
Indigenous Elite Networks and Mongol Governance in Thirteenth-century North China*

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In this paper, I reconstruct the epistolary network of Han literati in the northern territories during the thirteenth-century Jin-Yuan transition. As a base, I used two hundred letters in a collection titled *Zhongzhou qizha* 中州劄記 (Epistolary writings of the central plain). In response to a recent study which suggested the dissolution of literati networks after the demise of the Jin dynasty in 1234, I show how literati across different regions in the North maintained connections with each other through letters. I further discuss how Qubilai's system of patronage, with the help of several key brokers in the epistolary network, transformed parts of the literati network into an indigenous network of political elites after 1260; and this network, in turn, contributed to Mongol governance and administration in the North.

Keywords: Mongol empire, elite networks, Qubilai, North China, Epistolary Research

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1. Introduction

In less than half a century, the Mongols established an empire across Eurasia. How did they administer the empire's vast territories? Historians have attributed the success of the Mongols in maintaining the empire to their effective mobilization of resources and flexible adoption of various indigenous traditions of governing in different conquered territories.¹ In what is now North China, the Mongol ruling elites, with the help of Han literati, adopted the so-called “Han ruling methods” (*hanfa* 漢法) to govern. The Mongols labeled the population in the territories of the defunct Jin regime (1115–1234) as “Han people” (*hanren* 漢人) irrespective of their ethnic background such as Jurchen or Khitan. On the basis of this definition, I define Han literati as scholars, (1) whose native place was under the jurisdiction of the Jin; (2) who practiced the culture of traditional scholarly elites; and (3) who were educated to follow the basic values and moral standards of the Confucian school. The reasons behind Qubilai[Kublai]’s 忽必烈 (1215–1294, r. 1260–1294) employment of Han literati and his adoption of Han measures to govern have been extensively discussed in existing bodies of secondary literature.²

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- 1 David Morgan, *The Mongols* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 108–11; John Joseph Saunders, “The Nomad as Empire-BUILDER: A Comparison of the Arab and Mongol Conquests,” in *Muslims and Mongols*, ed. G. W. Rice (Christchurch: University of Canterbury, 1977), 36–66, esp. 46–49; Thomas T. Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism: The Policies of the Grand Qan Möngke in China, Russia, and the Islamic Lands, 1251–1259* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Michal Biran, “The Mongol Transformation: From the Steppe to Eurasian Empire,” *Medieval Encounters* 10, nos. 1–3 (2004): 339–61; and most recently *Nomads as Agents of Cultural Change: The Mongols and their Eurasian predecessors*, eds. Reuven Amitai and Michal Biran (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2015).
 - 2 See Morris Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan: His Life and Times* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 28–36; Herbert Franke, “From Tribal Chieftain to Universal Emperor and God: The Legitimation of the Yuan Dynasty,” in chapter 4 of his *China under Mongol Rule* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1994), 4–85. For specific studies relating to the Yuan adoption of the administrative structure of previous dynasties that ruled China, see David M. Farquhar, *The Government of China under Mongolian Rule: A Reference Guide* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Stuttgart, 1990), 1–11; Elizabeth Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China: Local Administration in the Yuan Dynasty* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1989), 3–15. For detailed discussions of Han literati who served the Mongols, see *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yüan Period (1200–1300)*, eds. Igor de Rachewiltz et al. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993); Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing 蕭慶, “Hubilie ‘qiandi jiulu’ kao” 忽必烈「潛邸舊侶」考, in his *Yuandai shi xintan* 元代史新探 (Taipei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, 1983), 263–302; and Zhao Qi 趙琦, *Jin Yuan zhiji de rushi yu hanwenhua* 金元之際的儒士與漢文化 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2004), 251–97.

Yet the following questions remain unanswered: How did the Mongols recruit Han literati? How did the latter manage to assume influential positions in the Mongol administration? Through a detailed analysis of a rare collection of letters that has yet to attract scholarly attention, I attempt to explore the extent to which an analysis of Han literati networks help solve the above two questions.

Recently Wang Jinping 王錦萍 has argued that networks of Han literati who relied on the patronage of the Jurchen Jin state power dissolved after the Mongol conquest in 1234. Instead, non-literati social groups like religious clergymen, villagers, and women formed networks and contributed to social stability in local communities, which in turn facilitated the Mongol governance in China.³ In contrast to Wang who substantiates her arguments with evidence from modern Shanxi, another scholar Ong Chang Woei 王昌偉 focuses on literati in Guanzhong 關中 (modern Shaanxi). Unlike Wang who considers the impact of the literati on Mongol governance was limited, Ong suggests that Guanzhong literati during the Jin-Yuan transition were “very ‘officially’ oriented, with many perceiving incorporation into the bureaucracy as their ultimate goal.”⁴ Considering an extra-bureaucratic space unnecessary, these men of letters promoted court-centered activism and a top-down political hierarchy.⁵ This in turn facilitated efforts by the Mongols to establish a centralized bureaucracy with reference to the Han tradition. Different scholarly perceptions on literati during the Jin-Yuan transition suggest that we need to rethink the social, political, or intellectual roles that literati played in thirteenth-century North China.

To what extent were literati networks dissolved after the demise of the Jin dynasty? I have reconstructed the epistolary network of literati in the Jin-Yuan transition through an examination of two hundred letters in a collection titled *Epistolary Writings of the Central Plain* (*Zhongzhou qizha* 中州 劄 , hereafter

3 Wang Jinping, “Between Family and State: Networks of Literati, Clergy, and Villagers in Shanxi, North China, 1200–1400” (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 2011). In another recently published article, Wang also discusses the cultural impact of religious networks in the Jin-Yuan transition period by showing how the networks of Complete Perfection Daoist monastic institutions and lay followers facilitated the printing of a massive Daoist canon in 1244. See Wang Jinping, “A Social History of the *Treasured Canon of the Mysterious Capital* in North China under Mongol-Yuan Rule,” *East Asian Publishing and Society*, 4, no. 1 (2014): 1–35.

4 Ong Chang Woei, *Men of Letters within the Passes: Guanzhong Literati in Chinese History, 907–1911* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2008), 206.

5 *Ibid.*, 76–131.

referred to in the main text as *Epistolary Writings*).⁶ The letter collection was compiled by a Yuan literatus named Wu Hongdao 吳弘道 (courtesy name Renqing 仁卿, fl. 13th century). The preface of this work, dated 1301, suggests that the collection was compiled in the late thirteenth century, though it does not offer much information regarding Wu's motive behind the collection and publication of letters. The binome *qizha* in the title of this collection refers to two distinct literary genres of official communication called *qi* 劄 and *zha* 劄, which originally referred to formal letters of greeting and bureaucratic documents respectively. In fact, the letters between Han literati collected here concern personal rather than administrative correspondence.⁷ Among the forty-eight literati who had their letters collected and whose names can be identified,⁸ the eldest is Zhao Bingwen 趙秉文 (1159–1232) and the youngest is probably Liu Yin 劉因 (1249–1293). All authors as well as intended recipients of the letters were Han literati. Out of the two hundred letters collected in the *Epistolary Writings*, famous literati such as Zhao Bingwen and Yuan Haowen 元好問 (1190–1257) only contributed two and seven letters respectively; this is in stark contrast with collections of correspondence by Song (960–1279) literati in which the majority of the letters have been attributed to prominent literary figures such as Sun Di 孫覲 (1081–1169), Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅

6 Wu Hongdao 吳弘道, ed., *Zhongzhou qizha* 中州 劄 (Qing manuscript edition) [hereafter, *ZQ*], rpt. in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1988), 116: 1–31. See the Appendix for a discussion of the compilation and transmission of the *ZQ*.

7 This attests the mixed adoption of *qi* and *zha* as personal correspondence in the Yuan period, as described in a thirteenth-fourteenth century encyclopedia. See Liu Yingli 劉應李 (*jinshi* 1274), ed., *Xinbian shiwen leiju hanmo quanshu* 新編事文類聚翰墨全書, rpt. in *Sikuquanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, *zibu* 子部 (Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 1995), 169: 1.18. For a recent discussion of the impact of bureaucratic documents like *zha* on the conventions of writing personal letters in Song China, see Tsui Lik Hang 徐力恆, “Bureaucratic Influences on Letters in Middle Period China: Observations from Manuscript Letters and Literati Discourse,” in *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, ed. Antje Richter (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 363–97.

8 It is worth noting that there is a slight difference between my counting method and that of the famous Qing bibliophile Lu Xinyuan 陸心源 (1834–1894). Lu names forty-four authors of the letters in the *ZQ*. See Lu Xinyuan, *Yigutang shumu tiba huibian* 儀顧堂書目題跋彙編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 448. Based primarily on the reproduction from the Beijing Library (now the National Library of China), I add four more authors to those Lu Xinyuan lists: Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273), Feng Bi 馮璧 (1162–1240), Mu'an 木庵 and Wang Yi 王儀.

(1045–1105) and Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101).⁹ The author with the greatest number of letters in the collection is the famous Confucian master Xu Heng 許衡 (1209–1281), with thirty-three letters incorporated. After Xu, the *Epistolary Writings* has fifteen letters by Shang Ting 商挺 (1209–1288) and fourteen by Yang Guo 楊果 (1197–1271), both top officials in Qubilai’s government.

The fact that the authors were prominent literati at the time raises many questions such as: to what extent could this set of letters shed light on literati activities and elite networks in the Jin-Yuan transition period? What did the spatial distribution of literati networks look like and how did it evolve over time? Ong Chang Woei has suggested that literati in the Jin-Yuan transition were incorporated into the bureaucratic structure. Can these letters help us understand what kinds of administrative positions they held during the Jin-Yuan transition? To what extent did literati networks overlap or interact with non-literati Buddhist and Daoist networks? Since most literati involved in the epistolary network were Han, how did they relate to the Mongol overlords and the Western and Central Asian elites under “miscellaneous categories” (*semuren* 色目人)? Hopefully, exploring answers to the above questions will shed light on the following key question: how did the Han literati network facilitate Mongol governance in North China in the thirteenth century?

2. Spatial distribution of literati networks

A total of forty-eight authors and sixty-nine recipients were involved in the two hundred letters collected in the *Epistolary Writings*; the native place of sixty-seven authors and recipients can be identified. Geographical distribution of their native place shows that the epistolary network was not confined to a single region, but mainly spread across different regions in North China: twenty-six of the native places are in modern Hebei, thirteen in Shandong, eleven in Henan, nine in Shanxi, five in Shaanxi, two in Liaoning, and one in

9 See Ronald C. Egan, “Su Shih’s ‘Notes’ as a Historical and Literary Source,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 50, no. 2 (1990): 561–88 and “Su Shi’s Informal Letters in Literature and Life,” in *A History of Chinese Letters and Epistolary Culture*, 475–507 for studies of Su Shi’s letters. For a discussion of Sun Di’s letters, see Tsui Lik Hang, “How Do You Respond to a Request for an Epitaph? A Case Study in Epistolary Communication between Literati Officials” (paper presented at the Conference on Studies of China’s Politics, Culture and Society during 10th–13th centuries China-cum-the 3rd Annual General Meeting of the Song Studies Group for the Lingnan Region” 十至十三世紀中國的政治、文化與社會學術研討會暨嶺南宋史研究會第三屆年會, Lingnan University, Hong Kong, December 9, 2012).

Jiangxi. Moreover, the network was dynamic—as the authors and recipients of the letters seldom stayed in their native place for their entire lives. This dynamism impacts the spatial distribution of the network along with the extent of its reach. The movement and epistolary network of Lü Xun 呂遜 (1209–1273), one of the two recipients (the other one was You Xian 游顯, 1210–1283) who was addressed to the most in the letter collection under discussion (i.e. more than thirty letters), helps illustrate the phenomenon. The following excerpt from a letter from Xu Shilong 徐世隆 (1206–1285) to Lü Xun gives us a rough idea about the latter’s movement:

Over twenty-one years since migrating to the North, we travelled together for a long time instead of a single day. Hence I am familiar with your behaviour. When you meet friends, you emphasized uprightness while playing down material rewards. You definitely were not motivated by (material) rewards. After accompanying Mr. Zhou to the South and staying for a year, you followed him to the North. Much later you returned to the South.

北渡以來餘二十一年矣，遊從之久又非一日，蓋已熟某之為。與人交，重氣節，輕貨財，決非為利而往者。既而從周君南轅，居一年，又從北，久之復南下。¹⁰

Xu Shilong recalled that Lü Xun had travelled along with his superior Mr. Zhou. After spending a year in the South, Lü accompanied Zhou to the North. Both Lü and Zhou returned to the South after working in the North for a long period of time. Another important clue in this letter is Xu Shilong’s indication that he wrote the letter twenty-one years after he migrated. Xu Shilong’s epitaph records his migration to the North, likely to be an involuntary movement instigated by the Mongol authority, after Henan was conquered in 1233.¹¹ This fact helps us to deduce that Xu wrote the letter in 1254 and, therefore, suggests that Lü Xun had spent most of the time in the North between the 1230s and 1250s before heading south, though it does not explicitly indicate where Lü visited. Other letters have to be consulted in order to solve two outstanding issues: the places that Lü visited during the said period as well as the identity of Lü’s superior Mr. Zhou.

10 Xu Weiqing taichang 徐威卿太常，“Yu Lü Ziqian canyi”與呂子謙參議，ZQ, 1, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 7a.

11 Su Tianjue 蘇天爵 (1294–1352), *Yuanchao mingchen shilüe* 元朝名臣事略 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996) [hereafter, YMC], 12.250.

Another letter by Feng Bi 馮璧 (1162–1240), one of the earliest surviving letters to Lü Xun, gives us an idea concerning when Lü visited Yan 燕 in modern Hebei. Feng was a veteran Hanlin Academician (*Hanlin xueshi* 翰林學士) of the Jin court. After the Mongol conquest of Kaifeng 開封, Feng Bi moved to Shandong and stayed there until 1236.¹² This letter was written during his stay in Shandong in the mid-1230s. According to Feng, Lü Xun had mentioned in an earlier letter that he had recently accompanied a Staff Officer (*canmou* 參謀) to return to Yan.¹³ Lü Xun’s movement unveiled in Feng Bi’s letter somehow echoes the description of Xu Shilong provided above. The remaining questions are: How long did Lü Xun stay in the North? When did he begin moving to the South? The following letter by Tudan Gonglü 徒單公履 (?–1289) provides some clues:

Recently I heard that you will travel to Henan. If you can drop by Qi when you return and stay for a few months, I am looking forward to greeting you.

近聞車從有河南之行，已是 程能一來淇上，作三數月之留，聊遂握手以慰。¹⁴

After learning of Lü Xun’s plan to travel to Henan, Tudan Gonglü wrote the above message to invite Lü to visit him at Qi that was in the vicinity of Weizhou 衛州 and stay there for a few months. Various sources indicate that Tudan had moved to Weizhou by the autumn of 1252 and had started teaching there.¹⁵ This information suggests that the date of this letter as well as Lü Xun’s trip to Henan could not have been earlier than the second half of 1252. Another way to deduce when Lü Xun moved to Henan is to trace the movement of his superior Mr. Zhou. As noted in Xu Shilong’s letter discussed above, Lü Xun

12 Wang Qingsheng 王慶生, *Jindai wenxuejia nianpu* 金代文學家年譜 (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubashe, 2005), 497.

13 Feng Neiha 馮內翰, “Yu Lü Ziqian canyi” 與呂子謙參議, *ZQ*, 1, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congan*, 116: 3a.

14 Tudan Yunfu 徒單雲甫, “Yu Lü Ziqian” 與呂子謙, *ZQ*, 3, *idem*, 116: 17b.

15 Wang Yun 王惲, “Renzi xia liuyue pei Xiao Zhengjun yin fangzhang Nan Rong tong hui zhe Wu Dashi zhengqing Dong Duanqing jingli xueshi Tudan Yunfu Zhang tidian Jidao Wang xiucan Zichu Jijia fu xiaozi Yun yushi ximo yun” 壬子夏六月陪蕭徵君飲方丈南榮同會者烏大使正卿董端卿經歷學士徒單雲甫張提點幾道王秀才子初泊家府小子惲偶侍席末云 and “Ai yousheng Ji zi ci bing xu” 哀友生季子辭並序, in *Wang Yun quanji huijiao* 王惲全集彙校, comps. Yang Liang 楊亮 and Zhong Yanfei 鍾彥飛 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 14.601, 65.2770.

was an assistant of Zhou and had accompanied the latter to assume duties in various places. Even though Mr. Zhou was frequently mentioned in the thirty-three letters addressed to Lü Xun, his full name is never revealed. How can we find out the identity of Zhou? Lü Xun's association with the General Distribution Commission for the Jiang-Huai region (*Jiang-Huai du zhuanyun si* 江淮都轉運司), as recorded by Wang Yun 王惲 (1227–1304) in the eulogy, gives us a clue. An official named Zhou Hui 周惠 (?–ca. 1261) was assigned to set up a General Distribution Commission for the Jiang-Huai region in the vicinity of Weizhou in the autumn of 1252,¹⁶ which was part of the efforts under Great Qan[Khan] Möngke 蒙哥 (1209–1259, r. 1251–1259) to rebuild the Jiang-Huai area and prepare for the conquest of the Southern Song. Before taking up his office in Weizhou, Zhou Hui was a Staff Officer in 1249 when he was staying in Zhending 真定,¹⁷ a place visited by Lü Xun as disclosed in a letter by Gao Shengju 高勝舉.¹⁸ The high degree of consistency in the movement of Zhou Hui and Lü Xun suggests that the former was the superior of the latter.

The letters discussed above give us a rough idea of the places that Lü visited between the 1230s and 1250s. Instead of returning to and settling in his native place in Dongping 東平 in modern Shandong, Lü Xun moved to the Weizhou area around late 1252 after living in the vicinity of Yan for over a decade. What deserves our attention is that during Lü Xun's stay in Hebei in the 1230s and 1240s, he corresponded with Feng Bi in his native place Dongping and Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273) in Henan. When Lü moved to Henan in the 1250s, Wang E who by then moved to Yan in Hebei continued to write to Lü Xun. Movements of Lü Xun and Wang E between the 1230s and 1250s are just two examples of the sorts of travel that literati took part in during the Jin-Yuan transition.¹⁹ The question is how typical is the pattern of Lü Xun's movement among literati in the Jin-Yuan transition? What explains Lü Xun's frequent travels together with Zhou Hui?

16 Wang Yun, “Qizhou Chuangjian gu Jiang Huai dou zhuanyunshi Zhou Fujun citang beiming” 淇州創建故江淮都轉運使周府君祠堂碑銘, *idem*, 54.2476–79.

17 Yuan Haowen, “Xinwu Cao jun qianbiao” 信武曹君阡表, *Yuan Haowen wen biannian jiaozhu* 元好問文編年校注, comp. and annot., Di Baoxin 狄寶心 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 5.1028–33.

18 Gao Shengju shangshu 高勝舉尚書, “Yu Lü Ziqian” 與呂子謙, *ZQ*, 3, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 18b.

19 Feng Neihan, “Yu Lü Ziqian canyi” and Wang Baiyi chengzhi 王百一丞旨, “Yu Lü Ziqian canyi” 與呂子謙參議, *ZQ*, 1, *idem*, 116: 3a–4a.

3. Literati vision of bureaucratic service

It is well known that the Mongols considered their conquered subjects as a kind of war booty to be offered to imperial relatives and meritorious officers. This is the fate that literati, among other people, were facing during the Mongol conquest of the Jin. At least nine of the forty-eight letter writers whose works are collected in the *Epistolary Writings* obtained an Advanced Scholar (*jinshi* 進士) degree under the Jin dynasty. After the collapse of their institutional patron in 1234, they lost their prestigious status as ruling elites. Joining other literati who were considered as conquered subjects, they were forced to migrate northward to serve as conscripted labor for Mongol overlords. Some captives chose to flee and become vagrants.²⁰ Apart from forced migration and evasion from captivity, literati vision of bureaucratic service as revealed in their correspondence is also a driving force to their movement, as shown in the letter below:

The Heavenly will besiege us. Not a single day can we attempt to fulfill our aspiration in this world. I am therefore happy to be nominated to a post ten thousand miles afar.”

天困我輩，未嘗一日得志於世間，故沾沾然有萬里之舉。²¹

The reason why literati were eager to travel a long distance to take up and share their joy over being nominated to an administrative position is because such opportunities were scarce. Not only were there fewer civil positions in the top echelon of Mongol administration compared to its Jurchen predecessor but there was keen competition. Because Mongols as well as Western and Central Asian elites competed for these positions, this limited the political influence of Han literati. Instead of assuming the role of senior civil servants in the court, most literati between the 1230s and 1250s merely assumed unranked or low-ranking positions in the administrative bureaus under the Mongol overlords or Han “hereditary lords” (*hanren shihou* 漢人世候), who were

20 Makino Shuji 牧野修二 has examined how social turmoil during the Jin-Yuan transition period led to the transformation of literati into prisoners, slaves or militias and how they managed to recover their former status. See Makino Shuji, “Transformation of the shih-jen 士人 in the late Chin 金 and early Yüan 元,” *Acta Asiatica* 45 (1983): 1–26. For a detailed discussion of the poor condition of Han literati during the Jin-Yuan transition, see Zhao Qi, *Jin Yuan zhiji de rushi yu hanwenhua*, 1–31.

21 Chen canyi Jiyuan 陳參議季淵, “Yu Lü Ziqian”與呂子謙, *ZQ*, 3, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 17a.

granted prerogative to manage their fiefs in hereditary right in different regions across North China.²² These Han “hereditary lords” played influential military, sociopolitical, and cultural roles in the Jin-Yuan transition. Apart from offering assistance to the Mongol military campaigns, they recruited Han literati who were scattered around different parts in China to assist in administrative bureaus or teach in local schools under their jurisdiction. In turn, social order was restored and Han cultural values were preserved.²³ Official titles and positions mentioned in literati correspondence written before 1260 give us an overview of the duties that Han literati assumed during the Jin-Yuan transition period. The majority of these were clerical positions inside administrative bureaus.

Yet, even gaining entry to these sub-bureaucratic positions was by no means easy. During the Song and Jin dynasties, examination credentials were increasingly emphasized; in contrast, in the Jin-Yuan transition, personal connection and recommendations were key to career advancement. Out of the two hundred letters collected in the *Epistolary Writings*, ten percent were

22 See Wen Haiqing 溫海清, *Huajing zhongzhou: Jin Yuan zhiji Huabei xingzheng jianzhi kao* 畫境中州：金元之際華北行政建置考 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2012) for a recent discussion of the territorial administration in North China during the Jin-Yuan transition.

23 Igor de Rachewiltz, “Personnel and Personalities in North China in the Early Mongol Period,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 9, no. 1 (1966): 88–144, which also discusses the significance of Han “hereditary lords” in North China during the period. Other scholarship on the Han “hereditary lords” include Françoise Aubin, “The Rebirth of Chinese Rule in Times of Trouble: North China in the Early Thirteenth Century,” in *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China*, ed. S.R. Schram (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1987), 113–46; Sun K’o-k’uan 孫克寬, *Menggu hanjun ji hanwenhua yanjiu* 蒙古漢軍及漢文化研究 (Taipei: Wenxing shudian, 1958); Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing, “Yuandai jige hanjun shijia de shihuan yu hunyin—Yundai tongzhi jingying yanjiu zhi er” 元代幾個漢軍世家的仕宦與婚姻——元代統治菁英研究之二, in *Zhongguo jinshi shehui wenhuashi lunwenji* 中國近世社會文化史論文集, ed. Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo chubanshin bianji weiyuanhui 中央研究院歷史語言研究所出版品編輯委員會 (Taipei: Zhong yang yan jiu yuan li shi yu yan yan jiu suo, 1992), 213–77, rpt. in his *Meng Yuan shi xinyan* 蒙元史新研 (Taipei: Yunchen wenhua, 1994), 265–348; Ikeuchi Isao 池內功, “Mongoru no Kinkoku keiryaku to Kanjin seko no seiritsu” モンゴルの金 経略と漢人世侯の成立, parts 1 to 4, in *Shikoku gakuin daigaku sōritsu sanjishūnen kinen ronbunshū* 四院大 創立 30 周年記念論文集, ed. Okamoto Mitsuo 岡本三夫 (Zentsūji: Shikoku Gakuin Daigaku Bunka Gakkai, 1980), 51–96 and *Shikoku gakuin daigaku ronshu* 四院大 論集 46 (1980): 42–61; 48 (1981): 1–39; and 49 (1981): 11–29; Inosaki Takaoki 井ノ崎隆興, “Mōkochō chika ni okeru Kanjin seikō — Kasaku chiku to Santō chiku no futatsu no kata—” 蒙古朝治下における漢人世侯——河朔地区と山東地区の二つの型, *Shirin* 史林 37, no. 6 (1954): 27–48.

literati requests for patronage. In most cases, they were written on behalf of relatives and friends by someone who had already served in the bureaucracy. In a letter to Lü Xun, Wang E, the top examination candidate of the Jin dynasty in 1224, wrote the following:

My cousin Han Maozhi was good at accounting. He has been a clerk for a few years, handling procurement and granary matters for Minister Zhao. Now he lives purely and honestly, returning to his native village and looking after the graveyard of my ancestors. If it is possible to obtain a nominal position under the patronage of the Commissioner and Mr. Kuo, I will be relieved.

表弟韓茂之，閑書筭，為趙相和糴官、倉官數年矣，今茲得清信，歸鄉里，為某守墳。儻得一虛名係都運與闔生門下，則安矣。²⁴

In another letter, Shang Ting sought patronage for a Marshal Li from Liu Bingzhong 劉秉忠 (1216–1274), a close adviser of Qubilai:

I sincerely recommend Marshal Li from the Commander Office, who is brave and good at planning. His strategic plots and schemes are distinctively desirable. Now he is in a hurry to reach the palace. I hope my master could spare a word to recommend him. Your respectable self, I know you will certainly know how to handle this, and it is not necessary for me to speak endlessly on this matter.

少懇帥府李元帥者，勇而有謀，籌通方略，歷歷可取。今馳傳赴闕，意望吾師一言保奏，想尊意必有所處，餘不待喋喋也。²⁵

In most cases we do not know how the recipients read, received, and responded to such requests. One of the exceptions is Xu Heng's recommendation of Yang Gongyi 楊恭懿 (1225–1294). In a letter to Jingzhao 京兆 Pacification Commissioner (*xuanfushi* 宣撫使) Lian Xixian 廉希憲 (1231–1280) in the 1250s, Xu mentioned the following:

My friend's brother Yang Yuanfu is an eremite. He has a sincere faith and is fond of learning. His conscientious deportment earns respect among our

24 Wang Baiyi chengzhi, "Yu Lü Ziqian canyi," *ZQ*, 1, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 4a.

25 Shang Zuoshan Mengqing 商左山孟卿, "Yu Liaoxiu guoshi" 與寥休國師, *ZQ*, 2, idem, 116: 14a.

scholarly peers. It will be wonderful if you are willing to take care of him.²⁶
友兄楊元甫，隱士也。篤信好學，操履不苟，實我輩所仰重。執事時肯眷顧，美事也。

The spiritual path stele of Yang Gongyi records that “the Pacification Commission and Branch Central Secretariats intended to employ Yang as Secretary to deliberate on policy matters.” 宣撫司、行省欲以掌書記共議事祿之，²⁷ suggesting that Xu Heng’s recommendation was favorably received by Lian Xixian. Yet Yang did not take up the position. In Yang’s funerary stele Yao Sui 姚燧 (1238–1313) explains that his eremitic attitude drove him to decline the offers.²⁸ I suspect, however, that Yang’s mourning obligation and poor health in the late 1250s and 1260s are also possible explanations.²⁹ Be that as it may, unlike Yang Gongyi, most literati during the Jin-Yuan transition were desperate to find bureaucratic positions—even performing tedious clerical duties that scholar-officials traditionally despised.³⁰ Official positions taken by literati before 1260 partly attested to this fact, since over seventy percent of the authors and recipients merely assumed junior official or sub-bureaucratic positions. Qubilai’s accession in 1260 appears to be a salvation for literati, who endured nearly three decades of dim prospects since the demise of the Jin. A comparison of the official titles and positions mentioned in the letters written before and after 1260 shows a thirty percent increase in senior positions in central and regional administration after 1260 in contrast to junior official and sub-bureaucratic positions. This phenomenon owes much to the political ascendance of Han literati in the epistolary network. Among the twenty-six authors and recipients whose careers before and after 1260 can be traced, sixteen of them who merely assumed junior official and sub-bureaucratic positions before 1260 became senior officials in central and

26 Xu zuocheng Luzhai 許左丞魯齋，“Yu Lian xuanfu”與廉宣撫，*ZQ*, 2, idem, 116:12b. This letter is also collected in the anthology of Xu Heng, under the heading of “Yu Lian xuanfu san shou”與廉宣撫三首；see *Xu Heng ji* 許衡集，comps. Huai Jianli 淮建利 and Chen Chaoyun 陳朝雲 (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 2009), 9.237.

27 Yao Sui, “Ling taishiyuan shi Yang gong shendaobei”領太史院事楊公神道碑，*Yao Sui ji* 姚燧集，comp. Zha Hongde 查洪德 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2011), 18.278.

28 Ibid. The official biography of Yang Gongyi basically followed the account of the funerary stele. See *YMC*, 13.265 and Song Lian 宋濂 (1310–1381) et al., *Yuan shi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976) [hereafter, *YS*], 51.3841.

29 Yao Sui, “Ling taishiyuan shi Yang gong shendaobei,” *Yao Sui ji*, 18.265–66.

30 See Endicott-West, *Mongolian Rule in China*, 105–28 for a discussion of how scholar-officials perceived clerks in the Yuan dynasty.

regional administrations after 1260. At least eleven and four authors served respectively as Hanlin Academicians and Councillors in the Central Secretariat, while five and ten recipients respectively reached the same positions.

It is true that subsequent to the establishment of an increasingly mature hierarchical bureaucracy after 1260, more senior positions in the bureaucracy became available. Yet, this does not necessarily mean that Han literati would be appointed. Even if Han literati managed to occupy key positions in the central government, their prolonged dominance had yet to be foreshadowed. This is because the power structure in the court depended on the emperor's political agenda—something that varied over time. According to a Mainland Chinese scholar Yao Jing'an 姚景安, Qubilai needed the talent of Confucian scholars to consolidate his power and facilitate his governance. But once the political situation was stabilized, Qubilai felt that the politically conservative Confucian scholars were obstacles to his expansionist policies. Together with his perception that the collapse of the Jin owed much to the work of Confucian scholars, Qubilai began to turn against and ultimately abandoned them.³¹ The uprising of Li Tan 李壇 (?–1262) in 1262 is a pivotal incident that partly explains Qubilai's shifting attitude; a number of senior Han officials who had close ties with Li were implicated in this affair.³² In turn, the emperor relied

31 Yao Jing'an, "Hubilie yu ruchen he ruxue" 忽必烈與儒臣和儒學, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu* 中國史研究, no. 1 (1990): 31–39.

32 Wang Ming-sun 王明蓀, *Yuandai de shiren yu zhengzhi* 元代的士人與政治 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1992), 67–79. For secondary literature on Li Tan's rebellion, see Otagi Matsuo 愛宕松男, "Li Tan no hanran to sono seijiteki igi: Mōkochō chika ni okeru Kanchi no hokensei to sono shūkensei e no tenkai" 李壇の叛亂と其の政治的意義：蒙古朝治下に於ける漢地の封建制とその州縣制への展開, *Tōyō shi kenkyū* 東洋史研究 6, no. 4 (1941): 253–78, rpt. in *Otagi Matsuo Tōyō shigaku ronshū* 愛宕松男東洋史學論集, vol. 4, *Genchō shi* 元朝史 (Tokyo: San ichi Shobō, 1988), 175–98; Sun K'o-k'uan, "Yuanchu Li Tan shibian de fenxi" 元初李壇事變的分析, in *Menggu hanjun ji hanwenhua yanjiu*, 44–65; and Huang Kuan-chung 黃寬重, "Geju shili, jingji liyi yu zhengzhi jueze—Song, Jin, Meng zhengju biandong xia de Li Quan Li Tan fuzi" 割據勢力、經濟利益與政治抉擇——宋、金、蒙政局變動下的李全、李壇父子, in *Shibian qunti yu geren: Di yi jie quanguo lishi xue xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 世變、群體與個人：第一屆全國歷史學學術討論會論文集, ed. Guoli Taiwan daxue lishi xuexi 國立臺灣大學歷史學系 (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue lishi xuexi, 1996), 87–106, a revised edition of which appears in Huang Kuan-chung, *Nan Song difang wuli: difangjun yu minjian ziwei wuli de tantao* 南宋地方武力：地方軍與民間自衛武力的探討 (Taipei: Dongda tushu, 2002), 275–306. For brief narratives in English of the Li Tan rebellion, see Morris Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan," in *The Cambridge History of China*, vol. 6, *Alien Regimes and Border States 907–1368*, eds. Herbert Franke and Denis Twitchett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 424–26 and Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 62–67.

increasingly on advisers and officials from Western and Central Asia. Unlike their Han colleagues who asserted benevolent government and hesitated to impose higher taxes, these Western and Central Asian were financial experts who managed to maximize government revenue for the sake of financing the court's expenditures as well as its costly military campaigns. Having taken into account the relative power of different ethnic groups under Qubilai's administration, what I describe as the rising political significance of Han literati after 1260 contrasts with their situation prior to 1260. To what extent could the internal and external connections of the agents inside the epistolary network help explain the ascending political role played by Han literati after 1260? How did the people mentioned in the letters establish ties between the Mongol rulers and Han literati and subsequently facilitate the latter's rise in officialdom? These are the questions that I address in the following sections.

4. Internal and external connections of agents inside the Literati networks

An analysis of the people mentioned in the letters sheds light on the relationship between Han literati and the Mongols as well as peoples under "miscellaneous categories." After excluding all authors and recipients, nearly three hundred names (including full names, partial names, and abbreviated names) appear in the main text of the two hundred letters, referring to around two hundred people. Almost all these names referred to Han people. Zhou Hui, who was closely related to one of the mostly addressed recipients Lü Xun, was mentioned the most (eight times). Zhou was followed by Lian Xixian (four times) and Kuokuo 闊闊 (1223–1262) (three times), two of the three Mongols and Western and Central Asians mentioned in the letters (the other non-Han person mentioned is Hudoulu 忽都魯, whose deeds can hardly be traced due to scarcity of sources). What explains the frequent articulations of Lian Xixian and Kuokuo? A closer examination of their lives and relationships with Han literati reveals how literati culture bridged the Mongols, Western and Central Asians, and Han literati despite the Mongol imposed "ethnic" differences.

Both Lian Xixian and Kuokuo were retainers of Qubilai, who ordered them to study under Wang E, a veteran Confucian scholar, in 1244.³³ Likely to be the earliest Mongol adopted to Confucianism, Kuokuo also studied with

³³ *YS*, 134.3250.

another Confucian scholar, Zhang Dehui 張德輝 (1195–1274).³⁴ In 1252, Kuokuo was assigned to draft military households across different circuits. He caused minimal disturbances to the mass populace by registering only the families that had strong men and abundant production. The Great Qan Möngke was delighted with his accomplishment and subsequently ordered him to supervise the Craftsmen Office (*jiangju* 匠局) in Yanjing. After Qubilai's enthronement, Kuokuo was promoted to be Junior Vice Councilor of the Central Secretariat (*zhongshu zuocheng* 中書左丞) in the seventh month of 1261.³⁵ During his service in the Central Secretariat, Kuokuo seems to get along with his Han colleague Wang Yun, as attested in the latter's poem addressed to the Junior Vice Councilor.³⁶ Soon Kuokuo was reassigned to be Pacification Commissioner of the Daming circuit, but his untimely death in 1262 prohibits us from further investigating the extent to which he interacted with Han literati.³⁷

Lian Xixian was born into a Uyghur family, and his father was a long-time retainer of the house of Tolui 拖雷 (1192–1232), the father of future Great Qans Möngke and Qubilai.³⁸ The relationship between Lian Xixian and Qubilai came closer in the 1250s, as the former married a daughter of a Uyghur named Mungsuz 孟速思 (1206–1267), whose second wife was the younger sister of Qubilai's wife. Before he became a nephew of Qubilai by marriage, Lian had received instructions from a famous teacher on the Confucian Classics since his youth. He managed to quickly summarize the essentials of the Classics and put them in practice. It is recorded that Lian was greatly interested in the Classics and history. He enjoyed reading to the extent that a book was always attached to his hands—even during meal and bed times. On one occasion in the 1240s when Lian Xixian was reading the *Mencius*, he was summoned by Qubilai. Lian carried the book along with him to meet the prince, who asked him about the teachings of Mencius 孟子 (372–289 BCE). He outlined the teachings on the kingly way, innate goodness of human nature and the distinctions between righteousness and self-interest as well as benevolence and violence in his

34 Wang Yun, *Zhongtang shiji* 中堂事記, 3, in *Wang Yun quanji huijiao*, 82.3413.

35 *YS*, 134.3250–3251.

36 Wang Yun, “Shang Kuokuo xueshi” 上閣閣學士, in *Wang Yun quanji huijiao*, 14.600.

37 *YS*, 134.3250–51. See also Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Yuandai Mengguren de Hanxue” 元代蒙古人的漢學, in *Meng Yuan shi xinyan*, 95–216, esp. 111.

38 The following narrative of Lian Xixian's life and career as well as his relationship with Han literati is primarily adopted from his biography in English, see Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” in *In the Service of the Khan*, 480–99. See also Michael C. Brose, *Subjects and Masters: Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire* (Bellingham, WA: Center for East Asian Studies, Western Washington University, 2007), 122–29.

reply.³⁹ Lian Xixian's inclination towards Confucian learning explains why the famous twentieth-century historian Chen Yüan 陳垣 (1880–1971) categorized him as Confucianists among the Western and Central Asians.⁴⁰ The Confucian education that Lian Xixian received partly explains why he nominated a prominent Confucian master like Xu Heng to supervise educational affairs and managed to work closely with two other Han literati Yao Shu 姚樞 (1203–1280) and Shang Ting during his tenure as Pacification Commissioner in Jingzhao in the mid-1250s.⁴¹ Apart from utilizing the scholarly and administrative talent of the above-named scholars, Lian also redeemed many Han literati in Jingzhao from slavery by paying their masters with his own saving and registering them as Confucian households.⁴² In 1259 when Lian joined Qubilai to besiege Ezhou 鄂州 (modern Wuhan in Hubei province), he led more than a hundred Confucian scholars to prostrate in front of the camp site, requesting the prince to ransom the literati in Song territory, who had been taken as prisoners of war, out of public funds. Qubilai agreed with Lian and subsequently freed more than five hundred literati.⁴³ In 1260 when a prominent scholar in Zhending named Li Pan 李槃 was unjustly kept in prison, Lian reported the incident to the newly enthroned Qubilai, and the emperor had the innocent Li released.⁴⁴ After Lian was summoned to the capital to serve as director of political affairs in the Secretarial Council (*zhongshu pingzhang zhengshi* 中書平章政事) in 1263, he worked with a group of Han literati who served in the central government, among them his old colleagues in Jingzhao Shang Ting and Yao Shu. Together they competed with a group of fiscal experts in the court under the lead of Ahmad and promoted “Han ruling methods” like the restoration of a censorial system as well as the institutionalization of a channel to nominate

39 Yuan Mingshan 元明善 (1269–1322), “Pingzhang zhengshi Lian Wenzheng wang shendaobei” 平章政事廉文正王神道碑, in *Quan Yuan wen* 全元文, comps. Li Xiusheng 李修生 et al. (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 2004) [hereafter, *QYW*], 24: 353; *YMC*, 7.125; *YS*, 126.3085.

40 Chen Yüan, *Western and Central Asians in China under the Mongols: Their Transformation into Chinese* (*Yuan Xiyu ren Huahua kao* 元西域人華化考), trans. and annot. Ch'ien Hsing-hai 錢星海 and L. Carrington Goodrich (Los Angeles: Monumenta Serica at the University of California, 1966), 21–23.

41 Xu zuocheng Luzhai, “Yu Lian xuanfu”, *ZQ*, 2, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 12b–13a; *YMC*, 7.124; *YS*, 126.3085 and Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” 483.

42 *YMC*, 7.126; *YS*, 126.3085; Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” 483.

43 Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” 484; *YMC*, 7.126; *YS*, 126.3086.

44 *YMC*, 7.127.

Han literati across the realm to join the officialdom.⁴⁵ As Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing 蕭慶 (1937–2012) succinctly noted, Lian “was a non-Chinese Confucian who [...] bore the brunt of the fight against the fiscal experts in defending the Confucian outlook.”⁴⁶ Likely because of the attack of Ahmad, Lian resigned from the Secretarial Council in 1270 and returned home. Soon a number of Han literati urged the emperor to reinstall Lian Xixian, among them Wang Yun presented a petition in 1271 to put Lian in charge of the affairs in Sichuan⁴⁷ and Wei Chu submitted a request in 1274 to summon Lian back to the capital and reinstall him at the Secretarial Council.⁴⁸ Despite the fact that their efforts were thwarted, likely because of the objection of Ahmad, their support of Lian is well attested. Only until 1278 did Lian ultimately return to the capital, this time on the recommendation of another Han official Dong Wenzhong 董文忠 (1231–1281), a former student of Lian’s mentor Wang E. Yet Lian was still prohibited from rejoining the Secretarial Council, likely because of his poor health and Ahmad’s continuous rejection.⁴⁹ We are told that many scholar-officials lamented the death of Lian in 1280.⁵⁰ Many Han literati composed eulogies or poems mourning him, of which those by Hu Zhiyu 胡祗適 (1227–1293), Yan Fu 閻復 (1236–1312), Hou Kezhong 侯克中 (1225–1315), Yao Sui and Li Yuanli 李元禮 still survive today.⁵¹ To sum up, Lian’s sympathy towards Han literati and his adherence to Confucian teachings partly explain why he was included in the Han literati network despite his Uyghur background, as attested by the frequent articulations of his name in the correspondence of Han literati as well as a number of eulogies and sacrificial prayers written by Han literati in memory of him. Unfortunately, in the few extant writings of Lian Xixian, it is difficult to find hard evidence of his role as a bridge of communication between Han literati and Mongol elites.⁵² Nevertheless, Lian’s

45 Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” 490–91.

46 Ibid, 480.

47 Ibid, 493.

48 Ibid, 494.

49 Ibid, 495.

50 *YMC*, 7.142.

51 *Yuanren zhuanji ziliao suoyin* 元人傳記資料索引, comps. Wang Deyi 王德毅, Li Rongcun 李榮村, Pan Bocheng 潘柏澄 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 1507. See also Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, “Lien Hsi-hsien,” 496.

52 Only a few writings by Lian Xixian are extant today. A modern compilation *Complete Prose of the Yuan* (*Quan Yuan wen* 全元文) contains three pieces by Lian Xixian. See *QYW*, 8: 286–90. A recent compilation *Complete Poems of the Yuan* (*Quan Yuan shi* 全元詩, comps. Yang Lian 楊鐮 et al. [Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013]) does not include any poems by Lian, which suggests that none of his poems survive today.

rapport with Han literati who served in the court and his close ties with Qubilai suggest that he played a pivotal role in connecting Han literati with Mongol elites,⁵³ and that his role was of crucial importance to Qubilai's recruitment of Han literati.

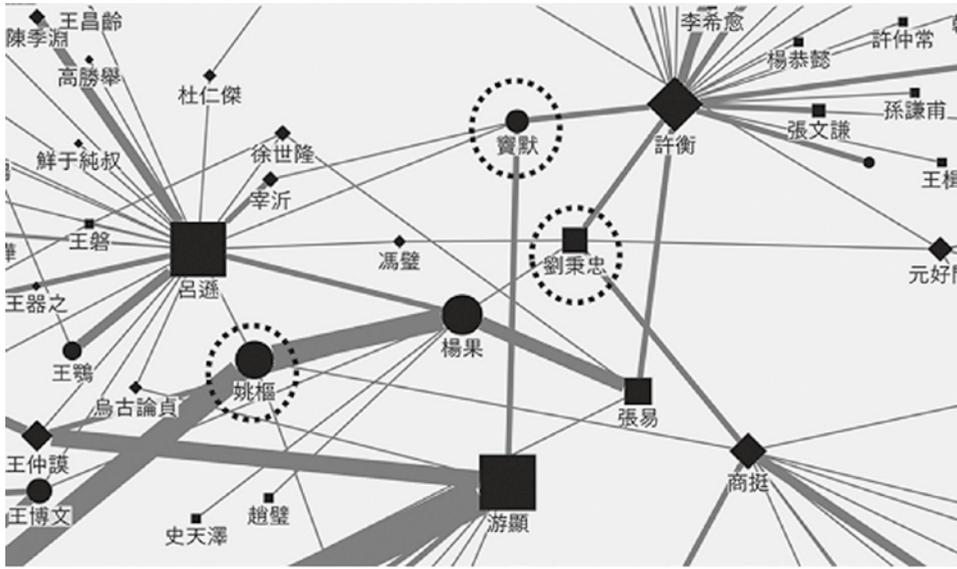


Fig 1: Epistolary network of Han literati during the Jin-Yuan transition. Diamond nodes represent authors, square nodes are receivers, and circle nodes are those who acted as both authors and receivers. The size of the nodes and the thickness of the edges represent the number of letters sent and/or received. Brokers are circled by dotted lines. To access and explore an interactive database containing the full text of the letters in the *Epistolary Writings of the Central Plain* and my network data, see http://dh.chinese-empires.eu/analysis/ZhongZhouQiZha2/zzqz_table.html.

In addition to Lian Xixian's connections, analyzing the epistolary network is another means to explore an answer to how the Mongols recruited Han literati. Those who sent and/or received the highest number of letters are identified as the core agents. Despite the lack of direct correspondence between them, it is interesting to note that the six core agents who sent and/or received fifteen or more letters, namely Lü Xun, You Xian, Yao Shu, Xu Heng, Yang Guo and Shang Ting, were connected to each other through three intermediary brokers. (see Fig 1) These three are: Yao Shu, Liu Bingzhong and Dou Mo 竇默 (1196–1280), whose social and political roles merit scholarly

53 See Wang Meitang 王梅堂, "Yuandai neiqian weiwu'er zu shijia: Lian shi jiazhu kaoshu" 元代內遷畏吾兒族世家——廉氏家族考述, in *Yuanshi luncong* 元史論叢 7 (Nanchang: Jiangxi jiaoyu chubanshe, 1999), 123–36 and Brose, *Subjects and Masters*, 122–35 for a discussion of the marriage networks of Lian Xixian's family.

attention. A common experience they all shared was that they all served as advisers to Qubilai when the latter was still a prince. Despite the fact that most of their correspondence with Han literati happened after they joined Qubilai, we should not attribute their core role in the epistolary network simply to their common service in Qubilai's administration. It could be that they were already serving as brokers in the Han literati network well before they joined Qubilai; however, this speculation cannot be verified due to the lack of concise temporal references of the letters and the scarcity of other sources for corroboration. Precisely when people started to connect with each other is unknown in most cases; and thus, we should not over-emphasize the reconstructed network as an explanatory tool and conclude that the personal connections of core brokers facilitated Qubilai's recruitment of Han literati. For example, since all three of Shang Ting's letters to Liu Bingzhong and Yao Shu were written after 1260, we are unable to attribute the recruitment of Shang Ting in 1253 to his connections with Liu and Yao.⁵⁴ What the reconstructed network tells us is that two people were connected to each other through letters; knowing this prompts us to further investigate when they started to know each other and at what point they were sufficiently comfortable to rely on their correspondent as social capital. In other words, the reconstructed network suggests some interpersonal ties that may shed light on Han literati's promotion after 1260. Examining these ties closely—with a particular focus on their temporal dimensions and using sensitivity regarding how they evolved over time—may help determine the extent to which they can be helpful in explaining how Qubilai recruited Han literati. Xu Heng's example helps illustrate the case. It is well evidenced that his letters to Lian Xixian, Liu Bingzhong and Dou Mo were written in the 1250s,⁵⁵ pointing to this somehow justifies our surmising that his connections with these close advisers of Qubilai facilitated his later promotion to be Junior Vice Councilor of the Central Secretariat in the 1260s. Extending this

54 Shang Ting was recruited to assist Qubilai in administering Guanzhong in 1253. See *YMC*, 11.218. For Shang Ting's letters to Liu Bingzhong and Yao Shu, see Shang Zuoshan Mengqing, "Yu Yao shangshu" 與姚尚書, "Yu Hui Gong guoshi" 與晦公國師 and "Yu Liaoxi guoshi," *ZQ*, 2, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 13b–14a.

55 Xu zuocheng Luzhai, "Yu Dou xiansheng" 與竇先生, "Yu Zhonghui Zhongyi" 與仲晦仲一, and "Yu Lian xuanfu," *ZQ*, 2, in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 8–9, 12b. These letters are also collected in the collected works of Xu Heng. See *Xu Heng ji*, 9.223, 228, 237. For a chronological biography of Xu Heng which I deduce a rough temporal reference of the letters from, see Zheng Shifan 鄭士范, *Xu Luzhai xiansheng nianpu* 許魯齋先生年譜, rpt. in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan* 北京圖書館藏珍本年譜叢刊 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 35: 585–654.

reasoning to other authors is more difficult however. The body of literary writings and biographical information of other authors and recipients is not as abundant as that of Xu Heng. This makes it almost impossible to discern when particular individuals met or began to correspond. Lack of temporal reference somehow limits the explanatory power of the reconstructed network with respect to how Qubilai recruited Han literati. Besides, one question remains unresolved: why did Qubilai recruit Han literati?

According to official accounts, Qubilai started to recruit Han literati as advisers after 1244 when he was still a prince.⁵⁶ Existing bodies of scholarship usually have attributed Qubilai's early recruitment of Han literati and later adoption of "Han ruling methods" to his recognition of the expertise of Han literati in governing sedentary territories, his mother's legacy as well as his personal experience and early exposure to Han culture.⁵⁷ A closer examination of the life and networks of one of the brokers in the epistolary network Liu Bingzhong,⁵⁸ who joined Qubilai the earliest and remained in service for the longest, also sheds light on the attitudes of the future Great Qan towards Confucianism and Han literati. Well versed in the rituals and teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, Liu Bingzhong had close ties with Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen* 全真) Daoist priests before he became a Buddhist monk in the 1230s.⁵⁹ When a leading Buddhist monk named Haiyun 海雲 (1202–1257)

56 *YS*, 4.57.

57 See Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, "Hubilie 'qiandi jiulu' kao", 264–68; Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 13; Bai Gang 白綱, "Guanyu Hubilie fuhui hanfa de lishi kaocha" 關於忽必烈附會漢法的歷史考察, *Zhongguo shi yanjiu*, no. 4 (1981): 93–107; Zhao Huaifu 趙華富, "Lun Hubilie xing hanfa de yuanyin" 論忽必烈「行漢法」的原因, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊, no. 4 (1985): 22–28 and Yao Jingan, "Hubilie yu ruchen he ruxue," 31–39.

58 For studies of Liu Bingzhong's life and contributions to the Mongol empire, see Ge Renkao 葛仁考, *Yuan chao zhongchen Liu Bingzhong yanjiu* 元朝重臣劉秉忠研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2014); Chen Dezhi 陳得芝, "Yelü Chucai, Liu Bingzhong, Li Meng helun: Meng Yuan shidai zhidu zhuanbian guantou de san wei zhengzhijia" 耶律楚材、劉秉忠、李孟合論：蒙元時代制度轉變關頭的三位政治家, in *Yuanshi luncong* 9 (Beijing: Zhongguo guangbo dianshi chubanshe, 2004), 6–11 and Chan Hok-lam 陳學霖, "Liu Ping-chung 劉秉忠 (1216–74): A Buddhist-Taoist Statesman at the Court of Khubilai Khan," *T'oung Pao* 53, nos. 1–3 (1967): 98–146.

59 Zhang Wenqian 張文謙 (1217–1283), "Gu guanglu dafu taibao zeng taifu yitong sansi shi wenzhen Liu gong xingzhuang" 故光祿大夫太保贈太傅儀同三司謚文貞劉公行狀, in *QYW*, 8:282.

was summoned to meet Qubilai in 1242,⁶⁰ he brought Liu Bingzhong with him. Impressed with Liu's talent, Qubilai kept him as adviser. We are told from the biographical sketch of Liu composed by Wang Pan 王磐 (1202–1293) that:

When the sagacious son of heaven (i.e. Qubilai) once met (Liu Bingzhong), he persuaded Liu to stay and treated Liu as his trusted subordinate. Their bond was as close as fish and water. With the assistance of Liu, (Qubilai) deliberated on and made decisions about plans and secret plots that even veteran guards and nobles were forbidden to hear.

聖天子邂逅一見，即挽而留之，待以心腹，契如魚水，深謀密畫，雖耆宿貴近不得與聞者，悉與公參決焉。⁶¹

The intimate relationship between Liu and Qubilai is also depicted in a sacrificial prayer for Liu written by Xu Shilong: “(Liu) had an early acquaintance with the emperor. Their intimacy grew day by day and their conversations lasted until late at night” 早識龍顏，情好日密，話必夜闌。⁶² The close relationship between Qubilai and Liu Bingzhong is revealed not only in the biographical sketch and sacrificial prayer for Liu composed by Han literati, a remark made by Qubilai's wife, Empress Chabi 察必皇后 (1227–1281), also attests to it. She once claimed that “the emperor heeded whatever advice (Liu gave)” 言則帝聽。⁶³ What deserves our attention is that it is Liu's possession of technical skills rather than his knowledge of the teachings of different schools that caught the attention of the Mongol prince.⁶⁴ In fact, Liu Bingzhong was not the first Han literati whose expertise in divination and astronomy caught the attention of Mongol ruling elites. Decades earlier the first Mongol Great Qan—Genghis 成吉思汗 (1162–1227, r. 1206–1227)—recruited the erudite Khitan scholar Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材 (1190–1244) as his adviser

60 For a discussion of Haiyun's career and his encounter with Qubilai, see Jan Yün-hua 冉雲華, “Chinese Buddhism in Ta-tu: The New Situation and New Problems,” in *Yüan Thought: Chinese Thought and Religion under the Mongols*, eds. Chan Hok-lam and Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 384–90; Jan Yün-hua, “Hai-yün,” in *In the Service of the Khan*, 224–42, esp. 235–37; and Mark Halperin, “Buddhists and Southern Chinese Literati in the Mongol Era,” in *Modern Chinese Religion I: Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan (960–1368 AD)*, eds. John Lagerwey and Pierre Marsone (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 1440–43.

61 Wang Pan, “Liu Taibao beiming bing xu” 劉太保碑銘並序, in *QYW*, 2:300.

62 Xu Shilong, “Ji Taibao Liu gong wen” 祭太保劉公文, *ibid*, 2:399.

63 *YS*, 114.2871.

64 Zhang Wenqian, “Gu guanglu dafu taibao zeng taifu yitong sansi shi wenzhen Liu gong xingzhuang,” in *QYW*, 8:284.

in view of Yelü's possession of these skills.⁶⁵ It is also interesting to note that several core agents and brokers in the epistolary network also possessed professional knowledge. For example we are told that Xu Heng learnt about medicine, divination, mathematics and water management before he focused on Confucian teachings,⁶⁶ while Dou Mo was also a medical practitioner and adept in acupuncture.⁶⁷ Such a shared interest in professional skills among the Han literati in the network likely fostered their connections and also attracted the attention of the Mongol overlords towards them. Be that as it may, Liu Bingzhong was one among several early advisers who introduced Confucianism to Qubilai. Most importantly, he managed to convince the future emperor to recruit Confucian scholars. In fact, most Han literati in the epistolary network joined Qubilai because of their direct or indirect ties to Liu Bingzhong. For example, one of the key brokers Dou Mo joined Qubilai on the recommendation of Li Dehui 李德輝 (1218–1280), who was nominated by Liu Bingzhong;⁶⁸ another key broker, Yao Shu, joined Qubilai on the recommendation of Dou Mo.⁶⁹

Even though an increasing number of Han literati served as advisers to Qubilai through Liu Bingzhong's connections, this does not necessarily mean that the prince would assign administrative duties to them—let alone appoint them to key positions in his government after 1260. In fact, to gain the favor of the Mongol prince, the Han literati needed to compete with other advisers from Western and Central Asia.⁷⁰ The administrative and fiscal reforms initiated

65 Han Rulin 韓儒林, *Qionglu ji: Yuanshi ji xibei minzushi yanjiu* 穹廬集：元史及西北民族史研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1982), 181.

66 Yao Sui, “Zhongshu zuocheng Yao wenxian gong shendaobei” 中書左丞姚文獻公神道碑, in *Yao Sui ji*, 15.216.

67 *YMC*, 8.151.

68 *Ibid.*, 11.213.

69 *Ibid.*, 8.152.

70 See Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, *Xiyuren yu Yuan chu zhengzhi* 西域人與元初政治 (Taipei: Taida wenxueyuan, 1966); Li Futong 李符桐, “Weiwu'er ren duiyu Yuanchao jianguo zhi gongxian” 畏兀兒人對於元朝建國之貢獻, in *Li Futong lunzhu quanji* 李符桐論著全集 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1992), 3: 271–338 and Sugiyama Masaaki 杉山正明, *Hubilie de tiaozhan: Menggu diguo yu shijie lishi de dazhuanxiang* 忽必烈的挑戰：蒙古帝國與世界歷史的大轉向 (*Kubirai no chōsen: Mongoru ni yoru sekaishi no daitenkai* クビライの挑戦：モンゴルによる世界史の大回), trans. Zhou Junyu 周俊宇 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2013), 104–6 for general overviews of the influence of the Western and Central Asian elites on Yuan politics. For studies of specific ethnic groups under the “miscellaneous categories” in the Yuan period, see Morris Rossabi, “The Muslims in the Early Yuan Dynasty” and Herbert Franke, “Tibetans in Yuan China,” in *China under Mongol Rule*, ed. John D. Langlois (Princeton:

by the Great Qan Möngke in the 1250s, I would argue, are crucial to the fate of Han literati. In order to effectively mobilize human and natural resources of a contiguous land empire, the Great Qan carried out a series of reforms with the following objectives: “(1) to limit and equalize the burdens borne by the empire’s sedentary subjects; (2) to reassert imperial authority within the princely appanages; (3) to minimize destruction and population dispersal in active war zones; and (4) to restore the economic vitality of previously devastated areas.”⁷¹ Interestingly, earlier proposals by Han literati advisers coincided with the plan of the Great Qan. In his “ten thousand characters” proposal presented to Qubilai in 1249, Liu Bingzhong emphasized the importance of “honoring the lord and protecting the civilians” 尊主庇民.⁷² “Rectifying the court and restoring the hierarchical bureaucracy” 正朝廷，振紀綱 helps to achieve the former,⁷³ while the latter could be accomplished through reducing taxes and repaying loans to the masses.⁷⁴ Yao Shu also submitted a similar proposal in 1250 after he first met Qubilai. Yao proposed not only to establish ministries under the Secretariat to ensure consistency in policy implementation, but also to revise the legal system so that the power of execution would rest with the court and feudal princes would no longer have the prerogative to punish their subjects. In turn, imperial authority of the Great Qan would be reinforced. Yao then suggested a series of measures such as reducing taxation and conscripted labor, encouraging agricultural production as well as introducing welfare and relief measures to restore economic prosperity.⁷⁵ In this light, a shared vision to establish civil order seems to have provided a common ground between the non-Han conquerors and the Han literati, as Peter Bol has suggested elsewhere in explaining the Jurchen Jin’s

Princeton University Press, 1981), 257–95, 296–328; Thomas T. Allsen, “The Yüan Dynasty and the Uighurs of Turfan in the 13th Century” and Igor de Rachewiltz, “Turks in China under the Mongols: A Preliminary Investigation of Turco-Mongol Relations in the 13th and 14th Centuries,” in *China among Equals: the Middle Kingdom and Its Neighbors, 10th–14th Centuries*, ed. Morris Rossabi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 243–80, 281–310; Michael C. Brose, *Subjects and Masters: Uyghurs in the Mongol Empire*, *passim*.

71 Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 85.

72 Zhang Wenqian, “Gu guanglu dafu taibao zeng taifu yitong sansi shi wenzhen Liu gong xingzhuang,” in *QYW*, 8:283; Wang Pan, “Liu Taibao beiming bing xu,” *ibid.*, 2:299.

73 *Ibid.*, 8:283.

74 For the full proposal of Liu Bingzhong submitted to Qubilai in 1249, see *YS*, 157.3688–92. See Chan Hok-lam, “Liu Ping-chung 劉秉忠 (1216–74),” 119–22 for part of the English translation and a summary of the proposal.

75 *YMC*, 8.157–58.

adoption of Chinese political institutions and simultaneous maintenance of their distinct ethnic identity.⁷⁶

The high degree of consistency between the Han literati's proposal and the grand strategies of Möngke explains why his younger brother Qubilai entrusted Confucian scholars with administrative assignments. Good governance at the prince's appanage Xingzhou and successful resolution of the prince's dispute with his brother Möngke were just two among many examples in which Han literati proved their capability.⁷⁷ This, in turn, laid the foundation for their political ascendance after 1260. After the prince's accession, twelve of the fourteen Han literati in the epistolary network who had enjoyed Qubilai's patronage before 1260 were promoted; eight became councilors in the Secretariat and four became Hanlin Academicians. Part of the Han literati network was hence transformed into an indigenous network of political elites.

There is more to the story than attributing the rising political significance of Han literati in the epistolary network after 1260 to Qubilai's favorable attitude; mutual support among Han literati themselves was also crucial to their political success after 1260. As discussed above, fervent recommendations of their relatives and friends for bureaucratic appointment in their correspondence show that Han literati in general shared a common vision: probably derived from the Confucian notion of "outer kingship," they envisioned applying their learning to the political realm, with preserving Han cultural values and restoring traditional ways of governing Chinese society as their ultimate aim. In addition to a centralized bureaucratic structure, a number of Han literati even suggested restoring the civil service examinations, likely on a belief that this recruitment mechanism would create more career opportunities for Han literati in general. Yet, disagreement among some of them over examination topics led to the delay of restoration.⁷⁸ This disagreement is one of the many

76 Peter K. Bol, "Seeking Common Ground: Han Literati Under Jurchen Rule," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 47, no. 2 (1987): 461–538.

77 For a discussion of the contribution of Han advisers to Qubilai, see Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 22–52. Regarding Qubilai's relationship with his brother Möngke, see idem, 34–36 and Allsen, *Mongol Imperialism*, 50–51.

78 A number of former Jin advanced scholar degree holders like Wang E and Tudan Gonglü had advocated restoring the civil service examinations in the 1260s and 1270s. Yet scholars who adhered to the teachings of Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi were skeptical about such proposals: they perceived the restoration would lead to a bias towards literary oriented studies and become a threat to classical studies and moral cultivation that they fervently asserted. See *YMC*, 13.266–67; *YS*, 51.3842, and Lam Yuan-chu 劉元珠, "On Yuan Examination System: The Role of Northern Ch'eng-chu Pioneering Scholars," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 9 (1985): 197–203. See also Hsiao Ch'i-ch'ing, "Yuan dai de ruhu: rushi diwei yanjin shi shang de yizhang" 元代的儒戶:

examples showing how Han literati in the epistolary network should not be considered as a coherent whole.

In fact, one of the distinctions within the group of Han literati is their different scholarly orientation; these originated from two different interpretations of learning in the Northern Song period (960–1127), namely cultural pursuit advocated by Su Shi and moral cultivation asserted by Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107). Late Jin scholars such as Zhao Bingwen attempted to reconcile the differences between the two schools by incorporating them into a broader definition of learning. In spite of such attempts, incongruence re-emerged after the demise of the Jin and two distinctive intellectual groups were formed.⁷⁹ The group labelled as Culturalists consists of literary scholars who imitated Su Shi's style of cultural pursuits and stressed literary beauty. This group tended to lead an extravagant lifestyle. They frequently held wine parties, occasions for social gathering and demonstrations of literary talent. In contrast, the other group of scholars, the so-called Moralists, adhered to the philosophy of Cheng Yi and emphasized the perfection of moral behaviour through education and classical learning in particular.⁸⁰

Japanese historian Abe Takeo 安部健夫 (1903–1959) has suggested that these two intellectual groups followed their own course of development in parallel without intervening with each other. Yet, the epistolary network of Lü Xun reveals that the two intellectual groups were indeed well connected through intermediate agents. Lü Xun was connected to Culturalists like Wang E, Goulong Ying 勾龍瀛, Tudan Gonglü, Kang Ye 康曄, Du Renjie 杜仁傑 (ca.1208–1290), Wang Pan and Xu Shilong. At the same time, he also received letters from Moralists like Hao Jing 郝經 (1223–1275),⁸¹ Dou Mo, and Yao Shu. A possible explanation for Lü Xun's role as an intermediary is that the

儒士地位演進史上的一章, in his *Yuandai shi xintan*, 1–58; Abe Takeo 安部健夫, “Gendai chishikijin to kakyō” 元代知識人と科学, *Shirin* 42, no. 6 (1959): 113–52 and Rossabi, *Khubilai Khan*, 70–71 for discussions of the debates over reinstating civil service examinations.

79 Bol, “Seeking Common Ground,” 461–538; Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, “Confucianism under the Chin and the Impact of Sung Confucian Tao-hsüeh,” in *China under Jurchen Rule: Essays on Chin Intellectual and Cultural History*, eds. Hoyt Cleveland Tillman and Stephen H. West (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1995), 71–114; and Ong Chang Woei, “Confucian Thoughts,” in *Modern Chinese Religion I*, 1404–06, 1421–24.

80 Abe, “Gendai chishiki jin to kakyō,” 113–52; Sun K'o-k'uan, *Yuandai Hanwenhua zhi huodong* 元代漢文化之活動 (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju, 1968), 155–56.

81 For a recent study of how the intellectual orientation of Hao Jing converged to that of the Southern Song Neo-Confucian moralist Zhu Xi, see Christian Soffel and Hoyt Cleveland Tillman, *Cultural Authority and Political Culture in China: Exploring Issues with the Zhongyong and the Daotong during the Song, Jin and Yuan Dynasties* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2012), 111–88.

two intellectual groups were not mutually exclusive. In fact, moral cultivation was also a major concern of the Culturalists, and the Moralists also expressed their interests in poetic compositions. Both Wang E and Wang Pan were leaders of the Culturalists; yet, the former instructed his students to treat “investigating principles” (*qiongli* 窮理) as the utmost priority and the latter never ceased reading the works of Song Moralism scholars Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).⁸² In contrast, the anthologies of Moralists like Xu Heng and Hao Jing contain lots of poems and rhapsodies.⁸³ Most importantly, both Culturalists and Moralists shared a common vision concerning the need to establish civil order. This common ground not only enabled Lü Xun to bridge the two groups but also facilitated the cohesiveness of the Han literati network despite the different intellectual orientations of its members. Apart from attributing Han literati’s mutual support and collective actions to their shared experience of social and political turmoil during the Jin-Yuan transition, challenges from elites of the “miscellaneous categories” who were also competing for the Mongol overlords’ favors may also explain the solidarity of the Han literati.⁸⁴

The epistolary network discussed in this paper shows how literati were connected to each other through written correspondence, which helped shape a literati identity among people from different ethnic groups in the network. Here the concept of “literatization” advocated by Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing is helpful to our understanding of this phenomenon. People with a non-Han ethnic background who adopted Han literati culture were considered “literatized.” Unlike “sinicized” people who abandoned their own cultural and ethnic identity and were assimilated to the Han tradition, “literatized” non-Han people could selectively retain aspects of their own cultural, ethnic, and political identities that were beneficial to themselves.⁸⁵ Even though the epistolary network was comprised

82 YMC, 12.240, 12.246.

83 See Xu Heng *ji*, 11.252–77; Hao Jing, *Hao wenzhong gong lingchuan wenji* 郝文忠公陵川文集 (Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2006), 1–15.1–237. For a list of recent scholarship regarding Hao Jing’s literature, see Soffel and Tillman, *Cultural Authority and Political Culture in China*, 24 n26.

84 See Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing, *Xiyuren yu Yuan chu zhengzhi* for a general survey of the influence of the elites under “miscellaneous categories” on Yuan politics.

85 For a discussion of the differences between “literatization” and “sinicization,” see Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing, “Lun Yuandai Menggu Semuren de hanhua yu shirenhua” 論元代蒙古色目人的漢化與土人化, in *Yuandai de zuqun wenhua yu keju* 元代的族群文化與科舉 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2008), 55–84. For a detailed study of how “literatization” facilitated the interaction of literati from different ethnic categories and the formation of different kinds of social relationships among them in the Yuan period, see Hsiao Ch’i-ch’ing, *Jiuzhou sihai fengya tong: Yuandai duozu shirenquan de xingcheng yu fazhan* 九州四海風雅同：元代多族土人圈的形成與發展 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban gongsi, 2012).

mainly of Han literati, it was not self-contained; rather, it was open to people who were affiliated with literati culture in a broad sense—irrespective of their ethnic or religious background. Kuokuo and Lian Xixian who were respectively Mongol and Uighur, or Buddhist monks like Haiyun and Mu'an 木庵 were incorporated into the network. Despite the fact that they were all “literatized,” Kuokuo and Lian Xixian retained their distinctive ethnic and political identities while Haiyun and Mu'an retained their religious identities. This shared literati identity, I would argue, strengthened the internal cohesion of individuals inside the network, which in turn facilitated their political ascendance after 1260.

What deserves our attention is that out of the two hundred letters in the collection, none of them were addressed to Daoist priests. Only one letter was written by a Buddhist monk and addressed to another. Religious practitioners who were influential social elites during this period appear to have been marginalized by the Han literati network discussed in this paper.⁸⁶ This apparent marginalization is likely to be an outcome of source bias. Even though the two hundred letters collected in the *Epistolary Writings* already represent a rather comprehensive collection of letters written by Han literati in North China between the 1230s and 1290s,⁸⁷ they are just one of the many literary genres that could reveal interpersonal relationships. Other writings like poems, prefaces, colophons, and epitaphs should also be taken into account.⁸⁸

86 For studies of influential religious groups like the Complete Perfection Daoists (from the Quanzhen School 全真教), Chinese Buddhists and Tibetan Buddhists in thirteenth-century China under Mongol rule, see Cheng Su-chun 鄭素春, *Quanzhenjiao yu Damengguguo dishi 全真教與大蒙古國帝室* (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1987); Pierre Marsone, “Daoism under the Jurchen Jin Dynasty,” in *Modern Chinese Religion I*, 1126–29; Sechin Jagchid, “Chinese Buddhism and Taoism during the Mongolian Rule of China,” *Mongolian Studies* 6 (1980): 61–98; Jan Yün-hua, “Chinese Buddhism in Ta-tu,” 375–417; and Nogami Shunjō 野上俊靜, *Genshi Shaku-Rō den no kenkyū 元史釋老傳の研究* (Kyoto: Nogami Shunjō hakushi shōju kinen kankōkai, 1978); and Hu Ch'i-te 胡其德, *Meng Yuan diguo chuqi de zhengjiao guanxi 蒙元帝國初期的政教關係* (Taipei: Hua Mulan wenhua chubanshe, 2009).

87 Based on a rough survey of all the letters collected in *ZQ* and two modern compilations, *Complete Prose of the Liao and Jin (Quan Liao Jin wen 全遼金文)*, comps. Yan Fengwu 閻鳳梧 et al. [Taiyuan: Shanxi guji chubanshe, 2002]) and *Complete Prose of the Yuan*, we can identify a total of around 270 letters written by literati in North China during the thirteenth century. Therefore, *ZQ* contains seventy-five per cent of all the extant letters.

88 For example Chen Wen-yi 陳雯怡 has reconstructed literati networks through an examination of prefaces. See Chen Wen-yi, “Networks, Communities, and Identities: On the Discursive Practices of Yuan Literati” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2007) and “Social Writings from the Song and Yuan: The Recipients of Prefaces by Jizhou and Mingzhou Writers” (paper presented at Prosopography of Middle Period China: Using the Database, Warwick University, Coventry, England, December 13–16, 2007).

In addition, as shown in the works of Iiyama Tomoyasu 飯山知保, sources like inscriptions, steles and rubbings may occasionally reveal networks of the people involved.⁸⁹ Ideally, all the above available sources would have been consulted in order to reconstruct a comprehensive elite network in the Jin-Yuan transition. In fact, close ties between the Han literati in the epistolary network and the influential Daoist sect in North China are well evidenced in the former's commemorative writings for Complete Perfection Daoist priests and temples, in which scholars like Yang Huan 楊煥 (1186–1255), Wang E and Tudan Gonglü portrayed that they shared with their Daoist friends a common vision to transform the world through political participation.⁹⁰ The syncretism of Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism in the Yuan period also facilitated intellectual exchange among their practitioners to a certain extent.⁹¹ I suspect that Liu Bingzhong, who was well versed in the three teachings, and others like him would have played important roles in linking the network of Han literati to other prominent religious groups apart from the Complete Perfection Daoists. The cooperation of the Mongol overlords with this interweaving network of political and social elites, I would suggest, would have been crucial for the former to govern North China in the thirteenth century. To test the validity of this hypothesis, extensive studies on elite networks in the Mongol period need to be done.

5. Concluding observations

On the basis of the two hundred letters in the collection titled *Epistolary Writings*, I have reconstructed the epistolary network of Han literati in the Jin-

89 See Iiyama Tomoyasu, *Kin Gen jidai no Kahoku shakai to kakyō seido: mō hitotsu no "shijinsō"* 金元時代の華北社と科擧制度：もう一つの「士人層」 (Tokyo: Waseda daigaku shuppanbu, 2011).

90 For studies of how Han literati in the Jin-Yuan transition depicted the Complete Perfection Daoist movement, see Florian C. Reiter, "A Chinese Patriot's Concern with Taoism: The Case of Wang O (1190–1273)," *Oriens Extremus* 33.2 (1990): 95–131; Ong Chang Woei, *Men of Letters within the Passes*, 103–5, 108–9; Wang Jinping, "Between Family and State," 72–88; and Mark Halperin, "Accounts of Perfection in a Flawed World: 13th-Century Chinese Literati and Quanzhen Taoism" (paper presented in the panel "Being Imperial in the East, II: Frontiers, Groups, and Centres in East Asian Empire" at Leeds International Medieval Congress 2014, University of Leeds, England, July 10, 2014).

91 Liu Ts'un-yan 柳存仁, "The Syncretism of the Three Teachings in Sung-Yuan China," in his *New Excursions from the Hall of Harmonious Wind* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1984), 54–95; Liu Ts'un-yan and Judith Berling, "The 'Three Teachings' in the Mongol-Yüan Period," in *Yüan Thought*, 479–512.

Yuan transition. This reconstruction shows how literati across different regions in North China connected to each other through letters. The spatial distribution of the epistolary network varied over time in relation to the movements of literati; likely, these movements were associated with changes in their bureaucratic assignments. Even though literati lost their prestige as ruling elites upon the demise of the Jin, they sought an alternative way to fulfill their vision of bureaucratic service by taking up clerical duties in the administrative bureaus of Han “hereditary lords.” Their endurance seems to have paid off; a significant proportion of literati in the epistolary network managed to reclaim their status as ruling elites when they were incorporated into the Mongol administrative structure after Qubilai’s accession in 1260.

A closer examination of the epistolary network of Han literati reveals that their political ascendance after 1260 benefited in some way from a frequently articulated Uyghur named Lian Xixian. As Qubilai’s long-time retainer and an adherent of Confucianism, Lian’s background suggests that he served as a bridge of communication between Han literati and the Mongol and Central Asian ruling elites. In addition, the three brokers, namely Dou Mo, Liu Bingzhong and Yao Shu, who were connected to the six core agents in the epistolary network and their relationship with the future Great Qan Qubilai played a crucial role in the fate of Han literati. Among the three, Liu Bingzhong’s role was pivotal. Liu was one among the group of Han literati who joined Qubilai as early as the 1240s and remained in his service for the longest. He recommended Han literati to the Mongol prince through his social network. Enjoying Qubilai’s patronage, some of these Han literati were later entrusted with administrative assignments, partly because their proposals were consistent with the grand strategies of Möngke. They managed to impress the future emperor through their professional services, which laid the foundation for their rising political significance after 1260.

The above conclusion may look familiar to Yuan historians. Yet, this attempt at network analysis departs from received scholarship: reconstructing the tangled web of Han literati relationships reveals patterns or evidence that we may not otherwise see. Analyzing the networks brings to light bridges of communication that allowed literati in different parts of North China and scholars with different intellectual orientations to connect. Together these diverse individuals formed a Han cultural identity among themselves. Although it is not necessarily the only answer, reconstruction of the epistolary network provides possible explanations to the political ascendance of Han literati after 1260. It shows how several key brokers solicited Qubilai’s patronage for some of the Han literati inside the network. Han literati who were closely associated

with the three brokers assumed key positions in the Mongol government after Qubilai's accession. Having done so, they were transformed into an indigenous network of political elites. These political elites managed to persuade the Mongol ruler to follow some of Möngke's grand strategies and to continue to adopt Han measures to govern and, in turn, contributed to Mongol governance and administration in the northern territories. Apart from studying how the elite networks impacted on Mongol governance in thirteenth-century China, it is also interesting to see how such networks in China correlate to those in other parts of the Mongol empire like the Ilkhanate and the Golden Horde. To what extent does a comparative study of elite networks across the Mongol empire shed light on the ruling principle of the Mongol overlord? This awaits further research that is beyond the scope of this paper.

Appendix: The compilation and transmission of the *Epistolary Writings*

Epistolary Writings was compiled by a Yuan literatus Wu Hongdao in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. A native of Puyin 蒲陰 county in Qizhou 祁州 (modern Anguo 安國 county in Hebei province), Wu Hongdao was also a famous composer of Songs (*qu* 曲), a popular literary genre in the Yuan dynasty.⁹² In 1301 when Wu was serving as a clerk in the Inspection Office (*jianjiao yuanshi* 檢校掾史) in the Jiangxi province, he planned to publish “the correspondence of various veteran scholars in the central plain” 中州諸老往復書尺⁹³ that he had collected so far. Wu invited his colleague Xu Shansheng 許善勝, an Associate Supervisor of Confucian Schools (*ruxue fu tiju* 儒學副提舉) in the Jiangxi region, to write a preface for this new compilation. This preface gives us some hints on how letters were used and perceived among Yuan literati:

The prevailing custom is waning. Scholar-officials who write letters consider exuberant style as ingenious and trimming luxuriance as skillful. The superbly skilled ones claim that they aim to get rid of hackneyed

92 Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, *Yuan qujia kaolüe* 元曲家考略 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1981), 145–46.

93 Quoted from the preface to the *ZQ* written by Xu Shansheng preserved in the Airi jinglu 愛日精廬 manuscript edition, which has been reprinted in *Sikuquanshu cunmu congshu bubian* 四庫全書存目叢書補編 (Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 2001), 79: 338–39.

phrases while the poorly skilled ones strive to utilize their flattering languages, hoping to attain a slight advancement.

流俗日靡，士大夫從事書札，扶 茂好以為巧，裁穠翦織以為工，高者自謂陳言之務去，卑者直欲盡平生之諂，以希分寸之進。⁹⁴

According to Xu, his contemporaries abused letters as tools for career advancement—either through self-aggrandizement or flattering influential people. Written with utilitarian purpose, letters became frivolous and filled with flowery writing. The noble value of letters as a genre of literary simplicity in conveying messages had been lost. Xu Shansheng's depiction shows that letters were widely used among early Yuan literati in pursuit of a career. In order to familiarize themselves with letter writing styles, early Yuan literati needed to look at references that contained many samples of letters. High demand for manuals of letters likely motivated printers to publish compilation of sample letters. This may explain why the editors of the *Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries* (*Sikuquanshu* 四庫全書) claimed that “the *Great Compendium of the Yongle Reign Period* (*Yongle dadian* 永樂大典) included the greatest numbers of letters from the Song and Yuan periods, but the quality is also the most variable” 《永樂大典》載宋、元 劄最夥，其猥濫亦最甚。⁹⁵ It also suggests that enormous amount of letters by Yuan literati were still available in the early fifteenth century when the *Great Compendium* was compiled. Surprisingly only a few hundred letters by the Yuan literati survive today.

After the *Epistolary Writings* was published, we know little about how it was circulated and received among the Yuan literati; their compositions such as prose, notebooks and letters had yet to mention this work. What is obvious is that entries of the *Epistolary Writings* were copied during the Yongle reign (r. 1402–24) of the Ming dynasty into the encyclopedic compilation, later known as the *Yongle dadian*.⁹⁶ The early fifteenth-century *Wenyuange* catalogue indicates that a copy of the *Epistolary Writings* was kept in the imperial library of the Ming court.⁹⁷ Most of the books in the *Wenyuange* were lost by the mid-fifteenth century after several fire accidents; thanks to the effort by

94 Ibid.

95 Yongrong 永瑤, Ji Yun 紀昀, et al., *Sikuquanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Shijiazhuang: Hebei renmin chubanshe, 2000), 191.5225.

96 Ibid.

97 Yang Shiqi 楊士奇, *Wenyuange shumu* 文淵閣書目, 3.8b, rpt. in *Yingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu* 景印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1984), 675: 177.

private collectors, however, the *Epistolary Writings* was saved from the fate of extinction. Ye Sheng 葉盛 (1420–1474), a famous bibliophile from Suzhou 蘇州 in the early Ming, was one of its early collectors.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, the *Epistolary Writings* had yet to be circulated widely: Ye’s contemporary Weng Shizi 翁世資 (1415–1483) recalled in 1467 that it “has yet to be circulated in bookstores. Only a few people have seen it” 書肆無傳，見者寡甚。⁹⁹ Weng, therefore, borrowed a rare copy from his colleague Mr. Fang, who held the office of Right Assistant Administration Commissioner (*You canyi* 右參議), and arranged to transcribe and typeset the texts into woodblocks and reprint them.¹⁰⁰

Likely having benefited from the reprints of Weng Shizi in the Chenghua era (1465–1487), the title *Epistolary Writings* appears in several catalogues of private collectors from the sixteenth century onwards; moreover, the Wanjuantang 萬卷堂 catalogue of Zhu Mujie 朱睦㮮 (1518–1587) explicitly states that the work was in four fascicles (*juan* 卷).¹⁰¹ The Qianqingtang 千頃堂 catalogue compiled by an early Qing (1644–1911) bibliophile Huang Yuji 黃虞稷 (1629–1691) attests to the survival of the four-*juan* edition through the Ming-Qing transition.¹⁰² Interestingly when the catalogue for the *Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries* was compiled in the eighteenth century, the editors did not refer to the four-*juan* edition of the *Epistolary Writings*; instead they made reference to a two-*juan* edition extracted from the *Great Compendium of the Yongle Reign Period*. Considering that most of the texts in the *Epistolary Writings* looked familiar, the editors decided to keep the title

98 Ye Sheng 葉盛, *Luzhutang shumu* 菴竹堂書目, rpt. in *Sikuquanshu cunmu congshu, shibu* 史部 (Jinan: Qi-Lu shushe, 1996), 277: 70.

99 A quote from Weng Shizi’s postscript to the *ZQ*, excerpts of which have been transcribed by Huang Shang 黃裳 (1919–2012), a modern collector who possessed a copy of the Chenghua edition, in his *Cuimo ji* 翠墨集 (Beijing: San lian shudian, 1985), 179–80.

100 Zhang Jinwu, *Airi jinglu cangshuzhi* 愛日精廬藏書志, ed. Feng Huimin 馮惠民 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 35.609. See also Huang Shang, *Cuimo ji*, 179–80.

101 *ZQ* appeared in two mid-Ming catalogues from the mid-sixteenth century. See Chao Li 晁璠, *Chaoshi baowentang shumu* 晁氏寶文堂書目 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005), 2.11 and Zhu Mujie 朱睦㮮, *Wanjuantang shumu* 萬卷堂書目, 4.19b, in *Xuxiu sikuquanshu* 續修四庫全書 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995–2002), 919: 488.

102 Huang Yuji, *Qianqingtang shumu* 千頃堂書目, eds. Qu Fengqi 瞿鳳起 and Pan Jingzheng 潘景鄭 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990), 31.764. In contrast with the Ming catalogues, Huang Yuji recorded the title of the work as *Zhongzhou qidu* 中州 牘. Huang’s record had likely influenced Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728–1804), whom also recorded the title of the work as *Zhongzhou qidu* in his bibliography of Yuan publications. See Qian Daxin, *Yuanshi yiwenzhi* 元史藝文志, 4. 26b, in *Xuxiu sikuquanshu*, 916: 276.

of the book in the catalogue but not to copy its full text into the *Complete Collection of the Four Treasuries*.¹⁰³

Yet several private bibliophiles of the mid-Qing still possessed the four-juan edition of the *Epistolary Writings*. Zhang Jinwu 張金吾 (1787–1829) had two different editions: a Yuan-print facsimile edition (*yingyuan chaoben* 影元抄本) and the Chenghua print edition mentioned above. Since the former had many missing characters, Zhang found the latter very useful in collating the texts of the former.¹⁰⁴ According to the postscript to the facsimile edition written by Ding She 丁申 (1829–1887) in 1870, the Chenghua print edition was lost during the Taiping Rebellions in 1860 and 1861.¹⁰⁵ Fortunately, the Yuan-print facsimile edition previously owned by Zhang Jinwu survives, thanks to the Ding family who acquired it and kept it in their private library Baqianjuanlou 八千卷樓 until the late Qing.¹⁰⁶ Later this copy was sold to the Qing government and ends up in the collection of the Nanjing Library (formerly known as Jiangnan Library 江南圖書館 and Jiangsu Provincial Library of Chinese Studies 江蘇省立國學圖書館) today. It has also been reproduced in the *Sikuquanshu quanmu congshu bubian* 四庫全書存目叢書補編.¹⁰⁷

Another Qing bibliophile Huang Pilie 黃丕烈 (1763–1825) also owned a copy of the *Epistolary Writings*. In a new preface written to the work in 1815, Huang described it as an incomplete manuscript edition even though some missing characters had already been collated.¹⁰⁸ Huang's copy was likely passed on to another famous bibliophile Lu Xinyuan, who also kept a Yuan-print edition.¹⁰⁹ Sometime in the early twentieth century, both editions

103 Ji Yun, *Sikuquanshu zongmu tiyao*, 191.5225.

104 Zhang Jinwu, *Airi jinglu cangshuzhi*, 35.609.

105 This postscript is preserved in the Airi jinglu manuscript edition, see *Sikuquanshu cunmu congshu bubian*, 79: 338.

106 Ding Lizhong 丁立中, ed., *Baqianjuanlou shumu* 八千卷樓書目 (Beijing: Guojia tushuguan chubanshe, 2009), 2: 604. I thank Travis Chan for sharing with me his findings about the Ding family's possession of the facsimile edition.

107 See *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu, ji bu* 中國古籍善本書目·集部, comp. Zhongguo guji shanben shumu bianji weiyuanhui 中國古籍善本書目編輯委員會 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 1642, item 17805; and Luo Zhuyun 雒竹筠 and Li Xinqian 李新乾, comps., *Yuanshi yiwenzhi jiben* 元史藝文志輯本 (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 1999), 20.522. This edition is reprinted in *Sikuquanshu cunmu congshu bubian*, 79: 337–68.

108 See Huang Pilie, *Shiliju cangshu tiba ji* 士禮居藏書題跋記, comp. Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭 and ed. Zhou Shaochuan 周少川 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1989), 6.309.

109 Lu Xinyuan, *Bisonglou cangshuzhi* 皕宋樓藏書志, 117.10b–12b, rpt. in *Xuxiu sikuquanshu*, 929: 631–33.

possessed by Lu ultimately ended up in the Seikadō Bunko in Japan.¹¹⁰ Other surviving copies of the *Epistolary Writings* include two Yuan-print facsimile editions (reproduced during the Qing dynasty) currently in the collection of National Central Library in Taiwan;¹¹¹ one of which was belonged to the private library Jiayetang 嘉業堂 in the late Qing.¹¹² The National Library of China also possesses a Qing manuscript edition, which has been reprinted in the *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan* 北京圖書館古籍珍本叢刊.¹¹³ The best edition that survives today is the one printed in the Chinghua era; as noted by twentieth-century bibliophile Fu Zengxiang 傅增湘 (1872–1949), a copy of which was in the collection of the renowned Qu 瞿 family of Changshu 常熟 in 1933.¹¹⁴ In 1950, this copy ultimately ended up in the collection of contemporary bibliophile Huang Chang 黃裳 (1919–2012).¹¹⁵ The above discussion of the letter collection is based primarily on the two printed reproductions. I have not yet had a chance to examine the Chinghua print edition.

110 *Seikadō Bunko kanseki bunrui mokuroku* 靜嘉堂文庫漢籍分類目錄, comp. Seikadō Bunko (Tokyo: Seikadō Bunko, 1930), 846.

111 Guoli zhongyang tushuguan 國立中央圖書館, comp., *Guoli zhongyang tushuguan shanben shumu* 國立中央圖書館善本書目, rev. 2nd ed. (Taipei: Guoli zhongyang tushuguan, 1986), 1346.

112 Miao Quansun 繆荃孫, Wu Changshou 吳昌綬 and Dong Kang 董康, *Jiayetang cangshuzhi* 嘉業堂藏書誌, ed. Wu Ge 吳格 (Shanghai: Fudan daxue chubanshe, 1997), 4.1174.

113 See *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu. Ji bu*, 1642, item 17806; Luo Zhuyun and Li Xinqian, *Yuanshi yiwenzhi jiben*, 20.522. This edition is reprinted in *Beijing tushuguan guji zhenben congkan*, 116: 1–32.

114 Fu Zengxiang, *Cangyuan qunshu jingyanlu* 藏園群書經眼錄, ed. Fu Xinian 傅熹年 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 17.1253–54.

115 See Huang Shang, *Laiyanxie shuba* 來燕樹書跋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1999), 118. His handwritten colophon and the first page of the Ming Chinghua print edition were reproduced as plates in Huang Shang, *Jieyu guyan: Laiyanxie shuba shouji jicun* 劫餘古豔——來燕樹書跋手跡輯存 (Zhneqzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2008), 2: 246–47.

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十三世紀華北地區的本地精英 網絡與蒙古帝國的管治

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本文以《中州 劄》內二百通書信為中心，重構十三世紀金元過渡時期華北地區漢文人的書信網絡。本文首先呈現了北方不同地區的文人如何通過書信保持聯繫，認為最近有研究提出文人網絡在1234年金朝滅亡後已解體的說法值得商榷，進而探討忽必烈的庇蔭體系以及書信網絡中幾個主要的中介人，如何把部分的文人網絡在1260年以後轉化為本土政治精英網絡，後者繼而促進了蒙古帝國在華北地區的管治。

關鍵詞：蒙古帝國 精英網絡 忽必烈 華北 書信研究