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## ***Knowing the Paths of Pilgrimage: The Network of Pilgrimage Routes in Nineteenth-Century China***

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### **Abstract**

In the early nineteenth century the monk Ruhai Xiancheng 如海顯承 traveled through China and wrote a route book recording China's most famous pilgrimage routes. *Knowing the Paths of Pilgrimage* (*Canxue zhijin* 參學知津) describes, station by station, fifty-six pilgrimage routes, many converging on famous mountains and urban centers. It is the only known route book that was authored by a monk and, besides the descriptions of the routes themselves, *Knowing the Paths* contains information about why and how Buddhists went on pilgrimage in late imperial China. *Knowing the Paths* was published without maps, but by geo-referencing the main stations for each route we are now able to map an extensive network of monastic pilgrimage routes in the nineteenth century. Though most of the places mentioned are Buddhist sites, *Knowing the Paths* also guides travelers to the five marchmounts, popular Daoist sites such as Mount Wudang, Confucian places of worship such as Qufu, and other famous places. The routes in *Knowing the Paths* traverse not only the whole of the country's geography, but also the whole spectrum of sacred places in China.

**Keywords:** *Knowing the Paths of Pilgrimage*; pilgrimage route book; Qing Buddhism; Ruhai

## Xiancheng; “Ten Essentials of Pilgrimage”

### 初探《參學知津》的 19 世紀行腳僧人路線網絡

十九世紀早期，如海顯承和尚在遊歷中國後寫了一本關於中國一些最著名的朝聖之路的路線紀錄。這本「參學知津」（朝聖之路指引）一站一站地描述了五十六條朝聖路線，含括著名的山岳與城鎮。此為目前已知的唯一一本由僧侶著述的路線紀錄，不僅詳述每條路線，且說明在中國晚清時期僧侶們如何與為何踏上朝聖之旅。本書在出版時不含地圖。藉由路線上主要地標彼此之相關地理訊息，我們能深入描繪十九世紀時的寺廟朝聖網路。雖然本書主要描述的是佛教聖地，但也指引旅人關於五嶽、著名道教聖地武當山、儒家朝聖之地曲阜、與其他名勝。「參學知津」裡描述的路線不僅橫貫整個國家的地理版圖，也展現了中國聖地的完整圖譜。

關鍵詞：朝山; 路程一覽; 朝山十要; 參學知津; 如海顯承; 清代佛教

Certainly no student of Chinese life can hope to arrive at a sympathetic understanding of existing religious conditions in China unless he is prepared to become—if only imaginatively—a member of one of those merit-making (and merry-making) bands of pilgrims who annually traverse the plains of China on their way to the Sacred Hills and the wonder-working shrines of *pusas* and “immortals.”

—Reginald F. Johnston (1913: 127)

## Introduction

In the study of Chinese Buddhist history, the decades from 1800 to 1870 are like the white spaces, the *terrae incognitae*, on nineteenth-century maps. We know very little about either the institutional or the popular Buddhism of that period. For various reasons the study of Chinese Buddhism has focused much of its attention on the first millennium. As a result, there is more research on Chinese Buddhism between 800 and 870 than about the time between 1800 and 1870, although arguably we have more data for the latter. Regarding Buddhism in Late Imperial China, Ming Buddhism is better studied than Buddhism under the Qing, partly because of broad general interest in late Ming culture. Where we do have studies of Qing Buddhism, they often focus on the religious policy of the mighty emperors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and the presence and influence of Tibetan Buddhism in China.<sup>1</sup> A

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1 Research on this topic and the GIS applications needed to visualize Xiancheng's routes were conducted at Nagoya University, which hosted me as a visiting researcher in Fall 2015. I am especially grateful to Professor Katsufumi Narita, who invited me back to my *alma mater* after many years. I am indebted to Timothy Brook, who studied the *Canxue zhijin* in the 1980s and generously shared his research notes. Many thanks to the Library for Chinese Studies at the University of Heidelberg for providing a scan of the text, as well as to Douglas Gildow, Meijun Liu, and two anonymous reviewers for important suggestions and corrections. Most of the coordinate data on which the maps are based was collected by Boyong Zhang, who has always shared my enthusiasm for GIS-based visualization. An overview article states that “compared to the study of Qing history, society, and philosophy, research on Buddhism Qing dynasty Buddhism is woefully lacking” (Qiu 2003:1). In the last twelve years a number of important publications (Berger 2003, Tuttle 2005, Tuttle and Elverskog 2011) have ameliorated this relative dearth, but compared to the size of the available data the imbalance between our knowledge of Chinese Buddhism of the first millennium and that of the second millennium remains.

certain amount of work has been done on the late Qing, which the work of Holmes Welch marked as a time of “revival” that was directly connected with the Buddhism of the early Republic. The late Qing revival is associated especially with the activities of Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837–1911), who established the Jinling Sutra Publishing House 金陵刻經處 (1866) and the Buddhist Research Society 佛學研究會 (1910).<sup>2</sup> An unintentional effect of Welch’s groundbreaking work was that the decades before Yang Wenhui were not deemed important enough to warrant more detailed studies. Between Qianlong and his sophisticated religious policy and the revival of Buddhism after the Taiping civil war, the early decades of the nineteenth century remain quite forgotten.

Another lacuna in the study of Chinese Buddhism concerns monastic pilgrimage in late imperial China.<sup>3</sup> We take it for granted that monks move about. In the first millennium, Indian, Central Asian, and later Chinese monks followed the trade routes when traveling between India and China. One of the best documented of these journeys, Xuanzang’s travels in the “Western Regions,” inspired one of the most beloved works of Chinese literature. Furthermore, every student of Chinese Buddhism is familiar with the motif of the Chan monk who visits a famous master to further his understanding. Huineng’s journey to Hongren is only one of many student-master encounters that presume that the student is passing through. Although the popularity of the practice must have fluctuated over the centuries, it was always present in the fabric of Chinese Buddhism. Nevertheless, we know relatively little about monastic travel in the Ming and Qing.

The terms that were used most often for monastic pilgrimage since the Song are *canxue* 參學

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2 The fame of Yang Wenhui is in a way symptomatic of the lack of scholarship on the period. While Yang is mentioned in every work on the period, the equally interesting Zheng Chengde 鄭澄德 (1826–1880) (also known as Shi Miaokong 釋妙空), who printed sutras in Yangzhou starting in 1866, has been largely forgotten.

3 One of the few studies on the topic, Jiang 2009 contains a number of useful canonical references.

and *xingjiao* 行腳.<sup>4</sup> *Canxue* implies visiting a master or a famous site to study and train in meditation. In principle *canxue* could also be done by lay people, but it has a more professional ring to it than *chaoshan* 朝山, the word for mountain pilgrimage that is generally used for lay pilgrims. In practice the two overlapped. Monks on *canxue* would visit holy mountains for their scenic beauty, and at least some lay visitors on *chaoshan* would have heard sermons from the resident monks and asked religious questions. In principle, monks and sometimes lay people were allowed to stay in the guest quarters of monasteries overnight.<sup>5</sup> Monks could expect to find shelter and simple fare even in smaller temples.

In his study of Chinese Buddhism, Holmes Welch (1967:303) has described the period of wandering as “a most important phase in a monk’s career.” From the testimony of Welch’s informants, we know that monks in the late Qing and early Republican period did travel free and wide, and that monasteries had guest quarters that could accommodate dozens, even hundreds, of pilgrims. In 1901, Archibald Little (1901:87) on his visit to Mount Emei found a number of “priests [who] had traveled throughout the eighteen provinces, begging their way from shrine to shrine; nearly all had been to Pootoo, the sacred isle in the Nan Hai (Southern Sea).”<sup>6</sup> Some decades later, in the 1930s, Johannes Prip-Møller ([1937] 1967:379) still met monks on pilgrimage, and regretted that his “study of

4 The term *xingjiao* seems to have originated in the Chan school and appears widely in *yulu* literature of the Ming and Qing. It is first explained as part of Chan practice in the *Zuting shiyuan* 祖庭事苑 glossary (ca. 1100 CE) (CBETA/X.64.1261.432c19). Earlier, in translations of Indian texts, “wandering” was often rendered as *youfang* 遊方. The term *yunshui* 雲水 ([moving about like] clouds and water) too became popular in the Song and from there was adopted into Japanese Buddhism (*unsui*), where it has been used prominently for the wandering stage in the life of a Zen monk. Xiancheng uses the term *yunshui* only once, and rather disparagingly (*Knowing the Paths* 卷首:7b). In the Ming and Qing the preferred terms for “monastic pilgrim” were *xingzhe* 行者 and *toutuo* 頭陀 (“ascetic,” from Skr. *dhūta*). *Yunshui* was sometimes used in the word *yunshui tang* 雲水堂 for “guest quarter” (Prip-Møller [1937] 1967:370), which was more commonly called *ketang* 客堂. In Chinese poetry, terms such as *yunyou* 雲遊 “cloud traveling” were also used at times for monastic pilgrimage.

5 We have a relatively clear picture of how the *ketang* in large monasteries were run in the first half of the twentieth century (Welch 1967:10–16, Prip-Møller [1937] 1967:98–103). For a rare photo of the inside of a guest quarter, see Prip-Møller 1967:137. Nevertheless we still lack a detailed study of the development of the monastic rules and guidelines concerning wandering monks. Large monasteries were even able to accommodate lay people. Prip-Møller (139) mentions that some were able to accommodate close to a thousand pilgrims at night.

6 “Pootoo” here refers to Mount Putuo 普陀山.

immovable architecture [did not] allow of satisfactory treatment of the important aspect of Chinese Buddhist monachism [*sic*] which the wandering monks constitute.” Considering how little is known about Chinese Buddhism in secondary sources about monastic travel and the early nineteenth century in general, it is all the more interesting that there is a rare early source from that period that gives a detailed and comprehensive account of Buddhist monastic pilgrimage. Previous research on pilgrimage has tended to focus on a relatively small group of sacred sites or literary works.<sup>7</sup> By mapping the network of routes in *Knowing the Paths* we now have a sample of monastic pilgrimage on a nationwide scale.

### **Edition History of *Knowing the Paths***

There are a large number of autobiographical travelogues (*youji* 遊記), as well as some fictional literary accounts of visits to holy sites, that depict the type of travel that is associated with *chaoshan* pilgrimage. Neither genre was written by monks, however, who, with few exceptions, preferred to write poetry, sutra commentaries, or other religious works.

The *Canxue zhijin* 參學知津 (*Knowing the Paths of Pilgrimage*)<sup>8</sup> is a rare route book written by a Buddhist monk for a Buddhist audience.<sup>9</sup> Route books (*lucheng yilan* 路程一覽) were a relatively new genre for China that had developed only in the sixteenth century.<sup>10</sup> The routes are realized as lists

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7 For a bibliographic overview of pilgrimage studies regarding China see Bingenheimer (forthcoming).

8 *Zhijin* 知津 can mean “knowing the fords” or “knowing the paths.” The term has been used in titles elsewhere, and might be simply translated as “handbook” akin to the Latin *vademecum*. On *canxue* and related Chinese terms for English “pilgrimage,” see Bingenheimer (forthcoming).

9 Johnston (1913:150) mentions the existence of similar works and cites a “*Chao Ssŭ Ta-ming Shan Lu-yin*” (probably 朝四大名山路引?) published by monks for monks of a monastery in Fujian. Judging from his description, the structure of that route book was very similar, but the content was limited to the four great and famous mountains. Another source, some one hundred years later, documenting one monk’s journeys through China is a short unpublished autobiography that was translated and mapped by Prip-Møller ([1937] 1967:378–384). The name of the monk is given only as “P’u chiu.” A very early source on sacred sites in China is the Dunhuang manuscript Stein 529, which is a collection of notes regarding famous mountains, relic shrines, and patriarch memorials, also with distances and probably based on the authors journey to these sites. Stein 529 is not a route book in the narrow sense, but the information was intended to inform travelers about places like Mount Wutai or Mount Pan.

10 The earliest route book can be dated to 1570 (Brook 1981a:35). On route books, see also Brook

of place names and distances. Because people usually know the immediate environment of their village, it is possible to ask for the next waypoint on the list wherever one is. Points where one could easily get lost were gates and river crossings. One had to make sure to leave towns by the right gate and cross rivers at the right point, otherwise one would lose the breadcrumb trail that the list of place names provided. In a survey article about the genre, Timothy Brook (1981a:74) has called *Knowing the Paths* a “totally original route book,” and indeed, to date no other route book that describes pilgrimage routes has been found. Route books were generally written by merchants for merchants, and Xiancheng might have encountered the genre on his travels and adopted it for a Buddhist audience. The edition history of *Knowing the Paths* can be pieced together from various clues hidden in the text itself. The main body of the text was written in Hangzhou by Ruhai Xiancheng 如海顯承 (d.u.), who has dated his authorial preface to August 21, 1826.<sup>11</sup> As the two other prefaces are dated to October 28, 1827, and November 14, 1827, we can assume that the book was first printed probably in 1828 or late 1827. Today, however, all known copies seem to be of a second edition, dated 1876, in which *Knowing the Paths* was published together with another geographical work, *A Glossary of Place Names* (*Diyu mingmu* 地輿名目) by Yirun Yuanhong 儀潤源洪. The fact that both works were published together attests, on the one hand, a renewed interest in pilgrimage travel in the decades after the Taiping civil war; on the other hand, the reprint is witness to the local Buddhist networks in Hangzhou. The byline for both fascicles of *Knowing the Paths* says “compiled by Xiancheng, the former abbot of the Kaihua Temple of [Hangzhou’s] Zhijiang Quarter, revised by the monk Yirun of the Zhenshu Temple of the Pingyao Quarter.” Yirun Yuanhong and Ruhai Xiancheng were both senior monks in Hangzhou in the 1820s and

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1981b; 1982. In the Roman Empire route books—*itineraria*—had been produced since the first century BCE. One of the earliest surviving examples is the *Itinerarium Burdigalense*, which records the stops and distances traversed by a fourth-century pilgrim from Bordeaux to Jerusalem. It is over long stretches organized exactly like *Knowing the Paths*, namely as a list of waypoints and distances. Like Xiancheng fifteen hundred years later, the anonymous pilgrim to Jerusalem occasionally adds information on sites (e.g., “Here was born the Apostel Paul”; Stewart 1887:14).

<sup>11</sup> The preface was written “three days after the summer retreat in the year Daoguang 6.” Traditionally the summer retreat ends on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month, which in 1826 fell on August 18, 1826. The preface was therefore written on August 21, 1826.

certainly knew each other. They also shared an interest in religious geography. Not incidentally, therefore, Yuanhong's work on place names was appended to Xiancheng's *Knowing the Paths* in the reprint of 1876, probably by people who had still known the two men personally.

The 1876 edition includes two donor lists that are appended to *Knowing the Paths*. The first donor list, compiled around 1827, names twenty donors who contributed to the first printing. This printing was organized by Yuanhong, who compiled and signed the first donor list, which was evidently part of the first print run of three hundred copies.<sup>12</sup> It concludes with the intriguing passage:

In order to help the living stay in good health and avoid calamity, and to help the dead to be reborn in the Pure Land, the monk Yuanhong, in charge of administration, distributes three hundred copies of *Knowing the Paths*, in three *juan*-chapters, which was carved with the donations from the [donors listed] above totaling seventy-seven silver dollars. The woodblocks are stored and made accessible in the sutra repository of the Manao Temple near the Western Lake. There is also another work called *Canchan zhijin* 參禪知津 [*Knowing the Paths of Chan-Meditation*] that still awaits printing.<sup>13</sup>

As far as we know, this manuscript of *Canchan zhijin* 參禪知津, Xiancheng's companion work to *Knowing the Paths*, was never printed. According to Yuanhong the two works were written together, the *Canchan zhijin* being a manual for the inward progress in meditation, and meant to complement *Knowing the Paths*, the route book for the outer journey of pilgrimage.<sup>14</sup> The second donor list was appended after the first in the second printing of 1876.<sup>15</sup> For the second edition the woodblocks of *Knowing the Paths* had to be recut.<sup>16</sup> The originals had perhaps been destroyed during the Taiping civil

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12 The page is clearly numbered as page 62 of the second *juan* chapter in *Knowing the Paths*.

13 *Knowing the Paths* 2:62b. The three fascicles (*juan*) mentioned are a fascicle with prefatory matter (*juanshou* 卷首), and two fascicle-chapters containing the body of the route book.

14 *Knowing the Paths* 卷首:4b.

15 It has the page number 1, and the page in the margin is clearly titled "donor list," if I am allowed such a prosaic translation for *fangming* 芳名.

16 The title page says the "carving" (*diao* 雕) was begun on the "the first month in the second year of the *Guangxu* era" (between February 25 and March 25, 1876). The second donor list clearly says "recarved" (*chongjuan* 重鐫).

war. While the first donor list contains the full names of lay people, nuns, and monks, the second donor list consists merely of the donors' Dharma names and their contributions, which makes it difficult to distinguish between lay people and monastics.<sup>17</sup> We know little about Yuanhong and Xiancheng themselves. Judging by Yuanhong's existing oeuvre he was invested in publishing and editing projects dealing with rather practical matters such as Vinaya rules and ritual practice.<sup>18</sup> No literary or doctrinal works by him have survived. His *Glossary of Place Names*, which was appended to *Knowing the Paths* in 1876, is not included in any of the canonical or paracanonical collections of Buddhist scriptures. About Xiancheng we know even less. It is hard to imagine that he could have collected the detailed information about the pilgrim routes by studying the works of others. In fact, *Knowing the Paths* does not cite or quote any contemporary works. To describe the sights and their distances with such a level of detail, Xiancheng must have traversed those fifty-six routes himself. This is evinced by the fact that he occasionally uses the first-person pronoun in his glosses.<sup>19</sup> We do not know, however, when exactly Xiancheng went on pilgrimage and how long he traveled.<sup>20</sup> Yuanhong's preface states:

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17 The second list contains seventy-five names. Interestingly, the total amount of donations did not differ much. The cost of producing the woodblocks for the three *juan* of *Knowing the Paths* was still about seventy silver dollars (*yangyuan* 洋元) in 1876. The sum of seventy-seven dollars raised by Yuanhong around 1826 seemed to have covered the cost of paper and the printing of three hundred copies. For the 1876 edition the title of the donor list mentions only carving, though paper and printing were probably included.

18 He edited and expanded a ritual manual for the extensive *Shuilu fahui* ritual, the *Shuilu yigui* 水陸儀規 (Yuanhong's edition was used according to CBETA/X.74.1499.1068.a1), and he produced a new edition of a compendium for lay-people (X.1123) as well as an annotated re-edition of a work on monastic regulations (X.1244). Apart from this we have a preface dated 1816, which he contributed to another work (CBETA/X.57.980.671.c14-15), and the *Diyu mingmu* appended to *Knowing the Paths* in 1876. All these are relatively concrete topics concerned with the rules and ritual of Yuanhong's community. Interesting in our context is Yuanhong's discussion of monastic pilgrims (CBETA/X.63.1244.457b19), where he distinguishes five different motivations for wandering monks.

19 *Knowing the Paths* 1:3a, 1:8a+b, and 1:54a.

20 It is likely that *Knowing the Paths* was based on notes that Xiancheng made during his travels and and revised for publication only in 1827. If he was around sixty in his "retirement" he could have written the notebook in his twenties or thirties, which would mean that the information reflects the state of pilgrimage routes in the late eighteenth century. Most likely, however, his journeys took place between 1800 and 1825. Further study of the text might provide a clue that could further narrow down that window.

Master Ruhai [Xian]cheng of Hangzhou's Kaihua Temple went twice to visit the famous mountains in the country in search of knowledge. Having enlightened his mind he returned to the Hangzhou region and stayed in the Daci Mountains. Between meditation and recitation he remembers his pilgrimage and has compiled *Knowing the Paths* in order to make [the routes] better known and help pilgrims find their way.<sup>21</sup>

Xiancheng's two journeys might be reflected in the two-fascicle division, but the routes within each fascicle are not always ordered in a sequence in which they could have been traversed. The first fascicle describes routes in a large arc from the north via Sichuan to the south and back north again. The second fascicle describes routes centered on the Jiangnan region and along the Yangzi.

Besides the prefaces by Xiancheng and Yuanhong, *Knowing the Paths* contains a preface by Shen Qiqian 沈起潛, a disciple or patron of Yuanhong, who wrote at least two other prefaces for him.<sup>22</sup> Shen indicates that he too has read Xiancheng's other manuscript, the *Canchan zhijin*, indicating that the three men knew each other relatively well. Apart from his appreciative preface, Shen also made a donation toward the cost of printing. The donation ledger has him down for "four silver dollars in order to celebrate his sixtieth birthday."<sup>23</sup> The ledger contains the name of another prominent author and lay Buddhist, Qian Yi'an 錢伊庵 (d. 1834), who gave three silver dollars so that his late son "may be reborn in a happy realm." There are still others on the ledger who belonged to the network of Hangzhou Buddhists in the 1820s and for whom we have some information; the much-traveled Xiancheng, however, stays firmly hidden behind the place names and distances of *Knowing the Paths*. His own preface reveals very little about himself, and to date I have not been able to find further sources that could tell us more about his life. Judging from his prose he was not educated in the literati style of writing. His attention to sites connected with vernacular literature, elements of his style (e.g., the use of *xi* 係 as a copula), and his limited range of quotations from the classics (rarely beyond the

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21 *Knowing the Paths* 卷首:3b.

22 See CBETA/X.60.1123.447b14 and CBETA/X.63.1244.374c14.

23 *Knowing the Paths* 2:62a.

*Analects*), point to an avid reader of novels with little formal training beyond the introductory readers and the Four Books.

### **How to Travel: “Ten Essentials of Pilgrimage”**

In the signature to his preface Xiancheng calls himself a *dhuta* monk (*toutuo seng* 頭陀僧), a monk who undergoes ascetic practices (Skr. *dhuta*), here especially that of wandering.<sup>24</sup> The term and the ideology behind it are in contrast to what many of Xiancheng’s contemporaries associated with travel, namely that travel is pleasurable. In her comprehensive overview of the travelogue (*youji* 遊記) genre, Marion Eggert (2004:177) describes how the mid and late Qing saw a flowering of travel literature. During Xiancheng’s time, the literati discourse about leisurely travel extolled the beauty of scenic sites, the company of friends, and communion with previous famous visitors to a site. Literati traveled for pleasure and to look for poetic inspiration.<sup>25</sup> What makes *Knowing the Paths* such an interesting document, however, is that it is not part of the *youji* genre. As a route book it instead shares the practical concerns of nonliterary travelers. It is well known that lay pilgrims traveled in pilgrimage groups (*xianghui* 香會). For lay pilgrims to travel in groups would have been safer, cheaper, and, because of the resulting infrastructure, more comfortable. Monks, on the other hand, were generally traveling alone, because the ethos with which they approached their journey was different. A monk’s journey was, at least ideally, less concerned with visiting a single sacred site, but with touring different monasteries to train in meditation and doctrine. This ethos is clearly described in Xiancheng’s introductory essay on the “Ten Essentials of Pilgrimage” (*chaoshan shi yao* 朝山十要).<sup>26</sup> It is addressed to the single Buddhist traveler and provides a unique view of what it meant for a monk to go on pilgrimage in early nineteenth-century China. Xiancheng’s essay proved popular and was included

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24 Both *toutuo seng* 頭陀僧 and *xingzhe* 行者 were common terms used for pilgrims in Ming and Qing literature.

25 See Wu and Di 2010 for a comprehensive treatment of literati travel during the Ming and Qing. See also Wu 2005 for some differences in the travel between the Ming and the Qing.

26 Parts of Xiancheng’s “Ten Essentials” were first published and discussed in Bingenheimer 2016a:184–186. The present article contains the first complete translation.

in other monastic route books.<sup>27</sup> It moreover corroborates many aspects of monastic pilgrimage reported for the first decades of the twentieth century by Johnston, Prip-Møller, and Welch, implying that the practice had stayed relatively stable between 1800 and 1940. The essay begins by describing the general attitude with which to approach monastic pilgrimage:

[1.] Mountain pilgrimage gives an orientation to the itinerant student. One becomes an itinerant student in order to broaden one's knowledge about the ways of the world.<sup>28</sup> As soon as one leaves one's doorstep, one will encounter sorrow and delight, fear and compassion, anger and desire, and circumstances will be easy or difficult. Even in old times, on Sudhana's southward journey, when he visited King Anala and the Brahmin Jayoṣ māyatana, doubts arose in him [about the qualities of these "good friends"].<sup>29</sup> How much less so can this be avoided today, in the latter days of the Dharma. When one encounters the above-mentioned states, one should regard them like a dream, like a mirage, like a shadow or an echo. One must not cede control to circumstance, but always strive to meet good [Dharma] friends and seek out highly enlightened [masters]. Even if one is at times not able to find them, one should recall how our good friends accompanied us in [previous] countless eons. By the grace of the Bodhisattvas of all [holy] mountains, one is still able to find a good friend today. Thus one should pay one's respect to the famous mountains in the world. One should reverently offer incense, and pray for the help of the divine powers [that reside in them], to attain enlightenment soon. To remember this is essential.

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27 Johnston (1913:158ff.) contains a loose translation of the ten essentials that he found prefixed to a different work. In that work, however, it seems that the essay was not attributed to Xiancheng.

28 *Canxue guang jianwen zhi shijing* 參學廣見聞之世境. "To broaden one's knowledge" (廣見聞) is a literal reference to a rationale given for monastic travel in the *Zuting shiyuan* (CBETA/X64.1261.433a2).

29 Stations 17 (King Anala) and 9 (Jayoṣmāyatana) in the *Gandhavyūha* (CBETA/T.10.293.699a5).

Monks did not generally join pilgrimage groups, but they also were not required to travel alone. In the following section Xiancheng advises how to choose one's travel companions. His lively description of ruffian monks is a reminder that access to food and shelter was at times contentious. This theme is again taken up in section 6.

[2.] On a mountain pilgrimage one should with concentration and sincerity entreat the spiritual powers for their protection on the way. If one has travel companions, one can avoid loneliness. Having one or two companions helps to cope with emergencies such as sickness or a robbery. Companions can assist each other when encountering steep crevices or darkness. Such companions should, however, be people whose minds are firmly established in the Way. This is what is called "Traveling afar, one relies on good friends."<sup>30</sup> "Choosing what is good in people and following that,"<sup>31</sup> thus one finds "spiritual friends on the same pilgrimage."<sup>32</sup> One is to address each other as "fellow itinerant," and be respectful with each other. Sometimes three, four, five [pilgrims] band together in a group, and are rough and violent. At a temple where they cannot stay, they try to force their way in. At a hermitage that cannot provide food, they fiercely demand it. The minds of ruffians like these are not fit to visit [masters of] the Way. One should never adopt such bad habits, which result in a bad reputation. If one meets a fellow traveler of great wisdom, one should respectfully treat such a person as one's teacher. When encountering a handicapped or suffering person one should take care of them as well as one can. To remember this is essential.

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30 *Yuanxing bi jia liangyou* 遠行必假良朋. Xiancheng is citing what was probably once a common saying, and appears in this form in Ming–Qing Chan literature (an early instance is attributed to Guishan Lingyou 滄山靈祐 at CBETA/X.63.1239.228.a15: 遠行要假良朋).

31 *Ze qi shanzhe er congzhi* 擇其善者而從之. *Lunyu*, Shu'er 述而, 7.

32 *Tongcan daoyou* 同參道友. An expression that has been used in Chinese Buddhism at least since the Song (CBETA/T.48.2022.1038c16).

Quite the route book author, Xiancheng advises travelers to plan their journey well and stick to a planned route. He does allow for a degree of flexibility, however, and if one hears about a promising teacher, one is allowed to change one's plan.

[3.] Before setting out on a mountain pilgrimage one should first find out clearly about the places where the Way is practiced. Once one has decided a route, one should stay the course and be committed to it. Some first go to this mountain, then to another mountain. If one does not establish an itinerary and just wanders hither and thither, eastward in the morning, at nightfall to the west, this is but distracted, idle wandering. One not only betrays one's "beginner's mind," but also degrades the practice [of Chan]. If, however, on the way one hears about a truly good spiritual friend dwelling at a certain place, one should investigate it carefully and, if found to be true, one may go there. If [a place] has strict rules one still must follow them, thinking to oneself, "I have come for the Dharma. I must do everything properly." If someone else makes a small mistake, one should not reproach him. To remember this is essential.

Time was not to be an issue for the monastic pilgrim. In contrast to our own travels, always predicated by plane schedules and hotel arrangements, Xiancheng's travels were not bound by timetables. Instead, his journeys are framed by discipline. He never so much mentions the notion, so widely popular among the literati of his day, that traveling to sacred sites might be fun. Though unhurried and eschewing fame and profit, "The Essentials of Pilgrimage" are strictly business.

[4.] When one is on a mountain pilgrimage one should not count the months or years, but take the road as one's home and pass the days unhurriedly. With the mind at ease and firm resolve one casts aside fame and profit. If one meets a great master, one should aim to become enlightened oneself. There is a time for stopping and for pressing ahead. If one meets a really

great master it is appropriate to become his follower.<sup>33</sup> In order to develop patience one should vow to practice austerities, never be picky with food, and always live simply. Even meeting with calamity one must persist, remembering that it is caused by one's failings in past lives, for which one now receives due retribution. In the same way, "when we see worthy men, we should think of becoming their equal,"<sup>34</sup> and "when we see bad people [one tries to get away] as if escaping out of hot water."<sup>35</sup> To remember this is essential.

In the next section we catch a glimpse of the communication problems that long-distance pilgrims would have encountered among the different forms of the Chinese language, which in the nineteenth century were not yet mediated by a national media standard.

[5.] Mountain pilgrimages were always intended to search for the Way, a practice of austerity. Walking in the world, how is one to find the heavenly Maitreya? Lord Shakyamuni said: "One has to go through bitter cold before one is able to smell the plum blossoms."<sup>36</sup> One has to make a pure, truly courageous effort and aspire to understand the serious matter of life and death. As if one's head were on fire, one must remember one's good friends. Like praying to the Medicine King, one should pay homage to the greatly enlightened ones. How to meet with teachers and elders is explained in detail in the teachings that the Boy Born-of-Virtue and the Girl Endowed-with-Virtue gave to Sudhana in the *Gandhavyūha* chapter of the *Avataṃsaka Sūtra*.<sup>37</sup> Languages and local dialects differ and it might be truly difficult to understand what is being said. In those cases one should ask repeatedly and carefully. Those who are able to write should write down [the teachings] to remember them later. To remember this is essential.

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33 This is exactly how Welch's (1967:306) informants portrayed pilgrimage to him.

34 *Jian xian si ji* 見賢思齊. *Lunyu*, Liren 里仁, 17.

35 *Jian bushan ru tan tang* 見不善如探湯. *Lunyu*, Jishi 季氏, 11.

36 The saying originated in the *Huangbo lu* (CBETA/T.48.2012B.387b13-14).

37 CBETA/T.10.279.419.c14-422b13. Xiancheng included this section after the table of content.

The phrase “those who are able to write” shows that Xiancheng did not expect all of his fellow pilgrims to be fully literate. Using a route book was one thing, writing down someone else’s Dharma discourse another. We have no figures for literacy among Buddhist monastics of that period. Xiancheng’s remark, however, corroborates the assessment Welch made after interviewing a large number of monks who were trained in the Republican period. The late imperial, early Republican Sangha seemed to have had higher literacy rates than the populace at large, but few monks were literate beyond more or less basic reading skills.<sup>38</sup> A number of them would have studied Buddhist texts, but compared with their literati colleagues, who had to practice writing intensively as part of their exam preparation, monks rarely had reasons to compose essays. Thus, though most wandering monks could have followed a Dharma talk, perhaps even in different forms of Chinese, not all of them could have taken notes. The next section of the “Essentials of Pilgrimage” makes an explicit distinction between lay pilgrimage and monastic pilgrimage. It is mainly about an utterly material concern: the availability of accommodation. Xiancheng gives instructions on how a monk on pilgrimage was to ask for shelter in the guest quarters of a monastery:

[6.] Going on mountain pilgrimage there is a difference between monks and lay persons. When lay people go on pilgrimage they have ample travel funds, and can readily find shelter. If monastics go on a pilgrimage, their travel funds are meager. [We] can only register in the guest quarters of monasteries. Every time one applies, one has to ask for help and feel slightly ashamed. If things work out and host and guest get along, one should count oneself lucky. If there is no karmic connection and one is not allowed to take up residence, one must not give rise to anger. In case it is already after dark, or raining, or the way is still long, one may ask gently for the other’s compassion. If in the end one may not stay, one should ask where else one

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38 “Anything above primary school education was rare in the sangha, but . . . illiteracy was even rarer” (Welch 1967:258).

could find shelter. One must then persevere and try another place. Under no circumstance is one allowed to become angry and use abusive language, thus harming one's own virtue by trying to sway the decision of the host. One should use the *prajñā* view of emptiness to calm oneself. To remember this is essential.

In the guest quarters of larger monasteries traveling monks could, in principle, stay as long as they liked once they were accepted by the guest prefect and as long as they followed the strict rules. Generally, no record of their stay was kept. Small village temples, on the other hand, had no obligation to shelter travelers and it was up to the resident monk to decide whether to take in guests and for how long. In case a monk was not able to reside at a monastery, village temple, or hostel, he was allowed to beg. In any case, one was never allowed to complain.

[7.] On mountain pilgrimages one comes to sites that welcome everybody. At times there is a lot of hustle and bustle so that monks cannot be properly provided for. We [monks] should always adapt to circumstances and not criticize others for not acting in the spirit of the Way. In the villages and hovels that one passes, some will be too poor to make offerings, some might not be believers or not be merciful, so that one cannot obtain provisions. But one should never say anything about people not making offerings. As a last resort one has to beg at the roadside. It is said: "With one bowl receiving rice from a thousand families, one can wander alone ten thousand leagues." This is the true style of Buddhist life. It is no cause for shame. The Sanskrit word *bhikṣu* means "beggar," after all. Inwardly begging for the Dharma to nurture one's inner nature, outwardly begging for food to nurture one's body. This is [for monks] the "right livelihood" by which to acquire food.

[Later] whenever someone comes to our door, we must remember how we gained offerings by the strength of the Way and should feel humbled. May we always welcome

[traveling monks] to take up temporary residence in the guest quarters, just as we have found shelter [on our travels]. To remember this is essential.

[8.] Mountain pilgrimage is to be done according to Minor Precept No. 37 of the *Fanwang jing* on “The Risks of Pilgrimage.” All places undergo periods of prosperity and decline; roads are sometimes open, sometimes impassable. Those who enter should know that temples and shrines were erected to venerate the Buddhas or deities, they were not put there because of our coming. The food at these places is first of all offered to the Buddhas and immortals and secondly to the people who stay there. It too is not prepared for our sake. Staying there one has to make do with quarters to which one is assigned and with the food one is given. We are already treated very kindly. If we dislike the accommodation or find the food coarse, we just create troubles for ourselves. If the heart knows no satisfaction, how can one avoid giving rise to the sins of greed and hatred? One should be happy and content. Those who are content with what they have are always happy, even when they have to bed on the floor. The World-honored One once received only coarse horse-grain as food offering [for three months], and by comparison we today are quite comfortable. To remember this is essential.

Guest quarters at Buddhist institutions were not the only option for a traveling monk. Buddhist pilgrims were also able to find shelter at local temples and shrines, many of which would have been closer to Daoist ritual practices than to Buddhism. At many sacred mountain sites, Buddhism shared space with Daoist and folk religious temples. Traveling monks were allowed to take shelter there, if they kept the peace and did not complain about the food:

[9.] On a mountain pilgrimage the places where Buddhist and Daoists reside are known as famous mountains. The main gate is therefore usually called “Mountain Gate.” Be it the great

temples of famous mountains, or be it small hermitages, or Daoist shrines and temples, staying at places that provide food and shelter one should not be picky and should award them all full respect. Everywhere one should do the [basic] rites [and burn some incense]. If there is even a little disrespect or arrogance, it will be difficult to get along. In all matters such as recitation, contemplation, maintenance duties, and eating, one should follow the customs of the place. One has to do what everybody else does and may not say “I am tired from my pilgrimage” and be lazy. To remember this is essential.

In his last principle, which he highlights as especially important, Xiancheng urges his fellow pilgrims to hold on firmly to the precepts.

[10.] On a mountain pilgrimage, no matter if moving or resting, one must take good care of oneself and keep one’s “precept body” intact. One must stay upright and alert and not give in even a tiny bit to the temptations of sound and sight. With the beauty of nature all before one’s eyes, one still must first make sure to tame the desires of the heart. One should not develop attachment to anything, be it a copy of a sutra or calligraphy, or some gold, jade, or a rare pearl, all of these are worldly objects. Though much admired by worldly men, we must let go of them. How much more if the things belong to others. If there is only a small breach here, one not only breaks the precept [against not stealing] and soils the reputation [of the Sangha], but moreover one makes things difficult for later pilgrims. One is not supposed to take anything not given, not even a blade of grass or a leaf, much less a rare pearl. To remember this is especially essential.

Xiancheng’s discussion of monastic pilgrimage, though structured and normative, also conveys some lively glimpses of a monk’s life on the road. The road offered a degree of freedom as well as temptation, and the particular ethos of monastic travel was to hold on to the religious purpose of the

journey, which consisted in visiting masters and sacred sites, all the while holding on to the precepts and practicing equanimity in the face of the vicissitudes encountered on the way.

### *What to Pack*

Another text that Xiancheng included in the introductory section of *Knowing the Paths* is a section of the *Fanwang jing* (T. 1484). It stipulates what items a “bodhisattva-traveler” may carry on his journey. The *Fanwang jing* is an influential apocryphon, famous for its set of Bodhisattva vows that are taken by monastics and lay practitioners alike. In contrast to the leisurely journeys of the literati, or the package-tour travel of the lay pilgrim associations, *Knowing the Paths* suggests the ideal of pilgrimage as a part of Buddhist practice. As such it was regulated by the Vinaya. For a Chinese monk in the nineteenth century, one of the main rules governing pilgrimage was the thirty-seventh minor vow of the *Fanwang jing*:

[Minor Vow No. 37] How a Bodhisattva must act regarding the two *dhūtāṅga* periods [of travel in spring and fall].

[At all times] should the Bodhisattva use a willow twig [for cleaning one’s teeth], soap, the three robes, a water bottle, a begging bowl, a mat, a staff, an incense burner, a basket for the incense burner, a water strainer, a handkerchief, a razor, a flint stone, pincers, a hammock, *sūtra* and *vinaya*,<sup>39</sup> as well as Buddha or Bodhisattva images.<sup>40</sup> Wherever the Bodhisattva goes on his travels during the *dhūtāṅga* periods, be it a hundred or a thousand miles, he should always have these eighteen items with him. During the *dhūtāṅga* periods, which last

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39 *Jinglü* 經律. Glossed by Xiancheng as meaning the *Fanwang jing* and the *Sifenlü* Vinaya. *Knowing the Paths* 卷首:16a.

40 Explained as images of Amitabha, Guanyin, and Mahāsthāmaprāpta. Xiancheng: “Usually on a small scroll that can be rolled up. For use in places where there are no Buddha images. One can also hang it when one recites the precepts or during the morning and evening rites.”

from the fifteenth of the first month to the fifteenth of the third month [in spring,] and from the fifteenth of the eighth month to the fifteenth of the tenth month [in autumn], he should always have these eighteen items with him, like a bird has its two wings.<sup>41</sup>

I believe it is quite likely that most monks and solitary laymen on pilgrimage did indeed carry all or at least some of these items. Minor Vow No. 37 also contains prohibitions against traveling dangerously:

During *dhūtāṅga* periods one should not enter any dangerous places, such as bad countries,<sup>42</sup> countries with a bad king, very high or low places, places with dense forest; one has to avoid all dangerous places [where there could be] lions, tigers, wolves, the dangers of water, fire, or wind, of bandits and snakes on the road.<sup>43</sup>

### *Weather*

Weather was understandably a major concern for the pilgrims, who often walked for days. Bad weather, a storm or a sudden cold spell could not only spoil the trip, but in certain regions be outright dangerous. In case of a downpour the best one could hope for was a small shrine for shelter, or a temple, that might open its doors to the drenched visitor. In the absence of reliable weather forecasts the travelers took recourse to traditional calendars that predicted the weather based on past observation, generically, very much like the weather predictions in the European almanacs. Xiancheng thus duly includes a month by month list of “storm days” (*baofengri* 暴風日).<sup>44</sup> On these days, he says, “travel on water should be avoided and on the roads too one must be careful. One should be prepared that the storm might not

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41 T.24.1484.1008a13-b7. Quoted by Xiancheng (1826, introductory chapter, 16a ff.) with commentary (*Knowing the Paths* 卷首:16a).

42 Xiancheng’s gloss explains: “Where there is hunger, for example.”

43 *Knowing the Paths* 卷首:16b.

44 These “storm days” were of course not Xiancheng’s inventions, but common weather folklore that also appears in other work of the time. See, e.g., Yan Ruyū’s extensive treatise on naval defenses (Yan 1843: chap. 18, p. 33a).

arise on that day, but in the three-day period before or after.” Akin to the German “farmer’s rules” (*Bauernregeln*) that predict the weather on the feast days of saints,<sup>45</sup> the Chinese “storm days” are often named after deities. Thus the ninth day of the first (lunar) month was the day of the “Jade Emperor Storm,” while the seventh of the third month was the storm day of King Yama. Even the gentle Guanyin had her storm day, on the occasion of her birthday on the nineteenth day of the second month.

### **Where to Go**

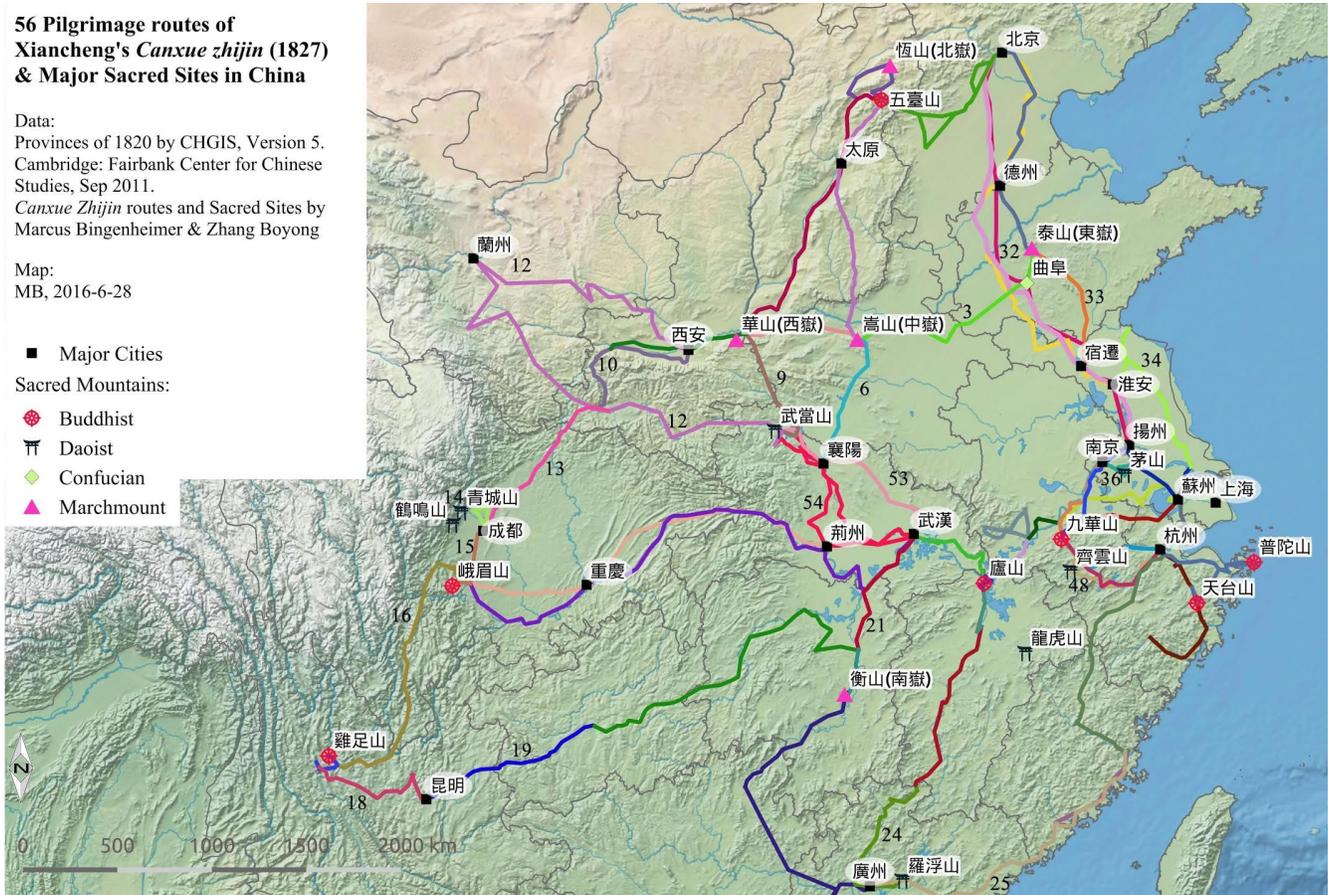
The two main fascicles of *Knowing the Paths* organize the network of Xiancheng’s travels into fifty-six routes (see Appendix). Although the routes cannot be traversed in their exact sequence, it is possible that the two fascicles describe two large journeys. The twenty-nine routes of the first fascicle move from the capital Beijing through the north, then westward to Chang’an, from there south into Sichuan, and on into Yunnan. There, Xiancheng’s visit to Mount Jizu marks the southeasternmost point of the network. From Mount Jizu he turned east into Guizhou, Hunan, and Guangzhou, and from there the routes lead north into Jiangxi and Fujian back toward the Jiangnan region. The second fascicle, on the other hand, details twenty-seven routes that spread out from the Jiangnan region, especially its centers Hangzhou and Nanjing. They often follow the Yangzi upriver to the geographic center of China proper around the Wuhan region (see Map 1).<sup>46</sup> Our concern here is with mapping the network as a whole, as it

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45 E.g., “Vor dem Markustag, sich der Bauer hüten mag” (i.e., “Farmer, beware the day of St. Mark!”).

46 The maps were created by identifying waypoints from Xiancheng’s routes on modern maps, mainly using online services such as Google Earth and Tianditu 天地圖 in conjunction with the Dharma Drum Place Authority database. Arranged by routes, the dataset consists of ca. 1,100 way points. The actual number of waypoints listed in the text is much higher. Xiancheng’s routes each comprise between ca. 30 and 100 waypoints, but we found that 15 to 30 waypoints are sufficient to define the routes at this scale. Generally, we first included waypoints that can still be clearly identified after two hundred years, such as towns, cities, and mountain sites. Smaller places, such as temples and villages, which can often be identified only with great effort, are included only where feasible. Some important temples have survived the twentieth century and are findable with the tools at our disposal, but many of the smaller temples and shrines listed by Xiancheng cannot be unambiguously identified on modern maps. The maps themselves were created with QGIS, a mature open-source GIS application. For backgrounds we used datasets made available by the Harvard China Historical GIS, and Natural Earth. The data on waypoints that was created by this project, including shapefiles, is made available under a Creative Commons license. Unfortunately, color versions of the maps could not be included in the print version of this special issue. The maps are reproduced in color in the electronic version available online at

reaches across China. Follow-up studies will be able to focus on discrete regions or single routes, and complete the data.<sup>47</sup>



Map 1. Pilgrimage routes of Xiancheng's *Canxue zhijin* and major sacred sites in China. Numbers indicate routes discussed in the text below.

The coloring of the routes in Map 1 merely serves to distinguish parallel, intersecting, or coterminous routes from each other. We can see that many of the fifty-six routes in *Knowing the Paths*

<http://booksandjournals.brillonline.com/content/journals/22143955>.

47 One attempt at such a follow-up study is Bingenheimer's (2016b) presentation on the "Northern Pilgrimage Square."

are connected, in the sense that the endpoint of one route is the beginning of the following one (e.g., Routes 14 and 15, etc.). It is likely that wherever the endpoint of one route is near or identical to the starting point of the next, Xiancheng traversed them in that order. This raises the question why such routes were conceived as different routes in the first place and not combined into one single path. This is probably because each route ends at a place where a monk could stay longer – either an urban center or a famous mountain site.

Where the end point of a route is not the beginning of another, we must assume the pilgrims were supposed to return the way they came. The pilgrimage routes described by Xiancheng are mostly linear, i.e., they simply lead from one place to another. Chinese pilgrimage differs in this aspect from the major pilgrimage routes in Japan, which are arranged as circuits. Even for the few routes for which Xiancheng describes a different return path, circuitry is not intended.<sup>48</sup> This way of moving fits with the first of the *Ten Essentials of Pilgrimage*, which claims that one goes on pilgrimage “to broaden one’s knowledge about the ways of the world.” Traveling far and wide was one way to do just that. Map 1 bears comparison with the map drawn by Prip-Møller ([1937] 1967:380) to trace the travels of a monk in the early twentieth century. Like Xiancheng, Prip-Møller’s informant traveled to all four sacred mountains of Buddhism plus Mount Jizu, Mount Lu, and Mount Tiantai. In contrast to Xiancheng, however, he eschewed the south and rarely ventured beyond the Yangzi. Another thing becomes clear when considering the network of pilgrimage routes that Xiancheng described. As Map 1 shows, Xiancheng visited the famous sacred sites of China, more or less irrespective of their religious affiliation. While the introductory part of *Knowing the Paths* is clearly written for a Buddhist, even specifically for a monastic, audience, the route descriptions themselves guide the traveler to all sorts of places, many of them not associated with Buddhism. If the reader had come to expect a guide to meditation temples and spiritual masters, he would be disappointed. Instead a recurring motive is the pilgrimage seal (*yin* 印) that travelers could ask for at major sites as a souvenir. Such seals were

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48 Different return paths are given for Routes 1, 4, 15, 34, 50, and 54.

inscribed in booklets, as is still the custom in Japan today, or printed on fans or pennants (Welch 1967:310).<sup>49</sup> Such objects would have served as mementos of the completed journey, a proof one had been there, something to show to friends. There is little sense of a Buddhist, or indeed any thematic, focus to the individual routes in *Knowing the Paths*. Of course Buddhist temples are mentioned more frequently, as this is where Xiancheng had the best chance of finding food and shelter for the night, but as a matter of fact he visited all kinds of sites—historic, literary, Daoist, Confucian, or simply scenic.

One route on the map, Route 3, passes through the Confucius Grove (*konglin* 孔林) in Qufu, where Xiancheng reminds the traveler to pay his respects to the tomb of Confucius, his son, and his grandson. He passes the tree that Confucius's student Zigong himself planted, and many more Confucian sites, but seems to have missed the nearby tomb of Mencius.<sup>50</sup> On the same route Xiancheng visits the Songyang Academy (*Songyang shuyuan* 嵩陽書院), one of the Four Great (Neo-)Confucian Academies, where once Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) taught. Xiancheng also visits all five marchmounts of the imperial cult, which was the origin of mountain pilgrimage in China. Xiancheng was somewhat less keen to visit Daoist sites. In Sichuan, Route 14 is a distinct detour to monasteries in the region north of Chengdu that were associated with famous Chan figures such as Mazu Daoyi 道一馬祖 (709–788) or Zhixuan 知玄 (811–883). Notably, however, Xiancheng did not visit nearby Mount Heming and Mount Qingcheng, which are famous for their role in the life of Zhang Daoling, the founder of religious Daoism. In the east, in Jiangxi, he again makes no effort to visit one of the most important Daoist centers—the famous Mount Longhu, the headquarters of Zhengyi Daoism and the residence of the Zhengyi patriarch—although two of his routes pass nearby. Nevertheless, Xiancheng does visit a good number of Daoist sites, including Mount Wudang (on Routes 9, 12, 53, and 54), which was one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in late imperial China.

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49 In Japan, most major temples on a pilgrimage circuit offer (for a modest fee) to inscribe a temple-specific “vermillion-seal” *shuin* 朱印 into a pilgrim booklet (*shuinchō* 朱印帳). I have also received seals at Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Thailand that cater to Chinese visitors.

50 *Knowing the Paths* 1:6a.

He also visited Mount Luofu (Route 24) , Mount Mao (Route 36), and Mount Qiyun (Route 48).

What Map 1 does not show, are Xiancheng's frequent visits to smaller sites associated with literary figures, especially heroes of vernacular novels. In Sichuan and Shaanxi, Xiancheng seems to have had a special interest in sites connected with the famous strategist Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234), a native of the region. He visits one of the shrines dedicated to Zhuge on Route 6, and Zhuge's grave is a waypoint on Route 10 and 12; more shrines and sites associated with Zhuge are part of Routes 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, and 25.<sup>51</sup> Although there existed a cult of Zhuge Liang in Sichuan long before the Qing, we can assume that Xiancheng was interested in these sites because he had read the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義). Similarly, at the eastern end of Xiancheng's pilgrimage network, Yuntai, the destination of Route 34, is associated with a novel. According to local legend Wu Chengen 吳承恩 (ca. 1501–1582) traveled here while posted in Huaian and, impressed by the scenery, stayed to write one of the most beloved of Chinese novels, *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記). Though Wu's authorship is not fully proven, it has been shown that local legends and place names from the Yuntai mountains were incorporated into the story of the unruly monkey king and his master (Li 2003). The westernmost point of the network is reached on Route 12, which takes the pilgrim from Chang'an out to Lanzhou, before turning back and continuing to Mount Wudang. The only sight mentioned for Lanzhou is the famous pontoon bridge, about which Xiancheng remarks: "The first bridge over the Yellow River. It is said that three days after winter solstice, people, chariots, and horses start crossing over on the ice. Three days after the beginning of spring they start using the bridge again."<sup>52</sup> The bridge is admittedly famous. It was first constructed on orders of the founding emperor of the Ming, and it was variously described and hailed as a landmark during the Qing. Today, now built of stone, it is called Zhongshan Bridge 中山橋 (i.e., Sun Yat-sen Bridge) and still regarded as a cultural monument. It is not, however, a sacred site, and it is not clear why a

51 Shrines to Zhu were generally known as *Wuhou ci* 武侯祠.

52 What Xiancheng reports from hearsay is not the whole story. The bridge actually had to be disassembled every winter before the river froze over to prevent it from being damaged by the ice.

Buddhist pilgrim should trek to Gansu to look at it. Why the trip to Lanzhou? I wonder if Xiancheng hesitated before he turned around in Lanzhou and headed back into China proper. The courier routes continued for another few days into the Gansu corridor, but Xiancheng must have felt he was standing at the border of the Buddhist world. Between the fifth and the eleventh centuries Lanzhou was a truly important center of the Buddhist world, the gateway to the Buddhist kingdoms beyond China. As Xiancheng well knew, many famous pilgrim monks had passed through here on their way into Central Asia and India a thousand years earlier. For them Lanzhou had been the beginning of their journey, but for Xiancheng it was a dead end; under the Qing the Western Regions held no more promises for a Chinese monk.

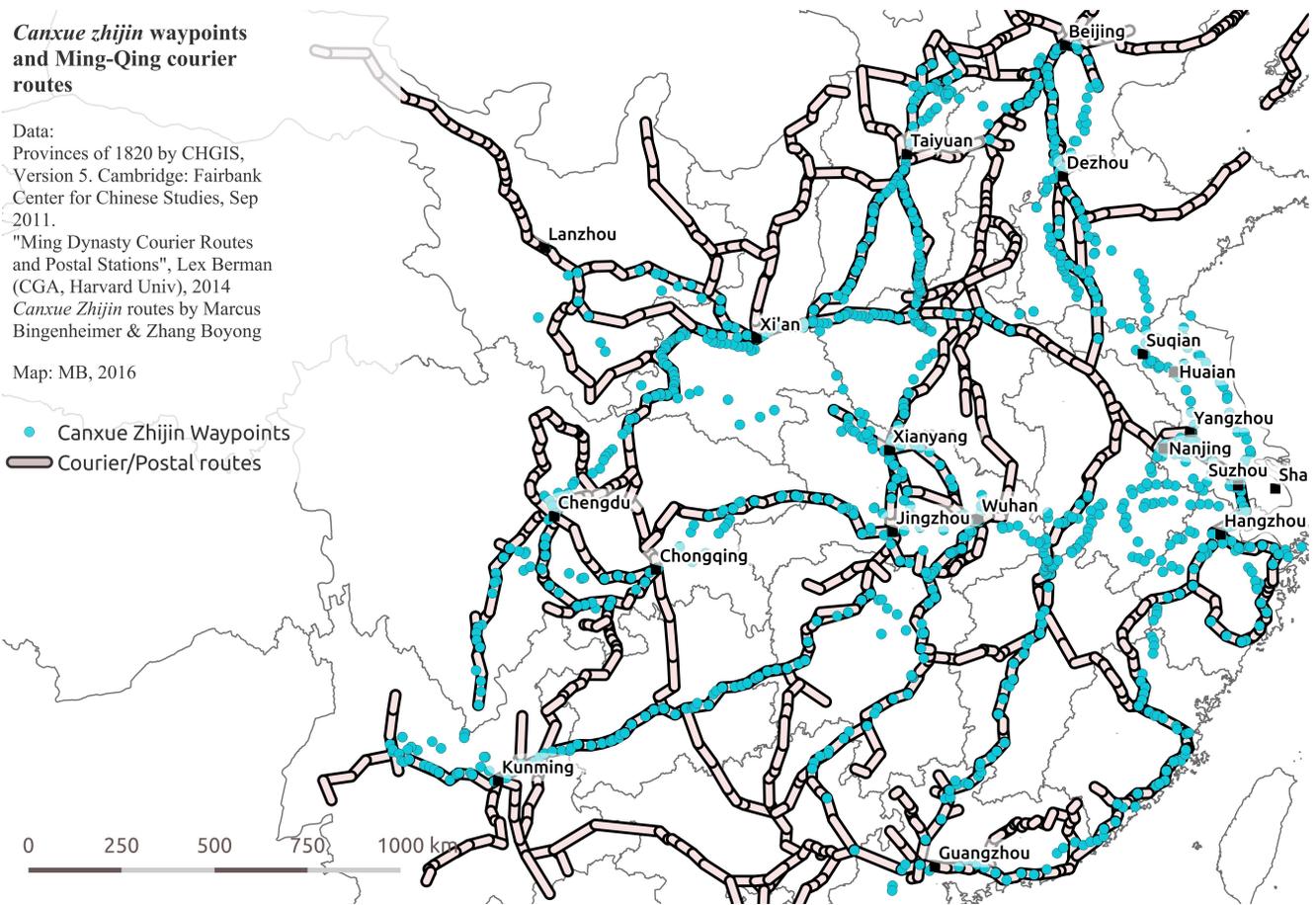
Another question that mapping can assist in answering is to what degree Xiancheng's journeys followed known traffic routes. Judging from his brisk and sustained pace of 5–7 km/hour we can assume that he mostly was able to walk on roads.<sup>53</sup> This is confirmed by comparing Xiancheng's network with what we know of the layout of the imperial post and relay system.

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<sup>53</sup> The speed can be extrapolated from the information in Routes 32 and 33, which give the daily distances covered. Assumed are eight to ten hours of walking every day.

**Canxue zhijin waypoints and Ming-Qing courier routes**

Data:  
Provinces of 1820 by CHGIS,  
Version 5. Cambridge: Fairbank  
Center for Chinese Studies, Sep  
2011.  
"Ming Dynasty Courier Routes  
and Postal Stations", Lex Berman  
(CGA, Harvard Univ), 2014  
*Canxue Zhijin* routes by Marcus  
Bingenheimer & Zhang Boyong  
Map: MB, 2016



Map 2. *Canxue zhijin* waypoints and Ming-Qing courier routes.

Map 2 shows how the network of routes that Xiancheng has traversed is highly dependent on existing trade and communication routes. Distances in *Knowing the Paths* are usually given in half-miles (*li* 里) but sometimes also in “stations” (*zhan* 站 or *yi* 驛). These stations refer to the network of government relay stations (*yizhan* 驛站) and postal stations (*jidi pu* 急遞鋪). The large relay stations, which also served as inns for travelers on government business, were spaced at intervals of between 50 and 80 half-miles. They were tasked with providing infrastructure for foreign dignities, traveling officials, and couriers to and from the court. The postal stations conveyed messages between the administrative centers of a region. The Qing network consisted of about 1,800 relay stations and some 15,000 postal stations.<sup>54</sup> Outside of these official routes, the road system in late imperial China was not

54 Feuerwerker 1980:44. For the Ming, Harris (2015:295) assumes ca. 10,000 postal stations, on

well maintained and pilgrims consequently tended to follow the established lines of commerce and communication. It is therefore no surprise that the routes in *Knowing the Paths* are closely aligned with the imperial courier network. There are a few exceptions where Xiancheng traverses a longer stretch that is not part of the courier route system. In those cases he usually follows busy waterways like the Hanshui 漢水 River on Route 12. One longer stretch where Xiancheng moves without the support of the imperial road system is far to the east, on Route 34 to Mount Yuntai, where, as mentioned above, he visited sites associated with *Journey to the West*. The return route that Xiancheng describes seems eccentric considering it eschews the easier way back south via the Grand Canal and opts instead for an overland path through north and central Jiangsu. It must be remembered, however, that this region was part of the Buddhist heartland of China in those days. Welch (1967:6, 255–257) has called the region northeast of Yangzhou the “cradle of monks,” because so many of the monks in Jiangnan came from there. Relying on first-person reports of monks from that region who had been ordained in the 1920s, Welch draws a picture of northern Jiangsu as especially open to Buddhist monastics. This might be the reason for Xiancheng’s decision to travel through that hospitable countryside instead of returning the way he came.

## Conclusion

The dataset of approximately 1,100 waypoints allows us for the first time to visualize Xiancheng’s pilgrimage routes. We have shown that Xiancheng visited not only Buddhist sites but also famous Daoist and Confucian sites. Moreover, we learn that his pilgrimage was not only religious, but also “literary.” Even on Mount Wutai, Xiancheng remembers the fictional hero Yang the Fifth, who became a monk at Mount Wutai.<sup>55</sup> In a follow-up study we could now try to analyze the web of literary references in *Knowing the Paths*. It is well known that vernacular literature and religion in China were

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average seven in each county. In the late Ming, Gu Yanwu, always much interested in past and present geography, observed: “These days there is a *pu* postal station every 10 *li*, where soldiers are posted to transport official communications” 今時十里一鋪，設卒以遞公文. *Rizhilu* 日知錄 (ca. 1639), fasc. 14: s.v. 驛傳.

<sup>55</sup> *Knowing the Paths* 1:2a.

closely connected and inspired each other. Xiancheng's travels seem to bear that out on the level of pilgrimage, but more research is needed to understand how exactly the religious *imaginaire* and the religious spaces in late imperial China were influenced by literary narratives.

Another issue that deserves to be looked into is the large number of Guanyin and Guandi sites that Xiancheng mentions in his routes. Sites that were associated with the Bodhisattva Guanyin and mentioned by Xiancheng had various names and appear frequently in *Knowing the Paths*.<sup>56</sup> Site names for the Guanyu cult were not that varied, but the term Guandi Temple (*guandi miao* 關帝廟) appears fifty-two times in *Knowing the Paths*. Both cults were part of a pan-Chinese religious system. Guanyin originated in Buddhism and entered Daoist and folk-religious worship. Guanyu went the other way. Originally a deified martial hero of the third century CE, he became one of the most ubiquitous protector deities in later Chinese Buddhism and was even adopted into Tibetan iconography. Thus cults were active nationwide, but it would be interesting to see if regional concentrations can be found or if they were spread evenly through the country. These and other avenues of inquiry have been made possible only relatively recently through the availability of open-source GIS technology that enables amateur cartographers to produce and analyze maps. Special gratitude is therefore owed to the developers of QGIS.

## **Appendix: The Fifty-six Main Routes Described in *Canxue Zhijin***

### **First Fascicle**

上集由北至西自西至南至中共二十九篇

First Group: From the north to the west, from the west to the south and the center. Together 29 routes.

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<sup>56</sup> In the whole text there appear twelve Guanyin “pavilions” (*guanyin ge* 觀音閣), twelve Guanyin temples (*guanyin si* 觀音寺), eleven Guanyin halls (*guanyin tang* 觀音堂), and five Guanyin caves (*guanyin dong* 觀音洞).

1. 北京由上方山至五臺山從真定府回京陸路第一 Land route from Beijing via Mount Shangfang to Mount Wutai, returning to the capital via Zhending<sup>57</sup>
2. 北京至東嶽泰山路程第二 From Beijing to the Eastern Marchmount Mount Tai
3. 東嶽泰山至中嶽嵩山少林寺陸路第三 Land route from the Eastern Marchmount Taishan to the Central Marchmount Mount Song
4. 五臺山至北嶽恆山由雁門關回祕魔崖陸路第四 Land route from Mount Wutai to the Northern Marchmount Mount Heng and returning via the Yanmen Pass<sup>58</sup> to the Mimo Cliff [near Mount Wutai]<sup>59</sup>
5. 五臺山至潼關陸路第五 From Mount Wutai to the Tong Pass [the Eastern Pass into the Guanzhong region]<sup>60</sup>
6. 中嶽嵩山由南陽府臥龍岡至襄陽府陸路第六 Land route from the Central Marchmount Mount Song via Wolong Gang<sup>61</sup> in Nanyang to Xiangyang
7. 中嶽嵩山由少林寺至熊耳山潼關陸路第七 Land route from the Central Marchmount Mount Song via the Shaolin Temple and Mount Xiong'er to the Tong Pass
8. 少林寺由太行山至五臺山陸路第八 Land route from the Shaolin Temple via Mount Taixing to Mount Wutai
9. 潼關由小秦嶺至武當山路程第九 From the Tong Pass via Little Qinling to Mount Wudang
10. 潼關由西嶽華山終南山夷門鎮至漢中府陸路第十 Land route from the Tong Pass via the Western Marchmount Mount Hua, Yimen, and Mount Zhongnan to Hanzhong Prefecture

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57 *Fu* 府 can mean “prefecture,” i.e., the administrative region below the province level (*sheng* 省) and above the county level (*xian* 縣). “Sub-prefectures” 洲 and 廳 (*ting* is a later term; most *ting* were established in the Qing) were also sometimes governed from a 府, sometimes directly under the provincial 省 government. In Xiancheng’s list of routes, as in common parlance, 府 is generally used to denote the seat of the prefectural government, thus a city or town. Therefore, with a few exceptions it is not translated as “prefecture.”

58 The Yanmen Pass is a famous pass on the Great Wall.

59 The Mimo Cliff is a site connected to Mañjuśrī. In the Dragon Cave the pilgrim is to visit an image of the Bodhisattva. *Knowing the Paths* 1:9a.

60 As becomes clear from the following routes, the Tong Pass was an important waypoint that connected north China with the region around the ancient capital Chang’an.

61 Wolong Gang is famous for its shrine to Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234).

11. 潼關由陝西省城至夷門鎮陸路第十一 Land route from the Tong Pass via the capital of Shaanxi Province to Yimen
12. 陝西省城自崆峒山至甘肅省城由漢中府朝武當山路程第十二 From the capital of Shaanxi Province via Mount Kongtong to the capital of Gansu Province and back via Hanzhong to Mount Wudang
13. 漢中府由沔縣至四川新都縣寶光寺陸路第十三 Land route from Hanzhong via Mian County into Sichuan to the Baoguang Temple in Xindu County
14. 寶光寺由羅漢寺三昧水至昭覺寺陸路第十四 Land route from the Baoguang Temple via the Luohan Temple and Sanmaishui to the Zhaojue Temple
15. 昭覺寺由四川省城朝峩眉山回至峩眉縣陸路第十五 Land route from the Zhaojue Temple via the capital of Sichuan Province to visit Mount Emei and returning again to the Emei county seat
16. 四川峩眉縣由七擒孟獲等處過火燄山至雲南雞足山陸路第十六 Land route from the Emei county seat via Qiqin, Menghu, and other places, passing by Mount Houyan to Yunnan's Mount Jizu
17. 雲南賓川州至大理府羅刹閣陸路第十七 Land route from Binchuan Department in Yunnan to the Luosha Pavilion<sup>62</sup> in Dali
18. 大理府由祿豐縣獅子山至雲南省城陸路第十八 Land route from Dali via Mount Shizi in Lufeng County to the capital of Yunnan Province
19. 雲南省至貴州省城黔靈山陸路第十九 Land route from Yunnan Province to Mount Dianling at the capital of Guizhou Province
20. 貴州省由大滄山嶽麓山至湖南省城陸路第二十 Land route from Guizhou Province via Mount Dawei and Mount Yuelu to the capital of Hunan Province
21. 湖南省由岳陽樓至湖北省城黃鶴樓路程第二十一 From Hunan Province[’s capital Changsha northwards] via the Yueyang Tower to the Huanghe Tower in the capital of Hubei Province<sup>63</sup>

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62 The Luosha Pavillion was a famous Guanyin site in that region.

63 These were two of the Four Famous Towers of Jiangnan 江南四大名樓.

22. 湖南省由南嶽衡山湘山至廣西省城陸路第二十二 Land route from Hunan Province[’s capital Changsha southwards] via the Southern Marchmount Mount Heng and Mount Xiang to the capital of Guangxi Province
23. 廣西省由六祖菩薩故里鼎湖山至廣東省城水路第二十三 Along the waterway from Guangxi Province via the hometown of the Sixth Patriarch and Mount Dinghu to the capital of Guangdong Province
24. 廣東省城由羅浮山至曹溪寶林山丹霞山梅嶺路程第二十四 From the capital of Guangdong Province via Mount Luofu<sup>64</sup> to Mount Baolin at Caoxi,<sup>65</sup> Mount Danxia, and Meiling
25. 廣東省由潮州府至福建省城陸路第二十五 Land route from Guangdong Province via Chaozhou to the capital of Fujian Province
26. 廣東從梅嶺由青原山至江西省城路程第二十六 From Meiling in Guangdong via Mount Qingyuan to the capital of Jiangxi Province
27. 江西省城由吳城鎮至廬山歸宗寺陸路第二十七 Land route from the capital of Jiangxi Province via Wucheng to the Guizong Temple on Mount Lu<sup>66</sup>
28. 廬山歸宗寺由東路至九江府陸路第二十八 Land route from the Guizong Temple<sup>67</sup> on Mount Lu via the eastern road to Jiujiang

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64 In the nineteenth century, a lively center of Quanzhen Daoism. Xiancheng says that it is the seventh of the Blissful Lands (*diqu fudi* 第七福地), but in Daoist sacred geography Luofu is actually the seventh major Grotto-Heaven 洞天, a more elevated title (there are seventy-two Blissful Lands but only ten major Grotto-Heavens). Although Xiancheng was probably not all that well versed in Daoist geography, he did remark on the local fauna: “There are ‘Immortal Butterflies,’ the larger ones big as a winnow basket, the smaller ones still as big as a fan. They are not easy to catch though, and even difficult to see.” *Knowing the Paths* 1:53a.

65 A reference to the Nanhua Temple 南華寺, associated with the Sixth Patriarch Huineng and his mummy (where one can ask for a pilgrimage stamp; *Knowing the Paths* 1:54b).

66 Actually the waterway is discussed as well here. We even learn the boat fare from Nanchang 南昌 to Wucheng 吳城鎮—100 copper cash. *Knowing the Paths* 1:61a. Xiancheng rarely mentions prices, but other examples of boat or ferry fares can be found, e.g., in Route 16 (1:32a), Route 22 (1:47a), Route 24 (1:52b, 55a), Route 29 (1:66a, 66b), and Route 40 (2:21b).

67 Better known today as Zhanyun Temple 瞻雲寺. According to tradition the temple had its origin in a gift from the famous calligrapher Wang Xizhi to the Indian translator monk Buddhayaśas.

29. 廬山歸宗寺由西路從九峯山至九江府陸路第二十九 Land route from the Guizong Temple on Mount Lu via the western road [and a detour to] Mount Jiufeng to Jiujiang

## Second Fascicle

下集自東至北由東至南至中共二十七篇

Second Group: From the east to the north, the south, and the center. Together 27 Routes.

30. 江蘇揚州府至北京陸路第一 Land route from Yangzhou in Jiangsu [Province] to Beijing

31. 江蘇揚州府至北京水路第二 Along the waterway from Yangzhou in Jiangsu to Beijing

32. 江蘇揚州府由山外至北京車驛站道第三 From Yangzhou in Jiangsu taking the route outside the mountains to Beijing's mule-cart station

33. 又山內車驛站道第四 [From Yangzhou in Jiangsu taking] the route through the mountains to Beijing's mule-cart station

34. 江蘇揚州府至雲臺山回海岸鎮路程\*附南通州狼山路程第五 From Yangzhou in Jiangsu to Mount Yuntai<sup>68</sup> and returning via the towns on the coast (Appended: The road to Mount Lang in Nantong Prefecture)

35. 江蘇揚州府由蘇州福山鎮至狼山路程第六 From Yangzhou in Jiangsu via Suzhou and Fushan to Mount Lang

36. 江蘇揚州府由大茅山至南京陸路第七 Land route from Yangzhou in Jiangsu via Mount Damao to Nanjing

37. 江蘇揚州府由牛首祖堂至安徽九華山陸路第八 Land route from Yangzhou in Jiangsu via the

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68 Not to be confused with the more famous Mount Yuntai in Henan, this is a hilly region in Lianyungang City in Jiangsu. The area is very scenic and connected to the novel *Journey to the West*, whose author is said to have been inspired by the place names in these hills. Xiancheng does not mention this, but probably this is why images to Xuanzang and his mother were enshrined in the Daoist Tuanyuan Temple 團圓宮, together with the three officials of Sky, Water, and Earth (and their mothers). *Knowing the Paths* 2:8a.

Patriarch Hall of the Ox-head School to Mount Jiuhua in Anhui

38. 江蘇揚州府至九華山水路第九 Along the waterway from Yangzhou in Jiangsu to Mount Jiuhua

39. 江南江蘇省至浙江省城水陸路程第十 Along the waterway from Jiangnan's Jiangsu Province to the capital of Zhejiang Province

[From Suzhou to Hangzhou]

40. 江南蘇州省由浙江湖州府至九華山路程第十一 From Jiangsu Province via Huzhou in Zhejiang to Mount Jiuhua

41. 江南蘇州府由靈巖山龍池磬山東壩至九華山路程第十二 From Suzhou in Jiangnan via Mount Lingyan, Longchi [Temple], Qingshan [Temple], and Dongba to Mount Jiuhua

42. 浙江杭州府至南海天台山路程第十三 From Hangzhou in Zhejiang to [Mount Putuo in] the Southern Sea and Mount Tiantai

43. 浙江杭州府由禹陵蘭亭至雁蕩括蒼山路程第十四 From Hangzhou in Zhejiang via the Mausoleum of King Yu<sup>69</sup> and the Orchid Pavilion<sup>70</sup> to Mount Kuocang and the Yandang Mountains

44. 浙江省由龍游縣至福建省城路程第十五 From Zhejiang Province via Longyou County to the capital of Fujian Province

45. 浙江杭州府由嚴州水路至九華山路程第十六 From Hangzhou in Zhejiang on the waterways via Yanzhou to Mount Jiuhua

46. 浙江杭州府由東西天目山至九華山陸路第十七 Land route from Hangzhou in Zhejiang via the (Eastern and Western) Mount Tianmu to Mount Jiuhua

47. 福建福州府由泉州洛陽橋至漳州府路程第十八 From Fuzhou in Fujian via the Luoyang Bridge near Quanzhou to Zhangzhou

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69 The “mausoleum” of Yu the Great, one of the early legendary kings who allegedly lived around 2100 BCE. This commemorative site near Shaoxing has existed since at least the sixth century and is still visited today.

70 The site at the foot of the Kuaiji Mountain where in 353 CE the Orchid Pavilion Gathering of poets took place. It was the occasion for Wang Xizhi's (303–361) *Preface to the Record of the Orchid Pavilion*, which is considered the most highly regarded piece in the history of Chinese calligraphy.

48. 安徽池州府九華山由黃山齊雲山下浙江杭州府路程第十九 From Mount Jiuhua near Chizhou in Anhui via Mount Huang and Mount Qiyun,<sup>71</sup> descending to Hangzhou in Zhejiang
49. 九華山由浮山至安徽省城路程第二十 From Mount Jiuhua via Mount Fu to the capital of Anhui Province
50. 安徽安慶府由二三祖山至投子山回省城陸路第二十一 Land route from Anqing in Anhui via the temples of the Second and Third Patriarchs to Mount Touzi and returning to the provincial capital
51. 安徽省由小孤山至江西九江府水路第二十二 Along the waterway from Anhui Province via Little Mount Gua to Jiujiang in Jiangxi
52. 江西九江府由四五祖山至湖北省城路程第二十三 From Jiujiang in Jiangxi via the temples of the Fourth and Fifth Patriarchs to the capital of Hubei Province
53. 湖北武昌府由漢口鎮木蘭山至武當山陸路第二十四 Land route from Wuchang via Hankou and Mount Mulian to Mount Wudang
54. 湖北漢口鎮由水路至武當山從長坂坡回省城路程第二十五 From Hankou in Hubei on the waterway to Mount Wudang, then returning to the provincial capital via the Changban Slopes
55. 湖北省至四川峩眉山路程第二十六 From Hebei Province to Mount Emei in Sichuan
56. 四川嘉定府峩眉山回湖北漢陽府路程第二十七 From Sichuan Jiading Prefecture's Mount Emei, returning to Hanyang in Hubei

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