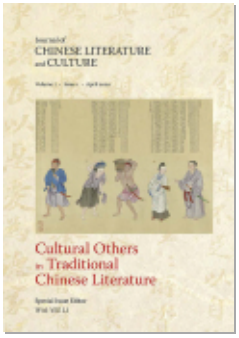
Journeys to the West: Travelogues and Discursive Power in the Making of the Mongol Empire



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Abstract Before the Mongol conquest in 1279, numerous envoys were sent from the Southern Song court to its neighboring states. Their purpose was to evaluate and tame foreign territories and alien peoples and thereby reduce their threat to Song culture, and the travelogues resulting from these journeys were often "utilitarian" in style. *The Record of the Perfected Master Changchun's Journey to the West* (Changchun zhenren xiyou ji 長春真人西遊記), however, deserves special attention for its nuanced handling of a complex cultural-political power dynamics. Its compiler, Li Zhichang, was a leader in the Quanzhen sect, and his travelogue documents the journey of his master, Qiu Chuji, at the invitation of Chinggis (Genghis) Khan. Li's text illustrates the tension of competing political and cultural authorities: while the Mongols were becoming the source of political authority, the Taoists still owned the discursive power. The author argues that Li deliberately adopted a narrative strategy that conceded the Mongol claim to political legitimacy while simultaneously asserting Taoism's cultural dominance over the Mongols. The article also juxtaposes Li's work with the travel record by Yelü Chucai, a Khitan adviser to the Mongols who traveled with Chinggis Khan during his western military expeditions. Although Yelü's travelogue is often read as a rebuttal to Li Zhichang's work, a closer look reveals how Yelü appropriated Li's strategy for his own agenda: to justify Mongols' invasion of Central Asia while highlighting the cultural values shared between the Mongols and the Han Chinese. Both works employ rhetorical strategies that laid the foundation for political discourse affirming the Mongol-Yuan dynastic legitimacy.

Keywords Qiu Chuji, Yelü Chucai, travelogues, Mongol Empire, legitimacy

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In the years leading up to the Mongol conquest in 1279, the Southern Song court sent numerous envoys to its neighboring states, both for diplomacy and to gather information. For instance, Zhao Gong 趙珙 traveled in 1221 to Hebei to meet with the Mongol army commander, and Peng Daya 彭大雅 (d. 1245) and Xu Ting 徐霆 were sent in 1232 on a diplomatic mission to Karakorum. With information on customs, climate, language, economic, and administrative systems, the records these emissaries produced enabled the Southern Song to devise plans to prevent further invasions from the north. Their travelogues employed a "utilitarian mode" of narration, in which foreign territories and alien peoples were evaluated and (it was hoped) tamed to lessen their threat to the text's host culture.[1]

Far from being merely utilitarian, Li Zhichang's 李志常 (1193–1256) travelogue titled *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji* 長春真人西遊記 (The Record of the Perfected Master Changchun's Journey to the West) embodies intriguing cultural dynamics that warrants special attention.[2] Invited by Chinggis (Genghis) Khan, a leader of the Quanzhen 全真 sect named Qiu Chuji 丘處機 (1148–1227) traveled in 1220 from Shandong to Hindu Kush (see fig. 1); his journey was later recorded and recapitulated by his disciple Li Zhichang. Unlike the envoys commissioned by the Southern Song court, the Quanzhen Taoists were not sent by an entity with political authority. To the Taoists, the "host" is no longer a competitor yet to be fended off. Instead, Li's travelogue presents a case in which political and cultural authorities diverge: while the Mongols became the source of political authority, the Taoists held the discursive power. Such divergence raises the following questions: How did the geopolitical configuration affect the representation of these Mongol conquerors? Does this travelogue demonstrate curiosity toward an exotic world? Who were the cultural others constructed in this text? What rhetorical schemata were applied in the depiction of Central Asia?

Though the Quanzhen travelogue was preserved as part of the Taoist Canon, its significance was not recognized until the renowned scholar Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804) reprinted the text in 1795. From the eighteenth century on, this travelogue was often incorporated into various geographical compendia, with numerous annotations to identify its place names.[3] Through painstaking effort in reconstructing Qiu Chuji's itinerary, previous scholarship has tended to regard the text as a source of historical information, often ignoring the ideological agenda and strategies adopted by the compiler, Li Zhichang. Li's biography indicates that he was among the disciples left behind by Qiu as the travelers approached the Argun Mountains.[4] That Li did not accompany his master on some of the major parts of the journey prompts us to reconsider the compilation process and the nature of the text. After all, the travelogue was meant to be read as a hagiography, not as a geographical manual. Its intended

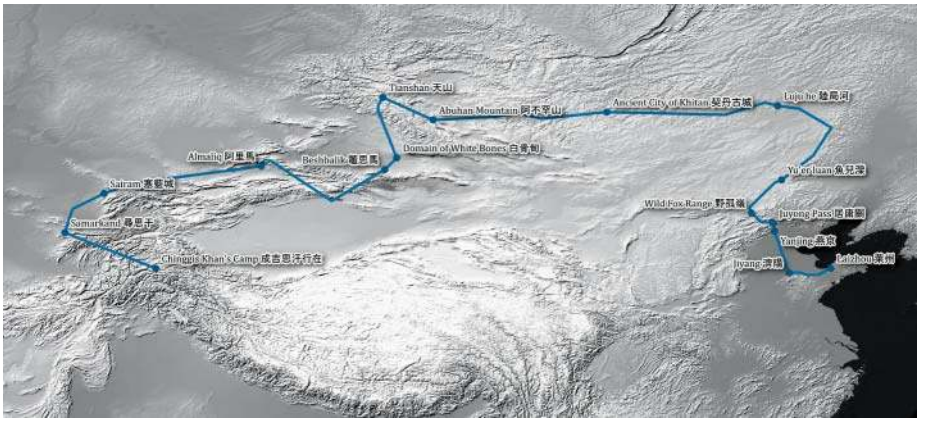

Figure 1. Qiu Chuji's journey to meet with Chinggis Khan. Scale: 1:11,000,000. Created with QGIS software.

readership was any potential Taoist followers (which includes people from various ethnic origins). It is crucial, then, to consider how this ideological agenda informs the text's vision.

Here I argue that Li Zhichang deliberately adopted a narrative strategy that allowed the Mongols to claim political legitimacy while maintaining the Taoists' cultural dominance over the Mongols. Thus, the travelogue is not an objective portrayal of the western regions' landscape and customs but a narrative shaped by a series of cultural and political concerns. I also juxtapose Li's work with another travel record composed by Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1190–1244), a Khitan adviser who served the Mongol Empire, traveled with Chinggis Khan on his western military expeditions, and persuaded the Khan to send an invitation to Qiu. Yelü's literary corpus includes several companion pieces written in response to Qiu, but just a couple of years later Yelü, deeply critical of the Quanzhen sect from the perspective of Confucian orthodoxy, decided to compose *Xiyou lu* 西遊錄 (Record of the Journey to the West), a rebuttal of Li's work. Although Yelü's travel account was meant to counter the Quanzhen Taoists' claims, a closer look reveals that he simultaneously appropriated Li's strategy. This article argues that the rhetorical schemata shared by the two dueling travelogues provided a foundation for the political discourse affirming the Mongol-Yuan dynasty's legitimacy.

Preaching the Anticonquest? The Relation between Spiritual Conversion and Imperial Expansion

As one traces Qiu Chuji's journey in the Li Zhichang travelogue, a clear demarcation between the culture of the central plains and that of the barbaric land emerges:

> He crossed the Wild Fox Range the next day. Looking back southward, we got a good view of the Taihang and other mountains. The mist on the hills was very agreeable. Gazing northward, there was nothing but wintry sands and withered grass. Here, the customs and climate of the central plains come to an end. But the Taoist must learn to be at ease wherever he goes. Song Defang[5] and the rest pointed to the skeletons lying on the battlefield and said, "Let us, when we come home, make offerings to them. This is also part of our fate as we set out on this journey to the north."
> 明日，北度野狐嶺，登高南望，俯視太行諸山，晴嵐可愛；北顧但寒沙衰草，中原之風，自此隔絕矣。道人之心，無適不可。宋德芳輩指戰場白骨曰：「我歸，當薦以金籙，此亦余北行中一端因緣耳。」[6]

Clearly, then, Qiu and his followers became conscious of cultural differences well before they arrived at the heart of Central Asia. As they crossed the Wild Fox Range, they paused to look back at their homeland, exemplified in the charming scenery of the Taihang Mountains. In contrast, gazing northward, the barren landscape ahead of them suggested desolation. A spatial liminality was perceived that prompted the group to reflect on the differences between their homeland and their destination.

In fact, before describing the Wild Fox Range, the travelogue gives us a glimpse into Qiu's activities when still in Laizhou 莱州 and Yanjing 燕京. We learn of poems composed at feasts celebrating Qiu's marvelous deeds, monasteries staging ceremonies in which thousands of believers praised the deities, and renowned paintings sent to Qiu for colophons. The text portrays a world filled with ritual and culture, and Li seems to take pleasure in naming many of the participants of this elite community. In this way, he builds an environment that eventually forms a sharp contrast with what the travelers witness on their journey—especially the jarring scene of exposed human bones in the wilderness. Central Asia is described as a battlefield, in contrast to the civilized central plains.

Death was often associated with places in the western region. When Qiu arrived at the first Mohammedan city 回紇城 and met with General Tian Zhenhai 田鎮海 (1169–1251), he was told they would soon arrive at the Domain of White Bones (Baigu dian 白骨甸): "The Master asked, 'Why was the place called the Domain of White Bones?' Zhenhai replied, 'This is the site of an ancient battle. When an army of exhausted men reached this place, fewer than one in ten managed to return. This is the land of the dead. More recently, the valiant troops of Naiman were also defeated here'" 師曰：「何謂白骨甸？」公曰：「古之戰場，凡疲兵至此，十無一還，死地也。頃者，乃滿大勢亦敗。」[7] The origin of this area's name was a history of recurring conquests and serious causalities. Although war and destruction are never directly described in

the travelogue, death nonetheless becomes a central image in this foreign land. Such an association is easily translated to a landscape filled with ghosts and evil spirits, and as Qiu headed to the desert, his followers warned their master to avoid night travel for fear of goblins bewitching them in total darkness.[8]

Immediately before Qiu was to meet with the Khan, he passed through Iron Gate Pass (Tiemen guan 鐵門關), which the Mongol army had recently stormed. He was stunned by the scene:

	It is still bearable to pass through the Iron Gate north of the waters;	水北鐵門猶自可
2	The rocky gorges south of the waters are simply too terrifying.	水南石峽太堪驚
	Sheer cliffs on the two sides are thrust toward heaven,	兩崖絕壁攙天聳
4	A single stream of cold waves tumbles on earth.	一澗寒波滾地傾
	Exposed corpses flanking the roads make men cover their noses,	夾道橫屍人掩鼻
6	Long-eared donkeys drowned in streams leave me in distress.	溺溪長耳我傷情
	For ten years now, warring halberds have clashed over a thousand *li*.	十年萬里干戈動
8	Bring back the forces and restore peace as soon as you can.	早晚回軍復太平[9]

The poem begins with a juxtaposition of the natural scenery to the north and south of the stream near Iron Gate Pass. Startled by the dangerous terrain, the poet provides a full description of the landscape by first looking up to the cliffs looming over the path. He then turns his gaze to the rapids running swiftly at the bottom of the hills. While such a vertiginous contrast could explain his shock on arrival at the rocky gorges, the next couplet provides a more jarring twist, as it depicts a scene with exposed dead bodies emitting a pungent smell and drowned donkeys inspiring melancholy. All these causalities lead the poet to ponder the suffering wrought by Mongol attacks. He ends the poem with a plea urging the Khan to take his army back and return to peace.

On the surface, this poem presents a straightforward argument against violence and conquest, but that this remonstrance is presented in the form of a poem is particularly intriguing. The travelogue offers evidence that Chinggis Khan often communicated with Qiu Chuji via a translator. Instead of taking this poem as a direct appeal to the Khan, we may surmise that the intended readers

here are not the Mongol rulers but the literati equipped to appreciate the art of poetry. This poem reminds us of the text's self-fashioning nature: the depiction of bones and corpses is part of the Quanzhen scheme to shape the image of Qiu as a compassionate teacher promoting an anticonquest agenda in the barren lands of Central Asia. And with this objective in mind, the travelogue pushes an analogy between Laozi and Qiu Chuji.

Before it has Qiu leaving Yanjing, the narrative refers to the painting *Taishang guoguan tu* 太上過關圖 (Laozi Crossing the Pass) by the renowned Tang painter Yan Liben 閻立本 (601–673). Qiu has been asked to inscribe a colophon on it:

	The day he left the Shu province and traveled to the West,	蜀郡西遊日
2	Was the moment he bade farewell to the East at Hangu Pass.	函關東別時
	If all the barbarians respectfully touch the ground with their heads,	群胡若稽首
4	The foundation of the Great Way will be laid again!	大道復開基[10]

The travelogue never explains why this particular moment is mentioned, but one can easily detect in Qiu's poem the analogy Li Zhichang means to suggest. As the legendary founder of Taoism, Laozi was said to have left the central plains through Hangu Pass 函谷關 to spend his final days educating the barbarians (*huahu* 化胡) in the west, thereby contributing to the emergence of Buddhism.[11] By comparing Laozi's journey to Qiu's, this detail foreshadows Qiu's success in converting the "barbarians" to civilized culture.

Another allusion to Laozi appears in a poem composed when Qiu is leaving Yanjing:

	This journey is indeed not easy,	此行真不易
2	With this parting, there is much to be said.	此別話應長
	We stride northward past the Wild Fox range,	北蹈野狐嶺
4	And reach westward limits to the home of the heavenly steeds:[12]	西窮天馬鄉
	No mirage can be found in Yinshan,	陰山無海市
6	Whitened grass grows in the sandy desert.	白草有沙場
	I sigh: Being no Sage of Profound Greatness,	自嘆非元聖
8	How can I pass through the barren wilderness?	何如歷大荒[13]

Here, Qiu gives his readers a glimpse of the journey on which he is about to embark. The enumerated distant locations build up an incredible itinerary, culminating in the final line, when Qiu exclaims that he is not comparable to the "Sage of Profound Greatness," an honorific title given to Laozi. The last couplet's tone is particularly interesting. By humbly denying the grounds of comparison with Laozi, Qiu inevitably draws our attention toward the resemblance between the legendary Taoist master and himself: both set out to the west toward the end of their lives with the hope of educating the barbarians. This humble gesture paradoxically affirms the connection between the two.

That the Quanzhen sect was building an analogy between Laozi and Qiu Chuji is evident, especially if we consider other materials they printed. Records of a debate between the Buddhists and Taoists in 1258 indicate that Quanzhen leaders repeatedly printed the classics associated with Laozi educating the barbarians. Apart from these reprints, the Quanzhen leaders also compiled *Laozi bashiyi huatu* 老子八十一化圖 (Illustrations of the Eighty-One Incarnations of Laozi) to promote the image of Laozi's superiority to the western people.[14] Obviously, the analogy the Quanzhen sect sought to draw here would not be complete without barbarians in the picture. It is tempting to simply identify the Mongols as the foreigners awaiting conversion; they were, after all, at the receiving end of Qiu's teachings. But a closer look at the travelogue suggests a more nuanced picture.

The Mongols were only one of many groups Qiu encountered in Central Asia. As he and his companions passed through the western hills, heading toward the Kerulen River (known as Luju he 陸局河 in the text), they were intrigued by the appearance and customs of local herdsmen, with their black wagons and white tents. Said to have no writings, these people were willing to obey orders and keep promises, prompting this comment: "They have indeed preserved the simplicity of primeval times" 有上古之遺風焉.[15]

While it is not unusual to present cultural differences in temporal terms, the poem Qiu composed adopts this logic with specific emphasis on the sages' teachings:

	Gazing as far as I can see, the mountains and waters have no limits,	極目山川無盡頭
2	Windblown smoke never breaks off, while the currents flow endlessly.	風煙不斷水長流
	Why would the Creator separate heaven and earth,	如何造物開天地
4	Only to order humans to have horses and cows graze at this place?	到此令人放馬牛

	Drinking blood and devouring raw meat like those living in a remote past,	飲血茹毛同上古
6	They differ from the central plains, where bound hair and tall caps hold sway.	峨冠結髮異中州
	The sages do not get to pass down the transforming power of culture,	聖賢不得垂文化
8	Through successive ages, they have run wild wherever they please.	歷代縱橫只自由[16]

The poem opens with a landscape surrounded by hills and rivers. The area's ruggedness prompts Qiu to turn to the locals living in these harsh conditions. Without enough flatland for farming, pasturing becomes the only means of survival. Evaluating their customs by the standards of the central plains, he finds similarities and differences between the two groups. In the second couplet of the poem, Qiu gestures toward the beginning of time by asking the Creator why he would order the men to stay in such a location. This brings in a temporal dimension that prompts Qiu to ponder the root of divergent paths. The answer he gives is "culture." Without the teachings passed down by the sages, the native inhabitants act without ritual or moral restraint.

While this poem hints at a form of geographic determinism, it is particularly intriguing if we juxtapose it with Daoist philosophy. The last couplet calls readers' attention to the achievements of the sages, implicitly praising them for the gift of civilization. Civilization, however, is different from the ideal in *Laozi* 老子 of embracing simplicity and banishing desires. If we follow that logic, the image and tone of the last line are more positive: "Through successive ages, they have roamed in all directions according to their will." This interpretation would change the poem's overall message, turning it into a celebration of the freedom enjoyed by people unrestrained by any hypocritical teachings.

While both readings are possible, the travelogue's overall context governs the understanding of this line. The text is consistent in presenting Qiu as the sage who enlightens primitive peoples; it would be very hard to imagine him glorifying a lifestyle independent of moral concerns. In fact, the travelogue is constantly weighing all "cultural others" against an ideal standard set by the "central plains." Thus, immediately after composing this poem, when Qiu and his disciples see an abandoned town whose layout "did not differ from that of a city in the central plains" 制作類中州,[17] we understand the resemblance implies a more civilized and preferable world. A more explicit instance occurs when the group arrived at the town of Beshbalig (Biesima dacheng 鼈思馬大城):

> Here, some relations of the Uighur king brought us wine, as well as marvelous flowers, all kinds of fruit, and choice perfumes. They also entertained us with [dwarfs] and musicians, all of whom were from the central plains. The people of the place indeed grew daily more courteous in their attentions. Among those who came to wait upon the Master were Buddhist and Taoist priests, as well as Confucians. We asked them about the history of the place, and they said in Tang times, this was the so-called Northern Court or residence of the Governor General of the central plains. In the third year of the period, Jinglong (709), the governor was a certain Yang Gonghe who ruled so well that the native population was devoted to him, and the effects of his administration are felt even today.
>
> 時回紇王部族勸蒲萄酒，供以異花、雜果、名香，且列侏儒伎樂，皆中州人。士庶日益敬，侍坐者有僧、道、儒，因問風俗。乃曰：「此大唐時北庭端府。景龍三年，楊公何為大都護，有德政，諸夷心服，惠及後人，於今賴之。」[18]

After watching a group of entertainers of Sinitic background and noticing the humble demeanor of the scholars, Qiu and his followers are intrigued and ask the locals about the history of the place. The explanation associates Beshbalig with the Tang dynasty, presented as the source of such courtesy. The message here is clear: Gen. Yang Gonghe's virtuous rule has successfully transformed the place. Following this logic further, a people's level of civility hinges on its degree of "Sinicization," the standard for evaluating cultural others in the western regions.

A similar instance can be found when a Buddhist monk greets Qiu Chuji as Qiu reaches the City of Chambalig. Qiu inquires, through an interpreter, about the scriptures the monk has read. The monk replies that he has received the tonsure and worshipped the Buddha without following any school of teaching, leading the narrator to exclaim that no true Buddhist or Taoist priests can be found beyond the dominion of the Tang dynasty.[19] Familiarity with scriptures determines the degree of civilization in his vision of center and periphery. Just how this hierarchical structure is intimately tied to the Tang dynasty's expansion is clearly revealed.

With this hierarchy as a basis, the text deliberately paints a favorable picture of the Mongol rulers by emphasizing their reverence toward Qiu and their willingness to promote Sinitic culture. We see this when Chinggis Khan asks Qiu Chuji the reason for calamities such as earthquakes and thunder after learning of a bridge swept away in a storm. Qiu replies by criticizing the Mongols for mistreating their parents, bathing in rivers during summer, and washing their clothes in the fields—all violating the proper way to serve Heaven. Chinggis Khan is pleased. He orders prohibitions on these behaviors and asks the officials to write them in Uighur script so that the words of Qiu can be circulated to all of Khan's subjects.[20]

The parallel between Chinggis Khan and Tang general Yang Gonghe is obvious: the Mongol ruler was the next virtuous ruler of the western region who could spread the ethical code, cultural values, and religious practices of the central plains, thereby bringing civilization to his kingdom. Recall the anticonquest theme explained above; here we see its contradiction. This glorification of Chinggis Khan is easily translated as a justification of his conquest and rulership. Ultimately, the Quanzhen sect's eagerness to paint a positive picture of the Mongols points to the political reality of the times: they were relying on Chinggis Khan's political power to educate and transform the "barbarians in the West." As the Mongols increased their control in the region, the Quanzhen sect hoped to extend its influence.

The travelogue seeks to bring together political and cultural authority. By doing so, it inevitably undermines the anticonquest agenda also present within the text. In fact, if we examine the travelogue closely, apart from the instances in which Qiu Chuji laments the calamities he witnesses throughout his journey, we never see Qiu directly remonstrating the Khan over the cruelty of his conquests. This recently sparked a series of debates about Qiu's achievements. Yang Ne has undertaken to trace how Qiu's achievements were historically fabricated, whereas Zhao Weidong argues that Qiu's role may be obscured by Chinggis Khan's explicit order that the details of their meetings be kept secret.[21] It is almost impossible to decipher what Qiu recommended to the Khan during their meetings. Instead of asking whether Qiu actually preached an anticonquest message to Chinggis Khan, I examine how the travelogue strategically gestures toward an anticonquest agenda while simultaneously undercutting it.

As illustrated above, Central Asia is deliberately portrayed as a war zone. It is natural to infer from these accounts a stance against any military expansion, but the text also provides a possible justification for such conquest: the Mongols would bring a Sinitic civilization to a barren land. The deliberate ambiguity of this narrative strategy is a response to the political and cultural circumstances behind the travelogue's composition. The intended readers of *The Record of the Perfected Master Changchun's Journey to the West* were mostly people living in the central plains, pining for peace. Not only does the anticonquest message echo their concerns, but the implicit Sinocentric perspective also satisfies their curiosity about the west while confirming their sense of superiority. However, as he finished the travelogue in 1228, Li Zhichang was well aware of the Mongol Empire's ongoing military advance. He had to gain the Khan's support and not alienate the new ruler of the central plains. Since Li was consulted by the new Ögedei Khan 窩闊台 (r. 1229–41) regarding the education of the crown prince in 1229, his narrative strategy may be counted a great success.[22]

If Qiu's preaching did not bring about the cessation of wars of conquest, how are Qiu's accomplishments presented in the travelogue? Enter the text's fantastic elements. The travelogue does not end when Qiu meets with Chinggis Khan; it goes on to document the Quanzhen Taoists' journey back to Laizhou, as well as key moments in Qiu's life until his death in Yanjing in 1227. In many of the places where Qiu preached, numerous miracles are reported. On more than one occasion his approach seems to bring desperately needed rain.[23] Qiu and his disciples also stop irreverent men from showing contempt to their fellow Taoist followers. Thus, according to the travelogue, when Qiu and his company reach the Yinshan Mountain 陰山:

> The members of the congregations made the following address to the Master: "This district, lying far away from any civilized region, has never, since the early days, received instruction in the True Doctrine. The people have consequently been led astray into worship of mountain-spirits and wood-demons. But since the foundation of this temple, they have more than once celebrated the Festival of the Dead,[24] and on the first and fifteenth days of the month, there have been regular meetings of the faithful. The rules against the taking of life have been generally observed. Only the mysterious operation of Tao could have wrought such a change. Last year, the Taoist community suffered much from the jealousy of certain evil men, and we had some unpleasant experiences. But one day, when Song Tao'an had fallen asleep in his cell, there suddenly appeared through a hole in the roof the figure of Zhao Jiugu who said, 'A letter has come.' 'Whence did it come?' asked Song.[25] 'From Heaven', replied the apparition, who held out a letter, upon which seemed to be written only two words, 'Great Purity'. Then the letter and its bearer suddenly vanished. The next day, your letter came, and since then, our torments have gradually decreased. The physician Luo, who had worked against us in every possible way, one day fell from his horse right in front of our temple and broke his leg. He at once repented of his errors, saying that this accident had come as a punishment and begged the Taoists to forgive him."
> 會眾白師曰：「此地深蕃，太古以來，不聞正教，惟山精鬼魅惑人。自師立觀，疊設醮筵，旦望作會，人多以殺生為戒。若非道化，何以得然？先是壬午，道眾為不善人妬害，眾不安。宋公道安晝寢方丈，忽有天窻中見虛靜先生趙公曰：『有書至。』道安問：『從何來？』曰：『天上來。』受而視之，止見『太清』二字，忽隱去。翌日，師有書至，魔事漸消。又毀者羅生，橫生非毀。一日，墜馬觀前，折其脛，即自悔曰：『我之過也。』對道眾服罪。」[26]

This peculiar incident well captures the tensions hidden throughout the text: by depicting the deceased disciple Zhao Jiugu's return from heaven as a messenger, Qiu's letter the following day is likened to a note from heaven. After the people receive these messages, the evil spirits are said to gradually disappear. Here Qiu

is presented as the powerful religious leader who brings peaceful order to a barren place. At the same time, the text shows how educating and transforming the community into fervent supporters of Taoism grant them a religious power that can exert dominance over others. The physician Luo, an opposing voice to the religious sect, is shown to have suffered for his opposition. Even as the religious sect promoted its message of anticonquest, a consistent yearning for power, rationalized as subjugation for an appropriate cause, seems to persist.

The travelogue initiates (or augments) a cult of Qiu Chuji, in which his image is repeatedly deified. Additional printed materials promoting his legacy include *Changchun dazongshi xuanfeng qinghui tu shuowen* 長春大宗師玄風慶會圖說文 (Illustrations of the Record on the Auspicious Gathering with the Taoists), compiled by Shi Zhijing 史志經 (b. 1202) in 1274. As only the front matter and first chapter (of five *juan*) from this illustrated hagiography survive, the sections related to Qiu's journey cannot be found in the extant version.[27] Nonetheless, through extensive study of how it was compiled and circulated, Paul R. Katz argues that the text represents an attempt to use the writing of history to enhance the Quanzhen movement's legitimacy.[28] There is clearly awareness within the Quanzhen community that the construction of its history can help them claim authority over other religious sects. In fact, this same awareness can be seen in Li Zhichang's travelogue, which epitomizes a conscious attempt to gain support from readers with a Sinitic background, glorifying the culture from the central plains while highlighting the marvelous power of Qiu Chuji. The text's ambitions extend still further into the political realm by proposing a basis for political legitimation as it contrasts the Mongols with other cultural groups in the west, portraying them as political leaders who would eventually bring Sinitic order to the "barbarians." I now turn to the response from the Mongol authorities, as well as Yelü Chucai's response to the Quanzhen travelogue.

Displaced Perspective: Yelü Chucai's *Record of the Journey to the West*

The term *xuanfeng qinghui* 玄風慶會, "auspicious gathering with the Taoists," is a phrase often used to refer to the meeting between Chinggis Khan and Qiu Chuji. It appears in the title of a Taoist text, *Xuanfeng qinghui lu* 玄風慶會錄 (Record on the Auspicious Gathering with the Taoists), attributed to Yelü Chucai. According to its preface, Chinggis Khan asked Yelü Chucai to keep Qiu's profound teachings a secret:

> Master Changchun, the teacher of the state, had received an imperial edict. He could not but begin his journey, leaving the central plains and passing through the Drifting Sands. He presented his moral teachings to the ruler, stopped the clash of arms, and

> saved all creatures. Having accomplished his great work, he withdrew. Weary from the mundane realm, he rose to heaven. After the Most Supreme and Profound Master [traveled] to the West, Master Changchun was the only [other] person who could achieve this in hundreds and thousands of years. The details of his journey have already been recorded in the *Journey to the West*. However, what remains a secret are the teachings he imparted to the emperor. The emperor ordered his close attendants to record his profound words and subtle ideas while keeping it a secret. Now, more than ten years have passed, [and] this should be spread to the world through printing and publication. I hope to share with all under heaven the marvel of this auspicious gathering with the Taoists. (Preface dated Winter Solstice, 1232)
>
> 國師長春真人，昔承宣召，不得已而後起，遂別中土、過流沙，陳道德以致君，止干戈而救物，功成身退，厭世登天。自太上玄元西去，之後寥寥千百載，唯真人一人而已，其往回事跡載於《西遊記》中詳矣。唯餘對上傳道，玄言奧旨，上令近侍錄而秘之，歲乃踰旬，傳之及外，將以刊行於世，願與天下共知玄風慶會一段奇事云。壬辰至日序。[29]

The preface's author praised Qiu Chuji for his commitment to preventing the devastation brought by war. Comparing Qiu with the supreme master Laozi, this piece again reinforces the analogy drawn in Li Zhichang's travelogue. This preface, however, prompts a number of intriguing questions about its authenticity. First, the text is not found in Yelü Chucai's literary collection, nor do any of his friends mention it. And if we take a closer look at Yelü Chucai's writings, we find another work condemning the Quanzhen sect, referring to it as a deviation from the righteous way. Thus, the dating of this text becomes a crucial problem. According to Li's travelogue, Yelü advised Chinggis Khan to host Qiu and his followers in the west. If he did, when did Yelü change his perception of the Quanzhen sect? What triggered his negative opinion of Qiu and his followers?

This brings us to the *Record of the Journey to the West*, by Yelü Chucai. With a preface dated 1229, the text attacks Qiu Chuji for being heterodox, and Yelü positions himself as a successor of Mencius 孟子 (ca. 372–ca. 289 BCE), who seeks to correct the impropriety of Qiu's perverse teachings. Why would Yelü condemn the Quanzhen in 1229 and then turn around and celebrate them in 1232? This contradiction can be explained in different ways. Perhaps another Mongol official wrote the Taoist text, and it was attributed wrongly to Yelü Chucai in the Taoist canon.[30] Another way to account for such a discrepancy would be to dismiss the whole text as a forgery. As the main concern here is not Yelü Chucai's philosophy, I instead focus on the *Record of the Journey to the West*, whose authorship is not disputed.

The *Record of the Journey to the West* is divided into two *juan*: the first is dedicated to a discussion of the customs and scenery Yelü Chucai witnessed in

the west, while the second chapter presents Yelü's clarification of his views on the Quanzhen sect of Taoism.[31] As indicated in the preface of the text, this travel account was written to respond to those curious about the foreign world and to clarify Yelü's attitude toward Qiu Chuji and the Quanzhen sect.[32]

The first chapter opens with a dialogue:

> It was the spring of 1218, the day after the full moon in the third month, when I, Layman Zhanran [i.e., Yelü Chucai], was summoned to serve in the ruler's retinue and travel to the West. After the heavenly army returned, during the winter of 1227, I received an edict to search through classical texts and hurried to Yanjing. At the first watch of the night, a guest graciously arrived, and asked in a direct manner, "Your journey to the West measures I don't know how many thousand *li* across. May I hear about your journey to the West?"
> 戊寅之春，三月既望，詔徵湛然居士扈從西遊。迨天兵旋旆，丁亥之冬，奉詔搜索經籍，馳驛來燕。既已更拂，有客惠然而來，率爾而問曰：「居士之西遊也，不知其幾千里邪？西遊之事，可得聞乎？」[33]

The guest's question sparks a lengthy response from Master Zhanran. This framing of the text calls for further analysis. First, instead of giving a chronological account of his journey, Yelü presents his account in the form of a dialogue. The use of the phrases "I don't know how many thousand *li* across" 不知其幾千里 (which comes from the first chapter of *Zhuangzi* 莊子)[34] and "may I hear about it" 可得聞乎 (which can be traced back to another pre-Qin classic, *Mencius* 孟子)[35] reminds us of Yelü Chucai's mission: he was searching for the classics in Yanjing. All these intricate details build up a cultural world in sharp contrast to the military expeditions of the opening line. When Yelü announces that he is accompanying the Khan to wage war in Central Asia, the reader might expect descriptions of glorious battle or devastated battlefields (like those depicted in Li Zhichang's travelogue). Instead, Yelü gradually diverts our attention to the Mongols' effort to restore culture. They are presented here not just as heavenly soldiers ready to fight but implicitly as the protectors of cultural heritage. But what kind of cultural heritage? Here we see how Yelü deliberately erases the distinction between the Mongols and the people in the central plains. For him, Zhuangzi 莊子 (ca. 369–ca. 286 BCE) and Mencius become the epitomes of a common culture the new empire seeks to preserve.

This strategy is even more evident in Master Zhanran's reply. While enumerating all the places he visits, he repeatedly refers to the Tang Empire. Besides Beshbalig (transcribed in the text as Bieshiba 別石把) and Luntai 輪台, where he finds stone inscriptions dating back to the Tang, he tracks down the history of Hezhou 和州, once named Gaochang 高昌, and the exact location of

the Kingdom of Khotan (Yutian 于闐), active during the Tang.[36] By providing place names documented by official histories of the Tang dynasty, the text draws a map of the land either belonging or submitting to the Tang. Yelü's effort to match geographical data with corresponding names given in the Tang is most evident in the following case:

> The Kingdom of Kefacha can be found (in) the Northwest of Black India. There are several thousand *li* of flat land without any hills and mounds. Alas! This is strange! No city walls or gates are erected, and the people own a lot of sheep and horses. They use honey as brew, and the flavor is no different from that of the central plains. In this kingdom, the days are long, and the nights short. Just as the shoulder of mutton is cooked, the sun has already risen again. This suits the depictions of the Kurykan Kingdom recorded in the *History of the Tang*, yet the two kingdoms have different names. Could it be because the pronunciation is inaccurately transmitted after such a long period of time?
> 墨色印度之西北有可弗叉國。數千里皆平川，無復丘垤。吁，可怪也！不立城邑，民多羊馬。以蜜為釀，味與中原不殊。此國晝長夜促，羊胛適熟，日已復出矣。正符《唐史》所載骨利幹國事，但國名不同耳，豈非歲時久遠，語音訛舛邪?[37]

A detailed description of the kingdom of Kurykan can be found in *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Important Documents of the Tang), compiled by Wang Pu 王溥 (922–82), in which this same description of the short nights is recorded.[38] The history of the Tang dynasty is cited as if it is already part of shared knowledge between author and reader. Comparing this with Li Zhichang's travelogue, we discover a similar strategy whereby the text measures the product or customs of the foreign land according to the standard in the central plains; here, the point of juxtaposition lies in the flavor of the honey brew. Both the Tang history and the taste of honey ale suggest an imagined audience with a background similar to the author's. Although Yelü Chucai served as a minister in the Mongol court, he was born near Yanjing, then capital of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234). In 1218, Yanjing was captured by the Mongol army, and Yelü, age twenty-eight, joined Chinggis Khan's administration.[39]

We can understand how Yelü Chucai would write from the perspective of someone from the central plains, yet the intriguing problem here is how he simultaneously speaks as representative of the Mongol Empire. In the beginning of his travel account, he opens with a grandiose sketch of the Mongol army:

> I set off from Yong'an, went through the Juyong Pass, passed by Wuchuan, proceeding from the right of Yunzhong and reached the north of the Tianshan Mountains. I then traversed the massive sandbar and crossed the desert. In less than one hundred days, I

> already arrived at the temporary capital. The mountains and river wind around each other with the dense green of the forests. The carriage awnings hovered like clouds, while generals and soldiers were as dense as raindrops. Fields were covered with horses and oxen. Weapons and armor brightened up the sky. Beacon smoke and fire beckoned to each other; the lined-up camps stretched for 10,000 *li*. Of all the splendors of time, none could surpass this. After a year, the heavenly troops launched a great military expedition in the West, and we passed through Jinshan Mountain.
> 予始發永安，過居庸，歷武川，出雲中之右，抵天山之北，涉大磧，逾沙漠。未浹十旬，已達行在。山川相繆，鬱乎蒼蒼。車帳如雲，將士如雨，馬牛被野，兵甲赫天，煙火相望，連營萬里，千古之盛，未嘗有也。越明年，天兵大舉西伐，道過金山。[40]

While Yelü's itinerary is very similar to that of the Quanzhen group, his journey from Yanjing to the temporary capital, where Chinggis Khan and his army are stationed, is presented hastily. Unlike Qiu and his followers, he gives no indication of differences between the civilization in the central plains and that of the Mongols. Yelü's narrative deliberately glosses over the hundred-day journey and focuses instead on the troops' magnificent appearance. The line "The mountains and river wind around each other with the dense green of the forests" 山川相繆，鬱乎蒼蒼 is taken verbatim from "Qian Chibi fu" 前赤壁賦 (The Poetic Exposition on Red Cliff) by Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101).[41] But while Su Shi was describing the Red Cliff gorges where Cao Cao 曹操 (155–220) planned to launch his invasion of the south, the scenic portrayal is here applied to Central Asia. Su Shi's image of Cao's army, "The prows and sterns of his galleys stretched a thousand *li*, his flags and banners blotted out the very sky" 舳艫千里，旌旗蔽空,[42] is similarly echoed and rivaled by Yelü Chucai, who seeks to formulate a still grander picture of the Mongol army. His series of four-syllable lines covers the Mongol army's carriages, soldiers, food supplies, and weaponry—all to suggest history has never seen such an impressive military force.

The text draws readers into comparison of Cao Cao and the Khan's armies through such allusions, thereby successfully situating the Khan's army in the long tradition of Sinitic history. This is also where the narrative perspective merges with that of the Mongol army: an account of the different locales and ethnic groups of Central Asia (according to standards of the central plains) follows. Without alerting the reader, the text shifts perspective and blurs cultural differences between the Mongols and those living within the Great Wall. By positioning himself as part of the Mongol army, Yelü Chucai forges a "self" that traverses multiple ethnic groups. Comparing this with Li Zhichang's travelogue reveals some striking similarities: both texts present the western region from a Sinocentric perspective, but while the Quanzhen Taoists seek to elevate the Mongols by praising their ability to spread and conform to Sinitic culture, Li

ultimately draws a line between the Mongols and those from the central plains. In contrast, while evaluating cultural others using a Sinocentric standard, Yelü redefines the notion of self in his text through the use of historical references and textual allusions. Thus, he strategically creates a narrative in which readers could easily identify with the Mongol army. All associations to previous Sinitic dynasties can in turn be used as resources to legitimize Mongol rule. We see, for instance, how he recounts the military campaign against the Western Xia:

> In 1224, the heavenly troops put their force in order. Since the Western Xia betrayed good faith and turned against a covenant, during the spring of 1226, we gradually advanced on the second and the sixth month. We drummed once and defeated them. One single outcast abandoned by his people submitted to punishment, and all the citizens are at peace. Shazhou and Guazhou were administrative units established by the Han dynasty. Shuzhou refers to Shanshan, Ganzhou refers to Zhangye, and Lingzhou refers to Lingwu. Alas! These are the edges of heaven and the corners of the seas. No one will ever arrive at these places. It is, indeed, a peculiar experience!
> 歲在涒灘，天兵振旅。以西夏失信背盟，丙戌之春二月、六月迭進，一鼓而下之，獨夫就戮，萬姓懷安。沙州、瓜州，漢所置也。肅州即鄯善也。甘州即張掖也。靈州即靈武也。噫！天涯海角，人所不到，亦一段奇事。[43]

The Western Xia are portrayed as faithless and perverse. The term *dufu* 獨夫 (one single outcast) reminds us of the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), in which the evil ruler of the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) was referred to as "one single outcast" as he violated humanity and righteousness. The punishment of such an outcast is thus permissible.[44] However, not only is the conquest's logic here presented with an archaic twist, but many of the terms used in this short account can also be traced back to the Han dynasty. For instance, while using the sexagenary cycle as a basis to date events, Yelü Chucai employs the term *guntan* 涒灘, an esoteric term that refers to the year of *shen* 申 (i.e., the ninth of the twelve earthly branches).[45] These highly archaic terms match the following geographical depictions, with their place names of Western Xia territory from Han dynasty history. Through these associations, readers are guided to see parallels between the Han dynasty and the Mongol Empire, with both upholding similar values just as their territories overlap. Yelü not only describes the scenes he observed during his journey but also maps out a Mongol Empire in both spatial and temporal terms. The Mongol Empire stretched across Central Asia, where traces of Han and Tang rule are easily found. By associating it with these earlier Sinitic dynasties, Yelü invents a tradition in which the legitimacy of Mongol rule can be established. Learning from the Quanzhen project, he realized how travel writings could serve as effective propaganda to preach one's

worldview. However, unlike Li Zhichang's travelogue, which at least hints at an anticonquest agenda, Yelü Chucai highlights another side of the Sinitic tradition in which warfare and occupation are justified. Such reconfiguration of self and others cannot be achieved without conscious effort in bringing together a series of textual references: the text's highly allusive language creates the impression that the Mongol Empire is the legitimate successor of previous "Chinese dynasties" by emphasizing continuities in mentality and territorial span.

One may question the significance of Yelü Chucai's strategy, given his text's eventual obscurity—*Record of the Journey to the West* was rediscovered in Japan only in 1926.[46] It appears the text was not widely circulated and may have had limited impact even among other literati. Although it is difficult to ascertain how Yelü's contemporaries read the text, some of the passages analyzed above were copied into an anecdotal record compiled during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In *Shuzhai laoxue congtan* 庶齋老學叢談 (Collected Notes of an Aged Learner of the Commoner's Study), Sheng Ruzi 盛如梓 (active thirteenth century) lamented that Yelü's contemporaries seldom read his travel account. Thus, he recorded an abridged version of the text to illustrate the customs and scenery of western regions.[47] Intriguingly, this abridged version is not an innocent replication of the original text. It eliminates not only the text's dialogic structure but also all references to the Mongols' military expeditions. A careful comparison of the two versions suggests that the political implications of Yelü's travelogue did not interest later readers. The dialogic structure justifying Mongol expansion seems irrelevant to Sheng, who is interested merely in the portrayal of western regions.

A similar choice informs Lu Youren's 陸友仁 (active fourteenth century) *Yanbei zazhi* 研北雜誌 (Miscellaneous Notes by Yanbei), as he focuses on Yelü Chucai's erudition.[48] Rather than questioning the text's political motives, Lu seeks to place the travelogue in the category of *bowu* 博物 (study of a wide range of things). Yelü's portrayal of landscapes and cultures is evaluated in terms of knowledge, an attempt to comprehend an unknown world. This view allows Lu to assimilate Yelü into a network of knowledge shared by scholars of the central plains. Both Sheng Ruzi and Lu Youren place Yelü Chucai's text in a scholarly tradition that conveniently ignores the author's political loyalties and rhetorical strategies. And in simplifying the text, they alter the image of Yelü—for them, he was merely a highly Sinicized scholar who traveled to the west and adopted Confucian learning to investigate this exotic world.

However scholars try to ignore the political implications of Yelü Chucai's text, the rhetorical devices adopted in the Quanzhen travelogue and Yelü's account hint at the problem of political legitimacy. We can see this explicitly discussed in the work of Yelü Zhu 耶律鑄 (1221–1285), son of Yelü Chucai,

whose literary corpus contains a series of *kaige* 凱歌 (songs of triumph). Written after the fall of the Southern Song in 1279, Yelü Zhu's songs celebrate the expansion of the Mongol Empire by presenting the army's itinerary through the southern part of China.[49] One of his most intriguing works is the poem "Zhan chengnan" 戰城南 (Fighting South of the City):

	At all times, the ancient battlefields	自來古戰場
2	are mostly found to the south of the Great Wall,	多在長城南
	Rarely are there any to the north of the Great Wall.	少在長城北
4	How can the endlessly vast Domain of the White Bones,	茫茫白骨甸
	Be directly connected with the desert of the Kingdom of Huanglong?[50]	如何直接黃龍磧
6	One may say:	或云
	ever since the time when Emperor Wu of Han opened up the Western regions,	自從漢武開西域
	Losing hundreds and thousands of men	耗折十萬眾
8	Only to obtain scores of fine horses,	博得善馬數十匹
	Exerting military power,	奮軍勢
10	Engaging in fierce battles,	務鏖擊
	Who has been washing their weapons as they come and go?	往來誰洗兵
12	The waters of the crimson river are still crimson.	赤河水猶赤
	The Han eventually abandoned the land of Luntai.	終棄輪台地
14	To the central plains,	其地於中國
	How would losing this land do any harm?	失之且何損
16	Acquiring it does not in any case bring any benefits.	得之本無益
	To add up everything they gain throughout time,	歷計其所得
18	It still cannot compensate for the losses.	皆不償所失
	Even if an imperial decree, filled with sorrow and pain, was issued,	雖下哀痛詔
20	How can regrets be of any avail?	追悔將何及
	This is true for all time:	此是萬萬古
22	The Sinitic world falls apart in the ruts of the wheels.	華夏覆車轍
	. . .	……

	Haven't you seen	君不見
	the people in this world,	世間人
	their minds are knit firmly together?[51]	心固結
34	This is called the emperor's enterprise of true unification.	是謂帝王真統業
	Haven't you heard	君不聞
	all around the world	四海内
	words of praise?	有美談
36	The son of heaven in the Zhiyuan reign has pacified Jiangnan:	至元天子平江南
	Were there ever pestles drifting in rivers of blood or drowning horses?[52]	何曾漂杵與溺驂
38	The sage owns an invincible city,[53]	聖人有金城
	Favors strategies and detests wars,	貴謀賤戰
40	He subdues the enemy's troops without fighting.[54]	不戰屈人兵[55]

The poem employs many familiar rhetorical tactics. First, Yelü Zhu juxtaposes the Mongol Empire's military campaigns with those of the Han dynasty. Like his father, Yelü Zhu is making a historical argument, attempting to justify Mongol conquest of the Southern Song by highlighting the frustrated endeavors of the earlier dynasty. From his perspective, the Mongol Empire is much more civilized than those dynasties because the Mongols did not inflict serious suffering on their enemies. Of course, it is important to point out that this song presents a biased narrative that aims to establish Mongol legitimacy, and the claim that the Mongol army conquered the Southern Song without violent battles is questionable at best. Setting aside the problem of historical accuracy, this claim against violence reminds us of the narrative strategy in Li Zhichang's travelogue.

But "Fighting South of the City" was written in very different times compared with the moment when the Quanzhen Taoists were visiting Chinggis Khan. From the song, we learn that Yelü Zhu wants to argue against acquiring territory beyond the Great Wall and that the emperor of the Zhiyuan reign (i.e., Kublai Khan [r. 1260–1294]) is trying to consolidate his rule in what will become known as the Yuan dynasty. But when did the Mongol Empire begin its claim to be a Chinese dynasty? How was Mongol rule's legitimacy established? Such questions have long been central concerns of historians of this period, even as the naming of the Mongol Empire captures much scholarly attention.[56] I suggest that the travel accounts of Li Zhichang and Yelü Chucai are key texts in this transition, presenting the Mongols as the embodiment of Sinitic values. In the work of the Quanzhen sect, the Mongols are portrayed as humble promoters of Sinitic values, whose regrettable violence is still considered barbaric. To counter this narrative, Yelü Chucai appropriates the framework but stresses that the

Mongols wage wars according to values laid down in the Sinitic tradition. Both narratives claim for the Mongols the authority of cultural tradition (however borrowed), yet their emphases shift according to the author's cultural and political agenda. Returning to an argument against violence, Yelü Zhu places the Yuan dynasty in the chain of dynastic succession while claiming the regime surpasses its predecessors because it truly upholds the teachings passed down from the ancients. This explains why the poem culminates in a highly allusive ending, with each line derived from an ancient text.

Epilogue

Studies of travel writing in conjunction with the rise of empires have garnered much attention in recent years. Mary Louise Pratt's concept of "imperial eyes" focuses attention on the power relations hidden behind representations of foreign lands.[57] Using nineteenth-century European travel narratives as an example, she describes a process of transculturation through which subordinated groups are invented from materials transmitted to them by a dominant culture. Considering these groups as living in the periphery in turn justifies the creation of a European identity. Thus travelogues, according to Pratt, become a way to legitimize and familiarize the European expansion process.

The dueling travelogues presented in this article can serve as a reference point to reconsider Pratt's formulation. Like their European counterparts, these travel accounts are not simply products of people moving between distant geographical locations but represent a moment when two or more entities clash and grapple with each other in a context of highly asymmetrical power relations. The asymmetry in the case of the Mongol Empire, however, is different from that between Europe and its colonies. At the turn of the thirteenth century, China's cultural and political instability was profound: political authority could be used to enhance cultural currency, while appropriation of the dominant cultural tradition served to boost political legitimacy. What is at stake is the meaning of *zhongguo* 中國, literally "central state," which was once used in Buddhist texts to refer to Central India and has then shifted to refer to China proper. Although the two travel accounts discussed above present different imagery as to what *zhongguo* comprises, they contribute to the invention of a historical continuity and value system their readers could share. The travelogues, in other words, become part of the process of inventing an identity.

In focusing on the power dynamics hidden within these works, I have not touched on the curiosity both richly exhibit. Sheng Ruzi rightly noted that many contemporary readers were attracted to these texts for their descriptions of exotic landscapes and customs in Central Asia. Such curiosity ebbed as concerns about political legitimacy within China proper became more pressing. After the

death of Chinggis Khan, literary works composed in Chinese became markedly less concerned with representations of western lands and peoples. While the concept of *zhongguo* and the essence of its culture were still contested in debates between Buddhists and Taoists, most travelogues reverted to a "utilitarian mode," in which foreign lands are treated as tributary states.[58]

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Notes

1. The term *utilitarian mode* is borrowed from Tian, *Visionary Journeys*, 159–65.
2. For an English translation of the text, see Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*. The text cited in this article was extracted mostly from this source, with modifications.
3. For instance, it was reprinted in 1903 in the anthology *Wangchao fanshu yudi congshu* 皇朝藩屬輿地叢書 (Geographic Collectanea of Imperial Dynastic Barbarian Colonies). Shen Yao 沈垚 (1798–1840), Ding Qian 丁謙 (1843–1919), Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927), and Wang Rutang 王汝棠 (1905–1944) published their annotated versions of this travelogue with an emphasis on identifying the place names in the text.
4. For a detailed account of Li's biography, see Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 354–65.
5. Song Defang 宋德方 (1183–1247) was one of Qiu Chuji's disciples. Including Li Zhichang, eighteen disciples accompanied Qiu on his journey.
6. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 72; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 52–62.
7. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 111; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 78.
8. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 112; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 79.
9. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 174. Waley omitted most of Qiu's poems in his translation, explaining: "Changchun [i.e., Qiu Chuji] has no reputation as a poet, and judging from the specimens in the *Xiyouji* [i.e., this travelogue], he deserves none. The reader may, therefore, feel assured that by the omission of the poems he is losing nothing of importance" (*Travels of an Alchemist*, x). Given that Li Zhichang authored the text's prose sections, I would argue that its poems offer us a more direct portrayal of Qiu's mentality. As for their aesthetic value, the late Qing critic Kuang Zhouyi 況周頤 (1859–1926) once praised the vigor of their lyrics. Hong Jingfang 洪靜芳 also has argued for their importance, comparing them with the works preserved in Qiu's own literary corpus. See Hong, "*Changchun zhenren xiyou ji* shici tanxi." The English translations of Qiu's poems in this article are my own.
10. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 45.

11. Traditionally, Laozi was said to have written *Laozi huahu jing* 老子化胡經 (Classic on Laozi Converting the Barbarians) while traveling to India to convert the population to Taoism. Many scholars believe that the text is a forgery originally compiled by the Taoist Wang Fu 王浮 in the early fourth century and that this false attribution is made only to support the superiority of Taoism over Buddhism. The possible dating of the text's extant version ranges from the late fourth century to the sixth century.
12. "Heavenly Steeds" is a reference to the Akhal-teke horses raised in Central Asia. During the Han dynasty, Emperor Wu acquired some of these horses and referred to them as "heavenly steeds."
13. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 67.
14. For a detailed discussion on the Quanzhen sect's printing of Taoist texts, see Chia, "Uses of Print in Early Quanzhen Daoist Text."
15. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 85; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 68.
16. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 85.
17. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 87; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 68. Waley translated the term *zhongzhou* 中州 not as "central plains" but as "Chinese," which may be problematic, as *China* tends to refer to the modern nation-state. To avoid any unintended confusion, I took the liberty of modifying his translation accordingly.
18. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 119; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 81.
19. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 123; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 83.
20. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 204; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 115–16.
21. Yang, *Qiu Chuji "yiyan zhi sha" kao*; and Zhao, "Qiu Chuji 'yiyan zhi sha' bianzheng."
22. This interview's details are documented in the epitaph of Li Zhichang, composed by Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273). See Chen, *Daojia jinshi lue*, 587.
23. After Qiu and his disciples reached a town next to the Abuhan Mountain 阿不罕山, when Qiu was alighting from the wagon, a rainstorm began, which greatly pleased the residents, who often suffered from summertime droughts. The text attributed the downpour entirely to Qiu's religious power. A similar event happened in Yanjing when Qiu hosted a rain-making ceremony. For details, see Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 217; and Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 122.
24. *Jiaoyan* 醮筵 (The Festival of the Dead) refers to a large-scale Taoist ceremony that local communities organized. It may be performed at intervals of one, three, or five years, either as a recurrent rite to renew life or to give blessings to the community.
25. Zhao Jiugu 趙九古 (1163–1221), whose religious name was Xujing xiansheng 虛靜先生 (Master of Empty Purity), was one of the followers of Qiu Chuji. He was said to have received signs that he would never return to the central plains. Eventually he fell ill and died in the town of Sairam 塞藍. See Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 142; and Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 90.
26. Li, *Changchun zhenren xiyou ji jiaozhu*, 224; Waley, *Travels of an Alchemist*, 124–25.
27. The two copies of the text, preserved in the Tenri Library in Japan and at the Fu Ssu-nien Library of the Institute of History and Philology in Taiwan, are both reprints made in 1305. The Tenri Library published the fragments it acquired with an explanatory postface written by Shinobu Iwamura 岩村忍 (1905–88). See *Gyosei shōyōei*, 203–346.
28. Katz, "Writing History, Creating Identity."
29. *Xuanfeng qinghui lu*, 194. The English translation is mine.

30. The Ming scholar Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–90) first spotted the discrepancy between Yelü Chucai's criticism of Qiu and the attribution of the Taoist text. He argued that Master Yelü 移剌 (the Jin 金 dynasty attempted to change all the Yelü 耶律 surnames to these two homophones) may not be Yelü Chucai. Developing Wang's ideas, the Qing scholar Chen Minggui 陳銘珪 (1824–81) argued that this record was written by Ahai 阿海, the translator who may have had the surname Yelü and had accompanied Qiu to the meeting with Chinggis Khan. After Li Zhichang and other Qiu disciples passed away, later Taoists could no longer identify who this Master Yelü was and wrongly attributed this work to Yelü Chucai. For their arguments, see Wang, "Shu xuanfeng qinghui lu hou" 書玄風慶會錄後, in *Dushu hou*, 8.2b–3b; and Chen, *Changchun daojiao yuanliu*, 584–87.
31. For a detailed introduction to the text, see Yao, "Yelü Chucai Xiyou lu zuben jiaozhu"; and de Rachewiltz, "*Hsi-yu lu* by Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai."
32. de Rachewiltz, "*Hsi-yu lu* by Yeh-lü Ch'u-ts'ai," 17–18.
33. Yao, "Yelü Chucai *Xiyou lu* zuben jiaozhu," 213.
34. Watson, *Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 1.
35. Lau, *Mencius*, 14–15.
36. Yao, "Yelü Chucai *Xiyou lu* zuben jiaozhu," 214.
37. Ibid., 217.
38. Wang, *Tang huiyao*, 100.1782.
39. For a detailed biography of Yelü Chucai, see de Rachewiltz et al., *In the Service of the Khan*, 136–71.
40. Yao, "Yelü Chucai *Xiyou lu* zuben jiaozhu," 213.
41. The line's English translation is extracted from Owen, *Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 292.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. The term *dufu* 獨夫 (one single outcast) is first used in the *Book of Documents* to refer to King Zhou 紂王 (d. 1046 BCE), the corrupted leader of the Shang dynasty who committed suicide after his army was defeated. See Legge, *Shu ching*, 117. Xunzi 荀子 (340–245 BCE) also used the term to explain why wars were morally justifiable when the ancient sage kings revolted against their evil rulers. See Knoblock, *Xunzi*, 2:224.
45. *Erya*, 94.
46. For example, Jack Weatherford argues, "For seven-hundred years, Li Zhichang's account was accepted as the sole record of the discussions between Chinggis Khan and the sage, as Yelü Chucai's report had disappeared from the libraries and archives of China, and scholars began to suspect that it had never existed" (*Genghis Khan and the Quest for God*, 229). The latter half of Yelü Chucai's work was not found until it was rediscovered by Kanda Kichiro 神田喜一郎 (1897–1984).
47. Sheng, *Shuzhai laoxue congtan*, 1.2b–5a. Using Sheng's text as his base, the Qing scholar Li Wentian 李文田 (1834–1895) produced an annotation of the text. See Li, *Xiyou lu zhu*, 1–18. This abridged version has also caught the attention of Emil Bretschneider (1833–1901), who translated this version of the text into English. See Bretschneider, *Medieval Research from Eastern Asiatic Sources*, 1:9–24.
48. Lu, *Yanbei zazhi*, 175.
49. Yelü, *Shuangxi zuiyin ji*, 2.1a–8b.

50. The *Kingdom of Huanglong* is a term used by southerners in the fifth century to refer to the Northern Yan 北燕 (407–36). It becomes a general reference to the north.
51. The term *gujie* 固結 (knit firmly together) is a reference to *Liji* 禮記 (Book of Rites), in which Zhou Feng 周豐 explained to the ruler, "If the heart be not observant of righteousness, self-consecration, good faith, sincerity, and guilelessness, though a ruler may try to knit the people firmly to him, will not all bonds between them be dissolved" 苟無禮義忠信誠慤之心以蒞之，雖固結之，民其不解乎? See Legge, *Li chi*, 191–92.
52. The term *piaochu* 漂杵 (pestles drifting) is an allusion to the *Book of Documents*, in which the blood shed by the Shang army during the battle of Muye 牧野 was said to flow so heavily that even pestles floated in it. *Nican* 溺驂 (drowning horses) was a reference to the catastrophic consequences from the war between Qi 齊 and the alliance between Song 宋 and Zheng 鄭. Warhorses were said to have drowned in the warriors' blood.
53. This phrase is taken verbatim from a political treatise drafted by Jia Yi 賈誼 (200–168 BCE), in which he argues that the subjects of a state are all willing to sacrifice for their leader if he is virtuous, and thus a sage king automatically "owns an unconquerable city." See Jia, *Jia Yi ji*, 44.
54. This line is taken from *Sunzi bingfa* 孫子兵法 (Master Sun's Art of War). See Sun, *Master Sun's Art of War*, 17.
55. Yelü, *Shuangxi zuiyin ji*, 2.11b.
56. See, e.g., Hsiao, *Meng Yuan shi xinyan*, 23–48; Chen, "Guanyu Yuanchao de guohao"; and Kim, "Was 'Da Yuan' a Chinese Dynasty?"
57. Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, 1–11.
58. The concept of *zhongguo* was often raised in debates between Buddhism and Taoism. For instance, in the Buddhist text *Sanjiao pingxin lun* 三教平心論 (Treatise Viewing the Three Teachings with a Balanced Mind; preface written in 1324), Liu Mi 劉謐 argued that "there is a central kingdom outside the barbarians from the four sides of our state" 四夷之外固有中國. Liu, *Sanjiao pingxin lun*, 1.16b.

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