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### Title

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### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/36n4t98z>

### Journal

Berkeley Undergraduate Journal, 29(1)

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### Publication Date

2016

### DOI

10.5070/B3291030167

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# TALES FROM THE CINNAMON SEA:

## Literary Appropriation and the Creation of Paradise in the Works of Fan Chengda

By Phillip Merlo

This paper introduces the reader to China's Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279), and specifically the diplomat, court official, and poet Fan Chengda (1127-1279). During his years in government bureaucracy Fan Chengda traveled widely throughout the Southern Song Empire. During his travels he wrote several travel diaries, encyclopedias, and geographical treatises, in addition to thousands of extant travel poems. This paper investigates two of his works in particular: the *Canluan lu* and the *Guihai yuheng zhi* (both circa 1171-1174), both written during his travels to Guilin in the far South of the empire. *Canluan lu*, or the *Register of Mounting a Simurgh* is a travel diary of his trip to Guilin, and *Guihai yuheng zhi* is a geographical encyclopedia of Guilin and its surroundings. Comparative analysis of the two texts shows that in an apparent attempt to validate his self-image as an ideal Song scholar-official, Fan Chengda appropriated historical descriptions of Guilin from past scholars. His in-text statements as well as his descriptive style suggest that Fan Chengda wished to identify and commune with scholars from other eras of Chinese dynastic history. This is significant because the cultural landscape he describes became official knowledge in the Song court: characterizations of Guilin in the sixteenth century, as well as a common Chinese phrase about Guilin being the most beautiful place on Earth, can be traced to Fan Chengda.

### I. A Twelfth Century Fantasy

Imagine you are a Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279) official on the road in twelfth century China, recently assigned to the commandery of Guilin on the far southern frontier of the empire. To ground this scenario in the historical record, suppose you are the court luminary and diplomat extraordinaire, Fan Chengda (1126-1193). The year is 1171, and you have just turned forty-five

years of age. After a successful career as a powerful official you have found yourself embroiled in court politics and out of political expediency the emperor has decided to exile you to Jingjiang principality, or modern day Guilin, Guangxi province. Your new post is approximately 830 miles, or 3,000 *li* away from the capital.<sup>1</sup> While Jingjiang principality itself is well known for its beauty, its surrounding areas are considered deadly and full of corrupting energy and noxious mists that physically and morally weaken visitors.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the distance to your destination, you would not embark immediately, or with any urgency. First you are subjected to numerous imperial and court audiences, and there is a large amount of paperwork to complete before you could even consider embarking on your journey. Upon completing your duties in the capital, you retire to your home township in Pingjiang municipality in modern day Suzhou to prepare and bid farewell to your close relations.<sup>3</sup> At parties with your friends and family you drink wine, listen to songs of the glorious past, and compose impromptu poetry. The farewell poems often speak to the ubiquity of travel in your life, as well as the stark possibility of never seeing your friends again.<sup>4</sup> After one year in the comfort of your villa your journey begins. You are accompanied by your family, several well-wishers, and a retinue of servants, guides, and minor officials, but this hardly surprises you. A gentleman of your stature and fame would be well attended anywhere you went.<sup>5</sup>

Although you depart with pageantry you have no illusions about the arduousness of the journey before you. Your colleague Hong Mai (1123-1202) wrote twenty years before that the area East of Guilin, Guangdong, was so plagued with deadly *zhang* that it was nigh impossible to fill administrative positions in the area.<sup>6</sup> *Zhang*, translated in the West as “miasma,” referred to any number of deadly tropical, communicable diseases in the area, or even to the region’s humidity.<sup>7</sup> The written record of *zhang* throughout China even shaped the geographical consciousness

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1 See James Hargett’s biographical essay on Fan Chengda’s life and career in Chapter Three of his major work on Fan Chengda, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)*, beginning on page 73: James Hargett, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)*. Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH: Stuttgart, 1989. 80. For autobiographical descriptions, one can use Hargett’s translations of Fan Chengda’s work in the same book, on page 180. See Fan Chengda, *Canluan lu*. In *On the Road in Twelfth Century China: The Travel Diaries of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)*. Edited by James Hargett. Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH: Stuttgart, 1989. 180.

2 Cong Ellen Zhang’s 2011 essay on this subject greatly informed this investigation. See Cong Ellen Zhang, “Between Life and Death: Song Travel Writings about *Zhang* in瘴 Lingnan.” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, No. 41 (2011), 191-225. Accessed at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23496210>.

3 For more on traditional farewell rituals, see Cong Ellen Zhang’s *Transformative Journeys*, “Chapter Five: Rituals of Departure”: Cong Ellen Zhang, *Transformative Journeys: Travel and Culture in Song China*. University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, 2010. The relevant chapter is from 111-129. For those curious, the chapter contains examples of farewell poetry, specifically from Lu You.

4 *Ibid*, see page 117. Lu You suggests his friends have become the “earth on the mountain” as he rides his “gaunt horse” around China. The constant instability of life as an official led Lu You to describe his reality as “dreamlike”.

5 *Ibid*, 124. The passage that refers to Fan Chengda in Cong Ellen Zhang’s work is actually referring to another sending-off held in Fan Chengda’s honor, this time as he was leaving the commandery of Chengdu in 1177.

6 See Cong Ellen Zhang, “Between Life and Death: Song Travel Writings about *Zhang* in瘴 Lingnan.” 191. The passage translated in Zhang’s text is Hong Mai’s writing about Lingnan and the Nanling ranges East of Guilin. It should be noted that Hong Mai mentions quite clearly that criminals are no longer assigned to the area for penal servitude because “few ever come back alive.”

7 Zhang, Cong Ellen, “Between Life and Death.” 192.

of the scholarly elite. For example, in your geographical treatise on Guilin, the *Treatises of the Supervisor and the Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea*, you wrote that *zhang* was caused by the “foul exhalations” of the natural environment. Some of the *zhang*-afflicted regions are even known as “execution fields” for the number of deaths in the region.<sup>8</sup> You know well that traveling through such *zhang*-afflicted regions constitutes political punishment.<sup>9</sup>

Being a scholar dedicated to the pursuit of a cultivated, academic life, before you even depart you decide it is necessary to take copious notes about the places you will visit and the people you will meet on your journey. You have never been to Guilin before, nor have you traveled along the roads that lead there. This unfamiliarity unnerves you. What better way to research your destination than to consult your friends? These colleagues are among the greatest scholars in the history of China, and you have had the great privilege of knowing their lives and works intimately. Because these friends mostly passed away before you were born, you are limited to looking through their corpora of poetry and travel essays in your private collection.<sup>10</sup> You might never have known Du Fu (712-770), Han Yu (768-824), Ouyang Xiu (1007-1072), or Su Shi (1037-1101) personally, but you see yourself as an embodiment and transmitter of their intellectual line, and you certainly exist in the same spiritual community as they do.<sup>11</sup> Desiring to rise to their seemingly transcendental level of cultivation, you let their landscape descriptions inform your own. In the process of adding to and expanding their descriptions the landscape becomes a medium for building your social identity as a scholar, with the side-effect of building the social identity of the lands you are describing. You could not know it at the time, but the style you use to describe the landscape would transform how future generations look at the places through which you travel.

An exciting aspect of your journey is the opportunity to visit historic sites along the way.

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8 Ibid. 199. The term “killing field” seems to originate with Zhou Qufei, a major contemporary of Fan Chengda. Most of the people who died from *zhang* appear to have died of malaria. For more on this, see Edward Shafer, *The Vermillion Bird: T'ang Images of the South*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970. 130.

9 While I do not intend to discuss this topic in depth, it is important to note that Song officials very much factored the presence of *zhang* into their geographical understanding of the land. Cong Ellen Zhang quotes Zhou Qufei as stating that *zhang* resulted from an imbalance of natural energy. See “Between Life and Death,” 199.

10 Fan Chengda is known to have admitted to doing this frequently. See his preface to the *Guihai Yuheng Zhi*: Fan Chengda, *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea*. Translated by James Hargett. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010. 1. Because of the confusion associated with having multiple translated sources from one author, the rest of this thesis will specify the title of every source Fan Chengda cited. The *Guihai yuheng zhi* will be referred to in its Chinese name, as opposed to its English translation. Citations of Hargett’s commentary before or embedded within his translations will refer to Hargett.

11 Evidence showing that Fan Chengda believed himself to exist in the same intellectual and spiritual community as Tang dynasty predecessors can be found in Fan Chengda’s preface to the *Guihai yuheng zhi*. This is a well-documented practice in Chinese history (especially during the Song), and can be traced to Book 5, Part B, Chapter 8 of *The Mencius*, where in a conversation Mencius tells his disciple Wang Chao that a scholarly man should seek to study and recite the works of the ancients, thereby communing and becoming “friends with the ancients.” Southern Song dynasty Neo-Confucians believed that by studying past sages one could converse with them and become enlightened as they were. See Daniel K. Gardner’s translation for more information: Daniel K. Gardner, *The Four Books, The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition: Translations, with Introduction and Commentary*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007. 83 (Book 5, Part B, Ch. 8). Note that the actual author or authors of *The Mencius* remain unknown.

Modern studies have shown that sightseeing was important for Song dynasty travelers because it allowed one to develop a sense of geographical belonging. Travel diaries and poems from the period illustrate this point. Song dynasty scholars were quite eager to visit sites in order to pay homage to earlier visitors and events. Being one of these eager scholars, when you travel by the Stone Forest on Bian Mountain on your way to Guilin, you are quick to point out that this is the same Stone Forest that the famous late Tang dynasty poet Du Mu (803-852) visited on his way to Hu County. To you the area is like a “Daoist mountain...too distant from the human world” and haunted with “mountain demons” due to the improper actions of the area’s owners, the Shen family.<sup>12</sup> The tales surrounding the mountain and Stone Forest are a significant and enriching aspect of your life. The stories of the past create a vivid historical landscape that shapes your perception of the area.

In an essay for the conference volume *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China* historian Conrad Schirokauer argues that in contrast to modern approaches to history, Song dynasty scholars often created a “dialogical” relationship to the past.<sup>13</sup> That is, Song scholars had a conscientiously conversational approach to the past. Short of being able to speak with past historical figures, the Song scholarly elite surely believed in responding to and communing with the past. In his essay, Schirokauer quotes the famed Song scholar Zhu Xi’s (1130-1200) expression of regret at being unable to meet the ancient poet, Tao Yuanming (365-427):

“I was born a thousand years too late!  
My best friends lived a thousand years ago.”<sup>14</sup>

This quote sheds light on Song scholars’ view of the past: scholars saw themselves as part of an interactive dialogue with historical events and figures. The poems and texts of past scholars were appropriated, transmitted, and expanded, because that was how one showed they belonged in the Song intellectual community. While impossible to generalize across Song officialdom, one might easily see how espousing a conversational view of history affected both the viewed and the written landscape. Similar to the operation of the *zhang* mists in the views of Fan Chengda and his peers, history left its imprint on the geographical consciousness of the Song scholar. Considerable scholarship has shown that Song literati had a morally charged relationship with history. This relationship with the past affected views of the landscape. In an attempt to validate himself, Fan Chengda used allusions to historical figures and events as a medium for creating an identity for the cultural landscape in Guilin, China. In the process he contributed to a long lasting geographical stereotype in Chinese culture that lasts to this day.

The significance of this thesis is two-fold. First, it expands on current scholarship of the traveling habits of the Song literati. While numerous studies have shown that the traveling

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12 Fan Chengda, *Canluan lu*. 182.

13 For more on this topic, see Schirokauer’s essay “Chu Hsi’s Sense of History” in Hymes and Schirokauer’s 1993 conference volume *Ordering the World*. The essay uses textual methods to analyze the philosophy of history espoused by Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi), eventually showing that for many Song literati, history “had to be taken into account if judgments and policy were to be balanced and policies successful.” (213). Conrad Schirokauer, “Chu Hsi’s Sense of History.” in *Ordering the World*, ed. by Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer. Berkeley: UC Press, 193.

14 Zhu Xi. Found in Schirokauer’s essay, originally translated by Jonathan Chaves. 202.

officials of the Song were highly attuned to historical circumstances and events, I hope to show that Fan Chengda's landscape writing reflected the period's moralistically charged atmosphere. Secondly, the Chinese cultural stereotype of the city Guilin as a paradisiacal landscape originated with Tang dynasty poetry and Fan Chengda's travel literature. Because Fan Chengda's works were the first major informational works on the area, his descriptions became culturally accepted as truth.<sup>15</sup> For instance, the famous Ming dynasty (1368-1644) explorer Xu Xiake (1587-1641) is known to have cited Fan Chengda's works. This is significant because Xu Xiake's works became the basis for many nineteenth century geographical and ethnological treatises on China.

This paper will begin with a broader discussion on the history of the Song dynasty. Then there will be a short biographical essay on Fan Chengda, his literary bibliography, and his literary innovations in the field of travel writing. I will discuss the historiography on Song dynasty travel literature, and narrow in on the literature regarding the latter half of the Song period, known as the Southern Song dynasty. Evidence from Fan Chengda's two major works on Guilin – the *Canluan lu* and *Guihai yuheng zhi* – will be presented suggesting that Fan Chengda indeed possessed a conversational understanding of history, and that his approach influenced his writings about China's cultural and physical landscapes. The paper concludes with a discussion on Fan Chengda's impact on writings from the late Ming (Xu Xiake) onward, with recommendations for further research on Fan Chengda's other diaries and on the works of Lu You (1125-1209).

## II. The Life of Fan Chengda: Biography and Previous Discussion

To understand the historical consciousness of Song dynasty literati such as Fan Chengda, one must understand the geopolitical conditions of the Song Empire. The Song existed from 960 to 1276 CE in two roughly equal periods. From 960 to the invasion of the Jin state in 1127, the capital of the empire was Bianjing, or modern day Kaifeng.<sup>16</sup> Bianjing sat on the central China plain, far to the north of the Yangzi River. The capital was sacked during the Jin invasion, and the Emperor Qinzong (1100-1161) and his recently abdicated father Huizong (1082-1135) were captured and imprisoned by Jin troops. A brother of the emperor, Gaozong (1107-1187), went on the run, and after being chased around Southern China for over a decade eventually established a new capital, Lin'an, in modern day Hangzhou. Historians have deemed the year 1127 as a chronological divide with the first period referred to as the Northern Song dynasty, and the second as the Southern Song dynasty.<sup>17</sup> Throughout this paper, the two periods will be treated as separate dynasties.

Throughout both dynasties, the scholarly elite were keenly aware of the empire's historic

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed explanation of this see Cong Ellen Zhang's nineteenth footnote in "Between Life and Death."

<sup>16</sup> Bianjing was officially known as Dongjing, or "Eastern Capital." Colloquially and in many poems and Song period gazetteers it was referred to as Bianjing, including in Fan Chengda's diaries. *Bian* was the name of a river that flowed through the city. I use Bianjing in this paper because this is what Fan Chengda consistently used. For more information, see the map of the Song dynasty in Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup> For more basic information on the Northern and Southern Song dynasty one might consider any recent edition of the *Cambridge History of China*. Lin'an, or modern day Hangzhou, sits on the Yangzi River. *Lin'an* roughly translates to "overlooking peace," and was surely a reference to establishing the continuity of the dynasty. A separate connotation of Lin'an is a designation of the capital as temporary, or as a temporary lodging of an emperor on an excursion.

predicament. The dynasty previous to the Northern Song, the Tang dynasty (618-907), was and remains considered one of China's great cosmopolitan golden ages. The Tang sprawled from its capital of Chang'an across most of China's traditional heartlands, but also into the Asian interior, laying claim to the Tarim Basin. The historical juxtaposition of the Tang with the Song aroused major insecurities for Song scholars.<sup>18</sup> The Tang Empire eventually fell after the infamous An Shi rebellion, in which the emperor's trusted general An Lushan (703-757) launched a powerful attempted coup that nearly tore the empire apart. In the aftermath the Tang was severely weakened, and by 907 had completely collapsed into numerous small kingdoms.<sup>19</sup> Philosophical writings from the Song were obsessed with improving governance so as to avoid another such catastrophe. By the Song's foundation in 960 a separate empire in modern day Manchuria, the Liao (907-1125), had established itself as a major military power. It even wrested control of the northernmost sixteen prefectures, areas including modern-day Beijing, from a successor state to the Tang. Despite initial peace between the Song and Liao, war eventually broke out in 976. The Song were consistently routed and forced on the defensive. By 1005 the Song emperor was forced to sign the Oath of Chanyuan, signifying that the Liao was a peer to the Song and binding the Song to pay large yearly tributes to the Liao court.<sup>20</sup> For the first time in the history of Chinese civilization a major dynastic empire was forced to admit the existence of a geopolitical equal.

In 1125, the Liao dynasty was invaded by the Jurchen peoples to its North, and subsequently collapsed. The Jurchen then established the Jin Empire (1115-1234), invaded the Song, and took the capital of Bianjing in early 1127. Fan Chengda was born on June 26, 1126 in Wu township of Pingjiang municipality. Today this area is called Suzhou, and is located south of the Yangzi River. While little is known about Fan Chengda's early life, we can say with some certainty that he suffered much hardship. In 1130 his hometown in Pingjiang principality was razed by advancing Jin armies. His early experiences left their mark on Fan Chengda's written record: anti-Jin sentiments can be found often in his writings.<sup>21</sup> Having come from a scholarly family, Fan Chengda probably spent his youth studying for the civil service examinations, and seems to have shown considerable promise from a young age.<sup>22</sup> The civil service examinations system existed to identify and select officials for the imperial bureaucracy, and most boys of Fan Chengda's social class would have spent their youth studying for them. After the early death of his parents in 1142 and 1143 he moved with his siblings to a Buddhist monastery, staying there for ten years.<sup>23</sup> Shortly before the passing of his parents Fan Chengda married a certain Miss Wei,

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18 There is a fair amount of evidence for Song insecurities about its historical position. Song period poetry is full of references to Tang counterparts, and often laments the Song's inability to control the whole of the Tang empires former domains. The poetry of Lu You and Su Shi is strong evidence for this. For examples, see Lu You, *The Old Man Who Does As He Pleases: Selections from the Poetry and Prose of Lu Yu*. Translated by Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973. 20.

19 The brief period between the Tang and Song is usually referred to as the Five dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period. After the Tang the Chinese cultural sphere broke apart into several military states, each eventually laying claim to being the heir to the Tang. The Song was the state that arose from this fray.

20 The geopolitical and cultural significance of the Oath of Chanyuan cannot be overstated. Aside from dictating the terms of peace between the Song and Liao, it also served as a template for other states to develop egalitarian relations with the Song – such as the Xi Xia, Jin, and Ningxia states. There was also a lasting cultural impact throughout the Song period, and the historical perception of the Song as weak certainly stems from it. For more information, see Ruth Mostern, *“Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern”:* *The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960-1276 CE)*.

21 Hargett, 73.

22 Ibid, 74.

23 Ibid.

niece of Wei Liangchen, a prominent official in the imperial court.<sup>24</sup> The full name of his wife is not known, but she is known to have accompanied Fan Chengda to the monastery and on his journeys later in life. While at the monastery he engaged himself in literary activities, including the writing of many works of poetry.<sup>25</sup>

Fan Chengda achieved the top level *jinshi* degree in 1154.<sup>26</sup> He took a year to celebrate his good fortune with his in-laws in Anhui province, and eventually was given an official post in Hui County. By 1162 he was assigned to a post in the new capital of Lin'an administrating a pharmacy for the poor. During his first stint in the capital he met his lifelong friend and fellow luminaries, including Lu You.<sup>27</sup> From 1163 to 1166 he held many posts, and by 1166 he became a vice director for an imperial ministry.<sup>28</sup> In 1166 Fan Chengda was abruptly forced to resign for rising through the ranks too quickly.<sup>29</sup> He used his newfound time to build his famous Boulder Lake estate back in Pingjiang principality. By late 1169 he was already back in the capital as a vice director for another ministry.<sup>30</sup> In 1170 he was sent on a prestigious ambassadorial mission to the Jin capital. On this mission he wrote the first of his travel diaries, the *Lanpei lu*, or the *Register of Grasping the Carriage Reins*. Upon his return home he managed to insult both a military governor and the brother-in-law of the Empress within a year. Consequently in 1171 he received orders to proceed to his new post as Jingjiang municipality administrator and Commissioner for Regulation and Order in Guilin, Guangxi. On the road he took notes about the landscape, and upon arrival composed his second travel diary, the *Canluan lu*, or *Register of Harnessing a Simurgh*.<sup>31</sup>

Despite a successful run in Guilin, Fan Chengda was not destined for another return to Lin'an. In the late fall of 1174 he was sent to another far reach of the empire – Chengdu, Sichuan – to serve as the administrator and military governor of the Chengdu region. His term in Sichuan lasted for another two years, and he received a commendation from the emperor for his efforts.<sup>32</sup> After he fell sick in 1177 he assumed a sinecure as an auxiliary scholar so that he could return home to convalesce. On his return home he was made a minister in the capital. In

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24 Eric Schmidt, *Stone Lake: The Poetry of Fan Chengda (1126-1193)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992. 6.

25 Hargett, 75.

26 Ibid.

27 Lu You was one of Fan Chengda's most well-known contemporaries. Lu You was born in similar circumstances as Fan Chengda (his home was also razed to the ground by advancing Jin forces), and was also best known as a poet. They met in the capital and spent much time together during Fan Chengda's tenure in Chengdu. Lu You is also known for writing travel diaries similar to Fan Chengda's, which were written a few years before the *Wuchuan lu* (1170). For more information on Lu You's biography, see Burton Watson's introduction to: Burton Watson, *The Old Man Who Does As He Pleases: Selections from the Poetry and Prose of Lu Yu*. Translated by Burton Watson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

28 Hargett, 76.

29 Ibid. Influential officials felt that Fan Chengda had become a threat, and when their feelings became public Fan Chengda had no politically viable choice but to leave office.

30 Ibid.

31 A simurgh, or *luan* (鸞) is a mythical bird in East Asian traditions, possibly related to the phoenix. For more information, one should consult Edward Shafer's *Vermillion Bird*: Edward Shafer, *The Vermillion Bird: Tang images of the South*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967. 8. It should be noted that in Hargett's translation, "mounting" is used instead of "harnessing." I use "harnessing" because it more accurately describes the classical Chinese character in question, *can* 驂.

32 Hargett, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China*. 82. He in turn cites Fan Chengda's official reply to the commendation in question. It is worth noting that Chengdu was not looked upon as a dangerous place. Sichuan had been part of the Chinese cultural sphere since well before the Tang dynasty.



1180 he returned to Boulder Lake in Wu Township, and outside of four brief administrative stints stayed there until his death in 1193. During his thirty-nine years of service, Fan Chengda had an extremely volatile career.

The geographical instability gave Fan Chengda opportunities for an extremely productive literary life. On his trip from Guilin to Sichuan alone he composed at least 135 poems and wrote his *Guihai yuheng zhi*, or the *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea*, a geographical treatise on the Guilin region.<sup>33</sup> He pursued academic cultivation with zeal, and extant reports show that he had numerous scholarly interests. He was a leading calligrapher in the Southern Song, wrote thousands of poems (of which some two thousand survive), and composed geographical treatises on Guilin and his local Wu Township. He even developed a large encyclopedic book on the flowers of China.<sup>34</sup> Later Chinese scholars saw him as a “fields and gardens” poet for the sheer amount of writing he did on the pleasures of the country side, but, as historian and travel writing scholar James Hargett mentions, this was an unfair characterization because his poems explore numerous poetic worlds.<sup>35</sup>

To best understand how Fan Chengda’s writing helped shape geographical identity in Guilin, it is important to review previous scholarship on his literature. James Hargett conducted a number of studies and translated much of Fan Chengda’s prose works, on which this paper draws.<sup>36</sup> Among Hargett’s studies, *On the Road in Twelfth Century China* illuminates Fan Chengda’s narrative style of writing travel diaries. Hargett declares that his three extant travel records are the first true travel diaries in the Chinese literary tradition. He further argues that they primarily served to inform readers about lands travelled through. Literary scholar and librarian Deborah Rudolph has argued that claiming Fan Chengda to be a “first” or “unique” ignores an entire literary tradition of travel writing dating back to the Han period.<sup>37</sup>

Regarding the study of the Song literati’s traveling lifestyle, one must begin with Cong Ellen Zhang’s *Transformative Journeys*, which uses Fan Chengda, his friend Lu You, and others as case studies for exploring the migratory world of the Song elite. The second half of her book sheds light on how the writings left behind by the Song elites created a web of collective memories that helped shape and accelerate the development Chinese local histories.<sup>38</sup> Another work of Cong Ellen Zhang’s, her essay “Between Life and Death: Song Travel Writings about *Zhang* 瘴 in Lingnan”, thoroughly investigates the Song perception of aforementioned environmental factors in traveling to Southern China. This work also uses the works of Fan Chengda and Lu You as starting points, and outlines the perceived medical perils associated with Song geography. The study of relationships between literature, landscape, and identity during the Northern and Southern Song dynasties has developed considerably recently. Linda A. Walton’s 1998 essay “Southern Song Academies and the Construction of Sacred Space” discusses the scholarly academies that

33 Ibid, 81. Fan Chengda probably wrote many more poems on this trip, but only 135 survive.

34 Data on his poems and calligraphy comes from Hargett, 83. For information on Fan Chengda’s flower knowledge, James Hargett has also written an article on Fan Chengda’s encyclopedia, *Mei Pu*: See James Hargett, “Fan Chengda’s (1126-1193) Meipu: a twelfth century treatise on mei-flowers.” *Monumenta Serica*. 58, (2010), 109-152.

35 Hargett, “mei-flowers”, 85.

36 Works translated by Hargett include *Meipu*, *Guihai yuheng zhi*, and the three travel diaries, *Lanping lu*, *Canluan lu*, and *Wuchuan lu*.

37 See Deborah Rudolph, “Literary innovation and aesthetic tradition in travel writing of the Southern Sung: A study of Fan Cheng-ta’s “Wu ch’uan lu.” *Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Berkeley. ProQuest, UMI Dissertations Publishing, 1996. 9723164.*

38 Cong Ellen Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*.

proliferated in the Song. She suggests that neo-Confucian academies saw mountain landscapes as physical embodiments of morality.<sup>39</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter of this thesis, the association of morality with mountains was a major aspect of Fan Chengda's writings on the landscape, and was a major area of literary appropriation in his work.

Literary appropriation, or the citation of other scholar's works as a primary means of description, was a literary technique by no means unique to Fan Chengda. In his 2007 doctoral dissertation "Imagined Travel: Displacement, Landscape, and Literati Identity in the Song Lyrics of Su Shi (1037-1101)," Benjamin Ridgway uses Su Shi's song lyrics to show that literary appropriation was a major motif in Northern Song scholar Su Shi's songs and poetry. Ridgway traces Su Shi's usage of literary tropes from previous scholars in his descriptions of landscape in his songs, ultimately concluding that the landscape was a major medium through which Su Shi constructed social and moral identity.<sup>40</sup> He draws heavily from the art historian W.J.T. Mitchell, whose conference volume *Landscape and Power* makes a powerful argument to one ought to view the landscape and landscape writing as a process of building and reinforcing social stereotypes.<sup>41</sup>

A slightly more recent work on the subject is Libo Yan's "The contribution of early medieval China (AD 220-589) to the travel culture of landscape appreciation". Yan argues that Daoist perspectives on mountains and suburban landscapes allowed literati to cultivate a strong consciousness of the landscape. Echoes of Daoist perspectives can be found in Fan Chengda's works, and are a major tool in his landscape writing.<sup>42</sup> Another recent work by Irene Leung, "The frontier imaginary in the Song Dynasty (960-1279): Revisiting Cai Yan's 'barbarian captivity' and return" uses the painting *18 Songs* to reconstruct the moralities involved in creating the imagined landscape of the Song's northern frontiers.<sup>43</sup>

A particularly useful study on the importance of historical views on Fan Chengda's geographical consciousness is Corey Byrnes' doctoral dissertation, "Rising From a Placid Lake: China's Three Gorges at the Intersection of History, Aesthetics, and Politics." This dissertation traces Du Fu's influence on geographical perceptions of the Three Gorges and Emei Mountain. In the second chapter of his dissertation Byrnes analyzes Fan Chengda's appropriation of Du Fu's descriptions of the Three Gorges on the Yangzi River. Byrnes convincingly shows that in Fan Chengda's poetry from his trip down the Yangzi, as well as in his *Wuchuan lu*, Fan Chengda applies common assumptions about what travel writing should do to a relatively unexplored area of the traditional Chinese cultural sphere. Fan Chengda, Byrnes argues, attempted to change contemporary perceptions of the mountains in order for them to fit the supposed high morality

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39 Linda A. Walton, "Southern Sung Academies and the Construction." *Landscape, Culture, and Power in Chinese Society*. Ed. by Wen-hsin Yeh. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. 38. While most of her work focuses on the landscape of scholarly academies, paragraphs on page 38 go into the significance of mountain landscapes.

40 See Benjamin Ridgway, "Imagined Travel: Displacement, Landscape, and Literati Identity in the Song Lyrics of Su Shi (1037--1101)." Order No. 3192761, University of Michigan, 2005. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305460340?accountid=14496>.

41 W.J.T. Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape." *Landscape and Power*. Edited by W.J.T. Mitchell. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002. 1.

42 See the eighth entry to the *Canluan lu*, page 182 in Hargett's translation, where Fan Chengda discusses the role of geomancy in Hu county.

43 Irene Leung, "The Frontier Imaginary in the Song Dynasty (960--1279): Revisiting Cai Yan's 'Barbarian Captivity' and Return." Order No. 3000989, University of Michigan, 2001. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304701400?accountid=14496>. The clearest enunciation of her argument can be found in her introduction and first chapter. See 1-25.

of Du Fu, their famous visitor.<sup>44</sup>

The body of historical studies on the Song elite points to the applicability of Mitchell's theories to Fan Chengda's descriptions of Guilin, and specifically to Fan Chengda's appropriation of Tang dynasty descriptions of the Guilin landscape in his travel diaries. Similar work on Fan Chengda's travels in Sichuan by Byrnes, and Cong Ellen Zhang's works have also discussed Fan Chengda's works more broadly. This study will focus on his travels in Guilin primarily focusing on Fan Chengda's *Canluan lu* and *Guihai yuheng zhi*.

The approach this thesis takes toward Fan Chengda's travel writing is informed by a branch within the field of human geography known as cultural landscape studies. For cultural landscape scholars, the term landscape means more than just scenery. It denotes the interaction between people and place, or of a social group and its spaces. The goal of this field of study is to determine how people use spaces to establish identity.<sup>45</sup> This field of study was developed primarily as a means of understanding the development of the United States during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and many of its core tenets are centered on existing in a present landscape, meaning that to practice the discipline you have to be in the landscape and time frame that you are studying.<sup>46</sup> That said, some of its methods can be used to approach other periods and places without being anachronistic. For example, cultural landscape studies emphasizes the primacy of analyzing interpretations of space. Fan Chengda's travel writings, as well as the writings of those in his intellectual community, constantly interpret the new spaces that the writers came across. Therefore by analyzing how Fan Chengda and others wrote about the places they visited and lived in, we can gain better insight into how his intellectual community created cultural norms.

This thesis uses vocabulary unique to cultural landscape writers, and it is necessary to introduce and define some key terms. Throughout this thesis one will come across the terms written landscapes, social landscape, and geographical stereotypes. A written landscape is the transmitted written description of the interaction between the social and physical dimensions of the landscape. Fan Chengda's description of Guilin constitutes a written landscape. The social landscape, or the social dimensions of a landscape, refers to the human elements of the landscape. This could be something such as the people or institutions inhabiting a place, but also the elements of the physical landscape that have been significantly shaped or interpreted by people. Fan Chengda and his traveling party are part of this landscape, as are the inhabitants of Guilin. Lastly, a geographical stereotype is a thought that has been adopted about certain types of geographical spaces, and may or may not reflect reality. Fan Chengda's written landscape in the *Canluan lu* creates a geographical stereotype of Guilin. This thesis's main intellectual thrust is that Fan Chengda's literary appropriation of prior scholars' descriptions created a written landscape of Guilin, producing a geographical stereotype of the region as paradisiacal. This geographical stereotype became a part of Guilin's cultural landscape.

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44 See Corey Jonathan Byrnes, "Rising from a Placid Lake China's Three Gorges at the Intersection of History, Aesthetics and Politics." Order No. 3593745, Berkeley: University of California, 2013. <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1439136205?accountid=14496> . See Chapter 2, 36-70.

45 For more elaboration on the subject, see Paul Groth's introduction to *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*: Paul Groth. "Frameworks for Cultural Landscape Study," in *Understanding Ordinary Landscapes*. Edited by Paul Groth and Todd W. Bressi. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. 1-25.

46 Existence in a present landscape meaning that the landscape being studied is that which you exist in.

### III. Reevaluating the Relationship between the *Canluan lu* and the *Guihai yuheng zhi*

Scholarship on the works that discuss the journey to and time spent in Guilin, the *Canluan lu* and *Guihai yuheng zhi*, tends to focus on their innovations as informative modes of writing. James Hargett makes the claim that because Fan Chengda's poetry tends to have more references to past scholars, the travel diaries and *Guihai yuheng zhi* could only primarily serve the purpose of relating information.<sup>47</sup> As a result he dismisses the need to analyze Fan Chengda's historical consciousness within the text. While it is true that the diaries were primarily meant to be informative, there is no valid reason to ignore the historical references within the text and their relationship to informative geographical descriptions. In light of Song views on history and aesthetics, the historical allusions scattered throughout the texts suggest the diaries were more than just informative effects.<sup>48</sup> Two passages from both the *Guihai yuheng zhi* and the *Canluan lu* show that Fan Chengda appropriates the historical descriptions of past scholars in an attempt to use the language of his readership, but also to signify that he belongs in the same class of scholars as those he appropriates—those that have achieved the Song ideal of the cultivated scholar. This appropriative method of description allows him to build his own social identity, but also creates a social identity of the landscape.

In considering Fan Chengda's approach to writing travel and landscape literature, the two passages in his preface to the *Guihai yuheng zhi* are telling. In two short pages Fan Chengda leaves enough evidence to show his belief in the interconnected nature of history, the landscape, and governance. While discussing his farewell party before leaving for Guilin, he wrote:

All of them were concerned about the scorching heat and desolate local conditions I would find in the South. I looked up some poems by Tang authors and checked on the geography of Guilin. Shaoling referred to it as "suitable to man," Letian referred to it as "free of miasma", Tuizhi went so far as to regard gazing at the rivers and mountains south of the Xiang River as superior to mounting a simurgh and riding off to the land of immortals. So, as for the best places I might travel to as an official, could there be any better destination?<sup>49</sup>

This quotation is consistent with what one might suspect from a Southern Song dynasty scholar about to travel to the South. His friends and family worried for his safety amid the "desolate local conditions." Being a cultivated scholar by his day's standards, Fan Chengda would not merely have concerned himself with the opinions of his friends and family, but also those he admired—the scholars of the past. His statement "I looked up some poems" clearly indicates his relationship with the past scholars. It is almost analogous to how we in the modern era might use books on history or geography before going to a new place.

During his time in Guilin, Fan Chengda writes that he developed a strong affinity for the

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47 Ibid, 100.

48 Ronald Egan's works on Su Shi are instructive on this point: See Ronald Egan, *The Problem of Beauty: Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006. Also, Ronald Egan, *Word, Life, and Deed in the Life of Su Shi*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994.

49 Fan Chengda, *Guihai yuheng zhi*. 1. Tuizhi and Letian are the literary cognomens of Han Yu and Bai Juyi.

local people in the region. He even perceived his writings on the region's landscape as proof that they had a strong relationship: in describing his reasons for writing the *Guihai yuheng zhi*, he writes "at the same time I remain deeply attached to Guilin, so much so that I have compiled and edited [this collection] of minutia and trivia, which proves that I did not look down on the people there. Although I am now far away from them in a 'famous capital and joyful land,' still I will never forget them!"<sup>50</sup> An examination of the text shows that Fan Chengda's physical landscape had a social identity. The first chapter of the treatise translates to "precipice grottos," and is an encyclopedic text on the mountains of Guilin. At first this seems to be a mere list of physical features. However, when one looks at the first entry, it becomes clear that the chapter is more than mere physical geography. The first entry is about a "reading cave" (*dushu yan*), so named because a former administrator had read books there.<sup>51</sup> The entry describes why the cave is suitable for reading. The sixth chapter, on birds, similarly describes the birds of the region not only in terms of appearances but also with regard to their relationship to humanity.<sup>52</sup> A representative example of this is in the entry on parrots, where the majority of the entry discusses those who raise the birds and the measures they go to prevent them from dying of malaria. Entries from across the *Guihai yuheng zhi* show that Fan Chengda saw the landscape as both a physical and social entity.

The *Guihai yuheng zhi* shows that Fan Chengda saw the physical landscape as distinctly tied to the human landscape. Indeed, he uses the physical landscape as a direct means of describing the people of the region. This suggests that the means he uses to communicate the physical landscape affects how he characterizes the peoples of the region. We know from his preface that Fan Chengda researched how Tang poets wrote about Guilin before even visiting it, but textual evidence from the *Canluan lu* shows that his descriptions actively appropriate those same Tang scholars' language.

For the student of Tang poetry, the most obvious instance of this appropriation comes from the title itself—*Canluan lu*. This title translates to *Register of Harnessing a Flying Luan* bird. The *luan*, translated as the mythical "simurgh" is an auspicious symbol in Chinese literature, the steed that brings those who reach transcendence to paradise. The title directly references the Tang scholar Han Yu's poem "Seeing off the Great Master Yan to Gui County" ("Song Guizhou Yan Dafu"), which discusses the beauty of Guilin's "Eight Cinnamons" and natural landscape:<sup>53</sup>

Glossy and green – the luxuriance of the Eight Cinnamons;  
 This is the land that lies South of the Xiang.  
 The Jiang (Yangzi) makes an azure gauze sash;  
 The hills resemble cyan jade hairpins.  
 Families mostly offer up halcyon plumes;  
 Households freely set out yellow tangerines.  
 This far surpasses an ascent off to sylphdom  
 So why take the time to mount a flying simurgh!<sup>54</sup>

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50 Ibid.

51 Ibid, 11.

52 Ibid, 61.

53 Han Yu is the same person as Tuizhi from the preface to *Guihai yuheng zhi*. Tuizhi was the man's literary cognomen. The "eight cinnamons of Guilin" refers to a legendary grove of cinnamon trees in the heart of the city.

54 Hargett, 102.

The title *Canluan lu* seems to be a direct response to the question posed by Han Yu's question. In his essay on Fan Chengda's diaries James Hargett claims Han Yu implies that going to the beautiful county Guilin far surpasses going to paradise. Thus by "harnessing a simurgh" Fan Chengda is metaphorically failing to heed Han Yu's advice.<sup>55</sup> This argument rigidly ignores the fact that Fan Chengda is actually going to Guilin. Han Yu's point is more likely that since Guilin itself is tantamount to heaven, there is no need to "journey to heaven" in the traditional mode of the transcendent.<sup>56</sup> At the end of *Canluan lu* Fan Chengda explicitly describes his reasoning for choosing this title for his text. His explanation implies that he is echoing and agreeing with Han Yu's insights on Guilin:

In front and in back of the commandery seat are myriad peaks arranged in a circle. Together, with the sky, they are limitless. It may be noted that, since the Tang, the hills and streams of Guilin have been praised because of their singularity and loveliness. Although Han Wengong (Han Yu) never reached here, he became accustomed to hearing about it when he was in Chao County. Thus, in one of his poems there are expressions "penetrate the heavens," "belting rivers," "halcyon plumes," and "yellow tangerines." In the closing lines, he says:

This far surpasses an ascent off to sylphdom,  
So why take the time to mount a flying simurgh!

One might say that his longing and desire for Guilin was such. Thus, I have named my excursion chronicle "Harnessing a Simurgh." If one needs details on the local topography here, there is the *Tractate of the Cogitator and Balancer of the Cinnamon Sea*.<sup>57</sup>

Perhaps Fan Chengda is not failing to heed Han Yu's advice, but instead merely stating that since Han Yu saw Guilin as tantamount to heaven, his own journey to Guilin becomes tantamount to a journey to heaven. It is no surprise that Fan Chengda would use Han Yu's poem as a basis for describing Guilin. Fan Chengda states in *Guihai yuheng zhi* that he looked up Tang poems for research purposes.<sup>58</sup> Furthermore, as Hargett mentions, using Tang scholarship was one of the most effective means of communicating to his readership. Studies on Song literary aesthetics as well as on the nature of the Song academy have shown that, historically, Song scholars responded well to Tang poetry.<sup>59</sup> Put simply, outside of the Confucian classics, the poetry and prose works of the Tang were major focuses of study for Song literati. Tang era descriptions were highly useful then for descriptive purposes.

However, Fan Chengda's appropriative usage goes beyond attempting to reach out to readers. A close textual analysis of this passage suggests that Fan Chengda sees himself as expanding on Han Yu's language in a similar style. Consider Fan Chengda's own additions to Han Yu's description. The arrangement and "limitless" nature of the mountains have heavy symbolic significance.<sup>60</sup> Hargett notes that ascending ever-rising mountains is a major theme

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55 Ibid.

56 That is, to harness *luan* birds.

57 Fan Chengda, *Canluan lu*. 204. The *Tractate of the Cogitator and Balancer of the Cinnamon Sea* is often translated today as the *Treatise of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea*, or the *Guihai yuheng zhi*. See Hargett's translation.

58 Fan Chengda *Guihai yuheng zhi*, in the preface, 1.

59 For a lengthy discussion on this topic, see Egan's *The Problem of Beauty*.

60 For those unfamiliar with Guilin, this is a good place to point out the region's extraordinary physical

in traditional Chinese approaches to transcendence.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore the “myriad peaks arranged in a circle” Fan Chengda describes around the city could be said to draw some comparison to the geographical arrangement of China’s sacred mountains. In *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China’s Mount Yutai*, Lin Weicheng explains the cosmological and social significance of mountains in Chinese dynastic history: “mountains with extraordinary features found their way onto the imperial map as physical and territorial markers and anchors of the land under heaven within which the emperor ruled. Mountains received sacrifices and revealed the heavenly mandate, for the greater a mountain was, the more spiritually potent it became.”<sup>62</sup> Fan Chengda’s emphasis on the mountains surrounding Guilin is no accident. The spectacular nature of the mountains suggested a higher, civilized existence outside the court. The mountains were markers of a civilized, virtuous locale. Fan Chengda’s new post in Guilin situated him in a landscape suitable for crafting a moral identity of place. Therefore it cannot be surprising that Fan Chengda’s first recorded statement on the local geography of his new commandery uses historically grounded language to place high moral esteem on the region: such a statement could only bolster his reputation because it links him both to the landscape and to the Tang dynasty scholars who produced the original language.

Fan Chengda’s reference to Han Yu’s geographical tropes surrounding Guilin are also worth examining because they serve as Fan Chengda’s principal description in the text. Han Yu’s original poem, “Song Guizhou Yan Dafu” describes the land as plentiful and the people as idyllic. Line for line, it depicts a rich and paradisiacal image of Guilin. The “luxuriance of the eight cinnamons” directly refers to a legendary grove of cinnamon trees in Guilin. However, it might also be noted that the cinnamon tree is a conventional symbol of the lunar landscape in Chinese tradition, the same lunar landscape that is the residing place of immortals. The association of Guilin to Daoist paradise, already discussed in reference to the simurgh, is clear evidence of Han Yu’s belief in Guilin’s spatial superiority. This is further evidenced by the metaphors used in the poem. The symbolism of referring to the Jiang River as an “azure gauze sash” and to the hills as “cyan jade hairpins” shows the landscape morally. “Hairpins” and “sashes” are known in Chinese tradition to be symbolic of maturity and proper filial piety—classic Confucian virtues.<sup>63</sup> When a woman was old enough to pin up her hair and wear a sash, she was considered mature and old enough to fulfill her duty to a husband.<sup>64</sup>

Another set of evidence regarding Han Yu’s moralistic view of the landscape are his references to “families offering up halcyon plumes” and setting out “yellow tangerines.” In this poem “halcyon” refers to the common kingfisher.<sup>65</sup> The poem implies that families in Guilin

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landscape. The region has karst topography, meaning it was predominantly formed of limestone. This was quite unfamiliar to most people in Fan Chengda’s time. The mountains Fan Chengda refers to in his work have a verticality unknown in most mountainous regions. For a scientific study on their appearance and history, see Wei Huang, “Spatial Dimensions of Tower Karst and Cockpit Karst: A Case Study in Guilin China.” (2014) *University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Papers and Dissertations*, 626.

61 Hargett, 102.

62 Lin Weicheng, *Building a Sacred Mountain: The Buddhist Architecture of China’s Mount Yutai*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. 1.

63 See CAS Williams, *A Manual of Chinese Metaphors*. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1920. 81. Williams draws this description from studies of the Book of Ceremonies and story of princess Lo-Chang.

64 Chinese literature has a long standing convention of describing mountains and the landscape in terms of a beautiful woman, and vice-versa.

65 The poem is unclear on the species, but it probably white-throated or black-capped kingfishers, or both.

fulfilled their offerings to ancestors with kingfisher feathers and tangerines. Therefore it is difficult to agree with Hargett's analysis that Han Yu is merely calling the scenery paradisiacal. His poetic description of the landscape influences his descriptions of people. Paradise is populated with those who perform their filial duties and respect Confucian norms for personal relations.

Fan Chengda does not merely title the diary *Canluan lu* because he agrees with Han Yu's appraisal of Guilin's surroundings or even because he simply wants to enhance his own descriptions. The title "register of harnessing a simurgh" responds and pays homage to Han Yu's poem. However, his own addition to the descriptions – that the sky and mountains are "limitless" and the arrangement of the mountains – suggests that he is also making a conscientious decision to expand on Han Yu's description and make it his own. To borrow W.J.T. Mitchell's language, Fan Chengda is using the landscape as a medium to morally stereotype Guilin and its inhabitants, but also to situate himself within the context of Song morality. In a metaphorical way, Fan Chengda is also using his journey to the South as an opportunity to insert himself into Han Yu's intellectual space.<sup>66</sup> It simultaneously agrees with Han Yu's assessment of Guilin's beautiful scenery, but also allows Fan Chengda to submit his own perspective as equal to Han Yu's, using Han Yu's own language.

One large question that remains regarding Fan Chengda's usage of Han Yu's imagery in the *Canluan lu* is that in the *Guihai yuheng zhi* he discusses the Song landscape with far greater detail. One might wonder if landscape descriptions in *Canluan lu* are important at all given that Fan Chengda wrote a much larger encyclopedic text. Notably, in the *Canluan lu* Fan Chengda only spends two entries discussing Guilin's landscape, and even invites the reader to visit the other text for more information.<sup>67</sup> First, the intentionality of Fan Chengda's historical allusion is unmistakable, and therefore significant with respect to how he perceived his work. Given the high level of educational training that Song literati received, it is likely that any usage of the landscape as a medium for social means within the travel diaries was intentional. Song scholars were painfully conscious of historical circumstances because their courses of study led them to confront the past.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, the vibrant literary culture of the Song meant that Fan Chengda's works probably received considerable exposure. Evidence of this comes from the level of critical scholarship given to Fan Chengda's works in the Qing, as well as the simple fact that unlike many Song documents, the *Canluan lu* was read enough to be preserved through the historical record.

The second body of evidence suggesting the value of Fan Chengda's descriptive writings in the *Canluan lu* (with relation to the *Guihai yuheng zhi*) comes from the content of the *Guihai yuheng zhi*. In his preface, Fan Chengda discusses the wondrous nature of the mountains of Guilin in depth, again alluding to Daoist, transcendental features: "But the wondrous and unsurpassed nature of the cliff caverns, the richness and antiquity of local customs and practices, and the grandness and superiority of the government seat far exceeded what I had heard

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66 This claim is very much informed by Ellen Zhang's Chapter 5, "Sight-Seeing and Sight Making" in *Transformative Journeys*.

67 See the end of the *Canluan lu*. It might seem curious that Fan Chengda would reference a work that had not yet been written – the *Guihai yuheng zhi* was written twenty-two months after the *Canluan lu*. It is probable that both works were edited by the author over the years. The strongest evidence of this is that *Canluan lu* in its extant form is itself an abridged form. Hargett goes into detail on this matter on pages 136 through 141 of *On the Road in Twelfth Century China*. Essentially, the complete version ceased to exist by the late Ming. The version Hargett translates is a conscientiously abridged volume from the Ming that only includes major events.

68 My argument here is again much informed by Cong Ellen Zhang's "Sight-Seeing and Sight Making".



before.”<sup>69</sup> Furthermore, in the *Guihai yuheng zhi*'s first chapter Fan Chengda returns to Han Yu's poem and states that when taken with the poems of Huang Tingjian and Huang Luzhi: “When one contemplates the meanings of the three master's words, then the wondrous nature of the hills of Gui will appear right before your eyes.”<sup>70</sup> This statement functions as an occasion for encyclopedically listing all the mountains in the Guilin region. Again, his description of the mountains is coupled with his own social commentary.

Excerpts from the *Guihai yuzheng zhi* and *Canluan lu* show that by appropriating and expanding descriptions of Guilin from historical predecessors, Fan Chengda depicts more than the physical landscape. His landscape becomes a medium for developing Guilin's social identity. Both at the end of *Canluan lu* and in his preface to the *Guihai yuheng zhi* Fan Chengda tries to informatively describe Guilin. In both works he conscientiously appropriates the descriptive language of his intellectual predecessors. Part of his choice to do this was to enhance the description by using language familiar to his readers, but it is also true that he expands the language of Han Yu and makes it his own in an attempt to show he belonged in the same cross-temporal community of scholars as Han Yu. His poetic appropriation effectively served as cultural signposting. In using this method for describing Guilin, Fan Chengda's landscape writing consequentially has the side effect of creating a social identity not merely for Fan Chengda, but also for the lands he describes.

#### IV. Fan Chengda's Influence: Creating Visions of Paradise

In the preface to the *Guihai yuheng zhi*, Fan Chengda asks “could there possibly be any better destination than Guilin?” This is a rhetorical nod to Han Yu's question regarding the simurgh.<sup>71</sup> Fan Chengda's question comes immediately after he mentions Han Yu's, and the asking of the question stems from the implicit comparison Han Yu makes between Guilin and paradise. In the first chapter, “Precipice-grottos,” he would go on to say “I once assessed the wondrous nature of the hills in Guilin and found them worthy of being rated first in the world.”<sup>72</sup> He would not know it at the time, but the two statements would help define Guilin's national image. In modern times, the statement *Guilin shanshui jia tianxia* is commonly used to describe Guilin's scenery. The phrase translates to “Guilin's scenery of hills and waters is first under heaven.” Compare that to the original Chinese of Fan Chengda's statement: *Yu chang ping guishan zhi qi, yi wei tianxia di yi*. In this instance it is highly instrumental to look at the original Chinese characters. The common modern saying:

桂林山水甲天下

And then Fan Chengda's statement:

予嘗評桂山之奇，宜為天下第一。

69 Fan Chengda, *Guihai yuheng zhi*, 8.

70 Ibid, 10.

71 Fan Chengda, *Guihai yuheng zhi*, 1.

72 Ibid, 7.

Both sentences claim that Guilin's scenery is the first under heaven. The first uses the verb *jia* 甲, which usually means "first on a list", so the first sentence might best be literally translated as "Guilin's scenery of hills and waters is first on the list under heaven." The second, older sentence uses a fairly common grammar structure: *zhi ... , yi wei... di yi* (之\_, 宜為\_第一). The phrase, which roughly means "to rate," is related to the first in meaning. While a direct trace between the two sentences cannot be claimed based on similarity alone, it is telling that Fan Chengda is the first person to ever use a phrase of this nature regarding Guilin.<sup>73</sup>

To prove there is a literary trace between Fan Chengda's historically appropriated characterization of Guilin and the modern identity of the city, a logical option is to look at references to Guilin in the roughly 900 years between Fan Chengda and modern times. If Fan Chengda's descriptions are transmitted into other texts, there is an argument for a link. In the history of Chinese travel literature, the next major journey through Guilin that produced considerable extant literature took place 447 years after Fan Chengda. In 1637, the great Ming dynasty explorer Xu Xiake (1586-1641) was making his way through Guangxi province, toward Guilin. He was afflicted by a miasmatic disease and in poor health, and getting to Guilin was essential to his survival.<sup>74</sup> His initial description of Guilin states the common maxim: "*Guilin shanshui jia tianxia*."<sup>75</sup> The phrase had already been in use by the late Ming. In a later entry on Guilin, Xu Xiake uses the second, older grammar structure, and then later directly references Fan Chengda.<sup>76</sup>

The origins of the transmitted written ideal that Guilin is a paradise are grounded in the historical repetition of appropriated descriptions. The majesty of the karst landscape also certainly has something to do with it, but the transmitted written landscape has a social dimension that dates back at least as far as the Tang dynasty. What can be said with some certainty is that appropriation of historical descriptions was the method used to facilitate the transmission of the written landscape. Fan Chengda's written record of his time in Guilin proves this. In an effort to improve the accessibility of his works, but also to show his cultivated level of learning, Fan Chengda chose to describe Guilin with the words of a Tang dynasty predecessor, Han Yu. He is not particularly shy about this. In fact, he treats his borrowing as a literary badge of honor to the point where he has no problem mentioning his research on historical discussions of Guilin throughout his work.

The identities of the Song scholarly class were robust, but they had unpredictable careers. Achieving the ideal of the cultivated Song gentleman was a major factor for many, including Fan Chengda. To achieve this ideal, one had to study and recite the works of past scholars. This dynamic played out in his writing. The *Canluan lu* borrowed from past scholars for the purposes of building Fan Chengda's identity as a cultivated scholar. The intentionality even affected the title of the diary. Treating the *Canluan lu* in relation with the geographical treatise *Guihai yuheng zhi* further shows that Fan Chengda's physical landscape had a strong social dimension. Because

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73 James Hargett mentions in the footnotes to the *Guihai yuheng zhi* that there has been one study on Fan Chengda on the origins of the Guilin phrase that directly states that Fan Chengda is the origin of the phrase: Su Hongji and Deng Zhuren, "*Guihai yuheng zhi*—Nan Song shiqi Guilin de lüyou baike quanshu," on page 109. I could not find an available copy of this work.

74 For more on this subject or Xu Xiake's biography, see Julian Ward, *The Art of Travel Writing: Xu Xiake (1587-1641)*. Richmond, Surrey: Curzon Press, 2001.

75 Xu Xiake, *You ji*. Guiyang: Guizhou ren min chu ban she, 2008. 494.

76 Ibid, 568. It should be noted that despite citing Fan Chengda, Xu Xiake had a vastly different style. Whereas Fan Chengda was very much a writer who used a narrative, Xu Xiake was primarily focused on encyclopedic documentation. His works have an unparalleled amount of detail for the time.

Fan Chengda borrowed from his predecessors, the landscape became a medium of transmitting the social information of the past. As a result, Tang era notions of Guilin's cultural landscape became embedded in Chinese culture. This can be seen in modern day phrases about Guilin, but also throughout the period between Fan Chengda and the present. Scholars such as Xu Xiake perpetuated the appropriated descriptions that Fan Chengda employed.

This study suggests further directions for research. The scholarly literature on *Wuchuan lu* is fairly numerous, and this work addresses the *Canluan lu*. However, little has been done on Fan Chengda's *Lanpei lu*, which is full of passages describing landscapes with strong social identities, and perhaps even stronger geographical stereotypes. An analysis of these passages and their effect on building geographical identity could be fruitful. For instance, consider this passage from the seventh entry of the *Lanpei lu*:

The interior of the Old City has only a few shops and markets, and people there lead a petty existence and nothing more. Gazing all around, from time to time I saw lofts and galleries standing tall and trim; all are former temples and belvederes. There is not a monastery that has not crumbled and collapsed. The people and judgments, likes and fondnesses, have all mutated in accord to theirs (that is, the Jin's).<sup>77</sup>

Without delving too far into a literary analysis of this piece, a student of the Southern Song dynasty would see that Fan Chengda's written landscape has a strong social identity. Another strong candidate for further investigation would be Lu You's diaries from the 1170's. Lu You was a known friend and confidant of Fan Chengda, and given the similarity of their travel diaries both in style and in time it is likely that they discussed their work. A closer, comparative look at Fan Chengda's *Wuchuan lu* and Lu You's *Ju-Shu chi* could provide a lot of insight into the development of the upper Yangzi River's cultural landscape. If the geographical writings of Lu You or other scholars from the Southern Song have similarly appropriative descriptive styles that create geographical stereotypes, it would suggest that modern presuppositions about geographical writing being primarily objective do not apply to the literary culture of the Southern Song. Given that Fan Chengda, Lu You, and their contemporaries all aspired to the Song ideal of the scholarly gentleman, and that their educations were largely similar, one should hypothesize that modern presuppositions indeed do not apply.

Continuing to analyze the impact of early and early modern texts on the modern Chinese cultural landscape is essential for developing a better understanding of China. As the PRC continues its rise on the global stage, questions about its cultural landscape will become more significant. Aside from academia, those wishing for a globally positive relationship with China will find it useful to understand the history behind China's underlying geographical stereotypes. A serious question will need to be answered: What human processes have shaped the Chinese perception of the landscape? If the Song dynasty works of Fan Chengda are any indication, the transmission of historically appropriated information is at least part of the answer.

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77 Fan Chengda, *Lanpei lu*. Translated by James Hargett in *On the Road in Twelfth Century China*.

V. Appendix A

Map of the Southern Song Empire



This map was found on Columbia University's online website for educators working on East Asian topics. The map is originally from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It can be accessed at [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ssong/hd\\_ssong.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ssong/hd_ssong.htm). One should note that Kaifeng and Hangzhou were known in the Southern Song as Dongjing or Bianjing, and Lin'an, respectively.

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**Phillip Edward Merlo:** I would personally like to thank Professor Waldo Martin for guiding me through the process of writing this paper and providing excellent suggestions throughout the writing process. Thanks are also in order for my advisors in the history department, Professors Michael Nylan and Nicholas Tackett, whose edits significantly improved this paper. I am also quite grateful for my student peer editor Charlotte Hull, and to my other editors Serena Ma, Eric Merlo, and Jon Parsley. Lastly, many thanks to History Department Undergraduate Advisor Leah Flanagan, who supported me while I was writing the paper.

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