

# Miscellaneous Records of the Delegation to Yan,<sup>1</sup>

## Chapter 4

p. 1

### Magic

We once visited Liulichang,<sup>2</sup> and thousands of people were crowded on the left side of the road, so close together that they could not get in. In the distance, I saw some long poles several *zhang* in length,<sup>3</sup> with points as sharp as drills, and large plates a foot wide placed on top. They spun the plates for a long time without tipping off. The spectators all cheered in unison. Perhaps because their skill was so great, it seemed like magic.

On the eighth day of the first lunar month, the interpreters summoned three magicians to our residence to put on a show for the delegation. They all looked ordinary, their clothes and hats dirty – they were low-class performing artists. They were sent to test out their skills in the courtyard, and there were a hundred people gathered around the steps to watch. First, they set up a high table. One man stood to the south of it, unfurling a red felt cloth onto the table, while looking all around talking and laughing, and calling out endlessly. Then he proclaimed the ingenuity of his skills, and said that the felt on the table was clear without any objects. After a while, he took out a small piece of black cloth, and shook it several times. He invited a Korean man to unfold it onto the felt, then asked him to smooth it out with his hands, so that the cloth and the felt lay flat on the table. By this time, a myriad of people had crowded round to watch, and there really were no other objects. The magician then stood back, looking all around to speak again. After some time, he picked up the centre of the cloth, abruptly lifting it up and putting it back down several times. Suddenly, he pulled it away, and there was a large painted bowl on the felt, filled to the brim with several *sheng* of mixed nuts,<sup>4</sup> such as walnuts and chestnuts, with four or five sparrows on top. They spread their wings and flew away; some stopped on the roof, flapping about for a long while before leaving. The whole courtyard saw this, and they turned to each other and praised how remarkable it was, with nobody understanding their magic. He lifted the cloth again like before, removed it, and then there was a large bowl of water, with four or five red fish swimming about in some pondweed. The magician stared wide-eyed, looking all around while praising his own ability. Then, he ordered someone to take the bowl away. He held it with both hands, and walked slowly and cautiously. The interpreters said, “When the magicians are

---

<sup>1</sup> Another name for Beijing

<sup>2</sup> Now a district in downtown Beijing, it is one of Beijing’s old quarters, known as a cultural centre

<sup>3</sup> Unit of length, one *zhang* is about 3 m

<sup>4</sup> Unit of weight, one *sheng* is about 0.7 kg

about to perform a trick, they must set it up outside beforehand. They use magic to conjure things up without relying on others, but when they send something back, they must make use of people to do it.” It seems that while they can make something appear, they cannot make it hidden; they can conjure its coming, but not its going. How can magic be switched on and off?!

There was also another man who stood to the south of the table. He pulled out a string from his breast pocket, and bent it in the middle with the two ends hanging down. He made a Korean man cut it in one place, then covered it with glue to stick it back together. He held onto that place with his left hand, and made the Korean man hold onto the two ends of the string. He muttered and mumbled, and after a short while, asked him to let go of one end and pull it. He pulled the string out until there was none left, and there was no trace of the glue at all. When he pulled and plucked it, it made a twang like a bowstring. Then he joined two strings together, bending them in the middle and tying them up. He strung several tens of coins onto them, and asked two people to each hold one end and pull it. He gathered coins on the two remaining ends and tied them together securely. Then he grabbed the coins, pushing and pulling them. Since the two strings were tied in the middle, the string of coins should not have been able to move freely, yet he moved them without pulling them or cutting them off. The two extra ends were also already firmly tied together, so the coins and the string should not have disconnected with each other. But when his hand suddenly let go, the several tens of coins fell off at once, and he pulled the string freely.

p. 2

Another man lay the felt on the floor. He took off his top and undid his trousers to show that there were no hidden objects, and then he picked up the felt and pulled it away in the same way as before. There was a dish of jujubes, arranged in neat rows, four or five inches high, with a bright flower inserted on top. Next, there was a dish of melon seeds and a dish of dried nuts, followed by a bowl of water with red fish inside it like before. Then, he stopped, and had them removed. He then lined up five ivory beads as big as soybeans on the table. He put them in his right hand one by one, and once he had finished, he opened his palm, but we could not see the beads. He flipped his hands over to show everyone around, and then pinched the air with his thumb and index finger, as if he were rubbing something. After a short while, not only did we see the beads gradually getting bigger, but when he released his fingers, the ivory beads fell onto the table as before.

He then got fifteen large coins out from his breast pocket, spread them out onto the table, and turned them over one by one – they were all old copper green coloured. He turned them over a second time, and the fifteen coins were as black as lacquer. He turned them over again, and they were as white as silver. He then put a pack of fine needles and a piece of thread in his mouth, and chewed on them. After a short

time, he searched for the thread and pulled it out. Forty to fifty fine needles came out one after the other, threaded through the eyes of the needles. Then, he separately put three small black-cloth bags as big as bullets into two people's mouths, with the man on the left holding one in his mouth, and the man on the right holding two. He then touched the two people's heads and rubbed their mouths, pretending to swap them. He made the two men spit them out at the same time: the man on the left had two, while the man on the right had one. He swapped them again, touching their heads and rubbing their mouths as before. The two men both desperately kept their mouths closed, fearing that he had exchanged them. When they spat them out, the man on the left had one and the man on the right had two. Next, he put two bags into their mouths separately, and when they opened their mouths, the right one was empty, while the left one had two. The two people were couriers of the delegation, and they both stared bewildered, neither of them knowing what had happened. The magician then mocked them in jest. Eventually, he asked one of the men to hold a bag in his mouth, then ordered him to chew on it. Having chewed on it several times, he was greatly startled and spat it out – it turned out to be a lump of camel dung. The other man vomited, unable to bear it, and the whole courtyard roared with laughter. Then, he laid out two empty goblets, and muttered into the empty space. He then wrote the character "water" in the air, and scooped up the air into the goblet. After a moment, he uncovered the goblet, and it was filled with sweet wine, deep yellow like the colour of turmeric. He asked for it to be shared between some of the Koreans, but they were all afraid of the camel dung, so did not dare to accept it. They drank it after he persuaded them, and they said that it was extremely sweet and strong. Then he picked up a goblet with his left hand, and wrote in the air and scooped it up like before. He then used a small goblet to pour it out. He poured repeatedly; at the start, there were drips and drops of water, but the more he poured, the more it filled up, until eventually yellow liquid overflowed the goblet, and it was the fine wine again. He picked up the black cloth again, and wrapped a goblet with it, rolling it up extremely tightly. He made someone beside him hold one end and shake it. The cloth unfolded and fell away, but the goblet had disappeared. The magician clapped his hands, as if surprised and in disbelief. Soon, he gave a slight smile, and took the goblet out from his breast pocket.

p. 3

It seems that all magic shows mostly depend on the agility of the magician's hands; there is nothing divine or strange about it. As for the dishes of nuts, bowls of water, and the wine in the empty goblets inside the cloth, one cannot say that there is no skill to it.

When the show ended, the three Korean officers of the embassy each awarded them paper fans, and the delegation also used the public funds to award eight taels of silver to them.

Afterwards, we headed west from the Gate of Divine Might,<sup>5</sup> and there were performers by the roadside. Seemingly in the same way as before, there were small poles several feet long, with large plates spinning on top, just like what we saw in Liulichang. But the only difference was that a small pole passed through it across the bottom, and someone would hold the pole in their mouth, as if they were smoking. They shook it slightly, but the dishes did not fall off, and instead they span rapidly without stopping. It is truly inconceivable how people's skills can reach this point. One interpreter brought over four kinds of toys, and said that these were objects from the Prince's residence. One of them was five steps made from pasted paper, and each step was about an inch high. There was a small doll which was three inches high, with colourful clothing and a couple of topknots. Its waist was twisted and outstretched, as if it had no bones. He placed it on the step, making its four limbs fall towards the ground, with its head down and bottom up. As soon as he let go of his hand, its body would flip over and turn a somersault, landing on the next step like it was at the beginning. It turned and flipped over again, stopping when there were no more steps. We tried this repeatedly, each time without any difference. It seemed that there was mercury hidden in its waist, which flowed up and down. Even though the design was clumsy, it nevertheless gave us a laugh. Another one was a bronze cast model of an old immortal. He put it on the table, and it leaned on its cane and took some steps, and shook its head and fondled its beard, with its clothes fluttering in the wind. One of them was a *Taiping* carriage,<sup>6</sup> with a horse harnessed to the front, a beautiful woman on top of it, dressed in splendid attire, and a maid sitting in front of her. When the horse galloped and the carriage sped up, the two women became animated as if alive. Another one of them was a small boat, with several pots of colourful flowers on top, a single crane perched upright to the side, and a punter shrugging his shoulders and beating his pole. Wherever he beat it, wherever the boat went. These three types of toys all had complex twisting gears hidden inside them.<sup>7</sup> They would stop after a few rotations, then one would use an iron key to wind it up from the hole at the bottom, and it would go on as before.

## Theatre

It is not known from which dynasty theatre was introduced, but it was at the height of success during the end of the Ming. With its novel art and skill, people of both upper and lower classes madly indulged in it, and it even flowed into the Imperial Palace.<sup>8</sup> They wasted funds and neglected a myriad of state affairs. Up until now, theatre stages span the empire. We once saw several cartloads of theatre equipment outside Xizhimen,<sup>9</sup> all stored in red-lacquered cupboards. I sent someone to ask about it, and they replied, "They've just come from finishing a play at the Summer

---

<sup>5</sup> Shunwumen, the northern gate of the Forbidden City in Beijing

<sup>6</sup> Lit. "Great Peace carriage", it is a type of large carriage from antiquity

<sup>7</sup> Lit. "sheep intestine tooth wheels"

<sup>8</sup> Refers to the living quarters of the Emperor within the Forbidden City

<sup>9</sup> A gate in Beijing's historic city wall

Palace.”<sup>10</sup> It was probably for the Emperor’s entertainment. There were ten or so theatre companies outside Zhengyangmen,<sup>11</sup> since there was a discrepancy in the official taxes.<sup>12</sup> For the large ones, the establishment fee was already eighty to ninety thousand silver taels, not including repair work. Hence one could imagine the government’s prosperity from the collection of taxes. It seemed that for one day’s admission per person, it cost three or four silver taels, so it was not merely for the entertainment of the theatre performance. There was tea, wine, fruit, and other delicacies, which were absolutely exquisite. One spent the whole day indulging in food and play, doing what they pleased.

p. 4

It was how the magnificently wealthy families became addicted, not knowing how to stop. This is why these decadent and extravagant *zaju* operas must be banned by the imperial government.<sup>13</sup> But since the territory fell to the enemy,<sup>14</sup> the Han officials’ ceremonial robes of their dignified manner and past successive dynasties have been what the adherents of the fallen dynasty have looked up to,<sup>15</sup> and what the later emperors took as examples. Thus, it is no trivial matter. Moreover, the operas acted out loyalty, filial piety, righteousness, and sternness, such as the matters of the Five Confucian Relationships,<sup>16</sup> as if they were real. They used lyrics and melody to rouse them, and the sound of reed pipes to cleanse them, making the audience sorrowful, as if they had seen real people. The audience have the means to become better day by day without knowing it themselves. This is theatre’s achievement in punishment and persuasion, and perhaps it is no different to the teachings of *Ya* and *Nan*,<sup>17</sup> and therefore theatre cannot be lacking either.

On the fourth day of the first lunar month, I watched a performance outside Zhengyangmen. The equipment in the tall building was set up majestically, to the finest standard. Even though it was indecent recreation, the strictness of its regulation was no different to military discipline. All the elegant things in the land could really be no match for it. The roof was made of thirteen beams, and a balcony which was several feet wide had been built against the northern wall, surrounded by carved bannisters – this was the theatre stage. It had an area of ten or so steps, the northern side was separated by a brocaded screen, and there was a wooden

---

<sup>10</sup> Yuanming Yuan, now known as the Old Summer Palace

<sup>11</sup> Also known as Qianmen, lit. “Front Gate”, a gate in Beijing’s historic city wall

<sup>12</sup> Performers who want to pay less tax would set up their stalls outside (city tax evasion)

<sup>13</sup> *Zaju*: lit. “variety show”, a type of poetic musical drama originating from the Song dynasty, but mostly associated with the Yuan dynasty, consisting of four acts

<sup>14</sup> The “enemy” refers to the Manchus, relating to the Manchu invasion and the subsequent establishment of the Qing conquest dynasty in 1644

<sup>15</sup> Refers to the Ming loyalists

<sup>16</sup> I.e. lord-vassal, father-son, husband-wife, elder-younger brothers, friends

<sup>17</sup> Dancers from the Zhou Dynasty in the Book of Odes, valued for their ability to improve morality

platform step outside the screen, with six or seven people on it. They were all carrying musical instruments: reed pipes, a *xianzi*,<sup>18</sup> zither, piccolo, large drum, big gong, clappers, and so forth – the various instruments were readied there. Behind the brocaded screen was where the theatre actors hid themselves to change their costumes. To the left and right were doors with hanging embroidered curtains, through which the actors entered and exited. There was a pair of couplets on the pillars by the doors, and the words were beautiful. Above them were inscribed tablets, which said, “Jade Colours and Gold Voices”, and “Embellished Colour and Great Harmony”. Hanging all around were various lanterns made from goat horn, rosewood, silk, and glass. They all had brilliant thread tassels, pearl cowries, and jade. Three sides of the stage were surrounded by steps for seating the spectators. There was a wooden balcony above it, which was also set up with tall tables on three sides, with a dish of melon seeds, seven teacups, and a pot of congee on each table. There was an incense burner, which did not stop burning all day – it was equipment for smoking. The three sides of the tables were all arranged with benches, which seated exactly seven people, to face the theatre stage. The tables and benches lined up behind were one level higher, so that one could look down from above without being obstructed. On both the balcony and below, they could seat hundreds to thousands of people. All those who wanted to watch the opera had to first obtain a paper label ticket from the theatre manager, and stick it on their table, and only then would they be allowed in their seat. Once they’d stuck it on, even if the seat were empty all day, other people would not dare to take it. If the labelled seats had already been filled, even hooligans and young ruffians would not wish to force their way in to watch.<sup>19</sup> It was the strictness of the custom. When I first entered the gate, there was a hall to the left of the gate, where a man dressed in embroidered clothing and fox fur robes sat cross-legged on a chair set up there. There were copper coins piled up beside him, and a long table placed in front, with writing brushes, ink stones, about ten scrolls of record books, and several tens of red paper label boxes on top. The paper labels were all printed, with empty spaces in between. I approached him to give my regards, and he said, “The theatre performance has already started, why have you come so late? You have no choice but to wait until tomorrow.” After I insisted, he accepted fifty copper coins, took a paper label, and wrote in the empty space, “One Korean gentleman”. He also wrote down the amount of money. I accepted it and entered through the central gate. There were people with chairs sitting inside the central gate as well, who had also been dismissed because the seats had been filled.

p. 5

After a while, I called for an usher and gave him my label, and the usher led me up the building via the stairs, checking all the tables everywhere, but there were no

---

<sup>18</sup> Three-stringed plucked instrument

<sup>19</sup> I.e. watching the performance without paying/without a seat

empty spaces. The usher also dismissed me with the label, and told me to wait until another day. I saw that there were empty seats with labels stuck on them in the east of the building. I requested to the usher that I sit down a little, in order to wait for the seat holder. It would seem that I had been forceful and rowdy from the outset, and since I had already greatly violated their customs, I took the chance to seize the seat – an awful habit from Korea. But I indulged in the pleasure of the moment, not waiting until the next day, which was also the bullish nature of the Korean people. That the theatre manager and the usher allowed it, though they seemed to not want it, was because they were constrained by etiquette and custom. Those who sat by me all looked at each other and turned away, and they also had annoyed expressions. At the time, it was only a few days after the Lunar New Year. The entire city was already dressed in new attire, and moreover many of those watching the opera were men at leisure. This was why the hundreds upon thousands of people in the whole building wore splendid clothing and red tassels, and they had become a magnificent sight in the theatre. There seemed to be droves of people in the whole venue, but it was silent and without clamour. Even though it was because they were watching intently, it was indeed the custom that they liked to be quiet. When it came to the intense and wondrous parts of the opera, they laughed in unison like thunder. I heard that the opera was a historical remnant of *Jade Garden* from the Zhengde Emperor's reign.<sup>20</sup> There were boys who had applied slight rouge and powder onto their faces, playing beautiful courtesans, of utmost beauty in their appearance. They often had a look of worry and resentment, and every time they sang, the group of instruments would play in unison in harmony with them. There was also an official who emerged when the curtains drew open. He leant on the chair with a furious expression, with banners and drums arrayed before him. Soon after, the curtains fell for the interval. I asked someone sitting by me about it, and they replied, "He's an investigator." Whenever the opera changed a little, they would sound the gong to mark the acts. The officials all wore hairnets and black gauze caps, and round collars in a Chinese design. With towering shoulders and great strides, they looked around in a measured way. This here was the so-called dignified manner of the Han officials. But since I did not understand what was happening, it was really like talking gibberish to a fool. Everyone in their seats was laughing merrily, but I could only follow them in their praises.

When we headed east to return home, and we arrived at Yutian County,<sup>21</sup> I saw a bamboo marquee set up on the street putting on plays. So I gave them two silver taels, and selected *The Merry Forest* from the theatre programme to try it out. It turned out to be the part where Wu Song drunkenly hits Jiang Menshen in *Water Margin*.<sup>22</sup> It differed a little from the original story. Someone said that there was a separate scripted version for the use of theatre. The scale of the equipment here

---

<sup>20</sup> Ming dynasty emperor, reigned from 1505 – 1521

<sup>21</sup> A county in north-eastern Hebei province

<sup>22</sup> Scene where martial hero Wu Song beats up an evil bar owner in the story *Water Margin*

was nothing more than rudimentary compared to the theatres in the capital, but since I understood what was happening, I could roughly make out what they were saying and thinking. Thus, the words made me laugh, and the scenes were interesting. It made everyone so merry that we forgot about going home. Afterwards, I understood the reason for the whole generation's craze for theatre.

p. 6

## **Market Shops**

Among the markets, the one in the Imperial City was the most flourishing,<sup>23</sup> followed by Shenyang,<sup>24</sup> then Tongzhou,<sup>25</sup> and Shanhaiguan after that.<sup>26</sup> In the Imperial City, it was particularly prosperous outside Zhengyangmen. As for Fengcheng,<sup>27</sup> it was a remote and desolate border post, and the goods were also very bleak and dull, but the market gate was still painted with red lacquer. When we arrived at Shenyang, it was all decorated very colourfully. As for the Imperial City, there were carved windows and engraved doors, with resplendent gold and silver. The shop signboards competed for novelty, and the chairs, tables, screens, and curtains were extremely extravagant. I suppose if it were not like this, then business would not thrive, and the goods would not accumulate. Whenever a shopfront was set up, the exterior alone would already be worth at least several tens of millions of taels.

At all the crossroads on the thoroughfare, there were many restaurants set up, facing each other on both sides of the road. The frames of the buildings all extended out beyond the eaves, and the balustrades were magnificent. But when it rained from above and the winds blew from the sides, and they experienced flooding in the summer rains, then they could never avoid the need for repairs. Although their wealth was abundant, it was still unfathomable that they indulged so carelessly in the pleasure of the moment, and did not hesitate in wasting expenses.

Once on my way back from Liulichang, there was a shop on the side of the road selling women's pendants. The shop owner invited me in for a chat, and there were five or six people, all of them Han people of distinguished appearance. They asked about Korea's examination system and study methods. They also enquired as to whether the *Spring and Autumn Annals* were read alongside with the *Three*

---

<sup>23</sup> The Imperial City refers to the inner part of Beijing

<sup>24</sup> Provincial capital of Liaoning, formerly known by its Manchu name of Mukden

<sup>25</sup> Now a district of Beijing, at the northern end of the Grand Canal and considered the eastern gateway to Beijing

<sup>26</sup> I.e. Shanhai Pass, one of the major passes in the Great Wall of China. These were all markets along tribute trade route

<sup>27</sup> Now known as Dandong in Liaoning Province; Fengcheng still exists as a county-level city under the administration of Dandong



*Commentaries* or not.<sup>28</sup> The furniture inside the shop was grand and extravagant. A fine carpet had been laid out below, deep red like blood. There were gilded intertwining dragons on the chairs, and my heart leapt at the sight of them – I did not dare to sit there. Inside every shop, a horizontal plank would be installed to separate the inside from the outside.<sup>29</sup> The top of it would serve as a long table, and it would be at waist height, painted with pure black lacquer. Various writing implements such as brushes and ink, abacuses, record books, brush stands, ink stones, and brazier jars would be placed on it. When discussing the quality and the price of any of the goods, the shop owner and the customer would conduct negotiations while separated by the table, not mingling with each other.

All the shops not only had inscribed tablets with their shop names on the door, but signs were also hung on all the eaves to make them recognisable. Thus, when the wind blew, an array of colours dazzled and shone. Even the street peddlers had their own signs too, using things like metal gongs, bamboo sieves,<sup>30</sup> strips of wood, and tea implements.<sup>31</sup> They did not have to bother calling out to be heard, as one already knew what they were selling.

Pawnshops were shops where one pawned items at an interest. The monthly interest was 2%. When someone exceeded the limit, they sold the pawned item to compensate for it. Upon entering a shop, there was no everyday item that they did not have, from clothing to ornaments. The shelves would be neat and tidy, and each one would have an identifying label. The four words “Military equipment not pawned” were written frequently, as there was probably a ban. In the tiny walled villages inside and outside of the passes, wherever there were shops opened, there was sure to be a pawnshop. It would always have carved windows and lofty eaves, completely different to the other shops. They must have made enough interest to provide for their furnishings. Moreover, they let the poor people depend on them to relieve their hardship, and the wealthy people did not dare to impose substantial interest. They were the most indispensable shops in the marketplaces.

p. 7

Many of the people exchanging silver and copper along the road went back to the pawnshops. They kept two pairs of scissors for cutting silver under the table, which were several feet long. They used abacuses to calculate the sums, and they moved their fingers so nimbly that even those watching beside them could not follow it. It

---

<sup>28</sup> The *Spring and Autumn Annals* are also known as the *Chunqiu*, and is one of the main Chinese classics. The *Three Commentaries* are also known as the *San Zhuan*, comprising of the *Zuo Zhuan*, *Gongyang Zhuan*, and *Guliang Zhuan*. They are a series of commentaries that annotate the *Spring and Autumn Annals*

<sup>29</sup> A shop counter to separate the shopkeepers from the customers

<sup>30</sup> Could also be bamboo combs

<sup>31</sup> Lit. “little dragon”

seemed that among those who made calculations in China, they used abacuses in the markets, while they still did brush calculations in Astronomy.<sup>32</sup> As for the ancient method of using bamboo chips, I certainly never saw it.

In the various markets in the capital city, they often used paper to make carriages, horses, and human figures as children's toys. But they would break with the touch of the hand, and were not worth a penny, though I still saw the shops selling them. Such was the extravagance of the prevailing customs.

There were also travelling merchants who carried a pole in their hands, with a small monkey straddling the pole-top. Its dancing hands had rhythm, and its fur swayed in the wind. But when I pressed them to look at it, it turned out to be fake. It was how they enticed people to gather and watch, as an excuse to sell their goods.

In the clothes markets, there were always people lifting their goods up with both hands, shouting out with high-pitched voices, and boasting of their quality and origin. For example, when holding up a fur coat, they would say something like, "The stuff made from this leather comes from Shaanxi". When they finished shouting out, they would move the item to the left. Every shop had hundreds and thousands of pieces of clothing old and new, piled up high into mounds. They moved things around all day, calling out to no end. Often, some people would run out of breath, with their throats hoarse, and unable to make a sound. But when their voices were clear and strong, and were amusing and easy to listen to, then the passers-by would stand around and cheer. As the people calling out became increasingly animated, they transformed into performers. It seemed that all the shops made it their task to gather people round. If people gathered around, it certainly benefitted the market.

The barbers used a shoulder pole to carry two round buckets, painted with a mix of colours on the outside. The buckets contained implements such as scraping knives of varying sizes, castor oil washbasins and brazier pots, and hot water – nothing was not prepared for. For picking earwax, or scraping corns off feet, there was no meagre skill and no wretched tool in spraying or peeling that they did not have. They willingly provided the service for people and did not fear that it was so inferior. In China's long period of peace and prosperity, one could imagine the abundance of people and objects, and the bitter hardships of making a livelihood.

## Temples

Both inside and outside the Imperial City, public and private Buddhist temples greatly flourished. These were temples such as Yonghegong and Hongren Temple.<sup>33</sup> The magnificence of the furnishings in the buildings exhausted the world's wealth, and stretched the limits of the world's craftsmanship. All the temples managed by the

---

<sup>32</sup> Lit. the study of calendars

<sup>33</sup> Tibetan Buddhist temples; Yonghegong is also known as Lama Temple, and is located in the Dongcheng district of Beijing, while Hongren Temple was destroyed in around 1900

Emperor allowed yellow-clothed lamas to live there. The lamas were Shakyamuni Buddhist followers from remote Tibet, who followed the lamas here. They would often have mystical, miraculous powers. Since the Kangxi period,<sup>34</sup> they were already revered as State Teachers. After that, when the Mongols were ordained to become Buddhist monks, they learned from the lamas, and all their clothing and hats were yellow. There were already several thousand of them in Yonghegong and Hongren Temple, all arrogant and fierce in their manner, completely without the demeanour of a hermit. I think that the mystical powers of the lamas are already in decline.

p. 8

There was a temple to the west of the city of Shenyang, and its structure was rather grand. The lamas maintained it, and the interpreters said that it was “a temple offered by the Khan”. I took a carriage and arrived under a decorated archway. The armed soldiers guarded it very sternly, carrying swords at their waist and holding whips. I got out of the carriage and entered the gate to go to see the main hall. Some yellow-clothed monks carried the keys, asking for “purifying heart pills”.<sup>35</sup> I had no choice but to give them a hundred copper coins, and only then did they open the hall and allow me to see it. There was a statue of Tathagata on the dais,<sup>36</sup> two or three *zhang* high. On the left was Guanyin,<sup>37</sup> and on the right was Puxian.<sup>38</sup> The offerings were very abundant, with braziers and curtains. All the pillars were engraved with dragons, and their claws and scales were lifelike. Such craftsmanship was already beyond what Korea could achieve. There were bows and arrows on the table, each with their own embroidered pouch, covered with yellow cloth. The monk said that they were presented by His Majesty after he went hunting. The monks’ living quarters were to the west of the hall, and there was an old *heshang* monk wearing a yellow garment and a little hat sitting on a chair on the steps.<sup>39</sup> Seven or eight people were waiting on him, all gesturing with their hands for me not to come any closer. I acted as if I did not understand, and I went directly in front of the chair and bowed to him. The monk got up from the chair and bowed back, then he led me in, sitting opposite on the *kang*.<sup>40</sup> I did not decline, and took a seat. The attendees arranged themselves separately below the *kang*, all with uneasy expressions on their faces. Upon asking how to address the monk, the attendees replied, “The abbot”. It seemed that he presided over the whole temple, and had an official rank.

---

<sup>34</sup> Qing emperor, reigned from 1661 – 1722

<sup>35</sup> The monks are asking for money to buy these pills, as they were not permitted to ask for money directly

<sup>36</sup> One of the titles of the Buddha

<sup>37</sup> Chinese name for the Bodhisattva Avalokitasvara, also known as the Goddess of Mercy

<sup>38</sup> Chinese name for the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra

<sup>39</sup> A *heshang* was the name for a more senior type of monk

<sup>40</sup> A heated brick bed

Guangyou Temple was to the west of the city of Liaodong,<sup>41</sup> and it was exceedingly magnificent. There was a white pagoda in front of the temple, which was a thousand *ren* high,<sup>42</sup> and some called it White Pagoda Temple. Looking to the south, one could see a thousand mountains for fifty or sixty *li*.<sup>43</sup>

Jinzhou's Guanyin Temple was restored in the ninth year of the Qianlong Emperor's reign.<sup>44</sup> The gold statues in the halls were of utmost splendour. But there were only several monk disciples. There were craft workshops in all the covered corridors. In the main hall, a group of craftsmen were in the middle of constructing coffins. They were applying paste to the inside of the coffin planks, scattered about beside the table. Many weavers were in both corridors. In front of it was a theatre stage, with a sign saying, "The performance has ended". There was a white pagoda, and its eight sides were engraved with images of the Buddha – it was extremely wondrous. When I went closer to look up at it, it was indeed a great sight. Compared to the white pagoda of Liaoyang,<sup>45</sup> it was perhaps even grander. To the west was the Goddess of Fertility Temple.<sup>46</sup> There was a statue of the Goddess of Fertility, with ten or so statues of children next to it; they looked like foetal spirits. There was also one holding human eyes in its hands, and it was called the Goddess of Eyes.<sup>47</sup> They were worshipped everywhere, second only to Guandi and the Buddha,<sup>48</sup> followed by the Gods of Medicine,<sup>49</sup> then the God of Culture and Literature after that.<sup>50</sup> The Gods of Medicine were the God of Agriculture,<sup>51</sup> Bian and Cang,<sup>52</sup> all of them forefathers of medicine. The Star God of Culture and Literature rules over matters of culture and literature in the world,<sup>53</sup> and he is worshipped by scholars and gentlemen who seek prestige. More than thirty pots of flowers were arranged in front of the temple, half of which were pomegranates. There was an iron basin containing several *dan* of water,<sup>54</sup> with colourful koi fish kept inside it, swimming around in the pondweed.

p. 9

---

<sup>41</sup> Guangyou Temple is now in the city of Liaoyang

<sup>42</sup> Unit of length, one *ren* is about 30 cm

<sup>43</sup> Unit of length, one *li* is about 500 m

<sup>44</sup> Qing dynasty emperor, reigned from 1711 – 1799

<sup>45</sup> Referring to the white pagoda in Guangyou Temple

<sup>46</sup> Temple worshipping the Goddess of Fertility or Childbirth; Chinese name: Songzi Niangniang

<sup>47</sup> Chinese name: Yankuang Niangniang

<sup>48</sup> Guandi is one of the deity titles for Guan Yu, a Han dynasty military general who served under Liu Bei

<sup>49</sup> Chinese name: Yaowang

<sup>50</sup> Chinese name: Wenchang

<sup>51</sup> Chinese name: Shennong

<sup>52</sup> Two famous doctors from the Han and Spring & Autumn periods

<sup>53</sup> Another title for the God of Culture and Literature – each star was believed to have a god ruling over it; Chinese name: Wenchang Xingjun

<sup>54</sup> Unit of weight, one *dan* is about 30 kg

Lord Guan was worshipped even more than the Buddha both inside and outside of the passes.<sup>55</sup> According to *A Brief Guide to Rank and Titles*,<sup>56</sup> Lord Guan's descendants had hereditary titles. The learned gentlemen were called "Descendants of the Sage" or "Dukes of Overflowing Wisdom" etc.<sup>57</sup> Every walled village had to first construct a Guan temple, and one could discern the size of the village from how extravagant it was in its structure. Their inscribed tablets and couplets on the pillars also had to be new and unique. But the inscriptions in the middle and back halls of the temples were most impressive. The statues were several *zhang* high, with small statues of many feet in front, all reddish-brown in colour. Inside the hall, there were ten or so deputy generals arranged in a line, their swords and halberds dense like a forest. Next to them stood the Green Dragon Sword,<sup>58</sup> which had a handle but no blade, like those made in the Guan temples of my country. There was a bell and drum tower in the courtyard, and they were both two storeys high. In front of the table, there were tubes of bamboo tokens for throwing lots, and it was said that some had miraculous accuracy. Behind the temple was a shrine for the God of Culture and Literature, where he was dressed in ceremonial robes and a hat, with an air of righteousness and a solemn stance. Notices were pasted onto the walls, with phrases like "Apply effort, avoid idleness", probably for the students' studies. Opposite the temple gates, there was also a theatre painted red and splendidly bright. It seemed that every big temple always had a theatre stage in front of the hall, but no one knew the reason for it.

The great Buddha temple in Jizhou had a six *zhang* high gold statue set up in a two-storey pavilion, and its grandeur was second only to the statue in the Yonghegong. When I ascended the building, just as I was at its shoulder, I measured its ears to be at least more than a *zhang* long.<sup>59</sup> Eight windows were installed on the outside of the building, along with railings. Everywhere I looked, it was extremely pleasant. There was a reclining Buddha to the west of the pavilion, with a brocaded coverlet draped over it, exposing half of its gold body. It rested its head on its bent arm, as if deep in thought. Upon seeing it, I was stunned and unconsciously took a few steps back.

To the east of Beijing, every pagoda large or small was built with bricks and lime, and thus they were called "white pagodas". Only in the city of Fengrun were there stone pagodas,<sup>60</sup> which were three or four *zhang* high. The texture of the stone was smooth like jade, and they were carved with immense skill. They were like the ancient pagodas in the great temples of my country.

---

<sup>55</sup> Lord Guan is another title for Guandi

<sup>56</sup> Qing dynasty book containing the names of all the gods

<sup>57</sup> These titles were also hereditary titles for descendants of Confucius

<sup>58</sup> A famous sword used by Guandi

<sup>59</sup> Long ears are considered a symbol of wisdom

<sup>60</sup> Fengrun is a city in Hebei

The households always had a place for Lord Guan, and incense was burned diligently from morning to night. I never saw anyone who had built a family temple to offer sacrifices to their ancestors.<sup>61</sup> Only in the assistant teacher's home in Shenyang was there a piece of silk hanging on the wall, with ten or so Manchu characters spread in the thread, which read, "Ancestral Tablet". But I saw that there were people selling newly made ancestral tablets in the Shenyang market, and they were made in a similar fashion. The *Family Rituals* also says to "keep it in a wooden box",<sup>62</sup> so I suppose that there were some people who abided by the *Family Rituals*.

Even though the halls and corridors in the temples both inside and outside the passes were extremely vast, they housed no more than four or five monks. Of all the ancient temples that we passed through, more than half were in ruin and disrepair. One can imagine the decline of Shakyamuni Buddhism. Some said, "Under the current system, converting to monkhood is extremely rigorous, and every temple has a fixed quota, thus the number of common people increases daily."

p. 10

## **Food and Drink**

Among wines, there were various types of red spirits, clear wine, and yellow wine. Yellow wine was cloudy wine. The wine cups were extremely small, and only contained a few spoonfuls. The pewter equipment for heating up the wine also only contained one cupful. It was round but thin at the middle. Separated at the middle, the wine was held in the top part, while the bottom part was heated with fire. It was easy to heat up, and when smoky shadows arose, the liquid flowed out into the cup. Holding the cup, one would take a little sip, then they would certainly furrow their brow, purse their lips, and let out a long breath, talking for a short while before taking another sip. One would finally finish a cup after seven or eight sips. It was done in such a way not only for strongly fermented red spirits, but also for clear wine and yellow wine.<sup>63</sup> Because of this, one drank all day without getting severely drunk, and without harming oneself either. They enjoyed its delight, but did not suffer from its negative consequences. The people of antiquity would drink three hundred cups a day. There was indeed a reason for this, and it was not enough to be regarded as unusual either.

When one entertained guests, they would first serve tea as a courtesy. One had to put a few tea leaves in a cup, heat up some water in a copper kettle to brew the tea with, then put the lid on. After a short time, the tea leaves unfolded and moistened like newly blossomed buds, and the hot water became clear like the colour of

---

<sup>61</sup> This is in accordance with Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian teachings. He was a leading Song dynasty scholar whose ideas were of great importance in both Korea and China

<sup>62</sup> Book written by Zhu Xi

<sup>63</sup> Referring to the process of heating up alcohol before drinking it

beeswax. The delicate fragrance was intoxicating. Chatting while sipping on the tea, it took a short while before one finished drinking a cup. The attendants would then pick up the hot kettle again, add some more water, and cover it. In the *kang* stoves of every wealthy and noble family,<sup>64</sup> as well as every market shop, some would burn coal, with a square brick covering the stove, and a round hole bored into the brick, on top of which they added a copper kettle. Like the wind in the pine trees and rain in the juniper, all day long the sound never ceased.

There were many types of tea. Green-black tea was the most lowly common sort.<sup>65</sup> Pu'er tea was the most valued and appreciated in the capital, and there were also many fake kinds. The delicate fragrance of chrysanthemum tea from Zhejiang was most delicious. It was for the people that the foreigners of the Catholic Church received, and it smelt like fennel, its fragrance exceedingly unusual.

The rice bowls were as large as the teacups, and they were little different in appearance. Whenever several people, perhaps six or seven, gathered together around the table, they would first set down things like pickled vegetables and condiments, and place a rice bowl and a teacup for each person. Afterwards, the bowls would be taken and filled with rice to be served. Next, soup and roast meat would be served. Be it rice, tea, soup, or roast meat, one ate as they pleased, and were served with more food as they pleased. Those who ate a lot sometimes had eight or nine bowls of rice, which is twice the amount that ordinary people in Korea eat.

The rice was all old rice from hill paddy fields, so dry and coarse that I could not bear to eat it. In Guandong,<sup>66</sup> everyone ate millet and mixed old grains from Sichuan, and they were not easy to obtain either. Every delegation had several hundred bags of food rations in grain sacks. This was so that the whole delegation could rely on the kitchens to feed us all rice from Guandong. The others below the rank of the interpreters all ate old rice. Some said, "Old rice is waterlogged rice,"<sup>67</sup> they save it from water and call it "waterlogged". Everyone who amasses rice in the granaries would always add water to soak it, and wait for it to dry before storing it.<sup>68</sup> It can last several decades without going bad. China has used this method to sell the old rice while buying new rice every year. Thus, the grain of the common people is so old and disgusting." I did not know whether this was right or not?

p. 11

---

<sup>64</sup> Heated brick bed with a stove on one end

<sup>65</sup> Not to be confused with green tea

<sup>66</sup> Lit. East of the [Shanghai] Pass, referring to modern day Northeast China

<sup>67</sup> The two phrases, "old rice" and "waterlogged rice", are homophones

<sup>68</sup> This refers to a method of processing harvested rice, called "wet rice processing". Rice was parboiled in water before milling, so that the starch would become gelatinised, hardening the grain, and improving the storage life by lowering the oil content

In the stores outside the capital, the meat delicacies were specially made from pork, and the soups were like bottle gourd noodle soup. The various types of convenience foods were mixed with spring onion and garlic. Whenever I tried it, the reek and spice turned my stomach, and I often retched, not being able to put it in my mouth. But when there were blizzards from dawn to dusk, one could not ward off the cold without eating this. When we went to Fengcheng, we went directly to a restaurant. Inside the restaurant, there were maybe ten or more rooms, with chairs and tables separately arranged in rows. It could seat a hundred people. To the side, there ten or so waiters, with cooking vessels, chopping blocks, knives, and spoons. They waved their hands in the air, calling out, "What would the Korean gentleman like to eat?" For my part, I called back dramatically, "Bring me the boss' best picks!" So they served me a bowl of "bottle gourd", which was a noodle soup. The servant presented our delegation with brass chopsticks, but we declined them, and took some wooden chopsticks from the tube on the table, which were what people on their travels used. I sipped and slurped, gulping it down as if it were the finest candy. In an instant, I had eaten two bowls. I drank some tea before stopping, and from this point on, it became an eating habit. I ate this as I pleased, using it to avoid going hungry in the cold. Sometimes my stomach suffered from pain and indigestion, so I would grind my teeth on a piece of betel nut, and after a while I would suddenly feel better. Perhaps because northerners ate meat too often, they took small betel nuts called "chicken hearts", broke them into four, and kept them in their bag. With one piece, they could chew on it for half a day.

We once went to a morning market, and passed through a narrow lane under the decorated archway in Dongsi.<sup>69</sup> For several hundred steps, thousands upon thousands of pigs were arranged in rows, spread all over the ground like two masses of black cloud. When we were returning home in the evening, the market was already empty, but the abundance of people and objects in the capital could be imagined. They particularly valued pigs and sheep, followed by chickens and geese, while cattle and horses were strictly forbidden. They said that in the Imperial City, there was only one kitchen which slaughtered several oxen a day to provide for imperial use.

When people in the Imperial City held even the smallest of banquets, the delicacies were all selected from the market stalls. With the hundreds of things in the market, there was nothing that they did not have. All the fried wheat cakes were collectively known as "pastries". Among them, types like antler cake, ginseng cake, and egg cake were fine and delicious, and there were a lot of them both inside and outside of the passes. In the Imperial City, the various unnamed cakes were specially valued for their sweet fragrance. They were often multi-coloured on the inside, and when they were cut into slices, they formed all kinds of patterns. Their round cakes were

---

<sup>69</sup> Lit. "Eastern Four", or "Eastern Quad", an area in Beijing



called “*bobo*”, and many contained icing sugar. The ones called “*yuanxiao cakes*” were balls of flour rolled up like birds’ eggs on the outside, with some syrup in the centre.<sup>70</sup> When it was boiled in water beforehand, it was most delicious. Honey was exceedingly rare. To sweeten food, sugar was used especially. Something like a ball of granulated sugar, as large as a fist, was worth a piece of silver. It was well-known that sugar cane was a bumper crop in the south. Longan fruit, lychees, raisins, candied jujubes, Fujian ginger, and tangerine cakes were treasured in my country. As for the various types of crystallised sugar and the “eight treasures”,<sup>71</sup> although they were produced differently, they all tasted of sugar.

The hawthorn fruits were as big as oranges, sweet and fleshy, strung together on a stick like how my country did it. Other things, like the various autumn fruits of grapes, pear-leaved crab apples, jujubes, and pears, were all displayed in the market until the end of the second month. They were all tender and fresh like they had just been plucked from the tree. Perhaps they had a different way of gathering and storing them.

My country’s soybean paste, *yaofan*,<sup>72</sup> and medicinal soup were cherished by these people. Once when people from Zhejiang tried our rice, they thought it was from the paddies of Liangzhe.<sup>73</sup> They said, “Such fertility has never been seen in Zhili.”<sup>74</sup>

---

<sup>70</sup> The night of the 15<sup>th</sup> of the first lunar month, called *yuanxiao*, is celebrated in the Lantern Festival (*yuanxiao jie*). These cakes are eaten as part of the celebrations

<sup>71</sup> A term referring to a special assortment of eight ingredients, such as longan fruit, jujubes, gorgon fruit, and lotus seed

<sup>72</sup> Name of a Korean dish: steamed glutinous rice with added ingredients such as jujubes and chestnuts

<sup>73</sup> Name referring to the two sides of Zhejiang, Zhejiang East and Zhejiang West

<sup>74</sup> Formerly a northern province of China, dissolved in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century