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JIANXIA ZHUAN (TALES OF KNIGHTS AT ARMS):
ON THE FORMATION AND TRADITION OF THE CLASSICAL
ANTHOLOGY OF KNIGHT-ERRANTRY STORIES

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Introduction¹

Jianxia zhuan 劍俠傳 (Tales of knights at arms) can claim the modest prestige of being the first Chinese anthology exclusively dedicated to narratives about knight-errantry. Historically, the range of stories included in this collection covers the period from the Tang to the Northern Song (8th to 12th c.), and generically all the texts in it can be assigned to the earliest elaborated form of fictional narrative in classical diction termed as *chuanqi* 傳奇 (lit., ‘tale of wonder’, as a generic term conventionally rendered as ‘tale’). The collection took its most relevant shape at some point in the middle to late Ming. From early on it was noted as a particularly fine selection of knight-errant stories, which included virtually all the thematically important early tales of some stature. Since then the collection has established its position as the representative, even authoritative, collection of Tang- and Song-tales on knight-errantry and swordsmanship. Due to frequent new editions it has remained quite popular among readers up to the present time. Throughout the Qing the anthology was included in a considerable number of collectanea, which attests to the importance attributed to it among literati and publishers.

Regarding its impact on literary history, *Jianxia zhuan* has been—depending on the writers’ ideological stance—either credited with, or blamed for its tremendous influence on the formation and maturation of the fictional genre of *wuxia xiaoshuo* 武俠小說 (commonly rendered as ‘martial arts fiction’), mainly in the late 19th and the 20th century.² Lu Xun 魯迅

- 1 I gratefully acknowledge the valuable critical comments offered by several readers of earlier drafts of this article. In particular I would like to thank Prof. Patrick Hanan, Prof. Wilt Idema, and Dietrich Tschanz.
- 2 *Zhongguo wenxue da cidian* 中國文學大辭典, eds. Ma Liangchun 馬良春 and Li Futian 李福田 (7 v., Tianjin: Tianjin renmin chubanshe, 1991), 7: 4745.

(Zhou Shuren 周樹人, 1881-1936), in his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe* 中國小說史略 (Historical sketch of Chinese fictional narrative, 1923/24), made *Jianxia zhuan* responsible for being the one collection which had marked the very starting-point of fantastic marital arts fiction. In his own epoch this genre had developed into the commercially most successful branch of entertainment literature to which he fiercely opposed.³ To cite a scholar with a somewhat different viewpoint, his elder brother, Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967), mentioned *Jianxia zhuan* in his memoirs in the context of an account of his own enthusiasm for *wuxia*-fiction as an adolescent. He equally considered *Jianxia zhuan* as the actual origin of the genre.⁴ The influence of *Jianxia zhuan* on the emergence of *wuxia*-fiction tends to be attributed to single stories contained in it rather than to the collection as such. But it should be kept in mind that these stories often were most readily accessible as anthologized in the widely circulated *Jianxia zhuan*.

Edward H. Schafer (1913-91) praised *Jianxia zhuan* as “an important collection of tales of daring and wonderful exploits”.⁵ However, in Western sinology it has largely gone unnoticed. Most disturbingly, in James J.Y. Liu’s pioneering study of *xia*-literature, the collection was not even mentioned by its title, although the Tang-tales that the author chose for discussion, may be seen as virtually a selection from *Jianxia zhuan*.⁶ In recent years the general interest for *xia*-fiction and its history among Chinese literary historians has increased enormously. This becomes apparent in the sharply growing number of relevant publications since the late 1980’s. In this wider context the *Jianxia zhuan*—because of its pivotal function in the transmission of *xia*-tales—has also received its due share of attention. Despite this heightened scholarly interest at least on the Chinese side, the *Jianxia zhuan*’s formative history has not been accounted for in a

3 *Lu Xun quanji* 魯迅全集 (16 v., Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1981), 9: 100-101.

4 Zhou Zuoren, *Zhitang huixiang lu* 知堂回想錄 (2 v., Xianggang: Tingchou chubanshe, [s.a.]), 1: 57.

5 *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 941.

6 Cf. James J.Y. Liu, *The Chinese Knight-Errant* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), 85-98.

satisfactory manner. There is even a growing amount of confusion and misconceptions about it. The following shall contribute to a more complete and more consistent view of the editorial and publishing history of this important anthology.

The early history of the *Jianxia zhuan* was embedded in the wider context of an important process taking place in the 16th century, namely, the ‘rediscovery’ of Tang- and Song- tales. I shall introduce in necessary detail the circumstances of the reissuing of the two great collections of tales, in order to provide a basis for the discussion of the claim that the compilation of the *Jianxia zhuan* had partly been based on them. Then I shall proceed to scrutinize the widely accepted claim that the *Jianxia zhuan* was compiled by the eminent Ming-literatus Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526-1590). I shall point out the actual precursors to Wang Shizhen’s edition and come up with a hypothesis about their relationship. A reconsideration of the textual sources will offer some clues to the dating and the conception of the collection’s original compilation. Having mapped out the formative history of the *Jianxia zhuan*, I will continue by discussing its subsequent inclusion in collectanea, the various formats it was shaped into and the various attributions of compilership. It shall become transparent from my discussion that, historically, the title “*Jianxia zhuan*” did not refer to one stable editorial entity, but rather to a variety of genetically interrelated anthologies.

Anthologizing tales in the Ming

The type of text as collected in the anthology *Jianxia zhuan* is commonly categorized as *chuanqi*. This literary genre can be characterized in terms of length and language as short prose narrative written in the classical literary language; in terms of subject matter it could be defined as a story dealing with unusual events and persons, often including supernatural or fantastic elements.⁷ The two main sources of the *chuanqi*-tale were “myths and

7 For concise descriptions of this genre see Sarah Yim’s entry on “Ch’uan-ch’i” in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 356-360; and Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, *Geschichte der chinesischen Literatur* (Bern: Scherz, 1990), 271-274. The generic label *chuanqi* was probably introduced as late as the 16th

legends of popular origin on the one hand, and historical events and current affairs on the other.”⁸ Although many scholars believe that the *chuanqi*-tale was the earliest fully-fledged fiction in Chinese literature, this is disputed by others.⁹ The genre of *chuanqi* had seen its heyday during the Tang-dynasty, mainly from the 8th through the 10th century, and found a certain continuation during the Northern Song-dynasty and, to some degree, throughout the late imperial period.

The great majority of *chuanqi*-texts from the Tang-dynasty that we nowadays still have, were passed down to us in one large compilation, the *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (Extensive gleanings of the Taiping-reign, 500 j.), compiled in the first decade of the Song-dynasty under the nominal supervision of Li Fang 李昉 (925-96). It was prepared for printing in 978, but its actual printing for wider circulation was prevented by scholarly objections to the heterodox subject matter and nature of the narrative material collected in it. Thus, the compilation remained practically unprinted, although the printing blocks had already been cut. Fortunately, the complete work survived in manuscript form.¹⁰ The second largest early

c., and it had been derived from the title of one of the most important collections of such tales, *Chuanqi* 傳奇, by Pei Xing 裴鏞 (825-880).

- 8 E[vangelin]e D. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period* (2 v., London: Probsthain, 1938), 2: 24.
- 9 For an important argument against the mainstream position of regarding *chuanqi* as fiction, see: Charles E. Hammond, “T'ang Legends: History and Hearsay”, *Tamkang Review* 20.4 (1990): 359-382. Also see: Cheng Yizhong 程毅中, “Lun Tangdai xiaoshuo de yanjin zhi ji” 論唐代小說的演進之跡 [On the traces of the Tang-story's progress], *Wenxue yichan* 文學遺產 1987/5: 44-52.
- 10 For brief information on the *Taiping guangji* and its compilation see Nienhauser's article on “T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi” in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 744-45; cf. Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1997), 57. For more detailed information see Edward Schafer's entry “T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi” in: *A Sung Bibliography*, ed. Yves Hervouet (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978), 341-42; and his “The Table of Contents of the *T'ai p'ing kuang chi*”, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 2 (1980): 258-63. Schafer's findings were partly revised by: Russell Kirkland, “A World in Ba-

compilation of stories is the *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 (The record of Yijian), written and compiled during the second half of the 12th century by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202). This is a compilation chiefly of Song-dynasty anecdotes and other short narratives on extraordinary matters, transmitted to Hong Mai in oral form, although in some cases he also quoted from contemporary written sources. Hong Mai started collecting stories for this compilation in progress when he was around twenty, and continued on this life-long project, with interruptions, up to his late days. He published the material in 32 installments of 20 or 10 *juan* each, the earliest one being published in 1161, and the last sequel following around 1198.¹¹ The entire compilation comprised the final number of 420 *juan*. However, as a direct consequence of this mode of publication in installments over a period of almost forty years, only very few readers were able to see—even less to acquire—the full set of the compilation. As a result, about half the compilation was lost in the process of transmission. Only in the early 20th century, scholars tried to reconstruct some of the missing parts from the numerous quotations in contemporary sources.¹²

In order to understand the role in literary history played by these two treasuries of tales, the *Taiping guangji* and the *Yijian zhi*, one has to be aware of the crucial fact that up to the mid-16th century, they had existed only in extremely rare manuscript copies and therefore had remained virtually inaccessible to the literati readership for several centuries. During the era Jiajing 嘉靖 (1522-66) of the Ming-dynasty, some literati and pub-

lance: Holistic Synthesis in the *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi*", *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 23 (1993): 43-70.

11 See Chang Fu-jui's entry "I-chien chih" in *A Sung Bibliography*, 344-45. For introductions to the contents of this work from the perspective of its value as a source for the study of social history, see: Chang Fu-jui, "Le Yi Kien Tche et la société des Song", *Journal Asiatique* 256 (1968): 55-93; and Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China, 1127-1276* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 17-24.

12 See the following two recent evaluations of this project: Hsiu-huei Wang, "Vingt-sept récits retrouvés du *Yijian zhi*", *T'oung Pao* 75 (1989): 191-208; and Barend J. ter Haar, "Newly Recovered Anecdotes from Hong Mai's (1123-1202) *Yijian zhi*", *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 23 (1993): 19-41.

lishers set out to recover the great legacy of tales from the Tang and the Song. Since the largest number of texts had been included in these two compilations, the preparation and wide circulation of new print-editions of the *Taiping guangji* and the *Yijian zhi* were most instrumental to the recovery of this literary treasure. The signal importance of this event on the literary field of this epoch can hardly be overstated. Undeniably it had an enormous impact on the further development of some narrative genres, most notably the vernacular story (the so-called *huaben* 話本) and the drama. Authors in these genres began to draw extensively on narrative material and inspiration from this vast corpus of Tang- and Song-tales, once it had been made accessible to the readership.

Among the two, *Taiping guangji* has the better researched publishing history. The first Ming-edition has a preface, dated 1566, by the eminent patron of this voluminous publishing project, Tan Kai 談愷 (*zi* Shoujiao 守教, 1503-68), who had achieved the *jinshi*-degree at a young age (1526) and subsequently made a brilliant official career.¹³ From the preface to the first edition we learn that this edition was based on a manuscript copy and that the text in a few parts was still incomplete. Apparently, these incomplete seven *juan* were gradually supplied in later printings, based on an extant fragment of a Song-printing. These revisions generated at least three textual 'systems' with differing degrees of completeness. Any subsequent print editions of the *Taiping guangji*, such as the collated edition by the author and publisher Xu Zichang 許自昌 (*zi* Yuanyou 元祐, 1578-1623) and a moveable type edition, were all based on the Tan Kai-editions.¹⁴

Hitherto the publishing and reception history of the *Yijian zhi* in the late Ming has not been well understood. Here the discussion has to focus

13 Qu Mianliang 瞿冕良, *Zhongguo guji banke cidian* 中國古籍版刻辭典 (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 1999), 512.

14 On the system of variant editions see: Wang Shaoying 汪紹楹, "Dianjiao shuoming" 點校說明 [Editorial explanations], in: *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (10 v., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 1: i-iii; Cheng Yizhong, "Taiping guangji de ji zhong banben" 太平廣記的幾種版本 [The several editions of the *Taiping guangji*], *Shehuikexue zhanxian* 社會科學戰線 43 (1988/3): 237-240; Zhang Guofeng 張國風, "Shilun Taiping guangji de banben yanbian" 試論太平廣記的版本演變 [Tentative discussion of the evolution of the editions of *Taiping guangji*], *Wenxian* 文獻 62 (1994/4): 3-17.

on one particular edition which stands out as the only one to have gained wide distribution, and which therefore should be regarded as the relevant Ming-edition of this work: the *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* 新編分類夷堅志 (The record of Yijian: newly arranged and categorized, 51 *juan*, 10 *ce*).¹⁵ This edition was issued by Qingping shantang 清平山堂, the publishing house of Hong Pian 洪楩 (*zi* Zimei 子美), who himself was a remote descendant of Hong Mai's, and who is noted in literary history chiefly as the editor of the earliest known collection of vernacular stories, the *Liushi jia xiaoshuo* 六十家小說 (Sixty Stories, 1541-50), better known by its alternative title *Qingping shantang huaben* 清平山堂話本 (Stories from Qingping shantang). When Hong Pian, after a brief intermezzo in an official position, returned to his home town Hangzhou 杭州, his first contribution to the publishing field probably was this edition of *Yijian zhi*-stories.¹⁶ He asked the famous Hangzhou-literatus Tian Rucheng 田汝成 (*zi* Shuhe 叔禾, *jinshi* 1526) to write a preface, dated 1546.¹⁷ This edition presented to the reader a thematically organized selection from the vast number of *Yijian zhi*-stories. It included 653 stories, i.e., a small fraction of the estimated original total number of up to 5000 stories. On the table of content Hong Pian attributed the compilation of this edition to an otherwise entirely obscure Song-person from Jian'an 建安 (Fujian province) named as Ye Zurong 葉祖榮. However, the authenticity of this edition seems undisputable for the crucial reason that it included a considerable number of stories that were lacking from the few fragmentary copies of the *Yijian zhi* still extant in the Ming. Later on, a 20th century scholar recovered these

- 15 I refer to the copy I was able to see (no. 08518) in the Rare Books Department of the National Central Library (Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan), Taipei.
- 16 On Hong Pian, see: Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge/MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 56; André Lévy, *Le conte en langue vulgaire du xvii^e siècle* (Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1981), 25. For a survey of the output of the publishing house Qingping shantang see: Qu Mianliang, *Zhongguo guji banke cidian*, 559.
- 17 This preface was also included in the modern standard edition of *Yijian zhi*, ed. He Zhuo 何卓 (4 v., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 4: 1833-1835. Tian Rucheng is best remembered for his Hangzhou chronicles *Xihu youlan zhi* 西湖遊覽志 (Tour guide to the West Lake, 24 *j.*) and *Xihu youlan zhi yu* 餘 (Additional tour guide to the West Lake, 26 *j.*).

additional stories from Hong Pian's edition and added them as a supplement ("Yijian zhi bu" 補, 25 j.) to the first modern edition of the fragmentary collection (1927).¹⁸ Since then, the edition *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* has onesidedly been regarded only under the single aspect of its function as a channel through which additional portions of the partly lost *Yijian zhi* had been gained. But the *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* should be reconsidered as the dominant form by which the *Yijian zhi* circulated throughout the late Ming and probably into the Qing. The wide distribution of this edition is clearly attested to by the considerable number of copies still extant in libraries nowadays. In Mainland China alone, it has been preserved in six different libraries, and in Taiwan another three copies are being held.¹⁹ Apparently, there was also a moveable type edition based on Hong Pian's (or Ye Zurong's) edition in the late Ming.²⁰ Although at least two other, larger editions of *Yijian zhi* were produced in the late Ming, they were not comparable to *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* in terms of distribution.

The publication of the Hong Pian-edition of an *Yijian zhi*-selection and the Tan Kai-edition of *Taiping guangji* certainly were path-breaking events on the literary field of the 16th century. Nevertheless, even after their appearance, the readership did not receive the corpus of stories from the Tang and Song exclusively as transmitted by these compilations. A number of single Tang-ales and even entire collections of tales had continuously been passed on outside the *Taiping guangji*.²¹ If these texts are compared

18 *Yijian zhi*, ed. Zhang Yuanji 張元濟 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927); cf. ter Haar, "Newly Recovered Anecdotes", 21-22. This supplement was also included in He Zhuo's standard edition, *Yijian zhi*, 4: 1549-1782. There, the sequence of texts is the same as in *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi*, but the already known stories were not reduplicated.

19 *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu (zi bu)* 中國古籍善本書目(子部) (2 v., Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 2: 741, no. 8729; *Guojia tushuguan shanben shuzhi chugao: zi bu* 國家圖書館善本書志初稿: 子部 (3 v., Taipei: Guojia tushuguan, 1998), 3: 115-116, nos. 08518-08520.

20 *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu (zi bu)*, 2: 741, no. 8730, entitled as *Fenlei Yijian zhi* 分類夷堅志; only a fragment of this edition has remained.

21 Cf., e.g., *Tangren xiaoshuo* 唐人小說, ed. Wang Bijiang 汪辟疆 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957).

to any respective versions in *Taiping guangji*, usually a considerable amount of textual variation can be found, which is due to the separate channels of transmission. In the late Ming, some literati began to compile new anthologies of old stories on the basis either of single tales, or of the original collections, or of *Taiping guangji* and *Yijian zhi*.²² Thus, towards the end of the Ming-dynasty, anthologies of *chuanqi*-tales from the Tang and the Song, occasionally enriched by later material, from the Yuan or the early Ming, became an increasingly important segment of a rapidly growing book market.

Possibly the earliest such compilation of Tang-tales, and in terms of selectivity definitely one of the finest anthologies of stories ever produced, was the *Yu chu zhi* 虞初志 (Record of Yu chu, 7 j.).²³ Probably an early Jiajing-product, its compilation is attributed to the mid-Ming literatus Lu Cai 陸采 (*zi* Zixuan 子玄, 1497-1537). It brought together the cream of Tang-tales, 31 single texts, compiled from sources outside the *Taiping guangji*. Due to its quality, it was frequently reissued and commented on by some of the most prominent late Ming literati, and its format and title became a model for later compilations.

Perhaps the most successful late Ming anthology of *chuanqi*-tales from the Tang and the Song was the *Yan yi bian* 艷異編 (Compilation of

- 22 For a good survey of 16th century anthologies of tales see: Allan Barr, "Pu Songling and *Liaozhai zhiyi*: a study of textual transmission, biographical background, and literary antecedents" (Ph.D. diss., University of Oxford, 1983), 197-202. For a study of the practice of story-anthologizing in the late Ming, focussing on *Jiandeng conghua* 剪燈叢話 and related collections, see: Otsuka Hidetaka 大塚秀高, "Mindai kôki ni okeru bungen shôsetsu no kankô ni tsuite" 明代後期における文言小説の刊行について, *Tôyô bunka* 東洋文化 61 (1981): 45-97; republished in Chinese translation as: "Mingdai houqi wenyan xiaoshuo kanxing gaikuang" 明代後期文言小説刊行概況 [The printing and circulation of classical stories in the late Ming period: a survey], tr. Xie Bixia 謝碧霞, *Shumu jikan* 書目季刊 19.2 (1985): 60-75 [1st part] and 19.3 (1985): 34-51 [2nd part].
- 23 The name *Yu chu* 虞初 alludes to the earliest list of fifteen titles of *xiaoshuo* 小説 as quoted in the bibliographical section ("Yiwen zhi" 藝文志) of the *Hanshu* 漢書. By far the largest item on the list is an obscure collection *Yu chu Zhou shuo* 虞初周說 (943 *pian*). See *Hanshu* (12 v., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), j. 30, 6: 1745. Thus, *Yu chu* became an alternate generic term for *xiaoshuo*.

the beautiful and strange). The thematic range of this anthology, as predictable from its title, placed a double focus on two traditional domains of the classical tale: ‘female beauty’ (courtesans etc.), and the various facets of the ‘supernatural’ (ghosts, magic etc.). Traditionally its compilation had been attributed to the eminent Ming-literatus Wang Shizhen (*zi* Yuanmei 元美, *hao* Yanzhou shanren 弇州山人, 1526-90). This attribution, though generally doubted, was corroborated in recent research by reference to circumstantial evidence.²⁴ The ante-quem-dating of Wang’s compilation was set to 1566. Two editions of *Yan yi bian* have been made accessible in reprint: the illustrated *Yuming tang zhaiping Wang Yanzhou xiansheng yan yi bian* 玉茗堂摘評王弇州先生艷異編 (Mister Wang Yanzhou’s Compilation of the beautiful and the strange, commentary and selection by Yuming tang [i.e. Tang Xianzu]), in 12 *juan*,²⁵ and what seems to have been a reorganized edition, the *Xin juan Yuming tang pixuan Wang Yanzhou xiansheng yan yi bian* 新鐫玉茗堂批選王弇州先生艷異編, comprising 40 *juan*, with a supplement (*xubian* 續編) of 19 *juan* attributed to the famous dramatist Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (*zi* Yireng 義仍, 1550-1616).²⁶ The latter probably was the commercially most successful version of this anthology. It served as the model or as the source for a number of later works. However, both these editions can clearly be dated to the early 17th century and apparently do not represent

24 Xie Bixia 謝碧霞, “Yan yi bian yanjiu” 艷異編研究 [A study of *Yan yi bian*], *Gudian wenxue* 古典文學 [Taipei] 8 (1986): 287-311; cf. Xu Shuofang’s 徐朔方 editorial preface (“Qianyan” 前言) to the reprint of a *Yan yi bian* edition in the series *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990) [=GBXSJC], i-ii. For another hypothesis, considering Zhang Dafu 張大復 (*zi* Yuanzhang 元張, 1554-1630) as a possible compiler of the *Yan yi bian*, based on the pseudonym Xi’an jushi 息庵居士 used in the preface, see: Ning Jiayu 寧稼雨, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao* 中國文言小說總目提要 (Ji’nan: Qilu shushe, 1996), 234. However I regard this tentative attribution as baseless.

25 Reprint in the series *Ming Qing shanben xiaoshuo congkan* 明清善本小說叢刊. This edition can be dated to the era Tianqi 天啓 (1621-27) of the Ming.

26 See the reprint in GBXSJC. The attribution to Tang Xianzu is believed to be spurious due to the fact that the preface to this edition (1618) postdates his death by two years. See Xu Shuofang, “Qianyan”.

the anthology's original structure and content, as designed by Wang Shizhen presumably around 1566. As a matter of fact, throughout the late Ming, under the title *Yan yi bian*, there circulated an impressive variety of editions, widely varying in size and organization. The rare books union catalogue of the P.R.C. lists no fewer than eight different editions (seven from the late Ming, one from the early Qing), representing at least five different formats, namely, 12 *juan*, 40 *juan* (with a sequel of 19 *juan*), 45 *juan*, 53 *juan*, and 57 *juan*.²⁷ Some of these editions seem hardly interrelated. One might get the impression that the title *Yan yi bian* was adopted to label a certain type of anthology rather than a particular edition or system of editions. Here I shall point out only one element of differentiation in the system of *Yan yi bian*-editions: on the one hand we have under the title *Yan yi bian* editions that in fact are collectanea, simply combining a number of existing, thematically specialized small collections of tales; on the other hand, there was the actual anthology-type *Yan yi bian* which removed the tales from their earlier editorial context, selected and rearranged them more strictly according to subject matter. In the overall development, the collectanea-type seems to have preceded the anthology-type, since the examples for the latter type all date from the early 17th century. However, the particularities of the relationships among these diverse *Yan yi bian*-editions remain unclear.²⁸ Although the original collection as compiled by Wang Shizhen seems to be lost, further below in our discussion, I shall refer to one edition of this anthology, which hitherto has gone unnoticed, but which might indeed represent its original format.

27 *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu (zi bu)*, 744-45 (nos. 8764-8771). Moreover, one contemporary catalogue also lists an early edition in 35 *juan*. For a table of contents of the edition in 57 *juan* see: *Zhongguo kexueyuan tushuguan cang zhongwen guji shanben shumu* 中國科學院圖書館藏中文古籍善本書目 (Beijing: Kexue chubanshe, 1994), 318-19 (*zi* 879). Four of the eight editions credit Wang Shizhen with the compilation.

28 Xie Bixia, "Yan yi bian yanjiu", 289-292, only refers to three *Yan yi bian*-editions: 45 *juan*, 40 *juan*, and 12 *juan*. Probably all three represent relatively late versions.

Anthologies of *xia*-stories

In the late Ming, the circulated anthologies of tales increased not only in number, but also in terms of diversity and thematic specialization. The *Jianxia zhuan*, as a narrowly defined compilation, exclusively focussing on stories about knights-errant, is considered one of the earliest examples of a monographic thematic anthology.²⁹ The *xia*-theme was introduced to narrative literature in the Tang,³⁰ and since then it came to be used as a topical category in miscellanea, collectanea, and anthologies. The earliest thematic concentration of stories involving the *xia*-theme is found in the miscellanea *Youyang zazu* 酉陽雜俎 (Assorted notes from Youyang, 30 j.) by Duan Chengshi 段成式 (c. 803-863),³¹ in a section covering most of *juan* 9, under the heading “Daoxia” 盜俠 (Thieving knights).³² Among the eight stories in this section, the ‘thieving’ theme is clearly predominant: three stories are about master-thieves, whereas the other five include the element of *xia* within the thematic framework of thieving.³³ Four of these *daoxia*-stories from *Youyang zazu*—«Seng xia» 僧俠 (The monk as a knight), «Jingxi dian laoren» 京西店老人 (The old man from the inn west of the capital), «Lanling laoren» 蘭陵老人 (The old man from Lanling), and «Lu sheng» 盧生 (Scholar Lu)—were later included in the *Jianxia zhuan*, where they formed something like the latter collection’s nucleus.

The first and foremost anthology of Tang-tales, the *Taiping guangji*, included a section “Haoxia” 豪俠 (Brave knights), comprising 25 stories in four *juan* (j. 193-196).³⁴ Among these the four stories from *Youyang*

29 Barr, “Pu Songling and *Liaozhai zhiyi*”, 202-203.

30 On the history of *xia*-narratives see: Chen Pingyuan 陳平原, *Qianggu wenren xiake meng* 千古文人俠客夢 [The literati’s age-old dream of the knight-errant] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1991); and Gong Pengcheng 龔鵬程, *Da xia* 大俠 [The great knight-errant] (Taibei: Jinguang chubanshe, 1987).

31 Cf. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 940-941.

32 *Youyang zazu*, ed. *Qinding Siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書, 1047: 693-697, 9.2b-9b.

33 Liu Yinbo 劉蔭柏, *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi: gudai bufen* 中國武俠小說史: 古代部份 (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 70-75.

34 *Taiping guangji*, 2: 1445-1473.

zazu were also included.³⁵ Although it may seem that the majority of tales in *Jianxia zhuan* was taken from this *Taiping guangji*-section, there is hardly any likelihood for such borrowing, as shall be seen. The relevant Ming-edition of *Yijian zhi*, the *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* which originally had been compiled in the Song, but was printed only around 1546, had a category “Jianxia” 劍俠 (Knights at arms), comprising four stories about knight-errantry and swordsmanship.³⁶ The direct influence of this edition of *Yijian zhi* on the formation of the *Jianxia zhuan* is shown by the fact that the latter included exactly the same set of four stories: «Huayue xinwen» 花月新聞 (Hearsay of predestined love), «Xia furen» 俠婦人 (The chivalric lady), «Jie Xun qu fu» 解洵娶婦 (The woman married by Jie Xun), and «Guo Lun guan deng» 郭倫觀燈 (Guo Lun watches the lantern). The discovery of this obvious textual relationship to the clearly datable *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* shall be put to use in our discussion of the collection’s dating.

Since the Tang the notion of *xia* included by definition the compulsory reference to the martial arts, i.e., the skillful use of certain weapons or at least of body technique. The term *jianxia* (rendered here as ‘knights at arms’) further reinforced this associative connection with the application of the martial arts. Obviously, *jian* 劍 (lit., ‘sword’) in the term *jianxia* is not to be understood literally, but rather as a synecdoche for the martial techniques of the *xia*. The selection of tales in the *Jianxia zhuan* clearly mirrors this narrow concept of *xia* as involving the application of martial technique. A major change in the concept of *xia* occurred in the late Ming. In the thought of some late Ming intellectuals, *xia* was raised to “a powerful force guiding human behavior”,³⁷ comparable to *qing* 情 (passion), being the core emotive word of the period. Along with this new interpretation, a clear tendency towards an extension of the concept of *xia* can be perceived: *xia* came to label a certain style of behavior (‘chivalry’),

35 In the Tan Kai-edition of *Taiping guangji*, the tale «Sengxia» was attributed to another source and placed differently; cf. *Taiping guangji*, 4: 1454-56.

36 *Xinbian fenlei Yi jian zhi, ji ji* 己集 [Collection part F] “Shenxian men” 神仙門 [Topic: Divine immortals], “Jianxia lei” 劍俠類 [Category: Swordfighters], 4.8a-13b.

37 Allan Barr, “The Wanli Context of the ‘Courtesan’s Jewel Box’ Story”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57.1 (1997): 110.

entirely unrelated to the use of weapons. In a similar way, the power of strong emotions (*qing*) was extended even beyond the human realm. The *Qing shi leilüe* 情史類略 (Short categorized history of passion, 24 j., c. 1628), compiled by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), was one of the foremost documents of *qing*-cult in the late Ming. At the same time it was a highly original example for a thematic anthology devoted to one particular range of subject matter. The 4th chapter of this compilation was entitled “Qingxia” 情俠 (Chivalry out of passion). Although it included among the more than forty stories one or the other actual (i.e., martial) *xia*-tale, it mainly consisted of stories about ‘chivalric’ acts in the extended sense of the term, i.e., unrelated to any martial techniques.

In 1610, Zhou Shiya 周詩雅 (*zi* Tingchui 廷吹, *jinshi* 1619) compiled an anthology in five *juan* under the title *Jianxia zhuan* 劍俠傳. Although this work itself is not extant any more, we know about it from the 1612 preface to the extant sequel, *Xu jianxia zhuan* 續劍俠傳, which collected 119 stories in five *juan*.³⁸ This sequel-collection included accounts of all sorts of ‘chivalric’ behaviour, stretching the category of *jianxia* to the extreme, and spanning the historical period from the Zhou- to the Yuan-dynasty. This collection does not seem to bear any genetic relationship to the one of the same title being the subject of this study. However, it appears more than likely that Zhou Shiya knew the predecessor and compiled his own anthologies in implicit competition to it. To judge from the extant sequel, the crucial difference to the original lay in the fact that Zhou Shiya expanded the category of *jianxia* to the point of meaninglessness. In literary history this anthology remained utterly unimportant.

Dating from about the same years as the compilations by Zhou Shiya we have another anthology of *xia*-stories with the title *Er xia zhuan* 二俠傳 (Stories of the two [kinds of] knights, 20 j.), compiled by a certain Xu

38 The sequel collection was also known under the variant title *Zengding jianxia zhuan* 增訂劍俠傳 (Tales of Knights at Arms: enlarged and revised). For descriptions see: Liu Yinbo, *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi*, 211-12; *Xuxiu siku quanshu tiyao* 續修四庫全書提要 (13 v., Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1972), 11: 1760; cf. Ning Jiayu, *Zhongguo wenyao xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao*, 244-45.

Guang 徐廣 and dated to 1613.³⁹ The outstanding feature of this otherwise not very remarkable anthology is the implication of its title: “the two kinds of knights” refers to male knights on the one hand and female knights on the other. Following this gender division, the anthology was divided in two main parts: a male section (“Nanxia zhuan” 男俠傳, j. 1-12), and a female section (“Nüxia zhuan” 女俠傳, j. 13-20). Despite the predominance on the male side in terms of volume, as the compiler pointed out in his editorial remarks, he included 108 stories about female knights as compared to only 70 stories about male knights. But his rendition of the male stories was (far) more detailed, whereas the female stories had been abridged and therefore were less voluminous, despite their larger number. In summary, the gender division in this anthology of *xia*-stories merely was an external feature. Regarding its scope it clearly represented a ‘soft’ definition of *xia*, although it included several stories about martial knights. Both these late Ming-collections will not have to concern us here any further. However, as weak responses to the original *Jianxia zhuan*, they also document the pervasiveness of interest in the thematics of *xia* in the late Ming period.

Wang Shizhen’s edition of *Jianxia zhuan*

Having introduced the wider context of anthologizing Tang- and Song-tales during the Ming, we are now prepared to turn to our main concern, the *Jianxia zhuan*: its process of formation, its compilership, and its dating. As for many other pre-Qing works of literature, the first major bibliographic description of the *Jianxia zhuan* is found in the monumental *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Abstracts to the full catalogue of the complete library in the four divisions of books, 200 j., completed c. 1795). The respective entry on *Jianxia zhuan* explicitly mentioned the Ming-collectanea *Gujin yishi* 古今逸史 (Anecdotes past and present, c. 1586) as

39 I refer to the copy held by the Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Book Collection (T2258/2908), which is described as a Ming-edition in 8 fascicles (*ce*); the title page ascribes its collation to Huang Guoshi 黃國士. For the precise dating (1613, which is not given on the copy I saw) I follow Ning Jiayu, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao*, 247.

a point of reference, but it based its description on an unidentified “old edition” (*jiuben* 舊本), which apparently was not the *Gujin yishi*. *Jianxia zhuan* is described as a work comprising two *juan*, compiled by an anonymous Tang-person. In terms of content it is characterized as an anthology of stories about Tang-dynasty “knights at arms” (*jianxia*), all of which had been derived directly from the four *juan* on “Brave knights” (*haoxia*) in the *Taiping guangji*. The entry concludes on the note that this anthology probably had been compiled by a Ming-person who had “plagiarized” (*chaoxi* 勦襲) the texts. Therefore it is considered an unauthentic work.⁴⁰ A more accurate and more detailed description is found in the bibliographic notes of the philologist Zhou Zhongfu 周中孚 (*zi Xinzhi* 信之, early 19th c.), who corrected some errors in the *Tiyao*-entry, although he also added new ones.⁴¹ Zhou based his description on the early Qing collectanea edition *Mishu ershiyi zhong* 秘書二十一種 (Twenty-one secret books, 1669), not the *Gujin yishi*.⁴² Trying to explain why the *Tiyao*-entry had described *Jianxia zhuan* as a work comprising two *juan*, whereas in the *Mishu*-edition it was in four *juan*, Zhou supposed that in the *Gujin yishi* it had had a different format, and the four *juan*-division had been introduced by the editor of the *Mishu*-edition. This however is not the case.

It was left to the eminent philologist Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 (1853-1955) to straighten things out and to come up with an entirely new theory about the compilership of *Jianxia zhuan*. In his revisions of the *Siku quanshu*-catalogue abstracts (first part published in 1937)⁴³ he corrected the two obvious mistakes: the *Gujin yishi*-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* already comprised four *juan*, and it did not credit any anonymous Tang-person with the compilation. Yu might have been right with his supposition that the “old edition” referred to in the *Tiyao*-entry could have been the *Mishu ershiyi*

40 *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (5 v., Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1971), j. 28, 3: 2993-94.

41 Zhou Zhongfu, *Zhengtang dushu ji* 鄭堂讀書記 (1st ed. 1921; rpt., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993; Qingren shumu tiba congkan, 8), j. 66, 1312.

42 Both collectanea editions, *Gujin yishi* and *Mishu ershi yi zhong*, will be discussed further below in the context of the *Jianxia zhuan*'s later editorial history.

43 Yu Jiayi, *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 四庫提要辨證 (4 v., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), j. 19, 3: 1172-73.

zhong, which indeed credited an anonymous Tang-author with the compilation. However, as Yu went on to argue, a Tang-compiler was out of consideration, since the collection also included stories referring to events of the Song-dynasty.

In the second part of his gloss Yu Jiayi came up with a striking suggestion for the identity of the compiler of the *Jianxia zhuan*.⁴⁴ He pointed out that the first series of the collected writings of Wang Shizhen⁴⁵ included a “Short preface to Tales of Knights at Arms” (“*Jianxia zhuan xiao xu*” 小序) among the prefaces that Wang had written for his own publications.⁴⁶ From this discovery it was indeed only a small step to the conclusion that Wang Shizhen must have been the compiler of the *Jianxia zhuan*. The case for Wang Shizhen’s role in the preparation of an early edition of *Jianxia zhuan* found strong support from a more recent discovery. In an article⁴⁷ published in 1985 Liu Yinbo 劉蔭柏 described an edition of *Jianxia zhuan* kept in the rare books collection of the Beijing National Library (Beijing Tushuguan 北京圖書館). The postface to this edition is dated to the 3rd month of 1569.⁴⁸ This blockprint edition (which here will be called the “1569-edition”) comprises four *juan* plus an appendix of one more *juan* which contains four stories that were not included in any previously known version. It has a preface, “Introduction to Tales of Knights at Arms” (“*Jianxia zhuan yin*” 引), by a Taoan Jushi 弢庵居士, and a “Postface to the printing of Tales of Knights at Arms” (“Ke

44 Yu Jiayi, *Siku tiyao bianzheng*, 3:1173-74.

45 Cf. *Dictionary of Ming Biographies 1368-1644*, eds. L. C. Goodrich and Chaoying Fang (2 v., New York & London: Columbia University Press, 1976), 2: 1399-1405.

46 Cf. *Yanzhou shanren sibu gao* 弢州山人四部稿 (rpt., Taipei: Weiwen tushu chubanshe youxian gongsi, 1976; Mingdai lunzhu congkan), j. 71.13b-14b, 7: 3434-3436.

47 Liu Yinbo, “Longqing keben *Jianxia zhuan xulu*” 隆慶刻本劍俠傳敘錄 [Description of the Longqing-edition of *Jianxia zhuan*], *Wenxue yichan* 1985/2: 112-114.

48 *Beijing tushuguan guji shanben shumu (zi bu)* 北京圖書館古籍善本書目(子部) (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, [1987]), 3: 1508. This item was not listed in any of the earlier editions (1933, 1959) of the rare books catalogue of this library.

Jianxia zhuan ba” 刻劍俠傳跋) by a person, Lü Qianzi 履謙子, who identifies himself as the publisher of this edition.

Unfortunately, Liu Yinbo himself drew the wrong conclusions from his ‘discovery’:⁴⁹ He rejected Yu Jiayi’s assumption that Wang Shizhen had been involved in the compilation of the *Jianxia zhuan*, since neither the preface, nor the postface to the 1569-edition contained any reference to such a person.⁵⁰ Such a conclusion is hard to understand to anybody who is fully aware of Yu Jiayi’s previous findings, on the one hand, and the 1569-edition as described by Liu, on the other. The strongest piece of evidence is provided by the preface of the 1569-edition: its text is almost identical to the “Short preface” that Yu Jiayi had discovered in Wang Shizhen’s collected writings.⁵¹ The case is even stronger if one considers that Wang himself was in full control of the edition of this first part of his collected writings, published in 1577.⁵² The preface to *Jianxia zhuan* was included among the section of prefaces written to works authored or compiled by the author himself. This is tantamount to an acknowledgement that he in fact had edited such a collection, since one can hardly think of any reason for him to pretentiously make such a claim. Moreover, the pseudonym by which the 1569-edition preface is signed, Taoan Jushi, is undeniably similar to another pseudonym, Tiantao Jushi 天弢居士, which is known to have been used by Wang Shizhen.⁵³ Liu Yinbo brought up the

49 Prior to Liu Yinbo’s article, Allan Barr had already mentioned and briefly described this edition in his 1983 Ph.D. thesis, “Pu Songling and *Liaozhai zhiyi*”, 202-203, 320 n29, and bibliography.

50 Liu Yinbo, “Longqing keben”, 113; cf. his *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi*, 210, where he holds on to his earlier position. Moreover, he takes the claim in the *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*-entry about an old edition comprising two *juan* serious.

51 The two versions of the preface diverge in their titles, and at two places also in textual detail. One instance had already been emended by Yu Jiayi precisely as it in fact appeared in the 1569-edition; *Siku tiyao bianzheng*, 3: 1173.

52 The second part of his collected writings, *Yanzhou shanren sibu xugao* 續稿 (207 j.), containing his later writings, was edited by a grandson of Wang’s and published posthumously.

53 Jiang Gongtao 姜公韜, *Wang Yanzhou de shengping yu zhushu* 王弢州的生平與著述 [The life and writings of Wang Shizhen] (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1974; *Wenshi congkan*, 39), 3, 80 (n. 1). It is well possible that we

often-heard argument that Wang Shizhen, as a leading figure on the literary scene of his time, would not have been willing to get involved with the relatively lowly business of editing an anthology of stories about knight-errantry. However, as I pointed out before, there is strong evidence for his involvement with an even far more notorious collection of tales, the *Yan yi bian*. We believe that the newly discovered 1569-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* added conclusive evidence to the assumption that Wang Shizhen had acted as its editor.

Yu Jiayi who did not have this piece of evidence yet, resorted to an autobiographical reading of the preface in order to add more weight to his claim that Wang Shizhen had compiled the *Jianxia zhuan*.⁵⁴ Yu related Wang's compilation of stories on knight-errantry to the notorious case which had led to the execution of Wang Shizhen's father, Wang Yu 王忬 (zi Minying 民應, 1507-60). Wang Yu had been a military commander in the war of defense against the Mongols. After repeated failures in his duties he had been imprisoned in 1559 upon a memorial by the Grand Secretary Yan Song 嚴嵩 (1480-1566/67).⁵⁵ One year later, Wang Yu was executed in the Capital. The actual origin of this case, which ended so tragically for the Wang family, was closely related to Wang Shizhen's own person. He had previously provoked Yan Song's enmity by backing up Yang Jisheng 楊繼盛 (1516-55) who had continually attacked Yan Song for his policy towards the Mongols. After Yang's execution in 1555, Wang had remained loyal to him, which infuriated Yan Song. Yan's later charges against Wang Shizhen's father leading to the latter's execution in the Fall of 1560 were regarded as an act of revenge originating from this affair. Soon afterwards, in 1562, Yan Song himself fell from power. Wang Shizhen had returned to his native place Taicang 太倉 after his father's execution. He stayed there until the enthronement of the new emperor, in 1567, upon which the rehabilitation of his father followed. In 1568 he

know only a fraction of the pseudonyms that Wang Shizhen used to sign his publications.

54 Yu Jiayi, *Siku tiyao bianzheng*, 3: 1173-74.

55 *Dictionary of Ming Biographies*, 2: 1586-91.

resumed an official post.⁵⁶ Yu Jiayi based his hypothesis mainly on the concluding lines of the preface that are translated here as follows:

If someone who has a personal interest [in reading such things] [好事者流]⁵⁷ would make these stories his own concern, he might say that he has achieved the [martial] technique, but never applied it, and [now] he could immediately ascend to heaven and become an immortal. [But] this is more than I shall dare to hope for.⁵⁸

Reading between the lines of this rather obscure statement, Yu Jiayi hears Wang Shizhen fantasizing about a knight-errant of the old mold who, upon hearing about the injustice suffered by his father, would take justice in his own hands and assassinate the villain, Yan Song. However, we may see in these words, first of all, an expression of the author's general wish to revive the tradition of the knight-errant who, with the sword, achieves uncompromising justice outside the law. Wang's words betray the idea widely shared in the Ming-dynasty that this tradition had already been lost, and that it could only be revived by harking back to the models of the Tang and the Song. They also convey the frustration of the literatus who, himself being incompetent in the martial arts, but nevertheless admiring the ethics of knight-errantry, could only hope to indirectly stimulate acts of knight-errantry by proliferating such a collection of stories. If contextualized by Wang Shizhen's personal experience and read as an autobiographical state-

56 Kenneth Hammond, "History and literati culture: towards an intellectual biography of Wang Shizhen, 1526-90" (Ph.D. Diss., Harvard University, 1994), 71-72 and 80ff. On the background of Yan Song's demise, see: *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 7: "The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part I", eds. Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 505-507.

57 For the various facets of meaning in the term *haoshizhe* 好事者 see *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 (12 v., Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 1987-95), 4: 286 (entry for *hàoshì* 好事). For its specific meaning with regard to early fictional narrative, cf. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 281.

58 For the text of the preface I follow the transcription in Liu Yinbo, "Longqing keben", 112.

ment, implying a desire for revenge upon the villain, the editor's alleged hidden motivation for propagating this kind of story remains vague, at best. The postface by the publisher Lü Qianzi, on the other hand, might indeed be seen as giving some indirect support to the hypothesis of an autobiographical motivation for Wang Shizhen's edition of *Jianxia zhuan*:

Although this print does not provide a tool for conveying the Way, [it is a suitable instrument] for those who wish to vent their indignation, and for those whose satisfaction it is to hold on to justice. Also it cannot be discarded by any filially pious son.⁵⁹

Wang Shizhen's personal motivation for editing *Jianxia zhuan*, as suggested by Yu Jiayi, would only have made sense as long as Wang believed that Yan Song was still alive. Yan Song died in 1566 or even 1567, shortly after his son, Yan Shifan 嚴世蕃 (1513-65), had been executed and all the family possession had been confiscated. In 1567, the first year of the era Longqing 隆慶 (1567-72), Wang seized the opportunity to present a charge against father and son Song to the new emperor in order to achieve his father's rehabilitation. Therefore, in terms of timing, the case remains rather unconvincing, even though we learn from Lü Qianzi's postface that the 1569-edition was a reprint (*fanke* 翻刻)⁶⁰ of an earlier edition which had been "nearly blurred" (*jin hutu* 近胡塗)⁶¹. Whether or not one adheres to Yu Jiayi's hypothesis about Wang Shizhen's desire for personal vengeance as a motivational background, there is sufficient other circumstantial evidence to prove that Wang did indeed edit the *Jianxia zhuan* as we have it in the 1569-edition. Yu Jiayi's original suggestion of Wang Shizhen's role in the formation of the *Jianxia zhuan* has been widely accepted.⁶² But in recent times the idea that Wang Shizhen actually compiled (*ji* 輯) the *Jianxia zhuan*, has gained general currency. In reference works on Chinese literature, it is already treated as a well-

59 For the postface I refer to the text as quoted in Liu Yinbo, "Longqing keben", 112.

60 翻 = 翻.

61 胡 = 糊.

62 Jiang Gongtao, *Wang Yanzhou de shengping yu zhushu*, 61-62.

established fact.⁶³ The best available modern edition of the anthology also credits Wang Shizhen with the compilation of the text.⁶⁴ In his preface to the 1569-edition, Wang Shizhen himself accounted for his editing job in the following terms:

In our family library, there were numerous stories about the adventures of knights-errant. Those among them that touched me, I gathered together as a book.

These words allow for some flexibility in assessing the extent of Wang's editing. In the following I shall point out the actual predecessors to Wang Shizhen's edition of *Jianxia zhuan*. From this it will become clear that Wang's contribution to the anthology was a minor one only. Although Wang Shizhen is likely to have edited the first monographic edition of *Jianxia zhuan*, he was not the anthology's original compiler.

- 63 See the following reference works: *Zhongguo wenxue da cidian* 中國文學大辭典, eds. Qian Zhonglian 錢仲聯 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1997) 995-96; Ning Jiayu, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo zongmu tiyao*, 235; *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo baike quanshu* 中國古代小說百科全書 (Beijing: Zhongguo da baike quanshu chubanshe, 1993), 206-207; Hou Zhongyi 侯忠義 and Liu Shilin 劉世林, *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shumu* 中國文言小說書目 (2 v., Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1993), 2: 130-32; *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo jianshang cidian* 中國武俠小說鑒賞辭典, ed. Ning Zongyi 寧宗一 (Beijing: Guoji wenhua chuban gongsi, 1992), 63-64; *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo cidian* 中國武俠小說辭典, ed. Hu Wenbin 胡文彬 (Shijiazhuang: Huashan wenyi chubanshe, 1992), 39-40; *Zhongguo wenxue da cidian* [1991], 7: 4745; and *Zhongguo wenyan xiaoshuo shumu* 中國文言小說書目, eds. Yuan Xingpei 袁行霈 and Hou Zhongyi (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1981), 269-70.
- 64 *Jianxia zhuan*, comp. Wang Shizhen, ed. Wang Guoliang 王國良 (Taibei: Jin-feng chuban youxian gongsi, 1987; Jingdian, 8). This edition was based on the *Gujin yishi*-edition. In an appendix it also includes the four stories appended to the Wang Shizhen-edition dated 1569 (84-99). The editor's introduction, "Jianxia zhuan kaoshu" 考述 (1-11), provides a survey of the scholarship on the text.

The earlier *Jianxia zhuan*

A recent publication from the P.R.C. brought back to light an anthology of tales from approximately the mid-16th century which hitherto had almost been forgotten: *Xue chuang tan yi* 雪窗譚異 (Discussions about strange things at the snowy window, 8 j.).⁶⁵ In *Xue chuang tan yi*, each of the eight *juan* comprises between four and nine sections with separate headings, containing either a collection of short tales or, as in some cases, a single narrative of more extended length. Each section is attributed to one single author or compiler. Based on this set of features, it appears as justified to call *Xue chuang tan yi* a collectanea. The *Xue chuang tan yi* seems to offer another example for the impulse felt in certain literati-circles of the Jiajing era, to secure and revive the heritage of tales from the Tang and the Song by printing old anthologies and compiling new ones on the basis of old collections. This work survived in a single copy.⁶⁶ We may assume that the modern typeset edition was based on this Ming-blockprint.⁶⁷ On the title page of this new edition, its editors attributed the eminent Ming-literatus Yang Xunji 楊循吉 (*zi* Junqian 君謙, 1458-1546)⁶⁸ with the compilation. In lack of any editorial comment, this attribution appears as baseless, since this modern edition includes a preface (“*Xue chuang tan yi yin*” 引) which was signed by Yang Yi 楊儀 (*zi*

65 Yang Xunji, comp.; eds. Song Wen 宋文 et al., *Xue chuang tan yi: Gudai chuanqi xiaoshuo daguan* 雪窗談異：古代傳奇小說大觀 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1992). This collectanea is not to be confused with the late Ming-anthology *Yuanzhu zhiyu xue chuang tan yi* 鴛渚志餘雪窗談異 by a compiler Junyuan huke 鈞鴛湖客; see the joint edition under the main title *Huaying ji* 花影集 (Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1995; Gu xiaoshuo congkan 古小說叢刊); cf. Xue Hongji 薛洪勳, *Chuanqi xiaoshuo shi* 傳奇小說史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1998; Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi congshu), 235-37.

66 This copy is kept in the library of Qixian 祁縣 county (Shanxi province). Cf. *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu (zi bu)*, 743.

67 The typeset text at some places shows lacunae (□), indicating that the editors did not emend the text.

68 *Dictionary of Ming Biographies*, 2: 1513-1516.

Mengyu 夢羽, *jinshi* 1526).⁶⁹ From the content of this preface we can only conclude that Yang Yi himself was the compiler of this work. As a matter of fact, Yang Yi was well-known for his efforts as an editor of Tang-tales. His most lasting contribution was an edition of the collection *Ganze yao* 甘澤謠 (Rumours of the Sweet Water Pond), attributed to Yuan Jiao 袁郊 (*zi Zhigan* 之乾, 9th c.). As the basis for his 1553 (date of preface) collated edition, he used a manuscript copy that he had received in 1548.⁷⁰ We are not surprised to find this collection *Ganze yao* also included in *Xue chuang tan yi*. This adds more evidence to Yang Yi's role as its compiler and sets the post-quem-dating for the compilation to 1553. Thus, it seems likely that this collectanea preceded the first printing of Wang Shizhen's edition of *Jianxia zhuan*, which probably came into circulation around 1569.

In *juan 5* of *Xue chuang tan yi* we find, as the 3rd and 4th from a total of six sections, a “*Jianxia zhuan*” 劍俠傳 comprising 11 tales, and a “*Xu jianxia zhuan*” 續劍俠傳 (Sequel to the tales of knights at arms) with another 21 texts.⁷¹ The former collection is attributed to an anonymous Tang-author, whereas the latter is attributed to Hong Mai, the compiler-author of the *Yi jian zhi*. These two collections with their 32 stories, when viewed together, show a striking correspondence to the four *juan* proper of Wang Shizhen's 1569-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* with its 33 stories. (The four stories of the appended *juan* will be left out of consideration for the moment.) The sections “*Jianxia zhuan*” and “*Xu jianxia zhuan*” as included in *Xue chuang tan yi* could have been transformed into the 1569-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* by the following three editorial operations: (1) The two parts were merged into one under the title *Jianxia zhuan*; this corpus was physically divided into four *juan*. (2) After the first story, a tale with the title «Fuyu guo wang» 扶餘國王 (The king of Fuyu-land) was

69 Qu Mianliang, *Zhongguo guji banke cidian*, 6 (entry for “Qikuai shanfang” 七檜山房).

70 Wang Guoliang 王國良, “Yuan Jiao Ganze yao yanjiu” 袁郊甘澤謠研究 [A study of Yuan Jiao's *Ganze yao*], in: *Disan jie Zhongguo Tangdai wenhua xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* 第三屆中國唐代文化學術研討會論文集, ed. Guoli Zhengzhi daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi 國立政治大學中國文學系 (Taipei: Guoli Zhengzhi daxue Zhongguo wenxuexi, 1997), 262-265.

71 *Xue chuang tan yi*, 218-230, 231-245.

inserted.⁷² This story is actually no other than «Qiuran ke» 虬髯客 (The stranger with the curly beard), which for some reason had not been included in any of the two earlier “Jianxia zhuan”-collections, although it had long been among the most celebrated tales about knight-errantry in the corpus of Tang-tales. (3) The first story of the sequel-collection “Xu jianxia zhuan”, «Jiaying shengji» 嘉興繩技 (The Jiaying rope trick), attributed to the Tang-collection *Yuanhua ji* 原化記, is moved further to the front and placed right before «Che zhong nüzi» 車中女子 (The woman in the carriage), a story which is indicated in the *Taiping guangji* as having been derived from the same collection. Based on these minor editorial changes one certainly could not claim Wang Shizhen as the original compiler of the collection *Jianxia zhuan*. Rather, it seems that Wang made use of two existing collections, added some editorial retouching to them and had them printed as one collection.

Based solely on the sections “Jianxia zhuan” and “Xu jianxia zhuan” as found in the *Xue chuang tan yi*, the case for a predecessor to Wang Shizhen’s edition would seem rather weak. However, supporting evidence is available from one particular edition of *Yan yi bian*, being the title of a system of anthologies of tales (cf. further above). As mentioned before, Wang Shizhen is likely to have been the compiler of the original version of this anthology, the title of which appears in Wang’s correspondence as early as 1566.⁷³ The Rare Books Collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library holds an edition entitled on the inside as *Anya tang chong jiao gu Yan yi bian* 安雅堂重較古艷異編 (The old compendium of the beautiful and the strange: new edition collated⁷⁴ by the Hall of Quiet Elegance, 12 j.).⁷⁵ Although the relationship between the numerous and widely different

72 Later editions write *zhu* 主 (ruler) instead of *wang* (king).

73 Xie Bixia, “Yanyi bian yanjiu”, 297-299. Cf. Xu Shuofang, “Wang Shizhen nianpu” 王世貞年譜 [Bibliographical chronology of Wang Shizhen], in: *ibid.*, *Wan Ming qujia nianpu. Diyi juan: Suzhou juan* 晚明曲家年譜. 第一卷: 蘇州卷 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, [s.a., pref. 1989]), 589.

74 較 = 校.

75 See the description of this edition in: Shen Jin 沈津, *Meiguo Hafu daxue Hafu Yanjing tushuguan zhongwen shanben shuzhi* 美國哈佛大學哈佛燕京圖書館中文善本書志 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1999), 409-410, no. 0719. Mr Chun Shum (Shen Jin), the curator of the Rare Books Collection of the

editions of *Yan yi bian* still awaits clarification, we may assume that this Anya tang-edition represents the original format of the collection. The modifiers in the title strongly suggest it as a revised version (*chong jiao*) of the original (*gu*), published at a time when already a number of anthologies, all uniformly titled *Yan yi bian*, but with different organization and content, competed on the book market. *Juan* 8 of this Anya tang-edition of *Yan yi bian*, which is exclusively concerned with stories about bravery and knight-errantry, included exactly the same double section of “Jianxia zhuan” and “Xu jianxia zhuan” as in *Xue chuang tan yi*.⁷⁶ Yang Yi’s collectanea even might have been its source. The only difference in the Anya tang-*Yan yi bian* is found on the table of contents, where the two sections appear as the first and second part (“shang” 上 / “xia” 下) of the “Jianxia bu” 劍俠部.⁷⁷ This heading might indicate the point at which the two separate collections “Jianxia zhuan” and “Xu jianxia zhuan” were about to be merged into one. If Wang Shizhen really compiled the original *Yan yi bian* around 1566 and in the format as reproduced in the later Anya tang-edition, we would not be surprised if he had taken this same “Jianxia”-section as the basis for his edition of *Jianxia zhuan* which must have been printed around the same years (2nd ed., 1569). The later editions of *Yan yi bian*, some of which were much more compact despite their larger number of *juan*, included only a few samples from the earlier

Harvard-Yenching Library, confirmed that this copy was the same edition as the one kept in the Beijing National Library; cf. *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu (zi bu)*, 744, no. 8764. We shall call this edition after the name “Anya tang”, being the name of the editor or publisher as printed on the inside title page. This edition has the same undated preface signed by the pseudonym Xi’an Jushi 息菴居士, which was also found in other editions, such as the one by Yuming tang (12 j.).

76 Furthermore, the respective *juan* in the Anya tang-edition of *Yanyi bian* and in *Xue chuang tan yi* also share the section “Yingxiong zhuan” 英雄傳 (Biographies of heroes), consisting of the same four stories. In *Yan yi bian*, the section is entitled “Yingxiong biezhuàn” 英雄別傳 (Unofficial biographies of heroes).

77 Elsewhere in this anthology, sections are split up only in order to adjust them to the physical limits of the *juan* or the *ce*, whereas in this case, the division clearly is an internal one.

sections “Jianxia zhuan” and “Xu jianxia zhuan”, truncating them beyond recognizability.⁷⁸

The “Xu jianxia zhuan” section (i.e., without the “Jianxia zhuan”) was also included in the late Ming collectanea *Heke san zhi* 合刻三志 (The three records in a joint printing), which was compiled by Shao Guoxuan 邵國鉉 (ps. Binghua Jushi 冰華居士).⁷⁹ The content of the “Xu jianxia zhuan” in *Heke san zhi* corresponds exactly to the respective sections in *Xue chuang tan yi* and the Anya tang-*Yan yi bian*, but unlike those, it attributed the compilation to the prominent Yuan-dynasty dramatist Qiao Jifu 喬吉甫 (*zi* Mengfu 夢符, c. 1280-1345).⁸⁰ Since *Heke san zhi* was later than both *Xue chuang tan yi* and the Anya tang-*Yan yi bian*, this attribution can hardly claim any weight. (Moreover, as we shall point out further below, the “Xu jianxia zhuan” could not have been compiled any earlier than the mid-16th century.) Unfortunately, the claim that the Yuan-person Qiao Jifu had compiled the “Xu jianxia zhuan”, is still taken serious by some scholars.⁸¹

If we assume that Wang Shizhen referred to two ready-made partial collections for his edition of *Jianxia zhuan*, it also becomes obvious why he placed four stories in an appended (*fulu* 附錄) *juan*: these were the four stories that Wang himself had compiled and added to the collection. By placing them in an appendix, he clearly separated them from the ‘inherited’

78 See *Xin juan Yuming tang pixuan Wang Yanzhou xiansheng Yanyi bian* (GBXSJC), j. 24 (second part of the “Yixia”-section), 2: 903-926, for a selection of five stories.

79 For a description of a late Ming blockprint edition of *Heke san zhi* in the Library of Congress see: Wang Zhongmin 王重民, *Zhongguo shanbenshu tiyao* 中國善本書提要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1983), 397. Another copy is in the Naikaku Bunko 內閣文庫. For a table of contents of this collectanea see: *Zhongguo congshu zonglu* 中國叢書總錄 (3 v., Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959-62), 1: 760-61. “Xu jianxia zhuan” is classified under the first of seven thematic headings, “Zhi qi lei” 志奇類 (Records of the extraordinary).

80 Cf. *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 274-75.

81 Liu Yinbo, *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi*, 155-56, 213. This scholar totally confused the matter, because he did not recognize any relationship between the “Xu jianxia zhuan” and Wang Shizhen’s *Jianxia zhuan*, despite their striking correspondences.

material. These four stories, at a closer look, reveal themselves as a highly original and thoughtful addition to the collection. They have one theme in common: they are all about fake knights-errant, about people who merely pose as *xia* in order to take advantage of others.⁸² If the collection proper conveyed a positive image of the knight-errantry of the past, the appendix, like a sceptical postscript, tries to warn the audience against people who merely pretend to be knights-errant. Two of the four stories in the appendix go back to Tang-sources,⁸³ one taken from a Song-source,⁸⁴ whereas the last story, in an obvious departure from the historical range of the collection, had been derived from an early Ming source.⁸⁵ Wang Shizhen added some changes to all four texts. As will be seen in our discussion of the further dissemination of *Jianxia zhuan*, the four stories from the appendix were not included in any of the subsequent editions. Thus, the addition of «Fuyu guowang» (i.e., «Qiuran ke zhuan») remained Wang's only contribution to the anthology.

82 This was already observed by Liu Yinbo, "Longqing keben", 113-114.

83 The story «Zhang Shouyi» 張守一 corresponds to the opening sections of *Guangling yaoluan zhi* 廣陵妖亂志 (Chronicle of the chaos stirred by sorcerers in Guangling) by Luo Yin 羅隱 (833-909); see *Luo Yin ji* 羅隱集 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 245-48; cf. Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature*, 2: 106-107. The tale «Zhang Hu» 張祜 is found, under the title «Cui Zhang zicheng xia» 崔張自稱俠 (Cui and Zhang style themselves as knights-errant), in the collection *Guiyuan congtan* 桂苑叢談 by Yan Zixiu 嚴子休 (10th c.); see ed. BBCSJC, 4a-5b.

84 The tale «Bai Tingrang» 白廷讓 is found, under its original title «Bai Wanzhou yu jianke» 白萬州遇劍客 (Bai meets a swordsman in Wanzhou), in *Luoyang jinshen jiuwen ji* 洛陽搢紳舊聞記 by Zhang Qixian 張齊賢 (943-1014); see ed. BBCSJC, 3.11a-14a.

85 «Qingcheng jianshu» 青城劍術 (The sword-technique of Qingcheng), originally entitled «Qingcheng wujian lu» 青城舞劍錄 (Record of the sword-dance of Qingcheng), in *j.* 2 of *Jiandeng yuhua* 剪燈餘話, compiled by Li Changqi 李昌祺 (1376-1452); see *Jiandeng xinhua (wai er zhong)* 剪燈新話(外二種), ed. Zhou Yi 周夷 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 189-192.

On the sources and the dating of the *Jianxia zhuan*

Since its first bibliographical description in *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, one unquestioned assumption about *Jianxia zhuan* has been that the majority of tales in it had been derived directly from *Taiping guangji*. Yu Jiayi stated that there was “a strong textual similarity” (文盡相同) between those 18 tales with corresponding texts in the “Haoxia”-chapters (j. 193-196) of *Taiping guangji*. Yu admitted discrepancies between the two series of texts only with regard to their sequence and occasionally also their titles.⁸⁶ I believe that any claim of derivation ought to pass the test of textual comparison. If we compare the texts in the early *Gujin yishi*-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* with their respective counterparts in *Taiping guangji*, we find that some of the tales exhibit textual variation to an extent which would rather suggest the *Jianxia zhuan*, with its predecessors, to represent a separate textual tradition. E.g., the *Jianxia zhuan*-versions of the tales «Nie Yinniang» 聶隱娘 (Nie Yinniang) and «Hongxian» 紅線 (Red Thread) both differ from the *Taiping guangji*-versions at about 10% of the characters in the text.⁸⁷ In one extreme case, being the tale «Che zhong nüzi» (The woman in the carriage), the textual variation between the two versions even amounts to over 30%! At the earlier formative stage, in the two separate collections “*Jianxia zhuan*” and “*Xu jianxia zhuan*” prior to their being merged in one collection, we consistently find the same textual variations as in the *Gujin yishi* joint edition. These findings seem to preclude any likelihood of direct textual derivation from the *Taiping guangji*, and we have to conclude that any such claim was baseless. Instead, the compilation rather seems to have been based on collections or individual tales passed down outside the *Taiping guangji*.

As pointed out in the introductory part of this article, the *Taiping guangji* began to be circulated in Tan Kai's new—and indeed first—edition in 1566 or later. Prior to this edition, the *Taiping guangji* had been virtually inaccessible to the audience. Wang Shizhen's involvement with his *Jianxia zhuan*-edition probably happened earlier than 1568, being the year

86 Yu Jiayi, *Siku tiyao bianzheng*, 3:1173-74.

87 Some of the textual variation in the two editions of «Nie Yinniang» has been pointed out by Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, *Tangren xiaoshuo jiaoshi* 唐人小說校釋 (2 v., Taipei: Zhengzhong shuju, 1983), 1: 293-302.

in which he resumed his official career. Since we know that Wang Shizhen based his edition of *Jianxia zhuan* on two previously circulating collections, there is hardly any likelihood for these predecessors to have been derived from *Taiping guangji*. The observation of the fairly high degree of textual divergence between the *Jianxia zhuan*-version of many stories and their counterparts in *Taiping guangji* merely confirms what in terms of timing would have seemed improbable any way.

Traditional scholarship has always regarded the identification of source texts as an aim in itself. Accordingly, the identification of textual origins for the tales anthologized in *Jianxia zhuan* emerged as a central concern of most previous research on this anthology.⁸⁸ We shall go beyond this self-sufficient approach and try to derive from the identification of sources some insights into the collection's original design as well as its dating. In discussing sources, we should look at the two previous collections "Jianxia zhuan" and "Xu jianxia zhuan" separately, since, in all likelihood, they had different origins, possibly centuries apart. Among the eleven tales of the earlier "Jianxia zhuan" we notice that the texts 3 to 6 («Seng xia», «Jingxi dian laoren», «Lanling laoren», «Lu sheng») all originate from the "Daoxia"-section in Duan Chengshi's miscellanea *Youyang zazu*, which is noted in literary history as the first consistent series of stories related to the *xia*-topic. In *Youyang zazu*, the four stories appeared in a slightly different order. Besides originating from the same source, the four texts also form a thematic unit (as pointed out already further above). The three texts «Nie Yinniāng», «Jing Shisan niāng» 荆十三娘 (Lady Jing Thirteen), and «Hongxian» (7-9), while originating from various sources, share one theme: they are all about female *xia*. «Che zhong nūzi» (2) also involves a female character, but in its content the element of 'thieving' is predominant. Probably for this reason the story was grouped with the set taken from *Youyang zazu*. The very first story in the collection, «Laoren hua yuan» 老人化猿 (An old man transforms himself into a gibbon), was

88 Following Yu Jiāxi, Zhao Jingshen 趙景深 (1902-85) offered additional identifications of source texts in his article "Jianxia zhuan" (originally written in 1944), included in his *Zhongguo xiaoshuo congkao* 中國小說叢考 (Ji'nan: Qilu shushe, 1980), 65-68. The task of source identification was meritoriously completed by Liu Yinbo, "Longqing keben", 113.

derived from a Han-dynasty source.⁸⁹ Probably it was meant to mark the mythical origin of the *xia*-tradition. Thus, the arrangement of stories in the original “Jianxia zhuan” seems to have primarily followed a certain thematic design, whereas the actual origins of the individual tales seem to have been rather irrelevant to the compiler. E.g., both «Nie Yinniang» (7) and «Kunlun nu» 崑崙奴 (The Kunlun slave, 11) had their origin in the collection *Chuanqi* 傳奇 (9th c.), but they were not placed next to each other. These observations do not offer any direct clue to the anthology's dating, but they might point to a historical context in which Tang-tales were hardly circulated. Speculatively, the “Jianxia zhuan” might have been compiled in the early Ming or even in pre-Ming times.

In a number of aspects, the compilation of the sequel “Xu jianxia zhuan” appears to have followed an entirely different plan, betraying its being a product from another period. Its compiler seems to have made use of sources in a very conscious manner. As a sequel collection, it was apparently designed to supplement and ‘round off’ the primary collection. The compiler of this sequel anthology quite systematically added other *xia*-tales from collections that were already represented in the “Jianxia zhuan”. «Che zhong nüzi» (2) had been derived from the Tang-collection *Yuanhua ji*; «Jiaying shengji» (xu1) was added as another thematically relevant text from the same collection. Similarly, «Tian Penglang» 田彭郎 (Tian Penglang, 10), included in the primary collection, originated from *Jutan lu* 劇談錄 (late 9th c.); the sequel-compiler added «Pan jiangjun» 潘將軍 (General Pan, xu4) from the same source. A third example should make evident the systematics of this procedure: from *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 (10th c.) «Jing Shisan niang» (8) had been included in the primary collection; the sequel added two more tales from this collection, «Xu Ji» 許寂 (Xu Ji, xu2) and «Ding xiucan» 丁秀才 (Cultivated talent Ding, xu3). Another three texts from the Tang- and the Five Dynasties were chosen from various sources (xu5-xu7).

A second major task of the sequel was to extend the historical scope of the original “Jianxia zhuan”—a thin anthology chiefly of Tang-tales—

89 The tale «Laoren hua yuan» was originally derived from a passage in the Han-dynasty compilation *Wuyue chunqiu* 吳越春秋, j. 9; see ed. SBCK, 2.43a-b. This text was also included in the *Taiping guangji*, j. 444, 9: 3628, where the source is equally indicated as *Wuyue chunqiu*.

supplementing it with stories from the Song. Almost the entire later part of the sequel-anthology (xu8-xu21) was compiled from Song-sources.⁹⁰ Apparently, the compiler in general was not only well aware of the dating of his sources, but he also paid attention to placing the Song-tales after the texts with earlier origins. Among the sources two clearly stand out by the fact that from each a set of four texts had been derived. One is the early Song collection *Jianghuai yiren lu* 江淮異人錄 (Records about strange people from the Yangzi- and the Huai-river [regions])⁹¹, originally in 2 j.), by Wu Shu 吳淑 (*zi* Zhengyi 正儀, 947-1002). This small collection comprising 25 stories served as the source for the tale «Li Sheng» 李勝 (Li Sheng, xu10) as well as for «Zhang Xun qi» 張訓妻 (The wife trained by Zhang, xu13), «Pan Yi» 潘辰 (Pan Yi, xu14), and «Hongzhou shusheng» 洪州書生 (The scholar from Hongzhou, xu15).⁹² With the exception of «Li Sheng», these tales were placed next to each other. This source-oriented principle of organization in the “Xu jianxia zhuan” is even more evident with regard to the second set of four stories derived from one source: the final four stories—«Hua Yue xinwen», «Xia furen», «Jie Xun qu fu», and «Guo Lun guan deng»—were all derived from Hong Mai’s *Yijian zhi*. More precisely, these four texts could only have been taken from Hong Pian’s edition *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi*, where exactly the same sequence of four texts constitutes the “Jianxia” subsection.⁹³ As pointed out in the introduction, the edition *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* was based on a Song-manuscript, but it can safely be assumed to have come into existence only by the 1546 (date of preface) edition. Thus, the year of publication of the *Xinbian fenlei Yijian zhi* draws a clear post-quem-line for the compilation of the sequel anthology “Xu Jianxia zhuan”. Therefore, neither Hong Mai himself, nor the Yuan-dramatist Qiao Jifu could have been its compiler. Rather, the “Xu Jianxia zhuan” appears as a typical product of the mid-16th century, when the number of circulated collections and anthologies of Tang- and Song-tales increased dramatically.

90 The only—probably erroneous—exception being the tale «Yixia» 義俠 (The righteous knight, xu16), which also originated in the Tang-collection *Yuanhua ji*.

91 I.e., the present-day provinces of Jiangsu and Anhui.

92 Cf. *Jianghuai yiren lu*, ed. BBCSJC [1 j.], 13b-14a, 16a-b, 9b-10b, 19a-20a.

93 Cf. above, n. 36.

The full and the shorter *Jianxia zhuan*

Soon after Wang Shizhen's joint edition of *Jianxia zhuan*, its four *juan* proper comprising 33 stories were included in the collectanea⁹⁴ *Gujin yishi* (c. 1586), compiled by Wu Guan 吳琯 (*zi Mengbai* 孟白, *jinshi* 1571).⁹⁵ Prior to the discovery of the 1569-edition, this version was the earliest known form of the collection.⁹⁶ Apparently the *Gujin yishi*-edition of *Jianxia zhuan* was also printed and circulated as a monograph; several such copies are still extant.⁹⁷ Wu Guan, while discarding Wang Shizhen's appendix of four stories, preserved the format as it had been introduced by Wang, the division in four *juan*. Originally this structure was not meant to reflect any internal principle of organization, but served a purely physical division of the textual corpus in four parts. This format was also continued when, later on, in the early Qing-dynasty, the anthology was included in the collectanea *Mishu ershiyi zhong* (Twenty-one secret books, 1669, 94 *j.*), compiled by Wang Shihan 汪士漢 (*zi Xingyuan* 星源, 17th c.).⁹⁸

- 94 For previous surveys on the inclusion of the *Jianxia zhuan* in collectanea see: *Zhongguo congshu zonglu*, 2: 1106; and Luo Liqun 羅立群, *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi* 中國武俠小說史 (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1990), 104-107.
- 95 In its largest edition *Gujin yishi* comprised 55 *juan* (=titles) among which *Jianxia zhuan* was *j.* 50. I refer to the reprint (Shanghai: Hanfen lou, 1937) of the Ming-blockprint by the publisher Jingming 景明.
- 96 The question as brought up by Huang Zhimin 黃志民, *Wang Shizhen yanjiu* 王世貞研究 [A study of Wang Shizhen] (thesis, s.l., s.a.), 90, whether the *Gujin yishi*-version preceded the Wang Shizhen-version, was refuted by the discovery of the 1569-edition.
- 97 E.g., in the National Central Library, Taipei; see *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben shumu* 國立中央圖書館善本書目 (2nd enlarged and improved ed., 4 v., Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1986), 2: 668; and in the Sun Yat-sen University Library, Guangzhou; see *Zhongshan daxue tushuguan guji shanben shumu* 中山大學圖書館古籍善本書目 (Guangzhou: Zhongshan daxue tushuguan, 1982), 332, no. 1946. Both copies are *Gujin yishi*-editions; the former is in two fascicles, the latter in one.
- 98 The title of this collectanea is also rendered as *Mishu nianyi zhong* 秘書廿一種. The *Jianxia zhuan* in four *juan* was also included in the enlarged edition *Mishu*

Wang Shizhen, when merging the two partial collections serving as the basis of his edition, had suppressed any previous attributions of authorship. The compilers of collectanea, in contrast, generally sought to pin down the authorship of the collections and texts that they included in their compilations. Wang Shihan indicated that the original compiler of the collection was unknown (*que ming* 闕名), as he also pointed out in his short preface. This shows that he already was not aware of any editions previous to the *Gujin yishi* any more.

In this 'full' format, comprising 33 stories in 4 *juan*, the *Jianxia zhuan* had a late comeback in the *Congshu jicheng chubian* 叢書集成初編 (The Grand Compendium of Collectanea: first part, 1936), whereas other collectanea, even prior to Wang Shihan's, had begun to include a short version of the collection. The earliest occurrence of a short version probably was in the new edition of the *Shuofu* 說郭 (The environs of stories). The new edition of the *Shuofu* in 120 rolls was compiled by Tao Ting 陶珽 (*jinshi* 1610) on the basis of the early Ming-edition in 100 rolls by Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀 (fl. 1360-1368). The printing blocks for the new edition had originally been prepared in the late Ming, but were destroyed in a 1621 fire. The edition had to be newly carved and was eventually published in 1646.⁹⁹ This edition was supplemented by a sequel, *Shuofu xu* 說郭續 (Sequel to the environs of stories), comprising 46 rolls, which included works by Ming-authors. The original *Shuofu* as compiled by Tao Zongyi had not included any collection of the title *Jianxia zhuan*, but among the texts and collections that Tao Ting added to the pre-Ming part of *Shuofu*, there is a "Jianxia zhuan" in one *juan*, comprising eleven stories.¹⁰⁰

nianba zhong 秘書廿八種 (1846); cf. *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo baike quanshu*, 341.

99 See Paul Pelliot, "Quelques remarques sur le *Chouo Fou*", *T'oung Pao* 23.4 (1924): 163-220; Chang Bide 昌彼得, *Shuofu kao* 說郭考 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1979), 22-31.

100 I refer to the copy of the new *Shuofu* (1646) kept in the Rare Books Collection of the Harvard-Yenching Library. "Jianxia zhuan" is the last of nine items in fascicle 114.

Ignorant of the past ‘life’ of the *Jianxia zhuan*, prior to Wang Shizhen’s and Wu Guan’s editions, one would have to assume that this shorter collection (c1) is a truncated version of the full edition.¹⁰¹ However, it turns out rather to be a perfect reproduction of the earlier “*Jianxia zhuan*”, from where it also copied the attribution to an unknown Tang-author. Tao Ting must have taken it from any previous collectanea, such as the *Xue chuang tan yi* or the *Yan yi bian* (Anyang-tang-edition). He did not include the more extensive sequel, “*Xu jianxia zhuan*”, though. Wang Shihan, in his preface to the *Jianxia zhuan* in *Mishu ershiyi zhong*, even explicitly mentioned its inclusion in the (new) *Shuofu* and “all other collectanea” as a sign of the collection’s respectability in the world of letters.¹⁰² But he probably did not realize that the *Shuofu*-version was different from his own.

Another important collectanea of about the same time as the new *Shuofu* was *Wu chao xiaoshuo* 五朝小說 (Stories of five dynasties). Its compilation must have been closely related to the new edition of the *Shuofu*, but the precise nature of their relationship still awaits clarification.¹⁰³ In *Wu chao xiaoshuo* we find basically the same shorter “*Jianxia zhuan*”, comprising eleven tales in one *juan*.¹⁰⁴ There is only one small, but significant difference: the compiler of *Wu chao xiaoshuo* preferred to discontinue the tradition of attributing the collection to an unknown Tang-person, and rather to identify its compiler by the name of Duan

101 Cf., e.g., *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo cidian*, 40 (entry by Luo Liqun); *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo baike quanshu*, 207 (entry by Xue Hongji).

102 Wang Shihan, “*Jianxia zhuan xu*” 序, as quoted in the edition *Congshu jicheng chubian*.

103 Cf. Li Ruiqing 李銳清, “*Wu chao xiaoshuo kanben wenti chutan*” 五朝小說刊本問題初探 [A preliminary discussion of the print-editions of the *Wu chao xiaoshuo*], *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan guankan* 國立中央圖書館館刊 25.2 (1992): 115-131; Cheng Yizhong, “*Wu chao xiaoshuo yu Shuofu*” 五朝小說與說郛, *Wenshi* 文史 47 (1998): 259-266.

104 This collectanea was reedited under the title *Wuchao xiaoshuo daguan* 五朝小說大觀 (Anthology of stories from Five Dynasties; lithographic printing, 40 *ce*, Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1926). “*Jianxia zhuan*” was included in fascicle 14, in the part “*Tangren baijia xiaoshuo*” 唐人百家小說 (Stories by Tang authors) under the section “*Pianlu jia*” 偏錄家 (Thematically restricted records).

Chengshi.¹⁰⁵ This attribution was probably based on the fact that four out of eleven stories had been derived from Duan Chengshi's *Youyang zazu*. Once this attribution had been established, it was continued in all later collectanea that included the shorter "Jianxia zhuan".¹⁰⁶

One common phenomenon in these early collectanea, such as *Shuofu* and *Wu chao xiaoshuo*, was the redundancy of texts, since some of the textual material their compilation had been based on, was partly overlapping. E.g., in *Wu chao xiaoshuo* the tale «Hongxian» was included in the "Jianxia zhuan" section, but also appeared in another section, as a separate unit (*juan*), under the variant title «Hongxian zhuan» 紅線傳 (The tale of Red Thread) and with some textual variation.¹⁰⁷ The two versions of the text apparently had been derived from different sources. Consequently, a later version of the shorter "Jianxia zhuan" in one *juan*, *Tangren shuohui* 唐人說薈 (Anthology of stories of the Tang, 1792),¹⁰⁸ did not include the story «Hongxian» any more, probably in order to avoid any double versions of a single story in one collectanea. But «Hongxian» is one of the longest tales in "Jianxia zhuan", and Chen Shixi 陳世熙, the compiler of the *Tangren shuohui*, apparently wanted to make up for this loss of substance by adding two other tales to the collection, «Guren qi» 賈人妻 (The merchant's wife, xu7) and «Qiuxu sou» 虬鬚叟 (The old man with the curly beard, xu8) from the sequel collection "Xu jianxia zhuan" (or from the full *Jianxua zhuan*). This rearrangement resulted in a modified collection comprising twelve stories (C2). *Tangren shuohui* was

105 About this prominent Tang-author see: E. Schafer, "Notes on Tuan Ch'eng-shih and his writing", *Asiatische Studien* 16 (1963): 14-34.

106 Referring to *Tangren shuohui*, Lu Xun rejected this attribution as erroneous; cf. *Lu Xun quanji*, 8: 107. See also Schafer, "Notes on Tuan Ch'eng-shih", 33. However, Schafer's information that *Jianxia zhuan* is instead regarded as a compilation by Pei Xing, i.e., by the presumable author of the important collection of Tang-tales *Chuanqi*, appears as equally baseless. Cf. *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, 941.

107 *Wu chao xiaoshuo daguan*, "Tangren baijia xiaoshuo", "Chuanqi jia" 傳奇家, fascicle 20.

108 *Tangren shuohui*, ji 4; cf. Bruno Belpaire, *T'ang kien wen tse. Florilège de littérature des T'ang* (2 v., Paris: Editions universitaires, 1959), 1: 15; Edwards, *Chinese Prose Literature of the T'ang Period*, 2: 101.

designed as a compilation of Tang-tales. From this perspective, the Tang-tale «Guren qi» was an appropriate addition, whereas «Qiuxu sou», which only nowadays has been identified as a story from a Song-collection, would appear as a misplacement.¹⁰⁹ Chen Shixi continued to attribute the modified shorter version of “Jianxia zhuan” in his *Tangren shuohui* to Duan Chengshi, despite the editorial changes that he obviously had added to it. In the modified format as defined by the widely circulated and frequently reprinted *Tangren shuohui*,¹¹⁰ the “Jianxia zhuan”-section comprising 12 stories found its way into a number of collectanea of the late Qing and the early Republic, such as *Longwei mishu* 龍威秘書 (Secret books of Longwei, 1794), *Yiyuan junhua* 藝苑摺華 (Flowers collected from the park of the arts, 1868 preface), and *Shuoku* 說庫 (Storehouse of stories, 1915).

The popular *Jianxia zhuan*

It is a conspicuous fact in the editorial history of *Jianxia zhuan* that the full collection, comprising 33 stories, after the early editions by Wang Shizhen, Wu Guan and Wang Shihan, practically vanished for an extended period of time. It resurfaced only in the second half of the 19th century, when a new type of edition of *Jianxia zhuan* came into circulation. This type of edition is chiefly noted for its highly artful character illustrations, originally created by the famous artist Ren Xiong 任熊 (zi Weichang 謂長, 1823-57).¹¹¹ This edition carried a “Preface to the newly printed illustrated Tales of Knights at Arms” (“Chongkan Jianxia xiang zhuan xu” 重刊劍俠象傳敘), dated to the 5th month of 1857 and signed by Wang Ling 王

109 «Guren qi» was derived from the Tang-collection *Ji yi ji* 集異記, attributed to Xue Yongruo 薛用弱 (early 9th c.). The origin of «Qiuxu sou» was located in the anonymous Song-collection *Beichuang ji yi* 北窗記異. See Liu Yinbo, “Longqing keben”, 113.

110 Reprints are known from 1843, 1911, and 1922; in 1806 it was issued under the title *Tangdai congshu* 唐代叢書.

111 For biographical information on Ren Xiong and a discussion of his artistic work see: Richard Vinograd, *Boundaries of the Self: Chinese Portraits, 1600-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 128-30.

齡 (*zi Jiuting* 九亭),¹¹² who was one of Ren Xiong's patrons during the last few years of his short life. It is also indicated that Wang Ling had collated the text, apparently based on the *Mishu*-edition by Wang Shihan, whose preface he reprinted and from whom he also copied the reference to an anonymous original compiler.¹¹³ The illustrations that Ren Xiong created for each of the thirty-three stories of the 'full' *Jianxia zhuan* were just one in a series of four albums of character portraits, each based on a collection of biographies or tales (*zhuan* 傳), that Ren completed in the years right before his early death.¹¹⁴ The three other works were about immortals (*Liexian jiupai* 列仙酒牌, 1854), about worthies (*Yuyue xianxian zhuan* 於越先賢傳, 1858), and about lofty scholars (*Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳, 1858). All four sets are regarded highly by critics for their unconventional, even provocative artistic approach. As seen in the context of a history of fiction illustration, "Ren followed the lead of Chen Hongshou [陳洪綬, 1598-1652] in creating minimalist visions of strange and often distorted figures floating against an empty background."¹¹⁵ The 33 character portraits illustrating *Jianxia zhuan*, in particular, became a lasting attraction to posterity and a publishers' favorite. Even nowadays, they are frequently being reproduced.¹¹⁶

112 Cf. *Huangqing shushi* 皇清書史, ed. Li Fang 李放 (Liaohai congshu 遼海叢書), 16.26b.

113 An edition with an imprint dated 1858, identifying the publisher as Wang shi Yanghe tang 王氏養和堂 (Mister Wang [Ling]'s Hall of Harmony Nourishing), still kept the division in four *juan* as it had been established by Wang Shizhen and had been continued by Wu Guan and Wang Shihan.

114 These sets of illustrations are most accessible in the joint edition *Ren Weichang xiansheng huajuan si zhong* 任謂長先生畫卷四種 (1st ed., Shanghai: Dongwen shuju, 1886; reprint, Shanghai: Jinwentang shuju, 1915; and more recent reprint, Beijing: Beijing shi Zhongguo shudian, 1985). Also see *Ren Weichang muke renwu* 任謂長木刻人物, ed. Wang Zidou 汪子豆 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin meishu chubanshe, 1959), and the editor's preface.

115 Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 211, 213.

116 See e.g. *Jianxia xiangzhuan* 劍俠像傳 (Beijing: Renmin meishu chubanshe, 1987).

The original form of Ren Xiong's *Jianxia zhuan*-illustrations had been an album entitled *Sa san jianke tu* 卅三劍刻圖 (Pictures of thirty-three swordfighters),¹¹⁷ the title-page of which gives the 3rd month of 1856 as the date of its completion. Each character drawing is accompanied by a title for the corresponding story and a one-sentence caption as a 'motto' drawn from the respective tale. In many cases Ren Xiong did not stick to the story's title as given in the *Mishu*-edition. For this reason, in the Wang Ling-editions from the late Qing there was a certain amount of discrepancy between illustration titles and story headings. The editor Wang Ling suppressed the mottoes that Ren Xiong himself had derived from the tales. The isolated character drawings were basically the only element that was kept from Ren Xiong's work. However, at least in one modern typeset edition from the Republican period (1936),¹¹⁸ not only Ren Xiong's illustrations were imitated, but also the titles of the tales were mostly rendered according to Ren's album.

One copy of Ren Xiong's album *Sa san jianke tu* seems to have been in the possession of the most famous living author of *wuxia*-fiction, Cha Liangyong 查良鏞 (*1924), familiar to the Chinese-speaking world today by his pseudonym Jin Yong 金庸. In January and February of 1970, he published a series of texts based on Ren Xiong's album.¹¹⁹ Ironically, Jin Yong, being the undisputed master of the genre and at the same time an erudite scholar of Chinese literature and history, did not realize that Ren Xiong's album in fact were illustrations for the *Jianxia zhuan*. With great zeal he searched out the origins of a number of corresponding tales, but in those cases in which Ren had altered the titles, Jin Yong could not find any source, of course. The few texts that he considered of outstanding literary quality, he rendered in the original version, whereas for the remaining

117 This album was reproduced in Wang Guoliang's convenient modern standard edition (Wang Shizhen, *Jianxia zhuan* [1986], 100-133).

118 *Xiuxiang Tangren jianxia zhuan* 繡像唐人劍俠傳 (1st ed., Shanghai: Zhongyang shudian, 1936; 2nd printing, 1937).

119 The series was published in the January and February issues of the evening edition of the newspaper *Mingbao* 明報. Later it was included in the 2nd part of the work edition *Jin Yong zuopin ji* 金庸作品集: *Xiake xing* 俠客行 (2 v., Taipei: Yuanjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1979), 2: 727-862. This edition also included a reproduction of the album (691-725).

stories he gave his own paraphrase in the modern written vernacular. Some of the tales he also supplemented with his own sometimes extensive comments. When occasionally in these comments Jin Yong referred to a *Jianxia zhuan*, he probably meant the short version as it was included in Qing-collectanea.¹²⁰ Thus, this series of texts turned into a partial ‘reconstruction’ of the *Jianxia zhuan*, rendered partly in modern translation.

From around 1878 on, the collection as edited by Wang Ling and illustrated by Ren Xiong came to be supplemented by a new sequel-collection, *Xu jianxia zhuan* 續劍俠傳, comprising 39 additional stories. Among these, only two stemmed from Ming-sources, whereas all the remaining material had been gathered from various Qing-collections.¹²¹ The compilation of this sequel-collection has been attributed to Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (also written as 鄭官應, *zi* Yingzhai 應齋, 1842-1922), who later became a famous politician. This attribution seems undisputable, although the actual biographical motivation for Zheng’s involvement with this edition remains in the dark. In 1878 he still was a merchant-manager who seems to have cared for nothing else but his own profit. Therefore it is somewhat hard to imagine him, at that time, as the compiler of a collection of stories on knight-errantry.¹²² Zheng also contributed a preface to the sequel collection (dated 1879) and apparently found an artist

120 See, e.g., Jin Yong, *Xiake xing*, 2: 731. Cf. Wang Guoliang, “Jianxia zhuan kaoshu”, 10.

121 In the sequel, unlike in the original collection, the sources were indicated for every story. For a listing of the sources for the sequel-collection see: Pan Mingshen 潘銘燊, “Cong Jianxia zhuan kan wuxia xiaoshuo de shenguai chuantong” 從劍俠傳看武俠小說的神怪傳統 [The fantastic tradition of the martial arts novel as seen from the *Jianxia zhuan*], in: *Wuxia xiaoshuo lun juan* 武俠小說論卷, eds. Chen Yongming 陳永明 and Liu Shaoming 劉紹銘 (2 v., Xianggang: Minghe she chuban youxian gongsi, 1998), 1:332-333.

122 See *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo cidian*, 110. Xia Dongyuan 夏東元, *Zheng Guanying zhuan* 鄭觀應傳 (rev. ed., Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 1985), 277, also mentions that Zheng Guanying published a *Jianxia zhuan* in 1878. One printing, dated 1858 (rpt., Hong Kong: Sinological Bibliocenter, [1984?]), included the sequel, attributed to Zheng Guanying, yet without the illustrations. It appears likely that this printing actually dated from 1878 or later and made use of the printing plates for Wang Ling’s edition.

who illustrated the stories of the sequel in the manner of Ren Xiong.¹²³ The edition—as revived by Wang Ling, illustrated by Ren Xiong, and supplemented by Zheng Guanying—provided the basis for later popular editions,¹²⁴ which made the collection in this form known to an even wider readership in the 20th century.

Zheng Guanying's sequel collection may be regarded as an 'up-date' to the original collection of Tang- and Song-tales, supplementing it with narratives from the more recent past. This seems to have been in line with Wang Ling's original idea. In his 1857-preface, Wang had idealized and promoted knight-errantry as a valid mode of social action. Such a viewpoint also fitted in with the broader movement, perceivable in the late Qing period, towards rediscovering, reviving and evaluating the tradition of knight-errantry in literature, and in culture more broadly. A crucial aspect of this project was the popularization of appropriate models of *xia*-style behaviour. Wang Ling pointed out that he had designed his illustrated edition to appeal to a well-educated readership as well as to those readers whom he imagined as less educated, but who, due to their physical condition, were more likely to actively emulate the models as promoted by the anthology. Zheng Guanying in his preface even went one step further and attributed eminent social significance to the *jianxia* in his own time. He called for a new role of the 'knight at arms' in ordering society, in defending the empire against foreign aggression, and in saving the Qing-dynasty. Thereby he anticipated the enthusiasm for *wuxia*-literature recurring in vogues throughout the 20th century.

123 The earliest edition with illustrations for both, the main collection as well as the new sequel, also for the first time included Zheng's preface. For a summary of this preface see *Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo cidian*, 973.

124 See, e.g., *Xiuxiang Tangren jianxia zhuan*, where the table of contents lists the sequel without discrimination along with the actual *Jianxia zhuan*. The sequel does not even have a separate title-page, but is identified only by the running title. For a new printing of the enlarged edition see *Jianxia tuzhuan quanji* 劍俠圖傳全集 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1987).

Summary

The collection *Jianxia zhuan*, as it has been known from late Ming-editions, was not an original compilation. Rather it was the merging of two previously circulating collections, “Jianxia zhuan” and its sequel, “Xu jianxia zhuan”. The “Jianxia zhuan”, a collection of eleven tales about knight-errantry, mainly from the Tang, clearly represents the collection’s earliest form. It might date back to pre-Ming-times. The sequel collection, “Xu jianxia zhuan”, consisting of another 21 tales mostly from the Song, and therefore providing the greater part of the *Jianxia zhuan*, can clearly be identified as a product of the mid-16th century. The 16th century saw the rediscovery of the great legacy of tales from the Tang and the Song, which was marked by the reissuing of editions of the two largest collections of tales, *Taiping guangji* (1566) and *Yijian zhi* (1546). The “Xu jianxia zhuan” can be positioned vis-à-vis these two projects: while the source-function of Hong Pian’s selective *Yijian zhi*-edition is undisputable, it seems equally clear that *Taiping guangji* could not have served as a point of reference. Thus, most probably, the “Xu jianxia zhuan” was compiled somewhen during the twenty years after 1546, but before 1566.

The “Jianxia zhuan” and the “Xu jianxia zhuan” in their original shape have been preserved in Yang Yi’s collectanea *Xue chuang tan yi* (equally a compilation approximately from the 1550’s) as well as in an edition restoring the original structure and content of the anthology *Yan yi bian*. This original *Yan yi bian* is believed to have been compiled by Wang Shizhen around 1566. He included in his compilation the two sections “Jianxia zhuan” and “Xu jianxia zhuan” (11+21=32 stories). These he merged, added minor modifications, and had it published as the first monographic edition of *Jianxia zhuan*, the second edition of which, dated 1569, is still extant. Wang Shizhen’s original contribution to the collection is represented by an appendix of four additional stories dropped by later editors. The merged *Jianxia zhuan* proper, in four *juan*, comprising 33 stories, was included in two early collectanea. In this format, the collection was revived only in 1857, when a finely illustrated edition based on it came into circulation. In 1878 this illustrated edition was supplemented by a sequel comprising 39 stories mainly from Qing-sources. This popular version was circulated in numerous editions and made the collection known to a wide readership in the late 19th and the 20th century. In Qing-

collectanea we usually find a short version of “*Jianxia zhuan*”, comprising either eleven or twelve stories. This smaller format, likely to have been established by the new *Shuofu*, reproduced the earlier “*Jianxia zhuan*” as found in *Xue chuang tan yi*. The variant version with 12 stories, earliest found in *Tangren shuohui*, represents a modified version of the short format, included in several collectanea of the 19th and early 20th century.

Up to the present day, the *Jianxia zhuan*, in its standard format as it had been introduced by Wang Shizhen, has remained the authoritative collection of classical *xia*-stories in Chinese literature. Although the original compilership of the collection has remained unknown, my discussion has shed some light on the textual history of this important thematic anthology. The descent of the various editions of *Jianxia zhuan*, as outlined on the chart (“Filiation of *Jianxia zhuan*-editions”, see p. 348), offers a more consistent and more complete account. It has become clear that the main process of its formation was firmly set in the context of the 16th-century movement towards rediscovering and reissuing the tales from the Tang and the Song. However, even prior to the reissuing of the *Taiping guangji* in 1566, a considerable corpus of Tang-tales—including those collected in the *Jianxia zhuan*—was already in circulation, though in variant textual versions. This is also a major reason for which the *Jianxia zhuan* should be cherished: textually superior versions of a number of Tang-tales have been preserved in it, independent of the *Taiping guangji* channel of transmission, the quality of which is open to doubt in many cases.

A / Axu

“Jianxia zhuan” / “Xu jianxia zhuan”

11 / 21 texts

- [1] Laoren hua yuan 老人化猿
 [2] Che zhong nüzi 車中女子
 [3] Seng xia 僧俠
 [4] Jingxi dian laoren 京西店老人
 [5] Lanling laoren 蘭陵老人
 [6] Lu sheng 盧生
 [7] Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘
 [8] Jing Shisan niang 荆十三娘
 [9] Hongxian 紅線
 [10] Tian Penglang 田膨郎
 [11] Kunlun nu 崑崙奴
- [xu1] Jiaxing shengji 嘉興繩技
 [xu2] Xu Ji 許寂
 [xu3] Ding xiucui 丁秀才
 [xu4] Pan jiangjun 潘將軍
 [xu5] Xuanci si menzi 宣慈寺門子
 [xu6] Li Guishou 李龜壽
 [xu7] Guren qi 賈人妻
 [xu8] Qiuxu sou 虬鬚叟
 [xu9] Wei Xunmei 韋洵美
 [xu10] Li Sheng 李勝
 [xu11] Guaiya jianshu 乖崖劍術
 [xu12] Xiuzhou cike 秀州刺客
 [xu13] Zhang Xun qi 張訓妻
 [xu14] Pan Yi 潘辰
 [xu15] Hongzhou shusheng 洪州書生
 [xu16] Yixia 義俠
 [xu17] Ren Yuan 任愿
 [xu18] Huayue xinwen 花月新聞
 [xu19] Xia furen 俠婦人
 [xu20] Jie Xun qu fu 解洵娶婦
 [xu21] Guo Lun guan deng 郭倫觀燈

B

Jianxia zhuan (Wang Shizhen etc.)

33 texts

- [1] Laoren hua yuan 老人化猿
 [2] Fuyu guo wang 扶餘國王
 [3] Jiaxing shengji 嘉興繩技
 [4] Che zhong nüzi 車中女子
 [5] Seng xia 僧俠
 [6] Jingxi dian laoren 京西店老人
 [7] Lanling laoren 蘭陵老人
 [8] Lu sheng 盧生
 [9] Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘
 [10] Jing Shisan niang 荆十三娘
 [11] Hongxian 紅線
 [12] Tian Penglang 田膨郎
 [13] Kunlun nu 崑崙奴
 [14] Xu Ji 許寂
 [15] Ding xiucui 丁秀才
 [16] Pan jiangjun 潘將軍
 [17] Xuanci si menzi 宣慈寺門子
 [18] Li Guishou 李龜壽
 [19] Guren qi 賈人妻
 [20] Qiuxu sou 虬鬚叟
 [21] Wei Xunmei 韋洵美
 [22] Li Sheng 李勝
 [23] Guaiya jianshu 乖崖劍術
 [24] Xiuzhou cike 秀州刺客
 [25] Zhang Xun qi 張訓妻
 [26] Pan Yi 潘辰
 [27] Hongzhou shusheng 洪州書生
 [28] Yixia 義俠
 [29] Ren Yuan 任愿
 [30] Huayue xinwen 花月新聞
 [31] Xia furen 俠婦人
 [32] Jie Xun qu fu 解洵娶婦
 [33] Guo Lun guan deng 郭倫觀燈

C1 (=A)

“Jianxia zhuan”

11 texts

- [1] Laoren hua yuan 老人化猿
- [2] Che zhong nüzi 車中女子
- [3] Seng xia 僧俠
- [4] Jingxi dian laoren 京西店老人
- [5] Lanling laoren 蘭陵老人
- [6] Lu sheng 盧生
- [7] Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘
- [8] Jing Shisan niang 荆十三娘
- [9] Hongxian 紅線
- [10] Tian Penglang 田彭郎
- [11] Kunlun nu 崑崙奴

C2

“Jianxia zhuan”

12 texts

- [1] Laoren hua yuan 老人化猿
- [2] Che zhong nüzi 車中女子
- [3] Seng xia 僧俠
- [4] Jingxi dian laoren 京西店老人
- [5] Lanling laoren 蘭陵老人
- [6] Lu sheng 盧生
- [7] Nie Yinniang 聶隱娘
- [8] Jing Shisan niang 荆十三娘
- [9] Tian Penglang 田彭郎
- [10] Kunlun nu 崑崙奴
- [11] Guren qi 賈人妻
- [12] Qiuxu sou 虬鬚叟

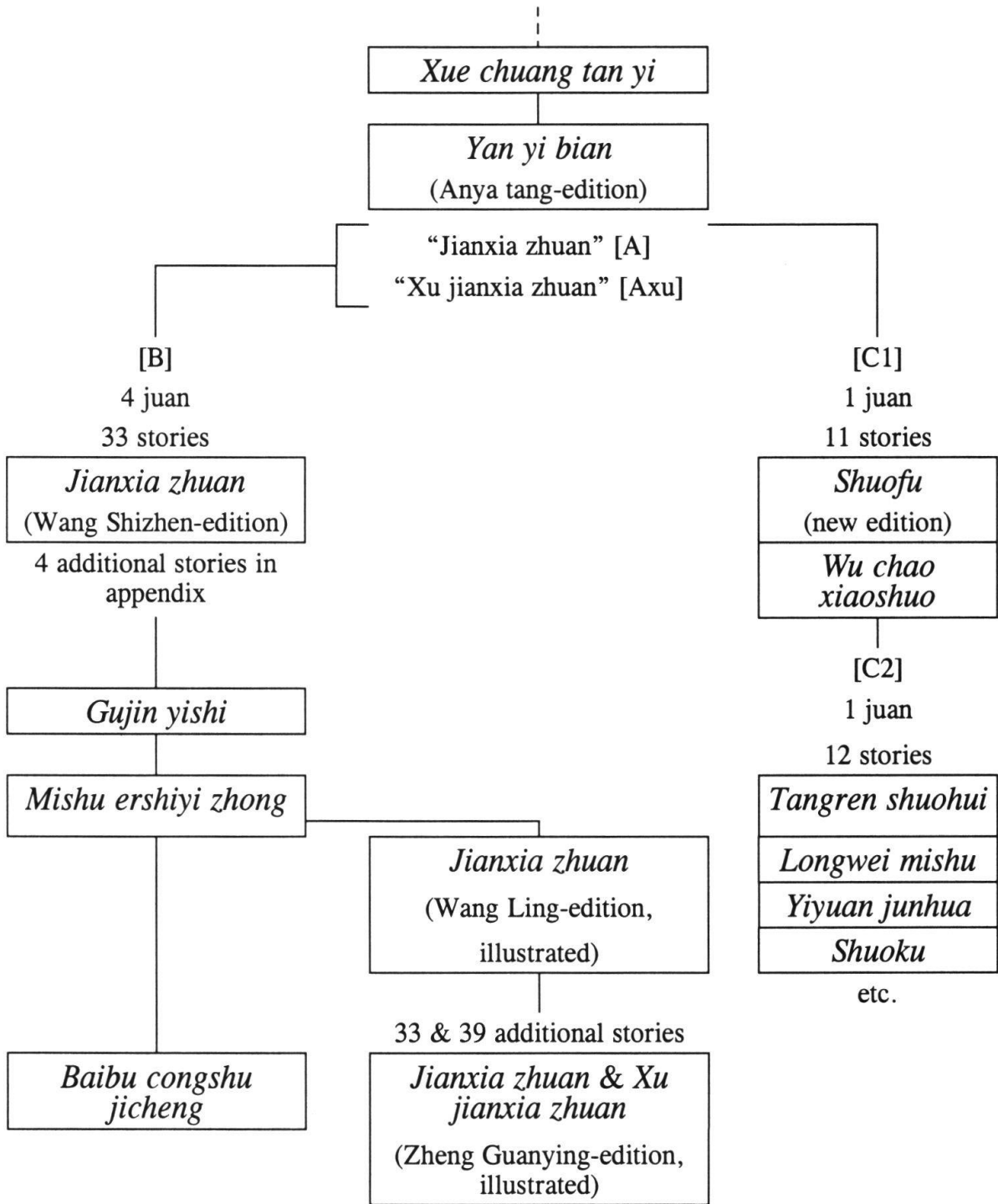


Chart: Filiation of *Jianxia zhuan*-editions