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A Comparative History of Travel: Late-Ming and Early Modern Travel Writers in China (1550-1644)

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Abstract

Early modern Europe and late-Ming China were societies which witnessed considerable advancements in transportation and communications infrastructure. Such developments enabled the proliferation of travel, alongside the creation, publication and dissemination of travel accounts, written by well-travelled and scholarly individuals.

This thesis focuses on the accounts of travel to and in China by four early modern European writers—Galeote Pereira, Gaspar da Cruz, Martin de Rada and Matteo Ricci—and three late-Ming Chinese writers—Wang Shixing, Yuan Zhongdao and Xu Xiake. One of its aims is to address the relative lack of a comparative perspective in current research on travel writing by offering an intercultural account of European and Chinese travel texts. This approach allows the juxtaposition, across different travel cultures and literary traditions, of accounts relating to the same time period (1550-1644) and geographical space (Ming China).

The assumption that Chinese and European travel accounts from this period are incommensurable due to differences in context, culture, purpose and form is challenged throughout. Instead, the thesis establishes a sustained conversation between Chinese and European travel accounts of late-Ming China by arguing that there were broad thematic similarities across the travel texts, ranging from writing the self into travel accounts, descriptions of travel infrastructure, the utopian impulse in travel texts, and ethnographic writing. This thematic approach allows for a focussed reading of the travel texts, locating the similarities and differences between Chinese and European accounts on a given topic—and analysing what these texts reveal about the writers' approaches and their historical and cultural contexts.

This thesis contributes to the ongoing discussion about 'global' travel writing. Travel writing scholars in Western academia have challenged Eurocentrism in travel writing studies and have sought to broaden the field by introducing texts from various cultural and linguistic traditions, providing historical overviews and translations of selected texts. This thesis seeks to go one step further in 'global' travel writing, by drawing Chinese and European travel texts into a conversation, allowing new insights to emerge from old texts.

Zusammenfassung

Das frühneuzeitliche Europa und das China der späten Ming-Dynastie waren Gesellschaften, die von umfangreichen Fortschritten in der Transport- und Kommunikationsinfrastruktur geprägt waren. Solche Entwicklungen ermöglichten nicht nur eine Ausweitung des Reiseverkehrs, sondern auch die Veröffentlichung und Verbreitung von Reiseberichten, die von weitgereisten und gelehrten Personen verfasst wurden.

Die vorliegende Dissertationsschrift konzentriert sich auf Reiseberichte nach bzw. in China von vier frühneuzeitlichen europäischen Autoren—Galeote Pereira, Gaspar da Cruz, Martin de Rada und Matteo Ricci—und drei chinesischen Autoren der späten Ming-Dynastie—Wang Shixing, Yuan Zhongdao und Xu Xiake. Ein wichtiges Ziel der Arbeit ist es, erstmals eine vergleichende Darstellung europäischer und chinesischer Reiseberichte vorzulegen und damit die bisherige Forschung um eine interkulturelle Perspektive zu ergänzen. Dieser Ansatz ermöglicht die Gegenüberstellung von Berichten aus derselben Zeit (1550-1644) und demselben geografischen Raum (Ming China), die gleichwohl aus verschiedenen Reisekulturen und literarischen Traditionen stammen.

Dabei wird die Annahme in Frage gestellt, dass chinesische und europäische Reiseberichte aus dieser Zeit aufgrund von grundlegenden Unterschieden in Kontext, Kultur, Zweck und Form nicht miteinander verglichen werden können. Stattdessen etabliert die Arbeit einen vielschichtigen Dialog zwischen chinesischen und europäischen Reiseberichten über das China der späten Ming-Dynastie, indem sie argumentiert, dass es umfassende thematische Parallelen in den Reisetexten gibt, die vom Schreiben des Selbst, über Beschreibungen der Reiseinfrastruktur und ethnographische Passagen bis zum utopischen Impuls der Reisetexte reichen. Ein solcher thematischer Ansatz erlaubt eine fokussierte Lektüre der Reisetexte, mittels derer die Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede zwischen chinesischen und europäischen Berichten, mithin die Relevanz der jeweiligen biographischen, historischen und kulturellen Kontexte, herausgearbeitet werden können.

Auf diese Weise trägt die Arbeit zur aktuellen Diskussion über "globale" Reiseliteratur bei. In der jüngeren Reiseberichtforschung sind eurozentrische Perspektiven kritisiert worden. Man hat versucht, das Feld zu erweitern, indem Texte aus unterschiedlichen kulturellen und sprachlichen Traditionen in die Analyse einbezogen werden, ergänzt durch größere historische Überblicke und Übersetzungen ausgewählter Texte. Diese Arbeit zielt darauf ab, einen Schritt weiter zu gehen, indem chinesische und europäische Reisetexte zueinander in Beziehung gesetzt werden, so dass aus alten Texten neue Erkenntnisse gezogen werden können.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements **5**

Explanatory Notes **6**

Introduction **7**

Comparative Travel Writing **11**

Literature Review **15**

Methodology **18**

Thesis Overview **22**

Corpus and Travel Writers **24**

Chinese Travel Texts **27**

European Travel Texts **29**

Chapter One:

Motivations for Chinese and European Travel in Late-Ming China **32**

1.1 Philosophies of Travel **37**

1.2 Travel and Society—Early Modern Europe and Late-Ming China **44**

1.3 Travel and Career **47**

1.3.1 The Chinese Literati—Travel as Pastime and Occupation **48**

1.3.2 European Travellers—Travel for Career and Mission **53**

1.4 Shaping the Social Self **57**

1.5 The Religious Aspect of Travel **67**

1.6 Conclusion **75**

Chapter Two:

Boats, Sedans and Courier Stations: Travel Infrastructure in Late-Ming China **77**

2.1 Travel Infrastructure in Early Modern Europe and Late-Ming China **81**

2.2 Travel by Water **88**

2.2.1 Boats: Trade, Wealth and Piracy **89**

2.2.2 The Narrative Functions of Ships and Boats **94**

2.2.3 The Social Functions of Boats **97**

2.2.4 The Poetics of Boats **102**

2.3 Interlude: Waterways and Pathways **105**

2.4 Overland Travel: Postal Services, Distance and Mobility **106**

2.5 Services Surrounding Travel—Food, Lodging, Maps and Guides **114**
2.6 Conclusion: Bridging the Divide **119**

Chapter Three:
Locating Utopias in Landscapes and Cityscapes **122**
3.1 Introduction **122**
3.2 Comparing Landscapes—Natural and Built **125**
3.2.1 'Like a Painting'—Describing Landscape in Ming Travel Texts **128**
3.2.2 Landscapes and Cityscapes—Early Modern European Travellers **137**
3.3 Travel Writing and Utopian Writing **147**
3.3.1 Ideal Societies: From *Utopia* to *Peach Blossom Spring* **149**
3.3.2 European Idealisations of China **151**
3.3.3 Chinese Travellers and *Peach Blossom Spring* **159**
3.4 Conclusion **164**

Chapter Four:
Parallel Ethnographies: Comprehending Foreign Cultures **166**
4.1 Introduction **166**
4.2 Travel Territories **171**
4.3 'Eyewitness Accounts' **175**
4.4 Conceptualising 'Self' and 'Other' **187**
4.4.1 The Han-Chinese and the *Yi* Barbarian **192**
4.4.2 The Early Modern 'Languages' of Civilisation and Christianity **198**
4.5 Conclusion **206**

At Journey's End: A Global Age of Travel Cultures **208**
Bibliography **213**
Declaration **227**

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Explanatory Notes

In the thesis, Ming China refers to both the dynasty (1368-1644) and the territories of China under the rule of the Ming emperors. Where relevant, lifespan dates are provided in parenthesis after the first mention of a person. I use the *Hanyu pinyin* system for romanisation, unless they have been otherwise quoted in the primary texts (e.g. 'Fucheo' instead of Fuzhou) and in instances where alternative spellings are more widely used (e.g. Canton, Taoism). Chinese characters are supplied at the first mention of personal names, place names and book titles, where necessary. For greater clarity, Chinese characters immediately follow the translation or the romanisation, when necessary to help readers identify the terms used. Simplified Chinese characters are used only in references to Mainland Chinese secondary sources published after the Simplification movement in the 1950s. All other characters are rendered in traditional Chinese. All translations which have not been attributed are my own.

Late-Ming Units of Measurements

1 里 *li*: 536m

1 丈 *zhang*: 320cm

1 卷 *juan*: fasiscle/volume=a unit of book-division

1 两 *liang*: tael=36.9g of silver

Late-Ming Dynastic Reign Periods (1550-1644)

Jiajing 嘉靖	1521-67
Longqing 隆慶	1567-72
Wanli 萬曆	1573-1620
Taichang 泰昌	1620
Tianqi 天啟	1621-27
Chongzheng 崇禎	1628-44

Introduction

In the early modern period, China acquired a special place in the European imagination. Soon after the Portuguese arrived in China via maritime routes in 1517, they established trade relations, took inventory of the size of the country, and shipped samples of Chinese goods such as tea and porcelain to Europe. Accompanying the economic interest in Chinese goods was a cultural interest in China. Many sixteenth-century European travel writers described China's governance, economy and intellectual life in an adulatory manner, and saw in the wealth, peace and well-ordered state of China a promising model for Europe's future economic and political developments.[1] Travel accounts of sailors, traders and missionaries were eagerly consumed by readers with an interest in China. Europeans who wrote about China such as Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza (1545-1618) and Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) enjoyed great fame and a wide readership, with their works being published multiple times in different languages and distributed throughout Europe. By the end of the seventeenth century, after nearly two centuries of interaction with China, numerous books had been produced, published, reissued and translated in major European languages by European missionaries, merchants, sea captains, sailors, soldiers and travellers. Clearly, early modern Europeans travelling through China was fascinating material, both for readers then, as it is for researchers now.

Yet Europeans were not the only ones recording their travels in China. In the same period, Chinese travellers were themselves in the midst of a 'travel boom', journeying throughout the Chinese empire. The early modern period in Europe largely corresponds with China's late-Ming dynasty (about 1540-1644) during which, as historians have pointed out, social and political changes led to major developments in the cultural landscape, one of which was an increased interest in travelling and the creation of travel and geographical writings.[2] A rich corpus of travel writing was produced, published and disseminated in this period, very similar to the situation in Europe. Xu Xiake (1587-1641) and Wang Shixing (1547-98) are two prominent travel writers of this period, widely praised for their wide-ranging travels through China and their important geographical works. Yuan Zhongdao (1570-1624), a renowned writer in his lifetime also wrote many texts about his experiences and reflections on travelling. As a region that stimulated much

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[1] Donald F. Lach and Edwin van Kley, *Asia in the Making of Europe*, *Volume III: A Century of Advance, Book 4: East Asia,* 3 vols (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1965-1993), III (1993), p. 1566.

[2] Richard E. Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), p. 31.

interest and an abundance of travel writing, capturing the imagination of both Chinese and European travellers, late-Ming China is a crucial geographic location in the study of travel culture and travel writing of this period.

The global turn in the humanities has led to an interest by Western academia in extra-European regions and cultures. This has brought a global perspective to the early modern period, now perceived as an era of nascent global interconnections, ushering in the movement across long distances of peoples, goods and ideas.[3] Global historians describe the early modern world as closely interlinked, chiefly characterised by a series of worldwide processes which impacted the economic, social, political and even cultural trajectories of various early modern societies. These global trends include the establishment of global maritime routes, the rise of a world economy, the growth of large, stable states, population growth, the intensification of land use and the diffusion of technology.[4] Global history is at once noted, admired and criticised for its bold linkages of events, institutions, its tendency to generalise phenomena across large spatial and temporal measures. Rather than viewing the early modern world from a local perspective—as separate regions, culturally and geographically removed from one another—it adopts a bird's-eye view of history, identifying long-term similarities in social trends, as well as political and economic institutions.[5]

In the past two decades, in line with the 'global' turn, scholars have introduced travel texts from outside of the European tradition to challenge the notion that Europeans were unique in their mobility and curiosity of the world, whereas non-Europeans were static and immobile.[6] It is an exciting development in travel writing studies to see the publication of the updated 2016 edition of *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, edited by Carl Thompson. This volume addresses the broadening of travel writing studies, since 2000, to encompass various cultural and linguistic traditions. These include historical overviews of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Indian and African travel writing in Part II of the volume. Thompson points out that 'scholars have begun to recognize and assess the often

[3] See for instance *Comparative Early Modernities, 1100-1800*, ed. by David Porter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 1-3.
[4] John Richards, 'Early Modern India and World History', *Journal of World History*, 8 (1997), 197-209 (pp. 197-99).
[5] Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, 4 vols (New York: Academic Press, 1974-2011), I (1974), pp. 40-42.
[6] Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discovery 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 2-3.

extensive and venerable traditions of travel writing that exist in many non-Western cultures, thereby countering the impression often inadvertently given in earlier studies of the form, that mobility and cross-cultural curiosity and commentary were somehow uniquely Western phenomena.'[7] While this research is still at the 'early "recovery" stage', to borrow Thompson's phrase,[8] they provide a widening perspective and necessitate a re-evaluation and readjustment of previous conclusions, theories and paradigms. In light of such developments, this thesis is interested in the broad comparison of travel, travel cultures and travel writing in an early modern world characterised by unprecedented mobility (for a select and privileged group). It compares Chinese and European travel cultures, as Chinese and European travellers were conducting their travels in the same time period and geographical space, creating written records about their experiences.

By travel culture, I refer to the practices surrounding travel and travel writing that were shaped by the social, historical and political contexts of the traveller's home society. The details surrounding the preparation for the voyage, the modes of transport, the routes and itineraries, what travellers wore, what they were instructed to see and how they wrote about travel, were all part and parcel of travel culture. Practices around travel were never mere coincidence, but were formed and informed by society and discourse. In her work on travel and travel texts, Judith Adler has called for the treatment of travel as 'performed art'.[9] Speaking out against the conflation of the travel experience with the travel text, and against the dissonance between the conventions surrounding the production of travel texts and their interpretation, Adler postulates the need for a 'sociology of travel'. She asserts that 'all travel conventions bear upon human movement through culturally conceived space, movement which is deliberately undertaken in order to yield meaning pertinent to the travellers and their publics. Space and time—and the traveller's own body as it moves through both—are baseline elements of all travel performance.'[10] To study and appraise travel texts fairly, Adler explains that the social and historical contexts of the travellers under discussion—their audience, goals and expectations must be considered, to prevent an anachronistic analysis, in which researchers project their own assumptions upon historical travel texts. My definition of travel culture closely follows Adler's 'sociology of travel'. I

[7] Carl Thompson, 'Introduction', in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Carl Thompson (London and New York: Routledge, 2016), pp. xvi-xx (p. xvii).
[8] Ibid.
[9] Judith Adler, 'Travel as Performed Art', *American Journal of Sociology,* 94.6 (1989), 1366-91 (p. 1368).
[10] Judith Adler, 'Origins of Sightseeing', in *Travel Culture: Essays on What Makes Us Go*, ed. by Carol Traynor Williams (Westport: Praeger, 1998), pp. 3-23 (p. 3).

demonstrate throughout the thesis that travellers carried the weight and expectations of their home cultures, which informed how they travelled, what they saw and how they wrote. I agree with Adler that travel should be analysed as a sum of its parts—historical, social, cultural, economic and religious—taking note of the complex worlds in which the travellers lived, journeyed and wrote.

In the global early modern period, numerous travel cultures coexisted and this thesis compares the texts of European travellers to China (predominantly missionaries) with the texts of late-Ming Chinese literati travelling through China. As this study is textually based, it is limited to studying the practices and writings of travellers who recorded their journeys. Certainly, there were many European travellers to China, and Chinese travellers within China, whose travels were not textually recorded. This thesis is aware of these silences, and does not presume to supply a complete picture of the innumerable travels within China—by European sailors, women, merchants, and Chinese peasants, merchants, and any other travellers who did not write about their travels.

Scholarship indicates that European travel culture in this period was driven by observation, privileging eyewitness accounts over hearsay. Travellers who recorded their journeys were instructed to provide useful and objective narratives that would benefit travellers at home. Travel narratives in this period were guided by lists which delineated fields of observations—such as the geography, dress, produce and culture of foreign countries. Aesthetic concerns played only a small role, and the personal voice was highly limited in an attempt to produce 'serious' travel writing.[11] Meanwhile, literati Chinese travel writing had an autobiographical function and was strongly guided by what Kenneth Ganza describes as 'a consciousness of travel as a special physical, social, cultural, emotional, aesthetic experience'.[12] There was a long tradition of geographical writing in imperial China, with state-commissioned surveys of the histories, climates, habits and practices of different regions, accordingly recorded in an official gazetteer. However, such texts did not constitute travel writing, for they were descriptive of place, but not of the travellers' personal voice and experiences. James Hargett terms this as a difference between the 'objective-descriptive' and 'subjective-personal' language modes.[13] Hargett

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[11] Ibid., pp. 9-13.

[12] Kenneth Ganza, *The Artist as Traveller: The Origin and Development of Travel as a Theme in Chinese Landscape Painting of the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries* (Ann Arbor: Indiana University, 1990), p. 9.

[13] James M. Hargett, 'Some Preliminary Remarks on the Travel Records of the Song Dynasty (960-1279)', *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 7 (1985), 67-93 (p. 68).

asserts that '[t]his melange of objective landscape description and subjective personal expression […] became the hallmark of all subsequent *yu-chi* (travel account) writing in China'.[14] Whilst early modern European travellers were urged to silence the personal voice and provide objective descriptions of their destinations, in Chinese travel writing it was the personal voice that differentiated geographical records from travel accounts, at times using landscape as a metaphor to express the author's subjective and personal feelings.[15] As we will see, these different cultural contexts, historical experiences and literary traditions enabled rich and unique forms of travel accounts to develop across different cultures throughout the early modern period.

An intercultural comparative approach to the study of travel writing quickly runs into the challenge of commensurability, especially when comparing European accounts with extra-European traditions. In their study of Indo-Persian travel writing during the 'Age of Discoveries', global historians Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam struggled with fitting Indo-Persian travel accounts into European categories, as the complex and meandering prose and the lack of a 'well-defined plot' did not correspond to established European forms of travel accounts from the period. They then raised the highly pertinent question 'To whom does the early modern travel-account really belong?'[16] Given the plurality of travel cultures and travel accounts in the early modern period, this question is one that must be answered through the introduction of travel texts from extra-European traditions, by considering their travel cultures and travel texts with the same degree of meticulousness as European travel texts during the 'Age of Discoveries'. Only through such comparative textual studies can scholars demonstrate the diversity of form and content of early modern/ late-Ming/ Indo-Persian travel writing. Such studies illustrate the cultural specificities of each travel culture and resist conforming extra-European travel texts to fit the categories and forms of European 'models'.

Comparative Travel Writing

This thesis takes an interdisciplinary and comparative approach to the study of travel cultures and travel writing, drawing from global history, cultural studies, literature and Chinese studies. It locates itself within the field of travel writing studies, for the concerns tackled in this thesis—writing the self, the utopian impulse in travel writing, and

[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid., p. 72.
[16] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, p. 2.

the ethnographic writing of cultural 'others'—have been derived from enquiries within the rich and ever-growing field of travel writing studies. Recent debates on introducing non-European voices to studies and anthologies of travel writing have inspired the present comparison of travel cultures.

I propose a comparison of Chinese and European travel texts, written by traditions with established travel cultures—guiding how the travellers under discussion performed the act of travel and how they wrote. This thesis documents and discusses a moment where two travel cultures converge—in their writings about travels through late-Ming China. Hence there are similarities in the topic (travels through China), authorship (educated authors of considerable social standing) and context (mature travel cultures with a large market for travel writings) that guarantee comparability. Within the texts, there are also thematic similarities, such as the textual creation of a social self, the mediations between travel, empire and mobility, projections of utopia onto physical landscape and the discussion of foreign peoples and cultures, addressed in subsequent chapters. This study juxtaposes two corpora of travel writing while limiting the comparison to the geographical boundaries of Ming China, in an effort to make the study more manageable and place-conscious.

The story of European and Chinese travel and travel writing in late-Ming China forms a part of global history, a *histoire croisée* of travel cultures with culturally unique discourses, rhetorical modes and literary conventions. I purposefully limit the geographical boundaries of the study to the borders of China, as space and spatiality is an important factor in the comparison of travel texts. Travel does not occur in a vacuum, and physical spaces were important in the production of these texts, not just as a setting, but often as the subject of study in itself. A comparison of Chinese and European travel cultures can be broadly global and intercultural, and simultaneously localised and geographically specific. Unlike other literary works, the travel text is space specific, place names purport to provide a truthful, empirically-grounded witness to the surrounding environs. Dennis Porter has cautioned against slipping into 'cultural solipsism', which entails monolithically grouping travel writers as being bound by hegemonic language modes and rhetorical conventions. Porter argues that travel writers had individual agency to make their own literary decisions,

and that the environment plays an important role in the production of the text.[17] Writers formed a 'dialogic engagement' with the spaces that they encountered on their journeys, producing insights that were spatially grounded.[18]

Spaces are both material and ideological, with material space influencing ideas (religion, power, gender), and these ideas working in turn to shape the material space ideologically.[19] The geographical space of late-Ming China has to be addressed, for it is the common focus of the travel writers, where their experiences intersect. Parallel travels through similar spaces allow for the analysis and discussion of common topics such as travel infrastructure and physical landscapes (mountains and cities). Space has the potential to offer a stable form of reference, for observing how travellers responded to similar spaces and objects. For instance, Chinese and European travellers' responses towards boat travel in China provides a common reference point, offering a discussion about their different perspectives towards boat travel—which facilitates contemplation on why such difference exist and their significance.

Much has been made of the cultural, scientific and religious encounters between early modern Europeans and late-Ming Chinese, a topic of enduring fascination, of how sixteenth-century encounters set the stage for the *longue durée* of China-Europe relations. In my reading of these travel texts, I suggest that the remarkable cultural interaction that took place during this period was not just a human interaction, but also one of spatial contemplation; Chinese spaces, Chinese aesthetics, architecture, ambition, tradition and religion, were being perceived and represented by European travellers. Space is an interrelation of materiality, social relations, meaning and aesthetics; it has the potential to 'act' autonomously, either by replicating or enforcing existing cultural conceptions and ideology, or by generating new ideas and categories.[20] Chinese cities and landscapes were being read into a context that was distinctly European, interacting to form new images and meanings, being integrated into European objectives and symbolic meanings. Concurrently, Chinese travellers were reinterpreting these spaces in light of their unique social and political circumstances, and the travel frenzy of the late-Ming period.

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[17] Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 5.
[18] Jeffrey Dupée, *British Travel Writers in China: Writing Home to a British Public, 1890-1914* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2004), p. 16.
[19] Paul Stock, 'History and the Use of Spaces', in *The Uses of Space in Early Modern History*, ed. by Paul Stock (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 1-18 (p. 2).
[20] W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994), pp. 8-9.

Through a comparison, this thesis fills a gap in current research in travel writing. Firstly, while early modern European travel accounts of China have been of interest to researchers of China and European-Chinese relations, only recently have scholars turned their attention towards 'Old World' texts, having been previously occupied with research on the 'New World'.[21] This thesis draws from such research and contributes a comparative perspective. Secondly, although the Chinese travel texts under discussion have been under-represented in travel writing studies, considerable research has been conducted on these writings by Chinese academics and in the field of Chinese Studies. This thesis facilitates a conversation between the fields of Chinese Studies, travel writing, and between Chinese and Western academics. Finally, it introduces a method to compare travel cultures and travel texts. There have been few attempts to compare Chinese and European travel accounts during this period, as Chinese travel writing has been perceived as too different in culture, purpose and form, to warrant comparison with their European equivalents. This thesis challenges these assumptions, demonstrating that travellers' experiences and writings can be compared, despite writing in different languages and literary forms. Building on research from a variety of disciplines, this project establishes a sustained conversation between Chinese and European travel accounts of late-Ming China.

Broad thematic similarities across the texts provide material for a sustained dialogue between the Chinese and European travel cultures and travel texts. For example, I am interested in the role of these travellers as agents of empires. In the early modern world, Spain, Portugal and China—countries from which the travellers under discussion either originated or received financial funding—were heavyweights in the global political economy. Closely corresponding to the time frame of this thesis, between the treaties of *Cateau Cambresis* in 1559 and the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, Spain was the power of Europe, and Portugal a close second.[22] On the other end of the Eurasian continent, China was the economic and political mammoth of East Asia. The travellers that we discuss were imperial subjects and their texts reflect the considerations and concerns of individuals trained in the service of empire. Whilst purporting to tell their readers of 'another place', as the European texts informed readers about China and Chinese travel texts informed readers about travels to other regions of the Chinese empire, the texts also address crucial concerns about 'home' and the nature of their own civilisation.

[21] Daniel Carey and Claire Jowitt, 'Introduction: Early Modern Travel Writing: Varieties, Transitions, Horizons', *Studies in Travel Writing*, 13 (2009), 95-99 (pp. 95-96).
[22] James Casey, *Early Modern Spain: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 6.

Other thematic concerns include travel and mobility; the distance between travellers and the imperial centres of the early modern world provides great potential for assessing the travel texts. Travellers were removed from the political, social and cultural centres that made up their everyday lives. The Jesuit was removed from the Roman College and the Chinese literatus away from his studio and the comforts and conveniences of late-Ming Jiangnan. Travel then brought them to an unfamiliar space, a state of in-betweenness where they were confronted with very different surroundings, away from their urban centres, but still using the 'conceptual apparatus'—the language and concepts that their home societies endowed them with. This rupture between the home and the foreign, from their 'centre' to a 'periphery', was something that the travellers under discussion dealt with to differing extents. The European travellers were geographically and culturally furthest removed from their centres. They encountered a different regime, a different climate, culture and language. Meanwhile, Chinese travellers such as Xu Xiake and Wang Shixing were similarly confronted with such differences the further away they moved from the centre, to areas in Southwestern China that were loosely governed. Travel thrust agents of empire into unfamiliar regions, and they in turn reformulated lived experience into travel texts—describing their surroundings while addressing deeper political and social concerns. Such similarities in the literary topic (travel) and historical context instigated the current comparison. Throughout the thesis, these are recurring themes, showing interesting parallels in the different travel cultures' perception of the world, in approximately the same time and space.

Literature Review

Of late, several contributions to the comparative study of Chinese and European travel writing have emerged. At the moment, this comparison is new and exploratory. In particular, there is no singular 'approach' guiding the comparison of Chinese and European travel accounts. Comparisons thus far have been varied in focus and methodology.

In comparative history, Joan-Pau Rubiés and Manel Ollé collaborated on an article 'The Comparative History of a Genre: The Production and Circulation of Books on Travel and Ethnographies in Early Modern Europe and China'. They remark upon the numerous similarities surrounding the rise of travel and travel literature in Europe and China during the early modern period, and the ethnographic impulse of both cultures. Fascinating similarities include the emphasis on empiricism, the combination of antiquarian travel and

new knowledge, with new travel experiences granted by expanding maritime or land borders. At the same time, there is a leisure class in the unemployed Ming Chinese literati that led to the rapid production of travel texts, of which there is no equivalent in Europe. They note that:

> There were qualitative as well as quantitative differences in the way that these genres functioned in each cultural area. Even when we find apparent similarities, we note different chronological rhythms and a different position of these genres of travel writing within a wider cultural field—what we might term their cultural relevance. The specific nature of Chinese state imperialism—or, conversely, the particular nature of European overseas colonialism—played a role in determining the type of ethnographic approach that came to predominate in each cultural area.[23]

Their observations lead them to suggest that there were multiple early modernities in both Europe and China. They conclude that despite many apparent similarities, different institutional and historical factors were responsible for bringing forth these trends.

Laura Hostetler's *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (2001) uses early modern European history, travel texts and cartography as a point of reference to compare and discuss the Chinese equivalents during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries of the Qing dynasty (1644 to 1911). She argues that ethnography and cartography have all too often been associated exclusively with early modern Europe—and historically associated with the global ascendency of the West, or 'Western modernity'.[24] By comparison with Qing China—during which the empire trebled in size, particularly under the reign of the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1662-1722), Hostetler demonstrates that the use of travel texts, ethnography and cartography for imperial ambitions was not solely a European impulse. Qing Chinese bureaucracy also strategically used travel and surveying for imperial ends. Instead of overseas colonies, Qing China built a large land empire, expanding West and assimilating regions of inhabitants who were non-Chinese.

[23] Joan-Pau Rubiés and Manel Ollé, 'The Comparative History of a Genre: The Production and Circulation of Books on Travel and Ethnographies in Early Modern Europe and China', *Modern Asian Studies*, 50 (2016), 259-309 (p. 262).

[24] Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2001), p. xvii.

In comparative literature, several scholars have made comparisons between Chinese and European travel accounts. Such comparative studies come with a new set of challenges, particularly when comparing Chinese and European texts—cultures that are too often perceived to be distinct and separate. In comparative literature, just as in comparative history, several have done this with little regard to periodisation: 'for East-West comparative studies, the concept of periodization must be radically revised, even abandoned, for periodization makes sense only within each respective cultural paradigm and cannot be used across all cultures.'[25] The result is the abandonment of temporal comparison in favour of an approach that focuses on thematic similarities, such as Wang Xiaolun's comparison of the theme of landscape as represented in Chinese travel writing and Romantic travel accounts.[26] Wang identifies a lack of a cross-cultural perspective in post-colonial studies on travel accounts, specifically in the encounter between China and the West. He refutes unflattering Victorian portrayals of the Chinese as being unable to appreciate landscape by supplying landscape poems from the canon of Chinese poetry that praise the landscape. Wang, too, struggles with the question of comparison, and opts for a comparison that is anachronistic—comparing texts of Victorian travellers with those of Chinese literati across the time span of imperial China, but spatially specific—selecting texts depicting well-known Chinese landscape. Wang's criterion for comparison is the similar social standing of the travellers: the Victorian travellers to China were agents of the British Empire, while the Chinese literati travellers were imperial subjects throughout history.

There have also been survey-like comparisons of Chinese and European travel texts that are broadly philosophical in tone and focus. Shoutong Zhu starts from antiquity, comparing the classics of travel literature in the Chinese and the Greco-Roman traditions, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* 山海經, a mythological, geographical and ethnographical account dating from Pre-Qin China, and Homer's *Odyssey*.[27] Taking the approach of cultural anthropology, he broadly compares Eastern and Western civilisations and identifies a narrative prototype with a physical journey to a mythical realm at the centre of the plot. He identifies key differences in the prototype, such as the motif of

[25] Wai-Lim Yip, *Diffusion of Distances: Dialogues between Chinese and Western Poetics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), p. 206.
[26] Xiaolun Wang, 'Travel and Cultural Understanding: Comparing Victorian and Chinese Literati Travel Writing', *Tourism Geographies*, 8 (2006), 213-32 (p. 215).
[27] Shoutong Zhu, 'The Essence of Literature as the Symbol of Life Pain: Comparative Analysis of Travel Literature in Chinese', *Comparative Literature Studies,* 54 (2017), 70-88 (pp. 71-72).

maritime travel in the Western tradition as compared to travels through mountains and forests in the Eastern tradition and puts this down to differences in Eastern and Western civilisation.[28] Zhu also notes the reliance on actual 'earthy' tools to get to the mythical realm in the *Odyssey* whereas the mythical realm in the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* is accessible by imagination.[29] He suggests that 'Western civilisation focuses attention and expectation on instrumental rationality, while Eastern civilisation relies more on the ideating rationality than instrumental rationality.'[30] Despite these differences, he argues that there is a central similarity of human pain and despair when the protagonists fail to reach the mythical realm, reflecting a 'human yearning for an unknown world and infinite space.'[31] Zhu makes broad and bold claims about the link between travel literature and human nature and civilisation. Although his arguments are interesting, certain claims lack sufficient substantiation, for it is difficult to make sound claims about human civilisation through the study of a handful of texts on travel literature. Furthermore, the juxtaposition of 'Western' and 'Eastern' tradition is debatable and arguably too simplistic and binary.

Comparative travel literature is a nascent, exciting and interdisciplinary field. Historians and literary scholars are offering different ways to approach the comparison and a 'method' of comparison has yet to be established. Researchers working in this field are afforded much creative freedom to define their own corpus, theory and methodology for comparison. My thesis provides an approach for comparing Chinese and European travel accounts from broadly the same time (1550 to 1644) and space (the territories of late-Ming China).

Methodology

This thesis draws on the works of travel writing theorists to provide a loose working definition of what travel writing is. While it is aware that the nuances of 'travel texts', 'travel writing', 'travel accounts', 'travel narratives' and 'travel diaries' are terms which are under debate,[32] it elects to use them interchangeably within the thesis.

[28] Ibid., pp. 74-75.
[29] Ibid., p. 73.
[30] Ibid.
[31] Ibid., p. 76.
[32] See Jan Borm, 'Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology', in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2004), pp. 13-26.

I adopt the following definitions of travel writing in my approach. The first is from Mary B. Campbell's influential *The Witness and the Other World* which notes: 'The travel book is a kind of witness: it is generically aimed at the truth.'[33] The travel texts in my corpus feature traveller's authority, privileging the narrator's role as an eye-witness to the loci of travel. There was a rhetorical emphasis on their ability to 'tell the truth' better than anyone else, by virtue of having personally experienced a particular destination. Furthermore, instead of following a definition limited to genre, form, style or subject matter, this thesis finds it more helpful to adopt Joan-Pau Rubiés' suggestion that travel writing comprises of many genres, many subject matters, and can best be identified by taking 'travel as an essential element for its production'.[34]

Although the thesis is conceptualised in the Anglophone tradition of travel writing studies, I will also provide a quick definition of the *youji* and its corollary, geographical writing, that takes up half of the enquiry, from the Chinese dictionary *Cihai*:

> *Youji*: a literary genre; a type of prose. It employs a lively writing style and vivid description that records and narrates what is seen and heard during a journey about the political life of a certain place, its social life, local conditions and customs, and landscape scenes, famous spots, historic sites, and so on. Moreover, it expresses the thoughts and feelings of the author.[35]

Even with a working definition of what constitutes travel writing and the Chinese *youji*, travel texts continue to pose challenges to the scholar, with regards to the reading strategies to undertake. Mary Campbell identifies the uniqueness of the travel text as a literary-historical document, 'the literary situation […] of the traveller who writes is an inherently interesting one—a limit case for such intertwined literary issues as truth, fact, figure, fiction, even genre.'[36]

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[33] Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), pp. 2-3.

[34] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe', *Journeys*, 1 (2000), 5–35 (p. 7).

[35] 'Youji [travel account] 游記', in *Cihai* [Sea of Words] 辭海, ed. by Cihaibianji weiyuanhui 辭海编辑委员會, 3 vols (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1979), II (1979), p. 2230, quoted in and trans. by James M. Hargett, 'Chinese Travel Writing', in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Carl Thompson, pp. 112-24 (p. 112).

[36] Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World*, p. 2.

As a result of this uniqueness, the reception and analysis of these literary-historical documents differ considerably. The travel texts discussed in this thesis were studied by scholars across multiple disciplines—history, literature, travel writing studies, historical geography, tourism studies and more. Travel writing resists being pinned down by a particular genre or discipline, and scholars employ varying reading approaches, creating vastly different results. This poses a methodological conundrum for the researcher endeavouring to bring these texts into a comparative perspective. To illustrate, I will briefly outline how Chinese travel texts have been perceived by Chinese and Western academics. A popular and enduring approach was to read these texts as historical documents which provided straightforward accounts about travel experiences through China. Such research was illustrative and historically detailed, using travel texts to provide a historical account of travel in Ming China. Recent critics have introduced another approach, echoing Judith Adler's arguments that travel was a performed art and embedded in the social and cultural norms of their times. Such texts have thus been re-read with attention to the author's biographies, rhetorical strategies and historical context.

The beginnings of research by Chinese scholars on late-Ming travel writing can be traced to the late 1980s and early 1990s, with scholars taking varying approaches, from studying the *longue durée* of Chinese travel writing, to analysing the socio-cultural factors behind literati travel, to specialised research on famous travellers.[37] Chinese research on travel writing has been extremely productive and exciting. There is a tendency to apply different reading strategies to travel poetry and travel accounts, with the former perceived as being more personal, emotional and subjective,[38] whereas the latter are read with a strong 'geographical' bent as veracious and accurate accounts of the actual journeys.[39] In

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[37] Zhou Haiyan 周海燕, 'Jing ershinian Mingqing wenren luyou shuping' 近二十年明清文人旅游研究述评 [Summary of Research on Ming-Qing Literati Travel in the past Twenty Years], *Changchun gongchengxueyuan xuebao: Shehuikexueban* 长春工程学院学报：社会科学版, 3 (2013), 54-57 (p. 54).

[38] Anthologies by Chinese academia on the long literary tradition of travel writing tend to categorise 'travel poems' and 'travel accounts' separately. The *Lidai luyoushi xinshang* 历代旅游诗赏析 [Analysis of Travel Poetry Across the Ages], ed. by Lin Yongzhong 林雍中 (Beijing: Kejijishuwenxian chuban, 1986), discusses how beautiful landscapes encouraged classical writers to express their appreciation and personal emotions in poetry. Instead of organising the poems chronologically, as one might presume from the title, the editor takes a spatially grounded approach, electing to organise the selection 'according to the country's famous scenic regions and routes.' (p. 1).

[39] An anthology titled *Mingdai youji xuancui* 明代游记选粹 [Selection of Ming Dynasty Travel Accounts], ed. by Zhu Jiachi 朱家驰 (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1987) makes a clear distinction between travel accounts that were guided by imagination and fantasy, citing the examples of Tao Qian's *Peach Blossom Spring* and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, and travel accounts that were 'first-hand accounts from the author's own travel experiences, while also utilising second-hand accounts of other travellers. These two forms of accounts would appear in the same volume or chapter, and this was the composite style of travel

travel writing scholarship, Xu Xiake and Wang Shixing are portrayed as serious and scientifically-minded travellers, praised by scholars for rendering precise geographical accounts of places that they visited.[40] This approach is grounded in the historical moment of post-socialist China in the 1980s and 1990s, eager to shed its perceived 'backwardness' in the rush to modernise, Westernise and be more 'scientifically minded'.[41] This is reflective of the hegemonic presumption of modernism as Western, and a result of Chinese Marxist historiography of Ming China, in their search for parallel developments in Chinese history that could count as harbingers of 'modernity'.[42] In a call for new approaches towards the analysis of travel texts, Zhou Zhenhe, in an article entitled 'On Xu Xiake and Late-Ming Travellers', addressed this tendency and recommended that scholars should also approach these texts as works of literature—considering genre conventions, late-Ming society, rhetorical strategies and aims of the travellers, instead of adhering to the limited reading of these texts as purely academic and geographical works.[43] In his research, Zhou draws from both approaches, treating these texts as literary-historical documents, paying attention to their content, but also to the contexts of travel and production, identifying

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accounts that became broadly popular.' (p. 2). In the current study, I resist making this distinction, and demonstrate in Chapter Three that imaginative travels and actual travel existed within the same text.

[40] Ting Wen-chiang, one of the earlier scholars of Xu Xiake, praised Xu for his scientific rigour and skill as a geographer in 'Hsu Hsia-k'o, Explorer and Geographer', *The New China Review* III, 5 (1921), 325-337 (pp. 325-327). This sentiment was also echoed in Joseph Needham's authoritative study, *Science and Civilisation in China, Volume III Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, 7 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), p. 147. Likewise, studies on Wang Shixing also praise his empiricism and contributions to geographical discussions and theories. See for instance, Xu Jianchun 徐建春, Shi Zai 石在, Huang Minhui 黄敏辉, *Fuchadadi Wang Shixing zhuan* 俯察大地—王士性传 [Observing the Earth: Wang Shixing's Biography] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 2008), p. 5. The prefaces of the editions of Xu Xiake and Wang Shixing's travel accounts that I use in this study (in the citations that immediately follow) both contain praise by the volume editors for the veracity and scientific accomplishment of these Ming travellers. The version of *Xuxiake youji* 徐霞客游記 [The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake][1776] ed. by Zhu Huirong 朱惠榮, (Guizhou: Guizhou renmin chubanshe, 1994), contains a foreword by the editor that praises a work as one bearing 'multi-faceted scientific value' 多方面的科學價值 (p. 1). Zhu claims that the work is 'a guide for travellers', 'a geographical encyclopedia', 'an accurate record of history' and 'a classic work of literature' (pp. 1-14). Meanwhile, Wang Shixing's collected works, *Wuyue youcao* 五岳游草 [Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains][1591], *Guang zhiji* 廣志記 [Records of Extensive Travels][1591], and *Guang zhiyi* 廣志繹 [An Interpretation of Vast Travels][1597], ed. by Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006), pp. 1-10 is similarly lauded for being a work of seminal geographical importance, for its eyewitness accounts and geographical fieldwork.

[41] Arif Dirlik comments on the 'Occidentalism' which emerged in post-revolutionary China that celebrated Western modernity and blamed China's problems on tradition. Arif Dirlik, 'Modernity as history: Post-revolutionary China, Globalization and the Question of Modernity', *Social History*, 27 (2002), 16-39 (p. 27).

[42] Arif Dirlik, 'Revisioning Modernity: Modernity in Eurasian perspective', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 12.2 (2011), 284-305 (p. 287).

[43] Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤, 'Xu Xiake yu Mingdai houqi luxingjiaqunti'徐霞客与明代后期旅行家群体[On Xu Xiake and late-Ming travellers], *Xu Xiake Yanjiu* 徐霞客研究,1 (1997), 52-61 (p. 59).

characteristics of the late-Ming 'travel vogue' or 'travel culture' 旅游風氣/ 旅游文化 through textual analysis.[44]

In Western scholarship, research on Chinese travel texts have a similar tendency to take the accounts as straightforward representations of geographical facts. Richard Strassberg's *Inscribed Landscapes: Travel Writing from Imperial China* (1994) is an anthology of Chinese travel writing from the first until the nineteenth century. This collection contained excerpts from fifty Chinese travel writers with brief biographical information. Strassberg's insightful and valuable introduction is a pioneering work, remaining to this day one of the very few studies in the English language that discusses the *longue durée* of Chinese travel writing. At the same time, Strassberg elects to read the texts as straightforward depictions of travellers' experiences. Stephen McDowall however, problematizes Strassberg's assumed veracity of Chinese travel texts and makes a strong case to read Chinese travel texts 'against the grain'.[45]

My own approach resists reading travel texts as straightforward, truthful accounts and takes up an approach similar to Zhou and McDowall, as well as the perspective of New Historicism, integrating literary analysis with historical scholarship.[46] I read the texts as representations, as rhetorical and self-reflexive documents—a complex interweaving of authorial intent, audience expectations and literary conventions. I recognise that the travellers in the text are personae, literary constructs of the author, with the purpose of presenting an idealised social self to their audience.[47] Although this approach differs from those who read travel texts as historical documents, I remain indebted to their research and this study benefits greatly from valuable scholarship in history, tourism studies and Chinese studies. This project aims to be not only intercultural, but also interdisciplinary.

Thesis Overview

Immediately following the Introduction is a section on the corpus of travel texts and brief biographical information on the travel writers. Chapter One explores the

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[44] Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤, 'Cong Mingren wenji kan WanMing luyoufengqi yu dilixue de guanxi'从明人文集看晚明旅游风气及其与地理学的关系[Understanding late-Ming Travel Culture and Geography through Analysis of late Ming Travel Texts], *Fudan Xuebao 复旦学报*, 1 (2005), 72-78 (pp. 73-74).

[45] Stephen McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections on Yellow Mountain: Traces of a Late-Ming Hatchet and Chisel* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), p. 3.

[46] Carey and Jowitt, 'Introduction', p. 96.

[47] Porter, *Haunted Journeys*, pp. 4-5.

rhetorical and textual motivations of Chinese and European travellers as recorded in the travel texts. It resists a straightforward reading of the motivations professed by the travel writers. Instead, it carefully considers how authorial intent and the social networks surrounding the authors informed their writing processes, for writing was an important tool through which men-of-letters articulated a social self to their audiences.

The following chapters present a geographically grounded approach, one that is focused on the travel infrastructure, landscape and cityscapes of late-Ming China as represented in traveller's writings. Chapter Two studies the depictions of travel infrastructure in the travel texts. It argues that infrastructure plays an important, albeit overlooked role in travel accounts, and that historicising travellers' descriptions of travel infrastructure and modes of transport can illuminate our understanding of their reflections on travel, culture and mobility.

Chapter Three ponders the Chinese preoccupation with descriptions of natural landscape, and the European traveller's lack of interest in landscape and their preference for the description of cities which they perceived as economically and strategically more important. Focusing on the different strategies through which Chinese and European travellers represented the physical world, the chapter suggests that the travellers' depictions of the physical world were influenced by the utopian impulse, which travellers from each culture projected onto very different geographical constellations.

Chapter Four, the final chapter, focuses on the ethnographic impulse of Chinese and European travel writers. Both travel cultures had a firm idea of a cultural and political 'centre' and defined their 'selves' in relation to an 'Other'. At the same time, the ethnographic impulse of this period was a dialogic negotiation between classical and new knowledge. Travellers were indebted to classical writers and historians who gave them brief, abstract ideas about the cultural 'others' that they were personally meeting for the first time.

Corpus and Travel Writers

This section outlines the corpus of Chinese and European travel texts used in the study. Here, I explain the selection of texts, briefly introducing the texts and their authors.

The first criterion of selection was the geographical focus of the travel texts. As I am interested in spatially-grounded, synchronic comparison of travel writing across Chinese and European travel cultures and literary traditions, I selected texts about travels to and in China. This considerably limits the corpus of the early modern European texts. While numerous texts documented travels throughout Europe and to diverse regions of the world, there were only a handful of published travel texts about China. This criterion also resulted in the elimination of texts by Chinese travellers who ventured outside the boundaries of the Ming Empire.

An important factor for selecting this particular time period (1550-1644) was the similar historical contexts and backgrounds of the writers. The Chinese and European travellers under discussion came from societies with sophisticated travel cultures and a literary public interested in travel accounts. Not only was there a travel boom in both regions during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, an expansion in commercial printing was also observed.[1] With the aid of the printing press, the experience of travel was not only limited to the travellers who made the physical journeys. Travellers had the potential to represent their journeys in text and to disseminate their observations to a wider public—through the commercial press and the flourishing book market. Accompanying the increase in travel was a simultaneous increase in the production and consumption of travel texts. Travellers were well aware of a demand and audience for travel books hence many who kept journals did so with the expectation of eventual publication.[2] Production anticipated consumption and circulation, a dynamic which is important to keep in mind.

Travel texts in both traditions stemming from this time period have complex and meandering publication histories, appearing in different editions and under different titles.

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[1] For printing and book culture in early modern Europe, see Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, trans. by Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton (London: Verso, 1971); Roger Chartier, *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). For printing in Ming China, see Tobie Meyer-Fong, 'The Printed World: Books, Publishing Culture and Society in Late Imperial China', in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 66 (2007), 787-817 and Cynthia Brokaw, Kai-Wing Chow, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

[2] Rubiés and Ollé, 'Comparative History of a Genre', p. 260.

They were read by the authors' contemporaries in the sixteenth and seventeenth century—but they were also constantly published, translated, reprinted, annotated and incorporated into different editions and compendiums. The accounts of the Iberian travellers Galeote Pereira, Gaspar da Cruz and Martin de Rada, for instance, appeared in Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza's *Historia de las cosas mas notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China*, published in Rome in 1585, and received with resounding success by European readers. They were translated into major European languages, appearing in other well-known compendia of travel texts such as Samuel Purchas' *Purchas his Pilgrimes* [1625].

The sources which I treat as 'travel texts' vary considerably in form and genre. These include diaries or journals, such as Matteo Ricci, Xu Xiake and Yuan Zhongdao's texts, whereby an individual recorded both travel and life events over many years. There are also reports, such as Gaspar da Cruz and Martin de Rada's accounts to the chief of mission back in their bases, and an anthology of geographical writings, the most fitting description for Wang Shixing's works that describe the physical and human geography of China. Once again, the definition of these texts as 'travel texts' depend not so much on literary form or genre, but on 'travel as an essential element for its production'[3], with travel writers purporting to have ventured on actual journeys, according to the definition set down in the introduction.

I selected Xu Xiake's travel diaries and Wang Shixing's writings on travels as they are renowned late-Ming works on travel and geography, particularly well-researched by Chinese academics. Furthermore, the breadth of their travels is much larger than that of the conventional late-Ming traveller. While travel to peripheral regions of the Ming empire, such as the less populated, less developed southwest provinces of Yunnan and Guangxi was on the rise in the late-Ming period, most travellers opted to stay on well-ventured tourist tracks. Thus Xu and Wang's works describe a larger geographical range, providing insights into the different regions and peoples across China, facilitating comparison about ethnographic writing in travel texts and travel infrastructure. On the other hand, Yuan Zhongdao's travel text provides a prime example of late-Ming literati leisure travel: short journeys to scenic sites surrounding the affluent Jiangnan region. Yuan's text is also representative of travel texts as autobiography, a popular form of literati writing in this period.

[3] Rubiés, 'Travel Writing as a Genre', p. 7.

Similarly, European travel writing burgeoned in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Letters, reports, and descriptive accounts proliferated as a result of maritime expeditions. Over the course of the sixteenth century, the genre of travel writing evolved. Starting off as reports and correspondence from across the oceans, textual interaction took place between traveller-observers abroad and humanist scholars back home, facilitated by the print medium of travel books. As a result, through inter-reading and debate, over the decades, early modern travel accounts developed, becoming more methodical and authoritative, eventually corresponding to contemporary cultural practices of sixteenth century Europe, such as classical learning, diplomacy and statecraft.[4]

With regards to the European travel accounts about Ming China, I selected the accounts of the Spanish and Portuguese travellers Galeote Pereira, Gaspar da Cruz and Martin de Rada as theirs were amongst the earliest writings that emerged about China during this maritime age. Furthermore, their works were quickly disseminated into different compilations across different nations and languages, shaping early images of China in the European imagination. [5] Their works were impactful contributions to European knowledge about East Asia. Martin de Rada accurately observed that descriptions of Marco Polo's Cathay closely resembled Ming China and concluded that 'the country which we commonly call China was called by Marco Polo the Venetian the kingdom of Cathay, perhaps because it was then so called; for when he came there, which was about the year 1312, it was ruled by the Tartars.'[6]

I am aware that I leave out several well-known early modern travel texts such as *The Travels of Peter Mundy*, in which Peter Mundy wrote about his journey to Canton in 1637, and Fernão Mendes Pinto's *Peregrinations* [1614], the travel accounts of the Spanish Jesuit Diego de Pantoja (who accompanied Ricci on his travels in China) and the account of the Jesuit priest Alvaro Semedo, *Imperio de la China* (The Empire of China), published in Madrid in 1642. I omitted Mundy and Pinto's texts as they were broadly focused on travels through Asia and Europe, hence descriptions of China were relatively marginal in their accounts. Although Pantoja and Semedo provided important reports of China, I

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[4] Rubiés, 'Comparative History of a Genre', pp. 259-61.

[5] Conceptions of China were constantly shifting and developing in Early Modern Europe, based on the reports of missionaries, shifting from Cathay, to 'China proper' and China. See Bo, Chen, 'Conceptions of China in Early Modern Europe', *Chinese Studies in History*, 48 (2015), 401-22.

[6] Martin De Rada, 'The Relation of Fr. Martin de Rada, O.E.S.A.', trans. by C. R. Boxer, in *South China in the Sixteenth Century: Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín De Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), pp. 241-310 (p. 260).

wanted a selection of texts from a range of religious orders and countries of origin, hence I selected Matteo Ricci and Nicolas Trigault's lengthier and more comprehensive text for a Jesuit account of China.

Chinese Travel Texts

Wang Shixing 王士性, *Wuyue youcao* 五岳游草 [Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains] [1591], *Guangzhiji* 廣志記 [Records of Vast Travels] [1591] and *Guangzhiyi* 廣志繹 [Interpretation of Vast Travels][1597] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006)

Wang Shixing (1547-1598) was a late-Ming official and avid traveller. Across the span of his official career, he was posted to various regions of China, visiting both capitals (Nanjing and Beijing) and fourteen out of the fifteen provinces of Ming China. Wishing to record his experience of travel, he penned *Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains*. In his later years, he wrote *Records of Vast Travels* and *Interpretation of Vast Travels*. Reflecting his experience of travel throughout the empire, Wang wrote on a vast scale, detailing the historical geography, physical geography and human geography of various provinces. Wang's works are valued for their contribution to Chinese geography. Wang emphasized the importance of empirical information in his writings, stressing his role as a first-hand witness.

Wang's writings provide particularly rich material for research as his interests lay not only in the physical landscape of China, but also in human geography. In his records, he describes not only the regional differences of the Han Chinese, but also the different ethnic minorities, usually living in the border provinces of the Ming territories. These works provide interesting insights into late-Ming perceptions of Chinese and non-Chinese. He also wrote about religion and language, describing and detailing the different regional dialects of China. Given the broad scope of his work, Wang borrows extensively from local and regional gazetteers, which gave historical information about geographical regions, arranged by topics such as geographies, institutions, economy, society and taxes.[7] Despite lifting entire sections from various gazetteers, Wang set his works apart from his sources

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[7] Joseph Dennis, *Writing, Publishing and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), pp. 12-13.

by providing personal commentary and opinions about local problems in Ming China and discussing how the geographical circumstances could be improved.

Xu, Xiake 徐霞客, *Xu xiake youji* 徐霞客游記 [*The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*][1776][8] (Nanjing, Fenghuang Chubanshe, 2009)

Xu Xiake (1587-1641), widely considered China's most prolific travel writer, was born to a scholarly family in late Ming China. From an early age, he was fascinated with travel and studied many historical books, atlases and maps. Unlike most Chinese men of his social standing, Xu did not adhere to the conventional path of classical learning, preparation for imperial examinations and eventual service as a government official. From the age of nineteen, he embarked on multiple journeys, and from 1615 to 1637, he made several large-scale travels. In 1638, aged fifty-one, he planned an ambitious trip to the south-western regions of China. This trip took four years in total, and he reached the province of Yunnan, where the south-western border of the Ming Dynasty lay. Shortly after returning from his long journey, from which he contracted malaria, Xu died in his hometown, leaving travel records that amounted to some 600,000 characters.

The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake is his life's work, detailing journeys around China that he undertook over the years. Chinese scholars praise him for his scientific and systematic approach towards travel, observing and recording geographical information about China's regions. Xu's writings take the form of a travel journal, where he records his daily location, movement and activities. Xu was particularly fascinated by mountains and a large portion of his diaries records journeys to China's many mountain ranges.

Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道, *Youju beilu* 游居杮录 [Records of Travelling and Dwelling] [1618] (Qingdao: Qingdao chubanshe, 2009)

Yuan Zhongdao (1570-1624), was a poet and writer. Throughout his lifetime, Yuan travelled widely and left behind a large number of travel essays, totalling 118. These essays are compiled in his magnus opus, *Collections from the Kexue Study Room*, which also contains the present volume, *Records of Travelling and Dwelling*. This text is an autobiographical journal and travel text which recorded the significant events of his

[8] This was when it was printed in woodblock for the first time. Prior to this, Xu's text existed in various manuscript copies. For information about the publication history, see Julian Ward, *Xu Xiake (1587-1641): The Art of Travel Writing* (Richmond: Curzon Press, 2001), pp. 69-72.

personal and social life from 1608 to 1618. The text presents a narrative of Yuan Zhongdao's life from the ages of thirty-nine to forty-nine, depicting important events of his life: his travels and excursions, his failures at official examinations, conversations with friends, literary gatherings discussing art and poetry, literati studios and gardens. Towards the end of his journal, he also records the deaths of Yuan Hongdao, his beloved brother and literary companion, the death of his father, and his long-awaited success at the examination at the age of forty-six.

I selected this text for its autobiographical qualities. Confucian scholars of the Ming period expressed their moral and emotional conditions through the autobiographical subgenre.[9] Yuan's text is particularly introspective and representative of the cultural and social life of the late-Ming literati. In line with neo-Confucian thought that was the intellectual vogue of the late-Ming period, Yuan's persona in the text exhibits characteristics of the quintessential Confucian scholar—who at the same time is deeply influenced by Buddhist and Taoist philosophy. Yuan exhibits the penchant towards the pursuit of leisure—demonstrated by his socialising, feasting and conspicuous consumption, a well-documented cultural practice in elite circles.[10]

European Travel Texts

***South China in the Sixteenth Century, Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín De Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)*, ed. and trans. by C.R. Boxer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953)**

This volume presents narratives about the Chinese people and their customs from three Iberian travellers to South China, from 1550 to 1575. Galeote Pereira (lifespan dates unknown) travelled to Asia on Portuguese trading voyages. He wrote about a longer stay in 1549 in Fujian where he and the crew were captured by Chinese coast-defence commanders during a crackdown on the smuggling trade along the Southern coast. During his captivity, they travelled from Quanzhou, their point of disembarkation, to Fuzhou where they were imprisoned for over a year, until he was smuggled to safety, fleeing the

[9] Wu Pei-yi, *The Confucian's Progress: Autobiographical Writings in Traditional China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), pp. 3-5.
[10] Wu Jen-Shu, *Pinwei shehua: Wanming de xiaofei shehui yu shidafu* 味奢華: 晚明的消費社會與士大夫 [Taste of Luxury: Consumer society and the scholar-literati circle in the late Ming dynasty] (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 2007), p. 2.

Chinese mainland.[11] Pereira wrote an account of his captivity and travels, recording his impressions of the Fujian and Guangxi provinces. The original report is a Portuguese manuscript copy, which was translated into Italian and printed in Venice in 1565, as an appendix to a compendium of Jesuit letters. It was entitled *Certain reports of China, learned through the Portugals there imprisoned, and chiefly by the relation of Galeote Pereira, a gentleman of good credit, that lay prisoner in that country many years.*

Gaspar Da Cruz (1520?-1570) was a Portuguese Dominican missionary, present in Canton for several months in 1556 until he had to leave China when local authorities did not grant permission for a longer stay. His account on China compiled geographic, political and ethnographic information. Da Cruz appropriated parts of Pereira's narrative on the social practices and customs of the Chinese, while adding in sections about his own experience in China for a more complete picture.[12] His work first appeared as *Tractado em que se cotam muito por esteso as cousas da China* [Treatise in which the things of China are related at great length, with their particularities], printed at Evora in 1569.

Martin De Rada (1533-1578) was a Spanish Augustinian missionary, who travelled through the Fujian province of South China from July to October of 1575 in an attempt to start a mission there. Although the mission was unsuccessful, his voyages to China enabled him to gather new information about Chinese history, politics and the economy, and disseminate it to the Spanish. His work appeared as *Relacion de las cosas de China que propriamente se llama Taybin* [*Relation of the things of China, which is properly called Taybin*] printed in 1575.[13]

The current volume used for this study is the English translation in 1593 by C.R. Boxer, historian of early modern European expansion, specialising in Portuguese, Dutch and Spanish overseas colonies. Boxer based his translation on sixteenth-century English

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[11] C. R. Boxer, 'Introduction', in *South China in the Sixteenth Century, Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín De Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)*, ed. and trans. by C.R. Boxer (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), pp.vii-xci (pp. l-lv).

[12] George Bryan Souza, Jeffrey Scott Turley, *The Boxer Codex: Transcription and Translation of an Illustrated Late Sixteenth-Century Spanish Manuscript Concerning the Geography, Ethnography and History of the Pacific, South-east Asia and East Asia* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2016), p. 8.

[13] For an informative introduction of the writers and the publication history of the travel texts, see Boxer, 'Introduction', pp. l-xci.

translations, while closely consulting the original manuscript and print editions in Portuguese (Pereira, da Cruz) and Spanish (de Rada).[14]

Matteo Ricci and Nicolas Trigault, trans., by Louis J. Gallagher, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610* [1615] (New York: Random House, 1953)

The journals of Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) were found among his papers after his death. The Belgian Jesuit Nicolas Trigault translated it from Italian to Latin, revised and published the volume in 1615, with the title *De Christiana expeditione apud Sinas* [*The Christian Expedition to China*]. The volume is divided into four books. The first book details the Chinese language, geography, climate, customs, dress and products, issues that would have been of interest to early modern Europeans. Books Two to Four describes the Jesuit mission to China. Starting with the early endeavours of the Jesuits to enter China, the books give an account of the various challenges that the Jesuits underwent before a mission could be set up. It also details their successes and failures at gaining converts and their engagement with Chinese officials. The final book ends with Ricci's death and includes an account by Trigault of Ricci's burial and tomb.

Ricci's journals have a lengthy publication history. It was first written in Italian for the General of the Society of Jesus. It appeared in multiple Latin editions over the next decades, as well as in French, German, Spanish, Italian, and English in volume Three of *Purchas His Pilgrimes.* Sections of Ricci's diaries were also included in Henry Yule's *Cathay and the Way Thither*, an 1886 publication by the Hakluyt Society. Gallagher's translation is of the 1615 publication in Latin.

[14] Ibid., pp. vii-viii.

Chapter One: Motivations for Chinese and European Travel in Late-Ming China

Global historians have written about the remarkable parallels between early modern Europe and late-Ming China.[1] While the periodisation of the 'early modern era' has been criticised as being Eurocentric, arbitrary and teleological, the term is helpful in recognising certain social and cultural phenomena characteristic of that period, such as demographic growth, economic expansion, centralisation of power, religious change, increasing connectedness between Europe and the rest of the world, introduction of new technologies and intellectual reorientation.[2] Comparative and global historians observed that the abovementioned phenomena can also be identified in Chinese history between the fourteenth to the eighteenth century.[3] Indeed, these historical parallels instigated the present comparative approach towards Chinese and European travel texts in the first place. Demographic growth, economic expansion and intellectual transformation were common historical factors which encouraged travel by Chinese and Europeans alike, ushering in this highly fascinating and productive period of travel and travel writing in late-Ming China.[4]

To begin a comparison of Chinese and European travel texts about late-Ming China, it is crucial to reflect upon the motivations for travel articulated by the writers considered in this study. Travel accounts, like other literary texts, do not exist in a vacuum, but are reflective of the historical time and place in which they were written. The cultural and historical context surrounding travel and the production of travel texts is considered in this first chapter, which compares and analyses the travel motivations as stated in texts. As briefly mentioned in the introduction, there has been a noted shift in the reading of travel literature, across disciplinary boundaries, from English literature, to travel writing studies, to Chinese studies. Texts once read for their factual accounts of history, geography and ethnography have been critically reread as self-narratives, and as texts directed towards specific patrons and audiences. In an edited volume about European travellers to Asia during the Renaissance, Daniel Carey remarks:

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[1] For a discussion of this debate, see David Porter, 'Sinicizing Early Modernity: The Imperatives of Historical Cosmopolitanism', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 43 (2010), 299-306.

[2] Luise-Schorn Schuette, *Geschichte Europas in der Frühen Neuzeit: Studienhandbuch 1500-1789* (Stuttgart: UTB, 2013), cited in 'Introduction', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History 1350-1750, Volume I: Peoples and Places*, ed. by Hamish Scott, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1-33 (p. 3).

[3] Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 32-33.

[4] Ibid., p. 34.

> Early modern cultural encounter has too often been understood within the terms of a limited paradigm: namely, the instance of individual European travellers who found themselves in unfamiliar environments and attempted to make sense of what they experienced […] it ignores the institutional constraints that defined cultural exchange and the terms in which such encounters took place.[5]

For the field of Chinese history, Stephen McDowall also questions the practice which historians have adopted towards Chinese travel texts, namely reading them as objective accounts which neutrally record facts about the physical environment.[6] McDowall proposes reading these travel accounts 'against the grain' since they were cultural artefacts 'created not only by the descriptive tools at the author's disposal, but by *entire systems of cultural, political, social and aesthetic schemata*.'[7] Both critics indicate that texts must be studied as part of wider historical trends which surrounded the world of the travel writer. The travels, observations and writings of these European and Chinese men are not straightforward descriptions of their physical surroundings, but products of the early modern and late-Ming worlds which formed their consciousness, experiences and language. Authorial intent and the social networks which surrounded the authors need to be considered.

While these travel texts focused on the same geographical location, the Chinese and European writers experienced, observed and wrote about late-Ming China differently. They set off with different expectations and asked different questions. Consequently, experiences of the physical world which surrounded the traveller were mediated according to their cultural background and personal perspective, before finding expression through text. In the words of Peter Burke, '[r]epresentations are not simple reflections of social reality, but pass through a double filter, through individual experience and through conventions of representation'.[8] This thesis adopts such an approach towards reading travel texts, and this is of particular importance to this first chapter, which examines the meanings and motivations of the Chinese and European travellers in late-Ming China. In describing their motivations for travel, travellers were neither objective nor autonomous. Just as their experience of the physical world was mediated through cultural practices

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[5] Daniel Carey, 'Introduction', in *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. by Daniel Carey (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 1-11, p. 3.
[6] McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections*, p. 3.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Peter Burke, 'Culture: Representations', in *The Oxford Handbook of Cities in World History* (2013), ed. by Peter Clarke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 438-63 (p. 438).

surrounding travel, their written motivations were similarly influenced by their institutional constraints and by political, social, and cultural codes.

A comparison between the European experience of overseas travel and the Chinese literati's experience of travel within China might seem unusual, given the varied motivations of the travellers and the difference in scale of the voyages. After all, European travellers embarked on lengthy, life-threatening voyages to China for diplomatic, missionary and mercantile purposes. In contrast, the Chinese travellers overwhelmingly travelled for leisure and enjoyment, and were not so far away from home. Cultural ideas about how one ought to travel also appear to be very different, if we consider these two quotes which are representative of the travel theories guiding the two travel cultures.

> Travel is thus a certain journey, undertaken by a suitable man out of the desire and wish to wander through, inspect and get to know external places, in order to acquire from there some good or other, which could be useful either to the fatherland and the friends or to ourselves. [9]
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> S. W. Zwicker, *Breviarium apodemicum methodice concinnatum* (Danzig, 1638)

> Literary men of great understanding often like to speak of travel. However, it is not easy to say what travel is. Without the breadth of mind to go beyond the mortal world, it is not possible to appreciate landscape [...] if you do not place your body outside worldly matters, abandon daily affairs and carry out your goal alone, then again you will be travelling, but it will not be real travelling.[10]
>
> Pan Lei (in the preface to Xu's diaries, 1776)

A parallel reading of these two quotes reveal a motivational divide in the prevalent theories of travel in the European and Chinese contexts. Zwicker's quote reflects the utilitarian goals of early modern travel. Travel in this period necessitated a hefty investment in terms of both time and money. Considering all the efforts and resources that went into travel, within Europe and to further destinations overseas, tangible rewards had to be reaped to justify the costs. Consequently, according to Zwicker, not everyone had the physical and mental capacities for travel. Not only did one have to embark on a physical

[9] Cited in and trans. by Justin Stagl, *A History of Curiosity: The Theory of Travel 1550-1800* (Chur: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1995), p. 71.
[10] Cited in and trans. by Ward, *Xu Xiake*, p. 99.

journey, one had to be curious about the world, closely inspect one's physical surroundings and synthesise one's findings for an audience. In early modern commentary, a useful journey had to end with the reaping of profit for one's country, friends or oneself, displaying tangible attainments in knowledge, trade, diplomacy and mission.

What a difference then to consider Pan Lei's lines. Written as a preface to Xu Xiake's travel diaries, it echoes and succinctly summarises the sentiments of late-Ming travel texts and poems. The Chinese theory of travel reflected neo-Confucian philosophy which adopted a sceptical view towards the blind pursuit of profit 利, Pan speaks of transcending the mortal world and removing one from worldly concerns. If one travelled for worldly, practical ends, such as to gain knowledge or on official business, 'it will not be real travelling'[11]. The traveller might be making a physical journey, yet in their mind, they do not appreciate landscape because they lack the 'breadth of mind' to step out from the secular world of societal, cultural and political pressures.

While early modern European theories of travel were concerned with utilitarian matters which benefitted a greater, institutional good, Chinese travel advice stressed the abandonment of these practical matters in order to focus on appreciating landscape without worldly impediments.[12] It is not to say that travel was completely anti-utilitarian, for travel was often written about as being of 'benefit' or 'gain' 益, or as an 'attainment' 得.[13] In travel texts, the activity of travel was framed in terms of achievement; it was a challenge for the literati, confined by strict study schedules and family obligations to remove themselves from their daily concerns and embark upon a journey. However, the gains to be made from travel were decidedly different from the utilitarian matters which incessantly preoccupied the literati consciousness—societal and political gains to be made from the careers. Rather, the gains from travel were those of self-cultivation and religious experience, obtained by removing oneself from worldly concerns, which will be further illustrated in the examples drawn from the travel texts.

While such travel advice contained important considerations for the travel writers, training their eyes and minds to prioritise certain moments in their travels over others, it was to a large extent pretext. Society offered European and Chinese travellers various

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Marion Eggert, *Vom Sinn des Reisens: Chinesische Reiseschriften vom 16. bis zum frühen 19. Jh* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004), p. 61.

[13] Ibid.

theories of travel, inculcating in them socially acceptable travel motivations. I suggest that culturally prescribed norms were not the only factors that guided their journeys and literary inquiries about travel. When the focus shifts from the travel writers' cultural differences and the seemingly incongruent motivations, to their shared humanity, their comparable social status, literacy and education, there is much common ground to start a discussion comparing the parallel experiences of travel.

The chapter first discusses the philosophies of travel in both cultures, considering the specific cultural interpretations of travel that influenced travellers journeying in late-Ming China. This provides insights into the travel pedagogy of the era and cultural preferences which shaped the processes behind the authorship and reception of travel texts. The chapter then discusses how historical circumstances in early modern and late-Ming societies influenced the travellers' motivations. This includes brief histories about the institutions which these men belonged to, to come to an understanding of their worldviews and pressing concerns. Throughout the chapter, the explicit travel motivations which the travellers expressed in writing, such as utilitarian travel and purposeless roaming will be critically analysed. Professed motivations expressed in the travel texts will be read against the grain, as travel literature from both Chinese and European cultures emerged out of their own literary traditions, necessitating an adherence to established literary conventions guiding travel writing.[14]. Although travel writers were deeply influenced by the established social rituals surrounding travel and travel writing, I recognise the need to avoid 'cultural solipsism' by attending to the travel writers as individuals, considering their biographies to arrive at a fuller picture of their lives and their travels. Therefore I also pay attention to motivations such as career, self-representation and spirituality in travel, which may have been less articulated but should not be overlooked. Historical issues surrounding the institutions of church and state, such as the overseas mission and Ming dynastic decline inevitably informed the travellers of this era and were reflected in the travel texts. I argue that such concerns and issues were present in the travel texts even when travellers were not ostensibly writing about them, reflecting the travel writer's conscious shaping of the text for their own purposes.

I am conscious of the possibility of enforcing binaries in comparative work, which might lead to the essentialism of the 'Chinese traveller' as juxtaposed to the 'European

[14] Adler, 'Travel as Performed Art', pp. 1371-72.

traveller'. Identities are, after all, plural and contingent and defy neat categorisations. By engaging in a close reading of textual traces left by the travellers, the chapter gives us an idea of the travellers as individuals, yet also products of their times, cultures and histories. Another practical challenge of this chapter is the distinction between the practices of travel and of writing. The motivations which spurred these men to travel may not have been the same motivations expressed in the travel texts, which were written for an intended audience and thus had to accord with audience expectations and conventions surrounding travel texts. However, since a corpus of travel texts is at the centre of this study, a separation of these two phenomena can only exist conceptually. For the seven travel writers in the study, the act of writing was a central part of their overall experience of travel. These writers set out on their journeys, with the intention of recording their travels for a wider audience either at the very start, or midway through their journey.[15] In early modern European travel writing, an important development in the genre is 'related to the appearance of the individual traveller as a writer of books self-consciously addressing a reading public.'[16] Hence, 'travelling' and 'writing' are not neat categories which can be separated, one from the other. Rather, they have a synergistic relationship right from the very start, with the act of travel informing the writing, and the desire to write informing the paths and attitudes of the traveller.

1.1 Philosophies of Travel

Both societies looked back on a long history of travel and mobility and each culture possessed a sophisticated philosophy about the meaning of travel. Europeans couched their narratives in terms of utilitarian travel, while Chinese travellers emphasised their ability to roam freely, leaving their worldly concerns behind. A brief discussion of their respective philosophical meanings of travel provides a useful basis for further discussion about the travellers' motivations for travel. It shows the schemata according to which travellers were expected to frame their texts so that their narratives would adhere to the conventions recognised by scholars and readers of their time.

In the early modern period, humanists were concerned with creating a theory of travel. Justin Stagl demonstrates that there was a 'methodising of travel' throughout the

[15] C.R. Boxer suggests that Pereira might only have considered writing an account of his travels and captivity midway through his journey. See Boxer, 'Introduction', p. xxi.

[16] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Instructions for Travellers: Teaching the Eye to See', *History and Anthropology*, 9 (1996), 139-90 (p. 148).

sixteenth century in the intellectual centres of Venice, Padua, Basel and Paris, with the systematic charts and the highly organised and detailed descriptions propagated by Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) being adopted by travel theorists with the aim of codifying and improving travel.[17] Over the years, the medieval pilgrimage—the predominant form of travel prior to the early modern period—had become tainted with non-religious purposes and eventually served as a guise for engaging in other distractions. As a new era of travel dawned, renewed legitimation for travel was needed and this was found in the pursuit of knowledge and education.[18] While religion remained an important feature of voyages, knowledge and information arose as new priorities. Europe was undergoing an age of cultural transformation with the overseas exploratory voyages of the late-fifteenth and early-sixteenth centuries expanding the boundaries of the world as perceived by Europeans. This had transformative effects on European notions of travel and travel writing. As travel within and outside of Europe flourished, an increase in the writing and reading of travel books occurred. Travel became a highly conscious social practice, and by about 1550, humanists began to synthesise various literary traditions discussing travel into a standard doctrine, otherwise known as the *ars apodemica*, or the art of travel.[19] The aim of the *ars apodemica* was to discipline travel by ensuring that travel had a conscious, programmatic utilitarian intent.[20] This was achieved by providing travellers with specific instructions about how they should travel and what they should observe and record. While these 'theories' were mainly aimed at conceptualising the function and method of travel for travellers within Europe, these discussions informed the European travel which took place in China, as will be demonstrated in the following examples.

The major methodological books on travel such as Theodor Zwinger's *Methodus Apodemica* (1577) were published in the 1560s and 70s, around the time when travellers such as Gaspar da Cruz and Martin de Rada journeyed to China.[21] Educated individuals of this period were taught according to a curriculum based on humanism, which instilled in them the classical education based on Greek and Latin literature, history and philosophy, with strong Christian influences. It is unclear whether da Cruz or de Rada read the methodological books on travel, but based on the systematic structure of their accounts,

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[17] Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, pp. 65-70.
[18] Ibid., p. 47.
[19] Ibid., pp. 49-52.
[20] Ibid.
[21] According to C.R. Boxer, Gaspar da Cruz was in South China for several months in 1556, visiting Canton for several weeks that same winter. Martin de Rada was in Fujian, China from July to September 1575. Boxer, 'Introduction', pp. lix, lxii.

and their educational background, they were likely kept abreast of the intellectual trends about travel circulating within Europe, accordingly adopting these structures for their travel texts. Matteo Ricci's diaries which were collated and translated after his death by his fellow Jesuit Nicolas Trigault likewise reflected the highly structured, programmatic nature of early modern European travel methodologies. Main topics which travellers were prescribed to observe were the name and geographical position of the region, the climate, the character and customs of the people, and information about the ruler of the region and the political organisation.[22] The contents of da Cruz, de Rada and Ricci's texts closely adhere to the requirements set out by the travel methodologists of Europe. They largely follow the same order in organising information, firstly indicating the geographical position of China and explaining the various names through which this land was once known to the Europeans, secondly describing the cities, and thirdly giving information about the people, their trades and their customs. They then close with a description of the political organisation and with information about the Chinese emperor. Consider the structure of de Rada's relation of China:

(1) Of the size of the kingdom of Taybin [China] and its situation

(2) Of the provinces into which the kingdom of Taybin is divided

(3) Of the number of the cities and towns of the kingdom of Taybin

(4) Of the fighting-men, garrisons and weapons

(5) Of the population of the kingdom of Taybin and tributers and tributes

(6) Of the antiquity of the kingdom of Taybin and of the changes which have occurred therein

(7) Of the manner of the people and of their customs and clothes

(8) Of their manner of eating, and of their banquets

(9) Of the buildings, husbandry, mines and other things which there are in this country

[22] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Travel Writing as a Genre: Facts, Fictions and the Invention of a Scientific Discourse in Early Modern Europe', *Journeys*, 1 (2000), 5-33 (p. 7).

(10) Of their justices and way of government[23]

One sees a real effort towards 'methodising travel' in the early modern period, in line with the attitude that educated travellers had the responsibility to use their travels for the production and expansion of geographical knowledge.[24] This was particularly the case for travellers journeying as far as China. After the Portuguese established initial trade relations in 1517, geographic literature on China increased and became popular in Europe. The emerging picture of China was one of a sophisticated culture with a strong centralised government and an abundance of riches. To early modern Europeans, China was imagined as a country ready for mercantile exploitation and religious conversion.[25] Hence travel to Asia was laden with expectations from the institutions which sent them abroad and the European reading public. Such expectations were accordingly addressed in treatises about China written by the travellers.

Historians of early modern travel have convincingly made the case that while not all early modern travellers referred to the *ars apodemica*, the travellers with more rigorous scholastic training tended to do so.[26] With the exception of Pereira, the European travellers da Cruz, de Rada and Ricci underwent years of education before being initiated into the order and sent abroad for mission. Travel for educational purposes was widely praised in early modern Europe and upheld as the correct model for travelling. Only when such criterion was fulfilled was travel considered 'true travel' or '*peregrinari*'. This was contrasted with aimless and useless wandering, which humanists termed '*vagari*'.[27] Travel for leisure was generally not acceptable at this time within Europe. For European travellers to China, leisure was very distant from their minds. Travel from the Iberian Peninsula to China was perilous and uncomfortable. Shipwrecks were probable, with one in four ships ending up at the bottom of the seabed and the length of the journey taking up to a year.[28] Disease such as scurvy claimed the lives of many European voyagers. Given that they were risking their lives to get to Asia at great financial and logistical expense, the travellers were

[23] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 243.
[24] Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, p. 71.
[25] Robert Markley, 'Riches, Power, Trade and Religion: The Far East and the English Imagination, 1600-1720', *Renaissance Studies*, 17 (2003), 494-516 (pp. 494-95).
[26] Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, p. 71.
[27] Ibid.
[28] Michela Fontana, *Matteo Ricci: A Jesuit in the Ming Court* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), p. 20; Felix Plattner, *Jesuits Go East*, (Dublin: Clonmore & Reynolds, 1950), pp. 46-56 identifies the Cape of Good Hope, Indian Ocean basin, Goa and the South China Sea as 'death traps', where missionaries were particularly vulnerable to unfavourable weather, shipwrecks, piracy and disease.

subject to great expectations from the institutions that sent them. This was especially apparent with the Jesuit missions, which specifically required missionaries to send in periodic reports to their superiors, who would carefully track missionary activity in their global bases.[29]

Having established that the European travellers in the present study were informed by discussions on utilitarian travel and the *ars apodemica*,[30] it is time to attend to Chinese theories of travel. Most discussions of Chinese travel philosophy returns to the etymological and semantic roots of the Chinese terms for 'travel'. [31] One form of travel is *lü* 旅, which indicates purposeful, utilitarian travel. Such travels included travel for official purposes and travel undertaken out of necessity. This term has connotations that the traveller is compelled to travel as a result of external pressure, as if one was 'dispatched', rather than freely making one's own decision to commence on the journey.[32] In classical texts, such as the *Commentaries on the Book of Changes* 周易正义, it explains the term as such, 'a traveller 旅者[…] is one who is removed from his original residence and stays in another area.'[33] An alternative term *xing* 行 is indicative of the distance that is moved and the mobility which comes with travel. This term refers to actual physical displacement and there is a specific destination in mind which the traveller moves towards.[34]

However, the preferred term of travel, which was selected by all of the travel writers in this study, is the term *you* 游. In juxtaposition to the purposeful travel of *lü* or *xing*, and the early modern 'peregrinari', *you*, a cognate with swimming, literally means floating and drifting. *You* was perceived as aimless wandering, which allowed its practitioners to be free. Despite its aimlessness, *you* carries none of the negative connotations of the derogative '*vagari*'. Instead, it was a positive term, particularly in the Taoist philosophical context which constantly emphasized the unnatural constraints of urban society and found in aimless wandering a return of man to the natural world which

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[29] Liam Matthew Brockley, 'Jesuit Missionaries on the Carreira da Índia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Selection of Contemporary Sources', *Itinerario*, 31.2 (2007), 111-32 (p. 111).
[30] Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, p. 71.
[31] Eggert, *Vom Sinn des Reisens*, pp. 13-19.
[32] Ibid., p. 14.
[33] Wang Bi 王弼 and Kong Yingda 孔颖达, *Zhouyi zhengyi* 周易正义 [Commentaries on the Book of Changes], [653?], ed. by Yu Peide 余培德 (Jiuzhou: Jiuzhou Publishing House, 2004), p. 638, cited in Wei Xiangdong, *Wanming Lüyou Diliyanjiu, Yi Jiangnandiqu Wei Zhongxin* 晚明旅游地理研究—以江南地区为中心 [Research on late-Ming Tourism and Geography: Focusing on the Jiangnan Region] (Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, 2011), p. 23.
[34] Eggert, *Vom Sinn des Reisens*, pp. 15-16.

was uncorrupted and good. Mentions of *you* in classical texts were also highly positive. In the Book of Rites 礼记, attributed to Confucius, it is written, 'Consequently the dignified man finds learning in all things, in times of hiding, of meditation, of resting and of travel.'[35] It is significant that 'travel' is categorised alongside actions that evoke contemplation and rest, indicating that travel had a restorative and regenerative function in Confucian teaching. In the classic *Book of Songs* 詩經, there is a poem about yearning for Feiquan (the name of a spring) and it closes with 'Let me drive forth and travel there, to dissipate my sorrow.'[36] In the ancient classic *The Songs of the South* 楚辞, the poem 'The Far-Off Journey' 遠游, opens with a desire to escape the world through travel, 'Grieved at the parlous state of this world's ways. I wanted to float up and away from them.'[37] This poem details a celestial journey, in which the persona travels away from the world experienced as a source of grief and despair, entering the Taoist heavenly realm where one is dispelled of former grief: 'Transcending Inaction, I came to Purity, and entered the neighbourhood of the Great Beginning [The Taoist state of formlessness].'[38] In these classical texts, travel is represented as a highly positive, pleasurable endeavour, juxtaposed with the corrupt, degenerate world. The world is perceived as a sorrowful place, full of grief and troubles, the antidote to which was travel, which availed one of the pressures of society and gave one freedom. Travel is thus framed as a metaphysical, spiritual removal from the corrupt world.

This idea of purposeless roaming was deeply appealing to the travel writers under discussion. In the titles of their texts, they all used the term *you* to describe their travels, even when other terms might be more philologically precise. It is particularly interesting to consider *The Travel Diaries of Xu Xiake*. Of all the travellers in this study, Xu was the one who most painstakingly recorded the actual movement, or the *xing* 行 of his travel in his text. Take for instance this excerpt of travels in Hunan. 'The first day of the fourth month: The drums indicating the fifth hour sounded, it was raining heavily. At daybreak we headed forth (*xing*)[39] in the rain […] we headed northeast and walked (*xing*) along the

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[35]Confucius, 禮記 *Liji* [The Book of Rites] (Shanghai: Shanghai Shangwu Yinshu, 1936), p. 109.
[36] *The Chinese Classics, Vol. IV The She King or The Book of Poetry*, trans. by. James Legge, 5 vols (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960), p. 64.
[37] David Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1959), p. 81.
[38] Ibid., p. 87.
[39] *Xing* 行, indicates a forward movement, usually with the feet, but it can be used to describe the movement of different modes of transport, hence the many different renderings of the verb in translations into English.

western shore of Xiaoshao creek for three *li*. Looking southwards, the mountain gorges east of Yankou 掩口 sloped downwards into the flat plains. Hence the mountains to the east gradually unfolded, the creek took a bend to the east and we followed (*xun* 循) it for five *li*.'[40] As a whole, Xu's travel texts offer detailed records of movement from one location to another, rather than the aimless roaming *you* 游 mentioned in the classical texts. Xu provides specific place names and has a clear itinerary and direction. From a reading of the travel diaries, Xu selects verbs which specifically refer to physical movement, such as *xing* and *xun*. Quite infrequently does Xu actually use the term *you* in his travel text. Nevertheless, when referring the entirety of his travels, the term selected is *you*, such as in the title of his diaries, or in the individual sections, such as 'Diary of Travels through *Chu*' 楚游日记, where the above excerpt is taken from. Wang Shixing, whose travels mainly took place whilst dispatched as an official to the various provinces of China, also selects the term *you* when giving a title to his travel records.

The preference for the term *you* to describe travel indicates the philosophical and rhetorical ideals which guided Chinese literati travel writing. Travel as *you* was the ideal pastime for late-Ming writers, having been hailed as a worthwhile pursuit since antiquity and immortalised in verse by ancient poetry and by Confucian and Taoist masters alike. While the philosophical texts spoke of aimless, purposeless wanderings, over time, this became a rhetorical phrase. It was a cherished aspiration that gained currency in the imaginations of the late-imperial literati, whose societal and political settings encouraged them to seek rest and transcendence in the act of travel.[41]

A comparison of the respective philosophical and rhetorical backgrounds indicates that Chinese and European travel writers were taught how to travel and how to write about travel. Travel experiences and their motivations for travel were framed in culturally-specific ways. European travellers, influenced by the humanist approach taught at European universities and monastic institutions, adhered to methodologies that disciplined early modern travel. The European travellers to China framed their journeys as true travelling, or *peregrinari*, highlighting the utilitarian ends of their journeys and texts. Meanwhile, the Chinese travellers in discussion were inspired by classical texts on travel and keenly emphasised their removal from worldly concerns and their desire to roam freely

[40] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 440.
[41] Eggert, *Vom Sinn des Reisens*, pp. 61-68.

through the landscape. In a close reading of the motivations of travel, it is necessary to recognise that the professed motivations stemmed from established cultural pedagogy disciplining (either deliberately or otherwise) the creation of travel texts. Instead of conflating the written motivations for travel with the travel writers' true intentions, I suggest in the next section that insights into the authors' biographies and historical contexts allows one to ponder upon aims and motivations portrayed less overtly in the travel texts, but which remain very relevant in a discussion on motivations for travel.

1.2 Travel and Society—Early Modern Europe and late-Ming China

Travel texts were products of the intellectual debate and travel norms of their time. Motivations narrated in travel texts were to a considerable extent predetermined and Daniel Carey notes that '[i]t was rare for anyone to travel in an independent capacity; the norm was to receive royal, ecclesiastical or aristocratic patronage which established ideological limits on the expression of these accounts.'[42] Chinese and European travellers alike were not independent agents. Powerful institutions defined their identities, their careers and the politics of the world they lived in, shaping the travellers' perspectives before they even commenced their journeys. Their travel texts were the products of these values and should be read with close attention to the social and political climate of their times, for not only philosophical discussions but also societal influences played a central role in the motivations of Chinese and European travellers. Travel texts of this period served as cultural spaces for the expression of a social self through travellers' narrations of their identity and political leanings; this was an age of heightened self-consciousness in autobiographical writings in both China and Europe.[43] Although cultural and ideological limits were established on Chinese and European accounts alike, there was room for the travellers to present their worldview and their opinions in their travel text. All the texts under discussion are first-person narratives in which the author directly addresses the audience at multiple points in the text.

[42] Carey, 'Introduction', p. 7.

[43] Tina Lu, 'The Literary Culture of the Late-Ming', in *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature (2 vols.),* ed. by Kang-i Sun Chang and Stephen Owen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 63-151. Lu names Li Zhi and Yuan Hongdao as representative self-conscious writers of late-Ming literary culture. Philippa Kelly, Lloyd Davis, and Ronald Bedford, 'Introduction', in *Early Modern Autobiography: Theories, Genres, Practices*, ed. by Ronald Bedford, Lloyd Davis and Philippa Kelly (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 1-18 (pp. 2-3).

Religion and social change shaped the mood of late-Ming and early modern European societies, compelling travel writers to address these issues in their travel texts.[44] European travellers in Asia wrote about religion as a response to pressing issues in their home society: the Reformation, the Wars of Religion and the subsequent Counter Reformation. Missionary-travellers abroad were keen to ensure that the 'correct' form of Christianity was being preached.[45] 'Regaining souls' to balance out those that had left the Roman Church for the Protestant faith was an important motivation for missionary-travellers and their Iberian sponsors who perceived themselves as defenders of the faith.[46] The Jesuit order, renowned for its global reach in an era of expanding overseas mission was an order that arose out of the divisive religious split, founded by Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556) with the intent of protecting the Church against religious heretics.[47] Meanwhile, in China, social and political issues ruled the day. The oversupply of examination candidates resulted in the underemployment of the literati class. Many elite, well-educated men had ample time and resources on their hands while waiting for the next round of the triennial metropolitan examinations.[48] Furthermore, gradual dynastic decline resulting in the usurpation of powers by the eunuchs in the court led to much resentment and anxiety about the future of the dynasty.[49] In this age of social change and anxiety, the travel texts of literati travellers served as vehicle for social commentary.[50]

While the Chinese and European travellers under discussion were mobile and geographically removed from the centres where political and religious change were taking place, they remained engaged with the debates, changes and crises occurring in the centres of Rome and Beijing. These social and political anxieties are significant, as travel writing also involves the politics at home. For instance, dynastic decline and political turmoil in late-Ming China greatly affected the cultural landscape of the age. Literary themes across genres and forms were reflective of the real-life political drama taking place in Beijing.[51] Some Chinese historians link the proliferation of travel texts in the late-Ming period to the

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[44] Porter, 'Sinicizing Early Modernity', pp. 209-306.
[45] Carey, 'Introduction', pp. 2-3.
[46] José Pedro Paiva, 'Spain and Portugal', in *A Companion to the Reformation World*, ed. by R. Po-Chia Hsia (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 291-310, (pp. 291-92).
[47] Fontana, *A Jesuit in the Ming Court*, p. 7.
[48] Benjamin Elman, 'Political, Social and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 50.1 (1991), 7-28 (p. 28).
[49] Lu, 'Literary Culture', p. 65.
[50] James C.Y. Watt, 'The Literati Environment', in *The Chinese Scholar's Studio: Artistic Life in the Late Ming Period* (New York: Thames and Hudson Inc. 1987), ed. by Chu-Tsing Li and James C.Y. Watt, pp. 1-13 (p. 1).
[51] Lu, 'Literary Culture', p. 74.

turmoil unfolding in Ming politics, arguing that literati travel was an escape from elite politicking, while also marking the beginnings of travel writing as a form of social commentary and critique.[52] Likewise, Andrew Hadfield argues that early modern travel writing was a form of participating in social debates, as well as political and religious discourse.[53]

The early modern European travellers to China might be linked by a common religion (Catholicism) and Western heritage, yet they were not easily categorised by nationality, native language, or religious order. The missionaries could be perceived as having a common missionary agenda, yet even that has been complicated by recent historical research, which indicates that political and religious power struggles taking place in Europe were reflected in institutional conflicts in Asia, meaning that royal, ecclesiastical, relational and personal aims overlapped.[54] Distance from home did not result in a corresponding freedom from institutional boundaries; European travel writers remained heavily bound by the ideologies and networks at home. A closer look at their travel writings will indicate that alongside mission and education, missionaries also discussed the diplomatic and economic interests of their countries, as well as the trajectory of their own careers.

A singular definition of the Chinese travel writers from the literati class of late-imperial China also proves to be elusive. Traditionally, making a career as a court official was of utmost importance to Chinese literati, who spent years studying to prepare for their civil examinations. Late-Ming population expansion and a series of political crises meant that a large number of educated and talented men were unable to establish a foothold in the world which they had been preparing themselves for since a young age. As an external observer, Matteo Ricci took note of this crisis in his travel text, 'Despite misfortune and with undying hope, some have been known to have made as many as ten attempts to gain this honor, and on the principle of all or nothing to have used up their whole lives in unsuccessful

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[52] Wu Shiwei 吴世伟 and Duan Renbin 段仁斌, 'Mingdai youji xingsheng yuanyin tanxi' 明代游记兴盛原因探析 [On the Reasons of the Prosperity of Travel Notes in Ming Dynasty], in *Journal of West Anhui University* 皖西学院学报, 21 (2005), 55-58 (p. 55).

[53] Andrew Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance, 1545-1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 12.

[54] Carey, 'Introduction', p. 3.

endeavour.'[55] Of the travel writers discussed in this thesis, only Wang Shixing can be considered as having achieved official success, acquiring his *jinshi* 進士 title, the highest degree in the imperial examinations, in 1577, which allowed him to commence on an official career spanning nearly two decades, with posts in Henan, Beijing, Sichuan, Guangxi, Yunnan, Shandong, Nanjing. In comparison, Yuan Zhongdao enjoyed mediocre success, taking years to obtain his *jinshi* degree, and only achieving a minor post at the end of his life, aged forty-six. Xu Xiake, on the other hand, completely opted out of the civil examinations, choosing instead to make travel his career, a highly unusual choice as success at the examinations was the standard by which men of his class were defined. Given this background of religious and political change, social ambition and creativity in the travel writers' home societies of China and Europe, this thesis selects several chief motivations to guide a closer reading of these travel texts. While the contexts of the travel writers under discussion were far from identical, this section identifies three themes which frequently surface in the travel texts from both cultures: career, the representation of a social self and religious encounter.

1.3 Travel and Career

This section explores the close link between travel, travel writing and the making of one's career in European and Chinese travel texts about late-Ming China. Though constantly on the move, travellers defined themselves in relation to their cultural centres of Rome, Lisbon, Madrid or Jiangnan and Beijing.[56] The travel writers' under discussion had social roles to fill and a need to create a successful career for themselves. Although these individuals were born and raised oceans apart, they came from a specific social stratum that is commensurable. The Iberian travellers belonged to the elite class of early modern Europe. Galeote Pereira, Matteo Ricci and Martin de Rada were descended from aristocratic families.[57] While Gaspar da Cruz was not of aristocratic descent, his admission into the Dominican order points to a monastic education which endowed him with the requisite language skills to participate in foreign missions. Likewise, the Chinese travel

[55] Matthew Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610,* trans. by Louis J. Gallagher (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 30.
[56] Rome, Lisbon and Madrid were the three centres which governed the European missions. See Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 11. Beijing was the political capital of late-Ming China, but Jiangnan is widely considered the cultural centre of late imperial China.
[57] Boxer, 'Introduction', pp. lix, lxii.

writers discussed in this thesis belonged to the highly literate, scholarly class. Receiving rigorous training in the Confucian classics, reading and writing, this class was traditionally trained to play a central role in the government and administration of the empire, yet in late-Ming times, the role of the official could no longer completely fulfil the ambitions of the scholarly men. Political turmoil and the pressures to succeed in the examinations made many of these scholars ambivalent about official life. In classical teachings, the dignified man was supposed to retreat from society when he saw that corruption was occurring, since it would be more ethical to give up his position in office than to serve a corrupt prince.[58] It was common for highly aware, politically and ethically sensitive members of the literati to seek out nature and aesthetic sanctuaries where they could carve out an occupation on their own terms.

1.3.1 The Chinese Literati—Travel as Pastime and Occupation

Given the adverse political circumstances, travel provided an alternative occupation through which many literati found their new calling. They imbued a purpose which the shortage of official posts had divested from their personal lives into travelling and the creative production of texts. Travel texts provided a platform for the literati to reclaim the roles which Chinese society traditionally bestowed upon men of their standing. Scholars of late-Ming China have remarked on striking innovations in both artistic works and political action in this era.[59] In a study of late-Ming literati painting and political involvement, Judith Whitbeck observes,

> Other painters assumed active roles as protagonists in the political struggles, and in a broad sense their artistic works mirror their deepest concerns. It is in part because of the composite (aesthetic, literary, philosophical and political) nature of elite roles in Ming China that one can discern points of correspondence between styles and concerns in painting and those in politics.[60]

There were alternative ways in which these elite men made travel their occupation. Some, like Xu Xiake and Wang Shixing carved out a niche for themselves by undertaking distant travels, journeying into nearly all of the fifteen provinces of China, thereby

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[58] William Theodore Debary, *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), pp. 5-6.

[59] Brook, *Confusions*, p. 10.

[60] Judith Whitbeck, 'Calligrapher-Painter-Bureaucrats in the Late-Ming', in *The Restless Landscape: Chinese Painting of the Late Ming Period*, ed. by James Cahill (Berkeley: University Art Museum, 1971), pp. 115-32.

travelling further than their contemporaries, living experiences which their contemporaries would only read about. Xu Xiake records being particularly joyful upon his travels to distant regions, realising that he had traversed a unique and challenging terrain,[61] suggesting to the audience an enthusiasm for travel, a desire for challenges and a bravery and perseverance that enabled him to 'conquer' less-ventured regions. Meanwhile, other late-Ming travellers had more modest ambitions, travelling instead to the neighbouring cities and provinces in order to focus on meditation and the discussion of ideas with fellow intellectuals and acquaintances. Consider Yuan Zhongdao, who wrote about his decision to leave his hometown for several months, for self-cultivation and to give more attention to his learning,

> After quietly dwelling for several months at home, I had a sudden urge to travel. For I have been residing in the Bamboo Valley, which is exceedingly tranquil and also permits me to study behind closed doors. Yet in this state of affairs there are reasons that prevent me from dwelling for long. Family affairs strain and tire me, I need to attend to external affairs and familiar guests constantly disturb me. For these reasons, I began to long for distant travels. Firstly, famous mountains and beautiful waters could cleanse me of my worldly concerns. Secondly, there are many fine retreats in the Wu and Yue area where I may read and study in peace. Thirdly, although I adequately comprehend my studies, my understanding still lacks depth. Too often I become emotionally involved in phenomenal illusion, and was hindered, distracted or misled into dead ends. Perhaps I may meet some eminent teachers and excellent friends, and I can be nourished by their rain and dew, sloughing off my innate bad habits. This would be a hundred times more effective than restriction enforced by self-discipline. For these reasons I dare not remain indolent.[62]

In this excerpt, Yuan Zhongdao portrays himself as a man tired by the worldly affairs of literati life. While literati writing emphasized scholarly pursuits, much that surrounded the life of the elite men-of-letters were practical, quotidian issues such as duties to the family alongside external and social affairs which Yuan would have been compelled

[61] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 129

[62] Yuan Zhongdao 袁中道, *Youju beilu* [Records of Travelling and Dwelling] 游居杮录 [1618], ed. and comp. by Liu Ruxi 刘如溪 and Yu Qin 于钦 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuban she, 2009), p. 169.

to attend to.[63] He expresses frustrations at these distractions from his learning, and decides that travel would provide him with the opportunity to fulfil his true calling of quiet reflection and self-cultivation. Yuan's yearning to be removed from worldly concerns is reflective of the dominant travel philosophies discussed at the start of the chapter, that portrays the world as a problematic, sorrowful place, and which suggest travel as a remedy that allows one escape and brings one peace.

Yuan's biographical information indicates that this text was written in 1608, after failing the metropolitan examinations the previous year. Hence, this statement can be read as an expression of frustration at the imperial examination system, which trained talented young men in the philosophical classics to eventually staff China's civil service. By the time Yuan sat for his examinations, many men of his standing met with constant failure and disappointment. Historians have noted that passing the final examinations became so unusual that those who anthologized, edited and commented on examination essays were those who had repeatedly failed the examinations over many years.[64] Yuan himself had numerous failures before qualifying in 1615, aged forty-six.[65]

Like many of his peers, Yuan records his frustrations and dismay at his failure to live up to societal expectations. Examinations were the focus of literati life on which individual aspirations were pinned. Success granted one social and political prestige, while failure led to grief, frustration and a return to the study to begin the distressing learning process anew.[66] Yuan's personal failures were compounded by the comparative success of his brothers at the examinations. As a result, members of the literati such as Yuan, highly aware of the social and political problems of late-Ming China and gradually accepting the circumstances that they might never succeed at the examinations, began to turn their attention towards carving out alternative occupations for themselves. Some took up the collecting and connoisseurship of artworks and antiques.[67] Travel, which flourished alongside connoisseurship, provided a space for the literati to express themselves and put their knowledge and literary talents to use. As Yuan outlined in the excerpt and later expands upon in his text, his travels involved visits to scenic sites and engaging in literati

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[63] Ibid.
[64] Lu, 'Literary Culture', p. 79.
[65] Liu Ruxi, 'Foreword', in Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p.5.
[66] Elman, 'Civil Service Examinations', p. 21.
[67] See Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2004).

activities such as book readings, sermons, discussions and the viewing of artworks.[68] Such social gatherings were commonplace in this era and allowed for a flourishing of intellectual discussions between members of the literati. Furthermore, travels allowed the literati to accumulate experience and material for writing prose works and poetry. Through the production of literary texts, and since publication in the late-Ming period was fairly easy, accessible and affordable, late-Ming literati had an alternative avenue of influence.[69] While they could not contribute to government, they could still express their ideas and display their years of scholarship in elegantly written texts replete with their contemplations on late-Ming life and travel. Travel and travel writing enabled the making of an alternative, literary career in an age of political crisis, where the conventional path to success by achieving a prestigious official post was beyond the reach for a large proportion of the elite male population.

Considering that the Chinese travel writers in discussion were educated as state administrators, it is unsurprising that political, social and economic issues surrounding the Chinese state regularly surfaced in these travel texts. Wang Shixing was in service as an official whilst he was travelling broadly across China and readily supplied his commentary on issues surrounding the state when the opportunity arose. Even Xu Xiake, largely reticent on personal and political topics, made critical comments about the military and security situation of the Chinese state in the peripheral southwestern regions. Wang and Xu's criticisms of Ming policies are further discussed in Chapter Four.

Although Yuan Zhongdao rhetorically claims to travel to escape 'worldly concerns', court politics and intrigue still crept into his travel narrative. On one occasion, Yuan passes by Jiangling on an excursion. This was the hometown of Zhang Juzheng (1525-82), a significant figure in the lengthy reign of Emperor Wanli (r. 1573-1620), the then reigning monarch. Wanli ascended the throne as a young child and Zhang Juzheng, the Grand Secretary was the de facto regent in the first ten years of Wanli's reign. Zhang made many reforms to the taxation system and bureaucracy. Although the Wanli Emperor had been highly dependent on Zhang in his youth, after the latter's natural death in 1582, he reversed many of Zhang's reforms. Opportunistic political rivals ensured that Zhang was charged for corruption and malpractice, leading to the purging of Zhang's family, the confiscation

[68] For detailed descriptions of activities taking place in the studies of late-Ming literati, see *The Chinese Scholar's Studio* ed. by Li and Watt.
[69] Meyer-Fong, 'The Printed World', pp. 806-10.

of his properties. Zhang was also posthumously stripped of his honours and titles.[70] Yuan comments on this harrowing political episode,

> As I passed by Jiangling 江陵 I sensed an air of desolation. This house met with the same fate as that of Li Wenrao 李文饒 [787-850]. The tragedy that befell them was one and the same. Wenrao was strongly attached to his abode in Pingchuan 平泉, and later he died in exile, on the sea.[71] Li Wenrao and Zhang Juzheng: Their talents and charisma were comparable. Even the disaster that befell them was comparable.[72]

Yuan's comparison of the contemporary figure of Zhang with the exiled Tang dynasty Chancellor Li Wenrao reveals his thoughts on court politics and intrigue. Both men were renowned for their brilliance as scholars and as court officials. Zhang and Li alike were enormously influential during their official careers, yielding great political power. Yet the factionalism that plagued the imperial court and the squabbles between political opponents meant that recognition and fame at court was usually capricious and short-lived. While Zhang Juzheng may have become de facto regent, and hence the most important man in the Ming court and society, his fate after death was a tragic one. Likewise, eight centuries prior, Li Wenrao might have been a skilled political tactician and rose to the position of chancellor, yet ultimately partisanship brought him to ruin and his family was also purged.[73]

Read in its context, Yuan's inclusion of this highly relevant political episode served a dual aim. Firstly, it was a timely political critique from an individual weary about the state of political affairs. Secondly, it was also a reflection on the individual's precarious role in society. Greatly influenced by the Buddhist thinker Li Zhi (1527-1602), himself a literatus with highly unorthodox, anti-bureaucratic attitudes,[74] Yuan's remarks also served as a commentary on the uncertainty of life and the vulnerability of the official in a political and social system that was corrupt and degenerate. On a political level, it reveals Yuan's

[70] Tang Gang 汤纲 and Zhu Yuanyin 朱远寅, *Ershiwushi xinbian—Mingshi* 二十五史新编—明史 [New Edition of the Twenty-five Official Dynastic Histories—The History of the Ming], ed. by Li Guozhang 李国章 and Zhao Changping 赵昌平, 25 vols (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), pp. 197-207.
[71] 死于海上, 'Death on the sea' refers to death at Hainan island, where exiled imperial officials were sent.
[72] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 4.
[73] *Xin Tang Shu* 新唐書 [New History of the Tang][1060], ed. and comp. by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and others, (Shanghai: Wu zhou tong wen ju shi yin, 1904), p. 846.
[74] Tang and Zhu, *Mingshi*, p. 198.

scepticism about the rewards that could be gained from entering civil service. Historical information reveals that many late-Ming literati were critical about forging an official career, for it was an ambitious, competitive and fleeting world, where one could experience overnight success or rapid demotion.[75] His elder brother Yuan Hongdao for instance, passed his examinations and received various postings, but created excuses such as illnesses to avoid several postings.[76] Yuan was in an ambiguous position. He had been trained to desire imperial success and to pursue a successful career in civil service, yet episodes such as these reflect his reservations towards official life. His life was largely dedicated towards undergoing immense stress in preparation for the metropolitan exams, but even more uncertainties lay ahead.

The travel text provided Yuan with a vehicle to share his personal narrative with a wider audience. Travel supplied him a pastime that served as his alternative occupation, allowing him distance from the political centre of Ming China and freedom from its woes and politics. Ironically, as much as Yuan articulates his desire to escape the 'vulgar concerns of this world' to focus on meditation and self-cultivation, his texts frequently circle back to his observations of political issues and complaints about the examination systems, demonstrating his preoccupation with societal and political concerns. Through Yuan's text, a rupture can be observed between the idealised state of freely roaming according to classical texts and Yuan's embodied reality.

1.3.2 European Travellers—Travel for Career and Mission

In the early modern context, travel and overseas missions were becoming important ways in which mercenaries such as Galeote Pereira and men of the cloth such as de Rada, Ricci and da Cruz could establish a career. Their travel texts displayed the fruits of their labour abroad—presenting to a European audience their strenuous overseas and overland travels, knowledge gleaned from foreign peoples and books, and in the case of Ricci, the result of years living abroad in a foreign land, adopting the language and customs of the Chinese. European travellers to China presented themselves as being greatly motivated by their vocational calling, which sent them to foreign lands.

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[75] Elman, 'Civil Service Examinations', p. 21.
[76] Tang and Zhu, *Mingshi*, p. 143.

Although these travel writers were all from southern Catholic Europe, they came from different kingdoms and religious orders. Galeote Pereira was the sole layperson; Gaspar da Cruz was a Portuguese Dominican missionary. Martin de Rada was a Spanish Augustinian friar with a theological education in Salamanca. His missionary work took him first to Mexico in the 'New World' prior to a posting in Asia. Matteo Ricci was an Italian Jesuit priest. European missionaries in China had complex, manifold identities. On one hand, they were agents of the state in the curious form of religious-colonial imperialism which was the overarching power structure at the time, transplanting European forms of governance into early modern Asia.[77] On the other hand, the missionary motive was deeply important, as they sought to evangelize to the Chinese, to fulfil their duties to their missions, and to work towards their own salvation through personal piety and bearing the hardships of missionary work.[78]

European travellers to China had many tasks to fulfil. Martin De Rada received commands from his superior, the Spanish governor in Manila, Guido de Lavezares, instructing him on practical matters.[79] While the missionary motive was prioritised in these orders, he was also expected to establish trade relations and designate a port for the Spanish so that Spanish ships could enter and leave securely, like the Portuguese could. Furthermore, he was instructed

> to learn the quality of the people of the land, and understand their manners and customs and what trade and commerce they have; and if they keep their word and speak the truth in what they promise, and what merchandise can be taken from here and brought from there, so that trade may be profitable to both parties, together with all the other matters and secrets of the country which can be found and learnt.[80]

Here, a confluence of European social, economic and religious policies is conferred onto an Augustinian monk and his company. In his account of his journey in China, de Rada is reticent on the personal intent of his travel, and stresses that his motive is the one

[77] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'The Spanish Contribution to the Ethnology of Asia in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', in *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. by Daniel Carey (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), pp. 93-123 (p. 95).

[78] Clossey, *Early Jesuit Missions*, pp. 6-10.

[79] Printed in extensor by Fr. Gaspar de San Agustin, *Conquistas*, pp. 304-06, trans. by and cited in C.R. Boxer, 'Introduction', p. lxxii.

[80] Ibid.,

which his king and order had bestowed upon him. Such is the motive that he proclaims to the Chinese officials when asked about the purpose of his travels,

> On the next day we sent the Viceroy a memorial, because he had ordered it thus, in which we notified him of our arrival, and that we had not come to negotiate about human concerns, nor were we of a profession which sought the things of this world, but those of Heaven; and that, therefore, what we wanted was that he would allow us to preach the true God, in whom consisted all bliss, and that this was likewise the desire of our Catholic King of Castile, whose friendship we promised him.[81]

This official, rather formulaic response about the motives of travel is the only one that de Rada overtly offers to his reader. Given that the initial audience of his travel report— before he even considered publishing and disseminating to a wider public, would have been the Spanish governor to Manila and other officials, it is understandable that de Rada would want the report to be concise and pertinent to their interests, omitting superfluous details about his own interests or experiences, unless it was directly related to his career and the larger overseas missions and enterprise.

Gaspar da Cruz's account of his endeavours in Asia is also rife with missionary motivations, similarly lacking personal intent, although da Cruz does seize the opportunity for self-promotion. Right at the beginning of Gaspar da Cruz's account to China, in a chapter titled 'In which it is set forth the reason why the author felt moved to go to China', da Cruz directly addresses the reader and gives him the reason as to why he went to China so as 'not to leave him [the reader] in suspense, but to satisfy him in part straightway in the beginning of the book.'[82]

Da Cruz illustrates his travails in Asia, starting off in the Dominican mission house in Malacca. He records being informed of a 'great opportunity to preach the Gospel, and to reap some fruit' in Cambodia, and began a difficult journey there, despite dissuasion by his colleagues in Malacca.[83] Da Cruz retells being greatly disappointed in Cambodia, where there was little potential for him to successfully evangelise, despite his great efforts. He

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[81] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 255.
[82] Gaspar Da Cruz, 'The Treatise of Fr. Gaspar da Cruz, O.P.', trans. by C. R. Boxer, in *South China in the Sixteenth Century : Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín De Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), pp. 45-240 (p. 59).
[83] Ibid.

gives several reasons to the readers, '[f]orasmuch then as the Bramenes are the most difficult people to convert, since they are very attached to their rites and idolatries.'[84]

Da Cruz then supplies several accounts of the hindrances faced when conducting mission work. One major problem was the authority of the local priests over the populace. Da Cruz characterises the priests as being 'exceedingly proud and vain, and alive they are worshipped for god[…] There is no person that dare contradict them in anything, and their words among them are held for so sacred, that in no wise will they endure to be gainsaid.'[85] The audience which Da Cruz found for his sermons were quickly dissuaded by the priests, who claimed that da Cruz was propagating an inferior religion to theirs. Da Cruz's account informs the reader that the king had religious control over the kingdom—preventing Christianity from entering the country, and that the priests yielded great political and religious power, thus da Cruz had no success despite spending a year in Cambodia. Da Cruz vehemently defends the disappointing spiritual harvest 'if some of my readers should say that they could be converted without the King knowing it, to this I answer that the people of the country is of such a nature, that nothing is done that the King knoweth not.'[86] From this account, da Cruz conveys a sense of deep frustration, arguing that mission in Cambodia is unviable because of the deeply adverse political and religious institutions, which gave no leeway for foreign religions to enter the country. Da Cruz's very negative account of the native Cambodian religions was quite typical of missionaries of that period, who condemned superstitious mythology for professional reasons.[87]

The effect of emphasising his adversity in Cambodia lent him an opportunity to praise his noble efforts in Cambodia in light of a desperate situation, and to justify having borne no fruit during his time there. Historians have noted that early modern European travel narratives of Southeast Asia overwhelmingly served as a literary foil to highlight a mission's efforts elsewhere in East Asia.[88] Da Cruz's account portrays the Cambodians as being almost unconvertible, providing him with an excellent excuse to head eastwards to China. Given all the failures in Cambodia, da Cruz wrote that he had lost hope after achieving nothing: 'I determined to leave this country. And because they told me many

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[84] Ibid., p. 60.
[85] Ibid.
[86] Ibid., p. 63.
[87] Rubiés, 'Spanish Contribution', p. 117.
[88] Sven Trakulhun, 'The Widening of the World and the Realm of History: Early European Approaches to the Beginnings of Siamese History, c. 1500-1700', in *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. by Daniel Carey (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 67-92 (p. 68).

things of China, and the people of it to have a disposition to Christianity, and that they loved reason, I resolved […] to go to China in a ship of Chinas which was then in the country.'[89] In China lay an opportunity for da Cruz to redeem himself. Having made a major misstep in his missionary career by trading the waxing Malacca mission for a waning Cambodia mission, da Cruz desperately needed a new plan. In his despair, China appeared as an option for an improved environment and an opportunity to achieve his potential. Da Cruz heaps great praise upon China even before his account of the country properly begins, announcing to the reader that his account is going to be a highly positive one, which can restore hope after the numerous disappointments which he initially suffered in his efforts in Asia. Although da Cruz is greatly enthusiastic about spreading Christianity to the Chinese people, in reality, da Cruz's advancement of the mission in China was just as marginal as in Cambodia, since he was not granted permission to stay for more than several months. However, his account of China was enthusiastic, praising the cities, the people, the commerce and the politics. Considering the religious, economic and political promise of China for the Portuguese overseas empire, one can argue that it was a strategic move by da Cruz to frame his account of China in glowing praise. Should the Portuguese have succeeded in creating diplomatic ties with the Chinese, da Cruz could be remembered as one of the pioneers of a China mission.

1.4 Shaping the Social Self

The texts selected in this corpus involve a first-person narrator—the social self which the author sought to portray in his literary work. In the early modern and late-Ming world, these travellers were participants of specific social groups—the clergy and the literati—which entailed specific restrictions about how they expected members of the social group to behave. For both European and Chinese travellers, institutions such as family, state, religion and tradition were important social forces which greatly influenced their lives, social conduct and writing. This did not imply that their travel texts were rigid and formulaic, for individuals had the authorial autonomy to create a literary self. Early modern literary identities were carefully crafted after much deliberation by their authors, through strategies such as self-conscious representation, cooperation with editors and publishing houses and a reliance on compelling literary models.[90] Such a shift is also noted

[89] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 63.

[90] Lisa Jardine argues that in the early decades of the sixteenth century, humanists were strategically fashioning their own literary identities and stature. Erasmus' towering pan-European reputation was 'effected

in early modern travel books from the late-fourteenth and fifteenth century onwards, when the individual traveller emerges as the self-aware author-narrator who directly addresses the reader in his text.[91] Travellers actively emphasised their provision of valuable first-hand information and knowledge and this was accompanied with a degree of opportunism and self-promotion.[92]

Chinese historians have also noted developments during the Ming period which emphasized the expression of the literati self through literature. One particularly influential thinker was Wang Shou Ren 王守仁 (1472-1528), a capable official and influential scholar, who gave lectures in Guizhou, Jiangxi and Zhejiang. His studies were disseminated by his students and he had a wide-reaching influence on intellectual trends in late-Ming society.[93] Some of his key philosophical teachings included the concept of 心外無物, meaning that the hearts and minds[94] of humans is the source of all things and objects and 心外無理 meaning that the order of all things is found only within the hearts and minds of people 内心. While Wang Shouren's goal was also to achieve order in society, his method contrasted with the dominant neo-Confucian teachings of the time, which contended that external learning and education was necessary to control human desires and to maintain order in society. Wang Shouren's teachings gained currency, leading to a new reading of the human self, which resulted in a heightened self-consciousness during the late-Ming period.[95] The literati began to seek various forms of self-expression. Travelling and literary writing were amongst the major popular activities through which the literati conducted such an exercise, engaging in a process of identity construction through writing texts about the self and one's own experiences, thoughts and emotions.

Since this chapter is focused on motivations for travels as represented in travel texts, it contends that geographical mobility and the interaction of the self with the material world offered the travel writers an imaginative space in which they could shape their textual identities. Travelling provided the writers with physical distance from their cultural

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by Erasmus himself, and the tight-knit coterie of scholar-servants, editors, correctors, printers and publishers, by a combination of more-or-less conscious strategies: self-conscious self-production, on a recognisable patristic model [Jerome], and assiduous fostering in the publishing houses of publications […] in which the subjects and their treatment were universal.' Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 147.

[91] Rubiés, 'Instructions for Travellers', p. 148.

[92] Ibid., p. 149.

[93] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p .57.

[94] The Chinese term *xin* 心 refers to both the heart and the mind.

[95] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 57.

and political centres. Chinese and European travellers used this distance for varying literary and personal ends. European travellers were part of a larger network of overseas missions (state and religious); their privileged position abroad was enabled by the support from the state, a religious order, or individual patronage. As such, they were expected to be useful by providing information and knowledge and to carry out their assigned tasks.[96] Through their texts, they carved out a social self with accomplishments on their travels, presenting themselves as a useful member of the overseas endeavours. For the Chinese travellers, this was their opportunity to 'roam freely' and be uninhibited by society. On the road, or at their travel destinations, the travellers were temporarily alone, removed from the institutions that sought to cast them into a rigid mould. Thus a physical journey and the peripheral destinations provided the writers with an optimal setting for creating a particular self-narrative.

This sentiment was regularly expressed by Yuan Zhongdao. His narrative constantly shifts between periods of boat travel and times of dwelling back in his hometown of Gong-an, residing alongside friends and family. Yuan regularly complained about having to participate in incessant social niceties which befitted a literatus of his standing and status. In one episode, he was concerned about the large amounts which he had to drink because of the banquets he was obliged to attend and the acquaintances which he had to meet. He then explained how travel and spending time away from the urban centre of late-Ming social life allowed him to avoid such obligations and live according to his own wishes.

> When I re-enter the gate of the city, I am obliged to attend the wine banquets. When I exit the Chunming 春明 gate, I am bound by the same burdens. When I return to my hometown, this is also the case […] the sole exception is after I have recently boarded this boat. I have not consumed any wine for a month. People observe that I enjoy living on a boat; they are unaware that on the boat, one can restore one's humours 养生, exercise personal freedom with regards to what to eat

[96] Elizabeth Williamson, '"Fishing after News" and the Ars Apodemica: The Intelligencing Role of the Educational Traveller in the Late Sixteenth Century', in *News Networks in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Joad Raymond and Noah Moxham (Leiden, Brill, 2016), pp. 542-62 terms this as a 'transactional relationship' (p. 551) between sponsor and traveller in which the traveller dutifully gathers information for reputational, moral and physical gains.

and decrease one's social obligations. There are no events to trouble my heart and mind.[97]

Yuan narrates that travel provides him with geographical mobility from his cultural centre, in this case Gong-an, where he would be compelled to act according to social norms. Travel provides an escape, where he can regain much control of his daily activities. He explains his personal aversion towards imbibing great quantities, 'I am very aware that this is a bitter entertainment, yet I live in the social world, relatives and friends view [social calls] as ritual 礼 […] should I decline to drink at just one banquet, the host would be taken aback 讶.'[98] He goes further, blaming wine as causing him to also experience moral and individual decline. In late-imperial China, excessive drinking was often linked to other human vices, such as lust. Other texts in this period spoke of 'going downhill wine' 下坡酒, which implied that drinking could lead to moral and physical decline.[99] Yuan appears to echo this sentiment: '[i]n all earnestness, that which defeats my morals, harms my life and impedes my learning, is certainly the result of wine.' Thus he finds his redemption in travels, seeking refuge from social obligations and moral vice on his boat.

This results in a depiction of considerable tension within Yuan, narrating a struggle between his two selves, depending on his location. He cannot maintain the same behaviour on his travels as he does in the city, because of social constraints that tie him down. Hence the geographical mobility grants him autonomy. By removing himself from the social and cultural norms which defined the lives of Chinese literati in late-Ming urban centres, Yuan is able to carve out a self on his own terms. To apply a more critical reading of Yuan's text, I analyse the ideal self which he crafts for himself in this passage. He portrays himself as an individual exhausted by social niceties, drinking and debauchery, and has decided to devote himself to travel, learning and restoring his health. In Yuan's narrative, he repeatedly mentions meditation, visiting temples, admiring landscape, listening to sermons and practising vegetarianism, idealising a lifestyle with slightly ascetic tendencies, which corresponded to the Taoist and Buddhist values prevalent in this era.[100] The portrayal of such an ideal, highly controlled self, free from social ties and human vices, is a common literary phenomenon in the late-Ming world. 'Escape from the world' had become a figure

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[97] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 42.
[98] Ibid., p. 43.
[99] Paolo Santangelo, *Materials for an Anatomy of Personality in Late Imperial China* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), pp. 403-06.
[100] De Bary, *Self and Society*, p. 147.

of speech, and being removed from mortal concerns was something that many philosophers and travel writers frequently voiced in their writings.[101] Therefore, even the ideal, true 'self' was subject to the literary and philosophical norms of the time. I argue that an actual escape from worldly concerns through travel was exceedingly difficult. The respite which travellers keenly announced to their audience stemmed from popular rhetorical conventions, and the carefully crafted social self almost always related back to the literary trends of the author's lifetime.

In his preface to *Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains*, Wang Shixing proclaims that 'one must travel to the Five Mountains' and describes his personal 'addiction to travel'.[102] Wang then goes on to emphasize the extent of his addiction, listing out all the adversities that he has faced on his numerous travels and speaks of his travels as a calling, where a transcendental force compels him to travel even in the worst of conditions.

> Hence I am not the master of my travels. When there is severe frost and snow, my hands and feet become frostbitten, great waves billow and the mast is half submerged […] I am unfazed […] When I meet beautiful mountains and valleys, I will travel. Even when my heart is afflicted by a hundred sorrows, when I am weary with ten thousand troubles, when the dead part from the living, and I am deeply grieved, when the clouds and fog darken the moon, and the winds and rain fall endlessly for ten days […] I am unfazed […] when I meet beautiful mountains and valleys, I will travel.[103]

Here we see a heightened sense of self, where Wang proclaims that 'I am not the master of my travels', suggesting an 'addiction', or an inexplicable calling to travelling. A claim to 'addiction' was celebrated amongst late-Ming literati of this period. Addiction to books, artefacts, paintings or travel became indicative of a person's character and was a way in which Wang could express his individualism.[104] As travel peaked in the late-Ming period, all sorts of travellers—from literati travellers to tourists from urban centres were on the road. It was a common rhetorical trope for elite writers to describe themselves as being deeply driven to travel. Given the influx of travellers and the wide availability of travel

[101] Chen Baoliang, *The Urban Life of the Ming Dynasty* (Hunan: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2014), p. 338.
[102] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 24.
[103] Ibid.
[104] Debary, *Self and Society*, p. 9.

texts on the book market, writers sought to differentiate themselves, by elevating their experience of travel in opposition to the worldly tourists.[105]

In this particular excerpt, Wang fashions himself as a great traveller, who travels in all seasons. Contrasting himself against the typical traveller who embarks on excursions only in good weather and convenient timing, Wang asserts that his addiction does not allow him to pick and choose his journeys, for as long as he is in the vicinity of a scenic mountain, he is inexplicably compelled to travel towards it, regardless of what kinds of challenges there are. Wang thrice repeats rhetorical phrases such as 'I am unfazed' and 'when I meet beautiful mountains and valleys, I will travel'. In the midst of these repetitions, he inserts all sorts of hypothetical adversities which arise externally and from within to highlight his dedication towards travel. These imagined hindrances are hyperbolic (his actual recorded journeys were not beleaguered with such an array of challenges), adding to the rhetorical effect which Wang wishes to achieve. Wang carves out an image of himself as a heroic traveller, superseding the challenges with superhuman strength and dedication, defining himself in contrast to the regular, undedicated traveller, who travels only at a whim and in suitable conditions. Here, Wang presents himself as a traveller by calling, overcome by an irresistible and supernatural force that pulls him towards the mountains and waters.

European travel writers were likewise concerned with creating a social self, although the self is not as immediately present when compared to the Chinese travel texts. Indeed, theorists on travel literature in the Western tradition have different opinions as to whether early modern travel writers were concerned with self-representation. Some contend that 'from the late eighteenth century, travel writing starts to look inwards as well as outwards', indicating a post-Enlightenment 'inward turn' where travellers began to relate their 'self'—their thoughts and feelings—to the reader.[106] Meanwhile, others argue that although early modern narrations emphasize the foreign environment over the narrator's opinions and feelings and are not as self-reflexive as later accounts, travellers' motivations nevertheless shape the content of the text.[107] My own reading of the travel accounts agrees with the second perspective. While self-representation was much more overt and pronounced in post-Enlightenment travel texts, early modern accounts were by

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[105] McDowall, *Qian Qianyi*, pp. 20-22.
[106] Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 9.
[107] Matthew Day, 'Western Travel Writing, 1450-1750', in *Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Carl Thompson (London: Routledge, 2015), pp. 161-68 (p. 167).

no means merely interested in recording useful information about the environment. Rather, early modern accounts were the precursors to later self-narrations in travel texts, for there is 'the emergence of a personal voice, conscious of changes and emotions wrought by encounters with the foreign world.'[108]

In contrast to the immediacy of the first-person in the Chinese travel accounts, the self largely lies dormant in the European texts through the limited mention of the first person 'I', which only appears at intervals deemed necessary by the writer. After all, the dissemination of knowledge was the paramount task conferred to the travellers by their patrons and the main interest of their audience, whereas the writers' personal thoughts and experiences were secondary. For instance, since the chief purpose of de Rada, da Cruz and Ricci's texts was to relay the geographical, political and social situation in China, self-representation is less frequent. Nevertheless, in certain episodes, the self comes forward to directly address the audience, most apparently in the preface and epilogue, but also at intervals where the narrator wishes to draw the attention of the audience upon himself. Even in the narration of informative accounts, the travellers' personal voices can be discerned through the narratives, hinted at through the writers' style, lexical choice and use of imagery.

Missionary career granted travellers in this study an impressive degree of geographic and social mobility. Hence self-representation in early modern travel texts tended to be in terms of their career, describing their aptitude in meeting the challenges of overseas missions. After all, being sent abroad on mission was an accomplishment on its own, for only a fraction of those who joined the order were selected to go on missions, after undergoing a decade of training and education.[109]

De Rada's account of his mission to China in the summer of 1575, though ultimately unsuccessful in its aim of establishing a permanent mission in China, actively emphasizes his role as an ambassador of the crown and the church. De Rada records the elaborate rituals of the Chinese hosts as they welcomed the Spanish emissaries before they even pulled into the harbour. 'Before we reached the town of Tiongzozou [Amoy], three captains came out to receive us at sea, of those who are said to have a thousand men each under their charge [...] After many compliments, they produced some refreshments of fruits

[108] Blanton, *Travel Writing*, pp. 10-11.
[109] Luke Clossey notes that upon joining the Jesuit Order as a novice, there was a wait of thirteen to fourteen years prior to selection as missionaries. Clossey, *Salvation and Globalisation*, p. 136.

and a collation.'[110] De Rada eagerly recorded the pomp and scale of their welcome, noting the status and rank of the captains who greeted them, conveying to the audience the importance of the missionaries in their roles as representatives of the Spanish empire. He narrates that they were welcomed as important guests and that

> everywhere we went we should be provided at the cost of the royal exchequer with everything needful in accordance with our standing as ambassadors. In all the places where we arrived, they came out to receive us with notably courteous ceremonies, and the mandarins and magistrates treated us to splendid banquets after their manner, with great kindliness and courtesy.[111]

The embassy was sent from official to official, from the mandarin at Amoy, to the chief magistrate, then to the Governor before finally reaching the Viceroy in Fuzhou, to whom they presented gifts, and who sent a missive regarding their mission to the emperor in Beijing.[112] At certain points in the narrative, de Rada depicts the missionaries as being set apart. He emphasizes the respectful manner in which they were treated, 'It was ordered that we Religious should be carried in large covered chairs, like litters [...] which are used by persons of quality.'[113] Considering that he used the term 'us' to refer to the embassy collectively up till this point, it is interesting that he then sets apart the missionaries through the term 'we Religious' as a distinct subgroup of the embassy. This is self-promotion at play, in which de Rada recounts that the missionaries were accorded special treatment by virtue of their status as religious men.

These descriptions of de Rada's role as ambassador and the warm reception of the Spanish embassy highlight to his audience the importance of the mission to China. It also provides a travel narrative that is in line with the trope of utilitarian travel, to benefit the fatherland and the church. De Rada's account provides useful description about the province of Fujian that he journeyed through. He also constantly emphasizes his role as a representative of Spain and as a religious man. Despite being warmly received by the Chinese officials, the result of this mission was not what the Spanish had hoped for, as they wished to gain concessions and establish a port as the Portuguese had previously

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[110] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 245.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Ibid., p. 246.
[113] Ibid., p. 249.

succeeded in doing. De Rada was already prepared to be stationed in China and not return to the Philippines should permission have been granted.[114]

Although this episode might have been framed in terms of defeat, since they were forced to return to the Philippines after permission for a longer stay was rejected, De Rada chose to weave his narrative in a positive light, focusing on the importance accorded to them by their Chinese hosts. Even after they had been advised by the viceroy to return to Manila, de Rada highlights that they continued to be treated as esteemed visitors 'We journeyed by the same cities through which we had come, everything necessary being given to us with the same punctuality as on out coming, and even more bountifully. Everywhere we went, they came out to receive us with great pomp, and served us very splendid banquets.'[115]

By doing so, de Rada portrays this mission not as a failure, but as a necessary stepping stone towards establishing lasting relations between the Spanish crown and Ming China. While events may not have unfolded according to plan, there was a tone of confidence throughout de Rada's sweepingly positive narrative. The travel text provides de Rada with a platform to highlight his contributions to this highly important episode of Spanish-Chinese relations. His narration of the pomp and detailed rituals surrounding their reception would have made a strong impression upon his sixteenth-century European audience.

Missionary travel accounts such as Ricci's were also eager to promote the missionary efforts in China. In Ricci's account, this is demonstrated through the recurring motif of labourers in the vineyard. Although Book One is completely devoted to geographical and ethnographic information about China, Books Two to Five give a historical account of the Jesuit mission in China, commemorating and promoting the Jesuits' arduous labour in China over the years, comparing themselves to the labourers in the vineyard from the parables.

With only a handful of converts, Ricci was conscious of the limited success of the mission, and offered reasons as to why efforts in China had not made sufficient returns. While the Jesuit order was a religious organisation with religious aims, there were huge

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[114] Boxer, 'Introduction', *South China*, p. xxxi.
[115] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 256.

economic costs associated with providing passage to Asia, and sustaining overseas missions and missionaries. Quantitative historical research on the Jesuit missions have noted the material and economic dimensions of the mission, demonstrating that the global Jesuit network was associated with existing Portuguese, Dutch and other European and Asian shipping networks.[116] As such, there were pressures and expectations on the leaders of the missions to make reasonable returns on the financial investments of the mission and imperial patrons. [117] Ricci, aware that the religious fruit borne in China was incommensurate with the expectations of the order, particularly when taking into account the populace of the vast empire offers his explanation, couched in the language of Jesus' parables of the labourers in the vineyard from the Gospel of Matthew. He describes China as a vineyard of 'meager harvest' and of 'intemperate climate' for missionaries. [118] Furthermore, Ricci reminds the audience that the mission in China was beleaguered with unfortunate incidents and the untimely deaths of Father Antonio Almeida in 1591 due to illness and of Father Francesco de Petrus in 1593. Their deaths were losses to the mission, particularly so, because under Ricci's tutelage, they had almost learnt enough of the language and culture to start missionary duties. 'And so, two almost fully developed labourers in the field were lost just when they were ready to reap the harvest.'[119] At the close of the volume, Nicolas Trigault who edited Ricci's diaries, commemorated Matteo Ricci's life-long efforts and provided a final defence of the mission by repeating this recurring motif. Trigault narrates that the whole history of the mission in China was a result of Divine Providence, accomplished not solely by human hands but through the will of God. He concludes 'And so, those who still labor in this vineyard, including your narrator, will not only lay down their lives here, but will leave their bodies as well, as a testimony to this people and the rest of the world.'[120]

Like de Rada's embassy, the account of the Jesuit mission in China could have been framed in a despairing, pessimistic tone, blaming the small number of converts on the superstitious Chinese and the harsh external conditions. In an effort to justify their careers in China and to ensure the continuation of the mission, it was favourable to appeal to their audience using a fervent tone and religious language. Throughout the account, Ricci (and

[116] See Frederik Vermote, 'Travellers Lost and Redirected: Jesuit Networks and the Limits of European Exploration in Asia', *Itinerario—International Journal on the History of European Expansion and Global Interaction*, 41.3 (2017), 484-506.
[117] Ibid., pp. 485-87.
[118] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 256.
[119] Ibid., p. 257.
[120] Ibid., p. 594.

Trigault) repeatedly emphasized their intentions to stay in China throughout their lifetimes. As missionaries however, the trajectory of their career were not entirely up to them, but dependent upon the decisions of their superiors and the patrons.[121] By couching their career and the mission in the language of Christ's parable, casting themselves in the role of faithful, uncomplaining workers in God's vineyard, they appeal to their superiors and the wider European audience to have faith that the mission will eventually bear fruit, should the workers persevere despite external hardships and setbacks. Trigault's final plea makes the case that even if the missionaries failed to reap a plentiful harvest in their lifetimes, their efforts were not in vain, and they would live on as testimonies and examples to the Chinese, other missionaries, and the audience. Through language that accorded with the missions' aims and motives, the missionaries attempted to carve out a social self through framing their careers in positive, religious rhetoric.

1.5 The Religious Aspect of Travel

Consideration should be given to the spiritual and religious dimension of travel, a feature of both travel cultures. As mentioned, early modern theories of travel were heirs to the medieval tradition of pilgrimage, although some travellers were criticised for using spiritual goals as a pretext for other forms of recalcitrance and entertainment while travelling. Travellers, especially missionaries were keen to demonstrate the usefulness of their travels, not just for knowledge and education but also for the expansion of the mission and for personal spiritual achievement. For many travellers, journeys provided a departure from the mundane and they sought to be transported elsewhere, to achieve experiences which would not be possible had they remained at home. Pilgrimage was a physical journey, but also an act of devotion, which ideally encompassed a transcendent meeting with the divine.[122] This section discusses the spiritual and religious motivations behind travel, and the writing of religious and transcendental encounters.

The early modern travel accounts discussed here were pivoted towards acquiring knowledge about distant lands and differ considerably from medieval pilgrimage accounts that portrayed moments of spiritual affect through the recording of emotions, prayers and physical responses to travel.[123] Yet historical continuities between these two epochs existed

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[121] Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization*, p. 29.
[122] Kim M. Phillips, 'Travel, Writing and the Global Middle Ages', *History Compass*, 14.3 (2016), pp. 81-92 (p. 83).
[123] Ibid.

and features prevalent in the medieval travel account made their way into the scholastic, knowledge-oriented accounts of early modern European travellers. European missionaries considered their distant and dangerous travels as an indication of their devotion to God. Distant travels were fraught with danger and the risk of losing one's life must have weighed heavily on the minds of the travellers. The most dangerous part of their journey was the one on the turbulent seas, and it was on risky, waterborne journeys where the missionaries narrated their experiences of God's grace and mercy during their travels. De Rada's narrative opens with the divine hand of God interfering to calm the seas and to grant safe passage to the Chinese boat in which the missionaries and dignitaries were making their way from Bolinao in the Philippines to the Chinese port city of Amoy in the summer of 1575.

> And for the honour of Our Lord I do not wish to keep secret that in the dangers in which we saw ourselves during a day and a night of storm, the Chinos told us that God had delivered them because of us Religious who were there: and they had abandoned on our account the ceremonies which they usually make in such perils to some idols which they carry in the poops of their ships, seeing that we had told them that they were vain, and that they should ask help from one true God alone.[124]

De Rada's account achieves a two-fold aim of narrating his experience of a miraculous deliverance, and foreshadowing the success which he believes the mission of the Spanish crown and the Dominican order will eventually have in China. In de Rada's narrative, the junk is preserved because the missionaries were present and on their way to carry out important work for the kingdom of God in China. Placed at the start of the narrative, it sets an overwhelmingly positive tone for the rest of de Rada's account. Prior to any deliberate efforts at evangelizing, and even before their first landing in China, the missionaries had already won converts, because divine intervention had saved the Chinese junk from danger. De Rada narrates that the Chinese were immediately convinced that the Christian God was the 'one true God', suggesting there was no need for their usual idols which they carried because God would deliver them. The vanity of the Chinese and the ineffectiveness of their idols was a theme that missionaries would return to throughout the travel narratives. When presenting a positive image of the potential for mission in China, the missionaries portray the Chinese as highly receptive to the gospel and eager to abandon

[124] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 244.

their idols. Rhetorically, de Rada is quick to proclaim to his audience that his motive is a religious one and not for self-gain and glory. He carefully couches this account in rhetorical modesty, ascribing all honour to God.

As a narrative device, De Rada was not the only missionary to encounter deliverance during dangerous episodes on water. Matteo Ricci also experienced a spiritual response towards journeys on sea. On his voyage from Europe to Asia, one of his fellow Jesuit travellers had remarked that missionaries should not be too attached to life, for there was great peril of death. Rather, one should be ready to suffer for God, so as to know of devotion through actual physical experience and suffering.[125] Reflecting a common theme in medieval Christian literature which portrays the journey of the pilgrim as a metaphor for the sufferings in one's earthly life, pilgrimages were imbued with devotional significance.[126]

A decade later, Ricci was to experience such an ordeal when he narrowly survived a shipwreck while travelling on a junk from Shaozhou towards Beijing in 1595. Ricci's text mentions passing a dangerous section with exceptionally shallow waters, protruding stones and whirlpools.[127] He notes that there was a temple where pilots and travellers would pray for a safe passage and that 'The General Scilan [on whose boats Ricci was travelling] himself followed this custom, but not with much success […] His second boat, carrying his wife and children crashed into one of the rocks, but no one was lost.'[128] They were quickly brought to safety but the ordeals continued; further down the river, a strong wind caused Ricci's boat to capsize, casting Ricci, his colleagues and servants in the turbulent waves of the rapids. Ricci is recorded as being miraculously saved from an imminent death, 'being a very poor swimmer, all he could do was to recommend his soul to God and to be resigned that his end should come in this particular way. He was under water when he felt his hand brushed by a rope. He seized it and pulled and pulled until his head was above water.'[129] While Ricci survived, his young Jesuit colleague João Barradas (1570-94) disappeared into the waves. Although devastated at the loss, Ricci explains to the Chinese literatus with whom he was travelling his belief that setbacks and tragedies

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[125] Jonathan Spence, *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci* (New York: Viking, 1984), p. 68.
[126] Brockley, 'Jesuit Missionaries', p. 115.
[127] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 264.
[128] Ibid.
[129] Ibid., p. 264.

such as these were trials from God to strengthen his faith.[130] Though he was moved by the death of his companion and unsure about whether to continue, he is recorded as eventually 'summoning his courage and trusting in divine grace for better things to come, [and] decided to carry out the project.'[131] For the contemplation of passion accounts and stories from early ecclesiastical history were important building blocks of Jesuit spiritual formation, and tales of suffering and martyrdom provided powerful metaphors and stimuli for the self-representation of Jesuit missionaries in their travel texts.[132] Furthermore, as overseas missions expanded, accounts of suffering, martyred Jesuit missionaries, would have been framed not as failures, but as sacrifices for God and a triumph for the society.[133] It was in accordance with the language of trial, suffering and sacrifice that Ricci framed the various challenges faced during his mission.

Such textual strategies and style reflect the religious intent of the travel writers, who eagerly portrayed their trials as bringing them closer to God and emulating the apostles. In a study on the rhetorical models surrounding early modern English autobiographies, Peter Burke identifies the 'religious models' influenced by biblical narratives of Job, Jesus and Paul, as models for portrayal of suffering.[134] The motif of ordeal by water during missionary travels had its precedent in the scriptural accounts of St. Paul's seaborne missions, where he was shipwrecked several times. Early modern missionaries were eager to forge a narrative connection between their own trials and those of the apostles. Apostolic suffering during the missions of the early church was central to the Christian learning and devotion of ordained priests being trained as missionaries in early modern Europe, and especially pronounced in the Jesuit order.[135] Hardships encountered during missionary travels were recorded in detail and sent back to superiors stationed in Lisbon and Rome.[136] Sources from contemporaneous Jesuit missionaries travelling to the east reveals how sea travel served as an important training ground for their future missions.[137] Missionaries aboard distant voyages ministered to the sick and were

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[130] Spence, *Memory Palace*, p. 68.
[131] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 265.
[132] Paul John Shore, '"In cacere ad dupplicium": Jesuit Encounters in Prison and in Places of Execution. Reflections on the Early Modern Period', *European Review of History,* 19.2 (2012), pp. 183-200 (p. 191).
[133] Ibid.
[134] Peter Burke, 'The Rhetoric of Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century', in *Touching the Past: Studies in the Historical Socio-linguistics of Ego-documents*, ed. by Marijke van der Wal and Gijsbert Rutten (Amsterdam: John Benjamin Publishing, 2013), pp. 149-64 (pp. 157-58).
[135] Shore, 'In carcere; ad dupplicium', p. 191.
[136] Brockley, 'Jesuit Missionaries', p. 126.
[137] Ibid., p. 116.

implored by the crew and fellow passengers to offer intercessory prayers during times of strong winds and turbulent waters. Considering that their most important audience would be their patrons and superiors in the order, it is unsurprising that the travel writers emphasized their religious experiences and incessant labour, regardless of whether they were on the voyage, or at their destination. Letters and reports of Jesuit missionaries were written in an edifying manner and were read aloud at Jesuit colleges as part of the novices' religious education.[138] Missionary sources about travels were highly audience-oriented, emphasizing the religious encounters experienced on the journey.

During the late-Ming period, lay Buddhism experienced a revival amongst many members of the literati. The reading of Buddhist books, visits to Buddhist temples and retreats, keeping the company of Buddhist monks and setting up Buddhist shrines at home became a feature in the lives of many literati, also influencing their travel practices and writings.[139] Yuan Zhongdao and his brothers were practitioners of late-Ming lay Buddhism. Yuan's travel text narrates his increasing turn towards Buddhism for solace, particularly after the death of his elder brother, Yuan Hongdao in 1610. Travel took on heightened religious purpose in Yuan's writings, recording his lamentations on his personal sufferings and his expectations that travel and religious experiences would relieve him of his worldly cares.

Travel for personal devotion and religious training was an integral part of Buddhist practice. Yuan, already adhering to this religious travel practice in happier times, began to intensify his search for religious and transcendent encounters through travel, in order to abate his intense grief over his brother's death. Yuan records an excess of emotions, particularly on his brother's birthday, three months after his passing where he was struck by excruciating pain and sorrow. In the night, he dreamt that his brother was at Jade Springs 玉泉, a Buddhist retreat which was a day's boat journey from their hometown and resolved to head there.[140] In the difficult year following his brother's death, Jade Springs is portrayed as a retreat for spiritual renewal and comfort. It was a place where he frequently travelled towards from his hometown. Yuan would go on excursions near the springs, expecting the sights of nature to calm and renew him. Other times were spent in worship and meditation, reading Buddhist works and learning from the monks at the temple in Jade

[138] Ibid.
[139] See Timothy Brook, *Praying for Power: Buddhism and the Formation of Gentry Society in Late-Ming China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).
[140] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 114.

Springs. On the final day of the year of his brother's death, Yuan observes the passing of the old year into the new at Jade Springs with a contemplative mood.[141]

Yuan's narration implies that travel to a spiritual retreat was necessary to meet his brother once more and to give him a final sendoff into the afterlife. After months of frequent visits to Jade Springs, accompanied with meditation and the reading of Buddhist sutras, Yuan narrates a final reunion with his brother in his dreams.

> At night, I dreamt that Zhonglang[142] and I were together in a building, I asked him 'Brother, are you happy living there?' Zhonglang replied 'I am extremely happy'. I asked 'May I come into this building, to share in your delight? Zhonglang replied 'Not yet'. I asked 'Is meditation and cultivation of benefit?' Zhonglang replied 'It is of great benefit'. The dialogue was made in great haste, and with my hands I touched Zhonglang's body and remarked. 'It is of extreme warmth, unlike the body of one who has departed.'[143]

In this episode, travel has a deep religious and transcendental significance. Yuan's physical removal from Gong-an to the Buddhist retreat of Jade Springs frees him from the site of his brother's death and its accompanying memories and grief, bringing him to a retreat where devotion and meditation offered a restoration of the soul after emotionally distressing episodes of loss and illness. Yuan portrays his religious travel to be of the utmost benefit by narrating the short reunion with his brother in dreams, in which Yuan 'travels' once more to an otherworldly destination where the living and the dead meet. In East Asian Buddhist doctrine, there is the belief that profound piety and meditation could offer a disciple access to many realms beyond the grasp of human consciousness, from the infernal to the celestial. This is corroborated with Buddhist scripture, which records that Buddha and Buddha's disciples have journeyed to the hereafter to teach, advise and save departed family members.[144] For Yuan, physical travel aids the attainment of meditative, otherworldly travel; Jade Springs as a Buddhist retreat provided Yuan with the setting and tools for more profound meditation and spiritual insight than what he could achieve at home, where he was confronted by domestic distractions and the immediacy of his grief.

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[141] Ibid., pp. 111-18.

[142] When referring to his famous elder brothers, Yuan uses their 號 *hao* (literary name). Yuan Zhonglang 袁中郎 was the *hao* of Yuan Hongdao.

[143] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 118.

[144] Robert E. Buswell Jr., 'Korean Buddhist Journeys to Lands Worldly and Otherwordly', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 68.4 (2009), 1055-75 (pp. 1062-63).

Travel and devotion culminates in Yuan's spiritual encounter with his brother, who reassures him that he is well in the hereafter and bestows him some final advice. Yuan narrates that his cultivation and devotion has been beneficial, enabling him to experience the transcendental travel only attained by the devout after much meditation and religious cultivation.

Travelling to temples and retreats for prayer and meditation was in vogue in late-Ming Jiangnan and texts became a vehicle for literati travellers to differentiate themselves from others. Literati travellers emphasized the sincerity of their religious encounter and experience, criticizing the loud, uncultured travellers who were only there for leisure or merrymaking. In contrast, they painted themselves as sincere devotees, whose visits to temples and retreats stemmed from an authentic desire for prayer, solitude and contemplation. On a visit to a mountain retreat, Wang Shixing comments on the bustle of tourist masses that were hindering silent contemplation, 'the retreat was situated halfway up the mountain, which should have sufficed as a quiet space. Yet the temple was filled with the clamour and bustle of men and women from the city, who were not genuinely meditating.'[145] Although religious and transcendent encounters through travel were sought by literati, merchant and urban travellers alike, the literati considered their own travel practices more sophisticated. They frequently sneered at the other travellers' religious rituals, considering their shows of devotion to be artificial and vulgar. When chancing upon a water burial during the Qingming festival which commemorated the deceased, Wang records that '[t]he men and the women were conjuring the spirits and those who were wildly weeping were as numerous as ants.'[146] Wang regularly compares the tourist mobs to 'ants', a figure of speech to highlight that the people were extremely numerous, but also showing that the literati travellers perceived other travellers as a homogenous entity, less cultivated and educated than themselves and hence not capable of deep religious contemplation.

Literati travel writers also frequently criticized the non-literati travellers for being lost in worldly cares, unable to truly travel and achieve transcendent experiences. Caves were perceived by Chinese travellers as numinous locales where one could come into closer contact with the world of spirits and immortals. Wang records stumbling across a truly unique cave, on his travels near the busy travel hub of Cha City 茶城, and was duly

[145] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 66.
[146] Ibid., p. 64.

impressed by this unique, spiritual spot, in his words ‘truly an exceedingly excellent locale for contemplation and meditation.’[147] Wang then expresses his amazement that despite being such a busy and bustling place, ‘that there is a cave as unique as this and no one is aware of it.’[148] Wang then offers his reasons for this oversight, that ‘those in the world cling on tightly to the brilliance of gems’[149], indicating that true religious travel was rare for most common people, who unlike himself were too preoccupied with their trade and personal gain to genuinely participate in carefree travels and spiritual respite.

Religious encounters and the search for transcendence were regularly featured in European and Chinese travel texts. European travellers were more deliberate in declaring that religion and piety was a central aim in their overseas travel, emphasizing the missionary impulse at the very opening of their travel texts and frequently writing about their supplications to God for grace and direction in their missions. Challenges that they faced in their travels were framed and narrated in terms of trials and testing which would bring them towards spiritual refinement. Successes in their travels and missions were ascribed to God’s grace and mercy and received much emphasis, for missionaries were eager to inform their audience that the missions in Asia were quickly bearing fruit, a sure sign from God that they had ventured in the right direction.

The Chinese travellers were less overt in their religious proclamations and none of the travellers explicitly stated religious reasons as a primary motivation for their travels. However, as seen in the brief discussion earlier about the philosophical meanings of travel in Chinese classical texts, there is a strong element of transcendence from the temporal that is ingrained within Chinese travel writing. One travelled to forget the cares and burdens of this world, travellers sought solace in Buddhist and Taoist retreats and in the natural landscape (which will be further discussed in Chapter Three). Accordingly, Chinese travel texts were dotted with religious references and personal reflections on transcendental experiences that occurred during travel. Brought into comparative perspective, it would appear that in both cultures religious experience and travel were closely interwoven. Although travellers had a plethora of motivations, ranging from monetary gain to societal aspirations, they keenly described and proclaimed their transcendent and religious experiences. Writers deliberately weaved religious encounters into the travel texts. These

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[147] Ibid., p. 44.
[148] Ibid.
[149] Ibid.

spiritual, transcendent encounters were always mediated by the writer from encounter into text, directed at an audience to whom accounts of such encounters would appeal.

1.6 Conclusion

The chapter on travel motivations has yielded several findings. Firstly, it is clear that both Chinese and European travel writers journeying through late-Ming China were heirs to a rich literary tradition of travel and travel writing. They were instructed about how to travel from a young age, and this pedagogy ensured their adherence to specific rhetorical models and literary conventions. European travellers wrote their travel texts in accordance with the programmatic *ars apodemica*, which encouraged utilitarian travel to benefit self, society and God. On the other hand, Chinese literati travellers cherished an ideal of travel *you* 'purposeless wandering' that encouraged one to roam freely, casting aside the worldly concerns that prevented one from truly enjoying and seeking the physical world.

Despite the seemingly incongruent motivations, in my study of the two travel writing traditions, I have noticed a broad similarity—the actual texts produced were a compromise between the standardized representational frameworks of travel texts and individual concerns pertaining to the socio-historical realities of the travel writers. While European travellers largely adhered to their duties to provide useful information, they simultaneously seized the opportunity to present an idealised literary self that was hardworking, pious and dedicated. And as much as Chinese travellers were captivated by the traditional rhetoric of free and purposeless wandering, their self-interests and daily concerns were likewise expressed within their accounts. The manner in which Chinese and European travel writers articulated this idealized literary self was slightly different, depending on the societal ends which they wished to achieve and the audiences that they sought to reach. Although European travel texts on China gained fame through reaching a wide reading public, their texts were originally aimed at a more focused audience—their patrons and superiors who sent them on their journey, often handing them a checklist of duties to fulfil. As such, their style was direct and focused, with the first-person 'I' being used at infrequent intervals so as to self-consciously emphasize their efforts and achievements to the patrons and sponsors through whom they sought reputational and personal gain. Meanwhile, the Chinese travellers wrote with the aims of publication, the intended audience being their literati peers or other classically educated readers. Their texts thus emphasized the sincerity of their travels—differentiating themselves from the typical

traveller through their literary flair, highlighting that they were genuine travellers who were compelled and dedicated towards travel and its accompanying spiritual experiences, in contrast other travellers of the period who travelled on a whim and were insincere.

The Chinese and European travel writers were educated men of considerable social standing, living in an age of great political and societal change. Self-conscious and autobiographical writings were features of both late-Ming and early modern societies. Travel texts are a fruitful medium to consider how these writers carefully crafted their travels, themselves and their home society in writing. For being away from their cultural and political centre placed them in an interesting position of having distance from the societal forces that bound and controlled them, yet at the same time still highly aware of the concerns back home. Motivations such as career, self-representation and religion provide a thematic approach towards reading the motivations of the travellers. Overlaps exist between these thematic categories and the motivations for travel expressed in text are numerous, layered and complex, indicative of the competing interests involving self and society in the early modern and late-Ming worlds.

Chapter Two

Boats, Sedans and Guesthouses: Travel Infrastructure in Late-Ming China

In an excerpt 'Travels to the Min Province' (present-day Fujian), from Xu Xiake's diaries, he records,

> The first year of the Chongzhen Emperor, on the thirteenth day of the third month [1627]: We walked thirty-five *li*, and traversed the mountain pass. We then took our meal at Xianyang 仙陽. The mountain pass at Xianyang is not lofty. There were mountain birds and dazzling sunshine of much loveliness. After our meal we found a sedan and after thirty *li* we reached Pucheng 蒲城. It was not yet mid-afternoon. During this time, the paths which led towards Quanzhou and Xinghua were said to be threatened with the menace of pirates, hence we thought it more prudent to reach Yongan 永安 via Yanping 延平. Besides, I long wanted to tour the caves in Yuhua hence I started to search for a boat towards Yanping.[1]

This short excerpt details a day on the road in late-Ming China. Xu narrates his quotidian itinerary, from walking, to mealtimes, to looking for transportation and altering planned routes to avoid perceived threats and menaces. Modern-day readers of such travel texts, unaccustomed to travel practices of the sixteenth and seventeenth century may be struck by the rich descriptions of travel infrastructure. While the place names and speed of travel have changed considerably between 1627 and the present day, the practical issues that surround the act of travel continues to bind the experiences of travellers today with those that traversed late-Ming China. Travellers were faced with decisions at every turn. Practical issues such as local transport, finding meals, and avoiding dangers were incidents that travellers dealt with daily.

Early modern and late-Ming travel texts describing travels through China provide fascinating insights into the travellers' experiences en route to their destinations. After all, travel is not just about what travellers saw once they 'got there' but also about the nitty-gritty moments 'in-between', providing readers with a more immediate account of each traveller's experience whilst on the road. Xu's record provides the impression that travel through the Min province was of relative ease. Roads were quickly traversed, meals were

[1] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 71.

not difficult to come by, sedan bearers could be found speedily and one received timely information about potentially risky paths to avoid. Xu's China is a picture of a mature travel economy, affording travellers great convenience with its well-developed travel infrastructure.

Having discussed the cultural, social and political milieu of the travellers, I now focus on the state of travel infrastructure and its representations in travel texts. This chapter critically engages with passages describing travel infrastructure, trappings that enabled movement and mobility. This chapter and the following chapter on landscape have close theoretical links, recognising that perception and representations of place and landscape are strongly affected by the practicalities of mobility through that landscape. To avoid slipping into an exclusively cultural reading of travel texts without attending to the spaces through which travellers moved, the materiality of the landscape and the geographic specificity of travel in late-Ming China have to be addressed. While the chapters engage with literary comparisons of travel accounts, methodologically, they borrow concepts from the field of landscape studies, a broad and interdisciplinary field that engages geographers, historians, philosophers, sociologists and cultural studies scholars.[2] This approach provides a useful temporal and spatial delineation for comparing Chinese and European responses to travel infrastructure and mobility.

Engaging in an intercultural comparison of travel texts raises the challenge of the spatial location of the comparison. Where should the comparison be located? Does space matter? These are just a few of the questions that such a study provokes, compelling one to confront the materiality of travel infrastructure and landscape. This thesis is convinced in the merits of a geographically specific comparison, for travel does not occur in a vacuum, but in a particular time and place. Following the practice of comparative literary history, this study engages in a comparison of synchronic societies in contact spatially and temporally,[3] by concerning itself with the physicality of travel encounters and the travellers' experiences of journeying through China. It looks at the ways in which routes, locales and infrastructure that enable mobility 'are creative of, as well as created by, human sociality,

[2] For a theoretical overview, see Barbara Bender, 'Place and Landscape' in *Handbook of Material Culture*, ed. by Christopher Tilley et al. (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2006), pp. 303-14.
[3] Thomas M. Greene, 'Language and the Scattered World', in *Comparative Literary History as Discourse: In honor of Anna Balakian*, ed. by Mario J. Valdes, A. Owen Albridge, Daniel Javitch (New York: Peter Lang 1992), pp. 81-100 (p. 92).

and how such places and landscapes empower people.'[4] It is also interested in the embodied manner through which travellers confront and engage with the physical world, considering how the physical and geographical is transformed 'into something that is historical and socially experienced'.[5]

Borrowing from historical geographers, I keep in mind the need to consider not only the text, but also the physical world surrounding the texts.[6] However powerful cultural and historical forces may be in constituting these accounts and experiences, travel experience is undeniably shaped by its material contexts—the physical roads and vehicles along and inside which the travellers move.[7] While key studies of travel writing tend to focus on geographic and ethnographic reports,[8] Chinese and European travellers traversing late-Ming China partook in an embodied experience of travel; places, routes and paths informed their experiences and their writing.[9] The centrality of infrastructure to the travel experience influenced the written text and these often overlooked details should be more closely scrutinised.

While this chapter relies upon historical research on the state of Ming travel infrastructure, my focus is not to ascertain, or challenge their research based on the corpus that I study. Instead, I compare the parallel experiences and impressions of Chinese and European travel writers towards Chinese travel infrastructure, avoiding a mere assemblage of descriptions, focusing instead on the potential meanings and functions of incorporating travel infrastructure into travel narratives. I demonstrate for instance, that boats have metaphorical meanings in both Chinese and European accounts. Beyond metaphors and symbolism, I argue that travel infrastructure challenged and instigated the travellers to make relational and comparative connections with issues challenging them back home,

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[4] Christopher Tilley, *A Phenomenology of Landscape* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1994), p. 18.
[5]Ibid.
[6] See *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments*, ed. by Dennis Cosgrove and S. Daniels (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Yi-fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1972).
[7] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity: London's Geographies, 1680-1780* (New York: Guilford, 1998), p. 72; Judith Adler terms this as the 'extraneous influences' surrounding travel styles. See Adler, 'Travel as Performed Art', p. 1371.
[8] Influential texts on travel writing studies in Western academia tend to focus on ethnography and European-Other encounters. See Claire Lindsay, 'Travel Writing and Postcolonial Studies', in *Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, pp. 25-34. Prominent examples include Edward Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London: Penguin, 1978); Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992).
[9] On the relationship between the body and representations of travel, see Marguerite Helmers and Tilar J. Mazzeo, 'Introduction: Travel and the Body', *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 35.5 (2005), 267-76.

issues such as mobility and the control of empire. Travel infrastructure was frequently mentioned in the travel texts, thus it was only possible to select the more representative and significant examples.

The style of the travel text greatly influenced the way in which travel infrastructure was incorporated into the account. The European reports and treatises by Pereira, Da Cruz and De Rada were written with an ethnographic eye that was cast not just upon the Chinese people, but also upon their travel infrastructure and equipment. The structure of their text did not lend themselves towards recording the minutiae of the travel experience, but mentioned travel infrastructure when it fit into their epistemological categories. On the other hand, Ricci's diaries provided greater detail of Jesuit travels through China, offering readers a glimpse of travel in an age of boats, carts and horses. Likewise, the Chinese travel writers had considerably different styles. Xu Xiake's diaries were focused on his movement—a precise, day-to-day record of distances travelled and steps taken, the meals he had and the travel infrastructure he used. On the other hand, Wang Shixing and Yuan Zhongdao's diaries are less focused on exact details, electing to mention travel infrastructure when relevant to their narratives. Thus even within the same 'travel culture', there was considerable variation in the presentation of travel infrastructure.

In order to apprehend these texts spatially and comparatively, this chapter is separated into several parts. The first section briefly historicises travel infrastructure in Europe and China. Reflecting the geographical realities of the Chinese landmass—'travelling by boats in the south and horses in the north' 南船北馬,[10] the subsequent sections are divided according by modes of transport—by water and overland. Transport by water yields rich descriptions from travellers who were particularly imaginative in writing accounts of boat travel. Overland travel frequently elicits observations from travellers about the imperial courier and postal system and sedans. Finally, a comparison of excerpts dealing with services surrounding travel, such as inns and guides, will be considered.

This thesis defines travel infrastructure as structures, facilities and services necessary for travellers to embark upon and complete their journeys. This includes routes

[10] This adage originated from the poet Meng Jiao (751-814) and was used by Wang Shixing in his overview of Ming China's geography and transport systems. 'In the south, travel is made by means of water, in the north, by horses and carts.' Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 10.

of travel, such as waterways and roads, modes of transport, such as sedans, boats, carts and horses, services facilitating travel, such as restaurants and inns, courier stations and local guides. Although none of the writers made travel infrastructure the central focus of their writings, infrastructure was necessary and discussed. This chapter identifies and studies specific passages discussing travel infrastructure, supplementing them with secondary research conducted on travel in late-Ming China to reach a nuanced understanding of the era's travel infrastructure and the travellers' impressions thereof. This chapter shows that a comparative approach towards travel infrastructure supplies useful insights about travel, the economy, culture and society. It also reveals how travellers selected and recorded their embodied experience of travel. Focusing on travel infrastructure draws attention to the practical and the quotidian experiences and challenges of pre-modern travel, a feature that often escapes modern sensibilities and notions of mobility.

My reading of the travel texts follows Jeffrey Dupée's idea of a 'dialogic engagement' between travellers and the material world surrounding them.[11] Travel writers actively engaged with the travel infrastructure in late-Ming China, offering descriptions of the environment and fresh representational insights, while incorporating their own discourse and motives. This chapter then shows how writing about travel infrastructure is an amalgam of discourse, culture, motivations, yet at the same time a reflection of concrete material objects that travellers are faced with.

2.1 Travel Infrastructure in Early Modern Europe and Late-Ming China

Prior to discussing representations of travel infrastructure in the texts proper, I briefly outline the historical situation of travel infrastructure in Europe and China, highlighting the circumstances that gave rise to the travels in question. The chapter discusses the state of travel infrastructure in Europe before addressing the proliferation of travel in late-Ming China, and the synergetic relationship between the developments of travel infrastructure and travel culture in Ming China.

Descriptions of travel infrastructure were recurrent in European travel accounts of China. Travelling across vast distances meant that travellers encountered varying modes of transport. First they had to survive the dangerous sea passage from Europe to Asia, later they were faced with sea travel from various parts of Asia to China. Gaspar da Cruz for

[11] Dupée, *British Travel Writers in China*, p. 16.

instance, was first based in Cambodia prior to his voyage to China. As mentioned, turbulence and dangers—in the form of capture, piracy and mutiny whilst on ships—were recurring literary topoi in the texts of European missionary-travellers, who perceived dangers as a potential for missionary activity and as a test of their faith. Yet besides couching dangers in terms of religious trials and deliverance, the European travellers in this study are reticent about their lengthy maritime voyages, focusing instead on describing the land, people and products of China. When describing travel infrastructure, they omitted accounts of the galleys that brought them to Asia, but were fascinated by the different modes of travel in late-Ming China—from roads to bridges, sedans to boats. The global travel revolution of the early modern period enabled European travellers to compare the travel infrastructure of foreign countries with their own, engendering the early beginnings of a cross-regional comparison of transport facilities and travel infrastructure.

The silence on maritime travel infrastructure is noteworthy. One could assume that the perils of sea travel, the fears and excitement of crossing the vast ocean to arrive at another continent would be a remarkable feat, certainly an important part of the travel account.[12] Of course, it is also possible that the journey itself was routine for the travellers and not worth describing at length. I suggest that the silence is linked to the travel practices of early modern Europeans. The utilitarian bent of the *ars apodemica* disciplined writers to focus on what would be of most benefit to their fellow countrymen who remained at home. Avid European readers of travel accounts, familiar with European maritime infrastructure, were likely more receptive towards descriptions of foreign travel infrastructure.

That is not to say that European infrastructure was rendered irrelevant in the travel accounts. As a point of reference, European travel writers considered the state of early modern travel infrastructure, using it as a constant for comparison to the Ming Chinese equivalent. While global history has emphasized the advancement of shipbuilding and maritime technological developments in Europe that enabled overseas travel and global interactions,[13] the minor, more local modes of transport, such as roads, chartered coaches and services surrounding travel remain relevant in inquiries on travel infrastructure and mobility. Once in China, European travellers only briefly addressed travel by sea and were

[12] The omission in travel accounts did not mean that there were no records of the maritime journeys. For an account of Ricci's passage to China based on letters and diaries of fellow passengers, see R. Po-Chia Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City, Matteo Ricci 1552-1610* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 28-36.
[13] *An Expanding World: The European Impact on World History (10 vols.)*, ed. by A.J.R. Russell et al. (Aldershot: Variorum, 1995).

instead fascinated by the various inland travel networks—whether by water or overland. It was in this area where comparisons with Europe were most frequently made.

The state of early modern transportation and communication networks is not a matter of consensus among scholars. Wolfgang Behringer makes a case for a 'communications revolution' in the early modern period, prior to 1750, considerably earlier than other historians, who assert that there was little structural change in the transport systems of the pre-modern world.[14] Behringer argues that systematic attempts to increase the speeds of transport and communications can be traced to the early modern period, as a development which occurred alongside the printing press. He points to the development of this phenomenon in early modern Italy, stemming from a desire to divide and structure space in a more rational way.[15] Increasingly elaborate systems of postal delivery were organised, with exact timings being monitored. The system of mounted couriers spread throughout Europe in the course of the sixteenth century, bringing about changes in the perception of time and speed and increasing the connectedness between regions.[16] Through statistical research, historical geographers have shown that there was a linear increase in the number of postal routes and stations from 1500 onwards, and this lasted until the postal system became replaced by the railroad.[17] As the postal system expanded, so did its efficiency, resulting in more postal routes and new and paved roads.[18]

In a similar vein, Hamish Scott argues that the final centuries of the *ancien regime* witnessed a focused effort to improve travel infrastructure, leading to increased speed, regularity and reliability, across Europe.[19] Monarchs built highways between important locations, which were eventually available for public use, facilitating a growth in other forms of travel infrastructure. Previously, travellers had to seek out private lodgings, but the creation of highways and ever-increasing numbers of travellers saw inns sprouting out on the principal routes, eradicating the tediousness of seeking private hospitality. The

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[14] Wolfgang Behringer, 'Communications Revolutions: A Historiographical Context', *German History*, 24 (2006), 333–74, makes this argument in a break with the historian Robert G. Albion, who dated the increase in speed of the movement of information, peoples and goods at around 1760, pre-dating and enabling the Industrial Revolution; see Robert G. Albion, 'The Communication Revolution', *American Historical Review*, 37 (1932), 718-20.
[15] Behringer, 'Communications Revolutions', p. 338.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid., p. 343.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Hamish Scott, 'Travel and Communications', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, Volune I: Peoples and Place*, ed. by Hamish Scott, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 165-91 (p. 181).

earliest travel guides began to be published during the sixteenth century, rudimentary maps were becoming available and roadside signposts were erected, aiding travellers in navigation.[20] Growing state involvement in improving transportation infrastructure meant that resources could be mobilised on a scale far beyond the local authorities.[21] Advancements in infrastructure stemmed from official, government needs to access and manage different parts of their territories with greater efficiency. Certain regions became nascent centres of travel, with newly emerging systems of communications and travel infrastructure, arranged along the lines of imperial administration and principal trade routes.

In the era of European overseas voyages, European travellers caught a glimpse of the travel infrastructure of other civilisations, enabling them to compare Europe with other world regions. While European travellers were confident about the maritime abilities of their home societies, they were deeply impressed by the more advanced inland travel infrastructure of other civilisations, such as the Chinese, Aztecs and the Incas.[22] In this study, the European travel writers scrutinised and assessed the quality of Chinese travel infrastructure and expressed their positive impressions in most instances. For these travellers, Scott argues that:

> The difference was particularly striking because of the contrasting physical geographies of the European continent and the lands of the Ming dynasty. With the obvious exception of the Alps, Europe was less divided by major mountain ranges than China, particularly in its Inner Asian provinces; it had a series of great rivers, running north and south, and to a lesser extent east and west to facilitate transport; yet its communications system would remain inferior to its Chinese counterpart until after 1750.[23]

Processes of change and continuity were at work in the development of infrastructure in early modern Europe. While shipbuilding and maritime developments allowed a very small proportion of European travellers to cross much further distances than travellers from other regions of the world in the same time period, travel within the European continent was in its initial stages of advancement and improvement, very much still a work in progress. Europe had the potential for extensive roads and efficient travel

[20] Ibid., p. 183.
[21] Ibid., p. 184.
[22] Ibid., p. 167.
[23] Ibid.

infrastructure given its advantageous physical geography, yet this potential could only be harnessed with increased coordination and cooperation between the central government and local authorities. These infrastructural improvements were emerging but differed considerably from the sophisticated travel networks of late-Ming China, to which I now turn.

In historical assessments of global travel and mobility during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, China is usually paid attention as a destination to which European ships travelled in attempts to make diplomatic and commercial ties. Often deemed 'insular' in earlier historiography, Ming China was not typically perceived as a culture of travel. In the past two decades, more attention has been paid to the remarkable, short-lived maritime voyages of the admiral Zheng He during the fourteenth century.[24] Remarkable for its span and ambition, the voyages were an anomaly in light of the official Ming policy. Rulers and bureaucrats distrusted maritime trade and travel, and later explicitly prohibited it in an edict, perceiving it as risky.[25] This was also noted by the European travellers to China. As Gaspar da Cruz reports in his text, that in contrast to the seafaring Portuguese 'the King of China […] withdrew himself with his men to his own kingdom, making a public edict that under pain of death none of the country should sail out of the kingdom of China; the which lasteth to this day.'[26] He elaborates further on the reasons for this in another chapter, 'This law was made because the King of China found that the frequent communication with foreigners might be the cause of some risings, and because many Chinas on the pretext of sailing abroad became pirates and robbed the districts along the sea coast. Yet for all this diligence there are many China pirates along the sea coast.'[27]

Thus in an age when mobility was historically perceived as being part of the European experience of maritime travel, China and other world regions seemingly play a more marginal role, appearing less mobile for their relative lack of overseas voyages. However, in discussions of global early modern 'travel cultures', to take a broader perspective that includes inland travel, overland travel, and travel for leisure instead of limiting the scope to overseas travels that resembled European 'voyages of discovery',

[24] See Louise Levathes, *When China Ruled the Seas: The Treasure Fleet of the Dragon Throne, 1405-1433* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) and Edward L. Dreyer, *Zheng He: China and the Oceans in the early Ming dynasty, 1405-1433* (New York: Pearson, 2007).
[25] John E. Wills Jr., *China and Maritime Europe, 1500-1800: Trade, Settlement, Diplomacy, and Missions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 34-36.
[26] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 67.
[27] Ibid., pp. 191-92.

there is much potential for comparison and it becomes apparent that late-Ming China experienced its very own 'travel revolution' that led to the creation of travel texts. In both societies, much travel was taking place, accompanied by a consciousness that the knowledge and experience gained from travel was worth recording and representing for a reading audience fascinated with accounts of movement and mobility.

The earliest decades of the Ming dynasty was characterised by strict control on movement by the Hongwu emperor (r. 1368-98), so that few could travel and those who could were restricted to small distances.[28] From the mid-Ming onwards, the reigns of the emperors Jiajing (1521-67) and Longqing (1567-72) saw a loosening up on societal laws, an uptick in trade, increased mobility and more individual freedom, presenting conditions for a travel revolution to take place.[29] By the late-Ming period, China transformed from a confined society, to one of marked social and spatial mobility. This stemmed from an expanding transportation and communications network and a relaxing of official regulations.

The late-Ming travel revolution was not a complete break with the past. The travel infrastructure that formed the extensive network throughout major regions of Ming China was a feature of the centralised, imperial system, which enabled tax collection and the conscription of able-bodied men for projects such as the paving of roads, and the creation and renewal of the Grand Canal. Timothy Brook's inquiry on Ming communications and commerce, demonstrates that in accordance with preceding Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties, Ming rulers continued the institutional tradition of investing in infrastructure. This cumulative investment resulted in great spatial mobility, bringing different regions of the empire in frequent contact, shaping the social environment and the lives of the Chinese people.[30] Ming policies of strengthening the existing courier system and encouraging local officials and magistrates to finance the construction of canals, roads, and bridges contributed towards the rapidly developing travel infrastructure.[31] Levying taxes and moving the imperial capital from Nanjing to Beijing in the fifteenth century necessitated increased administrative and fiscal circulation, which led to the opening up of

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[28] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 44.
[29] Chen Baoliang, 'Mingdai lüyou wenhua chushi' 明代旅游文化初识 [Initial Assessments of Ming Dynasty Travel Culture], *Dongnan wenhua* 2 (1992), 258-62 (p. 258).
[30] Timothy Brook, 'Communications and Commerce', in *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, Part 2: 1368–1644,* ed. by Denis C. Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, 15 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979-2015), VIII (1998), pp. 579-707 (p. 580).
[31] Ibid.

pathways and networks across the empire, most notably the Grand Canal, facilitating travels and communications between north and south.[32]

While travel infrastructure expanded as a result of state policy, it served a function beyond what its planners initially conceived. Instead of merely supporting the bureaucratic, economic and logistic needs of the state, infrastructure was also used for recreation. Economic historians have pointed out that Ming China was extremely prosperous, particularly in the affluent urban cities in Jiangnan, leading to the widespread phenomenon of leisure travel. The expansion of travel and communication networks provided the infrastructural capacity for the proliferation of travel and the creation of travel texts in late-Ming China. Efficient infrastructure led to more travel, more writing about travel, a higher demand for travel, which in turn necessitated further advancements and improvements in infrastructure and services. Leisure travel became a status symbol, through which affluent, educated, and socially-conscious individuals distinguished themselves from the rest of the tourist masses by their refined literature and gestures, creating an 'elite travel culture' in the process.[33]

Affluent urban regions well-connected to imperial centres enjoyed accelerated cultural development and financial prosperity that made leisure travel possible.[34] The two capitals of Ming China—Beijing and Nanjing, and the cultural and economic centres in Jiangnan region—the cities Suzhou and Hangzhou, became important travel centres, with roads radiating outwards to scenic spots in surrounding peripheries.[35] As Wang Shixing noted in his account of the major cities, 'inhabitants of the city love to travel.'[36] During important festivals such as the first day of the Lunar New Year and the Qing Ming festival, city dwellers embarked on brief excursions to the scenic environs. Travel only ceased after the Mid-Autumn festival, when the weather cooled.[37] In contrast, rural regions remained widely unvisited, with the exception of historically significant scenic sights.[38]

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[32] Ibid.
[33] Wu Jen-Shu 巫仁恕, *Youyou fangxiang: Mingqing Jiangnan chengshi de xiuxian xiaofei yu kongjian bianqian* 優游坊廂：明清江南城市的休閑消費與空間變遷 [Urban Pleasures: Leisure Consumption and Spatial Transformation in Jiangnan Cities during the Ming-Qing period] (Taipei: Academica Sinica, 2013), pp. 198-208.
[34] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 325.
[35] Ibid., p. 326.
[36] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 206.
[37] Ibid.
[38] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 325.

In early modern Europe, ordinary people did not have the option to travel for leisure. Even wealthier individuals rarely travelled for leisure because of the exorbitant cost, the perceived risks and the frowning upon unnecessary travel. In contrast, the late-Ming phenomenon of travel was so widespread, and so similar to the practice of 'tourism', that most Chinese scholars working on the sociocultural aspects of late-Ming travel have elected to use the term tourism 旅游.[39] Since most late-Ming travellers were temporarily leaving their permanent location of work and residence to visit another place for purposes of leisure, scholars have found 'tourism' an apt label.

Concurrent developments in travel infrastructure throughout the early modern world enabled and facilitated the journeys of Chinese and European travellers. A cumulative investment in travel infrastructure began as a means of imperial expansion, the accumulation of taxes and fiscal wealth as a measure of enabling state information to move across bureaucratic channels. Global travel made a great jump in the early modern age, facilitating various travel experiences across cultures. Now that the historical context is established, the next section discusses literary representations of travel infrastructure, studying travellers' representations of travel by water, overland, and of the various travel services of the Ming dynasty. Such a study affords one a glimpse of the travellers' attitudes towards the travel infrastructure and their textual portrayals of their material surroundings.

2.2 Travel by Water

The highly developed travel culture of late-Ming China lends to extended discussion surrounding travel infrastructure, travel equipment and accoutrements. Travel by water was extensively discussed, with the travel texts boasting numerous examples. This chapter's lengthy treatment of boat travel reflects the geographic and material circumstances of travel in late-Ming China. Boat travel was the primary mode of transport for literati travellers, many of whom were based around the Jiangnan region which was well connected with canals, streams and tributaries.[40] Compared to the strenuous travel overland, travel by boat was faster and more efficient—one's baggage did not have to be lugged around by servants nor pulled by carts but could simply be brought on the boat.

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[39] For a brief history of the Chinese term *lüyou* 旅游 and its English equivalent 'tourism', see Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], pp. 4-9.
[40] Ibid., p. 101.

Furthermore, travellers could move freely whilst travelling on the boat, allowing them to utilise their time to read or rest.[41]

A comparison of the descriptions of travel by water reveals the varying attitudes and interests of the Chinese literati travellers and the European travel writers. The Chinese travellers under discussion lived in an era of conspicuous consumption and social stratification. Travel equipment was differentiated, catering to different classes of travellers. Literati travellers attached particular meaning to transport by water, idealising it as the optimal way to travel, through which they could achieve solitude and freedom, reflecting the Neo-Confucian philosophy surrounding travel, as discussed in the previous chapter. Yet transport by water was not merely framed through an autobiographical and philosophical approach towards travel and writing. The Chinese travel writers addressed contemporaneous issues surrounding water travel, such as the various types of passenger boats, and the piracy problem.

Meanwhile, European travellers wrote about water transport with an economic and ethnographic eye. They were interested in what the boats and the efficient transport system suggested about the Chinese economy and the flow of goods. Boats and waterways also offered them insights into Chinese society, allowing European travellers to understand how Chinese across social classes utilised water transport. Thus descriptions of travel by water provide various examples of how boats can be framed, understood and represented.

Boats and other forms of travel infrastructure as they appear in travel texts can be read in various ways. On the one hand, they are material objects, offering travellers convenience and mobility. On the other hand, as objects in narratives, travel writers had creative liberty to interpret, conceptualise and write these vessels into their accounts, according to literary conventions or their own imaginations.

2.2.1 Boats: Trade, Wealth and Piracy

All European travellers in the corpus recorded their impressions of the immense number of ships and the well-connected waterways that stretched across much of China, making comparisons with European waterways and trade channels. At times, boats served as metaphors, informing readers about the writers' attitude towards China. Descriptions of

[41] Ibid., pp. 101-02.

boats could be framed with the greatest praise, marvelling at the economic and diplomatic potential of China. Boats could also be critiqued, reflecting the author's negative attitudes towards China.

Matteo Ricci's descriptive account of Chinese boats in the chapter 'The Fertility and the Products of the Chinese Empire' ends with a hyperbolic flourish:

> This country is so thoroughly covered by an intersecting network of rivers and canals that it is possible to travel almost anywhere by water. Hence, an almost incredible number of boats of every variety pass hither and thither. Indeed, there are so many of them that one of the writers of our day does not hesitate to affirm that there are as many people living on the water as there are dwellers on land [...] there are as many boats in this kingdom as can be counted up in all the rest of the world.[42]

Ricci's enthusiastic appraisal of Chinese water transport and his emphasis on the advanced travel infrastructure is aligned with his rhetoric throughout his travel text, describing the abundance of Chinese products, the fertility of the land and the general largesse of Chinese society. Gaspar da Cruz was also duly impressed by Chinese waterways and boats, dedicating an entire chapter of his account to this subject, entitled 'Of the ships and vessels which there are in the country'. For European states, China was perceived as a wealthy land, offering new opportunity for trade, with ships offering particular imaginative potential.

Mercantilist calculations colour da Cruz's account of ships in South China, revealing the desire of early modern Iberian countries to profit from overseas trade and resources, having profited from silver and goods from the New World and enslaved people from Africa. Da Cruz's account describes the abundance of food and objects that China offered. At the port city of Canton, da Cruz glows in praise recalling the 'marvellous multitude' of ships of all sizes that are berthed along the city, 'and what is more, all those that go forth, go laden, and all that come in, come laden, taking goods and bringing goods.'[43] Ships here represent great economic potential. He then describes the sheer volume of trade within China. In his narrative, Da Cruz presents a confident assessment of

[42] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 12.
[43] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 111-12.

the abundance of Chinese wares and the huge profits to be made should suitable trade relations be established.[44] Since a bustling (though illegal) maritime trade was already ongoing between the southern coast of China and the port cities of Southeast Asia, a Spanish entry into the market would be quick and easy. China, to sixteenth-century Europeans, was associated with abundance and limitless opportunity for trade. Such qualities were conveyed by travel writers through their depictions of numerous ships and the wares they ferried.

Da Cruz was also interested in the larger shipping junks. While describing Chinese vessels to a European audience, he tries to find their European equivalent so that his audience might imagine the ships more easily. 'The greatest ships they call junks, which are ships fit for war, made like great carracks, in the which they make great forecastles and high, and likewise abaft, to fight from them in such manner that they over-master their adversaries […] there be other lesser vessels than junks, called Bancoes.'[45] He finally concludes 'they have many other vessels of burden, which is superfluous to tell of every one.'[46] In his chapter on water vessels, Da Cruz omits the pleasure boats that the Chinese travellers were so concerned with. There are several possibilities for this omission. On one hand, Da Cruz did not visit the Jiangnan and Min regions where the literati travellers were most active. Instead he was in South China, where most boats were for coasting on the seas or for the transport of people and goods. On the other hand, since da Cruz's aims made him see the travel infrastructure in terms of governance and commerce, he possibly discounted the smaller pleasure boats, regarding them as superfluous to his purposes.

Da Cruz was however, interested in the issue of piracy. As in Europe, piracy was a major problem for Chinese authorities and securing the large coastal areas of the empire was a drain on manpower and financial resources. Da Cruz remarks on the security measures taken by the kingdom to ensure that ships could reach their destination and not get attacked by pirates, a common occurrence in the southeast. Like the rest of his account, da Cruz describes being impressed by the good governance and careful planning.

> From the city of Oucheo [Wuzhou], that is where the governor of Cansi and Cantam is resident, unto the bounds of the province of Cansi, which are the most dangerous places there are continually armadas of forty or fifty vessels. All these

[44] Ibid., p. 112.
[45]Ibid.,
[46] Ibid., p. 114.

> guards and watches are paid from the common revenues of the kingdom. From this it can be clearly seen how well China is governed, and how much trouble is taken to make the ways safe for merchants and travellers.[47]

Da Cruz's praise of the Chinese surveillance of pirates, ensuring a safe water passage for merchants and travellers can be understood better when considering the practical limits of state control in early modern Europe. While China was a large and relatively centralised state, early modern Europe consisted of expansionist empires, with loose collaboration between nations. This made the demarcation and policing of borders nearly impossible, for states generally lacked the financial means and the political authority to control maritime borders and far-flung borderlands.[48] The challenges to central authority over land and sea borders created conditions conducive to organised crime, such as banditry and piracy. As a result, early modern travel books informed travellers and merchants about dangerous routes prone to bandits and robbers. The state solution was to engage the help of local populations to guard these territories. In return these communities would receive privileges in the form of autonomy, lower rates of taxation and elevated social status.[49] This arrangement was less than ideal as these areas remained vulnerable to high levels of organised crime. Only in the seventeenth century did the European states gain more central control and fiscal revenues to maintain larger military and police forces.

Since early modern European states had limited military and bureaucratic resources to guard dangerous regions, the Chinese coastal defence system was met with marvel and praise in da Cruz's accounts. In line with the enthusiastic appraisals of China as a land of potential and promise, European travellers commended the Chinese efforts against piracy. It has to be qualified with historical research however, that the control of piracy was not as efficient as da Cruz claims. The Ming administration spent massively towards ensuring that the coastal regions were guarded and kept free from pirates. In reality however, many of the officials and guards were corruptible, conspiring with pirates who continued their lucrative and illicit 'trade' by paying bribes.[50] Scholars estimate there were at least 70,000

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[47] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 116.
[48] Kelly Hignett, 'Co-option or Criminalisation? The State, Border Communities and Crime in Early Modern Europe', *Global Crime*, 9 (2008), 35-51 (p. 35).
[49] Ibid., p. 50.
[50] Wills Jr., *China and Maritime Europe*, pp. 34-36.

pirates active on the Chinese coasts—too large a number to effectively control and eradicate.[51]

The resources and efforts mobilised was noted by Wang Shixing in his overview of Ming China. Born and raised in the coastal city Taizhou 台州, a traditional stronghold against pirates, Wang took a personal interest in the issue of piracy and defence.[52] In his travel text, he addresses the challenges posed by pirates 倭 and identifies their strategic tactics.[53] As a work of historical geography, Wang's text traces the empire's historical struggle with piracy when discussing the Deng prefecture in the Shandong peninsula. Detailing in his travel text a rhetorical conversation with a guest 客, he discusses why previous generations created a defence against pirates in this particular area.[54]

The Deng prefecture was a strategically important point of defence: based in the Tsushima island and Busan, the pirates would ride on the East winds, with 'the Deng prefecture as their first port of arrival and Tianjin as their second, it was imperative for this area to be well guarded.'[55] Although many guards were posted near the coastal regions, the pirates located sparsely patrolled areas for their landings. Wang is convinced that the pirates had informants in these regions. Wang claims that China has always suffered from 'an abundance of poverty and dangers of barbarians 殷瘠夷險', making it vulnerable to attacks, for enemies received help from local informants. [56] Wang later continues his rhetorical debate, contending that despite popular misconception, the pirates' profits lay in the theft of gold and not of vessels carrying food supplies. Wang is convinced that the area would benefit from proper investigation into the pirates' bases and their targets; through identifying the region's geographically vulnerable points, the appropriate defence strategy can be adopted accordingly.[57] Thus, while Da Cruz praised the Chinese ability to control piracy, Wang, who was better informed about such issues was aware of the shortcomings of existing infrastructure and made personal suggestions on how the pirate situation could be strategically improved.

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[51] Robert Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea: The World of Pirates and Seafarers in Late Imperial South China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 10.
[52] Xu, Shi, and Huang, *Wang Shixing zhuan* [Wang Shixing's Biography], p. 5.
[53] Ming maritime relations were characterised by suspicion of 'Japanese pirates' 倭, many of whom were actually Chinese. This suspicion of maritime menace led to a prohibition of maritime trade. See John E. Wills Jr., *China and Maritime Europe*, p. 34.
[54] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 245.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., p. 246.

In general, Da Cruz and Ricci lauded the Chinese water transport for its efficiency and security. This tone reflects their overall celebratory attitude towards the Chinese people and culture. They perceived the Chinese as polite and civilised, their main flaws were being 'heathen' and hence 'ignorant' and 'superstitious', a point which will be further discussed in Chapter Four. However, different European travellers had diverging opinions of Ming Chinese travel infrastructure. In contrast, Martin de Rada, who was considerably more lukewarm towards the Chinese narrates, '[t]heir ships are somewhat slow and ill-made, although they sail very well before the wind and well enough close-hauled. They do not have sea-cards but they do have some were dotted with green grass, manuscript rutters.'[58]

De Rada compares the Chinese naval technology with European equipment and finds the Chinese technology inaccurate and backwards. 'They also have a compass-needle, but not like ours, for it is only a very sensitive little tongue of steel which they touch with a load-stone. They place it in a little saucer full of sea-water and on which the winds are marked. They divide the compass into twenty-four parts, and not into thirty-two as we do.'[59] De Rada gives the Chinese credit for inventing rudimentary sailing techniques, yet considers them sub-par to European sailing and navigation methods. Given Spain's status as a maritime power, de Rada was unimpressed with the state of Chinese ships. In contrast with the glowing accounts of Chinese travel infrastructure supplied by da Cruz and Ricci, de Rada's review of Chinese boats reflects the overall tone of his account, one that was less enthusiastic about China. Accounts of travel infrastructure were not merely descriptive, but also indicative of the travel writer's attitudes towards the Chinese people.

2.2.2 The Narrative Functions of Ships and Boats

Chapter One briefly mentioned how shipwrecks in missionary accounts were a common topos, utilised to demonstrate the trials and faith of overseas missionaries. In a similar vein, travel by water had narrative functions in the travel accounts, forwarding the narrative by adding danger, tension, excitement or despair.

On their journey from Nanjing to Beijing for an audience with the emperor, the Jesuits were invited by the President of the Magistrates on a ship which conveyed the

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[58] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 281.
[59] Ibid., p. 295.

President's family, guests and servants. As described in the travel text, 'This particular kind of boat had some resemblance to a trireme, and because of its speed the Chinese called in a cavalier.'[60] There were many rooms and much space in the boat, with the Jesuit fathers having their own quarters, separated from those of the servants. The onward journey to Peking was grand, sumptuous and comfortable.[61]

In stark contrast to the luxurious boats which the Jesuits were offered as part of their onward journey to the Chinese capital, was the humble vessel on which they travelled on the way back. They had decided that their first mission to Peking was not a success and opted to return to Nanjing and hope for better opportunities in the future. Instead of a private boat, they travelled by commuter boat. 'With that decided upon, they hired places on a boat, at a low price, for the return voyage. Empty boats returning took passengers for nearly nothing but in this instance the avarice of the captain made this boat most unsuitable to travel in, because it was unprotected for want of arms, as well as lacking sufficient crew.'[62]

In this account, it is worth noting the narrative significance of the type of boats on which they commuted to and fro the Chinese capital. On the way to Peking, they were hopeful and optimistic that their expensive and unique European gifts would please the emperor, paving a path for Jesuit missionary endeavours in China. On a resplendent, exquisitely fashioned ship of the presidents of the magistrates, the Jesuit father sailed towards Peking with hope and eagerness for the future. However, the Jesuits' first mission to Beijing was a failure; despite their years of preparations, they did not achieve their aims. The journey back reflected this desolation. While ferried there by grand, official vessels, the voyage back was one of despair and desolation in a common commuter boat. The difference between the expectation and the outcome, likewise reflected in the choice of water vessel, could not have been starker.

By its nature, boat travel was risky; there were threats of piracy, natural and even unnatural dangers, a menace to European and Chinese travellers alike. In numerous accounts, the writer narrates moments of boat travel when his life was at risk, adding tension to the travel accounts and highlighting to the audience the perilous nature of boat travel. Due to weather conditions and the difficulties of navigating natural surroundings,

[60] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 301.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid., p. 315.

one had to take care of the tides and ensure that the boat was not damaged by sharp rocks, or threatened by stormy weather. Matteo Ricci's shipwreck in the river as mentioned in the previous chapter occurred when navigating a particularly perilous stretch: '[F]or a distance of about thirty miles, the river bed is strewn with sharp, protruding rocks […] It is covered with numerous whirlpools, which travel so rapidly that if the pilots are not experienced the boats may be caught in a current and dashed on a rock, with the loss of baggage and perhaps of lives as well.'[63] During their journeys through China, travel writers regularly faced dangerous boat crossings, some recording fearing for their lives during rapid currents and dangerous storms.

Yuan for instance, encountered two disasters during a short trip to the scenic environs of Nanjing. From aboard his boat, he witnessed a capsized boat in the river which locals rescued by quickly paddling towards the site in their light vessels.[64] Just two days later, as he and a servant were ascending a boat, he records, 'The young servant boy Meng Lu lost his footing and fell into the water, I grasped at him by his clothes and laughed, yet in a moment he was engulfed by a whirlpool and no more to be seen. What extreme sadness!'[65] Subsequently, the boat rower and passengers on a military boat informed Yuan of a strange creature in the river, which takes a victim at the same time each year.[66] Yuan does not give his personal assessment about the credibility of these reports. Instead, he expresses his extreme sadness over the misfortune of this servant, mourning his unjust death. That Yuan neither ridicules nor discredits the accounts of the rower and passengers suggests that travellers in this period did not rule out unnatural occurrences such as water monsters causing water disasters for travellers.

The woes of other travellers were brought on by meteorological circumstances. In Xu Xiake's journeys through Guangxi in 1637, he records a period of constant rain whilst travelling by boat. He was soaked from the rain and boat travel was risky due to high, turbulent waters. Xu recorded having trouble procuring a boat due to irregular schedules and waited till the next day. By then the rain was even heavier and the course of the river more rapid. The boat was so narrow that he was unable to bring his bags with him. On the boat ride through the rapid waters, he comments:

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[63] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 263.
[64] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 53.
[65] Ibid., p. 54.
[66] Ibid.

> At midday, the flow of water was vast, expanding over the banks and crashing into the shores. As the people on city streets saw the rising water, many proceeded to higher plains to avoid the floods. As I sat, facing the forceful flow of water, large, fell trees, with intact roots and leaves started flowing towards us, separating into groups and causing forceful currents in the water, akin to naval warships, battling upon the waters.[67]

After a period of rain, boat travel was particularly risky, offering narrative tension and excitement to Xu's account. Xu emphasizes his foolhardy nature by continuing on boat journeys despite the dangers of 'forceful currents' and tree parts 'battling upon the waters' which he highlights in figurative language. According to Xu's account, locals used long ropes to fasten the tree barks, letting the flow of the river carry them downstream before pulling them ashore, later selling the tree parts as kindling. Such local services were of great use to Xu, for getting struck by one of these large trees would have been disastrous, meaning possible death. [68]

2.2.3 Social Functions of Boats

For Chinese leisure travellers, the light boat 輕舟 was the ideal vehicle for leisurely journeys through waterways. According to Tu Long 屠龍, a famous Ming writer and a friend of Wang Shixing, a light boat 舟 should be ideally fashioned and equipped, 'Shaped like a rowing boat, with a flat bottom, about three *zhang* long […] which allows for a capacity of six guests and four servants.'[69] Other properties of the light boat include a roof over the middle section, barriers on both sides, table and chairs, small sleeping berths installed in the centre of the boat, and incense burners, decorative plants and accessories for drinking.

> The rear of the boat is cordoned off with a long blue curtain, in order to conceal the servants, the wind and the sun […] Fastened in the shade of a willow tree, in moments of leisure and rest, one can fish with a rod, or on a snowy night when the moon is bright, when the peaches are red and the willow beguiling, sail with the

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[67] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 699.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Tu Long, 'Youju Yabian' 游具雅編 [The Refined Collection of Travel Accessories], in *Kaopan Yushi* 考槃余事 [Desultory Remarks on Furnishing the Abode of the Retired Scholar], cited in Wei, *Wanming Lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], pp. 101-02.

> boat, and blow on the flutes, to set in motion the melodies of the sky, compelling solitary cranes to sail in the wind and screech, or to perch on the side of the boat and sing, one gets his fill of scenic views. When one turns about his boat and returns, he reclines on his pine window, the feeling of living free and easily in this world, what joy is this. [70]

According to this description, it is not just the physical properties and convenience that made boat travel desirable to literati travellers. Over time, boat travel achieved significance and prestige, linked with a certain romantic view of life that defined easy and free living 逍遙, and an appreciation of landscape and waterscapes that overland travel could not provide. Furthermore, the motion of the boat drifting over water closely corresponded Chinese concept of travel 游, which emphasized the ease of roaming and drifting, being at rest and free from the cares of society. Wu Jen-Shu, in his study of leisure in late-Ming Chinese society, approaches boats not merely as vehicles, but as important spaces of leisure for urban Chinese literati travellers. The boat was a social space where male circles of friendship could be realised and enacted.[71] Travel was not only about reaching scenic destinations. Instead, the process of the excursion, including the conversations, entertainment and meals on the boat were part of the travel experience.

Yuan Zhongdao's account shows that boats acquired significance beyond mere transportation, serving as spaces of leisure and socialisation. Yuan accounts for the foodstuffs brought onto the boat: 'Since we had docked, we went to the marketplace, which was filled up with fish, salt, rice and wines. There was a seller of eels, and I ordered the servant boy to purchase it as an accompaniment to wines.'[72] The text indicates that meals were paid careful attention on Yuan's journeys, closely resembling the home setting of a well-to-do literatus, whose meals were looked after by servants and cooks. As Yuan frequently entertained on his boat, he ensured that there were sufficient supplies of good wines and foods when friends visited his floating abode, or accompanied him to scenic spots.

One of the most remarkable social events mentioned in his travel text, was a party celebrating the refurbishment of Floating Duck Boat.

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[70]Ibid.
[71] Wu, *Youyou fangxiang* [Urban Pleasures], p. 314.
[72] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 145.

> I set up a banquet to celebrate the occasion of my new boat, inviting many guests. The drums and the wind instruments played in harmony. The spectators filed upwards into the boat, so numerous that they seemed almost like a wall. The brightness of the sun was reflected in the vast expanse of water, and the sounds of music, conversation and laughter fell in between the ebb and flow of the waves.[73]

Clearly, the personal boat was a status symbol, celebrated by the owner and displayed to admiring and curious guests. Yuan's boat did not even leave the dock, but served as a floating banquet hall, allowing Yuan to display his new travel accessory while socialising with friends and guests.

Even on solitary travels, Yuan records his leisurely life on the boat: 'I travelled to Red Cliff. At the edge of the water was a stone pavilion, at the foot of which were stones rounded like tortoise-shells, where one could sit cross-legged, in the manner of a Buddhist devotee. I ordered a servant to collect water from Dragon Springs for the purposes of brewing tea. The taste was exceedingly pleasant.'[74] This connoisseurship that Yuan exhibited on his travels, the inclination for fine drinks paired with enticing foods was typical of pleasure-seeking literati life. Contemporary printed sources show that portable travel cookware and utensils were commonplace during the late-Ming dynasty. The Ming writer Gao Lian's *Eight Treatises on the Nurturing of Life* 尊生八箋 recommends leisure travel as a way of nurturing life and proceeds to outline the various travel accessories 游具 required on journeys, such as a bamboo walking stick, a portable stove and a folding table.[75] Boat travels in surrounding regions provided Yuan with a rhetorical escape from the social pressures of home, while affording him the comforts befitting a man of his status.

The consumerism and leisure economy of late-Ming society is well represented in this passage. Ornate, personal boats, popular amongst Ming literati travellers from the wealthy Jiangnan regions, were splendidly furnished with all manner of material comforts. Craig Clunas has stated that the late-Ming period was one of conspicuous consumption, where much fuss was made about material goods and the descriptions thereof.[76] There have been conflicting interpretations about why Ming Chinese elites were preoccupied with

[73] Ibid., p. 86.
[74] Ibid., p. 38.
[75] Gao Lian 高濂, *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋 [Eight Treatises on the Nurturing of Life][1591], (Chengdu: Bashu chubanshe, 1988), pp. 300-13.
[76] See Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).

material delights. Some argue that late-Ming objects provided an escape for the Chinese scholar in a turbulent, problematic age. However, Clunas challenges this claim, arguing that texts about material things provided a key area of discourse of Ming history, taking on a rhetorical function.[77]

The rhetorical functions of travel infrastructure can be explored further. In some texts, a boat served as a status symbol, suggesting a capacity for unencumbered leisure, which only Chinese men of privilege and status could afford. Boats in text were also ascribed poetic and sentimental significance, reflecting the autobiographical quality of late-Ming travel texts and the introspective nature of literati travel. Travel served as a metaphor of life as a journey. Travels accounts could record the everyday, almost mundane experience of boat travel, but could also be a metaphor of self-growth and learning through the experiences on one's journey. Indeed, Yuan Zhongdao reflects in his travel account that '[o]f all the joys in the world, there is nothing like being in a boat.'[78] In his text, he repeatedly emphasizes the idyllic, carefree lifestyle which boat travel offered, giving an account of productive leisure and the furthering of his literary pursuits. 'Whilst in the boat I had no cares, hence I read some books and edited my poems, lighting up incense and brewing tea, practised calligraphy on the paper fan, and passed the day away.'[79]

The rhetorical desire for freedom and self-cultivation as attained through travel, is reflected in Yuan's travel account detailing his day trips in the southeast, taken on his boat. After articulating his desire to travel at the beginning of his text, Yuan began to consider the logistics for a smooth journey. He considered his lack of a personal boat and specifically articulated his desire to travel by water, so as to encounter the fine landscapes and waterscapes. The solution presents itself almost immediately, as Yuan narrates:

> By chance I met my eighth uncle in the pavilion and spoke to him of my plans to travel. I said, 'distant travels ought not to be intercepted by limitations of status and profit, yet surely travel by water is the most comfortable and convenient. However, if one travels via waterways, it would be more advisable to buy one's own boat. Then one can carry his own supplies of grains, and not be restricted to the schedules of commercial vessels, if by chance one meets good landscapes and good friends, one can stay amongst them at length. Moreover, on the waters there are

[77] Ibid., p. 169.
[78] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 8.
[79] Ibid., p.10.

many winds and waves, but I would be free to stop and stay according to my wishes.' My uncle replied, 'I have a boat that I made myself, it is strong and sturdy and I have used it for many years. Today I shall give it to my nephew.'[80]

This passage reveals many characteristics of literati travel by waterway. Commercial boats were widely available in late-Ming South China, offering travel routes between cities and towns, taking on passengers and goods for a fare.[81] The concern of an elite, literati traveller was not so much the destination of the boat, but the inflexible schedules and the bothersome clamour of goods and people.[82] Writing from a position of privilege and given the status of travel texts as a late-Ming elite commodity that served to project a particular image of its author, Yuan is concerned with the proper travel accoutrements befitting a man of his social standing.[83] Personal boats in late-Ming China were common and affordable. Yuan's Eighth Uncle's casual generosity in gifting him the boat, indicates that a man of his standing ideally ought to have multiple boats, or could easily procure another one should the need arise. Weaving personal prestige into his travel text was paramount for Yuan. Commercial boats were available for all but it lacked the privacy and exclusiveness of a private boat, necessary for his autobiographical journey.

From a literary viewpoint, Yuan creates a compelling narrative. Although enjoying quiet respite from the pressures of learning and exam life at Bamboo Valley, the name of his family's private garden where he had residence, he felt stifled, lacking personal growth. His uncle's boat has both a practical and a metaphorical function, allowing him to navigate the waterways of southeast China with ease. Metaphorically, it provides him with an escape from the stifling confinements of home, a vehicle that allows him to start on his journey of self-cultivation and personal growth. Here, travel is also part of Yuan's 'inner journey', an autobiographical account of learning, reflection and growth. The boat then is the tool that realises this desire, transporting him away from the comforts and familiarity of home, commencing his literal and literary journey.

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[80] Ibid., p. 6.

[81] On commercial passenger boats, see Chen Baoliang, *The Urban Life of the Ming Dynasty,* trans. by Zhu Yihua, Wang Ting, and Yang Fei (Hunan: Hunan People's Pubishing House, 2014), pp. 207-08.

[82] Ibid.

[83] McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections*, p. 18.

2.2.4 The Poetics of Boats

As Yuan's travel progressed, his boat took on more importance than a mere vehicle, gradually becoming central to Yuan's journeys and experience of travel. Yuan poetically names his boat 'Drifting Duck Boat' 泛凫舟, claiming inspiration from an ancient poem found in the classical text *Verses of Chu* 楚辭, traditionally attributed to the celebrated Chinese poet and minister Qu Yuan 屈原 (338?–278BCE).[84] In the poem, Qu Yuan, the chief persona, troubled by his exile and reputation, asked a diviner how he should proceed. Qu Yuan asks, 'is it better to be painstakingly honest, simple-hearted and loyal, or to keep out of trouble by welcoming each change as it comes? [...] is it better to have the aspiring spirit of a thousand-*li* stallion, or to drift and drift like a duck on water, saving one's neck by rising and falling with the waves?'[85] Yuan quotes from the poem and offers his personal interpretation: Qu Yuan, who served the State of Chu as a minister, lived in turbulent times, as the state was under jeopardy from surrounding, belligerent states. Yet Qu, even in political exile refused to save his own neck 'by rising and falling with the waves', or adhering to the status quo. Instead, he continued to write and express deep concern about his country, attempting to suppress his depression as he saw his state fall apart, succumbing to attacks from surrounding enemies.[86] Yuan reflects upon his own life, commenting: 'Fortunately, I was born in a world of peace and order. In my youth a new dynasty was not established, hence I do not busy myself with the affairs of people, home and country. Instead I save my neck by falling with the waves, such is my duty.'[87]

Yuan's exegesis of the poem and the parallels he draws with his own life can be read as a justification of his personal circumstances. Yuan's failures at the examinations and the resultant inability to serve the state as an official, was a bitter reminder of his personal shortcomings. Though on the surface, he claims to be 'fortunate' for being born in peaceful times, the tone veers towards one of irony and resentment. Throughout Chinese history, Qu Yuan and his hagiographic biography served as a moral and educational tale for Confucian scholars. Immortalised as an aspirational symbol and figure, Qu Yuan was

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[84]David Hawkes provides convincing evidence that this piece entitled 'Divination' 卜居, could not have been written by Qu Yuan, but its subject closely resembles Qu Yuan's circumstances, retelling his predicament of action with grievous consequences, or feigning ignorance. The poem satirises contemporary society. Hawkes, *Ch'u Tz'u The Songs of the South: An Ancient Chinese Anthology,* trans. by David Hawkes (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1959), pp. 88-89.

[85] Ibid., p. 89.

[86] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 35.

[87] Ibid.

the archetypal, noble, patriotic and self-sacrificial scholar and statesman.[88] He became an enduring literary motif, perceived by scholars as the embodiment of Confucian qualities—loyalty to the state, personal integrity, fulfilling social duty and artistically creative (through poetry).[89] To juxtapose his situation with that of Qu Yuan's shows the stark irony of Yuan's situation. Born in a time when competition was rife and at an advanced age, Yuan's hopes for achieving his potential by rising through the official ranks seemed dismal. Instead of having the aspiring spirit of a thousand-*li* stallion, Yuan is resigned to the pessimistic alternative, drifting in his personal boat like a duck, doomed to conform to the tides of time. He names his boat to reflect his troubled inner world, rendering his boat autobiographical, an extension of Yuan himself.

This is further demonstrated in another episode during a particularly sorrowful time in Yuan's personal life. After using the boat on his travels for some years, it was unfortunately destroyed in 1612, battered by strong winds when storms and flooding affected his hometown. Yuan lamented in his diary, 'Drifting Duck Boat was in the lake, when it was hit by strong winds that destroyed and sunk it. In its lifetime it was a good boat to dwell in, today it shall never return and that is very regretful.'[90] The passage continues with Yuan reminiscing his deceased father and elder brother, and bygone moments in life. The entire passage ends on a sad, despairing note. Clearly, the boat was associated to Yuan's memories of travel, with its many visits to scenic sites and the numerous social gatherings on board.

In a particularly dark chapter of Yuan's personal life, the boat ceases to be mere infrastructure, taking on an affective quality. The destruction of a boat full of good memories put Yuan into a remorseful and melancholy mood. The boat serves as a metaphor for happier times and its destruction as a reminder of the loved ones that have left him. After the death of his brother and also a result of his declining health, Yuan's travels reduced in frequency. The tone of his travel text shifts from joyful exuberance to one that is fatigued and melancholic, resigned to his life situation.

[88] For the figure of Qu Yuan in Chinese historiography, see Laurence Schneider, *A Madman of Ch'u: The Chinese Myth of Loyalty and Dissent* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
[89] Ralph Croizier, 'Qu Yuan and the Artists: Ancient Symbols and Modern Politics in the Post-Mao Era', *The Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, 24 (1990), 25-29 (p. 26).
[90] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travel and Dwelling], pp. 142-43.

Yuan was not the only traveller who used the motif of the boat for contemplation and creative purposes. Wang Shixing's travel texts include several sections of travel poetry, displaying his literary flair and providing audiences insight into his personal reflections. While Yuan interweaves his reflections throughout his diaries, Wang's main body of text is written in the objective-descriptive mode,[91] focused on the history and geography of places, providing descriptive accounts of his journeys. Rarely does he venture out to the *belles lettres.* His poems however, provide him with a form to express his artistic creativity more naturally. Boat travel is a recurring theme.

In 'Eight scenes from the Pagoda by the River', dedicated to a friend, the motif of the boat is integral in setting the mood and tone of his poem. The first scene is entitled 'The hoarse screeching of an egret against the paleness of the moon'.

The brightness of the moon envelops the islet,

the water reeds look forward to autumn.

The follower of the path has a heart that is like water,

flocks of birds follow his meandering boat.[92]

The following scene is entitled 'Fishing by the stone steps in the breezy wind'.

Reflecting the light, the fisherman enters a desolate wilderness.

Where is the flute whose sound is carried by the evening winds?

In the light boat, he ceases to fish and returns,

He turns and drifts in the direction of the willows,

mooring the boat in its shadows.[93]

Here the boat takes on poetic significance, as a recurring motif in Chinese landscape art and poetry that celebrates the waters and mountains, an important point to be

[91] Hargett, 'Some Preliminary Remarks on the Travel Records of the Song Dynasty', p. 68.
[92] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 87.
[93] Ibid., p. 88.

expanded upon in the following chapter. The fisherman represents an individual detached from the worries and cares of the world. Unlike Yuan who professed a desire to escape from society at the beginning of his journals, Wang's travel texts are grounded in the realities of late-Ming society, exhibiting close attention towards describing his itinerary and surroundings, only occasionally slipping into pensive moments, usually at locations such as temples and resting stops which facilitated meditation. Though yielding magnificent descriptions of landscape, Wang's *Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains,* from which this set of poems come from, largely consists of geographic writing, much less autobiographical than Yuan's text. Nevertheless, the section which Wang devotes to poetry exhibits his personal, affective response to nature and travel. The boat is a motif that he veers towards to express his contemplations whilst travelling. As a common literary theme, boats exceed their apparent use as travel infrastructure, being elevated from vehicles to motifs of artistic creativity.

2.3 Interlude: Waterways and Pathways

While South and South-eastern China were easily accessed by interconnecting waterways spreading thousands of kilometres, the northern, western and central regions of China were less accessible by rivers and canals. In these regions, geographically characterised by vast plains, horses, carts and sedans were predominant forms of travel by land. Travellers journeying from the southern regions to the north used a combination of both land and water routes to reach their final destinations.

Ricci's travel text records reaching the Muilin [Mei] Pass 梅關 before Nanjing, where waterways and pathways converge, as the geography gradually shifts from one dominated by waterways, to a topography of roads and pathways. Ricci gives an account of the massive logistical transfer, with supplies going from north to south and vice versa.

> From the southern base of the mountain, the Nanchiun River begins to be navigable, flowing from here through the Metropolitan City of Canton and thence south to the sea. On the other side of the mountain at the City of Nangan there is another big river [Yangtze River] which flows through the provinces of Chian-si and Nankin, passing through many other cities and descending eastwards to the ocean. A tremendous amount of merchandise is brought here from many provinces to be carried over the mountain and sent south, and likewise, from the other side and over

the mountain, to be sent in the opposite direction […] Travellers cross on horses or in palanquins and the merchandise is transported on beasts of burden or by carriers, who seem to be innumerable, and the procession is constant all day long and every day.[94]

Ricci marvels at the architectural demands in creating such a pass. Praising the well-developed and technologically advanced travel infrastructure of China, he narrates how human effort altered nature, to convenience the journeys of travellers and merchants.

Formerly, this mountain was impassable, but science and labor opened a highway. The entire journey over it is made through rocky country covered with forests, but the stopping places, wayside inns, are so frequent that one can pass either day or night in them in security and in comfort. The military guards and the continuous stream of travellers are protection against robbers, and the road is never flooded, even by a torrential downpour.[95]

Ricci's glowing accounts illustrate numerous features of overland travel. From horses to palanquins, inns to roads, overland travel required a plethora of vehicles, services and travel accessories. In the second half of this chapter, I address overland travel and services surrounding travel as represented in the travel texts. While boats were the vehicle and literary motif of choice for Chinese travel writers, given its associations with drifting and freedom, Ming China was a land empire. The movement of the imperial capital from Nanjing—easily accessible by waterways, to Beijing—near the northern plains, required a different set of infrastructure.

2.4 Overland Travel: Postal Services, Distance and Mobility

European travellers paid particular attention to the scale of the Chinese empire and mobility across vast overland distances. While early modern European countries were building naval empires, Ming China was an immense land empire. The European travel texts reflect the travellers' interest in the maintenance of a land empire the size and scale of China. Galeote Pereira marvelled at the scale of the Chinese kingdom.

[94] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 261.
[95] Ibid., p. 262.

> The kingdom is so large, that under five months you are not able to travel from the towns by the sea-side to the Court and back again, no not under three months in post at your urgent business. The post-horses in this country are little of body, but swift of foot. Many do travel the greater part of this journey by water in certain light barks, for the multitude or rivers commodious for passage from one city to another.[96]

Matteo Ricci and his companions narrate their journey towards Beijing on the emperor's command.

> The magistrates of the fort provided eight horses and thirty porters or carriers for the journey to Peking. These were changed each day at the stopping places. On this particular trip the Fathers were lodged in the palaces of various officials along the route. They were treated very respectfully and they were not charged for anything. On the contrary, they were honoured by everyone because it was known that they had been summoned by the King.[97]

As foreign dignitaries, the Jesuits enjoyed special treatment, travelling at the cost of the state. Although Matteo Ricci was the only European travel writer in the study who was able to travel further inland, overland travel and the organisation of communications was also mentioned by the other European travel writers.

Well-developed travel infrastructure was an important feature in maintaining a kingdom the scale of China. In the early stages of their expansionist imperial project, maintaining control over a large landmass preoccupied Iberian monarchs and bureaucrats. When their subjects were sent out on overseas journeys, a key part of their assignment involved the survey and assessment of the size and governance of their destinations, as outlined in the *ars apodemica*.[98] Pereira comments that China was efficiently organised and that the king, though located in Beijing in the far north, was able to receive detailed information each month about the happenings in his territories.

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[96]Galeote Pereira, 'The Report of Galeote Pereira', trans. by C. R. Boxer, in *South China in the Sixteenth Century : Being the Narratives of Galeote Pereira, Fr. Gaspar Da Cruz, O.P. [and] Fr. Martín De Rada, O.E.S.A. (1550-1575)* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1953), pp. 3-44 (p. 6).

[97] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 371.

[98] Stagl, *A History of Curiosity*, pp. 49-52.

> The whole kingdom being divided into shires, and each shire having in it one chief and principal city, whereunto the matters of all the other cities, towns and boroughs, are brought: there are drawn in every chief city aforesaid, intelligencies of such things are do monthly fall out, and be sent in writing to the Court. If haply on one month every post is not able to go so long a way, yet doth there notwithstanding once every month arrive one post out of the shire. Whoso commeth before the new moon, stayeth for the delivery of his letters until the moon be changed. Then likewise are dispatched other posts back into all the thirteen shires again.[99]

China provided a novel opportunity for European agents of empire to witness the governance and organisation of large land territories. Keeping abreast of information in each of the provinces, to know how the crops were faring, or if there were any calamities was pivotal in ensuring a well-ordered kingdom. The infrastructure which Pereira outlined formed the communications backbone of the empire. Wang Shixing's texts also demonstrate the importance of transport and communication networks. In certain regions of China, the harvest was plentiful, whilst other regions in the northeast faced famines and food shortages.[100] Up-to-date communications and efficient infrastructure enabled the transportation of grains and foodstuffs from the plentiful regions to the barren north.[101]

Historians identify three main communications systems of the Ming state, namely the courier service, the postal service and the transport service. I will briefly address the courier service which was mentioned by Chinese and European travellers alike. The courier service had the function of moving communications, bureaucrats and foreign guests travelling through China on official business. Courier stations were located sixty to eighty *li* apart, or a day's travel expected from an official. These routes radiated from the two capitals and connected major Chinese cities, forming the major travel networks of Ming China.[102] They are recorded in detail in Chinese gazetteers and travellers' route books. Courier stations were pivotal to the Chinese travellers in this study, serving as rest stops before continuing on their way. They also served as information points, for up-to-date news and for information about the immediate environs, which the traveller might be traversing for the first time. In the maintenance of imperial line of communications, courier stations facilitated the movement of officials and the dissemination of information.

[99] Pereira, 'Report', p. 7.
[100] Brook, 'Communications and Commerce', p. 612.
[101] Ibid., p. 656.
[102] Ibid., p. 582.

Maintained at the expense of the Chinese state, not all travellers could benefit from its services and convenience.

As a bureaucrat, Wang Shixing could utilise courier services on official travels. From his posts as prefect in Henan, to inspector at Guangxi, to vice premier in Yunnan, Wang had a successful and lengthy official career, being posted to different regions according to protocol which limited the entrenchment of power.[103] Wang spent much time on the road, following the main points of the courier station to get from one post to another. That said, Wang is reticent on the role of the courier stations in his accounts. There are several possible reasons for this reticence. Firstly, the courier system was only meant to be used on official travel. Perhaps Wang found it unsuitable to make mention of courier stations in published narratives of his personal excursions to scenic spots. Furthermore, Wang possibly found the courier system unremarkable. Descriptions of courier stations per se served no purpose in forwarding his travel narrative, resulting in their omission from the text. Despite Wang's sparse descriptions, he conceptualised and organised his travel text, the *Interpretation of Vast Travels*, along the main points of the courier system, commencing with the two administrative capitals: Beijing and Nanjing, before providing accounts of secondary centres and routes.

Yuan Zhongdao records the courier stations through which he passed whilst travelling with his brother Yuan Hongdao from Zhengzhou to their hometown Gongan. While Yuan Zhongdao was officially unable to use courier stations because he was not yet an official at this point, his brother was entitled to use these services and accompanying family and friends could benefit from these rest stops. Even on travels when his brother did not accompany him, Yuan records using the services of the courier stations, resting and sleeping at these locations.[104] This matches historical accounts suggesting that official rules were malleable and not strictly observed.[105]

Despite frequent use, Chinese travellers' narrations of courier stations were rather droll and unembellished, mentioning the locations in passing, without granting them much further attention or detail. Yuan names the location of the courier stations and briefly mentions the historical significance of each location. 'We rested at Baoan station 保安,

[103] Xu, Shi, and Huang, *Wang Shixing zhuan* [Wang Shixing's Biography], pp. 154-56.
[104] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 66.
[105] Brook, 'Communications and Commerce', pp. 687.

which was where the large Kunyang battle took place during the reign of the Guangwu emperor […] Bowang station 博望, this was the hometown of Zhang Qian [a famous official of the Han Dynasty], of whom many songs were written in the past.'[106] Yuan's accounts does not describe what occurs at these stations. Such descriptions may have bored his intended audience, already familiar with the function and organisation of courier stations. Instead, he provides information about the history of the place, or the scenery near the stations, more likely to appeal to the Ming reader of travel texts.

Within the cities, travellers and urban dwellers used sedans to traverse shorter distances. Since horses were scarce in southern Chinese cities, sedans were a convenient and common form of travel for the gentry, officials, students and exam candidates.[107] Usually carried by two or four bearers, there were different types of sedans, some with veils for the passenger's privacy, while others were open sedans. Though mainly reserved for the gentry and the affluent members of society, sedan travel was a common sight in late-Ming China. The existence of different categories of consumers, from the nobility, to the gentry, to students and exam candidates meant that a wide range of sedans was produced by the market to meet this demand. Sedans were both a means of travel and a reflection of one's wealth and status.

European travel writers describing sedans correctly identify it as a status symbol in China and at times pass judgment on the wasteful opulence of the upper classes. Ricci notes that 'men of high station in life are never seen walking in the streets. They are carried about enclosed in sedan chairs and cannot be seen by passers-by, unless they leave the front curtain open.'[108] Gaspar da Cruz also found sedan travel noteworthy.

> In China, some officials take sedans which are lifted and carried across the town by men. All these sedans are splendidly decorated, looking quite pretty and expensive, but they often cost too much money. The other kind of large sedans are of decency and elegance and are sealed around, only with a window at each side. Through the beautiful window panes made with ivories, bones or wood, people sitting in it could peep at passers-by on the road without being noticed.[109]

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[106] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], pp. 85-86.
[107] Wu, *Pinwei shehua* [Taste of Luxury], p. 72.
[108] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 80.
[109] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 116.

Both singled out privacy through screens as being desired by upper-class travellers. Da Cruz's judgement of sedans costing 'too much money' is reflective of his overall assessment of the Chinese as admirable, but vain, placing too much importance on material goods and social rituals, to be further discussed in the final chapter. In his comments, he remarks upon the frivolity of using precious materials on transport vehicles.

Da Cruz provides an account that corroborates with historical studies of the conspicuous consumption of late-Ming urban life. The commercialisation of late-Ming cities established a burgeoning consumer market and the requisite production of goods to meet these demands.[110] Social groups indulging in these extravagances included the gentry, scholars, merchants and officials. The vogue of travel in the late-Ming dynasty made the sedan a widely available and important vehicle, which also functioned as an accessory for wealthier, image-conscious individuals who could indulge in sedans of fine material.[111] Cultural historian Wu Jen-Shu devotes a chapter of his book on consumption in late-Ming China to sedans, arguing that these instruments of travel served as a prime example of status symbol and an indicator of social and economic power.[112] He demonstrates that in the early years of the Ming dynasty, the administration controlled the use of sedans, listing it as a ritual object 禮制, granting the use of sedans exclusively to office holders, which effectively made the use of sedans off limits to most.[113] The consumer market of late-Ming society attacked the strict hierarchy and sumptuary rules established in the early years of the dynasty. Richly ornate sedans became available to those who could afford it. Exam candidates who had not properly earned the right to use such sedans purchased and used them anyway, in an effort to elevate their social status and imitate the daily practices of the officials, whose societal stature they aspired towards.[114]

It is informative to read Martin de Rada's observation of the different types of sedan chairs which different social classes were allowed to use.

> When their principal men go out, even if it is only to visit a friend in the city, they go in large, canopied chairs [...] If any common man, through illness or exhaustion, wishes to go in a chair, he has to go in a lowly little chair of cane, forasmuch as

[110] Wu, *Pinwei shehua* [Taste of Luxury], pp. 27-41.
[111] Ibid., pp.74-75.
[112] Ibid.
[113] Ibid., pp. 75-80.
[114] Ibid., pp. 84-87.

> only the captains and justices can go in the large and covered ones. The higher their dignity, the richer their chair.[115]

This excerpt reflects the social segregation of Ming society. These sumptuary laws, which would be unremarkable to Chinese travel writers, demonstrates that sedan chairs were not just practical fixtures, but allowed European travellers to recognise the customs and manners of the Chinese. At the same time, recent research such as Wu's demonstrate that actual practices of late-Ming consumption reacted against established social norms. European travel writers' information was likely gleaned from books on China, or from their informants, but did not necessarily reflect the reality of late-Ming society.

While larger ceremonial sedans captured the attention of Europeans, Chinese travel writers used simpler sedans during personal travels. Along tortuous paths and mountain roads, large and ornate sedans were impractical. Lighter and more agile sedans, requiring fewer bearers suited the challenging terrain, though lacking the elegance and comfort of the fully-fledged, ornate versions.[116] Literati travellers to scenic mountains usually took a horse-pulled cart from the city to the foot of the mountain, before transferring to wick sedan chairs for the ascent.[117] Even then, certain terrain was so challenging to navigate, that travel writers recorded having no choice but to walk, for the bearers could no longer proceed. Wang Shixing records that Mount Heng 恆山 was physically demanding for him and his chair bearers. 'The bearers ascended the steps lightly and swiftly, via the north-eastern ridge of the mountain. The mountain was lofty and sturdy, the road winding and tortuous, as we bobbed up and down they gasped for breath in succession. After seven *li* we cut across Tiger Wind Pass 虎風口 […] It was practically impossible to proceed with the sedan.'[118]

Xu's diary records regularly securing sedans and sedan bearers for his journeys. Travelling in a sedan was challenging in the rocky, mountainous terrains that Xu was drawn to. At Taihe Mountain 太和山, Xu noted that '[t]he bearers were having a difficult time because of the uneven and bending path.'[119] With Xu's penchant for challenging journeys to remote areas, that being his bearer was no easy feat. In his final trip to the

[115]De Rada, 'Relation', pp. 285-86.
[116] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 103.
[117] Ibid,.
[118] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 43.
[119] Ibid., p. 105.

southwest, when Xu fell ill in central Yunnan and had to return home, he was transported by sedan chairs for 150 days, over a distance of roughly 4,500 *li*.[120] Mention of using sedans increases in diary entries from Xu's later years. Despite the continued desire to travel, Xu could no longer easily walk long distances and sedan travel became a crucial part of his journeys.

According to the interpretation and literary expression of the travel writer, the experience of sedan travel has the potential to add new perspectives to travel and scenic sights. Instead of viewing sights from solid ground, or gliding through the water on a small boat, sights were viewed while bobbing up and down—part of the motion of travelling by sedan. Yuan Zhongdao comments: 'From the sedan, I could see the colours of the mountains, their peaks rose up and down like waves, from a distance, the dark-green peaks appear almost edible, like plucking bamboo shoots and undoing their sheaths.'[121]

The view from the sedan chair lends itself to a different kind of visual experience than that of travelling on boat or by foot. As I elaborate further in Chapter Three, there was a close relationship between travel, landscape painting and landscape writing in imperial China. Writing about landscape was a common way for literati travellers to highlight their literacy, self-cultivation and status, particularly important in a society in which the literati were facing probing questions into their own identities and were trying to differentiate themselves from the increasingly prosperous merchant class.[122] Wu Jen-shu highlighted in his study on sedans and status, that a recurring motif in late-Ming painting was the figure of the 'traveller in sedan' admiring the scenic landscape.[123] Yuan was likely inspired by such motifs in contemporary painting in his time, seeking to emulate it by providing a descriptive account of his own interpretation and experience of landscape while being provided with new angles and views from a sedan chair. Through this, he could differentiate his writings from those of other travellers.

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[120] Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 176.
[121] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 17.
[122] McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections*, pp. 14-20.
[123] Wu, *Pinwei shehua* [Taste of Luxury], p. 116-18.

2.5 Services Surrounding Travel—Food, Lodging, Maps and Guides

Though marginal in the travel texts, travel services, such as food and lodging, the procurement of porters and sedan-bearers were essential for travellers to sustain and continue their journeys. The European travellers in this study were foreign dignitaries. Their ambassadorial status meant that their travels were taken care of by local authorities and their accounts illuminate how foreign guests were received in Ming China. Their texts also compared travel services between Europe, China and the New World. Chinese travellers on state business were also taken care of, although travellers who planned and funded their own journeys, such as Xu Xiake and Yuan Zhongdao, were responsible for organising their own food, lodging and transport.

The popularity of travel in late-Ming China witnessed the increase in services surrounding travels. However, the development of services surrounding food and accommodation was uneven. Undoubtedly, services in the Jiangnan region and the urban centres expanded, with inns, monasteries and the homes of locals serving as reasonable accommodation choices for late-Ming travellers.[124] Yet in rural, mountainous areas, travellers could not always depend on local services and took their own supplies on their journeys.[125] Literature offering practical advice to travellers provided estimates for how much food to bring on a trip, depending on the destination.[126]

For the Chinese travellers, procuring daily meals was a recurring consideration frequently recorded in the travel texts. In 1608, after receiving the boat from his uncle, Yuan Zhongdao records taking a year's supply of food with him on his journey through the waterways in the southeast.[127] This strategic planning was important because a lack of supplies could interrupt a trip. Such was the case for Yuan on a scenic trip to Peach Springs, where he wished to continue exploring, but 'the supply of rice was steadily declining, hence I had to turn about and return.'[128] The physical needs of the travellers to eat, drink and rest are well reflected in text, reminding readers that material circumstances affected the speed and progress of their travels.

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[124] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 100.
[125] Ibid., p. 96.
[126] For a journey to Tianmu Mountain for instance, Zou Diguang recommends two months' supply of food. Zou Diguang, 'Youpuji' [Travels Through Pu] 游蒲記, cited in Wei, *Wanming Lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], pp. 610-12.
[127] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 7.
[128] Ibid, p. 80.

Xu Xiake's diaries paint him as an anomaly—despite fastidiously reporting the mundane occurrence of mealtimes in numerous entries, Xu presents himself as generally nonchalant about the quality of his meals. In contrast, Wang Shixing and Yuan Zhongdao recorded their meals on special, noteworthy occasions. In the late-Ming period, travellers often had to self-cater and they brought their own cooking equipment, servants and even a chef. Depending on the individual traveller and the purpose of the travel, the preparation and consumption of food had varying significance. At times, meals were quick affairs, settled with speed so that the travellers could proceed with more important tasks.

Xu records being particularly absorbed by his travels, to the point that he was largely unconcerned by the quality of his meal. He narrates, 'In the afternoon, locals brought cooking equipment up here to sell meals, but once the time was past they left and I did not reach there in time, so I ate the cold food which I had brought along.'[129] Locals from villages flurried to tourist sites, as the tourist economy offered them a stable income derived from the daily ebb and flow of hungry travellers in need of a meal. Chinese travellers were afforded considerable convenience since opportune locals were keen to make a quick earning. Despite this convenience, Xu often packed his own meals: '[I]t was just past midday, I ate the food that I brought along in the corner of the road and continued to follow the path of West mountain, in a northerly direction.'[130] From this minimal description, Xu implies that he was so engrossed by the journey that having a warm meal was not important and eating his packed meal had the benefit of expediting his journey.

In sharp contrast to the late-Ming practice of leisure travel, Xu presents himself as conscientious and focussed, indifferent to pleasures derived from food and drink. Despite the availability of services such as restaurants, inns and vendors, it appears that Xu only patronised these establishments if it suited his schedule. He opted instead for his meals to accommodate his travels, bringing his own food and ordering servant Gu to prepare the majority of the meals at their accommodation whilst on the road. One of the rare occasions when he expresses appreciation of a good meal was in 'Travels to Heng Shan'. He recorded travelling through the city centre of Lanxi, enjoying a good meal at a noodle restaurant: 'Together with Wang Jingchuan, I entered a noodle store run by a man from She [modern-day East Anhui], the noodles were excellent thus each of us consumed two

[129] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1213.
[130] Ibid., p. 220.

portions.'[131] As Xu's texts were written in diary-form, recording his daily movement, there is frequent, passing mention of him having meals. In line with his rhetoric of being a serious and dedicated traveller, detailed writing about food was limited, meriting necessary but fleeting attention in a text focussed on Xu's progress through the landscape.

In contrast to the Chinese travel writers, European travellers who arrived with an embassy had little to worry about the details of arranging food or finding accommodation. According to de Rada's account, the governor of the region dispatched a man to accompany the embassy, with 'a large board on which was written in broad characters his order or patent, in which he commanded that wherever we went, we should be supplied with everything needful.'[132] De Rada also recorded that the embassy was treated to banquets by mandarins and magistrates, and often invited to lodge at the palaces of high officials.[133] Since European ambassadors such as Da Cruz and De Rada were well provided for and also under close surveillance by the accompanying soldiers, they did no need to concern themselves with the various travel services.

That said, they were interested in the travel services on offer, and European travel writers could broadly compare the conditions between China and the 'New World'. Commenting upon the ease of hiring luggage porters in China, they compare it to the situation in Europe and in New Spain:

> Although they have little sumpter-mules and little asses and pack-horses, they also employ men to carry burdens, like the natives of New Spain. But one Chino will carry a much as three Indians of New Spain, and thus laden they will go almost as well as a horse. It is easier to find men for carrying burdens than it is animals; nay, many times they dispute with and strike each other over who will carry the burden [...] They usually travel six or seven leagues a day, and when they put down their burden, they return to their own village, I suppose that they return there to sleep.[134]

This and Xu's accounts of locals providing meals, reflect the state of the local economy in late-Ming China. The structure of employment was optimal for the provision

[131] Ibid., p. 110.
[132] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 258.
[133] Ibid, pp. 254-57.
[134] Ibid., pp. 285-86.

of travel services, aiding travellers through China. Whilst urban dwellers and social elites had the leisure and means to travel, a huge rural population was underemployed and living on subsistence levels, eager to make an extra income, bringing a huge pool of labourers into the travel economy.[135] In contrast, the much smaller population of early modern Europe meant that human labour was much more expensive than the hire and upkeep of pack animals. The extensive use of human labour in China was surprising to European travellers accustomed to carts and pack animals to transport goods during travel and thus worthy of mention and comparison.

Xu frequently records engaging local travel services, usually finding porters, bearers and guides with ease. Xu and his servant Gu typically required ten men—two sedans, four bearers, four reserve bearers for alternation and two luggage porters. In 'Travels in Zhejiang' in 1636, he records, 'the third day, on the bridge of the South gate of Hangzhou, I was able to hire porters.'[136] In well-developed areas like Hangzhou, with a prosperous tourist economy, those providing services would wait at gates, hoping to find work for several days. Yet not all servants and porters could endure the travels. On the same journey, one of Xu's servants and a porter fled. 'The fifth day, the cock crowed again and I ordered the servant boy to begin to cook the morning meal. When he was done cooking and returned to the lodgings, we realised that the porter had followed Servant Wang and fled. After the journey, we went around looking for another porter and only set off much later.'[137] Xu's diary entry from the previous day records the porter's request to lodge in his own home, located nearby, which Xu allowed. However, the porter escaped the following day. Although Xu narrates that much time passed before they found another porter and set off again, he nonetheless records travelling a considerable distance before midday, which means that he spent no more than one to two hours procuring a new porter. Although they were no longer in the urban centres, the mountainous areas of the Zhejiang province did not lack for travel services. Even in the borderlands of Ming China, while travelling through Guangxi, Xu 'managed to get two sedans, as well as ten men'[138], indicating the ubiquity of labourers willing to serve as sedan bearers and luggage porters.

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[135] Evelyn S. Rawski, *Agricultural Change and the Peasant Economy of South China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 52-55 provides a regional study on the augmentation of peasant income by engaging in various forms of handicraft, trade and the provision of services, particularly focusing on the example of sericulture.
[136] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 191.
[137] Ibid., p. 197.
[138] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 122.

In order to navigate successfully, travellers also required direction and guidance—either in the form of local guides for hire, or books and maps which were at their disposal. The Chinese travellers brought along volumes and books which provided essential historical-geographical information about localities that they were travelling through. Local gazetteers were basic sources of information about local history, space and culture.[139] Xu Xiake's travels to Guangxi gives an idea of how late-Ming travellers procured official gazetteers, maps and directions. While travelling in 1638, he records that he 'wrote a letter to the prefect of Guangxi shire, He Bei Jia, to request for the *Gazetteer of the Guangxi Province*. This day was his birthday. He did not go to the great hall to work and did not receive the letter.' Xu then 'entered the great hall to look at the map surveying the whole of Guangxi shire.'[140] Xu's account suggests that elite travellers with social connections could approach officials and request to be supplied with information about the region. Although Xu wrote to the prefect several times before receiving an answer over a week later, he eventually procured the guide and set off on his travels.

Official sources were not the only channel for information about travel routes. Travellers also relied on locals and sedan bearers for help with navigation. Xu Xiake was frequently advised by sedan bearers who were familiar and knowledgeable about regional localities. Whilst navigating the narrow mountain roads, he notes that 'the sedan bearers mention that this route is tortuous, winding and difficult to access and recommended instead going via the southern boulder, which had scenic sights.'[141]

Yuan Zhongdao also records relying on the advice of travel service providers. Since his travels were mostly made by boat, he gets advice on boat travel and routes from operators familiar with the best ways to navigate the winds and waterways. For instance, when he wished to travel by boat towards his brother's home, Yuan records the boat operator informing him that '[t]he northern winds have yet to shift, it is better to go tomorrow.'[142] Yuan followed his advice, the next day the southern winds were blowing and although it was extremely cold on the boat, Yuan was able to arrive at his destination more quickly than usual. In another episode, he records travelling along Ma River 麻河, where many fisherman families lived. 'When it was about time to cross over to the lake, I was unfamiliar with the waterways along the lake. Hence I found a boat and hired the two

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[139] Dennis, *Gazetteers in Imperial China*, p. 4.
[140] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1195.
[141] Ibid., p. 68.
[142] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 88.

people in the boat to be my guide.'[143] Though Yuan was an experienced boat traveller, his dialogues reveal a reliance on local knowledge, which helped him travel with greater efficiency, directing him on the right paths towards his destination.

To qualify the reliance of Chinese travellers on services, it is important to also realise how certain travellers were keen to 'write out' the presence of servants and porters. This tendency and ability is particularly unique to classical Chinese, the language of the Chinese texts. The practice of omitting the personal pronoun in Classical Chinese makes it at times unclear to the reader who exactly 'traversed ten *li*' 行十里, hence the writers could reasonably omit the other individuals who facilitated their travels, to preserve an image of themselves as the sole protagonists in their travel narratives, devoid of the narrative encumbrances of other characters. This is related to the nature of travel texts as autobiographical writing. Chinese travel writers were keen to present a 'social self' to the audience, which emerges as the protagonist throughout the text. This ambiguity of classical Chinese grammar lends itself to sustaining the illusion of a solitary traveller as the lone agent of their text, unencumbered by other trappings and servants—unless they desire to mention them.[144]

2.6 Conclusion: Bridging the Divide

To conclude, I first discussed the historical context of travel infrastructure in the early modern world, arguing that representations of travel infrastructure in travel accounts are often overlooked, receiving less attention than the destination, or the overall message of the travel text. Yet in the previous pages, the reading of texts describing travel infrastructure shows that there is much potential in paying attention to these sections. Boats for instance were at once physical, material vehicles in Ming transport and communications history. The proliferation of travel brought about such a corresponding increase in the number and the variety of boats that they became important, practical features of late-Ming life. At the same time, they represented and were representative of

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[143] Ibid., p. 160.
[144] In contrast to my reading, Sabina Knight offers an interpretation of the lack of subject as a way of effacing the self, bringing the reader closer to the subject of travel and landscape. See Sabina Knight, *Chinese Literature: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 43. 'The absence of a specific persona is common in classical Chinese poetry, especially landscape poetry, and it is regrettable that translation often requires adding a subject, for the ambiguity could be an artistic response to questions of selfhood. Instead of glorifying an individual subject, Chinese poems often efface the self. Softening the distinction between "subject" and "object", such poems offer reflections on the world less mediated by individual personality.'

the social standing of the owner. Boats were also latent with economic potential. European travellers concerned themselves with the amount of goods ferried by Chinese sea-borne vessels, imagining how trade with China could contribute to the coffers of the Spanish Empire. In the age of imperial expansion, boats figured prominently in imperial discourse and calculations. Finally, boats had a metaphorical function, best demonstrated in Yuan Zhongdao's travel diaries. His boat was a vehicle, a social space and a metaphor for his autobiographical life journey.

Textual forms play a deciding role in determining how the travel infrastructure is described. Texts such as Gaspar da Cruz's treatise and Pereira's report do not easily lend themselves to prolonged contemplation on the travel infrastructure that facilitated their journeys. Returning to the utilitarian characteristics of early modern travel accounts, descriptions of infrastructure would have been omitted unless they were useful in the scheme of the larger narrative. However, the texts show that European travellers' appraisals of Chinese travel infrastructure generally reflected their overall attitudes toward China and its inhabitants. Ricci and da Cruz's praise of Chinese boat travel and technology reflected their optimism in establishing trade and mission in China, whereas de Rada's more reserved assessments of Chinese naval technology indicates a more restrained outlook. Meanwhile, the diary form lent itself to richer descriptions of travel infrastructure, as Yuan's, Xu's and Ricci's travel diaries allowed the authors to detail the minutiae of their journeys.

To close this chapter on sixteenth and seventeenth century travel infrastructure, I share Gaspar da Cruz's description of the famous stone bridges of Fujian, another form of infrastructure that allowed travellers to traverse rivers without needing boats. Da Cruz compares Chinese infrastructure with that of Europe—praising the craftsmanship, durability and aesthetics of the structure. At the same time, his description presents the limits of delineating travel infrastructure from its physical surroundings, for bridges are not just infrastructure, but part of the larger picture—physically and conceptually attached to the destination of European travellers: the Chinese city.

> These bridges likewise form the chief market-place of the city, where all kinds of things are sold, but chiefly food; and a great multitude of boats laden with provisions comes to either side of the bridge, where they offer for sale what they bring. When the winter season comes and the river runs furiously, they break up

> these bridges, chaining one row of boats along one bank of the river and the other row on the other bank. They then make use of ferry-boats, the which the magistrates are compelled to provide for the service of the city, paid at the cost of the public revenues of the King. There are many of these bridges in many parts of China.[145]

While this chapter delineated roads, bridges, boats, waterways as travel infrastructure, da Cruz's rich description of the numerous sights before him reveal the complex nature of travel and travel writing. Infrastructure, roads, bridges and cities blend into a continuous whole, and at some point, it is difficult to clearly delineate what is travel infrastructure and what is considered the destination. The bridge or the road were architectural features that bridged the divide between the journey and the destination—locations to which travellers and readers typically ascribed greater importance, as the locations that were systematically observed by travellers and in turn strategically represented to an audience as geographic and/or ethnographic information. Traveller's interpretations of their destinations were reflective of themselves and their own societies. For travel texts are documents latent with emotions, reflection and a web of motives. Describing a city and its landscape, or mountain and waters could reflect political, social and cultural themes. This next chapter studies the travellers' arrival at their 'destinations', focusing on the written descriptions of late-Ming cityscapes and landscapes.

[145] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 105.

Chapter Three: Locating Utopias in Landscapes and Cityscapes

I saw a most magnificent scene of hills joining east and west, glittering with green and rosy colours. There were rocks artfully coiled high against the background of the sky, covered with trees. The rocks were of one colour but differed in spirit and texture.[1]

Xu Xiake

The city of Fucheo is very great, and mightily walled with square stone [...] The streets are paved [...]. The market places be large; great abundance of all things there be to be sold […] streams and barges do ennoble very much the city, and make it as it were to seem another Venice.[2]

Galeote Pereira

3.1 Introduction

This chapter studies the various ways travellers perceived and wrote about their destinations, delineating natural landscapes and cities as spaces that travellers perceived as 'having arrived at'. Travel in this historical period, though comparably well developed and more comfortable than the preceding eras, was still costly in terms of time and money. As such, destinations were laden with expectations, as spaces that travellers narrated for their audiences with precision, personal opinion and emotion. The quotes above reveal the divide between the kinds of landscape that appealed to Chinese and European travellers. The European travel writers in this study journeyed for many months before arriving at their destinations—the kingdom of China, and more precisely, Chinese cities. Meanwhile, Chinese travel texts were filled with descriptions of natural landscape. Yet, Chinese travel writers did not merely admire just 'any' landscape. As Richard Strassberg suggests, famous Chinese natural landscapes were 'built sites' and Chinese travellers from across the empire journeyed towards specific destinations, which were canonised and admired by generations of Chinese writers and audiences.[3] Having arrived at their destinations after arduous travels, the narratives of Chinese and European travel writers had to fulfil the expectations built up by the audience, and portray a destination that was worth the journey.

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[1] Xu Xiake, *The Travel Diaries of Hsu Hsia-k'o*, trans. by Li Chi (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1974), p. 179.
[2] Pereira, 'Report', p. 52.
[3] Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*, p. 6.

For readers primarily acquainted with early modern European travel texts, the undiluted focus on natural landscape in the texts of their late-Ming contemporaries stand out. From a comparative perspective, this rupture is challenging and particularly worth exploring. Although Chinese and European travellers alike journeyed through Ming China, their written responses were vastly different. For the European travel writers in this study, natural landscape was not given much consideration, either omitted from writing, or given perfunctory treatment. Meanwhile, the Chinese writers were heirs to a long tradition of literature and philosophy, in which writing about nature and landscape played an integral role.[4] The theme of landscape spans genres in Chinese literature, ranging from contemplative landscape poetry to day essays inspired by visits to scenic sites. In comparison to their European contemporaries, the late-Ming travellers seem completely absorbed by the enjoyment and contemplation of landscape.

In contrast, European travel writers paid careful attention to recording details of the large Chinese cities that travellers encountered. They recorded the strength and grandeur of the city gates, the maintenance of the city walls, the bustling marketplaces, the houses of the lords and commoners, and the organisation of urban life. Yet cities were of lesser interest to the Chinese literati travellers who lived and worked in cities. Cities were spaces where they were constantly departing, only relevant as resting points or to meet with social acquaintances and engage in festivities.

This divergence brings up interesting questions, such as how can this difference be reconciled, why European travel writers were interested in cityscapes and disinterested in landscapes and why Chinese travel writers were interested in landscapes and disinterested in cities? Throughout the chapter, I recognise the important role of travel culture and literary tradition in shaping travellers' responses to their material surroundings. Although they journeyed through the same regions, their eyes were trained upon different aspects of the physical world, with landscapes and cityscapes evoking starkly different responses. Georges Duby, a French historian of historical geography and the history of mentalities asserted, 'The topography that the geographer has before his eyes and attempts to understand depends of course on elements as material as geological formations, but it also depends, much more than one would think, on mental representations, value systems, and an ideology. Moreover, it represents the translation, the inscription on the terrain, of the

[4] Ibid., p. 4.

whole of a culture.'[5] In a more recent study of the relationship between landscape and cultural imagination, British historian Simon Schama wrote, 'landscapes are culture before they are nature; constructs of the imagination projected onto wood and water and rock'.[6] Landscape is deeply ingrained with cultural and ideological significance. Although Chinese and European travel writers encountered similar material topographies in Ming China, varying goals and experiences saw them translating and representing the landscapes differently, showing just how subjective the human experience of the material terrain can be.

For a deeper inquiry of contrasting perceptions and representations of landscapes, this chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section provides an extended discussion on landscape—offering definitions of landscape and methodologies for interpreting landscape texts. It provides historical information about early modern European and late-Ming Chinese views of landscape, alongside examples of Chinese and European travel writers' descriptions of landscapes and cityscapes, focusing on the vivid, enthusiastic and hyperbolic manner in which they discussed their 'destinations'. The second section of the chapter proposes approaching travel writing as utopian writing, for such an approach provides greater comparative potential. Instead of arguing that Chinese and European travel accounts are incommensurable since Chinese travellers were interested in nature, whilst European travellers were interested in providing official, accurate eyewitness accounts of Chinese cities, it considers the 'utopian impulse' in travel writing.[7] It argues that the act of travel and travel writing in both cultures is informed by the utopian impulse. Through their travels, travel writers sought and found a space: a 'no place' which was lacking in their home societies. Subsequently representing it in their writings, travellers engaged in dialogue with familiar literary topoi. With regards to the travel texts under discussion, the literary archetypes of 'the ideal city' in the European context and the tale of *Peach Blossom Spring* in the Chinese context were deeply influential, demonstrating that models of utopian societies from classical sources prevailed in the early modern and late-Ming eras, and were amended by the travel writers to suit their specific times, needs and purposes.

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[5] Georges Duby and Guy Lardereau, *Dialogues* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980), p. 150, cited in Renzo Dubbini, *Geography of the Gaze: Urban and Rural Vision in Early Modern Europe*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 10.
[6] Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995), p. 61.
[7] Chloë Houston, *The Renaissance Utopia: Dialogue, Travel and the Ideal Society* (Sussex: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 7-8.

3.2 Comparing Landscapes—Natural and Built

Before this chapter commences properly, a working definition of 'landscape' should be established, by firstly addressing the meaning(s) of the term 'landscape', then subsequently outlining approaches which interpret the travel texts' depictions of landscape. Cultural historian Simon Schama traces the etymological origins of 'landscape', which entered the English vocabulary at the end of the sixteenth century from the Dutch term *landschap*, a term reflecting human jurisdiction, a political, administrative unit.[8] As the term 'landskip' entered the English vocabulary, it was linked to a specific genre of painting depicting scenery on a land.[9] Paul Coones points out that the term 'landscape' is imprecise and can mean many things, implying the visible and visual scene, a picturesque view, or a piece of land that can be owned, inhabited and modified. Landscape also embodies the qualities of space (*espace*), recording the interaction between human society and nature, as it is expressed in the land.[10] Since landscape is a broadly used concept which embraces multiple histories, disciplines, cultures and ideologies, arriving at a single definition of landscape is a tall order.

Richard Muir raises a fitting analogy of landscape as a palimpsest, constantly subject to change, like words on a computer.[11] This approach is the result of a fundamental division of opinion in landscape studies. Scholars such as David Lowenthal approach landscape as part of the material world, a tangible section of the natural and cultural environment which is all-embracing, encompassing the physical world surrounding us.[12] Others such as Yi-fu Tuan and Dennis Cosgrove adopt a cultural reading and treat landscape as a painterly way of seeing the world, reflecting human imagination and aesthetic preferences.[13] The viewer, like a painter, appropriates landscape, interprets it in light of his cultural background and reproduces it according to his own interpretation and imagination, creating 'a picturesque view'.[14] Stephen Daniels rejects these two polarities and argues that landscape is both material and cultural, suggesting that 'we should abide in

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[8] Schama, *Landscape and Memory*, p. 10.

[9] Steven C. Bourassa, *The Aesthetics of Landscape* (London: Belhaven Press, 1991), p. 3.

[10] Paul Coones, 'Landscape Geography', in *The Student's Companion to Geography*, ed. by Alisdair Rogers and Heather Viles (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 70-79 (p. 70).

[11] Richard Muir, *Approaches to Landscape* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. xiv.

[12] Edmund C. Penning-Roswell and David Lowenthal, 'Introduction', in *Landscape, Meanings and Values*, ed. by Edmund C. Penning-Roswell and David Lowenthal (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), pp. 1-2 (p. 1).

[13] Yi-fu Tuan, *Landscapes of Fear* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), p. 89. Dennis Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscapes* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984), p. 13.

[14] James Duncan, 'Landscape Geography, 1993-94', *Progress in Human Geography*, 19.3 (1995), 414-22 (p. 414).

its duplicity'.[15] This echoes Jeffrey Dupée's concept of 'dialogic engagement' which takes place in travel writing: in spite of travel writers' ideological baggage, they engage with the material landscape encountered on their journeys and produced insights that are spatially grounded.[16] Muir proposes that students of landscape should be aware that landscape consists of physical and cultural processes, rejecting a purely cultural reading, while also sceptical of landscape studies which claim to be objective, free of ideology and solely focused on the physical phenomenon before them.[17] In my study of Chinese and European travel texts about late-Ming China, I favour this definition which embraces both the material and cultural dimensions of landscape. Although textual responses to landscape were shaped by cultural and literary norms, the physical landscape of Ming China played an important role, confronting the travellers with its material realities, but also providing a canvas for the travellers to interpret their surroundings with creativity.

Landscape studies offer a plethora of methodologies, and readings of landscape can be highly differentiated, ranging from 'structural semiotics in which the researcher is an expert decoder of landscape to post-structural studies of historical and cultural differences in meaning, emphasizing ambiguity, multi-vocality, instability and meaning practices, the productive slippage and interplay of unpredictable power relations.'[18] The interpretation of landscape by researchers is open-ended, suggesting different possibilities and further conversation. My own approach interprets travel texts about landscape in light of their cultural-historical context. In an analysis of historical travel texts, an added layer of interpretation is necessary since the meaning of texts is culturally and historically contingent. The centuries separating the modern reader from the context of the creation and reception of these texts provides an additional challenge. Early modern European and Ming Chinese travellers used expressions and references in their texts, which were readily understood by their audience. Since landscape does not exist in a vacuum, intertextual references must be considered. These travellers were not merely writers; they were also readers of classical and contemporaneous texts, and consumers of a visual culture that shaped their attitudes towards natural landscapes and cityscapes. Landscapes represented

[15] Stephen Daniels, 'Marxism, Culture, and the Duplicity of Landscape', in *New Models in Geography, Volume II*, ed. by Richard Peet and Nigel Thrift, 2 vols (London: Unwin-Hyman, 1989), pp. 196–220 (p. 218).
[16] Dupée, *British Travel Writers*, p. 16.
[17] Muir, *Approaches*, p. 49.
[18] Nancy Duncan and James Duncan, 'Doing Landscape Interpretation', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Geography*, ed. by Dydia DeLyser and others (London: SAGE Publications, 2010), pp. 225-47 (p. 226).

in text exert a powerful force on the imagination, creating a schema for future readers, writers and visitors to specific sites, and it becomes difficult, if not impossible to divorce the traveller's perception of the site itself, from what they absorbed through texts and visual images (another form of text)—even before the journey begins.[19]

As landscapes are read and represented in a cultural and textual context, discourse analysis becomes an effective way to uncover the ideologies, rituals, texts and practices that underlie the reading and the representation of landscapes.[20] Throughout this chapter, I discuss the significance of landscape for these writers and their audiences. As a comparative study of Chinese and European travel texts on Ming China, the multiple meanings of landscape across cultures are of interest. I consider the motivations and textual strategies of the authors, which can help retrace the meanings and purposes of writing about the physical world around them. I do not claim to uncover a 'true' or singular meaning for what writers meant when they wrote about a particular mountain, or a Chinese city, however I offer a fruitful way of reading their accounts, by contemplating how aesthetic and cultural ideals are projected onto natural and built landscapes.

Landscape is a broad term which encompasses a great deal of the content of travel texts. In order to make the area of research focused and manageable, I have singled out the instances when travel writers offer responses indicating that they were impressed and awestruck by their surroundings. Chloe Chard, in her study of Grand Tour travel accounts, observes that hyperbolic writing is a hallmark of travel writing, 'in acclaiming the topography as striking, dramatic, remarkable they affirm at the same time that it has supplied the evidence of difference required and expected of it […] a need for hyperbole is one of the features that differentiates the traveler from those without the experience of travel.' [21] I agree with Chard that this is a striking feature in travel writing, present in both the Chinese and European accounts when describing natural landscapes and cityscapes respectively, highlighting to the reader that they were actually there, privileging the

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[19] The concept of a 'schema' of seeing the world comes from E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1960), p. 62. Gombrich proposes that artists create pictures by manipulating inherited 'schemata'. Through convention, the 'schemata' designates reality and the artist compares a pictorial schema to his direct observation of the world, and on that basis presumes to correct the schema. This work becomes part of the available formulae until adjusted by later artists. Beholders, in turn, make their own sense of pictures by collating what they see on the canvas with what they know about the world and with what they remember of other pictures. Therefore, perception is learnt and constructed.

[20] Duncan and Duncan, 'Doing Landscape Interpretation', pp. 235-36.

[21] Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt on the Grand Tour: Travel Writing and Imaginative Geography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 5.

experience of direct observation. Furthermore, in both traditions, there were instances where even hyperbolic writing was insufficient, in which writers exclaimed that the medium of writing limited what they truly wished to express to their audience, for the landscape before them was beyond what they could put into words. Chard describes this as 'hyperboles of the unrepresentable' where travellers narrate their sense of wonder by virtue of having travelled and beheld the topography.[22] She argues that such hyperboles indicate 'another exceeding of bounds: the movement beyond the mundane and familiar, entailed in confrontations with the sublime.'[23] The following sections provide examples of such 'hyperboles' from the travel texts, providing also contextual information about the appeal of certain topography over others, and explaining why certain textual strategies were employed by the travel writers.

3.2.1 'Like a Painting'—Describing Landscape in Ming Travel Texts

Landscape, or the Chinese equivalent *shanshui* 山水 which literally translates into 'mountains and waters' is both a textual and a visual tradition. Landscape painting or *shanshui hua* is the major genre of Chinese art and a potent visual marker of the Chinese aesthetic and artistic tradition.[24] In the late-Ming period, connoisseurship and the artistic heritage of the literati were emphasized, with many dabbling in landscape painting and collecting as a pastime. The emphasis on seeing can be apprehended through the highly visual language used by the travel writers with regards to landscape writings. The textual framing and descriptions used by the travel writers when praising landscape were reminiscent of descriptions of landscape painting. Terminology from the visual arts provided a useful tool for recording visual observations, when a landscape or view evoked the travel writers' memories of a particular visual theme. Instead of articulating the view into words, travel writers elected to refer to scenes in paintings that their peers were well acquainted with, so as to convey the sight or the emotion with greater ease.

Chinese travellers frequently used the term *ru hua* 如畫 or 'like a painting' to describe a pleasurable scene. While on a boat trip in 1613, Yuan Zhongdao recollects a particularly lovely scene from his travels the year before.

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.
[24] *Fantastic Mountains: Chinese Landscape Painting from the Shanghai Museum*, ed. by Liu Yang (Sydney: The Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2004), p. 6.

> In the eighth month last year, I was returning from Jade Springs, stopping at the Zhang River (in Fujian). From the boat I could view all the mountains of Gao'an as if in a painting [*ru hua*]. As I was in a small boat I could pass through the shoals and rapids. I wished that I need not worry about the passing of time and could view the abundance of the mountains to their limit.[25]

Viewing a chain of mountains from a boat, Yuan is likely reminded of panoramic landscape paintings of mountain ranges, juxtaposed with waters and accented with the painting of a small boat in the foreground. The term *ru hua* is reserved for moments when the scenery is of particular aesthetic appeal, suggesting that the traveller was beholding a scene that was worthy of being painted, or that reminded him of a beautiful painting that he had seen before.

Wang Shixing also uses this term when enjoying a majestic view from a tall peak, 'Gazing downwards, the four mountains were vying to display their uniqueness, a boundless expanse, with streams, plains, plants and trees, as if in a painting [*ru hua*]. Soon, it was time to return, and with great reluctance I headed down.'[26] Here, the term is used to express a particularly captivating sight for Wang. His reluctance to step away from the view implies an unspoken desire for the scene to be captured in a painting, to be viewed at his leisure. At the same time, to remark that a scene is 'like a painting' allows the writer to dispense with the challenging task of representing visually loaded scenes—which requires rich vocabulary and literary imagination. Such visual depictions would demand from the writer a literary palette of colours, to have metaphors ready at hand and to carry out an assured 'execution' of the literary painting. Instead, travel writers could appeal to the imagination of their readers. The literati reading audience, whom such travel texts were geared towards, had a rich repository (mental or material) of famous landscape paintings through which they could construct mental pictures of the scene that these travel writers were describing. This lent a 'picturesque' quality to their writings, with greater effect that what the writers themselves were able to describe.

In other instances, travellers displayed their literary flair—literally describing the imagined 'painting' before them. Like Wang and Yuan, Xu also frequently recorded scenes that were 'like a painting'. Instead of leaving the task to the imagination of his readers, Xu

[25] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 169.
[26] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], pp. 38-39.

goes further and describes the 'painting' for them. Julian Ward's literary study on Xu's travel diaries emphasizes Xu's extraordinary literary ability and great descriptive precision, arguing that Xu was rarely at a loss for words, even before the most complex and emotionally moving landscape scenes.[27] The following excerpt from Xu Xiake's trip to Heng Mountain, vividly describes the shapes of the geological formations, the various colours of the plants and rocks and the horizon. The light and shade depending on the time of the day is mentioned, and altogether it resembles the way a painter might have depicted a landscape before him.

> I saw a most magnificent scene of hills joining east and west, glittering with green and rosy colours. There were rocks artfully coiled high against the background of the sky, covered with trees. The rocks were of one colour but differed in spirit and texture. The trees, on the other hand, differed in colour with their mixed growth presenting a scene as gorgeous as a sheet of glowing variegated silk. The jagged and lofty rocks, some over-hanging and some coiled up, looked wonderful, adorned as they were by the colourful boughs and foliage. Some of the trees stretched out wide while others were curiously twisted, looking older and more beautiful than they were because of the background of abrupt and erect rocks.[28]

In this passage, Xu describes a profusion of colours, textures, layers, light and shade as if in a painting. In late-Ming landscape art, twisted rock formations were very popular—either represented in painting, or as fixtures in the gardens of wealthy households.[29] In this case, they were 'artfully coiled', as if designed by an artist for aesthetic purposes. The various textures of rocks and trees bring an engaging variety to the description, adding to the richness of the scene. When the Chinese travellers describe a landscape scene that is greatly pleasing to the eye, they describe it as if it were a painting. Xu's ekphrasis is vivid, lavish and lyrical, highlighting his literary aptitude.

In one episode, Yuan Zhongdao mentions both sculpture and painting to praise the sights that he beheld whilst travelling by boat through a lake with many limestone formations.

[27] Ward, *Xu Xiake,* p. 123.
[28] Xu, *Travel Diaries*, trans. by Li Chi, p. 179.
[29] Craig Clunas, *Fruitful Sites: Garden Culture in Ming Dynasty China* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 71-74.

> [t]he sky gradually cleared, the sun shone through and illuminated all of the hills, resembling the flying waves of a silver sea, and it appeared as if the submerged mountains were sculpted by a skilled hand using mutton-fat (creamy white) jade […] There was a bountifulness of creeks and mountains to behold after I meandered through the limestone hills. These were delights of the greatest extreme. Not one peak failed to resemble the ancient paintings of the famous masters.[30]

Throughout this passage, Yuan expresses sheer delight at the series of limestone hills that he passes on his boat. He lavishes much praise on this range of hills, and ends the day's journey lamenting, 'how could I speak of it sufficiently?'[31] For Yuan, what he experienced was so lovely that he lacked the words to describe the wonder, using instead 'hyperboles of the unrepresentable' to make his point. In this passage, reference to the visual arts was a means of heaping praise on a remarkable sight. Where words failed to do a scene enough justice, the reference to prized jades and the most famous landscape paintings could convey to the readers just how marvellous an encounter it was.

Descriptions of landscape did not end with comparisons to paintings. Sometimes, travel writers provided the exact painters that the audience should have in mind. Wang Shixing, on a visit to Hua Mountain 華山 with a friend remarked, 'We ascended the Magnificent Lookout, and sat facing the three peaks. The wondrous precipices overawed us. Such a sight which Wang Wei 王維 and Ma Yuan 馬遠 were unable to paint, my spirit has already gone towards there.'[32] Mount Hua was one of the best-depicted mountain landscapes of imperial China, with famous representations in the canon of Chinese literary and pictorial tradition.[33] In this passage, Wang deliberately refers to some of the most famous Chinese painters. Wang Wei (699-759) was a painter and poet who enjoyed enduring fame, and his landscape painting and poetry were particularly admired. Ma Yuan (c.1160-1225) was a Song Dynasty painter also renowned for his landscapes. On the one hand, we can read this as lavishing the highest praise on a scene of natural beauty. By bringing up the names of these two painters, Wang is referring to some of the most famed and cherished landscape works in the Chinese painting canon. By subsequently suggesting that the sight he beheld was what 'Wang Wei and Ma Yuan were unable to paint', Wang

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[30] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], pp. 28-29.
[31] Ibid., p. 29.
[32] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 33.
[33] Flora Li-tsui Fu, *The Representation of Famous Mountains: Chinese Landscape Paintings of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), p. 8.

praises the surpassing magnificence of Hua Mountain, emphasizing that it was a sight so wondrous and moving, that it was impossible to be represented by even the most skilful landscape painters.

The examples above demonstrate that the visual culture of rock sculpture and landscape painting instilled a specific schema of viewing and picturing the world, which in turn is transformed into literary expression in late-Ming travel accounts. The tradition and consumption of landscape painting had a schema and language of its own, so much so that textual depictions of landscape were often couched upon paintings and sculpture, either due to rhetorical humility, or an inkling of fear that despite the writers' literary elegance and figurative language, they would not be able to achieve the same mental image in the minds of their audience as reference to a pictorial archetype could do. At the same time, the travel writers implied a 'loss for words' when describing landscape, referring the challenging representational task to landscape painting.

Wang's suggestion that even the most famous and skilled of Chinese landscape painters would be unable to represent a sight demonstrates the spiritual and metaphysical qualities of natural landscape. Stemming from millennia of nature worship and reverence, the admiration of landscape had lengthy philosophical, literary and visual traditions. Per Wang's suggestion that the actual glimpse of the sight was beyond the limits of human representation—either from his pen or from the painting brushes of towering landscape artists, suggests that there were metaphysical and spiritual properties that travel writers perceived as being beyond the representational capacities of the most talented and expressive individuals.[34]

While late-Ming Chinese travel writers were drawn towards natural landscape, mere description was not the sole aim of their texts. Zhou Zhenhe advocates keeping in mind the historical changes surrounding the writers. Alongside historical developments 'the objectives of travel also changed, from one that was merely interested in natural landscape to one that was equally interested in nature and the humanities, including one that took into consideration history and contemporary society.'[35] Zhou suggests that it was for these reasons, that Ming Chinese travel writing on natural landscape was so rich and

[34] While this phenomenon is similar to the Romantic concept of the sublime, I have consciously refrained from using that term because of the highly specific cultural connotations it carries.
[35] Zhou Zhenhe, 'Foreword', in *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], Wei Xiangdong, pp. 1-3 (p. 1).

resonant to contemporaries and future generations.[36] In other words, travel and description of landscapes should not be analysed merely in the light of tradition, visuality and the verisimilitude of description. The natural landscape was necessary for drawing the literati writers into a mood of reflection and contemplation, yet descriptions of these sites were not ends in themselves, but were a means of self-expression. Chinese writers historically used mountains and waters as a focal point to discuss history, political issues or their own lives.[37] Landscape writing transformed beyond mere description and should not only be read naturalistically, but should be considered as literary constructions. Landscapes under discussion became imbued with meaning, becoming expressive vehicles for the literati to portray their self-cultivation, their literary abilities and their own views of history and contemporary society. I will argue in the second half that utopian writing was a feature of landscape writing in the late-Ming period—reflective of the literati traveller's discontent with late-Ming society, their position in life, or both.

To place the focus on landscape in its historical context, Ming travel writers' perceptions were rooted in a cultural tradition which revered and celebrated landscape. Travellers, exposed to such visual, textual and philosophical traditions from a young age, were influenced by centuries of tradition, painting and literature, frequently referring to such works in their own texts. From prehistoric times, there was a history of nature worship in China and sacred mountains took on particular spiritual importance, as numinous spots where one could be closer to the divine. In early writings, mountains appear as revered landscapes. Certain mountains were worshipped and canonised, such as the 'Five Sacred Mountains' 五嶽, transforming these mountains from natural landscape into powerful cultural symbols that resounded in Chinese visual and literary culture.[38] These five mountains were Mount Tai 泰山，Mount Hua 華山，Mount Heng (Shanxi) 恆山，Mount Heng (Hunan) 衡山 and Mount Song 嵩山. While other famous mountains became canonised, the fame of the 'Five Sacred Mountains' endured from the Qin Dynasty into the Ming. Travelling to all five mountains was seen as a major accomplishment, as a trophy to be won, that a traveller could boast of.[39] Both Wang Shixing and Xu Xiake travelled to the five famous mountains and boasted of these visits in their travel accounts, with Wang titling one of his volumes *Travel Notes of Five Sacred Mountains*. Famous

[36] Ibid., p. 1.
[37] Fu, *Representation of Famous Mountains*, p. 13.
[38] Ibid., p. 2.
[39] Eggert, *Vom Sinn des Reisens*, p. 62.

landscape sites held powerful cultural currency, allowing travel writers to become part of an imagined cultural elite.

Writings about well-known landscape were at once historical and innovative. Ming travel writers did not merely borrow from creative minds of the past, but engaged in a process of dialogue, personally travelling to and perceiving the natural landscape and interpreting it in light of their own lives and times. Travellers quoted from classical works of historical geography, tracing the history of the place across the various imperial dynasties, and also referring to works from earlier famed poets. When Wang Shixing visited Mount Heng, he referred to knowledge imparted by classical geographical texts, noting that 'The *Commentary of the Water Margins*[40] claims that the Dark Peak 玄岳 [another name to refer to Mount Heng] has a height of 3900 *zhang*, the *Records of the Grotto-heavens* states that it has a circumference of 130 *li.*'[41] Quoting from well-known, classical accounts of the mountain, Wang indicates to his readers that he is informed about the literature and lineage of the mountain. Yet he does not end there, but subsequently introduces his personal opinions based on eyewitness experience, confirming the magnificence that classical writers had conferred upon it, and joining them in the praise of the natural landscape, asserting that Mount Heng has earned the repute and fame that history has endowed it. After tracing the geographical history of Mount Heng, he gives his own evaluation of the magnificence of the mountain, 'an air of grandeur overfills this place, this magnificent land is worthy of being counted amongst the Five Famous Mountains.'[42]

An important philosophical concept to discuss at this point is neo-Confucianism, an elite philosophical movement which gained momentum in the twelfth century. Based on the teachings of eleventh-century moral philosophers, it gave traditional Chinese ethics a new spin by incorporating elements of Daoism and Buddhism, two philosophies that had gained immense popularity by then. Neo-Confucianism remained popular and state-sanctioned until the seventeenth century. For five hundred years, neo-Confucianism was influential amongst the Chinese literati, affecting their worldview and their choices about their place and role in society.[43] A central tenet of neo-Confucian morality was 'a belief in

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[40] Li Daoyuan (469? To 527) was one of the forefathers of Chinese travel literature, famous for his *Commentary of the Water Margins* 水經注, a well-known systematic summary of different geographical units of a then politically divided land.
[41] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 42.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Peter K. Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 1.

unity and coherence as the fundamental nature of all things in the universe'.[44] This meant that a bond existed between nature and man, and it was the duty of man to ensure that the relationship was a harmonious one. There was an inherent belief that natural disasters such as earthquakes and floods, resulted from man having upset the balance of things through behaviour that displeased Heaven. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the most prominent neo-Confucian thinker, attached great importance to the Confucian *Doctrine of the Mean,* which opens with the lines, 'What Heaven imparts to man is called Nature. To follow our Nature is called the Way. Cultivating the Way is called Education *xue* 學.'[45] The proper Way was to follow one's Heaven-endowed nature, which could be achieved by educating and cultivating oneself. Education and self-cultivation was central to the life practices of the literati—and travel to be close to nature was part of the process towards self-cultivation. Through self-cultivation, man would understand how to conduct his relationships with people and his duties to the state, leading a moral, harmonious life.

The journey metaphor was particularly commonplace in the late-Ming, Neo-Confucian discourse on Education *xue* 學, one of the key notions of Confucianism. While *xue* is usually translated as 'to learn' or 'to study' it can mean 'to emulate' or 'to imitate' the sages.[46] For many late-Ming Neo-Confucians, the regimen of striving towards self-cultivation by 'learning' or 'imitating' became increasingly pressing—due to the challenges to their identity by the lack of official positions and the rise of the merchant class, blurring the divide between the literati and those with the means to purchase the cultural capital through which the literati had always defined themselves.[47] Hence, the literati chose to differentiate themselves through their education, travels, writing and publishing; literary meditations on landscape served as a 'status symbol' that bore witness to the self-cultivation and creative abilities of its author.[48] Journeys to natural landscapes thus had multiple purposes—as both a physical journey and a metaphorical journey of self-cultivation.

To paint a more nuanced picture of the philosophical and religious background of literati travel to natural landscape, it must be mentioned that the late-Ming period was an

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[44] Ibid., p. 5.
[45] Ibid., p. 194.
[46] Wu, *The Confucian's Progress*, p. 99.
[47] McDowall, *Qian Qianyi's Reflections*, pp. 14-20.
[48] Brian Dott, *Identity Reflections: Pilgrimages to Mount Tai in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), p. 197.

age of syncretism. While neo-Confucianism was accepted as state orthodoxy, Buddhist and Daoist philosophies towards travel and nature remained highly influential. These religions adopted different approaches towards travelling—Confucianism emphasised travel as education, Daoism focused on 'free and easy travelling' 逍遙游 and 'non-acting' 無為, and Buddhism emphasized the physical pilgrimage of travellers to Buddhist retreats and metaphysical travel to the Pure Land. These philosophies were syncretic and encouraged man's proximity to nature, all bearing the idea that wisdom and peace could be attained by viewing mountains and rivers, for numinous natural forms allowed one to connect with the spiritual world. [49] Buddhist and Daoist temples were built on mountains, whereas Confucian centres of learning were strategically placed close to nature.

The fixation with landscape and nature was heightened as the late-Ming travel boom allowed literati travellers to behold famous scenic sites, creating cultural works which served the social function of highlighting their individuality and self-cultivation, through their literary reflections on landscape. Landscape became a prominent theme in literati travel writings, a vehicle for contemplation and self-reflection through text. By the late-imperial period, Confucian, Buddhist and Daoist attitudes towards travel and nature were hybridised and individual Chinese travellers approaches to natural landscape was shaped by both systems.[50] This syncretism is well-reflected in the accounts of the travellers. As analysed in the first chapter, Yuan Zhongdao emphasizes that his motivations for travels were self-cultivation and learning 學, for he felt encumbered at home and believed that natural landscape would offer inspiration. Yuan rhetorically peppers his text with Daoist references of free and easy travelling and non-acting, demonstrating that he is letting nature take its course with his unencumbered life on the boat, floating through the waterways. Religious encounters at Buddhist retreats are interwoven in his travel text, for Yuan and his brothers were adherents of Mahayana Buddhism, and made frequent trips to Buddhist retreats for the purpose of spiritual renewal and contemplation.

There was nothing innately obvious or apparent about nature and landscape being beautiful and good. Rather, this had its roots in a longer philosophical tradition. While late-Ming travellers assessed landscape in the light of their own times, it was the cultural world

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[49] Strassberg, *Inscribed Landscapes*, p. 22.
[50] Timothy Brook, 'Rethinking Syncretism: The Unity of the Three Teachings and their Joint Worship in Late-Imperial China', *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 21.1 (1993), 13-44 (pp. 19-24).

that they were born into that encouraged them to draw close to landscape and to perceive nature as being good and benevolent.

As shown above, a close link existed between man and the natural landscape in Chinese culture and spirituality. Chinese travellers spent much time travelling to scenic spots and admiring nature, leading to the production of creative works, such as landscape art and writing, governed by specific rules. As mentioned earlier, landscape can be read as text and is deeply intertextual. Trying to understand the way individuals see the world is a deeply complex task, one can only begin to grasp the writers' perceptions of natural landscape through what they elected to express in their travel texts. As Tian Xiaofei argues in her study on medieval and nineteenth-century Chinese travel writing, 'What we do know is seeing as articulated in language. As such, seeing is governed by a body of explicit and implicit laws and codes, beliefs and values, by which members of a society understand and approach the world; it is also mediated by language, by rhetorical strategies, images and tropes.'[51] Travel writers appreciating landscape were heirs to a cultural episteme that shaped the way in which they viewed and represented the world. By approaching these landscapes on a textual level, I am aware of the strategies and conventions at work in these texts and am interested in what a critical reading of these landscape texts reveals about the Ming travellers and their society.

3.2.2 Landscapes and Cityscapes—Early Modern European Travellers

Having discussed the Chinese reverence towards landscapes and mountains, it is fitting to outline European attitudes towards nature and mountains, and their representations thereof. I then demonstrate through examples that although early modern European descriptions of natural landscape was brief and perfunctory—for it was clearly not their intended destination, they found places with great imaginative potential in the Chinese cities.

In contrast to their Chinese contemporaries who dedicated their creative works to nature and mountains, early modern European held ambivalent attitudes towards mountains. Some scholars even argue that mountains were negatively viewed by European travellers until the eighteenth century, when perspectives on nature permanently changed

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[51] Xiaofei Tian, *Visionary Journeys: Travel writings from Early Medieval and Nineteenth-century China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), p. 7.

and mountains began to be celebrated as grand and magnificent. Marjorie Hope Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, describes early modern European attitudes towards mountains as 'Mountain Gloom'. '

> During the first seventeen centuries of the Christian era, "Mountain Gloom" so clouded human eyes that never for a moment did poets see mountains in the full radiance to which our eyes have become accustomed. Within a century—indeed within fifty years—all this was changed. The "Mountain Glory" dawned, then shone full splendor.[52]

Nicolson argues that early modern Europeans lived in an age when mountains were viewed negatively. Nicolson traces this attitude to the aesthetic inclinations of the Judeo-Christian Church Fathers, who drew on the classics and the Bible to conceive of an earth with a 'round proportion' that was blemished by mountains.[53] In her study, Nicolson notes a dualism in the perception towards mountains, in the Greco-Roman and the Christian tradition. She notes that the early Greeks had a deep ambivalence towards Nature—responding with attitudes of awe, as the home of the gods, yet also with aversion, approaching nature with 'a feeling for the vast, the wild, the dangerous in elemental nature.'[54] The Romans, however, were averse towards mountains; although classical Latin writers such as Virgil and Horace celebrated *otium,* praising the countryside and pastoral landscapes, mountains were rarely described with approval.[55] This duality persisted in Biblical literature as well—mountains such as Sinai and Ararat were sacred sites, and passages depicted mountains as places of refuge, where one could seek God and find peace by lifting their eyes up to the mountains, though Nicolson notes that in the New Testament, mountains were not treated with the same reverence.[56]

Later scholars, though acknowledging the pioneering contribution of Nicolson to the study between literature and the natural environment, rightfully criticise the too simplistic reduction of the long and complex classical and biblical traditions into 'a fall from original Greek and Hebrew Glory into a straight-line decline through Roman and Christian Gloom to the warts, waste and pustules of the seventeenth-century British

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[52] Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959), p. 3.
[53] Ibid., p. 28.
[54] Ibid., pp. 38-39.
[55] Ibid., p. 40.
[56] Ibid., p. 43.

rhetoric'.[57] Instead, there was an interplay between attraction and repulsion of rugged landscapes across all periods of European traditions, from the Greeks to the Romans, in the Old and New Testament alike.[58] I agree that Nicolson's argument was too polarised and that there are important episodes in classical and biblical writing which celebrate the majesty of the mountains. I suggest, however, that the ambivalence towards mountains likely contributed towards the relative silence in European travellers' responses towards the Chinese natural landscape.

It is too simplistic to say that early modern European travel writers were disinterested in the natural landscape. They may not have had the rich literary corpus of Chinese responses to the mountains to draw on, but classical and contemporaneous European writers had produced rich, moving texts about natural landscape, such as hills, mountains and pastoral scenes, ranging from allegories to naturalistic descriptions. As examples from the travel texts shall demonstrate, European travel writers' illustrations of Chinese natural landscape were informed by the specific agendas of trade, mission and diplomacy that guided their travels to China. This limited the space for expressive prose writing on the Chinese natural landscapes.

One telling example of the relative silence towards landscape is Matteo Ricci's excursion to scenic spots. Ricci lived in China for many years and adopted a policy of cultural assimilation: putting on the dress and habits of the Chinese literati, reading their texts, speaking their language and partaking in their social activities. Ricci was invited to scenic spots by his Chinese peers, partaking in the leisurely journeys enjoyed by the Chinese literati, which he detailed in accounts of his life and travels through China.

> A few days after their arrival at Inte the Mayor invited them, by way of recreation to visit a certain beautiful cave in the village called Pelotum, a place of great renown and very rightly so. The cave was a natural formation, about a mile from the river, filled with clear water from mountain springs and abundantly stocked with fish.[59]

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[57] Janice Hewlett Koelb, '"This most beautiful and adorned World" Nicolson's *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory* Reconsidered', *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 16 (2009), 443-68 (p. 444).
[58] Ibid., p. 468.
[59] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 234.

Whereas Chinese travellers would have gone on to paint a picturesque description of this site, Ricci's descriptions ends here. He informs his audience that this cave is beautiful and scenic, but unlike his literati peers, Ricci does not express his personal responses towards nature through descriptive text or through travel poetry.[60] Instead, Ricci subsequently introduces to his audience an important acquaintance from this excursion, Wang Yinlin, Assistant Magistrate of Nanxiong.[61] This is understandable, given that the text is angled at a European audience more interested in descriptions of China and of the Jesuit mission's progress, than of a visit to an incidental, though lovely cave. It is noteworthy, that despite Ricci's years of living in China and his familiarity with the elite class' propensity for leisure travel and the production of travel texts, Ricci's accounts of Chinese scenic spots remain seemingly uninfluenced by the literary style of the reflexive, biographical Chinese travel text.

The European travel writers noted the Chinese affinity to natural landscape. Martin de Rada discusses the friars, hermits and nuns 'in the mountains and hills.'[62] While the text does not inform us if he was aware of the spiritual significance of these places, it shows that foreign visitors perceived the tendency of Chinese religious orders to create their temples and abodes amongst the natural landscape.

European travel writers' approach towards natural landscape was informed by their travel motivations and their textual vehicles—reports and histories which did not readily lend themselves to extended reflection on natural landscape. After discussing the rich descriptions of natural landscape in late-Ming Chinese travel writing, the silence about landscape in the European travel texts is a stark contrast. While early modern travellers were also enjoying a 'travel boom', with an unprecedented number of travels made within and outside of Europe, natural landscape was hardly considered. European writers had different agendas and literary conventions, and did not view natural landscape in the poetic and contemplative manner of Chinese travel writers. While early modern travel writers to China attempted to record as much information as possible in their texts, there were too many sights and sounds. Careful selection was necessary to create a text with the most relevant information, firstly for their patrons, and secondly for the wider audience. Unsurprisingly then, despite a slowly growing interest in landscape back in Europe,

[60] For the perspective of Qu Rukui, a literatus who accompanied Ricci on this excursion, see Hsia, *A Jesuit in the Forbidden City*, pp. 124-25.
[61] Ibid. p. 124.
[62] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 308.

descriptions of landscape fell by the wayside. Instead, topics such as history, customs, dress, political organisation, social circumstances and architecture were deemed more noteworthy and useful.

Since China is a relatively mountainous country, Europeans who travelled there would have encountered its numerous mountain ranges. However, the geological formations themselves were never the subject of much interest or description. Far more pertinent for the European travellers was analysing and discovering what these mountains represented in terms of political borders and the different groups of people who lived near the mountains. This is demonstrated in the following account of Galeote Pereira.

> Quanci shyre [Guangxi] as far as I can perceive, lieth upon the south and it is the end of this kingdom; for as soon as we began to enter therein, we went always in a southerly direction for most of the time, travelling not far from the high mountains we saw there. Asking what people dwelleth beyond those mountains, it was told me that they be robbers, and men of a strange language […] As this city of Quanci and the cities, towns and villages of the whole province are all situated at the extremity of the kingdom on this side, and so far from the coast, and their sites seem to have been chosen rather from necessity than from choice in so dry and sterile a region, so it is surprising to find so many large towns as we found all along this river and the adjacent mountains.[63]

In this passage, Pereira is more interested in all that surrounded the mountains of Guangxi than in the mountains themselves. The practical functions of the land, the possible danger from robbers and foreigners and the usefulness of mountainous regions to its inhabitants is of greater interest than its aesthetic appearance. In stark contrast with Xu Xiake's attitudes towards the mountainous landscape of the Guangxi province, this response demonstrates how travel culture—the literary conventions and practices surrounding travel—deeply influences the responses produced. Guangxi province was a region with one of the most fascinating landscapes of China. Literally meaning 'the Western expanse', the mountainous terrain has historically been the frontier region of the Chinese empire, beyond which foreigners and non-Han peoples lived.[64] Geographically, it is famed for its rugged terrain, full of mountains, lakes, rivers and valleys, and geological

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[63] Ibid., pp. 34-35.

[64] Leo K. Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion in the Ming Borderlands* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 10.

features such as limestone caves and spires, attracting droves of tourists. This was one of the southwestern regions of China that Xu Xiake had a lifelong desire to visit, but he claims that he was unable to do so until he was fifty, for it was too far removed from his hometown, and he was reluctant to venture far from his mother while she was alive, on grounds of filial piety.[65] It is ironic that the landscape which Pereira mentions in passing was the landscape that one of the most prolific Chinese travellers waited a lifetime to see. Approximately one quarter of Xu's diary—which recorded his travels across three decades is dedicated to his travels in Guangxi. Although Xu's Guangxi travels was beleaguered by incessant rain, and the sickness and eventual death of his travel companion Jingwen 静文, Xu continues to document enthusiastic visits to mountains and caves in his usual descriptive manner. In contrast, Pereira's surprise at the presence of towns and settlements in the mountainous region of Guangxi is a manifestation of his presuppositions that mountains are inhospitable, harsh terrain, which did not encourage the cultivation of land and the development of civilisations.

Instead, European travel writers noted and favoured natural landscape that could be ordered, cultivated, and of agricultural and practical utility to its inhabitants. They were more fascinated by the agricultural infrastructure and the people living within the landscape than the landscape itself. Martin de Rada recorded taking a trip up-river in a ship whilst in South China.

> We were greatly astonished to see so many towns on both banks of the river […] The natives of these other towns through which we passed, have cultivated their land to such an extent, that even the tops of crags and rocks were sown, although it seemed as if no result of any kind could be achieved there; whence it appeared to me that this country is the most populous one in the whole world.[66]

Pereira's and de Rada's description shows a propensity for European travellers to document natural landscapes as spaces to be ordered and controlled—land could be cultivated and abundant harvests reaped. After all, early modern travel accounts of the Far East were informed by the proto-colonial rhetoric of order, control and profitability, where

[65] Xu, *Travel Diaries*, trans. by Li Chi, pp. 17-18.
[66] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 248.

travellers were assessing the potential benefit of their new-found connections with foreign lands.[67]

In this vein, it is of little surprise that European travel writers were at their literary best when describing Chinese cities. Cities were, after all, built and imaginative locales *par excellence*. Cities were physical evidence of architectural capabilities and prowess, a material reminder of human urban agglomeration and planning. Yet cities were not only geographical, material locales, but also products of human imagination. Cities in European history were markers of civilisation, and have also been read as symbols of transcendence—the ideal-type of city and its architecture represented an order in the cosmos that was absent on earth.[68] In their accounts of cities, close attention was paid to detail, intertextuality and imagery, showering the Chinese city with positive appraisal.

The rich and highly visual imagery that the same writers used to describe Chinese cities is a marked contrast to their spartan descriptions of natural landscape. Gaspar da Cruz provides his readers with a survey account of the architectural characteristics and features of Chinese cities. Though he had not visited most of them for he was confined in South China, he offers a rich literary description of Chinese cities—rooted in highly visual descriptions of an urban setting.

> Many of the cities in China have […] galleries made of stone or of very strong brick, high and very well-wrought, with battlements on top and all very fair, something which greatly embellishes and ennobles the cities […] In all the streets of the principal cities, which are royal or main highways, there are very many and very sumptuous triumphal arches […] being very fair, sumptuous and very well wrought […] they are topped by a very fair and curious edifice of wood. It is roofed with very fair porcelain tile, which gives it much grace and beauty; and these arches are made of such width and in such wise that many people can stand underneath protected from the rain and sun; wherefore underneath them are sold many fruits and toys and a great variety of wares. And even though in some parts these arches may be built upon timber, in many others they are all of stone, very good and very well wrought. These arches make the cities look very proud, noble and beautiful […] when the Chinas celebrate their general feast-days, these arches

[67] Markley, 'The Far East and the English Imagination', p. 494.
[68] Tuan, *Topophilia*, p. 164.

are decked with silken hangings, and at night, which is the chief time for their feasts, they hang many lanterns on them, the which make them very fair and large, the silken stuffs being very well coloured and in the light of the candles they look very well. Thus these arches at night with these lanterns and with these silken tapestries are very beautiful and look very fine.[69]

The language which da Cruz uses to describe the features of Chinese cities is hyperbolic. His account is full of the intensifiers 'very', 'greatly' and 'much'—all rendered as '*muito*' or '*muita*' in the original Portuguese, to exemplify the positive features of beauty, fineness and sumptuousness that he ascribes to Chinese cities. Da Cruz emphasizes his role as a traveller through this dramatic text about the stunning Chinese city, which his readers at home will not have the privilege to view personally, only experiencing the city's greatness through Da Cruz's narration.[70] Contextualised within the rest of his text, the Chinese city functions as a microcosm, representing all that is positive about the civilisation—a melding of good architecture, good masonry and excellent urban planning. His reliance on intensifiers to express what he saw to his audience is limited to his accounts on Chinese cities, indicating his desire to present an excessively positive picture of late-Ming urbanity. Da Cruz uses highly visual language, representing the Chinese city to his readers with an attentive eye and systematically ordering the different features of the city, starting from the gates, to the watchtowers, to the galleries around the city wall, to what lies beneath and above the arches.

While da Cruz endeavours to provide a comprehensive narration of Chinese cities, he privileges direct visual observation of China as opposed to armchair travels and argues that there are significant limits to what travellers can reproduce in text. Da Cruz mentions in his note to his readers at the beginning of his account that the things of China 'must be seen and not heard, because hearing it is nothing in comparison with seeing it.'[71] He further emphasizes his claim with the biblical allusion of the Queen of Sheba's meeting with King Solomon, the former who was duly impressed and remarked 'what I have seen is incomparably greater than what they told me of you.'[72] Considering the entire corpus of European travel accounts on China, the careful descriptions of Chinese cities are amongst the most visual. Da Cruz's rhetorical claims about the limitations of language to describe

[69] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 102-04.
[70] Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, p. 5.
[71] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 56-57.
[72] 1 Kings 10:7, cited in Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 57.

visual scenes shows how European travellers keenly emphasized the grandeur of Chinese cities, going so far as to inform their readers of the textual limits, for the reality of the Chinese city is ‘incomparably greater’ than what could reasonably be represented.

There is a fascinating parallel to the Chinese travellers’ own claims of having reached the limits of language and representation, for example, when Wang claims that natural landscape could be so majestic and moving, that not even the most celebrated of landscape painters could capture it. The travel writers found themselves at a loss for words, utilising the ‘hyperboles of the unrepresentable’,[73] in very different scenarios—the Chinese travellers in the face of natural landscape, the European travellers when describing the magnificence of Chinese cities. Claims for a topography being ‘unrepresentable’ reflected an emphasis on natural landscapes and cityscapes in Chinese and European travel culture of this period. Only the sights and sites that the travellers recognised as the most appealing and significant to them and their readers brought upon this speechlessness, indicating a moment where the travel experience moves beyond the mundane. The significance of the topographical features before the travellers exceeded their material properties and through interactions with the landscape is the traveller ‘entailed in confrontations with the sublime.’[74] The landscapes were greatly esteemed by the travellers, not by virtue of any intrinsic, inherent value, but because travellers placed such great emphasis on these landscapes as key features of their travel texts.

To nuance this chapter, and to prevent a binary East-West comparison that Chinese travellers were *only* interested in natural landscapes and European travellers *only* in cities, one must note that Chinese cities were also noted by Chinese travel writers—who passed through their fair share of cities on their travels. Of late, urban life in late imperial China has become a topic of new research, with historians studying both visual and literary representations of Chinese cities by the literati class.[75] Historical geographers researching the tourist economy of late-Ming China note that cities were not only strategically important as nodes along an elaborate transport network, but also offered a rich and

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[73] Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, p. 5.
[74] Ibid.
[75] See for instance *Urban Life in China: 15th to 20th centuries,* ed. by Luca Gabbiana (Paris: École française d'Extrême-Orient, 2016); *The City in Late Imperial China*, ed. by G. William Skinner (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977); and Wang Cheng-hua 王正華, ‘Guoyan fanhua: Wanming chengshitu, chengshiguan yu wenhuaxiaofei de yanjiu’ 過眼繁華：晚明城市圖、城市觀與文化消費的研究 [Looking At Prosperity—a Study of City Representations, Urbanity and Cultural Consumption in the late Ming], in *Zhongguo de chengshi shenghuo* 中國的城市生活 [Urban Life in China], ed. by Li Xiao-ti 李孝悌 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2005), pp.1-57.

attractive cultural life, filled with activities and festivities, a space of cultural prestige, intellectual vitality and material abundance.[76]

Chinese travel writers bypassed cities on their journeys and recorded their itineraries in their travel text. In contrast to the lavish descriptions of natural landscape, the language used to describe cities is at times sparse and minimal, providing their readership with brief details of the city, unlikely to grab the reader's attention. One example includes Xu Xiake's account of entering and walking through Beiliu 北流 a city in the Guangxi province.

> The West Gate was shut and unopened, for the westward roads were important points of transactions for thieves and were strictly controlled. Walking around the circumference of the city, I entered through the South Gate, passed by the front doors of the magistrate's office and exited by the Eastern gate, and saw the street market which was considerably abundant. A street that ran through the city and then in a northerly direction was named The Road of Ruins 街墟, another street that followed the path of the river and ran in an easterly direction was named Sand Street 沙街. The Road of Ruins turns eastward in a northern nook of the city. There is a stream that flows from the north of the city, spanned by a stone bridge named Ascending Dragon Bridge 登龍橋 […] To the northeast of Sand Street traversed Broad Crossing Bridge, where the waters of the northern stream flow into the Xiu River. I crossed the bridge and met with the road that leads to Ascending Dragon Bridge, the road exits Narrow Gate from the north, the river flows eastwards.[77]

This excerpt is characteristic of Xu's style when writing about cities and the progress of his travels. Xu remains highly specific, noting details such as road names and the direction in which the streams and rivers flowed. However, passages referring to cities are devoid of the highly visual descriptions, found in his lyrical passages on landscape. Cities and their topographical features were relevant to his diaries, insofar as they informed his readers about his itinerary and daily progress. As locales on the landscapes that he travelled through, Xu 'mapped' and 'located' these cities within his travel texts. Yet none of his travel diaries were ever about the cities themselves. Cities were neither the scenic

[76] Wei, *Wanming Lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 325.
[77] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 176.

‘destinations’ of Xu’s travels, nor the subject of his writing and literary expression. Only natural landscape warranted Xu’s praise.

In *Interpretation of Vast Travels*, Wang Shixing outlines the historical geography of the two capitals, Peking and Nanjing, accounting for the shift of the imperial capital from the latter to the former in the mid-Ming period.[78] By virtue of his career in both capitals, Wang records, ‘I have been posted to both areas as an official, and have considerably observed its mountains and waterways, the peoples and their customs. Now I will select the most outstanding features and compare the two.’[79] He then outlines the geography, climate, historical traditions, major mountains and waterways, the architecture, the city walls and the customs and practices of the people. The text is not merely matter-of-fact and informative. Sights in the city could also be lovely to behold. Just as Da Cruz notes the sumptuous night festivals of the Chinese, Wang remarks upon the New Year’s festivities that ‘[o]n the fifteenth night of the New Year 元宵, the city is lit up with lanterns, the tall buildings are bathed in pearly-white and emerald shades, the city is crowded with people and vehicles. On Tomb-Sweeping Day, the city-dwellers go on their spring outing to Tall-Beamed Bridge 高粱橋, when viewing the scene entirely, it seems as if in a painting 如圖畫.’[80] In this description, city views could also be lovely and scenic, and Wang once again compares beautiful views with paintings. Clearly, scenes of aesthetic appeal did not only exist amongst the mountains and waters, but also in the urban environment. However, at no point does the loveliness of the cityscapes inspire a loss for words. For Wang, natural landscapes are baffling—pushing and exceeding the limits of verbal or visual representation, as noted earlier. Though the opulence and resplendence of the city is a great visual treat to the traveller, his descriptions of cityscapes do not culminate in ‘hyperboles of indescribability’[81], for those are reserved for transcendent experiences amongst the mountains and waters.

3.3 Travel Writing and Utopian Writing

In comparing representations of the same place (Ming China) across different travel cultures, this chapter questions what different responses to the physical world reveal about the travel writers and their societies. I suggest that an answer can be found by treating

[78] Wang, *Interpretation*, p. 203.
[79] Ibid.
[80] Ibid., pp. 206-07.
[81] Chard, *Pleasure and Guilt*, p. 85.

travel writing as utopian writing. As travel writers recorded real, physical places, they projected their own ideals and expectations onto the physical landscape before them—writing about landscape is thus always a 'dialogic engagement' between the writers and their environments.[82] Chloe Houston, in her work on the close connection between utopian writing and travel writing during the early modern period, has written about 'global utopias'.[83] Commenting on the emergence of utopian writing during the age of European overseas voyages, she asserts that travel was being imaginatively used to conjure up better lives in foreign societies.[84] Encounters with foreign lands were recounted in narrative form, and literary interconnections were made with concepts of state, religion and culture.[85] Early modern travel writing was self-reflexive and described internal issues while purporting to show them a distant land.

I propose an intercultural reading of utopias in the travel texts, suggesting that both Chinese and European travellers were interested in locating utopias whilst on their travels and were projecting their images of an ideal state onto vastly different geographical constellations—the Chinese onto landscape, and the Europeans onto cityscapes. To experience these utopias, travel was a necessary condition. By writing about Chinese cityscapes and natural landscape, the travel writers under discussion were presenting utopic sites that they had the privilege to access, but which their audience could only experience through text, for they had not commenced upon the journey that would reveal these sites to them.

As discussed in Chapter One, travel writers were living in societies underdoing great social, political and religious change.[86] I suggest that travel writers were searching for order in their travels and conceived of ideal societies as a response to the political problems of their home socieities.[87] However, their 'ideal societies' were articulated differently. Chinese travellers found order in nature and landscape, more specifically by drawing inspiration from classical literary texts that lauded nature as both paradise and

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[82] Dupée, *British Travel Writers*, p. 16.
[83] See Chloe Houston, 'Travelling Nowhere: Global Utopias in the Early Modern Period', in *A Companion to the Global Renaissance: English Literature and Culture in the Era of Expansion*, ed. by Jyotsna G. Singh (Sussex: Blackwell, 2009), pp. 82-98.
[84] Ibid., p. 83
[85] Ibid.
[86] Late-Ming China was a place that was seemingly stable and prosperous, yet with deep-rooted, underlying social tensions. Debary, *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, p. 6.
[87] Ruth Eaton, *Ideal Cities: Utopianism and the (Un)Built Environment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2001), p. 10.

utopia. On the other hand, European travellers found a variation of the ideal society in highly organised, well-governed Chinese cities that reflected contemporaneous European social-political commentaries on ideal states. In the following sections, I establish how the Chinese and European travel texts can be read as a platform for imagining better lives in ideal societies. Travel served as a means for locating distant utopias in the physical world—hinting at the problems and discontent that troubled these travellers in the domestic sphere.

3.3.1 Ideal Societies: From *Utopia* to *Peach Blossom Spring*

Travel literature records the encounter and responses of travellers with their physical world in narrative (and poetic) forms. At the same time, it is not merely a description of the physical world, but a reflection of the mental worlds of the travellers.[88] Travel writers narrate a search for a transcendent world that is culturally constructed, which they in turn project onto the physical world that can be visually apprehended.

Literary and imaginative renderings of utopian societies vary considerably in Chinese and European cultures. Classical writers of each tradition selected different geographical settings to locate their versions of utopia. These utopian archetypes exerted a powerful force on later writers, thus recurring features and metaphors can be found in the writings of the Chinese and European writers of the study, who imitated and drew inspiration from their own literary utopian traditions. Travel was an essential criterion for finding the ideal society, necessarily spatially removed from the quotidian life of the traveller, with the journey as a metaphor for the process through which the perfect society could be achieved.[89]

In early modern Europe, travel writing and utopian writing were closely linked. The most representative work was Sir Thomas More's *Utopia* of 1516, the title being More's neologism that became synonymous with 'ideal society'. Houston points out that More's *Utopia* was written when travel narratives were flooding the European book markets; the New World was regularly compared to the biblical Eden, where there was peace, fertility and an abundance of produce, highlighting the close connections between travel writing and utopian writing.[90] J.H. Elliott, in his seminal work on European encounters with the

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[88] Hadfield, *Literature, Travel, and Colonial Writing in the English Renaissance*, p. 12.
[89] Houston, 'Travelling Nowhere', p. 95.
[90] Ibid., p.87

New World, argues that early modern Europeans, in light of the corruption of Europe and wrestling with political and confessional divides, were particularly receptive to change and interested in reading narratives describing alternative, better societies.[91]

Despite the dominance of Eden as the concept of the biblical, unsullied paradise, representations of early modern utopias oscillated between the Garden and the City. From the sixteenth century onwards, the city was becoming idealised, as a symbol that many writers and thinkers spent much time describing, providing a setting for utopian writing.[92] The biblical Jerusalem became the archetype of an ideal city. Much attention was paid by overseas voyagers to cities, and city gates, which held symbolic significance since ancient times, and were considered to be 'faces of the city', in need of particular description.[93] For instance, Amerigo Vespucci's (1451-1512) travel account of South America, *Mundus Novus* [1504], describes the Aztec capital Tenochtitlan, with its peaceful inhabitants, extremely wealthy aristocrats, and opulent religious festivals.[94] Both Christian and classical traditions were important reference points in conceptualising ideal societies in this period. European descriptions of China were reflective of both Edenic abundance and the idealised Renaissance image of the city.

The literary archetype of the Chinese utopia was the *Peach Blossom Spring* 桃花源, by Tao Qian (365-427).[95] It is the timeless tale of a fisherman, who lost his way and chanced upon a forest of peach blossoms. Entering a cave, he discovers a happy and peaceful commune, an agrarian utopia, dotted with villages, farmland and agricultural produce. It was removed from the outside world and beyond the reach of the state, the inhabitants having fled to this retreat during the troubled Qin dynasty (221-206 BCE). The fisherman tells the commune's inhabitants about the troubles of the outside world and they instruct him to be reticent about their existence. When the time comes for him to leave, the fisherman marks his path. Upon reaching the prefecture, he informs the prefect, who subsequently attempts to find the commune. However, the peaceful commune was never to

[91] J.H. Elliot, *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 16-25.
[92] Eaton, *Ideal Cities*, p. 115.
[93] Ulrich Schütte, 'Stadttor und Hausschwelle: zur rituellen Bedeutung architektonischer Grenzen in der frühen Neuzeit', in *Zeremoniell und Raum*, ed. by Werner Paravicini (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1997), pp. 305-324 (p. 309).
[94] Eaton, *Ideal Cities*, p. 115.
[95] Sing-Chen Lydia Chiang, 'Visions of Happiness: Daoist Utopias and Grotto Paradises in Early and Medieval Chinese Tales', *Utopian Studies*, 20.1 (2009), 97-120 (pp. 97-99).

be located again.[96] This tale long captured the imagination of many poets, painters, scholars and officials wishing to escape the problems of their own society. It symbolizes a perfect, parallel universe, a utopia hidden in the depths of nature. The author, Tao Qian was himself an official living during the warfare and instability of the Eastern Jin dynasty (317-420). Dispirited by society and the difficult political circumstances, he quit and withdrew to his countryside estate.[97] While a complete retreat was frowned upon by late-Ming neo-Confucianism, which emphasized benefitting fellow man as an important principle of leading a proper life, many writers still romanticized the life of the 'scholar in seclusion', particularly when faced with treacherous political circumstances and an uncertain future. Indeed, the fisherman in the tale is an archetype of a figure that has abandoned life in society to live in tune with nature. Given the adversity surrounding late-Ming literati, and the parallels between their time and that of Tao Qian's, the frequent allusion to *Peach Blossom Spring* in travel texts becomes all the more understandable.

3.3.2 European Idealisations of China

Now that the literary and imaginative traditions of utopia in China and Europe have been established, we turn to the traveller's descriptions and idealisations of the physical worlds that they encountered. Early modern Iberian travellers were largely confined to the coastal provinces of Canton and Fujian. These two provinces were centres of maritime trade and one of the few locations where the Ming administration tolerated the presence of foreigners. Hence, cities in southern China were well represented in European travel narratives of this era, even more than the administrative capitals of Beijing and Nanjing. Travellers' descriptions of Chinese cities were enthusiastic, marvelling at its grandeur, reflective of their overall attitude towards China. Donald Lach, in examining early European impressions of China contends that 'sixteenth-century Europeans had considered Japan and China to be the great hope of the future'.[98] These hopes permeated European travel accounts of China, providing readers back home with images of Chinese cities as rich, grand and impregnable. Depictions of cityscapes in the accounts of explorers, traders, diplomats and missionaries were not descriptions of Chinese cities as they actually were. C.R. Boxer, upon comparing early Iberian accounts with geographical sources of Ming

[96] For a complete translation, see James Robert Hightower, 'The Peach Blossom Spring', in *The Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. by Victor H. Mair (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp. 578-80.

[97] A. R. Davis, *T'ao Yüan-ming (AD 365–427): His Works and Their Meaning, Vol. 1: Translation and Commentary*, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 199.

[98] Lach and van Kley, *A Century of Advance*, pp. 1889-90.

Chinese cities, points out that statistics provided on the size of the walls and the scale of the city were often exaggerated, in particular, the size of the imperial capital of Peking was customarily exaggerated in multiple European accounts.[99] This could, on the one hand, suggest a dearth of accurate information, for numerous European travellers never ventured to Peking but gained information from informants or Chinese gazetteers. On the other hand, in light of the idealisation of Chinese cities in early modern European travel literature, this overestimation was possibly deliberate—a creative act on the part of the travel writer to persuade his audience on the usefulness of establishing connections between Europe and China.

The Portuguese mercenary and traveller Galeote Pereira made several trips to China in his lifetime and recorded his impressions of Fuzhou, the provincial capital of Fujian in 1549.

> The city of Fucheo is very great, and mightily walled with square stone both within and without […] the watchtowers covered with tiles and with galleries very well made, that one might dwell therein[...] The streets are paved[...]. The market places be large; great abundance of all things there be to be sold. The city standeth upon water, many streams run through it, the banks pitched and so broad that they serve for streets to the city's use. Over the streams are sundry bridges both of timber and stone… At night these [bridge] arches are closed up with gates, so they shut up all the gates of the city. These streams and barges do ennoble very much the city, and make it as it were to seem another Venice.[100]

The Spanish priest Gaspar da Cruz described the city of Canton in a style similar to Pereira's. Da Cruz was not allowed to travel further inland and starts his chapter with the disclaimer that according to reports of travellers who ventured further into China, Canton was inferior to its other cities, suggesting that there were greater, more marvellous cities that lay within the kingdom.[101] Nevertheless, he goes on to sing its praises.

> Cantam in its compass, is of very strong walls, very well made, and of a good height; and to the sight they seem almost new […] The bulk of the wall at the entrance gate is twelve paces thick; the gates are all plated with iron from top to

[99] Pereira, 'Report', p. 30.
[100] Ibid., p. 52.
[101] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 115.

> bottom; and all of them have very strong portcullises in front, which are always up and never let down, but are ready against they be needful […] The streets of the city are all drawn by a line very straight, without any manner of making a nook or winding. The principal streets are something broader than the Rua Nova dos Mercadores 'dos ferros' of Lisbon. All the cross ways are as straight as the streets, in sort that there is neither street nor traverse that maketh any turning. [102]

Immediately apparent is his interest in detailing the architecture of the city, particularly the walls and the watchtowers, which served to keep the city secure. City gates served as symbols of security in the early modern period.[103] Walls in particular were one of the key architectural features that differentiated cities from other settlements in European imaginations.[104] Since the medieval period, walls already served as distinct markers of *civitas*, separate from the countryside, demarcating a distinct area of security, order and law, where inhabitants of cities were afforded special rights and privileges.[105] In the early modern period, city walls became of theoretical interest to writers and readers, not just as architectural structures, but as representations of city and state.[106] The preoccupation with city walls reflected volatile political and military situation in Europe, most pronounced in Renaissance Italy, though the design of well-fortified walls spread across Europe throughout the sixteenth century.[107] The descriptions of the strength of the city walls of Fuzhou and Canton were testaments to the grandeur and wealth of the cities, and hinted at their wealth and military strength.

Travellers conscientiously juxtaposed China with Europe, and other civilisations that European travellers were beginning to establish contact with. Early modern Europeans were enthusiastic in their praise. With a hyperbolic flourish to portray Chinese cities as strong and magnificent, Pereira confidently declares, 'These cities are as well walled as any cities in all the world. As you come into either of them, standeth so great and mighty a bridge, that the like thereof I have never seen in Portugal nor elsewhere.'[108] Having travelled extensively on various voyages, Pereira draws on his personal experience to

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[102] Ibid., pp. 115-16.
[103] Burke, 'Culture: Representations', p. 441.
[104] Christopher R. Friedrichs, *The Early Modern City (1450-1750)* (London: Longman, 1995), p. 21.
[105] Daniel Juette, 'Entering a City: On a Lost Early Modern Practice', *Urban History*, 41.2 (2014), 204-27 (p. 206).
[106] Ibid.
[107] Eaton, *Ideal Cities*, pp. 56-60.
[108] Pereira, 'Report', p. 7.

present to his readers a Chinese city that equalled or even surpassed all other cities that he had previously known.

Pereira also made references to Roman works and architectural treatises of antiquity. The Renaissance saw a revival and celebration of the architectural designs and aesthetics of the classical age. There was a renewed fascination in the ruins and ancient buildings of Roman times, beginning in Italy in the fifteenth century, with this trend spreading to the rest of Europe by the sixteenth century.[109] European travellers projected the design of Roman architecture and building onto the built structures of the Chinese city. 'I heard one of my fellows say, that he told in one bridge forty arches […] they are equally built, no higher in the middle than at either end, in such wise that you may directly see from the one end to the other; the sides are wonderfully well engraved after the manner of Roman works.'[110] As suggested in Elliott's study, the languages of Christianity and antiquity were intertwined in European descriptions of foreign places.[111] In a foreign land, they projected European ideals onto foreign cityscapes. In their positive descriptions of China, European travellers recognised architectural features that were desirable in a European context, and associated the symmetry, arches and engravings of the Chinese bridge as something created 'after the manner of Roman works'. For educated writers and readers, the use of classical architectural language evoked the grandeur of ancient Rome, reminding viewers of an idealised, ancient heritage. The study and observation of architecture was encouraged amongst young, educated men and subsequently adopted as an ideal, and a reminder of a glorious, historical past.[112]

Additionally, the maintenance and good conditions of the streets and bridges are mentioned here. 'The ways each where are gallantly paved with foursquare stone, except it be where for want of stone they use to lay brick. In this journey, as far as Fucheo, wheresoever it was necessary, the road was cut with a pickaxe, and in many places no worse paved than in the plain ground.'[113] Early modern European travel texts about China, praised the extensive network of paved or gravelled roads that linked major and secondary cities and towns.[114] This was a textual reflection of the European travellers' comparison of

[109] Christy Anderson, *Renaissance Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 2-3.
[110] Pereira, 'Report', p. 8.
[111] Elliot, *Old World and the New*, p. 21.
[112] Anderson, *Renaissance Architecture*, pp.15-17.
[113] Pereira, 'Report', p. 8. In a comment, Boxer notes that Iberian highways in this period were of very bad quality.
[114] Scott, 'Travel and Communications', p. 166.

China and their home context. The well-kept state of walls and roads were particularly impressive, walls were subject to the elements, in need of constant repair and expensive to maintain.[115]

Praise of the broad, linear streets is noteworthy, frequently mentioned in Renaissance architectural treatises on ideal town planning.[116] Influenced by city plans from antiquity, the order of the city streets served as a symbolic reflection of the order of the political system and the universe.[117] Linear and parallel city streets are once again reflective of the biblical New Jerusalem, a perfectly cubic city with parallel, perpendicular streets. In reality however, early modern European cities did not depart considerably from their medieval grids of narrow, winding streets, reflecting the path dependency of town planning in most cities; for these cities developed organically and while improvements were made to European cities in the early modern period, tearing out narrow, winding streets simply because architectural tastes changed, was unfeasible.[118] Hence Chinese cities and their grid planning appealed to the early modern European aesthetics of preferring wide, paved and straight streets, for straight streets were both a metaphor for moral righteousness and were praised for their beauty in *laudationes urbium* texts.[119]

Travellers from Iberia, and especially from Spain, had other historically-rooted reasons for aesthetically preferring straight and parallel streets. The first was the historical situation of Spain, emerging from centuries of power struggle and civil war known as the Reconquest, which finally ended with the fall of the last Muslim kingdom of Granada in 1492, only decades before these overseas journeys to Asia commenced. The centuries of Muslim influence was central in shaping early modern Spain. Social historian James Casey argues that 'For most of the early modern period, Spain was trying to live down its Moorish past.'[120] Accounts of travellers and ambassadors journeying through Spanish cities, describes narrow, labyrinthine streets and closely built buildings, which some travellers explained as being an unfortunate legacy from the Islamic period. According to Casey, to the classical minds of educated, early modern travellers, the buildings, streets

[115] Juette, 'Entering a City', p. 223.
[116] Eaton, *Ideal Cities*, p. 49.
[117] Ibid., p. 28.
[118] Wim Borefijn, 'About the Ideal Layout of the City Street in the Twelfth to Sixteenth Centuries: The Myth of the Renaissance in Town Building', in *Journal of Urban History*, 42.5 (2016), 938-52 (pp. 941-46).
[119] Ibid., p. 941.
[120] Casey, *Early Modern Spain*, p. 4.

and squares of early modern Spain held little aesthetic appeal—for these individuals were raised on architectural examples of grand squares, large buildings and straight streets.[121]

As theorists of identity formation have emphasized, the imagined 'self' is defined by negating the conceptual 'other'. Early modern Europeans—particularly the Spanish—would have come to know themselves in the negative mirror of their Islamic past, to 'make out the outlines of what they hoped not to be, and therefore, of what they aspired to become.'[122] As a result, Europeans, particularly Spanish Christians were particularly attuned to defining themselves against the negative mirror of the Moors. Encounters at the margin of the European comfort zone could prove more taxing than distant overseas adventures, as Spanish Christians struggled to weed out a cultural and religious 'Other' that was once firmly rooted amongst them and whose influence was written not only in their history and culture, but also in their cityscapes.

China presented a new territory free of the winding and narrow streets that were perceived as urban traits of Moorish Spain,[123] and much closer to the classical aesthetics that were in vogue during the sixteenth century. The aesthetic preference for large houses and wide streets, and the disdain for little houses and narrow winding streets is particularly pronounced in de Rada's account as he praises 'the houses of the great men […] are very large and they occupy a great space, for they have courtyards and more courtyards, and great halls and many chambers […] these halls are ordinarily higher up than the ground by three or four steps of very large and beautiful flagstones.'[124] In contrast, he suggests that '[t]he houses of the common people are like the little houses of the *Moriscos*.[125] Each one occupies about fourteen feet of street frontage, and they usually consist of two rooms with a small courtyard in between.'[126] He also praises the main streets as 'very broad, and they all have a large number of triumphal arches, some of very well wrought stone and others of woods.' The more minor streets however, he quickly dismisses, stating 'the other streets

[121] Ibid.
[122] Kivelson, 'Cartographic Emergence', p. 54.
[123] For discussions on winding streets in southern Spanish cities as an architectural remnant of Muslim presence prior to the Inquisition, see Mikaela Rogozen-Soltar, 'Al-Andalus in Andalusia: Negotiating Moorish History and Regional Identity in Southern Spain', *Anthropological Quarterly*, 18.3 (2007), 863-86 (pp. 870-71); Larry R. Ford, 'Urban Morphology and Preservation in Spain', *Geographical Review*, 75.3 (1985), 265-99 (pp. 292-98).
[124] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 291.
[125] The *Moriscos*, who remained in Spain after the Christian reconquest, were progressively racialized and marginalised by Spanish society throughout the sixteenth century, before they were finally expelled en masse in 1609. See Deborah Root, 'Speaking Christian: Orthodoxy and Difference in Sixteenth-Century Spain', *Representations*, 23 (1988), 118-34.
[126] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 292.

are all filthy little alleys.'[127] We see in De Rada's text an admiration for classical architectural forms of broad streets and a repulsion of 'filthy little alleys' characteristic of early modern Spanish cities.

Finally, Chinese cities such as Fucheo, as well as Suzhou and Hangzhou were frequently compared to the archetype of Venice. Like Venice, these cities were built near large bodies of water, populated with bridges and canals. In the travel accounts of the Jesuits, Ricci compared the rich, sumptuous Jiangnan and Fuzhou to Venice. Ricci's accounts of the wealthy and culturally rich cities of Suzhou and Hangzhou are greatly flattering.

> This is one of the two towns which the Chinese have put into the proverb: 'What in heaven is called the seat of the blessed, on earth is Suceu and Hamceu.' It is one of the most important cities of this region and is known for its splendour and wealth, for its numerous population and for about everything else that makes a city grand […] People move about here on land and on water, as they do in Venice, but the water here is fresh and clear, unlike that in Venice, which is salty and brackish […] The merchants here carry on a heavy trade throughout the whole year with the other trading centers of the kingdom, with the result that there is scarcely anything that one cannot purchase at this mart […] The city is all bridges, very old but beautifully built and those over the narrow canal are constructed as single arches.[128]

Through conscious, mediated comparison, Pereira, who claimed that 'streams and barges do ennoble very much the city, and make it as it were to seem another Venice'[129], and Ricci, were ascribing qualities of *La Serenissima* to this Chinese city. Venice held a special place in European imaginations as a near mythical, magnificent city, whose ports stored and carried wares from around the world, endowed with an excellent political constitution, equality and harmony across different social groups.[130] Venice was no utopia in the sense that it was an actual place, but it was the ideal European city *par excellence*. For the ideal state in early modern imaginations was not only constituted architecturally, but also through the effective planning of social structures and the utilisation of technology

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[127] Ibid.
[128] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 317.
[129] Pereira, 'Report', p. 52.
[130] Margaret L. King, 'The Myth of Venice', in *Encyclopedia of the Renaissance,* ed. by Paul F. Grendler, 6 vols (New York: Scribner, 1999), VI (1999), p. 227.

and resources for all citizens to live happily and efficiently.[131] Venice was exemplified in European political theory as a benevolently governed, harmonious society. Likewise, European travellers to China did not merely praise the architectural excellence of Chinese cities, but also commended its social welfare system.[132] Pereira marvels that there are hospitals and no beggars, for 'in every city there is a great circuit, wherein be many houses for poor people, for blind, lame, old folk' where they can remain for the course of their lives.[133] In early modern Europe, charitable institutions for children and the poor existed, and European travellers to China must have been aware of them.[134] Their eulogisation of Chinese society and its ability to care for the poor and sick likely reflected their hopes for the advancement of such institutions their home societies, once again demonstrating how China was presented as a well-governed, socially harmonious utopia in early modern travel texts.[135]

The preoccupation with the cityscape of late-Ming China revealed the traveller's interest in the architecture, infrastructure, commerce, the political economy and the general organisation of the kingdom. Late-Ming China provided early modern European travellers the opportunity to confront a socio-political system that was geographically far removed from theirs, allowing them to relativise their own cities and compare it to those of China. In China, they found an alternative space to criticise their own societies and locate what was lacking in their domestic spheres by idealising and praising what they found in China. The constant comparison of Fuzhou and Canton with Venice and Lisbon is noteworthy. Writers have commented that it was a literary technique present in many early modern travel accounts describing cities, with comparison making the 'foreign' city seem familiar to the author and his audience.[136]

Yet I argue that this was not the sole purpose for comparison. Early modern cities had the power to evoke a plethora of associations extending beyond their geographical

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[131] Eaton, *Ideal Cities*, p. 5.
[132] For more, see Rachana Sachdev, 'European Responses to Child Abandonment, Sale of Children and Social Welfare Policies in Ming China', in *Encountering China: Early Modern European Responses*, ed. by Rachana Sachdev and Qingjun Li (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), pp. 19-48.
[133] Pereira, 'Report', pp. 30-31.
[134] Sachdev, 'European Responses', p. 40.
[135] Ibid., pp. 46-48. Sachdev points out that according to economic research, late-Ming China was a society that was becoming very unequal, hence it is ironic that social harmony and welfare was lauded by early modern European travellers.
[136] Kate Lowe, 'Foreign Descriptions of the Global City: Renaissance Lisbon from the Outside', in *The Global City: On the Streets of Renaissance Lisbon*, ed. by Annemarie Jordan Gschwend and K.J.P. Lowe (London: Paul Hoberton, 2015), p. 52.

realities. For instance, Lisbon's *Rua Nova dos Mercadores* was the most important commercial street in the global Renaissance city, with peoples from different regions and wares from around the world.[137] Venice was lauded as an ideal city in the fifteenth century, at a time when rivalry between cities extended into the realm of representations.[138] The comparison of Chinese cities with European cities that were regarded as successful, wealthy and socially harmonious suggests that Fuzhou and Canton were idealised by European travellers. When verified against historical information about the socioeconomic and architectural realities of late-Ming Chinese cities, scholars have commented that European representations were idealistic and unrealistic. For instance, the size of cities was exaggerated and late-Ming society witnessed a period of growing social inequality.[139] The reality of the Chinese city varied from the travellers' representations. Nevertheless, the metaphor of the city offered travel writers a place in a distant land to laud for its qualities, whilst simultaneously providing them with an opportunity to critique the perceived shortcomings of European cities and systems.

3.3.3 Chinese Travellers and *Peach Blossom Spring*

While European travel accounts focused on maritime Chinese capitals, accounts of Chinese literati travellers tended to focus on everything but the city. Instead, they described and extolled landscape. As mentioned in the first section of the chapter, tradition and textual precedent instructed the Chinese literati to view natural landscapes as praiseworthy. Another historical reason for the literati's attraction to landscape was the rapid urban development of prosperous Chinese cities during the late-Ming dynasty due to industry and commerce.[140] As the population of Chinese cities rapidly developed, literati frustrations towards urban living escalated, complaining of congested waterways, urban buildings which were too compactly constructed, and accommodation sprawling beyond the city walls.[141] Chinese travellers had an ambiguous relationship with the city, enjoying its cultural life and conveniences, yet frequently grumbling about the vulgar, worldly cities and its accompanying distractions, yearning in their texts to travel and enjoy freedom in nature.[142]

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[137] Ibid., pp. 10-12.
[138] Peter Burke, 'Representations', p. 7.
[139] Sachdev, 'European Responses', pp. 46-48.
[140] Wu, *Youyou fangxiang* [Urban Pleasures], p. 10.
[141] Ibid.
[142] Ibid.

Another longer, continuous artistic and literary tradition praised the virtues of landscape and a hermetic lifestyle, ascribing to it utopian qualities. In times of political strife, it was common for many officials to retreat from political life, and seek abode in the mountains, living there as Taoists.[143] This duality was a permanent feature of Chinese literati culture, with scholar-officials constantly wavering between city and country, studying and working as Confucianists in the city, with a deep involvement in bureaucracy and state affairs. During unfavourable political situations, they retreated to their luxurious homes in the countryside, reacting against the rigid, straightjacket life of the Confucian scholar. Should the political situation take a turn for the better, they emerged from their carefree lives in the country and return to their official positions.[144] It was through this mould that late-Ming literati travellers regarded nature and travel. The two excerpts below are representations of *Peach Blossom Spring* in late-Ming travel texts, demonstrating how frequently quoted this tale was, and how Chinese versions of utopia were projected by travel writers onto secluded spots in nature, hidden within the mountains.

On his travels in Hunan in the early spring of 1612, Yuan Zhongdao visits a scenic location named Peach Spring 桃源, almost certainly named after Tao's famous fable, for it was located near Wuling 武陵, the place name mentioned in the original tale. Yuan deliberately furthers the association by echoing passages from the fable in his own text. 'Mooring the boat at the small stream, I walked with the various gentlemen towards the spring of the flowers, until we reached the entrance of Peach Blossom Cave. There were about a thousand peach trees, lining the path like a beautiful tent, flower buds were scattered on every corner of the earth. I reached the aperture of the mountain.'[145] This closely echoes the opening lines of Tao's fable, where the fisherman

> [s]uddenly encountered a forest of peach trees which lined the banks for several hundred paces. There were no trees of any other variety amidst them, but the flowers and grass were fragrant, and fallen petals were in tangled profusion. Amazed by the sight, the fisherman continued ahead, desiring to see all of this forest. The forest ended at the source of the stream, where he encountered a

[143] Wolfram Eberhard, *Conquerors and Rulers: Social Forces in Medieval China* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), p. 45.
[144] Ibid.
[145] Ibid., p. 57.

> mountain. There was a small entrance at the side of the mountain and it seemed as if light shone from within. Thus he left his boat and went into the entrance.[146]

Although Yuan does not directly quote Tao's lines, the imitation of the opening sentences meant that any contemporaneous reader of Yuan's works would have immediately made the association to the tale.

Yuan's story did not end with him discovering an idyllic, agrarian utopia buried in a scenic site. Instead, the emphasis of Yuan's entry in his travel journal is an escape from the troubles of the world, which he claims to have achieved on this trip. Yuan wrote of communing with nature and his travel companions.

> Whilst the rest wined, I stealthily crept back to the path instead, till I was underneath the peach trees, the shade of the moon turned fair and bright. I sat on the floor, intoxicated by the scent of the flowers. Shortly after, Wenruo [a travel companion] also reached the path [...] We walked on the clearing collecting tea leaves, filled with laughter. Over time, some of our other travel companions also reached the clearing. Then we returned and climbed up towards the main scholar's chambers. Underneath the light of the moon, the thousand mountains resembled smoke and fog.[147]

Here, Yuan uses the fable as a tool to illustrate how his travels to places of natural beauty provided an escape from the pressures of daily life. In his texts, he portrays himself as deeply frustrated with the worldly pursuits of literati life; his lack of an official position due to his failure at the imperial examinations being a constant thorn in his side.[148] The ideal of a society removed from the stress and unrest of imperial life and Tao Qian's own biography of retreating from society resonated with Yuan. While at Peach Spring, he forgets his worldly cares, enjoying an idyllic day with like-minded companions, drawing close to nature and seeking an experience of slipping into another, ideal world.

Xu Xiake records his own experience of Peach Blossom Spring by describing a Buddhist monk's retreat in the mountains during his travel to Guizhou in 1638. On a rainy, foggy day, he records, 'I passed by Nanjing Well again, and headed north, passing by a

[146] Michael A. Fuller, *An Introduction to Literary Chinese* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 80.
[147] Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 58.
[148] Liu Ruxi, 'Qianyan'[Foreword], in Yuan, *Youju beilu* [Travelling and Dwelling], p. 5.

monk's little house. The monk locked the door and headed towards White Cloud Mountain. Only the poppy flowers in the rain gazed silently at me. The empty mountains were lovely and colourful, as if it were the cave leading towards Peach Blossom Spring.'[149]

This passage reflects the syncretic belief systems of late-Ming literati travellers—Xu finds the peacefulness and other-worldliness of the classic Taoist retreat, Peach Blossom Spring, near the abode of a Buddhist monk. In an age of syncretism, the Confucian scholar could find a Daoist utopia in a Buddhist site of contemplation and worship.[150] Peach Blossom Spring was the Chinese literati's imagined refuge from the real world. Here it reflects Xu's yearnings of a refuge from the rain—and a refuge from the late-Ming world. For him, the Buddhist monk was like the idealized 'scholar in seclusion' or the Taoist motif of the lone fisherman, living in the natural landscape, searching for the ideal world. Xu paints a picture of poetic silence and solitude. The Buddhist monk's little house in the mountains serves as a retreat from a chaotic world. Natural landscape offered the promise of a utopian abode, a path that could potentially lead to the idealized society of *Peach Blossom Spring*. Xu's writings reflect a vision of utopia located in isolation from the rest of society. Only before the beauty of the transcendent, natural landscape, could one be alone and removed from external distractions, and subsequently, the ideal society could be revealed.

Wang Shixing takes the motif of the cave in *Peach Blossom Spring* even further on his trip to Terrace of Heaven 天臺 mountain range. He goes so far as to create his own Peach Spring so that he could regularly access his own, private agrarian utopia. 'Passing by the Clear Creek 清溪 […] I go in search of Peach Spring […] I chiseled through the stone to make a path, and fashioned a clearing in the cave for Peach Blossoms Village […] In front of the foundations I planted a thousand peach trees, ten plots of tea plants, and I purchased twenty plots of mountain farmland.'[151] In this account, one notes the intertextuality of Wang's account with earlier texts on *Peach Blossom Spring*, including Tao Qian's original tale. Wang casts himself in the role of the fisherman, going past the creek, and finding a small opening in the mountain that leads to a clearing. He then creates imitations of the villages, farms and agricultural plants found in the original tale, in the desire to recreate the self-sufficient, fertile and egalitarian commune that could exist in

[149] Xu, *Youji,* [Travel Diaries], p. 190.
[150] Brook, 'Rethinking Syncretism', pp. 27-34.
[151] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 80.

seclusion through its location in the natural landscape, removed from the chaos of the outside world.

Wang deliberate re-creation of Peach Spring demonstrates the deep influence of the utopian tale. Many painters, poets and writers inspired by the tale created their own representations of *Peach Blossom Spring* in painting, prose and poetry.[152] Wang too, creates his own representations, first by purchasing an actual space in the mountains, and then through his textual mediations on this space. He asserts his ownership of Peach Spring in the beginning of the travel text, stating 'Since I became the owner of Peach Spring, I have constructed a village and I am merely several dozen paces away.'[153] This echoes again Tao Qian's original text, where the fisherman at the entrance of the cave is suddenly greeted with a wide, broad vista after several dozen paces. Possessing his own agricultural commune in the natural environment of the Terrace of Heaven, Wang had a space to retreat towards when the external, political environment turned against him, following the tradition of the Chinese literati's retreat into nature.[154]

In a later travel poem written by Wang entitled *The Ballad of Peach Spring*,[155] it appears that Wang's (actual or imagined) escape to his agrarian utopia in nature has come to fruition later in his life, after meeting a large setback in his political career.[156] While Tao Qian's *Peach Blossom Spring* is still the subject of his preoccupation, since Wang borrows many of its motifs, instead of focusing on the agrarian utopia, he reflects on the darker side of the famous Daoist tale. Wang's lines contemplate the fleeting nature of the utopian vision; one could stumble upon it, yet paradoxically, to seek it purposefully was to lose it. 'As my vulgar aspirations draw me back into the human world,' he surmises, 'I am unable to return to the transcendental springs once I have left it, for white boulders and green moss conceal the old path.'[157]

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[152] Nathaniel Robert Walker, 'Reforming the Way: The Palace and the Village in Daoist Paradise', *Utopian Studies*, 24 (2013), 6-22 (p. 7).
[153] Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. 78.
[154] Eberhard, *Conquerors and Rulers*, p. 45.
[155] Wang's poem *The Ballad of Peach Spring* 桃園行 was after the style of the famed Tang poet Wang Wei's (701-761) work of the same name.
[156] According to biographical information, Wang offended the Emperor in 1588 and was demoted. Zhou Zhenhe 周振鹤, '*Qianyan*' [Foreword] 前言, in Wang, *Wuyue youcao* [Travel Notes], p. xi.
[157] Ibid., p. 151.

Literary critics of *Peach Blossom Spring* commented that the tale portrays a utopia that once existed in a primordial past, in nature and in landscape.[158] Yet it could exist only in seclusion from the outside world that had been corrupted with vulgar, worldly desires, imperial ambitions and political strife. Reflecting the duality and contradictions of Chinese literati life, it demonstrates that utopia could only be found when chanced upon. Deliberate attempts to locate it were futile, regardless of whether it was the fisherman who returned with the prefect to show him a utopian vision, or if it was Wang's attempt to create his own agrarian utopia in nature. In his ballad, Wang resembles the proverbial fisherman, hoping to possess utopia, but realizing that it has eluded him.

3.4. Conclusion

Travel writing is a 'dialogic engagement' with the landscape and complex interactions unfold as the travel writer projects his cultural assumptions onto the material landscape before him, affecting the way he perceives, senses and represents his physical surroundings. As this chapter focuses on travel writers' representations of the physical world, it closes in on passages in which landscapes were described with the pronounced attention, verbal precision, detail and emotion. For the Chinese travellers, this is reflected in detailed and emotive descriptions of natural landscape—of the mountains and waters, revered since ancient times, but which gained new significance in the late-Ming period, closely connected with the literati's sense of self, and their desire to project a social version of themselves—as cultured, refined men, through the textual vehicle. While the European travellers paid little attention to the natural landscape of China—passages on Chinese cities are full of rich, visual literary descriptions, sketching out the city for their readership and colouring their texts with their own subjective, enthusiastic appraisal.

Travel writing was closely connected with utopian writing, reflecting the travellers' desire to find an ideal society. The impulse to find utopia on a physical and metaphorical journey was present in both travel cultures, but were projected onto very different geographical spaces. European travellers to China found the ideal state in the well-organised, architecturally pleasing Chinese cities that reflected Renaissance ideals of town planning, aesthetics and socio-political ideals. On the other hand, Chinese travellers' search for utopia was articulated by literary imitation of Tao Qian's *Peach Blossom Spring*,

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[158] Chiang, 'Visions of Happiness', p. 118.

finding its expression in the natural landscape, where Chinese travellers traditionally sought refuge in and perceived as being aesthetically pleasing.

These projections of utopia onto landscapes and cityscapes reflected differing ideas of the perfect society. Representations of early modern utopias oscillated between unsullied Edenic paradise and highly organised cities. Long distance voyages in the early modern period opened up possibilities of establishing contact with far-off and previously unknown societies. Utopias in both traditions found its genesis in classical sources of the respective literary canons, such as the Bible, classical poetry and philosophy, apparent in the intertextuality of the travel texts. The literary tradition of utopian writing was used as a reference and the travel writers in turn re-interpreted and adapted these texts as a basis for recording their own observations.

These representations of utopia were projected onto places geographically removed from the travellers' home destination. The European traveller was searching for solutions to European social, economic and political problems by casting their gaze to newly apprehended lands, whereas the Chinese scholar expressed a desire to escape the stress and corruption of the city in seeking out a Taoist paradise in nature. Yet their home societies were always reflected, whether explicitly mentioned or not. When European travellers praised the organisation of Chinese cities and society, there was an unspoken critique of the situation back at home. Likewise, the unfettered, agrarian existence that Chinese travellers imagined in their utopias provided a foil to their urban realities, where they were compelled to conform to the long-established social system of examinations and civic duty. To return to the analogy of landscape as palimpsest, the landscapes and cityscapes which the travellers apprehended were material canvasses, with their own structures and etched with their own histories. By projecting their ideas of utopia onto these sites, these places were brought into a relation with the traveller's home societies. These were material spaces that travellers engaged with and altered in their texts, by projecting onto the landscape their hopes and ideals, they inadvertently revealed the societal problems and flaws which they sought to remedy.

Chapter Four: Parallel Ethnographies—Comprehending Foreign Cultures in late-Ming/ Early Modern Travel

Of Fucheo. When we lay in prison at Fucheo, […] we were brought to the palaces of noblemen, to be seen of them and their wives, for that they had never seen any Portugal before. Many things they asked us of our country, and our fashions, and did write everything, for they be curious in novelties above measure.[1]

Galeote Pereira, on his short imprisonment in South China

4.1 Introduction

In Western scholarship, travel and ethnographical writing in the early modern age was initially viewed as a European occupation. European mobility in the 'Age of Discovery' and the European gaze on indigenous populations was the subject of discussion and research, coinciding with post-colonial studies and the debate between power structures of the core and the periphery. Representative works with the imperial-gaze approach include Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (1992) and Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978), which study representations of other cultures in European travel and ethnographic writing. These studies demonstrate that representations of cultural 'others' were ideologically laden—products of imperial designs, which projected a prescribed European representation of non-Europeans to the domestic reading public. The role of the Europeans being the 'gazers'—the authors of travel texts, and the non-Europeans as being the recipients of the 'gaze'—the subject of representation, prevailed for decades in scholarship on early modern travel writing. More recent scholarship has challenged this view as too centred on the European imperial experience, failing to consider other centres of global imperial power, such as the Ottoman Empire, India and China, where there was also an interest in travel, observation and ethnography.[2]

Europeans were not the only travellers of the early modern age and research has been conducted in other academic traditions about their own great travellers.[3] As Steve Clark suggests in a volume discussing Chinese, Japanese and Southeast Asian travel writing, 'imperial gaze models derived from Mary Louise Pratt are difficult to apply to

[1] Pereira, 'Report', p. 25.
[2] See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, 'Connected Histories: Notes Towards a Reconfiguration of Early Modern Eurasia', *Modern Asian Studies,* 31 (1997), 735-62.
[3] Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels*, pp. 2-20.

travel writing about a region [Asia] that has always contained many of the world's great urban centres.'[4] Clark points out that Asians travelled too and although these two strands of travel writing have largely existed in isolation, with few attempts at a transcultural, comparative approach towards travel cultures of the early modern age, there is much scope for comparison.[5] Factors such as ideology, religion, imperial designs, economic benefits and personal gains transcend cultural boundaries,[6] and shape both European and Chinese travel texts. Ethnography—the encounter, observation and representation of a cultural 'Other' by a traveller from the 'core', the cultural centre—is a feature of travel writing across cultures. Through comparison, the features of travel and ethnographic writing, which were not only specific to the European imperial experience, can be identified. In this chapter, I compare the way Chinese and European travellers approached ethnographical writing during their travels through China.

The introductory quote provides one example of the Chinese 'gaze', reflecting the complexities of early modern travels and encounters. Written by a European who travelled to China to observe and describe the 'foreign' Chinese, here is an instance where the gaze is reversed. Instead of Pereira being the sole gazer and ethnographer of the Chinese, he also inadvertently records the inquisitive 'gaze' cast upon him by Chinese audiences, studying the curious Portuguese newcomers, interviewing Pereira about his origins and his home culture. This situation entails a plurality of positions, bringing into question which group is observing and which is being observed. As a suspected vagrant, recently imprisoned, the Portuguese traveller is now the recipient of curious glances. Such instances demonstrate that early modern European travellers noticed that other cultures were 'gazing' too, destabilizing earlier historical narratives of Europeans being unique in their ethnographic curiosity and observation of the outside world.

This chapter focuses on the ethnographic aspect of the travel texts, when writers observed and described the unfamiliar peoples and cultures which they encountered. Travelling through Ming China meant crossing a multiplicity of borders, including topographical, political, linguistic and cultural borders. The European travellers were concerned with giving an account of their travels, but even more importantly, recording an overview of the land, the Chinese and their customs. Ethnographic forms of writing were a

[4] Steve Clark, 'Introduction', in *Asian Crossings: Travel Writing on China, Japan and Southeast Asia,* ed. by Steve Clark and Paul Smethurst (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2008), pp. 1-14 (p. 3).
[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid.

more marginal concern for late-Ming literati travellers, but they do exist and will be discussed here.

The introduction of Chinese travel texts introduces another voice into the scholarship on early modern ethnography, challenging the assumption of travel, observing and ethnographic writing as being solely the prerogative of the European traveller. Laura Hostetler's *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (2001) and Emma Teng's *Taiwan's Imagined Geography: Chinese Colonial Travel Writing and Pictures (1683-1895)* (2004) argue that the Chinese methods of travel and ethnographical writing resembled those in early modern Europe. Looking specifically at the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), during which the territory of the Chinese empire vastly expanded, Hostetler and Teng studied the Chinese rhetorical strategies, cartographical methods and representations of non-Chinese 'others'. Hostetler and Teng conclude that early modern European and Chinese colonial discourses were very similar and that Qing China was essentially a non-Western imperial power, in a polycentric early modern world. Writing from the background of Western scholarship in which academic discourse conventionally focuses on European colonisers expanding their territories overseas, Hostetler and Teng argue for the multiple processes of imperialism taking place throughout the early modern world, with China providing a case study for comparison with and contrast to the European example.

I compare European and Chinese travel writing and ethnography in a different historical context. Hostetler and Teng compare Qing China—a land empire and colonizer, with the European colonisation process at its peak during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In contrast, this chapter compares European and Chinese ethnographies in a period just preceding these eras. While early modern Spain and Portugal had already expanded overseas in parts of America and Africa, their experience in China contrasted greatly from their missionary and imperial endeavours elsewhere. The power structures present in China allowed European travellers to be present as guests and dignitaries, but it would be a stretch to refer to them as 'colonisers' attempting to gain control of China. Likewise, in contrast to Qing China, the late-Ming era is not conventionally seen as an age of imperial expansionism. If anything, this period is viewed as a lull between two eras of outwards expansion, sandwiched between the historical event of the Admiral Zheng He's maritime voyages towards Asia and Africa in the early fifteenth century, and the Kangxi

Emperor's (r. 1661-1722) cartographical project of his empire,[7] and subsequent territorial expansion.

Nevertheless, this was a period when travel flourished—Europeans and Chinese travellers journeyed through China, observing the land, climate, cities, topography, the people and their customs. This in turn provides an unconventional historical context to study the ethnographic elements in travel texts. Unconventional because this time period distances the present discussion from the usual discourse informed by the European colonial experience. Most discussions of ethnographic travel assume that European writers were in a position of ethnographic authority, resulting from 'contingent institutional conditions which provided the narrative framework for a privileged position in the representation of non-European societies.'[8] However, this study offers a time and place where European travellers were not privileged politically, socially or economically. I argue instead that both Chinese and European travel writers of this study were writing from within separate travel cultures and epistemes, in which they enjoyed a position of privilege and cultural confidence, as educated and cultured elites of status and means. The point of comparison here is not a European and a non-European 'other'. Both Chinese and European travel writers perceived themselves as coming from a cultural centre which provided them with a strong, defined and assured sense of 'self' at the start of their journey, lending them ethnographical language and narrative strategies to depict 'others' in the travel text. As will be demonstrated however, the negotiation between 'self' and 'other' is quite complex in practice, and was subject to renegotiations.

This unconventionality of comparative source material comes with its own challenges. Much of the terminology surrounding travel writing and encounters with foreign countries and people has been influenced by the European experience of overseas travel and the colonial experience. Here the voice of the Chinese travel writer serves as a transcultural counterpart to the early modern European traveller. While the chapter will still subscribe to a framework and terminology that is deeply rooted in the European experience, the intention is to introduce a greater diversity of material, voices and perspectives to the debate, on how intercultural encounters and writing about other cultures

[7] Cordell D.K. Yee, 'Traditional Chinese Cartography and the Myth of Westernization', in *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 2, Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. by J.B. Harley and David Woodward, 6 vols (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987-2016), II (1994), pp. 170-202, (pp. 184-85).

[8] Babak Rahimi, 'From Assorted to Assimilated Ethnography', in *Unravelling Civilisation: European Travel and Travel Writing*, ed. by Hagen Schulz-Forberg (Brussels: Peter Lang, 2005), pp. 107-28 (p. 109).

took place in the early modern world. These phenomena could, of course, be understood and evaluated in isolation from one another. However, a comparative approach allows us to consider travel and encounters as an intercultural, global experience, where each culture was grappling with a method to evaluate and understand cultural diversity, positing the questions of how cultures differ, what made a culture unique, and the more challenging question of why this difference mattered. At times, the encounter forced travellers to re-examine preconceived notions, such as their notions of 'self' and 'other'. Knowledge once taken for granted was cast into doubt when faced with other knowledge systems and epistemologies. The parallel readings of works from two different traditions allow for a more nuanced understanding of early modern intercultural encounters, reflecting an early modern world that was occupied by a multitude of voices and experiences.

Travel writers of the early modern period were jack-of-all-trades, shouldering the roles of geographer, ethnographer, historian and poet all at once. Anthropologists acknowledge that in the early periods of the genre, ethnographers were usually travellers engaged in organised ethnographic activity.[9] Early modern and late-Ming texts can be characterised as 'ethnographic' because of the presence of the traveller in the group under discussion and the relative distance that travellers maintained in their writings.[10] The texts I refer to as 'ethnography' in this section do not correspond with modern definitions of ethnography, a field that has become well-defined and highly methodological, emphasizing the 'close and prolonged observation of a particular social group [...] to record in detail particular events and actions from the everyday life of the group.'[11] While early modern and late-Ming ethnographies fall short of present-day definitions, their travel texts are of ethnographic and historical value, demonstrating the genre's early beginnings and revealing preconceptions, prejudices and perceptions of Chinese and European travellers in a time when contacts with cultural foreigners were gradually intensifying.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first establishes the regions which the travellers journeyed to and the cultures which they described. The second addresses the writers' rhetorical approaches, such as tropes of 'eyewitness accounts' and the reliance on extant texts to provide complete accounts to the audience, discussing how these approaches

[9] J.S. Slotkin, 'Foreword', in *Readings in Early Anthropology*, ed. by J.S. Slotkin (New York: Viking Fund Publications, 1965), pp. v-vi (p. xi).
[10] David Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step by Step* (Los Angeles: Sage Publishing, 1998), p. 3.
[11] Andrew Edgar, 'Ethnography', in *Key Concepts in Cultural Theory*, ed. by Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 133.

worked together in early modern and late-Ming travel texts. The third section contemplates the travel writers' perceptions of cultural difference, examining how travellers defined, classified and represented cultural 'others'. I argue that the writing of foreign cultures was for both Chinese and European travellers a reflection and negotiation of the self and their home contexts: an evaluation of the cultural centre through the contemplation of the periphery.

4.2 Travel Territories

Wang Shixing and Xu Xiake journeyed through much of Ming China in their lifetimes. Wang travelled to fourteen out of the fifteen provinces of China, on various official postings. Xu visited thirteen of the fifteen provinces and undertook a prolonged journey to the southwest. Both were productive writers, describing famous sites, the geography of each region and their personal encounters with different cultures.

Although these Chinese travellers remained within Ming China's territorial boundaries, sections of their works can be considered as ethnographic records of a variety of peoples and cultural practices. Xu travelled to the regions of southwest China, to the provinces of Guangxi and Yunnan, home to a diverse array of peoples, which the Chinese termed *yi* 夷, which can be translated into 'non-Chinese', 'foreign' or even 'barbarian'. Xu's diary entries of his southwest travels are a departure from his usual style and content. In most of his travel diary, the focus is on travelling through landscapes (particularly mountains), and his personal reflections on the landscape. When travelling through the more established, Chinese populated regions of China, he scarcely mentions the locals. His southwestern texts on the other hand, though still chiefly recording his mobility through the landscape, are scattered with references to the locals and the political situation. This is reflective of the unusualness of the southwest for Xu—as the final frontier of Chinese culture and political rule, an amalgamation of non-Chinese tribes living amongst Han-Chinese peoples and officials.[12] While the encounters with locals in the centre may have been too banal, the encounters in the periphery and the socio-political context were experiences that Xu found worth mentioning.

[12] C. Patterson Giersch, *Asian Borderlands: The Transformation of Qing China's Yunnan Frontier* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), p. 17.

The southwestern frontier, consisting of the provinces Guizhou, southern Sichuan and Yunnan were later additions to the Chinese empire, geographically mountainous and largely inaccessible. From 1400 onwards, the region transformed from a poorly understood and scarcely visited periphery into an important part of the Ming Empire through economic commercialisation and introducing Han-Chinese migrants into the region.[13] Despite this, the political centre only had loose connections to these regions, vesting authority to indigenous leaders known as *tusi* 土司, which resulted in the political and cultural isolation of the southwest from the rest of China, with people living independently from the laws of the centre.[14] The Ming dynasty technically claimed the territory by adhering to a low-cost system with the *tusi* pledging loyalty to the emperor, though in reality, *tusis* wielded much power over the region.[15] In the minds of most late-Ming Chinese, this area was 'foreign' country. Chinese travellers were moving amidst groups which they perceived as cultural foreigners. Travel writing and descriptions of these people and places saw travel writers grappling with concepts of 'difference' and a formation of the categories 'home' and 'foreign'.

Wang Shixing's descriptions of the inhabitants of Ming China by region are of ethnographic interest. With a population of 160 to 200 million[16] and spanning an area roughly equivalent to Western Europe, the Ming Chinese themselves were hardly homogenous, with great variety in regional customs, diets, habits, and spoken language. Wang positioned himself as an 'objective outsider', writing about the people from different regions, recording their produce, trade, occupations, customs, diet and culture. Wang was interested in the relationship between people and their geography, spending a considerable portion of *Interpretation of Vast Travels* suggesting a causal relationship between human culture and their environment to account for the vast differences between the various regions of China. This resembled the intellectual trends in Europe during the second half of the eighteenth century, when thinkers systematically organised the natural world, linking local geography to cultural differences. He divided his text into several fascicles, including the two capitals—Beijing and Nanjing,[17] the four provinces of Jiangbei, north of the

[13] Ibid., p. 34.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Nicolas Standaert, 'The Transmission of Renaissance Culture in Seventeenth Century China', in *Asian Travel in the Renaissance*, ed. by Daniel Carey (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 42-66 (p. 44).
[17] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], pp. 203-22.

Yangtze River (Henan, Shaanxi, Shandong and Shanxi),[18] the provinces of Jiangnan, south of the Yangtze River (Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Huguang and Guangdong)[19] and the provinces of the Southwest (Sichuan, Guangxi, Yunnan and Guizhou).[20] Wang would dedicate several pages to brief descriptions of each province and its inhabitants.

The earliest sixteenth-century European travellers to China had minimal information about the country and its culture. Information was derived from classical writings and Marco Polo's *Travels*, reflecting a medieval perspective of China, in which the East was portrayed as a mysterious, earthly paradise, lacking clearly delineated geographical boundaries.[21] Early modern travel writers defined China for their readers, accounting for its geographic location and boundaries. Ricci introduced China to his European readers by referencing familiar historical and geographic appellations of the Far East.

> This most distant empire of the Far East has been known to Europeans under various names. The most ancient of these appellations is Sina, by which it was known in the time of Ptolemy. In later days in was called Cathay by Marco Polo, the Venetian traveller who first made Europeans fairly well acquainted with the empire. Nor again have I any doubt that this is the country referred to as the Land of Silk (Serica region), for nowhere in the Far East except in China that it is not only worn by all the inhabitants of the country.[22]

Since even the geographical location was not common knowledge, sixteenth-century European travellers had only fuzzy ideas about Chinese culture and what to expect there.[23] Scholars have spoken of 'remote ancient lands newly apprehended in southern and eastern Asia' during the sixteenth century.[24] This was certainly so for European travellers to China, who perceived the region as being known to Europe since antiquity, but found themselves coming to a new and more profound understanding upon disembarking at the ports in south China. China in the late-sixteenth century was a dynasty showing initial

[18] Ibid., pp. 223-62.
[19] Ibid., pp. 263-300.
[20] Ibid., pp. 301-29
[21] Folker E. Reichert, *Begegnungen mit China: Die Entdeckung Ostasiens im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen: Thorbecke, 1992), p. 10.
[22] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century,* p.5.
[23] Standaert, 'Renaissance Culture', p. 43.
[24] Margaret L. King, 'A Return to the Ancient World?', in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern European History, 1350-1750:Volume 2: Cultures and Power*, ed. by Hamish Scott, 2 vols (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 3-25 (p. 25).

signs of strains, which would lead to its gradual decline and eventual collapse in 1644. However, when the European travel writers arrived it was a prosperous region, with many urban centres and a booming cultural and economic life.[25] The system of bureaucracy and governance was highly complex and organised, with scholar-officials dealing with finance, taxation, laws, public works and education. Passages from travel texts demonstrate that European impressions of China were generally favourable, praising the refinement and civility of the Chinese. In their ethnographic texts, attention was paid towards describing the degree of political organisation, the manufacture, produce and commerce of China, embellishing the text with praise. Positive appraisements were however balanced with the assessment that the Chinese were 'heathen' and needed European intervention to guide them on the correct religious path.

Regarding travel mobility, most Iberian travellers were confined to the coastal provinces of Canton and Fujian, where the Ming administration tolerated the presence of foreigners. Galeote Pereira wrote about a longer stay in 1549 in Fujian where he and the rest of the crew were captured by Chinese coast-defence commanders, travelling from Quanzhou to Fuzhou where they were imprisoned for over a year, until he was smuggled to safety.[26] Gaspar da Cruz was present in Canton for several months in 1556 until his departure when local authorities did not grant permission for a longer stay. Martin de Rada was in the Fujian province of South China from July to October 1575. Although the travellers could only directly observe the peoples and customs of southern China, this did not hinder them from producing ethnographic texts describing China and the Chinese. This chapter demonstrates that to compensate for their inability to make headway into the vast interior of Ming China, they based their writings on information from Chinese acquaintances and Chinese geographical works, substantiating the limited geographical scope of their travels.

Due to mobility restrictions, most early modern European travellers barely skimmed the surface of Ming China. An exception was Matteo Ricci, who spent decades in China, making contacts with officials who granted him the permission to make his way further inland. In 1600, eighteen years after first landing in China, Ricci arrived in the capital Beijing. Ricci's years of living in China, fluency in the language and his contacts with local authorities set his texts apart from contemporaneous European travellers, an

[25] Brook, *Confusions of Pleasure*, p. 101.
[26] Boxer, 'Introduction', pp. l-lv.

asset which Trigault, the compiler of Ricci's texts strongly emphasized in his foreword to Ricci's diaries.

This chapter outlines noteworthy parallels observed through comparing Chinese and European travel texts. Firstly, the rhetorical device of eyewitness accounts and personal experience were emphasized in the Chinese and European texts alike, promising their audiences truthful and accurate descriptions. Nevertheless, it was apparent that besides first-hand experience, travellers used a range of sources to supplement their accounts. Secondly, ethnographic writing compelled travellers to define a cultural 'other' in relation to their own 'core' or home context. Travellers' ethnographic texts reflected their own views on culture and civilisation, and also reflected the anxieties of their cultural 'centres'.

4.3 'Eyewitness Accounts'

A comparison of the travel texts yields illuminating insights into the travel writers' narrative strategies. European and Chinese ethnographic texts of this era adhered to the rhetoric of direct observation and experience. The trope of the traveller-as-eyewitness is introduced at the very beginning of the travel text. Since broad and comprehensive geographic and ethnographic works were favoured in this period, a methodological approach emerged: first-hand travel information was corroborated with historical records, or hearsay from acquaintances, to achieve a 'complete' account. Additionally, a wide variety of narrative voices appear in the accounts. While some writers adopt the voice of a distant, objective observer, others use the first-person, emphasising the first-hand experience of travel and movement whilst also describing personal interaction with foreign culture. There are also moments of intrusive narration in the text, where the author abruptly switches to the first-person from third-person to expound on his personal experience, in an attempt to assure his audience of the truthfulness and accuracy of his account.

Nicolas Trigault's introduction to Ricci's diaries emphatically mentioned the pioneering nature of the book, first published in Augsburg in 1615. He stresses the Jesuits' first-hand observation—a necessary trope by then—and emphasizes that the Jesuits could provide a more detailed, accurate and culturally informed account than others, for they understood the Chinese culture and lived amongst the Chinese.

> Although many books are circulating through Europe concerning these same topics, I am of the opinion that it will not bore anyone to hear these same things from our companions. We have been living in China for well-nigh thirty years and have travelled through its most important provinces. Moreover, we have lived in friendly intercourse with the nobles, the supreme magistrates and the most distinguished men of letters in the kingdom. We speak the native language of the country, have set ourselves to the study of their customs and laws and finally, what is of the highest importance, we have devoted ourselves day and night to the perusal of their literature. These advantages were, of course, entirely lacking to writers who never at any time penetrated into this alien world. Consequently, they were writing about China, not as eyewitnesses, but from hearsay and depending upon the trustworthiness of others.[27]

Ricci's text can be read as early modern ethnography. It emphasises living amongst the Chinese, and learning about China through immersion in Chinese society, according to the Jesuit's practice of cultural assimilation. That their accounts were derived from living amongst the Chinese for decades, dressing like them, understanding the culture and literature sets them apart from the run-of-the-mill travel accounts on China that were available to European readers. In 1615, when Ricci's account was first published, the best-known travel text about China was Juan Gonzalez de Mendoza's *Historia de las cosas más notables, ritos y costumbres del gran reyno de la China* [1585], its information provided by travellers to China such as da Cruz, de Rada and Pereira, who stayed for merely several months. They were heavily restricted to travelling only in the provinces of Canton and Fujian in South China, and had limited proficiency in the language, relying instead on go-betweens.[28]

Trigault, aware of the uniqueness of the Jesuit experience in China, keenly emphasised the text's originality to convince its readers about its reliability. More importantly, they were introducing a new method of understanding and writing about the Chinese. Complete immersion into the culture and living amongst the local population was a strategy of the Jesuit missions, to communicate with and proselytise the 'heathen' by blending into their culture and silently incorporating their cultural peculiarities into

[27] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 4.
[28] Ibid., p. xi.

Christianity.[29] The Jesuits present a linear process of first living in and travelling through China, then making contacts with scholars and officials. To intensify their knowledge of the land and its culture, they learnt the native language and studied its customs, laws and literature. While this is a highly simplistic summary of the Jesuit mission in China, which was a series of small progressions coupled with sporadic setbacks,[30] Trigault, the compiler of the text portrays the natural progression of the ethnographer, who first enters the country as a stranger, then interacts with the local population and observes their behaviour, before learning the language and customs, and finally gaining insight into their culture.[31]

In reality, a reading of Ricci and Trigault's general ethnographic observations of Chinese customs, people, products, and the organisation of the Chinese state bears strong similarities in structure and content to the reports of earlier travel writers—arranging their text according to the genre conventions of overseas travel reports. Ricci is able to give more detail about Chinese ideographs, the stylistic differences between the written and spoken language, and Chinese books and philosophy, which earlier writers hardly broached. The Jesuits had markedly different observations on certain similar topics. For instance, Ricci criticises Chinese architecture in a section titled *Concerning the Mechanical Arts*, stating, 'Chinese architecture is in every way inferior to that of Europe with respect to the style and durability of their buildings [...] [The Chinese] gauge things by the span of human life, rather than for posterity.'[32] The tone of the section is critical of the quality of Chinese buildings, the simplicity of Chinese printing and the lack of perspective in their paintings. Ricci judges this as resulting from Chinese cultural pride, 'Their pride it would seem arises from an ignorance of the existence of higher things and from the fact that they find themselves far superior to the barbarous nations by which they are surrounded.'[33] By describing their mechanical arts as rudimentary and poorly made, Ricci draws connections to the state of Chinese spirituality, criticising them for being only concerned with the temporal, unaware of a higher power. Ricci's judgement of Chinese architecture differs completely from da Cruz's praise of the houses in Canton:

> The houses of the magistrates are very sumptuous at the entrances, with high portals, great and well wrought of mason's work […] the houses of the common

[29] Fontana, *Matteo Ricci*, p. 6.
[30] R. Po-Chia Hsia, 'Promise: China', in *A Companion to the Reformation World*, ed. by R. Po-Chia Hsia (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), pp. 375-92, (p. 376-77).
[31] Edgar, 'Ethnography', p.133.
[32] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 20.
[33] Ibid., p. 23.

> people in the outward show are not ordinarily very fair, but within are much to be admired; for commonly they are white as milk […] they are paved with square stones […] the timber is all very smooth and very even […] I confess, in truth, that I never saw so fine timber as this.[34]

When drawing parallels, between European and Chinese buildings, da Cruz suggests 'all the houses are tiled with very good tiles, better and more durable than ours are; for besides they being very well made, they are of very good clay.'[35] The contrast between Ricci and da Cruz's observations is difficult to reconcile, and could be a textual reflection of Ricci's frustrations due to obstacles met along the course of the Jesuit mission. Despite both emphasizing their reliability as eyewitnesses, asymmetries exist. In cases where European audiences faced contrasting accounts, the Jesuit accounts could have appealed more due to Trigault's earlier assurance that the Jesuits lived in China for decades and were more learned and knowledgeable about China than earlier travellers.

What Ricci and Trigault also offer that is ground-breaking due to their mobility within China and contacts with the local elites, are accounts of conversation and interactions of the officials and literati—something that the Iberian travellers to China a few decades prior were unable to provide. For instance, they provided accounts of discussion and debate with Chinese guests at the Jesuit Mission House, such as the Chinese reception of Ricci's renowned *Mappamundi*.

> Hanging on the wall of the reception room in the Mission House there was a cosmographical chart of the universe, done with European lettering. The more learned among the Chinese admired it very much and, when they were told that it was both a view and a description of the entire world, they became greatly interested in seeing the same thing done in Chinese. Of all the great nations, the Chinese have had the least commerce, indeed, one might say that they have had practically no contact whatsoever with outside nations, and consequently they are grossly ignorant of what the world in general is like. […] So the Governor consulted with Father Matthew Ricci and asked him, as he expressed it, if he, with

[34] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 97-99
[35] Ibid., pp. 99-100.

the help of his interpreter, would make his map speak Chinese, assuring him that such a work would bring him great credit and favor with everyone.[36]

This celebratory account of the *Mappamundi* is unfairly dismissive in its assessment of Chinese knowledge of the world. Nevertheless, it shows that through contact and cultural immersion, the Jesuits could present themselves in dialogue with the Chinese. This provided them with insights that previous travellers were not privy to, such as the Chinese view of the world and Chinese interest in cartographical representations. While the Iberian travellers briefly described the system of Chinese administration, Ricci could describe this in detail, providing information about the Exchequer, the Court of Rites, the Military Court, the Commission of Public Works and Buildings and the Hanlin Academy, which he describes in a tone of praise,

> Members of this cabinet have nothing to do with public administration but outrank all public officials in dignity of office […] These are the King's secretaries, who do both his writing and his composing. They edit and compile the royal annals and publish the laws and statues of the land. The tutors of kings and princes are chosen from their number. They are entirely devoted to study and there are grades within the cabinet which are determined by the publications of its members.[37]

Similarly, the Chinese travel writers emphasized their eyewitness accounts, and their experiences of travelling and living in different provinces. Such properties granted the writer additional authority to write texts about the regions in question. Unlike the European travel writers, whose assignments in China entailed observing the Chinese people and culture for the purpose of fulfilling further goals of trade and mission, ethnography was not a key priority of Chinese travel writers. Despite this, travellers such as Wang Shixing was personally interested in ethnography and organised his travel account accordingly, describing the geography, customs and peoples of the different regions in China.

Wang's *Interpretation of Vast Travels* consists of six volumes, which he organised with close adherence to the structure of local gazetteers, an important source material for Wang. For example, Wang's description of the provinces north of the Yellow River 江北四省 in the third volume commences by describing the region's history across the various

[36] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 65
[37] Ibid., p. 50.

dynasties, from the Zhou dynasty (1100-256 B.C.E.) to the present day. Wang describes it as the cradle of Chinese civilisation: 'since ancient times, this was designated as the central plains, it is the birthplace and hometown of the ancient sages, and still one can feel the customs and spirit 風 of yore.'[38] He then proceeds to describe the region's rivers, climate, and topography, outlining its various mountain ranges. He also describes the major cities, the practices and products of the people. 'The Bian City 汴城 is the richest of the other eight cities in the region, there are many attractive and beautiful youths, their people are crafty in their ways.'[39] Of crafts and products, he describes the city of Suzhou in another volume. 'The people of Suzhou are intelligent and they love antiques, and they are particularly skilled in the creation of fake antiques, and copying calligraphy and paintings, as well as at tempering ancient, sacrificial vessels. Indeed, they are so skilled, than one can hardly tell the differences between their creations and the original.'[40] Wang puts on the ethnographer's lens, detailing and recording customs of people across the wide range of the Chinese empire.

Wang Shixing uses the eyewitness trope and boasts of his impressive travels in his foreword to *Interpretation of Vast Travels*, asserting 'I have already traversed the five mountains within the seas, and journeyed through all the famous mountains and valleys of the lands which I administered, if I were to record all the essays and poems from those travels here, I would dry out the pages.'[41] He criticises contemporaneous travel accounts which 'make use of their ears as their mouth, committing false accounts to paper.'[42] Wang even claims that his account is absolutely truthful, 'there is no denying my words, for I have personally seen and heard all this, had I not I would rather have omitted it.'[43] Here, emphasis is placed on the travellers' accountability, and actual physical presence in each region. Though eyewitness accounts and personal experience are valued, in actuality, Wang was only resident in each region for several years, before moving to his subsequent official posting. In-depth research of the peoples and regions recorded in his account was not really possible. Just as the eyewitness trope was a rhetorical tool in European travel accounts to sound more authoritative, it also occurred in the Chinese accounts. Given the wide proliferation of travel accounts in the late-Ming period, this was one way for travel

[38] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 233.
[39] Ibid., p. 325.
[40] Ibid.
[41] Ibid., p. 184.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid.

writers to set themselves apart from the masses of travel texts produced in the same period.[44]

Assurance to the reader in the foreword was scarcely enough to convince the audience of their presence in China. Authors used techniques of intrusive narration to confirm the empirical evidence that they were supplying. Although the travel texts are largely written in third-person narration, maintaining a distance between the traveller-ethnographer and the source material, moments of intrusive narration occur in both Wang and Ricci's texts. To give evidence of their actual presence in the places which they were describing, they mention themselves at appropriate intervals, as a rhetorical method of adding credence to their accounts.

Wang's *Interpretation* was predominantly written in the third person, with interjections at intervals to highlight areas where his personal experience could further affirm his narrative. When Wang attested to the wealth of certain regions, he highlights his posting there to add weight to his claims, 'No provincial warehouse in China exceeds the wealth of that of Sichuan. In 1588,[45] I was posted to Sichuan and was assigned to supervising the state provincial warehouse, which had a store of eight million taels (of silver). In contrast, counties such as Chengdu and Chongqing do not even have stores of 200,000 taels.'[46] Wang's role as a government official gave him privileged access to provincial information. Intrusive narration also occurs when the writers doubted earlier accounts and sources. In this case, they enter the narrative and describe to the reader their process of verifying the truthfulness and accuracy of earlier knowledge. Wang Shixing uses this when casting doubt upon the conventional knowledge about the flow of the river, recalling,

> I was travelling though Hanzhong [a city in Shaanxi] 漢中. I passed the temple of Great Yu and enquired after the sources of the Han River [a tributary of the Yangtze River].[47] For I saw a section of the river coming from Luoyang 洛陽 and its currents were so strong and rapid, that I do not know how the small lake 漾

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[44] Wei, *Wanming lüyou* [Late-Ming Tourism], p. 33.
[45] In Wang's text, 戊子, the 25th year of the 60 year cycle, approximately 1588.
[46] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 192.
[47] Xu's enquiry was based on the Yü-gong 禹貢 [Tribute of Yu], one of the Five Classics of Chinese literature, a chorography of the ancient Chinese empire. See Florian C. Reiter, 'Change and Continuity in Historical Geography: Chang Huang's (1527-1608) Reflections on the Yü-kung', *Asia Major*, 3.1 (1990), 129-41.

> could possibly be its source, hence I began to doubt it. I then read *Complete Records of an Exiled Man* 丹鉛總錄[48] and realised that there was once the West and East Han River, which I will now quote from.[49]

Wang then quotes from the text which provides evidence of two Han Rivers—the West and East Han Rivers, making the knowledge gained from the canonical geographical classic *The Tribute of Yu* plausible. Here, intrusive narration is used to supply eyewitness account and to show the travellers efforts at reconciling eyewitness accounts with earlier, learned knowledge. In his travel accounts, Wang has the rhetorical authority to raise doubts on geographical facts about the regions that he personally visited, adding to existing knowledge by cross-referencing, and either verifying or debunking earlier, well-known texts.

Ricci's text also featured intrusive narration to emphasize the validity of his eyewitness accounts. When he describes the Imperial Palace in Peking, he emphasized his role as an eyewitness when detailing the palace's immensity and splendour.[50] As an eyewitness, he could authoritatively debunk popular misconceptions about the Palace held by European audiences. Ricci narrates, '[t]he roof and tiling of the palace are also done in yellow and with various paintings of dragons. This has probably given rise to the story that the tiling of the palace is all of brass or gold. This I can assert to be a mere legend, because I have examined the painted tiles myself.'[51] Through intrusive narration, Ricci appears in the text as an eyewitness, debunking myths perpetuated by earlier narratives, emphasizing his ability to offer a more accurate account of China, providing empirical information to replace ungrounded tales of the fantastic.

Despite the obligatory rhetorical tropes of eyewitness accounts, travel writers were limited in terms of time and resources. Although the eyewitness-as-author was undoubtedly the desired state of affairs in the rhetorical framework of early modern European and late-Ming Chinese travel texts, this differed in practice. Writing in intellectual climates where travel texts were popular and commonplace, these writers

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[48] This encyclopaedic collection was written by Ming scholar Yang Shen 楊慎 (1488-1559) during his lengthy exile in Yunnan. In this vast volume is a collection of various themes, ranging from astrology to geography, from history to biographies, from botany to zoology. For brief information about his life and works, see *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, Part 1,* ed. by William H. Nienhauser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 912-14.
[49] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 235.
[50] Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 69.
[51] Ibid.

sought to differentiate themselves and their texts. European and Chinese travel writers alike aimed to produce works of great breadth, which is quickly apparent when noting the titles and the length of the travel books. Wang Shixing ambitiously includes nearly all the provinces of China into *Interpretation of Vast Travels*, incidentally his final travel account, while actually lifting many sections from gazetteers and geographical writings.

Da Cruz titles his work *Treatise in which the things of China are related at great length, with their particularities.* The name, the geographical location and organisation of the empire, the architecture, agriculture, customs, justice system, rites and religious practices are documented in twenty-nine chapters, an impressive feat for someone only present in China in the winter of 1556. Da Cruz could hardly have come to such an in-depth understanding of the country based on personal experience, despite informing his readers that the '[things of China] must be seen and not heard, because hearing is nothing in comparison with seeing it'.[52] Travel writers were promising more information than what was realistically possible for individual travellers to gain in a lifetime, much less a few months. Supplementary information, derived from regional histories and gazetteers were needed to create a more complete account about China and its inhabitants.

A fascinating similarity between the Chinese and European texts was the overlap in the textual material that these traveller-ethnographers consulted. For example, the local gazetteer was a key source of information for both Chinese and European travellers. Martin de Rada clarified at the very beginning of his account:

> [t]he things which we will treat herein concerning this kingdom will be part of them seen with our own eyes, part taken from their own printed books and descriptions of their country, because they take an interest in themselves; for not only do they have general and particular descriptions of their country, but printed books thereof, wherein are described in detail all the provinces, cities, towns and frontier posts and garrisons, and all the particularities thereof.[53]

De Rada is describing the provincial histories and gazetteers providing maps and regional information. These books provided de Rada with abundant information on Chinese society and local life. Local gazetteers for instance, were cumulative records of an administrative

[52] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 56-57.
[53] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 261.

unit (such as a province) published by local authorities covering the topics of geography, political and social institutions, population, taxes, literature.[54] Such information was of interest to de Rada's intended audience, the Spanish imperial administrators surveying the potential of establishing overseas territories in different bases in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Since de Rada was only in the Fujian province from July to October 1575, his experience and knowledge of China was limited, as he himself admitted early in his book.[55] His personal narrative of the mission is short, for the entourage was hampered by bureaucracy and unable to travel much further than their initial point of landing. What he saw therefore, was specific to the port city of Amoy in Fujian.

Chinese sources augmented European travellers' eyewitness accounts, filling in gaps about the regions which they had never set foot on and granting them access to detailed local information found in gazetteers. As a scholarly reflex, de Rada turned to available local information to supplement his limited eyewitness knowledge. However, he found this a less-than-ideal compromise. De Rada warns his readers that Chinese scholarship was wanting in precision and reliability. 'They are a people who know very little geography, geometry, or even arithmetic, they draw their illustrations very crudely, and even their distances and circuits very falsely, so that it is impossible to reconcile them in many places.'[56] Though de Rada amends the figures to make them more plausible according to his own experience, he leaves the work of the 'truth' about China to future travellers.[57] The eyewitness trope here is effective in lending de Rada rhetorical authority. By virtue of having personally visited China, he could claim to improve upon the Chinese sources, adjusting figures and facts to match his personal experience and perception. At the same time, de Rada insists that written sources were not a viable alternative to actually having seen, travelled and surveyed, arguing that the 'truth' could only be discovered through lengthier and more thorough travels through China.

Likewise, Chinese travellers depended on supplementary information to guide their travels and to write thorough accounts of the regions which they were concerned with. In travel accounts, they make mention of the guides and gazetteers used to orientate themselves. Wang frequently referred to local gazetteers and famed literary works for the specific regional histories, often directly quoting from them. This was common practice in

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[54] See Dennis, *Gazetteers in Imperial China* for a detailed study on the genre.
[55] Boxer, 'Introduction', p. xvii.
[56] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 261.
[57] Ibid.,

late-Ming geographical writing.[58] Literati travellers collected and read gazetteers on their travels, then subsequently utilised gazetteers as the basis for their own geographical anthologies and travel texts on famous mountains and scenic spots.[59] The travel writers made these texts their own, by appending their personal analysis and interpretation of the regions from their travels. For instance, in a section on Sichuan in the southwest, Wang Shixing quotes 'The Chronicles of Huayang[60] claims that the barbarians settled in this land, and for one hundred *li*, no one dared to live or herd.'[61] Wang also quotes from famous literary sources which mention the region, such as a poem from the acclaimed Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai 'The Road to Shu is hard, harder than climbing to the heavens'.[62]

In Wang's descriptions of regional practices, he does not always supply his sources, but comparison to extant gazetteers from the Ming period reveals these to the modern reader. He declares at the start of his text that 'I have yet to set foot into Fujian, but I hope that I shall be able to in the near future',[63] indicating a gap in empirical knowledge. Although he refrains from dedicating a section to Fujian, the one province which is notably missing from his empire-wide account, he still mentions the province and features of its inhabitants at various points in his text, such as the comparison of seafood consumption: 'In China,[64] the provinces of Fujian and Zhejiang slaughter the most creatures. Ningde, Taizhou, Wenzhou, Fuzhou, Quanzhou are situated on the coast and fish, prawns, clams and molluscs are consumed. These are so plentiful that when caught by hand the harvest can fill up bamboo baskets and the variety is uncountable; what more when a net is cast across the water?'[65] Wang directly quotes from a number of gazetteers, in this case, from the empire-wide *Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming* 大明一統志, published in 90 *juan* between 1408 and 1466.[66]

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[58] Dennis, *Local Gazetteers*, p. 251.
[59] Ibid., p. 4.
[60] The Chronicles of Huayang 華陽國志 is one of the oldest extant gazetteers of China, describing the history, geography and peoples of Sichuan.
[61] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 303.
[62] Ibid. The Road to *Shu* refers to ancient, treacherous mountain roads, joining the provinces of Shaanxi and Sichuan.
[63] Ibid., p. 189.
[64] Wang uses the Chinese term 天下，which literally means 'under heaven' and conventionally refers to China.
[65] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1155.
[66] Li Xian 李賢 and others, *Da Ming yitongzhi* 大明一統志 [Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming], 90 *juan* [1461].

Xu Xiake also depended on a range of gazetteers during his travels, and frequently recorded correcting lacunae and errors of printed books through his personal travel experience. While travelling through Guichao 歸朝, located between Fuzhou 富州 and Guishunzhou 歸順州, during his travels in Guangxi, Xu was momentarily confused, for information about this region was missing from the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, which typically provided the traveller with wide-ranging, encyclopaedic information about all districts and cities of the empire.[67] Whilst analysing inscriptions on a commemorative brass bell in a bell tower erected in 1591, Xu realised that this region was only assimilated into the Ming empire during the reign of the Wanli Emperor (r. 1573-1620), postdating the publication of the *Gazetteer*. With the official gazetteer being nearly two centuries old, changes to place names and the borders had to be verified by more up-to-date publications, or through personal travel experience. In his journeys to the southwest, Xu was particularly anxious to receive a current copy of the local gazetteer from the prefect of Guangxi prefecture, which took almost two weeks to deliver and considerably hampered the course of Xu's travels as he could not proceed further without the maps and guide in the gazetteer.[68] Xu's travel texts contain detailed information about the historical and political situation of the southwest, quoting from gazetteers and local officials.[69]

Despite travellers' insistent claims to having witnessed what they wrote about and even deriding hearsay for its inaccuracies, in this period, both Chinese and European travel traditions collated both personal observation and existing knowledge for their travel and ethnographic works. However, not all writers were keen to acknowledge this. Trigault and Wang openly derided those who based their accounts on 'hearsay and [...] the trustworthiness of others',[70] and those who 'make use of their ears as their mouths'.[71] Yet their reliance on other sources would be immediately apparent to discerning and thorough readers of their texts. An upfront declaration at the beginning of the text about referencing printed books and oral accounts, as de Rada did, was less common.

Therefore, having personally travelled to the region did not necessarily privilege Chinese and European travel writers to fascinating and novel insights. However, it gave them rhetorical authority to relate information to their audience, even if it was additional

[67] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1194.
[68] Ibid., pp. 1195-97.
[69] Ibid., p. 1205-06
[70] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 184.
[71] Ibid.

evidence gleaned from guidebooks or other sources. Personal travel experience was an assurance from the author to the reader of the truthfulness and the quality of their reports, allowing them to write ethnographies even when their own experiences were finite. Scholars on early modern Chinese ethnography noted a ‘dual structure of authority: eye witnessing and the textual record’.[72] The evidential scholar and compiler of travel texts was neither fully convinced by personal observation nor text, since both can be flawed by inaccuracies, rather ‘collation ensures greater reliability, with text confirming direct observation and direct observation verifying the written record. Text and experience thus guarantee each other's reliability.’[73]

Visual perception and personal experience was constantly reiterated and implied at the preface and throughout the text, reminding their audience that the authors were speaking from a position of knowledge. Furthermore, when claims required further support—travel writers used the method of intrusive narration to emphasise to the audience their first-hand experience and by extension, the truthfulness of their accounts. In travel accounts across both traditions, travel writers nearly always turned to existing scholarship to supplement their personal experiences. At the same time, they used personal observation to censor and edit existing texts, sometimes stripping earlier geographic texts and gazetteers of their authority by correcting them on the basis of their eyewitness experience. The end-product combines both aspects and claims to make them more accurate in this new configuration.

4.4 Conceptualising ‘Self’ and ‘Other’

Having contemplated the variety of ethnographic methods, I now examine the literary representation of foreign cultures in Chinese and European travel texts, considering how differences were perceived when travellers came into contact with other cultures. The travellers arrived at their destinations with ideological biases and specific goals which framed their understanding of the foreign culture. At the same time, travel writers faced a complex representational task of condensing the experience of travel amongst foreign cultures into a text with distinct categories, such as appearance, beliefs, language, customs, for their readers’ comprehension. This section is concerned with the ethnographic information that travellers selected and the way they organised and rhetorically represented

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[72] Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, p. 49.
[73] Ibid.

their ethnographies. It argues that such categories were a reflection of the travellers' understanding of what features were important to their own cultures, resulting in an assessment of foreign cultures based on such criteria.

Scholars studying ethnographies and 'othering' have suggested that foreignness is not an ontological category; that something is 'foreign' or 'different' does not imply any properties of what the culture actually 'is'.[74] Rather, it is a reflection of a new culture, in relation to the home culture of the ethnographer. It is a specific mode of cognition that crystallizes what the writer considers as the 'self'. That which is neither identified nor accepted as the 'self', is considered to be foreign.[75] With such a definition, one might assume that travel writers could possibly fall prey to the polarisation of cultures, with complexities being reduced to the simplistic binary of 'us' and 'them'. While there certainly was the concept of 'European' and 'Chinese' from the European perspective, and 'Chinese' and 'non-Chinese' with regards to the Chinese travellers, a look into the texts reveal the complexities of what these perceptions really meant during actual interactions with different cultures. There were moments where the ethnographer and traveller emphasized the foreignness and difference of the culture that they were coming into contact with, yet at other times, they were caught in the middle, struggling to make sense of just how foreign (or similar) other cultures were, based on the categories and criteria which they developed.

Contextualising ethnographic travel accounts requires attention to the writers' preconceptions of cultural difference: the knowledge and biases they brought with them on their travels, which either consciously or subconsciously made their way into their texts.[76] Much of this is shaped by their home culture, their own established markers of identity, and further reinforced by contemporaneous travel knowledge which informed the travellers about the regions they were heading to. Reading the texts in this light reveals why writers expressed surprise, tolerance, contempt or esteem in their representations of cultural 'others'. Travel writers had information and expectations which tempered what they expected to find when travelling to a foreign place and confronting a different culture. As Babak Rahimi eloquently puts it: 'The ethnographer as traveller defines the unfamiliar

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[74] Werner Röcke, 'Befremdliche Vertrautheit. Inversionen des Eigenen und des Fremden in der deutschen Literatur des 16. Jahrhunderts', in *Reisen über Grenzen: Kontakt und Konfrontation, Maskerade und Mimikry*, ed. by Renate Schlesier and Ulrike Zellmann (Münster: Waxmann, 2003), pp. 119-32 (p. 119).
[75] Ibid.
[76] Blanton, *Travel Writing*, pp. 2-6.

against a context of traditions and audiences, engaging in the narrative construction of the other in terms of his or her own culturally specific limited perception.'[77] Here, I also suggest that despite the travellers' limited perception, in the event of actually encountering the cultural 'other', there were ruptures between what travellers expected, and what they were actually confronted with. Nevertheless, initial expectations played a role in accounting for the tones and attitudes ultimately reflected on paper.

The Ming conception of China was of a domain defined by both natural geographic borders and the cultural boundaries between the civilized Chinese and surrounding barbarians.[78] During this period, the word *Han* 汉 was used to differentiate culturally Chinese peoples (shaped by and conveyed through the Chinese written language) from those with different ethnic and cultural backgrounds.[79] At the same time, literati travellers were highly aware of cultural differences, both amongst the Han-Chinese and the non-Han.[80] During his travel throughout China, Wang Shixing became aware of the many regional differences between the Han-Chinese and became interested in assessing the varying characteristics and practices of peoples from different provinces. Culinary habits, dress and the produce of the region were noteworthy features defining the cultural differences amongst the numerous Han-Chinese. Here he lists an example of the culinary diversity in the land.

> The people of Hainan eat fish and prawns, the northerners hate the smell of seafood. The people of the northwest eat cheese. The southerners detest the smell of mutton; people of Hebei consume peppers, onions, garlic and chives, those of Jiangnan fear the spice and pungency, yet these things they do not realise of themselves. These are the result of inherited habits of the water and soil, and we cannot compel all to be similar.[81]

Late-Ming writers had a sense of cultural relativity based on geography. Through juxtaposing different regional practices, they highlighted that the varying regional characteristics of the Han-Chinese were determined by differences in the 'water and soil'.[82]

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[77] Rahimi, 'Assimilated Ethnography', pp. 107-08.
[78] Teng, *Taiwan's Imagined Geography*, p. 238.
[79] Laura Hostetler, 'Introduction' in *The Art of Ethnography: A Chinese 'Miao Album'*, ed. by David Deal and Laura Hostetler (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), pp. i-xxx (p. xxv).
[80] Ibid.
[81] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 191.
[82] Xu, Shi, and Huang, *Wang Shixing zhuan* [Wang Shixing's Biography], p. 193.

Although these regions were connected by means of a shared written culture, local differences continued to persist and defined each region in contrast with others. Hence while cultural similitude was possible through shared language, customs and a centralised government, Wang concedes that cultural homogeneity was not attainable. 'We cannot compel all to be similar 不可强同' is a recurring phrase that appears at many points in the text, after Wang provides a summary of regional differences.

This statement reflects an awareness of extreme cultural difference within China, acknowledging that even cultural Chinese living in the heartlands of China differed greatly from one another. Accordingly, there was an inference of hyper-differentiation between the Chinese and the non-Chinese. If even the culturally civilised, written-script adopting Chinese could be so different because of their physical surroundings, by extension, those who did not adopt their cultural practices must be vastly different.

The 'barbarians' who lived in peripheral regions were perceived to be different, and were categorized and given different ethnonyms.[83] On his southwestern travels, Wang mentioned the many non-Han ethnic groups populating the southwest: 'Out of all the provinces, Yunnan is where all kinds of barbarians reside, spreading throughout each and every county, in this place the only Chinese people are those deployed to defensive garrisons.'[84] Wang then proceeds to name the 'one hundred types of barbarians 百夷',[85] listing the major non-Chinese ethnic groups of the region. Frontier regions were complex places that Han-Chinese officials found hostile, abhorrent and alien, as these were places where cultural identities merged and shifted, where their own identities were unstable.[86] The Chinese travellers conceived of these places and people as 'aliens', though their opinions of the non-Chinese were unstable, highly personal and subjective, as the examples will show.

In sixteenth-century Europe, numerous overseas missions were undertaken, reports about the 'New World' poured in by means of news pamphlets and books, drawing interest from European intellectual circles. The European knowledge of the world was constantly changing. This phenomenon had an effect on the European self-consciousness, resulting in

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[83] Hostetler, 'Introduction', in *Art of Ethnography*, p. xxv.
[84] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 321.
[85] Ibid.,
[86] Peter Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 41-42.

both a heightened awareness and reflection of what it meant to be European, and how one ought to define and represent non-Europeans.[87] Valerie Kivelson argues that even though the overseas travel affected how Europeans identified themselves, there were continuities from the medieval period that historiography has tended to ignore, favouring instead narratives that highlight reflections of identity as symptomatic of the Renaissance. Kivelson demonstrates that 'as a collective identity, "Christendom" held far more purchase than any elusive idea of "Europe"'.[88] Medieval thinkers had their own markers of identity that continued to affect and shape early modern reflections of 'Europe'.[89] The early modern travellers under discussion did not identify as 'European'; Gaspar da Cruz would likely have thought of himself as Christian, a Dominican friar and a subject of the Portuguese king.

Ever-shifting textual and visual representations of foreign cultures framed European understandings of the world beyond Europe.[90] Reports from the 'New World' impacted European conceptions of the 'Old World'—regions such as Asia and Africa. Over the course of overseas encounters—as European travels expanded to include more world regions, European travellers and audiences became aware of the great variety of cultural 'others' and came up with ways to describe and categorise them, and some of these categories can be found in the travel texts discussed here. Connected human and bodily habits, such as eating, drinking and dress became a criterion for judging non-European 'others'.[91] Since religion was such an important marker of identity in early modern Europe, paganism represented 'otherness'.[92] European travellers to China also used such criteria to assess and judge the Chinese, in what Rubiés terms 'the fundamental clash between the "languages" of Christianity and civilization in sixteenth-century ethnological discourse.'[93]

[87] Kivelson, 'Cartographic Emergence of Europe', p. 40.
[88] Ibid.,
[89] Ibid., p. 41.
[90] Carina L. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe*: *The Ottomans and Mexicans* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 9-11.
[91] Michiel van Groesen, *The Representations of the Overseas World in the De Bry Collection of Voyages (1590-1634)* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), p. 177.
[92] Ibid., p. 220.
[93] Joan-Pau Rubiés, 'Texts, Images and the Perception of 'Savages' in Early Modern Europe: What We Can Learn from White and Harriot', in *European Visions: American Voices*, ed. by Kim Sloan (London: British Museum, 2009), pp. 120-30 (p. 121).

4.4.1 The Han-Chinese and the *Yi* Barbarian

Self and other, centre and periphery were important concepts to the self-understanding of the Chinese, informing their maps, where China was displayed in a central position, and also their language, since terms such as 'under the heavens' 天下 and 'within the four seas' 四海内 were used to refer to the Chinese empire. The idea of centrality was firmly embedded in the experience of late-Ming literati travellers, from their own life experiences—the education system and the imperial examinations were a way of ensuring that the imperial centre controlled the learning and life-path of the Chinese literati.[94] Their ideas of China were closely allied with conceptions of 'language', 'learning' and an imperial centre from a very early age, and this interplay between 'empire' and 'self' could not be easily set apart.

While there were great differences within Han peoples, this difference was seen as surmountable. Wang's text frequently discussed the highly variant regional practices in trade, dress and cuisine, between Han-Chinese peoples across the empire. Wang glosses over this variation with the phrase 'we cannot compel all to be similar' 不可強同. It is worth mentioning that this rhetoric of tolerating differences is not Wang's own creation. Rather, it is lifted from the *Comprehensive Gazetteer of the Great Ming*. The phrase 'we cannot compel all to be similar' recurs throughout the text, appearing after descriptions of regional particularities.[95] That said, this rhetoric is only used when describing differences between Han-Chinese people, as part of a cultural and imperial rhetoric of a centralised empire that considered Han-Chinese people and culture its core.[96] Variances between Han-Chinese people were accepted as incidental. Xu Xiake, as well, notices on his travels variances between Han-Chinese cultural practices. On the night of Qixi 七夕, he notices how the Han-Chinese people in Guangxi observe different celebratory practices from his hometown of Jiangnan: 'Tonight it is Qixi, the people here do not know of praying for skills 乞巧,[97] but instead they worship their ancestors, this is a testament to their good

[94] Elman, 'Civil Service Examinations', p. 28.
[95] Li, *Gazetteer of the Great Ming*, VII (1461), p. 124.
[96] Hostetler, 'Introduction', p. xxv.
[97] This was a practice of young women in late imperial China, who would put on their new clothes and pray to the weaver maid to grant them wisdom and skills, presenting small gifts at her altar.

virtue.'[98] Regional variations of the Han-Chinese could be framed in a positive light, without the need for homogenous practices throughout the empire.

However, this rhetoric was limited to Han-Chinese peoples. Even well-travelled literati such as Wang and Xu were aware of a considerable difference between the Han-Chinese and the non-Chinese *Yi*, or barbarian. Language was one of the most important markers of this difference. When Xu travelled through Yunnan, language was a criterion he used to separate the indigenous population from the groups that assimilated and adopted Chinese culture. 'I was able to converse with these people in the Han language, hence they are not *Yi*.'[99] At the borders in the southwest, language became one of the most obvious markers of identity for Xu, providing a quick way to categorise the various minority groups.

Travel to the periphery, where one was faced with an acute loss of imperial power at the frontier, was potentially destabilising for travellers. Even for a well-travelled literatus like Xu, it was destabilising to reach a point where conceptions of power and empire shifted radically. In his travels through Guangxi, he records the lawlessness and in-fighting between the various tribes in the peripheral regions. He rhetorically repeats several times throughout the journey: 'The various *tusi*s are only aware of other barbarians and know nothing about China 中國.'[100] This demonstrates a worldview widely removed from Xu's regular understanding. Xu blames the inefficiency of the Ming state in creating this problem on the borders, considering the lack of central control as causing the periphery to become destabilised, a land of barbarians.

Xu was not alone in his negative evaluation of the Ming state. Wang used his travel text to reflect on the difficulties which securing the frontier had imposed upon state finances. Frontier relations played a large role during the second half of the Ming dynasty. Fearing invasion from the non-Chinese nomadic tribes inhabiting the steppes in the north which had previously been where military threats to previous dynasties had come from, the Ming state was determined to secure the frontier and resorted to drastic measures, including moving the capital to Peking in the north and dispatching soldiers to the frontier,

[98] Xu, *Travel Diaries*, p. 698.
[99] Ibid., p. 1226.
[100] Ibid., p. 856.

at high cost to the state and its taxpayers.[101] In the first section of *Interpretation of Vast Travels,* Wang summarises the history of China's localities and geographical boundaries.[102] He discusses the wealth of the provincial coffers and contrasts it with earlier periods, when the state was considerably wealthier. Lamenting on the relative impoverishment of the storehouses, he states:

> At the beginning of the dynasty, the counties' coffers were abundant, the eunuch Zheng He sailed towards the Western Oceans, and was given over seven million taels (of silver), though his efforts took ten years, he returned with one million taels still remaining […] in the Yuan dynasty, they did not defend the frontiers, hence the aforesaid abundance. Clearly, the fatigue of today's commoners results from the excessive costs of securing the borders.[103]

Ethnographic writing about China and the situation along its borders and frontiers was for Wang a reflection of very real problems faced by the administration and by the commoners. Here, questions over border security and tax burdens caused by military expenditure were written into ethnographic accounts.

As previously mentioned, Xu's travel diaries of the southwest are an anomaly when compared to his usual reticence about the social and political situation of his destinations. In the southwest entries, there is an outpouring of information about the political unrest in Yunnan. Xu emphasises the misdeeds of the tyrannical *tusis*, battling each other for greater power and control over a region only loosely controlled by the central Chinese state. He portrays the *tusis* as desiring to acquire power for themselves, disregarding the well-being and livelihood of the people under their jurisdiction. In a particularly well-commuted locale, Xu records, 'There are wide and vast farmlands here and the roads are well-traversed. Many people assemble here and a prefecture could certainly be set up. However, the *tusis* are afraid of their powers being weakened or challenged, hence no one brings up this affair [to the central authorities].'[104] Xu describes at great length the political turmoil due to succession struggles following the recent death of a prominent chieftain. There was also considerable infighting between these leaders in their struggle for power.

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[101] John W. Dardess, *Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012), p. 15.
[102] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], pp. 189-92.
[103] Ibid., pp. 192-93
[104] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1222.

Xu's perception of the local leaders was deeply negative, but he also criticised the Ming political centre, which only loosely controlled the peripheral regions, and was essentially dysfunctional. Xu laments that '[f]rom the east of Lingan County, the west of Guangxi County, people are unaware that there are officials of the Ming dynasty!'[105] Xu's witnessing of the mismanagement and the chaos in the political situation of the southwest can be read as a reflection of the political situation of his times. Xu was well aware that the Ming dynasty was in decay, but a visit to a southwest highlighted the situation with greater clarity. Hence Xu's travels to the empire's periphery made him reflect on the politics and the weakness of the centre. He concludes his entry with a tone of anger and exasperation at the lapses in the political and military situation, 'Alas! The imperial court mismanages their soldiers at all the borders, not just in the southwestern regions!'[106] His preoccupation with lawlessness reflects the fractured political situation of late-Ming China, which affected the lives and consciousness of the Jiangnan literati class.[107]

In some instances, the perception of 'difference' was deeply rooted and commonplace amongst Han-Chinese peoples, revealing attitudes and biases. Xu narrates an encounter with soldiers patrolling the mountains of Yunnan. Xu required lodging and the soldiers offered him their barracks.[108]

> The thatched huts in the camp were leaking above, damp below, with people and animals living amongst each other. Those soldiers still said gleefully to me, 'You are an honoured guest, had you not met us and there was no place for you to rest, what would you do? Although the barracks are low and narrow, it is still ten times better than the house of an *Yi* 彝 [non-Chinese people who inhabit the region].' I nodded my head in agreement and searched for water to cook rice porridge.[109]

From the tone and manner of the text, it is unlikely that Xu agreed with the soldiers, and may have nodded as a cordial gesture to his hosts. Instead of engaging in further conversation about the *Yi* and their living conditions, Xu busies himself with his own affairs. This dialogue reveals the underlying prejudices prevalent in Ming Chinese society towards the non-Han. Here, the Chinese soldiers posit a clear distinction between

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[105] Ibid., p. 1193.
[106] Ibid.
[107] Debary, *Self and Society*, p. 6.
[108] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1225.
[109] Ibid., p.1214.

themselves and the non-Chinese *Yi*. Xu records their speech and reports his own reaction but refrains from verbally agreeing with them. From the text, Xu describes that despite the squalor, the soldiers could 'still' gleefully welcome Xu to their abode. Even in abhorrent conditions, the Chinese soldiers considered their lodgings superior to that of a *Yi*. Underlying prejudices of the *Yi* as being inferior to the Chinese existed, a by-product of the centralised Han-Chinese culture in which Xu and the soldiers alike were raised. The very presence of the garrisons was a physical manifestation of the Chinese state attempting to establish presence and control in the southwestern regions, as military control was deemed necessary in cultural frontiers where Han-Chinese settlers and officials lived amidst other ethnic groups.[110] The experience of the Han-Chinese traveller at the frontier has traditionally been that of encounter and differentiation, where the non-Han 'barbarians' are differentiated, then set apart from the learned and culturally 'civilised' Chinese traveller.[111]

Han-Chinese travellers tended to view the natives of the southwest as being violent and uncivilised, associating them with banditry and robberies.[112] While Xu's text does not reproduce the Chinese-*Yi*, civilised-uncivilised binaries that were pervasive in this period, he also records rather negative encounters with the *Yi*. In the following excerpt, he narrates an extremely unpleasant encounter in a region predominantly populated by non-Chinese peoples, 'Jiangdi village is a *Yi* stronghold, with only one rest house being run by a Han-Chinese. The people here are all unkind, for instance, the *Yi* people who threaten those crossing the river, and the Han-Chinese woman who extorts travellers. Never did I witness such actions in the other minority regions in the South.'[113]

Xu portrays the inhabitants as generally dishonest and exploitative and hints that poor governance and tyranny are the factors behind the problems, by subsequently providing contextual information about the geopolitical stability of the region, 'The *tusis* here treat their people poorly, this is in their nature, and a border that only brings problems to the court, will not benefit the country. All the various *Yi* peoples suffer from the trampling of the *tusis*, which is heartrending for the bystander […] the reason that the *Yi* people frequently rebel is because of the ill treatment they receive.'[114] The infighting between the de facto leaders and the resulting political instability is a constant feature in

[110] Leo K. Shin, *The Making of the Chinese State: Ethnicity and Expansion on the Ming Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 20.
[111] Ibid., p. 170.
[112] Xu, *Youji* [Travel Diaries], p. 1220.
[113] Ibid., p. 1228.
[114] Ibid., p.1237.

Xu's texts about the southwest. He expresses frustration and anger at the power hungry *tusis* who were nonchalant about their actions causing suffering and instability for their subjects.[115] Xu implies that the southwest is characterised by a lack of peace due to its geographical distance from the empire's cultural and political centre. Instability causes such 'foreign' places to be perceived as dangerous, but in his opinion, the root of the problem was the political context: the failure of the Ming state and the native leaders to establish a peaceful and cohesive environment, rather than inherent differences between Chinese and non-Chinese.

Wang's writings acknowledge and describe great variation between the inhabitants of different regions. He drew his own conclusions about superior and inferior regions, though not in a binary, Chinese and non-Chinese way. Rather, his criteria of cultural superiority factored in the economic production and wealth of the region and its number of successful examination candidates.[116] The excerpt below is an example of typical categories Wang employed.

> Lianzhou[117] is an impoverished region of China, there are customarily four types of inhabitants in this region: The first is called *kehu* 客户, these live within the city walls, and understand the Han language 汉音, they are tradesmen by occupation; the second are called *dongren* 東人, who variably live in the villages, and understand the Min language 閩语[118] and are farmers by trade; the third are called *liren* 俚人, they live in the distant villages, and do not understand the Han language 汉语, they are completely dependent on the cultivation of land for subsistence; the fourth are called *danhu* 蛋户, boat dwellers living in grottoes. They are similar to the water tribes, but they understand the Han language 汉音 and subsist by fishing.[119]

A deciphering of this text is fruitful for comprehending how Wang and his intended audience perceived indigenous inhabitants. Wang systematically provides four categories of information: the names of these peoples, their dwelling, their language and their

[115] Ibid., p. 1214.
[116] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], p. 156.
[117] Lianzhou 廉州府 was an administrative region of the Ming dynasty, located today in Guangxi.
[118] This was the language spoken by the Chinese inhabitants of the Min (Fujian) province.
[119] Wang, *Guangzhi yi* [Interpretation of Vast Travels], pp. 295-96.

occupation. The typologies of the inhabitants reveal underlying attitudes. The first two names, *kehu* and *dongren* are neutral. However, the third *liren* is a derogatory term, meaning 'unrefined people'. Wang's first assessment of the region being 'impoverished' already indicates his negative perception of these peoples, since he viewed economic wealth as indicative of the refinement of a region's inhabitants, a sentiment echoed across his text. The information he provides encodes unspoken attitudes about these groups, including how non-Chinese and foreign they were.

Information about their understanding of Chinese languages (Han and Min) is particularly important for Wang as it reveals the degree of their assimilation into the mainstream Han-Chinese culture. Being Chinese in this period was after all dependent on a group's degree of cultural and linguistic assimilation.[120] Besides these criteria, Wang focused on their habitation and occupations, revealing his ideology and typologies of civilisation. Those living in the cities and the villages had neutral appellations, indicating that their dwellings afforded them a certain level of status and respectability. However, those living in lesser conditions, such as in distant villages and grottoes, were seen as vulgar and mean, and given derogatory appellations that revealed to the reader their lack of refinement.

The above examples indicate that 'self' and 'foreign' are not clear categories, but have fuzzy boundaries, particularly in this period when travel writers were struggling to define and understand how a foreign culture was alike or different from their own. The following section shows that European travellers used customs and culture as a gauge for evaluating the Chinese. Both Chinese and European travellers considered their own cultures as 'civilised' and worthy of emulation, hence others had to be 'similar to them' in order to be depicted in a positive light.[121]

4.4.2 The Early Modern 'Languages' of Civilisation and Christianity

Early modern European travellers to China were in a situation that differed from European encounters in other world regions; China was relatively similar to their home culture in terms of cultural, political, intellectual and economic complexity.[122] Overwhelmingly, the reports on China were positive and enthusiastic. This, of course, was

[120] Hostetler, 'Introduction', in *The Art of Ethnography*, p. xxv.
[121] Standaert, 'Renaissance Culture', p. 50.
[122] Ibid., pp. 42-66.

largely due to the personal goals of the travellers. Traders, adventurers and missionaries alike portrayed China in a promising light so that trade and religious missions there would continue to be viable.[123] Some historians have suggested that a process of 'similarising' the Chinese was taking place in European travel writing as a result of the missionary and proto-imperial endeavour.[124]

Joan Pau-Rubiés suggests that sixteenth-century ethnographic writing was couched in the 'languages' of Christianity and civilisation.[125] The intellectual climate of early modern Europe saw scholarship that engaged in fruitful conversation with ancient Greece and Rome, but also with the Bible and its meanings, and the two 'languages' preoccupied early modern scholarship and thought across disciplines and genres.[126] The European texts under discussion swing between praise of the Chinese as 'civilised' but dismiss them for their ignorance of the Christian religion, yet at the same time reflect an ambiguity, appealing to their readers that these are a people who are ripe and 'ready' to receive the gospel.

The languages of Christianity and civilisation worked together to describe the Chinese in the ethnographical sections of the travel texts. European travel writers identified daily customs of interest, such as food and dress that differed from the practices back home. Some practices, such as eating with chopsticks, were framed positively. Galeote Pereira gives a glowing appraisal of Chinese practices surrounding food, conversation, manners, culture and also wealth.

> They feed with two sticks, refraining from touching their meat with their hands, even as we do with forks, for the which respect, they do not need any tablecloths. Neither is the nation only civil at meat, but also in conversation, and in courtesy they seem to exceed all others. Likewise in their dealings, after their manner, they are so ready, that they far pass all other gentiles and Moors[127] and have little reason

[123] Volker Mertens, 'Katzenbart und Schlangenfraß: Der Körper der Chinesen in Reiseberichten des 13.-17. Jahrhunderts', in *Fremde Körper: Zur Konstruktion des Anderen in europäischen Diskursen*, ed. by Kerstin Gernig (Berlin: Dahlem University Press, 2001), pp. 30-57.
[124] Ibid.
[125] Rubiés, '"Savages" in Early Modern Europe', p. 121.
[126] Kevin Killeen and Helen Smith, 'Introduction. "All Other Bookes… are but Notes upon This": The Early Modern Bible', in *The Oxford Handbook of the Bible in Early Modern England, c. 1530-1700,* ed. by Kevin Killeen and Helen Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), pp. 1-18 (pp. 1-2).
[127] In Boxer's translation notes, the Spanish term is 'Mouro', meaning 'Muslim' or 'Muhammadan'.

> to envy us. The greater states are so vain that they line their clothes with the best silk that may be found.[128]

In this excerpt, the Chinese are portrayed as different from the Europeans because of their usage of chopsticks while eating instead of a fork and tablecloths. At the same time, this was used to demonstrate that the Chinese possessed an equivalent level of etiquette and cultural sophistication as the Europeans, making a case for their similarity.[129] Bodily habits such as eating became important criteria for judging other cultures in early modern travel representations; the description of Chinese dinners as civil, orderly and well-mannered prevailed in future European descriptions of China.[130] Pereira uses the Chinese refinement at the table as a basis for his subsequent statements, arguing that a people with refined table manners would also be civil at conversation and courteous. Employing the language of Christianity, Pereira compares the Chinese with 'other gentiles', using terminology that initially referred to non-Jews, but in the language of Christian Europe, began to mean 'non-Christian' and hence 'other'.

In the early modern context where information from global missionary endeavours poured into Europe, cultural relativity and assessing different world cultures through comparison with others was commonplace.[131] In the missionary texts, a variety of appellations designated different cultural groups, according to the missionary's perception of a culture's degree of civilisation, and their receptiveness towards Christianity. This tendency stemmed from the writers' educational upbringing consisting of both Christian and classical elements.[132] Hence there was a broad register of appellations which Europeans used to evaluate foreign lands and peoples. 'Moors' referring to 'Muslims', were distinguished from 'other gentiles', because of the proximity of the Turks to Europe. This concept was highly influential in early modern definitions of 'European' and 'non-European', with the Islamic Near East providing a 'negative recognition' for European identity formation.[133] 'Moors' were considered literate and cultured, but ultimately inferior

[128] Boxer, *South China*, pp. 14-15.
[129] Mary Laven, *Mission to China: Matteo Ricci and the Jesuit Encounter with the East* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), p. 89.
[130] The DeBry collection of voyages, depict the Chinese dinner as orderly and filled with gastronomic delights. See van Groesen, *Overseas World*, p. 177.
[131] Ibid., p. 10.
[132] J.H. Elliott, *The Old World and the New, 1492-1650* (Oxford: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 41-42.
[133] See M.E. Yapp, 'Europe in the Turkish Mirror', *Past and Present*, 137 (1992), pp. 134-55.

to the Europeans because they were heathen.[134] Likewise, the Chinese were evaluated with ambiguity. Although they were literate, cultured and hence 'civilised' according to the classical tradition, they were still heathens. Pereira's final remark about the vanity of the Chinese decked out in fine silks complicates the initial praise lavished upon them and reflects the dilemma of the civilised heathen. Calling them 'vain' was a judgement on their character, expressing personal disapproval of the wasteful, hedonistic lifestyle of the urban Chinese.

Like Pereira, Da Cruz refers to the Chinese as gentiles when describing their practices. 'The Chinas do use on their birthdays to make great feasts, continuing yet in them the custom of the old gentiles.'[135] It is fascinating to juxtapose da Cruz's description of the opulent, lantern-lit festivals of late-Ming Chinese cities with that of famous Chinese writers. Zhang Dai (1597-1679), a renowned late-Ming writer, beautifully depicts the dazzling night festivities in his memoirs, 'From the gates of the City God's temple to the gullies at the Penglai Ridge, there was nothing to see but lanterns. As one let one's eye roam across the landscape from the base of the mountain it was as if the starry river of the Milky Way was flowing backwards, shimmering and luminous.'[136] Da Cruz does mention the fine lights and the beautiful scene, 'they put many lighted candles, and in every place many lanthorns very new and fair, all alight.'[137] However, he interprets the darkness of the night as a direct reflection of their ignorance, being without the 'light' that Christianity could give them. He states 'The feast lasteth all night long, for all the gentiles as they walk in darkness, living without the knowledge of God, so all their feasts through all the regions of Indian and in China particularly are made by night.'[138] In his ethnographic sections, by describing the Chinese as gentiles, he portrays them as a cultured people with civil practices, but distinct and separate from the Christian 'us' and thus a cultural 'other' living in ignorance, that literally and metaphorically walk in darkness.

The early modern Christian worldview defined cultural groups in terms of their receptivity towards the faith.[139] Matters of faith and local religious practices were therefore pertinent to the missionaries' assessment of the Chinese people. Ethnographic texts about

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[134] Johnson, *Hierarchy in Sixteenth Century Europe*, pp. 137-42.
[135] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 143.
[136] Zhang Dai, *Dream Recollections of Tao'an*, quoted in and trans. by Jonathan Spence, *Return to Dragon Mountain* (London: Quercus, 2008), p. 95.
[137] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 143.
[138] Ibid.
[139] Elliott, *Old World and the New*, p. 43.

existing beliefs would also interest sponsors of the mission who were based in Europe. De Rada, Da Cruz and Ricci all devote a section of their texts to record the rites, gods and idols of the Chinese. The content is largely similar, relaying the Chinese concept of 'Heaven' which the Chinese 'hold as the true God' and which they believe 'created and made all things.'[140] The missionaries note that besides 'Heaven', the Chinese worshipped a great number of idols. The missionaries keenly emphasized the incoherence and lack of reason in the widely practised Chinese religions. All of them criticised the casting of lots, a method of divination practised by the Chinese when making important decisions such as travelling or building a house.[141] The missionaries regularly lamented that these people were ignorant, and 'blindly grope after God',[142] expressing frustration with the Chinese superstitious practices that they considered ridiculous and foolish. Their tone reflects perplexity, with missionaries wondering why such civil people would be enslaved to idolatry. In his travel text, Gaspar da Cruz recalls an incident where he persuaded some Chinese in a temple against the casting of lots, by appealing to their reason,

> Trusting in the little estimation in which they held their gods, and in their being men who would be satisfied with reason, I threw the stones down on the ground, whereat some turned on me very fiercely and asked me angrily why I had done that? I went mildly to them, and smilingly asked them why they were so inconsiderate as to worship those stones? They asked me why they should not adore them, whereon I showed them how they were better than the stones, since they had the use of reason, feet, hands and eyes, wherewith they did divers things that these stones could not do; and that seeing they were better they should not abase and esteem so little of themselves as to worship something so vile, being themselves so noble. They answered me that I was very right, and they went out with me in company, leaving the stones on the ground; so that I found in these people this likelihood and disposition for them to become Christians.[143]

Once again, the terminology of civilisation and religion is present. The Chinese are represented as people of reason, unconvinced by their own 'vile' beliefs. In da Cruz's opinion, the Chinese, as a civilised people searching for truth, would readily accept a rational religion and therefore be open to the Christian God. That da Cruz writes himself

[140] De Rada, 'Relation', p. 304.
[141] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', pp. 214-18; De Rada, 'Relation', p. 307; Ricci, *China in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 128.
[142] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 213.
[143] Ibid., p. 217.

into the account so prominently is worth mentioning. He fashions himself as a bold proselytizer of the faith who confidently stood up for the truth, challenging ignorance with his own reason and persuasion. Though his travel text is written in third person, he appends his personal opinions at frequent intervals. Episodes such as this, where he writes himself into the unfolding events of his narration are less frequent. The abrupt switch from third-person narrative to first paves the way for his figurative grand entrance. The moment of conversion is highly simplistic, with the Chinese in the temple performing a sudden about-face, immediately accepting da Cruz's arguments while forgetting their initial fury at him for throwing their stones to the floor.

Other European travel writers reflected similar optimistic opinions that Chinese idolatry could be quickly remedied. Pereira echoed da Cruz's opinion, 'I am persuaded therefore, that if this country were in league with us […] it would be an easy matter to draw them to our religion from the superstition, whereat they themselves do laugh when they do their idolatry.'[144] Pereira highlights that the Chinese were flexible and tolerant in religious matters, suggesting that a conversion to Christianity would be easy and could occur without resistance, 'In this point of religion, the Chins be at liberty, everyone to worship and follow what they liketh him best.'[145] In the missionaries' eagerness to achieve their goals, there was a tendency to oversimplify the issue. Their line of argument was that being such a sophisticated culture, the Chinese could easily and quickly comprehend and understand the Christian message.

Missionary travel writers constantly emphasized the missionary motive in their ethnographies, couching them in religious rhetoric. Da Cruz anticipates this in his first chapter, explaining to the reader his personal motivation for travelling to China. 'The disposition that I found there for the hearing of the word of God […] I will say at the end of this book, where I describe the rites of the Chinas, and to which I refer the reader.'[146] Pereira keenly emphasizes that Chinese practices correspond with Christian virtue, inserting biblical intertextuality in the travel texts. He praises the Chinese for their diligence, 'A great help […] is that idle people be much abhorred in this country, and are very odious unto the rest, and he that laboureth not shall not eat.'[147] Da Cruz commends the abhorrence of idle people in China, for 'it behoves everyone to seek a way and manner

[144] Pereira, 'Report', p. 38.
[145] Ibid., p. 36.
[146] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 64.
[147] Ibid., p. 118.

of livelihood.' His language closely echoes the Pauline epistle to the Thessalonians, 'If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat. For we hear that some among you walk in idleness […] Now such persons we command and encourage in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living.'[148] Through an ethnographic narration of the Chinese as receptive and predisposed towards a Christian way of life, da Cruz paints an optimistic picture of a civilised people who could be further improved through conversion. Pereira suggests that in some aspects the Chinese are superior to the practices of Christian Europe: 'Now will I speak of the manner the which the Chins do observe in doing justice, that it may be known how far these Gentiles do herein exceed Christians, that be more bounden than they to deal justly and in truth.'[149] Pereira perceives the Chinese to be superior in virtues such as justice and truth which he conceptually links to Christianity, emphasizing that they were well-suited to Christian morals and messages, highlighting that '[o]ur manner of praying especially pleased them, and they are well enough disposed to receive the knowledge of the truth.'[150]

Although the Chinese are represented as paragons in the rhetoric of civilisation, possessing proto-Christian attitudes, at times they were perceived to be lacking and immoral in the language of Christianity. Da Cruz suggests that '[t]his people hath no knowledge whatever of God, neither among them is there found any vestige of such knowledge.'[151] Though he praised Chinese civility and their virtues of labour, he finds them lacking in their blindness towards God and Christianity. Da Cruz takes this to mean that the Chinese 'are not given to the contemplation of natural things',[152] for he believes that if they had such contemplations, they would have a natural awareness of God. As he phrases it, 'it would have sufficed them to come thereby to the knowledge of God as the old philosophers had: Saint Paul the Apostle saying in his epistle to the Romans that the invisible things of God and his divinity, power and eternity can be learnt from the contemplation and knowledge of things created and visible.'[153] Da Cruz is misinformed here, for the Chinese did in fact have studies of natural philosophy. He goes on to describe the religious rites of the Chinese, which he and other missionaries condemned as superstitious practices and useless.

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[148] 2 Thessalonians 3:10-12.
[149] Pereira, 'Report', p. 17.
[150] Ibid., p.16.
[151] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 212
[152] Ibid.
[153] Ibid.

In the final chapter, he condemns homosexual practices in late-imperial China as 'a filthy abomination, which is that they are so given to the accursed sin of unnatural vice.'[154] Da Cruz accordingly suggests that the disastrous earthquakes that struck the Shaanxi and Shanxi provinces in January 1556[155] and the comet of March 1556 were signs of 'punishments from God which the Chinas received'.[156] Da Rada draws allegorical parallels between the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the devastating earthquake: 'It seemeth that the China who brought this news was so frightened that it appeared to him as if the whole province of Sanxi was desolated, just as the daughters of Lot, seeing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra, thought that the whole world had perished.'[157] Da Cruz's interpretation of this calamity was that God was punishing the Chinese for their widely-practiced vice of homosexuality, just as the biblical cities of Sodom and Gomorrah were catastrophically destroyed for similar vices. Da Cruz continues to narrate that more disasters befell the Chinese in May 1956 when people were killed with 'a great store of rain very hot, with the which the earth seemed to burn'.[158]

At the close of his treatise he once again stresses the Chinese ignorance of God and the suffering for their sins. Da Cruz pleads, '[m]ay God in his infinite mercy open the eyes of these peoples […] let us all pray that He may open a way to His servants for them to preach to these people and thus draw them to the reward of His holy church.'[159] Final words framed in a plea for the salvation of the Chinese and emphasising the necessity of a mission to China were prevalent among missionary travel texts and ethnographies of this period. According to his argument, a mission to China would be fruitful—for the Chinese were civilised, open to receiving Christian teaching and humane. With Christian teaching, the Chinese could cease their vices and put an end to the heaven-sent punishments. The missionaries were keen to expound on the Chinese receptivity towards Christianity. Given that most of these ethnographies portrayed the Chinese in an overwhelmingly favourable light, as civilised, but with a few minor vices, the missionaries were making a case that the Chinese were worthy of understanding the gospel and receiving salvation.

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[154] Ibid., p. 223.

[155] The earthquake struck a course of 250km along the Yellow River Valley, levelling buildings in its path, with Shaanxi and Shanxi suffering the most extensive damages, killing an estimated 800,000 to a million. See Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), pp. 63-64, for a brief account of the calamity and the Chinese interpretation of this disaster.

[156] Da Cruz, 'Treatise', p. 223.

[157] Ibid.

[158] Ibid., p. 227.

[159] Ibid.,

As demonstrated, the literary representation of ‘others’ was a constant negotiation by the travel writers to define who to exclude as a cultural ‘other’ and who they would consider to be ‘civilised’ and culturally closer to the European or Han-Chinese ‘self’, and the instability and fluidity of these categories in travel writing. This section discussed how encounters with foreign cultures brought travel writers into confrontation with issues that were deeply important to them, such as politics, society and religion. Learning about foreign cultures and travelling through another country raised issues and questions that challenged fundamental aspects of their worldview, forcing the travellers to reassess previously held notions. This in turn affected their area of focus when selecting what to write about in the travel texts and ethnographies. When travel writers selected what to write about foreign cultures, these writers were in reality, writing their own concerns and anxieties into ethnographic accounts about a foreign culture. In particular, it focuses on the issues of political instability and imperial weakening in the case of the late-Ming empire, and the Christian world view in the European case study.

4.5 Conclusion

Some conclusions can be drawn about the ethnographic aspects of travel writing in a comparison of late-Ming and early modern travel accounts. Firstly, the chapter has shown that both Chinese and European travel writers were highly aware of cultural differences between peoples and were interested in observing and recording these differences. Ethnographic curiosity was prevalent in both cultures and was reflected in the production of texts about travel and encounters with other cultures.

The development of an ethnographic method which privileged eyewitness accounts and personal travel experience appear in travel texts from both traditions; this was an era that emphasised empiricism and reports based on personal encounters complemented older, authoritative texts from both traditions, such as medieval travel texts to Asia, and the Chinese gazetteers. Generally speaking, late-Ming and early modern travel accounts were an eclectic mix of genres, fusing first-hand knowledge gained from travel, with second-hand information and information from well-known texts. The widely-disseminated Chinese gazetteer supplied important geographical and historical information about Chinese localities to both Chinese and European travel writers.

In actual encounters with foreign cultures, mental boundaries were culturally established, reflected in the categories of Han and non-Han, Christian and heathen. Yet the examples show that representations of foreign cultures were constantly negotiated. Chinese travel writers faced the dilemma of how to perceive and represent non-Chinese ‘others’, who were at times represented as impoverished, illiterate ‘barbarians’, but at other times were represented as not necessarily ‘inferior’ in character, though certainly less refined because of their adverse geographical and political circumstances. On the other hand, European travellers to China painted a positive, though ambiguous picture of the Chinese. The texts portray the Chinese as refined and reasonable people, fulfilling European standards of civility, with a caveat that they were still ‘heathen’, distant from divine grace, and in this respect, inferior to the Europeans.

This chapter has demonstrated considerable similarity between the Chinese and European texts, though difference in purposes and circumstances must be kept in mind. Writing ethnography was self-conscious and reflexive, to be contextualised within the historical social, political and religious background. The narratives surrounding these ethnographic travel texts were ones which appealed to the writers’ sensibilities and personal experiences. The Chinese travellers lived in a period when tensions on the border were increasingly frequent and the centre was becoming weaker due to population expansion and political weakness of the Ming state. The literati travellers saw their frustration with the state mirrored in the problematic political and military situation of the Chinese borderlands. On the other hand, European travel accounts were highly politicised—early beginnings of European ‘nations’ and trade interests were amongst the many contesting agendas that European travellers had to address in their writings. Ethnographic travel texts also have to be considered in the context of a prevailing Christian world view, for many travel writers were sent to China as missionaries by their respective monastic orders. Therefore, both Chinese and European travel writers reflected concerns of the ‘self’ and their home context in their representations of cultural ‘others’.

At Journey's End: A Global Age of Travel Cultures

In the Spring of 1610, Yuan Zhongdao records reading the obituary of Matteo Ricci in the Capital Gazette 京報, a newspaper that circulated in the realm. Yuan found the life of Ricci fascinating enough to record what he read in the papers in his own diaries.

> Matteo Ricci came from his own country via the oceans and it took him four of five years to reach this place. At first he lived in the Min province, then he headed to the Wu province, as he gradually became proficient in the Chinese language and script. Afterwards, he entered the capital, bringing with him icons of the Lord of Heaven 天主 and clocks that chimed and presented them to the court. Since his country serves Heaven 天, they are unaware of the Buddha. They practise the ten virtues 十善 [probably the ten commandments], emphasise communion with 'The Way' and there are many who are celibate amongst them. Matteo was well-versed at conversation and discussion. He spent his time writing and compiling books […] In his words, if the universe was like an egg, the heavens would be the yolk, and there are realms above and beyond the four corners 四方.[1] His words are quite remarkable and resemble exactly that of the Various Flowers Sutra 雜華經,[2] 'facing up there is a realm, facing down there is a realm, to the sides there are realms.' Matteo and other governor officials had visited Zhonglang's [Yuan Hongdao (1568-1610), Yuan Zhongdao's elder brother] office, and Zhonglang had met him several times. Matteo lived till the age of sixty and I read that he was celibate throughout his life.[3]

This thesis has engaged in a discussion of two worlds, two travel cultures that overlapped albeit briefly and fragmentarily. The flourishing of travel and travel writing coincided in the annals of global history during the late-Ming and the early modern periods, increasing mobility for travellers from both regions, allowing both Chinese and European

[1] Ricci and his Chinese collaborators compiled, translated and published texts in Chinese. Ricci adopted an approach of linguistic accommodation, rendering Christian concepts into Chinese terms. See R. Po-Chia Hsia, 'The Catholic Mission and Translations in China, 1583-1700', in *Cultural Translation in Early Modern Europe*, ed. by Peter Burke and R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 39-51 (pp. 48-49).

[2] The Avataṃsaka Sūtra is regarded as the first teaching of Buddha after his Enlightenment and is one of the most influential texts in Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, describing Mahayana doctrinal cosmology of a multiplicity of worlds. See Angela Falco Howard, *The Imagery of the Cosmological Buddha* (Leiden: Brill, 1986), pp. 88-94.

[3] Yuan, *Travelling and Dwelling*, p. 90.

travellers to travel, write and observe late-Ming China. Yuan's reading of Ricci's obituary provides an ideal analogy to come to a close. For here is a brief moment in which the travel texts in the corpus coincide: Yuan, the traveller-literatus, reads about Ricci, the traveller-missionary. Throughout this thesis, Yuan has been viewed as a travel writer, and it is interesting to see him in the role of the audience here—learning of Europe, Christianity and Ricci's life and travels through the newspapers. Likewise, having read Ricci's texts and his ethnographies on the Chinese people, it is fascinating to read of him as a subject of Yuan's writing—to see how he was perceived by the Chinese papers and by a late-Ming Chinese literati-traveller.

Throughout the thesis, I argue for a comparative approach towards Chinese and European travel writing. Although the texts may seem dissonant on the surface, the one hundred years that this thesis surveys is a period of the parallel proliferation of travel and travel texts, enabling multiple 'travel cultures' to flourish and emerge in the early modern world. Furthermore, as mentioned at various points in the thesis, the flourishing of culture, heightened sense of self, and curiosity about the outside world were features of the early modern and late-Ming worlds, providing a strong case for a comparative study of travel texts. Travel was and is a highly cultural practice; regardless of whether the journey was for knowledge of for leisure, every traveller confronts issues of displacement, mobility, questions of the self and the other and the challenge of representing an embodied experience on paper.

Situating late-Ming and early modern travel and travel texts in the *longue durée*, travel writing in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was unique and in a state of change. European travellers, through their texts, promoted themselves and their missions, fulfilled the curiosity of armchair travellers and informed officials desiring to expand their kingdoms abroad. They also created new and differentiated literary works—with travel as a whole gradually shifting from the form of medieval pilgrimage to exploration and ethnography—developing a rhetoric that emphasised and privileged eyewitness accounts and scholarly, empirical evidence. Through their texts, the travellers under discussion contributed to the literature, world view and the systems of knowledge of their time, creating and disseminating books that were privileged, because they purported to represent the knowledge about the wider world. The late-Ming period saw a burgeoning in travel and travel texts—and travel writing in this period became closely linked with biographical

writing.[4] Travellers engaged with classical works about geography and landscape and contributed their own input and experiences. This created unique works informative about the peoples and places which they encountered on their travel, but also provided readers with insights of a personal, and spiritual, autobiographical journey.

Through comparing Chinese and European travel texts, new perspectives into both travel cultures can be attained. The ruptures that initially appear at first sight give way to fascinating readings of early modern and late-Ming societies and individuals. The first chapter grapples with the seemingly incongruent motivations professed by the travellers in the travel texts—the utilitarian aims of European travellers and the leisure travel of the Chinese literati. Through contextualising these writings within the frameworks of early modern and late-Ming travel methodologies, it becomes possible to see hints of these writers as individuals, with their concerns reflected in reflexive and self-conscious travel texts. Chapters Two and Three focused on the embodied experience of travel as portrayed through descriptions of travel infrastructure and physical landscapes. It compares the European and Chinese reflections on mobility and the destination, showing how movement and the utopian impulse were represented in travel texts. Finally, the fourth chapter discusses the experience of encountering foreign cultures through travel, comparing the ethnographic methodologies, and showing how ethnographic writing was a constant negotiation of 'self' and 'other'. Travel writers had to define their home cultures through received knowledge from cultural norms and earlier sources, and subsequently combined it with their own embodied travel experiences and their own judgments.

There is much potential for future research. Gender and travel writing remains inadequately addressed in this thesis. All travel writers under discussion were men—reflecting the gendered dimension of early modern and late-Ming travels. Several examples of female travel writers exist, but they were very few in number.[5] A further, comparative discussion of early modern and late-Ming masculinity and travel would be most valuable and illuminating.[6] Furthermore, the approach of geographically limiting the comparative case study to China, across the same period was a most helpful method to tame and organise the contents of this thesis. That said, a smaller-scale, more detailed comparison of

[4] Wu, *The Confucian's Progress*, p. 12.
[5] See Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 283-93.
[6] For a thoughtful, gendered reading of Jesuits descriptions of China, see Mary Laven, 'Jesuits and Eunuchs: Representing Masculinity in Late Ming China', *History and Anthropology*, 23 (2012), 199-214.

Chinese and European travel writers' representations of a particular province or city would certainly provide more local, nuanced insights into the processes of travel, travel writing and the representations of landscapes and local peoples. Finally, these travel texts were written, compiled, edited, published and disseminated in the complex world of early modern and late-Ming writing, publication and reading practices. A comparative study of these cultural and historical processes aids researchers in understanding both the content and context of these travel texts.

To conclude, I return to the excerpt from Yuan's account, which highlights the complex processes that occur in travel writing. Reading about Ricci as represented through the language, culture and episteme of a late-Ming literatus is unusual and eye-opening. Christianity as described by Yuan is a departure from convention. He describes the Christian God through the Chinese concept of Heaven, or *Tian* 天, literally meaning 'the skies', and the ten commandments are described as the ten virtues. Yuan also expresses surprise at the vows of celibacy of the Christian monastic orders. Yuan's interpretation of the Christian cosmos through quoting a Buddhist cosmological sutra highlights the challenge of representation: what is being witnessed in the process of travel, is rationalized in terms of what is already known and represented in reference to an existing culture and canon of texts. As Wai-Lim Yip suggests,

> As we look back on the development of literary histories of different cultural systems, we find many discrepancies between the given and the perceived, between the perceived and the expressed, between the expressed and the received. These discrepancies already occur frequently within a monocultural system; this is due to the fact that the addresser and the addressees are both locked inside different hermeneutical domains rooted in specific socio-cultural milieus.[7]

Yip summarises the complex tasks facing the literary historian, outlining the many processes encountered, from critical reading to historical research, with the aim of understanding the cultural and social worlds that gave rise to texts and their contents. Throughout the thesis, I argue that the comparative approach to travel texts is a fruitful and productive endeavour. Comparing different discourses surrounding the act of travel allows the 'different hermeneutical domains rooted in specific socio-cultural milieus'[8] to surface

[7] Yip, *Diffusion of Distances*, p. 194.
[8] Ibid.

through the investigation of similarities and differences in Chinese and European travel texts. Discourse surrounding travel and the writing of travel can be then addressed more effectively than when one only considers a monocultural system, devoid of another, comparable system as a point of reference. A comparative approach to travel writing paves the way for new insights and clarity about the text, its context and what we, as present-day readers of these historical texts, can learn from the affinities and diversities of the act of travel and its accompanying representations.

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Declaration

I declare that I have referenced all resources and aids that were used and assure that the paper is authored independently on this basis.

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