Baiben Zhang (Hundred Volumes Zhang): A Scribal Publisher in Nineteenth-century Beijing

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Agency: How Manuscripts Affect and Create Social Realities
Edited by Michael Kohs and Sabine Kienitz

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A ‘letter from Heaven’, ID no. I (33 J) 176/1963, Berlin, Museum of European Cultures (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Museum Europäischer Kulturen). Written in Ernstroda near Gotha, Thuringia, and dated 1776. The original sheet of paper was folded once, making four pages. Here we can see p. 1 with the title ‘Himmels=Brief, welchen, Gott selber geschrieben’ (‘Letter from Heaven, which God Himself has written’) and page 4. The written bifolium was then folded four times. Two words were visible on the two outer sides resulting from this: ‘Gottes Brief’ (‘God’s letter’), shown on p. 4. The upper part of the letter has been cropped and part of the illumination has been cut off. Photography: Christian Krug.
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Baiben Zhang (Hundred Volumes Zhang): A Scribal Publisher in Nineteenth-century Beijing

Zhenzhen Lu | Lewiston, Maine

Introduction

The scholarly narrative of literary production in late imperial China is dominated by print. Studies of publishing from the Song (960–1279) to the Qing (1644–1911) dynasty have shed much light on the social and cultural impacts of commercial woodblock printing, and have mapped the book trade from both the sides of production and reception. Yet the enduring market for handwritten books, and their copious production outside of elite circles, remains little inspected. This article explores a special corner in this field: the commercial production of entertainment literature by a prolific scribal publisher of late Qing Beijing.1

Early twentieth-century collectors in the Beijing area noticed the name ‘Baiben Zhang’ (Hundred Volumes Zhang) because it was ubiquitous. The shop, which produced manuscripts of texts spanning the range of northern genres of popular performing literature, belonged to a milieu of establishments in the city specialized in producing handwritten books of stories and songs for sale. Among the vast collection of books gathered by the Academia Sinica from the Beijing area during the Republican era (1912–1949), there were thousands of manuscripts produced by Baiben Zhang. There is also evidence to suggest that, among the two major collections of performance literature from Qing Beijing that became dispersed in the mid-1920s, the Che Wangfu 車王府 (Mansion of Prince Che) and Shengpingshu 昇平署 (Court Theatrical Bureau) collections, significant numbers of manuscripts originally came from the last role of manuscript culture in facilitating access to books and its continued presence in the lives of readers (McDermott 2006, 43–82).

Woodblock printing, which was present in East Asia by the early eighth century, was the dominant form of printing in China well into the nineteenth century. On the book trade in late imperial China, see Brook 1999, Brokaw 2007, Brokaw and Chow 2005, Chia 2002, Chow 2004 and Ōki 2004, among others; see also, Ding 2002, He 2013, Hegel 1998, Hsiao 2007, Keulemans 2007, Brokaw and Chow 2005, Chia 2002, Chow 2004 and Ōki 2004, among the growing number of studies by literary scholars that engage intensely with the subject of orthographic variation is not the focus of this study, however, I have not replicated every variant, but have in a few cases employed the closest approximations available.

The manuscripts examined in this article contain a mix of ‘simplified’ and ‘traditional’ characters. In citing text from them, I have generally tried to replicate the forms; as the potential ambiguities of the term ‘commercial publisher’ in the case of print publishing, see Chia 2002, 6–7 and McDermott 2015, 112–115.

I employ the term ‘entertainment literature’ to refer to a wide range of literature spanning the genres of drama and storytelling. The term has the benefit of not discriminating against social classes. I am inspired here by a conversation with Wilt Idema (6 July 2017, Leiden), who suggested the term in lieu of ‘popular literature’.

By ‘commercial production’ I refer to the systematic production of books for sale on the open market, which in this case can be clearly established from Baiben Zhang’s extant manuscripts, including sales catalogs. On the potential ambiguities of the term ‘commercial publisher’ in the case of print publishing, see Chia 2002, 6–7 and McDermott 2015, 112–115. I employ the term ‘entertainment literature’ to refer to a wide range of literature spanning the genres of drama and storytelling. The term has the benefit of not discriminating against social classes. I am inspired here by a conversation with Wilt Idema (6 July 2017, Leiden), who suggested the term in lieu of ‘popular literature’.
Baiben Zhang and similar outlets. The sheer quantity of manuscripts of commercial origin from a single area should draw our attention to their social and geographic context, as well as to the handwritten mode of production that made them available to readers and collectors.

Modern notions of publishing, in Chinese as in Japanese, are informed by strong associations with printing, as suggested by the very term chuban 出版 (‘to publish’) in reference to the printing block. But if one takes a more encompassing view of publishing as a process by which texts are made available to communities of readers, the scribal medium facilitated the propagation of a variety of literature in late imperial times. Just as manuscripts constituted a desired medium for distributing literature within exclusive coteries, so handwritten copies made a variety of entertainment literature available to wider communities of readers. A recent survey of the extant corpus of youth books (zidi shu 子弟書), a genre of verse narrative popular in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century north China, has highlighted the overwhelming proportion of handwritten texts in this genre in comparison with printed ones, while shedding light on a niche market for this literature dominated by Beijing’s scribal producers. The findings signal a large commercial landscape for the production of manuscripts in other genres of Chinese vernacular literature as well, whose detailed terrains remain to be explored.

The shops that produced handwritten books of entertainment literature in Qing Beijing were many and varied. Probably the most scholarly attention has been given to the lending shops of the late Qing that made a business of renting books of drum ballads and court-case fiction, exclusively hand-copied and catering to daily reading. An early study by Li Jiaway has described the rental of manuscripts at so-called ‘steamed bun shops’, whose exact

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5 The Chewangfu collection comprises a massive corpus of plays, ballads and fiction that surfaced in the second-hand book market of Republican-era Beijing, and that came into public attention when the books were acquired in large numbers by Beijing’s Kongde Xuexiao 孔德學校 (a secondary school named after the French philosopher Auguste Comte) in 1925 for its library. The precise identity of ‘Prince Che’ remains debated among scholars. On the provenance of this corpus, see Huang 2008, 140–151; for an overview of twentieth century Chinese scholarship on it, see Miao 2002. Huang Shizhong relates that, among some 285 manuscripts from this corpus which he studied at Peking University, a number bear traces of Baiben Zhang stamps that have been washed out incompletely, and he suggests that a larger number of them originally came from Baiben Zhang and other shops (Huang 2008, 149–51). As Huang’s survey is limited to one genre (zidi shu), just what proportion of all the manuscripts in the Chewangfu corpus has commercial origins is a subject that has yet to be investigated. The Shengpingshu was established in 1827 (after the previous Nanfu 南府) as the central institution for managing theatrical entertainment at the court, and it remained in function until 1924, when the Puyi emperor was ousted from the palace. At this time, the bureau’s large collection of manuscripts also became dispersed. Among Shengpingshu manuscripts in the present collection of Beijing’s Palace Museum (merely a part of the vast original collection of the bureau), there are 26 items bearing Baiben Zhang stamps and 53 additional ones likely of the same provenance, judging from the layout of their title pages (see photo reprints in Guogong zhenben congkan vols 697–699). The proportion of manuscripts of commercial origin in this corpus likewise needs investigation. On the history of Shengpingshu, see Ye 2012, 15–56; on the dispersal of the manuscripts in the 1920s and 53 additional ones likely of the same provenance, judging from the layout of their title pages (see photo reprints in Guogong zhenben congkan vols 697–699). The proportion of manuscripts of commercial origin in this corpus likewise needs investigation. On the history of Shengpingshu, see Ye 2012, 15–56; on the dispersal of the manuscripts in the 1920s and subsequent efforts to gather them, see Xiong 2011.

6 See Kornicki 2006, 23–24.

7 See Love 1993, 35–37, on ‘publish’ in the sense of ‘making public’ (restoring an older meaning of the term), which is central to his conceptualization of ‘scribal publication’ in seventeenth-century England. In his pioneering work, Love categorized scribal publication into three kinds – ‘author publication’, ‘entrepreneurial publication’ (‘copying manuscripts for sale by agents other than the author’) and ‘user publication’ (non-commercial replications) (Love 1987; 1993). In this scheme, the entrepreneurial productions that are the focus of this study make up only one form of scribal publication. Love does not make a case for quantity, but the large numbers of extant manuscripts from Baiben Zhang provide food for thought on this topic as well.

8 See Kornicki 2006, 23–24.

9 Lu 2018. It remains to be seen whether the youth book was a special case. For comparison, one might look at the drum ballad (guci 鼓詞), another popular northern genre for which Beijing was a major center of production in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While the texts did circulate locally through a variety of manuscripts, in this case their print production across varied locations (in the form of woodblock imprints and lithographs) was more substantial, judging by numbers of extant titles (see Wan 2020, 22, 34–38, 49–53).

10 On Beijing’s lending shops, see Li 1936; Zhang 1999b, 448–451; Shahar 1998, 125; Pan 1999; Cui 2017, 231–241; and Wan 2020, 36–37. There were also lending shops that rented out hand-copied novels in Fuzhou and Canton in the early 1800s; see McDermott 2006, 96–98.
nature remains contested; dates on extant manuscripts suggest that they were a popular phenomenon of the mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century.11 But lending shops were far from the only kind of scribal businesses that existed in late Qing Beijing. From around the same period, many other venues offered manuscripts of entertainment literature for sale. The impressive variety of their offerings can be discerned from extant books of popular songs, prosimetric stories, and various regional operas bearing the stamps of these establishments.12 Together they corroborate the existence of a thriving market for handwritten books nourished by the vibrant cultures of musical and theatrical entertainment in nineteenth-century Beijing.

In this study, the term ‘scribal publisher’ is used to describe Baiben Zhang and other venues that sourced, produced, and sold handwritten copies of entertainment literature, which can be ascertained on the basis of evidence from their manuscript products. By being responsible for this entire chain of activities, they were veritable publishers, whose range of products suggest not one but multiple clienteles with varying needs, purchasing powers, and interests in the entertainment offerings of Qing Beijing. In the sense that their books were produced through organized scribal production, they were also ‘copying houses’. While I also refer to them as ‘shops’, in recognition of their commercial nature, they are to be distinguished from bookshops that solely stocked and sold books; as we will see, the sales of manuscripts took place at regular temple markets as well as at the shops. Baiben Zhang is chosen as the focus of this first study for having the richest sources in extant manuscripts and anecdotal literature; further study of the vast corpus of extant manuscripts may reveal multiple kinds of scribal enterprises and business models.

The story of Baiben Zhang is one intimately linked to a place in time. This article thus begins with portrayals of Baiben Zhang in anecdotal accounts, and the world of temple fairs with which it is remembered by contemporaries and later collectors. In the absence of dates on the manuscripts themselves, these sources help to establish the shop’s flourishing in nineteenth-century Beijing while breathing imagination into the figure of its proprietor Zhang. Proceeding from literary sources to manuscript objects, this article next presents Baiben Zhang as a full-fledged business. Stamps and catalogs provide glimpses into practices from branding and sales to scribal production; the variety of extant products points to the scribal publisher’s participation in multiple entertainment cultures. The article concludes with reflections on Baiben Zhang the shop, its business model, and the factors that contributed to its success in an age commonly perceived to be dominated by print.

Part 1, Baiben Zhang in anecdotal sources
At the beginning of a sales catalog, Baiben Zhang advertises its products in a plethora of entertainment genres:13

11 In his early study (1936), Li Jiarui suggests that the ‘steamed bun shops’ (in Chinese: mantou pu 蒸錦頭舖, or more colloquially, zhenggao pu 燕頭铺) that rented out manuscripts of drum ballads and fiction were regular neighborhood shops that sold steamed buns. Zhang 1996b suggests rather that they were a different entity. In his account, they were shops that specialized in selling glutinous rice figurines (jiàngmǐ miàoren 江米黏人) of theatrical inspiration; he tells of storefronts in old times being decorated with banners inscribed with the names of opera scenes. At the door fronts, assortments of figurines clad in theatrical costumes were stuck all over the parapets on the city walls of a wooden model of the underworld city Fengdu 豊都. The model is known as a hushi louzi 朝食籃子 (‘house of offerings’—hushi refers to food for feeding the dead used in both Buddhist and Daoist rituals). The rental of manuscripts at these shops was initially a side business. The dated manuscripts from lending shops that were described by Li Jiarui date between the years 1862 and 1908. Zhang 1996b, 449, cites a passage from Yanshi jibi 燕市積弊 published in the Xuantong era (1909–1911) in the Jinghua xinbao 京華新報 newspaper describing the popularity of lending shops, which suggests that they were still around at that time. Zhang suggests that they died out around 1926, a few years after the demise of Baiben Zhang and other shops, but provides no information on how he obtained these dates (Zhang 1996b, 451).

12 Many such manuscripts can be found in the Sokodo Bunko 雙紅堂 collection in the library of the Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo 東洋文化研究所 at Tokyo University; they come from the former collection of the Japanese collector Nagasawa Kikuya 長澤規矩也 (1902–1980) (they are photo-reprinted in Huang and OKIE 2013). For a brief overview of the commercially produced manuscripts in this collection, see Huang 2011, 146–150.

13 The following text comes from Academia Sinica, ms Tj30-232, fols 1r–1v; the punctuation is mine. The manuscript has been rebound. The scholar Fu Xihua 傅惜華 (1907–1970) cites the same ad on the first folio of a sales catalog from Baiben Zhang entitled Erhuang xi mulu 二簧戲目錄 (Catalog of Erhuang opera) in his private collection (now at the Chinese National Academy of Arts 中國藝術研究院 in Beijing) (Fu 1954a, 319). The subject of sales catalogs such as these will be discussed in detail in the next part of this article.
date to that time or later, when many forms of drama and not evolve until the nineteenth century, the catalog would correspond to performed genres will need further investigation. From extant catalogs, we know that a number of other shops similarly sold hand-copied books of songs and stories, though we know far less about them than about Baiben Zhang. The shop has left its traces not only on considerable quantities of extant manuscripts but also in a wealth of anecdotal sources: a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century guidebook to Beijing, a song about a trip to a temple fair, notes by two early twentieth-century guides to Beijing, a mid nineteenth-century 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Fig. 1a: The Inner City and Outer City. Lithographed map of Beijing, early 20th century. Private collection, Hamburg. Original size: 63 x 56 cm.
privacy and protection from state surveillance. Gatherings took place around performances of eight-cornered drum songs (bajiao gu 八角鼓) and youth books (zidi shu 子弟書), popular forms of storytelling entertainment in bannermen circles, while they also increasingly included performances of scenes from plays, spurred by the popularity of commercial theater and restricted access to them in the Inner City. The theatrical activities of these clubs reached their height in the late nineteenth century, with over a dozen new clubs having been established in the Guangxu era (1875–1908). Gatherings took place almost entirely in the western section of the Inner City, with a major cluster in its northwestern section – in close vicinity to Baiben Zhang.

Located just south of Baiben Zhang’s home, the Huguo Temple (Huguo si 護國寺) was the site of one of the most important temple markets of Qing Beijing. The location must have made it convenient for the shop to transport its products to the fairs where it regularly sold its manuscripts. Along with the Longfu Temple (Longfu si 隆福寺) in the eastern part of the city, the Huguo Temple hosted markets on regular days of the month from the mid-eighteenth century into the first decades of the twentieth century. On these occasions, which were popular outlets of commerce and entertainment for Inner City residents, people from all over mingled and all kinds of things were sold. The fairs were also important sites for the circulation of books, which as early as Ming times took place at floating markets throughout the Inner City.

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21 See Liang 2018, 14–18, which includes a map.
22 On the two temples and their fairs, see Naquin 2000, 29–31, 115, 629–632; Beijing shi dongcheng qu yuanlinju 2002, 253–268; see also Wei 2018 on the Longfu Temple and the world of commerce associated with it during the Qing and Republican eras.
the city.\(^{22}\) Being attached to the ritual calendar meant that the sales of manuscripts were part of a larger flow of commodities linked to shared cycles of cultural time and to the locality.\(^{24}\) In anecdotal sources, Baiben Zhang is almost always remembered in connection with the fairs.

The figure of a Mr. Zhang at the temple markets who hand-copied songs for sale appears in the nostalgic reminiscences of an elderly gentleman of Beijing, Xiaolianchi Jushi \(\text{小蓮池居士} ('\text{Gentleman of the Little Lotus Pond}')\), a collector of youth books at the turn of the twentieth century. The youth book was a genre of musical storytelling that flourished in Qing Beijing, associated with the city’s bannermen and performed at private amateur gatherings, as well as at teahouses and other sites of entertainment.\(^{25}\) Sometime during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as they faded from performance, the texts came to be collected by readers with great nostalgia. In a preface to a collection of songs dated 1922, Xiaolianchi jushi recalls:

[...] 請子弟書始自韓氏，殆無不可，先生者，嘉道間嘗游于京師東郊之青門別墅，所謂撫棹樓也者，所製曲，屢肆競為刓版。廟市有張姓，亦勸稿鈔鬻之。余兒時，都市猶不乏屢肆刻本，劇社亦間有歌之者。每一思維，青鎻年來，長安惟重桃李，此曲人間無聞久矣。[...]

[...] Thus it can be said that the genre of the youth book originated with Mr. Han.\(^{26}\) Sometime between the Jiaqing \([1796–1820]\) and Daoguang reigns \([1821–1850]\) the master had visited the Blue Gate Mansion in the eastern suburbs of the capital, which was known as the Cane House. As for the lyrics that he composed, Liulichang’s shops competed to print them. In the temple markets, there was a man of surname Zhang, who also sought out the texts, which he hand-copied and sold. When I was a boy, in the city markets there was no lack of woodblock-printed youth books from Liulichang’s shops, and at theatrical gatherings they were still occasionally sung. Every so often, I think back upon those days; since I have become an old man, people in the capital have cared for nothing but sensuous music. These songs have long been lost among men.\(^{27}\)

Mr. Zhang is remembered in connection with the songs of a bygone era, as one who hand-copied songs for sale while the shops of Liulichang competed to print them. In his time, the aging Xiaolianchi jushi was not the only one to remember the music and the books. His preface appears in an anthology of a hundred works in twenty fascicles, edited and compiled by a friend and fellow collector, Jintai Sanweishi \(\text{金臺三畏氏} ('\text{The Thrice-Reverent One of the Golden Terrace}')\), another gentleman of Beijing.\(^{28}\) In his preface, Sanweishi expresses his gratitude to Xiaolianchi Jushi for letting him copy works from his collection, and relates the fate of his own collection of youth books, which had once numbered over one hundred but had in the meantime became dispersed during the sieges on the capital in the year 1900. The present anthology, he wrote, was the result of great efforts to reclaim a number of youth book texts as their author. The translated passage continues in this vein (‘Mr. Han’ refers to Han Xiaochuang). On the works attributed to this prolific early composer of youthbooks and questions surrounding his biography, see Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, 4468–4479.

\(^{22}\) Writing in the Wanli \((1573–1620)\) era, Hu Yinglin \(\text{胡應麟} ('\text{Hutu Biyan}')\) records book markets that gathered with the schedule of the metropolitan examinations and also took place on a monthly basis at the City God’s Temple in the western part of the city (see Hu 1958, 56).

\(^{24}\) Temple markets as sites of book distribution have yet to be more fully studied. The experiences of buying books at temple fairs appear in a number of anecdotal accounts by Qing literati: in his essay from the Qianlong era on Luliangch, Li Wenzao \(\text{李文藻} (1730–1778)\) includes a description of booksellers at Longfu Temple \((\text{Lü Lü Tang Yin Guan})\); a contemporary, Dai Lu \(\text{戴璐} (1739–1806)\), reminisces on the temple fairs at the Ciren Temple \(\text{慈仁寺} ('\text{The Thrice-Reverent One of the Golden Terrace}')\) in the Outer City, long gone by his time, which in their glory days in the early Qing saw the likes of the great scholar-official Wang Yuyang \(\text{王漁洋} ('\text{Fangjiigion})\), who was also a collector of books. Dai Lu states that a man of surname Li \(\text{李} ('\text{Qingzhou Li'})\) would come on the day of the Chongyang Festival to the temple fairs and print his works from his collection, and relates the fate of his own collection of youth books, which had once numbered over one hundred but had in the meantime became dispersed during the sieges on the capital in the year 1900. The present biography, see Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, 4468–4479.

\(^{26}\) As with Xiaolianchi Jushi, the real name of Sanweishi is unknown; Sanwei is his courtesy name and Lütang yinguan \(\text{綠棠吟舘} ('\text{Poetry Studio of the Green Pear Trees}')\) is his studio name. ‘Sanwei’ 三畏 comes from Analects 16.8, ‘Confucius said, “The gentleman has three things he stands in awe of. He stands in awe of the Mandate of Heaven, of persons in high positions, and of the words of the sages.”’ 君子有三畏：畏天命，畏大人，畏聖人之言 \(\text{Wang Watson} (2007, 116)\).

\(^{27}\) Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, 4455. The italics are mine. The preface is signed ‘On the day of the Chongyang Festival in Autumn 1922, written by the Gentleman of the Little Lotus Pond at Hanyanmao Studio, Shichahai’ (1914–1995) (shelfmark \(\text{yi} 486\)).
the works. In the ‘Fanli’ 凡例 (Editorial principles) section, Sanweishi recalls:

是種詞曲在咸, 同以來, 穎盛興一時, 故前門外打磨廠
一帶鋪肆, 多有刊板出售者。此外如東城之隆福寺, 西
城之護國寺, 有所謂百本張者, 亦出品此項鈔本之書
目。自庚子兵災以後, 而鋪肆既相繼廢棄, 則百本張亦
香如黃鶴焉。…

Since the Xianfeng [1851‒1861] and Tongzhi [1862‒1874] reigns, this genre of songs was rather in vogue, and so many of the shops in the Damochang area outside of Qianmen had them carved and printed for sale. There was, in addition, the so-called ‘Baiben Zhang’ at the Longfu Temple in the eastern part of the city and the Huguo Temple in the western part of the city, who sold catalogs of hand-copied youth books. But ever since the sieges of the Gengzi year [1900], the shops of Liulichang shut down one after another, and Baiben Zhang was also gone like the yellow cranes …

This passage gives the most precise dates for Baiben Zhang in extant sources, linking the sales of manuscripts to the heyday of youth book performances in the late nineteenth century, and marking 1900 as a clear date for when it ceased. While it is ambiguous whether ‘Baiben Zhang’ refers to a person or a shop, the specificity with which Sanweishi recalls the sales catalogs suggests that he was intimately acquainted with the books. Like the account of Xiaolianchi Jushi, Sanweishi’s narrative subtly positions the manuscript-seller of the temple books. Like the account of Xiaolianchi Jushi, Sanweishi recalls:

…

When [the gentleman] came to the Eastern Stele Pavilion and saw Baiben Zhang with books of tales and plays laid out, he perused them for a long time and said, looking at Zhang Da: ‘I’d like to order a copy of The Cases of Judge Shi, And also a copy of The Green Peony, just as if Shi Yukun [had told the story].’

Zhang Da did not say anything and frowned;

Besides the reminiscences of these collectors, Baiben Zhang is mentioned in books from its own time. A lively narrative of shopping at a temple fair can be found in Wandering through the Huguo Temple, a youth book composed probably in the early to mid-nineteenth century. The song, which recounts a wealthy gentleman’s wanderings through the Huguo Temple on the day of a fair, takes the reader along for a dazzling tour of the objects, foods, and performances that he sees. There, the Zhang brothers make a curious appearance:

至東碑亭見百本張擺着書戲本
他翻來了多時, 望着張大把話云:
我定抄一部施公案
再抄一部綠牡丹, 亞賽石玉昆
張大不語扭着個臉
又見張二在傍邊捏著泥人
他說: 這人兒眉眼兒精神兒做的真奇特
就只是哄孩子拿在家中, 一會兒工夫就稀爛無存
張二說: 石頭的也怕碰, 不然咱們將鉄人鋸
他說: 哎呀呀, 我可拿不起來, 那麼挺沉

The approximate date can be inferred from known biographical information about the text’s author, who is mentioned in the story itself to be Helishi 鶴仕氏 (‘Mr. Companion to the cranes’), or Aisin Gioro Yigeng 義 геро (1809–1848), twelfth son of Prince Zhuang 賢親王 (Mianke 錦駒, 1763‒1826). On his life and other works, see Chen 2003b, 76‒77, Chiu 2018, 236‒257, and Huang-Deiwiks 2000, 65‒66. Guan 1991, 17, dates this text to the period spanning the Daoguang (1821‒1850) and Xianfeng (1851‒1861) eras.

One skillful reading has highlighted the multi-media and multi-sensory nature of this marketplace, where performances and objects were likewise commodities (Keulemans 2014, 113‒124). This song has also been treated in Chiu 2019, 52‒53 and 276‒278; Wan 2020, 34‒36.

Later scholars have attributed the decline of Baiben Zhang to the advent of lithography; see Fu 1954a, 317, and Zhang 1996a, 446. Zhang dates Baiben Zhang’s closing to around 1921, but unfortunately does not give further information. Corroborating Sanwei’s account of 1900 as the date when Baiben Zhang closed shop, this year is given on the inside case covers of a series of Baiben Zhang manuscripts by their collector, signed Nahata, as the time when he had them rebound (Capital Library, yi 乙, 448; these manuscripts are discussed in more detail in the last section of this article). The fact that by then Baiben Zhang manuscripts were clearly collector’s items suggests that they were no longer part of the circulating entertainment literature.
Then [the gentleman] saw Zhang Er beside him, with his display of clay figurines.

[The gentleman] said: ‘These figures have such exquisite expressions!

Only, if one were to bring them home to entertain the children, they’ll be beat up into a mash in no time.’

Zhang Er replied: ‘Why, even stone would fear being smashed – lest we mold the figures from iron!’

The gentleman said: ‘My goodness, I won’t be able to pick those up, they’d be much too heavy.’

The scene vividly portrays an encounter between the gentleman and the Zhang brothers. The man’s exchanges as he wanders through the temple market show that he was a regular there, but not always welcomed by proprietors, especially as he flaunts his wealth and worldly knowledge but fails to commit to purchasing. While the scene appears as part of a literary representation, we notice two things: the manuscripts and figurines were on display at a stall of sorts and sold side by side, and the gentleman came to a decision to ‘order copies’ (dingchao 定抄) of specific titles after perusing books on display – possibly model books or catalogs. The Cases of Judge Shi, of which the gentleman wanted a copy, belonged to a group of court-case stories that was widely popular in nineteenth-century Beijing, propagated through performances, handwritten copies, and printed books.34 The Green Peony was the title of a well-known martial arts novel that was widely printed during the same period, while the mention here of the famed Beijing storyteller Shi Yukun 石玉昆 (fl. Daoguang era, 1821‒1850) would rather seem to point to a prosimetric version of the story closely related to performance.35 Later in the narrative, the gentleman wanders to the stall of another bookseller, Tongletang 同樂堂 ( ‘House of mutual delight’), which, like Baiben Zhang, had ‘books of tales and plays’ (shuxi ben 書 戲本) on display.36 There, the proprietor presents his client with two newly composed works by Helülü, one of which is Wandering though the Huguo Temple. ‘These two new tales are rather witty’ (zhe liang hui xinhui dao huxie 这兩回新書到詒誼), pleads the proprietor eagerly.37 In the marketplace of books, a story that is new and up-to-date is apparently a desirable commodity.

The floating sites of the temple fair stalls and the image of Mr. Zhang the person are likewise evoked in an expanded edition of the popular nineteenth-century guidebook, Dumen jilüe 都門紀略 (Records of the Capital), which introduced the sights and shops of the capital to sojourning merchants and other visitors.38 An entry ‘Baiben Zhang’ appears in a section on ‘Skills’ 技藝, amid a list of curiosities ranging from tooth-pulling medicine to wrestling performances:

此人所賣者，皆是細小之物，但其樣式、材料，皆照市巿所用之大傢俱無二，能做大作小，曲贊 其妙。雖為 供搢紳少年之玩賞，而其心思之精巧，可謂極矣。在東 西廟及廠甸等處出鬻。

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34 The cases of Judge Shi are the subject of an early court-case adventure novel with a preface dated to 1798; on extant printed edition, which all date to the nineteenth century, see Ótsuka 1987, 169‒170. The stories were also the subject of plays and prosimetric performances in the Beijing area (see Zhao 1936 and Miao 1998a, 109‒110; Wan 2009, Wan 2010, and Wan 2020, which also discuss The Green Peony). Just what kind of text is requested by the gentleman in this scene is a topic for investigation, as is the relationship between the varied media of performance, manuscript and print in the circulation of court-case stories in the Qing. On this topic, see Blader 1977; Cui 2008; Keulemans 2014; Miao 1998a and 1998b; and especially Wan 2020.

35 Later in the narrative, the gentleman wanders to the stall of another bookseller, Tongletang 同樂堂 (‘House of mutual delight’), which, like Baiben Zhang, had ‘books of tales and plays’ (shuxi ben 書 戲本) on display. There, the proprietor presents his client with two newly composed works by Helülü, one of which is Wandering through the Huguo Temple. ‘These two new tales are rather witty’ (zhe liang hui xinhui dao huxie 这兩回新書到詒誼), pleads the proprietor eagerly. In the marketplace of books, a story that is new and up-to-date is apparently a desirable commodity.

36 The story divulges that the proprietor ‘newly added small pictures [in the books] in the hopes of striking it rich’ 近日他新添小畫想發財 (Sawunnixe congkan vol. 398, 630), so he was selling illustrated books. It is not clear to me whether Tongletang’s books were hand-copied or printed.

37 The version I have consulted is an expanded edition, entitled Xinzeng Dunye jilüe zaji 新增都門紀略, dated Tongzi 4 (1865), printed by an unspecified Liulichang print shop; the line Luliangch ang congkan 琉璃嶺書坊藏板 (‘the blocks are kept by the print shop at Liulichang’) appears on the cover. It is digitized from the collection of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin. The punctuation in the Chinese text cited below is mine.
What this person sells are all trifles, yet in style and material they are just like the full-sized furniture of the city shops; made smaller in size after the likeness of the big objects, they are utterly exquisite. Though they are for the amusement of youths from well-to-do families, utmost thought has been put into their making. They are sold on display at the Eastern and Western Temples and in the Changdian area, among other places.

Here Mr. Zhang appears as a seller not of manuscripts, but rather of exquisite miniatures. The description of ‘youths from well-to-do families’ who purchased the objects for amusement is a particularly suggestive one. As a guidebook that boasts insider’s looks into the capital’s shops – and that thrives on its own fashioning of what is caché – its description probably contains a measure of exaggeration. At the same time, the passage reveals something about the status of the miniatures as collectibles; one may imagine the manuscripts to have had a similar status and clientele.

Still another account of Baiben Zhang can be found in the extensive anecdotal collection Qing bai leichao 清稗類鈔 (A categorized compendium of miscellaneous accounts from the Qing dynasty), compiled in the Republican era, which gives a lively account of Zhang the man. He is the protagonist of an entry entitled ‘Niefen’ (Squeezing dough). The entire entry is translated below.

The art of ‘squeezing dough’ transmitted in recent times is a display of utmost skill. [The dough-artist can portray his subject] down to every strand of his brow and beard. Though there is oil painting, painting with pigments, and brush painting, they are all looked down upon by him. The way it is done is as follows: he takes a ball of flour and asks the client to sit across the table from him. Without looking down for a second, he squeezes the dough into the subject’s likeness covertly under his sleeves. When he is finished and takes out the figurine, there is not a single dent and bulge, line or crease on it that does not match exactly [the subject’s] face.

In the Guangxu era, one who was adept at this was a Mr. Zhang of Tianjin. In the beginning, he had copied operas for people, and was therefore extremely knowledgeable in all manners of things. He could reconcile and correct the differences among the various librettos to the point of perfection, and got his name from this; the Tianjinese called him ‘Hundred Volumes Zhang’.

Once the name ‘Baiben Zhang’ got out, his true name became obscure. Later on he switched his profession and learned to squeeze dough. He became adept in the art, yet being proud and aloof in his nature, he would not accede to pleas with cash unless he was depleted of funds and on the brink of starvation. At the time, Hai Zhang Wu [‘loaded Zhang Wu’] was the richest among the billionaires of Tianjin, and one day Zhang deigned to visit his door, imploring to borrow five thousand cash. Hai Zhang Wu refused. Zhang said: ‘So you don’t agree. Will you really not have any regrets?’ Hai Zhang Wu replied, ‘What can there possibly be to regret?’

Zhang left, and afterward he molded into shape a figure matching the height and girth of Hai Zhang Wu, which he stood up on the main thoroughfare with a straw sign stuck on its head that said, ‘Hai Zhang Wu for sale’. Passers-by, struck by it, took it to be the real Hai Zhang Wu; upon further inspection, they realized it was a sculpture of the man. This made Hai Zhang Wu so ashamed that he made up his mind to pay the five thousand cash. That was eventually settled.

近畿所傳捏粉之術，匠心獨運。鬚眉畢現。雖油畫鉛畫，毛筆畫等，方之蔑如也。其法取麵粉一團，與求畫者對案坐。目不轉瞬，私自於袖底捏其形狀。捏成，取出。則面部上之一凹一凸，一紋一縷。無不纖微適合。擅此技者，光緒朝為津人張姓。張初為人鈔錄戲曲。顧記聞極博。能將各曲本互異之處，折衷改正。期於盡善而止。以是得名。津人稱之曰百本張。自百本張之號出。而其真姓名轉隱。後改學捏粉。精其技。然性傲僻。非遇囊空爨絕。持金求之。不應也。時天津巨富首推海張五。張一日踵門往訪。乞借五千金。海張五拒之。張曰。君不應我。能無後悔乎。曰。何悔之有。張退。乃依海張五之身量長短肥瘦。捏成一形。置之通衢。而插草標於其首。曰。出賣海張五。過者驟見之。以為真海張五也。即而視之。乃啞然失笑。詢其價值。則以五千金對。少一文不售也。海張五素以財力雄視一方。聞之。引為大辱。而又莫可如何。乃潛使門客。如數購之。而與張言和焉。張晚年目盲。偶塲地。折傷肢體。不能營舊業。遂困頓以死。
examination, they would break into laughter. When asked the figure’s price, Zhang would reply ‘five thousand cash’, and would not sell it for a dime less. Hai Zhang Wu, who had dominated the land with the power of his wealth, found this tremendously humiliating when he heard about it, but could do nothing. He secretly sent a retainer to buy the figure for the asked price and made peace with Zhang.

Zhang became blind in his old age. On one occasion, he fell and broke his limbs. Being unable to maintain his livelihood, he died in poverty.

In this account, Mr. Zhang was the protagonist of a delicious story of a humble artisan who outwitted a rich man, possessed of perfect skill in his trade yet not making obeisance to wealth and power. The story, with its colorful characters and narrative flourishes, has the flavor of hearsay rather than historical fact. Given that in all the other sources, Baiben Zhang was located in Beijing, the compiler here most probably confused its proprietor with a contemporary of the same surname, Zhang Changlin 張長林 (courtesy name Mingshan 明山, 1826–1906) of Tianjin, who was a skilled maker of theatrical figurines. Just like the dough-artist recounted in the story, Zhang Mingshan was known to have possessed the skill of squeezing clay into the likeness of real persons while sitting across from them. His theatrical figurines were apparently collected by foreign visitors for high prices and displayed in museums; he was also said to have made ‘little portraits’ (小照) for people.

That the Qing bai leichao confused the two Zhangs, one from Beijing and one from Tianjin, probably has something to do with the fact that Baiben Zhang had at one point sold miniature figurines, as corroborated by the accounts in the youth book and in the guidebook Dumen jilüe cited earlier. The art of making theatrical figurines was popular in many areas of China in the nineteenth century, both in Jiangnan and the north, and the existence of commercial workshops that produced both manuscripts and figurines is a topic that merits further exploration. Like figurines, manuscripts were handmade objects; while differing in their raw materials, the two trades shared a common connection with a world of entertainment, which generated continual demand for fine, handmade, collectable things.

While the Qing bai leichao anecdote tells the story of a proud artisan who had utter disregard for commerce, it can also be read as an ironic comment on the power dynamics of the urban marketplace. Whatever we might make of the story and the other anecdotes before it, we can observe a few things about Baiben Zhang the business: its links to the world of theater and storytelling performance; its life connected to the temple fairs; its urban, commercial setting; and its date in the mid- to late nineteenth century. While these sources provide rich food for the imagination, in the next part of the article we examine extant manuscripts for a glimpse of the real-life operations of Baiben Zhang. They go far beyond the figure of Zhang the man, real or imagined, to reveal a full-fledged business operation.

Part 2, The operations of a scribal publisher
Extant manuscript sources reveal Baiben Zhang to have been a leading producer in what was a highly competitive business of copying manuscripts of entertainment literature for sale. Thousands of manuscripts gathered during the Republican era, scattered among various collections in Asia today, attest to the quantity and variety of output from scribal producers of Qing Beijing. For all their wealth, the commercial origins of

42 The Qing bai leichao, first printed in the Republican era, was the product of a complex process of compilation. In the section on editorial principles preceding the main text, the compiler Xu Ke 徐珂 (1869–1928) divulges that its sources ranged from his personal jottings to books in his private collection, and still to newspapers, which often did not record their sources in detail. Xu further noted that, ‘when it comes to what is chronicled, I do not dare to boast about the thoroughness of evidence, but have mostly made it a point that [stories] possess beginnings and endings’ 凡所記載，固不敢以考證精詳自詡。要以具有本末者為多。 See ‘Fanli’ (Editorial principles), 2–3, in Xu Ke 1917 (rpt. 1966), vol. 1.


44 Likewise, the topic of how traditional clay sculpture flourished alongside other varieties of portraiture from painting to photography merits further study. On portraiture (painting) in the Ming and Qing, see Ruttenbeek 2017.

45 While the subject of collections merits a study of its own, a note is due on Beijing’s special place in this history. In the 1920s and 1930s, the city was a locus of activity among China’s elite, whose intense interest in the literary past outside of the canons was accompanied by active efforts to collect, on both institutional and private levels, diverse kinds of vernacular literature ranging from drama and fiction to folk songs and stories (see Hung 1985). In the collections that formed in this period, the antique book dealers of Liulichang played a major role. Baiben Zhang manuscripts were ubiquitous and appeared in many different collections. Notable figures to mention include Liu Fu 劉復 (Liu Bannong 劉半農) (1891–1934), who together with his assistant Li Jiuru 李季瑞 (1895–1975) collected thousands of manuscripts from Baiben Zhang for the Academia Sinica (see Fu 1954, 329, prefaces in Liu and Li 1932 and in Li 1933, and Wang Fansen 1998, 124–130; also see Bordahl 1999 and Zeng 2010 for general background on the collection, presently at the Fu Sinian Library at Academia Sinica in Taipei). Fu Xiuxia 傅惜華 (1907–1970) and Wu Xiaoling 吳曉玲 (1914–1995), both Beijing natives from a slightly later generation of scholar-collectors, privately
these manuscripts have not yet been systematically examined, while many of the books have lost their original appearance in the course of collection and preservation. With further study pending, this section of the article takes a first look into the operations of Baiben Zhang as a scribal publisher. Three aspects are examined: branding, sales, and scribal production.

Branding
That selling manuscripts of entertainment literature was a competitive business is attested by the variety of stamps branding the manuscript products. Stamping was a common practice for branding handcrafted goods, on manuscripts of commercial origin, a stamp bearing the name of the shop typically appears on the title page. In his early study, Fu Xihua had enumerated nine different kinds of stamp and stamp combinations from Baiben Zhang, the greatest variety among known shops. Several kinds of common stamps can be seen today. The most elaborate one is a rectangular stamp with the characters ‘Baiben Zhang’ in the middle.

46 These include paper; see Chang 2012 on papermakers’ stamps found in printed books and manuscripts from the Qing dynasty. See Huang 2008, 151, on stamps containing the characters Renlihe ji 仁利和記 that he noticed inside two youth books, which have also been found by the scholar Boris Rifin (Li Fuqing 李福清) inside a handwritten copy of the novel Guwangyan 姑妄言 (Words of delusion) held in Russia. Huang suggests they are the stamps of a papermaker.

47 In this article, I refer to the first page of extant manuscripts bearing the title of the text as the ‘title page’. In many cases, they were probably the front covers, but it is possible that some manuscripts also had covers that originally went over the title page but became lost in the process of being rebound. Typically, the genre of the text is labeled below the title, along with the price of the manuscript.

(Fig. 2); the ornamental frame contains the motifs of plum blossoms, bamboo, pines, and chrysanthemums interspersed among the characters tong sou wu qi 童叟無欺 (‘[we] do not fool the young or the elderly’) in the left column and yan wu er jia 言無二價 (‘no less than the stated price’) in the right. A character at the top of the frame and another at the bottom make up the word shichuan 世傳 (‘passed on for generations’). On manuscripts I have seen, the stamp impressions measure between 3.7 by 5.7 cm and 3.9 by 5.9 cm. Often this stamp is accompanied by another stamp on its right side, stating ‘from the Qianlong era to today; we don’t haggle’ you Qianlong nian qi zhi jin / shaqian bumai bie huanjia 由乾隆年起至今/少錢不賣別還價 (Fig. 2).49

Besides the stamp of Baiben Zhang with floral decorations, there is another black stamp bearing Baiben Zhang’s name that appears on the title pages of manuscripts (Fig. 3). Measuring approximately 2.7 by 4.6 cm, it bears a frame of geometric patterns and contains six characters in the middle, in two columns and divided by a line, stating ‘don’t haggle / Baiben Zhang’ (bie huanjia / Baiben Zhang 別還價 / 百本張). This stamp may appear alone or in combination with another red stamp giving the address of the shop. Most commonly seen is the address of Tall Well Alley (Gaojing Hutong 高井胡同) on the Main Street inside Xizhi Gate (Xizimen Dajie 西直門大街) (as in Fig. 4), but on one occasion (Fig. 5) I have come across a stamp stating ‘Baiben Zhang, located at Xinjiekou / Vegetable Garden Alley Number Six’ (zhu Xinjiekou Caizhuang Liu- / tiao Hutong Baiben Zhang 住新街口菜園六 / 條胡同百本張). Given that the two addresses are in close proximity to each other in the northwestern section of the Inner City, they were probably not different ‘branch’ sites, but rather indicate that the shop changed its location over time. The latter address was most probably the earlier one.50

Fu Xihua has noted still other stamps on the front of manuscripts. One stamp has bie huanjia / Baiben Zhang 別還價 / 百本張 enclosed by a simple double-line rectangular frame, which Fu suggests to date to the earliest time in the life of the shop; at times it is accompanied by a red stamp below it, stating ‘look carefully / no returns’ (dang mian kan ming / na hui bu huan 當面看明 / 拿回不換).51 There exists still another red stamp that states, ‘Patrons, please correctly distinguish [the products of] Baiben Zhang: “I readily make Huqiu [style] playthings; the theatrical figurines represent the joyous scenes of musical performance”’; then [the manuscript] is genuine’ (fan cigu zhe renzhun Baiben Zhang ziji cheng zuo Huqiu wan / wu xiren dai su xingyue xirong bian zhi zhen buwu 凡赐顧者認準百本張：自己成做虎丘頑物戲人，代塑行樂喜容，便是真不悞).52 The curious couplet contained in these lines, while referring to the theatrical figurines sold by Baiben Zhang, may have served another function. Possibly it was a code for clients

49 This has led scholars to believe that Baiben Zhang existed since the Qianlong era, but perhaps it is best interpreted as an advertisement until other sources are found. Here and below, I use ‘/’ to indicate the divisions of columns as they appear in the stamps.

50 On the manuscript in which the latter stamp appears, see note 80. This is the earliest known catalog of youth books, and an exception also in the sense that it is preserved with its original cover and binding, with no title page but the stamp appearing on the first inside folio. This stamp was not described by Fu Xihua and would appear to be an addition to the nine types of stamps and stamp combinations he enumerated. The same applies to the stamp depicted in Fig. 4; Fu describes several stamps containing the same Gaojing Hutong address, but they are worded slightly differently (Fu 1954a, 318–319).

51 Fu 1954a, 317–318; image 331.

52 Fu 1954a, 317–318. The punctuation is mine. Fu parses the lines differently (自己成做虎丘頑物戲人，代塑行樂喜容).
to affirm the authenticity of the products, but just how exactly this functioned remains to be investigated.\textsuperscript{53}

Besides stamps on the title pages, there are also those that appear on the back of manuscripts. There is a long red stamp, with densely packed text in three columns and measuring 1.8 by 8.4 cm (Fig. 6):

\begin{quote}
本堂書戲岔嘍\textsuperscript{54}, 當日挑看明白, 言明隔期兩不退換, / 諸公君子莫怪, 由乾隆年迄至今, 少錢不賣, 住西直 / 門內高井胡同中間東小胡同東頭路北, 張姓行二。
\end{quote}

[If you wish to purchase] the stories and songs of this house, carefully select [the books] on the day of purchase; we have the express policy of not accepting returns or exchanges of items past the date, and seek you gentlemen's understanding. From the Qianlong era to the present, we have not sold our products for less than the stated price. [Our shop] is located north of the eastern end of the East Little Alley, midway down Tall Wall Alley inside Xizhi Gate. [My] surname is Zhang; [I am] second in the family line.\textsuperscript{55}

These lines caution customers, again, that once sold, manuscripts are not to be returned or exchanged. The instructions to ‘carefully select [the books] on the day of purchase’ suggest that customers were given the chance to examine products before making purchasing decisions. This calls to mind the temple market displays for which Baiben Zhang was known, where probably selections of products were readily available for purchase.\textsuperscript{56} The no-return policy may be directed against customers who take manuscripts home simply to read and then return them, and distinguishes Baiben Zhang from lending shops.\textsuperscript{57}

The resemblance between the name of Baiben Zhang and that of a certain ‘Baiben Gang’ 百本剛 (‘Hundred volumes strong’) has led one scholar to suggest that the latter may have been an early incarnation of Baiben Zhang.\textsuperscript{58} Like Baiben Zhang, Baiben Gang has a variety of stamps. The most striking one is a rectangular black stamp that appears on the title pages of manuscripts,

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{fig6.png}
\caption{Fig. 6: Baiben Zhang stamp on the last folio verso, Qianjin quande zidi shu di ba hui (The golden hairpin, a youth book, the third chapter), National Library of China, ms no. 107299.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{fig7.png}
\caption{Fig. 7: Baiben Gang / Yijuantang stamp on the title page of Yuzan ji zidi shu san hui (The golden hairpin, a youth book, the third chapter), Capital library of China, yi 乙, 506.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{53} Lei Mengshui, who worked in Liulichang bookshops in the Republican era, tells of a practice used by antiquarian bookshops to encode prices using couplets. Books had both clearly marked prices and ‘secret’ prices, denoted by combinations of characters selected from special ten-character couplets known only to insiders. With significant differences between the marked prices and ‘secret’ prices, the system privileged distinguishing customers (Lei 1988, 70‒71). The Baiben Zhang couplet is clearly something else, but the last line (‘then [the manuscript is genuine]’) suggests that it served some kind of authenticating function.

\textsuperscript{54} This character, of uncommon orthography, stands here for the character 曲 ('tune'); in the present context, 曲 (‘song’) seems to refer to songbooks generally, while elsewhere it denotes a genre, such as when it is referred to as zidi chaqu子弟岔曲 (‘bannermen’s ditty’; ref. the ad cited earlier). The character 曲 also appears in the title of a Baiben Zhang sales catalog of ‘port tunes’ (matou diao三頭銘), where it is used interchangeably with the character 曲 (see Matou diao shanggu mahu, Appendix 2).

\textsuperscript{55} National Library of China, ms no. 107299. The punctuation is mine. This stamp is also described in Fu 1954a, 318. One might note that, in Wandering through the Huguo Temple, there were two Zhangs – the younger brother, Zhang Er (‘Zhang number two’) was the one who sold clay figurines.

\textsuperscript{56} Given that sales catalogs from Baiben Zhang list hundreds of titles, it is hard to imagine that it had all its products on display. Probably sales took places through a combination of purchases on the spot and pre-ordering through sales catalogs; this topic will be discussed in detail in the next section.

\textsuperscript{57} One might also take into account the books’ physical features. Manuscripts from lending shops are often made of durable, thick paper to stand wear and tear, while bearing elaborate stamps detailing lending policies such as daily exchange of books and loss of the initially paid deposit with their untimely return (Li 1933, 161). Baiben Zhang manuscripts, in contrast, tend to use thin paper, which corroborate their status as collectibles rather than books for frequent use. Sun 1999 has described Baiben Zhang as a lending shop, but does not provide evidence for this and seems to have confused some sources.

\textsuperscript{58} Huang 2008, 150‒151.
with the characters **Yijuantang / Baiben Gang** (‘House of million scrolls / Hundred volumes strong’) inside a frame of geometric patterns (Fig. 7). The frame and double column design make the stamp highly reminiscent of a common Baiben Zhang stamp (Fig. 3). Four tiny characters are embedded in the left part of the frame, spelling out **jingdu di yi** (‘number one in the capital’); another four characters are embedded in the right part, which would most probably have said **tian xia chi ming** (‘famed under
The stamp, measuring 2.7 by 5.4 cm, is slightly longer than the Baiben Zhang stamp of similar appearance (2.7 by 4.6 cm).

There are also several red stamps from Baiben Gang. On the title pages of manuscripts, the black stamp is sometimes accompanied by a red stamp containing the characters Yijuantang ji (‘mark of the House of Million Scrolls’) inside a square frame of geometric patterns (Figs 8 and 9). On the back of manuscripts, two additional kinds of red stamps can be found. One depicts the characters Baiben Gang ji (‘mark of Hundred Volumes Strong’) (Fig. 8), and measures 1.9 cm wide and 4.7 cm long; the other is a circular stamp with a geometric frame encircling the same characters, with a diameter of 3.2 cm (see Figs 8 and 10). Whether ‘Hundred Volumes Zhang’ and ‘Hundred Volumes Strong’ were indeed affiliated calls for further investigation; it is possible that they were competitors.

Stamps from other shops can be seen on extant books today. Besides Baiben Zhang, the shops Biyetang 別埜堂 (‘The idyllic house’) and Jujuantang 聚卷堂 (‘House of accumulated scrolls’) leave the largest numbers of extant manuscripts. Biyetang employed simple stamps with two four-character lines; one stamp advertises ‘The mark of Biyetang / distinct from the rest’ (Biyetang ji / yu zhong bu tong 別埜堂記 / 與衆不同), while another states ‘The seal of Biyetang / distinct from the rest’ (Biyetang bao / yu zhong bu tong 別埜堂寶 / 與衆不同). Similarly, the stamp of Lao Jujuantang 老聚卷堂 (‘The old House of accumulated scrolls’) advertises: ‘Lao Jujuantang / Number one in the business’ (Lao Jujuantang / qishou diyi 老聚卷堂 / 起首第壹). Possibly related to Lao Jujuantang, the shop Jujuantang 聚卷堂 has a ‘Li of Jujuantang’ (Jujuantang Li 聚卷堂李) stamp, with the characters encased by a frame of geometric patterns (Fig. 11).

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59 In the figure, the first character is not discernible on the rebound title page of the manuscript (Yuzan ji zidi shu 玉簪記子弟書, Capital Library, yi 乙 506), but can be inferred from the parallel wording.
60 This combination occurs on the title pages of several manuscripts that contain chapters from a youth book (Mashang lianyin zidi shu 馬上聯姻子弟書, National Library of China, 119984; the text is fourteen chapters long). In their present form, the manuscripts have been rebound together into two volumes; some of the title pages have been removed.
61 Huang 2008, 150, tells that he had seen this stamp on various manuscripts at Peking University.
62 Admittedly, it is much harder to come across Baiben Gang manuscripts today. Wu 1982, 152, notes their rarity.
Tongletang 同樂堂 (‘House of mutual delight’), Jingyitang 景異堂 (‘House of unusual sights’), Dunhoutang 敦厚堂 (‘House of honesty’), Yanghetang 養和堂 (‘House of nourishing harmony’), and Huijutang 匯劇堂 (‘House of collected plays’). And there was another Baibentang 百本堂 (‘House of hundred volumes’) located in the Outer City, outside of Zhengyang Gate, which apparently sold medicine along with manuscripts of works in genres very similar to those Baiben Zhang sold. While most of these shops leave few traces other than a few stamped manuscripts, they provide inklings into the diversity of the manuscript market. In the next section, we look at the variety of products offered by Baiben Zhang and its model of sales from catalogs.

**Products and sales**

In his early study of Baiben Zhang, Fu Xihua had observed its special function of both producing and distributing

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Baijiao gu shidao qu lianzhu diao paizi qu qingdan 八角鼓 時道曲 連珠調 牌子曲清單 (Clear list of linked tunes: eight-cornered drum songs, tunes-of-the-times, jingles); the catalog is rebound together with other manuscripts.

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66 An example of the Tongletang stamp can be seen on manuscript T1-001, Fu Sinian Library, Shu Luohan zidi shu 数羅漢子弟書 (Counting the arhats); the Jingyitang stamp appears on KS 2-029, Fu Sinian Library, Yun he 沾泥河 (The muddy river); manuscripts containing stamps from the other shops are photo-reprinted in Huang and Ōki 2013, vol. 15; also see Huang 2011, 146‒150. Huang categorizes books from Yanghetang among manuscripts of theatrical troupes and aficionados, but the neat, regular handwriting in the manuscripts suggests rather that they were produced by a copying house (see photo reprints in Huang and Ōki 2013, vol. 7, 38-324).

67 See the manuscript at the library of the Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo, Sokudo bunko gokyoku 雙紅堂 戏曲部 108, Po Hongzhou 破紅洲 (Thwarting the siege of Hongzhou), reproduced in Huang and Ōki 2013, vol. 15, 488. This Baibentang has two elaborate stamps. One of them describes its location ‘outside of Zhengyang gate in the capital’ (jingdu Zhengyang men wai 京都正陽門外), and contains the characters Baibentang Chen ji 百本堂陳記 (‘mark of [Mr.] Chen of Baibentang’) in the middle. In smaller characters, it lists the shop’s offerings, which include products in the genres of xipi 西皮, erhuang 二簧 [the character huang is not legible but can be inferred], and dagu shu 大鼓書.

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68 Extant sales catalogs provide telling glimpses into their common business model of selling manuscripts from lists of titles. The catalogs, labeled with prices like other manuscript products, were clearly intended to be sold, and must be distinguished from internal inventories of any kind. By my estimate, there are at least twenty extant catalogs from Baiben Zhang, and several catalogs from Leshantang 樂善堂, Bieyetang 别埜堂, and Jujuantang 聚卷堂. Below, I provide a preliminary survey of Baiben Zhang catalogs, with attention to their dates, prices, and repertoires of products.

70 Dates for extant catalogs corroborate Baiben Zhang’s flourishing in the late nineteenth century. Like other manuscript products, catalogs do not bear dates, but approximate dates can be inferred from a combination of circumstantial evidence, including titles based on historical events and known information about genres of musical and
72 Xuantong eras (1909‒1911). the Tongzhi (1862‒1874), Guangxu (1875‒1908), and dated the various catalogs in his personal collection to who had an impressive knowledge of performed repertoires, 74 the beginning of the Guangxu era (1875‒1908). has dated a Baiben Zhang catalog of for eight hundred cash; amounts over one diao are indicated by a number, with the ‘hundred’ assumed, i.e., yi diao er 一吊二 (literally, ‘one diao two’) for ‘one diao and two hundred cash’. 78 A varied sample of Baiben Zhang catalogs can be found in the collection of the Capital Library of China, including three catalogs of youth books, a catalog of erhuang opera, and a catalog of gaoqiang opera. All adopt a similar layout in which prices are listed below the titles, five to a page.

71 See Appendix 2. Fu 1954a suggests that the shop must also have had a catalog for bangzi 梆子 opera. In the list above, erhuang xi and gaoqiang xi describe theatrical repertoires (to be discussed in detail below), while dagu shu 大鼓書 (big-drum tales), matou diao 馬頭調 (port tunes), and zidi shu 子弟書 (youth books); probably there were also catalogs of products of other kinds. 77 Prices under one diao are simply written as numbers in increments of a hundred, i.e., babo 八伯 [百] ‘eight hundred’ while calling for further investigation into its evolution in time.

What information does a sales catalog contain? Generally, it contains a list of titles in a particular genre or type of tune (which we may think of as a ‘product line’), along with corresponding prices. Like other manuscript products, it typically features a title page stamped with the name of the house; next to the stamp, the title and price of the catalog are written (Fig. 12). 77 The majority of extant catalogs refer to themselves as mulu 目錄 (‘catalog’) in their titles, and occasionally dan 單 (‘list’) or qingdan 清單 (‘clear list’). 76 The main unit of account for prices listed in the catalogs is the diao 吊 (‘string’), with one diao being equivalent to one thousand units of cash. 71 The main unit of account for prices listed in the catalogs is the diao 吊 (‘string’), with one diao being equivalent to one thousand units of cash. 77 Prices under one diao are simply written as numbers in increments of a hundred, i.e., babo 八伯 [百] ‘eight hundred’ for eight hundred cash; amounts over one diao are indicated by a number, with the ‘hundred’ assumed, i.e., yi diao er 一吊二 (literally, ‘one diao two’) for ‘one diao and two hundred cash’. 78

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77 See Appendix 2. Fu 1954a, 319–328.
74 Fan 2010.
75 The figure depicts a catalog of erhuang opera, shelfmark yi 己1008, Capital Library of China. Measuring 14.6 by 10.8 cm, it has been trimmed and rebound together with another catalog.
76 See Appendix 2. Fu 1954a, 326–328, lists two catalogs of port tunes that contain the terms shanggu dan 上趣單 and shanggu mulu 上瞭目錄 in their titles. According to Fu, shanggu means the songbooks were ‘of utmost flavor’ (a literal interpretation of the characters), but the colloquial nature of the term may call for a different interpretation.
77 The diao is a unit of account that is used in many places but is satisfied by different amounts of actual cash (in the form of copper coins) depending on the cash system used. On the diao as a unit of account in Beijing, see King 1965, 60–62 and 160–162. While diao literally means ‘string’, in the context of the prices listed in the catalogs, it would refer to a unit of account rather than a physical string of coins.
78 This is the price on the title page shown in Fig. 12.
Table 1: Baiben Zhang catalogs in the collection of the Capital Library of China.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>shelfmark</th>
<th>number of folios</th>
<th>number of titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gaoqiang xi [mulu]</td>
<td>ding丁6610</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erhuang xi mulu</td>
<td>yi己1008</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu①</td>
<td>yi己1008</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu②</td>
<td>yi己473</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu</td>
<td>yi己459</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>314</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

They contain between 204 and 319 titles and between 2 and 32 folios (Table 1). Manuscript yi己473 is a rare example of a Baiben Zhang book preserved with its original cover and binding; given that it contains no title and is stamped on an otherwise blank first folio, it seems to be an exceptional case (Fig. 13).

Probably it would be useful to begin with the two catalogs of xi（‘drama’ or ‘opera’). Beijing of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a flourishing center for drama, with performances taking place everywhere from the court to commercial theaters and teahouses, and still to temples and merchant guilds that regularly sponsored plays in regional traditions. The variety of dramatic genres in which Baiben Zhang offered products reflects the diversity of sounds present in the capital – from the lasting presence of Kun opera, the genre from Jiangnan favored by elites, to various regional musical traditions of more humble origins that would eventually find their way into the distinct ‘sound of

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79 The third catalog (catalog of youth books, shelfmark yi己1008) is incomplete; see note 81.

80 This catalog, yi乙473, Capital Library of China, is the earliest of Baiben Zhang’s youth book catalogs. See notes 101, 112, and 120.

81 This catalog is incomplete, and has been rebound together with the erhuang xi mulu (with the same shelfmark). The title page is missing; the title in brackets above is my description. One folio has been ripped out at the end. An identical Baiben Zhang catalog held at the Chinese National Academy of Arts reveals that it should have 5 more titles, making for a total of 324 titles (Chen 2003b, 50).

82 The catalog does not contain a title.

83 I use ‘drama’ and ‘opera’ interchangeably to refer to the theatrical traditions of xi, which are invariably also musical in performance.
Erhuang opera, originally a regional form, rose to great popularity in the capital in the course of the nineteenth century. The relatively large number of extant catalogs of titles in this genre suggests that it was a major product line for Baiben Zhang. The present catalog (Fig. 12) contains over two hundred titles of erhuang opera, varying between one and eight volumes. Each page contains five columns and three rows, with titles in the top row, numbers of volumes in the middle row, and prices in the bottom row (Fig. 14). Stamp marks reveal signs of use. A circular red stamp appears above more than 80 of the 270 titles; many of these same titles are also marked with an ink dot. These overlapping marks possibly indicate two sides of a business transaction, or a collector stamping the items already acquired.

While the manuscript is labeled as a catalog of erhuang opera, it also contains fifty-one titles from the repertoire of Kunqiang (Kun opera), a form originally from the Kunshan area in Jiangnan that came to be widely celebrated as an art genre in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and that retained its associations with elite culture in later times. In Qing Beijing, Kun opera was one of two genres sanctioned by the court, and was performed in commercial theaters as well as the palace well into the late nineteenth century, at the same time...
that erhuang and other regional musical traditions rose to great popularity.\textsuperscript{88} The breakdown of erhuang xi and Kunqiang titles in our catalog – 219 for the former and 51 for the latter – points to a time when erhuang had taken ascendance; that titles in both genres were listed suggests that they were directed to the same parties of musically versed clients. Toward the end of the catalog, under the heading ‘Kun melody’ (Kunqiang 昆腔), the titles are listed with a second tier of prices for texts marked with notation – ‘with music and beats’ (dai gongche banyan 代[帶]工尺板眼) or simply ‘with beats’ (dai banyan 代板眼) (Fig. 15).\textsuperscript{89} These products were clearly intended for singing; possibly they appealed to audiences familiar with the tradition of recital singing known as ‘pure singing’ (qingchang 清唱).\textsuperscript{90}

Manuscripts intended for singing can also be found among Baiben Zhang’s products of gaoqiang xi 高腔戲 or gaoqiang opera. Known in the capital since the early Qing, gaoqiang opera and Kun opera were the only genres officially approved by the court through the mid-nineteenth century, when the former saw a revival with princely patronage.\textsuperscript{91} A Baiben Zhang Gaoqiang xi mulu (Fig. 16) has been dated to the early Guangxu era (1875–1908) partly on the basis of theatrical roles contained in it, which do not appear in sources before that time.\textsuperscript{92} The small booklet of 21 folios contains over 200 titles, beginning with auspicious plays and followed by titles listed according to role. Comparison between the titles in the catalog and the known repertouire of a late nineteenth-century troupe reveals many overlaps, corroborating the catalog’s date in the same period.\textsuperscript{93} Would the products have been intended for amateur singers? Extant manuscripts containing specialized notation for singing gaoqiang opera suggest this may have been the case. A printed insert found at the back of a Baiben Zhang

\textsuperscript{88} The ascendance of erhuang and xipi over Kunqiang in the course of the nineteenth century is a favorite topic among historians of Chinese drama, though just when and how this happened remains subject to debate. Zhu Jiajin observes that, as late as 1877, Kunqiang troupes constituted a significant proportion of commercial troupes registered with the Court Theatrical Bureau (four out of eleven); he suggests that in Beijing, Kunqiang did not fully give way to erhuang and xipi until the end of the Guangxu era (1875–1908) (Zhu 1995, 90; 95–96).

\textsuperscript{89} Gongche notation, which employs Chinese characters to denote notes on the scale, was a common form of musical notation in the nineteenth century, and is still used today among village musicians in north China (Jones 1995, 120). Banyan indicates rhythm, with ban being the strong beats and yan being the weak beats.

\textsuperscript{90} Beginning with Ye Tang 葉堂 (1736–1795) in the late eighteenth century, elite practitioners defended the recital tradition of ‘pure singing’ in response to the popular, staged Kun opera performed by commercial troupes (Goldman 2012, 129–131). It is not clear to me where Baiben Zhang products lay on this axis (I have not seen any manuscripts containing a Kunqiang text), and whether the two tiers of products, with and without notation, would have appealed to different interests (i.e., reading and singing). In the catalog, the prices given for Kunqiang products marked with notation range from two to more than four times as much as the same work without notation. While erhuang titles listed include complete plays, the titles listed in the Kunqiang section appear to be individual scenes from plays, with no volumes given (even though in both musical traditions there is the practice of performing short scenes from longer works, known as zhezixi 折子戲). In his study, Fu Xihu had described two erhuang xi catalogs in his collection, which had variations in their erhuang xi listings but contained an identical list of over sixty Kunqiang titles at the end (yi 乙 1008 contains fifty-one, but being rebound, it is possible that the folios are not complete). According to Fu, these titles reflected those performed in Beijing theaters at ‘the end of the Qing’, when Kunqiang was in decline (Fu 1954, 320–21). On the other hand, he suggested that the erhuang xi titles contained in one catalog included dramas popular in Beijing venues before the Xianfeng (1851–1861) and Tongzhi (1862–1874) eras. Would this suggest that not all the erhuang xi products were contemporaneous to performances?

\textsuperscript{91} The musical system of gaoqiang is also known as Yi qiang 弁腔 or Yi yang qiang 弁陽腔, after Yiyang, Jiangxi, where it is believed to have originated in the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644) before spreading through the empire to mix with local musical traditions and develop different forms. On gaoqiang and the court’s attempts to regulate performed genres in the capital, see Goldman 2012, 115–116. On its revival in the mid to late nineteenth century, see Wang 1934, 75–76.

\textsuperscript{92} Fan 2010, 122–125.

\textsuperscript{93} Fan 2010, 125–128.
manuscript, which most likely would have been included in many other manuscripts, gives detailed instructions on how to vocalize the notations—consisting of dashes, circles, and combinations of them.94 A handwritten version of this text, inside a reference booklet on the pronunciation of characters in singing, includes an additional line at the beginning: This book of gaoqiang opera is entirely the authentic text of the Hecheng troupe, with no inconsistencies…”此高腔戲本俱係和成班真本並無錯落.95

The catalogs from Baiben Zhang which have received the most scholarly attention to date are those of youthbooks (zìdī shū), the northern genre of verse narrative widely popular among the bannermen populations of Beijing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.96 This was a genre that thrived as both a literature and a form of performing art, propagated through private gatherings of amateur singers as well as through performances in teahouses and other commercial venues.97 Its popularity is attested by thousands of extant manuscripts, ranging from personal copies made by amateurs and aficionados to commercial copies from scribal publishers.98 The large quantity of manuscripts of the latter kind draws attention to the important role played by shops such as Baiben Zhang in the evolution of the literature, while handwritten sales catalogs from various shops, including Leshantang and Biyetsang, reveal the impressive variety of titles in scribal circulation.99 Judging by the numbers of extant books, Baiben Zhang was by far the leading producer of youth books in the Qing, whether manuscript or print; zìdī shū must have been one of its most important product lines.100

While Fu Xihua made the earliest attempt to date the catalogs,101 later scholars have made further progress by studying the titles contained in them. The stories that touch on datable events of the nineteenth century have made rough chronological orderings possible. The scholar Chen Jinzhao has divided extant

94 This single folio appears at the end of a Baiben Zhang manuscript of Kao-tung 拷童 (Sokudo bunko gikyoku 雙紅堂 戲曲 65; photo-reprinted in Huang and Ōki 2013, vol. 7, 20–37). The instructions reveal that many of the notations have to do with ‘singing’ (chang 唱) or ‘accompanying’ (bang 帮) (gaoqiang is known for having chorus sections). The notations are not unique to Baiben Zhang manuscripts, but can also be found in products from other houses such as Yanghetang (Huang and Ōki 2013, vol. 7, 38–324).
95 I have not been able to track down the Hecheng troupe. The manuscript belongs to a set of rebound booklets, with shelfmark Sokudo bunko gikyoku 雙紅堂 戲曲 333, at the library of the Tōyō Bunka Kenkyūjo (reproduced in Huang and Ōki. 2013). It is undated; labeled as a Jiàntuān zì běn 尖團字本 (Book of characters with pointed and rounded sounds), it is a reference booklet containing lists of characters and their pronunciations for singing.
96 For an overview of scholarship on this genre, see Chiu 2018, 16–19.
97 See note 25.
98 Zìdī shū was also printed by woodblock print publishers and, toward the end of the Qing, by lithographic publishers, but manuscripts dominate the extant corpus by far. For a survey of extant zìdī shū by the numbers and more detailed discussion on the role of commercial scribal publishing, see Lu, 2018.
99 The Leshantang catalog will be discussed below. Fu 1954b, 14–15, dated the Biyetsang catalog to the Xuantong era (1909–1911), while Chen 2003b, 52, suggests it dates before 1900.
100 See Lu 2018, 106–108.
101 Fu 1954a and 1954b.
Baiken Zhang catalogs into three types, with the earliest dated to the Xianfeng era (1851–1861); catalogs of a second type date between that time and 1886; and the latest and the most commonly seen variety dates between 1886 and 1900 (Fig. 17). Given that many works take historical events as their subject, including those that took place in Beijing, it is possible that scribal publishers capitalized on current events of public interest to market new texts. Interestingly, the vast majority of titles on historical events are extant only in handwritten form; as manuscripts of commercial origin are generally not dated, however, we do not know the actual amount of time it took between the events’ occurrence and their appearance in the literature.

The earliest extant catalog of youth books, from the shop Leshantang of Beijing, provides clues about how sales catalogs functioned. This catalog has been dated to the Daoguang era (1821–1850). In an ad at the beginning of the manuscript, Leshantang extols the superiority of its texts in a market abundant with those of others:

本堂抄賣子弟書詞, 並有石派當今新書, 授自名人較正, 情理相符, 書義精微, 非等間之論也。別家或有是書, 希惟名者獲利, 書中章句、大畧均與石書相反。本堂數年來精工採訪, 遂得數底, 幸與石書相合。照顧者方知斯言不謬耳。諸公賜顧, 詳認樂善堂為記。今將子弟書名、石韻書名, 集成目錄, 開載清楚, 以備諸公選用。外抄名班戲本曲詞, 另有目錄, 一應俱全, 不愧主顧。105

This house copies and sells youth books and new Shi-style tales with sections of rhyming verses. Having been edited by well-known persons, [the stories] are true to sentiment and moral principle, and their messages are subtle and exquisite; they are not works of the ordinary variety. Other houses purportedly offer these tales, but they only tout the name for profit’s sake, while the lines in their books and the plots likewise differ from the [true] tales of Shi [Yukun].

The ad reveals the shop’s involvement in the entire process of textual production, from seeking out texts and editing them to issuing catalogs containing available titles for patrons. Besides youth books, the shops apparently also sold plays and song books (‘scripts and lyrics of the famous troupes’) from separate catalogs. We might observe many similarities between this ad and the Baiken Zhang ad cited earlier. Just as that ad provided a detailed address for the shop, so at the end of Leshantang’s catalog, information is given on the days and sites of its sales:

The exact nature of these hard-won manuscripts is not clear to me. The Chinese text simply has the term 底稿, which literally means ‘bottom’ or ‘base’; it can refer to a handwritten draft on which a printed text is based (dihen底本) or to a version of a text from which copies are made (diben底本). Possibly these were manuscripts transcribed or derived from performances. I interpret Shi shu石書 (‘Shi’s tales’) to refer to actual performances by the storyteller, given that the catalog probably came from his time. Note that the text employs a different term, Shi yun shu石韻書 (‘Shi-style tales’) to refer to the books containing these tales.

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105 See Chen 2003a, Chen 2003b, and Chen 2017, 52–54. The three catalogs of youth books at the Capital Library of China represent each of these types. Yi 473 is an example of the earliest type; the catalog contained in yi 1008 is an example of the second type; yi 459 belongs to the latest type. In conversation, Chen has described a fourth and latest type, examples of which include a catalog held at the National Library of China (5 October 2018, Taipei). I have not seen this item.

106 Historical events touched on by texts held in manuscripts from Baiken Zhang include: the banning of theater in the Inner City in 1799, the uprisings led by Jahangir Khoja in Xinjiang in the 1820s, the prostitution scandal at a Beijing temple of 1838 involving bannermen and nobility, military corruption in 1841–1842, and the uprising of Hong Xiuquan (from 1851). There are manuscripts from Bieyetang that contain a text on French incursions in Vietnam in 1883–1884 (Yuefa jiaobing越法交兵, Vietnam fights France). For extant works based on Qing dynasty stories, see Huang et al. 2012a, 341–434.

107 On the date of this catalog, see Chen 2003b, 50–51. Chen suggests that it dates to some time between 1836 and 1838, given known biographical information about Helashi 鶴侶氏, author of a work contained in it (Shiwei tan侍衛嘆, Lament of the imperial guardsman). Lament of the imperial guardsman). The punctuation is mine.
The manuscripts of this house are famed everywhere. On every seventh and eighth day,107 we are at the Western Corner Gate at Huguo Temple. On ordinary days, look for [Mr.] Wang’s Leshantang, the first shop on the north end of West End Lane, inside the eastern entrance of the Fourth Alley in Gongmenkou, inside Fucheng Gate. When there is inclement weather on temple fair days, we sell from home.108

A word ought to be said here about the ‘Shi-style tales’, of which 22 titles are included at the end of Leshantang’s catalog. The Shi-style tale, referred to in catalogs as 石韻書 or 石派書, is a genre of prosimetric storytelling related to the youth book, that is known to have flourished during the Daoguang and Xianfeng eras and ceased at the beginning of the Republican period.109

The popularity of these stories in performance appears to have stimulated demand for the texts, which, as Leshantang’s ad reveals, were sought after by scribal publishers who competed to obtain authentic versions. Catalogs of youth books from the various houses typically end with a list these longer works (Fig. 18). A single sheet of unknown date, stamped by Baiben Zhang, announces a list of available and forthcoming titles that it has taken great effort to obtain:

風波亭一部現有
九頭案以後, 從南俠暗行、婆子哭墓起,
合計六十餘本, 要者定抄。再，本堂有數樣石韻之書未能得全，現在託人挽轉，全行得妥，較正明白，再行定抄可也。

The title The Pavilion of Trouble is readily available. As for the plot after The Case of the Nine Heads, from Secret Ventures of the Southern Knight to The Old Woman Weeps at the Grave, there are a total of over sixty volumes. They can be copied to order upon demand. Moreover, there are a number of Shi-style tales that this house has not been able to obtain in their entirety; at present we have employed someone to look for the missing parts, and the texts can be copied to order once they are complete and corrected.110

The titles referred to in the passage belonged to the cycle of stories about Judge Bao that were widely popular in the capital in the nineteenth century, judging by the many versions of extant texts.111 The ad not only provides important clues into the textual evolution of these stories, but also reveals that dingchao 定抄, or ‘copying to order’, was the standard way in which manuscripts were produced and sold. In the Leshantang catalog, the final title listed is 長途公案

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107 This would mean the seventh, eighth, seventeenth, eighteenth, twenty-seventh, and twenty-eighth days of the month.

108 Fu Sinian Library, Tj 27-212. The punctuation is mine. Leshantang’s address is not far from Baiben Zhang’s Xizhimen address in the western section of the Inner City.

109 For an overview of this genre, see Chen 2002. While the Shi-style tale is sometimes referred to as 石派子弟書, the actual relationship between the two genres has to be investigated. A special feature of these tales are sections of rhyming verse known as zàn 賞; the first line in the cited passage thus refers to ‘new Shi-style tales with sections of rhyming verses’ (石派帶贊新書). Chen 2002, 11–12, notes the distinct visual layout of these verses in hand-copied books.

108 The title The Pavilion of Trouble is readily available.

110 See Appendix 3 for the complete advertisement. Li 1934, 19, mentioned an ad by Baiben Zhang seeking texts of Shi-style tales. Possibly he is referring to this same item, although this seems to be an announcement rather than a call for texts.

111 For a discussion of the titles listed in the ad and the textual evolution of Judge Bao stories, see Chen 2003b, 71–76. See also Miao 1998b, 209–211, on differences between Shi-style tales and drum ballad versions of the stories. On Judge Bao stories in Ming and Qing fiction more generally, see Bauer 1974, Blader 1977, Hanan 1980, Ma 1973, Ma 1975, and Ma 1979, 214–218; also, see Ge 2010 and Idema 2009 for ballads on Judge Bao from an earlier period.
龍圖公案 (Cases from the Academician of The Dragon Hall), an extended collection of Judge Bao court-case stories; under the title it says: ‘copied and sold by section; a separate catalog exists; copied to order’ 按段 (section)抄賣，另有目錄，要者定寫'.

We might also recall the anecdote from Wandering through the Huo Guo Temple in which the protagonist ordered copies of The Cases of Judge Shi and The Green Peony. For these longer works related to storytelling performance, then, ‘copying to order’ was a common procedure; it remains to be investigated whether it also applied to shorter works and to other genres besides the Shi-style tale.

While pre-ordering appears to have dictated one sector of sales, there is evidence to suggest that shops like Baiben Zhang kept regular stocks of manuscripts. Apart from the sales catalogs discussed above, two items in the collection of the Fu Sinian Library at Academia Sinica appear to have been internal inventories. The first is a booklet of nine folios from an unknown shop, written in one hand, with running lists of titles.

Small triangles drawn beneath each title, indicating tallies, reveal that the first seven folios were part of an inventory. The titles are grouped under headings containing the names of genres, including Chuan xi 川戏 (Sichuan opera), ganban 赶板 (swift beats), lianhua lao 莲花落 (the lotus falls), zidi shu 子弟书 (youth books), kuaishu 快书 (fast tales), Kun Yi xi 昆弋戏 (Kun and Yi opera), paizi 牌子 (linked tunes), dagu 大鼓 [big drum], and matou [diaoy 大頭 (port tunes); the titles number well over 500 in total.

While we do not know which shop the inventory comes from, its impressive variety of stocked titles supports the thesis that shops like Baiben Zhang produced books in multiple genres at the same time. In another inventory containing a list of 52 titles on a single folio, notes written under several titles reveal where manuscripts were kept: under

as the first seven folios and adopt a similar layout of listing abbreviated titles in multiple rows on a page.

112 Fu Sinian Library, Tj 27-212, fol. 15. The punctuation is mine. It seems that the scribe who copied this manuscript wrote jia 段 in lieu of a very similar character, duan 段 (‘section’). It is possible that the character jia 段 was written as a homophone for jia 價 (‘price’), in which case an jia chao mai 按價抄賣 would mean ‘copied and sold according to price’. But jia 價 (rather than jia 段) does appear elsewhere in the same manuscript (fol. 2; in the line huo zheng jia shi 貨真價實 ‘the products are genuine and true to price’).

113 In manuscript yi 已 473, Capital Library of China, the term dingchao is written above several titles of youth books, which suggests that they were available on a copy-to-order basis (Fig. 19). The titles are: Kao hong 按紅 (2 hui [chapters], 1 diaoy), Xuejiao guanhua 學校觀花 (2 hui, 800 cash), and Feixiong meng 飛熊夢 (5 hui, 1 diaoy 800 cash). Compared with other titles in the catalog, these titles were not particularly long or expensive, and it is not clear to me presently why they were singled out. But they do suggest that at least some zidi shu titles were copied to order.

114 Fu Sinian Library, Tj 31-240. The folios have undergone preservation (backing has been applied) and the binding is from a later time; the folios may have originally belonged to a larger set of papers. The digitized version at the Fu Sinian Library is incomplete and does not accurately reflect the correct orders of folio rectos and versos.

115 On the last two folios, instead of tallies below each title, single triangles are drawn above selected titles, which suggests that these folios were part of something else – a secondary inventory. They are written in the same hand containing the names of genres, including Chuan xi 川戏 (Sichuan opera), ganban 赶板 (swift beats), lianhua lao 莲花落 (the lotus falls), zidi shu 子弟书 (youth books), kuaishu 快书 (fast tales), Kun Yi xi 昆弋戏 (Kun and Yi opera), paizi 牌子 (linked tunes), dagu 大鼓 [big drum], and matou 大頭 [port tunes]; the titles number well over 500 in total.

116 The count is made from lists contained in the first seven folios; besides the categories named, there are three more kinds of xi 戏, or dramas (I am not able to make out the writing before the character xi in each case), and a certain kind of tune (diaoy 調). In the headings, the name of the genre is sometimes followed by the term di 基 (‘base’), e.g., ganban di 赶板底 (“‘base copies’ of ganban [titles]”). The last two folios contain titles in the genres of erhuang 二簧, Kun Yi 昆弋, kuaihua 快画, zidi shu 子弟书, dagu 大鼓, matou [diaoy] 馬頭, paizi 牌子, and quandiao 全调. The fact that kuaihua and zidi shu are listed separately suggests that the nine folios may date to sometime during the Guangxu era (1875–1908), when kuaihua evolved apart from zidi shu into an independent genre (Chen 2017, 53; 2003b, 70).

117 Fu Sinian Library, Tj 28-225, fols 1–1’. This single folio has been bound together with another thirteen folios from one or more sales catalogs, but clearly does not belong together with them. Which shop it comes from is unknown, and I have not yet identified the genre(s) to which the titles belong.
one title, it says ‘there are [copies] at the temple’ (miaoshang you 庙上有); under another, ‘base copies of this are kept at the Wei Room’ (shi dizi zai Wei wu 是底子在未屋); under still another title, ‘there are no base copies of this’ (shi dizi wuyou 是底子无有). The ‘base copies’ possibly referred to manuscripts that were kept in-house – perhaps drafts from which copies for sale could be made.118 We might recall the prefatory remarks in the Leshantang catalog that say its products were ‘completely available upon request’ (yi ying ju quan). This would have implied that it possessed the texts for all the titles, ready to be copied to order, and possibly that it stocked ready-to-sell copies; the unknown house to which the above inventory belonged apparently had multiple sites of storage for its manuscripts, including at the temple.119

We might imagine that shops such as Baiben Zhang had multiple sectors of sales at the height of their careers – from pre-copied manuscripts at temple fairs to products copied to order (such as the longer works of Shi-style tales). We unfortunately have no extant sales records, but the prices and lengths of titles listed in catalogs offer some clues into production patterns. A survey of two sample Baiben Zhang catalogs may provide some food for thought. Of the 219 erhuang titles contained in the catalog of erhuang opera examined earlier in this article, the majority are between one and two volumes (ben 本); a total of sixteen titles are five volumes or longer (Chart 1).120 The prices range between 280 cash for the cheapest one-volume title to 4,800 cash for a complete play in eight volumes, while the variation in prices among titles with the same number of volumes suggests that the price was not determined by length alone (Table 2). Of note is that the price of the catalog itself, written on its title page at 1,200 cash, is much higher than the one-volume products listed inside it, which range between 280 and 500 cash. If we look at a second catalog, a catalog of youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Volumes (ben) in title</th>
<th>Lowest price</th>
<th>Highest price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,000</td>
<td>1,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>4,800</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Prices ranges in copper cash for erhuang xi titles.

118 This is to interpret the term dizi 底子 in the sense of diben 底本, ‘base manuscript’ (refer to note 106).

119 The unnamed site of storage for the titles other than the ones described may well be the home shop. Interestingly, the Shi-style tale does not appear among the many categories listed in Tj 31-240. The folios may have been incomplete, but it can also be due to the fact that these longer works were copied to order instead of being stocked for sale.

120 The data contained in Chart 1 and Table 2 below is gathered from Erhuang xi mulu, yi 已 1008, Capital Library of China. I have not included the Kunqiang titles contained in it in this discussion, as their lengths are not given in the catalog.
Chart 2: Zidi shu titles by number of volumes.

Table 3: Prices ranges in copper cash for zidi shu titles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapters (hui) in title</th>
<th>lowest price</th>
<th>highest price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>700</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>1,800</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2,600</td>
<td>2,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>3,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>4,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>4,800</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>5,000</td>
<td>5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>7,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>11,200</td>
<td>11,200</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>12,000</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
books, the patterns are similar. Among a total of 251 titles of youth books, those containing one or two chapters (hui) constitute the majority of the products, even though the longest titles go up to thirty chapters (Chart 2). As in the catalog of erhuang opera, there is a good deal of variation in prices for titles of the same length (Table 3). What proportion of the shop’s actual income came from shorter works and what proportion from longer ones? Does the range of products and prices allude to different sales sectors and different kinds of clientele – from individuals browsing books at temple fairs to wealthy households and institutions which could afford to keep libraries and private troupes of performers?

Probably it would be most telling to understand the prices listed in the catalogs compared with external prices of the same period. What first has to be said is that, despite the apparent wealth of price information contained in sales catalogs, they are more difficult to interpret than would appear, given the monetary fluctuations in Beijing in the second half of the nineteenth century and the absence of precise dates for the manuscripts. We might nevertheless attempt a tentative comparison between manuscripts in relation to other reading materials and the cost of going to the theater at the beginning of the Guangxu era (1875‒1908). A Baiben Zhang catalog of gaoqiang opera which has been dated to the beginning of this period lists prices for manuscripts ranging from 400 cash to sixteen diao (the equivalent of 16,000 cash). From the same time, the price of a ticket at the theater varied between 600 cash for the cheapest seats in the ‘pond’ to 18,000 for the most expensive private balcony seats. The lowest-priced

121 The data contained in Chart 2 and Table 3 below is gathered from yi 已 473, Capital Library of China. In the discussion, I have not included the eleven titles of Shi-style tales listed at the end of the same catalog. While the unit employed for zidi shu titles is ‘chapter’ (hui), for the Shi-style tales, length is given in volumes (ben). Lengths are given for only some of the latter titles; they vary between six and forty volumes.

122 On Beijing’s cash system in the late nineteenth century, see King 1965, 58–65, 158–163, and 215–218. On changes in prices, wages, and costs of living, see Peng 2013. The serious inflations during the Xianfeng period (1851‒1861) make it especially tricky to compare prices before and after the period. What first has to be said is that, despite the apparent wealth of price information contained in sales catalogs, they are more difficult to interpret than would appear, given the monetary fluctuations in Beijing in the second half of the nineteenth century and the absence of precise dates for the manuscripts. We might nevertheless attempt a tentative comparison between manuscripts in relation to other reading materials and the cost of going to the theater at the beginning of the Guangxu era (1875‒1908). A Baiben Zhang catalog of gaoqiang opera which has been dated to the beginning of this period lists prices for manuscripts ranging from 400 cash to sixteen diao (the equivalent of 16,000 cash). From the same time, the price of a ticket at the theater varied between 600 cash for the cheapest seats in the ‘pond’ to 18,000 for the most expensive private balcony seats. The lowest-priced

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rental. The expensive pricing of Baiben Zhang products is confirmed when we look at how affordably priced printed materials could be in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the capital, an issue of a printed gazette – a common vehicle for the official news – cost as little as 7 cash in 1878; the total cost of a year’s worth of gazettes, 3,746 cash, would have been sufficient for purchasing merely a handful of Baiben Zhang’s medium-priced titles. From these comparisons we might rather get a sense of the manuscripts as collectibles; this is echoed by the visual appearance of the pages, which, compared with cheaper sorts of printed and handwritten materials with writing squeezed densely onto the page, stand out for their spacious margins, large characters, and general aesthetic appeal (Fig. 20).  

Fig. 20: Page layout with large characters and punctuation, inside a Baiben Zhang manuscript (‘Song on opium’). Waseda University Library, Fūryō Bunko, bunko 文庫 19 F400 Z79, fols 1’ and 2’.  

128 While the lending shops were known to have rented out longer works of drum ballads and court-case fiction, some also rented out books of songs (Zhang 1996b, 450–451). Two items in the Sokodo Bunko (Sokodo bunko gikyoku 雙紅堂 戏曲 265 and 266, photo-reprinted in Huang and Oki 2013, vol. 32, 368 and 523), bearing stamps of a Yongfa caiyuan 永發菜園 (The ever-flourishing vegetable garden), contain collections of port tunes (matou diao) and eight-cornered drum songs (bajiao gu), respectively; a note on the last folio recto of one of them, cautioning patrons not to rip or write over the text, suggests that the book was intended for rental (Huang and Oki 2013, vol. 32, 520). Zhang 1996b, 451, suggests that youth books were also available at lending shops, which he divided into two kinds in accordance with the different types of manuscripts they offered, but this has to be corroborated by further evidence.

129 A survey of catalogs from commercial and government print publishers reveals just how cheap printed books could be in the late Qing (Zhou 2005, contains a list of such catalogs; also see Li 2010).

130 See Mokros 2016, 93–152, on gazettes in the capital. The prices above come from Osawa 2004 (cited in Mokros 2016, 142), who described them as contained in a note filed with a list of gazettes from Juheng Baofang 聚恆 報方 kept at the Östasiatiska museet in Stockholm. The figure of 3,746 cash includes the price for the gazettes (7 cash each, with 338 issues printed in 1878, making a total of 2,366 cash) and the price for twelve book covers (at 115 cash each, making 1,380 cash in total). Juheng Baofang was one of the main publishers of printed gazettes in the late Qing; issues viewable through the digital collection of the National Library of Australia range between several to about a dozen folios in length (see Jing bao 1898). I am grateful to Emily Mokros for information on Juheng Baofang. The affordability of printed gazettes is corroborated by other sources from the period. There were varying tiers of quality among gazettes; manuscript gazettes continued to circulate alongside printed ones in the late nineteenth century, while often sold at much higher prices (Mokros 2016, 133–145).

131 While it has been suggested that Baiben Zhang manuscripts were ‘cheap’ compared with certain novels (Cui 2005, 153; Chiu 2018, 285), these novels may well have been the exception.

132 Many of the catalogs held at Academia Sinica contain Suzhou numbers and various other marks suggesting signs of use. All the books have been rebound, however, some quite chaotically, with scattered folios from multiple catalogs. As such, they will need to be studied very carefully.

133 The discounts were for ten percent, twenty percent, and thirty percent, respectively. See Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, 4378; the collation notes cite a Baiben Zhang catalog in the former collection of Nagasawa Kikuya. I have not seen this manuscript, and am not aware of similar discounts advertised in other Baiben Zhang catalogs.

134 Given the increasing contact between the palace and the city’s commercial troupes in the course of the nineteenth century, it is not surprising that the court also sourced texts from commercial establishments in the city. On the mutual influence between the palace and commercial theaters, see Ye 2012, 226–227.
prominent banner households, suggests that well-to-do Inner City residents may also have been among its clients.135

More in-depth study is due on the sales catalogs from Baiben Zhang and other scribal publishers. Further study should yield more insights into the precise dates of the shops and their evolving lines of products, as well as their possible connections to the world of commercial theater in nineteenth-century Beijing. On a practical level, the catalogs call attention to the manner of production that made possible books in great variety. In the next section, this article examines scribal hands in manuscript products for glimpses into the processes of organized scribal production.

Scribal Production

While anecdotal sources might lead us to imagine a Mr. Zhang assiduously sitting at his desk and copying day and night, both the quantity and variety of extant manuscripts suggest that Baiben Zhang was (or became) a much larger operation involving organized scribal production. The number of scribes employed over the course of the house’s lifetime of operation has yet to be ascertained – this may have to wait for an efficient method of sorting handwriting samples in the hundreds – but a glimpse of scribal production can be had from a look at even a small group of manuscripts. In the discussion below, we examine a selection of youth books from Baiben Zhang in the collection of the Capital Library of China. Given the quantity of extant manuscripts in this genre from the shop, they would seem to be a reasonable place to begin studying its productions.

Baiben Zhang’s youth book manuscripts adopt a long, rectangular format (Fig. 21) and a regular layout to the text, with four columns on each page, each divided into two sections (Fig. 22). Each section of a column, corresponding to a sung line, contains space for seven characters, while longer lines are written partially in double columns using smaller characters. The handwriting is neat and formal, with the individual characters clearly legible and in a regular size, being the work of seasoned scribes who were practiced in writing neatly and consistently if not always elegantly.136 The regularity of the hands in the manuscripts is such that sometimes it is difficult to distinguish one hand from another. In identifying hands, it is thus useful to find markers besides handwriting that display individual idiosyncrasies.

A common feature of manuscripts are L-shaped symbols that appear at the ends of lines, marking regular divisions of text within each chapter (hui 條).137 While the functions of these symbols have yet to be well understood, here they provide an efficient means for distinguishing scribal hands. In spite of variations for each copyist at different times and with the change of the writing brush, there are points on the ‘L’ where pressure is applied consistently by the individual scribe, in many cases quite distinctly (Fig. 23). The amount of space between the marks and the characters, as well as their size in relation to each other, can also assist in this investigation. Where comparison of the L-shaped symbols yields questions, comparison of characters – focusing on the ways that the same strokes are written – can be further employed to distinguish one scribal hand from another.

The manuscripts examined here belong to a set of Baiben Zhang manuscripts rebound into six volumes.138 The inside case covers of the two cases that enclose them are signed by the collector Nahata 納哈塔 and dated Guangxu 26 [1900]; his inscription inside the second case, which holds volumes five and six, states that the books were rebound at that time.139 The bottom and top edges of the folios have been trimmed, variation, expressive grace). Boltz 2012/2013, citing inspirations from Bernhard Bischoff on Latin paleography, proposes a spectrum of formality for thinking about handwriting styles in early Chinese manuscripts; the presence of a neat, formal ‘book hand’ implies a high status for the object regardless of its textual content. Along this line of reasoning, the formal handwriting style in Baiben Zhang manuscripts would corroborate their status as collectibles.

137 These L-shaped symbols can be found not only in manuscripts from Baiben Zhang, but also in those from other houses. It has been suggested that they marked divisions of episodes (luo 落) within each chapter, facilitating both the reading and performance of youth books; it is also possible that they indicated repetition (Cui 2005, 21–22). Similar L-shaped symbols can be found in manuscripts of other kinds of performance-related literature, such as ritual handbooks.

138 They have the common shelfmark of yi 已 448, Capital Library of China.

139 In his inscriptions, Nahata also listed the contents of the volumes contained in each case. Generally, they correspond to how the volumes presently appear, with the exception of volume five, which contains a text in twenty-four chapters not listed by Nahata (it is a copy of the youth book Xianzhang hou 駕遺后 [The bond of matrmony]). Possibly the collector did not include it in his list because he was not able to identify it; there is no title page which precedes the folios of text in their current form. It is also possible that the volume was rebound again after Nahata’s time. Besides Nahata’s seals, manuscripts also bear the seals of Wu Xiaoling, to whom they belonged before being transferred to the Capital Library. There are also the seals of a certain Yinqu shangguan 咏秋山館 (Fig. 21).
so their original dimensions would have exceeded the current measurements (11.2 by 20.5 cm). The case covers signed by Nahata measure 12.0 cm by 20.7 cm – the length being only slightly greater than the current length of the folios. Possibly they were trimmed by Nahata or were already trimmed by the time they came into his hands.

141 Besides these short texts, there are longer titles which are only partially represented – e.g. the title page indicates that the manuscript is part of a sequence by labelling the title with touhui (‘first chapter’) or yuan (‘prime’) 元. It is not always clear to me whether each chapter originally formed one codicological unit. In a few cases, multiple chapters have been bound together into the volume, but only the title page for the first chapter is present. In the case of Changban po zidi shu 長板坡子弟書 (The battle at Changban Hill, a youth book), two title pages are present, one labelled as touhui (the first chapter) and one as erhui 二回 (the second chapter), so each chapter was originally one manuscript. But this does not seem to apply universally, as there are also instances where the chapters of a text run continuously and do not match page divisions (so multiple chapters would have been bound together).

142 The analyses below will examine the scribal hands in a selection of the manuscripts for clues into the processes of production.

In the manuscripts contained in the first four volumes, at least fourteen hands can be distinguished, based on the L-shaped symbols that appear in them (Fig. 24). Interestingly, when one compares the handwritten titles on each of the title pages (one might pay special attention to the final three characters zidi shu 子弟書 which appear in all of them), recurring idiosyncracies in the execution of certain length.

143 In this count, I include only the hands that are clearly distinguishable to me; possibly more hands can be found with closer scrutiny. Generally, a unit of one chapter seems to have been copied by one scribe.

140 The six volumes each contain what were originally multiple manuscripts. In the first four volumes, 26 titles are represented, including many short texts ranging from five to eight folios long. The fifth and sixth volumes each contains two titles of significant
strokes suggests that they were all written in one hand (Fig. 25). If it is indeed true that one person signed all the titles, the manuscripts would belong to a common span of time. This also provides clues about the division of labor: there were multiple copyists and a single title-signer; the latter was possibly the possessor of the house stamps, the organizer of labor division, and the proprietor of the shop. A survey of a larger sample of manuscripts should reveal whether there were changes in the title-signer; whether the fourteen hands seen here were recurring hands; and with more detailed surveys of handwriting (not only the L-shaped symbols, but also the characters), we may have clues about the growths and declines in the size of the scribal staff over the course of Baiben Zhang’s lifetime.

We can glimpse the collaborative process of copying a multi-chapter text through the case of Qiao dongfeng zidi shu 俏東風子弟書 (The fair east wind, a youth book), a youth book in twelve chapters. In their present, rebound form, the entire 12 hui are bound together and form the first part of a larger volume; the chapters number 7 folios each, with each hui starting on a new folio. What is very interesting is that four scribal hands were involved in copying this 12-hui text (Fig. 26). The first seven hui are by a single scribe, then hui 8 is in a distinctly different hand. Hui 9 and 10 are copied by yet a third copyist. Hui 11 is again in the hand of the first scribe, but only the first folio and fol. 2 recto; fol. 2 verso is left blank, and then, beginning with fol. 3’, the remainder of hui 11 is in a different, fourth hand. This last copyist also completed hui 12. This raises the question whether the copyists in fact sat in the same room and took turns copying, which seems plausible given the return of the first scribe and then what seemed to be an abrupt departure in the middle of hui 11. Did he go on lunch break between hui 8 and hui 11 – when 21 folios, or 336 lines, were copied in his absence by his colleagues? And then, when he set about copying again, did some urgent task call him away, such that he had to leave the better part of the remaining two hui to yet another colleague?

The presence of multiple hands in other multi-chapter manuscripts from Baiben Zhang suggests that this case was not an exception. Rather, the phenomenon points to the efficiency and flexibility of organized scribal production, with scribes able to easily resume each other’s work, while texts were copied in accordance with a standard layout. This would have most easily taken place at a workshop or other site of organized copying. Many questions are open: given the hundreds of titles advertised by Baiben Zhang in its catalogs, did copyists specialize in certain genres of texts or certain titles? For manuscripts sold with musical notations, was there a division of labor between copyists and notators – with the task of annotation requiring familiarity with musical performance? How was work allocated in other ways? And just how big was the Baiben Zhang operation at a given point in time – how many people were involved in the various roles of editing, copying, annotating, cover-signing, stapling, binding, inventory-keeping, temple-fair staffing, account-keeping, and delivering? These are questions for future investigation.

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144 For example, one might observe how the horizontal stroke is consistently written with a bend and how the final stroke of the mouth (kou 口) radical is always elongated. I am grateful to Uta Lauer for these observations and for pointing out to me that the idiosyncrasies are consistent.

145 Huang Shizhong, who first noticed the phenomenon of a repeated hand signing the title pages of manuscripts, has suggested that this person may have been the proprietor of the shop (Huang 2008, 151).


147 It is not clear to me how the manuscripts would originally have been bound (whether each hui was its own volume, or whether several hui were bound into one volume).

148 Comparison with a manuscript (from the Chewangfu corpus) of the same title, contained in Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 8, 3109, shows that eight lines were skipped here.
Fig. 24: Scribal hands in fourteen youth book manuscripts, from Capital Library of China, yi 448, vols 1–4.
Fig. 26. Scribal hands in a 12 huī (chapter) text, Qiao dòngfēng zǐ dì shū, from Capital Library of China, yi 已 448, vol. 6.
Conclusion

From anecdotal sources to manuscripts, this article has attempted to piece together a picture of Baiben Zhang’s operations, while much remains to be understood – from the evolution of the scribal publisher over time to its role in the larger circulation of entertainment literature in Qing Beijing. While it may have been an outstandingly successful case, Baiben Zhang belonged to a milieu of shops that thrived on the sales of handwritten books. We might pause for a moment to reflect on the scale of their productions and the conditions that made it possible.

A sense of scale can be had from a survey of the extant literature of youth books that was so popular in Beijing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Among thousands of extant items, the significant proportion that bears signs of their commercial origin suggests that scribal publishers dominated the market for books in this genre. Whether by number of texts or variety of titles, the figures for extant manuscripts of commercial origin far exceed those for woodblock-printed books, pointing to Beijing’s scribal publishers – Baiben Zhang foremost among them – as the leading producers of this popular regional literature. What is important to note is that the youth book was but one of a spectrum of products offered by Baiben Zhang; judging by the quantity of extant manuscripts in this genre alone, the shop’s overall output must have been enormous indeed.

The success of Baiben Zhang leads us to reflect on the urban context in which it thrived, given Beijing’s vibrant cultures of entertainment; its large population of leisurely consumers, from bannermen to sojourners; and the ready pool of literate laborers in the capital, from examinees to clerks. In such a context, the advantages of a business model based on hand-copying books would have been many: from locally sourced texts to local scribal labor to a local clientele, it avoided the cost of transporting woodblocks and books while keeping products new and up-to-date. With the ease of scribal production – requiring only brush, paper, desk and copyist – it needed little initial investment, while the flexibility of handwritten production makes possible an enormous variety of products copied on demand. If profit did not come from a huge number of copies of a single text, variety made up for it, while the wide availability of scribal labor and value attached to the calligraphic medium may have together contributed to high profit margins for the manuscripts as collectibles. In some sense, Baiben Zhang’s success can be attributed to an old scribal technology put to use in a new urban context, where the changing vogue of entertainment – which saw their height in late nineteenth-century Beijing – generated desire for an ever-increasing variety of books.

Baiben Zhang and other scribal publishers formed a special milieu in China’s changing book markets of the nineteenth century. In a time when new printing technologies came to be widely adopted and when commercial print publishers sought out new markets and audiences, they point to the lasting presence of a thriving, local book market tied intimately to the cultural life of the city. Beijing’s uniqueness as a locale must have been part of the story. The fondness with which Baiben Zhang is remembered with its temple markets in anecdotal sources calls attention to cycles of culturally shared time, whose own ebbs and flows in connection to technological change need further study. Just as people from far and wide came together in the space of the fair, so the books belonged to a larger flow of commodities, mixing old and new, cheap and extravagant, handwritten and printed, invented and recycled. It is within this larger context that they must be studied next.

149 For detailed figures supporting the statements in this paragraph, see Lu 2018.

150 For reasons that will be explored elsewhere, the youth book was privileged by collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and they are much more accessible today as a corpus in libraries and archives than books in many other genres that were also important product lines for Baiben Zhang. The list in Appendix 1 gives the breakdown by genre for a large group of manuscripts collected in 1929; there the count of zidi shu comes after Kun Yi and erhuang.

151 On China’s changing book markets of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Brokaw and Reed 2010.
(Appendices)

Appendix 1: Texts contained in Baiben Zhang manuscripts discovered by Liu Fu in 1929

570 erhuang 二簧
460 Kun Yi 昆弋
314 zidi shu 子弟書
250 matou diao 馬頭調
125 ganban 赶板
122 chaqu 峽曲
96 dagu shu 大鼓書
85 paizi qu 牌子曲
31 lianhua lao 蘊花落
28 kuaishu 快書
12 Huguang diao 湖廣調
8 qingiang 琴腔
3 xijiangyue 西江月
2 bianguan diao 邊關調
2 Fujian diao 福建調
2 Jinan diao 濟南調
2 shiduohua 十朵花
2 taipingnian 太平年
2 danghuchuan 壽湖船
2 dasijing 大四景
1 Laoting diao 樂亭調
1 xianhua diao 鮮花調
1 qunqu 羣曲
1 shibeijiu 十杯酒
1 shachuangwai 紗窗外
1 xiujiazhou 繡九州

Total: 2,124 texts

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152 Fu 1954a, 329, recounts that Liu Fu 刘復 discovered over 80 sacks of Baiben Zhang manuscripts at an unnamed Liulichang bookshop in 1929. Probably the categories in the above list (which range from names of genres to types of tunes) come from labels that are commonly found on title pages of manuscripts. Judging by Fu’s wording, the numbers should refer to counts of distinct texts in each category, and not physical volumes (the term he uses is zhong 种 [‘kind’]). Fu notes that these books were all purchased by the Institute of History and Philology of the Academia Sinica under Liu’s suggestion, but mistakenly records that they were lost in a shipwreck. A search for ‘Baiben Zhang’ through the Fu Sinian Library’s electronic catalog today reveals several hundred items – there may be many more that were not catalogued as such but in fact come from Baiben Zhang.
Table 1: Sales catalogs, listed by house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Collection and shelfmark (where known)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Baiben Zhang</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books</td>
<td>Capital Library of China, <em>yi</em>己1008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erhuang xi mulu 二簧戲目錄</td>
<td>Capital Library of China, <em>yi</em>己1008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaoqiang xi mulu 高腔戲目錄</td>
<td>Capital Library of China, <em>ding</em>丁6610</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
<td>Capital Library of China, <em>yi</em>己473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
<td>Capital Library of China, <em>yi</em>己459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erhuang xi mulu 二簧戲目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erhuang xi mulu 二簧戲目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dagu shu dan 大鼓書單</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaoqiang xi mulu 高腔戲目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matou diao shangqu dan 馬頭調上趣單</td>
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<td>Matou diao shangqu mulu 馬頭調上</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of big-drum tales</td>
<td>Kansai University, L23 D 6478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biyetang</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geyang kuaishu mulu 各樣快書目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books</td>
<td>Hebei University Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jujuantang</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bajiao gu shidao qu lianzhu diao paizi</td>
<td>Capital Library, <em>yi</em>己1008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qu qingdan 连珠調牌子曲清單</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Clear list of linked tunes: eight-cornered drum songs, tunes-of-the-times,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>jingles)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leshantang</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books</td>
<td>Fu Sinian Library, TJ27-212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Extant sales catalogs and other lists from various scribal publishers

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Table 1: Sales catalogs, listed by house.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>Capital Library of China, <em>yi</em>己459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matou diao shangqu dan 馬頭調上趣單</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matou diao shangqu mulu 馬頭調上</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>jingles)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leshantang</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books</td>
<td>Fu Sinian Library, TJ27-212</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All the items listed below are manuscripts. I have assembled this provisional list from archival visits and various secondary sources, but there may be still more items that are extant. Typically, sales catalogs from scribal publishers contain lists of titles with prices and are themselves marked with a price. Below, they are listed by house where known, and ordered alphabetically by collection. Catalogs from the Fu Sinian Library whose provenance needs further research are listed separately. Finally, in cases where the status of an item is not clear to me (e.g. I have not seen it and a secondary source says that it does not contain prices), or where it is clearly a list of a different kind (e.g., an inventory), I have indicated this in a footnote and listed the item under the section ‘Other’ at the end of this appendix. The catalogs of youth books have thus far received the most scholarly attention; see Chen 2003b, Cui 2005, 117–119, and Huang 2012, 2–3, which includes photo reprints of pages from several of them. Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, has made available the catalogs from Bieyetang and Leshantang in typeset form and includes a list of titles collated from several Baiben Zhang catalogs. The collation notes do not, however, point out all the differences between the list and what is contained in the manuscripts used for collation.

The titles on manuscripts are listed (in italics) where known; otherwise a description is given.

This catalog is described in Fu 1954a, 319–321. Manuscripts from Fu Xihua’s personal collection, which went to the Chinese National Academy of Arts, are not presently accessible to the public.

This catalog catalog is described in Fu 1954a, 321–322. Manuscripts from Fu Xihua’s personal collection, which went to the Chinese National Academy of Arts, are not presently accessible to the public.

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Table 2: Catalogs at the Fu Sinian Library for further study.

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<td><strong>Dagu shu mu 大鼓书目</strong></td>
<td>TJ27-211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zidi shu mulu 子弟书目录</strong></td>
<td>TJ27-213</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Dagu shu mulu 大鼓书目录</strong></td>
<td>TJ27-214</td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Zidi dagu shu mulu 子弟大鼓书目录</strong></td>
<td>TJ27-215</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Erhuang mulu 二簧目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ30-233</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erhuang mulu 二簧目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ30-234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Zengbu erhuang mulu 增補二簧目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ30-235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Xin erhuang mulu 新二簧目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ31-236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erhuang mulu 二簧目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ31-237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Za qu mulu 雜曲目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ31-238</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Matou diao mulu 马頭調目錄</strong></td>
<td>TJ31-239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3: Other.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Collection and shelfmark (where known)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List of songs in various genres</td>
<td>Chinese National Academy of Arts qu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>Fu Sinian Library, Tj28-225172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventory</td>
<td>Fu Sinian Library, Tj31-240173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copy of a catalog of youth books (?)</td>
<td>Hebei University Library174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books (?)</td>
<td>National Library of China, wen 文 571175</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books (?)</td>
<td>Unclear176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catalog of youth books (?)</td>
<td>Unclear177</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

170 These are catalogs at the library whose provenance needs further research. For each item, I have given the title listed in the library’s online catalog, but they do not in all cases accurately reflect the content of the books. All the manuscripts have been rebound, and most are missing their original covers/title pages. A number contain partial folios from what originally were multiple catalogs. Tj27-210, Tj27-211, Tj27-213 and Tj30-234 contain title pages bearing Baiben Zhang stamps, but in at least one case (Tj27-213), the differences in paper suggest that the folios did not originally all belong together. I did not find stamps from copying houses in the other items, but they share the usual sales catalog format of listing prices beneath titles. I have arranged the list by shelfmark.

171 This item, dated to 1886, is described as Ganban paizi kuaihua chaqu matou diao geyang qumu 赶板牌子快書岔曲馬頭調各樣曲目 (List of various swift beats, linked tunes, fast tales, ditties, and port tunes) in Huang 2012, 7; also see Chen 2017, 51‒54. It is not clear to me if it is in fact a sales catalog from a scribal publisher, as these manuscripts are hardly ever dated.

172 This single sheet, containing a list of abbreviated titles with notes, is rebound together with a sales catalog.

173 This item of nine folios contains running lists of titles in various genres, with triangles indicating tallies. The first seven folios form one inventory, and the last two form another.

174 Chen 2000, 221 note 20, suggests this may be a later-made copy of a sales catalog from Baiben Zhang (but gives no further details).

175 The library’s electronic catalog gives the title of this item as Zidi shu mulu 子弟書目錄 (‘catalog of youth books’) and describes it as a manuscript in two volumes, dated between the second half of the nineteenth century and the early Republican period. No further information is given, but very possibly this is a sales catalog from a scribal publisher.

176 This item is described in Huang 2012, 2, as a Baiben Zhang catalog of youth books from the former collection of Nagasawa Kikuya. The photo reprint of a page from the manuscript included with the description shows that titles and numbers of chapters are listed, but not prices, so it is not clear to me if it is in fact a sales catalog. The original cover of the manuscript is apparently missing (ref. Huang et al. 2012b, vol. 10, 4358). Huang does not specify the present location of this item.

177 Huang 2012, 2, describes this item as a Baiben Zhang catalog with a later cover signed by the collector Lüting yanguan 綠棠吟館, ‘Complete list of youth book verses, a base copy from Baiben Zhang’ (Zidi shu ciqu quanmu Baiben Zhang diben 子弟書詞曲全目 百本張底本). That it is described as a ‘base copy’ raises the question whether it is in fact a sales catalog. Huang does not specify the present location of this item.
Appendix 3: Announcement from Baiben Zhang

計開石派書列後

風波亭一部現有

九頭案以後，從南俠暗行、婆子哭墓起，合計六十餘本，要者定抄。再，本堂有數樣石韻之書未能得全，現在託人挽轉。全行得妥，較正明白，再行定抄可也。

今將未能得妥之石派書名列后

| 四郎探母 | 五本十六回 |
| 三矮奇聞 | 三本九回 |
| 義俠記 | 十本三十五回 |
| 混元盒 | 兩本六回 |
| 凤儀亭 | 兩本八同 |
| 長坂坡 | 兩本六同 |
| 下河南 | 五本十五同 |
| 長生殿 | 兩本六同 |
| 二心閨 即真假幻 | 兩本六同 |
| 二度槑 | 八本三十二同 |
| 仙俠緣 聊齋紅玉 | 兩本六同 |
| 綺閣春 聊齋馬介甫 | 四本十二同 |
| 謗門醒夢 | 兩本六同 |
| 撞天婚 | 兩本六同 |

京都百本張具

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178 I am grateful for Prof. Chen Jinzhao for generously sharing this source with me. I do not know the shelfmark for this item at the Fu Sinian Library. The text appears to be complete on a single sheet of paper. The punctuation below is mine.

179 The characters jingdu Baiben Zhang 京都百本張 come from a stamp, while the character ju 具 is handwritten.
List of pending Shi-style tales to follow

The title *The Pavilion of Trouble* is readily available.

As for the plot after *The Case of the Nine Heads*, from *Secret Ventures of the Southern Knight* to *The Old Woman Weeps at the Grave*, there are a total of over sixty volumes. They can be copied to order upon demand. Moreover, there are a number of Shi-style tales that this house has not been able to obtain in their entirety; at present we have employed someone to look for the missing parts, and the texts can be copied to order once they are complete and corrected.

For the moment, those incomplete Shi-style tales are listed as follows:

- *Silang Visits His Mother*, 16 chapters in 5 volumes
- *Marvels of the Three Midgets*, 9 chapters in 3 volumes
- *The Knights’ Chronicle*, 30 chapters in 10 volumes
- *The Box of Primordial Chaos*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *The Phoenix Pavilion*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *The Battle at Changban Hill*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *Going down to Henan*, 15 chapters in 5 volumes
- *The Palace of Everlasting Life*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *Battle of the Two Minds* (i.e. *The Illusion of Reality*), 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *The Second Bloom*, 32 chapters in 8 volumes
- *The Fairy and the Knight* (or *Hongyu*, from *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*), 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *Spring at the Pavilion* (or *Ma Jiefu*, from *Strange Tales of Liaozhai*), 12 chapters in 4 volumes
- *Reprimanding Yama and Waking from the Dream*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes
- *A Marriage by Heaven’s Arrangement*, 6 chapters in 2 volumes

From Baiben Zhang of the Capital
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