

Friendship and Place in Fourteenth Century China: Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu

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Contents

Introduction.....	3
Part one	14
1. A farewell party for Tang Su	14
2. Memories of the north city wall district.....	20
Part two	28
3. The recluse dwellings of Xu Ben and Zhang Yu	28
4. The private estates of Li Rui and Chen Ruzhi	36
5. The Fan Family Garden and Numinous Cliff	43
6. The Requiting Kindness Monastery and Cloud Cliff Monastery.....	50
7. The Stone Lion Garden in word and image	57
Conclusion	65
Bibliography.....	69
Appendix A: Information on persons	76
Appendix B: Timetable	79

Introduction

This thesis is about the friendship between four of the greatest poets of Suzhou during the fourteenth century: Gao Qi 高啟 (1336-1374), Wang Xing 王行 (1331-1395), Xu Ben 徐賁 (1335-1380), and Zhang Yu 張羽 (1333-1385). Their friendship is strongly associated with the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” (*Beiguo shi you* 北郭十友), a literary group consisting of young literati poets, calligraphers, and painters, much like themselves. They are often reckoned among its most prominent members, and their participation in this group is often mentioned in general surveys on literature and painting.¹ Their friendship is probably best known from Frederick Mote’s now classic book on Gao Qi, published in 1962,² in which he gives the following description of the relationship between Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu and the other “Ten Friends”:

Most were roughly [Gao Qi’s] own age, and all were residents of that northeast quarter of the city just inside and just outside the city wall, where [Gao Qi]’s own family home was located. They gathered for recreation of all kinds – visiting famous places, climbing hills to write poetry on the scenes viewed from their summits, drinking and feasting, traveling on horseback or by boat to nearby places, visiting old temples to discuss philosophy with famous monks and Taoists, and sharing each other’s family celebrations.³

According to Mote, the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” were a group of like-minded, high-spirited, somewhat idealistic and romantic young men of action. They shared the same living

¹ References to the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” can be found in *Ming Biographies* in the entries of Zhang Yu and Xu Ben. See Goodrich 1976: 106, 595. The group is also mentioned in an entry on Gao Qi in *The Columbia history of Chinese literature* (Mair 2001: 395); in entries on Xu Ben and Gao Qi in *The Columbia book of later Chinese poetry* (Chaves 1986: 112, 122); in *The Cambridge history of Chinese literature* (Sun Kangyi 2010: 5); and in Yoshikawa 1989: 107.

² See also Mote’s shorter monograph on Gao Qi that appeared the same year in *Confucian Personalities* by Arthur F. Wright and Denis Twitchett’s (Mote 1962b: 247-54).

³ Mote 1962a: 94.

quarter near the northern part of Suzhou's city wall, where they built a friendship bond through literary gatherings, poetry competitions, and other forms of entertainment.⁴

At first glance, Mote's description of the community of poets in the north city wall district and their joint activities is easy to fit in with what we know about Suzhou in the fourteenth century as a major cultural and literary center. Located at the heart of the Jiangnan area, Suzhou was a place where poets, artists, wealthy patrons, and connoisseurs convened in a congenial atmosphere, described by one scholar as a "salon culture".⁵ Literary groups and gatherings, also called 'elegant gatherings' (*yaji* 雅集), thrived in this climate, and there were many more groups and assemblies like the one near the north city wall that were hosted at other locations in and around Suzhou during the late Yuan.⁶

Whereas many literary groups of the Yuan dynasty have been studied in detail, there has been no specialized study on the "Ten Friends of the North City Wall" in the English language since Mote first introduced the group to Western audiences in 1962. His approach to study them jointly, as "a group of fellow spirits", and to take as one of the "keys" to their relationship a "shared concept of the heroic life", does not sufficiently take into account the nuances of each of these individual's social lives.⁷

Literary assemblies and gatherings are a well-known phenomenon in Chinese history, but their representation in source material can often be characterized with inconsistencies and discrepancies, which does not always make it easy to gain insight into the factual details of these events.⁸ This thesis offers a long-needed study into the involvement of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu in the "Ten Friends of the North City Wall". This interesting and versatile group deserves more attention than it has hitherto received, not only because it included some of

⁴ Ibid. 94-106.

⁵ West 2011: 576-78, 604; see also Li Chu-ting 1972.

⁶ A great number of these are listed and discussed in Ouyang Guang 1996: 155-309.

⁷ Mote 1962b: 248.

⁸ See for example Knechtes (2006: 399-403) on the obscurity of the location of the "Orchid Pavilion Gathering (*Lanting jihui* 蘭亭集會)"; Laing (1968) on the "Elegant Gathering in the Western Garden (*Xiyuan yaji* 西園雅集)" hosted in the Northern Song, and famously depicted by Li Gonglin 李公麟 (1049-1106), but which according to her probably never really took place; and Hearn (1999) on multiple versions of the depiction of the "Elegant Gathering at the Apricot Garden (*Xingyuan yaji* 杏園雅集)", held in Beijing in 1437.

Suzhou's most talented and influential poets and writers, but also because it is one of the most obscure and questionable literary groups of the Yuan dynasty.

The “Ten Friends of the North City Wall”

Most of the problems with the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” derive from the historical fact that there was no group during the late Yuan that called themselves as such. Some Chinese scholars suggest that it was the late Ming scholar Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) who first came up with this name, which he besides based on what is most likely a misinterpretation of one of Gao Qi's poems.⁹ Qian Qianyi mistakenly thought, and this is still common today, that the ten poems of a series, called “On a Spring Day, Thinking About Ten Friends” 春日懷十友詩, refer to the ten members of a literary group hosted by Gao Qi in the north city wall district.¹⁰ Leaving aside the obvious problem that the number of friends becomes eleven if we also count Gao Qi, the author of the ten poems, Chinese scholars consider it now much more likely that Gao Qi composed the ten poems upon his return to Suzhou for a short visit when he was no longer staying in the city (probably in 1371). Finding these ten individuals absent, he decided to dedicate a poem to each one of them, which was not an uncommon thing to do.¹¹ Although the poems give a glimpse of some of Gao Qi's best acquaintances, it is unlikely they had anything to do with a literary group under his auspices in the north city wall district.¹²

⁹ Cai Maoxiong 1987: 36. Cai Maoxiong argues that the first appearance of the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” is in an entry on Yu Yaochen 余堯臣 in Qian Qianyi's *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan* 3-13.59-61, where Yu Yaochen is mentioned as a member of this group, alongside Gao Qi, Zhang Yu, Song Ke 宋克 (1327-1387), Lü Min 呂敏 and Chen Ze 陳則. Likely under Qian Qianyi's influence, the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” found its way in other Qing sources, most notably Wang Xing's entry in the biographical section of the *History of the Ming (Mingshi 明史*, completed in 1739). According to this source, the “Ten Friends” were Wang Xing, Gao Qi, Xu Ben, Gao Xunzhi 高遜志, Tang Su 唐肅, Song Ke, Yu Yaochen, Zhang Yu, Lü Min, and Chen Ze. See *mingshi*: 285.7329.

¹⁰ The poems are dedicated to Yu Yaochen, Zhang Yu, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Yang Ji 楊基 (1326-1374), Lü Min, Song Ke, Chen Ze, Yao Guangxiao 姚廣孝 (1335-1418), and Wang Yi 王彝. For the poems, see *GTSDQJ* 3.133-38. According to Mote, eight of these were members of the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” (excluding Yang Ji and Wang Yi). See Mote 1962a: 95.

¹¹ See, Jia Jiyong 2008: 92-93. For a similar argument, see Cai Maoxiong 1987: 36-37.

¹² Having said that, Gao Qi probably knew many of them from time spent together in the north city wall district.

It is probably also through Qian Qianyi that the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” were from the Qing dynasty onwards interchangeably referred to as the “Ten Talented Ones” (*Shi caizi* 十才子). This too seems to be incorrect. The latter is of a much earlier origin than the former and appears as early as 1380 in an inscription by Lü Min on a painting by Xu Ben.¹³ Some Chinese scholars suggest that the “Ten Talented Ones” were a literary group with different members founded by Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu during the early years of the Ming dynasty, when they were no longer residents of the north city wall district.¹⁴ However, few of these new members have made a name for themselves and they rarely appear in historical records or in the correspondences of the other members of this group.¹⁵ Their interrelationships and significance to the group remain therefore difficult to ascertain.

As a result of these ambiguities, it is difficult to determine who the ‘members’ of this supposed literary group were. Attempts by Chinese scholars have resulted in numbers varying from as low as five to as high as nineteen.¹⁶ All these attempts are deceptive in some way or another. Many of these individuals were never together in the same district at the same time, and the result is more a list of acquaintances than a list of members of a self-conscious and coherent group.

A second difficulty is with the assessment of the significance of the north city wall district for this group. If this quarter of the city was indeed a site where literary assemblies were regularly held, we would expect to find traces of this in the writings and correspondences of those who lived there, especially if we consider how literary gatherings were usually represented during the late Yuan. It is not uncommon to have the poems composed during the event with prefaces describing the circumstances of composition, or paintings depicting the location (*caotang tu* 草堂圖) and/or the guests (*yaji tu* 雅集圖) with inscriptions added by each of the participants.¹⁷

¹³ Xu Ben’s painting is no longer extant. Lü Min’s inscription has survived in *Shigu tangshu hua huikao* 54.337.

¹⁴ Ouyang Guang and Shi Hongquan 2004: 102.

¹⁵ Ming and Qing sources usually identify as the “Ten Talented Ones” a combination of the following eleven individuals: Gao Qi, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, Wang Xing, Yang Ji, Zhang Shi 張適, Fang Yi 方彝, Liang Shi 梁時, Qian Fu 錢夏, Pu Yuan 浦源, and Du Yin 杜寅.

¹⁶ Ouyang Guang and Shi Hongquan 2004: 99-103; See also Ouyang Guang 1996: 304-307; and Cai Maoxiong 1987: 35-37.

¹⁷ See for example the studies by David Sensabaugh (1989; 2009: 128-34) and Yu Christina Yu (2011: 22-51) on the gatherings hosted by Gu Ying 顧瑛 (or Gu Dehui 顧德輝, 1310-1369) at his villa on Jade Mountain 玉山 in Kunshan 昆山, which were relatively well recorded gatherings of the late Yuan.

Several of the supposed “Ten Friends” of the north city wall district participated as guests in some of the most famous literary gatherings that were hosted during the late Yuan, and some of their literary contributions to these gatherings still survive.¹⁸ However, no sources of any of this kind exist or are known to have existed for any literary or artistic group activity that took place by the north city wall of Suzhou. There are abundant accounts of exchanges and interactions between the several neighbors, but there are no poems that are either the clear product of a literary assembly near the north city wall or a representation thereof.¹⁹ We do not have the usual accounts describing the activities and the participants, and nothing close to group portraits or other visual depictions of the north city wall district. In fact, there are only very few occurrences of the “north city wall” (*beiguo* 北郭) in their correspondences.²⁰

¹⁸ In 1360, Gao Qi attended a lavish farewell gathering hosted by Zhang Jing 張經 (1310-1369) at his residence in Suzhou, the Thatched Cottage of Liangchang (*Liangchang caotang* 良常草堂), together with twenty-seven other famous poets from the area. During the party, each of the participants composed a poem on a famous scenic spot in the area of Suzhou as a farewell gift for their host. The poems, including the one by Gao Qi, are still extant. See Yu Christina Yu 2011: 75-83, 218-22.

Gao Qi and Zhang Yu were also guests of the prestigious gathering held at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion (*Tingyulou* 聽雨樓), hosted in 1365 by Lu Shanfu 廬山甫 and his son Lu Shiheng 廬士恒 in Suzhou. The famous painter Wang Meng 王蒙 (1308-1385) produced a painting of the gathering to commemorate the event. The painting, famous in its time, is no longer extant, but the accompanying poems composed by the participants, including the one by Gao Qi, have survived. On the gathering, see Li Chu-tsing 1972: 488. Gao Qi’s poem can be found in *GTSDQJ* 7.308. I have been unable to locate Zhang Yu’s contribution.

¹⁹ There are two sets of sources that may be considered. One describes the banquets held at the residence of Yu Yaochen in Suzhou. The exact location of his residence is nowhere stated, but might have been in the north city wall district. See Gao Qi, “Together with Seven Poet Guests (original note: all living in the north city wall district) Attending a Banquet at Yu Sima’s [Yaochen] Garden Pavilion” 與詩客七人會飲余司馬園亭 (原注: 居皆在北郭), *GTSDQJ* 13.520. There are a few other poems that mention banquets at Yu’s residence. See Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 5.218; and Xu Ben, *BGJ* 1.559. None of the poems are datable and none of the participants are mentioned by name.

A second series of poems is of a gathering at Zhang Yu’s residence near the Maple Bridge 虹橋, in the northern part of Suzhou, which might also have been in the north city wall district, to watch and enjoy the full moon during the Mid-Autumn Festival of the year 1366. For Zhang Yu’s invitation poem, see *JJJ* 6.784; For poems probably composed during this event, see Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 8.315-16; Wang Xing, *BXJ* 10.418-19; Xu Ben, *BGJ* 3.575; and Tang Su, *Danya ji* 3.175. For poems composed after the event that reflect on it, see Zhang Yu, *JJJ* 1.726; and Xu Ben, *BGJ* 3.580.

²⁰ The phrase “friends of the north city wall” (*beiguo zhuyou* 北郭諸友, *beiguo guren* 北郭故人, *beiguo zhugong* 北郭諸公) occasionally comes up in their correspondences and seems to be used mostly as a convenient way to refer to acquaintances who lived in this part of the city. See for example, Gao Qi, “On a Spring Day, Responding in Rhyme to [Poems] Sent by Friends in the North City Wall [District]” 春日次北郭故人寄韻, *GTSDQJ* 18.777; and Xu Ben, “Responding from My Mountain Residence to [the Poems] Sent to Me from Gentlemen in the North City Wall [District]” 山居答北郭諸公見寄, *BGJ* 2.567; and “While Sick, Sending to Friends in the North City Wall [District]” 病中寄北郭諸友, *BGJ* 5.598. They also used the north city wall to refer to people who lived in the same district but who were never considered part of their literary activities. See for example, Xu Ben, “In Zhashang (Huzhou) Meeting Dong Zhuang, (Dong is an old neighbor from the north city wall [District] of the city of Suzhou)” 雪上逢董莊 (董吳城北郭故鄰), *BGJ* 4.589. and Xu Ben, “On My Way to Jiangxi; Sending to Wang, Li, and Other Friends from the North

One thing that is important to consider is that the gatherings by the north city wall might not have been organized in the same way and for the same purpose as most other literary gatherings of the late Yuan. I surmise that as a group of neighbors, the residents of the north city wall district must have formed an informal, rather closed off society of moderate size and with moderate means, which was not organized around a single host or patron. We can therefore assume that they had less need to record and display their assemblies openly to the outside world, and aside from close acquaintances, they might have attracted not much outside attention.

With this thesis, I aim to direct our attention away from the attempt to reconstruct a literary group and the endless question of membership. In the following, I will limit my inquiry to only some of the individuals who are normally considered the “Ten Friends”, namely Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu. For reasons mostly to do with convenience, I will occasionally refer to them as the residents of the north city wall district, even though they did not actually reside in this district their entire lives, and without wishing to suggest that they were the only ones who lived there. The reason why I only focus on these four is because they are the only ones who are consistently mentioned by all the sources as members of both the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” and the “Ten Talented Ones”. They were furthermore most certainly residents of the north city wall district, which will prove relevant later on, since it means that they shared a common memory of this place. They were also the most prolific writers of this district. Together, they have bequeathed a corpus of over 3000 poems and other pieces of writing, many of which testify to a life-long ongoing exchange. Despite the attention given to these four individuals by Frederick Mote and Chinese scholars, a large portion of their exchanges and correspondence remains yet unexplored.

Friendship and place

City Wall [District] in Suzhou” 江西途中寄吳城北郭王李諸友, *BGJ* 5.605. Other occurrences of the north city wall will be discussed in greater detail in part one.

In this thesis, I want to challenge the idea that the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” is the name of an historical group of poets that convened for literary and artistic activities in the north city wall district of Suzhou, and that this place was a major locus of social interaction and literary production. It is true that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu initiated their friendship in the north city wall district, but as I will show in this thesis, they spent the greater parts of their lives as itinerants, separated from their homes and from each other. This means that most of their interaction took place elsewhere and most of their contacts were acquired during visits to places other than the north city wall district.

In order to understand how these four men practiced their friendship and interacted with other people, and how they composed their poems in a social setting, I therefore suggest that we expand the geographical spectrum of our inquiries to include their social activities and interactions in places besides the north city wall district, and with people other than their direct neighbors. Concrete, physical places where joint literary activities took place can offer a tangible criterion in what otherwise may remain an abstract correspondence between friends. An initial glance at the correspondences of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu reveal that there were few that did not involve a concrete physical place in some way or another. Picking out the places that feature most often in these correspondences will allow us to identify hubs where their social interaction was concentrated. It will furthermore give us a way to characterize and qualify relationships based on the location where they were acted out, and differentiate them from relationships that were centered around other places.

For this approach we will need to take into account the role of traveling, visiting places, and meeting people beyond the confines of the living quarters in the practice of friendship in Yuan China. There was in China, as Martin Huang has shown, a “close affinity between the concept of *you* 友 (friends) and that of *you* 遊 (travel).”²¹ In order to meet and interact with people, to socialize and establish networks, it was required, or at least beneficial, to travel far and widely. Since friendships were maintained outside the family-bond and beyond the confinements of the hometown, having many friends presupposed the ability to travel, while the ability to travel and

²¹ Huang 2007a: 6.

make distant journeys created vital opportunities to maintain long-term and long-distant friendships.²²

Throughout the Tang and Song dynasties, the examination system and the civil service system were important catalysts for travel and friendship. The examinations drew literati from the provinces to the capital where they created tight communities and friendship networks to stay ahead in the competition,²³ while the civil service system ensured that officials were continuously sent out to the provinces.²⁴ An intricate system of government support was put into place during the Song to facilitate mobility, while also providing opportunities for networking and visiting friends.²⁵ With the expansion of these systems during the second half of the Ming dynasty, mobility increased and there arose what Huang called a “cult of friendship”, which he in part attributed to “the popularity of travel (*you 遊*)”.²⁶

The Yuan dynasty on the other hand, and especially the transition to the early Ming, was a period when opportunities for distant travels and social networking were greatly reduced. When the Mongol rulers abolished the examination system and greatly limited access to the civil service system for scholars from South China,²⁷ an important system for the support of both travel and friendship was taken away. The collapse of the Yuan dynasty and the rising threat of local warlords and rebel bandits during the mid-fourteenth century further diminished travel opportunities.

In one of the few publications on friendship in the Yuan-Ming transition, Anne Gerritsen has argued that the political instability and civil warfare of the late Yuan dynasty meant that “elite men had few opportunities to travel widely and establish social networks (*you 遊*)”,²⁸ with as a consequence that during the fourteenth century “there were precious few social spaces within which male relationships and friendships among men... could be forged.”²⁹ Gerritsen succeeds in

²² As Susan Mann writes, it was men who were able to extend friendship networks because it was men who were able to travel and meet other travelers (unlike women who were confined to the household). Mann 2000: 1605-6.

²³ Shields 2015: 64.

²⁴ Ibid. 70-74.

²⁵ Zhang Cong 2011: chapter 3 and 4, especially pp. 79-80, 84, 101-103, 109.

²⁶ Huang 2007b: 149-50.

²⁷ Elman 2000: 29-38.

²⁸ Gerritsen 2007a: 36.

²⁹ Ibid. 37.

showing that the importance of the friendship bond did not diminish despite the challenges of the Yuan-Ming transition, but she does not show how literati responded to these challenges and how they created opportunities to physically meet and interact with people.

Literary gatherings and assemblies can be seen as one particular solution to the problem, and their popularity during the Yuan, especially in Suzhou, can in part be attributed to their ability to provide a space for literati scholars to reliably and regularly come into contact with peers and patrons outside the official circuit. They were usually hosted on the estates or in the gardens of wealthy men of culture, where poets and painters could meet and share their talents in the relative safety and security provided by these secluded places.³⁰ These private properties were, as one scholar wrote, “hubs of social interaction for scholars and their cultural productions”,³¹ and it was in the gatherings that were held there that, according to Li Chu-tsing, “new ideas in art and literature must have been developed”.³² The question remains to what extent literary gatherings and assemblies were the sole solution to the crisis in mobility and social networking in the Yuan, and whether they could fully satisfy literati’s desire to visit places and meet with other people.

Sources, method, and structure

This thesis will look at the whole geographical landscape of places where Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu maintained their social network, including, but not restricted to, the north city wall district. This will not only allow us to get a sense of the compass of their relationships, but also to get an insight into the various options for traveling and establishing social relationships that were available to an individual living in Suzhou in the fourteenth century.

How did Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu maintain a social network in the Yuan-Ming transition that extended beyond the north city wall district and a close circle of neighbors? What were the sort of places that they visited? Why did they visit these places? What were the

³⁰ Brown 1989: 101-102.

³¹ Yu Christina Yu 2011: 23.

³² Li Chu-tsing 1972: 488.

sort of relationships that they maintained at these places and what were the sort of social activities that they performed? To what extent did the physical setting determine their social interactions, and to what extent did social context dictate their behavior at the locations that they visited?

My main source for answering these questions will consist of the vast amount of written material that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu collected during their lifetimes in literary collections (*wenji* 文集), which were published after their deaths.³³ I first set out to collect data on the locations that they visited, when they visited these places, and with whom. I then looked at how they represented these places in their writings and exchanges, for it is only through its representation that a specific place or a momentary visit can be shared, repeated, and responded to by others. Finally, I determined the social context of these representations and their exchange.

The geographical range of my inquiries will be relatively small, mostly limited to the city of Suzhou and its environs.³⁴ The timeframe of my inquiry will likewise be brief: approximately fifteen years, starting from the period that they were together in the north city wall district, in the early 1360s, until halfway through the 1370s, when contact between them mostly ceased.

The starting point for our inquiry will be the north city wall district, the place where they initiated their friendship, where they spent most of their youth together, and which supposedly featured the gatherings that later made them famous as members of the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall”. We will still have to make clear what this place meant to them and how it

³³ Gao Qi produced multiple collections during his lifetime: The *Gao Taishi daquanji* 高太史大全集 (*Complete Collection of Grand Scribe Gao*) is a collection of eighteen scrolls, published in 1450, with annotations by the eighteenth century scholar Jin Tan 金壇. A little over a hundred of his prose writings are collected in the *Fuzao ji* 鳧藻集 (*Mallard in the Grass Collection*) of five scrolls, and a small collection of *ci* 詞 lyrics appears in the *Kouxian ji* (Tapping the Boat Collection). Both were published in 1445; The *Beiguo ji* 北郭集 (*The North City Wall collection*, a title given to it at publication) of ten scrolls, by Xu Ben was first published in 1487; The *Banxuan ji* 半軒集 (*Collection of the Half-complete Pavilion*) of twelve scrolls, by Wang Xing was published in 1777; Zhang Yu's *Jingju ji* 靜居集 (*The Collection of the Peacefull Dweller*) has two editions, each with the same poems, but with some minor textual differences and presented in a different order. I have consulted the edition of six scrolls, published in 1491. In addition, I have consulted the writings of Yang Ji, Tang Su, Wang Yi, and Yao Guangxiao, some of their acquaintances who participated in many of their social activities and left behind valuable records of them.

³⁴ A notable exception is a journey undertaken by Gao Qi into Zhejiang province to the south that lasted for a couple of years. The reason why he set out on this trip is not entirely certain, but whatever the reason was, the excursion was unsuccessful, and it is uncertain what relationships resulted from it. For an analysis on Gao Qi's trip, see Mote 1962a: 75-88.

contributed to their friendship. I will do this in the first two sections by examining how the north city wall district featured in their own personal experiences and memories.

Part two will offer case studies on various places other than the north city wall district that feature in the correspondences of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu. The case studies do not aim to be exhaustive, nor are they presented with any specific order in mind. Some of the places that I will discuss are private properties, owned by themselves in the countryside of Suzhou (section 3), or owned by others, which they consequently visited as guests (section 4). Others were locations of local significance, tied to the urban and suburban landscape and the history of Suzhou (section 5). I will also look at some of the many Buddhist monasteries that they visited and that dotted the landscape. Some of these were famous cultural landmarks (section 6), others were not and needed yet to be put on the map (section 7).

The places discussed in these case studies will have in common that they were located outside the domain of the family and state institutions, yet did not require the traversing of great distances or extensive journeys to be reached. They were furthermore conveniently located on the border between the private and the public, and allowed literati to negotiate between, on the one hand, the desire for comfort and companionship, and on the other hand, the need for public recognition and acknowledgment. In other words, what I hope to show is that these places were not only foci of shared meaning and experience, which bonded the neighbors of the north city wall together, but were also the hubs in a network that linked them to the outside world.

Part one

1. A farewell party for Tang Su

The earliest description of the north city wall district that can be found in the writings of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu, happens to also be the most extensive and detailed one. The occasion was the departure of Tang Su, one of the district's other residents, who in the spring of 1366 was appointed to a teaching position in Jiaxing 嘉興, south of Suzhou. The winter before his departure, his neighbors organized a farewell gathering for him at Gao Qi's residence,³⁵ and Gao Qi composed a parting preface for him in which he gives the following description of their friendship:

For generations we have lived here by the north city wall of Suzhou. Of scholars who lived in that same quarter who pursued literature and who were my good mutual friends, there was [at first] only Wang Zhizhong [Xing]. But in the past ten years or more, Xu Youwen [Ben] from Piling, Gao Shimin [Xunzhi] from Henan, Tang Chujing [Su] from Kuaiji, Yu Tangqing [Yaochen] from Yongjia, and Zhang Laiyi [Yu] from Xunyang have for various reasons come to live in Suzhou, and all of them have found temporary homes here as neighbors of mine. Due to their coming, the literary character of the north city wall [district] has come to flourish indeed! With nothing to do, I spend day and night with these several gentlemen, sometimes arguing points of learning and refining definitions for the sake of improving our learning, perhaps responding to each other in song and replying to each other's poems in

³⁵ On Tang Su's actual departure in the following spring, his neighbors accompanied him off to a way station just outside the city. For farewell poems produced on either of these two occasions, see Xu Ben, "Seeing Off Tang Chujing [Su] on His Way to Jiaxing" 送唐處敬赴嘉興, *BGJ* 4.593; and Gao Qi, "Farewell to Tang Su Moving to Zuili (Jiaxing)" 送唐博士肅移家醉李, *GTSDQJ* 12.490. For a poem composed by Tang Su in response to these farewell poems, see "[I] Will Go to Jiaxing and Leave Behind My Friends from Suzhou; Obtaining the [Rhyme] Word 'Jun'" 將之嘉興留別姑蘇諸友得君字, *Danya ji* 3.175.

order to set forth our ambitions, sometimes strumming the zither to express our innermost feelings, or perhaps just sitting together at the banquet table, joining in the pleasures of the feast. Although it is a time of chaos and disorder, and we have long been forced to withdraw into seclusion, yet together we have found pleasure and lighthearted joys, so that there is none of us who has not benefited [from our association].

余世居吳之北郭，同里之士有文行而相友善者，曰王君止仲一人而已。十餘年來，徐君幼文自毗陵，高君士敏自河南，唐君處敬自會稽，余君唐卿自永嘉，張君來儀自潯陽，各以故來居吳，而卜第適皆與余鄰，於是北郭之文物遂盛矣。余以無事，朝夕諸君間，或辯理詰義以資其學，或賡歌酬詩以通其志，或鼓琴瑟以宣堙滯之懷，或陳幾筵以合宴樂之好。雖遭喪亂之方殷，處隱約之既久，而優游怡愉，莫不自有所得也。³⁶

According to this source, they were with only seven in the north city wall district; aside from Gao Qi, there were also Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, Gao Xunzhi, Yu Yaochen, and Tang Su.³⁷ Gao Qi furthermore calls them his ‘good mutual friends’, emphasizes the literary and sophisticated character of their daily activities, and the benefit that they gained from each other’s company. This source seems unequivocally clear about their literary association in the north city wall district, and not surprisingly, it is often taken as the best representation of the literary gatherings of the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall”.

I will begin this section with a discussion of this important source. In order to judge its value, we must take its context into consideration and consider the reasons why Gao Qi might have written it. Why is the earliest and most detailed account of the friendship between the residents of the north city wall this parting preface for Tang Su? What is the significance of Tang

³⁶ Gao Qi, “Preface to Seeing Off Tang Chujing [Su]” 送唐處敬序, *FZJ* 2.871-72. This and other translations in this section are after Mote 1962a: 95-96, with modifications.

³⁷ In another parting preface, Wang Xing mentions that Yang Ji and Wang Yi were present at the farewell party as well. However, it is quite certain that they were not residents of the north city wall district, which might be a reason why Gao Qi neglects to mention them in his preface. See Wang Xing, “Preface to Seeing Off Mr. Tang Chujing [Su]” 送唐君處敬序, *BXJ*, buyi, 441.

Su's departure to Gao Qi's decision to record their friendship, and why did he choose to record their association in the genre of the parting preface?

Ironically, the farewell party for Tang Su was not only the first recorded gathering between the residents of the north city wall district, it proved also to be the last occasion that all of them were together in this one place. The reason for this was the worsening of the political situation near the end of the Yuan dynasty, which by the time of Tang Su's departure was starting to make an impact on their friendship.

From the early 1350s onwards, around the time when Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu moved into the north city wall district, the Yuan dynasty was already on the decline. The central government lost its grip over many parts of South China to the Red Turbans and other rebel groups. Suzhou was affected by the unrest when in 1356 the former salt trader Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321-1367) took over the city, plundered it, and placed himself at the head of local government. Initially, he presented himself as a servant of the Yuan emperor, which gave him some legitimacy, but he declared independence in 1363 by proclaiming himself King of Wu 吳王. Around the same time, he clashed with the Red Turban leader Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), who had his base in Zhejiang and Jiangxi. In the years that followed, the two engaged in a fierce war for control over the Jiangnan area, a war that more and more turned out in favor of Zhu Yuanzhang.³⁸

Tang Su's departure in the spring of 1366 took place against the background of these developments, and he was not the first of the group to leave the city. Gao Qi was worried about the effect that these departures would have on their friendship. A little further on in the parting preface for Tang Su, he writes:

However, two years ago, Shimin (Gao Xunzhi) left for Yunjian (in Songjiang 松江 Prefecture), last year Youwen (Xu Ben) left for Wuxing, and this year Tang Su must also leave for Jiahe (in Jiaxing) to take up a post. Many guests [have come to] drink and see him off at my residence. Half-drunk, I said sorrowfully: "All these gentlemen lived within a distance of five *li*, how fortunate indeed! More than half of them have

³⁸ For a detailed account of the civil war, see Dreyer 1982: chapter 2.

left by now, and those who remain, it seems, cannot be kept from leaving. This way, who will still be here with me in the end?"

然自前年士敏往雲間，去年幼文往吳興，今年處敬又將往嘉禾而仕焉。眾客觴別於余舍。酒半，余戚然曰：諸君之居吾里，誠幸矣！今去者過半，而留者猶未可羈也。然則誰終與處此乎？³⁹

Gao Xunzhi and Xu Ben had already left the north city wall district, and now they were saying goodbye to Tang Su as well. Gao Qi's worries that soon none of them would be left proved to be justified. In the years directly following Tang Su's departure, almost all of them, including Gao Qi himself, willingly or unwillingly, substituted Suzhou for various other destinations. It is therefore not inconceivable to think that Gao Qi's emphasis on group unity in his preface for Tang Su might have stemmed from his anxiety that the group was falling apart. He might have wished to negate some of the loss by reminding the remaining assembly of their unique bond. This is exactly what he does further on when he quotes one of the other guests saying to the gathered assembly:

In the past, there were lofty friendships [that lasted for over] a thousand years and spiritual bonds [that extended for over] a thousand miles. If there is togetherness and affiliation, why should one be born at the same time and live at the same place? Why the need for the intimacy of connected living quarters or the hardships of growing old together? We cannot let distance make us forget the affection [of our friendship], nor let separation alter its intent, and if through our struggles we reach success, we must not let it affect its durability. Even being at the borders of Hu or Yue⁴⁰ should still make no difference from being near the north city wall [district]!

³⁹ *FZJ* 2.871-72.

⁴⁰ Hu and Yue usually refer to the 'barbarians' at the border regions of the Han Dynasty, but Mote suggests that in the time frame of Gao Qi's writing, Hu and Yue should be read as allusions to the Mongols and/or Red Turban rebels. See Mote 1962a: 104.

古有尚友於千載、神交於千里者，以有所合而同爾，豈必生同時，居同里，連棟宇之密而接杖屨之勤乎？諸君能不以遠而忘其好，不以疏而易其志，不以窮達而渝其久要之心，則雖限胡與越，而亦不異於北郭之近矣。⁴¹

Gao Qi writes to his companions that they should keep up their friendship no matter how far separated they might become from each other. He reminds them that their friendship was not bound to one particular place, and, as such, could not be defined by the north city wall district. Their friendship existed purely in the mind and would persist as long as they kept it alive in their memories. As I will show in the next section, unlike Tang Su, Yu Yaochen, and Gao Xunzhi, who quickly disappeared from the stage after they left, Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu remained true to the spirit of these words, and continued to honor their friendship in their memories even when they were no longer in each other's company.

Gao Qi reported on the existence of a literary group by the north city wall on the threshold of its disintegration. This would also explain his use of the parting preface; since parting prefaces were commonly exchanged on the verge of separation in a friendship, they were, as Norman Kutcher says, “a celebration of what is already changing.”⁴² The general function of the parting preface is also something that we should take into account.

Farewells had become a staple of travel culture in the Song dynasty, and the exchange of parting poems and prefaces were a standard component of these highly ritualized social events.⁴³ A study by Chen Wenyi has shown that the preface, most notably the ‘parting preface’ (*songxing xu* 送行序), or the ‘preface of bidding farewell’ (*zengxing xu* 贈行序), “reached its high point in the Yuan”.⁴⁴ Parting prefaces functioned as ‘introduction letters’, meant as a tool for traveling literati to introduce themselves at unfamiliar destinations.⁴⁵ They were crucial for establishing relationships and maintaining social networks. Since parting prefaces worked on the general idea

⁴¹ FZJ 2.871-72.

⁴² Kutcher 2000: 1628.

⁴³ Zhang Cong 2011: 111-22.

⁴⁴ Chen Wenyi 2007: 325-35, quote taken from p. 333.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 346-52.

of “knowing a person from his associations” - the idea that one’s associations reflect one’s talents and morality - prefaces worked by introducing a person through his acquaintances.⁴⁶ They can best be thought of as a written supplement to the farewell poems that accompanied the preface. The function of the preface is to explain the nature of the connection between the contributors of these poems and the carrier of the scroll. The literary talent and social standing of the author of the preface could greatly enhance its overall efficacy, for which reason they were preferably requested from amongst the most talented and prestigious of a person’s associates. Providing prefaces for departing friends and letting them be carried off with them also benefited the authors of the poems and the preface, as they indirectly introduced them, and their literary skills, alongside the scroll’s recipient.⁴⁷

The question is, could Gao Qi’s parting preface for Tang Su have been meant as an ‘introduction letter’? The preface was likely mounted together with the farewell poems written by the other participants that were present that day, and was then given to Tang Su as a farewell gift to be taken with him to his new destination. In addition, copies might have been made and circulated among those who were there to see him off. The preface mentions all of Tang Su’s acquaintances, praises him as a member of a literary group, and makes sure that his place among some of the greatest poets of Suzhou is unmistakable. Written by Gao Qi, already famous in his own time, and furthermore ‘signed’ with parting poems by some of the greatest poets of Suzhou, this document would be the perfect introduction for Tang Su at his new job in Jiaxing (and indirectly for the others as well).

We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of Gao Qi’s description of his intimate friendship with his neighbors, but we should take the performative into account as well; rather than simply reporting on the existence of their friendship, Gao Qi might have attempted by writing this preface to retroactively strengthen the identity of their friendship to either support his departing friend or to prevent that their friendship would be forgotten. If this is the case, then I think it is important to consider that this source might give an exaggerated account of the literary activeness of the north city wall district and the unity that existed among those who lived there.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 366, 374-76.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 351, 386-89.

2. Memories of the north city wall district

Tang Su's departure in 1366 can thus be seen as a turning point in the relationship between the residents of the north city wall district; it was not only the first occasion for Gao Qi to give a written account of their mutual bonds and have it circulated among his departing friends, it also defined how they would look back upon their friendship in the north city wall district in the years that followed. As mentioned, Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu continued to exchange memories about the north city wall district after their separation. We will thus see that all the remaining occurrences of the north city wall district appear as part of the nostalgic recollections of these four former neighbors. All of these occurrences are datable to after Tang Su's departure in 1366, and none of them were written in the north city wall district or in the company of the other neighbors. However, these occurrences of the north city wall district should not be neglected. The exchange of nostalgic recollections was essential to the continuation of a friendship through time and space.⁴⁸ In this section I will look at how the nostalgic recollections of the north city wall shaped the friendship between Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu through changing circumstances after their separation.

The departures from the north city wall that Gao Qi describes in his parting preface for Tang Su happened all in the wake of the war between Zhang Shicheng and Zhu Yuanzhang. When Zhu Yuanzhang's armies encroached upon the region surrounding Suzhou at the end of 1366, those who had fled earlier from the warfare were now forced to return to the city for safety. It did not take long, however, before Zhu Yuanzhang reached the city and staged a siege that lasted for ten months, from the winter of 1366 until the autumn of the next year. Although circumstances during the siege were harsh, it incidentally brought a momentary reunion in the north city wall district.

⁴⁸ Shields makes this point in a study on the friendship between Bai Juyi 白居易 (772-846) and Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779-831) in the Tang dynasty. See Shields 2006. It will be important to note that unlike these Tang poets, for the residents of the north city wall, the of nostalgic recollections was purely an attempt to preserve their personal friendship, and was not necessarily aimed at maintaining favorable positions within the public sphere or sustaining social networks.

Zhang Yu was one of the residents of the north city wall who had left earlier (see section 3) but was forced to return before the siege occurred. Although he was happy to be reunited with Gao Qi, Wang Xing, and Xu Ben, he was also cut off from many of his other friends who happened to be outside the city for the duration of the siege. To these men he dedicated a long scroll of twenty-three poems, titled “Thinking About My Friends” 懷友詩.⁴⁹ Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, as well as their friend Yang Ji, who were in Suzhou alongside Zhang Yu, and who must have been familiar with most of the individuals mentioned in the scroll, each added an inscription to it.⁵⁰

Shortly after Zhu Yuanzhang’s takeover of Suzhou in the autumn of 1367, Zhang Yu fled to Hangzhou, but remnant rebel forces in the area prevented him from returning for at least some years. As he was now also separated from Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Yang Ji, he wrote five additional poems to his original twenty-three, dedicated to all four of them and Yu Yaochen, his other former neighbor in the north city wall district. In addition, he added the following preface in which he reminisces about their old friendship:

While I was in Suzhou when it was under siege, I composed twenty-three “Thinking about my Friends” poems. Four others later added inscriptions, namely Yang Mengzai [Ji] from Jialing, Wang Zhizhong [Xing] from Jieqiu, Gao Jidi [Qi] from Bohai, and Xu Youwen [Ben] from Tanjun. In my spare time, I hang out with these few men and Tangqing [Yu Yaochen] from Yongjia. We had all lost hope and [chose to be] without office. Left behind like this, we were always composing poetry while drinking alcohol. Not heeding the warnings coming from the civil unrest, I moved to Wulin (Hangzhou) after the war had ended. Of the twenty-three persons I thought about [in the “Thinking About My Friends” poems], I have never seen one of them again. And of the five others (Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Yang Ji, and Yu Yaochen), some of them were exiled, others went into hiding, and we all became separated from one another. How absurd, the vicissitudes of separation and reunion. Thinking

⁴⁹ The poems are reproduced in *Shigu tangshu hua huikao*: 54.322-24.

⁵⁰ See Xu Ben, *BGJ* 6.612; and Wang Xing, *BXJ* 8.388-89. I have been unable to locate the inscriptions by Yang Ji and Gao Qi.

of the difficulties of traveling and meeting them, I composed these five poems called “continuing the ‘Thinking About My Friends’ Poems.”

予在吳圍城中作《懷友詩》二十三首，其後題識者四人則：嘉陵楊君孟載、介丘王君止仲、渤海高君季迪、郟郡徐君幼文也。時餘，與諸君及永嘉唐卿者游。皆落魄不任事，故得留，連詩酒間。若不知有風塵之警者，及兵後移家武林。向所懷廿三人，往往而不相見。而五君者或謫，或隱，各相睽，異嘆，離合之無常。感游從之難得，作《續懷友詩》五首。⁵¹

Zhang Yu writes that while he, Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Yu Yaochen, and Yang Ji were still in Suzhou, they regularly spent time together composing poems and getting drunk. After the siege, each went a separate way, so Zhang Yu added their names to his long list of friends that he tried to keep in his memory.

After Suzhou fell and Zhang Shicheng capitulated, the way was paved for Zhu Yuanzhang to unite the rest of the Chinese territories and proclaim himself the first emperor of the Ming dynasty (the Hongwu Emperor 洪武, 1368-1398). As emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang was notorious for his unpredictable and distrustful nature.⁵² He was especially suspicious towards the elite of Suzhou, where his former rival Zhang Shicheng had resided for over ten years, and banished or relocated many of the city’s residents upon capturing the city.

It is uncertain what happened to Wang Xing after the siege, but he probably stayed at his rural residence near Stone Lake (Shihu 石湖), south of Suzhou. Gao Qi too spent the initial years after the siege at his rural residence near the Lou River (Loujiang 婁江), east of Suzhou, where his wife’s family owned property at the nearby Green Hill (Qingqiu 青丘). Xu Ben, Yang Ji, and Yu Yaochen were less fortunate, and were banished in the years from 1367 to 1369 to the city of Zhongli 鐘離 in Haoliang 濠梁, near the Huai River (Huaihe 淮河), at a considerable distance to the north of Suzhou, on the accusation of having had ties with Zhang Shicheng’s government.

⁵¹ *JJJ* 1.738-39.

⁵² See Zhu Yuanzhang’s entry in Goodrich 1976: 385-92.

When in the winter of 1368, Xu Ben was released from exile (slightly ahead of Yang Ji and Yu Yaochen), he immediately paid a visit to Gao Qi at his rural residence at the Lou River.⁵³ They celebrated his return with a trip to the White Lotus Monastery (Bailiansi 白蓮寺) in a nearby village called Fuli 甫里 (or Puli 浦里), where they were reunited with their old friend Lü Min. The year before Xu Ben's exile, in 1366, they had sent Lü Min off to become ordained as a Daoist priest,⁵⁴ but he now lived temporarily as a Buddhist monk at the White Lotus Monastery.⁵⁵ Gao Qi, Xu Ben, and Lü Min celebrated their reunion with a number of poems,⁵⁶ (some of) which they mounted onto a scroll called the "Singing Together on the Eastern Bank Scroll" (*Donggao changhe ji* 東皋唱和卷) (I will come back to this source later).⁵⁷

Their reunion did not last long, however. Xu Ben soon returned to his mountain residence in Wuxing 吳興 (see section 3), and Gao Qi was called to the capital in Nanjing (formerly Jinling 金陵) shortly thereafter. Gao Qi was summoned to Nanjing by the Ming emperor in the spring of 1369 to work on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan* (*Yuanshi* 元史). He worked under some of the most talented men in Zhu Yuanzhang's government, but they could not prevent that the result turned out to become the poorest of the dynastic histories.⁵⁸ The circumstances of the whole project were notoriously bad and the work was rushed.⁵⁹ They presented the work to the emperor in the autumn of the same year that they started it, although they did not consider it

⁵³ There is some confusion concerning the date of Xu Ben's visit. Chen Jianhua (1987: 190) suggests dating the visit to 1369, but this seems unlikely considering that Gao Qi moved to Nanjing earlier that year (see below). For this reason, I will follow Jia Jiyong's suggestion that the visit took place in 1368. See Jia Jiyong 2008: 92.

⁵⁴ When Lü Min left the city in 1366 to become ordained as a Daoist priest, he was seen off with abundant parting poems and prefaces by his friends who lived near the north city wall. See Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 14.588-89; *GTSDQJ* 15.665; Zhang Yu, *JJJ* 4.768-69; and Xu Ben, *BGJ* 6.619. For the prefaces, see Gao Qi, *FZJ* 2.875-86; and Wang Xing, *BXJ* 5.351-52.

⁵⁵ According to Mote, Lü Min's motivation to become a Daoist priest was to be able to wear the Daoist garments and so bypass the much-resented Mongol Yuan dress code. See Mote 1962a: 103.

⁵⁶ For poems composed during this event, see Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 15.636; 14.598; 18.773; and Xu Ben, *BGJ* 5.599.

⁵⁷ The original scroll is no longer extant, but (two of) the poems have survived elsewhere: Gao Qi's "Record Keeper Xu [Ben] After Returning from Exile to Zhongli Together Climbing the Pavilion on the Eastern Hill 徐記室謫鐘離歸後同登東丘亭", *GTSDQJ* 17.737; and Xu Ben's "Climbing the Pavilion on the Eastern Bank Responding to Jidi (Gao Qi)" 登東皋亭答季迪", *BGJ* 6.613. The Eastern Hill and the Eastern Bank in the poems refer to Gao Qi's rural residence.

⁵⁸ The project was nominally headed by the prominent statesman Li Shanchang 李善長 (1314-1390), but in practice was overseen by Song Lian 宋濂 (1310-1381) and Wang Wei 王禕 (1321-1372), two eminent officials and literary figures from Jinhua in Zhejiang province, who were in Zhu Yuanzhang's service since around 1360. See the entries on Song Lian in Goodrich 1976: 1225-31; and on Wang Wei in *ibid.* 1444-47.

⁵⁹ The circumstances of Gao Qi's assignment are examined in more detail in Mote 1962a: 161-67.

finished.⁶⁰ Overall, Gao Qi's stay in Nanjing had been an ungratifying experience for him. Life at court did not suit him, and he was glad when the task was over.⁶¹

After the history project was completed, Gao Qi was rewarded with a post in the Hanlin Academy (*Hanlinyuan* 翰林院). He subsequently moved his residence to a scenic site just outside Nanjing, called Bell Mountain (Zhongshan 鐘山), and brought his family over from Suzhou. It was here, in 1370, that he received a visit from Yao Guangxiao. This well-educated, scholarly monk from the Lengjia Monastery (Lengjiasi 楞伽寺) was first introduced to Gao Qi during the siege of Suzhou, when he partook in the revels in the north city wall district.⁶² Now, several years later, Yao Guangxiao traveled to Nanjing to show Gao Qi his poetry collection and to request a preface from him. Gao Qi very much appreciated this visit from an old friend from Suzhou, and aside from providing him the preface,⁶³ he composed the following poem about his coming:

Master Yan (Yao Guangxiao) Visited My Residence on Bell Mountain 衍師見訪鍾山里第

風雨孤舟寄一僧	[Through] wind and rain, a lonely boat brings a monk,
遠煩相覓到金陵	Away from troubles, we come looking for each other in Jinling (Nanjing).
青衫愧逐塵中馬	In scholarly robes, disgracefully driven along like a horse in the dirt,
白拂看麾座上蠅	With a white brush, looking out for signs of flies on my seat.
事去南朝猶有恨	Disaster has befallen the Southern Dynasties but still there is regret,
夢歸北郭已無憑	My dream of returning to the north city wall is already without ground.
文章何用虛叨祿	Having my writings, what use is there to vainly receive salary,

⁶⁰ The last reign of the Yuan dynasty was missing from the compilation due to lack of documentation. The work was continued after Gao Qi by a new batch of scholars, including Gao Xunzhi, Du Yin, and Wang Yi, all acquaintances of Gao Qi.

⁶¹ The poems that Gao Qi wrote during his stay in Nanjing were melancholic and full of longing toward his friends and family in Suzhou. Many of these poems are translated and discussed in Mote 1962a: 159-61, 170-80.

⁶² Yao Guangxiao's relationship with the residents of the north city wall district is described by Wang Yi, who during the siege was another resident of this district. See Wang Yi, *WCZJ* 2.411.

⁶³ For Gao Qi's preface, see "Preface to 'Du'an ji'" 獨菴集序, *FZJ* 2.885-86.

只合從師問上乘

I should only study with you master and inquire after the Great Vehicle.⁶⁴

What this poem expresses, is that Gao Qi's long-term interests were never directed towards the empire or the court, and although he had met with reasonable success in Nanjing, he was still longing to return to the north city wall quarter of Suzhou. He could not express this desire to his colleagues in Nanjing, but he could to Yao Guangxiao, who shared his memories of the place. However, when Gao Qi took up residence somewhere in the southern part of Suzhou shortly after his official resignation in the autumn of 1370, there were none of his former friends left in the city.⁶⁵ Wang Xing had again retreated to his rural residence near Stone Lake, Yang Ji was exiled to Juqu 句曲, in Jurong 句容 County, and Zhang Yu and Xu Ben had both received minor official appointments by Zhu Yuanzhang.

Zhu Yuanzhang's distrust of the literati of Suzhou had not changed in the meantime, and ultimately led to a series of notorious purges. The first great purge took place in 1374, and was directed against Wei Guan 魏觀 (1305-1374), the governor of Suzhou, but also implicated Gao Qi, Yang Ji, Tang Su, and many others, who were consequently executed on grounds that are still not entirely clear.⁶⁶ In 1385, Zhang Yu committed suicide on his return from banishment, and in 1393, Xu Ben starved himself in prison after being sentenced to die. This is how the friendship between the former residents of the north city wall and some of the most talented men of Suzhou came to an unfortunate end.

There is one final mention of the north city wall district that is worth mentioning. In 1374, the year of Gao Qi's execution, Wang Xing obtained the "Singing together on the Eastern Bank" scroll that Gao Qi and Xu Ben composed earlier during their short-lived reunion at the White Lotus Monastery. Prompted probably by Gao Qi's execution, Wang Xing added a colophon to the scroll

⁶⁴ *GTSDQJ* 14.581. See also Yao Guangxiao, "Visiting Gao Qi at His Residence on Bell Mountain" 訪高啟鐘山寓舍, *TXZSJ* 7.801.

⁶⁵ This is the moment when scholars think it most likely that Gao Qi composed the "On a Spring Day, Thinking about Ten Friends" (see the introduction). The poem for Yu Yaochen explicitly mentions the north city wall district as one of the places where they used to meet.

⁶⁶ This is not the place to go into the details of the incident. I refer to the discussions of Gao Qi's death (cut in half at the waist) in Mote 1962a: 234-40; Xu Yinong 2000: 144-48; and Ku and Goodrich 1938: 302-305.

in which he looks back one last time on their friendship during the time that they still lived together in the north city wall district:

The scroll of poems on the right contain the ‘singing together poems’ by Gao Qi Jidi from Bohai, and Xu Ben Youwen from Shu Mountain, from when they visited Lü Min Zhixue from Liangxi by the eastern bank. In the beginning, the literary character of Suzhou flourished the most in the north city wall [district]. Without ceasing for a day, several gentlemen joined here together, usually to exchange insights or to converse lightheartedly, or to roam around and enjoy nice vistas. We even had mornings with zither and wine and evenings with fragrant tea. There was none of us who was not busy with brush and ink, which has already resulted in plenty of writings.

右詩一卷，渤海高啟季迪、蜀山徐賁幼文，訪梁溪呂敏志學甫於東皋所唱和也。初，吳城文物北郭為最盛，諸君子相與無虛日，凡論議笑談，登覽遊適，以至於琴尊之晨，薺茗之夕，無不見諸筆墨間，蓋卷帙既富矣。⁶⁷

The few sources quoted in these two sections are all there is (or is left) that describes the relationship between the residents of the north city wall district. It is not much to go on. If we no longer have the poems and other writings that must have resulted from the activities that according to these sources took place in the north city wall district, then that is because for some reason they did not thought it worth keeping them. What they thought worth recording, however, were their memories of these activities and this place. The repeated exchange of these memories of the north city wall was more impactful to the development of their friendship and their shared identity than their actual literary congregations in the north city wall district. Despite all the changes that their relationship went through, the shared memory of the north city wall remained constant, and as a result, their relationship outlived a civil war, a siege, exile, employment in distant places, and even death.

⁶⁷ Wang Xing, “Colophon to ‘Singing Together on the Eastern Bank’” 跋東皋唱和卷, BXJ 8.393.

We should keep this in mind for the following sections in which I will examine the social relationships that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu maintained at other places outside the north city wall district. We should above all be careful not to regard them as traveling members of a literary group that is based in the north city wall district. The shared memory of the north city wall district is what kept them associated and what kept their mutual friendship distinct from other relationships that they made along the way.

Part two

3. The recluse dwellings of Xu Ben and Zhang Yu

It was not uncommon for wealthy residents of Suzhou to own additional property in the countryside surrounding the city, and this was also the case for some of those who lived in the city's north city wall district. Gao Qi, for example, owned a country retreat at the Green Hill, in the eastern suburbs of Suzhou, where he stayed at regular intervals. Wang Xing likewise spent much of his time at his retreat near Stone Lake, in the southern suburbs of Suzhou. In this section, I will look at the properties that Xu Ben and Zhang Yu owned in the mountains of Wuxing, south of Lake Tai, where they spent most of their time when they were not in Suzhou.

Xu Ben left Suzhou to take up residence in his newly built mountain dwelling on Shu Mountain (Shushan 蜀山) in Wuxing in the year 1364, two years before Tang Su's departure from the north city wall district. He came there on the invitation of Zhang Yu, who had been staying for a while on a nearby mountain, called Dai Mountain 戴山. Zhang Yu's invitation, in the form of a poem, was for Xu Ben to come live a peaceful rural existence with him in the mountains, not unlike two recluses:

Invitation to Recluse Xu Youwen [Ben] to Withdraw to Wuxing With Me 約徐隱君

幼文同隱吳興

吳興好山水	Wuxing has nice scenery,
子我盍遷居	So why do you and I not move there?
繞郭群峯列	Surrounding the city walls an array of jutting mountain peaks,
迴波一鏡如	Undulating [and reflecting] like a mirror.
蠶餘即宜稼	Silkworms aplenty and well-suited for farming,
樵罷亦堪漁	When finished cutting wood, one can also do some fishing.

結屋雲林下 Let us build a residence under the clouds and trees,
殘年共讀書 So that during our remaining years we can study together.⁶⁸

The choice to live as a recluse in the countryside was not an uncommon one at the end of the Yuan. It conformed to the ideal Confucian choice not to serve or participate in public life in times of adversity, and to dedicate oneself to study and moral self-cultivation until the times are right again.⁶⁹ After Xu Ben and Zhang Yu made their retreats into the mountains of Wuxing, however, they did not cease contact with their former neighbors in the north city wall district.⁷⁰ On the contrary, they continued to write to each other and benefit from each other's support, even when they were no longer bound to each other as neighbors in the same district. Because of this, the mountain dwellings of Xu Ben and Zhang Yu are one of the best-represented places in their exchanges, and will therefore be a good starting point for our inquiry into how they maintained their friendship outside the north city wall district. Why did the recluse dwellings of Xu Ben and Zhang Yu feature so often in the correspondences of their friends and what do their representations of these places tell us about the nature of their friendship?

We can find extensive descriptions of Xu Ben's residence on Shu Mountain in the records (*ji* 記) that he requested from Wang Xing and Gao Qi to commemorate his newly acquired abode and to celebrate his new life as a recluse. Wang Xing wrote the following in his "Record of the Study on Shu Mountain" 蜀山書舍記:

My neighbor Mr. Xu Youwen [Ben] is an upright person of integrity, highly ambitious, erudite and well informed. He likes to make himself at home in prose and ancient

⁶⁸ *JJJ* 4.768.

⁶⁹ See Mote 1960: 204-6, 288-90.

⁷⁰ Xu Ben's poems addressed to his friends in the north city wall district (quoted in footnote 20) were written from his residence on Shu Mountain. Around the year 1370 or 1371, Gao Qi and Xu Ben had a chance meeting in Wuxing. Gao Qi asked Xu Ben to send Zhang Yu his regards in the form of a poem, see Gao Qi, "Seeing Off Xu [Ben] the Mountain Man Returning to Shu Mountain; Also Sending to Zhang [Yu] the Peaceful Dweller" 送徐山人還蜀山兼寄張靜居, *GTSDQJ* 15.653. Zhang Yu responded to this poem from Gao Qi with: "Presenting an Answer to Mister Chuitai's (Gao Qi) Poem on Seeing Off the Man from Shu Mountain (Xu Ben)" 奉答吹臺先生送蜀山人見簡之作, *JJJ* 1.734.

style poetry and song. He is just at the age of early manhood, and will not let the bad times restrain him in realizing his ambitions. Thus he retreated to Shu Mountain in Wuxing, where he set up a building for his studies. When the building was finished, he requested me to deliver a piece of writing to commemorate it, but I have not yet done so. In the spring of the year 1365, [Xu Ben] came to Suzhou and repeated his request for a commemorative writing. In the autumn, he made the same request again.

吾郡徐君幼文，為人清介有氣節，立志高遠，博學多聞見，喜為文詞古詩歌以自適。年甫壯，遭時多虞，不克施其志。乃避地於吳興之蜀山，立屋以讀書焉。屋成，徵予文為紀，未果為也。歲乙巳春，君來吳，復以記請。至秋，又請焉。⁷¹

Wang Xing affirms Xu Ben's choice to renounce all participation in political and public affairs and to dedicate himself to his studies instead. Interestingly, Wang Xing gives the impression that he was unwilling to answer Xu Ben's request to write a commemoration on his new residence. Xu Ben had to come back to Suzhou to press the request twice before he finally delivered this text. This might have been because of feigned modesty on Wang Xing's part or because he did not want to give the impression that he was deliberately advertising his friend. For as his commemoration shows, Xu Ben's request to commemorate his recluse dwelling was at the same time a request to write about his personal talents, capabilities, and his ambitions.

Gao Qi does the same in his recording of Shu Mountain, which contains the following praise of Xu Ben:

Youwen (Xu Ben) is now just at the age of early manhood. He possesses talents that could be employed. Yet he is not hasty in his pursuit of advancement and reward; rather, he devotes himself to study in order to seek knowledge beyond that which he has yet encountered. Is this not a scholar of great purpose?

⁷¹ *BXJ* 3.325.

今幼文以方狀之齒，有可用之材，而不急進取，益務於學，以求其所未至，豈非有志之士哉？⁷²

Mote says about this source that even though Gao Qi praises Xu Ben's choice to remain aloof, the aims of his friend were ultimately practical and worldly, aimed at employment and recognition of his talents.⁷³ That this is quite right is suggested by Wang Xing when elsewhere he says about Xu Ben's choice to live in the mountains: "My neighbor Mr. Xu Youwen [Ben] retreated to Shu Mountain in Wuxing to enjoy himself with literary activities; disengaged from the world, yet not completely detached from the world either" 吾郡徐君幼文避地居吳興之蜀山，以著述自樂，無與於世，亦非與世相絕。⁷⁴ Xu Ben relied on his friends who remained in Suzhou to keep him in touch with the world.

Years later, Wang Xing and Gao Qi offered the exact same service to Zhang Yu, but not for his residence on Dai Mountain, but for a new residence that he had built on Jing Mountain (Jingshan 菁山), slightly further to the south. Only one year after Xu Ben had joined him on Dai Mountain, they were forced to return to Suzhou to seek safety from Zhu Yuanzhang's approaching armies. When in 1369, five years later, Zhang Yu was finally able to return to his old residence on Dai Mountain, he found that it was destroyed. He thereupon rebuilt his residence on Jing Mountain and requested Gao Qi and Wang Xing to commemorate his new recluse dwelling.

Just like they did for Xu Ben years earlier, Gao Qi and Wang Xing praised Zhang Yu's moral aspirations through his property, but this time they gave special attention to Zhang Yu's choice to name his residence the "Dwelling of a Peaceful Man" (*Jingzheju* 靜者居). According to Gao Qi, the name was appropriate because Zhang Yu was a peaceful man who lived in a peaceful residence.⁷⁵ According to Wang Xing, Zhang Yu got the idea for this name while he was staying in the vicinity of Hangzhou for a couple of years before coming to Jing Mountain. After some futile attempts by Hangzhou officials to seduce him into accepting an official position, they declared:

⁷² Gao Qi, "Record of the Study on Shu Mountain" 蜀山書舍記, *FZJ* 1.853-54. Translation after Mote 1962a: 98-99, with modifications.

⁷³ Mote 1962a: 99.

⁷⁴ Wang Xing, "Preface to Seeing Off Recluse Xu [Ben] 送徐隱君序, *BXJ* 5.350, composed upon Xu Ben's departure into exile in 1367.

⁷⁵ See Gao Qi, "Record of the Dwelling of a Peaceful Man" 靜者居記, *FZJ* 1.856-57.

“this peaceful man is incorruptible [by fame and position]” 是靜者不可濶也。⁷⁶ This is exactly how Zhang Yu wished to be seen and this kind of disinterestedness in fame and success is exactly what he wanted his recluse dwelling to signify. He reinforced this image of himself by choosing to name one of the halls “The Tranquil Hall” (*Qingyantang* 清晏堂) and he requested Xu Ben to inscribe the characters on a beam above the gate.⁷⁷ In similar fashion, Gao Qi sent Zhang Yu a poem to be engraved on his recluse retreat, for which Zhang Yu sent him his thanks.⁷⁸

While they were staying at their mountain retreats, Xu Ben and Zhang Yu received several visits from their friends in Suzhou. One of their visitors was Lü Min, who visited Xu Ben at least twice on Shu Mountain. On each of these occasions, Xu Ben, an accomplished painter, presented him a painting as a gift, one of which is called *Shu Mountain* 蜀山圖, dated 1371 (figure 1).⁷⁹ The painting depicts the scenery of Shu Mountain and what most likely must represent Xu Ben’s residence hidden in the bottom right corner.

The painting contains a poem and an inscription by Xu Ben, with the following explanation on the reason and circumstances of this particular gift:

Mountain man Lü [Min] came to visit me from Suzhou, to go sightseeing and enjoy himself on Shu Mountain. Afterwards, he stayed for a couple of days with only one zither and a country boat. When suddenly saying his goodbye, I drew for him this painting as a gift, together with a poem on the pleasures of living in the mountains,

⁷⁶ Wang Xing, “Record of the Dwelling of a Peaceful Man” 靜者居記, *BXJ* 3.324.

⁷⁷ For Zhang Yu’s request to Xu Ben, see “The Tranquil Hall” 清晏堂, *JJJ* 1.735; and for Xu Ben’s response, see “Zhang the Peaceful Dweller [Yu] Lives on Jing Mountain; He Named His Hall “The Tranquil [Hall]”; He Wanted Me to Inscribe it First With a Poem to Express its Allure; Therefore I Composed This to Answer Him; Also Imitating Zhou Boyang [Jian]” 張靜居寓菁山以清晏名堂，要余題先以詩見美，因賦此酬之，并似周伯陽, *BGJ* 2.567. In Zhang Yu’s entry in *Ming Biographies*, Tung-wen Weng locates “The Tranquil Hall” on Dai Mountain, which according to this poem, is incorrect. See Goodrich 1976: 106-107.

⁷⁸ For Gao Qi’s poem, see: “Sending to be Inscribed on Subeditor Zhang’s [Yu] Recluse Retreat on Jing Mountain” 寄題張著作菁山隱居, *GTSDQJ* 15.617. For Zhang Yu’s response, see “Record Keeper Gao [Qi] Commemorated My Recluse Retreat on Jing Mountain for Me; Replying in Rhyme, Sending Him My Thanks” 高記室為予題菁山隱居次韻寄謝, *JJJ* 5.781.

⁷⁹ The painting is reproduced in Sirén under the name *Rolling Hills in Rich Verdure* (Sirén 1956-1958: vol. VI, plate 113). The other painting that Xu Ben gave to Lü Min was called *On a Drunken Spree* (*Zuizhong tu* 醉中圖), dated 1373, but is no longer extant.

because I want to invite him to become my neighbor mountain man! Today, I composed the poem for the painting, whenever you will look at it after you have left, certainly, because of the poem, you must be reminded of my mountain retreat. 呂山人自吳來訪余，蜀山中登臨燕賞，遂留數日孤琴野艇，倏然告歸，因畫一紙以贈，并詩以道山居之樂，蓋將以邀吾山人卜鄰爾噫！余今因畫賦詩，君歸而觀此，必旋能因詩而念我山居也。⁸⁰

Xu Ben's painting was meant as a personal gift for Lü Min and as a souvenir of his visit, and it is unlikely that its audience was ever meant to extend beyond a close circle of friends. The painting is a good example of the genre painting that Richard Vinograd calls 'landscapes of property', which he uses to describe a particular shift in the representation of nature that took place during the Yuan dynasty; painters turned away from the depiction of anonymous naturescapes or well-known famous sites, and instead turned to the depiction of specific, recognizable locations that were closely tied to the artist and/or recipient by bonds of ownership, personal association, or family history.⁸¹ Vinograd writes that 'Landscapes of property' were usually addressed to a private audience made up of men who were familiar with the specific location that is depicted.⁸²

Xu Ben's painting of his residence on Shu Mountain did not stay with Lü Min, but circulated among their other friends for whom the painting's landscape and message were recognizable. Lü Min first brought the painting of Shu Mountain to Zhang Yu on Dai Mountain, who added a short inscription to the painting about how it was brought to him.⁸³ Later that year, the painting was brought to Crane Ladle Mountain (Hepiaoshan 鶴瓢山) (see the next section) where it was put on display and signed by Song Ke, a close acquaintance of Xu Ben and the other residents of the

⁸⁰ *Shigu tangshu hua huikao* 37.560-61. The poem that Xu Ben mentions can also be found in *BGJ* 3.579.

⁸¹ Vinograd 1982: 11. The depiction of private estates or country retreats became such a widespread practice among late Yuan painters that Claudia Brown calls it a "bread-and-butter genre". See Brown 1989: 103.

⁸² Vinograd 1982: 11-13.

⁸³ See *Shigu tangshu hua huikao* 37.560-61.

north city wall district, and a painter himself.⁸⁴ There were probably other paintings of Shu Mountain as well that circulated in similar fashion among Xu Ben's friends.⁸⁵

Xu Ben came to Shu Mountain because Zhang Yu invited him to spend the rest of their lives together as recluses. They did so successfully for some part of their lives, but not without having their reclusive dwellings put on display by and for their friends in Suzhou. These representations were the result of the collaborative efforts of their friends to put their recluse dwellings in word and image. As a result, their recluse dwellings were not so much relevant as places where friends regularly convened, like the north city wall district, but they were much more significant as a result of the wide variety of poems, commemorations, paintings, and inscriptions that circulated among their friends, which furthermore ensured that they all shared the same meaning and idea of these places.

By representing each other's personal dwellings in word and image, the residents of the north city wall district had found a way to support each other and to gain value out of their friendship. Multiple recent studies have shown that it was not uncommon that friends were valued in China, implicitly or explicitly, for their utility in the pursuit of patronage, employment, fame, and success.⁸⁶ Friendships were deliberately 'publicized' and 'advertised' to this end, to the point that some scholars, borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, stated that "friends were a kind of social capital".⁸⁷ This form of utility and display was completely absent in the memories that the residents of the north city wall district shared of their friendship, which were discussed in the previous section, but, as this section has shown, still was an essential part of their friendship.

⁸⁴ Almost all that is known about Song Ke comes from a biography that Gao Qi wrote about him. See his "Biography of Mister Nangong" 南宮生傳, *FZJ* 4.908-909. See also Song Ke's entry in Goodrich 1976: 1223-24.

⁸⁵ There were other paintings by Xu Ben of Shu Mountain that are now lost. One is called *The Study on Shu Mountain* 蜀山書舍圖 (dated 1387), with an inscription by Gao Qi. See *GTSDQJ* 18.774-75. Qian Qianyi mentions that there were other paintings as well that were inscribed by Lü Min and Yao Guangxiao. See Qian Qianyi, *Liechao shiji xiaozhuan*, 3-13.77-78.

⁸⁶ See for example Clunas's (2004) study on Wen Zhengming 文徵明 (1470-1559). See also Huang 2007a: 10.

⁸⁷ Shields 2004: 47. The full quote reads: "For mid-Tang literati without influential kinship ties or aristocratic backgrounds, friends were a kind of social capital"; See also Shields 2015: 31, and chapter two of her book on the social function of friendship in the Tang.



Figure 1. Xu Ben, *Shu Mountain* (*Shushan tu* 蜀山圖), dated 1371, hanging scroll, ink on paper.

4. The private estates of Li Rui and Chen Ruzhi

As mentioned in the previous section, the painting of Shu Mountain that Xu Ben presented to Lü Min as a gift was later brought to Crane Ladle Mountain where it was put on display. Crane Ladle Mountain was the name of the estate of Li Rui 李睿 (also called Li Derui 李德睿), a Daoist priest of the Ningzhen Monastery (Ningzhenguan 寧真觀), and was located in Kunshan, west of Suzhou. Li Rui enjoyed considerable status as a Daoist teacher and was able to attract a great number of disciples to his residence, but is otherwise an obscure figure in Yuan history.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu were all frequent guests at his estate. Li Rui's Daoist background mattered little to them; to them Li Rui acted mainly as a host, maybe even as a patron, comparable to the role that hosts of some of the more illustrious literary gatherings of the late Yuan fulfilled for their guests.

Sensabaugh's studies in the renowned gatherings hosted by Gu Dehui at his estate on Jade Mountain have shown that host and guest were expected to fulfill certain social roles. The host, who usually was the owner of a vast estate or private garden, provided the social situation and space for the production and spread of his guest's poems and paintings.⁸⁹ In return, his guests were expected to use their literary and artistic skills to represent in word and image their host's property and the location of the gathering, which their hosts used to "fashion an identity for themselves" as men of culture.⁹⁰ In this section, I will examine the residents of the north city wall district in the role of guests at the private properties of people other than themselves. What had these property owners to offer them at their estates, and how did they reciprocate their host's hospitality?

Li Rui's Crane Ladle Mountain was a site where the residents of the north city wall could participate in literary gatherings and artistic exhibitions. *Shu Mountain* by Xu Ben was not the only painting that was exhibited here and inscribed by Li Rui's guests. This is implicit in a poem by Gao

⁸⁸ Li Rui's identity as a Daoist teacher is best recorded by Wang Xing in *BXJ* 12.426-27.

⁸⁹ Sensabaugh 1989.

⁹⁰ Sensabaugh 2009: 119.

Qj, composed early in 1369, shortly after he received his summons by the Ming Emperor to work on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan* in Nanjing. Due to his departure, which was sudden and still during the New Year holidays, he had to miss one of Li Rui's gatherings, so he wrote the following poem as a supplement:

Everyone Gathered at Crane Ladle Mountain Residence to Inscribe Paintings and
Compose Poems; But I Will soon be on My Way to Answer an Imperial Summons
and Therefore Cannot Participate; I Will Inscribe it Later Instead 諸君會宿鶴瓢山
房題畫賦詩；予將赴召不得預；明日補題其上。

偶趨籓省召 Unforeseeably I must haste to a summons to the Orchid Department,⁹¹
不預竹林歡 And shall be unable to attend this time's pleasures in the bamboo forest.⁹²
山水圖中景 Mountains and rivers are not unlike the scenery in a painting,
明朝走路看 Tomorrow, on the road, I will view those [instead].⁹³

It is impossible to know how large the assembly described by Gao Qi was, but we do know that there were more activities of this sort held on Crane Ladle Mountain. From a rather informative title of one of Gao Qi's poems, we learn of an intended tea drinking gathering together with Xu Ben and Wang Xing at Li Rui's residence. The gathering was planned to take place shortly after the siege of Suzhou, but it never went through:

Youwen [Xu Ben] Invited Me and Zhizhong [Wang Xing] to Stay Together at
Shiming's [Li Rui] House on Crane Ladle Mountain for a Tea Tasting Gathering; I Had
Already Moved Into the City and Youwen Had Already Returned to the Mountains
(Shu Mountain), While Shiming Was at Sea and Zhizhong too Had Business for which

⁹¹ The department of the Orchid Pavilion (*Lantai* 蘭臺), an unofficial reference to the position of historiographer. See, Hucker 1985: 300.

⁹² The bamboo forest, a reference to the famous gatherings of the Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove (*Zhulin qi xian* 竹林七賢) in the third century CE.

⁹³ *GTSDQJ* 16.695. For another poem by Gao Qi on painting viewing on Crane Ladle Mountain, see *GTSDQJ* 16.684.

He Could Not Attend; Shiming's Niece Yuanxiu Stayed with Me to Talk Through the Night; Thereupon I Composed This Poem in order to Write Down My Concerns.

幼文約余與止仲同宿士明鶴瓢山房爲試茶之會；余既入郭而幼文已歸山中，士明亦往海上，止仲復以事不赴；士明姪元修留余夜話；因賦是詩以書耿耿。

94

Despite the host's absence, Gao Qi was welcomed on Crane Ladle Mountain by Li Rui's niece Yuanxiu, which might testify to his familiarity with the place.

A final example of Li Rui's hospitality towards the residents of the north city wall district is presented in the title of a poem by Xu Ben, which records a spontaneous poetry competition involving himself, Song Ke, and two other individuals:

Together with Jin Wenzhong, Zhu Zhongyi, and Song Zhongwen [Ke] We Passed by Master Li Shiming [Rui]; Obstructed by Rain We Spent the Night; Searching for a Rhyme I Obtained the [Rhyme] Word 'Gu'; The Master (Li Rui) Has a Wine Ladle in the Shape of a Crane and That Is Why the Plaque on His House Reads 'Crane Ladle Mountain Residence'.

與金文中、朱仲義、宋仲溫過李士明鍊師，雨阻留宿，探韻得孤字，師有酒瓢如鶴形，因扁居曰鶴瓢山房。⁹⁵

Aside from describing the occasion for the composition of the poem, this poem also gives an explanation of the name of Li Rui's residence. Apparently, the residence was named after an object in Li Rui's possession, a ladle (for scooping wine or measuring herbs), which resembled, we can imagine, the curling shape of a crane's body.

A fuller account of the story of the crane-shaped ladle is given by Wang Xing in "Record of Crane Ladle Mountain Residence" 鶴瓢山房記, dated 1366. Wang Xing records a story that Li Rui once told him during one of his visits to Crane Ladle Mountain. The story is about how on one day,

⁹⁴ *GTSDQJ* 4.158-59.

⁹⁵ *BGJ* 4.583.

when Li Rui was still a disciple, studying to become a Daoist master, he thought about quitting his training. His teacher Huang 黃, who was originally from Sichuan, chided him for his lack of devotion, and gave him this ladle as a gift, hoping it would spur his disciple on to continue his training:

Then, taking out a ladle, [the teacher] said: “This has been with me for several hundred years and has traveled over ten thousand miles. Today I bequeath it to you. Seeing it is like seeing me. Do not give up!” [Li Rui] respected it greatly. The shape of the ladle resembles a crane, so that is what he named it after. In addition, he inscribed his room with the words: ‘Crane Ladle Mountain Residence’, and also used it (Crane Ladle) for his style name, to honor his teacher Huang’s wish.

暨出一瓢曰：“是從我幾百年，行地餘萬里，今以遺汝，見是如見我也。勉之！”君敬愛焉。瓢形類鶴，遂以鶴名之。并題其室曰鶴瓢山房，仍以自號，尊信黃師之意也。⁹⁶

Li Rui named his residence after a personal and honorable gift that he had received from his former teacher. In addition, he adopted the same name as his residence for his own personal style name.

Robert Harrist writes on the history of gardens starting from the Northern Song: “...the concept that building a garden, a thatched hut, or a studio and giving it a distinctive name were acts of self-representation through which the garden owner constructed an identity and projected it to the world.”⁹⁷ I believe that this is what Li Rui was aiming for when he named his residence Crane Ladle Mountain. The name presented to the world his self-chosen identity as a devoted Daoist disciple who earned his former master’s respect. However, the construction of an identity around a place and expressing this identity to the world was not an enterprise solely undertaken by the owner. In the case of Crane Ladle Mountain, the process was initiated by Li Rui, but was executed by his guests, in the accounts of Wang Xing and the other residents of the

⁹⁶ BXJ 12.426-27.

⁹⁷ Harrist 1996: 158. For similar arguments on the social function of garden names, see Harrist 1993, Makeham 1998: 192-95, and Clunas 1996: 144-48.

north city wall district. The fact that practically each time one of them referred to either Li Rui or his residence they repeat, in more or less the same words, the story of the crane ladle, supports my suggestion that this is how the residents of the north city wall district applied their literary skills and fame as poets to reciprocate Li Rui's hospitality.⁹⁸

Li Rui was not the only local estate owner for whom the residents of the north city wall provided this service. A clear example is the role that Gao Qi played in establishing the ownership of Chen Ruzhi 陳汝秩 (1329-1385) over his newly acquired garden in the south-west corner of Suzhou. The garden was originally built by Zhu Mian 朱勗 (1075-1126), a prominent statesman who lived in Suzhou during the Northern Song. By the end of the Yuan dynasty, the garden, then known as the Zhu Family Garden (Zhujiayuan 朱家園), had fallen into disrepair. When Chen Ruzhi obtained possession over the garden, it still carried the name of its former owner. In order to establish that the garden had a new owner and a new life, Chen Ruzhi changed its name into Green Water Garden (Lüshuiyuan 綠水園).

Like Crane Ladle Mountain, the Green Water Garden was a frequent gathering place for the residents of the north city wall district. We have many poems by Gao Qi, Zhang Yu, and Xu Ben about their participation in lavish banquets hosted by Chen Ruzhi in his garden.⁹⁹ Chen Ruzhi entrusted Gao Qi, a frequent visitor of the garden,¹⁰⁰ with the task of communicating to the city's elite that the place had a new name and a new owner. Gao Qi fulfilled his task with a set of sixteen poems accompanied by a preface that is worth quoting in full:

⁹⁸ Aside from the passages discussed in this chapter, see also Gao Qi, *FZJ* 4.922-23; Wang Xing, *BXJ*, *fangwai buyi*, 466; Zhang Yu, *JJJ* 6.792; See also Wang Yi, *WCZJ* 3.423-24; and Yao Guangxiao, *TXZSJ* 4.782; 10.826. There were no other writes in the late Yuan and early Ming who wrote on Crane Ladle Mountain, which suggests that this probably was a role that the residents exclusively fulfilled.

⁹⁹ See for example, Gao Qi, "Drinking at Mountain Man Chen's [Ruzhi] Garden, Following the Rhyme of Elder Neng" 飲陳山人園次能翁韻, *GTSDQJ* 15.654; "Banquet at the Green Water Garden" 綠水園宴集, *GTSDQJ* 6.255; Zhang Yu, "Banquet at the Green Water Garden" 綠水園燕集, *JJJ* 4.774; Xu Ben, *ibid.*, *BGJ* 4.595.

¹⁰⁰ It is hard to date Gao Qi's visits to the Green Water Garden. We know that he knew Chen Ruzhi for a while (from a chance encounter in the early 1360s, for example. See *GTSDQJ* 16.678 and 16.680), but it is unlikely that he became his regular guest before he moved into the southern part of Suzhou in 1371, not far from where the garden was located.

In the southwestern corner of Suzhou is the Zhu Family Garden. The elders say it is the old estate of Zhu Mian of the Song. Chen Weiyin [Ruzhi] from Lushan obtained [the place] and named it the Green Water [Garden] after a pond in the garden, and after a poem by Du Zimei [Fu 甫] (712-770). [The garden's] trees, ponds, pavilions, and balconies each are indicated by a signboard. Although they were recently abandoned and ruined, they are still spacious and delightful, and one can still fish around or whistle a song there. Weiyin regards me as their most familiar visitor, and requested me to put them into song.

Alas! When [Zhu] Mian, during better times, although poor still lived extravagantly, the garden indeed had a hundred times more precious trees and marvelous rocks, high plateaus and tall pavilions than now. Writers and poets who praised its beauty and boasted about it in eulogies were manifold as well. Nowadays, these have all become vestiges and echoes of the past, and none of it is visible any longer. Weiyin might be poor but he lives a prudent life, and might pass on his legacy through poems and writings. His sincere filial piety and brotherly love, his elegant execution of brightness and virtue, make us indeed look down upon Mian. I therefore do not need to feel ashamed for taking up the brush for him. Because recorded nowhere else, maybe some might be passed on [by this], to let the elders know that, starting from Weiyin, the name of the garden has been changed into Green Water [Garden].

吳城西南陬有曰朱家園者，父老言宋朱勔故墅也；廬山陳惟寅氏得之，更名曰綠水，以園中有池，且用杜子美詩語也。其林沼亭軒，亦各有扁焉。近雖破廢，然寬閑幽勝，猶可以釣游而嘯歌。惟寅以余往來其中最熟，求遍詠之。

噫！當勔以幸貴時，窮尚豪侈，園中之珍木異石，崇臺嶢榭，固當百倍於此，文人詞客為之稱美而誇詠者亦多矣，今皆跡滅響沉，無復可觀。惟寅雖窮居隱約，而能以詩書世其業，篤於孝友，其清德雅操，固可以蔑視勔矣。則余

為之執筆，亦可以無愧焉。因不復辭，且庶幾或傳，使父老知園之更名綠水者，自惟寅始也。¹⁰¹

Gao Qi describes the landscape and features of the Green Water Garden, mentions the inspiration for its name, and above all, gives an account of its new owner's superior morale character. He furthermore made sure that it is clear from this preface that the garden was no longer an abandoned plot of land, formerly belonging to the Zhu family, but was now in the cultivating hands of Chen Ruzhi and worth visiting. By writing this preface he succeeded in doing his host a good service.

Outside the north city wall district, Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu enjoyed the hospitality of the owners of various sorts of private properties. Visiting these properties as guests provided valuable opportunities for them to participate in literary and artistic activities and banquets. However, they did not participate in these activities without responsibilities. What the two examples of Crane Ladle Mountain and Green Water Garden affirm, is that a property's name was not a trivial matter. It was part of how Li Rui and Chen Ruzhi took ownership over the estate or garden and appropriated it for their own sake. Yet, it was a meaningless effort if they could not communicate their self-chosen identity outward. This is where the literary skills of their guests came into play. To have one's property recorded by famous poets not only conferred status upon the place and its owner, but was also a means to communicate this status to the world.¹⁰² Whenever Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu sojourned at the properties of others, therefore, they were expected to employ their skills and fame as poets to reciprocate their host's hospitality by dedicating some good words to the location of their visit.

¹⁰¹ Gao Qi, "Preface to miscellaneous songs from the Green Water Garden" 綠水園雜詠序, *FZJ* 3.905-6.

¹⁰² Entries on Crane Ladle Mountain and Green Water Garden in local gazetteers affirm that this had effect. See for example the entry on the Green Water Garden in the *Gazetteer for Suzhou* (*Gusu zhi* 姑蘇志, 1506), which states that the garden was formerly the Zhu Family Garden, but was now owned by Chen Ruzhi and had changed its name. It also mentions Gao Qi's preface. See *Gusu zhi* 32.452. The *Gazetteer for Suzhou* also records Li Rui's Crane Ladle Mountain, but tells the story of its name slightly differently. According to this version, Li Rui used to sell medicine in Suzhou as a Daoist priest and healer during the early Ming for which he used a small ladle shaped like a crane. It was for this reason that he was called Master Crane Ladle. The source does mention the recordings by Zhang Yu, Wang Xing, and Gao Qi. See *Gusu zhi* 58.865-66

5. The Fan Family Garden and Numinous Cliff

When Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu were still neighbors in the north city wall district, they liked to celebrate the major yearly festivals and holidays in each other's company. Each spring, around the time of the Qingming Festival (The Pure Brightness Festival), they sent each other invitation poems to watch the apricot flowers blossom in the Fan Family Garden (Fanjiayuan 范家園).¹⁰³ The event is described in a set of poems by Yang Ji in which he fondly reminisces about the yearly festivities in the garden. The first of his three poems suffices to give an idea of how the citizens of Suzhou must have entered the Fan Family Garden during this time of year:

Mooring the Boat on South Lake; Having Memories 舟泊南湖有懷

紗衣羅扇一時裁	In silk garments and with silk fans fashioned for the occasion,
兩兩三三作伴來	companies of two or three arrive.
正是吳中好風景	It is just that Suzhou offers a beautiful sight,
范家園里杏花開	When in the Fan Family Garden the apricot flowers blossom. ¹⁰⁴

What was known among the residents of the north city wall district as the Fan Family Garden was in fact the famous Community Estate (*yizhuang* 義莊) founded by the prominent statesman of the Song dynasty, Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052). While fulfilling an official position in Hangzhou, Fan Zhongyan bought a large plot of farmland in and around Suzhou to provide the members of his clan with the means to sustain themselves through the generations. By the end of the Yuan dynasty, the family's status and property had greatly diminished, while

¹⁰³ See for example, Gao Qi, "Inviting Some Gentlemen to Visit the Fan Garden to Watch Apricot Flowers" 約諸君遊范園看杏花, *GTSDQJ* 10.414, which received a reply in rhyme from Yang Ji: "Invitation to Watch the Apricot Flowers at the Fan Garden" 約范園看杏花, *MAJ* 2.356.

¹⁰⁴ *MAJ* 11.466. Yang Ji adds in the other poems that it was common for the visitors to get drunk and take some of the apricot flowers home.

most of the lands that remained in the family's possession were confiscated during the first decades of the Ming dynasty.¹⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Fan Zhongyan's contribution to the city of Suzhou were not forgotten, and the family name continued to enjoy a high reputation among the local elite.¹⁰⁶

Unlike the private properties examined thus far, the Fan Family Garden was a place that was part of local history, and that was accessible to the general public (at least during the Qingming Festival). In this section, I will look at the different ways in which Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu engaged with this garden and other places in Suzhou that were associated with the Fan clan's history. Why did they visit these places? How did they interact with other visitors? How did the history and local function of the places that they visited matter to their experience of the place?

Similar to the recordings of the north city wall district, it was only after their usual activities were disrupted that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu thought it worth recording them. Most of their invitation poems to watch the apricot flowers in the Fan Family Garden during the Qingming Festival, and their responses, date to the 1360s, when the armies of Zhang Shicheng and Zhu Yuanzhang were wreaking havoc in the area. The chaos and violence of the civil war contradicts the sentiments usually associated with the spring festival. Traditionally, the Qingming Festival was a celebration of spring renewal and nature's revival, and was considered a day of clarity and brightness. When the Fan Family Garden was filled with blossoming apricot trees, it was an excellent site to find inspiration for poems on these themes. Their invitation poems give the impression that visiting the Fan Family Garden to watch the apricot flowers blossom was one of the activities that they enjoyed participating in most. The exchange of nostalgic recollections of their past visits to the Fan Family Garden was therefore not only a way to affirm their friendship, but also a way to express how the political changes at the end of the Yuan affected them personally.

¹⁰⁵ For a historical overview of Fan Zhongyan's Community Estate from the Song until the early Qing, see Twitchett 1959: 123-26.

¹⁰⁶ Milburn 2015: 107-10.

Somewhere between 1363 and 1365, when the fighting in the Jiangnan area was at its fiercest, instead of the usual invitation poem, Gao Qi sent out the following poem to his friends, in which he deplored that they could not visit the garden to watch the flowers blossom that year:¹⁰⁷

Expecting Some Friends to Watch Apricot Flowers in the Fan Garden; Because of
Wind and Rain They Did Not Blossom 期諸友看范園杏花風雨不果

欲尋春去怕春休	Wanting to enjoy the spring, I fear this spring will be passed over,
又值春陰不得遊	Again, we encounter a cloudy spring day and we cannot visit.
寂寞西園風雨裏	All alone, facing wind and rain in the western garden,
杏花比客更多愁	The apricot flowers have more sorrows than their guests. ¹⁰⁸

Xu Ben responded to Gao Qi's poem with another poem (in the same rhyme), in which he picks up on his gloomy sentiments, but which he also directs at the future. He expresses the hope that they will be able to visit the garden again when circumstances will have improved:

Responding to Gao Jidi [Qi]'s Invitation to Watch the Apricot Flowers 有約
看杏花答高季迪

雨阻花期可便休	When rain prevents the flowering period, it can be passed over,
明朝也合為春遊	In the morning, on the other hand, we will make spring visits together.
閑行若待天晴去	We will stroll idly like the skies have just cleared away,

¹⁰⁷ According to Chen Jianhua (1987: 160/61), it was Zhang Shicheng's uprising halfway the 1350s that caused the disruption. However, Jia Jiyong argues that the disruption fits better with the events of the civil war between Zhang Shicheng and Zhu Yuanzhang, and dates it accordingly somewhere between 1363 and 1365 (2008: 90-91).

¹⁰⁸ *GTSDQJ* 17.725.

只恐花飛人又愁 My only concern is that when the flowers blossom, [we]
people will have found new worries.¹⁰⁹

Sometime after these exchanges between Gao Qi and Xu Ben, Gao Qi visited the Fan Family garden on his own, but he was unable to enjoy his visit without the presence of the others, as the title of a poem suggests:

Invited Some Friends to Watch the Apricots in the Fan Garden, But They Bore No
Fruit; Later I Happened to Visit it on My Own But the Apricots Were Already Gone,
Only Some Peach Trees Were Blossoming; I Was Stirred and Wrote This; Thereupon
I Sent It to You Gentlemen

約諸君看范園杏，花不果；後偶獨遊而杏已盡落，惟桃數樹盛開；感而有賦；
因寄諸君¹¹⁰

The residents of the north city wall had their own preferred way of giving meaning to Fan Zhongyan's garden grounds, which during the civil war mainly focused on their personal grievances. According to the poems by Yang Ji cited earlier, the garden must have been bustling with visitors that all partook in the same celebrations as they were, but this aspect is completely ignored in the poetic exchanges between Gao Qi and Xu Ben. I have also been unable to find any reference in local sources on the tradition of watching the apricot flowers blossom at the estate of the Fan family clan as part of the spring celebrations.

The Fan family had property all over the city and the garden with the apricot trees was not the only site that the residents of the north city wall visited. Located in the northeastern corner of the city, not far from the north city wall district, was the Wenzheng Academy (*Wenzheng shuyuan* 文正書院).¹¹¹ In 1346, the ancestral temple of Fan Zhongyan was rebuilt and transformed into this academy and provided with additional land to support itself.¹¹² Both Gao Qi

¹⁰⁹ *BGJ* 6.608.

¹¹⁰ *GTSDQJ* 11.443-44.

¹¹¹ *Gusu zhi* 32.447.

¹¹² Twitchett 1959: 123-26.

and Wang Xing have written about this recently developed part of the Fan family's estate close to their homes. Near the place where the academy stood grew two pine trees said to be planted by Fan Zhongyan himself more than three hundred years earlier. When some years after the building of the academy, Fan Mengkui 范孟奎, a tenth-generation grandson of Fan Zhongyan, built a pavilion next to the pine trees, called Gazing at the Pines Pavilion (*Zhansongting* 瞻松亭), he requested Gao Qi to contribute an engraving (*ming* 銘),¹¹³ and presumably, he was also responsible for Wang Xing's ode (*song* 頌) on the same pavilion.¹¹⁴ In both these recordings, Gao Qi and Wang Xing constructed a narrative around the pines that emphasized Fan Zhongyan's heritage and the continuation of his legacy through his descendants.¹¹⁵

The residents of the north city wall were well aware of the significance of the Fan clan for the history of Suzhou, even though they visited their property mainly for their personal delights. The history of the place only became worthy of recording when they were employed by the descendants of Fan Zhongyan to report on their family lineage and to reconnect the present garden to its historical past. As a result, their recordings of the Fan Family Garden might give the impression that they were not invested in the region of Suzhou, and that they were little interested in the history and cultural background of the places that they visited. The many poems and records that they wrote on the history and landscape of the city show that this was however not the case.¹¹⁶

Another part of the ancient history of the Fan clan, more closely associated with Fan Li 范蠡 (536-448 BCE), Fan Zhongyan's distant ancestor who lived during the Spring and Autumn Period, was relevant to them in a different, more politically oriented context, namely in their relationship with a remarkable official serving in Zhang Shicheng's government, Rao Jie 饒介

¹¹³ See Gao Qi, "Inscription for the Gazing at the Pines Pavilion" 瞻松亭銘, *FZJ* 4.918-19.

¹¹⁴ See Wang Xing, "Ode to Gazing at the Pines Pavilion (With Preface)" 瞻松亭頌 (有序), *BXJ* 1.286-87.

¹¹⁵ In addition, Fan Mengkui requested Wang Yi to provide a record of the pavilion. See Wang Yi, "Record of Gazing at the Pines Pavilion" 瞻松亭記, *WCZJ* 1.389-99. These are the only three recordings I could find in Yuan and Ming sources on this pavilion.

¹¹⁶ The best example of this is a collection of 123 poems on the various ancient sites and historical figures of Suzhou that Gao Qi finished compiling in 1372. See, "Preface to Assorted Poems About Gusu" 姑蘇雜詠序, *FZJ* 3.907. Gusu is an old name for Suzhou. For a translation of the preface, see Mote 1962a: 184-86.

(1300-1367). Rao Jie was one of the most distinguished literati of Suzhou, and was notorious for his indulgences and wild extravagancies. He regularly invited fellow literati to visit local scenic sites for excursions and poetry competitions, which typically involved great quantities of wine. This earned him the nickname “The Drunken Woodcutter from Linchuan” 醉樵臨川公.¹¹⁷

Somewhere in the years between 1356-1358 or 1360-1363, Gao Qi and Yang Ji joined Rao Jie and nine other members from his circle in a day trip to the Numinous Cliff (Lingyanshan 靈巖山), east of Suzhou.¹¹⁸ The history of this famous site dates back to King Fuchai of Wu 吳王夫差 (r. 495–473 BCE), the great last king of the ancient kingdom of Wu 吳. The place was remembered from Tang times onwards mostly as the former location of King Fuchai’s pleasure palace, the Lodging-Beauties Palace (*Guanwagong* 館娃宮), the place where his romance with the famed beauty of antiquity Xi Shi 西施 (506 BCE – ?) was played out. It was also the place where he once held Fan Li captive.¹¹⁹ Fan Li, in his role as political and military advisor for the State of Yue 越, would later play an important part in this state’s victory against the state of Wu.

By the time of the Yuan dynasty, few of the constructions on Numinous Cliff were still recognizable, but there were still many spots on the mountain that could be associated with their history. These spots were often visited and eulogized by local literati,¹²⁰ including Gao Qi,¹²¹ Zhang Yu,¹²² and Yang Ji.¹²³ In a record that Rao Jie asked Gao Qi to compose on their trip up the mountain, Gao Qi reported on all the scenic sites and historical places that they passed by, including “a cave called Xi Shi 曰西施之洞”, where Fan Li was held captive, and which was for

¹¹⁷ Gao Qi particularly celebrates Rao Jie’s drunken behavior with his guests in a poem titled “Presented to the Drunk Woodcutter” 贈醉樵, *GTSDQJ* 11.438-39.

¹¹⁸ The exchanges between Gao Qi and Rao Jie are difficult to date. In the years approximately between 1358 and 1360, Gao Qi was present in the city (see footnote 34), and the visit to the Numinous Cliff with Rao Jie must have taken place shortly before or after his absence from Suzhou.

¹¹⁹ On the history of Numinous Cliff in imperial times, see Milburn 2013: 277-83.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.* 283-91, 298-308.

¹²¹ See for example Gao Qi’s poems on the various scenic spots on Numinous Cliff: the Echoing-Step Corridor (*Xiangxielang* 響屨廊), *GTSDQJ* 5.216-17; the Qin Tower (*Qintai* 琴臺), *GTSDQJ* 10.428; the Holding-Emptiness Pavilion (*Hankongge* 涵空閣), *GTSDQJ* 14.594; the Inkstone Pond (*Yanchi* 硯池), *GTSDQJ* 16.704; and the Fragrant Water Stream (*Xiangshuichi* 香水溪), *GTSDQJ* 9.352.

¹²² See Zhang Yu’s poems on the Qin Tower, *JJJ* 6.784; and the Lodging-Beauties Palace, *JJJ* 2.751.

¹²³ See Yang Ji’s “Visiting Numinous Cliff and Cherishing the Past” 遊靈巖懷古, *MAJ* 10.452, in which he mentions the Qin Tower, the Xi Shi Cave, the Echoing-step Corridor, the Gathering-herbs Path (*Caixiangjing* 採香徑), and the Octagonal Well (*Bajiaojing* 八角井).

that reason frequently visited by Xi Shi, and “a pond called Huanhua 曰浣花之池”,¹²⁴ “all remnant places of the revels and banquets of King Fuchai of Wu” 皆吳王夫差宴游之遺處也。¹²⁵

The residents of the north city wall showed great interest in the history and geography of Suzhou. But their interest was not always an innocent form of antiquarianism, but occasionally intersected with their political relationships. Gao Qi’s engagement with other officials in Zhang Shicheng’s government also took place against the background of the local landscape and ancient history of Suzhou.¹²⁶ There might have been a political purpose in these excursions, but this remains difficult to verify since Gao Qi is never explicit about their purposes. It is not entirely sure why he associated with Rao Jie if he was not willing to become too involved in Zhang Shicheng’s enterprise.¹²⁷ Neither he, nor Wang Xing, Xu Ben, or Zhang Yu were explicit about their political views, although they were generally reluctant to accept official positions from Zhang Shicheng.

The sources discussed in this section were all, in some way or another, recordings of private experiences of public places. Like friendship itself, the places where friendships were practiced were never fully private or fully public.¹²⁸ The various sites in Suzhou associated with

¹²⁴ The Huanhua Pond, also the Wanhua (玩華 or 翫花) Pond, is one of several ponds that can be found on the mountain. It was famous for its clear water and for never drying up, and was one of the favorite spots to visit by King Fuchai and Xi Shi. On the history of the various sites on the mountain, see Xie Xiaosi 1998: 192-93.

¹²⁵ Gao Qi, “Record of the Visit to Numinous Cliff” 遊靈巖記, *FZJ* 1.862-63.

¹²⁶ Together with Zhang Xian 張憲 (fl. 1380), an official of the Bureau of Military Affairs (*Shumiyuan* 樞密院都事), who was also present on the excursion to Numinous Cliff, Gao Qi made a visit to the Requiring Kindness Monastery (see the next section), where they composed a linked verse. See Gao Qi, “Wind and Rain Linked Verse” 風雨聯句, *GTSDQJ* 14.568-69. The monastery is one of the oldest Buddhist compounds in the city, with a pedigree stretching back to Sun Quan 孫權 (182-252 CE), king of Wu during the Three Kingdoms Period. On the history of the monastery, see Xie Xiaosi 1998: 122-24.

Somewhere between 1360 and 1362, Gao Qi, Zhang Xian, Jin Qi 金起 (another member of Rao Jie’s circle and participant in the trip to Numinous Cliff), and Wang Yu 王隅 (-1366) (an old acquaintance of Gao Qi), visited the Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill (also discussed in the next section). One of the famous sites they visited was the Sword Pond (*Jianchi* 劍池), which presumably housed the burial site of the great King Helü 闔閭 of Wu (514-496 BCE), the father of King Fuchai. See Gao Qi, “Sword Pond Linked Verse” 劍池聯句, *GTSDQJ* 14.565-66. On the history of Tiger Hill, see Milburn 2013: 218-76.

¹²⁷ According to Mote, it was Rao Jie noticed Gao Qi’s poetic talents and wished to assimilate him in Zhang Shicheng’s enterprise. Although he pressed him to join his official literary coterie, their relationship never developed into that direction. See Mote 1962a: 67-68. Yang Ji, on the other hand, is described in the *History of the Ming* as a “guest of Rao Jie’s household” 客饒介所, suggesting that he was an official member of Rao Jie’s entourage. See *Mingshi* 285.7328.

¹²⁸ According to Martin Huang (2007a: 5), the ambiguity of the concept of friendship defied any attempt to categorize it either as “public” (*gong* 公) or as “private” (*si* 私). While friendships were often portrayed as private relationships, they were practiced outside the household in the external world, and therefore “resonated in both the public and the private spheres”. See Shields 2015: 53-54.

the Fan clan were located on the border between the public and the private. On the one hand, the residents of the north city wall came to the Fan Family Garden to celebrate the Qingming festival and watch the apricot flowers blossom. For them, it was a place where they could share personal experiences and express their feelings. However, they remained always aware that when they entered a public place, they had to share it with others. In those cases, their recordings focused more on the objective recording of the history of the place, which was easier to share with others.

6. The Requiring Kindness Monastery and Cloud Cliff Monastery

Gao Qi once admitted: “In the beginning I was unwilling to be friends with Buddhists” 余始不欲與佛者游. However, he later changed his minds and said that he was “sad that the customs of the literati have deteriorated for so long” 悲士大夫之風壞已久 and that he was “happy that among the Buddhists there are still some that are worth befriending” 喜佛者之有可與游者.¹²⁹ This statement is indicative of both his attitude towards the Buddhist community and that of Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu, and explains why during the later part of their lives many of their companions were Buddhist monks.

In the eyes of the residents of the north city wall district, Buddhist monasteries were attractive places to visit. Monasteries were often located at a natural site or in possession of a secluded garden, and were generally perceived as places of purity and tranquility, where visitors could find refuge and safety in times of uncertainty. The following description by Wang Xing of one of the Buddhist gardens in Suzhou is typical in this regard: “Tranquil and secluded, not comparable to towns and cities, where scholars who are troubled by worldly affairs regularly go to” 蕭閑森爽，不與井邑類，大夫士之煩於塵坌者時之焉。¹³⁰

The interest that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu show in Buddhist monasteries is not at all unusual. Timothy Brook has shown that the Buddhist community and their institutions

¹²⁹ Gao Qi, “Parting Preface to Reverend Xubai” 送虛白上人序, *FZJ* 3.893-94. This source will be discussed below.

¹³⁰ Wang Xing, *BXJ*, *fangwai buyi*, 465. The description is of the Stone Lion Garden (discussed in the next section).

were an integral part of the late-Ming gentry social landscape.¹³¹ Monasteries were spacious, they embodied the right eremitic ideals, and were conveniently situated at the borders of the social-political realm: “The monastery was not, after all, simply a convenient place for culturally elevated gatherings; it was the appropriate place.”¹³²

Already during the Yuan, Buddhist monasteries were places where the literati community interacted with the Buddhist clergy. Gerritsen has shown that during the Song-Yuan-Ming transition, Buddhist temples and monasteries were “complex spaces of interaction”, which played important roles in literati’s engagement with their surrounding world.¹³³ Writing about and for local religious institutes and their practices were essential for local literati to imagine “they could belong in the local landscapes, be part of the community, perform meaningful roles within them, and transform the local.”¹³⁴

It was common practice for local elites to provide various forms of patronage to the Buddhist community, often financial, but also in the form of inscriptions and other literary contributions. Monastery inscriptions were a suitable medium for literati to write about religious practices, but also about social or political matters or about their own private experiences.¹³⁵ Patronizing monasteries was a good opportunity for the literati class to “publicize status” and acquire recognition.¹³⁶ For the Buddhist community, literati patronage granted prestige to an institution, which was essential to its survival. Monks are known to purposefully cultivate literary relationships to this end, and often took the initiative by requesting poems or essays from renowned poets and writers.¹³⁷

What stands out in the writings of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu is the high number of parting prefaces that they provided for members of the Buddhist community. As discussed in section 1, parting prefaces were widely used within the Yuan literati community as ‘introduction letters’, a material support for traveling literati who sought to establish themselves at an unfamiliar destination. We see the parting prefaces of the residents of the north city wall as

¹³¹ Brook 1993: 90-96.

¹³² Ibid. 125.

¹³³ Gerritsen 2007b: 5-6.

¹³⁴ Ibid. 98.

¹³⁵ Ibid. chapter 4. See also Halperin (2006: chapters 4 and 5) on monastery inscriptions written by Song literati.

¹³⁶ Brook 1993: 217.

¹³⁷ Ibid. 176-77, 213-15.

a form of literary patronage or support, extended not to monasteries as a whole, but to individual monks. In this section, I will examine the parting prefaces that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu wrote for the monks of two monasteries that they frequently visited. What do these parting prefaces tell us about the nature of the relationship between the residents of the north city wall and the monks of the monasteries that they visited? What was the reason that the monks of these monasteries requested parting prefaces from their literati visitors and why did the latter provide them?

One of the monasteries that Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu liked to visit most was the Requiring Kindness Monastery (Bao'ensi 報恩寺), one of the oldest Buddhist compounds still present in the city. This large monastery occupies a prominent position in the northern part of Suzhou, not far from the north city wall district. The regular visits by the residents of this district to this monastery resulted in some interesting relationships with the monks who lived there. When in the year 1371, Reverend Shi 示 was to depart permanently from the Requiring Kindness Monastery to another monastery, his disciple, Reverend Hao 浩, requested Gao Qi to write a parting preface for his teacher. Gao Qi was happy to comply, and, as usual for his parting prefaces, begins by explaining his relationship with the recipient:

The Requiring Kindness Monastery is near the north city wall of Suzhou, not very far from my residence. Within [the monastery] there are long bamboos and old junipers, broad halls and deep pavilions, where you can roam and gaze around, rid yourself of troubles and disturbances, and pour yourself into comfortable emptiness. [The monastery's] abbots, Wuyan Xuan and Baiyun Ju, were both virtuous and also my good friends. Hence, [it is a place] I visited with my literary friends Yang Mengzai [Ji], Zhang Laiyi [Yu], Wang Zhizhong [Xing], and Xu Youwen [Ben] (presented in order of seniority). Each time, we ascended from the western side of the hill, gathered fallen leaves to sit on, and looked for rhymes to compose poems on. When the sun was set and the birds had returned, only then did we leave. Those monks of the monastery who were interested, each time came with us too,

carrying tea or holding a lute. One of them was Reverend Shi. Although he is relatively young compared to the others, he is quick of mind and fond of learning. I therefore expect him to become an excellent monk.

報恩教寺，在吳之北郭，距吾舍為近；其中有修竹古檜，廣堂邃閣，可以覽觀眺望，卻煩囂而挹虛爽。其主席若無言宣、白雲聚，又皆賢而與余善，故與諸文友楊孟載、張來儀、王止仲、徐幼文輩數往游焉。每登西麓，聚落葉藉坐，探韻賦詩，抵日入鳥歸乃去。寺僧好事者，亦往往拏茗抱琴來從之；有示上人者，居眾中年雖少，而警慧好學，余固期其為良緇流也。¹³⁸

Gao Qi tells that he often came to the monastery for sightseeing, poetry compositions, and other revels together with Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, and Yang Ji. They were drawn by the monastery's proximity, relative secludedness, and the hospitality of its abbots.

However, by the time Gao Qi wrote this preface, circumstances at the monastery had changed drastically. Gao Qi had just returned from his two-year service in Nanjing (1369-1370), and Yang Ji, Zhang Yu, and Xu Ben, his usual travel companions, were still away from the city. So Gao Qi decided to revisit the monastery on his own. By this time, the abbots of the monastery, Wuyan Xuan and Baiyun Ju, had already passed away and most of the other monks with whom he and his friends hanged out with in the past had already left. Reverend Shi was one of the contacts that he still had in the monastery.

But when Reverend Shi heard of my coming, he welcomed me most warm-heartedly. He talked about our past excursions and stated that he would again join my coterie, if so desired. I bow down to his learning; he has already fathomed the essentials, and is furthermore expert at poetry and prose. He recently caught the attention of the present Abbot Reverend Yin, and got promoted to first place in the monastery. I know his potential is to become an excellent monk, which makes me proud and glad for him.

¹³⁸ Gao Qi, "Parting Preface to Reverend Shi" 送示上人序, *FZJ* 3.890-91.

而示上人聞余來，迎勞甚歡，語昔游之樂，意若願復從余周旋者；叩其學，則已能究宗要，且攻為詩章，方為今住山因公所知，延為寺之第一座，余知其果可為良緇流也，則復為之適然以喜焉。¹³⁹

Gao Qi's parting preface for Reverend Shi contains all the elements that one would expect from a 'letter of introduction'. It describes the intimate connection between him and the famous poets from the north city wall district, while the preface itself was written by Gao Qi, the most famous poet of the group. Gao Qi furthermore does not fail to describe Shi's talents, his devotion as a Buddhist disciple, but also, and more importantly, his talents as a literatus. The message that the preface was to convey is that Reverend Shi was not only a devout Buddhist, but also a man of the world.

It was not Reverend Shi himself who requested the preface from Gao Qi, but his disciple, Reverend Hao, with whom Gao Qi says he was on good terms as well. We know from exchanges between the residents of the north city wall and Reverend Hao that they frequently met outside the monastery, for example at the latter's private residence in the western suburbs of Suzhou, the Plain Studio (Suxuan 素軒).¹⁴⁰ Gao Qi's preface for Reverend Hao's teacher was not a one-time favor. It was a service that the residents of the north city wall provided repeatedly for the monks of the Requiring Kindness Monastery. Wang Xing was especially generous. Not only did he provide two parting prefaces for Reverend Hao,¹⁴¹ he also provided extensive parting prefaces for other monks of the monastery, such as the Reverends Fu 伏 (the grandson of Abbot Baiyun),¹⁴² Gong 恭,¹⁴³ Qian 謙,¹⁴⁴ and Hui Mu'an 彙木庵.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Wang Xing composed several commemorations on Hao's Plain Studio, see: *BXJ* 4.337-38; 12.428-29; 12.438; and *fangwai buyi*, 458. See also, Gao Qi, "Record of the Su Pavilion" 素軒記, *FZJ* 1.863-64. Meetings with Reverend Hao are frequently recorded in poems by Xu Ben and Gao Qi. See Xu Ben, *BGJ* 4.585; 5.602; 5.603; and Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 15.633-34; 18.767.

¹⁴¹ Wang Xing, "Parting Preface to Reverend Hao" 送浩上人序, *BXJ* 12.432; and "Parting Preface to Master Hao Who Lives in the Requiring Kindness Monastery" 送浩師住報恩寺序, *BXJ* 12.432-33. The prefaces are undated.

¹⁴² *BXJ*, *fangwai buyi*, 458-59.

¹⁴³ Ibid. 460-61.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 461.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. 462-63.

Another nearby monastery that the residents of the north city wall district liked to visit was the Cloud Cliff Monastery (Yunyansi 雲巖寺), located on Tiger Hill (Huqiu 虎丘). Between 1360 and 1362, Gao Qi lodged at one of the guest quarters of this monastery, the Western Study (*Xizhai* 西齋), where Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu consequently paid him regular visits.¹⁴⁶ When a certain Reverend Xubai 虛白 was to leave the monastery in 1362, he came to Gao Qi to request a preface.¹⁴⁷ Gao Qi was well aware that the temple on Tiger Hill was not an isolated Buddhist haven. Tiger Hill was (and still is) a famous scenic site west of Suzhou, with a rich local history, which already attracted many visitors in the Yuan dynasty. The description that Gao Qi gives of the Cloud Cliff Monastery in his parting preface for Reverend Xubai is much more mundane:

During the two to three months of spring, [the number of] visitors to the Cloud Cliff [Monastery] surges; high officials and big shots, carts and horses lined up; the abbot sounds the bell to gather the throng, but merely offers them an official welcome. 方春二三月時，雲岩之游者盛，巨官要人，車馬相屬，主者撞鐘集眾，送迎唯謹。¹⁴⁸

Gao Qi praises Xubai nevertheless for his austerity and purity, and says of him that he is someone with whom it is “worth being friends with” 可與遊者。

In the final lines of the preface, Gao Qi explains the manner in which Xubai came to him with the request for the parting preface:

This year’s autumn, Xubai will travel to the east, and he came over to request a word to present. I do not hold Xubai as someone who has favors to ask from worldly people, why then would he want me to promote him? That is why I wrote my

¹⁴⁶ For poems composed on these visits, see Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 8.338-39; 14.569-70; 14.592; and Xu Ben, *BGJ* 7.12; 4.593.

¹⁴⁷ Dated by Chen Jianhua (1987: 167).

¹⁴⁸ Gao Qi, “Parting Preface to Reverend Xubai” 送虛白上人序, *FZJ* 3.893-94.

feelings down as I did. Partly out of politeness for the person, and partly to examine myself, merely so that I have nothing to be ashamed of towards Xubai.

今年秋，虛白將東遊，來請一言以為贈。余以虛白非有求於世者，豈欲余張之哉？故書所感者如此，一以風乎人，一以省於己，使無或有愧於虛白者而已。¹⁴⁹

Gao Qi tells that Xubai came to him with a request to “promote” (*zhang* 張) him by giving him “a word to present” 一言以為贈, or a “presentation word” (*zengyan* 贈言), which is another way of saying a ‘parting preface’.¹⁵⁰ At the Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill, where literati convened in large numbers, requests for ‘presentation words’ might have been experienced less out of place than at the Requiring Kindness Monastery, where these mundane requests were incongruent with their idea that monasteries represented secluded places where one could escape from the dusty world. But even in his parting preface for Xubai, Gao Qi admits that he does not quite know what to make of this worldly request from such a devout Buddhist monk.

It was not uncommon for inhabitants of local monasteries to resort to their literary visitors to aid them in their networking within the monastic community. Buddhist monks who were about to travel from one monastery to another requested from them parting prefaces to introduce themselves at their new accommodation. It is understandable that they requested these documents from talented writers in the lay community whom they frequently encountered in their monasteries.¹⁵¹

Monasteries were places where the residents of the north city wall went for their own comforts, but they were also aware that they were expected to employ their literary skills in service of the monks who put an effort in receiving them. Since parting prefaces worked on the intimacy between the author and the recipient, that the residents of the north city wall district

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Chen Wenyi 2007: 335.

¹⁵¹ It is hard to tell how common and wide-spread this practice was. Halperin (2006: 53-58) mentions that Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-728) wrote parting prefaces for monks, and Chen Wenyi (2007: 365) gives one example of this literati practice for the Yuan.

wrote so many of them suggest that they were well connected with the Buddhist community, which can only be achieved through numerous and prolonged visits to monasteries. They were attracted to Buddhist monasteries for their location and scenery, but they were linked to Buddhist monks by social obligations and worldly requests.

7. The Stone Lion Garden in word and image

In the previous sections, I have discussed various ways in which Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu extended their network by assimilating the physical and historical landscape of Suzhou into their social activities. In this section, I will show that their literary excursions and recordings left various lasting marks on the landscape.¹⁵² One of the sites in Suzhou that has become associated with the residents of the north city wall district this way is the Stone Lion Garden (Shizilin 獅子林), a famous garden site in the north-eastern section of the city, which can still be visited today. The Chan monk Tianru 天如 constructed the garden in 1348 to provide a space for his sermons.¹⁵³ When the residents of the north city wall district visited it in the early 1370s, it had not yet been in existence for a long time; it did not yet have a rich historical record, nor did it enjoy the reputation that it now has. As this final section will show, the garden was initially put on the map by, among others, the residents of the north city wall, whose visits to the garden contributed to its significance in later generations.

One of the first recorded literary gatherings in the Stone Lion Garden in which Gao Qi and Wang Xing were involved took place in the autumn of 1372. Present were also Wang Yi, Zhang Shi, and Xie Hui 謝徽 (? – 1373), with whom Gao Qi had worked together on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan* several years before. At the time of their visit, the garden had come into the hands of Reverend Yin (因公, real name: Zhiliang 之良), Tianru's second-generation successor.

¹⁵² An example is a poem by Gao Qi inscribed on the rock surface above the Sword Pond on Tiger Hill, the supposed burial site of the great King Helü of Wu. See Milburn 2013: 267. The poem in question is reproduced in *GTSDQJ* 15.612 as “The Tomb of Helü” 闔閭墓.

¹⁵³ On the history of the Stone Lion Garden, see Xie Xiaosi 1998: 126-27; and Wei Jiazan 1992: 97-99.

Reverend Yin was on good terms with Wang Yi,¹⁵⁴ who frequently visited the garden with Gao Qi after they had become neighbors in the southern part of Suzhou (from the early 1370s onwards, after Gao Qi's return from Nanjing).¹⁵⁵

At the request of Reverend Yin, the 1372 visit was recorded by Wang Yi. In his record, Wang Yi first described the natural features of twelve scenic spots in the garden and proceeded to record the gathering itself:

I used to visit this place in the past quite frequently without getting bored of it. This year's autumn, I visited again with Mao Zhaomin, Chen Yanlian and Zhang Manduan, and Reverend Yin, who is my old friend. Only I stayed at the Wenmei Pavilion (one of the twelve scenic spots), where day after day, I managed to compose songs on the [garden's] hills and valleys. The Reverend said: "So these really can be sung about?" He wanted to have them recorded. Thus, he copied them on the stone[s] and had them published. But before this, there were twelve songs copied on stone. Grand Scribe Gao Jidi [Qi] wrote the opening poem and those who followed were Zhang Ziyi [Shi] from the Department of Waterways and Irrigation, Instructor Wang Zhizhong [Xing], and the Academician Xie Xuanyi [Hui], who too today are my fellow visitors. Recorded on the seventh month in the autumn of the fifth year of the Hongwu reign by Wang Yi from Jiyue.

余在昔，於斯遊也，蓋屢焉而不厭。今年秋，復與茅宅民、陳彥廉、張曼端來遊，而因師者余故人也。止余宿問梅閣，得詠歌其丘與谷者累日。師曰：「是果可以詠歌歟？」願有記也，故書之石而使刊之。先是有十二詠書石上。

¹⁵⁴ According to a story told by Wang Xing, Wang Yi kept a copy of the Diamond Sutra in the family, ostensibly copied by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037-1101) on the death day of his father and to be given to the Buddhist community. When Wang Yi gave the copy to Reverend Yin of the Stone Lion Garden, he finally fulfilled Su Shi's intention, "thus Changzong's (Wang Yi) friendship with Master [Yin] became especially profound" 且常宗之友師特善. Recorded in an inscription by Wang Xing on the copy of the sutra, and preserved as "Inscribing Dongpo's (Su Shi) Copy of the Diamond Sutra from Stone" 題東坡書金剛經石刻, in *BXJ, fangwai buyi*, 465-66.

¹⁵⁵ See for example, Gao Qi, "Together with Office Recruit Wang [Yi] Visiting Master Li [Rui?] and then Together Passing by Stone Lion Garden to Seek Reverend Yin" 與王徵士訪李鍊師遂同過師林尋因公, *GTSDQJ* 7.293. Dated 1370 by Wang Yunwu (1981: 29).

其倡者高太史季迪，和者張水部子宜、王文學止仲、謝翰林玄懿，今亦為同游者。洪武五年秋七月稽岳王彝記。¹⁵⁶

Wang Yi seems to have initiated the poetic exposition of the garden's scenic sites, but the resulting twelve poems were written in collaboration with Gao Qi, Zhang Shi, Wang Xing, and Xie Hui, his fellow visitors.¹⁵⁷ On Reverend Yin's request, the poems were then carved onto the garden landscape.¹⁵⁸ In addition to having the poems inscribed on stone, Reverend Yin had the twelve poems copied and assembled into a scroll, and requested Gao Qi to write a preface. In this preface, Gao Qi mentions that attached to the scroll was also a painting by Zhu Derun 朱德潤 (1294-1365), called *Painting of the Stone Lion Garden* 獅子林圖, which is no longer extant.¹⁵⁹

Zhu Derun had produced this painting earlier in 1362, when he was invited to the garden by Reverend Li 李公, Reverend Yin's predecessor. Reverend Yin, in his turn, had brought the famous painters Ni Zan 倪瓚 (1301-1374) and Zhao Shanliang 趙善良 over in 1373, and Xu Ben in 1374, to have the garden put into image twice again.¹⁶⁰ Xu Ben's rendition of the garden is presented in the form of an album of twelve leafs (figure 2). Each leaf represents one of the same scenic sites that also feature in the poems by Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Wang Yi, Zhang Shi, and Xie Hui, composed during their visit two years earlier.¹⁶¹ The names of each of the twelve sites are written in bold seal script on each leaf.

¹⁵⁶ Wang Yi, "Record of Stone Lion Garden" 獅子林記, *WCZJ, xu buyi*, 437-39. The record is followed by a set of fourteen poems and another record, dated 1374, which states that Reverend Yin for some reason later desired another poetry set of fourteen poems, covering two additional sites in the garden.

¹⁵⁷ The twelve poems can be found in Gao Qi, *GTSDQJ* 16.669-71; and Wang Xing, *BXJ, fangwai buyi*, 466.

¹⁵⁸ It is not clear whether the poems were inscribed onto a single stone somewhere in the garden or were carved onto multiple stones located in each of the twelve locations.

¹⁵⁹ Gao Qi, "Preface to Twelve Songs on the Stone Lion Garden" 獅子林十二詠序, *FZJ* 3.888-89.

¹⁶⁰ The painting by Ni Zan and Zhao Shanliang is called *Stone Lion Garden* 獅子林圖 and is still extant. The role of Zhao Shanliang is unclear and the painting is usually attributed to Ni Zan.

¹⁶¹ The album is accompanied by another set of twelve poems on the same sites, but presented in a different order. The poems are collected in *Shigu tangshu hua huikao* 54.333-34.



Figure 2. Xu Ben, *Stone Lion Garden (Shizilin tu)*, album leaf, ink on paper. National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

Shortly after these initial visits, the garden lost its function as a site for social and literary gatherings. It continued to exist for a while longer as a Buddhist site until the garden lost its religious function as well and fell into disrepair. While the garden deteriorated, the scroll with the poems by Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Wang Yi, Zhang Shi, and Xie Hui, as well as the album leaves by Xu Ben, continued to survive. Xu Ben's album was initially kept at the Stone Lion Garden, but in 1417, when Xu Ben had already passed away, one of Reverend Yin's successors brought the album with the inscriptions to Yao Guangxiao, who at this time was serving as advisor to Zhu Di 朱棣 (1360-1424), the future Jianwen Emperor (建文, r. 1399-1402), in Beijing.¹⁶² Yao Guangxiao used to be a familiar guest of the Stone Lion Garden himself,¹⁶³ and Xu Ben's painting already contained an inscription by him. Upon seeing the paintings again after more than forty years, he added another colophon to them.¹⁶⁴

By the late Ming, the Stone Lion Garden had become the property of a landowner by the name of Lu Shen 陸深 (1477-1544). Lu Shen also obtained Xu Ben's painting album to which he

¹⁶² For Yao Guangxiao's relationship with Zhu Di and his involvement in the rebellion, see Chan 1976: 31-39.

¹⁶³ For poems on Yao Guangxiao's visits to the Stone Lion Garden, see *TXZSJ* 5.786; 6.792; and 8.805-806. For another series of twelve poems on the garden's scenic sites by Yao Guangxiao, see *TXZSJ*. 8.809-10.

¹⁶⁴ The colophon can be found in *Shigu tangshu hua huikao* 54.333-34.

added another colophon, dated 1543.¹⁶⁵ Not much later, a version of the scroll with paintings and inscriptions came into the hands of Wang Shimao 王世懋 (1536-1588). His older brother, the garden owner and patron of garden culture, Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590),¹⁶⁶ added another colophon to the scroll. The whole history of the garden and its various representations is recorded in this colophon by Wang Shizhen:

Tianru once composed sixteen quatrains, recording [the garden's] scenic spots fairly well. His successor[s], respecting the previous generation, subsequently arranged [the garden] into twelve spots. During the early Hongwu period, Mister Wang Yi, Grand Scribe Gao Qi, Grand Scribe Xie Hui, Zhang Shi from the Bureau of Waterways and Irrigation, and Recluse Wang Xing visited and recorded [these twelve spots] in poems. Before this, Supervisor Zhu Zemin [Derun] had painted [the garden]. Provincial Administration Commissioner Xu Ben too painted it, and mountain man Ni Zan and Zhao Shanzhang [Shanliang] also made a painting. I do not know in which hands the original[s] ended up. One hundred fifty years later, Academician Attendant Wen Zhengzhong [Zhengming], reproduced the scene, and copied out [Wang] Yi's and [Gao] Qi's works. He attached them together and handed them to Abbot Chao Ran. After Chao Ran died, it was given to Monk Fumao of the Bamboo Hall, who could not keep it and it was given to Huang Bian from She (Anhui), almost as if it had entered into foreign lands. After Bian's death, it luckily found its way back to Zhou Feng from Kunshan. After Zhou's death his family could not keep it either and it was then that my younger brother Jingmei (Wang Shimao) first obtained it. I thereupon picked up Tianru's poems and handed them to Jingmei. In imitation to the precedent set by Zhengzhong, he added a [colophon] in small regular script at the end.

天如嘗有十六絕句，頗紀其勝，法嗣善遇輩，遂厘十二景，而洪武初，王先生彝、高太史啟、謝太史徽、張水部適、王處士行皆游而有絕句紀之。前是

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ On Wang Shizhen's interest in garden culture and history, see Hammond 1999.

朱提舉澤民圖之矣，徐布政賁復圖之，倪山人瓚、今趙善章復圖之，真跡不知散落何手。百五十年，而文待詔徵仲重貌其勝，而書彝、啟之作，系而歸之主僧超然者。超然沒，歸之竹堂僧福懋，不能守，歸之歙人黃注，幾若落異域矣。注歿，幸而歸之崑山周鳳，周歿，其家又不能守，而吾弟敬美始得之。余乃拈天如絕句授敬美，伊仿徵仲例，以小楷系於末。¹⁶⁷

There are multiple points in the history of the garden that are ambiguous. The number of scenic spots continuously changed from source to source. According to Wang Shizhen, Tianru originally envisioned sixteen spots in the garden, but there were eight are mentioned in the inscriptions on Ni Zan's painting. However, in the poems by Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Wang Yi, Xie Hui, and Zhang Zhi, as well as in the inscriptions to Xu Ben's paintings, the garden was consistently associated with twelve spots. Wang Shizhen's colophon shows that their renditions of the garden changed hands many times and traveled around quite a bit, at some point even leaving the Wu area, where, according to Wang Shizhen, it obviously did not belong (he does not mention that Yao Guangxiao received the scroll in Beijing). The scroll with Xu Ben's paintings apparently went through some form of reproduction by Wen Zhengming, before they finally came into the hands of Wang Shimao and his brother.

By the time Wang Shimao got a hold of the scroll, the garden had already deteriorated to such an extent that the twelve scenic sites were no longer recognizable. As Wang Shizhen remarks further on in his colophon:

I heard that more than ten years ago, the Stone Lion Garden was still there and that furthermore half of the so-called twelve spots were still recognizable. Nowadays, [the garden] has passed into the commoner family Lu, who use it freely for weaving industry and raising livestock, while none of the Buddhist statues, stone formations, old plum trees, and extraordinary trees remain.

¹⁶⁷ Wang Shizhen, "Copying Wen Zhengzhong's restoration of Tianru's Stone Lion Garden scroll" 書文徵仲補天如獅子林卷, *Yanzhou shanren xugao*, 171.7816-18.

聞十餘年前，獅子林尚在，而所謂十二景者亦半可指數。今已轉授民家陸氏，縱織作畜牧其中而佛像、峰石、老梅、奇樹之類，無一存者。¹⁶⁸

Wang Shimao's acquisition of copies of Xu Ben's paintings of the garden landscape was an attempt on his part to bring together all the renditions of the garden that were still in circulation. His aim was to save the Stone Lion Garden's legacy from being forgotten. According to his brother:

Jingmei wants to buy all the paintings by the three or four gentlemen, for it is generally said that the effect of writing and painting can add another couple of hundred years to save this garden from sinking into decay.

敬美意似，欲盡購三四君子圖，大較謂書畫力更可得數百載，將以救茲林之泯泯然。

¹⁶⁹

In an oft-quoted passage, Frederick Mote says about the city of Suzhou that “[t]he past was a past of words, not of stones... the only truly enduring embodiments of the eternal human moments are the literary ones”.¹⁷⁰ What he wants to say is that unlike in the West, where physical buildings carry the past, in China, places were remembered for how they were represented in literature. Whereas buildings are bound to their physical locality, and natural landscapes are subject to change and decay, words and images transcend these spatial and temporal boundaries, and could add to the preservation of a location's memory.

The past of the Stone Lion Garden certainly was a past of words and not of stone. Nowadays, few of the original twelve scenic sites remain and most of the names have been changed.¹⁷¹ Regardless, the visits by Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and the others have ensured the garden a place within the cultural landscape and history of Suzhou. Not only that, their literary and visual recordings of the garden have made sure that their names were remembered by future

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Mote 1973: 51.

¹⁷¹ On the present-day layout of the garden, see Henderson 2013: 54-59.

generations as well. Nowadays, the poems by the residents of the north city wall on the Stone Lion Garden “is still among the most celebrated works in garden literature”.¹⁷²

¹⁷² Sun Kangyi 2010: 5.

Conclusion

This thesis examined the physical locations where Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu practiced their friendship and which they used for networking and maintaining social relationships. The contributions that this thesis aimed to make are twofold:

In the first place, I wanted to challenge the idea that these four poets were members of the “Ten Friends of the North City Wall”, and that this is the name of an historical group of poets, led by Gao Qi, that convened for literary and artistic activities in the north city wall district of Suzhou. The “Ten Friends of the North City Wall” is a memorable, captivating name for a literary group, which conveniently captures the association of some of the greatest poetic talents of fourteenth-century Suzhou, but it is also riddled with ambiguities, and we should be careful with how we use it. It would be useless to try to pinpoint who exactly were part of this association and who were not - there are simply no good criteria. We furthermore lack the resources to say anything meaningful about the social impact of the assemblies that supposedly took place in the north city wall district. The present study deliberately only included Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu, a small selection of the individuals who are usually associated with this group, but whose friendship is relatively well documented.

My thesis proposed an approach hitherto little undertaken in the study of friendships in China, namely the study of social relationships through the physical locations where they were acted out. The primary reason for this approach was the confusing lists of “Ten Friends” that Qing sources have bequeathed to us, and Frederick Mote’s abstract focus on their “unity of spirit”, their shared ideals and ambitions.

The first part of this thesis dealt with the role of the north city wall district in the friendship between Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu. It was shown that, while the focus of most literary groups and gatherings of the late Yuan was on the present assembly and the physical location of the congregation, theirs was, from its earliest recording, themed by separation and distance. All their descriptions of literary assemblies in the north city wall district were given post factum, a point that is too often overlooked. It implies that we only have access to the memories that they self-consciously created of a life that they once shared. The implications of this shared

memory for their friendship should not be neglected - it is what kept them associated, even when they were separated from each other, and what kept their mutual friendship distinct from other relationships that they maintained at the same time. Separation and the exchange of nostalgic recollections were essential to their mutual friendship but do not describe how they interacted with people at places other than the north city wall district.

The second contribution that this thesis aimed to make was to our understanding of how literati in the Yuan-Ming transition traveled, visited places, and maintained social relationships. The premise was the strong correlation in Imperial China between the practice of friendship and the ability to travel. It is my contention that despite the lack of support for distant journeys and without many opportunities to meet travelers from afar in the mid-fourteenth century, the social importance of travel and visiting places did not diminish. On the contrary, with pathways into the examination system and government support closed off, it became all the more important for literati scholars in Suzhou to find places where they could meet, socialize and exchange works. Although they were unable to travel as freely and extensively as their counterparts from previous dynasties, the landscape surrounding the city was dotted with scenic spots, natural or man-made, which still offered ample opportunities for excursions, sight-seeing, literary expositions, and, consequently, opportunities for establishing valuable contacts with people of interest.

Throughout this thesis, I have made use of various valuable studies on the interaction of literati in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties with their physical surroundings. These studies usually illustrate how certain parts of the landscape were represented in word and image, how these representations feature in a social context, and how they were culturally or socially significant to a certain community. The case studies presented in the second part of this thesis have shown that literati did not just interact with only one part of the geographical landscape. Each of the locations discussed here accomplished a different aspect of the social network of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu, and were critical to their development as Suzhou's leading poets.

My discussion in section 3 of the representations of the mountain dwellings of Xu Ben and Zhang Yu that circulated among their friends has shown that these places were essential to how they benefitted from their friendship. In section 4, it was shown that their recordings of the

estates of affluent landowners played important roles in how they reciprocated the hospitality that they received as guests at these places. The local and historical places discussed in section 5 have shown that their social relationships required the constant negotiation between the private and the public. Section 6 has shown that local Buddhist monasteries were not only places that they visited for their personal enjoyment, but that these places also provided an important audience for their literary skills (i.e. by writing parting prefaces for the monks of these monasteries). Finally, I have shown in section 7 that their travels and social interactions not only contributed to the history and cultural meaning of the landscape, but allowed them to reach audiences through space and time.

On the one hand, they visited these places to find refuge from civil war, to escape the hubbub of the city, or simply to seek a moment of respite from the demands of daily social life. They found enjoyment in their excursions, and reveled in the banquets and poetry competitions that they attended in the company of close friends. At the same time, their sojourns were always more than an innocent pastime. Visiting places other than where they lived allowed them to connect with other people, to offer their services to the world, and make use of their talents. What they had to offer was of course their literary and artistic talents, which they employed to represent the places that they visited in word and image.

Overall, there were not many relationships in the network of Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu that did not involve a place in one way or another. There were of course acquaintances that I have not been able to discuss in his thesis; people they mainly knew through the exchange of poems, paintings, and inscriptions. Many of these were famous poets, writers, and painters who lived in the Jiangnan area.¹⁷³ Like the other acquaintances discussed in this thesis, almost all of them had frustrated political careers and were uprooted by the civil wars of the late Yuan. They were all roamers to an extent, and spent at least a part of their lives traveling around, visiting friends, attending literary gatherings, or in some cases hosting gatherings of their own, similar to the residents of the north city wall district.

¹⁷³ Among their other acquaintances can be counted the famous painters Ni Zan, Chen Ruzhi's brother Chen Ruyan 陳汝言 (ca. 1331-1371), Zhou Zhi 周砥 (?-1367), Wang Meng, and his cousin Zhao Lin 趙麟.

There are possibilities to extend the research done in this paper to include locations where other literati poets, writers, painters, and scholars met and interacted in the Yuan dynasty. More study might reveal that the locations discussed in this thesis – private properties, local scenic sites, Buddhist monasteries and gardens – were in fact part of a larger network of locations in the Jiangnan area that allowed literati, including the residents of the north city wall district, to meet and interact in the Yuan-Ming transition.

Bibliography

List of abbreviations used in the footnotes:

<i>BGJ</i>	<i>Beiguo ji</i>
<i>BXJ</i>	<i>Banxuan ji</i>
<i>FZJ</i>	<i>Fuzao ji</i>
<i>GTSDQJ</i>	<i>Gao Taishi daquan ji</i>
<i>JJJ</i>	<i>Jingju ji</i>
<i>MAJ</i>	<i>Mei'an ji</i>
<i>TXZSJ</i>	<i>Taoxuzi shiji</i>
<i>WCZJ</i>	<i>Wang Changzong ji</i>

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Appendix A: Information on persons

Gao Qi 高啟 (1336-1374); Courtesy name: Jidi 季迪; style name: Qingqiuzi 青邱子. One of the most famous poets of the Ming dynasty; during his youth, interested in martial arts and military strategy; in 1351, took up residence in the north city wall district; showed some interest in government affairs but never took up an official position; between 1369 and 1370, summoned to the capital in Nanjing to work on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan*; in 1374, implicated in the purges against Wei Guan, the governor of Suzhou, and executed at the age of 38; with Xu Ben and Lü Min, visited the White Lotus Monastery; with Yang Ji and Rao Jie, visited Numinous Cliff; one of the participants in the gathering at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion; regular visitor of: Crane Ladle Mountain, the Green Water Garden, the Fan Family Garden, Requiring Kindness Monastery, Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill, and the Stone Lion Garden.

Wang Xing 王行 (1331-1395); Courtesy name: Zhizhong 止仲. The son of a medicine seller; owned a residence in the north city wall district; owned a residence near Stone Lake in the southern suburbs of Suzhou; during the early Ming, occupied various government positions; regular visitor of: Crane Ladle Mountain, the Fan Family Garden, Requiring Kindness Monastery, Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill, and the Stone Lion Garden.

Xu Ben 徐賁 (1335-1393); Courtesy name: Youwen 幼文; Style name: Beiguosheng 北郭生. A poet and painter; owned a residence in the north city wall district; After 1364, owned a residence on Shu Mountain in Wuxing; between 1367 and 1368, with Yang Ji and Yu Yaochen, exiled to Haoliang; from 1374 until his death in 1393, held a few minor position in Zhu Yuanzhang's government; regular visitor of: Crane Ladle Mountain, the Green Water Garden, the Fan Family Garden, Requiring Kindness Monastery, Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill, and the Stone Lion Garden.

Zhang Yu 張羽 (1333-1385); Courtesy name: Laiyi 來儀. A poet and a painter; originally from Sichuan; owned a residence in the north city wall district; also owned a residence on Dai Mountain in Wuxing; after 1366, took up residence near the Maple Bridge in Suzhou; after 1369, owned a residence on Jing Mountain in Wuxing; after 1373, accepted a minor government

position in Zhu Yuanzhang's government; in 1385, committed suicide on his way back from banishment to Guangdong; one of the participants in the gathering at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion; a regular visitor of: the Green Water Garden, the Fan Family Garden, Requiting Kindness Monastery, and Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill.

Yu Yaochen 余堯臣; Courtesy name: Tangqing 唐卿. Before coming to Suzhou, stationed as a military advisor at the border region; owned a residence in the north city wall district; frequently hosted banquets at his residence in Suzhou; between 1367 and 1368, with Xu Ben and Yang Ji, exiled to Haoliang.

Gao Xunzhi 高遜志; Courtesy name: Shimin 士敏. Owned a residence in the north city wall district; in 1363, left Suzhou; in 1370, one of the scholars employed to finish work on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan*.

Tang Su 唐肅; Courtesy name: Chuqing 處敬; Style name: Danyajushi 丹崖居士. Owned a residence in the north city wall district; in 1366, left Suzhou to take up a teaching position in Jiaying.

Yang Ji 楊基 (1326 - 1374); Courtesy name: Mengzai 孟載; Style name: Mei'an 眉庵. With Gao Qi, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu known as one of the "Four Outstanding Figures of Suzhou"; owned a residence west of Suzhou near Tianping Mountain (天平山); a close acquaintance of the residents of the north city wall and one of the attendants of Tang Su's farewell gathering; member of Rao Jie's unofficial coterie; between 1367 and 1368, with Xu Ben and Yu Yaochen, exiled to Haoliang; between 1370 and 1371, exiled to Juqu in Jurong; in 1374, executed in the purges against Wei Guan; with Gao Qi and Rao Jie, visited the Numinous Cliff. Regular visitor of: the Fan Family Garden.

Yao Guangxiao 姚廣孝 (1335-1418); Monastic name: Daoyan 道衍, also Yan Sidao 衍思道; style name: Taoxuzi 逃虛子. A Buddhist monk of the Lengjia Monastery (Lengjia si 楞伽寺), well-educated in Confucian doctrine, and knowledgeable of military and political affairs; during the siege of Suzhou between 1366-1367, became acquainted with Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, and Wang Yi in the north city wall district; in 1370, visited Gao Qi in Nanjing to request a preface to his poetry collection; from 1382, advisor to Zhu Di, the Prince of Yan, and Zhu Yuanzhang's fourth son; played an ambiguous, but crucial role in Zhu Di's rebellion against Zhu

Yuanzhang's grandson, the Jianwen Emperor, which led to the establishment of the Yongle reign (永樂 1403-1419); one of the participants in the gathering at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion; a regular visitor of: the Green Water Garden and the Stone Lion Garden.

Wang Yi 王彝; Courtesy name: Changzong 常宗. During the siege of Suzhou between 1366-1367, with Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu lived in the north city wall district; in 1370, one of the scholars employed to finish work on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan*; after 1370, Gao Qi's neighbor in the southern part of Suzhou; in 1374, died in the persecutions directed against Wei Guan and his followers; regular visitor of the Stone Lion Garden and on good terms with Reverend Yin.

Lü Min 呂敏; Courtesy name: Zhixue 志學. In 1367, left Suzhou to become ordained as a Daoist priest and later became ordained as a Buddhist monk; over the course of several years took up residence at various Daoist and Buddhist monasteries; in 1368, received Gao Qi and Xu Ben in the White Lotus Monastery; visited Xu Ben twice at his mountain dwelling on Shu Mountain and recipient of multiple of his paintings.

Song Ke 宋克 (1327-1387); Courtesy name: Zhongwen 仲溫; Style name: Nangongsheng 南宮生. Native of Suzhou; trained in martial skills and military tactics and pursued the ideal of the *wuxia* 武俠 (knight-errant) in his early years, but later gave up this lifestyle in favor of a scholarly education; regular visitor of Crane Ladle Mountain.

Xie Hui 謝徽 (? – 1373); Courtesy name: Xuanyi 玄懿. A scholar from Suzhou; with Gao Qi, worked on the compilation of the *History of the Yuan* in Nanjing; rewarded a post in the Hanlin Academy after completion of the history project; in 1370, resigned from his position and returned to Suzhou; in 1372, with Gao Qi, Wang Xing, Zhang Shi, and Wang Yi, visited the Stone Lion Garden.

Rao Jie 饒介 (1300-1367); Courtesy name: Jiezhi 介之; Style name: Huagai shanqiao 華蓋山樵. A prominent literatus and high official in Zhang Shicheng's government; known for his indulgences in poetry competitions, wine, and other pleasures; with Gao Qi and Yang Ji, hosted an excursion to Numinous Cliff; one of the participants in the gathering at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion; in 1368, summoned to the capital and executed by Zhu Yuanzhang.

Appendix B: Timetable

Year	Historical Events	Biographical Events	Social Events
1351		-Gao Qi moves to the north city wall district in Suzhou.	
1352			
1353	-Zhang Shicheng rebels.	-Gao Qi marries into the Zhou family at the Green Hill and spends time in the north city wall district and at his rural residence.	
1354			
1355	-Zhu Yuanzhang rebels.		
1356	-Zhang Shicheng takes over Suzhou. -Rao Jie is promoted to Assistant Grand Councilor of Huainan.		-Gao Qi and Yang Ji visit Numinous Cliff together with Rao Jie (between 1356-1358 or 1360-1363). [Section 5]
1357			
1358	-Zhang Shicheng conquers Hangzhou, redeemed by the Yuan.	-Gao Qi journeys to the south.	
1359			
1360		-Gao Qi returns from the south and takes up quarters in the Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill.	-Gao Qi joins the farewell gathering for Zhang Jian at the Thatched Hut of Liangchang.

			-Gao Qi, Zhang Yu, Wang Xing, and Xu Ben visit Tiger Hill (summer). [Section 6] -Gao Qi, Zhang Xian, and Jin Qi visit Cloud Cliff Monastery on Tiger Hill (between 1360-1362). [Section 5]
1361			
1362		-Gao Qi moves to his rural residence near the Lou River.	-Gao Qi writes a preface for Reverend Xubai from the Cloud Cliff Monastery. [Section 6]
1363	-Zhang Shicheng proclaims himself King of Wu, rebels against the Yuan, and engages in a war with Zhu Yuanzhang.	-Zhang Yu moves to Dai Mountain. -Gao Xunzhi leaves Suzhou.	-Gao Qi sends an invitation to Yang Ji, Xu Ben, Zhang Yu, and Wang Xing to watch the apricot flowers in the Fan Family Garden (between 1363-1365). [Section 5]
1364		-Xu Ben moves to Shu Mountain.	- Gao Qi writes a commemoration on Xu Ben's dwelling on Shu Mountain. [Section 3]
1365	-The war between Zhang Shicheng and Zhu Yuanzhang reaches the Wu region.	-Gao Qi, Xu Ben, and Zhang Yu return to Suzhou.	-Gao Qi, Yao Guangxiao, and Zhang Yu participate in the gathering at the Listening to the Rain Pavilion.

			<p>- Gao Qi hosts a farewell party for Tang Su in the north city wall district. [Section 1]</p> <p>-Wang Xing writes a commemoration on Xu Ben's dwelling on Shu Mountain. [Section 3]</p>
1366	-Zhu Yuanzhang besieges Suzhou (winter).	<p>-Tang Su leaves Suzhou (spring).</p> <p>- Gao Qi, Zhang Yu, Xu Ben, Wang Xing, Yu Yaochen, and Yang Ji are in Suzhou during the siege.</p> <p>-Lü Min leaves Suzhou to become ordained as a Daoist priest.</p>	-Wang Xing writes a record for Li Rui of Crane Ladle Mountain. [Section 4]
1367	- Zhu Yuanzhang conquers Suzhou (1 Oct).	<p>-Gao Qi moves to his rural residence near the Lou River.</p> <p>-Xu Ben, Yang Ji, and Yu Yaochen are exiled to Haoliang.</p> <p>-Zhang Yu is held up near Hangzhou.</p>	-Zhang Yu adds a preface to his "Thinking About My Friends" poems, with memories about the north city wall district. [Section 2]
1368	-Zhu Yuanzhang establishes the Ming dynasty and becomes the Hongwu emperor.	-Xu Ben, Yang Ji, and Yu Yaochen return from exile to Haoliang.	- Xu Ben and Gao Qi visit the White Lotus Monastery and they compose the

	<p>-Jinling (now called Nanjing) becomes the new capital.</p> <p>-Rao Jie is brought to Nanjing and executed by Zhu Yuanzhang.</p>		<p>“Singing together on the Eastern Bank” (winter).</p> <p>[Section 2]</p>
1369	<p>-Zhu Yuanzhang orders the compilation of the <i>History of the Yuan</i>, supervised by Li Shanchang, Song Lian, and Wang Wei.</p>	<p>-Gao Qi works on the <i>History of the Yuan</i> in Nanjing (spring-autumn), and stays in the Temple of Heavenly Boundaries.</p> <p>-Xu Ben returns to Shu Mountain.</p> <p>-Zhang Yu moves to Jing Mountain.</p>	<p>-Gao Qi receives a visit from Yao Guangxiao and writes a poem about the north city wall district.</p> <p>[Section 2]</p>
1370		<p>-Gao Qi moves to Bell Mountain near Nanjing; but later returns to the Green Hill (autumn).</p> <p>-Yang Ji is exiled to Juqu.</p> <p>-Gao Xunzhi, Wang Yi, and Du Yin work on the <i>Histories of the Yuan</i> in Nanjing.</p>	<p>-Gao Qi receives a visit from Yao Guangxiao and writes a poem about the north city wall district.</p> <p>[Section 2]</p> <p>-Gao Qi and Xu Ben meet Reverend Hao of the Requiring Kindness Monastery. [Section 6]</p>
1371		<p>-Gao Qi moves to the southern part of Suzhou.</p> <p>-Yang Ji returns from his exile to Juqu; takes up residence near the north-western gate of Nanjing.</p>	<p>-Gao Qi composes a parting preface for Reverend Shi of the Requiring Kindness Temple. [Section 6]</p> <p>-Lü Min visits Xu Ben on Shu Mountain and receives</p>

		-Wang Xing lives a secluded life in the suburbs near Stone Lake (approx.).	the painting <i>Shu Mountain</i> . [Section 3] -Gao Qi composes the "On a Spring Day, Thinking About Ten Friends" poems. [Section 2]
1372	-Wei Guan is appointed governor of Suzhou.		-Gao Qi, Wang Yi, Wang Xing, Zhang Shi, and Xie Hui visit the Stone Lion Garden. [Section 7]
1373		-Gao Qi moves to Xiahouli 夏侯里 (spring). -Zhang Yu accepts a minor appointment.	
1374	-Wei Guan is executed.	-Gao Qi, Yang Ji, Tang Su, and Wang Yi are executed. -Xu Ben accepts a minor appointment.	-Xu Ben creates a painting series of the Stone Lion Garden. [Section 7] -Wang Xing adds a colophon to the "Singing Together on the Eastern Bank" in which he reminisces about the north city wall district. [Section 2]
...			
1385		-Zhang Yu commits suicide	
...			
1393		-Xu Ben commits suicide.	

...			
1417			Yao Guangxiao adds a colophon to Xu Ben's painting of the Stone Lion Garden. [Section 7]