

Tobacco Smoking in Qing China

This article scrutinizes the social aspects of smoking in Qing China and examines the perceptions of tobacco among different social strata and groups. Some of the sources, both written and pictorial, have never before been used in this context. Notably, the pictures reveal – often with playful images – valuable information that on the one hand suggests something about the differences between women’s and men’s smoking habits, and, on the other, reveals distinctions between the elite and commoners. In the opening part of the article, I survey the history of tobacco in China – its accommodation and expansion – to provide a general background. This part relies on previous scholarship.¹ Given the sheer quantity of tobacco production in modern China,² it is perhaps surprising that the history of tobacco is not a popular topic. Even cultural anthropology, a discipline rapidly rising on the mainland, avoids tobacco, although tea and liquor, which, so to speak, form the other two legs of the tripod, are given detailed attention. (One may note in passing that opium smoking, closely associated with tobacco, is also absent from current Chinese publications on folk

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¹ Of monographs published in China, Yang Guo’an 楊國安, *Zhongguo yancao wenhua jilin* 中國菸草文化集林 (Xi’an: Xibei daxue chubanshe, 1990), provides rich historic data with a selection of poetry and essays about tobacco and smoking; Zhang Daming 張大明, ed., *Zhongguo yancao shihua* 中國菸草史話 (Beijing: Zhongguo qingongye chubanshe, 1993), primarily deals with cigarettes, but also includes chapters on *duilian* 對聯 (couplets) and social customs; Wang Wenyu 王文裕, “Ming Qing de yancao lun” 明清菸草論, Ph.D. diss. (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue, 2002), extensively discusses the attitudes of traditional medicine toward tobacco. In English, the recent Sander L. Gilman, Zhou Xun, eds., *Smoke: A Global History of Smoking* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), includes “Smoking in Imperial China” by Timothy Brook, pp. 84–91. More references are listed in my monograph about tobacco and Qing society, *Tabák v čínské společnosti, 1600–1900* (Olomouc: Univerzita Palackého, 2005).

² In 1980, the world production of tobacco was led by China (given in thousands of tons): 920, U.S.A.: 804, Brasil: 410, India: 400, Soviet Union: 305, Turkey: 230, Japan: 169, Bulgaria: 160, S. Korea: 134, Italy: 125, Zimbabwe: 114, etc. Note the advantage of China and the U.S.A., and the strong position of Japan and S. Korea, indicating the importance of the tobacco industry in E. Asia in general; quoted from *Ilustrovaný encyklopedický slovník* (*The Illustrated Encyclopaedic Dictionary*) (Praha: Československá akademie věd, 1982), s.v. *Tabák*.

habits and customs.) The reason behind this silence on tobacco smoking is perhaps in part the seeming triviality of an omnipresent habit, and in part the various official programs, both Chinese and worldwide, that discourage smoking.

THE BEGINNINGS OF TOBACCO CULTURE IN CHINA

Tobacco was long used in the ancient Americas as a ritual intoxicant, and it was not until Columbus claimed discovery of that continent that the rest of the world became acquainted with it. In the sixteenth century, Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch sailors introduced tobacco across the seas. From their East Asian bases at Manila, Port Zeelandia, and Macao, smoking and snuffing reached Japan before the end of the sixteenth century, from which it quickly found its way to Korea (around 1616), Manchuria, Mongolia, and northern China.

The discovery in 1980 of three clay pipes in Lianzhou 連州 on the Guangxi coast shows that the practice of smoking (if not necessarily the cultivation of tobacco) existed in the mid-sixteenth century;³ and written sources about local tobacco cultivation date to the Tianqi 天啓 reign (1621–1627). Tobacco came into China by several routes. Prior to the halt of sailing in 1636, Japanese ships presumably carried tobacco directly to Zhejiang and Fujian. However, the major tobacco route to the southern Chinese coast came from Luzon (Philippines), either directly or via Taiwan. This connection, and the cultivation of tobacco in Fujian, is attested by writers in the early-seventeenth century. For the route from Vietnam, there is the archeological evidence from Lianzhou. In addition, there was a route from Turkestan, which is the least documented one, thus its dates are not certain.

The earliest known Chinese text about tobacco is a short note in *Lushu* 露書, a book published in 1611. The author, Yao Lü 姚旅, who remains obscure, mentioned the alien origin of tobacco, its spread in Fujian, and its curative effects. His remarks are typical of what others had to say about tobacco from his own time and down into the next century, and they appear mostly in occasional jottings and poems. Physicians began to consider tobacco an efficient remedy for malaria and other disorders, but seldom pointed out that tobacco was harmful, as Zhang Jiebin 張介賓 (1563–1640) and Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671) did. As time went on, pharmacology and botany continued to recom-

³ Discovered at the Fucheng 福成 commune, Hepu 合浦 county. See Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, p. 100; Yuan Tingdong 袁庭棟, *Zhongguo xiyān shihuā* 中國吸煙史話 (Beijing: Shangwu yinguan guoji youxian gongsi, 1995), pp. 48–50; Wang, “Ming Qing de yancao lun,” p. 10.

mend tobacco as a useful drug.⁴ The belief that the pipe, which had been used for several decades, possessed curative qualities was generally accepted.⁵

Some of the earliest sources on tobacco and smoking in China deal with official suppression. Ming and Qing rulers repeatedly banned tobacco in the late-1630s.⁶ The edicts proper have not always survived, but were commented on in contemporary writings. For example, in Manchuria, smoking became a passion of ordinary folk as well as of higher society, and Manchus gained a reputation for being heavy smokers.⁷ Beating, piercing ears, fines, and even the death penalty proved ineffective against the product's fast spread, and the fact that the ban was in the end lifted could not have mattered much. In fact, tobacco prohibitions came in a series of regulations issued in 1636, the purpose of which was to raise morals and manners. In China, the Ming emperor Chongzhen 崇禎 (r. 1628–1645) opposed tobacco, but his reasons are not clear. A later source explains that he considered the term *chiyan* 吃煙 (“to smoke”) a bad omen, because of its homophony with “swallowing [the capital] Yan[jing] 燕[京].”⁸ Meanwhile, tobacco claimed a positive value as a remedy against malaria and cold. At any rate, after 1644, with the fall of the Ming, there were no more official bans except those proclaimed centuries later by the Taipings. The indifference of the succeeding Qing government to tobacco is obvious: neither production nor sales was taxed before the twentieth century, although tobacco dealers founded guilds as early as 1770, and tobacco was traded on a large scale across China.⁹

PRODUCTION, TREATMENT AND WAYS OF CONSUMING TOBACCO

As noticed in early-seventeenth-century sources, the fundamental factors of tobacco's accommodation were local cultivation and production. Moreover, as recorded in gazetteers, by the end of the century, the

⁴ See G. A. Stuart, *Chinese Materia Medica* (Taipei: Southern Materials Center, Inc., 1987), pp. 284–85.

⁵ An old pipe with a thick substance inside the stem cures a boy in the story “Yanlong” 煙龍, by Yuan Mei; in *Xin qi xie* 新齊諧 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1996), p. 726.

⁶ See L. C. Goodrich, “Early Prohibitions of Tobacco in China and Manchuria,” *JAS* 58 (1938), pp. 648–57; and Zhang, *Zhongguo yancao shihua*, pp. 309–14.

⁷ On their smoking habits, see Diao Shuren 刁書仁, *Manzu shenghuo lüeying* 滿族生活 略影 (Shenyang: Shenyang chubanshe, 2002).

⁸ From Yang Shicong 楊士聰 (1597–1648), *Yutang huiji* 玉堂薈記, taken from Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, p. 97; also Yuan, *Zhongguo xiyen shihua*, p. 164; Wang, “Ming Qing de yancao lun,” p. 174.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34. The *lijin* was a special case, concerning all merchandise.

southern coast (Fujian, Taiwan, Guangdong, and parts of Jiangxi) and Manchuria became the main regions that produced tobacco.¹⁰ There are two species of agricultural tobacco: *nicotiana rustica* with yellow blossoms and *nicotiana tabacum* with red blossoms. The yellow tobacco, of shorter vegetation period and resistant to cold, is grown on the uplands of northern China and in Jilin. The red tobacco, originally developed in Virginia, is milder, and is now grown worldwide as the material for cigarettes. Various distinct qualities are cultivated from these two species. On the whole, tobacco is not a demanding plant, although the cultivation of high quality leaves requires special care and techniques. Ripe leaves are picked in July and dried under the sun (*shaiyan* 曬菸), or dried in or under a shed (*liangyan* 晾菸).¹¹ Roasting leaves in ovens (*kaoyan* 烤菸) has been practiced in Taiwan, Shandong, Henan, and Anhui from the beginning of the twentieth century. In general, though, it is the quite amenable characteristics of the tobacco plant that in great part explain its rapid spread worldwide.

There are various ways of consuming tobacco. One can twist whole tobacco leaf and smoke it, as some indigenous Americans used to do, and as is sometimes practised in Southeast Asia.¹² The typical way of consumption in premodern China was inhaling through a bamboo stem (*yanganr* 煙杆). For this, it was cut into thin strips, the so called “golden threads” (*jinsi* 金絲); and ingredients such as sugar or scent sometimes were added. A certain amount was packed into a small metal container (*yandai guor* 煙袋鍋), attached to the stem at one end, and lit. The smoke passed through the long stem to one’s mouth. The longer the stem, the milder the taste of the smoke (and the lower the content of nicotine in the smoke). Bamboo was an ideal natural implement, and so in China, from the earliest stage, the typical tobacco utensils were bamboo pipes (*yandai* 煙袋, *yandou* 煙斗, and so forth; long pipes – one meter or more

¹⁰ Today, the Huang Hai region handles 28% of the total production in China; the other five tobacco regions are the southwest and the northeast; southern China, central China, and Xinjiang.

¹¹ This treatment was praised as an example of Chinese frugality: “On an American tobacco plantation one of the heaviest expenses is the building of the long and carefully constructed sheds for drying. In Chinese tobacco farms there is for this object no expense at all. The sheds are made of thatch, and when they are worn out the old material is just as good for fuel as the new. When the tobacco is picked, the stout, stiff stalks are left standing. Straw ropes are stretched along these stalks, and upon the ropes are hung the tobacco leaves, which are taken in at night with the ropes attached, like clothes hung to a line. For simplicity and effectiveness this device could hardly be excelled”; Arthur H. Smith, *Chinese Characteristics* (New York, Chicago, London and Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Co, 1894), p. 26.

¹² At Quang Binh province (northern Vietnam) in 1963, an elderly woman was seen smoking a roll. At the time, a female smoker was unheard of in town. I am grateful to Ivo Vasiljev for this communication.

— were called *chaoyan* 潮煙). Pipes made of brass became common in Mongolia and Japan, and also in China. They were durable, plain or decorated, some made of one piece, others retractable. These were generically called the “dry pipes” (*hanyan ju* 旱煙具).

With the eighteenth-century campaigns to Turkestan, water pipes (*shuiyanhu* 水煙壺) came to prominence. The tobacco mixture for water pipes was processed from a special tobacco sort (*mohe yan* 莫合菸). The top brands were grown in the areas by Lanzhou 蘭州, Lintao 臨洮, and Jingyuan 靖遠, in Gansu. These centers were also known for their water pipes; Lanzhou alone had more than 200 water-pipe workshops in the second half of the eighteenth century, and the pipes were transported to markets in the rest of the empire, and also to the Chinese communities of Southeast Asia.¹³ An average water pipe was about 24 cm high and made of metal, usually brass.¹⁴ It was therefore quite large and heavy, not so convenient for carrying around. It was a fancy object, obviously more expensive than an ordinary *yandai*, and when not in use served as decoration. Inhaling smoke through water removed impurities and moderated the thickness of the smoke. Such factors may have contributed to its popularity among women; however, men smoked water pipes too, although not as much.

An alternative was snuffing (*biyan* 鼻煙 or *wenyan* 聞煙), a way of consumption practiced mostly by the elite. A processed mixture of tobacco and herbs was kept in a tiny snuff bottle, the price of which precluded use by ordinary people. The snuff bottles, made of colored glass or precious stone, were associated with the court. In 1684, the Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662–1722) emperor received glass snuff bottles from Jesuits in Nanking, and later, in 1696, he set up Imperial glassworks in Peking to produce snuff bottles.¹⁵ His son, the Yongzheng 雍正 emperor (r. 1723–1735), had a great liking for these miniature objects.¹⁶ Since his time, the activities *chiyān* (to smoke) and *xiūyān* 嗅煙 (to snuff) are clearly differentiated in texts. In the Daoguang 道光 reign (1821–1850), Chinese developed the technique of painting the inside of miniature glass bottles (*hunei hua* 壺內畫). The ware produced in Boshan 博山, in

¹³ *Zhongguo fengsu cidian* 中國風俗辭典, ed. Ye Dabing 葉大兵 and Wu Bing'an 烏丙安 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 1992), p. 543.

¹⁴ About tobacco utensils, see Wang Anzhu 王安珠, *Zhongguo yanju wenhua* 中國煙具文化 (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi, 2004).

¹⁵ This occurred under the directorship of the Jesuit Kilian Stumpf. See Robert W. L. Kleiner, *Chinese Snuff Bottles: The White Wings Collection* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Art Museum, 1994), p. 9.

¹⁶ For more about snuffing and the Yongzheng emperor, see Li Guorong 李國榮 and Zhang Shucai 張書才, *Shi shuo Yongzheng* 實說雍正 (Beijing: Zijincheng chubanshe, 1999).

Shandong 山東, and Canton was exported abroad. Snuff bottles have been highly sought by art collectors; and the pioneer treatise on the subject, *Yonglu xianjie* 勇廬閒詰, was written by the painter Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 in 1869 (published in 1880). Snuffing gradually spread from court nobility and high officials to gentry and commoners, but always remained a mark of wealth and position, as noted at the close of the nineteenth century, “A few officials and wealthy people still employ [snuffing], but seem to do so rather to make an exhibition of their costly snuff bottles.”¹⁷ A curious case involving a snuff bottle occurred in 1802, when Jiqing 吉慶, the governor-general of Guangdong, committed suicide by swallowing the bottle.¹⁸ Finally, still another, not very common, way of consuming tobacco is chewing (*jiaoyan* 嚼煙).¹⁹

These traditional ways of tobacco consumption eventually yielded to the rise of cigarettes (*xiangyan* 香煙, *juanyan* 卷煙). Cigarettes were first produced in 1881 in the United States: their tobacco is cut by machine and the fine bits rolled with a thin paper. This brought about a turning point in the tobacco industry and smoking habits worldwide. In China, during the 1890s, cigarettes were primarily imported by foreign companies, indigenous companies emerging only later, in the early-twentieth century. For instance, the successful Nanyang xiongdiancao gongsi 南洋兄弟菸草公司 was founded in 1905 in Hong Kong, with branches in Wuhan and Shanghai. In the 1930s, China had some 1,200 cigarette factories, and production boomed. The first Chinese producer of cigars (*xuejiayan* 雪茄煙) established himself in Shanghai in 1905; more producers in Guangdong, Hainan and Sichuan followed prior to 1911. Cigarettes and cigars, however, were perceived as overseas articles, and carried a social perception very different from that of the traditional domestic pipes and snuff bottles. With the introduction of cigarettes to China, another subculture of tobacco consumption arose, and my discussion necessarily stops at that point, only adding a brief comment at the end of this article.

THE ACCOMMODATION OF TOBACCO IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY SOCIETY

The lifestyles of the early-Qing emperors are said to have been relatively modest. Kangxi was fond of neither drinking nor smoking, and

¹⁷ Stuart, *Chinese Materia Medica*, p. 285.

¹⁸ Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* (1943; rpt. Taipei: Ch'eng Wen Publishing Co, 1970; hereafter *ECCP*), pp. 584–85.

¹⁹ Nowadays practiced by some minorities living in Yunnan, e.g., Bulang, Dai, and Yi (Lolo). Zhang, *Zhongguo yancao shihua*, pp. 475–76.

prohibited smoking on the palace grounds in 1676.²⁰ Both Yongzheng and Qianlong occasionally reasoned against tobacco out of a concern for the proper use of land, which should have been planted with staple crops rather than luxury plants that were not nutritious – plants such as tobacco, *gaoliang* 高粱 (for brewing alcohol), and cotton.²¹

It was controversial for the elite to acknowledge indulgence in tobacco at times when smoking was prohibited, or when the emperor argued against it. There was a want of a well known, respected smoker, whose addiction would justify its use by others. An anecdote about Han Tan 韓荃 (z. Mulu 慕廬, 1637–1704), published in 1709, should be understood against this background:

Han Mulu indulged in smoking and drinking. When I met him at a reception in the year *wuwu* 戊午 of Kangxi (1678), the cup and the pipe would not leave his hands. I joked, What if you were to make the choice, like Mencius, and choose only one of the two delicacies?

Han Mulu bowed his head and thought for a while. “I would let the drink go,” he then said.

This made everybody laugh.²²

Han Tan gained prestige as the top graduate at the 1673 examination, and obtained high offices, culminating in the post of minister of rites in 1700. The fact that he smoked legitimized tobacco in the eyes of the elite, and possibly made it fashionable; with anecdotes like this, the taboo surrounding tobacco receded. When the memory of Han Tan faded, there were other celebrities, including Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724–1805), the chief editor of *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書. With smoke steadily rising from his head, he was nicknamed “Cauldron Ji” (Ji Daguo 紀大鍋). In one story, he was suddenly summoned to the emperor, and having no other option, stuck the pipe into his boot. It burned and forced tears to his eyes at the audience, until the emperor empathically asked what

²⁰ The image of Kangxi as scorning tobacco was developed by later historians: Li Tiaoyuan 李調元 in *Danmo lu* 淡墨錄 (1795), and Xu Ke 徐珂, in *Qingbai leichao* 清稗類鈔 (1917). But contemporary evidence, i.e., the ban of 1676, or his speech quoted by his son in *Tingxun ge-yan* 庭訊格言, 1730, reveals that his criticism was grounded on a fear of inciting fires. See also Goodrich, “Early Prohibitions,” p. 655; and Li and Zhang, *Shishuo Yongzheng*, p. 33.

²¹ The prohibition against alcohol, issued at the beginning of the Qianlong reign (1737), argued this way. It should be noted that in the draft, one of the advisors, Fang Bao 方苞, recommended that tobacco plantations should be reversed to crops. However, other compilers, such as Sun Jiagan 孫嘉淦, were aware of the importance tobacco (and *gaoliang* 高粱, in the case of spirits) had on the economy, and tobacco was not included in the final document; Zhang, *Zhongguo yancao shihua*, p. 546.

²² Wang Shizhen 王士禛, *Fen Gan yuhua* 分甘餘話 (1709); taken from Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 113–14.

the matter was. It is also said that the Qianlong emperor granted him exclusive permission to smoke in the palace.²³

Among the lower social strata, there was an analogous trend to legitimize tobacco by the aid of legendary figures or rulers. A tale from Jilin concerns certain bannermen who received land from the Xianfeng 咸豐 emperor (r. 1851–1861). They planted tobacco and each year sent the emperor, who himself smoked, gifts of tobacco leaves.²⁴ In very early times, in Sichuan, Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181–234 AD) reportedly gave his soldiers a new kind of plant (tobacco) to inhale, and this cured their malarial fever.²⁵ The latter legend places the origin of tobacco in China, and draws on the notion of tobacco as a remedy. Both Sichuan and Jilin produced fine tobacco. However, smoking entered Chinese society from the bottom, not from the top as these tales try to suggest. This kind of folk interpretation – to endorse a phenomenon by means of an elite origin – is common in many cultures.

One facet of smoking in traditional society that may be surprising by comparison with modern China, or with alien cultures, was that female smoking seemed “natural,” and they were accepted in the same way as male smokers. The writer Luo Qilan 絡綺蘭 (1755–1813?) mentioned in the introduction to a poem that she smoked as she wrote.²⁶ Like most women of her standing, Luo Qilan showed concern for social propriety and cared for her good reputation.²⁷ She did not hide smoking because there was nothing wrong with it. Also, in legal hearings there seems to have been no particular focus on female smokers, and this indifference is obvious too from folk pictures. The fact that a woman smoker attracted no attention sustained the formal approval of such behavior.²⁸

Written Sources

There is sufficient material about smoking tobacco in the high-Qing period, and the supply of evidence keeps increasing steadily

²³ Ibid., pp. 114–15.

²⁴ Diao, *Manzu shenghuo lüeying*, p. 124.

²⁵ See *Zhonghua wenhua da cihai* 中華文化大辭海 (Beijing: Zhongguo guoji guangbo chubanshe, 1998) 5, p. 541. Variations of this tale were recorded by other authors.

²⁶ In the collection *Ting qiusheng xuan shiji* 聽秋聲軒詩集 (n.p.: 1797). I am grateful to Robyn Hamilton for bringing this line to my attention.

²⁷ See Robyn Hamilton, “The Pursuit of Fame: Luo Qilan (1755–1813?) and the Debates about Women and Talent in Eighteenth-Century Jiangnan,” *Late Imperial China* 18.1 (1997), pp. 39–71.

²⁸ This is quite unlike historic Europe; in Bohemia, e.g., woman would smoke tobacco only as a cure for sickness. A female smoker was otherwise shocking: Georges Sand, the well-known

through the nineteenth century. Literary compositions and compilations on this topic are scarce, but were nonetheless conveniently gathered into anthologies by tobacco adherents. When entertaining guests, tobacco soon became equally as important as tea and alcohol, and erudite smokers deplored the absence of a “classic on tobacco,” analogous to the already existing *Book of Tea* (*Chajing* 茶經) by Lu Yu 陸羽 and *The Classic of Alcohol* (*Jiujing* 酒經), now lost. One of the first to take up the challenge was the noted historian Quan Zuwang 全祖望 (1705–1755). His “Danbagu fu” 淡巴菰賦 (“Rhapsody on Tobacco”), numbering about 1,050 characters (including introduction), recorded what had been known about tobacco in China, and concluded with a comment on its future, in a slightly negative tone: “I know that its popularity will not fade; as I’ve heard, it gained ground even at places where only rebels dare to tread ...”²⁹

Others went further and compiled manuals from historical data, bibliographical material, topical poetry, and the like. The earliest known one, written in 1737 by Wang Shihan 汪師韓 from Qiantang 錢塘, had the title *Jinsi lu* 金絲錄 (*Records of Tobacco*, literally, “golden threads”). Later, in 1774, Lu Yao 陸燿 (1723–1785), the former governor (*xunfu* 巡撫) of Hunan, wrote *Yan pu* 煙譜 (*A Handbook of Smoking*). However, the “classic of tobacco” turned out to be *Yancao pu* 煙草譜 (*A Handbook of Tobacco*), in eight *juan* 卷, written in 1805 by Chen Cong 陳琮, a poet from the Shanghai region. Based on 210 references listed in the opening *juan*, he explained the cultivation, treatment, prohibitions and fees in the second *juan*, collected *diangu* 典故 in the third *juan*, and in the remaining five gathered topical literary works, including some written for his book.

These literary works were mostly poems in the *shi* 詩 or *ci* 詞 form. As for their content, certain motifs and ideas came up repeatedly: the origins of tobacco, its use on social occasions comparable to that for tea and liquor, curative (medical) effects, excitative effects that helped overcome sadness and loneliness, decorated smoking utensils like purses and snuff bottles, beautiful women smoking long pipes, and the smoke itself. A number of these poems were composed *ad hoc* at parties, when guests smoked and exchanged poems, and only a small portion display creativity. Most of the authors are now forgotten, but some are well recognized poets and scholars, for example, You Tong

French romantic writer, dressed like a man and smoked a cigar (like a man) in order to provoke. Women snuffing, however, were acceptable in many countries.

²⁹ Quoted from Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, p. 219.

尤侗, Shen Deqian 沈德潛, Li E 厲鶚, Wang Chang 王昶, Zhao Yi 趙翼, who is discussed further, below, and Shu Wei 舒位.

Literary works and compilations provide a considerable amount of data about smoking, but they seldom leave the realm of high society. The same goes for novels, which often carry readers into the world of illusion and luxury. When they do contain long and accurate descriptions, these usually concern high society (for instance, the scene about treating a cold with snuff-tobacco, in chapter 52 of *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢). Facts from the lives of ordinary and poor people were recorded during legal hearings, and to some extent jotted in various notes or anecdotes by literati. This evidence will be considered in greater detail below.

Pictorial Sources

An old drawing is shown on the cover of the modern scholar Yang Guoan's 楊國安 book *Zhongguo yancao wenhua jilin* 中國菸草文化集林: a scholar sits behind a desk with writing utensils and books, holding a long bamboo pipe (see figure 1). At first glance it seems to be just a cover illustration, and nowhere in the book is it stated what the picture actually represents – probably a portrait of Chen Cong, the author of *Yancao pu*. This evident disregard among scholars for pictorial sources is regretful, since a good deal can be deduced from the picture. Still, the perception of value and meaning of pictorial sources has undergone a change among social historians as well as art historians.³⁰ An increasing number are making use of visual representations, interpreting them, dating them, and referring to the sources.³¹

It is not always easy to find images of smokers. The so-called genre painting did not broadly develop in China (unlike in Korea or Japan), and examples are rare. An exception to the rule, the handscroll “The Fishermen’s Joy” (“Yule tu” 漁樂圖),³² shows a fisherman smoking a short pipe, typical of ordinary men. The scroll is imprinted with a false seal of Wang Zhenpeng 王振鵬 (fl. early-fourteenth century), and the commentator Charles Mason, who makes an exhausting analysis of the

³⁰ Borrowing the words of Craig Clunas: “Lately, some large claims have been made for pictures ... [some] called for a history of images, as opposed to a history of art, a form of historical enquiry which would not start a priori privileging of certain works as masterpieces, but would range more widely across the entire field of cultural production”; Clunas, *Pictures and Visuality in Early Modern China* (London: Reaktion Books, Ltd., 1997), p. 9.

³¹ This being one of the key issues behind the miscellany edited by Huang Ko-wu, *When Images Speak: Visual Representation and Cultural Mapping in Modern China* (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 2004).

³² An eight-leaf album from the Middle School of the Central Academy of Arts collection, Peking; reproduced in James Cahill, Richard Vinograd, and Xue Yongnian, eds., *New Interpretations of Ming and Qing Paintings* (Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 1994), catalogue entry 99–6.

style to prove that the painting was made in the eighteenth century, takes no notice of the pipe, which would have effectively supported his conclusion.³³ In ink painting, the evidence of smoking is rarely found not because smoking was uncommon, but because the smoking figure was not a favorite subject in high art, with its lyric subject-matter. Would there be a figure, he or she would most likely have been a figure from antiquity, dressed accordingly. The same was valid of book illustrations, which are without any doubt a rich source of Ming and Qing figure painting. As a whole, the figures in illustrations have little to do with actual reality, since the stories were based on legends and history. Indeed, Chinese indulgence in their past was such that even Gai Qi's 改琦 illustrations of the practically contemporary novel *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 showed the male characters in Ming costumes and hair-dress.³⁴ The infatuation with the past was adamant until the Guangxu 光緒 era (1875-1908), when the self in actual settings finally gained an important position in composition. Why it happened, in painting as well as in literature, is a question requiring a complex answer, which lies beyond the scope of this article.

There was, however, a specific group of court paintings, commissioned to depict important events that captured actual state activities. These were pictorial documents (*jishi hua* 紀實畫), which were kept in a separate archive, and not part of the imperial painting collection, although they were executed by eminent artists.³⁵ Their format and composition were adapted from an old Song model, the famous Qingming shang He tu 清明上河圖,³⁶ and the eighteenth-century court experienced a revival of this type of painting, starting with "Nanxun tu" 南巡圖 in 1689. The purpose was not to produce a work of art, but to make a historic record. We may assume that depictions of festive, happy events intentionally avoided disagreeable matters, and therefore could not have been ultimately truthful; but they are faithful enough for our purposes. Occasionally, one notes a smoker in such scrolls. Although they are few, they were painted on dated documents, and that raises their value over the other pictorial sources.

³³ Ibid., p. 132.

³⁴ The novel was first published in 1792. Gai Qi drew the illustrations by 1828, and they were first published in 1879 under the title *Hongloumeng tuyong* 紅樓夢圖詠; see the edn. published by Taiwan University Library, Old editions, p. 236.

³⁵ Maxwell K. Hearn, "The Kangxi Southern Inspection Tour: A Narrative Program by Wang Hui," Ph.D. diss. (Princeton University, 1990), p. 3.

³⁶ A long horizontal scroll fully covered with a bird's-eye view of a busy town, occasionally broken by a rustic scene. Although a miniature, the scenes show astonishing details. Therefore, the scrolls are also called "painting of a town" (*chengshi hua*).

“Wanshou shengdian tu” 萬壽盛典圖 is the earliest pictorial source of smokers that I have found; it was painted in 1711, and published in 1717 at Wuying dian 武英殿 as a book in two volumes, with seventy-three and seventy-five double-page woodblock illustrations, respectively. This document commemorates the emperor’s sixtieth birthday. It follows the route from a suburban palace to the Northern Gate of the Forbidden City, by streets richly decorated and crowded with people. Approximately half-way through the scroll, one spots a few smokers with pipes (see figure 2), perhaps ten, out of the hundreds of figures in the scroll. Judging from their attire, they were, with a few exceptions, of gentry status. Another court scroll titled “Shengping wanguo” 升平萬國 was painted by Zhou Kun 周鲲 in 1745 to celebrate the New Year.³⁷ It was not, strictly speaking, a pictorial document, but it was painted in the same manner and intended to capture reality: the happy reality of the current regime. It is quite an accomplished work of art, which to my mind surpasses similar scrolls. In the opening section on the right edge, a lonely smoker is sitting on the ground inside the city gate. He is an ordinary fellow who probably wants to warm himself up with the pipe.

The scrolls inspired by “Qingming shang He tu” were painted on the same tiny scale, with figures less than one centimeter in height. In the 1740s, some of the documentary scrolls employed a somewhat bigger scale, with figures approximately three centimeters tall, for example, the four scrolls commemorating the sericultural ritual (“Qincan tu” 親蠶圖), dated 1744.³⁸ At the beginning of the fourth scroll is a group of idle officials, smoking pipes; and in the second scroll we see an official carrying a pipe. One also finds smokers in “Zhigong tu” 職貢圖, a documentary painting that does not follow the pattern of “Qingming shang He tu.” It represents China’s tributary polities, each by a couple in typical costumes and with typical tools in their hands, against a blank background. This work was commissioned in 1751 from the painter Xie Sui 謝遂, and over the years up to 1790, more tributary nations were added.³⁹ Inscriptions in Manchu and Chinese give a brief explanation to each picture. Here and there – mostly in the third scroll depicting

³⁷ Palace Museum, Taipei, inv. no. 01705; 31.3 x 480.5 cm; reproduced in the catalogue *Gugong shuhua tulu* 故宮書畫圖錄 (Taipei: Guoli Gugong bowuyuan, 1989–2002) 20, p. 6.

³⁸ Palace Museum, Taipei, inv. no. 00917–00920; reproduced in *Gugong shuhua tulu* 21, pp. 445–55; the section with smokers on p. 447. They are, however, hardly visible in the reproduction because of the tiny size. The original was exhibited in the exhibition *Schätze der Himmelssöhne*, Altes Museum, Berlin, July 18 to October 12, 2003.

³⁹ Palace Museum, Taipei, inv. no. 00046–00049. The painting is made of four scrolls, having, respectively, 70, 61, 92, and 78 pairs (301 in sum). The height of the scrolls is 33.9 cm.

Gansu and Sichuan – is a figure holding a tobacco pipe, meant to show his or her typical attribute. The inscriptions, with two exceptions, do not say anything about their smoking, obviously feeling no need to comment on it. “Zhigong tu” was also published as a book with black-and-white illustrations (between 1790 and 1796), faithfully replicating the model, except for the Manchu inscriptions, which were omitted in the later version (figure 3).

The same purpose, that is, to create documentation, was behind the drawings and sketches made by foreign travelers in China. Smokers are seen in the illustrations from books about China published in Europe during the Qing era. Further, the so-called “export pictures” painted by Cantonese artisans showed styles and content to which westerners could relate, accommodating foreign aesthetic tastes. On the whole, pictures by foreigners and “export pictures” are quite a satisfactory source for tobacco in China.⁴⁰ (In this context, one may wonder at the absence of smokers in *Shizoku kibun* 清俗記聞, a Japanese compendium on Chinese habits, published in 1799, which is a chief and rewarding pictorial source for the eighteenth century; but it avoids smoking. Apparently, by that time Japanese found nothing special about the proliferation of smokers with showy, long pipes. However, smokers appear on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Japanese *ukiyo-e* 浮世繪 prints.)

Popular professional painters, whose works appealed to illiterate audiences in towns and villages, did paint scenes inspired by authentic situations. Their works were not sold in the form of original paintings, but rather in the form of reasonably priced, color prints. These are usually though not correctly called *nianhua* 年畫 (“New Year pictures”): their contents extend much beyond that festival. Folk prints are also a good source on tobacco smoking, with more material and content of a greater variety than that of official pictorial documents. The deficiency of folk prints is their dating, which often cannot be precisely determined. I assume that most such pictures do not precede the Tongzhi 同治 reign (1862–1874). Folk prints usually have a distinct style according to regional provenance; they are classified after the main printing center, where many producers competed.⁴¹ Unlike in high art, the human figure is the leitmotiv of printed pictures, and everyday reality is

⁴⁰ They were not necessarily always figures or genre scenes: a picture of a tobacco shop, with boxes neatly arranged on shelves, from ca. 1820–30, is reproduced in Craig Clunas, *Chinese Export Watercolours* (London: Victoria & Albert Museum, 1984), p. 22.

⁴¹ For example, Wuqiang, a town in Hebei province, was an important center with some 144 printed picture shops at the beginning of the twentieth century; no lesser number must have existed in the surrounding villages; James A. Flath, *The Cult of Happiness. Nianhua, Art and History in Rural North China* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2004), p. 25.

not avoided. It is true that theatrical and historical scenes show figures dressed in historic costumes, but symbolic (well-wishing and protective) pictures do not. Besides, secondary figures in religious pictures often wear contemporary dress (see figure 4). Any scene set in a factually correct background may include smokers and smoking utensils.

Finally, from the 1860s and 70s onward, newspapers of the Western type began circulating in big cities like Shanghai, Tianjin, and Wuhan. Several papers had sections with pictorial reports and cartoons. Unlike narrative pictures, which turned toward stock images from the past, newspaper illustrations showed the present and sometimes even sought to exaggerate reality by recapturing actual events as they were supposed to have happened. They often underscored scandals and disasters. Depending on the reporter's ability, the accompanying pictures were improved with everyday details, including smokers and smoking tools.

DIFFERENCES IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE SMOKING PHENOMENON

We naturally assume that literati who specifically wrote on the subject of tobacco were not indifferent to it. There was nothing unique about authors who thought that consumption of tobacco was pleasant, and we may assume that they themselves were consumers (smokers). The small group of authors who did not take this attitude – eight poems out of sixty – had various reasons for their detachment. They either expressed the concern over peasants' growing an inedible plant instead of crops, and spending money on tobacco instead of food; or the opinion that swallowing fire was suitable for demons, but not men.⁴² None of them brought up the notion of tobacco being harmful, on the contrary, smoking was praised as a good breathing exercise, which incites the production of *qi* in one's body.⁴³ The historian and poet Zhao Yi (1727–1814), one of those not in favor of smoking, elaborated on a Tang phrase that read “相思若煙草,” and thereby claimed that tobacco had been known in China under that dynasty.⁴⁴ It is true that expressions like *xiangcao* 香草, *yancao* 煙草, *yeyan* 葉煙, and *xiangyan* 香煙 appeared in ancient and medieval literature; however, they indicated other plants,

⁴² My main source for the poems discussed below is the anthology in Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 169–226.

⁴³ A poem by Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 172.

⁴⁴ In *Gaiyu congkao* 陔餘叢考, written during 1773 and 1777; see Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, p. 186.

or incense, or were simply meant to be read literally as “smoky herb.” Zhao Yi’s research reveals an anxiety about the fact that tobacco did not originate in China, but was an overseas import.

A strong stand against tobacco, such as that voiced by Qing emperor Taizong, was seldom repeated. Literati seem not to have been disgusted by smoking, but criticized it as something foolish, their disapproval expressed in a mild, polite manner. Qi Zhouhua 齊周華, a victim of the Qianlong inquisition, wrote a prose-poem (*fu* 賦) about his friend’s decision to quit smoking. After reviewing the medical characteristics of tobacco, and making clear his own disapproval with smoking, he says,

Zhang Jiuyi 張九一 was keen on smoking like anybody else. But after staying one month in my house, he quit. I was worried that he felt pressed to do so, and asked him to resume smoking.

“You yourself do not smoke,” he said, “so why do you ask others to do so?”

“Oh no,” I said, “Since every man has his particular nature, I would not press anyone. Su Dongpo did not drink, yet treated his guests to wine. The guests asked him whether he did so to please them, or to please himself. And Su Dongpo said, ‘To please myself.’”

“Your words are as an order to me,” said Zhang Jiuyi. “But I would not have come hundreds of miles to study [with you] if I were not to stay next to you and learn from you. What if I make you stuff your nose and leave the lecture? But how to eliminate the voices which say that [smoking] is good for health? Mencius said: ‘The mouth is always fond of tasty meals, that is a natural thing. But when an order is issued, a man of character would not mention what was natural.’ Why don’t you approach me as a man of character, then? Why do you treat me as an ordinary folk?”

“You are quite right,” I said. “I fear, however, that you will behave like this today, and perhaps not another day. If so, how could I face the elders? Is it not better not to set rules?”

“Had you, my teacher, seen something like that ever happen? Someone who accepts a rule one day, and breaks it on the morrow?”

“Yes, indeed. Sit down and listen. When I served in [Shaanxi] Erqu 二曲, a guest came to a banquet, and he drank as if bottomless. I was annoyed, and so was the host. The guest was embar-

rassed, and said he was mistaken to drink that much. We pressed him not to drink anymore.

“I want to make an oath that I cease drinking. The next time when you meet me, you will have seen that I replaced liquor with tea. Please write a poem about [this decision of mine]!”

I wrote two poems on the subject (...), but not even a month later, I met him again in Xi'an, and he was quite drunk. He was ashamed, but so was I. Had I not written those poems, I would have saved him much embarrassment. Presently, I do not want to make the same mistake again.

“Don't you trust me?” cried Zhang Jiuyi. “Besides, smoking is a trifle. Since I do not believe that it carries away disease and sadness, why should I dwindle on it and not quit? Why would I have come, if not to emulate you and learn from you? You do not smoke; Su Dongpo did not drink. Although it was caused through your natural disposition, I wish to make the most of that disposition too, and will obey the rule!”

I felt happy with his decision, and dedicated this story to him.⁴⁵

The humorous tone that penetrates Qi Zhouhua's prose-poem surprises us, showing Qi's attempt to ridicule smoking. The *fu* “Filling a Pipe with Tobacco” 塞烟筒賦 by Li Lun'en 李綸恩 goes further. It is a parody of a discourse between a philosopher and his student, showing, in reverse, the master playing the fool. At the end of the dialogue, the student speaks ironically of beautifully made, but impractical, things, such as his master's metal pipe.⁴⁶

There were authors who apparently did not smoke, but mentioned the phenomenon without expressing any emotion or stand toward it, for example, Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–1798), in his ghost stories. On the other hand, it only seems natural that most writers on the subject were smokers who not only wrote about tobacco but praised it. First of all, they praised its excitative effects. The pipe became “a friend” and companion who helped overcome loneliness. In this connection, poets frequently played on the homophony of a synonym of tobacco: *xiangsi* 香絲 (“fragrant threads”), and *xiangsi* 相思 (“to think of, to miss”). Poets chose to portray smokers engaging in a lonely act, although their social class smoked in company. This is a presumable fact, but we can

⁴⁵ A free translation, made from *ibid.*, pp. 224–25. For Qi Zhouhua's biography, see *ECCP*, pp. 123–25.

⁴⁶ For the original text see Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 220–21. The exact dates of Li Lun'en's life are not known.

also find evidence for it, for example, in the court pictorial document “Qincan tu” 親蠶圖 dated 1744. At the beginning of the fourth scroll, the painter, more exactly one of the several listed painters,⁴⁷ placed a group of idle officials, squatting down and smoking pipes. Quite unlike the poems by educated men, the ordinary people did not conceal the fact that smoking was an important means of socializing. Smoking was relaxing, usually accompanied by friendly conversation, as the plain worker taking a rest in the background section in “Wanshou shengdian tu” 萬壽盛典圖 (figure 2, upper-left corner) shows. Smokers could share the same pipe. In a story by Yuan Mei, the hero declined a pipe offered when he recognized that his partner was a demon, and by refusing the offer, escaped from hell.⁴⁸

In the eighteenth century, asking for a light for their tobacco gave a rare chance for village men to drop into the kitchen of another person’s house and mingle with women, when sexes were segregated.⁴⁹ This observation is confirmed by other stories by Yuan Mei. Asking for a light was evidently used by strangers as a way to get close to a woman and start a conversation or directly to flirt.⁵⁰ Records of legal hearings indicate that talking about tobacco and smoking could have implied allusions to sex.⁵¹

The literati not only used tobacco to dispel loneliness but also repeatedly claimed that tobacco cleared their minds when studying, and inspired them to literary creativity. In the portrait of Chen Cong, the author of *Yancao pu*, the smoking utensils are placed before him on the table together with, and on the same level as, the ink and the brush, becoming the attributes of a scholar. The association of smoking with literary creativity, needless to say, only concerned the elite. Also, the historical facts about tobacco concerning its social parallel with tea and liquor and its medical characteristics do not appear in evidence related to ordinary folk. We may assume that tea, liquor, and curatives were above the means of poor peasants, but tobacco was a cheap commodity, accessible to all.

⁴⁷ The fourth scroll (00920) is concluded with the signatures of Giuseppe Castiglione, Jin Kun 金昆, Cheng Zhidao 程志道, and Li Huilin 李慧林.

⁴⁸ “Gui qing xiyao” 鬼請吸煙, in Yuan, *Xin qi xie*, pp. 718–19.

⁴⁹ Janet Mary Theiss, “Dealing with Disgrace: The Negotiation of Female Virtue in Eighteenth-Century China,” Ph.D. diss. (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), p. 140.

⁵⁰ This is clearly stated in some of his stories, e.g., *Xixi jing* 屑屑精, *Dianzhu huanzhai* 店主還債, *Shixiang erzi* 尸香二則; see Yuan, *Xin qi xie*, pp. 122–25, 298, 325–26.

⁵¹ See esp. the case QL 45.7.12, 159.4, in Theiss, “Dealing with Disgrace,” p. 175; and the case DG 11.3, SF 169 in Matthew Sommer, “Sex, Law and Society in Late Imperial China,” Ph.D. diss. (Los Angeles: University of California, 1994), pp. 272–73.

Some notions were shared by both rich and poor circles, notably the bewitching and changing shape of smoke, which reminded poets of calligraphic forms, among other things. In a story from *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱衛草堂筆記 by Ji Yun, smoking became the main subject. At a birthday celebration in a public pub, in 1758, two of the well-wishers were ordinary men who donated flying cranes and palaces created of smoke.⁵² The smoke had a strong association with Daoist magic: “I wonder, did I become an immortal, or does that smoke emerge from myself?”⁵³ asked a poetess; while grand secretary Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 recommended inhaling as a good breathing exercise.⁵⁴

Smoking utensils, including water pipes and tobacco purses, were described in poems on precious objects (*yongwushi* 詠物詩), and were no less admired by popular artists who placed them in their pictures with no other apparent reason than for decoration. In figure 5, an illustrated story concerning a monk, two water pipes, of different forms, can be seen at the sides of the picture. In a side room on the left there is the so-called “*yi* 乙-shaped” pipe; and on a table at the right there stands an ordinary cylindrical water pipe.

Smoking utensils could be seen as fashionable: Manchu girls used to attach pipes and tobacco purses to their belts, and would not leave the house without it;⁵⁵ and ordinary Chinese women stuck long thin pipes into their hair buns.⁵⁶ Only the very expensive snuffing-bottles, in spite of their sophisticated forms and elegant beauty, were not seen in sources concerning commoners, and not depicted in pictorial sources. Snuff bottles were indeed reserved for the nobility. The writer Li Tiaoyuan 李調元 (1743–1803), relatively well known in our times, expressed his thanks in a poem for a gift of a snuff bottle, but also expressed his embarrassment: the snuff tobacco was too expensive. Because he was an old man, he would keep his habit of smoking a pipe.⁵⁷

Among the recurrent motives in sources on tobacco were beautiful women (*meinü* 美女, *meiren* 美人). They appear frequently in poetry, reflecting upper society,⁵⁸ and also in folk prints and pictorials (for

⁵² Seen in Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 161–62.

⁵³ By Shen Cai 深彩, quoted from *ibid.*, p. 198. Only three poems were written by women, and their content does not, on the whole, differ from those written by men.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 172. A note on Chen Yuanlong's (1652–1736) career is in *ECCP*, p. 97.

⁵⁵ Diao, *Manzu shenghuo*, p. 124.

⁵⁶ Mentioned in a poem by Huang Zhijun 黃之雋, written in 1744; see Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 173–74.

⁵⁷ See *ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵⁸ E.g., five out of the “Six Poems about Beauties” by You Tong (1618–1704) describe a

example, figures 6, 9, 12, 13), reflecting ordinary social groups. In the folk prints, the female smoker with a long pipe represents a constant, favorite type. The long pipe, favored by women, is used to the advantage of the composition, just like a lantern pole or a flute, balanced on her elongated, slim figure. She may be an ordinary creature, an allegorical figure (carrying one of the “four treasures” of an educated man),⁵⁹ or a supernatural being (for instance, “The Three Beauties” 三美圖, representing immortals).⁶⁰ Beauties in splendid costumes are seen on New Year pictures, where the whole family would gather in a decorated main hall. Such pictures display wealth and luxury, of which these women are a part; indeed, they may be regarded as one of the many expensive objects on view. The plentitude conveys best wishes to the viewers. The beauties are decent members of the harmonious family and should not be seen as courtesans. Female smokers are always graceful – even women from narrative scenes who were miserable, poor, or agitated (figure 6). If old, the woman may have comical traits, yet she keeps her charm: in a scene from the play *Two Bracelets* (*Shuang yuzhuo* 雙玉鐲), an old neighbor tries to use her long pipe to drag a jade bracelet on the ground over to her (figure 7). In this rare case, the pipe actually has a function in the story. Another subcategory of female smoker was the pretty Manchu woman, recognizable by her costume (figure 8). The pipe and tobacco purse were regarded as a proper accessory of the Manchu costume.⁶¹ Thus, the long pipe became an attribute of a beauty.

The figure of a male smoker was not a decorative element in the picture. A man was seen more realistically, he could have been rich or not – a servant, a peasant, or a vagrant – but he always radiated a satisfied, happy mood, and the pipe he smoked was a part of this disposition. Prints from Yangjiabu 楊家埠, in Shandong, presumably from the Guangxu reign, show a village matchmaker, who is smoking while consulting a fortune-teller about the suitable day for a wedding (figure 9). In another print of the same provenance, the family gathered to greet the arrival of a wheel-barrow loaded with gold; two men in the picture have a pipe. A typical image of a male smoker in New Year

beautiful woman smoking a pipe. One of them certainly is a courtesan, the others are ambiguous; see Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, p. 193.

⁵⁹ Reproduced *ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶⁰ See the Taohuawu 桃花塢 print reproduced in *Collector's Show of Traditional Soochow Woodblock Prints in Taiwan* (Taipei: Taipei Fine Arts Museum, 1987), p. 40.

⁶¹ Diao, *Manzu shenghuo*, p. 122.

pictures is a contented, well-to-do patriarch (figure 10). Surrounded by his offspring, wife, concubines, and luxurious objects, he holds his pipe as if it were a sceptre. In this case, the pipe symbolized power, wealth and good fortune.

That smoking was a pleasant, even merry indulgence, is also evident from a prose-poem "The Biography of Mr. Pipe" 烟筒傳讚 by Wang Lu 王露. Mr. Pipe, a son of Mr. Bamboo and Madame Bronze, encounters various adventures. He first attracts the attention of a Cantonese physician, reputed for curing of malaria. He becomes popular and gradually finds his way into the Forbidden City. He makes a career, but later falls into disuse, is repaired with the help of Mr. Wood, and again falls into disuse; however, his numerous progeny carry on.⁶² Like the other two prose-poems discussed earlier,⁶³ the language used is not too complicated for this form of composition; the text reads briskly and overflows with wit: the humorous tone suits a hero of a low social status.

Another male iconographic type was the Qing official, a figure implying public power. He could also be found in a religious context, for example, as a minor official or a god's attendant from another world (figure 4).⁶⁴ Obviously, male types had a broad range across the social spectrum, but the female types were limited to one or two. Only the foreign documentarists painted low-class women smoking pipes. In the watercolors by William Alexander, who accompanied Lord McCartney's mission to China in 1793 and 1794, one can see a female peddler, and a female puppeteer, both with pipes (and with feet of natural size). Alexander painted all he happened to see, he painted officials as well as men low in status, including many smokers (see figure 11, a pipe vendor carrying a bunch of long pipes on his back). We can safely conclude that Chinese folk artists did not necessarily depict real figures, but had the tendency to represent certain types, and that these types included

⁶² For the original text, see Yang, *Zhongguo yancao*, pp. 222–23. The exact dates of Wang Lu's life are not known.

⁶³ By Qi Zhouhua and by Li Lun'en; see n. 47, above.

⁶⁴ One specific image was an assistant to the Judge of the Second Hell, who has the outfit of a Qing official, wears glasses, holds a pipe and a folding fan. The other deities in the picture, however, have historic (Ming) costumes. This official can be seen on a Qing print from Anhui (reproduced in Sun Helin 孫和林, Gao Jinlong 高金龍, eds., *Zhongguo minsu yishupin jianshang*, *Huihua juan* 中國民俗藝術品鑑賞, 繪畫卷 [Jinan: Shandong kexue jishu chubanshe, 2001], p. 37), or on a black-marble relief in Dongyue miao 東岳廟 in Tainan, on the side wall of the main sanctuary. The same iconographic type represents one of the 24 solar terms, personified, who were depicted by Pan Lishui 潘麗水 in 1970, on the door of Magong 馬公 temple in Tainan. So far, I was not able to decipher the iconography of the supernatural official with a pipe. In the story "Gui qing xiyan" by Yuan Mei (see n. 49, above), one of the hell attendants also smoked a pipe.

smokers. However, they omitted the possible types of poor, ordinary looking women. I would not say that this omission implies different attitudes towards tobacco smoking, but rather the strained social position of women in those times.

We turn to a different angle, the way certain smoking utensils fit certain social categories. Following is a story in which snuff bottles decide success at examinations:

When Pan Boyin 潘伯寅 served as the highest examiner, he had two glass snuff bottles in his drawer, a red one and a green one. While reading the compositions, he picked out one [of the bottles]. If the red one, the examinee passed, if the green one, the examinee failed. The minister of war Zhang Ziqing 張子清 accused him of debasement, but Boyin said: "It has been a long time since I studied, and sometimes I am quite confused. The examinees just finished their studies at the Hanlin Academy, and their knowledge must be deeper than mine. As far as I know, any of them can pass this exam. So I let the snuff bottles decide their fate."⁶⁵

This is fiction, and the humorous accent is easily noticed. However, the next curious incident happened in 1740, and was recorded during a legal hearing. Briefly, a daughter of a provincial examination graduate married into a wealthy literati family in Suizhou, Henan province. She objected to her husband's taking as a concubine one of the maids who accompanied her as a part of the dowry. The couple argued and he hit her in the face, shoving the pipe she was smoking into her throat and injuring her.⁶⁶ The smoking utensils were not the main topic in these two anecdotes, but they had a decisive importance for the plot and most significantly, they provided the protagonists with a recognizable position within the social hierarchy.

Smoking culture developed its own etiquette, presumably different in various social strata. With regard to upper circles, the fifth chapter of Lu Yao's *Yan pu* is of particular interest. He advised on the matter of the propriety of smoking in various situations. The right moment to smoke was after waking up in the morning, after a meal, in the company of a guest, when writing, when tired of reading, while waiting for someone who does not turn up, when feeling depressed, when there is no liquor or delicacies on the table. Secondly, one should not smoke when listening to *qin* 琴, when feeding cranes, during sophisticated

⁶⁵ Yang Jun 楊鈞, *Caotang zhiling* 草堂之靈; quoted from *Zhonghua wenhua* 5, p. 544.

⁶⁶ Paraphrased from Theiss, "Dealing with Disgrace," p. 263.

conversation, when admiring plum blossoms, when paying respects to ancestors, during an audience, when lying down with a beauty. Third, one should restrict smoking when coughing up phlegm, when having trouble with breathing, when the host cannot afford to offer tobacco, when an unwanted guest arrives, when lighting a pipe which does not catch. Finally, it is stupid to smoke on horseback, under a blanket, when in a hurry, when penniless, when walking on fallen leaves, on a reed boat, or when standing next to a pile of old paper.⁶⁷

CHANGES IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

As already stated, Western style newspapers began circulating in big cities beginning in about the 1860s. They concentrated on city life and addressed literate city dwellers who were generally more shrewd than the village audience for folk prints. Smokers and smoking tools, including water pipes, figure prominently in newspaper pictorials, and we note some differences in the perception of depicted smokers. The fixed iconographic types from the folk prints remained: the patriarch, surrounded by family, and the Qing official would smoke long pipes. However, their image changed: they were now obviously ridiculed (figure 12). The long pipe carried a stamp of conservatism and inefficiency, the short pipe, on the other hand, was reserved for a poor man (figure 13). Male smokers came from all social levels. The poor ones, however, were now rendered with a degree of naturalism. Those civilians who were better off, smoked water pipes.

The types of female smokers in newspaper illustrations notably increased. As before, they all were good-looking women in a rich interior, full of expensive objects, a water pipe being one. On the old pictures, there used to be one beauty, or two, posing with a long pipe in her hand (figure 14). In the pictorial news, there commonly was a group of women, engaged in some kind of household activity, while a water pipe stood somewhere on a table, as a minor detail in the picture (figure 15). The long pipes (*chaoyan*) were gone. However, I hardly find any pictures of a woman who was actually smoking the water pipe, although I do find such pictures of men. Quite a few pictures depicted courtesans, especially in illustrations to serial novels, whose stories were often set in a brothel, gambling house, teahouse and so on.

⁶⁷ Lu Yao's "Dos and Don'ts" 宜忌 are discussed by Zhang, *Zhongguo yancao shihua*, pp. 421–22; *Zhonghua wenhua* 5, p. 544. For an introduction in English, see Brook, "Smoking in Imperial China," p. 88, or his "Is Smoking Chinese?" In: *Ex/Change (Newsletter of Centre for Cross Cultural Studies, City University of Hong Kong)* 3 (February 2002), pp. 4–6. I am grateful to Carol Benedict for the reference.

Cigarettes appeared in a number of newspaper illustrations, and warrant mention. The men who smoked cigarettes have an air of modernity. They look like intellectuals, and some may wear Western clothing. A comic strip instructs the reader how to smoke even though not possessing any cigarettes; it shows a smoker who asks for a cigarette from whomever he meets, men and women, of any age and in Western and traditional dress. Unlike the pipe, a cigarette has no relation to its owner, and can be given to another person without much consideration. A cigarette does not need to be looked after and maintained, is carried around quite easily, and thrown away when smoked up. Female cigarette smokers were sometimes made heralds of modern times, in newspapers as well as folk prints. A print from Huangpi 黃陂 shows a girl in a Western-style straw hat, riding a velocipede (the so called *michauline*, first constructed in 1866),⁶⁸ with a cigarette in her mouth (figure 16). This print speaks positively for the modern changes. In another printed picture from Yangliuqing 楊柳青, the cigarette helps to build up a negative perception. A courtesan, riding in a riksha, lost her shoe, for which two youngsters compete (figure 17). A woman with a cigarette seemed provocative, and the trendy eroticism of popular pictures fully developed with the new style calendars and advertisements (*yuefenpai* 月份牌) in the 1920s and -30s. Society became very sensitive and disapproving of a female smoker.

Although late-Qing newspapers had quite a lot of pictures showing tobacco smokers, they were hardly as many as those relating to opium. Furthermore, consuming opium became the main subject-matter in relevant newspaper illustrations, whereas tobacco almost never did. This may indicate that editors did not regard tobacco as a matter of much social consequence, in contrast to opium which became a target for cartoonists. This had to do with the large-scale campaign against opium, launched in 1906, which went on for a decade. It is not difficult to distinguish an opium smoker from a tobacco smoker, because the pipes and other utensils look so different; the opium pipe is thick and in several pictorial scenes used as a convenient beating stick. Moreover, the opium smoker usually lies down when smoking, while the tobacco smoker is walking around. The anti-opium pictures had three main topics. First, the discovery of an illegal opium den by police. Second, the disaster brought through opium onto users and their families. These pictures do not necessarily show the culprit, but perhaps his desolate young wife, ready to drown herself in a river with a baby

⁶⁸ I am grateful to Amir Moghaddass Esfehiani for this information.

boy in her arms. Third, they create a burlesque of the officials involved in opium smoking. In a cartoon from *Tuhua xinwen* 圖畫新聞, the addict would not let go of his pipe even under sentence, while the onlooking judge is smoking opium too (figure 18). Women smoking opium are not represented, although they were consumers. Pictures presenting opium and tobacco side-by-side are rare (as in figure 19, showing a man with a tobacco pipe, seated next to a tray with opium utensils). The mingling of tobacco and opium smokers must have been a daily occurrence, but is seldom seen in illustrations or in writings. Contemporary writers did not bring up similarities between smoking tobacco and smoking opium. Those who perceived the two as comparable social evils were exceptional, for example, Wang Shixiong 汪士雄, in his *Suixi ju yinshi pu* 隨息居飲食譜 (*The Suixi Garden Cookbook*) of 1861, or Zhang Changjia's 張昌甲 *Yanhua* 煙話 (*Speaking of Opium*) of 1878.⁶⁹ In written and pictorial material alike, the subject was either tobacco, or tea, or opium, or food, but they were not considered as human activities that occurred in a variety of mixed contexts, as in real life.

CONCLUSION

Commentators and writers about China have long been aware that smoking tobacco during the period of the Qing dynasty was common among all levels of society, not regarded as evil, and enjoyed by both sexes. In order to approach the topic in more detail, however, and to find out facts about the middle and lower rungs of society, we must turn to informal and nonstandard sources. Most literary works focus on the life of the elite, and in the recognized pictorial art, genre scenes are scarce. True descriptions of everyday life dating from high-Qing are only found in documentary and legal records, and in medical and technical works. Not until late-Qing were authentic and direct depictions of both society at large and the self (at the other end of the spectrum) recognized and used to advantage. In spite of these problems, I was able to find sufficient material to recognize some peculiarities in social attitudes toward tobacco. The use of unconventional sources, both written and pictorial, has helped to give a new perspective, and even uncover some aspects hitherto hidden.

My sources reveal, often by details or glimpses, that tobacco smoking became an object of recreational consumption for men and women alike, and was perceived to be harmless, if not invigorating. Judging

⁶⁹ On *Yanhua*, see Keith McMahon, *The Fall of the God of Money: Opium Smoking in Nineteenth-Century China* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), p. 111.

from folk depictions, it gained a fixed position in the idealized milieu of beauty and luxury, and became associated with happy, prosperous, and relaxed characters. In prints and pictorials alike, a pipe was increasingly seen as the attribute of a wealthy, influential man in a state of psychological composure, or of a beautiful young woman surrounded by luxury, although in reality, as other evidence showed, the habit spread over all social levels. As one would expect, several tobacco motifs in popular art differ from those used by gentry members, who composed poems and compiled books, and developed a sophisticated etiquette centered on tobacco. Nonetheless, this only affirms that tobacco was thoroughly integrated into Qing economy and culture.

The factors behind the rapid accommodation of tobacco are difficult to determine with precision. The relatively easy cultivation and processing of tobacco was one, and was valid anywhere, not only in China. The medical recommendation and application of tobacco as a remedy must have played a meaningful role, in spite of the fact that tobacco had been from the outset recognized by specialists as a potentially harmful drug.⁷⁰ The tolerant stand of the Chinese, which may have viewed smoking as demonic, but would not persecute it on religious grounds, was no less significant. Chinese society recognized and elaborated the art of living, including various forms of relaxation, some of which could have been regarded as indolence in other cultures. The delight in the taste, warmth and aroma of tobacco, which past and present opponents of smoking deny, must have had a powerful appeal for consumers. Smoking among the elite of Qing society, and the notion of famous and successful people smoking, became an increasingly important factor, too.

Although three or four ways of consuming tobacco were known in China, smoking a long pipe became the favorite one, and it was indeed regarded as typically Chinese in their land as well as abroad. Strangely enough, at the turn of the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, the pipe, a personal and personalized object, was suddenly replaced by an impersonal cigarette. This was driven largely by economic reasons, but it is also a significant marker of the new style of life in the new, hurried age. The old ways of consuming tobacco, pipe, and snuff often remained signs of old times and conservatism, like in the satirical story *Yanhu* 煙壺 by Deng Youmei 鄧友梅.⁷¹ One is inclined to assume

⁷⁰ For Qing physicians' views on tobacco, see Wang, "Ming Qing de yancao lun," pp. 57-73.

⁷¹ See 1984 *nian zhongpian xiaoshuo xuan* 1984年中篇小說選 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985) 1, pp. 91-191.

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that the age of cigarettes will decline as rapidly as the age of pipes did,
when trends of living become sufficiently transformed.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECCP Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*



Figure 1. Tobacco Plant with Portrait of Chen Cong

Woodblock ill. from Chen Cong's 陳琮 Yancao pu 煙草譜, 1805.

Source: Brook, "Smoking in Imperial China," p. 87.

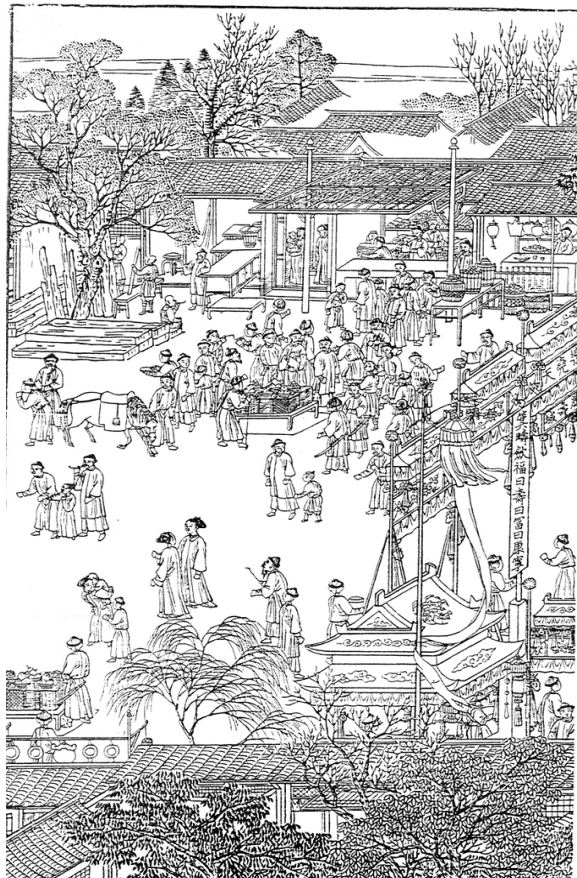


Figure 2. Street Scene

Woodblock ill. from Wan-shou shengdian tu 萬壽盛典圖, j. 41, folio 37, printed by Wuying dian 武英殿 in 1717. Source: Qing dian banhua huikan 清殿版畫匯刊 (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 1998) 2, p. 105.



Figure 3. Couple from Nianbo 碾伯, Gansu

Woodblock ill. from Zhigong tu 職貢圖, j. 5, folio 58, printed by Wuying dian after 1790. Source: Qing dian banhua huikan 9, p. 163.

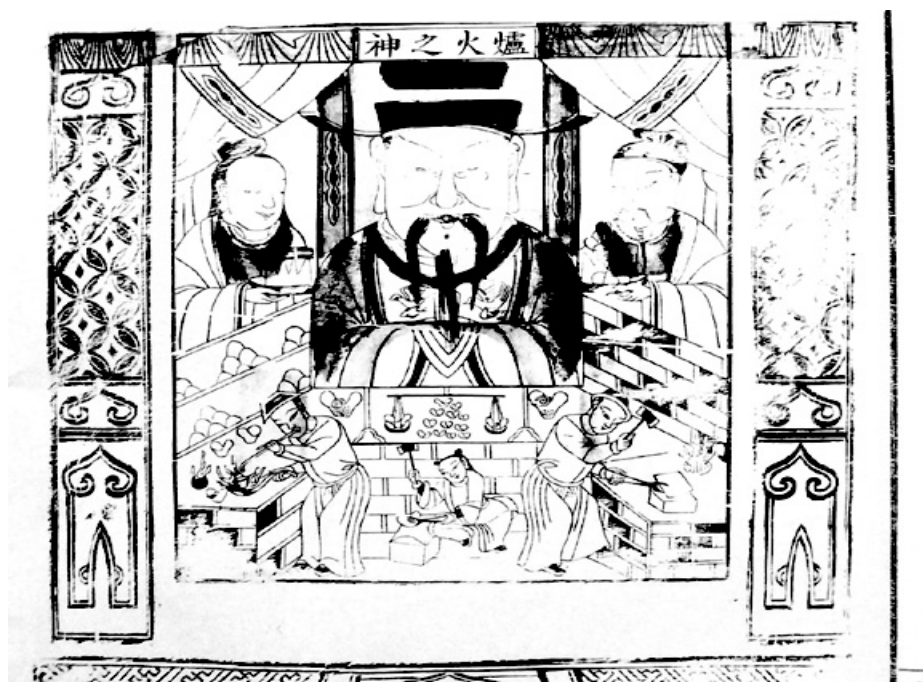


Figure 4. God of the Kitchen-Stove

Folk print from northern China, Qing era. Courtesy of the Asian Art Department, National Gallery at Prague.

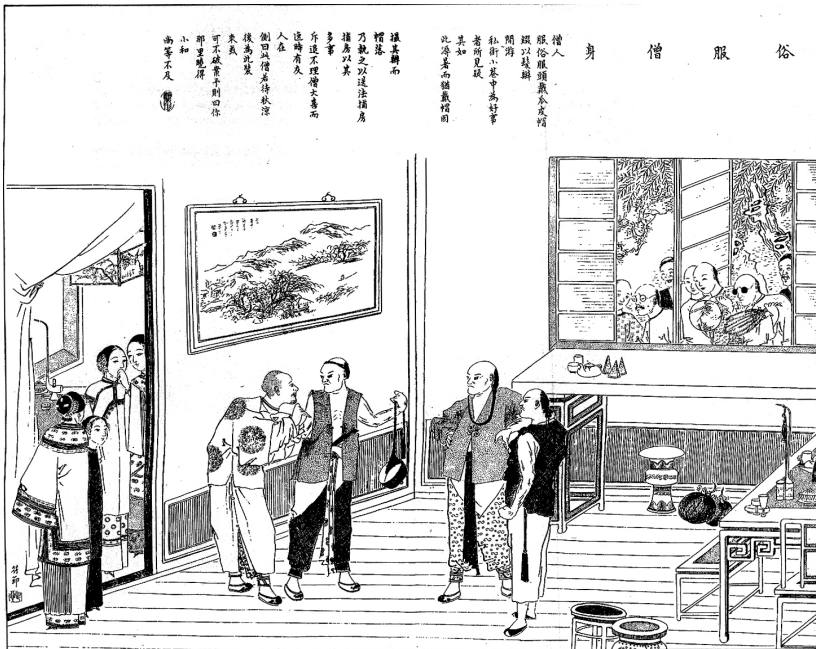


Figure 5. A Monk Gets a Dressing Down

Ill. by Gu Fujie 顧符節, from Dianshi zhai huabao 點石齋畫報, published between 1884–1898. Source: Don J. Cohn, Vignettes from the Chinese Lithographs from Shanghai in the Late Nineteenth Century (Renditions Paperbacks; Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1987), p. 51.

Figure 6, overleaf 



Figure 7. Snagging a Bracelet with a Long Pipe

Ill. for a comedy. Yangliuqing print. Source: Zhongguo Yangliuqing nianhua xianban xuan, p. 246.

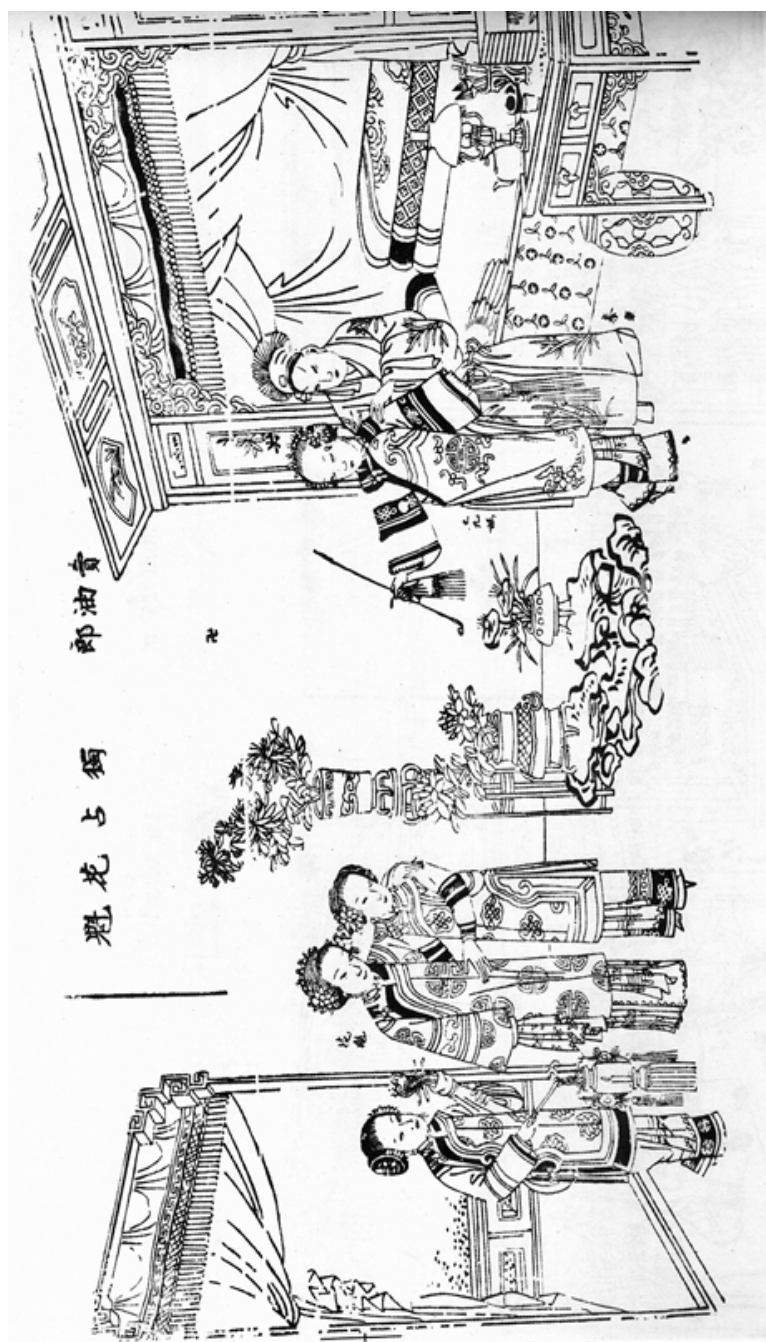


Figure 6. Illustration for Novella

Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 Mai you lang 賣油郎; Yangliuqing 楊柳青 print, late-Qing. Source: Zhongguo Yangliuqing nianhua xianban xuan 中國楊柳青年畫綫版選 (Tianjin: Tianjin Yangliuqing huashe, 1990), p. 302.



Figure 8. Village Woman Visiting Married Daughter

Ill. for a comedy. Yangliuqing print. Source: Zhongguo Yangliuqing nianhua xian-ban xuan, p. 279.

Figure 9, overleaf 



Figure 10. New Year's Celebration

Detail from Yangliuqing print. Source: Zhongguo Yangliuqing nianhua xian-ban xuan, p. 450.



Figure 9. Consulting a Fortune-Teller
 Yangjiabu 楊家埠 folk print, late-Qing era. Source: Cui Senlin 崔森林 et al., eds., *Shandong minjian nianhua* 山東民間年畫 (Jinan: Shandong meishu chubanshe, 1993), p. 12.



Figure 11. Pipe Vendor

Watercolor by William Alexander, 1793-1794, first published in *The Costume of China: Picturesque Representations of the Dress and Manners of the Chinese* (1818). Source: *Xifangren bixia de Zhongguo fengqing hua* 西方人筆下的中國風情畫 (Shanghai: Shanghai huabao chubanshe, 1997), p. 103.



Figure 13. Unoccupied Rickshaws

Pictorial report from *Feiyingge huabao* 飛影閣畫報, around 1890. Source: *Qingdai baokan tushu jicheng* 1, pp. 522-23.

神州畫報



Figure 12. Caricature of an Official

Ill. from *Shenzhou huabao* 神州畫報, late-Qing era. Source: *Qingdai baokan tushu jicheng* 清代報刊圖書集成 (Taipei: Quanguo tushu-guan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2001) 5, p. 353.



Figure 14. A Beauty Weaving a Foot-Band

Woodblock illustration from the collection of Bibliothèque Nationale de France; Qing era.
Source: Dieter Kuhn, Die Darstellung des Handwebstuhls in China (Köln: Lindauer Dornier GmbH, 1975), p. 118.

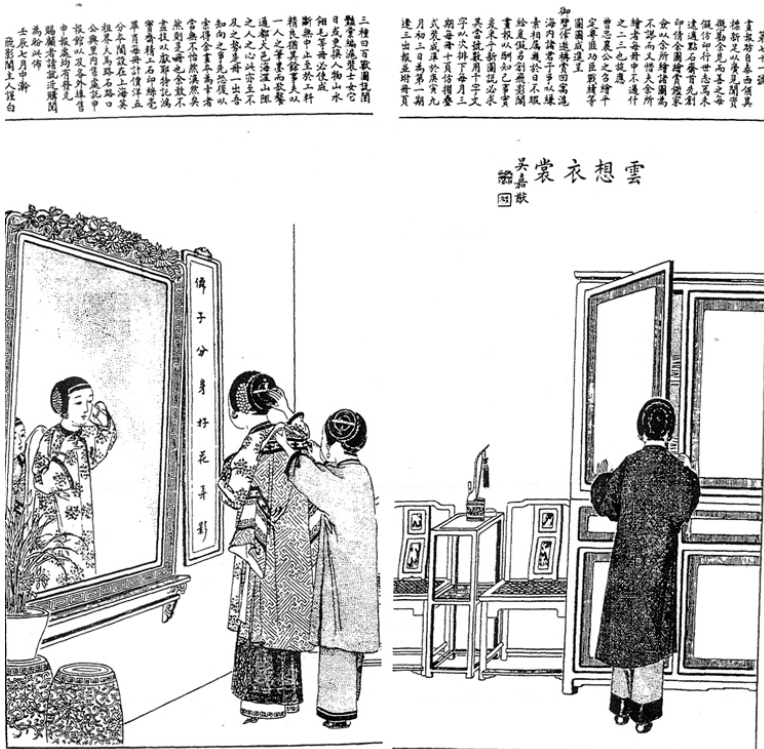


Figure 15. Getting Dressed Up

Picture by Wu Youru 吳友如, from Feiyingge huabao, made 1884-93. Source: Qing-dai baokan tushu jicheng 2, pp. 712-13.

Figure 16. *Girl Riding Michauline*

Huangpi 黃陂 folk print, 1880s. Source: Min-jian meishu, Hubei muban nianhua, jianzhi, piying 民間美術湖北木板年畫剪紙皮影 (Wuhan: Hubei meishu chubanshe, 1999), p. 49.



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Figure 19. *Discussing Inscription, with Opium Nearby*

Pictorial report from Xinwen huabao 新聞畫報, late-Qing era. Source: Qingdai baokan tushu jicheng 4, pp. 830-31.



新聞畫報

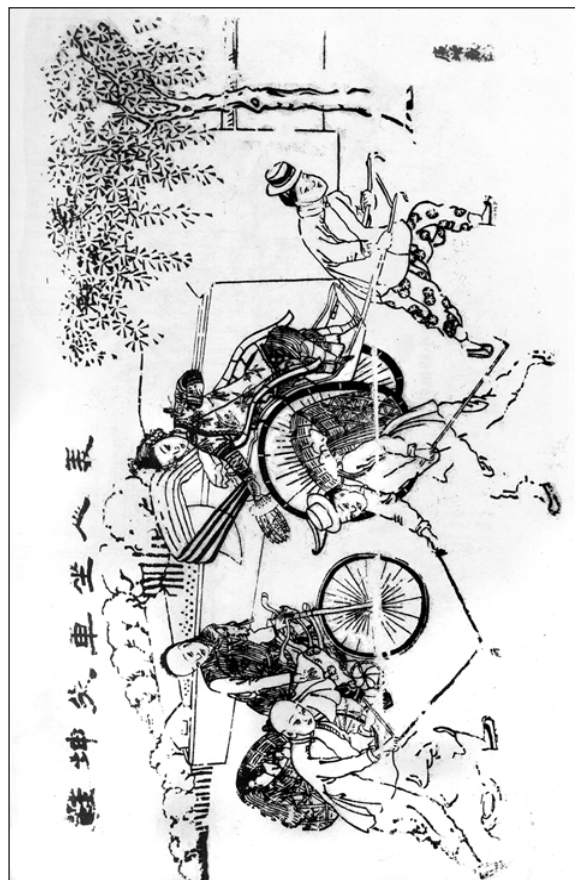
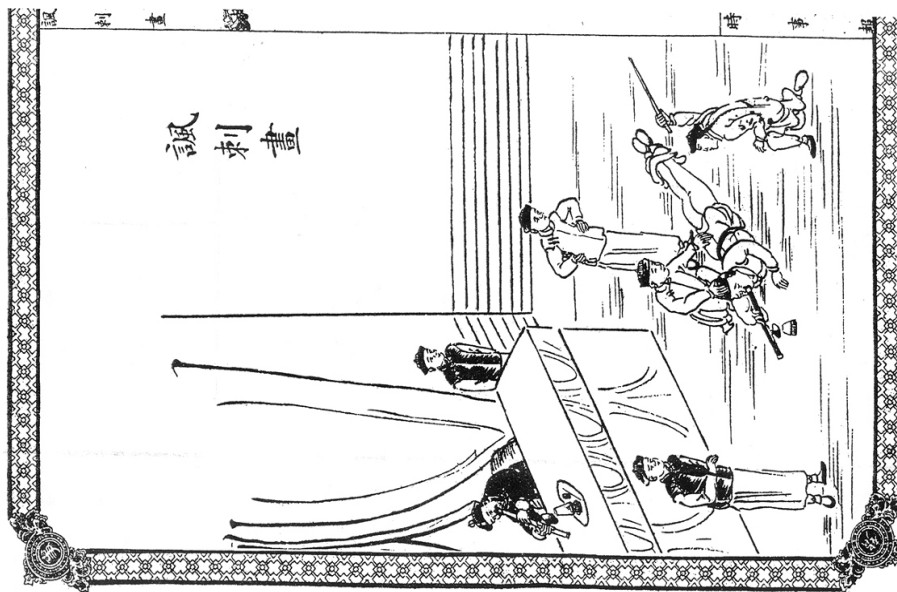


Figure 17. *Lost Shoe*

Illustration to a novel; Yangliuqing print. Source: Zhongguo Yangliuqing nianhua xianban xuan, p. 541.

Figure 18. *Opium Addict in Court*

Newspaper caricature, Shishi bao 時事報, circa 1906. Source: Qingdai baokan tushu jicheng 7, p. 49.