

Han Xizai (902–970): An Eccentric Life in Exciting Times¹

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One of the best-known pictures in the collection of the Palace Museum in Beijing is *Han Xizai yeyantu* 韓熙載夜宴圖 (Night revels of Han Xizai) which depicts the nightly entertainments of Han Xizai 韓熙載 (902–970), who lived most of his life at the Southern Tang 南唐 (937–975) court. The fascination that Han Xizai inspired and continues to inspire is responsible for many anecdotes that render any evaluation of his historical person somewhat problematic. Han contributed to this blurred image himself through his attitudes and his actions. He is a historian's delight, since he offers so many chances to try and decipher the many riddles that go to make him up. To do so, one has to accept that after more than a thousand years facts and fiction concerning the man are interwoven and hard to disentangle. This is not and cannot be the aim of this essay, which seeks to explore Han Xizai's role as an official involved in the most important decisions taken at the Southern Tang court of the second ruler Yuanzong 元宗 (r. 943–960), the host of intellectual activities under the Southern Tang, and as an eccentric human being. While eccentric behavior was certainly a characteristic of elite circles of Chinese society throughout history, I treat it here as a sign of the times Han Xizai lived in. Since at any given time status and position might be threatened by political change or external invasion, the life of a scholar-official such as Han was much reduced to the moment. Han Xizai's attitudes towards politics and accepted norms of social behavior are an excellent, if rather rare, example of how to deal with the conditions of the times.

Fact and fiction carry the same value in providing us with the many facets Han displayed in his manifold "lives." I will deal here with his "real" as well as his "historiographical" lives. The depiction of Han in the *Han Xizai yeyantu* has been studied in depth by De-nin Lee, so I will only

touch upon it where necessary, and try to add a second, in this case historical-biographical dimension.

In the following I deal briefly with Han Xizai's image in modern times and its functions on the wider political and cultural stages, and then turn to a biography of him. This is subdivided into two sections: his career under the three Southern Tang rulers, with the emphasis on his role and performance as a political advisor, and his private life, including his "decadent" behavior and status as one of the most prominent literati of his times.

Han Xizai in the Twentieth Century

Han's private life was a constant source of concern both for his contemporaries and his rulers, and it has preoccupied the imagination of artists and writers until the present time. The most recent expression of this interest is an opera entitled *Yeyan* 夜宴 (libretto by Zou Jingzhi 鄒靜之, music by Guo Wenjing 郭文景), in which Han Xizai is depicted as an official who does not want to serve a doomed dynasty as chancellor and therefore attempts to make himself ineligible by leading a decadent life. The plot centers around the nightly entertainments at Han's residence witnessed by two court painters, namely Gu Hongzhong 顧闳中 and Zhou Wenju 周文矩 (both fl. tenth century), who act here as the voice of the "moral" majority at court giving critical comments on Han's private life.²

In 2002, the Han-Tang Yuefu Ensemble (based in Taipei) launched a production that used the painting *Han Xizai yeyantu* as the basis for a musical performance that also contained some ballet. The production included an enactment of the second scene from the original scroll, a part of which depicts Han playing the drums while dancers perform. The person of Han Xizai here is of less interest than the content of the picture, which was understood by the producers to be a faithful reflection of the cultural and artistic life of the Tang-Song period.³

In a similar way the audio-visual artwork *Pingfeng* 屏風 (Screen) by visual artist Wang Jianwei 汪建偉 does not so much deal with Han Xizai as with the painter of the picture, Gu Hongzhong, who is identified as a spy.⁴

What all of these modern productions have in common is an interest in some of the aspects implied in the painting as one of the masterworks of Chinese art, and, to a minor degree, in Han Xizai himself. He is represented in these more or less fictionalized accounts as a political symbol

and as an example of a refined culture long gone, which is interpreted in the framework of modern Chinese society and which, fascinatingly, is also made accessible and comprehensible to Western audiences.⁵

Generally, Han has almost completely been ignored as a historical political person by most scholarship on the Five Dynasties and Ten States, and as a prominent actor on the political scene of that period. At the same time his status as an important literary figure is also rarely taken into consideration. It is therefore quite obvious that the information about Han as a politician and as a literatus supplied in biographies of him written in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries has been disregarded in favor of the popularized accounts which were mainly constructed through the medium of the painting and its accompanying colophons and texts in the twentieth century. Therefore the present paper goes back to the “traditional” biographies of Han Xizai to complement his rather two-dimensional image.

Early Career

Han Xizai was born in North China, though his birthplace is not clear, and has been identified as either Qizhou 齊州⁶ (modern day Jinan 濟南, Shandong), Beihai 北海⁷ (modern day Weifang 濰坊, Shandong), or Changli 昌黎⁸ (modern Xuchang 徐昌, Henan). His *zi* 字 was either Shuyan 叔言 or Shunan 叔南.⁹ He claimed to have spent his childhood on Mt. Song 松山, one of the important centers of Daoism during his times.¹⁰ Apparently he prepared there for the official examinations, as we are told he took the *jinshi*-examination in Luoyang.¹¹

His father Han Guangsi 韓光思¹² was a vice-director of the Palace Library¹³ and the deputy of the surveillance commissioner of Pinglu 平盧 (Shandong). When troops mutinied against the military governor Fu Xi 符習 in 926, Han was appointed deputy commander by the mutineers.¹⁴ After the Later Tang quelled the rebellion and killed Guangsi, Han Xizai chose to flee southwards, as he could certainly expect to be punished for his father's actions.

He was accompanied on his journey by Li Gu 李穀, and when they parted company in Zhengyang, north of the river Huai, which constituted the border between the empires of Wu 吳 and the Later Tang, an interesting conversation is said to have taken place.

After having a few drinks together, Han told Li that he would become a high minister in Wu, and furthermore that he would achieve the

reunification of the empire. Li Gu replied that he would stay in the north and become a general, and that conquering the southern state would be “as easy as searching one’s pockets.”¹⁵

Han Xizai’s Career under the First Southern Tang Emperor

Han submitted a job application in the form of a “xingzhizhuang,”¹⁶ which was apparently received and read by Xu Zhigao 徐知誥 (?888–943), who at the time had just begun to take over power in Wu, after the death of his step-father Xu Wen 徐溫 (862–927).¹⁷

Somewhat unimpressed by the young man, Xu gave Han the title of editor and employed him as an administrative clerk in three districts consecutively (Hezhou 和州, Anhui; Changzhou 常州, Jiangsu; Chuzhou 滁州, Anhui). He did not live up to the reputation of a brilliant scholar that he had acquired while waiting for the examination in the capital, Luoyang. Instead he was very idle, and neglected his official duties, which may be explained by his easy-going nature and the frustration he must have felt at being given a low-level post that surely did not befit a *jinshi*.

During this time he married a rural girl from a certain Zhao 趙 family. This was his third wife, since he was already married to a daughter of the famous Li 李 clan of Zhaojun 趙郡,¹⁸ and his second wife Jiang 蔣 family in Beihai,¹⁹ both of whom he had probably left behind when he fled south.

Han’s living and working conditions improved greatly with the establishment of the Qi 齊 dynasty in 937. In this year Xu Zhigao declared himself emperor, and disposed of the imperial Yang 楊 family of the Wu empire,²⁰ emperors who had ruled in name only since 920.²¹ After ten years service in the districts, Han was summoned to Jinling to receive an appointment as Assistant in the Palace Library under the new emperor. At the same time, he was made companion to the heir apparent Li Jing 李景 (916–961) at the Eastern Palace, the residence of the crown prince.

His conduct there did not improve, however, even though according to Lu You, Xu Zhigao had admonished him to change his ways. He did not take any part in the renaming of the dynasty as Tang in 937, nor did he have a hand in the fabrication of a genealogy that linked Xu Zhigao, who assumed the new name Li Bian, to the former Tang ruling house.²²

Han continued to neglect his official duties, and did nothing in the Eastern Palace but engage in conversation, tell jokes, and enjoy partying.

Involvement in Politics

This came to a sudden stop when Li Jing ascended the throne as the second Tang emperor Yuanzong. On account of his good relationship with Yuanzong, Han was appointed vice-director of the Bureau of Forestry and Crafts (*yubu yuanwailang* 虞部員外郎) and Senior Compiler in the Historiography Institute (*shiguan xiuzhuan* 史館修撰). In accordance with his new ranks and titles he received a red official robe (*fei* 緋). Since he was very well-versed in ceremonial he was furthermore made Erudite of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices (*taichang boshi* 太常博士).²³ In this function he made his first serious appearance as an official. When Li Bian died in early 943 he received the posthumous title Guangwen suwu xiaogao huangdi 光文肅武孝高皇帝, and Han Xizai together with Jiang Wenyu 江文蔚 (901–952),²⁴ the head of the Court of Imperial Sacrifices, discussed conferring on Li Bian a temple name (*miaohao* 廟號) that included the character *zong* 宗. This suggestion was opposed by Xiao Yan 蕭儼 (?–after 960),²⁵ who was then Minister of Justice (*xingbu shangshu* 刑部尚書). Xiao explained as follows:

When rulers lose [control of the empire], but regain it themselves, this is what is called a return to the throne (*fanzheng* 反正).²⁶ [The present case] is not like this [in that the late emperor] has not lost [control of the empire], but he has restored it himself. This is called a restoration (*zhongxing* 中興). A ruler of a restoration should be addressed as *zu* 祖 in the imperial ancestral temple. Our late emperor has restored [the empire] and is now on his way to his grave. He should not be degraded by referring to him as *zong*.²⁷

Accordingly Li Bian was given the temple name Liezu 烈祖. However, the reasoning is seriously flawed in this version of the event. Making Li Bian out to be the founder of a restoration also distanced him considerably from the claims that he himself had laid down in his genealogy. Han's and Jiang's argument for addressing him as *zong* would have put him directly in the line of Tang emperors since the fall of the Tang in 907. Xiao Yan's view was accepted as being correct and Han complied with it. A further problem arose out of the fact that Li Bian had died not long into the seventh year of his Shengyuan 昇元 reign era. When Yuanzong, upon taking the throne in spring 943, proclaimed his own reign era Baoda 保大, Han submitted a memorial in which he asked the new emperor to reconsider this step: "It is an ancient rule to change the reign era only after the passing of one year. If we do not follow the rules of the past how else can the people be taught?"²⁸ Han here displayed his knowledge of precedents

in order to educate the emperor accordingly, but since the proclamation had already been made public it could not be revoked.²⁹

After Li Bian's burial Han was appointed drafter in the secretariat, a position he was well suited for. The style of the documents he drafted was regarded as being as brilliant as that of the Yuanhe 元和 period (806–821) of the Tang, an era marked by such prominent people as Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846). None of the writings of Han Xizai are extant, except some poems, which are cited in his biographies.³⁰

Gifted though he was, Han soon fell back into his old habits and neglected his duties. Thus Feng Yansi 馮延巳 (903–960), Yuanzong's chief advisor, pointed out Han's lax behavior and Han lost his position as drafter.³¹ Nothing is known about his activities in the years between 943 and 945. In 947, when he was back in the capital as vice-director in the Ministry of Forestry and Crafts, he raised his voice once more. In that year Yuanzong congratulated the Qidan for their successful invasion of the Later Jin³² and asked them to restore the imperial tombs of his "ancestors" in Chang'an. At the same time quite a few scattered military units of the Later Jin came south and proposed to serve the Southern Tang. Han Xizai in this situation confronted Yuanzong: "If your majesty really wants to revive the enterprise of your ancestors, now is the time! When the ruler of the slaves [i.e., Qidan] returns north, and a new emperor emerges in the Central Plains, it will no longer be as easy to do it as it is now."

Han showed a remarkable sense of the opportunity that the moment offered but which could not be grasped by the Southern Tang ruler, because the vast majority of his Southern Tang forces were still engaged in fighting the empire of Min. If Yuanzong had taken seriously his claim to legitimate rulership of the whole of the Chinese empire then the withdrawal of the Qidan would have really been the chance to "restore" the Tang from the south, especially when so many troops in the north were willing to follow him. Though Han's advice was heard no action was taken.

The Southern Tang armies suffered a terrible defeat in the war against the empire of Min in 947. This disaster had been brought about by the leadership, which consisted chiefly of career bureaucrats who ignored the advice of professional soldiers, in order to gain quick merits for themselves. Han advised Yuanzong to execute the two main culprits, Chen Jue 陳覺 (?–958) and Feng Yanlu 馮延魯 (?–971) to set an example, but Yuanzong had already let them go free, since Song Qiqiu 宋齊丘 had intervened as well as Feng Yansi, Yanlu's older brother, who meanwhile had become chancellor. Han Xizai's memorial was one of at least two

asking for the punishment of Chen and Feng, the other having been submitted by Jiang Wenyu.³³

Han apparently had not been deterred from remonstrating by the example of Gao Yuan 高遠.³⁴ When Song Qiqiu was called from his voluntary exile on Mt. Jiuhua 九華山 in 946,³⁵ his supporters at court, namely Feng Yansi and Feng Yanlu, in addition to Chen Jue, had started to use his backing to control the bureaucracy at court. Gao Yuan, then serving in the Ministry of Forestry and Crafts, demanded that they be punished for factionalism. For this he was demoted to administrative assistant (*sishi* 司士) in Qizhou 蘄州 (Hubei).

Han's criticism prompted Song and Feng to denounce him as an alcoholic, an accusation that according to authors like Wenying and Ma Ling was completely unfounded, but nevertheless Han was demoted to the position of assistant to the prefect of Hezhou 和州 (Anhui).³⁶

The last occasion on which Han voiced his concern over imperial policies was in 951. Apparently discussions were going on at court to plan an invasion of the north and throw out the Later Zhou. Han declared that he had made such a suggestion earlier but that now the situation in the north was completely different. The generals of the Later Zhou were very loyal to the new dynasty, and preparing the Southern Tang armies for combat against them would only lead to failure. As in all the other previous political-military cases nobody listened to Han.³⁷ However, he was entrusted with leading a diplomatic mission to the Later Zhou court on the occasion of emperor Shizong's 世宗 (r. 954–959) accession to the throne in 954. Upon his return, Yuanzong was eager to learn about the new emperor and his court, but Han commented only on the supervising inspector of the Palace guards, Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤, the future first emperor of the Song. He reported that Zhao was straightforward, possessed a majestic demeanor and outshone all others at court. Han judged that Shizong would not be able to unify the empire, implying that Zhao Kuangyin would.³⁸ This information did not deter Yuanzong from taking military action in 956.

When the Southern Tang armies set out for the campaign, Han Xizai tried a last time to give good advice by asking that the two senior commanders should be replaced. This was again a very courageous action, since Li Jingda 李景達 (924–971), prince of Qi 齊 and younger brother of Yuanzong, was field marshal, while Chen Jue, who had earlier proven his incompetence, had been appointed supervising inspector. Han argued: "The launching of armies is a very important matter. First of all

the status [of the people involved] should be decided. Nobody trusts the prince and nobody [thus] respects him as field marshal. That being so, how can one appoint [Chen Jue] supervising inspector?"³⁹ As a consequence of ignoring Han's advice, the Later Zhou defeated the Southern Tang⁴⁰ and forced Yuanzong to give up his imperial title, adopt the Later Zhou calendar, cede Huainan, and submit his state as a vassal to the Later Zhou in 958.

The finances of the Southern Tang had already suffered heavily due to military expenditure in the various wars during Yuanzong's reign, and an even heavier financial burden was placed on the newly named kingdom of Jiangnan and its ruler in the form of regular tribute payments to the Later Zhou. In order to counter the rising inflation, in 959 Zhong Mo 鍾謨 (?–960) suggested the minting of large coins that would be equal to 50 copper cash in value, while Han Xizai suggested the creation of iron coins which equaled two copper cash. In the end Yuanzong adopted a modified version of Zhong Mo's plan, by introducing large coins that were worth ten copper cash. These new coins, which bore the title Yongtong 永通, were to be used alongside the old Kaiyuan coins of early Tang times.⁴¹ When Zhong fell from power, the Yongtong coins were taken out of circulation.⁴²

Private Life

It was upon Yuanzong's death in 961 that Han's interest in politics ended, and it is around this time that the sources turn to Han Xizai's private life.

The accession of the new ruler Li Yu 李煜 did not occur without problems. Officials, among them Zhong Mo, had protested against the appointment of Li as crown prince, after the designated heir apparent Li Hongji 李弘冀 died in 959. Zhong Mo, who had been on a diplomatic mission with Yuanzong's seventh son Li Congshan 李從善 (939–987), praised the latter's abilities, at the same time saying that Li Yu was unfit to rule, because he lacked talent and possessed a weak character.⁴³

These evaluations may have been shared by Han Xizai, since no mention is made in the relevant sources, except for Ma Ling, that he was active in decision-making after the death of the second Southern Tang emperor. The argument that he did not want to be involved as a high minister in the downfall of the dynasty is not quite correct, for, as mentioned above, he was still advising Yuanzong on fiscal matters when the latter had already submitted to the Later Zhou.

In any case, Han was sent as the Southern Tang envoy to the newly established Song court to convey the condolences of Li Yu on the occasion of the burial of the mother of the Song emperor.⁴⁴ Apparently Han was not permitted to return south immediately but was retained at the northern court for an unspecified period of time.

According to Ma Ling, after Han returned to Jiangnan he submitted a collection of documents entitled *Huangji yaolan* 黃機要覽, which dealt with matters of administration and government. It was praised by contemporaries as a piece of good and solid political advice, but no further information has come down to us regarding this text.

Most sources, especially Ma Ling and Lu You, devote themselves to describing Han Xizai's expenses for concubines and his lavish life style after 961. Interestingly, a certain Liu Xuan 柳宣, who was a censor and a friend of Han's, was reproached by Li Yu for not having joined in the accusations against Han which resulted in his demotion to a post in the southern capital Nandu (Nanchang). Instead, Liu had declared Han not guilty. In the confrontation between ruler and censor an illuminating exchange took place:

[...] The last ruler [i.e. Li Yu] shouted at him: "You are not Wei Zheng who loved to speak out straightforwardly." [Liu] Xuan answered: "I am not Wei Zheng, but Your Majesty is not [Tang] Taizong either."⁴⁵

In the early sources it is especially the number of girls and women that Han housed in his residence which arouses interest among authors. Our earliest historical source for the Southern Tang, the *Nantang jinshi* 南唐近事 (hereafter *NTJS*) by Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953–1013), does not mention the number of women that Han assembled at his house; it states rather that Han spent all his money on them, so that he was forced to beg from them disguised as a Buddhist monk.⁴⁶ Another entry says:

He did not restrain his maids and concubines. He possessed something of the style of Xu Zhicai 徐之才 of the Northern Qi. His maids frequently cohabited with his retainers. A poem by one of these retainers reads as follows:

"Around the fifth double hour they cannot be kept any longer. They leave the pillows and dress, to go to other men."

Xizai did not care about this.⁴⁷

The attitude of Zheng Wenbao regarding the situation in Han's household is rather ambivalent, and the critique does not come as an outright

condemnation. However, emphasis is put less on the number of concubines, than on the money they cost Han, as well as their somewhat independent behavior. Xu Zhicai, to whom Han Xizai is likened, was a high minister at the court of the Northern Qi who was also known for keeping a large retinue of females.

Other sources give the number of women in Han's residence as 40, "several tens," or 100. The first elaborate description of how they behaved in the presence of guests comes from an eleventh-century text, *Wudaishi bu* 五代史補 (Supplement to the history of the Five Dynasties) by Tao Yue 陶岳 (fl. 980–after 1026).⁴⁸

As to the guests themselves we are not enlightened by the sources, but we know that Han was the center of a circle of prominent Southern Tang figures, who were attracted by the entertainment his house had to offer. Among the regular guests on these occasions were northern emigrés like Xiao Yan 蕭儼 and Chang Mengxi 常夢錫, and southerners like the Xu brothers Xuan 鉉 and Kai 鏞 (920–974),⁴⁹ the Feng brothers Yansi and Yanlu, as well as Pan You 潘佑 (?–975),⁵⁰ Jiang Wenyu, Zhang Ji 張洎 (933–997),⁵¹ and Han's disciple Shu Ya 舒雅.⁵² The painting depicts only the notorious events which took place at Han's house—but these formed only one part of a social evening. The wide ranging interests of Han Xizai included calligraphy, especially the *bafen* 八分 script, theatrical plays, dance, music, painting and the discussion of these with disciples and guests. Whether these intellectually stimulating meetings occurred after or before meeting the women cannot be ascertained. They certainly must have paled into insignificance against the other "nightly entertainments" which make Han out to be an inconsiderate man.

Han's behavior towards women, as well as his predilection for lavish parties, has received so much attention that he appears to be unique among the officials of the Southern Tang. There is however at least one more official who was noted for similar activities. Sun Sheng 孫盛 (?–956), another northerner, reached the Wu court in the late 920s. He had served Zhu Shouyin 朱守殷, the governour of Bianzhou 卞州 (Kaifeng), who attempted to rebel against the Later Tang in 927. Once he was accepted as an official at the southern court, he was appointed to high posts, and it was he who was responsible for conferring the title *ranghuang* on the last Wu ruler after his dethronement. Thanks to his position he was able to purchase not only several residences, but also a large number of singing girls. He enjoyed having his food served not on a table, but by the girls, who had to surround him for meals, so that he could have the dishes that

he wanted. He called this, rather ambiguously, *routaipan* 肉臺盤 (meat dishes).⁵³ Before he was summoned to become chancellor, he would entertain colleagues at his residence, Han Xizai among them. When he saw the poor and rundown quarter in which Sun Sheng resided, Han commented that this was not appropriate for a future high minister of state.⁵⁴ At the time no one understood his statement, but within ten days Sun was appointed to high office. This must have occurred during the conflict with the Later Zhou, since it was on this occasion that Sun was sent as representative to Zhou Taizu.⁵⁵

It is interesting to note that Han was demoted once after having been denounced as an alcoholic. While it is impossible to decide whether he drank or not (some sources insist that he did), we have other cases from the Southern Tang that suggest that alcoholic intoxication, though considered a major offense, was not necessarily punished as hard as in Han Xizai's.⁵⁶

Jiang Wenyu was ashamed after he became drunk and discourteous during a banquet at the palace. Consequently he wrote an apology and self-accusation, which Yuanzong accepted. Instead of punishing him, however, he presented him with a new set of clothes. On an earlier occasion, Song Qiqiu participated in a party at the palace. When everyone was quite drunk, female musicians entered the banquet hall to entertain the guests. Song seized the chance and “fondled” one of them before the eyes of the emperor. Everyone expected an imperial rage, but this failed to materialize and again the emperor gave the culprit presents, this time in the form of paper and brush.⁵⁷

Against this background it is not hard to understand why Yuanzong was not as interested as his son and successor Li Yu in knowing more details of Han's nightly activities, since he himself loved to party.

Han's calligraphy skills were so good that he was often asked to write epitaphs and prepare texts for stelae. One instance is very telling in regard to the disrespect that Han Xizai had for the influential chancellor Song Qiqiu. Song, a self-made scholar who had never had the chance of a formal education, and whose knowledge was entirely based on the teachings of the Legalist Shang Yang, ordered Han to execute one of the texts that he had drafted in the *bafen* script. Han obeyed the command, but plugged his nose with paper while writing the text. He must have been working in the secretariat where he would have been observed by colleagues, because they asked why he had plugged his nose. He replied: “The words are impure and they stink!”⁵⁸

In another instance Han was given expensive presents and a very young dancer that he had heard about, who was skilled in the arts of the bedroom, by Yan Xu 嚴續 (910–966). Yan was at the time first vice-director of the Department of State Affairs and was detested by his colleagues because he did not possess the educational qualifications for such an elevated position.⁵⁹ Jiang Wenyu wrote some devastating verses about the man in the form of a poem entitled *Xie fu* 蟹賦 (About a crab):

“On the outside it has many legs, on the inside not one inch of gut.

...

It has a big mouth, and every time it loses its way, bubbles form on its face.
It has a halberd and armour fixed to its chest, but they constantly jam, so that it has to move sideways.”

Given this low standing among the “real” scholars at court it is quite clear that Yan was looking for ways to improve his position. One sure way was to commission an impressive text for the stele at the tomb of his late father. For this task he chose Han, and in return for the work offered him the dancing-girl and the presents. Han accepted everything that Yan gave him to “wet his brush,” but when the text was finished, it was merely a genealogy of the Yan family, listing the posts held by the deceased, the rites conducted during his burial and the posthumous honors he was accorded. However, not one single word mentioned Yan Xu or his merits. When Yan received the text, he was embarrassed, but sealed it and pretended not to have read it, hoping that Han would change it. Han however, sent back all the presents, including the girl, together with a short poem:

The wind makes the willow tree tremble, the branches are restless. Dreaming,
I return to the clouds and rain with my rendezvous on the veranda.

In yet another year the end of all physical pleasures is sounded from Black
Currant Island. All that is left when thinking about the old dancing dresses is
to grasp a cup [of wine?].⁶⁰

Sending back all the presents must have been quite difficult for Han because he had once complained to Li Yu that his salary was not sufficient to support his household. He was a very generous person who entertained his guests well and paid for all his concubines, and when appointed to serve in Linchuan 臨川 (Jiangxi), he borrowed 300,000 copper cash from his office, but ultimately needed even more. Li Yu responded angrily by

saying that Han's salary was more than sufficient.⁶¹ However, he gave him more presents, including various kinds of silk for his official robes. This indicates that Han truly was as poor as he pretended to be when he came begging as a Buddhist monk.

It was around this time too that Li Yu attempted to educate Han in the matter of the concubines, by demoting him to the post of mentor to the heir apparent in the southern capital, as mentioned above. He hoped to make him chancellor, and at first his plan seemed to be working. Han submitted a memorial, in which he begged to be permitted to stay in the capital, and emphasized his service to the dynasty as well as his old age, and (amazingly) his wife and children. Since he did not receive a royal reply immediately, he expelled all the concubines and singing girls. Li Yu, believing that Han had reformed, allowed him to stay in Jinling, making him director of the Palace Library. As might have been expected, the female personnel soon reappeared, and Li Yu remarked that he now saw how Han's mind worked. In any case, after this incident Han performed his official duties more diligently, evidence of which is the *Huangji yaolan*. Shortly afterwards, however, in the summer of 970, he died.⁶²

It is certainly no coincidence that Han's tomb was situated right next to that of Xie An 謝安 (320–385),⁶³ one of the major southern literary and political figures, which was at a place called Meilinggang 梅嶺崗 / Meidinggang 梅鼎崗. This location fulfilled the conditions that Li Yu had called for on the basis of *fengshui* 風水, having “high mountains, in a magnificent environment next to the tomb of an old sage, close to a beautiful stretch of water.”⁶⁴

Xie An was one of the most powerful men of his time and was known as the “cultivated chancellor” (*fengliu zaixiang* 風流宰相) because he was an accomplished calligrapher. The parallels with Han's talents and attitudes go even further, in that Xie loved to surround himself with singing girls. The fundamental difference between the two was that Xie was a serious chancellor who enjoyed art and women in his spare time, whereas Han invested a great deal of time in his “hobbies” and not very much in his official work.

Li Yu encountered another problem in the form of the posthumous honors which he wished to confer on Han Xizai. Since Han had not held the position of chancellor Li Yu looked for a precedent that would nevertheless allow him to give Han the very high ranking honorary title of Grand Councillor (*pingzhangshi* 平章事). Fortunately a precedent was found in general Liu Muzhi 劉穆之 (ca. 349–417) who had been awarded

the unique title of Commander Unequaled in Honor (*kaifu yitong sansi* 開府儀同三司), on account of his merits.⁶⁵ This example was readily adopted in handling Han's case. As a posthumous name for him, Li Yu selected Wenjing 文靖 ("cultivated and refined") which is no doubt a reflection of the esteem Han enjoyed at court as well as among his contemporaries.

Conclusion

Lu You was the first author to mention that Han Xizai behaved frivolously in order to avoid being promoted to chancellor by Li Yu.⁶⁶ This information was thoroughly embellished not only by the colophons to the *Han Xizai yeyantu* scroll but also in a work compiled by Mao Xianshu 毛先舒 (1620–1688), which contains miscellaneous historical notes on the Southern Tang, entitled *Nantang shiyiji* 南唐拾遺記. In an anecdote found in this work, Han Xizai explains to his friend, the monk Deming 德明, during one of his parties: "I am doing this in order to avoid being called to the post of chancellor of this state." When Deming asks for the reason, Han replies: "A tiger is in the Central Plains, gazing over here. One day, when the true ruler emerges, Jiangnan will lay down its armor an instant. I cannot bear to become the laughingstock of future generations."⁶⁷ The time frame for the statements is not given in the texts, but it appears that the first anecdote, from Lu You, is set during Li Yu's reign. The *Nantang shiyiji* version, by contrast, most probably refers to the rule of Li Jing, in that the "true ruler" in the North has yet to emerge. This may either refer to the founder of the Later Zhou, or the founder of Song, both of which established their empires during the reign of Li Jing.

Whatever the timing of the statement may have been, if we accept it as a "fact," it contrasts sharply with the remarks that Han made when he entered Jiangnan, and predicted a ministerial position for himself. However, the remarks never appear together in the same text, something which, given that a biography not only had to entertain but also to be consistent in itself, would have run counter to historiographical conventions.

The way we look at Han's private life is informed to a large extent by the sources, which depict him as a singular case. We have to ask two questions: Firstly, were his household management methods unique in his times, and, secondly, if that is not the case, why has he been singled out? As has been shown above, Han Xizai's behavior was certainly erratic

at times, and extravagant at others, but not very different from that of some of his colleagues, or some men in earlier times.

This may explain why authors such as Ouyang Xiu, Ma Ling and Lu You do not condemn Han's actions outright. They tend to heavily criticize his hedonistic life style, since they see this as the reason why he did not succeed as an official. But between the lines one may also discern the admiration these writers felt for a free spirit and a man of obviously great intelligence, as well as regrets that this man did not use his capacities and abilities to the full.

The further authors are separated from the times of Han Xizai the more significance is attached to the behavior of the females in his household and to Han's apparent lack of interest in exerting control over them. The "female" problem has preoccupied writers so much that they have completely lost interest in the other guests that Han invited to stay with him.

Han has been reduced to a mere symbol of an extravagant lifestyle and relaxed standards of behavior that repelled authors and their audiences alike, while simultaneously attracting their interest in the intimate details of the various entertainments. Into this background fits the fact that the famous painting allegedly showing the revels at his residence is a product of the Southern Song.

NOTES

- References in the footnotes are to the earliest sources.
- The libretto of the opera is found in Zou Jingzhi, *Yeyan, Wo ai taohua* 夜宴·我愛桃花 (Beijing: Shehui kexue chubanshe, 2003).
- "The Feast of Han Xizai," directed by Chiang Wei-kuo, at www.pts.org.tw/php/_utility/homepage/program_sale/php, accessed on February 12, 2003.
- See "Sex, Spies, and Videotapes: Visual Artist Wang Jianwei's 'Screen' is a Multimedia Dazzler," by Val Wang, at www.chinanow.com/english/beijing/city/culture/screen.html, accessed on February 12, 2003).
- Note that the painting *Han Xizai yeyantu* appeared on a series of stamps in the People's Republic of China in 1990. The issuing of these stamps authorizes the picture as a national work of art. At the same time one wonders if the relevant authorities are aware of the connotations of the work.
- According to his "xingzhizhuang" 行止狀, which survives and is found in Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953–1013), *Jiangbiaozhi* 江表志 (*Xuehai leibian*; hereafter *JBZ*), 2.8a–11a.
- Nantang shu* 南唐書, by Ma Ling 馬令 (fl. 1105) (*Congshu jicheng*; hereafter *MLNTS*), 13.89, and *Nantang shu* 南唐書, by Lu You 陸游 (1125–1210) (Hong Kong: Guangzhi shuju, 1950; hereafter *LYNTS*), 12.49.
- Diaoji litan* 釣磯立談 (*Congshu jicheng*; hereafter *DJLT*), attr. to Shi Xubai 史

- 虛白, 26. Since his father was stationed near Qizhou, Han was considered a Qizhou man, as stated in his epitaph (“Tang gu zhongshu shilang Guangzhengdian xueshi chengzhi Changli Han gong muzhi” 唐故中書史郎光政殿學士承旨昌黎韓公墓誌 composed by Xu Xuan 徐鉉 (917–992) which is found in the latter’s collected works, the *Xugong wenji* 徐公文集 (*Sibu beiyao*; hereafter *XW*), 16.2a. Han adopted the title Changli xiansheng 昌黎先生, which is the same as that of the great Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824). While the two shared the same family name they were not related, so the adoption of the title may indicate the veneration Han Xizai had for Han Yu.
9. Shuyan in *MLNTS*, Shunan in *XSYL*, 3.55.
 10. According to his “xingzhizhuang.”
 11. His biographies refer rather vaguely to the Tongguang 同光 reign era from 923–926. The *Wenxian tongkao* tells us that examinations were held in 924–926, but not in 923. See Ma Duanlin 馬端臨 (1254–1325), *Wenxian tongkao* 文獻通考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), 30.282.
 12. His epitaph traces Han’s family origins to the Jin dynasty. During the turbulent times at the end of the Eastern Jin the family moved to Changli. His great grandfather Jun 鈞 served as Chamberlain for the Imperial Stud, his grandfather Yin 殷 as Attendant Censor. See *XW*, 16.1b–2a.
 13. All titles are translated according to Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1986).
 14. A description of the mutiny is found in Xue Juzheng 薛居正 (912–981) et al., comp., *Jiu Wudaishi* 舊五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977; hereafter *JWDS*), 37.509; Fu Xi has a biography in Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), comp., *Xin Wudaishi* 新五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974; hereafter *XWDS*), 26.277–278.
 15. *XWDS*, 62.778–789. This anecdote is also reported by Ma Ling in the commentary to the chapter on scholars. See *MLNTS*, 13.93–94. It serves as an illustration of the attitude of Five Dynasties scholars in Zhang Lei’s 張耒 (1054–1114) *Keshanji* 柯山集. See *Keshanji* (*Congshu jicheng*), 35.416. Zhang mentions neither parting nor drinking.
 16. The *Siku tiyao* for *JBZ* refers to this “xingzhizhuang” as “guiguozhuang” 歸國狀 and declares it incomprehensible (不可解). See Yongrong 永瑢 (1743–1790) et al., comp., *Siku quanshu zongmu* 四庫全書總目 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 66.586.
 17. When Yang Xingmi 楊行密 (852–905), the most powerful warlord in Jiangnan and later founder of the state of Wu, was on a military campaign through Anhui, he found a little boy, whom he adopted. Since his sons were jealous of the new family member, Yang ordered Xu Wen, one of his officers, to take over the child.
 18. *XW*, 16.4a.
 19. *XW*, 16.4a. This information was given in a rather garbled fashion by Ouyang Xiu, who declares Han a descendant of a family of generals. See *XWDS*, 62.778–779.
 20. The last Wu emperor, Yang Pu 楊溥 (r. 921–937) was given the title of “retired emperor” (Ranghuang 讓皇) and put under strict guard at Danyang (Jiangsu) on the advice of Song Qiqiu. The last crown prince of Wu (appointed 929), Yang Lian 楊璉, took a daughter of Li Bian as secondary wife. He died in 940, his death very probably arranged by the Southern Tang emperor. See the relevant entry in *ZZTJ*, 282.9210, which in turn was based on the

- Jiuguo zhi* 九國志 by Lu Zhen 路振 (957–1014). In the extant version of the *Jiuguo zhi* this information cannot be found.
21. Xu Wen had made sure that only young boys would ascend the Wu throne, so he could control them more easily. On this see Johannes L. Kurz, “Problematische Zeiten: Die Fünf Dynastien und Zehn Staaten in Chinas 10. Jahrhundert” (Problematic times: The Five Dynasties and Ten States in tenth-century China), in *Zeitenwenden: Historische Brüche in asiatischen und afrikanischen Gesellschaften*, ed. Sven Sellmer and Horst Brinkhaus, 283–285 (Hamburg: EB-Verlag, 2002).
 22. Sources disagree about the genealogy Li Bian had his officials create for him. Long Gun 龍袞 (fl. early eleventh century) makes Li Bian a descendant of Li Ke 李恪, third son of the Tang emperor Taizong (r. 626–649) and prince of Wu (Wuwang 吳王). See Long Guan, *Jiangnan yeshi* 江南野史 (*Yuzhang congshu*; hereafter *JYS*), 1.5a. The *XWDS* traces his ancestry to the Tang emperor Xianzong’s 憲宗 (r. 806–820) son 恪, the prince of Jian (Jianwang 建王). See *XWDS*, 62.767.
 23. *XW*, 16.2a.
 24. Jiang Wenyu, *jinshi* of the Changxing 長興 era (930–933) of the Later Tang, was another emigré from the north. Implicated in the rebellion of Li Congrong 李從容 in late 933, he was forced to flee. He possessed wide knowledge of rituals and ceremonies and was thus given the task of compiling a ritual compendium for the Southern Tang. The sources state that his literary and lyric style was similar to that of Han Xizai, but that he took his official duties much more seriously than the latter. In his function as censor he repeatedly criticized Song Qiqiu and his partisans and was therefore demoted and exiled. See *MLNTS*, 13.92; and *LYNTS*, 10.42–43.
 25. Xiao Yan, who hailed from Luling in the south, entered the civil service via the *tongzi* 童子 exam, which during the Northern Song was open to talented boys under the age of 14. He made a name for himself as a straightforward person, who was not even afraid to admonish the ruler, while at the same time, he was not interested in accumulating wealth, so that he died a poor man. See *MLNTS*, 22.145–146; and *LYNTS*, 15.62–63.
 26. The last such event had taken place at the end of the Tang, when the emperor Zhaozong 昭宗 (r. 888–900/901–904) was put under house arrest by the eunuchs in 900, and was replaced by the crown prince. When the eunuchs were eliminated one year later, Zhaozong returned to the throne. See Liu Xu 劉煦 et al., comp., *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 20A.771.
 27. *LYNTS*, 15.62–63. Cf. also Wenying 文營 (fl. late Northern Song), comp., *Yuhu qinghua* 玉壺清話 (hereafter *YHQH*), in *Xiangshan yelu, xulu, Yuhu qinghua* 湘山野錄·續錄·玉壺清話 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 9.94.
 28. Chen Pengnian 陳彭年 (961–1017), *Jiangnan bielü* 江南別錄 (*Xuehai leibian*; hereafter *JNBL*), 9a.
 29. A number of decisions taken shortly after Yuanzong’s accession to the throne met with official resistance. Though these objections were considered correct by officials at court, the decisions were not rescinded as they had already been proclaimed publicly. The two most important decisions concerned a law that permitted the sale of free people (*liangren* 良人) as unfree people (*jianren* 賤人), and the appointment of Yuanzong’s younger brothers as regents. See Sima Guang 司馬光 et al., comp., *Zizhi tongjian* 資治

- 通鑿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992; hereafter *ZZTJ*), 283.9246 and 283.9261–9262.
30. None of the official writings of Han Xizai are extant. Some of his poems are cited in his biographies in *YHQH*, *MLNTS*, and *LYNTS*. Apart from this, several texts in *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 are attributed to Han. Among them are a document dealing with the construction of new walls for the city of Xuanzhou (*Xuanzhou zhu xincheng ji* 宣州築新城記); his “xingzhizhuang”; his petition not be sent to Nanchang (*Fensi Nandu qi liu biao* 分司南都乞留表); a stele inscription for the Zhenfengguan (*Zhenfengguan bei* 真風觀碑); another for the Tangquanyuan in Wujiang 烏江 (Jiangxi) (*Tangquanyuan bei* 湯泉院碑); and a funerary inscription for Zen master Yuanji (*Yuanji chanshi bei* 元寂禪師碑). See Dong Gao 董誥 (1740–1818) et al., comp., *Quan Tang wen*, vol. 9 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 877.3a–18b (9171–9179). Lu You also mentions two more collections of writings, namely *Niyiji* 擬義集 in 15 *juan*, and *Dingjuji* 定居集 in two *juan*. None of these have survived. His most well-known work was *Geyan* 格言 (Maxims), a text that was prefaced by Shu Ya 舒雅 (before 940–1009), Han’s favourite disciple. *Geyan* was finished in 967, according to the *Songshi* 宋史. See Tuotuo 脫脫 et al., comp., *Songshi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), 478.13867. The work appears in most catalogues of Song times, but is no longer extant today. While the relevant catalogues list *Geyan* as having five to six chapters, Lu You states that *Geyan* and *Geyan houshu* 格言後書 together amounted to three *juan* only. I have no explanation for this discrepancy other than that during Lu’s time only three *juan* had survived. See *LYNTS*, 12.50.
31. *XW*, 16.1b.
32. According to Long Gun, Song Qiqiu had provoked the Qidan invasion of the Later Jin. He contacted the Qidan emperor offering an alliance and when the latter sent an envoy, he was given many gifts and guarantees of goodwill. Song had this envoy murdered on his way back north, in the territory of the Later Jin, which added to the growing conflict between the Qidan and the Later Jin. See *JYS*, 4.6a.
The envoy was a certain Gao Ba 高霸, the father of Gao Qiong 高瓊 (935–1006) who was one of the generals of the first Song emperor and whose descendant, Empress Gao, rescinded the reforms of Wang Anshi.
33. According to Sima Guang, Jiang Wenyu 江文蔚 (901–942), a censor, requested capital punishment for Chen and Feng in January 948. Jiang was demoted to a lowly post outside the capital. See *ZZTJ*, 286.9355. Shortly afterwards Xu Xuan together with Han Xizai submitted a similar proposal to the throne. See *ZZTJ*, 286.9355–9356. Sima Guang here follows the *Xugong xingzhuang* which is contained in the *XW*. See *Xugong xingzhuang* 1b in *XW*. This report about Xu Xuan’s conduct was written either by his son-in-law Wu Shu 吳淑 (947–1002), or Chen Pengnian, another southerner who gained prominence under the third Song emperor, or Hu Keshun 胡克順, the editor of the *XW* in 1017. Lu You does not mention Xu Xuan’s participation in setting up the memorial. The biography of Jiang Wenyu in *LYNTS*, 10.42–43 consists almost in its entirety of the text of Jiang’s memorial.
34. Gao Yuan was later the court historiographer and thus it would have been of great importance to read his history of Wu (*Wulu* 吳錄, 20 *juan*) as well as the historical records of the reigns of Li Bian (*Liezu shilu* 烈祖實錄, 20 *juan*) and Li Jing (*Yuanzong shilu* 元宗實錄, 10 *juan*). However, he burnt the drafts

- of these histories when he was about to die. Li Yu ordered a thorough search of Gao's house which only confirmed that all historical records were gone.
35. Song felt that he had not been treated appropriately by Li Jing, who preferred his entourage of younger officials to the older statesman. Song had already used retirement to Mt. Jiuhua on previous occasions under Liezu, to remind him of his worth and value as an advisor.
 36. Chang Mengxi 常夢錫 (897–958), another prominent northern official at the court of the Southern Tang, actually turned to drink on account of the political situation at court. In 943 he had been made head of the Xuanzheng yuan 宣政院, an agency within the palace whose remit was to check on the bureaucracy. He was responsible only to Yuanzong. After one year the Xuanzheng yuan was abolished, but Chang continued to warn about the clique surrounding Feng Yansi. As he could not change the emperor's mind about this, he pretended to be ill and started drinking heavily.
 37. *ZZTJ*, 290.9475.
 38. *YHQH*, 9.93.
 39. The statement is reported by Sima Guang, but is truncated. See *ZZTJ*, 293.9551. The complete statement is found in Han's biography in *LYNTS*.
 40. As a matter of fact Chen Jue assumed complete control over the army, after which he replaced an able commander whom he did not like. This frustrated officer defected to the Zhou together with his troops, and this resulted in a general panic among the remaining troops and the consequent Zhou victory. See *XWDS*, 62.775.
 41. According to *ZZTJ* another coin was circulated that had the same value as two copper cash. This was called Tangguo tongbao 唐國通寶. See *ZZTJ*, 294.9603. The accuracy of this statement cannot be thoroughly checked. None of the other sources mention the Tangguo tongbao, and it would have been quite extraordinary if the Southern Tang had minted a coin that would still link them to the Tang while being vassals of the Later Zhou.
 42. Zhong Mo was accused of having plotted with a military officer to take control of the bureaucracy. The Yongtong coins were taken out of circulation, since it was apparently rather easy to counterfeit the new currency and this was harming the economy. See *ZZTJ*, 294.9604–9695.
 43. *JBZ*, 3.1a.
 44. Li Tao 李燾 (1115–1184), *Xu zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1983), 2.15a.
 45. *JBZ*, 3.3a. This dialogue later on forms part of the biography of Xiao Yan, who interrupted the ruler's game of *weiqi* by turning over the gambling table. Cf. *MLNTS*, 22.146.
 46. Zheng Wenbao, *Nantang jinshi* 南唐近事 (hereafter *NTJS*; *Congshu jicheng*), 15.
 47. *NTJS*, 15.
 48. *Wudaishi bu* (*Siku quanshu*), 5.15. For a translation of the relevant entry see Wu Hung, *The Double Screen: Medium and Representation in Chinese Painting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 42.
 49. Xu Kai and his older brother shared the same interests, such as calligraphy and *Shuowen* 說文 studies. See Johannes L. Kurz, *Das Kompilationsprojekt Song Taizongs (reg. 976–997)* (Bern: Lang, 2003), 74–75.
 50. Pan You was executed in 975 for criticizing Li Yu's attitude towards the Song.
 51. Zhang Ji served the Song after 975 and participated in the compilation of the

- Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 and *Taiping yulan* 太平禦覽. See Kurz (note 49), 78–79.
52. Shu has a long biography in the *Xin'anzhi* 新安志 by Luo Yuan 羅願 (1136–1184). See *Xin'anzhi* in *Zhongguo fangzhi congshu* 中國方志叢書 (Taipei: Chengwen, 1974), 6.339–341.
 53. Interestingly, this detail is found only in the official histories of the Five Dynasties. See Sun's biographies in *JWDS* and *XWDS*.
 54. *NTJS*, 7.
 55. As a matter of fact Sun had complained about this appointment, declaring that an offer of surrender to the Later Zhou would be an act of ingratitude towards the late emperor. Thus, when he was brought close to the walls of Shouzhou, a city on the Huai river that was besieged by the Zhou armies, in order to urge the besieged to surrender, he instead encouraged them to hold out against the Zhou. For this he was executed.
 56. It would certainly be worthwhile to ascertain what attitudes there were towards drinking in the whole of this period, but here I have to limit myself to the Southern Tang.
 57. Both anecdotes are found in Zheng Wenbao, *Jiangnan yuzai* 江南餘載 (*Congshu jicheng*), 1.4.
 58. *JYS*, 4.5b.
 59. Yan Xu was the son of Yan Keqiu 嚴可求, who had been chancellor of Wu. Yan Xu had gained his post through the *yin*-privilege and was related to the ruling house through his marriage to one of Li Bian's daughters. He retired in 965 from the post of chancellor without having been affiliated with any of the alleged factions at court. See *MLNTS*, 10.71; and *LYNTS*, 13.54.
 60. Wenyng 文營 (fl. late Northern Song), *Xiangshan yelu, xulu, Yuhu qinghua* 湘山野錄·續錄·玉壺清話 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 3.55–56. According to Ma Ling this poem carried the title *Qianni jindai* 千泥金帶. See *MLNTS*, 13.91.
 61. *MLNTS*, 13.90.
 62. The epitaph in *XW* 16.2b gives the 27th day of the seventh month of the *gengwu* 庚午 year, which corresponds to 31 August 970 in the Western calendar.
 63. On Xie, see Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 (578–648) et al., comp., *Jinshu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 79.2072–2077; and J. D. Frodsham, *The Murmuring Stream: The Life and Works of the Nature Poet Hsieh Ling-yün (385–433)*, *Duke of K'ang-lo*, vol. 1 (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1967), 2–5.
 64. *YHQH*, 10.104.
 65. See his biography in Shen Yue 沈約, comp., *Songshu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 42.1306–1307.
 66. *LYNTS*, 12.50. Han makes the statement to an anonymous person.
 67. Mao Xianshu 毛先舒 (1620–1688), *Nantang shiyiji* 南唐拾遺記 (*Xuehai leibian*), 4a–b.