

**Manuscript version: Author's Accepted Manuscript**

The version presented in WRAP is the author's accepted manuscript and may differ from the published version or Version of Record.

**Persistent WRAP URL:**

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/170323>

**How to cite:**

Please refer to published version for the most recent bibliographic citation information. If a published version is known of, the repository item page linked to above, will contain details on accessing it.

**Copyright and reuse:**

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions.

Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

**Publisher's statement:**

Please refer to the repository item page, publisher's statement section, for further information.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: [wrap@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:wrap@warwick.ac.uk).

## Reading late-imperial Chinese merchant handbooks in global and micro-history

### Abstract

In late imperial China, handbooks were key tools for merchants who negotiated the challenges of the land and water routes along which they travelled with their goods. Such handbooks provided invaluable information. The knowledge contained within such itineraries pertained to the minutiae of individual places, but it helped create and maintain the global connectedness of the late imperial empire. Porcelain and tea, produced in the inland provinces of southeast China, could be delivered safely to the port of Canton, and from there to consumers all over the world because these merchants had created, preserved and transmitted this knowledge. The micro-global lens, thus, is a key tool for understanding such merchant handbooks: it makes possible to see how micro-level knowledge sustained the agency of the merchants who shaped the global trading world surrounding Canton. Reading late-imperial merchant handbooks from Huizhou makes visible the connections between Huizhou and the wider world.

### Keywords

Merchants, Huizhou, Lake Poyang, Canton, handbooks, itineraries, micro-global history.

## Introduction

This essay begins in perhaps an unusual way (for historians): with a very local form of writing, namely a poem in eight lines that describes the nine counties of a prefecture in the inland province of Jiangxi, in south-eastern China:

### Poem of the Nine Counties

On the Wan'an rapids, the water moves like a (weaver's) shuttle;  
in the south is Longquan, Taihe is in the north.

From afar, the earth's veins reach the Anfu border;  
Their source and flow connect directly to Yongqing's rivers.

On the roads of Yongning, travel companions are rare;  
While in the hills of Jishui, high degree holders are numerous.

Only the Yongfeng people are cunning;  
And the troubles started from the plains of Luling.<sup>1</sup>

It is a rather clumsy, undated, anonymous poem, in which most of the prefecture's counties get a few words of description, though two of them, Longquan and Taihe, only get a directional reference (north and south). Without delivering any great poetic lines or profound insights, the poem conjures up a place with some natural beauty, quiet spaces, examination success, and a hint of political activism. Could such an unmemorable rhyme about a mostly unknown place hold something of interest to global historians?

While we have little information about the poem itself, we know that it was included in a small, sixteenth-century anthology with a grand name: *Huang Ming shixuan* (Selected Poems of the Glorious Ming).<sup>2</sup> It was also included in a seventeenth-century route-book, the *Tianxia lucheng tuyin* (Maps and guides of the routes of the realm), dated to the late Ming dynasty.<sup>3</sup> Its author, a man referred to as Danyizi, claims that this poem of the Nine Counties) was by a famous Ming poet-official, Xie Jin (1369–1415).<sup>4</sup> Born on Ji'an, the

prefecture that forms the subject of the rhyme, Xie Jin had risen to the eminent position of Chief Grand Secretary at the early fifteenth-century Ming court. Much later, the same poem with its attribution to Xie Jin was also included in a nineteenth-century handbook of a porcelain merchant.<sup>5</sup>

I contend that this little 8-line poem connects the scales of the local and the empire-wide. It is a local piece of writing, in that it describes a local area, but when the poem is placed amongst selected poems of the glorious Ming or referenced in a route-book that covers the whole empire, its reach suddenly stretches beyond that area. It conjures up a static space, but when the poem is included in a description of routes that criss-cross the Ming empire as a whole, it becomes associated with the empire's mobility. It features places, not people, but when the poem is attributed to a Chief Grand Secretary, the compiler thereby creates a link between the locality and the imperial court. This essay explores the ways in which the local is connected to the larger contexts of the empire-wide and even the global, with which I mean not necessarily the entire world, but the major world regions that were connected through the movement of people, things and ideas. Taking late-imperial Chinese merchant handbooks as its key source, this contribution focuses on space, mobility, and the intricate webs of connections between the local, the empire-wide, and the world beyond the Chinese empire. This chapter will seek to demonstrate that reading such merchant manuals through the combined lenses of global and micro-history is key to making precisely those connections between the locality and the empire-wide realm visible.<sup>6</sup> Merchant manuals, or merchant route books, have of course been extensively studied, for the European as well as the Chinese context.<sup>7</sup> The focus of those studies, however, has largely been elsewhere: with the genre itself, or with the mentalities and social identities of merchants the genre reveals, or more recently with

cross-cultural exchange and commercial activities across spatial networks. This contribution, however, focuses on the relationship between the minutiae of local knowledge contained in these handbooks and the broad sweep of global connections that this type of knowledge ultimately facilitated. The micro and global historical lenses deployed here can make that relationship visible and thereby offer a new reading of such late imperial Chinese merchant handbooks.

In what follows below, I will begin with the context from which the two merchant handbooks that form the focus of this contribution emerged, before offering a close reading of the texts themselves. I will then return to the question of connections that such merchant manuals can both reveal and create, between the micro-level of the individual towns and counties through which these merchants travelled, to the level of the empire-wide and the global.

## The space

The area for our discussion today could broadly be described as the Lake Poyang region, spanning the northern part of Jiangxi province and the southern part of Anhui province. Lake Poyang lies at the centre of this region. Fed by the Yangzi, the longest river of China, Lake Poyang changes in size over the course of the year. In spring, when the meltwaters from the mountainous western provinces of the Chinese empire increase the water levels of the Yangzi, the lake overflows, inundating the floodplain that surrounds it. After the summer, the water level in the river declines, and the lake becomes smaller. The size of the lake has also fluctuated throughout history. At one stage, the lake covered 6,000 square kilometres, although it has averaged around 3,500 square kilometres more recently.<sup>8</sup> Owing

to various factors, including consecutive droughts, the water storage created by the Three Gorges Dam and the setting of water traps for fish farming, the surface area of the lake has recently been as low as 200 square kilometres.<sup>9</sup> Lake Poyang is also fed by the Gan, the river that flows northwards from Ganzhou, the southernmost county of Jiangxi Province. The Gan flows past Jiangxi's provincial capital, Nanchang, into Lake Poyang and from there provides access to the Yangzi via a connecting channel. The Gan was one of the key north-south transportation routes in the southern Chinese empire, and Lake Poyang formed a key node in the late-imperial trade and communication systems for the entire part of the Chinese empire that lay south of the Yangzi (see Figure 1).

Insert here

Figure 1. Map of Lake Poyang and surroundings

To the north, the lake narrows as it leads towards the Yangzi river at the river port of Jiujiang. The Yangzi separates Jiangxi province from its northern neighbours, now Hubei and Anhui. To the south and southeast, the lake connects to the heartland of Jiangxi province. The area to the east and northeast of Lake Poyang is a hilly region that leads to the foothills of Huangshan (Yellow Mountain) in Anhui province, known until the 1980s as Huizhou.<sup>10</sup> Because of the fluctuations in Lake Poyang's size, the shores are irregular and the land surrounding the lake marshy. The ecological characteristics of the region mean that it is favoured by migratory birds; 98 per cent of the world's population of Siberian cranes overwinter at Lake Poyang, as do egrets, spoonbills, storks, swans, geese, ducks and shorebirds. The area has the status of a nature reserve (the Poyang Lake Nature Reserve) and is counted amongst the now twenty-seven Wetlands of International Importance (the so-called Ramsar List) in China. The counties immediately surrounding the lake were prone to flooding, and the land was not considered particularly fertile. The editors of a late

seventeenth-century gazetteer for this region described it as a place with “poor-quality land,” meaning that people have to be frugal, consuming “basic foodstuffs, plants, trees, fowl and fish.”<sup>11</sup>

The Lake Poyang region, which stretches from the mountainous counties to the north-east of the lake to the middle course of the Gan, forms a key part of the connection between the lower Yangzi delta and the port of Canton on the south coast. The lower Yangzi delta is well known for being the most economically developed and affluent region of late imperial China, the port of Canton (Guangzhou) for the access it provided to Western merchants to Chinese-produced goods. Much less is known, especially in Western-language sources, of the region that lies between the two, even though many of the domestic products that arrived in Canton for export had travelled along the trade routes that traversed this region.

### The goods

The goods traded and transported on the lake and the region’s river network centred on three specific traded commodities: grain, tea, and porcelain. Of these, grain was mostly a local commodity. The grain-growing region formed by the Ji’an-Taihe basin (also known as the Jitai basin)<sup>12</sup> along the Gan River south of Nanchang made Jiangxi province an area of grain surplus. The grain-producing counties of Ji’an prefecture had easy access to the Gan, from where grain was transported downriver on the Gan to Lake Poyang. At Wuchengzhen, the town located at the end of a spit, at the exact point where the Gan flowed into the lake, grain-laden junks sailed northwards to Hukou, just slightly downriver from Jiujiang, where they could enter the Yangzi river system. From there, the junks laden with grain tribute for

the imperial court could sail downriver (i.e. eastwards), towards the entrance of the Grand Canal, and from there reach the capital in the north. Alternatively, the grain from the south of Jiangxi province could be shipped upriver towards Jingdezhen along the Chang, a river that flowed into Lake Poyang near the county capital. The prefectures in the region of Lake Poyang shipped their grains to the various depots near the lake, and a lakeside county capital like Poyang would be charged with the shipment of grains to the imperial capital. The high yield of the grain-growing fields along the Gan river basin, the well-developed transport networks provided by the region's river systems, and multi-directional access provided by Lake Poyang meant that the region's grain trade was known throughout the empire.

The second of the commodities that passed through this region, Fuliang tea, was known not only throughout the empire but in different parts of the world. Located to the northeast of Lake Poyang, Fuliang shared a border with Qimen county in what is now Anhui province, and was one of empire's foremost producers of tea.<sup>13</sup> Its early fame stemmed from the Tang-dynasty poet Bo Juyi's "Song of the Pipa," which narrates the story of a woman's loss as her husband has left her for months to trade tea in Fuliang.<sup>14</sup> Ever since, the region is known for its tea as much as its tea merchants. In terms of the contemporary classification of different tea leaves, Fuliang tea is in the same category as Qimen tea, together known as Qihong (literally "red from Qi"). In the West, this tea became known as Keemun.<sup>15</sup> Keemun was one of the named types of black tea that was highly sought after in nineteenth-century Europe and shows up in the records of the inland Treaty Port of Jiujiang, where junk shipments of tea were recorded and taxed, before being sent on to Canton.<sup>16</sup> So, if grain was part of the empire-wide economy, tea tied the region's economy to global networks of trade.



The third commodity traded throughout this region was porcelain.<sup>17</sup> Most of the kilns were located in and around the town of Jingdezhen, in the county of Fuliang, but much of the surrounding region was closely connected to the production and trade of porcelain. To the north of Jingdezhen are the mountains where the supply of most of the firewood was sourced; both to the north and to the southwest of Jingdezhen are the areas that supplied the white clay for which Jingdezhen is famous; to the east of Jingdezhen is Lake Poyang, key for the transport of porcelain in all directions. Many of the counties in the Lake Poyang region supplied raw materials to Jingdezhen, such as the county of Yugan, on the southeastern edge of the lake, which produced a variety of clays and stone for use in the Jingdezhen manufactures: white stone, red stone, green stone and white clay. All of the counties surrounding Jingdezhen had an obligation to provide a regular supply of labourers to work in the kilns, and those who were not working in the kilns themselves earned money as porcelain peddlers and small-scale traders. So, the production of porcelain connected many of the counties in this region. We can trace the trajectory of porcelain, from its origin in clay form in the foothills of Huangshan via the fires of Jingdezhen's kilns, onto the merchant ships in Canton, and into the South China Sea, the Indian Ocean, the African Coast and the European markets. The trade in grain, tea and porcelain connected the region that stretched from southern Anhui via Jiangxi province to the port of Canton, and from there beyond the boundaries of the late imperial empire.

### The merchants

As is well known, writings by early Confucian scholars sought to emphasize the importance of scholarly endeavour and bureaucratic service, thereby suggesting the lesser value of the

work of merchants. As Confucian scholars might have put it, merchants were motivated only by a selfish desire for profit, produced little of value for the public good, and therefore merited a position lower in standing than farmers and artisans.<sup>18</sup> This outdated perspective on the activities of the merchant class shaped an older literature on imperial China. It also shaped the textual archive for late imperial China. Scholar-officials, both at court and scattered throughout the empire, were responsible for gathering the sources to be used in official historical writing, and generally ignored any documentation related to commercial activities, unless they concerned taxation, or the transport of imperially requisitioned goods known as imperial tribute. Taxation payments and tribute goods were responsible for a vast, official infrastructure that secured the transport of goods, including grain, tea and porcelain, but also salt and iron, from all over the empire to the capital.<sup>19</sup> The local and regional markets, their goods, and the merchants who bought and sold a wide range of goods, ranging from bulk commodities to luxury items, however, featured much less in the official writings of the scholar-officials. More recently, scholarship on late imperial China in English and Chinese has taken far greater account of the importance of China's merchants.<sup>20</sup> The archival record available for writing such histories, however, remains patchy.<sup>21</sup>

The people responsible for the movement of goods within and beyond the empire are generally referred to as merchants, although in practice it is difficult to identify them as a single, homogenous group. The term included a wide range, from powerful merchant families who had been granted one of the coveted imperial permits that allowed trade in the state-monopolized goods to small-scale individuals that peddled their wares from door to door; from merchants who worked only within a small region to those whose trade covered the entire empire and beyond. My focus here will be on merchants from Huizhou, a region located *ca.* 230 miles inland from Shanghai, in the southern parts of Anhui province

and bordering Jiangxi. From the twelfth century onwards, Huizhou prefecture consisted of six counties: She County, Yi County, Xiuning, Qimen, Jixi, and Wuyuan, with more counties added in later centuries, such as Huangshan and Jingde (see Figure 2).

Insert here:  
Figure 2. The counties of Huizhou

The region was famous for its flourishing merchant culture, boasting many wealthy merchants who had made their money in the lucrative tea and salt monopolies.<sup>22</sup> Huizhou merchants appear regularly in the historical scholarship as a type: active merchants who connected all the key parts of the empire by way of their trade in a wide range of commodities, while always harking back to their Huizhou home.<sup>23</sup> The region features prominently in wide-ranging studies on socio-economic history, the cultures of commerce and the merchants, social institutions like the lineage, material culture, and so on.<sup>24</sup> The trade in grain, tea and porcelain in the Lake Poyang region was almost exclusively in the hands of merchants from Huizhou.<sup>25</sup>

### Merchant routes and handbooks

The transportation infrastructure that facilitated this trade in the late imperial Chinese empire was organised around a network of relay stations or stage posts (*yizhan*). Imperial officials, messengers, and visiting dignitaries could stay at these stations, refresh their horses or boatmen, and take on provisions. The system of the fourteenth century already had over 2,000 of such stations, and the system only grew over the course of the Ming. In the early Ming, when the capital was in Nanjing, four arterial trunk routes cover the entire empire, with branches covering each of the 13 provinces; later, when the capital was moved

to Beijing, the routes were reoriented, starting in Beijing and extending throughout the empire.<sup>26</sup> The network was also used as a postal system, intended for administrative communications, with routes used by messengers radiating out from each county town or provincial capital, serviced by simple post stations. Together, these networks served the dual purposes of imperial communication and control.

Merchants largely made use of the same network of routes (by land and water), even if they had no access to some of the services provided at the relay stations. In fact, for traders, passing such stations and administrative centres usually meant checkpoints, and inevitably the payment of taxes, levies and other fees. So, things like choosing the route, planning where to stay, knowing where to transfer goods onto ships and when to hire carriers all required specialist knowledge, and for this purpose, there were merchant route books.<sup>27</sup> The earliest printed versions of such books date to the sixteenth century, when advances in commercial publishing made such practical, informative guides financially attractive propositions.<sup>28</sup> Such route books were textual rather than visual, referencing the sites a travelling merchant needs to know: points along the route, inns where one could stay, waterside stations where boats could be hired, fords where rivers could be crossed, distances between them, and so on.<sup>29</sup> A recent study has looked at similar documents from early modern Europe where they are referred to as “itineraries”: printed texts that document the details of a route from A to B, including all the names of places one passes along the way, with distances and noteworthy features.<sup>30</sup> The term fits these two Chinese examples well.

More important for our purposes, perhaps, than such printed route books are the handwritten documents that detail the commercial activities of the Huizhou merchants. Such manuscripts have rarely been preserved as part of any formal archive, but as the

extensive, decades-long research of Wang Zhenzhong has shown, they were preserved in the private archives of Huizhou families. The recent publication of such materials, in a 30-volume collection of rare materials, demonstrates the wealth and importance of the sources available in informal Huizhou village archives.<sup>31</sup> I focus here on two examples, both collected by Wang Zhenzhong.<sup>32</sup> The older of the two itineraries is entitled “Shuilu Ping’an,” literally: Safe Journey by Water and Land, dated 1844; the later example is entitled “Wanli Yuncheng,” literally: Ten-Thousand Mile Cloud-Route, probably dated between 1848 and 1854.

### *Safe journey by water and land (Shuilu ping’an)*

The first manual, *Shuilu ping’an*, was handwritten by a Huizhou merchant, ostensibly in the 24<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of the Daoguang emperor, i.e. 1844.<sup>33</sup> In fact, Wang suggests that although the manuscript bears the date of Daoguang 24, internal references within the text point to 1811 and 1833/4, which leads him to conclude that the document was put together on the basis of multiple journeys between Huizhou and Guangzhou carried out over a period of more or less 30 years.<sup>34</sup> The text describes “the route by land and water from Qimen county in Anhui via Jiangxi to the provincial capital of Guangdong [i.e. Guangzhou]” (see Figure 3).<sup>35</sup>

Insert here:

Figure 3: Map of the main places along the trade routes from Huizhou to Canton

It lists all the places one passes along the way: a total of 341 locations,<sup>36</sup> with an indication of the distance between them, until the arrival in Canton is described near the end of the manual.<sup>37</sup> The distances between the listed places are around 5 to 10 *li* apart, and all

information considered noteworthy is jotted down. For the passages by river, the manual usually describes what to look out for on both banks of the river.

The family that produced this manual was involved in the porcelain trade. All points along the way that are key to the porcelain trade are glossed with more detail. For the county seat of Fuliang, for example, where the offices of the administrators in charge of the imperial kilns were located, the comment explains that the western bank is where the ships are moored that are travelling downstream to Wucheng (or Wuchengzhen), while the salt checkpoint is located on the eastern bank.<sup>38</sup> Wucheng, on the shores of Lake Poyang, was one of the empire's key distribution points for porcelain; from Wucheng, the transport routes led both to the north: via the Yangzi to the towns of the lower Yangzi delta and via the Grand Canal to the imperial capital, and to the south: via the Gan and the Dayu mountain pass to the port of Canton.

For Jingdezhen, the text adds: "On the eastern bank is the large town, ranked first amongst the four great market towns."<sup>39</sup> The locality produces porcelain, so you will find here the imperial kiln manufactory, the deputy offices of Raozhou prefecture, the office of the Jingdezhen authorities, and the Fuliang government office."<sup>40</sup> This observation shows that the imperial government was certainly present in Jingdezhen, even if market towns did not have a formal place in the administrative system. The county town, in this case Fuliang county, was the lowest unit in that system of nested hierarchies and would have been the seat of the county magistrate and the various other local officials appointed to the region. Because of the empire-wide importance of the porcelain produced in Jingdezhen, however, the imperial state was represented in the locality by way of these various offices. Ten *li* further downriver, we find another place related to the ceramics industry, identified simply as *guanzhuang* ("the official place"), with the following note: "On the western bank, there

are some dwellings. This is the workshop where they fire the porcelain saggars.”<sup>41</sup> Saggars were ceramic separators, used to protect the individual pieces of porcelain in the kiln. Vast quantities of such saggars were required for each kiln firing, and their manufacture formed a kind of secondary production system that existed in parallel to the manufacture of the porcelain pieces themselves.

Several other key locations along the route are mentioned, such as the market towns of Yonghezhen (or Yonghe) and Zhangshuzhen (or Zhangshu). One of these was known for its ceramics production: “The embankment at Yonghezhen. The mooring is on the westside. In the past, porcelain vessels were fired in these kilns.”<sup>42</sup> The other was known for its trade in medicine: “The market town of Zhangshu. Resorts under Qingjiang county [Linjiang on the map]. A big town on the east bank, with a police chief and a brigadier. There are numerous merchant representatives here of the trade associations in mixed goods and medicine.”<sup>43</sup> From the Ming dynasty onwards, Zhangshu was well known as a general commercial centre,<sup>44</sup> but the town’s important place in the empire-wide trade in pharmaceuticals was also well established.<sup>45</sup> Most recently, Bian He has studied Zhangshu’s importance as a place where “wholesale traders of materia medica gathered and traded, and supplies from all over the country pulled together for redistribution.”<sup>46</sup> As Bian He shows: key to Zhangshu’s success was its strategic location along the Gan, with access to transport routes in all directions: north to the Yangzi, and from there to the commercial hubs of the Jiangnan region, towards Sichuan, where many medicinal plants were sourced, as well as towards the imperial capital, but also into Huguang (i.e. Hunan and Hubei together) and Fujian provinces via much smaller rivers. But its location along the Gan was also its weakness: under threat from the movements of the river and the competition of the other towns along the Gan. Its heyday as a centre for the medicinal wholesale trade, as Bian shows, was probably during

the Ming dynasty, but the reference in this route book of the early decades of the nineteenth century shows its prowess had not completely waned by then.

A tide table for Canton follows and a list of eight tourist sites worth visiting in the area, including several Buddhist and Daoist shrines, Guanyin Mountain or Magazine Hill as it would become known by the English and the famous water clock of Canton (*tonghu dilou*). Housed in one of the Canton city gates in the Shuangmendi area, this waterclock had been here for many centuries.<sup>47</sup> Frequently rebuilt, it consisted of a series of copper buckets placed on a series of steps. Over a period of twelve hours, water would drip into the top bucket and when it overflowed, the drip filled the next bucket, and so on. A floating device in the lowest bucket provided an indication of the current time.

### ***The ten-thousand-mile cloud-route (Wanli Yuncheng)***

The second manuscript to be discussed here is entitled *Wanli yuncheng*, which translates as “The ten-thousand-mile cloud-route,” or “Cloud route” for short.<sup>48</sup> It details an overland route that starts in She county in Huizhou and ends in Guangdong province, a total distance of 3,423 *li* (i.e. over 1,000 miles).<sup>49</sup> The manuscript is not dated, but a reference in the text to an increase in the tax rate in the *wushen* year points to a publication date after 1848 and before 1854, when the Taiping rebellion disrupted the tea trade between Huizhou and Canton.<sup>50</sup>

There are over 600 placenames listed along the route, with an indication of the travelled distance between these points. The route guidance is extremely detailed, especially for the beginning of the route, where the place names mentioned are no more than one or two *li* apart. So, to give a flavour of the text, it opens like this: “She county. 3 *li*. Fishpond. 2 *li*. Ziyang bridge. 1 *li*. Ling village. 1 *li*. Bao family village. Seven-mile point. 2 *li*.



Wheel bend.”<sup>51</sup> At these distances, ranging from 500 yards to a mile, these places would surely all be familiar, especially so close to home. The distances gradually increase, and once the traveller has crossed the county boundary, the average distance between the listed place names increases to about 10 *li*, which we might guess took between 1 and 2 hours to cover on foot.

In broad strokes, the journey looks as follows (see Figure 3): starting from She county (i.e. the location of the capital of the Huizhou region), passing in a westerly direction through the Huizhou counties of Xiuning (95 *li*), Yi county and Qimen (110 *li*), then in a south-westerly direction into Raozhou, via Fuliang and the porcelain manufacturing centre of Jingdezhen (513 *li*), and towards Lake Poyang. The journey continues to the provincial capital Nanchang by way of the Gan (180 *li*). The upstream journey of the Gan (travelling southwards towards Guangdong) is given in great detail, passing the counties of Fengcheng, Xin’gan and Xiajiang, to Ji’an prefecture (470 *li*), Ganzhou prefecture (475 *li*), and then across the provincial border into Guangdong, via Nan’an (310 *li*), the prefectural capitals of Nanxiong (120 *li*) and Shaozhou (310 *li*), following the river to Qingyuan and Sanshui, and from there to the provincial capital of Guangdong (i.e. the city known as Canton), a final distance of 840 *li*).<sup>52</sup> The level of detail is clearly inconsistent, or consistent in the sense that the further away from the family’s Huizhou home, the less detail is provided.

This sequence of placenames covers the first 20 pages or so of the manual, or about the first half. The list of placenames has some intertextual notes, which provide some guidance for understanding how “Cloud route” was used. For example, at the start of the trip, when the traveller has crossed into Yi county, an additional note states: “This is where the tea boxes are placed on bamboo rafts”.<sup>53</sup> And on entering Qimen, an added note explains “if there is [sufficient] water [in the river], boats can reach the wharf; if there is no

water, place [the goods] onto the rafts”.<sup>54</sup> And at the entry point of Fuliang county, the notes add: “There is a checkpoint here, where they examine any privately [traded] salt.”<sup>55</sup> The salt inspection post at Fuliang was one of many that together formed part of the salt merchant system. Merchants with permission to transport salt were regularly submitted to inspections along the route, to ascertain that they were transporting no more than their allocated quota for transport and that they had paid the relevant taxes on their quota.<sup>56</sup> Together, this set of comments confirms the purpose of the guide. The practical details about where to load and unload, or what to expect in terms of inspections and payment of fees, add up to the business-critical information required to negate risk and help secure the outcome of the commercial venture.

The second half of the manual fleshes the description of the route out further, with further information about practical issues, organized both geographically and thematically into different sections. This section starts with a tide table of Canton,<sup>57</sup> and a list of nine important tea trading houses in Canton.<sup>58</sup> One of these, Longji, quite possibly refers to the Longji trade house that was established by Zhang Dianquan, and at one time, one of the thirteen factories in Canton.<sup>59</sup> Also known as Zhang Jianhu, this merchant had insider knowledge of Canton, where he had been well-connected to the key figures in the overseas trade. Due to a conflict with other merchants in Canton, Jianhu was expelled from the area and forced to move to Suzhou. Suzhou at this time was the centre of the domestic tea trade. It was Jianhu who understood that one of the key local products intended for the domestic market could be rebranded to cater more specifically to the preferences of the overseas consumers. Jiang Youke and his family were amongst the beneficiaries of this: it was their tea that benefited most from the network established by Zhang Jianhu between the sites of tea production in Huizhou, the centre of the domestic trade in Suzhou, and the overseas

export in Canton.<sup>60</sup> The houses listed in the manual would be the key destination for the Huizhou tea merchants, delivering and selling their tea to one of these trading houses the main goal of the trip. The houses are indicated with the Chinese term *majian* 孖肩, which is not in fact an idiomatic term in Chinese, although it could literally be translated as “a pair of shoulders”. According to Wang Zhenzhong, *majian* may well be a phonetic rendering of the English word “merchant”.<sup>61</sup>

The next two pages offer details on the weighing scales and their equivalents in use in five major areas along the route,<sup>62</sup> and a listing of the equivalents of copper-coin-strings for thirteen separate places, using specially adapted forms of characters to indicate the adjustments.<sup>63</sup> This is, of course, key information for those passing goods through these areas. But we learn something else, especially from the juxtaposition of these two lists. Each divides the space up into different units: one points to a division of the region into five areas, each integrated by its own, shared weighing system; the other into thirteen, each integrated by its own currency. The two do not overlap.

The twenty pages or so that follow offer a more fleshed out view of the route.<sup>64</sup> The journey of a Huizhou tea trader, seeking to sell his wares in Canton started in She county, where the tea was harvested, processed and packed for the journey. From She county, the tea was carried to the town of Tunxi, the centre of the Huizhou tea trade.<sup>65</sup> This place was rendered as Twankay in English and, as such, became an almost generic term for (green) tea in nineteenth-century England.<sup>66</sup> Samuel Ball’s 1848 *Account of the Cultivation and Manufacture of Tea in China* demonstrates the level of detail available to the British interested in the China tea trade. Ball worked for the EIC as tea inspector and was based in Canton during the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>67</sup> He situates the centre of the tea trade with Canton in Whey-chew-fu (Huizhou): “The green tea connected with the

foreign markets is grown in the southern part of the province of Kiang-nan, in the district of Whey-chew-fu.”<sup>68</sup> Based on what Ball called “personal observations” made between 1804 to 1826, his comment allows us to bring the British desire for Chinese goods another step closer to the agency of the Huizhou tea producers and merchants.

The handbook tells us there were several types of permit (*zhao*) one had to purchase in Tunxi. For example, one could buy a permit to start the journey here with a guide (or pilot) or, for less money, without guide.<sup>69</sup> But one needed to pay for some sort of certificate to start the journey. Such documents could only be obtained in the county yamen (*xiansi*) in Tunxi.<sup>70</sup> Here, the handbook also points out the need to pay a surplus payment, or connivance fee (*xiaofei*) of 0.361 tael of silver.<sup>71</sup> Only once all the required licenses and fees had been obtained could one proceed to the shipping agency (*chuanhang*) to hire boats to transport the tea from Tunxi to a place upriver called Yuting. The price for hiring these boats depended on the quantity of goods and on the water level.<sup>72</sup> Upon arrival in Yuting, the accounts had to be settled and tips paid (*jiu qian*, lit. “give wine money”) to the boat hands. A little note adds: “If you hired them in She county, then you pay them in Tunxi; no need to give [tips] to those you hired in Tunxi”.<sup>73</sup> In Yuting, the cargo had to be off-loaded from the ships and carried across a mountain range to Qimen. The risk, the manual explains, hinges on the fact that there is no standard fee payable to the porters, meaning that there are some who will cheat you (*bibing*). Moreover, without a guide (*yinpiao*), you’d struggle to navigate this area. So, more fees payable: to each of the carriers, and, if you’d like to urge them on a bit: a tip for each of the crates they carry.<sup>74</sup>

From Qimen, the barges follow the Chang River and enter Jiangxi. That river passes through the famous porcelain town Jingdezhen, where some other Huizhou merchants are carrying porcelain trade with Canton by following the same Jiangxi route.<sup>75</sup> Downstream of

the Chang River, in Raozhou, the tea has to be moved from the barges onto river boats, each of which can carry over 80 *dan* of tea.<sup>76</sup> These boats will then cross the Lake Poyang, enter the River Gan, and then sail all the way upstream until Nan'an, where the tea has to be landed again for another mountain-crossing trip.<sup>77</sup> This part of the upriver journey of the Gan River is richly annotated. It shows that as the upstream water-level turns shallower, more barges have to be hired to lighten the boats.<sup>78</sup> A certain number of haulers also have to be employed here for dragging the boats through the shallows and rapids of the Gan, and given appropriate tips on top of the basic pay.<sup>79</sup> At Ganzhou, taxes were payable over the cargo, with different taxes applied depending on the size of the crates.<sup>80</sup> Such tax rates were reformed at various stages, including in 1848 ("the *wushen* year"), when the rate doubled from 280 *wen* per ship to 560 *wen*.<sup>81</sup>

At Nan'an, the cargo has to be taken out of the ships, and carried across the mountain pass to Nanxiong, after which it enters into a different river system, for the final part of the journey to Canton via Shaozhou.<sup>82</sup> Great detail is provided on how to handle this part of the journey, which involved yet more hiring of porters and payments of taxes and other fees. Finally, the ships arrive in the Pearl River delta, and reach a place referred to as Huadi.<sup>83</sup> A brief note adds the following: "This place has a flower garden. They grow a wide range of exotic flowers and rare herbs here, that are exported throughout the year."<sup>84</sup> The gardens (or: nurseries) at Huadi ("Fa-tee") were a frequent feature in reports of overseas visitors to Canton, especially those with an interest in botanical specimens.<sup>85</sup> "The most important fieldwork site for the naturalists was the Fa-tee nurseries, three miles upstream from the foreign Factories."<sup>86</sup> Foreign visitors came to these nurseries to purchase unusual flowers, but the Huizhou merchants, similarly, seemed to have felt some amazement and surprise at this wide range of flowers and herbs.

The outgoing trip ends here. A note at the end of this section states, rather laconically: “That is the broad outline of the whole route. Indeed, you will encounter changes as you go through. Just proceed by taking account of how things look at the time.”<sup>87</sup> The last pages of the manuscript provide details on trustworthy agencies along the route,<sup>88</sup> a much shorter text (compared to the journey southwards) offering guidance for the return trip from Canton,<sup>89</sup> and the regulations for tax-tariffs payable over the return cargo at the customs houses in Shaozhou and Ganzhou.<sup>90</sup> This list of goods over which tariffs were due provides some information on what kind of goods were transported on the return trip, from Canton to Huizhou. Several of the products listed here are predicated with the term *yang*. Literally meaning ocean, the term *yang* used in its adjectival form describes any product that has arrived in China from across the sea, and thus refers to goods that are foreign, or, sometimes, specifically Western.<sup>91</sup> The products brought back to the north included metals like tin and graphite; “foreign” indigo; flowers from Chaozhou, glass, foreign cotton, various kinds of woollen fabrics: broadcloths (*dani*), serges (*biji*), and camlets (*yusha*). Rachel Silberstein has analysed these materials in detail and demonstrates that there were distinct differences in price between these: camlets were the most expensive; followed by broadcloths, while the serges were the cheapest woollen fabrics.<sup>92</sup> The serges, according to Silberstein, were imported in the largest quantity. The list also mentions wool for robes and *magua* jackets, cotton quilts and handkerchiefs.

There seems to be little or no discernible order or sequence to the list of goods. Ginseng and birds’ nests are followed by copper and metal implements (*qi*); patterned and plain cottons and silks (including fragments or damaged pieces, *popian*) are followed by vessels in a range of materials: frosted glass, stone, horn, and raffia baskets.<sup>93</sup> Pharmaceuticals are also included: cinnabar, dried orange peel, amomum, glue, gamboge,

minium (red lead). A variety of foodstuffs: orange cake, sweets, fishtails, trepang (or sea cucumber), peanuts. While there is perhaps no evidence here of systematic or bulk trading from Canton into the Jiangxi hinterland, or from Canton to the sophisticated merchant world of Huizhou, it is clear, and probably not very surprising, that a very wide range of foreign goods were considered desirable in nineteenth-century China. Some of these were materials that were not available within domestic manufactures, such as woollen products; some were products made with materials available domestically, too, but their foreignness made them more attractive, such as cotton quilts identified as *yang*, or overseas.

Several of the products listed have long import histories in imperial China. Beeswax, for example, had long been imported from Southeast Asia for use in making candles.<sup>94</sup> As David Pattinson has shown on the basis of Song-Ming agricultural manuals, beekeeping has a long history in China, and the honey from honeybees as well as their related wax products were considered desirable. But in terms of quantities, demand outstripped domestic supply, and as early as the Song dynasty, beeswax was imported from Southeast Asia.<sup>95</sup> Pepper, or more precisely, black pepper (*hujiao*), too, was an imported product, brought to the Chinese empire mostly from the Malabar coast in India as early as the Song dynasty, as no (black) pepper plants grew in China.<sup>96</sup> Of course, pepper was a familiar spice used widely for medicinal purposes and in cooking, and grown domestically in the Sichuan area, but this refers to what is commonly identified as Sichuan pepper: a very different tree from the Rutaceae family with husked seeds that are used widely in cooking. The fact that beeswax and pepper are listed here amongst the goods brought back to Huizhou from Canton shows that it was not only Western goods that were traded inland, but also goods from the Indian Ocean world and island Southeast Asia. All of this suggests that the world of the Huizhou traders and the world beyond the boundaries of the Chinese empire were connected,

through the goods delivered from the hinterland to the port, but equally through the material world of Southeast Asia and Europe.

## Conclusion

The poem that opened this essay was included, amongst other places, in “Shuilu ping’an,” which guided porcelain merchants from their home in Huizhou via Ji’an prefecture to their final destination in Canton. No one could possibly make the argument that the rhyme about the counties of Ji’an would have been crucial to the success of these merchants’ mission.

The two manuscripts discussed here contained a wide range of information, and only some of it would have been business critical. Yet, it was precisely those key pieces of local information that could make the difference between the success and failure of a commercial expedition from Huizhou to Canton and back. The very local nature of the information contained within these handbooks made them valuable, especially in the hands of someone only transiting through the area. Access to this information facilitated not only safe transit through the physical landscape, but also offered the chance of establishing effective relationships within the social spaces these merchants traversed. For us to recognise the value of those details, access the social world of the merchants, and understand the material and symbolic forces that shaped that world, we need the multi-layered and fine-grained analysis that micro-history offers. But those spaces were not static; they were mobile, traversed and inhabited as they were by a wide variety of merchants, innkeepers, permit-handlers, transport workers, boatmen, temple guardians, migrant workers and many others. The information contained in these handbooks made it possible for outsiders to navigate through these spaces, along unfamiliar land and water routes, and



towards their destination in Canton, negotiating safe passage along the way. The notes created by those who had come before made it possible for those who came later to have access to their predecessors' experiences; these manuscript documents facilitated the preservation and transmission of the knowledge they had gained. Such documents were created, preserved and transmitted by Huizhou men, for use by their descendants, who deployed the handbooks not just to deliver their goods in the hand of the Canton merchants but also to supply Huizhou residents with goods from all over the world. To read these handbooks only as evidence of local networks is to miss important dimensions of their significance. Reading them through a global lens brings a very different picture to the fore, in which Huizhou merchants played a key role in the development and growth of the global connections that shaped late imperial China and connected it to the wider world. By selecting goods to bring to the foreign merchants in Canton, by shopping for foreign luxuries to bring home to Huizhou, by negotiating with representatives of global empires through the Canton merchants, these Huizhou men were active agents in the growth of those connections. Combining the two methods into a single, micro-global lens offers the best tool for making that role visible. Only seen through that lens do we see the opening rhyme about the Ji'an counties as part of a much larger strategic infrastructure that connected Huizhou to Canton, and China to the wider world.

---

<sup>1</sup> 九縣詩。萬安灘上水如梭 / 南有龍泉北泰和 / 地脈遠通安福界 / 源流直接永清河 / 永寧路伴行人少 / 吉水山高進士多 / 惟有永豐人狡猾 / 廬陵平地起風波。The translation is mine.

<sup>2</sup> Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the 'glorious Ming' in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 55-73. Pinyin is used for the transliteration from Chinese.

- <sup>3</sup> *Tianxia shuilu lucheng* 天下水陸路程; *Tianxia lucheng tuyin* 天下路程圖引; *Keshang yilan xingmi* 客商一覽醒迷, ed. Yang Zhengtai 杨正泰 (Taiyuan, 1992): 439.
- <sup>4</sup> Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, "Cishang Zhi Lu: Ba Huizhou Shang Bian Lucheng "Shuilu Ping'an' Chaben 瓷商之路: 跋徽州商編路程《水陸平安》抄本 [The Porcelain Road: Postscript to a Manuscript of a Huizhou Merchant Manual "Shuilu Ping'an'," *Lishi Dili* 25 (2011): 328.
- <sup>5</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an 水陸平安 [Safe Journey by Water or Land]" (1844), 16b.
- <sup>6</sup> For a discussion of the concept of micro-spatial, please see Anne Gerritsen and Christian De Vito, "Micro-Spatial Histories of Labour: Towards a New Global History," in *Micro-Spatial Histories of Global Labour*, eds. Christian G. De Vito and Anne Gerritsen (Cham, 2018), 1–28.
- <sup>7</sup> Timothy Brook, "Guides for Vexed Travelers: Route Books in the Ming and Qing," *Ch'Ing-Shih Wen-T'i* 4.5 (1981): 32–76; "Guides for Vexed Travelers: A Supplement," *Ch'Ing-Shih Wen-T'i* 4.6 (1981): 130–40; "Guides for Vexed Travellers: A Second Supplement," *Ch'Ing-Shih Wen-T'i* 4.8 (1982): 96–109; Daniel A. Rabuzzi, 'Eighteenth-Century Commercial Mentalities as Reflected and Projected in Business Handbooks', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 29.2 (1995): 169–89; Jaume Aurell, 'Reading Renaissance Merchants' Handbooks: Confronting Professional Ethics and Social Identity', in *The Idea of Work in Europe from Antiquity to Modern Times*, ed. Josef Ehmer and Catharina Lis (Farnham, 2009), 89–108; Joseph F. Stanley, 'Negotiating Trade: Merchant Manuals and Cross-Cultural Exchange in the Medieval Mediterranean', *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 30.1 (2018): 102–12; Rachel Midura, 'Itinerating Europe: Early Modern Spatial Networks in Printed Itineraries, 1545–1700', *Journal of Social History* 54.4 (2021): 1023–63.
- <sup>8</sup> Tang Guohua 唐国华, "Ming Qing Shiqi Poyang Hu de Kuozhan Yu Xingtai Yanbian Yanjiu 明清时期鄱阳湖的扩展与形态演变研究 [The Development and Transformation of Shape of Lake Poyang during the Ming and Qing]," *Jiangxi Shehui Kexue* 37.7 (2017): 123–31.
- <sup>9</sup> Q. Zhang et al., "Has the Three-Gorges Dam Made the Poyang Lake Wetlands Wetter and Drier?," *Geophysical Research Letters* 39.20 (2012): 1–7.
- <sup>10</sup> For the purpose of enhancing tourism in the region, Huizhou was renamed in 1987, and has been known since as Huangshan City, after the nearby mountain. Xiaomei Ji, "City-Renaming and Its Effects in China," *GeoJournal* 83.2 (2018): 381–97.
- <sup>11</sup> (*Kangxi*) *Duchang Xian Zhi* (康熙)都昌縣志 [*Kangxi-Era Duchang County Gazetteer*], ed. Xu Mengshen 徐孟深 and Zeng Wangsun 曾王孫 (1694; repr., Beijing, 2013), 155b.
- <sup>12</sup> Zhao Shidong, et. al., "Population, Consumption, and Land Use in the Jitai Basin Region, Jiangxi Province," in *Growing Populations, Changing Landscapes: Studies from India, China, and the United States* (Washington, D.C., 2001), 179–206.
- <sup>13</sup> Huang Chongtao 黄崇焘, "Fuliang chaye shihua 浮梁茶叶史话 [History of Fuliang tea]," *Nongye kaogu* 4 (1992): 240–42.
- <sup>14</sup> Huang Chongtao 黄崇焘, *Fuliang chaye baojian* 浮梁茶叶宝鉴 [*Comprehensive mirror of Fuliang tea*] (Nanchang: Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2005), 11.
- <sup>15</sup> Zou Yi and Lin Xi, "Tunxi: Urban Sectoral Agglomeration in a Regional Centre of Tea Trade," in *China: A Historical Geography of the Urban*, eds. Ding Yannan, Maurizio Marinelli, and Zhang Xiaohong (Cham, 2018), 91–114.
- <sup>16</sup> For an example, see China Imperial Maritime Customs, *Reports on Trade at the Treaty Ports.*, Statistical Series 4 (Shanghai, 1878), 73.
- <sup>17</sup> Anne Gerritsen, *The City of Blue and White: Chinese Porcelain and the Early Modern World* (Cambridge, 2020).
- <sup>18</sup> For a brief introduction, see Frederick W. Mote, *Imperial China, 900-1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999), 390–91.
- <sup>19</sup> Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, CA; Los Angeles, CA; London, 2011), 44.
- <sup>20</sup> An extensive literature on all aspects of merchant culture in late imperial China exists. A few illustrative examples include Joseph P. McDermott, *The Making of a New Rural Order in South China: Merchants, Markets, and Lineages, 1500–1700*, vol. 2, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2020); Timothy Brook, "The Merchant Network in 16th Century China. A Discussion and Translation of Zhang Han's 'On Merchants'," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 24.2 (1981): 165–214; Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, Mass., 2007); Wu Yulian, *Luxurious Networks: Salt Merchants, Status, and Statecraft in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford, 2017); Richard von Glahn, *The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2016).

- <sup>21</sup> For an extensive bibliography on the literature in Chinese and English on merchants, merchant culture, and the merchants' contribution to the growth of the late-imperial economy, see Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 574–77.
- <sup>22</sup> Wu, *Luxurious Networks*, 31; Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure*, 127.
- <sup>23</sup> Zou and Lin, "Tunxi," 91–92.
- <sup>24</sup> Antonia Finnane, *Speaking of Yangzhou: A Chinese City, 1550-1850* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004); Joseph McDermott, *The Making of a New Rural Order in South China: Village, Lineage and Land in Huizhou: C. 960-1540*, vol. 1, 2 vols (Cambridge, 2013); Du Yongtao, *The Order of Places: Translocal Practices of the Huizhou Merchants in Late Imperial China* (Leiden, 2015).
- <sup>25</sup> Zou and Xi, "Tunxi," 99.
- <sup>26</sup> *Mingdai Yizhan Kao* 明代驛站考 [National Stagepost Network of the Ming Dynasty], ed. Yang Zhengtai 楊正泰 (Shanghai, 1996).
- <sup>27</sup> Brook, "Guides for Vexed Travelers," 1981; "Guides for Vexed Travelers: A Supplement," 1981; "Guides for Vexed Travellers: A Second Supplement."
- <sup>28</sup> *Mingdai Yizhan Kao*.
- <sup>29</sup> Timothy Brook, *Geographical Sources of Ming-Qing History* (Ann Arbor, 1988).
- <sup>30</sup> Rachel Midura, "Itinerating Europe: Early Modern Spatial Networks in Printed Itineraries, 1545–1700," *Journal of Social History* 54.4 (2021): 1023–63.
- <sup>31</sup> *Huizhou minjian zhenxi wenxian jicheng* 徽州民間珍稀文獻集成 [Collection of rare popular materials from Huizhou], ed. Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, 30 vols (Shanghai, 2018).
- <sup>32</sup> The two texts I focus on here are: "Wanli Yuncheng 萬里雲程 [The Ten-Thousand Mile Cloud-Route]" (1848 1854); "Shuilu Ping'an"; Wang first brought ten such newly discovered documents to the attention of the scholarly community in a short publication in 2000. Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, "Xijian Qingdai Huizhou shangye wenshu chaoben shizhong 稀見清代徽州商業文書抄本十種 [Ten rare merchant manuscripts from Qing dynasty Huizhou]," *Hua'nan yanjiu ciliao zhongxin tongxun* 20 (2000): 11–14.
- <sup>33</sup> Wang, "Cishang zhi Lu."
- <sup>34</sup> Wang, 326.
- <sup>35</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 1a.
- <sup>36</sup> Wang, "Cishang zhi Lu," 326.
- <sup>37</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 46a.
- <sup>38</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 4a.
- <sup>39</sup> Market towns (zhen) had a special status within the imperial system. They were too small to merit the presence of a permanent representation of the imperial administration, but important enough for manufacturing or commercial reasons to require taxation. During the Qing, there were four key towns in the empire, of which Jingdezhen was one (the others were: Hankou 漢口, Foshan 佛山 and Zhuxian 朱仙. He Yimin, "Prosperity and Decline: A Comparison of the Fate of Jingdezhen, Zhuxianzhen, Foshan and Hankou in Modern Times," *Frontiers of History in China* 5.1 (2010): 52–85; For a study of market towns in a much earlier period, see Richard von Glahn, "Towns and Temples: Urban Growth and Decline in the Yangzi Delta, 1100-1400," in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, eds. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge, 2003), 176–211.
- <sup>40</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 4a.
- <sup>41</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 4a.
- <sup>42</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 17a.
- <sup>43</sup> "Shuilu Ping'an," 11b.
- <sup>44</sup> McDermott, *Merchants, Markets, and Lineages*, 2:20n22.
- <sup>45</sup> Ishikawa Akira 石川晶, "清代の樟樹鎮薬材商人の活動について [Zhangshuzhen Pharmacists' Activities in the Qing Dynasty]," *The Japanese Journal for History of Pharmacy* 46.1 (2011): 51–57; Luo Hui 罗辉, "Qingdai Qingjiang shangren de jingying huodong 清代清江商人的经营活动 [The managerial activities of the Qingjiang merchants during the Qing]," *Jiangxi keji shifan xueyuan xuebao* 3 (2010): 49–52.
- <sup>46</sup> He Bian, *Know Your Remedies: Pharmacy and Culture in Early Modern China* (Princeton, 2020), 128; 137-142.
- <sup>47</sup> Shuk-wah Poon, *Negotiating Religion in Modern China: State and Common People in Guangzhou, 1900-1937* (Hong Kong, 2011), 46.
- <sup>48</sup> The text was discovered and first discussed in a publication by Wang Zhenzhong. See Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, "Qingdai Huizhou yu Guangdong de shanglu ji shangye: Shexian chashang chanben "Wanli yuncheng" yanjiu 清代徽州與廣東的商路及商業：歙縣茶商抄本《萬里云程》研究 [Trade and the Trade Route from

---

Huizhou to Guangdong during the Qing: A Study of a Tea Trader's Manuscript "Wanli Yuncheng'," *Lishi Dili* 17 (2011): 297–315.

<sup>49</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 21a. One Chinese *li* measures about one third of a mile (or 500 meter). For convenience, I will refer to the original distance in *li* throughout.

<sup>50</sup> Jiang Yitong 江怡桐, "Shexian Fangkeng Jiang Shi Chashang Kaolve 歙县芳坑江氏茶商考略 [The Fangkeng Jiang Family Tea Traders of She County]," in *Huishang Yanjiu 徽商研究 [Research on the Merchants of Huizhou]*, eds. Zhang Haipeng 张海鹏 and Wang Tingyuan 王廷元 (Hefei, 1995), 577–99; "Wanli Yuncheng," 28a. I am grateful to my student Xu Guanmian (Victor) 徐冠勉 for spotting this.

<sup>51</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 1a. This numbering system is not part of the manuscript, but refers to my own pagination.

<sup>52</sup> These are distances given in the manual. I have not measured these distances on a contemporary map. "Wanli Yuncheng," 21a.

<sup>53</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 2b.

<sup>54</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 3a.

<sup>55</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 4a.

<sup>56</sup> Wu Yulian, *Luxurious Networks*, 48.

<sup>57</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 21b.

<sup>58</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 22a.

<sup>59</sup> Wu Ren'an 吴仁安 and Tang Lixing 唐力行, "Ming Qing Huizhou chashang shulun 明清徽州茶商述论 [Account of the tea merchants of Huizhou during the Ming and Qing]," *Huizhou shixue* 3 (1985): 36; Liang Jiabin 梁嘉彬, *Guangdong shisanhang kao 广东十三行考 [The thirteen hong of Canton]* (1937; repr., Shanghai, 1989).

<sup>60</sup> Liang Jiabin 梁嘉彬, *Guangdong shisanhang*, 340–342.

<sup>61</sup> "王振忠说徽州 | 徽商“走户”：到广东发洋财\_私家历史\_澎湃新闻-The Paper," accessed 13 August 2020, [https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail\\_forward\\_1733186](https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_1733186).

<sup>62</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 22b.

<sup>63</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 23a.

<sup>64</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 23b–34b.

<sup>65</sup> Zhang Yanhua 张燕华 and Zhou Xiaoguang 周晓光, "Lun Daoguang zhongye yihou Shanghai zai Huizhou cha maoyi zhong de diwei 论道光中叶以后上海在徽茶贸易中的地位," *Lishi dang'an* 1 (1997): 98–99.

<sup>66</sup> Liu Yong, *The Dutch East India Company's Tea Trade with China, 1757-1781* (Leiden, 2007), 71; For "Twankay" or "Twanky" used as substitute for tea, see J. (Joseph) Hewlett and Theodore Edward Hook, *Peter Priggins, the College Scout*, vol. 2 (London, 1841), 313. The quote reads: 'It will not amuse you, Ninny, to give you an account of our conversation over the twanky and brown Georges [i.e. brown bread], as it chiefly related to college and university matters. The preparation processes for Twankay tea are also given here: Samuel Ball, *An Account of the Cultivation and Manufacture of Tea in China: Derived from Personal Observation during an Official Residence in That Country from 1804 to 1826 : With Remarks on the Experiments Now Making for the Introduction of the Culture of the Tea Tree in Other Parts of the World* (London, 1848), Chapter IX: 206–249; Appendix: 374–379.

<sup>67</sup> Andrew B. Liu, *Tea War: A History of Capitalism in China and India* (New Haven, 2020), 66.

<sup>68</sup> Ball, *The Cultivation and Manufacture of Tea in China*, 206.

<sup>69</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 23b.

<sup>70</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 23b–24a. The Qing imperial regulated tea had to be licensed in Tunxi before leaving the Huizhou area.

<sup>71</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 23b.

<sup>72</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 24a.

<sup>73</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 24a.

<sup>74</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 24a.

<sup>75</sup> Wang, "Cishang zhi Lu."

<sup>76</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 25a. The unit, *dan*, refers to one shoulderload.

<sup>77</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 25a–29b.

<sup>78</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 26a.

<sup>79</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 26b–27a.

<sup>80</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 28a.

<sup>81</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 28a.

<sup>82</sup> "Wanli Yuncheng," 29b–33b.

- 
- <sup>83</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 34a.
- <sup>84</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 20b.
- <sup>85</sup> Josepha Richard and Jan Woudstra, “‘Thoroughly Chinese’: Revealing the Plants of the Hong Merchants’ Gardens Through John Bradby Blake’s Paintings,” *Curtis’s Botanical Magazine* 34.4 (2017): 475–97.
- <sup>86</sup> Fa-ti Fan, *British Naturalists in Qing China: Science, Empire, and Cultural Encounter* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 29.
- <sup>87</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 34b.
- <sup>88</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 34b–35b.
- <sup>89</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 35b–38b.
- <sup>90</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 39b–43b.
- <sup>91</sup> Frank Dikötter, *Things Modern: Material Culture and Everyday Life in China* (London, 2007); Yangwen Zheng, *China on the Sea* (Leiden, 2012).
- <sup>92</sup> For the history of British woolens in China, see Rachel Silberstein, “Fashioning the Foreign: Using British Woolens in Nineteenth-Century China,” in *Fashion, Identity, and Power in Modern Asia*, ed. Kyunghye Pyun and Aida Yuen Wong (Cham, 2018), 231–58.
- <sup>93</sup> “Wanli Yuncheng,” 41a.
- <sup>94</sup> *Description of the City of Canton: With an Appendix, Containing an Account of the Population of the Chinese Empire, Chinese Weights and Measures, and the Imports and Exports of Canton*. (Canton, 1834), 85.
- <sup>95</sup> Beeswax is mentioned throughout Zhao Rukuo’s “Gazetteer of Foreign Lands”. Zhao Rugua 趙汝适, *Zhufanzhi* 諸蕃志, Siku quanshu (13th century; repr., Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983); for details, see the excellent new translation of *Zhufan zhi* by Shao-yun Yang, “A Chinese Gazetteer of Foreign Lands,” ArcGIS StoryMaps, accessed 18 August 2020, <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/39bce63e4e0642d3abce6c24db470760>. Beeswax appears regularly throughout the text.
- <sup>96</sup> David Bulbeck, ed., *Southeast Asian Exports since the 14th Century: Cloves, Pepper, Coffee, and Sugar* (Leiden, 1998), 5–6.