

Chapter 6

Resources and Strategies of Identity

By the time Bilge Buqa and Eren Temür's descendants had been in China for three generations they began to acquire additional types of cultural capital that were more specific to China, especially honorific Chinese-style official titles and laudatory descriptions by prominent Chinese writers of the time, which this family then used to become members of the Chinese literati community. By the end of Xie Wenzhi's life, his family had established a reputation as paragons of Confucian virtue and diligence that coalesced in the phrase "the family of the three virtuous ones and six *jinshi* scholars" (see their genealogical chart on p. 272).

Loyalty and Fidelity: Two Topoi of Identity

We have already seen how Qara Buqa's death while on assignment in south China resulted in his award by the Yuan court of several posthumous titles. He achieved a certain kind of immortality with inclusion among the *Yuanshi* biographies of loyal officials. The real effect of those honors, however, redounded to his descendants, who tapped the moral quality of his loyalty as a marker of their identity. That topos turned out to be valuable cultural capital indeed, worth far more than any financial or material capital that Qara Buqa may have left to his descendants. Several sources show us precisely how the identification as a loyal official was developed and bequeathed to the family. In the end, Qara Buqa became the head of a family known for their loyalty, fidelity and filial piety.

Four prominent Chinese literati wrote eulogies and inscriptions in honor of Qara Buqa long after his death. In addition to the important biographical data they contain, the

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content, authorship, and context of these texts also provide us with clues to the strategies employed by Qara Buqa's descendants to create some specific cultural capital by establishing the identity of their illustrious ancestor, and to place themselves in positions that enabled them to use that capital to construct identities for themselves as political and cultural elites. For example, some of these pieces were written by men involved in intense political struggles beginning in the 1340s, and their eulogies tell us something about the status of the Xie family among the different Confucian factions that were responsible for the direction of politics in the last decades of the Yuan dynasty.

We first turn to two eulogy texts written by Huang Jin and Xu Youren, because they contain the most detailed information about Qara Buqa and the Xie family, and because both writers were cohorts of Qara Buqa's well-known grandson, Xie Zhedu, in the first civil service exams in 1315, and important cultural figures in their own right.¹ The piece written by Huang Jin 黃潛 (1272–1357) was a spirit way inscription for Qara Buqa.² The title of the text, in typical fashion, summarized all of the career high points of the deceased for anyone who came across the stone that

¹ See John W. Dardess, *Conquerors and Confucians: Aspects of Political Change in Late Yuan China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 75–94, for information about Huang's and Xu's role in Yuan court factionalism.

² Huang Jin was a distinguished Confucian scholar who held several important positions in the central government. He was also a cohort of Qara Buqa's grandson, Zhedu, in the metropolitan exams of 1315. Among his official positions he served in the Hanlin Academy, the National College, and as Superintendent of Confucian Schools in Jiangxi Province. A spirit way inscription was essentially identical in content and structure to a funerary inscription or epitaph, except that the latter was meant to be placed inside the tomb while the former was inscribed on a stone that was placed on a path leading to the tomb or in front of the tomb where the public could read it. See my discussion of funerary inscriptions below.

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marked the path to his grave. This one is titled “Spirit Way Inscription of Master Qara Buqa, Minister of Tax Transport and Salt Monopoly for Guangdong Circuit, who was posthumously awarded the titles of Meritorious Official Who Extended His Honesty, Protected His Loyalty and Was Entirely Virtuous, Grandee of the Fifth Class, Minister on the Right in Henan, Jiangbei and other Provinces, Supreme Protector of the State, and who was awarded the posthumous honorary titles Duke of Gaochang Prefecture, and Loyal and Grieved.”³ The text starts with Qara Buqa’s father and traces the history of this family down through Qara Buqa’s great-grandsons, who lived in the final days of the Yuan dynasty. We can date this text to around 1349 because it states that one of Qara Buqa’s descendants, Xie Zhedu, had just been promoted to the rank of Second Privy Councilor (*canzhi zhengshi*) in the Jiangzhe provincial government (*Jiangzhe xingsheng* 江浙行省).

A long text, Huang Jin’s composition contains a wealth of biographical detail about this Uyghur family going back several generations and ending with descriptions of Qara Buqa’s immediate family. We get some sense of the high esteem in which Qara Buqa’s grandson, Xie Zhedu, was held by the Yuan court from the introductory lines: the Hanlin Academy ordered Huang Jin to write an inscription for Zhedu’s grandfather’s spirit way stela because his grandfather’s grave was located in the province where Zhedu was assigned (and site of his father, Xie Wenzhi’s retirement). Two other high officials also added their stylized characters to the stela upon its completion, a certain Duoerzhiban 朵爾直班 (Dorji Bal?), presumably a Mongol who was head of the Office for the Empress’s Household, and Tai Buqa 泰不花, who was Minister of the Office of Rites. Perhaps most important, the

³ Huang Jin, *Jinhua Huang xiansheng wenji* 25.1a.

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eulogy gives us a detailed history of the sequence of Qara Buqa's imperial posthumous awards.

Emperor Renzong [temple name for Ayurbarwada Qan, r. 1312–1320] reflected on Qara Buqa's death, and in the 11th month of 1318 he conferred on Qara Buqa the hereditary title Grandee of the Twelfth Class (*Tongyi Dafu*), and [working titles] Minister of Revenue and Supreme Master of Light Chariots (*Hubu shangshu* and *Shang qingche duwei*), and granted him the landed title Marquis of Gaochang Prefecture.... In the 10th month of 1334 the emperor [Toghon Temür, r. 1333–1368] granted him the posthumous style name of Meritorious Official who Protected his Loyalty and was Entirely Virtuous, and the name Loyal and Grieved. Again in the first month of 1349 the emperor bestowed on Qara Buqa the additional title Meritorious Official who Extended his Honesty, Protected his Loyalty and was Entirely Virtuous, and he granted Qara Buqa [the honorary name] Grandee of the Fifth Class (*Zide Dafu*) [and restated his other titles enumerated above].⁴

This unambiguous chronology of events reveals the accumulation of cultural capital to Qara Buqa, as locus of Xie family identity, by virtue of imperial grant of posthumous titles and ranks to him over a period of thirty-one years, beginning more than thirty years after he died. Each new installment or promotion granted by the Yuan court to Qara Buqa can be correlated with some accomplishment by one of his descendants, as we will see in the following chapters. By 1318 his most famous grandson, Xie Zhedu, had achieved his *jinshi* degree and was an officeholder. By 1334 all six of Qara Buqa's grandsons had achieved the *jinshi* degree, and by 1349, when this text was composed, Zhedu had reached the height of his career in the Ministry of Revenue and two of

⁴ Huang Jin, *Jinhua Huang xiansheng wenji* 25.2b–3a.

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Qara Buqa's great-grandsons, Xie Si and Xie Boliaoxun, were well on their ways to important careers as *Semuren* officials. Huang's eulogy text reveals the process by which Qara Buqa became both the original source of his family's cultural capital and the symbolic repository of the on-going accumulation of such capital by various later Xie family members through their own achievements in office or as social and cultural elites.

The second of Qara Buqa's eulogies is a tomb inscription (*muzhiming*) written for him by the noted Chinese scholar Xu Youren 許有壬 (1287–1364).⁵ The title and content of this inscription are similar to Qara Buqa's spirit way inscription, listing most of the same functional and honorary official titles and posthumous titles that are mentioned in the former text. The only significant difference between the two titles is that Xu Youren's text indicates that Qara Buqa had been awarded the honorary title of Grandee of the Thirteenth Class (*Jiayi dafu*) while still alive, calling Qara Buqa the "Grandee of the Thirteenth Class and Commissioner of Tax Transport and Salt Monopoly for Guangdong" before listing posthumous titles.⁶

Xu began his eulogy by recounting the history of Qara Buqa's ancestors, linking them to the famous Türk general Tonyuquq. He provides basic biographical information for all family members through Qara Buqa's grandsons, as well as some interesting mentions of Qara Buqa's wife. The first part of this text ends with a laudatory

⁵ Xu Youren was a native of north China, who achieved his *jinshi* degree in 1315, in the same class as Qara Buqa's grandson, Xie Zhedu. He spent the majority of his long career in the Yuan Censorate as Second Privy Councilor (*canzheng*), and as Chancellor of the Hanlin Academy.

⁶ The text reads: 嘉議大夫廣東道都轉運鹽使; Xu Youren, *Zhi Zheng ji* 至正集 54.3b–5b.

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commendation of Qara Buqa, and tells the reader why he wrote this tomb inscription.

The master [Qara Buqa] has seldom been written about, but he had great abilities in leading troops and managing resources. That was his primary virtue. If you examine what he did for the people and that which became law, and then look on how he sacrificed his life for the state then his great virtue will be known. In the *yanyou* era (1314–1320) the system of exams was established... and his grandsons were all recommended together, as if they were one person. Of the learned Confucian families who took the exams in the Tang and Song, none were like the Xie family.... Seeing Qara Buqa's actions we know that Heaven's way comes naturally [to some].⁷

It appears from the text that Qara Buqa's son, Xie Wenzhi, asked Xu to write his father's tomb inscription. This commission was thus part of Wenzhi's strategy to establish his family's identity as members of the social elite in Liyang. Xu comments: "In order to display the merits of the Xie family, they moved his [Qara Buqa's] grave on the certain day of a certain month of a certain year. It was originally located at Qinggou, in Lijiao Village, Teng Prefecture [Teng was the name of an ancient state in Shandong and the site of Qara Buqa's first post as a *Semuren* official]. The commissioner [Wenzhi] asked me to write an inscription."⁸ This marked attention to Qara Buqa's genealogy in his tomb inscription is interesting because epitaphs written during the preceding Song period de-emphasized genealogy.⁹ Unlike epitaphs from earlier

⁷ Xu Youren, *Zhi Zheng ji* 54.8b.

⁸ This portion of the text reads: 滕州禮教鄉清溝. See Xu Youren, *Zhi Zheng ji* 54.5b.

⁹ Angela Schottenhammer, "Characteristics of Song Epitaphs," in *Burial in Song China*, ed. Dieter Kuhn (Heidelberg: Edition Forum, 1994), 262.

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dynastic eras that were primarily functional and reiterated the deceased's genealogy to serve the ancestral and family cult, Song period epitaphs tended to be shorter and more akin to private historiographical texts showcasing the individual's personal accomplishments, rather than his achievements in office and his family's history. Qara Buqa's tomb inscription thus follows the pre-Song model for an epitaph of a high official. This should not surprise us, especially if Qara Buqa's descendants needed to "prove" their aristocratic line to their peers.

Again resembling Huang Jin's spirit way inscription, Xu Youren attached a short inscription (*ming*) in the form of a poem to the end of Qara Buqa's tomb inscription. Much shorter than the rest of the epitaph, the poem begins by referring to the Xie family's origins at the Xienianjie River in the steppe, and goes on to extol the virtues of loyalty, uprightness and filial piety that had become the hallmarks of Qara Buqa's family. As might be expected, the language of this poem is quite flowery and stands in marked contrast to the tone and content of the prose text that precedes it. Here, all of Qara Buqa's accomplishments and moral qualities are alluded to via poetic metaphors and dense language. These poems would only have been understood and appreciated by the most highly literate of readers of the day.

Two other prose texts written in Qara Buqa's honor also emphasize the topos of loyalty as his defining moral character. These texts differ from the ones already mentioned, however, since they focus on a family ancestral temple built to honor Qara Buqa. Through these texts we can see how Qara Buqa's descendants sought to portray themselves as paragons of Confucian family values by honoring their worthy ancestor in a family shrine. In this case Qara Buqa's son, Wenzhi, and his grandson, Zhedu, both participated in this Confucian family obligation. The

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Xie ancestral hall, in turn, was to become another locus of identity for the Xie family.

Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249–1333), a famous Neo-Confucian scholar in the Yuan period, wrote one of the inscriptions for the Xie family hall, which he entitled “Record of the Ancestral Hall of the Minister of Transport, the Marquis of Gaochang.”¹⁰ In this long text, Wu first describes the virtuous qualities of loyalty and virtue that merited an ancestral hall in Qara Buqa’s honor, and follows with a description of the history of the Xie family through Qara Buqa’s direct descendants, his son, Xie Wenzhi, and his grandson, Zhedu. A few pertinent biographical details are given about Qara Buqa, Wenzhi and Zhedu, but most of Wu’s text is devoted to discussing the functions and meaning of Qara Buqa’s ancestral hall.

Wu attributes the success of the six Xie family members in the *jinshi* exams to Qara Buqa’s moral qualities, especially his virtue of loyalty. Qara Buqa, the author declares, should rightly be honored as an ancestor, since his descendants have achieved so much. Furthermore, it is important that future generations of family members also recognize the importance of their ancestor, Qara Buqa, and

¹⁰ Wu Cheng, “Duyun shangshu Gaochang hou citang ji” 都運尙書高昌侯祠堂記, in *Wu Wenzheng ji* 吳文正集 [Collected works of Wu Cheng] (Siku Quanshu ed.; rpt. Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1971) 35.3a–6b. Wu Cheng was known for his Confucian learning, and after starting his official career in the southern Song, was appointed to a series of high-level offices at the Yuan court, including Deputy Director, and then Director of the National College, Academician in the Hanlin Academy and lecturer in the emperor’s Classics Colloquium. For information on Wu Cheng, see David Gedalecia, “Wu Ch’eng and the Perpetuation of the Classical Heritage in the Yüan,” in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 186–211; and his more recent expanded study, *The Philosophy of Wu Ch’eng: A Neo-Confucian of the Yüan Dynasty* (Bloomington: Indiana University Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1999).

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thereby continue the achievements and status of the Xie family.

A second essay that commemorated the Xie family hall was written by another Chinese literatus, Zheng Yuanyou 鄭元祐 (1292–1364). This short piece was entitled “Hall of the Former Virtuous Marquis Xie of Gaochang.”¹¹ In it Zheng highlights the moral qualities of Qara Buqa, his wife and son, and the impact of their virtuous conduct on later family members:

...When the few loyal and valiant of our eminent kingdom had conquered Jin and pacified Song, it was ordered that the meritorious and the extravagant [i.e., all officials] be investigated.... The marquis [Qara Buqa] was sent as an official to the south where he was loyal in his administration.... His wife was upright, and upon her husband's death she taught her sons to be filial.... He cut a piece of his flesh for his mother when she was ill, and people all praised his character as filial and loyal.... The marquis's grandsons were all educated [lit. read books] and all succeeded in the exams.... His son wore the Golden Tiger Tablet, and his grandsons all had the purple ribbons of office. Generations of men proclaimed their excellence. The marquis [Qara Buqa] established it, and the great three virtuous ones produced a single line [of eminent family members]. How can anyone match this record!¹²

¹¹ Zheng Yuanyou, “Gaochang Xiehou zaojie Tang” 高昌侯侯早節堂 [Hall of the First Worthies of the family of Marquis Xie of Gaochang], in *Qiao Wu ji* 僑吳集 [Collected works of Zheng Yuanyou] (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1970) 1.1b. Zheng was an itinerant scholar, originally from Zhejiang. He refused appointments to office for most of his life, preferring to travel around and stay with other scholars. He did hold the position of Confucian teacher in Pingjiang route in 1357, but only stayed in that post for one year. He was eventually assigned to be a director of Confucian Studies in the Zhejiang provincial government in 1364, but died in office.

¹² Zheng Yuanyou, *Qiao Wu ji* 1.1b.

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Zheng's brief essay perhaps sums up best the attitude of many Chinese elites to the Xie family. Qara Buqa is portrayed as the real source of his descendants' political and social success, and even the secondary virtues of uprightness and filial piety displayed by his wife and son were byproducts of his loyalty. After all, the text is focused on the ancestral hall dedicated to Qara Buqa.

Zheng also links Qara Buqa to his family's Uyghur heritage by using the posthumous title Marquis of Gaochang in the title of his essay. This title is not, in itself, surprising, since Chinese posthumous honorary titles frequently used ancient toponyms. But by the mid-1300s, when Zheng wrote this, Qara Buqa's descendants were acting like Chinese-style aristocrats. This explicit reference to Qara Buqa's connection to Uyghuristan would surely have reinforced Qara Buqa's alternate *Semuren* identity, to Chinese and *Semuren* readers alike. It was undoubtedly a reference that his family did not protest, and may have been an important counterpoint aimed to maintain their Uyghur identity and ties within the Uyghur *Semuren* community in China. This Uyghur aristocrat was loyal to the Mongols to the end!

Uprightness (zhen 真): The Second Confucian Topos of Xie Family Identity

The second Confucian topos that became a type of cultural capital for Qara Buqa's descendants was moral uprightness and was associated specifically with Qara Buqa's wife.¹³ This term referred specifically to the virtuous behavior of women, and was manifested in such ways as wifely regard

¹³ While *zhen* is commonly translated as truth, sincerity, or genuineness, I render it as uprightness here since it is associated with the character of Qara Buqa's widow, and implies a moral quality associated with widow chastity. This sense of *zhen* is reinforced by its use in the compound *zhenlie* as a category of widows in local gazetteers, translated as "the chaste and the staunch" by Sherry Mou, personal communication.

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for husband and sons, and the vow of the widow to remain faithful to her husband after his death with an oath of chastity. Ouyang Xuan makes the connection between uprightness and Qara Buqa's wife clear in his biography of the family: "in the prime of life she became a widow. She was pure and morally upright, and both strict and foreboding in her righteous ways."¹⁴ Once people began to describe Qara Buqa's wife in this manner, it was easy to apply the term "uprightness" as a general moral virtue of the entire family.

It is surprising to see such behavior practiced by a woman who was obviously not Chinese, who was married into another prominent Uyghur family who had not been in China for more than two generations, and who ignored Mongol customary law of levirate marriage, which specified that a widow should be remarried to her late-husband's brother or cousin. What were her actions that prompted the accolades of later Chinese writers, how did they fit in with accepted customs of marriage in her lifetime, and why was she so important to her family's identity?

All we really know about the origins of Qara Buqa's wife is that she was definitely *Semuren*, coming from the Xitaitele 希台特勒 family.¹⁵ When her husband

¹⁴ Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.11b. Ouyang's portrayal of this woman as a chaste widow must be understood within the context of the view of women held by Daoxue Confucianists of the time, which was largely negative. Paul Smith has described this attitude as "gynophobia." See his "Fear of Gynarchy in an age of Chaos: Kong Qi's Reflections on Life in South China under Mongol Rule," *Journal of the Social and Economic History of the Orient* 41.1 (Feb., 1998): 1–95, which is discussed below.

¹⁵ Both of Qara Buqa's eulogies and Ouyang's History of the Xie Family report his wife's clan name as Xitaitele, while later sources render her clan name as Xijiteqin 希吉特勤. See, for example, Tu Ji, *Mengwuer shiji* 45.5a. None of the sources provides any other information about her or her natal family, but it is either a Mongol or

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was killed in south China in 1284, we are told that the lady Xitaitele became a widow at age 35, and was left with three young children. According to the sources, she was the ideal widow who proceeded to run her own household and to give her three children a purportedly Chinese education (curiously, only her sons are mentioned in most sources, but we know that she also had a daughter).¹⁶ Moreover, she ignored the Mongol customary law of levirate marriage and did not remarry after Qara Buqa's early death. The lady Xitaitele lived until the ripe old age of 72, and after she died, the Yuan court bestowed on her the posthumous title of Mistress of Gaochang Prefecture (*Gaochang jun furen* 高昌郡夫人), matching her husband's posthumous title as Marquis of Gaochang Prefecture.¹⁷

Semuren name. I have not so far located this name in any list of prominent Yuan *Semuren* individuals or families.

¹⁶ We know that the two boys were familiar with Chinese culture and probably the Chinese language, but we know nothing about Qara Buqa's daughter. Xu Youren's tomb inscription for Qara Buqa is the only source that reports the existence of a daughter, and that only obliquely by referring to a daughter who had married a certain Hutukehashihuohaya (Qutuq Qash Qaya?) of Zhenjiang 鎮江呼圖克哈適霍哈雅. See Xu Youren, *Zhi Zheng ji* 54.8a.

¹⁷ For another example of a *Semuren* who adopted the Confucian practice of widow chastity, see the story of Safaliq (Safali 薩法禮), a woman from Khotan and wife of a Qipchaq general, in Thomas T. Allsen, "Mahmūd Yalavač (?–1254), Mas'ūd Beg (?–1289), 'Alī Beg (?–1280), Bujir (fl. 1206–1260)," in *In the Service of the Khan*, 131. Francis Cleaves has also discussed this woman in conjunction with his translation of a passage from the *Yuan Dianzhang* regarding Uyghur mourning regulations. See Cleaves, "Uighuric Mourning Regulations." It is interesting to note in this text, which Cleaves tentatively dates to sometime in Qubilai's period, that Uyghurs were enjoined from imitating the mourning rituals of northern Chinese (Haner 漢兒). In this light the adoption of the Chinese custom of widow chastity becomes even more significant as an indication of the acculturation of these *Semuren*. I thank Thomas Allsen for these references.

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We do not know if her decision to remain single and raise her family herself was based on her economic position, her interest in leading an independent life, or out of a genuine sense of Confucian moral obligation to remain true to her husband and to express that devotion by focusing on her children rather than remarrying. But in any event, her actions were interpreted by later Chinese writers (especially the authors of Qara Buqa's eulogies) in Confucian terms. Consequently, the lady Xitaitele is portrayed in all of the sources as a woman who was devoted first to her husband and then to her children, and maintained that by becoming a faithful (chaste) widow, one of the time-honored Chinese moral categories often applied to women. The uprightness imputed to this woman as chaste widow was then converted into a powerful type of cultural capital, the second great moral quality of uprightness that accrued to her descendants.¹⁸

Since her decision to not remarry flew in the face of the Mongol custom of levirate marriage, which was extended to all Yuan subjects in 1271 (although enforcement was relaxed after 1276 in certain cases), and her decision was the basis of her reputation as an upright woman, we need to know a bit more about this practice in Mongol China.¹⁹ We do not know the Uyghur customs and expectations regarding remarriage at that time, but as the wife of a *Semuren* elite she would, in theory, have been subject to forced remarriage under the custom of levirate.

As I have already noted above, one of the major differences between the Mongol and Chinese populations in Yuan China was the practice of levirate marriage,

¹⁸ This does not mean that her descendants had no hand in crafting her identity in these Confucian terms, and I suspect that the Chinese writers reflected Xie family members' own views on the matter.

¹⁹ Qubilai Qan's own mother managed to evade the levirate when her husband, Prince Tolui, was killed in battle in 1232. Frederick P. Mote, personal communication.

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whereby a widow would be taken in marriage by one of her late-husband's brothers or cousins. Levirate marriage operated in conjunction with the practice of bride-price, and was rooted in the way that property was divided among the sons in a Mongol family. Pre-mortem inheritance by all but the youngest son was common practice in Mongol families, and the levirate was one way to insure that families remained cohesive units. Once a woman was married, if her natal family was adequately compensated for their loss, then her family had no further claim on her. Since a Mongol senior wife inherited her husband's property (the hearth property, as distinct from that given to his sons before his death), in the case of widowhood it was important that the husband's family retain control over the wife, in order to maintain family control over that property. Obligatory levirate provided the most efficient means to regulate transfer of property within the male's line of descent.

In Yuan China, levirate marriage contrasted sharply with Chinese marriage customs, and was objected to by the Chinese population. The traditional Chinese custom of dowry implied a much greater degree of control of a woman and her property by her natal family, and was rooted in the structure of the Chinese family, where several generations of family lived under the same roof, and property was divided equally after death.²⁰ At any rate, as we have seen above, levirate was not uniformly practiced by Mongols and *Semuren* throughout the Yuan period. In fact, there seems to have been great variation in the practice of levirate even among Mongol and *Semuren* households, depending on the economic position of the parties involved, even as levirate was written into the early Yuan legal code

²⁰ Jennifer Holmgren, "The Economic Foundations of Virtue: Widow-Remarriage in Early and Modern China," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs* (Jan., 1985): 1-27, makes the point about the economic aspects of marriage explicit.

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and enforced on Mongol and *Semuren* populations. When Qubilai abolished the old Jin legal code and instituted a new one for the Yuan dynasty in 1271, levirate was made obligatory for the entire population, Chinese and non-Chinese alike. However, as we have just pointed out, levirate was in direct contradiction to Chinese customs and the long precedent of Chinese customary law regarding division of property and remarriage. As such, it quickly proved impossible to impose levirate marriage on the population, and very quickly exemptions begin to show up in application and enforcement.²¹

The practice of levirate also reinforced certain social expectations being placed on women by conservative Daoxue Confucianists in the late Yuan. By and large, levirate seems to have been more widely practiced in north China, and usually among poorer households. After the Mongols conquered the south, jurisdiction over levirate came increasingly under Chinese influence, and seems to have been treated in a semi-voluntary fashion. The topos of the faithful widow was becoming more popular in China by the mid-Yuan as marriage patterns changed and the cult of fidelity was promoted by Chinese literati.²² In fact, as Carlitz points out, the practice of levirate dovetailed nicely with the Neo-Confucian agenda that surfaced in the Yuan, one effect of which was to further curtail women's freedom and choice.

Given these developments, then, it does not seem at all surprising that the *Semuren* wife of the highly respected official, Qara Buqa, should opt to join the ranks of chaste

²¹ Paul Ratchnevsky makes this clear in his study, "The Levirate in the Legislation of the Yuan Dynasty."

²² Katherine Carlitz discusses the shifting patterns of marriage and emergence of the cult of fidelity beginning in the late Yuan. See her "Shrines, Governing-Class Identity, and the Cult of Widow Fidelity in Mid-Ming Jiangnan," *Journal of Asian Studies* 56.3 (August, 1997): 612-40.

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widows. Her husband's family had undoubtedly acquired sufficient economic resources, which meant that levirate was probably not her best option. Neither is it clear that all *Semuren* practiced levirate marriage, in spite of the fact that it was applied to all *Semuren* in Yuan legal codes. Finally, if Qara Buqa's wife was as interested in Chinese culture and values as she seems to be, then widow chastity was a rational option; her participation in the topos of the faithful widow would validate her own dedication to Chinese culture, and it would be in her family's best interest. Her deliberate choice to "protect her virtue as a widow" was certainly beneficial to her son and later descendants, and it is just possible that this woman was prescient enough to understand the long-term ramifications of her choice.

Xie Wenzhi and the Topos of Filial Piety: the Third Leg of Xie Family Identity

The story of Xie Wenzhi's childhood recounted in the last chapter is striking because it is not at all what we expect to see from the son of an important Uyghur *Semuren* official. His actions reveal a great deal about the kind of family in which he was raised, and also about Wenzhi's own predilections and values.²³ As we have already noted, his mother was actively involved in his early education, which appears to have been largely Chinese in orientation. For example, he would only have learned about the extreme form of filial piety of cooking a piece of one's own flesh for an ill person from Chinese literature. He would also

²³ It is important to point out here that the accuracy or verifiability of these stories about Wenzhi or, for that matter, other Xie family members is not the issue. In presenting these accounts we need to keep in mind the primary function of such sources, which was to adopt stereotypical language and images to present a myth about the subject. At the same time, it is important to take the stories seriously, and to try to read them in the manner in which they were intended for the original audience.

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have become acutely aware of the importance of a surname through associating with Chinese people and reading Chinese texts. But we would not have learned of any of Wenzhi's actions had they not been described in writing, and it is to these texts that we now turn to understand the importance of these actions as markers of identity for Wenzhi and his family.

The single most important source of information that documents the Xie family and its Uyghur ancestors before they became Mongol subjects is a history of the family written by Ouyang Xuan 歐陽玄 (1283–1357).²⁴ It is especially important because it is one of the few essays that purports to document the early history of this family in Uyghuristan, before they were absorbed into the Mongol empire.²⁵ As Herbert Franke has shown, the practice of writing private histories began in earnest in the Yuan period, and Wenzhi and his descendants are certainly

²⁴ Ouyang Xuan, "Gaochang Xieshi jiazhuang," in *Guizhai wenji*, 11.3a–13a. A punctuated edition of Ouyang's essay is contained in Chen Gaohua 陈高华, ed., *Yuandai Weiwuer – Halalu ziliao jilu* 元代维吾尔哈刺鲁资料辑录 [Compilation of historical materials on Yuan dynasty Uyghurs and Qarlucs] (Urumqi: Xinjiang Renmin Chubanshe, 1986), 75–82. Ouyang Xuan was a well-known scholar-official in Mongol China, descendant of the famous Song Dynasty writer Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), a director of the project to compile the Song, Liao, and Jin dynastic histories, and a cohort of one of Xie Wenzhi's sons in the first *jinshi* examinations in 1315. He is discussed in more detail below.

²⁵ The only other sources that report the pre-Yuan history of this Uyghur family are Qara Buqa's eulogy texts, which were composed at about the same time as Ouyang's history. The later official biographies of the four Xie family members included in the *Yuanshi* seem to have drawn from these accounts. As I have argued above, Juvaini's history of the Mongols is also an important source for Xie family history prior to and in the very early years of the Mongol empire, but does not contain the same level of detail found in Ouyang's text. The earliest date of any of these texts is surely Juvaini's, which was begun in 1252.

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examples of that practice.²⁶ The use of a biography commissioned by a family and written by a prominent Chinese writer was an accepted means of communicating elite power in China by the time that Ouyang wrote his essay.

Ouyang's account is a good example of the use of biography writing by elites to project or construct identity. He provides us with the names, official titles and other details for several generations of this Uyghur family in Uyghuristan, long before they became Mongol subjects. Just as important to the Yuan-era Xie family, it also describes the ethnogenesis of the Uyghur people that specifically links this family to the earliest Uyghur steppe aristocracy. Finally, it provides the rationale for Xie Wenzhi's choice of surname, purportedly in his own words.

The fact that such a prominent writer as Ouyang Xuan was commissioned to write their story was also a type of evidence of the high status of this family in Yuan China. Ouyang's text would probably have been inscribed on a stone tablet to be hung in Xie Wenzhi's residence, where it would suitably impress visitors and remind them of the Xie family story. It was common for families of means to commission a well-known writer to compose epitaph texts or private biographies, and this may have been the case with this biography. Ouyang was also a cohort of one of Wenzhi's sons in the 1315 *jinshi* exams, and probably wrote this essay with more personal interest than may have normally been the case in such commissioned works. Since Xie family members provided him with information, his essay is also probably a reliable source for aspects of this family's history (taking into account, of course, the partial and often hyperbolic nature of these kinds of texts). One of the most important themes in Ouyang's history is the linkage of the Xie family to their ancient Türk and Uyghur

²⁶ Herbert Franke, "Some Aspects of Chinese Private Historiography in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries," in *Historians of China and Japan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 115–34.

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heritage. This putative history provides an excellent example of the centrality of biography to identity, and how that was used by the Xie family.

In Ouyang's history, the family traces its origins to one Tonyuquq 瞰欲谷, a leading figure in the history of the Uyghur people who succeeded the Eastern Türk empire in the 730s. We know quite a bit about him because his funerary inscription was found in 1897, and has been translated.²⁷ Tonyuquq was a Turk who grew up in Tang China because his father was an administrator for the Tang court in the northern frontier zone (in northern Shanxi). Tonyuquq first appears in the historical sources as an advisor to the Eastern Türk qaghan Qutlugh sometime after 680, and he is an important figure in both Turk and Uyghur history for several reasons. He introduced Chinese administrative institutions and practices to the Eastern Türks, and his insider knowledge of affairs at the Tang court at the time was crucial to Qutlugh's rise to power. He is also cited frequently in the Tang Dynastic Histories for his role in the military raids on northern China that the Eastern Türks carried out – first under Qutlugh between 682 and 690 – and as advisor to Qutlugh's successor, Moche. In fact, it was under Moche's leadership that the Turks reached the apogee of their success as a nomadic empire.

Moche was killed in 716 by dissident Turks, and Tonyuquq went on to serve as an advisor to his successor, Mojilian. By this time the Türk empire was in civil war over the succession problem, and they were in no shape to carry out raids on China as had been common under Moche. Perhaps Tonyuquq's greatest contribution to the survival of his people was when he dissuaded Mojilian from leading an

²⁷ See Rybatzki, *Die Toñuquq-Inschrift*. Also see Talât Tekin, *A Grammar of Orkhon Turkic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), 283–90; and Rene Grousset, *The Empire of the Steppes*, 103–13.

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attack on Tang China to inaugurate his reign. He is also famous for his prescient advice to not build a walled capital, another goal of Mojilian's. Tonyuquq knew that the Turks' strength lay in their mobility as nomads, and centering the nomadic Türk empire in a walled city would result in their defeat. His last action as advisor was to suggest that Mojilian offer a peace treaty with China, in 718. When the Tang emperor declined the treaty and threatened joint action, along with the Qitan and the Basmil Türks, against the Eastern Türks, Tonyuquq assured him that the Chinese would not be able to mount such an attack. On his advice, Mojilian attacked and defeated his old enemies the Basmil, and eventually signed a peace treaty with Tang China. Mojilian died in 734 and the Eastern Türk qaghanate soon fractured. Three Turkic tribes which had been subordinate to the Eastern Türks soon rose in revolt: the Basmil, the Uyghurs and the Qarluq. Eventually the Uyghurs succeeded in gaining power over their rivals, and in 744 the Uyghur leader, Gulipeiluo, set himself up as qaghan over the Türk lands at Qarabalghasun. He adopted the title Qutlugh Bilge, leader of the Uyghurs.

Since the Xie family history so explicitly ties the lineage to the figure of Tonyuquq, we need to understand Tonyuquq's currency as a putative family ancestor. First, any person literate in Chinese history in the twelfth century would have been aware of the importance of Tonyuquq to the history of Tang China and the Türk Empire. He is cited numerous times in the Tang Histories. Moreover, it is likely that literate Uyghurs would have known about the stories of Tonyuquq and other important Türk leaders that had been recorded on stone stelae in the Orkhon River valley. Tonyuquq was a person of major cultural and historical importance to the history of the Turkic people, and since the Uyghurs were not only the political and military successors to the Turkic steppe empire in 745, but also ethnically related to the Turks, proof of direct descent from

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this man endowed his descendants with enormous cultural capital, and claiming descent from Tonyuquq established the aristocracy of Xie family ancestors.

Identification with Tonyuquq, the consummate political player, tells us something about the situation and goals of the Xie ancestors at Gaochang. Tonyuquq's power was based on his knowledge of Tang China and his position as an advisor to the ancient Türk qans. He was also related by marriage to the Turk royal family, and survived Kul Tegin's coup because of this. Yet Tonyuquq was only incidentally related to the Uyghurs. Does this also reflect on the position of this family of Uyghurs at Gaochang? The Xie ancestors at Gaochang were not members of the Uyghur royal family, but they could claim aristocratic heritage through their link to Tonyuquq. That link was demonstrated in two specific ways: Tonyuquq was portrayed as the biological ancestor of the extended Xie family, and his "descendants" held hereditary titles at Gaochang that they claimed were first given to Tonyuquq.²⁸

The important point here is not that there was no basis in fact for this Uyghur family's claim of descent from Tonyuquq. We have no way of determining the veracity of that claim. The significance lies in the claim itself; biography was an important, powerful tool in the construction of elite identity, and selective use of biography had been a well-known strategy throughout the medieval world.²⁹ The Yuan-era Xie family also utilized that strategy to further their own goals by claiming descent from Tonyuquq.

²⁸ Ouyang's text states that "Tonyuquq first held the position of *guoxiang*"; *Guizhai wenji* 11.5a.

²⁹ See Jennifer Holmgren, "Lineage falsification in the northern dynasties: Wei Shou's ancestry," *Papers on Far Eastern History* 21 (1980): 1-16. Thanks to Scott Pearce for this reference.

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According to Ouyang's account, the Xie family's next ancestor was Kezhipuer 克直普爾. The putative nature of the claim of descent from Tonyuquq is raised at this point, however, since there is a gap in time of some three hundred years between these two individuals in Ouyang's chronology. Tonyuquq probably died sometime in the early 700s, while it seems that Kezhipuer lived in the late eleventh or early twelfth century. Ouyang's text only states vaguely that he followed Tonyuquq by "several generations." Since Ouyang provides us with a detailed description of Kezhipuer's life and activities this may indicate that he was the earliest ancestor the Xie family knew anything about when Ouyang wrote his text.

Kezhipuer held the title of high state minister (*guoxiang*) at the Uyghur court, along with several other functional and honorary titles that indicate he moved among the highest levels of the Uyghur aristocracy at Gaochang, including Free Noble (*darqan*) and Elder Statesman (*ata Tutuq*).³⁰ All of these titles and offices were inherited by his heirs down through Bilge Buqa, the last family member to hold them and serve at Gaochang. At some point Kezhipuer was sent to the Liao court as a Uyghur envoy where he held other important positions, including that of Grand Preceptor (*taishi*), Grand Councilor-in-Chief (*da chengxiang*), and was in charge of royal storehouses at the Liao capital (*zongguan neiwai zangshi*).³¹ Kezhipuer's son, Yuebi 岳弼, inherited his father's titles and duties at the Uyghur court, but that is virtually all we know about him from this or any other

³⁰ *Darqan* was originally granted for military merit, while *ata dudu* (T. *tutuq*) is an old Türk title borrowed from Chinese that meant a military governor of a province. See Han Rulin, "Menggu dalahan kao"; and Ecsedy, "Old Turkic Titles of Chinese Origin."

³¹ Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.4b. On the office of Grand Preceptor, or *taishi*, see Serruys, "The Office of *Tayisi* in Mongolia in the Fifteenth Century."

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source. Ouyang moves quickly on to Yuebi's two famous sons, Bilge Buqa (also known as Bilge Temür) and Eren Temür, and their stories then serve as introduction to Qara Buqa and descendants.

Ouyang's history of this family is also interesting to us because he devotes a good deal of space to tell his reader how this prominent Uyghur family became known by the Xie surname. The particular name Wenzhi chose was loaded with meaning. First, we are told that it was derived from the name of a river in the Mongol steppe where the ancient Uyghur peoples, the ancestors of this family, originally lived.³² According to Ouyang:

The original home of the Uyghurs was at the confluence of three rivers near Qarakhorum 哈刺和林, in present-day [Yuan-period] Hening Prefecture 和寧路. The first river is called the Ganerhan (幹耳汗, the Orchon Gol River?), and it flows northeast of Bingcheng. The second river is called the Helin (和林, the Halahelin River?), and it flows northwest of Jiangcheng. The third river, called Huerbandamier (忽爾班達彌爾, the Tuul Gol River?), begins in the northwest and flows east. These three rivers converge 30 li north of the city into the river called the Xienianjie (契輦傑, the Selenge?).³³

³² As I have already pointed out, Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing argues that the character Xie was a Chinese rendering of the first part of a Uyghur personal name, and thus not really a Chinese style surname *per se*, translating Xie Wenzhi as Sävinch. See his "Meng Yuan shidai Gaochang Xieshi de shihuan yu hanhua."

³³ Ouyang Xuan, *Guizhai wenji* 11.3b. The only river identified in Ouyang's text that can be positively identified in the Chinese Historical Atlas is the Ganerhan River. A river called Halahelin flows into that river, which I believe is transcribed incorrectly in Ouyang's text as the Helin River. I believe the Xienianjie is the river now known as the Selenge, in the Mongolian steppe, but this question remains in dispute. See Tan Qixiang, ed., *Zhongguo lishi dituji*, Vol. 7, 11–12, for these rivers in the Yuan period.

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The end of Ouyang's text is taken up with a direct quote from Wenzhi, who states that he adopted the Xie surname so that his descendants would remember their heritage as a family of Uyghur aristocrats whose natal home was located in the ancient Turk heartland in the steppe.

Wenzhi thus not only preserved his ancestral, or native, identity as a part of the Uyghur aristocracy who were part of the glorious steppe empire, he also implicitly linked his family to the longer history of the Turk empire. These cultural symbols would have been recognized by *Semuren* peers of the Xie family. At the same time, using a surname would have made this family more acceptable to their Chinese peers. Wenzhi and his *Semuren* peers undoubtedly knew that surnames were (and are) essential to one's identity in China, especially in such matters as marriages, taxation, and social power. Tracing one's lineage back to a "founding ancestor" and "native place" was a common enough scheme used by any Chinese family who wished to substantiate their status as elites, especially after moving to a new place. Adopting a homophone of a more common surname Xie 謝 cleverly combined two different identity markers that would make sense to the different audiences with whom this *Semuren* family had to deal in Mongol China.

Poetry in Honor of Xie Wenzhi

In addition to Ouyang Xuan's family history, we are fortunate to have a large number of poems and prefaces to poems and other works that were written to honor various Xie family members by other important Chinese writers and thinkers. The Yuan period is notable for several developments in literary style and form, including its poetry. Yoshikawa Kōjirō has described these developments in poetry in terms of both a quantitative increase in the numbers of people who were writing poetry,

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especially the “townsmen,” and in the types of poetry being written at the time.³⁴ He argues that many more Chinese were drawn to writing poetry because they were cut off from politics, and turned to the arts to express themselves. Since these men had no particular ties to politics they also developed into a new type of “independent artist,” free from most social conventions and attuned only to the demands of their art.

However, lest we think that only hermits wrote poetry in the Yuan, many of the important poets whom Yoshikawa identifies in the Yuan period were involved in politics. Several of those men wrote poetry or essays in honor of Xie family members, including Yu Ji, Ouyang Xuan, Huang Jin, and Liu Guan. Regardless of their views on serving the Mongols, Tang poetry was held up as an exemplar for these Yuan thinkers and writers, who adopted that style (known as *shi*) and abandoned the more rationalistic or philosophic Song poetic models.³⁵

All of the poems written to honor Xie family members appear to be *shi*-style poems, written as described by Yoshikawa by townsmen, or local elites. Most *shi*-style poetry was written in lyric form and was probably meant to

³⁴ See Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *Five Hundred Years of Chinese Poetry, 1150–1650: The Chin, Yuan, and Ming Dynasties*, tr. John Timothy Wixted (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), especially Chs. 4–5.

³⁵ See Frederick W. Mote, “Confucian Eremitism in the Yuan Period,” in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960), 202–40, for a discussion of philosophical poetry that persisted in the Yuan period. For an example of a Yuan-period writer who continued to express sympathy for the Song, see William A. Brown, *Wen T'ien-Hsiang: a Biographical Study of a Sung Patriot* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1986). On the issue of Song-era poetic styles and themes, see Yoshikawa Kōjirō, *An Introduction to Sung Poetry*, tr. Burton Watson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967).

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be performed orally among a group of friends.³⁶ It did not employ colloquial language, and depended on elaborate figures of speech, extensive use of allusion, imagery and symbolism to evoke a response of empathy for the experience described in the poem. Yuan-era *shi* poetry also borrowed heavily from earlier Tang models, and assumed that the audience was fluent with Tang history and personalities. As Richard Lynn points out, one of the hallmarks of Yuan *shi* poetry, especially in contrast with Song-period *shi* poetry, was its “exploitation of the full range of syntactic possibilities of the literary language,” and the fact that Tang and Yuan *shi* poetry both used “formal (*wen*) expressions as against the tendency to use colloquial expressions (*pai*).”³⁷

³⁶ For an in-depth treatment of *shi*-style narrative poetry, see Dore J. Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry: the Late Han through T'ang Dynasties* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1988); and Ching-hsien Wang, “The Nature of Narrative in T'ang Poetry” and Yukung Kao, “The Aesthetics of Regulated Verse,” both in *The Vitality of the Lyric Voice: Shih Poetry from the Late Han to the T'ang*, ed. Shuen-fu Lin and Stephen Owen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 217–52 and 332–85, respectively.

³⁷ Lynn, *Kuan Yin-shih*, 84–85. Lynn’s study of this prominent Uyghur *Semuren* is also one of most thorough studies of Yuan *shi*-style poetry to date. It has served as a model for my research, and inspired me in my efforts to deal with the poetry about and by Xie family members. I make no claim to any expertise in reading or understanding Chinese poetry, and so shall not attempt to analyze the poetry of any Yuan writer in terms of its poetic form or style. Nor am I trying to link *shi* poetry to a specific community of writers in the Yuan period (that would be a book in itself). But the vast majority of Chinese literati wrote and performed *shi*-style poetry as a matter of course, and it was one of the chief hallmarks of their status as members of the cultural elite. The fact that so many Xie family members were honored in poetry or were subjects of prefaces to poems and literary collections, as well as having written poetry themselves, indicates, I think, that they were recognized as full members of the literati community. Many of these poems are quite ambiguous and difficult to interpret, and extracting biographical details from them is just as fraught with

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Liu Guan 柳貫 (1270–1342), a writer and official from Jiangzhe Province, and a contemporary of Wenzhi's, wrote a poem in honor of Wenzhi's family hall in Jiangxi. Liu was from Pujiang, just south of Hangzhou in Jiangzhe province (the area was also known by the literary name Luling).³⁸ Throughout his forty year long career as an official in Mongol China he was involved in positions related to Chinese culture and Confucianism, and was one of the major figures in the Daoxue Neo-Confucian school at the time. Liu Guan was first assigned as an official in 1300, to be a lecturer in Confucian schools. In 1319 he was promoted to the National University at the capital as a preceptor, and then promoted to the position of erudite (*boshi*) in that college. In 1326 he was sent to Jiangxi as a Superintendent of Confucian Schools, and reached the highest level for a Chinese literati in 1341 when he was promoted to be a compiler of the first class (*daizhi*) in the famed Hanlin Academy. He died in 1342 at the age of 73. It is unclear when Liu Guan became acquainted with Wenzhi, but Liu's poem is clearly a product of a friendship, and not simply a work written in his official capacity in the Hanlin Academy or at the behest of the court. In fact, this long poem is striking for its personal tone as well as for the information it contains on the Xie family home and hall.

Liu Guan's "Sanjie Tang" poem is an especially

problems as understanding them as poems. I have included them here because they indicate a relationship between a Chinese writer and a member of the Xie family. My translations of relevant portions of poems are intended only to evoke the spirit of a given poem, and to evaluate information that seem to pertain to biographical details provided in other sources.

³⁸ Liu Guan's life and career are summarized in Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 2.753–55. He has a very short biographical entry appended to the biography of another Chinese man of letters, Huang Jin, in *Yuanshi* 181. See also John D. Langlois, Jr., "Political Thought in Chin-hua under Mongol Rule," in *China Under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois, Jr. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 137–85.

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interesting source for information on the Xies.³⁹ Consisting of almost one hundred five-character lines, it was written in the *gu-shi* old-style genre.⁴⁰ The piece reads as a laudatory paeon of praise from one Chinese literatus to another, using terminology and phrasing that would only be understood by a very well-educated reader. It begins by reciting the history of the Xie family beginning with Qara Buqa and proceeding to Wenzhi's sons and nephew. And we are given some additional details about Wenzhi's hall that was attached to his residence at Liyang, and which, in a sense, is the real subject of this poem. But true to the *gu-shi* form, after the introduction the entire last half of the poem is given over to describing the ideals of virtue and righteousness in their own right. We get the sense that Liu's agenda in writing his poem was really to extol those moral virtues, of which the Xies were, in some senses, merely the best human examples he could call on. Since this is an extraordinarily long poem, I shall only translate fragments:

[Natives of] Gaochang and the Xienian [river],
an eminent family of noble ancestry,
several [family members] prospered as officials,
several [also] served with honor at the imperial court.
They wore imperial garments and followed
Confucius and Mencius,
and their actions were in accord with righteousness
and propriety.
Now they are called the Xie clan,
owing to their place of origin.
This family's ancestors are registered as "Family of
Three Virtuous Ones,"
and they maintain their hearts with utmost sincerity.

³⁹ Liu Guan, *Liu Daizhi wenji* 1.11b–12b.

⁴⁰ According to Frederick Mote, personal communication, in contrast to the standard *shi* style genre, which was limited to four or eight lines, *gu-shi* genre poems went on at great length and were more usual for narrative poetry, because the longer form was required to relate a story. See also Levy, *Chinese Narrative Poetry*, 7–9.

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[The next 54 lines of the poem describe the virtuous conduct of Qara Buqa, his wife, and their son Wenzhi, laying emphasis on the actions that each took during their lives to gain the reputation as the “three virtuous ones”.]

.

Does [this family] spring up from no root?
A plant that is cultivated will depend on its
roots to grow.

[The author uses the image of the growth of a plant to suggest that this family has not come about in a short time, but has grown strong from its strong root over a long period of time.]

.

Unexpectedly I ran into [Xie Wenzhi] in Jiantang,
we sighed about traveling from place to place in
the past.
I went up to his hall and wished him a long life,
sending out my thoughts and friendship to my
old friend.⁴¹

Apart from one reference to the Xie family's origins in Uyghuristan, the poem provides a strong sense of the impeccable Chinese cultural credentials of the Xie family.

As in the biographical texts we have already discussed, Xie Wenzhi is portrayed as the ideal son, who followed his parents' model of exemplary moral behavior by his filial piety. Liu also provides a better description of the family complex at Liyang than we have had in other sources. Wenzhi built an ancestral hall that was attached to

⁴¹ Liu Guan, *Liu Daizhi wenji* 1. 11b–12b.

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his residence where his ancestors (i.e., Qara Buqa and his wife) were worshipped in good Confucian fashion. According to Liu, “[Wenzhi] built the hall to make sacrifices to ancestors, large scrolls were hung in the hall between the pillars, meant not only to be honored by people, but also in order to make known the ‘regulations’ of the family’s ancestors....”⁴² We have to wonder if the painting of Qara Buqa that was executed in southern China was among this collection?

The high scholarly and literary achievements of Wenzhi’s sons are also highlighted in the poem, as for example, in the florid descriptions of their careers and achievements as men of high culture. The poem ends on a melancholic note when Liu Guan mourns the passing of his old friend Wenzhi. In fact, his death appears to have been the reason that Liu wrote this poem in the first place.

Chen Lü 陳旅 (1287–1342) was another Confucian thinker and writer from southeast China who wrote in honor of Wenzhi as a member of the Liyang elite. Chen was originally from Quanzhou (in present-day Fujian).⁴³ He came from a family of Confucian scholars, and he followed in his ancestors’ footsteps under the Mongols. His first position as an official in Yuan China was to be in charge of Confucian studies at Minhai, in Fujian. He was eventually appointed as a preceptor (*zhujiao*) in the National University, after traveling to the capital with a friend and fellow elite, the *Semuren* poet Ma Zuchang. In 1334 he was selected to be an Assistant Superintendent of Confucian Schools in Zhejiang Province, and in 1338 promoted to the position of writer (*yingfeng*) in the Hanlin Academy at the capital. He was shifted back to the National University in 1341 as a deputy director (*jiancheng*), and died the next

⁴² Liu Guan, *Liu Daizhi wenji* 1.12a.

⁴³ Chen Lü’s biography is summarized in Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 2.1278.

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year. Chen's recognition by his contemporaries and the Yuan court during his lifetime as a Confucian scholar and writer can be ascertained from the fact that his biography was included in the chapter on prominent Confucianists in the Yuan Dynastic History.

Chen's "Postscript to an Inscription for the Hall of Three Virtuous Ones" is typical of the type of texts that Chinese literati were commissioned to write for inscriptions and other similar media; it extols the good qualities of the subject of the inscription, but does not provide much by way of substantial information about the subject.⁴⁴ Chen's short text is interesting precisely because it is a good example of literati encomia focused on Xie Wenzhi and his family. The postscript begins with a long commentary on the general moral qualities that resulted in certain men being called "virtuous." That was followed by specific references to the Xie family; Chen reviews briefly the actions of Wenzhi and his parents that gave rise to their identity as the Three Virtuous Ones, and then explains their relationship to the subject of the inscription.

Those people of the Xie family, the official [Qara Buqa], his wife, and his son, were proper in all things [*jindang* 盡當], [but] they were not the only ones who took pleasure in the fact. Their virtuous behavior came as the result of adversities which have been recorded. All people have benefited from and enjoyed the record of their acts [that have been] displayed.... Wenzhi was healthy in his old age, and all of his sons were selected for imperial degrees, and they all had prosperous careers. Everyone asked after them and took pleasure in the [flourishing of the] Xie family.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Chen Lü, "Shu Sanjietang ji xu hou" 書三節堂記序後, in *An Ya Tang ji* 安雅堂集 [Collected works of Chen Lü] (Taipei: Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan, 1970) 9.13b–14a.

⁴⁵ Chen Lü, "Shu Sanjietang ji xu hou" 14a.

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The character of the Xie family comes through clearly in Chen's text.

Chen presumably wrote this postscript because he was commissioned by the Xie family, but he may also have known about Xie Wenzhi since Chen spent at least four years as an official in Zhejiang near Liyang where Wenzhi retired. In any case, his postscript is another example of the interest of important Chinese Confucian literati in the Xie family during and after Wenzhi's lifetime.

At some point after 1330, Wenzhi altered the name of his family hall to reflect the fact that his five sons and nephew had all achieved the *jinshi* degree in the state civil service exams. As a result of their unusual achievement, those Xie men became known by the title "the Six *Jinshi*" (*Liugui*, literally, "Six Cassia"), and that was added to the moniker "Sanjie."⁴⁶ By the end of Wenzhi's life, his family, and his residence at Liyang, came to be known as the family of the Three Virtuous Ones and Six *Jinshi* (*Sanjie Liugui*).

Liu Yueshen 劉岳申 (1260–1346) was a contemporary of Xie Wenzhi who lived in Jishui in Jiangxi.⁴⁷ Liu was best known for his erudition in Chinese classical literature and Confucian studies. His official positions

⁴⁶ The usage of cassia, or cinnamon, to denote *jinshi* degree holders derives from the term *guiji* (the imperial register of *jinshi* degree holders), which in turn goes back to the expression *guilin yizhi* 桂林一枝 found in the *Jin Shu* 晉書 biography of Xi Shen 郤詵, which is probably short for *guizi*. I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for this reference to the source of this term.

⁴⁷ Liu's life and career are summarized by Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 3.1838–39; and by Chang Bide 昌彼得, "Xulu" 敘錄 [Introduction], in *Shen Zhai Liu xiansheng wenji* 申齋劉先生文集 [Collected works of Mr. Liu Yueshen (usually abbreviated as *Shen Zhai wenji*)] (Siku quanshu ed.; rpt. Taipei: Guoli Zhongyang Tushuguan, 1970), 1–3.

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under the Mongols were all related to education; he was in charge of examinations in Huguang, an instructor in the state-sponsored school in Yongshuang, and an Assistant Superintendent of Confucian schools in Liaoyang. Liu most likely became acquainted with Wenzhi when Wenzhi served as an administrator of Liu's natal district Ji'an in southern Jiangxi Province. Liu wrote two inscriptions that honored the Xie family, both contained in his collected works. The first was an "Inscription for the Hall of the Three Virtuous Ones and Six *Jinshi*," and the other a "Memorial Offering for Magistrate Xie: of the Five *Jinshi* Xie Family of Yuzhang."⁴⁸

Liu Yueshen's long inscription is valuable as a source of information on Wenzhi and his extended family. Liu confirms that Xie Wenzhi used the name "Sanjie Liugui" for his private dwelling and family hall at Yuzhang. But the real importance of Liu's essay is that it is the clearest exposition we have in any extant primary source of the meaning of this name. He tells us that "Sanjie" represents the three Confucian virtues of loyalty (*zhong*), uprightness (*zhen*), and filial piety (*xiao*), and that each originated out of specific actions taken by Qara Buqa, his wife, and their son, Wenzhi, respectively. The "*Liugui*" refers to the five sons and nephew of Wenzhi who all achieved the *jinshi* degree between 1315 and 1330.

The Hall of Three Virtuous Ones and Six *Jinshi* is the name of the hall attached to the private residence at Yuzhang of Xie Wenzhi, former military commander of Guangxi. Why is it called Three Virtuous Ones? It is said that the minister [Qara Buqa], his wife and his son [exhibited] the three virtues of loyalty, uprightness and filial piety. This is a fitting name [to

⁴⁸ See Liu Yueshen, "San Jie Liu Gui Tangji" 三節六桂堂記 [Inscription for the Hall of Three Worthies and Six *Jinshi*], in *Shen Zhai ji* 5.10b-11a; and "Ji Xie Jianjun Wen: Yuzhang Wugui Xieshi" 祭僕監郡文 豫章五桂 僕氏, in *Shen Zhai wenji* 12.6a-6b.

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describe them]. Why is [the family] called the Six *Jinshi*? It is said that in the exams that were started in the *yanyou* reign period [1314–1320], the five sons and nephew of Xie Wenzhi all attained degrees [*jinshi*] in the six exams that were held between 1315 and 1330. This too is a fitting name [that describes their accomplishments].⁴⁹

After this explanation of the name of the Xie family hall, Liu lists the high points in the Xie family history that gave rise to the qualities encapsulated in the name of their residence. He begins with Qara Buqa, and reiterates the story of Qara Buqa's death in the line of duty, and the fact that the Yuan court awarded Qara Buqa the posthumous title Loyal and Grieving. According to Liu, Qara Buqa's reward for an honorable life also included his upright wife, his filial son, and his grandsons, who all took the exams and were promoted to offices themselves.

It is obvious from the text that Wenzhi was living in Jiangxi when Liu wrote this inscription. Liu devotes a fair amount of space in the inscription describing how the virtues of their predecessors paved the way for the accomplishments of Wenzhi's sons and nephew, the celebrated six *jinshi*.

The Xie family was aided by Heaven to move beyond the common people. Because they planted their virtue deeply they obtained many rewards and a profound fate.... Heaven has made its declaration and has fixed their ranks. They have flourished in the exams, [because] those who read books and teach their children have different fates from the commoners. Thus the six *jinshi* [of the Xie family] have naturally ascended the heights like *jinshi* of old, and they are now famous officials in the land.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Liu Yueshen, *Shen Zhai wenji* 5.10b–11a.

⁵⁰ Liu Yueshen, *Shen Zhai wenji* 12.a.

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In spite of the typically dense, hyperbolic language of this type of text, Liu's meaning comes through rather directly. He clearly aims to show to the reader that the achievements of the six Xie family members in his own time are all the direct result of actions and moral qualities found in their ancestors.

We can infer that Liu was asked to write this essay while Wenzhi was still alive. He does not tell the reader who requested him to write his essay, but most likely it is the product of Liu's personal acquaintance with the Xie family since Liu was a native of Ji'an Circuit, where Wenzhi himself served as an official. The overall tenor of Liu's text is one of praise for Wenzhi's accomplishments as an official and as a responsible head of a family that achieved almost unparalleled success, even measured by the standards of the Chinese literati elite.

The second of Liu's essays that he wrote for the Xie family is his "Memorial Offering for Magistrate Xie: Of the Five *Jinshi* Xie Family of Yuzhang."⁵¹ Liu wrote this short prayer to honor the memory of his old friend, Xie Wenzhi, after he had died.⁵² This prayer is more personal in feeling than Liu's inscription for the Xie family hall, and also provides context for Liu's other encomia honoring the Xie family.

The Duke [Xie Wenzhi] came to Luling [old name for Ji'an], and it seems like only yesterday that I was asked to write an inscription for his residence hall. Now I hear his obituary notice.... I wish to recall something of the late Master. He regulated his life; within the inner chambers of his residence he revered his mother, and in the outer courtyard he taught his

⁵¹ Liu Yueshen, "Ji Xie Jianjun wen: Yuzhang Wugui Xieshi" 祭侯監郡文豫章五桂 侯氏 [Memorial offering for Magistrate Xie: of the five *Jinshi* Xie Family of Yuzhang], in *Shen Zhai Liu xiansheng wenji* 12.6a-6b.

⁵² Liu Yueshen, *Shen Zhai wenji* 12.6a.

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sons.... The Gaochang Xie family were praised in the region because [Wenzhi] promoted peace in his governing Luling.... I lament his death. I am now old, why do I sing at length to express my sorrow? Nothing is as good as singing to quiet my distress.

Liu's tone of grief shows that he knew Xie Wenzhi and missed his old friend. Not surprisingly then, Liu portrays Wenzhi as the epitome of a good Confucian official. He recounts how Wenzhi came to Jiangxi as an official in charge of the area, and that peace and stability resulted from his tenure in office. Just as important for Liu was Wenzhi's home life, which was the model of decorum and correct behavior. "Within his hall he honored his mother [parents?], and in the outer courtyard he taught his sons, and his teaching paved the way for their success as learned men."⁵³ Thus, Wenzhi is portrayed as the exemplary Confucian scholar-official, who was humane in office, and observed propriety in his private and family life. But we also have to remember that, regardless of Wenzhi's personal relationship with Liu, this account would have been an important part of the Xie family identity as Chinese-style literati.

Liu's brief biographical sketches of the members of this family corroborate and supplement the descriptions of their careers contained in the various official sources such as the local gazetteers. More important for my purposes, however, Liu's essays reveal the cultural activities of this family of Uyghur *Semuren*, and the fact that Wenzhi was actively involved in constructing an identity for himself and his family as members of the Chinese cultural elite, an identity that would go well beyond their identity as *Semuren* officials.

Wenzhi's stint as an official in Ji'an was obviously successful. He made more than one friend among the

⁵³ Liu Yueshen, *Shen Zhai wenji* 12.6a.

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Chinese community in Jiangxi during his service there. Liu Shen 劉誥 (1268–1350) was another Chinese literatus from Jishui who wrote an ode that honored the Xie family that he titled “In Praise of the ‘Hall of Three Virtuous Ones and Six *Jinshi*.’”⁵⁴ Liu Shen was a contemporary of Wenzhi. He was a poet and writer, and was known primarily for his Confucian learning and expertise.⁵⁵ However, unlike his fellow Jishui native Liu Yueshen, Liu Shen never held any official position in Yuan China. Liu’s importance to the literati elite in southeast China may be judged by his written work, two collections of which (one each of his poetry and his essays) still exist. It is as a member of that community of Chinese literati in Jiangxi that Liu Shen’s ode commemorating the Xie family hall must be understood.

Liu Shen provides his own unique perspective on the Xie family by relating some details not given in any other contemporaneous source. For example, he begins by locating the ancestors of the Xie family first in Beiting (the Chinese name for the Uyghur capital city Beshbaliq), then later in Gaochang (known in Uyghur as Kocho). Liu Shen’s brief recounting of the Xie family ancestors at Beiting, which must surely come from Wenzhi or other Xie family members, seems intended to link Wenzhi’s generation to Uyghurs who were the defenders of Chinese interests at Beiting in the Tang period, and who were also presumably part of the ancient Uyghur aristocratic circle.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Liu Shen, “Song: Sanjie Liugui Tang” 頌三節六桂堂, in *Gui Yin wenji* 桂陰文集 [Collected works of Liu Shen] (Siku Quanshu ed.; rpt. Taipei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1972) 4.4a–6a.

⁵⁵ Liu Shen’s life and career are summarized in Wang Deyi, et al., *Yuanren zhuanji* 3.1798–99. His status as a Confucian scholar is reflected in the fact that his biography was included in the chapter on Confucianists (*ruxue*) in the *Yuanshi*; see chapter 190.

⁵⁶ Ecsedy, “Uyghurs and Tibetans in Pei-t’ing (790–791),” reviews this issue.

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This serves as a prelude to Liu's main point, which is to honor the Xie family that he knew personally. He does this like other Chinese writers who wrote about this famous Uyghur *Semuren* family, by focusing in on their unusual moniker "Family of Three Virtuous Ones and Six *Jinshi*." After telling the reader about the three Xie family members who were known for their virtuous behavior and identifying the six *jinshi* degree holders, Liu focuses on the accuracy of the epithet to describe Wenzhi's family: "The term 'three virtuous ones' [or 'three who practiced virtuous deeds'] alone is not sufficient, nor is the term 'six *jinshi*' adequate to describe this family. Only when you put them both together do they bring out [the attributes of] the Xie family."⁵⁷ Liu then compares this family with other notable literati families of the past who were known for their virtuous behavior, and concludes that the Xie family is rightly well known by all of his contemporaries, and that their deeds will be known by later generations.

Conclusion

Qara Buqa was the prototypical *Semuren* official in early Mongol China. He grew up in north China on the appanage lands of a member of the Mongol imperial clan, and was drafted early into the qan's personal bodyguard, from which he was launched on a successful if short career in a series of positions in both civilian and military spheres. His son, Xie Wenzhi, was more of a transitional figure in his family's history. Like his father, he served in a wide variety of positions that included both civil and military duties. But he was the last person in this family to do so; his sons and later descendants served exclusively in civilian bureaus. He also turned south, where he adopted a Chinese style surname, purchased land for a residence and ancestral graves, and made sure that his sons were all educated in the

⁵⁷ Liu Shen, *Gui Yin wenji* 4.4b.

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Chinese tradition and competed successfully in the civil service exams. His story reflects the simultaneous evolution of the Mongol experience in governing China and of many *Semuren* individuals as people who were at home both in *Semuren* and Chinese society.

The people who wrote about his family were mainly contemporaries of Xie Wenzhi's sons, and the consistent references in their writings to the Xie family's origins in Uyghuristan and their Confucian character seems to be a subtle ploy to rest the family's prestige on two, seemingly contradictory, bases of identity as "Confucianized Uyghurs." As descendants of the Uyghuristan aristocracy, they could claim a legacy of independent high cultural attainment that was then reinforced by their appropriation of core Confucian values, manifested most vividly by the virtuous actions of their ancestors and the fact that they had produced six *jinshi* degree holders in one generation.

By the time that Xie Wenzhi died in 1340, his five sons and nephew had all obtained the coveted *jinshi* degree within a record 30 years, and they all held a variety of important positions in the Yuan civil administration. In fact, it is in that generation that the Xie family reached its apex in terms of political prestige in China. That same generation of Xie men also marked the social-cultural high water mark for this family in China. His family had become true Chinese-style *shidafu wenren* who, while employed in the civilian bureaucracy, were capable of military accomplishments even though they no longer served in those capacities. Their careers and lives look quite different from those of their grandfather and father.