Epistolary Knowledge for Mass Consumption:
Letter Manuals in Late Qing and Republican China (ca. 1831–1949)

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the understudied development of epistolary knowledge in China during the late Qing and Republican periods (ca. 1831–1949), when an increasing number of guides to letter writing were published. Attending to the ways letter-writing manuals transmitted epistolary codes and conventions for the betterment of Chinese society contributes to understanding how such manuals attempted to define effective written communication in social, emotional, commercial, and family life. This study aims to offer fresh insights into Chinese mass education as well as to situate Chinese epistolary culture within a global context.

Model letters analyzed in this study are translated into English for the first time. Following the pervasive interest in maintaining epistolary communication during the late Qing and Republican periods, I focus on rhetorical devices and language in letter manuals and present three major arguments. First, the rules and guides of letter writing, a social practice traditionally implicated with power, helped both men and women writers establish and strengthen personal relationships, and these guides facilitated the masses' relentless pursuit of education, employment, and social refinement. Second, the ability to write letters, which entails literary competence beyond mere literacy, expanded the social influence of educated women by enabling them to become independent correspondents. Third, although sample letters were often dismissed by contemporary commentators as impractical teaching materials replete with formulaic phrases, a close reading of their content reveals new fashions in epistolary communication for incorporating complex concerns with nation-building and family reform. In the final analysis, letter writing became so central to people's everyday lives that rudimentary competence in epistolary forms was required for people who aspired to establish themselves in contemporary Chinese society.

Résumé

Cette thèse examine le développement peu étudié des connaissances épistolaires en Chine à la fin des périodes Qing et républicaine (vers 1831–1949), lorsqu'un nombre croissant de guides de l'écriture de lettres ont été publiés. La manière dont les manuels de rédaction de lettres transmettent les codes et les conventions épistolaires pour l'amélioration de la société chinoise contribue à comprendre comment ces manuels tentent de définir une communication écrite efficace dans la vie sociale, émotionnelle, commerciale et familiale. Cette étude vise à offrir de nouvelles perspectives sur l'éducation de masse chinoise et à replacer la culture épistolaire chinoise dans un contexte mondial.

Les modèles de lettres analysés dans cette étude sont traduits en anglais pour la première fois. En étudiant l'intérêt omniprésent pour le maintien de la communication épistolaire à la fin des périodes Qing et républicaine, Je me concentre sur les dispositifs rhétoriques et le langage dans les guides de rédaction des lettres et je présente trois arguments majeurs. Premièrement, les règles et les guides de l'écriture de lettres, une pratique sociale traditionnellement associée au pouvoir, ont aidé les écrivains, hommes et femmes, à établir et à renforcer des relations personnelles, ces guides ont facilité la poursuite incessante des masses à l'éducation, l'emploi et le raffinement social. Deuxièmement, la capacité d'écrire des lettres, qui implique des compétences littéraires au-delà de la simple littératie, a élargi l'influence sociale des femmes éduquées en leur permettant de devenir des correspondants indépendants. Troisièmement, bien que les modèles de lettres aient souvent été rejetés par les commentateurs contemporains comme du matériel didactique impraticable rempli de formules, une lecture attentive de leur contenu révèle de nouvelles modes de communication épistolaire pour intégrer des préoccupations complexes en matière d'édification de la nation et de réforme de la famille. En dernière analyse, l'écriture de

lettres est devenue si centrale dans la vie quotidienne des gens que des compétences rudimentaires en formes épistolaires étaient nécessaires pour les personnes qui aspiraient à s'établir dans la société chinoise contemporaine.

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List of Figures

Abbreviations

AGCD	*Aiguo chidu* 愛國尺牘
CDQB	*Chidu quanbi* 尺牘全璧
DSZP	*Dingshi zhenpu* 丁氏真譜
GDNZCDJB	*Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 高等女子尺牘教本
JJBYSLQJ	*Jujia biyong shilei quanji* 居家必用事類全集
MQWW	Ming Qing Women's Writings 明清婦女著作
RFLSC	*Rongfeng lou shicun* 榕風樓詩存
SGXCD	*Shuanggui xuan chidu* 雙桂軒尺牘
XXBD	*Xiexin bidu* 寫信必讀
ZNCD	*Zhinan chidu* 指南尺牘

Part One: Introduction

Chapter 1 Epistolary Knowledge for Mass Consumption

Everyone needs to make a living, so everyone should seek employment. Everyone needs to seek employment, so everyone should learn the writing of letters. Letter writing is a necessary skill for earning one's keep as well as being the medium for seeking employment.
人人要謀生活，則人人應當求職業。人人要求職業，則人人應當學尺牘。尺牘是謀生活之必需品，是求職業之媒介物。[1]

Nowadays, all women should be able to write their own letters; if they cannot, they have to ask others to write for them. If there is no one available to write for them, they would be unable to send letters; or, if the person who writes letters for them cannot properly convey their meaning, then the recipient would not truly understand the message. Moreover, the current world is a place in which men and women are considered equal. When the world is civilized, affairs would get complicated, so the exchange of messages must be effective. Women who are unable to write letters tend by nature to depend on others. Although they may desire equality, they are unable to achieve it. Therefore, present-day women who want true equality should learn to write letters.
今之女子，皆須自能寫信。不能自寫，則必託人代寫。如無代寫之人，即不能寄信。或代寫而不能達我之意，則受信之人，仍未能深知一切也。况今之世界，是男女平等之世界。世界文明，則事務極其繁密，消息必須靈通。女子而不能寫信，是先有依賴他人之性。雖欲求平等而不得矣。故今之女子，欲講真正之平等者，亟宜學寫信也。[2]

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[1] Feng Zongdao 馮宗道, ed., *Baihuo gongsi da chidu* 百貨公司大尺牘 [A vast repository of varied letters], vol. 8, advertisement for *Letters for Social Engagement* (*Shehui jiaoji chidu* 社會交際尺牘), front cover (Shanghai: Shanghai dacheng shuju, 1926). Unless otherwise indicated, all translations in this dissertation are my own.

[2] Zhang Xizhen 張錫珍, "Nüzi yi xue xiexin" 女子宜學寫信 [Women should learn to write letters], *Mingde nüxiao xiaoyouhui zazhi* 明德女校校友會雜誌 [Magazine of the alumnae association of Mingde women's school] 9 (1932): 20.

1.1 General Overview of the Dissertation

Let us imagine two people living in late Qing and Republican China. The first is a man preparing his letters of introduction for positions as a secretary in a government office or a clerk in a bank. The second is a woman about to reply to a letter from a senior relative asking her for favours. Scenes such as these were very common in everyday life. What kind of social protocols did they pay attention to? What would be the most appropriate terms and styles for them to use on such occasions? Were there any services that could offer them instant assistance if writing their own letters proved to be too challenging? Questions like these are at the core of this study.

Epistolary knowledge has long been regarded as essential to all strata of Chinese society. The late Qing and Republican periods, in particular, witnessed an explosive growth of guides to letter writing. Despite ongoing interest in Chinese epistolary culture and letter-writing practices, the pedagogical manuals that sought to teach people how to write proper letters have been understudied. Although historians have long mined letters, either real epistles or fictive samples, as sources of evidence about the past, scant attention has been paid to the value of letters and letter-writing manuals in capturing ever-shifting modes of communication during the crucial era of transition in modern China. While the study of communication is commonly approached by examining the effects of government institutions (e.g., the postal service)[3] or modern technologies (e.g., mobile phones),[4] I examine the effects of letter-writing manuals on how people

[3] See, for example, Ying-wan Cheng, *Postal Communication in China and Its Modernization, 1860–1896* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Lane J. Harris, *The Post Office and State Formation in Modern China, 1896–1949* (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012); Weipin Tsai, "The Qing Empire's Last Flowering: The Expansion of China's Post Office at the Turn of the Twentieth Century," *Modern Asian Studies* 49.3 (2015): 895–930.

[4] See, for example, Cara Wallis, *Technomobility in China: Young Migrant Women and Mobile Phones* (New York: NYU Press, 2013).

communicated in modern China. By attending to the ways letter-writing manuals transmitted epistolary codes and conventions for the betterment of individuals and particular social groups, this dissertation aims to illuminate how such manuals attempted to define effective written communication in social, emotional, commercial, and family life.

Letter-writing manuals examined here refer in particular to epistolary compilations that were published primarily for teaching purposes, which include real as well as fictive letters. The growth of letter manuals in the late Qing and Republican periods appeared in conjunction with the development and expansion of China's postal service and the establishment of a modern school system; the latter included epistolary training in the official school curricula. While acknowledging the complex social and educational forces behind the growth of letter manuals during this time, my dissertation places greater emphasis on the evolving rhetoric of letter writing by asking how letter manuals differed from other forms of print. To follow this line of inquiry, I will explore the distinct mechanisms of editing and compiling letter manuals that were designed to meet contemporary readers' pressing needs.

My main focus is on rhetorical devices and language in letter manuals. While I pay attention to the prevailing discourse that was circulated in model letters, I aim to show how this genre changed during the first half of the twentieth century. One noticeable change suggests that public affairs rarely documented in letter manuals of previous periods entered the private sphere of personal letters between individual kin, acquaintances, or business partners, which continually renewed the epistolary rhetoric and complicated the art of epistolary communication. New fashions in letter writing and epistolary manuals appeared while the long-established epistolary models continued to be published, intertwining with the promotion of new culture and mass education and the rise of commercial publishing at the turn of the twentieth century.

The diversity of letter-writing manuals and the numerous surviving editions, however, complicate the overall picture of these texts. Previous historical research in Chinese, Japanese, and English has incorporated Chinese letter-writing manuals, and some—to be discussed in further detail below (Section 1.3)—have paid particular attention to their value for historical research. Nonetheless, the subject matter of existing scholarly surveys, be it the content of a certain manual or certain cultural patterns drawn from several manuals of the same kind, varies according to different research focuses, such as the histories of commerce, women, or childhood and youth. As a consequence, scholarship of Chinese letter manuals remains largely fragmented and, in order to facilitate constructive scholarly conversation, warrants reconsideration. While it is beyond the scope of my dissertation to conduct a full investigation of Chinese letter-writing manuals due to the vast number of titles that were published and the innumerable reprinted editions of certain titles, I trace the history of these pedagogical sources from the perspective of epistolary rhetoric to allow different sorts of letter-writing manuals to be analyzed within the same context. Four domains of historical research are particularly pertinent to my investigation: letter-writing manuals in the West, Chinese epistolary knowledge, knowledge production in the global and modern context, and publishing and popular literacy in modern China.

1.2 History of Letter-Writing Manuals in the West

Letter-writing manuals were among the most frequently reprinted books in modern Europe and America and have attracted scholarly attention since the 1930s.[5] In recent decades, a growing body of studies of French and English letter manuals has drawn inspiration from an increasing interest in popular culture and mass education. Roger Chartier, one of the leading

[5] Katherine Gee Hornbeak, "The Complete Letter-Writer in English, 1568–1880," *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* 15 (1934): 1–150.

cultural historians, notably uses letter-writing manuals to illustrate his concept of "appropriation."[6] In his study of "Bibliothèque bleue *secrétaires*," collections of model letters in France from the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, Chartier suggests:

> To read a *secrétaire* might be to learn about the ordering of the social world, strictly translated into the formalities of the letter-writing code; or it might mean penetrating a remote and "exotic" universe, that of aristocratic ways; or again it might bring with it the pleasure of piecing together a plot from the series of letters furnished as examples for imitation. Model letters were not therefore merely resources provided to people who wanted to write a letter but had not mastered the conventions of letter-writing. More subtly, through a process of readings that were often not followed by any attempt at writing, they nourished a social knowhow and a social imaginary.[7]

Certain successful collections of model letters under the category of *secrétaires* were imbued with "court civility and moral thinking" alien to the experience of the lower strata in society. Nonetheless, reading a *secrétaire* was to break and enter into "a distant, closed and separate aristocratic world," which made it appealing to readers like "tradesmen, artisans and peasants."[8] As such, functions of these manuals for contemporary readers were likely more symbolic than practical.

It was estimated that reading a letter-writing manual for its immediate practical utility

[6] The term "appropriation" is key to Chartier's history of written culture, which suggests that texts do not have stable, fixed, or universal meanings; the meaning of texts depends on how cultural materials are appropriated by various groups. See Roger Chartier, "Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France," in Steven L. Kaplan, ed., *Understanding Popular Culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century* (Berlin: Mouton, 1984), 229–53.

[7] Roger Chartier, "Introduction: An Ordinary Kind of Writing—Model Letters and Letter-Writing in Ancien Régime France," in Roger Chartier, ed., *Correspondence: Models of Letter-Writing from the Middle Ages to the Nineteenth Century*, trans. Christopher Woodall (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997, originally published in French in 1993), 5.

[8] Chartier, "Introduction," in Chartier, ed., *Correspondence*, 77; 97–98.

became increasingly predominant from the beginning of the nineteenth century. Even so, letter-writing manuals in nineteenth-century France reproduced a highly hierarchical model of society, as Cécile Dauphin points out:

> Nobody could depart from the law that obliged one to know and to stick to one's place on the social ladder. Age, gender, rank, and power were the four unavoidable parameters. There was nothing particularly new in this, as compared with seventeenth-century treatises on civility: every form of social life obliged individuals to evaluate and interiorize their own positions within the various hierarchies. But in letter-writing, the lack of familiarity with writing compounded the effect of distance. The letter object and the ceremonial made the barriers and the positions of superiority, inferiority or equality both concrete and visible. To achieve this inscription of hierarchies in the letter form, an apprenticeship including exercises and precepts was necessary.[9]

Letter-writing manuals were considered crucial to help "achieve this inscription of hierarchies" in the form of letters of the undereducated, the young, the rural working class, and women. Moreover, as Janet Altman cogently argues, the French Revolution initiated a far-reaching epistolary reform by introducing both class and gender into the epistolary norms during the nineteenth century.[10] Based on major studies of French letter-writing manuals from the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, Martha Hanna's article on letter writing during World War I provides a notable case of the continuing influence of letter-writing manuals and argues that correspondence provided French families a means of remaining connected and intimate during wartime.[11] The

[9] Cécile Dauphin, "Letter-Writing Manuals in the Nineteenth Century," in Chartier, ed., *Correspondence*, 140.
[10] Janet. G. Altman, "Teaching the 'People' to Write: The Formation of a Popular Civic Identity in the French Letter Manual," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 22.1 (1993): 168.
[11] The affective and emotional functions of wartime letters were attributed to the elementary school curricula of the early Third Republic, which "gave considerable time to learning the rules, protocols, and cultural significance of family correspondence" and, therefore, produced "a

lessons from model letters (e.g., confessional tone to parents and more intimate but equally honest tone to siblings and friends) were later adapted to "speak the unvarnished truth" and applied to the real situations of life at war; therefore, the epistolary pedagogy facilitated the "cultural appropriation" of French troops and their civilian correspondents.[12]

Rich archival sources of English letters and letter manuals enable scholars to conduct in-depth studies regarding key themes in the history of the book, in particular, print culture and literacy. For example, Eve Bannet emphasizes the scholarly value of letter manuals by examining the "dynamic interactions between manuscript and print" and how these interactions rendered manuscript and print cultures in Britain and America "collaborative, co-dependent and unexpectedly homologous" despite the distinctive practices of speaking, reading, collecting, and "inditing" in the eighteenth century.[13] Bannet maintains the following view:

> [Letter manuals'] publishing histories put in question some of those longstanding preconceptions about the fixity of eighteenth-century print culture and about the stability of "the book," which contribute to keeping manuscript and printed letters locked in parallel scholarly universes and prevent us from noticing profound similarities between them both in habits of writing, compilation and preservation, and in material culture…letter manuals offer a surprising and distinctly unorthodox glimpse of some curiously destabilizing effects of copyright in its actual manner of operation, which also suggest that it was ultimately copyright, not print, that "fixed" the text.[14]

In her more comprehensive monograph, Bannet argues that letter writing sustained the British

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democratization of epistolary culture and a foundation for the vast expansion of letter writing evident in World War I." See Martha Hanna, "A Republic of Letters: The Epistolary Tradition in France during World War I," *The American Historical Review* 5 (2003): 1343–44.

[12] Hanna, "A Republic of Letters," 1348; 1360.

[13] Eve Tavor Bannet, "Printed Epistolary Manuals and the Transatlantic Rescripting of Manuscript Culture," *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* 36.1 (2007): 15.

[14] Bannet, "Printed Epistolary Manuals," 15.

Empire in both practical and ideological ways, and that the malleable letter manual, which disseminated "a single standard language, method and culture of polite communication," is the forgotten repository that articulated the transatlantic social body. The conventions disseminated via letter manuals are reflected not only in the letters written by the highly literate, but also by those people with little formal education. Instead of using the term "literacy," Bannet coins the word "letteracy" to "designate the collection of different skills, values, and kinds of knowledge beyond mere literacy that were involved in achieving competence in the writing, reading, and interpreting of letters."[15] In her monograph recovering exemplars of middling- and lower-sort epistolary writings in eighteenth-century England, Susan Whyman coins a similar concept, "epistolary literacy," which defines the repertoire of abilities more than writing one's name.[16] During this period, according to Whyman, individuals first acquired epistolary literacy in childhood by corresponding with family members under the supervision of parents who were obsessed with the epistolary skills of their offspring. Parental support came from a belief that epistolary literacy could contribute to upward mobility and strengthen family relationships. When Bannet and Whyman published their works, other scholars also approached epistolary culture from the vantage point of literacy. Letter writing was an important activity to which the labouring poor applied their literacy in Frances Austin's study of the Clift family correspondence in the 1790s, which discusses the possible ways in which the Clifts used model letters to enhance their epistolary skills. According to hints in extant letters, the formulaic openings and endings in Clifts' correspondence, many variations notwithstanding, were one indication of the actual

[15] Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688–1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), xvii.
[16] Susan E. Whyman, *The Pen and the People: English Letter Writers, 1660–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

influence of letter-writing manuals.[17]

While scholars' focus on literacy bridges fictive letters and real correspondence, the gap between epistolary knowledge and practice deserves attention. In her study of letter-writing instruction in nineteenth-century schools in the United States, Lucille Schultz points out that letter-writing textbooks emerged and proliferated in the wake of a promotion of a literate citizenry and universal education, which triggered a burst of subject-specific textbooks for children: despite their practical application, letter-writing textbooks sought to inculcate contemporary American children with the manners and morals of polite society; however, the "residual" values of the upper-middle class imposed by epistolary training were occasionally challenged and even resisted by schoolchildren's "emergent" letter-writing practices.[18] This lack of congruence between letter-writing instructions for children and children's actual practices also exists in the context of eighteenth-century England: as Amy Harris demonstrates, letter-writing manuals imagined a hierarchical world and regulated the parameters of polite society, but young letter-writers pushed against these conventions and creatively forged new balances between equality and hierarchy.[19] The youthful freedom from epistolary prescriptions was reflected in the chatty tone, light-hearted nature, and sometimes explicit mockery of letter-writing conventions in real correspondence. This fact illustrates young people's role as the producers of print and written culture, rather than denying the influence of letter manuals on youths' epistolary practices. These studies demonstrate how social power intertwined with the ability to read and write letters,

[17] Frances Austin, "Letter Writing in a Cornish Community in the 1790s," in David Barton and Nigel Hall, eds., *Letter Writing as a Social Practice* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing, 1999), 43–61.
[18] Lucille M. Schultz, "Letter-Writing Instruction in 19th Century Schools in the United States," in Barton and Hall, eds., *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, 124.
[19] Amy Harris, "This I Beg My Aunt may not Know: Young Letter-Writers in Eighteenth-Century England, Peer Correspondence in a Hierarchical World," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 2.3 (2009): 333–60.

an important yet unexplored perspective in analyzing Chinese letter writing; thus, they are useful points of reference for comprehending epistolary knowledge in China.

1.3 History of Chinese Epistolary Knowledge

In recent years, scholars in Chinese studies, most notably Antje Richter, have demonstrated the significance of epistolary communication from different perspectives, such as materiality, genre, and diverse content.[20] Nevertheless, epistolary pedagogy in modern China remains largely uncharted with a few exceptions, most notably Dániel Z. Kádár's works.[21]

The history of collections of model letters dates back at least to the Western Jin Dynasty (266–316).[22] It was during the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–589) that the genre of *shuyi* 書儀 (etiquette for letter-writing and other occasions) came into being and during the Tang Dynasty (618–907) that it further spread among ordinary people, as seen in the extant Dunhuang 敦煌 manuscripts. The widespread phenomenon of *shuyi* was attributed to "ritualized communication" that helped maintain social relations: the bulk of the sample letters did not involve requests or other business, but rather conveyed greetings, congratulations, announcements, and condolences.[23] These rites and the decorum of letter writing were reflected in the real correspondence of medieval China, as seen in the examples of real letters recovered

[20] Antje Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture in Early Medieval China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013); Antje Richter, ed., *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
[21] Dániel Z. Kádár, *Model Letters in Late Imperial China: 60 Selected Epistles from 'Letters from Snow Swan Retreat'* (München: Lincom Europa, 2009); Dániel Z. Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing* (London & New York: Continuum, 2010). While Kádár has translated and analyzed three letters from *Qiushui xuan chidu* (see Chapter 3), they are not the ones under investigation in my thesis.
[22] Zhou Yiliang 周一良, "Shuyi yuanliu kao" 書儀源流考 [Tracing the origin of *shuyi*], *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究 2 (1990): 95–103.
[23] Patricia Ebrey, "T'ang Guides to Verbal Etiquette," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.2 (1985): 583–84.

from Dunhuang. They also influenced pre-modern Japanese epistolary etiquette.[24] During the Song Dynasty (960–1279), *shuyi* underwent a noticeable change in that they contained more content about social etiquette than sample letters.[25]

As a result of the general boom in commercial publishing, epistolary compilations were largely produced and widely circulated during the Ming and Qing periods (1368–1911). On the one hand, model letters adapted from real letters show that contemporary readers could be attracted to informative and recreational messages in these commercial imprints.[26] On the other hand, sample letters written mainly for pedagogical purposes continued to be published and, together with real letters, reached their first apex of influence and popularity as important

[24] Markus Rüttermann, "So That We Can Study Letter-Writing: The Concept of Epistolary Etiquette in Premodern Japan?" *Japan Review: Journal of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies*, no. 18 (2006): 57–128.

[25] For sample letters in the Song, see, for example, Jin Chuandao 金傳道, *Bei-Song shuxin yanjiu* 北宋書信研究 [A study of letters in the Northern Song dynasty] (PhD diss., Fudan University, 2008), chapter 4; Lik Hang Tsui, *Writing Letters in Song China (960–1279): A Study of Its Political, Social, and Cultural Uses* (PhD diss., University of Oxford, 2015), chapter 6.

[26] For example, *Modern Letters* fulfilled the average person's curiosity about the latest news of the influential intellectuals of their day. See Ellen Widmer, "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 10.2 (1996): 1–43. *New Selections of Letters* edited by Zhou Lianggong 周亮工 (1612–72) not only served as an epistolary primer, but also as a unique source of political messaging that reflected the concerns of contemporary intellectuals. See David Pattinson, "Zhou Lianggong and *Chidu xinchao*: Genre and Political Marginalization in the Ming-Qing Transition," *East Asian History* 20 (2000): 61–82; David Pattinson, "The Market for Letter Collections in Seventeenth-Century China," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 28.1 (2006): 125–57. The repetitive features of commercial epistolary collections might have satisfied contemporary readers' strong desires for elite cultural imitation. See Chen Hongqi 陳鴻麒, "Liuxing yu xiaofei: Lun wan-Ming chidu shangpin de jieshou ji shengchan" 流行與消費——論晚明尺牘商品的接受及生產 [Popularization and consumption: A discussion of the reception and production of epistolary commodities in the late Ming], *Zhongji xuekan* 中極學刊 7 (2008): 45–69. Love letters in the Ming might be read as a sort of epistolary fiction, raising questions about how people might have consulted letter manuals for reasons beyond social etiquette. See Kathryn Lowry, "Duplicating the Strength of Feeling: The Circulation of *Qingshu* in the Late Ming," in Judith T. Zeitlin and Lydia H. Liu, eds., *Writing and Materiality in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 239–72.

components of "how-to" manuals.[27] These handbooks commonly contained an individual chapter on sample letters, but the titles of the epistolary chapters varied, including but not limited to *qizha* 啟劄, *shuqi* 書啟, *jianzha* 柬札, *yunjian* 雲箋, and *hanzha* 翰札.[28] Sample letters in handbooks for practical use could be easily copied verbatim with only minor changes or insertions of names to suit the circumstances. The development of commerce during the Ming and Qing periods gave rise to a distinct genre of epistolary manuals for commerce within a broader genre of merchant manuals. These manuals reflect the spirit of the commercial world and the mentality of the merchants of the time. The consensus in present-day academia is that Confucian values, among others, constituted a basic moral code that helped consolidate, rather than impede, merchant culture in late imperial China. The epistolary manuals for businessmen were a sub-category of the merchant manuals and used as historical sources to uncover the commercial culture of late imperial China (see Chapter 5). The structure and content of certain epistolary manuals are presented in detail in some previous studies, but the sociocultural milieu of these manuals and the epistolary literature for commerce as a distinct genre warrant further study.[29]

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[27] See, for example, James Hayes, "Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World," in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 75–111; Wu Huifang 吳蕙芳, *Ming Qing yilai minjian shenghuo zhishi de jiangou yu chuandi* 明清以來民間生活知識的建構與傳遞 [The construction and transmission of the knowledge of folk life since the Ming and Qing periods] (Taibei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju youxian gongsi, 2007); Cynthia Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).

[28] Zhongguo shehui kexueyuan lishi yanjiusuo wenhuashi 中國社會科學院歷史研究所文化室, ed., *Mingdai tongsu riyong leishu jikan* 明代通俗日用類書集刊 [A collection of encyclopedias for daily use in the Ming dynasty] (Chongqing: Xinan shifan daxue chubanshe, 2011).

[29] See, for example, Liu Qiugen 劉秋根, "Ming Qing shangren jingying ji zijin choucuo fangshi: Yi ruogan zhong chidu fanben shu de jiedu wei zhongxin" 明清商人經營及資金籌措方式——以若干種尺牘範本書的解讀為中心 [Merchants' managerial and fundraising methods in the

Another era of prolific production of letter-writing guides came during the late Qing and Republican periods. Apart from fictive samples, collections of model letters from actual correspondence were particularly popular as composition textbooks in private schools at that time.[30] The remarkable production of letter manuals was embodied not only in the prodigious quantity of copies that were printed and circulated, but also in the tailoring of sample letters to cater to diverse groups, such as children, women, merchants, peasants, workers, and overseas Chinese.[31] Guides to letter writing in the Republican period developed new categories and topics as well as new linguistic and rhetorical features. This development united many complex social and educational forces, some more directly and intentionally than others. The existing scholarship has partly discussed these emergent trends, focusing on the new development of letter-writing manuals for two particular groups: women as well as children and youths, both of which generated lucrative business in the first half of the twentieth century.

Ming and Qing periods: A study of several letter-writing manuals], in Liu Qiugen and Ma Debin 馬德斌, eds., *Zhongguo gongshangye, jinrong shi de chuantong yu bianqian: Shi zhi ershi shiji Zhongguo gongshangye, jinrong shi guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwen ji* 中國工商業、金融史的傳統與變遷——十至二十世紀中國工商業、金融史國際學術研討會論文集 [The tradition and transformation of Chinese industrial, commercial, and financial history: International conference proceedings of Chinese industrial, commercial, and financial history from the tenth to twentieth centuries] (Baoding: Hebei daxue chubanshe, 2009), 152–83; Liu Qiugen, "Jiangxi shangren changtu fanyun yu jinrong xinyong: *Jiangxi shangren jingying xinfan* de jingying shi jiedu" 江西商人長途販運與金融信用——《江西商人經營信範》的經營史解讀 [Long-distance trade and financial credit of Jiangxi merchants: A study of *Model Business Letters of Jiangxi Merchants*], *Zhongguo qianbi* 中國錢幣 2 (2013): 44–56.

[30] The collections of real letters that were later used as epistolary textbooks were written by illustrious literati, such as Zheng Banqiao 鄭板橋 (1693–1765) and Zeng Guofan 曾國藩 (1811–1872), but also from little-known private legal advisors (*muyou* 幕友), as I will discuss in Chapter 3 on the case of *Qiushui xuan chidu*.

[31] See, for example, *Letters for Children* (*Tongzi chidu* 童子尺牘, Guangyi shuju, 1915), *Model Letters for Women* (*Nüzi mofan chidu* 女子模範尺牘, Shijie shuju, 1926), *Epistolary Textbook for Peasants, Workers, and Merchants* (*Nong gong shang chidu jiaoben* 農工商尺牘教本, Zhonghua shuju, 1941), and *Letters for the Overseas without Soliciting Others' Help* (*Huaqiao buqiuren xinzha* 華僑不求人信札, Wuguitang shuju, 1946).

The multiple titles and large number of printed copies of letter manuals for women have attracted the attention of researchers in the field of women's history. The modern scholar Luo Suwen 羅蘇文, for example, demonstrates that these manuals not only served as epistolary guides, but also codified and shaped women's behaviour and manners, encouraging them to evolve as members of "the world of women" (*nüjie* 女界).[32] Despite her early recognition of letter-writing manuals for women as useful sources for studying women's history, Luo only examines *Categorized Model Letters for Women* (*Nüzi fenlei chidu fanben* 女子分類尺牘範本), a manual published by the Biaomeng Book Studio (*Biaomeng shushi* 彪蒙書室) in 1908.[33] Oi Man Cheng has conducted a more comprehensive survey of letter manuals for women, focusing mainly on thirty-two manuals and examining how these manuals helped negotiate a new womanhood in China at the turn of the twentieth century.[34] In her paper, Cheng argues that these female-oriented manuals should be seen as material and cultural objects rather than discursive texts: the editors intentionally used these sample letters to introduce their female readers to the new Chinese society and to encourage new modes of female social and political engagement by focusing on the images of female citizens.[35] While Cheng cogently analyzes the political discourse embedded in letter manuals for women, the significance of learning letter writing for

[32] Luo Suwen, *Nüxing yu jindai Zhongguo shehui* 女性與近代中國社會 [Women and modern Chinese society] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1996), 448–57.
[33] This manual is also cited in Joan Judge's paper on late-Qing textbooks for women. See Joan Judge, "Meng Mu Meets the Modern: Female Exemplars in Early-Twentieth-Century Textbooks for Girls and Women," *Jindai Zhongguo funü shi yanjiu* 近代中國婦女史研究 [Research on women in modern Chinese history] 8 (2000): 129–77.
[34] For the list of letter manuals used in Cheng's thesis, see "Appendix II," in Oi Man Cheng, *Model Missive: Epistolary Guidebooks for Women in Early Twentieth Century China* (M.A. thesis, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong, 2013), 245–50.
[35] Oi Man Cheng, "Epistolary Guidebooks for Women in Early Twentieth Century China and the Shaping of Modern Chinese Women's National Consciousness," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 14.2 (2012): 105–20.

contemporary women and the unique role of letter-writing manuals in contrast to other reading materials for women (e.g., textbooks, newspapers, journals, or magazines) remain unexplored.

Given this unresolved issue, it would be useful to expand the research scope from a focus on the education of new women to the evolution of epistolary knowledge in general. I introduced the frameworks of book history and Western epistolary culture to my M.A. thesis on letter-writing manuals for children and youths in Republican China, which examined twenty-one manuals of this kind.[36] By focusing on ten particularly popular manuals among young readers of this period, I analyzed the editorial strategies of publishers, including choice of language (i.e., classical or vernacular Chinese, or both), arrangement of categories (i.e., by the status of recipients or occasions), and the use of illustrations in different editions of the same title. I argued that epistolary instruction was a distinct testing site for balancing long-standing indigenous manners of politeness with newly imported ideals of children and childhood. These manuals provided rudiments of epistolary knowledge, but more importantly, they transmitted essential communication skills as well as social and political knowledge and inspired cultural imagination. Consequently, they redefined the role of children in family and society and prepared the young for the future. In my paper on children's epistolary practice and knowledge, I argue that letter-writing children in Republican China played an important role in the world of adults through their epistolary service that has long remained hidden, and they were central to history in ways previously unacknowledged.[37] My dissertation extends the subjects of research from letter manuals for a certain group, either defined by gender or age, to letter manuals for common

[36] For more detailed information about the ten core manuals in my thesis, see "Fulu: Yi" 附錄：一 [Appendix: I], in Cai Danni 蔡丹妮, *Minguo xuesheng de shuxin jiaoyu yanjiu* 民國學生的書信教育研究 [A study of epistolary instructions for students in Republican China] (M.A. thesis, Xiamen University, Xiamen, 2014), 98–106.

[37] Danni Cai, "Power, Politeness, and Print: Children's Letter Writing in Republican China," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 13.1 (2020): 38–62.

people, thereby arriving at a general understanding of epistolary knowledge.

1.4 History of Knowledge Production in the Global and Modern Context

According to Peter Burke, a pioneer in historicizing knowledge, the history of knowledge has developed out of other branches of history, in particular, the history of the book and history of science.[38] In his introduction to the "popularization" of knowledge, Burke suggests that the dissemination of knowledge not only spreads across space but also moves from scientists, scholars, and other experts to the "lay" public.[39] A particular genre that interests him is the encyclopaedia, which is considered the most popular type of books "that are designed not to be read from cover to cover but to be consulted whenever needed."[40] Burke co-edited with Joseph McDermott, who works on Chinese book history and economic history, a volume in which scholars trace an "entangled" or "connected" history of the book through the study of technology transfer, knowledge transfer, and the history of news. In a chapter therein, Burke and McDermott compare reference books between East Asia and Europe and explore "how distinct fields of knowledge were associated with different institutions and professions in particular cultures."[41] They are not alone in uncovering the value of Chinese reference works and reconstructing the production and preservation of encyclopedic knowledge. For example, contributors to an edited volume, *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930)*, were motivated by an

[38] Peter Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2016), 5. On "social history of knowledge," see Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000) and *A Social History of Knowledge II: From Encyclopaedia to Wikipedia* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012).
[39] Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* 89.
[40] Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* 91.
[41] Peter Burke and Joseph Peter McDermott, "The Proliferation of Reference Books," in Burke and McDermott, eds., *Book Worlds of East Asia and Europe, 1450–1850: Connections and Comparisons* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015), 238.

abiding interest in vernacular knowledge that includes "conceptual migrations, processes of translation and adaptation, and taxonomies of knowledge."[42] This volume demonstrates that "the Chinese had already accepted a completely new systematic method of expression" in the late imperial and Republican periods as contemporary Chinese encyclopaedias integrated "concepts and structures borrowed wholesale from the West" and "examples of systematised Chinese traditional common knowledge."[43] This global pursuit of useful knowledge pertinent to the everyday life of the masses was also evidenced by numerous letter manuals across various cultures, the similarities and differences of which have received little scholarly attention.

Like their European counterparts, North American scholars have also published research on the history of knowledge in late Qing and Republican China. While the aforementioned European volumes highlight the impact of globalization, several edited volumes from the United States underscore the impact of modernization. Peter Zarrow, for example, identifies two features that were often associated with "modernity"—rationality and Westernization—and tries to contextualize this "modernity" as a set of everyday practices, including "acceptable behaviors, norms, discourses, and institutions."[44] Nonetheless, his 2006 edited volume's disproportionate focus on "discourses," such as cultural pluralism, constitutionalism, or terrorism, reduces the scope of "knowledge" of everyday life. Contributors to another volume on the construction of knowledge that Zarrow co-edited with Che-chia Chang in 2013 cover a wider range of topics,

[42] Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Rudolf G. Wagner, "Introduction," in Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Rudolf G. Wagner, eds., *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 19.
[43] Doleželová-Velingerová and Wagner, eds., *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930)*, 430.
[44] Peter Zarrow, "Introduction," in Peter Zarrow, ed., *Creating Chinese Modernity: Knowledge and Everyday Life, 1900–1940* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 21.

including the practices of translation, education, writing, and editing.[45] Zarrow and Chang stress that modern knowledge in China is specialized and "pure" in its pursuit of transcending immediate life experiences, which is different from the "general knowledge" that educated literati in traditional society were expected to acquire.[46] The emergent trend of knowledge specialization engendered by modernization was reflected in the taxonomy of knowledge, as seen in the medical, political, philosophical, sociological, economic, and technical fields of knowledge discussed in the above volume. This trend intertwined with institutional and commercial reformation that transformed the ways in which people accessed knowledge. Accordingly, more groups beyond the traditional male literati elites were able to engage in the production of knowledge.[47]

Notably, the tendency to associate modernity with rationality and Westernization echoes Westernizing and modernizing intelligentsia in late imperial and Republican China, who upheld the "modernist values of the Enlightenment" based on a "scientific and rational understanding of the world."[48] However, as Prasenjit Duara contends, modern ideas and values are implicated in power struggles:

> It came to be used in a power struggle where the state and advocates of modernity sought to expand their power in relation to each other and in the society where their ideas would rule. Each episode of intervention in the name of modernization

[45] Peter Zarrow and Che-chia Chang, eds., *Jindai Zhongguo xin zhishi de jiangou* 近代中國新知識的建構 [The construction of new knowledge in modern China] (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2013).
[46] Peter Zarrow and Che-chia Chang, "Daoyan" 導言 [Introduction], in Zarrow and Chang, eds., *Jindai Zhongguo xin zhishi de jiangou*, 5. Nevertheless, the authors remind readers that the concepts of "general knowledge" and "pure knowledge" are not mutually exclusive.
[47] Zarrow and Chang, "Daoyan,"17–19.
[48] Prasenjit Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaigns against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth-Century China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 50.1 (1991): 68.

> also involved a restructuring of power in local society, ending up, more often than not, with a significant expansion in the power of the state.[49]

Duara also analyzes how most Chinese modern intellectuals adopted the "Enlightenment History," narrating history based on the Chinese "nation-*state*" (italics in original) as the subject in their pursuit of modernity.[50] The power struggles related to modernist values have been examined in salient social and gender issues in China, such as prostitution, hygiene, footbinding, and female infanticide.[51] The perspective of power struggles in modernizing discourses is also useful in understanding how epistolary knowledge was relevant to China's reform agenda because intellectual enlightenment was expressed in modern letter manuals. According to Leo Ou-fan Lee, one popular mode of urban modernity in Shanghai linked intellectual enlightenment to the new style of urban life: publishing.[52]

The publishing industry was one major agent of popularizing letter-writing manuals, and Shanghai has been the center of publishing in China since the late Qing. In his study of the Shanghai-based printing and publishing system, Christopher Reed analyzes the social and institutional features of "print capitalism": print production and trade, which developed in China through imported Western technology and machinery between the 1870s and 1930s. Printers in Shanghai distributed new-style journals, newspapers, and textbooks to ever-expanding audiences

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[49] Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity," 81.
[50] Prasenjit Duara, *Rescuing History from the Nation: Questioning Narratives of Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 29.
[51] Gail Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures: Prostitution and Modernity in Twentieth-Century Shanghai* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Ruth Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity: Meanings of Health and Disease in Treaty-Port China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Dorothy Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters: A Revisionist History of Footbinding* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michelle Tien King, *Between Birth and Death: Female Infanticide in Nineteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).
[52] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *Shanghai Modern: The Flowering of a New Urban Culture in China, 1930–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).

through their proactive indigenization of Western imports. As a result, the emergent Chinese-owned printing machine manufacturing industry was pivotal in promoting the mechanization and spread of print capitalism in urban centers and the hinterland during the 1910s and 1920s.[53] By focusing on editors' daily practices in China's largest publishers in Shanghai, Robert Culp demonstrates "how the cultural activities and work practices of literate elites in China's largest publishing companies" were key to "the making of the modern intellectual and the creation of modern Chinese culture and thought."[54] Given the significance of development of the publishing industry since the late nineteenth century, which allowed for the production of books on a far greater scale than what woodblock printing permitted, Culp uses the term "print industrialism" to characterize this period. Print industrialism was maintained by low-ranking staff editors, who reframed and packaged new concepts central to modern academic knowledge to reach broad markets of readers and facilitated the writing of vernacular Chinese. Reed and Culp both reveal the material and intellectual forces that underpinned the publishing of letter-writing manuals in the major presses of Shanghai. However, these manuals involved more extensive publishers in other regions. By taking letter manuals as the focus of my study, I will bring the editors and publishers of Guangdong into view.[55]

1.5 History of Publishing and Popular Literacy in Modern China

[53] Christopher Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876–1937* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2004).
[54] Robert Culp, *The Power of Print in Modern China: Intellectuals and Industrial Publishing from the End of Empire to Maoist State Socialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 3.
[55] My research has focused on letter manuals published in Shanghai and Guangdong, as they are most easily accessible and have survived in the greatest numbers. Some letter manuals were published in other cities, such as Xiamen, but they have not survived in large quantities and deserve a separate study.

Although the history of knowledge has lately attracted the attention of historians in Chinese studies, its foundation can be traced to the history of the book, as mentioned above. The social and cultural history of the book that draws special attention to the production, circulation, and consumption of knowledge provides the initial theoretical inspiration for my study of letter manuals.[56] This approach seeks to go beyond a small group of elite scholars and bibliophiles (i.e., the bibliographic history of books) or professional technicians in the field of printing (i.e., the material and technological history of books) to examine ordinary people from various backgrounds who were associated with books in their everyday lives.

Two approaches of studying history of the book deserve attention. One is to examine the "communication circuit" of books laid out by Robert Darnton, which inspired historians to weave books into various social, cultural, economic, and political networks.[57] For example, Cynthia Brokaw's work on "popular textual culture" in the Qing period and Joseph Dennis's monograph on the "life cycle" of local gazetteers show how the history of the Chinese book opens up new avenues to understanding social and cultural history.[58] The other approach is to examine the "community of readers," which attaches importance to the distinct mechanisms that distinguish the various communities of readers and traditions of reading, and to the extensive ways in which communities are shaped by shared reading experiences that transcend

[56] This approach aims to show the "social, economic, intellectual, and cultural aspects of book history." See Cynthia J. Brokaw, "On the History of the Book in China," in Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 5.

[57] The "communication circuit" is a circle that ties together authors, editors, publishers, printers (and their suppliers), shippers, booksellers, and readers, and which must be studied in terms of complex links at each site to intellectual influences, socioeconomic conditions, and political and legal sanctions. See Robert Darnton, "What is the History of Books?" (1982) reprinted in David Finkelstein and Alistair McCleery, eds., *The Book History Reader* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 9–26.

[58] Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*; Joseph Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

classifications of social status.[59] This approach was proposed by Roger Chartier and used in his study of letter-writing manuals in France, as mentioned earlier. The advantage of this approach in accommodating miscellaneous popular manuals also manifests in Yuming He's study of commercial imprints in the late Ming, which explores the multiple ways a reader might engage with and appropriate the book by examining its physical totality.[60]

While both approaches prove useful in exploring the dynamic relationship between people and books and both facilitate my inquiry into popular manuals in China, my dissertation adopts the perspective of "community of readers" as the major analytical lens to better differentiate letter manuals from other forms of popular readings. Therefore, my main focus will be placed on the components of letter manuals and the epistolary devices therein, rather than the physical materiality of these texts or the technical means of production. This emphasis shares the broad aim of Yuming He's book that consists of different case studies to attend to the clues of how diverse commercial imprints were produced and used within particular historical contexts.[61] To accommodate the diversity of letter manuals, I also analyze different cases, which draw on real letters as well as fictive letters, model letters for both men and women, and letters known for their literary merits and rhetorical features as well as their ideological and political commitments. The "community of readers" approach entails a close reading of letter manuals *per se* and thus enables present-day readers to better understand the enduring appeal of this pedagogical genre from the angles of its target audience in late Qing and Republican China.

The focus on readers and reading experiences brings to the fore the subject of popular

[59] Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).
[60] Yuming He, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2013).
[61] He, *Home and the World*, 6.

literacy, an ideological practice implicated in power relations.[62] The popularity of letter manuals was an important part of the promotion of education and popular literacy in modern China. These manuals served to improve the reading and writing skills of the public and shared many features with language primers widely circulated during the same time, which usually commingled instructions in literary skills with Confucian ideals of society, family, and personality.[63] The turn of the twentieth century remarkably initiated a new era for model letters to develop new features in their subjects and languages. More and more model letters in the classical style were published with detailed annotations and/or with vernacular translations in accordance with the emergent trend of reforming literature and promoting vernacular language.[64] The evolution of epistolary languages was to accommodate the immediate needs of the masses, including growing numbers of labourers who had access to literacy and knowledge under the Mass Education Movement in the Republican period. There were letter manuals designed for labourers (see Section 1.3 for an

[62] For the power of literacy, see Brian V. Street, *Social Literacies: Critical Approaches to Literacy in Development, Ethnography, and Education* (London: Longman, 1995).

[63] Evelyn Rawski suggests that the limited terms pertinent to the Confucian Classics and doctrines in character recognition books rarely appear to have been used solely in the first stage of elementary education. See Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Education and Popular Literacy in Ch'ing China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1979). Limin Bai further concludes that the basic feature of traditional Chinese literacy primers was to convey various kinds of knowledge but with Confucian indoctrination at its core. See Limin Bai, *Shaping the Ideal Child: Children and Their Primers in Late Imperial China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2005), 6–17. Angela Leung demonstrates that the process of teaching new characters was also to convey "the worldview common to the average Chinese of the time, common notions of time and space, and a shared set of values" and the transmission of values was considered the main purpose of Chinese elementary education. See Angela K. C. Leung, "Elementary Education in the Lower Yangtze Region in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in Benjamin A. Elman and Alexander Woodside, eds., *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600–1900* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), 381–416.

[64] For language reforms in early twentieth-century China, see Robert Culp, "Teaching *Baihua*: Textbook Publishing and the Production of Vernacular Language and a New Literary Canon in Early Twentieth-Century China," *Twentieth-Century China* 34.1 (2008): 4–41; Elisabeth Kaske, *The Politics of Language in Chinese Education, 1895–1919* (Leiden: Brill, 2008).

example), and there was an increased demand for letter writing among labourers.[65] The role of letter manuals in the lives of the masses warrants further study.

1.6 Summary of Individual Chapters

This dissertation is divided into three parts: a general introduction (Chapters 1 and 2), four case studies (Chapters 3 to 6), and a conclusion (Chapter 7). After the general introduction in this chapter, Chapter 2 offers an overview of letter-writing manuals in late Qing and Republican China by examining their components, including prefaces, editorial principles, classifications, sample letters, and other appended notes. I highlight two publishing centers of letter-writing manuals, Guangdong and Shanghai. To reveal the encompassing nature of this pedagogical genre, I provide a glimpse into the social, moral, and vocational training contained in these manuals, which served as behavioural guides through which readers could learn the appropriate protocols and modes of communication for their respective stations in life. The evolution of these manuals over time, as seen in the more diverse epistolary occasions and topics, indicate the relationship between epistolary guides and social advancement. The following four case studies further elaborate on the social and political implications of epistolary knowledge.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate the rhetoric and subject of two collections of real letters composed in the nineteenth century and offer explanations for their republication as epistolary textbooks in the twentieth century. Both collections were not originally published for educational purposes, but shrewd publishers made them suitable for mass consumption by applying various

[65] For Chinese reformers' efforts to teach the masses read and write letters, see Kate Merkel-Hess, *The Rural Modern: Reconstructing the Self and State in Republican China* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 26; 33; 43; Yurou Zhong, *Chinese Grammatology: Script Revolution and Chinese Literary Modernity, 1916–1958* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 104–08.

editing strategies, such as adding explanatory notes, providing vernacular translation, or excising texts that they considered too recondite. Chapter 3 focuses on Xu Simei's 許思湄 (commonly known by his courtesy name Jiacun 葭村, ca. 1769–ca. 1856) *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* (*Qiushui xuan chidu* 秋水軒尺牘, first edition dated 1831), which was reprinted in great numbers by major publishers in Shanghai during the late Qing and Republican periods as model letters for emulation. While this collection proved influential in epistolary literature and pedagogy, there were ensuing debates on its value as a primer in the Republican period. An analysis of the linguistic register and subject matter of *Qiushui xuan chidu* suggests that while it was deemed incompatible with nascent reforms in the social and literary realms of late Qing and Republican China, it possessed an enduring appeal for the reading public in its pursuit of the art of classical letter writing and, more importantly, in developing readers' proficiency in expressing sociability. I also explore the annotators who helped popularize this collection and argue that many of them seized the chance to utilize their epistolary knowledge to promote mass education with the intention of making a living.

Chapter 4 focuses on Ding Shanyi's 丁善儀 (courtesy name Zhixian 芝仙, 1799–after 1861) *Correspondence of the Double Osmanthus Studio* (*Shuanggui xuan chidu* 雙桂軒尺牘, first edition dated 1878) and its textbook version titled *Advanced Epistolary Textbook for Female Students* (*Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 高等女子尺牘教本, 1907), which was especially notable for being attributed to an individual woman. I outline Ding's life trajectory, analyze the sociopolitical dynamics behind her epistolary practice, and examine how the two editions differ in subject matter and linguistic register. I demonstrate that the choice of adapting Ding's letter collection as a textbook was reasonable because it encoded basic social rituals in the form of letter writing and represented cultural capital upon which women's education drew during its

formative period.

By examining fictive letters, Chapters 5 and 6 analyze how model letters developed under political and social influence during the early twentieth century. Chapter 5 focuses on *Grand Treasury of Classified Patriotic Letters* (*Fenlei aiguo chidu hongbao* 分類愛國尺牘鴻寶, first edition dated 1916), a manual for businessmen that covers twenty categories in eight volumes and includes more than 400 models. As model letters follow political dynamics, the evolution of epistolary skills was in line with the incorporation of ideological content, which is particularly evident in this manual. The incorporation of topics pertinent to industrial and commercial activities reflects the economic and political claims of Chinese businessmen in the 1910s, helping direct businessmen toward the building of a modern and robust nation as well as aiming to differentiate businessmen of integrity from their immoral competitors.

Chapter 6 focuses on a common intricate issue present in many letter manuals: declining proposals for "early marriage" (*zaohun* 早婚). This issue deserves special attention because model letters for declining early marriage proposals attempted to redefine the younger generation's position in the household and destabilize the hierarchy of patrilineal society. In contrast to other conventional topics inherited from letter-writing manuals of late imperial China, this new topic created a subtle tension in letter-writing manuals, which were designated for transmitting epistolary knowledge according to a hierarchical social order. Model letters provided the standard lines of appeal that sought to ease tensions between the younger and older generations as the young consciously appropriated the discourse of national salvation and strengthening as well as free love and conjugal marriage to legitimize their dissent. Therefore, this issue allows us to glean insights into the changing dynamics of family letters under the influence of new ideals about family and marriage.

The concluding Chapter 7 reiterates that epistolary manuals provided useful and multiple formulaic phrases for mass consumption, which helped readers acquire epistolary skills, establish and strengthen personal relationships, seek employment, pursue social refinement, and cultivate political consciousness. They also provide a glimpse into the changing etiquette and protocols of everyday communication in modern China.

1.7 Contribution of the Dissertation

Model letters analyzed in this study are translated into English for the first time. Since letters served as a primary tool of communication for the masses during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, letter manuals are crucial for understanding many aspects of Chinese society during these tumultuous decades. Although the information extracted from letter manuals may differ according to context, the available studies of letter-writing manuals clearly reflect the significant value of these manuals as historical sources to analyze the art of epistolary communication and to trace the history of epistolary knowledge. In addition to utilizing new sources, I venture to approach Chinese epistolary culture by drawing on new theoretical frameworks of recent studies of Western epistolary culture. Rather than interpreting letters merely as transparent carriers of historical facts, I explore the subtle implication of power in letter writing by tracing the need for epistolary communication in a time of massive social change and mobility. As the masses migrated across geographical space, the educated class navigated the sociocultural domain. Epistolary knowledge helped spread popular literacy in rural as well as urban areas and rouse nationalistic sentiment and political consciousness in private as well as public voices. By taking the genre of the letter manual as a starting point, this dissertation aims to offer fresh insights into Chinese mass education and to situate Chinese epistolary culture within a global context.

Chapter 2 Letter Manuals in Late Qing and Republican China

> Letter writing in the past was not as easy as it is now, because letters had to be written in classical Chinese. I had studied in a private school for a few years, so it was not a problem for me. However, such traditional-style letters had to be written in a strict format…Differences in seniority and gender had to be observed carefully and one should not make the slightest mistake. Therefore, I had to buy some letter-writing books and clearly understand terms of address and so on; when writing letters, I faithfully copied the opening and ending sections in these books. I also had some famous model letters on my desk, such as *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* and the like. I read them in my spare time, hoping that in doing so my letters would become elegant. Letter writing is truly a type of scholarly knowledge.
>
> 往日寫信可不如現在簡單，要用文言。因為我讀過幾年私塾，這不成問題。只是舊式書信有很嚴格的格式……輩分要分清，男女也有別，來不得半點差錯。為此我就得買來一些有關寫信的書，把稱謂等東西都讀清楚了，信頭信尾照書上寫的抄。我桌上還擺著一些著名尺牘，如《秋水軒尺牘》等，空下來讀讀，好把信寫得雅一點。寫信也真是一種學問。[66]

In the above epigraph, Ren Rongrong 任溶溶 (1923–) recalls how he managed to acquire epistolary skills from letter-writing manuals as a primary school student. This is not an isolated case, as guides to letter writing often appear in memoirs of authors who were born and received their early education during the first half of the twentieth century. They were so pervasive that even foreigners who traveled to China took notice of them. George Tradescant Lay (ca. 1800–1845), for example, records: "I see in a *Letter-Writer*, there are models of an epistolary kind for

[66] Ren Rongrong, "Dai shenshenmen xiexin" 代嬸嬸們寫信 [Writing letters for my aunties], in *Wo ye youguo xiaoshihou: Ren Rongrong ji xiao duzhe* 我也有過小時候：任溶溶寄小讀者 [I also had a childhood: Ren Rongrong writes to young readers] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang daxue chubanshe, 2015), 90.

women as well as for men."[67] Epistolary manuals have also been found in private collections.[68] Despite the massive production and wide circulation of letter-writing manuals in late Qing and Republican China, there is no comprehensive survey of this pedagogical genre.

Figure 2-1: Author's collection of letter-writing manuals

Since 2012, I have consulted more than 200 copies of letter-writing manuals (including different editions of the same title) preserved in libraries located in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Japan, South Korea, and the United States. I use approximately forty exemplars in my dissertation (see my bibliography). Based on bibliographies and international library catalogues, there are many more letter-writing manuals that could be examined, many of which are still extant. The diversity of titles and their numerous editions make it impossible to

[67] George Tradescant Lay and Ephraim George Squier, *The Chinese as They are: Their Moral and Social Character, Manners, Customs, Language* (Albany: George Jones, 1843), 59.

[68] For letter manuals in the collection of Yung Sze-chiu (Weng Shichao) 翁仕朝 (1874–1944), a village scholar from Hong Kong, see Wang Ermin 王爾敏, "Ruxue shisuhua ji qi duiyu minjian fengjiao zhi jinru" 儒學世俗化及其對於民間風教之浸濡 [The secularization of Confucianism and its influence on folk customs], in *Ming Qing shehui wenhua shengtai* 明清社會文化生態 [Sociocultural environment of the Ming and Qing periods] (Taiwan: Shangwu, 1997), footnote 31, 66–67.

provide any accurate statistics regarding the overall output of epistolary manuals at this point.[69] It is feasible, however, to conclude that most of these letter-writing manuals were published between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, and some titles were reprinted more frequently and were more well-known among contemporary readers than others. On the one hand, I chose 1831 as the initial year of my survey because it marks the first publication of *Qiushui xuan chidu*, a popular manual I will discuss in Chapter 3 and the oldest primer examined in my dissertation.[70] On the other hand, by setting 1949 as another watershed year, I pay attention to the influence of the regime change from the Republic of China to the People's Republic of China, which caused a sharp decline in the production of letter-writing manuals, though it by no means terminated their publication. While popular titles contain valuable information and will be closely examined in my dissertation, I draw on some little-known epistolary manuals in order to encompass more features of this genre.

As I briefly introduce in Chapter 1, the circulation of model letters has a long history in China. However, the first official initiative of epistolary training dates back to 1904, when the Qing government included letter writing in school curricula as a basic language skill under the *Guimao* 癸卯 school system formulated in 1903. This system initiated a nationwide movement of establishing schools, where students were required to take a course on "Chinese writing" (*Zhongguo wenzi* 中國文字). This course taught students to write short letters for daily use so as to "pave the way for their future writing and satisfy the needs for making a living and coping

[69] According to my preliminary investigation, at least 600 copies of letter-writing manuals for students (including different editions of the same title) can be traced and 331 of them are dated. see Cai, *Minguo xuesheng de shuxin jiaoyu yanjiu*, 12; 15–21; 98–106.
[70] This date was given by Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967) (see more in Chapter 3). I have not seen this edition, so I add a "ca." in my title to indicate an uncertainty.

with social interaction" 開他日自己作文之先路，供謀生應世之需要.[71] When the Qing government decided to establish public schools for women throughout the empire in 1907, epistolary textbooks specifically for women began to flourish. While the official regulations facilitated the emergence of these pedagogical sources for students and women, a large proportion of letter-writing textbooks were not used in contemporary classrooms but purchased by readers as complementary readings for self-improvement outside of the classroom. This tendency can be seen in epistolary manuals for general readers examined in this dissertation.

The gradual evolution of epistolary languages, from the classical style with tactful rhetoric to the vernacular style in a straightforward tone to make letter writing more accessible to a wider audience, becomes one entry point to my analysis of these manuals (see more in Chapters 3 and 4). This trend challenged the long-established epistolary style of "men of letters" (*wenren moshi* 文人墨士), which was characterized by extensive use of metaphorical allusions and stereotypical routine greetings. Based on this transformation, I argue that the changing epistolary style manifests the progress of mass education. In addition to the epistolary style, the epistolary substance of model letters also experienced a sea change, which was correlated with the social and political transformations of the day. These changes were particularly reflected in two aspects: the epistolary occasions and topics. As I extend the scope of my research to letter-writing manuals for general readers, the epistolary occasions and topics are more abundant and complicated, since many of them follow the growing trend of incorporating contemporary affairs into model letters. To better appreciate this trend, I will examine how patriotism and marital ideals were conveyed in model letters in Chapters 5 and 6. Before delving into the four case

[71] Shu Xincheng 舒新城, ed., *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyushi ziliao* 中國近代教育史資料 [Historical materials of modern Chinese education] (Beijing: Renmin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1981), 415.

studies, I will provide some general information about letter-writing manuals in this chapter.

2.1 Publishing Centers: Guangdong and Shanghai

Extant evidence suggests that the Guangdong region (including Hong Kong and Macao) and Shanghai were two major publishing centers of letter-writing manuals in late imperial and Republican China. Although the dominance of Shanghai in the publishing industry tended to minimize the output from publishers elsewhere, the role of Cantonese publishing houses in transmitting epistolary knowledge deserves attention, especially during the final decades of the Qing dynasty.[72] By comparing available letter-writing manuals for a general audience of these two publishing centers, I will address their major features: manuals published and circulated in Guangdong seem to have been compiled under the influence of local educators who were promoting mass education and social reform, which particularly, but not exclusively, were geared to the needs of local readers; while Shanghai-based manuals appear to be published under the powerful impact of urban consumer culture and targeted readers across the country.

While Guangdong presses published titles in book lists of publishers from other areas like Shanghai, they also published manuals authored by local men of letters. The life trajectories of some authors imply that the transmission of epistolary knowledge was part of a larger project of social reform, which shared the political motivation with textbooks of other subjects that were compiled in late Qing Guangdong. For example, May-bo Ching demonstrates how "native-place" textbooks (*xiangtu jiaokeshu* 鄉土教科書) published in 1904–1911 Guangdong endeavoured to connect the locality with the nation while narrated "racial discourse" and expressed "ethnic

[72] For a preliminary list of book stores and their publication in late imperial Guangdong, see Lin Zixiong 林子雄, "Ming Qing Guangdong shufang shulüe" 明清廣東書坊述略 [Publishing houses in Ming and Qing Guangdong], *Tushuguan luntan* 圖書館論壇 29.6 (2009): 142–46; 198.

politics" under the guideline of national education.[73] Nevertheless, the focus of reform in these epistolary manuals was mainly to spread popular literacy and further attack outdated customs by introducing new ideas. The two locally authored manuals I examine below, *Letters for Women and Children* (*Furu xinzha* 婦孺信札, preface dated 1903) and *Textbook on Knowing Six Hundred Characters to Practice Letter Writing* (*Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu* 識六百字能寫信教科書, first edition dated 1919) can illustrate this point. Both of them contain a vocabulary section that only occasionally appears in contemporary letter-writing manuals initially produced by Shanghai publishers.

Both manuals were compiled by local educators and were reprinted several times, indicating their influence on contemporary society. *Furu xinzha* was written by Chen Ronggun 陳榮衮 (1862–1922, often known by his courtesy name Zibao 子褒). Originally from Xinhui 新會, Guangdong, Chen entered the Wanmu caotang 萬木草堂 school established by Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927) and participated in the Hundred Days' Reform. The failure of the Reform forced him into exile in Japan, where he studied basic methods of popularizing elementary education. Upon his return in 1899, Chen set up a primary school in Macao and started a newspaper for women and children (*Furu bao* 婦孺報). Calling himself "Servant of Women and Children" (*furu zhi pu* 婦孺之僕), Chen published a series of primers for women and children.[74] Chen's major contributions were recorded by the prominent Cantonese female scholar Xian

[73] May-bo Ching, "Classifying Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Late Qing Native-Place Textbooks and Gazetteers," in Tze-ki Hon and Robert Joseph Culp, eds., *The Politics of Historical Production in Late Qing and Republican China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 55–77.
[74] See, for example, *New Reader for Women and Children* (*Furu xin duben* 婦孺新讀本), *Essential Knowledge for Women and Children* (*Furu xuzhi* 婦孺須知), and *History for Women and Children* (*Furu lishi* 婦孺歷史).

Yuqing 冼玉清 (1895–1965), who was under his tutelage for six years.[75] In his 1903 preface to *Furu xinzha*, Chen noted that this manual was compiled to alleviate difficulties he had encountered in his teaching. Since his students often struggled to understand phrases in the instructional passages he had selected from newspapers, outside of the classroom for years Chen collected literary terms for his students and provided explanatory notes written in the vernacular. With assistance of his friend and his brother, he expanded the content of his work and incorporated sample letters into his manual.[76] The vocabulary section of this manual consists mostly of phrases with four or two characters in bold type. All of these phrases are followed by their Cantonese equivalents or an explanation in Cantonese. For example, a repetition of "*xingshen*" 幸甚 (lit., very fortunate) equates to "*hou choi dou gihk*" 好采到極 (*hao cai dao ji*), and the self-deprecatory term "*fuqi shenna*" 伏祈哂納 (lit., "I prostrate myself and ask for your kind acceptance of my humble gift") is followed by a Cantonese explanation: "Sending a gift to people and asking them to kindly receive it" 送物件去人求人受落佢 (see Figure 2-2).[77] The terms "*hou choi*" 好采, "*sauh lohk*" 受[收]落 (*shou luo*), and "kéuih" 佢 (*qu*) are still widely used in Cantonese.

[75] Xian Yuqing, "Gailiang jiaoyu qianquzhe—Chen Zibao xiansheng" 改良教育前驅者——陳子褒先生 [A pioneer of education reform: Mr. Chen Zibao] (1941), in Qu Xingui 璩鑫圭 and Tong Fuyong 童富勇, eds., *Zhongguo jindai jiaoyu shi ziliao huibian: Jiaoyu sixiang* 中國近代教育史資料彙編：教育思想 [Collected historical materials of modern Chinese education: Educational thinking] (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaoyu chubanshe, 2007), 571–84.

[76] *Furu zhi pu* (Chen Ronggun), "Xu" 序 [Preface], *Furu xinzha cailiao* 婦孺信札材料 [Epistolary sources for women and children] (Mengxue shuju, 1903).

[77] For Figure 2-2, see *Furu xinzha, Xinzha cailiao hebian* 婦孺信札、信札材料合編 [Combined collection of letters for women and children & sources for letter writing], vol. 2 (Guangzhou: Linshuge, date unknown), 1b–2a.

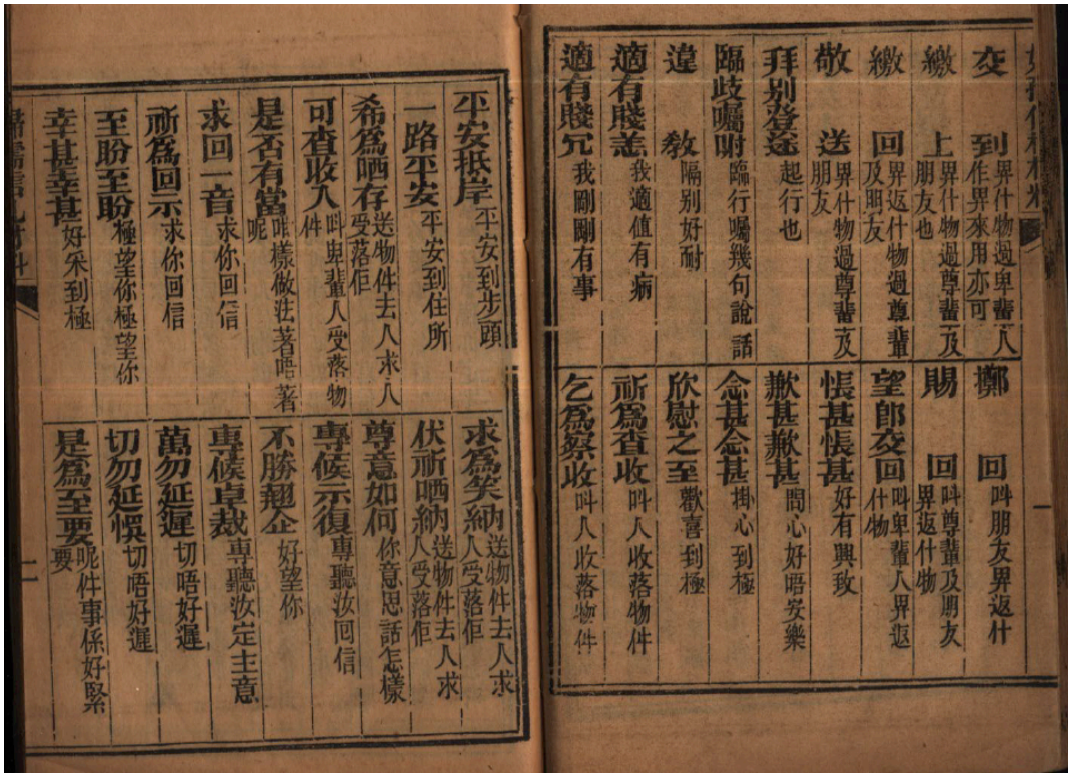

Figure 2-2: Epistolary terms and vernacular notes in *Furu xinzha*

The other epistolary manual, *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, was compiled by Cen Xixiang 岑錫祥 (1880–1947), who also participated in compiling other textbooks.[78] Originally from Xinning 新寧 (modern Taishan 台山), Guangdong, Cen served as the first principal (*jiandu* 監督, 1910–1913) of Xinning Middle School (now Taishan First Middle School).[79] In his preface dated 1917, Cen articulated his deep concern about the weakness of the newly established nation and championed mass education:

> No one would say that academic study is absent in China. But why is China in

[78] See, for example, Cen Xixiang and Huang Peikun 黃培堃, eds., *Guangdong xiangtu dili jiaokeshu* 廣東鄉土地理教科書 [Guangdong native-place geography textbook] (Guangzhou: Yuedong bianyi gongsi, 1909).

[79] Li Jintao 李錦桃, ed., *Taishan diyi zhongxue jianxiao yibai zhounian jinian* 台山第一中學建校一百週年紀念 [The centennial anniversary of Taishan First Middle School], *1909–2009* (Publisher unknown, 2009), 47.

> such a weak and degenerate situation and confining itself so that it cannot compete with foreign powers? Here are the reasons: Western language is simple while Chinese language is complex; Western language is consistent in its written and oral forms while Chinese language is not; Western countries have been using textbooks while it is not until recently that textbooks [that meet Western standards] came into use in China. Although the textbooks have come into use, the customs, names, and languages of the Southern and Northern provinces are different, so no standardized forms exist that can be widely used. Moreover, previously there were no [modern] textbooks for teaching purposes and education was not universal. Numerous men are unable to pursue schooling in the prime of their lives, not to mention the two hundred million female compatriots!
> 顧中國，非無學術，何以中國國勢頹靡衰弱，固步自封，幾不堪與列強各國決一戰！此其故在於西國文字簡而中國繁，西國文言合一而中國則否，西國有教科書而中國之教科書近始發生。雖發生而南北各省風氣之異，名物語言稱謂之殊，未能通俗，不盡適用，且前此教科無書，教育未圖普及，而壯年失學之男子，尚項背相望，固無論夫二萬萬之女同胞也。[80]

Cen attached importance to the knowledge of everyday objects and letter writing, which he contended laid the foundation for Chinese parity with Western countries. As such, he wrote this textbook for "people with talent, old countrymen, village women, common men, woodcutters and fishermen, and shepherd boys" 才人、野老、村婦、俗夫、樵漁、牧豎 and aimed to promote mass education.[81] This textbook consists of three volumes, respectively containing a vocabulary section, simple sentences, and sample letters (see Figure 2-3).[82]

[80] Cen Xixiang, "Xu" 敘 [Preface], in *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, 4th ed. (Guangzhou: Guangdong shuju, 1926), vol. 1.
[81] Cen, *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, vol. 1.
[82] For Figure 2-3, see *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, vol. 1, 15b–16a; vol. 2, 7a; vol. 3, 6b.

Figure 2-3: Lessons teaching vocabulary, simple sentence, and sample letter respectively from the first, second, and third volume (from left to right)

These two manuals not only served to instruct letter writing, but also instilled new ideas that helped to "change customs" (*biansu* 變俗).[83] These ideas were transmitted through sample letters as well as editors' notes. In Chen's *Furu xinzha*, there is a note prior to every letter, many of which relate the customs to be changed. For example, prior to a reply from a fictional writer née Li 李 to her daughter-in-law, who addresses the damage caused by footbinding, the compiler notes that the custom of footbinding is "extremely benighted" (*xiayu zhiji* 下愚之極) and "cruelly goes against principles" (*renxin haili* 忍心害理). This note provides the date when the court issued an edict to ban footbinding in 1902 and utilizes this edict to prohibit footbinding: "Henceforth, those who have had their feet bound can unbind their feet in accordance with this edict, while those who have not had their feet bound should not practice footbinding in defiance

[83] "Liyan" 例言 [Principles], in *Furu xinzha, Xinzha cailiao hebian*, vol. 1, 1a.

of the imperial edict."[84] Li's reply states that since the imperial edict has banned footbinding, there is no need to worry about the difficulty of arranging the marriage of a daughter with unbound feet.[85] In Cen's *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, the notes are appended at the end of sample letters.[86] For example, a fictive letter from a grandfather warns his sojourning grandson that mass gatherings in the local village for theatrical performances are the most futile of activities, and could cause trouble such as fires, robberies, and brawls. This letter is followed by Cen's disapproval of gatherings in the name of gods, which are considered of "no benefit" (*wuyi* 無益): "If people use the money spent on activities for gods to do good things for other people, it would result in much more happiness and virtue. It is a pity that many people do not realize this."[87]

While Guangdong presses had been producing epistolary manuals throughout the first half of the twentieth century, Shanghai presses came to dominate the market share of letter manuals roughly from the 1920s onwards. As the major publishing center in Republican China, the prosperous cultural production of Shanghai helped to bring about its reputation for being modern and cosmopolitan. While many popular novels, newspapers, and textbooks published in Shanghai have been scrutinized in a growing number of studies, letter-writing manuals remain understudied. Being products for the mass market, letter manuals constituted a considerable proportion of the commercial imprint of many Shanghai publishers. Among publishers, the World Press (*Shijie shuju* 世界書局) maintained an all-time record of reprinting certain titles more than two hundred times. Based on bibliographies and international library catalogues, its *New Letters for Children* (*Ertong xin chidu* 兒童新尺牘) was reprinted for the 164th time in

[84] *Furu xinzha, Xinzha cailiao hebian*, vol. 1, 10b.
[85] *Furu xinzha, Xinzha cailiao hebian*, vol. 1, 11a.
[86] Not all sample letters are followed by a note in Cen's textbook.
[87] Cen, *Shi liubaizi neng xiexin jiaokeshu*, vol. 3, 10a.

1936 and was adapted for the new edition, which was reprinted for the 24th time in 1948. Its *New Letters for Students* (*Xuesheng xin chidu* 學生新尺牘) was reprinted for the 201th time in 1940 and was adapted for the new edition, which was reprinted for the 52nd time in 1947. Its *New Letters for Elementary Education* (*Chudeng xin chidu* 初等新尺牘) was reprinted for the 131st time in 1936 and was adapted for the new edition, which was reprinted for the 14th time in 1948. Although there are some problems regarding the statistics of reprinted editions, the popularity of letter manuals published by the World Press was corroborated by the memoir of a former staff member.[88]

Other publishers in Shanghai were also enthusiastic about letter-writing manuals and competed with each other. The prevalence of boastful advertisements vividly reflected fierce competition. According to Wen-hsin Yeh, Shanghai advertising "involved in practice both the mobilization of established genres of communication towards the production of new meanings, and the adoption of new-style media to circulate age-old ideas."[89] The "new meanings" behind the commercial packaging, in the case of letter-writing manuals, imply that the ability to write one's own letter is essential in the modern world. The first epigraph on the importance of letter writing at the beginning of my dissertation, an advertisement, comes from a manual titled *A Vast Repository of Varied Letters* (*Baihuo gongsi da chidu* 百貨公司大尺牘) published by the Dacheng 大成 Book Company in 1926. This manual consists of twelve volumes, each containing a page that advertises other titles (mostly letter-writing manuals) published by the Dacheng Book Company. Figure 2-4 (Left) lists the titles of twenty-one manuals, which include letters for a

[88] For more statistics and the memoir, see Cai, *Minguo xuesheng de shuxin jiaoyu yanjiu*, 15–21; 98–106.
[89] Wen-hsin Yeh, "Shanghai Modernity: Commerce and Culture in a Republican City," *The China Quarterly* 150 (1997): 387.

specific audience (e.g., children, teenagers, students, women, merchants) as well as for the general public, letters in classical or/and vernacular language, and letters with annotation, punctuation, and classification.[90] Above the list, text in bolder and larger lettering indicates that the publisher had especially invited famous writers to compile these titles, which were recently released and well received by all circles in society (*gejie* 各界). Below the list, additional text advertises the availability of these manuals in major bookstores in cities other than Shanghai. Figure 2-4 (Right) offers more detailed information regarding *New Letters for General Application* (*Putong shiyong xin chidu* 普通適用新尺牘), one of the titles listed in Figure 2-4 (Left).[91] The blurb of this title includes its total number of volumes (six), its physical features (hardback), its price (six *jiao* 角), and its merits. This manual is claimed to provide helpful guidance as if from an experienced "senior teacher" (*lao xiansheng* 老先生).

[90] Feng, ed., *Baihuo gongsi da chidu*, vol. 1, front cover.
[91] For Figure 2-4 (Right), see Feng, ed., *Baihuo gongsi da chidu*, vol. 4, front cover.

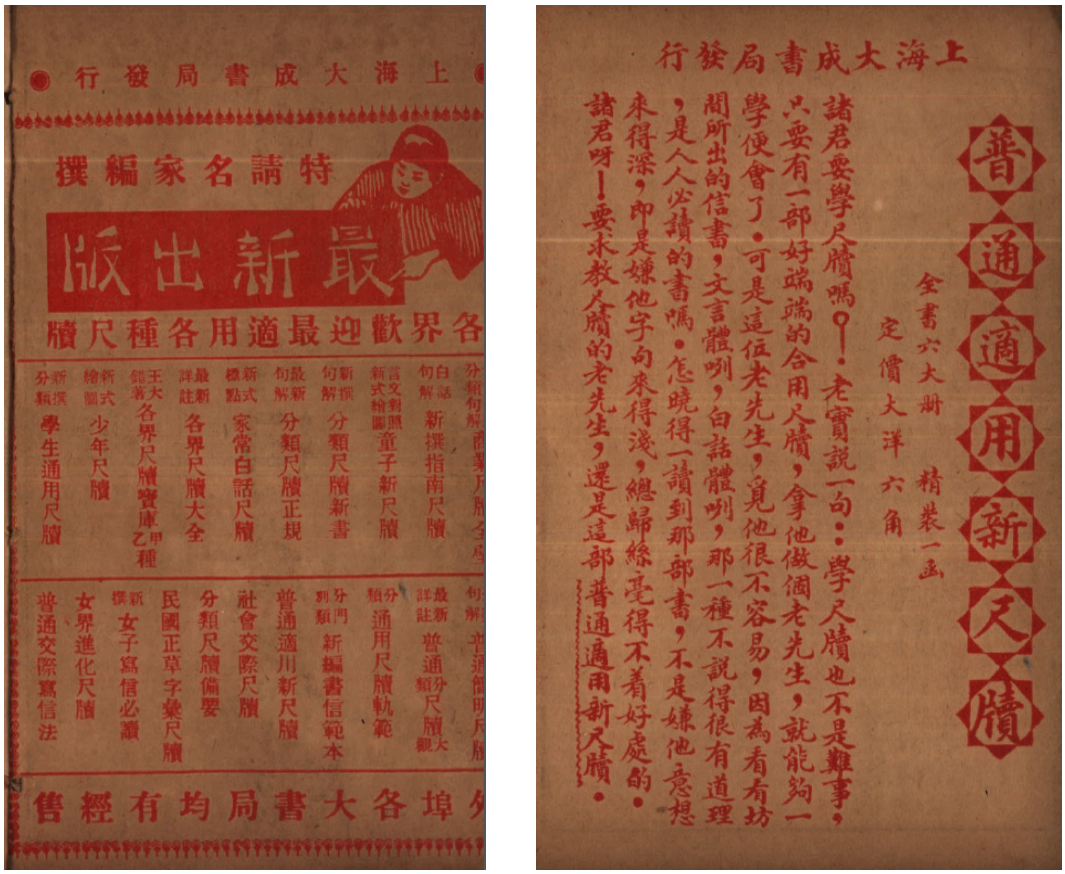

Figure 2-4: (Left) A list of recently published letter-writing manuals; (Right) A blurb of *Putong shiyong xin chidu*

The section comparing the merits of *Putong shiyong xin chidu* with other contemporary manuals shares the same tone as the preface of *Baihuo gongsi da chidu*. Authored by Miu Xunyan 謬遜言 (lit., "fallacious and mediocre words," presumably a self-deprecatory pseudonym), this preface begins with a similar argument that mastery of letter writing is possible if one uses a beneficial manual as a model. To underscore the benefits of this manual, it mentions that people with advanced literary skills are not always versed in letter writing for social interactions since literary knowledge does not always "suit" (*yi* 宜) the context of everyday life. Next come the merits of the manual:

> The categories are extensive, and the models are abundant. It strives to retain literary essentials rather than flowery language and discards the commonplace and the irrelevant. It seeks to cover as many occasions as possible while phrases are appropriately composed in accordance with the specific occasion. The varied occasions and epistolary types allow one to continuously imitate, eventually enabling one to comprehensively master letter writing. Its choice of words for pragmatic and specific purposes avoids the disadvantage of overgeneralization; at the same time, it articulates the sentiment of parting. If scholars get a copy and then study and apply it, they would enjoy a versatile ability only with a smattering of literary knowledge while avoiding being impertinent and rigid. [This manual] is truly capable of helping one with practical writing and an indispensable reader for general social interaction.
>
> 門類既廣，篇幅又多。期於精要而不浮，毋取泛濫而不切。故事類惟求其多，而文詞各徵其實。類多則比附不窮，並易引起融會貫通之益；徵實則事由不泛，兼達旁通曲陽之情。學者得此編而研究之、應用之，只需於文學稍有門徑，即具左宜右有之樂，而無扞格不通之病矣。誠極應用文之能事，而普通社交必讀之書也。[92]

This example suggests that the preface could be read as an extended version of an advertisement and therefore reflects the stiff competition among publishers. While a "preface" was rarely included or was usually brief in imperial letter-writing manuals, it became a staple feature during the late Qing and Republican periods and adumbrated the social context behind the prolific publication of these manuals. Mostly penned by the editors with the aim of self-promotion, these prefaces often contain some or all of the following themes: the profound tradition of Chinese letter writing, the increasingly frequent requirements for correspondence, the outspoken criticism toward other letter manuals on the market, and the merits of their respective letter manuals. The intent to follow new social fashions usually appeared in the rhetoric of these

[92] Miu Xunyan, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in *Baihuo gongsi da chidu*, vol. 1.

prefaces and persistently fostered a connection between epistolary practice and current affairs. The preface from *A Complete Collection of New Style Letters* (*Xinshi chidu daquan* 新式尺牘大全, 1936), for example, showcases this routine practice. After briefly recounting the miscellaneous genres of Chinese writings, it pointedly associates writing styles with political upheavals during the late Qing: "In the waning years of the Qing Dynasty, the Imperial Examinations ceased, schools were established, and as a result, the style of writing changed in tandem. Before long the Revolutionary armies rose up, the Republic of China was established, and as a result, the style of writing changed again."[93] The preface continued with concise comments on the overall change of the writing style and explained the importance of the letter: "As for ordinary social interactions (*wanglai jiaoji* 往來交際) in everyday life, the only thing which cannot be discarded or be found to be lacking is the epistle."[94] The importance of the letter was further highlighted by the listing of the basic functions of letters, such as conveying sentiments, sharing opinions, and reporting facts. More notably, this importance was reflected in its response to the need for communication: "Now the whole world's transportation is such that routes are numerous and disorderly, the range of social interactions is growing broad, and the affairs of the world (*renshi* 人事) are increasingly complicated; the demand for epistolary models is today more pronounced than ever."[95] The preface then proceeds to criticize recent letter-writing manuals, most of which were either outmoded or opaque, and calls for a more appropriate manual:

> The composition of this volume is to wash away existing errors and correct existing failures. Both wording and theme are to give prominence to what is

[93] Yuan Taohu 袁韜壺, "Xuyan" 序言 [Foreword], in *Xinshi chidu daquan*, 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1936), 1.
[94] Yuan, "Xuyan," in *Xinshi chidu daquan*, 1–2.
[95] Yuan, "Xuyan," in *Xinshi chidu daquan*, 2.

> succinct and new, to facilitate ongoing trends, and to provide for society's needs. This is my humble intention.
> 本書之作，冀洗其弊而糾其失，舉凡措詞立意，一以簡明新穎為主，俾應潮流之趨勢，藉供社會之要需，此則作者區區之用心也。[96]

The platitudes and self-promotion in these prefaces may prompt us to downplay their role as serious expositions of epistolary theory. Nonetheless, the ubiquitous concerns and praise in the prefaces regarding the usefulness of epistolary manuals do convey a general attitude among contemporary authors toward a normative standard of letter writing and their shared yet unspoken intention of redefining epistolary knowledge in a changing era. In a popular letter manual for students first dated 1907 by the Commercial Press (*Shangwu yinshu guan* 商務印書館), the preface explicitly claims that it is hard to advance the dissemination of epistolary skills if one continues to rely heavily on elaborate language and baffling allusions in a letter. The models scholar-officials admired were written in the classical style from ancient times, which is not easy for everybody to be familiar with, let alone to be acquired by children. Of course, writing in an uncouth way is worse. If the words are not refined and courteous, it is more likely to mislead the learners. In the end, what concerned the editor of this letter manual was "the needs of the society and the debates of academia. The meaning should be broad and deep while the wording should be suitable for practical use."[97]

The paratexts of letter-writing manuals, either in the form of advertising posts or prefaces, embody the marketing strategies of publishers in Shanghai through the open discussions on the true essence of epistolary knowledge. Some publishers in the Guangdong region, indeed, also

[96] Yuan, "Xuyan," in *Xinshi chidu daquan*, 3.
[97] "Xu" 序 [Preface], in Shangwu yinshuguan, ed., *Dingzheng xinzhuan xuesheng chidu* 訂正新撰學生尺牘 [Revised new letters for students], new 7th ed. (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1938), 1–2.

availed themselves of similar strategies by incorporating prefaces outlining the merits of their own manuals; however, in general they were less critical of the shortcomings of manuals produced by their competitors and less boastful of the merits of their own manuals.

2.2 Epistolary Conventions: Components, Indentation, and Calligraphy

Letter-writing manuals of the late Qing and Republican periods, like other cultural phenomena that straddle successive political regimes, were not immediately updated with new features and content but oftentimes preserved traditional format and style (*kuanshi* 款式). Although letter-writing manuals in vernacular language appeared from the early 1920s, letters in classical language were preferred for most formal occasions, even for correspondence between family members. As the epigraph of this chapter indicates, there was an unspoken rule that letters should be written in classical Chinese, which required formality and elegance. Below I will only focus on basic conventions of writing letters in the classical language.

According to "Essential Skills for Letter Writing" (*Xiexin yaojue* 寫信要訣) from a manual dated 1902, the layout of a formal classical letter could be divided into four basic parts: opening (*qishou* 起首), compliment (*gongwei* 恭維), narration (*xushi* 敘事), and ending (*jiewei* 結尾). The "opening" included all or some of the following elements: terms for the addressee, pleasantries, and expressions of longing, and, if any, a word on the previous correspondence between the writer and recipient.[98] The use of a "compliment" should be contingent on the occasion. If the letter is a New Year greeting or to celebrate other festivals, phrases about the

[98] Tang Zaifeng 唐再豐, ed., *Zuixin zengguang zhujie zihui chidu quanbi* 最新增廣註解字彙尺牘全璧 (hereafter *CDQB*) [Newest expanded complete work of annotated letters with a vocabulary list] (1902), reprinted in Tarō Hatano 波多野太郎, ed., *Chūgoku gogaku shiryō sōkan: Sekidoku hen* 中國語學資料叢刊：尺牘篇 [A collection of Chinese language sources: The section of letters], vol. 2 (Tōkyō: Fuji Shuppan, 1986), 402.

season (*shiling* 時令) should be used; if the occasion is a joyous event, such as a birthday or moving into a new house, blessings should be offered; compliments are not necessary when writing to close friends and relatives, frequent correspondents, and younger people.[99] In contrast to the florid complimentary rhetoric, the "narration" should be concise and clear.[100] In terms of the "ending," the key was to adjust the tone with the aforementioned matter 其語氣須與前事呼應為要.[101] These are explanations of each component; how these components are laid out in a letter will be shown through an example for women in Chapter 4 and an example for men in Chapter 5.

While stock phrases and conventional allusions are requisite in a formal letter, they are too complicated to draft by the general letter writers themselves. To deal with this daunting task, many letter manuals provided ready-made phrases or sentences for the convenience of readers. These references helped readers acquire "book conversancy" for their own letter writing: by following these ready-made phrases or sentences, readers of these manuals were able to re-appropriate "canonical texts and their prescribed system of value and social respectability."[102] *A Complete Collection of Classified Letters for General Use* (*Fenlei putong chidu quanbi* 分類普通尺牘全璧, dated 1916), for example, contains a repository of epistolary phrases in its first volume, which consists of the terms of address (*chenghu* 稱呼), elegant sentences for each season (*shiling liju* 時令麗句), essential phrases (*yaoyu* 要語) for compliments, opening and

[99] Tang, ed., *CDQB*, 403–4.
[100] Tang, ed., *CDQB*, 406.
[101] Tang, ed., *CDQB*, 411.
[102] The concept of "book conversancy," an ability beyond the conventional binary between literacy and illiteracy, or an act between reading and non-reading uses of books, proposes to scrutinize the book in its physical totality to contextualize the production, transmission, and consumption of various literary and non-literary texts and genres by Ming commercial publishers. See He, *Home and the World*, 73.

ending formulas, literary materials for various occasions (e.g., gift-sending or exhortation), key terms, and assorted allusions (see Figure 2-5 Left).[103]

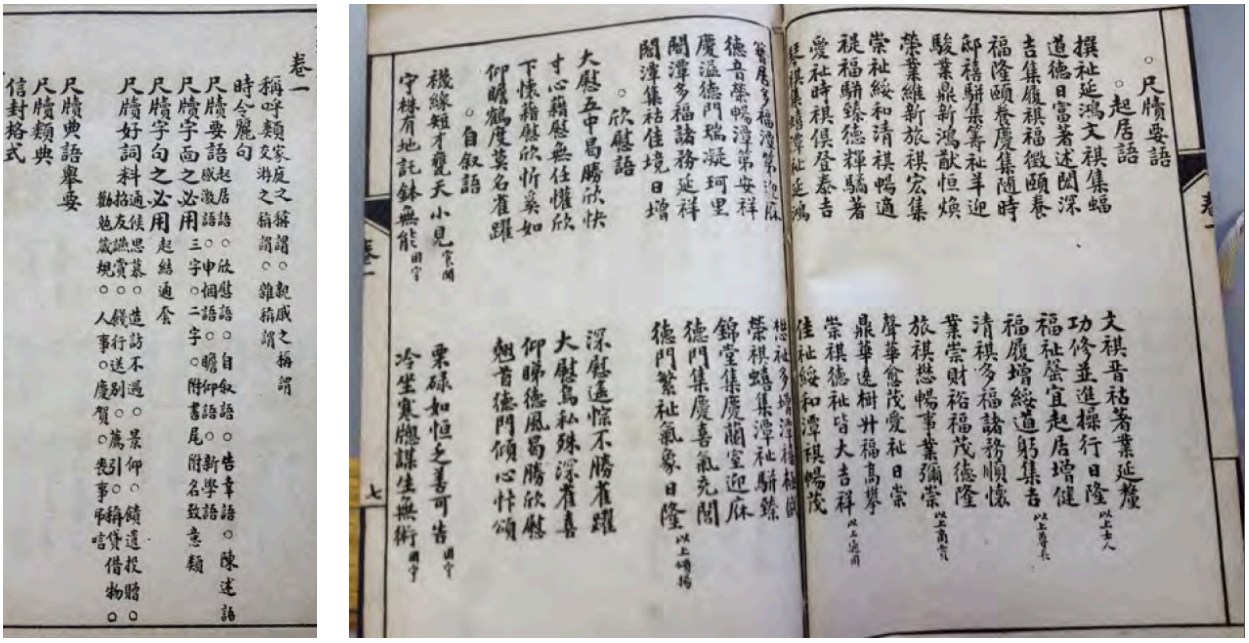

Figure 2-5:(Left) Table of contents of the first volume of *Fenlei chidu quanbi*; (Right) Examples of essential phrases for compliments

The editor of this manual gathered the literary materials for emulation (see Figure 2-5 Right), which were deemed "the most brilliant language" 最生色之語, from real letters of illustrious people.[104]

In addition to the layout of a letter, the appropriate indentations (*taitou* 抬頭) in traditional vertical writing, as manifested in imperial edicts and official documents, were important to letter writers in late imperial and Republican China.

[103] For Figure 2-5, see Xihu xiahan 西湖俠漢, ed., *Fenlei putong chidu quanbi*, vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shizhu shanfang shuju, 1916), 1a; 7a.
[104] Xihu xiahan, ed., *Fenlei putong chidu quanbi*, vol. 1, 23a.

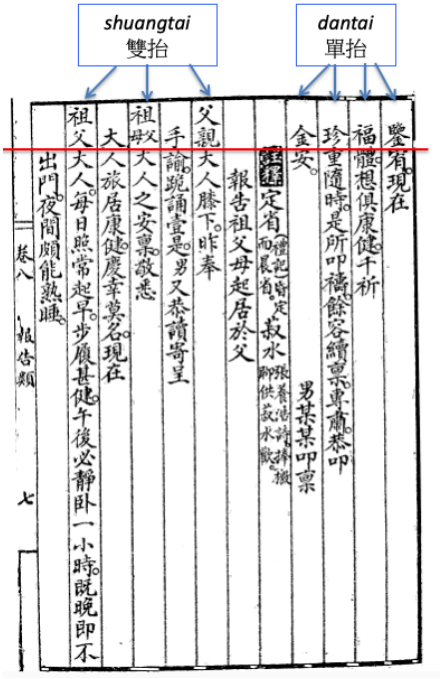

Figure 2-6: An example of *taitou*

The title of the superior or the elder, to whom the letter is addressed, should be written in a particular way: 1) a single character space was reserved prior to the title, known as *nuotai* 挪抬; 2) letters began with a new line and the title set flush with no indentation, known as *pingtai* 平抬; and 3) the title should be placed one, two, or even three characters above the normal indentation of lines—the format with one character positioned above was called single indentation (*dantai* 單抬), with two character was called double indentation (*shuangtai* 雙抬), and with three characters was called triple indentation (*santai* 三抬, not shown in Figure 2-6).[105]

[105] For Figure 2-6, see Zhang Bainian 章百年, ed., *Xinti fenlei gejie jiaoji chidu daquan* 新體分類各界交際尺牘大全 [Complete collection of new-style classified social letters for various communities] (1925), vol. 8, reprinted in Guo Xiaoyong 郭曉勇, ed., *Jindai richang shenghuo wenxian congbian* 近代日常生活文獻叢編 [Collection of documents on daily life in modern China], vol. 68 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue chubanshe, 2015), 641.

According to more detailed instructions, the extent of a *taitou* should be no more than three characters and no less than two characters. If all the lines are written in *pingtai*, this letter can only be sent to an inferior or a junior (*beiyou* 卑幼), or your closest friends; otherwise, it may be regarded as a slight. If a *shuangtai* has been used to address an elder male (*laobo* 老伯) at the beginning of the letter, then keep in mind to use a *santai* if you need to mention his predecessors such as his grandfather. In terms of the title meaning "Your Excellency" like *gexia* 閣下 or *zhishi* 執事, *dantai* is a conventional rule. This convention also applies to phrases like *fu'an* 福安 or *taijian* 台鑒 to sign off letters.[106]

The calligraphic styles were also important. The "General Principles" (*fanli* 凡例) of *Chinese Letters for Advanced-Level Students* (*Zhonghua gaodeng xuesheng chidu* 中華高等學生尺牘, first edition roughly dated 1914), for example, contains a note about the calligraphic style: "Write in a standard style when you address an elder and write in a semi-cursive style when you address a friend or peer" 對於尊長則用楷書, 對於朋輩則用行書.[107] This norm is clearly exemplified in its sample letters that incorporate various calligraphic styles, reflecting the different social status of the writers and the addressees. The appendix of another manual (first edition dated 1907) suggests that "all characters should be written in a neat and standard style…only when writing letters to close friends or people who are inferior or younger than you can you do away with this" 書中字體均宜端楷……惟施之熟友或卑幼, 則可不拘.[108]

With set phrases and specific steps to follow, letter-writing manuals not only transmitted

[106] "Fulu: Shuzha kuanshi shuze" 附錄：書札款式數則 [Appendix: Several rules of epistolary style], in *Dingzheng xinzhuan xuesheng chidu*.
[107] Zhonghua shuju, ed., *Zhonghua gaodeng xuesheng chidu*, 27th ed. (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1924), 1.
[108] "Fulu: Shuzha kuanshi shuze."

epistolary knowledge, but also exposed the rudiments of social interaction and reinforced the fabric of social hierarchy. Moreover, a close reading of these manuals reveals the encompassing nature of this genre and provides a glimpse into the social, moral, and vocational training contained in letter-writing manuals. The next section will touch upon this nature by focusing on a popular title, *A Guide to Letter Writing* (*Zhinan chidu* 指南尺牘, first edition dated before 1861).

2.3 Miscellaneous Instructions: Social, Moral, and Vocational Training

While editors and authors emphasized the pragmatic purposes of their letter-writing manuals, they incorporated into the manuals many ideological arguments that were not directly related to letter writing. In this sense, Chinese letter-writing manuals were similar to their English counterparts in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which played an important role in the teaching of academic, vocational, and social skills and "served as behavior manuals from which the writer could learn the appropriate social conventions for his station in life."[109] To understand how miscellaneous instructions were conveyed in epistolary manuals, this section will focus on *Zhinan chidu*, which was attributed to Ding Gongchen 丁拱辰 (1800–1875) from Jinjiang in the south of Fujian Province. Born into a merchant family of Muslim descent, Ding embarked on his early career as a merchant, travelling across southern China, the island of Luzon (in the Philippines), and the Middle East. This sojourning experience abroad expanded his knowledge of western science and technology and enabled him to develop artillery in response to the First Opium War between China and Britain (1839–42). As a self-taught mechanical engineer, he was

[109] Linda C. Mitchell, "Letter-writing Instruction Manuals in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century England," in Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, eds., *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present: Historical and Bibliographic Studies* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007), 178.

known for his *Illustrated Descriptions of Artillery* (*Yanpao tushuo* 演炮圖說) with a sequel, and works on military machinery.[110]

Compared to his aforementioned works, Ding's *Zhinan chidu*, an epistolary, social, moral, and commercial guide, has received less attention from present-day scholars despite its numerous editions.[111] I have tabulated available information on its various editions from 1861 to 1997, drawn from international library catalogues, in an appendix (see Table 1) at the end of this dissertation.[112] As a contemporary comments, *Zhinan chidu* "instructs the young in the terms of address in letters, knowledge for miscellaneous uses, and ways of conducting oneself in the world, which are all detailed" 教導子弟書札稱呼、雜用要法、與夫交接持身涉世之方，無不詳備.[113] This manual begins with three vocabulary lists respectively on the minutiae of daily life, commendatory expressions (*shanren ziyan* 善人字眼), and derogatory expressions (*eren ziyan* 惡人字眼) (see Figure 2-7).[114]

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[110] On Ding Gongchen, see Chen Zhongchu 陳仲初, ed., *Jinjiang gudai yu jinxiandai zhushulu* 晉江古代與近現代著述錄 [Records of the works from ancient and modern Jinjiang] (Fuzhou: Haixia wenyi chubanshe, 2015), 28.

[111] Although the value of *Zhinan chidu* as a historical source was highlighted, its epistolary knowledge has not been adequately addressed in existing studies. See Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, "Minnan maoyi beijing xia de minjian riyong leishu: *Zhinan chidu shengli yaojue* yanjiu" 閩南貿易背景下的民間日用類書——《指南尺牘生理要訣》研究 [The popular daily encyclopedia in the context of trade in southern Fujian: A study of *Guide to Letter Writing and Trading Etiquette*], *Anhui shixue* 安徽史學 5 (2014): 5–12.

[112] The edition used here was published by Hongwen shuju 鴻文書局 (first edition dated 1930). *Baihua zhushi chuxue zhinan chidu* 白話注釋初學指南尺牘 (hereafter *ZNCD*) [A guide to letter writing for beginners with vernacular notes] (Shanghai: Shanghai Hongwen shuju, 1939).

[113] Zhou Panyun 周攀雲, "Chuxue zhinan xu" 初學指南序 [A preface to *Chuxue zhinan*], in *ZNCD*, 2.

[114] While this Shanghai edition contains vocabulary lists, it is probably reprinted from editions produced in Guangdong or Xiamen, Fujian (see the appended Table 1). For Figure 2-7, see *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 2b–3a.

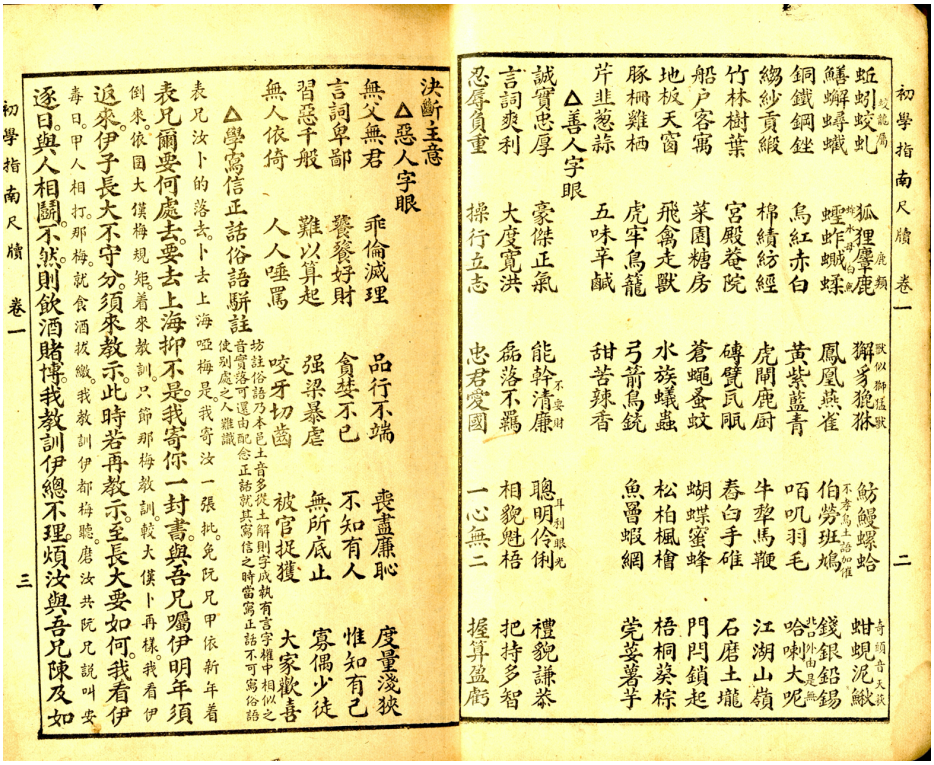

Figure 2-7: The vocabulary lists in *Zhinan chidu*

Next to the vocabulary lists, a sample letter in the local dialect, southern Fukienese (*minnan yu* 閩南語), is presented side by side with a vernacular transcription to serve local people.[115] *Zhinan chidu* was thus also popular in neighbouring Taiwan, where southern Fukienese dialect is widely used, and was reprinted many times by presses in Taiwan up till the 1990s. Third, three other letters were incorporated: one letter from a certain He Youneng 何有能 in Quanzhou, Fujian, to his younger brother He Youcai 何有才 in Guangdong describing the trade between Fujian and Guangdong, which is still consistent with other components of this manual in attending to commercial skills and morality;[116] two letters from wives to husbands written in a

[115] "Xue xiexin zhenghua suyu pianzhu" 學寫信正話俗語騈註 [Presenting standard and vernacular Chinese side by side to teach letter writing], in *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 3–5.

[116] The names of correspondents, Youneng (lit. "having the ability") and Youcai (lit. "having the

female voice and listed under the category of *Letters from Wife to Husband* (*Qi ji fu shu* 妻寄夫書), however, stood out from the rest.

Nonetheless, the first of the two letters relates the affairs of a merchant family.[117] It was said to be written by a certain Lady Yan 顏, the wife of Luo Dalin 羅大林 from Ji'an prefecture 吉安府, Jiangxi. Since Luo had been doing business in the eastern capital (*Dongjing* 東京, i.e., Kaifeng fu 開封府) for many years and had been absent from home, Lady Yan wrote him a letter of one thousand characters with two poems attached.[118] Luo was so touched by this letter that he soon returned to Jiangxi. This story was probably a folktale or fantasy, since the main body of the letter contained many phrases from the *Thousand Character Classic* (*Qianziwen* 千字文), a primer for teaching Chinese characters to children from the sixth century onwards.

The second letter was also an adaptation of canonical texts, including *Lunyu* 論語 and *Mengzi* 孟子, though it had no connection to commercial activities. This letter was said to be written by the daughter of Yin Zhuangtu 尹壯圖 (1738–1808), the Grand Secretary (*neige xueshi* 內閣學士), to dissuade her husband, the third son of the official Zou Bian[Yi]xiao 鄒變[燮]孝 (1728–1791),[119] from becoming a monk. The poems appended to these two letters had long been circulated anonymously, which express a lady's wish to reunite with her husband or lover. For example, one poem reads:

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talent"), suggest that the letter writers might be fictive, though the letters might be adapted from actual correspondence.

[117] This title seems to be omitted from the 1887 edition. See Wang, "Minnan maoyi beijing xia de minjian riyong leishu," 6.

[118] The original Chinese characters are *Dongjing*, but do not refer to Tokyo (the capital of Japan since 1868, which was previously called Edo), because I surmise that this story was set in the Song dynasty (960–1127).

[119] *Bian* 變 is probably a typographical error for *Yi* 燮 since Zou Yixiao is a real historical figure.

It has been several years since my husband departed.	良人自別幾經年
[My] pillow and quilt are cold and [I am] truly miserable.	枕冷衿[衾]寒孰可憐
Blasts of cold wind knocked outside the door.	數陣涼風敲戶外
A lonely moon illuminated the front of the towered building.	一輪孤月照樓前
The honks of the wild geese flying across the sky sound like spasmodic sobs.	天邊過雁聲聲咽
Each character of the palindrome is fresh from the brush.	筆下廻文字字鮮
[I] ask the wild goose to send [my] letter to a distant land,	緘札差鴻傳異地
Telling my husband to buy a boat to come back early.	囑郎早日買舟旋[120]

These letters and poems, seemingly unconnected to the commercial content of the rest of this guide, were designed to help maintain a healthy conjugal relationship by reminding sojourning merchants to be mindful of their solicitous wives at home.[121] The ostensible pedagogic purpose of including these letters and poems was to cultivate the merchants' sentiment as well as letter-writing skills.

The epistolary knowledge in *Zhinan chidu* was transmitted mainly through three means: 1) general instruction, 2) sample letters and replies exchanged between family members, business partners, and friends, and 3) phrases and expressions for mechanical application. The general instruction, following a list of titles arranged in accordance with familial ties and seniority,

[120] "Bing fushi ershou cheng lan" 并附詩二首呈覽 [Two poems attached for reference], in *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 10–11.

[121] Model letters between the separated husband and wife also existed in English epistolary manuals, which were "inherently dramatic" and served "both to instruct readers how to behave in a similar way in their own letters and to delight them with imaginary vignettes." See W. Webster Newbold, "Traditional, Practical, Entertaining: Two Early English Letter Writing Manuals," *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric* 26.3 (2008): 280.

emphasizes the social hierarchy. For example, the opening lines should conform to the following rule: "I respectfully report" (*jing bing zhe* 敬稟者) is used for respected seniors; "I respectfully begin" (*jing qi zhe* 敬啟者) is used for peers, and there is no need to use opening formulas of this kind when writing to juniors or the young.[122] This general instruction set the tone for the following section on sample letters between family members, which extended from (grand)parents and (grand)sons, nephews, siblings, to in-laws.

The core theme of these sample letters for family was to evoke the homesick feelings of sojourners, urging them to come back home as soon as possible. For example, a sample letter from maternal grandparents begins: "You, my grandson, travel to other places in order to earn meagre profits. What I hope is that you focus on business and come back early once you have achieved your goal. Do not linger in the brothels while forgetting your roots: [if you could do as I request,] that would be very lucky for our family" 吾孫慾求微利，而往外鄉，所望專心經紀，得意早回，勿戀異地花柳，而忘父母之邦，則家人之萬幸也.[123] A sample letter from a father-in-law urges the addressee to return home by likening the act of failing to return home after having won high honours and social recognition to the behaviour of "walking in brocade robes at night" (*yijin yexing* 衣錦夜行).[124] Compared to those for families, sample letters and replies for business partners and friends require more polite formulas, which are presented in the second volume and are arranged by the four seasons and twelve months. Although these formulas could be mechanically applied to suit the circumstances, they were not supposed to be

[122] "Xiexin chenghu kuanshi" 寫信稱呼款式 [The terms and styles of letter writing], in *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 19.
[123] "Wai zufumu zaijia ji waisun shu" 外祖父母在家寄外孫書 [A letter from maternal grandparents at home to their out-of-town grandson], in *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 42.
[124] "Yuefu zaijia ji nüxu shu" 岳父在家寄女壻書 [A letter from a father-in-law at home to his son-in-law], in *ZNCD*, vol. 1, 45.

included in letters to peasants (*gengtian zhiren* 耕田之人) or close friends and were not suitable for family members.[125] In this sense, the transmission of epistolary knowledge occurred simultaneously with the reinforcement of social norms.

In addition to social knowledge, this manual contains a section titled *Admonitions and Regulations for Beginners* (*Chuxue zhengui* 初學箴規). This section consists of twenty articles, implanting "a sense of the difficulties and dangers of actions in the world, as well as of epistolary actions" that also appeared in Western letter manuals.[126] Some of its instructions are also reflected in sample letters. For example, the fifth article emphasizes: "Soliciting a prostitute and gambling, which will seriously harm one's reputation, must be forbidden. Once a person indulges in them, he runs the risk of suffering abjection and loneliness. [If this happens,] it will be too late to regret it" 嫖賭二字，切戒不可，大損聲名。一旦失足，落拓無依，噬臍莫及.[127] A sample letter urging a friend not to drink and solicit prostitutes reads:

> …You are handsome and unrestrained, and I understand that it is hard for you to give up romance when you are in bustling areas, so you let your emotions and desires run wild. Indulging in alcohol and prostitutes will not only bring ruin to your finances and business and bring worries to your family, but also sap the energy of your body. The single tree is about to wither and cannot stand the felling of double axes. Be sure to control sexual excess and to awaken early from the wrong path. Establish lofty ambitions and do not degrade your family's reputation…
> ……足下風流逸致，繁華場中，知難割愛，獨不忘恣情肆慾。嗜酒貪花，非特財業消磨，家室可慮，獨恐癡戀忘身。孤樹將枯，不堪雙斧砍伐也。千祈

[125] *ZNCD*, vol. 2, 17.
[126] Victoria Myers, Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson, "Model Letters, Moral Living: Letter-Writing Manuals by Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 66.3–4 (2003): 387.
[127] *ZNCD*, vol. 2, 2.

節性防淫，迷途早醒。矢志遠大，勿墜家聲……[128]

The allusions, "single tree" (*gushu* 孤樹) and "double axes" (*shuangfu* 雙斧),[129] suggest that alcohol and lust will destroy one's body. Following the above letter is one that also admonishes a friend against gambling:

> You are extraordinarily talented, dashing, spirited, and promising. Recently, I heard that you do not attend to your business ventures but, instead, trust wicked and crafty people, indulge in games of chess, and gamble away your fortune. Do you think it is possible to make a living in the long run by honing your gambling techniques? If this is possible, people who toil from morning till dusk are all stupid, while people in the gambling parlours are all smart. However, I wonder if you could find any case in the marketplace that attests to this situation. I have never seen how one can have a prosperous family through gambling (lit., calling out black and chick).[130] I hope you will immediately turn back from the wrong path and firmly strive to realize your ambition. [By doing this,] you will match the wealthy Taozhu in the future.[131]
>
> 足下冠世才能，英風煥發，足以有為。近聞足下生理不務，崇信奸徒，雙陸是依，好為孤注。得無操必勝之術，以為營生長策乎？如以為然，則披星戴月之人俱愚，而賭博場中之人盡智也。然試思廛市間成立者不知幾許？弟未見呼盧喝雉能使家饒戶足也。伏望速轉迷途，猛然奮志，將來富敵陶朱，自

[128] "Jian you jiu se" 諫友酒色 [Advising a friend to stay away from alcohol and lust], in *ZNCD*, vol. 4, 19.

[129] On the origin of "double axes felling the single tree" 兩斧伐孤樹, see *History of Yuan* (*Yuan shi* 元史) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/yuanshi/yuanshi136.html (accessed December 22, 2019).

[130] The idiom "calling black and chick" (*hulu hezhi* 呼盧喝雉) refers to the gambling game. In the past, there were two sides to the wooden dice used in gambling, with one side in black on which a calf was drawn and one side in white on which a chick was drawn. The first prize consists of five dice in black and the second consists of four dice in black and one in white with the picture of a chick.

[131] Taozhu refers to Fan Li 范蠡 (fl. 496–473 BCE), who was worshipped as a god of wealth (*caishen* 財神). See Olivia Milburn, *The Glory of Yue: An Annotated Translation of the* Yuejue shu (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 196.

可為之預卜矣。[132]

These examples suggest that the sample letters are not isolated from the moral components of this manual; instead, different sources of instruction are combined for the readers' edification.

Apart from moral lessons, *Zhinan chidu* contains three essays, teaching commercial principles and methods of calculating the cost (*suanben* 算本) as well as keeping records (*jizhang* 記賬). These parts indicate that *Zhinan chidu* belongs to the genre of merchant manuals and has the general features illustrated in Richard Lufrano's study: "Discussions of technical issues are often interlaced with commentary on character training and social relations indicating the interrelationship of technical matters and self-cultivation in merchant culture. The authors not only dwell on theory but also discuss actual business practices of the day in order to make their own points more effectively."[133] While the practical issues as a whole implicate Confucian self-cultivation, the technical instructions in *Zhinan chidu* endorse the pursuit of commercial profit. For example, the essay on methods of keeping records lists the potential risks that would cause merchants to lose their original capital (*xueben* 血本). Keeping regular track of one's accounts is important, it warns, since there are many variables in the world as time passes: poor debtors may be unable to repay, and avaricious and parsimonious debtors may find a pretext for delaying repayment (see Figure 2-8).[134]

[132] "Jian you dubo" 諫友賭博 [Advising a friend to stay away from gambling], in *ZNCD*, vol. 4, 19–20.
[133] Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants*, 2.
[134] *ZNCD*, vol. 2, 9.

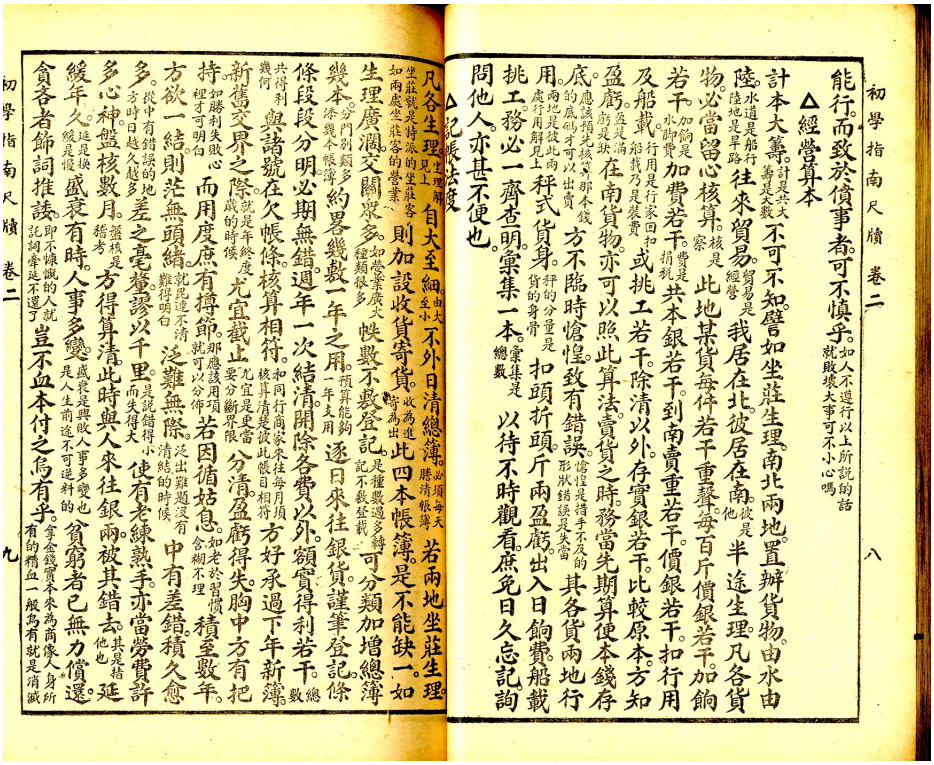


Figure 2-8: The vocational training in *Zhinan chidu*

Despite the reminder of the repayment in the above essay, the editor Ding provided five sample letters on asking for debt repayment (*taozhang* 討帳[賬]) contingent on the addressees. One of them is to ask for the repayment of an old debt (*jiuzhang* 舊帳) in a polite tone since it is used for "poor debtors," as the sample reply indicates.[135] Another one for the repayment of a business debt (*shengyi zhang* 生意帳), however, is written in a straightforward manner and a critical tone since it is probably used for "avaricious and parsimonious debtors."[136] These sample letters, together with the aforementioned essays on business, prepare apprentice merchants for tricky situations so as to ensure their benefit in future commercial activities. By imparting epistolary, social, moral, and vocational knowledge, *Zhinan chidu* was circulated for approximately a

[135] *ZNCD*, vol. 3, 17–18.
[136] *ZNCD*, vol. 3, 19–20.

century and provides us with a panoramic, though by no means comprehensive, perspective into this pedagogical genre.

2.4 Temporal Changes: Repackaged Titles and Revisited Topics

While letter-writing manuals have much in common, dissimilar features existed among these manuals. On the one hand, certain titles were repackaged by different publishers and thus had various versions; on the other hand, certain topics were revisited by different manuals from time to time and thus embody perceptions that were not necessarily consistent. To address these temporal changes, I will examine a title, *An Indispensable Reader for Letter Writing* (*Xiexin bidu* 寫信必讀, the earliest available edition dated 1887), and a topic, geomancy, in sample letters.[137]

Xiexin bidu was reprinted in great numbers, especially by major publishers in Shanghai, throughout the first half of the twentieth century, and its content varied vastly across different editions.[138] Moreover, a sequel to *Xiexin bidu* by Cai Dongfan 蔡東藩 (1877–1945), a writer of historical romances, was first published in 1933,[139] which followed the newest epistolary fashion 俾得從時.[140] *Xiexin bidu* was attributed to Tang Zaifeng 唐再豐 (courtesy name Yunzhou 芸洲, Taohua guan zhuren 桃花館主人, dates unknown), whose life trajectory remains obscure.[141] As a Suzhou native, Tang was known for his ground-breaking work on

[137] Geomancy remained a popular topic and source of everyday practical concerns well into the twentieth century. For more on this subject, see Tristan G. Brown, *The Veins of the Earth: Property, Environment, and Cosmology in Nanbu County, 1865–1942* (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2017).
[138] Available information on its various editions, drawn from international library catalogues, is listed in Table 2 appended at the end of this dissertation.
[139] Li Baoming 李保明, *Yanyi dajia Cai Dongfan* 演義大家蔡東藩 [Cai Dongfan: A master of the historical novel] (Chengdu: Dianzi keji daxue chubanshe, 2014), 234.
[140] An advertisement in *Shenbao* 申報 21877 (March 16, 1934), 3 (*ban* 版).
[141] On a brief Chinese introduction on Tang Zaifeng and an incomplete list of his works, see

Chinese magic, *A Compilation of Thaumaturgy* (*Ehuan huibian* 鵝幻彙編, dated in the 1880s) and a *wuxia* 武俠 novel, *Thirteen Heroes with Seven Swords* (*Qijian shisan xia* 七劍十三俠, dated around 1892). In addition to *Xiexin bidu*, he authored another epistolary manual, *Reformed Letters for Autodidacts* (*Wushi zitong weixin chidu* 無師自通維新尺牘, date unknown). According to a preface dated 1896, Tang was a well-educated and talented man of letters but had to work as a private secretary for officials to make a living for more than a decade.[142] The publication of Tang's letters was proposed by his close friend, the writer of this preface, who praised Tang's sentimental words as outstanding. The preface writer selected the pieces he considered accessible and suitable for both refined and popular tastes and annotated them for publication.[143]

A close reading of Tang's letters, however, suggests that at least some of them were not written as actual correspondence. While different editions of *Xiexin bidu* contained various subheadings, eight categories appeared with relative consistency: family letters (*jiashu* 家書), trade (*maoyi* 貿易), greetings (*wenhou* 問候), requests (*qingtuo* 請託), solicitation (*qiuken* 求懇), short letters (*duanzha* 短札), boudoir letters (*guige* 閨閣), and congratulations and consolations (*qingwei* 慶慰). Many sample letters are accompanied by replies, and these letters are more likely to have been fabricated for teaching purposes. Sample letters under the *guige*

Suzhou tushuguan 蘇州圖書館, ed., *Suzhou minguo yiwen zhi* 蘇州民國藝文志 [Records of literature from Suzhou in the Republican period] (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2005), 696–7.

[142] Shi Shishou 施世守 (Sobriquet: Yingyuanjiuzhu 瀛園舊主, dates unknown), "Xu" 序 [Preface], in Tang Yunzhou and Cai Dongfan 蔡東藩, *Xiexin bidu hebi* 寫信必讀合璧 [An indispensable reader for letter writing and its sequel], 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Huiwentang Xinji shuju, 1934), 1. This preface was dated 1900 under the name of Shoumeisheng 瘦梅生 (Sobriquet: Xiyoubaozhu 息遊寶主, dates unknown). See *Tangzhu xiexin bidu quanbi* 唐著寫信必讀全璧 (hereafter *XXBD*) [Complete collection of an indispensable reader for letter writing compiled by Mr. Tang] (1912), reprinted in *Chūgoku gogaku shiryō sōkan: Sekidoku hen*, vol. 2, 500.

[143] Shi, "Xu," 2.

category, though without replies, most likely depict fictional experience.[144] A notable sample letter in this category titled Christianity (*yesujiao* 耶穌教) was omitted from many editions reprinted in the Republican era. This letter congratulated a female teacher on her birthday.[145] As the addressee is assumed to be a Christian, therefore, this letter uses terms rarely found in other occasions, such as "divine grace" (*shen'en* 神恩) and "holy grace" (*sheng'en* 聖恩).[146]

One version of *Xiexin bidu* that deserves attention was published by Shanghai Press 上海書局 in 1902. The categories for epistolary occasions were reorganized and the numbers of sample letters in each category were either expanded or remained unchanged.[147] A new category of moral exhortation (*guiquan* 規勸) was created, and none of its letters could be found in the eight common categories of *Xiexin bidu*. Notably, it included exemplary letters that were inconsistent with letters in other categories in their attitudes toward certain matters. Visiting a prostitute, for example, should be resisted considering the potential threats:

> Romance in a brothel is absolutely illusory and paying for a prostitute's service is

---

[144] The epistolary occasions and the respective addressees included asking a female teacher for leave (*qingjia* 請假), greeting older female relatives on the Spring Festival holidays (*he nianjie* 賀年節), greeting female friends on the Dragon Boat Festival (*he duanyang* 賀端陽), greeting sisters-in-law on the Mid-Autumn Festival (*he zhongqiu* 賀中秋), asking female friends for their company, inviting relatives by marriage to a birthday banquet, politely declining a younger woman's invitation, enquiring about a younger female relative's illness, and seeing sisters-in-law off (*songxing* 送行).

[145] The complimentary line of this letter reads: "*Wuxing huancai, you huan jie shou zhi ting*" 婺星煥采，猶環介壽之庭. The term *wuxing* 婺星 indicates the female addressee. The expression "celebrating birthday" (*jie shou* 介壽, short for *yi jie mei shou* 以介眉壽) refers to longevity. See James Legge, trans., *The Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/shijing/shijing155.html (accessed December 21, 2019).

[146] *XXBD*, vol. 7, 533–34.

[147] According to the new classification of model letters, the more common category, "*qingwei*," was divided into two separate parts: "congratulation" (*qinghe* 慶賀) and "consolation" (*diaowei* 吊慰). Another more common category, "*duanzha*," was replaced by two categories: "invitation" (*yaoqing* 邀請) and "asking for debt repayment or loan" (*suojie* 索借). See *CDQB*.

> nothing other than wasteful. In addition to the loss of your wealth, both your body and reputation will be ruined. If you are infected with a severe disease, you will regret it for the rest of your life: this is what I deeply worry about.
> 秦樓風月，盡屬虛浮；買笑殷勤，無非揮霍。身名兩敗，不獨傷資已也，或染惡疾，以致抱恨終身，尤為深懼。[148]

However, there is also a sample letter inviting a male friend to visit a prostitute:

> The new *nü jiaoshu* of Qinghe Fang is both talented and beautiful, with her hibiscus-like face and lotus-like feet. People who see her all think that she is a fairy from heaven. You treasure talent as much as life. If you have the intention of patronizing this beauty, what about visiting her together tomorrow.
> 清河坊新來女校書，才貌雙全，蓉蓮並絕，見者疑從天上來也。足下愛才若命，倘有意憐香，詰朝同往訪之。[149]

This sample letter is followed by a reply in a positive tone: "To look at a beautiful woman who pleases me in order to broaden my horizon—How lucky I am!" 觀雅意中人，以廣眼界，何幸如之.[150] In her study of the discourse of prostitution and Chinese modernity, Gail Hershatter invokes Spivak's concept of "subaltern" to demonstrate "congealed relations of power" in the writings of Chinese intellectuals in the twentieth century, who used prostitutes as a metaphor to articulate their own subordination with respect to Western governments and intellectuals.[151] It partly explains the seemingly incompatible extant records regarding courtesans and lower-class prostitutes, both of whom "were key elements in the stories that men told about pleasure, danger,

[148] "Quan jiepiao" 勸戒嫖 [A exhortatory letter on cessation of soliciting a prostitute], in *CDQB*, vol. 6, 482.
[149] "Yue xiaji" 約狎妓 [An inviting letter on visiting a prostitute], in *CDQB*, vol. 3, 444.
[150] "Yue xiaji," in *CDQB*, vol. 3, 444.
[151] Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures*, 11.

gender, and the nation."[152] Other sample letters that reject alcohol and gambling in this new category of moral exhortation also voice differently from more widely circulated letters that regard wine and mahjong as an integral part of literati culture.[153]

The apparently inconsistent voices that co-exist in the 1902 version, to some extent, imply the commercial value of *Xiexin bidu* in incorporating a wide range of topics to meet the growing needs of contemporary consumers. As the preface writer of this version, Zhu Weibin 朱渭賓 (dates unknown), claims: "This compilation was derived from extensive sources, and letters therein are arranged under different categories, neither simple nor complicated but rather elegant" 是編特廣輯成書，分門別類，不簡不繁，殊爲雅致.[154] Therefore, this compilation was considered able to "perfectly satisfy people in the field of trade who aim to hone their epistolary skills" 貿易場中雖研究筆札者應無遺憾也.[155]

Another version of *Xiexin bidu* published by Guandongya shuju 關東雅書局 of Guangzhou in 1908 shows the influence of *Letters for Travellers* (*Jianghu chidu* 江湖尺牘, the earliest available edition dated 1782).[156] The overlapping components between these two manuals were clearly reflected in their tables of contents. Both compilations contain three sections of commercial ethics and skills for sojourning merchants: "Rules for Journeys" (*lucheng guilüe* 路程規畧),[157] "Ten Essentials for Travel" (*lucheng shiyao* 路程十要), and "Important Matters of Trade" (*maimai jiguan shiyi* 買賣機關事宜). Moreover, their prefaces have the same beginning and follow the similar pattern of narrative. While the 1908 version follows *Jianghu chidu* in

[152] Hershatter, *Dangerous Pleasures*, 12.
[153] *CDQB*, vol. 3, 444–45.
[154] *CDQB*, "Xu" 序 [Preface], 398.
[155] *CDQB*, "Xu," 398.
[156] On the translation of *jianghu*, see Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants*, 10.
[157] The same section was titled *lucheng gui* 路程規 in *Xiexin bidu*.

some respects, it includes many instructions not seen in *Jianghu chidu*, though these sections might be adapted from other reference works. Letter-writing phrases, terminology, and samples were added in the 1908 version, reflecting the ongoing development of epistolary pedagogy throughout the nineteenth century. One remarkable trend of this development is that the ability to write proper letters had been gradually regarded as essential to all strata of Chinese society, rather than to a limited number of professional men of letters. For one thing, more and more letter manuals incorporated a list of glossaries pertinent to everyday life and thus also served as language primers for the public; for another, the increased corpus of optional elegant phrases and elevated sentences was able to assist readers who lacked the systematic training of classical literature. Both features could be found in the 1908 version (see Figure 2-9).[158]

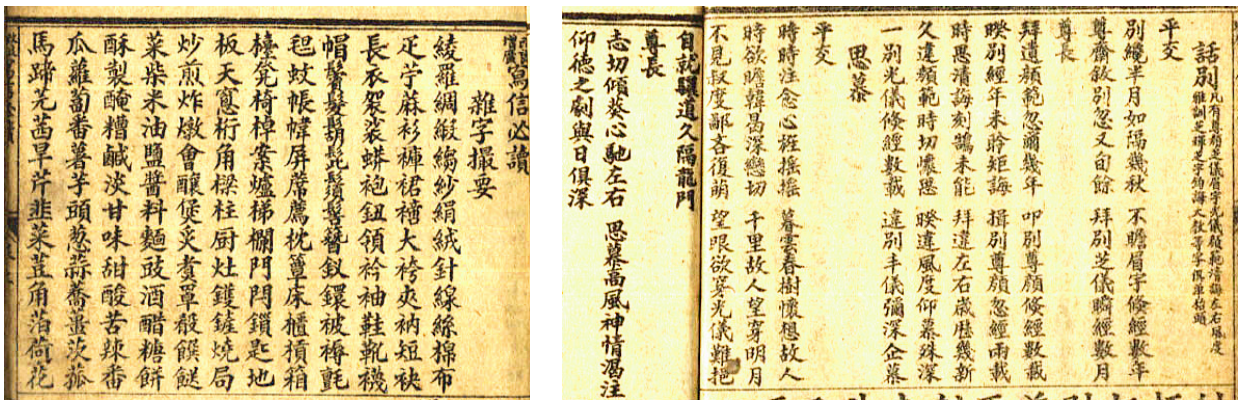


Figure 2-9: (Left) A list of glossaries; (Right) Formulaic sentences for imitation

A close reading of the essential vocabulary and exemplary sentences in the 1908 compilation suggests that the content of this manual was designed to integrate literary sources into quotidian matters of ordinary people's everyday lives, in particular, attending to their pressing needs for social exchange. As its preface suggests, this compilation refers to ritual books (*lishu* 禮書) and

[158] For Figure 2-9, see *Xinji Xiexin bidu* 新輯寫信必讀 [An indispensable reader for letter writing, New edition] (Guangzhou: Guandongya shuju), 1a; 33b.

selected couplets (*yinglian* 楹聯) and formulas for weddings and funerals (*hunsang tieshi* 婚喪帖式) for the reference of readers who began learning to engage in social exchange 以為初學酬世者知所問津.[159] These appended sections suggest that the 1908 compilation probably followed the editing principles of other reference works. However, the instructions of the 1908 compilation were more concrete and colloquial in order to reach a wider audience in an era of promoting mass education.

Back to the 1902 version of *Xiexin bidu*, the section of sample letters was expanded by adding more letters, covering topics that were common in the late Qing and Republican periods. The letter regarding geomancy is a case in point.[160] The earliest known sample letters pertinent to geomancy appear in *Precious Guide to Social Exchange* (*Choushi jinnang* 酬世錦囊), a popular how-to manual published in southern Fujian (preface dated 1771), which includes two samples and their replies.[161] One is about recommending a geomancer:

> The country abounds with people who have a good knowledge of *Qingnang*.[162] However, how many of them know the bone of the mountain as well as Guo Jingchun did?[163] There is a particular person who is skilled in this field and well known for it. I am sure he can find a suitable gravesite for your late father. I hope you will invite him and give him a chance [to select the gravesite].
> 理青囊者遍天下。求其知山骨，如郭景純者蓋有幾？某於此道，頗有令名，

159 "Xu," *Xinji Xiexin bidu*.
160 "Tuo mi jiacheng" 託覓佳城 [Asking to find a suitable gravesite], in *CDQB*, vol. 4, 459.
161 For *Choushi jinnang*, see Hayes, "Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World," 75–111; Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*, 413–21.
162 *Qingnang* refers to the books on geomancy, such as *Qingnang jing* 青囊經.
163 Guo Jingchun refers to Guo Pu 郭璞 (courtesy name Jingchun 景純, 276–324), whose works include *Qingnang jing*. On Guo Pu, see David R. Knechtges and Taiping Chang, ed., *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature: A Reference Guide, Part One* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 301–3.

> 必能為令先君覓一佳城，幸延而試之。[164]

The reply to this recommendation suggests that if this person is as good at geomancy as Liao Junqing 廖均卿, a famous geomancer, the replier would consider his insight and give it a try.[165] Sample letters regarding geomancy in the late Qing can be found in the expanded edition of *Xiexin bidu* as well as in *Concise Letters* (*Jianming xinzha* 簡明信札, preface dated 1908). A writer asks if the recipient could bring Mr. Chen 陳先生, who is adept in geomancy and talented at locating burial spots 地理精通，善於點穴, to his house the next day so Mr. Chen could have a look at his ancestor's gravesite. Upon this request, the recipient suggests that he would introduce Mr. Chen at the end of this month because now his family needs this geomancer to help with a burial in the mountain (*zangshan* 葬山).[166]

This topic continued to be incorporated into epistolary manuals of the early Republican period. *New Letters for Republican China* (*Gonghe xin chidu* 共和新尺牘, first edition dated 1913), for example, includes the following letter:

> …I am troubled because I have not been able to find a proper burial site for my late father. I am anxious to bury him in order to appease his spirit; however, I dare not do so arbitrarily without consulting a geomancer. I have long been aware that

[164] Ma Xuan 馬萱, "Jian kanyu" 薦堪輿 [Recommending a geomancer], in Zou Jingyang 鄒景陽, ed., *Choushi jinnang* 酬世錦囊 [Precious guide to social exchange], vol. 3 (Shanghai: Hongbaozhai shuju, 1884–ca. 1934), 2b.

[165] Zou Keting 鄒可庭, "Da" 答 [Reply], in *Choushi jinnang*, vol. 3, 2b. Another sample letter and its reply on geomancy read similarly, see Yu Bangyan 俞邦彥, "Tuo qiu kanyu" 托求堪輿 [Asking for a geomancer] and Zou Wugang 鄒梧岡, "Da", in *Choushi jinnang*, vol. 3, 5a. Liao Junqing (1350–1413) was a well-known geomancer from Jiangxi Province, see Editorial Committee, ed., *Jiangxi shengzhi: Renwuzhi* 江西省志：人物志 [Gazetteer of Jiangxi Province: Biographies] (Beijing: Fangzhi chubanshe, 2007), 165.

[166] "Qi yi xiongdi" 契誼兄弟 [Sworn brothers], in Rong Jixi 容緝熙, ed., *Jianming xinzha* 簡明信札 [Concise letters] (Guangzhou: Zuijing shuju, preface dated 1908).

> you, Sir, are expert in geomancy like Junqing and can find a good land to allow my late father to be at peace. I do not expect to find a burial site that can help the offspring in my family prosper but am content with a site that is sheltered from wind and well-drained of water…
> ……弟以先君未卜夜城，耿耿在抱，急欲落土，以妥先靈，乃未經堪輿，不敢擅自卜葬。素知足下精均卿之術，俾我先人得安一坏[壞]。非敢妄冀牛眠，但能避風去水則已耳……[167]

Some of the other sample letters from the same category in this manual are also addressed to individuals who engage with the supernatural world, such as Buddhist monks (*sengren* 僧人) and Taoist priests (*daoshi* 道士), which are all written in a respectful tone. Most of these sample letters are accompanied by annotations, explaining the allusions used in the field of geomancy. For example, terms associated with suitable grave sites include *yecheng* 夜城, *jiacheng* 佳城, *niumian* 牛眠, *yihuai tu* 一坏[壞]土.

Although the topic of geomancy persisted in letter-writing manuals, the attitudes toward geomancy appear to experience a change from positive to negative. For example, in a sample letter from a letter-writing manual published in 1925, the writer criticizes the folk custom of "blindly following the words of geomancers" 迷信堪輿家言 and claims that the choice of *niumian* and *malie* 馬鬣 is ridiculous in the hope that the burial of one's forefathers would bring happiness to the offspring.[168] The writer concludes that nothing could be considered as more

[167] "Zhi kanyu jia" 致堪輿家 [A letter to the geomancer], in Anonymous, *Gonghe xin chidu*, vol. 4 (Shanghai huiwentang, 1913), 21a.
[168] *Niumian* 牛眠, the place where an ox sleeps, refers to a good gravesite. See *Book of Jin* (*Jin shu* 晉書), vol. 58 in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/jinshu/jinshu058.html (accessed December 21, 2019); *Malie*, the shape of the earth above the grave, is from *Liji* 禮記 and refers to good land for burial. See James Legge, trans., "We have followed the axe-shape, making what is called the horse-mane mound" 從若斧者焉, 馬鬣封之謂也, in *The Book of Rites* (*Li ji*) in

unfilial and stupid 不孝且愚 than practicing geomancy.[169] The emergent discourse against "superstition" (*mixin* 迷信) was largely influenced by social reforms from the late nineteenth century onwards, especially during the Chinese enlightenment that promoted democracy and science.[170] Although religious matters often came under attack in public discourse, religious practices were still popular among the common people as well as the authorities.[171] Sample letters regarding geomancy continued to be disseminated throughout the Republican era, on the surface appearing anachronistic to the increasingly urban social mores of the early twentieth century. However, these letters came from reprinted editions of letter-writing manuals that were first published during the Qing dynasty, such as the aforementioned *Choushi jinnang* and *Zhinan chidu*.[172] New letter-writing manuals published from the 1920s onwards were more likely to express disapproval of this practice, as the above example shows.

2.5 Subjects of Reminiscence: Manuals and Amanuenses

The survey of letter-writing manuals in this chapter, mostly based on manuals for the general public, is far from exhaustive due to the diversity and quantity of examples of this genre. It serves to lay a foundation for the following chapters and brings up major issues regarding their

Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/liji/liji003.html (accessed December 21, 2019).

[169] "Wen di jinnian zuying yingfou tianyin" 問弟今年祖塋應否添蔭 [A letter to the younger brother on the decision on ancestor's gravesite], in *Xinti fenlei gejie jiaoji chidu daquan* (1925), vol. 8, reprinted in *Jindai richang shenghuo wenxian congbian*, vol. 68, 648.

[170] During the New Culture Movement, Chinese nationalists attacked traditional values and promoted Western ideals of "Mr. Democracy" (*De xiansheng* 德先生) and "Mr. Science" (*Sai xiansheng* 賽先生). See, for example, Jonathan D. Spence, *The Gate of Heavenly Peace: The Chinese and Their Revolution, 1895–1980* (New York: Viking Press, 1981), 117–23.

[171] Rebecca Nedostup, *Superstitious Regimes: Religion and the Politics of Chinese Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2009).

[172] For the sample letter on geomancy in *Zhinan chidu*, see "Qiu you jian kanyu" 求友薦堪輿 [Asking a friend to recommend a geomancer], in *ZNCD*, vol. 3, 29–30.

general features and remarkable differences. The growing necessity of letter writing and increasing sophistication of epistolary knowledge in late Qing and Republican China propelled the proliferation of letter-writing manuals and professional services provided by an amanuensis or professional scribe (*daibi* 代筆 or *daishu* 代書), subjects of reminiscence in many contemporary Chinese writings.[173] The amanuenses were usually educated senior men who made a living through their literacy skills, which also included the ability to write formal documents, such as contracts or lawsuit files. They often installed themselves in bustling marketplaces or outside post offices to wait for customers, the majority of whom were women and the elderly, as depicted in Figure 2-10.[174]

Figure 2-10: (Left) Photograph of a scribe writing a family letter for a female servant dated 1938; (Right) Contemporary illustration of an amanuensis at work outside a post office

[173] For these scribes and their written materials, see Ronald Suleski, *Daily Life for the Common People of China, 1850 to 1950: Understanding Chaoben Culture* (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 1–3.
[174] Writing letters for others was a common profession throughout Republican China. This profession still exists in some areas but is gradually fading out. For Figure 2-10 (Left), see *Shaonian huabao* 少年畫報 [Youth pictorial], no. 8 (1938): 20; for Figure 2-10 (Right), see Deng Haifan 鄧海帆, "Dai shu jiaxin" 代書家信 [Writing family letters for others], in *Louxiang renwu zhi: Jiu Beijing minsu shihua* 陋巷人物志：舊北京民俗詩畫 [Recording people in the humble alleys: Folk poetry and paintings of old Peking] (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1998), 68.

According to a recollection, the amanuensis was addressed as "Teacher" (*Xiansheng* 先生). The customer who came up to his desk might first ask him to read a letter he or she had received and to explain the formulaic expressions contained therein. After learning the main points of his customer's intended reply, the letter writer would grind the ink stick, open the letter paper, position the paper weight, and pick up his brush or pen. Upon finishing the reply, he would read it to his customer for confirmation. Once he received approval from the customer, he would address the envelope, affix the postage stamp, and seal the envelope. The fees for the letter paper, envelope, and postage stamp were officially standardized, so he derived his income mainly from "fees for lubricating the brush or pen" (*runbi fei* 潤筆費).[175] Amanuenses usually were familiar with guides to letter writing and official documents, which suggests that readers of letter manuals were actually not people who had little education. Many educated people needed to refer to these reference books for various purposes. In this sense, the massive production of epistolary guides undergirded rather than replaced the role of amanuenses, which explains James Hayes's observation that rural specialists, who mastered the art of functional writing, were still in high demand despite the availability of inexpensive popular guides.[176] Correspondingly, the gradual disappearance of epistolary manuals was concomitant with the decline of professional scribes as epistolary communication gave way to telecommunication throughout the twentieth century.

[175] Zhai Hongqi 翟鴻起, "Daixie shuxin" 代寫書信 [Writing letters for others], in *Wo na qingxingmi de xiaoshihou* 我那青杏蜜的小時候 [My green-apricot-honey childhood], *1930–1939* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang shaonian ertong chubanshe, 2013), 109–11.
[176] Hayes, "Specialists and Written Materials in the Village World," 75–111.

Part Two: Case Studies

Chapter 3 Correspondence of "Humble Men of Letters": A Study of *Qiushui xuan chidu* and Its Annotators

3.1 Introduction

> *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* was popular for a time because there are many phrases related to seeking employment in this book, which are very useful for the great number of humble men of letters in China.
> 《秋水軒尺牘》所以曾風行一時，是因為中國寒士多，書中多覓館求差語，甚有用處.[177]

In the note cited above, Lin Yutang 林語堂 (1895–1976) associated the popularity of *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* (*Qiushui xuan chidu* 秋水軒尺牘, hereafter *Qiushui xuan*), an epistolary collection that was later used as a pedagogical manual, with the urgent occupational needs of the so-called "humble men of letters" (*hanshi* 寒士). While Lin aptly pointed out the practical appeal of *Qiushui xuan* for many humble men of letters, it should be noted that some of them also played a key role in the publication of this collection and other epistolary manuals. Building on the undiscovered stories of *Qiushui xuan*'s readers and publishers, this chapter brings an unnoticed epistolary text and a little-known group of men of letters into view and examines these men's pervasive influence on the late Qing and Republican publishing industry. *Qiushui xuan* serves as an entry point to this examination because it was the most extensively known but controversial letter-writing manual from the mid-nineteenth century throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

The popularity of *Qiushui xuan*, ironically, was linked to the unsuccessful careers of a group

[177] Lin Yutang, "Wo de hua" 我的話 [My words], *Lunyu* 論語 29 (1933): 214.

of humble men of letters, one of whom was its author, Xu Simei 許思湄 (better known by his courtesy name Jiacun 葭村, ca. 1769–ca. 1856).[178] Originally from Shanyin 山陰 (present-day Shaoxing, Zhejiang), Xu was unable to enter officialdom through the civil service examination but had to sojourn as a private legal advisor (*muyou* 幕友 or, to use its colloquial term, *shiye* 師爺), a profession that was gradually disappearing after the demise of the Qing government in 1911.[179] Xu lost his father at an early age and, like many of his fellow townsmen, left home at around twenty years old to seek a livelihood in Baoding 保定, capital of Zhili 直隸 around 1788. He sojourned in different counties in North China in the following decades. While suffering from straitened circumstances, he borrowed money to purchase official titles (*juanguan* 捐官) in the hope of becoming a local official; these efforts ultimately failed. His constant separation from his family also weighed on Xu's mind during his sojourn in the North, and he kept seeking professional opportunities in locations nearer to his native place. At the age of around sixty-three, Xu returned to Zhejiang to work for different officials in several counties. Modern historian Feng Erkang 馮爾康 estimates that Xu retired at seventy-two and passed away when nearly ninety years old. Throughout his life, Xu was considered unsuccessful in his

[178] The dates and life trajectory of Xu Jiacun herein are based on Feng Erkang, "Mubin Xu Simei nianpu: Ju *Qiushui xuan chidu* zhizuo" 幕賓許思湄年譜——據《秋水軒尺牘》製作 [A chrono-biography of Xu Simei based on *Qiushui xuan chidu*] (1998), in *Qingdai renwu sanshi ti* 清代人物三十題 [Thirty articles on figures in the Qing dynasty] (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 2012), 294–308.

[179] *Muyou*—literally "friends in the tent or behind the curtain"—were hired by officials to undertake different duties. There were different types of *muyou* based on their different duties, which therefore should be translated in different ways. Xu was a *xingming muyou* 刑名幕友, whose main duty was to assist local officials in judicial administration. Therefore, the term *xingming muyou* was translated into "private legal advisor." *Xingming muyou* was the most essential assistant to local administrators and enjoyed a much higher social status and received higher pay than the others. See Li Chen, "Legal Specialists and Judicial Administration in Late Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 33.1 (2012): 1–54.

career due to his constant financial insecurity; his life was not recorded in local archives and our knowledge is based on his three surviving works.[180]

In contrast to the scant attention paid to Xu's life, there was sustained interest in publishing and teaching his *Qiushui xuan*, the collection of his letters written before his return to Zhejiang in 1831. This collection is known being first introduced to Western readers in 1911 by Erwin von Zach (1872–1942), an Austrian diplomat and Sinologist.[181] These letters were addressed to Xu's colleagues and friends, and the number of letters included varies slightly in different editions.[182] The edition used in this chapter, *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with Extensive Annotation and Vernacular Translation* (*Guangzhu yuyi Qiushui xuan chidu* 廣注語譯秋水軒尺牘), contains 229 letters.[183] This edition was annotated by Song Jingru 宋晶如 (1904–1982) and was first published by Shanghai Shijie shuju 世界書局 in 1936.[184] For the benefit of readers, Song's edition provided two methods of searching the 229 letters: chronological and thematic. Beginning with Xu's earliest letter, each letter was assigned a number based on their

[180] Apart from *Qiushui xuan* (first edition dated 1831) and its sequel (first edition dated 1884), Xu also composed a poetry collection titled *Draft of Sojourning in the North* (*Yan you cao* 燕遊草). These are the only primary sources that have survived from his literary career. See Feng, "Mubin Xu Simei nianpu."

[181] Erwin von Zach, "Auszüge aus einem chinesischen Briefsteller," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens* 14.1 (1911): 27–72; see "A Select Bibliography," in Richter, ed., *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 938.

[182] On a preliminary list of editions of *Qiushui xuan*, see the appended Table 3.

[183] Xu Jiacun and Song Jingru, *Guangzhu yuyi Qiushui xuan chidu* 廣注語譯秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with extensive annotation and vernacular translation] (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1936).

[184] Song's edition was reprinted by Shanghai shudian 上海書店 in 1986 and Jiangsu Guangling guji keyinshe 江蘇廣陵古籍刻印社 in 1997. Song Jingru was from Shaoxing 紹興, Zhejiang. He worked at Shijie shuju from 1933 and annotated a series of literary collections written in classical Chinese. For Song's life and annotated works, see Song Zhijian 宋志堅, "Zhuyi *Guwen guanzhi* de Jingru xiansheng" 注譯《古文觀止》的晶如先生 [On Mr. Jingru, annotator and translator of *Anthology of Chinese Classical Prose*], Supplement of *Renmin ribao* 人民日報, no.8 (2016.06.11). For a short biography of Song Jingru, see Song Zhijian's blog on August 14, 2016, http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_4e40c3e80102wu6z.html (accessed November 23, 2019).

date of composition; I will identify the number when I cite Xu's letters.[185] His letters were also thematically arranged into eight categories: salutation (*xuhou* 敘侯), congratulation and condolence (*qingdiao* 慶吊), consolation (*quanwei* 勸慰), solicitation (*qingtuo* 請託), polite refusal (*cixie* 辭謝), request and borrowing (*suojie* 索借), consent (*yunnuo* 允諾), and banter (*xixue* 戲謔). These letters, many of which addressed requests for favours, were crucial for Xu in constructing and maintaining his social network with other private legal advisors from the same native place. From a historical perspective, it has been shown that *Qiushui xuan* is a valuable source in providing glimpses into the life trajectory of Shaoxing *shiye* and the political operation of Qing local governments.[186]

The popularity of *Qiushui xuan* is not only evidenced by the sheer number of reprints but was also manifested in offhand references to it by its readers. Its wide readership greatly distinguished *Qiushui xuan* from other contemporary letter-writing manuals either adapted from real epistles or composed of fictive samples.[187] While this work proved influential in epistolary

[185] While recipients of all letters are presented with their names, most of them remain obscure in history, so I will only identify the number of letters but leave out the names of the recipients.

[186] See, for example, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 (1893–1980), "Cong *Qiushui xuan* zhong suojian zhi muke shenghuo" 從《秋水軒尺牘》中所見之幕客生活 [The life of the private secretary based on *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio*], in *Gu Jiegang quanji: Gu Jiegang dushu biji* 顧頡剛全集·顧頡剛讀書筆記 [Complete works of Gu Jiegang: Gu Jiegang's reading notes], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 225; Wang Zhenzhong 王振忠, "Shijiu shiji huabei Shaoxing shiye wangluo zhi ge'an yanjiu: Cong *Qiushui xuan chidu, Xuehong xuan chidu* kan 'wu Shao bu chengxing'" 十九世紀華北紹興師爺網絡之個案研究——從《秋水軒尺牘》、《雪鴻軒尺牘》看"無紹不成行" [A case study of the network of Shaoxing clerks in nineteenth-century North China based on *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* and *Correspondence of Snow-Swan Studio*], *Fudan xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)* 復旦學報 (社會科學版) 4 (1994): 71–76; 107.

[187] There are other epistolary collections widely circulated and used as pedagogical sources for letter writing, but they were apparently less frequently reprinted and cited in contemporary writings. One example is the epistolary collection, *Correspondence of Snow-Swan Studio* (*Xuehong xuan chidu* 雪鴻軒尺牘). It was often reprinted jointly with *Qiushui xuan* but was less influential, to which I will return below.

literature and pedagogy, there were ensuing debates on the value of *Qiushui xuan* as an epistolary primer. On the one hand, publishers spoke highly of it and reproduced numerous annotated editions, some of which included vernacular translations; many teachers used it in their classrooms, requiring their young students to memorize its texts and emulate its literary style. On the other hand, the majority of its readers criticized it as being insincere in content and stilted in style on the basis of ideological and moral principles. Roughly beginning in the 1930s, such criticism has persisted until the present day.[188]

The seemingly contradictory responses of publishers and readers precisely mirror the ambiguous attitude towards changing literary styles and sociocultural codes brought about by the New Culture and May Fourth movements (1915–1919). However, the tendency to depreciate *Qiushui xuan* is contradicted by the linguistic and stylistic perspectives that valorize its "prominent rhetorical and stylistic features" and classifies it as the collection of "social" letters that employed a large inventory of honorific forms, strategies of politeness, and other complex tools for the purpose of reinforcing personal relationships.[189] From this point of view, while *Qiushui xuan* was deemed incompatible with ascendant reforms in the social and literary realms of late Qing and Republican China, it possessed an enduring appeal for the reading public in its pursuit of the art of classical letter writing and, more importantly, in developing readers' proficiency in expressing sociability.

That *Qiushui xuan* remained in print well into the twentieth century, despite its growing practical anachronism, underscores the role played by the often-overlooked group of "humble men of letters." These men relied on their command of classical literature to earn a living in

[188] See, for example, Zhao Shugong 趙樹功, *Zhongguo chidu wenxue shi* 中國尺牘文學史 [History of Chinese epistolary literature] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 1999), 575–77.
[189] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 131.

urban centers in matters relating to the publishing business during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While some might be more accomplished than others in their literary careers, these men of letters shared a common responsibility in making the language of *Qiushui xuan* more accessible to common readers by annotating the literary allusions and in some cases translating its classical expressions into vernacular language. Collectively these men of letters made an important historical impact, however, most of them left only faint traces in the historical record. To a greater or lesser extent, they were marginalized in the Chinese cultural landscape and have long been unnoticed due to their relatively humble status. Yet it was also this group who worked closely to disseminate practical knowledge such as letter writing, and, wittingly or unwittingly, passed down the core of traditional norms in a time of considerable flux.

As the opportunities for official appointments decreased in the Qing dynasty, there was a growing pool of educated men who sought alternative careers.[190] The highly competitive examination and the perceivable uncertainty of obtaining an official career motivated more and more frustrated scholars to participate in commercial publishing enterprises as editors, compilers, authors, commentators, or critics. Consequently, these publishing experiences were taken to be the "symbolic capital of the literati" that rendered their literary skill profitable.[191] Like their counterparts in the Ming dynasty, there were also a group of men of letters who were unable to pursue careers in officialdom, especially after the abolition of the civil service examination in 1905, but had to engage in "cultural entrepreneurship" of the Republican era.[192] To the extent

[190] Benjamin Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
[191] Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 97.
[192] The term "cultural entrepreneurship" is "an analytical category that helps to explain new practices of individual and collective agency characterized by mobility between cultural professions and modes of cultural production." See Christopher Rea and Nicolai Volland, eds.,

that the publishers of *Qiushui xuan* were able to respond to changing cultural trends, they should not be considered as mere vulnerable victims of declining opportunities in officialdom. Instead, they reinvented themselves in new settings by means of their epistolary knowledge.

Moreover, the high visibility of *Qiushui xuan* during the first half of the twentieth century shows that the period as a whole was not dominated by a hegemonic modernist voice. Classical learning, far from being sidelined, remained important for many families and individuals during this period. Although this period is customarily seen as one of transition from tradition to modernity and from writing in classical Chinese to writing in the vernacular, recent scholarship has been increasingly critical of this tendency to portray a progressive linear trajectory.[193] *Qiushui xuan* is another case in point questioning this linear trajectory. In terms of its content, letters were suffused with laments of hardship of a poor secretary for local officials and instilled Confucian ethics; in terms of its rhetorical technique, letters adhered to the style of parallel prose (*pianwen* 駢文), which consists mainly of lines in four and six characters that had become a target of criticism from the 1930s on for limiting the free expression of letter writers' inner feelings. Also, these letters were loaded with literary and historical allusions, which was inconsistent with the promotion of vernacular Chinese (*baihua* 白話). Rather than being abandoned, *Qiushui xuan* survived in the competitive commercial publishing industry and was adapted into multiple editions to better suit the needs of contemporary readers and writers. From this point of view, the study of *Qiushui xuan* also illuminates the zeitgeist of Chinese epistolary

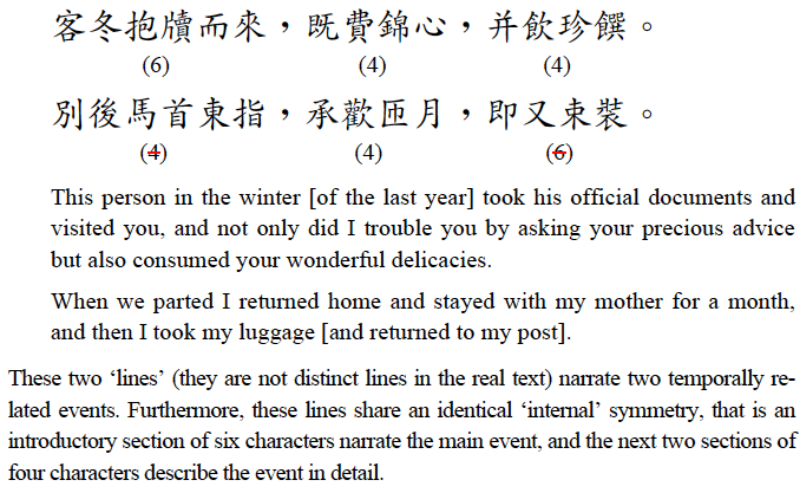
The Business of Culture: Cultural Entrepreneurs in China and Southeast Asia, 1900–65 (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2014), 3.

193 See, for example, Kirk A. Denton and Michel Hockx, eds., *Literary Societies of Republican China* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2008); Shengqing Wu, *Modern Archaics: Continuity and Innovation in the Chinese Lyric Tradition, 1900–1937* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Zhiyi Yang, "The Tower of Going Astray: The Paradox of Liu Yazi's Lyric Classicism," *Modern Chinese Literature and Culture* 28.1 (2016): 174–221.

communication in the early twentieth century when classical forms survived much longer than previously assumed.

3.2 Linguistic Register: Parallel Prose with Conventional Allusions

To explain the unique appeal of *Qiushui xuan*, it will be helpful to analyze the linguistic register of its letters. In his translation and interpretation of three letters of *Qiushui xuan* (No. 28, 123, 145), Dániel Kádár identifies Xu Jiacun's letters as examples of the "social letters" and explains the primary literary and rhetorical features that are particularly frequent in them. Two features deserve special attention: parallel prose style and allusion. Parallel prose consists of sentences with "equal length and to some extent related content (in many cases the parallel sentences even apply [adopt] identical syntactic structures, as well as either resembling or intentionally contrasting lexical items)."[194] He uses the following two lines of Xu's letter (No. 123) as an example (see Figure 3-1).[195]


客冬抱牘而來，既費錦心，并飲珍饌。
(6) (4) (4)
別後馬首東指，承歡匝月，即又束裝。
(4) (4) (6)

This person in the winter [of the last year] took his official documents and visited you, and not only did I trouble you by asking your precious advice but also consumed your wonderful delicacies.

When we parted I returned home and stayed with my mother for a month, and then I took my luggage [and returned to my post].

These two 'lines' (they are not distinct lines in the real text) narrate two temporally related events. Furthermore, these lines share an identical 'internal' symmetry, that is an introductory section of six characters narrate the main event, and the next two sections of four characters describe the event in detail.

Figure 3-1: An example of the parallel prose with six-four characters[196]

[194] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 137.
[195] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 138.
[196] Typographic errors appear in the 2nd line of numbers, which is not (4) (4) (6) but (6) (4) (4).

Allusions in letters can be classified into two categories according to Kádár's terminology: the "altered idiomatic expressions" that serve to "invite" the recipient to join the author's literary exchange, and the "conventional references" that elevate the recipient and deprecate the author.[197] While invoking Kádár's concepts, I simplify his two categories to the literary and historical references and argue that frequent references enabled the letter writer to position himself in accordance with his specific goal and could be appropriated by readers of *Qiushui xuan* for their own letter writing. To illustrate this point, I will examine two allusions, one from literature and one from history, respectively.

The reference to "a poor girl" (*pinnü* 貧女), which Xu repeatedly applied to define himself as a poor scholar who had to work for others to earn a meagre income, exemplifies how literary allusions function in Xu's letters. Martin Huang's study of Xu's contemporary Shen Fu 沈復 (b.1763) demonstrates that the "poor girl" from Qin Taoyu's 秦韜玉 (fl. late ninth century) poem was a common feminized metaphor for the poor scholars who were unable to "stand on their own feet" (*zili* 自立).[198] Various references to the imagery in Qin's famous lines, "How bitter and regretful every year I have to work with needle and thread/ And yet all bridal gowns I have made are for others" 苦恨年年壓金線, 爲他人作嫁衣裳,[199] appear in Xu's collection, reiterating his predicament while demonstrating his distinct epistolary skill in social engagements. Xu compared the labour of private legal advisors to "business for the wedding"

[197] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 146–47.
[198] Martin W. Huang, "The Manhood of a *Pinshi* (Poor Scholar): The Gendered Spaces in the *Six Records of a Floating Life*," in Kam Louie, ed., *Changing Chinese Masculinities: From Imperial Pillars of State to Global Real Men* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), 35–36.
[199] To convey the literal meaning of Qin's poem, I modify Huang's liberal translation, which reads: "How sad every year I have to do needlework/ And yet all the gowns I make are for the weddings of other girls." See Huang, "The Manhood of a *Pinshi* (Poor Scholar)," 35.

(*jiawu* 嫁務), both of which he found "miscellaneous and toilsome," and likened his work to "working with needle and thread" (*yaxian* 壓線) and "sewing bridal gowns" (*zuojia* 作嫁).[200] Terms related to the bridal gown—*jiaxian* 嫁線/綫, *jiayi* 嫁衣, and *jinxian* 金線—are more common throughout this collection.[201] Apart from situating one reference in the context of labouring silkworms,[202] Xu inserted the others into his letters without context, assuming that his recipients would understand the connotations of these references. For example, Xu described his busy life to a senior in the following lines:

> I have been labouring over needle and thread (*jinxian*) and engrossed all day. I am too occupied to open my tired eyes to appreciate such wonderful weather.
> 弟勞勞金線，鎮日埋頭，對此芳辰，莫開倦眼。(No. 169)

References to Qin's "poor girl" as a seamstress express Xu's own frustration as a humble scholar who had to depend on others for a living. As Huang suggests, a *muyou* like Xu "was totally dependent on the whims of his employer, partly because their relationship was not institutionally guaranteed by the imperial bureaucratic system."[203] By acknowledging his precarious situation through poetic imagery, Xu characterized his social letters as both functional and aesthetic.

Xu's laments about his fate also manifest in his historical allusion to the story of Su Qin 蘇秦 (courtesy name Jizi 季子, ?–BCE 284). The function of historical references, as Kádár suggests, is to "draw some kind of analogy between historical men and events and current ones."[204] To accentuate his straitened circumstances, Xu constantly compared himself with the

[200] No. 1, No. 3, No. 7, No. 182.
[201] No. 38, No. 105, No. 124, No. 167, No. 169, No. 170, No. 176, No. 198.
[202] See No. 167: "While the spring silkworms turn silk into cocoons, they simply provide bridal gowns for humans" 而春蠶作繭，亦徒爲人成得嫁衣耳.
[203] Huang, "The Manhood of a *Pinshi* (Poor Scholar)," 36.
[204] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 147.

historical figure Su Qin, who initially attempted to realize his ambition in the central government of the state of Qin 秦 by persuading the King to strengthen the state. Unfortunately, Su failed and had to return home in dire poverty. According to the dramatic description in *Zhanguo ce*, Su was miserable when he returned home down and out:

> His black sable robe was worn out, his hundred pounds of gold was [were] used up, and his means were exhausted. He left Ch'in [Qin] and went back, his trousers tightly bound and straw sandals on his feet, carrying his books on his back and his baggage across his shoulder, emaciated in appearance, his countenance sallow and dark, his whole exterior expressive of shame. When he got back home, his wife did not put down her weaving, his sister-in-law did not cook food for him, his father and mother did not speak to him.[205]

As a typical example of achieving success and fame after considerable effort, Su's story inspired people for generations to work with stamina and diligence. Xu was likewise familiar with Su Qin's story and alluded to it in a lament of his own plight:

> My mother is getting older, and every day she leans on the door [waiting for me]; but Jizi's pack is empty, so I cannot go back as I wish. My previous ambition has gradually died away under such strenuous and depressed circumstances.
> 家慈垂暮，日切倚閭，乃以季子囊空，欲歸不得。當時豪興，多於冗場愁境，日漸消磨。(No. 13)

> Fortunately, my blanket is not yet cold, but the walls of my house are like those of

[205] Bramwell Seaton Bonsall (1886–1968), trans., *Records of the Warring States* (An unpublished translation kept at the Library of HKU), 17. For another translation, see James Crump, trans., *Chan Kuo ts'e*, revised ed (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, University of Michigan, 1996), 83. I do not cite Crump's translation here because his translations of two words, *kui* 愧 and *sao* 嫂, seem inaccurate compared to Bonsall's translation. Su's unsuccessful career and subsequent estrangement from his family motivated him to exert himself tirelessly in his studies. Ultimately, he succeeded in establishing himself in the state of Zhao 趙 and became one of the most influential political strategists during the Warring States period.

> [Sima] Xiangru (ca. BCE 179–BCE 117), and my pack is as empty of cash as that of Jizi. Wondering and chanting at the north gate, I still live in poverty and have not found a means of getting over the destitution.
> 雖幸一氈未冷，而家立相如之壁，囊空季子之金，載咏北門，依然終窶，正不知送窮何策耳。(No. 57)

In the above two cases, Xu tactfully denoted his hardship by presenting himself as the talented but impecunious Su Qin. Xu also conveyed his fear and guilt while protecting his dignity as a scholar without revealing too many details about his personal life. In the case of the second letter, other references also deserve attention. The altered form of "azure blanket" (*qingzhan* 青氈), which appears in Xu's collection many times to indicate the job, refers to a valuable belonging of poor scholars. By saying that "my blanket is not cold," Xu suggested that "I have not lost my job." The allusion to "north gate" translates in spatial terms the sorrow and distress of poor scholars who wonder about the way to go.[206]

By utilizing common allusions to Chinese literature and history, Xu integrated classical sources into quotidian matters and showed how this integration could be repeated or recreated in similar contexts, as seen in his repetitions of the same literary or historical allusions. His allusive style was later widely admired by publishers, as shown by the following effusive praise:

> Mr. Xu's letters were refreshing and polished! Look at the allusions he used, how dexterous and natural! How outstanding and elegant his elaboration of diction is! It is remarkable that he could just think of them and write them down effortlessly, and they all contain ingenious ideas. Every part of his letters reads spontaneously, and every piece of his letters is full of charm, which generates a sense of beauty.

[206] This allusion is from *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經). See James Legge, trans., "I go out at the north gate, with my heart full of sorrow. Straitened am I and poor, and no one takes knowledge of my distress" 出自北門，憂心殷殷，終窶且貧，莫知我艱, in *The Book of Songs* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/shijing/shijing041.html (accessed November 24, 2019).

> Letter writing is originally a fundamental skill for handling social relations. Mr. Xu's epistolary technique has reached such a high level of attainment. It is truly worth emulating…
> 許先生的尺讀筆墨，委實是清麗極了！你看他運用典故，多麼地妙造自然！鋪飾詞藻，多麼地風流雋雅！而且想得到，寫得出，隨手拈來，都成妙諦！處處水到渠成，篇篇神完氣足！看了很可以使人發生美感！寫信，本來是應付社會環境的一種基本技術；許先生的寫信技術，居然有这樣的造詣，这是很值得我們效法的……[207]

Consequently, *Qiushui xuan* was reprinted many times. Given its literary value, *Qiushui xuan* was one of the major primers for letter writing in the Republican period, though its author was not a renowned figure. It was used in China as well as in overseas Chinese communities, such as in a private school in Kobe.[208] The fact that *Qiushui xuan* constantly appeared in the works of modern Chinese writers attests to its wider social dissemination and its readers' lasting impression. For example, *Qiushui xuan* was used by Yu Pingbo 俞平伯 (1900–1990) as the textbook for Chinese when he taught first year undergraduates at Tsinghua University in the 1930s.[209] *Qiushui xuan* was among the books read by Shen Congwen 沈從文 (1902–1988) when he served in the army as a secretary in the late 1910s.[210] Hong Yanqiu 洪炎秋 (1899/1902–1980) mentioned in 1968 that *Qiushui xuan* was among the standard textbooks

[207] Jin Zhanlu 金湛廬, "Juantou yu" 卷頭語 [Words at the beginning], in *Xiangzhu huajie Qiushui xuan chidu* 詳注話解秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with detailed commentaries and explanations] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1941).
[208] Tan Tianxing 譚天星 and Shen Lixin 沈立新, eds., *Haiwai huaqiao huaren wenhua zhi* 海外華僑華人文化志 [Cultural records of overseas Chinese] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1998), 69.
[209] Zhou Shao 周劭, "Yao Ke he *Tianxia*" 姚克和《天下》 [Yao Ke and *World*], *Dushu* 讀書 2 (1993): 94–101.
[210] Shen Congwen, *Shen Congwen zizhuan* 沈從文自傳 [Autobiography of Shen Congwen] (Taibei: Lianhe wenxue zazhi she, 1987), 67.

people of his age used in their childhood and youth.[211]

However, the pedagogical value of *Qiushui xuan* encountered more and more criticism, and critical voices became more frequent from the 1930s on. While confirming its usefulness in the epigraph of this chapter, Lin Yutang in another essay classified it with other outdated examples that ought to be "put down" (*dadao* 打倒)—or denounced.[212] This disapproval was also expressed through the voice of Mulan, the main literary character in Lin's English novel *Moment in Peking*: "What I hate most is the writing of letters in the style of the *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio*..."[213] In point of fact, Lin's opinion was shared widely among his contemporaries in the 1930s.[214] Consider the comments of Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885–1967), a Shaoxing native, as an example. Although Zhou collected all of Xu Jiacun's works to enrich his literary collection of Shaoxing writers, he explicitly stated his disapproval: "I am afraid that reading *Qiushui xuan chidu* is a degenerate thing in a modernizing China" 看《秋水軒尺牘》，在現代化的中國說起來恐怕要算是一件腐化的事.[215] While *Qiushui xuan* was associated with

[211] Hong Yanqiu, "Hong Qisheng de lianru jiaocai" 洪棄生的"煉乳教材" [The complimentary textbooks of Hong Qisheng], in *Qianren qianyan* 淺人淺言 [Shallow person and shallow words] (Taibei: Sanmin shuju, 1972), 14. For more examples, see Tang Junyi 唐君毅 (1909–1978), "Ji Chongqing lianzhong jige shaonian pengyou" 記重慶聯中幾個少年朋友 [Recalling several young friends in the associated middle school of Chongqing], in *Tang Junyi quanji* 唐君毅全集 [Complete works of Tang Junyi] (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2016), 382; Ren, "Dai shenshenmen xiexin," 90.

[212] Lin Yutang, "Lun yulu ti zhi yong" 論語錄體之用 [On the application of the genre of discourse records], *Lunyu* 論語 26 (1933): 84.

[213] Yutang Lin, *Moment in Peking: A Novel of Contemporary Chinese Life* (New York: J. Day Co., 1939), 246.

[214] For example, according to an anecdote, *Qiushui xuan* was found under the pillow of Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1950), which was used by his opponent Zhou Zuoren to attack him for betraying the goal of the New Culture movement. See Yuan Yidan 袁一丹, "Zhou Zuoren yu Fu Sinian de jiaowu" 周作人與傅斯年的交惡 [The hostility of Zhou Zuoren and Fu Sinian], *Dushu* 讀書 10 (2014): 108–16.

[215] Zhou certainly understood the tremendous influence of *Qiushui xuan*, as seen in his quotation:

the little-appreciated and outdated culture of private secretaries, Zhou claimed that it was not fair to condemn it as worthless. The wide circulation of *Qiushui xuan* suggests its social function in meeting contemporary needs and distinguishes it from its counterpart, *Correspondence of Snow-Swan Studio* (*Xuehong xuan chidu* 雪鴻軒尺牘, hereafter *Xuehong xuan*). Written by Gong Weizhai 龔未齋 (1738–1811), another Shaoxing secretary who was also Xu's older friend, letters in *Xuehong xuan* proved less suitable as epistolary models for beginners because of Gong's ingenious yet unconventional remarks, which limited the accessibility and popularity of his collection.[216] Kádár argues that *Xuehong xuan* "represents the Qing Dynasty private epistolary tradition in its full richness."[217] However, its linguistic and rhetorical complexity also made it less popular than *Qiushui xuan* among general learners and less recorded in public memory, as Kádár demonstrates:

> Between these two collections, the one written by Gong Weizhai is the more difficult to read…This difference is rooted in these two authors' styles: while Xu was an expert of [sic] the art of letter writing and made use of all the complex requirements of this genre, Gong was a real master of the art who often went beyond mere generic requirements.[218]

"I used to read the letters in *Qiushui* [*xuan*] *chi*[*du*], which is the best among the ancients as well as contemporaries. Every household in this country keeps one" 嘗讀秋水[軒]尺[牘]一書，驂古人，甲今人，四海之內，家置一編. See Zhou Zuoren, "Guanyu chidu" 關於尺牘 [On letters], *Yuzhou feng* 宇宙風 28 (1936), reprinted in Zhong Shuhe 鐘叔河, ed., *Zhou Zuoren wenlei bian: Bense* 周作人文類編：本色 [Compilation of Zhou Zuoren's essays: Distinctive character] (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 1998), 217–24.

[216] Zhou's comment that Gong's collection "has never received any attention" 向來沒有人提起 was not correct considering its similarly large print run. See Zhou Zuoren, "Zai tan chidu" 再談尺牘 [A second talk on letters], *Yishi bao* 益世報 (April, 1937), reprinted in Zhong Shuhe, ed., *Zhou Zuoren wenlei bian: Bense*, 225–30. On a preliminary list of the Republican editions of *Xuehong xuan chidu*, see Kádár, *Model Letters in Late Imperial China*, 3–4.

[217] Kádár, *Model Letters in Late Imperial China*, 3.

[218] Kádár, *Historical Chinese Letter Writing*, 132.

Qiushui xuan was thus more representative as a formulaic sample and probably led to its later depreciation. Many contemporaries suggested that while people were still required by their teachers or senior family members to follow the style of *Qiushui xuan*, they questioned its content for not being practical and useful. In a letter to the editor of *Shenghuo zhoukan* 生活週刊 published in 1930, a twenty-two-year-old reader wrote to solicit advice on self-improvement. Graduating from a missionary middle school, he always felt his Chinese was not very good. In particular, he was bad at writing eight-line social letters (*bahang xin* 八行信) that he deemed empty and perfunctory to his elders. Given that many elders paid fastidious attention to the formulaic epistolary language, he had no choice but to learn to write it. The *Qiushui xuan* he found unexpectedly in a bookstore turned out to be a precious treasure. He was absorbed by it day and night almost to the neglect of sleep and food, which benefited him immensely. However, he realized that *Qiushui xuan* was unable to fundamentally enhance his level of knowledge because its models were outmoded and difficult to understand. The editor concurred with this reader and replied that *Qiushui xuan* was old-fashioned and hence unable to meet the needs of the present. Rather than following the "stilted formulas" (*daiban zhi geshi* 呆板之格式) provided by *Qiushui xuan*, the editor suggested, the key to composing well-written letters was to improve one's Chinese.[219]

While many writers in Republican China shared the editor's opinion, they might have also shared the reader's contradictory feelings toward *Qiushui xuan*, learning from it but disapproving it. Tang Tao 唐弢 (1913–1992), for example, recalls his study in a village school established in

[219] Anonymous, "Xiang mibu xuewen shang de quehan" 想彌補學問上的缺憾 [An intent to remedy the defect of knowledge], in Hansong 寒松, ed., *Duzhe xinxiang waiji* 讀者信箱外集 [Mailbox for readers: Additional collection], vol. 2 (Shanghai: Shenghuo zhoukanshe, 1931), 26–27.

his ancestral hall:

> Apart from textbooks, the course readings included *Qiushui xuan chidu*. It was written in parallel prose. Its language was elaborate while its content was hollow, which was no more than social engagements. The teacher required us to memorize the texts, so I recited them with cadence. This experience might have influenced my preference for the essays of the Han, Wei, and Jin dynasties.
> 課本之外，老師還教一本《秋水軒尺牘》，裡面駢四儷六，詞藻很漂亮，內容卻空洞，都是請托應酬文字。老師規定要背誦，我就用抑揚頓挫的調子背出來。這和我以後愛讀魏晉兩漢文章，可能有些關係。[220]

In his recollected essay, Dong Qiao 董橋 (1942–), a writer based in Hong Kong, records how he developed his skills of letter writing. When he was young, he was often ordered to transcribe his father's business letters in classical Chinese during the summer vacation to keep a copy on file. Since there was no photocopier at that time, and his father's letters were written in brush, it was impossible to use carbon paper to preserve a copy. After much transcribing work, Dong memorized the epistolary formulas, which laid the foundation for his classical letter writing in the future. He was also required to memorize *Correspondence of Little Cangshan Studio* (*Xiao cangshanfang chidu* 小倉山房尺牘), the epistolary collection of Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1797), and *Qiushui xuan*. However, he stated, "those letters are insincere in that they regurgitate the parallel prose style with four-six characters; I had a smattering of them and went through the motions of learning them" 其實那些信都虛偽得很，硬插入四六駢體的陰魂，我一知半解，

[220] Tang Tao, "Dushu bucheng dang youwu zuo" 讀書不成當郵務佐 [Unsuccessful in study I worked as an assistant in the postal service], in Pan Yaoming 潘耀明, ed., "Ziyou: Dajia fangtan lu" 字遊：大家訪談錄 [Traveling in words: Interviews with the masters] (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 2014), 135.

應卯而已.[221]

The above criticisms since the 1930s suggests that the growing disapproval of *Qiushui xuan* was the result of the reforms that language and culture underwent in prior decades. According to the modern scholar Liu Na 劉納, parallel prose was pervasively used in official documents and popular novels in the 1910s. This literary style proved useful to express the nostalgic complex of contemporary men of letters and thus became an outlet for their frustration and alienation. Since parallel prose was often used to convey "sad and miserable feelings" (*shangcan* 傷慘), it provided effective rhetorical tools for novels that feature "protagonists' emotional struggle and psychological conjecture" (*zhurengong de qinggan zhengzha yu xinli chuaice* 主人公的情感掙扎與心理揣測).[222] The sensational epistolary novel, *Jade Pear Spirit* (*Yu li hun* 玉梨魂, first dated 1912), is a typical case. Chih-tsing Hsia (commonly known as C. T. Hsia) surmises that its author, Xu Zhenya 徐枕亞 (1889–1937), was influenced by the linguistic register of *Qiushui xuan* when composing his novel:

> For impassioned eloquence, they far surpass those in *Ch'iu-shui-hsien ch'ih-tu* (*Qiushui xuan chidu*), which had by late Ch'ing (Qing) times become a standard reference work for home use and may have inspired Hsü (Xu) to include correspondence as a staple of his novel. [223]

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[221] Dong Qiao, "Xiedian timian de gonghan" 寫點體面的公函 [Writing some befitting official documents] (1996), in *Yinghua chenfu lu* 英華沉浮錄 [Records of the ups and downs of England and China], vol. 4 (Beijing: Haitun chubanshe, 2012), 244.

[222] Liu Na, "Minchu wenxue de yige qijing: Pianwen de xingsheng" 民初文學的一個奇景：駢文的興盛 [A spectacle of literature in the early Republican period: A boom of parallel prose], *Zhengzhou daxue xuebao* (*Zhesheban*) 鄭州大學學報(哲社版) 5, (1996): 208–15.

[223] Notably, Xu Zhenya also engaged in the production of letter-writing manuals and was the author of *Fengyue yanqing chidu* 風月艷情尺牘 and *Zhonghua gaodeng xuesheng chidu* 中華高等學生尺牘. See Chih-tsing Hsia, "Hsü Chen-ya's Yü-li hun: An Essay in Literary History and Criticism (1981)," in *C. T. Hsia on Chinese Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 219–50. For more comments, see Shen Songquan 沈松泉, "Wentan jiuwen lu" 文

Hsia attributes the controversy over *Yu li hun* to general disapproval of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School (sentimental romances or love stories) and the decline of the *pianli* 駢儷 style after the May Fourth Movement.[224] Both employing the style of parallel prose, *Qiushui xuan* and *Yu li hun* were popular as well as contentious among contemporary readers.

3.3 Subject Matter: Confucian Ideals of Social Interaction

Apart from its complex linguistic techniques, *Qiushui xuan* embodies the Confucian ideals of social interaction, in particular, as expressed in the concept of "human emotions" (*renqing* 人情). In Confucian discourse, *renqing* refers to the natural human feelings and emotions found in father-son relationships, family and kin relationships, and friendship. These feelings and sentiments were thought to be the sources of "ritual" (*li* 禮), the proper conduct of social relationships, and social events and affairs that made possible and preserved the whole social order.[225] This Confucian subject was touched upon by Ouyang Shengzhen 歐陽聲振 (dates unknown),[226] who had known Xu for more than twenty years and thus readily responded to the request of Xu's associates and friends to print his letters when Xu was about to return south. In

壇舊聞錄 [The old news of the literary world], in Yu Zilin 俞子林, ed., *Nashi wentan* 那時文壇 [Literary world of old days] (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2008), 109–11.

[224] On the study of Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School, see Perry Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies: Popular Fiction in Early Twentieth-Century Chinese Cities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

[225] Based on her fieldwork in contemporary China, Mayfair Yang provides three meanings of *renqing*: 1) part of the intrinsic character of human nature in terms of social interaction; 2) "the proper conduct in accordance with one's status"; and 3) "the bond of reciprocity and mutual aid between two people on account of emotional attachment or the sense of obligation and indebtedness." See Mayfair Mei-hui Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets: The Art of Social Relationships in China* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 67–68.

[226] We only know that Ouyang Shengzhen self-identified as *Dianren* 滇人, a native of Yunnan.

his preface written in 1835, Ouyang spoke highly of Xu's letters by emphasizing their "human emotions" and "material principles" (*wuli* 物理). These letters would guide people to the Way (*dao* 道) and set the standard for establishing themselves and engaging in social affairs for later generations. For these benefits, Ouyang commented:

> Those who had the same aspiration as [Xu] Jiacun should then write in the same way. Words are the means by which one establishes one's aspiration, and writings are the means by which one realizes one's words. The merits [of Xu's letters] are substantial in their potential for expanding the Way of Confucianism.
> 志葭村之志者，亦當言葭村之言。言以立志，文以立言。利濟無窮，而吾儒之道伸且廣焉矣。[227]

The above comment echoes the phrase that "writing is the vehicle for the Way" (*wen yi zai dao* 文以載道), which emerged in the eleventh century and proposed that "elegant ancient prose transcended literature per se and possessed the ability to transmit thought and ideas."[228] The Way is a key concept of Confucian ideology, which encompasses sharable values such as benevolence (*ren* 仁), filial piety (*xiao* 孝), and rightness (*yi* 義) as well as symbolic resources such as rituals.[229]

Renqing, which Ouyang deemed valuable to realize the Way, was particularly critical in the social life of members of Shaoxing *shiye*, such as Xu Jiacun, whose livelihood were largely dependent on their personal networks. In his preface dated 1859, Feng Lian 馮連 (courtesy name Pushan 璞山, dates unknown) indicated how *renqing* was embodied in Xu's social

[227] Ouyang Shengzhen, "Xu" 序 [Preface] (dated 1835), *Qiushui xuan chidu xiangzhu* 秋水軒尺牘詳註 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with detailed annotation] (Chongqing: Shanchengtang, date unknown), 3b.
[228] Ge Zhaoguang, *An Intellectual History of China*, trans. Josephine Chiu-Duke and Michael S. Duke, vol. 2 (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 77.
[229] See, for example, Charlene Tan, *Confucius* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).

engagements.[230] Feng was Xu's second maternal uncle (*biaojiu* 表舅), and they "had known each other for a long time and understood each other deeply."[231] There were five letters in *Qiushui xuan* written to Feng, in one of which Xu politely turned down the proposal to publish his letters. (No. 225) Feng valorized Xu's letters by beginning with the lines that "The most important is to first establish high virtue, then meritorious deeds, and finally words" 太上立德，其次立功，次立言, which were adapted from *The Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳),[232] and by suggesting that Xu's contribution transcended this profound intellectual tradition:

> I have read his letters, in which he is either narrating his own life, or elaborating on the principles of social matters. [From him], I know high virtue and meritorious deeds can mutually illuminate each other. It is only when one cannot do otherwise that one thinks of it as secondary.
> 嘗見其往來尺牘，或自述平生，或暢言事理。維德與功，有可互相發明者，是所謂不得已而思其次也.[233]

After lamenting the difficulties of Xu's life, Feng lauded Xu's obliging manners: "He is always humble and amiable to his peers and fellows. He tries his best to encourage and promote others, which wins him heartfelt admiration" 每遇同儕後學，謙沖和睦，獎勸汲引，莫不備至，令人

[230] Feng Lian, "Yuanxu" 原序 [original preface], in *Zengzhu Qiushui xuan chidu* 增註秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with annotation] (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1915), 1. While Ouyang's preface is (presumably) the earliest, it was not included in later reprinted editions for unknown reasons. Instead, Feng Lian's preface (1859) was labeled as the "original preface" and was often included in later editions. My hypothesis for the choice of Feng's preface is that Feng offered a brief summary of Xu's early education, career, and achievement, thereby serving as a sort of biography.
[231] Feng, "Yuanxu," 2.
[232] On the original text, see *The Commentary of Zuo on the Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu Zuoshi zhuan* 春秋左氏傳) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/zuozhuan/zuozhuan010.html (accessed December 22, 2019).
[233] Feng, "Yuanxu," 2.

心悅誠服.[234]

Feng's compliment echoes Ouyang's aforementioned preface by stating that Xu's letters embodied the Confucian ideal of *renqing*. This was evidenced in Xu's constant inquiries about job vacancies or monetary loans for his peers. In a reply letter to a request for recommendation, for example, he promised: "Although your younger brother's [i.e., Xu's] power is as weak as the twinkle of stars and fireflies, and I find it difficult to illuminate others, I dare not decline my responsibility as an introducer if I can help in one way or another" 弟雖星星螢焰，分照爲難；設令推轂有緣，則曹邱一席，不敢辭耳. (No. 33) His two letters for his fellow-townsmen Chen Jiexin 陳誡新 reflect his concentrated efforts, which read:

> Jiexin has waited for employment [as a *muyou*] at home for a long time. Previously one of my colleagues left, so I was thinking of inviting him. However, the owner of the place where I stayed had his son-in-law fill the vacancy, so there was no position for him. You, Sir, extend your affection [for me] to the crow on my house [i.e., Jiexin] deeply and sincerely. You are as graceful as Zheng Dangshi and as friendly as [Lord] Mengchang of Qi, who is hard to find today. The idle flower depends on a gust of spring breeze.
> 誡新席珍已久。曩以同人引去，擬卽相邀；適居停坐有東牀，蟬聯而下，無能爲其位置。閣下以屋烏之愛，切切相關，鄭當時之雅懷，齊孟嘗之高誼，求之於今，何可多得！閒花一片，尚有賴於春風之噓也。(No. 76)

> Although there were many people who got recommendations from the provincial capital, if they did not have a channel [for contact], they probably would sit dully [at home]. Jiexin has waited for half a year, but no one has shown any intent to hire him. Furthermore, he recently suffered the loss of his mother. His poverty and grief have reached a serious level. He met you in Tianjin and has long received

[234] Feng, "Yuanxu," 2.

> your kind consideration. He now needs your promotion to get a job, as if the bird of *jiaoliao* needs a branch to dwell. If you take pity on him and recommend him [for a position], it would be more than moistening a dried-up root with rain and dew.[235]
>
> 會垣薦出多門，聲氣不通者，率皆枯坐。誡新株守半載，絕無過而問者；近復有母之喪，窮愁益甚。渠以津門傾蓋，夙承知愛之情，鷦鷯一枝，重望噓借；若憐其窮而汲引之，不啻潤枯荄以雨露也。（No. 86）

The above two letters were sent to the same recipient, a certain Zheng Shentian 鄭莘田, but with different emphases regarding their rhetoric. The former one, sent earlier, focuses more on Xu's admiration for Zheng, who was likened to two generous aristocrats well known for the size of their entourages in ancient China.[236] The latter one, however, places greater emphasis on Xu's sympathy for Chen, who had been long unemployed and recently bereaved, to arouse Zheng's sympathetic feelings. Nevertheless, both apply metaphorical terms to address the importance of the recipient to jobless Jiexin, as seen in the last sentence of each letter: what the recipient means to Jiexin is analogous to what "spring breeze" means to an "idle flower" or what "rain and dew" mean to a "dried-up root." Letters asking for favours to help others like these are plentiful in *Qiushui xuan* and exemplify publishers' commendation that their structures were well-designed, diction was vivid and elegant, and expressions of emotion and reasoning were tactful and

[235] The expression, "the bird of *jiaoliao* needs a branch" (*jiaoliao yi zhi* 鷦鷯一枝), refers to one's humble need for a basic livelihood. See James Legge, trans., "The tailor-bird makes its nest in the deep forest, but only uses a single branch" 鷦鷯巢於深林，不過一枝, in *Zhuangzi* 莊子 in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/zhuangzi/zhuangzi001.html (accessed on December 22, 2019).

[236] On Zheng Dangshi, see *Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/shiji/shiji120.html (accessed December 22, 2019); on Lord Mengchang, see *Shiji* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/shiji/shiji075.html (accessed December 22, 2019).

thorough.[237]

It is notable that in the latter letter above Xu articulated the important role of the "channel" (*shengqi* 聲氣), which means privy information and personal contact, in finding and securing employment. Xu was often solicited to lend a loan to people poorer than himself or keep a lookout for job vacancies for others in need. The support networks of private legal advisors were facilitated by bonds of kinship as well as ties with colleagues sharing common interests.[238] The pragmatic expectation of mutual aids embodied how *renqing* functioned within Xu's circle of correspondence, thereby motivating him to form and maintain reciprocal liaisons. Xu's efforts of developing supportive networks were reflected in the allegory of a horse and Bole 伯樂, the master judge of horses, as seen in the following example:

> I rely on others to make a living, punctilious as a horse tied to a cart. Now I intend to shake off the bridle and dash forward, but there is not one place for me to raise my head and give a long neigh. You are the Bole who knows my talent. If you could spur me on regardless of my clumsiness, I will be able to break into a gallop along a thousand-mile thoroughfare. My humble request is within the reach of your whip, and I very much look forward to your promotion.
> 弟因人成事，跼促如轅下駒。刻思絕靮而馳，又無可爲昂首長鳴之地。兄固弟之伯樂也，苟不以駑劣而策之前焉，則千里康莊，騰驤有自矣。鞭長可及，望之望之！(No. 9)

By addressing the recipient as his Bole, Xu expressed his explicit wish to strengthen his

[237] Wang Houzhe 王后哲, "Liyan" 例言 [Editorial principles], in *Xinbian fenlei Qiushui xuan jujie chidu* 新編分類秋水軒句解尺牘 [Newly compiled Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with categories and explanations of each sentence] (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1925), 1a; Song Jingru, "Liyan," in *Guangzhu yuyi Qiushui xuan chidu*, 1.

[238] See, for example, Wang, "Shijiu shiji huabei Shaoxing shiye wangluo zhi ge'an yanjiu," 73–74; Bradly W. Reed, *Talons and Teeth: County Clerks and Runners in the Qing Dynasty* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 76–121; James H. Cole, *Shaohsing: Competition and Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

emotional bond with the recipient, a perceptive and sympathetic judge. According to the story of Bole, this judge was able to identify superior horses, while those selected horses would respond with a long cry to Bole's appreciation of their quality.[239] Xu clearly uttered his intention of requiting favours in other letters, for example, "the clumsy horse has a heart and wants to repay Bole, appreciative for his support" 駑馬有心，所慾酬知於伯樂者也. (No. 204) To his disappointment, however, *renqing* was not always satisfactory, as he complained: "the ways of the world are like autumn clouds, and emotions of human are like the flowing water" 秋雲世態，流水人情. (No. 85) In a letter explaining his intention to leave Shanggu 上谷 (in current Hebei), Xu wrote: "The feelings between people in Shanggu are getting worse recently" 上谷人情，近尤惡薄. (No. 194)

While *renqing* was consolidated by the reciprocal interactions Xu practiced in his social life, it was sustained by the filial piety Xu upheld in his family life. Xu's emotional attachment to his aged mother was constantly mentioned in his letters. In a letter on borrowing money, for example, Xu wrote:

> Time passes as the horse gallops. Every time when I think of my aged mother and my lack of male offspring [to aid my mother], my heart is filled with longing, and I want to hire a cart to bring my mother to live with me. Unfortunately, although I have been working outside for ten years, I do not have enough money to welcome and support my mother. In vain, I harbour this humble intention. Sir, your resolute mien is like the thick cloud that deeply impresses me. If you can spare the water of Xijiang to generously quench my thirst, this wandering son would obviate the suffering of separation from his dear mother…[240]

[239] Robert E. Harrist, Jr., "The Legacy of Bole: Physiognomy and Horses in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 57.1/2 (1997): 136.

[240] The expression "the water of Xijiang" (*Xijiang zhi shui* 西江之水) refers to the loan. See *Zhuangzi* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/zhuangzi/zhuangzi026.html (accessed

> 年華如駛，每念家慈垂暮，童乏應門，未嘗不切切於懷，冀效板輿之奉；以十年垂橐，迎養無資，徒有心旌一片耳。閣下意氣如雲，弟所深佩，或不惜西江之水，一借潤焉，則他鄉遊子，不致悵隔慈輝……(No. 15)

In the above passage, what I translate as "my lack of male offspring" (*tong fa ying men* 童乏應門, lit., there is not a boy to answer the door) is from the storied essay, *Petition Stating My Feelings* (*Chen qing biao* 陳情表), written by Li Mi 李密 (224–ca. 287) to the founder of the Western Jin dynasty, Sima Yan 司馬炎 (236–290).[241] Sima invited Li to serve the new regime in 267, but Li was concerned about leaving alone his ninety-six-year-old grandmother who had raised him. Hence Li expressed his filial devotion to his grandmother in a touching tone when turning down Sima's offer. Moreover, the allusion to the "cart" (*banyu* 板輿), a vehicle specifically taken by older people in ancient China, connoted the ability of imperial officials to attend upon their parents.[242] By invoking Li's essay and the conventional allusion, Xu demonstrated his filial piety, eliciting the sympathy of the recipient to achieve his purpose. In another letter on seeking a livelihood near his hometown, Xu explained an important reason for his choice: his mother was nearly seventy years old and sick, who needed to be waited on; however, his elder brother worked hundreds of miles away and could not accompany her day and night, which urged him to return:

December 22, 2019).

[241] The reference, "*tong fa ying men*," is a variant of "there is no five-*chi* boy at home to answer the door" 內無應門五尺之童. For more information on Li Mi, see Knechtges and Chang, ed., *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature*, 494–95.

[242] On the origin of this allusion, see Pan Yue 潘岳 (courtesy name Anren 安仁, 247–300), *Xianju fu* 閒居賦 [Prosody living in idleness]. For more information on Pan Yue, see Knechtges and Chang, ed., *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature*, 698–709.

> I work in a faraway province and can only go back once in several years, which means that I have to set out soon after I see my mother's face. So, my mother sheds tears every time I leave home...If I can have your strong recommendation and get the job closer to my hometown, my aged mother can obviate the pain of leaning on the door [waiting for her children]. As a son, I can also relieve the longing for home. My deep gratitude would go beyond what I can express in words.
>
> 弟更隔省遙遙，經年一返，甫親色笑，旋駕征驂；是以一度辭家，輒灑老人之淚……倘得仰藉鼎言，近託一枝，俾衰慈免倚閭之勞，卽遊子釋望雲之感，紉佩何可言喻！（No. 127）

In the above quote, what I translate as "the longing for home" (*wang yun zhi gan* 望雲之感, lit., the feelings of gazing at clouds) is a variant of a well-known idiom *(baiyun qinshe* 白雲親舍), which was evolved from the filial story of Di Renjie 狄仁傑 (630–700).[243] Communicating *renqing* through vivid literary and historical allusions, as shown above, explains why *Qiushui xuan* was deemed a classic epistolary primer for more than one century and has won sustained praise. *Qiushui xuan* was considered "both excellent in transmitting literature and affection, detailed in meaning and reason, suitable for both the highbrow and the lowbrow readers, and appropriate in its degree of depth" 文情并茂, 義理兼詳，雅俗咸宜，淺深合度.[244] The wide circulation of *Qiushui xuan* was in no small part motivated by its notable cultural mission: offering guides and vocabulary of courtesy that met common readers' need for maintaining their

[243] Di Renjie was one of the most celebrated officials of Wu Zetian's reign in the Tang dynasty. It is said that Di once ascended the summit of Taihang Mountain and gazed at the distant white clouds, telling people around that "Under those white clouds is my parents' house" 吾親所居，在此雲下. See *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/jiutangshu/jiutangshu093.html (accessed December 22, 2019).

[244] Jiang Ren'an 江忍庵, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in *Guoyu zhujie Qiushui xuan chidu* 國語註解秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with vernacular annotation] (Shanghai: Dada tushu gongyingshe, 1935).

social contacts, achieving their pragmatic purposes, and upholding Confucian ethics.

3.4 Beyond *Qiushui xuan*: The Untold Stories of Its Annotators

Qiushui xuan was reprinted in great numbers, especially by major publishers in Shanghai, as one of the primary epistolary models, from the late nineteenth century onwards. I provide available information on the various editions in the appended Table 3 drawn from bibliographies and international library catalogues.[245] Based on 49 dated reprints in my table, I outline the temporal distributions of them and find that *Qiushui xuan* experienced a significant reprinting boom in the 1920s and 1930s.

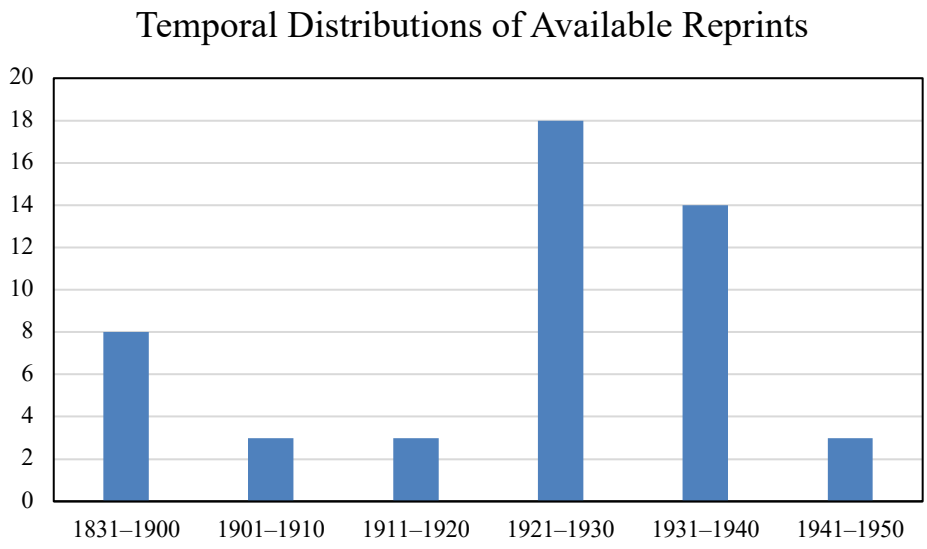

Figure 3-2: Temporal distributions of available reprints of *Qiushui xuan*

[245] Beijing tushuguan 北京圖書館, ed., *Minguo shiqi zong shumu* 民國時期總書目 [A general catalogue of books published during the Republican period] *(1911–1949): Wenxue lilun, shijie wenxue, Zhongguo wenxue* 文學理論·世界文學·中國文學 [Literary theory, world literature, and Chinese literature], vol. 2 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1992); Li Lingnian 李靈年 and Yang Zhongzhu 楊忠主, eds., "Xu Simei" 許思湄, in *Qingren bieji zongmu* 清人別集總目 [A complete bibliography of individual collections from the Qing], vol. 1 (Hefei: Anhui jiaoyu chubanshe, 2000), 607–8.

An overview of these editions reveals the names of "annotators" (*zhujie zhe* 註解者), whose collective efforts contributed to the popularity of *Qiushui xuan*. The basic task of these annotators was to explain the many allusions employed in classical letters, while some of them also wrote prefaces, editorial principles, or vernacular translations for *Qiushui xuan*. Although they engaged in the publication of other works and their names were not uncommon in the popular literature published in late imperial and Republican Shanghai, their identities and careers were mostly obscure. A notable exception was Xu Jia'en 許家恩 (courtesy name Zezhai 澤齋, style name Xiaotian 嘯天, 1886–1946/1948), who was known for his drama and fiction and regarded as one of the representative figures of the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School.[246] Xu was valorized as a "top-notch vernacular expert" and expected to uncover the secrets of traditional literature 把舊文學的秘訣統統揭穿 to benefit readers by translating *Qiushui xuan* into a combined version in both classical and vernacular languages, in categories based on social occasions with detailed annotations.[247] Xu's knowledge of classical literature was not

[246] Xu Jia'en was originally from Shangyu 上虞, Shaoxing. He joined the "Restoration Society" (*Guangfu hui* 光復會), an anti-Qing organization known for some of its members including Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875–1907) and Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (1869–1936). Xu worked with Qiu and, beginning at the age of nineteen, submitted articles to Su Bao 蘇報, which was edited by Zhang Taiyan and Zou Rong 鄒容 (1885–1905). After Qiu's uprising was suppressed in 1907, Xu was forced to go into exile in Shanghai, where he later became the editor of the Mass Learning Publishing House (*Qunxue shushe* 群學書社) in Shanghai and annotated collections of literati of the Qing dynasty, such as Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–95) and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–92), as well as classical novels, such as *Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢 and *Shui hu zhuan* 水滸傳). See Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅, *Shanghai jiuhua* 上海舊話 [Reminiscences of Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 1986), 23–24.

[247] Shen Jixian 沈繼先, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in *Yanwen duizhao fenlei xiangzhu xinshi biaodian Qiushui xuan chidu* 言文對照分類詳註新式標點秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with classical and vernacular Chinese, with categories and detailed annotations, with new style punctuations] (Shanghai qunxueshe, 1920s), 3. Xu also annotated the

disregarded but treasured as valuable capital that would most likely profit the producers while potentially benefiting readers who purchased the book.

The annotator was the "petty intellectual" (*xiao zhishifenzi* 小知識分子), as Robert Culp puts it, who underpinned "the industrialization of cultural production in Republican China."[248] It was this group of men of letters who participated in the popularization of *Qiushui xuan*, as distinctly manifested in their unanimous valorization of its practical value, as previous sections present. Taken as a whole, these compliments can be easily classified as self-promotion for commercial purposes. It remains unclear whether or not these annotators really meant what they said in their appreciation of Xu's epistolary style.

To better appreciate this group of marginalized yet significant men of letters, this section will focus on Guan Sijun 管斯駿 (1849–1906), one of *Qiushui xuan*'s annotators who also wrote a preface for his annotated edition in 1883, by tracing his involvement in popularizing *Qiushui xuan* in the late Qing. Originally from Wuxian 吳縣 (in current Suzhou 蘇州), Jiangsu, Guan Sijun was also known by his other names, including Qiuchu 秋初, Lichuang jiuzhu 藜床舊主, and Lichuang wodusheng 藜床臥讀生. Guan was selected as the director of the Shanghai Book Trade Association (*shuye xiehui* 書業協會) in 1888.[249] He held a degree title of *zhusheng* 諸生, so he passed the county level of the civil service examination but probably failed to

epistolary collections of Gong Weizhai and Yuan Mei.

[248] Robert Culp, "Mass Production of Knowledge and the Industrialization of Mental Labor: The Rise of the Petty Intellectual," in Robert Joseph Culp, Eddy U, and Wen-hsin Yeh, eds., *Knowledge Acts in Modern China: Ideas, Institutions, and Identities* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 2016), 210.

[249] Guo Changhai 郭長海, "*Xinxi xiantan* de liangwei yizhe"《昕夕閑談》的兩位譯者 [Two translators of *Idle Talk of Day and Night*], *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 3–4 (1992): 457–61.

advance further.[250] Important to my inquiry here is Guan's role as the owner of a commercial studio named The Studio of Potential Longevity (*Keshou zhai* 可壽齋) in Shanghai, which published popular literature (e.g., novels and how-to manuals) and sold pharmaceutical products (e.g., *wansan* 丸散, *gaodan* 膏丹, *hualu* 花露) that were developed by this studio. The range of its aforementioned business could be glimpsed from the *Shenbao* 申報 (*Shanghai News*, 1872–1949), an influential newspaper in modern China, which often carried advertisements of Guan's studio. Guan himself was an active contributor to *Shenbao* and was well acquainted with Wang Tao 王韜 (1828–1897), who wrote the political column in *Shenbao* as its editor from 1884. Hailing from Suzhou as well, Wang must have known Guan before Wang took up the editorship of *Shenbao*.[251]

According to Wang, Guan served as a private secretary—as did Xu Jiacun, the writer of *Qiushui xuan*—and private tutor; both were a common means of livelihood for poor scholars in the Qing dynasty. Letter writing for social engagements was a main component of these scholars' daily routine and an essential skill to be honed. For these scholars, engaging with collections of letters or letter-writing manuals—epistolary knowledge with which they were familiar—could be a stepping-stone into the publishing market. Guan articulated this clearly in his notice in *Shenbao*:

> I had no means of making a living as a writer in Shanghai, so I spent three years painstakingly annotating *Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio* (four volumes) and *Correspondence of Spring-Cloud Loft* (four volumes). I took out a loan from

[250] Suzhou tushuguan, ed., *Suzhou minguo yiwen zhi*, 1820.
[251] Wang Tao was suspected to have contacted the leader of the Taiping Army and provided advice during the rebellion (1850–1864) and thus was forced to leave Shanghai for decades. See Paul A. Cohen, *Between Tradition and Modernity: Wang T'ao and Reform in Late Ch'ing China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 47. The interaction between Wang and Guan is not touched upon in Cohen's book.

> friends to print and sell these works. It was truly a poor scholar's pitiful situation. Recently I heard that someone intends to pirate my works in order to make a profit. Originally, printing books was to leave behind a name, so there was no law to ban; however, I have no intention to win a name and only wish to make money in order to live. If somebody pirates my works, I will be unable to pay back my debt and my livelihood would come to an end. In that case, I will certainly sue by legal means and the pirates would not be able to claim that they printed my work in order to spread my name. For this reason, apart from registering officially for further investigation, I am announcing the matter in this newspaper. It should be noted that, in the matter of a lawsuit, one does not have to know whether it exists in the law code as long as it is within reason. I state my position thus. Written by Guan Qiuchu, owner of the Studio of Potential Longevity.
>
> 予案筆申江謀生無路，遂□三年心血補注《秋水軒尺牘》四卷，補注《春雲閣尺牘》四卷，向友商借資本刊印出售，實貧士之可憐情狀也。近聞有人欲翻刻混充，希圖射利。查刊印書籍，原為傳名，故律無究禁之條，而予不欲傳名，但期圖利，以資過活。如果有人翻刻，則予借本難償，生計頓絕，勢必比律呈控，恐翻板者亦難強以代我傳名為詞也。為此除存案備究外，合應登報聲明。要知涉訟之事，只要在情理之中，不必問律例中之有無也。此白。可壽齋主管秋初啟。[252]

In this down-to-earth statement, Guan clearly admitted the commercial purpose of his venture in annotating the two epistolary collections and warned potential pirates to give up the idea of stealing money from a "poor scholar" (*pinshi* 貧士).[253] Moreover, *Qiushui xuan* was not

[252] "Fanke Guan zhu *Qiushui xuan* ren yue zhi" 翻刻管注秋水軒人閱之 [To people who plagiarized (Correspondence of) Autumn-Water Studio annotated by Guan], *Shenbao* 4160 (November 10, 1884): 5 (ban 版). On a legal case Guan filed in 1892, see Wang Liqi 王利器, ed., *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao* 元明清三代禁毀小說戲曲史料 [Historical sources of novels and dramas banned in the Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 163–64.

[253] For the copyright disputes regarding letter manuals, see Fei-Hsien Wang, *Pirates and Publishers: A Social History of Copyright in Modern China* (Princeton: Princeton University

the only epistolary collection he worked on. In addition to the *Chunyun ge chidu* mentioned in the above notice, he also edited and annotated other letter manuals. *Letters for All Trades and Professions* (*Sanbai liushi hang chidu* 三百六十行尺牘), for example, was compiled to provide practical writing samples for people in the field of business.[254] Compared to his other publications,[255] Guan seems to have paid special attention to *Qiushui xuan*, which appeared in the advertisements of Guan's studio in the 1880s and was often listed as the only title in his book list available for purchase. As Guan comments in his annotated edition: "The diction is beautiful and the sentiments expressed are touching" 措詞富麗，意緒纏綿.[256] More intriguingly, *Qiushui xuan* was sold with a complimentary copy of Guan's poetry collection mourning his wife, *Poems Mourning Crimson* (*Dao hong yin* 悼紅吟), a combination not seen in other titles published by Guan's studio (see Figure 3-3).[257] According to the advertisement posted in 1885, the combined purchase of Xu Jiacun's *Qiushui xuan* with Guan's annotation (four volumes) and *Dao hong yin* (one volume) cost five dimes (*jiao* 角) while the separate purchase of *Dao hong yin* cost one

Press, 2019), chapter 5.

[254] Gu Wenbing 顧文炳, "Xu" 敘 [Preface], in *Sanbai liushi hang chidu* (Shanghai: Chongwen shuju, 1894).

[255] Guan's publications include epistolary collections as well as other genres, such as classical novels. On a preliminary list of Guan's works, see Xu Jun 許軍, *Qingmo Minchu shehui zhuanxing yu shishi xiaoshuo chuangzuo liubian* 清末民初社會轉型與時事小說創作流變 [The social transformation in late Qing and early Republican China and the evolution of news fiction] (Shanghai: Shanghai daxue chubanshe, 2016), 38–40. On a study of Guan's historical novel, see Zhu Hengfu 朱恆夫, "Xin faxian de xiaoshuo liangzhong: *Wujian shibayi* he *Liu dajiangjun pingwo baizhan baisheng tushuo*" 新發現的小說兩種——《五劍十八義》和《劉大將軍平倭百戰百勝圖說》 [Two newly-discovered novels: *Five Swords and Eighteen Swordsmen* and *Illustrated Explanations on the Ever-Victorious General Liu against Japanese Troops*], *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究 4 (1991): 1–9.

[256] Guan Sijun, "Xu" 序 [Preface] (1883), in *Xiangjiao buzhu zhengxu Qiushui xuan chidu* 詳校補注正續秋水軒尺牘 [Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio and its sequel with detailed collation and annotation] (Shanghai: Jianyu shanfang, 1888).

[257] For Figure 3-3, see *Shenbao* 4224 (January 13, 1885): 6 (*ban* 版); for Figure 3-3 (Right), see *Shenbao* 4930 (January 3, 1887): 8 (*ban*).

dime and five cents (*fen* 分).

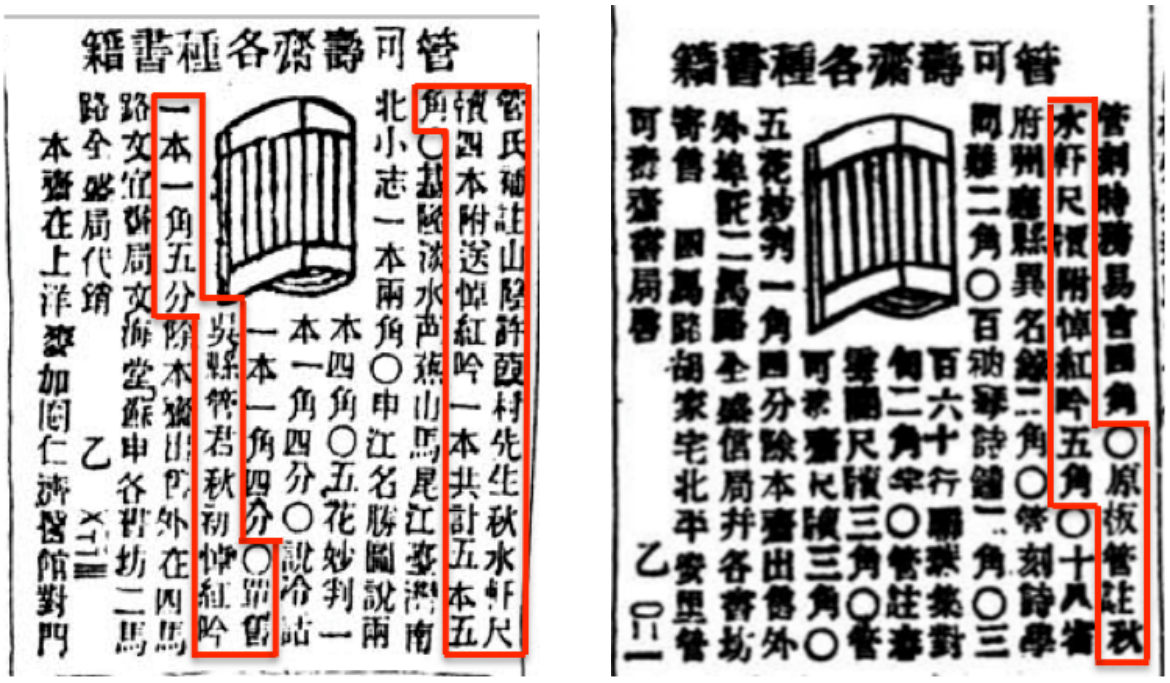

Figure 3-3: (Left) An advertisement in 1885; (Right) An advertisement in 1887

To understand this unique combined sale and the special status of *Qiushui xuan* in Guan's works, it is helpful to consider Guan's sentiments to his deceased wife Pan Zhu 潘珠 (1852–1879), which can be gleaned from two essays by Wang Tao. One was a touching biography (1884) of Pan, who was also from Wang's home village Fuli 甫里, Jiangsu. Since the Pan and Wang families had connections for generations, Wang had heard of Pan Zhu from his family during his sojourns. Pan's intelligence and filial piety were already well known in the village before she married Guan in 1876. Although their marriage was companionate and the newly-weds shared a common interest in (poetry) writing, they had to face multiple challenges in life. Because Guan had to serve as an itinerant secretary far away from home to make a living, this couple, like many others, was separated. To make matters worse, their first two sons only survived a few months. Pan was so disheartened by the loss of their sons that she fell sick soon

thereafter. Pan's premature death at twenty-eight affected Guan for years, so Guan decided to publish a work in memory of his wife. He solicited memorial poetry for Pan from scholars all over the country, which were compiled into a collection. To reach a wide audience of scholars, Guan even posted an announcement in *Shenbao*, inviting readers to submit their poems to the press. Wang was personally invited by Guan to submit memorial poems. Guan's devotion to his wife certainly evoked Wang's painful memories of losing his own young wife in his early twenties, so he felt particularly sympathetic about Guan's suffering and agreed to write this biography in addition to his poetry.[258]

The tragic story of Guan and Pan also inspired Wang to compose a tale, *Mourning Crimson Celestial* (*Dao hong xian shi* 悼紅仙史), in his collection of short stories published in 1884. This tale begins with a shortened version of Pan's biography and then dwells on an unexpected reencounter of Guan and his deceased wife, originally a female celestial in charge of flowers in Dao hong loft. This episode suggests Guan's grief and love for his wife. During their short reunion, Pan Zhu showed her contentment in returning to the tranquil immortal world and encouraged the heartbroken and tear-streaked Guan to remarry and produce offspring. Guan first refused, but Pan insisted and even used her supernatural power to identify Guan's successor wife, a beautiful lady from Suzhou, and urged him to send a matchmaker as soon as possible. Guan finally accepted Pan's arrangement. After recounting his adventure, Guan told Wang that once he had son(s) to take care of his family business, he would like to retire in seclusion to the mountain where he had encountered his deceased wife.[259] It is not clear if this tale originated from Guan's

[258] Wang Tao, "Pan ruren zhuan lüe" 潘孺人傳略 [Biography of née Pan], in *Taoyuan wenlu waibian* 弢園文錄外編 [Additional selection of essays from Taoyuan], vol. 11 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe, 2002), 274–77.

[259] Wang Tao, "Dao hong xian shi" 悼紅仙史 [Mourning Red Celestial], in *Hou liaozhai zhiyi* 后聊齋誌異 [After *Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio*] (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe,

idea or from Wang's own fantasy, but it was apparently informed by Wang's own struggle with remarriage after his first wife had passed away. By imagining that the deceased wife was content with her immortal life and encouraged her husband to remarry, men like Wang and Guan could relieve the psychological burden of remarriage.

Wang and Guan's emotional attachment toward their deceased wives echoes Shen Fu's grief, as Martin Huang illustrates, Shen's "mourning of his late wife was closely tied to his grieving over his own failures in life—*daowang* is being turned into an act of double grieving: he grieved not only over the death of his wife but also his helplessness as a husband and perceived failures as a man."[260] Like Shen Fu, Wang and Guan were at the bottom of the gentry class in contemporary society. Their precarious livelihoods in their early careers caused suffering for their wives as well and could have led to the death of their young wives. Their struggle over remarriage reflected their general frustration of living a difficult life. This conjecture can be supported by an anonymous note in *Shenbao* in 1884:

> The difficulty of writing letters lies not in the formal but in the casual style. Even for ordinary letters of social engagement, they should be light and pleasing. Only then would they be considered as having satisfied the basic rule. *Qiushui xuan* written by Xu Jiacun is the most popular now. The allusions he employed are well known and need no explanation. However, it will be easy for beginners to use if it is accompanied by annotations. It is a pity that there were many omissions and errors in the original [annotated] edition.[261] Now Guan Qiuchu has added more than five thousand notes, corrected the errors, and supplemented the omissions. He is truly the mentor of the juniors and the *intimate friend* [emphasis mine] of

1992), 82–86.

[260] Martin Huang, *Intimate Memory: Gender and Mourning in Late Imperial China* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 96.

[261] It probably refers to the edition annotated by Lou Shirui 婁世瑞 (dates unknown), see the appended Table 3.

> Jiacun. This title has been published for a while and I was honoured to receive a copy as a gift yesterday. Therefore, I am writing a few lines to express my gratitude. I will post a more detailed statement in another section of this newspaper. I also learned that Mr. Guan recently printed a volume of *Dao hong yin*, which contains poems written by his colleagues to respond to those he wrote to mourn the death of his wife. This volume is affective and full of grief—these feelings are manifested in the words. If there is a Pan Huangmen in this world, he would not bear reading it to the end.[262]
>
> 尺牘不難於整而難於散，卽尋常酬應之作，亦須輕倩宜人，方為入彀。許葭村先生所著之秋水軒，近最通行，其中所運用之典，皆人所習見習聞，原不必用註，惟為初學，計有註，更覺省目，惜原本挂漏訛悞太多，閱者憾焉。現在管君秋初，增註五千餘條，訛者正之，闕者補之，是誠後學之導師，抑亦葭村之知己也。早書業已刻成，昨承持贈一帙，因書數語，以誌謝忱，其詳另登告白於報後，并悉管君新刻悼紅吟一册，是諸同人和其悼亡之作，縕綿悱惻，情見乎詞。世有潘黃門，其人當不忍卒讀。[263]

According to this anonymous author, Guan was the one who truly understood Xu, thereby increasing the value of Guan's annotated edition. By comparing their lives, it is clear that Guan Sijun (as well as Wang Tao) had much in common with Xu: they were humble men of letters who had few or no prospects in officialdom, the traditional arena of upward mobility defining the success of a man; they had to sojourn to seek a livelihood at an early age, which meant long-time separation from their families and concomitant challenges to fulfill their duties as son, husband, and father; they suffered sudden losses of close family members, often when they were away from home, and were constantly anxious about their lack of male descendants. For them, their

[262] Pan Huangmen 潘黃門 refers to Pan Yue 潘岳 (courtesy name Anren 安仁, 247–300), who composed essays, *Prose Lamenting a Permanent Loss* (*Ai yongshi wen* 哀永逝文) and *Prosody Mourning the Deceased* (*Daowang fu* 悼亡賦), and poems mourning his deceased wife.
[263] "Shu buzhu *Qiushui xuan chidu* hou" 書補註秋水軒尺牘後 [Words on Correspondence of Autumn-Water Studio with annotation], *Shenbao* 4101 (September 12, 1884): 4 (*ban*).

letters and publications of letters were more a means of livelihood than a project for winning repute. They wrote letters to ask for favours, and they published letters to promote the art of asking for favours, a sine qua non of social engagement in every situation. Letters were their instruments of survival. In this sense, the multitude of humble men of letters in the late Qing and early Republican periods would have easily resonated with the content and tone of Xu's letters in *Qiushui xuan*.

3.5 Conclusion

The reception of *Qiushui xuan* captures broader divergent attitudes towards cultural reform in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century China. While being narrowly defined as annotators, many figures discussed in this chapter also acted as writers, editors, or publishers. Their particular connection with *Qiushui xuan* probably came from their resonance with its writer Xu Jiacun, a low-ranking man of letters. Their common difficult life experiences acquainted them with the courteous manner of asking for favours, which later became a profitable skill in high demand. Although most of these annotators remain unknown, their connection or similarity with certain well-known historical figures, such as Wang Tao, suggests that their indispensable role in the publishing market went beyond letter-writing manuals to encompass Chinese literature in general. In addition, their activities in commercial publications reflected that their writings were probably produced to gain pecuniary benefit rather than as a result of literary inspiration. Being well versed in classical literature and familiar with the vernacular language, these men of letters found their niche in the publishing industry and thereby probably profited from their out-of-date knowledge.

More importantly, although the works these annotators engaged in were usually associated

with a declining traditional culture and subjected to threats of being "put down" even before the founding of the Socialist regime in 1949, these annotators cannot be considered as outsiders to China's reform agenda; rather, many of them seized the chance to utilize their knowledge and, directly or indirectly, contributed to promoting mass education with the intention of making a living. In fact, there was an enormous market for translating classical works into the vernacular language to meet the increasing demands of an emergent generation who sought self-improvement in the Chinese language and knowledge of past cultural practices. While significantly facilitating universal education and increasing popular literacy, vernacular literature never completely replaced classical Chinese but rather laid the foundation for advanced learning. This cultural trend, unexpectedly, provided opportunities for "humble men of letters," most of whom were marginalized but crucial in shaping the reading world of modern China. In this sense, these annotators enrich our understanding of Chinese mass education.

Chapter 4 Correspondence of Literary Women: A Study of *Shuanggui xuan chidu* and Its Adaptation (1907)

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, in the case of *Qiushui xuan chidu*, the genre of personal letters constituted an established literary tradition in China, and the publication of personal letters experienced a remarkable boom during the late Qing and Republican periods as part of the popularization of epistolary knowledge. While epistolary collections of individual writers had been used as letter-writing guides since antiquity, nearly all of them were written by male writers. In this sense, *Advanced Epistolary Textbook for Women* (*Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 高等女子尺牘教本) was a notable exception because it was adapted from *Correspondence of the Double-Cassia Studio* (*Shuanggui xuan chidu* 雙桂軒尺牘, hereafter *Shuanggui xuan*), the letter collection of the gentlewoman Ding Shanyi 丁善儀 (1799–after 1861).[264] While other literary collections of individual women of the Qing dynasty typically consist of poetry compilations, *Shuanggui xuan* is distinguished from them in recording the life of its author through the epistolary genre.[265] However, no full-scale study of Ding's life or letters has been conducted. To fill in this lacuna and, more importantly, explore the common epistolary conventions for Chinese women in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, I interpret Ding's letters both as biographical records as well as pedagogical sources for letter writing. I outline

[264] This chapter is based on two versions: Ding Shanyi, *Shuanggui xuan chidu* (hereafter *SGXCD*), facsimile edition reprinted in Xiao Yanan 肖亞男, ed., *Qingdai guixiu ji congkan* 清代閨秀集叢刊 [A collectanea of collections of boudoir talents of the Qing dynasty], vol. 33 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2014); Ding Shanyi, *Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* (hereafter *GDNZCDJB*) (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue shuju, 1907). See the appended Table 4 for a comparison of these two versions.

[265] Hu Wenkai 胡文楷 and Zhang Hongsheng 張宏生, eds., *Lidai funü zhuzuo kao* 歷代婦女著作考 [Women's writings through the ages], 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008), 214.

Ding's life trajectory, analyze the sociopolitical dynamics behind her epistolary practice, and examine the differences in the subject matter and linguistic register between Ding's *Shuanggui xuan* (1878) and its textbook version (1907).

Publisher	Series of Collection	Title	Author of the Collection (Gender)	Author of Preface (Year)
Shanghai: Shenbaoguan 上海：申報館	"Chidu jijin" 尺牘集錦 (1878)	*Menghua ting chidu* 夢花亭尺牘	Lu Changchun 陸長春 (Male)	N/A
		Penglai guan chidu 蓬萊館尺牘	Dai Dejian 戴德堅 (Male)	
	"Xinbian chidu sanzhong" 新編尺牘三種 (1882)	*Shuanggui xuan chidu* 雙桂軒尺牘	Ding Shanyi 丁善儀 (Female)	Renyinüshi from Liangxi (i.e., Wuxi) 梁溪紉宜女史 (1877)
Shanghai: Kexue shuju 上海：科學書局	Nüzi chidu jiaoben 女子尺牘教本 (1907)	*Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 高等女子尺牘教本		Gu Mingqi from Wuxi 無錫顧鳴岐 (1907)
		Zhongdeng nüzi chidu jiaoben 中等女子尺牘教本	Gu Mingsheng 顧鳴盛 (Male)	N/A
		Chudeng nüzi chidu jiaoben 初等女子尺牘教本		

Figure 4-1: Information about the two versions

It is not clear how Ding Shanyi's letters were collected and finally put into print in 1878. First appearing in the *Collectanea of the* Shenbao *Publishing House* (*Shenbaoguan congshu* 申報館叢書), *Shuanggui xuan* was the only collection of women's letters in the subsequent collection (*xuji* 續集) of this collectanea and was reprinted, along with two other epistolary collections, under the series titled *Collected Brocade of Letters* (*Chidu jijin* 尺牘集錦).[266] According to Rudolf G. Wagner, its publication was "courageous" since the art of letter writing was often associated with the "scholarly, literary, and official communication" of men and thus considered a male domain; nevertheless, there was no hint that *Shuanggui xuan* was for women

[266] Shanghai tushuguan 上海圖書館, ed., *Zhongguo congshu zonglu* 中國叢書綜錄 [Comprehensive bibliography of Chinese collectanea], vol. 1 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe), 228.

only.[267] *Chidu jijin* was reprinted in a new series under the title *Three New Compiled Letter Collections* (*Xinbian chidu sanzhong* 新編尺牘三種) in 1882.[268]

The success of *Shenbaoguan congshu* might have helped spread the fame of Ding Shanyi's letter collection, but adapting it as a textbook was possibly due to the efforts of the Ding family, especially that of Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874–1952).[269] He was from a distant branch and three generations younger (see below Figure 4-2: Selected Ding family tree). As a polymath known for his involvement in publishing medical, Buddhist, and numismatic works, Ding Fubao was also one of the major contributors to the family genealogy in 1894 and 1924, and he wrote the entry on Ding Shanyi in 1896.[270] Therefore, he might have provided the materials on Ding Shanyi to his disciple Gu Mingsheng 顧鳴盛 (courtesy name Binqiu 賓秋, dates unknown). As the author of many popular texts for the masses, Gu created fictive samples in his *Primary Epistolary Textbook for Women* (*Chudeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 初等女子尺牘教本) and *Intermediate Epistolary Textbook for Women* (*Zhongdeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* 中等女子尺牘教本). It is not clear whether Gu Mingsheng played a role in the publication of *Advanced*

[267] Rudolf G. Wagner, "Women in Shenbaoguan Publications, 1872–90," in Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, and Richard J. Smith, eds., *Different Worlds of Discourse: Transformations of Gender and Genre in Late Qing and Early Republican China* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 250.

[268] The 1882 edition was circulated in Japan and Korea and incorporated into official as well as private collections. For example, see the catalogues of the Tōyō Bunko 東洋文庫 (The Oriental Library) and Kyujanggak Institute (규장각 奎章閣) for Korean Studies at Seoul National University.

[269] On Ding Fubao's life and works, see Gregory Adam Scott, "Navigating the Sea of Scriptures: The Buddhist Studies Collectanea, 1918–1923," in Philip Clart and Gregory Adam Scott, eds., *Religious Publishing and Print Culture in Modern China: 1800–2012* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2015), 86–125.

[270] *Wuxi Nantang Dingshi zhenpu* 無錫南塘丁氏真譜 (hereafter *DSZP*) [Ding lineage genealogy of Nantang in Wuxi], vol. 2, in Guojia tushuguan difangzhi jiapu wenxian zhongxin 國家圖書館地方志家譜文獻中心, ed., *Qingdai minguo mingren jiapu xuankan xubian* 清代民國名人家譜選刊續編 [A continuation of the Selections of the lineage genealogies of celebrities in Qing and Republican China], vol. 48 (Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 2006), 14–15; 195.

Epistolary Textbook for Women. However, the fact that the preface of this adaptation was written by Gu Mingqi 顧鳴岐 (dates unknown) denotes a certain connection. Although these two Wuxi natives appeared as editors of several textbooks, unfortunately for us, their connection remains uncertain.[271] The recording of these three epistolary textbooks for women by Zheng Yimei 鄭逸梅 (1895–1992), a prolific writer known for his recollected essays on modern Chinese literary circles, identifies their circulation.[272]

Apart from tracing the new initiative of epistolary education for women, I aim to further explore an understudied area of women's literary culture in late imperial China: the role of letters in sustaining relationships between literary women. There have long been two salient problems with studies primarily based on a small number of selected letters of individual women from different periods contained in epistolary anthologies that were published for commercial purposes. First, many anthologies tended to single out letters on certain dramatic topics, such as female writers' longing, self-lament, or heroic virtue, and to generate certain stereotypical impressions of women's letter writing. These impressions reduce the diverse contents and emotional dimensions of women's letters and reinforce gender bias in epistolary scholarship.[273] Second, these anthologies included letters of dubious origins or written by women of unverified historical identity. However, the reliability of these anthologies as sources was not questioned.[274]

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[271] For the textbooks edited by Gu Mingsheng and Gu Mingqi, see Wang Youpeng 王有朋, ed., *Zhongguo jindai zhongxiaoxue jiaokeshu zongmu* 中國近代中小學教科書總目 [Bibliography of primary and secondary school textbooks in modern China] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2010), 13, 67, 850, 852, 856, 857, 858.

[272] Zheng Yimei, *Chidu conghua* 尺牘叢話 [General talk of letters], reprinted in *Zheng Yimei xuanji* 鄭逸梅選集 [Selected works of Zheng Yimei], vol. 5 (Harbin: Heilongjiang renmin chubanshe, 2001), 756.

[273] See, for example, Zhao, *Zhongguo chidu wenxue shi*, 53–61.

[274] See, for example, Zou Zhenhuan 鄒振環, "Qingdai shuzha wenxian de fenlei yu shiliao jiazhi" 清代書劄文獻的分類與史料價值 [The classification and value as historical sources of

While recent studies of literary women's letters in late imperial China endeavour to demystify the lives of particular individuals by extending the scope of corresponding themes and the range of addressees, the lack of reliable archival sources of this genre still hinders access to the epistolary world of educated Chinese women of the late imperial period.[275]

Shuanggui xuan is a unique literary collection in that it not only preserves forty-seven letters by one female writer during a tumultuous period in the nineteenth century but was also adapted as a pedagogical manual for educational purposes in the late Qing. Compared to other collections, the relatively large quantity of letters distinguished *Shuanggui xuan* from other sources of women's letters, be they epistolary anthologies or epistles in women's personal collections. Therefore, it showcases literary women's everyday letter writing by reiterating certain mundane issues and consistently applying rhetorical techniques, namely recurring motifs, images, allusions, and metaphors. In this sense, Ding's collection provides a Chinese case of how women's letters showcase levels of sophistication and erudition through which women looked to the epistolary genre to express themselves and their mastery of language and rhetorical strategies.[276] Moreover, scrutiny of the original collection and its adaptation within educational

epistolary documents in the Qing dynasty], *Shilin* 史林 5 (2006): 180.

[275] See, for example, Ellen Widmer, "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China* 10.2 (1989): 1–43; Ellen Widmer, "Letters as Windows on Ming-Qing Women's Literary Culture," in Richter, ed., *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 748–53; Yu-Yin Cheng, "Letters by Women of the Ming-Qing Period," in Susan Mann and Yu-Yin Cheng, eds., *Under Confucian Eyes: Writing on Gender in Chinese History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 169–77; Dorothy Ko, "'Letter to My Sons' by Gu Ruopu (1592–ca. 1681)," in *Under Confucian Eyes*, 149–53; Tang Xinmei 唐新梅, "Neiwei de jiaolü: Cong Chen Ershi jiashu kan Jiaqing monian shizu jiazheng" 內闈的焦慮：從陳爾士家書看嘉慶末年士族家政 [Anxiety of the inner chamber: A study of gentry household management of the late Jiaqing reign from Chen Ershi's family letters], in Cao Hong 曹虹, Jiang Yin 蔣寅, and Zhang Hongsheng 張宏生, eds., *Qingdai wenxue yanjiu jikan* 清代文學研究集刊 [Literature of the Qing dynasty], vol. 6 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2013), 250–95.

[276] For more discussions, see James Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford:

settings reveals differences in their prefaces and editorial strategies, which are manifested in the revised contents and rhetoric of specific letters in the textbook version. The publication of Ding's collection as a textbook reflects publishers' growing interest in female readers in the wake of the establishment of women's public schools in 1907, which was followed by an upsurge in the publication of epistolary textbooks for women. As a pedagogical manual, *Gaodeng nüzi chidu jiaoben* embodies male scholars' initial attempts to educate women and equip female readers with basic epistolary knowledge during the last decade of the Qing dynasty. The two versions of Ding's collection thus enhance our knowledge of women's letter writing in China from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

4.2 Epistolary Records: The Matriarch of a Household in a Time of Crises

Ding Shanyi, the author of *Shuanggui xuan*, hailed from Wuxi 無錫, a county along the Grand Canal in Jiangsu located at the core of the famous Jiangnan region. Like most talented women from this region, Ding was born into a prominent family known for producing accomplished officials and scholars. Ding Shanyi's great grandfather Ding Heqi 丁鶴起 (1696–1766) and grandfather Ding Ting 丁亭 (1718–1786) both held the post of prefect when they died. Their efforts to promote public welfare, strengthen local defense, and settle lawsuits were documented in the gazetteer of Wuxi as well as in the lineage's genealogy.[277] In contrast, Ding's father, Ding Baozhou 丁寶洲 (1763–1834), who died as an associate prefect (*tongzhi* 同知), left fewer traces in local and familial records. Although the genealogy contains few details about his career, it records the loss of his two wives and the first of his two biological sons, Ding Quan

Oxford University Press, 2006), 6.

[277] On the portraits, tomb inscriptions, and biographies of Ding Heqi and Ding Ting, see *DSZP*, vol. 2, 275–76, 279–80, 415–22, 547–49.

丁權 (1783–1801). Perhaps concerned about the patrilineal succession, Ding Baozhou adopted the fifth son of his cousin Ding Fangzhou 丁芳洲 (1752–1813) as his third son. His third wife née Pan 潘 gave birth to Ding Shanyi, his only daughter. While the loss of family members happened before Ding was old enough to understand its impact on her family, the resulting sorrow might have been felt during her childhood. For example, Ding later expressed her sadness at losing her elder brother Ding Quan in her poem written on the portrait of his fiancée Ma Shimeng 馬師孟 (1781–1801), a poet from Wuxi.[278] Ma determined to marry into the Ding family after Ding Quan's death; she fell ill and died soon afterwards.[279] Ma's chastity was recorded in the local gazetteer and invoked wide sympathy, so Ding Shanyi must have learned about their tragic story from the memories of others.

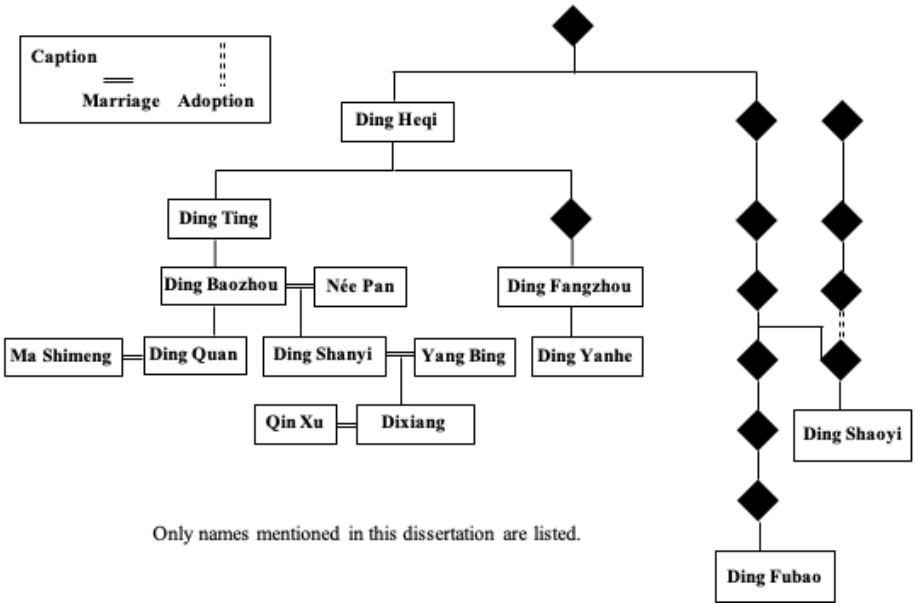

Figure 4-2: Selected Ding family tree

[278] Ding Shanyi, "Ti Saoshi Ma yizhao" 題嫂氏馬遺照 [Inscribed on the portrait of my late sister-in-law née Ma] (我痛雁行斷), in *DSZP*, vol. 2, 194.

[279] "Ma lienü zhuan" 馬烈女傳 [Biography of the heroic maiden Ma], in *DSZP*, vol. 2, 553. On the ideological, psychological, cultural, and economic aspects of the "faithful maiden," see Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Although Ding Shanyi was born and grew up at a time when her family was on the decline, she had the privilege of learning literature and art, as was common among women of the elite stratum in the Jiangnan area.[280] Existing literature reveals nothing about Ding's interaction with her half-brothers, but suggests that she was close to her second cousin Ding Yanhe 丁彥和 (courtesy name Changzhi 暢之, 1793–1860), the fourth son of Ding Fangzhou. Ding Yanhe won acclaim for his literary talent and served as the private secretary of Lin Zexu 林則徐 (1785–1850), a scholar-official best known for his role in the First Opium War (1839–1842).[281] Their close connection might have resulted from their shared literary interests. Ding Yanhe spoke highly of her literary and artistic talents and wrote a poem endorsing her calligraphic work copying the *Spiritual Flight Sutra* (*Lingfei jing* 靈飛經), which was circulated in literati circles during her lifetime.[282] He also provided residence for her daughter, Dixiang 棣香 (dates

[280] Ding began writing poetry under the guidance of Yang Yun 楊芸 (courtesy name Ruiyuan 蕊淵, 1774–1830), a local female poet. Yang Yun was the author of a collection titled *Song Lyrics of Zither-Purity Loft* (*Qinqing ge ci* 琴清閣詞), which is included in *Collected Song Lyrics of Boudoir Talents from Xiaotanluan Chamber* (*Xiaotanluan shi huike guixiu ci* 小檀欒室彙刻閨秀詞) edited by Xu Naichang 徐乃昌. See, for example, Grace S. Fong, ed., Ming Qing Women's Writings (hereafter MQWW).

[281] "Changzhi gong zhuan" 暢之公傳 [Biography of the dignitary of Changzhi], in *DSZP*, vol. 2, 552.

[282] See, for example, Shen Shanbao 沈善寶, *Mingyuan shihua xuji* 名媛詩話續集 [A continuation of remarks on poetry by famous women] (1879), vol. 3, 5a–6a, in MQWW. Yang Meigao 楊渼皋, "Ti Zhixian furen lin *Lingfei jing* ce" 題芝仙夫人臨靈飛經冊 [Inscribed on the *Spiritual Flight Sutra* copied by Lady Zhixian], in *Rongfeng lou shicun* 榕風樓詩存 (hereafter *RFLSC*) [Preserved poems from the Rongfeng Tower] (1884), vol. 2, 17b–18a, in MQWW. Zhang Shengxiu 張聲琇, "Chengjiang jihuai Ding Zhixian mei jian yi dao qixing" 澂江寄懷丁芝仙妹兼以道其行 [Sending my inner feelings to sister Ding Zhixian from Chengjiang and sending her off], in *Guxiang shi gao* 古香室稿 [Draft from the Guxiang Chamber] (1644–1911), vol. 2, 18a–19a, in MQWW. Ding Yanhe, "Ti Zhixian suo shu *Lingfei jing*" 題芝仙所書靈飛經 [Inscribed on the *Spiritual Flight Sutra* copied by Zhixian], in *DSZP*, vol. 2, 127; Zou Tao 鄒濤, ed., *Zhao Zhiqian nianpu* 趙之謙年譜 [A chronicle of Zhao Zhiqian]

unknown), and two granddaughters for two years, so she wrote him a letter of appreciation on behalf of Dixiang.[283] Ding Yanhe and his family were killed when Taiping rebels occupied Wuxi in 1860. This violent rebellion inflicted heavy casualties in the Jiangnan region and caused another period of great loss in Ding Shanyi's life.[284]

The most devastating loss Ding Shanyi experienced was the death of her husband Yang Bing 楊炳 (courtesy name Zixuan 子萱/宣, 1796–1861). Although Ding married Yang when he was a widower and hence was his successor wife (*jishi* 繼室) and Yang had at least three concubines, only Ding's name was recorded in extant literature on Yang, which suggests that Ding held the key role of mistress of the household. Originally from Xincheng 新城, Jiangxi, Yang was appointed to posts in different counties of Zhejiang.[285] Ding traveled with her husband during his official tours of duty, which enabled her to strike up friendships with other gentlewomen who also accompanied their husbands to the same regions. Ding maintained correspondence with them after they moved due to the reappointments of their husbands. A loose literary network was formed among these ladies, with whom Ding exchanged letters when she moved to Xiushui 秀水, another county under the administration of Jiaxing prefecture, following her husband's new appointment in 1852. I speculate that the forty-seven letters in *Shuanggui xuan* were written during this crucial life juncture when both her family and the Qing government were facing

(Beijing: Rongbao zhai chubanshe, 2003), 307.

[283] Ding, "Dai Dixiang zhi Changzhi shu" 代棣香致暢之書 [A letter to Changzhi on behalf of Dixiang], in *SGXCD*, 287–88. This is her only letter in the family genealogy. See *DSZP*, vol. 2, 193.

[284] Lin Meiyi 林玫儀, "Yu Yiao yu Yang Fangcan, Gu Han, Ding Shaoyi zhujia qinzu guanxi kao" 余一鼇與楊芳燦、顧翰、丁紹儀諸家親族關係考 [The familial connections and relationships between Yu Yiao, Yang Fangcan, Gu Han, and Ding Shaoyi], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 38 (2011): 95–170.

[285] Chen Qiong 陳璚, et al., eds., *Minguo Hangzhou fu zhi* 民國杭州府志 [Gazetteer of Hangzhou Prefecture compiled in the Republican period], vol. 122, facsimile edition (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1993), 81.

overwhelming challenges under the shadow of the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864).[286]

Yang Bing's appointment to Xiushui proved to be a difficult time because Xiushui was a county in dire straits and the family had to confront a precarious financial condition. Ding minced no words about her concerns to her female friend: "Because my husband is the new magistrate of Xiushui, which is well known for its poverty, I hope you can understand the difficult situation here. I am extremely anxious and even stay up for the whole night. Now my family has moved to a temporary residence" 近因外子奉權秀邑，宿號累區，疲瘠情形，素邀洞鑒，萬分焦灼，五夜傍徨，眷口現已移寓行館.[287] She complained to a female relative that she faced frequent relocation with the recent transfer of her husband and was exhausted as a result: "We had to move constantly and I feel increasingly worn out" 歷碌遷居，益形勞瘁.[288] As the matriarch of a big family, she was responsible for taking care of her husband's concubines and their children. The size of her family was difficult to accommodate. Although their residence contained five rooms and was spacious as a whole, it was far from enough to house the whole family.

Although the crowded household was stressful to manage, Ding yearned for her husband's concubines to give birth to more male offspring. Not long after they moved to Xiushui, the family welcomed its ninth child, a healthy baby son born by one of the concubines. Ding immediately shared this news and expressed her joyous excitement. She looked forward to another concubine delivering a son as well, as seen in her letter to a certain sister-in-law: "The

[286] The dates of Ding's letters are unknown, but according to their content, such as Yang Bing's recent post in Xiushui (1852) and Taiping rebels' defeat in Changsha (1852), it is estimated that Ding's letters were written around this time. See Ding, "Zhi Runqing mei" 致潤卿妹 [To younger sister Runqing], in *SGXCD*, 231–33.
[287] Ding, "Zhi Liang furen: Qi san" 致梁夫人：其三 [The third of six letters to Mrs. Liang], in *SGXCD*, 224–26.
[288] Ding, "Zhi Runqing mei," in *SGXCD*, 231–33.

pregnant concubine named Lian is weak in body and often has minor illnesses. She is expecting a baby next month. What I hope is that she will deliver a son and later recover with proper care" 蓮姬妊身孱弱，時抱微疴，出月計可免身，所盼再得一雄，或可調理強健也.[289] Lian did bear a son in the winter of the same year; unfortunately, the newborn died soon after. Ding lamented the premature death in her letters to different people as truly regrettable.

In her fifties, Ding suffered nagging illnesses, including a foot ailment, gradual loss of sight in her right eye, and paralysis (*pianfei* 偏廢), and she took ginseng and poria (*shenling* 參苓) to nurse her body back to health.[290] Since Korean ginseng (*Gaoli shen* 高麗參) was hard to get in central Zhejiang, she asked a younger female relative to purchase it for her. While relating the health issues of her family in Xiushui, she was also concerned about the physical well-being of other family members and friends elsewhere: "My sister, your jade body is weak with excessive phlegm. Has the quality of your sleep and appetite been improving recently?"[291] Childbearing was a key issue in Ding's routine greetings, and she instructed her granddaughter to fulfill the duty of childbearing:

> I know that because your jade body is weaker than before, you are not yet pregnant. You should pay attention to improving your body in order to give birth to a boy again, satisfying the expectations of your parents-in-law. This is why I, though far away from you, burn incense and pray day and night.
> 知玉體較弱於前，以致華而不實。切宜加意衛攝，方能再卜熊占，以慰堂上含飴之望。此則遠人所昕夕焚禱者耳。[292]

[289] Ding, "Zhi Ruyuan Zhang ersao" 致如園張二嫂 [To Mrs. Zhang named Ruyuan], in *SGXCD*, 244.
[290] Ding, "Zhi Wang Chunshou dadi" 致王春綬大弟 [To my oldest younger brother Wang Chunshou], in *SGXCD*, 216.
[291] Ding, "Zhi Sunlan wumei" 致蓀蘭五妹 [To my fifth younger sister Sunlan], in *SGXCD*, 235.
[292] Ding, "Yu Wenqing" 與溫卿 [To Wenqing], in *SGXCD*, 291–92.

Ding extended her thoughtful consideration to her maidservant named Liangui 連貴, who was sent to her younger brother who lived in another place to be his concubine. At that time Liangui was suffering from an illness and thus was emaciated. Ding asked her brother to show tender solicitude toward Liangui and nourish her health before consummating their marriage.

At the same time, the outbreak of the Taiping Rebellion and the widespread anxiety it caused pressured this family to seek other shelter. Ding's husband, Yang Bing, had completed his appointment in Xiushui and was heading to the provincial seat of Hangzhou to wait for a new position. Cognizant of the unsettled political situation of the provincial capital and the uncertainty of her husband's next post, she assumed the responsibility of leading the women and children of her family to cross the Qiantang 錢塘 River. During their stopover in Hangzhou, their eleventh child caught a cough. Ding had to find a doctor nearby and stayed there for around eight days before she led the women and children eastward. They later lodged in the countryside of Jiyang 暨陽, Zhejiang, where she found the local people simple and unassuming but life there isolating, depressing, and boring. To make matters worse, she had to respond to unexpected requests for help that were triggered by the social unrest. For example, in her reply to Fang Jiaolin (i.e., Mrs. Yu), the wife of the Hangzhou prefect Yu, Ding began by relating her recent displacement and sickness, which prevented her from visiting Fang's residence in Hangzhou during her brief stay there. After a conventional salutation, Ding addressed Fang's entreaty to entrust her suitcases to Ding's safekeeping:

> I am honoured to receive your order for keeping the suitcases you sent to me. Since we are good friends, I should certainly comply with your order. But here is my narrow point of view as an innocent from the countryside: since I moved here, I have been living in fear and trepidation; recently the situation is getting worse,

> which I know is caused by the social unrest, so I keep a close eye on it. Fortunately, the local people have always been honest and unassuming and thus there is no need to worry about accidents. If you only have a couple of suitcases to send, it should be fine for me to keep them; but if you have a lot of them, then I am afraid that it is not very safe to keep them here as they will be exposed to many eyes. The north is now under a severe attack by the rebels and the capital city of Hangzhou seems not to be an agreeable place at this moment. You, my Sister, may consider moving back to your hometown, or finding a lodge in the area of Jinhua 金華 or Yanzhou 嚴州 [both prefectures are in Zhejiang], which may keep you away from the turmoil and the battles. These are my humble opinions and I speak without reserve. I hope you will not reproach me for these honest words, out of your kind tolerance.
>
> 承囑寄存箱籠，叨在至好，自應遵命。但鄉愚蛙見，自妹抵厲以來，已形驚異；近日風聲鶴唳，頗知為避亂而來，未免留心窺測。所幸民俗素稱淳樸，或無意外之虞。尊處箱籠，若果數事，尚可代存，多則俗目所視，恐併妹處亦難駐足矣。北路逆氛甚熾，會垣似非樂土。吾姊不如就養梓舍，或於金嚴一帶覓廁，可無紛擾，藉避烽烟[煙]。管見所及，知無不言，恃愛直陳，當不見責也。[293]

In a reply to a certain aunt (*bomu* 伯母), Ding was confronted with a similar solicitation to take care of fourteen suitcases without advance notice. She seemed a little overwhelmed and averse to accepting them; nonetheless, she accepted all the suitcases and freed her aunt's mind of apprehensions with her courteous words:

> I, your niece, moved my family to the east of the Qiantang River because Jiaxing was truly hard to live in. Besides, warning messages were frequently issued from Zhenjiang [in Jiangsu] and Ningguo [in Anhui], so I decided to cross the river and travel eastward. I have no idea if the village in which I am now staying is safe

[293] Ding, "Zhi Yu Jiaolin furen" 致蛟隣余夫人 [To Mrs. Yu named Jiaolin], in *SGXCD*, 281–82.

> enough, so I only carried necessities with me and left the rest of my belongings with family and friends in Hangzhou and Jiaxing, as your servant Yang Sheng saw and understood. The drought of late makes the lives of ordinary people very difficult. Right now, many people from two other places in this province have come here to seek temporary refuge. From my limited point of view as an innocent in the countryside, the rumors worry me day and night, and I do not know whether to stay or to leave. Now you have unexpectedly sent me so many suitcases, which I received with considerable trepidation. [I decided to keep them for you because] I fear there are other uncertain situations on the way. If I send them back, it is not easy to transport them back and forth under such formidable circumstances. I will keep them upstairs for now. Once you settle down in a new place, you can send a reliable person to take them back. There is no need to worry too much since this is still a peaceful place. Since I treat your possessions as my own, how can I transfer them to other places? It should be self-evident [if you] lower yourself to consider the above reasons.
>
> 姪女移家來越，實緣禾地卜居匪易，兼之鎮江、寧國，警信頻來，故爾決計東渡，非知此鄉之能安磐石也。所以僅帶隨身行李而來，餘俱寄存杭禾諸親友處，此楊升目擊深知者。邇來天時亢旱，民不聊生。適有省中兩處移來僑寓，荒村蛙見，日來頗有謠言，正在日夕愁慮，去住兩難。今忽發到多箱，殊為惶悚，毅然代存，惟恐設有他變，若交原便帶回，值此時艱，往返實非易易。姑且代存樓上，一俟慈駕遷移定所，即祈差妥人取去，庶可放心，此地如信樂土。姪女之物，豈肯轉存他處？以此俯察，當可不言而喻矣。[294]

When the Taiping rebels captured Hangzhou in 1861, Yang Bing died a martyr with one of his concubines in the provincial seat. Ding survived this calamity when she took shelter in Fujian, where her son-in-law Qin Xu 秦煦 (courtesy name Guyi 穀貽, dates unknown) was serving as a magistrate. Ding continued to take care of their family after Yang's death and asked their son Yanying 儼嬰 to respect Yang's friend, Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–1884), a Shaoxing native

[294] Ding, "Zhi Mou tai furen" 致某太夫人 [To a certain elder lady], in *SGXCD*, 283.

who also took shelter in Fujian, as his teacher.[295] The rebellion resulted in many deaths in Ding's family and the loss of her poetry collection.[296] The preservation of Ding Shanyi's few poems was mainly due to the efforts of Ding Shaoyi 丁紹儀 (1815–1884), one of the survivors who witnessed the disastrous losses in the Ding family during the devastating civil war.[297] Although he was from a distant branch of the Ding family and was one generation younger than Ding Yanhe and Ding Shanyi, he seemed particularly close to them. Since his youth he studied under the guidance of Ding Yanhe, and he paid a visit to Ding Shanyi in Jiaxing when she moved there with her husband. When Ding Shaoyi first published his poetry remarks in 1869, Ding Shanyi was probably still alive.

The memories of political upheaval have mostly been approached from the perspectives of males by examining their miscellaneous writings.[298] The recent rediscovery of women's compositions in late imperial China furnishes a window into literary women's experiences in

[295] Yang Bing's second son, Yanying, passed the exam of selecting tribute students for preeminence (*bagong* 拔貢) but lost his scholarly honour soon afterwards for some unknown reason. See Zhao, *Zhao Zhiqian nianpu*, 307.

[296] Although Ding's poetry collection, *Poetry Collection of Double-Purity Chamber* (*Shuangqing ge shiji* 雙清閣詩集), did not survive, some of her poems were recorded in her contemporaries' literary collections. See, for example, Ding Shaoyi 丁紹儀, "Zhixian gu shici" 芝仙姑詩詞 [Poetry and song lyrics by my aunt Zhixian], in *Tingqiusheng guan cihua* 聽秋聲館詞話 [Poetry remarks of the lodge of hearing the sound of the autumn] (1869), vol. 11, reprinted in *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書 [Continuation of the Four Treasuries], vol. 1734 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 136; Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅, "You Yandang riji: Fulu ciyun geshi" 遊雁蕩日記：附錄次韻各詩 [Diary on Yandang Mount: Appended poems matching tunes], in *Langji xutan* 浪跡續談 [A continuing account of my wandering traces], vol. 3 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 308; Hou Xueyu 侯學愈, ed., *Xu Liangxi shichao* 續梁溪詩鈔 [A continuation of draft poems from Liangxi], vol. 21 (Huanduzhai, Xicheng gongsi, 1920), 18a; Xu Naichang, ed., *Guixiu cichao* 閨秀詞鈔 [Copied song lyrics of boudoir talents] (1909), vol. 12, 8b–9b, in MQWW.

[297] Lin, "Yu Yiao yu Yang Fangcan, Gu Han, Ding Shaoyi zhujia qinzu guanxi kao."

[298] See, for example, Rania Huntington, "Chaos, Memory, and Genre: Anecdotal Recollections of the Taiping Rebellion," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, vol. 27 (2005): 59–91; Zhang Daye, *The World of a Tiny Insect: A Memoir of the Taiping Rebellion and Its Aftermath*, trans. Xiaofei Tian (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).

times of crisis and makes female voices heard.[299] Nevertheless, the works consciously composed by both sexes documented more traumatic moments while leaving out a broad range of trivial matters, such as keeping suitcases when fleeing from calamity in Ding's letters above. As a means of exchanging news, Ding's letters also sketch the day-to-day concerns of a gentlewoman in the mid-nineteenth century in regard to domestic and imperial crises. Her letters thus provide a specific context to understand the importance of female friendship for upper-class women and how it was sustained through the exchange of letters.

4.3 Epistolary Practice: Political Participation through Female Friendship

Studies of the role of letters in forming and maintaining female friendships in Western societies demonstrate that women's letters notably indicated the varying intensities of individual relationships and served to maintain a distinct and emotive female network.[300] Letters were also crucial to women's social interaction in late imperial China. By examining the mechanics of compiling and publishing women's letters, Ellen Widmer argues that letters served as an effective way for talented women to support each other in literary or artistic creation, precipitated group publication projects, and were essential emotional sustenance for women experiencing

[299] See, for example, Grace Fong, "Signifying Bodies: The Cultural Significance of Suicide Writings by Women in Ming-Qing China," *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in Early and Imperial China* 3.1 (2001): 105–42; Kang-i Sun Chang, "Women's Poetic Witnessing: Late Ming and Late Qing Examples," in David Der-wei Wang and Wei Shang, eds., *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 504–22; Xiaorong Li, *Women's Poetry of Late Imperial China: Transforming the Inner Chamber* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012), 115–44.

[300] See, for example, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in Nancy F. Cott and Elizabeth H. Pleck, eds., *A Heritage of Her Own: Toward a New Social History of American Women* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 311–42; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*; Amanda Herbert, *Female Alliances: Gender, Identity, and Friendship in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 53–55.

difficult times.[301] She suggests that extant Chinese women's letters advance our knowledge of particular individuals and reflect women's writing culture as a whole.[302] Siao-chen Hu's article shows Chinese women writers of the early twentieth century deemed magazines to be an effective vehicle to publish their letters and poems in order to integrate their intimacy of friendship into a print culture context.[303] Despite their importance, letters remain a relatively underexplored genre of sources in illuminating women's literary culture, which explores the function of writing as a distinctive self-presentation of women's various roles in the normative power structure of the patriarchal family and lineage hierarchy. In particular, the existence of women's literary communities suggests that educated women enjoyed the freedom of seeking companionship and intellectual fulfillment after having attended to their wifely and motherly duties.[304]

Further inquiry is needed on how women applied certain stylistic and rhetorical techniques in their letters to convey intimate and supportive sentiments and promote female homosociality. *Shuanggui xuan* proves to be invaluable to facilitate such an inquiry for two reasons. First, among its forty-seven letters, only four were sent to male kin. A large portion of Ding Shanyi's letters was written to her geographically far-flung female friends. Apart from several letters addressing congratulations and consolations written mainly for the sake of propriety, most of these letters served to maintain a sense of emotional affinity by sharing private thoughts and feelings. Second, although Ding's letters were similar to those of other literary women in late

[301] Widmer, "The Epistolary World of Female Talent in Seventeenth-Century China."
[302] Widmer, "Letters as Windows on Ming-Qing Women's Literary Culture," 745.
[303] Siao-chen Hu, "Voices of Female Educators in Early-Twentieth-Century Women's Magazines," in Michel Hockx, Joan Judge, and Barbara Mittler, eds., *Women and the Periodical Press in China's Long Twentieth Century: A Space of Their Own?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 176–91.
[304] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994).

imperial China in that they included a wide range of feelings (e.g., joy, contentment, anxiety, and isolation), they were notable in their use of poetic allusions within the corpus of Chinese epistolary culture to convey the writer's sentiments.[305] One conspicuous allusion in Ding's letters is from *Jianjia* 蒹葭, one poem of the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經). With its implication of reminiscence and longing, this allusion appeared in different variants, such as *lusu* 露遡, *huisu* 洄溯, *jiasu* 葭遡, and *jiasi* 葭思. In the following letter to a certain Mrs. Chen 陳, Ding used the variant *jia cang lu bai* 葭蒼露白:

> You, my younger sister, are the dearest one among friends who knows me in my life, and I admire you wholeheartedly upon our first meeting. I am fond of you but not able to meet you. Can you understand my suffering? The poem *Jianjia* probably was written for people like us. If it is convenient for you to send fish and wild geese [i.e., letters], please be unstinting in sharing delightful messages.
> 生平歷數知已，一見傾心，首推吾妹。愛而不見，我勞如何？葭蒼露白之章，殆為我兩人詠矣。鱗鴻有便，勿吝好音。[306]

The above-cited examples of poetic allusions, also common in Xu Jiacun's *Qiushui xuan* examined in Chapter 3, were generally used by both sexes and could be easily used in another letter with minor adjustments. The use of elevated sentimental expressions in *Shuanggui xuan*,

[305] A similar pattern of applying certain strategies can be seen in letters by sworn sisters in Jiangyong 江永, known as *nüshu* 女書. Their letters consistently conceive the *laotong* relationship (i.e., sworn sisterhood) as an exclusive couple through repeated use of pair metaphors and both implicit and explicit analogies to marriage. They portray this relationship as long-lasting, intimate, and fun, based on fidelity, great emotional attachment, and mutual high regard. See Cathy Silber, "From Daughter to Daughter-in-Law in the Women's Script of Southern Hunan," in Christina K. Gilmartin, et al., eds., *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 47–68; Fei-wen Liu, *Gendered Words: Sentiments and Expression in Changing Rural China* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[306] Ding, "Zhi dasikou Chen furen" 致大司寇陳夫人 [To Mrs. Chen, the wife of the Minister of Justice], in *SGXCD*, 219. Mrs. Chen probably refers to the wife of Chen Fu'en 陳孚恩 (1802–1866), the Minister of Justice between 1849 and 1850.

however, raises questions regarding the interpretation of women's letters as autobiographical records and carriers of historical fact, given the potential for strategic use of intimate, affectionate, and passionate language in correspondence.[307] Although present-day readers are cautioned against taking expressions of longing in letters at face value, it is still necessary for one to contextualize expressions of emotions on specific occasions and to specific persons before one can draw a general conclusion. As I will suggest, letters sent with gifts and poems by elite wives traversed the fluid boundaries between the public and the private, the political and the domestic.

The politicization of women's correspondence has been a major theme in studies of women's letter writing in Western society, which "use letters to locate the different forms of women's power and influence within the family, locality and occasionally within a wider political scene."[308] Traditional interpretations of English female letter-writing during the Tudor period as merely domestic, parochial, and non-political have been questioned and have given way to emerging views that "women's letters in general display an awareness of the intricacies of the politics of language" and that "female letter-writers were well equipped to marshal the weapons of codes of deference and social courtesy in their wide-ranging and diverse correspondences."[309] Ding Shanyi's letters enable us to investigate whether a similar politics of language existed in Chinese women's letter-writing, given that she corresponded with wives of various officials who were the superiors of her husband Yang Bing, and that her linguistic register was appropriately refined for the educated wife of an official. Ding's literary talent and friendship with wives of officials were inextricably linked to her husband's official network. Yang Bing was appointed as

[307] Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 25.
[308] James Daybell, ed., *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450–1770* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), 13.
[309] Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England*, 31.

a magistrate in Yunnan (1839–40), where Ding had the chance to get to know the Hunan native Zhang Shengxiu 張聲琇 (courtesy name Lanfen 蘭芬, dates unknown), who also accompanied her husband Yu Chongben 余崇本 (courtesy name Zongshan 宗山, dates unknown) to reside in a neighbouring prefecture. Zhang was senior to Ding and wrote her ten poems, expressing her affection and wishing Ding a good journey with her husband when he transferred to Zhejiang in 1845.[310] Probably when her husband served as a magistrate of Yongjia 永嘉 in Wenzhou (1847–48), Ding came to know Yang Meigao 楊渼皋 (courtesy name Wanhui 婉蕙, ?–ca. 1884), the wife of Liang Gongchen 梁恭辰 (courtesy name Jingshu 敬叔, 1814–87). Liang was the prefect of Wenzhou (1847–ca. 1850) and also resided in Yongjia. Through their husbands' connection, Ding and Yang met Mrs. Qing 慶 (dates unknown). She was the wife of Qing Lian 慶廉 (courtesy name Yunpu 雲浦, dates unknown), a Manchu official who was appointed as the Circuit Intendant of Wenzhou and Chuzhou (*Wenchu fenxun dao* 溫處分巡道, ca. 1843–ca. 1853).[311] When Ding accompanied her husband to Jiaxing around 1850, she came to know Fang Jiaolin 方鮫鄰 (courtesy name Niansi 年姒, dates unknown). Fang was the wife of Yu Shili 余士琭 (courtesy name Junong 菊農, 1800–?), the prefect of Hangzhou (1850–52). Through Fang's introduction, Ding became friends with Shen Shanbao (1808–62) in the spring of 1851 and they exchanged poems.[312]

The epistolary exchange between Ding Shanyi and Yang Meigao, to whom Ding had sent the most letters (nine in total) in her collection, was a case in point of how female friendship exerted

[310] Zhang, *Guxiang shi gao*, vol. 2, 18a–19a.
[311] Editorial Committee, ed., *Wenzhou shi zhi* 溫州市志 [Gazetteer of Wenzhou city], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 2194–95.
[312] Shen, *Mingyuan shihua xuji*, vol. 3, 5a–6a, in MQWW.

sociopolitical influence.[313] Ding and Yang enjoyed composing poems about their excursions to see the major sights of Wenzhou.[314] Through Ding's recommendation, Yang's poems were recorded in *Remarks on Poetry by Famous Women* (*Mingyuan shihua* 名媛詩話).[315] In late 1848, Ding moved to Yuhuan 玉環, an independent subprefecture close to Wenzhou, following her husband's new appointment. Yang composed several poems to send her off, one of which ended by reminding Ding: "Fish and wild geese [i.e., letters] should be sent back and forth to convey the messages of safety" (*Linhong wangfu bao ping'an* 鱗鴻往復報平安).[316] Their friendship was sustained through the ongoing exchange of gifts and poems accompanying letters. A close reading of these letters suggests that letter-writing women in nineteenth-century China were familiar with the politics of language and thus served as supportive helpmates of their husbands in their official networking while articulating the warmth of female friendship.

The politics of language, in this case, were embodied in epistolary codes of deference and social courtesy. To minimize a sense of gross materialism, references to gifts in classical Chinese letters had to follow certain formulae. A general rhetorical technique was to describe the gifts sent by the addressees as generous and valuable and to play down the letter writer's own gifts as inadequate and worthless, as manifested in Ding's letters to Yang. For example, Ding sent various examples of embroidery (*haizhen shuzhong* 孩針數種) when Yang's grandson was born and referred to them as "celery of mine" (*qinsi* 芹私), a variant of the conventional

[313] For the nine letters, see six in Ding, "Zhi Liang furen" 致梁夫人 [To Mrs. Liang] and three in "Zhi Wanhui Liang furen" 致婉蕙梁夫人 [To Mrs. Liang named Wanhui], in *SGXCD*, 221–31; 263–68.

[314] Huagai Mount 華蓋山, Feixia Cave 飛霞洞, Yifeng Pavilion 揖峰亭 (February 1848), Yandang Mount 雁蕩山 (March 1848), and Jiangxin Temple 江心寺 (April 1848). See Yang, *RFLSC*, vol. 2, 18a; 19a–20b; Liang, *Langji xutan*, vol. 3, 308; vol. 5, 340.

[315] Shen, *Mingyuan shihua xuji*, vol. 3, 11b–12b, in MQWW.

[316] Yang, "Song Zhixian zi furen Yuhuan die qianyun" 送芝仙姊赴任玉環疊前韻 [Matching the previous tune to see sister Zhixian off to Yuhuan], in *RFLSC*, vol. 2, 19b, in MQWW.

self-deprecatory term "celery offerings" (*qinxian* 芹獻).[317] This allusion was often used by gift-givers to show respect and humility. In letters sent to celebrate either Yang's birthday or the Mid-autumn festival, Ding referred to her own gifts as "trifling objects" (*weiwu* 微物), another common self-deprecatory term. On the other hand, Yang's gifts were referred to as "elegant bestowals" (*yakuang* 雅貺), "precious gifts" (*zhenxi* 珍錫), "precious goods" (*zhenpin* 珍品), or praised as "extremely intricate" (*jiwei jingqiao* 極為精巧). Yang responded to this rhetoric in her poems by praising that the clams Ding sent from Yuhuan were particularly fat and delectable and the rare delicacy from Ding made children laugh and talk cheerfully.[318] Apart from writing poems in her letters of gratitude, Yang seized every chance to send Ding gifts when carriers, either servants or acquaintances, were available. Like their Western counterparts, Ding and Yang's sisterly bonds were deepened through the custom of gift making and giving, a critical part of female sodality, communication, and experience.[319] More subtly, their exchange of gifts also connected two official families in a way that acknowledged the "rules of propriety" in accordance with the parameters of age, rank, and gender.[320]

In addition to gifts, the exchange of poems is a noteworthy topic in Ding's letters with Yang. It was common for women to exchange poems in their letters, but these letters were often excluded when women's poems were published.[321] The rare preservation of both Ding's letters

[317] Originally from *[The Writings of] Master Lie* (*Liezi* 列子), this term alludes to the story of a man who was embarrassed when some important people rejected his recommendation of foods he liked, including broad beans, nettle-hemp seeds, celery, and southernwood shoots. For the translation of this story, see A. C. Graham, trans., *The Book of Lieh-tzu* (London: J. Murray, 1961), 155.
[318] Yang, "Xie Zhixian zeng shiwu" 謝芝仙贈食物 [Expressing gratitude for the food Zhixian sent], in *RFLSC*, vol. 2, 23a–b, in MQWW.
[319] Herbert, *Female Alliances*, 53–55.
[320] Yang, *Gifts, Favors, and Banquets*, 70.
[321] An example is the "epistolary poems" of Gan Lirou 甘立媃 (1743–1819) to her natal family.

and two poems allows for a preliminary investigation into the role of educated women in strengthening their husbands' networks during the late imperial period. In one of her poems to Yang, Ding expressed a sense of reminiscence and longing as well as her admiration for Yang's poetic talent. She allusively commended Yang's poems as "coming from an ingenious heart" (*miaoxincai* 妙心裁) and superior to hers: "I am ashamed that my writing is not comparable to yours, as stone is not comparable to jade" (*Zikui wufu nan bingyu* 自媿碔砆難並玉). Therefore, she looked forward to receiving more "excellent verses" (*jiaju* 佳句) from Yang.[322] The reference to poetry followed the same rule for describing gifts: valorizing others while deprecating oneself. Apart from the comparison between "stone" and "jade" made in the above poem, in her letters Ding also deprecated her own poetry as "grain husk and blighted grain" (*kangbi* 糠粃), a metaphorical term for trivial and useless things, to highlight the quality of Yang's poem as "pearl and jade" (*zhuyu* 珠玉). The same rhetorical technique was applied in the following letter, in which Ding said that she dared not compose poems to avoid making a fool of herself before proceeding to speak highly of Yang:

> You, my younger sister, are enjoying life in your hometown [in Fujian]. The tip of your brush must have captured the spectacle, and [I imagine that] you collected the unusual scenes in Li Mountain [in Fujian], improving the purity and elegance of your writings day by day. I wonder if you have gained more poetic ingredients in your pocket? Compared to the refined pleasure of that elegant person, this superficial person is mundane and vulgar. The difference between us is as tremendous as that between the immortal and the ordinary. If you could kindly

See Grace Fong, "A Life in Poetry: The Auto/biography of Gan Lirou (1743–1819)," in *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency, and Writing in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press), 9–53.

[322] Ding, *SGXCD*, 228–29. In her letters, Ding praised Yang's poems for their "clear phrases and beautiful sentences with deep affection" (*qingci liju, yiwang qingshen* 清詞麗句，一往情深). See *SGXCD*, 226–28.

> send me some great pieces, I will see the pearl and jade in front of me…
> 因思吾妹夫人，梓鄉頤養，筆鋒攬勝，梨嶺採奇，清興日增，未識奚囊中又添幾許詩料？雅人深致，以視鄙人之塵俗，萬斛若判仙凡。倘蒙惠寄佳章，不啻珠玉在前矣……[323]

The term "the pearl and jade in front" (*zhuyu zaiqian* 珠玉在前), originally from *A New Account of Tales of the World* (*Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語), refers to one's honour to have the company of outstanding persons, so it is often used to imply self-deprecation in letters. Moreover, Ding referred to Yang as an "elegant person," an allusion from *Book of Poetry* (*Shijing* 詩經), while degrading herself as a "superficial person" to create multiple layers of comparison in a short passage. The above quotation was removed from *Gaodeng jiaoben* in 1907. However, new content on anti-footbinding was added to this letter, which I will discuss later.

More overt awareness of the politics of language manifested in Ding's correspondence through her messages on the official career of Yang's husband, Liang Gongchen. One fact that requires attention here is that Ding's husband tended to maintain his close contact with officials through poetry exchange while Yang's husband, unfortunately, was not interested in poetry.[324] As such, the friendship between Ding and Yang would have been considered, at least partially, to be a complement and extension of the comradeship between their respective husbands. The second of Ding's two poems attached to her letter begins with a line that indicated Liang's recent post in Shaoxing, a city in the fertile, scenic, and sophisticated northeastern Zhejiang 敬叔太守新權越郡. Reading Ding's letters to Yang as a whole, these two poems probably served to congratulate Liang's promotion. In a prior letter, Ding said to Yang that Liang's removal from his

[323] Ding, *SGXCD*, 265–67.
[324] For Liang's lack of interest in poetry, see Liang, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in *RFLSC*, 2a.

office in Wuxing 吳興 (in current Huzhou 湖州, Zhejiang) was disappointing and comforted Yang by quoting a well-known Chinese proverb suggesting that a loss was no bad thing as "every cloud has a silver lining" and Liang deserved a better position.[325] It is plausible that letters sent from Ding, either to congratulate or to console Yang, could also have served a second purpose as messages from Ding's husband to his superior, Yang's husband. Similarly, Yang was often apprised by Ding of updates on the situation of Ding's husband and son-in-law. From this point of view, the literary correspondence between elite wives like Ding and Yang, whether out of political purpose or not, contributed to the official networking of their husbands.

While it is necessary to uncover the political dynamics behind the literary correspondence between Ding and Yang, their friendship should not be considered as merely serving their husbands' careers and social standing. Poems and letters foreground the emotional bond between Ding and Yang and imbue their relationship with meaning and weight. Ding expressed her "endless grief of parting" (*wuxian liqing* 無限離情) in one of her poems and her wishes of meeting up with Yang to "continue previous happiness" (*qianhuan zaixu* 前歡再續) in one of her letters.[326] Their similarities, including social backgrounds, literary interest, and life experiences, enabled them to forge an emotional bond easily. Both leading an itinerant life due to the constant transfers of their official husbands, Ding and Yang shared deep concerns about an unstable life and uncertain future. Therefore, the literary exchange could be regarded as relief from the problems that they were facing and a source of happiness for both of them. Apart from their shared role as the wives of officials, they were both solicitous mothers. Moreover, Yang was the godmother (*jimu* 寄母) of Ding's daughter Dixiang and often asked about Dixiang's

[325] Ding, *SGXCD*, 224.
[326] Ding, *SGXCD*, 229; 266.

situation in her letters to Ding.[327] Correspondingly, Ding inquired about the safety of Yang's eldest son during the Taiping rebels' siege. There was much mutual sympathy between them, as Ding related: "As for our ardent waiting for our children, we truly sympathize with each other (*tongqing* 同情)."[328] As this example illustrates, the literary exchange served as an outlet to transform their inner anxieties into emotional support.

According to Antje Richter's study of letters from early medieval China, it is unproductive to assume that "pure" friendship is incompatible with the pursuit of personal or familial benefits because this assumption "confuses the establishment of an ideal with its realization in social practice."[329] The epistolary exchange between Ding Shanyi and her female associates showcases the compatibility of cultivating friendship while pursuing benefits for the family. Compared to poetry writing, letter writing was more flexible in style and, thus, provided a more flexible means for Ding to lay bare her sentiments freely. In her epistolary exchange with Yang, Ding indeed subscribed to certain epistolary formulae and employed many letter-writing commonplaces, but the rhetoric should not be merely understood as literary cliché. Instead, epistolary rhetoric was the embodiment of their family background and social status and, more importantly, enabled them to exert social power beyond the household domain to the sociopolitical arena. As women were increasingly encouraged to receive universal education and engage in public social life from the last decades of the Qing dynasty onwards, Ding's epistolary collection offered models and epistolary tools that could be appropriated to facilitate social engagement and upward mobility by women of different social strata.

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[327] For Yang's poems to/about Dixiang, see Yang, "Ji huai Dixiang" 寄懷棣香 [Sending my inner feelings to Dixiang], in *RFLSC*, vol. 2, 22b, in MQWW. Yang, "Qiuri Dixiang jinü zhao zhu zimei" 秋日棣香寄女招諸姊妹 [Autumn my goddaughter Dixiang invited sisters], in *RFLSC*, vol. 2, 26a–b, in MQWW.

[328] Ding, *SGXCD*, 268.

[329] Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture in Early Medieval China*, 118.

4.4 Epistolary Knowledge: Major Differences between the Two Versions

Ding Shanyi's letter collection was published as a textbook in 1907, the year that marked the official start of women's education and the emergence of the first epistolary manual for women in China.[330] Oi Man Cheng's study of fictive letters for women of the late Qing and Republican periods argues that editors of these guidebooks had intentionally used these sample letters to introduce their female readers to the new Chinese society and to encourage modern modes of female social and political engagement by focusing on female national images.[331] However, the adaptation of Ding's collection as a textbook was very different from those examined in Cheng's study. As an essential component of women's education, epistolary knowledge based on real letters of elite women better attuned the expression of women's emotions to what was considered decorous in everyday correspondence. Moreover, the adaptation as a textbook offers one more case of the hybridity and coexistence of tradition and modernity in women's education during the crucial period of transition in the 1900s.[332] The various modifications in epistolary substance and style between Ding's letter collection and its adaptation offer invaluable clues to the changes in modes of epistolary communication between women over the last decades of the Qing and the ideal mode recognized by male intellectuals (see Appended Table 4: A Comparison of Two Versions for more information).

The first remarkable difference between the two versions is manifested in their prefaces. The

[330] While it is difficult to identify the first epistolary manual for women in China according to existing evidence, it was most likely published in 1907. For more information, see Cheng, *Model Missive*, footnote 189, 63–64.
[331] Cheng, "Epistolary Guidebooks for Women."
[332] For a reformist educational discourse on promoting women's education, see Paul John Bailey, *Gender and Education in China Gender: Discourses and Women's Schooling in the Early Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge, 2007); Xiaoping Cong, *Teachers' Schools and the Making of the Modern Chinese Nation-State, 1897–1937* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2007).

original preface was written by a certain Renyinüshi 紉宜女史 from Liangxi 梁溪 (i.e., Ding Shanyi's hometown Wuxi) in 1877,[333] which "elaborated at length on the prominent role women had played in literature up to the Tang, when women's fate, in the narrative of these years, took a turn for the worse with them being excluded from public and with footbinding becoming increasingly pervasive."[334] This preface begins with a brief review of the profound tradition of Chinese women's writings since ancient times and proceeds to integrate women's letter writing into this established tradition by implying that letters were as important as poems in sustaining emotional bonds between women: "If there is no exchange of elegant letters, how can female sentiments be conveyed" (*Buyou qionghan, hetong fangsu* 不有瓊函，何通芳愫)? [335] The preface strictly follows the four-six character style of parallel prose with many literary allusions, which were commonly used in premodern Chinese letters to convey a sense of longing that was hindered by geographic separation.[336] Unlike the original preface, which is full of allusions and does not refer to Ding Shanyi and her life, the new one in the adaptation written by Gu Mingqi in 1907 concerns the evolution of epistolary knowledge and provides a short biography of Ding Shanyi. It begins as follows:

> Women's letters widely circulating in Shanghai of late were mostly written by philistine merchants. These letters are far-fetched, superficial, and vulgar. However, beginners often pick up cast-off [phrases] from them, leading to mistakes. A saying has it that the advance of the sciences has been accompanied

[333] Renyinüshi's identity and her relationship with Ding Shanyi remain unknown.
[334] Wagner, "Women in Shenbaoguan Publications," 249–50.
[335] Renyinüshi, "Xu" 序 [Preface], in *SGXCD*, 210.
[336] The original preface includes metaphors for letters with the implication of longing, such as "fish paper" (*yujian* 魚緘) and "phoenix paper" (*fengzhi* 鳳紙). According to Richter, the most common metaphors were associated with fish, particularly carp, and birds, such as the swallow and the wild goose, which were often inspired by the hope for a swift and safe delivery in poems. See Richter, *Letters and Epistolary Culture in Early Medieval China*, 36.

> by the degeneration of the Chinese language—isn't this true?
> 女子尺牘，近日滬上通行，大都出於市儈之手。牽引支辭，淺陋僿埜；而新生後學，往往拾其唾餘，致滋謬誤。語云：科學進步，則國文退化，其信然歟！[337]

The above excerpt reveals the challenges of learning the classical language in an era where scientific knowledge was increasingly dominant, making the revitalization and popularization of the Chinese literary tradition an urgent task. Ding's letters were considered exemplary in furthering this educational mission since they satisfied the age-old standards of elegant writing, as Gu's preface proceeds to demonstrate:

> This book was written by Lady Ding herself, which contains more than forty letters. The rhetoric and thought [of these letters] are woven together like damask, pure and graceful, gorgeous and brilliant. They give free rein to personal qualities, ignore constraints, and gladden the heart: They are indeed a social intercourse of the mind.
> 是書乃女士一人所著，共四十餘首。藻思綺合，清麗綿芊，條鬯任氣，優懌柔懷，誠心聲之獻酬也。[338]

Ding's literary talent served as a yardstick for textbooks for women because her letters were "real," which was emphasized above, and the intimate feelings conveyed in these letters were potentially more sincere than sample letters fabricated by editors for teaching purposes and thus pedagogically superior in demonstrating the art of letter writing. As such, "Using it as an epistolary textbook for advanced female students is more than fitting!"[339] Next, Gu's preface

[337] Gu Mingqi, "Xuyan" 緒言 [Preface], in *GDNZCDJB*.
[338] Gu, "Xuyan," in *GDNZCDJB*. This succinct evaluation of Ding's letters was derived from two major works of literary criticism in ancient China with minor adjustments: *The Art of Writing* (*Wenfu*) and *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (*Wenxin diaolong*).
[339] Gu, "Xuyan," in *GDNZCDJB*.

comes to a brief introduction of Ding's paternal genealogy (i.e., names and official titles from her great-grandfather to her father) and her accomplishments in calligraphy, poetry, and painting, showing the influence of her scholar-official family on her early education. To highlight the unique value of Ding's letters, it notes that Ding had accumulated extensive life experiences from her journeys accompanying her husband to various posts.[340] By concluding that "Readers of this book should know that Lady Ding's letter writing was merely a minor part of her literary creation,"[341] it acclaims Ding's talent and, subtly, identifies epistolary skills as essential for women who aspire to seek advanced literary training.

The changes in the letters from *Shuanggui xuan* (47 in total) to its textbook version (45 in total), some rather minor while others more consequential, reflect the mechanism of the textbook version in imparting traditional epistolary knowledge under the new milieu of social reforms. The following letter, for example, illustrates how the substance and language of letter writing were edited to better fit the new sociocultural context.[342]

[340] The similar biographical texts on Ding Shanyi in the new preface and the lineage genealogy, to which Ding Fubao contributed, suggest that the preface was possibly based on the genealogy and thus depict the connection between Gu Mingqi and Gu Mingsheng, Ding Fubao's disciple.
[341] Gu, "Xuyan," in *GDNZCDJB*.
[342] Ding, "Zhi mou furen" 致某夫人 [To a certain lady], in *SGXCD*, 242–43; *GDNZCDJB*, 14a–b.

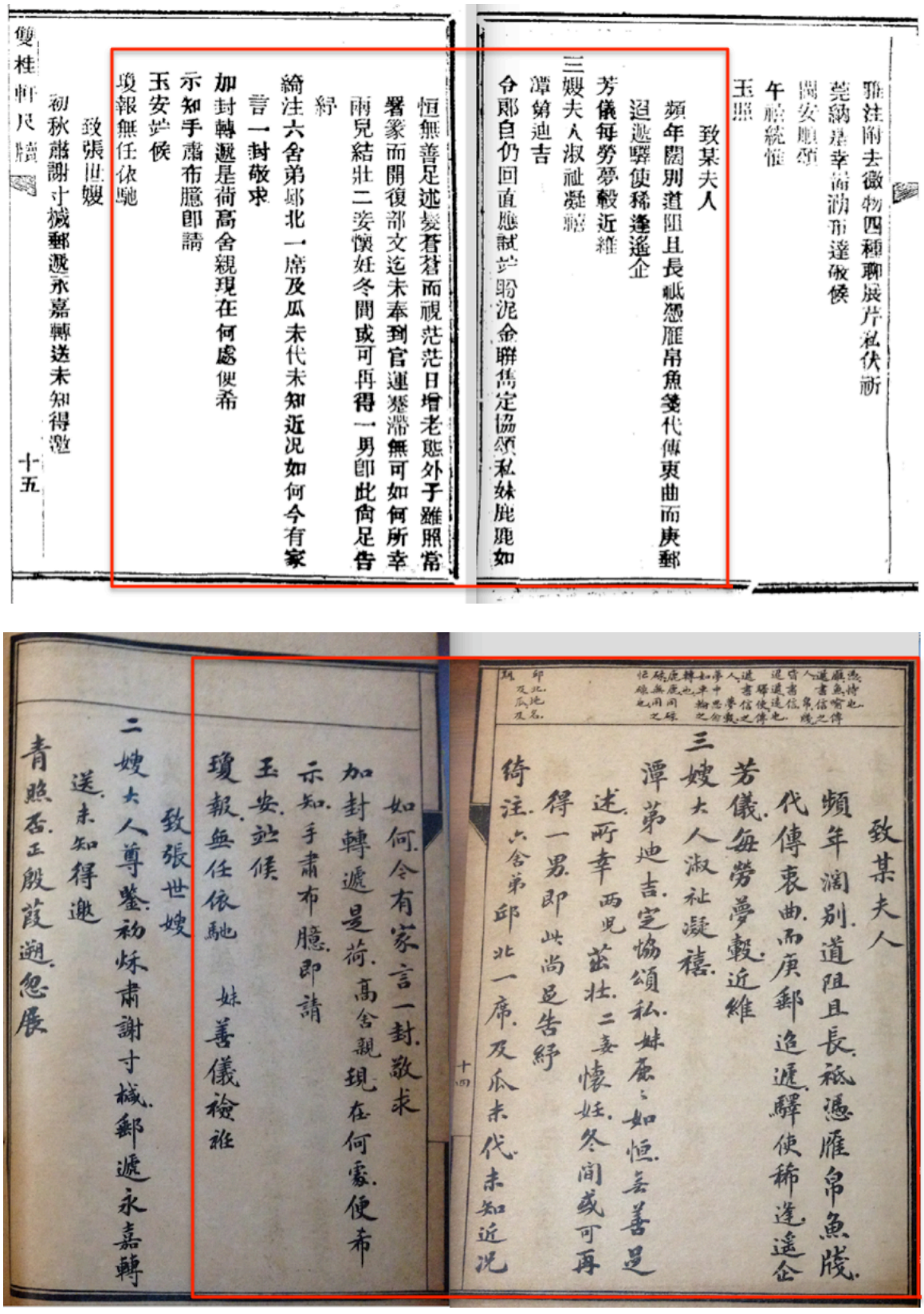

Figure 4-3: A comparison of the same letter in the two versions

For analytical convenience, this letter is transcribed below by combining the texts of the two versions, with **bold** text identifying the phrases that exist only in the original version, and *italicized* text identifying the phrases that exist only in the adaptation. The combined text consists of five essential components of a formal letter: 1) the opening (*qishou* 起首); 2) compliments (*gongwei* 恭維); 3) narration (*xushi* 敘事); 4) the ending (*jiewei* 結尾), and 5) the sign-off / subscription (*juming* 具名), which are numbered in the following translation:

> 1) We have been separated for many years because of the journey stretching hard and long. Only the silk carried by wild geese and paper carried by fish [i.e., letters] are available to convey our inner feelings for us, but the postal-relay route is of great distance and couriers are rarely seen. When I miss your graceful demeanor from afar, I always have to resort to my dreams.
> 頻年闊別，道阻且長。祇憑雁帛魚箋，代傳衷曲，而庚郵迢遞，驛使稀逢。遙企芳儀，每勞夢轂。
>
> 2) I step forward to wish you, my third sister-in-law, good fortune and wish for your family to be bestowed with favourable auspiciousness. **Your son returned to Zhili to take the examination. I wish for him to have the golden painted cards [i.e., good news] and succeed in the examination.** [The outcome] will certainly accord with my personal wishes.
> 近維三嫂**夫**（*大*）人淑祉凝禧，潭第迪吉。**令郎自仍回直應試，竚盼泥金聯雋，**定協頌私。
>
> 3) I am busy with miscellaneous work as always and have nothing good to tell you. **My hair is getting grey and my vision is becoming blurred, and I look older day by day. Although my husband has been performing his official duties as usual, he still has not received the decree to resume his original post. His official career is not going well and there is nothing we can do.** Fortunately,

the two children are healthy and strong. And the second concubine is pregnant and probably will give birth to another boy this winter, which is reported to alleviate your express concern. My sixth younger brother's tenure of office at Qiubei has ended. How is everything going with him? I have a family letter for him, which I hope you can seal and forward to him for me. Do you know where my relative Mr(s). Gao is now? Please let me know at your convenience.
妹鹿鹿如恒，無善足述，**髮蒼蒼而視茫茫，日增老態。外子雖照常署篆，而開復部文迄未奉到。官運蹇滯，無可如何。**所幸兩兒**結**（*茁*）壯，二妾懷妊，冬間或可再得一男，即此尚足告紓綺注。六舍弟邱北一席，及瓜未代，未知近況如何？今有家言一封，敬求加封，轉遞是荷。高舍親現在何處，便希示知。

4) I write reverently to express my feelings and I wish you good health. I look forward to your precious reply, with extreme fondness and yearning.
手肅布臆，即請玉安。竚候瓊報，無任依馳。

5) *Your younger sister Shanyi salutes with her garment front taut*.
妹善儀襝衽。

There are three major changes in the above letter: the second part on compliments deleted the sentence about the civil service examination that was abolished by the Qing government in 1905; the third part on narration removed Ding's complaint about her problems of aging and the unsatisfactory situation of her husband's official career; and the fifth part on the sign-off was added in the 1907 version. There are two minor changes in the textbook version: the editor used the term *daren* 大人 to replace the original term *furen* 夫人, both showing a sense of politeness for the addressees, and used the term *zhuozhuang* 茁壯 to replace the original term *jiezhuang* 結壯, both meaning "healthy and strong."

The changes in the complimentary and sign-off parts can be seen throughout the 1907

version and reflect the evolution of epistolary knowledge in terms of language and format. A growing trend in letter writing of the early twentieth century was to shorten or even do away with complimentary lines, which served mainly ritualistic and social functions rather than informational purposes. Complimentary lines, as well as three entire letters for congratulatory purposes written in a conspicuous florid style, were natural and crucial in revealing Ding's educational background and facilitating her social interactions with other upper-class wives but were deemed redundant, stilted, and mannered, and thus removed from the textbook version. The inclusion of the standard sign-off at the end of each letter, such as "saluting with the garment front taut" (*lianren* 襝衽, only used in women's letters), "respectfully sent" (*jingqi* 敬啟) or "written by hand" (*shoule* 手泐), foregrounds another constituent part of epistolary knowledge. The sign-off was added probably because the adaptation was published for teaching purposes and, thus, it was necessary to present the complete format of a formal letter, even though they were deleted in the original version. Although formal sign-offs would have appeared trivial for the gentlewomen to demonstrate their mastery of epistolary writing, adding them to the adapted textbook was important for students to learn the "hierarchies and acknowledged relations of power."[343]

In addition, the textbook version of the above letter listed major classical allusions and terms in the upper register of the page with brief notes, which was also a new strategy adopted by the editor of the textbook for readers' benefit, thereby making letter writing more accessible. These allusions were not easy to understand without competency in Chinese literature or using reference books. *Menggu* 夢轂 (lit., dream and hub of wheel), for example, appears with a note stating: "the longing in the dream is like the rotation of the hub of a wheel" 夢中思念如車輪之

[343] Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, 65.

轉也. *Jigua* 及瓜 (lit., to wait until the ripening of a melon), which was from *The Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳) and short for *jigua erdai* 及瓜而代, refers to the termination of one's official term and one's replacement by another official. Both allusions appear in *Qiushui xuan*. The allusive style of Ding's letters conceivably increased the appeal of *Gaodeng jiaoben* among readers who were keen on learning the art of classical letter writing and the decorous expression of sociability, as seen in contemporary readers' reception of *Qiushui xuan*.

The above letter, one of many examples showing the textual excision in the textbook version, reveals what the editor might consider as dispensable or outdated as pedagogical sources of letter writing; the new contents that were added to the textbook version, on the other hand, reflect three topics that were common in fictive samples composed by males, including overseas study, the anti-footbinding campaign, and concerns of political affairs.[344] First of all, the textbook version calls attention to overseas study: "My fifth younger brother has not carried out his plan of studying in Japan and the reason, I heard, is that he has not yet received the official document" 五舍弟遊學日本，迄今尚未成行，聞係咨文未領到故也.[345] This addition, along with the deletions of texts relevant to the imperial examinations in the textbook version shown above, reveals sweeping sociocultural transformations in 1907, when "studying abroad was to become

[344] For example, in another letter-writing manual for women published in the same year 1907, there were four fictive samples on overseas study: "Zhi Baoxiong: Shu fumei qingxing" 致胞兄：述赴美情形 [To my brother: Narrating the situation of going to America]; "Zhi Tangjie: Yue fu Riben youxue" 致堂姊：約赴日本遊學 [To my senior cousin: Invitation to study in Japan]; "Fu Tangmei: Ci fu Ri youxue" 復堂妹：辭赴日遊學 [A reply to my junior cousin: Declining to study in Japan]; "Zhi liuxue mouzi tie: Gao huiguo" 致留學某姊帖：告回國 [To a certain senior sister who studies abroad: On my return]. Also, there were four letters on anti-footbinding and three letters on public affairs. See Anonymous, *Zuixin nüzi chidu jiaoben* 最新女子尺牘教本 [Newest epistolary textbook for women] (Shanghai: Zhangfuji shuzhuang, 1907).

[345] Ding, "Zhi Wanhui Liang furen: Qi yi" 致婉蕙梁夫人：其一 [The first of six letters to Mrs. Liang, Wanhui], in *GDNZCDJB*, 23b–24a.

the basic requirement for entrance into government service."[346] Second, the 1907 version adds a short passage to another letter, discouraging the footbinding of young girls:

> Your fifth daughter has gradually grown up. You, my younger sister, let her body grow naturally and did not bind her feet, preventing her from suffering bodily constraints. This is definitely wise and unprecedented. Your advocacy should be noted once the new custom permeates our society and the degenerate practice completely ends in the future.
> 五甥女日見長成，吾妹一任其天然，不為纏足，免束縛肢體之苦，具徵賢明卓識，絕後空前。他日上行下效，頹風一旦盡除，悉吾妹倡率之功也。[347]

The newly added lines on the problem of footbinding were possibly inspired by Ding's narration of her feet ailment, but they were also in line with the growing anti-footbinding campaign during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The addition of anti-footbinding rhetoric echoed contemporaneous Chinese male nationalists, who linked women's bound feet with the symbolic poignancy of China's national shame and considered the eradication of footbinding a prerequisite for China's parity with Europe and America.[348]

Last but not the least, the addition of a letter on the Opium War between China and Britain to the textbook, the **only letter** completely unseen in *Shuanggui xuan*, bespeaks the sensibility of the textbook editor: keeping readers apprised of political affairs and cultivating a political awareness in female students. In this letter to a certain Mrs. Xu 徐, the relevant part reads:

> I accompanied my husband to his official post and managed the household chores. Because of the clutter of "rice and salt," I feel ashamed about my poor

[346] For Chinese overseas students in Japan, see Marius Jansen, "Japan and the Chinese Revolution of 1911," in John K. Fairbank and Kwang-Ching Liu, eds., *The Cambridge History of China: Late Ch'ing, 1800–1911, Part 2* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 339–74.
[347] Ding, "Zhi Wanhui Liang furen: Qi er," in *GDNZCDJB*, 24b–25a.
[348] Ko, *Cinderella's Sisters*.

> management. Luckily, my family members are all safe, and thank you for your kind consideration. The negotiations in central Zhejiang are getting more intricate. Now Yi Jing 奕經 has been appointed as Yangwei General and is responsible for the negotiations. The foreigners covet Dinghai, Zhejiang; Amoy, Fujian; and Hong Kong, Guangdong. They have been to Ningbo and asked General Yu Zisong to pass on their requests to the emperor. This situation has been reported to the court, but we do not know how the court will deal with it. The military force is so [disconcerting]; therefore, to fight or to defend are both difficult. Although I am sitting in the inner chamber, I cannot help but feel frightened and anxious (see *Appended Texts* for the entire letter).
>
> 妹隨唱衙齋，料量內政，惟米鹽之凌雜，愧經紀之多疏。所幸闔署平安，為可告抒綺注。浙中交涉，日益紛拏。現聞簡放奕協揆為揚威將軍，前往督辦。彼族欲得浙之定海、閩之廈門、粵之香港。撥與地段鬧市，前於寧波投書余紫松提軍，囑其轉達天聽，聞已據情入奏，第不知廟算若何。兵勢如此，戰守俱難。我輩身處深閨，亦不無驚心蒿目也。[349]

According to the historical events described in the above extract, the writing of this letter was in the winter of 1841, which dated much earlier than most letters dated 1852 or 1853. The discrepancy in dates and the absence of this letter in *Shuanggui xuan* suggest this letter, like the content of overseas study and anti-footbinding rhetoric, was possibly fabricated by the editor of *Gaodeng jiaoben*. Admittedly, this letter could probably have been written by Ding herself in 1841 and was then collected later by the editor who considered it relevant and had it published only in 1907. In either case, the textbook version echoed prevailing trends of incorporating current affairs into model letters to direct women's attention toward national crises and build a national identity "within existing cultural traditions," as seen in other late-Qing textbooks for

[349] Ding, "Zhi Xu furen" 致徐夫人 [To Mrs. Xu], in *GDNZCDJB*, 45b–46a.

women.[350]

By excising or adding epistolary substance and components as well as providing notes for allusions and idioms, the 1907 version fundamentally transformed the purposes of publishing Ding's letters from recording her life and preserving her literary merits to transmitting epistolary knowledge to women, involving them in functional writing and China's reform agenda.

4.5 Conclusion

Compared to *Qiushui xuan*, the social influence of *Shuanggui xuan* was certainly less prominent, but it was still circulated among readers and reprinted by publishers.[351] Ding Shanyi's correspondence reflects the ways in which gentlewomen's letters textualize family and other relationships, mirroring nineteenth-century Chinese social and gender hierarchies through modes of address, language, style, and tone. In its entirety, Ding's correspondence illustrates the breadth of social contacts that numerous women of her status enjoyed, which were at times geographically far-flung and often extended well beyond household and family. In her letters to wives of imperial officials, Ding skilfully applied allusions that conveyed a sense of closeness, and, in some cases, she attached poems to strengthen her emotional bonds with these ladies. More subtly, the rhetorical techniques of her letters were useful in building and maintaining alliances between official families. By accompanying gifts and poems or sending inquiries about health, letters played a pivotal role in the lives of elite wives. In this sense, gentlewomen like Ding, empowered by their epistolary competency, engaged in the politics of their time and

[350] Judge, "Meng Mu Meets the Modern," 134.

[351] The textbook edition was reprinted by the same publisher in 1912. See Liu Jingchao 劉景超, *Qingmo Minchu nüzi jiaoke shu de wenhua texing* 清末民初女子教科書的文化特性 [The cultural character of textbooks for women in late Qing and early Republican China] (Beijing: Zhishi chanquan chubanshe, 2015), 58.

exerted an invisible but real bearing on the social engagement and mobility of their husbands. The potential function of gentlewomen's letters in forming sociopolitical alliances blurred the boundaries of "inner" and "outer" space of gentry households, demonstrating literary women's sociability outside the family.

The choice to adapt Ding's letter collection as a textbook, though likely motivated by personal connections, was reasonable because it contained the basic social rituals in the form of letter writing and signalled the cultural capital utilized in the initial period of promoting women's education. Letters from women of elite families proved to be fitting sources for educating female students in the felicitous manners of gentility, so the publisher of the textbook version, albeit in line with the discourse of reforming China, preserved the late imperial epistolary format and provided explanations of classical allusions to popularize epistolary knowledge. To conclude, the process of adapting *Shuanggui xuan* as a textbook leaves a unique trace of the changing modes of epistolary communication that began in the last decades of the Qing dynasty.

Chapter 5 Communicating Patriotism in Model Letters for Businessmen

5.1 Introduction

> Every category in this volume contains several sample letters on patriotism that awaken businessmen to the immorality of coveting profits while ignoring public welfare. The earnest instructions herein specifically place great hopes on the world of businessmen [to address this problem].
> 是編每一門中必列愛國尺牘數則，藉以喚醒商人重利忘公之劣德。而諄諄勸勉，尤於商界有厚望焉。[352]

The above excerpt is from an eight-volume letter-writing manual for businessmen first published in 1916, *Grand Treasury of Classified Patriotic Letters* (*Fenlei Aiguo chidu hongbao* 分類愛國尺牘鴻寶, hereafter *Aiguo chidu*). This manual belongs to an established tradition of epistolary manuals for businessmen that circulated widely during the Ming and Qing periods. However, what distinguishes it from others is its transmission of the patriotic ideology that was engendered by national crises in the 1910s. By focusing on this manual, I examine the general changes in model letters for businessmen in early twentieth-century China.

The development of commerce during the Ming and Qing periods gave rise to a distinct genre of epistolary manuals for businessmen within a broader genre of merchant manuals (*shangye shu* 商業書 or *shangren shu* 商人書).[353] These manuals reflect the spirit of the

[352] "Fanli" 凡例 [General principles], in Jiqing shi 霽青氏, ed., *Fenlei Aiguo chidu hongbao* (hereafter *AGCD*), vol. 1 (Shanghai: Jiangdong shuju, 1916), 1b.

[353] For a review, see Richard John Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants: Commerce and Self-Cultivation in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997); Chen Xuewen 陳學文, *Ming Qing shiqi shangye shu ji shangren shu zhi yanjiu* 明清時期商業書及商人書之研究 [A study of the merchant manuals in the Ming and Qing periods] (Taibei: Hongye wenhua youxian gongsi, 1997); and Chiu Peng-sheng (Qiu Pengsheng) 邱澎生, "Ming Qing Zhongguo shangye shu zhong de lunli yu daode lunshu" 明清中國商業書中的倫理與道德論述 [The discourse of ethics and morality in the merchant manuals of Ming and Qing China],

commercial world and the mentality of the merchants of the time, and thus they have long been used by Chinese and Japanese scholars as historical sources to uncover the commercial culture of late imperial China.[354] Since these merchant manuals contain rich information related to travel, they have been called "Route Books" in Timothy Brook's annotated bibliography.[355] In his monograph on this genre, Richard Lufrano suggests that the realistic and detailed instructions of these merchant manuals aimed to direct readers to become both prosperous businessmen and respectable gentlemen. Confucian-influenced education equipped apprentices or "mid-level merchants" not only with commercial skills, but also with social knowledge and ways of self-cultivation. As such, Confucian thought and merchant practice were not incompatible. Merchants were expected to "achieve an 'inner mental attentiveness,' subdue selfish desires, distinguish good from evil, and practice reciprocity."[356] The epistolary manuals for businessmen were sometimes a sub-category of the merchant manuals. For example, the sixth volume of *The Merchant's Guide* (*Shanggu bianlan* 商賈便覽, dated 1792), a key merchant manual examined in Lufrano's book, consists of "form letters, along with the appropriate replies, covering such

in *Dang jingji yushang falü: Ming Qing Zhongguo de shichang yanhua* 當經濟遇上法律：明清中國的市場演化 [When economics met law: The evolution of the market in Ming and Qing China] (Taibei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2018), 351–94.

354 For earlier works on Chinese merchant manuals, see, for example, Ju Qingyuan 鞠清遠 (fl. 1930s), "Qing kaiguan qianhou de sanbu shangren zhuzuo" 清開關前後的三部商人著作 [Three works published around the juncture of Manchu army's conquest] (1937), in Bao Zunpeng 包遵彭 and Li Dingyi 李定一, eds., *Zhongguo jindaishi luncong: Shehui jingji* 中國近代史論叢：社會經濟 [Compilation of modern Chinese history: Social economy], vol. 2 (Beijing: Zhengzhong shuju, 1958), 205–44; Terada Takanobu 寺田隆信, "Min Shin jidai no shōgyō sho ni tsuite" 明清時代の商業書について [On the merchant manuals of the Ming and Qing periods], *Tōyōgaku* 東洋學 20 (1968): 111–26; Morita Akira 森田明, "*Shōku benran* ni tsuite" 『商賈便覽』について [On guide for traders and shopkeepers], *Fukuoka Daigaku kenkyūjo hō* 福岡大學研究所報 16 (1972): 1–28.

355 Timothy Brook, *Geographical Sources of Ming-Qing History* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Center for Chinese Studies, 1988).

356 Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants*, 2.

diverse subjects as borrowing silver, recommending clerks, requesting market information, purchasing goods, consoling someone who had been robbed, and inviting others to establish business relationships."[357] These topics still appear in commercial manuals in the early twentieth century, when epistolary manuals for businessmen continued to develop on a comparatively larger scale and displayed many new features. However, these manuals remain mostly unexplored in existing scholarship.[358]

Before delving into *Aiguo chidu*, I will briefly introduce some general features of epistolary guides for businessmen in the early twentieth century. Model letters for businessmen can be found in manuals with titles containing the character for "business" (*shang* 商)—e.g., "business professions" (*shangye* 商業), "business affairs" (*shangwu* 商務), or "business uses" (*shangyong* 商用)—as well as in general-purpose letter manuals under the category of "world of businessmen" (*shangjie* 商界) or in letter manuals intended for apprentices (*xuetu* 學徒).[359] Most of these manuals were written in classical Chinese, but vernacular model letters emerged to make letter writing more accessible to a wider audience. *Vernacular Letters for General Business Use* (*Putong shangye yingyong baihua chidu* 普通商業應用白話尺牘, first edition dated 1909), for example, is in the vernacular language to teach young apprentices, "which are easier to

[357] Lufrano, *Honorable Merchants*, 2.
[358] For an introduction of ten model letters in the Republican period, see Wang Zhenzhong, "Huizhou shangye wenhua de yige cemian: Fanying Minguo shiqi Shanghai Huizhou xuetu shenghuo de shifeng shuxin" 徽州商業文化的一個側面——反映民國時期上海徽州學徒生活的十封書信 [A facet of business culture of Huizhou: Ten letters on the life of apprentices from Huizhou in Republican Shanghai], *Fudan xuebao (Shehui kexue ban)* 復旦學報 (社會科學版) 4 (1999): 86–93.
[359] I translate *shang* 商 into "business" instead of "commerce" because epistolary manuals for businessmen in the first half of twentieth-century China include a wide range of topics not limited to trading, as the term "commerce" normally implies, but extending to manufacturing and other forms of enterprise.

imitate and therefore, yield more benefits" 易於楷模，則得益反多.[360] The preface of this manual, dated 1908, differentiates letters for businessmen from the highbrow epistolary literature of "men of letters" (*wenren moshi* 文人墨士) and attaches importance to the compilation of this genre:

> The ancients said: "A man has the ambition to travel around the world." From a very young age, sons of merchants' families must travel to learn the skills of business. After leaving home, when they need to discuss matters with their families, they are unable to talk freely in person as they can do at home, so the use of letters emerges. Gradually, they exchange letters with friends and commercial partners. As the ways of the world become increasingly complicated, the use of letters is expanding.
> 古人云："男兒志在四方。"商賈子弟從小必須出門學業，出門之後，有事與家中人商榷，不能如在家之時可以當面暢譚[談]，則尺牘之用起矣。自後漸有朋友往還，漸有生意出入。人事漸煩，則尺牘之用亦漸廣.[361]

The goal of compiling letters for commerce went beyond epistolary instruction to encompass social and moral guidance, "deepening one's experience in the world."[362] In this sense, the early twentieth-century letter manuals for businessmen shared the same intention of cultivating worldly wisdom and hence related features with their nineteenth-century counterparts, such as *Zhinan chidu* discussed in Chapter 2.

While some epistolary manuals for businessmen were still written in classical Chinese, the content of their model letters reflects ongoing social changes. *The Newest Epistolary Textbook for Business Affairs* (*Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu* 最新商務尺牘教科書, first dated 1907),

[360] Chen Fengmu 陳鳳慕, "Xu" 序 [Preface], Chen Yemei 陳也梅, ed., *Putong shangye yingyong baihua chidu* 普通商業應用白話尺牘 [Vernacular letters for general business use], 21st ed., vol. 1 (Shanghai: Zhaoji shuzhuang, 1927), 1b.
[361] Chen, "Xu," in *Putong shangye yingyong baihua chidu*, vol. 1, 1a–b.
[362] "Fanli" 凡例 [General principles], in *Putong shangye yingyong baihua chidu*, vol. 1, 2b.

for example, displays a unique mix of traditional and new content.[363] This textbook consists of two volumes. The first volume introduces basic characters, phrases, and sentences, which can be applied to all epistolary situations. In particular, there are 155 new phrases in a lesson of "phrases of the new learning" (*xinxueyu* 新學語), which covers many highly-debated topics of the day (see Figure 5-1).[364]

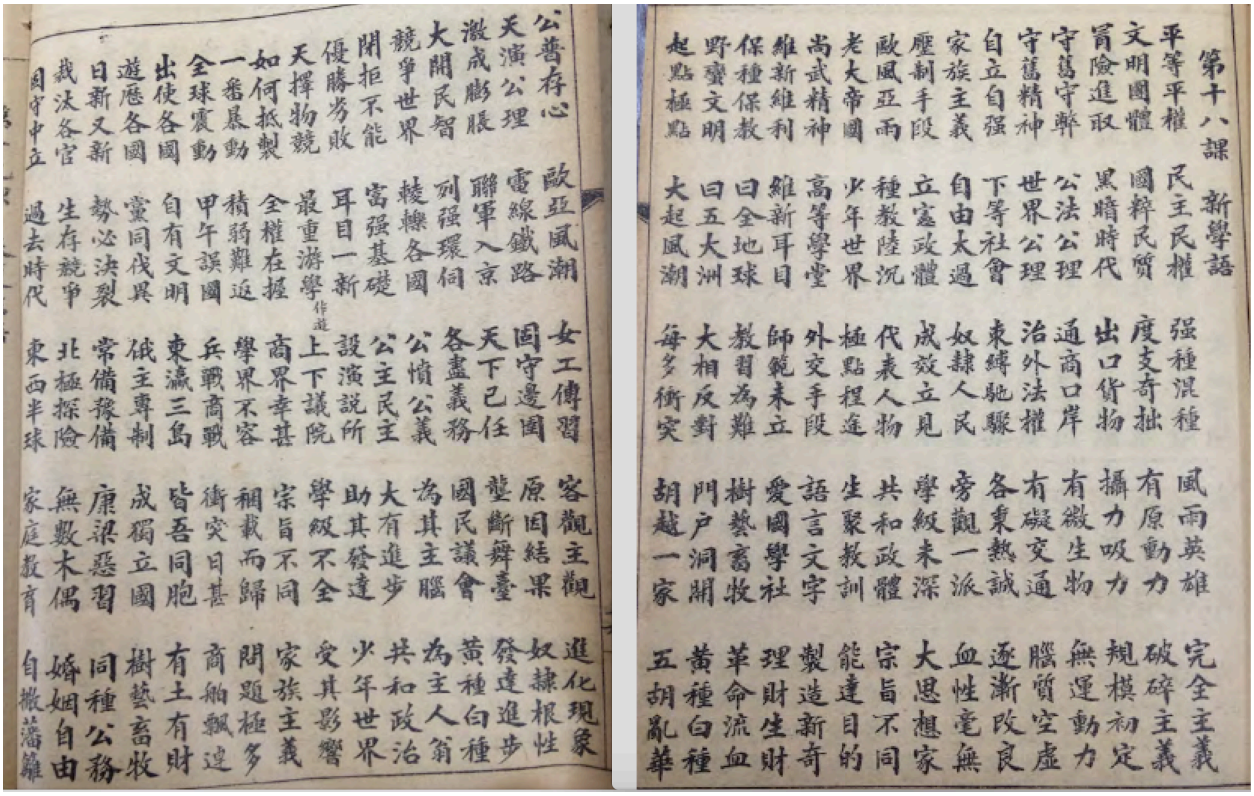

Figure 5-1: A lesson of "phrases of the new learning" (*xinxueyu* 新學語)

Some terms related to business like "transportation" (*jiaotong* 交通) and "commercial war" (*shangzhan* 商戰) appear frequently in other epistolary manuals for businessmen, such as *Aiguo*

[363] This textbook was reprinted for the 36th time in 1940 by Shanghai Hongwen shuju 鴻文書局. Its content varies from edition to edition.
[364] Zhou Tianpeng 周天鵬, ed., *Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu* 最新商務尺牘教科書 [Newest epistolary textbook for business affairs], 2nd ed. vol. 1 (Shanghai: Huiwen shushe, 1913), 16a–b.

chidu that I will discuss. According to its compiler, the textbook was compiled to respond to the "commercial war" in which business letters required prompt attention in business fields 商務尺牘為商場飛速之件.[365] The second volume of this textbook provides model letters that are organized into forty-six categories of commercial negotiation or transaction, covering the industries of food, clothing, mining, stationery, finance, manufacturing, pharmacy, communication, and others. The two illustrations in the second volume depict modern technologies of communication and transportation.

Figure 5-2: Illustrations of a telephone (*delüfeng* 德律風) and a train at a station

In her new book on Chinese railroads, Elisabeth Köll explores how railroads participated in and responded to new trends in the Chinese economy and society "through the institutional prism of

[365] Zhou Tianpeng, "Ba" 跋 [Postscript], in *Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu*, vol. 2, 48b.

their business operations and strategic responses."[366] She argues that "the increasing adaptation and standardization of freight business, taxation, and commercial practices into the operational management of railroads" were "part of the modernization process that came to characterize China's economy during the Republican period."[367] While Köll makes a point that "railroads in the early Republican period were unable to foster a strong sense of national belonging"[368] among contemporary Chinese people who would thus less likely view themselves as members of a nation, it is necessary to note that the railroad was often associated with national concerns in letter-writing manuals for businessmen, as seen in *Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu*. For example, in a model letter on fundraising for a railway, the writer begins with the complaint that the fundraising is failing to achieve its goal because wealthy people are reluctant to donate. He criticizes the wealthy for not realizing that the loss of railway rights will lead to the loss of territory, which will threaten Chinese lives since their houses are located in this territory, so the fate of China is as tenuous as a thread, and the Chinese are gravely imperilled.[369] This concern is shared by another letter, which denigrates the wealthy as "animals" (*qinshou* 禽獸), inferior even to prostitutes who are delivering public speeches to promote the fundraising. The author of this letter notes that the foreigners will disregard Chinese as worthless if they know about the ignorance of the wealthy.[370]

The evolution of letter manuals for businessmen in the new century, a virtually uncharted territory, can be discerned in the themes of their sample letters, many of which discussed multifarious topics of the day. Lin Wanli 林萬里 (original name Lin Xie 林獬, also known by

[366] Elisabeth Köll, *Railroads and the Transformation of China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), 92.
[367] Köll, *Railroads and the Transformation of China*, 93.
[368] Köll, *Railroads and the Transformation of China*, 130.
[369] Zhou, ed., *Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu xuji*, 8a–b.
[370] Zhou, ed., *Zuixin shangwu chidu jiaokeshu xuji*, 9a.

his pen name Baishui 白水, 1874–1926) was among the pioneering compilers of epistolary manuals that incorporated political affairs. According to Joan Judge, Lin was recognized as the first Chinese to study journalism abroad: he went to Japan to study law and journalism at Waseda University. In 1903, he returned to China and wrote for a number of newspapers, including *Shibao*, *Minli bao*, and *Jingzhong ribao*.[371] Compared to his prominent career in running newspapers, Lin's compilation of school textbooks and letter manuals has not received much attention, especially the latter. His *New Letters for Commerce* (*Shangye xin chidu* 商業新尺牘) and *A Handy Collection of Letters for Students* (*Xuesheng bianyong chidu* 學生便用尺牘, first edition dated 1910) were said to be popular across the country after their publication 出版后風行全國.[372] In fact, *Xuesheng bianyong chidu* was reprinted fifty-five times during sixteen years before Lin was put to death for criticizing warlord intrigue in 1926. According to Lin's criteria for effective epistolary interaction, composing letters without conveying overt political concerns was effectively a waste of time. For example, a sample reply to a letter that sent New Year greetings, a conventional topic in letter manuals, states overtly disapproval of this routine exchange: "According to mundane convention, people exchange greetings at the beginning of the year. Platitudes come and go, but people do not find them meaningless. What a strange thing!"[373]

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[371] Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: 'Shibao' and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 210. For Lin's works, see Lin Weigong 林偉功, ed., *Lin Baishui wenji* 林白水文集 [Collection of Lin Baishui's essays] (Fuzhou: Fuzhoushi xinwen chubanju, 2006)；Fujian sheng Lin Baishui yanjiu hui 福建省林白水研究會, ed., *Lin Baishui wenxuan* 林白水文選 [Selected works of Lin Baishui] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2016); for studies of Lin, see Lin Lixin 林立新, ed., *Baojie xianqu Lin Baishui yanjiu lunwen ji* 報界先驅林白水研究論文集 [Collection of papers on Lin Baishui, a pioneer of the press] (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2008).

[372] Lin, ed., *Xuesheng bianyong chidu*, front cover, 27th ed. (Shanghai: Huiwentang shuju, 1919).

[373] "He Xinnian fushu" 賀新年復書 [A reply to the New Year greetings], in Lin, ed., *Xuesheng*

By highlighting the preference for a certain type of political and economic information over others, the art of correspondence was thus redefined and reoriented. Lin's model letters concern a series of hotly debated matters, aiming to enlighten the minds of Chinese people or strengthen their bodies.[374]

As a journalist, Lin explained how reading newspapers would benefit all four strata of Chinese society, namely, the literati, peasants, workers, and merchants. He asked: "In terms of someone running a business, he depends totally on getting quick and well-informed news. If newspapers are unavailable, how can one get news on anything?" 若說做生意的人，全靠消息靈通。沒有報看，那裡都能曉得呢?[375] The importance of reading newspapers is reiterated in his model letters that combine current affairs with commercial activities. An example pays special attention to the influence of reading newspapers on the business practice since businessmen should be aware of the external situation rather than being indifferent to everything; otherwise,

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bianyong chidu, vol. 2, 28.

[374] For example, a letter model about inviting one's friend to join the Athletic Association (*tiyuhui* 體育會) reads:

> In terms of present-day state power, if Chinese students do not unite, undertake physical training, and dedicate to martial arts, it will certainly be difficult to defend our country in the future. The establishment of this Association is indeed an urgent task…There is a longstanding custom of weakness lingering in our nation; and the literati and scholars have been mocked by foreigners for their physical weakness. In an era of fierce competition among nations, if our citizens do not keep up their spirits and pursue martial arts, we will not be able to resist external humiliation and defend our nation…
> 以今日之國勢而論, 非合全國學生, 同習體操, 提倡尚武, 將來必難以衛我國家。此會之設, 實為萬不可緩之舉……吾國積弱之風, 已成習慣; 而文人學士, 尤以手無縛雞之力, 貽笑外邦. 際此世界競爭劇烈之秋, 苟國民猶不早謀振作精神, 力求尚武, 誠無以御外侮而衛國家……

"Jiyou qing ru tiyuhui" 寄友請入體育會 [Inviting a friend to join the Athletic Association], in Lin, ed., *Xuesheng bianyong chidu*, vol. 1, 28–29.

[375] Xuanfanzi 宣樊子, "Lun kanbao de haochu" 論看報的好處 [Discussing the benefits of reading newspapers] (1901), in *Lin Baishui wenji*, 4.

the business will fail as a minor consequence while the country will be in great peril as a serious consequence. Therefore, foreign businessmen were considered models for following current affairs and possessing comprehensive knowledge, which enabled them to occupy an advantageous position.[376] Lin's exhortation for businessmen to concern themselves with current affairs followed the new trend of discussing current affairs in everyday correspondence; letter-writing manuals thus became a forum to disseminate news and miscellaneous ideas.

In my M.A. thesis, I outlined the epistolary occasions of six popular textbooks that contain topical issues. For example, *Complete Collection of Letters for Students in a New Age* (*Xin shidai xuesheng chidu daquan* 新時代學生尺牘大全, first edition dated 1920) contains an informative preface showing the editor's discontent with other letter manuals, which are accused of being replete with "empty sentences and formulaic patterns" (*xuwen suge* 虛文俗格).[377] According to the preface, it is a shame that letter manuals on the market barely contain letters of debates, which should be the "mainstay" (*zhenghu* 正鵠) of letters exchanged by students. For this reason, model letters therein are organized into three broad categories (*bian* 編), the first of which is "on learning" (*lunxue* 論學). Under this category, there are seventy-seven model letters in total, which are classified into five subcategories: self-cultivation (*xiuyang* 修養), scholarship (*xueshu* 學術), literature and the arts (*wenyi* 文藝), hygiene (*weisheng* 衛生), and miscellaneous discussions (*zalun* 雜論).[378] As sources of information and a means of articulating opinions, sample letters played a similar role as "letters to the editors," which

[376] "Jiyou quan yuebao" 寄友勸閱報 [Encouraging a friend to read newspapers], in *Xuesheng bianyong chidu*, vol. 4, 28–29.
[377] Shen Weijun 沈維鈞, "Xuyan" 序言 [Preface], in Shijie shuju 世界書局, ed., *Xin shidai xuesheng chidu daquan*, 26th ed. (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1933), 1.
[378] For more information, see Cai, *Minguo xuesheng de shuxin jiaoyu yanjiu*, 27–35; 50–53.

deserve attention as "an individual, voluntary form of political participation" in the "imagined public sphere."[379] While I am not arguing that epistolary manuals examined here formed a "public sphere" in Republican China, it is useful to identify the connection between sample letters and public letters, which "provide a flexible medium," "making new uses socially intelligible at the same time allowing the form of the communication to develop in new directions."[380]

In her study of letter manuals in France and England in the eighteenth century, Janet Altman demonstrates that "political ideology" was embodied in model letters.[381] Altman's astute observation led me to consider how the symbolic functions of letters were complicated in early Republican China by the evolving relationship between the nation-state and the individual—a relationship that I refer to as a "political ideology." This ideology underpinned Chinese letter-writing manuals during the first half of the twentieth century. Like other contemporaneous print media intended for a mass audience, letter-writing manuals were replete with nationalistic content that was borne out of concern for empowering and enriching the nation. This motivation, at first glance, seems unrelated to epistolary instructions, but it reflects the changing social and political context of the day by articulating a new sociopolitical dimension in written

[379] Natascha Gentz, "Opinions Going Public: Letters to the Editors in China's Earliest Modern Newspapers," in Richter, ed., *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 901.
[380] Charles Bazerman, "Letters and the Social Grounding of Differentiated Genres," in Barton and Hall, eds., *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, 15.
[381] In Altman's analysis, "political ideology" refers to a hierarchical order intertwined with conceptions of class, rank, gender, and religion. By comparing popular letter manuals by three writers, Samuel Richardson and his predecessors, Thomas Goodman and John Hill, Altman argues that their manuals essentially represented different social groups: Goodman's and Hill's model letters contained the self-reliant voices of youths, apprentices, debtors, and women, while the fictional correspondents in Richardson's letters were taught to rely on traditional authority figures, such as masters, parents, and God in his judgment in the after-life. See Janet G. Altman, "Political Ideology in the Letter Manual (France, England, New England)," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 18 (1988): 104–22.

correspondence. These sample letters served not only as models for epistolary form, but also as normative guides for epistolary content.

Aiguo chidu, with its explicitly patriotic stance, is a case in point. Originally published by Jiangdong 江東 Press in Shanghai in 1916, *Aiguo chidu* was printed in response to the Japanese Twenty-One Demands posed to the Chinese government in 1915, then headed by Yuan Shikai 袁世凱 (1859–1916). On May 9th, Yuan acceded to some of these demands that attempted to extend Japanese control over China, which was viewed as a great humiliation. The Twenty-One Demands were the first claim on China that was remembered with a National Humiliation Day (*guochi ri* 國恥日), the first that initiated the inclusion of the term national humiliation in school texts, and the first that prompted an emphasis on "the importance of education, both 'spiritual education' in school and popular education, as a vehicle to arouse people's patriotism."[382] Model letters in *Aiguo chidu*, which to my knowledge have not been examined in previous studies, showcase this political ethos and increase the meanings of epistolary manuals for businessmen. While I will analyze how these model letters promulgated the prevailing discourse of nationalistic patriotism, the focus of this chapter is to address how this pedagogical genre evolved in the new sociopolitical context.

[382] Zhitian Luo, "National Humiliation and National Assertion: The Chinese Response to the Twenty-One Demands," *Modern Asian Studies* 27.2 (1993): 312.

Figure 5-3: Cover images of the author's edition of *Aiguo chidu*

5.2 The Major Components of *Aiguo chidu*: Preface, Categories, and Model Letters

The immediate intended audience of *Aiguo chidu* was businessmen who were engaged in industrial and commercial enterprises. According to its preface, facilitating long-distance communication alongside extensive commercial activities was crucial to the success of the nation. This preface begins by attributing China's impoverished financial situation to the lack of commercial prosperity, which shored up the advocacy of a "commercial war" among anxious Chinese people. As a result, the "state dignitaries" (*zhengfu zhu jugong* 政府諸巨公) took the lead in setting up the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company (*zhaoshangju* 招商局) to monopolize the profits of river and sea transportation as well as telegraph offices and post offices to monopolize the profits of correspondence.[383] While the names of these "state dignitaries" are

[383] "*Zuixin shangye aiguo chidu xu*" 最新商業愛國尺牘序 [Preface to the newest patriotic

not specified, the preface suggests several influential reformers who participated in the "Self-Strengthening Movement," a series of institutional reforms in response to the external and internal crises in the late Qing.[384] The concept of "commercial war" was advanced in this context to develop the domestic economy, in particular, modern industrial enterprises, and to recognize the businessmen's role in national survival and prosperity.[385] The founding of the China Merchants' Steam Navigation Company in 1872[386] and the operation of the Imperial Telegraph Administration from 1881[387] were under the influence of the concept of "commercial war" and were part of the Self-Strengthening Movement.[388]

The preface proceeds to warn that the "commercial war" concerns "state dignitaries" as well as the general public, since China's inherent economic rights (*guyou zhi liquan* 固有之利權) will in the end be seized by foreigners if the Chinese fail to promote the "commercial war" to maximize its benefits. As such, China's most urgent need is to develop trade, as the text of the preface states:

> Therefore, whether there is trade or not concerns the benefit of the people and the prosperity of the nation. If we want to enrich the nation, we must first maintain

letters in the field of business], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, 1a.

[384] On the Self-Strengthening Movement, see, for example, Mary Clabaugh Wright, *The Last Stand of Chinese Conservatism: The T'ung-Chih Restoration, 1862–1874* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957).

[385] For the main ideas of contributors to the concept of the "commercial war," especially Zheng Guanying 鄭觀應 (1842–1921), see, for example, Karl Gerth, *China Made: Consumer Culture and the Creation of the Nation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 59–60.

[386] Chi-kong Lai, "Li Hung-chang and Modern Enterprise: The China Merchants' Company, 1872–1885," *Chinese Studies in History* 25.1 (1991): 19–51.

[387] Telegraphy was first introduced into China by missionaries in 1852. On its history in China, see Yongming Zhou, *Historicizing Online Politics: Telegraphy, the Internet, and Political Participation in China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 19–127.

[388] The Imperial Post Office was established in 1896 after the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese war, which ended the Self-Strengthening Movement with China's humiliating defeat by Japan. On the early history of Chinese Post Office, see Tsai, "The Qing Empire's Last Flowering."

> business as a priority. One should know that the ins and outs of business are from time to time hindered by the mountains and rivers and confined by territorial boundaries. If one wants to convey the conditions and discuss matters, letters would be an effective means. Thus, although letter writing is a minor skill, the thoughts and wording therein matter a great deal. Everyone in the business community should enthusiastically study the art of correspondence [for these reasons].
>
> 是以商通有無，能利民斯能富國，欲富吾國，必先維持商業為要務。不知商業中之出入，有時不免為山川所阻，疆域所限，欲達其情，以述其事，則尺牘尚矣！顧是尺牘雖小道，而著想措詞，關係甚大，凡商界中人，不得不熱心研究. [389]

To maintain trade relations, people must communicate through letters, which necessitates the study of the epistolary art. The preface also identifies the basic attributes of acceptable manuals and points out the problems with current circulating manuals, which the author claims had prompted him to compile a new manual pertinent to current topics and political realities. Therefore, although the literary value of model letters in this collection may not compete with those written by illustrious authors, they are considered innovative and original in terms of the patriotic ideas that businessmen have never expressed. Furthermore, these letters are well organized and herald a new age of gathering profit while taking public welfare into account: "In these words lie profit, and in profit lies power. The future profits can strengthen the inherent power of the nation, preventing it from being seized by foreign nations" 言中有利，利中有權，將來之利，能聚諸國中固有之權，不達於國外.[390] In the end, the text suggests, this epistolary collection in no small part has the intention to discuss the "state system" (*guoti* 國體), to reform and create

[389] "*Zuixin shangye aiguo chidu xu*" in *AGCD*, vol. 1, 1a.
[390] "*Zuixin shangye aiguo chidu xu*" in *AGCD*, vol. 1, 1a.

new methods for the world of business, and to remedy the degenerate practices of the business community: "Is this not an aid to the strengthening of the nation and trade" 豈非富國興商之一助?[391] The relationship between business and the nation is restated in one of the "General Principles" (*fanli* 凡例):

> The relationship between business and the nation is most significant. The slightest mismanagement of the transport of goods will lead to financial loss, which will adversely affect the nation's economy. Therefore, this volume also touches upon [this matter] to help commercial operations prosper.
> 商業與國家關係最巨。交通進出，一有經營不善，立有虧損，而國計受其影響尤非淺鮮。故編於此亦畧述及，以為興商之小補。[392]

While these claims are certainly ambitious and noteworthy, unfortunately for us, the identity of the author(s) remains uncertain. From its colophon, one only learns that this manual was authored by Jiqing shi 霽青氏 from Dantu (in current Zhenjiang, Jiangsu Province).[393]

Like other contemporary letter-writing manuals, *Aiguo chidu* provides practical guides for readers to engage in epistolary practice and other functional writings. which can be seen in its twenty categories: loyalty and patriotism (*zhongai* 忠愛), salutation (*wenhou* 問候), official document (*gongdu* 公牘), congratulation (*qinghe* 慶賀), family letter (*jiashu* 家書),

[391] "*Zuixin shangye aiguo chidu xu*" in *AGCD*, vol. 1, 1a.
[392] "Fanli," in *AGCD*, vol. 1, 1a–b.
[393] Jiqing shi probably refers to Yan Yue 嚴鉞 (fl. the 1930s, Jiqing may be his literary or style name). Most of Yan's writings were published from 1905 to 1939, showing his embrace of Christianity. One of his most distinctive and better-known pieces is his essay against the practice of footbinding, see Yan Jiqing, "Jie chanzu wen" 戒纏足文 [Essay on banning footbinding], *Tongwenbao* 通問報 184 (1905): 10b–11a. Yan disapproved of superstition (because of his conversion to Christianity) and footbinding; both topics were discussed in letter models of *Aiguo chidu*, see *AGCD*, vol. 3, "Jiashu lei," 15a–b; 17a. However, it remains unknown whether he personally engaged in business activities.

exhortation (*guiquan* 規勸), solicitation (*qingtuo* 請託), recommendation (*qiujian* 求薦), appreciation (*ganxie* 感謝), mediation (*paijie* 排解), request and borrowing (*suojie* 索借), prompting (*cuicu* 催促), invitation (*yaoyue* 邀約), gift-presenting (*kuizeng* 餽贈), commendation (*jiangli* 獎勵), denunciation (*jieze* 詰責), tactful defence (*wanbian* 婉辯), rejection (*ciju* 辭拒), consolation (*diaoyan* 吊唁), and contractual template (*qiju* 契據). It includes more than 400 texts and covers the major functions of correspondence at that time (see the appended Table 5).

The first and unique category in this manual is "*zhongai*" (fifteen entries), which includes issues such as remembering national humiliation, purchasing national products, discussing the history of patriotism, advocating commercial war, and encouraging the return of overseas merchants, and others. All sample letters in this category are accompanied by a sample reply, and both samples are headed by a title suggesting the topic to be discussed for readers' easy reference without reading the whole manual (see Figure 5-4).

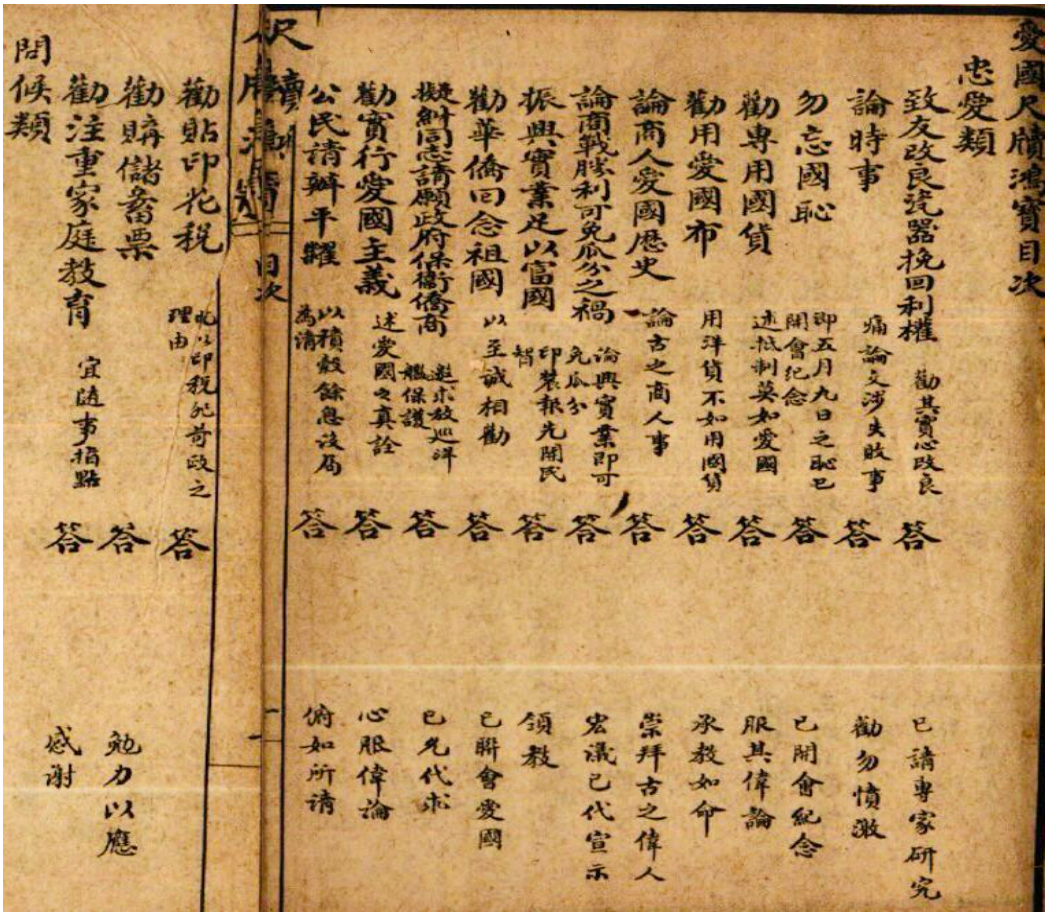

Figure 5-4: Table of contents of the category of "*zhongai*"

While sample letters form the bulk of the content, non-letter texts relevant to commercial activities or Republican policies are included as well, mostly as addenda to the last category of "*qiju*" (around fifty entries). These include templates for selling property/real estate, forms for establishing joint ventures/limited companies, model prefaces for organizing societies, formats for envelopes, ritual proprieties for the Republic of China, graduation certificates, agendas in honour of a national day or a memorial day, literary couplets for business communities, and others.

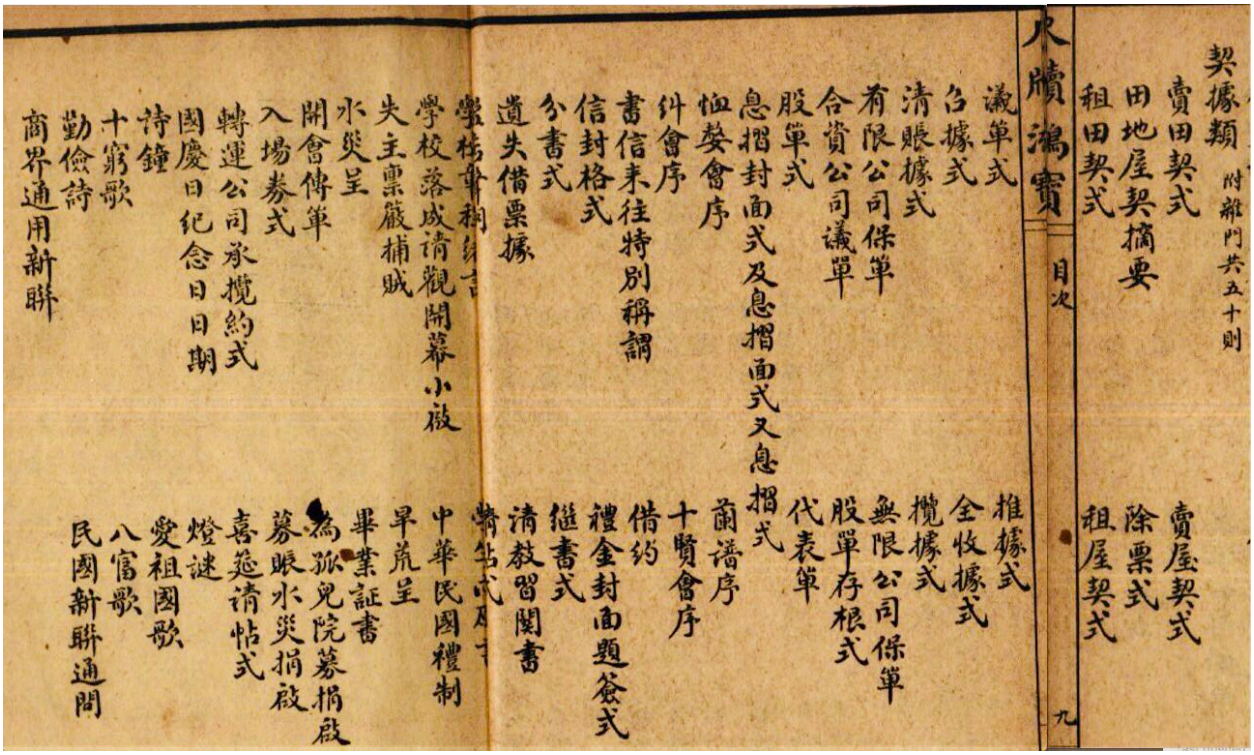

Figure 5-5: Table of contents of the category of "*qiju*"

Strictly speaking, the title "*qiju*" (contractual template) is not exactly accurate to define this category since the documents herein include literary texts from morality books (*shanshu* 善書) of imperial China.[394] Nevertheless, the compiler of *Aiguo chidu* tailored certain elements of these texts to suit the new context. For example, the last two lines of a folk song encouraging hard work and thrift (*qinjian* 勤儉) was changed from "The emperors and officials attend to hundreds of important matters/ How can people tolerate lazy and idle commoners" 天子萬幾官

[394] For example, on *Song of Eight Kinds of Prosperity* (*Bafu ge* 八富歌) and *Song of Ten Kinds of Poverty* (*Shiqiong ge* 十窮歌) in *Aiguo chidu*, see "Shi fu" 十富 [Ten kinds of prosperity] and "Shi qiong" 十窮 [Ten kinds of poverty], in Li Changling 李昌齡, et al., *Taishang ganying pian tushuo* 太上感應篇圖說 [Illustrated explanations on the *Treatise of the Most Exalted One on Moral Retribution*] (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2011), 995. For the most comprehensive study in English of morality books, see Cynthia Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

萬事，豈容惰慢有凡民[395] to "Now the Republic and Democracy have been established/ and [we'd better] engage soon in seasonal affairs to align heaven with earth" 今日共和民主立，早興時務正乾坤.[396] Thus, the subject of honour was changed from the emperor and his officials to the Republican and democratic regime.

A noteworthy piece in the category of "*qiju*" is an unattributed poem titled "A Song of Loving My Motherland" (*Ai zuguo ge* 愛祖國歌). It was, in fact, composed by Gao Xu 高旭 (1877–1925, Sobriquet: Ziyouzhai zhuren 自由齋主人), one of the three co-founders of the Southern Society (Nanshe 南社, active 1909–1923), and was published in the *New Fiction* (*Xin xiaoshuo* 新小說) in 1903.[397] Gao had written many politically sensitive and innovative literary essays that probably circulated in contemporaneous intellectual-official circles. In this work, Gao projected his patriotism by employing the age-old "Encountering Sorrow" (*Li Sao* 離騷) tradition, a classical style that he had used in many of his other works. This style was established by Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340–278 BCE), an illustrious poet known for his loyalty.[398] In this twenty-line poem, the "motherland" is addressed as "You" (*ru* 汝) whose "sickness" worries the solicitous poet. Taking up the restoration of his motherland's "health" (*zhuangjian* 壯健) and "vigour" (*kangqiang* 康強) as his duty, the poet makes his resolution by invoking Qu Yuan's famous line: "I would go up and down to seek my heart's desire" (*wo jiang shangxia er qiusuo* 我將上下而求索).[399] He continues to depict China's promising future in the following lines,

[395] "Qinjian ge" 勤儉歌 [Song of thrift], in Li, *Taishang ganying pian tushuo*, 995.
[396] "Qinjian shi" 勤儉詩 [Poem of thrift], in *AGCD*, vol. 8, "Qiju lei," 23a.
[397] Ziyouzhai zhuren 自由齋主人, "Ai zuguo ge," *Xin xiaoshuo* 8 (1903): 167–68.
[398] Laurence A. Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
[399] On the translations of the title *Li Sao* and the quoted line, see David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u: The*

expressing his hope that China will embrace the waves of freedom and the blossom of civilization:

Your future will ascend in extraordinary splendour,	汝之前途當騰一異彩兮
Your fortune and fate will be as pleasant as the drinking of sweet wine.	汝之福命彷如得飲甘醴
How can this [good fortune] last forever?	安得長此以終古兮
When I think about you, I burst into tears.	我思汝而流涕
You are also a special product of this world;	汝亦世界上特別之産物兮
You have every reason to be proud.	汝原足以驕誇
I would like to be an auspicious phoenix,	我願為祥鳳兮
Flying to faraway lands at will without concealment.	恣披拂八表而莫我遮
To arouse the bright waves of your freedom,	以激起汝自由之錦潮兮
To blow open the fresh blossom of your civilization.	以吹開汝文明之鮮花[400]

The poet ends by emphasizing his emotional attachment to his motherland. The patriotic sentiment of Gao Xu's poem perfectly fits the theme of *Aiguo chidu*, though there might have been other unknown reasons for its inclusion.

Apart from "*zhongai*" and "*qiju*," the other categories in this collection also contain patriotic sample letters. While these letters do not strictly follow the epistolary formulae commonly used by literary communities, as we have discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, they are nevertheless written in the classical style, so formulaic phrases often appear in their openings and endings. The persistence of the classical style suggests that while Republican business letters were generally more forthright, unlike letters by men of letters, and gave due attention to current affairs, unlike letters of the nineteenth century, they still conformed to the traditional epistolary protocols to

Songs of the South (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), 28. In the quoted line, Gao changed Qu Yuan's character for "I" from its classical form, *wu* 吾, to its vernacular form, *wo* 我.

[400] "Ai zuguo ge," in *AGCD*, vol. 8, "Qiju lei," 22a.

avoid any suggestion of the writers' "indiscretions and indelicacies."[401] For example, the following letter by "Hong Chengdian" to "Yang Pinru" and the latter's reply combine traditional routine greetings with contemporary commercial concerns. The five basic components of a formal letter—1) the opening; 2) the compliments; 3) the narration; 4) the ending, and 5) the sign-off / subscription—are numbered in the following translation:

> 1) [Dear] Pinru, my benevolent elder brother, Your Excellency: Time flies since I [lit., your younger brother] bade you farewell last winter. Now the willow turns green and the oriole twitters—it is getting radiant and enchanting.
> 聘儒仁兄閣下，弟自客冬拜別，一轉瞬間，而柳綠鶯啼，皆光明媚矣。
>
> 2) From afar [I] hope your good fortune is increasing and the wellbeing of your family is steadily advancing—this is what [I] am praying for and what will make [me] comforted.
> 遙維福祉加增，潭祺廸吉，為頌為慰。
>
> 3) Here [I] state: I [lit., your younger brother] have been unemployed as always and have nothing good [to report]. [I] originally intended to go to the area north of the Yangtze River to purchase some silkworms in the market. However, a run of wet weather lasted for a whole month, and the sky did not clear up. Moreover, there was a chill in the air, which was aggressive. In terms of the weather, [I] was afraid that the business of silkworms would not be prosperous. Therefore, [I] stay at home and do not travel afar. Fortunately, [my] stubborn body is still in good condition, and [my] appetite is good and rivals that of Lian Po—for laughs.
> 茲啟者：弟鹿鹿如恒，毫無善狀。本拟待趁蠶市，去赴江北一帶稍收繭貨，奈陰雨連綿匝月未曾開霽，而且風寒料峭，咄咄逼人，似此天時，蠶事恐不興旺。爰此仍舊家居，不曾遠出。所幸頑軀尚健啖飯，本領殊不遜於廉頗，一笑。

[401] Dauphin, "Letter-Writing Manuals in the Nineteenth Century," in Chartier, ed., *Correspondence*, 143.

4) [I] respectfully send [my letter] and greetings for the spring [to you].
此上並請春安。

5) Your younger brother, Hong Chengdian, makes a ceremonious bow.
弟洪承典頓首。[402]

Although business letters were not required to show literary skills, this example invokes an elder's hearty appetite by mentioning general Lian Po 廉頗 (BCE 327–243), who was old but still enjoyed his food.[403] Some formulaic phrases in the above letter frequently appear in other contemporary model letters, including "Your Excellency" (*gexia* 閣下), the second part of "compliments," and "making a ceremonious bow" (*dunshou* 頓首). Noticeably, this letter is exchanged between friends, but Hong consciously uses a deferential term of address, "younger brother" (*di* 弟), for self-referencing in the opening, narration, and sign-off and uses an honorific term of address, "benevolent elder brother" (*renxiong* 仁兄) to address Yang.

The same epistolary strategy is applied in the reply, which artificially creates an inscription of hierarchies based on age. In the opening of the reply, Yang borrows the literary trope of "trees in spring weather and twilight clouds" (*chunshu muyun* 春樹暮雲),[404] which invokes the letter writer's longing for the addressee and is also seen in *Qiushui xuan* and *Shuanggui xuan*,[405] to

[402] "Chunji wenhou" 春季問候 [Greetings in the spring], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Wenhou lei," 2a–b.
[403] On Lian Po, see *Shiji* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/shiji/shiji081.html (accessed December 22, 2019).
[404] This trope is from Du Fu's 杜甫 poem "On a Spring Day, Recalling Li Bai" (*Chunri yi Li Bai* 春日憶李白): "I, north of the Wei, trees in spring weather/ you, east of the Yangzi, twilight clouds" 渭北春天樹，江東日暮雲. See Stephen Owen, trans., *The Poetry of Du Fu* (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG., 2016), 33.
[405] On its application in *Qiushui xuan*, see "clouds and trees" (*yunshu* 雲樹) in No. 7, 178, 204; on its application in *Shuanggui xuan*, see "twilight clouds and trees in spring weather" (*muyun*

express his longing for Hong. He also treasures the incoming letter as "your esteemed letter" (*huazha* 華札), a conventional honorific phrase. In response to the unemployment of Hong, Yang tactfully interprets it as "having no intention to leave the mountain [to engage in business]" 無意出山, thereby transforming his unemployed situation to a positive choice. Following his lament that "You are so talented, so it will be truly a pity that you abandon it" 如此大才，殊覺棄置可惜, Yang smoothly proceeds to invite Hong to collaborate in trading "national products" (*guohuo* 國貨, which I will discuss below) since this is a good time for one to engage in "industry and commerce" (*shiye* 實業). From what he has learned, foreign products are decreasing while national products are increasing in Shanghai, which convinces him that they could realize their ambition by transporting national products, like silks, satins, and clothes, from the inland areas to sell at major ports or abroad.[406] Although Yang does not use any honorific phrase when narrating his proposal, he thoughtfully elevates the meaning of commercial engagement: this is a good chance for the talented to "realize his enterprise" (*zhanbu hongyou* 展布鴻猷), rather than simply for the unemployed to make a living and earn some profits. Presumably, this elevation will make his invitation more appealing and more likely to be accepted. In this pair of model letters, the writers exchange the latest business information, and Yang endorses national products in his reply, thereby extending the purpose of routine greetings from simply maintaining personal relationships to subtly pursuing commercial profits and even facilitating political mobilization. In one way or another, sample letters of *Aiguo chidu* convey implicit and explicit concerns of social issues in the Republican era, which were not only derived

chunshu 暮雲春樹) in No. 35 and *chunshu muyun* in No. 42.

[406] "Chunji wenhou da" 春季問候答 [A reply to greetings in the spring], in *AGCD* , vol. 1 "Wenhou lei," 2b–3a.

from traditional values and etiquette, but also adapted to fit the new context.

5.3 The Rise of Merchants in the 1910s and the Cultivation of *Ren'ge*

Although patriotism was partly valorized by the prevailing political climate, patriotic ideals were largely disseminated in everyday life through textbooks. In her work on the everyday practices of the new Republican political culture, Henrietta Harrison explores the ways in which the concept of the Republican citizen was consolidated through a series of customs and symbols conveyed by textbooks.[407] To illustrate the efforts to educate modern citizens, Robert Culp examines how Republican-era textbooks were produced by contemporary intellectuals and educators to define and teach citizenship: history and geography textbooks were to introduce the concepts of national community and identity; textbooks on moral cultivation, civics, party doctrine, and language were to relate contemporary ideas about modern society, social membership, and civic culture and morality.[408] In addition to citizenship, Peter Zarrow extends the political discourse of textbooks to enlightenment and nationalism, suggesting that textbooks conveyed messages seen in journalism, novels, dramas, and other cultural expressions.[409] While Zarrow argues that textbooks "modeled" modern knowledge by classification and cumulative effect, he does not explain how these mechanisms were applied to strengthen the abstract concepts he identifies in textbooks and what made these textbooks relevant to readers' pressing everyday needs. As a type of textbook, letter-writing manuals were key sources of information that captured readers' attention and helped shape their interactions with the political mainstream.

[407] Henrietta Harrison, *The Making of the Republican Citizen: Political Ceremonies and Symbols in China, 1911–1929* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
[408] Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912–1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007).
[409] Peter Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society, and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

More importantly, they tailored functional models for various occasions that could be easily utilized for readers' purposes. Letter-writing manuals for businessmen such as *Aiguo chidu*, as we will see, engaged contemporary businessmen in key social domains and equipped them with epistolary strategies to stake out a respectable social position.

A growing number of studies have identified the vigorous business activities in late imperial China and depicted the active role native or overseas businessmen played in public affairs through various organizations. While many businessmen engaged in national and even international trade, the social influence of their efforts appears mostly at the local level.[410] Approximately from the first decade of the twentieth century, businessmen from the most developed area of the day, the Lower Yangzi region, sought to extend their associational networks and sociopolitical influence to the national level.[411] Between 1910 and 1920, Chinese capitalism embraced a "golden age of the national industries," especially during the first World War (1914–1918), which "provided a unique opportunity for expansion for the modern sector of the Chinese economy."[412] First published in 1916, *Aiguo chidu* reflects the economic and political claims of the rising class of businessmen during this crucial juncture. For example, a

[410] See, for example, William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Commerce and Society in a Chinese City, 1796–1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984); Chiu Peng-sheng (Qiu Pengsheng) 邱澎生, *Shiba shijiu shiji Suzhou cheng de xinxing gongshang ye tuanti* 十八、十九世紀蘇州城的新興工商業團體 [Newly emerged industrial and commercial organizations in Suzhou city during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries] (Taipei: Taiwan daxue chubanshe, 1990); Madeleine Zelin, *The Merchants of Zigong: Industrial Entrepreneurship in Early Modern China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[411] See, for example, Feng Xiaocai 馮筱才, *Zai shang yan shang: Zhengzhi bianju zhong de Jiang Zhe shangren* 在商言商：政治變局中的江浙商人 [Talking business: Jiangsu and Zhejiang merchants in the political changes] (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2004); Zhongping Chen, *Modern China's Network Revolution: Chambers of Commerce and Sociopolitical Change in the Early Twentieth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

[412] Marie-Claire Bergère, *The Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie, 1911–1937* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 63–64.

sample letter to the textile factory known as *Jingqin* 精勤 (probably short for the Chinese idiom "*ye jing yu qin*" 業精於勤, which means that excellence in a profession comes from diligence) suggests business opportunities created by World War I. The pertinent part reads:

> According to my humble opinion, the unfortunate fact that the outbreak of the European war [World War I] results in the interdiction of foreign goods provides a good opportunity for our country. The cloth I ordered from your factory previously is in great demand at this point. Why do you delay the shipping of my order? I think you, as the manager,[413] are also keenly aware of the whole situation nowadays. I hope you could lead the workers to produce the goods immediately to meet current demands. Be sure not to miss this opportunity; otherwise, it will be too late, and you will regret it…
> 竊以歐戰發生，舶來品來源頓滯，然此乃他人之不幸正我國之幸也。前訂貴廠布匹，刻正為市所需，奈何一再延擱不見運到。想執事先生亦諳今日之大局者，尚祈暫率機工，緊急出貨，以應時勢之要求。勿令錯過時機，而追悔莫及也……[414]

Another sample letter advertises "patriotic fabric" (*aiguo bu* 愛國布) produced by a Chinese factory in response to the increasing price of foreign fabric because of World War I.[415]

Wen-hsin Yeh articulates a "material turn" in the first two decades of twentieth-century China, when the "new way to think of the role of merchants and economy in the Chinese state and society" had taken hold.[416] This turn paralleled the increasing political awareness of

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[413] What I translate as "manager" (*zhishi xiansheng* 執事先生, lit., Mister in charge) is an honorific term of address in classical official and business letters.
[414] "Cuicu suchu guohuo" 催促速出國貨 [Urging one to manufacture national products immediately], in *AGCD*, vol. 5 "Cuicu lei," 2a.
[415] "Quan yong aiguo bu" 勸用愛國布 [Encouraging one to use patriotic fabric], in *AGCD*, vol. 1 "Zhongai lei," 5b–6a.
[416] Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor: Economic Sentiments and the Making of Modern China, 1843–1949* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 27. To illustrate this point, Yeh

merchants, who "were ready to advance their claim to patriotic citizenship."[417] Concerned with this patriotic mission, *Aiguo chidu* contains sample letters that address contemporaneous topical and political subjects around 1916.

Among others, comments on the National Humiliation of May Ninth, 1915, are frequently found in this manual. For example, a pair of sample letters titled "Do Not Forget the National Humiliation" (*wuwang guochi* 勿忘國恥) imagines a conversation between Yu Youzhi 余有志 (lit., "I have ambition") and Tao Yunqing 陶筠卿 remembering the May Ninth event. Yu begins by bemoaning Japanese imperialism and the lack of available measures to counter Japanese aggression. He emphasizes that this national shame should not be forgotten and argues that the Chinese should emulate the model of King Goujian 勾踐 (?– ca. 464 BCE) to achieve their final revenge. For this purpose, Yu prods Tao into remaining steadfast in his beliefs, instead of displaying "a five-minute enthusiasm" (*wufenzhong zhi rexin* 五分鐘之熱心). In his reply to Yu, Tao compliments Yu's patriotic stance and claims that he has organized a commemorative meeting to deliver a speech on Chinese national humiliation. To show his sincere patriotic sentiment, rather than taking slogans (*koutouchan* 口頭禪) at face value, he also suggests holding annual events in commemoration of May Ninth.[418]

In his study of the modern narrative of the classical fable of King Goujian, Paul Cohen elaborates on how the "National Humiliation Day" heightened people's patriotic awareness. This story was part of a vast array of *guochi* literature, which aimed to awaken the Chinese public to the lamentable situation of their nation-state and mobilize more people to strive for the revival of

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invokes Leah Greenfeld's concept of "economism," "a state of mind and a view of life in which issues of economy occupy a place of centrality." See Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 9.

[417] Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 28.

[418] "Wuwang guochi" 勿忘國恥 [Do not forget the national humiliation], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 3a–4a.

their country. The continued commemoration of *guochi* in the Chinese social, political, and economic landscape, Cohen asserts, reflects both the "people's consciousness" and contemporary intellectuals' worries about "the *quality* (italics in original) of the remembering."[419] These worries, permeating *Aiguo chidu*, can be boiled down to the "*quality*" of patriotism, namely its true meaning.

Among the diverse sources Cohen examines, the story of King Goujian appears mostly as a positive influence. However, *Aiguo chidu* does feature one critique of the story. In a sample letter addressed to "compatriots" (*tongbao* 同胞), the writer considers the acts of "lying on brushwood and tasting gall in hope of future revenge" (*woxin changdan, yitu jianglai* 臥薪嘗膽, 以圖將來) as "idealistic, empty, and impulsive" (*lixiang kongtan, keqi yongshi* 理想空談, 客氣用事), and suggests cultivating the "complete character of the individual" (*yiji wanquan ren'ge* 一己完全人格) instead.[420] The concept of "character" (*ren'ge*, lit., human pattern),[421] which is deemed as the key to claim businessmen's patriotic citizenship, appears in many studies of women in modern China. "On the Problem of Women's Personhood" (*Nüzi ren'ge wenti* 女子人格問題) by Ye Shaojun 葉紹鈞 (1894–1988), an article published in 1919, was one of the primary examples of literature examined in these studies, in which Ye defined "personhood" as "a spirit of being an independent and wholesome individual in a big group."[422] Tani Barlow elaborates on

[419] Paul Cohen, *Speaking to History: The Story of King Goujian in Twentieth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 47–48.
[420] "Jie xi zhiyan" 戒吸紙煙 [Quit smoking cigarettes], in *AGCD*, vol. 3, "Guiquan lei," 2b.
[421] For the literal translation of *ren'ge*, "human pattern," see Chloë Starr, *Chinese Theology: Text and Context* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 124.
[422] Zheng Wang, *Women in the Chinese Enlightenment: Oral and Textual Histories* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 53. Another study examining Ye's article on women's personhood, see Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), Chapter 2.

the term *ren'ge*, which implicates "individuality," "identity," or "personality."[423] While this term is often associated with the discourse of gender, Chen Dongyuan 陳東原 (1902–78) in his 1934 article identified two aspects of *ren'ge*: the "gendered aspect of character" and "individual character."[424] The cultivation and perfection of *ren'ge*, which are repeatedly underscored in *Aiguo chidu*, are used to exemplify what "patriotism" should mean. In other words, the correct practice of "patriotism" was an integral part of cultivating the ideal character as a human being. In a pair of letters promoting patriotism, the writer disapproves of the "false" ways of expressing patriotic sentiments, such as launching verbal attacks on the government and bureaucracy or plotting violent riots. He proceeds to explain: "We should know that the nation is founded on individuals. If every individual has a complete *ren'ge* and extends it to the broader community, how can everything not work harmoniously?"[425] This writer is motivated to start a monthly patriotic newspaper, hoping that his individual effort can resonate with the "heavenly mind" (*tianxin* 天心) and consequently enrich and strengthen the nation. The recipient first concurs with these views by attributing false behaviour to "weakness and arrogance" (*xujiao zhiqi* 虛憍之氣), then proceeds to praise his correspondent's remarkable endeavours towards awakening the public.[426]

In another sample letter, the writer associates *ren'ge* with one's clothing because he had been disturbed by the unusual cross-dressing behaviour of both men and women, as well as the

[423] Tani E. Barlow, *The Question of Women in Chinese Feminism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 94–95, 114–26.
[424] Helen M. Schneider, *Keeping the Nation's House: Domestic Management and the Making of Modern China* (Vancouver, BC: UBC Press, 2011), 63. By quoting Chen's article, Schneider also seems to pay more attention to the "gendered aspect of character," which is followed by a *pinyin* Romanization of the original characters.
[425] "Quan shixing aiguo zhuyi" 勸實行愛國主義 [Encouraging the practice of patriotism], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 12a.
[426] "Quan shixing aiguo zhuyi," 12a–13a.

"cultural cross-dressing" of those who wore foreign attire. This xenophobic attitude conforms to Harrist's conclusion drawn from Chinese literature that the Chinese male in a Western suit was the most disturbing sight for the Chinese in the early Republic because it disrupted "the sartorial boundaries that once defined social, cultural, and ethnic identities."[427] According to the writer of this letter, these cross-dressing phenomena will lead to the perishing of the nation and thus are harbingers of inauspiciousness. The sender disparages people who are keen on cross-dressing by comparing them to grotesque monsters and demons, thereby suggesting that they have lost their *ren'ge*.[428] In this sense, the fate of a nation depends on the propriety of personal fashion.

The idea of *ren'ge*, in essence, establishes patriotism as part of the moral standard for businessmen: the implication of *ren'ge* was embodied in the relationship between the nation and the individual businessmen. In a pair of sample letters, the bond between businessmen and nation was historicized through an allusion to Xiangao 弦高, a famous merchant of the Spring and Autumn period (771–453 BCE) who saved his country, the state of Zheng 鄭, by supplying his own livestock to the Qin 秦 army, an emblem of the state authority.[429] In another sample letter, businessmen were encouraged to extend their "morality of business" (*shangye daode* 商業道德) to the field of education by setting up schools to spread Confucian thinking on loyalty and integrity.[430] The educational charity of businessmen was exemplified by Ye Chengzhong 葉澄衷 (1840–1899) and Yang Sisheng 楊斯盛 (1851–1908) from Shanghai, who earned good

[427] Robert E. Harrist, Jr, "Clothes Make the Man: Dress, Modernity, and Masculinity in China, ca. 1912–1937," in Wu Hung and Katherine R. Tsiang, eds., *Body and Face in Chinese Visual Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 188.
[428] "Lun zheng fuzhuang yi zhong ren'ge" 論正服裝以重人格 [On rectifying one's attire to emphasize one's character], in *AGCD*, vol. 3, 21b–22a.
[429] "Lun shangren aiguo lishi" 論商人愛國歷史 [On the history of merchants' patriotism], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 6b–7a.
[430] "Lun shangren zunkong" 論商人愛國尊孔 [On merchants' love for country and respect for Confucius], in *AGCD*, vol. 2, "Gongdu lei," 24a–25b.

reputations for "accumulating talents for the nation" (*weiguo chucai* 為國儲材).[431] Overseas businessmen also served to illustrate this nation-individual interaction. In a letter from a Hua Nianzi 華念茲 (lit., "China is thinking about this"), overseas residents are urged to unite and return to their homeland in order not to become a "Robinson," the titular character in Daniel Defoe's novel *Robinson Crusoe*, who wanders without any company.[432] The more the businessmen contribute to their nation, the more protection their nation could offer them in return. However, those who remain abroad would not receive any protection. A sample letter sketches this predicament with the example of overseas businessmen in Dutch-colonized Indonesia and calls on the central government to send a naval vessel to demonstrate the "national prestige" (*guowei* 國威) and alleviate the anxiety of the overseas businessmen.[433]

Sample letters in *Aiguo chidu* were expected to serve the immediate communication needs of industrialists and merchants in their everyday business, but the recurrence of patriotic arguments broadens the scope of the readers' concerns and elevates the significance of their activities, thereby characterizing businessmen as a rising social class under the grand cause of nation-building. The manual further attempted to describe the etiquette of interaction between

[431] "Jiang zhi jiaoyu rencai yi pei guoben" 獎知教育人才以培國本 [Rewarding talents who know education to cultivate the national root], in *AGCD*, vol. 6, "Jiangli lei," 1a–2a. On Ye Chengzhong and Yang Sisheng, see Huang Jingwan 黃警頑, *Yang Sisheng, Ye Chengzhong xiansheng hezhuan* 楊斯盛、葉澄衷先生合傳 [A joint biography of Mr. Yang Sisheng and Ye Chengzhong] (Shanghai: Yixin shushe, 1936); on Ye Chengzhong and the school he founded, see Wang Zhen 王震, "Ye Chengzhong yu Chengzhong xuetang" 葉澄衷與澄衷學堂 [Ye Chengzhong and Chengzhong school], in *Shanghai difang shi ziliao* 上海地方史資料 [Local historical sources of Shanghai] (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 1986), 148–52.

[432] "Quan huaqiao huinian zuguo" 勸華僑回念祖國 [Persuading overseas Chinese to return and care for their homeland], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 9b–10a.

[433] "Ni jiuhe tongzhi qingyuan zhengfu baowei qiaoshang" 擬糾合同志請願政府保衛僑商 [Planning to gather comrades to present a petition on protecting overseas merchants to the government], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 10b–12a.

nation and businessmen (as an individual or as a group), between businessmen of different fields or different statuses, and between businessmen and their families. This inclusion of patriotic and commercial content aimed to affect not only the businessmen who had a growing political consciousness, but also other social groups who were seeking upward mobility in a time when the power of the epistolary and communicative media could have been wielded by anyone who had access to the literate world.

5.4 The Advocacy of "Genuine" Patriotism through Improving "National Products"

By analyzing the letters of Chen Diexian 陳蝶仙 (1879–1940), a prolific man of letters and creative entrepreneur, Eugenia Lean suggests that Chen's letters "sought to mobilize support for the fight against counterfeiting by appealing to patriotic merchants, and identified National Product merchants in particular as ones who would oppose unpatriotic acts of copying."[434] In his letter (dated 1926), Chen attributed the weakness of China's industry to the enormous numbers of "immoral merchants" (*jianshang* 奸商) who counterfeited his tooth powder. This letter also reveals the frustration and anxiety—"enthusiastic people are few, and those who are patriotic and promote National Products even fewer"[435]—shared by many contemporary businessmen, who thus attempted to differentiate themselves from those immoral businessmen. Their attempt is partly manifested in their debates on "national products," which touches upon the relationship between businessmen and the nation in many letter-writing manuals.

In his study of "national products," Karl Gerth explores how nationalism was an integral aspect of consumer culture in early twentieth-century China and how the idea of nationality was

[434] Eugenia Lean, *Vernacular Industrialism in China: Local Innovation and Translated Technologies in the Making of a Cosmetics Empire, 1900–1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), 219.
[435] Lean, *Vernacular Industrialism in China*, 219.

articulated, institutionalized, and practiced through everyday commodities, thereby arguing that nationalism and consumerism were two key forces that shaped, and continued to shape, the modern world.[436] While Gerth does not use epistolary manuals as sources, sample letters also convey the importance of promoting "national products" to their readers like many of the advertising posters he examines. For example, in Lin Wanli's *Xuesheng bianyong chidu* (first edition dated 1910), a letter writer addresses this matter when sending an umbrella to his older friend. He decides to send a Chinese paper umbrella (*zhisan* 紙傘) because his foreign umbrella (*yangsan* 洋傘) has been broken for a long time and cannot be used any more, by which he implicitly criticizes the low quality of foreign goods. He proceeds to demonstrate the merits of his Chinese paper umbrella: notwithstanding its ungainly shape, it is easy to carry and cheap in price—the money spent on a foreign umbrella can be used to buy three or four paper umbrellas. He thus resolves to stop using foreign umbrellas and hopes that his friend does not prefer foreign goods while undervaluing Chinese "national products."[437]

Chudeng xin chidu (first edition dated between 1917–1924) offers another example,[438] which not only promotes national products but also explicitly boycotts goods from foreign countries. In this letter, the male writer tells his elder female cousin that the Chinese have spared no effort in promoting national products since China's boycott of foreign "inferior products" (*liehuo* 劣貨). Within a few months, however, these inferior products returned to flood the domestic market, thereby mocking the "five-minute enthusiasm" of the boycott. He attributes the temporary nature of this boycott to the Chinese lack of a "cultivated public morality" (*gaoshang*

[436] Gerth, *China Made*.
[437] "Ji you jiesan" 寄友借傘 [To a friend on borrowing an umbrella], in *Xuesheng bianyong chidu*, vol. 3, 28–29.
[438] According to my statistics, the earliest available edition (14th edition) of this epistolary textbook was published in 1924 by Shanghai Shijie shuju, which was established in 1917.

zhi qunde 高尚之群德), only caring about immediate profits while ignoring the harmful consequences. To reverse this trend, he intends to persuade his family, including his cousin, day and night to resolutely support Chinese national products.[439]

Although we do not know exactly when these two examples were first written, they show that sample letters concerning "national products" or boycotts vary in tone because the threat of "foreign products" varies from period to period and from business to business. During the first third of the twentieth century, "there were significant boycotts in 1905, 1908, 1909, 1915, 1919, 1923, 1925, 1928, 1931, and then nearly continuously into the Second Sino-Japanese War."[440] The 1910s witnessed a growing sense of vigilance and hostility towards Japan in particular because of growing Japanese political pressure and military aggression. A sample letter composed not long after the May Fourth Movement (1919) summarizes several reasons for rejecting Japanese products:

> The Japanese have long coveted the rich resources of our nation, such as fish and meat, and they are hostile to our people, treating us like oxen and horses. Continuing to use Japanese products is, first, a reflection of one's lack of conscience; second, a betrayal of our comrades who participated in the May Fourth Movement in 1919; and third, a revelation to the Japanese of the psyche of our nation's people, and who knows how they might further mistreat our country after being emboldened by this!
> 日本人既垂涎我國家，如魚呀！肉呀！仇視我人民，如牛呀！馬呀！我們要再用他的貨品，一則是沒有心肝，二則很對不起民國八年，五四運動的，一般同志，三則日本人知道我們國民的心理，將來還不知要欺到甚麼地步呢！[441]

[439] "Quan wu gou liehuo" 勸勿購劣貨 [Asking not to purchase inferior products], in Huang Kezong 黃克宗, ed., *Chudeng xin chidu* 初等新尺牘 [New letters for elementary education], new 14th ed. (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1948), 42.
[440] Gerth, *China Made*, 125.
[441] "Ken you wuyong rihuo" 懇友勿用日貨 [Asking a friend not to use Japanese goods], in

Compared to their counterparts that promoted national products for the general public, sample letters featured in *Aiguo chidu* are comparatively nuanced and do not always follow a narrative indisputably advocating the boycotting of foreign goods, especially Japanese goods, in order to express patriotic fervour. This is likely because the author tailored the samples for his intended readers, commercial producers and traders, rather than for the consumers of products. In this sense, sample letters in *Aiguo chidu* portray a picture slightly different from what is outlined in Gerth's study, which argues that "boycotts were merely the most visible—and violent—aspects of the attempt to nationalize consumer culture."[442] Reflecting the interests of its intended readers, the promotion of national products was discussed in more specific ways. Some sample letters point out price manipulation schemes behind the boycotts. In a letter condemning an "immoral merchant" (*jianshang* 奸商)，the writer reports that a store owner ostensibly encourages the masses to boycott Japanese products while covertly hoarding them, expecting to sell them at a high price in the future. Such actions have nothing to do with "loving the nation," but instead constitutes the despicable behaviour of "selling the nation" (*maiguo* 賣國).[443]

In a sample reply to a call for consuming national products, the writer suggests that national products should first be updated to meet general standards before being elevated to a status worthy of one's patriotism.[444] Many sample letters consider the problem of making national products more competitive and appealing than their foreign counterparts. In a letter to the

Jinzhang tushuju 錦章圖書局, ed., *Guoyu xin chidu* 國語新尺牘 [New letters in vernacular language], 5th ed., vol. 3 (Shanghai: Jinzhang tushuju, 1929), 8a–b.

[442] Gerth, *China Made*, 126.

[443] "Qing cheng maiguo zhi jianshang" 請懲賣國之奸商 [A plea on punishing immoral merchants who sell the nation], in *AGCD*, vol. 2, "Gongdu lei," 5a–6a.

[444] "Quan yong guohuo da" 勸用國貨答 [A reply to suggestion on using national products], in *AGCD*, vol. 2, "Gongdu lei," 8b–9a.

president of a chamber of commerce, the writer explains that "indigenous products" (*tuhuo* 土貨) had many producers but few buyers because of the limited knowledge of local people. Therefore, he proposes organizing a center for showcasing national products (*guohuo chenlie suo* 國貨陳列所) to promote them, attract potential customers, and compare the goods of high quality with those of bad quality 一以推廣招徠，一以互較良窳, which he surmises may enlarge the influence of Chinese products across the globe within ten years.[445] In a letter on upgrading the quality of porcelain, the writer encourages his correspondent to improve the craftsmanship and lower the cost, which would not only prevent the nation's profits from draining away, but also invigorate the export of porcelain to other countries.[446]

In a letter on rewarding the improvement of national products, the writer analyzes the reasons behind Chinese products not being on par with foreign imports:

> …[Chinese] technicians and masters are not well trained. Moreover, machines are not well equipped, and manual work is slow and cumbersome, hence everything produced is neither as beautiful as that made by machines nor as simple. As a result, the cost is high while the profit is low, which daunts people in the field of industry and commerce.
> ……良以工師類皆無學，而且機器不全，人工遲鈍，故凡一物製造出來，既不若機器製成者美觀，復不若機器製成者省事，轉致本大利微，工商畏阻。[447]

He then laments that mechanization in Chinese industry has fallen behind, and if no measures are taken towards "self-improvement" (*gailiang* 改良), it is nothing more than self-abnegation, and

[445] "Ni she guohuo chenlie suo" 擬設國貨陳列所 [Planning to establish a showcase of national products], in *AGCD*, vol. 2, "Gongdu lei," 11a–b.
[446] "Zhi you gailiang ciqi wanhui liquan" 致友改良瓷器挽回利權 [To a friend on improving the porcelain to retrieve economic rights], in *AGCD*, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 1a–b.
[447] "Jiang neng gailiang guohuo" 獎能改良國貨 [Rewarding on improving the national products], in *AGCD*, vol. 6, "Jiangli lei," 6a–b.

Chinese products would therefore be eliminated according to the "principle of evolution" (*tianyan* 天演).[448]

While being more circumspect about promoting national products and rejecting foreign products, sample letters in *Aiguo chidu* do work to promote "genuine" patriotic sentiment that goes beyond the superficial support for national products. In a letter concerning the boycott of foreign goods, the writer explicitly objects the boycott:

> From my point of view, if our citizens *genuinely love our nation* [emphasis mine], it seems unnecessary to take such a superfluous action, and naturally latent non-boycott solutions will emerge that work better than a boycott. It is a shame that our compatriots do not realize this fact, so troubles are generated in vain. Let us look at the Japanese people. They are commonly motivated by the mantra of patriotic love and are also subjected to a climate of rejecting foreign products. However, their patriotic boycott performs better than other countries. Why is this so? Since the Meiji Reformation, Japanese citizens have never taken the skin and hair [i.e., minute details] of foreigners, imitated the foreigner's adornment and dress, regarding the imitation as an honour. Instead, they esteem the clothing and household wares of their nation to show their *sincere patriotic sentiment* [emphasis mine]. That is why the Japanese still wear the wafuku until now and do not prefer western suits. If our citizens can follow the Japanese example, is it not better than furtively boycotting foreign goods?
> 惟以弟眼光觀之，國民果真愛國，似不必多此一舉，而自然暗中有不抵制而勝於抵制之一法。惜乎同胞未見及此，所以徒滋紛擾耳。請觀日本之民，其平昔當以愛國為口頭禪，有抵制外貨風潮，然而彼愛國與抵制外貨，已較他國尤甚。何則？該國民自維新以來，從不竊人皮毛，學人粧飾，以為榮寵，惟重本國服飾器皿，以示愛國肫誠。所以倭人至今仍多著和服，並不見著甚西裝也。我國民倘能效法，不即愈於暗中抵制國貨[sic]乎？[449]

[448] "Jiang neng gailiang guohuo," in *AGCD*, vol. 6, "Jiangli lei," 6b.
[449] "Quan zhuanyong guohuo" 勸專用國貨 [Persuading one to only use national products], in

In the reply, his correspondent concurs with his idea, and by indicating Japan as a strong neighbour of China, he expresses regard towards the Japanese and calls on Chinese citizens not to degrade their own culture to curry favour with foreigners. He expresses hope that the genuine patriotic feeling would lead China to unparalleled achievements in the end.

Unlike the predominant discourse of boycotting foreign products featured in other letter manuals, the sample letters of *Aiguo chidu* did not unconditionally promote national products in the name of "patriotism." More subtly, they alerted the audience to commercial speculation under the pretense of patriotism and aimed to direct readers onto the right track of strengthening national enterprises. By shifting the focus of patriotism from commercial manipulation to the building of the national economy, they attempted to redefine bona fide patriotism and substantively reform their audience's thinking.

5.5 Conclusion

In a sample letter to please his father back in his home village, a shop clerk intentionally shares his observation of patriotic Europeans in urban Shanghai. He views the foreigners who enthusiastically join the army for World War I as great exemplars for the Chinese. He proceeds to criticize Chinese soldiers in the past for consuming their rations and amusing themselves during peacetime yet vying to flee first whenever there were problems and the generals led them to the frontlines. These soldiers cannot be mentioned in the same breath as Westerners. The contrast convinces him that European countries have a reason to be wealthy and strong, conquering the world.[450] In his reply, the father affirms the son's keen awareness of keeping

AGCD, vol. 1, "Zhongai lei," 4b–5a.

[450] "Shu jian wairen aiguo zhenxiang" 述見外人愛國真相 [Telling the reality of foreigners'

track of national affairs: "Regarding [national affairs], such as the Westerners joining the army with enthusiasm, it is what others could not say [in their family letters], but you, my son, pay heed to it. This is truly a matter worth rejoicing!" [國事]類如述西國軍人踴躍徵戎一節，此語他人所不能道者，而我兒竟及此，誠非可幸之事耶！[451]He is also concerned with the different attitudes towards "national disasters" (*guonan* 國難) between foreign citizens and both the Chinese military forces and general "citizens" (*guomin* 國民), and he encourages his son to realize his responsibility as a citizen: "I am old and unable to fight. You are still young, and I hope you will exert yourself. It would be a blessing if you do not indulge in pleasure and be negligent."[452]

The inclusion of political affairs into model letters for businessmen was a new feature in the epistolary manuals of the twentieth century, as seen in the above letters between family members with a commercial background in *Aiguo chidu*. As model letters follow political dynamics, the evolution of epistolary skills was in line with the incorporation of ideological content, thereby promulgating the prevailing discourse of nationalistic patriotism in Republican China. This combination of traditional epistolary knowledge and pertinent topics for industrial and commercial activities, which is particularly evident in *Aiguo chidu*, became a selling point for epistolary manuals for businessmen. On the one hand, *Aiguo chidu* helped direct businessmen toward the building of a modern and robust nation to compete with various imperialist powers, particularly, Japan. On the other hand, the epistolary formulae and didactic instructions for genuine patriotism in *Aiguo chidu* aimed to differentiate businessmen of integrity from their immoral competitors, enhancing the former's public image and authority in modern China.

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patriotism], in *AGCD*, vol. 3, "Jiashu lei," 2a–b.
451 "Da" 答 [Reply], in *AGCD*, vol. 3, "Jiashu lei," 2b–3a.
452 "Da," in *AGCD*, vol. 3, "Jiashu lei," 3a.

Chapter 6 Communicating Marital Ideals in Family Letters

6.1 Introduction

In Qian Zhongshu's 錢鍾書 (1910–1998) satiric novel *Fortress Besieged* (*Weicheng* 圍城, 1947), the college student Fang Hongjian 方鴻漸, who has been engaged under a family arrangement since high school, grows green-eyed after seeing couples in love on campus and feels aversion to his fiancée Miss Zhou, who has quit school after one year of high school to learn housekeeping at home in order to serve her future in-laws and husband. Therefore, Fang is thinking of how to ask his father to release him from this arranged marriage without infuriating his father. In his first family letter regarding this issue, he fabricates his physical discomfort as an excuse, which requires him to sever this marital tie since his poor health may cause a lifetime of regret for Miss Zhou. Although Fang's letter is "couched in an elegant style without incorrectly using any of the various particles of literary Chinese,"[453] his father still reads his thoughts and gives him a severe scolding in reply, criticizing Fang for neglecting his filial duties and threatening to cut off his funds. As a result, Fang has to send a second letter immediately begging for his father's forgiveness and reluctantly accepts this marriage but asks "that it be postponed until after his graduation. For one thing, it would interfere with his schooling; for another he was still unable to support a family and would not feel right about adding to his father's responsibilities."[454] His father, nevertheless, is satisfied to prove his authority over his distant son in college and grants Fang's request for the postponement.

Sarcastic as it may sound, this scenario, which is set roughly in the late 1920s,[455] was not

[453] Ch'ien Chung-shu [Qian Zhongshu], *Fortress Besieged*, trans. Jeanne Kelly and Nathan K. Mao (Indiana University Press, 1979), 9.
[454] Ch'ien [Qian], *Fortress Besieged*, 10.
[455] According to *Fortress Besieged*, Fang Hongjian has spent four years in college in Peking and four years in Europe before returning to Shanghai in 1937. Since Fang's letter to his father was

entirely groundless in reality, since letters seeking to cancel or postpone marriage arranged by parents or grandparents were common family correspondence from young people during the Republican period, as evident in extant epistolary manuals. Available model letters from this period invite comparisons with Qian's novel and help present-day readers better understand why Fang's first letter does not achieve his purpose while his second letter does. Many of these model letters offer justified reasons for young people to negotiate with their families, such as national benefits or individual progress, which respond to many pressing public issues that concerned a growing number of citizens. In contrast, Fang's reasons in his first letter for cancelling the arranged marriage lack the acceptable justifications to legitimize his resistance to his family obligations, and his first letter was considered a challenge to his father's authority, which was undermined but still paramount in the deep-rooted patrilineal family hierarchy of the day.

To understand the differences between public-spirited justifications and personal excuses, I will elaborate on the reasons offered in model letters and contextualize them in a period when new ideas clashed with ingrained patriarchy. Model letters notably provided the standard lines of appeal that sought to ease tensions between the younger and older generations as the young consciously appropriated the discourse of national salvation and strengthening as well as free love and conjugal marriage to legitimize their dissent. In other words, how did young people, inculcated with new ideas about free love and conjugal marriage, communicate with elders who tried to impose arranged marriages on them? Following the fictive letters of declining early marriage (*zaohun* 早婚) in manuals widely circulated during the Republican period, I argue that letters concerning the drawbacks of early marriage were influenced by and influenced emerging debates about the nation, hygiene, education, and economics. Such letters offered reform-minded

written in his early years in Peking, it is inferred to have been written in the late 1920s.

young students a decorous communicative strategy to release them from arranged marriages and provide us a window into the changing knowledge of writing family letters. To appreciate these changes, this chapter examines model letters declining arranged marriage published in different periods of Republican China. Model letters exchanged between the young and elders in their families underwent significant changes in their negotiations in accordance with the modernizing ethos: roughly in the 1910s, the young in letters assented to the elders' authority in knowledge and experience, and the elders were considered superior to the young; in the 1920s and early 1930s, the thrust of these letters suggests the young tactfully decline elders' marital arrangements by providing tenable reasons regarding the harm of early marriage; in the late 1930s and 1940s, model letters offered more radical viewpoints attacking the traditional extended family and aimed to cultivate modern citizens. The ever-evolving features of these model letters explain their wide circulation and continued popularity among young readers.

6.2 The Inculcation of Confucian Ethics

In imperial China, the formal epistolary expressions were largely conditioned by Confucian ideas of ritual propriety and social hierarchy, which were instrumental in constructing and maintaining a harmonious community based on kinship and family.[456] According to Antje Richter, "letters of familial admonition" of early and early medieval China read in a similar fashion to family instructions (*jiajie* 家誡 or *jiaxun* 家訓) and testaments (*yiling/yan* 遺令/言) in terms of their content, and the transmission of these letters was due to their "literary qualities" and "societal values," many of which could be described as "Confucian in character."[457] The

[456] Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China: A Social History of Writing about Rites* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).
[457] Antje Richter, "Between Letter and Testament: Letters of Familial Admonition in Han and

Confucian ideas were inculcated in real letters by distinguished writers discussed by Richter as well as in templates of *shuyi*, etiquette for letter writing and other occasions. The genre of *shuyi* was classified under "Etiquette and Annotations" (*yizhu* 儀注) and included instructions for rituals through its language.[458] To be more specific, *shuyi* instructed the performance of rites in which decorous words were required for occasions like salutations, congratulations, or condolences.

Confucian ideas played a sustained role in family letters in late imperial China and exerted an influence on the maintenance of the patriarchal hierarchy. Examples of family letters appeared early and frequently in household encyclopedias for daily use because the Chinese conventionally considered the family letter as a gateway to master epistolary skills and a site of social practice that prepared individuals for their future. In *Comprehensive Collection for Use at Home of Indispensable Matters* (*Jujia biyong shilei quanji* 居家必用事類全集), an encyclopedia that dates back to the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) but was widely circulated in the Ming and Qing periods, there is a separate section on family letter templates (*jiashu tongshi* 家書通式, see below Figure 6-1)[459] under the category of "letters" (*shujian* 書簡).[460]

Six Dynasties China," in Richter, ed., *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 269–70.

[458] *Shuyi* developed from the tradition of codifying ritual and etiquette. See Ebrey, "T'ang Guides to Verbal Etiquette," 611.

[459] For Figure 6-1, see *Jujia biyong shilei quanji* (hereafter *JJBYSLQJ*), reprinted in *Mingdai tongsu riyong leishu jikan*, vol. 4, 4–5.

[460] For an introduction to this encyclopedia, see Tadao Sakai 酒井忠夫, "*Mindai no nichiyō ruisho to shomin kyōiku*" 明代の日用類書と庶民教育 [Ming dynasty daily-use encyclopedias and education of the common people], in Hayashi Tomoharu 林友春, ed., *Kinsei Chūgoku kyōiku shi kenkyū* 近世中國教育史研究 [A study of modern history of Chinese education] (Tokyo: Kokudosha, 1958), 25–154.

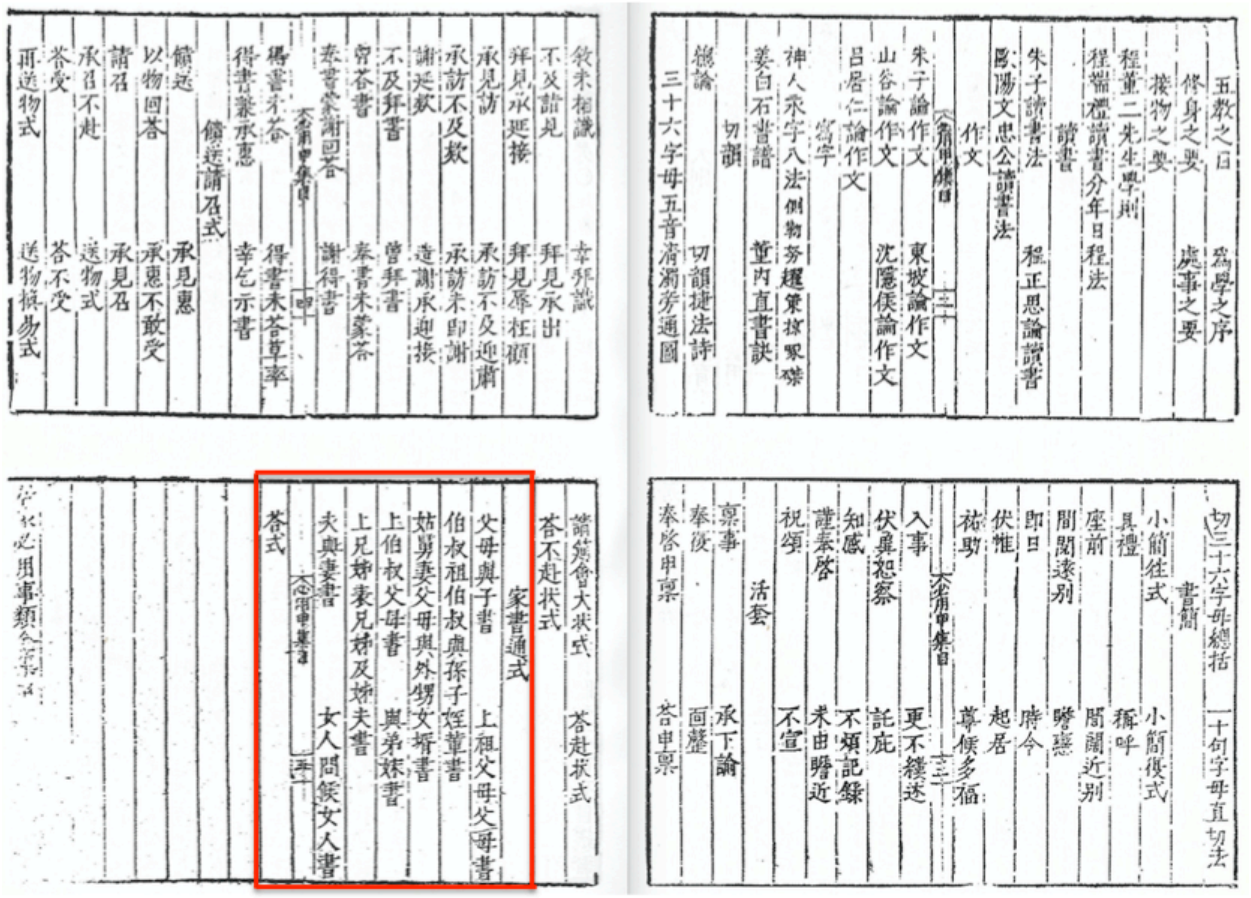

Figure 6-1: Table of contents of family letter templates

This section begins with a template letter from parents to a sojourning son, which can be used for correspondence from grandparents to a grandson with minor adjustments. This template showcases the basic components of a formal family letter, which includes: 1) the addressee's name or rank (*hangdi* 行第) in the opening, 2) greetings like "summer is hot, and I hope you are safe and healthy" 夏熱想汝安健, 3) narration of specific matters, 4) formulaic language inviting more correspondence like "this letter is not comprehensive" (*Bu ju* 不具), and 5) the status of the writer and the date.[461]

Next to the above template comes a reply letter from the sojourning young son to his father

461 "Fumu yu zi shu" 父母與子書 [Letter from parents to son], in *JJBYSLQJ,* 45.

at home, which can also be addressed to seniors, such as paternal grandparents, mother, or maternal grandparents, as well as be applied to exchange from a home-based young person to his sojourning seniors. Compared to the prior model letter, this longer one from a young person contains similar components but reveals more reverence in its wording. This is reflected explicitly in the phrases with the character "reverence" (*zun* 尊) related to the addressee, including "reverent greetings" (*zunhou* 尊候), "reverent father" (*zunyan* 尊嚴), and "reverent concern" (*zunnian* 尊念), as well as implicitly throughout the whole model by using other formulaic phrases. For example, the writer exaggerates the bowing to as many as hundreds (*baibai* 百拜) to his father and indicates the invisible spatial hierarchy they respectively occupy: the son is in a low position, so he has to submit his reply upwards (*shangfu* 上覆), greet below the knees (*xixia* 膝下) of his father, look up at the face of his father (*zunyan*) with respect (*zhanyang* 瞻仰), and abase his concerns as "emotions from below" (*xiaqing* 下情). Moreover, the commonplace phrase inviting succeeding correspondence in this model appears with a character "cautiously" (*jin* 謹), showing that the choice of epistolary content for this letter and for future letters is the result of great deliberation (*jinjububei* 謹具不備).[462]

This set of templates is followed by a general instruction on writing family letters, which lays out several foundational points for attention when writing to seniors. In particular, on the cover of a family letter should be inscribed the characters for "safety" (*ping'an* 平安) to delight senior members; letters to a respected senior should use good paper and be written in the form of standardized characters; when using words about seasons in greeting lines, one should use "straightforward characters" (*zhiyan* 直言) sanctioned by antiquity indicating the first (*meng*

[462] "Shang zufumu fumu shu" 上祖父母父母書 [Letters to grandparents or parents], in *JJBYSLQJ*, 45.

孟), second (*zhong* 仲), and third (*ji* 季) period of a season, instead of the "new spring" (*xinchun* 新春) or the "beginning of summer" (*shouxia* 首夏) and so on, which all sound ambiguous.[463] A hierarchy based on seniority and gender is observed in these templates as well as in a final note that alerts one not to address the names of seniors and discourages women to write since "writing is not women's business" 大抵文墨非婦人事.[464]

The expansion of moral content in letters of the late Qing and Republican eras bears some similarities with changes in American letter writing over a similar period. In his study of the American "familiar letter" between 1750 and 1800, Konstantin Dierks argues that "[a]uthors of familiar letter manuals endorsed letter writing as a new way to inculcate the younger generation in the values, skills, and habits that would determine both personal character and social status upon adulthood."[465] In her study of nineteenth-century epistolary instructions in American schools, Lucille Schultz demonstrates that letter manuals presented the dominant culture's behaviour codes for daily living, such as personal discipline, self-sacrifice, duty, and obedience, thus "learning to write a good letter was learning to become, by 19th century codes, a well-mannered person."[466] In the very different context of nineteenth-century China, the category of family letters was fundamental in letter-writing manuals, and its epistolary content

[463] Other family relationships addressed in letters of this section were seen in letters from grand-uncles or uncles to a grand-nephew or nephew (伯叔祖伯叔與侄孫子侄輩), from parents-in-law to a son-in-law (姑舅妻父母與外甥女婿書), from nephews to an uncle and/or his wife (上伯叔父母書), from older brother to younger siblings (與弟妹書), from a younger brother to older siblings or sister's husband (上兄姊表兄姊及姊夫書), from a husband to a wife (夫與妻書), and between women peers (女人問候女人書).

[464] *JJBYSLQJ*, 47.

[465] Konstantin Dierks, "The Familiar Letter and Social Refinement in America, 1750–1800," in *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*, 33–34. According to Bannet, the category of "familiar letters" "encompassed letters of business and letters of news, as well as letters of friendship, family, amusement and courtship." For more explanations, see Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, 42–53. By using the term "family letters," I focus on letters between family members.

[466] Schultz, "Letter-Writing Instruction in 19th Century Schools in the United States," 118–19.

was expanded to suit the new cultural milieu and incorporate pertinent Confucian moral lessons. While following the general template from household encyclopedias like *Jujia biyong shilei quanji*, the content of model letters from seniors to the young in *Xiexin bidu* is more substantial and possesses a didactic tone and engages in moral cultivation. A model letter from a sojourning father to his son at home reads:

> My son, as you know, it has been three months since I left home. Because it is hard to access the postal service, I have not been able to send a letter home, which has been lingering in my mind. Your father [i.e., the writer] is forced to travel far away from home. You should be filial to your grandmother and mother. In all matters, you should first accept things as they are at the beginning; your daily expenditure should be frugal. You should pay respect to your seniors and neighbours and must keep away from licentious acquaintances and gambling friends. Go to bed early and get up early. It is most important to keep the household safe, do not become slack, and be especially vigilant towards fire risks. For other matters such as food and drink and the usual pleasantries, you should remain attentive. You must remember my words, and do not disobey my instructions.
>
> 某兒知悉，余自離家，迄今三月，以郵便難逢，無從一致家書，念念。汝父遠違鄉井，亦非得已，爾當孝養祖母，侍奉母親。凡事必先忍耐，日用尤宜從儉。親長鄰居，務須尊重，淫朋賭友，切勿相交。早眠早起，門戶最要小心，勿怠勿惰，火燭更當謹慎。餘如飲食寒暄，自宜留意。切記余言，勿違是囑。[467]

The father's exhortation in this example are "Confucian in character," in particular, "the focus on self-cultivation and humility as well as the choice of worthy friends, all of which were seen as contributing to the honor of one's family as well as the state."[468] Model letters to family

[467] "Yuzi: Guijie" 諭子：規誡 [Instructing the son: Exhortation], in *XXBD*, 501.
[468] Richter, "Between Letter and Testament," 269–70.

members upheld the Confucian patriarchy even after the founding of the Republican government. According to *New Letters for Republican China* (*Gonghe xin chidu* 共和新尺牘, dated 1913), a proper letter should avoid pretentious language and make sure all words come from the heart; nevertheless, the diction of family letters should be adjusted accordingly: writing to elders is called *feng* 奉, which shows reverence; writing to brothers is called *yu* 與, which shows sincerity; writing to juniors is called *ci* 賜, which shows dignity.[469]

While moral instruction was often imparted by the senior to the young, a reverse situation was possible in model letters written by a junior to a senior, aiming to uphold the Confucian family hierarchy. A sample letter to one's eldest brother, for example, endorses the concept of filial piety by criticizing the recipient for often disobeying the instructions of his "kind mother" (*cimu* 慈母). Two reasons are offered to support the writer's criticism: for one thing, based on "the propriety of a son" (*renzizhili* 人子之禮), one should accord with his or her parents' orders in everything rather than improperly taking the liberty to act independently and hurting the parents' feelings; for another, the young should not obstinately defy their parents' opinions since the young are considered naïve and inexperienced while their parents are more circumspect and farsighted. In the case that the parents' opinions are off the mark, the author insists, the young should seize the chance to explain themselves tactfully, instead of infuriating their parents and hurting their parents' feelings.[470]

While the above letter does not specify the disobedient behaviour of the recipient, I have identified one noticeable example of disobedience—declining arranged marriage—by combing through letter-writing manuals published in Republican China. A set of fictive letters published

[469] *Gonghe xin chidu*, vol. 2, 1.
[470] "Zhixiong: Guishou muxun" 致兄：規受母訓 [Exhorting the older brother to accept mother's instruction], in *Chudeng xin chidu*, 36.

in 1916 between a nephew named Dunxiao 敦孝 (lit., "sincere and filial") and his paternal uncle touches upon this issue and implicates the power relationship based on seniority. On a recent trip to Shanghai by sea, Dunxiao experiences a severe windstorm and his ship sinks at midnight. Fortunately, he survives but makes use of this adventure to turn down the marriage arrangement made for him by his paternal aunt, citing how the potential bride must have brought him bad luck. Moreover, he claims he is too young to get married and could wait for another two years. He writes to his uncle, the husband of his aunt, to convey this message in the hope of obtaining his aunt's understanding. In his reply, the uncle scolds Dunxiao:

> Your aunt is especially fond of you and would like to conclude a marital arrangement for you in response to your parents' request. However, you do not understand her careful thoughts and remain unsatisfied with her arrangement. Now science is booming, eclipsing the theories of geomancy and fate, but you adhere to superstitious ideas and ignore your aunt's kind consideration. Isn't this a double mistake?
> 汝姑母對汝感情尤厚，欲為汝締婚，以盡兄嫂之託。特何汝不解事，依然為前憤憤。況今日科學發旺，從無關風水命運之說，而汝猶拘執迷信，不諒親情，豈非誤而又誤。[471]

Dunxiao's letter fails to justify his refusal of the arrangement of his marriage. As the above reply reveals, his uncle speaks not only for his aunt, but also for his parents who had asked his aunt for help. Therefore, by declining the arrangement, Dunxiao is also perceived as going against his parents' will, thereby breaching his filial duty. Resorting to Confucian patriarchal tenets to justify the elders' authority, the criticism of Dunxiao's uncle recalls the aforementioned younger brother who admonished his eldest brother against hurting their mother's feelings, which would constitute a breach of familiar ritual propriety. The criticism from a younger brother also

[471] Jiqing, ed., *AGCD*, vol. 3, "jiashu lei," 17a.

resonates with how Dunxiao's uncle, who appears more rational, dismisses Dunxiao's superstitious excuse as naïve by citing the emergent discourse of science.[472]

The authority and knowledge of the older generation, however, was undermined in the first half of the twentieth century as the Confucian hierarchical system was under severe attack from the New Culturalists. In seeking to escape the strictures of the patriarchy, the young equipped themselves with new nationalistic ideas, which they called upon in polite dissent against their elders' wishes. Model letters declining early and arranged marriage, with tenable reasons based on improving national benefits and personal well-being, prove to be useful in understanding these changing dynamics between the older and younger generations. These reasons echo the argumentation of Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929). In his far-reaching essay *Debates on Banning Early Marriage* (*Jin zaohun yi* 禁早婚議, 1902), Liang categorized the detriments of early marriage according to five components of individual and public well-being: 1) physical health, 2) reproduction, 3) national education, 4) personal academic success, and 5) national and household economy.[473] According to modern scholar Lü Wenhao's 呂文浩 study, other writers frequently revisited these themes, either by reinforcing or questioning them, in many articles published in the first decades of the twentieth century.[474] While Liang's main argumentation has

[472] *Aiguo chidu* (*AGCD*) was published in 1916, see Chapter 5. This was during the New Culture Movement (1915–19), which promoted science.

[473] Liang Qichao, "Jin zaohun yi" 禁早婚議 [Debates on banning early marriage], in *Yinbing shi wenji dianjiao* 飲冰室文集點校 [Writings from the Studio of Ice Drinking with annotation] (Kunming: Yunnan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2001), 652–57.

[474] Lü Wenhao, "Zhongguo jindai hunling huayu de fenxi: Cong Qingmo zhi 1930 niandai" 中國近代婚齡話語的分析：從清末至 1930 年代 [An analysis of discourse of the marital age in modern China: From the late Qing to the 1930s] (2005), in Liang Jinghe 梁景和, ed., *Shehui shenghuo tansuo* 社會生活探索 [Exploration of social life] (Beijing: Shoudu shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 3–16.

been summarized to show the "great influence of racial eugenics" on it,[475] I will analyze its influence on model letters against early marriage in the next section.

6.3 The Negotiation of Marital Arrangements

The emergent phenomenon of postponing marriage should be contextualized within the social changes in late imperial and Republican China. According to my survey, early marriage was originally banned by local officials long before the publication of Liang Qichao's essay that will be discussed.[476] Some steles suggest that criticism of early marriage had been disseminated prior to the twentieth century and provided the social background of Liang Qichao's essay and other works under his influence, which is omitted by the aforementioned Lü's study of early marriage. A ban issued in 1892 by Huang Bao 黄葆, the magistrate of Chaocheng 朝城 in Shandong Province, articulated the imperative to cease the detrimental custom of early marriage since it was against social morals and manners (*fenghua* 風化). Huang first cited the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) to suggest that the ideal ages for men and women to get married were thirty and twenty respectively.[477] He thus emphasized that early marriage was not part of the orthodox

[475] On a brief English summary of Liang's "five great harms [harm]," see Yubin Shen, "Too Young to Date! The Origins of *Zaolian* (Early Love) as a Social Problem in 20th-Century China," *History of Science* 53.1 (2015): 93.

[476] With only a few minor variations in wording, steles located in Yilong 儀隴, Jiange 劍閣, and Tongjian 通江 counties, Sichuan Province, still preserve the ban imposed by the Censorate (*Ducha yuan* 都察院) in 1581, stating the regulation that "From now on men and women are not allowed to marry until fifteen or sixteen and upwards. People who violate this rule will have their father and brother punished. Local officials who fail to report this violation will be punished as well" 今後男女婚配年至十五六歲以上方許迎娶，違者父兄重責枷號，地方不呈官者一同枷責. See, for example, "Zaohun jinbei" 早婚禁碑 [Stele banning early marriage], in Ren Xiangzhen 任祥禎, ed., *Tongjiang xianzhi* 通江縣志 [Gazetteer of Tongjiang County] (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 1998), 819.

[477] James Legge, trans., "At thirty, he had a wife" 三十而有室… "at twenty, she was married;

Confucian tradition but an unregulated social practice. This practice was pervasive because of its practical benefits: some families needed an additional member to help with household management, so they overstated the age of their sons; while some families with unwed girls coveted the wealth of people who proposed a marriage and thus married their daughters off in haste. As a result, children were getting married as early as nine years old and remarrying as early as twelve. This absurd practice vexed magistrate Huang Bao, who pointed out its detrimental effect on the young couples in terms of mutual affection and procreation. More broadly, as Huang warned, this practice could lead to an array of social problems, such as the "illness caused by depression" (*yiyu zhiji* 抑鬱致疾) in the newlywed bride, sexual disease in the newlywed groom, family conflicts, damage to personal reputation, and perhaps even lawsuits. Out of these grave concerns, Huang resolved to reform this practice and ordered people in Chaocheng county to follow certain rules: 1) grooms should be older than brides or not more than four years younger; 2) in principle, men were only allowed to marry after turning twenty and upwards, but they could marry earlier if their families were in urgent need of a helpmate, but no earlier than at age fifteen. He urged the community heads as well as educated and upstanding people of each village to disseminate the new rules. If any locals continued to practice early marriage beyond these rules, the offending parents of the two families and the matchmakers would be severely punished once their conspiracy was discovered. Community heads would accordingly be held accountable for failing to prevent this practice.[478] This stele provides

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or, if there were occasion (for the delay), at twenty-three" 二十而嫁；有故，二十三年而嫁, in *The Book of Rites* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/liji/liji012.html (accessed January 1, 2020).

[478] Huang Bao 黃葆, "Jie zaohun bei" 戒早婚碑 [Stele exhorting early marriage], in Shenxian zhengxie xuexi xuanchuan wenshi weiyuanhui 莘縣政協學習宣傳文史委員會, ed., *Shenxian wenshi ziliao: Shenxian beiwen daguan* 莘縣文史資料：莘縣碑文大觀 [Records of literature and history of Shen County: Stone inscriptions of Shen County], vol. 19 (Shandong sheng

valuable sources for understanding how early marriage related to local governance, which exceeds the scope of this chapter and requires another study.

Due to the fierce competition in the civil service examination, only a small proportion of candidates could succeed at a young age.[479] Most candidates had to get engaged or married at a young age before they achieved their academic goals and gained their desired official positions. Women in pre-modern China were denied access to the civil examinations, and both upper- and lower-class families normally prepared for the marriage of their daughters early. According to Susan Mann, "most girls in elite families were married out between the ages of 17 and 18 *sui*, with boys marrying slightly later, at 20 or 21."[480] The elders in the family commonly had the right to make a decision regarding the young people's marriage, which was determined by the elders' authority and status in the household hierarchy.

However, early twentieth-century China witnessed profound changes in the lives of young men and women, who were able to receive civic education and citizenship training. Under these circumstances, a new "civic ritual" began to spread among young students. According to Robert Culp, "civic ritual" refers to "symbolic collective performance that organizes social and political relationships, produces cultural patterns, and serves as a context for negotiating social power."[481] This new civic ritual differed from Confucian ritual and reshaped the minds and behaviours of young students in many respects. The idea of declining early engagement/marriage, to a greater or lesser degree, was also influenced by civic education and thus a type of "civic ritual." Both marriage and career choices were regarded not merely as personal issues but also as matters of

xinwen chubanju, 2004), 74–75.
[479] Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*.
[480] Susan Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 46.
[481] Culp, *Articulating Citizenship*, 209–10.

national import. The students who were attracted by the new ideas of civic education and citizenship might have prioritized their academic studies and careers over marriage arranged by their family, which was under attack from the New Culturalists. This behaviour distinguished these students from those who were less educated, showing their sense of patriotism and nationalism.

In his book tracing the lives of Chinese students (mostly males) from 1890 to 1920, Jon Saari demonstrates that young students faced the dilemma of negotiating between their independent individual consciousness and their traditional family obligations.[482] Since students were away from home for further schooling, they were released into a peer group in an untraditional urban setting. Some upper-class students sought to escape their family's control, and they were considered to be "patrician rebels" armed with new ideas emphasizing the individual and the nation as the most significant matrix of social life. They challenged the old family system with a revolutionary consciousness motivated by progressive books and peer contacts outside the family. These circumstances contextualize model letters postponing marriages between family members.

Model letters not only provided legitimate reasons for young people who wanted to pursue their academic studies, but also offered an excuse for those who intended to escape from their elders' intervention in their decisions about marriage while maintaining their respect for their elders. Although the assumed letter writers firmly decline an early engagement/marriage arranged by their seniors, they unanimously express their reverence or gratitude at the beginning of the letters, as a way to confirm the elders' authority and to better achieve their purposes. For example, a model letter from a male student to his grandparents begins with his appreciation for

[482] Jon L. Saari, *Legacies of Childhood: Growing up Chinese in a Time of Crisis, 1890–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1990).

their sincere love and earnest hope for him and his assurance that he dares not disobey their orders.[483] Other writers even approve of their elders' wisdom of choosing an ideal person for them by praising the persons they are expected to engage. In a second example, a male student writes to his father, expressing that he is satisfied with the family background, virtue, and learning of a certain lady chosen by his father, so he always regards this engagement as a fortunate opportunity.[484] Nevertheless, both examples offer similar reasons for declining the marital arrangement: early marriage will cause enormous harm because it means that the letter writer has to suffer the burden of wife and children without finishing his studies and fostering his "moral character" (*dexing* 德性). A comparison between these two models shows that the writer of the latter further expresses his concerns for the potential bride, who has grown up and will find it hard to wait for him for a long time if they were to be engaged.[485]

The repetitive occurrences of the above lines of reasoning indicate their importance as rhetoric in letter writing, whether the students agree to the engagement or not. According to these model letters, not having completed one's academic studies and established one's own career are major reasons for young men to decline marital engagements, which were applied to model letters for women as well. These letters depict female students who are worried about being distracted from their pursuit of academic progress and their preference to prioritize their success in studies before graduating from school.[486] Some examples further touch upon marital expectations and aim to influence women's choices. In a model letter from a female student to

[483] "Qing wu zao dinghun" 請勿早訂婚 [Dissuading one from early engagement], in Shijie shuju, ed., *Xuesheng xin chidu* 學生新尺牘 [New letters for students], new 19th ed. (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1943, second edition dated 1921), 1–2.
[484] "Su juhun zhi you" 訴拒婚之由 [Explaining the reasons for declining marriage], in *Xin shidai xuesheng chidu daquan*, 23.
[485] "Su juhun zhi you," in *Xin shidai xuesheng chidu daquan*, 23.
[486] "Wan ju dinghun" 婉拒訂婚 [Declining engagement], in Anonymous, *Nüzi xin chidu* 女子新尺牘 [New letters for women] (Shanghai: Shanghai yinshuguan, date unknown), 6.

her uncle, before identifying the danger of marrying prior to twenty years of age, the writer states that she is not concerned about "material satisfaction" (*wuzi de manzu* 物資的滿足), so she declines her uncle's selection of a potential bridegroom whose family's wealth numbers in the hundreds of thousands to guarantee financial security for the rest of her life. This letter is followed by a notice, reminding the reader that disagreement with seniors' proposals should be expressed in a respectful and polite manner.[487]

In addition to model letters addressed to one's seniors that decline early marriage, model letters addressed to one's peers criticize early marriage by referring to the emergent ideology of nationalism, which makes marriage beyond simply a personal or family issue but a critical national affair. A review of various reasons for postponing marriage in these letters, which synthesize major viewpoints widely circulated in the first half of twentieth-century China, suggests their correlation with Liang Qichao's criticism on early marriage. The imagination, planning, and design of the "advanced" and "modern" nation-state in early twentieth-century China were deeply connected to the epistemological frameworks developed in Western societies during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[488] This intellectual orientation, which was dominated by a linear, teleological, and progressive historiography, was explicitly reflected in the works of Liang Qichao.[489] Revisiting Liang's essay on banning early marriage helps trace the sources of relevant debates in sample letters at the dawn of the twentieth century.

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[487] "Gei Bofu: Fandui dinghun" 給伯父：反對訂婚 [To paternal uncle: Rejection to engage], in Tao Qiuying 陶秋英, ed., *Xiandai nüzi shuxin* 現代女子書信 [Letters of modern women], new 2nd ed. (Shanghai: Shijie shuju, 1941, first edition dated 1930), 11.

[488] Wang Hui, *China from Empire to Nation-State*, trans. Michael Hill (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014), 30–60.

[489] On Liang's transformation from a Confucian intellectual to a liberal nationalist, see Joseph Richmond Levenson, *Liang Ch'i-ch'ao and the Mind of Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

For example, a letter writer first argues that early marriage will enfeeble a nation. According to his survey, in Western nations, people are not allowed to get married until they reach the legal age; therefore, Western youth are vigorous, strong-minded, courageous, and creative, and Western nations are growing steadily. By contrast, there are no laws in China to regulate the age of marriage, so it is very common to see Chinese people under the age of twenty already being married with families.[490] This observation was not from the scientific survey but probably from widely circulated essays echoing Liang Qichao's opinion that early marriage exposes the underbelly of Chinese civilization and needs to be reformed to strengthen the Chinese nation.[491] Liang suggested that the age of marriage was an indicator of the civilized level of an ethnic group: since the marital age of the Chinese and the Japanese was later than that of the Indians but earlier than that of the Europeans, China was ahead of India but behind Europe in terms of its developmental stage.[492] The writer further demonstrates that it is the parents who should be responsible for this situation since parents impose the harmful burden of early marriage on the young that restricts their bodies, rather than fostering their moral character, studies, and strong bodies. He thus calls on the younger generation to break the rule and pursue their own success.

The first of the five detriments discussed in Liang Qichao's essay explains the concern expressed in the above model letter. According to Liang, early marriage would sap the energy of teenagers if they married before their minds and bodies were mature enough to handle sex; by

[490] "Lun zaohun zhi hai" 論早婚之害 [On the detriment of early marriage], in *Xin shidai xuesheng chidu daquan*, 77–78.
[491] According to the law issued by the Nationalist government in 1930, the minimum marital age was 18 for men and 16 for women, which were not earlier than the minimum legal ages for marriage in France (18 for men and 15 for women). See Lü, "Zhongguo jindai hunling huayu de fenxi," 5.
[492] Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 653. Liang did not clearly define the proper marital age, but he suggests that the ideal parents should be no younger than twenty-five or thirty years old after finishing their studies and having accumulated sufficient experience. See Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 655.

contrast, people would have better knowledge of sexual desire and better control themselves at an older age. To dissuade people from indulging in excessive sensual pleasure, Liang drew an analogy between society and lifespan. A person who has lived for sixty years, which consists of approximately twenty thousand days, could be regarded as a society with twenty thousand people in succession. If one of the people were to be injured due to debauchery, the next person in line would be injured as well. As a consequence, the indulgent sixty-year-old would die in the worst case or in less extreme cases lose vigor and vitality for the rest of his life. The death triggered by sexual indulgence was akin to the "I of today" (*jinri zhiwo* 今日之我) killing the "I of tomorrow" (*mingri zhiwo* 明日之我) while the permanent loss of vigor and vitality was akin to the "I of today" violating the rights of the "I of tomorrow." Liang then rhetorically asked, if the murder or violation of one person was considered criminal in law, then how would the seriousness of a crime toward hundreds of thousands of people be measured? As such, the indulgence of sensual pleasure was similar to what enticed people in a society to kill and violate each other, thereby undermining the health of a society. As the institution that would cause the excessive sensual pleasure, early marriage was responsible for the lack of vitality, bravery, and fortitude of Chinese people.[493]

A similar reasoning regarding "studying with concentration and maximum effort to pursue progress" (*zhuanxin zhili, yiqiu jingjin* 專心致力，以求精進) is offered by another model letter, which emphasizes that young people should focus their ambitions on studies rather than indulging in romantic love.[494] According to Liang Qichao, the period of schooling was decisive

[493] Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 653.
[494] "Quan wu zao hun" 勸勿早婚 [Dissuading one from early marriage], in Wang Quansun 王荃孫, ed., *Xinzhuan gaodeng xuesheng chidu* 新撰高等學生尺牘 [New letters for advanced-level students], 9th ed. (Shanghai: Guangyi shuju, 1921), 3.

to one's whole life in shaping one's intelligence, moral character, and strength, and preparing one for the future. If people failed to make the best of this critical period, they would be at a disadvantage in the group or society; by the same token, if one group of people failed, this group would be at a disadvantage in the world. Liang urged the young not to waste their valuable time on love affairs or lose their enterprising spirit, which would lead them to engage in inferior manual labour as an occupation and drag the nation down.[495] More notably, this model letter aims to persuade a classmate not to be engaged so early for fear that this custom will "weaken the Chinese race" (*ruozhong* 弱種): consummating a marriage "regardless of whether young people's vitality and bodies have grown to maturity could lead to numerous deaths" 無論氣體尚未完固，因此斷喪者頗多.[496] This concern could be traced back to Liang Qichao's second reason for banning early marriage, which claims that early marriage would endanger the quality of the Chinese population. Liang was among Chinese readers who studied John Fryer's (1839–1928) hygiene texts and "characteristically placed them in the context of national crisis."[497] By quoting a theory of biology,[498] Liang maintained that the essence of reproduction was embodied in the methods of nurturing the young. To fulfill the duty of reproducing the young for the nation, married couples should not bear children until they had reached the age when they were capable of mature parenthood, and they could make their own living and shoulder the responsibility as parents. These two prerequisites were proposed to limit early marriages, which Liang claimed would result in a total waste of human fertility for improving society due to weak offspring

[495] Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 653.
[496] "Quan wu zao hun," in *Xinzhuan gaodeng xuesheng chidu*, 3.
[497] Rogaski, *Hygienic Modernity*, 126.
[498] This theory suggests that survival and prosperity of one species is not determined by its quantity but the methods in which it nurtures its offspring, and these methods distinguish human beings from objects and the civilized from the barbarians. The origin of this theory that reads like Darwin's theory of evolution remains unclear in Liang's essay. See Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 653.

produced by unqualified parents. To highlight the relationship between individual strength and national fate, Liang compared the different attitudes between Spartans and Chinese toward producing offspring and emphasized that the Chinese see high fertility as the foremost happiness of life while caring less about the quality of their offspring. This entrenched preference toward larger families fertilized the soil of early marriage in increasing China's population while compromising its quality. Unfortunately, the key for a nation to thrive was not quantity but the quality of its population, as Liang reiterated by using British colonial rule over India as an example. Concerning the similar dilemma China was facing, as India did, in its interaction with foreign powers, Liang put forward an extreme solution to continue Chinese ethnicity: eliminating the weak and only preserving the strong (*taotai ruozhong, duchuan qiangzhong* 淘汰弱種，獨傳強種). As such, the custom of early marriage was the primary obstacle that needed to be overcome in order to meet this end.[499]

There are other specific reasons for postponing marriage. As another model letter (first edition dated 1907) suggests, apart from harming people's health, early marriage will hinder the economy; these drawbacks are not trivial to be ignored or tolerated.[500] Liang Qichao also touched upon this aspect in his essay by quoting a theory of economics,[501] arguing that people should ponder if their income per year was sufficient to support themselves as well as their wife and children before getting married. It would be unusual for young people under twenty years of age to gain a secure and stable income from some form of employment; therefore, it would be better for them to first complete schooling and secure an occupation. Without this precondition,

[499] Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 654.
[500] "Quehun" 卻婚 [Declining marriage], in *Dingzheng xinzhuan xuesheng chidu*, 51.
[501] The bedrock principle of this theory implies the significance of economic productivity to the fate of a nation, which means that every member of the nation should be financially independent and enjoy a return based on his or her contribution—that is how a nation strengthened its power. The origin of this theory remains unclear in Liang's essay. See Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 653.

marriage was not wise since these young people, along with their own new family, would have to rely on their aging parents, and this was a problem that contributed to China's weakness. According to Liang's analysis, one person was responsible for the livelihood of dozens of people in many Chinese families, so one's earning was often hardly enough, and poverty ensued. Since the poor had to make ends meet, the ferocious might degenerate into robbers, the cunning might descend to become despicable frauds, and the feeble might fall into vagrancy, all of which might occur in their next generation as well.[502] The concern regarding economic burden also appears in the aforementioned Fang Hongjian's second letter that seeks to postpone his marriage, which is finally approved by his father. Although these letters are not family letters, the reasons articulated therein certainly would attract readers who were concerned about this issue and conceivably encourage the young to apply these reasoning to their own family letters.

Although Liang Qichao's essay on banning early marriage was first published in 1902, his main arguments continued to appear in model letters into the 1930s.[503] In an example from an epistolary manual published in 1935, an older brother, Maoru 茂如, cautions his younger brother, Zhuoru 卓如, who is mocked as "not old but so eager to have a grandson," against the harms of arranging a marriage for his son Lan 蘭 too early. In arranging a marriage in accordance with the old saying that "men are born with the wish to have a family," there are four issues to consider.[504] First, the young men and women should reach marriageable age; otherwise, the timing will not be right, and they will not have adequate knowledge of love and sex, which

[502] Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 654.
[503] While I point out the similarities between Liang's essay and model letters in criticizing early marriage, I am not arguing that these letters were based on Liang's essay.
[504] James Legge, trans., "When a son is born, what is desired for him is that he may have a wife; when a daughter is born, what is desired for her is that she may have a husband," in *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子) in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/mengzi/mengzi006.html (accessed December 21, 2019).

would be harmful to both men and women since they would not be able to control their sexual desire. Second, the bodies of the young should be completely mature; otherwise, they will not have sufficient stamina to engage in the sudden experience of sexual activity following their marriage, which would affect their lifespan and the strength of their children. Third, the young should be academically accomplished; otherwise, they may indulge in the "land of warmth and tenderness" (*wenrou xiang* 溫柔鄉)—a seductive realm after they marry, and it would be very difficult for them to make any academic progress. Fourth, the young should be economically independent; otherwise, it will be difficult for them to make ends meet after marriage. Even if their father and brothers are of modest means, the young cannot rely on them forever. Maoru gently criticizes Zhuoru for being too eager and persuades him to delay the marriage of Lan, who is only eighteen years old and has not yet graduated from high school. Although Maoru is sympathetic with Zhuoru about having a grandson to carry on the family line, which compelled Zhuoru to arrange a marriage for his only son Lan, Maoru warns that an early marriage would hurt Lan eventually and suggests that he defer it for two years.[505] These four issues correspond to the aforementioned concerns expressed in model letters against early marriage.[506]

While the main goal of this section is to lay out the reasons against early marriage for potential negotiation, rather than analyzing Liang Qichao's arguments or presumably arguing that model letters criticizing early marriage directly draw on Liang's essay, it is useful to revisit Liang's essay when explaining these reasons, which are usually brief without elaboration in model letters. Nevertheless, as a means of disseminating new theories, epistolary manuals were

[505] "Quan wu wei zhi zaohun" 勸勿爲姪早婚 [Dissuading one's brother from arranging the early marriage for one's nephew], in Jin Zhanlu, ed., *Yuti xin chidu* 語體新尺牘 [New letters in vernacular Chinese] (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1935), 37–38.
[506] Among the five detriments discussed by Liang, the third one, concerning the poor early education provided by ignorant young parents, is rarely seen in model letters against early marriage. See Liang, "Jin zaohun yi," 654–55.

probably no less effective than other print media in terms of the practical application of their instructions in real life, such as those communicative strategies to release the young readers from arranged marriages.

6.4 The Articulation of the *Xiao jiating* Ideal

The contemporary rhetoric of postponing marriage, by resisting the intervention of senior family members in young people's decisions about marriage, was developed in tandem with the discourse of free love and conjugal marriage in model letters. In her study of family reform in modern China, Susan Glosser examines the ideal of the *xiao jiating* 小家庭 (lit., "the small family," which refers to the nuclear or conjugal family), which includes "freedom of marriage choice, a companionate relationship between spouses, at least some degree of economic and emotional independence from the joint family, and women's continued devotion to reproductive labor."[507] Analyzing the ways in which this ideal was appropriated for personal and political ends, she argues that the discourse on family was inextricably intertwined with the discourse on the state, suggesting the integral connection between national salvation and strength of families. Since Glosser's main focus is to uncover the origins of tragic episodes of state development in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the emotional aspect of *xiao jiating* discourse remains relatively underexplored.

Emotion or love, "the legitimizing basis for a new social order," constitutes a site for Haiyan Lee to trace the trajectory of China's search for modernity.[508] Love has a two-pronged

[507] Susan L. Glosser, *Chinese Visions of Family and State, 1915–1953* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 197.
[508] Haiyan Lee, *Revolution of the Heart: A Genealogy of Love in China, 1900–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2007), 3. According to Lee's notes on terminology, she generally translates *ai*, *lian'ai* and *aiqing* as love or romantic love, *yu*, *qingyu*, and *xingyu* as sexual desire,

implication: "the rise of the private, the personal, and the everyday" and the "horizontal identification, egalitarianism, voluntarism, and patriotic sacrifice."[509] Lee identifies three chronological modes of response to this duality: the Confucian, the enlightenment, and the revolutionary. In the enlightenment structure of feeling, which coincided with the advent of the May Fourth Movement, the modern notion of love was elevated to the central position and, in particular, the ideal of free love was regarded as the highest of all values, which was set against the oppressive hypocrisy and callousness of the Confucian family. Free love served as "the key trope of universal subjectivity" through which a new national community could be imagined due to "the relationship between the modern subject and the modern political community."[510]

The "modern subject" who prioritized the conjugal family was also delineated in model letters in Republican China, as exemplified in the "family letters" (*jiating shuxin* 家庭書信) section of *Letters for Modern Young People* (*Xiandai qingnian shuxin* 現代青年書信, preface dated 1932).[511] Consisting of thirteen letters and replies to twelve of them in the vernacular language, these letters read similar to short novellas with different episodes, including discussions of freedom of marriage choice between the young and the old, cohabitation guidelines between unmarried couples, family education between sisters, economic independence between sisters-in-law, divorce decisions, early marriage, filial piety and *xiao jiating*, and others. Some of its letters communicate marital ideals that resonate with Lee's "enlightenment structure of feeling." For example, a pair of letters exchanged between an

ganqing and *qinggan* as passion or emotion, and *tongqing* as sympathy or pity. And "sentiment," "feeling," or "emotion" (and their adjectival forms) are used to indicate relatively abstract or philosophical materials or encompass the entire gamut of words of affect. See Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 20.

509 Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 9–10.

510 Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 18.

511 Qiu Nishan 邱尼山, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 10th ed. (Shanghai: Guangming shuju, 1940), 149–231. There is little information regarding Qiu Nishan.

assumed Hanhao 漢浩 and his father-in-law Hongtao 宏濤 presents a new attitude toward the conflict between filial piety and the conjugal family. Based on the content, Hanhao and his wife Cui 璀 move out of his mother's house because of the tense relationship between his mother and wife. Hongtao writes to urge them to return home for fear that people would see this couple as heartless and unfilial (*buyi buxiao* 不義不孝) and misinterpret the conflict as his failure to educate his daughter. He questions the disobedient behaviour of the current young generation to which Hanhao belongs by quoting Mencius's aphorism that regards "affection for one's kin" (*qinqin* 親親) as the basis of social life.[512] It bothers him that, contrary to Mencius's instruction, the young people fail to love their kin while always detesting the old and fancying the new, and they indulge in loud and empty talk of loving human beings and society as well as sacrificing their life for various causes. Despite the fact that "filial piety" is under attack in contemporary society, Hongtao tries to persuade his son-in-law to return home by emphasizing the kinship between mother and son. He also reminds his son-in-law that living with his mother would save on household expenditure, hoping that Hanhao would think twice (*siqian xianghou* 思前想後) and have forbearance (*rennai* 忍耐).[513]

In his reply, Hanhao states a different opinion on "forbearance." He finds it unacceptable when his mother poses a barrier in the way of the future development of his family, making his wife and him her slaves and taking all they have for her own comfort. He asks for Hongtao's understanding by complaining that his mother is "selfish" (*zisi* 自私) for molding him into an ideal machine against his own will: "I will never want to be anyone's machine" 我可決不願做

[512] James Legge, trans., "He is loving disposed to people generally, and kind to creatures," in *Mencius* in Chinese Notes, http://chinesenotes.com/mengzi/mengzi013.html (accessed December 22, 2019).
[513] Qiu, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 226.

任何人的一架機器呵！[514] In response to the question of "filial piety," Hanhao criticizes it as enslaving children to their parents and deems the stories in the Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars, such as feeding mosquitoes with one's blood to relieve parents' suffering and lying on ice in search of carp for a parent, as "inhuman" (*bu rendao* 不人道). He expresses his aspiration to be independent by elaborating the mechanism of *xiao jiating*:

> The formation of *xiao jiating* is to escape the darkness of the [extended] family and enable us to make concerted efforts in our lives and careers without the interference of my mother. In the meanwhile, we are more likely to nurture our courage of independence and spirit of cooperation, eradicating our deep-rooted bad habits of relying on our extended family. Although our material life is not as comfortable as that under the support of *da jiating*, our spirit is vigorous and free. If our efforts were insufficient to support our *xiao jiating*, we would each make our own living; if we had children, we would endeavour to raise them; at the same time, we would shoulder our responsibility to reform society without any restraint.
>
> 小家庭的組織，是要避免無謂的家庭中的黑暗，使我們兩人可以有時機共同努力自己的人生的事業，不至受她的桎梏。同時我們更能養成獨立的勇氣，合作的精神，依賴家庭的劣根心由此可以切實地消滅。雖然我們的物質生活，沒有大家庭給我們的那样舒适和豐裕，但是我們的精神是活潑的，自由的。如果我們兩人的力還不足支持我們的小家庭的時候，我們可各自謀生；我們養了孩子的時候，也當以兩人的努力和刻苦來培養；同時，我們可自由地肩負起我們改造社會的責任。[515]

While being critical of the traditional extended family, which the writer likens to "hell on earth" (*renjian de diyu* 人間的地獄), and of his mother herself, Hanhao promises his father-in-law that

[514] Qiu, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 229–30.
[515] Qiu, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 231. The punctuation marks are from the original text, so some of them do not conform to the current standard.

he would fulfill his duty as a son by frequently visiting his mother and meeting her needs.

Xiandai qingnian shuxin contains model letters assumed to be written by modern men like Hanhao as well as modern women, as seen in two letters from an assumed female student Huaijin 懷瑾 respectively written to her grandmother and uncle. Huaijin lost her parents at six and was raised by her grandmother. Under the auspices of her grandmother, she went to Shanghai for high school. Huaijin is supposed to come back for her wedding ceremony in a few days with her fiancé, a high school graduate currently working in officialdom in Nanjing, but she refuses the marriage arranged by her uncle. In response to her grandmother's reproach, Huaijin defends herself by illustrating the new ideal of women under the Western and scientific influence and by showing her determination to break from "old rituals" (*jiu lijiao* 舊禮教):

> Chinese women have been harmed by old rituals so deeply that few of them realize this. Even for women who live in metropolises, most of them are still intoxicated with men's embraces. Women who proclaim themselves to be awakened, upon scrutiny, are only men's covert accessories [lit., property in disguise]. I live in the city, and because of you [grandmother] I have the opportunity to study hard. My knowledge enlightens me and makes me understand many aspects of life. This is absolutely not Shanghai's bad influence on me!
>
> 中國的女子因爲受禮教的遺毒過深，覺悟的太少，雖在通都大邑之中，大多數的女子還沉醉在男子的懷抱裏。一種自名為有了覺悟的女子，視其究竟，也僅僅是一種變相附屬品罷了。身在都市的我，就因爲你給我有了努力爲學的機會，我的智識指示了我，使我了解了生活之諸面目，這絕不是上海把我弄壞了！[516]

Huaijin repudiates her grandmother's idea of "good wife and wise mother" (*xianqi liangmu* 賢

[516] Qiu, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 158.

妻良母) and strives for her role as a "human" (*ren* 人).[517] In response to her uncle, she reiterates her notion of being "human" with "thought" (*sixiang* 思想), "will and spirit" (*yiqi* 意氣), "character" (*xingge* 性格), and "aspiration and interest" (*zhiqu* 志趣) in a marriage:

> Marriage is by no means to simply serve the aim of continuing the ancestral line as patriarchal society took for granted but a natural conjoining based on the highest level of mutual affection and respect… [Men and women] can guide and support each other and together strive towards the common goal of being "human." Since they are motivated by the power of "love," they can bravely strive for their careers. Since they are ceaselessly striving, the foundation of their romantic love is further strengthened along the way.
> 結婚決不是如宗法社會所認爲天經地義的‘傳種接代’那麼的單純，結婚是男女兩性相愛相敬到了極度的一種自然抱合……[男女兩性]能夠在同一的目標下，互相提攜，彼此努力做一個‘人’。他們因爲有‘愛’的力量的推動，能夠很勇敢地爲他們的事業奮鬥，因爲有不斷的奮鬥，自然更建立了愛的基礎。[518]

Huaijin also explicitly expresses her detestation of her fiancé, whose pursuit of official promotion associated with power and wealth was completely different from her own aspirations and interests. She refuses to take her uncle's suggestion to "abide by her lot" (*anfen* 安分) since it means to unconditionally accept the arranged marriage, which she believes would betray her personality and destroy her life.

Notwithstanding its radical standpoint against the Confucian patriarchy, model family letters in *Xiandai qingnian shuxin* concern the cultivation of a true "human being," rather than confining the meanings of modernized marriages merely to the construction of a modern nation.

[517] For the discussion of "*xianqi liangmu*," see, for example, Shizuko Koyama, *Ryōsai Kenbo: The Educational Ideal of "Good Wife, Wise Mother" in Modern Japan* (Boston: Brill, 2013); for the discussion of "*ren*," see my Chapter 5 on "*ren'ge*" (lit., human pattern).
[518] Qiu, ed., *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, 166.

In her study of "the specifically gendered meaning of writing," Wendy Larson uncovers how love was associated with national concerns, suggesting that romantic love commonly served as a central trope for personal liberation in stories and novels of the late 1920s and early 1930s. By reading the works of Chinese women writers, Larson argues that love was actually "an ambivalent and sometimes fantastic illusion, a paradox that was supposed to create a strong woman working toward national unity but never lived up to this promise."[519] A comparison between model letters probably written by a male writer in a modern woman's voice, as seen in *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, and Chinese women's actual literary works complicates the concept of modernity. The numerous stories of "free love" produced in the 1920s and 1930s communicated the severance of ties with family, tradition, and locality and the forging of a national community whose claim on individual identity must override particularistic bonds, such as familiar ones.[520] The nationalist proposition embraced by the New Culture and May Fourth radicals was by no means the only approach for China to enter into modernity; however, nationalism dominated the discourse of modernity throughout the twentieth century. It introduced a sea change in Chinese society, especially offering women more educational opportunities, allowing them to secure occupations, and endowing them with political rights. Nevertheless, it failed to fully emancipate Chinese women as long as modernity was defined as male-dominant and masculine, and the goals of reform or revolution were directed at strengthening the nation. By contrast, *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, like the works of the "romantic generation,"[521] tells somewhat different stories from the works examined in Larson's study for depicting modern subjects not subordinated to

[519] Wendy Larson, *Women and Writing in Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 92.
[520] Lee, *Revolution of the Heart*, 96.
[521] Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

nationalism.

6.5 Conclusion

Family correspondence was an important and common section in letter-writing manuals and communicated Confucian ritual practice and ethical norms throughout pre-modern Chinese history. The Republican period witnessed a gradual transformation in epistolary models from reflecting norms and values of Confucian patriarchy to the ideal of the modern nuclear family (*xiao jiating*), as seen in model letters by young writers to family members that sought to postpone or cancel arranged marriages. These models utilize the emergent reforming and nationalistic discourse, such as sexual and reproductive health, education, and economics, to bolster the young in their negotiations with elders in their family. This discourse echoes Liang Qichao's argument against early marriage and subsequent works under his influence. This forceful yet subtle dissent in the 1920s reflects different threads of ongoing social reforms. Specifically, it uncovers the highly fluid nature of epistolary knowledge in accommodating new ideas with the traditional Confucian tenet that instructs the young to comply with their elders' wishes. From the 1930s, letter manuals, such as *Xiandai qingnian shuxin*, begin to draw on the discourse of family reform and join other literary genres, especially fiction, in cultivating the "modern subject." The correspondence of marital ideals in different phases of the Republican period thus provides a concrete example of the changing knowledge of writing family letters in modern China.

Part Three: Conclusion

Chapter 7 Models for the Masses

In his study of English women's letters from 1560 to 1603, James Daybell argues that the ability to write letters exerted a positive or emancipatory impact on women's lives. Since letter-writing women were in possession of full literacy, they could manipulate more extensive private topics on their own, for instance, by establishing business relationships or expressing intimate feelings, which were often inaccessible to partially or totally illiterate women.[522] Dena Goodman's study of French women's letters in the eighteenth century suggests that letter writing was a crucial step for women to "develop a consciousness of themselves as gendered subjects in the modern world."[523]

In the context of late Qing and Republican China, the importance of epistolary knowledge is manifested in the cultivation of independent letter writers, as reflected in the second epigraph at the beginning of this dissertation, "Women Should Learn to Write Letters." This epistolary independence enabled the readers of these manuals to manipulate epistolary practices when writing for themselves or on behalf of others as amanuenses. Organized in accessible and practical formats, letter-writing manuals conveyed strategies of politeness and abstract concepts of social interaction (e.g., *renqing*) through specific sample letters for correspondents from different groups, such as children, women, businessmen, officials, labourers, and overseas Chinese, or for certain occasions, such as congratulation, solicitation, recommendation, invitation, appreciation, and consolation. Memoirs of contemporaries suggest that some of these manuals were used as educational materials on a regular basis to teach students epistolary skills,

[522] James Daybell, "Female Literacy and the Social Conventions of Women's Letter-Writing in England, 1540–1603," in Daybell, ed., *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing*, 59–76.
[523] Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 4.

as seen in the case of *Qiushui xuan*. As a type of reference work, these manuals were more likely to be consulted whenever a special occasion arose.[524] Therefore, many letter manuals provided ready-made phrases or sentences for readers' easy reference. A growing number of readers' demands for mastering the art of classical letter writing motivated many men of letters to engage in compiling, annotating, and publishing epistolary manuals, which provided various options in the book markets. However, readers would not simply regurgitate the sentences and ideas from these manuals. Instead, they might appropriate useful and multiple formulaic phrases for their own purposes in letter writing.[525]

As the demand for letter-writing manuals has continued to decrease since the latter half of the twentieth century, the social and educational influence of imperial and Republican epistolary handbooks has faded into oblivion. A major goal of my dissertation, therefore, is to bring this pedagogical genre back into view, providing a unique perspective for us to understand mass education in modern China. In my overview of these manuals, I have highlighted many features they shared with their Western counterparts, although no concrete evidence claims that the compilation of any Chinese manual was under Western influence. Like their French counterparts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, these manuals "inculcated values along with skills" and provided "a glimpse into the world of private, autodidactic learning"[526] since letter-writing textbooks were used both in contemporary schools and by readers outside of the classroom as complementary readings to improve themselves. Like their British and American counterparts in the eighteenth century, these manuals taught proper conduct by using "exemplifications,"

[524] Burke, *What is the History of Knowledge?* 91.
[525] Cai, "Power, Politeness, and Print."
[526] Altman, "Teaching the 'People' to Write," 168.

"advice," and "repeated characterization of particular social or generic types."[527] Epistolary rules and conventions also helped middling families pursue social refinement and upward mobility, so familiar letters were formalized to avoid "desultory incoherence" and "arrant vulgarity," though they were meant to be spontaneous, emotional, and conversational.[528] Like Western epistolary manuals, Chinese manuals served the symbolic function of showing polite manners and social rituals and thus enhance our understanding of epistolary culture across time and space. However, the fact that these Chinese manuals were often classified as a category of language primer implies that ostensibly their main pragmatic function was to improve the reading and writing skills of the public. I have shown how, with their multiple functions, such as self-representation, moral exhortation, information exchange, emotional expression, and commercial negotiation, letters were critical media for maintaining and strengthening interpersonal relationships, as seen in my case studies of *Qiushui xuan* and *Shuanggui xuan*. With their evolving content and format, letters were also invaluable sources in capturing contemporary social and cultural transformation, as seen in my case studies of model letters communicating patriotism and marital ideals.

Rather than merely teaching readers how to write proper letters, many epistolary manuals also aimed to instill modern ideas and values driven by "power struggles,"[529] which were in line with contemporary male reformers' continued efforts to build a prosperous and civilized China and to equip its citizens with ever-evolving theories to embrace China's historic transformation from an empire to a modern nation-state. These modernizing efforts were reflected in model letters as well as the elaborate prefaces of letter-writing manuals, both of which could serve as a

[527] Bannet, *Empire of Letters*, 69–74.
[528] Dierks, "Familiar Letter and Social Refinement in America," 31–35.
[529] Duara, "Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity," 81.

vibrant forum for the debates of various topical issues that also appeared in other writing and media. In this sense, epistolary manuals played a role similar to other forms of print media, such as journalistic writings and literary creations, in articulating sociopolitical opinions and shaping public consciousness. Letter manuals reflected existing social norms and dynamics while supporting new ideas that came to define citizenship in modern China since different social forces engaged in the production and circulation of these manuals for educational, cultural, commercial, and political motivations. Although many letter manuals were frequently repackaged to share the lucrative markets of self-help guides, these manuals transmitted indispensable knowledge unobtainable from other types of popular literature when rudimentary competence in epistolary forms was required for people who aspired to establish themselves as educated and sophisticated citizens in contemporary society. Therefore, these late-Qing and Republican letter manuals serve not only to reveal the etiquette and protocols of everyday communication that once guided and continues to influence Chinese writers and readers, but also offer fresh insights into mass education in modern China.

Appendices

Table 1: List of Available Editions of *Zhinan chidu*

Title	Publisher	Date
初學指南尺牘全集 2 卷	廣州：雙門底古經閣藏板	1861
初學指南尺牘全集 4 卷 附經驗各方	廈門：文成堂	1871
初學指南尺牘全集 4 卷	聚文堂	1878
初學指南尺牘 附商業文件細則	上海章福記 1912 初版	1917
改良分類指南尺牘	上海：萃英書局	1930s
改良分類指南尺牘 4 卷	嘉義市（許應元）	1935
新編註解初學指南尺牘	嘉義市（許應元）	1935
白話注釋初學指南尺牘 4 卷	上海鴻文書局 1930 初版	1939
初學指南尺牘	台北市：盛興書局	1945
指南尺牘 正集	台北市：國華書局 （明心文化研究會）	1945
白話註解 初學尺牘 4 卷	高雄市：金鶴堂（姚三貴）	1946
初學指南尺牘	台北市：大華	1957
初學指南尺牘 4 卷	台北市：文化	1957
初學指南尺牘	台中市：正義 雲鶴居士	1958
初學指南尺牘	新竹市：竹林書局	1997
指南尺牘台話解說	台南市（張枝正）	NA
初學指南尺牘全集 2 卷	NA	NA

Table 2: List of Available Editions of *Xiexin bidu*

Title	Publisher	Date	Paratext
唐註寫信必讀	上海鴻文書局	NA	簡明珠算 玉堂字彙
增註寫信必讀	商務	NA	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	香港：永新書局（王如明）	19?	
唐著寫信必讀	NA	192?	附考正字彙
新編寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	香港：五桂堂	193?	附刊結婚證書 婚喪摘要 禮書帖式 姓氏郡名 楹聯
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	香港：陳湘記書局（蒲編使者）	196?	
最新增廣註解字彙尺牘全璧	上海書局	1902	序（1902） 學算必讀 考正字彙摘要
改良校正唐註寫信必讀	日新書局	1905	序 契約成規 交接稱呼 接見常談 賓筵酒令 課童常禮 應酬佳話
唐註寫信必讀	上海鑄記	1906	
增註寫信必讀	上海商務印書館	1906	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	廣東省城十七甫懷遠驛 關東雅書局	1908	序（建勳）婚禮帖式 楹聯新編百家姓郡名
增廣寫信必讀	上海：廣益書局	1908	附考正字彙
增補寫信必讀	廣東：文光樓	1909	
考正字彙唐著寫信必讀全璧	上海書局	1912	敘（1900）考正字彙 書契便蒙算法指掌
考正字彙唐註寫信必讀	上海：廣益書局	1913	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	上海：錦章圖書局	1915	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	香港：陳湘記書局	1915	

寫信必讀 10 卷	上海：進步書局	1917?	
增註寫信必讀 10 卷	上海：商務印書館	1917	
言文對照廣註寫信必讀	廣文書局	1921	敘 尺牘碎錦 契據類
言文對照寫信必讀	上海：世界書局	1921	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	廣州：華興書局	1930	
新時代寫信必讀	上海廣益書局	1934	
言文對照 唐著寫信必讀	上海文業書局	1936	契據類
唐註寫信必讀	安東：誠文信書局（孫虛生）	1936	附珠算字彙
現代寫信必讀?	上海：文業書局（董振華）	1936	
新輯寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	上海：廣益書局	1936	後附婚禮帖式 楹聯新編 百家姓郡名
唐著寫信必讀	上海：達文書店（胡碧雲）	1937	
唐著寫信必讀	重慶：上海書店	1941	
唐著寫信必讀	贛州：三晶書店	1943	
唐著寫信必讀	桂林：南光書店（凌善清）	1943	
唐著寫信必讀	上海：新亞書店	1944	
唐著寫信必讀：自修尺牘規範	上海：大中華書局	1948	
唐著寫信必讀：國語註解	上海：廣益書局	1951	
新編寫信必讀 分韻撮要合璧	香港：五桂堂書局	1952	
唐著寫信必讀言文對照白話註解	台北：文化圖書公司	1959	
寫信不求人：唐著寫信必讀合刊	台北：文化圖書公司	1971	
言文對照 唐註寫信必讀	台北市：華正書局（徐碧波）	1974	

Table 3: List of Different Editions of *Qiushui xuan*

Title	Date/ Edition	Publisher	Annotator (*zhujie zhe* 註解者)
秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1821–1850	道光刻本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1821–1850	道光刻巾箱本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1859	羊城味經堂刻本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘詳註	1869	羊城味經堂刻本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1885	朱墨刻管斯駿補註本	山陰 婁世瑞注釋 吳縣 管斯駿補註
管注秋水軒尺牘 4 卷續刻 1 卷	1886	蠡城春草堂校刻本	山陰 婁世瑞注釋 吳縣 管斯駿補註
管注秋水軒尺牘 4 卷續刻 1 卷	1888	上海簡玉山房 重校刊	山陰 婁世瑞注釋 吳縣 管斯駿補註
管注秋水軒尺牘 4 卷續刻 1 卷	1894	刻本	山陰 婁世瑞注釋 吳縣 管斯駿補註
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1901	維新堂刻本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1908	印刷社會石印本	山陰 婁世瑞
增註秋水軒尺牘 3 卷	1908	上海同文書局石印本	山陰 婁世瑞
秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1911	上海會文堂書局	山陰 婁世瑞
增註秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1915 ？版	上海廣益書局石印本	山陰 婁世瑞
秋水軒尺牘	1919	上海掃葉山房石印本	不詳
增註秋水軒尺牘	1921	上海掃葉山房石印本	山陰 婁世瑞
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1921	石印本	不詳
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1923 ？	廣文書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1924	廣文書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1925	上海世界書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
補註增解分段提要秋水軒尺牘	1925	上海會文堂書局鉛印本	不詳
新編分類秋水軒句解尺牘 4 卷	1925	上海廣益書局石印本	句容 王后哲
秋水軒尺牘	1925	上海群学社	上虞 许家恩

秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1925 ？ 版	上海會文堂書局	山陰 婁世瑞
註釋秋水軒	1925 再版	上海掃葉山房	山陰 婁世瑞
新體註解秋水軒尺牘	1925 初版	上海大東書局	武進 鄒友梅
增註秋水軒尺牘	1928	上海掃葉山房石印本	山陰 婁世瑞
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1928	廣文書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1928	上海世界書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
言文對照新式標點秋水軒尺牘	1928 初版	上海華北書局	上虞 許家恩
言文對照新式標點秋水軒尺牘	1929 再版	上海華北書局	上虞 許家恩
言文對照新式標點秋水軒尺牘	1930 3 版	上海華北書局	上虞 許家恩
言文對照新式標點秋水軒尺牘	1930 3 版	上海文光書局	不詳
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1931	上海世界書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
言文對照新式標點秋水軒尺牘	1931 6 版	上海新華書局	錢義璋
言文對照秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	1931 再版	上海新文化書社鉛印本	鮑庚生 （標點）
秋水軒尺牘	1932 4 版	上海大中書局	梁溪 李襄君
上海新文化書社鉛印本	1933 11 版	上海新文化書社鉛印本	鮑庚生 （標點）
新體廣注秋水軒尺牘 2 卷	1934	上海世界書局石印本	吳江 陸翔
上海新文化書社鉛印本	1935 26 版	上海新文化書社鉛印本	鮑庚生 （標點）
新式標點言文對照分類秋水軒尺牘	1935 5 版	上海啟智書局	不詳
國語註解秋水軒尺牘	1935 再版	上海大達圖書供應社	古吳 江蔭香
秋水軒尺牘	1936	上海世界書局鉛印本	不詳
廣注語譯秋水軒尺牘	1936 初版	上海世界書局	紹興 宋晶如
詳註自修讀本秋水軒尺牘	1937 ？ 版	上海中央書店	儲菊人（校訂）
秋水軒尺牘	1938 再版	上海達文書店	不詳
新體註解秋水軒尺牘	1940 13 版	上海大東書局	武進 鄒友梅
詳注話解秋水軒尺牘	1941 初版	上海中華書局	金湛廬
言文對照精校詳註秋水軒尺牘	1946 再版	上海春明書店	姚乃麟
國語註解秋水軒尺牘	1949 新 8 版	上海廣益書局	古吳 江家楨
秋水軒尺牘 4 卷	不詳	芝香堂刻本	不詳
秋水軒尺牘	不詳	上海鴻寶齋書局石印本	不詳

Table 4: Comparison of Two Versions of Ding Shanyi's Epistolary Collection

雙桂軒尺牘 No. and Title, 1878 (47 in total)	高等女子尺牘教本 No. and Title, 1907 (45 in total)	Identity of Addressees	Major Issues	Major Excision of the 1907 Adaptation (highlighted in italics)	Major Addition of the 1907 Adaptation
1 致王春綬大弟	43	Brother named Wang Chunshou 王春綬 and sister named Danxian 淡仙	1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Description of Ding's illness, children, and her husband's new post 3 Gift-presenting		姊善儀手啓
2 致大司寇陳夫人	44	Wife of Chen Fu'en 陳孚恩 (1802–66)?	1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Description of Ding's illness and her husband's new post		姊善儀謹白
3 其二	45		1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Inquiry about health		姊善儀謹白
4 致婉蕙梁夫人	1	Yang Meigao 楊渼皋 (courtesy name Wanhui 婉蕙, ?–c.1884) Wife of Liang Gongchen 梁恭辰	1 Congratulation on the new birth of Mrs. Liang's eldest daughter-in-law 2 Concerns about the miscarriage of Mrs. Liang's second daughter-in-law	大甥媳再索得男，已經彌月。階前玉樹，連發孫枝。*天上石麟，疊昭瑞降，自是德門澤厚，*定占袍笏盈床。*翹企吉雲，欣忭無既。姊遠違帶水，未克親試啼聲。遙想華堂瑞藹，湯餅筵開，當亦念及遠人岑寂也。*	姊善儀手啓

		(courtesy name Jingshu 敬叔, 1814–1887) Third daughter-in-law of Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅 (1775–1849)	3 Gift-presenting to Mrs. Liang's grandchildren		
5 其二	2		1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Description of Ding's husband's new post 3 Concerns about Mr. Liang's post	前者役回之便，辱承惠賜耳香，極為精巧。*正值中秋之夕，俾申上祝之忱，并以珍品下頒，多而且□。*銘心飽德，曷可言宣……外子兩載嘉興，*勉力籌畫公事，得以無誤，而支絀之況，素邀洞見，茲復。*移權秀水，愈趨愈下，何以支持？*想吾妹聞之，亦爲眉皺。*	姊善儀謹白
6 其三	3		1 Description of Ding's husband's new post 2 Gift-presenting to Mrs. Liang's grandchildren	*暌違玉度，箋敬久踈，懷想之私，無時或釋。*中秋曾泐寸箋，恭賀鴻禧，並呈微物，諒荷青照……*德昭繡豸，聿勤內政於璇閨；化溥慈烏，共式母儀於珊海*……遙喜孫媛方長，正值週齡。*繡褓攜時，想見含飴之樂；晬槃設處，預徵*繩武之休，可為預賀。	姊善儀謹白
7 其四	4		1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Congratulation on Mr. Liang's new post 3 Request for Mrs. Liang's poems	雅貺騈羅，*既耀目以分輝，更朵頤而飽德，翠圈作佩，永誌隆情。*拜領之餘，感慙交集。*小女亦對賜敏頭，祇領一一*……昨又欣聞妹丈越郡綰符，召棠敷蔭，*并轡攬雲門之勝，揮毫賡剡水之箋。*	姊善儀檢衹

8 其五	5		1 Description of Ding's new residence 2 Response to Mrs. Liang's poems	*和詩列後即求校正：* *于喁迭唱妙心裁，尺幅藤箋盥手開。* *自媿碔砆難並玉，翻勞佳句報瓊來。* *烏飛兔走感年華，無限離情對落霞。* *孤負東籬好風景，不教同賞晚秋花。* *燕寢聯吟出雅裁，雲帆恰指鑒湖開。（敬叔太守新權越郡）* *蘭亭山水柯亭竹，應待魚軒選勝來。* *病餘短鬢染霜華，靈藥空思餌碧霞。* *一事報君同一笑，矇矓銀海又生花。（時患目眚）*	姊善儀手啟
9 其六	6		1 Description of Ding's family 2 Congratulation on Mrs. Liang's birthday	*際此花欄雨潤，正切馳思。適逢紀至，猥以荔果，偶生*辱承柬賀，銘鏤殊深……月二十日，欣逢賢妹婺宿呈輝。海籌增紀，*華觴捧處，望瑤池桃熟，千春錦帨，懸時仰璇閣。蘭熏九畹，誕連菩薩，福似神仙，翹企萱幃，莫名藿向，*姊*鳧趨迹阻，未能親介蕃釐，燕賀情殷，用敢遙稱純嘏，肅丹布賀千秋……*	姊善儀手布
10 致潤卿妹	7	Unknown female relative	1 Expressions of longing 2 Description of Ding's illness and her husband's new post 3 Taiping Rebellion in Changsha		姊善儀手肅「肅」

			and Jiangxi		
11 致伯服姪婦	8	Unknown female relative	1 Inquiry about family members		芝仙手泐
12 致蓀蘭五妹	9	Unknown female relative	1 Inquiry about health	比維懿祉迎庥，百凡迪吉，*綺閣叶齊眉之慶,萱幃徵繞膝之歡*……君硯大甥，烋初在署小住半月，有孚一械，囑為寄覽，*儀孱軀粗適，近狀如常，新生九兒，甚爲結實，足抒雅註。*	姊善儀手啓
13 致檢珊妹	10	Unknown female relative	1 Description of Ding's children and illness	姊目花腕痛，兩鬢蒼蒼，老態日增，殊堪自笑。*不與藥爐為伍，而高麗參浙中甚少，慾懇賢妹代買一觔。有費清神，統容圖報。*	姊善儀手佈
14 上某太夫人	11 *致*某太夫人	Unknown female senior relative	1 Description of Ding's family		姪媳善儀謹肅「肅」
15 上某太夫人	12	Unknownfemale senior relative	1 Response to a request for employment-seeking 2 Gift-presenting	跡羈浙水，夢繞家山，屢擬言歸，藉親色笑。奈因冗俗，未克分身。*憶雅度之久違，實私衷之時戀*……敬維姻伯母大人壽祺康豫，潭祉綏安。*並稔二兄自楚遠歸，想見萱室顏和，敘天倫之融洩；華陔頤養，樂家慶之團欒，引睇鴻庥，曷勝鳧企。*	姪媳善儀手肅

16 致某夫人	13	Female cousin named Peifen 佩芬	1 Description of Ding's family 2 Gift-presenting	春間肅复一椷，諒*已久登妝閣，暌違玉度，箋敬久疎*，懷想之私，無時或釋。*邇際懸蒲入序，益徵履茀翔和*。緬維*表姊大人*懿祉清佳，潭祺綏吉，*喜蒲觴之介福，卜榴子之宜男*。	妹善儀謹白
17 致某夫人	14	Unknown sister-in-law	1 Description of Ding's illness, her husband's new post, and the concubine's pregnancy 2 Request for forwarding a family letter	近維三嫂*夫「大」*人淑祉凝禧，潭茀迪吉，*令郎自仍回直應試，圻盼泥金聯雋*，定協頌私。妹鹿鹿如恒，無善足述，*髮蒼蒼而視茫茫，日增老態。外子雖照常署篆，而開復部文迄未奉到，官運蹇滯，無可如何*。	妹善儀襝衽
18 致如園張二嫂	15 致*張世嫂*	Unknown sister-in-law	1 Gratitude for gift-receiving 2 Description of Ding husband's new post and one concubine's pregnancy 3 Mrs. Zhang's reunion with Mrs. Qing		妹善儀上言
19 上某太夫人	16	Unknown female relative	1 Congratulation on birthday and gifts-presenting		姪女丁善儀謹肅
20 致表姊某	17 致*某表姊*	Unknown female cousin	1 Gift-presenting	敬維*表姊大人*禔躬日茂，茀祉烋清，*香滿犀樽，霽月協如，恆之頌螽，延鴻案吉，星符多壽之占，引企蘭芬，式如藻忭*。	表妹善儀敬叩

21 上溫處道慶師母	18 上溫處道慶*夫人*	Wife of Qing Lian 慶廉 (courtesy name Yunpu 雲浦, dates unknown) Circuit Intendant of Wenzhou and Chuzhou (*Wenchu fenxun dao* 溫處分巡道, 1843–1853)	1 Congratulation on birthday and gifts-presenting	謹維師母大人履綏納祜，鼎福凝釐。*佐豸繡以調羹，輝增象服；警雞鳴而戒旦，香泛犀觴。茲當月滿秋中，恰值星躔壽次。*籌添珊海，爭開百六鴻圖。	丁善儀謹上
22 其二	missing			*See Appended Texts below for the complete missing letter No.22*	丁善儀謹上
23 其三	19		1 Description of the premature death of one concubine's newborn baby son		丁善儀謹肅
24 其四	20		1 Gift-presenting	*憶久暌違，夫絳帳益深，依戀於丹忱。際茲臘轉珠杓，春回玉琯，*敬維師母大人鼎祺百福，簪紱雙禧，*椒頌篇華，雅協瑟琴之奏；梅調禹莢，績熙鼎鼐之和。開東閣之清尊，春風滿座；撫西冷之淑景，冬旭延庥。*	
25 其五	missing			*See Appended Texts below for the complete missing letter No.25*	
26 其六	21		1 Description of Ding's sojourning life	*師母大人鼎履鴻庥，坤頤駢集，勤襄柏府；瞻象服之是宜；景麗槐階，進鶴觴而式宴……*每憶絳幃，*效皋趨依而未得，屢銘丹篆，更鶴跂之頻殷。*	
27 賀某夫人壽	missing	Unknown female senior	1 Congratulation on birthday and gifts-presenting	*See Appended Texts below for the complete missing letter No.27*	

28 致某觀察夫人	22 致*某夫人*	Unknown female friend	1 Expressions of longing	辰維*賢妹夫人*福履凝釐，潭庭集祜，*陔南黍潔，佐瀡滫於辛槃；堂北蕿榮，奉晨昏於子舍。*式瞻鳳采，曷罄鳧忱。	姊善儀謹啓
29 又與婉蕙妹	23 *致婉蕙梁夫人*	Yang Meigao 楊渼皋 (courtesy name Wanhui 婉蕙, ?-c.1884)	1 Request for Yang's new poems 2 Description of the premature death of one concubine's newborn baby son	*緬維賢妹夫人禔躬靜懾，遄喜早占，香浮柏葉之尊，春融鴻案，暖入椒花之詠。艷溢魚箋，*如有新篇，尚祈即付郵筒。	五舍弟遊學日本，迄今尚未成行，聞係諮文未領到故也……姊善儀襝衽
30 其二	24		1 Description of Ding's temporary residence in Yuanhu 鴛湖, her daughter's family, and her health	*近稔婉蕙賢妹夫人履祉雙清，坤祺百福，優遊珂里，蘭芷承歡，隨倡璿閨，頻繁協德，仰瞻鴻案，頌切蟻忱。* 種種冗俗，紛至沓來，*是以筆墨荒蕪，不敢擬道韞之詞高，猶竊比文通之才，盡一笑。因思吾妹夫人，梓鄉頤養，筆鋒攬勝，梨嶺採奇，清興日增，未識奚囊中又添幾許詩料？雅人深致，以視鄙人之塵俗，萬斛若判仙凡。倘蒙惠寄佳章，不啻珠玉在前矣。*	五甥女日見長成，吾妹一任其天然，不為纏足，免束縛肢體之苦，具徵賢明卓識，絕後空前。他日上行下效，頹風一旦盡除，悉吾妹倡率之功也……姊善儀敬啓
31 其三	25		1 Concern about Yang's family in a time of chaos 2 Gifts-presenting (food)		姊善儀手書

32 致畹卿陳夫人	26	Unknown female relative	1 Concern about the health of the Mrs. Chen's family 2 Gratitude for Mrs. Chen's care of Ding's daughter		姊善儀手布
33 其二	27		1 Inquiry about the date to meet 2 Inquiry about delivering two fans with painting to a lady		姊善儀手布
34 其三	28		1 Invitation to meet in summer	惟*三弟既已入都，蓮輿自須北上。我兩人結鄰之願，又屬子虛，殊爲悵結。*	姊善儀手奏
35 致某從嫂	29	Unknown sister-in-law	1 Gratitude for the addressee's hospitality 2 Description of Ding's illnesses		姊善儀襝衽
36 致某夫人	30	Unknown sister-in-law	1 Gratitude for the addressee's gifts 2 Description of the illness of the eleventh child after separation		妹善儀襝衽
37 致嘉興縣薛夫人	31	Unknown sister-in-law	1 Description of Ding's life in Jiyang 暨陽	敬維三嫂夫人坤祺載福，鼎祉雙清，*德被鴛湖，琴瑟佐鳴絃之化；賢齊鴻案，翟茀聯製錦之華。翹首芳徽，傾心藻忭。*	妹善儀敬啓
38 送婢與石門丁明府	32 *致*石門*縣*丁明府	Unknown brother	1 Description of Ding's life in Jiyang	*回念琴堂晉謁，款接殷拳，感荷隆情，(增)倍增離緒。*辰下敬維三弟大人升猷聿懋，斗望丕隆，	姊善儀白

			2 Sending maidservant Liangui 連貴 over to be Mr. Ding's concubine	*樹駿續於桂坊，拜龍光於楓所……苎羅邨邊，再尋西子；桃花源裏，暫避秦人。*	
39 致蛟隣余夫人	33	Fang Jiaolin 方鮫鄰 (courtesy name Niansi 年姒, dates unknown)	1 Description of Ding's illness 2 Response to Fang's request for suitcase-keeping	妹隻身來省，小住數日，*數日與諸戚友一敘闊衷*，故未裁箋布悃……	妹善儀謹白
40 上某太夫人	34 *致*某太夫人	Unknown aunt	1 Agreement to keep the aunt's fourteen suitcases	*拜別依依，忽將兩月，俗冗碌碌，尚未裁箋，正深抱歉，茲於月之望日，*楊升帶到諭言，並箱籠十四件……	姪女善儀謹肅
41 致前糧道顧夫人	35	Unknown female relative	1 Description of the meeting with Mrs. Gu's mother and concern about her family 2 Description of Ding's family 3 Gifts-presenting (local food)		姊善儀敬啓
42 寄唁芷薌勞夫人	36	Unknown lady	1 Condolence to the wife of the dead 2 Mourning the loss of Ding's maternal grandson	*世姊夫人琴調燕婉，方庚比翼之詩，鏡剖鸞孤，遽失同心之侶。音容忽杳，哀毀宜深。維念姊丈青箱業富，黃綬名高，現宰官之身，返神仙之府，從容撒手，無復聖懷，況賢郎方遠客燕山，吉兆又未諧蔡卜，尤當親承含玉，勿效啼珠。*	妹善儀手佈
43 代棣香致暢之	37 代棣香致暢之*書*	Ding Yanhe 丁彥和 (courtesy name	1 Gratitude for Ding Yanhe's care	敬稔舅氏大人壽躬泰豫，福祉萃豐，*稍息文翰之勞，獲安寢興之素，家庭聚順，杖履優遊，*仰跂	甥女棣香謹稟

		Changzhi 暢之, 1793–1860)		德輝，曷勝健羨。	
44 與何氏姊	38	Unknown female friend	1 Concern about the addressee		妹善儀敬啓
45 示竺珊甥	39	Nephew named Zhushan 竺珊	1 Concern about Zhushan 2 Description of Ding's plan to go to Fujian	*近因袁江一帶，道途梗塞，北闈全錄，遲至月前始見，遺珠可歎，殊代扼腕。科名本有定數，或遲待來科，或竟一麾出守，奮翮來吳耶！系念之至，作何定見？幸示及之。*	竺珊賢甥披覽 芝仙手泐
46 與外孫女溫卿	40 與*溫卿外孫女*	Granddaughter named Wenqing 溫卿	1 Concern about Wenqing's body 2 Description of Ding's illness		芝仙手泐
47 其二	41	unknown female friend	1 Expressions of longing		芝仙手泐
	42 *致徐夫人*	Unknown lady			*See Appended Texts below for the complete additional letter*

Appended Texts

Missing Letter No. 22

其二

叩違慈範，趨侍無由，依戀之思，時縈五內。昨以偶生荔果，知蒙長者厪垂有素，用敢上陳，迺荷頒賜多儀，吉詞藻飾，祗領之下，感媿交并。頃閱邸抄，恭稔師大人嗚騶蒞郡，振鷺朝天，想係先返甌州。琴裝待束，然後携同瀛眷，黼座偕趨。此時搢笏含香，雙旌並擁；還視開藩陳臬，兩浙重臨。早發春明，式安冬爰。儀夙荷青垂，尤殷丹頌。憶金閨之遠隔，萱背久違；盼玉趾之旋来，蓬心殊切。肅修鯉牘，恭送魚軒，敬請福安，伏惟慈詧。

Missing Letter No. 25

其五

前具謝函，諒蒙賜鑒，每企慈暉之在望，時深孺慕以勿諼。日昨接閱省抄，欣稔師大人寵荷綸音，榮陳臬事，伏維師母大人鼎裀晋秩，坤祉升華。栢省勤襄，豸節與魚軒並耀；蘭亭隨唱，雁銜聯鳳佩增輝。溥舊澤於金湖，錦堂晝暖；迓新恩于玉掖，璇閣春浓。驤首裔雲，傾心積日。晏方伯處，眷屬起身之後，未識何時移節崇轅，同開吉庫？諸多盼念，伏乞示知。儀幸隸仁帡，久違絳帳。本擬躬親芳範，伸燕賀以彌殷。祗緣跡阻禾中，效鳧趨而未遂。專緘鱗牘，虔叩鸿禧，並請懿安。

Missing Letter No. 27

致某夫人賀壽

月前曾肅蕪箋，諒登荃詧。玆屆一陽應序，欣逢五福添籌。敬維賢妹夫人，淑慎垂儀，莊姝協度，華閥表鳳城之望，重幃詒燕翼之休。襄治化於黄堂，人歌生佛；啓芳筵於紫府，會列羣仙。舉案齊眉，共慶人間桃熟；和羹洗手，恰看嶺上梅開。吹葭管以回韶，雲書獻瑞；爇芝香以寫詔，霞帔增輝。驤企班儀，鳧愉祝悃，姊近聯襟，带仍隔屏。幃末由酌兕而陳辭，竊效介麋以進頌。所喜木公金母，長成駢福之圖，更覘瑶珥，瑜環益篤。賓爻之慶，附陳不腆。恭祝維祺，祗請雙安，統希乙照不備。

Additional Letter

致徐夫人

秋九具覆一箋，詳陳近狀。光陰彈指，瞬已冬初。撫時序之推遷，緬芳徽而洄溯，辰維親母仁姊大人福履崇隆，閨幃清謐。嗚機教子，聿成華國之才，截髮留賓，克盡持家裡之道。引瞻豐範，昌馨翹馳。妹隨唱衙齋，料量內政，惟米鹽之凌雜，愧經紀之多疏。所幸閫署平安，為可告抒綺注。浙中交涉，日益紛拏。現聞簡放奕協揆為揚威將軍，前往督辦。彼族欲得浙之定海，閩之廈門，粵之香港，撥與地段開市，前於寗波投書余紫松提軍，囑其轉達天聽，聞已據情入奏，茀不知廟箕若何。兵勢如此，戰守俱難，我輩身處深閨，亦不無驚心蒿目也。野機葛此地所無，茲來家機上細夏布衫料兩件，廣羅衫料兩件，所謂廣羅，大約即是此種，湖縐兩疋，杭綢一疋，並所需紋銀一百兩，如數寄到。統乞察收示復，是所跂禱。耑泐布達，祇請淑安，餘惟藹照不宣。妹丁善儀襝衽啓。

Table 5: Contents of *Aiguo chidu*

最新商業愛國尺牘序	
凡例	
忠愛	致友改良瓷器挽回利權/論時事/勿忘國恥/勸專用國貨/勸用愛國布/論商人愛國歷史/論商戰勝利可弭瓜分之禍/振興實業足以富國/勸華僑回念祖國/擬糾合同志請願政府保衛僑商/勸實行愛國主義/公民請辦平糶/勸貼印花稅/勸購儲蓄票/勸注重家庭教育
問候	歷訴近狀/春季問候/夏季候友/秋季候友/冬季候友/初交/問疾/久別/留別
公牘	募捐賑災/籌送時疫痧藥/募捐士紳愛國儲金/請懲賣國之奸商/上國貨維持會書/勸用國貨/勸改良府綢/擬設國貨陳列所/請代表揚國貨/請禁夜花園/請辦衛生事宜/答友問救時富國策/答友憤論外交失敗書/答友問紗貨市況/要求賠償亂時損失/請作實業團代表/論救國良策/論正服裝以重人格/上籌安分會/勸儲金/論商人尊孔/獎勵救國儲金分事務所函
慶賀	賀民國憲法草議案/賀生孫/賀民國新年論改曆之理/賀開國紀念日/賀得儲蓄票/賀開張/賀新婚/賀畢業/賀友父壽/賀友母壽/賀娶妻/賀生子/賀生女/賀嫁女
家書	與兒論古人愛國歷史/述見外人愛國真相/孫奉祖/奉叔祖/奉父母/奉叔父/奉兄長/致幼弟/致妻/致胞妹/致族兄/致嫂/致姑父/致姨母/致表兄/致內兄/致襟兄/致岳丈/致生女
規勸	勸勿作洋奴/勸戒紙煙/勸勿戀賭/勸勿冶遊/勸勿酗酒/勸守信義/勸恤廉恥/勸速回里/勸習勤儉/勸助慈善事業
請託	請寄愛國月報章程/請書楹聯/請代擔保/托銷貨物/托尋房屋/托代招股/托尋夥友/托探行情/托代購貨/托代借款

求薦	求入出洋參觀實業團/請薦店夥/求薦校對/求薦學徒/薦友入三育會/薦友入實業團/介紹書啟/介紹名醫/介紹司賬
感謝	謝勸愛國良箴/感友慰藉/感人之救倒閉/感人之薦好夥友/感友之惠款/感友之問疾/感友知遇/感友揄揚/感友推薦
排解	調和黨爭/權救誣扳/勸息爭訟/勸熄罷工風潮/調停賣客貨價/維持公益/代挽留同學
索借	索還友欠以充賬款/贖還抵押/借書/約期還款/追索陳欠/挪借公款/借款度歲/索討薪金/商借川資
催促	催認救國儲金/催促速出國貨/延不到店/催出定貨/催速繳帳/催了婚事/催速起程/催促回里/催促繳課/催還借書/催理店務/催還墊款
邀約	約赴救國演說會/約同赴學/邀集同門會/邀聚敘/邀請演說/邀撰雜誌/邀同返里/約友遊兩湖觀濤/感懷時事招友偕隱書/餞友北上啟/約友踏青啟
餽贈	贈民國輿地圖/餽遺鮮果/贈友？儀/謝友媒禮/犒賞夥友/贈人酒醴/贈友西瓜/贈友藥餌/贈姪書籍/贈友衣物
獎勵	獎知教育人才以培國本/拾遺不昧/獎振興實業/獎作事勤儉/獎能改良國貨/獎肯認錯/獎不受私/獎盡心慈善事業/獎捐愛國儲金
詰責	責貌為熱心國事者/戒欺誑詐偽/責驕恣/責鄙吝/責不求專業/責謊言/責無志/責失約/責詐騙/責妄毀/責同業相妒/責無愛國心/責偏聽/責不孝養
婉辯	譬論極要人才/辯答覆遲誤理由/責人代書之誤/辯貨價漲落理由/辯抵制日貨之非計/辯華茶遽跌原因/辯國貨急宜改良/辯洋煙貼印花稅事/辯非得已
辭拒	拒絕黨誘/辭拒勸屯米穀/辭不觀劇/辭不入賭/拒約冶遊/辭不赴宴/拒迷信之舉/辭拒擔保/辭做定盤買賣/拒托代銷洋貨/拒挪公款
吊唁	約共追悼革命時首義先傑/唁喪父/唁喪母/唁喪祖母/唁喪兄/唁喪弟/慰落水遇救/慰

	失官/慰遇匪/慰倒歇/慰失慎
契據	賣田契式/賣屋契式/田地屋契摘要/除票式/租田契式/租屋契式/議單式/推據式/召據式/全收據式/清賬據式/攬據式/有限公司保單/無限公司保單/合資公司議單/股單存根式/股單式/代表單/息摺封面式及息摺面式又息摺式/恤婺會序/蘭譜序/糾會序/十賢會序/書信來往特別稱謂/借約/信封格式/禮金封面題簽式/分書式/繼書式/遺失借票據/請教習關書/盤店聲明/請帖式/學校章程緒言/學生志願書/學堂落成請觀開幕小啟/中華民國禮制/失主稟嚴捕賊/旱荒呈/水災呈/畢業證書/開會傳單/爲孤兒院募捐啟/入場券式/募賑水災捐啟/轉運公司承攬約式/喜筵請帖式/國慶日紀念日日期/燈謎/詩鐘/愛祖國歌/十窮歌/八富歌/勤儉詩/民國新聯通問/商界通用新聯

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