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# Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose (Book One)

Asian Studies Institute Translation Paper 2

By Yuan Zhongdao (1570-1624)

Translated by Duncan Campbell

Original ISSN: 1174-7676

ISBN: 0-475-11060-9

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*ASI translation papers are a new series of translations into English of works of literature, history etc., from east and south Asia. This second paper consists of a translation of Book One of Yuan Zhongdao's diary, entitled 'Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose'. The diary records events which occurred between 1608 and 1618 in Southern China.*

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## Translator's Introduction

Thus it is that, for the six years now since the *Wushen* year [1608], I have spent much of my time aboard a junk. As one junk fell into disrepair, I have had another built. Whenever I live in town I become as inflamed as if being cauterised with moxa, only finding release when I climb upon a junk. If when studying at home I can understand not a word of what I happen to be reading, on board a junk I become intoxicated with the copiousness of my reading notes. Or if I haven't written a line of poetry during the course of a year spent on land, my poetic inspiration surges up again like a spring the moment I find myself within the cabin of a junk ... Such is the power of living on a junk.

Yuan Zhongdao, 'Hou Fanfu ji' [Record of My Second "Floating Wild Duck" Junk]

Yuan Zhongdao, the youngest of the three famous Yuan brothers of the late Ming period, never quite achieved either the official success of his eldest brother, Yuan Zongdao (1560-1600), or the literary reputation of the most famous of the three, Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610).<sup>[1]</sup> To the mind of his earliest biographer, the great Qian Qianyi (1582-1664), his problem in the latter respect was certainly not due to any lack of talent. "Both your poetry and your prose", Qian records himself as telling Yuan on one occasion, "suffer from an excess of talent. Your travel records, for instance, if only you were to edit them severely, deleting more than half their text, could well stand alongside those of the ancients". "Excellent advice", Yuan had responded, "but although you may well be able to do this to them, I cannot, and I am myself forever fearful of the extent to which the gush of my inspiration tends to overflow the banks".

Yuan Zhongdao's diary, entitled *Youju feilu* [Notes Made Whilst Travelling and at Repose], Book One of which is translated here, is a remarkable work, perhaps in part by virtue of the superfluity spoken of by Qian Qianyi. Its thirteen books provide a detailed record of the years 1608-18, a period during which both Yuan Zhongdao's father and his beloved brother Hongdao died, whilst Zhongdao himself belatedly achieved the examination success long expected of him and took up the first of his official posts. Above all, the diary tells of the pleasure Yuan derived from his riverine travels throughout some of the most scenically beautiful parts of southern China, of the friends he encountered along his way and the private collections of painting and calligraphy that he was given access to. As such, it affords us a unique glimpse into the

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material, social and emotional world of a noted member of the scholarly elite of the late imperial period in China.

Yuan Zhongdao's collected works, entitled *Kexuezhai ji* [Collection of the Snowy White Jade Studio] and including his diary, was first published in his own lifetime, in 1618. The present translation is based on the version found in Qian Bocheng (ed.), *Kexuezhai ji* (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1989). Reference has also been made to a recently published and lightly annotated version of the diary, Bu Wenying (ed.), *Youju feilu* (Shanghai: Yuandong chubanshe, 1996). A partial translation of Book One of this diary is included in Stephen Owen (trans.), *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York & London: W.W. Norton, 1996), pp. 823-26.

I am grateful for the care with which Professor Andrew Lo of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, read the draft of my translations and the suggestions he provided.

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### **Book One: The Year of the Monkey [1608]**

This first day of the tenth month of the 36th year of the reign of the Wanli Emperor, the *Wushen* year, finds me living in my Valley of the Tall Bamboo. [2] Last year, having failed in the Metropolitan Examinations, I took up residence in the household of the Minister of War, Jian Da of Yuyang. It was only in the third month of the present year that I embarked upon my journey home. On his trip southwards during winter last year, my brother Hongdao, then serving in the Ministry of Rites, received word of his posting to the Ministry of Personnel. So it was that once the spring had arrived, he set off to return to the capital and I remained here. Within my Valley of the Tall Bamboo, the bamboo grows daily more luxuriant, the flowers more splendid. I have added to the garden a pavilion here and a terrace there. More and more I think of withdrawing from the world.

After several months of quiet repose, I find that the urge to travel far away has again grown strong within me. True, here amidst the beauty of the Valley of the Tall Bamboo, I may pull shut my door and read. But circumstances are such that I cannot remain here long before the burdens of family press down upon me and my social obligations begin to multiply. The incessant chatter of my ever more frequent houseguests affords me not a moment's peace. I have resolved, therefore, to set off upon a distant journey. In the first place, the sight of famous mountains and majestic rivers will serve to cleanse my vulgar imagination. Secondly, the many *vihara* that stud the Wu and Yue regions will provide havens where I may study in peace. Lastly, although I believe my scholarship already to have entered that stage of confident understanding, my powers of intuitive apprehension are not yet profound and all too often I find myself becoming emotionally involved in the phenomenal illusions that surround me. All too frequently also my mind leads me along precipitous paths that afford no egress. Perhaps on my travels I shall meet up with an eminent master or some excellent friend or two who, by means of their beneficent influence, will help dissolve the habits of mind that have become so ingrained within me. This will surely prove far more efficacious than any regimen of self-discipline that I could adopt. It is for these reasons that I dare not cleave to my present tranquillity.

I happened to run into my maternal eighth uncle, Gong Zhongan, and spoke with him of my desire to journey far away: "As my trip is not inspired by the pursuit of either wealth or fame, nothing could be more fitting than to travel by means of the waterways, and in travelling thus, it is always best, I feel, to have possession of one's own junk. One can load it up with cured grain and other provisions and worry not at all about how fast one travels or how far one goes. Whenever one encounters a fine scene or a boon companion, one can linger as long as one wishes. This truly constitutes the delight of aimless wandering, for one is free of the impatience of the boatmen to get on. Further, storms often blow up upon the lakes and rivers and only if one has one's own junk can one travel when one considers it safe to do so and halt when one does not. Nothing is greater than this".

To this, my uncle responded readily: "I have a junk that I once had made for my own use. It is a most sturdy craft and the boatmen too have long been in my employ. I'll give

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it to you, if you would like it?" The junk happened to be moored presently in the prefectural seat of Sandy Town.

I crossed the Yangtze on the way to Sandy Town to ready the provisions that I would require on my travels. In the evening, the wind blew up a gale and dark clouds loomed all around me. By dawn, however, the weather had lifted, the river rippled gently in the breeze and the sun shone brightly. I rested a while once I had reached Yellow Sandbank. I note that in his collected works the Southern Song dynasty scholar Wang Shipeng called this place Yellow Altar. He must have had some basis for having done so.

I went to the riverbank to take a look over the junk my uncle had given me. It is indeed a stout craft. Sitting in it I brewed up some tea using water drawn from the river – it was excellent! Ashore once again, and wandering through the town, I recalled having visited this place some twenty years ago. Then, the streetwalkers had lined the alleyways. The scene now is one of pitiable desolation.

The Customs Collector Shen Chaohuan of the Bureau of Waterways and Irrigation summoned me to take a drink with him in the Hall of Tranquil Karma. In the centre of the hall hung a plaque with the words 'Hall of Subhavyuha', and on either side a couplet that read:

Spring Flowers Amitabha,  
Autumn Flowers Avalokitesvara

Both the plaque and the couplet were from the brush of Huang Hui and they inspired a discussion with Shen Chaohuan about contemporary calligraphy. We agreed that of this present age, only Huang Hui and Dong Qichang might truly stand alongside the ancients. Whilst Dong Qichang can be said to have thoroughly understood the method of calligraphy, Huang Hui's individual style, on the other hand, fully captured its spirit. Having begged for sick leave, Huang Hui took a roundabout route home and came to Chu. His journey happened to coincide with the burial of my elder brother Zongdao. Huang was importuned with requests for specimens of his calligraphy but displaying not the slightest sign of annoyance at this circumstance, he threw off scrolls in a most relaxed manner. This explains why there are so many examples of his hand here in the Hubei region. The versions he did for me of the Jin dynasty poet Tao Qian's 'Return Home!', 'Tasting Songluo Tea at Hundred Springs' as well as the poems he wrote in response to my own 'Parting at Xiling', are especial masterpieces.

I paid a call on some people at the Heaven Supporting Monastery, this having been long ago the residence of Luo Han of the Jin. He lived here whilst serving as Retainer and later the place became a monastery. A stele written by the poet Huang Tingjian of the Northern Song dynasty still stands here.

The *Zhugong gushi* [Tales from the Islet Palace] by the Tang dynasty scholar Yu Zhigu records the following: "Hating noise and being something of a recluse, Luo Han shifted out of town to live some three *li* to the south". The *Jingzhou ji* [Record of Jingzhou] by Sheng Hongzhi, on the other hand, notes the following: "A hundred or so *li* west of the town Luo Han built a tower that overlooked the Yangtze, the place thus acquiring the name 'Duke Luo's Island'". This place, then, was his administrative office, and beyond the city, above the river, was where he shifted to later to escape the bustle. The sentence that reads: "When he returned the orchids and chrysanthemums were blooming in profusion" refers to his having returned to his office from the countryside, not to his home. Luo Han was from Leiyang county and held office in Jingzhou, so when the history books state, "He retired from office and returned to Jingzhou", they are mistaken. During the Continued Stability reign period [1228-37] of the Southern Song dynasty, Luo Yu was posted here and he began construction of the *Vihara* of the Gathered Orchids, Wei Liaoweng having written a record of this structure.

Huang Tingjian spent eight years exiled in the Qian and Rong regions after having been dismissed over the historiographical affair. Once he had been restored to office, he took up a post at Jiangling where he wrote his *Fotu ji* [Record of the Pagoda] for the Heaven Supporting Cloister. Later on, the authorities took exception to parts of what he had

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written and he was again demoted, to Yiyang on this occasion. If nobody at the time dared to include the text of this record in his *Yuzhang Huang xiansheng wenji* [Collected Prose Writings of Master Huang of Yuzhang], how much more unlikely it would have been that this very text would have been engraved upon such handsome stone as this stele? The present stele, moreover, appears to have been re-engraved several times, even more reason to suspect that it does not in fact date from the Song period.

I passed in front of the former residence of the late Grand Secretary Zhang Juzheng – how sad it is to reflect upon his fate! His mansion is comparable to that of the Tang scholar Li Deyu's 'Peaceful Springs' in Luoyang. Li Deyu loved his garden retreat and enjoined his sons and grandsons not to give away a single plant from it. Later, he was to die at sea, only to return to his beloved 'Peaceful Springs' in the dream of Linghu. His fate was even more lamentable than that of Zhang Juzheng. Both men were alike in terms of both their talents and their sense of integrity, however, and they shared too similar joys and hatreds. Similar too were the eventual misfortunes that befell them.

We sailed idly upon the Yangtze, heading for All Quarters Monastery at South Lake. This monastery is also known as the Forest of Assembled Fragrance, and Huang Hui had also inscribed the plaque hanging here. Mendicant monks who travel here from all quarters of the empire once had nowhere to lodge, until my brother Hongdao and the Secretariat Drafter Su Weilin initiated the construction of the monastery complex. After a few years' work on the project, the Hall of the Buddha along with the various monk cells began to take shape. A monk from the Wu region has been living here fasting in solitary confinement for the past three years. When we questioned him about Chan Buddhism, we discovered that he knew nothing at all about contemplative analysis, but simply maintained his chant: "I place my trust in the Amida Buddha". Whereas men such as I bustle around all day without a moment's cease, as skittish as monkeys, men such as this one lead cœnobitic lives of great asceticism and suffering. Such devotion is in itself worthy of our admiration and perhaps one should not demand more from them.

I received a letter from Hongdao in the capital, saying: "I now fully understand that a 'hot' official post such as the one I presently hold is to be avoided at all costs and my one apprehension is that I will not be able to escape it soon enough". I can sympathise with him. I received also a letter from Master Li Weizhen which reads, in part: "Recently I've been reading your *Yuyang ji* [Yuyang Collection] but have not yet been able to get hold of a copy of your 'Goose Poems'. I'd be most grateful if you could make a copy of these and send them to me, when you have the time". I had written these poems over the course of the spring of the *Bingwu* year [1606]. At the time, the monk Boundless had composed a couple of poems, and Hongdao and I proceeded to lock horns in front of the Pleasure of the Orange Pavilion and each came up with ten more poems. Later on, Long Ying read them and, moved to admiration, rhymed ten of his own poems with them, Long Xiang too coming up with ten poems, and the two Grand Historians Zeng Keqian and Lei Ying each producing two poems. I included my own poems in my *Yundang ji* [Valley of the Tall Bamboo Collection].

Studying specimens of painting and calligraphy in the retreat of Zhu Guangzuo of the Ministry of Personnel, I came upon a scroll of ink bamboos by the great Song poet Su Shi. It bore an upper inscription that read: "I was moved to paint this whilst sitting in my Western Hall in front of the bamboo grove". The calligraphy was at once vigorous and elegant, and the scroll carried a seal of the Promulgating Harmony reign period [1119-25] of the Song dynasty with the text: "This is an example of inspired brushwork". Beneath the seal was an encomium by Ke Jiusi. I viewed also a scroll with the calligraphy of Huang Tingjian and a scroll painting of a group of Arhats by Qian Xuan, the latter of which bore a colophon by the Grand Historian Dong Qichang.

Whilst visiting Xia Daofu of Xin'an, my host produced a bundle of manuscripts, being poems and letters by Li Zhi, none of which had ever been published and all of which were admirable for both their richness of expression and severity of judgement. Xia Daofu had written out in running script upon several sheets of paper my 'Biography of Li Zhi' and it looked most impressive. Someone else there at the time asked me: "Why was it that Li Zhi was so irascible?"

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To this, I replied: "This is simply a matter of old habits being difficult to change like thousand year old ice which does not melt away after a single day's burning sun. But his opinions were most true, his approach to understanding firm in the extreme. He was truly the dragon of our age!"

During this same visit to Xia Daofu's house I saw also a note that Li Zhi had written about my brother Zongdao's *Haili pian* [Inadequate Jottings]. It is the commentary of an already enlightened man and is of lasting value, thus I record it here:

I found Yuan Zongdao's *Inadequate Jottings* a quite marvellous read. Now that I have met with the man here above Dragon Lake, however, I have been able to discover more about him and find him even more remarkable than I anticipated he would be. We should not worry about scholars intent upon understanding the Way not letting go of the Way, rather we should worry that they may let go of it too early. An intelligent person will easily let go, thinking that he has already arrived at an understanding of the Way, whereas a dullard will find it difficult to enter. Are there really intelligent people and dullards, however? In the latter case, it is simply a matter of not being sincere in one's determination and not fearing death. If a person loves to study and is capable of entering, and after he enters he does not let go, then when the day comes for him to let go, who would be able to withstand him? I have written these lines about Yuan Zongdao in the hope that we may meet again sometime.

Having read these comments through several times, my desire to pursue contemplative analysis became even more pressing.

The provisions for my journey now already assembled, I returned to Gong'an and we cast off. My junk was loaded with a year's supply of grain and several trunks full of books and paintings. By evening we reached Stone Head, anchoring at Sand Jetty.

I had my luggage taken to a monk's cell in Jade Field Monastery, within Stone Head township. As the snow had stopped falling by then, I strolled into the Buddha Hall to gaze upon his golden mien and to pay homage to him. There was not a touch of vulgarity about his pure and compassionate statue. I sat idly in the weak sun, and in the far distance there seemed to be traces of snow still lying upon the eastern peaks. I wanted to climb up there, but put the visit off because of the mud. The hall also contained a statue of the Bodhisattva which, or so I was informed by the monks, had been dragged up in the net of a fisherman working upon White Mud Lake. It is a fine statue, similar to that of the statue of the Buddha that stands in the Protecting the Nation Monastery in Jingzhou. I note also that this is one of the thirteen sites in the empire where Ge Xuan of the Three Kingdoms period refined the elixir of immortality.

I paid a visit on the Grand Historian Zeng Keqian and we climbed the hill behind his residence. There a single Nanmu tree was in full bloom, this tree being the reason that the Grand Historian has named his studio Nanmu Studio. A good half of Embroidered Forest and Eastern Peak lie within the town walls, with people living upon the foothills, and one can view the scene from the hill behind their residences.

Secretary Wang's new residence too was pillowed against a mountain pass and within its perimeter there was a rectangular pond covering an area of some ten *mu*. Several dozen pine and cassia trees stand thereabouts, elegant in their luxuriant vegetation. An ivy creeper covers a high wall, the dark red of the wall in this way being dappled with green. At the foot of the wall lies a flat stone upon which chess may be played. The Secretary turned to me to say: "There's a grotto here, large enough for several dozen of people to stand within. I've had it sealed up for the paths are a maze and I fear there are a lot more things hidden in there. I dare not allow anyone to enter it".

We went from here to climb the hill beyond, clambering over the rocky cliffs for several hundred steps or so. Reaching the highest mound to the left of the hill, we gazed out over the river and beyond to the distant mountain chain. It was a magnificent site for a pavilion, and when the Secretary asked me to come up with an appropriate name, I responded: "You could call it 'Pavilion of the Distant Sails'". He went on to ask me for a

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fitting couplet to hang in the pavilion, and I immediately thought of two lines from that poem by Xie Tiao of the Jin that go:

On the edge of the horizon I descry a returning boat,  
Within the clouds I can make out the riverside trees.

The Secretary brought out two authentic specimens of the calligraphy of Mi Fu of the Song and Zhao Mengfu of the Yuan. The piece by Mi Fu was on eight leaves of paper and presented a discussion of the methods of papermaking and the types of paper that he had used in his lifetime. Its diction was most fine, and the calligraphy both vigorous and bold. A true example of the 'Madman's' brush. As to the Zhao Mengfu piece, this comprised ten or so of his seven-syllable regulated verses. It too was an excellent example of his brushwork. I wrote a short colophon on it.

Visiting the thatched cottage of the Cultivated Talent Zhang Wengbo, I saw the Tang dynasty Zhou Fang's 'Painting of Fishing at the Pleasure of Spring Garden'. This scroll bore the Promulgating Harmony seal, the colour of which remained a blood red. Towards the foot of the scroll there were brushed the words: "Mounted during the Promulgating Harmony reign period", apparently in the calligraphy of the Emperor Huizong. After reading the colophon, I discovered that this was not in fact authentic and that Zhou Fang had actually written this colophon himself, the scroll however having simply been remounted during the Promulgating Harmony period. The painting itself depicted the Tang Emperor Xuanzong angling with the various princes in his Pleasures of Spring Garden, all of them attired in similar court robes. One man was holding a fishing rod, another was sitting on the opposite bank of the stream, yet another was perched in a tree, while a young lad was threading a fishing hook. Only these four people were depicted, but they were vividly limned in Zhou Fang's inimitable manner. I saw also the Southern Song artist Liu Songnian's 'Painting of Lu Tong Brewing Tea', with the artist's personal name brushed into the trunk of a tree. This scroll also carried colophons by Li Fu and Yang Weizhen. A painting by the Xuande Emperor depicting a toad eating flies upon a tree bore the imperial inscription: 'Given to Yang Pu'. A small portrait of Su Shi by Tang Yin of the Ming carries inscriptions, in their own hands, by Liu Zhongxuan, Li Wenxi, Li Kongtong, Zuo Guoji and Wen Zhengming. A painting entitled 'Scroll Painting of the Pure Jade Hall' depicts Mao Cheng departing on official business and bears parting poems by the gentlemen He Jingming, Xue Kaogong, Sun Shaozu, Yang Shen and Wang Tingchen, all in their own calligraphy. There was also a painting by Xie Shichen entitled 'Painting of Yang Peak', this being the name of the hill that stood behind his residence. Also a poem by Xu Zonglu of Fanchuan, and scroll by the old master Guo Xu entitled 'Painting of Two Lads Playing Chess'. Zhang Wengbo owned also two fan paintings by Lu Shen, one entitled 'Two Quatrains on the Pear Blossom', and the other 'The Peacock Pecks the Pomegranate until it's about to Burst'. Also three scrolls of bamboo by Sheng Mou, bamboo by Xia Chang and the 'Southern Hall Poems' in four styles of calligraphy by Li Dongyang. And finally, a seven-syllable regulated verse by Duke Yangfeng, written whilst he was on his travels, followed by autograph colophons by Zhang Longhu, Liao Daonan, Tong Chengxu and Sun Jifang.

Zeng Keqian and the others arranged to pay a visit to East Mountain, and Secretary Wang ordered a troupe of singing boys to accompany us there. Having ascended the mountain, we saw the Yangtze surging majestically below us, its glistening sheen seeming to stretch beyond the furthest horizon. Before us loomed Yellow Mountain, appearing as if it were rank upon rank of unfurled pennants. Towards dusk, we moved with our cups down amidst the disorderly outcrop of rocks along the river bank, each of us sitting to drink upon an equally strangely shaped rock. The music of the flutes and strings merged with the mournful roar of the river as it pounded against the rocks, and fishing skiffs flew by upon the river. On this occasion, Zhang Wengbo and Wang Boyu accompanied us.

Secretary Wang brought out a number of paintings for us to view. The first was a painting entitled 'A Hundred Birds' attributed to Zhao Boju of the Northern Song. It was no more than several *chi* in length and yet each bird was shown to best advantage. The painting is certainly a most excellent example of the art of painting, but it is not by Zhao Boju. The scroll bore colophons by both Jin Youzi and Zeng Qi. The next was a painting

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entitled 'Horse' by Zhao Yong with a colophon by Ke Jiushi. Secretary Wang also showed us an exquisitely worked painting by Wen Zhengming entitled 'Yangtze Vista', along with Qian Xuan's 'The Illustrious Emperor Lecturing on the *Book of Changes*' which carried colophons by the three Yangs, Yang Shiqi, Yang Rong and Yang Pu. Lastly, he had us look at the early Ming painter Xie Jin's 'Early Levée Poems' in the grass script. The scroll carried no inscriptions but is a truly masterful example of his calligraphy. It reveals not a suggestion of anger or resentment and is a real treasure.

Setting off eastwards on my travels through the Wu and Yue regions, I set sail from Stone Head. On our approach to Baling we met with extreme cold and were forced to head back. On arriving in Embroidered Forest, I sent a note to Zeng Keqian telling him of my return. Very soon, he turned up and boarded my junk, saying: "You've come back at just the right moment. I had been about to warn you that the route you planned to take is extremely dangerous at the moment. I've been worried about your safety". Upon hearing that I had been forced to turn back, Wang Boyu too arrived on board and we talked the night away.

After rising at dawn on my junk, I went to sit upon the disordered rocks around East Mountain's breakwater. Although the rocks there were not themselves especially fine, they appear as if they have suddenly split away from a large screen. A number of fishing junks were moored in the small bays amidst the rocks and the scene resembled somewhat that of a landscape painting. The Cultivated Talent Wang Qimao arrived, along with Wang Boyu and Zhang Wengbo, saying that today was just the day to pay a visit to South Mountain. Thus we all set off on foot. When we reached Prajna Monastery at the foot of the mountain we discovered that Zeng Keqian, the Provincial Graduate Wang Longyu and the Cultivated Talent Wang Yunyi were also there in the monastery. They decided to stay on there, whilst I set off for the summit with my companions.

This mountain is known as Dragon Canopy. Beneath us, the river flowed close by, whilst in the far distance one could make out the myriad peaks of the Huarong and East Mountain ranges, as clearly and well defined as if they stood upon one's teapoy. Here upon the mountain stands the Ancestral Temple of Li Jing, this being the site where he quartered his troops during his campaign against Xiao Xian during the Sui dynasty. To the left of the mountain a path leads off towards Stone Head Monastery. This monastery is where my Buddhist monk friend Cold Snow once lived. Cold Snow spent more years living with us brothers than anyone else and he was well advanced in his understanding of the principles of Chan. Tragically he died before his fiftieth year. All that remains here is a single desolate monastery. How I mourn him still! Behind the monastery stands a cliff of disordered rocks, the contours of which appear as crashing breakers. This too is an excellent spot. We returned to Prajna Monastery by way of a level road, and having taken a meal there, we set off upon our return journey. I have made a fuller record of this visit elsewhere.

At the Cultivated Talent Wang Yinshi's place I viewed a biography of Yang Pu's father in the hand of Xie Jin. Yang Pu's father was in fact originally from my own native place, Gonggan, and only moved to Stone Head later in his life. I saw there also calligraphy in four styles from the brush of the Grand Secretary Li Dongyang, followed on the same scroll by ten seven-syllable regulated verses from his early period, all written in the running script. They were excellent.

I moved to stay in Wang Longyu's Riverside Pavilion. When I opened my window I found myself looking directly out over the river and the ever-changing pattern of the waves and the clouds provided an endless fascination. I would claim that the view from this pavilion is in no way inferior to that afforded Su Shi from his Snow Hall.

This morning, just as we were about to cast off to embark upon our return to Gonggan, Zeng Keqian arrived unexpectedly, saying: "Stay another day, for my sake. A friend of mine, a Master Wang Yangsheng, owns a small garden hereabouts which is well worth a visit". So we set out together to visit this garden. Once there, Zeng Keqian took out an autograph version of Yang Shen's 'Rules for Drinking Tea' which we proceeded to read together. It reveals a masterful command of diction.

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We set sail for Gongan, finally, berthing for the night at Haoxue. There was little to occupy myself with on board so I amused myself for the day reading, revising some of my poems, burning incense, brewing tea and practising my calligraphy on a fan.

My younger brother Fangping boarded the boat along with my maternal uncle Gong Zhongan, and we had ourselves taken across to the northern banks of the river where we alighted. Sitting there upon mats on the sand dunes we drew characters in the sand and I came to appreciate something of the delight the ancients took in painting in the mud and sand. When the wind began to quicken, we drew closer to the banks and listened to the pounding of the waves upon the shore. We stewed up a fish and warmed some wine. Soon, well into our cups by then, we were all singing lustily. The setting sun washed the islets a blood red.

In the studio of my uncle Gong of the Directorate of Education, I was shown Shen Zhou's painting 'Swans', along with two examples of running script by Ban Yangong. Ban Yangong lived during the Yuan dynasty and took the studio name Shuzhai. His fame is often associated with that of Guan Yunshi and Yang Weizhen, and he was known as an expert in dramatic lyrics. His calligraphy is uncommonly pure and strong, not at all inferior to that of Zhao Mengfu.

By evening, a heavy snow had begun to fall and although I had intended boarding my junk and making my way back to Sandy Town, the weather prevented me from doing so. The snow falling amidst the myriad bamboos that line the shore made a mournful pitter-patter. I sat in a darkened window idly reading by the light of a single lamp, this bringing me a modicum of compensatory pleasure. I reflected upon the fact that whenever I was about to set off anywhere, circumstances always seemed to conspire to prevent me from doing so. Life, however, is always full of such frustrations and rather than cavilling at one's lot, perhaps one should best simply accept things as they are. Is this what Huang Tingjian meant by his line: "One can hang one's dreams anywhere"?

Last night I dreamed that I was about to enter a temple when all of a sudden I felt myself to be physically unclean. To myself, I chanted a tantric mantra and visualised a Brahma letter on my forehead. In an instant, I found myself in the presence of a god who turned out to be Duke Guan. He got up from his seat and we greeted each other. He began to speak: "You, sir, appear to have an auspicious canopy painted on your head, its lustre bright in the extreme. What omen is this, can you tell me?"

I responded: "I happened, a moment ago, to chant to myself a mantra from the realm of Pure Dharma as I entered your hall".

It was my father's birthday today and a banquet was held in the Hall of the Restful Mind. Once he had a drink or two, my uncle Gong Zhongan proved himself quite a comic, giving a perfect imitation of a cat. The rest of us fell about laughing.

The weather has cleared up somewhat, and at dawn I boarded my junk and entered Sandy Town. By noon, however, black clouds had blanketed the river and drizzle fell almost horizontally, driven by a gusting wind. I pulled aside the curtain and looked out upon a misty river scene painted upon nature's screen.

We arrived in Sandy Town early but as sandbars blocked the river it had proven difficult either to advance further or to berth. But one can actually sail this part of the river even when the water level is low, something that the locals don't seem to understand. We berthed in front of the Temple of the Goddess of Mercy.

Fan Dongsheng of Wu paid a visit upon me and in the evening we went off in a small boat upon the river, joined by my Fujianese friend Yao Baizhi. At midnight, we laid out the wine cups and began drinking in our little skiff. In full-throated song we glided eastwards, the wind driven rain seeming to reach towards the heavens around us and the river clothed in a dispiriting blackness.

My younger brother Fangping arrived to make the arrangements to buy the Han family residence. Gongan County falls daily into a greater state of dilapidation, only Dipper Lake



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remaining at all inhabitable, although even this suffers from neglect and isolation. A letter from Hongdao had asked that the garden and residence that he had bought within the county seat now be sold and this mansion acquired in its stead. The Han family is related to ours by ties of both friendship and marriage and their properties include a tower overlooking the river. As the present Hongdao holds only an unprofitable office, he has found it impossible to come up with the full amount being asked for the property. Fortunately, payments for it can be made in instalments and so with the greatest difficulty an agreement has been reached. As for myself, I ply the river in my little storied junk, my direction depending entirely upon that of the wind. Modelling myself on recluses of old such as Tao Xian and Zhang Zhihe, I no longer need to worry about the acquisition of houses and property.

We cast off to return to Gongan. The houses on either side of the river are buried beneath the snow. The wind is in our favour as we fly along. Back in my garden, the winter-sweets are in full bloom, I discover, whilst the ancient plums too have just begun to come into bud.

I received a letter today from the brothers Long Xiang and Ying, arranging a trip with me to Huayuan. As I was passing by the Hall of Spring Grasses in the Heavenly Flowering Studio belonging to my fifth brother, the old monk Moon River turned up and we went off together to take some tea in his hermitage. The hermitage is also named Dharma Flower and houses a plaque with the words 'Forest of Refined Progress' in the flowing calligraphy of Huang Hui. Moon River is an expert in the cultivation of cypresses and specimens of his ancient cypresses can be seen everywhere here. He frequently lives in total seclusion within his cell for years on end, without venturing out, and is truly a man of great asceticism. The hermitage abuts onto my fifth brother's garden.

The time had come to set off for Fengyang on my way towards Huayuan. We left the Valley of the Tall Bamboo in sedan chairs and passed beside Bamboo Forest Monastery, this being the Ancestral Temple of the Song dynasty official Kou Zhun. Here, the withered bamboos had begun to give way to new shoots. When the Song dynasty was forced south of the Yangtze and Meng Zhongxiang occupied the territory of Jing, a great many Sichuanese fled here and many of them stayed a while in this temple. During the years of the Chunyou reign period [1241-52], Shi Qingchang of Mount Mei came here twice to lecture. Shi Qingchang was the author of the *Xuezhai zhanbi* [Notes from My Study], a work of formidable learning. During the 30th year of the reign of the Wanli Emperor [1602], Huang Hui, then working in the Secretariat of the Heir Apparent, passed through this place and wrote some poems about his visit.

Passing through Chanling we saw standing beside the road the ruins of the city once built here by Madame Sun. When we reached Three Hollows Bridge, we boarded a junk. Water from the Yangtze enters the river here where it reaches Tiger Ford, flowing through the right hand side of the county seat. One can travel to Lake Dongting, Changsha and Guilin along this river. My mountain village is about 60 *li* away from this spot. At the moment, as the level of the river is lower than that of the lake, the flow has burst through a gap and is pouring into the river like a waterfall. We passed the night at Pan Family River.

The day dawned bright and clear, with only a gentle breeze early on. A suggestion of spring hung in the air. We passed Chetai Lake and boarded our junk at Meng Family Brook, this being within Gongan village. We alighted and strolled through Coral Forest and from there on to Lotus Leaf Hill. Upon the hill, lofty trees reached towards the heavens and the wind soughed within the pines. We rested a while at the house where I had once lived and read the lines I had long ago written upon the walls and doors. We took our dinner in the garden of my paternal uncle Yuan Jin, sitting amidst a maze of towering pines and billowing cassia trees. My younger brother turned to us to say: "Some days ago an important official turned up here and informed us that pines such as these are only appropriate to grave sites – 'Why have you planted them here?'" To this, I could not respond with anything other than a laugh.

New Year's Eve of the *Wushen year* [1608], and I set off in my junk from Meng Family Brook, reaching Four Rivers Mouth. This area is covered in innumerable pines, stretching

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upward into the heavens and blocking out the sun. The lake glistened. One could find a retreat almost anywhere here, it's just that nobody understands.

The above is a record of the winter of the *Wushen* year.

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## Endnotes

1 Short biographies of all three Yuan brothers, by C.N. Tay, may be found in L. Carrington Goodrich & Chaoying Fang (eds), (1970) *Dictionary of Ming Biography, 1368-1644* (New York & London: Columbia University Press), Vol. 2, pp. 1635-38. Chih-p'ing Chou includes a discussion of the literary theories of all three brothers in his *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Jonathan Chaves (trans.) (1978) *Pilgrim of the Clouds: Poems and Essays from Ming China* (New York & Tokyo: Weatherhill) provides translations of various poems and essays by the Yuan brothers.

2 Yuan Zhongdao's description of this garden is appended to the present translation.

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## Appendix

### A Record of the Valley of the Tall Bamboo

The Valley of the Tall Bamboo is about thirty *mu* in circumference and was completely covered in fine bamboo. Just within the gate a rectangular patch of land ten *zhang* long and half as wide has been cleared. Here at the entrance, I have had Bank's roses trained to form a hedge and stones from Brocade River placed at intervals of several *zhang*, shaded by plantains. Two sweet osmanthus trees grow here, both thick trunked. When in flower their fragrance pervades the air as far as ten *li* away. There, too, stand a couple of gardenia trees along with both a yellow and a white apricot tree. A pavilion bears the inscription, 'Assorted Blossoms'. A chamber is sited besides the grove and is named 'Apricot Gallery'. A bamboo hedge surrounds the whole and beyond this hedge, to the front and back, left and right, there is found nothing apart from bamboo. To the west of the hedge, behind the 'Grove of Assorted Blossoms', a path winds its way through the bamboo for about fifty paces. Here, too, an area has been cleared of bamboo, some thirty *zhang* in length and a third as wide. Here I have had built a three-columned pavilion, named 'Pure Greenness'. Behind this is sited a hall, also of three columns, bearing the name 'Sheathed Dragon'. Behind this again there is a small chamber for quiet repose. A wall surrounds this in turn and again, beyond the wall to the front and back, left and right, there is found nothing but bamboo. To the west, behind the 'Pure Greenness Pavilion', yet another patch of land, some ten *zhang* long and half as wide, has been cleared of bamboo. Four thick trunked yellow oranges have been planted here. At year's end, these produce several catties of fruit of exceptional sweetness and quality. A pavilion called 'Pleasure of the Orange' stands there, this too being surrounded by a hedge. Bamboo alone grows both to the front and back of the hedge, and to its left and right.

The upright man loves the bamboo, but none, I'd venture, has planted as many thousand as have I. The rustle of their leaves is forever in my ears, the sight of their colour before my eyes, their scent assails my nose and the taste of their shoots lingers long in my mouth. I feel the green chill of their shade upon my body and my mood is affected by their gentle sighing, for nobody can compare with me in my enjoyment of the bamboo. I eat and sleep surrounded by them.

I bought this land from Master Wang in exchange for several hundred *mu* of rich and fertile fields and designed the garden with my brother Hongdao. Within a couple of years it has become the fine orchard of today. It was Hongdao too who gave my garden its present name, 'Valley of the Tall Bamboo'.

[*Kexuezhai ji*, Vol. 2, p. 546]