky and dark. The walls on each side also gradually became narrower. The ceiling of the cavern was relatively high. Since I did not have a torch, I could not illuminate the upper level. The narrow way below gradually dropped lower and seemed not big enough to allow a person to get through. From here, I headed south, where all the rocks high in the air amid soaring clouds had now fallen victim to mighty axes and raging flames.[34]

Following the same route, I saw the surpassing natural beauty of the mountain's towering and jagged peaks when I descended and turned north. But when I looked all around, no footpath could be found. Then, as before, I passed northeast of where the families surnamed Long lived. I broke off the trail and proceeded west, meeting someone who guided me to the rear cavern. This cavern is north of the mountain. When you enter the cavern, a shaft tunnel goes straight up to the mountain's summit. I then proceeded due south of the cavern, which is lofty and vaulted, bright and spacious. Positioned in the cavern's center is a stone pillar that slants high up, forming a spiral, twisting shape. It is called Rock Tree [Shishu]. Below is Rocky Chessboard [Shi Qipan]. Above are several round cobblestones that seem like uncollected chess pieces. The local custom is to refer to them as "chess pieces left uncollected." Behind them are rocks flat and protruding like an ox's heart and a horse's lungs. Below are rocks rearing their heads upward from below while others dangle their stalactite teats down from above. The rocks below and the teats above seemed like they were about to touch but did not. After we turned west in the cavern, someone said this way could lead through to the front cavern, where we could exit. But it was dark, and I had no lamp or guide, so for now, I returned the way I came and left the cavern.

When I finished visiting all four caverns, the sun was already rushing downward. There was no time to find someone with a torch and then go back into the cavern, and the rocky slabs on the trail outside the cavern were sharp and spikey. I also sensed that clouds were beginning to drift in and stir in the sky, so there was no time to survey the other secluded sites inside the cavern. From inside a rocky section of the mountain, Tranquil Hearing and I ascended by clambering up a cliff and treading through a fissure. Below, we saw various overhanging rocks, some of which seemed to have been pared with a knife, some of which seemed stitched together. Tranquil Hearing was frightened and could not proceed any farther while groups of people living at the mountain's base

34 This is another reference to the harmful environmental damage caused by lime kilns.

shouted that there were no trails we could take to go higher. But I still wanted to twist and twine my way to the top of the peak. Tranquil Hearing and I each squatted down on a rock and devoured the sesame seed cakes we had been carrying. We figured it was already past sunset, so there was no time to look for a place to have a cooked meal. Not long afterward, when we descended the mountain, in the northern corner on the western side, I saw a tragic sight: it had been fired and hacked just like on the southern side. Next, I proceeded west and passed a mountain ravine. After five *li*, passed into the mountains to the west, following the mouth of a river. Next, I proceeded two *li* and climbed to General's Depression [Jiangjun Ao]. After two more *li*, descended to the corner of a ridge to the west, took the main trail, and proceeded southwest. After five *li*, a big stream approaches from the south, winds around the northeastern section of Xincheng County, and then departs. A pontoon bridge spans the stream. When you cross it, you are at the east gate of Yongxin County.

> Although he does not mention it, when Xu Xiake and Tranquil Hearing reached the "east gate" of Yongxin (that is, the area east of the county), they then reboarded the boat, which took them the rest of the way to Yongxin.

At that time, the boat turned at Return to Antiquity and headed north, then next cut toward the south. Moreover, it moved along a course that was quite circuitous and coiling and was heading upstream against the current, so we still needed to reach our destination of Yongxin. When I entered the city wall to look around, dusk had already fallen, and our boat was now moored below the pontoon bridge.

Twenty *li* east of Yongxin is a high mountain called Decorum Mountain, which extends crosswise and then moves south. It serves as the border with Taihe and Longquan Counties.[35] The high mountain forty *li* to the west is called Grain Mountain [Heshan]. It serves as the border of Chaling Subprefecture.[36] The highest of the ridges to the south is called Ridge Back [Lingbei] and is known as Seven Courtesans Ridge [Qiji Ling]. It is fifty *li* from the Yongxin city wall. The road there leads through to Yongning and Longquan Counties. The stream in Yongxin approaches from Hemp Fields [Matian] in the west.[37] When it reaches the area below the city wall, it winds south, turns, and then winds east, and finally heads off north. Hemp Fields is twenty *li* from the Yongxin

35 Longquan County is located in southwest Zhejiang, bordering Fujian and Jiangxi.
36 That is to say, it serves as the border between Luling and Chaling in Hunan.
37 The reference in this line is to the Grain River.

city wall. A river approaches from east of Lujiang.[38] Another river comes from north of Yongning. They meet at Hemp Fields.

Thirtieth day [25 January]: The magistrate of Yongxin County, Min Jishen [*jinshi* 1628], closed the pontoon bridge to stop grain purchases.[39] Moreover, while government offices were closed for the New Year, he deceivingly consented to reopen the bridge but has yet to show up. That morning, the boatman searched for a sedan chair but failed to find one, so I lost interest in going to Yongning County and planned to hasten to Lujiang instead. Then, with the two porters and boatman carrying our luggage, we passed through the east gate, exited the south gate, and headed west and upstream. After seven *li*, a small stream approached from Seven Courtesans Ridge in the south and flowed into this one. Next, I proceeded three *li* west to where a great stream coming from the southwest emerged after breaking through a rock wall.[40] From the northwest, the trail passes along the mountain. Next, I proceeded three *li*, where to the west, I ascended Grass Villa Ridge [Caoshu Ling]. After three *li*, passed that ridge and descended to Maple Tree [Fengshu], where I reencountered the great stream. From northwest of Maple Tree, the trail crosses Closed Mouth Ridge [Hekou Ling]. After eight *li*, reached Boxwood [Huangyang]. Only after heading upstream and proceeding west did the mountain path open significantly. After seven more *li*, I reached Li's Field [Litian]. It was still twenty *li* to Lujiang. Although the day had only just turned to afternoon, I was worried it would be hard to find a place to stay because it was New Year's Eve, so I immediately sought accommodations. The local inn had no rooms at all. When I nervously paced at the trail crossing, a scholarly looking gentleman in a long robe approached me and asked, "Are you a native of the Southern Capital [Nandu], sir?[41] I also intend to head south and spend some time in the Forsaken Capital [Liudu]. But how could I ever allow worthy men like yourselves to sleep outside in my home county?" He bowed with hands clasped to one of the relatives accompanying him and had us stay at this person's home.[42] I asked his family name, and he said, "Liu." Moreover, he said, "My older brother is also in the Forsaken Capital, so I want to

38 Modern Longtian Xiang, Jiangxi.

39 Xu Xiake does not mention why Min Jishen stopped selling grain. Perhaps there was a shortage in neighboring counties, so the magistrate closed the bridge to maintain Yongxin's supply.

40 "Great Stream" refers to the Grain River.

41 That is, modern Nanjing in Jiangsu. In 1421, the capital of the Ming dynasty changed from Nanjing to Beijing in the north. Thereafter, Nanjing was sometimes called the Southern Capital [Nandu]. As we see in the next line, it was also known as the Forsaken Capital.

42 In the original text (*YJJZ*, 1:224; *YJ*, 1:158), a Chinese character is missing in this line. This lacuna, however, has not affected the general meaning.

visit him there." Presumably, he referred to Liu Jianwu in the Ministry of Rites (Libu), whose given name is Guangzhen.[43] Only then did I realize that Liu Guangzhen was a native of Yongxin County and that this is his home village, or so we were told. Since I already had our luggage sent ahead, I then went with Mr. Liu to the home of his relative Liu Huaisu. The residence was spacious and orderly. Liu Huaisu's home was that of a private scholar and was not a guesthouse. When we asked where Jianwu resided, we were told it was five *li* distant, so there was no time to meet again with the scholarly looking gentleman I had run into earlier. I only covered thirty-five *li* this day because I bought wine and meat to fete the three porters accompanying me while our host served me some local brew. This finally made us forget about the toils of travel. Throughout the night, we never once heard the sound of exploding firecrackers. The solitary silence of a mountain village truly is another universe. That evening, as we watched the sunset, I gazed north. The lofty mountain in the distance seemed quite close. I asked about it: it was Grain Mountain.

Dingchou *year, first day of the first month* [26 January 1637]: I got up at daybreak. The sky was especially clear and beautiful. I asked about our current location. To Lujiang it was twenty *li* west. From Grain Mountain, it was 120 *li* to Wugong County.[44] So I had Tranquil Hearing accompany the three porters and take our luggage to Lujiang. Servant Gu and I carried our bedding and proceeded directly north to Grain Mountain.

The mountain is not tall, but the color of its soil is deep crimson. I climbed and scaled for five *li*, crossed a small stream, and proceeded another five *li* to the Liu Family Residence [Liujia]. Then, to the north, reached Lavish Hall Monastery [Houtang Si]. Only after crossing a small ridge did I see level farmland, where rice paddy fields stand silent and still. Next, following the stream's flow northeast, proceeded five *li*. Then turned northwest, and tracing the stream, passed into the mountain. This stream turned out to be a river northeast of Grain Mountain. Its flow is quite strong. While proceeding west from Yongcheng, I had not yet seen a large river flowing into the stream from the southeast. This should be the river's lower reaches that flow into Yongcheng from the Liu Family Residence on top of the mountain. In the north, I passed Blue Hall Ridge [Qingtang Ling] and again found level farmland in a mountain col. This is Twelve Wards [Shi'er Du]. To the west, we traced the stream and passed into Dragon Gate Hollow [Longmen Keng]. From inside a gorge between two mountains, the stream's water smashes

43 Liu Yuanzhen 劉元震 in the original text should instead read Liu Guangzhen 劉光震 (*jinshi* 1631). Jianwu 尉吾 was his courtesy name.

44 Wugong (lit., "Martial Valor") County corresponds to modern Wugong Xian, Jiangxi. It takes its name from the nearby Martial Valor Mountain [Wugong Shan].

against rocks, pounds the base of a crag, and then drains successively into three or four pools. The deepest pool below us was deep blue and dark as kohl. The rocks on the crag above it all face each other as they soar and stick out. I again found level farmland as I passed into the mountain's interior. This is the site of Grain Mountain Monastery [Heshan Si]. Five Elders Peak faces Grain Mountain south of the monastery. The monastery nestles against another mountain that rises from a spur north of Grain Mountain, where massive rocks stand facing each other on the mountain behind the monastery.

Presumably, Grain Mountain is the principal mountain west of the monastery, while Five Elders—the peak south of Grain Mountain—is the tallest and straightest. I snapped a mental picture of the scene that goes, "A pair of lads nestle behind the monastery, while five elders bow before it with hands clasped." The two mountains in question are Grain Mountain and Five Elders. Hemmed inside a mountain depression is Arhat Cavern. I heard that it was not very deep. A monk from the monastery named Joyous Retreat (Le'an) provided some food and wanted me to stay for a sightseeing trip to Arhat Cavern and Five Elders Peak. But I was anxious to reach Wugong County out of fear that if I made a trip to Arhat Cavern and Five Elders Peak, my physical strength would not be enough to get to Wugong the next day. So I requested that we explore and experience those sites after my return here later.

I then bid Joyous Retreat farewell and climbed north to Ten *Li* Depression [Shili Ao]. Its ridge advances for altogether ten *li* and then continues into the distance. As I climbed the ridge, I gazed west at the mountain's apex behind the monastery, where twin rock formations stand parallel. Their peaks look like two people whispering back and forth into each other's ears. I crossed north of the ridge and descended, where the mountains again formed a col. A river approaching from the east crashes into the mountain and then departs. The houses inside the col stand in neat rows like fish scales. This area is called Iron Pathway [Tiejing]. Next, I crossed a ridge north of it and descended for five *li*, where we found level farmland. This is named Yan's Hall [Yantang]. The river there is the one that drops south from west of the ridge to Iron Pathway. From Yan's Hall, I proceeded north for five *li* and ascended Rooster Depression [Jigong Ao]. It is also called Double Summits [Shuangding]. Its ridge is quite high. The river south of the ridge approaches from Iron Pathway and then departs to the east. The river north of the ridge approaches from the stream to the north through Chen's Mountain [Chenshan] and then comes out into the countryside to the south. The area north of Rooster Depression is the border with Anfu County.[45] The sun had already set when I descended the ridge for five *li* and reached Chen's Mountain. I found an old gaffer named Li Jiquan and stayed at his place for the night. He is seventy years old and an eminent recluse who lives deep in the mountains.

45 Modern Anfu Xian, Jiangxi.

Second day [27 January]: After breakfast, I proceeded north. The river that approaches from the south smashes into Chen's Mountain and then flows off. There is also a river that comes from the north. When it reaches here, it joins with this one and proceeds east. I then took the trail heading upstream and ascended north. Presumably, everywhere southeast of Chen's Mountain are tiered mountains, hemmed in and standing erect. But the area from south to north unfolds into an expanse that forms a col. The mountains all around claw at the sky and collapse into the canyons. Above, they disappear and hide the sky and sun; below, they rush and plummet down from heights sheer and steep. I am no longer in the kind of place one finds in the mortal world. I twisted and twined my way for five *li* and reached the top of a ridge. Then I turned east and skirted the mountain again, crossing the crest of a ridge called Temple Mountain Depression [Miaoshan Ao], also known as Constant Charge Ridge [Changchong Ling]. To the west is a peak called Qiao Family Mountain [Qiaojia Shan]. Its rocky features jag and jut and are high and steep. On its summit, there seem to be screens aligned in rows and people standing. This one is the most outstanding among the mountains here, or so it is said. I descended three *li* to the north, where a rocky precipice suddenly appeared on the left side of the stream. The rocks on top of the precipice spread out in every direction, forming the appearance of a bird with clipped wings flying in circles. The river that approaches from the base of the peak plummets down through the air for several dozen rods. It is just that the trail proceeds from the right, and along the sides of the cliff are cluttered and clogged thickets of thatch grass, making it impossible to peer below. I could only hear rumbling in the valley as water smashed into the air. After I descended, I only saw ridged fields ringing around gulches in the mountain gorge, and it was only after two more *li* that I saw the homes of three or four families. This stream is called Young Lu's Cascade [Luzi Long]. A stream approaches from a gorge to the southwest, merges with the one from Constant Charge Ridge to the south, and then flows north. North of the torrent, a single knoll stretches across and blocks the stream as if it were guarding the homes here. . . .

> The following entry describes Xu's visit to Martial Valor Mountain, which straddles the border of Jiangxi and Hunan. Its highest point, White Crane Peak [Baihe Feng], is 6,294 ft/1,918 m.

Third day [28 January]:[46]. . . When the rain let up, I ran into a Daoist who wanted to guide me to the mountain's summit, so we headed west to Nine Dragons Monastery [Jiulong Si]. Then, braving the rain, we proceeded for one-half *li* and crossed the Old River Bridge [Laoshui Qiao]. Next, we followed Martial Valor and proceeded to the southern foot of the mountain, then ascended Ox Heart Ridge [Niuxin Ling].

46 *YJJZ*, 1:228–29; *YJ*, 1:161–62.

Proceeded five *li* and passed Chessboard Rock, where a Buddhist retreat is on the ridge above. The rain gradually became heavier, so the Daoist guide returned the fee I had paid him earlier, put down the travel bags, and left. Presumably, I was on the trail from Chessboard Rock. I headed directly north and ascended for five *li*, then passed through the stone pillars at Windy Cavern. After another five *li* reached the footpath to the mountain's summit. Here, I found Gathered Clouds Abbey [Jiyun Guan] on the main trail one takes to climb the mountain. Followed a deep gulch along the mountain footpath and proceeded east. This was the trail to Avalokiteśvara Cliff. I wanted to take in the scenery along both trails, so I eventually hastened to Nine Dragons Monastery along the little trail from the mountain's summit. However, the Daoist wanted to return to Gathered Clouds Abbey and take the trail from He Family Lane [Hejia Fang].[47] So, we disagreed and parted ways. Braving the rain, I then proceeded east along the small footpath. From here on, all the mountain spurs fall from the top into a gulch below. Those that protrude form ridges of hills; those that are concave form gorges. The trail follows the midpoint of the mountain. When you encounter a hill, you mount and ascend; when you meet a gorge, you look down and descend. When you pass through the second gorge through Chessboard Rock, there is a rock ten-some rods high standing straight up on the flank of a peak, which I felt was especially graceful and gorgeous. Within the gorge and inside the area where the rock stands, precipices stick out, and trees crowd together. When you gaze at them, they are quite extraordinary in appearance, but along the twisting trail, it was pouring rain, and vegetation clogged the way, so there was no way to gain a foothold.

Next, I followed the trail east, passing three gorges. Below the ridges of their hills, I crossed at the base of a hollow and proceeded south, which took me directly east of Incense Burner Peak [Xianglu Feng]. The river in the hollow then divides and heads off to the east and west. In the west, it comes out at Level Fields [Pingtian] through Gathered Clouds Abbey; in the east, it descends to Jiangkou through Avalokiteśvara Cliff. Both are streams to the northeast of Anfu County.

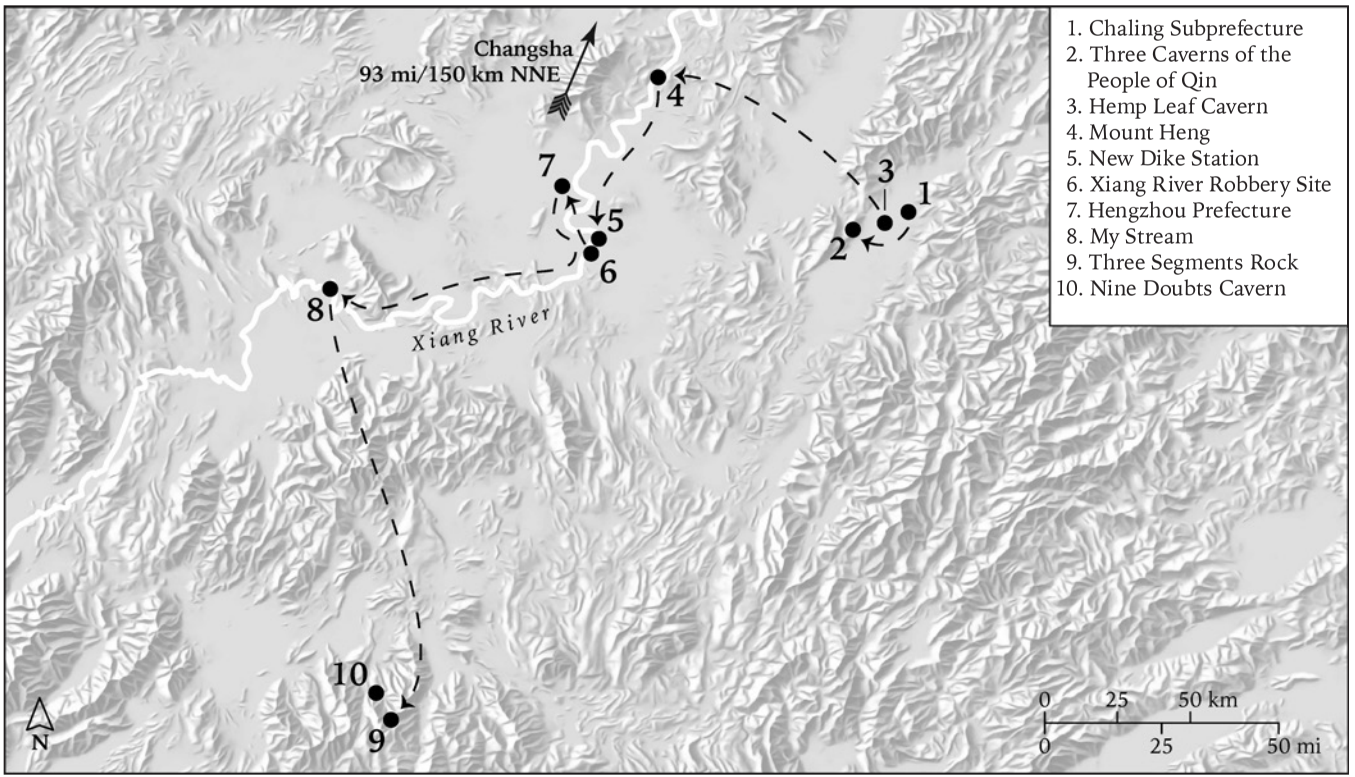
We next passed two gorges. Gazing at the gorge to the north, everywhere inside it is cluttered and clogged with trees. Rocky cliffs boldly protrude. Occasionally, it seemed like a white curtain was pulled down by a waterfall on top of the cliff. What is strange is that it lacked the force of a flying waterfall. So as I carefully took my time to savor this scene, it must have seemed like I had frozen in place and had turned into ice. . . .

47 Presumably, this is the same Daoist who had earlier served as Xu's guide but abandoned him because of heavy rain. Here he suddenly reappears.

Fourth day [29 January]:[48] When I heard that the early morning haze had not yet broken, I laid back down for quite a while and did not get up until after breakfast. Silhouettes of fog swiftly opened, then swiftly closed. I wanted to search for Windy Cavern's rocky pillars. After descending for three *li*, I saw thatch grass everywhere on the mountain ridges on either side of us, but the scene here was not as extraordinary as the other precipices and peaks. In the distance, I saw the summit of Incense Burner Peak, which emerged and disappeared from time to time. Half the mountain was still enveloped by thick fog, just like before. I thought Windy Cavern's rocky pillars were still two or three *li* below us, but I feared it would take a while to find it. Moreover, I suspect the information given to us earlier by the Daoist was just some fancy talk. So even if we see it, there is probably nothing extraordinary. In due course, I retraced my route to the mountain's summit, where I had a meal at a thatch grass retreat. Next, following the mountain ridge, I proceeded west. At first, I was still in an endless expanse of fog, but a short time later, it gradually cleared away. After a slight descent of three *li*, crossed a ridge. Suddenly, amid the silhouettes of fog, I gazed north of Martial Valor's central peak and saw spectacular cliffs and towering pillars, which above stab into the tiered empyrean and below stick into the depths of the earth. This is the so-called Thousand Rods Cliff [Qianzhang Ya]. Hundreds of cliffs stand tall in close clusters, circling and ringing around, none the same in height, some recessed, some protruding, some hidden, some in view. Heading straight down, I descended to the north, where rock formations resembling gates, resembling watchtowers, resembling banners, resembling buildings plummet straight down to the bottom of a canyon, where dense trees clutter and clog the flat ground below. But from time to time, the fog still caged and shrouded the mountain cliff. But when I reached the cliff's flank, the fog swiftly cleared away again. Just now, when the cliff was shrouded in fog, it looked like a woman deliberately covering her face with her sleeves to avoid being seen by a stranger. But after the fog cleared away, it looked like she was comely casting a welcoming smile. Presumably, Martial Valor Mountain resembles a standing screen. The eastern, western, and central sections together form three peaks. The prominent peak is the highest, entirely covered with rocks. The south side boldly protrudes, but on the north side, one finds overhanging cliffs and twisting scarps of the utmost, extraordinary beauty. If you do not pass from here but instead take the main trail, and if you pass this way and the fog does not retreat, you will almost say that Martial Valor Mountain has no extraordinary and surpassing scenery! . . .

—Translated by Naixi Feng and James M. Hargett

48 *YJJZ*, 1:230; *YJ*, 1:163–64.



Map 21. Chu (Hunan), 1637

Travels in Chu

[WINTER AND SPRING 1637]

After leaving Jiangxi, Xu Xiake traveled south into Chu (modern Hunan), where he spent nearly four months sightseeing. Hunan is ringed on three sides by rugged, mountainous terrain. Water resources are plentiful, with three major tributaries of the Changjiang and numerous lakes, including Lake Dongting [Dongting Hu] and Lake Poyang, which are among China's largest freshwater lakes. After arriving in early February 1637, Xu dispatched the monk Tranquil Hearing to take their luggage by boat to Hengzhou Prefecture while he and Servant Gu proceeded overland with lighter traveling bags. One of Xu's first sightseeing stops was in Chaling Subprefecture, where he visited the People of Qin Cavern [Qinren Dong]. According to tradition, natives of the ancient state of Qin fled to Hunan to escape the turmoil of that short-lived dynasty. Some of them supposedly took refuge in this cavern. During the Ming dynasty, Chu fell under the administrative control of the Provincial Administration Commission of Hu-Guang (Hu-Guang Buzheng Si).

Seventeenth day [*of the first month*] [11 February 1637]: I had breakfast after I got up. Followed the same route north of New Retreat and descended to Dragon Head Ridge [Longtou Ling]. Proceeded for altogether five *li* and reached the area below Twisted Thread Pool [Luosi Tan]. Earlier, I checked the gazetteer, which has the line, "Three Caverns of the People of Qin [Qinren Sandong]. . . . but the Upper Cavern is only some rocks in the shape of a gate that does not allow entry."[1] After being misinformed by the gazetteer, I visited the other two caverns but failed to find the so-called Upper Cavern.[2] A local person told me, "North of Twisted Thread Pool is Upper Clarity Pool [Shangqing Tan].

Source: "Chuyou riji" (*YJJZ*, 1:250–52; *YJ*, 1:183–86).

1 Xu Xiake's quotation from the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming* is incomplete. The gazetteer entry reads: "Three Caverns of the People of Qin is thirty *li* south of Chaling Subprefecture. Its Upper Cavern has stones in the shape of a door that does not allow entry, but occasionally one hears chiming stones therein. The generations had passed down that the cavern has traces from when people of Qin took refuge here." *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, 63.9b.

2 Xu Xiake knew this because he had explored these same caves the day before.

The entrance is quite narrow. Water comes out from inside, but people are unable to go in.[3] But if you get inside, there are some extraordinary and surpassing sights. Divine dragons lurk in Upper Clarity Pool and Hemp Leaf Cavern [Maye Dong].[4] Not only is it difficult to go in, but no one dares do so." When I heard this, I was overjoyed. After I passed Twisted Thread Pool, I did not cross the mountain stream but immediately descended to the side of the western foothill. Presumably, crossing the stream takes one to the eastern foothill west of Cloud and Sun Mountain [Yunyang Shan] and my former route by Date Pit Ridge [Zaohe Ling]. Not crossing the stream takes one to the western foothill, east of Big Ridge and Awash in Azure Mountain [Hongbi Shan]. This brings one out on the trail to Take Seven [Baqi].[5]

Headed north for one-half *li* and met up with a woodcutter, who guided me to Upper Clarity Pool. The nearby cavern is below the trail and above the stream, while its entrance faces east.[6] The two sides of the entrance look like clasped hands. Water comes out of the cavern in two streams. The one from the rear gathers but does not flow on; the one from the left comes out of an opening on the south side of the cavern's entrance and rushes off. After moving past the rapid water flow on the left side of the cavern, I entered by cowering down in the water. The woodcutter guide would only provide me with a lit torch. He refused to press on ahead. I then took off my clothes, cowered in the water, and slithered like a snake into the cavern. The gap into the cavern was not only low; it was also narrow. Moreover, most of it was underwater, so I had to cower in the water and hold the torch above my head to keep it dry. This is how I managed to enter the cavern. Only after entering and going two rods to the west did the gap into the cavern rise to over a rod in height, while the gap spanning across from south to the north also extended to over three rods in length. But nowhere was there a way to get through the gap. There was only a chamber directly to the west, five feet wide and two feet high. But the water level inside was also five feet, and only five inches of headroom remained in the gap. I figured that if I crawled through the water on my hands and knees, I would need to submerge my mouth and nose while simultaneously holding the torch and stretching my hand forward. Even if I went through keeping close to the top of the gap, half of the torch would still be drenched. Meanwhile, Servant Gu minded my clothes outside the cavern. Who would pass the torch to me if I swam into the cavern? And even if I could enter

3 The local person mentioned here makes reference to a cavern near Upper Clarity Pool, described below.

4 In Chinese mythology, "divine dragons" (*shenlong*) control rain and agriculture. According to tradition, one should not anger or neglect these creatures, for often the result is drought, storms, and floods.

5 As noted below in the diary, "Take Seven" is the name of a village (*zhen*).

6 That is to say, Upper Clarity Cavern [Shangqing Dong].

through the water, how could I get through? Moreover, the water in People of Qin Cavern, when it had gone above my knees and soaked my clothes, was warm and never felt cold. Water in this cavern, however, is cold, no different from that of a mountain stream. The cavern is positioned in a drafty place, so the wind whooshes and swooshes even more. Since the wind and water held me back together, and there was a danger of losing the torch's fire, I gave up and left the cavern. After leaving it, I threw on my clothes but still felt goosebumps all over my body, so I built a fire by the cavern entrance. After some time, I followed the western foothills and proceeded north along the stream west of Date Pit Ridge.

Proceeding three *li* from Upper Clarity, I reached Hemp Leaf Cavern. The cavern is near Hemp Leaf Bend [Maye Wan]. To the west is Big Ridge, to the south is Awash in Azure, to the east are the Cloud and Sun Mountain and Date Pit Ridge spurs, and to the north is the western extremity of Date Pit. Winding to the east of Big Ridge is a stream flowing through a gorge. The perpendicular inclines that hem in the gorge are like a gate. In front of this gate is a single peak whose lofty monoliths rise precipitously. This is General's Ridge [Jiangjun Ling]. The stream pounds the peak's western facade, while the western extremity of Date Pit Ridge terminates here. To the west of the stream is a rocky, south-facing cliff. Stretching around like spreading wings, looking east, it purveys the stream below. The eastern extremity of Big Ridge's spur also terminates here. Beneath the encircling cliff is a crevice, but its shallowness does not admit entrance. Before the cliff is a small stream running west to east. It flows into the larger mountain stream as it passes the cliff. Following the little stream, I found scattered rocks by the cliff's western edge. The stream terminates below, while above is an opening; this is Hemp Leaf Cavern. The cavern entrance faces south but is no bigger than a ladle. Inside the rocky aperture are several circuitous steps winding downward.

I initially sought torches and a guide. Although the torches were forthcoming, I waited for someone to lead us. Someone said, "A divine dragon dwells within." Another said, "Malicious spirits live inside. None but an exorcist may subdue them." Eventually, someone was found with the promise of a hefty reward. He had removed his clothing and was about to enter when he learned I was a scholar, not a Daoist practitioner clad in feathers.[7] He anxiously reemerged, saying, "I took you for a great master and was willing to follow you into the cavern. Since you are a book-learned gentleman, how can I throw my life away?" Therefore, I

7 This term refers to a Daoist holy man capable of exorcising spirits. They were sometimes associated with feathers because it was believed there was once a transcendent being with feathers that enabled him to fly. Later, the terms feathered ones (*yuren*) and rain masters (*yushi*) became general references to those engaged in Daoist pursuits.

proceeded to the previous village, where I stowed our luggage at his house. Then, with Servant Gu, each of us grasping a torch, we entered. By this time, several dozen villagers had arrived at the cavern entrance. There were woodcutters with sickles hanging from their waists, plowmen toting hoes, women who had abandoned their cooking fires, weavers who had discarded their shuttles, herd boys, and travelers carrying loads. One after the other, all came ambling up, yet none would follow.

The two of us entered feet-first, and following the steps, we wound our way down the chasm holding our torches. It took several turns to reach the cavern floor. The cavern was reasonably spacious, and we could stretch our limbs and raise our heads. We then proceeded ahead, torches in hand. The east-to-west-running chasm had no outlet. Directly north was an opening, barely a foot in height and width, yet its floor was flat and dry. Holding the torches before us, we crawled, snake-like, into the opening, our backs and sides pressed against the rock walls, with our backsides raised somewhat. Thus, we passed through this, the first barrier of the inner cavern. Inside, the chasm was high. It, too, ran from east to west, again with no outlet. We navigated the second barrier, whose height and width were comparable to the first. Our method of passing through was also the same. Having thus gained entry, we found that the interior level also ran horizontally. The southwestern chasm was not particularly deep. The northeastern one led up to a rocky depression, which abruptly rose to a horizontal cavity with a vaulted roof and narrow floor. Its height was such that we could not see the top. When we reached here, the rock appeared to take on weird shapes, its surface pattern suddenly changing; every tiny hole in the rock seemed imbued with spirits.[8]

The farther we pursued the northwestern cavity, the narrower it became until it resolved into a fissure that would not admit torches. Turning and following the southeastern gorge, we descended into a depression. Its floor was paved with pebbles resembling the smooth bed of a stream. It was very dry, and without water, so we were spared the trouble of lifting our clothing or having it dirtied by mud. Scattered rocks were piled at the gorge's southeastern extremity, not unlike a multi-storied building. We were able to climb from cracks between the rocks. At the top was a rocky crevice that completely pierced the cavern roof. Light streamed through it as though from a crescent moon surrounded by bright stars toward which one could gaze but not touch. Below the layered rocks, the streambed ran south. It was covered by rocks no more than a foot from its bottom. Surely this was the one that passed the cavern's exterior, yet from where it entered and how it had previously flowed, I did not know, nor did I understand why it had now dried up.

8 Premised on the belief in animism, people in pre-modern and early-modern China believed that natural objects, including rocks, could harbor spirits.

Descending the layered rocks, I entered the streambed heading north. The narrowness of its width and height was comparable to the two outer barriers. Deviating slightly to the west, we climbed a rocky crevice, turning north then east. It was like mounting a saddle or lofty peaks. The color and quality of the rock on either wall were smooth and shiny, as though dripping with moisture. Stalactites like suspended lotus buds hung down, their texture as if carved, their shape appearing ready to take flight. Descending another level toward the east, I reencountered the streambed that had turned into a narrow passageway. From here, the cavity opened onto a veritable laneway two rods in width and five in height. Its rocky cover was as smooth as a cloth curtain, while the streambed was so flat it was like walking on a road. I sped along one-half *li* toward the north. Below, a single stone lay horizontally like a couch, its edges all neat and uniform. Above it, rocky lotus flowers hung suspended, knitting themselves into a curtain and weaving into a precious canopy. On all four sides, they hung down, the size of a bed. Circular and empty in the middle, a vault above formed a ceiling. On the western wall behind it, they stood round pilasters of jade, some large, some small, not one whose shape was alike. Their color, moreover, was all a gleaming white; their texture was delicately carved. This is the laneway's premier wonder.

Again, we proceeded directly north for one-half *li* until the cavern divided into upper and lower levels. The streambed turned from east to north, while the upper cavern ascended from west to north. By this time, seven-tenths of the torches we carried had burned down. Afraid of being unable to discern the return route, we made several turns along the previous pathway, passing through the two narrow barriers. Just as we reached the spot where the daylight entered, the torches happened to burn themselves out. Emerging through the aperture was like being born into another world.

Several dozen people had swelled the ranks of those keeping vigil outside the cavern. Upon seeing us, they greeted us by raising their hands to their foreheads, declaring it an extraordinary feat and taking us for great ritual masters. They also said, "Having waited so long, we thought that you must have fallen into the mouth of some monster. And so we dared not go in despite our wish to do so, nor could we leave even though we wanted to. Now that you are safe and without mishap, if not for divine intervention, how else could this have been brought about?" I thanked them, saying, "I hold to my habit; I explore my scenic sites, yet I have troubled all you gentlemen to wait so long. How can I express my gratitude?"

Yet the cavern consisted of nothing more than many narrow passageways. The inside was clean and dry. No cavern I had previously seen could compare with it. I could not fathom why the locals were so frightened to enter. Therefore, we retrieved our traveling bags from the

previous village and left General's Ridge. I followed the stream north for over ten *li* before regaining the main road. From there, it was seven *li* east to Take Seven Village and barely three *li* west to Hemp Leaf. I had initially wished to take a boat from Take Seven Village and travel west. By this time, though, it would have entailed going against the current, something I was unwilling to venture. I also worried that for the moment, there would be no boats in Take Seven Village. Since the sky had cleared, we went west, following the land route, returning to Hemp Leaf. By then, the sun had sunk low, and I had not eaten; I sought wine in the market.

After a farther ten *li* west, I took lodging at Yellow Stone Inn [Huangshi Pu], 40 *li* from Chaling Subprefecture. That night, the sapphire sky appeared as if washed clean. The moon was white and the frost keen. This too made for an extraordinary vista during our trip. Weary from my travels, I finally laid down to rest.

—Translated by Alister D. Inglis

After his cave experiences in Hunan, Xu Xiake visited Mount Heng [Hengshan], China's Sacred Mountain in the South [Nanyue].[9] We rejoin Xu about a month later in the following diary entry below. He is now traveling by boat on the Xiang River, a major tributary of the Changjiang that flows northeast through Hunan. This next diary entry, and the one that follows, recalls one of the most harrowing and dramatic experiences described in all of Xu Xiake's travel accounts.

Eleventh day [*of the second month*] [7 March]:[10] I again heard rain during the fifth watch, but it gradually cleared as the sky grew bright. Proceeded south for twenty-five *li* to Theater Sandbank [Shanggou Tan], the premier sandbank south of Mount Heng. The river here is deep, and its current languid; hence, its force is not overly great. We turned west for another five *li* to East Sun Crossing [Dongyang Du]. Colored Glaze Works [Liuli Chang], the official kiln of Gui Headquarters (Guifu), is on the northern bank.[11] Proceeded another twenty *li* west to Wagon River [Chejiang]. Sometimes, it is called the Branching River [Chajiang]. Several *li* to the north is Mother of Pearl Mountain [Yunmu Shan]. Changing course, we

9 *YJJZ*, 1:257–58; *YJ*, 1:188–90. Xu Xiake's brief account of his visit to Hengshan, the Sacred Mountain in the South, only recounts his uneventful climb to the Ascending to Conduct the Feng Sacrifices Monastery [Shangfeng Si], so I have not translated it.

10 *YJJZ*, 1:272–77; *YJ*, 1:200–205.

11 "Gui Headquarters" is an abbreviation for "Headquarters of the Prince of Gui" (Guiwang Fu), for which, see note 12 below.

proceeded southeast for ten *li* to Clouds Gathering Pool [Yunji Tan], on whose eastern bank lies a small hill. Next, we turned south and proceeded for ten *li* to New Dike Station [Xintang Zhan]. A relay station, now deserted, once stood here. After another six *li*, we moored upriver from New Dike Station on the opposite shore. Among our fellow passengers were Ai Xingke (d. 1637) from Heng Commandery and Shi Yaoting. Ai is a ritual apprentice (*lisheng*) at Gui Headquarters.[12] On the other hand, Shi is originally from Suzhou, but his family has been settled here for three generations.

At that time, while some daylight remained, we anchored beside two grain boats, the only other boats there. After a while, five or six grain boats, also traveling upstream, arrived. They too anchored beside us. There had never been a village by the shore there, but mindful of how Shi and the passengers in the front cabin from Anhui were seasoned river travelers and how Ai was a local, feeling loathe to influence their travel plans, I agreed to anchor the boat there.

When I boarded the boat the previous evening, I was treated to evening rain in the Xiao and Xiang River region. This evening, I bore witness to a luminous moon over the Xiang River. The moon was fairly bright when night fell, and I remembered how I had not seen the moon since the start of spring. I was delighted to have enjoyed different scenic splendors on two separate nights.

Some time passed, and suddenly, I heard crying from the shore. It sounded like a child or a woman. It continued even after two hours. All the boats were silent as none dared make inquiries. Listening to it prevented me from sleeping, and so, on my pillow, I composed poetry in sympathy with whomever it was. I had lines like, "Pipes and reeds on a lonely boat, bemoan the Red Cliff; a lute held betwixt two sleeves, dampens my green robe with tears." There was also, "The sandbar startles a homing goose, only one against the sky; the moon calls to the cuckoo, the hour already three." I only feared a trap; some trickster was lying in wait for someone to take pity and then offer help, only to follow him back and kidnap him. It never entered my head that they were pirates.

By the time of the second drum, Tranquil Hearing could not bear it and waded through the shallows to the bank to relieve himself ashore. Tranquil Hearing was extremely disciplined. Whether it be to relieve himself or spit, he would invariably wait until ashore and would never

12 Heng Commandery refers to Hengzhou Prefecture, which corresponds to modern Hengshan Xian, Zhejiang. Ritual apprentices performed ritual services at the court or headquarters (*fu*) of an imperial prince. In this case, the reference is to the headquarters of the imperial prince Zhu Changying (1597–1645), which was in Hengzhou Prefecture. Zhu was the seventh son of the Ming emperor Shenzong, also known as the Wanli emperor. Zhu Changying was formally known as the Prince of Gui (Guiwang).

do so in the water. He called out, asking who was there. It was a boy. Perhaps fourteen or fifteen, so he did not yet wear his hair as would a man. He led Tranquil Hearing to believe he was twelve and absconded from a eunuch's household. The eunuch was given to drink and at such times would take to him with a large cane. The boy therefore wished to run away. Tranquil Hearing urged him to return and assiduously consoled him until eventually, the lad laid to rest beside the shore. Shortly after Tranquil Hearing reboarded, a band of pirates, waving swords and wielding torches, crying bloody blue murder, boarded the boat.

I was not asleep yet, so I quickly took the traveling money out of my small money box to hide it elsewhere. After I passed Mr. Ai's cabin, I wanted to throw it into the water from the stern of the boat. But just then, the pirates, brandishing swords, were hacking at the stern door. Unable to go out the door, I forcefully pushed up the gap in the boat's awning and clumsily threw the money box into the river. Then I returned to my sleeping quarters and found some clothes to drape over my shoulders. As for Tranquil Hearing and Servant Gu, along with Mr. Shi and his servant, all were forcibly huddled together in one place, some naked, some covered only in quilts. The pirates moved forward from the middle cabin. Others in the stern of the boat smashed through the stern door. In front and behind us, their swords and spears stabbed indiscriminately. None of our naked bodies was spared. Then I realized that the pirates would certainly seize me. I had thrown away my silk clothes because it was inconvenient to carry them. Each of us kneeled before the pirates, pleading for our lives. But the pirates hacked away unrelentingly, so we all arose, lifted the boat awning, and jumped into the water. I was the last in because I stumbled on a bamboo towline. Finally, I fell headfirst into the water together with the awning, my head reaching to the bottom. Water poured into my ears and nose, so I quickly bounded to the surface. Fortunately, it was not deep, coming only up to my waist. I then waded against the current. When I encountered one of the neighboring boats coming my way to avoid the pirates, I jumped in. I was soaked and freezing. One of the passengers covered me with the boatman's quilt. I then lay down in the boat. We proceeded three or four *li* upstream and moored at Incense Burner Mountain. Presumably, we were now on the other side of the Xiang River.

I gazed back at our pillaged boat. The flames were fiery red. As a signal, the bandits yelled out in a chorus, then withdrew. A short time later, the boats moored earlier with ours all came to moor with us. Someone mentioned that a young gentleman from Nanjing had been stabbed four times. I smirked when I heard this because his claim seemed exaggerated. Fortunately, I alone was not stabbed as I stood there naked during the random hacking of swords and thrusting of halberds. This was indeed a blessing from heaven! I did not know the whereabouts of Tranquil Hearing and Servant Gu. But I thought since they also had

tumbled into the water, they could have avoided the "mouth of the tiger."[13] The money case was now of no concern, but what bothered me was that no sooner did the *Continuation Account of a Southern Itinerary* (Nancheng xuji)—written by the Honorable Zhang Zonglian (1374–1427) in his calligraphy and a treasured possession in his family for over two-hundred years—come into my possession than it suffered this calamity![14] How can one not be angered and suffer pain from this? The boatmen, father and son, had both been stabbed. They wailed in pain on a neighboring boat. On another boat was Shi Yaoting, along with Mr. Ai's servant and Servant Gu, whom the pirates had stabbed. They arrived at my boat naked and huddled with me under the same quilt. Only then did I realize that the person who had been stabbed four times was my servant, Gu. The five people from Huizhou Prefecture in the forward cabin were all carpenters. Two of them were on a neighboring boat. The whereabouts of the other three were unknown. There was still no sign of Tranquil Hearing in my forward cabin. In the stern cabin where Ai Xingke stayed with his friend, Mr. Zeng, there was no way to ask about Tranquil Hearing. As many people surrounded me, Servant Gu moaned from extreme pain. Although my money pouch had been destroyed in the fire and nothing was left, the money box I had thrown in the water might have been retrieved on the riverbed. But I feared someone might see and take it during daylight, so I wanted to look for it at dawn. But I did not have a stitch of clothing, so how could I reach the bank? On the evening of the raid, the new moon had been bright. But when the pirates arrived, there were dark clouds all around. But by daybreak, it was raining again, heavy and hard.

Twelfth day [8 March]: A passenger on the neighboring boat with the family name Dai took pity on me and gave me a pair of his underwear and unlined trousers. I had nothing else on me. When I felt my hair bun, my silver earpick was still there. I usually do not carry a hairpin. But during this trip, when I reached Wu Gate [Wumen], I recalled that twenty years earlier, when I got to the riverbank of the Qiantang River on my return trip from Min, all my traveling money had been spent.[15] I removed the hairpin from my bun, snapped it in two, and used one half to pay for a meal and the other half to hire a sedan chair, which then took me to the Golden Heart Moon [Jinxin Yue] lodgings in the Brilliant Felicity Monastery.[16] On this trip, I took along an earpick for two reasons: to coil my hair into a bun and to be prepared for any untimely

13 In other words, in the jaws of certain death.
14 The reference here is to Xu Xiake's money box.
15 That is to say, Suzhou Prefecture (modern Suzhou Shi).
16 This monastery was in Hangzhou Prefecture (modern Hangzhou Shi).

necessity. Even though I had fallen into the river, I was fortunate to have the hairpin, so my hair did not fall into disarray.

As for Ai Xingke, since he was traveling with untied hair, he was not rescued.[17] Even though an item like an earpick might seem trivial, it can sometimes save the day. I repaid the boat passenger's kindness by giving him the earpick. I then hurriedly asked his family name and departed. Servant Gu, without a stitch of clothing, stood there bare naked. I gave him Mr. Dai's trousers. Then I put on the underwear, which only came up to my waist.[18] A neighboring boatman handed me a width of patched cloth, which I used to cover my front. I then went ashore. The shore here is on the northeast bank of the Xiang River, so we followed the bank and proceeded north. Those who went ashore included me and Servant Gu, the servants of Mr. Shi and Mr. Ai, and two travelers from Huizhou Prefecture, making six altogether. We all looked like fettered ghosts. The dawn breeze was extremely cold, and the gritty gravel split open our bare feet. We wanted to proceed but could not move forward; we wanted to halt but could not stop. After four *li*, the sky gradually began to brighten. I gazed at our burning, looted boat on the other side of the river. People on the boats above and below our position saw us, but not one was willing to come ashore and ferry us across the river. We yelled and beseeched them twice or thrice, but no one trusted us.[19] Mr. Ai's servant shouted across the river for his master; I shouted across the river for Tranquil Hearing; the two men from the Huizhou Prefecture shouted for their companions. Each of us called in turn, but there was no response. A short time later, I heard someone shout out to me, and I knew it was Tranquil Hearing. I was secretly delighted and yelled back to him, "The three of us are all alive!"[20] I very much looked forward to reuniting with him. Some local people from across the river came with a boat and ferried me to the other side. When I reached the burned-out boat, I spotted Tranquil Hearing, which delighted me even more. I went into the water and waded around, looking for the bamboo money box I had tossed into the river. Tranquil Hearing looked over at me and asked what I was doing. From a distance, I said, "The money box is right here. But the money inside it is now all gone. My hand-copied versions of 'Yu the Great's Stele' (Da Yu bei) and the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of Heng County*

17 Tentative translation. The point of this line seems to be that since Mr. Ai was traveling with untied hair, he was mistaken for a bandit (some pirates in Hunan were known to wear their hair long) and therefore not rescued.

18 The underwear (*liyi*) mentioned here was similar to what today is called long johns. That is, a top section covering the upper body, attached to a lower section covering the legs.

19 As we saw in the previous entry, river pirates oftentimes would lure their victims by having someone cry out, pretending to be in distress. This explains why the people on the boats did not approach Xu Xiake and his group.

20 By "three of us," Xu refers to himself and the two travelers from Huizhou.

(Hengzhou tongzhi) were not soaked through with water."[21] When we landed at the bank, I saw Tranquil Hearing. From among our clothes and bedding and the bamboo book box, he managed to rescue several articles of clothing that he guarded beside the sandy shore. Feeling sorry for me because I was cold, he quickly took off his clothes and gave them to me to wear, then rescued a pair of trousers and some socks for me. But they had been damaged in the fire and were soaking wet. He then took some wood from the still-burning boat to dry the trousers and socks. By that time, the five travelers from Huizhou had all arrived. As for the four people in Mr. Ai's party, although his two friends and servant were injured, they were also there. But there was no trace of Ai Xingke. His friends and servant begged some local people to dispatch boats to conduct a methodical search for him along the shore. We remained on the beach, drying our clothes and waiting for some news about Mr. Ai. We were hungry then, but nothing was left of our cooking utensils, which had sunk into the river during the fire. Tranquil Hearing went into the water and retrieved an iron pot, then returned and retrieved some water-logged rice. Earlier, we had obtained several pecks of dry rice, but they had been taken away by Mr. Ai's servant, who used it to make porridge for all the other people in distress. Only after that did he have some himself.

By the afternoon, we still had not received any information about Mr. Ai. The people from Huizhou were the first to take a boat and return to Hengzhou Prefecture. Then, our group, Mr. Shi, Mr. Zeng, and Mr. Ai's servant, found a local boat and returned to Hengzhou Prefecture. In my thinking, I still assumed that Mr. Ai had returned home ahead of us. Our local boat was quite big but was operated by only one person. Although we sailed with the current, we could not cover more than twenty-some *li*. By the time we reached Branching River, it was already twilight. After twenty more *li*, it was already late at night when we reached East Sun Crossing. At that time, the moonlight was doubly bright. We proceeded thirty *li* by moonlight. It was already the fifth watch when we reached Iron Loft Gate [Tielou Men].[22] A messenger had returned earlier to inquire about Mr. Ai, but Mr. Ai was nowhere in sight.

> This next section is especially informative because it describes, in some detail, the many books, letters, and drafts of diary entries that Xu carried with him while traveling.

Tranquil Hearing had seen us go down into the water completely naked. Remembering that those bags with Buddhist sutras were stowed beside the boat's awning, he remained on board, risking his life by

21 According to legend, this stele was inscribed and placed on Mount Heng when Yu, or Yu the Great, harnessed the great flood in remote antiquity.

22 Iron Loft Gate is the eastern gate of Hengzhou Prefecture.

begging and pleading with the pirates. Because of these efforts, they eventually put down the sutras. After they broke open my bamboo case and saw nothing inside except books, the bandits dumped them all on the boat floor. Tranquil Hearing again implored the pirates to allow him to pick up the sutras and return them to the damaged case. The pirates did not stop him. Inside the case were volumes of the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, handwritten letters between myself and Wen Zhenmeng, Huang Daozhou, and Qian Qianyi, and drafts of my travel accounts in diary format. The only item lost was a draft of a letter to be sent to the Honorable Liu Yu.[23] The pirates went on to open my leather case. Seeing a length of silk inside it, they immediately closed the case, secured it, put it into a sack, and carried it off. In this case, there were also drafts of documents from Huang Daozhou to Master Mu (Mugong) in Lijiang, along with letters to the monks Profound Discernment and Peacefully Humane, and altogether, several dozens of family letters to Gu Dongshu on the Cangwu Circuit and others.[24] There was also a copy of *Continuation Account of a Southern Itinerary* (Nancheng xuji), written by Zhang Zonglian, which was handwritten and dating from early in the Xuande reign when Zhang was a special envoy to Guangdong. His relatives had kept this treasure in the family for over two hundred years. I came to possess it only after much hardship. It was wrapped with material bearing the calligraphy of Zhuang Dingshan and Chen Baisha and placed among other books. Tranquil Hearing knew nothing about this and did not beg that it be spared. The pirates thus took everything away, and Tranquil Hearing had no idea where the books may have been discarded. How truly unfortunate!

They also took my leather satchel, in which were six specimens of my family's *Sunshine Mountain Calligraphy Rubbings* (Qingshan tie), an iron needle, a tin bottle, and a pot made by Chen Yongqing, all of which were heavy items. So when the pirates got the satchel, they did not open it but hastily stuffed it into their bag. They smashed my bamboo-plaited food basket, took the fruit and cakes inside it, and threw them down on the boat floor. Three volumes of Cao Xuequan's (1574–1646) *Gazetteer on Famous Surpassing Scenic Sites* (Mingsheng zhi), four volumes of the *Gazetteer on Yunnan* (Yunnan zhi), and the *Chronicles of Travels* (Youji) in ten block-printed volumes were all destroyed in the fire.[25] Most of the

23 Liu Yu is not further identified.

24 In his Zhejiang travel diaries (diary entry for 18 October), this volume, Xu Xiake mentions that a friend gave him a letter from Gu Dongshu's son that he hoped Xu could deliver to Gu, who was then serving as an official in Cangwu County in Guangxi. There was no public postal system, so private letters to distant locations were often transported by friends and acquaintances traveling through those destinations.

25 Cao Xuequan, courtesy name Nengshi, was a well-known Ming dynasty scholar-official and travel writer. *DMB*, 2:1299–1301. As for the three works

items in Mr. Ai's cabin were also destroyed by fire. Only Shi Yaoting's bamboo box was not opened. Just before the pirates made their getaway, they intentionally set fire to the rear cabin. At that moment, Tranquil Hearing was lurking on the side of the boat. He waited until they left then immediately put out the fire. My cabin door also caught fire, so Tranquil Hearing went into the river again, fetched some water, and extinguished it. When the pirates heard water splashing, they thought someone was coming. But when they saw it was Tranquil Hearing, they slashed him twice with a knife, wounding him. Then they left. But it was already too late to put out the fire. By then, all the other boats had moved safely away except for the two boats carrying grain. Tranquil Hearing called out to them, but they turned around and moved farther away. Tranquil Hearing then went into the river to get the boat awning that had fallen into the water the night before and used it to make a raft. Then, hastily taking the sutra bag and whatever items of mine that had survived the fire, he ferried them to one of the boats carrying grain. Braving the fire, Tranquil Hearing went into the water again to retrieve Mr. Ai's clothes, quilt, books, rice, and Shi Yaoting's bamboo bookcase. Next, he placed these things on the awning and ferried them to the grain boat. But our boat had already sunk by the third time he returned to it. Tranquil Hearing retrieved three or four soaked articles of clothing from the bottom of the river and then, continuing as before, ferried them over to the grain boat. But people on the grain boat availed themselves of the darkness to hide the silk clothes and other items I had thrown away earlier.[26] The only things that survived were some cotton clothes and quilts. After Tranquil Hearing had moved the clothing items and bedding to the beach, the grain boat departed. We were ferried across the river as he watched over these items. When Mr. Shi and Mr. Ai's servant spotted the items that had been recovered, they recognized them and went over to claim them. Addressing Mr. Shi, Tranquil Hearing asked, "Do all these things belong to you, sir?" Mr. Shi then became greatly insulted and besmirched. He blamed Tranquil Hearing: "Everyone suspected that you led the pirates to us when you went ashore, claiming that you would inquire about that crying boy. You are truly a ruthless person, wanting to steal my chest." Mr. Shi was unaware that Tranquil Hearing, on Mr. Shi's behalf, had braved attack by the sword, braved the cold,

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mentioned here, the complete title of the first one is *Gazetteer on Famous Surpassing Scenic Sites in Guangxi* (Guangxi mingsheng zhi). While traveling in south and southwest China in the early 1600s, Cao Xuequan wrote numerous travel accounts. However, as far as I know, he never compiled a gazetteer about Yunnan. As for the third and last book lost in the fire, *Accounts of Travels*, its author and contents remain unknown, and no surviving copy is recorded in major bibliographies.

26 The subject of this line is unclear. "People on the grain boat" (not in the original text) is a tentative translation.

braved fire, and braved water to recover and protect this chest, then waited for its owner. Mr. Shi, rather than appreciating his fortitude, instead insulted Tranquil Hearing. Even pirates can take pity on a Buddhist monk, but this guy, in his ruthlessness, even surpasses that of pirates and robbers! Such is the way of men without conscience!

> After his encounter with pirates, Xu Xiake needed money, so he returned to Hengzhou Prefecture, where he had stayed earlier, and met with Jin Xiangfu, whose employer was Zhu Changying, Prince of Gui and son of Emperor Shenzong.

Thirteenth day [9 March]: When I went ashore at daybreak, I had no plan on where to go. Since Jin Xiangfu was an old acquaintance I met elsewhere, I thought I could seek refuge with him or insist he take me in. [27] I waited for the Iron Loft Gate to open and then went in. Anxiously, I hastened to Xiangfu's residence, telling him all the details of my encounter with the river pirates. Xiangfu was distraught and angry about what had happened. At first, I wanted to borrow several dozen taels of silver from the frontier prefectural office, entrusting Xiangfu to guarantee the loan, and asked Xiangfu if he could collect repayment after returning home to Jiangyin, thereby still completing my great wish to visit the western regions.[28] Xiangfu said the frontier prefecture office had no silver that could be borrowed. He exhorted me, saying that if I returned home, he could make separate arrangements to cover the cost of clothes and luggage. I thought that if I returned home after encountering a setback, needing to find funds to finance another trip, my wife and children would certainly not be willing to allow me to continue my travels. I had no desire to alter my determination to carry on. I continued to implore Xiangfu to make a special effort to help, and he responded, "Yes, yes, of course."

Fourteenth and fifteenth days [10 and 11 March]: Spent the entire day at Jin Xiangfu's residence.

Sixteenth day [16 March]: Jin Xiangfu submitted a request to the inner offices on my behalf. It was agreed that financial assistance would not be discussed until the twenty-second day of the month. Earlier, Xiangfu said he could not provide me with any money and wanted to solicit donations from everyone in the inner offices. I had serious reservations about this idea. Tranquil Hearing said that Jin Xiangfu had long desired

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27 Xu Xiake mentions in his diary entry for 2 March, this volume, that Jin Xiangfu was a native of Jiangyin, which explains why Xu expected his assistance. See *YJJZ*, 1:267; *YJ*, 1:197.

28 Western regions here probably refers to Yunnan and Sichuan.

to establish fields at their monastery home in Jiangyin to help it receive rental income to support the observance of the Forty-Eight Vows and Vegetarian Feast Rites. Were Jin to receive donations from everyone here in Hengzhou for this cause now, these funds could finance my trip to the west. Then, as soon as I returned home, I would buy land for the fields equal to the loan amount and erect a stone tablet bearing the donors' names. Tranquil Hearing thought this would be an exceedingly convenient way to resolve both matters. Reluctantly, I agreed to it.

> So with Tranquil Hearing's help, a plan was in place to secure funds to support his planned travels in the western regions.[29] Ai Xingke's body was recovered on 21 March.[30] Xu Xiake attended his funeral in Hengzhou Prefecture two days later.
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> The place that serves as the focus of the following diary entry—"My Stream" [Wuxi]—is famous in Chinese literary history because the distinguished Tang dynasty writer Yuan Jie (719–72) once lived there. Yuan was good friends with the celebrated calligrapher Yan Zhenqing (709–85), and in the summer of 771, invited Yan to join him at My Stream, where together they inscribed the text of Yuan Jie's "Encomium to the Great Tang Restoration" (Da Tang Zhongxing song) on the rocky cliff face beside My Stream.
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> Two days before the events described in the following diary entry, Xu Xiake became very sick. He does not specify his illness's precise nature, only saying, "After a meal, I suddenly became ill and could not stop moaning from pain."[31]

Tenth day [*of the third month*] [4 April]:[32] I recall hearing about the surpassing scenery at My Stream and that one cannot visit there just once. I have been ill lately but am feeling a little better now. The boatman had

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29 As it turned out, the needed travel funds came from a different and unexpected source. In his diary entry for the twenty-sixth day of the second month (22 March 1637), Xu notes, "Today, Jin Xiangfu unexpectedly attended a lottery gathering and drew the winning lot, obtaining over one hundred taels of silver. After receiving news of this in my residence, Jin found it difficult to refuse me further and agreed to lend me twenty taels. I used a land lease agreement for twenty acres of land as collateral and handed it over to him." See *YJJZ*, 1:281; *YJ*, 1:208 (diary entry for 二月二十六日). In another diary entry, dated 三月初一日, Xu also mentions his intent to borrow additional funds from one "Mr. Liu," whom he met earlier in Yongxin. See *YJJZ*, 1:282; *YJ*, 1:208.

30 It is unknown if Mr. Ai drowned during the attack or if the river pirates murdered him.

31 *YJJZ*, 1:283; *YJ*, 1:210 (diary entry for 初八日).

32 *YJJZ*, 1:284; *YJ*, 1:211.

not yet sailed because he was waiting for additional passengers, so despite my illness, I mustered all my strength to get up and visit My Stream. Following the market along the Xiang River, I proceeded south. After proceeding five *li*, crossing the river, and heading east, I was already at My Stream. The so-called Lion Mane [Shizi Fu] is on a riverbank two *li* to the south.[33] It turns out this is a place I have been to before. I asked for directions, but nobody told me how to get there. Could it be that Lion's Mane could not withstand the changes in the world because of piled sand and shifting currents and so disappeared? My Stream approaches from the east, then moves west, and eventually flows into the Xiang River. Its current is rather minimal. Three cliffs tower side-by-side north of the stream, overlooking the Xiang River to the west. The middle cliff is the highest and bears the inscription "Encomium to the Restoration" (Zhongxing song), written in the calligraphy of Yan Zhenqing and inscribed high on the cliff wall.[34] A slab mirror (*shijing*) is inlaid on its flank. It measures two feet in length and five feet in width. The surface of the slab is shiny and black, just like lacquer. If you sprinkle water on it, pavilion rocks beside the cliff nearby and village trees across the river in the distance reflect distinctly and clearly on its surface. I have no idea where the slab mirror came from or when it may have been inlaid here. Could it also have been bequeathed by Yuan Jie? If so, his achievement is equal to Yan's calligraphy!

> The lines below concerning some local place names coined by Yuan Jie (or "Mr. Yuan") require explanation. Most Chinese characters contain two components: one semantic, the other phonetic. When the *stream* by his house needed a name, Yuan took the semantic element (or "radical") for "*water*" 氵 and combined it with the phonetic element *wu* 吾, thereby creating the Chinese character *wu* 浯. This character, when combined with the generic place-name suffix meaning "stream," *xi* 溪, yields the two-character toponym Wuxi 浯溪, Wu Stream. The phonetic element *wu* 吾 can also stand alone as the singular pronoun meaning "I" or "my." Yuan Jie's wordplay here is intentional. So "Wu Stream" can also be understood to mean "*My* Stream." Yuan Jie uses this same unique process to coin "my" names for a nearby hill and pavilion.

During the Song dynasty, Chen Yan observed:

> As for Mr. Yuan's intentions when he began to devise place names, because of the nearby stream's association with water,

33 This is the name of a rock formation.

34 This is an abbreviated version of the full title "Encomium on the Ascendancy of the Great Tang."

> he came up with the name My Stream [Wuxi 浯溪] using the "water" 氵radical; for a nearby hill, he came up with the name My Hill [Wushan 峿山] using the mountain/hill" 山 radical. Using the "structure on a cliff" 广 radical, when he built a building, he called it My Pavilion [Wuting 唐亭]. The designations of these "Three Wus" derive from "my." The characters created with semantic components related to "water," "hills," and "structure on a cliff" are named from "my." These three scenic sites' names come from "my" and are associated only with "my."[35]

A pavilion in front of the cliff overlooks the Xiang River. On the apex of the cliff, rocks stand pinnacled in bunches, like clustered sepals of flowering hibiscus. The area north of there also has a pavilion. Today, it holds a statue of the Great Emperor Who Subdues Demons (Fumo Dadi).[36] At the eastern foot of the cliff is the Yuan and Yan Shrine [Yuan-Yan Ci].[37] The shrine is vacant and narrow. In front is a building with three rooms that serve as a layby for sightseers, but no one is watching over the place. I crossed My Stream and proceeded east to a monastery facing north. This is Central Palace Monastery [Zhonggong Si], the former site of Manlang's residence [Manzhai].[38] It is already in a severe state of ruins, which cannot help but inspire feelings of sadness for ancient times. I lay on a rock beside the cliff because I felt too weak to proceed, waiting a long time for the boat. What a pity that even though the scaffolding along the cliffside, from which stone rubbings of the inscription can be made, still had not been removed, there was no one around to make a rubbing for me. This was most disappointing. After the boat arrived at midday, we proceeded another twenty *li* and passed Daughter-in-Law Dike [Xifu Niang Tang]. On the river's north bank, there is a rock, comely and fair of form, standing upright at the end of a peak with its head raised and posed in a manner of gazing toward the west.

Bamboo fish (*zhuyu*) are found in the stream below. They are small but very plump. By the eighth or ninth month, they already weigh one or two catties (*jin*).[39] They are found nowhere else. At the time, I was laid up sick in my cabin. So I only got a quick look at Daughter-in-Law Dike

35 Although Xu Xiake does not acknowledge the textual source of this quotation, it derives from a passage in a Song dynasty geographical treatise compiled by Zhu Mu 祝穆 (fl. ca. 1200) titled *Survey of Scenic Sights throughout the World* (Fangyu shenglan 方輿勝覽) (repr., Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2003), 25.6a.

36 The Great Emperor Who Subdues Demons is a title bestowed posthumously in 1614 on the historical figure Guan Yu. In later Chinese religious history, Guan became a cult figure and was even worshipped as a god-emperor.

37 Named in honor of Yuan Jie and Yan Zhenqing.

38 Manzhai 漫宅 is an abbreviation for Manlang zhai 漫郎宅, or "Manlang's residence." This refers to the former site of Yuan Jie's home at My Stream.

39 During the Ming dynasty, one catty (*jin*) was about 1.3 lbs/0.59 kg.

before we passed by. Only after another ten *li*, when we moored at Dripping Water Cliff [Dishui Ya], did I realize her lifted head faced east and that there were several layers of clouds across the river. Dripping Water Cliff is on the south bank of the river. Precipitous cliffs spanned the sky; the flow of the river was hushed. Nearby were only a few remote villages. I had no idea why the captain would want us to moor here. On this day, altogether, we covered thirty-five *li*.

> Around this time, Xu Xiake heard—probably from someone he met during his travels—that there was an unusual, vertically aligned rock formation called Three Segments Rock [Sanfen Shi] nearby. This site marks the loftiest point on Mount Jiuyi [Jiuyi Shan] in southern Hunan, near the border with Guangdong. Although not a great distance away, these rocky monoliths were in an isolated area with few places to spend the night. Bandits were also known to gather nearby.

Twenty-eighth day [22 April]:[40] I had a morning meal at the fifth drum and waited for daybreak. Following the same route, I passed south of Jade Flute Cave [Yuguan Yan] and looked for the guide. He had gotten up earlier, cooked a meal, and headed off carrying a lantern on a pole over his shoulder. I immediately followed him, ascending Master Yang's Ridge [Yangzi Ling].[41] I proceeded for two *li* and climbed to the top of the ridge, on which were upthrust rocks that looked like people standing upright, like beasts squatting on their heels, and like dragons lying on their backs. Everywhere above them were more rocks, winding around and protruding. From the top of the ridge, I proceeded southeast into a depression known by the name Thatched Den [Maowo]. Everywhere over the next three *li* are extraordinary rocks. I descended deep into the den, where a rocky cliff was high and jagged. An emerald waterfall a thousand rods high converges on all four sides and then pounds its way down into a rugged cavern, raining down on huge rocks. The cavern's depths cannot be fathomed. This place is named Nine Turtles Enter the Crag [Jiugui Jinyan] because inside the den are nine hills shaped like turtles. All the water on the hills rushes down toward the crag. Since the crag faces west, I suspect the water that comes out from the crag next to the old site of the Eternal Blessing Monastery [Yongfu Si] is from here. Next, proceeded two *li* southeast, where I crossed a ridge. The Coiling Dragon Settlement [Panlong Dong] river entrance is here.[42] Where the

40 *YJJZ*, 1:310–14; *YJ*, 1:235–39.
41 The precise identity of "Master Yang" is unclear.
42 "Settlement" (*dong*) is a territorial administrative unit used to demarcate non-Chinese tribal areas in China's southern and southwestern provinces.

settlement advances to the east, the river remains deep. All those living in the settlement are High Mountain Yao (Gaoshan Yao).[43]

Next, I climbed a ridge for one *li* and came to Clear Water Pool [Qingshui Tan]. On the flank of the ridge is a pool with crystal clear water. The trail descends east of the ridge to the road to Chives Plateau [Jiucai Yuan]. Next, I proceeded two *li* southeast, then crossed Ox Head River [Niutou Jiang]. The river approaches from Purple Gold Plateau [Zijin Yuan] in the east.[44] The trails along the crags on both sides of the river are sheer and steep. Up and down, I climbed and clambered, which was quite arduous. Sometimes, however, because of roving bandits, one must temporarily go this way. Locals have cut down huge tree limbs and laid them in lengths along the crag trail, like a plank walkway, which ascends and descends following the branches of the trees. As you traverse the cliff, some tree limbs crouch below it and bore through between its legs, while others straddle it and pass over its spine. After crossing the river, I ascended southeast to Half-Side Mountain [Banbian Shan]. Purple Gold Plateau is on the lofty mountain to its northeast. It turns out the administrative seat of Lanshan County is beyond the mountain. Empty Hut Plateau [Kongliao Yuan] is on the lofty mountain to its southwest. Farther south is Incense Burner Mountain. On top of the mountain at Empty Hut Plateau is a single vein of white rock, which ascends to the mountain's apex and descends to its foothills. The rock resembles a hanging length of silk, so locals refer to it as White Floss Silk [Bai Mianchou].

Incense Burner Mountain is thirty *li* south of Jade Flute Cave and twenty *li* northwest of Three Segments Rock. In height, Incense Burner Mountain is on a par with Three Segments Rock. On its summit is a clear pool two or three acres wide. In the pool are two columns of rock, towering and tall, extending from the water's surface for more than three rods. I suspect that this is what the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming* calls Celestial Lake [Tianhu], although it merely says it is in Mount Jiuyi's foothills.[45] But the one here, on the summit of the mountain, is different. It seems there are no lakes in the foothills around here. From Half-Side Mountain, ascended five *li*, then descended slightly to Dog Arrow Den [Goushi Wo]. I proceeded higher, time and again crossing mountain crests as narrow as an earthen wall. Time and again,

43 Xu Xiake distinguishes between two types of Yao people: High Mountain Yao (Gaoshan Yao) and those who live on level land, whom he calls Flatlander Yao (Pingdi Yao). The origins of the Yao people in China have been traced to Hunan. Today, they are the most widely distributed ethnic minority group in south China, mainly Guangxi.

44 The character *yuan* 原, commonly used to denote the "plains" in northwestern China, here and below, refers to flat areas or plateaus along the midpoint of a mountain.

45 This lake is not referenced by this name in the received editions of the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*.

I tracked across mountain summits, descending less, ascending more, for altogether five *li* to the northeast, when I came out at Sea Turtle Head Mountain [Aotou Shan]. The thick fog from earlier had not cleared. So the peaks of Half-Side and Sea Turtle Head were close by, but I could not see them. But when I got to them, the mountains immediately revealed themselves. Upon reaching here, I gazed south into the distance for Three Segments Rock but did not know its location. A short time later, the thick clouds suddenly opened, and for an instant, the shadow of Three Segments Rock flashed over the summit of some lofty peaks. It resembles Mount Jianglang in Jiangshan County.[46] One of the segments is the source of the Zhe River; the other is the source of the Xiao River.[47]

Mount Jianglang stands lofty and upright only at mid-mountain. Three Segments Rock is simply different because it hangs above the absolute summits of countless peaks. As for the two mountains, Half-Side and Sea Turtle Head, they bestride Purple Gold in the northeast to form Ox Head River, which flows between them. In the southwest, they bestride Empty Hut and Incense Burner and then form Xiao Source River [Xiaoyuan Jiang], which flows between them. The water for these rivers comes from Three Segments Rock. Here then is the mainstay of these two rivers. The two rivers merge southeast of Jade Flute, then descend west to Luguan and merge with the Pu River [Pujiang]. Only then is it borne, like a leaf-like boat, to flow into the great ocean.

From Sea Turtle Head, I proceeded east, following a trail halfway up the ridge, descending after two *li*. After three more *li* descended to reach the Muddy River [Lanni He]. Only then was I able to get some water and prepare a meal. By then, it was already afternoon. From Muddy River, proceeded east for five *li* and passed over a ridge. On the flank of the ridge, there is a small trail that takes one to Cold River Depression [Lengshui Ao], a sanctuary for robbers. Descended the ridge for three *li* and came to High Bridge Plateau [Gaoliang Yuan], on the western border of Lanshan County. This area is also a sanctuary for robbers. As it turns out, this ridge is Indigo Mountain [Lanshan], which marks the boundary with Ningyuan County. It is to the east of Three Segments Rock. The flow of the river here also follows along this ridge. Following the most direct route to Three Segments Rock, I descended to Muddy River, where I came to a separate trail leading to High Bridge Plateau. I broke off the trail and proceeded southwest, then ascended another ridge. The red and purple flowers on the mountain ridge vied in their beauty. Only after I approached from Sea

46 Xu Xiake describes Mount Jianglang in his Nine Carp Lake diary (entry for 23 June), this volume.

47 The sudden shift in the subject here (from the previous sentence) suggests the text at this point might be corrupt. In any case, each of the Three Segments was traditionally believed to be the source of a different river. In his diary entry for 24 April (see below), Xu Xiake explains these various river sources in detail.

Turtle Head Mountain did I see the blue petals of mountain azaleas. There are also two varieties of purple flowers found here. The larger variety is the camellia (*shancha*); the smaller variety is the mountain azalea. They are most charming in their allure. Also, among some withered trees, yellowish-white mushrooms were as thick and big as plates. I gathered some and stored them in my sleeves. That night, after I reached Three Segments Rock, I wrapped them up in some thin bamboo and then roasted them. They were fragrant and tasted exactly like sweet mushrooms.

The mountain trees here are so tall they seem to hold up the empyrean. In these parts, the mountain trees are enormous. The most precious ones are solitude trees (*dumu*); next are *nan* trees.[48] There are also coffin-wood trees (*shoumu*), the leaves of which are flat like the leaves of the leaning thuja (*cebo*), a variety of cypress trees.[49] The huge ones in girth measure the arm spans of four or five people and are dozens of rods high. On the flank of the Xiao Source River, where one crosses it, a *nan* tree has been felled to serve as a bridge across it. It stands up to a man's eyebrows and runs for no less than thirty paces. I heard that twenty years ago, people were ordered to gather lumber and build a bridge across the river. Could this be what is left of it?

I ascended and descended for altogether five *li* and reached Xiao Source River. It approaches from Three Segments Rock in the southeast. It flows off to the west when it reaches here, passing northeast of Mount Incense Burner to emerge at Luguan. Where the river's flow ended, I crossed to the south, then immediately ascended from the foot of Three Segments Ridge [Sanfen Ling]. The ridge is pinnacled and sheer, with nowhere to put your feet, while the tiny trail is hidden deep among slender bamboo. I lowered my head, pushed through the bamboo, and ascended, using two hands to pull on the bamboo so my feet could move forward. Because the bamboo was soaked and drenched by early morning fog, I could not hold my head above it and proceed on flat ground below it. All I could do was rely on the bamboo to serve as a well-rope dangling down from the sky, which was quite effective. It was like this for the next eight *li*, and only then did the terrain gradually level out.

Next, I proceeded south from the top of the ridge for two *li*. At the time, it was still covered by the early morning fog. I gazed toward the summit of Three Segments Rock but could not make it out. Twilight was approaching, so I abandoned the slender bamboo for some pine trees, where I found a plot of land as flat as the palm of a hand. The mountain was lofty and had no water, and even though I made a fire, it was hard to

48 The precise identity of solitude trees is unknown.

49 Coffin wood trees (lit., "longevity trees") might refer to *Taiwania cryptomerioides*, one of the largest trees in Asia that grows to 200 ft/61 m tall. The wood of this tree is especially resistant to insects, fungi, and decay, making it highly desirable for making coffins and furniture.

cook. I had the guide chop some big pieces of wood, stack them up, and then make a bonfire. The plan for the night was to use slender bamboo as our bedding and consider the fire as a bed curtain. After dark, a great wind howled, gathering bonfire sparks as they danced in the sky. The flames roved and shifted, swiftly fleeing forward for several rods. Only then did I consider this place a surpassing scenic wonder. Not long afterward, the fog yielded to the wind. Suddenly, I looked up at the bright stars, which were then followed by a fine rain. I held up an umbrella but could not fend off the wind and rain; I held up a quilt, which gradually became soaked. Fortunately, the force of the fire was intense, so this was sufficient to ward off attacks from wind and rain. The rain was extreme at the fifth drum, so I could not avoid becoming drenched.

Twenty-ninth day [23 April]: The sky gradually brightened; the rain gradually let up. I looked up at Three Segments Rock, and for a moment, its shadow was revealed. Then, bearing hunger, I immediately charged through the wet bamboo and proceeded south. Next, I descended the mountain for two *li* and realized there was still a peak between Three Segments Rock and me. Crossed the small spine of a ridge inside a depression and again ascended to the south for three *li*. Only then did I come to some huge rocks coiling around a cliff. All the places where I ascended yesterday were steep, earthen slopes with no rocks. This was the guide's error.[50] I came south of the huge rocks, then proceeded for one *li*, where I looked down to the east at some tall summits, which seemed like one could reach out and touch them. But they were mired in a haze, so I could not distinguish their true form. I advanced as far as possible to where the stone steps ended. A heavy mountain rain poured down, soaking me from head to heel. I then backtracked the way I had come. When passing the huge rocks at the cliff, I noticed that on their flank was a thread-like trail hidden deep among some slender bamboo. The rain was intense, so I could not ascend. And even if I could ascend, I could not see anything. I then descended, following my earlier route. I reached where I was the previous night, where the guide had built the bonfire. I planned to descend the earlier trail that approached directly from the north. I tried cooking rice near a stream, but the rain extinguished the fire. With only some embers remaining, I hurriedly found charred wood, which I lit and used as a torch when I descended the mountain. But I mistakenly took the trail approaching from the mountain's west side, and in the end, I could not find the trail. After quite a while, I came to a stream at the bottom of a small ravine, where I cooked some rice. By then, it was already noon. Next, I treaded and trampled through some brush and bamboo and after quite a while reached a

50 That is to say, the guide had mistakenly led Xu along a trail where he could not observe unusual rock formations.

mountain stream. This is a place where five mountain streams from across and athwart merge. These are all waterways from the west, south, and north sides of Three Segments. The stream from the east I crossed when I came by here earlier is to their far north. I then skipped the first stream and crossed the third but did not cross the remaining stream to the far north. Following along the shoal on the southern shore of the stream, I proceeded east. After one *li*, I came to the same place where I had crossed the river earlier. Only then did I wade across and head north. Following my earlier trail, I reached Muddy River and Sea Turtle Head Mountain, where I sat and rested for a while. I caught a whiff of the highly fragrant orchid flowers. I looked around for the flowers inside a nook next to me. I picked some and took them with me. Next, reached Half-Side Mountain and descended to Ox Head River. Dusk had already fallen. Fortunately, by then, I had gone past the dangerous places.

I then had the guide lead me along the shortcut to Chives Plateau, where the High Mountain Yao people live. I proceeded south from there, where I failed to see even a single hut. Only after going straight through the High Bridge Plateau did I come upon dwellings of the Yao people. At first, in my ascent, I was still on an earthen mountain. But after entering the mountain and descending to the east, all I could hear was the gurgling and burbling of water from a deep gulch. In the dark, we groped along a precipitous stone stairway and descended. After one *li*, we passed two single-plank bridges, then saw the flicker and glimmer of fire. As I hurried toward it, I noticed that the fire was down low in an area next to a plot of farmland, so I did not dare to check further. A short time later, I came upon one or two thatched huts. I shouted, and a person came out carrying a torch and graciously welcomed us to spend the night there. I asked about the fire near the plots of farmland. It turns out the people there were catching "smarties." The Yao people call frogs "smarties" (*guaizhe*). I asked our host his surname, and he said it was Deng. He was twenty years old and well informed in speaking about mountain matters. I was grateful to him for inviting me to stay at his place in the middle of the night. Only then did I realize the generosity of the ancients is still maintained among the Yao people. After going into his hut, we hastily built a fire to dry my clothes, cooked rice, ate, and then went to bed.

Thirtieth day [24 April]: I had not slept the night before, so it was daybreak before I called the boy servant to get up and make breakfast. We headed out after breakfast. Only then did I see the so-called Chives Plateau. Situated at the base of a lofty mountain, it is shaped like a wok. I heard the gurgling sound of water during the night but did not know where it was coming from. As it turns out, the water flows into a cavern and is forced into a gorge. Inside the gorge is a hollow with a clear pool with deep, blue water. This is Dragon Pool, or so I was told. Crossed a mountain to the west and proceeded for altogether two *li*, where I passed Clear Water Pool.

After another one and a half *li*, I passed the mouth of Coiling Dragon Stream [Panlong Xi]. After another one and a half *li*, crossed a ridge and then passed Nine Turtles Enter the Crag. Then ascended a ridge, went by Thatched Den [Mawo], and descended to Master Yang's Ridge, covering five *li* altogether before we reached the guide's home. After three more *li*, I returned to have a meal at Slanted Cavern [Xiedong], after which I briefly rested. I took the orchid flowers I was carrying—nine of them on altogether seven stems, but the leaves were not long and bold. These flowers are inferior to those in Fujian. Facing the entrance to a small peak, I placed them on top of a rocky terrace as offerings to Buddha. I did not proceed until the afternoon. We then passed north of the Sage's Ceremonial Hall [Shengdian] on the western ridge. By the time we came out between the two peaks, Fairy Radiance [Ehuang] and Maiden Blossom [Nüying] in the west, I had already turned and proceeded northeast.[51] After altogether ten *li*, passed Grand Peace Camp [Taiping Ying]. Proceeded another five *li* to the north and stopped to spend the night at Trail Pavilion [Luting]. With all the recent rain, it was not until tonight that I observed the glow of the setting sun.

Southeast of Nine Doubts Cavern [Jiuyi Dong] is Jade Flute Crag. As it turns out, a small rocky peak rises among the layers of mountains all around it. The cavern is situated below the peak, facing west. Trigram Mountain [Guashan] is to the west, directly facing the cavern entrance. In shape, it resembles a water-bamboo stalk and looks like a scholar's upright, rectangular headwear.[52] It moreover rises prominently among the masses of mountains. The cavern's interior is flat, spacious, and unobstructed from south to north. Here, one finds the remains of an ancient shrine, designated as the place where Marquis He (Hehou) rose and ascended.[53] Thirty *li* south of here is Incense Burner Mountain, while fifty-some *li* to the southeast is Three Segments Rock. Thirty *li* west is Mother of Shun Rock [Shunmu Shi], while another ten *li* west are Nine Segments at the Head of the Border [Jietou Jiufen], which, as it turns out, is the eastern border of Jianghua County.

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51 The three vertical rock formations that Three Segments Rock comprises have individual names. Two of them are mentioned here. These are supposedly monikers of the daughters of legendary emperor Shun, whose name graces the third and main segment of the rock formation. According to legend, while on an inspection tour of the south, Shun died and was buried on Mount Jiuyi.

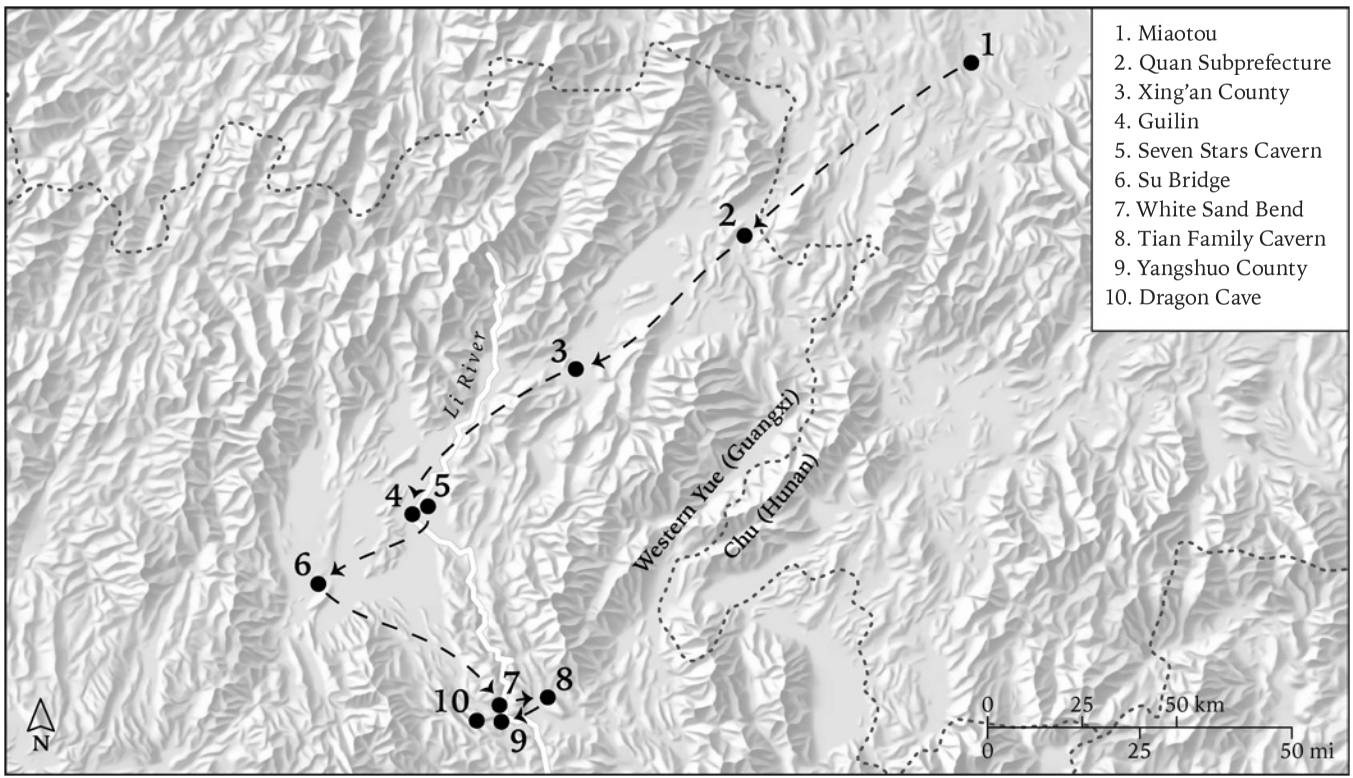
52 Xu Xiake refers to the thick stalks of the water-bamboo plant (*jiao*); in other words, the entrance to the cavern is vertically aligned. The reference here is to a type of headwear called scholar's headcloth (*rujin*) or square headcloth (*fangjin*), worn by scholars during the Ming dynasty.

53 According to legend, He Zhenyuan lived on Mount Jiuyi in remote antiquity. He commanded such skill as a doctor and veterinarian that it attracted the attention of the legendary King Shun, who, when he visited Mount Jiuyi, conferred upon He Zhenyuan the title marquis (*hou*). Later, Marquis He became a transcendent and "rose and ascended" into the heavens.

As for the sources of the streams below Three Segments Rock, everyone claims that one of them goes out to Guangdong, one of them goes out to Guangxi, and one of them descends from Mount Jiuyi to form the Xiao River, which then goes out to Hu-Guang. But after reaching below Three Segments, you realize it is simply a rock formation segmented into three forks. The stream to the northeast of its base forms the source of the Xiao River, which merges with streams to the north and west—the five mountain streams that join and connect—and then flows out to the great ocean. This is the source of the Xiao River. The stream directly to the east approaches from High Bridge Plateau to form the Plain Fields River [Baitian Jiang]. Fifteen *li* to the east, it passes through Place Overlooking the River [Linjiang Suo]. After another twenty *li* to the east, it reaches the administrative center of Lanshan County. This is the source of the Kui River [Kuishui]. The river in the southeast approaches from the big bridge fifteen *li* southeast of High Bridge Plateau and goes down to Brocade Fields [Jintian], then heads west to Jianghua County. This is the source of the Tuo River [Tuoshui]. It does not go out to the two Guangs because, in the south, the river at Brocade Fields crossflows to form the borders of Chu and Yue. East of the Brocade Fields is Stone Fish Ridge [Shiyu Ling], which forms the border of Lianzhou Prefecture in Guangdong. It is there where its water begins to flow southeast into Eastern Yue [Yuedong]. If you consider Guangxi, then the area south of Upper Martial Bastion [Shang Wubao] forms the border of He County.

High Bridge Plateau forms the southern border of Ningyuan County and the western edge of Lanshan County, but it falls under the jurisdiction of Lanshan. This is also a High Mountain Yao area, the hidden haunt of robbers and bandits. Over the last two months, some of them dashed out of Yongzhou Prefecture and killed a constabulary officer from Dong'an County. And it was this bunch who did all the killing and looting in and around Cold Water Bend [Lengshui Wan] and Vast Wilderness Bridge [Boye Qiao]. All their comings and goings were from Ox Head River, so they availed themselves to spend the night at Chives Plateau and Coiling Dragon Cavern [Panlong Dong] and passed through Nine Doubts Settlement. Their gang has about seventy and eighty men, with twenty or thirty horses. They are well equipped, with both sharp weapons and silk banners. Among them are several who have just started to grow their hair, along with two or three Buddhist monks from the temple on the ridge at Cold Water Bend. Also among them are some carpenters from distant places. Every person who lives in Chives Plateau can talk about their activities. My guide talks about them in the same way.

—Translated by James M. Hargett



Map 22. Western Yue (Guangxi), Diary 1, 1637

Travels in Western Yue

I

[EARLY SUMMER 1637]

On 31 May 1637, while in Miaotou, Hunan, Servant Gu was sent by boat to Guilin in Yuexi, modern Guangxi, where he would take Xu Xiake's baggage and belongings and wait there. Xu and Tranquil Hearing then visited several scenic mountains near Quan Subprefecture. After passing through Xing'an County, they rendezvoused with Servant Gu in Guilin on 20 June. As mentioned in the introduction, one of the main reasons that Xu Xiake traveled to Guangxi and Yunnan was to observe karst caverns. One of the most spectacular karst landforms in Guilin is Seven Stars Cavern, so-called because its aboveground spire has seven "peaks" that in outline resemble the seven stars that comprise the Big Dipper. Xu Xiake's diary entry describing his visit to the cavern, translated here, is a good example of how skillfully he can delineate the details of an individual landform.

Second day [*of the fifth month*] [23 June 1637]: After breakfast, I packed some food provisions with Tranquil Hearing and Servant Gu. Then, carrying our bedding, we headed east through Pontoon Bridge Gate [Fuqiao Men]. Crossed a pontoon bridge, then next crossed Flowery Bridge [Huaqiao].[1] Proceeded east from the bridge and immediately turned north, following the height.[2] On the eastern edge of Flowery Bridge, a small rock formation juts out.[3] As it moves off to the east, the slender stream that adorns the nearby village is especially pleasing to the eye. As for the towering height northeast of Flowery Bridge, its contours jut and jag and are surprisingly not as striking as the peaks on both sides of the trail to the southeast, but Seven Stars Cavern stands aloft right there.

Source: "Yuexiyou riji yi" (*YJJZ*, 1:379–81; *YJ*, 1:293–95). This translation (here revised) originally appeared in Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 165–70.

1 The "floating" or pontoon bridge mentioned here spanned the Li River [Lijiang] in the eastern part of Guilin.

2 "Height" here (shan 山) refers to the "cliff" or aboveground portion of Seven Stars Cavern.

3 The small rock mentioned in this line is still a popular tourist attraction in Guilin known as Hibiscus Rock [Furong Shi].

Altogether, it is only one *li* or so from the pontoon bridge. The cavern faces west, and the Eternal Buddha Monastery [Shoufo Si] is below it. One climbs the spire from the left side of the monastery. First, you come to a pavilion with extended eaves-like wings that welcome visitors. It is called Plucking Stars [Zhaixing] and was constructed by Cao Xuequan, who also wrote the inscription on its name plaque.[4] An overhanging cliff spans high above it. There was barely enough room along the path for my feet, but my view was relatively unobstructed when I looked down at the city wall battlements and spires to the west. To the left of the pavilion is a Buddhist cave hermitage situated right at the entrance to the cavern, but when you go in it, you do not realize it is part of the cavern. I asked a monk from the monastery about the location of the entrance to the cavern. He pushed open the rear door leaf and led me inside. I then ascended steps for about three rods.

At this point, Xu enters the cavernous interior of Seven Stars Cavern:

The entrance to the cavern was hidden in the shadow cast by a Buddhist hermitage.[5] Suddenly, the cavern's passageway turned and headed northwest, where it opened broadly. Above, it is open like a dome; below, it is flat. Numerous aligned rocky bamboo shoots hang down like suspended columns, chilly and cool, dripping and leaking. This is the upper section, which forms Seven Stars Cliff. We descended some steps from the right and entered the lower section. This forms Nestled against Sunglow Clouds Cavern. It is grand and luminous, bold and spacious. Its entrance also faces northwest. Looking out into the distance, the view is expansive and majestic. There is a crack stretching across the ceiling of the cavern. The carp-shaped rock up there seems like it is about to leap down through the crack. Covered in scales from head to tail, even if someone had carved a rock to fashion such a carp, it could not be more lifelike. Next to it are intertwined carriage canopy pennants in the shape of coiling dragons, penta-colored and glistening. To the northwest, a tiered terrace rises high. I ascended the terrace along stone steps. This area forms Lord Lao's Terrace. From the terrace, I headed north, where the cavern seemed to divide into two realms. The higher terrace proceeds west and then turns east, following the interior of a deep cavity. I proceeded along the terrace, passed an entranceway, and went straight north until I reached a dark area. Above is a boundless dome. Below is a sunken depression where a pool has formed. The boundless space here becomes precipitous and ruptured. Terrain that was flat before now suddenly turned treacherous.

4 On Cao Xuequan, see part 1, note 25, pages 250–51, above.
5 The retreat was built directly in front of the entrance to the cavern.

Now about to enter the dark recesses of the cavern, Xu puts the guide he hired earlier to work.

I had hired a guide, who lit a pine torch at the bottom of the cavern to lead me in. I could not catch up since he did not accompany me along the terrace. I also did not know if this was a place to light torches.[6] I then descended from the terrace and reached the bottom of the cavern. The guide, carrying a torch, pressed on. Following the terrace eastward, we proceeded through a cavity and only then caught sight of the terrace wall, where the patterns of the cracks resemble an ornately designed tapestry. To be provided with such miraculous transformations makes one note even more that they have come down from what is above.[7]

We continued north and entered First Heaven's Gate, whose stone pillars droop straight down so only one person could pass at a time. After we entered, the cavern became even more vaulted, lofty, and deep. To the left of the gate is a stone balustrade spanning across. Below, it sinks into deep darkness, so indistinct you cannot see to the bottom. This forms Otter Pool [Tazi Tan]. The guide said that the abyss below it leads to the sea, but this is not necessarily so. This is probably the place where Lao Lord Terrace plummets to the north. But when it reaches here, its great height and depth change orientation into intricate passages and intersections, forming an entirely separate scene. Inside it are entrances to two consecutive celestial gates (*tianmen*).[8] The path then gradually turns to the northeast, along which are the rock formations Bamboo Stuck in a Flower Vase [Huaping Chazhu], Withdraw the Net [Chewang], Chessboard [Yiqi], Eight Transcendents [Baxian], and Steamed Bun [Mantou]. On both sides of the path are images of Sudhana, among which is an image of Avalokiteśvara.[9] The guide proceeded with great haste, but I insisted that we pause to make close examinations, being selective in what I looked at. But what I desired to observe was not here.

Next, we passed a cliff and ascended. To its right is a pool—a black abyss just like the Otter Pool, but in grandness and expanse, it even surpasses it. This is called Dragon River [Longjiang]. It probably connects through to Otter Pool. Next, proceeded north and then turned east, passing Red Felt [Hongzhan] and White Felt [Baizhan]—hanging

6 Limestone contains large pores that can serve as storage areas for gas or oil, so the concern here is that lit torches might trigger an explosion.

7 In other words, visitors to the cavern are reminded that they are now in a subterranean world of "miraculous transformations" quite different from the one they came from "above."

8 These "celestial gates" are vertical rock landforms resembling doors or gates.

9 Sudhana (Shancai tongzi) is a famous young Buddhist pilgrim who sought enlightenment by traveling extensively to study with various master teachers and bodhisattvas. Avalokiteśvara is universally known throughout East Asia as the bodhisattva associated with compassion.

"blankets" that looked like abandoned "fur coats." Their "wrinkles" seemed like they had been woven. Next, along the path to the east, we passed Phoenixes Frolicking in Water [Fenghuang Xishui], and only then did we pass through a cavern entranceway. A chilly wind swished and soughed, which blew out the torch while the cold stabbed at us. Presumably, the wind came in from outside the cavern, and when it reached here, its collective force became even greater. Windy Cavern on Folded Brocade Spire [Diecai Shan] is also like this, but in the past, Folded Brocade never had a Windy Cavern.[10] Yet people today designate it so. There was a Windy Cavern here in the past, but no one knows about it today. Exiting the cavern, we suddenly saw a halo of light shining inside a deep cavity. It was hazy, just like when the light of dawn is about to break. To the east, we then exited from the back of the cavern. There was a stream there from the northern section of the cavern that flowed in a circle. We entered the cavern from the south. I guess that the stream I describe below is Dragon River.[11] A small rock bridge spans above it, which is said to have been built by the Song dynasty minister, the Honorable Zeng Bu (1036–1107).[12] After crossing the bridge with my hand, I brushed away moisture on the right side of the cavern entrance, where I found Honorable Zeng's account.[13] I only then realized that the cavern was formerly named Cold Water Cave [Lengshui Yan]. The Honorable Zeng commanded Gui. While searching for wonders in the cavern, he constructed the bridge. Only then was the name changed to Master Zeng's Cavern [Zenggong Yan]. Presumably, Dragon River and Nesting in Sunglow connect as one subterranean cavern, and it is simply that their two respective entrances have unique features.

> In his travels, Xu often gathered information from local informants. In the next section, he quotes a response to a question he asked about the source of a subterranean stream.

I stood for a long while on the bridge. When I looked down into the ravine, I saw someone washing clothes and drawing water. I asked, "This stream approaches from the northeast. Can one enter the cavern by tracing it upstream or not?" The person said, "One can go deep into this watery cavern for several *li*. Along the way, there are notable sights. If

10 Folded Brocade Spire is in the northeastern precinct of Guilin.

11 Xu Xiake is alerting readers that he suspects the following description pertains to the Dragon River.

12 Zeng Bu was a Northern Song official who, in 1178, was appointed to serve as the administrative and military commissioner of the region now known as Guangxi. During one of his sightseeing tours in Guilin, he explored Seven Stars Cavern and built the stone bridge mentioned here by Xu Xiake.

13 The account (*ji*) mentioned here refers to the commemorative essay written by Zeng Bu to celebrate the bridge's construction.

you compare it to the caverns outside, the route is twice as long but doubles the number of surpassing scenic sights. As for those caverns with water, there is no way to tell the depth. One can only wade through them during the winter months, not now." I immediately hired him to serve as my guide. He then returned home to fetch some pine torches. I followed him out of the cavern and then to the right, where we came to Felicitous Forest Abbey [Qinglin Guan]. I stowed my bags there and asked the monks to provide us with a meal of yellow millet. As before, the guide and I went into the cavern from the east entrance to a defile. Only after passing Phoenixes Frolicking in Water and reaching the Two Felts, Red and White, did we proceed north on a forking path.

> This next section documents some creative and evocative names bestowed on karst formations, such as "lions sporting with balls" and "elephants with curled trunks."

Along the way are "lions frolicking with balls," "elephants with curled trunks," and "camels with long necks and protruding humps." There are sacrificial offerings on earthen burial mounds, which include "swine bristles" and "goose feet" set out in front; there is a feast for Arhats, which includes "golden goblets" and a "silver stand" arranged and set out below. At a spot high above it, there is a mountain spirit, about one foot in length, sitting on an overhanging cliff, seemingly about to take flight. In the deepest part of the cavern is an image of Buddha, but only seven inches in height, sitting upright halfway up the wall on the flank of a bodhisattva. Next to the bodhisattva is a niche with a meditation mat where monks sit cross-legged and meditate. In front of Avalokiteśvara's throne, Dharma Storehouse's (Fazang, 643–712) prayer wheel seems as if it is about to start spinning.[14] In the deep part of the cavern, we again found abyssal darkness by a bridge over the upper reaches of a stream. When we reached this place, the guide would not dare go in, saying, "Carrying a lantern and leading with a torch, we could never reach the end, even in several days. However, no one has ever gone in here, let alone just after the water in the stream has risen. How could we possibly risk such unpredictable danger?" We backtracked, following along the Red and White Felts and Phoenixes Frolicking in, then exited the cavern.

> Following his usual practice, Xu Xiake closes with a summary of the distance he traveled and a brief assessment of what was observed.

14 Dharma Storehouse was an important and influential patriarch of the Huayan School of Buddhism. Prayer wheels were used to help one accumulate wisdom and gain good karma.

I figure that first, from Nestled against Sunglow Clouds to Master Zeng's Cavern, altogether I covered about two *li*; later, from where I entered and then exited Master Zeng's Cavern, I made a circuit of about three *li*. However, as for the surpassing scenery in the two caverns, it turned out that we saw just about everything there was to see.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

On the twenty-first day of the fifth month (12 July), accompanied by Tranquil Hearing and Gu Xing, Xu Xiake traveled south by boat to the town of Yangshuo. There, he enjoyed spectacular views of karst scenery on both banks of the Li River. He spent the next few days exploring the sights in and around Yangshuo, returning to Guilin on the twenty-eighth (19 July).

Twenty-third day [*of the fifth month*] [14 July 1637]:[15] After an early breakfast, I followed the river northeast on foot from White Sand [Baisha].[16] After one *li*, I crossed the river and went south, emerging to the east of Pageboy Mountain [Shutong Shan]. Looking east from the ford toward the northeast bank of the river, I saw four tall peaks standing in a line and angling toward the south. The northernmost peak is divided into two, forming a human-like shape that tilted toward the northwest—one of several mountains to the east that have this appearance. Continuing south, I arrived at the eastern foothills. Amid a grove of trees overlooking an artificial pond stands the Pure Heart Pavilion [Chengxin Ting], where one can rest.

Next proceeded east for one *li*, I passed Mu Mountain Village [Mushan Cun], then crossed the river and continued east, following the southern slope of the four pinnacled peaks and soon emerging east of the peaks. The mountains then opened up, revealing an even more extraordinary scene. As I gazed northeast, another peak rose, on top dividing into two forks, the eastern fork low and at an angle—like a monk's cap hanging in the air, the western fork tall and thrusting—two extraordinary sights on a single mountain. Of the four pinnacled peaks, the eastern branch is the most elegant, and the western summit is the most imposing of the two branches. In this way, the two mountains complement each other. But when looking back southwestward across the river, below, one sees sharp rock faces falling sheer, and above, one sees twin peaks standing together—a startling image of the massed peaks to the south of Pageboy Mountain.

15 *YJJZ*, 1:425–29; *YJ*, 1:330–35.

16 At White Sand, southeast of Yangshuo, the Li River makes an abrupt turn toward the northeast.

Now I was following the mountains east, and after five *li*, I had left behind the two forks. Descending a ridge to the southeast, I reached Power of Buddha Market [Foli Si]. Ten *li* from Yangshuo, this village faces the river's southward turn. After setting my luggage down in an inn, I asked about First Graduate Peak [Zhuangyuan Feng], still expecting to head east toward it, but the locals pointed to the west, and only now did I realize that it was the two-pronged peak I had passed earlier. The western summit, being the highest, is called First Graduate.

Then I crossed the ridge behind, heading north, and after one *li* arrived at Red Flag Cave [Hongqi Dong]. After inspecting it and walking one *li* to the northwest, I arrived at the foot of a mountain to find the path buried beneath grasses and impossible to make out. Climbing and clambering, I gradually made my way up and found a stone path, only to lose it soon again, for sometimes it was obscured and sometimes visible, depending on the denseness of the vegetation. After ascending one *li* to the northwest, I crossed the depression to the west, then proceeded two *li* to the northeast, crossing a depression on the east side—the spot where the mountain separates into two branches. To the northwest, I made my way over a jumble of rocks and a tangle of creepers until I reached the peak.

On the side of the rock face, a cave faced east. Although the entrance was tall, it was not very wide; inside, there was an array of images of gods and goddesses. Local people had carved inscriptions on the stone alongside, claiming that praying for rain here is very effective, and naming the mountain Rich Teaching Mountain [Fujiao Shan]. Above the cave are two tiers of openings; I went out under the overhang, but there was no way to climb up. In front of the cave, I could see a peak facing east—the one like a monk's cap—and it had a cave, but I could not access it, given the sheer rock face and the thatch grass in between.

I sat inside the cave for a long time, gazing off into the distance toward Gongcheng to the east, Pingle to the southeast, and Lipu to the southwest—mountains after mountains in all directions. I wanted to climb to the high peak's summit, but the north and south faces were sheer and had no steps. On the south side, I tried to climb up the cliff, scaling the steep rock, now clinging like an ape, now leaping like a panther, and I succeeded in reaching halfway up the cliff, only to find that there was not a single crack in the rock face and my hands and feet were powerless to take me farther. At this time, heavy rain showers were moving in from the south and west. Seeing that the rock face above me offered no grips and there was thick vegetation below, I realized that it would be even harder to get a foothold when branches were slippery with rain, and I quickly made my descent. After three *li*, I reached the foot of the mountain, and after another two *li*, I crossed the ridge. I stopped for a meal in the Power of Buddha Market.

Members of the local Su family had succeeded in studying while also farming—three or four of them had been selected as tribute students, and seeing me appear on the scene, they gathered around: "This mountain is so steep," they said, "that there has never been a path up to the summit. A few years ago, an ancient tree was growing on the side of the mountain. After praying for a safe climb, three of our servants attempted an ascent using ladders and ropes, but they could only manage to get as far as the tree and never reached the top. After that, nobody else ever tried." In the afternoon, I returned from Power of Buddha Market in the rain, covering ten *li* in total, once more crossing the river twice before I arrived at White Sand Bend [Baisha Wan]. I then rested on the boat. . . .

Twenty-fourth day [15 July]: After breakfast in White Sand, I crossed the river to the foot of the southern mountains. Once ashore, I asked the way to Tian Family Cavern [Tianjia Dong]. Following the hills southeast, as I passed a peak, I found a cavern entrance extending high, a door and wall at its foot. I entered right away. The cavern faced east, lofty and bright, level and open, with many stalactites. In the left rear was an opening to the outside; the passage was dark but airy. The statues of gods inside the cavern were very striking; a stone stele below recorded the reopening of the cavern by Magistrate Wang Zhichen (*jinshi* 1595). Only after reading the inscription did I realize that this cavern, which the locals call Tian Family Cavern, was known in the olden days as White Crane Mountain [Baihe Shan]. I had been searching for White Crane for three days without success, and now, visiting one cavern, I had succeeded in locating two caverns—what a happy outcome! . . .

After leaving White Crane, I followed the hills north and the river westward, and after three *li*, entered through Yangshuo's southeast gate, exited through the main south gate, and left my bags at an inn. Then, carrying fire and shouldering torches, I took the main road northwest to Dragon Cave [Longdong Yan]. After first going one *li*, I saw a mountain off to the right, deeply cavernous, with multiple windows, and I took that to be Dragon Cave. But the people on the road pointed farther ahead, saying: "It's on the northern mountain." So I went through a stone passageway, and after one *li*, crossed a small bridge and headed east, finding two cavern openings facing west, one to the south and one to the north. The southern of the two is Dragon Leap Cave [Longyue Yan]. The land slopes slightly downward, and the opening is awkward and exposed; the northern cavern is slightly higher, with vegetation blocking the path to the entrance.

I first entered the southern cave. Inside, I mounted a ledge, to the right of which was a hole that extended deeply to the front of the cave. To the left was a stone platform, stone seat, and stone grotto, where one can rest and reflect. To the right was an inscription, "Account of Opening the Cave" (Kaidong ji), by a local provincial graduate named Mo

Xiaolian, which said, "To the north is the palace where lurking dragons hibernate. Here is where the magic dragons gambol, so it is called Dragon Leap Cave."

After leaving, I ascended north to Dragon Cave. We entered with torches alight. The cave was five rods wide and one rod tall; the ledge along the half wall on the south face was as level as a corridor. After proceeding for several rods, we found the cave opened to the south, and the ceiling grew taller. On the rear wall, we saw the Dragon Shadow [Longying] and Dragon Bed [Longchuang], both of a striking white stone, overhanging above and cracked below, seemingly chiseled half away with a stone mallet, leaving just a faint impression. Below was one square pool and one round pool, five or six inches deep, with spring water as clear as a mirror. The water drips constantly but does not spill; no matter how often you draw water from the pools, it always refills. Given that this hidden palace has such a wondrous spring, it is fitting that this cavern is billed as the foremost spectacle in Yangshuo. In front of the ponds is a cinnabar stove, enclosed on all sides, while below a hole has been carved out of the rock, almost like a door made with human hands. Above the pools are rows of little cavities, like wasp dens or swallow nests, but none offer a way through.

I entered, crouching low from a hollow below the left wall. The passage gradually grew so tight it felt like being inside a large pipe. I crawled southward for five or six rods before finding space to stretch. Soon after, there was a side cavity where one could turn around. Then, like at Nanming and Xiaoyou, in each direction a grotto heaven opened, and I thus arrived at the rear of Dragon Leap.[17]

After exiting the cave and proceeding one-half *li*, I entered through a gate and gazed east toward the array of peaks to the south, where Dragon Cave was located. I could see multiple openings in the mountains and was brimming with anticipation at the prospect of mounting the dragon. So I crossed a stream and headed east, proceeded through an overgrown marshy area, and after another one-half *li*, I arrived at the foot of the mountain. First, I went into the first west-facing entrance. It was as lofty as a gorge, but inside, it had been trodden and soiled by cattle and horses and was not fit to walk on. I proceeded several dozen feet to the east: a passage that turned to the north grew so dark that I could not go to the end, while a passage that turned south was illuminated by windows facing west. Following the light, I arrived back at the gorge and exited to the west above my original entry point: after entering the cavern, I climbed south to the second west-facing entrance.

Now, from the outside, I climbed to the third west-facing entrance. The cave opened to the east, forming a gulch like the first cave, but its

17 Nanming and Xiaoyou are the names of celebrated mountains in Zhejiang and Hunan, respectively.

lower portion was as narrow as an alleyway, with the rock above rising in tiers like a storied building. Within five rods, the gulch ended, and on the rock face above, I saw the opening to a passageway, round and regular as though crafted by paring and polishing. But the walls were sheer, and there was no way to climb up. With Tranquil Hearing's assistance, I tried by every means to make an ascent and finally reached the next level up, but the level above was so perpendicular that the passageway was out of reach.

So we went back through the entryway and looked up at the two entries above, the fourth and fifth west-facing entrances. I was hoping that inside it would be possible to descend and reach that opening above the gulch. Tranquil Hearing proposed to climb up on the outside by clinging to branches and putting his feet into crevices, while I preferred to look for another hole or ledge that would provide access to the interior. I arrived below the sixth west-facing entrance, but it was considerably higher up, and the rock face was even more sheer; the more I gazed up at it, the more inaccessible it seemed.

So then I went over to below the seventh west-facing entrance. There, I noted that there were veins in the rock; where the rock jutted out, I would be able to find a foothold, and where there were crevices, my fingers would be able to grip. So I spread myself over the rock and made my ascent, reaching the cavern entrance after an arduous climb.

At the north end of the cave, a narrow hollow rose vertically, some five or six rods high. First, I attempted to reach the upper level, but the crevice was shiny and had no footholds, so it was impossible to go up. I told Servant Gu to go down the mountain to look for wood so that we could ascend by jamming branches into the gap. But we did not have a knife, and though there were some upright branches, it would be hard to break them off. Nonetheless, I had him go off to search as best he could. At this point, Tranquil Hearing was still clambering outside the fifth entrance; I reckoned it would be difficult for him to ascend that way, so I told him to hurry up and join forces with me here.

As Servant Gu descended, I sized up the crevice once more. Although there were no crannies or steps, the walls bent round, and one could prop oneself up with hands and feet without fear of falling. So I eased myself inside, and then, as though working my way up inside a well, I stretched and wriggled upward without relying on rungs or steps. Once I had climbed to the top, I found that to the north, the rock fell away, creating a passageway, and light was shining through, making me realize there must be access to the cavern I saw earlier. But I had not yet established which entry it would lead to, so I just sat there straddling the rock. I looked up at the cave ceiling—it extended in all directions like a vault. I peered down at the bottom of the passageway—it divided into two, like an ornate chamber. So at the top of my voice, I shouted to Tranquil Hearing, urging him to hurry up.

Eventually, he arrived, but later than Servant Gu. The branches that Gu had collected were too spindly to be of any use, and by this time, I had no need for them anyway, having already climbed the ridge. I instructed Tranquil Hearing to climb up like I did—it was like teaching a gibbon. Once he had joined me at the top, I went southward from the west side, and he went northward from the east side, each of us searching for new features of interest, but neither of us could get very far. So from the north end, I descended into the passage and proceeded northward, and to the west, there was an entrance high up—the sixth double door.

We did not make the ascent immediately; instead, we followed the passage and entered farther, turning and exiting to the west: this was the fifth entrance. Next to it was a rock shaped like a dragon, hanging down three or four rods, its head divided into two branches; when knocked, it gave a boom. Next to it was a level shelf that below overlooked the serried cliffs and above offered a view of stalactites: one could lie down and take one's ease next to the dangling dragon.

Going north from the dragon to the end of the cliff, I found another entry—the fourth entry. I entered and headed east, and after I descended one level, the passage opened in all directions. When I went right, the passage turned east; it was extremely dark, and I could not reach the end. When I went left, it exited to the west—to the upper level by the earlier third entrance. I realized the entryway that appeared to have been gouged out must lie within. So following the cliff, I went to the end to find a column standing in the way. I slipped through a crack next to the column and found another dark chamber inside, neither extending far nor offering an outlet.

Ascending from the third entry, we passed four more entries in turn, and in all cases, at first, there seemed to be no way up. Still, once we entered the seventh door, it was like a string of pearls all linked together, continuously connected, turning corners to reach farther, ascending and descending through different levels of the structure, shallow or deep as they chose, layer upon layer overlooking the void—it was really like being inside the Stamen and Pearl Palace [Ruizhu Gong] on the summit of Massed Jade Mountain! Mo Gongchen had inscribed the words "Pearl Bright Cavern" (Zhuming Dong) in several places above the fourth and fifth caverns—clearly his effort to pay tribute to this cavern.

By this time, it was afternoon, so I had Servant Gu hurry off to the inn by the south gate and prepare a meal for us. Tranquil Hearing and I relaxed for a time, up high next to the dangling dragon, as blissful as gods, utterly forgetting ourselves—a supremely fortunate moment in life. . . .

> On 31 July, Xu Xiake left Guilin. He instructed Servant Gu to escort the luggage to the river port of Su Bridge [Suqiao], some 20 mi/32 km southwest of Guilin. At the same time, he took the

opportunity to explore caverns in the area in between. Tranquil Hearing, now too ill to participate in such strenuous activities, rested while Xu Xiake was busy caving. We join Xu Xiake at the end of his busy morning exploring the Zither Pool [Qintan] and Lychee [Lizhi] Caverns.

Tenth day [*of the sixth month*] [31 July 1637]:[18] . . . Emerging from the cavern, I walked one *li* to the north of Zither Pool and arrived at the village; by this time, it was afternoon. I led Tranquil Hearing northwest by a shortcut for two *li*, and we reached Level Dike Market [Pingtang Jie]. The rocky mountain to the west is very sheer, its two peaks standing close together like a gate, and near the summit of the southern peak, I suddenly spotted a window that went all the way through to the other side, as bright as an extended mirror. Earlier, when visiting Middle Concealed Mountain [Zhongyin Shan], I had searched unsuccessfully for Copper Coin Cave [Tongqian Yan]. That night, when I hastened toward the west gate, I felt excited when I passed it.[19] Now, I was passing beneath it once more, and I could not contain my joy. But when I asked people how to reach it, everyone said there was no path.

At this point, Tranquil Hearing was so ill that he could not proceed farther. There was a beverage vendor by the side of the road—the man I had asked about the sights at Through Cave [Chuanyan] when I was on my way back from Middle Concealed Mountain—and he said, "There's a fork up ahead, just after the oil mill. If you push your way through, you can turn southeastward to an old temple, and from there, you can climb the mountain."

So I hung our bags on the purlin of his hut and told Tranquil Hearing to lie in the shade under the thatched roof while I carried on ahead, walking stick in hand. I inquired again as I passed the oil mill and again was told, "There's no way to reach the cavern, and there's no path that leads in that direction."

But when I gazed up behind, I saw a narrow, serpentine path winding its way among the vegetation. So I poked through gaps and brushed my way through the shrubbery, following the foothills to the east, and then I turned south. Just before I reached the old temple, I saw a path leading upward to the west, and I took it.

At first, I clambered up steps and then scaled the cliff. The stone had sharp edges in the steep parts of the rock face, and my toes and fingers could get a firm grip. Where the rock face was high, boughs were hanging down, my feet could catch on vines, and my hands could grip branches.

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18 *YJJZ*, 1:448–50; *YJ*, 1:354–55.

19 Xu is referring to his sightseeing activities on the twelfth day of the fifth month: see *YJJZ*, 1:406–8; *YJ*, 1:316–17.

But when the rock face ended, and I crossed the canyon, thorns and creepers were dense, stretching above me and grabbing me below, hooking into me everywhere. It was like treading water or falling into trenches, and I found it impossible to extricate myself. So I stuck my umbrella and my walking stick into hollows among the rocks and put all my strength into my fingers and toes, and thus, eventually, I reached the base of the piled-up rocks. Above were circling lions and dancing elephants, soaring phoenixes and prancing dragons, a whole variety of strange shapes laid out in great profusion, and I reckoned that the bright window must be close by. So I crossed to the north, and the more I turned, the nearer I got to the top of the peak. When I looked down, I found the cavern was now below me.

Down the mountain, people yelled that I had gone the wrong way; they pointed at steps below me. Grateful for their kindness, I descended along the path they had indicated, but in so doing, I bypassed the spot where I had left my umbrella and walking stick. Two herdsmen had called out to me out of concern that I could not find my way down. I went over and thanked them. They told me the way to climb the mountain was farther to the south of the old temple—it seemed that the cavern needed to be accessed from the rear, not from the east.

I told them I had left my umbrella among the rocks and returned to look for it. Before long, I heard the calls of children down below in Level Dike Market, and soon, dozens of people were shouting at the foot of the mountain. They sounded very agitated, and at first I did not realize it was on my account—this became apparent only after I had fetched the umbrella and come back down. When I reached the old temple, I found that the people were all armed with spears and arrows; they thought I had been scouting around in the undergrowth with bad intentions. I explained that I was exploring the caverns. When they did not believe me, I loosened my clothes to show them I had no weapon and added, "I left a bag in the hut of the soybean milk vendor at the crossroads—you can go and check." At this, they gradually dispersed.

Now, from south of the old temple, I ascended, climbing a stone stairway and brushing aside bushes. I turned to the southwest, emerging in a hollow behind the mountain. Looking south, I saw a peak rising, a rock perched vertically on its summit, dozens of feet high, extremely striking. I judged that I had now arrived behind the cavern, but when I gazed from this distance at the rock wall, I still failed to see an entrance to the cavern.

Suddenly, from below, I heard a boy's voice shouting again that I had taken the wrong path and that there would not be time to make the climb. By this point, the sun had fallen behind the western hills, and thorns and vines blocked the way, so I reckoned I could not make it. Also, Tranquil Hearing was waiting at the thatched shop, the owner

would soon be leaving, and I feared there would be no place to spend the night, so I followed the boy down the hill. But he raced off ahead, and I was unsure whether he had hailed me out of pity or suspicion.

So I followed the northern foothills around, emerging near the oil mill to find the beverage vendor packing his things and heading home. I collected the bag hanging from the purlin, and we followed the vendor to Flat Dike Market to look for a place to sleep. The vendor said his house was too small to accommodate us, so he sought out a neighbor who could take us in, and he prepared a meal, also searching for a kinsman who could act as my guide the next day.

The evening was humid, and thunder rumbled. Tranquil Hearing was seriously unwell, and Servant Gu was no longer with us. After dinner, I went out and sat in the street under the bright moon as a gentle breeze began to blow. There, among the mountains, I listened to the village women as they engaged in badinage and sang their aboriginal songs—another notable experience among these jade peaks.

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

After traveling by boat down the Luoqing River [Luoqing Jiang] for a day and a half, Xu Xiake arrived at the south gate of Luorong County Seat on the afternoon of 3 August 1637.[20] "Although the town has a wall," he noted, "the markets and shops are down-at-heel, with a few dozen thatched houses; there is only one old woman living by the town gate." Given the river's many serpentine bends, it would take another three days by boat to reach Liuzhou Prefecture, his next destination, so Xu opted for a more direct overland route instead. But Tranquil Hearing was now hardly able to walk.

20 Luorong is now a Zhen within the boundaries of Liuzhou Shi.

II

[LATE SUMMER/FALL 1637]

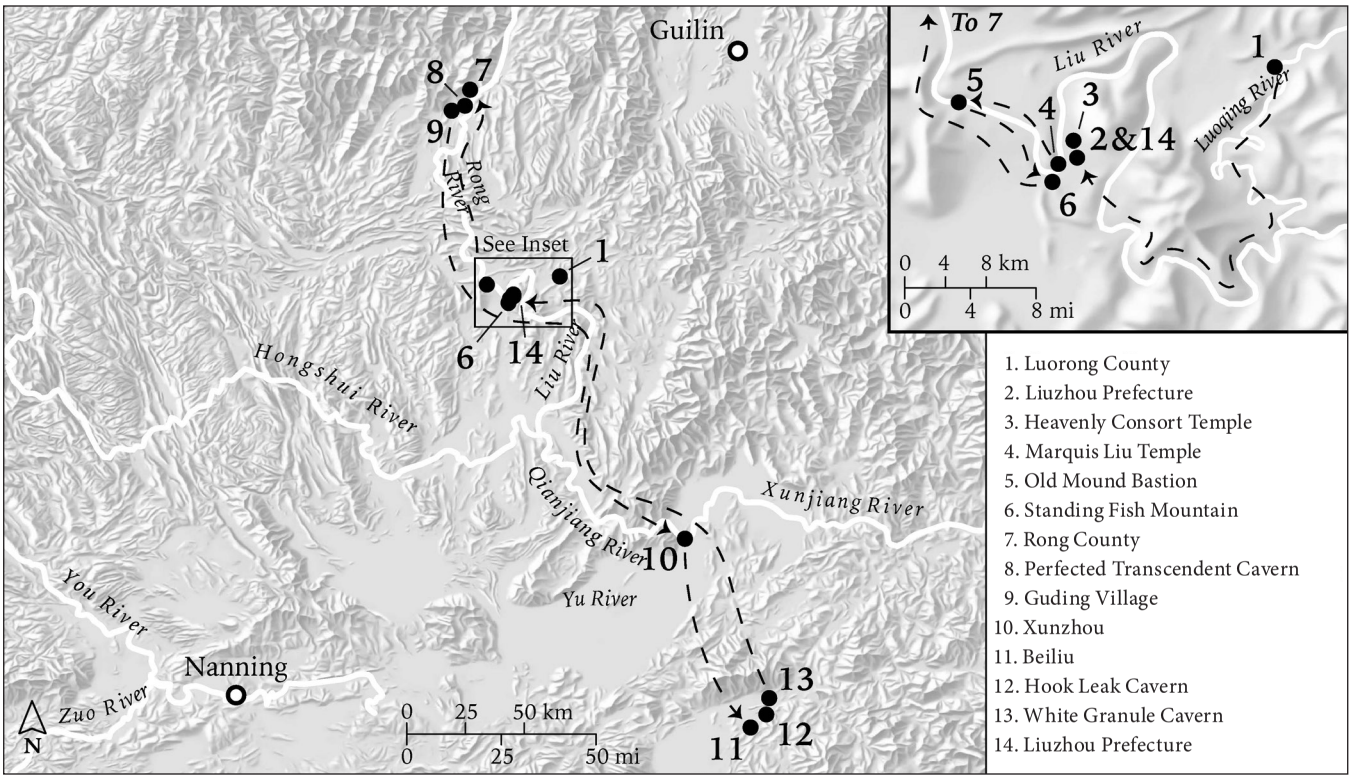
Fourteenth day [*of the sixth month*] [4 August]: I rose and ate at dawn, then engaged porters to carry the pouches and panniers and rented a horse to carry Tranquil Hearing. We went out the south gate and headed west, skirting the town wall. Tranquil Hearing had hardly mounted the horse before he rolled out of the saddle and tumbled to the ground. Servant Gu went ahead with Tranquil Hearing and the porters while I went back to return the horse. Twice, we changed mounts, and both times Tranquil Hearing could not keep his balance. I had the idea of hiring a cart to carry him, but the porters all argued that a cart would be even bumpier than a horse and said that when going up and down hills, he would have to get out of the cart and be helped along, making the trip all the more difficult. So in the end, at a high price, I hired three men to carry him in a sedan chair, and we did not set off until after I had let the porters eat their fill. By then, the morning was well advanced.

I went ahead by myself, intending to wait for them at the inn ahead and reckoning that, given the pace of the sedan chair, I could not possibly arrive after it. After one *li*, I passed the west gate, crossed a bridge, and continued west. Soon, I ascended a hill, and all around, I could see a profusion of mountains and ridges and an expanse of grassy terrain; only to the south was a sharp peak that exposed its rocky structure. I trekked for eighteen *li* through the wilds, and when I crossed a high ridge, I looked back but saw no sign of Tranquil Hearing's sedan chair. After descending the hill and going southwest for two *li*, I reached High Ridge Inn [Gaoling Pu], near a scattering of thatched houses that announced Meng Village [Mengcun]. Tranquil Hearing had still not appeared, so I rested in the inn there as I waited. When finally he did arrive, he was all the more exhausted.

I walked west one more *li*, turned south, crossed a ridge, wended my way south, and after four *li*, reached the west side of South Stronghold Mountain [Nanzhai Shan]; the Liu River [Liujiang] presses up against its western cliff. I descended west, and a boatman took me across to the other side on a raft.

> Xu Xiake continued west, going between Li Feng Mountain [Li Feng Shan] to the north and Luo Mountain [Luoshan] to the

Source: "Yuexiyou riji er" (*YJJZ*, 1:457–67; *YJ*, 1:363–72).



Map 23. Western Yue (Guangxi), Diary 2, 1637

south. He found a rocky outcrop known as Lone Elegance Peak rising ahead.

Here, people traveling the road would stop under a tree to rest, and I waited there for Tranquil Hearing's sedan chair, but he did not appear. When I asked the people who arrived after me, they said they had seen no sedan chair on the road, and I was very perplexed. But when I looked back and saw a cavern on the western slope of Luo Mountain, I was intrigued. One of the other travelers said, "If you turn east when you get to the southern slope, you can get to Luo Cavern [Luo Dong Yan]. The memorial arch just east of the cavern can serve as a landmark."

Hearing this, my curiosity was piqued all the more. I looked up at the sun, and it was not yet aslant, so I pushed my way through the long grass on the southeast corner and after one *li* reached the southwest corner of Luo Mountain. The peak was crowned with a jumble of rocks; on the side of the mountain was a narrow opening shaped like a scepter and a horizontal cavern shaped like a beam. From here, I turned south and followed the foot of the mountain around to the east. When I looked north, halfway up the mountain, there was a south-facing cavern, slightly lower than the northern peak but precisely aligned with it. To the southeast, I saw a small mountain at the south end of the riverside hills; a crack in its rocky side went all the way up to the top of the mountain, forming a natural doorway.

Then there was a sudden downpour, just as I stood in grass so deep it came up to my shoulders. I was not so concerned about getting a drenching from above as I was worried about getting soaked from the side. I turned to the right, and after about one *li*, I crossed level ground and headed north. Here, a mesa opened up like a natural cover. A monolith jutted upward at an angle north of the right peak, several scores of rods high, much like a human figure with hands clasped and clad in ancient garb.

On the north face of the left cliff, two cavern entrances extended downward in the gorge. The north-facing inner cavern fell away deeply and formed a chasm at the bottom of which a clear stream flowed. The steep sides rose several scores of rods high. The southern entrance extended very deep, and I could not tell where it led. To the north, I reached the cavern entrance; the rock wall fell away, and above was a horizontal boulder two feet high, framing the cavern entrance like a gate. One could sit there and peer toward the bottom. It was impossible to bridge the gap and climb down, but there was no need to fear losing one's footing and falling in. On the left wall of the gate, several scores of ropes had been coiled and tethered to the wall. I suspect some adventurous soul had used it to lower himself down the rock face and explore the bottom of the cavern. Unfortunately, I was traveling solo, without a partner, and I could not use my body as a winch to plumb the hidden depths.

Xu Xiake explored the other caverns in the area before resuming his journey toward Liuzhou.

After one *li*, I reached the base of Lone Elegance Peak. Then I walked quickly westward for five or six *li*, asking people whether they had seen a monk in a sedan chair, and they said they had not—they had only seen a monk lying down in an oxcart. Only now did I realize that the sedan chair carriers must have deliberately walked very slowly and then, realizing how gullible Tranquil Hearing is, bamboozled him into exchanging the sedan chair for an oxcart.

Gazing north at this spot, I saw two sharp peaks standing erect, while to the south, there was a ring of mountains, with rocks projecting from their summits, a gorgeous sight, although I do not know its name. After another five or six *li* to the west, I came upon the Liu River, now flowing from south to north. I had arrived at the city's eastern edge. On a hill on the east bank, a pavilion perched high among the greenery—the Wang family library of Wang Qiyuan, a *jinshi* of the *renwu* year (1622).[1]

By now, I was anxious to track Tranquil Hearing down, so I crossed the river, and once I had climbed the bank, I found myself below a line of houses. Following the alley for two *li*, I entered Liuzhou. Once within the east gate, it turned out to be rather quiet. I moved west past the government offices and reached the inn where Servant Gu was lodging, but there was no sign of Tranquil Hearing. So I went out the south gate and asked everyone I met on the road; some said they had seen him, and others said they had not. I went through the east gate and around the walls to the north, walking from Two Tang Worthies Shrine [Tang Erxian Ci] to the Opened Prime Monastery [Kaiyuan Si]. I learned he had stopped at the monastery but did not know where he went after that. The monks said that the only places where outsiders were accommodated were the Thousand Buddhas Inn [Qianfo Lou] and the Three Officials Hall [Sanguan Tang], and I needed to check those places. So I left the monastery, going east and then bearing north, and after one *li* or so, I came to the Thousand Buddhas Inn; it was now dusk. I asked a monk, but Tranquil Hearing was not there. So I walked briskly west to Three Officials Hall, where I was told that a monk had arrived. I thought it must be Tranquil Hearing, but when I got to the monks' living quarters, I found he was not

1 The text of Xu's diary here gives this man's surname as Huang 黃, but this is incorrect. Other sources give the scholar's surname as Wang 王, as does Xu Xiake later in his diary. The Wangs were a family of distinction; Wang Qiyuan's grandfather had passed the *jinshi* exam, and his father the *juren* examination. Xu Xiake later left his calling card with Wang Qiyuan's son. See *YJJZ*, 1:494; *YJ*, 1:396.

there. I rushed out, returning to the Opened Prime Monastery and questioning other pedestrians. Somebody drawing water from a well said he had run into Tranquil Hearing by the riverside. "What retreats are there by the river?" I asked. "There is the Heavenly Consort Temple [Tianfei Miao]," was the answer.

I proceeded northeastward in the dimming light, and after one *li* I came to the temple. There, at last, I found Tranquil Hearing. The carriers had swapped the sedan chair for an oxcart, but the cart could not cross the river, so just one of them had carried the luggage across. He demanded a large fee from Tranquil Hearing, and fearing that he might run into me, he had made a point of taking a circuitous route around the walls and bringing Tranquil Hearing to this secluded temple and then cajoled him into pawning his bag and blanket so that he could be paid in cash. Tranquil Hearing is unwell, to be sure, but how could he be duped so easily? The temple monks then gave me dinner, and Tranquil Hearing and I hunkered down in a rough-and-ready room on the temple's north side. The walls were of ramshackle bamboo cane, and the moon shone brightly throughout the night.

Fifteenth day [5 August]: Rose at dawn. I had no comb for my hair, so I hastily proceeded to the lodging in town, leaving Tranquil Hearing still resting in the temple. At first, I was planning to have Servant Gu go and attend to his needs, then bring both Tranquil Hearing and the baggage back to the inn, but Servant Gu was also unable to get out of bed, and I spent the whole day sitting in a room upstairs waiting for him to get better. But Gu was confined to bed the entire day, and there was no time to go out and explore. This day was extremely hot, and with the two sick men lying immobile in different places, I was anxious, not knowing whether to go out or stay put. I filled in the time by recording what I had seen in the last two or three days of travel from Guilin, and when evening came, I went to bed.

Sixteenth day [6 August]: Before Servant Gu had risen, I wanted to go on my own to bring Tranquil Hearing back, but Servant Gu forced himself to get up and make the trip instead, so I gave him money to recover Tranquil Hearing's bag and blanket. Later in the morning, Gu came back, but not with Tranquil Hearing—with one of the monks from the temple, instead. He said that the previous day, Tranquil Hearing had been somewhat better and in the evening showed even greater improvement, but today, he was weak and seemed close to death; he needed urgently to be brought here in a sedan chair. "If his illness is acute," I responded, "it would be a big mistake to move him," and I urged the monk to keep him a bit longer—I would come and check on him and bring a doctor to treat him on the spot.

The monk went off looking very glum. I did not wait for lunch but went out the east gate, passed Two Tang Worthies Shrine, and turned west to the Marquis Liu Temple [Liuhou Miao]. The Marquis Liu Stele (Liuhou Bei) stands before it, with Han Yu's (768–824) poem written in Su Shi's (1037–1101) hand; Liu's tomb lies behind.[2] I note that in the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, there is a record only of Liu Fen's tomb in Liuzhou and no mention of Liu Zongyuan—why is this? Perhaps I should look into it. I hastened to the Heavenly Consort Temple to see Tranquil Hearing and found him feeble and delirious, not at all himself. When I first questioned him, he could not give me proper answers, but when I pressed him, it emerged that he had felt a bit better. Still, in the evening, he had taken a dose of calamus (*changpu*) and realgar (*xionghuang*) and afterward was seized with enormous fatigue. I assumed he was suffering from the extreme heat, and when he took this very warming medicine with its assertive properties, it was not surprising that it had this effect. A few days ago, I was reading *Gems of Western Affairs* (Xishi er), and it mentioned that people in this area often drink calamus wine at the Dragon Boat Festival, causing, in one instance, the deaths of all the members of one family.[3] I had drawn a warning from this, but Tranquil Hearing had made the mistake of taking just such a medicine when he was already ill, and it is a miracle he did not die on the spot.

I was inclined to counteract the effect with basal benefit powder (*yi yuansan*) but feared that Tranquil Hearing would not trust me. So I walked two *li* to the north gate and found a doctor named Dong to come and diagnose his condition. The doctor said that the powder would do no harm and that Tranquil Hearing would recover after taking it. So I accompanied him to his home, where I observed that his medical preparations were random and lacking focus. I returned his medicine to the inn, went out looking for basal benefit powder elsewhere, then asked Servant Gu to take it to Tranquil Hearing and pass on the doctor's advice to take the powder and then decoct and take the accompanying herbal medicine. At dusk, Servant Gu returned, and I learned that Tranquil Hearing's symptoms had somewhat moderated after taking the powder.

Seventeenth day [7 August]: Thunder rumbled in the middle of the night, and rain began as dawn broke. After breakfast, I sent Servant Gu to check on Tranquil Hearing's illness, and he gradually improved. Soon

2 Liu Zongyuan, courtesy name Zihou, served as prefect of Liuzhou during the last five years of his life. Centuries later, he was honored with the posthumous rank of marquis by the Song Emperor Huizong (r. 1100–26).

3 During his time in Guilin, Xu Xiake had bought a copy of *Gems of Western Affairs*, a miscellany compiled by the Ming scholar-official Wei Jun (*jinshi* 1604), who held the office of education commissioner (*tixue qianshi*) in Guangxi during the late Wanli reign period.

after noon, the rain stopped, but the steamy humidity remained. I remained in the inn, feeling too tired to go out.

Liuzhou has a river on three sides, so it is known as Ewer Town [Hucheng]. The river flows down from the north, then abruptly turns and flows back toward the north. The town is broader at the southern turn and narrower at the northern end, thus forming the shape of a ewer. That is why Liu Zongyuan wrote: "The river winds like the nine folds of a gut. . . . "[4]

Eighteenth day [8 August]: Since Servant Gu was too ill to cook, I had breakfast at a congee stall. Then I went out the east gate to see Tranquil Hearing. One *li* to the north, I passed Two Worthies Shrine, and on the east passed Opened Prime Monastery. I arrived at the Heavenly Consort Temple to find his condition somewhat improved, but in appearance and spirit he was still not his old self. At first, I had the idea of giving money to the temple monk so that he could buy mung beans to mix with rice and make porridge and also lay on some bean sprouts and fresh ginger, but when I asked him about the money I had given earlier, it turned out he had not bought rice but noodles and flat-cakes instead. Fearing he would do the same thing again, I did not give him money this time, intending to buy the rice myself and then pass it on to him. But all that happened was that Tranquil Hearing and the monk attacked me verbally. The patient did not believe in medicine but in ghosts, while the monk preferred a meat diet to a vegetarian diet, and so he had tempted Tranquil Hearing with hearty meat dishes, and Tranquil Hearing went along with him. The monk said that what Tranquil Hearing needed was not medicine but nourishment, and Tranquil Hearing said I was only concerned about money and not his life—which shows that he still was not thinking straight. So I headed back, looking in on Opened Prime Monastery on the way.

The monastery is an old building dating from the Tang: although large, it has no other notable features to commend it. Then I went west to Two Tang Worthies Shrine and looked for a man who sold rubbings. I bought a rubbing of Han Yu's poem in Su Shi's hand. I also looked for other rubbings and noticed that he had a copy of Liu Zongyuan's "Inscription on Stone at Luo Pond" (Luochi tishi).[5] The calligraphy was

4 A line in Liu Zongyuan's famous poem "Climbing the City Tower at Liuzhou, Sent to the Prefects of Zhang, Ting, Feng and Lian" (Deng Liuzhou chenglou ji Zhang Ting Feng Lian Sizhou Cishi). *QTS*, 351.3935. See also *Collected Works of Liu Zongyuan* (Liu Zongyuan ji 柳宗元集) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979), 42.1164.

5 Luo Pond [Luochi], the site of a temple to honor Liu Zongyuan, had been made famous by his friend Han Yu's stele inscription, reprinted in *Liu Zongyuan ji*, appendix, 1437–38.

energetic and the carving ancient, and although the latter portion of the text had worn away, the original form was still intact.

I asked the man to look for a few other sheets, and he cheerfully responded, "That is easy." He then produced a stone rubbing fresh out of a newly copied mold and only just carved. "Where is the original stele?" I asked. "It is cracked and broken. This is not like the old one—corroded and incomplete." I was sorry to hear that the original stele had suffered such damage. I thanked him for doing the new version but left with only the original rubbing and the two big sheets from Han Yu's work.

"Where is the Luo Pond?" I asked as I left. "Go north on the big street to the right of the shrine, then turn east on the side alley, which will lead you straight there. But now it is within the walls of a private home, and it is not easy to access."

Following his directions, I walked one-half *li* up the street leading north but drew a blank. I then turned east down an alley and made more inquiries, and at first, the locals said they did not know.

In the end, one person realized what I was talking about. "Do you mean 'Night Moon at Luo Pond' [Luochi Yeyue]? That site was washed away long ago. It can no longer be seen."

"How did this happen?" I asked.

"On the southeast bank of the river, there is Lamp Terrace Mountain [Dengtai Shan], and its reflection in the pond was a celebrated sight. But the locals got fed up with all the officials coming here for picnics, so they tossed stones and rubbish into the pond until it was clogged. That ruined the reflection, and now there is nothing to see."

I asked to have a look, so the man led me through a gap in the wall by the corner of the house. We walked through a side gate, and I found myself at the edge of a pond. The water was very dirty, and to the south, I found two lines of ruins, with a section of wall and half a corner still visible—I assume that these are the remains of the pavilion that once stood here. On the east side stood two longan trees, tall and big, attractively lush, and with much fruit hanging from their branches. I reckoned that this spot must have been at the rear of the Liu Shrine and the former Luo Pond Temple (Luochi Miao), where Marquis Liu once resided in spirit. The current pond is no longer fit to be owned by his spirit—how could one expect it to survive as a sightseeing destination? I grieved over this for a long time, then returned to the inn for lunch.

After that, I went out the small south gate and inquired about a boat to Rong County, wanting to arrange travel the next day.[6] Only then did I learn that it would be market-day at Liuzhou's north gate and that boats

6 Rong County, some 70 mi/112 km north of Liuzhou, is now Rongshui Miao Autonomous Xian.

headed home once the market closed; many boats would leave for Shagong.[7]

I followed the river toward the main south gate and crossed to the south side. Somewhat to the west lies Horse Saddle Mountain, the tallest peak in the area, with both of its extremities thrusting high; it is the prefecture's anchor mountain. Slightly to the east is Screen Mountain [Pingfeng Shan], which is recumbent and square. To the northeast is Lamp Terrace Mountain, tall and curving north, next to the river. West of Horse Saddle, with a sharp peak, is Standing Fish Mountain [Liyu Shan]. It rises uniquely like a fish standing upright. To the south, another mountain is in alignment with it, and unless you get closer and walk beneath, you cannot distinguish the two.

Standing Fish is right next to the road that leads to Bin Subprefecture, at the southwest corner of the town. From the northwest, I followed steps up and around the mountain's base. Halfway up the mountain, facing east, was the entry to a cavern. Just outside and up to the right was another cavity—like a hollow above a belvedere—in which an image of the mountain god had been set in place. Down to the left, several steps led to another grotto, like a narrow cleft between sheer cliffs—it was so tall one could walk straight in. Inside was a statue of a bodhisattva. The entry to the main cavern was like a wide, gaping mouth, and the interior was broad, level, and open. On the ceiling were carved in reverse order four large characters, "Southward Come This Cave" (Nanlai cixue), written by Yang Fang of Sichuan. Outside stands a stele with a poem, as well. There is a full array of images of gods inside, and in the rear are two cavities, one on the south side and one on the north. When you thread your way to the west, the entries are so small they could have been carved with a knife. I first entered through the southern cavity, which suddenly opened into a tall space. To the west was another portal, opening to the west side of the mountain, a secluded area in which large images of the Three Pure Ones (Sanqing) were displayed.[8] Through the passage behind, you cross a threshold, and after you exit, you overlook a sheer canyon. I could see a cluster of peaks stretching far into the distance in the southwest.

Going through the cavity on the right and then down, there was another cavern, its opening facing west. Inside was not tall but wide, with a stone column standing in the middle and statues of various deities grouped around it. Behind the column was a tunnel, the northern of the two tunnels from the previous cavern. Then I realized that one could walk from one side of the mountain to the other in a delightfully open way, something that one rarely finds in Guilin's many caverns. Once inside, I followed the spire's rock face up to the left and found that the cavern extended from south to north, acquiring greater height. There

7 Shagong was a riverside village at the southern end of Rong County.
8 The Three Pure Ones were gods in the Daoist pantheon.

were five holes in the cavern's roof, and when one looked up, they almost looked like bright stars spreading their light.

Below, an incline opened to the right, providing a route to the monk's den, but a barred door blocked passage. . . . So I followed the rock around and exited through another opening to the south. Ahead, I saw a small outcrop parallel to the main peak. From here, climbing stone steps, I ascended all the way to the summit of Standing Fish.

It seems that the cavern extends through much of the body of the mountain, with two portals to the east, three to the west, and one to the south. Its ceiling is high, and the slanted part has cracks, with over ten grottoes, some wide and some narrow, of infinite interest. The cavern is deep, and you never come to a dead end. It is really a remarkable place.

After making several turns, I exited through the front grotto, then ascended a flight of steps to the right and rested briefly in the monk's cottage. Looking down to the east, I saw a pond that gathered run-off from the vicinity; in the middle, it was still, but water was seeping out, and I did not know where it went. To the northeast is the northwest slope of Horse Saddle Mountain, where Transcendent's Chess Cavern [Xianyi Yan] is situated. The locals know it only as Horse Saddle and no longer recognize the earlier name—actually, it is the same mountain.[9] To the southeast is the southwest peak of Horse Saddle Mountain, where Longevity Star Cavern [Shouxing Yan] is located. When you gaze at the distant mountains to the rear, you see a circle of double peaks; the combination of that view and the closer spectacle of Horse Saddle cannot be grasped in just one visit. By this time, the sun was low in the sky, and rain was falling continually. Since I wanted to visit Tranquil Hearing one more time, I left the exploration of Transcendent's Chess Cavern for a future occasion.[10]

I proceeded down the mountain for one *li*, crossed the river to the south gate, and walked another three *li* to the northeast, arriving at the Heavenly Consort Temple with a supply of beans and vegetables. Tranquil Hearing and the monk, however, reproached me yet again. I wanted to redeem the blanket, but the head monk avoided me and failed to appear. So I dropped the matter and left, entering the town hurriedly since the gate was about to be closed for the night. I reached the inn as it got dark and went to bed without having dinner.

Nineteenth day [9 August]: I rose before dawn to find it raining heavily. I went out early through the north gate to look at the market, but with

9 Xu Xiake would have read about this feature in Liu Zongyuan's works. Liu mentions it in one of his essays. See *Liu Zongyuan ji*, 29.776.

10 Xu Xiake would visit this mountain the following month after his return from Rong County. See *YJJZ*, 1:494; *YJ*, 1:396.

all the rain, the streets were waterlogged and only some of the vendors were there.

Later in the morning, I returned to the inn for lunch. I had planned to set aside money for rice and mung beans and send Servant Gu over to escort Tranquil Hearing back, only to find that he had already arrived at the inn. Although he had not completely recovered, he left his sheet and blanket behind in the Heavenly Consort Temple and came over alone. I took the innkeeper aside and asked him to let Tranquil Hearing and Servant Gu stay on and rest up during my absence. I collected my bag and went out the southwest gate, paid for a passage on a place on a small Shagong boat, and got on board. But the other passengers were not leaving until the following morning, so I spent the night by the sandbank.

Twentieth day [10 August]: Since we had to wait for all the passengers to arrive, it was well into the morning before the boat set off. From the west end of town, we went north, following the Liu River, and after we passed the west gate, the town became less visible, no longer having frontage on the water. Goose Mountain [Eshan] reared straight on the west bank, standing alone in the broad valley like a signpost. As we continued north, there were still a lot of thatched cottages perched on the east bank above grain barges densely packed with sheaves of rice. Women would go to the water's edge to weigh the rice and make their purchases. The boats had all come down from Liucheng and Rong County.[11] After proceeding north another twenty *li*, we moored on the west bank at Old Mound Bastion [Guling Bao].

When you travel northwest from Liuzhou, rocky peaks and gentle hills appear at intervals on both banks. After a string of hills, dozens of rocky peaks suddenly stand in a line, sharp and steep, some obscured, some clear to see. What makes the landscape different from Yangshuo and Guilin is that all you see there are rocky peaks, without a single hill interrupting them, whereas here the rocky peaks, like awls in a pouch, still strike you as novel, the way they poke out from among the other hills.

On this northwest stretch of the Liu River, one sees sharp rocks on both banks, but they do not interfere with river traffic, and the current is gentle. The mountains' elegant reflections in the water fall short of the stunning views along the river in Yangshuo, nor are they the equal of the hanging sandbanks and desolate reefs along the river in Luorong.

I have observed three kinds of river views here in Guangxi—none as hazardous as Jian Stream.[12] Along the Li River at Yangshuo, although there are many sandbanks, not a single rock is found among them, but on both sides sheer rock faces rise, curbing the river's flow, and multiple outcrops hem the river in as it winds—this is the most spectacular of

11 Liucheng is now a Xian under the jurisdiction of Liuzhou Shi.
12 Jian Stream is in Fujian.

river excursions. On Luorong's Luoqing River, the sandbanks are high, and the current is strong; the shoreline has no projecting rocks, and the hills are all densely covered slopes—this is the least dramatic river excursion. On the Liu River of Liucheng, water flows evenly over the sandbanks, and there are many rocky outcrops along the banks, some high and some low, alternating with hills. This scenery, placed between Yangshuo and Luorong, ranks in the middle of the pack regarding river travel.

> Xu Xiake arrived in Rong County on the twenty-fourth day of the sixth month. The following day, he made his first tour of the celebrated Perfected Transcendent Cavern [Zhenxian Dong], with its iconic cluster of speleothems known as "Lord Lao's Seat" [Laojun Zuo], traditionally likened to a sculpture of a seated Laozi surrounded by elephants and oxen. Xu spent the next two weeks exploring the caverns in the area, not returning to Liuzhou until the tenth day of the seventh month.

Twenty-ninth day [19 August]:[13] When I got up in the morning, I urged the monk, Contemplating Wisdom (Canhui), to look for people to make a raft. However, before he had set off, the woodcutters I had talked to the day before arrived in a noisy throng and asked me, "Did you make it into the cavern?" I told them I was waiting for a boat to be brought. "It is impossible to carry a boat here," they said. "If we tie logs together to make a raft and push it into the cave, that will work just as well as a boat."

I had Contemplating Wisdom pay them with the money I had given him. They then carried logs into the stream, felled bamboo, and set to make a raft. Before long, the raft was made, and they then fetched a long ladder from the cavern, placed it down on top of the raft, and put a wooden tub on top of that. I then perched on the tub and rested my feet on the ladder. The men in front pulled the raft forward with a rope; those on the sides guided it and prodded it with poles, while those behind supported it with their shoulders. When they encountered deep water, they guided the raft as it floated; they clung to its sides when it had drifted too far for them to guide it. Initially, we went upstream from the entrance; when I gazed upward at the cavern ceiling, it looked all the more vault-like, with steep rocky sides streaked green and red. The farther we went, the more remarkable it was, and looking ahead, I glimpsed natural light in the far distance as chambers opened on either side. From amid the clear and swirling waters, we entered, pushing through the void, reciting the Banished Transcendent's "Waters flow far into the distance / Opening into another world," it was as though the poet spoke those lines precisely

13 *YJJZ*, 1:479–91; *YJ*, 1:383–94.

for me on this day.[14] Once we went through a second entryway, a cavernous void stretched above, and dark depths extended below. At the same time, on either side, the walls were studded with recesses, everywhere shaded by swaying curtains. Whether we were looking back toward the entrance or forward to where we were heading, light shone in on us either way. Were we men or transcendents? How were we able to reach this spot? There was no way to tell!

The raft pushers wanted to stop in the middle and climb up the bank with torches lit to explore the side chambers fully. But I had them first proceed upstream and exit the cavern so that I could reach the end of the chambers that had natural light. Carrying along the channel, we got to the rear entrance facing southwest, where the spring flowed in. The stream descended through stones, and the raft, obstructed by the rocks, could go no farther. So I left the raft, and clambering on the rocks, I exited the cavern, finding myself in a bright, open space. The stream stones were so rough that it was impossible to walk on them; looking upward on the left rock face, I saw steep steps among the brush, so clutching the undergrowth, I made my way up the slope and within a few dozen paces I reached a footpath. I saw level ground surrounded by a cluster of peaks in all directions, and I realized I was now in the northeast corner of the north cavern I had seen from the road—now to the south. So then I went left and passed a slight dip to the east, reckoning that if I made a turn up ahead, I would reach the main road east of the double beams, and then, climbing the narrow path up to the crest, I should be able to get the cavern entrance on the cliff opposite the Lord Lao's Seat—all these landmarks could be found by keeping directions in mind.

But the raft pushers were all waiting for me to continue the tour inside, so I went back and boarded the raft, and following the current, we entered the cavern, again reaching the central gate. I noticed that chambers could be climbed on both sides, but on the west face, the chamber was tall and hard to climb. Also, I had earlier explored the dark cavern, and it seemed that we were now near to it, whereas the east cliff had multiple chambers that I had never seen. So I lit a torch and entered to the east. Above, stalactites formed a screen, and a ring of pillars created doors, similar to the sights in the dark cavern behind Lord Lao's Seat. Inside, I followed gaps and penetrated openings, many of which had adjacent cavities. Natural light came in from above, with fragments of cloud visible, so I knew that I was very close to the east slope of the

14 A reference to Li Bai's poem "Question and Answer in the Mountains" (Shanzhong wenda): "You ask why I want to rest among blue mountains, / I smile without answering, my heart at ease. Peach blossom waters flow far into the distance, / Opening into another world." *QTS*, 178.1813. Li Bai is sometimes also called the Banished Transcendent or Banished Immortal (Zhexian) in Western language sources on Chinese literature.

mountain; it was just that the holes were small and vertical, not allowing human access, so they offered no outlet. From the side, after taking several turns, I exited to the north and found myself on the lower level of the cliff opposite Lord Lao, and here, there were traces of goldstone and dragon-field deposits. Following the cliff, I could look down at the stream below.

Above, there was a stone latrine—can it be that once a kiosk was erected here, and a beam was placed across as a bridge? On the rear wall, the four large characters "Longevity Mountain's Blessed Realm" (Shoushan Fudi) are inscribed in a very ancient and unusual fashion. I could not discern whose calligraphy this was. When I went out again, I could see the upper tier of the opposite cliff, with a dense array of columns. Open apertures gave access to the outside, but the rock face stood steeply some distance away, with no access to this level. So we floated down on the raft. I wanted to climb up from the stream, but the bank was sheer, and there was no way to climb. I reckon that one needs to turn south in front of the cavern: when you get to the northeast corner of the dip, if you climb to the top of the hill, you can get in that way. It is impossible to climb inside the cavern unless one places a beam across the stream. So we went back into the cavern on the raft. Where the water discharges, it is shallow and narrow, and nothing is notable. Only then did I climb the east bank as the boatmen disassembled the raft and hauled away the timber.

I quickly called back one of the smarter woodcutters to carry the remaining torches and guide me to the Duke Liu Cavern [Liugong Dong]. We went north along the main path for one-half *li*, then turned southwest into a small bight and carried on toward a canyon in the direction that the old farmer had earlier indicated. Although the guide had often gathered firewood in this area, he did not know which cavern was Duke Liu Cavern. After another two *li*, we reached the foot of the mountain. In the distance, I saw a cavern on the south mountain, facing east and hunched low; another on the south mountain, facing north and perched high; and one on the central, prominent peak in the north mountains, facing east and shallow. I was at a loss, not knowing how to go, when I heard a herdsman coughing. I called him and asked for directions; it turned out that the cavern perched high was the one I was looking for.

I began to make my way through the brush in that direction. Seeing me carry a single bunch of torches, the man scoffed: "In that cavern, you need to have a lot of torches if you want to get to the end. It is no use having just one bunch." This convinced me that the cavern was deep, and I regretted bringing so few torches.

Amid the low growth, the stone pavers were hard to spot; following them, I climbed up and saw a huge rock spanning the cavern entrance. One entered through a gap in the rocks; large characters reading "West

Peak Cavern" (Xifeng Yan) were carved into the rock face, written by Li Guigao in the third year of the Baoyou reign (1255). There are two other inscriptions, one illegible, the other commemorating the opening of this cave by Prefect Liu Jizu in the first year of the Shaoding reign (1228), recorded and written by one Rao, Administrator for Public Order (*sili canjun*) in Guilin. The gist is that Guangxi's wonders are largely concentrated in its mountains and rivers. Perfected Transcendent Cavern is foremost in the world, and they say that Lord Lao's Cavern [Laojun Dong] ranks second, with Jade Flower [Yuhua] and Pellet [Danzi] next. West Peak Cavern is on par with Perfected Transcendent but has only recently been opened up. Only now did I realize this was why the cavern is known as Duke Liu Cavern. And it was now all the more apparent that when this cavern was first discovered, it must have been marked with an elegant path and entry pavilion, whereas now it is desolate and hard to access. I am struck by Rong's flourishing in those days and how much in decline it is now!

Entering the cavern, I found it very spacious. Lighting a torch, I entered from the rear right side; there was a profusion of vertical columns and twisting chambers, but before long, I reached the exit. Then I entered from the rear left side, where the columns were imposing and the portals steep-sided, and after proceeding some distance, the more I turned, the grander it became, with draperies and stalagmites arrayed on both sides. I went up and down, turned this way and that, never reaching the end and seeing more than I could record. Concerned that the torches might be expended, I rushed ahead as fast as possible. I left having just tasted morsels, not knowing what delights the farthest reaches had to offer. Tang Rong's "Engraved Account of the Perfected Transcendent" (Zhenxian juan ji) says, "West Peak Cavern, like Pellet Cavern, adds further marvels, but is a little tight."[15] When he referred to it as "tight," could it be that he was misled by the huge stone at the entrance and did not realize the expansiveness of its palatial walls?

After going downhill, I gazed westward at the cavern with an eastward entry on the north mountain. Although it looked shallow from the outside, its rocky stance was imposing, with two parallel openings; the passages had to be connected in the middle. I walked below to find that the rock face was sheer, and there was no way up. At this time, the guide had already gone back, but seeing me lingering and looking upward, he returned and led me into a small cavern on the southern flank. Its entrance facing south was shallow and did not connect with the upper cavern. So the upper cavern precipitously overlooked half the peak, and looking at it from a distance, it appeared very remarkable, but

15 Xu Xiake includes the full text of Tang Rong's account in an earlier diary entry. See *YJJZ*, 1:475; *YJ*, 1:379. Tang Rong, a native of Lingling in Hunan, had visited these caverns in 1238.

seen at close quarters, there is nothing notable to see, and since the path had petered out, there was no other recourse, deterring me from going any farther.

I proceeded eastward, and when I turned and looked back, I was drawn to the cavern's captivating appearance. I pressed the guide to find a way for us to scale the rock, so he cleared away brush to make steps then clambered up using his hands and feet like a monkey. I followed suit and thus reached the top of the cliff. Another tall rock face stood nearby, but there was a way to bridge the gap between them. The cave looked shallow from the outside, and I concluded that it would not lead to any hidden depths even if it had some exquisite features. Only then did I set off back, having satisfied all my aspirations. I continued southeast for two *li* until I reached Perfected Transcendent Cavern.

It was midday, so I rested inside the cavern, searching and perusing the boulders' inscriptions. But the ladder slipped off the rock face, and I fell with it, ending up with scrapes on my eyebrows and knees.

Perfected Transcendent Cavern is bright inside, and one can nestle in its creases; it is silent and dust-free. The drawback is the constant roar of the stream, and in the dark corners, there are snakes, although they do not pose a hazard. But a multitude of mosquitoes made sleep difficult. Late on the night of the twenty-eighth, I heard a loud noise, like an old man clearing his throat; it went on for quite some time. I inquired about it in the morning and was told it was a tiger's roar. The animal's head is large in proportion to its body and it lurks in its den at night. This was only the evening when it made itself heard—it was silent otherwise.

First day of the seventh month [20 August]: Rose early, but I rested inside the cavern because I was still sore from the previous day's accident. The sheet of paper I laid over the Huang Tingjian [1045–1105] stele the night before as the first step to taking an impression was still on the stone.[16] I had not yet applied ink and feared that it would be warmed by the sun later in the morning, so with some effort, I climbed the rock face to make a rubbing. I had just finished when Contemplating Wisdom called me for breakfast. So I left, leaving the rubbing on the stele to dry. I ate quickly, but by the time I got back down, someone had gone off with my rubbing. Earlier, I had made a rubbing of the stele portrait of Laozi on the left rock face, and it had disappeared after I left it overnight to dry. This was the second time my labors had come to nothing, and I felt extremely vexed. For here, there was no paper; earlier, when the authorities instructed the local monks to bring paper to the cavern to make a rubbing of *Account of the Yuanyou Faction* (Yuanyou Dang ji), I was able

16 In an earlier diary entry, Xu mentioned an inscription by the Song literatus Huang Tingjian on the cavern wall. See *YJJZ* 1:477; *YJ* 1:381. He was keen to make an impression of it.

to purchase four large sheets.[17] Local government clerks supervised the rubbers, and they wanted to wait until the Faction Account Stele [Dangji bei] was finished before they could rub the large Han Qi (1008–75) stele, so I stayed around to wait.[18] I had first taken a sheet of paper from the unused sheaf to rub this stele, but now it had proved to be a waste of effort. The stele could be rubbed again, but the paper could not be replaced, and I could only sit and wait for the rubbers to finish the Han Qi stele. Today, the monks reckoned that the stele would be completed the next day so they could do the rubbing for me on the third, but the Han Qi stele was large, and there was no place to stand on the two sides, so first, I brought pieces of timber over to make a trestle.

Second day [21 August]: Today was market day in the county seat. Because I was tied down as I waited for the rubbings, I wanted to go and have a look at the market. Only when I left the cavern did I realize it was raining. Inside the cavern, one hears such a constant gurgle of running water that there is no way to tell whether it is sunny or wet outside. So I returned to the cavern and resumed rubbing the Huang Tingjian stele. In the afternoon, I rested in the cavern.

Third day [22 August]: Mist early; in the morning it cleared. I sat in the cavern, waiting for the stele rubbers. After some time, they arrived; the county authorities had again issued paper for the rubbing, but the job would not be completed until the fourth.

So I left the cavern and searched for a path leading to the cavern on the opposite mountain. To the east, I crossed the rocky ridge in front of the cavern then followed the mountain south and turned west. The path was hidden in the grass and often could not be seen, and once I had scaled the ridge of the hill behind, I could not find a path that led up the mountain to the west. So I trampled the undergrowth and climbed rocks, scrambling halfway up the mountain in my search, but all I saw was a jagged rock face with no way in. When I took stock of my position, I felt I had come too far south, so I headed back down the rock. Suddenly, two farmers passed ahead of me, so I ran over to question them, and they confirmed that the cave was still to the north.

Following in the northwesterly direction that they indicated, sure enough, I found an opening amid the brush. Wide enough only to accommodate one person, it fell away steeply on the other side. I bent over and looked down: over three rods deep, it was the cavern one saw from the monk's eyrie on the north face. I could hear the voices of the

17 The so-called Yuanyou Faction was a group of government officials associated with the Yuanyou reign (1086–94) in the Northern Song dynasty.

18 Han Qi, nickname Zhongxian, was the prime minister under three Song emperors.

monks rubbing the stele down below, but the rock face was perpendicular; I could not simply throw myself into space. After studying the terrain for some time, I noticed that on the left face, there was a crevice running vertically, and although it offered no grips for feet and toes, the sides of the gap were a foot and a half apart so that if I pressed my arms and feet against the sides, I could descend a little way. I swiveled left toward the crack, but the rocks all slanted downward, and none angled upward; smooth and shiny, they offered no handhold or foothold, so I had to proceed by crawling on my belly. Like a bird scraping the sky or an ape leaping through the air, it seemed a feat that the spirit of hands and feet could not achieve. Once I was in the crack, I propped myself inside, but with no fingerholds, I could not move my feet, and with no toeholds, I could not lower my body. My arms and feet clung to the rock as though glued or nailed, but if I were to make the slightest movement, I would slip and fall. However, even if I wanted to stay still, simply gripping the rock indefinitely would exhaust all my strength and lead me eventually to slip, so I realized I would do better to make the best of the situation and bend my knees as I let go. Then, as I was about to hit the ground, I strove to keep flexible and absorb the impact, avoiding falling headlong. This was a solution I came up with when I had no other option—it is not something that I recommend you try.

Now that I had made the descent, I saw that the cave was four or five rods wide, level in the middle, and overlooking a deep stream at the other end; ahead of me was a line of posts tied together like a balustrade, evidently put there as a safety precaution, out of fear that people might lose their footing and fall into the gorge. The cavern's walls exhibited a lively variety of bulges and recesses, like fretwork, but reaching a level of subtlety that fretwork cannot achieve. Ahead, there was a view of the west cliff while light shone from the cavern roof behind. From inside, one could see the two ends of the stream below, and one also commanded a clear view of both entry points into the cavern, grasping at once its full range, a unique feature among all the wonders on display. If Perfected Transcendent is the first in the world, as Zhang Xiaoxiang (1132–70) of the Song labeled it, then this has to be the foremost treasure of Perfected Transcendent.[19]

To the right, a rock rose flat above the stream, as though in a full-lotus posture, while above water dripped from a stalactite directly onto one end of the rock so that the rock glistened like jade. It would surely match the dew dish beneath a transcendent's palm if one could catch the moisture in a little hollow.

Off to one side, I climbed the rock face northward and found two more openings leading into two more grottoes; both were spotlessly

19 Zhang Xiaoxiang was a famous poet and politician of the Southern Song dynasty.

clean, while their corrugated walls, in a variety of shapes and hues, gleamed as though freshly created. In the forward chamber, there was another pillar rising from beside the stream; in the middle, it thinned to the diameter of a finger, then touched the roof above, where linked drapes scattered like dragons, their slender fingers hanging down; several conspicuous strands had water dripping from their tips. A round rock rising three feet from the ground was as glossy as a bottle; it boomed like a bell when I slapped it. Rocks hanging down alongside made a similar sound, but this one was distinctive in standing alone.

These three caverns are not interconnected but form a continuous frontage on the outside. The stream acts as a pathway, and the opening in the roof brings in light; there are no stray water drops that fall randomly inside the cavern, and the stalactites act as a door screen—surely there can be no more perfect place to sleep among clouds and to pillow a stream!

This feature lies east of the stream, on the upper level of the rock face. It is very close to the lower level of the mountain to the south, but a stone barrier separates them, plunging into the streambed and making it impossible to ford. A little way inside, a crevice extends southward; the entrance is circuitous, and the passage is winding; a dense network of dragon-shaped stalactites hangs down. I hoped the cavern would provide access to the mountain's south side, but a layer of rock stood in the way. If one could bore a hole through, one would be able to get access from here, and from the lower level, one could reach the pontoon bridge and cross over to behind Lord Lao's Seat; one could thus create a link between the sights on both cliffs above and below, without resorting to a path outside and thereby avoiding the danger of having to jump down. That would truly be a wonderful way of enhancing the appeal of this site.

Now, although I had slipped into the cavern from above, I realized that it would be impossible to climb back out, so I called across the stream to the stele-rubbers in the monk's eyrie and asked them to lower a rope down for me, hoping I could use it to climb up and join them. But they were not familiar with the path that led outside and suggested offhandedly that they lay a long ladder across the stream instead. But it would be hard to cross the stream, and the ladder would not be long enough to reach half the cliff's height—even if I crossed the stream, I could not get down. I hesitated for a long time, planning to wait until Contemplating Wisdom, the cavern monk, returned so that he could find the right path and give me a rope.

It was afternoon, and I still had not had a midday meal. After scanning the area below several times, I saw a vertical crevice, and though it offered no handgrips, there was a hollow beneath the overhang next to it. I could not see what lay above, but it seemed possible there might be a way down from there. So like a bird spreading its wings, I took a leap into space and found I had escaped from the trap and extricated myself

from the well—my delight can be easily imagined. I descended through the brush for one *li*, then went over the stone bridge, entered the cavern, and ate lunch. Because my clothes were stained in the afternoon, I took them to the stream to wash, and then dusk fell.

Sixth day [25 August]:[20] Now that the projects inside the cavern have been completed, I want to explore Iron Flag Cavern [Tieqi Yan], so I have prepared. But on this day, rain suddenly began to pelt down. Ignoring this inconvenience, I set off as soon as I had finished breakfast. After one *li*, I passed the north cavern I saw when I arrived, and after another one-half *li*, when I reached the south cavern, the rainfall was even heavier. Still, I wanted to climb up to the south cavern, so clutching shrubs and pushing aside the brush, I braved the rain and made the ascent. Though I had reached the area below the two peaks, I could not find the cavern. The rain came down in torrents, so I pressed close to the rock face to avoid it, but the rain showed even less sign of stopping, and I was soaked from head to foot. I gave up trying to shield myself and used my umbrella as a walking stick; clinging to the shrubbery as though it were a cable, I descended through the rain.

It seemed that the cavern was farther to the east; the hill I had climbed was to the west. Looking up from below, the cavern's location was obvious, but when I searched for it at closer proximity, it was hidden from sight. After braving the rain for one more *li*, I passed Serene Spirit Pool [Anling Tan] to the south, and after one-half *li*, I crossed to the west side of the stream and then took the left fork toward a dell. After another one-half *li*, I went west across the dell; the path gradually widened, and the rain gradually tapered off. I passed through a cleft, and after one *li*, I crossed a little bridge to the south. This was the upper reaches of the little stream I crossed when I arrived. I then gazed up at the mountain to the south of the bridge; halfway up, I saw a cavern facing north with a path leading up to it, so I immediately headed there. The cavern extended deeply, but it had no other chambers. Inside, the locals made paper—of a very coarse quality—with a pond, stove, and baking equipment ready by the side of the cavern.

Although nobody was inside, I knew I was now not far from Guding Village [Guding Cun]. So I went farther in and wrung out my sodden clothes, then went down the mountain and followed the foothills round to the west, where there was a row of village houses—quite a densely populated cluster in this hilly area. When I asked about Iron Flag Cavern, the residents pointed halfway up the northwest peak. After another one-half *li*, I reached the southeast corner of the peak and saw a cavern opening on the waist of the peak; I assumed that this was it. I looked for a path to the left and right but could not find one, so I roamed around

20 *YJJZ*, 1:488–91; *YJ*, 1:390–94.

several times. Walking farther west, I finally spotted a cavern halfway up the mountain, with a pavilion perched in front of it, but I found no path either to the left or right. After walking back and forth for some time, I saw a boy fishing, and he guided me: it turned out that the path was at the foot of the mountain, but the entrance was waterlogged and covered by grasses, so it was easy to miss. As I climbed higher, I found tiered steps with fallen trees on either side, clumps of wood-ear fungus on their trunks, and mushrooms clinging to their lower extremities. Since I was in a hurry to get into the cavern, I did not bother to inspect them closely.

When I reached the cavern, I found the door closed. I tugged on the rope latch and found no monk inside; since the rain continued to pelt down, I pushed open the door and entered. The cavern faced Lu Knoll Mountain [Lulong Shan], south of Hundred Pace Dike [Baibu Tang]. The crest of the mountain on which Guding Village was located lay to the left, while the crest of the mountain where Seething Water Cavern [Feishui Yan] is located lay to the right; the cavern lay halfway up the mountain, with the entrance round and open and a pavilion projecting inside. The cavern's interior was not very spacious; there was a dense cluster of statues of gods. When one turned to the right, the cavern became broader and darker; before long, it rewound on itself, lacking other chambers. Although the cavern had no special marvels, it offered a rich interplay of contrasting light. The "iron flag" moniker denotes the peak, not the cavern.

Looking around, I saw that the monk's kitchen accessories were on the right side of the cavern, and his sleeping quarters were in the pavilion. I went up there, took my clothes off, wrung them out and hung them by the window, then covered myself with clothes that the monk had left and waited for him. In the early afternoon, I saw a monk at the bottom of the mountain, wearing a bamboo hat and making his way up through the thatch grass. Time passed, and he still had not arrived; it turned out he was collecting fungus to fill up his basket, which was why he took so long.

When the monk arrived and found I had entered the closed space without his permission, he was very insulting in words and manner. I explained that I had come a long way and encountered rain, so I had no choice but to enter, and now I was waiting to be fed. At first, he demurred because he had neither rice nor firewood. I had taken a peek inside his storage pot and found it well stocked, so although I did not directly expose his mendacity, I insisted he cook a meal. Once he gave in, I chatted with him, and the conversation became cordial. Not only did he cook rice, but he also made a soup with the fungus and fetched firewood to dry my clothes. A native of Hunan, he was fond of employing Chan sayings. After I had eaten, I offered to pay for the meal, but he refused to accept money.

By then, the rain had gradually stopped, so I asked him how to find Dragon Cave. Having not lived here long, he confused it with Seething Water Cavern and pointed to a cavern opening to the southwest. Not

knowing better, I followed his instructions, and after one-half *li*, I reached the foot of the mountain. There, I found a water-filled entrance, the channel very full. From the sound the water made, the cavern seemed to be very large, and to the east, it was the same, for most likely, it was an empty cavity that the water had filled. But the Dragon Cave that I had heard about was said to be halfway up the mountain, so I looked upward and climbed the slope. The mountain was divided into two peaks, a sheer gap separating them; to the west, there was a shallow cavern, and to the east, I saw a cleft. I tramped through thickets on the hillside to explore farther but could not find a cavern where the water collected. I went back down, still not realizing that what I had seen was not Dragon Cave but Seething Water Cavern.

East one-half *li*, I hurried to the village of Guding. When I gazed at the mountain behind the village, I saw two cavern openings facing south, one tall and narrow, the other round. I told myself I could not afford to miss this extraordinary feature, so I ascended eastward from the fork. The narrow opening extended upward to form a vault; a rock hung like a door in front. To the east, it opened onto a ledge, and from there, I made my way down to the adjacent, round entrance. It looked like it had been gouged out of a dragon's lair, and a large rock rose prominently. At that point, I was still under the impression that Seething Water Cavern was Dragon Cave, not realizing that this was the true Dragon Cave.

After descending, I continued along the old road north of the village. I crossed the small bridge to find that the water level in the stream had risen dramatically so that the bridge was submerged under two feet of water, and I had to feel my way across with the umbrella. It occurred to me that if the small stream were so swollen, the stone weir at Numinous Longevity [Lingshou] would surely be battered by high floodwaters and hard to cross. Just then, I saw a local man laden with bamboo shoots returning to Guding, and I asked him about this. He answered, "The big stream will certainly be hard to cross, but there's no need to cross it. Cross the ridge and follow the stream to the north when you reach the stream. What you cross is just a little stream, and you wind round and come out to the left of Lord Lao's Cavern."

I was very happy to hear this, for not only could I avoid fording high water, but I could also reach the spring that entered the cavern north of Peaceful Spirit [Anling], which was exactly what I had in mind to do. So I followed his advice. I crossed the valley, arriving at the west weir at Peaceful Spirit that I had crossed when I first arrived. The force of the water was powerful and truly not feasible for fording. So I followed the left bank of the stream northward, and after one-half *li*, I neared the south caverns on the other side, and here the stream turned to the west. Then, I circled an isolated peak on the west and turned north along its west slope, heading east to advance toward the rear cavern of Lord Lao. Here, the path was buried among deep thatch grass, and there was no way to find it, so all I

could do was look at the peaks and try to head in the right direction. After going two *li*, I saw that the big Numinous Longevity stream had now turned east and would not block my way, and in a fold in the west hills, there was another small stream from the west that flowed into it, with a weir on top that I could ford. But the surging waters were so strong that at a place where one could normally cross without difficulty, I could not but sigh that I now had to halt my steps, wide-eyed with wonder.

I hesitated for some time, and the sun was going down in the west once I had crossed. So I followed the stream east, for here there was a path, and passing Duke Liu Cavern to the north, I emerged on the main road that leads to Lower Expanse [Xiakuo]. I calculated the distance, considering the many twists and turns, and at this time, the sky was darkening. I judged that I was now behind the cavern and that if I crossed the valley on my left and then descended, I could arrive in front of the cavern, and even if there were no path, I would not have to fight my way through thatch grass and thorns for more than one *li* or so, so I sped on as fast as I could. But the valley was all sheer rocks, with vines and prickles intertwined. I sank in up to my neck, and my hands and feet were entangled as though I had plunged into surging billows where there was no possibility of getting out. I reckoned that if I went back to Duke Liu Cavern, I would not make it before nightfall, and at that point, whether it was tiger or wolf, snake or viper, any quick-moving creature would be more than a match for me. Fortunately, the thorns kept out of the way—as though in a state of primordial innocence—some stayed low and slipped between my legs, or I was able to crush them or leap over their hidden tips. Eventually, I emerged on the rim of the depression and made my way briskly down despite all the spines on the slope, feeling all the more that there was no reason to fear falling in the dim light. Thus, I emerged from the vegetable patch to the left and reached the cavern. Contemplating Wisdom had already bolted the door, so I called him to open it, and once I was back in the cavern, I felt as though I had another lease on life.

Seventh day [26 August]: Contemplating Wisdom left early for the purification altar, and because my clothes had not yet dried out, I stayed in the cavern and did my own cooking. On this day, rain fell incessantly, but it let up close to noon, so I hurried to the south end of town to inquire about boats and went farther into town to repair my clothes. Three boats had already left this morning, and I reckoned that I would need to go to this spot to wait, for one could not know in advance when boats would come down from Huaiyuan, while local boats departed at irregular intervals. At dusk, I returned to the cavern to pick up my bag so that I could stay in an inn at the south end of town, but Contemplating Wisdom had still not returned, and so I did not have a chance to say goodbye; I left money with his disciple and left. This was the Seventh Night, but the locals focused exclusively on the Zhongyuan Festival and

were unfamiliar with the "begging for cleverness" custom, knowing only how to honor their ancestors—an admirable local tradition.[21] Showers continued in the evening, and the river swelled. I bought wine and sipped it at leisure. I slept on top of straw that night, but the rain seeped through and soaked all my bedding.

Eighth day [27 August]: Rain fell all the more heavily, and the river rose. I found a boat in the morning, hurried aboard with my bag, and then waited for departure. After a long time, the owner arrived, but the boat was very narrow, and there was not adequate room for both of us, so I picked up my things and returned to the inn. By midday, the water spilled over the banks and splashed against the shore. Many of the townsfolk, seeing the water rising by the minute, evacuated to higher ground. I sat facing the churning flow as large trees and trunks floated down the river and careened around like warships jockeying for position. Some locals went out in small crafts to pick up fallen branches, and soon they had a whole boatload. Then, they would tie a long rope to one of the trees, and once it had tumbled into an eddy, they would drag it over to a side course and haul it ashore. "When our houses are about to be lost," the bystanders said, "why do you bother about firewood?" "We are reaping a harvest from the water," the boatmen responded. "Not like you people just waiting to be drowned!" Thus, they ribbed each other as they mingled.

> Xu Xiake, Tranquil Hearing, and Gu Xing arrived in the central Guangxi town of Xunzhou on the twenty-first day of the seventh month.[22] Neither Tranquil Hearing nor Gu Xing was feeling well, so the following morning, Xu left them at an inn by the town's south gate and began a solo excursion to the southeast corner of Guangxi. One of his main goals was to visit an extensive cavern complex near the town of Beiliu.[23] Known as Hook Leak Cavern [Goulou Dong], it was a celebrated Daoist "grotto heaven" (*dongtian*).

Twenty-ninth day [*of the seventh month*] [17 September]:[24] After going another five *li* to the east, where the stone mountains cluster, another peak rears up suddenly, with Precious Scepter Cavern [Baogui Dong] at

21 The Seventh Night fell on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month, when the legendary Weaving Maid was thought to reunite with her sweetheart and when women would lay out snacks for the Weaving Maid in a bid to win her blessings. For additional details, see note 20, page 224. The Zhongyuan Festival, associated with honoring ancestors, occurred a few days later, on the fifteenth.

22 Xunzhou is modern-day Guiping Shi.

23 Beiliu today is a county-level city under the administration of Yulin Shi.

24 *YJJZ*, 1:518; *YJ*, 1:419.

the west corner and Hook Leak Retreat [Goulou An] on the southern slope. Thunder was rumbling, so I first took refuge in the retreat. It was rebuilt by the authorities during the Wanli reign and is very tidy and clean. The inner hall has three chambers, with a Golden Transcendent (Jinxian) in the middle, Saint Guan (Guansheng) to the east, and Magistrate Ge (Geling) to the west.[25] The image of Magistrate Ge, with a blue thread cap and vermilion shoes, was strikingly vivid. In the rear suite, a statue of Zhunti Bodhisattva (Zhundi Dashi) was in the middle, with a kitchen on the west side and a seating area on the east. In the front courtyard, hibiscus was in bloom, with clusters of red and pink flowers, while in the rear courtyard, the whitewashed walls provided screening, as bamboo and cassia grew lushly all around, in silence, with no one to be seen.

The Daoist's wife closed the door behind me as I entered, and I asked her about the procedure for visiting the cavern. "Wait until the Daoist comes back later," she said. So I left my bag in the vestibule and let her go off while I prepared a meal. By the time I had finished, the rain had stopped and it was dusk; the Daoist now returned. Following instructions from his superior, the magistrate summoned him, demanding that he collect cinnabar and transcendent's rice (*xianren mi*) from inside the cavern.

But the idea that Magistrate Ge wanted to access cinnabar here was something he said once in response to a casual impulse. Later, he achieved transcendence on Mount Luofu in Guangdong and never visited here. For ages now, there has been no cinnabar here, so how could there possibly be transcendents' grains or leftover cinnabar?

The Daoist wore an anxious look on his face. I gave him some money and asked him to prepare a good number of torches for the next day's exploration. He agreed to do that and was willing to act as a guide . . .

First day of the eighth month [18 September]:[26] After breakfast, I first made a trip to Precious Scepter, arranging with the Daoist that he would follow with torches and lanterns. The cavern is one-half *li* north of the retreat. Behind the retreat, one cavern faces south, and one faces west; seen from a distance, they both are shallow. Precious Scepter is farther to the north. First, a stream from the northwest flows east and rinses the foothills; after crossing it and climbing the mountain to the north, I came across the cavern entrance. It faces west; to the left, the cavern lies open, and to the right, it presents a deeper entrance. The open section is lined with stone slabs on a level with the western peak. To the right, the cavern slants

25 In Daoist religion, the Twelve Golden Transcendents (Shi'er Jin Xian) were venerated, and Guan Yu, the celebrated general of the Three Kingdoms era, was elevated to the status of a deity. "Magistrate Ge" is a reference to the renowned Daoist practitioner, Ge Hong.

26 *YJJZ*, 1:523–29; *YJ*, 1:420–28.

downward, and a stone pillar acts as a gate, with a rock at the top jutting out into space. The path from the side descends to the bottom of the cavern, which opens into four forks: one to the east, one to the south, both very deep and dark, one to the west, agape, and one extending to the north, both empty and bright. On the south side of the east fork, a leaf-shaped rock abruptly drops from one side of the roof and projects into the air like a flat shelf opposite the pillar that acts as an outside gate. Within the leaf-shaped rock are round apertures and curved fissures that allow an unusual amount of light and air to enter. I clambered up the left rock face and reached the flat shelf, where I walked back and forth and then sat down: it really felt like riding the clouds in another world altogether.

After sitting there for some time, I returned and proceeded along the fork extending north. Several rods in length, a stalactite hung low, water dripping slowly from its tip. Farther north, I entered a cleft: to the right, it sloped down to an exit at the north end, while to the left, it extended upward to form an upper layer. These were the north and west forks of the well-lit part of the cavern.

After I had explored for quite some time, the Daoist arrived carrying torches and also bringing a companion with a basket. When I asked about the basket's purpose, the Daoist replied, "The magistrate, following instructions from the intendant, has asked that I collect cinnabar and transcendents' rice (*xianmi*). Just now, a student found some transcendents' rice for me, and cinnabar can be found in the cavern, so I will look for it with basket and torch." Only then did I realize that the granules he meant were not actually cinnabar but granules a bit like cinnabar, which is most valued when white, with yellow ones ranked second—that is why the northern cavern is named White Granule Cavern [Baisha Dong]. What he meant by rice was the water bamboo that grows in the mountain ponds, which the locals dub "transcendents' rice."

Then we lit the torches and first entered the south cavern, the walls on both sides rising steeply, tall but not wide. After one-half *li*, on the left wall, a mark ran crosswise, one rod from the ground—called a "transcendent bed" (*xianchuang*). By the side was a column hanging down and fractured openings, all short and narrow. The interior of these openings was cup-shaped, like a mortar. I probed it with my hand, and inside, there was a heap of grains, square or round; I gathered them and put them in the basket. We reached into three or four holes in sequence, and the harvest did not amount to a whole pint. Later, when the Daoist took them out and rinsed them of impurities, selecting the round and clean grains, they amounted to only one-tenth of what was gathered. But they were just ordinary pieces of grit—how could they really be leftovers from the Nine Refinements (Jiuzhuan)?[27]

27 In Daoist alchemy, cinnabar elixirs undergo nine stages of refinement to achieve the highest purity and efficacy.

After a further advance, the cleft suddenly plunged into a pool. From the cavern ceiling to the water was two rods in length; I could not tell how deep the water was. The two banks were so steep it was impossible to climb them. Looking southward to the interior, it was impenetrably dark. At first, I urged the Daoist to ford the pond, but he answered:

"When the water is this deep, no one has even managed to cross."

I urged him to find a raft.

"It is too tight a space," he said. "Nobody has ever brought a raft in here."

"Then how can we go farther?"

"You have to wait until winter, when the water recedes, to jump down and walk."

"Once you go farther, what is it like?"

"It extends very far. You can see, but you cannot climb out."

Hearing this, I was quite despondent. I threw a stone into the water; it did not immediately reach the bottom. I stood looking at the scene for some time. Then, glancing upward, I noticed a crevice on the left wall, and I hastened to enter. The pillars in the crevice were perforated, and as I entered, it gradually became constricted, and there were no more holes. So then I descended and returned and exited through the intersection.

Lighting a torch, I then entered the east cavern. Initially, the two sides formed walls, but below, they gradually gained in height, and then in the middle, they opened like a hall, and to the sides broke into scepter-shaped cavities, all dark grottoes. After going north a little way, the passage turned east, and the trail ended. Compared to the southern branch, although the cavern winds its way, it is not even half as deep. That one has a hole, but the water blocks it; this one has no water, but the hole is blocked, and I came to feel that the east branch is entirely dry. So I returned to the intersection and planned to visit White Granule Cavern.

According to the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, White Granule is north of Hook Leak; Hook Leak is first in the world, and White Granule is preeminent of the caverns at Hook Leak. As regards the wet caves, such as Jade Void [Yuxu] and Jade Field [Yutian], and the dry caves, like Pervasive Radiance [Puzhao] and Lone Elegance [Duxiu], the Daoist said nothing—it was only White Granule that he spoke of with great enthusiasm. I quickly proceeded forward while the Daoist led the way, carrying the torches, basket, and broom. From the north, we emerged below the side door, then followed the northwest foothills around, only then to see the two mountains in front and behind standing there; the peak rising prominently to the southwest housed Precious Scepter, while the northeast peak was the one that sheltered White Granule. White Granule also has two entrances, in front and the rear; the front entrance faces north and is tall and spacious, dividing into three apertures, two to either side high up on the rock face, while steps can reach the central one; the rear entrance faces south, tall

and narrow, with only a single aperture, its frontage facing the rear of Precious Scepter, its left being the ridge of the central connector. First, we passed the dip by the rear entrance, where grass covered the path; the Daoist did not enter but headed north. After one *li*, we turned east, skirted the northern foothills, and ascended to the front entrance. Once inside, the path led down, and after dozens of steps, we reached the bottom. I gazed up to the left and right sides of the entrance, and each had a high fissure—the left and right apertures. The falling light illuminated the open areas but could not reach as far as the recesses. Turning right in the cave, the passage was tall and wide, but gradually, it grew dim and petered out. I searched in all directions but found no path that penetrated farther.

Coming out, I told the Daoist to light the torches, and then we reentered, but the torchlight failed to find any other path. Suddenly, the Daoist tossed a torch under the rock face and crawled into the space. The tunnel was no more than a foot high and a foot wide. We went some way, and suddenly the passage opened out, with all kinds of sights arrayed, as though we had opened the door to find heaven and earth connected once more. I looked around; the space extended in all directions, and there were no fissures. Suddenly, I saw another tunnel that went east and south, sometimes opening and sometimes closing, four tunnels altogether, narrow as a pipe.

Then, at the top of the rock face on the left, the word "Cinnabar" was written. Underneath was a cavity, and the Daoist said, "Here is a cinnabar hole." He bent down and swept up an armful of granules. There was a fork to the south, but it did not go far. I went out and turned to the west and then south to find the sunlight glaring as though bright stars were projecting down; I could see the entry to the rear cavern in the distance. This cavern had a pool inside and was very level; only the wall holes were open, with no channels or spines rising and falling, and the front and rear openings were high up above.

The Daoist wanted to go back through the original entrance, but I wanted to climb up and out through the rear opening. "The back entrance is so tight, it is impossible to climb out," said the Daoist. "The grass outside is so thick that you will not be able to see where to go."

"That tight spot in the darkness earlier did not deter me in the slightest, and this hole has light, so I can see how to wriggle through. I am not concerned about the lushness of the grass."

So I crawled through the hole to find the sun was now overhead, and for the first time, I saw Precious Scepter's rear peak; a cluster of pine trees blocked the entry. I then pushed aside the thatch grass, trampled thorns, and went out into the valley, passing the side entrance to Precious Scepter. After two *li*, when I returned to the retreat, I told the porters and the Daoist to cook a meal. Then I pressed another man staying in the retreat to join

me in going east to explore Clear Spring [Qingquan], the south-facing cave I had passed earlier. The cave was not deep but bright, clean, and fit for an overnight stay. In front of the cave was a Song dynasty stele, written in large characters: "Clear Spring Cave" (Qingquan Yan). There was no spring to the right or left of the cave, and it was impossible to know why it had this name. I returned to the retreat for lunch.

In the afternoon, I pressed the attendant and a lodger in the retreat to explore the caves in the nearby mountains with me. I do not know where the lodger was from, but he stayed in the retreat; he did not have a penny to his name. He came with me to the caverns, and I gave him food. He left two days later, and I do not know where he went. We went southwest to Granny Huang Cave [Huangpo Yan], a cave formed in a crease among the mountains southwest of Precious Scepter. Its mountain stretches east from Waiting for One's Husband Rock [Wangfu Shi], and the cave is situated on the northeast corner, opposite Precious Scepter to the east but slightly to the south. The entrance is very high, and Granny Huang Cave is tiered; the summit of the mountain beyond the cave forms a strange shape: one slope is like a woman's head, hair coiled in a bun, poised as though looking at herself in a mirror. On the north side, there was another cluster of peaks, in line with this mountain, and to the east, opposite Precious Scepter. On the southeast rock face is a large inscription, "Hook Leak Mountain" (Goulou Shan), proportionate in size to the mountain, which locals attribute to a transcendent hand. Below it, there must once have been a palatial edifice, but now there is no way to verify that.

Afterward, I followed the foothills east of Granny Huang Cave, looking eagerly as I walked. I then turned to follow the southern foothills and saw a jagged cliff extending. Although there was an entrance below, the inner passage was not deep, and it was impossible to get through the door and reach the chambers, so I crossed east past the barracks and the retreat and reached the southeast corner of the rear peak.

Here I found a clear stream flowing with a gurgle out of the jumble of rocks. Above, grasses and rocks abounded; below, to the southwest, the spring formed a creek. This is the place where walkers cross. The retreat and barracks drew their water from here, but nobody was interested in where it came from.

As I was planning to investigate the source, a boy suddenly appeared and asked the attendant, "Are you looking for caverns? Above here, there are two, several tens of rods apart. The path is overgrown, but exploring and entering is possible."

Someone else said, "Yesterday at dusk, two men with a dog came walking from the east. A tiger leaped down from the rocks and carried the dog off. The tiger's den is up there, so you better not go that way."

I ignored his warning and pressed the attendant and the lodger to join me in climbing through the thick vegetation, searching for the cave

among the vines. Sure enough, we found an entrance facing east, but on the outside, it was hemmed in by creepers, concealed behind rocks, and so not easily spotted. On entering the cavern, we found the ground dropped precipitously. Looking down, we could see a stream running along the bottom. The water gurgled, but the rock face was so sheer that it was impossible to climb down.

Scanning the mountainside, I noticed that the south face dropped precipitously, except in one section. There, a rocky ledge jutted out like a plank walkway perched on the edge of a cliff. No more than eight inches wide, it stretched to the west side, but two posts had been placed halfway along the ledge, like a fence blocking the path, and the outer of the two posts had been removed, leaving just a foot or so of the base left, so it was possible to clamber over it. But the space was even more narrow; one had to grip the inner post with both hands and swing one's body over the outer post—there could surely be no more hazardous feat than this.

Once we reached the west face, we were opposite the entrance, with the stream in between. We lit torches and shined them on the cavern; below, the rock fell away steeply, just like the outside rock face. When we entered, we saw stalactites in great profusion, sometimes in a circle, like an ornate chamber, sometimes airy, like a winding kiosk—it would be impossible to describe all the hidden wonders there. Then we moved away from the rock face and toward the creek; after jumping down a steep incline, we reached the creek. The water did not quite come up to my knees, surging from the south under the rock face to the north, tumbling over underneath the cliff. I then followed the creek upstream from underneath the south cliff. The entry hole was very low, so I had to duck until just a foot above the water's surface.

My attendant and the lodger were afraid that the torches would be soaked, making it impossible for us to see where we were going, and they argued against going inside. I threw caution to the winds and waded into the stream as the spray covered my forehead. I proceeded south for several rods and saw ahead a gleam of light. I was delighted; entering another cavern, I shouted at the top of my voice to the two attendants. Although I had to crouch low in the water and found myself knocking against rocks while crawling with my head down, I could still see both in front and behind, the light of the torch and the light from the sky complementing each other, so I kept on going and never stopped. Another few rods to the south, a cavern opened up broadly on either side; above and to the east, there was an opening to the outside, while to the west, there was a huge gulch. My companions had arrived, so I told them to proceed with the torches. Then we followed the stream farther up to the west, and the cavern grew ever taller and wider, and the current ever deeper and broader. After another few rods, I reached a flat rock in the middle of the stream. I climbed up and looked around: the cavern gaped

open like a huge mansion, spring water spreading in all directions. With my walking stick, I tested the water depth and could not touch the bottom; shining a torch into the cavern, it was deep and dark. I climbed down and retraced my steps, arriving at a spot below the east-facing opening.

My two attendants lowered their heads and held their torches horizontally as they crawled north toward the low cavern. I stopped them, saying, "Although this exit route is steep, it is no different from our entry path. It would be better to climb up and out this one rather than worming your way along to reach the entrance."

"If we can't get anywhere once we're outside, what do we do then?" they asked.

"Whatever we find outside," I replied, "we will be somewhere on the mountain. Even if we were to go out the way we came in, it still wouldn't be easygoing, would it?"

I led the way in climbing up the rock face. The two of them discarded the torches and followed, and we all emerged from the cavern. The door faced east and was adjacent to the entry. It had been obscured by jutting rocks and trailing vines and thus was invisible to us earlier. I proceeded parallel to the left face, and looking up, I saw another level extending like a balcony, but it was impossible to access. I then turned a corner to the north, reaching the earlier opening where the spring emerged. There I bathed my feet leisurely, waiting for the attendants to catch up.

Then we quickly walked from the southeast corner of the mountain, passed the barracks, and after one *li* arrived at the Hook Leak Retreat amid a heavy downpour of rain. On this day, I first went west in a vain search for the Jade Void and Jade Field caves, then went east and found these two other caverns, which was a marvelous discovery. But had a remarkable individual not pointed them out, I would have missed out on them entirely—how would I have known that next to Big Character Cave [Dazi Yan] on the west peak, there were other caves buried by brambles and hidden by creepers? And how could I have found those vertiginous rocks on the southeast side of Granny Huang Cave to grasp with my hands and tread with my feet?

Second day [19 September]: After breakfast, I told the attendant to go with the Daoist west to Beiliu to buy vegetables and rice while I stayed alone in the retreat to rest. Earlier, the lodger had left at night to avoid the mosquitoes, and I did not know where he had gone. Now he turned up, saying, "After inquiring, I have learned that Lone Spectacle Cave [Dusheng Yan] is north of here."

I knew there might be other caverns newly discovered to the north, but they would not include Lone Spectacle Cave. But nobody else was in the sanctuary, and I could not go with him immediately, so I told him it would have to wait till the next day. The man then left, and he never came back. At noon, the attendant returned with the supplies. I

immediately instructed him to prepare the meal, for I was planning to take brush and inkstone to copy the poems carved on the walls of Precious Scepter Cavern.

Suddenly, the Daoist rushed in. "The Circuit Intendant is coming! He may well be having a meal in the retreat." He wanted to take my bag and store it in his nest. I ignored him and hurried off to Precious Scepter.

No sooner had I left the retreat than the escorts arrived with banners and pennants. The visitor was not the local administrator of the Yulin Circuit [Yulin Dao] but the intendant of the Lianzhou-Haibei Circuit [Lianzhou Haibei Dao].[28] He was Zhang Guojing (*jinshi* 1622), courtesy name Yinliang, of Zhangpu, whom I once met at the Gantang Relay Station [Gantang Yi] along with Huang Daozhou; he was now based in Lianzhou. At this time, Xiong Wencan (d. 1640), the provincial military commander (*junmen*), had just replaced Lu Xiangshu (1600–1638) of Jing Stream [Jingxi] as supreme commander in Henan on a mission to suppress bandits, and Zhang had gone to see him off.[29] Zhang was passing through here on his way back, so he wanted to tour Hook Leak. I stayed out of sight behind the west side of the wall and waited till he had entered the retreat, then rushed off to record the cave poems. I had copied less than half of them when he arrived at the cave, so I quickly sought refuge in the upper level of the belvedere on the north fork. I recalled the *Wuzhou Gazetteer's* (Wu[zhou] zhi) description of the small west chamber, where the cavern has enough light that one can look out and where there is a natural stone bed, level on a raised platform, where one can sleep or sit; it is situated opposite the east cavern, and the two are like matching armpits. The scene now was just like that. The visitors entered the south cavern, went as far as the water, and then turned back. I lay on the rock for a while and found it a novel experience to listen as the sightseers alternated between making a clamor and falling quiet. After Zhang left the southern cavern, he turned north and came over to the side entrance, but he would never climb as high as the top tier. He and the magistrate pointed and peered, oohing and aahing, never realizing someone was lying on top.

After they left, I resumed copying the poems. All the poems are recent, except for the one on the Song dynasty stele, which was in poor condition, presumably because of damage in some affray. I had just finished copying when the sun went down, so I returned to the retreat.

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

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28 The Lianzhou-Haibei circuit intendant oversaw administrative affairs in southwest Guangdong province. Lianzhou is today known as Hepu Xian.

29 *DMB*, 1:562–66. Lu Xiangshu, a native of Yixing, was killed in an engagement with Qing troops later that year.

III

[FALL 1637 AND WINTER 1638]

Although Xu Xiake noted some improvements in Tranquil Hearing's health on his return to Xunzhou, the monk's condition appears to have deteriorated. A diary entry dated the seventeenth day of the eighth month, as the travelers were approaching Nanning by boat, notes that Tranquil Hearing was suffering from acute diarrhea throughout the journey.[1] Almost all the diary entries that Xu Xiake kept during the following weeks have been lost; when we next hear of Tranquil Hearing, he is staying at a monastery on the outskirts of Nanning and is critically ill.

Dingchou *year, twenty-second day of the ninth month* [8 November 1637]: I went to the Exalted Benevolence Monastery [Chongshan Si] to say goodbye to Tranquil Hearing, then boarded a boat heading for Taiping.[2] I looked after the baggage and told Servant Gu to attend to Tranquil Hearing. That night, at the Celestial Consort Palace [Tianfei Gong] moored the boat next to Jianwu Relay Station [Jianwu Yi].

Twenty-third day [9 November]: The boat did not set off this morning. I recalled how in the Exalted Benevolence Monastery, Tranquil Hearing was fearful that wind would blow through a hole in the window. Although Cloud White had several times promised to fix it, he had not taken any action. Given the boat's change of schedule, I planned to go to the Liang house and get some money to give Tranquil Hearing so that he could hire someone to do the repair.[3] The monk Precious Altar (Baotan) had now returned, and he would not mind getting his hands dirty, while the guest monks Wise Meditation (Huichan) and Perfected Lineage (Manzong) would also help rig up a bamboo mat to block the wind—so different from Cloud White!

Tranquil Hearing asked very earnestly that I give him the cloth shoes and Hengyang tea I had bought earlier. I told Tranquil Hearing, "Once

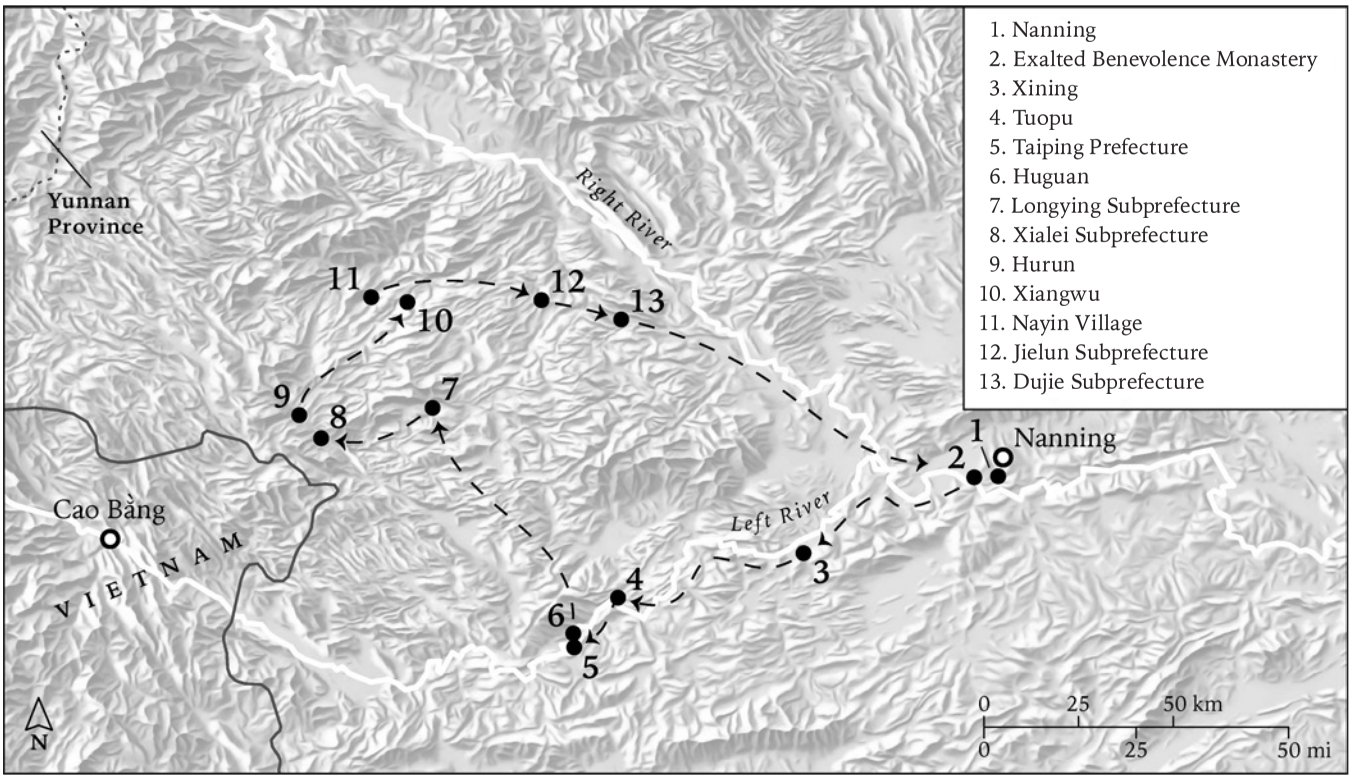
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Source: "Yuexiyou riji san" (*YJJZ*, 1:555–56; *YJ*, 1:451–52).

1 Nanning was then a prefecture, with its administrative center in Xuanhua County; it is now Nanning Shi, the capital of the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region.

2 Taiping, then a prefecture, is now a Zhen in Chongzuo Shi. Xu Xiake's boat to Taiping traveled on the Zuojiang, or Left River [Zuojiang].

3 The Liang house appears to be an inn run by Liang Zhongyu, who is also referred to below as "Liang" or "Landlord Liang" (Liang Zhuren).



Map 24. Western Yue (Guangxi), Diary 3, 1637–38

you can get up and walk, I will come back and attend to you here—why do you need those things now?" Wise Meditation tried to reason with him several times, but Tranquil Hearing would not let the matter drop.

By now, the boat was soon to leave. I heard that Precious Altar was staying at the Heavenly Peace Monastery [Tianning Si], and I planned to collect the money from Liang and give it all to him, so I said goodbye to Tranquil Hearing and left. Together with the manager of the Liang Inn, I sought out Precious Altar, who generously took on the responsibility of aiding Tranquil Hearing in his hour of need. I then boarded the boat, which now proceeded southwest for four *li*. It then turned northwest, and after another four *li*, we moored at Kiln Head [Yaotou].

The sun was still high in the sky, and I kept thinking about Tranquil Hearing's insistence on getting the shoes and the tea. I interpreted this as meaning that he was still hoping to fully recover and resume the journey to Mount Chicken Foot—he did not want to wait for my return. If I were to come back and not find him here, that was not what I had in mind; if it was anticipated that he was bound to die and I would come back to collect his bones, that was not what he had in mind. It would be better to give him the two things he wanted and then part from him forever, with no second thoughts; that would also allow me to fulfill my aspiration to visit Mount Emei.

So I went ashore and headed east, leaving Kiln Head Village [Yaotou Cun]. After two *li*, a little stream came from the northwest and turned eastward here, so I crossed it, then followed it east. After another two *li*, it drained south into the river. Going east one *li*, I crossed the large bridge west of White Gown Retreat [Baiyi An] and entered Exalted Benevolence Monastery. By now, the sun was low in the sky. I went in and said goodbye to Tranquil Hearing, parting from him forever. I left quickly, crossing the bridge once more, and after five *li*, I reached Kiln Head. When I boarded the boat, it was too dark to make out any colors. . .

> For the next several days, Xu Xiake traveled southwesterly up the Left River, marveling at the stunning views of the karst mountains. When the boatmen decided to stop for a rest at the village of Nale, Xu took the opportunity to explore.

Twenty-seventh day [13 November 1637]:[4] At first cockcrow proceeded southwest from Xining.[5] We had turned northwest, headed straight for the west peaks, and turned south. After traveling eight *li*, the rocks on the east bank rose steeply into the sky—a fantastic sight. Then, abruptly, we made a turn, and up ahead, two pinnacles jutted out, with a huge slab connecting them at a lofty height. Below, the mountains gape open as

4 *YJJZ*, 1:561–63; *YJ*, 1:456–59.
5 Xining is today known as Fusui Xian.

though a sluice gate has been raised; above, the rock arches like a bridge spanning the air—among all the marvels, this is a stupendous spectacle. But I regretted that the boat passed by without me having the chance to climb to the top. Nor were there knowledgeable people whom I could ask. I would guess that these are the formations called Lion Rock [Shishi] and Cave Abode [Dongfu], but I am unsure whether that is right.

One *li* farther on, a tributary joined the river from the southeast; this is the so-called Surging River [Chongjiang], the source of which is in Zhongzhou.[6] After we proceeded south another three *li*, a very sharp-pointed peak appeared on the east bank, and in a round, curving hollow on its north face, I saw a series of west-facing caves, but they were on a perpendicular rock face and had no access path. Another eight *li* to the southwest, we reached Nale. The wind was right behind us, but the boatmen moored here to have a drink since other men from their town had stopped. So while the boat was tied up, I went ashore to explore the Through Mountain [Chuanshan] and Rhinoceros [Xiniu] Caverns.

Nale, on the river's east bank, is a bustling village. When I asked about Rhinoceros Cavern, none of the locals knew about it, and they mistakenly pointed southward toward Mu Kiln [Muyao]. So I walked in that direction, threading my way between two peaks. Three *li* to the southwest I found a stream flowing into the river from the southeast. Its flow was small but strong and babbling. A stone slab had been newly laid across the stream, very stable underfoot. The stream's source is in Jiangzhou; the locals know it as the Lateral River [Hengjiang]. After crossing the stream, I arrived at Mu Kiln Village [Muyao Cun], where there was a market; to the west, it borders the river. Nobody could answer my inquiries about Rhinoceros Cavern, but I found Big Cavern [Dayan] instead. It lies one *li* to the south, among a cluster of peaks. The cavern stands halfway up, its entrance facing south. I clambered up the rocks to reach it, and only then did I see the river over to the west. When I entered the cavern and looked through the opening on the other side, I saw a rock face swathed in greenery.

Then I climbed higher in the cavern and squatted on a central ledge. Now, the east and west entrances faced each other, and I could see both at once. Stalactites hung down, forming a dense curtain on both sides. The cavern was lower on the west side and taller on the east, so the entry on the east side is higher than the exit on the west side, and from the outside, you cannot tell that the cavern goes all the way through—it is only after you have entered the cavern that you can see right through to the other side. Looking out through either entry, you see lofty pinnacles that pierce the clouds. The east entry is particularly high, with a sheer rock face both above and below. Rocky crags fill one's view from north to east, while a deep gorge lies below to the south, opening up a lush green world.

6 Zhongzhou is now Dongmen Zhen, under the jurisdiction of Fusui Xian.

To the west, the rock face obscures the entrance to the gorge, and one cannot get a good view.

I then descended and followed the mountain round to the north. After one *li*, I inquired again at Mu Kiln and was told that Rhinoceros Cavern is at Unicorn Village [Qilin Cun], so I crossed the stone bridge and headed northeast, arriving at Unicorn after three *li*. This village lies two *li* east of Nale, so the three villages form a triangle, with Mu Kiln slightly to the south. If the people in Nale had directed me here in the first place, I would not have made that detour to the Big Cavern. In Unicorn, the villagers pointed to a spot on the east peak of the northern mountains and said that is where I would find Rhinoceros Cavern—if I walked one more *li*, they said, I would see the path.

So I walked on ahead but could see no path. I heard the sound of woodcutting, so brushing aside thorns and clambering over prickly shrubs, I yelled, but there was no answer. Seeing nothing, I went back to the main road. It was now afternoon, and I had told the boatmen I would return by this time. But I put out of my mind the possibility that the boat might set off without me and leave me hungry, for I wanted to find the cavern. However, when I questioned the locals, I could find no one who knew of it. I thought it must be on the north rim of the mountains, so I circled around to the northeast corner, following the main road. After two *li*, I saw a spur turning to the north and noticed a burn scar. Earlier, the people in Unicorn Village had said: "When you reach the burn scar at the foot of the mountain, that's where you take the path up to the cavern." I thought this must be the place, so I rushed ahead as fast as possible, entering a cleft between the hills.

On either side, peaks assembled, and cliffs piled up, but the central path was level and straight, and I saw cart tracks. I followed them for over one *li,* and there I found four or five carts stopped, with several cattle grazing on the slopes and several men collecting wood by the cliff. I questioned them all, but none knew of a cavern. They had come here from a distant village to graze their cattle and pick up firewood; they would use the carts to carry their haul back home.

After one more *li*, the valley turned east, and I saw tiered pinnacles in all directions, so sheer that no path was possible; the western cliff was especially steep. As I stood there in uncertainty, a man shouldering bamboo emerged from a deep thicket. I called out to him, but he shook his head.

"You're going the wrong way," he said. "Where is the cavern?" I asked. "Come with me," he said. I followed him out, and when we reached the carts, I questioned him closely. It turned out that he was equally in the dark about the cavern's whereabouts—he thought there was no way forward for me and so had wanted to guide me out.

So I left him and went back into the notch, reaching the north and east end after two more *li*. There, the notch doglegged into a hollow, level

as a whetstone in the middle, but on all sides cliffs circled and peaks blocked, and given the deep thickets and dense cover, the path could go no farther. Here too some men had left their cattle grazing and gone off to collect firewood, but they knew no more about the cavern than the others had. Having looked without success for a path among the thorny growth, I made my way out of the notch, very dejected. But I observed how this valley penetrated deeply among the mountains, with soaring crags above and no other path in sight—it was a marvelous spectacle in its own right. If one could climb the ridge to the east, I reckoned that there, one would be able to see boats passing on the river beyond. On the east side of the valley, there was a cluster of caves, but the cliffs were sheer and the route impassable, so there was no way to get closer. Though I could not access the very heart of the valley, I was able to map out the general lay of the land, so the trip was not at all a waste of time.

After retracing my steps five *li* to the southwest, I reached the main road at the north end of Unicorn Village, and as I looked ahead, I saw a burn scar on the other side of the hill. I hurried toward it and saw a little path leading away from the burn area. I headed toward the spot where I had earlier heard wood being cut. The rocks and the vegetation created a barrier, and for a time, I found nothing, but I felt sure I was finally on the right trail. By then it was afternoon, and though hunger was gnawing at me, I did not want to miss this cavern, so I strode on ahead with all the more determination. I clambered up the steep incline, making my way through masses of high grass. On the sheerest parts of the climb, I found rocks to serve as steps, and in the deepest grass, I found footmarks, so I had no need to wonder if I was going the wrong way. The higher I ascended, the farther I could see. Looking west, the land dropped away, with a jumble of rocks straddling the mountain's crest. Looking east, I saw a ring of peaks and one isolated pinnacle almost as tall as the mountain on which I stood. Only a single path ascended to the north, and after two *li*, I reached the summit of the high peak, thinking the cavern would be here, only to find that the path continued down the other side. As I descended, I looked down at the northern glen, realizing I had now reached the area of the "tiered pinnacles" I saw when I mistakenly entered the notch. By then I had explored every corner and scaled every height—I had spared no effort in looking for the cavern. But the path was growing ever fainter, and descending westward into a dip, it petered out in a low-lying area of grass and thorns, so densely overgrown that I could not go farther. Although I tramped back and forth for quite some time, I could not find a path. So I crossed back over the high peak to the south, and after two more *li*, I descended to the burn area, where I saw a path heading toward the canyon to the east between a crack in the rocks. The path headed directly toward the isolated pinnacle, which accorded with the Unicorn villagers' words. So I realized I had been very close to the path but was confused by the other trails. After

making mistakes thrice and returning thrice, I found the right way in the end—surely my devotion to this mountain scenery was now being rewarded!

The sun was gradually going down, so I made haste to climb toward the pinnacle, up very steep steps. After one-half *li*, I reached the north end, and only then did I realize that the pinnacle sticks out at an angle between the other high peaks, like a single horn protruding—hence the name Rhinoceros. To the north, the crest leads onto another tall peak directly opposite. A huge boulder stands on the crest, like a wild beast blocking the way, acting as a buttress in line with the single horn. In the middle of the boulder is a large, vertical cavity, and a stone block over one rod tall is embedded in the hole. The boulder clasps it on both sides and covers it so snugly that it is as though the hole had to have been chiseled out for the block to be placed inside. The block is a reddish ocher, different from all the other rocks on the mountain. It reminds me of the burial stone at the Yu's Mausoleum [Yuling], but the block here is all the more remarkable, encased as it is by the boulder. To the east, the crest falls away to a hollow, deep as a crevasse, while above, sharp peaks pierce the sky in a circle so round it could have been drawn with a compass.

Having scaled the ridge, I looked down at the depths. Near the bottom of the rock face to the south is a cavern facing north, its entry tall and wide, its cavity so deep that there was no way of knowing how far it extended. The surrounding cliffs were dense with vegetation, and the valley floor was even more heavily overgrown. I could see paths on the slopes below, but the thick plant cover would make advancing on the valley floor impossible. If one could clear all the obstructions away, then within the circle of pinnacles, the valley would lie flat as the palm of a hand, with the fathomless cavern yawning wide—who would ever turn down the chance to explore the wondrous world that must lie inside?

I had probed the deep and hidden corners to find everything as silent as in remote ages, indifferent to the vulgar world. But my belly was empty, my legs were tired, and the sun was about to set, so I went down the hill and continued west past the north end of Unicorn Village. After two *li* I arrived back in Nale and boarded the boat where I had left it. By now, the sun had set.

> On the twenty-eighth, Xu Xiake resumed his boat journey, arriving on the second day of the tenth month in the bustling river port of Tuopu (known today as Tuolu). Here, for the first time, he became aware of potential obstacles to his smooth passage to Yunnan: reports of Vietnamese incursions into the far west corner of Guangxi raised questions about the viability of the route he had been planning.
>
> Xu Xiake's servant, Gu Xing, was still ailing, so he stayed behind in the inn in Tuopu while Xu Xiake traveled southwest

by road. That afternoon, he stopped just short of the prefectural capital of Taiping (known today as Chongzuo) in the suburb of Huguan.

Fourth day [*of the tenth month*] [19 November]:[7]. . . In Huguan, in the past, there were only four or five rooms in the tollhouse quarters that could accommodate travelers. Still, now the old monk Vegetarian Fast (Caizhai) has built the Reflecting Sunglow Clouds Retreat [Yingxia An] nearby, with a tea pavilion in the rear. I arrived at the retreat in the afternoon and stayed there to rest. Vegetarian Fast is a Northerner, sixty-one years old, who has roamed far and wide across the country. He subsists daily on a diet of two bowls of unsalted vegetables and does not eat rice. Seeing this desolate area, he built this retreat especially to receive all and sundry. Several dozen people eat and sleep in the retreat; he does not disrespect them even if they stay long. Vegetarian Fast's Buddhist name is Pursuant Joy (Ruxi), and his disciple's name is Ocean Freshening (Hairun).

Fifth day [20 November]:[8] After breakfast, I crossed over to Homeward Dragon [Guilong], went four *li*, and followed White Cloud Cliff to the west. On this wild hill, grasses grew everywhere, so tall they came up above my head, blocking my view of distant landmarks. Below, thorns pierced my socks and trousers so that I felt stabbing pains every time I took a step forward, and soon, it was unbearable. After a few more steps, I removed my socks and trousers and examined them carefully for thorns, removing every one before continuing forward. A small stream now flowed down from the canyon to the southeast, draining northward in front of the crags. Above, I was snagged by vines and tendrils, and below, I had to hurdle streams and mud, so progress was very difficult. After crossing the stream, I arrived below the crags. . . . The ground was thick with briars and vines. I could not find a path, and there was no one to consult. I wandered back and forth, unsure what to do, as morning turned to afternoon. . . . Ultimately, I kept going west, leaving Homeward Dragon and following the riverbank south.

After three *li,* I arrived between the two mountains, Golden Cabinet [Jingui] and General's [Jiangjun]. Golden Cabinet overlooks the river; its empty cave looked big enough to accommodate several hundred people, but dense vegetation made it impossible to access. I circled its north, east, and south faces and twice scaled its summit. Looking down at the river town, I could see it as clearly as my beard and eyebrows in a mirror. To the east stood General's Mountain, its cliffs and summit facing the river

7 *YJJZ*, 1:571–72; *YJ*, 1:464.
8 *YJJZ*, 1:573–80; *YJ*, 1:466–70.

as though stalwartly defending the town. This prominent peak offers the best vantage point for a comprehensive view of the surrounding area.

I descended and waited for a boat to ferry me back across the river, but it was dusk, and no boat came; my stomach was empty. To the north, I spotted a boat crossing to my side, so I clambered over the rocks, and after one *li*, I reached the dock, only to find that the boat was already on its way back to the other side. After a long wait, I found a fishing boat that took me over. As I walked westward, I saw someone selling bananas, and since I was too hungry to look for a regular meal, I bought a dozen or so bananas and ate them right there, then hurried back to Huguan, for mountain rains were moving in, and the night was falling.

Sixth day [21 November]: I could not decide between the Guishun or Nandan routes. . . . I went to the Temple of Miss Ban [Banshi Shenmiao] to cast lots to settle the matter.[9] The temple is outside the big west gate and overlooks the river. This goddess possesses noteworthy occult powers in this prefecture, and all households invoke her protection. Local officials never fail to honor her punctiliously.[10]

After I finished appealing for her guidance, I noticed that several scholars were making an offering in the temple, and I asked them about the road to Guishun. One of the senior scholars offered to write letters on my behalf to the native chieftains whom he knew. I asked him his name and learned that he was Teng Kentang, given name: Zuochang. The youngest of the group was his son, Teng Binwang, given name: Zuo; they lived in front of the battalion headquarters in town. I promised to visit their house, then went back to eat at Reflecting Sunglow Clouds Retreat.

Carrying a torch, I left Huguan and followed the riverbank west. After one *li*, I reached the north end of the drill ground, then went another *li* west in search of Azure Cloud Cavern [Biyun Dong]. I went in and out and circled several times before returning to Huguan.

Seeing it was afternoon and reckoning that Teng would now be home, I went into town and knocked on his door. He immediately hailed me as a friend and kept me for drinks. His wine was excellent, rather like Jingkou.[11] His tea was not as good as Songluo's, but the wine and tea were better than anything else available here.

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9 By the Guishun route, Xu meant the most direct route to Yunnan, westward through Guishun Subprefecture. The route through Nandan in northern Guangxi would involve traveling through Guizhou Province to reach Yunnan.

10 The cult surrounding Miss Ban continued into the Qing, attracting the notice of Liang Zhangju (1775–1849), who served as governor of Guangxi from 1836 to 1841. He included a poem on the topic in his *Sanguan shihua* 三館詩話 (Nanning: Guangxi Renmin Chubanshe, 1996), B.105.

11 The merits of wine from Jingkou [Zhenjiang] have been praised since at least the Song dynasty.

As we sat and chatted, Mr. Teng said, "If you want to travel by way of Guishun, the best thing would be if the regional commander issues you a tally. Why not visit him tomorrow morning, along with my son?"

I said I was not up to doing that.

"In that case, could you write him a letter?"

I nodded my assent and arranged to bring a letter the next day, then said goodbye and returned to Huguan.

Seventh day [22 November]: Heavy rain and very chilly. Master Vegetarian Fast, noticing how thin my clothes were, took off his lined jacket and had me put it on. Only then could I go out and expose myself to the wind. After breakfast, Mr. Teng dropped by, and on his departure, I wrote a letter to the regional commander. After lunch, I went to Mr. Teng's house, but he had gone off on a boat with his son, and as twilight approached, they had still not returned. With the rain starting up again, I could not wait any longer and returned to Huguan. When the rain tapered off, I went west searching for Tiger Cave [Laohu Yan], but though I tramped through marshes and pushed through thickets, I could not find it.

Eighth day [23 November]: Once more, I visited the Tengs, presenting my letter to the regional commander, Zhang Yi, also known as Zhengchen, a native of Shaoxing. Seconded from the Ministry of Revenue (Huke), he is a *jinshi* of the *xinwei* year (1631). Teng again had me stay for a meal, netting fish from the pond and picking tangerines from a tree. I thus had the chance to hear the story of his life. . . . He suggested that I temporarily serve as a tutor here; that way, the scholars in the local school would all contribute to a teaching stipend, which could then serve to cover my travel costs. I politely declined.

By the time I returned to Huguan, it was already dusk. A monk delivered a message from Nanning's Exalted Benevolence Monastery: Tranquil Hearing had died in the middle of the night on the twenty-eighth day of the previous month. This monk had come personally to inform me about the funeral rites. Tranquil Hearing had died only five days after I said goodbye.[12] To my surprise, Cloud White had not prepared a coffin for him. I did not know who had appropriated the money and clothes left there. I grieved for Tranquil Hearing and did not sleep at all that night.

Ninth day [24 November]: After lunch, I went into town again to wait for the regional commander's response to my letter. However, the Teng father and son were still keen to have me stay on to tutor the local

12 A later diary entry, written on the tenth day of the lunar twelfth month—after Xu's return to Nanning, gives the date of Tranquil Hearing's death as the day following their final farewell. *NP*, 33, follows this as the day Tranquil Hearing passed away (10 November 1637).

scholars, so they had not submitted the letter. It had been opened by a tribute student named Fang, recorded, and then taken away. It was quite some time before I got it back. I resealed the letter and asked them to submit it immediately. I could not possibly stay on longer here.

Tenth day [25 November]: After breakfast, we went to look around Rock Gate. Later in the morning, I went to Mr. Teng's house. I had only just sat down when Teng Binwang came in with an invitation from the regional commander. I thanked him. Then the commander's adjutant, Tang Yuping of Quanzhou, given name Shangzhu, presented me with the travel tally. I stopped by the commander's residence, left my card, and dined with the Tengs on my return. The rain would not stop, so I spent the night in the Tengs' study.

Eleventh day [26 November]: Rain. Ate and rested at the Tengs' house.

Twelfth day [27 November]: Rain. Ate and rested at the Tengs' house. The rain eased somewhat at dusk, so I said goodbye and returned to the Reflecting Sunglow Clouds Retreat in Huguan. That night, it rained all the more heavily.

Thirteenth day [28 November]: Confined to Huguan by the rain.

Fourteenth day [29 November]: Pinned down by the rain once more. I wanted to return to Tuopu to collect Gu Xing, but the road was muddy and the grass damp, so it was impossible to make the trip.

Fifteenth day [30 November]: Rain again. Three monks visiting from far away were planning to travel from Huguan to Tuopu, so at last I had a chance to send word to Gu Xing and tell him to engage porters and bring the luggage to Taiping.

Sixteenth day [1 December]: In the night, the rain intensified, and there was no letup at dawn. I slept with my quilt over my head and did not get up until the retreat monk called me for breakfast. After I had eaten, the sky suddenly cleared; again, there was sunshine and shadows. I went for a stroll in the neighborhood, and on my return, I found Gu Xing had arrived. We had been staying in different places for a good ten days, and I was excited to see him. I immediately urged the station attendant to find carriers for us and made plans to leave on the eighteenth.

Seventeenth day [2 December]: Very cold early. I got up and looked outside; the day seemed about to break, but there was redness in the sky, and mist obscured the dawn light. I suspected that there was a solar halo and feared it would rain, and with it being so cold, I pulled the covers

over myself and lay down again. Later, a clear blue sky emerged, and the morning sun shone brightly, so I got up and had breakfast. I went to say goodbye to Mr. Teng, but he and his son had gone out, so I returned to Reflecting Sunglow Clouds for lunch. At dusk, I returned to call on the Tengs again, and Mr. Teng had returned. He had me stay for a few drinks and told me he would write letters on my behalf to all the aboriginal subprefectures—he reckoned it would be midnight by the time he finished. I said goodbye and returned to the retreat to sleep.

> Carrying the tallies supplied by the regional commander and the letters of introduction provided by Teng Kentang, Xu Xiake set off on the morning of the eighteenth. Concerned that incursions by the Vietnamese might jeopardize his travel if he proceeded toward Yunnan by the most direct westerly route, he took a detour northward to the town of Longying, arriving there on the afternoon of the twenty-third.[13] Three years earlier, in 1634, Longying had been occupied by forces under the command of the Vietnamese Mạc (Chinese: Mo) lineage based in Cao Bằng (Chinese: Gaoping).

Twenty-fifth day [10 December]:[14] Since I was waiting for carriers in Longying, I took the chance to visit Pinnacle Cavern [Piaoyan]. A few *li* to the north of the subprefectural seat, inside a ring of grassy hills, is a small rocky peak shaped like a brush rack, the anchor mountain of Longying. A level plain lies in front, with a river running through it, Longying's primary river. Pinnacle Cavern Mountain [Piaoyan Shan] stands east of the river, a very steep and conspicuous peak on the east side of the town. High up on the mountain's east face is a cavern that faces southeast. It pokes high into the clouds, and below is a perpendicular drop.

I heard that when Longying was raided, the locals fled to a mountain redoubt, and though the Vietnamese surrounded it from below, they could never climb up. I could tell right away that it had to be this mountain. But I could see no path when I looked up from ground level. Without a ladder extending a thousand feet, making the ascent would have been impossible, so I began to walk away, despondent. When I saw some families living beside the main road, I decided to stop and make inquiries.

"That's Pinnacle Cavern," they said. "It's also known as Mountain Cavern [Shanyan]. During those raids by the Vietnamese bandits, it was the key to our survival."

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13 In Ming times, Longying was a subprefecture under the jurisdiction of Taiping Prefecture. Its administrative center was located in what is now Longming Zhen, in the southwest corner of Tiandeng Xian.

14 *YJJZ*, 1:590–92; *YJ*, 1:480–82.

"How big is it?" I asked.

"There was enough room for all the evacuees," they said.

"What happens if there is no water?"

"There is a tunnel inside, and if you crawl through to the end, there is water enough for dozens of people."

"Is there a trail one can take to get up there?" I asked.

Some said there was, but others said it would be very difficult. I persuaded one of them to lead me to the trailhead. Climbing up, I found lengths of bamboo ladder, some dangling loosely next to the rock face, some wedged into cracks between rocks. In all I had to climb fourteen flights of varying lengths, curling upward, before I reached the entrance to the cavern. On either side, the rock face fell steeply, and only beneath the entrance did indentations provide sufficient grip for the ladder. Above the cavern mouth was a pronounced overhang, with many wooden partitions dividing the space into compartments, like a beehive or swallows' nests. I entered a central cavity; the opening was narrow, but the grotto gradually increased. Stalactites the width of my cupped hands hung like green jade pillars; they gave a resounding bong when I slapped them. Off to one side, another column extended down from the ceiling, immediately above but not quite touching a similar column protruding from the floor; the two faced each other like needles on a balance. Next to the pillars, fences marked off living areas, presumably to allow the locals some space of their own. As I proceeded north, the cavern grew dimmer; where a thin beam of light shone in, the locals had put up a bamboo lattice to close off the passage. When I pushed the lattice aside, I could see the light entering from the east, and looking down, I saw more bamboo and wood frames on a lower level, so I knew there was another entrance somewhere.

I went back out, and to the right of the pillars, I entered a low and narrow cavity to the east, immediately adjacent to the central entryway. I went west through a tight tunnel, which then widened. In the darkness, I ran my hand over the walls; this grotto was not very deep. Then, I exited through the central entrance to the outer cavern. On the left face of the mountain was a wooden walkway suspended over the abyss, with bamboo baskets strewn here and there. At the north end, a piece of wood had been pushed into a chink in the rocks.

There, another cavern opened up. It faced east, and in the middle was a stone slab, standing upright like a stele, three feet tall, one and a half feet wide, and two inches thick. Both sides were scraped flat, as though polished by a human hand—it made me wonder if it could be a relic like Mount Tai's Wordless Stele (Wuzi Bei).[15] The dimensions were not the same, however. The interior of the cavern was level, and it gradually

15 A stone column on the summit of Mount Tai in Shandong, the Wordless Stele was commonly assumed to date from the Qin dynasty.

widened. At the end, stalactites hung as thin as tree twigs or bamboo canes. To the right was a hole leading toward the central entryway—the narrow passage the locals had closed off with a bamboo lattice. To the left, the cavern sloped downward; a hole yawning over the abyss had been covered with fencing. When I peered down, I could see other bamboo objects and wooden frames at a lower level, but I did not know how to get there.

I crossed the wooden walkway once more and took a ladder down. After going down three flights, to my left on the rock face, I saw another ladder. I grabbed hold and began to climb, crossing the cliff face diagonally toward the north until I reached a narrow path—just a foot wide but over three rods long. The locals had laid pieces of wood along the edge as a balustrade, and I grasped the railing for support—that way, I could walk without fear.

At the end of the cliff, there was yet another cavern facing east. From above and left of the entrance hung a rock, dozens of feet long, like a wing suspended from heaven. At its tip hung a smaller rock, three feet long and a foot in circumference, strikingly similar to the scene at Dragon Snout Stream on Mount Yandang.[16] But this was the dry winter season, and I could not see a drop of water here. This cavern was tall and spacious, unlike the central grotto, which had a low entrance and was dark inside. By the rear wall, a rock hung down. I explored the cleft, which twisted and turned. The locals had put wooden partitions and bamboo fences inside—this was the area I had glimpsed through the hole on the upper level.

After lingering in each cavern, I climbed the remaining eleven ladder flights. Dozens of people were standing at the bottom, gazing up, and waiting for me to come down—they wanted to show their concern, knowing the rigors of the climb. "We all relied on this mountain to protect us from the Vietnamese," they told me. "But though it saved our lives, it could not save our houses."

The cavern served as a refuge for them, but to rely on it as a barrier was not, in my view, a well-thought-out defense strategy. And the water source that they mentioned would easily run dry in these winter months. I had looked for water everywhere but could not find it; if one were stranded inside for any time, would the supply not soon be exhausted? "To be successful in warding off danger," I said to them, "the best approach is to join forces to repel the enemy—simply going into hiding is a poor idea."

They nodded in agreement and thanked me for my advice. This cavern stands right above the road, and you can see it from far and near—only when you are in the town of Longying, which faces the other side of the mountain, is the cavern not visible. Of the caverns I have climbed

16 Xu Xiake mentions this feature on his first visit to Mount Yandang. See diary entry for 31 May, this volume.

up on this western trip, this one has to count as the steepest and most dangerous. Transcendent's Cavern [Xianyan] by Gui Stream [Guixi] also has an impressive view, but it lacks the spaciousness of this cavern, although its water supply is superior.

I went back to the inn to eat. There, I found that the manager had only just picked up a tally to assemble carriers, so once again, it was not possible to get on the road.

> Xu Xiake left Longying the following day, carried in a sedan chair. After an overnight stop at the village of Ancun, he arrived in the subprefecture of Xialei on the afternoon of the twenty-seventh, closer to the border with Vietnam and rife with rumors about Vietnamese troop movements.[17]

Twenty-eighth day [13 December]:[18] Heavy fog. In the middle of the night, I dreamed that a wall had collapsed on top of me, and I found this very disturbing. What's more, I heard that south of Guishun Mạc raiding parties are active, and north of Guishun roadblocks have been put in place by Guichao supporters.[19] I was now increasingly inclined to turn back. But, alarmed and confused, I had not yet decided.

Guichao lies between Fuzhou and Guishun and is at loggerheads with both, often abducting travelers and making the road impassable.[20] It was not mentioned when I looked it up in the *Unified and Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*. Someone told me that the chief of Guichao was once in charge of Fuzhou, but later, Fuzhou received imperial favor, and Guichao found itself in the shade and ended up under Fuzhou's thumb, so now they are hostile to each other. I do not know if that is true or not.

A five-rod-high monolith stands by the narrow north gate of Xialei on the riverbank. I climbed several stone steps until I reached the top, level as a terrace and one and a half rods across. A pavilion has been erected there, with a statue of Avalokiteśvara inside; the clear river is visible below, with green mountains on each side. On the wall is a poem by Zhang Yun of Nanhai and a prose record by Wu Wenguang of Putian, both written in graceful calligraphy.

Because my route ahead faced so many obstacles, I wanted to appeal to the bodhisattva for advice on my itinerary. Here, it was impossible to get tally verses, so instead, I proposed a pact using divination blocks: if

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17 Xialei, then a subprefecture, is now a Zhen in Daxin Xian.

18 *YJJZ*, 1:595–96; *YJ*, 1:485–86.

19 Guichao is now Guichao Zhen, in Funing Xian, Yunnan, just across the boundary with Guangxi.

20 Fuzhou is modern Funing Xian in Yunnan. Most of Funing lies to the west of Guichao.

I were to have a smooth journey without difficulties, the three throws would end up with both blocks landing flat or one on the flat side or one on the curved side, never both blocks on the curved side; if I would run into some minor obstacles but not face life-threatening dangers, in one throw both blocks would land on the curved side; if I were to face mortal perils and would be unable to make progress, in two throws both blocks would land on the curved side. In the first round, the result was one instance of two curves, one instance of two flats, and one instance of one flat and one curved. When I appealed for a second judgment, the divination rendered one mixed and two flat. After returning to the hostel, I had Servant Gu go and implore Avalokiteśvara's guidance again, regarding the same questions. The first time, he got one of each result, and his second solicitation also produced one curved and one flat; the outcome was much the same as when I prayed earlier for an answer. It seems there will be an obstruction, but I cannot tell whether or not I can avoid a major disaster.[21]

In the morning, the fog cleared, and the sun came out. I waited for carriers and breakfast, but neither came. After a long time, I was served a meal, and then I took a stroll in front of the government offices and climbed the gate tower. Inside was a bell cast by the native official Xǔ Yinggui in the nineteenth year of the Wanli reign (1591). On it were inscribed the following words:

> Xialei is an ancient subprefecture of the Song and Yuan. Still, at the beginning of our dynasty, a jealous prefecture—a reference to Zhen'an—hid its insignia and refused to hand it over so that it did not receive imperial recognition and fell under native control for two hundred years. My father, Xǔ Zongyin, embarked on punitive expeditions, repeatedly winning commendations, so I submitted a memorial and asked to establish a subprefecture again.

Now I realize that this subprefecture dates only from the Wanli era, so it is natural that it is not mentioned in the *Comprehensive Gazetteer*.

Beyond the town's south wall, mountains rise steeply. A road running through a valley to the southwest reaches, after thirty *li*, the border with Cao Bằng. The road going southeast through the valley follows the river to Anping and is the old road to Nineteen Ridges [Shijiu Geng]. Anping is now worried that the road will allow free passage to the Vietnamese, so it has felled trees and built barricades. . . .

This was market day in Xialei; I saw men with their hair hanging loose for the first time. I inquired about news of the Vietnamese advance

21 On occasion, Xu Xiake was in the habit of seeking guidance from divine authority when planning his route. For the earliest example, in Jiangxi, see *YJJZ*, 1:233; *YJ*, 1:167. For another, in Hunan, see *YJJZ*, 1:280; *YJ*, 1:207.

on Zhen'an and was told that they had made no move. This sounds right because Tianzhou, seeking support in its conflict with Zhen'an, induced the Vietnamese to come by promising them young women, horses, and money.[22] Earlier, Zhen'an and Wang Da of Guishun joined forces in opposing Tianzhou, wounding dozens of Tianzhou troops, so Tianzhou resorted to bribing the Vietnamese to come to its aid. But the Vietnamese are very cunning: they have pitched camp near Zhen'an, demanding supplies and pocketing gifts, sitting back and waiting to see which side wins so they can reap the spoils. They decline to take any prompt action.

> Shortly before noon, the carriers arrived, and Xu set off, reaching Hurun five miles northwest that afternoon. On his arrival at the post station, he was told that Vietnamese were continuing to be seen on the roads, and he was warned not to go any farther toward Yunnan.

Thirtieth day [15 December]:[23] It was extremely cold in the morning. The early fog cleared away, but the carriers failed to show up, I think because the post station manager here in Hurun was very deceitful; he did not want me to go to Guishun because Guishun is so far away, and several times tried to scare me by stressing that the road there is teeming with Vietnamese. The native official in charge of Hurun, surnamed Cen, is the village chief. Because he is so close to the Vietnamese, he identifies only with them, not China. When they pass through, he gives them generous gifts, but to China he is indifferent. The Vietnamese likewise give this village preferential treatment and do not cause trouble here. Misled by the inn manager and fearful that my nightmare might come true this morning, I asked heaven to offer guidance on three possible itineraries: to aim for Guishun, to return to Xialei, or to head toward Xiangwu.[24] Appealing to heaven, I drew my lot, and the answer turned out to be Xiangwu. The manager also favored me going to Xiangwu, for Guishun would require long-distance carriers. In contrast, on the way to Xiangwu, carriers could be replaced regularly as I traveled from one village to another.

In the afternoon, carriers arrived, but there were only eight of them—two short. They had not brought vegetables and rice, so I realized they were short-distance carriers. I had no other options, so I went along with it.

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22 Zhen'an (modern Napo Xian) lay to the north of Guishun; Tianzhou (modern Tianyang Qu in Baise Shi) bordered Zhen'an to the north. Both were under the control of native chiefs.

23 *YJJZ*, 1:597–602; *YJ*, 1:489–90.

24 Xiangwu (modern-day Xiangdu Zhen) was in the northwest corner of what is now Tiandeng Xian. To reach Xiangwu, Xu must make his way northeast from Hurun.

They proceeded northeastward through the rough terrain for some distance.

A stony mountain, densely covered with vines and trees, stuck out on the north bank of the stream. Below it, the road wound its way past streams and ponds. When I looked upward to the north and south, I saw many tall, green hills, but the mountain's peak to the north protruded sharply, exposing its jagged bones. Progress was difficult with this stony mountain in our way, rising crookedly layer upon layer. But on both sides, trees had been trimmed, and grass had been cut back, opening a broad path. Only now did I realize that this was the road from Hurun to Zhen'an—and the Vietnamese had widened it as they passed through. Wanting to keep out of their way, I had decided against going to Guishun, but now I had ended up on the road they would take—how I resented being misled by the inn manager!

Following the stony mountain, we went one *li* to the northeast, and I saw an old man gathering firewood by the side of the road. The carriers exchanged words with him, and he accompanied us as we proceeded. After one-half *li*, trees arched across the stream, and we crossed a bridge, arriving at South Mound Village [Nanlong Cun]. There were a few houses on the south bank. The carriers carried my chair to the old man's house and signaled they were leaving. I wanted them to stay, but the old man said: "My village ought to see you on farther, I know, but it's getting late now, so why not rest and wait until the morning? The men don't need to stay." I had no option but to let them go.

At the time, there was still enough sunlight to travel a few more *li*, but having accepted the old man's advice, I joined him in his living quarters, where he boiled eggs and served me rice-water.

When I asked him his age, it turned out he was ninety.

Then I asked him how many sons he had. "Seven altogether," he said. "The first four have passed away, but the other three are still living."

The mother of the seven sons was the old woman tending the fire and warming the rice water; she and her husband were devoted helpmates. How remarkable to find such a long-lived couple in a desolate, remote border region like this!

I could not understand what the other villagers said—the old man was the only person who could speak the Han language. He did not wear his hair loose or go barefoot—between Xialei and Hurun, half the men I saw did not tie their hair, nor did he consume tobacco or betel nuts. He also was unaware that in towns like Taiping and Nanning, the central government appointed officials for limited terms only. "On the sixteenth, the Vietnamese came this way," the old man said. "They had been in Luo Cavern en route to Zhen'an. I went to the mountains to avoid them, but they left the area without causing any disturbance."

First day of the eleventh month [16 December]: There was fog early in the morning, but it was very beautiful when the sun came out. We proceeded northeast from South Mound and after one *li* crossed the stream. After advancing along the north bank for two *li*, I saw that the stream had its source in a waterfall on the southeastern hills. An enormous rock, several scores of rods high and over ten rods wide, stretched across the canyon like a dam, and the surging water, roaring like thunder and with the power of an avalanche, was extremely impressive—the first time I had seen something like this since I had arrived in the southwest. The falling waters formed a stream that flowed to the southwest, while the road followed a small stream running northeast. After one *li*, the valley ended, and we ascended a ridge.

After another *li*, we arrived at the summit, where we ran into a dozen or so Vietnamese, half of whom carried spears with bright red shafts while the other half were shouldering muskets. They had bamboo hats slung over their backs, wore loose hair, and walked barefoot; they carried no additional supplies. They looked at me as they passed, and I glanced at them. They exchanged words with the sedan chair carriers and claimed they were heading home after attacking Zhen'an. But I suspect this was an idle boast. After another one-half *li*, we encountered another six or seven Vietnamese, armed in the same way; I do not know where the main body of their forces are. . . .

> On the third day of the eleventh month (18 December), Xu Xiake arrived in Xiangwu and put up in the post station for the night. Once more, Xu Xiake initially found his reception chilly; no food was provided, and the station manager ignored Teng's letter of introduction to the subprefect, Huang Shaolun. In the middle of the night, it began to rain.

Fourth day [19 December]:[25] Waited for porters in the post station as rain pelted down the whole day. I wrote a poem to give to Huang and visited adjutants Hu and Xie. Both natives of Guichi, they casually kept the poem to pass on to Hu for me.

Fifth day [20 December]: Very cold; the sky partially cleared in the morning. Porters arrived, but only six. One Zhou Bingquan, a native of importance, saw my poem and immediately took it to pass on to the subprefect. He also instructed the porters to leave and asked me to stay a bit longer. In the afternoon, Huang sent me a letter, along with vegetables, rice, wine, and meat. At dusk, he matched my poem and sent me a letter along with it.

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25 *YJJZ*, 1:605–09; *YJ*, 1:494–98.

Sixth day [21 December]: The sky had cleared when I rose at dawn. After breakfast, I received a letter from Zhou Shangwu, courtesy name Wentao, asking me to stay on. I declined, explaining that I would set off as soon as the porters arrived. Time passed, and the porters still did not show up. So I walked north one-half *li*, looking for the large stream, Withered Banyan River [Kurong Jiang]. I followed its tributary east, and a peak rose roundly like Lone Elegance, with caves in three levels facing west and jutting out. I descended the lower cavern, which is five rods deep, and found very full and refreshing side chambers. But it was impossible to access the upper caverns. I gazed up at them: unless one had a long ladder, they would be impossible to access.

After exiting the cavern, I skirted the northern and eastern foothills for one-half *li*, and after a walk of one *li*, I returned to the residence. By then, porters had arrived, and I wanted to set off. Zhou Wentao arrived, sat down, and urged me to stay; he also prodded his secretary, Liang Wenhuan, to collect a gift to support my travel expenses. So I wrote a letter of thanks to Huang.

Packing the bags, I shouted to the porters to hurry up and leave. But when I finished eating, they all scattered, and no one was left. When I shouted at them to leave, I was urging them to get ready to set off, but they misunderstood, thinking I was telling them to disperse. After the meal, I told Servant Gu to go to their homes and rustle them up, but they had all gone into the mountains to collect firewood, so we set the departure date for the following day instead. I took a stroll in the surrounding hills.

At dusk, I returned to the post station, and suddenly, a man arrived and greeted me deferentially—he had come at Mr. Huang's bidding to ask me to stay. He issued this invitation very earnestly, but I declined—given how eager I am to visit the famous mountains—and said I could not linger; I asked him to convey my tactful apology. No sooner did he leave than Xie and Hu each came to visit—their superior had asked them to make sure I stayed—and the other emissary made several trips back and forth. Then Zhou Wentao and a big chief named Wei paid a call on me, restating with great sincerity Mr. Huang's wish that I delay my departure. Once more, emphatically, I declined. At nightfall, Mr. Huang sent a consignment of wine, rice, vegetables, and meat and a handwritten letter imploring me to stay and looking forward to an early meeting. He had accorded me great respect in words and deeds, and I went to bed unsure how to proceed.

Seventh day [22 December]: The early cold chilled to the bone—even the worst cold in my home district is not more severe than this. Dawn had just broken when Mr. Huang again sent a chicken, some meat, and rice and wine, so I got up and wrote a thank-you letter, agreeing to stay on a few more days. Today was particularly bright and clear, and it was a

market day once more in front of the government office, so I gave the live hen to a monk, bought bananas, and cooked the meat, washing it down with wine until I was tipsy.

Eighth day [23 December]: In the morning, Zhou Wentao delivered another letter from Mr. Huang and gave me coins to cover expenses during my stay; he invited me to visit that afternoon. It seems that the native officials turn night into day and do not rise and bathe until afternoon. In the afternoon, Wentao returned and conducted me to the rear quarters, where I was honored, and Mr. Huang and I regretted not meeting earlier. He is now fifty-five, three years older than me. Initially, he urged me to stay on longer, but I declined strenuously, given my dedication to touring. He then said:

He said, "I understand your lofty goals, and given your unwillingness to suffer confinement, how could this thorny thicket be a place for a phoenix to perch? It's simply that there are many obstacles on the road, and I fear it may be difficult to proceed. Just now, a messenger from Guishun arrived. I want him to take a letter and guide you and also carry a letter to Guichao—that way, you can make the trip successfully."

The official in charge of Hurun is his son-in-law, who had also agreed to send a letter of introduction. So it was arranged that I would leave one day later, accompanied by the Guishun messenger. Then we engaged in a "hand conversation," and each of us won a game and lost a game.[26]

After that, I took Huang Daozhou's stone carving and Wen Zhenmeng's handwritten letter out of my bag and showed them to him while Mr. Huang took me to inspect his promotion plaque. On it was written, "Imperially Awarded," and the notation, "Presented on the fifteenth day of the tenth month of the eighth year of the Chongzhen reign to mark the appointment of Huang Shaolun, subprefect of Xiangwu, as assistant regional commander." The newly framed plaque had been hung on a high crossbeam and was protected with several mat layers; at Huang's instruction, the mats were removed so I could view the plaque.

It was a long time before I returned to the residence, and the sun was about to set. Wentao once more arrived with a letter from Mr. Huang, this time thanking me for the visit.

Tenth day [25 December]: The weather was bright and beautiful. Before the sun rose, it was very cold, but after the sun was up, it became pleasant. The night before, I met the Guishun messenger, Liu Guanghan, who told me, "The roads to Guichao and Fuzhou are both blocked, and the Vietnamese are very unpredictable." He advised me not to go that way.

26 "Hand conversation" referred to the game of Go, *weiqi* in Chinese.

I was unsure what to do, and again, I cast lots before Buddha. Once more, the indication was that the route via Nandan and Dushan was propitious.[27]

At noon, Zhou Wentao delivered advice from Mr. Huang, "If you're not traveling to Guishun and Guichao, I can write letters instead to Tianzhou and Sicheng, and you can head in that direction."[28] I was uncomfortable going to Tianzhou, and Wentao also said it was not a safe road, so I decided to take the easterly route.

It was a market day once more, so of the Song dynasty coins that Mr. Huang had given me, I kept one from each reign period, and with the remainder, I bought cloth with which to wrap my feet, fish and meat, and a large knotweed root.[29] At dusk, Mr. Huang sent me gifts: a silk shirt, a hat, and a raw silk skirt.

> Having given up on traveling directly west into Yunnan, Xu Xiake was now resolved to return to Nanning, then travel north to Guizhou, and from there into Yunnan. On this day, Xu Xiake was carried in a sedan chair from Zhenyuan east to Jielun Subprefecture, a distance of twenty *li*.[30]

Twentieth day [4 January 1638]:[31]. . . . The aborigines regularly tie up travelers and sell them off to the Vietnamese. Healthy adults can fetch thirty taels; young and old cost at least ten. Jielun and the other aboriginal subprefectures in this area are some distance from Vietnamese territory, so the captives are resold several times before they are delivered to the final purchasers. When appeals for their return are submitted to the authorities, recovery of the victims is likewise an involved process, and fewer than two or three out of ten ever make it back. The rule is that seven must be returned for every person kidnapped and sold, but that is not what happens. In the aboriginal jurisdictions, revenge killings often stem from these incidents. . . .

Twenty-first day [5 January]: A dense cloud enveloped the village; no fog. Having waited in vain for carriers, I strolled over the hills on the east

27 Nandan is in northern Guangxi, and Dushan is immediately to the north, in Guizhou.

28 Sicheng Subprefecture, now Lingyun Xian, was northwest of Tianzhou, bordering Guizhou to the north.

29 The dried root of knotweed (*heshouwu*) was believed to have important health benefits. It seems to have been widely available in the Guangxi highlands at a low price. Xu Xiake stocked up with fifteen catties of knotweed root in Xiangwu. See *YJJZ*, 1:638; *YJ*, 1:523.

30 Jielun Subprefecture is now Jinjie Zhen, in the northeast corner of Tiandeng Xian.

31 *YJJZ*, 1:622–25; *YJ*, 1:509–10.

side after breakfast. I came upon an ancient plum tree, its blossoms bright, dense, and powerfully scented. I lingered there, reluctant to leave, and broke off two eye-catching sprays with crooked stems and exquisite blooms.

Gazing south, I glimpsed a cavern on the hillside, almost hidden among the bamboo. I made my way over, brushing the vegetation aside. Entering through a narrow opening, I found that the cavern divided into two branches, neither of which extended very far.

When I returned to the post station, I looked for a fire to roast the plum sprays. As a light drizzle fell outside, I sat sipping a cup of village tipple and savoring the sweet smoke, almost forgetting that it was the end of the year and I was at the edge of the earth.

> On the afternoon of the twenty-second (6 January), Xu Xiake arrived in the village of Nayin, hoping to travel east to Dujie Subprefecture the following day.[32]

Twenty-third day [7 January]:[33] Mist covered the land early in the morning. After I had breakfast, the sun had risen in the east. I asked the porters to hurry up, but once more, they wanted to follow a route through the col to the northeast. I had first inquired about the route to Dujie and was told it was over the ridge to the east. I took this to mean that the porters wanted to avoid the long road to Dujie and instead take a route that would lead through villages where other men could replace them as porters. If we were to go first in the direction of Guohua, there would be villagers to take over from them, whereas going southeast toward Dujie, there would be no such option. And so, the Nayin porters refused to head southeast. After a long deadlock, one man came forward with a proposal: we could go east to Dunlong, although that would be a somewhat roundabout route requiring a further change of porters. I had no choice but to accept this suggestion. We went northeast into the col, and after one-half *li*, I came across the stream encountered earlier that flowed from the southwest. Then we proceeded eastward. . . .

> As it turned out, however, when he got to the village of Tunlong, the locals, fearing that porterage to Dujie would be too onerous an assignment, flat-out refused to cooperate, and the following day, Xu Xiake would have to go back the same way he had come.

. . . At noon that day, the locals provided squirrel for my meal, and I waved it away. It was replaced with a small, smoked, quail-like bird; it was stir-fried. The alcohol supplied, whether distilled spirits or rice

32 Dujie Subprefecture is now Dujie Xiang, on the west side of Long'an Xian.
33 *YJJZ*, 1:626–27; *YJ*, 1:512–13.

liquor, is all drinkable. There is also rice wine, cloudy and sweet, which is sold in the markets but seldom in the villages.

> Xu Xiake finally arrived in the town of Dujie, seventy miles northwest of Nanning, on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh month of the *dingchou* year (11 January). It was his birthday, and after several frustrating experiences during the previous few days, he went to bed that night lamenting his continuing bad luck, for the manager of the Dujie post station was uncouth and far from hospitable.

Twenty-eighth day [12 January]:[34] I rose early. Very cold; the sky was clear. The manager did not serve breakfast, and it was well into the morning before I was given two bowls of brown rice with no vegetables to go with them. I asked the manager to give my name card to the magistrate, but he delivered it only very reluctantly. In the early afternoon, suddenly, the card was returned to me with an official tally and a message: "Since you are an educated man, please show me one of your compositions." I told the manager I had no prose essay available and gave him a poem instead. Off he went with the card.

Time passed, and eventually, he returned with a name card, on which was written a topic: "The man of virtue is bound to have words; the man of words. . . ."[35] What a tedious rigmarole! Leaning on a pannier and grinding my ink, without much thought I composed an essay on the back of the card and gave it to the man. Off he went once more, and it was not until late afternoon that a message came back authorizing the provision of chicken and wine, rice and meat. At the same time, I was given a second writing assignment: "Zilu stood, one hand cupped in the other. He was invited to stay for the night."[36] Again, I asked for a lamp and dashed something off at the bottom of the card. Then I had dinner, which now included a beef dish, and went to lie down. I was already in bed when somebody informed me that arrangements had been made for a horse ride to outlying areas the following morning, and the station manager was instructed to prepare an early breakfast for me.

Twenty-ninth day [13 January]: It was cold early, but the sunrise was beautiful. Two horses had been brought over when I got up and ate breakfast. One was for me and the other was for He Dongxuan, a tribute student of Taiping Prefecture. We rode east with the other horsemen and were joined by three riders coming up from the south, the first of whom was Mr. Nong, chief of Dujie Subprefecture. With clasped hands, we all

34 *YJJZ*, 1:631–34; *YJ*, 1:517–19.
35 Quoting the *Analects*, 14.4.
36 Quoting the *Analects*, 18.7.

saluted each other on horseback and headed east. After three *li,* we crossed a stream, and after another two *li*, we followed the stream into a canyon. We proceeded east another five *li*, arriving at a very steep ridge on the northeast side. "We can make it across on our horses," said Mr. Nong, "there's no need to dismount." His steed leaped over the rocky terrain with the verve of a roaming dragon.

After we had scaled the ridge for two *li*, several native settlements came into view, and we reached the village of Nalin, which has several dozen dwellings, all on stilts, with thatched roofs, set apart at some distance from each other. Proceeding east another two *li*, we came to an even steeper ridge, and after traversing it for two *li* and riding one *li* farther, we advanced through a level col until we reached an east-flowing stream. We turned slightly to the north, and stretching over two rods to the south was a confluence of streams marked off as a fishpond in a place called Xiang Village [Xiangcun]. A thatched canopy had been laid over a wooden frame, with mats on the ground below.

The Dong men now raised their nets and tossed them into the stream, hauling out several fish—all carp and perch—the largest of which was just a foot and a half long.[37] After driving several dozen cattle into the stream to stamp and splash around, the locals cast their nets again and caught another few fish; some were no fatter than a finger. Then they chopped the biggest fish into pieces and put them in a large bowl, dressing them with spring onions, shredded ginger, salt, and vinegar, and ate the fish just like that, considering it a great delicacy. I could not follow their example, so I ate meat and sipped wine. By the time the meal was over, the sun was in the west, so we rode five *li* back to the village of Nalin, where we gathered under a thatched pavilion. The family slaughtered a pig and some hens, offering a sacrifice to the gods before the dinner, where chopped raw fish was served once more. At dusk, we rode the ten or so *li* back to Dujie. I said goodbye to Nong and retired to the post station for the night.

Thirtieth day [14 January]: Beautiful sunshine and somewhat less cold. I composed two poems titled "Sightseeing on Horseback" (Qiyou) and presented them to Nong. A Nanning student named Zhu came over, carrying an essay on yesterday's topic in his sleeve. He had called on me when I was in Xiang Village, and on our return to Dujie, the magistrate had asked him to write this piece. Glancing over his work, I found it utterly incoherent, but Student He was so undiscriminating as to think it excellent. I passed it on to Nong, who could easily discern its weaknesses, and he soon sent me a message: "The Nanning student's essay is

37 "Dong men" in the original text is *dongding* 侗丁, a reference to the Dong (or Kam) ethnic group that populated many parts of Guangxi and areas in neighboring Hunan and Guizhou during this period.

a slipshod piece of work. If I were to show him what you wrote, he would scurry away in panic." Then we embarked on a game of Go. At dusk, Nong hosted an elaborate dinner in which he asked that I compose a report in response to his clansman Guohu's accusations so that he could clarify matters for the regional inspectors. Thus, he prevailed on me to stay on an extra day.

First day of the twelfth month [15 January]: Spent the day at the post station in Dujie. When I rose in the morning, the landscape was wreathed in low clouds. I would have liked to get going, but the local magistrate, Nong Guoqi, had insisted I stay to write the report for the regional inspectors—at this time, Guoqi was being sued by his cousin Guohu in an inheritance dispute.[38] As twilight fell, the clouds had yet to lift. At dinnertime, finally, Nong gave me a monetary gift to support my travel expenses.

> On 24 January, Xu Xiake finally returned to Nanning. He immediately proceeded to Exalted Benevolence Monastery, where Tranquil Hearing had died three months earlier.

Tenth day [24 January]:[39] . . . I went into the monastery to inquire about Tranquil Hearing's final parting. He had passed away in the early evening of the twenty-fourth day of the ninth month, just one day after I left. A monk led me to the site where his remains were buried, halfway up the stream, near the east end of the wooden bridge. I cried as I respectfully bowed to him. When I turned around and looked south toward the bridge, Servant Gu and two porters were approaching. I arranged a meeting with the monk again, then quickly headed to Liang Inn to lodge for the night. It was only midday, but rain was coming down heavily and showed no sign of stopping. After eating, I took a walk to put some questions to traveling merchants from Yunnan and Guizhou who might be staying at the home of Xiong Shihu.[40] A merchant from Guiyang had just left, and at that time, no one else was expected at the inn. My feet were sore, so I went shopping for medicine, sandals, and socks. I then returned to the inn. . . .

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

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38 The chieftainship of Dujie was a hereditary office enjoyed by the Nong family since the beginning of the Ming period; Nong Guoqi belonged to the fourteenth generation of chiefs. It seems that a rival had contested his right to inherit the title.

39 *YJJZ*, 1:643; *YJ*, 1.529.

40 Traveling merchants were good sources of information concerning road conditions, bridges, river travel, and possible sites to visit.

IV

[WINTER AND SPRING 1638]

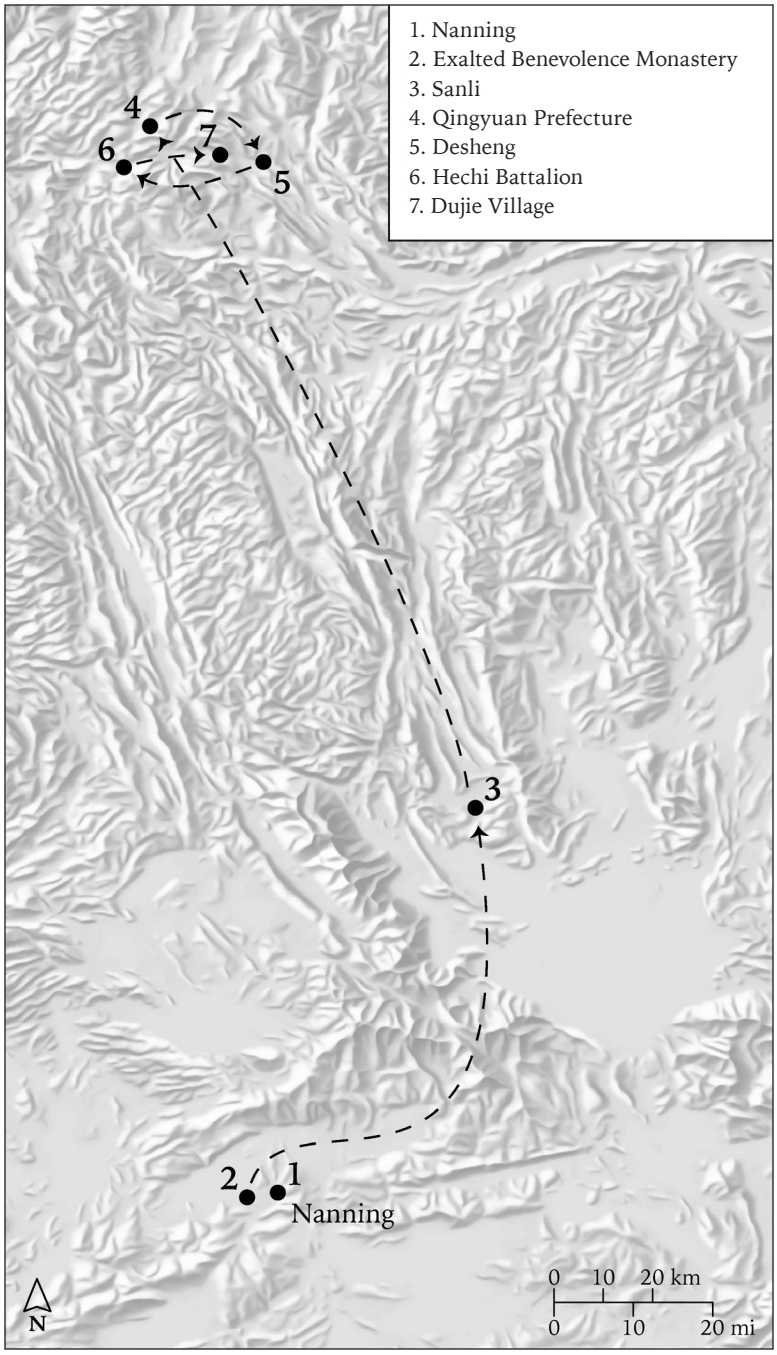
Dingchou *year, eleventh day of the twelfth month* [25 January]: Rain during the night lasted until dawn. I have been suffering from sores, and I got up late. But the sores gave me chills, and I was exhausted, so I was not at all comfortable. I had not decided which road to take. I had heard that Tranquil Hearing's last words were that his bones must be interred on Mount Chicken Foot, and I had heard that taking his remains would be very difficult. This made me anxious and uneasy. I then drew two lots and asked for guidance before the image of Buddha in the Heavenly Peace Monastery; the advice was to "take his bones." So, braving the rain, I hurried to the Exalted Benevolence Monastery, where I turned over the money to the monk Precious Altar and had him cook some vegetarian dishes in preparation for the next day's exhumation. When I reached the Liang Family Inn that evening, it was still raining.

Twelfth day [26 January]: The rain did not let up until after noontime. I bought some incense and candles, then hurried to the Exalted Benevolence Monastery. But the two monks, Precious Altar and Cloud White, wanted to divide between them the sutras and cassocks left behind by Tranquil Hearing. They had secretly held discussions at the Liang Family Inn, and to absolve themselves of responsibility, they argued that nothing could be agreed upon until Liang joined us. But Liang stubbornly refused to come. I appealed to them all again and again, going back and forth multiple times, but the three scoundrels all made excuses, none willing to give way. When I sat down and pressed them, they again held private confabs that went on forever. I did not understand why they had to engage in such underhand dealings, but I could do nothing about it. All I could do was implore them day and night, but they just took turns attacking me in abusive language.

Thirteenth day [27 January]: I got up at dawn and implored Liang to make a trip to Exalted Benevolence Monastery, but he refused to go. I then wrote an affidavit describing what had happened and implored Liang to serve as a witness. However, in the end, Liang refused to sign the document. I again sent Servant Gu to implore the two monks to settle things, but their intentions remained unchanged.

So I had no alternative but to consider reporting the matter to the local authorities. But first I planned to move to new lodgings. I went

Source: "Yuexiyou riji si" (*YJJZ* 1:646–48; *YJ,* 1:531–33).



Map 25. Western Yue (Guangxi), Diary 4, 1638

into the city and found an old room in Tribute Scholar Deng's (Deng Gongshi) house. I returned, paid Liang for three nights at his house, and took my bags into town. The sky gradually cleared. But this new house had no cooking pot, so I bought a crock for making dinner. There was a bright moon, which I took as a hopeful sign of clear weather on the way.

Fourteenth day [28 January]: I heard movement sounds in the government offices in the morning. When I got up and looked out, it was drizzling once again. I had Servant Gu cook a meal and wrote an accusation that I had him deliver to Mr. Wu, the Prefect. However, that day, the touring inspection commissioner (*xunfang shi*) was coming from Wuyuan, and Mr. Wu had gone out to meet him in the outskirts[1]. Servant Gu waited for his return while I sat in my room as it rained.

I walked by the Surveillance Bureau [Chayuan] offices in the early afternoon. I observed the gifts and welcome banquet dishes the Left River intendant and Xuanhua County magistrate had prepared for the visitor. There was a plentiful supply of both. I then returned to my lodging. Since the prefect had not yet returned, Servant Gu suggested he go to the Exalted Benevolence Monastery and appeal to the monks again. I wrote another letter for him to deliver to them, but as before, they ignored it.

Fifteenth day [29 January]: At the fifth watch, it was bitter cold, but at daybreak, the sky turned clear. Since the first of the month, it has been cloudy every morning until now, so it took precisely half a month for the weather to clear. On this day, the touring inspection commissioner was on duty in Nanning, receiving his various subordinate officials, so in the morning, I went to take a look. After midday, Prefect Wu returned from visiting the Left River Intendant, so I had Servant Gu take my accusation to him regarding the Tranquil Hearing affair. He too ignored my appeal. That afternoon, I went out of town to look for a cart and porter but could not find either. I was very disheartened.

Sixteenth day [30 January]: This day was especially bright and clear. The touring inspection commissioner immediately hurried off to Taiping Prefecture at the fifth drum. When he came here from Si'en, he was in the same kind of rush; I do not know why. I suspect it was because the Vietnamese were threatening the border once more, but I did not hear of him deploying any troops. Everyone, whatever their rank, dismissed this issue as of no concern. So once more, I sent Servant Gu to search everywhere for a cart and porter, but I never found one. . . .

1 Wuyuan County was north of Nanning, in neighboring Si'en Subprefecture.

Seventeenth day [31 January]: For a second time, I prepared incense, candles, and a vegetarian dish and went to Exalted Benevolence Monastery. I had Cloud White cook the vegetables and then laid them out as offerings. I only asked for Tranquil Hearing's cassock, sutras, and bamboo case; I did not mention other items of monetary value. Cloud White stalled, saying he needed to wait until Precious Altar returned. I then proceeded to exhume Tranquil Hearing's bones, which nearly filled an entire urn. Ashes and earth were mixed in with them, so I painstakingly removed these impurities with bamboo chopsticks, which took up much of the day. I then deposited the ashes into the urn and returned them to the original burial plot. Next, I wrapped the bones in several layers of paper and took them outside the monastery, as I was not allowed to bring them inside.

Just then, Precious Altar returned. Seeing that I had asked for the sutras and bamboo case, he immediately scowled like a thief and said: "The monk died and has already been laid to rest. What are you doing willfully digging him up?" He then bolted the door and locked me inside. I smiled, gauging that he probably wanted me to write an affidavit falsely affirming that I had taken possession of all Tranquil Hearing's items. By this time, the sun had already set. Earlier, I had heard him muttering to himself, saying, "You say I conspired to murder the monk. My only regret is that I did not conspire to murder you!" Recalling these words, I was very frightened, so I gave in and handed over a false affidavit, after which I was given only the cassock and the sutra. I could then take the wrapped skeletal remains back to my quarters.

It was already dark when I reached the Deng Inn. I found a candle and rewrapped the bones to make a respectful bow to them. I then immediately packed up everything inside the cassock and stitched it shut. Then I placed the items into the large bamboo case, filling its lower compartment. Fortunately, that day had been sunny and clear, so I could spend the entire day sorting Tranquil Hearing's bones by the riverbank. On my return, in the darkness, I spotted a carriage by the sandbank, and I thought I would surely be on my way the following day.

Xu Xiake was now heading toward Guizhou, but first he planned to visit Lu Wanli, a regional commander based in Sanli, northeast of Nanning.[2] Lu, a fellow Jiangnan native, proved such a congenial host that Xu would stay seven weeks in the Sanli area.[3]

2 Sanli is modern Sanli Zhen, in the northeast corner of Shanglin Xian.

3 In these remote parts, shared roots quickly created a connection between Xu Xiake and fellow Jiangsu natives. On the eve of his arrival in Sanli, Xu found accommodation in the village home of a woman whose father hailed from Nanjing; although she did not know Xu, on hearing his accent, she promptly offered him a bed for the night.

Twenty-second day [5 February]:[4]. . . After ten *li*, the gorge opens expansively, with mountains on the rim and a broad valley in the middle. One peak rose steeply from the level land, much like Guilin's Lone Elegance and Xiangwu's Jade Stone Crag [Langyan], but smaller and more jagged.[5] The road passes to its west. Suddenly, tree shadows were cast downward, with sunlight visible in between, and I quickly turned east toward the mountain to find a rupture between its north and south. The south entrance had a huge rock jutting out from the cave roof and dividing the entry into two. Inside the door, a crack extended several rods in height and a rod and one-half in breadth, extending five or six rods north of the peak. Exiting by the north opening, the flying peak above leaned over and soared eastward, like a walkway circling into the air, as hanging trees threw shadows. I went back inside and to the west reached another window, turning to the northwest and then out, with twists and turns, several arches, and various cracks and apertures, until I reached the west entry. With one small peak, four openings, and two internal passages, it is like a miniature version of Jade Stone Crag. But Jade Stone Crag is tall and vast, while this cave is level and narrow.

Proceeding north from the cave for three *li*, I reached Cassia Water Bridge [Guishui Qiao] over a stream that comes from the northwest, while the peak to the south overlooks the stream and bridge. In the past, a cluster of rocks formed a terrace, and a pavilion was erected on top called the Come Hither from Afar Pavilion [Laiyuan Ting], but now only ruins remain.

Crossing east over the bridge and going another two *li* to the north, I arrived in Sanli. The town was founded in the eighth year of the Wanli reign (1580), and the commander's headquarters dates from that same time. The Nandan Frontier Guard (Nandan Wei) was moved here to subdue the Eight Strongholds [Bazhai].[6] It was afternoon already, so I put up outside the south wall at the home of a company commander surnamed Chen. He belongs to the Chen family of Shangyu in Zhejiang and has lived here for twenty years. The evening sunshine was lovely, so I went into the town to pay my respects at Emperor Guan Temple [Guandi Miao] and then changed money in the market before returning. Once I was in bed, rain fell heavily once more.

Twenty-third day [6 February]: When I got up in the morning, the rain had stopped. Soon, the sun was shining brightly, so I told Servant Gu to wash

4 *YJJZ*, 1:655–57; *YJ*, 1:539–42.

5 The Chinese text mistakenly refers to the cave as Ruiyan 瑞巖; see *YJJZ*, 1:655; *YJ*, 1:540. Xu describes Jade Stone Crag in *YJJZ,* 1:619; *YJ*, 1:506.

6 The Nandan Frontier Guard, a military garrison, had in the early Ming period been stationed in Nandan, near the Guizhou border. It retained the original name even after reassignment to Sanli. For more on the Eight Strongholds, see *YJJZ*, 1:675, *YJ*, 1:558.

the clothes and blankets. At the same time, I prepared a letter for Regional Commander Lu (Canrong Lu), attaching my poems on "Lamenting Tranquil Hearing," in preparation for delivery the following morning. At dusk, the sun disappeared among black clouds.

Twenty-fourth day [7 February]: It was raining again when I rose at dawn. In the morning, I submitted my letter to Mr. Lu. Lu is from Zhenjiang and has held office here for six years. His given name is Wanli. Having received my letter, he had a squad leader bring me his name card, so I entered to pay my respects. I gave him a report on affairs in my hometown and stayed for quite some time before leaving. "I ought to host you for longer," he said, "but I have another engagement today. Tomorrow, I will give you my full attention." It turned out that this day was the growing-up ceremony for his grandson, Boheng, and the various officers arranged a celebratory party. When I went back to the residence, the rain kept pouring down. Chen, my host, plied me with alcohol, and I went to bed tipsy.

Twenty-fifth day [8 February]: The sky gradually cleared when I rose in the morning. I wrote my travel diary in my lodgings. In the morning, Mr. Lu sent me a letter setting up a meeting time; he returned the entire gift I had presented. I wrote a letter in reply, insisting that he keep it, and he accepted the "Autumn Scents in Gold Valley" (Jingu qiuxiang) scroll. In the afternoon, I attended a banquet in the inner chambers, conversing with Mr. Lu. His younger brother Xuanzhi and other siblings were welcoming and sincere, and I greatly liked them.

Twenty-sixth day [9 February]: I got up in the morning and went to thank Mr. Lu. He put me up in the east wing of the residence, screened by tall pines; it was quiet and comfortable. Mr. Lu was most lavish with his presents, giving me a jacket and socks, trousers and shoes, showing an unstinting generosity and cordiality beyond that of one's own flesh and blood. On this day, Mr. Lu brought out new and old issues of the *Gazette* to show me. Now, for the first time, I learned that Huang Daozhou had arrived in the capital and submitted two memorials, only to be rebuked in an edict for his stubbornness; Xiong Wenju (1595–1668), secretary in the Ministry of Personnel (Libu), had come to his rescue with another memorial. I also learned that a verdict of banishment had been planned in the case of Zheng Man (1594–1639) but that later, an imperial edict upgraded the penalty, sentencing him to death; Minister of Punishments (Xingbu Shangshu) Ren had been demoted three ranks for this.[7] In the sixth month, the commander of the imperial guards was

7 Wen Tiren, also known as Wucheng, Qian Qianyi, Zheng Man, courtesy name Miyang, Xiong Wenju, and Qu Shisi were prominent figures in the politics of the time.

reported to be ill. I also learned that Qian Qianyi had been denounced in a memorial written by a petty person eager to ingratiate himself with Wen Tiren (d. 1638) and so was arrested and sent to the capital, where he was imprisoned along with Qu Shisi (1590–1650).[8] Zhu Guobi, marquis of Wuning (Wuning hou), and others attacked Wen Tiren, leading to his retirement in the sixth month. The cases of Zheng and Qian have yet to be settled.

> After moving north to Qingyuan Prefecture and spending some three weeks exploring sights near Yishan County, the prefectural capital, Xu Xiake set off again on the tenth day of the third month, heading northwest and arriving two days later in a settlement at Desheng.[9]

Twelfth day [*of the third month*] [25 April]:[10] I rose at dawn, but it was still raining when finished breakfast. I instructed Slave Gu to accompany the soldiers carrying our luggage and proceed to Desheng's west camp. I entered the gate of Desheng's east lane, and after one *li*, I turned north. Within another one-half *li*, I arrived at the foot of the north mountain—Yuan Family Mountain [Yuanjia Shan]. I passed Avalokiteśvara Retreat [Guanyin An] but did not go in, instead following a track to the left and going up the mountain. There was a cavern near the summit, its entrance facing south, some five rods high, with a large rock pillar occupying the space in the middle. I was able to enter both toward the east and the west; the cavern grew dark as I began to descend. I had earlier read a stele at Avalokiteśvara Retreat: "Behind the retreat lies Lion Cavern [Shizi Dong]." So I knew this had to be Lion Cavern.

I had also heard from locals that a cavern extends to the rear of the mountain. Seeing how deep this cavern was, I was sure they meant this one. Outside, rain was still pouring down. On the top of the mountain stands Jade Emperor Belvedere [Yuhuang Ge], and I wanted to go and look for torches to explore the cavern, but the belvedere monks happened to have gone down the mountain, so there was nobody there. I told the attendant, Wang Gui, to go back to the Avalokiteśvara Retreat to get torches while I climbed the mountain, umbrella in hand. Stone steps wended their way up the rock face very steeply, and there were several twists and turns; when I got to the top, I found the door to the upper level was locked but noted that pieces of firewood stored in the lower level could serve as torches. I promptly picked up some pieces and tossed them down. Below, I saw two monks at the entrance to the cavern, and I

8 *DMB*, 2:1474–78.

9 Yishan is modern Yizhou Shi. Desheng is now Desheng Zhen, in the northwest corner of Yizhou.

10 *YJJZ*, 1:719–25; *YJ*, 1:595–601.

suspected they were from the Jade Emperor Belvedere. Once I got down there, I found the attendant was there too.

The monks were actually from Avalokiteśvara Retreat; one was named Meditative Oneness (Chanyi), the other Luminous Jade (Yingyu). They had come at the bidding of the senior monk, Brimming Chamber (Manshi), to welcome me by serving tea and guide me through the cavern. So I joined them and collected the firewood I had tossed down; we entered the cavern with abundant torches. Proceeding through the opening on the east side of the screening pillar, we carried on for several rods, and then the passage opened into a lofty space. Here, there were rocks in all kinds of shapes: Skyscraping Pillar [Qingtian Zhu], Rhinoceros Gazing at the Moon [Xiniu Wangyue], Warbler Beak [Yingzui], Stone Boat [Shichuan]. Turning east for several dozen more rods, we saw beams of light shining down from the north wall, and I assumed this was the way out of the cavern. But going east, we found another dark passageway, so we followed it, torches in hand, only to find that it ended after about five rods. So we returned to the north exit, arriving below the opening where the light came in. Rocks hung down precipitously, with light projected above, like several moons shining in at the same time.

I was curious, so I clambered up the rocks to find that a ledge curled around to the left, and I could exit through a north opening—below the opening I had seen earlier from inside. Leaving the cavern, I climbed the south-facing slope to find rocks shaped like sepals, and it felt like walking on top of a cluster of lotus blossoms; when I passed the area where there were holes in the rock face, it was like seeing things through a hanging curtain. On the south side, I ascended to the summit, entering from the rear of Jade Emperor Belvedere to find the belvedere monks had now returned. Climbing to the belvedere, I looked down to see the houses in Desheng arrayed like fish scales below me, and the serried ranks of peaks all lay within my gaze. Accompanied by the two monks, I descended the mountain, passing Lion Cavern and entering Avalokiteśvara Retreat, where I thanked Brimming Chamber and said goodbye.

Then, I went south for one-half *li*, passing Desheng Market [Desheng Jie], where the market was in progress. Amid the rain, I crossed the street and headed south, and after another one-half *li* arrived at Wei Family Mountain [Weijia Shan]. Here, I ascended steps on the western slope. Trees hung low from the sheer rock face, like spiraling dragons dancing in the air. Above, branches of other trees mingled with the tips of huge trees arrayed by the entrance to a cavern, uniting together as one, linking up and soaring down. On a horizontal ledge, a single tree pierced through holes in the rock as if part of a single carving. Above and below the entry to the cavern, the rock face was sheer; the entry faced west. Looking ahead, you saw just the tops of the trees, and only when you got closer did the entrance come into view. In front was a small terrace, with rocks lying horizontally by the cliff's edge, like a protective railing.

Ascending higher, I found Avalokiteśvara Belvedere [Guanyin Ge] directly in front of the cavern entry and entered the cavern to the right. The cavern divides into two branches: one is accessed behind the belvedere and, turning south, becomes dark. Holding a torch, I reached the end after five rods and found no further holes. The other branch is accessed from the west side of the belvedere: it descends one level and turns north, growing dark, ending after ten rods, with no other holes. In short, although this cavern looks out into space, it lacks deep cavities, unlike Lion Mountain, which is pierced all the way through. Lion Mountain Cavern is remarkable for its uninterrupted passage inside. At the same time, this cavern impresses with its presentation on the outside—leaning over the drop, the perpendicular rock face above, matching the sheer rock face below, is a marvelous sight.

To the left of the Avalokiteśvara Belvedere was the monk's sleeping nook. Given the steep cliff above and below, the monk used a bamboo door as a screen. At the south end, there was an opening to the outside, over one rod in width, like a pavilion hanging out into space; the monk was planning to screen this off, too. I urged him to lay a piece of wood to fence off the opening but not block the view, and the monk accepted my suggestion.

The monk initially had intended to stay put, but soon I heard reports that this cavern also extended far toward the rear, and since I was keen to go all the way, I gave him some money and asked him to buy torches and guide me; he happily agreed. Two traders from Guangdong, hearing our exchange, tagged along. Once in, we searched everywhere but found no deep cavity, so we stopped. Going down the steps at the end of the cavern, we came to another opening. We entered and found it extended no more than four rods and was very narrow, so we descended the mountain with the rain still coming down heavily.

After one-half *li*, I reached the central portion of Desheng Market and proceeded west, passing the branch office. After one more *li*, I exited through the West Market [Xijie] gate, and one more *li* to the west, I found a training camp on the north side of the street—this was Desheng Camp [Desheng Ying]. When I inquired about the luggage, I was told it had been taken to Hechi Battalion [Hechi Suo]. . . .

To the south stood a huge, tall monolith with a monk's thatched cottage on top—this was Lotus Blossom Retreat. It was like the Buddhist retreat in front of Fragrant Mountain Monastery [Xiangshan Si], but the monk raised pigs and stored refuse by the gorge wall—rather disrespectful to a sacred spot. West of the stream in the gorge was an old three-room temple bolted and abandoned. A retreat in front was tumbledown, with a wooden table and large stools inside, but nobody was looking after the place. With stones empty and clouds cold, I found it discouraging. Then I returned. . . .

Then, going west, I passed the entry to an old terrace; the road was laid with bricks, but the houses nearby were sparse—it was not as thriving as

Desheng. Another *li* to the west, I entered the east gate of Hechi Battalion. It has a brick wall with four gates, but the battalion offices are in ruins, with very few houses. During the famine in the *wuwu* year [1618], the buildings were burned, looted by bandits, and reduced to grass and weeds. Desheng is inhabited entirely by outsiders, who hired native soldiers from Donglan and Nadi to guard the town, and it managed to remain secure and avoid misadventure. In contrast, this garrison town could not protect itself and was put to the torch. The luggage had been set down in the western barracks of the battalion, but the place was unbearably dirty and mean, so after changing my clothes and shoes, I went to East Market [Dongjie] to call on Du Shizheng. Finding he had gone out, I returned to the hostel and went to the east gate. There, Shizheng led me to his study in a rear wing of Blessed Mountain Retreat [Fushan An] on top of the Battalion's earth mound. The retreat monk was so poor that he had no wood for the stove, so the meal was prepared in the soldier's house and then brought to the retreat. We transferred the luggage there too.

In the afternoon, I told Servant Gu and the attendant to report to the Battalion Commander, Mr. Liu, with the letters and army tallies. He happened to have gone out, but at dusk, he returned and sent a message: "I ought to call on you promptly. Since it is late, I shall come in the morning." The battalion's wall and the Blessed Mountain Monastery to the rear were both built during the Yongle reign by eunuch emissary Lei Chun, the man who developed mining on Mengying Mountain [Mengying Shan].

Thirteenth day [26 April]:[11] When I got up in the morning, I wanted to visit Mr. Liu, so I went to the market to look for a name card, but Liu arrived before I had time to do that. Liu's given name is Hongxun, and his nickname is Mengyu. The provisions he gave me were abundant, but I accepted only the rice and the meat. Soon, the notepaper arrived, so I delivered a note of appreciation to his office, a newly thatched building. I consulted Mr. Liu on which route was preferable.

> "The road through Nandan is wide and goes a long way," he said, "but the households of the native officials are in turmoil, and the road through Xiasi is not open.[12] If you take the route through

11 *YJJZ*, 1:722; *YJ*, 1:598.

12 Xu Xiake provides more detail in a long aside: "In the winter of the ninth year, native official Mo Ji held a birthday celebration for his mother, and when his sister-in-law—the wife of his third younger brother—came to deliver her congratulations, he raped her. As a result, this brother and the fourth younger brother were outraged and together rebelled against him, forcing Mo Ji to flee to Nadi. Later, Xiasi—that is to say, native chief Lan of Dushan—having been abused earlier by Nandan in the ninth month of the tenth year

> Libo, the road is close but the mountains are hazardous, with the Yao and Zhuang often coming and going unpredictably.[13] On the west edge of Si'en is River Back Ridge [Hebei Ling], which is very high and steep, a dangerous road where you may see nobody the whole day. After you reach Maolan to the west, you enter Libo jurisdiction, and only there can you hire porters. But on that road, you must travel with a larger group."

Earlier, Commander Qi (Qi Zhihui) had given me escort tallies and said, "If you travel via Libo, have Aide-de-Camp (Mujun) Fang Yujie escort you there." The indigenous inhabitants of Libo, it seemed, lived in fear of Qi, and Fang was his shadow; he often shepherded travelers and goods back and forth. Mr. Liu told Fang to come and personally instructed him to see me to Libo, and though Fang assented, he showed no sign of following through, hoping to secure a large bribe.

Looking at the north mountain cavern from the government office, it is like a millet kernel inlaid in a screen. I had just gone out, intending to tour the north mountain, when Mr. Wang, card in hand, came to visit. His given name is Mian, and his nickname is Xianzhou; he also conveyed Mr. Liu's wish to see me. Soon after, Mr. Liu's written invitation arrived, so instead of touring the north cave, I drank at Liu's offices. Also present were Wang Xianzhou, Du Shizheng, and Shizheng's older brother Du Tiqian, all students at Hechi Battalion. Student Zeng came separately later. During the meal, Shizheng said his father-in-law, Chen Mengxiong, was traveling to Nandan. "Here, it is just finding porters that is difficult," he said. "If he accompanies you, you should not be troubled by bad people." Mr. Liu told a page to invite him, but he did not come. Not knowing what was best, I felt at sea.

Fourteenth day [27 April]: Because today was an inauspicious day, Mr. Chen's departure was postponed. When I conducted a divination, Nandan was promising, and Libo had obstacles. But when a second divination was made, the result favored Libo. My dilemma was still unresolved. So I went out the north gate and went on an excursion to the north

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also seized an opportunity to vent his resentment, and the area fell into chaos. The two younger brothers used ten thousand men from Xiasi to lay siege to Nandan, while Ji brought troops from Nadi to come to Nandan's aid, with the result that the third brother fled to Si'en Subprefecture and the fourth to Shangsi, while Ji returned to the prefectural capital. In the twelfth month, he gathered local troops and seized the third brother, imprisoning him. In the spring of this year, the prefecture sent Commander Qi to mediate. The third brother's life was spared, but Ji is still at loggerheads with the fourth brother in Shangsi."

13 Libo, now a Xian in Guizhou Province, was in Xu Xiake's day just inside Guangxi territory, northwest of Desheng.

mountain. It lies a little over one *li* to the north of the town. I went up steps for about one more *li*. The mountain rises in three tiers, and a Buddhist edifice is located on top of the second tier and below the highest tier. After exiting the north gate, I first proceeded up a level canyon. Within one-half *li*, there was a jumble of rocks spilling over near a corner, like doors and like signs, like screens and like beams, like bamboo shoots and like fungus, all different in their striking features, even more artful than Lotus Blossom Pond [Lianhua Chi] and Fragrant Mountain Monastery.

Continuing to the north for almost one more *li*, I crossed the mountain toward the north and climbed a steep staircase that clung to the cloudy rock face, making bends for almost one *li*, then entered through a side gate. There was a three-room hall. Because the monk went out to look for food, he had closed the door, and looking at it from below, I thought I would not be able to enter, but when I pushed the door, I found it had not been bolted. I went inside, and the board above read "Cloud Deep Belvedere" [Yunshen Ge], while to the right, a prose tribute was written on another board, in which provincial graduate Dong Qiying described how he studied here and how he searched for a musical stone to the east of this building and erected a thatched pavilion to house it.[14] Now, no sign exists if you come from the retreat searching for the pavilion. The west end of the retreat climbs a sheer rock face with a perpendicular cliff above and below. Still, a thin path like a scar descends the cliff to a hollow where water collects behind a manmade dike, dripping down from the cliff above and providing a supply for morning and evening collection. The retreat has no other notable features, but one can see far into the distance from this height. To the south, looking straight ahead, I saw Abundantly Numinous Mountain [Duoling Shan] beyond the second row of peaks. Ram Horn Mountain [Yangjiao Shan] and Wei Family Mountain are the landmarks visible to the east and west.

After lingering there for a long time, I went down the mountain and followed the main road outside the north gate east and northeast for one *li*. At that point, I entered Longevity Mountain Monastery [Shoushan Si]. Water gathered here and there beneath a jumble of rocks, and on the peak, three or four structures of varying heights have been built to make sacrifices to gods and Buddha. A Gold Transcendent (Jinxian) statue had been placed in the first room I entered. To the west, a fissure extended from south to north between the rocks: clear water collected there, like a natural boundary. Using the stone blocks as a bridge, I forded the stream to the west, where on one side a line of rocks extended from south to north, with gaps like doorways above and below. I threaded through to the west, where a retreat faces north. Water collects in front to form a pond, ringed by rocks.

14 Dong was a *juren* of 1627.

Behind the retreat, up-thrusting rocks are isolated and high, and on top stands a three-room structure, with a statue in the middle, imposing in robes and hat. An old man identified the image as that of Commander Zhang [Zhang Zongye], but the students there all said it was Wenchang.[15] In Blessed Mountain Monastery, I read *Poems on Heyang's Eight Scenes* (Heyang bajing shi), which had a colophon written by Zhang Zao, in which he said he composed them among the mossy rocks of Longevity Mountain when he passed through while inspecting troops in the *wuzi* year of the Wanli reign (1588). So there can be no doubt that the statue is of him.[16] Because there is no text to record this here, these younger men were unaware of the facts, hailing the statue as Wenchang, not knowing it was Zhang.

After standing in tribute for some time, I walked southwest for one *li* and entered the town through the east gate, returning to my inn in Blessed Mountain. I told the slave to buy salt and look for porters in Desheng in preparation for departure the next day. I then wrote up my diary in the residence. Later, Du Shizheng and his father-in-law arrived and found porters for me, committing to leaving for Nandan the next day.

Today, the sky cleared in the afternoon and was completely clear by evening. The icy wheel rising in the east boosted my spirits.

Fifteenth day [28 April]: When I rose at first light, the sky was as clear as though it had been washed. I ate quickly and prepared to leave. Mr. Liu wanted to see me off, so I went to thank him. Then I accompanied Du Shizheng to his father-in-law's house, and we waited till he was ready to leave. We exited through the west gate and headed west. We crossed a stream, and after seven *li*, we passed to the north of Ram Horn Mountain. We waited for an exchange of porters at the west village, but the relief carriers failed to show. After waiting quite some time, we went south and crossed an earth ridge. Looking to where there was a ring of peaks in the west, I saw a cavern near the summit. Facing southeast, its entrance was huge, and I suspected that this was the so-called New Cavern [Xindong].

The hills divided into two groups, east and west, south of an earthen knoll, and we proceeded southward through the col in the middle. After five *li*, I noticed a small brook gurgling to the left of the road, soon joined by a brook coming down from the rocky mountain to the northwest. We crossed the stream from the north and followed it; two *li* to the south, we arrived at Dujie Village [Dujie Cun], where several households perched on the western foothills. This area, known as West Den [Xichao], was infested with Zhuang bandits. In this next stretch, no porters could be found. After

15 A Daoist deity, god of literature and culture.

16 Zhang Zao, a native of Anhui, had been appointed a military commander in Guangxi after serving with distinction in Zhejiang during the early Wanli reign.

another two *li* to the south, we followed the stream into a narrow gorge between hills. After one and a half *li*, we turned east, and after another one and a half *li*, the stream went south while the road crossed west through a dip, and we finally got out of danger after we made it past the so-called Dujie Mound [Dujie Long]. On the mound, grasses and trees offered cover for highwaymen. A few days earlier, there had been a robbery here, and I counted myself fortunate to get through without a hitch.

Descending the valley to the west for three *li*, a thatched cottage stood on the north slope—this was a tax station (*shuisi*). It was under Desheng jurisdiction but administered by the local chieftain here. Going west one *li*, we reached Luosuo Village [Luosuo Cun]. The Dujie stream turns west and arrives here, then enters the canyon to the south, while the road passes to the north of the village and crosses the hills. Dujie and Luosuo are both bandit dens. After two and a half *li* to the northwest, we passed underneath rocks and a huge boulder perched north of the road, with a banyan tree straddling it.

After another *li* to the west, there was a huge cavern halfway up the mountain on the right, its entrance facing southeast, very tall and steep; just seeing it made my spirits take flight. The porters had just then put down their loads, so I plucked up my courage and rushed to climb up the slope, although the thatch grass was dense and there was no path. Down below, everyone was shouting, but this just made me climb with renewed energy, and I pushed my way through the thorns and creepers and reached the approach to the cavern. Ahead were many bamboo palms of enormous height. The cavern entrance was very lofty, and inside was cool and spacious; the cave extended back some ten rods. To the right was a small cavity, very narrow but hollow in the middle; I wondered if I could get farther if I crawled inside. In front of the cavern, a rock was divided into two forks, the tip hanging down. I rested there alone; because Mr. Chen was waiting for me below, I went back down.

After another two *li* to the west, we stopped for the night in a village on the north side of Horse Grass Dike [Macao Tang], on the slope of the north peaks. A river flows west of the village from the gorge to the north then through a gorge to the west; it is the upper reach of the East River [Dongjiang]. The thatched houses of the villagers are very large, with wooden floors and bamboo porches. The owners came out with grass-filtered wine to offer travelers. "They are all bandits," Mr. Chen told me.

The moon rose over the eastern hills that night, as bright and clean as though just washed. Since the beginning of spring, this is the only day where there has not been the slightest bit of cloud to obscure the morning sun and the evening moon.

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

Travels in Qian

I

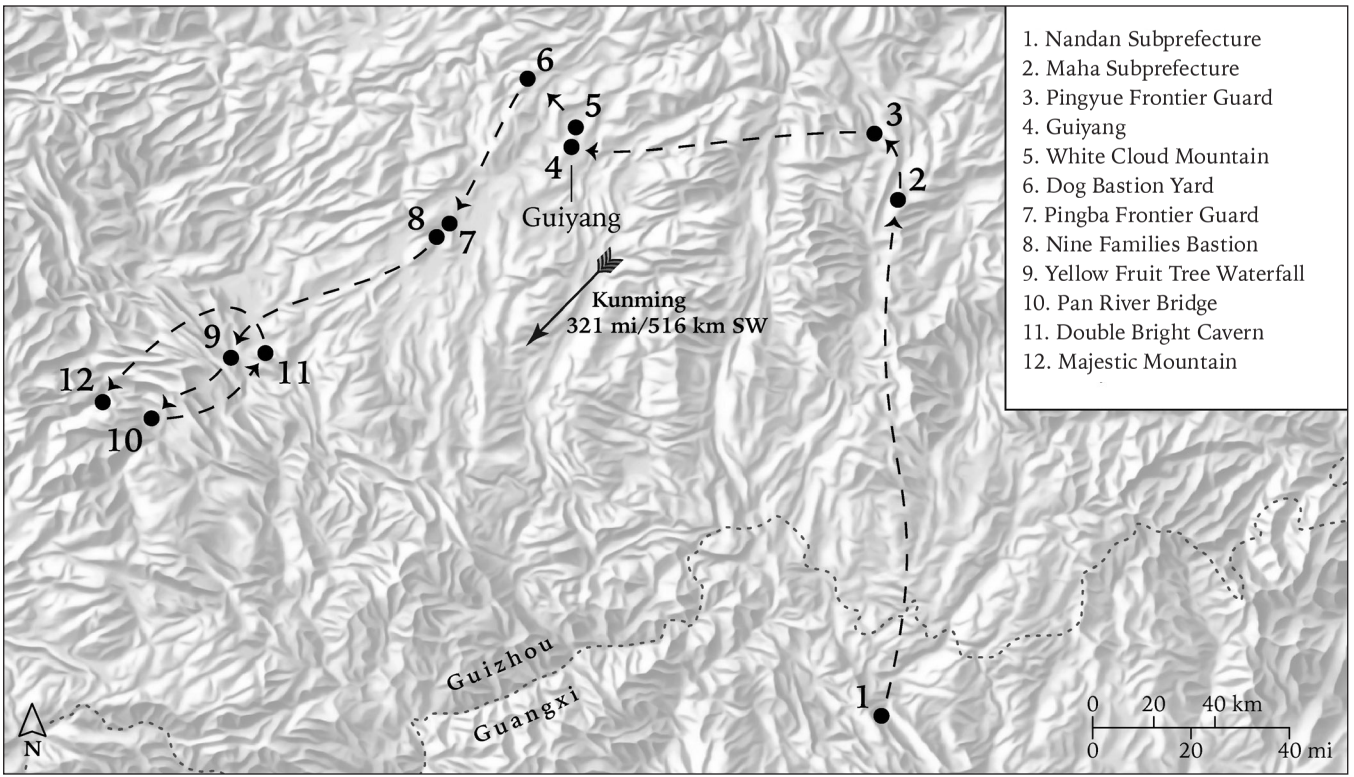
[SPRING AND SUMMER 1638]

On 10 May 1638, Xu Xiake entered Qian, or modern Guizhou, from Nandan County on the southeastern border of Guangxi. Over the next forty-one days, he visited several sites in the mountainous backwater of southwestern Guizhou, leaving for Yunnan on 20 June. Although Guizhou became a province of China in 1413, in the late Ming, it was still an isolated border region populated by aboriginal tribal people. The following diary entry describes the breathtaking, mountainous terrain in and around White Cloud Mountain [Baiyun Shan], south of the provincial capital in Guiyang.

Sixteenth day [*of the fourth month*] [29 May]: I heard wind and rain throughout the night. At daybreak, the early morning rain fell heavy and hard, so I got up late. After breakfast, I sat by a small window and waited for the skies to clear. I wanted to search for Dragon Pool, but the drizzle never stopped. As it turned out, I proceeded after lunch. Following the same route, I passed over the ridge north of Submerged Dragon Belvedere [Qianlong Ge] and reached Southern Capital Well [Nanjing Jing]. By way of the forking path to the northeast, I passed into a deep bamboo grove, where towering bamboo trees along layered cliffs, secluded and sheltered above and below, push through cliffs and pierce through the deep blue void, making it seem as if I was no longer in the mortal world. It was like this for altogether five *li*, to where the peak summit on the western cliff descends into a recess, plummeting deep down to form a gorge. Water accumulates inside it, a bottomless abyss of deep blue. Rocks have fallen to the foot of the gorge, neither too few nor too many. Indeed, this is an abyss hidden by countless antiquities, shut away in a canyon among a thousand peaks. From south to north, the gorge measures about five rods; from east to west, it measures about one and a half rods.[1] At the base of

Source: "Qianyou riji yi" (*YJJZ*, 2:764–65; *YJ*, 1:636–37).

1 The dimensions of this landform, described here and below by Xu Xiake, do not come anywhere near what is usually understood as a "gorge" in English. Although Xu uses the word *xia* 峽, which almost always indicates



Map 26. Qian (Guizhou), Diaries 1 and 2, 1638

the cliff to the east, where it sinks, measures about three rods; where the cliff to the west towers and then falls, it measures ten-some rods. The depth of the water cannot be fathomed, and to the south, it penetrates through an opening that goes even deeper, presumably passing through the mountain and piercing its belly. The interior of the peak is immersed in water, and directly to the southwest, it makes its way to form Southern Capital Well; in the southeast, it makes its way to form Ladle Water While Kneeling Spring [Guishao Quan].[2] On top of the cliff are tall trees with thickset branches, flooding the void and shrouding it in lush green. Next I clambered up a cliff to the northeast, then crossed a gulch to the southeast, secluded and sheltered to the extreme. East of the gulch, an abandoned thatched cottage serves as a sanctuary. Crossed a plank bridge and went into the sanctuary. Two years ago, this served as a meditation place for a monk from Mount Lu, but it is now deserted, and the monk is gone. Just as I was about to cross the plank bridge and depart, a mountain rain poured down. So I backtracked, following my earlier footpath. Amid the deep mist, a profusion of emerald leaves plunged on me. My clothes and sandals were soaked through. Passed Southern Capital Well a second time and went into the monk's sanctuary to the north. The monk had locked the door when he left for White Cloud Retreat. Only the rain-drenched warblers remained, singing tender melodies to me.

The empty mountain seemed charming and alluring, just as if I had come upon the entrance to Peach Blossom Cavern [Taohua Dong].[3] On my return, I passed through Submerged Dragon Belvedere. The monk Naturally Thus (Ziran) had already arrived there and was waiting for me by the side of the belvedere. I then descended to the retreat, where tea was served, and I dried my clothes. The rain let up after dinner. Naturally Thus once again had his disciple serve as my guide. From east of the retreat, I climbed to the corner of a ridge. Following it, I proceeded north for one *li* and came out to a nook in the east. All the nearby mountains crouched below the ridge. The mountains in the distance that approach from Green Cliff [Qingya] are spurs that come down from Dragon Village [Longli]. Slightly to the north, I descended to a deep forest, crossed a rocky chasm, and entered a meditation chamber with three open, spacious rooms facing east. A terrace adorned with wildflowers has formed in front, where the rooms are close to mountain rocks and adorned with

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a deep-cut river gorge, I suspect that in this case, he is describing a ravine-like landform.

2 Earlier, in his diary entry for 28 May (*YJJZ*, 2:763; *YJ*, 1:635), Xu Xiake explains that this spring ran under a pillar in front of the belvedere. So to fetch water, one would need to kneel and draw it with a ladle. Hence, the name Ladle Water While Kneeling Spring.

3 That is to say, the entrance to the utopia described by Tao Yuanming in his account of the "Peach Blossom Spring," for which see part 1, note 6, pages 78–79.

wildflowers. The rooms are clean and bright and quite charming. The chamber stands loftily suspended above countless trees and looks down upon thick folds of plentiful and profuse bamboo groves that look like plots of chives. Separated by overhanging cliffs and delineated by empty ditches, one can gaze at them from a distance, but they cannot be scaled. Thus, one must take the winding trail from White Cloud Retreat. Presumably, the trails from the meditation chamber on level land behind and north of Submerged Dragon Belvedere are all like this. There are no alternate footpaths to climb the mountain. This meditation chamber is spacious and not messy, secluded but not closed off, and steep but not constraining. Here, one's breath reaches the stars, and somewhere between sleep and wakefulness, you are cut off from the human realm.[4] Indeed, this is a surpassing place to take refuge and cultivate one's true nature. The meditation master uses the nickname Expound the Fundamentals (Qiben). He is a native of Yunnan who dwells together with a disciple. In the flat area to the north, there is only a single elderly monk. Behind White Cloud Retreat there are altogether ten meditation cottages. Each monk left the mountain because of the chaos during An's Rebellion.[5] Only in these two cottages are there monks still dwelling, numbering twelve. Next to the cottages are pits with springs where water can be drawn. So I know the summit of this mountain is concave and retains water, which remains in place, not flowing anywhere. This is yet another scenic wonder. In the evening, I backtracked to White Cloud Retreat. At sunset, it began to rain again. The monk Naturally Thus provided me with tea on the side of the retreat. I turned up the wick on the lamp for a nighttime chat. Quite a while passed before I finally laid down to sleep.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

> By the eighteenth day of the fourth month of the *wuyin* year [31 May 1638], Xu Xiake had been in Guizhou for three weeks. As he prepared to set off westward from White Cloud Mountain, southwest of Guiyang, the provincial capital, the monk Naturally Thus, his host for the previous two days, counseled against taking the most direct westerly route because on that road there was

4 "Reaches to the stars" is a loose translation of the Chinese astronomical term "Emperor's Throne" (Dizuo 帝座). Usually, this term refers to the Cassiopeia constellation in the northern sky. It is difficult, however, to determine if Xu Xiake has in mind a particular star in that constellation. If so, he might be thinking of Schedar, its alpha (or brightest) star.

5 An's Rebellion (Anshi luan), also known as the She-An Rebellion (She-An luan), began in Guizhou and Sichuan in late 1621. Because of taxes imposed by the Ming government on the people living there, the aboriginal chieftains She Chongming (d. 1629) and An Bangyan (d. 1628) led a revolt that lasted almost eight years. It was eventually suppressed in the summer of 1629.

a danger of being ambushed by Miao aborigines. Instead, he recommended a detour to the northwest: "Though the distance is longer by some forty *li*, that area is out of the way, and the Miao there are docile, so you should be able to avoid trouble."[6] Xu Xiake followed this advice. Near the end of that day, he reached the village of Dog Bastion Yard [Goubao Chang], populated by Miao, who worked on land owned by a prominent Han Chinese family.[7] Despite his appeals, however, none of the residents were willing to let him stay overnight, and he had no choice but to press on.

Eighteenth day [*of the fourth month*] [31 May]:[8]. . . Proceeding west, we followed the level fields to a hill on the north side. After about one more *li*, a stone peak rose from the col, its sheer rock face cleaving the sky—another example of a steep and perilous mountain. After following the gorge to the north and going west for one-half *li*, we reached another village. When we went in and inquired, people slammed their doors and fled. Heading west again, we reached a homestead and forced our way inside. It was a shabby thatched hut, and the sleeping area was as filthy as a pigsty. In this area, the people may be civilized Miao, but though they are tenant farmers, their lifestyle is very coarse—it makes me think back fondly to the bamboo stilt houses I used to encounter farther south.[9]

Nineteenth day [1 June]:[10] I urged the Miao host to get up and cook at the crack of dawn. Suddenly, the porter also called him, and I thought this strange: "In the past, he's always been lazy, unwilling to get up in the morning—today why does he join me in calling out?"

The man's name was Wang Gui, a native of Sun Mesa [Taiyang Ping] in Jingzhou.[11] Two months earlier, when I arrived in Indigo Stream [Lanjian] from Sanli, he and several others had caught up with me from behind, saying, "We want to go to Qingyuan, but that road is blocked, and the roundabout route is too far. Hearing that the regional commander

6 *YJJZ*, 2:767; *YJ*, 1:639.

7 Xu Xiake identifies the landowner as a certain Tang who held a post in the Ministry of Personnel. This appears to reference Tang Jingming, a Guiyang native and *jinshi* of 1616.

8 *YJJZ*, 2:770; *YJ*, 1:643–44.

9 "Civilized" is a rendering of the word *shu* 熟, which means "cooked." From at least the twelfth century on, in their encounters with Miao and other non-Han peoples inhabiting the peripheries of the empire, the Chinese commonly made a distinction between those who were *sheng* 生 ("raw," i.e., unassimilated, wild) and those who were "cooked" (assimilated, tame).

10 *YJJZ*, 2:770–71; *YJ*, 1:643.

11 Jingzhou corresponds to what is now the Jingzhou Miao and Dong Autonomous County (Jingshou Miaozu Dongzu Zizhi Xian) in Hunan.

has organized a military escort for you, we come specially to ask if we can join your party." Feeling sorry for them, I agreed, and en route shared with them the supplies I was given.[12] When we got to Qingyuan, they went off by themselves, but I ran into them again when visiting South Mountain, and after that, Wang waited on me day after day, expressing a wish to accompany me to Yunnan.[13] My thinking was this: from Qingyuan to Nandan, I would have porters to accompany me, but once I entered Guizhou, I would likely have nobody to carry things, so I wanted to recruit one of these men. I arranged with Wang Gui, "Here, I do not have a job for you to do, but since you are with me, I will give you one-hundredth of an ounce of silver each day. If you need to carry luggage, I will raise the daily pay to three and a half hundredths."

He wanted me to hire both himself and a second man. Later, when staying in the caves at Southern Mountain, I heard that his companion had stuffed a cowherd's mouth with cotton, and my suspicions were aroused. But Wang Gui came and told me that his companion was staying in Qingyuan at the time this happened—according to him, it was someone else who had lured the cowherd.[14]

After that, Wang Gui asked to come alone, and later, by the time we reached Maha Subprefecture, he had grown so cocky that one day he injured my foot with a stool.[15] Now that we were in Guizhou and he saw that I planned to hire another porter, he put on a show of repenting his errors. Since he seemed so pathetic, I employed him once more.

This morning, after rising early, he suddenly took off. When I checked the travel money I had laid away, it was all gone. Once I began to travel through aboriginal areas, I concealed several taels in the salt canisters, not realizing that he would spy out this hiding place with time. So I ended up losing the money not in a place of baleful miasmas and vicious plots but on a day when I was traveling on level ground and sticking to the road. This put me in a very dark mood.

It was now daylight, and there was no way of intercepting the thief and recovering the money. So I asked our Miao host to serve as a porter and see us as far as Pingba. It was less than 30 *li* away, but he demanded an exorbitant fee, and then he ran off and refused to come out. It seems that the Miao are not in the habit of escorting visitors.

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12 Xu first encountered Wang Gui among a group of five men near Blue Stream on the fourteenth day of the second lunar month, when they sought to join Xu for the safety that his escorts provided.

13 They met again on the seventeenth day of the lunar second month: see *YJJZ*, 1:680; *YJ*, 1:564.

14 On the twenty-second day of the second month, Xu had heard from villagers that one of the group had made advances on a young cowherd and tried to abduct him. See *YJJZ*, 1:686; *YJ*, 1:565.

15 Maha (modern-day Majiang Xian), which they had passed through two weeks earlier, is southeast of Guiyang.

When I approached another Miao, he said, "The man was kind enough to put you up for the night—how can you think of burdening him with your luggage? You need to carry it yourself. In two or three *li*, you will reach Nine Families Bastion [Jiujia Bao] and find a porter there." I asked everyone I could find, and they said the same thing. Since I had no choice, I secured the load after breakfast, and Servant Gu and I carried the luggage. . . . After one-half *li*, a creek flowed strongly from south to north. . . . There used to be a stone bridge spanning the creek, but it has collapsed; from the east side we waded through the water, arriving on the west bank in Nine Families Bastion, inhabited by civilized Miao. It was close to noon, and I could finally hire a porter. With him now taking my place, we proceeded northwest up a hillock.

—Translated by Allan H. Barr

The following diary entry describes one of the highest waterfalls in China. Located outside of modern Anshun Shi in north-central Guizhou, in the late Ming, it was called the White Water River Waterfall [Baishui He Pubu]. Because of a sudden drop in the elevation of the riverbed, the waterfall plummets through nine separate stages. The largest of these stages is called Yellow Fruit Tree Waterfall [Huangguo Shu Pubu], which falls about 200 ft/60 m.

Twenty-third day [5 June]:[16] After hiring a short-distance porter, I proceeded south along the main road. After two *li*, I gazed east at the western cliff of Double Bright Cavern [Shuangming Dong] from the top of a lofty knoll. Below the cliff, bright light still pierces through the cavern toward the east.[17] The water inside the cavern flows out to the west and into a gulch. Then, from below the main road, it goes down to the mountain's base. Twice, it seeps out, and twice, it goes back in. In all, it passes through to the belly of the mountain three times. After that, it pours into a great stream. Presumably, inside is a low-lying hollow enveloped by mountains on four sides, so water must tunnel through the cavern. Next, I proceeded south, passing over an earthen mound, ascending and descending four times, covering four *li*. I then came to a walled county on a mountain ridge to the south. The trail turns from north of the ridge and descends to the west. After another two *li* came to a modest shop along the road. On the left side of the road, there is a thatched canteen.

Next, I descended to the west, climbing and scaling a ridged canyon. After altogether seven *li*, I came to a settlement in a col called White

16 *YJJZ*, 2:783–84; *YJ*, 1:651–53.

17 Double Bright Cavern is so-called because it has two entrances, one to the east and another to the west. Judging from his description, Xu Xiake could see through the entire length of the well-lit cavern from a distance.

Water Hamlet [Baishui Pu]. But now it is a lunchtime canteen.[18] Next, I proceeded west for two *li*, where from a distance, I heard a thunderous boom of rushing water. From a crevice along the lofty knoll, I gazed north. Suddenly, in the mountains to the northeast, water poured down in torrents from a cliff in a gorge, pounding into layers of deep pools. But I could only see the upper half of its foamy, white current, which measured several rods across. It seemed as if surging snow was tumbling through the sky, but I could only see its lower part because the cliff largely blocked my view in front. Next, I passed over an earthen mound and descended for one-half *li*, then looked down at the lower reaches of the waterfall. Following its rushing and roaring current, I headed west. Gazing back at the flying torrent in the northeast, I regretted that I could not reach its base. The porter said, "This is the White Water River. Up ahead, there is a spot where the water plummets down from the sky from an even higher place." I regretted that I could not view that scene just once in person. I felt displeased and dissatisfied. I followed the current for one-half *li* to where a massive stone bridge had been built over the river. This is White Nimbus Bridge [Baihong Qiao]. The bridge stretches from south to north. Below it, there are three arches. The water flowing through them is quite voluminous; each arch measures several rods across. Without fail, the rushing water shoots snow-white waves from the bottom of the stream that flutter over the cliffs, flooding the stream like a flock of white egrets in flight. The name White Water is indeed not a misnomer!

Next, I followed the stream, proceeding west for one-half *li*. Suddenly, I was lost in a bamboo grove on a lofty knoll. Then, once again, I heard the roar of thunder. I thought to myself: I have reached yet another extraordinary scenic site! Through a crevice on the lofty knoll, I turned around to look south where on the left side of the trail, a stream pounded down from midair like countless strands of white silk soaring in the sky. As they descended, like leaves, they covered rocks in the stream. Three openings in the center of the rocks seem to have been gouged out with a knife. Above the "leaves," water floods the summit, descends like countless sheers of delicate muslin, and then spreads crosswise beyond the openings. The distance the waterfall plummets cannot be counted in rods. Like shattered pearls and fragments of jade, they are flying foam inverts and surges, like mist and fog rising into the sky. Its force is bold and formidable. Even the couplet "The beaded curtain's hook is never fastened; / Bolts of white silk dangle down on distant peaks" is insufficient to capture the waterfall's magnificence.[19] By and large, of the

18 What is translated as "canteen" literally reads "a place on the road where one can stop at midday (*zhong* 中) for a hot meal (*huo* 火)."

19 As far as I can tell, Xu Xiake composed this couplet of verse during his visit to the waterfall. The complete text of the poem, however, has not survived.

waterfalls we have seen, while some are several times higher and steeper than this one, none have been so vast and huge. You cannot avoid feeling frightened when you are above the waterfall and lean to one side to look down. The porter remarked, "In the past, there was a Gazing at the Water Pavilion [Wangshui Ting]. Sightseers could rest there." I looked for the pavilion in the distance. It survives on the cliff in front of us. From the side of the waterfall, I descended to the southwest, then again crossed the gorge and ascended to the south. After altogether one-some *li*, I mounted to the apex of the western cliff. The pavilion there is made of thatch. This is probably the former site of the Gazing at the Water Pavilion. Since the surveillance commissioner (*ancha shi*) will pass by here, he will likely gaze at distant sights from the pavilion, so local officials have used some thatch to erect a pavilion.[20]

—Translated by James M. Hargett

20 During the Ming, a province's surveillance commissioners were responsible for judicial and surveillance activities. Earlier in his Guizhou diary (*YJJZ*, 2.781; *YJ*, 1.648), Xu Xiake identified the surveillance commissioner as Feng Shijin and said he was a native of Sichuan.

II

[SUMMER 1638]

China has a long history of suspension bridge construction, extending back to at least the fourth century CE. In this next entry, Xu Xiake describes, in detail, a suspension bridge using iron chains (*tiesuo*) for cables that spanned the Pan River [Panjiang]. The Pan River, also known as the North Pan River [Bei Panjiang], originates in Yunnan and courses through the southwestern part of Guizhou. This area marks the entranceway to Yunnan. The deep valley and swift current made crossing the Pan River by boat a great challenge to travelers.

Twenty-fifth day [7 June]: . . . Following the east bank of the Pan River, I proceeded south. After one-half *li*, reached Pan River Bridge [Panjiang Qiao]. Iron cables support the bridge. The east and west ends of the bridge connect to the tops of cliffs and serve as its lengthwise framework, while planks are laid out across the iron cables and serve as its crosswise framework. The distance between the two cliffs from east to west is no more than fifteen rods, but the bridge stands about thirty rods above the river. Water rushes and dashes below it. The depth of the river cannot be fathomed. Before the bridge was built, people were ferried across by boat, but there were numerous mishaps when people died. So they tried to build a bridge by piling rocks but could not complete it. In the fourth year of the Chongzhen reign (1631), Zhu, the current provincial administration commissioner—his given name is Jiamin, and he is a native of Yunnan—was then provincial surveillance commissioner (*lianxian*), ordered the brigade commander (*youji*) of the Pu'an Frontier Guard [Pu'an Wei], Li Fangxian, a native of Sichuan, to take huge iron chains and connect them to tops of the cliffs on both sides of the river. The iron chains comprised several dozen lengths. Two layers of planks were laid across them, barely eight inches thick and measuring eight-some feet across. Gazing at the bridge from a distance, it seems to float and flutter in the air. But when you tread over it, it remains steadfast, never moving. Vast numbers of oxen and horses cross it daily, all bearing heavy loads as they rush to their destinations. On each side of the bridge, elevated iron chains are also connected to serve as railings, while thinner chains run lengthwise and crosswise, forming a patterned design.

Source: "Qianyou riji er" (*YJJZ*, 2:793–94; *YJ*, 1:657–58).

The cliffs at the two ends of the bridge each have a pair of stone lions, three or four feet tall. The chains that serve as railings emerge from the mouths of the lions. At each end, in the east and west, a huge commemorative archway spans over the road. The one to the east end has an inscription: "Moat of Heaven, Ship of Clouds" (Tianqian yunhang). The archway was installed by Master Zhu, Director of the General Bureau (Dubu). The one at the west end has an inscription that reads, □□□□.[1] This was installed by Fu Zonglong (d. 1641) when he served as army-inspecting censor (*jianjun yushi*).[2] Fu also erected an arched stele. Its inscription reads, "Little Ge's Bridge" (Xiao Ge Qiao). The inscription tells of Zhuge Liang (181–234), the Martial Marquis (Wuhou), who, it says, used iron to construct the Mekong River Bridge [Lancang Qiao], and that only now, after several thousands of years, it again exists here, or so the inscription claims.[3] Note: the reference to building a bridge across the Mekong River (Lancang Jiang) is a tale from the time of the Martial Emperor of the Han dynasty. Moreover, no iron-cable bridge over the Mekong River exists.[4] The former site of the iron bridge is in Lijiang, and Zhuge Liang did not build it.[5] Stele inscriptions, shrines, and temples at each end of the bridge here are vast. But it was sunset and raining heavily, so there was no time to scrutinize them. After crossing to the right side of the bridge, we had already passed through the new city gate. . . .

Twenty-seventh day [*of the fourth month*] [9 June]:[6] I had a meal after the pack horses departed, then made inquiries and found out that five *li* east of the city, where you head north from a tea stand, is Majestic Mountain

1 The four-character inscription that belongs here is missing in the original text. The symbol □ indicates an absent Chinese character.

2 Fu Zonglong was a native of Kunming, Yunnan, and served in several high-ranking posts in the Ming government bureaucracy. Holders of the office mentioned here—army-inspecting censor—usually accompanied and monitored the activities of military units on a campaign, then would independently report their observation directly to the emperor. Hucker, no. 815.

3 Zhuge Liang was a famous statesman who served the Shu-Han Kingdom during the Three Kingdoms period. He is especially well known as a military strategist. Zhuge was posthumously known as the Loyal and Martial Marquis (Zhongwu Hou) or Martial Marquis.

4 Although the Mekong River is usually associated with Vietnam, it originates on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau and flows through Yunnan. It then enters Burma, where it is known as the Salween River. After that, it continues to course through Laos, Thailand, Cambodia, and Vietnam, emptying into the South China Sea.

5 Xu's reference here is probably to a Tang dynasty iron suspension bridge that crossed the Gold Dust River in Lijiang Prefecture in Yunnan, along the main road from Yunnan to Tibet.

6 *YJJZ*, 2:795–98; *YJ*, 1:659–62.

[Weishan].[7] It has caverns that pass through from east to west. It also has water caverns, in which the collected water is very deep. In front, it provides a direct, bird's-eye view of the garrison city.[8] When you point at that place in the distance, although located on the apex of a mountain, it seems close. Together with Servant Gu, I followed the trail I had taken yesterday. Proceeded five *li* east and reached a tea stand, then proceeded toward the mountain on a forking path to the north. After one *li* reached a depression on the mountain's left side, where Majestic Mountain's spurs suddenly turned from north to south. Those spurs to the south tower aloft, while those to the north crouch low; those to the south are sheer, while those to the north dip down. Mountain cliffs spanning east and west, slant and lift, then ascend to the south. Another small peak rises in the same way from the southern foothills. I proceeded another one *li* into a gorge to the east, directly reached the back of the mountain, and passed the crest connecting with the eastern peak. Then descended north from the crest, deep into the mountain along a trail overgrown with weeds. From the crest, I turned west, following the midpoint of the mountain's northern peak. The trail is overgrown with weeds, but the stone steps remain. Following the steps, I proceeded. Haze from inside the north basin began to rise in an endless expanse over the north peak. The peak was nearby, but I could not see it. But on the north side of Majestic Mountain in the south, the only bright place was where the trail continued onward. The apex of the mountain also gradually became shrouded in haze. I proceeded west for one-half *li* to where the stone steps ascended to the south. Step by step, I climbed for one-half *li* to where the peak's north side was now wholly shrouded in haze. Then I turned east and ascended to the north, taking me above where the eastern cliff slants and rises. Its rocky crest is quite narrow. From the northeast, I ascended southwest, where I slithered upward like a dragon tail.

Next, beyond peaks to the southeast, I spied transparent skies and dazzling sunshine. The distant mountains seemed like they were bathed in indigo. The area northwest of my trail was inundated with fog and looked like an ocean. Everywhere above and below the peaks was a muddled mass as if the mountain's crest here served as a dividing line. The wind presumably approached from southeast of the crest, so the early morning haze cleared and swept away. The northwest side of the crest blocks the wind. Noxious fog can thus nestle and form inside dens

7 I follow Zhu Huirong's gloss in *YJJZ*, 2.805n21, which defines *cha'an* 茶庵 as a general term referring to stands along mountain trails that provide tea to travelers.

8 The reference is to the Annan Frontier Guard in southwestern Guizhou during the Ming.

and lairs in the mountain basin.[9] Early that morning, I had wanted to gaze north into the distance at the source of the Pan River, but each time I tried, the view was blocked by a peak.[10] Upon reaching here, just when I climbed to the northern apex, the view was blocked again, this time by fog. As for the profound mysteries of the Fashioner of Change (Zaohua or Zaohuazhe), this is how he denies us from probing and surveying them![11]

I clambered up one-half *li* to the crest, where below the summit's cliff is a cavern. Its entrance faces east; the top resembles joined palms of the hands, slightly concave and descending.[12] At the bottom, it measures four or five rods across. Inside is a niche for a statue of the Buddha and a monk's meditation couch. There was some leftover cooked rice still here, but I had no idea where the monk had gone. On both sides of the cavern are quite a few niches with profuse and plentiful mists lingering in the air around them. At the cavern's rear, the passageway penetrates straight through, then moves west. After you enter, the cavern gradually narrows and drops down; it also becomes more tapered, like joined palms of the hands. The side passageway west of the entrance goes straight through and comes out at the belly of the mountain. It is about seven-some rods long. The entrances at the front and back of the cavern are visible but cannot be seen when you descend because the cavern is high above. After you leave the rear entrance, everywhere above and below are sheer cliffs and heaps of rocks. The trail follows southwest of the cliff for over ten rods. There is also a cavern facing west, but its entrance is not even one rod in height. But its floor is very flat. Its height and width each measure two rods. But behind the cavern is a continuous

9 Noxious fog (*duwu*) refers to miasmic fumes (*zhangqi*) caused by mountain mists and watery poisons, along with decomposing animal or vegetable matter, which in premodern China were thought to poison the air, causing miasmic diseases and other dreaded ailments. While diseases such as malaria were usually associated with the tropical and subtropical climates of Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan in the late Ming and Qing periods, malaria was not uncommon in Guizhou. Even today, Guizhou is still considered a malaria-endemic area.

10 The Pan River is a major waterway in Guizhou and Yunnan.

11 Following Wang Zhaodan, *Xu Xiake youji xuanzhu*, 315n9, and reading *genzhu* 根株 (lit., "root and trunk") to mean "profound mysteries" (*aomi* 奥秘). The "Fashioner of Change" is a supernatural entity that is responsible for "fashioning" and "changing" all the "countless things" of the world, both animate (including humans) and inanimate. Cf. "Fashioner of Things," glossed in part 1, note 8, page 79.

12 When devising similes to describe tapered landforms pointing upward, Xu Xiake sometimes uses the term *hezhang* 合掌 (joined palms of the hands). This term refers to a hand gesture used by Buddhists when performing a greeting or prayer. It is executed by pressing the palms of the hands together at the chest, with the thumb and fingers pointing upward.

stretch of profuse and plentiful rocks, not deep, but fantastic. A Buddha throne has been placed among them, while an empty worship hall has been built in front.[13] It has already collapsed in ruins, and it would be impossible to preserve it. The front of the hall provides a direct, bird's-eye view of the garrison city, which seemed like it was only a footstep away. Unexpectedly, I was then wholly swallowed up by fog. Suddenly, it was everywhere, and I could not see a thing. I never imagined that mirages like this are also found in mountains and cities.[14] But this is merely the scene outside the cavern. When you enter and move east through the opening on the left side of the cavern, the entrance gradually narrows and darkens. I clambered through the threshold of the rocky entrance and ascended. Inside are holes and piles of rocks sloping deep down into hollows, all different. Every hole is full of water, yet none spills to the outside. From the cavern's ceiling, dribbles and drops of water fall into watery ponds, sounding like assorted tinkling pendants and a generous mix of stringed instruments, clanging and clattering, far and near. The interior gradually turns northeast. The cavern is like a great, deep abyss sinking downward. Since there are watery ponds above and below, there is nowhere to place your foot, while torches will not stay lit long enough. So you can only listen in the dark for sounds in the distance.

I have visited several water caverns, but only this one hangs high on the summit of massed peaks. Moreover, water collects therein and never flows away. Not a single drop drains to the outside. When I gazed at the cavern earlier, I thought it was a solitary boulder high in the sky. Who would have thought that inside it is a basin holding water?

After exiting the cavern, I followed my earlier trail by the cliff and proceeded north. Next, I entered the rear entrance of a brightly lit cavern and reached the cavern in front of it. Left of the monk's meditation couch is a niche on one side to which one can climb. If you clamber up there, a crevice penetrates through to the west, which is like a window but split into two parts. Behind it, there is another entrance to a cavern facing west. Located on the cliff trail, its entrance is quite spacious. It is just that the twin sides of the window are narrow and cramped where they penetrate through the crevice, providing only a limited view of what is beyond. You cannot simply pass through them and exit the cavern. Earlier, when I entered the cavern in front, I saw the name Thrice Bright

13 "Buddha throne" (Fozuo) probably refers to an image or statue of Buddha sitting cross-legged in the lotus position on a platform of stylized lotus flowers.

14 "Mirage-like scenes" is a loose translation for *haishi shenlou* 海市蜃樓 (lit., "sea-borne towns and clam-monster towers"), which refers to an optical phenomenon—often described as dream-like atmospheric lights and hazes—that were supposedly glimpsed by Chinese mariners. According to Chinese mythology, these mirages were produced by fabulous creatures called "clam monsters," whose breath could produce vaporous "towns" and "towers" that floated above the sea.

Cavern [Sanming Dong] engraved on the cliff wall in the three characters. Looking straight from inside the cavern, you only see the caverns in front and behind. I never thought that by examining to the side, one could behold even more extraordinary sights like this.

After descending the cavern, I followed our former trail for three *li* and reached the tea stand. By chance, His Honor, the Surveillance Commissioner Feng Shijun, arrived to conduct an inspection tour.[15] In the past, inspections were carried out here, but only within the Barrier Ridge and the Pan River areas. But because Feng's official position was renewed by special order, he has transited here through the mountain passes. At the time, I saw his banners and flags passing through mountain passes and moving past mountain depressions. Looking at them from a distance, the deserted mountains added brilliance to the scene. The commissioner's party reached Annan Frontier Guard [Annan Wei], but not without the company of a disorderly group of horseback riders. After a journey of five *li*, I made it to the guard, where I got a drink of water at the Chen family shop. Then went through the east gate and in the west reached the front of the guard. I then turned south and went out the south gate. To the south, I proceeded through ridges and gorges. Next ascended for altogether two *li* on flat land to a crest that crossed from northwest to southeast. The area east of where it crosses and is flat serves as farmland. The terrain to the west suddenly plummets down into a chasm that is deep and descending. A small stream murmurs and mumbles as it flows out of the chasm. The trail follows the stream, which moves westward along the north cliff, descends, and plummets down. This is the so-called Cawing Crow Pass [Wuming Guan]. Cawing Crow Pass is near the Annan Frontier Guard. Locals refer to it as Old Crow Pass [Laoya Guan]. We proceeded west, straight down the mountain for one *li*, to where a tea stand straddles the side of the trail. Flying waterfalls on both sides cast spray onto the trail. As it turns out, when the murmuring and muttering stream that had merely trickled along reaches here, it then races and surges forward. Below the tea stand, where the cliff circles around and the gorge narrows, is terrain inclined and sinking to the extreme.

Next, I turned and twisted down the mountain for one-half *li* to where a mountain spring brims over and saturates the trail. The arched tablet contains an inscription: "Sweet Springwater and Surpassing Vestiges of the Past" (Ganquan shengji). A pavilion was next to it in former times but is now abandoned. Traces of the past and some choice steles remain. The inscription says that during the Jiajing reign, a monk served tea and meals to everyone who came here and that drawing spring water from below the ridge was extremely difficult. It also says that one day,

15 Earlier, the surveillance commissioner's name was identified as Feng Shijin 馮士晉. Here it is given as Feng Shijun 馮士俊.

when the monk was clearing away some earth, he discovered the spring, and these words prove that it was the monk who found the spring. I remember the name Sweetwater mentioned in the old gazetteer. However, the murmuring and muttering stream that trickles and flows along comes from water brimming over the ridge. Perhaps the monk channeled the water and directed it here, which would be a considerable achievement. But to say the origin of this spring is like the legendary tale of a monk's tin staff controlling the movement of dragons, that is not the case here.[16]

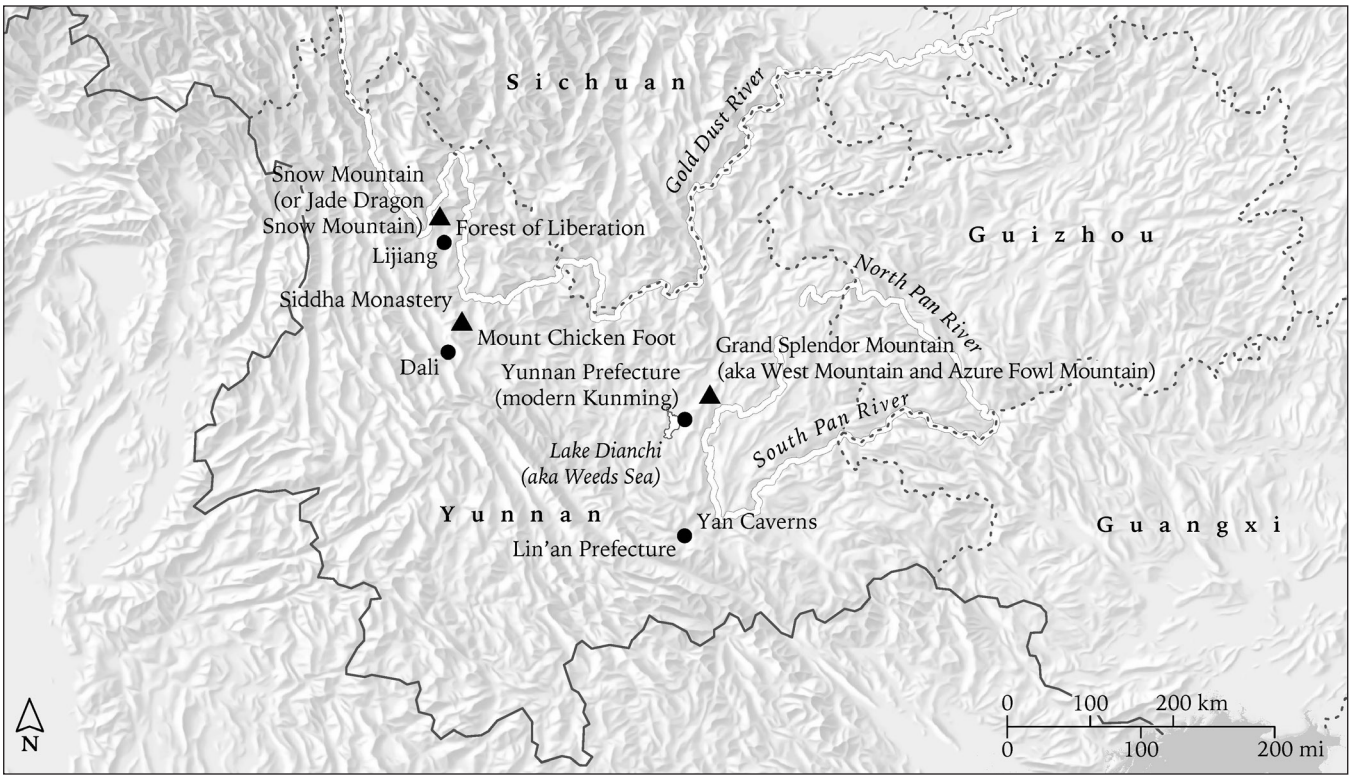
Next, I descended the stone steps southwest for one *li* until I reached the entrance to a gorge. Followed the foot of the western cliff, then turned and headed west. To the north, rocky crags aligned in the sky, boldly protruding and pressing down from above. To the south, the crag drops into a canyon, winding as it descends. Small mounds, across and athwart, have been tilled into fields. Although the fields rise and fall many times, they still gently extend to the midpoint of the mountain. Next proceeded west for one-half *li* to a spring twisting and twining through a crack in the north cliff. Where the trail passes in front of it, a bridge has been built that spans across the spring. The spring drops down on one side of the bridge, and then from below, the bridge pours down into a gorge. I sat on the bridge and looked up to admire the spring. The crack in the cliff is curved and crooked; the spring seemed to tumble out from inside a cloudy mass, sometimes hidden, sometimes visible, which also seemed to transform into something like a waterfall.

Following the cliff, I next headed west, twisting and twining as I ascended on smooth terrain. Twice passed mountain crests that crossed to the south, then gradually turned northwest and proceeded for five *li* to Cawing Crow Post Station [Wuming Pu]. Next, I descended into a gorge in the northwest for over one *li,* where there were two small streams. One approaches from the east side of the gorge, while the other approaches from the north side. Each has a rock bridge spanning across it. The streams merge on the left side of the trail, then flow off to the southeast. Crossed both rock bridges and next ascended the ridge to the southwest. After one *li*, I passed a sentry post as I approached from the top of the ridge. On both sides of the trail are several dozen dwellings. Next, from the top of the ridge, I proceeded west along the northern border of a large mountain to the north. South of there, once again, level land has plummeted down to form a canyon. Fields have formed where the bottom of the canyon twists and crosses, which are quite deep in the mountain. The distant mountains to the south and those along the northern

16 The practically minded Xu Xiake is debunking a Buddhist legend about an eminent monk who claimed that his dharma power was so miraculous that spring water would gush out with one touch of his walking stick to the ground.

border are arranged in a ring and tower like an unfolding screen. Only one corner in the north rises sharply. The single ridge of earth encircling this canyon and extending eastward is part of the great mountain on the northern border. The precise crest connecting to the north is the spot I passed on the ridge, with sentry posts on both sides. Earlier, when I was proceeding west by way of Sea Horse Barrier [Haima Zhang], I saw peaks in the west curling and coiling from the crack on the ridge far off in the distance, but this peak alone has a square-shaped summit. From a distance, it stands out like a standing screen. I asked the caretaker of the horse, "This peak is Jiangxi Slope [Jiangxi Po], is it not?" He replied, "Jiangxi Slope is still some distance south of here." I gazed far off at the entrance to the mountain depression, which was to the north. . . .

—Translated by James M. Hargett



Map 27. Dian (Yunnan), Diaries 1, 5, 6, and 13, 1638–39

Travels in Dian

[SELECTED WRITINGS]

In modern editions of Xu Xiake's travel diaries, entries chronicling his travels and residence in Dian, modern Yunnan, in 1638 and 1639, are divided into thirteen separately numbered sections or subchapters. Around the time when the cataclysmic events during the Ming-Qing transition reached Jiangyin in 1645, the first of the thirteen sections of the Yunnan diary was lost. Fortunately, Xu Xiake's distant relative and family tutor, Ji Mengliang, was able later to supplement some portions of the lost chapter with related materials. Thus, we have some limited information that describes Xu's entry into Yunnan from Guizhou in the autumn of 1638, along with his journeys in the eastern and southern parts of the province. Unfortunately, the original diary entries for the first chapter remained lost. Ji Mengliang's supplementary material—now constituting the first Yunnan chapter in *Xu Xiake youji*—includes four short essays: "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to Grand Splendor Mountain" (You Taihua shan ji), "Account of Flowering and Woody Plants in Dian" (Dianzhong huamu ji), "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to the Yan Caverns" (You Yandong ji), and "Casual Jottings: Two Items" (Suibi erze). The first essay records Xu Xiake's trip to scenic Grand Splendor Mountain in Kunming; the second describes a special flower found in Yunnan: camellias. The third text recounts a sightseeing trip to the Yan Caverns, a well-known karst cave complex in modern Jianshui Xian in Yunnan. The fourth and final text has two sections, with the first introducing the history of the Mu family, a lineage from Yunnan that received titles of nobility from the Ming court and administered local affairs—the second reviewing the rebellions along the southwestern frontier led by the local warlord Pu Mingsheng (d. 1636) and introducing how his wife Madame Wan powerfully ruled the region after his death.

The first section of the Yunnan diary is prefaced with remarks from Ji Mengliang, Cao Chencai, Chen Hong (fl. 1776), and Xu

Source: "Dianyou riji yi" (*YJJZ*, 2:818–19; *YJ*, 2:679–85).

Zhen (fl. 1776–1806), all of whom served as editors of various versions and editions of Xu Xiake's travel accounts.[1] The last-mentioned editor, Xu Zhen, was a descendant of Xu Xiake.

I

[INDIVIDUAL REMARKS AND TEXTS]

[JI MENGLIANG'S REMARKS]

In the seventh month of the *yiyou* year [July and early August 1645], one of my clan members, Ji Yangzhi, stayed at his uncle Xu Yuqing's place to escape the mayhem.[2] Ji once called on me at the family school, where he saw a copy of *The Travel Diaries of Xiake*. When he left, he took the section "Travels in Yunnan" (Dianyou) with him. Less than two days later, Yuqing was murdered by brigands. When they burned his house, the section "Travels in Yunnan" was reduced to ashes. That the collection *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake* would end up fragmented and incomplete was indeed destined by fate! Later, the original manuscript was moreover lost and scattered, but the collection was recovered. Such peril! Such luck! The only complete collection today is found in the home of my schoolmate, Cao Junfu from Yixing. Junfu is also fond of traveling and admires Xiake's lofty character. Upon hearing of Xiake's death, he went to Xu's gravesite to pay his respects and grieve. After Xiake was buried, Cao bowed at the tomb and took his leave. Later, Junfu revisited me, seeking Xiake's surviving writings, which he intended to collate, edit, and have printed. I followed his request and sent him the original manuscripts. One year later, he returned from Zhao and reported that the transcription had already been finished.[3] Now, the collection must certainly be complete. Moreover, this volume accurately marks Xiake's entry into Yunnan, filled with extraordinary adventures and accounts of surpassing sightseeing journeys. If you have this volume when visiting Yunnan,

1 Chen Hong was a native of Jiangyin. During the Qianlong reign (1736–96), he collected two hand-copied versions of *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*, collated them, and then produced a new hand-copied version (now lost). Chen also wrote an important critical review of the similarities and differences in all versions of the diaries extant in the mid-1770s.

2 "Mayhem" (*nan*) refers to the bloody, cataclysmic military actions that took place during the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, including the total destruction of Xu Xiake's hometown, Jiangyin, by Qing troops in 1645.

3 *YJ*, 2:679, identifies Zhao 趙 as a place-name in this line. However, it is impossible to determine its precise location without additional information.

your travels will be much easier.[4] There is also a volume of poems that Xu Zuntang sent to the printer Chen Zhonglin. Zhonglin was killed during the mayhem, so the poems' manuscript was also lost. However, the poems were in a separate volume, not connected to the travel diaries. We can get by without them. But if even one diary is lost, the collection is incomplete. It is urgent to find all of them.

[CAO CHENCAI'S REMARKS]

"Diary of a Sightseeing Trip to Dian" (Dian youji) is missing one volume, which should be urgently sought. As for the person called Cao Junfu, I do not know the names of his son or grandson. After the military chaos, how could his book have survived? Alas! In all directions in heaven and on earth, many imperfections and shortcomings remain. Cannot the same be said for books? The key is to maintain this sort of inquisitive mindset despite such flaws.

[CHEN HONG'S REMARKS]

I found evidence that Gaffer Jie (Jieweng) once purchased the Cao family master copy of the Yunnan diary from someone surnamed Shi of Yixing.[5] But in this volume, one merely sees some brief accounts of sightseeing trips to Grand Splendor Mountain and the Yan Caverns.[6] Diaries entries from the ninth day of the fifth lunar month (20 June 1638) to the sixth day of the eighth month (13 September 1638), altogether eighteen-seven days, remain missing. Considering that the extracts acquired from Cao Junfu already appear in the abridged content of "Investigation of the Pan River," we know that Junfu's transcription was incomplete. His text has flaws and shortcomings; only a few passages are reliable. Because of this, I heave a heavy sigh.

[XU ZHEN'S NOTES]

The "First Section of the Yunnan Diary" (Dianyi) was burned to ashes. Gaffer Jie collected fragments from the diary, restored the chapter, and put it in good order. Indeed, he knew these were not edited and patched together with fake writings. Otherwise, he could have deleted them all

4 That is to say, the first section of the Yunnan diaries.

5 "Gaffer Jie" refers to Xu Xiake's son Li Ji, whose courtesy name was Jieli. He was in his sixties when he "collected fragments from the diary, restored the chapter" (see below), hence the "gaffer" reference.

6 Grand Splendor Mountain is approximately 9 mi/15 km west of Kunming. In the following account, Xu Xiake also refers to the mountain by two of its alternate names: West Mountain [Xishan] and Azure Fowl Mountain [Biji Shan].

in one fell swoop. Then, straightaway, he could have taken several sections from the Grand Splendor Mountain text and made them into an entirely separate and superfluous piece of writing. The "First Section of Yunnan Diary" remains missing, as it was before. So how could Gaffer Jie's efforts form a separate, new chapter? The text here was edited and revised according to Chen Hong's version.

A SIGHTSEEING TRIP TO GRAND SPLENDOR MOUNTAIN

I left the provincial capital then proceeded southwest for two *li*, where I boarded a boat.[7] Flat farmland extends along the two banks of the waterway. The fields end after ten *li*. Along the way, reeds grew thick, covering the lake. As the boat traveled through the lush green foliage, I still could not tell we were on a giant reach of Lake Dianchi [Dianchi Hu]. This is the Weeds Sea [Caohai].[8] The boat channel through the weeds is quite narrow. When I gazed at West Mountain in the distance, like a curved, outstretched arm, it extended out of the east. On its sheer cliff high in the sky is Arhat Monastery. I proceeded west for another fifteen *li* and reached High Point [Gaoyao], where I abandoned the boat and proceeded overland.[9] High Point is an open area on West Mountain. All of the mountains to the south and north circle around and head out to the east. Among them, only the western section is open and spacious. The river there also presses in from the west. Where hundreds of households nestle against the mountains and overlook the river, this is the main road to Yixi.[10] I ascended north to Fu's Garden [Fuyuan] then ascended west for five *li* from Fu's Garden to Azure Fowl Pass [Biji Guan], on the main road to Anning County [Anning Zhou]. One reaches the Shrine to Hanlin Academician Yang [Yang Taishi Ci] after ascending south from High Point.[11] Continuing south from the shrine, you arrive at Flowery Pavilion

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Source: "You Taihua Shan ji" (*YJJZ*, 2:821–24; *YJ*, 2:680–83).

7 That is, Kunming.

8 Lake Dianchi was divided into two parts. The shallow, northern section is known as the Weeds Sea. During the Ming dynasty, it was also called West Lake. The southern section was designated the Watery Sea [Shuihai]. It is also known as the Outer Sea [Waihai] or Kunyang Sea [Kunyang Hai]. This part of the lake is deep and wide.

9 High Point was a river crossing at the foot of Grand Splendor Mountain.

10 Yixi corresponds to modern Dianxi, a large area to the west of Kunming. Together with Yidong (today's Diandong and Diannan), east and south of Kunming, these were the main administrative regions of Yunnan during the Ming dynasty.

11 Yang Shen (1488–1559) was a native of Sichuan and an eminent scholar-official in the mid-Ming period. In the early years of Jiajing reign, he was banished from the imperial court and exiled to Yunnan. Yang lived there for over thirty-five years (1524–59), during which time he traveled extensively in the region and wrote voluminously about the local people and culture.

[Huating] and Grand Splendor and eventually reach Mount Arhat, on the southern edge of Azure Fowl Mountain, where it abruptly becomes a precipitous cliff. Presumably, Azure Fowl Mountain extends from northwest to southeast. Peaks such as Entering the Ear [Jin'er] extend southwest to northeast. The two mountains converge at a spot that recedes on the mountain to the west, thus creating a suitable passage for the main road. Above, a government checkpoint has been put in place. High Point serves as a wharf there.

I proceeded south for one *li* and had a meal at the Hanlin Academician's Shrine. Later, headed south again and passed a village, then ascended southwest into the mountain for altogether three *li*. At the midpoint of the mountain, I came to the Flowery Pavilion Monastery [Huating Si]. The monastery faces east. In back, it nestles against a precipitous peak; in front, it faces the Weeds Sea. Exiting from the south side gate of the monastery, I skirted south of the monastery and ascended to the west. To the south, I passed over a lofty mountain spur and then went into a mountain depression. After altogether two *li*, a ridge rose in the southeast. This is the ridge that juts out to the east, marking the boundary between Flowery Pavilion and Grand Splendor Mountain. I passed over the ridge from the south, cut west, and into where mountain gorges gather. Above is a precipitous peak; below, an extended, deep valley. Grand Splendor stood aloft east of the valley before the walking trail. But I followed the trail to the terminus on the western side of a depression, and only then could I exit the gorge on the eastern side. Inside the depression are two branches of a stream that plummets down into rocky grottoes, which are secluded, steep, dangerous, and oblique. One could not see such scenery if taking a different route. After turning and leaving the gorge, I proceeded east for one *li* to get around to the entrance to a mountain. After proceeding for altogether one *li*, I looked down at a monastery in a gulch. As it turns out, this is the Grand Peace Monastery [Taiping Si]. I proceeded south for another *li* and arrived at Grand Splendor Monastery [Taihua Si]. This monastery also faces east. In front of its main hall, camellias are planted everywhere on both sides of the staircase. The camellias on the south side were especially huge and extraordinary. I entered the monastery through the front corridor of the south portico, which, to the east, faces Lake Dianchi. But what I could see from here was limited to the area of the Weed Sea. But if one wants a view of Lake Dianchi's whipping and whooping waves and a vast and mighty surge of water, south of Arhat Monastery is a better spot. In due course, I exited south through a side gate, descended slightly, and then, following a col, headed west into the mountain. Next, turned east and proceeded for one-half *li* and passed over a ridge to the south. From the highest point in the western peaks, the ridge trails down to the east. Next, I came to the main trail that ascends straight up. This is the trail one takes to climb to the summit. I cut straight down the trail, descending to the southeast.

Next I turned south and came upon rocky peaks, sharp and spikey, swarming to the south. Then, from north of the peaks, I dropped to the east for one *li* toward an earthen chasm. Next proceeded west into a rocky thicket.

After one *li*, I next treaded up to the edge of a cliff, then wound my way around the cliff and proceeded south, where I saw the upper and lower parts of the south cliff. Like beehives and swallows' nests, in countless clusters, they seemed as if they were about to plummet down. These are all Buddhist retreats to the north and south of Arhat Monastery. Through a crack in a rocky crevice, I descended slightly for one *li* and reached the northern retreat. I did not find the principal trail until I came out on Mañjuśrī Crag [Wenshu Yan]. From here, I descended to the south to the main ceremonial hall of the Arhat Monastery, then descended farther south to Heavenward Bridge [Chaotian Qiao]. The bridge is built between steep cliffs.

Everywhere above and below the bridge are deep rocky cliffs. Here, I again saw steep cliffs that had collapsed inward. Crossed the bridge and proceeded south to Divine Official Ceremonial Hall [Lingguan Dian]. The gate of the hall faces north and overlooks the bridge. I descended from the side gate east of the hall, clambered over cliffs, and treaded steep trails. The more I ascended, the more extraordinary the scenery became. The loft enshrines and worships Pure Life-Energy (Chunyang); the ceremonial hall enshrines and worships the Prime Emperor (Yuandi); the belvedere enshrines and worships the Jade Emperor (Yudi); the palace is named Embracing the One [Baoyi].[12] They all face Lake Dianchi in the east. They are recessed and poised among the cliffs. Each time I ascended for several dozens of rods, I would come to an immense, flat terrace among the cliffs. The buildings on the cliffs are invariably held in place by wooden pegs and frames fitted into rocky fissures, so none of the ceremonial halls are gigantic. Yet they are tinged with clouds and adorned with rocks, which play off one another. Only after reaching here does the view become so expansive that one can take in all of the surpassing scenic sights of Lake Dianchi. On the south cliff, a pavilion projects to the front; on the north cliff, a loft extends crosswise. A lofty cypress tree in front of the loft seems to float in the sky and sway in the mountain's lush green hue. When one sits down beside the loft, it looks like you are high up on the mast of a ship and no longer aware that the cliff rocks below buttress the structure. On the sheer cliff south of Embracing the One Palace [Baoyi Gong], posts supporting a wooden

12 Pure Life-Energy (Chunyang) is an alternate name for Lü Dongbin, a prominent Daoist deity. The Prime Emperor (Yuandi or Yuanshi Tianzun) is one of the highest Daoist gods and one of the three primordial emanations of the Dao. The Jade Emperor is the assistant of the Prime Emperor, in charge of the cosmos.

plankway are inserted into holes bored in the rock. The plankway stands suspended among the cliff's trees, while the holes supporting the plankway bore into a crevice. Everywhere along the plankway, it is extremely dangerous and precipitous. After one passes the crevice, a small loft is set against the edge of a rock, equipped with a bed, shrine, and cooking stove. The scenic sights north of the retreat reach their pinnacle here.

I backtracked to Heavenward Bridge and then paid my respects at the main ceremonial hall in the Arhat Monastery. The cliff behind the ceremonial hall is a hundred fathoms high. When you turn and cut south, there is a standing pool of water at the foot of the cliff, which advances through a crack near Heavenward Bridge. This is called Ladle Cold Water Spring [Shaoleng Quan]. To the south, I moved past the spring then immediately cut southeast. Cliffs above the spring are even more tiered in rows, through which a swirling strand of flat ground winds its way. Everywhere below are collapsed slopes and crumbled cliffs that plunge directly down to the bottom of Lake Dianchi. On the strand of flat ground are Buddhist temples and transcendent palaces such as the Thunder God Temple [Leishen Miao], Three Buddhas Ceremonial Hall [Sanfo Dian], Eternal Buddha Ceremonial Hall [Shoufo Dian], Emperor Guan Yu Ceremonial Hall [Guandi Dian], Transcendent Zhang's Shrine [Zhangxian Ci], and Perfected Warrior Palace [Zhenwu Gong], all arranged in a row.[13] Above Perfected Warrior Palace, the cliffs become more distinguished and statelier. Long ago, the Prince of Liang came here to escape the summer heat, so it was also named Beating the Summer Heat Terrace [Bishu Tai].[14] This area marks the farthest extent of South Retreat [Nan'an]. Above the terrace is a small loft in an opening between the rocks. Farther south, the retreat ends while the cliffs continue. Their dome-shaped walls were covered in clouds; layers of cliffs unfolded and then rejoined. Down below the sheer wall to the south is the former site of the Nestled against Orchids Belvedere [Yilan Ge].

I returned to the main ceremonial hall, proceeded east, and exited through the entrance gate to the mountain. After making about eight turns, descended two *li* and arrived at the foot of the mountain, where

13 As the name indicates, Leishen is a Daoist deity in charge of thunder. Three buddhas (*sanfo*) usually refer to the buddhas of the past, the present, and the future, who were often worshipped together. Eternal Buddha (Shoufo) is an alternative name of Amitabha. Guan Yu (160–220) was a famous military general during the Eastern Han dynasty known for loyalty and heroic character. He later became a deity worshipped in folk religions. Zhang the Transcendent is a Daoist deity in charge of fertility and protecting people's progeny. The Perfected Warrior, also named Dark Warrior (Xuanwu) and Great Emperor (Dadi), is the Daoist god of the north and is revered by martial artists.

14 Prince of Liang is Gammala (1263–1302), son of Zhenjin (1243–86), Kublai Khan's grandson. He was enfeoffed in Yunnan and based in Kunming to support the administration of this region during the Yuan dynasty.

there was a village with several scores of households. All the people in the village make their living by fishing. South of the village is Dragon King Hall, the front of which overlooks the open waters of Lake Dianchi. From behind the hall, I followed south along the foot of a cliff. At the end of the village, I came to where the lake's waves met the cliff, making its physical features even more prominent. Above, I had already passed the former site of the Nestled against Orchids Belvedere. The south wall is even more spacious and sheer, extending for five *li*. Traces of yellow stone drape the bottom of the wall. This is known locally by the name Hanging Placard Mountain. Farther south, the cliff twists, and a mountain spur projects outward. Giant boulders stretch into the sky, while the deep lake water seemingly breaks them into cracked pieces of jade. Like standing screens, walls in the south separate then join, but they are not as majestic and jagged as I saw before. Nonetheless, the scenery was unexpectedly fantastic. Once again, a unique scene unfolded before my eyes.

After three *li*, as I descended, I looked down on the shore of Lake Dianchi. Through a crevice of rocks, I could see boats appearing and disappearing. By the south shore stands a thatch-grass cottage. I hurriedly descended a headlong, narrow footpath and came to Golden Thread Spring [Jinxian Quan]. The spring gushes from the belly of West Mountain. Outside the spring are three separate cavern entrances, only as large as an earthenware jug. The area inside the entrances is cavernous and capacious. But giant boulders are resting against the sides everywhere, so I could not go in. Water emerged from the earthenware jug entrances, each separately surging toward the lake. Tiny fish from the lake swim upstream into the cavern. They are known as golden thread fish (*jinxian yu*).[15] Less than four inches in length and plump in shape, they have a wisp of golden thread stretching from head to tail. This fish is a rare delicacy of Lake Dianchi.

There is a large rocky cavern one-half *li* north of the spring. The entrance to the cavern looks down on Lake Dianchi to the east. A cliff had toppled down right below the main trail, so there was nowhere to go. I had to take a circuitous route to its south. Only then was I able to wind and writhe my way back to the entrances to the cavern where earlier, while gazing through a crevice in the rock, I had seen small boats appearing and vanishing.

Inside the cavern entrances, the quality of the rock is delicate and porous. Fractured crevices and thick-set pillars are all located in bright places in the cavern. After proceeding south for several rods, the cavern immediately turned dark. I found a torch and moved farther south, where the cavern became higher and more spacious. Only after I proceeded for altogether one *li* did the way divide, one path leading toward the east and

15 The reference here may be to the golden-line barbel, a species of cyprinid fish unique to Lake Dianchi and its tributaries in Yunnan.

the other west. I ascended east for three rods to where the path ended. Then, to the west, passed into the cavern's hidden recesses, which seemed to have no end. Afraid the torch might go out, I left the cave. I then ascended a mountain and backtracked to Embracing the One Palace.

I asked about the way to Black Dragon Pond [Heilong Chi] on the summit and learned that I must proceed north toward the central part of Grand Splendor Mountain then turn south. But the pond is on the ultimate summit of Golden Thread Spring, south of Grand Splendor. Because the cliffs in this area are tiered and the rocks are pinnacled, one can only reach there by clambering and pulling oneself up. I immediately ascended perilous cliffs and passed through successive fissures. Although the walls are steep, numerous cracks are along the edges of the walls. I leaped about the overhanging rocks, moving as freely as I wished. There was a flower with snowy, jade-white petals and gem-like stalks, bearing a thousand features and ten thousand variations I had never seen before. The only familiar flower was the tree peony (*mudan*). Its branches and leaves all hang down in disarray, spreading out and filling gaps between the rocks, making the scenery matchless! As it turns out, after the peonies go to seed and hang down, they are green on the outside and red on the inside. This is also something I have never seen in my hometown.

Because these flowers grow in high and remote places, the local people do not know how to collect and appreciate them. They merely remark that these are flowering peonies (*shaoyao*) and have never further identified them. After clambering and scrambling for over one *li*, I reached the mountain's summit. Thick as fish scales, rocky calyxes, like green lotus flowers emerging from the water, lay scattered all over the ground. I treaded south, along the side edge of the peak, where a single peak to the southwest stood highest. After proceeding along the peak's summit for four *li*, I approached its highest point, the ultimate summit of Azure Fowl Mountain. South of the summit, rocky calyxes cluster densely. In the collapsed portion of a mountain to the south, another mountain rears up, slightly lower than the summit. That mountain is at the estuary far to the south of Lake Dianchi. From the ultimate summit, I descended two *li* to the east, where I was already overlooking the area above Golden Thread Spring. I observed Black Dragon Pond between the towering cliffs and descended.

ACCOUNT OF FLOWERING AND WOODY PLANTS IN DIAN

Yunnan's flowers and woody plants are all extraordinary, but the camellias are the most amazing. The camellia blossom is larger than a bowl, and its petals cluster in the shape of a ball. The best varieties are the divided hearts

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Source : "Dianzhong huamu ji" (*YJJZ*, 2:827; *YJ*, 2: 1151).

(*fenxin*), curly sides (*juanbian*), and soft stems (*ruanzhi*).[16] In the provincial capital, those most valued come from the Grand Splendor Monastery outside the city.[17] Where Zhang Shifu resides in front of the Clustered Red Loft [Duohong Lou], a camellia tree stands boldly upright over three rods in height. Another tree twists and hangs down, nearly covering half an acre. The one hanging down has dense foliage and a thick trunk and reaches down to cover the ground. This is the so-called soft stems variety. There is also the "divided heart big reds" (*fenxin dahong*), which is the crown variety in Dian City [Diancheng].[18]

Rhododendron flowers come in five colors. The flowers are as big as those of the camellia. Along the entire route of my journey west, I heard there were none more exceptional than those in the territory of Dali and Yongchang.

The "flowery red" shape is the same as those in my hometown. But when I ate some at home, I suspected the color did not live up to its name. But after reaching here, I finally understood that the fruit of the "flowery red" has a voluptuous red color that is not inferior to its flowers.

ACCOUNT OF A SIGHTSEEING TRIP TO THE YAN CAVERNS

There are three Yan Caverns altogether in Lin'an Prefecture. The most famous one was opened for sightseeing by a district jailor (*dianshi*) surnamed Yan. As soon as I got to Yunnan, I never forgot about Julu at every meal.[19] Next, I proceeded south from the central part of the province and passed Tonghai County, then did some sightseeing at Elegant Mountain [Xiushan] south of the county. After ascending the mountain for one-half *li*, you come to Boundless Firmament Palace [Haoqiong Gong]. In front of the palace are two giant camellia trees. The structure is called

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Source: "You Yandong ji" (*YJJZ*, 2: 829–32; *YJ*, 683–85).

16 The Chinese term *fenxin*, or "divided heart," refers to the reproductive part of the flower, mainly the stigma and stamens. It grows loosely rather than in dense clusters.

17 In 1381, the Ming army entered Yunnan and changed the name of the Zhongqing Circuit [Zhongqing Lu] to Yunnan Prefecture. The following year, a city wall was constructed around the prefectural seat, now Kunming.

18 Dian City is another name for Kunming.

19 Here we encounter an allusion to a passage in the *Grand Scribe's Records* (*Shiji* 史記) of Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145–ca. 86 BCE): "Emperor Wen of the Han remarked: 'When I took up residence in Dai Commandery, my Chief Food Steward (Shang Shijian) Gao Qu would often mention the great competence of Li Qi 李齊, a general of the state of Zhao, and his experiences in battle at Julu. Julu thus always comes to mind whenever I have a meal.'" *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 102.2757. Julu is the name of an ancient commandery in Hebei. Xu Xiake's comment can be paraphrased something like this: "Ever since I arrived in Yunnan, at every meal, I thought about visiting the Yan Caverns."

Red Clouds Ceremonial Hall [Hongyun Dian]. The palace was built in the early years of the Wanli reign, just sixty years ago. Camellias are the premier flowering trees in the southland.

Next, I proceeded south and reached Lin'an Prefecture. The south side of the prefecture wall is near the Lu River [Lujiang]. This river approaches from Extraordinary Dragon Lake [Yilong Hu] in Shiping County to the west, and to the northeast, it pushes through and comes out at the Yan Caverns. The multitude of waterways throughout Lin'an all use these caverns as their outlet.

I hired a guide at the Meet and Welcome Monastery [Jiedai Si] east of the city wall. To take the main trail to Yan Caverns, one should proceed south, following the city wall, and then cross the Lu River Bridge [Lujiang Qiao]. But the guide took us northeast along a small trail in front of the monastery on the opposite side of the river, so we did not cross the Lu River. Along the way, we observed a spot to the east where three streams converge. We followed the edge of an embankment from north of the monastery and proceeded east. The red lotus covering a pond was so thick east of the embankment that we could not see the water. After proceeding fifteen *li* northeast, we crossed Master Sai's Bridge [Saigong Qiao]. A river approaches from the northwest and flows into the Lu River to the southeast. After another five *li*, I ascended a mountain, on which is Golden Fowl Outpost [Jinji Shao]. The Lu River merges with several other waterways south of the outpost and then flows into a gorge, where the river water rages in torrents. The entrance to the cavern is still more than one *li* to the east. When you gaze at the cavern, the rocky cliffs above are split in two, like the sides of a gate facing each other. The cavern bores into the mountain right below them. There are layered ridges on both sides, so the cavern is not visible. I asked some local people to guide me into the cavern. They all said, "The water is rising now, and the current is swift. This is not a good time for sightseeing. Two months ago, one could go in without a bridge when the water dried up. But today, even if there was a bridge, one still could not enter. Not to mention that there is no bridge at all!"

Bridges in the cavern are not fixed in one place. Whenever there is deep water, without fail, a plank walkway is erected on which one can cross. In the past, the usual practice was that whenever the surveillance commissioner would come to the cavern to do some sightseeing, a bridge would be erected costing about a hundred taels of silver and another hundred taels for additional expenses. The local people suffered dearly because of this practice. Thus, when the tribal leader Pu Mingsheng led a revolt, this was used to devise a story about the area east of the cavern falling into the territory of Ami County.[20] Since rebels were known to

20 Ami County, administrated by Lin'an Prefecture during the Ming, corresponds to modern Kaiyuan, Yunnan. The rebel Pu Mingsheng's association

frequent that place, senior officials' sightseeing visits to the east ended. I was determined to reach the cavern's entrance, so the local people said, "You must cross the river to the southern bank, then follow the gorge as you proceed. This is the so-called main trail to Lu River Bridge." Only then did I feel regret about being misled by the guide. I then abandoned plans to visit the cavern with water and searched instead for the two dry caves, Southern Brightness [Nanming] and Myriad Images [Wanxiang].

From Golden Fowl Outpost, I descended to the east, ascended a mountain, and climbed to the summit. To the east, I looked down into a gorge, where a river orbited the gorge and then flowed into the cavern from the east. The cavern entrance is at the bottom of the eastern gorge.[21] The place where I climbed directly faces the twin cliffs above the cavern. But just as before, the entranceway was still winding and shielded, so I could only see where the sheer cliff faces west, where turbulent river water slants to the east, where water pounds into the cavern, and where the force of its flow is swallowed by the cavern, all now thoroughly exposed! I proceeded northeast for three *li*, passed over the spine of a ridge, and then descended the mountain. After two *li*, far to the east, a rocky cliff turns and towers as if ringing halfway around a city wall. The cavern entrance below faces north.

Something seemed unusual when I gazed at it, so I descended straight down. After one *li*, I reached the interior of the gorge. After another one and a half *li*, I reached the area below the eastern wall. I ascended slightly to the south, where the cavern entrance is vast in breadth. Above, "Cloud Crossing Cavern" (Yunjin Dong) is written in prominent characters. Presumably, this is the central entrance to the water cavern. When sightseeing at Yan Caverns, one should regard Cloud Crossing as an extraordinary site. I entered the cavern by way of a bridge erected at the front entrance then left through the rear exit.[22] I proceeded in the dark, close to the water for about four or five *li*. Suddenly, I came to an open passageway where the scenery extends into the distance. Above it, a sheer rock wall bends and rings around. Thus, I naturally took it to be extraordinary and outstanding.

I could not enter through the front cavern but found a way in among the layered scarps and sheer, stacked mountains. Moreover, I only knew about the Myriad Images and South Brightness caves. I knew nothing about Cloud Crossing, which was truly beyond my imagination. Next, I looked down at Cloud Crossing Cavern and descended. At the base of the cavern, a river approaches from the cavern's interior to the southwest.

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with Ami County is described in the first of Xu Xiake's *Casual Jottings*, translated below.

21 This references the entrance of Cloud Crossing Cavern, mentioned below.

22 "Bridge" refers to elevated plank walkways erected when the cavern is filled with water.

I wound my way through the cavern entrance and proceeded east. Descended to a spot next to the riverbank. I figured the river measured three rods across while the cavern was five or six rods high. The diameter of the area between the east and west entrances, where daylight shoots into the cavern, is about twenty rods.

But water pouring into and out from the cavern pressed hard against the outer wall. Thus, without a bridge, one cannot proceed. Where water comes out of an opening to the west, it gradually became dark, and I could not see into the distance. Water comes into the cavern from an opening to the east, which is slightly more spacious. I gazed at it from across the river. Inside it, I saw stalactites hanging in rows of teat-like columns, profuse and plentiful, gentle and graceful. Next, I ascended and left the cavern, where I looked up at the three sides of the east, south, and north, surrounded by walls that cannot be ascended. Following the same route west as before, I came out on our former trail and ascended a mountain to the east. After proceeding one *li* to the east and passing over a ridge, I had already scaled above where the east wall circles and rings around.

I proceeded one *li* from a col on the ridge toward the east. Layers of peaks stand north and south of there, where rocky cliffs sometimes protrude. Myriad Images Cave is on top of the north cliff. But the guide mistakenly claimed it was at the foot of the south cliff. I descended straight down for one *li* and reached the south cliff. The entire cavern faces east and is four rods in height. Water surges out from inside it. Two cliffs rise from the corners of the cavern, forming a gorge in front. When water emerges from the cavern, it smashes into the gorge with an exceptionally bold and forceful force. Presumably, this is the rear exit of the water cavern.

I proceeded another two *li* and reached Rat Village [Laoshu Cun], where I stopped someone on the road to ask for directions. He told me Myriad Images Cave is on a ridge to the northwest, precisely where I descended the mountain earlier. The cavern is quite deep. I descended, step by step, to where the water cavern links at the base. I still wanted to go to the cavern's entrance, but it was already late in the day, and it was still ten *li* to the guesthouse where I was staying. I have known about and admired the three caverns here for dozens of years. And now, having hastened countless *li* to get here, when I finally reached Yunnan, rebellious Yi people prevented me from visiting the caverns, great waves cut them off, and the sun urged me to leave.[23] The guide also misled me. Among all the sightseeing trips undertaken in my life, this was the most disastrous.

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23 In other words, the revolt led by Pu Mingsheng made travel to the cavern more difficult, as did the presence of high water inside it. Moreover, by the time Xu finally reached the cavern, it was too late in the day to do any sightseeing.

> Mu Ying (1345–92) was a well-known general, politician, and the adopted son of Zhu Yuanzhang, founder of the Ming dynasty.[24] After consolidating power, Zhu gave titles of nobility to military officers who had served under him. Mu Ying was granted the title marquis of the State of Qian (Qianguo Gong). This title took Mu Ying to Yunnan, where his family remained until the end of the Ming. His primary male descendants inherited the title marquis of the State of Qian. Three of those descendants are the subject of Xu Xiake's first "Casual Jotting."

After Mu Changzuo (1554–1624), marquis of the State of Qian, passed away, his grandson Mu Qiyuan (?–1628) inherited his title of nobility. Students in the city attended the memorial ceremony honoring his grandfather.[25] At the time, the central gate of the Mu Mansion just happened to be open, so one of the students raised his head to look inside. The officer at the gate then beat him with a cane. Many students were infuriated at this, and so they beat the officer as well, but they in turn were then harmed by a gang of fierce servants from the mansion household. The students brought the case details to the investigating censor (*zhizhi*), the Honorable Mr. Jin, whose name is Jian. He was about to arrest the servants, but the servants goaded Mu Qiyuan into submitting a memorial to higher authorities that falsely accused the students of being at fault. Although the case was sent down to the investigating censor, who took charge, Jin still arrested the servants as previously planned. Qiyuan became even more infuriated. He called up troops, carried out a memorial ceremony to honor their colors, and then had the troops surround the Honorable Mr. Jin's government office. He then had the troops fire rounds from a huge canon to intimidate the Honorable Mr. Jin, but Jin did not yield. Mu Qiyuan then rounded up several dozen students, flogged them severely, and locked their heads in a cangue. Jin forbade the students from having further run-ins with Mu, then sent up a memorial informing his superiors about what had happened. They then ordered Zhang Heming (1551–1635), military commander (*du*) of Qian, to examine the case and submit a memorial explaining its facts.

At the time, Wei Zhongxian was in charge of government affairs and issued an edict directing that the matter be mediated. But Qiyuan became even more daft and deranged and could not be controlled. His mother, Madame Song (Song Furen), feared the family would lose its hereditary rank and emoluments. She wept for three days then killed her

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Source: "Suibi erze" (*YJJZ*, 2: 832–37; *YJ*, 1131–34).

24 On Mu Ying, see *DMB*, 2:1079–83.

25 The "city" mentioned in this line probably refers to Kunming.

son Qiyuan with poison. So with Qiyuan's demise, the matter was resolved. Madame Song sent up a memorial requesting that since her grandson was still young and thus not ready to hold rank and receive emoluments, he now only be appointed nominally. After he grows up, he could then be bestowed with his rightful title. As chance would have it, the Chongzhen Emperor had just assumed the throne.[26] Feeling sorry for the boy, he commanded that the boy be conferred his rightful titles of nobility. The boy is now Mu Tianbo (1627–61), Marquis of Qian. He was only a year old when he inherited his title.

> The second "casual jotting" concerns Pu Mingsheng, a notorious bandit from Yunnan.

Pu Mingsheng was a local bandit from Ami County. His grandfather was Pu Lu. Pu Lu and his son staged a rebellion in Sanxiang and Weimo Counties. In the forty-second year of the Wanli reign (1614), Xiao Yiyu, the prefect of Guangxi Commandery, called up the army of Aboriginal Chief Lu [Lu Tusi] in Ning County to join forces with him to suppress the rebels. They pummeled the rebels in no time at all. Pu Lu and his son were stabbed and killed, and only then was Weimo County recovered and Sanxiang County established. At that time, Mingsheng escaped to Ami. Lu Hong from Ning County decided to get rid of him. Liang Guimeng, prefect of Lin'an Prefecture, and a gentleman from the commandery named Wang Zhongcheng brought comfort to the local people. Fearing the strength of Ning County, they kept around the enemies Pu had made to counterbalance his power and secretly protect Mingsheng. From the beginning, Mingsheng kept his camp in Ami. After more than ten years, his troops became very strong and destroyed all the armies led by the various aboriginal offices. He then stationed his troops inside the county walls and seized total power from the county prefect.

In the fourth year of the Chongzhen reign (1631), the grand coordinator (*fuchen*), Wang Kang, was worried about the situation in Ami County. To disguise himself as a commoner, he wore a felt robe and a straw hat and then secretly went to the county with two horse soldiers. After gaining details about the rebellion, he submitted a memorial asking the court to annihilate the rebels. The emperor ordered troops from four provinces, including Sichuan and Guizhou, to crush the rebels jointly. Aboriginal Chief Long [Long Tusi] of Shiping first led his troops to advance to Yangtian, but the rebels crushed them. On the eighth day of the third month (9 April 1631), Wang Zhongcheng, who was personally stationed in Lin'an, and Zhou Shichang (d. 1632), the provincial administrative commissioner (*buzheng shi*), leading thirteen assistant regional

26 Chongzhen was the last emperor of the Ming dynasty. He ruled from 1627 to 1644.

commanders (*canjiang*) and seventeen-thousand soldiers, approached a place called the Shen Family Gravesite [Shenjia Fen]. The brigand Pu Mingsheng ordered Li Yaxuan to offer resistance so the government army could not advance. The stalemate lasted for two months. On the second day of the fifth month [1 June], Li Yaxuan secretly left his camp and went to see Mingsheng to congratulate him on his birthday. Li was drunk when he later returned to his camp. A servant boy leaked this information to Aboriginal Chief Long. Long and Aboriginal Chief Wang (Wang Tusi) raided Li Yaxuan's camp that night. Li was captured and beheaded. Long and Wang's forces advanced toward the city of Bozhou and then besieged it for four months, but the city could not be conquered. At the time, Liao Daheng (*jinshi* 1622) from Bozhou was a gentleman in the Department of Operations (*zhifang lang*) in the Ministry of War (Bingbu).[27] The brigand Pu Mingsheng depended on him as an ally and secretly received his assistance.

An envoy was secretly sent to the capital and attempted to alienate Wang Kang from the emperor. The envoy claimed that Pu did not rebel and that it was Grand Coordinator Wang who intentionally provoked riots and deliberately took the credit, thereby bringing total catastrophe down upon the common people of the region. Thus, Chief Officer Liao Daheng submitted a memorial, stating that Pu Mingsheng's territory was less than one hundred *li* in area, and his army had no more than one thousand soldiers. If a rebellion can be suppressed with a single order, what need is there to mobilize such a huge military force? Meanwhile, Wang Xigun (1598–1647), the palace elucidator (*gongyu*), and Yang Shengwu (1596–1641), the Hanlin Bachelor (*shuchang*), respectively submitted memorials suggesting that the rebels be crushed. These memorials were sent to the Bureau of Military Affairs (Shubu) for discussion. Earlier on, Grand Coordinator Wang submitted a memorial stating that Pu Mingsheng had been harboring evil intentions for a long time. In the past, a senior officer was nursing an ulcer who did not have it removed, which resulted in his ulcer spreading widely and becoming difficult to remove.[28]

Therefore, His Majesty criticized the previous grand coordinator and the surveillance commissioner. The previous grand coordinator, Min Hongxue (*jinshi* 1598), was already promoted to minister (*zhongzai*) in the Ministry of Personnel and feared that he would not be able to defend

27 The Ming court established the Department of Operations in the Ministry of War. The department's main responsibility was preparing for war and related matters, including map making, constructing garrisons, and training soldiers.

28 Xu Xiake seems to be drawing an analogy between the dangers posed by Pu Mingsheng's rebellious actions and the officer who did not have his ulcer removed. That is to say, when a threat is not eliminated, it grows and thus becomes more difficult to remove.

himself, so he immediately passed on rumors to the minister of war to incite trouble. The minister of war had already heard earlier from the Gentleman in the Department of Operations, Liao Daheng, that the area claimed by Pu Mingsheng was smaller than a single town and that the grand coordinator and the surveillance commissioner had conspired with each other, making the situation worse. Also, the minister of war said that a prolonged suppression campaign against Pu Mingsheng would be time-consuming and a waste of grain and the court's provisions. After he submitted a memorial on the matter, the court issued a stern arrest warrant for Wang Kang and Commissioner [Anchen] Zhao Shilong.

On the fifteenth day of the tenth month (8 November 1631), the grand coordinator and the surveillance commissioner were arrested in Lin'an. On the eighteenth day of the twelfth month (7 February 1632), Zhou Shichang was killed by a round from a blunderbuss. Thirteen regional commanders died during the battle. On the first day of the first month in the fifth year of the Chongzhen reign (20 February 1632), the entire bandit force was poised to attack Lin'an. They pretended that if the commandery paid them a ransom of ten thousand taels of silver, the bandits would stave off the attack. But after they collected the ransom, they attacked with even greater force. By the sixteenth day (6 March 1632), the city was on the verge of falling. But the bandits then suddenly retreated because He Tianqu carried out a surprise attack on their hideout. Tianqu, a native of Jiangxi, was one of Mingsheng's thirteen chiefs. He noticed that Mingsheng had some unusual intentions and felt uneasy about it. His wife, née Chen, encouraged him to switch allegiance to the court. He thus begged to surrender. Those in authority then arranged for him to stay inside the walls of Sanxiang County. With the help of He's troops, the siege was lifted. Later, Pu and his troops attacked Sanxiang several times, but the battle ended in a stalemate each time. With no hope of victory, Pu then withdrew his troops. His priority then was to seek revenge against the aboriginal chief of Ning County for the deaths of his father and grandfather. Just as Pu Mingsheng was about to attack Ningzhou, the aboriginal chief of Ningzhou, Lu Hong, was transferred to a new position in the Central Plains.[29] His mother gathered Lu's many chiefs together, rewarding them with five taels of silver and two lengths of black cloth from the capital. Each was then expected to defend strategic locations in Ning County so the bandits could not enter the city. After returning to Ningzhou, Lu Hong thought his mother gave too much money to his followers and intended to get the money back. All the various tribal chiefs then disassociated themselves from him. The bandits sent spies into the city, then seized the opportunity to attack. Lu

29 "Central Plains" refers to the provinces in central China, in contrast to frontier regions like Yunnan.

Hong escaped to Solitude Mountain [Gushan] at Comforting Transcendents Lake [Fuxian Hu]. Over a year later, Hong took back his homeland. Disheartened and depressed, he died after that.

The bandits subsequently conquered Shiping County. Aboriginal Chief Sha [Sha Tusi] and thirteen senior officers surrendered and switched loyalty. Pu Mingsheng was determined to subdue Lubai City south of Weimo County and immediately commenced a grand-scale attack. Lubai City [Lubai Cheng], on the border of Jiaozhi, is a seven-day journey from southwestern Guangxi and a nine-day journey southeast of Lin'an.[30] The city is fortified by natural boundaries and is occupied by the White Yi (Baiyi) people.[31] Mingsheng often remarked, "If I advance, then the plan is to take the Central Plains. If I must retreat, then I shall protect Lubai. Either way, there will be nothing more to worry about." Pu besieged the city for three years but could not conquer it.

Pu Mingsheng suddenly died from some unknown illness in the ninth month of the seventh year [late October to mid-November 1634]. His son Fuyuan was only ten years old. His wife, née Wan, was skilled at political tricks and intrigue, and her power and influence were widely known. The government officers in charge pacified and appeased the rebels, so the disaster continues today. As for the people east of Lin'an in the south of Guangxi, none knew anything about Ming government officials. Today, people in Lin'an do not dare to utter a single word of criticism about what happened. When passing travelers ask about it, the people invariably cover their mouths, warning each other to remain silent. Official documents in the district and county are moved to lower levels of the government, but they are nothing more than empty forms. When I passed An Village [Anzhuang], I observed that every person treated so harshly by the aboriginal chief in Shuixi shares the same hatred and is eager to exact revenge, even at the expense of their own lives. But everyone in this region expressed no complaints or resentment. I never expected that the power and influence of just one woman could be as great as this!

The land under bandit control in the south includes that of Aboriginal Chief Sha as far as Mengzi County; in the north includes Mile County as far as Guangxi Prefecture; in the east includes Weimo County and as far as Sanxiang County; and in the west as far as Lin'an Prefecture. These are all areas that have been ravaged and oppressed by Madame Wan. Only He Tianqu from Sanxiang in the east and Long Zaitian from Longpeng in the west resisted and fought against her. All the other areas submitted to her out of fear when they heard about her actions. Local

30 Jiaozhi is an old Chinese name for what is now northern Vietnam.

31 The White Yi is a branch of the Yi people. They reside in today's Sichuan and Yunnan provinces and were once the servant class of the aristocratic branch of the Yi people known as the Black Yi (Heiyi).

officials coaxed and cajoled by her, and the local gentry restrained by her numbered eight or nine out of ten. Wang Kang was arrested on the charge of inciting discord. Later, the person in charge of the case accepted the circumstances and smoothed things over. Is there anyone in the court who could help with deportment like this? Now, Wang Kang's crime lies in his mistaken employment of Zhou Shichang. With no knowledge of military strategy, his campaign stretched for several months, and over time, this led to unforeseen events with his troops. At the time, we should have only blamed Wang Kang for being slow in deploying troops. He should have been kept in his position to see how effective he would be. One should never change commanders when confronting the enemy! Or worse yet, suddenly arrest him in the presence of his troops! Alas! The court deploys troops everywhere, and similar military situations occur everywhere. Thus, the events described here are not restricted to the Yi people in the southwest.

—Translated by Naixi Feng

V

[WINTER/SPRING 1639]

In some ways, Xu Xiake's time on Mount Chicken Foot represents the culmination of his life's work. When he left eastern China in October 1636, he had been waiting many years to embark on his greatest journey to the southwest. He set off in the company of two servants and his monk traveling companion Tranquil Hearing, who passed away en route in 1637 and whose remains were carried to Mount Chicken Foot by Xu Xiake. Xu would end up spending several months on the mountain, eventually compiling a gazetteer at the request of the local Aboriginal Chief Mu Zeng.[1]

Rather than accounts of passing through towns and villages, visiting caves, or climbing mountains that constitute much of his visit to southwest China, the records of Xu Xiake's stay on Mount Chicken Foot afford a different perspective. A lengthy stay allowed time for multiple visits to monasteries and scenic spots and the possibility of building relationships with the monks he encountered.

During his time on the mountain, as elsewhere in the Yunnan diaries, Xu Xiake often employed the vocabulary of *fengshui* or geomancy, which was highly fashionable in late Ming dynasty China. The central feature of this practice, whether it be a tomb, a monastery, or even a town, was the site (*xue*), a specific location where certain energy flows and influences are believed to converge. In an ideal *fengshui* setting, the site was flanked to the front by the Dragon Sands (Longsha) and Tiger Sands (Husha), situated respectively on the left and right side, while directly in front was the flat terrain. The passage below starts with Xu leaving the west gate of the unnamed walled town where he had spent the previous night.

[Wuyin *year*,] *twentieth day* [*of the twelfth month*,] [23 January 1639]: When I set off after breakfast, it was still very cold, but the sky was clearing up. From the west gate, I headed north along the western hills, arriving at a village after five *li*. North of the village, a river comes down from a gorge

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Source: "Dianyou riji wu" (*YJJZ*, 2:1006–22; *YJ*, 2:819–33).

1 First used by the Mongols, the aboriginal chief (*tusi*) system gave limited power to aboriginal leaders in outlying parts of the empire. The system was expanded considerably during the Ming dynasty.

to the west, so I followed the river and entered the gorge. I went gradually uphill for more than one *li*. After slightly more than one *li*, a village called Four Levels Slope [Siping Po] appeared on the west side of a ravine. I turned north for five *li*, crossed a bridge over a stream, and climbed north for three *li* to Nine Cauldrons Mountain Monastery [Jiuding Shan Si]. Another two *li* brought me to the summit, where I had a meal. I descended to the northeast in the afternoon, arriving at North Stream Bridge [Beixi Qiao] after three *li*, where I joined the main trail. I followed the river upstream northwest along the western foot of Mount King of Liang [Liangwang Shan]. After five *li*, I arrived at King of Liang Village [Liangwang Cun], from where I went north for eight *li* to Pine Nut Outpost [Songzi Shao].

I proceeded for one-half *li* by a stream that flowed west as the path climbed northward; after one-half *li*, I crossed a ridge before descending north-east for five *li*, meeting a stream flowing from the west, which joined up with a smaller one coming from the northern foothills of Mount Mu [Mushan]. I crossed at the point where the two streams meet; this marks the boundary between Yunnan County and Binchuan Subprefecture. Two and one-half more *li* eastward took me to Northerly Pass [Zibei Guan]. By now, it was dusk. I went east for two and one-half more *li*, crossing a stream north of the bridge, then east for one-half *li*. I turned north for one and one-half *li*, arriving at Mountain Knoll Inn [Shangang Pu], where I spent the night.

Twenty-first day [24 January]: At first light, I proceeded ten *li* through a large col to the west, where lies Binju. I then went north for another five *li* by a small stream flowing through the fields and north for another three *li* by a ravine that emerges from the western gorge. Following this hollow north for two *li* led to Fire Head Base [Huotou Ji]. I then went northwest, crossing two streams, north for another five *li* to Zongfu Village [Zongfu Zhuang], then north again for another three *li* to Binchuan Subprefecture, which lies on the eastern slope and nestles up against a big mountain to the east. It overlooks a stream to the west that flows about one *li* from the town. Big Net City [Daluo Cheng] is on the shore of the river's east bank. Sending my luggage ahead, I wrote up my diary by the river's west bank. Looking north of the subprefecture, one knoll from the east projects to the west, while another to the north runs from west to east, the two intertwining in the middle of the col; this is the gateway to the lower reaches of the river flowing out of Binchuan. Here, the stream begins to wind around the ridge, revealing the overall topography.

I proceeded north for another three and one-half *li*, crossing a ridge that sticks out to the east, from where I could see a village by the northern foothill called Red Hat Village [Hongmao Cun]. The stream winds around from the southeast toward a knoll that protrudes to the east, then turns west and passes in front of the village before opening out to the

front and extending northward into a large col. I then headed north along the western hills. After five *li*, I gradually turned to the west, and after that, the path splits into two; the path to the northeast, which follows the stream right through the large col, becomes the road that leads from Ox Well Market [Niujing Jie] to the Mekong Frontier Guard (Langcang Wei). I went northwest along a small col until I crossed a summit on the road from Jiangguo Village [Jiangguo Cun] to Mount Chicken Foot. Initially, when I looked north from the Mountain Knoll Inn, I thought the eastern boundary of the big mountain's northern summit was Mount Chicken Foot and that the rivers in the Sichuan Basin turned west and flowed into the Mekong River. It was only on arriving here that I realized that the river at Binchuan heads north and flows into the Gold Dust River, which means that what is known as the Mekong Frontier Guard has no connection with the Mekong River.

The big mountains off to the east that turn from the north face of Mount King of Liang are hemmed east of Binchuan before stretching out to the Gold Dust River; this is not the main mountain ridge. After going west for two *li* along the small col, and crossing the ridge off to the west, Mount Chicken Foot came into view off to the west, as high as the range off to the east. However, the mountains off to the east are like a horizontal barrier crossing horizontally, rising, and falling halfway up the slope like Thunder Response Mountain [Leiying Shan].[2]

Looking southward from the top of the ridge, Five Virtues Mountain [Wude Shan] spans the southern horizon. Squeezed against the west side of Nine Cauldrons Mountain [Jiuding Shan], it was familiar to me from my previous visit to the Lake Erhai Frontier Guard [Erhai Wei]. There were pockets of snow at the summit.

From here, the ridge continues to cross east to west. To the east, it soars up Mount Mu, also known as Mount King of Liang. There is a low depression at a spot between the two mountains that crosses the mountain ridge at Pine Nut Outpost before heading north. I followed the ridge westward for three *li* before heading slightly downhill to the north; a stream flowed from west to east before emptying into the big river at Binchuan. Over this point, a bridge with a pavilion has been built. This is Jiangguo Village, on the north bank of the river, which flows as fast as the river at Fire Head Base. By now, it was already afternoon, and there were still thirty-five *li* to the eastern caves. As there was nowhere on the way where I could stay, I stopped for the night.

Twenty-second day [25 January]: After dawn, I had breakfast at Jiangguo Village then headed west along the north bank of the stream. With its source on a mountain on the east side of Lake Erhai, the stream flows

2 Xu Xiake visited Thunder Response Mountain earlier in his Yunnan travels. See *YJJZ*, 2:987; *YJ*, 1.803.



Figure 10. Unidentified artist, after Huang Xiangjian (1609–73), from *A Journey in Search of the Artist's Parents* (Wanli xunqin tu), 1656. Album leaf, ink on paper. 15.5 × 11.37 in. / 39.4 × 28.9 cm (detail). Metropolitan Museum of Art, Sackler Fund 1970.2.1a–q, https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/42560.

This scene featuring Mount Chicken Foot is drawn from an album that is virtually an illustrated travel diary. It chronicles a journey undertaken not for pleasure or exploration but to retrieve the artist's parents from China's western frontier.

down from the southern foot of Mount Chicken Foot and the north side of Five Virtues Mountain. A four *li* ascent took me to a summit from where I headed north, the cold wind piercing my bones. Fortunately, the sun started coming out, though I worried it would take a long time. Circling the ridge, I went north for one and one-half *li*: north of the summit, a col opening out from east to west became visible.

From the middle of the col, a river starting at Ox Well Market and flowing west to east empties into the big river at Binchuan. The col, called Ox Well Col [Niujing Wu], has various high and low villages and a stream emanating from the gorges of Mount Chicken Foot, the lower reaches of what is known as Box Hole River [Hezi Kong Jiang]. From here, I gradually descended to the west, arriving after one and one-half *li* in the middle of the col. After passing one *li* westward through a village in the middle of the col, there is a memorial arch with a sign that reads "Well Overflowing with Golden Oxen" [Jinniu Yijing], indicating a scenic spot. A local pointed out a well among the caves on the northern side of the ridge, saying this marked where an ox had emerged from the well. I proceeded west for another two *li*, once again having to cross a knoll and scale a gorge as all the mountains protrude to the south. On arriving at a stream, I stopped. The stream circled to the east: the first col to open out is Refining Cave [Liandong], and the next is Ox Well. The ridge opening toward the middle becomes the dividing point between the two mountain gorges.

I circled the gorge and went up as it stretched out continuously to the northwest, now up, now down, for five *li*, then climbed a summit again, arriving at a gorge. I gradually descended for one and one-half *li*. There is a stele on the slope with an inscription: "Abundant Fields Flowing Fragrance" (Guangdian liufang). After another one and one-half *li*, I passed to the rear of another village, the farthest southeast of the Refining Cave villages. Went north for two more *li*, where there is a village straddling the road, with a government guesthouse at the northeast corner overlooking the river. This is Refining Cave's middle village. I went north of the village for two *li* and climbed another peak. After two more *li*, I crossed a summit and headed north. Only after reading a stele with the inscription "Refining Technique Dragon Pool" (Lianfa longtan) did I realize there were hibernating dragons and refined Daoist masters here. That is how Refining Cave acquired its name.

Two *li* to the north lies a village suspended high up, with a pond in the middle. To the west of the pond is a pavilion over a well four or five rods deep and equally wide; known as the Dragon Pool; the pond neither overflows nor does it dry up. In front of it is a reservoir where locals come to wash and draw water from the outer valleys of Mount Chicken Foot. This is the entry point to the mountain, so anyone climbing it comes here. The village's streets were full of people banging drums to

welcome visitors. I paid no attention and proceeded on. I went northwest over a summit. After five *li,* a small hut on the summit serves as a tea stand. I climbed northwest for one and one-half *li*, where the road divides into two: the road going directly west from the summit is the road to the east side of the lake, and the one following the gorge to the north is the road to Mount Chicken Foot.

From here, I followed the road north. After going gradually downhill for three *li*, I looked in my basket for something to eat, but there was nothing there; presumably, the owner of the place I had stayed in last night had helped himself. After descending northward for another *li*, I came to a stream emanating from the gorge to the southwest, which circles for a huge distance; it is a spur stretching out of the mountain's southern gorge. A bridge with a pavilion straddles the two cliffs.

I crossed to the west side of the gorge and climbed for two *li*, passing a summit. One *li* later, there is a sentry post guarding the summit. After going north for another *li*, the middle of the gulch starts to open toward the northeast, facing Plucking Flowers Monastery [Nianhua Si]. Famished, I went into the monastery to ask the monks for food. I then went north of the monastery, turning in a westerly direction. After three *li*, I crossed a knoll called Seeing the Buddha Terrace [Jianfo Tai]. From here, I descended one *li* to the northwest, crossing a gorge that stretches out to the north until I could see a valley to the west of the ridge that descends to the north. The northern part of this valley begins close to the foothills of Mount Chicken Foot. In fact, the mountain juts out from the northwest toward the east, the valley acting as a boundary. At this point, the valley turns toward the gorge to the northeast, and the path coils around the southeast ridge to where the mountain valleys converge.

I proceeded west for one *li*. I saw a memorial archway on the left side of the road. Once I had crossed over to the south side of the mountain, I was sure the memorial archway must mean there was something remarkable here, so I asked a cowherd for information. He said, "Above the memorial archway is White Rock Cliff [Baishi Ya]. You must cross the southeast slope for one *li* to get there."

I sent the luggage to Mount Chicken Foot and retraced my steps to look for the cliff alone. Taking a path that twists upward to the southeast, after one *li* there is indeed a precipitous cliff in the middle of a pine forest. In front of a cave on the hillside is a Buddhist monastery with a north-facing entrance, which was locked so I could not go in.

I could pick my way to the cave through the thickets blocking the path and wander around the cave pavilion. I also climbed the slope to the west to explore the other caves and could see that I could pass through the trees from the front, so I followed the path down, eventually reaching the main path after one *li*. I went northwest for two *li* down to

the middle of the valley and crossed a stream at Wash Heart Bridge [Xixin Qiao]. Of the various streams on the south side of Mount Chicken Foot, the western one comes from Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket [Taohua Qing], and the southern one is from the Box Hole River. After passing through here, all the streams flow out of the gorge to the east, passing Refining Cave and Ox Well to the southeast before joining the river at Binchuan. At the foot of Mount Chicken Foot, north of the stream, is a flourishing village called Sand Base [Shazhi] nestled against the mountain to the north. This is the southern slope of Mount Chicken Foot. I could feel the mountain getting closer, all the paths heading upward.

From the rear of the village, I went west along this slope, turning north into a valley to follow the middle ridge of the mountain upward. After one *li*, there was a large memorial arch across the road with a name sign that reads "Chance Meeting on Numinous Mountain" [Lingshan Yihui] that Surveillance Commissioner Song had erected. Babbling brooks and magnificent lofty pines surrounded me. Heading north around a knoll, I climbed for two *li*, arriving at a fork in the path. The northeast branch follows the gorge, while the northwest branch crosses a summit before arriving at a waterfall two *li* farther above the western gorge; the path following the gorge above the eastern valley leads to the Dragon Pool. Great Awakening Monastery [Dajue Si] lies north of the waterfall, while Siddha Monastery [Xitan Si] is north of the pool.[3] At first, I was quite unaware of all this. I went in that direction when I saw the memorial archway in the eastern gorge proclaiming the Dragon Pool. As I wound my way up several dozen stone steps, I could feel the profundity of the remote setting but could not see any Dragon Pool. After crossing a plank bridge, I could see a monastery north of a col. On asking, I was told it was Siddha Monastery and that Dragon Pool was now a deep gulch to the front of the monastery. I had already sent my luggage to the Great Awakening Monastery, so I went west for two *li*, passing West India Monastery [Xi Tianzhu Si] and Dragon Flower Monastery [Longhua Si] before arriving at the Great Awakening Monastery, where I spent the night.

Twenty-third day [26 January]: After breakfast in the Great Awakening Monastery, I went east to Siddha Monastery, the easternmost of the mountain's monasteries. It nestles against Nine Layered Cliff [Jiuchong Ya], while Black Dragon Pool [Heilong Tan], in front of it, is encircled by two winding mountain ridges. Some gentlemen I met in the provincial

3 During the Wanli reign, the Chan Buddhist Master No-Mind, on the instructions of the empress, transported a copy of the *Buddhist Canon* to the Siddha Monastery from the Avataṃsaka Monastery [Huayan Si]. See *YJJZ*, 2:1356; *YJ*, 2:1145.

capital said it is called Tranquil Pool [Xitan], while others said it is Snow Pool [Xuetan]. Only now did I realize that they were all wrong. Two Buddhist masters, Profound Discernment and Peacefully Humane, invited me to eat in the abbot's chamber and to move in straight away.[4] However, I had arranged to meet Universal Cycle (Bianzhou), a monk from the Great Awakening Monastery, who had a bad foot, so I was happy to wait for him. Heading back to the Great Awakening Monastery, I climbed west for one *li*, then went into the Calm Illumination Monastery [Jiguang Si], where the abbot produced some snacks. Of all the monasteries around here, only Seven Buddhas Ceremonial Hall [Qifo Dian] has a special Chan meditation room and an abbot's chamber; it is as beautiful as the Great Awakening Monastery and Siddha Monastery. About one-half *li* to the west are the peaceful and orderly retreats of Water Moon [Shuiyue] and Accumulated Merit [Jixing], both of which had been bequeathed by their Buddhist Master Needful Universality (Yongzhou).

Twenty-fourth day [27 January]: During a cordial meeting with Universal Cycle, Profound Discernment and Peacefully Humane turned up and enthusiastically invited me to move my accommodation. So I went with them to Siddha Monastery, hanging Tranquil Hearing's remains from an ancient plum tree before entering.[5] When I asked about Transcendent Bank (Xiantuo) and Pure White (Chunbai), it turned out that they were higher up the mountain, supervising the building of a foundation for the stupa. I had previously met the two monks at the home of Tang Dalai and had already had a serious discussion about burying Tranquil Hearing's remains.[6]

When I arrived at Mount Chicken Foot, the two peaks of the mountains looked like open doors. Although there was a water source on the eastern side, the lack of a stupa at the heart of the mountain was a great deficiency for me. Although Transcendent Bank directed the construction work, I still did not know where it was being built. Profound Discernment pointed out the location is among the twisting mountain ridges, which accorded perfectly with my idea. After eating, I went

4 We first hear of the two monks mentioned here in Xu Xiake's diary of his visit to Zhejiang when Chen Jiru gave him a letter for them. See "Travels in Zhe" (diary entry for 8 March), this volume.

5 It was considered inappropriate to bring human remains, even those of a monk, into a monastery because of concerns about maintaining the purity and sanctity of the temple environment.

6 Tang Dalai, mentioned in the introduction, was a painter and poet whose ancestors arrived in Yunnan around the start of the Ming dynasty. The first time he appears in the diaries was when Xu was in the provincial capital of Yunnan. Following the collapse of the Ming, Tang became a Buddhist monk, taking the name Universal Lotus (Puhe), and resided on Mount Chicken Foot.

southeast for two *li*, climbed up to where the stupa was being built, and met Transcendent Bank.

Twenty-fifth day [28 January]: I proceeded north from Siddha Monastery, passing the retreats of No-Breath (Wuxi) and No-Self (Wuwo). One *li* farther on, after passing Mahāyāna Retreat [Dasheng An], I came to two streams, one to the east of Illusory Dwelling's (Huanzhu) retreat, the other one east of Orchid Bank's (Lantuo) retreat. Both streams flow south, converging into one stream west of Siddha Monastery. I scrambled up a slope between the two streams; after two *li*, Illusory Dwelling's retreat, now known as Blessed Peace Monastery [Funing Si], is off to the east, while Orchid Bank Monastery [Lantuo Si] is on the western knoll. The stream east of Illusory Dwelling's retreat flows down from the hollow east of Buddhist Master Uncultivated Ignorance's (Yeyu) meditation chamber, forming a boundary with Nine Layered Cliff. The stream to the west of Illusory Dwelling's retreat, which converges with the stream opposite Openly Singular's (Genyi) Orchid Bank Monastery, flows down from Desolate Land's [Shenye] meditation chamber that lies above. Originating in the Chanting Buddha's Name Hall [Nianfo Tang], it becomes the stream in the gorge at Lion Grove.

Following the eastern knoll next to Illusory Dwelling's retreat, I went north for one *li*, arriving at Deva Incense's (Tianxiang) meditation chamber. There was no one in. When I asked where Desolate Land stayed, a young monk pointed toward a secluded spot in the twisting cliffs on the west side of the steep precipice. So I climbed up the precipice to the rear, passing through trees and up stone steps amid lush green vegetation. There are no lofty pines here, just a profusion of different types of trees. The paths twisting through the trees were in themselves a site to behold. After going through many more twists and turns for about one *li*, I climbed a knoll to the east, arriving at Uncultivated Ignorance's cottage—the path along the precipice to the west and through a hollow that leads to Desolate Land's place. I then crossed a cliff off to the west for one-half *li* to a meditation chamber perched high in the hollow built by the head of the Siddha Monastery storehouse. The door was barred, so I could not go in. From the front of the retreat, I went down in a westerly direction to Orchid Bank Monastery, then climbed up the hill to the rear, arriving at Desolate Land's meditation chamber after another one-half *li*. I knew Desolate Land had gone to Mount Śākyamuni [Mouni Shan], but his father, Mr. Shen, was in the retreat. Upon my arrival, this door was also locked, and I found out that Mr. Shen had gone elsewhere to worship, and there was no one to ask about his whereabouts.

I went upward from the left side of the retreat, arriving at another meditation chamber. The abbot had also gone out, but one of his disciples

was there. On enquiring, I discovered Orchid Sect (Lanzong) was his Master. I asked him, "Where is Mr. Shen?"

"In his room."

"Why is the cottage locked?"

"He's gone out, he can't be far away."

. . . Following the hollow to the left, I passed by Beaded Curtain [Zhulian] and Misty Blue Wall [Cuibi], climbing up to a terrace and going into a room in which Shadowed Emptiness (Yingkong) stayed, though he was not there. I then turned east to the room's left, arriving after one *li* at Uncultivated Ignorance's meditation chamber, known as the Great Meditation Chamber [Dajing Shi]. A three-roomed building stretched across in front, the lower section against the sheer cliff face. Sitting by the bright, wide windows was peaceful and relaxing, like floating in the clouds. The senior monks were all present. Uncultivated Ignorance came out to greet us. When I enquired, I met Orchid Sect, Shadowed Emptiness, and Wise Heart's (Huixin) meditating companions from Arhat Wall [Luohan Bi]. On this occasion, Uncultivated Ignorance was providing for all the meditating monks and convinced me to stay on so I could have something to eat. After we had eaten, on seeing my case of books, the monks took them out so they could have a look. Out of all of them, it was Orchid Sect who was so enraptured that he did not want to let me go: he felt he had traveled through the clouds to my hometown and relished being able to submerge his heart in culture.

I headed off westward through the trees toward Arhat Wall, passing below Chanting Buddha's Name Hall, which was hidden by trees so I could not see it, before eventually crossing level ground toward the west. After one and one-half *li*, there was a retreat built on a large stone slab, so I went in to ask the way, which then goes southwest of the retreat for one-half *li*, crossing over a protruding mountain pass that is known as Gazing at the Terrace Ridge [Wangtai Ling]. This mountain branch falls away to the south to the spot where the Great Awakening Monastery was built. The mountain turns in on itself west of Chanting Buddha's Name Hall, circling below to form a gorge against which nestle the Sandalwood Grove [Zhantan Lin] meditation chambers.

West of the gorge is another mountain spur, stretching down from the front of the summit. This is Sandalwood Ridge [Zhantan Ling], which forms a boundary with Arhat Wall. The ridge that descends from this range forms the central ridge of the mountain. Here, the Calm Illumination Monastery and the Foremost Transmission Monastery [Shouchuan Si] nestle. I proceeded past Rest in the Shade Veranda [Xiyin Xuan], turning east before stopping at Great Master's Belvedere [Dashi Ge].[7] From

7 "Great Master" (Dashi) in this monastery's name is an epithet for the Buddha.

Gazing at the Terrace Ridge, I traveled westward on flat terrain, going two and one-half more *li* before crossing the central ridge. A rocky precipice gradually emerges west of the ridge, circling to the rear. I turned north and went upward for one-half *li* arriving at Azure Cloud Monastery [Biyun Si]. The monastery, built by disciples of a monk from Beijing, was full of incense, as many people had come to pay their respects to the Buddhist Master. He was staying in Perfected Warrior Belvedere [Zhenwu Ge], located in a hollow in the cliff to the monastery's rear.

Taking a path behind the monastery, I went upward for one-half *li*, where I entered a pavilion full of male and female worshippers, but I could not see the master. Seeing a peaceful terrace east of the pavilion, I had to look on my own. An old master was washing his feet. In my heart, I knew he must be the Buddhist Master, so I greeted him and waited. When he had finished washing his feet, he leaped up, grabbed my arms, and said, "Things that accord in tone vibrate together. Things that have affinity in their inmost natures seek one another." He went on to explain his words in full.[8] He had not put on the socks but held them in his hands, pointing at his chest; he said, "I've been so preoccupied with my thoughts that I have not washed the dirt from my socks for twenty years."

He held out the socks to show me. On hearing our voices, the crowd of male and female pilgrims rushed forth and crowded around, bowing their heads in ceaseless worship. The terrace was too small to accommodate everybody, so they took turns in groups. Without growing tired, he spoke to each of them about how to study the Buddha and cultivate oneself, saying something different on each occasion. I was the first to leave because of the long way ahead. I could see a manageable path to the rear of the cliff. So once again, I scrambled up to get to it. Turning east, I arrived at the upper part of a cliff, where there is a retreat, large enough to sit in, that is reachable by a steep set of stairs.

I went back down to Azure Cloud Retreat [Biyun An]. By chance, Wise Heart was there. He asked me to stay the night because the road back to Siddha Monastery was long. The person in charge of the retreat was embarrassed because they had no bed covers, and it was cold, so I was in a hurry to go back down. I went south for two *li*, passing White Cloud Monastery as dusk descended. I then followed the middle ridge of the mountain north of the monastery, where the path gradually became flatter and wider. After two *li*, I passed by the Foremost Transmission Monastery, though I could not make much out in the dark. I then went southeast for more than a *li* before arriving at the Calm Illumination Monastery. After another *li*, I reached the Great Awakening Monastery,

8 The monk here quotes lines from the First Trigram (Qian) in the *Changes Canon* (Yijing).

then went east another *li*, arriving at West India Monastery, where I left the main path, walking through pine trees.

The darkness now made it impossible to make anything out. After another two *li*, I passed in front of Siddha Monastery and went downhill along the side of Dragon Pool. When I looked back and saw shadowy lights, I turned round to look for the monastery. When I arrived, the Ten Directions Hall [Shifang Tang] was already closed, and no one would open up. I had to knock on the door to get inside so I could spend the night there.

Twenty-sixth day [29 January]: I woke at dawn and had breakfast. Profound Discernment said, "Today is an auspicious day for fixing the site of the new mound; we can go together to have a look. We have been fortunate enough to find a spot suitable for the remains of Buddhist Master Tranquil Hearing to be placed in the mound." I was delighted. With Profound Discernment leading the way, we went two *li* east of Dragon Pool, crossing the inner branch of the Dragon Sands. The site was off to one side, one-half *li* north of the mound. The base of the pagoda lies on the spot where the mountain ridge divides before sloping downward. Originally, there were three mounds, all containing students of Fundamental Nonexistence (Benwu). The one farthest south houses the remains of Transcendent Bank and Pure White's master, whose hometown was Songming. Transcendent Bank and Pure White, cousins, are nephews of their master. Donning the robes and shaving their heads, they followed him to become his disciples. When the Buddhist Master passed on before Fundamental Nonexistence, he selected this auspicious spot and wrote a memorial for him. I asked Universal Cycle if we could choose a site off to the south for Tranquil Hearing's grave. He said I could choose a spot myself from a large plot. The location of Fundamental Nonexistence's burial mound, north of the ridge, had also been carefully chosen. I thought the spot near Transcendent Bank's Buddhist master would be suitable, so I selected this site. Tranquil Hearing was buried today.

Twenty-seventh day [30 January]: [A portion of the original text is missing here] I could see the path ahead gradually petering out. However, because there were traces of a path off to one side, I could scramble over the rocks and ascend to the north. Climbing the rocks like a monkey, I was repeatedly suspended above a precipitous stone staircase. After one and one-half *li*, cliffs protrude on both sides of the path, the sheer rock faces propping up the skies. I pulled myself up over the rocks. Looking up from below, it was like a sign had been placed in the void. Approaching it from above, there is a line of interconnected mountain ridges, like an exquisite terrace suspended amid the mountains, pairs of palaces setting each other off. Running crosswise to the rear is the central mountain ridge.

I pushed my way up through dense thickets of grass to a big path that runs east to west across the mountain ridge. In fact, from Chicken Mesa Pass [Jiping Guan] on the mountain's eastern side, the path climbs westerly, eventually arriving at a path to the ultimate summit. In the past, the route to the summit had been widened enough for a donkey to pass to allow bricks to be transported to the summit so that a wall could be built. I turned back to follow this path east for one-half *li*, climbing up the tiered cliffs. However, while it is level above, it is indented below so that I could not see anything when I leaned over, unlike the way you can see all around from Nodding Head Peak [Diantou Feng] because it sticks out.

The two sides of the mountain ridge are covered in ancient trees; the path goes through the middle; there is one open patch from where it is possible to see the rear of the mountain. To the northeast, another mountain rises, circling south like a winnowing basket. Known as Mount Moni [Moni Shan], it was formed from the coming together of the other spurs of this mountain. The spur stretching to the northwest, known as the Rear Talon [Houzhi], rises from the south to form the spur leading to the summit. Looking upward from the southern gorge, the summit is like an unfurled banner standing up to the west, while the nine layers of the mountain ridge at Arhat Wall are like an unfurled banner standing up to the east. Looking from the north side of the mountain ridge, the summit is like an unfurled banner standing up to the south, while the rear talon is like an unfurled banner standing up to the north. This is the overall layout of the mountain.

When it came to crossing over the ridge at Peach Blossom Thicket, which is also in a gorge southwest of the summit, the south side rises from the peak of Fragrant Wood Mesa [Xiangmu Ping] before extending out to the east to form Box Ridge [Hezi Ling], while Arhat Cliff [Luohan Ya] and Nodding Head Peak are on opposite sides to the north and south, forming distinct two sections of the mountain. Lying outside the three feet of the southwest peak of Mount Chicken Foot, it is a mountain on the opposite side, rather than Mount Chicken Foot itself. In fact, the main spine of the southern section, which heads south from Fragrant Wood Mesa toward Black Dragon Dike [Wulong Ba], Arhat Wall, and Nodding Head Peak, is a spur that emerges from the eastern section of the mountain, and not the central core of the mountain. The rear of the mountain is part of Luochuan, while all the land heading north to Nanya is part of Dengchuan Subprefecture. Therefore, this mountain ridge serves as a boundary with Binchuan. In fact, the summit of Mount Chicken Foot belongs to Dengchuan Subprefecture, while Cao Stream Monastery [Caoxi Si] and Huashou Gate [Huashou Men] are attached to Binchuan.[9]

9 As the meaning of the name Huashou 華首 in relation to this landform is uncertain, we do not translate it.

Mount Moni, which lies to the northeast, comes under the jurisdiction of Beisheng and the Mekong Frontier Guard, serving with Mount Chicken Mesa [Jiping Shan] as the boundary for the eastern slope of Mount Chicken Foot. Gazing off due north along the mountain ridge, Snow Mountain [Xueshan] rises alone, floating in and out of vision above the horizon. Snow Mountain is within the territory of Lijiang, which is separated from Heqing Prefecture. To the east side of Snow Mountain, the Gold Dust River flows south. It was just over one rod wide, so I could not make it out.

I went west along the mountain ridge on a path that rises and falls twice; after five *li*, a path that stretches up from the south goes to Sandalwood Ridge, east of Arhat Wall. The road heading northwest that converges with the ridge following the north side of Rear Talon goes to Heqing, while the road heading down to the northeast converges with the ridge going to Luochuan. The path going west along the ridge leads up to the summit. I went upward again on a circuitous path to the north, arriving just below the summit after more than two *li*. There were traces of gleaming white snow on the mountain's north face; it was unclear when it had fallen. I went uphill to the south for another one-half *li*, passing through the southern entrance of the summit. Outside the entrance, a path drops down through a gulch along Macaque Stairs [Husun Ti], coming out at Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall [Tongfo Dian]. The path leads out of the northern entrance and climbs the mountain's rear ridge before heading down to the southwest from Bind the Body Gorge [Shushen Xia], coming out at Worshipping the Buddha Terrace [Lifo Tai]. It comes from Huashou Gate and joins the path to the Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall. Macaque Stairs is off to the southeast, heading upward along the ridge. Bind the Body Gorge is to the northwest, following the course of the water channel. The two ways to the summit are so dangerous that there is no way of getting there by crossing the ridge.

On entering the gate, I found myself in Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall [Jiaye Dian], built on the site of the former Earth Master Temple [Tuzhu Miao]. Originally, the Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall had been located halfway up the mountain. In 1637, Regional Inspector [Xun'an] Zhang said Mahākāśyapa should be worshipped on the summit and donated funds for the construction of a new monastery, and the Earth Buddhist Master Monastery was moved to the left side of the hall. Heaven Everlasting Belvedere [Tianchang Ge], to the front of the monastery, was built in the seventh year of the Tianqi reign (1627) by Inspector Zhu from Haiyan County, while Wind View Terrace [Guanfeng Tai], which lies to the rear, was built in the first year of the Tianqi reign (1621) by Regional Inspector Pan from Guangdong. However, it is now known as Bounteous Treasures Loft [Duobao Lou]. Behind lies Perfect Rain Pavilion [Shanyu Ting], also built by Regional Inspector Zhang, whose portrait

can be found inside it. Later, Regional Inspector Ni from Xichuan changed its name to West Foot Traveler's Lodge [Xijiao Qulu]. The meaning behind this name is a huge mockery.[10]

There are halls and pavilions on all four sides, surrounded by a wall on which towers facing all four directions have been built to serve as entrances. The south-facing tower is called Cloud View [Yunguan], alluding to the remarkable phenomenon of sunglow clouds over Yunnan County in the past. The eastern tower, called Sun View [Riguan], refers to the sunrise at Mount Tai;[11] the northern tower, called Snow View [Xueguan], honors Snow Mountain in Lijiang Prefecture, while the eastern tower, called Sea View [Haiguan], refers to Mount Cang [Cangshan] and Lake Erhai. The Honorable Mr. Zhang conceived this huge project on the ultimate summits of countless peaks. Mu supported his desire to move the Bronze Ceremonial Hall [Tongdian] from Mount Zhonghe [Zhonghe Shan].[12]

The ceremonial hall was moved here presumably because Mount Zhonghe lies east of the provincial capital and because bronze is associated with the direction of the west and can thus overcome wood.[13] Rumors were spread to try to stop this move. With Mount Chicken Foot being part of the Lijiang range and the surname of the ruler of Lijiang being Mu [his family name, Mu, 沐, sounds the same as the Chinese character for "wood"], stories circulated about his fear of being overcome by metal, to the extent that he had considered sending troops to Mount Chicken Foot to get rid of the monk who had proposed this idea. When I heard about this in Guizhou, I thought it was preposterous. Lijiang lies to the north, and Mount Chicken Foot to the south. I had only heard of the Mount Chicken Foot range extending outward from Lijiang, not the other way around. Surnames and place names should not be muddled up. What is all this talk about overcoming?

When I arrived here, I could see the bits of the Bronze Ceremonial Hall piled up in the Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall because a suitable location had yet to be designated. It was not that there was an obstruction; they

10 Xu Xiake is saying here that the name West Foot Traveler's Lodge is embarrassingly mundane in contrast to the more poetic Bounteous Treasures Loft and Perfect Rain Pavilion.

11 The reference here is to Mount Tai in Shandong.

12 Mu Tianbo, originally from Dingyuan in Anhui province, was appointed Guizhou's Duke of State (Guogong) during the reign of the Chongzhen emperor, 1627–45.

13 The Five Phases (or Five Elements; Wuxing) represent the fundamental substances of everything in the universe and natural phenomena. They are fire (*huo*), water (*shui*), wood (*mu*), metal (*jin*), and earth (*tu*). Each element has its own character and can generate or destroy one another. Of relevance to this passage from Xu Xiake's travel diaries is the idea of "mutual conquest" (*xiangke*), according to which metal (including bronze) can conquer or overpower wood.

were waiting for Mu to choose a suitable spot. However, within the confines of the wall at the summit, after the Everlasting Pavilion was built, it was placed under the direction of a monk from Henan, while a monk from Shaanxi headed up the newly built Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall. Since he came from Inspector Zhang's hometown, Mu also entrusted him with the Bronze Ceremonial Hall. Unfortunately, since the two monks have different temperaments, there is inevitably a lack of harmony between them, which is inauspicious for the monastery.

When I first arrived at the mountain, I heard talk of two monks from Henan and Shaanxi. Arriving at the summit just as the sun set, I met the Shaanxi monk's uncle at Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall, so I moved my luggage there. His nephew Mingkong was still at Came Hither from the West Monastery [Xilai Si] at Arhat Wall. I entered Heaven Everlasting Belvedere from the side of the hall: the Shaanxi monk had blocked up the main entrance of Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall with artifacts from the Bronze Buddha Hall, so I could not come and go that way. The Henan monk, who was staying below the Bounteous Treasures Loft, offered to provide food for me that evening. I was truly angry with his plans and cursed him silently. When I returned to Earth Master Monastery, it was very cold. The Shaanxi monk lit a fire and offered me some fruit, telling me how his nephew Mingkong had collected alms for Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall. He said, "He is currently at Came Hither from the West Monastery; we could meet him." I agreed.

Twenty-eighth day [31 January]: It was very cold when I got up at dawn. I hurriedly put on some clothes and went to the south tower to see the sunrise, but it had risen already and was shining brightly. After breakfast, I began copying the stele inscriptions in the Everlasting Pavilion and Perfect Rain Pavilion.

Because my fingers had gone numb, I did not finish the two longest inscriptions by Deputy Censor in Chief [Xianfu] Zhang, so I returned to Mahākāśyapa Hall to have a meal. When I left by the north gate, the ridge outside was full of people selling noodles in soy sauce. Everywhere west of the ridge are pared cliffs extending downward. Could this be the Bind the Body Gorge I had heard about before? I ascended north along the ridge for one *li* then turned west and went downhill, passing a dilapidated pavilion, before heading south down Bind the Body Gorge. Split boulders are on both sides of the path, with a bank in the middle, creating a depression. A path goes downhill from the middle: on both sides, rocky cliffs press in, going down very steeply, twisting through the gorge with no space at the side, hence Bind the Body. After going down for one-half *li*, I came to a small plain, with Crouching Tiger Retreat [Fuhu An] nestling against it. In front of the south-facing shrine were people selling the herbs that grow at the summit.

Following Bind the Body Cliff, I turned southeast on the path to Cao Stream Monastery and Huashou Gate. Going around the shrine, I turned west to climb up the steep cliff to Worshipping the Buddha Terrace and Crown Prince Visits Arcane Pass [Taizi Guo Xuanguan].

Worshipping the Buddha Terrace was my first stop. There is a pavilion east of the terrace, but it is in disrepair. Worshipping the Buddha Terrace rises amid a profusion of rocks in front of it, appearing to hang in midair on a steep cliff above a deep gulch. Looking northward toward the precipitous slopes, it seems to hang upside down above the deep gullies. This was the most northerly spot at the summit; below lies Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket, but I could not look down because of the protruding cliff. In the gulch off to the southeast is Releasing Light Monastery [Fangguang Si], while in the col on the opposite side lies Fragrant Wood Mesa.

Worshipping Buddha Terrace is located at the northwestern corner of the summit. With the inverted images high in the sky, I felt as if I were on a boat floating through the deep gullies. This is one of the most famous spots on the mountain, but the pavilion is in such disrepair that I could not help feeling sad. North of the terrace, the cliff drops precipitously, and the stone-stepped path comes to an end. Looking down from the western side of the cliff, rocky petals open outward like a blooming flower stem. Ahead, there is no path, just a plank walkway crossing the end of the cliff, like a flying dragon joining wings to traverse the two sides of the endless mountain ranges. I stepped on the opened-up stone flowers, like entering a peony calyx, hollow inside, and transparent outside, one minute coming together, the next separating. Just below Worshipping the Buddha Terrace, I entered a deep cave. It had been formed from the internal rocks, which are joined at the top, and the external rocks, which are split at the bottom with crossways that divide the cave. I leaned over to get in, passed through the gap to make my way out, and climbed above the southern terrace. Continuing to head west, I skirted past Crouching Tiger Retreat, following the bank alongside the cliff and twisting past the summit. When I raised my head to look at the lofty cliffs, I was dazzled and felt like I was about to fall. Who knew it was where I had just been walking, shaking the dust from my clothes?

After going southeast for more than one *li* along the cliff face, I came to a loft up against the cliff at Cao Stream Monastery. With a pond to the side of the monastery, below the lofty cliffs, from which the water flows down into the ravine, this was the source of all the water courses, like the entrance to all the Buddhist sects. Going downhill, the path divides into two: the main path, which is level, heads southeast along the cliff, while the lesser path heads west down a steep slope. I could see Releasing Light Monastery on the southwestern side of the ravine, so I decided the small path was the one to take. I followed it west for more than one *li*, then turned north to cross a pass, circling right below Worshipping the Buddha Terrace. The path off to the northwest goes

to Peach Blossom Thicket. By the time I had arrived at a point beneath the southeastern gulch, it was no longer possible to continue, so I rejoined the old path.

After proceeding along the cliff for two *li*, I came out onto the main path, passing the Virtuous River of the Eight Merits [Bagong Deshui]. The path along the cliff had become increasingly narrow, embedded in the side of the cliff like a piece of string. Looking up, although I could not see the summit, I sensed the mountain's majestic height. Looking down, although I could not see to the bottom, I could feel the deep remoteness. It was as if a vast painting of a deep green cliff had been suspended, and although I was somewhere in this painting, I had no means of working out precisely where I was.

As I went east for one *li*, the cliff soared upward, high and vaulted like the eaves of a house. Enclosing the threshold-like entrance below, the cliff seemed to incorporate two steeply rising closed gates. The cliff's teeth-like rocks had all fallen; what was left behind is now known as Huashou Gate. The gates are about twenty rods high. I do not know how high the above vault stretches, but it must be the cliff below the Sea View Gate [Guanhai Men] at the summit of the mountain. At the foot of the gates, a pavilion lies next to the cliff, with matching small brick pagodas at either side; this is what the sutra refers to as the place where Mahākāśyapa received his robe and entered a state of meditation, waiting for six hundred thousand years to pass on the robe to Maitreya [Mile].[14] A Buddhist hymn written by Deputy Censor in Chief Wang Shixing: Was it a case of knitting the brows [a poor imitation]? Or tattooing the face [in punishment]?[15] At Bind the Body Gorge, the inscription reads, "Most Extraordinary Rock Formation" (Shizhuang daqi); at the Mahākāśyapa Hall, it reads, "Even More Extraordinary Rock Formation" (Shizhuang youqi); and at the mouth of Shielded Command Gorge [Doushuai Xia], the inscription reads, "Original Extraordinary Rock Formation" (Shizhuang shiqi). Four locations in all, each with one change of character. What have the mountain spirits done to deserve this?

14 According to a popular tale from early Buddhist literature, when Mahākāśyapa knew his time in the world was about to end, he entered the mountain to await the coming of Maitreya, the future Buddha, so he could pass on to him the robe that he had received from Shakyamuni.

15 Wang Shixing was a noted late Ming government official, explorer, and travel writer who, unlike Xu Xiake, held several official positions. *DMB*, 2:1405–6. In the original text, Xu Xiake refers to him as "Wang of the Ten Sacred Mountains" (Wang Shiyue) because of the vast extent of Wang's travels. Xu Xiake seems to be here suggesting that Inspector Ni's defacing of the hymn inscribed by Wang Shixing is a form of graffiti that has ruined an otherwise pristine landscape. His actions can either be seen as a ludicrous imitation or as similar to branding a criminal's face.

After another one-half *li*, at the end of the east side of the lofty cliffs, the rocky ridge drops away; nestling up to the east side is Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall. Its entrance is adorned with an inscription that reads, "Transmission of the Lamp Monastery (Chuandeng Si)." This is the spot where the part of the summit that protrudes to the east falls away down Macaque Stairs and continues to the Mahākāśyapa Monastery [Jiaye Si], where it forms the starting point of the southwestern branch of the Mount Chicken Foot Range. The monastery faces east, the main path rising from below until it divides into two in front of the monastery. To the rear of the monastery, climbing up Macaque Stairs along the northern gorge is the path leading to the summit's front entrance. I looked at the path yesterday from above. Turning west along the bank in front of the monastery, passing Huashou Gate, and going up Bind the Body Gorge is the path leading to the summit's rear entrance, which was the one I had just gone down.

To the north of the monastery is a gorge; to the west is a cliff. Behind lies Macaque Stairs, which hangs down from the ultimate summit of the mountain at the eastern end of steep cliffs where the gorge winds around. North of the monastery is a rocky peak that soars up in the middle of the gorge, with a shrine perched on it, known as Mahākāśyapa's Cassock Rock [Jianye Shi]. At first, I did not know this was Mahākāśyapa's Cassock Rock, although looking at it, I could see it was out of the ordinary, so I climbed up instead of going into Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall. When I arrived, a monk invited me to sit on the rock. The rock divides into two layers of lines with a round hole on top. The monk said the lines in the rock are from Mahākāśyapa's cassock, while the hole marks where he inserted his walking stick. Although there are no relics of Mahākāśyapa, the setting amid winding cliffs coiled round to the outside, the tumbling gullies coiled up in the middle, as well as the rock's position against the bank and overlooking a gulch all make this a remarkable place. The monk prepared a very refreshing drink of azalea blooms for me.

I was on the point of going down to the Light Emitting Monastery and Sacred Peak Monastery [Shengfeng Si], but I could not stop thinking about Macaque Stairs, so I followed the right side of Mahākāśyapa's Cassock Rock. After one-half *li*, I went up the stairs, which had overlapping notches that the toes could grip, but the spaces between the notches are filled with jagged stones, making it hard to step on. Looking down along the left of the ridge above Huashou Gate and looking down to the right toward the mouth of the gulch below Mahākāśyapa Rock (Jiaye Shi), the teeth-like rocks fall away below Huashou Gate. The Macaque Stairs turn around to ascend, but the quality of the stones is the same. After twisting and turning upward for one-half *li*, I came to the end of the stairs, from where I continued to follow the gulch upward.

On inquiring, I was told the summit was still a long way off, so I turned around and went back down the stairs, heading east down the gorge north of the Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall. After one *li*, cross-angled and twisting at the bottom of a gorge, is the half-ruined Shielded Command Retreat [Doushuai An]. Behind the retreat is where the spur separating the summit and Arhat Wall sticks out. To the front of the retreat, the gorge falls away sharply. Past the retreat, I followed the left side of the cliff downward for one-half *li*. At the bottom is an encrusted pit, with shady trees on all sides and a poem on a stele written by a recluse called "Crane Hills" (Hexun). The gorge to the front winds around deeply; the path follows it upward before dividing into two. The branch that follows the southwest down from the right side of the gorge is the central path on the western spur to Mahākāśyapa Monastery and Sacred Peak Monastery; the smaller path goes east down the left gorge to Came Hither from the West Monastery, Azure Cloud Monastery, and Arhat Wall.

At that point, although I may have been bodily walking down the western gorge, I felt as if my soul were flying up to Arhat Wall as I turned around every step to look back. After one-half *li*, I came to Look On High Pavilion [Yanggao Ting] poised above the gorge. I did not go in as it was in ruins, instead proceeding down for one-half *li* when I left the gorge at Mahākāśyapa Monastery. The entrance faces east; the monastery is big and spacious. Formerly known as Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall, it has been reconstructed because of its proximity to the summit, so it is now a monastery. I went in to pay my respects to the honorable monks. The monastery faces south. In front of the monastery, I headed south down a wide, steep branch path, past a couple of mendicants using the pine trees as a canopy. The narrow, winding path goes through many twists and turns until, after more than one *li*, I came to the south-facing Assembled Lamps Monastery [Huideng Si], which I entered to worship. On leaving, I went downhill to the east for one-half *li*, where a branch path goes west to Light Emitting Monastery. Because the sun was going down, I was worried that I would not have enough time to get there, so I did not take the path heading west but instead hurried down the eastern path, which was flat and broad. After one *li,* I arrived at Sacred Peak Monastery. The monastery, which faces east at the branch on the mountain ridge, has a large memorial arch in front and an imposing pavilion to the rear. In all, a majestic setting.

The pavilion honors the Jade Emperor, so it is now known as the Jade Emperor Belvedere. Looking north from here, Came Hither from the West Monastery lies high above, embedded in the layered cliffs blocking the sunset clouds floating across the cliffs. They were only faintly discernible in the atmosphere, a most exquisite sight.

After leaving the monastery, I went east along a bank for two *li*, passing White Cloud Monastery. To the right of the monastery, I went

east for one and one-half *li*, passing the Forest of Wisdom Retreat [Huilin An]; farther on, the two streams on either side of the path unite where the bank comes to an end. After going through a valley to the left of the retreat, I went east past the vegetable garden of the Great Awakening Monastery. After one *li,* I crossed the ridge of the central branch behind Rest in the Shade Veranda. Passing in front of Thousand Buddhas Belvedere [Qianfo Ge], I saw the market traders, who assemble here at the end of the year during the pilgrimages to the mountain. Previously held by the Stone Bell Monastery [Shizhong Si], the market has been moved near the Great Awakening Monastery and the other prominent monasteries. From the market, I went east for one-half *li*, passing West India Monastery, then went more than two *li* to Siddha Monastery.

After supper, I knew that Master Shen, Desolate Land's father, was staying there, so I offered my greetings, left a message, and waited in the monastery. I hurriedly came down from the tower. When Buddhist Master Shen arrived, we spoke to each other with great respect and admiration. It was dark by now, and water was being heated in preparation for bathers. I went to the pool with Shen and four elders from the monastery. The pool was made of brick, five rods long and eight rods wide. With a depth of four feet, the water was heated up in a cauldron in a separate part of the building, a process that took all day. The bathers washed themselves before entering the water. After soaking in the water for a while, they got out and went to wash themselves. While soaking in the pool, the bathers do not move for fear of dirtying the water. Since bathing at Sanlipan and entering Yunnan, I had only bathed in hot springs; this bath was a rare treat.

Twenty-ninth day [1 February]: I ate at Siddha Monastery, then wandered around the market with Master Shen and Structured Ultimate's (Tiji) nephew. I bought shoes; Gu Xing bought a hat. I met Universal Cycle from the Great Awakening Monastery, who had also come to the market for a wander and wanted to take me along. I declined because I would revisit him in the New Year when he would be seventy. In the afternoon, Master Shen bade farewell, and I bought a bowl of noodles. I went more than one *li*, past Mahāyāna Retreat and up to Illusory Dwelling Retreat [Huanzhu An], arriving after another *li*. I could see the name tablet on the retreat read: "Blessed Peace Monastery." I asked the way and left, still not knowing it was the Illusory Dwelling Retreat. From the right side, I headed along a ridge to the northwest, entering the south-facing Orchid Bank Monastery after one *li*. From the main ceremonial hall, I went to the east tower, from where Buddhist Master Openly Singular came out to welcome me. I asked about the stele in front of the monastery. He replied, "It was written by a former Buddhist Master to record the deeds of Mahākāśyapa." Having previously stood at Huashou Gate, when Regional Inspector Pan built the Lookout Terrace

at the summit, the stele had been dragged there, and preparations made to engrave a new inscription.

When Openly Singular found out about this, he stopped it, thus saving the stele. Because the path to Huashou Gate is steep, it would have been hard to transport, so it was brought via a circuitous route. I prepared to record the inscription adorning both sides of the stele, with the first part on the lower section. Pointing at the scrolls hanging on the walls, Openly Singular said, "The words on this scroll have been copied from the inscription on the stele." I took the scroll down, moved it close to the stele, and began to copy. Openly Singular provided some vegetarian food, and Master Shen also turned up. After eating, I worked out that I could not finish copying, so I sent Servant Gu off to fetch the bedding. Shen said farewell and departed. I planned to go and see him the next day. When dusk fell, I still had not finished the inscription. Gu arrived with the bedding, so I went to lie down on the Chan sofa at Orchid Bank Monastery. Servant Gu passed on a message from Profound Discernment and Peacefully Humane: "Tomorrow is New Year's Eve. We hope your Buddhist Master returns to the monastery soon; let us not lose hope." Hearing these words made me feel sad for a long time.[16]

Thirtieth day [2 February]: Desolate Land turned up in the morning after I had finished getting dressed. We were pleased to see each other again. We had breakfast at Orchid Bank Monastery. I had more copying of the inscription to do. By the time I had finished, Desolate Land had left, so I headed north from the monastery along the mountain ridge on a comparatively flat path. After one *li*, I turned and headed east, arriving one *li* later at a small meditation chamber in front of Desolate Land's cottage. After another one-half *li*, I came to Desolate Land's loft. Master Shen had prepared food for me, and Desolate Land chanced by, so we ate in his loft. The father and son prepared the food together, roasting taro with boiled vegetables; they were very happy. Desolate Land asked me to send Servant Gu to Orchid Bank Monastery to fetch the bedding, saying, "Why should particular meditation chambers bind like-minded people?" I agreed, so I stayed in the northern room of his loft.

The loft faces southeast. From the front, I could look down on layered cliffs, all embraced by the mountain's peaks, peaceful and harmonious. To the front of the loft, bark from horse chestnut and pine trees had been woven into a fence that was at once plain and elegant, while the lattice-worked windows were broad and bright.

This New Year's Eve amid the myriad peaks was better than many thousands of nights spent among mortals. Toward dusk, when I was

16 The reason(s) for Xu Xiake's sadness here are unclear.

leaning against the window, looking at the light shining down from the stars, at the bottom of the col, I could see a mass of jumbled lights, near and far, carried by the pilgrims. The brightness did not stop all night, a true sight to match the moon on Chalcedony Pond [Yaochi].[17]

—Translated by Julian Ward

17 Chalcedony Pond is a dwelling occupied by transcendents on Mount Kunlun, where the Queen Mother of the West resided.

VI

[WINTER 1639]

First day of the Jimao *year* [3 February 1639]: At Desolate Land's meditation chamber at Lion Grove on Mount Chicken Foot. The early morning air today was crystal clear, the rising sun directly overhead. I got up at dawn, worshipped Buddha, and had a meal before visiting the meditation chambers of Obscure Emptiness (Yinkong) and Orchid Sect. I also passed by Uncultivated Ignorance's meditation chamber, but he had gone to see Orchid Sect. A higher path led me west along the flat to Chanting Buddha's Name Hall, where Master White Cloud's (Baiyun) Chan retreat, the first to be built after the founding of Lion Grove, is located. The first to arrive was Master Great Strength (Dali), who had endured hardship to cultivate purity, building a hut with Orchid Sect that lies just below here. White Cloud subsequently built his cottage in the same location as the other monks, in the most central and highest part of Lion Grove.

Originally, there was no spring water at this spot, and because of the altitude, there was no wood at hand that could be gouged out to form a conduit. The two Buddhist masters accumulated virtue through communication with the spirits. Suddenly, White Cloud uncovered a spring one day while chiseling at the rock in a small gap in the mountain behind the retreat. This is a most remarkable matter that has not been previously recorded.

Upon entering the retreat, I saw a rocky ridge soaring up to form a precipice. On the left-hand side, there is a sacrarium, two feet high and the same depth and width.[1] Outside the cavity, a rock hangs down like the eaves of a house: spring water emerges from within and pours down. The cavity's roof is hollow on the inner side of the eaves, but the water does not flow out from there. The rock face outside is precipitous, but the water does not flow down from the cliff; it flows from within the eaves like strings of falling jade pearls. At the bottom of the cavity is a square pool of water with abundant reeds around the sides. White Cloud snapped off branches of plum blossoms and placed them in the water, giving them a dazzling purity. When I climbed up the bank to gain a comprehensive overview, it seemed so extraordinary that I asked him how, given that the central dragon ridge drops directly downward yet is

Source: "Dianyou riji liu" (*YJJZ*, 2:1027–41; *YJ*, 2:835–51).

1 Here, sacrarium refers to a niche where religious objects, such as statues and idols, are arranged.

not connected to the two outer edges, the spring water could break through the cracks in the rock and come out below.

White Cloud said, "Since the day the rock was chiseled out, the water has not stopped flowing." This made me marvel even more. Only when I saw Orchid Sect later did I hear the full story about worshipping the gods and making offerings to the Buddha. Buddhism does not go in for falsehoods, which provided proof for the stories I heard about Tall Tin Walking Stick Spring [Zhuoxi Quan] and Tiger Leaping Spring [Hupao Quan]. The cypress trees in front of the retreat had been bound together to form a fence, a small encircling screen lush with green vegetation. The grass was piled high in round layers in front of the steps. Sitting cross-legged on it, I could see it matched any prayer mat or embroidered mattress. The retreat is very compact, with a pine canopy. The monks were offering penance to the Buddha.

Welcoming me with tea and snacks, White Cloud pointed in my direction, saying, "There are two more meditation chambers west of here that you might like to visit for some relaxation while I cook up some vegetables from the mountain." I did as he had suggested and headed west through a bamboo grove where I saw two monks sitting on a tree branch, enjoying the sunshine. One led me farther west to a newly constructed three-roomed building with a very open and spacious stone terrace to the front. Inside, the furnishings were delicate and neat, the Buddhist retreat and floral offerings exquisite and dignified. However, I could not see any sign of the occupant. When I asked, I was told, "This place belongs to the drummer for White Cloud's ceremonies." In my opinion, this person was particularly unsophisticated. How could he have such a lovely retreat?

Heading off to one side, I went up to another retreat with a name board inscribed "Salient Moon" [Biaoyue], but once again, the entrance was blocked, so I went back to see White Cloud and ate. He informed me that Master Structured Ultimate had built the exquisite cottage west of the Siddha Monastery; the drummer was only its guardian. After eating, I went up the hill to the east of the Chanting Buddha's Name Hall, climbing up to two *sacraria*. The mountain face is behind the higher one, almost at the ridge's summit, although there is no trace of a path there. To the front, however, a winding trail runs along the layers of encircling cliffs, eventually forming a terrace up against the cliff face, with trees that serve as a natural ladder. With the radiance of the mountain hanging in the air all around, it was just like climbing up to Vulture Ridge [Jiuling].[2]

2 Vulture Ridge, also known as Vulture Peak [Jiufeng], located in northeastern India, was the setting of a few of the Buddha's sermons, most famously the *Lotus Sutra*, and is now a site for Buddhist pilgrimage.

A protruding rock circles the front of the retreat, creating a terrace; the inscription on the name board, which reads "Snowy Room" (Xuewu), was written by Cheng Huan, a man of talent from Kunming. His nickname was Eryou.[3] However, this entrance was also closed, as all the monks had gone off to participate in the ceremony led by White Cloud. I gradually descended eastward until I reached Uncultivated Ignorance's chamber. However, he still had not returned, so I headed off to the east, climbing the eastern gorge, which falls away from the summit, appearing to form a dividing ditch with Nine Layered Cliff. At the summit, precipitous crags pile up, while on the eastern side of the gorge, a cliff extends downward: this is the branch of the mountain on which Siddha Monastery is located. I could not see the meditation chambers of Nine Layered Cliff, which lie off to the east as the peak and the gorge blocked them. Previously, I had climbed to the summit along a gap between the rocks to the east of One Cassock Veranda [Yina Xuan]. Not having sufficient time to walk around here in meditation, I climbed up instead.

The path was petering out: on reaching the middle of the gorge, I could see that the rocky cliff of the eastern peak was extremely steep, and the gorge was crumbling into the void. I estimated there would be a path somewhere far below, so I returned the way I had come earlier. I passed below the curtained spring at the foot of the green slope and re-entered Orchid Sect's cottage. I knew Orchid Sect and Uncultivated Ignorance were in Obscure Brightness's (Xuanming) retreat, so I headed there to look for them.

Obscure Brightness is a disciple of Calm Illumination (Jiguang). His cottage, built recently, faces Orchid Sect's meditation chamber in an east-to-west direction, is below the Hall for Chanting Buddha's Name, and is above Uncultivated Ignorance's Mountain retreat. Because it is hidden under the abundant vegetation, I had not discovered this building before visiting here. I found it today thanks to the directions given to me by Orchid Sect's disciple, eventually coming to a small belvedere with lattice windows, resplendent in the bright light of the snow. The belvedere is called Rainy Blossom [Yuhua]; the inscription there had been done by Uncultivated Ignorance. The monks had just started chanting. When I arrived, they made some tea, and we chatted. It was now afternoon. Uncultivated Ignorance and others had gone off to look for White Cloud, so I went down to Desolate Land's cottage for a rest. When Uncultivated Ignorance and Orchid Sect returned around dusk, we talked about the origins of the mountain's temples. Still, there was not enough time that evening to discuss fully the virtuous deeds of monks in former times or the physical remains of ancient buildings.

3 In a later diary entry, Xu Xiake mentions that Cheng Huan was once falsely accused of stealing money and thrown in jail but was later pardoned by the governor of Yunnan. See *YJJZ*, 2:1341; *YJ*, 2:1112.

Second day [4 February]: Right after a meal with Desolate Land, I visited Orchid Sect, hoping to tap his knowledge of the mountain, but he was not in. I had greatly appreciated the exquisite finery of Obscure Brightness's Rainy Blossom Belvedere, so I went back to see him for more tea and some relaxed conversation.

Picking up my bamboo walking stick, I headed west for one *li*, passing Gazing at the Terrace Ridge, which lies west of Lion Grove and serves as a boundary with Sandalwood Ridge, stretching down the ridge on which the Great Awakening Monastery is located. As I climbed from west of Lion Grove up Gazing at the Terrace Ridge, I could see the summit suspended off in the west, hence the name Gazing. Between Gazing at the Terrace Ridge and Sandalwood Ridge, a succession of gullies presses in to form a col dotted with monks' meditation chambers.

At first, the Mount Chicken Foot meditation chambers were only found in three locations: Lion Grove in the middle, Arhat Wall to the west, and Nine Layered Cliff to the east. Sandalwood Ridge lies between Lion Grove and Arhat Wall. The lower section, where all Calm Illumination's disciples had built cottages, is close to Calm Illumination Monastery, so there are now four locations rather than three. The canyon where these cottages are located is east of Gazing at the Terrace Ridge and west of Sandalwood Ridge, serving as a boundary with Arhat Wall. A central ridge, where the Calm Illumination Monastery is located, also extends southward down the cliff.

East of Arhat Cliff, circling cliffs divide off from the ridge before stretching down to the south, to where the Calm Illumination Monastery was built. Heading south from the front of the monastery and then turning east, Avalokiteśvara Belvedere and Rest in the Shade Veranda tower up beside the waterfall at the eastern peak. From there, crossing another ridge and heading south leads to Śākyamuni Retreat [Mouni An], where rocks soar up to form a central peak, like a guiding post built inside. The Great Master's Belvedere nestles off to one side, while Dragon Pool and the waterfall come together below. The mountain's central arteries converge here.[4]

After crossing Gazing at the Terrace Ridge, and going west for three *li*, I climbed up past several cottages, winding through the gulch westward for three more *li*. I then circled the ridge to the south before turning north for one *li*. The cliffs to the north that pierced the sky were covered in clouds scattered about like colored silk. To the west lies what is known as Arhat Wall. The east side of this cliff arises from Sandalwood Ridge, extending west to Look On High Pavilion before tumbling down among the various gulches. In the folds of the east side of the cliff, Master Illusory Emptiness (Huankong) has built his cottage.

4 The Great Master's Belvedere was built by Investigating Censor Shen (Shen Zhizhi) in the Wanli reign. *YJJZ*, 2:1356; *YJ*, 2:1145.

Below Perfected Warrior Belvedere, located at the cliff's foot, are criss-crossing curved paths with tiered stone steps. The master used bamboo to build a fence and rocks to construct a terrace next to the pavilion where he resides.

Below the pavilion, some monks established a monastery known today as Azure Cloud. I had already visited Illusory Emptiness, but on my way back, I remembered there were some poems by Commandery Marquis Chen (Chen Junhou), given name Tiangong (1589–1644), that I had not copied down, so I went back to record them. He produced snacks, and we chatted on his sofa for a long time. On either side of the pavilion are linked meditation chambers inhabited by his disciples. However, there is no path to Came Hither from the West Monastery, so it was necessary to descend to reach Azure Cloud Monastery.

From the entrance to the mountain, I went west along the sloping cliff for one and one-half *li* before ascending north for one and one-half *li*. I arrived at the foot of a cliff where there is a small monastery, now known as Came Hither from the West Monastery, built by a monk from Shaanxi called Bright Emptiness (Mingkong).

The monks from Beijing, Shaanxi, and Henan all chose their names according to the place's name. In my estimation, the reputations of the monks from Beijing and Henan are of equal measure, while the Shaanxi monk is more unrefined. His reputation stems from his coming from the same town as Temporary Traveling Inspector (Daixun) Zhang Fenghe (d. 1643), who set him up as head of Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall on the mountain's summit.[5] Moreover, Prefect Mu ordered the moving of the Bronze Ceremonial Hall of Mount Zhonghe, so his reputation grew enormously. However, all was not harmonious with the monk from Henan on the mountain's summit. All he did at Came Hither from the West Monastery was welcome male and female pilgrims. His knowledge was only on par with the monks at Azure Cloud Monastery; he was no match for Illusory Emptiness.

By Came Hither from the West Monastery, which backs onto a sheer cliff, the morning and evening clouds hung like curtains and banners that seemed to descend from the horizon like screens, making this the most dramatic of all the lofty slopes here. West of the monastery lies Ten Thousand Buddhas Pavilion [Wanfo Ting]. Embedded at the foot of the cliff below is a spring, four or five feet deep and equally wide, whose water never overflows and dries up. The water gathering here among the

5 Zhang Fenghe was an official who held several high-ranking positions, including surveillance commissioner in Zhejiang, Yunnan, and elsewhere. Renowned for behaving with due probity, he said: "If one does not display meritorious behavior at home, how can he be expected to do so when out in the world?" Xu Xiake's comments are a testament to senior public officials' influence on Buddhist temples' affairs in late Ming China.

pure rocks atop the myriad peaks is an extraordinary sight. However, it differs from that which flows out next to White Cloud's cottage to drop down into the void in such a wondrous way. Because the water I drank at this monastery had come from a good distance away at the western summit, its quality was not especially limpid. Certainly, it could not compare with the spring water at White Cloud's cottage.

Triple Emptiness's (Sankong) meditation chamber is east of the monastery, hard against the cliff face. Triple Emptiness and Bright Emptiness are both from Shaanxi and are younger brothers of the master, but it is Triple Emptiness who is detached from the world and has the vital energy of the Way. He kept me in his cottage; by the time he had made some food, it was already afternoon. The rocks all stand up straight and high from east to this point. The cliffs beside the temple have cracked, forming caves with cavernous voids in the middle. As the monks house visitors' horses in the caves, entering them for a look around is impossible; this is a matter of great regret. From the summit, a gorge opens into a hollow as it descends, wedged into the cracks like a sword rampart embedded in a cloud gate. This is also a remarkable sight. The monks go to the summit to gather firewood, which they throw down this gap to the foot of the precipice as a shortcut. This is not a good way to create a scenic spot.

After eating, I once more went west of the temple along the cliff. Two *li* farther on, where the cliff ends, a gorge is located above Look On High Pavilion. I had previously taken a path from the summit to pass below here before going to the bigger path to Mahākāśyapa Monastery. I had no time to follow the eastern path to one side leading to Arhat Cliff. Looking back from Mahākāśyapa Monastery to the end of the cliff, I saw the trace of a thread-like path with a succession of caves that seemed to be up in the clouds. I found this quite remarkable. Undaunted by the late hour, I looked at those places I had not visited.

However, although the rocky cliff soars above the void, just like the cliffs at Huashou Gate, it was impossible to go far into any of the caves, so I turned back. From the front of Came Hither from the West Monastery and White Cloud Monastery, I headed east past Sandalwood Ridge. I continued into Lion Grove, ending below White Cloud's cottage, where I looked out for Obscure Brightness's monastery. Entering mistakenly to the side, I arrived at a sanctuary that was Jade Moon's cottage. He was a disciple of the Siddha Monastery. The front is encircled by young bamboo, with the pine trees on the left-hand side used to provide a pavilion. It was all very elegant, so I had a short rest. By the time I returned to Desolate Land's place, the sun had already set.

Third day [5 February]: I got up at dawn and had a meal. With my luggage on my back, I prepared to set off down the hill to Siddha Monastery. Orchid Sect had invited me to finish our discussion, so I went to his cottage, where he had prepared a food basket, and we talked about the

mountain's ancient sites. In the afternoon, Master Reflecting Sincerity (Niancheng) passed by and asked us over for something to eat, so Orchid Sect stopped cooking, and we went over together. We wandered for a long time along a path below Beaded Curtain Waterfall [Zhulian Quan] and Misty Blue Wall. To the east of the cottage that Orchid Sect had built, a rocky cliff rose for several scores of rods next to a gorge. Water gushes out from the lower section of the cliff, embedded in the rock below, into the void, spraying everywhere in wild profusion like strings of shining pearls. I pushed my way through the curtain of water to enter the recess sunken into the cliff. Looking back at Orchid Sect and the others, it was as if they were wrapped up in silk and separated from me by misty clouds. To the front of the waterfall, the shadows of the trees and plants made my soul soar as if cleansed, a marvel all around. The west side of the cliff was covered in green moss as if the ground were covered by a dazzling multicolored rug, dripping lush green; this was an exquisite natural dyeing agent. Although it is neither a rocky cliff nor a mountain mist, it forms another natural illusion. To the side of the cliff is a collection of trees with jade-like branches and trunks lined up like tents to provide cover and a multitude of colors.

Pointing at one of the trees, Orchid Sect said, "Have you ever seen a flat tree like this?"

It was an ancient tree with flat rather than round roots that spread across the ground for more than one rod before soaring upward; three feet high and less than one foot thick, the rock-like roots lay on their side next to the path. At first, I thought it was a rock. I could only tell it was a tree when I walked around it and saw its upper section. The rock derives its color from the vegetation, just as the tree takes its shape from the rock; both have assumed highly unusual forms.

I went east for one-half *li* and ate at Reflecting Sincerity's cottage. After bidding farewell to Orchid Sect, I headed downhill to the south, passing through a bend shaped like the character *zhi* 之. After one-half *li,* I went into a meditation chamber at the most south-easterly point of Lion Grove, built recently by Righteous Loftiness (Yixuan), who belongs to the Great Awakening Monastery. Reflecting Sincerity's cottage lies above, while the highest cottage, known as the Great Meditation Chamber [Dajing Shi], is where Uncultivated Ignorance stays. All are on the eastern spur of the mountain.

Above Desolate Land's loft at the far end of the southwest side is Obscure Brightness's cottage. The highest of all on the western spur of the mountain is where Structured Ultimate has just built a cottage. Above Orchid Sect's cottage, which is adjacent to the cliff at Beaded Curtain in the middle of the valley, is Obscure Emptiness's cottage; the highest of all on the central spur of the mountain is Chanting Buddha's Name Hall [Nianfo Tang], where White Cloud stays. Here lies the central spur of the mountain. Interspersed among the winding paths and

separated slopes, every one of the cottages is a marvel. With every twist and turn, each one creates its own realm like a vast lotus plant, whose petals are divided into a thousand shapes, each creating its own world, each one faultless.

From Righteous Loftiness's cottage, I went south along the bend shaped like the character *zhi* 之 for more than one *li*, passing Deva Incense's meditation chamber. Deva Incense, who is Illusory Dwelling's disciple, is ninety years old. While looking for Desolate Land's cottage, I first passed by and stopped to ask the way. I went south for another *li*, passing Illusory Dwelling Retreat, west of which is Orchid Bank Monastery [Lantuo Si], on the opposite side of the dividing banks. The streams that rise in Lion Grove flow down separately before converging below. I continued down for more than one *li*, coming across Mahāyāna Retreat [Dasheng An] at the point where two streams converge.

The trail took me in an easterly direction along the southern side of the ravine. After one-half *li*, as the water veers off to the south, I crossed a ravine heading down one *li* to the southeast, passing No-Self's and No-Breath's Retreats. Small Dragon Pool [Xiao Longtan] and Five Blossoms Retreat [Wuhua An] lie below, beyond the right-hand wall of Siddha Monastery and separated from it by a ridge. I crossed the ravine again, heading south past Meeting Auspiciousness Monastery [Yingxiang Si]; after that, I proceeded east along the ravine. After one *li*, I arrived at the Tiger Sands on the east side of the monastery, where I had previously stumbled in the darkness.

This spur stretches south of Orchid Bank Monastery, extending eastward at Meeting Auspiciousness Monastery. It then cuts across in front of Siddha Monastery and joins up with the Dragon Sands, which sticks out of the spur, before winding around in front of Black Dragon Pool, the most prominent area of flat terrain for Siddha Monastery. The inner part of the spur blocks off the Lion Grove streams, which flow east into Dragon Pool. The outer part of the spur acts as a boundary marker for the Sandalwood Monastery (Shantan Si) streams, which converge with the lower reaches of Dragon Pool; the spur stops once it has reached this point.

I now went north for one-half *li,* crossing a gulch and entering the Siddha Monastery, where I met up with Profound Discernment and other monks: seeing them here felt like a reunion with old friends. Previously, when I entered Lion Grove with Desolate Land's father, everyone had brought along a sprig of the apricot blossoms that had just come out in front of the temple. After my departure, the peach blossoms also came out in profusion. While the colors of the apricot blossoms were brighter and more abundant, the colors of the peach blossoms were even fresher and more colorful: in just five days, the scene had become even more fragrant. Watching the arrival of spring colors made me appreciate nature's unending transformations even more.

Fourth day [6 February]: Right after eating at Siddha Monastery, I set off westward with my walking stick past Meeting Auspiciousness Monastery and Stone Bell Monastery. After two-some *li* in total, I passed over a gulch in front of Stone Bell Monastery and West India Monastery and headed south on the main path connecting with the front of the mountain. Previously, after crossing the stream behind Repay Kindness Monastery [Bao'en Si], I had taken the wrong turning at the point where the paths diverged, heading uphill along Dragon Pool Stream [Longtan Xi], with the result that I had run out of time to get here after going past Bodhisattva Pavilion. However, at least my luggage had now arrived.

Servant Gu said there was an extraordinary waterfall behind Great Master's Belvedere a short way down the hill. I followed his advice and crossed over a very narrow, flat ridge. The waterfall flows into a ravine to the ridge's south, while to the north, there is a ravine below a stone bridge. The ridge stretches from Rest in the Shade Veranda to the west, passing here where it protrudes southward at Sakyamuni Retreat before ending at Great Master's Belvedere.

By the side of the big path along the peak's southeast side lies View Waterfall Pavilion [Guanpu Ting]. The waterfall crosses the valley from the southwest, with Jade Dragon Belvedere [Yulong Ge] stretching across above the waterfall. Looking down from the cliff opposite View Waterfall Pavilion, the waterfall scatters out below Jade Dragon Belvedere; a suspended thread of silver silk drops down to the end of the ravine for more than one hundred rods, straight down to the depths of the gulch, which is densely covered in bamboo. Looking down, I could not see the foothills.

However, sitting in the pavilion and looking up and down, the summit seemed floating in the clouds, suspended in the Ninth Heaven, while the falling snow gathered on the steep cliff, coating the Nine Earths below. Adding in the reflected light of the clearing skies and the floating shining of the blossom, I felt as if I were in another world far from human realms. The Rock Bridge at Mount Tiantai extends up to Dharma Flower Pavilion [Tanhua Ting] similarly. At that moment, my spirit soared up to Jade Dragon Belvedere. I had no time to enquire about the wonders of Great Master's Belvedere, so I turned around and went back to the ridge, going south along the ridge for one *li*, climbing up above the waterfall, all the way to Jade Dragon Belvedere, which straddles the upper section of the waterfall. Jade Dragon Belvedere lies in the mouth of the gulch between the two mountains. It is located at the meeting point of the western and central of the mountain's three spurs: water flowing from Huashou Gate and Avataṃsaka Monastery is suspended in midair before falling downward to pound below. Jade Dragon Belvedere is like a stone bridge straddling green mountains, a magpie bridge soaring up into the heavens. Yet sadly, no one is residing in the pavilion. I imagine the loneliness would lead to feelings of despair.

The pavilion's name was inscribed by Yang Shicong, courtesy name Lengran (1577–1630); like Viewing the Waterfall Pavilion, it was built by Jiang Binchuan, courtesy name Erdi. I knelt to copy the inscription on the stele lying on the floor.

I followed the central spur for one *li* and headed west up to Rest in the Shade Veranda. A left turn took me north across a ravine for one-half *li*, where I entered the Great Awakening Monastery. I kowtowed to Venerable Master Universal Cycle, a seventy-year-old disciple of No-Mind, who is sound in body and mind and the most venerable person on the mountain. I had earlier arranged to give Universal Cycle birthday greetings in the new year, but I had not arrived on time from Lion Grove and was sad to visit him empty-handed. The master asked me to stay on for food in the eastern veranda.

Water spurts into the air from the pond in the middle of the veranda. The pond is not big; in the middle is a stone basin containing a tin tube that pours water. It rises along the tin tube, nearly three rods high. Jade droplets spurt upward, sprayed out by the wind to be scattered in the air like a blossom. When I saw it, it seemed extraordinary, but then I became a bit suspicious. Although the tube was stuck in the middle of the pond, it could not connect with the water in the pond. Moreover, since the water can go up for three rods, why is it limited to three rods?

There had to be another source for the water, of the same height as this one, which flows downward before soaring up again so that only when it reached this height could it surge again. The mechanism must be buried at the bottom of the pond; the water could not surge from below to above. When I arrived here and asked, it turned out the water came down a cliff that was more than three rods high to the left of the veranda via a three-rods-long tin pipe, which went underground for around ten rods without a single drop escaping on the way, explaining why the fountain was so vivacious.

Long ago, beneath the Dragon Splash Pool on Mount Yandang, there was Double Swords Spring [Shuangjian Quan], from which water had soared three feet into the air. However, this was originally a natural cavern. Later, when an opening had been carved out, the water no longer spurted because all the air had been sucked out. Long ago, I visited Huang Daozhou at Moling and saw a basin in a house at Hongwu Gate [Hongwu Men].[6] Water surged forth from the basin. Inside it was a round pellet-shaped object floating on the surface. The water only rose three feet high. Because I was in a hurry to see Huang, I did not have time to investigate fully, but it was probably a similar shape to this one here on Mount Chicken Foot.

6 Moling is an alternate name for Nanjing. Hongwu was the name of the city's main southern gate.

After eating, I copied a stele in the western veranda. There was a camellia in the veranda in full bloom. I had seen one before when I had plucked a branch. I said goodbye to Universal Cycle. After going west for one *li*, I crossed a bridge, headed north up a slope for one *li*, and entered the Calm Illumination Monastery [Jiguang Si]. But the abbot, who had been eating with Universal Cycle on the eastern veranda, had not returned. I had yet to finish recording the stelas. The night was coming, and I had used all the paper I had brought, so I returned to Sidda Monastery. I headed east of the Great Awakening Monastery to check out the Dragon Flower Monastery and West India Monastery, but could not make them out in the dark.

Fifth day [7 February]: Spent the day at Siddha Monastery. Mr. Shen, Desolate Land's father, had made a card inviting the Chan monks from Siddha Monastery and me for a vegetarian meal at Lion Grove. I did not go outside all day.

Sixth day [8 February]: Four senior monks at Siddha Monastery had arranged to head off after breakfast to join Mr. Shen in fasting. I had copied the four poems I had written on New Year's Eve evening in honor of Shen's sixtieth birthday at the start of the year. After another five *li*, we passed next to Deva Incense's cottage before climbing up a slope for two *li* to Desolate Land's mountain retreat, where several monks, including White Cloud, Halcyon Moon, and Abstruse Brightness, were all meditating.

We had some food, then visited all the meditation chambers in the grove together. As we circled the green hills, the atmosphere was vibrant: the light was pure and beautiful, the blossoms on the tea plants (*chashi*) were bright and delicate, and the tips of the clouds were streaked with halcyon lines. We went everywhere. I first called on Obscure Emptiness, taking a box of tea as an offering. Visits to Orchid Sect and Uncultivated Ignorance went unanswered: they had already descended the mountain. When I visited Abstruse Brightness, we drank tea and ate pine nuts. At White Cloud's, we drank tea and ate the nuts of the tea plant. The nuts are similar to those of the fox nut (*cishi*); the kernel is divided into two segments like a hazelnut (*zhen*), but longer and with a very particular flavor. They are like the nuts of the new tea from my hometown, albeit these are edible. I have heard that the best ones come from the Gantong Monastery [Gantong Si], but they are not easy to find. Some of the oily ones can be prickly.

Next was Structured Ultimate's cottage, where he had prepared tea to welcome me. In the afternoon, I had some food at Desolate Land's mountain retreat. The four elderly monks encouraged me to go on horseback, so I went west for one *li*, passing to the west of Orchid Slope Monastery [Lantuo Si]. I turned east in front of the temple, passing in front of

Illusory Dwelling's cottage before heading down the slope. After four *li*, I was back at Siddha Monastery.

Seventh day [9 February]: I got up early. Universal Cycle from the Great Awakening Monastery had sent his disciples with an invitation card. Just as I was about to leave, Openly Singular and Orchid Sect turned up by chance, along with Return to Self [Fuwu], who had arrived from the Moni Monastery [Moni Si]. Return to Self, from Heqing Prefecture, used his status as a government student (*xianshi*) to be a disciple of Fundamental Nonexistence (Benwu).[7] Now abbot at Mouni Monastery and the senior of the four elders, Return to Self comes back here occasionally. He has a son who is currently at school in Heqing.

Master Uncultivated Ignorance also arrived, so we all ate together. That afternoon, Uncultivated Ignorance and Orchid Sect went to the Great Master's Belvedere via Pagoda Rock Ridge [Tapan Ling]. I took up the invitation to go to the Great Awakening Monastery. After a snack, I felt very full. Taking advantage of some free time, a trip to the Calm Illumination Monastery allowed me to record the remaining stelae inscriptions. I went back to Siddha Monastery to sleep, having eaten at the Great Awakening Monastery.

Eighth day [10 February]: After breakfast, the four elders were waiting to set off for the courtyard at Fundamental Nonexistence's Pagoda [Benwu Ta], as this day had been fixed for sweeping the tombs.[8] I went along with them. Following the Dragon Pool to the left of the monastery, we descended east for one *li*, passing a stream on the east side and proceeding south for one-half *li* on what is, in fact, the Dragon Sands. This is the inner spur of the mountain, which protrudes from east to west and is hemmed in with Great Master's Belvedere, which is positioned at the peak of the central spur and stands opposite the two sides of the peaks of the central spur in front of Siddha Monastery.

The various water courses surrounding Siddha Monastery all arise here. A path starts from flat ground at the summit before crossing to the south. Profound Discernment, Uncultivated Ignorance, and I headed purposefully westward along this path to investigate the summit that is cut off by ravines; looking over to the west, I could see the central spur protruding southward, stretching out before coming to an end here. Great Master's Belvedere, which nestles lower down, is built in a place of

7 That is to say, he was a student in a government-supported Confucian school at the prefectural or lower level.

8 As a sign of respect and remembrance, the gravesites of Buddhist monks are often adorned with miniature pagodas, designed to add a sense of beauty and serenity to the gravesite. "Sweep the tombs" means clean and tidy up the area around the grave.

natural defense, protecting Siddha Monastery. We continued back along the main path for one-half *li*, following the eastern peak southward till we arrived at Tranquil Hearing's resting place, where I climbed up to pay my respects.

I headed south for another *li* along the outer ridge of the Dragon Sands. This also rises from a split at the eastern peak mountain range before extending out to the west, opposite not just Transmitting the Robe Monastery [Chuanyi Si], which lies on the peak on the western spur, but also both sides of the front of Siddha Monastery; the setting is majestic.[9]

The various water courses east of Great Master's Belvedere at Dragon Pool, as well as the waterfalls to the west, all arise here. This is Mount Chicken Foot's Dragon Sands, particularly close to Siddha Monastery, also the southeastern spur of the "three feet" that lie at the foot of Mount Chicken Foot.[10] The mountain range crosses east from the summit, ascending upright into the atmosphere to form the rear ridge on which Arhat Cliff, Lion Grove, Nodding Head Peak, and Nine Layered Cliff are located.

The central spur falls away from Arhat Wall, stretching down to Great Master's Belvedere, where it ends, while the eastern spur circles around this peak from Nine Layered Cliff to the southeast, like an embracing arm. The first layer to be divided out is the Inner Sands [Neisha], which lies opposite Great Master's Belvedere on the central spur, circling this layer as the Outer Sands [Waisha], opposite the peak behind Transmitting the Robe Monastery on the western spur.

The overall layout of the mountain protrudes from east to west; the stretched-out ridge drops away gradually like a horse saddle, which explains how Horse Saddle Ridge [Maan Ling] acquired its name. When I first came to Mount Chicken Foot, on arriving at the Great Awakening Monastery and looking all around at the layout of the mountain, the layer upon layer encircling and enfolding the monks' temples and retreats, which are suspended all around the heart of the mountain, all seemed quite fitting. It was just at this one spot where no pagoda stood that I felt the mountain was missing something.

When I got to Siddha Monastery, I could see in the distance that this peak was particularly extraordinary; I do not know whether Emperor Asoka, in manifesting his miraculous capabilities through eighty-four thousand stupas, was sharing his divine light here.[11]

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9 The name of this monastery is derived from the legend of Mahākāśyapa preserving Gautama Buddha's priestly robe.

10 The term *sanju* 三距, rendered here as "three feet," refers to a chicken's three claws. The topography described in this line explains how Mount Chicken Foot acquired its name.

11 Asoka, emperor of India in the third century BCE, was reputed to have constructed 84,000 stupas during his reign.

When I met Profound Discernment, I asked him where Transcendent Bank was. He said, "At Pagoda Rock Ridge." When I asked him, "Where is Pagoda Rock Ridge?," he indicated it was right here on this mountain. At that time, this pagoda had yet to be built, so it was impossible to look far; looking from behind was the same as looking in the opposite direction. People say the western section of Mountain Chicken Foot's three "feet" is long, and the central and eastern "feet" are short, but this is incorrect. If the central "foot" is short, it is unlikely to be suspended in the middle, given that it is encircled by the outer "feet." The western "foot" is long, but its setting is comparatively low because if it is to be the Tiger Sands, it must be low. As for the purported shortness of the eastern "foot," considering it from the circling descending position, it is indeed short, but if you think about it in terms of cutting across the ridge and crowding around behind, it is not only long but also very high; it cannot be compared with the western spur. The western spur, which circles and is in a low position, is a Tiger Sands, so it acts as the flat terrain for the mountain. The eastern "foot," which stretches out naturally at a superior height and is the Dragon Sands, also acts as a screen for the rear of the mountain. In all human endeavors, there is no match for this natural marvel.

Pagoda Rock Ridge is situated in the middle of Horse Saddle Ridge, at the summit on the western side of the depression. From Horse Saddle Ridge, a path comes from the southeast, heading toward Chicken Mesa Pass [Jiping Guan]. To the east of Horse Saddle Ridge is a branch path heading northeast toward Fundamental Nonexistence's Pagoda. More than one hundred people currently work at Pagoda Rock Ridge despite there being no water at the summit. Water can be found very high up at the eastern peak of Horse Saddle Ridge, but because of the col in between, it is impossible to flow to the western peak. So several rows of wooden posts have been erected above, and a trough has been built to guide the water. The posts are more than four rods high. The wood has been hollowed out to form a channel that crosses the tips of the pine posts. I have heard how in former times, there was a magpie bridge in the Milky Way made to transport water; now, this has been made to allow the water to cross over, which is even more extraordinary. At the Great Awakening Monastery, the water is pushed down into the earth to allow it to surge out here. Here, the water can cross by flowing through a void; both ways involve violating the rules of nature. Following the depression to the east, I traversed the peak along the southern edge of Mount Chicken Foot's central ridge. The front aspect is very open, encircling the mountain's branch ridges, forming another vista: you can say that every side of this numinous mountain is extraordinary.

In all, I went two *li*, climbing up to visit Fundamental Nonexistence's Pagoda. At this majestic site, three pagodas soar up in unison, with the middle one housing Fundamental Nonexistence's ashes, while the ones

on either side honor his disciples Pu and Tong. The left-hand pagoda has a courtyard, pavilion, and portico but no guardian. One can rest or stay overnight. Every resident monk and visiting monk had come to participate in the ceremonies so I could make the most of the leftover food. All the other monks had also joined in besides the four elders—White Cloud, Return to Self, Mr. Shen, and Desolate Land. Orchid Sect and Openly Singular were followers of Fundamental Nonexistence, so they had not come along. After we had finished worshipping, Transcendent Bank and Pure White brought sacrificial goods to worship at the three pagodas north of Horse Saddle Ridge to pay respects to Tranquil Hearing. In the afternoon, I returned to Pagoda Rock Ridge, where I thanked Transcendent Bank for offering sacrifices in honor of Tranquil Hearing.

Ninth day [11 February]: Right after breakfast, I proceeded westward, walking stick in hand. After three *li*, I passed by Rest in the Shade Veranda on the ridge of the central spur. This forms the flat terrain of the Great Awakening Monastery, where Master Fundamental Nonexistence meditated. On the name board was an inscription by Assistant Censor in Chief Feng Shike, courtesy name Yuancheng (1546–1619). Cane Bamboo Veranda [Qiongzhu Xuan] is also known as Rest in the Shade Veranda because it was at Bamboo Veranda that Fundamental Nonexistence became a monk. In front of the veranda, the path branches off in three directions. The left-hand path crosses over a stream on the way to the Great Awakening Monastery and the Monastery of Calm Illumination; the right-hand path crosses over a stream on the way to Transmitting the Robe Monastery and down to the Meet and Welcome Monastery. Going directly up the hill on the back path after crossing another stream on the right-hand side of the path, one can either pass the Forest of Wisdom Retreat and then climb up to Sacred Peak Monastery or climb up the western spur to arrive at Avataṃsaka Monastery.

I first went one-half *li* to the right, crossed the stream, then turned east to go up the southern peak. One-half *li* farther on, I twisted round to the eastern cliff of the southern peak on the waterfall's western side. I proceeded southward along the peak; when I looked east, I could see Great Master's Belvedere on the central ridge, while Pagoda Rock Ridge was higher up and opposite on the eastern ridge.

After proceeding on flat terrain for three *li*, I then turned east down a slope; after one *li*, the east-facing Transmitting the Robe Monastery nestled halfway up the mountain. To the north of the monastery had previously been the location of Halt in Place Retreat [Zhizhi An], built by Silent Retreat (Hei'an) and True Words (Zhenyu), who were friends of Chan Master Great Opportunity (Daji) of the Transmitting the Robe Monastery.

Carrying on the south was Pure Cloud Retreat [Jingyun An], built by Penetrating Emptiness (Chekong) and True Brilliance (Zhenbing). Farther south are three more retreats: Amitabha [Mituo], Circular Passage

[Yuantong], and Octagonal [Bajiao], all of which are connected with Transmitting the Robe Monastery. Octagonal Retreat is the best known of the three because in the past, there was an Octagonal Pavilion [Bajiao Ting] that has since been reconstructed as a retreat. The Octagonal Pavilion was built during the Jiajing reign by the Superior One Auspicious Emptiness (Jikong). South of the retreat lies Transmitting the Robe Monastery, which is made on a grand scale with broad foundations and a large archway in front of which are inscribed the words "Pure Secluded Bamboo Forest" (Zhulin qingyin). Chosen by Censor [Zhizhi] Mao Kan (*jinshi* 1598, also known as Mao Juci) from Suzhou, the words are not quite right. Above is a sign inscribed with an "Ancient Pine Tree" (Gu songshu) poem written by the censor, just signed "Sacred White Peak." (Baiyue).

The ancient pine in front of the arch has a trunk measuring three arm spans around; it is a dragon-scaled pine (*longlin*), not a five-maned pine (*wulie*). The large pine trees in the mountains all have five manes, rising into the sky. In fact, this old dragon-scaled tree is not particularly big, but its tangled form is truly extraordinary. With a trunk more than fifteen feet thick, the branches come out abruptly on all sides as big as the trunk, their intertwining ends slanting down, so big that the trunk cannot support them and has almost split.

A six- or seven-foot-high terrace has recently been built to support the trunk, with some logs included to support the hanging branches. It will be a great fortune if the tree is prevented from falling. Climbing onto the terrace by ladder, the branches fall on all four sides to the outside, some soaring up from the middle, others tumbling down from the summit. Due to their interwoven dancing appearance, it is hard to distinguish individual branches. Are the soaring phoenixes of Mount Tiantai any match for this?[12] The couplet on the sign, written by Wang Yuanhan, nickname Juzhou (1565–1633), reads:

> 花為傳心開錦綉 , 松知護法作虬龍 。
> The precious flowery brocade that speaks to the soul has bloomed,
> The pine trees protect Buddha's teachings like a small dragon.

12 Among the extant fragments of the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer,* we find the following: "The pine trees on Mountain Chicken Foot are considered extraordinary for their five mane-like needles, which pierce the Milky Way and cover the banks, shading jade green over one hundred *li*. The ends of the whiskers are green but upright and not curling, gigantic and sleek without appearing ancient. Old trees usually grow up to have dragon scales and crane down, crisscrossed and inverted in myriad fringes. Only this ancient tree rises at the peak before Tramsmitting the Robe Monastery, unexpectedly outside the rest of the great beauty spots." *YJJZ*, 2:1353–54; *YJ*, 2:1143.

The couplet on the gate, written by Luo Rufang, nickname Jinxi (1515–88), reads:

峯影遙看雲蓋結，松濤靜聽海潮生。
Looking from afar at the clouds among the shadows
at the peak;
The waves of the pine trees listen quietly to the pull
of the tides.

The words are just about satisfactory. However, Luo Rufang's use of the characters *tao* 濤 (waves) and *chao* 潮 (tides) for his couplet is laying it on a bit thick, why not use *sheng* 聲 (sound) instead of *tao* (waves)?

Formerly, Transmitting the Robe Monastery was known as Perfect Trust Retreat [Yuanxin An]. In the Jiajing reign, Li Zhongxi, nickname Yuanyan (1497–1580) extended the retreat to a temple on behalf of Chan Master Great Opportunity. His disciple Light Trace (Yinguang) and his grandson Dharma World (Fajie) followed the monastic rules like Great Opportunity. After the monastery was destroyed by fire on New Year's Day in the *xinchou* year of the Wanli reign (3 February 1601), Dharma World rebuilt it with great endeavor on an even grander scale than before.

When I first passed by Halt in Place Retreat, a sickly old monk had treated me to food. I sat for a long time watching him wash rice before leaving to eat with the monk Awakened Mind (Juexin) from the Pure Cloud Retreat. I visited the monastery, going into the Sutras Depository Belvedere. In front of the belvedere, the camellias were small but flowering luxuriantly, so I picked two branches as I left. Heading northeast down into a gulch, after a wall there is an enclosed space measuring one *li*. The mountain has been dug out to form a pond filled with goldfish with a retreat placed on top, also built by a monk of an earlier generation from Halt in Place Monastery (Zhizhi Si). With the clouds' shadows and the mountain's glow reflected on the pond, I inadvertently felt the brightness of the shadows on the water cleansing my thoughts. Descending to the northeast for another one-half *li*, I arrived at the bottom of the valley, now separated from the lower reaches of the waterfall by the curve of the hillside.

Previously, when I looked down from the waterfall, I could not see the bottom of the valley. Having now crossed the bottom of the valley, the waterfall was not visible either. West of the valley lies a grass cottage and a vegetable patch, the vegetable garden of Transmitting the Robe Monastery. Although the water in the middle of the valley flows like a skein of silk, it is no match for the grandeur of the suspended waterfall.

After crossing the ravine, I headed east up a slope, arriving at the main path after one *li*, next to Great Master's Belvedere, which is nestled halfway up the central ridge protruding to the south. In front of the pavilion are an archway, two lofts, and a set of very steep steps leading

up to the belvedere, which lies to the rear. The roof ridges soar upward, and the pillars intertwine: with towers on either side, the monastery's setting, dedicated to the Buddha, is expansive.[13]

The belvedere was built in the *bingwu* year of the Wanli reign (1606) by Censor Shen, who chose an old monk called Clumsy Ignorance (Zhuoyu) to live in the belvedere, which he named Samādhi Monastery [Sanmei Si]. Just as I copied some inscriptions below the temple, a monk kindly invited me to eat. When I enquired who he was, he turned out to be Empty Universe [Xuyu], a disciple of Clumsy Ignorance. Empty Universe belonged to Orchid Sect's group. Ever since the death of Clumsy Ignorance, he has been in charge. Uncultivated Ignorance and Orchid Sect stayed here yesterday and spoke about me, so when Empty Universe saw me, he was sincerely welcoming and asked me to stay the night. Because the sun was setting and the inscriptions were long, I agreed. I sent Servant Gu back to Siddha Monastery and spent the night in a room in the western tower.

Tenth day [12 February]: In the morning, as I was washing, Gu arrived to tell me that the monk sent ahead to Lijiang by Master Profound Discernment had left already as an advance party. I waited till I had finished eating, then headed north on the big path to the left of the monastery. After two *li*, I crossed the middle ridge of the central branch, on which a retreat called Śākyamuni Retreat can be found. To the front, the shadows of the pine and the peach trees created a most remarkable vista. Behind the retreat is Observing the Waterfall Pavilion [Guanpu Ting]. Turning around to look down at the waterfall makes it hard to turn one's eyes away.

I proceeded up the central ridge for another two *li*, passing behind Inhale Yin Veranda to go directly west for one *li* before going south once more to cross the gulch from where I proceeded west. By now, I had already reached the southern side of the vegetable garden of the Great Awakening Monastery, located to the rear of the central ridge of the mountain, which extends from the north to reach here before turning eastward. Two streams of water converge to the west of the vegetable garden, forming the upper reaches of the waterfall.

One of the streams flows southeast from Arhat Wall, and the other runs northeast from Avataṃsaka Monastery, converging at a narrow spot on the central ridge. The Forest of Understanding Retreat lies above the branch extending eastward on the southwest ridge, where Sacred Peak Monastery and White Cloud Monastery nestle against the mountain.

The path to Avataṃsaka Monastery follows the vegetable garden eastward, crossing the lower reaches of the waterfall. I next went west upstream along the southern bank of the gulch for one and one-half *li*,

13 As noted earlier (see note 7, page 397, above), although *dashi* is often used as a general term for "bodhisattva," here it is probably an epithet for the Buddha.

gradually crossing the ridge crest. South of the ridge is another gulch, which is separated from the ridge that runs eastward from the west branch. Going westward upstream along the north bank of the gulch for more than one *li*, I could see three or four burial mounds on the ridge. To the rear of the mounds are the remains of a few lofty towers, which, like the tombs, are in ruins. This ridge, which is part of the western branch, leads directly outward: with no protection on any side, this is a very natural setting.

Heading west of the tombs, I went down into the canyon, divided into two parts. The southern side originates south of the Dharma Illumination Monastery [Fazhao Si] on the western ridge. It extends eastward, passing north of Avataṃsaka Monastery, where it joins up with the north side of the gulch. The northern side originates north of the Dharma Illumination Monastery on the western ridge. It extends eastward, passing north of Vairocana Monastery [Pilu Si], where it joins up with the south side of the gulch.

The two streams converge, with the mountain ridge squeezed in between, at the flat terrain which faces north at Avataṃsaka Monastery, and also the southwest ridge of the mountain which faces east where Vairocana Monastery and Celebrate the State Monastery [Zhuguo Si] nestle up against the mountain. After crossing the gulch on the north side, the path again branches off in two directions: one follows the gulch to the west, leading to Celebrate the State Monastery and Vairocana Monastery; the other, which climbs the ridge along the side of the branch, goes west upstream along the north bank of the southern gulch to Avataṃsaka Monastery. I then ascended the ridge, looking down at the southern gulch as I proceeded.

After one *li*, a bridge with a pavilion spans the gulch, serving as an access point for Avataṃsaka Monastery. Only after crossing the bridge was I on the southwest branch of the mountain itself. After heading west for another one-half *li*, I arrived at Avataṃsaka Monastery on the ridge of the southwest branch, facing Nine Layered Cliff to the northeast. The terrain here is very different from what I had seen elsewhere, making it another scenic spot in the mountain.

In fact, the temples on the central and eastern branches of Mount Chicken Foot and those at the top of the mountain all face either east or south; none of them face to the north. Only this monastery turns round to face in the other direction. Many temples are piled on each other on the mountain's north face, offering quite a different view. The monastery was founded in the Jiajing reign by Moon Hall (Yuetang), a Nanjing monk whose successor, Full Moon (Yuelun), was renowned for his lectures on the scriptures. At the start of the Wanli reign, the empress donated sutras, which were later destroyed in a fire. Although the monastery has since been restored, and the monks are as before, the missing Buddhist scriptures have not been replaced.

East of the monastery, a path heads eastward along the mountain, leading directly to Transmitting the Robe Monastery. Heading westward along the side of the gorge in front of the temple, after one-half *li*, there is another pavilion bridge spanning the gulch on the upper reaches of the stream. Pavilions and bridges surround the monastery; the only time I have seen this on the mountain. After crossing the bridge, I ascended the secondary branch, stretching out to the north. The ridge went up for one-half *li* before I circled the crest, passing Vairocana Monastery, in front of which is Celebrate the State Monastery. Both monasteries are located on the ridge and face east. North of the temple, a gulch extends out to the east: this was the one I had traversed earlier. From the south bank, I moved upstream to the west, where, after one and one-half *li*, a temple sits on the ridge. This is the Dharma Illumination Monastery.

In fact, it transpired that the southwest branch falls to the south from below Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall, turning east when it arrives here. At the turning point, a branch extends eastward to become the mountain range on which Vairocana Monastery and Celebrate the State Monastery are located, crossing in front of Avataṃsaka Monastery on the first spur of the southwest branch.

Another ridge divides north on the opposite side of Dharma Illumination Monastery. Impermanence Retreat [Wuzhu An] nestles up to the hill below, the branch with the dilapidated burial mounds, on the second spur of the southwest branch. Numerous paths head directly north, crossing ridges and passing over gullies before stretching outward, the main paths leading to Sacred Peak Monastery and the United Torches Monastery [Huideng Si]. Keen to analyze the source of these branches, I went upstream from the canyon. As I left the south side of the Dharma Illumination Monastery and then headed north, circling behind the Impermanence Retreat, the paths gradually disappeared under a crisscross covering of bamboo thickets and thick vegetation, creating a secluded, peaceful spot. I was already getting close to the lower face of the mountain summit. At that moment, no travelers were on the path, so I followed a local villager from Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket. After one *li,* I went north along a gulch then, after another *li*, ascended a precipitous ridge. Another *li* of walking took me across a ridge and then west. Looking west, I could now see the hills in front of Fragrant Wood Mesa soaring upward, the suspended precipice at Huashou Gate, as well as the side cliff circling to the west at Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket. The ridge rises from Bronze Buddha Hall, reaching the Dharma Illumination Monastery below, then turns east, extending out, separating the western gulch of the ridge, creating another unique vista, precisely where Light Emitting Monastery is located.

I crossed the ridge, then proceeded upward along the valley, which winds round to the northwest, reaching the main path after another one

and one-half *li*, by which point I was already approaching the cliff below Huashou Gate. This is the main path sweeping from the east past Sacred Peak Monastery, then west past Light Emitting Monastery, arriving at Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket, eventually ending up at Dengchuan Subprefecture. I followed the main path west, coming to Light Emitting Monastery after one-half *li*.

Facing southward, backing up against the sheer cliff, with its front next to encircling gullies, the monastery is guarded on the right by Peach Blossom Bamboo Thicket and the right by the southwestern main branch of the mountain. Despite being situated outside the "three feet" of the mountain, it is right below the very summit; this was the reason for the coming together of the luminous brilliance. When I had first looked down from Cao Stream [Caoxi] and Huashou Gate at this monastery placed deep at the foot of the gulch, I had thought the light soared up from the depths, from the lairs of flying squirrels and poisonous snakes. Now that I was here, still above the countless swirling gullies, when I gazed up at the Huashou Gate, it was as if it had been pared for ten thousand feet over a very broad area. Although there were strands of wispy blue mist like a stitched scar, I did not think I could pass through and ascend it. Who would have thought that the upper part of the cliff starts west at Cao Stream Monastery, joining up with the Bronze Buddha Ceremonial Hall in the east along a towering path stretching across the Huashou Gate? Moreover, when I passed by Huashou Gate, looking up at the vaulted roof above the sheer cliff, I was unaware of the steepness of the cliff below. Now that I was here, I could see that above and below together formed a picture. Where else could compete in terms of overall majesty? Mount Chicken Foot does not lack layered cliffs such as Huashou Gate, Arhat Wall, or Nine Layered Cliff, yet the mountain is undeniably lofty. In terms of majesty, nowhere can match this.

In front of the monastery, a big memorial archway serves as a gate. Below the gate are two statues carved in a remarkably ferocious style, as majestic in its way as the natural scenery. Inside is the front tower, with a huge stone standing on the left-hand side, five rods high and equally wide. The upper section is towering, the lower side precipitous. A pavilion above is adorned with an inscription by Magistrate Jiang from Binchuan that reads, "Four Walls Without Substance (Sibi wuran)."[14] Were it not blocked by the roof, one could look up at the Huashou Gate from the north side. Of the four walls, only one had been covered up in this fascinating way, which I could not help but regret.

14 "Without substance" (*wuran*) refers to the Buddhist concept of things or places existing or phenomena occurring without being constrained by conceptualization or categorization. In Buddhism, this is the true nature of reality beyond all the constructs and labels mortal souls attach to them.

Built in the Jiajing reign by a monk from Shaanxi called Circular Tranquility (Yuanxing), the temple had burned down at the start of the Wanli reign but was later rebuilt. An inscription by Li Zhongxi, nickname Yuanyang, is cast and engraved in bronze, but some characters are incorrect. After his descendant Return to Emptiness (Guikong) restored the Vairocana Belvedere [Pilu Ge], Emperor Shenzong donated some sutras. I copied the bronze stele as the light darkened in the ceremonial hall, and my stomach rumbled with hunger. At that time, the head monks were all out. There was just one novice around, so I gave him money, lit some bamboo for a torch, then lit a fire to make food.

After a meal, I followed the main path east for one *li*, ascending the ridge that falls away from the branch for more than another *li*, winding around above the gulch opening out below, before arriving at a fork in the path. One path heads due east across the gulch on the way to Sacred Peak Monastery, and the other climbs north up the ridge to the United Torches Monastery. This is the right way to the summit, so I ascended the northern ridge, arriving after many twists and turns at the United Torches Monastery. Formerly the meditation chamber of Master Wide Openness [Kuoran], the south-facing monastery was established by his descendant.

West of the monastery, more twists and turns, over more than one *li*, took me northward to Mahākāśyapa Monastery, which faces east and was formerly known as Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall [Jiaye Dian]. As a result of Inspector Zhang's establishing Mahākāśyapa Ceremonial Hall at the summit, this became a monastery. From the front of the monastery, I went north into a gulch, which rises from the summit to the west side and Arhat Wall to the east side; the two cliffs press in from opposite sides, with stone steps suspended in the middle. A short way up the cliff sits a memorial archway that marks the visit of two gentlemen, Luo and Li. Luo is Mr. Luo Rufang, nickname Jinxi; Li is Mr. Li Cun, nickname Jianluo. Both were from Jiangxi. They were regional inspectors when they visited here. Higher still lies the Look On High Pavilion, built during the Wanli reign by Regional Inspector Zhou Maoxiang (d. 1621), in honor of the ascent of the mountain and appreciation of the scenery by the two gentlemen. Regional Inspector Zhou was also from Jiangxi.

When I previously passed through here, I had seen the dilapidated pavilion. However, I did not have time to copy the inscriptions on the stelae, so I headed off. On this occasion, the first thing I did was to copy them down. The wind was howling, and it was much colder than other places. The text was long and verbose, and my hands were repeatedly frozen in the wind. When I finished copying, the sun was setting in the west. Looking up at Shielded Command Retreat, which lies above the pavilion, I could see that this was the spot from which I had descended from the summit, and the path that extended out east of the retreat was the path to Arhat Wall. Previously I had also reached here and turned

back. Climbing from here up to Arhat Wall was unfinished business, but on this occasion, I could not complete the climb in the time available.

So I turned around and went downhill again, crossing in front of Mahākāśyapa Monastery, from where I could see a mountain path heading down to the east into the middle of the gulch. At the bottom of the gulch is a retreat north of Sacred Peak Monastery. This was almost certainly Buddha's Successor's Retreat [Buchu An]. I then took the downward path that followed the ravine. The path that goes down the ridge passing the United Torches Monastery is the main path; the one following the ravine down to Buddha Successor's Retreat is the smaller one. After descending two *li*, I arrived at the retreat. The surroundings were gradually becoming more desolate, and I was concerned that I would not get back before sunset. I headed south past the front of the retreat, crossing a gorge, before heading up a slope, passing by the Sacred Peak Monastery, which faces east and has a big memorial archway in front of it. I went beyond the archway for more than one *li*, through a narrow ridge with deep pits on all sides. After crossing the ridge, I again went east for more than one *li*. The newly built White Cloud Monastery is in the middle of the slope. I was keen to investigate the farthest point of this ridge, so I descended east of the gulch's south side. After two *li*, I came to the Forest of Understanding Retreat nestled at the end of the slope. Passing in front of the retreat, I turned down the northern gulch, after which came a climb up the central ridge, where the north and southern gullies meet south of the path. To the east is the vegetable garden of the Great Awakening Monastery. I went east for one-half *li*, crossing the northern side of the vegetable garden, east for one *li,* passing south of Rest in the Shade Veranda, and then east for one *li,* passing north of the waterfall. At this point, I left the main ridge and went north to cross the gulch by West India Monastery before twisting along the gulch between the central and eastern ridges. After another two *li*, it was getting close to evening, so I entered Siddha Monastery.

—Translated by Julian Ward

Lijiang is an aboriginal district in the northwestern part of Yunnan populated mainly by the Naxi people. It rests in a valley surrounded by mountains in the foothills of the Himalayas. At an elevation of 7,900 ft/2,400 m, Lijiang is best known for its alpine beauty and elaborate monastic complexes. Xu Xiake was invited to visit Lijiang by Mu Zeng, the local head chieftain (*tusi*) whose family ruled the district throughout the Ming period. The invitation was made possible because "Master Mu"—as he is respectfully called in the diary entries below—and Xu Xiake had a mutual friend in Chen Jiru. Accompanied by an interpreter-guide from Lijiang sent by Master Mu to Mount Chicken Foot several days

earlier, Xu left for Lijiang on 24 February 1639. He arrived three days later. As evident in the descriptions below, Mu Zeng treated his Chinese guest lavishly, showering him several times with gifts and money. Mu Zeng could read and write classical Chinese and was especially fond of Chinese culture. He was a devout Buddhist as well. We catch up with Xu Xiake just after he arrives in Lijiang.

Twenty-sixth day [*of the first month*] [28 February 1639]:[15] I had breakfast in the small loft at dawn.[16] The interpreter's father said Master Mu was delighted when he heard I had arrived. He immediately ordered that I go to the Forest of Liberation [Jietuo Lin] at dawn tomorrow and wait to meet him. He also instructed his aides to take along enough food provisions for seven days, presumably because he would be hosting me there for seven days.

Twenty-seventh day [1 March]: Light rain. Sitting in the interpreter's small loft, I revised some of my earlier diary entries. The apricot blossoms here have begun to wither, but the peach blossoms have just started to bloom. I suppose this is because I am farther north now, which is colder.

Twenty-eighth day [2 March]: The interpreter said that Master Mu ordered a carriage to take me to the Forest of Liberation that afternoon. The Forest of Liberation is on a mountainside west of the col to the north, presumably a spur from the southern base of Snow Mountain.[17] It is the crown among monasteries in this commandery.

Twenty-ninth day [3 March]: I got up at dawn and had an early breakfast. The interpreter prepared the horse and waited for us to leave for the Forest of Liberation. Only then, after crossing the bridge to the west, did we begin our ascent north from the front of the prefectural government office. Holding close to the eastern foot of Yellow Peak [Huangfeng], we proceeded through the col to the north. I looked toward Dozing Elephant Mountain [Xiangmian Shan] in the east.[18] Only then did I realize the upper reach of the Jade River [Yuhe] diverges into two streams. I

15 *YJJZ*, 2.1063–73; *YJ*, 2.871–77.

16 The "small loft" (*xiaolou*) mentioned here accommodated interpreters.

17 Snow Mountain, or Jade Dragon Snow Mountain [Yulong Xueshan], is a mountain range twenty-some *li* northwest of the prefectural offices of Lijiang that towers directly above the Forest of Liberation. Some of its peaks, which look down on the Gold Dust River, rise to almost 20,000 ft/6,096 m.

18 One mile/1.6 km north of the Lijiang prefecture seat, this mountain is so-called because, in shape, it resembles a reclined elephant at sleep.

proceeded another five *li* and passed a dried-up mountain stream with a rock bridge. I looked toward Central Lake [Zhonghai] in the west, where willow trees lined the banks, and waves swirled around. A large settlement above looks down on the lake. This is the site of Ten Harmonies Cloister [Shihe Yuan]. Behind it is Ten Harmonies Mountain [Shihe Shan], a spur from Snow Mountain's southern base. Proceeded north for another one *li* to a main road heading north. This is the road to White Sand Cloister [Baisha Yuan]. Crossed the bridge to the northwest. This is the road to the Forest of Liberation. The stream bed below the bridge is quite deep but lacks even a single drop of water. After crossing the bridge, we skirted the mountains to the west. After five more *li* is the site of Cliff Foot Cloister [Yajiao Yuan]. The cottages there all cluster together, while a corner on every one of them displays a small, double banner. These were the homes of Master Mu's attendants (*bashi*). One-half *li* north of the cloister, a mountain stream comes down through a gorge from the mountains in the west. A wooden bridge spans across the stream. We crossed the bridge and then scaled a ridge. This is the main road to Zhongdian.[19] We traced the stream west from south of the bridge and ascended a ridge. This is the road to the Forest of Liberation. As it turned out, we treaded up a steep incline to a ridge from the southwest of the bridge. After two *li*, the trail leveled slightly. Next, we entered a gorge to the south. After one-half *li*, a monastery appears near the top of a mountain to the west. Its gate faces east. The area in front of the gate is on a plot of low, flat terrain. This is the site of the Forest of Liberation. A villa is on the hill south of the monastery, close behind it. This is where Master Mu rests and takes his repose.

The interpreter led me to the villa's entrance gate. Two senior attendants arrived and bowed to me with hands clasped. Both of them were surnamed He. One of them, responsible for written documents, had once visited the capital and sent a memorial to the throne. While there, he also met Chen Renxi (1581–1636).[20] The other attendant was in charge of security. He was big and strong, with a dark face. A true, fierce-looking warrior! They introduced me as I entered the villa. Master Mu emerged from the second entrance gate and welcomed me into his inner quarters, where we exchanged bows with clasped hands to show great mutual respect and courtesy. A mat was spread out on a flat, wooden platform. My host sat at the head of the mat, which is the most important aspect of ceremonial etiquette here. After we chatted over three rounds of tea,

19 Zhongdian is in northwestern Yunnan, on the border with Tibet. As we see below, Xu Xiake wanted to travel there after visiting Lijiang. In 2001, Zhongdian was officially renamed Shangri-La [Xiangge Lila].

20 Chen Renxi, nickname Zhitai, was a well-known late Ming dynasty official, scholar, and historian. *DMB*, 1:161–63.

I stood up, and Master Mu accompanied me out to the entrance of the guest reception hall, where he had the interpreter lead me into the Forest of Liberation. I stayed in the right chamber of the Sutras Depository Belvedere. The resident monk-hosts at the Forest of Liberation are all natives of Yunnan. They understood how to be a good host and cordially treated guests. . . .

> Xu Xiake rarely discusses food in his diaries. In this next entry, however, he describes in great detail the sumptuous dishes served to him at a banquet in his honor.

Jimao *year, first day of the second month* [5 March]: Master Mu ordered a senior attendant to collect black incense (*heixiang*) and ten ounces of silver from his household and present these items to me as gifts.[21] In the afternoon, a banquet was held in the east hall of the Forest of Liberation, where pine tags were spread out on the floor.[22] Master Mu allowed a young scholar surnamed Xǔ from Chuxiong Prefecture to join us at the banquet.[23] Moreover, the master rewarded us with cups and silk, specifically, two silver cups and a bolt of green crepe silk. Eighty varieties of main dishes were served, arranged in such lengthy order that I could not tell which dish was what flavor. The banquet did not end until sunset. Afterward, the fine dishes left from the banquet were presented to young scholar Xǔ, who distributed them to the various servants.[24]

Second day [6 March]: Went into the south inner apartments of the Forest of Liberation, where Master Mu resides. He welcomed me and arranged our seating positions as they had been earlier. After taking his leave, Master Mu returned to the Forest of Liberation. Mr. Xǔ, the student who attended the banquet the day before, arrived. He wanted to exchange some silver for the green crepe silk presented to me as a gift at the banquet. Then, in the afternoon, Master Mu ordered the main attendant to

21 Black incense is not further identified but probably refers to some rare aromatic.

22 Since Master Mu and his guests at the banquet would be sitting on mats, spreading pine tags on the floor presumably made sitting on the mats more comfortable.

23 This prefecture was about 220 mi/355 km south of Lijiang, just west of Kunming. Master Mu arranged to have Young Scholar Xǔ attend the banquet probably because he wished to have a local man of letters there to engage socially with Xu Xiake.

24 Tentative translation. During the Ming and Qing dynasties, it was customary to distribute leftovers from banquets to servants.

come and convey an invitation to write a preface for the Master's *Clouded Space and Light Ink* (Yunke danmo) collection.[25]

Third day [7 March]: I submitted my preface draft to Master Mu's collection. He then ordered a senior attendant to visit me and convey his thanks. The wines and fruits presented to me included extraordinary products such as white grapes, longan, and lychees, along with crispy cookies and deep-fried dough sticks as thin as human hair. Inside the sticks, pine nuts are wrapped into strips, which are quite flaky and crisp. There were also wonderful treats such as strands of candy, silk-like strands made from white candy, thinner than a human hair, in a thousand strips and myriad strands, which are joined and kneaded together.[26] They hold together and are not sticky after being mixed with thin noodles.

Fourth day [8 March]: A Mount Chicken Foot monk took the *Clouded Space and Light Ink* collection text he had copied out in the provincial capital and handed it over to Master Mu.[27] Master Mu immediately ordered a senior attendant to pass the collection so I could look it over. Moreover, he asked if I would proofread and correct it. Although the monk had copied out the text in the calligraphy style of the Hongwu emperor, which was neatly written, there were many incorrect Chinese characters. Not only were these wrong characters randomly scattered throughout the text, but the collection lacked coherence. Moreover, the text overlapped and was upside down in numerous places. I more or less corrected the errors and suggested that the contents be topically arranged into categories to avoid the shortcoming of having the same mistakes reappear in the text. I submitted the text that evening.

> One aspect of the following diary entry is quite important. When his visit to Lijiang was finished, Xu Xiake wanted to travel north to Zhongdian, a distance of about 115 mi/185 km, where he presumably intended to further investigate the course of the Gold Dust River as the possible headwaters of the Changjiang. Of course, such a request would need to be approved by Mu Zeng.

Fifth day [9 March]: Master Mu ordered the senior attendant to come and convey his thanks. The attendant said the Ding Day Sacrifice

25 Portions of Mu Zeng's philosophical anecdotes survive, but Xu Xiake's preface is not extant.

26 The precise nature of strands candy (*fatang* 髮糖; lit., "hair candy") is unknown.

27 That is, in Kunming.

(Jiding) to Confucius would be held the following day, so the master could no longer remain there.[28] He ordered a senior attendant to come here and see to my needs. Master Mu asked me to stay for several more days, during which time he would trouble me to arrange the *Clouded Space and Light Ink* collection into topical categories, as I had suggested earlier. I agreed to his request. I then wrote a letter to Master Mu to convey thanks for honoring me in this way. I moreover asked if I could travel to Zhongdian. While taking in the sights in the Forest of Liberation, I saw a bronze statue that was three rods and six feet high. Master Mu departed that afternoon but sent a written response to my request before leaving. He said that Guzong people controlled all the roads in Zhongdian and there were numerous bandits so that no one could go there.[29] Presumably, the senior attendants thwarted my plan to go to Zhongdian, fearing that I would spy on their territory. On this day, I was presented with so many huge and crispy wheat cakes that I could not finish eating even one of them throughout the entire day.

Sixth day [10 March]: I remained in the Forest of Liberation working on the *Clouded Space and Light Ink* collection. Although Master Mu had departed, he arranged for people to bring me wine and fruit occasionally. He also sent an uncooked chicken as big as a goose. Its entire body was covered in oil. It was yellow in color, round in shape, and highly plump. I treasured the chicken so much that I had Servant Gu preserve it in salt.

> At this point in the text, Xu Xiake inserts a separate account of the Forest of Liberation.

The Forest of Liberation nestles against the mountain on the western border of White Sand Col [Baisha Wu]. As it turns out, that mountain is south of Snow Mountain and north of the mountain behind Ten Harmonies Mountain. It connects with and embraces the mountains of Halcyon Screen [Cuiping] and Dozing Elephant on its eastern border, while on both sides of White Sand, it forms the col behind Yellow Peak. The monastery is located at the mid-point of the mountain, facing east, because Halcyon Screen is in a low, flat area. As it turns out, the Forest of Liberation is the premier monastery in Lijiang. The monastery's gates, verandahs, and staircases display outstanding artistry, but the central ceremonial hall is not spacious, and its Buddhist statues are not tall and massive. But the elegant decorations are majestic and dignified, while

28 Sacrifices in honor of Confucius were carried out in the spring and autumn, on the first *ding* 丁 day of the second and eighth lunar months. *Ding* is the fourth of the ten "Heavenly Stems" (Tiangan) in the Sexagesimal Cycle.

29 Guzong people immigrated from Tibet to the Lijiang Valley and parts of Sichuan during the Ming period.

the walls and eaves are shiny and immaculate. Such a place is found nowhere else.

Behind the main ceremonial hall, tiered terraces rise to great heights. The Dharma Cloud Belvedere [Fayun Ge] is built above the terraces. Octagonal in design with extended eaves, it is exceptionally spacious and gorgeous. Inside is a copy of the *Buddhist Canon* (Cangjing), gifted to the monastery during the Wanli reign.[30] There are two verandahs outside the front of the belvedere. I am lodged in a room off the south verandah.

South of there, beyond the two verandahs, there is a circular ceremonial hall with a thatched roof. A brick wall circuits around inside it. As it turns out, the statue of Buddha is carved from white stone. It has an air of antiquity and is exquisite and delicate in its detail. There is only one statue of Buddha in the hall, with no other figures arrayed beside it. This creates a pure and rarified atmosphere. A dining room and kitchen are in front of the worship hall. To the north, there is also a circular belvedere, the top story of which has open windows. In front of the belvedere is a loft with three pillars, elaborate windows, and ornamented partitions, all adorned with gold and jade. This is where Master Mu takes his repose. It has a door but is never open. Across from the entrance is the banquet venue. Meditation chambers are on the slope to the right of the monastery. The gate there also faces east. Inside are three halls, none of which are grand and spacious. The wall around the halls is only as high as one's shoulders, but the abundant, lofty pine trees cover the area like connected tents, creating a rich atmosphere of misty rain and sunset clouds. I heard someone say that one can ascend the mountain from here and visit Saluting Longevity Terrace [Gongshou Tai] and Lion Cliff [Shizi Ya], but since I have been busy with my proofreading chores, there was no time to do the climb.

Sixth and seventh days [10 and 11 March]: I worked continuously over the last two days on proofreading and rearranging the content of the *Clouded Space and Light Ink* collection into topical categories. I divided the entire book into eight sections. After finishing my work that night, I wrote a letter and handed it to a senior attendant. In it, I explained that my proofreading was completed and that I had heard about the surpassing scenery at Ancient Knoll Mountain [Gugang Shan]. Can a guide take me there? Another name for Ancient Knoll is Mournful Prattle [Shuluo]. It is northeast of the commandery and takes more than ten days to get there. The mountain has several caverns through which one can pass. There are four ponds there. The tint of the water in each one is different. All of them are transparently clear and extraordinary; each produces its own brilliant luster. Above them are three high peaks, upon which is a

30 The Chinese *Buddhist Canon* consists of several thousand Buddhist texts. It serves as a major source of Buddhism and its exegesis in China.

particularly dense form of shiny and white snow. This is something that Snow Mountain cannot match. Earlier, on several occasions, Master Mu had wanted to go to Ancient Knoll Mountain, but the various senior attendants told him this was not possible. They made a great effort to block any such trip. But, as it turns out, several years later, Master Mu was able to visit there. He returned to Lijiang only after sketching an outline of the mountain's topography. Today, that sketch is on the wall of the verandah behind the Forest of Liberation, directly opposite the Dharma Cloud Belvedere to the north. I got to know about the mountain by consulting the sketch. Moreover, I asked the head monk, Pure Oneness (Chunyi), about Ancient Knoll, and he told me that there are many actual practitioners there, each of whom resides in his own cave. They can live without taking any food. The leader among them commands divine and extraordinary powers. With his hands, he can take a stone and knead it into rice flour; with his feet, he can stomp on a slope and turn it into a hollow. Although the leader is young, he is prescient. Before Master Mu went to the mountain, the young leader announced to all the local people there that a highly esteemed person would be coming to visit. As a result, the local people came to trust and respect him even more. I was awestruck when I heard about this and yearned to travel there.

Eighth day [12 March]: At dawn, a senior attendant carrying Master Mu's book departed in a great rush. I took my time before getting up. After a meal, it started raining, heavy and hard. Pure Oneness gave me an ancient porcelain cup, a light bronze tripod, young tea leaves, and utensils to boil water and make tea. When my horse was ready, I bid Pure Oneness farewell and descended the mountain.

I proceeded slightly north then turned and descended to the east, where it was very steep. After two *li*, I reached the foot of the mountain. Along the trail to the north is a mountain stream, which comes down from the southeast of Snow Mountain. Following the trail, I proceeded east for one-half *li* to a wooden bridge. Where one crosses to the northeast of the mountain stream and passes over a hill—this is the road to Zhongdian. I proceeded southeast from the bridge. After one-half *li*, I turned and headed east. This is the way to Cliff Foot Cloister, which nestles against a mountain and faces east. The homes there stretch on continuously. Most of them are wooden houses or thatch grass houses. Those with tiled roofs are all the residences of headmen.[31] On all the corners of their homes, they display small, double-sided banners that freely flutter when the wind blows, swaying and rippling among the young peach blossoms and unsullied plum blossoms. The red peach

31 Based on the comments below, these "headmen" (*toumu*) were responsible for security along the northern border of Yunnan.

blossoms were infused with raindrops from the night before, while the morning mist carried a tint of green. I rode through the woods in the wind and rain, shivering from the cold. And yet, to my surprise, I have found such a surpassing scene.

Southeast of the cloister is a low-lying area among the village cottages, whose interior has dried up and has no water. And yet there are still pavilions and terraces, with willow trees along its embankment. As it turns out, there was once a lake here surrounded by gardens and pavilions. Now it is an abandoned gulch. Proceeded south for two *li*, where a dried-up mountain stream lies deep in a recessed area. As it turns out, this stream southeast of Snow Mountain pours into Central Lake from the south. Today, its water is diverted east to the ridge of a col. Not even a drop of its water flows down into the stream. There is only a rock bridge here that spans over the stream. Crossed east of the bridge and immediately followed the diverted water's course. After four *li*, I saw Ten Harmonies Village [Shihe Cun] downhill in the distance to the west, which is thriving. Central Lake is south of the village. I gazed at it as I proceeded southeast. The road to White Sand Cloister is the main road that heads directly north. Four *li* to the south is a dried-up mountain stream that runs across a col from east to west. A small rock bridge spans across it. Proceeded another five *li*, where to the east I gazed at Dozing Elephant, which I was already approaching. Earlier, the interpreter agreed to guide me to Elephant Trunk River [Xiangbi Shui]. After reaching here, we proceeded southeast through some fields for two *li* and reached the mountain's base. Water emerged from openings at the bottom of a pit to the west. The openings are small and all different. In due course, the water spills out to form a stream that turns and then departs to the south. After two *li*, the stream divides into two courses: one follows Dozing Elephant and heads south; the other turns around inside a col and then flows into a gorge. When it passes a small rock bridge, it again divides into two courses, which move along the east and west sides of the trail.

After another five *li*, we reached the area north of Yellow Peak. As for the streams diverted this way, one course divides behind the peak and flows off; the other flows east along Yellow Peak and then heads south. Only then did I realize that the spur of Yellow Peak descends southward from inside the col that trails down from the mountain slope north of Elephant Trunk River. When the spur reaches here, it gathers and forms into a small peak at the entrance to the col. Dozing Elephant Mountain on the eastern side of the peak also ends when it reaches here.

The mountains on the western side approach from southwest of Central Lake then circle and head north, connecting with the mountains behind Ten Harmonies. On the south side, a huge col opens from east to west. The huge ridge on the mountain range to the south that tracks from west to east seemed like a table arranged before me. On it is Black Dragon

Peak [Wulong Feng]. Calligraphy Brush Peak [Wenbi Feng] towers alone in the southwest. On the southern peak, the Mu Family Compound [Mujia Yuan] loops around and towers aloft like an impregnable barrier in the southeast. Among the numerous larger mountains, the primary one is this smaller one, and this is because the Mu Clan chose Yellow Peak to establish a lineage to last for a thousand generations. From a depression on the left side of Yellow Peak, I ascended south then turned west. Proceeded another *li* and came out south of the peak at the Lijiang prefectural seat, which faces east, overlooking a stream. Dragon Snout Stream circles in front of it; Yellow Peak crowds around behind it. I heard that the lofts and belvederes inside the grounds of the prefectural government seat are extremely magnificent. Still, many are of modest design, so guests are not received in the prefectural seat, or so I was told. When I was still three *li* from Yellow Peak, an attendant arrived with the letter and another person carrying wine and meat. They had come braving heavy rain because they thought I had not departed from the Forest of Liberation. Together with them, I passed in front of the prefectural seat, crossed Jade River Bridge [Yuhe Qiao], proceeded east for another one-half *li*, and as before, stopped to rest at the interpreter's small loft. I then read Master Mu's letter, which asked if I would beseech Huang Daozhou to compose a preface for his book. Moreover, he also insisted I write a letter of invitation because he was about to dispatch someone to the provincial capital to invite Wu Fangsheng to visit Lijiang.[32] Earlier, Master Mu and I had a face-to-face discussion about notable people throughout the empire. I remarked:

> The only true sage in the world is Huang Daozhou. His calligraphy and painting rank first in the Academies and Institutions.[33] His writing ranks first in this dynasty. His character ranks first in the four seas. His knowledge is equal to that of Zhou and Kong, and he ranks first among ancient and modern scholars.[34] But he is not easy to meet, nor is he easy to summon.

Master Mu thus asked:

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32 Wu Fangsheng was a friend of Xu Xiake who wrote letters of introduction for him and raised money to help defray Xu's traveling expenses. As mentioned below, Wu was a native of Jiangyin stationed in Kunming on garrison duty.

33 Here, I follow *Hucker*, no. 3310, and translate *guange* 館閣 (lit., "guesthouses and belvederes") as "Academies and Institutes." This term was an unofficial reference to the prestigious Hanlin Academy (Hanlin Yuan) during the Ming.

34 "Zhou and "Kong" refer to the Duke of Zhou (Zhougong; r. 1042–1035 BCE) and Confucius, respectively, both of whom in China are regarded as paragons of wisdom and knowledge.

> After Chen and Dong, are there others from whom one can gain wisdom?[35]

I remarked:

> High moral character is difficult to attain. As for the extraordinary traits of Chen and Dong, I have not seen anyone who has continued their ways since then. And even if there were such men, how could one enlist their services? However, if you are in a distant place, there is no one for countless *li* to serve as a companion; if you are nearby, there will be former, current, and future students to meet with you. There is one Wu Fangsheng, who is a native of my hometown. These days, he is on garrison duty in Yunnan and thus living in the provincial capital. Not even the Son of Heaven could kill him. He never wavers, even in critical moments. He is equally adept in the polite arts and military matters. His learning and knowledge are both complete. Indeed, these qualities of his character could never be compromised.

Master Mu was worried that if he invited Wu Fangsheng to visit, Wu might not come. So I agreed to write a letter of introduction. Hence, this invitation. But Master Mu was still unaware that I had reached the prefectural seat. The messenger then took my written reply and returned the way he came. The senior attendant who delivered my letter arrived back because Master Mu ordered him to return and convey the master's thanks. Moreover, he said traveling to Ancient Knoll would be difficult, and going there without careful planning was impossible. Presumably, this was just his excuse to keep me from going there. However, I did hear that during the winter of last year, direct military operations were taken there against the Tibetans. The operations were unsuccessful, and several wounded headmen have still not recovered. The Shuluo and Guzong had joined forces in the territory north of Lijiang, so people feared for their safety on the roads there. The Shuluo and Guzong have also burned Outer Iron Bridge [Waitie Qiao].

On this day, rain showers fell from time to time. I gazed at Snow Mountain from the loft, dimly visible in the distance. To the south, I glanced at Chuandian, where peach and willow trees are profuse and plentiful, to which I toasted a full cup of wine.[36]

35 "Chen" and "Dong" refer to Chen Jiru and Dong Qichang, respectively.

36 The precise location of Chuandian 川甸 (Sichuan and Yunnan?) is unclear.

In 1633, a plague epidemic broke out in Shanxi province, and by 1641, it would reach the capital, Beijing, where some two hundred thousand people were reported to have died. As we learn from the following account, people in Lijiang faced a different infectious disease: smallpox.

There is a great fear of smallpox in this area. Every twelve years, during the *yin* year, there is an outbreak.[37] Since the disease is highly contagious, the death toll is almost endless. However, many people manage to elude and avoid infection. Thus, each *yin* year, some people do not come down with smallpox, most of whom avoid infection by taking refuge deep in the mountains and the far reaches of valleys. They keep their presence there confidential. In the provincial capital and border towns, as soon as someone is infected with smallpox, they are immediately moved to Nine Harmonies [Jiuhe] and kept in quarantine and lockdown. The prohibitions are strict. As it turns out, Nine Harmonies is on the border to the south, beyond the great ridge on the mountain south of Calligraphy Brush Peak, on land bordering Jianchuan.[38] Half of the people who elude and avoid infection in the mountains and valleys are in their fifties and sixties, so they remain fearful and frightened when they run off there to escape. Neither Master Mu's eldest son, who will inherit his position of prefectural magistrate, nor his third son contracted smallpox. Since last year (1638) was a *wuyin* year, they took refuge in the mountains and valleys. During the following year, they had still not returned. Only the second son and the fourth son, whose given name was Su and who recently enrolled in the government school in Heqing Prefecture, came down with smallpox. Master Mu had the fourth son send his regards to me in a letter and asked if I might come to the Mu Family Compound to read and help revise his compositions.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

37 *Yin* 寅 is the third of the twelve Earthly Branches (Dizhi) in the Sexagesimal Cycle.

38 Jianchuan is about 32 mi/50 km southwest of Lijiang.

XIII

[FALL 1639]

Xu Xiake returned to Mount Chicken Foot on the twenty-first day of the eighth month of the *jimao* year (18 September 1639), following an absence of seven months during which he had been traveling through Western Yunnan. On his return, he based himself at Siddha Monastery, familiar to him from his earlier stay on the mountain, initially spending several days relaxing and recuperating from his exertions. On the twenty-ninth day (26 September), he was able to take a bath:

After a long time in malarial regions, my head and all four limbs were covered in densely clustered rashes in the folds of my skin and on my left ear and left foot. I was constantly squirming. I thought I had a parasite two weeks ago, but I looked and found nothing. On arriving here, I realized I had, in fact, suffered a seizure but sadly had no medicine to treat it. The water in the thermal bathing pool was very deep and full of medicinal herbs, so I soaked in the water for a long time: the sweat poured off me like rain. This is a marvelous way to treat a seizure, and I was extremely fortunate to have come across this means of curing my ailment.[1]

He also wrote up his diary, described his pleasure from looking at the mountain's flowers, and even spent a day reading poems with some monks. Soon, however, he began to wander around the mountain again and wanted to return to Dali to pick up his luggage and finish exploring the sights of the nearby lake and mountains.

Events then took over with the sudden disappearance of Gu Xing, Xu's servant. Intending to spend the night in a monk's cottage at the top of the mountain, Xu had sent Gu back down, fearing it would be too cold for him. The next day, Xu heard that Gu had left, saying he was heading for Dali, but Xu did not believe this. He soon discovered that everything out of his chest had been taken. The diaries end abruptly soon after.

Despite, or perhaps because of, this traumatic incident, the last few entries have a valedictory note. Xu's enquiring mind and

Source: "Dianyou riji shisan" (*YJJZ*, 2:1343–50; *YJ*, 2:1115–21).

1 *YJJZ*, 2:1340; *YJ*, 2:1111–12.

adventurous spirit remained undiminished: the last few days include a description of his trying to ascertain the source of a waterfall and a remarkable account, on the penultimate day of his diaries, of a vertiginous scramble along the branches of a tree to reach an otherwise inaccessible cliffside cave. He also records with great delight a chance meeting with a local literatus, Shi Zhongwen, a like-minded wanderer. A brief editorial note from Ji Mengliang follows the diary's abrupt ending.

Ninth day [*of the ninth month*] [5 October]: I proceeded east for one-half *li* and stopped at Chanting Buddha's Name Hall, the meditation chamber of the monk White Cloud, but he was not there. Looking at the Numinous Springs [Lingquan] that are located here, the waterfall does not flow from the mouth of the gorge but from the mountain ridge; it does not flow from outside the cliffside but from within; it does not come out of an opening in the rock but from the roof of a cave; it appears to be suspended in midair as if there were an outlet, yet it is unseen; it just tumbles down from above. It seems the waterfall's water does not have a source yet is inexhaustible. This is so remarkable! Thus, this provides proof of the divine power of Buddhism. . . .

Catching sight of me from the depths of the bamboo grove, Orchid Sect came over to shake my hand and ask me to stay the night. By now, Desolate Land had already headed east, and, as it happened, his father was not in his cottage either. I was keen to meet him, so I accepted Orchid Sect's invitation. Harmonious Light (Heguang) wanted to descend the mountain, so I had Gu Xing go with him as I thought the cottages on the mountain would not have enough bedding and it would be too cold for him. Gu asked for the key. I handed over the keys for all my chests and cases because extracting the relevant key from the string was too difficult. When Gu headed off, Orchid Sect picked up his walking stick and guided me to look once more at the various sites, such as Water Curtain [Shuilian], Misty Blue Wall, and the Inclining Tree [Ceshu]. After dusk, we returned to his cottage. Today was the Double Ninth Festival [Chongjiu Jie]; the daytime vista was already stunning, but in the evening, the bright moon on the top of the mountain peak and the sky washed out like water, dazzled on the jade mountain tops.[2]

Tenth day [6 October]: I got up at dawn. When I asked about Mr. Shen, I was told he still had not returned. While Orchid Sect prepared food, including some maize pancakes, I found some paper to write poems on

2 The Double Ninth Festival is so-called because it falls on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. Typical activities on this holiday include hiking, drinking wine infused with chrysanthemums, and visiting ancestral graves.

the "Four Wonders of Lion Grove" (Shilin siqi)—Water Curtain, Misty Blue Wall, Inclining Tree, Numinous Spring—to offer to him. Noticing that Gu had not arrived, I anxiously enquired where he was. Orchid Sect said, "He knows you are keen to descend the mountain right away; why would he come back up?" This made me even more anxious. Unable to wait any longer for Mr. Shen, I decided to leave Orchid Sect and set off down the mountain.

On the point of leaving, I saw a very flustered monk arriving. Orchid Sect joined him and asked why he had come up the mountain. He said, "The elders at Siddha Monastery told me to seek out the honorable gentleman." In my heart, I knew then that my servant had fled. When I quizzed him, he said, "The elders saw him carrying his bundle in the direction of Dali. When I asked Harmonious Brightness, he was afraid that Gu was not carrying out your instructions, so he sent me over to report." I now knew for certain that Gu had fled, and he was not heading for Dali. I said farewell to Orchid Sect and hurried down the mountain with the monk. After five *li*, we passed to the east of Illusory Dwelling Retreat (Huanzhu An) in front of Lanna Monastery [Lanna Si], then down for another three *li*, passing a spot where two mountain streams converge from east and west, arriving at Siddha Monastery at midday.

When I opened my bags, everything was gone. Structured Ultimate and Profound Discernment wanted to send two of the temple's monks in pursuit, but I stopped them, saying, "If we pursue him, we probably will not catch him. He could not be forced to return if he were to be caught. All I can do is acknowledge his departure." However, for a master and his servant to be three years away from home, their forms and shadows inseparable, only for me to be abandoned one morning ten thousand *li* from home is too much to bear.

Eleventh day [7 October]: I felt disturbed and distressed. Concerned that I was distressed, Structured Ultimate told his nephew and Pure White to accompany me on a stroll over to the Sutras Depository Tower [Cangjing Lou]. Good Karma [Miaoxing], from Universality Retreat [Yuantong An], was reading sutras in front of the building. He made some tea and offered some fruit. Pure White showed me some prayer beads (*xianghuang*) Known as bezoar, or dog's treasure (*goubao*), the prayer beads emanating from an elephant's stomach are generally the size of a ginkgo, with the biggest the size of a peach. Still soft when extracted from the four corners of an elephant's stomach, they form into prayer beads once steeped in boiling water. Yellow with a streak of white, just like cremated ashes, they are as hard as a prayer bead and cannot be crushed by a heavy object. They come from India, where they are highly valued and are only used to make prayer beads; they have no other use. Pure White also said that the prayer beads are only found in the biggest

elephants, one out of every hundred thousand, so they must be the king of the elephants.

I sat by the pond in front of the tower, examining major events in the life of Mahākāśyapa. I looked at the *Buddhist Canon* and material relating to Mount Chicken Foot. On copying out some extracts, I discovered that when the sutras note "As Mahākāśyapa guarded the clothes of the Buddha while he was meditating, four rocky mountains gathered round," they are referring to events that took place here, even though there is no direct mention of Mount Chicken Foot. I also found out that there are three Mahākāśyapa. The only Kāśyapa among the three that became great is Mahākāśyapa; the other two are minor or lesser Mahākāśyapa and nothing more. This evening saw the arrival from the provincial capital of Shi Zhongwen. Originally from Heqing Prefecture, he had come to the mountain to escape after failing the imperial examination.

Twelfth day [8 October]: Good Karma arrived and invited me to go sightseeing at the Avataṃsaka Monastery. He told me that I should meet Uncultivated Pond [Yechi], an old monk who had been a disciple of Full Moon [Yuelun]. I could not meet him on my previous visit because he had been meditating inside a closed shrine, which was a matter of great regret for me.

When I passed Avataṃsaka Monastery at the start of the year, his disciples had all gone out, so there was no way of seeing him. I had often felt sad that Full Moon had no descendants. It was only on arriving here that I discovered that there was someone. We had a quick bite to eat before heading off. Harmonious Light joined us. We went west for one *li*, crossing over a stream by Meeting Auspiciousness Monastery that separated the eastern and central summits, leading us into the realm of the central peaks.

After over one more *li*, we headed south to cross the stream's lower reaches below Lock Water Belvedere [Suoshui Ge] before ascending a slope to arrive at the ridge of the central summit. We went northwest for one *li* up the ridge, passing Rest in the Shade Veranda [Xiyin Xuan]. We then followed the upper reaches of a waterfall heading northwest for more than one *li*, crossing a stream from the north. At this point, we left the central peaks and entered the realm of the western peaks. We went north for more than one *li*, then headed west to cross a stream in the middle of the gorge. We then ascended the ridge of a mountain spur. After reaching the summit, we headed northwest for one *li*, then went west to cross a pavilion bridge. From the land to the front of Avataṃsaka Monastery, the stream below has bridges on the upper and lower reaches. The bridge we crossed is on the lower reaches.

In the gorge by the bridge is a circular pond, a type of dragon pool, which is close to the flowing water but does not mix with it. From the

south side of the stream, we proceeded northwest, crossing a ridge on the western summit of the mountain. After one-half *li*, we entered Avataṃsaka Monastery. Built by Moon Pool (Yuetan), the monastery, which faces east, lies on the north face of the central ridge of the western summit. Because Moon Pool came from Nanjing, it is known as the Nanjing Retreat [Nanjing An].

After Full Moon enlarged the monastery, it became the most important monastery on Mount Chicken Foot, and Empress Cisheng (1018–79) presented a copy of the *Buddhist Canon* to be kept within.[3] After the temple was later destroyed by fire, Uncultivated Pond restored it: the scale of the temple may have been the same as before, but the tower holding the *Buddhist Canon* could not be restored. Now more than seventy years old, Uncultivated Pond had served many renowned monks. Now, in his old age, he had not forgotten the virtuous deeds of his elders. He retreated into quiet and assiduous study because he had not received an education in his youth. This was most praiseworthy.

When he heard of my intention to revise the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*, he lent me the *Comprehensive Account of Mount Clear and Cool* (Qingliang tongzhuan), which he had hand-copied.[4] On the point of leaving in the afternoon, Shi heard I was around, so he came over. I was afraid it was already too late to go back, so, saying goodbye to Uncultivated Pond, I headed off on a different path. Because Shi had a sedan chair, I got a ride.

After leaving the temple, we headed northwest, crossing a bridge on the stream's upper reaches: after four *li*, we crossed northeast and crossed three streams in succession. Later, we came to the east-facing summit, below Sage Peak Monastery [Shengfeng Si] and Burning Lamp Monastery [Randeng Si]. After going down to the east for another *li*, we came to the far point of the summit: a temple was poised above the middle of the path; this was the India Monastery. To the north of the Monastery, a stream flows down from the gorge where Look On High Pavilion is located. To the south of the monastery, a stream flows down in several places from the eastern side of the gorge on the western face of the summit, arriving at the branch of the Sage Peak Monastery: it is here that the east side comes to an end. The suggestion in Wang Shixing's *Sightseeing Chronicles* (Youji) that the Sage Peak Monastery lies in the middle spur of the main summit is incorrect.[5]

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3 Empress Cisheng was the principal consort of the Song dynasty Emperor Renzong (r. 1022–63).

4 Mount Clear and Cool [Qingliang Shan] is an alternative name for Mount Wutai in Shanxi.

5 As already mentioned in note 15, page 405, above, Wang Shixing was a well-known government official and sightseer-traveler of the late Ming. In the original text, because of the vast extent of Wang's travels, Xu Xiake refers to him as Wang of the Ten Sacred Mountains.

At a spot lower down, we crossed a small bridge in the middle of the northern gorge; after that, we entered the western part of the central summit area. We followed the north foothill eastward for one-half *li*, twice crossing small south-flowing streams that pass on either side of the front of the Foremost Transmission Monastery. The field on the southern side of the gorge, which has a cottage in the middle, marks the first signs of cultivation: this is the vegetable garden of the Great Awakening Monastery.

From the left-hand side of the temple, I turned northward, crossing the ridge of the central summit after one-half *li*, passing three temples in succession: Lotus Sutra Retreat [Fahua An], Thousand Buddhas Retreat [Qianfo An], and Spiritual Source Retreat [Lingyuan An], all located on the downward slopes of the central ridge. After one-half *li*, I headed north, crossing the lower reaches of water at the Lock Water Belvedere [Suoshui Ge], arriving at the Great Awakening Monastery.

I carried on eastward along a big path for one *li*, passing in front of the West India Monastery before climbing up to the Accommodating Retreat [Yantong An], where I enjoyed looking at a bush with lantern flowers (*denglong hua*). The bush had leaves as fine as bean seeds and roots as big as a gourd; the flowers were as big as dogwood, with a red pointy center and green stems that hung down very low like lanterns. I had seen a bush like this at Liu's library in Yongchang, but not the blossom.[6] This was the former residence of Good Karma, so I stayed on to brew up some tea before leaving. After one *li*, we crossed a stream to the north side of Meeting Auspiciousness Monastery and left the central-ridge to enter the realm of the east-facing ridge. Passing Dragon Spring Retreat [Longquan An] and Five Blossoms Retreat, we headed northward up a river known today as Small Dragon Pool, on the upper reaches of the Big Dragon Pool [Da Longtan] by Siddha Monastery. While Big Dragon Pool has dried up into a deep gulch, Small Dragon Pool is still full of flowing water. I had looked for it on many occasions. When I got here, I had two monks go to the slope behind Five Blossom Retreat to look for it. I could see the water bubbling up to the right side of Siddha Monastery. I followed the path along the side of the slope and climbed up, but I could not see where the water came out. The two monks persuaded me to return with them as it was getting late. By the time we got back, the temple's doors were about to be closed.

I spoke with Mr. Shi in Return to Self's retreat that evening. Shi has devoted his life to mountains and rivers. He spoke with great familiarity about the great ridge, which heads south from Golden Phoenix Outpost [Jinfeng Shao] in the central and western sections of his hometown, passing east of Lake Erhai, Five Dragons Dike [Wulong Ba], Watery Eyes

6 Xu had met Liu Beiyou when staying at Yongchang (modern Baoshan Shi) in Western Yunnan. See *YJJZ*, 2:1253–54; *YJ*, 2:1033.

Monastery [Shuimu Si], and Watery Dish Hamlet [Shuipan Pu], before passing south of Yimen and Kunyang, where the mountains encircle the provincial capital.

He also said that the stream on the western ridge of Mount King of Liang [Liangwang Shan] to the front of Nine Cauldrons Mountain, which flows south toward White Cliff [Baiya] and Lost Crossing [Midu], is known as Mountain Stream [Shanxi]. Sometime in the past, locals cut off the gorge through which the stream flows, diverting it toward Lake Erhai, resulting in the water being divided into two parts. In fact, the mountain range on which Clear Splendor Cave [Qinghua Dong] is located turns southward from the east side of Mount King of Liang before extending southward at the spot where the gorge is cut off. At first, I thought the ridge descended west of Nine Cauldrons Mountain. If in fact the stream flows south to White Cliff, then my earlier assumption was a huge mistake. As a result of what I have seen in my wanderings through this area, I realize that I should not ignore other people's knowledge.

He told me that throughout a lifetime of exploring mountains, he had constantly been laughed at and become afraid of speaking to anyone. He was delighted by our chance encounter. Having reached the end of the line after forty years of exploring our great mountain ranges, finally meeting a like-minded soul was quite extraordinary. That evening, the exceptionally bright moon and the pure, limpid sky penetrated my inner core.

Thirteenth day [9 October]: Shi, who had inscribed a large tablet for Siddha Monastery, had first acquired a reputation as a calligrapher; his poetry was also exceptional. We had another uninhibited conversation. As the sedan carrier urged me to leave the mountain in the afternoon, Shi earnestly beseeched me to go with him to Nine Layered Cliff, then west past Lion Grove and Siddha Monastery, to stay at Arhat Cliff. We could climb to the summit together tomorrow and then say our farewells. I accepted.

So we climbed up a slope past Celestial Pond's meditation chamber from the east side of Siddha Monastery. Six *li* farther on, we passed the meditation chambers of Master Cessation and Contentment (Zhizu) from Hunan. We climbed northward for more than one *li* along the foot of a steep slope, passing the meditation chamber of Full Virtue [Dechong], an esteemed disciple of Return to Self. Return to Self, in turn, has a close relationship with Mr. Shi because they come from the same village, so he had told him to visit this chamber. After climbing along the western path to Arhat Cliff, Return to Self provided food for us at West India Monastery, where we stopped for the night.

This meditation chamber, which is new and very clean, is located in the middle of Nine Layered Cliff at the highest point. The rear of the chamber lies halfway up a steep slope, with a cave in the middle that

could be reached by climbing up a tree. I had heard of this spot before, but I never thought my first visit would be in the company of other travelers. When I raised my head to look at the trees soaring upward into the skies, there seemed to be an entrance to a cave high up on the cliffside. At that moment, Mr. Shi stopped for a rest and went no farther, but I just carried on up the steep path. Although there was no clear path at the start, I found a wooden water trough and followed it westward for one-half *li*. When I looked up again, the cave was still above, so I continued along the steep path. Once again, there was no clear path at first, but after arriving at the foot of the cliff after one-half *li*, I could see a tree stretching up against the steep cliff. Using the small marks carved out of the tree to provide a foothold, I clambered up the branches to make my way up the precipitous cliff. In all, I crossed several branches in mid-air until I arrived at the tips: it was all extremely perilous. While I had to rely on my hands for half of the strength of my feet, there was nothing to rely on for half of the strength of my hands. It was a case of grasping the wind to soar through the air, although in reality, when it came to the grasping, there was nothing to grasp onto, and when it arrived at soaring, there was no means of doing so.

The entrance to the cave faces due south; there is a precipitous rock face above and below, with the entrance to the cave embedded in the middle, one and a half rods high with the same breadth and depth and not so much as a single crack on all four sides. Enough water sprayed down from the cave roof to provide drinking water for one person, but there was room for just one bed with no additional space. I fear it would be impossible to avoid the assault of the wind and rain.

Looking into the distance from within the cave as far as one could see, Fragrant Wood Mesa's mountain ridges stretch out close at hand below, while in the distance, the mountain peaks of Five Dragons Dike cross to the south. The layers of the mountains at Aligned Sands [Paisha] and Avalokiteśvara Bamboo Thicket [Guanyin Qing] crisscross in the middle, each one manifesting its secluded spots: there are no mysteries that are not revealed.

Sometime later, when I heard calling from the meditation chamber, I went outside. Once more, following the wooden trough eastward along a plank walkway, I could see the water flowing from under a huge rock. On emerging, the water was guided westward by the hollowed-out tree trunk; this was the highest point of water on the hillside. The water descended one or two rods before gushing out as a spring. Return to Self's disciple directed the water to the retreat; the water from another spring that emerges below is guided toward One Cassock Veranda [Yina Xuan]. Water comes out at three levels from the depression in a single gorge. Although the mouths of the springs are in different locations, there must be some hidden connections. This central section of the mountain depends on the water flowing in various directions.

After descending to the retreat, we had tea, fruit, and cakes. I followed the wooden trough at the lower level, going west for one *li* to enter One Cassock Veranda. Gazing into the distance for a long time, we had more tea before heading off.

I went west for one *li*, passing the slope I had previously used to climb up to the summit, before heading across to the west, where the path gradually narrows. At times, the path winds around the start of the slope; at other times, it goes through a depression in the gorge. All around, a jumble of rocks tumble down the slopes. Because there was not a drop of water in the gorge, building a cottage was impossible, so the path had become quite overgrown.

After more than two *li*, I came to a huge tree that had fallen right across the middle of the depression in the gorge, just like a bridge. After heading west for another two *li*, I went up a slope that wound around the spur of the mountain, past Uncultivated Ignorance's meditation chamber. After another one-half *li*, I ascended as far as White Cloud's meditation chamber. He made a determined effort to detain me, but because it was already late, I left. Before saying goodbye, he accompanied me to Natural Law's meditation chamber.

I went west for one-half *li*, past Single Sect's (Yizong) meditation chamber. I climbed a slope next to a stream for one-half *li*, crossing a ridge protruding from south of Prospect Terrace [Wangtai]. By now, dusk was encroaching, and the moon's light was slowly becoming brighter. Advancing over one *li*, I twice crossed a stream in a depression on the western side of Prospect Terrace. Thanks to the light of the moon, I was able to continue for another *li*, crossing Sandalwood Ridge to the south, past the eastern slope of Arhat's Cliff. I gradually made my way across the ridge, arriving after one-half *li* at Wise Heart's (Huixin) meditation retreat, which lies on a slope just out in front of Illusory Emptiness's Azure Cloud Monastery. More than half a year had passed since I had said goodbye to Wise Heart at the United Torches Monastery, and I had not seen him in that time, so I took advantage of the light of the moon to knock on his door. He brought out some tea for us to drink in the moonlight; this was a most agreeable moment.

I was still three *li* from the accommodation arranged in advance by Return to Self, and I would have had to pass down to the west through impassable bamboo thickets in the dark, so Wise Heart took his walking stick to show me the way. After one-half *li* traversing the slope, we climbed upward then ascended a slope for another one-half *li*, meeting the big path from Azure Cloud Monastery. With the moonlight as bright as it had been earlier, Wise Heart left at this moment. After another *li*, I passed a meditation chamber, circled a ridge, and climbed northward up a slope, at which point I saw Return to Self on the hilltop calling out. After another *li*, I entered Came Hither from the West Monastery. Bright Emptiness, one of the temple monks, had gone elsewhere, but when

Triple Emptiness, with whom I had eaten earlier, heard us, he emerged from his retreat to greet us. Knowing I liked to eat gruel, Return to Self cooked some up for us. I had not tasted any for a long time: having just completed the hill's ascent, eating in the moonlight felt like tasting the food of transcendents.

Triple Emptiness had already prepared some snacks: steamed buns, followed by steamed millet cakes made with rice that was even softer than sticky rice, cheese in chili oil, and fried grass stalks in plum vinegar, all laid out in a jumble and not much of it, although it was very flavorsome. It turned out Shi had prepared the food in advance with his fellow monk Bright Emptiness.

[JI MENGLIANG'S EDITORIAL NOTE]

Mr. Wang Zhongren mentioned, "There are no more diary entries by Xu Xiake after the fifteenth day of the ninth month of the twelfth year (11 October 1639)." I note the following: On orders from Mu Zeng in Lijiang, Xu Xiake spent over three months on Mount Chicken Foot before he finished compiling the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*. From the ninth month to the first month of the following year [1640], he spent all his time compiling the gazetteer in the Siddha Monastery. In addition to the gazetteer, Xu produced three small leaflets listing its contents. After these were appended to *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*, extracts of *Chronicle of Events in Lijiang* (Lijiang jishi) and *Dharma King's Infinite Causation* (Fawang yuanqi) were also appended to the diaries.

> The following selection, culled from Travels in Dian 13, is not a travel diary but a critical essay on the source of the Changjiang titled *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source*. This text is important for two reasons: first, Xu Xiake delineates the courses of the Gold Dust, Min (Minjiang), and Great Crossing Rivers (Dadu Jiang) as these major tributaries relate to the Changjiang; and second, he is the first person to correctly identify the upper reaches of the Jinsha Jiang, or Gold Dust River, as the headwater of the Changjiang. His hometown of Jiangyin is located on the estuary of that great waterway.
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> Throughout most of Chinese history, the source of the Changjiang was thought to be in the Min Mountains of Sichuan, from which a tributary of the Changjiang called the Min River flows south and joins with the Changjiang. The legitimacy of this claim is based on a brief line in the "Tribute of Yu" chapter of the *Documents Canon*, an ancient text supposedly edited by Confucius. Xu Xiake disputes this claim and proposes an alternate explanation. On numerous occasions in his diaries,

Xu challenges, as he does here, old descriptions and geographical identifications that seem to have no basis in fact, but for various reasons—such as a mention in a venerated, ancient text like the *Documents Canon*—have been assumed to be correct. Because of such assumptions, these explanations were copied and repeated over countless generations. Xu Xiake's proto-scientific approach to such matters is different: when he disputes an earlier geographical account—and he does so often in his diaries—it is based on knowledge gained from a close reading of textual sources such as geographies and gazetteers, information gathered from local scholars, guides, and informants, and first-hand observation.

The original complete text of Xu Xiake's essay on the Changjiang, also known by the alternate title *Investigation into the Source of the Jiang* (Jiangyuan kao), is lost. The surviving extract of the original work, translated below, is preserved in Feng Shiren's (*jinshi* 1634) *Jiangyin xianzhi* (1640 ed.), 1.17b-20b.[7] Feng added a short preface and a postface, which are also translated.

[FENG SHIREN'S REMARKS]

Those who have discussed the source of the Jiang have long followed the assertion in the "Tribute of Yu" that "[Yu] cleared a passage through the Jiang in the Min Mountains." Recently, a native of this town, Xu Hongzu, courtesy name Xiake, fond of distant sightseeing since his youth, desired to investigate the source of the Jiang.[8] In the fall of the *bingzi* year of the Chongzhen reign (1636), he left home to go beyond the deserts.[9] He returned home in the fall of the *gengchen* year (1640). If we reckon the length of his itinerary, it was one hundred thousand *li*; if we reckon his time away from home, it was four years. The information he chronicled and verified was derived from a complementary appraisal done by his feet and eyes, which supplements what is not mentioned in Sang's *Treatise* and Li's *Commentary*.[10] When he was content and satisfied with his knowledge of mountains and rivers, Xiake returned home and produced *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source*, so I have appended it here.[11]

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7 *YJJZ*, 2:1361–66; *YJ*, 2:1128–31.

8 Xiake is Xu Xiake's nickname, not his courtesy name.

9 In other words, he left home to travel to distant places in southwest China.

10 That is to say, Xu's appraisal was based on where he went and what he saw. The reference here is to Sang Qin's (third cent.?) *Waterways Treatise* (Shuijing) and Li Daoyuan's (ca. 469–527), *Commentary on the Waterways Treatise* (Shuijing zhu). Both are essential works on China's geography in ancient times.

11 According to Qian Qianyi's biography, Xu Xiake set him a copy of *Tracing the*

When reading *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source*, one should remember that this is a critical essay designed to convince readers about the true source of China's greatest river. Thus, the voice of Xu Xiake's prose in this essay differs from that in his travel diaries.

—Translated by Julian Ward

TRACING THE JIANG UPSTREAM TO UNRAVEL ITS SOURCE

"Jiang" and "He" refer to the Changjiang and Yellow Rivers, the two major rivers flowing through the south and north. Their exceptional quality is that they extend to the sea. My hometown is at the hub where the Great Jiang flows into the sea, so the town takes its name from the Jiang.[12] Moreover, when it reaches here, the force of the Jiang attains its greatest strength. This also marks its termination point. People born and bred here, who gaze wide-eyed with wonder at the beating of boat oars on the Jiang, know about its vastness but not its great length. Those who have traced upstream to find its ultimate source, thinking they know how far it extends, have mistakenly thought its source to emanate from the Min Mountains and left it at that.

I examined some chronicles and texts in my youth and saw that the Great He [or Yellow River] flows into China from Mount Stacked Rocks [Jishi Shan].[13] Among those who have traced upriver to find the source of the He, first there was Bowang, who rode a raft, and later there was Du Shi, who wore a Golden Tiger Tally.[14] Their explanations about the source

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Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source from Sichuan *before* he returned home from the southwest in the summer of 1640. This claim seems dubious because there is no evidence that Xu ever reached Sichuan in his travels.

12 The name of Xu Xiake's hometown, Jiangyin, means "on the south side of the Changjiang."

13 Here I follow the variant reading *you* 幼 ('in my youth") instead of *chu* 初 ("originally" or "in the beginning"). See *YJJZ*, 1:1363n3; *YJ*, 2:1286n3. During the Ming, and on modern maps, there are two Mount Stacked Rocks, one designated "Big" (Da), the other called "Small" (Xiao). The first is in southern Qinghai; the second is on the bank of the Yellow River in Gansu, not far from Qinghai. Suffice it to say that scholars, both traditional and modern, have had great difficulty determining how either of these "Stacked Rocks" heights might relate to the actual source of the Yellow River, if at all. Today, the Bayan Har Mountain Range (Bayankala Shanmai) on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau in Qinghai—specifically, the Yueguzonglie Basin in the northern part of that range—is officially recognized by the Chinese government as the source of the Yellow River.

14 Bowang, or Marquis Bowang (Bowang hou), is a title of nobility bestowed upon the great Han dynasty traveler Zhang Qian (d. ca. 114 BCE). After a diplomatic embassy to the faraway Western Regions, Zhang returned to

of the He did not match, but both said the source was north of Kunlun.[15] But if you take stock of that location, it is more than ten thousand *li* northwest of the Min Mountains.[16] How could the source of the Jiang be a shorter distance away and the source of the He be a longer distance away? How is it possible that the great expanse of the He is more than twice that of the Jiang? Only after crossing the Huai River [Huaihe] and wading across the Bian River [Bianshui] did I observe that the He's course bends like a belt, and its width is not one-third that of the Jiang.[17] Given the vastness of the Jiang, how is it possible that its water volume is less than that of the He? In the north, I transited to the Three Qins [San Qin]; in the south, I reached the limits of the Five Ranges [Wuling]; and in the west, I came out at Rock Gate and the Gold Dust.[18] Only then did I realize the waters of the He flow through five provinces: Shaanxi, Shanxi, Henan, Shandong, and Nan Zhili, while the waters of the Jiang flow through eleven provinces: from the northwest through Shaanxi, Sichuan, Henan, Hu-Guang, and South Zhili [Nan Zhili]; from the southwest through Yunnan, Guizhou, Guangxi, Guangdong, Fujian, and Zhejiang.[19]

China years later and reported to the emperor that he had found the source of the Yellow River while drifting on a raft. Du Shi was a Yuan dynasty explorer who searched for the origin of the Yellow River. In 1280, he was appointed to a government office that entitled him to wear a Golden Tiger Tally (Jinhu Fu) on his waistband while he searched for the source of the Yellow River. Possession of this tally meant the emperor authorized his travels.

15 Mount Kunlun figures prominently in myths concerning the Western Regions, including the many different accounts concerning the source of the Yellow River. Mount Kunlun's precise physical location, if it ever existed at all, remains unknown. According to one modern scholar, in traditional Chinese scholarship, at least seven different mountainous areas are identified as the site of "Kunlun." See Vera Dorofeeva-Lichtmann, "Where is the Yellow River Source? A Controversial Question in Early Chinese Historiography," 70. What specific height Xu Xiake might have had in mind when he mentions Kunlun is thus difficult, if not impossible, to determine.

16 Strictly speaking, "ten thousand *li* northwest of Min Mountains" would put Mount Kunlun somewhere in modern Europe. By "ten thousand *li*" Xu means a great distance.

17 The Huai is a major river in China that flows about midway between the Yellow River and the Changjiang. The Bian runs through Henan, Anhui, and Jiangsu, linking the Huai River with the Yellow River.

18 Rock Gate (Shimen) refers to an ancient road of that name connecting southern Sichuan with various places throughout Yunnan. The name is drawn from Rock Gate Mountain in modern Gao Xian, Sichuan. On whether Xu Xiake reached the headwaters of the Gold Dust River during his travels in the southwest, see the translator's note below (following the translation). In English, "Jinsha Jiang" is usually translated as Golden Sand River, but this is inaccurate. Jinsha refers to the alluvial gold powder that today is still panned from the river's waters.

19 During the Ming dynasty, South Zhili corresponded to modern Anhui and Jiangsu provinces. In the next list of provinces, Xu Xiake abbreviates "Nan

When calculating water volume, since the Jiang is twice that of the He, it is undoubtedly a greater river in size.

Note [written by Xu Xiake]: As for the sources of these rivers, the He emerges from the north of Kunlun, while the Jiang emerges from the south of Kunlun. The reach of their courses is the same.[20] The river that emanates from the north is called Star Constellations Lake [Xingxiu Hai]. Buddhist sutras refer to it as the Sītā River [Xiduo He]. In the north, it flows through Stacked Rocks and only then cuts east into Ningxia, where it becomes the Ordos [Hetao].[21] Next it meanders south to form the Great He at Dragon Gate Gorge [Longmen Xia] and then merges with the Wei River [Weihe]. The river that emanates from the south is called Plowshare Rock [Liniu Shi]; Buddhist sutras refer to it as the Gaṅgā [or Ganges; Qingga He].[22] In the south, it courses through Rock Gate Pass [Shimen Guan] and only then cuts east and flows into Lijiang Prefecture, where it becomes the Gold Dust River. Next, it meanders north to become the Great Jiang in Xuzhou Prefecture, where it merges with the river from the Min Mountains.[23]

Note [written by Xu Xiake]: The Min River passes through Chengdu and continues to Xuzhou Prefecture, a distance of less than a thousand *li*. The Gold Dust River passes through Lijiang, Yunnan, and Wumeng Prefectures to Xuzhou Prefecture, a distance of more than two thousnad *li*. Here, the focus is on the closer Gold Dust River rather than the more distant Min River, but is this just because the source of the Gold Dust River is different from the Min River?[24] Of course not! The source of the He has been sought through repeated explorations, so its distant origin has not yet been found. The source of the Jiang, however, has received little attention, so only its nearby tributaries are considered its source. The Min River enters the Jiang, and the Wei River enters the He—these are tributaries in China. While the Min River provides navigation for

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Zhili" as "Nan Zhi." As pointed out in *YJJZ*, 2.1364n8, the various "province" names listed here refer to territorial administrative divisions during the late Ming dynasty, which were officially designated as Provincial Administrative Commissions.

20 In other words, both rivers ultimately flow into the ocean. The Changjiang flows into the East China Sea near Shanghai; the Yellow River flows into the Bohai along the coast of Shandong.

21 The Hetao [Loop of the He], often called Ordos in English, refers to a floodplain region in northwestern China where the Yellow River makes is notable loop or bend. It resembles a bell curve in shape.

22 The Ganges River is also called Huanhe in Chinese sources.

23 Xuzhou Prefecture corresponds to modern Yibin Shi, Sichuan. "The river from the Min Mountains" refers to the Min River.

24 In other words, the longer and more distant Gold Dust River could be the source of the Changjiang.

boats, the Gold Dust River turns and twists through Manliao and Xidong settlements, so none of the river and land routes there can be used to trace it upstream.[25] The people of Xuzhou only know that the river there emanates from Mahu and Wumeng Prefectures. They do not know that its upper reaches course from Yunnan and Lijiang Prefectures. As for Yunnan and Lijiang Prefectures, the people in Xuzhou know these are the places where the Gold Dust River forms but do not know that the lower reaches of that river that emerge in Xuzhou constitute the source of the Jiang. Yunnan also has two Gold Dust Rivers: one flows south and then turns north. This is the Jiang being discussed here. As it turns out, it is called the Ganges River in Buddhist sutras. The other flows south and down into the sea. This is where Wang Ji (1378–1460) made his punitive expedition to Luchuan.[26] The Burmese people at that time regarded the river as a strategic barrier. As it turns out, Buddhist sutras refer to it as the Sindhu River [Xindu He].[27] None of the Yunnan gazetteers chronicle the differences in these two rivers' sources and terminus points. Each suspects confusion about the matter, but none says whether these are two parts of one river or two separate rivers. But if you divide them as north and south rivers, how, using this approach, can one distinguish which one is the source and which one is not? Since all of them failed to determine which one was more distant and which one was closer, they looked at the text in the "Tribute of Yu," which says, "[Yu] cleared a passage through the Jiang in the Min Mountains," and then took it as the source of the Jiang, thereby associating it with the Min Mountains. They did not realize that Yu's opening of the passage was undertaken because of the Jiang's potential harm at the beginning of China's history and not because it was the starting point of the Changjiang.[28] The opening of a passage through the He started at Stacked Rocks, but the He's source does not start at Stacked Rocks. Opening a passage in the Jiang began in the Min Mountains, but the Jiang's source likewise does not emanate from the Min Mountains. Even though the Min River flows into the

25 Xu Xiake seems to be using the terms Manliao and Xidong as general references to tribal people who occupied lands along the Gold Dust River. When Xu says "so none of the river and land routes there can be used to trace it upstream," he suggests it is either too difficult or dangerous to head upstream on the Gold Dust River.

26 While serving as minister of war in the early 1440s, Wang Ji led a military campaign to Luchuan on the Burmese border to quell a local insurrection. Wang is also known by the honorific title Jingyuan (Calm and Distinguished).

27 According to Indian folklore, its four major river systems' origins can be traced to the Xueshan, or Snow Mountains, on the western side of the Himalayas. Xu Xiake's understanding of the Ganges and Sindhu Rivers, as they relate to the two Gold Dust Rivers in Yunnan, reflects his own perspective. How these waterways may or may not have networked is much more complicated than the brief account provided here.

28 The "potential harm" comment refers to the dangers posed by flooding.

Jiang, that does not necessarily make it the Jiang's source. This is precisely like the Wei River flowing into the He, but that does not necessarily make it the source of the He.

There is more. South of the course of the Min River, there is also Great Crossing River, which approaches from Tubo in the west.[29] It flows through Li and Ya Subprefectures, then merges with the Min River. Northwest of the Gold Dust River, the source of the Great Crossing River is also farther away than the Min River, yet it is closer than the Gold Dust. Thus, when advancing an argument about the Jiang's source, the Gold Dust River should be regarded as the headwater.

There is more. Confucian scholars during the Song dynasty referred to China's Three Major Dragons [San Da Long].[30] The vein of the Southern Dragon also emerges from the Min Mountains, descends to adjoin with the southern bank of the Great Jiang, proceeds east, crosses Chengling Shoal [Chengling Ji] and Hukou County, and then reaches Jinling.[31] In so thinking, Song dynasty scholars should have carefully noted that the expanses of the Great Crossing and Gold Dust rivers cut off the Southern Dragon Vein [Nan Longmai] in mid-course. Moreover, they should have indicated that Chengling Shoal and Hukou County serve as Dongting and Lake Poyang's estuaries. These two giant lakes surge into the Jiang. The western source of Dongting emerges from the Yuan River [Yuanjiang] and Grain Spike Pass [Gumang Guan] in Guizhou. The southern source arises from the Xiang River, Cooking Pan Mountain [Fushan], and the Dragon Temple [Longmiao] in Western Yue [Yuexi, modern Guangxi].[32] The southern source of Poyang emerges from the Gan River (Ganjiang), from Litou and Pingyuan County in Eastern Yue.[33] The eastern origin emerges from Xin and Feng, from Fishing Bridge Mountain [Yuliang Shan] in Min, and the south ridge of Transcendent Sunglow Clouds Ridge in Zhejiang.[34] This southern vein twists and winds for three thousand *li* south of the Jiang, so how could one say the Southern Dragon Vein "descends to adjoin with the southern bank of the Great Jiang"?

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29 Tubo is an alternate name for Tibet, derived from the empire and people of that name who lived on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau between the seventh and tenth centuries. *YJJZ*, 2.1359–60n1.

30 "Three Major Dragons" [San Da Long] is an abbreviation of "Three Major Dragon Veins" [San Da Longmai]. The Chinese term *mai* 脈, rendered here as "vein," should be understood as connected ridges that form *chains* or *ranges* of mountains.

31 This rocky shoal in modern Chongqing Shi is known as the "First Shoal on the Changjiang." Jinling is modern Nanjing in Jiangsu.

32 That is to say, Guangxi.

33 That is to say, Guangdong.

34 Following *YJJZ*, 2.1365n17, and reading Xin 信 to refer to Guangxin 廣信 Prefecture and Feng 豐 to refer to Yongfeng 永豐 County.

Moreover, since those Song dynasty scholars did not carefully consider the Dragon Veins, they did not determine the Jiang's source. Today, if you carefully look at the overall configurations of the Three Dragon Veins, the Northern Dragon [Beilong] straddles the He to the north. At the same time, the Southern Dragon embraces the Jiang to the south. The Central Dragon [Zhonglong] forms an especially short boundary between them. As for the Northern Dragon, only half of its branch extends toward the south and passes into China. All of these viewpoints have alternate explanations.[35] Only the Southern Dragon boundlessly stretches throughout half the realm. Its vein also emanates from Kunlun, where it gains the upper hand over the Gold Dust River and then descends to the south, passing through Rock Gate Pass and Lijiang Prefecture. The two rivers, Gold Dust in the east and Billows Blue [Lancang] in the west, straddle it.[36] The Southern Dragon circles around
the south of Lake Dianchi, crosses the southern borders of Guizhu and the Duli River [Duli Jiang], then presses on to the Five Ridges.[37] The Dragon Veins are far away; the Jiang is also far away. The veins are far away; the sources are also far away. This is the reason the Jiang is longer than the He.

There is more. The southern vein presses on to Mount Fisherman's Bridge through the Five Ranges, then in the south spreads to form Mount Drum [Gushan] in Min Province.[38] In the east, it divides to form Mounts Tiantai and Yandang in Zhejiang. The main chain turns north to form Little Gan Ridge [Xiaogan Ling] on the border between Min and Zhe. It crosses Grass Mesa Relay Station [Caoping Yi] on the border between Jiangsu and Zhejiang then towers up to form mountain ranges in Zhejiang and Mount Huang on the border between Huizhou and Ningguo Prefectures. In the east, it reaches Clustered Mountains Pass [Congshan Guan] on the border of Jixi and Jianping.[39] In the east, it divides to form the Tianmu and Wulin Mountain Ranges.[40] In the north, the main chain crosses East Dike [Dongba] then towers up to form Mount Hook Curl [Gouqu Shan].[41] Hence, the whirling Dragon Vein

35 See the remarks on this line by Chen Hong in the text below.
36 This is the Chinese name for the upper half of the Mekong River.
37 During the Ming, Guizhu (modern Guiyang Shi, Guizhou) was the name of a tribal chief's office. "Duli River" [Duli Jiang 都黎江] should probably instead read "Duni River" [Duni Jiang 都泥江], which is a tributary of the South Pan River [Nanpan Jiang] in Guizhou.
38 The "Five Ranges" stretch across Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangdong,
39 Clustered Mountains Pass is thirty *li* north of modern Jixi Xian, Anhui, where spurs of the Tianmu Mountains and Mount Huang converge. *YJJZ*, 2.1365n20. "Jianping" 建平 in this line is not further identified.
40 Both of these mountain ranges are in Zhejiang.
41 Mount Hook Curl is southeast of modern Gourong Xian, Jiangsu.

moves westward to join with Jinling [or Nanjing]. The remaining veins press eastward to my hometown, serving as the termination point of the Great Jiang and the termination point of the Southern Dragon Vein. The Dragon Vein and the Jiang emanate from Mount Kunlun and end in my hometown, where the vein towers up, forming a strategic gateway to the Jiang and sea, establishing Jinling and supporting the longstanding capital with a foundation that could not be uprooted in a thousand years. Is it possible that the lower reaches of the Great River, which since long ago meandered in the north, hastening to Stacked Rocks, and now moves south, seizing control of the Huai and Si Rivers, wholly lacks strategic importance?[42] This being so, the reason the Jiang is greater than the He is not only because they share the same distant source but also because it turns out that the Jiang joins and meets with the Dragon Vein. Thus, if you do not explore the Jiang's source, you will not know it is greater than the He; if you do not discuss this matter in the context of the He, you will not know its source is more distant. Those who talked about the places through which it courses thought it permissible to consider the south first and the north second.[43]

[CHEN HONG'S REMARKS]

The original version of this investigation is lost. What is copied here from Feng's *Gazetteer* for this town [that is, Jiangyin] is not the complete text. Some people in the past have said the original document comprised tens of thousands of words,[44] but what remains today is only a thousand-some words. Following the line in the investigation that says: "As for the Northern Dragon, only half of its branch extends toward the south and passes into China," there is a note that says: 'All of these viewpoints have other explanations.' Xu Xiake's explanations were undoubtedly much longer than what we have here. As it turns out, much of the text has been lost. This is especially unfortunate."

Translator's Note: Practically every Chinese language source published about Xu Xiake mentions that he "discovered the Jinsha Jiang, or Gold Dust River, as the source of the Changjiang." Several prominent historians of science in China, including Joseph Needham (1900–95), have echoed this claim.[45] More recently, however, the eminent China

42 This is another name for the Changjiang.

43 In other words, they failed to investigate the river's more distant origin.

44 The reference here is to Qian Qianyi, who, in his biography of Xu Xiake, says the manuscript of *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source* sent to him comprised "several tens of thousands of words" (*shuwan yan* 數萬言). See *YJJZ*, 2.1441; *YJ*, 2:1194.

45 "A Note on Chinese Explorers," in *Science and Civilisation in China*, Vol. 3, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth* (Cambridge, MA:

bibliographer Endymion Wilkinson has argued that Xu Xiake was not the first person to identify the Gold Dust River as the source of the Changjiang. Moreover, he says, this is a falsehood circulated by Ding Wenjiang. "Long before Xu's time," Wilkinson remarks, "Yan Shigu (581–645), in one of his notes in the *Documents on the Han* (Hanshu), correctly states that the Sheng River [Shengshui; today's Jinsha Jiang] is the source." *Chinese History*, 251. The *Hanshu* passage and commentary Dr. Wilkinson cites about a Han dynasty county named Suijiu (southeast of modern Xichang Shi in southern Sichuan reads: "The Sheng River flows out beyond its (that is, Suijiu County's) borders and in the east reaches Bodao County [modern Yibin Shi, Sichuan], where it enters the Jiang, passes through two commanderies, and then proceeds onward for 1,400 *li*" (遂久，繩水出徼外，東至僰道入江，過郡二，行千四百里。). Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 CE) et al., eds., *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 28A.1600. While Yan Shigu's commentary suggests that the Sheng River is a tributary of the Changjiang, nowhere does it pinpoint that waterway is the source or headwaters of China's longest river. "Source" or "headwaters" is where a river begins. Rivers typically get their water from *many* tributaries or smaller streams. The source is the single tributary most distant from the river's end.

If we define "discover" as reaching a place for the first time, Xu Xiake did not "discover" anything. The Changjiang is fed by three major tributaries, the Gold Dust, the Min, and the Great Crossing, as well as numerous smaller tributaries. Xu Xiake correctly *determined* that among these waterways, the source of the Changjiang can be traced only by following the course of the Gold Dust River. But how did he reach this conclusion? During his travels in southwest China between 1636 and 1640, did Xu physically trace the Gold Dust River to its source? If so, when and where did he do this? If not, what, if anything, prevented him from doing so? A related question is this: Since the late Ming, have geographers and scientists conducted investigations and explorations that have served to pinpoint the source of the Changjiang further? In other words, has anyone discovered other, more distant tributaries that feed into the Gold Dust River?

Xu Xiake entered Yunnan (from Guizhou) on 27 March 1638. He spent the next eighteen months there, after which he fell ill and returned home. His travels and activities in Yunnan can be divided into two periods. The first, from 4 April to 23 September 1638, when he was based in Kunming; the second, from 2 October 1638 until early 1640, when he was based at Mount Chicken Foot (the precise date of his departure for home is unknown). Based on the itineraries described in his diaries, Xu Xiake did not discover or explore the Gold Dust River, though he may have

Cambridge University Press, 1959), 522.

crossed it during his travels in Yunnan. The closest he got to the river was during a trip to Lijiang, a prefecture in northern Yunnan populated in the late Ming by the Nakhi people. As we saw earlier, Mu Zeng, the leader of the family that ruled that prefecture, invited Xu to visit Lijiang. Xu arrived there from Mount Chicken Foot on 22 December 1638. While in Lijiang, he was treated as an honored guest. Xu Xiake was also given clothes and a substantial amount of money to support his future travels. His intention was first to visit Lijiang then continue his journey to Zhongdian, referring to the northwestern part of Yunnan, where the borders of Yunnan, Tibet, and Sichuan meet. This area constitutes the heart of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau. Mu Zeng, however, denied Xu's request to travel north, telling him, "There are Tibetans everywhere along the way and many bandits.[46] One cannot travel there" (路皆古宗, 多盗不可行). *YJJZ*, 2:1070; *YJ*, 2:876. Xu Xiake's diary entries describing his visit to Lijiang are translated in "Diary of Travels in Dian 6." Xu's earlier comments about Manliao and Xidong settlements along the Gold Dust River mirror these concerns. It seems quite possible, then, perhaps even likely, that Xu's desire to travel north to Zhongdian was to explore the upper reaches of the Gold Dust River. Unfortunately, he was denied the opportunity, which may have saved his life.[47] His failure to reach Zhongdian leads to yet another question: if he did not have a chance to explore the northern section of the Gold Dust River, on what basis did he identify it as the upper reaches of the Changjiang?

During his extended stay on Mount Chicken Foot, Xu Xiake compiled a gazetteer for the mountain, which, in places, is quite detailed. This suggests he had access to a library where he could have consulted sources about the waterways in Yunnan. Moreover, during his travels in southwest China, Xu often met with local scholars and government officials, who could have provided him with local and provincial gazetteers and accounts of local places (*diji*). Guides and informants could have given him helpful information as well. In the final analysis, Xu Xiake never discovered the actual source of the Changjiang. What he did was to *identify* the Gold Dust River as the main tributary that

46 During the Ming dynasty and after that, Guzong referred to Tibetans who left their homeland and resettled in Yunnan's Lijiang and nearby Heqing regions. Mu Zeng seems to suggest there is unrest in these areas, making it dangerous to travel there.

47 In a postscript appended to the diaries, Ji Mengliang mentions that after Xu's death, he interviewed Xu's servant Gu Xing, who robbed and abandoned his master in Yunnan but eventually returned to Jiangyin. Ji asked Gu about a nineteen-day gap in the diaries around the time of Xu's visit to Lijiang. Gu claimed that his former master "thoroughly probed the Gold Dust River" (窮金沙江). *YJJZ*, 2.985; *YJ*, 2.802. It seems highly unlikely that Xu could have accomplished this feat relatively quickly, mainly because the Gold Dust River is lengthy (about 1,400 mi/2,253 km), and travel to its source would have been extremely difficult and dangerous.

constitutes *the upper reaches of the Changjiang,* and by doing so, he debunked the "Min Mountains identification" in the "Tribute to Yu."

So how has Xu's identification of the Gold Dust River as the upper reaches of the Changjiang held up since the late Ming? During the subsequent Qing period, geographers in China identified the Gold Dust River as a tributary of the Tongtian River [Tongtian He] in Qinghai, but this was in error. As it turned out, the Tongtian is a separate waterway. The Hong Kong-based explorer and author Wong Hao Man (1949–) led a National Geographic Expedition Team to study the entire river in 1995 and again in 2005. Using high-resolution satellite imagery, the source of the Changjiang was pinpointed to Dam Qu Stream in southwestern Qinghai on the border with Tibet at an elevation of 16,948 ft/5,170 m at coordinates N 32°36'14", E 94°30'44". Finally, satellite mapping in the early twenty-first century has now determined that the ultimate sources of the Changjiang, Yellow, and Mekong Rivers are all located within a few hundred kilometers of one another on the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

—Translated with commentary by James M. Hargett

Appendix 1

Chronology of Xu Xiake

This chronology, based mainly on *NP1* and *NP2*, presents an outline of the significant events in Xu Xiake's life. Date references are to the Western calendar.

1587 Born on 5 January in Nanyangqi, a village in what is now Jiangyin Shi, Jiangsu Province.

1592 Around this time probably begins schooling at home with a local private tutor.

1604 Xu's father, Xu Youmian (1545–1604), dies of wounds sustained during a home invasion by robbers sometime during the previous year.

1607 Following the obligatory three-year mourning period for his father, Xu marries his first wife, née Xǔ, the niece of a prominent local family. Visits Grand Lake in Jiangsu.

1609 Sightseeing trips to Qufu, the traditional home of Confucius, and Mount Tai in Shandong; also visits the Ming capital in Beijing.

1613 In early spring, accompanied by a good friend, the Buddhist monk Lotus Boat, journeys to Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang in Zhejiang. While in Zhejiang, he also surveys the Cao'e River and undertakes additional sightseeing trips to Shaoxing, Ningbo, and Mount Putuo. His earliest surviving diaries chronicle his journeys to Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang in 1613.

1614 Travels to Nanjing and Yangzhou, probably in winter. Xu takes a concubine, née Jin.

1615 Wife gives birth to Xu Xiake's first son, Xu Qi (1615–45). Xu's only daughter, referred to in the family genealogy as Xu the Chaste Widow (Xu Jiefu), was probably born around this time.

1616 With his wife's younger uncle, Xunyang, Xu travels to Mount Baiyue (also known as Mount Qiyun), Mount Huang in Anhui, and Mount Wuyi in northern Fujian. During the fall, he travels to Hangzhou and visits the Orchid Pavilion and Mount Guiji in Shaoxing.

1617 With his mother, née Wang (1545–1625), he visits Master Zhang's Cavern and Shanjuan's Caverns in Yixing. Xu's wife dies.

1618 Visits Mount Lu in Jiangxi with his cousins Xu Yingzhen (1587–1635) and Xu Baifu; travels to Mount Huang for a second time. During this year, he takes a second wife, née Luo.

1619 At home in Jiangyin. Xu's second son, Xu Xian (1618–45), is born to his second wife.

1620 With his uncle, Xu Fangruo, in early summer visits Nine Carp Lake in Fujian. While Xu is away from home, his wife learns that a servant in the household, née Zhou, is pregnant and Xu Xiake is the father. The wife expels the servant and her infant son—born sometime in late 1619 or early 1620—from the family and arranges for Ms. Zhou to marry a local man surnamed Li. Moreover, the wife denies the boy permission to use the family name "Xu," so he becomes known as Li Ji or Li Jieli. After his father's death, Li Ji was instrumental in editing and helping to preserve *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*. That same year, Xu Xiake's mother became seriously ill but later recovered. Xu builds the Clear Sky Mountain Hall to celebrate her return to good health.

1621 At home in Jiangyin.

1622 At home.

1623 Sightseeing tours to Mount Song, Mount Hua, and Mount Taihe (also known as Mount Wudang).

1624 At home, where he celebrates his mother's eightieth birthday. Together, they visit some local scenic sites. Xu meets the famous Ming dynasty cultural icon Chen Jiru (1558–1639), who coins for him the nickname Xiake, or Traveler in the Sunglow Clouds. Another son, Xu Gou (1624–78), is born to concubine Jin.

1625 His mother passes away in late summer.

1626 At home.

1627 At home.

1628 Following the mourning period for his mother, Xu heads to Fujian and travels as far south as Mount Luofu in Guangdong.

1629 Travels to Beijing and Mount Pan (near modern Tianjin Shi).

1630 Visits various scenic sites in Zhejiang, Fujian, and Jiangxi.

1631 Mostly at home. Visits Songjiang with his cousin Xu Yingzhen.

1632 With his cousin, Xu Zuntang (courtesy name Zhongzhao; 1583–1653), Xu revisits Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang in Zhejiang. He also goes sightseeing around Lake Tai with his friend Huang Daozhou (1585–1646), a famous calligrapher and high-ranking Ming dynasty government official.

1633 Visits Beijing, then travels to Mount Wutai and Mount Heng in Shanxi.

1634 At home.

1635 At home.

1636 On 17 October, Xu Xiake leaves home with Tranquil Hearing and two servants, Gu Xing and Wang the Second, for an extended sightseeing excursion to southwest China that would take them through Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Hunan, Guangxi, Guizhou, and eventually to Yunnan. This would be Xu's most extended and final journey away from home. He first visits various sites in Zhejiang and Jiangxi.

1637 Travels to scenic locations in Hunan, including Mount Heng and Mount Jiuyi. Later passes into Guangxi. On 7 March, Xu, Tranquil Hearing, and Gu Xing almost lose their lives when pirates on the Xiang River hijack their boat. Visits karst caves and other scenic sites in and around Guilin. Tranquil Hearing and Gu Xing both become seriously ill in late July. Xu then attempts to continue his journey to Yunnan, but while traveling, he discovers the road is closed because of threats by Vietnamese bandits along the border. Forced to abandon the direct route to Yunnan, he returns to Nanning. Finds out that Tranquil Hearing had died there earlier, on 10 November. Following the monk's deathbed wish, Xu collects his remains, which he will later bury on Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan.

1638 Further sightseeing in Guangxi and Guizhou. Reaches Yunnan from Guizhou on 21 June. Traces the origin of the South Pan River. Visits the provincial capital at Kunming. While in Yunnan meets and becomes friends with the famous painter and poet Tang Dalai (1593–1673), who provides Xu with money to support his travels and letters of introduction.

1639 Sometime in winter, Xu reaches the Great Awakening Monastery on Mount Chicken Foot in Dali, Yunnan. Buries Tranquil Hearing's remains on the mountain. Visits Lijiang in northwestern Yunnan at the invitation of Mu Zeng (1587–1646), leader of the Nakhi (Chinese: Naxi) people, where he edits some of Mu's Chinese writings and tutors one of his sons. He also goes sightseeing around Dali, the center of the old Nanzhao dynastic kingdom that flourished during the eighth and ninth centuries. Spends several months traveling to places and scenic sites throughout Yunnan. In the fall, he is back on Mount Chicken Foot, spending about three months compiling the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*. After accompanying Xu Xiake for years, Servant Gu Xing runs off, taking his master's belongings.

1640 Suffering from a severe foot ailment, Xu leaves Yunnan for his home in Jiangsu in late February. He arrives in Jiangyin

sometime in the summer, probably in early August. Xu sends his oldest son, Xu Qi, to Beijing to deliver winter clothes to Huang Daozhou, who is now imprisoned. Xu Qi hand-copies his father's travel diaries into four volumes.

1641 Xu Xiake dies at home on 8 March. He was fifty-four years old.

—James M. Hargett

Appendix 2

Commemorative Tomb Biography of Xu Xiake

by Chen Hanhui (1590–1646)

Chen Hanhui, from Linhai County in Zhejiang, was a long-standing friend of Xu Xiake. He became a *jinshi* in 1632 and acted as magistrate for Jingjiang, a county close to Jiangyin. Some of the content of Chen's commemorative tomb biography, particularly about Xu Xiake's travels in western China, is based on conjecture. Certain passages are very similar to the text of Qian Qianyi's biography of Xu Xiake, for which see appendix 3 below.

Commemorative tomb biographies, inscribed on a flat, upright stone displayed in front of the tomb chamber, combined the record *zhi*, which recounted the main biographical events of the deceased's life, with the inscription *ming*, which added grief-stricken praise written in a highly ornate and hyperbolic literary style, sometimes blending poetry and prose.

A tomb biography is a biography of the events in the life of the person in the tomb. The venerable Xiake was a close friend and a great traveler. He wandered on land and water during his life, clambered up starry mountain peaks, and treaded across distant wildlands. Now, he travels among the emperors in the mountains of the Daoist transcendents, gracefully riding the mists beyond the eight extremities like a phoenix hovering seven thousand feet up. Will we once more speak of him perching among mortals?

Now, the composition of tomb biographies is an ancient custom. In the past, when Xiake undertook his boundless journeys, his friends feared he was just like Kuafu, pursuing the sun in his chariot, and that he would never return to see the walls of his hometown.[1] Now, his body has been presented for burial, and his form is entrusted to the ancestral burial ground. The venerable gentleman's immortal bones and immense talents will instruct posterity with their rectitude, for, throughout his life, he displayed filial piety, chivalrous uprightness, and the virtues of

Source: *Xu Xiake muzhiming* (*YJJZ*, 2:1431–38; *YJ*, 2:1191–95).

1 Kuafu was a mythological figure who tried to catch the sun to relieve a constant raging thirst. He eventually died of dehydration.

the ancients. His literary works, regarded as remarkable among outstanding men, should be spread worldwide along with tales of his travels and cannot but provide obvious and clear instruction for all posterity.

His closest friends, like Chen Jiru, Chen Renxi, and Miao Changqi (1562–1626),[2] have already passed away while Master Huang Daozhou is in prison. Xiake's cousin Zhongzhao, out of a desire to find someone to record and inscribe the tomb inscription biography, has thus instructed me to grasp the brush and compose the words. While I am a mere turtledove with little knowledge of the world, we have been close friends for a long time, so I would not presume to decline my moral duty simply because I am not quick-witted enough.

I present this document respectfully according to form. The gentleman's given name was Hongzu, his courtesy name was Zhenzhi, and Xiake was his nickname. Master Huang Daozhou gave him an additional nickname, Xiayi, but the name Xiake, chosen by Chen Jiru, is known throughout the world. His ancestors were eminent scholars of the southern regions. In the Song dynasty, Xu Gu was the municipal governor of Kaifeng before following the imperial retinue in the Southern Crossing (Nandu).[3] His ancestors were scattered across Bramble Stream, Yunjian, and Qinchuan. Only when One Thousand and Eleven assumed the office of gentleman for managing affairs (*chengshi lang*) did the family settle in Wucheng Village [Wucheng Li] at Jiangyin for the first time.[4] One Thousand and Eleven's descendants vowed never to serve the Yuan court.[5]

When we come to the present dynasty, Xu Qi (1362–1445) was chosen for his ability and was sent to Sichuan to take up an official post, while Xu Min (1393–1476), his oldest son, produced grain to relieve famine at the frontier.[6] Both men took the glory of fulfilling their national duty and rode in the emperor's chariot. Xu Min had a son, Xu Yi (1422–83), the Honorable Yi (Yigong), who was appointed palace penman (*zhonghan*)

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2 On Miao Changqi, see *DMB*, 2:1067–69.

3 Southern Crossing refers to the refugee flight south from Kaifeng of some members of the Song imperial family and government officials after the fall of the Northern Song dynasty to the Jin (or Jurchen) in the mid-1120s. Many of these refugees settled in Zhejiang and Jiangsu.

4 This relocation would have taken place in the closing years of the Southern Song dynasty.

5 When the leader of the Mongol empire, Khan (ca. 1215–ca. 1294), proclaimed the establishment of the Yuan dynasty in China in 1271, many former government officials of the Song dynasty and their descendants refused to serve the alien regime.

6 The hyperbole in the summary account of Xu Xiake's family background that follows—especially the successes of Xu's ancestors in the civil service examinations, should be compared with the more sobering account of his family history in the Introduction. Because of the profusion of names in the account below, Xu's ancestors' birth and death dates, when available, are provided to help readers sort out the roles of his forefathers in the family's lineage.

because of his skill in the Six Styles of Calligraphy (Liushu), while his brother, Xu Tai (1429–79) earned highest honors in the civil service examinations and later served as prefect of Jingzhou Prefecture. They all added luster to the annals of officialdom through their talent and fame. Xu Yi had a son, Xu Yuanxian (1454–81), the Honorable Ziting (Ziting Gong). He had a son, Xu Jing (1473–1507), the Honorable Xiwu (Xiwu Gong), whose name topped the civil service examination noticeboards in the south. Xu Jing's son Xu Qia (1497–1564), the Honorable Qia (Qiagong), served as a registrar (*bu*) for the Court of State Ceremonials (Honglu Si). Xu Qia's son Xu Yanfang, the Honorable Chaishi (Chaishi Gong), was bestowed with the title of aide in the Court of Imperial Entertainments (*guanglu cheng*). These appointments are all recorded for posterity in the family annals. Yanfang's son, Xu Youmian (1545–1604), the Honorable Yu'an (Yu'an Gong), was Xiake's respected father.

Xu Youmian married Wang Ruren. When Xiake was one month old, she had a strange dream about his birth. He was born with a large frame, gracious eyebrows, a prominent forehead, and eyes that shone bright green day and night. For twelve hours after he was born, Xiake never slept. Those who saw him took him to be one who supped on sunset clouds.[7] From a young age, he attended school. As soon as he could talk, he could recite texts; as soon as he could wield a pen, he could compose an essay.

Xu was especially fond of extraordinary books and spent excessive amounts of time reading extensively through historical and geographical accounts, illustrated works about the mountains and seas, and the entire corpus of accounts of transcendent beings and eminent recluses. Whenever he read these works, he would need to cover them with Confucian texts, under which he would then enjoy reading these extraordinary books. They made his spirit cheery and content. However, he feared going against his parents' wishes, so he applied himself to studying pedantic, dry texts even though this was decidedly not what he desired.

After reading Tao Hongjing's (456–536) biography, he joked: "This is just like listening to the wind in the pine trees. If we set our sights on gazing at the heavens and climbing up to the bright sun, how can anywhere seem distant?"[8] Taking into consideration the words of Yan Guang (ca. 1–75 CE): "If there are nine regions, I will visit eight of them; if there

7 In other words, he looked destined to become a transcendent being.

8 Tao Hongjing (also known as Tao Shuijian) was the founder of Daoism's Supreme Clarity (Shangqing) sect. His biography in the *History of the Southern Dynasties* (Nanshi) contains the following passage: "He was so fond of the sound of the wind in the pines, that he planted pine trees all over his courtyard; whenever he heard that sound, he was filled with great happiness." Li Yanshou 李延壽 (fl. 618–76), ed., *Nanshi* 南史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), 76.1897–1900.

are five sacred mountains, I will climb four of them," Xiake clapped his hands and declared: "In the morning I should be at the Jade Ocean [Bihai] and in the evening at Mount Cangwu [Cangwu Shan].[9] Why should I restrict myself to one corner of the world?"

Some found fault with his fantastic claims, but he was not bothered and went further into the anecdotes of ancient people, along with the treasures of the dwelling places and caves of the transcendents: there were none he did not investigate. He frequently drank and recited verses till dawn with acquaintances, writers, and local associates. He was gentle morning and night and attentive to the most minor things. In his speech, he showed attention to the little details, cherished mulberry (*sang*) and catalpa (*zi*) trees, was always respectful to the people of his local village, and was ashamed to follow the habits of wealthy young fellows.[10] He was much like the youthful Liang Hong (Han dynasty) in that he did not depend on others.[11]

No sooner had Xiake left his youth behind him than his father had an encounter with robbers and was confined to his home with injuries. He rushed to help, providing care and medicine for over a year until his father died. When Xiake's sorrow left him thin and emaciated, the villagers recognized his youthful filial piety. After expending his energies in doing his utmost to provide a funeral, external worries piled up so that he appeared to change from one day to the next, becoming even more disenchanted with the mundane world. He wished to seek out the extraordinary in the mountains, but because his mother was still alive, he was reluctant to leave the simple life and dared not ask her for permission to travel. However, she encouraged him, saying: "It is the ambition of men to travel to the four quarters. The *Analects* puts forward the following: '[A son] away from home must always have a specific direction in mind.' It only asks that a son closely keep track of his distance and time away from home and should leave and return home at an arranged time. So, how could I force my son to stay cooped up like a pheasant inside an enclosure or a horse hitched to the shafts of a wagon?[12] This inspired him to put on his traveling cap and prepare for departure. Hobbling along in his straw sandals like an old donkey, Xiake sought the remarkable and went close to dangerous sights. From then on, he covered the eight circles of the four great regions, trekking non-stop."

I recall how, in the autumn of 1632, on his third trip to Mount Tiantai and Mount Yandang, he accompanied Zhongzhao to visit me at Lesser

9 Mount Cangwu, also known as Mount Jiuyi, is in Hunan.

10 Mulberry and catalpa trees were traditionally planted to honor one's descendants. Chen Hanhui here alludes to the "Xiaobian" poem (*Maoshi* 197) in the *Poetry Canon* (Shijing) to convey Xu Xiake's love for his parents.

11 In his youth, the poet Liang Hong ate alone, allowing the fire used by others to die down before relighting it.

12 *Analects*, 4:19.

Cold Mountain [Xiao Hanshan]. Burning a lamp as we talked into the night, he gave me a rough outline of the travels that had taken up his life:

> In 1607, I first crossed Grand Lake by boat. I climbed the two mountains of East and West Dongting [Dongxi Dongting] and visited the historical vestiges of His Honor, Spiritual Majesty (Lingwei Zhangren).[13] In 1609, I passed through the states of Qi, Lu, Yan, and Ji, ascended Mount Tai, worshipped at the Forest of Confucius [Kong Lin], went to the Mencius Temple [Mengmiao] and the village where his mother moved home three times, and mourned the withered paulownia tree on Mount Yi [Yishan].[14]
>
> I also headed south to Mount Potalaka [Luojia Shan].[15] On my return, I climbed eighteen thousand rods to the top of Flowery Summit, from where I looked east to Big and Small Dragon Splash Pools, Rock Gate, and Mount Transcendent Capital [Xiandu Shan].[16] In 1614 and 1615, I wanted to be at home in Wu, so how could I turn a blind eye to the areas around my hometown? My thoughts turned to Nanjing, a beauty spot since the Six Dynasties when Emperor Gao (Gaodi; r. 479–83) established his capital there.[17]
>
> I did not wish to miss seeing the bright moon by the twenty-four bridges or the thirty-six bends of the muddy Yellow River. It was not until 1616 that I set off on distant travels again. At the start of spring, I visited Mount Huang and Mount Baiyue; in the summer, I went to the Nine Bends of Mount Wuyi; and in autumn, the Five Waterfalls and Orchid Pavilion and saw Yu's Mausoleum.[18] I tied up at the West Lake [Xizi Hu] for a month. 1617 I stayed home, though I did visit the Shanjuan Caverns and Master Zhang's Cavern. In 1618, I climbed Mount Nine Blossoms [Jiuhua Shan] and gazed at the Five Elders Peak.[19]

13 Spiritual Majesty (Lingwei) is a transcendent who supposedly once encountered King Helü of the state of Wu (r. 514–496 BCE) on Mount Yu [Yushan].

14 Mount Yi is in Shandong. The "Tribute of Yu" chapter in the *Documents Canon* references a solitary tree on the mountain's south side.

15 That is, Mount Putuo.

16 These sites are all in Zhejiang.

17 Moling is an ancient name for the city of Nanjing, which was the capital of the Southern Qi dynasty (479–501), established by Emperor Gao.

18 Yuling's Mausoleum, a memorial for Yu the Great, is situated near present-day Shaoxing.

19 Five Elders Peak is on Mount Baiyue (or Mount Qiyun).

> In 1620, I reached Fish Dragon Cavern [Yulong Dong], examined the Zhe River Tidal Bore (Zhejiang Chaoshui), and reached Mount Jianglang and Nine Carp Lake before returning home. In 1621 and 1622, I visited Mount Song, Mount Hua, and Mount Wudang, peeked at the fairy isle of Yingzhou and the Bohai Sea, and went up the Xiao and Xiang Rivers. I can still faintly picture the nine specks of clouds seen in Qizhou. Thinking back to the remarkable people I have met, I can still see faintly the Zen Master Wisdom Lamp on Mount Lu, the herb gatherer in the Zhongnan Mountains [Zhongnan Shan], and the Daoist on Mount Hua who abstained from eating grain.

Having listened to what Xu Xiake had to say, I felt the extent of his travels was as boundless as the Milky Way, so I asked him:

> "Are you weary from your travels?"

He replied:

> Not yet. There are still vast horizons I have yet to explore within the emperor's realm. Moreover, there are still places in Western Yue [Guangxi] and Southern Yunnan that I have yet to visit. Even when it came to my desire to visit Mount Emei, because of the disruption caused by She Chongming, I could only manage a short amount of time in Shaanxi and Gansu before returning home, which was not my intention.[20] I wish to investigate the distant regions of Langfeng Ridge [Langfeng Ling] on Mount Kunlun.

Zhongzhao said: "My cousin had a very filial nature. Whenever he traveled, he gathered various flowers and plants to celebrate his mother's longevity."

His accounts of the strangeness of the customs, the marvels of the caverns, the mountain valleys, and the cliffside paths of all the regions he passed made people tremble in astonishment. His mother, on the other hand, was greatly pleased. When she was old, he was keen not to be admonished for his distant travels, but she said: "I once told you, I am still a good eater. Now, you should continue with your travels." She asked him to accompany her to Bramble Stream and Mount Hook Curl and walked in front of him the entire way there. Everyone joked: "The ability to traverse physical landscape must be in the blood."

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20 On the rebellion in Sichuan led by She Chongming in the early 1620s, see part 2, note 5, page 354. See also Qian Qianyi's biography of Xu Xiake in appendix 3.

His mother celebrated her eightieth birthday in the *jiazi* year of the Tianqi reign (1624). Chen Jiru wrote a foreword marking her longevity, Zhang Lingshi painted "Autumn Orchard, Morning Loom" (Qiupu chenji tu), and Xu's relative Li Benning wrote an introduction. The inscriptions by these honorable gentlemen, all over seventy years old, were renowned nationwide. Xiake collected the treasures written in honor of her longevity as the "Sunny Mountain Hall Copybook" (Qingshan Tang tie).

That year, Xiake once more went out on his travels. Upon reaching Green Stalk Mesa on his descent from Mount Hua, his heart suddenly started to pound. He hurriedly tied on his straw sandals and rushed back home, but his mother was already seriously ill. In 1625, he spent from spring to autumn by her bedside caring for her, never stopping to loosen his clothes. If his mother did not eat, he also did not eat, so she insisted that he should do so. Towards the end of her life, Xiake cried like a child day and night and beseeched Dong Qichang and Chen Renxi for help. Whenever he walked, he stumbled. When her illness was critical, he implored the heavens to take his body in her place and traveled everywhere in pursuit of well-known plants that could serve as medicine. Due to his immeasurable filial devotion, he was almost crushed by his grief.

Once the mourning period was complete, he heaved a big sigh and said: "Formerly, when my mother was alive, I could not devote myself to anything else. Now that she has passed, can I not devote myself to mountains and rivers?" He took leave of his two parents at their tomb, not committing himself to a journey for any length of time, and traveled at leisure, without obstacle.

His idea of traveling was different from that of other people. He would carve out a mountain path with pieces of iron, sleep out in the frosty dew, endure hunger for several days, and eat when he eventually found some food. At night, he would speak with trolls and demons. He could endure winter with a simple quilt and summer with an unlined garment. Most remarkable was that heaven provided him with a pair of calloused feet, so he did not need to avail himself of a carriage. Having spent his days passing through thick bamboo thickets and sheer precipices for one hundred *li*, in the evenings, he would light a torch and pick up a pen by a withered tree at the foot of a crumbling cliff to record his diary. If, by chance, he met someone who told him about the attractions of a particular place, he would stride off to find it. Several months later, he would seek out that person to inform him of all the unseen wonders.

Once, at a banquet, I asked Xiake: "Have you ever climbed to the summit of Mount Yandang?" On hearing this, his interest was stirred. The next day, before the sun had risen, he stood by my bedside, a pair of straw sandals in his hands, and said: "I am going back there now; I'll report to you on my return." Ten days later, he returned and told me:

"Setting off on a side path, I clambered up some vines to the Dragon Splash Pool. After thirty *li*, I came to a tarn where geese had built their homes. I ascended for over ten more *li* and found the round hut of the monks White Cloud and Beyond the Clouds from the Zhengde reign still there. After ascending another twenty *li*, I was buffeted by fierce winds at the summit, where a herd of several hundred deer surrounded me as I slept. I did not come down till I had spent three nights there." Such was his boldness in going forward.

Zhongzhao laughed, saying: "What is so hard about getting to a place that is so close at hand? I recall when he went to Yan, Chen Renxi spoke to him about Mount Kongtong, where Guangchengzi stayed, and how it was possible to see beyond the frontier from the summit."[21] Xiake set off, carrying enough food for three days. When he returned, he passed his newly acquired knowledge to Chen Renxi. After a few days, the caitiffs had arrived at Jimen.[22]

From Jiangyin, he went to Fujian, where he visited Huang Daozhou at a halting place near a tomb.[23] On arriving in Guangdong, he presented a letter of introduction written for him by Huang. When he returned from climbing Mount Luofu, he was bearing the fruits of a plum tree. The following year, he sought out Huang Daozhou on the way to Yunyang. Then, remembering me at Xiling, he went from the Cao'e River to Mount Siming. After five days, he arrived barefoot carrying an orchid. He praised me for recommending that I look out for the stone window at the heart of the mountain. My cousin was of the type whose sincere heart only looked forward. He had no second thoughts and never promised anything lightly. Here, I have praised the gentleman through a detailed description of his exploits.

Xiake did not like the words of the practitioners of divination and numerology. By the time he had finished his wanderings throughout the empire, he had ascertained the divisions and sources of the stars' movements and the earth's twists and turns. He said that the astronomical and geographical records written by scholars of former periods had merely perpetuated false assumptions. Since the earliest records, discussions of the courses of the Changjiang and Yellow Rivers and the major branches of the three mountain ranges had been limited to those parts lying within the territory of China. Nobody before had ever investigated the outer reaches. For this reason, he desired to go to the regions beyond

21 Guangchengzi is a mythical Daoist figure from the time of the Yellow Emperor in high antiquity who resided on Mount Kongtong [Kongtong Shan] in Gansu. He was said to have lived for 1,200 years.

22 Tentative translation. Either some of the original text is missing, or this line is out of place. Jimen is southwest of Beijing.

23 The diaries do not document this meeting. It may have taken place in 1628 when Xu was on his way to Mount Luofu in Guangdong.

Mount Kunlun. He recorded the words of Xiang Chang: "If I were already dead, I would be fortunate enough not to have family cares."[24]

In the ninth month of the *bingzi* year (1636), he sent me a brief letter saying he was going away beyond the Changjiang: "I will seek a route to the Western Regions, and do not know when I shall return to the eastern lands. Should I be lucky enough to reach Jigong, I will make a report on the exotic realms there."[25] He waited for Zhongzhao to return from Fujian. Before grasping hands in farewell, he set off with a big smile, accompanied by a monk and servant. The monk, Tranquil Hearing, was burning incense in his monastery when he first heard Xu speak. Much taken by Xu's words, he was oblivious to the difficulties of a long journey. The initial stages of the journey saw them pass through northern and southern Zhejiang, Jiujiang, and Sanchu.[26] During an encounter with robbers on the Xiang River, they lost luggage and books. Tranquil Hearing subsequently died of his injuries, and Xiake only just survived.[27] Everyone said it would be better to rest than to carry on. Xiake said: "As long as I am carrying a spade, where can I not be buried?"

Borrowing money from villagers, he carried Tranquil Hearing's remains, crossing Lake Dongting and climbing Mount Heng, where he exhausted the wonders of the seventy-two peaks, ten caves, fifteen cliffs, thirty-eight springs, and twenty-five streams.

Thinking back to his former travels, he realized he had not yet thoroughly explored Mount Emei, so when he took the road to Sichuan, he climbed the mountain before heading north to the Min Mountains, going as far as Songpan.[28] To the south, he traversed the Great Crossing River, passed through Li Subprefecture and Ya Subprefecture, and climbed Mount Wawu [Wawu Shan] and Mount Shaijing [Shaijing Shan].[29]

Next, Xu investigated the Gold Dust River, going as far as the border regions among the yaks, before heading south to cross the Mekong River,

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24 Xiang Chang was a Daoist from the Later (or Eastern) Han dynasty who traveled to China's sacred mountains. Xu Xiake recorded Xiang Chang's words probably because they could be sent to the family in Jiangyin if he met peril during his travels. A rough paraphrase is: "Don't worry about me. If I happen to die, it's no big deal. You should carry on with whatever you need to do. Life must go on."

25 The Western Regions in this line refer to Yunnan, Guizhou, and Tibet. Jigong is a mythical state mentioned in many ancient texts, including the *Guideways through the Mountains and Seas*.

26 Sanchu (lit., "the three parts of Chu") refers to the three areas comprising the State of Chu during the Warring States period.

27 This statement is inaccurate. Tranquil Hearing died of dysentery and related ailments.

28 Songpan is in the Min Mountains in the northwestern part of Sichuan.

29 Lizhou, Yazhou, Mount Wawu, and Mount Shaijing are all in Sichuan. There is no evidence that Xu Xiake visited any of these places.

then north to explore the Pan River, crossing almost all the southwestern lands of the Yi people as well as most of the sights of Guizhou and Yunnan. When Mu Zeng of Lijiang heard of his exploits, he came out to welcome him with a respectful ceremony.

Among the places he had passed before, the Luo people had greeted him by taking up their ritual brooms. The Meng leaders had worn their welcome crossbows in a manner that was in no way inferior to what happened on those occasions when Liezi was offered a bowl of soup. Xiake found excuses to leave, not to burden Mu Zeng with his food demands.[30] Mu [Duke] of the State of Qian (Mu Qianguo [gong]) also exalted him with ceremonies.[31] When he heard of him collecting strange roots, he asked to see them, hoping to exchange them for large piles of gold. Xiake laughed and replied: "It's not as if I want the Jade of Zhao. I'm just doing what I like. I don't want to exchange anything for fifteen citadels." The Marquis of the State of Qian esteemed him even more highly.[32]

Having rested at Mount Diancang [Diancang Shan] and Mount Chicken Foot, he then donned Buddhist garb to bury Tranquil Hearing's bones in a Buddhist ceremony in honor of Mahākāśyapa. Grand Scribe (Taishi) Shan wrote an inscription for the pagoda in his honor.[33] From Mount Chicken Foot, he went west several thousand *li* from Rock Gate Pass to Mount Kunlun and as far as Star Constellations Lake. Halfway up a mountain, with the wind blowing so hard his clothes almost flew off, a golden pagoda appeared in the distance. He vowed to walk to Tibet, leaning on his walking stick, to visit the Precious Jewel Dharma King (Dabao Fawang). Apart from the Singing Sands Mountain [Mingsha Shan], they were all hellfire territories such as Milu and A'nou.[34] The

30 Chen Hanhui refers to local, non-Chinese people whom Xu Xiake would have encountered during his journey to southwest China. It was not uncommon in late imperial China for such groups to adopt the name Luo or Meng during the process of Sinicization. The ancient philosopher Liezi (ca. 450–375 BCE) turned back halfway on his journey to the state of Qi. When asked why, he said he was alarmed that five of the owners had served him first at the fifteen inns he had stopped at for food.

31 The title Duke of the State of Qian was first granted to Mu Ying, a well-known general, politician, and adopted son of the founder of the Ming dynasty. The reference here is to Mu Tianbo, who received the title when he was only one year old. For more details, see part 2, Travels in Dian 1, prefatory remarks to the first of Xu Xiake's "Two Casual Jottings."

32 This line alludes to an incident recorded in Sima Qian's biography of Lian Po (ca. 327–243 BCE), a general in the state of Zhao. After King Huiwen of Zhao (r. 298–266 BCE) acquired jade from the He clan, King Zhao of the state of Qin (r. 306–251 BCE) offered fifteen walled cities in exchange. *Shiji*, 81.2442.

33 The reference here is to Shan Zhongyan (1597–1642), a poet and official with whom Xu spent time in Yunnan. The title grand scribe (*taishi*) indicates that he held office in the Hanlin Academy. Shan's inscription is discussed in *YJJZ*, 2:1123; *YJ*, 2:1058.

34 Mount Singing Sands is in Dunhuang. Milu and A'nou are in modern Xinjiang.

distances he covered are unfathomable. *Chronicles of Western Regions* (Xiyu zhi) reports how the heaps of the bones of both men and horses were testimony to the difficulty of traveling through the desert and the impossibility of avoiding the devilishly hot winds. The many demons that tormented Master Xuanzang (ca. 602–64) are all recorded in his *Chronicles*.[35] How could Xiake fly if he did not have a great destiny? By the time he was traveling in the West, he already regarded this life as illusory. He was on Buddhist soil and wanted to throw off his mortal skin.

By chance, when he was looking through some old volumes, he found a reference to a certain Yang Fu (*jinshi* 1415), residing in reclusion at Mount Five Flowers [Wuhua Shan], who had immersed himself in the School of Principle (Lixue).[36] One day, Yang desired to become a Buddhist. Hungry and thirsty during his travels, he met someone who said: "The Buddha is south of here, dressed in the colored garb of a woman and wearing a man's shoes." No sooner had this person finished speaking than he disappeared. Although Yang looked everywhere, he could not find any trace of him, so he headed home. When his mother heard a knock at the door, she was very anxious. Putting on her father's shoes and wearing matching clothing, she went outside. Yang Fu kowtowed to her and offered up worship to Buddha, and he taught the villagers in the ways of Confucius and Mencius. Xiake sighed and replied: "The Three Teachings do not supersede the Five Relationships (Wulun). My forebears are all buried in Jiangyin, and it is there that I shall return today."[37]

When he was at the foot of Mount Emei, he sent me a letter, entrusting me with a note for his friend Qian Qianyi that recounted his comings and goings in strange lands. The letter told of all the remarkable and dangerous places through which he had traveled and stated:

"The Changjiang does not originate in the Min Mountains, and the Yellow River does not come down from the heavens. As for their sources, the Yellow River comes from the north of Mount Kunlun, while the Changjiang comes from the south. The overall volume of the water in the Changjiang is twice that of the Yellow River."

He also discerned the physical contours of the Three Dragons [Sanlong]. The Northern Dragon [Beilong] lies on either side of the north of the Yellow River, and the Southern Dragon [Nanlong] embraces the southern part of the Changjiang. In contrast, the middle part, the dividing

35 The famous Buddhist monk Xuanzang's account of his trip from China to India to collect Buddhist sutras is better known as *Accounts of the Western Regions during the Great Tang* (Da Tang Xiyu ji).

36 The School of Principle refers to the School of Neo-Confucianism, which emerged in the Song dynasty.

37 The Three Teachings are Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism; the Five Relationships are those between monarch and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brothers, and friends.

line, is particularly short. Only half a spur south of the Northern Dragon enters the Middle Kingdom, and only the Southern Dragon majestically winds into China. Its source is also Mount Kunlun. It then heads south adjacent to the Gold Dust River and circles Lake Dian before arriving at the Five Ranges. When the mountain ranges are long, the water sources are also long, which is why the Changjiang is greater than the Yellow River. These views consequently became his *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source*.[38]

My friend Li Lingxi (*jinshi* 1640; d. 1663; also known as Li Duanmu), Prefect of Jiangyin, had blocks cut for *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source* to be printed in the joint gazetteer for Jiangyin and Jiangjing to correct the errors of Sang Qin's *Waterways Treatise* and Li Daoyuan's *Commentary on the* Waterways Treatise.[39]

His wanderings were complete when Xiake returned to southern Yunnan. One day, his feet were suddenly too sore to travel, so he spent three months revising the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*. Prefect Mu of Lijiang provided food and a bamboo sedan chair for him to return home. After bumping up and down in the chair for one hundred and fifty days, he encountered great difficulties when he arrived at the Chu River [Chujiang].[40] District magistrate (*daling*), the Marquis Huang Gang, then provided a boat, and Xu was back in Jiangyin in six days and was able to return home alive.[41] This was the summer of 1640. When he got back, he was unable to receive visitors. All he could do was place strange rocks on the bed, pick them up, and compare them. He did not enquire about family matters.

He told his son Qi: "Having traveled widely through many numinous regions, I know that life is a lodging, death a return. I now long in my travels to be transformed, for there are no obstacles. My only regret is that I have been unable to see all my old friends again."

He dispatched his eldest son to visit Huang Daozhou in prison. When his son returned, he told him how Huang was doing. As he lay on his bed, Xiake gave a long sigh: "How short is human life! In this unsatisfactory world, why should I worry any more about all the traps and snares?"

A few days before he died, he ordered his son to see me again at Horse Islet [Mazhu] and wrote a letter saying: "Hanhui. Do not forget the attractions of home life." His sincerity in friendship remained deep and unshaken.

Three days after the gentleman set off on his celestial travels, Zhongzhao sent me a letter saying: "Xiake has at last gone to Mount Tai. Near

38 This text is translated in part 2, Travels in Dian 13.
39 Hargett, *Jade Mountains and Cinnabar Pools*, 51.
40 In Chu, the Changjiang is also known as the Chu River.
41 Huang Gang, magistrate of Bin Subprefecture, had inscribed a stele at the Halt in Place Retreat on Mount Chickenfoot. See *YJJZ*, 2:1357; *YJ*, 2:1146.

the end, he entrusted his ambition to you and prayed that his sons would have the means to make something of themselves rather than waste away their lives." Xiake did not assign great importance to his travels, but among the travelers of all time, Xiake should be given an important place from now on. Like a crafty and shrewd divine transcendent, he seized the carriage reins, headed off to mulberry fields in the eastern regions, and then returned home to lead his mother by the hem of her robe.[42] His earnest filiality was like Zeng Shen gnawing his fingers with an aching heart.[43]

In his solitary journeys over ten thousand *li*, he was like Chao Fu, tossing his head and refusing to stay in one place.[44] Like Li Bai, the banished immortal who visited Mount Prime Cinnabar [Yuandan Shan] and traveled in his dreams to Mount Celestial Dame [Tianlao Shan], and Du Fu (712–70), who crossed Tree Bark Ridge [Mupi Ling], he had an extraordinary obsession for mountains, whether they were renowned for their beauty or their strategic importance.[45] The energetic and lofty sense of righteousness with which he carried out his responsibilities was a match for the devotion shown by Zhuo Qishun, who carried a letter to Huizhou, and Guo Hang, in the way that Xu Xiake carried Tranquil Hearing's bones to Mount Chicken Foot.[46] His resolute disposition was considered to surpass that of former sages or close acquaintances.

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42 This line loosely alludes to a poem in the "Nine Songs" (Jiuge) of the *Songs of the South* (Chuci), an anthology of southern verse compiled in the second century CE. In that poem, the Lord of the East (Dongjun) "seizes the reins" of his steed and journeys off to the boundless heavens in the East. Chen Hanhui is saying that Xu Xiake is like the Lord of the East and those divine transcendents of antiquity who journeyed to the East to gather herbs in mulberry fields. In Xu's case, however, he returned home to guide or look after his aged mother. In other words, Xu was a paragon of filial piety.

43 For Zeng Shen, see Qian Qianyi's biography of Xu Xiake in appendix 3.

44 Chao Fu was a recluse of high antiquity who built a nest and lived in a tree. "Tossing his head and refusing to stay in one place" alludes to the opening lines of Du Fu's poem "Seeing off Kong Chaofu Who has Resigned on Account of Illness and Will Return East of the Changjiang to Visit: Presented to Li Bai" (Song Kong Chaofu xiebing guiyou Jiangdong: jian cheng Li Bai). See *QTS*, 216.2259.

45 The famous Tang dynasty poets Li Bai and Du Fu both enjoyed visiting famous mountains. For the Li Bai poems referenced here, see *QTS*, 166.1717 and 174.1779–80; for the Du Fu poem, see *QTS*, 218.2299.

46 When Su Shi was living in exile in Huizhou in 1095, he received a letter from his son Su Mai (1059–1119) that had been carried from Yixing by Zhuo Qishun, a laborer at a temple in Suzhou. In his *Commemorative Tomb Biography for the Honorable Guo Hang* (Guojun Hang muzhiming), Wei Liaoweng (1178–1237) spoke of the devotion of Guo Hang (courtesy name Zhongren) to his younger brother Lin after his younger brother's death. Chen Hanhui is suggesting here that Xu Xiake's devotion to Tranquil Hearing is of a similar caliber.

Zhongzhao also spoke of two other extraordinary features of Xu's travels. Firstly, he had such a passion for extraordinary books that when he was on his travels and came across books he had not seen before, if he had no surplus cash in his bag, he would take off his clothes and sell them; he would then carry the books back himself. He had so many books, half of which he acquired in his travels, that they would almost fill four libraries. Second, he was naturally attracted to extraordinary people. But if he met high officials, he would flee; if he came to a city, he would run away. However, when it came to his admirers, he would spontaneously knock on their door in his grass sandals and present a letter from a minor official out of his sleeve before bowing and climbing up to the hall, where they would show mutual respect. He would accept words of advice and bestow his own words before taking his leave, departing the next day without saying anything. Based on what I have heard about Xiake from his friends in Jiangyin, it is not only his travels that they esteem. I have seen evidence of the filiality he displayed to his parents in official records, biographies, and inscriptions on paintings. He happily respected his older brother as if he were his father till his old age.

His younger brother, born of a concubine, received his share of the family's worldly goods. There was no discrimination when it came to his will. When reminiscing about his ancestors, the respect he showed was even more sincere. Together with Zhongzhao, he devoted himself to due ceremony by engraving their writings, printing their collected works, and wiping clean and mounting old paintings. He placed those tombs of the earlier generations, which were out in the wind and rain, in a tiled pavilion. He divided up the ancestral fields and led the members of his clan in performing sacrifices, saying: "This is what my mother taught me."

He honored the three associations and placed justice before everything else.[47] When he saw cause for moral duty, he took pity on orphans and comforted fallen women. In a bad year, he would hand out grain to relieve the hungry, repair bridges and fords, and happily restore ancient ruins.

After passing Mount Jun [Junshan] and seeing sacrifices being carried out in honor of Marquis Zhang Zonglian, he dug up a stele from the rubble that honored Yang Shiqi (1365–1444), gathered materials for restoring the building and arranged for the stele to be carved anew. The local worthies all praised his merits.

According to the *Jiangyin Gazetteer*, Marquis Zhang Temple [Zhanghou Miao], which lies at the western foot of Mount Jun, was constructed in the seventh year of the Xuande reign (1432) to honor Associate Administrator (Tongzhi) Zhang Zonglian who came from that town. His

47 The three associations refer to the family of an individual's father, mother, and wife.

deeds and virtues were recorded in detail by Junior Preceptor (Shaoshi) Yang Shiqi in the account of the temple's stele. The temple later fell into a state of disrepair. In the eleventh year of the Hongzhi reign (1495), County Magistrate (Zhixian) Huang Fu restored the temple on the site of the Celestial Consort Palace [Tianfei Gong], and sacrifices were carried out every year in spring and autumn. After an extended period, it again fell into disrepair. In the fourth year of the Tianqi reign (1624), Xu Xiake donated funds for the restoration and asked Dong Qichang to inscribe on stone Zhou Chen's (1380–1453) stele inscription bearing the words of Junior Preceptor Yang Shiqi. Grand Academician (Da Xueshi) Zhou Yanru (1588–1644) wrote the account on the stele.[48]

Within his family, all was harmonious, there were no discordant feelings.

Despite having different mothers, his three sons were all brought up without prejudice, received the same education, and lived together.[49] When dividing up and sharing money, Xiake treated all of them with remarkable integrity. He had no time to count out every thread of cash endlessly.

Xiake was skilled at writing *shi* poetry and ancient prose and verse but excelled at travel writing. The two masters, Wen Zhenmeng and Huang Daozhou praised his writing with great relish, but Xiake was happy to keep it in trunks, for he had no wish to show it to anyone. Today, his scattered writings and surviving drafts contain matters within and outside the Six Realms. How is this anything like Sima Xiangru's (179–117 BCE) "Treatise on Sacrifices?"[50] Zhongzhao put the writings in order, which we can hold him accountable for in the future.

Xiake was born in the *bingxu* (or twenty-third) year of the Wanli reign and died in the *xinsi* (or eighteenth) year of the Chongzhen reign at fifty-five. On the ninth day of the third month in the *renwu* year (18 April 1641), he was buried in a specially built site at Horse Bend [Mawan].[51] Chen Hanhui wrote an epitaph for him that reads:

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48 *DMB*, 1:277–79.

49 As noted in the introduction, Xu Xiake had four sons.

50 Shortly before he died, Sima Xiangru composed a text titled "Essay on the *Feng* and *Shan* Sacrifices" (Fengshan wen). He told his wife if an emissary were to visit and ask for his writings, she should present this essay to him.

51 Xu Xiake's birth year is recorded as the *bingxu* year of the Wanli reign, which mostly corresponds with 1586. However, Xu was born late that year, specifically on the twenty-seventh day of the eleventh lunar month, or 5 January 1587 on the Western calendar. He died on the twenty-seventh day of the first month of the fourteenth year of the Chongzhen reign, so he was fifty-five *sui* (or fifty-four years old by Western reckoning) when he passed away. Chen Hanhui's note that Xu was buried in the spring of the following year (1642 by Western reckoning) seems unlikely, especially as, according to the chronological biography compiled by Ding Wenjiang, Xu Xiake was buried on 8 March 1641. See *NP1*, 57.

The traveling dragon and flying swan pursue the sun and ride the winds. Exhausting the outer regions and wandering throughout China, he now rests among the transcendents. Laid to rest in Mawan, we extol his virtuous heart. He is traveling in the heavens. People say he was gifted and steadfast as a city wall. Alas, it is not a case of A-Meng from Wu.[52]

—Translated by Julian Ward

52 Chen Hanhui draws upon the famous story of a military commander and strategist A-Meng, for whom see part 1, note 4, pages 179–80.

Appendix 3

Biography of Xu Xiake

by Qian Qianyi (1582–1664)

Xu Xiake, whose given name was Hongzu, was a native of Wucheng Village near Jiangyin. His great-grandfather Xu Jing was a successful provincial examination candidate at the same time as Tang Yin, although their names were subsequently removed from the list of graduates. On one occasion, Tang paid off a gambling debt of three thousand taels by giving Xu Jing a collection of paintings by Ni Zan (nickname Yunlin; 1301–74).[1] The original artworks are still in the family.

From a young age, Xiake developed a reputation in the village for his remarkably impassioned nature and obsession with landscape. He exerted great effort in tilling the fields and attending to his mother's needs, spending money to cover the cost of the local corvée labor. Trapped like a bird crashing into the sides of its cage, his every thought was of going away.

When he was thirty, his mother sent him off on his travels. His usual pattern consisted of traveling over spring, summer, and autumn before returning home in wintertime to visit his elderly relatives. The beautiful scenery of the southeast, such as East and West Dongting Lake, Yangxian, Jingkou, Jinling, Wuxing, and Wulin, Mount Jing [Jingshan] and Tianmu Mountains in western Zhejiang, the Five Waterfalls, Mount Siming, Mount Tiantai, and Mount Yandang in eastern Zhejiang, and Mount Putuo in the southern ocean, all became as familiar to him as his kitchen table or the clothes on his back. Xiake went to some places twice or thrice and others several times; there was nowhere he went to only once.

Traveling with a servant, or sometimes with a monk, equipped with just a walking stick and a cloth bundle, there was no need to carry a traveling bag or bundle up food supplies. He could endure hunger for several days, eating his fill whenever he found food. He could walk for

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Source: *Xu Xiake zhuan* (*YJJZ*, 2:1439–41; *YJ*, 1191–95).

1 The renowned painter Tang Yin befriended Xu Jing while studying for the imperial exams. After Xu Jing attempted to bribe the servant of one of the chief examiners, both men were jailed. For additional details, see the introduction.

several hundred *li*. Whether he was ascending sheer cliffs, braving bamboo thickets, scrambling up and down, or hanging over precipices on a rope, he was as nimble as a gibbon and as sturdy as an ox. He used towering crags for his bed, streams, and gullies for refreshment and bathing. Due to his finding companionship with mountain demons, trolls, apes, and bigfoots, he achieved a blissful state of mental transcendence. This affected his ability to speak until he discussed the makeup of the mountains and distinguished water sources or investigated any geographical terrain. Then, his mind suddenly became clear again. He was not one who habitually produced ornate writing. After traveling for several hundred *li,* he would burn pine by a tumbledown wall or withered tree, feeding the flames as he scribbled down his diary, which was a match for any great work of writing or superior work of art, something which even the greatest writers could not have improved upon.

On his return from the Tiantai and Yandang Mountains, he called on Chen Hanhui at Lesser Cold Mountain. Chen asked him: "Have you ever climbed to the summit of Mount Yandang?" Xiake promised to go and, by the next morning, was nowhere to be seen. Ten days had passed before his return, upon which he said: "Setting off on a side path, I clambered up some vines to Dragon Splash Pool. After thirty *li*, I came to a tarn where geese had built their homes. I ascended for over ten more *li* and found the round hut of the monks White Cloud and Beyond the Clouds from the Zhengde reign still there. After ascending another twenty *li*, I was buffeted by fierce winds at the summit, where a herd of several hundred deer surrounded me as I slept. I did not come down till I had spent three nights there." He was the kind of person who would vie with others, risking his life to seek out the unusual and pursue great sights.

Later trips saw him reach Mount Huang, Mount Baiyue, Mount Jiuhua, and Mount Lu. In Fujian, he climbed Mount Wuyi and traversed Nine Carp Lake. In Chu, he visited Mount Wudang. He traveled in the northern regions of Qi, Lu, Yan, Ji, Mount Song, and the Luo River [Luoshui]. When he reached Green Stalk Mesa on his descent from Mount Hua, a sinking feeling in his heart compelled him to return home, where he found his mother, overcome by serious illness, biting her fingernails in the expectation of seeing him.[2]

Following her death and the three years of mourning, his appetite for traveling huge distances returned greater than ever. After visiting Huang Daozhou in Fujian, he covered the great sights of the province's mountains, which are quite unfamiliar to the locals. He climbed Mount Luofu

2 "Biting her fingernails" alludes to the story "Zengzi's Filial Devotion Stretches Over Ten Thousand *Li*" (Zhengzi xiaogan wanli), preserved in the collection *In Search of the Supernatural* (Soushen ji). After returning home from a journey to the south, his mother remarked: "I missed you, so I was biting my nails."

and visited Cao Stream before returning and seeking out Huang Daozhou again in Yunyang. Going to and from for ten thousand *li* was a mere stroll down the road for such a seasoned traveler. From the Zhongnan Mountains, he headed south for Mount Emei, collecting herbs with the locals and resting in caves without hot food for eight days at night. On arriving at Mount Emei, he encountered She Chongming's rebellious soldiers and had to turn back.[3] Traveling alone with just a cauldron, he visited Mount Heng beyond the northern frontier and all the strategic passes of the nine border regions.[4] On his return, he came to see me in the mountains. He talked excitedly about traveling in all four seasons, going to the four outermost regions of the country, the Nine Regions and the Nine Precincts [Jiufu], distinguishing their main features as clearly as the back of his hand.[5] He said: "The bygone records of the stars above and the lands below are based on mistaken assumptions. From the earliest records, the passage of the Yellow River and the Changjiang and the delineation of the mountains and rivers were confined to the Central Plains. I wish to travel to the oceans beyond Mount Kunlun and overseas and reach the deserts' very end before I return." We were traveling on a boat as small as a leaf and were soaked in a thunderstorm. I invited him to disembark, but he refused, saying: "If a mountain spring were to burst forth and crash against my back suddenly, I would be truly happy."

On *bingzi* day of the ninth month (11 October 1636), Xu left his home and headed west. The monk Tranquil Hearing wanted to worship Mahākāśyapa on Mount Chicken Foot and asked to accompany him. During an encounter with bandits on the Xiang River, Tranquil Hearing was injured and later passed away. Xu encased his bones and took them along with him as he crossed Lake Dongting and ascended Mount Heng, where he climbed all seventy-two peaks.[6]

He ascended Mount Emei again, then headed north to the Min Mountains, going as far as Songpan. Heading south again, he traversed the Great Crossing River, passed through Lizhou and Yazhou, and

3 On She Chongming's rebellion in Sichuan, see part 2, note 5, page 354.

4 The Mount Heng mentioned here is the Sacred Mountain in the North. The nine border regions, set up in the Hongzhi reign (1488–1506), stretch from Liaodong in the east to Gansu in the west.

5 The four seasons, or seasonal axes, are the summer and winter solstices, and the two transitions from winter to spring and summer to autumn. As recorded in the "Tribute to Yu" chapter of the *Documents Canon*, the Nine Regions comprised the territory of China when Yu the Great tamed the floods in remote antiquity. Details are provided in Wilkinson, *Chinese History*, 245. The Nine Precincts are the eight points of the compass, with an added middle precinct in the center.

6 That is Mount Heng, the Sacred Mountain in the South.

climbed Mount Wawu and Mount Shaijing.[7] Xu furthermore investigated the Gold Dust River, going as far as the border regions among the yaks, before heading south to cross the Mekong River, then north to investigate the Pan River, crossing almost all of the southwestern lands of the Yi people as well as most of the sights of Guizhou and Yunnan.

After passing through Lijiang, he rested a while at Mount Diancang and at Mount Chicken Foot, where, by his long-standing desire, he buried the bones of Tranquil Hearing in a Buddhist ceremony in honor of Mahākāśyapa. From Mount Chicken Foot, he went west several thousand *li* from Rock Gate Pass to Mount Kunlun and as far as Star Constellations Lake, going thirty-four thousand three hundred *li* beyond the Central Plains. Halfway up a mountain, with the wind blowing so hard his clothes almost flew off, a golden pagoda appeared in the distance. Another few thousand *li* took him to Tibet, where he visited the Precious Jewel Dharma King. Apart from the Singing Sands Mountain, these places were all foreign lands, such as Milu and A'nou. The distances he covered are unfathomable. *Chronicles of the Western Regions* reports how the piles of bones lying beneath men and their horses were testimony to the difficulty of traveling through the desert, with no way of avoiding the devilishly hot winds. The many demons that tormented Master Xuanzang are all recorded in his biography. In contrast, the short time that Xiake spent on his travels appears like a stroll in the park.

On returning to the foot of Mount Emei, he entrusted the gnarled roots of the strange trees he had found on his travels to merchants to carry back home and sent me a copy of his *Tracing the Jiang Upstream to Unravel Its Source*. In this text, he states that the "Tribute to Yu" chapter is incorrect in declaring: "[Yu] cleared a passage through the Jiang in the Min Mountains." Yu's clearing of the river through the Min Mountains was related to flooding in China and has nothing to do with the source of the Changjiang.

There are five provinces whose rivers feed into the Yellow River and eleven that feed into the Changjiang. When calculating water volume, there is twice as much water flowing through the Changjiang as in the Yellow River. Note: the source of the Yellow River lies north of Mount Kunlun, while the Changjiang emerges from south of Mount Kunlun. It is not the case that the Yellow River's source is near while the source of the Changjiang is farther away.

Xu also distinguished between the overall configuration of the Three Dragons: the Northern Dragon straddles the Yellow River to the north; the Southern Dragon embraces the Changjiang to the south; the Central Dragon forms a boundary between them and is particularly short. Just one section of the Northern Dragon extends south of the Middle Kingdom. Only the Southern Dragon continues to wind majestically into the

7 Lizhou, Yazhou, Mount Wawu, and Mount Shaijing are all in Sichuan.

heart of the country. Also originating at Mount Kunlun, it joins the Gold Dust River to head south, circling Lake Dianchi before reaching the Five Ranges.[8] When the mountain ranges are long, then the water sources are also long, which is why the Changjiang is greater than the Yellow River. The many thousands of words that make up Xu Xiake's work revise Sang Qin's *The Waterways Treatise*, as well as those areas not covered by Li Daoyuan's *Commentary on the Waterways Treatise*, and the work of various Confucian scholars of the Han and Song dynasties on the "Tribute to Yu." I have picked out the general gist of his work above.

When Xiake returned to southern Yunnan, his feet were too sore for him to travel, so he spent three months revising the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*. Governor Mu of Lijiang provided food and a bamboo sedan chair to help him return home. Xiake, who was in great pain, said to those who asked after him:

> Zhang Qian opened up new areas but never saw Mount Kunlun. Xuanzang of the Tang dynasty and Yelü Chucai (1189–1243) of the Yuan dynasty could only travel west because they were carrying the commands of their rulers. With my coarse clothes, I have been to the end of the Yellow River and the western deserts with a bamboo walking stick and a pair of sandals. I have climbed Mount Kunlun and traveled throughout the western regions, establishing a reputation in distant countries. I shall not die unhappy if I can join this trio to make a quartet.

I met Xiake through Liu Lüding from Zhangzhou. Lüding said to me:

> When Xiake returned from the west, he was breathing with great difficulty. When he heard how Huang Daozhou had been imprisoned by imperial edict, he dispatched his eldest son on the arduous journey to visit him. Returning three months later, he gave a complete account of Huang's arrest. Xiake leaned on his bed and gave a great sigh. He ate no more and passed away.

That is the sort of person he was.

> Mr. Wuxia[9] remarks:
>
> In former times, Liu Gongquan (778–865) recorded the matter of the Three Peaks, saying there was a certain Wang Xuanchong who visited a Buddhist monk Righteous Sea (Yihai) at South

8 The Five Ranges separate the provinces of Hunan and Jiangxi from southern China.

9 Mr. Wuxia refers to Qian Qianyi.

Slope [Nanpo] to climb Lotus Blossom Peak.[10] On that day, he calculated the circumference as fifty thousand fathoms and reckoned it to be a ten-day journey. When he reached the top, he lit a beacon by way of proof. Righteous Sea, as arranged, lodged at Peach Grove [Taolin]. At dawn, the mountains were clear and bright. He stood stock still for some time as white smoke rose from the top of the three peaks. When Xuanchong arrived after twenty days, he took several petals of fallen leaves from the Jade Well and a few small fragments from the iron boat at the lakeside to Righteous Sea and headed off, picking up his satchel. When Xuanchong arrived, Righteous Sea told him: "This mountain is as if whittled; if you do not ride the winds and soar on the clouds, there is no way of going there." Xuanchong retorted: "You should not say that some places cannot be reached; it is just that you do not have the ambition to go there." Xiake did not consider himself the equal of Zhang Qian and the others or to be compared to Xuanchong. However, as an extraordinary master of the Three Clarities (Sanqing), with whom should he be compared?

The text of Xiake's travel diary is big enough to cover a table. I asked his second cousin Zhongzhao to keep and collate the book since it is the greatest travel diary ever written. Xiake was fifty-six when he died.[11] He returned from his western journey in the sixth lunar month of 1640 and died in the first lunar month of 1641. He is buried at Mawan in Jiangyin. This is what Lüding told me.

—Translated by Julian Ward

10 Liu Gongquan was a renowned Tang dynasty calligrapher.

11 In fact, Xu Xiake was fifty-five *sui*, or fifty-four years old by Western reckoning, when he died. For details, see appendix 2, note 51, page 485.

Appendix 4

"Short Biography of Xu Xiake"

After the end of the Ming dynasty, a new gazetteer for Mount Chicken Foot was compiled by Big Mistake (Dacuo), a monk whose secular name was Qian Bangqi (1602–73). Further revisions to the gazetteer appeared during the reign of the Kangxi emperor, in 1692 and 1703, the former edited by an official called Fan Chengxun (1641–1714). This short biography of Xu Xiake, taken from the edition compiled by Fan, is of particular interest, not just for the details it provides of the transportation to Mount Chicken Foot of the remains of Xu's companion, the monk Tranquil Hearing, following his death in Nanning, but also for the brief lyrical epitaph by Huang Jiao.

Xu Hongzu, whose nickname was Xiake, was from Jiangyin near Nanjing. Born with a love of travel, his overriding desire was to describe and record all the empire's wonderful mountains and rivers. He traveled around the country, enjoying the empire's beautiful scenery.

In the *gengchen* year of the Chongzhen reign (1640), when he was about to set off to Mount Chicken Foot, he passed by the Welcoming Good Fortune Monastery in Nanjing, where he met a monk called Tranquil Hearing, who also yearned to enjoy the surpassing scenery of Mount Chicken Foot, so they set off together.[1] When they reached Guangxi, Tranquil Hearer fell ill. On the point of death, he beseeched Xu Xiake, saying: "I am not going to achieve my ambition to go to Mount Chicken Foot. If I do die, please take my bones there."

Xiake had great empathy for Tranquil Hearing's ambition, so he burned the body, placed the bones in a chest urn, and carried them to Yunnan. On arriving at the mountain, he stayed at Siddha Monastery, looking for a suitable spot to bury the monk's remains to complete Tranquil Hearer's ambition to travel to the mountain. Transcendent Bank, a monk attached to Siddha Temple, admired his righteousness. He divined a spot on the north side of Mount Writing Brush [Wenbi Shan] and built a pagoda on the tomb.

Huang Jiao from Jinning wrote an epitaph:

Source: *YJ*, 2:1195.

1 The correct year for Xu Xiake's departure to southwest China is 1636.

He who has hastened hither conveyed his mortal shell;
He who carried it so far traversed that great wilderness.
His ambition was lodged in famous mountains;
These bones will never perish.
The burial ceremony and the pagoda's construction together
signal his ambition's completion;
We have buried him on this famous mountain
so his name may be known far and wide.
The reputations of Xiake and Tranquil Hearing
derive from their love of the landscape.

After Xiake buried Tranquil Hearing, he came to love the scenery of Mount Chicken Foot, so he stayed on. Mu Shengbai, Lijiang's Aboriginal Prefecture Magistrate (Tu Zhifu), invited him to compile the *Mount Chicken Foot Gazetteer*. He produced four chapters, but before completing his work, he had to return home because of illness.

—Translated by Julian Ward

Appendix 5

Preface [to *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*]

by Pan Lei (1646–1708)

Pan Lei, a distinguished literatus of the early Qing dynasty, was one of the scholars involved in compiling the *Mingshi*, the official history of the Ming dynasty. In this preface, Pan outlines how the word *you* 游 [遊] means a lot more than to travel. Pan's reading of Xu Xiake's diaries, particularly the account of the long journey to southwest China, captures *you* as embodying the idea of traveling to extraordinary places for both sightseeing and aesthetic appreciation.

Literary men of great understanding often like to speak of travel. However, it takes work to say what travel is. Without the breadth of mind to go beyond the mortal world, it is not possible to appreciate landscape; without the physique to traverse the scenic, it is not possible to seek out the remote and secluded; without many years of leisure, it is not possible to classify one's nature as free and easy. Without all these, when traveling near home, you will not be extensive; by traveling slightly, you will not find the extraordinary; if you travel in convenient places, you will not find pleasure; if you travel in a group, you will not be away for long. If you do not place your body outside worldly matters, abandon daily affairs, and carry out your goal alone, then although you will be traveling, it will not be real traveling.

I have perused the travel diaries of all the great writers of the past and realize that what they saw and passed is merely the tasting of a morsel of meat, the peeling back of a section like just stepping over the gate of a courtyard, rarely seeing the more secluded places. As for those places I have visited, I had to exhaust the heights and plumb the depths. For example, I could become detached from the mortal world when I went to Linwu Grotto [Linwu Dong]. When I went to Mount Yandang, I saw Wild Goose Tarn [Yandang] with my own eyes; when I went to Mount Lao [Laoshan], I ascended the summit of Hualou on Mount Luofu and

Source: "Panxu" (*YJJZ*, 2:150203; *YJ*, 2:1257–58).

lodged at the summit of Feiyun.[1] On each occasion, I felt I had gone as far as it was possible to go.

After reading Xu Xiake's travel diaries, I can only apologize, for this was not the case. Xiake's travels in the Central Plains were nothing special. However, his three or four trips to and from the desolate regions of the hundred barbarians in Fujian, Guangxi, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Guizhou were supremely extraordinary achievements. He did not follow government roads in his travels, but wherever there was a spot worthy of fame, he would abruptly twist and turn to seek it out. He would first examine in great detail the comings and goings of the mountain ranges and the joining together and separation of the water courses. Having ascertained the overall layout, he would seek out and investigate the fine details of every secluded spot. He did not need a path when climbing, for there was no wild tree or bamboo thicket he could not pass through. When crossing water, he did not need a ford; no surging rapid or fierce torrent could hold him back. He unfailingly soared up to sit on the summit of the steepest peaks and would hang like a gibbon and slither like a snake through the deepest caves, exhausting all the side passages. If his road ended, he did not worry; if he erred in his way, he did not regret his mistake. When he was tired, he would sleep lying down amongst the rocks and trees; when hungry, he would eat the fruit of plants and trees. He did not seek to avoid the wind and the rain and was unafraid of tigers and wolves. He did not plan his journey dates or desire traveling companions. For Xiake, traveling was both his innate sensibility and his whole life. He is unique in all times.

In former years, Qian Qianyi admired Xiake's personality and wrote a remarkable biography, giving a short outline of his life. However, because Qian had not seen the *Travel Diaries*, his work had several inaccuracies. After checking Xu Xiake's writings, I know that the trips to Jade Gate Pass [Yumen Guan], up Mount Kunlun, and probing Star Constellations Lake never took place: Xu only got as far as Mount Chicken Foot. His journeys among the rulers of the aboriginal tribes of Guangxi, Guizhou, and Yunnan, his tracing upstream of the Mekong and Gold Dust Rivers, and his exhaustive investigation of the sources of the Northern and Southern Pan Rivers are genuinely a case of a Chinese person opening up new lands. After reading his diaries, I realized the breadth of the southwest region and its many remarkable mountains and rivers surpass those of the Central Plains. His diaries, arranged daily, directly record his feelings and the scenery without any elaborate description. Natural delights flow on all sides. The astonishing wonders of nature and the arrangement of the mountains and rivers are all displayed in front of our eyes. Local customs and human feelings, frontier bridges, and border passes appear frequently. The mistakes in the old records of mountains

1 Mount Lao is in Shandong.

and local regions have all been corrected. At the same time, strange traces and remarkable tidings come almost too thick and fast for the reader. However, Xu did not go in for a wild and extravagant talk, attempting to deceive the reader with false knowledge. Thus, in Xiake's travels, I admire not the vast distances he covered but the delicate precision of the detail, while, in his book, I admire not the range of arguments but the truths.

Qian Qianyi called Xiake the greatest traveler, and he was right. Someone once said:

"Zhang Qian and Gan Ying contacted all the tributary states of the Western Regions; Xuanzang went to India in search of Buddhist scriptures; Du Shi reached the western boundaries of Tibet and traced the source of the Yellow River."[2]

So, after all, what is it that Xiake accomplished? He accomplished something only because he did not set out to accomplish something. He was thus most single-minded. Because he was single-minded, he traveled alone. Because he traveled alone, he could come and go as he pleased and was able to achieve every one of his aims. If the Fashioner of Things did not wish the supernatural marvels of our rivers and mountains to be long obscured, how is it the case that this man was born to reveal them?[3] To sum up, there was an absolute need in the universe for such an extraordinary man and a fundamental need in the annals of literature for this book. It is a great shame that I am old and weary and thus unable once more to lift my robe and head off to tread the hallowed path that made this person unique among extraordinary people.

—Translated by Julian Ward

2 Zhang Qian was a Han dynasty envoy who supposedly traveled to Central Asia; Gan Ying was a Han ambassador who allegedly journeyed to Rome. As mentioned earlier, Xuanzang, also known as Tripitaka in English, is a famous Chinese monk who wrote an account of his journey to India titled *Accounts of the Western Regions during the Great Tang*; Du Shi was a Yuan dynasty explorer who searched for the origin of the Yellow River in 1280.

3 On the "Fashioner of Things," (Zaowuzhe), also known as the "Fashioner of Change," see part 1, note 8, page 79, and part 2, note 11, page 363.

Appendix 6

"Lamenting Tranquil Hearing, My Buddhist Companion: Six Poems with Preface"

by Xu Xiake

Xu Xiake's Buddhist friend and traveling companion, Tranquil Hearing, died in Nanning, Guangxi, on 10 November 1637 after a long illness. Xu Xiake wrote six poems to lament his passing. A date of composition is not provided, but it seems certain the verses were written sometime between 23 November 1637, when Xu first heard about Tranquil Hearing's passing (*YJJZ*, 1:575; *YJ*, 1:469), and 6 February 1638, when he sent copies of the poems to a regional commander in Guangxi surnamed Lu (*YJJZ*, 1:656; *YJ*, 1:541).

PREFACE

The Superior One, Tranquil Hearing, and I pledged our devotion to famous mountains and, on our journey, traveled 10,000 *li* to reach Mount Chicken Foot. When he became sick and did not recover, I put him in the Exalted Benevolence Monastery in Nanning. Shortly after we parted ways, he took his final leave. As for the pain of life and death, my feelings are revealed in the following words.

POEM 1

At dawn, we shared company in cloudy passes; at sunset, we shared tiny temple nooks;
Amid Buddhist chants and flickering lamps, we found our sense of solace.
Meditation dispelled bad elements in his bones, voided his remnant dreams;

Source: "Ku Jingwen Chanlü: Liushou youyin" (*YJJZ*, 2: 1381–82; *YJ*, 2:1150–51).

Thinner than the yellow flowers, he could not bear the cold.
We gazed at mountains in the west; together, we shared life and death;
I now look east; my companion gone; carrying on will be hard.
At home, we only remarked that those who climb lofty heights are rare;
My soul is broken on the world's edge: I can only look forward alone!

Translator's Commentary: This initial poem in the sequence recalls past days and travels with Tranquil Hearing, while in the ultimate line, Xu laments his "broken soul" and the road he must now travel alone. Line 3 requires some explanation: White Bone Meditation (Baigu Guan) refers to a Buddhist introspection method that, when appropriately practiced, can cleanse one's bones of harmful dark elements, thereby leading to the purification of body and mind. The point here is that Tranquil Hearing practiced Buddhist meditation in such a rigorous way that he could purify his body and mind, thereby "voiding" or eliminating all secular cravings or "dreams." In line 4, Xu Xiake alludes to a line in a lyric poem written by the Song dynasty poet Li Qingzhao (1084–ca. 1155) written to the tune "Tipsy in Flowery Shade" (Zui huayin). This is a mournful verse, written during the Double Ninth Festival in autumn when wine infused with chrysanthemums (or "yellow flowers") was drunk to celebrate the occasion. However, Li Qingzhao's mood is somber because she lost her husband earlier and is now experiencing the holiday alone. The ultimate line of her poem reads: "In the westerly wind that curls up the curtains, I am thinner than the yellow flowers." Xu Xiake draws on this line to describe how he imagines Tranquil Hearing must have looked on his deathbed in the Exalted Benevolence Monastery in Nanning.

POEM 2

Rough and rugged roads, a thousand rivers, a thousand mountains as well;
His discipline kept him from polluting the clear river; his countenance endured the filth.
Almost in a fish belly, bedridden on the boat, he preferred to suffer the passengers' reproach;
I temporarily lodged in the Dragon Flower Monastery; now, I drift alone into oblivion.

I am sorry that when he was on the brink of death, I took my leave;
Nothing is sure about my floating life except that I will return home alone.
Holding back my tears, I feel sorrow for you, sir, and for myself as well;
Divided shadows may survive or perish, but our bond will never be broken.

Xu Xiake Note: "The Superior One, Tranquil Hearing, was meticulous and rigorous in his religious discipline and would never discharge nasal mucus or saliva into a river. When he came down with this grave illness on our boat, he preferred to endure everyone's complaints and curses and vowed never to pollute the pure river water."

Translator's Commentary: As we saw in the account of the Xiang River robbery, even when healthy, Tranquil Hearing would never urinate or defecate in rivers. When traveling by boat, he would always go ashore to relieve himself. When he became ill with dysentery and could not leave the boat, he refused to bathe in the river out of fear of defiling it. His entire body eventually became caked with filth. Not surprisingly, the resulting unpleasant odor annoyed the other passengers on the boat. Line 3 references the Xiang River robbery. When river pirates boarded their boat, Xu Xiake and the other passengers jumped overboard to save themselves. Tranquil Hearing, however, remained onboard to guard his copy of the *Lotus Sutra*, Xu's books, and other items. Later, a passenger named Shi falsely accused him of colluding with the pirates, only to discover that the monk had recovered a chest full of Shi's belongings. "Almost in a fish belly" (*yufu*) means "in the throes of death." The idea here is that even though Tranquil Hearing faced almost certain death during the robbery—he was stabbed several times, the monk nevertheless displayed great bravery by remaining on the boat. As for line 4, there was a Dragon Flower Monastery on Mount Chicken Foot, but when Xu Xiake wrote this poem, he had still not reached Yunnan. Xu's reference must refer to another temple of the same name. Its precise location is unknown. In line 5, Xu recalls that his monk companion died just one day after Xu left Nanning. Although Xu Xiake does not directly mention any feelings of guilt about having abandoned Tranquil Hearing when the monk was on the brink of death, there can be little doubt that such feelings were

much on his mind. Xu's comment in line 7 about "feeling sorry" confirms his regret over deserting his friend.

POEM 3

The roving traveler still took his leave while the sick traveler
stayed behind;
When we parted, we still had memories of our former days.
Life and death on this very day suddenly parted ways;
Gatherings and partings, through the years, now converge.
When our journey began, we stumbled along, winding
through canyons;
But in the end, repeated calls to cross the river were all
made in vain.
For half my life, with only a dipperful of drink, my climbing
clogs scaled a thousand mountains;
I will commit his dried-up bones on the shore of a miasmic sea.

Translator's Commentary: Line 6 of this poem alludes to Zong Ze (1059–1128), a general who bravely defended the Northern Song dynasty capital at Kaifeng from attack by foreign Jurchen (Jin) military forces in the mid-1120s. Zong exhorted the Song emperor—who had fled the capital—to return to Kaifeng, organize his military forces, and cross the Yellow River to retake sacred Song territory lost to the Jurchen in the north. This plan, however, was blocked by court officials who preferred capitulation to the foreign invaders. On his deathbed, Zong Ze reportedly cried out "Cross the River" three times, but his clarion call—like his appeal to the emperor—was ignored. Xu Xiake regards Tranquil Hearing and Zong Ze as two men whose lofty ambitions were thwarted. The penultimate line employs another allusion to the *Analects* of Confucius. "Dipperful of drink" refers to someone—in this case, Xu Xiake—who lives a straightforward life. In *Analects* 6.11, Confucius commends his disciple Yan Hui in this way: "How admirable was the virtue of Hui! With just a simple bowl of food and a dipperful of drink and living along a rundown, shabby lane—others could not have endured such distress, yet Hui remained unchanging in his joy. How admirable is Hui!" As for the ultimate line, the Chinese believed that the southern tropical forests produced nocuous vapors that were harmful and even deadly to humans. "Miasmic sea" refers to Lake Erhai, an alpine lake in west-central Yunnan. But Tranquil Hearing's remains were not buried there. Xu's point is that he will bury the monk's bones on Mount Chicken Foot, far from the Chinese heartland.

POEM 4

Together, we journeyed to the southwest, to the land of Langbo;
I could not bear to see my transcendent partner fall prey to a swooping hawk.
In a barren land, we were far removed from that famous mountain height;
Now wrapped in horsehide, it will be hard for him to follow me home in triumph.
The yellow chrysanthemum brings tears at our separation, a thousand *li* still to go;
My white thatch-grass soul breaks apart in five-flower mists.
Time has passed since we parted ways; now I carry your bones, sir;
Night after night on this empty mountain, the tearful cries of a cuckoo.

Translator's Commentary: "Langpo" (Vietnamese: Lãng Bạc) refers to the site outside modern Hanoi where the Han general Ma Yuan (14 BCE–49 CE) led a military expedition that defeated the forces led by the Trưng sisters. This pair of Vietnamese military commanders ruled for three years after rebelling in 40 CE against Chinese domination of Vietnam. Here, Xu Xiake emphasizes the great distance of his journey with Tranquil Hearing to Mount Chicken Foot in the southwest. The "swooping hawk" in line 2 refers to the poisonous, miasmic vapors of south and southwest China, to which Xu attributes the cause of the monk's death. Line 3 references Nanning, which he describes as a "barren land," and Mount Chicken Foot, or "that famous mountain height." "Wrapped in horse hide" (*guoge*) is an expression also associated with Ma Yuan, who is credited with coining the idiom "wrapping one's corpse with horse hide" (馬革裹屍). This refers to a military man so dedicated to his responsibilities that he is willing to die on the battlefield and have his body wrapped in horsehide and taken home. Xu Xiake's point is that Tranquil Hearing's unexpected death means his Buddhist companion cannot fulfill his dream of visiting Mount Chicken Foot and returning home to Jiangyin in triumph. In line 5, the yellow chrysanthemum is used as a metaphor to represent Tranquil Hearing's noble and unsullied character and how Xu cried at their "separation" and now must travel "a thousand *li*" to deliver his remains on Mount Chicken Foot. The comment that Xu's

"White thatch-grass soul breaks apart" is another expression of his sadness over the "separation" from his Buddhist companion (the precise meaning of the expression "five-flower mists" is unclear). Finally, the cry of the cuckoo bird is a familiar image in Chinese poetry, symbolizing sorrow and sadness.

POEM 5

Crane shadows and duckweed tracks never have a specific path;
In a floating life, who decides what happens during the three reincarnations?
Guarding his sutra as he faced pirate swords, his body was covered with wounds;
Maintaining discipline to keep the river pure, he was always careful where he spat.
This bamboo basket is hard to lug, stocked with his remnant bones;
Midway on our journey, vainly, he trusted my heart's meager pledge.
When we parted, I already feared I would never see him again;
How many times, as I was about to leave, was I still unwilling to go?

Xu Xiake Note: "When we were robbed on the river, the Superior One alone remained on board the boat. With swords cast down on him, he risked his life to protect the sutra, saving it from being burned or lost in the river."

Translator's Commentary: In the opening line, Xu Xiake likens Tranquil Hearing's "floating life" to "crane shadows" and "duckweed tracks," which move aimlessly in this direction or that, without any destination in mind. Buddhism's "three reincarnations" refer to the past, present, and future. To paraphrase Xu's question in line 2: "Who was responsible for the tragic life of Tranquil Hearing, who ultimately suffered so much misery and pain"? The "pledge" in line 6 refers to Xu Xiake's promise to bury Tranquil Hearing's remains on the slopes of Mount Chicken Foot.

POEM 6

One bout of Māra's hindrances, another about of his naivete;
His dream of visiting the famous mountain is also a form of desire.
When a well does not reach down to spring water, there is no need to talk about it being nine fathoms deep;

When the general found it hard to cross the river, he still shouted three times!
Although exhausted at the ferry crossings, in this master's heart, there was only the Buddha;
As for the foolish man who moved a valley, he died and left behind male descendants.
Being together is an illusion, as is separation; both are manifestations of illusion;
Taking life and death as a dream we can share together is better.

Translator's Commentary: This last poem in the sequence differs from the previous five in that Xu Xiake's tone is less mournful and soberer, even to the point where he questions Tranquil Hearing's devotion to Buddhism. "Māra" (Chinese: Moluo) is a supernatural demon in Buddhist scriptures who represents the passions that delude those like Tranquil Hearing, who seek enlightenment through meditation. Māra sends "hindrances" to block such efforts. In the opening line, Xu Xiake says that while becoming a monk, Tranquil Hearing endured numerous "hindrances" or hardships but perhaps was unwise in showing no flexibility in dealing with those hardships. As for line 2, maintaining "desire" (*tan*) violates one of the most basic rules in Buddhism. So, Xu says, Tranquil Hearing's strong desire to deposit his sutra on Mount Chicken Foot violates a fundamental Buddhist precept. Line 3 alludes to the following passage in the *Mengzi* (or *Mencius*) 26: "You can dig a well nine fathoms deep, but if you do not reach water, it is the same as an abandoned well." The *Mengzi* reference and mention of General Zong Ze (for which, see the commentary to poem #3) bring attention to failed attempts to realize a cherished ambition. This parallels Tranquil Hearing's unsuccessful mission to reach Mount Chicken Foot. "Ferry crossings" in the following line should be understood to refer to Xu Xiake and his monk companion's extensive travels together. On several occasions during their journey to the southwest, Tranquil Hearing became exhausted because he could not physically keep up with Xu Xiake's relentless pace of travel, but he always "had Buddha in his heart." Line 6 alludes to the famous folktale "Foolish Old Man Who Moved a Mountain" (Yugong yishan; why Xu changes "mountain" to "valley" in this line is unclear). Although his neighbors laughed at his desire to clear a road by moving a mountain, the old man persevered, as did his children and their children. Impressed with his perseverance, Heaven eventually ordered the removal of the mountain. The idea here is that Tranquil Hearing shared these same qualities of dedication

and willpower. In the final couplet, Xu resolves his set of poems dedicated to Tranquil Hearing by stating *the* basic tenet of Buddhism, supposedly once uttered by the Buddha himself: "All is an illusion." In other words, our mind's projections of reality are illusory. It is better, says Xu Xiake, to regard life and death as a dream that can be shared.

Following Tranquil Hearing's death, Xu Xiake left Nanning on 5 February 1638. After additional sightseeing in Guangxi, he crossed the border into his next provincial destination, Guizhou, on 10 May. Over the next six weeks, Xu visited scenic sites in the mountainous backwater of southwestern Guizhou. He finally reached Yunnan on 21 June. He spent the next six months sightseeing and visiting acquaintances in and around Yunnan Prefecture (Yunnan fu; modern Kunming), the provincial capital. The next three months were spent sightseeing south and east of the prefecture and the southwestern part of Guizhou. Xu Xiake finally reached Mount Chicken Foot on 25 January 1639.

—Translated by James M. Hargett

Appendix 7

"Ten Views of Mount Chicken Foot: Seventeen Poems"

by Xu Xiake

During his two visits to Mount Chicken Foot in Yunnan, Xu Xiake wrote several poems extolling the mountain's scenic wonders. Given the mountain's fame as a Buddhist retreat and Buddhist-related legends, it is not surprising that Buddhist topics constitute a central theme of these poems. Notable among them is the mountain's association with Mahākāśyapa, a famous disciple of Gautama Buddha who was thought to have ended his days at Mount Chicken Foot. Xu Xiake's poems also contain several Daoist themes, such as the famed goddess Queen Mother of the West and the transcendent Guangchengzi.

"FOUR VIEWS FROM THE ULTIMATE SUMMIT: EASTERN SUN, THE WESTERN SEA, THE SOUTHERN CLOUD, AND THE NORTHERN SNOW" (JUEDING SIGUAN: DONGRI, XIHAI, NANYUN, BEIXUE)

A lotus of a thousand rods cuts through Heaven's core,
Sculpting the sky, shaping the earth, every view is suspended high.
Her heights threaten the eastern gloom as the sun appears at night,
The sky enjoins her northern reaches where a thousand years of snow are piled.
Sunshine above Lake Erhai shakes the silvery moon,
Auspiciously tinted southern clouds spread colored cushions.
Her extraordinary sights completely capture splendors, both old and new,
In her, the Celestial Creator has clearly been one-sided.

Source: "Jishan shijing: shiqi shou" (*YJJZ*, 2: 1383–86; *YJ*, 2:1151–55).

"THE SUN VIEW"

The heavenly vault far above and the oceans below unite,
The Sun-Chariot casts ruby rays halfway through the night.
I can't believe they're still dreaming down there in the dells,
I rather think they've all forgotten to ring the morning bells.

"THE SNOW VIEW"[1]

With the North Star close at hand, the Jade Dragon sleeps.[2]
Shattered on the vacuous void is snow of ten thousand years.
The ornate signpost does not disturb the Liaohai Crane,[3]
Mount Kongtong can but face Mount Miaogu's transcendent maid.[4]

"THE SEA VIEW"[5]

Ten thousand river valleys return to a single pool,[6]
While the Milky Way from far away caps the autumn sky.
Why need we make inquiries in the changing world below?
The raft we ride will reach the stars before much time goes by.[7]

---

1 North is the snow view, referring to the snow on the mountains north of Lijiang Prefecture.

2 Jade Dragon, or Jade Dragon Snow Mountain, is north of Mount Chicken Foot.

3 The Liaohai Crane (Liaohai He) refers to a fourth-century story about the transcendent Ding Lingwei, who returned to his birthplace in the guise of a crane. As Ding approached the city gate, he was spotted near a signpost. In China, cranes are associated with transcendents and are a symbol of longevity. Xu Xiake compares the color of Jade Dragon's snow-capped peaks with a crane's snow-white feathers, while the ornate signpost symbolizes a sleeping dragon.

4 Mount Kongtong, in Gansu province, has inspired many legends about the cult of immortality. Here Xu Xiake contrasts the juxtaposition of Mount Kongtong and Miaogu Mountain [Miaogu Shan] with that of Chicken Foot and Jade Dragon, which he considered geomantically related. The transcendent of Miaogu Mountain first appears in the *Zhuangzi*, an early Daoist philosophical work. Although the term "transcendent" is gender-neutral, the description there strongly suggests a female. If so, Xu Xiake seems to imply that Jade Dragon Snow Mountain is even more beautiful than a goddess.

5 The west is called the Sea View since that is the location of Mount Diancang and Lake Erhai.

6 This line compares Lake Erhai with a puddle or a small pool, despite its vastness, given its diminutive appearance from the lofty mountain-top.

7 This line refers to an account that envisioned the Milky Way as connected to the ocean, and that a raft traveled annually between the two.

"THE CLOUD VIEW"[8]

White clouds have always arisen among the mountain ranges,
Blessed light from her southern foothills in rainbow colors swirl.
All at once, cotton clouds become another world,
Yet my single body still remains on top of Buddha's peak.

"HUASHOU DOUBLE GATE"[9]

A precipitous cliff, tall and steady, is fringed with ivory cloud,
Walls and screens of iridescent green, how the path winds 'round.
Twin towers conceal the spring, earth and sky are old;
Double doors shut fast by day, sun and stars are cold.
The Golden Robe, throughout the ages, as always still remains,[10]
Brocade staircase to the sky, by whom was it thus laid?
Why must we ask Mahākāśyapa, holding a flower all the while?
When precipitous crags standing straight break into a smile.[11]

---

8 In this and another poem, Xu Xiake refers to an optical illusion known as a glory (*foguang*). This is caused by the refraction of sunlight (or, more rarely, moonlight) in water droplets that comprise clouds or mist. The result is a rainbow-colored circle, similar to a saint's halo. The observer's shadow may often be seen in the circle's center when viewed from a great height. Hence Xu Xiake's reference to his physical body remaining on the mountain implies that his shadow was projected onto the halo. As he gives no reference to having personally experienced this phenomenon in his diaries, it is uncertain whether this and another similar poem, translated below, are composed from imagination.

9 This is a distinctive cliff to the west side of Mount Chicken Foot's main peak. A large, flat, arched rock-formation with a fissure running down its center resembles double gates, hence the name. It is thought to be the place where Gautama Buddha's disciple, Mahākāśyapa, entered a state of suspended animation (*dhyāna*), thereby preserving his body while waiting for the coming of the Maitreya Buddha. Given its sacred nature, many pilgrims still visit the site today.

10 The Golden Robe (Jinlan) refers to Gautama Buddha's robe, which he gave to Mahākāśyapa as a gesture of respect.

11 According to Buddhist lore, Gautama Buddha showed a flower to his disciples when preaching under the Bodhi tree. Only Mahākāśyapa indicated his understanding with a smile. The Buddha then gave him his robe and begging bowl, symbolic of spiritual authority. Mahākāśyapa was thought to have brought these to Mount Chicken Foot to await the coming of the Maitreya.

"THE CROWN PRINCE'S ARCANE PASS"[12]

Lotus, lotus, straight and tall, her creeping shadows earthward fall.
All at once, aloft the heights, I penetrate mysteries recondite.[13]
Secretly to that island dwelling-place went Guangchengzi without a trace.[14]
The world within the Vacuous Garden-plot is ever found inside a pot.[15]
When shadows enter and circulate, we may the twin apertures differentiate.
When breathing within its cavernous zone, I find myself all alone.[16]
I'll fully shed from this time hence the grime of human existence.
Now the wind has strengthened on both sides, my bones will soon revitalize.[17]

12 Otherwise known as Arcane Pass Cavern [Xuanguan Dong], this was a narrow, precipitous cave leading down from Worshipping the Buddha Terrace, located on the northwestern side of the main summit. One needed to navigate a plank walkway built onto a sheer cliff to reach it.

13 "Mysteries recondite" is a free rendition of *zhenzhong fu* 枕中符, an alternate title for the Daoist philosophical work *Talisman Inside a Pillow* (Zhenzhong shu). Xu Xiake playfully suggests that the experience of entering Arcane Pass Cavern was akin to entering a pillow (traditional ceramic pillows in China were hollow), thus enabling him to understand the mysteries of this esoteric work. All this is difficult to translate succinctly in verse.

14 Guangchengzi was a Daoist transcendent thought to reside on Mount Kongtong, to whom Xu Xiake refers elsewhere. On Mount Kongtong, see note 21, page 478, and note 4 above.

15 The Vacuous Garden [Langyuan] refers to a legendary abode of transcendent beings. The expression "world inside a pot" signifies a story from *Biographies of Gods and Transcendents* (Shenxian zhuan) in which a transcendent was able to enter a kettle or teapot, not unlike a genie into a bottle. Evidently, the constrictive nature of Arcane Pass Cavern and the commonly-held associations between caves and the cult of transcendence inspired Xu Xiake to draw this analogy.

16 Tentative translation. The meaning of the phrase *zuotong* 座通 at the beginning of this line is unclear.

17 "Both sides" is a rendering of *ye* 腋, which usually refers to armpits. In this context, I understand *ye* to mean the wings, flanks, or sides of a large rock formation.

"THE ARHAT'S SHEER WALL"[18]

Arrayed brocade fringed in sunset glow, such a lovely scene,
During quiet meditation, don't go gazing at the cloudy haze.
When monks face the sheer cliff, clouds are ever calm;[19]
Having spread their pleated peaks, bedrock accompanies the stars.[20]
Branches lend verdant groves so that each may find repose,[21]
Water provides for cooking, offerings made in threes.[22]
Hidden, ephemeral, what an illusion is this human form;
Layers of alpine mist reveal the Dharma Realm.[23]

"NUMINOUS SPRING IN THE LION GROVE" (TWO POEMS)[24]

THE FIRST

Who may touch the glistening pearls of a thousand charitable acts?
Aloft the numinous spring a numinous shrine is delved.
Pine shadows sway in its purity amid a thousand feet of snow,
Plum blossoms bathe in its chill as moonlight fills the pond.[25]

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18 This is a huge, sheer, rocky wall southeast of the summit, near Lion Grove.

19 In his diary, Xu Xiake tells how monks would meditate facing the sheer wall.

20 The specific term Orion (Shen) I have rendered generally as "stars," given that Xu Xiake is simply asserting—in his hyperbolic style—that the wall is high enough to accompany Orion.

21 As Xu Xiake mentions monks building meditation chambers near the sheer wall, I understand this line to mean that branches were used for this purpose.

22 "Cooking" (*xiangji*) refers to cooking in a Buddhist context. Certainly, the establishment of a monastery was contingent on a water source. In his travel diary, Xu Xiake mentions how local monks used a spring beside the cliff. It was customary for votive offerings to be made in threes.

23 Dharma Realm (Fatan) occurs elsewhere in Xu Xiake's poetry. According to Buddhist doctrine, it refers to the ultimate reality of the universe.

24 Although there was originally no water source in the vicinity of the Lion Grove, the monk White Cloud serendipitously—or Xu Xiake might say, providentially—struck a spring from the bare rock on top of a spur. Xu Xiake regarded it as proof of Buddha rewarding those with great virtue, hence the reference to charitable acts in the first line.

25 In the diary entry for the first day of the lunar new year, 1639 (*YJJZ*, 2:1027; *YJ*, 2:835), Xu Xiake describes his visit to the spring. He mentions a pool at its bottom in which the monk White Cloud had placed cut plum blossoms. The reference to plum blossoms in the line almost certainly refers to those. In traditional Chinese poetry and painting, plum blossoms symbolized perseverance against diversity and, together with the pine and bamboo, constituted the "three friends of winter" (*hanshi sanyou*). Hence, the plum blossoms nicely complement the reference to the pine trees and snow in the previous line. As Xu Xiake first visited the spring during winter, he likely refers to actual snow.

Within her emerald eye, cinnabar infuses the nectar;[26]
Upon white lotus rock, dew becomes sweet.[27]
The whole forest lacks offerings from neither man nor Heaven,
Pearls rain as heavenly flowers to moisten the Buddha realm.[28]

THE SECOND

Spring water flows within serenity and stone suddenly sunders;[29]
With a luminous moon aloft the peak, the Dipper is simply radiant.
When the aperture and terrestrial bones enjoin, the very marrow is refreshed,[30]
When the fountain overhead cascades, it's like drops of liquid jade.
They only say that cream may from Heaven fall,[31]
Yet here our very hands may cup the sweet, auspicious dew.[32]
Serving maids and imperial palaces are but ordinary things,
Who's to know that the numinous spring such wonders could outdo?

---

26 According to alchemical Daoism, cinnabar was considered a health-giving ingredient. I have rendered *yu* 玉 (jade) in the original text as "emerald" for the benefit of the general reader.

27 Sweet dew was considered an auspicious portent in China from ancient times.

28 According to a passage from the *Vimalakīrti Sutra*, heavenly maidens cast flowers to test Buddhist devotees. While the flowers fell from the bodhisattva's (enlightened beings) bodies, they stuck to those of the lesser followers (śrāvakas), thereby revealing their respective degree of cultivation. Heavenly flowers may also have contained a secondary level of meaning for Xu Xiake, given that a type of orchid known as Heavenly Maiden was found in the mountain's environs. On the Dharma Realm, see note 23 above.

29 When White Cloud, one of Mount Chicken Foot's Chan Masters, set about building a meditation chamber at the Lion Grove, the work caused a spring to miraculously flow. Hence the idea that the stone was sundered.

30 I understand the term *gujie* 骨節 (lit., "joints") to signify a landform's underlying structure according to traditional geomancy, as it would have been unlikely for Xu Xiake to have bathed here during winter when he first visited the site. He uses "bones" (*gu*) elsewhere in his diaries in a similar sense.

31 In Buddhist lore, cream (*tihu*) has special significance being a refined form of milk; hence it may symbolize spiritual cultivation.

32 On auspicious dew, also known as sweet dew, see note 27 above.

"AUSPICIOUS SHADOWS AT RELEASING LIGHT MONASTERY"[33]

That which surrounds this spiritual place, a blessed halo forms,
Thus does opalescent vapor the Buddha realm renew.[34]
As I slough my dusty self, emptiness takes on form;[35]
Having assumed the Buddha's image, illusion is now all true.[36]
A mirage is not the ocean, whose breath has been exhaled?[37]
To the jade mirror within the sky, I give up my physical form.[38]
Now I realize that each tree and every blade of grass throughout the mountainside
Has light to cleanse the shadows of all with vitality born.[39]

33 This poem celebrates the optical phenomenon known as a glory; see note 8 above.
34 Buddha Realm (Fajie) is a variant of Dharma Realm. See note 23 above.
35 Emptiness is a metaphor indicating the ontological ambiguity of everything in the universe according to the Buddhist doctrine of non-duality. That is, entities—including living beings—neither exist nor do they not exist as they do according to conventional, binary thinking. This whole line alludes to how the poet's physical form is projected onto the halo as a shadow.
36 This develops the idea of the previous line. Given that all phenomena are neither this nor that according to the Buddhist doctrine of non-duality, truth is illusion and illusion truth.
37 "Mirage" (*shenlou*; "clam-monsters' towers") in the original text refers to mirages that appear above the ocean, hence the connection between mirage and ocean. Again, this problematizes the conventional dualistic idea of fixed, unambiguous phenomena.
38 The jade mirror-world metaphorically refers to the glory, whereas the poet's forsaking his physical form again alludes to how his shadow was projected onto its halo.
39 This last couplet alludes to the non-dualistic idea that all living beings within the universe are ultimately one, mutually dependent, and without separate, differentiated natures.

"THE GLORIES OF THE BUDDHA'S TOP-KNOT" (TWO POEMS)[40]

THE FIRST

Back then the Great Asoka was willing to try his strength,[41]
Deep within countless mountains divine works were manifest.
All the devas rallied 'round, pagodas were all raised,[42]
A single pillar gave sole support, protecting the very core.[43]
Its splendor surpassed the turtle isles which immortals locked and bolted,[44]
Its luminescence shook Vulture Ridge, lotus-like and capped in snow.[45]

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40 Top-knot refers to the *ushnisha* ascribed to Buddha in some traditions: a fleshy cranial protuberance covered by hair. The following two poems extol a miraculous occurrence that was said to have occurred on the site of or inside the Victorious One Pagoda [Zunsheng Ta], next to Mount Writing Brush, southeast of the summit. It was built in 1638 in the Indian stupa-style. The term *zunsheng* is a contraction of *Foding zunsheng fomu*, signifying the Buddhist deity Usnīsavijayā (Victorious One with an Ushnisha), a buddha of longevity. In his gazetteer, Xu Xiake speaks of how the deity's "golden palm (or palms) suddenly transformed into a thousand manifestations of the Pure Land of Vairocana." *YJJZ*, 2:1353; *YJ*, 2:1141. Since his poems and gazetteer entry preclude detail, we must understand this as a kind of optical illusion revealing the Pure Land of Vairocana. In the Pure Land, within a sea of fragrant water, a thousand-petal lotus flower is believed to encompass an infinite variety of worlds. This harks back to the doctrine of non-duality, according to which any single phenomenon in the universe manifests all other phenomena.

41 The Great Asoka (r. 268–232 BCE) was the third ruler of the Mauryan empire. After a devastating war, he united many separate kingdoms covering most of modern India. Regretting the enormous loss of life, he became a staunch patron of the Buddhist church. In his diary, Xu Xiake professes belief that Asoka had conferred numinous light to the pagoda's location; hence, his opening line.

42 Deva (lit., "shining one") is a lower-level deity in both Hindu and Buddhist cosmology.

43 In his diary, Xu Xiake mentions how Mount Chicken Foot's many temples and shrines were appropriately laid out according to geomantic principles, except for this pagoda's location; it seems that no spire had been erected during his visit. Hence, the newly-built pagoda is thought to "protect" and complete the mountain's overall geomantic layout.

44 Legendary islands (*aofeng*; "giant sea-turtle peaks") are thought to have been carried on the backs of giant turtles.

45 Vulture Peak was where Gautama Buddha lived and preached for many years.

It's as though the Queen Mother herself has visited the peak,[46]
Guangchengzi and his long swords here once again to meet.[47]

THE SECOND

Who uses shadow puppets divine power to manifest?
The immortal's palm held midair conjures layered forms.[48]
Cathay's famous mountains are with many splendors blessed,
Southeast of the summit, Mount Writing Brush twin peaks erects.[49]
Four verdant cliffs display their living faces;
Three Realms of the Golden Buddha reveal the dharma nature.[50]
No matter what showy verses glibly praise Compassionate Grace,[51]
This day southern Yunnan will Mount Song outpace.[52]

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46 Queen Mother refers to the Daoist deity, Queen Mother of the West. Here, as elsewhere, Xu Xiake demonstrates his reverence for both traditions. In this context, perhaps he implies Buddhism's capacity to encompass diverse faiths, given the doctrine of non-duality.

47 On the transcendent Guangchengzi, see note 14 above. Among his weaponry was a pair of male and female swords. It is unclear who meets the transcendent: the poet himself or the Queen Mother of the West. I have, therefore, preserved this inherent ambiguity.

48 Layered forms (*chonggou*) evidently points to the multiple images entailed in the miraculous manifestation of the Pure Land of Vairocana that is the poem's subject.

49 According to the Kangxi era gazetteer on Mount Chicken Foot, this mountain was so named given the pagoda that was built at the location. Nevertheless, in the local dialect, "writing brush" (*wenbi*) may also signify a Buddhist pagoda. Therefore, the idea of Mount Writing Brush erecting twin peaks evidently refers to both the mountain and the pagoda; the double image is consistent with the idea of the Pure Land of Vairocana's multiple realms.

50 Three Realms (Santian) refer to the three realms of samsāra (traidhātuka): the desire, form, and formless realms. "Golden Buddha" (Jinsu) refers to Tathāgata, one of Buddha's ten epithets. "Buddha nature" equates to what I have elsewhere translated as the Buddha Realm.

51 Compassionate Grace [Ci'en Si] was a famous monastery in Chang'an (modern Xi'an). On its grounds was a stupa known as the Great Wild Goose Pagoda [Dayan Ta], in which were kept sutras and Buddhist images brought from India by the famous pilgrim-monk Xuanzang. Xu Xiake favorably contrasts this illustrious center of Buddhism with Mount Chicken Foot's comparatively humble pagoda.

52 Located in modern Henan, Mount Song is one of China's five most celebrated mountains. Xu Xiake's diary of his journey to Mount Song is translated in part 1, this volume. Besides picturesque scenery, it is an important center for both Daoism and Buddhism. In his original poem, Xu Xiake refers to Mount Song as *dengfeng*. This is the name of the county in central Henan where Mount Song is located. The name alludes to the ancient *feng* and *shan* sacrificial rites conducted by the First Emperor of the State of Qin to establish

"A WATERFALL RIDES THE VOID"[53]

Three spurs all facing east, who is there to guard them?[54]
A bolt of silk centrally suspended before the countless glens.
The tripod's legs forever view the cockerel to the rear;[55]
Above the waves, I suddenly see speeding equestrians.[56]
Curvy pearls cascade down from Heaven's very heights,
Snow and ice dashed on double cliffs transform into a roar.
Could I but straddle the jade dragon and ride against the flow,
Join countless cranes upon the peak and as one together soar.

"ANCIENT PINE AT TRANSMITTING THE ROBE MONASTERY"[57]

Jasper tree of a thousand rods and cloud-shadows layered;
Ancient branches brave the breeze, he alone is verdant.[58]
What was once the First Emperor's sacrificial spoils,[59]
Is now a guardian-dragon of Buddha's holy servants.[60]

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political legitimacy after his unification of the warring states in 221 BCE. Given that Xu Xiake had previously climbed Mount Song, this line implies the poet's visit to Mount Chicken Foot exceeded his prior travel to Mount Song.

53 This poem celebrates the Jade Dragon Waterfalls [Yulong Pubu], located west-south-west of the summit.

54 Three spurs refer to the mountain's three main branches. The term "guard" (*yao*) is a geomantic term often evoked in Xu Xiake's diaries. Here, it indicates a vital land feature that protects from the elements.

55 The term "tripod" harks back to Mount Chicken Foot's "three feet" or "three claws." The "cockerel" refers to the main summit of Chicken Mesa Pass, which Xu Xiake describes as Mount Chicken Foot's "shin-bone."

56 By "speeding equestrians" (*ma zhengxian* 馬爭先), it is unclear whether Xu Xiake refers to Horse Saddle Ridge, which he referred to as "the gateway to Mount Chicken Foot," or else imagined horse-shapes suggested by the rushing water. Like many other ambiguous phrases in his poetry, either meaning is possible.

57 This poem celebrates an ancient pine tree outside Transmitting the Robe Monastery.

58 Pine trees often symbolized superior men in traditional poetry and painting, given their evergreen nature, even during snowfalls, hence the idea of perseverance in the face of adversity. They also symbolized longevity.

59 The First Emperor refers to the First Emperor of Qin, who conquered the multifarious warring states to form a unified empire in 221 BCE. To consolidate political authority, he carried out elaborate sacrifices, known as the *feng* and *shan*, to heaven and earth, respectively, on Mount Tai in Shandong. By rhetorically asserting that the pine tree was a relic from the Emperor's sacrifice, Xu Xiake establishes its age and importance.

60 In his diary, Xu Xiake describes the tree as resembling a dragon.

His scaly bark halfway to Heaven is like a gibbon's dancing arms,
Flags and banners of a thousand cohorts are with phoenix feathers sewn.[61]
Dining on ice, supping on snow, for a thousand years refined,
Still for the Flower-Holder a single smile is shown.[62]

"A PARALLEL WORLD INSIDE AN ANCIENT CAVE" (TWO POEMS)[63]

THE FIRST

Simurghs and cranes on the empty mountain, the road is lost in haze,
While the very heights of pleated peaks climb into the clouds.
What person from the outside world may come to dally here?
Betwixt and between the flower-heads lies a solitary cave concealed.
Jasper herbs and jade branches bring blossoms that bloom and fall,
Silvery dew and transcendent milk drip tears so very long.[64]
A divine dragon of a hundred feet forever guards the pond,
He won't allow the peach blossoms to be banished to Yelang.[65]

THE SECOND

Cave-worlds were once never found within the mortal realm.
Three tributaries on the eastern side, we yet again ascended.
Directly arriving at a place where numberless peaks recede,
Suddenly then, amid the gloom, were twin towers suspended.

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61 This line develops the idea expressed in the previous one about the texture of the bark and the appearance of massed pine needles.
62 On the Flower-Holder, see note 11 above.
63 These two poems extol the wonders of Lotus Treasury Cavern [Huazang Dong], inside of which were stalagmites, stalactites, and other spectacular rock formations. Informed by Daoism, Chinese throughout the imperial period generally believed that certain caves harbored alternate, parallel worlds inhabited by transcendent beings.
64 A figurative description of stalagmites and stalactites.
65 This alludes to Li Bai's poem, "Recalling Peach Blossoms by Autumn Bank While Traveling Long Ago during Banishment in Yelang" (Yi Qiupu taohua jiu youshi cuan Yelang), thought to be composed in 759 during his banishment to Yelang (in modern Guizhou). *QTS*, 182.1860. In the context of caves with connotations of parallel worlds, peach blossoms also recall Tao Qian's famous story about the Peach Blossom Spring, for which see part 1, note 6, pages 78–79.

Peach blossoms flourish and fall yet the portal is always there,
Ancient cranes dip and dive, the road is never closed.
Thirty thousand *li* due east lie the transcendent isles,[66]
Between which a single cloud sometimes comes and goes.

—Translated by Alister D. Inglis

66 On these transcendent isles, see part 1, note 6, page 60.

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Note: Several Chinese-language works listed in the bibliography were published with both a Chinese title and its English translation. In such cases, the original translated title appears in parentheses. For Chinese-language works published with Chinese titles only, English translations of the titles, provided by the translators of the current volume, are presented in square brackets.

ABBREVIATIONS

DMB	Hucker, *A Dictionary of Ming Biography*
NP1	Ding Wenjiang, *Xu Xiake xiansheng nianpu*
NP2	Chu Shaotang, *Zengding Xu Xiake nianpu*
QTS	*Quan Tangshi*
YJ	Chu Shaotang and Wu Yingshou, *Xu Xiake youji*
YJJZ	Zhu Huirong, *Xu Xiake youji jiaozhu*

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General Glossary-Index

Page numbers in italics refer to illustrations.

CONVENTIONS

Chinese-language items are listed under their translated titles, followed by Hanyu Pinyin and Chinese characters in parentheses:

> "Account of a Sightseeing Trip to the Yan Caverns" (You Yandong ji 游顏洞記)

Likewise, names of Chinese government organs and office titles are listed under their English translations:

> administrator for public order (*sili canjun* 司理參軍)
> Directorate of Education (Guozi Jian 國子監)

With some exceptions, names, terms, and related items translated from Chinese are listed under their English translation, and alternate written forms of Chinese characters appear in brackets.

> Buddhist retreat (*an* 庵 [廣])

An asterisk precedes the names of Buddhist monks:

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Place-Name Glossary-Index

When a capitalized administrative designation in Hanyu Pinyin, such as *shi* 市, *xian* 縣, *qu* 區, and *xiang* 鄉, directly follows a place-name, it refers to a modern place-name, such as Beijing Shi. When a capitalized administrative designation is translated into English, such as county, subprefecture, and prefecture, it refers to a traditional or premodern place name, for example, Huangyan 黃巖 County.

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