

Glen Dudbridge

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by

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GLEN DUDBRIDGE

Born in 1938 in Clevedon, Somerset, Glen Dudbridge attended Bristol Grammar School. Following his National Service, he read Chinese at Cambridge, where he was taught by H. C. Chang, who is probably best known for his substantial and densely annotated anthology of Chinese vernacular literature which appeared in 1973 as *Chinese Literature: Popular Fiction and Drama* (Edinburgh). He also greatly benefited from the expertise of Piet van der Loon, who would remain a major source of inspiration throughout his life. As well as Chang, van der Loon must have drilled him in philology and bibliography. Following his years at Cambridge, Dudbridge continued his studies at the New Asia College in Hong Kong. In 1965, he was appointed as Lecturer in Modern Chinese at Oxford. Twenty years later, in 1985, he was made Professor of Chinese at Cambridge, but returned to Oxford in 1989 when he was appointed in the same function there. He served as Chair of the European Association of Chinese Studies from 1998 to 2002, and was a visiting professor at Yale University, University of California, Berkeley, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He was elected a fellow of the British Academy in 1984 and was awarded an Honorary Membership of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in 1996. Following retirement from his Oxford Chair, he remained actively involved in academic life and research. He is survived by his wife, their two children and four grandchildren.

The topic of Dudbridge's doctoral dissertation was the development of the legend of the Journey to the West, up to its appearance in 1592 in the form of a 100-chapter novel, nowadays usually ascribed to Wu Cheng'en 吴承恩. His first published articles dealt with the relation of the early editions of this *Xiyou ji* 西游记 to the shorter versions of the legend that circulated at the same time. In a fifty-page article published in 1969, he carefully surveyed the known editions of the full novel and the shorter versions, concluding that the latter were based on the longer version and not the other way around, but that the story of the birth of Xuanzang first made its appearance in the short version edited by Zhu Dingchen 朱鼎臣, and was only later incorporated into the 100-chapter version.¹ That has remained a conclusion difficult to accept for those scholars who grew up reading the novel that included the episode of Xuanzang's birth.² Furthermore, Dudbridge's conclusion that the ascription of the 100-chapter novel to Wu Cheng'en is based on the flimsiest of grounds regrettably does not seem to have had much impact.

Dudbridge's first monograph publication was *The Hsi-yu Chi: a Study of Antecedents to the Sixteenth-Century Chinese Novel* of 1970.³ This study fitted in with

¹G. Dudbridge, 'The Hundred-Chapter *Hsi-yu Chi* and its early versions', *Asia Major*, NS14 (1969), 141-91.

²Xu Haoran 许浩然, 'Yingguo hanxuejia Du Deqiao yu *Xiyou ji* yanjiu' 英国汉学家杜德桥与西游记研究, *Zhongnan daxue xuebao*, 18/1 (February 2012), 187-91.

³G. Dudbridge, *The Hsi-yu chi: a Study of the Antecedents of the Sixteenth-Century Novel* (Cambridge,

the new developments of Western sinology after the Second World War. Academic sinology of the first half of the twentieth century had been focused very much on the philological study of ancient Chinese culture. But the impact of the May Fourth Culture, the influx of young Chinese scholars and the organisation of Chinese studies in the USA in departments of Chinese/East Asian languages and literatures now resulted in a growing interest (first in the USA but later also in Europe) in the vernacular fiction of the last dynasties. Dudbridge's monograph immediately established him as a master in this field. The book basically consists of two parts. In the first, Dudbridge meticulously surveys each known reference to the legend of the Journey to the West and its main characters from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, carefully distinguishing direct quotations from summaries and other indirect references. In the second part of his monograph, he evaluates the different theories that had been put forward to explain the origin of the character of Monkey. Taking as his starting point the image of the Acolyte Monkey (*houxingzhe* 猴行者) of the *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取经诗话 (the story, interspersed with poems of how Sanzang of the Great Tang fetched the sutras), the earliest known account of the legend, Dudbridge rejected each and every theory proposed by his eminent predecessors in the field, as these tended to start from the image of Monkey as found in the 100-chapter novel of some centuries later. No wonder that C. T. Hsia, in his review of Dudbridge's work in the *Journal of Asian Studies*, repeatedly mentioned his 'caution' and his 'skepticism'.⁴ Hsia also pointed out the discrepancy between Dudbridge's opening chapter and the main content of the book. In this opening, Dudbridge dwells at some length on the Parry-Lord theory of oral composition, which in the 1960s and 1970s was at the height of its popularity, stressing that written references to the legend were only an infinitesimal fraction of the rich and constantly changing but also unknowable legend as it was orally transmitted. While Hsia could at times be quite blunt—if not to say abusive—in his comments on the works of other scholars in the field of vernacular literature, here he expressed himself very mildly, but still Dudbridge took issue with this review.⁵

In an article of 1988, 'The *Hsi-yu chi* Monkey and the fruits of the last ten years',⁶ Dudbridge would return to the issue of the origin of Monkey and evaluate the theories that had been put forward in the years since he published his monograph. While

1970); reviewed by C. T. Hsia, *Journal of Asian Studies*, 30 (1971), 887–8; and A. C. Yu, in *History of Religions*, 12 (1972), 90–4.

⁴In *Journal of Asian Studies*, 30 (1971), 887–8.

⁵G. Dudbridge, 'The *Hsi-yu chi* Monkey and the fruits of the last ten years', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 31 (1972), 351.

⁶Originally published in *Chinese Studies*, 6 (1988), 463–86; reprinted in G. Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture: Selected Papers on China* (Leiden, 2005), pp. 254–74.

still displaying the same sceptical attitude to the various proposals advanced, mostly by Japanese scholars, he also tries to find an explanation for the function of Monkey by looking at the role of this figure in funerary rituals of the late nineteenth century in Fujian. Here Monkey acted as the guardian of the soul during its transition to the other realm.

Dudbridge's second monograph appeared in 1978 as *The Legend of Miaoshan*.⁷ The research must have been concluded some years earlier, as Victor Mair pointed out in his review that the bibliography contained no publications later than 1973. This of course meant that Dudbridge had conducted his research during the heyday of the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution in China. In view of the major role of the bodhisattva Guanyin 观音 in the Journey to the West, the choice of the legend of her female incarnation as the princess Miaoshan 妙善 was perhaps an obvious one for a follow-up project. For Dudbridge, one of the major attractions of this legend was that here it was possible, in contrast to the frustrating Journey to the West, to pinpoint the moment at which this legend entered Chinese culture in a fully developed shape. Dudbridge, otherwise writing quite concisely, describes at some length how the metropolitan official Jiang Zhiqi 蒋之奇 (1031–1104), demoted to the provincial posting of prefect of Ruzhou in Henan, in early 1100 visited the Xiangshan Monastery in Baofeng—by that time already a well-established centre for Guanyin veneration—and there was presented by the abbot Huaizhou 怀昼 with a biography of Miaoshan, which had apparently been brought to the monastery just a few days earlier by a mysterious monk who had since departed without leaving a trace. The biography, said to have been retrieved from a pile of waste paper, claimed to be the tale of the bodhisattva's incarnation as told to the saintly seventh-century monk Daoxuan 道宣 (596–667) by an unspecified heavenly being and recorded by one of Daoxuan's disciples. Jiang Zhiqi copied out the text and prefaced it with an account of his meeting with the abbot; and a stele of this text, written out in the calligraphy of Cai Jing 蔡京 (d. 1126), was erected in the temple later that same year, to be reinscribed in 1304. Needless to say, Dudbridge received no reply from the local authorities in China when he wrote to them for information on the whereabouts of the stone and requested a rubbing in case it was still available.

As he had no access to the stele in the early 1970s, Dudbridge reconstructed its contents on the basis of two later summaries. Its main difference with later versions of the legend was that this early version did not as yet include an account of Miaoshan's

⁷G. Dudbridge, *The Legend of Miaoshan* (London, 1978): reviewed by W. L. Idema in *T'oung Pao*, 66 (1980), 286–8; by V. H. Mair in *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 39 (1979), 215–18; by A. Seidel in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 38 (1979), 770–1; and by K. Whitaker, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 42 (1979), 193–4.

visit to the underworld and her liberation of all sinners. This episode was first included in a version that was connected to the name of Guan Daosheng 管道昇 (1262–1319), the wife of the famous calligrapher Zhao Mengfu 赵孟頫 and a fine painter and calligrapher in her own right. With the addition of this episode the legend had, in Dudbridge's view, acquired its mature form. He continued his survey of the historical development of the legend with a discussion of the *Xiangshan baojuan* 香山宝卷 (Precious Scroll of Incense Mountain, which carries a preface claiming to date from 1103), the late sixteenth-century novel *Nanhai ji* 南海记 (The Story of the Southern Sea, composed by Zhu Dingchen, most likely on the basis of the precious scroll) and a seventeenth-century rewriting of the legend, again in the precious scroll format (first studied by the Dutch sinologist Henri Borel), but did not pursue the many adaptations of the legend in local forms of drama and storytelling. In the final two chapters, he preferred to look into some of the background materials of the legend (especially the Lotus Sutra and folklore, comparing the legend of Miaoshan to *King Lear*), and into its ritual functions (filial piety and salvation).

Dudbridge researched his *The Legend of Miaoshan* when the large databases he would happily use in his later work were still in the future. When his book came out and was reviewed in Taiwan, Lai Ruihe 賴瑞和 pointed out that not only was the short text of Guan Daosheng's life of Miaoshan available, but also that a rubbing of the second half of Jiang Zhiqi's text as erected at the Upper Tianzhu Monastery near Hangzhou in 1104 had been preserved.⁸ Dudbridge then quickly published an article in the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* in which he evaluated the importance of these new materials to his work,⁹ and when in 1990 a Chinese translation of his study appeared in Taiwan these findings were incorporated into the text.¹⁰ In this way, his monograph also became known in the People's Republic of China, but only circulated in very small numbers. Writing in 2011, Chen Yongchao 陈泳超 of Peking University states that he had to make special efforts to get hold of the book.¹¹ In his long and judicious review of Dudbridge's monograph, he puts his work alongside Gu Jiegang's

⁸ Lai Ruihe, 'Miaoshan chuanshuo de liangzhong xin ziliao' 妙善傳說的兩種新資料, *Zhongwai wenxue*, 9 (July 1982), 116–26.

⁹ G. Dudbridge, 'Miaoshan on stone: two early inscriptions', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 42 (1982), 589–614.

¹⁰ Du Deqiao 杜德橋, *Miaoshan chuanshuo: Guanyin pusa yuanqi kao* 妙善傳說觀音菩薩起考, trans. Li Wenbin 李文彬 (Taipei, 1990). The translation was accompanied by a full photographic reprint of a rare, early seventeenth-century printing of the *Nanhai ji* from the Bodleian Library.

¹¹ Chen Yongchao, "'Xieben" yu chuanshuo yanjiu fanshi de bianhuan: Du Deqiao *Miaoshan chuanshuo shuping*' 写本与传说研究范式的变换杜德桥妙善传说述评, *Minzu wenxue yanjiu* (2011.5): 5–17. For an earlier evaluation of Dudbridge's monograph see Dong Xiaoping 董晓萍, 'Chuanshuo yanjiu de xiandai fangfa yu xiandai de wenti: ping Du Deqiao de *Miaoshan chuanshuo*' 传说研究的现代方法与现代的问题: 评杜德桥的妙善传说, *Minzu wenxue yanjiu* (2003.3), 3–13.

顾颉刚 (1893–1980) study on the legend of Meng Jiangnü 孟姜女 in importance. Chen would appear not to have been aware that in 2004 Dudbridge had published a revised edition of his *The Legend of Miaoshan*, which not only incorporated the conclusions of his 1992 article, but also could make use of the full text of the (slightly damaged) text by Jiang Zhiqi as reinscribed in 1304. While Dudbridge was not allowed to see the stone at its current location during a visit to Baofeng in the late 1990s, he now had access to a rubbing and photographs provided by Chinese colleagues. His letter for information on the stele in the early 1970s apparently had been received after all, because local Chinese sources now reported that the stele had been exhibited in Oxford in that period (and would continue to do so despite Dudbridge's protests that such had not happened at all).

It is very unlikely that the text that Huaizhou showed to Jiang Zhiqi did indeed date from the Tang dynasty, let alone that it had been revealed to Daoxuan who was well known to have visions. Dudbridge clearly implies that the life of Miaoshan may have been concocted by the abbot to bamboozle an eager devotee of Guanyin. But recently, voices have been heard that argue that the text after all may well have been authentically revealed, even if not from the Tang. Whatever the truth of the matter, Dudbridge would spend most of his research of the following decades on authentic texts of the seventh to tenth centuries, especially those that had been preserved in the huge compendia compiled during the reign of Taizong of the Song (r. 976–997), such as the *Taiping yulan* 太平御览 (Imperial Reader for the Time of Supreme Peace) and the *Taiping guangji* 太平广记 (Extensive Records for the Time of Supreme Peace). In view of his meticulous attention to each detail of the texts he was working with, Dudbridge would not only deal with issues of authorship and date of composition but also with all aspects of their transmission. This meant that he was not only interested in the transmission of these texts up to the moment they were included in the Song imperial collections, but also in the printing history of the *Taiping guangji*. And because Dudbridge soon was convinced that the *Taiping guangji* had been hastily and shoddily compiled, he also was fascinated by the occasional transmission of classical tales of the Tang outside that collection, whether in full or synoptic versions.

Several collections of translations of classical tales from the Tang had appeared by the 1980s, but Dudbridge set a new and much higher standard for the study of these materials with the publication of his *The Tale of Li Wa: Study and Critical Edition of a Chinese Story from the Ninth Century* of 1983.¹² Like his *The Legend of Miaoshan*,

¹²G. Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa: Study and Critical Edition of a Chinese Story from the Ninth Century* (London, 1983): reviewed by W. L. Idema in *T'oung Pao*, 71 (1985), 279–82; by W. H. Nienhauser in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 106 (1986), 400–2; by D. E. Pollard in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 116 (1984), 304–5; and by G. Weys in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 48 (1985), 172–3.

this volume was published in the ‘Oxford Oriental Monographs’ series by Ithaca Press, and it is difficult to imagine that he could have published this work in this form with any other publisher, as he starts his ‘Introduction’, without any preamble, with a highly technical discussion of the textual history of the tale. This monograph definitely was not written to win over undergraduates, but to teach his fellow scholars a lesson. That lesson was that tales such as *Li Wa zhuan* might have been written as light entertainment but were composed by young men who had passed the *jinshi* examination and for their friends who had the same background, and that we might therefore expect them to draw on their shared readings for their language, whether as subtle allusions or trite clichés. Very well aware that he might indulge in over-annotation, Dudbridge provides a near exhaustive list of all borrowings from the classics and the *Wenxuan* 文选, among which especially the borrowings from the *Zuozhuan* 左传 stood out. But Dudbridge does not limit himself to providing a new critical edition of the Chinese text of this tale and a new translation; he also highlights the problematical nature of its traditional ascription to Bai Juyi’s 白居易 (772–846) younger brother Bai Xingjian 白行简 (776–826), relates the tale to the sensational history of the Zheng 郑 family in the wake of the An Lushan rebellion, discusses the background and status of Li Wa 李娃 as a private courtesan and the possibility of her marriage to her paramour, and traces the later adaptations of the tale in anecdote, *huaben* and drama.¹³ Those who might think that Dudbridge had lost his interest in religion by turning to this story of love and betrayal, family disruption and reunion, would find that this was not the case at all, as here (as elsewhere) he relies heavily on the ritual theory of the French anthropologist and folklore scholar Arnold van Gennep (1873–1957) on ‘rites of passage’ in analysing the literary structure of the tale.

This abiding interest in religion in literature is also evident in some other fine readings of the individual tales that Dudbridge published in his period. In his wonderful reading of the *Liu Yi zhuan* 柳毅传 and its analogues, for instance, he introduces the theme of the ghost marriage.¹⁴ This focus on religion was also quite apparent in a number of articles that were written as side products of his work on the reconstruction and interpretation of Dai Fu’s 戴孚 *Guangyi ji* 广异记 (Great Book of Marvels), a collection from the third quarter of the eighth century, a project that would eventually result in his *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T’ang China* of 1995.¹⁵ Dudbridge

¹³ Dudbridge goes on to suggest that the popularity of the self-sacrificing courtesan in traditional Chinese literature might have facilitated the Chinese reception of *La Dame aux Camélias* in its translation by Lin Shu in the early years of the twentieth century.

¹⁴ G. Dudbridge, ‘The tale of Liu Yi and its analogues’, in E. Hung (ed.), *Paradoxes of Traditional Chinese Literature* (Hong Kong, 1994), pp. 61–88; reprinted in Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, pp. 151–79.

¹⁵ G. Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T’ang China: a Reading of Tai Fu’s Kuang-I chi*

had already included a translation of the preface to this collection by Dai Fu's friend Gu Kuang 顾况 (d. 806) in the 'Introduction' of his *The Tale of Li Wa*. Dai Fu had been a minor official, mostly active in the Zhejiang area. Dudbridge extracted over three hundred items from his collection from the *Taiping guangji*, which showed Dai Fu to be a precise observer of exceptional events in his surroundings, as well as an eager recorder of strange stories that were told to him by friends and acquaintances.¹⁶ In these ways, Dudbridge argues, Dai Fu's tales were not works of 'creative fiction' but preserved 'the oral history of a remote age'. Dudbridge studied the many voices recorded in the *Guanyi ji* 'not really to build up a knowledge of events and institutions with documentary data, but rather to explore the perceptions of that long dead generation as it confronted the visible and invisible world all around'.¹⁷

To analyse these rich materials, Dudbridge coins the terms 'inner story' and 'outer story'. The inner story refers in his usage to a personal supernatural experience such as a dream, a vision or a revelation, and also a legend, which will be culturally conditioned but is basically beyond verification; whereas the outer story concerns the equally culturally conditioned ways in which society at large publicly deals with these exceptional experiences of one or more of its members.¹⁸ In contrast to the professional religious literature as collected in the Tripitaka or the Daozang, which is made up of writings by clerics for clerics, Dudbridge argues, these tales provide us with a quite reliable record of how Chinese society of the third quarter of the eighth century dealt with the irruption of the divine in their daily lives.¹⁹ After demonstrating the usefulness of his distinction between inner story and outer story in his first chapter, Dudbridge proceeds with a detailed analysis of Gu Kuang's preface to the *Guangyi ji*

(Cambridge, 1995); reviewed by R. F. Campany in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 19 (1997), 143; by Huang Chi-liang in *China Review International*, 5 (1998), 120–4; by R. Kirkland in *Journal of Asian Studies*, 55 (1996), 977–8; by O. Moore in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 7 (1997), 494–5; and by W. H. Nienhauser in *T'oung Pao*, 85 (1999), 181–9. For Chinese evaluations of this monograph see Xu Haoran, 'Yingguo Hanxuejia Du Deqiao dui *Guangyi ji* de yanjiu' 英国汉学家杜德桥对广异记的研究, *Shixue yuekan* (2011.07), 134–6; and Yang Weigang 杨为刚, 'Zhiguai xiaoshuo yanjiu de yuwai zhi yan: Du Deqiao Zongjiao tiyan yu Tangdai shisu shehui: *Guangyi ji de yizhong jiedu pingdu*' 志怪小说研究的域外之眼: 杜德桥宗体验与唐代世俗社会广异记的一种解读评述, *Huawen wenxue*, 110 (2012.3): 31–4. Both articles place Dudbridge's study in the context of the history of mentalities.

¹⁶ Summaries of all items are provided in an appendix. For the reader's convenience, these items are numbered according to the order of presentation in the edition of the text by Fang Shiming 方詩銘 in *Mingbao ji, Guangyi ji* 冥暴記廣異記 (Beijing, 1992).

¹⁷ Dudbridge, *Religious Experience and Lay Society in Tang China*, p. 6. Dudbridge points out that J. J. M. de Groot frequently made use of materials from *Guanyi ji* in his *The Religious System of China*.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 14–15. Nienhauser notes in his review that Dudbridge is not always able to maintain this distinction between 'inner' and 'outer'.

¹⁹ For all his work on popular religion of the Tang dynasty, Dudbridge showed little or no interest in the *bianwen* literature of Dunhuang, in which the clergy preach to the laity.

in his second chapter. Following a chapter on the life and times of Dai Fu, Dudbridge continues his analysis of the materials provided by that writer through a number of thematic chapters, such as ‘The Worshippers of Mount Hua’ which considers the unavoidable encounters of individual men and women with the amorous male and female deities of this holy mountain.

Dudbridge’s wide reading in classical tales inspired him with a mission to reconstruct the lost works that could be (at least partially) salvaged from the early Song compendia and in this way reconstruct the lost individual voices of authors whose works had not been transmitted independently. He describes this mission in his 1999 Panizzi Lectures at the British Library, *The Lost Books of Medieval China*. In the first of the three talks collected in this slim volume, he sets out his conclusions regarding the sources, the compilation and the resulting quality of the *Taiping yulan* and the *Taiping guangji*. At the same time, he also discusses the value of the Song dynasty bibliographies in asserting the nature and organisation of texts that no longer exist as independent works but were in some cases still available in such form to the compilers of these catalogues. The second and third talks do not return to his work on Dai Fu and his *Guangyi ji*, but deal with two other cases. The first of these is the *Sanguo dianlüe* 三国典略 (Summary documents of three kingdoms), a chronological history of the sixth century up to the foundation of the Sui dynasty compiled in the eighth century by a man named Qiu Yue 丘悦. Dudbridge had compiled a critical edition of the surviving items of this text (in this case also strongly relying on Sima Guang’s 司马光 *Zizhi tongjian* 资治通鉴) in co-operation with the Chinese scholar Zhao Chao 赵超 of the Academy of Social Sciences, an edition that was published in 1998 in Taipei.²⁰ In describing the aim of this project, Dudbridge says in his Panizzi Lectures:

The point has already been made that a project like this aims to do more than just recovering bits of text. Among other things it will look for serious new insights into Chinese history. From the T’ang period and before, outside the standard histories, we have very few surviving historical records. To recover something like this from the hand of a private historian should give a rare chance to get behind the bureaucratically inspired values and choices of the imperial historian, and discover other values, other choices, and different information.²¹

To bring out the distinctive approach of Qiu Yue, Dudbridge covers two episodes in some detail. The first concerns the transferal of the Liang capital from Jianye (Nanjing) to Jiangling, in which the last Liang emperor allowed himself to be swayed by the voice of a soothsayer against the advice of all his officials. The second deals with the

²⁰ Qiu Yue, *Sanguo dianlüe jijiao* 三国典略辑校, edited by Du Deqiao (G. Dudbridge) and Zhao Cao (Taipei, 1998).

²¹ G. Dudbridge, *Lost Books of Medieval China* (London, 2000), pp. 31–2.

burning of the imperial library at the end of that dynasty, whether by accident or design.

The third and final talk of the Panizzi Lectures is devoted to the *Liang sigong ji* 梁四公记 (Four Gentlemen of the Liang), a short text of the early eighth century and uncertain authorship. It describes the adventures of four mysterious men at the court of Emperor Wu of the Liang. They arrive in the capital in rags, yet impress not only the court officials but also the emperor by their superior abilities in every branch of knowledge. Three fragments of this text have been included in the *Taiping guangji*, of which the first is quite extensive and would appear to provide a complete narrative, leaving Dudbridge wondering where the two other fragments should fit in. Dudbridge also expresses his bewilderment at the original intention of this work, whether we should read it as a satire (perhaps of the court of Xuanzong) or as ‘a work of exuberant fantasy’, and in that context once again expresses his criticism of modern Chinese scholarship on Tang classical tales that—caught in the binary contrast of *zhiguai* 志怪 (anomaly records) and *chuanqi* 传奇 (stories of the strange)—could discuss a work such as the *Liang sigong ji* only as a precursor of later full-fledged *chuanqi*.

This criticism was only one of the many manifestations of Dudbridge’s unease with these terms. His extensive and long-lasting engagement with the classical tales of the Tang had set him off on a crusade against *chuanqi*, that is to say, against the preferential treatment by literary historians of a small group of tales that were seen (following Lu Xun 鲁迅) as the culmination of the development of the classical tale towards self-conscious fiction. In many talks and publications, Dudbridge argued that this procedure not only resulted in a reductive reading of these few texts that had been classified as *chuanqi*, but that it also resulted in wilful neglect of the overwhelming majority of tales that were put away as *zhiguai* or *yishi* 軼事 (‘apocryphal anecdotes’). Little of this unease over the use of *zhiguai* and *chuanqi* was as yet discernable in his monograph on *Li Wa zhuan*, but in the following years Dudbridge became increasingly outspoken on this issue, stressing that there were no hard and fast criteria to distinguish *chuanqi* from the great mass of classical tales and anecdotes, and that many of the usually ignored tales not only had considerable literary merits but also many other characteristics that made them worth studying. Dudbridge provides a clear statement of his concerns in the introductory paragraphs of his ‘A question of classification in Tang narrative: the story of Ding Yue’, an article that was first published in 1999. Having pointed out the May Fourth mistake of equating the traditional Chinese notion of *xiaoshuo* (‘small talk’) with fiction and seeking for ‘onward progress’ in literature, he writes:

For Tang narrative one important category was bequeathed by Lu Xun: since his time the label *chuanqi* has clung stubbornly to his anthology pieces from the Tang and Song. The name had no generic status or function in the periods when those stories

were written—a proposition which no one actually denies. Yet even today writers on Chinese narrative are content to go on applying the term mechanically to that small corpus of stories Stories outside the corpus are often categorized as *zhiguai* (another ancient term resurrected for purposes of modern classification), and as *yishi*, ‘apocryphal anecdotes’, and likewise subdivided by subject matter.

By pointing out this pattern of categories within a general habit of classificatory thinking, mutable and unstable as they are, the present paper aims to stress how little the whole system illuminates the literature itself. As students of China we should reach beyond the inherited categories of one or another generation of anthologists or literary historians: we should confront the primary texts as best we can in their own environment and accept all the complexity that may face us there.²²

For Dudbridge, this is very strong and passionate language indeed. The only problem is of course that many of his colleagues in literature were reading the classical tales of the Tang with thematic interests that were different from his own, such as the emergence of romance. At the same time, the May Fourth Movement that had raised the status of traditional narrative had also taught Chinese intellectuals to despise popular religion as superstition—and the anthropologists who worked on traditional religion were only rarely interested in the history of that tradition. Moreover, while it would appear that the young authors of a flurry of recent monographs on Tang tales and anecdotes have heeded Dudbridge’s urgent appeal to draw on as wide a selection of materials as possible, they do so from a non-religious perspective, and only rarely follow his example in reconstituting individual collections and studying their individual characteristics.

For yet another magisterial demonstration of what may be achieved by doing so, however, we only have to turn to Dudbridge’s last monograph, *A Portrait of Five Dynasties China: from the Memoirs of Wang Renyu (880–956)*, which came out in 2013.²³ Wang Renyu 王仁裕 hailed from Qinzhou and served under the Former Shu dynasty; when that regime was overthrown, he served the Later Tang and its successor states until his death. A prolific author, his collected works counted 685 scrolls upon his death, but hardly anything of his formal writings survives. Wang Renyu’s anecdotal writings enjoyed a better fate. The *Taiping guangji* includes over two hundred items of Wang’s collections of tales and anecdotes, *Yutang xianhua* 玉堂闲话 (Table-talk from the Hanlin Academy) and *Wangshi jianwen lu* 王氏见闻录 (Things Seen and Heard by Mr Wang):²⁴ ‘Both books offer testimony and comment in Wang Renyu’s

²²G. Dudbridge, ‘A question of the classification in Tang narrative: the story of Ding Yue’, in A. Cadonna (ed.), *India, Tibet, China: Genesis and Aspects of Traditional Narrative* (Florence, 1999), pp. 157–8. The article was reprinted in Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, pp. 192–213.

²³G. Dudbridge, *A Portrait of Five Dynasties China: from the Memoirs of Wang Renyu (880–956)* (Oxford, 2013).

²⁴Summaries of all these items are provided in an appendix.

own voice, and both equally offer pen-portraits of individuals, gossipy anecdotes, historical memories, legends attached to particular places, and the type of stories we would now call urban myths.²⁵ Translating a wide selection from these with detailed annotations, Dudbridge is able to present the ‘memoirs’ of someone who personally lived through one of the most chaotic and violent periods of Chinese history and was eyewitness to some of the most traumatic events. After the scene has been set in the first chapter, the second chapter deals with the oral traditions that developed around some of these happenings of the late ninth and early tenth century. While religion cannot be expected to play the same role in this volume as it did in the monograph on Dai Fu, the third chapter discusses ‘A World of Signs and Symbols’. Chapters four and five deal with Wang Renyu’s experiences in Shu and the people he encountered there, whereas chapter six is mostly taken up with the full translation of a long description of the fall of the Shu regime. The remaining chapters deal with Wang’s life at the central courts. Chapter eight is devoted to anecdotes concerning ‘Music and Musicians’ and chapter nine is titled ‘The Wild’, concerning hunting stories and animals. Before them, chapter seven is entitled ‘The Khitan’—Dudbridge writes:

The Khitan-related memoirs come down to us like nearly all the rest through the *Taiping guangji*. But three of them, the most important of the group, share an unusual circumstance. They vanished from the Chinese transmission of *Taiping guangji* and survive for us to read only in the Korean text *T’ae p’yŏng Kwang ki sang chŏl*.

This last title refers to a (partially preserved) Korean selection from the *Taiping guangji* that was printed in 1467 (so one hundred years earlier than the first preserved Chinese edition of *Taiping guangji*). Dudbridge continues:

What might that signify? We have seen that the early transmission of *Taiping guangji* in China before 1567 lies in shadow. But concealed in that shadow is the bulky presence of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, whose direct control covered China but not the Korean peninsula. It is irresistibly tempting to guess that the three ‘Khitan’ memoirs, filled with vigorous anti-barbarian sentiments, were deemed unwelcome and dispensable during the Mongol era, yet escaped the same attention in Korea, where an earlier edition was probably handed down. In any case, we are lucky to have them.²⁶

If Dudbridge is right in his suggestion that the *Taiping guangji* was censored in China during the Yuan, it becomes of course an even more problematical source than it already is on account of its hasty and shoddy compilation.

Even though Dudbridge’s research since the 1980s was focused on the classical tale of the Tang and Five Dynasties period, he remained at the same time very much inter-

²⁵Dudbridge, *A Portrait of Five Dynasties China*, p. 5.

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 146.

ested in Chinese vernacular and popular literature (and its relation to popular religion) of the late imperial period. We have already mentioned his ‘The *Hsi-yu chi* Monkey and the fruits of the last ten years’ of 1988, and his ongoing work on the legend of Miaoshan. His participation in the 1989 conference on ‘Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China’ resulted not only in the translation of chapters 68 and 69 of the seventeenth-century novel *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* that was published in the conference volume as ‘Women pilgrims to T’ai Shan: some pages from a seventeenth-century novel’,²⁷ but also in a detailed study of these chapters that was separately published in *T’oung Pao* as ‘A pilgrimage in seventeenth-century fiction: T’ai-shan and the *Hsing-shih yin-yüan chuan*’.²⁸ His work on the amorous deities of Mount Hua of the Tang also stimulated him to pursue the development of the legend of Chenxiang 沉香, especially in the Cantonese ballads known as *myuyshu* 木鱼书, in a very detailed article.²⁹ He also edited a number of late nineteenth-century articles on the aboriginal population of Taiwan.³⁰

Dudbridge used the opportunity of the opening of the Institute for Chinese Studies at the University of Oxford on 1 June 1995 to sketch his vision of the future of Chinese studies in a lecture entitled ‘China’s Vernacular Cultures’.³¹ While acknowledging the inevitability in many cases of a top-down study of Chinese culture on the basis of materials prepared by the political and cultural elite at the centre, Dudbridge made a plea for the equal role of the study of regional cultural traditions on the basis of local materials in order to do justice to the richness and variety of Chinese culture in all its complexity, past and present. In 2002, Dudbridge and Frank Pieke also initiated the series *China Studies* with the Leiden publisher Brill. The nigh on forty volumes that have appeared in this series so far have covered a wide range of topics, from traditional fiction to migrant communities in present-day Beijing.

With his mastery of both modern and classical Chinese, his formidable scholarship and his demanding standards, Dudbridge could be a forbidding teacher. But the stern

²⁷ G. Dudbridge, ‘Women pilgrims to T’ai Shan: some pages from a seventeenth-century novel’, in S. Naquin and Chün-fang Yü (eds.) *Pilgrims and Sacred Sites in China* (Berkeley, CA, 1992), pp. 39–64.

²⁸ G. Dudbridge, ‘A pilgrimage in seventeenth-century fiction: T’ai-shan and the *Hsing-shih yin-yüan chuan*’, *T’oung Pao*, 77 (1991), 226–52. Reprinted in Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, pp. 275–302, as ‘A pilgrimage in seventeenth-century fiction: Taishan and the *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*’.

²⁹ G. Dudbridge, ‘The goddess Hua-yüeh San-niang and the Cantonese ballad *Ch’en-hsiang T’ai-tzu*’, *Chinese Studies/Hanxue yanjiu*, 8 (1990), 627–46. Reprinted in Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, pp. 303–20.

³⁰ G. Taylor, *Aborigines of South Taiwan in the 1880s: Papers by the South Cape Lightkeeper*, edited by Glen Dudbridge (Taipei, 1999).

³¹ G. Dudbridge, *China’s Vernacular Cultures: an Inaugural Lecture Delivered before the University of Oxford on 1 June 1995* (Oxford, 1996). Reprinted in Dudbridge, *Books, Tales and Vernacular Culture*, pp. 217–37.

appearance hid a genial and friendly personality. His DPhil students remember their days with him most fondly.³² I personally could observe his efforts on behalf of international students in the 1980s and 1990s, when the ERASMUS programme enabled European universities to set up networks for the exchange of students in specific fields. Oxford and Cambridge participated in a network for Chinese studies that was coordinated from Leiden. In view of their fine facilities at home, the number of British students that were interested in spending a year on the Continent tended to be small, whereas there were always many continental students eager to spend a year at Oxford or Cambridge. Each year, Dudbridge went to great lengths to ensure that at least one continental student could come to Oxford, and that he or she would be housed in one of the colleges to make sure that they would share in the full Oxford experience. In many other ways he also showed his concern for the well-being of these special students.



³²The Festschrift published on the occasion of Dudbridge's retirement from the Chair at Oxford contained contributions by Alan Barr, Li-ling Hsiao, Chloë Starr, Alison Hardie, Rana Mitter, Carolyn Ford, Mark Strange and Daria Berg: D. Berg (ed.), *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse, Essays in Honour of Professor Glen Dudbridge* (Leiden, 2007).

As a member of the British Academy, Dudbridge played an active and important role in initiating and developing academic co-operation between China and the United Kingdom. His service to the British Academy had started in October 1979, even before he was elected a Fellow, on the occasion of the Academy's first delegation to China. The delegation included five Fellows (Alec Cairncross, Raymond Firth, James Joll, Toby Milsom and William Watson) and the Academy's Secretary. Because this group did not include a good Mandarin speaker, Dudbridge was invited to go with them. He was much younger than the rest of the delegates and consequently found himself used rather as if he were a member of staff, sorting out the various issues that arose. But from his point of view it was a tremendous opportunity—this was, after all, quite an early high-level humanities and social sciences academic delegation after the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death in 1976—and the delegation was received in the Great Hall by Deng Xiaoping (Dudbridge is at the far right in the back row in the photo on p. 15). The visit would lead, in 1980, to the signing of an exchange agreement with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, one of the first with a Western country (the Academy itself had only been established in 1977, when it was separated from the Chinese Academy of Sciences).

After he was elected a Fellow of the British Academy, Dudbridge sat on the China Selection Panel (responsible for the administration of the China exchange agreements) from 1987 to the end of 1997, serving as chair (after Alec Cairncross) from 1990 onwards. He also served on the Academy's Overseas Policy Committee from 1988 to 1995, where he proved to be a thoughtful and valuable member, willing and able to apply his experience and understanding to issues beyond his own specific interests. He also would go on two further British Academy delegations to China. In 1993, he was on the delegation led by Charles Feinstein, along with John Goldthorpe and Marilyn Strathern. Because Dudbridge was unwilling to fly internally in China, the trip involved long train journeys (Beijing to Xian, Xian to Chengdu) which were fascinating for his sociologist and social anthropologist companions. And in 1997, he was part of the delegation led by Tony Wrigley, along with Barry Supple and Jessica Rawson, which went to Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong (for talks with the KC Wong Foundation) and Taipei. On both these trips, Dudbridge was crucial in interpreting not merely the language but also the historical, social, cultural and academic contexts, in such a way as to help those members of the team who were not specifically sinologists, and his expertise was regularly deferred to.³³

³³ These two paragraphs on Dudbridge's service to the British Academy were contributed by Jane Lyddon, former head of International there.

When David Pollard, well known for his work on modern Chinese literature and the essay, reviewed Dudbridge's *The Tale of Li Wa*, he wrote:

I had almost forgotten what satisfaction and pleasure could be got from reading a work of good old-fashioned sinology. That satisfaction derives from following, at a remove, the patient assembly and collation of texts and commentaries from the libraries of the world, the methodological checking of the hard evidence upon which arguments have been based, taking nothing for granted in the process, and a cool appraisal of the legitimate limits of inference and speculation. The pleasure lies in being party to an imaginative reconstruction of what is known and enlargement of what is thought, still within the bounds of plausibility.³⁴

It is clear from these phrases that for Pollard 'good old-fashioned sinology' referred to the philological scholarship associated with the European tradition of sinology of the first half of the twentieth century. In a way, however, Dudbridge was even more 'old-fashioned' than that, because the China scholar he most often explicitly engaged with, especially in his *The Legend of Miaoshan* and in his *Religious Experience and Lay Society in T'ang China*, was the Dutch sinologist J. J. M. de Groot (1854–1921). For all his fame in his own time, de Groot was hardly mentioned in Leiden in my student days, as my teachers considered him at best a ghost from the past of no relevance whatsoever to their own work.³⁵ Dudbridge most probably had been introduced to the works of de Groot and their combination of ethnographical fieldwork with historical background studies by Piet van der Loon, who, like de Groot, was fascinated by the popular religious and literary traditions of south-east China. But Dudbridge was modern and unique in applying his philological skills to materials that were ignored by the sinologists of preceding generations, and stood apart from many of his colleagues by not searching for a 'system' or 'synthesis' but by his fascination with personal voices from the past.³⁶ At the same time, his interpretation of these voices was always informed by his broad reading in the social sciences and criticism.

Rereading Dudbridge's major publications in preparation for this memoir was both a pleasurable and a humbling experience. Of course I had read his works on first appearance, and consulted them on later occasions to my benefit, but reading them

³⁴D. E. Pollard, 'Review of G. Dudbridge, *The Tale of Li Wa*', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 116 (1984), 304–5.

³⁵So, they were quite surprised when in the late 1960s and early 1970s the British anthropologist Maurice Freedman (1920–1975) showed considerable interest in the works of de Groot, for instance in his 'On the sociological study of Chinese religion', in A. P. Wolf (ed.), *Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society* (Stanford, CA, 1974), pp. 19–41. Freedman joined Oxford University in 1970.

³⁶Dudbridge's work on Tang tales shows many similarities to the work of Robert Ford Campany on the classical tales of the pre-Tang period, as the latter likewise stresses that these tales should be seen as historical sources and not as failed precursors of fiction. Campany, however, has a background in religious studies and does not eschew synthesis.

again from cover to cover I was not only impressed anew by his sure command of his sources and the careful presentations of his findings, but also became aware of how much I had failed to notice earlier. Avoiding the use of fashionable jargon, Dudbridge's works show no signs of aging. With their unique combination of fine textual scholarship, extensive translations and probing analysis of detail, these publications will, I am sure, continue to inspire future generations of students of Chinese society and culture at large.

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