A STORYTELLERS’ SCRIPT IN THE
Yangzhou Tradition of Western Han

Vibeke Børdahl
(NIAS, Nordic Institute of Asian Studies, University of Copenhagen)

The city of Yangzhou, situated at the junction of the Grand Canal and the Yangzi River, was formerly a city of great cultural and commercial importance, featuring, amongst many other assets, a rich intellectual milieu and proud traditions of storytelling. A number of performers of these genres are still active in Yangzhou today, and they pass on their art from master to disciple primarily by oral training. Written scripts tend to play a secondary role, but can provide major insights in the transmission and development of repertoire. This paper discusses the transmission and formal characteristics of one specific script, roughly dated to late Qing, ca. 1880-1910, but with roots dating much further back. The author purchased it from the family of Dai Buzhang (1925-2003), a highly esteemed Yangzhou storyteller whom she also had occasion to meet and to record in person during the final years of his life.

Yangzhou storytelling, Yangzhou pinghua, is an age-old oral tradition of prose-storytelling with roots as far back as the time of the famous professional performer of pinghua, Liu Jingting柳敬亭 (1592-1674), who came from and was mainly active in the area of the Lower Yangzi, where this genre has traditionally had its foothold. Among storytellers of the 20th century, there was a consensus that the oral education from master to disciple was the basic training, called ‘transmitting by mouth and teaching from the heart’, kouchuan xin shou口傳心授. Written scripts, jiaoben脚本, were a family secret, not to be revealed to colleagues, and often not discussed even between master and disciple. In the recent period, from the 1990s, some storytellers were open about the fact that some of their ancestors wrote scripts, kept them as a kind of guarantee and left them to following generations.

In the following, I want to discuss the transmission and formal characteristics of a storytellers’ script from Yangzhou, roughly dated to late Qing, ca. 1880-1910. This untitled script of 330 pages, bound in five volumes, contains the handwritten version of the repertoire of Western Han, Xi Han西漢, one of the semi-historical cycles of Yangzhou storytelling with a long history of oral transmission. In Chinese storytelling as such the theme goes back to the Song dynasty and is mentioned in sources from the Yuan dynasty as ‘Telling about Han Xin’, Shuo Han Xin說韓信. In Yangzhou storytelling, we find the theme of Western Han in five generations of unbroken oral transmission since the first half of the 19th century. Some sources also claim that Liu Jingting already had this theme among his repertoires in the first half of the seventeenth century.

Transmission of the script
When I had occasion to see this script for the first time in 2000, it belonged to Dai Buzhang戴步章 (1925-2003), a highly esteemed master of Yangzhou storytelling (Fig. 1). Dai Buzhang’s father, Dai Shanzhang戴善章 (1880-1938), and most of his uncles and brothers were all storytellers, and they
specialized in several of the large traditional repertoires and had studied not only with members of the family, but also with other masters.

The worn pages of the script were crammed with characters in stylish calligraphy as well as corrections and notes filled in between the lines. According to Dai Buzhang, the script could only be tentatively dated ca. 1880-1910, since it had been handed down through several generations, but not within the same family. The manuscript was attributed variously to his father’s teacher, the storyteller Ren Yongzhang 任永章 (Late Qing–Republic, fl.), and to the teacher of this teacher, Xu Hongzhang 許鴻章 (1847-1905). Ren Yongzhang belonged to the third generation of Yangzhou storytellers of Western Han and Xu Hongzhang to the second generation after the so-called founder Hu Zhaozhang 胡兆章 (ca.1850, fl.)*. The home-maid binding of the script contained newspaper pages that were datable to 1912. Ren Yongzhang did not have a son, and therefore he bestowed the script on his best disciple, Dai Shanzhang. At some point it had been in the possession of the renowned storyteller Fan Zizhang 樊紫章 (1848-1968).*

In his childhood, Dai Buzhang often listened to his father’s performances of this saga. After his father’s death in 1938, Dai Buzhang studied Western Han with another master of this repertoire, Jiang Shoushan 江壽山 (1888-1961), but before he started this period of study, he – as he told me – read through the script as a preparation. He had no difficulty in reading the text, because he was already very familiar with the contents. He used the script for memorization of the poems; otherwise, he had little use for it. Nevertheless, he pointed out that he himself had made quite a few annotations in the margins of the script, emendations and amplifications.

Table I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School of Western Han¹⁰</th>
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<tr>
<td>Sun Ganzhang</td>
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<td>Zhang Shan’an</td>
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<td>Dai Shanzhang*</td>
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<td>Wang Shanhe</td>
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<td>Dai Shanshan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hu Zhaozhang — Xu Hongzhang*? —</td>
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<td>Liu Chunshan</td>
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<td>Jiang Shoushan</td>
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<td>Dai Buzhang*</td>
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<td>Liu Xiaoshan</td>
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Dai Buzhang performed this saga during a period in the 1940s and early 1950s. Then he lost interest in it and changed to other repertoires, and so he forgot all the poems. When performing episodes from the Western Han repertoire, he would not be able to remember the poems, so he would just leave them out, he said. In 2003 he gave a performance of a small episode from the repertoire that corresponded to a passage photographed from the script.¹¹ This script was kept in the family, more for the sake of honouring the ancestors than for its practical use, I was told. Dai Buzhang, however, on this and later occasions seemingly treated his ‘family treasure’ with utter nonchalance, banging the dusty and torn...
volumes onto the table with a loud crash, and telling me several times over that these old things were no use. This comment should, however, in my opinion, by no means be taken at face value. Dai Bu-zhang belonged to a school of particularly jocular storytelling, and his character and behaviour seemed completely saturated with a deep sense of humour. I would rather tend to explain the fact that I was allowed not only to see, but also to have the script photographed, as a sign of his unusual generosity. His attitude of ‘neglect’ and ‘ridicule’ towards the script, could very well be a way of expressing, albeit with a smile, his deep anxiety for the future of the art of his forefathers.

The Western Han script and the storyteller’s manner
In the Chinese novels of the Ming and Qing dynasties the style of the ‘storyteller’s manner’ is most obvious. This ‘simulacrum of storytelling’ is generally defined as:
1) Textual subdivision into ‘sessions’ (huì 回)
2) Alternation of prose and verse
3) Narrator type
4) Narrator’s comment and simulated dialogue with the audience
5) Storyteller’s stock phrases (taoyu 套語):
   a) A fixed set of pre-verse markers
   b) A fixed set of transitional meta-narrative phrases
   c) A more or less fixed set of simulated questions

There has been a long-standing discussion about the status of the ‘manner’. Was it a reflection of the oral storyteller’s habits taken over by the genre of the novel, or was it a literary form created explicitly for the novel as a ‘false’ imitation of oral style? This question will perhaps never find a solution. However, the style of true storyteller’s scripts has never been part of the discussion. Do they reflect the ‘storyteller’s manner’? And if so, in what respects? In the following, we shall take a closer look at a true script of Chinese storytelling. Western Han script of the Dai family is a traditional script, which was in use as such through several generations in Yangzhou.

Authorship and collectively created art
Most of the traditional oral repertories of Yangzhou storytelling cannot be referred to an author. They have been transmitted for several hundred years from master to disciple, and it is not possible to find the ultimate source. The oral tradition is in a continuously changing state. Nobody knows exactly how the previous masters would tell the story. What was left out and what was added in subsequent storytellers’ performances? Who has the right to the spoken word? It is not possible to speak of ‘authorship’ in the usual sense. When Liu Jingting is called ‘the father of storytelling’ in China, this only means that he was famous and had followers. However, it is obvious that he did not ‘create’ his repertoires. He lived in a milieu of storytelling, learned his art from others, told traditional stories, just like those who came before and after him. That he had particular skills as a performer seems without doubt, although not all of his chroniclers liked him.

The fact that many oral repertoires are shared not only within various genres of performance, but also with written genres such as novel and short story, does not automatically mean that the ‘authorship’ of these stories goes to the authors/editors of the written genres. We know that many of the traditional novels, such as Water Margin and Three Kingdoms, had background in earlier storytelling. The relationship between the written and the oral genres is highly intricate, and for the written PRINTED editions, authorship and editorship are difficult to distinguish. Even though there do exist examples of storytelling repertoires that clearly started with one well-known performer as the oral ‘author’, his stamp of authorship will generally soon be watered out, as his disciples continue the oral tradition, adding, subtracting, changing the story according to their memory and skills.

Some of the oral repertoires of Yangzhou storytelling have literary counterparts in the form of
printed novels, usually anonymous. These novels carry some characteristics from storytelling, but they
can hardly be considered faithful “recordings” of oral storytelling. They are based on storytelling,
but their language and layout are designed with a view to a reading audience.14 These printed novels
may or may not have had a previous life as storytellers’ scripts, but we have no sources about this. In
their present form, they belong to the genre of novels, printed and circulated for the reading public,
not for the use of storytellers.

The text of our present investigation is a different kind of text: A unique manuscript that was never
printed and, as far as we know, never copied by hand. The storytellers who owned it kept it as a secret
‘capital’ and handed it down to their best disciples during four or five generations. It is not completely
clear who wrote it originally:

1) Was it a storyteller, who wrote it for his own use and for his disciples?
2) Was it a literary man in the circles of the storytellers, who wrote it for his storyteller friend(s) to
serve as script for the performers?
3) Was it written with a view to publication as a literary piece for reading?
4) Was it written in a completely different way?

I think we can rule out 3) and 4). There is nothing in the transmission of the script that would point to
these possibilities. 1) This situation is the most likely setting for the creating of the script. Moreover,
it is what Dai Buzhang told me as his opinion. 2) This possibility cannot be ruled out at present. How-
ever, if we take 1) or 2) as the most probable settings for the writing of the script, other questions arise:

a) Was the writer of the script dependent on oral transmission for penning down the story? Did he
write it from his memory of having heard it, or from having studied the repertoire with a teacher?
b) Did he write it based on some history book(s) he had at hand? Was it, therefore meant, not as a
reflection of oral storytelling, but as a ‘guide’ for oral performance?
c) Was it written on the basis of both methods, i.e. from remembrance of oral performance, but
also with basis in popular history books and other written materials?

Although we can rest assured that this script served as a genuine script for several generations of ac-
tive storytellers of the Western Han or Xi Han repertoire, we must bear in mind that such scripts had
perhaps rather limited usage. The storytellers of the generation born ca 1915-1940, mostly declared
that scripts meant very little to them.15 The oral teaching from master to disciple meant everything.

Families who owned such handwritten materials, kept them as a sign of prestige. Dai Buzhang was,
however, a witness that he ‘read through’ the whole script before beginning to study the repertoire
with his new teacher. He also used the script for memorizing verses. The condition of the script itself
points to much wear and tear. The script has not been safeguarded and left unused during the more
than a hundred years of its existence.

As a genuine script for storytellers who were educated according to the good old rules of Yangzhou
storytelling during the first half of the twentieth century, it is therefore interesting to find out how the
‘storyteller’s manner’— if any – is manifested in this document.

Textual subdivision
The handwritten manuscript of the Xi Han script is arranged in five volumes of paper notebooks, bound
in newspaper. The first and last pages of the volumes are so worn that one cannot see how the various
volumes of the script started, and we do not even have the title of the script, if there was any. On the
newspaper binding, each volume is numbered and variously called ‘booklet’ (ben 本), ‘volume’ (ce
册) or ‘scroll’ (juan 卷), ‘book’ (shu 書). In the text of the script, there is no mention of ‘storytelling
session’ (yi chang shu 一場書, yi tian shu 一天書), ‘return, session, chapter’ (hui 回) or the like. The
division into ben, ce, juan or shu seems to be according to the amount of pages of each notebook, and
Cover for the third volume of the Xi Han script. Scanning has apparently nothing to do with the division into storyteller’s sessions. However, on the cover one finds sloppy notation about the contents of the volume (not in the original hand of the script). Maybe the writer of the script tried to fill in major units of content into each notebook. This, however, seems to have little to do with the ‘storyteller’s manner’ of dividing a text into hui (returns, sessions, chapters) corresponding roughly to the content of one performance in the storyteller’s house. As for textual subdivision, I would therefore conclude, preliminarily, that there is no trace of the oral habits of performance units in the script. Likewise, there is no trace of the novelistic ‘storyteller’s manner’ in the way the script is organized into sections.

Alternation of prose and verse

Alternation of prose and verse, one of the important aspects of the ‘manner’, is decidedly typical of the script. Poems (shi 詩) and other kinds of poetry and serious statements (biao 表) are inserted regularly into the prose, or one might say that the prose is inserted between the poetry. Poetry is often introduced by markers and stock phrases, as we shall see below.

Many of the poems describe the scenery of military ceremonies or battles. Poems and other set pieces such as memorandums, letters, etc., are indented in the manuscript, and obviously, such set pieces serve a major function in the whole script.
Narrator type and style

From the narrative aspect, the script contains short third-person summaries of action and description (covered narrator) and dialogue in direct speech. The narrative portions are written in a highly detached and abrupt literary style (wenyan 文言) and personal pronouns are evaded. The dialogue passages take up large portions of the space. The speech of the characters is also coined in stern literary style, but the speakers express themselves directly (not covered) and use the pronouns ‘I, me’ (wo 我 (186), wu 吾 (198)) and ‘you’ (ni 你 (15), er 尔 (189)).

The language is generally characterized by a terse, simple literary style, including a number of grammatical markers, pronouns and other vocabulary typical of literary Chinese: zhi 之 (2043), he 何 (651), wu 無 (472), wei 未 (258), bi 碧 (175), yi 矣 (171), nai 奈 (47). The language imitates the style of early historical works, not only in the selection of tag word for ‘he said’ (yue 曰), and in pronouns of address between the king and his generals (qing 卿, bixia 陛下, jun 君, chen 臣), but also in the monosyllabic staccato rhythm of most phrases and sentences. Four- and six-syllable expressions are dominant. Even if some of the sentences are also possible in Modern Standard Chinese and some compounds (zhunbei 准备 (2), duihu 队伍 (9)) are from modern usage, there are exceedingly few features of modern vernacular.

As for expressions coined according to Yangzhou dialect (Y.D.) grammar, there are only a few single instances to be considered: Y.D. ‘go home’ (jiaqu 家去 (1) (Modern Standard Chinese (MSC): huijia 回家); Y.D. ‘look at’ (yi wang 一看 (5) (MSC: yi kan 一看); Y.D. ‘cannot’ (bu de 不得) (high frequency) (MSC: bu neng 不能). More research is necessary to determine how far these few
occurrences can be taken as dialectal in the present script, since some expressions that are dialectal if compared to MSC, are much less so, if seen in a wenyan flavoured context. For example, in present-day Y.D. ‘today’ is jinri 今日 or jinge 今個 (MSC: jintian 今天). In wenyan, however, jinri 今日, is highly frequent. Therefore, this expression cannot be categorized as dialectal in the context of a text in wenyan style.

The handwriting of the script is characterized by a relatively high frequency of so-called ‘vulgar characters’ (su zì 俗字) or ‘wrong characters’ (cuo zì 錯字), and many are homonymic loans. Sometimes the homonymic loans point to influence of the Y.D. pronunciation. Further study is necessary to determine the spread of such cases in the text of the script. The unauthorized forms of characters in the script are indicators of the general habit of simplification of characters in handwriting at the time. The loan characters are symptoms of writing based on oral performance rather than on copying from written works.

Narrator’s comment and simulated conversation with the audience

As for the question of narrator’s comment and simulated conversation with the audience, we have so far only found a couple of examples in the text, which might indicate this kind of comment. The first example is from a note at the right edge of page 1-26 of the script:

(Here one should) explain how the Chen family is living in the mountain cave and …

交待陈宅居山穴，附近野獸，為陈趕走，因陈祭母妻子女尚有三年堅持，家中務農，有餘糧，其他樹口果根，山桃，野杏充飢。

This comment, written as an addition, i.e. a note in the margin of the text, could hardly be anything else than a reminder to the storyteller-performer or his disciple while using the script for preparation of performance. It is not a ‘simulated conversation’ with the audience.
From a note on the padding of the cover for the third volume of the script (page 3-02):

After that, (one should) perform how Zhang Liang convinced all the feudal lords of the various states to oppose Chu.

This comment, too, written on the cover of the volume, must be understood as a note for the storyteller-performer, not as something to be explained to the audience. Both examples belong to the inserted comments, written in another hand. Therefore, they can hardly be considered to belong to the script in its original state. It is obvious that one must distinguish between the original hand of the script and the commentator.

### Storyteller’s stock phrases

Storyteller’s stock phrases can be found already in the early ‘folk books’ or ‘plain tales’ (pinghua 平話) of the Yuan period (1279-1368). Among these early fixed phrases, we find several that are also used in the present Western Han or Xi Han script. With a few exceptions, those found in the present script were used also in the genre of the early novel (zhanghui xiaoshuo 章回小說): 22

a) Pre-verse markers found in plain tale, novel and Xi Han script: ‘indeed’ (zheng shi 正是)(107); ‘there is a poem that testifies to this’ (you shi wei zheng 有詩為証) (57); ‘behold’ (dan jian 但見) (9); ‘the poem says’ (shi yue 詩曰) (1); pre-verse markers found in plain tale and Xi Han script: ‘how did it look?’ (zen jian de 怎見得) (36); ‘… a stanza as follows’ (…yishou …一首) (4). 24

b) Transitional meta-narrative formulas found in plain tale, novel and Xi Han script: ‘just look’ (zhi
‘we shall not speak more of this’ (Bu ti 低 / 题) (7); ‘meanwhile, let’s tell’ (Qie shuo 且说) (3). Both in the plain tales and in the novel we find the formula ‘let us just tell’ (Zhi shuo 只说), but this form is not found in the Xi Han script. Here we find, however, a very similar formula: ‘let us now relate’ (Zhi yan 只言) (19). This wording seems to convey the literary style (Wenyan 文言) that flavours the script throughout.

c) Simulated question formulas and storyteller’s asides: ‘how did it look?’ (Zen jiande Nom 只得) (36); ‘let me explain’ (Jiaodai 交代) (2). The formula ‘how did it look’ has two functions, both as a pre-verse marker and as a storyteller’s simulated question to his audience. The form occurs in the plain tales, but not in the novels that are scrutinized here. ‘Let me explain’ is found sometimes in modern Yangzhou storytelling, especially in the edited book versions of Yangzhou storytelling, but does not have counterparts in the plain tale or novel. In the Xi Han script, zen jiande is used as pre-verse marker, but it does not seem to have the function of ‘simulated question to the audience’. The expression jiaodai is only found twice in the script and both times in added comment, serving as reminders to the performer, not ‘simulated conversation’ with the audience.

In the script, we find a regular use of four pre-verse markers, reminiscent of the style of the plain tale and the novel. Transitional meta-narrative formulas are sparingly used, and only a few from the usual set of formulas in the novel occur. ‘Storyteller’s simulated questions or conversations with the audience’ are absent.

Conclusion
From the above preliminary investigation of the Xi Han script, I think one can draw some tentative conclusions.

1) The script does not pretend to be a ‘reproduction’ of actual performance. It has no imitation of sessions in the storyteller’s house. It only records in a short and terse style the happenings of the story, inserting the dialogues, verse and set pieces that belong to the saga.

2) The alternation of prose and verse is clearly reflected in the script. We may suspect from oral performance tradition that the prose portions were meant to be performed at much greater length, while the verse must be learned by heart. It is not unlikely that dialogue, verse and set pieces were the raison d’etre for the script. Some scripts had only verse and set pieces. The present script as well as the scripts with only verse and set pieces do not mirror oral performance, but serve as aide-mémoire to performance.

3) The narrator of the written script is totally imperceptible (covered third person narrator). This phenomenon is closely connected to the kind of language used in the script, the simple Wenyan style of history writing. The writer of the script apparently is not interested in reproducing the actual spoken style of storytelling. The fixed portions, such as imposing dialogue, poetry, statements, etc., as far as we can test from modern performance, do reflect the actually spoken words-in-performance, but there is little reason to think that the storytellers would also narrate the saga in the Wenyan style of the script. It is more likely that the compressed style of narration was a kind of shorthand, as well as a habit of written style. This was not a reflection of the actual oral storyteller’s linguistic habits, and it was certainly at a distance from the ‘manner’ of the novel, too.

4) In contrast to the ‘manner’ of the novel, the Xi Han script does not in any way pretend to mirror storyteller’s communication directly with the audience. This feature is totally absent from the script. The few examples of ‘explaining’ (Jiaodai) are found, not in the hand of the original script writer, but in a couple of notes added by a later hand, in order to remind the performer, not the audience, of
certain portions to tell more in detail.

5) The usage of ‘storyteller’s stock phrases’ (taoyu) in the script is particularly intriguing. Were the stock phrases part of the linguistic idiom of ‘history writing’ in simple wenyan, adding a few of the most general stock phrases in order to demarcate verse and transitions in the text? Verse and set pieces are marked by indentation, so that the formulas are somehow superfluous. Were the taoyu mainly part of a written tradition of recording oral repertoires? They could have had very little to do with the actual oral habits of the performers of Xi Han. We know that storytellers of Yangzhou storytelling in the late twentieth century hardly used such taoyu during performance. Occasionally, there might occur a single instance, but these expressions were in general not part of the Yangzhou storytellers’ idiom of performance. Obviously, the writer of the script was giving his text a ‘finish’ of storytelling (‘the storyteller’s manner) by using these taoyu, but we cannot so far know exactly what the relationship was between these expressions in the written script and the tradition of performance during the late Qing, when the original script was written down.

After reading the Western Han script, one has the impression that the later ‘hand’ seems to have had closer ties to storytelling than the original writer does. The language of the original scriptwriter is coined in literary Chinese (wenyan), often in an exceptionally terse and staccato variant of wenyan. This characteristic seems to point to the function of the text as aide-mémoire, furnishing only the barest narrative of the plot, providing ‘catchwords’ for performance, but not serving its reader the pleasure of reading for enjoyment. Moreover, the storyteller in performance was expected to elaborate on the contents of each episode, something the performance by Dai Buzhang in 2003 gives ample evidence about. One might at times wonder if the original script is less than ‘intelligible’ because of being written in a sloppy way by someone who did not always understand what he was writing. Was the person who wrote the script basing himself on knowledge of the oral tradition? Is the script a kind of shorthand version ‘written as remembered’ from the oral performance tradition? The homophonic characters point to this situation. Alternatively, could the scripter be copying from written sources, such as other storyteller’s scripts that would also contain such loan characters? Maybe the scripter was copying from another manuscript that was difficult to read. Could he depend on printed works, such as popular historical texts? This question will be elucidated in the following chapter.

Notes
1 Cf. BREUER 2013: 66-98.

2 The primary status of oral transmission and the ancillary status of scripts in Yangzhou storytelling are also characteristic of many other of the orally transmitted genres of China, cf. IGUCHI 2003: 94-112, see also the introduction to the paper by Junko Iguchi in this volume.

3 About the usage of scripts in Chinese storytelling in general and in Yangzhou storytelling in particular, cf. BØRDAHL 2005 and BØRDAHL 2009.

4 After the CHIME conference in Venice 2014, this script has been published in a facsimile edition, cf. BØRDAHL AND GE 2017. The present text was last revised in June 2018.

5 Oral repertoires of storytelling, shuoshu 說書 [telling texts/telling books], are in Chinese called shu 書 [books/texts] or shumu 書目 [items of books/texts]. Oral repertoires are in this article written in small capitals, in order to distinguish them from book titles, written in italics as usual.

6 Cf. CHEN Ruheng 1962: 61. Works of the popular written tradition of Western Han are discussed in Liangyan Ge’s article in the present volume, “Han Xin Kills His Benefactor: The Evolution of an Episode from the Popular Western Han Narrative Tradition”.
In Yangzhou storytelling, we find this theme as a school of storytelling since the first half of the nineteenth century, cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 283, 350. Some sources also claim that already Liu Jingting had this theme on his repertoire in the first half of the seventeenth century, cf. WEI Ren and WEI Minghua 1985: 15.

Works on the history of Yangzhou storytelling present the lineages of storytellers arranged like family trees, often with a single storyteller at the beginning, cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 344-353. It should, however, be kept in mind that although storytelling was often a family business, the relationship between master and disciples was mostly based on an arrangement for teaching disciples outside the family. Therefore, there is in general no biological ‘hereditary’ relationship. Many famous masters had a handful of disciples. Moreover, many young storytellers would learn from several masters. The tidy pictures of storytelling ‘trees’ of lineage are therefore a kind of conventional ‘fiction’ about the development of certain ‘schools of storytelling’. Since the historical sources on storytellers’ lives are few and scattered, there is a tendency to arrange each ‘school’ with only one storyteller at the beginning and honor his family by naming the school with their family name. Even though this corresponds to a certain reality in the relationship between the storytellers of a certain age, it might give a wrong impression about ‘authorship’ for the repertoire. The repertoires are usually much older than the ‘first’ storytellers of a ‘school’ are. This is evident from the lists of individual storytellers and their repertoires; cf. *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 318-338.

It is not clear if the script was owned by Fan Zizhang before it was given to Dai Shanzhang, or if this happened already before it was handed down to Ren Yongzhang. In the latter case, this would indicate that the script was older and probably authored by Xu Hongzhang.

Storytellers who have owned the script on Western Han, according to the memory of the Dai family, are marked with an asterisk *. The table is according to *Yangzhou quyi zhi* 1993: 350. Information about the storytellers, ibid. pp. 283, 292, 288, 321; cf also BØRDAHL and ROSS 2002, Life stories.

The performance was recorded on 24 October 2003, in the home of Dai Buzhang in Biluochun Street in the old storytellers’ quarter in Yangzhou. The corresponding passage from the script has been treated in several articles and a book; cf. BØRDAHL 2005, 2009 and 2013, Chapter 9. My friend, the late Jette Ross (1938-2001), photographed part of the script in Yangzhou, 2000. In 2003, the author was able to buy the script from the family of Dai Buzhang with a view to research. The whole script was scanned in 2004 and a copy donated to the family. In 2013, Liangyan Ge and the author together started a new research project concerning this material. In cooperation with a doctoral student of history, Wang Yalong, the whole script was transcribed into computer characters. Therefore, the material is now in searchable form, cf. BØRDAHL AND GE 2017.
This phenomenon is discussed in BØRDAHL 2013: 239-240.

See GE Liangyan 2001: 112.

Cf. the article by Liangyan Ge in the present volume.

For the present investigation, I shall take three early editions of the Shuihu zhuàn 水滸傳 and the earliest edition of Jin Ping Mei cihua 金瓶梅詞話 as representative of the early Ming novel; cf. BØRDAHL 2013, Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Most of the expressions are fairly equally distributed over the five volumes of the whole manuscript. But zen jiande occurs, with one exception, only in the third and fifth volume.

See Børdahl 2013: 36, 43, and 124. The expression ‘it was really’ (que shì 卻是), sometimes used as pre-verse marker in the plain tales, seems to be used occasionally also in this function in the Xi HAN script, but this needs further study of the script. The use of ‘…a stanza as follows’ reminds more of the style of the plain tales, where this formula has many variations, all ending with ‘…a stanza as follows’, cf. BØRDAHL 2013:36.

See BØRDAHL 2013: 125. ‘We shall not speak more of this’ (bu ti 不提) is in the Xi HAN script sometimes followed by the pre-verse marker, ‘indeed’ (zheng shi 順式).


Dai Buzhang owned some scripts of this type, which Jette Ross photographed in 2000.


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