

Chapter 5

Xie Family Transitional Figures

In this chapter we consider the sons and grandsons of Eren Temür, the brother of the Uyghur State Minister Bilge Buqa, since they constitute a transitional stage in the history of this family. As we know, Eren Temür established his family in Shandong Province where he was in service to Chinggis Qan's youngest brother, Temüge Odchigin. He remained in north China for the duration of his career as a *Semuren* official, and while his sons and grandsons grew up in Shandong, they also began to orient themselves more to the south, initially because of their official postings. That southward orientation eventually included an interest in Chinese cultural practices. By the time that Eren Temür's great-grandsons came along, this family had become thoroughly enmeshed in Chinese culture and closely connected with prominent Chinese, all while continuing to act as powerful *Semuren* officials. In order to fully understand this transformation, we look first at the careers of Eren Temür's sons and grandsons as *Semuren* officials. Then in Chapter Six we examine the activities of these men as Chinese-style social elites.

Eren Temür had ten sons while he lived at Yidu but we have information about only two of them, his fourth son Duermishi 都爾彌勢 (Turmish?), and his eighth son Qara Buqa 合剌普華.¹ Duermishi was probably born in the

¹ See Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.8b, for the names of Eren's sons, and for information on Duermishi. See also the table of names in Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing 蕭啓慶, "Meng Yuan shidai Gaochang Xieshi zhi shihuan yu hanhua" 蒙元時代高昌偃氏之仕宦與漢化 [The official careers and sinicization of the Gaochang Xie clan in the Mongol Yuan Dynasty], in *Yuanchao shi xinlun* 元朝史新論 [New essays on Yuan

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1230s in Yidu, but we do not know anything about his childhood. He accompanied his uncle Sergius in the mission to put down Li Tan's rebellion at Yidu. After he returned, Duermishi was appointed to be a senior supervisor (*langzhong*) in his home district, Yidu, where he oversaw the various secretaries and sub-officials responsible for daily affairs of the local government. Duermishi would thus have had quite a bit of real power over Yidu's civil affairs, and his appointment to this position undoubtedly reflects the status of his family, especially his uncle, Sergius, who by that time had been elevated to the position of military governor of Shandong province.

At some point Duermishi led a contingent of troops alongside the Mongol general Bayan in a campaign against the Song. According to the sources, Sergius was originally assigned to go on that campaign, but Duermishi volunteered to go in his uncle's place because Sergius was getting old. Duermishi must have been successful as a military leader, because sometime after he returned from that campaign he was chosen to be the Military Commander of the Eastern Campaign in the Mongol invasion of Japan. Duermishi, however, did not take part in that campaign, resigning over differences of opinion with the Mongol general in charge of the whole operation, a certain Ataqai. His last commissions as a *Semuren* official were in south and east China; he was assigned to be an agent at Taiping Prefecture (*Taipinglu darughachi*), and was eventually sent to Yunnan as a surveillance commissioner. We know nothing more about his personal or public life.

Dynasty history], Yunchen congkan 允晨叢刊, no. 78 (Taipei: Yunchen Wenhua Press, 1999), 249. Interestingly, all but two of the ten siblings were given Uyghur personal names that ended with "Buqa." This may be an example of generational name tags in the Uyghur tradition.

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Duermishi's career was typical of the *Semuren* who served in north China in the first decades of Mongol rule. They were expected to be proficient in civil and military affairs, and there was little real distinction between those spheres. His younger brother, Qara Buqa (1246–1284), followed a similar career pattern, distinguishing himself as a loyal and courageous *Semuren* official in various assignments as a military leader and civil administrator. Unfortunately, he was killed in the line of duty when he was only 38 years old. However, we know considerably more about this man than any of his siblings, undoubtedly because of the prominence of his immediate descendants. Qara Buqa is also interesting because he began a period of transition for his family, where these Uyghurs began to act more and more as typical, Chinese-type literati, even as they continued to occupy important positions as *Semuren* political elites. This transition involved geography, education and personal inclination.

Born in Yidu, Shandong Province, in 1246 where his father was serving at Temüge Odchigin's appanage, Qara Buqa would be the first member of his family to serve in southern China. By the time Qara Buqa was appointed to his first official position, as a member of the qan's imperial bodyguard, north China had been pacified and Qubilai was well on his way to conquering the south. Qara Buqa's career path also differed from his father's and grandfather's in that his position and status did not result from his affiliation with the Uyghur *idiqu*t. Finally, while he was mainly a military man, there is some evidence that Qara Buqa was also interested in things Chinese. Thus, Qara Buqa represents a shift in *Semuren* career strategies and trajectories.

Before we discuss his career, we need to highlight Qara Buqa's qualities as a "gentleman." According to one source, Qara Buqa was a precocious child:

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One day as he was quickly working he sighed and said, “If I do not study while I am a young man, I will certainly degrade [the legacy of] my ancestors.” Then he hastened to his father and told him this in person. His father was amazed at him, and made him study Uyghur script, and also gave to him the *Analects*, the *Mencius*, the *Classic of History*, the *Mirror of Government*, and he memorized and recited them with skill and energy, coming from his natural instincts.²

This reference to Qara Buqa’s scholarly abilities is surprising given the fact that he spent his entire career as a military and pacification officer under the Mongols and was never known for his literary abilities. It is undoubtedly information that was supplied to the writer of this source by later family members, but it is an important piece of information that sheds light on the strategies of this important Uyghur clan to position themselves as *Semuren* who would be accepted by Chinese *shidafu*.

However, we should not necessarily discount outright this information as spurious. *Semuren* officials such as Qara Buqa were in the vanguard of the Mongol presence in south China after 1260, and some of them may have felt an attraction to the Chinese culture they encountered there in a way they had not seen in the north. Perhaps Qara Buqa genuinely became interested in Confucianism and began to study it? Even discounting this, however, it is probably likely that Qara Buqa was literate both in Uyghur and Chinese.³

² The original text reads: 一日忽作而嘆曰幼而不學有不墮吾宗乎 即趨父所自白父奇之 俾習偉兀書及授語孟史鑒文字記誦精敏出於天性. Ouyang Xiu, *Guizhai wenji* 9b. Qara Buqa’s tomb inscription supplies a much abbreviated version: 父奇其志授偉兀書儒書性警敏誦轍不忘. See Xu Youren, *Zhi Zheng ji* 54.3b, p. 256.

³ It may be that *Semuren* such as Qara Buqa, whose families had histories as cultural and aristocratic elites in their native place, shifted

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In typical fashion, Qara Buqa began his career as an official by induction into the Mongol qan's personal bodyguard.⁴ His duties in various southern districts engaged him primarily in maintaining control over newly

their orientation toward Chinese culture when they moved into south China. A far broader study of social and vocational patterns among *Semuren* than is possible in this volume will be necessary to decide whether such a shift was experienced among *Semuren*, and the degree of change, if indeed it was experienced at all.

⁴ Several primary sources document Qara Buqa's life and career. The most important are his tomb inscription, spirit way inscription, a history of his family, and a short biography as a "loyal and righteous" 忠義 official of the Yuan Dynasty. See, respectively, Xu Youren 許有壬, "Gu Jiayi dafu Guangdong dao du zhuan yun yanshi zeng tongyidafu hubu shangshu shang qingche duwei zhui feng Gaochang junhou Qara Buqa gong muzhiming" 故嘉議大夫廣東都道轉運鹽使贈通議大夫戶部尚書上輕車都尉追封高昌郡侯合刺普華公墓志銘 [Tomb inscription of Master Qara Buqa, former Grandee of the Thirteenth Class, commissioner of salt transport for Guangdong circuit, posthumously titled Tongyi dafu, minister of Board of Revenue, Superior General of Light Chariots and enfeoffed as Marquis of Gaochang], *Zhi Zheng ji* 至正集 [Collected works of Xu Youren] 54.3b–5b (Shiyinben ed.; rpt. *Yuanren wenji zhenben congkan* 元人文集珍叢刊, 8 vols., Taipei: Xinwenfeng Press, 1985), Vol. 7, 256–58; Huang Jin 黃潛, "Guangdong dao du zhuan yun yanshi zeng tuicheng shouzhong quanjie gongchen zide dafu Henan Jiangbei dengchu xing zhongshusheng youcheng shang hujun zhui feng Gaochang jungong shi zhongmin Qara Buqa gong shendaobei" 廣東道都轉運鹽使贈推誠守忠全節功臣資德大夫河南江北等處行中書省右承上護軍追封高昌郡公諡忠愍合刺普華公神道碑 [Spirit way inscription of Master Qara Buqa, commissioner of salt transport for Guangdong circuit, posthumously titled 'virtuous official who confidently protected his loyalty and was entirely virtuous,' Grandee of the Fifth Class, minister on the right in Henan, Jiangbei and other provinces, 'Supreme Protector,' posthumously granted honorific title of 'Duke of Gaochang Prefecture' and style name 'Loyal and Sympathetic'], *Jinhua Huang xiansheng wenji* 金華黃先生文集 [Collected works of Mr. Huang Jin of Jinhua] (Sibu congkan ed.; rpt. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1922) 25.1a–5b; Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.3a–13a; and *Yuanshi* 193.4384–86.

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conquered areas and helping to push the conquest further on into south China. Qara Buqa had a relatively standard, if short, career as a *Semuren* official, and he would probably not have achieved the prominence necessary to have funerary inscriptions composed for him had it not been for the fame of his descendants. He was still a young man living at home in Yidu when Li Tan began his rebellion, and after it was over his uncle Sergius recommended his young nephew to Qubilai as a member of his personal guards. Like other members of the Uyghur elite of his time, he also married a woman from another *Semuren* family, the Xitaitele 希台特勒 clan. We know almost nothing about her except for the fact that she was thirty-five years old in 1284 when Qara Buqa's death made her a widow. Left with three small children, she took up her household duties with diligence and purpose. The sources (written at least one generation later) all comment on her devotion to her husband and her decision to remain a widow rather than remarry, and construct out of her actions a powerful topos of identity as an upright chaste widow, used by later family members to describe the moral characteristics of their family.⁵

Qara Buqa's first official assignment as a regular official was to oversee production at two iron mines located at Sijiao Mountain 四腳山 in Shandong, somewhere near Yidu. We do not have information on the operation of those

⁵ According to Mongol customary law, enshrined by Qubilai Qan as the law of the land in China in 1271, all Mongol and *Semuren* women were subject to levirate marriage, the custom where a brother of a deceased male should marry that man's widow in order to keep the property of the male within the family. This practice was relaxed after 1276 in some cases, and women of status were often successful in evading it. Qara Buqa's widow was such a woman of status, who succeeded in remaining unmarried. See Birge, *Women, Property, and Confucian Reaction*, 238–51. I shall discuss this topos of identity further in the next chapter.

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particular mines or the dates of Qara Buqa's assignment, but it was an important first position since iron would have been considered an essential resource for both revenue and weaponry, and production of that vital resource would have been given high priority by the Mongol government, as it had been under the preceding Song. His duties probably included oversight of other, less important officials as well as laborers since he was provided with a Golden Tiger Tablet to wear during his tenure at the mines.

Qara Buqa apparently succeeded in his duties at the Shandong iron mines, because he was next appointed as a superintendent of the provincial grain transport bureau (*xingdu caoyun shi*).⁶ That office was in charge of one of the most vital links between south China and the Yuan capital, concerned with supplying the capital and other areas of north China with grain from the south. According to our sources, Qara Buqa was in charge of a substantial workforce (one source reports fifteen thousand people), and he was responsible for some important developments within the bureau, working to prevent accidents and skimming of profits that occurred during the transit of grain. The leadership skills he developed in his first two assignments as a *Semuren* official were undoubtedly noted by the Mongol court, and were vital to his assignments in the newly conquered south.

Qara Buqa was also in the first wave of *Semuren* officials to be posted to south China, and may have gone south as part of the Mongol general Bayan's campaigns against Song. Sometime in the 1270s he was promoted and sent into the field as a pacification officer (*xuanwei shi*) for Jiangxi region (*Jiangxidao* 江西道), and then appointed to

⁶Huang Jin, *Jinhua Huang xiansheng wenji* 25.2a. This text of Qara Buqa's spirit-way stele gives the most detailed information on Qara Buqa's activities as an official in south China, as well as information on the various personnel and functions of the transport, salt and maritime offices.

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be a superintendent of the regional salt tax office (*duzhuan yunyanshi*) for the Guangdong region (*Guangdong-dao* 廣東道) in southern Jiangxi Province.⁷

This was an important job because salt was a valuable taxable commodity produced in large quantities in Guangzhou, and extracting tax revenues from that salt trade, along with the taxes on other shipping activities in Guangzhou, was a vital source of revenue for the Mongol court. No date is reported for Qara Buqa's assignment to Guangdong, but his combined experience in the transport office in north China and in the pacification office in Jiangxi made him eminently suited to the job in that frontline area.

Guangdong was quite unsettled in the late 1270s. Song loyalists had occupied Guangzhou until February of 1278, and while Qubilai was able to establish firm control of south China by early 1279, pockets of resistance to Mongol control persisted, in the form of Song loyalists as well as bandits who took advantage of the situation to exert their control over areas in the south. Qara Buqa's position at Guangzhou was not unusual; the central government routinely sent trusted and experienced *semu* officials to frontier areas like south China to establish government offices and maintain order over newly pacified areas and populations. It was, however, a dangerous assignment, and the sources reflect this fact in their descriptions of Qara Buqa's activities in office there. He "was in charge of all of

⁷ This office was opened in the city of Guangzhou immediately following the defeat of Song to supervise the production and transport of salt and revenues extracted from the salt trade. By 1285 the office was taken over by the Guangzhou Pacification Office, and its officials supervised both the salt industry and maritime operations in Guangzhou. The Jiangxi Branch Secretariat was established in 1277, and extended further into parts of south China, including eastern Guangdong and the city of Guangzhou. As such, the office in charge of salt tax and maritime activities at Guangzhou was under the supervision of the Jiangxi Branch government. See Farquhar, *Government of China*, 378–81.

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the flourishing markets and sea-going merchants there, and set up laws that stopped the private sale of salt.... The salt traders in Donghuan, Xiangshan, and Huizhou [all near Guangzhou] planned a rebellion, but Qara Buqa and Dashman (荅失蠻) suppressed them and then reformed the salt laws.”⁸

Qara Buqa was obviously a talented and efficient administrator, and his reform of the salt laws apparently favored the local population because the sources all say that he was very popular with the locals because of those reforms. He also put a stop to various problems that plagued the regional transport office such as the illegal skimming of profits off of the salt industry by officials. Since Qara Buqa was an officer in the regional pacification office he also had to maintain order over bandits who roamed the area.

Qara Buqa was killed while pursuing his obligations as a pacification official in Guangdong. In 1284 he was sent to keep order in an area just north of Guangzhou, after a local group of bandits had disrupted the supply route. On the way he met up with a local bandit chieftain, a certain Ouzhong, and his gang. When they caught Qara Buqa’s small party, they tried to extract promises of goods and special treatment from Qara Buqa, but he refused and he and his men were then killed by the bandits.⁹

Qara Buqa’s untimely death at the hands of those bandits resulted in his eventual recognition by the Mongol court for his loyalty as a *Semuren* official, by granting him a series of posthumous style names and official titles long

⁸ Huang Jin, *Jinhua Huang xiansheng wenji* 25.2b.

⁹ Ouyang Xuan included a most interesting passage in his history of the Xie family that describes Qara Buqa’s wife’s actions on the night that he was killed. This passage is part of the picture of the virtuous, chaste woman theme featured in other contemporaneous sources.

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after he was killed in 1284.¹⁰ The practice of granting a man long dead with posthumous titles was common throughout Chinese imperial history and is not, in itself, remarkable. Qara Buqa's case is interesting, however, because at least one characteristic used to describe him in his posthumous titles, the term loyalty (*zhong*), became another topos of identity used by his descendants to describe themselves and their family as ideal Confucian types (see my discussion below). His death also left a widow with small children back in Shandong, and her actions, and those of their younger son, contributed to the formation of an identity that would be claimed by later family members.

By the time Qara Buqa began to serve the Mongols as a *Semuren* official in the early 1260s, a new phase in the Mongol occupation of China had begun. Qubilai Qan was beginning the final military campaigns against the Song that would extend Mongol rule over all of China. He was also starting to orient his rule towards China, which eventually resulted in the fragmentation of the Mongol empire into separate qanates. During Qubilai's reign, south China was consolidated into the Mongol realm, the capital of the whole Mongol empire was moved to north China, a new Chinese-style dynasty was proclaimed, and Chinese influence began to grow at the Mongol court and in many

¹⁰ Showing loyalty was highly valued by Mongols and Chinese alike, and men who died as a result of their loyal service to the qan were often rewarded by the awarding of posthumous titles, offices, and other honors. For example, Chinggis chose his close companions by their loyalty to him, and we have already seen examples from biographies of other prominent Uyghur *Semuren* where Chinggis Qan specifically lauded the man for loyalty to his former masters. Qara Buqa's posthumous titles, honorific names and positions can be seen in his funerary inscriptions, two examples of which are "Meritorious Official Who Protected his Loyalty and was Completely Virtuous" (*shouzhong quanjie gongchen* 守忠 全節 功臣), and "Loyal and Longsuffering" (*Zhongmin* 忠愍).

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areas of social and political life. By the end of Qubilai's reign in 1294, Mongol China was a very different place than it had been in 1260. Those changes can also be seen in the kinds of careers available to and personal choices made by many *Semuren* in China, including Qara Buqa's offspring.

Qara Buqa was the last member of his family whose personal and professional life was formed in north China. He was also the first member of his family to serve in the south. His positions there were, however, part of the final Mongol campaigns against the Song and subsequent mop-up operations, and did not, apparently, result in any significant shift of attention away from the north. It is with his eldest son that we begin to see the pattern change, though he too was at least partly a product of the north since he spent his childhood there, and his career followed the traditional pattern of wide involvement in both civil and military bureaus and duties.

Xie Wenzhi

When he died, Qara Buqa's family was at Yidu, and it is here that his widow began the education of their two sons. The eldest of these was known by his Chinese-sounding name of Xie Wenzhi 偰文質 (Sävinch?), while the younger carried the Uyghur name Ögrünch 越倫質.¹¹ Like his father, Xie Wenzhi was a precocious child. More than one source tells us that by the time he was eight years of age, Wenzhi was able to memorize "several hundred characters" every day, and could recite the texts he was learning by heart.¹²

¹¹ Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing argues that Xie was not used as a surname but as a Chinese transcription of the first syllable of that man's Uyghur personal name Sävinch. See his article "Meng Yuan shidai Gaochang Xieshi de shihuan yu hanhua." While I do not dispute his assertion, contemporaries clearly regarded Xie as a Chinese-style surname.

¹² His personal name, Wenzhi 文質 can be translated as "cultured and unaffected" or "literate and of personal character," both of which are

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Even more interesting, we are told that when Wenzhi was only 10 years old he served up a piece of his own flesh to bring relief for his ill mother. He “cut off a piece of his own thigh, cooked it with some ground up deer antler and served it to his mother [because] he heard that this was practiced in ancient times [by sons for an ill parent].”¹³ His actions apparently had the intended effect, for we are told that his mother lived until the ripe old age of 72 years. This action would come to be seen as one of the hallmarks of Xie Wenzhi’s identity as an ideal model of filial piety, a virtue that would in time be transferred to his family as model Confucianists.

The practice of cutting off a piece of one’s own body and preparing it for consumption by an ill parent has a long if contentious history in China, described by a modern scholar, Qiu Zhonglin.¹⁴ The earliest references in the Chinese sources to the specific practice of using a piece of

full of Confucian meaning. See Luo Zhufeng 罗竹风, ed., *Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大詞典 [Great dictionary of Chinese], 13 vols. (Shanghai: Hanyu da cidian chubanshe, 2001), Vol. 6, 1541, for definitions and historical usages of this term. As with children of the Chinese literati, children of Uyghurs and other *Semuren* in Mongol China probably received their primary education at home, and tutors would have been hired for higher level education for sons whose families valued or were interested in Chinese culture and acculturation to that tradition.

¹³ While all of the sources report this incident, it is described in most detail in a poem written to honor the Xie family. See Liu Guan 柳貫, “Sanjie Tang shi” 三節堂詩 [Poem about the Sanjie Hall], in *Liu Daizhi wenji* 柳待制文集 [Collected works of Liu Guan] (Sibu congkan ed.; rpt. Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1928) 1.11b–12b. Regarding this particular practice, see Qiu Zhonglin 邱仲麟, “Buxiao zhixiao – Tang yilai gegu liaoqin xianxiang de shihuishi chutan” 不孝之孝 – 唐以來割股療親現象的社會史初探 [Unfilial filial piety – a sociohistorical study of the phenomenon of cutting flesh to heal parents], *Xinshi Xue* 新史學 6.1 (March, 1995): 49–94. I thank Angela Leung for bringing this article to my attention.

¹⁴ See Qiu Zhonglin, “Buxiao zhixiao.”

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flesh from one's own body to bring about the healing of an ill family member date from the Tang period. However, it is likely that this was practiced long before the Tang, and appears to originate either in the popularization of certain Buddhist practices or early Chinese medicine. Tang sources document several cases of people who cut off a piece of their own bodies, cooked it and offered it to an ill family member (most commonly to a parent, more rarely for a brother). Qiu claims that precedents for cutting of one's flesh appear in early Chinese medical literature, and that it was practiced by physicians who established that this custom was an efficacious way to heal an ill parent. But Qiu's point is that there was a good deal of ambiguity concerning the practice among the ancients. Various writers in the Tang and Song periods denounced the custom as really being quite unfilial. After all, it was considered highly un-Confucian to harm one's own body. Yet, the practice seems to have gained in popularity in the Yuan period, and continued to be practiced on a fairly wide scale in Ming and Qing times.

Portraying Wenzhi as familiar with this particular manifestation of Confucian morality when he was only 10 years old implies to us that he was raised with a heightened appreciation of Chinese culture and traditional values. This character attribution is not surprising in light of his descendants' familiarity with Confucian teachings. Wenzhi's Confucian orientation is further reinforced by the fact that his mother chose to remain a widow after Qara Buqa's death. Her choice was undoubtedly informed by a number of factors, including her economic position and the fact that levirate marriage seems not to have been favored by upper class *Semuren* in China. But her choice was also certainly informed by her appreciation of Confucian propriety, and those values were communicated to her children. This portrayal also provides us with insight into this Uyghur family and their uses of Chinese cultural

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markers in forming their identity as literati in Mongol China.

Long after Wenzhi is supposed to have performed his act of filial piety for his sick mother, the sources report “the people of Yue [Guangdong and Guangxi] all called his family ‘the family that practiced the three virtues of loyalty, uprightness and filial piety’ [Yue zhi renshi wei zhong zhen xiao sanjie beiyu yijia 粵之人士謂忠真孝三節備於一家]. [Then] among themselves they [the people of Yue] had a drawing (*tu*) made which was passed around for all to see, and after a while the name of this family spread all about and people heaped praise on them.”¹⁵ This short statement in the history of the Xie family written by another famous Chinese writer, Ouyang Xuan, describes a pivotal event that shaped the identity and history of the family, and it all stemmed from Wenzhi’s characteristic as a deeply filial son.

Since Qara Buqa’s family was most likely living in Shandong when he was killed in Guangdong, why did the people in the south have Qara Buqa’s likeness depicted in a painting? It presumably depicted Qara Buqa as the virtuous ancestor and exemplar of this model family? It would not have been unusual for Qara Buqa’s wife to commission a drawing of her late husband, since that was common practice among those Chinese who could afford it.¹⁶ Such an act would also have been in keeping for this woman, who had already taken vows of widow celibacy, and who was committed to living according to the Confucian code.

¹⁵ Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.11b. Ouyang’s history of the Xie family is the only source that reports these details.

¹⁶ According to James Cahill, it was common for a family to commission a drawing or painting of a departed loved one that would be used at a family altar or to otherwise commemorate that person. James Cahill, personal communication, 1997. The creation and role of ancestor or memorial portraits in China is also described by Jan Stuart and Evelyn S. Rawski, *Worshipping the Ancestors: Chinese Commemorative Portraits* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

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In this way her deceased husband would take his place as the family ancestor and be remembered, in good Confucian fashion, as the departed husband, father, and loyal official. Assuming that such a painting was done and that it became known in southern China, where Qara Buqa's memory may have been kept alive, it certainly provided his descendants with a good reputation.

The other action that Wenzhi took, presumably early on, that had long-term ramifications for his and his family's identity, was to adopt a Chinese-style surname for his family. None of the sources tell us when he decided to do this, but they all agree that he, and not his parents, were responsible for selecting this unusual surname. If Wenzhi was really as active in constructing this new identity for himself and his family as literati in the Chinese tradition as the sources imply, then the need for a surname would certainly have occurred to him. As we have already seen, many other Uyghur *Semuren* individuals adopted Chinese-style surnames after they had been living in China for awhile. But the name he chose was taken from the name of a river in the steppe where his Uyghur ancestors supposedly originated. Thus, the choice of this rather unusual character for a surname, as opposed to its more common homophone, seems to have been explicitly intended to accomplish two simultaneous goals: to preserve the Uyghur heritage for his descendants, while conforming to the Chinese surname tradition. I shall have more to say about this issue in the next chapter since several Chinese writers commented on it in their encomia written in Wenzhi's honor.

While his personal life reflected Chinese values, Xie Wenzhi's life as a *Semuren* official followed traditional patterns. He used his father's service as an official to gain admission into the Mongol administrative system by virtue of the *yin* protection privilege, a tactic that was common

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among *Semuren* in China.¹⁷ He received his first appointment at age 16, when he was assigned to the tax bureau in Teng County 滕縣 in his home district of Yidu.¹⁸ Sometime during the Dade reign period (1294–1304), Xie Wenzhi was sent to Longxing Prefecture 龍興路 in Jiangxi Province, as a judicial secretary (*liwen*) in the provincial Judicial Proceedings Office. He established his residence on East Lake in the prefectural city, also known by its old name of Yuzhang 豫章 (near to present-day Nanchang), where his five famous sons eventually grew up and where he lived, on and off, for over thirty years.

In 1314 Wenzhi was appointed to the position of a director general (*zongguan* 總管) of Guangde Prefecture (*Guangde lu* 廣德路) in northern Jiangzhe Province.¹⁹ While stationed there he became known for his reputation

¹⁷ Gazetteer sources that contain information on Xie Wenzhi's career as a *Semuren* official include Zhu Lin 朱麟, *Guangde zhouzhi* 廣德州志 [Gazetteer of Guangde Prefecture] (1535; rpt. Taipei: Chengwen, 1985); Wen Renquan 聞人詮, *Nanji zhi* 南畿志 [Gazetteer of Nanjing] (1469–1538 ed.; rpt. Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1987); *Liyang xianzhi* 溧陽縣志 [Gazetteer of Liyang County] (various editions, see comments below); and Fan Lai 范涑, *Xinxiu Nanchang fuzhi* 新修南昌府志 [Newly revised gazetteer of Nanchang Prefecture] (1527–1608 ed.; rpt. Beijing Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1990).

¹⁸ *Liyang xianzhi* (Jiaqing ed.) 12.13b.

¹⁹ Zhu Lin, *Guangde zhouzhi* 7.9a. Guangde Circuit was located in southeast China, in the northern part of Jiangzhe Province, southwest of Lake Tai in present-day southeast Anhui Province. The Yuan Dynasty *lu* was in most cases equivalent to the prior Song and subsequent Ming prefectures, and the usual term for prefecture, *fu*, was only used in Yuan for special circumstances. Frederick P. Mote, personal communication. It was second in importance to the circuit (*dao*), but it controlled most of the functions carried on at the local level, including education, taxation, and municipal affairs, and was also in charge of lower-level administrative units. For further description of Yuan administrative units, see Farquhar, *Government of China*, 411–25; and Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 62–65. The director general was in charge of a semi-military unit (*du zongguan fu*) at the prefectural level.

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as an honest official who ruled according to the law. The entry for Wenzhi in the Guangde gazetteer praises him for his qualities of honesty, self-restraint, his kindness to the people, and the fact that he worked to establish schools in the area. It was also there that he first became acquainted with his future son-in-law, the prominent Uyghur *Semuren* official, Talima Jierde Gusulu (see below).

After that assignment he was transferred west to Huguang Province, where he served as Director General of Tanzhou prefecture 潭州路 (present-day Changsha, Hunan Province). The Yuan court upgraded Tanzhou to a superior prefecture (*dajun*) on Wenzhi's watch, and he was praised for upholding the law without partiality. It was probably also at this point in his career that Wenzhi was promoted by the court with the honorary title Grandee of the Twelfth Class (*Tongyi dafu*).

Wenzhi's next official position was back in Jiangxi Province where he was assigned to be a Director General of Ganzhou prefecture 贛州路 in east-central Jiangxi. At Ganzhou he was given the prestigious Golden Tiger Tablet as a symbol of his imperial authority. At some point thereafter he was sent further south and west as an assistant pacification officer (*xuanwei fushi*) in the Guangxi region (*Guangxi liangdao* 廣西兩道), with the concurrent post of assistant regional military commissioner (*fudu yuanshuai*) in southern Huguang Province.²⁰ It is interesting to note that even in the mid-1300s *Semuren* officials were apparently routinely assigned to both civil and military positions, a vestige of the old Mongol practice of not

²⁰ The Yuan court established three Pacification Commissions and General Regional Military Commands in Huguang Province. See Farquhar, *Government of China*, 412. On Huguang during the Yuan, see Ritsuko Ōshima, "Mongol Control over Hu-kuang 湖廣 Province during the Yüan Dynasty: Control over the Hsi-tung 西洞 People," *Memoirs of the Research Department of The Toyo Bunko* 43 (1985): 19–43.

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recognizing a strict distinction between those different spheres of authority. Furthermore, while it may be argued that officials like Wenzhi who served in these pacification bureaus with military titles were essentially managers and not commanding officers per se, there was never a clear, hard division between these areas during the time of Mongol rule of China.

Pacification bureaus were important components in the Mongol administration of China. They were placed just below the province in the administrative hierarchy, attached to bureaus of military affairs. They were usually located in frontier or other areas that the Mongols had trouble bringing under their control. The Guangxi Pacification Office was in charge of a vital part of southern China, the entire southern half of Huguang Province.²¹ The sources note that while Wenzhi was serving in Guangxi there was a rebellion by the forced laborers (*yaomin*) in the south. We are not told why they rebelled, but Wenzhi led several thousand troops to put down the rebellion and captured nine or ten of the rebel leaders, including their leader and instigator of the rebellion, a certain Long Bantian 龍半天.²² After that rebellion, Wenzhi continued to serve in Guangxi; he petitioned the court to allow some kind of restructuring of the system of military agricultural colonies (*tuntian*) there, and his requests were approved by the central government.

²¹ This was part of the large pacification bureau that spanned Guangxi and Liangjiang Circuits. See Tan Qixiang 譚其驤, ed., *Zhongguo lishi dituji* 中國歷史地圖集 [Historical atlas of China], 8 vols. (Shanghai: Ditu chubanshe, 1982), Vol. 7, 32–33.

²² It is secondary sources, most notably the *Xin Yuanshi*, that indicate the Yao rebels Wenzhi encountered in Guangxi were led by Long Bantian. According to these accounts, Wenzhi came up with a plan to capture the rebel and his gang, and so was able to establish peace in the region. See the accounts in Tu Ji, *Mengwuer shiji* 45.5; and Ke Shaomin, *Xin Yuanshi* 136.4b

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Wenzhi's next official position was again back in central Jiangxi as an Agent at Ji'an Prefecture (Ji'anlu 吉安路).²³ Along with this posting came a promotion in honorary rank to Grandee of the Eleventh Class (*Zhengyi Dafu*). Wenzhi's last official position may have been an assignment as a judge (*duanshiguan*) back down in southern China, in Guangxi and Haibei, but the sources do not agree on either the timing or location. If he was sent back to the south, the court did so because of his earlier success as a pacification officer there.

Wenzhi was eventually allowed to retire from office in 1335 after repeatedly submitting petitions "of several thousand characters" to the court that were not approved. For reasons that are not clear, sometime after he retired to Yuzhang, Jiangxi, he moved his residence further north to Liyang County in Yuan-era Jiangzhe Province (present-day southern Jiangsu, between Nanjing and Shanghai), which he went to some considerable effort to establish as his family's permanent residence. Most important, he had the graves of his father and mother moved there from Shandong, and he built another family residence and adjoining hall. Since Liyang was just north of Guangde Prefecture where Wenzhi had his first important assignment as a *Semuren* official in southern China, we may speculate that he had made some good social and economic connections there that would make Liyang a better place than Jiangxi to establish his family's permanent residence.²⁴ Wenzhi died in 1340 and was eventually

²³ The sources do not agree on the timing of this position; some state that Xie Wenzhi was brought out of retirement to fill this position, while others state that he went to Ji'an before he retired to Yuzhang Prefecture. It is not possible at this time to verify which version of events is correct.

²⁴ It is interesting to note that there are far more entries about Wenzhi and his family in the Liyang gazetteers than there are in any of the Jiangxi gazetteers.

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awarded several posthumous titles by the court: he was made Marquis of Yunzhong Prefecture (*Yunzhong junhou*), and had bestowed upon him the posthumous honorary name Loyal and Assisting (*Zhongxiang*).²⁵

Wenzhi's career as a member of the *Semuren* political elite was typical of his prominent contemporaries. He used the *yin* privilege to enter the Mongol administration, and he advanced up through the ranks during a long and successful career in which he served as an administrator at local and regional levels in both civilian and military capacities. The fact that virtually all of his career was spent in southern China may have contributed to his decision to settle there rather than return back to Shandong after he retired from office. Since he had spent so much time in the south, he had gained many friends and acquaintances among the important Chinese of the area. This is clear from the essays and poems that a number of prominent Chinese writers from Jiangxi and other areas of the south wrote about Wenzhi and his family (which are discussed in the next chapter). So it seems evident that he succeeded in building good relationships with local Chinese literati while he was an official.

Wenzhi as a Member of the Cultural Elite

More interesting than any aspect of his official career, however, are his actions (invented or real) in his private life that conformed to the Confucian cultural norms and expectations held by contemporary Chinese literati and which contributed to the identity of his family as models of

²⁵ His honorary title "Marquis of Yunzhong Prefecture" was apparently a family heritage since it was also awarded to his great uncle Sergius. Yunzhong was the old name of Datong Prefecture 大同路 in northern Shanxi during the Liao and Jin Dynasties, but was perpetuated as an alternative name in honorific titles. Frederick P. Mote, personal communication. See *Yuanshi* 58.1375 for the historical names of Datong *lu*.

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good behavior. Whether or not he actually did all of the things that were attributed to him as a child, it is clear that Wenzhi was attracted both to Chinese culture and to life in southern China. This is not surprising given the fact that the south was China's economic and social heartland and the place where he would have the most opportunity to further his own and his family's interests. His interest is obvious in Wenzhi's actions.

While serving as a *Semuren* official in Jiangxi, all of his sons received a Chinese style education and participated successfully in the imperial examination system. Since the exam system was not the most effective way for a Semuren to enter the bureaucracy (the standard routes were the *yin* inheritance privilege or induction into the qan's personal bodyguard), success must have been important to Wenzhi and his family.

Wenzhi also bought into the Chinese social system in other ways, most importantly by adopting and using a Chinese-style surname for himself and his family, and by physically relocating himself and his forebears into southern Chinese territories. The Liyang gazetteer tells us that when Wenzhi retired there he purchased enough land to build his own residence and to serve as a graveyard for his family. He then transferred his parents' tombs (*gaimu*) from the north to the village of Sandy Creek (*Shazhang cun* 沙漲村), in the northern part of the Liyang county seat.²⁶ In fact, he did not simply move his parents' graves there, but went to the expense of constructing an entire spirit way leading up to the tomb!²⁷ (See cover photo.) This was an

²⁶ The text reads, "Gaochang jungong zhongmin Qara Buqa mu zai xianbei Shazhang cun," 高昌郡公忠愍合刺普華墓在縣北沙漲村 *Liyang xianzhi* (1813 edition) 4.30a. This gazetteer also lists the locations of the graves of Xie Wenzhi, his son Xie Zhedu, and grandson Xie Si.

²⁷ Xie family members who still live in Liyang City have spent a considerable amount of money to restore Qara Buqa's tomb and stelae

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expensive undertaking and indicates how serious Xie Wenzhi was in wishing to establish his new home at Liyang.

The fact that Wenzhi had accumulated enough capital to purchase land in Liyang represents an important refocus of his identity away from north China, his natal home, and from Jiangxi, where his own family had grown up. We are not told how much land Wenzhi purchased, but he was able to buy enough land to build his residence and accommodate his parents' graves. Land ownership was an important source of economic and cultural capital for prominent Chinese in China, and Wenzhi undoubtedly made this investment for economic and social reasons.

Transferring his parents' graves from Shandong to Liyang was another highly significant act that underscores Wenzhi's intention to settle in Liyang county as a member of the local elite. Resituating an ancestral grave was usually done when a branch of a family moved permanently to a new location and wished to maintain links to the main lineage. It was an important procedure that invoked the identity of the family that had moved, and it was an expensive procedure that involved ritual specialists and the purchase of land for the permanent grave. These graves would also have been the focus of annual ancestral veneration during the Qing Ming festival.

As Rubie Watson points out in her study of the politics of grave sitings in southeast China, the placement of text and rituals associated with an ancestor's grave were all important to the living, and done for the benefit of the living members of the family. Siting a grave was an overt political event, "involved in the give and take of local politics... [since] groups and individuals make claims and counterclaims that alter the status quo."²⁸ Watson's point is

inscription. The Yuan-era spirit way stone animal and human figures are largely intact and in place, and can still be seen.

²⁸ Rubie S. Watson, "Remembering the Dead: Graves and Politics in Southeastern China," in *Death Ritual in Late Imperial and Modern*

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that the ancestor's bones and grave are loci of power for the living descendants, in contrast to the funeral rites and subsequent rituals performed in an ancestral hall. Since Wenzhi seems to have been the only child of his parents to reach adult age (the sources make brief mention of his only brother dying at a young age), it was natural for Wenzhi to be concerned with the location of his parents' graves. He was also clearly aware of the importance in Chinese culture of ancestral graves to the identity of the living descendants. Since he had no previous connection to Liyang, moving his parents' graves there provided Wenzhi with important and immediate contact to his adopted locality.

The next action that Wenzhi took to secure his identity as a member of the Liyang elite was to build a family residence on land he had purchased there. He had already built a family residence and hall in Yuzhang, Jiangxi, where he had lived before retirement, so the precedent was established for constructing one in his new home. At Liyang Wenzhi built a family home with an attached hall, and that residence soon became an important locus of his family's identity. Tapping into the imperial title given to his family to add further weight to his new residence, he called it the "Hall of Three Virtuous Ones" (*Sanjie Tang* 三節堂). This name would most certainly have provided every person in Liyang with a daily reminder that these Uyghurs were people who practiced Confucian virtuous behavior.²⁹

China, ed. James L. Watson and Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 204–05. Watson stresses the distinction between ancestor worship in the hall and at the grave, and the self-interest involved in grave rites. She borrows from and extends Maurice Freedman's work on ancestor worship and the geomancy of burial. Moreover, although Watson deals with the 1930s, her arguments about the overtly political ramification of grave sitings and rituals apply to late-imperial China as well.

²⁹ It was common for local elites to give auspicious names to their residences and attached study or ancestral halls. Evelyn Rawski points

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Conclusion

Qara Buqa and his son Xie Wenzhi were both transitional figures in their family's history. The lives and careers of both men occurred during a period when the Mongol Empire was evolving and maturing after the death of the founder, Chinggis Qan. China had finally been fully conquered by the Mongols, who imposed a very different type of rule on the south versus the north. The princely appanage system was not extended to south China, and the Mongols accommodated more Chinese practices and personnel into their civil bureaucracy after the south was conquered than had been the case when they only controlled the north. Qara Buqa's and Xie Wenzhi's lives reflect these changes.

What were the conditions that made Qara Buqa and his son, Xie Wenzhi, transitional figures in their family's history? Judged solely from their records as *Semuren* officials in the Mongol administration of China, it is not clear how they might have differed from any other *Semuren* before or after their time. Both men served in a variety of positions that included military as well as civil authority, and the kinds of positions in which they served – pacification commissioner (*xuanweishi*), judge (*duanshiguan*), or agent (*darughachi*) – were given only to Mongols or *Semuren*, never to Chinese. As the range of these positions and duties also make clear, both men were part of a typical Mongol administrative system, where there was little real distinction between the civil and military spheres and where these non-Chinese held real power over

out that in the Qing period the name of an ancestral hall (*tangming*) – a hall attached to the residence of an elite family – referred to the household itself; see her article, “The Ma Landlords of Yang-chia-kou in Late Ch'ing and Republican China,” in *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940*, ed. Patricia Ebrey and James Watson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 245.

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their Chinese contemporaries. But the lives and careers of both men were, in fact, quite different from their predecessors and their descendants.

One obvious difference between these two men and their ancestors is the fact that they served most, if not all, of their careers in south China. More important, they were the last men in the family whose official duties included both military and civilian functions. Xie Wenzhi, in particular, marks this transition; he settled in the south rather than return to his family's home in Temüge Odchigin's old appanage lands in Shandong.

Why did Wenzhi settle in southeast China when he retired from office rather than return to his family's home at Yidu? We know that the southeast did not experience the radical economic and social dislocation visited on north China by the Mongol invasion. In fact, one of the remarkable facts about Yuan history is the rapidity with which Qubilai established good working relations with the Chinese in the south. He understood that it was vital to maintain the social and economic infrastructure in south China in order for the Mongols to hold onto power in China. Wenzhi's decision probably turned on the economic prosperity and opportunities available to *Semuren* and Chinese alike in south China, which had been the economic center of China since at least the mid-eighth century. Unlike his father's generation, Wenzhi had also spent the majority of his adult life in southern China, most of it as a *Semuren* official. He had enjoyed successful tenures as an official in several parts of southern China, and had likely established good personal and professional relations with important local community leaders in some of those places (certainly in Jiangxi and Jiangzhe). The cooperation of local elites was necessary for any representative of the Mongol court to maintain order. But Wenzhi may have also felt a deeper kinship to the Chinese local elites because of his own family's history and his interests in Chinese culture.

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Xie Wenzhi was also the last Xie family member whose service included stints in the pacification bureaus. His sons served exclusively in civilian positions, and reflect the evolution of the Mongol administration towards a more functionally specific system with clear distinction between the civilian and military spheres of power.³⁰

Qara Buqa and his son are also represented in the sources as making specific choices about education, lifestyle, and identity that set them apart from their Uyghur ancestors and paved a new way for their descendants. Some of their choices were undoubtedly due to the longstanding appreciation and experience of literate cultures that they had as Uyghurs, while other choices were related to their experiences in southern China. Those choices ultimately led to new identities for these men, their wives and their descendants, as ideal Chinese cultural types, or what some have called a “Sino-Uyghur identity.” We have already seen other examples, such as the families of Qara Īghach Buyruq and Buyruq Qaya, where prominent Uyghur *Semuren* fashioned similar identities. In essence, we can say that Qara Buqa and Xie Wenzhi began a process of creating new kinds of cultural capital, which their descendants could use to become full-fledged cultural elites acceptable to Chinese counterparts even as they continued to act as powerful political elites representing Mongol interests.

But we must also remember that these men were really using the same strategies of survival long practiced by their ancestors. We have already seen that the first generation of Gaochang Uyghurs in Mongol China

³⁰ It could be argued that the fact that throughout the Yuan era the Mongols continued to use agents (*darughachi*), an office that fused military and civilian powers and duties, shows that they never fully abandoned the most important parts of the Mongol nomadic administrative system. This issue is, however, well beyond the scope of this book.

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possessed important forms of cultural and social capital that they used to their advantage as a diaspora group. Their cultural capital included the specialized knowledge of systems of literacy (specifically, a written language) and administration (such as the use of seals), and their credentials as a highly cultured people. Their social capital coalesced around two principal relationships: association with the Uyghur *idikut*, and the network of relationships with other Uyghur elites that began at Gaochang and extended among members of the Uyghur diaspora community in China. In the next chapter we shall see just how effective the Xie family was at using these forms of capital to construct their well-known identity as the family of the three virtuous ones and the six *jinshi* scholars.