

Kuaiji's 會稽 'Forgotten Century', the Cult of Yu 大禹, and Kuaiji Today*

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Abstract: This study on Mount Kuaiji, just southeast of Shaoxing in Zhejiang province, consists of two parts: Part I, with its focus on the Qin and two Han dynasties and particularly Kuaiji's 'forgotten century' (roughly 50–150), excavates the literary traditions ascribed to this center of southern learning, while demonstrating the site's importance in southern communications and in local industries. Its aim is to complicate the usual story of center and periphery, of assimilation and validation, and of provincial backwaters. Part II discusses the curious development in modern times of Mount Kuaiji into a state cult site in honour of the primeval flood-queller, Yu the Great. Among others, Sun Yatsen, Zhou Enlai, and Jiang Zemin have duly paid homage to Yu and worshipped the cultural icon at his temple. Over the past twenty years, large investments have created in a vast complex a hybrid family-oriented playground and a site of worship that now ranks only second to that of the Yellow Emperor at Huangdiling in Shaanxi.

* The authors wish to thank their assigned discussant and several astute questioners of this paper, as it doubtless is due to them that some improvements were introduced. For this paper, the two authors would further like to thank (in alphabetical order) Vanessa Davies (Egyptologist), Jianye He (Reference Librarian), and Deborah Rudolph (Rare Books Librarian), the latter two at the East Asian Library at UC Berkeley.

Keywords: Kuaiji, Eastern Han, local traditions, modern cultural industries, sacrificial schedules, mythicization of Great Yu 大禹, water resources, pirates

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.15239/hijbs.05.01.03>

A dear friend, an expert in *Guoyu* 國語 [Advice from the States] and *Shuoyuan* 說苑 [Garden of Eloquence], said somewhat sardonically, ‘The Chinese people’s chief god is not a deity like Great Yu; it is themselves’.¹ Certainly, it is true that the only two national-level sacrifices nearly continuously conducted from the time of the First Emperor of Qin down to today are those to Huangdi or Yellow Emperor, the figure who is now anachronistically conceived as the ancestor of the Chinese people alone, and to Great Yu, whom legend has not merely mapping but also determining the lay of the land in all Nine Provinces of China. In some respects, worship of the Great Yu is the central thread throughout this essay, as worship to that deified sage-king of the mythological past seems to have been continuous for the entire period under review, but Michael Nylan’s half of this story concerns a constellation of developments in history, and the hidden factors that made Kuaiji Mountain² and Kuaiji City—some six kilometres southeast of today’s Shaoxing city (Zhejiang province)—by the first century of Eastern Han a thriving economic, political, and cultural centre, despite the stunning paucity of primary sources and secondary studies devoted to that so-called ‘forgotten century’. As Olivia Milburn, *the* expert on the region in the pre-Qin period, has remarked, ‘knowledge of the cultural conditions of the . . . region in the Eastern Han dynasty is patchy to nonexistent’.³

¹ Eric Henry (Emeritus, UNC), mid-August 2021 email.

² The mountain range extends for nearly one hundred kilometers. The locals spoke a variety of languages, judging from the latest linguistic surmises.

Here are the bald facts: whereas we can count a total of three important people who hailed from Kuaiji during Western Han (none of them classicists),⁴ based on the *Kuaiji dianlu* 會稽典錄 [Kuaiji Canonical Records] and *Hou Hanshu* 後漢書 [History of Later Han] alone, we can list at least fifty-two for Eastern Han (many of them noted classicists), even though the *Kuaiji dianlu* exists today only in fragments. The phenomenon Nylan first set out to explain was this: how did a relative backwater, supposedly filled with 'wild' barbarians (the Min'ou 閩越, the Dong'ou 東歐/東海, and the Wu 吳), fiercely rebellious,⁵ so quickly become a leading cultural centre,⁶

³ Milburn, *Cherishing Antiquity*, 148. She speaks only of Jiangsu, because that is where a certain mirror comes from, but she is clear about the paucity of information about the entire southeastern region. Dong, another expert, says in his 'Handai de Wu-Yue wenhua', 39, that Ban Gu's *Hanshu* really only deigns to notice three men from the Kuaiji area for some two hundred years: Yan Zhu 嚴助 (?–122 BCE), Zhu Maichen 朱買臣 (?–115 BCE), and Zheng Ji 鄭吉 (?–49 BCE). While this is something of an exaggeration, the difference for Eastern Han is huge.

⁴ Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 296, notes that classicists from the coast dominated Western Han classical learning, judging from the *Hanshu* 'Rulin zhuan': with thirty-one classical masters from Lu and forty-eight from the three coastal commanderies of Langya, Donghai, and Qi (or 25.13% of the total). None came from Kuaiji, however.

⁵ This is why Liu Pi 劉濞 (216 BCE–154 BCE) was sent to Wu (Kuaiji), and given jurisdiction over three commanderies with thirteen walled cities (*Shiji* 106.2821). That Liu Pi was meant to quell rebellions (rather than start them) is obvious, but he was the chief instigator of the Seven Kingdoms Rebellion of 154 BCE.

⁶ Let us not forget that in 353 the Orchid Pavilion 蘭亭 Gathering of forty-two men of letters took place there (in Shanyin, capital of Kuaiji), which was immortalised by Wang Xizhi the calligrapher in a piece of writing (the 'Lanting xu' 蘭亭序, now known from copies) that was treasured by emperors and kings, as the epitome of cultivation. We know that some major festivals had thousands attending, 'praying for happiness and exorcising calamities' (*qifu rangzai* 祈福禳災). Xiao Cha's 蕭愨 (519–562) 'You Qishan si fu' 游七山寺賦, compiled sometime between 527–529, gives us a sense of the cults of the time.

especially when it came to classical learning (a.k.a. the misnamed ‘Confucian’ Classics), home to some families who were among the most renowned for their scholarship?⁷ As we will see, part of the answer is that Kuaiji may not have been a backwater, given its history over the preceding centuries,⁸ and part of the answer is that the region had superb local leadership (another indication that the court thought it important) and local tuition, also the wealth to fund the necessary institutions.⁹ In effect, her part of the essay queries the easy assumptions that allege, ‘After the Chu and Yue kingdoms fell to the Qin ... the Jiangnan region became more culturally and politically marginalized’, and so, inevitably, ‘the importance of their mountains also lessened’.¹⁰

⁷ Whole books have been devoted to some of the most famous clans: the Yus 虞 of Yuyao 餘姚, the Hes 賀 of Shanyin 山陰; the Wangs 王 of Kuaiji; and the Kongs 孔 of Shanyin. Four works of interest in tracing these family lines are Qu’s *Zhonggu Kuaiji shizu yanjiu*; Liu’s *Liuchao Kuaiji shizu*; Lan’s ‘Han Tang Yuyao Yushi shijia shulue’; and Wang’s ‘Jiangbiao Ruzong: Kuaiji Heshi zhi jiafeng yu jiaxue’. Also of note were the descendants of Qing Pu 慶普, the Western Han ritual master, some of whose family moved to Kuaiji, apparently during the civil wars before Eastern Han.

⁸ Han Xin 韓信 (?–196 BCE), the erstwhile ally of the Western Han founder, rebelled from here. The propensity of the Han kings in the area to rebel, as under Liu Pi of Wu in 154 BCE (see note 5 above), and under the kings of Hengshan and Huainan in 122 BCE, suggests that the area was fertile enough and rich in ores, as these were needed to launch and provision big armies. It seems unlikely that all the old traditions from Wu died out, including metalworking (see below).

⁹ Here the name of Wang Wang 王望 (fl. 58–75) was famous (*Hou Hanshu* 39.1297).

¹⁰ Contra Wei, ‘A View of History’, 127. Much of Wei’s essay I admire, just not this statement. Wei draws here upon Wang Mingke’s 王明珂 argument about Mount Kuaiji and Mount Xiang 湘山: that these mountains were related to the fortunes of Chu and Yue kingdoms by ‘forced geographical interpretation[s] of the mythology of the sage kings’ Yao and Shun, ‘due to political needs’. See Wang’s *Huaxia bianyuan: lishi jiyi yu minzu rentong*, 163–84. I object to Wang’s treatments of ‘historical memory’ and ‘ethnic identification’, also his as-

She realizes that in some cases it may be easier to import new ideas into a new area, if other conditions are right, than to change old habits of thinking (a supposition spurred by her reflections on present conditions in the good ole USA), but we must nonetheless ask, How can we be sure that the ideas and techniques we identify with second- and third-century Kuaiji were entirely new to the Kuaiji area, given the constant interactions among disparate populations in this area marked by continual trade?¹¹ That is the question we must seriously entertain, if we accept the fact that networks of economic and cultural exchange, and even the imposition by a polity of territorial controls over those exchanges, do not invariably leave indisputable evidence behind for latter-day historians and archaeologists to uncover. In any event, that no fewer than fifty-two experts gained empire-wide recognition during Eastern Han (a few trained in the technical arts, but the overwhelming majority well-versed in classical learning) should astonish us, when we consider how many local manuscripts were lost in the centuries following the Eastern Han downfall.¹² Wang Chong 王充 (27–97), the Eastern Han thinker,

sumptions about 'marginality' in antiquity. During one of the Six Dynasties (or 'Jiankang Empire', by Chittick's nomenclature), some proposed to conduct the most solemn imperial *feng* 封 sacrifice at Mount Kuaiji, rather than at Mount Tai. See Yan, *Liang shu*, 40.575, 577 (Xu Mao 許懋 [464–532] biography).

¹¹ The idea that economic backwardness can be an advantage in development projects was first argued by Gershenkron, *Economic Backwardness*. On borders as interaction sites, see, for example, Ludden, 'The Process of Empire'; Langer and Fernandez-Götz, 'Boundaries, Borders, and Frontiers'. Three impressive works have been in our mind as we pen this: (1) Scott's *Seeing Like a State* and (2) *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* and (3) Szonyi's *The Art of Being Governed*. But as both authors treat early modern or modern periods, different presumptions about time and space prevail in their work and in ours.

¹² For example, seven major works of Eastern Han history are now known only from a few fragments preserved in Tang and Song collectanea, including the influential *Hou Hanshu* text by Xie Cheng 謝承, which Michael Loewe believes formed the basis of Fan Ye's fifth-century work.

spoke of some one hundred pupils training in classical learning, at the age of eight *sui* 歲 or seven years, which suggests a rather lively and advanced local scene.¹³

I first stumbled upon Kuaiji's importance when reading Wang Chong, who was himself a Kuaiji native and local booster.¹⁴ But then I also stumbled, quite inadvertently, on another remarkable resource while idly re-reading Karl Polanyi (see below), the economic historian, who argued that cities in the antique world were built up and flourished for two main reasons, economic and religious. Kuaiji was named as an important cult site, a 'Garrison Mountain' (one of five), whose deities commanded power, during Wudi's reign,¹⁵ and Kuaiji in Eastern Han was a major stopping point along a newly built road under Zhangdi, presumably receiving gold in two ways, along the water route from Burma, but also a mixed water-overland route (Figure 1).¹⁶

¹³ Wang talks of going to the local administrative offices to study at a young age in his own Autobiography ('Ziji pian' 自紀篇): 書官小童百人以上。Wang Chong disputes some of the more credulous legends, as is well known. Much the same is told of Huang Chang's experience (see below), in *Hou Hanshu* 77.2496.

¹⁴ In his own time, Wang Chong's teachings were largely ignored, and there was no manuscript copy of *Lun heng* at the capital. During his exile to the south in the 180s, Cai Yong read the work, and he spoke highly of it, and when Wang Lang returned to the north in 198, he brought a copy with him to the Han court controlled by Cao Cao at Xu 許 city. Thereafter, the book came into wider circulation.

¹⁵ During the reign of Wudi 武帝 of Western Han (141–87 BCE), a new system of imperial sacrifices was established for the worship of nature gods. By this cultic order, altars and shrines were built for Taiyi 太一 (Great Unity), Houtu 后土 (Sovereign Earth), the Five Sacred Peaks or Marchmounts (*yue* 嶽), Five Zhen 鎮 (Garrison Mountains), the four Great Rivers 四瀆, and the oceans 海. Like the group of the Five Sacred Peaks, the Five Garrison Mountains were arranged by the four cardinal directions of Chinese geomancy, plus the centre. The Southern Garrison Mountain was Mount Kuaiji. See Qu, 'Antiquity or Innovation?', 20 note 40.

¹⁶ One wonders, too, whether the road was built to facilitate the transfer of soldiers and judges from the capital to suppress the rebellion of King/Prince Ying of Chu, under Mingdi. This was certainly true in earlier times, in the early

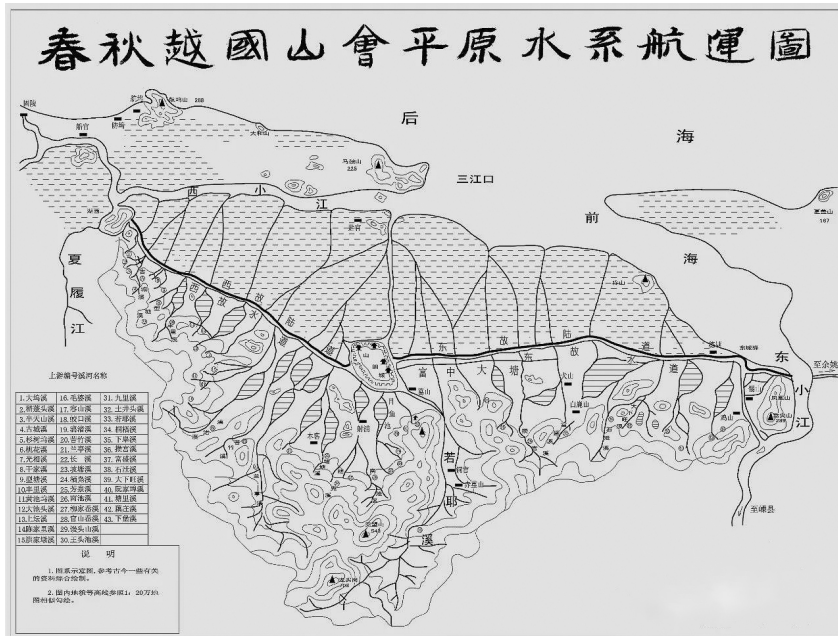


FIG. 1 Hydraulic map of the Chunqiu period of Yue, in the Kuaiji area, when the first canals were built. After an image on display in the Shaoxing yunhe wenhua guan 紹興運河文化館. Taken by Thomas Hahn on October 14, 2014.

That set me to thinking about Kuaiji as the burial site of Great Yu, the legendary flood-queller, as an important cult site from at least five centuries before unification in 221 BCE, even if it's been hard to piece together the story of Kuaiji before the Eastern Jin (318–420)—the time when records become relatively plentiful—and harder still to assemble much evidence on a single century or so of Eastern Han (25–220), roughly 50–150, whose details I mean to fill in,¹⁷ before

to mid-Western Han. See, e.g., *Shiji* 114.2984. See also *Hou Hanshu* 3.143; 4.190 (for Hedi's reign, Yongyuan 14); 5.203 揚州領六郡，會稽最遠，蓋不調也。

¹⁷ To state the obvious, in the post-Han Sanguo era (220–60), the Kuaiji area once again becomes the capital of a major power, this time under Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252), lord of Wu, and so once again, quite predictably, the records about

Thomas Hahn takes over with his thoroughly contemporary story of the worship of Great Yu at Kuaiji.

In large part, as it turns out, the difficulty of piecing together the Kuaiji story is the difficulty of keeping track of the multiple alternative names the area is associated with and went by.¹⁸ Before unification in 221 BCE, nomenclature for the region is confused. Accordingly, recent studies of the region in the pre-Qin and post-Han era that try to delimit the territory do so without notable success.¹⁹

classicists, commentators, and court advisors become more plentiful, probably in part because the respected historian Xie Cheng's elder sister was the wife of Sun Quan, and Xie Cheng himself served as governor (Taishou) of Wuling in Wu kingdom. It is no less relevant that a century before, in 129, Shundi divided Kuaiji into two commanderies (Kuaiji and Wu), apportioning the richest commanderies to Wu. That the same area went under multiple names accounts for much of the initial difficulty in tracing its story. This is true not just for Kuaiji, but for other southern commanderies as well. For example, Cangwu and Dongting commanderies are listed as Changsha and Qianzhong in the *Shiji* and Pei Yin's commentaries to it. Many entries for the region appear in the standard histories under other names as well, including Boluo 博羅 and Southern Chu 南楚 (*Shiji* 129.3268). 'Southern Chu' is what Sima Qian calls the Kuaiji area stretching to Hengshan, Hunan. But *Shiji* 6.234 notes that while Jing 荆 is usually taken to be north of Yangzhou, some authors take Kuaiji to be 'south of Jingjiang' 荆江南, referring vaguely to 'south of the Yangzi'. *Hanshu* 28A.1590 tells of two place name changes in Western Han, first to Jing kingdom and then to Wu: 會稽郡, 秦置. 高帝六年為荆國, 十二年更名吳. The entire area is also included in the rubric 'Nine Commanderies' (*Jiujun* 九郡) and as part of Yangzhou 揚州, one of the Nine Provinces. See note 19 below. One essay, (Nie, 'Kuaiji xin kao', 50–52) even argues, unconvincingly, that Kuaiji was originally in the foothills of Mount Tai, in Shandong province.

¹⁸ Mount Kuaiji eventually becomes the Southern Garrison Mountain 南鎮, whose jurisdiction is tended by Daoist priests (see below). This group of mountains performs stabilizing and protective functions for the empire. Note that this group of mountains does not overlap with the Five Marchmounts.

¹⁹ As the territory of Kuaiji in pre-Qin days at points belonged to Chu, Wu, and Yue, the names of these kingdoms continue to be associated with Kuaiji in

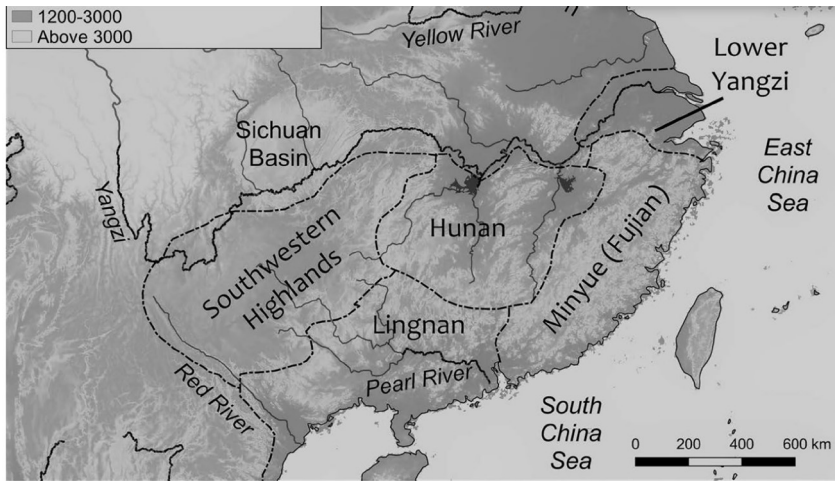


FIG. 2 Vague boundaries in the south: After Maxim Korolkov, *The Imperial Network in Ancient China* (2021), Fig. 1.1, itself drawn from Wikimedia Commons, on Minyue borders (vaguely defined).

The sources are too scanty to define the borders or frontiers with great precision, as is clear from one map delineating the area (Figure 2),²⁰ and the multiple names applied to the area may or may not correspond to the same sites over time, as place names move around in early China, for settlers often transferred the names of their old homes to new sites. That said, Nylan has done her best to check and cross-check the areas she identifies as Kuaiji Mountain and Kuaiji City²¹ vs. Kuaiji region, though the separation between the three is

later times. (See note 17). Many associate Kuaiji with Tushan 涂山, the site where Shun's two wives came from. For that reason, Nylan had no difficulty finding temples to Shun in Kuaiji. See notes 23, 24, below for more on the pre-imperial period; also, Korolkov, *The Imperial Network*, chapters 2–4. For the post-Han period, see Chittick, *The Jiankang Empire*. Charles Holcombe is not entirely convinced by Chittick, but, like me, he finds Chittick's book worth reading. Holcombe's review appears in the *Journal of Chinese History/Zhongguo li shi xue kan*, 131–35.

²⁰ This map derives from Korolkov, *The Imperial Network*, chapter 1.

seldom maintained in the early sources (see below), unless they have been edited repeatedly over time.²²

The first half of the paper consists of four parts, all relating to this ‘forgotten century’ of the first century explicitly and the cult site implicitly. After preliminaries about the Kuaiji location (Part I), it summarises the testimony of Wang Chong regarding his native place (Part II), then turns to examine the place of local historians from Eastern Han glorifying the exploits of Wu and Yu (Part III), and finally, in Part IV, considers exchanges in gold, bronze, tin, and crystals,²³ as well as pirates,²⁴ to sketch the contours of Kuaiji at a single time and place, during Zhangdi’s reign (r. 75–88), and in the decades immediately following. Given the early history that the essay sketches, it argues, if tentatively, that the usual narratives told in the Chinese sources alleging that Kuaiji’s impressive cultural heritage is entirely attributable to migrations of elites and artisans from the North China Plain are unlikely to represent the whole story.

²¹ No fewer than thirty-six streams come down from Kuaiji Mountain, drenching Kuaiji City frequently.

²² As was done with the *Shuijing zhu*, for instance. See Nylan, ‘Wandering in the Land of Ruins’.

At points, Kuaiji is even associated, for cult purposes, with Southern Hengshan 衡山 (today’s Hunan province), the Southern Peak of the Five Sacred Mountains, a fact that plays into this account; see *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 7.3165 [Treatise on Sacrifices]: 秦觀者望見長安, 吳觀者望見會稽, 周觀者望見齊西. Southern Hengshan today consists of seventy-two peaks, and it stretches for some one hundred fifty kilometers long. Presumably the conflation occurred because Kuaiji is a ‘straight shot’ to Changsha, according to the *Shanhai jing* 29.1 (沔水); *Shanhai jing* 40.1: 漸江水: 湖西有湖城山, 東有夏架山, 湖水上承妖皋溪, 而下注浙江. 又逕會稽山陰縣 [NB: Shanyin as identifier], 有苦竹里, 里有舊城.

²³ The *Shanhai jing* states that all around Kuaijishan, in the four directions, gold, jade, and crystals are found: 四方, 上多金玉, 下多瑛石.

²⁴ Kuaiji mountain was said to be some fifty *li* from the sea, which made it a natural launching point for campaigns against the pirates. See *Shuijing zhu* 2.40. According to *Shuijing zhu* 29.1, going east from Yuyao county 餘姚, one entered the sea (東入於海); cf. *Shuijing zhu* 40.4: 中江在丹陽蕪湖縣西南, 東至會稽羨縣入於海.

Part I

1.1. The Basic Geography for Kuaiji

As readers will recall, the Kuaiji region eventually became the capital for the kingdoms of Wu and Yue during the four centuries leading up to unification in 221 BCE,²⁵ with the ruling lines of both Wu

²⁵ After Fuchai 夫差 (r. 495–473 BCE) defeated Yue in battle (494 BCE), Goujian 句踐 (r. 496–465 BCE) then retreated to Mount Kuaiji and sued for peace from there. Goujian gave himself up as a captive, so that Wu would spare Yue further devastation. After years of captivity, Goujian returned to Yue, outwardly obedient to Wu, but secretly planning to destroy Wu. After twenty years of planning using various strategies offered by his advisors to weaken Wu and strengthen Yue, Goujian attacked Wu and conquered it, becoming hegemon.

Here is more of the backstory: By the late sixth century BCE, the capital of Wu was at Gusu (Suzhou, supposedly planned out by Wu Zixu for Helu). Around this time, with the first recorded appearance of Yue, Kuaiji was depicted as an important cult centre near the Yue capital located at Shaoxing. When Yue conquered Wu (473 BCE), Yue moved its capital to Langye in Shandong province in 468 BCE. That much seems clear, but then things get muddier: According to the *Suoyin* quoting the *Zhushu jinian*, in the thirty-third year of the reign of King Yi 翳 of Yue (379 BCE), the capital was moved to Wu 吳 (Suzhou). And now, too, it seems that Yue can also be called Wu, because *Zhanguo ce*, 14.506, calls all or part of the Yue army 'the men of Wu'. (This could just mean part of the army hailed from the old Wu territories, of course.) When Chu then conquered Yue, the conquest was accomplished by seizing Wu (centred in the Suzhou area), but the *Shiji* says that the southernmost parts of the original Yue lands remained independent from Chu, and split among Yue chiefs and princes. So while Wu and Yue, as geographic terms, were originally distinct, with Wu referring to the Suzhou area and Yue to the Kuaiji area, by late *Zhanguo* the few extant sources tend to conflate them. Benjamin Daniels hypothesizes that under Lord of Chunshen 春申君 (d. 238 BCE), during the rebuilding of Suzhou, the Lord of Chunshen helped in part to preserve and transmit legends of Wu's glorious history, making Wu an important part of the Wu-Yue mythology. During Qin, Kuaiji commandery's capital was at Gusu (Suzhou), further conflating Kuaiji and Wu.

and Yue kingdoms tracing their royal lineages back to Great Yu and making regular offerings at his cult site.²⁶ Kuaiji city was also an important centre during the heyday of the Chu kingdom, one of the two last kingdoms to fall to Qin in 223 BCE, with nearby Gusu (present-day Suzhou) the capital of the fief overseen by Lord of Chunshen 春申君 (d. 238 BCE).²⁷ As soon as Qin unified the empire, it made Kuaiji into a commandery composed of fifteen counties, with Shanyin 山陰 (today's Shaoxing) its main administrative seat.²⁸ Such evidence suggests that Kuaiji hardly sank into oblivion in late Zhanguo or Qin times, even if these traditions are generally beyond the scope of this essay, insofar as it focuses on the first century of Eastern Han realm (prior to the division of the single Kuaiji commandery into two, in 129),²⁹ when a collection of local notables

And during Western Han, the kingdom of Wu contains the lands of the old Wu and Yue and Kuaiji, which become the commandery of Kuaiji later on. For further information, see Daniels, 'The Matter of Wu and Yue'.

²⁶ For details for the fifth-century semi-legendary figures of Wu Zixu, Goujian, and Fuchai, see Daniels, 'The Matter of Wu and Yue'. While I worked closely with Daniels as his main adviser, his thesis concerns these legendary figures, while my story focuses on early Eastern Han.

²⁷ Qi fell more than a year later than Chu, in 221 BCE.

²⁸ Zhang, 'Qin Zhejiang jun kao', argues that Kuaiji commandery did not extend indefinitely, but soon made room for Zhejiang commandery (mentioned sketchily in a few sources here and there, but attested by a Qin seal for a *du shui* 都水 commandery official (now in the possession of the Shanghai Museum). But this would not explain why none of the Han histories or early gazetteers attest the development of this commandery before the Tang dynasty.

²⁹ The wealthiest thirteen counties of the former Kuaiji commandery were hived off as Wu 吳 commandery; the remaining nine counties remained as Kuaiji commandery. The division was made in part because Kuaiji was the largest of all commanderies in Western and Eastern Han, and once it began to be more economically productive, the court became anxious that it not all be under a single jurisdiction, lest that commandery become the basis for a major rebellion, as happened under Liu Pi, King of Wu, in 154 BCE. This division was made, after a memorial by Zhou Jia 周嘉 was submitted to Shundi, pointing out the obvious dangers.

appeared in Kuaiji, including several celebrated governors of Kuaiji³⁰ such as Diwu Lun 第五倫 (fl. 9–75, i.e., during early Eastern Han),³¹ Zhang Ba 張霸 (ca. 30–100),³² Xie Yiwu 謝夷吾 (25–89),³³ Yin Xing

³⁰ Listing some of the earlier figures, we have (1) Zhu Maichen, who was famous for his memorial in 126 BCE, which persuaded the court to suspend operations in the southwest and in Korea, to concentrate on establishing defences and a commandery in Shuofang, in the northwest. He was an ardent opponent of Zhang Tang, who had ruined the career of his friend Zhuang Zhu, and the two together managed to effect the downfall of Zhang in 115 BCE, only to fall victim and be executed themselves. For Zhu as Kuaiji governor, see *Hanshu* 64A.2792: 拜為太守，買臣衣故衣，懷其印綬，步歸郡邸。直上計時，會稽吏方相與羣飲；(2) Zheng Hong 鄭弘 (fl. 74–42 BCE). The family was based in Linci (in the old Qi kingdom); Zheng Hong's forebears had considerable wealth, and so when the family was broken up during Han Wudi's reign, one part traveled to Kuaiji. A noted expert on legal and administrative matters, Zheng's views in particular were sought about a rebellion by the Qiang. He was suspected of being in cahoots with southern rebels. His record as provincial administrator was excellent; see *Hanshu* 66.2902–4. Dong, 'Handai Wu-Yue wenhua', 38, says Zheng Hong was probably the most famous man of Kuaiji besides Wang Chong; (3) Xu Wu 許武 (in Western Han); and (4) Bao Xuan 鮑宣 (fl. 47 BCE–ca. 5 CE), a 'man of few words, who nonetheless had real substance', was courageous enough to critique such imperial favourites as the Colonel of Security in the capital region. Almost nothing is known of his tenure while governor of Kuaiji, unfortunately, but see *Hou Hanshu* 79B.2570.

³¹ Diwu Lun's biography appears in *Hou Hanshu* 41.1395–1405. On Diwu Lun as a hero by late Eastern Han, see Ying Shao's *Fengsu tongyi*. Diwu Lun was a descendant of the aristocratic Tian 田 family of Qi. During the Xin-Eastern Han transition, he refused to join the bands of insurgents; appointed to the staff of a governor in troubled times, Diwu Lun changed his name to Wang Boqi 王伯齊 (shades of Fan Li 范蠡 [536–448 BCE]), and became a salt peddler, until his former governor Xianyu Bao 鮮于褒/裒 recommended him to the capital, where he served as registrar (*zhubu* 主簿). Eventually, he held many high offices in early Eastern Han, including that of Imperial Counsellor (Sikong), the second highest administrator in the Eastern Han imperium.

³² Zhang Ba, a native of Shu (Chengdu Plain), studied the *Annals* clas-

尹興 (fl. 70),³⁴ and Ma Ling 馬稜/Ma Zhen 馬臻 (fl. 140), during a flourishing century of Eastern Han.³⁵ (Kuaiji would then become the

sic from the age of seven *sui*, and eventually he studied the *Gongyang* tradition under a master Fan Shu 樊; thinking Fan's exegesis to be too cumbersome, he shortened it to two hundred thousand characters, making a *zhangju* that was so popular that a particular school of learning came to be named after it (*Zhangshi xue* 張氏學). He served as governor of Kuaiji, during the 90s. Legend had him stirring and calming the waves to tactical advantage when he was dealing with local pirates. His nominees for capital office (Gu Feng, Gongsun Song 公孫松 [*Hou Hanshu* 36], and others) went on to achieve distinguished careers for themselves, while supposedly, under his encouragement, all of Kuaiji turned to classical learning ('on every road and in every lane, the only sound to be heard was chanting the Classics'). Zhang Ba returned to the capital, where he became a Palace Attendant (*zhong lang* 中郎). He died in 100 CE or so, at the age of seventy, shortly before he was due to be honoured by the throne as 'Quintuply Experienced' (*wu geng* 五更) for his *Yanshi Chunqiu* teachings. See *Ersi wushi bubian*, 'Bu *Hou Hanshu* Yiwen zhi', by Qian Dazhao; *Hou Hanshu* 36.1241–42.

³³ Xie Yiwu was an Eastern Han magus (*fangshi* 方士), who served in the local government of Kuaiji, of which he was a native (Shanyin county). As a young man, he became a protégé of Diwu Lun, then governor of Kuaiji, and he later rose to the highest administrative ranks. He was particularly well known for his prognostications by the wind. Recommended as a *xiaolian* 孝廉, he eventually rose to the position of Jingzhou Regional Inspector (*cishi* 刺史) and Governor of Julu 鉅鹿郡. Ban Gu praised him as an exemplary minister, on a par with the legendary Gao Yao. Eventually he was impeached by the Regional Inspector of Jizhou and demoted to be a county prefect of Xiapei 下邳. See *Hou Hanshu* 82.2713–15.

³⁴ Yin Xing was governor of Kuaiji in 70, but his name appeared on a list of co-conspirators in connection with the treason trial of King Ying of Chu, during Mingdi's reign. (Mingdi was jealous of this brother, and the charges were probably cooked up to serve his purposes.) Yin was scheduled to die in Luoyang, but Mingdi released some of the prisoners belatedly; Yin Xing was allowed to return home but was further proscribed from office-holding. See *Hou Hanshu* 81.2682 for Yin's story; for King Ying's 'rebellion', see *Hou Hanshu* 2.117, for the year Yongping 13.

³⁵ The Mas are known only from *Taiping yulan*. A full account of Eastern Han governors can be found in Fan, 'Dong Han shiqi Kuaiji jun taishou de zhiji yu

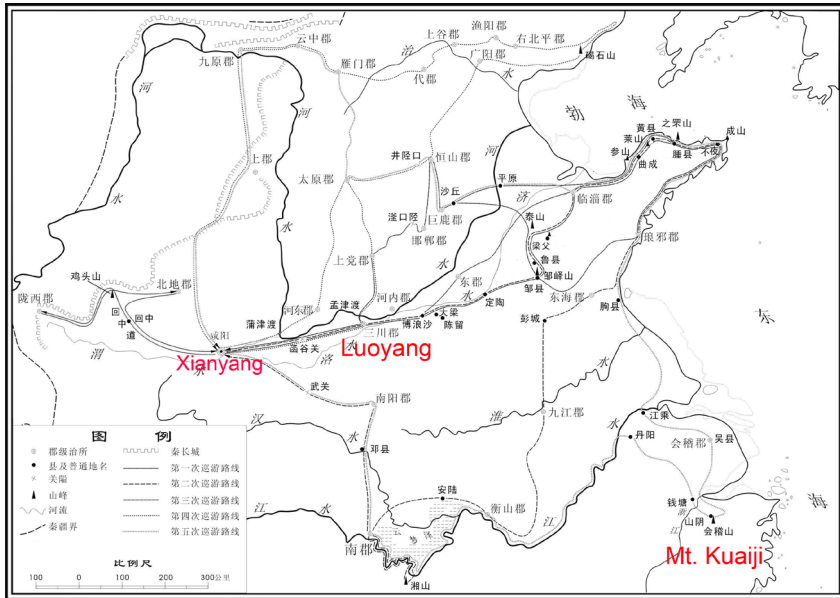


FIG. 3 Kuaiji, as far distant from the Qin and Han capitals, but a site of imperial worship as early as Qin times. After Nylan and Vankeerberghen, eds., *Chang'an 26 BCE*. Map 1.04.

base area for Wu, one of the Three Kingdoms, during the post-Eastern Han period, but that tale postdates my tale, by a long shot.)³⁶

During Qin and Western Han, there is no question that Kuaiji was considered peripheral to the empire, if we judge its distance from the capitals far to the northwest (Figure 3). As late as 2 CE, there were hardly any taxpaying households in the area, and Kuaiji was certainly considered one of the ‘outer’ commanderies (Figure 4).³⁷ However, we should note how important the area remained as a centre of repeated rebellions against the Western Han rulers, suggest-

quyu fazhan’. De Crespigny’s *Biographical Dictionary* includes information on neither Ma, despite their being governors of Kuaiji (see below).

³⁶ See Qu, *Zhongguo Kuaiji shizu yanjiu*, chapter 1, esp. 32–33.

³⁷ Twitchett and Loewe, eds. *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 194, Map 9.

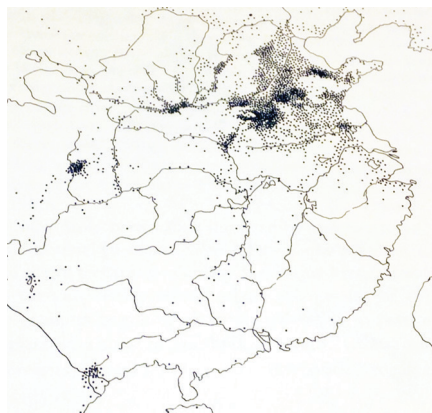


FIG. 4 This map shows the density of tax-paying households. It does not reflect a general census of the population, but rather the penetration of Han administration into areas far from the capital. From Twitchett and Loewe, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 1, 194, Map 9.

ing that it retained sufficient wealth and sufficient weapons to launch local armies during Western Han.³⁸ Then, fairly rapidly during Eastern Han times, long centuries after the development of the cult centre dedicated to Great Yu the flood-queller, Kuaiji became a major centre of cultural learning, if we are to trust the sources at our command, including Wang Chong's *Lunheng* (see below). From Diwu Lun on, a string of governors was known for their accommodating ways (meaning, willingness to meet the locals on their own terms, so long as certain attestations of loyalty were made and the most offensive local practices, from the capital's perspective, dropped). Gradually, we are told, the governors habituated the locals to less warlike and superstitious ways, but, no less significantly, the local protégés of the

³⁸ See note 5 above. Unfortunately, the surviving records tell us remarkably little about the south, and the humidity of the area makes it unlikely that many artifacts and texts will be found through excavation. But if Kuaiji functioned as a nexus or *entrepôt* for local and regional trade, as it seems to have done, we should consider it in relation to the South Seas islands oceangoing trade associated with Panyu (Guangdong), under the Nanyue kingdom, also the Burma trade in metals (worked and unworked), as well as the local trade near what is now Wuxi.

governor were nominated for court appointments, and even for fast-track careers.³⁹ Moreover, in the chapter devoted to accommodating officials in Eastern Han, one out of three had a Kuaiji connection, a ratio that suggests the capital's abiding interest in the region.⁴⁰ That the set of governors for Eastern Han were particularly well connected with the Eastern Han consort clans and imperial house likewise attests to the significance of the area,⁴¹ as does the fact that all these governors had come through the fast-track administrative career promotions, reserved for the inner circle at the Han capital, and several (particularly Zhang Ba) were extremely erudite when it came to classical learning, which Zhang promoted while commandery governor.⁴² As the proverb goes, 'fine learning leads to official service' 學

³⁹ That string of *xunli* 循吏 governors would include Diwu Lun, Ren Yan 任延 (5–67), and Liu Chong 劉寵 among its numbers. Other local officials characterised in much the same way would include Zheng Hong 鄭弘, protégé of Diwu Lun (ca. 33 CE); Zhongli Yi 鐘離意, who organised famine relief in 38 CE and became a leading light in Lu Learning (see *Shanbai jing*, *juan* 25.1 [泗水]); Sheng Ji 盛吉, a lenient judge; Meng Chang 孟嘗 (?–171), who supposedly saved many locals (*Hou Hanshu* 76.2462–63); Zhou Gui 周歸, whose administration was frugal and lenient (*Kuaiji dianlu*, *juan* 3); and Chen Xiu 陳秀, known for his gracious (*hui* 惠) governance (*Kuaiji dianlu*, *juan* 3). Yu Yu's *Kuaiji dianlu* is included in Congshu jicheng jibian. Nearly all of this information is repeated in *Kuaiji dianlu*, *juan* 1. See *Hou Hanshu* 41.1396, 76.2471, for Diwu Lun's nomination of a local protégé to the court.

⁴⁰ Those in Eastern Han were Ren Yan, who served in Kuaiji; Xu Jing 許荆, a Kuaiji native; Meng Chang, a Kuaiji native; and Liu Chong, from Donglai 東萊, who served in Kuaiji.

⁴¹ Ma Ling was a clan member of a younger generation than Ma Yuan. Zhang Ba's connections were equally striking. Ma Zhen was appointed governor under Shundi, according to *Tongdian* 通典, *juan* 182 (citing *Zhou jun shier* 州郡十二). Liang Ji's clansman became Kuaiji Governor as well: 遷揚州刺史。是時會稽太守梁旻，大將軍冀之從弟也 (*Hou Hanshu* 67.2199). There was also an imperial consort who was daughter of a Kuaiji governor (see *Hou Hanshu* 10B.451).

⁴² Fan Zheng'e, 'Dong Han shiqi Kuaiji jun taishou de zhiji yu quyue fazhan', 11–12. Zhang Ba, who had studied with a recluse in Yuzhang 豫章, was an

而優則仕.⁴³ Kuaiji by late Eastern time, first for Cai Yong 蔡邕 (132–92),⁴⁴ during his self-imposed exile there for twelve years (before 189), and then during Wang Lang’s 王郎 (d. 228) tenure as governor, had become an attractive place to retreat to, especially when the capital had become ‘too hot’ for earnest administrators.⁴⁵

These local governors were responsible for assimilating the leading locals to the dominant marriage and mourning rituals of the North China Plain (as did Diwu Lun), also with encouraging the same groups to adopt Chinese-style sedentary agriculture, to replace the old-style farming used in the area, by which one burnt off all vegetation and then grew plants in water (probably indicating rice cultivation).⁴⁶ Potentially, the imposition of new styles of

expert in the Yan 嚴 interpretation for the *Annals* classic and the *Analects*. The famous exegetes in the post-Han kingdom of Wu are treated in Cheng Yuanmin’s *Shangshu xue shi*.

⁴³ *Analects* 19/13.

⁴⁴ Cai Yong had repeatedly insulted a group of powerful palace eunuchs, for which offense he was sentenced to be exiled to the north in 178. Subsequently pardoned, he promptly committed another offense, insulting at a farewell banquet Wang Zhi, the Administrator of Wuyuan, brother of the eunuch Wang Fu, with the result that his life was once more in danger. With the aid of his kinsmen by marriage, he fled the capital and took refuge in Wu and Kuaiji commanderies. He stayed in the southeast for twelve years, though he evidently had contact with the capital, for he composed a funerary inscription for the Lady Ma, widow of the Excellency Yuan Tang, who died in 187.

⁴⁵ It is thanks to Cai Yong, apparently, that we know anything about the *Lunheng* (see above and below). Wang Lang was Governor of Kuaiji around 191. A scholar of the *Changes* classic, he was famous for his luxurious residence and his failures as military commander.

⁴⁶ E.g., *Hou Hanshu* 5.220. There is a flurry of activity in edicts about Kuaiji under Hedi, Andi, and Shundi, with a major epidemic reported there under Andi 大疫, 遣光祿大夫將太醫循行疾病, and the emperor’s own envoy and imperial physician sent to the area to tend to the afflicted, *ibid.*, 5.230). In an earlier epidemic under Guangwu, no such care was shown: 案傳, 鍾離意為督郵, 建武十四年會稽大疫. See *Hou Hanshu zhi* 17.3350, which continues: 揚徐部大疾疫, 會稽江左甚.

farming represents one of the most intrusive forms of refashioning the socioeconomic terrain, although early on we do not read much about local populations being replaced with farmer-settlers, as they later would be.⁴⁷ One governor, to take one example, was famous for 'teaching them to use the plough' 教用犁耕⁴⁸ (shades of Great Yu, the flood-queller, millennia later, in Han times).⁴⁹ Still, shortly after the 'forgotten century' of Kuaiji, in late Eastern Han, some sedentary farmers (possibly of local origins) had basically occupied the fertile plains, pushing some indigenous groups into the mountains (where they were identified as 'Shan Yue' 山越 or 'mountain barbarians').⁵⁰ Soon Kuaiji was so developed in sedentary farming that the area was able to export grain during famines, even if some inhabitants of the plain erupted in frequent rebellions. Such efforts culminated, apparently, under Governor Ma Zhen, who built in Shanyin 山陰 county in Kuaiji a vast reservoir called Mirror Lake, or Jing hu 鏡湖. The reservoir was to prevent flooding, as runoff would flow naturally to the sea several meters below. But the reservoir simultaneously extended irrigation in the area by 'more than more than ten thousand *qing* of land', improving the wet farming (mostly rice farming).⁵¹ The dam

⁴⁷ Korolkov, *The Imperial Network*, 72, assumes that such state-imposed replacement of local indigenous peoples with northern farmer-settlers took place on a large scale as early as the late Zhanguo period.

⁴⁸ *Hou Hanshu* 86.2838; cf. *ibid.*, 76.62466; *Tongdian*, *juan* 182. Wang Jing 王景, governor in Lujiang, made similar efforts to 'civilise' the south and south-eastern regions nominally under Han control, during the reign of Han Zhangdi (*Hou Hanshu* 76.2464–66).

⁴⁹ Legend tells us that Yu miraculously had his gravesite tilled by birds: 'Written traditions state, "When Shun was buried at Cangwu, elephants tilled the ground for him. When Yu was buried at Kuaiji, crows labored in the fields."' By legend, in these 'bird fields' 鳥田 of Yue, the birds came faithfully every spring, carrying seeds in their beaks, and planted the fields by dropping these seeds into the soil. They later returned to weed the plots. Wang Chong supplies a rational explanation for this well-known local phenomenon (*Lunheng* 4.179 ['Shuxu' 書虛]).

⁵⁰ See *Hou Hanshu* 8.330.

⁵¹ *Hou Hanshu* 4.208, for example. An entire paper analyses the climate around

around the reservoir was reportedly more than three hundred *li*/leagues in perimeter, with ‘more than more than ten thousand *qing* of land irrigated’.⁵² The building of such a massive reservoir both reflected and further catalyzed steady population growth in the area.⁵³ Suppressed to some degree, but not suppressed entirely, were the local ‘superstitions’ in an area that since Anyang-Shang times (thirteenth–eleventh centuries BCE) had been famous for the fineness of its divination turtles and the efficacy of its shamanic healing cultures. Both continued to generate considerable local wealth as well.⁵⁴ (As early as the legendary Yu, the area was famous for being particularly rich in dragons.)⁵⁵ After a succession of excellent governors with notable capital collections, the area became known for its wealth 沃野萬里, 民富兵強.⁵⁶

Mirror Lake. See Wu and Jin, ‘Shaoxing Jianhu huanjing tezheng yu hushui yang zhuangkuang bianhua de fenxi’, 30–34. Some information derives from *Kuaiji fangzhi*, 96–97.

⁵² *Shuijing zhu*, ‘Zheshui’ 浙水 section, on ‘Chang hu’ 長湖 (Li Daoyuan’s name for Mirror Lake). *Shuijing zhu* says the reservoir measures 50 by 430 *li*, with sixty-nine outlets for the water 六十九所. The reservoir connected in the north to the Yangzi River. Note that the waterworks in the area began with Goujian’s canal, which was however only some 20 miles long initially, even if it eventually became part of a major network of canals all across the south.

⁵³ Yuan, ‘Shilun Dong Han’, 23–26, esp. 25. See also Wang, *Zhanguo Qin Han jiaotong geju yu quyu xingzheng*, 43, Table 3, showing the expansion in population.

⁵⁴ As late as Song times, healers claimed descent from ‘rulers of the Wu-Yue kingdom’, for example, Qian Yi 錢乙 (1032?–1113), courtesy name Zhongyang 仲陽. His forebears were natives of Hangzhou (Qiantang 錢塘). I learned this from a forthcoming book by Nathan Sivin.

⁵⁵ See *Bowu zhi*, *juan* 6, for details; Daniels, ‘The Matter of Wu and Yue’, esp. 134, 136, and Appendix 2. As legend had it, Yu drove out the dragons from the Central States, from where they fled to the periphery, inhabiting the rivers and lakes of the southeast.

⁵⁶ *Sanguo zhi* 54.1267.

1.2. A Snapshot from Wang Chong 王充 (27–97?), Mid-Eastern Han

Wang Chong was a well-trained classicist, who despite his connections with the Ban 班 consort clan, was unable to secure a good position in Luoyang, a fact that colours all his narratives in the one piece of his writing that has come down to us, the *Lunheng* 論衡 [Discourses Weighed in the Balance], a lengthy tome in eighty-one chapters, each of which is highly polemical (and often aggrieved). As is well known, the text likely would have been lost, were it not for Cai Yong's self-imposed exile in the Kuaiji area for some twelve years. As the *Baopu zi* says, Cai Yong got hold of the manuscript and particularly admired its style of writing, so when he finally returned to the court, 'all the court classicists' perused it, and Cai Yong prided himself on getting this unknown masterwork into wider circulation among the 'right people'.⁵⁷ In any event, some (including Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 [1869–1936]) credited Wang Chong with promoting one of the five major intellectual changes in the Han through Jin periods.⁵⁸

Wang Chong's manuscript was exceedingly contentious (ergo its 'lofty' [supercilious?] tone). Wang was an old codger, indubitably, who loved to puncture the conformists of his day by pointing out their reckless 'falsehoods', unceremoniously; he was also quarrelsome with his colleagues in his first appointment to the local *gongcao* 功曹.⁵⁹ Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) famously (and incorrectly, in my

⁵⁷ As in *Hanshu* 67.2913; *Baopuzi*, cited in Huang, *Lunheng jiaoshi*, 1238 (on 'Old Assessments on the *Lunheng*'). Cf. *Hou Hanshu* 49.1629. Wang Lang, appointed governor in 196, also seems to have given a helping hand in promoting the book.

⁵⁸ Zhang, 'Xue bian', 270. I do not find Zhang's analysis persuasive in all its details, but it has been enormously influential nonetheless.

⁵⁹ Many of Wang's chapters have *xu* 虛 (baseless) in their titles, and others 'question' (*wen* 問) revered figures of the past about their supposed lapses (e.g., 'Wen Kong' 問孔). Still others speak of vulgar customs (*su* 俗). Wang's autobiography says that he 'got worked up over reckless lies' 疾虛妄. For Wang's gleeful and/or vicious lack of ceremony, see *Hou Hanshu* 49.1629. Wang's fights with his colleagues are not mentioned in his very brief biography, but they are in *juan* 14

view) characterised early Eastern Han as the most ‘superstitious’ era in all of early China, and Wang Chong as the most determined foe of superstitions, a proto-scientist and a materialist, even if Wang embraced some superstitions with ardor.⁶⁰ What is clear is that Wang Chong availed himself of the latest astronomical knowledge, and from that flowed his particular view of *qi* theory and his articulation of humans as animals.⁶¹ Equally clear is the fact that Wang claimed for himself the mantle of ‘superlatively great Ru’ (*hongru* 鴻儒). Definitely understudied is Wang’s sense of the ‘truly beautiful and excellent’ (*zhenmei* 真美). Still, that the members of Wang’s circle, justly or ridiculously, deemed themselves the equals of the capital dignitaries whom Wang envied (just as Kuaiji Mountain was said by some to be the rival and peer of the sacred Mount Tai in Shandong) makes Wang’s brief sketches of the Kuaiji literary scene all the more memorable to readers today.⁶² Wang Chong listed a string of Kuaiji notables who had influenced him or his family members, and these fine men, Wang claimed, were equally as impressive as any high-ranking official or literary man up in the capital. After giving us a string of cultural heroes (Huangdi 黃帝, Great Yu the flood-queller, Goujian 句踐 [?-464 BCE], Wu Zixu 伍子胥 [559 BCE–484 BCE], Qu Yuan 屈原 [340 BCE?–278 BCE], and so on),⁶³ Wang supplies what for us today, given the capital-centred nature of our extant sources, are mostly a string of names: Yan Fuzi 嚴夫子 (188 BCE?–105 BCE);⁶⁴

of *Kuaiji zhi* 會稽志. That work is included in Shaoxing difangzhi bianzuan weiyuan hui, ed., *Shaoxing xianzhi ziliao zhi wu*.

⁶⁰ While Wang fights some superstition, he also promotes many others, and certainly, contra Hu Shi, he was not particularly opposed to the apocryphal writings. For Hu Shi’s views, see *Lunheng jiaoshi*, 1267.

⁶¹ Cf. Nylan, ‘Humans as Animals’.

⁶² See, e.g., *Lunheng zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT) 190/39/16; and for Wu Jungao 吳君高 39/189/17.

⁶³ Wu, ‘*Lunheng* zhong de Yu xingxiang tanxi’, interests. Wu reminds readers first that Yu was reputedly the author of the *Shanhai jing*; and second, how often Yu appears in the Han apocrypha (although Wu seems anxious to downplay this aspect of the *Lunheng*).

Zou Boqi 鄒伯奇; Yuan Taibo 袁太伯, Yuan Wenheng 袁文衡; Wu Jungao 吳君高;⁶⁵ and such literary giants as Song Yu 宋玉 (298 BCE–222 BCE) and Zhou Changsheng 周長生 and his relations, including Zhou Boxian 周伯賢, Zhou Meng 周孟, and assorted unnamed clansmen (all first-class chaps, we are told); Tang Zigao 唐子高; and Gu Ziyun 谷子雲. Note that among the Kuaiji literary figures who wrote superbly well,⁶⁶ Wang lists Yang Jing 楊/揚荊, Tang Le 唐勒, and Song Yu, identified elsewhere as men of Chu. In other words, Wang conflates two locales, as many others in antiquity tended to do. Then Wang makes an odd, seemingly risible claim, insisting that all the people on his lengthy list were or are of such extraordinary talent that they qualify for appointments to the inner circle of imperial palace consultants and advisers 郎中之寵, even the ones he doesn't trouble to name.⁶⁷ This assertion may not be quite as ludicrous, as I first thought, however.

Partly thanks to clues in *Lunheng*, we can begin to state, with authority, that Kuaiji had become a centre of classical learning in Eastern Han, with many erudite men renowned enough to be registered in the capital-centred narratives (Figure 5).⁶⁸ It was a classical centre

⁶⁴ See *Lunheng zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT) 39/189/17.

⁶⁵ See *ibid.*, 83/361/12.

⁶⁶ There are references to a governor's recommendation by Meng, and *cishi* Ren An 任安 (?–91 BCE). Dong, 'Handai de Wu-Yue wenhua', 41, lists four men who were famous as poets.

⁶⁷ See *Lunheng zhuzi suoyin* (CHANT) 190/39/16; 83/361/12. For the important place of these palace courtiers in policymaking, see Loewe, 'Consultants and Advisors'.

⁶⁸ This map was generated by Andrew Hardy, at the request of Michael Nylan. Lü Yun, one of the first scholars in the PRC to try to define and locate cultural centres, is the source of inspiration for this attempt to map geographic changes in classical learning over the course of the two Han dynasties. See his 'Dong Han shiqi de wenhua quyu yu wenhua zhongxin', 158, which reckons that some 52% of the Han studies on the pre-Qin masterworks were compiled by Kuaiji residents in Eastern Han. To Hardy and Nylan, that figure seems high. One person of great interest in this connection was Zhang Ba, discussed in note 31 above.

Native Places of Classical Masters
Eastern Han (25-220 CE)

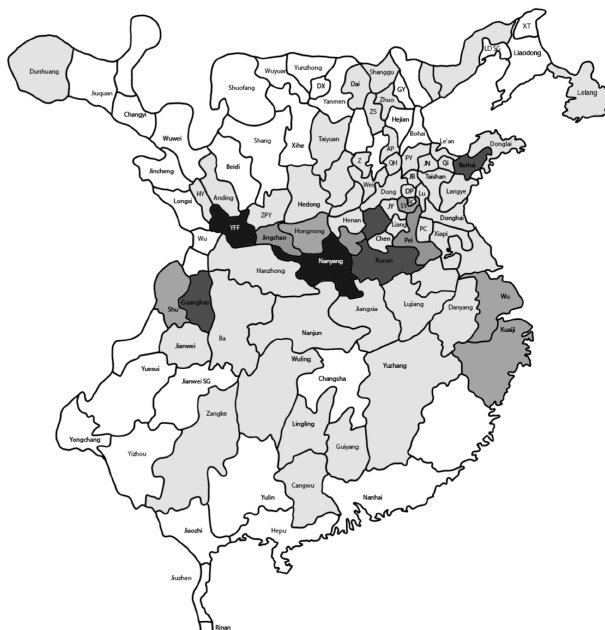


FIG. 5 Classical Learning in Eastern Han, based on the extant historical records and generated by Andrew Hardy (predoctoral candidate, University of California, Berkeley, Department of History).

that tended to produce, in men like Wang Chong and later Yu Fan 虞翻 (164–233), people who were *kuang zhi* 狂直 (crazily blunt) in their style of discourse.⁶⁹ The modern scholar Qu Xiaoyun lists what he thinks of as the most famous ‘Confucians’ (actually ‘classicists’) in the area, only some of whom are well known today:

Zhongli Yi 鍾離意 (*Hou Hanshu* 46.1406);
Wang Chong 王充 (*Hou Hanshu* 49.1629);
Huang Chang 黃昌 (*Hou Hanshu* 77.2496);

⁶⁹ *Sanguo zhi* 52.1234: 57.1431. Yu was a noted *Changes* scholar, as all agree. For details, see Wang, ‘Liuchao shiqi Kuaiji Yushi zhi jiafeng yu jiaxue’; cf. Tang, *Wei Jin nanbei chao shi luncong*, 368.

Bao Xian 鮑咸 (*Hou Hanshu* 79B.2570);⁷⁰
 Zhao Ye 趙擘 (*Hou Hanshu* 79B.2575);
 He Chun 賀純 (*Hou Hanshu* 63.2082);⁷¹
 Xie Yiwu 謝夷吾 (*Hou Hanshu* 82A.2713);
 Wei Lang 魏朗 (*Hou Hanshu* 67.2200);
 Wang Lang 王郎 (*Hou Hanshu* 67.2201, 49.1629); and
 Han Yue 韓說 (*Hou Hanshu* 82B.2733)

Wei Lang, for example, was a student at the Imperial Academy, an expert in the apocrypha associated with the *Annals* classic, and author of *Weizi* 魏子, and Wang Lang was Kuaiji governor in 196 CE.⁷²

In addition, there were assorted recluses such as Yan Guang 嚴光 (fl. 31), and filial daughters, both bearing witness to the sophistication of the local culture.⁷³ Luckily for today's scholars, we have other Kuaiji 'native sons' who were indefatigable researchers, people such as Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801) and Lu Xun 魯迅 (1881–1936), who have helped us flesh out the literary evidence by on-site visits to local temples and steles.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Bao Xian composed a *zhangju* for the *Analects*, according to *Ersbi wushi bu bian*, 'Bu *Hou Hanshu* Yiwen zhi', by Qian Dazhao 錢大昭 (1744–1813), 2097.

⁷¹ On the Hes, as descendants of Qing Pu, perhaps the best source is Wang's 'Jiangbiao Ruzong'.

⁷² See Qu, 'Antiquity or Innovation?', 16–17, citing *Hou Hanshu* 79B.2753, and *Kuaiji dianlu*, *juan* 1. To this list, *Wu jun zhi*, 305–07, adds very full entries on one eccentric, Lu Kang 陸康 (126–195), and several other figures, including Shen Feng 沈豐 (active 78) and Shen You 沈友 (176–204) in Eastern Han. A few people are known only by their names.

⁷³ See Qu, *Zhongguo Kuaiji shizu yanjiu*, esp. 20–22. Yan Guang is a voluntary recluse, whose biography appears in *Hou Hanshu* 83.2763–64. Yan is clearly classically trained, as he defends his decision not to serve by very sophisticated references to classical traditions, including the *Documents* and *Zhuangzi*. He speaks forthrightly to his emperor about his wish not to violate his own nature, arguing that his misgivings have nothing to do with the current occupant of the throne. Huangfu Mi's *Gaoshi zhuan* includes several conversations between Yan Guang and Hou Ba 侯霸 (?–37).

1.3. Local Histories and the Great Yu Cult

Even without these famous native sons listed by Wang Chong, we would know that two great histories (both extant) were produced in Eastern Han Kuaiji by Kuaiji native sons, both of which centre on Kuaiji history: Zhao Ye 趙晔 (fl. 40) was author of the *Wu Yue chungiu* 吳越春秋 [Chronicles of Wu and Yue], in twelve *juan*;⁷⁵ and Yuan Kang 遠康, of the *Yuejue shu* 越絕書 [Documents on the Glory of Yue; comp. 52].⁷⁶ These two works are best seen alongside other local history cycles set down in writing in mid-Eastern Han or in the immediately post-Han period, including *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 and *Yizhou xianzhi* 益州賢志.⁷⁷ Olivia Milburn has done us the favour of translating or summarising large parts of each work, and in the single case of *Yuejue shu*, she has also provided a very good introduction to the work.⁷⁸ Both works, despite their focus on the pre-unification rival kingdoms of Wu and Yue in the fifth century BCE, gather some of the best evidence we have for the local inhabi-

⁷⁴ On this, see Tang and Zhao, ‘Yuyao Yushi zongzu yanjiu shi shuping’. For Lu Xun’s main contribution, see his *Kuaiji jun gushu zaji*.

⁷⁵ See *Hou Hanshu* 79B.2575; *Kuaiji dianlu* fails to mention that Zhao compiled the *Wu Yue chungiu* (1016), but there are only fragments of his biography there.

⁷⁶ *Wu Yue chungiu* (a partial translation of ten major episodes) became Milburn’s *Cherishing Antiquity*, and *Yue jue shu*, her *The Glory of Yue*. Jianjun He just produced a new complete translation of *Wu Yue chungiu* for Cornell University Press (2021). A second complete translation by Milburn is expected soon from New York University Press.

⁷⁷ One might well mention also Xie Cheng 謝承 (?–256), author of a *Hou Hanshu*, which seems to have been one the major sources, if not *the* main source, for Fan Ye’s fifth-century *Hou Hanshu*. (As the text survives only in fragments, one cannot speak definitively.) Other figures are listed and described briefly in Zhu, ‘Han Jin shidai Shaoxing de shiwei shixue jia’. One title that likely represents a major work is *Kuaiji xianxian zhuan* 會稽先賢傳, originally in seventy *juan* (scrolls).

⁷⁸ See her *Glory of Yue*, chapters 1 and 2; also *Cherishing Antiquity*.

tants during imperial times, sketchy as those pieces of evidence are.⁷⁹ Both of these historical works centre on Kuaiji rulers who had Kuaiji as their capitals,⁸⁰ and trace the lineages to entirely legendary times, when their ancestors descended from Great Yu, for whom Kuaiji was the chief cult site. (Indeed, as Thomas Hahn will explain, this cult site is one of two national sites, the other being that dedicated to the Yellow Emperor, to persist, with substantial patronage from earliest times.)⁸¹ We also have great numbers of Kuaiji histories written shortly after Eastern Han, from which we can glean hints of the cultural prominence of the area earlier, in mid-Eastern Han.

To these well-known texts, we can add a number of other local histories (now only in fragments): those by Dong Kun 董昆, whom Zhangdi liked and appointed to be governor of Chu commandery; by Shen Xun 沈勳, from Shanyin, honoured at the Biyong, above many others; by Chunyu Yi 淳于翼 (386 BCE?–310 BCE), famous at Huandi's court as a child prodigy conversant with the *Changes* and *Annals* classics;⁸² by Mao Kai 茅開; by Chen Ye 陳業 and Que Ze 闕澤 (170–243), plus several ascribed to the He 賀 clan whose members claimed descent from Prince Liao of Wu, named Qing Ji 慶忌.⁸³ One of the Hes, He Chun 賀純 (active 121) was *shizhong* 侍中 under Andi.⁸⁴ Local gazetteers were produced by yet another long list of famous men in Eastern Han, Six Dynasties, and Tang.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Millburn, *Glory of Yue*, 23ff. ('The Bai Yue during the Han Dynasty').

⁸⁰ For Kuaiji harbor as 'base area' (*jidi* 基地) for Wu (a.k.a. Shitang 石塘), see Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 187.

⁸¹ Taishan may rival these two sites in age, but for many reasons the Taishan cult arguably falls into a special category of its own.

⁸² Chunyu Yi ended his career as Libationer at the Southern Palace.

⁸³ By legend, Qing Ji's wife and son supposedly settled in Kuaiji, in the environs of Mirror Lake.

⁸⁴ On the Kuaiji historians, the most useful overview is Shi, *Kuaiji jun gushu ji: zhu gaoben de wenxian yanjiu*, 49–62, with three helpful charts on various encyclopedias and editions.

⁸⁵ E.g., Yu Yu, compiler of *Kuaiji dianlu*, originally in twelve *pian*; *Zhongli Xiu* 鍾離岫, Sui dynasty compiler of *Kuaiji houxian zhuanji* 會稽後賢傳記; a

Partly thanks to the fragments preserved of these local histories, we can begin to trace patterns in Kuaiji local history and see the sorts of activities that the locals engaged in.⁸⁶ Whatever we read should be put into the wider context of an explosion of people from the region south of the Yangzi who are famous enough to appear in the standard histories (in Western Han, merely nine versus seventy-five in Eastern Han), some part of which either hailed from or served in Kuaiji. Perhaps even more important than the numbers, we begin to see multi-generational magnate families who consistently contribute their efforts to empire-wide conversations, particularly about classical learning. (In this connection, the very close Donghai-Kuaiji connection may have been a major factor, as Donghai throughout Western and Eastern Han remained one of the most celebrated centres of classical learning.)⁸⁷

This seems the right place to delve a bit more into the most famous classicists of the area, many from Shanyin, the commandery seat (Wang Chong's hometown), and while there is hardly space to catalogue all the famous classicists, we can certainly mention three. Besides Wang Chong, these names seem most important: (1) Zhongli Yi (fl. 30–65?); (2) Huang Chang; and (3) Bao Xian.⁸⁸ Zhongli Yi was an expert in the *Odes* and *Annals* classic. He was instrumental, according to his biography in persuading the local Kuaiji governor not to be overly harsh when minor officials hosted, at government expense, local dignitaries, on the grounds that these were minor offenses, and that sometimes good order emanated out from such families to the wider populace in the area. In crafting his persuasion he

Mr. He 賀氏, *Kuaiji xianxiang zhuàn* 會稽賢象傳; Zhu Yu 朱育, *Kuaiji tudi ji* 會稽土地記; He Xun 賀循, *Kuaiji ji* 會稽記; Kong Lingfu 孔靈符 (a.k.a. Kong Ye 孔曄 (Ye being the personal name or *ming*) (?–465), *Kuaiji ji* 會稽記 (same title as He Xun's); and Xiahou Zengxian 夏侯曾先, compiler of *Kuaiji dizhi* 會稽地志.

⁸⁶ A helpful chart is supplied in Qu, *Zhonggu Kuaiji shizu yanjiu*, 13–15.

⁸⁷ Xiao and Li, 'Qin Han shiqi Jiangnan jiaotong'.

⁸⁸ These, and a few other figures (including Wang Chong himself), are treated in *Kuaiji zhi*, *juan* 14, which deals with Humans (Renwu) while a later chapter deals with flora and fauna.

cited a couplet from the *Odes* to clinch his case that 'good governance moves from those nearby to those remote'.⁸⁹ When the commandery was hit hard by an epidemic in 38, with the locals dying in the tens of thousands, Zhongli personally traveled all around the commandery to dispense efficacious medicaments, heedless of the risks to his own personal health that such travels posed. Eventually named by his commandery governor a *xiaolian* 孝廉 ('Filial and Incorrupt') candidate, on the fast track, he served in the capital on the staff of Hou Ba, himself a distinguished officer, from which post his own career took off: he served as county prefect and commandery governor.⁹⁰ In those posts, he was so unfailingly generous, even to the criminals he tried, that the locals gained a strong sense of shame and left off their bad behaviour. When advanced to a high capital post, he refused to share in the spoils confiscated from criminals, to the emperor's frank astonishment.⁹¹ Soon afterwards, he was appointed Director of the Secretariat, through whose hands went all memorials and edicts for review. When a great famine occurred in 60, Zhongli Yi sent into his emperor a sharply worded memorial, asking him to review his own conduct with respect to six items, before putting the blame on others; here he quoted the *Documents* classic.⁹² Supposedly, when the emperor in an edict assigned all blame for the famine to his own misconduct, the heavens opened up and the rains poured down. Zhongli Yi also took full responsibility for any errors of his own Secretariat

⁸⁹ *Hou Hanshu* 40.1406, citing the *Odes* ('*Daya*' 大雅): 刑於寡妻, 以御于家邦.

⁹⁰ For a short list of county officials, see Cao, *Minguo Wuxian zhi jiaobu*, 2.114–15; 9.461, 464, 466, 497, 498. Interestingly, Sun Quan 孫權 (182–252), head of Wu kingdom during the Sanguo period, was first recommended to the court under Xiandi under several categories, as *mingjing* 明經 ('well-versed in the Classics'), as *xiaolian* 孝廉 ('Filial and Incorrupt'), and *maocai* 茂才 ('Flourishing Talent'). Plainly, local prominence mattered more than virtuous qualities.

⁹¹ *Hou Hanshu* 40.1407–8; this is Mingdi (r. 57–75). Mingdi heavily rewarded him for his upright behaviour from the imperial treasury.

⁹² The story concerned a famine under Tang the Victorious, who experienced a seven-year famine, before he emended his conduct. For details, see *ibid.*, 41.1408n4.

staff, offering to be beaten in their place, gradually alerting the overly suspicious emperor that his own fierceness was counterproductive, and thereby improving the imperial administration and harmonizing the cosmic *qi*, we are told.⁹³ Within five years in that position, the entire tone of the capital administration improved.

As for Huang Chang: based on his *Hou Hanshu biography*, Huang Chang was a poor boy, but he was fortunate to be in Yuyao 餘姚, where the children of the rich attended local schools and ritual centres (*xiangxu* 庠序).⁹⁴ Fascinated by what he saw, he began to imitate them from afar, we are told. When a local official spied him practicing, he saw that Huang was appointed to the staff of the local *juecao* 決曹 (something like a local legal bureau). He soon became famous for catching bandit gangs operating in the area by a combination of smart tactics and subterfuge. Having put the fear of god into the local miscreants, Huang promptly had a rash of people who turned to more lawful professions. Eventually, he was appointed Governor of three commanderies in turn (Shu, Henei, and Yingchuan), and everywhere he went, the area became far more orderly than it had been, although the Yingchuan natives were famously difficult to control, as were the Peng family in Chen kingdom, yet another assignment. (As if to counter the impression that Huang Chang was legalistic, Yu Yu's local history claims that for years on end the jails were empty in Huang's jurisdiction.)⁹⁵ Finally, Huang was appointed to the post of minister (Court Architect) and an ostensibly lower but no less influential position as Senior Palace Counsellor (*taizhong dafu* 太中大夫), in which post he died a natural death.

Bao Xian, a native of Qu'e 曲阿, became an expert in the *Analects* and in the Lu version of the *Odes*, after he went to the capital

⁹³ *Hou Hanshu* 41.1409–10.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.2496–97. Quite unusually, Huang is described as a classicist who was also a 'cruel official' (*ku li*). Unfortunately, on the subject of local schools *Wu jun zhi* (op. cit.), *juan* 4, begins with Tang schools, and only remarks that study of the Six Classics 'has gone on for a long time' (32).

⁹⁵ See *Kuaiji fangzhi*, 44, citing Yu Yu's *Kuaiji dianlu*.

to study. Soon enough, he was appointed tutor to Mingdi for the *Lunyu* (*Analects*), for whom he wrote a *zhangju* (commentary by chapter and verse), which was widely circulated (think of something like today's *Cliffs Notes*). He was then catapulted to join the imperial inner circle, serving as *jian dafu* 諫大夫, *shizhong* 侍中, *zhongliang jiang* (*you*) 中郎將 (右), and finally the ministerial post in charge of diplomacy, *da honglu* 大鴻臚. His son also specialised in teaching the *Analects* to Hedi (r. 89–104) when he was heir apparent.

What surprises, perhaps, is none of the classicists from Kuaiji specialised in the *Documents* classic, although some are vaguely described as specialists in the Five Classics.⁹⁶ I say 'surprisingly', because Great Yu, the flood-queller, figures most importantly in the *Documents* classic. Setting aside the problem of Yu's ruler, Shun, whom some contested accounts held should be worshipped in Kuaiji as well,⁹⁷ it may prove helpful to review Yu as a primary culture hero⁹⁸ Yu, since the Mohists, at least, has epitomised the 'work and worry' ethical model for sage-kings, due to his unceasing endeavors on behalf of the greater good, his backbreaking labour, and self-denying efforts, all of which are catalogued in many Chinese works, but most particularly in the 'Tribute of Yu' chapter in the *Documents* classic.⁹⁹

The *Hanshu* gives us an idea of the profound significance of Yu, when it remarks, 'The Ancients had a saying, "Were it not for the achievements of Yu, we civilised human beings would all be living as fish 微禹之功, 吾其魚乎!"'¹⁰⁰ The *Lüshi chunqiu* had already

⁹⁶ See Qu, *Zhongguo Kuaiji shizu yanjiu*, 17, for particulars.

⁹⁷ E.g., Yu, *Kuaijishan Yu-Shun ling kao*.

⁹⁸ One good place to begin is Sarah Allan's 2015 book, *Buried Ideas*.

⁹⁹ By Chinese mythology, Yu was great-grandson of the Yellow Emperor; by legend the kings of Yue traced their lineage back to him (*Shiji* 41.1739). For the *Documents* classic, and Yu's particular role in it, see Nylan, *The Five 'Confucian' Classics*, chap. 3.

¹⁰⁰ *Hanshu* 29.1698. This saying perhaps plays upon *Analects* 14/17, which says that had there been no Guan Zhong, the sociopolitical order of the Central States would have been far more primitive ('But for Guan Zhong, we should now be wearing our hair unbound, with the lappets of our coats buttoning on the left

proclaimed that, ‘no one has ever surpassed Yu in laboring hard for the benefit of the people!’¹⁰¹ Today’s *Zuozhuan* deems Yu an exemplary ruler, because he ‘labored without any assumption of gaining power’,¹⁰² though eventually he occupied the throne, as the ruler Shun had him installed as heir, over his own son.¹⁰³ The story of Central States civilisation, in one sense then, all begins with Yu.¹⁰⁴ In barely over one thousand graphs, the ‘Tribute of Yu’ describes the land demarcations, local peoples, tribute items, and varying degrees of dependence upon the centre, with consequent varying treatments of outlying regions.¹⁰⁵ As such, it is perhaps the single most influential geographic treatise from the early empires, which draws upon multiple comparisons between the body’s circulatory system and the body politic.¹⁰⁶

Cults associated with Kuaiji included, besides those to erected to Yu himself,¹⁰⁷ cults erected to his predecessor Shun; to Wu Taibo

side’, like the semi-nomadic people). It cites, however, *Zuozhuan*, Lord Zhao, Year 1.

¹⁰¹ *Lüshi chunqiu*, *juan* 1 (‘Ailei’ 愛類 *pian*).

¹⁰² *Zuozhuan*, Lord Xiang, Year 29, recounting the visit made by Prince Jizha of Wu to the Lu court, where he watched many musical performances associated with the rulers of old, and assessed their significance. This is one of the most celebrated pieces of aesthetic judgement found in all of early Chinese literature.

¹⁰³ Allan, *Buried Ideas*, does an exemplary job of detailing such legends. Her only mistake: to presume that talk of abdication to a worthy must have ended with the imperial period.

¹⁰⁴ Ergo the Zhou (late) claims to be descended from Yu.

¹⁰⁵ Gao, *Gongyu yanjiu lunji*, 78; Xin, *Yugong xinjie*, 1 (with the latter giving the word count).

¹⁰⁶ For such comparisons, see *Shiji* 129.3261; *Lunheng*, ‘Shuxu’ 書虛 chap.: 夫地之有百川也, 猶人之有血脈也.

¹⁰⁷ For an introduction, see Zhang He, *Wu Yue wenhua*, 12. During the Tang interregnum under Wu Zetian (r. 684–704), only four regional cults were spared destruction: cults dedicated to Prince Jizha, to Wu Taibo, to Wu Zixu (Helu’s wise minister), and to the mythical sage-king Yu. During Tang, there was a great deal of anxiety about the growth of unsanctioned temples and unorthodox sacrifices.



FIG. 6a



FIG. 6b

A bronze Kuaiji figural mirror depicting Wu Zixu. Eastern Han. In the Collection of the Shanghai Museum, *Shanghai bowuguan cang qingtongqi* II, pl. 95.

(who ceded the throne to his more virtuous brother, paving the way for the rise of King Wen of Zhou);¹⁰⁸ to the kings of Wu and Yue, especially Kings Goujian of Yue and Fuchai of Wu; to Wu Zixu, the epitome of loyal but mistrusted adviser; and also to Prince Jizha of Wu, the able envoy to Lu who proved that an inhabitant of Wu could outdo those at the Lu court when it came to understanding the profundities of Zhou culture (Figure 6a, Figure 6b). All these shrines, especially that dedicated to Yu on Kuaiji Mountain, commanded followers to engage in cult activities, with Yu in particular envisioned as a southern deity offering special blessings to southern residents. After unification in 221 BCE, the First Emperor (Qin Shihuang) began to make imperial progresses to the most important cult sites in his vast territories. He made the ascent up Kuaiji Mountain in 210 BCE, indicating that this was already an important cult site.

¹⁰⁸ The history of the main temple to Wu Taibo is described in Ye, *Wuguo lishi yu Wu wenhua tanmi*, 37–39. The temple site dates from Eastern Han, though the present structure dates to Ming. We know that Wu Taibo received numerous titles over the years, including those from Emperor Ming of Jin (r. 323–325), and received extensive imperial patronage during Tang and Qing.

On the mountain top, the First Emperor erected a major stone stele, whose inscription addressed the highest gods.¹⁰⁹ Qin Shihuang's hapless son, Ershi, also 'went south to Kuaiji', erecting a small stele next to the great stele dedicated by his father,¹¹⁰ as did Han Wudi in 135 BCE,¹¹¹ with either Sima Tan or (more likely) Sima Qian in his entourage.¹¹² During late Western Han, these 'southern tours of inspection', as they were called, came to be halted, as too dangerous and prohibitively expensive, but the Eastern Han emperors resumed them as soon as possible, in part because it allowed them to stop by their old home, not too far away. Successive rulers were seeking several types of blessings, no doubt: they longed for personal immortality, as well as long life for the dynasty. As the slogan went, 'True Men Go on Tours South' 真人南巡, with Kuaiji and/or Hengshan 衡山 the destinations.¹¹³

In this connection it is relevant, surely, that Kuaiji was home to

¹⁰⁹ One may consult Martin Kern's book on the stone stele inscriptions (*Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih-Huang*) or Burton Watson's translation for the full text of the stele (Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian*). According to Lu Yun's (262–302) 'Da Ju Mao'an shu', Qin Shihuang stayed in the area for 'more than thirty days'. Lu Yun was Lu Ji's 陸機 (261–303) younger brother, and both were from the area (吳郡, 華亭).

¹¹⁰ *Shiji* 6.260, 267.

¹¹¹ Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 187, ties this visit with Yan Zhu's attack on the Dong'ou three years earlier, noting that Han Wudi may well have taken the sea route to get there. Pirates frequently made the troop movements impossible by sea (*ibid.*, 193). Kuaiji troops were levied to fight the Dong'ou. Pirates in the Kuaiji area hit the Eastern Han empire particularly hard in 109 (*ibid.*, 195). For another sea battle, ordered by Zhangdi, see *Hou Hanshu* 16.610.

¹¹² *Shiji* 130.3293, says, 'The Senior Director of the Archives says: I have traveled south and ascended Mount Lu to view the nine rivers that Yu channeled. Then I went to Kuaiji and Taihuang, ascending Gusu to survey the five lakes there.'

¹¹³ The phrase comes from Zhang Heng's 'Southern Capital *fu*', and *Dong-guan Hanji*, *juan* 10, mentions Hengshan, among other places. For further information, see Wang, *Zhanguo Qin Han jiaotong geju yu qiyu xingzheng*, 40–41.

some of the most famous shamans (male and female), and moreover, a hefty concentration of cult sites in the area.¹¹⁴ Nearly all of the area's rich shamanic traditions involved healing practices. Here, possibly, were some first sightings of the Celestial Master's Tradition,¹¹⁵ and, not all that far away by sea, the earliest sightings of Buddhist imagery, at Mount Kongwang 孔望山.¹¹⁶ (As Timothy Barrett showed, sites with access to the coasts tended to be where new religions traveled.)¹¹⁷ Once again Kuaiji was part of a larger pattern, it seems, for some 42% of all shrines or temples mentioned for the early empires were situated within the coastal commanderies, though those commanderies represented only 17.4% of the realm's territory.¹¹⁸ Blessed by the salubrious sea air, many such cult sites tended to command wide-angle, open-air views. Qin Shihuang particularly enjoyed the spectacular views from atop Mount Kuaiji, they say.

¹¹⁴ The early local gazetteers are preoccupied with anomalous events. See Fan, *Wujun zhi*, chapter 44 ('Strange Events' 奇事), and page 619. Fan, *Wujun zhi*, 8, identifies 'illicit cults' as the 'customs' in the area.

¹¹⁵ See, for example, Kong Lingfu's *Kuaiji ji*, whose fragments are collected in Fan, *Kuaiji fangzhi*, 85–88, which includes Mount Tiantai 天台山 in its purview. Cf. Fan, *Wujun zhi*, 90. Early gazetteers touted the numinous caves of the south with their special properties. In this connection, see *Baoqing xu Kuaiji zhi*; Wei, 'A View of History'. As 132 notes, 'According to the Declarations of the Perfected [Zhen'gao 真誥], the Azure Lad [*qingtong* 青童], Lord of the Paradise Realm [*fangzhu* 方諸], dwells on the islands of Kuaiji and regularly roams about Mount Mao, in Jurong County, as well as the many grotto heavens in Mount Tongbai on Mount Tiantai' Thus, a certain geographical logic regarding immortal residences was formed: 'to Kuaiji, its islands; to the Wu and Yue, its grotto heavens'. Cf. Hu, 'Cong kuaiji dao jiankang—jiangzuo shiren yu huangquan'.

¹¹⁶ We know far too little, but Prince Ying of Chu, one of Guangwu's fifteen sons, supposedly worshipped in front of a Buddhist (*Fotu* 浮屠) image. And Chen Yinke wrote a famous essay alleging that some of the first Celestial Masters were from the area. For the Mount Kongwang materials, see Rhie, *Early Buddhist Art*; Wen, 'A General Introduction'.

¹¹⁷ See Barrett, 'Religious Change', 438 (Map 9).

¹¹⁸ Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 294, 297.

One idea that is prevalent in the secondary scholarship in Chinese is that the area under discussion was basically full of ‘barbarians’ (now dubbed ‘minority peoples’) before successive waves of migrations from the North China Plain people managed to ‘civilise it’. This is certainly the impression left by a few famous chapters in the standard histories, which recount tales of famous governors in the area teaching the locals to plough and to forsake their old superstitious ways. No less a modern scholar than Wang Zijin 王子今 promotes this simplistic tale that relations between the ‘central lands’ (*zhongtu* 中土) and the ‘southern periphery’ (*nan bian* 南邊) was ‘comparatively representative’ (比較典型) of the relations that prevailed between the civilised and barbarians everywhere.¹¹⁹ However, careful analysis shows how implausible this narrative is likely to be in relation to Kuaiji, as the former capital of the Yue and Wu kingdoms, and an important trading centre later for Chu kingdom. Perhaps Chinese-style agriculture was not yet in place, but the area certainly could, prior to successive migrations from the north, support a highly sophisticated level of culture, attested by the artifacts found in the area, including the bronze swords and related objects from the pre-Qin era, as well as by objects from further south, from Zhao Tuo’s 趙佗 (?–137 BCE) burial site in Guangdong early Western Han.¹²⁰

1.4. Gold, Silver, and Tin: Coastal Trade and Local Manufactures

As early as the ‘Yugong’ chapter of the *Documents* classic, the region was known for certain local products. Here is my translation of the passage:

¹¹⁹ Wang, *Qin Han quyuan wenhua yanjiu*, 224.

¹²⁰ For the celebrated bronze artifacts from the area, see Daniels, ed., ‘Wu Yue’. For Zhao Tuo’s tomb, see Guangzhou Xi Han Nanyue wang bowuguan, ed., *Xi Han Nan Yue wang bowuguan zhenpin tulu*; Lam, *Nanyue wang mu yuqi*; Guangzhou Xi Han Nanyue wang bowuguan, ed., *Nanyue wang mu yu haishang sichou zhi lu*.

Its tribute includes feathers and fur, ivory and rhinoceros hides, copper of three colours, the *chun* 杗, *gan* 榦, *kuo* 栝, and *bai* 柏 trees,¹²¹ grindstones and whetstones,¹²² arrowheads, and cinnabar. As for fine bamboo and the *hu* tree wood,¹²³ three realms within Jingzhou were famous for offering these as tribute. There were wrapped and packaged *jingmao* fibres.¹²⁴ Their baskets of tribute contained red-black and yellowish-red silk and pearled ribbons. From the Nine Yangzi Channels was supplied tribute in the form of large tortoise shells. 貢羽、旄、齒、革、金三品、杗、榦、栝、柏、礪、砥、磬、丹、維箇籛、楛、三國致貢其名、包匭菁茅、其籛玄纁璣組、九江入賜大龜。¹²⁵

Very fine luxuries were known to come from the region from the late Zhanguo period—the probable date of the *Documents* chapter—including three types of metal, perhaps ‘copper of three colours’, as most early commentators say, or ‘metal of three types’, as some early commentators prefer. If it’s the latter, we are learning of copper, silver, and tin deposits in the area, not just fine copper.¹²⁶ Other early

¹²¹ *Gushi bian*, I, 663n9 cites a slew of commentaries that explain these four different types of trees, but then notes that the best course would be just to follow Zheng Xuan’s simple explanation that the ‘*chun*, *gan*, *kuo*, and *bai* are the names of four trees’ 杗榦栝柏，四木名。

¹²² Following Zheng Xuan, we take *li* 礪 to be larger grindstones and *di* 砥 to be the whetstone used for smaller and finer blades.

¹²³ The *hu* 楛 tree was supposedly used for making arrow shafts. For bamboo, see Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 369.

¹²⁴ Zheng Xuan glosses *gui* 匭 as ‘to tie up and knot’. In the binome *jingmao* 菁茅, *mao* 茅 refers to a plant with hairy barbs, which were supplied to the ancestral temple to filter wine. ‘They were highly valued, so they were wrapped, tied up, and knotted’ 匭，纏結也。菁茅，茅有毛刺者，給宗廟縮酒。重之，故包裹又纏結也。

¹²⁵ *Shiji* 2.61; contrast *Hanshu* 28A.1529. Ibid. 28B.1670 specifies similar local products coming from North Vietnam, on the Red River 紅河三角洲 (i.e., Jiaozhi 交趾) 多犀，象，毒冒，珠璣，銀，銅，果，布之湊，which is far away from Kuaiji, but well connected to it by local traders, but note the pearls and silver 自交趾至會稽七八千里，百越雜處，各有種姓，不得盡云少。

¹²⁶ *Qian Hanji*, era of Xiao Wudi (*juan* 4, *pian* 13), given as part of the reason

texts claim that the area was also rich in jade and valuable crystals.¹²⁷ The rice-growing area was not only fertile but expanding, thanks to new cultivation techniques and major expansions of the old pre-Qin irrigation projects (e.g., ‘Mirror Lake’, but also the Shaoxing canal).

Economic historians know that great wealth generally spurs cultural production,¹²⁸ and the first and most obvious sign of that in the Kuaiji area in the forgotten century is that no fewer than two enormous manuscripts of local boosterism were produced in the area, as mentioned above: Yuan Kang’s 袁康 (active 40) *Yue jue shu* 越絕書 (compiled ca. 40) and Zhao Ye’s 趙曄 (active ca. 25–56) *Wu Yue chunqiu* 吳越春秋 (compiled 52), both by Kuaiji authors,¹²⁹ not

that Wudi sent people to populate the area in 119 BCE, but Wudi dispatched the poor. On this migration (once debated, but no longer) to Kuaiji, see Xin, ‘Han Wudi ximin Kuaiji shishi zhengshi’; also Liu, ‘Jiujiang, Tushan, Kuaiji kao’, 49–52. By contrast, during the civil wars before Eastern Han, many great families (well-educated and with money) fled the North China plain, as recounted in Qu, *Zhongguo Kuaiji shizu*, chapter. 1 (esp. page 9). This was apparently what happened with Wang Chong’s forebears.

¹²⁷ See note 13 above.

¹²⁸ For poems celebrating the area, one may consult Zou, *Kuaiji duoying congji, dianjiao*.

¹²⁹ Lagerwey’s entry on the ‘Wu Yüeh ch’un ch’iu’, a summary of parts of his Ph.D. thesis, provides a very good introduction to the book. See Lagerwey, ‘The Annals of Wu and Yüeh’. As Lagerwey states, it is difficult to know how much of the book was authored by Zhao Ye, and how much represents the work of Yang Fang’s abridgement, as the *Tai ping yulan*, in particular, contains many citations of passages that cannot now be found in the received text. Zhao Ye’s biography is included in the *Hou Hanshu* ‘Rulin zhuan’ (*Hou Hanshu* 79B.2575). He was known as a scholar of the Han version of the *Odes*. Schuessler and Loewe, ‘Yüeh chüeh shu’, call the attribution to Zhao Ye ‘little more than speculative’, but concede meanwhile, ‘Recently scholars have tended to agree that the contents, ideas, and style of the work do not conflict with the date of 52, the last year to be specified in *chüan* no. 2.21a.’ I am prepared to follow Zhu, ‘Han Jin shidai Shaoxing de shiwei shixue jia’, 94–96, on those two books, in light of the Eastern Han boosterism found in many areas. Also, as Milburn, in both *Cherishing Antiquity* and

to mention Wang Chong's writings. We know that in agriculture great strides were made in the area, especially under Diwu Lun and Ma Zhen (see above). We also have material evidence attesting the high value of Kuaiji land by mid- to late Eastern Han, in two forms: a famous 'mountain inscription' (*moya* 摩崖), and a Kuaiji land contract dated to 76 CE (Figure 7).¹³⁰ The value of local lands could only have escalated once the area increasingly was settled by rich magnates seeking to expand their landholdings in the fertile south, while evading turmoil in the north.¹³¹ In all likelihood, the presence of those magnates would then have contributed to the excellence of Kuaiji mirror production, as those mirrors, especially those with auspicious legends and signs on them, were always a luxury reserved for the rich, even when they began to appear in areas far distant from Kuaiji, including the capital and along the eastern seaboard.

1.5. On Eastern Han Kuaiji Mirrors

Kuaiji was home to a famous metalworking tradition from the fifth century BCE. Its swords were famous throughout the area we call

Glory of Yue, writes, Yuan Kang and Wu Ping were very clear that the core text could not be attributed to Zigong, a disciple of Kongzi, and many different stories made up the *Yuejue shu* compilation. Milburn (*Glory of Yue*, 67) notes a 'demonstrable difference in vocabulary' between a block of three chapters and the rest of the *Yuejue shu* text. One tradition says that Wu Ping died at the beginning of Eastern Han.

¹³⁰ The land contract inscribed on stone was found in a graveyard in Kuaiji. It describes the purchase of a grave site by six brothers for thirty thousand cash. No names or details are given, but the stone is dated as Jianchu yuannian 建初元年. The text is headed *Daji* 大吉 [Great Auspiciousness]. *Jinshi xubian* 金石續編 1.2b; Lu, 'Handai Xu Sheng mai di qian quan jianjie', 60. For further information, see Loewe, 'Land Tenure and the Decline of Imperial Government', 87. The Loewe essay provides historical context for this contract, contending that the specifics of this gravesite land contract indicate the landowners must have belonged to a fairly large magnate household.

¹³¹ See notes 38 and 119 for further details.

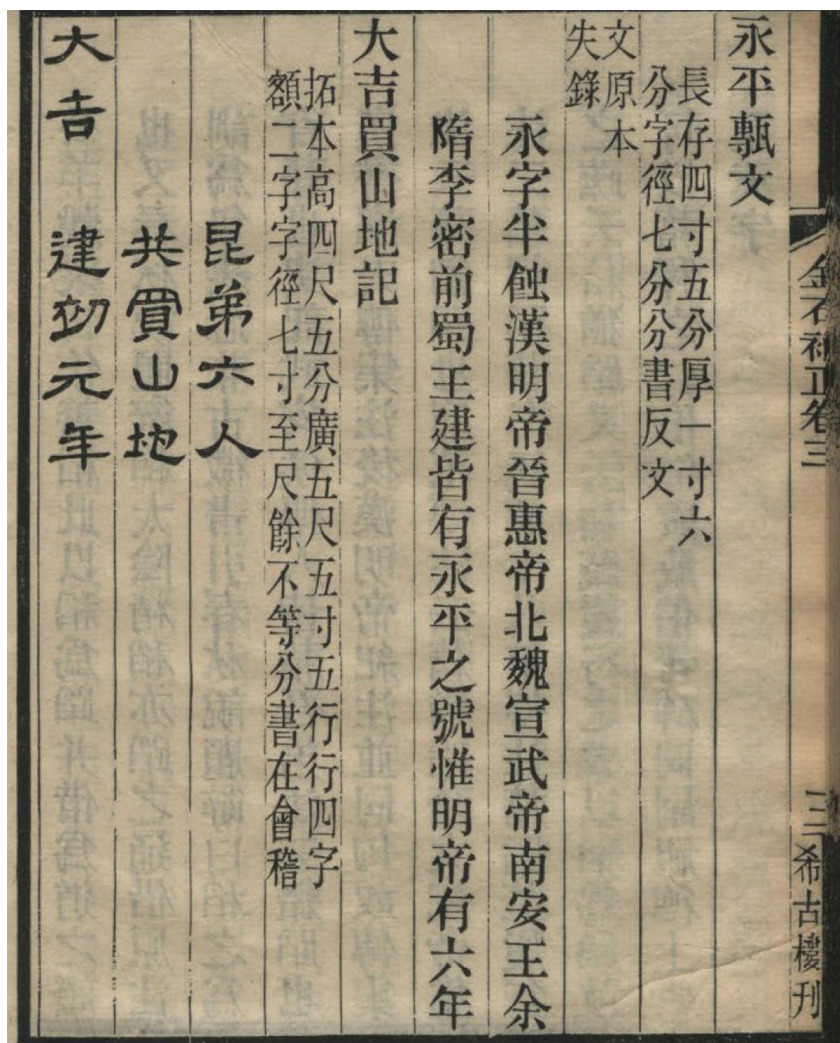


FIG. 7 Kuaiji, Eastern Han land contract inscribed on stone, whose header reads 'Da ji 大吉'. *Jinshi xubian* 金石續編 1.2b. After East Asian Library, Rare Books Collection, *Ba qiong shi jinshu lu bu zheng*, (2082/7143. vol. 4), *juan* 3/3b-5b.

China today at roughly the same time. So while Chinese authors typically assume that any famous metalworking families must have come from the North China Plain, in the waves of refugees from the wars up north, there is every reason to suspect that both artistic traditions and artisans north and south would have contributed to the Eastern Han mirror-making in the Kuaiji area.¹³² During the two Han dynasties, but especially in mid-Eastern Han, the quality and quantity of bronze mirrors became noteworthy.¹³³ Not only did mirrors figure in the burial items for Han princes and nobles, but cheaper mirrors (usually of lesser quality) have even turned up in some small- to mid-sized commoner graves near Chang'an and Luoyang. There is no question that Kuaiji mirrors had gained a certain cachet by mid-Eastern Han, because the objects themselves began to proudly proclaim their origin in labels such as 'Kuaijishan, Yin'an' 會稽山陰安本里.¹³⁴ From the beginning in Western Han, Chu-style items had been in fashion, due to the origins of the ruling

¹³² For Wu and Yue swords, see Daniels, 'Wu Yue Scripts'.

¹³³ Shi, 'Cong "tong chu Danyang" dao "Kuaiji zuojing"', discusses the mining centres in relation to mirror casting centres, concluding that Kuaiji mirrors (known in late Western Han) came to be of unprecedented quality, perhaps due to the North China Plain artists migrating south during the wars of transition between the Xin and Eastern Han dynasties. *Ibid.*, 2–3, discusses Danyang commandery and Xuzhou kingdom as prime manufacturing Kuaiji mirrors. By late Western Han, these were rivaled only by the palace manufactures made in the capitals of Chang'an and Luoyang and the best Chu-style mirrors, made in Changsha and its environs.

¹³⁴ For examples, see Umehara, *Shōkō kokyō shūei*, 58; also, his *Kan sangoku rikuchō kinenkyō zusetu*; Higuchi, *Kokyō zuroku*. For place names in the locality, see Hargett, '會稽'. The early sources give multiple explanations for the derivation of the place name Kuaiji, the most important being that Yu was enfeoffed at Mount Tai, where he met his nobles, so the term refers to the meeting, or that Kuaiji was associated with a floating mountain Mount Fu 浮山 (out in Liaoxi), as per the *Huainan*. The early sources note another Kuaiji located in Zhejiang (although this name was probably not in use before Zhanguo) and in Guangdong, another Mount Kuaiji, where people who claimed descent from Da Yu settled.

Liu clan in the south.¹³⁵ And there were rich deposits in bronze, gold, and tin near Kuaiji, in Yuzhang 豫章, as well as in nearby sites.¹³⁶

But significantly, it was Kuaiji commandery, Danyang county (present Anhui), established under Qin,¹³⁷ that became the single site among the one hundred and five commanderies listed in the standard histories for the two Han dynasties to have its own Tongguan 銅官 (Officer in Charge of Copper).¹³⁸ Its copper was famous throughout the realm for its high quality.¹³⁹ The most famous site in Kuaiji mirror-making seems to have been Shanyin, as multiple references exist to the Shanyin bronze-makers that explicitly name the lineage-artisans to enhance the value of the local products.¹⁴⁰ (Many excellent reports by archaeologists and art historians have focused on these mirrors.)¹⁴¹ Two nearby sites that have yielded fine Han mirrors are

¹³⁵ See Li, *The Path of Beauty*, chapter 4.

¹³⁶ *Shiji* 129.3268; cf. *Hanshu* 28B.1666, 1668. Page 1666 identifies these as part of the old Wu territories (今之會稽, 九江, 丹陽, 豫章, 廬江, 廣陵, 六安, 臨淮郡, 盡吳分也). Yuzhang was identified as a major producer of gold 出黃金 and ‘all manner of minor [i.e., not easily taxable] products’ on page 1668.

¹³⁷ In 112 BCE, Danyang was made a commandery, mainly because of the high quality of the copper deposits in that area. Liu Pi of Wu had been able, due to the quantity and quality of copper and salt in the environs, to not tax his people, which made him immensely popular (*ibid.*, 35.1904–5: 百姓無賦). Danyang interests Ban Gu as a key site of copper mining.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 28B.1592.

¹³⁹ *Shi Jiyi*, 3; cf. Shu, ‘Cong “gu Yue sanjue” dao “Shaoxing sanbao”’, 11–15, esp. 12.

¹⁴⁰ See Wang, ‘Wuxian, Shanyin, he Wuchang’, 1028 (Plate 8). Cf. Wang, *Zhejiang chutu jing juyin*, 4; 梅原末治 . . .

¹⁴¹ See Mei, ‘Zhejiang Kuaiji jing’; Wang, ‘Jingchu sannian jing’, 1120, pl. 6; Wang, ‘Qing yang de Wujun jing gongkao’, 642, esp. pls. 2 and 5; Wang, ‘Wu jingshi Chen shi suozuo shenshou jing lunkao’, 1017–24, which shows us five pieces by Chen Shi, probably dated to 228 CE, while supplying more historical background. Wu mirrors have been found far from Wu, for example, in Zoucheng 鄒城 (southern Shandong). See Wang, ‘Wu jingshi Chen shi suozuo shenshou jing lunkao’, 1022.

Liu'an 六安 county¹⁴² and Shouchun 壽春, one of Chu kingdom's many capitals and the capital established for Liu Chang 劉長 (198 BCE–174 BCE), King of Huainan, soon after the Western Han was founded. Mirrors from Liu'an have a dragon interlaced pattern on the mirror back, often with birds and animals to the side, and such formulaic legends as 'Xiu xiangsi' 修相思 ('Thinking of you'), which suggest attempts for a wider market.¹⁴³ (Some art historians speculate these are the origins of the famous Four Spirit Animals [*si shen* 四神] motif in later times.)¹⁴⁴ Indeed, many fine mirrors that were once identified as being from further north have now been definitively re-assigned to Kuaiji, even when no foundry or artisans are specified, partly on the basis of their extraordinarily lively decorations (see Figure 6a, Figure 6b).

Admittedly, during the civil wars attending the transition to Eastern Han, some artisans from the North China Plain likely fled south, to avoid the wars. That their migration accounts for the increasing quality of the *extant* Danyang/Kuaiji mirrors is a plausible story, but speculation nonetheless. It is not inconceivable that rich magnates brought artisans with them to the area, but it seems equally plausible that migration to the area by the wealthy

¹⁴² Later a kingdom, founded in 121 BCE.

¹⁴³ Purportedly a variation on 'Chang xiangsi' 長相思, to avoid Liu Chang's tabooed personal name. NB: Shi Jiayi also mentions mirrors from nearby Pengcheng and Xuzhou that clearly exhibit the Chu-style as well (Shi, 'Cong "tong chu danyang"', 4).

¹⁴⁴ Wang, 'Mirror, Death, and Rhetoric' ties the mirror depictions to Eastern Han court politics, which strikes me as unlikely. These are local mirrors, popular locally, that then also are taken, in some few cases, to the capital, judging from the locations of the few excavated examples we have. See also Milburn, *Cherishing Antiquity*, 144–61, plus plates 1–13, for a thorough review of a sampling of the Wu/Kuaiji mirrors, in Chinese collections and those abroad. As Milburn notes, at the time of her writing (2012), none of the so-called Wu Zixu mirrors derived from an excavated site, and provenance is sketchy for the others, so much must remain speculation. However, some few excavated examples of Kuaiji mirrors featuring other motifs are known, and many have been published.

stimulated local market demand sufficiently to support the already thriving local industry in the area. In any case, Kuaiji's situation would have improved dramatically with the founding of the Eastern Han dynasty from the perspective of the capital at Luoyang, given the new home base of the ruling Liu clan, located much further to the southeast in Eastern Han than during Western Han. This meant, for Kuaiji and for nearby Wu 吳 county (and later, from 129 on, in Wu commandery 吳郡, the new administrative unit corresponding to the wealthiest part of the old Kuaiji region), it became highly profitable to produce wonderful mirrors of very high quality, decorated with sculpted relief animals on them or with local heroes,¹⁴⁵ with some further enhanced by auspicious slogans congratulating the owners on their prized possessions.¹⁴⁶ That increasing commercialization of both the capital region and of the southeast¹⁴⁷ explains why, in Eastern Han, we suddenly learn of many families of master artisans making high-quality mirrors in the area: the Dus 杜氏 of Shangyin, the Zhangs 張氏 of Liu'an, the Zhengs 鄭氏 and the Longs 龍氏 of Shouchun, and the Master-Artisans Du 杜, Zhu 朱, Zhou 周是,¹⁴⁸ and Bo 伯/柏 from Wu commandery (old Kuaiji).¹⁴⁹ Evidently, the local private mirror-pro-

¹⁴⁵ Experts now generally agree that the mirrors with human figures on them appear in Kuaiji, Shanyin (the administrative seat) from early Eastern Han. See Li, 'Shilun Xuzhou', cited in Zhu, 'Handai huaxiang jing', 13.

¹⁴⁶ Such mirrors are often decorated with the auspicious slogans such as '服者延壽', '服者君卿', '服者富貴', congratulating the purchasers and owners on their propitious selection of the fine mirror.

¹⁴⁷ Shi, 'Cong "tong chu danyang"', 5. Dong, *Handai Wu-Yue wenhua gaishu*, 11, does not think this explanation (oft-repeated) tallies with the evidence at hand. Dong divides those who study the Classics from those who study the masterworks (15), at points distorting the picture.

¹⁴⁸ Usually read as the homonym 周氏.

¹⁴⁹ For details, see the Tsinghua working group 2014 publication (based on the 2012 Japanese version): Okamura, 'Han jing fengqi yanjiu'. Okamura is a specialist on agriculture who has written on mirrors as well. See also Yan, 'The Monetary Value', 66–115.

duction factories won great fame, and justly so, as we plainly see with the finely-crafted examples of mirrors made by the Bo family 柏氏, maker of a Wu Zixu mirror;¹⁵⁰ the so-called 'Principled Lady' mirror;¹⁵¹ two Wu 吳 county spirit animal mirrors¹⁵² (one engraved with the legend 'Huyang Zhang Yuan' 胡陽張元),¹⁵³ as well as the most superb example made by the Kuaiji 'master' Bao 會稽師鮑作明鏡. So much has been written on mirror metaphors and the peculiar characteristics of Han mirrors that there is no need to belabour the point here.¹⁵⁴ But this much mirror production must have relied upon rich metal deposits in the area, as evinced by the presence of that Tongguan, and also by brief notices in the capital-centred histories for the period.

Underlying some of these trends are the undeniable environmental changes that made the North China Plain a far less desirable location for farming than it had been in Western Han.¹⁵⁵ Three other important factors came into play, putting Kuaiji on the economic, political, and cultural maps, even from the point of the view of the courts so far away. First, as Karl Polanyi observed of the ancient world, 'Cities required a special stimulus to grow, such as a sanctuary, a seat of royal power, or trade routes, which were quite rare' in the remote past, and in the case of Kuaiji we can find that 'special stimulus', imperially driven, for during Zhangdi's reign (75–88) Kuaiji became a major site along the newly-paved road bringing metal up from the far south. (Immediately one recalls the metal trade transporting gold up from Burma, with vast quantities seen in the tomb of Haihun hou [Liu He 劉賀, ca 92–59 BCE]) (Figure 8a, Figure

¹⁵⁰ See Wang, *Zhejiang chutu tongjing*, pl. 26. The Bo family artisans were particularly famous for their depictions of horses and carriages, according to Zhu, 'Handai huaxiang jing', 15.

¹⁵¹ Zhu, 'Handai huaxiang jing', pl. 11 (in colour).

¹⁵² Ibid., pl. 12 (in colour), often called the 'Zhoushi' 周氏 mirror.

¹⁵³ Ibid., pl. 50.

¹⁵⁴ See Nylan, 'Beliefs about Seeing', 89–132; also, several essays in 'Beliefs about Social Seeing'.

¹⁵⁵ The key source here is Zhu, *Zhu Kezhen wenji*, esp. 495–97.

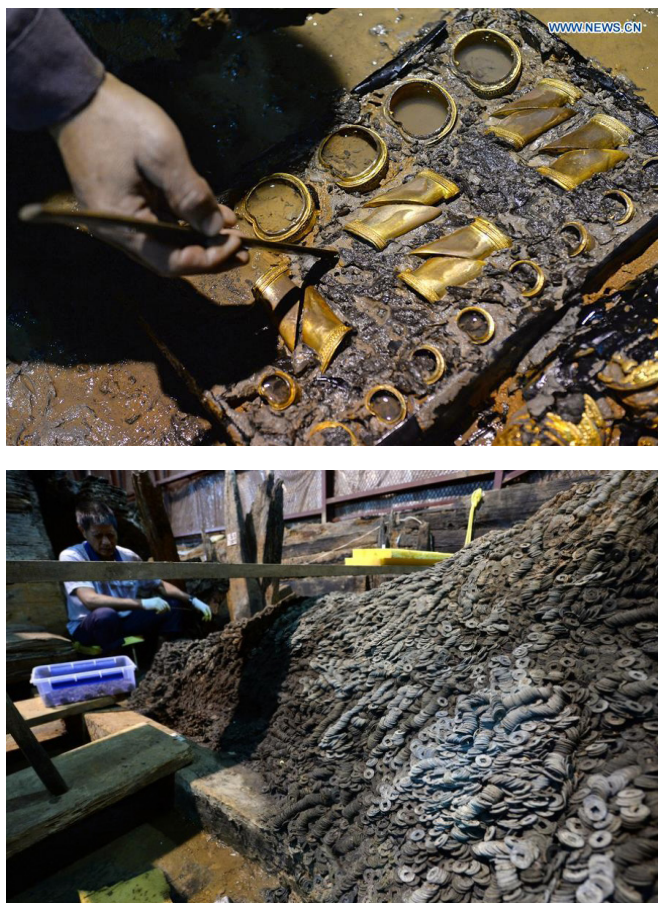


FIG. 8a–8b Tomb of Haihunhou, closed 59 BCE, when its occupant, Liu He, was only 33 *sui*. Image after China Daily report of the find announced in 2016. Xinhua, ‘Gold coins, hoofs’.

The marquis, Liu He, was grandson of Emperor Wu, whose reign began one of the most famous periods in China’s history. By contrast, Liu He was deposed as emperor after a mere twenty-seven days, and exiled to the far south, to a fief located near today’s Nanchang, provincial capital of Guangxi. The remains of the marquis were found in a coffin in an interior chamber and hoisted out in January 2016, for lab research. More than 10,000 artifacts have been unearthed so far, including 378 golden ‘hooves’ and nearly 300 ‘gold cakes’ 金餅, approximately 2 million *wushu* coins, and 3,000 bronze chariot fittings (making a total of nearly ten tons of metal objects in the tomb), not to mention other precious items.

8b).¹⁵⁶ Second, according to Tsuruma Kazeyuki's research, rich families always gravitate, sooner or later, to the major urban sites from the more peripheral areas, concentrating wealth in administrative centres and also providing funds to build or refurbish cult sites, such as that erected to Great Yu at the site of his supposed death in Kuaiji. We know that by 129 CE, in fact, Kuaiji commandery, always the single largest Eastern Han administrative unit, commanded too many resources for it not to pose a potential strategic threat to the Eastern Han throne, should one of the local leaders try to rebel. Given the continual small-scale rebellions by the indigenous peoples in the area, the court decided that it would be prudent to split Kuaiji commandery into two commanderies, Kuaiji and Wu 吳 commanderies. Third, the steady population growth in the area had led to a remarkable expansion of areas opened to new cultivation.¹⁵⁷

Predictably, then, in Eastern Han a number of entries in the standard histories and other impeccable sources highlight the problem of the southeastern coastal pirates, which could not likely

¹⁵⁶ Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson, *Trade and Markets*, 35. It was Polanyi, who mentioned building a road to facilitate the haulage of metal reserves from the far south to the capital in the North China Plains. However, there was an imperial highway (a *chidao* 馳道) going to Kuaiji from at least the time of Qin Shihuang, according to Xiao and Li, 'Qin Han shiqi Jiangnan jiaotong', 76. As the authors point out, Kuaiji was also a key stop on the Pengcheng-Danyang route, dealing in precious metals. (One Kuaiji route ended up in Guilin, in Guangxi, which connects via the Li River to the Pearl River going to Burma and gold.) The need for military transport in the area was constant during Eastern Han (78–79), which is why Kuaiji became a key point on the Shanyin-Dong Ou highway route, as well (79). Kuaiji was also connected with Qiantang 錢塘, and through there to the Eastern Min and Ou groups.

¹⁵⁷ See Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, table on 523, which gives some idea of the expansion from Hedi to Zhidi (reigns 105–146). A table showing population increase from 2 to 136 is supplied by Wang, *Qin Han quyu wenhua yanjiu*, 110. Wang explains that the increase was not huge, due to previous 'relatively early development' of Kuaiji and Danyang commanderies. There was extraordinary growth (in one case more than nine times the growth) in nearby commanderies.

have represented a brand-new crisis.¹⁵⁸ (The very presence of such pirates, well-organised and powerful enough to challenge the forces dispatched from the central court at Luoyang—this alone testifies to the tremendous wealth in the area.)¹⁵⁹ Campaigns against the south-east coastal regions began already in Eastern Han, under its founder, and General Ma Yuan 馬援 (14 BCE–49), and wherever General Ma traveled, we learn, he left new canals (needed for water transport) and new roads in his wake.¹⁶⁰ Even far away, in the northwest frontier area of Juyan, these fights against the coastal pirates are mentioned multiple times, in strips referencing the years 72, 110, and 132.¹⁶¹ Omen

¹⁵⁸ For example, Kuaiji is mentioned as a haven for pirates in the old text titled *Gujin zhu* 古今注 by Fu Hou 伏侯 (a.k.a. Fu Wuji 伏無忌 [active 136]). See *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 11B.3244. Pirates were endemic in the area since the Hangzhou estuary provides them with plenty of places to hide out in.

¹⁵⁹ On these pirates, see Wang and Li, ‘Handai de haizei’, who note that earlier there was collusion between the local leaders and pirates, as during the Seven Kingdoms rebellion led by Liu Pi of Wu or late in Western Han, with the rebellion led by a woman from Langya (‘Mother Lü’ 呂母), as mentioned in *Hanshu* 99B.4150. At the same time, the main focus of their co-authored essay is on Eastern Han, as that is the period from which most records derive. See also Wang, ‘Qin Han diguo zhizheng jituan’, 143.

¹⁶⁰ His biography tells of him traversing the mountains for ‘more than one thousand *li*’. (See *Hou Hanshu* 24.838–39, in language recalling the ‘Yu gong’ chapter. On Jiangnan, see Wang, *Qin Han quyu wenhua yanjiu*, 94–115, 211. On the region and Ma Yuan, see Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shi xin shi*, 258–82, esp. 268.

¹⁶¹ *Juyan Hanjian* (33.8) show us major attacks by pirates in 72, 110, and 132, specifically in this area. Cf. *Hou Hanshu* 1B.69, 5.213, 6.259 (海賊曾旌等寇), 38.1277, etc.; also *Kuaiji dianlu* (*juan shang*), 1016. Wei Bin, whose interest lies in the post-Han and pre-Tang period speaks of the importance of the Five Marchmounts, of which Hengshan/Kuaiji was one, as sites for Daoist and Buddhist retreats. He states, ‘For Ge Hong, the sacred mountains of the central plains are better suited for religious retreats than those in the south. Only after the Yongjia Uprising 永嘉之亂 in 311, when “the mountains of the central plains became inaccessible”, did those pursuing the Dao retreat to the mountains and

treatises add new dates for Kuaiji pirates, in 163, for example, since a major uprising then affected three commanderies.¹⁶² Under Shundi, for example, we know that pirates attacked the Kuaiji *dongbu duwei* 東部都尉 (one of three such colonels assigned to the region), insisting that they were the aggrieved parties in a local dispute.¹⁶³ There were also two pirate brothers specifically known as the Kuaiji brothers.¹⁶⁴ Several famous anecdotes of the period feature encounters between the locals and the pirates.¹⁶⁵ And these pirates were reportedly sailing not only along the sea coast, but also all up and down the Yangzi River.¹⁶⁶

islands of Kuaiji.' According to Ge Hong's writings, the Jiangnan mountains 'suited to early Daoist mountain reclusion were rather widely dispersed, with the most concentrated area being Kuaiji District', and it was only during the Southern Dynasties that the political and cultural resources moved from Kuaiji to Jiankang, where they were consolidated. Throughout the period, Kuaiji was known for continuing sacrifices to Yu the Great. See Wei's 'A View of History', esp. 137. Huge bribes of up to one hundred thousand cash were used to pay the pirates off and keep them from raiding; over two thousand boats were involved in the fracas. See Wei, 'A View of History', 41 notes 1-4; *Dunhuang Hanjian shiwen*, 81; and Han strips EPF22:ES9SF4, EPT 22:224, EPT 22:225.

¹⁶² See Wang and Li, 'Handai de haizei', 37-50, particularly 43. The attacks on the area continued into the Sanguo period, in Wu. Indeed, Wang and Li, 'Handai de haizei', 44, 77, is mainly devoted to Sanguo incidents. As Wang and Li note, Chen Yinke had thought these pirates were in cahoots with the Yellow Turbans or Tianshi dao/Celestial Masters groups based in Shandong ca. 184. See Chen, 'Tianshi dao yu binhai diyu zhi guanxi', 1-40; cf. *Hou Hanshu* 31.1109. Multiple uprisings in the areas do not necessarily prove a close connection, however. The coastal areas have their own ecology, which Chen's research does not necessarily delve into.

¹⁶³ *Hou Hanshu* 6.249 [Basic Annals of Shundi]; *Hou Hanshu*, *zhi* 11.3244.

¹⁶⁴ *Hou Hanshu zhi* 11.3244. The brothers Zeng Jing 曾旌 and Zeng Yu 曾於 are mentioned.

¹⁶⁵ Fan Ye, *Hou Hanshu* 81.2674, biography of the 'Duxing' 獨行 (eccentrics) features, for example, the story of Peng Xiu 彭修. NB: different stories give Peng different (if related) names.

¹⁶⁶ Wang and Li, 'Handai de haizei', 48, make a point of the differences be-

(North of Kuaiji, there were good connections to the Yangzi [Figure 9].)¹⁶⁷ Perhaps it should not surprise us that Kuaiji was centre of salt production (sea salt), bamboo harvesting, and also ship building,¹⁶⁸ as one of the earliest traditions portrays the locals as ‘men of the water who live on the water’.¹⁶⁹ (Nor should we forget that grain shipments from the area, presumably of rice, used water transport to help feed the North China Plain throughout the early empires.)¹⁷⁰

1.6. Interim Conclusion

As mentioned above, by the expert reconstruction by Karl Polanyi, the relatively advanced urban economies in antiquity ‘required a

tween the Yangzi pirates 江賊 and the coastal pirates 海賊. See, for example, ‘Han bei zhong youguan nonmin qiye de yixie cailiao’, 8–9.

¹⁶⁷ *Hanshu* 31.1796n3.

¹⁶⁸ For Kuaiji as the most important ship-building centre, see Xiao and Li, ‘Qin Han shiqi Jiangnan jiaotong’, 79; cf. Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 237, citing *Sanguo zhi*. As Wang points out, the southern part of Kuaiji commandery corresponded to today’s Fujian province. As for salt, Kuaiji is listed as one of the centres of salt production in *Shiji* 129 and *Hanshu* 28 (‘Dili zhi’); cf. Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 245–46, 294. Kuaiji is said to have one of the thirty-five salt monopoly offices in the *Hanshu* 28A.1591 (‘Dili zhi’).

¹⁶⁹ See Wu Zixu’s speech, in Guoyu, ‘Yueyu, shang’. The speech goes on to talk of naval warfare.

¹⁷⁰ Kuaiji was one of eighteen coastal commanderies. See Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 294. As Wang, 298 notes, because there is no mention of great granaries in the area, Wang Xianqian, *Hanshu buzhu*, presumed that all was rapidly transported on water to the north. Wang, *Qin Han jiaotong shigao*, 505, reminds us of the rich products that passed through these commanderies, including gold, silk, incense, cinnabar, coral, and so on. The ‘Basic Annals of Andi’ tells us in 113 that Kuaiji supplied rice to the north, Nanyang, and other areas. A similar story is told of 107, when the ‘Five Commanderies (of which the Kuaiji area was one, identified as Danyang, Shanyang, and also as Wu commandery) fed the north, with “Kuaiji being the furthest away” 會稽最遠 (see the Li Xian commentary).

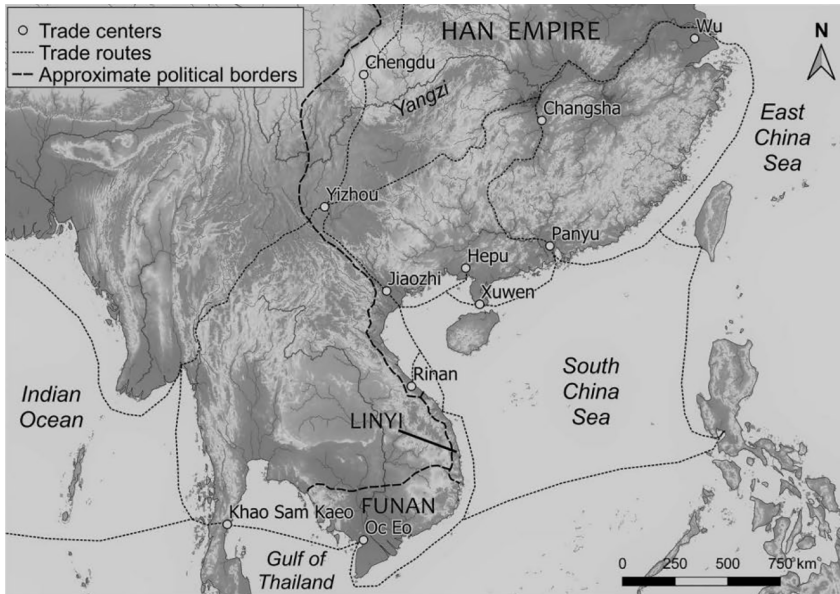


FIG. 9 Maritime and water routes in the south, linking to Kuaiji, after Maxim Korolkov, *The Imperial Network in Ancient China* (2021), (Map. 8.1, 'Southern Trade Network in the Second Century CE', with Kuaiji marked as 'Wu'). Image from Wikimedia Commons.

special stimulus to grow, such as a sanctuary, a seat of royal power, or trade routes'—stimuli that Polanyi deemed 'quite rare' in antiquity. Polanyi further postulated that what he called 'projects' of 'internal colonization' sprang invariably from royal initiatives in the antique world.¹⁷¹ Already under Han Wudi, we know that a major reorganization of the imperial cults confirmed the prominence of Kuaiji.¹⁷² Therefore, the first part of the paper has circled around imperial cult sites; imperial interests in controlling the flows of rare commodities, so as to prevent others from taking their cut; and the throne's strong interest in posting highly capable administrators to the region, to promote identification with the distant capital.

¹⁷¹ Polanyi, Arensberg, and Pearson, *Trade and Markets*, 35.

¹⁷² See above for details.

How the Eastern Han courts managed these multiple agendas our sources do not say, but there seem, upon first reading, uncanny parallels with certain aspects of the state-sponsored projects in the PRC today. That is Thomas Hahn's project, and he will take up these themes in the second part of this paper. As Bruno Latour remarked, 'We have never been modern.' *Plus ça change*. . . .

Part II

2.1. Let Us Fast Forward

Yu the Great collapsed at Mount Kuaiji in the year 2233 BCE. Or maybe he just lay flat 躺平 and didn't bother to get up again. In any case, his work was done and his fame guaranteed, and why the Starbucks on Renminlu in Shaoxing's city centre hasn't yet named one of their concoctions after him is beyond me. Over the decades, I have paid my respect to Yu on a number of occasions, the first time in the early 1980s (1982 to be exact), the last time seven or eight years ago (in late 2014). I was preceded and followed in these excursions by a large number of likeminded worthies, such as emperors Qin Shihuang (as above); Kangxi 康熙 (in 1689) and Qianlong 乾隆 (in 1751, 1784, 1795); Ruan Yuan 阮元 (in 1800), Zhang Taiyan 章太炎 (in 1903), writer Lu Xun 鲁迅 (repeatedly from 1910 onwards), Sun Yat-sen 孫中山 and Hu Hanmin 胡漢民 (in 1919), Zhou Enlai (in 1939), Chiang Kaishek 蔣介石 (in 1947), representatives from the Xia 夏 clan of Taiwan (in 1989), Jiang Zemin 江澤民 (1995), and so on. The exact monthly dates of the official visits were ritually reversed in February 1936, moved from the celebration of Yu's birth (supposedly in April) to his demise (supposedly in September).

For the uninitiated, these days the site itself consists of several parts: a broad but bending (the sacrilege!) 'Spirit Pathway' (*shendao* 神道), with a massive salutary gateway (*pailou* 牌樓); the Cave of Yu (Yu *xue* 禹穴) on nearby Mount Wanwei 宛委, with its vagina-shaped opening which corresponds to the Han dynasty phallic Bian Stone 窆石 housed in its own pavilion on the temple premises (now designated the tenth Grotto Heaven); an exhibition hall dedicated to the

'traces of Yu' (Yu *ji* 禹迹); Yu's monumental bronze statue (Yu *xiang* 禹像), which at twenty-one meters tall is located on the mountaintop above the temple mausoleum; the commemorative temple compound (Da Yu *miao* 大禹廟), rebuilt in the 1930s, using western building techniques and materials such as concrete, as well as traditional design elements; the temple compound's commemorative stele corridor; an aviary; a dinosaur exhibition space; and a large performative plaza where ritual celebrations have recommenced since 1995. The plaza follows in the footsteps (pun intended) of the one other state ritual site, Huangdi ling 黃帝陵, in Shaanxi, which started up a tad earlier.

Back in 1937, one may recall, that same Shaanxi site served as a rendezvous place for emissaries of both the CCP (represented by Lin Boqu) and the Guomindang (represented by Lin Sen) to negotiate a United Front as a way forward for China. Mao Zedong himself composed a poem in December 1936 evoking the spirit of the legendary culture heroes, which was read and distributed during this historic meeting between the two warring parties. Among other topics, the poem co-opted the Yellow Emperor in accepting his (Mao's) words as appropriate offerings and analogised the Xiongnu of old to the current Japanese invaders who had defiled China's sovereignty to such a degree that the country in Mao's eyes could no longer be called home to Huangdi's descendants. Zhou Enlai, ever the trusted ally of Mao and a Shaoxing native, would on a number of critical occasions similarly invoke the spirit of Yu in addressing the nation's needs. For example, during a visit to Yuling in March 1939, he publicly declared that Yu, as the nation's premier hydrologist, had 'fired the first shot in man's fight against nature'.¹⁷³ Shortly after the founding the People's Republic, on August 24, 1950, he reminded an assembly of the country's scientific elite that it was up to the engineers to lead the new China into a future of strength and glory, as Great Yu had shown the way in civil engineering millennia before, with his dedication to water control and extraordinary self-sacrifice on behalf of the Chinese people, and thus to Chinese prosperity.¹⁷⁴ Zhou Enlai him-

¹⁷³ The Chinese reads: '大禹在人類向大自然作鬥爭中, 打響了第一炮'.

¹⁷⁴ The Chinese text of Zhou's speech reads: '我們有信心在這一輩子能看到光

self, it should be noted, from an early stage in his career functioned as the vital link between ideology and nation building, labour and engineering, as he personally supervised many of what we today would call mega-projects, such as the construction of the Miyun Reservoir.

With both bases thus covered, Huangdi and Yu the Great, representing genetic and scientific/cultural heritage respectively, over the millennia have continued to form a very powerful spiritual and ideological alliance. The political potency of this instrumentalised alliance cannot be underestimated. To have national leaders worship at Yu's temple guarantees the country's unified progress into the future, just as worshipping at the Yellow Emperor's tomb signifies the survival of the Hundred Names 老百姓.¹⁷⁵ There are no greater common goods to be had for the state.

Let us back up at this point and look at the site named Da Yuling in some greater detail. In the old days, this was not a stand-alone place of worship dedicated to Yu the Great, but a destination incorporated into a network of supporting or competing sites, such as the above mentioned Mirror Lake (Jinghu), which, according to Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735) and others similarly knowledgeable about such matters, contained an island in its midst that marked the tenth lesser Grotto Heaven (Yangming dongtian 陽明洞天), a site and name closely affiliated later with the Ming philosopher Wang Yang-ming, among others. Although at a distance from Yuling by about forty *li* 里 or leagues, over the centuries practices associated with Mount Kuaiji's Yangming dongtian (such as offering Golden Dragon statuettes [*tou jinlong* 投金龍], inscribed jade tablets [*yujian* 玉簡], prayers for rain, etc.), merged with Yu's cult practices and worship calendar at Kuaiji. Grotto-Heaven agency has also been transferred to

明, 幸福, 富強的新中國. 從新民主主義開步走, 為我們自己和我們的子孫打下了萬年根基, “其功不在禹下”. 大禹治水, 為中華民族取得了福利, 中國科學家的努力, 一定會比大禹創造出更大的功績’.

¹⁷⁵ Now construed as the commoners or proletariat, the original Baixing referred to the most elite members of the realm. For such linguistic changes, see ‘Keywords’ in the forthcoming translation of the *Documents* classic by Michael Nylan and He Ruyue.

the Cave of Yu, a place where he supposedly deposited sacred texts on such important topics as water management and longevity. In addition, since Kuaiji was invested with imperial sponsorship as the Southern Garrison Mountain (Nanzhen shan 南鎮山), a Southern Region temple was constructed within easy walking distance from the Yu Temple (Yu *miao* 禹廟). The stretch of road between the two became a lively market street (*huishi* 會市) where townsfolk, officials, and local peasants alike could enjoy a cup of tea, take in a performance, or make purchases from the local vendors.¹⁷⁶ Aside from these three locales, all administered and looked after by Daoist priests since at least Song Huizong's 宋徽宗 reign (r. 1100–1126),¹⁷⁷ a fourth should enter our survey of the landscape, and that is the village of tomb caretakers who identify themselves as descendants of Great Yu himself and go mostly by the surname Si 姒氏. Si Village, known by such names as Guarding the Gravesite Village (Shouling cun 守陵村), Yu's Gravesite Village (Yuling cun 禹陵村) or simply Below the Temple (Miaoxia 廟下), was first situated on the Yuling side of the river, where it clung to the narrow strip of land between the temple compound and the Yuling River. Eventually, however, it came to be relocated to the west side of the river, where it still stands today. The Si lineage, by the way, boasts a 'family genealogy' (*jiapu* 家譜) dated to 1875 that purports to trace the family back one hundred and forty-one generations. A preface composed by Fan Zhongyan (989–1052) for an earlier version of the genealogy can be dated roughly to 1038 or 1039, when Fan served as the local prefect (*zhizhou* 知州). Probably Fan wrote in response to an imperial edict

¹⁷⁶ 大禹，三月初六祭南鎮，從每年二月開始，到會稽山下做生意的商販就接踵而至，他們在禹廟到南鎮廟之間的道路搭起布賬，竹篷，開設茶肆，菜館，形成規模可觀的‘會市’。正值春暖花開的農間時節，周圍百姓既可去禹廟，南鎮廟進香，又可順便到集市去看熱鬧，買東西。此時，會稽山北麓的禹廟和南鎮廟遊客雲集，香火旺盛 (Yanxing, *Da Yu*, 5051).

¹⁷⁷ The Yu Temple was in fact renamed Gaochengguan 告成觀, the 'guan' indicating that the temple had been converted to a Daoist monastery. See Zhang, *Da Yu chuanshuo yu Kuaiji wenhua yanbian yanjiu*, chapter 8 section 1: From Yu Temple to Gaochengguan 從禹廟到告成觀.

issued by the founder of the Song dynasty, which ordered the construction of yet another iteration of the Yu Temple at Kuaiji in 966. (Previous rebuildings are recorded for the years 179 and 545.) By the founder's edict, the Song dynasty was to incorporate into its imperial sacrifices cult duties paid to Yu, along with other sage kings. Long before Fan's time, members of the Si clan had settled on the scene, having constructed their own ancestral family shrine (*citang* 祠堂) to Yu (whose latest iteration dates to 1986), separate from the extant Yu Temple and on a different calendar of worship altogether (July of each year).

2.2. Intermission

At this point, I recommend we take a short breather and steer clear of Kuaiji, at least momentarily. The reader may be aware that in his distinguished career as the foremost hydraulic engineer of his times, Yu the Great, by profession was required to cover a lot of ground—if he ever existed and wasn't a worm to begin with, as the distinguished Gu Jiegang wants us to believe. His ecological footprint, one might argue in modern parlance, was not exactly small. In fact, his footprints are all over the place. Dubbed 'the Traces of Yu' (*Yu ji* 禹迹), a great many places claim to have been graced by his presence: Zhejiang (of course), Anhui, Shandong, Henan, Qinghai, Sichuan, etc., are all Chinese provinces that in recent years have published hefty tomes saluting the feats Yu performed within their respective territories. In fact, a map of China displayed in the Yu Memorial Exhibition Hall in Shaoxing and captioned 'Quanguo Yuji fenpei tu' 全國禹跡分配圖 [Distribution Map of the Traces of Yu Throughout the Country] lists well over one hundred sites of impact in the northeastern, northwestern, central, and southwestern parts of the country. The only 'white' gaps on this map occur in Guangdong, Guangxi, and Hainan.

Another map in circulation—and this is where Yu acquires a foreign policy dimension—moves the focus to Japan, where numerous shrines dedicated to Yu exist to this day. A Japanese map entitled 'Nihon Uō no iseki bupu zu' 日本禹王遗迹分配图 [Distribution of the Traces of Yu, the King] lists one hundred and fifty-three sites, and additional sites are added each year.¹⁷⁸ Of late, Japanese scholars and

Yu aficionados have gathered every two years to discuss all things Yu, up to the seventh and last meeting (Dai 7-kai zenkoku Uō samitto 第7回全国禹王サミット) in 2019, after which the pandemic put a temporary halt to the proceedings.

Undoubtedly the most curious overseas connection to Yu and Kuaiji comes to us in the form of a recent essay by Xu Bohai on the ancient Egyptian king Narmer. Xu's article, self-published and not vetted by a learned committee, it would seem, postulates that Yu's merits as one of the founders of Chinese civilisation and identity have their roots in ancient Egypt. King Narmer, Xu argues, was Yu's progenitor (by a smidgeon, say, two or three centuries), and much of the archaeological record in Egypt has a bearing and indeed direct influence on Chinese practices of boat building and carpentry, funerary practices and symbology, ethnography, and that most quintessential feature of Chinese culture, the Chinese script. Such claims, however fanciful, are not necessarily new, the link between the two scripts having been made before.¹⁷⁹

Helping us through this maze of tracks and traces, it might be prudent to deploy the words of Gilbert K. Chesterton (1874–1936): 'A story grows easily, but a heroic story is not a very easy thing to evoke. Wherever that exists we may be pretty certain that we are in the presence of a dark but powerful historic personality. We are in the presence of a thousand lies all pointing with their fantastic fingers to one undiscovered truth.'¹⁸⁰

2.3. Visiting Yuling Today

The scene that greets the visitor to Yuling today has stripped away much of that complicated, multifaceted heritage (Figure 10). The Southern Garrison Temple, which has served little purpose since the Ming, is now buried under a parking lot. Si Village has been emptied

¹⁷⁸ For 2022 maps of traces of Yu in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, see Shaoxing shi wenguang luyou ju, 'Yu feng haodang bianxing tianxia'.

¹⁷⁹ Xu, 'Further Thoughts on the Location where Narmer Probably Buried'.

¹⁸⁰ Chesterton, *Varied Types*, 200–02.



FIG. 10 Overview of today's site dedicated to Great Yu's burial site on the top of Mount Kuaiji (Da Yuling). Screen capture from Google Earth, captured January 8, 2022.

of its villagers and completely reconstructed with new, 'cleaner' materials. The Daoist priests and monks tending those Grotto Heavens are gone, and the tenth Grotto Heaven's storied connection with local religious traditions no longer merits even a mention in Shaoxing's recent promotional literature. Mirror Lake has been transformed into a closely monitored and manicured municipal wetlands park. The aviary and the dinosaur exhibition are an utterly gratuitous distraction from the 'Yu experience' itself, being solely designed to attract families with children. And finally, the once lively market street at the foot of Yuling has been developed (with private capital) into the Great Yu Gravesite Entertainment Town (Da Yu ling yule cheng 大禹陵娛樂城).

Hmmm... How did we get here? Let's start in May 1985, when the Shaoxing City-level Cultural Affairs Office (Shaoxing shi wenguan chu 紹興市文管處) convened the Yuling Master Planning Symposium (Yuling zongti gui hua hui yi 禹陵總體規劃會議), taking firm control of the site and its legacy message. The office started doing what planning committees inevitably do: trying to rule the world. This move came three years after the city of Shaoxing had

been named as one of the cultural and historical cities of China 中國歷史文化名城, in the very first batch of cities announced by the Chinese State Legislative Council on February 8, 1982. (Altogether, twenty-four cities were included in this list).

It took another ten years before the first official sacrifice 官祭 to Yu in post-Liberation times was conducted on April 20–21, 1995, almost exactly sixty years to the day after the last one in 1935, on which it was structurally based. The 1995 event was attended by representatives from all thirty-one provinces, including, by the PRC reckoning, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Macao. Other, more regular sacrifices soon followed, allowing the descendants of Yu in 2001 to finally continue offering clan worship in their own tradition (*zuji* 族祭), alongside the public worship of people in general (*gongji* 公祭), in 2000. The institutionalization of Yu-related sacrificial practices received a boost when a letter by none other than Xi Jinping, then Party Secretary of Zhejiang province 浙江省委書記, hailed Yu the Great as an example of a great man, with great achievements, embodying the correct spirit, and stating herewith that he, Secretary Xi, would support the process of worshipping Yu.¹⁸¹ The letter, dated March 28, 2006 and addressed to the Yu sacrifice organizing committee in Shaoxing on the eve of just such a ceremony, supplied one more stepping stone to aid Shaoxing's quest to elevate the annual Yu memorial sacrifice from provincial to national status. Shortly thereafter, up north in the county of the Yellow Emperor's Gravesite (Huangdi ling), in Shaanxi, the phone rang in the offices of the organisers of the annual sacrificial ceremony in honour of the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi. It was an official from Shaoxing who wanted to know how much the whole affair would actually cost the city to stage, to host the performers and dignitaries, and pay Chinese television crews. (Think of something on the order of the opening ceremony at the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, including the presence of about eighty domestic and foreign TV stations, and

¹⁸¹ Zhang, 'Zhejiang Yuji tu chuban faxing'. The Chinese reads: 大禹以其疏導洪患的卓越功勳而贏得後世景仰, 其人其事其精神, 展示了浙江的文化魅力, 是浙江精神的重要淵源。

you'll be close.) The Huangdi ling county organisers quoted a bogus amount, much lower than actual costs incurred, fearing that if people got wind of the real costs, it would upset the apple cart.¹⁸² Soon afterward, a lavish affair was mounted in 2007, and the Yuling ceremony at Kuaiji was duly elevated in rank to national sacrifice (*guoji* 國祭), just below Huangdi. This inaugurated a new era in the land use and planning scenarios for the Kuaiji site, as well as for Shaoxing's reputation and tax revenues. So much so, that it was soon decreed that the site was to be much enlarged, in order to accommodate much bigger audiences. The newly designed ritual plaza, for example, was to have room for not a mere thousand, but ten thousand spectators. Much precious and formerly sacred land was given over to form oversized parking lots. Everything needed to be scaled-up and more monumental and that is how it was done. ArchDaily has a very interesting breakdown of the various features of the new Yuling as a performative space,¹⁸³ which saw its first use after completion for the official annual ritual on April 20, 2022.

It is no surprise, perhaps, that the redesigned Yuling and its various adjacent features have come under quite a bit of criticism, both internally and from outside 'reviewers' and experts (Figure 11, Figure 12). Think of the aviary and dinosaur park, or the fake old village, or the new five-star hotel resort, for starters. As suggested above, the expansion mostly benefitted the performative aspects of the site, it being a bit like the Birds Nest in Beijing, which cost more than a billion USD and was only used once for six weeks in one year, during the Olympic Games in 2008. Likewise, huge sums were invested in Shaoxing to stage an event (the ceremony commemorating Yu) which would only occur once a year for roughly seventy minutes. The argument can be made—and probably must be made—that the propaganda value of the ceremony's annual TV broadcast appears

¹⁸² Sang and Barmé, 'The Great Yu'.

¹⁸³ Just as a matter of perspective and scale, the new salutary gateway (*pailou* 牌樓) at the beginning of the Yuling 'Spirit Pathway' (*shendao* 神道) now measures thirty-eight meters across and six meters tall, as one of the largest archways in the country. See *Chengshi guan*, 'Shaoxing Da Yu'.



FIG. 11 The Da Yu Ling ceremonial space before its redesign. Thomas H. Hahn photographic image, on site in 2014.



FIG. 12 Channel walkway to the redesigned Da Yu Ling ceremonial space. Photo by Qiang Zhao, UAD-ACRC. Accessed 2022. <https://www.uadacrc.com/work#/new-gallery-2>.

to be more important to the Shaoxing and Zhejiang elders than the values that have accrued to Yu the Great as a cultural icon himself over the two last two thousand years since the First Emperor felt compelled to visit Kuaiji to pay his respects. Certainly, the original message of Yu's self-sacrifice on behalf of humanity, is diluted, if not ultimately lost in the new site's noise, as modern advertisement executives and political pollsters would say. The 'eternally inextinguishable' spirit of Yu (as the Hong Kong *Wenhui bao* dramatically put it in an editorial back in 2019),¹⁸⁴ appears overused and spent (Figure 13).

A sense of being over-extended, mixed with resentment towards the authorities, probably describes the feeling the villagers of the Si clan these days. They no longer have unrestricted access to their own village, which was mostly razed and rebuilt after a plan agreed upon in 2002, which then took many years to complete. This new 'old village' is largely empty, and only springs to life—by official fiat—during the time of the annual observances to Yu. In fact, most if not all of Kuaiji's historical architecture, which was originally built to human scale and used locally-sourced materials, has been demolished, and the new versions of the old structures create a most jarring effect when contrasted with an environment which boasts one of the most highly curated and prized national forests in the immediate vicinity.¹⁸⁵

This points towards one of the conundrums one encounters frequently in Chinese planning circles and debates: entities that are at odds with one another's goals, methods, and values. The particular problem in China these days is that all these entities are (or think they are) flush with cash and therefore forge ahead with their competing designs, no matter how brutalist the design implementation may appear to be to visitors. For after a 'successful' completion, those in charge can expect to move up the bureaucratic ladder, from Shaoxing perhaps to the provincial capital in Hangzhou, where there

¹⁸⁴ 'Yong bu momie de Da Yu jingshen'.

¹⁸⁵ According to *Zhejiang Shaoxing Kuaijishan guojia senlin gongyuan zongti guihua*, 5, the Mount Kuaiji area is home to one of the largest and most stable *Torreya grandis* populations in the entire country.



FIG. 13 Plaques affixed to the wall in the Da Yu temple designating this place as a national educational site of great importance 教育基地. Thomas H. Hahn photographic image, on site in 2014.

is even more money to be spent (until there isn't). The new Yuling is one of these sites of conflict. Conceived under the banners of 'cultural production' (*wenhua chanye* 文化產業) and 'mythological production' (*shenhua chanye* 神話產業), the consumption of Yu is prioritized over the ideational legacy of Yu.¹⁸⁶ Yu himself, were he alive today, would have a very hard (if not impossible) time assembling the local leaders to unite around a single goal, to conjure the same spirit the very name of Kuaiji 會稽 has epitomised throughout Chinese history. I reckon he probably would give up and at long last return to his thrice-neglected wife.

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¹⁸⁶ See Huang and Gong, 'Shaoxing Da Yuling shenhua'.

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