



BRILL

JOURNAL OF THE ECONOMIC AND
SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE ORIENT 66 (2023) 795–884



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The Timurid Regions and Moghulistan through the Eyes of a Ming Diplomat: An Annotated Translation of the *Xiyu fanguo zhi* and Selected Poems by Chen Cheng (1415)

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Submitted 29 June 2022 | Accepted 23 February 2023 |

Published online 3 November 2023

Abstract

The article investigates the fifteenth-century Ming diplomat Chen Cheng's travel accounts by situating them against the backdrop of Islamic and Mongol history. The first part of the article presents Chen Cheng's travels and his reports in the context of Ming-Timurid relations and comprehensively studies the existing editions of Chen's writings. The second part of the article provides a complete, critical, and annotated translation of Chen's travel narrative, the *Xiyu fanguo zhi*, and a selection of his poems that describe the Timurid and eastern Chaghatayid regions through which the ambassador traveled. The translation is based on the text from Chen's personal literary collection, the *Chen Zhushan wenji*, which has not yet been adequately utilized in English scholarship. Incorporating information from contemporary sources, the annotated translation contextualizes Chen's accounts in Islamic history of Western and Central Asia. Finally, the article supplements the translation with a biography of Chen Cheng and information extracted from his itinerary.

Keywords

Chen Cheng – *Xiyu fanguo zhi* – Ming-Timurid relations – Moghulistan – Chaghatayid history – Western Regions – Shahrukh – Herat

Published with license by Koninklijke Brill NV | DOI:10.1163/15685209-12341607

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Introduction

The early fifteenth century witnessed major developments in the diplomatic relations between the Ming dynasty of China and the Timurids in Iran and Transoxiana; numerous ambassadors, envoys, and traders traversed the deserts and mountains along various routes of the Silk Road to visit different regions in China and Western and Central Asia. Among the Ming diplomats, Chen Cheng stands out as one of the most important to later historians, for he has left behind first-hand, engaging reports of his travels. His writings not only record geographical features and natural sceneries that he saw en route, but also document his activities and observations of the foreign polities of the “Western Regions” (*xiyu* 西域) that he visited. This article will situate Chen Cheng’s travels within the history of Ming-Timurid relations, investigate the complete collection of his writings—the provenance of the texts, their copies, previous editions and translations—and, finally, translate Chen Cheng’s *Xiyu fanguo zhi* and his poems describing the Timurid territory and Moghulistan, contextualizing them in Islamic history.

Chen Cheng’s Travel and Ming-Timurid Relations

In the middle of the fourteenth century, with famine, plagues, and peasant revolts sweeping across China, Zhu Yuanzhang rose to command the rebels, forcing the ruling Mongol-Yuan rulers to retreat to the Inner Asian steppe. Upon seizing the Yuan capital of Khanbalik (modern Beijing), Zhu ended the Yuan Dynasty and, in 1368, claimed to be the first Ming emperor in Yingtian (modern Nanjing), beginning the Hongwu era. Meanwhile in Central Asia, the warlord Timur Barlas managed to navigate the tumultuous environment following the waning of Chaghatayid influence to emerge as the dominant power and established his new capital in Samarkand. The newborn Ming and Timurid dynasties would soon become the two largest powers in Asia, viewing each other through the wary and curious eyes of the envoys and diplomats sent to their respective courts.

The Ming and the Timurid dynasties began exchanging contacts in 1387. From that time on, the Hongwu Emperor and Timur maintained a steady two-way flow of envoys and gifts.¹ However, their seemingly peaceful ambassadorial exchanges belied Timur’s ambition of world conquest. In 1395,

1 In month 9, year 20 of the Hongwu era/1387, Timur sent a group of envoys led by Mawlana Hāfiz to the Ming court, bringing gifts including horses, camels, and silver. See *juan* 185 of the *Taizu shilu* 太祖實錄 in *MSL*, v. 7: 2779–80; *MS*, v. 28, *juan* 332: 8597. Later exchanges of envoys between the Timurid and Ming dynasties can also be found in the same volume of the *MSL* and the *MS*.

Timur detained the Chinese ambassadors, Fu An 傅安 and Guo Ji 郭驥. Two years later, he interned another group of Chinese envoys led by Chen Dewen 陳德文.² According to Ruy González de Clavijo, the ambassador of the Spanish King Henry III of Castile in Samarkand, Timur publicly insulted the emperor of China, calling him the “Pig Emperor.”³ In 1405, when the nearly-seventy-year-old Timur finally set out to conquer Ming China, he fell ill and died, and his campaign never reached Chinese territory. After fourteen years of civil war, the mantle of power passed to Timur’s son, Shahrukh. The new ruler transferred his capital to Herat, appointed his son Ulugh Beg to govern Samarkand, and attempted to re-establish diplomatic relations with China. In the interim, the Hongwu Emperor’s son, Zhu Di, then the Prince of Yan, had claimed the throne through rebellion, becoming the Yongle Emperor. He moved his capital to Beijing and sought to create friendly relations with foreign regions.

The Yongle Emperor was a well-known sponsor of diplomatic missions and exploration of the world, and is especially renowned for supporting the massive and long-term Zheng He maritime expeditions. Yet this is only one part of the picture. On land, large official delegations were exchanged between China and many Western and Central Asian territories during the twenty-two Yongle years (1403–1424). Much like the Yongle Emperor, meanwhile, Shahrukh subsidized important political missions to China and to India. As a part of these foreign relations, the two new emperors carried on the tradition, established by their fathers, of exchanging envoys—only with more good will. Thus, a decade of prosperous Ming-Timurid relations under these two rulers was no coincidence.⁴

2 *MS*, v. 28, *juan* 332: 8609.

3 Clavijo describes the scene in his narrative as such: This Emperor of China [is called] “Chas Khan” (*chiscano*), a title which signifies “Emperor of Nine Empires” (*enperador de nueve ynperios*), but the Chaghataiyids (*chacatanes*), who have insulted him, call him Tunguz (*tangus*), which means “the Pig Emperor.” *Clavijo/Estrada*: 160. “Emperor of Nine Empires” is likely a reference to *jiuzhou* 九州, the nine regions into which the legendary hero the Great Yu was believed to have divided the space of “All-under-Heaven” understood as by people in ancient China, hence used as an analog for China. See Ge Zhaoguang, *What is China?: Territory, Ethnicity, Culture, and History*, trans. Michael Hill (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, Press, 2018): 32–35. For referring to the Timurids as the “Chaghataiyids,” see Joo-Yup Lee, “The Timurid View of the Mongols: An Examination of the Mongol Identity of the Timurids.” *Iran Namag* 6/3–4 (2021). In Turkic languages, “nine (*tokku:z*)” sounds like “pig (*tonuz*),” thus the insult based on the pun. See *Clayson*: 474; 527. Interestingly, Timur might have not been aware of an alternative interpretation of his own joke: the family name of the Ming Emperors was “*zhu* 朱,” one of whose homophones is the word for pig, “*zhu* 猪.”

4 Evidence of Ming-Timurid relations is documented in both Chinese and Persian sources, most noticeably the *MSL* and the *HAZ*; their relations are also examined in two monographs: Ralph Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden: China, Iran und Zentralasien*

Starting from 1407, when the detained envoys Fu An and Chen Dewen returned to China, the reciprocal ambassadorial visits between Beijing and Herat became increasingly frequent and they were usually conducted with the dispatch of gifts and imperial correspondence and the escorting of envoys coming back and forth. In 1410, the Ming ambassador Bai'a'er-xintai 白阿兒忻台 carried the Yongle Emperor's letter to Shahrukh, and he returned to Beijing in 1413 with envoys not only from Herat but also from other places of the Western Regions such as Samarkand, Shiraz, Andkhoy, and Turfan.⁵ Later that year, another group of Ming ambassadors including Li Da 李達, Chen Cheng 陳誠, Li Xian 李暹, Jinhalanbo 金哈藍伯 were tasked with escorting the "Western" envoys back and sending gifts to Herat and Samarkand, "rewarding them for their frequent tributary missions."⁶

Of these ambassadors, Chen Cheng was undoubtedly one of the most important, for he not only contributed nearly thirty years of his career to ambassadorial excursions,⁷ but was the only one among them who left behind written reports of their journey and experiences in Iran and Central Asia. Chen's works were produced when Shahrukh finally gained control of most of Timurid territory in Iran and Transoxiana after over a decade of civil war following Timur's death, and he was seeking new ways of legitimating his authority through the religion of Islam. It was also a time when the Chaghatayid princes were striving to Islamize Moghulistan, which was situated on Chen's route to the Timurid capital.

The most well-known among Chen's works are the two reports he submitted to the Yongle Emperor upon his return to Beijing in 1415,⁸ namely the *Xiyu xingcheng ji* 西域行程記 [Record of the journey to the Western Regions] (hereafter abbreviated as "XCJ") and *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域番國志 [Record of the countries of the Western Regions] (hereafter abbreviated as "FGZ"). Along with the reports, Chen presented to the emperor the poetic essay, *Shizi fu* 獅子賦, "Poem for the Lion," and his previous diplomatic correspondence with Annan.⁹ In addition, Chen Cheng's personal literary collection,

im Spätmittelalter (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2005); Zhang Wende, *Ming yu Tiemu'er wang chao guanxi shi yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006).

5 See *juan* 140 of the *Taizong shilu* 太宗實錄 in *MSL*, v. 13: 1690.

6 See *juan* 143 of the *Taizong shilu* in *MSL*, v. 13: 1706.

7 See Appendix 2: "Chen Cheng—a Biography."

8 Chen Cheng and others returned on the *guisi* day of month 10 of year 13/November 30, 1415. See *juan* 169 of the *Taizong shilu* in *MSL*, v. 13: 1884.

9 For the list of Chen's submission, see "Feng shi xiyu fuming shu" 奉使西域復命疏 in *ZSWJ/SK*: 315. Annan 安南, or Annam, was how Vietnam is designated in Ming sources. For the Ming-Vietnam relations, see Wang Gungwu, "Ming Foreign Relations: Southeast Asia." In

the *Chen Zhushan Xiansheng Wenji* 陳竹山先生文集 [The literary collection of Chen Zhushan] (hereafter abbreviated as “zswj”)¹⁰ brings together other essays, poems, and correspondence of Chen Cheng, shedding more light on his trip through the Western and Central Asian territories and his perception of these latter regions’ geography and early fifteenth-century politics.

Between 1422 and 1424, the Yongle Emperor launched several military campaigns against the Mongols who became increasingly powerful north of China, and he had to deal with domestic issues brought about by the resultant growing military expenditures. In this period, no Chinese ambassadors reached the Timurids, though the Ming court received and rewarded several groups of envoys from Herat and Samarkand. The Yongle Emperor’s successor, the Hongxi Emperor, officially terminated all on-going diplomatic missions immediately after his accession to the throne in 1424.¹¹ Although there were sporadic official exchanges between the Ming and the Timurid houses later on, the golden age of their relations had come to an end. There was therefore no opportunity for any Ming author to produce the like of Chen Cheng’s travel writings.

Chen Cheng’s Travel Literature on the Western Regions

The *Xiyu xingcheng ji*

The *xcj*, “Record of the journey to the Western Regions,” is the itinerary of one Ming ambassadorial group from the Suzhou Guard (肅州衛) of Gansu to Herat. Authored by Chen Cheng and Li Xian, the *xcj* was “documented during the full nine months spent on the way” and was completed in 1414 or early 1415 while the group was still in Herat.¹²

Skipping only the days spent at encampments, the *xcj* contains a daily record of weather, landscape, route, place names, and the activities of the group. According to the *xcj*, they departed Suzhou in early 1414.¹³ After praying for safe travel to “the god(s) that ought to be worshipped for the Western Regions,”¹⁴ they marched westward and crossed the Jiayu Pass, the first frontier fortress at the west end of the Ming Great Wall.

The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty, ed. Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 301–32.

10 For the circumstances of the compilation of the *zswj*, see Appendix 2.

11 See *juan* 1 of the *Renzong shilu* 仁宗實錄 in the *MSL*, v. 15: 15–16.

12 “Documented during the full nine months spent on the way. [We are] still in Herat.”—So is the *xcj* concluded. *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 49.

13 *Ibid.*: 33. See also Appendix 1.

14 *Ibid.* “祭西域應祀之神.”

The overland route to Herat was certainly a difficult one—extreme cold and heat, treacherous mountains and deserts, wildernesses where bodies of men and horses could be seen, occasional lack of water and provisions are among the situations that the group had to deal with. On the other hand, it is clear that the Ming envoys were well-informed travelers; they must have been able to utilize the postal system along the way to communicate with others as well. The *XCJ* documents a number of occasions on which the group was received by the representatives sent from their destinations a day or two prior to their arrival in those places. Along the way, the group had visited and exchanged gifts with several Chaghatayid and Timurid rulers in Hami, Sayram, Shahrukhiya among other cities and encampments.¹⁵

Such depictions in the *XCJ* provide examples of the diplomatic ritual of envoy escorting, but more importantly, they confirm that the task of solidifying relations with the Timurids was not the only mission with which Chen Cheng's group was charged. Of their activities, the meeting with the Chaghatayid prince Muhammad (*Mahamu* 馬哈木) deserves special attention. In later March, 1414, the group stopped in the environs of Yar (崖兒城) where they camped for seventeen days.¹⁶ The *XCJ* does not explain this lengthy stay, nor does it report any unfavorable weather or diplomatic activities that might have held the group up from moving forward at that point. However, the entry following this stay registers that “because Prince Muhammad was seen dwelling on the south side of the mountain, [we] split up to take the southern and northern routes respectively.”¹⁷ Such a record conveys several messages to us: First, Prince Muhammad was leading a nomadic life and did not reside in one place—a fact of which the Ming ambassadors were well aware. Thus, when Chen Cheng refers to Muhammad as “ruler of Beshbalik” (別失八里國主) or introduces “Beshbalik,” he is using the term “Beshbalik” to denote all the eastern Chaghatayid territory, i.e., Moghulistan, not the city of Beshbalik.¹⁸ Second, there must have been communications between the ambassadorial group and Prince Muhammad. In fact, it is possible that the group waited by the city of Yar for information on the whereabouts of Muhammad in order to decide on

15 See Appendix 1.

16 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 37. Yar is located in the present-day Jiaohe Ruins; for more details, see section “Yar City” in the translation.

17 *Ibid.* According to their route, the mountain appears to be Borohoro Range, a major northern range of the Tianshan Mountains.

18 For examples of Chen Cheng's usage of “Beshbalik,” see the poem and the *FGZ*. For the discussion of both the location of the city and the historical term, see my annotations of the section “Beshbalik.”

their path. Third, meeting with Muhammad was a major goal for Chen Cheng's section and they were prepared to change their plan to locate him.

Chen Cheng's party took the southern route, crossed the Borohoro mountains, and arrived in the Ili Valley. In early May, they reached Tele-hala 忒勒哈剌, a locality in the present-day Xiyuan County (新源縣), where they were met by the representatives of Prince Muhammad and escorted to camp near Muhammad's pavilion.¹⁹ The Ming ambassadors stayed with the Chaghatayid prince for thirteen days.²⁰ In addition to the *XCJ* account, Chen describes their visit to Muhammad's royal tent in two poems, elaborating the amiable scenes of greeting, wine drinking, and gift exchanging.²¹ Chen's accounts, together with the records in the *MSL*, provide important evidence on the friendly relationship between the Ming court and Moghulistan at this time.

The group that took the northern route did not document their journey, but traces of their activities can be found in the *XCJ*. In the beginning of June, both sections reached the Ili River (衣烈河) and camped by its banks. As the two parties congregated, they also sent a *baihu* 百戶, "commander of a hundred," named Hasan 哈三 to "take the horses back to the capital [Beijing]."²² It is not clear whether or for how long the two sections traveled together from this juncture; the *XCJ* only tells us that, a month later, they met up again near Sayram. The description of the southern and northern routes in the *XCJ* reveals a reasonable degree of flexibility in the conduct of Ming ambassadorial missions; while the ambassadors had clear diplomatic goals, they (or at least some of them) may also have been entrusted with other duties like horse trading and could modify their route choices accordingly.

After reaching Timurid territory,²³ Chen Cheng's group visited a number of cities including Tashkent, Shahrukhiya, Samarkand, Kesh (Shahrisabz), Termez, Balkh, and Andkhoy. Notably, representatives from Samarkand received the group as far away as the environs of Tashkent.²⁴ The Timurid envoys probably escorted the Ming group back to Samarkand where the visitors were hosted by Ulugh Beg for ten days.²⁵ In a poem entitled "Reaching the Fruit Garden of Ulugh Beg, Ruler of Samarkand," Chen Cheng vividly describes

19 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 39. For the location of Tele-hala, see *XYDMCD*: 450.

20 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 39.

21 See "Reaching the Tent of Muhammad, Ruler of Beshbalik" in "Selected Poems."

22 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 40.

23 According to Chen Cheng, Yangi is the first pass in the Timurid territory. For more discussion of borders, see "Yangi" in "Selected Poems" and "Beshbalik" in my annotated translation of the *FGZ*.

24 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 44.

25 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 45.

the reception and meal at Ulugh Beg's residence.²⁶ Next, as the group reach Kesh,²⁷ the birthplace and former capital of Timur, Chen lamented on several occasions the state of the monumental but desolate buildings commissioned by Timur,²⁸ which points to Timur's decision to embellish Samarkand at the expense of his hometown.

When the group was approaching Herat in September 1414, they stayed in Chichektu (*Chechetu* 車扯秃) for half a month, waiting for Shahrukh to return from his campaign—apparently the one against his nephew Iskandar.²⁹ In a poem written during this stay, Chen Cheng describes Chichektu as a “desolate suburb,” yet his depiction of tax collection, alfalfa harvest, and grape fermentation presents a place full of activity. Interestingly, the scenes portrayed in Chen's poem seem to chime with Ḥāfiẓ Abrū's description of Chichektu as a journeying-stage (*manzil*) where the Timurid armies used to rest.³⁰ It is not clear whether the Ming ambassadors saw Shahrukh in Chichektu, but they started to travel towards Herat and there was no major stop before they reached their final destination on a sunny day on 14th of the leap month 9, corresponding to October 27, 1414.

The *Xiyu fanguo zhi*

By contrast with the *XCJ*, the *FGZ* is an account of eighteen territories of the Western Regions, composed in order from west to east: Herat, Samarkand, Andkhoy, Balkh, Termez, Shahrukhiya, Sayram, Tashkent, Bukhara, Kesh, Yangi, Beshbalik, Turpan, Yar, Yanze, Huo Zhou (Karakhoja), Luchen, and Hami. These locales are presented in the opposite order shown in the *XCJ*, indicating that Chen Cheng wrote the *FGZ* during the group's stay in the Timurid territory and on their way back to the Ming court in 1415.

The *Xiyu fanguo zhi*, or “Record of the countries of the Western Regions,” is the name given to Chen's text when it was collected into the Ming archive and it has become the most commonly known designation of this report of Chen Cheng. However, Chen's personal literary collection, the *ZSWJ*, reveals the original title of the text: *Jincheng yulan Xiyu shanchuan fengwu jilu* 進呈御

26 See “Selected Poems.”

27 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 45.

28 “Visiting Kesh, the Former Residence of Timur Fuma” in “Selected Poems,” and “Kesh” in the *FGZ*.

29 *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 48; “Staying in Chichaktu Waiting for the Return of the Ruler of the Country” in “Selected Poems,” and note 273.

30 *HAI/Haravī*: 59; *HAZ*, 3:366. see also notes in “Staying in Chichaktu Waiting for the Return of the Ruler of the Country” in “Selected Poems.”

覽西域山川風物記錄, “Record Submitted to the Emperor of the Landscapes, Sceneries, Traditions, and Customs of the Western Regions.”

The *FGZ* is the most valuable—and indeed the only—first-hand report of Iran and Central Asia written in Chinese during the Ming period. After it was submitted to the Yongle Emperor, abridged and collected into the *Ming Shilu*, almost all succeeding Ming histories and geographical works that involve a description about the *Xiyu*, “Western Regions,” used the *FGZ* or some part of it. This contributes to the fact that the *FGZ* has acquired several different names over the years. Since the name *Xiyu fanguo zhi* is the one most commonly used in scholarly works, I adopt the abbreviated form *FGZ* based this title, and I shall discuss the editions and transmissions of the text in the coming section.

The descriptions of the eighteen territories in the *FGZ* vary considerably in length. The account entitled *Halie* 哈烈, “Herat,” is particularly meticulous and constitutes almost half of the volume; the rest of the accounts are much shorter in length, but they nevertheless contain valuable and sometimes unique information about “the Western Regions.” It must be noted that, contrary to the opinions of some scholars,³¹ the imbalance of the lengths of the accounts does not reflect Chen Cheng’s familiarity with or the duration of his stay in those places but is due (at least partially) to the author’s style of dividing chapters and naming them. That is, Chen Cheng uses the name of the capital city to refer to a whole country. The account of “Herat” starts with Chen’s report of the city of Herat but is not limited to it; the latter half of “Herat” describes the customs, traditions, landscapes, climate, technology, calendar, products among other matters that Chen keenly observes in the Timurid territory.

Similarly, as I noted above, the account entitled *Bieshibali* 別失八里, “Beshbalik,” should not be read as a report of the city of Beshbalik, which is located in present-day Jimsar. Unlike the section of “Herat,” however, which *does* dedicate a decent portion to introducing the city of Herat, the section entitled “Beshbalik” offers little information on the exact locality of Beshbalik but provides a general description of a more extensive territory. As is confirmed by the original note that Chen Cheng attaches to the title “Beshbalik,” saying “they are in fact the Mongol tribes” (即蒙古部落是也), “Beshbalik” means “the Mongol tribes,” which appears to be the term that the Ming diplomat uses to refer to the eastern Chaghatayid land, i.e., Moghulistan.

31 Zhou Liankuan attributes the imbalance of the lengths of the accounts to the assumption that Chen Cheng was more familiar with Herat, and Wang Jiguang relates it to the duration of Chen’s stay in those places, see Zhou Liankuan (ed.), *Xiyu xingcheng ji, Xiyu fanguo zhi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1991): 77; 19.

This section of the *FGZ* contains some interesting information about both Moghulistan and Chen's own perception of the region. First, Chen's designation of Moghulistan as "the Mongol tribes" precisely points to the mobility of eastern Chaghatayids and their lack of a static political center. As Chen describes people's dwelling locations, he remarks that permanent city walls and other urban structures can only be seen occasionally. Such a description is in accordance with information in the *FGZ* and Chen's poem "Reaching the Tent of Muhammad, Ruler of Beshbalik." Though Chen refers to Prince Muhammad as "Ruler of Beshbalik" (別失八里國主), the Ming ambassador had never met, nor even expected to meet, the prince in the city of Beshbalik. Instead, the group found Muhammad encamped in the Ili Valley and was received in the latter's royal tent. Chen Cheng's depiction of the "Mongol tribes" and Prince Muhammad certainly speaks for the Chaghatayids' adherence to the nomadic living and ruling style, which is likewise noted by Thackston, who writes in his introduction to the *Baburnama* that "the Chaghatayids did not assimilate to the ruling traditions of ancient empires, for the territory in which they found themselves really had no established legacy of urban administration."³²

Second, Chen clearly maps out the territory of Moghulistan at that time, which extended to Yangi (Taraz) in the west and Hami in the east, connecting with the Golden Horde and the Oirats in the north, and stopping at Khotan in the south. Due to the political instability of the Mongol regimes, the territorial boundaries of Moghulistan were not clearly defined at any period, and seldom stayed the same for twenty years at a time.³³ The fact that the geographical extent of Moghulistan around 1415 is not documented in any other source makes Chen's first-hand observation all the more valuable. In addition to describing the geographical extent of Moghulistan of his own time, Chen also remarks that, before the rise of Timur, the western border of Moghulistan reached Samarkand, demonstrating the Ming official's knowledge of Timurid-Chaghatayid history. Further, Chen makes note of Mongol-Uighur relations whenever he finds evidence of this latter: the two peoples fight against each other in Yangi but they co-inhabit Hami despite their differences in customs.

Last but not least, Chen stresses the Chaghatayids' inheritance of Chinggis Khan's legacy more than once. After introducing the geographical extent and major towns of Moghulistan in the latter half of the section entitled "Beshbalik," Chen asks, "isn't it based on the virtue accumulated by their

32 *Bābur/Thackston*, 1:26.

33 For a discussion of the structure of the eastern Chaghatayids, see Mano Eiji, "Moghūlīstān." *Acta Asiatica: Bulletin of the Institute of Eastern Culture* 34 (1978): 52–60. "The Land of the Moghuls." In "Introduction." *Haydar/Ross*: 51–71.

ancestors?”. In the poem “Passing the Tomb of Prince Khidr Khwāja (黑的兒火者 Heidi'er huozhe),” Chen more explicitly states that the Chaghatayid prince’s assets of territory and people “were founded on the division of royal property.” In both cases, Chen relates to Chinggis Khan’s apportionment of people and land (*qismat*) that took place between 1206 and 1227, attesting to the continuous influence of the Mongol Empire on the politics of various parts of Eurasia.

Thus far, the importance of the *FGZ* has been well recognized in the study of Timurid history and Ming-Timurid relations. However, the latter half of the *FGZ* (the section “Beshbalik” onward) introducing the situation of Moghulistan has not received the attention that it deserves. Given the scantiness of contemporary sources on Moghulistan and on Chaghatayid history in general, the *FGZ* is an indispensable document on these topics. To facilitate the scholarly use of the *FGZ* and to draw attention to Chen’s organization of his report, I have divided the eighteen accounts of the *FGZ* into two titled categories, “Timurid territory” and “Moghulistan,” while retaining the original order of those accounts.

Chen Cheng’s Poems on the Western Regions

The *ZSWJ* collects seventy-five³⁴ of Chen Cheng’s poems written on his journey to the Western Regions between 1414 and 1415. These poems are not dated, but it is clear that they were composed enroute, alongside the *XCJ* and the *FGZ*. First, the section of the poems in the *XCJ* is entitled “Travel Poetry Recording the Journey to and from the Western Regions on an Ambassadorial Mission” (奉使西域往回紀行詩).³⁵ Second, the contents of the poems precisely matched those of the *XCJ* and the *FGZ*. In addition to the fact that the places described in the poems are arranged in the same order as in the two reports, sporadic chronological information contained in the poems confirms that Chen Cheng wrote the poems as he traveled. For example, the *XCJ* records that the group camped by the Amu River on the 15th day of the 8th month, and Chen Cheng’s poem entitled “Mid-Autumn Day at Amu River” (阿木河中秋) portrays a night of yearning for his homeland on this important Chinese holiday.³⁶ It should also be noted that Chen Cheng had started to write the poems as soon as the group left Beijing and continued his composition after they reached Herat. Thus, in addition to providing information on the route supplementing the *XCJ* records, the poems also include Chen’s observation of urban life in the Timurid cities.

34 The number may not be the same in different studies. This is due not to any controversy over the poems themselves but to the fact that some of the poems have two parts and may be counted differently.

35 *ZSWJ/SK*: 336.

36 See Appendix 1; *ZSWJ/SK*: 342. The 15th day of the 8th month of the Chinese lunar calendar is date for Mid-Autumn Festival, an important occasion for family reunion.

Chen Cheng's poems are primarily narrative in nature. While the verses of these poems conform to the formal rules of classical Chinese poetry, the most valuable aspect of Chen's poetic works is the rich information they communicate, not their literary aesthetics. As an official dispatched by the Ming central government, Chen's principal objective in composing poems is to describe the localities that the ambassadorial group visited and events they experienced. For example, Chen narrates his visit to the tent of Muhammad, ruler of Moghulistan, and the gardens of the Timurid rulers Shahrukh and Ulugh Beg, paying close attention to the rituals of the banquets, exotic items and animals, and unfamiliar customs he observes. He also describes the landscape, geographical features and climatic conditions of the cities and encampments along their route. Such descriptions are useful additions to the more rigorously presented records in the *XCJ* and *FGZ*.

Another indispensable aspect of these poems is Chen Cheng's overt and abounding expression of his pride as a Chinese ambassador and his homesickness. Certain sets of motifs and rhetorical devices are often applied to express those feelings. For example, *yinhe* 銀河, "the Milky Way" is a common metaphor for distance, and *xingcha* 星槎, "a celestial raft," is often used to allude to travelers. Occasionally, Chen Cheng's sentiments seem to be coupled with his praise of Chinese imperialism; Chen compares himself to the famous Han Chinese figures Zhang Qian 張騫 and Su Wu 蘇武, both of whom served as imperial envoys to the Xiongnu and Central Asian regions and endured major hardships in their missions. It is noteworthy that the phrase *jincheng yulan* 進呈御覽, "to be submitted to the emperor" appears at the beginning of the poetry section, indicating that the Yongle Emperor was Chen Cheng's initial target audience—even though these poems were not ultimately included in Chen's final submission.³⁷

Chen Cheng's poems are the least studied among his travel literature. There are two main reasons for this lack of study. First, the poems are only found in Chen's personal collection, the *zswj*, which had not been given sufficient attention before Wang Jiguang's discovery of the collection in the 1980s. Though in 2012 Wang published a modern edition of the *zswj* which includes Chen's poems, the text is not well introduced and not annotated.³⁸ Second, the poetic form may have masked the information in Chen's poems and modern readers may easily overlook the historical implications while overinterpreting the connotations of certain phrases. For example, in the poem entitled *zhi*

37 The poems are not included in the list of Chen's submission according to "Feng shi xiyu fuming shu" 奉使西域復命疏, see *zswj/sk*: 315.

38 This is his *Chen Cheng xiyu ziliao jiaozhu*, which is discussed in "Modern Editions and Studies."

yangyi cheng 至養夷城, “Reaching the City of Yangi,” Chen Cheng points out that Yangi stands on the Timurid-Chaghatayid borders in the last verse, “This is the first pass into the *rong-qiang* territory.” While *rong* 戎 and *qiang* 羌 originally refer to two specific non-Han Chinese groups west of China, the phrase is used by Chen Cheng here to convey the sense of “foreign” or “west.” Reading this verse in the light of the knowledge that the Ming ambassadorial group had just traveled through Moghulistan, it is clear that this verse signifies that they had reached a new foreign territory, i.e., the Timurid lands. Remarks on the Timurid-Chaghatayid boundaries of the early fifteenth century, which are not found in Timurid sources of the same period, would add much to our knowledge of Timurid and Mongol history, yet these can be easily neglected if one does not contextualize the above-mentioned poem. Because of such oversight, Didier’s French translation of Chen Cheng’s poems, albeit complete and extensively annotated, misrepresents much of the historical information in the text and thus must be treated with particular caution.

To facilitate the scholarly use of Chen Cheng’s poems dealing with Timurid lands and Moghulistan, I have made a selection of his poems, and translated and annotated them. With a focus on Chen Cheng’s perception of Western and Central Asia, the poems selected either narrate diplomatic events, describe major cities and political figures, or introduce “foreign” customs and technology.

Aside from the travel literature previously discussed, a certain number of other works collected in the *zswj* shed light on Chen’s *xiyu* missions in one way or another. They are discussed in the following section on editions of Chen Cheng’s works. Given that my primary aim in the translation is to present information on the Timurids and Moghulistan, I have not included these additional works in the *zswj* in my translation.

Manuscripts and Pre-modern Printings

Travel literature attributed to Chen Cheng can be divided into two groups, the unabridged and abridged versions. As previously mentioned, Chen Cheng submitted several documents to the Ming court when he returned from his journey in 1415. His submissions, especially the *FGZ*, were subsequently excerpted, copied or incorporated in a number of histories and geographical works produced in the Ming and Qing periods, such as the *MSL* and the *MS*, the *Ming yitongzhi* 明一統志, and the *Xianbin lu* 咸賓錄.³⁹ The unabridged texts of the *XCJ*, *FGZ*, and other works of Chen survived in two types, commonly known by

39 In the *MSL*, Chen’s text is retitled “*shi xiyu ji*” 使西域記. And this title was subsequently carried over to other official histories and geographical works. See *juan* 169 of the *Taizong shilu* in *MSL*, v. 13: 1884–92.

the names of two collections in which the texts appear: the *Shanben Congshu* 善本叢書 [Collection of Rare Texts] (hereafter abbreviated as the *SBCS*) and the *ZSWJ*. These two types of unabridged versions were recovered and made available to scholars in the 1930s and 1980s respectively. Subsequent studies have filled many lacunae in Chen's texts, making the use of the abridged versions unnecessary. Therefore, I have not consulted the abridged versions for my translations. In the following section, I will discuss the provenance of Chen Cheng's texts and the history of their transmissions, and compare the two types of unabridged versions.

The *SBCS* was produced by the Beiping Library (國立北平圖書館) which aimed at collecting and preserving valuable texts after the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. The *XCJ* and the *FGZ*, constituting one volume, are among the texts printed in 1937 in this collection. In this volume, the inside cover indicates that the texts were "photocopied from a Ming hand-copied edition" (據明鈔本影印), and the label on the margin of each page writes "*duwuyuan gao* 獨寤園稿" (*duwuyuan* manuscripts) and the "*danquan shuwu* 淡泉書屋" (*danquan* study). Given that the *duwuyuan* and the *danquan* are names of the study of Zheng Xiao 鄭曉 (1499–1566), a Ming official who had access to a large number of Ming documents, the *XCJ* and *FGZ* in the *SBCS* must be the reproduction of a copy in Zheng Xiao's private library. In addition to the *SBCS* edition, another copy of Zheng Xiao's *XCJ* and *FGZ* can be found in the *Yushutang congshu* 豫恕堂叢書, the personal collection of the late Qing scholar Shen Shandeng 沈善登 (1830–1902), now preserved at the Shanghai Library. Since the *Yushutang* and *SBCS* share the same source—Zheng Xiao's collection, they display little difference.⁴⁰ Because of the *SBCS*'s accessibility, the *XCJ* and *FGZ* reproduced from Zheng's are commonly known as the *SBCS* edition.

The *SBCS* edition of *XCJ* is the only extant version of the text, and there is thus little room for improvement on its scholarship until new materials are found. Before the recovery of the *ZSWJ*, the *SBCS* edition of the *FGZ* was considered the only unabridged version of Chen Cheng's travel narrative. For this reason, its title, the *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域番國志, has become the best-known name of the text. At the same time, this version of the *FGZ* displays several obvious flaws even without comparing against others.

40 I have only seen the *SBCS* but not the *Yushutang* edition. According to the editors of Zhonghua Book Company, the two editions only differ slightly in their styles of copying. Zhou Liankuan ed., *Xiyu xingcheng ji*, *Xiyu fanguo zhi*: 30.

First, there are numerous apparently erroneously transcribed characters in this *FGZ*.⁴¹ Second, the contents page includes the entry “Khotan” (*Yutian* 于闐), whereas, in fact, Khotan is simply mentioned in the account of Beshbalik and is not described individually. In addition, there is no evidence that Chen Cheng’s group had visited Khotan on that trip. Lastly, the accounts of Tashkent (*Dashigan* 達失干) and Bukhara (*Buhua’er* 卜花兒) are placed in the end of the *FGZ*, which should not be in the correct order of the original text. Since all entries within Chen’s *xiyu* literature—the *XCJ*, the *FGZ*, and the poems—are organized strictly chronologically, i.e., according to the order of his visitations, Tashkent and Bukhara, which were located in Timurid territory, could not have been the last places the group visited before entering China. These major flaws point to the fact that the copyist of this *FGZ* (or one of the copyists before him) did not use sufficient discretion or did not properly comprehend the text, and that the *SBCS* edition of the *FGZ*, though relatively complete, is imperfect.

Fortunately, the resurfacing of one copy of the *ZSWJ* in 1984, as well as the later recovery of other editions of the text,⁴² gave a boost to the study of Chen Cheng’s work. Because the *ZSWJ* copies display a clear chain of editors and contributors that can be traced all the way back to Chen Cheng’s time, this clarified many obscure issues regarding the *FGZ* text and its transmissions.

The *ZSWJ*, or *Chen Zhushan Xiansheng Wenji* 陳竹山先生文集, is Chen Cheng’s personal literary collection which stayed within his family. Compiled by Chen Rushi 陳汝實, Chen Cheng’s great-grandson, this collection was completed in the 12th year of Zhengtong/1447 while Chen Cheng was still living; it is highly possible that Chen Rushi was able to consult Chen Cheng directly in the process. The first edition of the *ZSWJ* is prefaced by Wang Zhi 王直, the minister at the Ministry of Personnel (吏部尚書) and the head state historiographer (國史總裁), who indicates that Chen Cheng kept a back-up copy of his submission to the throne, which then became the source material for the *ZSWJ*.⁴³ After the first edition, *ZSWJ* was copied or reprinted three more times by Chen Cheng’s descendants: in the 16th year of Chongzhen/ 1643, the 7th year of Yongzheng/ 1729, and the 24th year of Jiaqing/ 1819. Though only the last two editions have survived, the date and contributors of each edition are clearly indicated on cover pages or in prefaces. When the Qianlong

41 Zhou’s edition corrects most of these errors. Wang Jiguang also stresses the flaws in the *SBCS*’s transcription; thus, I shall not repeat them. See *Chen Cheng/Wang*: 8.

42 For more details, see section “Modern Editions and Studies.”

43 *ZSWJ/SK*: 310.

Emperor (r.1735–1795) commissioned the compilation of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 [Complete books of the Four Storehouses], a copy of the 1729 edition was collected by the compilers. This *zswj* was not included in the main series of the *Siku quanshu*, but was photocopied and published in 1997 by the Qilu Press in the series of *cunmu* 存目 texts,⁴⁴ i.e., texts that were consulted and given bibliographic descriptions but were not included in the main series. This is the main text on which my translation is based, and I abbreviate this particular edition as the *zswj/sk*.

The *zswj* is divided into two parts: the “inner chapters” (內篇) and the “outer chapters” (外篇).⁴⁵ The former section is an assemblage of works authored by Chen Cheng while the latter was written by Chen’s friends and colleagues. Notably, the text of the *xcj* is not collected in the *zswj*, which may be explained by the fact that the Li Xian was the main notetaker of the ambassadorial group’s itinerary and that Chen did not keep a copy of the *xcj*. This speculation is supported by the fact that some non-Chinese place names are transcribed differently in the two accounts.⁴⁶

The *FGZ* text in the *zswj* is entitled *Jincheng yulan Xiyu shanchuan fengwu jilu* 進呈御覽西域山川風物記錄, “Record Submitted to the Emperor of the Landscapes, Sceneries, Traditions, and Customs of the Western Regions”—styled formally and in line with Chen’s other submissions to the throne. Such a title also precisely reflects the various aspects dealt with in Chen Cheng’s report, and there is thus little doubt that this is the original title of Chen’s submission. Furthermore, a “retirement addendum” (歸休補遺) to the *FGZ* comprising two short accounts, “Pamir Mountains” (*Congling* 蔥嶺) and “On the Rose Water” (*qiangweilu zhi shuo* 薔薇露之說), only exist in the *zswj* collection.⁴⁷ Most importantly, the *FGZ* text presented in the *zswj* shows little ambiguity, demonstrating that the it had been carefully copied and would appear fairly close to the original.

44 In v. 26 of the *jibu* 集部 (“belles-lettres and collections”) within the series *Siku Quanshu Cunmu Congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書.

45 Dividing a literary work into inner chapters and outer chapters is a literary tradition of China. Inner chapters consist of the core of the work, while outer chapters are usually of an auxiliary nature.

46 See notes in Appendix 1.

47 Since my translation aims at contextualizing Chen Cheng’s works on the Timurid and Chaghatayid history produced during his trip, it does not include these two newer accounts.

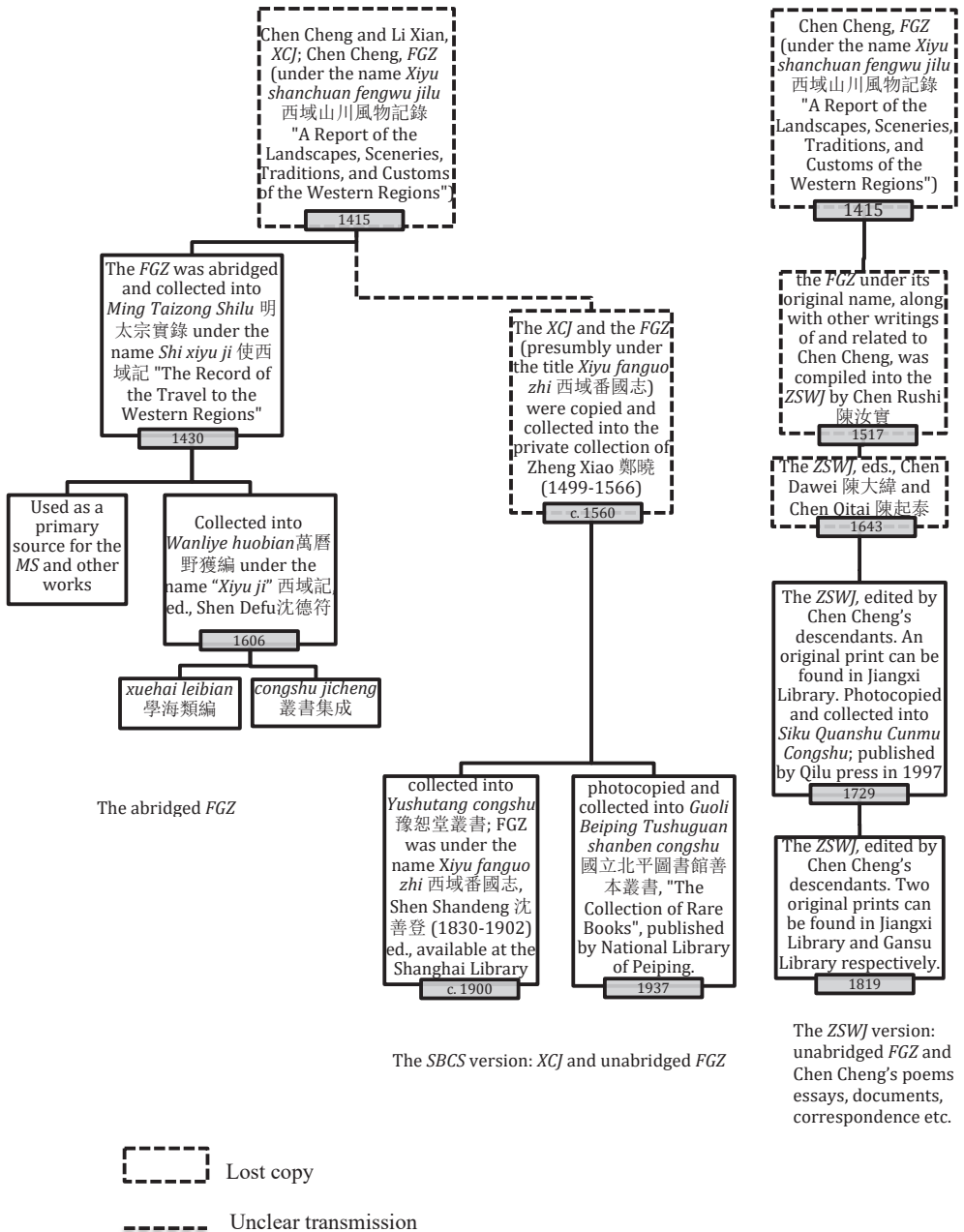


FIGURE 1 Prints, copies, and transmission of Chen Cheng's works

Other works in the “inner chapters” include the *Shizi fu* 獅子賦, “Poem for the Lion,”⁴⁸ which was one of Chen’s official submissions to the Yongle Emperor; a number of narrative poems and essays written since Chen’s retirement in 1425; and a record of credentials that summarizes the life and career of the author. The “outer chapters” gather a number of literary works written by eminent Ming officials and literati addressing Chen Cheng when seeing him off to the Western Regions and on other occasions. These works illustrate Chen’s social networks and,⁴⁹ at the same time, demonstrate the significance of this diplomatic mission from the perspective of the Ming government.

Modern Editions, Translations, and Studies

As early as 1888, Emil Bretschneider introduced Chen Cheng to English readers and partially translated his travel accounts for the first time.⁵⁰ Since the 1970s, Morris Rossabi has published several studies on Chen Cheng, exploring his career and the editions of his works. Furthermore, he has translated the section “Herat” of the *FGZ* into English.⁵¹ Despite the undeniable contributions of these earlier studies, much of the information and translation provided in their works are not accurate, and their style is obsolete; my article therefore will not engage with them.

In 1991, the Zhonghua Book Company (中華書局) published the first critical edition of Chen Cheng’s *xcj* and *FGZ*. This edition is heavily annotated by Zhou Liankuan 周連寬 and introduced by Wang Jiguang 王繼光. Though Zhou uses the *SBCs* as the basis of his edition, he publishes the related essays and

48 The *Shizi fu* was produced at the same time of Chen Cheng’s major reports around 1415. It takes the literary form of *fu* 賦, “poetic essay,” to eulogize the Ming emperor and Chinese imperialism; to this end, the essay briefly recounts the diplomatic mission, portrays the physical strength of the lion, and narrates the history of receiving the lion as a tribute in Chinese dynasties. See also Sally K. Church, “A Lion Presented as Tribute during Chen Cheng’s Diplomatic Expeditions to Herat (1413–1420).” In *Tribute System and Rulership in Late Imperial China*, ed. Ralph Kauz, and Morris Rossabi (Göttingen V&R unipress, 2022): 203–22.

49 For more discussion of Chen’s social networks and their impact on his career, see Appendix 2.

50 Emil Bretschneider, “Chinese Intercourse with the Countries of Central and Western Asia during the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries.” In *Mediaeval Researches from Eastern Asiatic Sources: Fragments towards the Knowledge of the Geography and History of Central and Western Asia from the 13th to the 17th Century* (London: Trübner & Co., 1888).

51 Morris Rossabi, “Two Ming Envoys to Inner Asia.” *Young Pao* 62/1–3 (1976); “A Translation of Ch’en Ch’eng’s Hsi-yü fan-kuo chih.” *Ming Studies* 1 (1983); “Ming China and Turfan, 1406–1517.” *Central Asiatic Journal* 16/3 (1972).

correspondence found in the *zswj* as appendices to the reports.⁵² Thus, this book (or its later reprints) is still the most commonly used modern edition of Chen Cheng's text.⁵³ However, the shortcomings of Zhou's annotations must be noted. First, the descriptions and analysis given by Zhou regarding Timurid history are often irrelevant and not necessarily accurate, as he rarely collates information from contemporary Timurid or other Islamic sources. Second, his investigation of the geographical data presented in Chen's works, especially the *xcj*, is based on what appear to be Soviet maps. Such a method would not have been reliable at the time that Zhou was writing and the information provided has also now become outdated. In addition, his edition does not include Chen Cheng's poems. Nevertheless, his work is the most widely used and still the only annotated modern Chinese edition of the *xcj* and *FGZ*; I have read it critically and indicated where my interpretation diverges from that of Zhou.

Another notable development of the study of Chen Cheng's texts started with Wang Jiguang's discovery of the Jiaqing edition of the *zswj* at the Gansu Library in 1984. Later, he acquired Chen's genealogical register from the latter's hometown⁵⁴ and systematically discussed the editions and values of the *zswj*, adjusting several earlier speculations on Chen Cheng's travel accounts and their transmissions.⁵⁵ Drawing on the Jiaqing edition of *zswj*, Wang published a modern edition of Chen Cheng's writings, *Chen Cheng xiyu ziliao jiaozhu* [Annotated Documents of Chen Cheng On Xiyu],⁵⁶ in which he presented a complete, punctuated version of the *zswj*, as well as other documents related to Chen that he had collected. On the one hand, the simple layout and the small volume of the book enable the reader to skim quickly through Chen Cheng's writings, making it a desirable guidebook; on the other, the lack of annotations (opposed to what the book title suggests), the use of simplified

52 Though by the time of the publication of the Zhonghua Book Company edition, the *zswj* had become available to the editors, it was not the most accessible text.

53 In 2000, the book was published again along with the text of *Xian bin lu* 咸賓錄, but there is no change of content or page layout for Chen Cheng's texts.

54 In Chen Cheng's hometown Jishui, the scholar Zeng Caitang 曾采堂, who had an abiding interest in toponymy and local biographies, found Chen Cheng's family book in around 2005 and dedicated it to the relevant scholars. The family book was not published but was used for research purpose among those scholars.

55 Wang Jiguang 王继光 "Chen zhushan wenji de shiliao jiazhi yu banben" 《陈竹山文集》的史料价值与版本. *Xiyu yanjiu* 1 (2010); "Chen Cheng jiashi shengping kaoshu" 陈诚家世生平考述. *Xiyu yanjiu* 1 (2005).

56 Wang Jiguang 王继光 ed. *Chen Cheng Xiyu ziliao jiaozhu* 陈诚西域资料校注. Wulumuqi shi: Xinjiang renmin chubanshe, 2012.

Chinese, and the occasional errors would disqualify it from being considered as the main source for a rigorous examination of Chen's text.

Facilitated by these modern editions, more studies appeared and diverse methods were applied to approach Chen Cheng's text and the Ming-Timurid ambassadorial exchanges in which he participated. For example, Felicia J. Hecker examined Chen's career and the Persian vocabulary in the *FGZ* in "A Fifteenth-Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat";⁵⁷ Ralph Kauz utilized Chen's accounts an important source in his monograph on the Ming-Timurid relations;⁵⁸ and Sally Church translated the *XCJ* with Zhou Liankuan's annotations into English and she has proposed to use GIS to map out Chen Cheng's trip.⁵⁹

Notably, Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu translated both of Chen Cheng's reports, the *FGZ* and *XCJ*, into Turkish, along with the letters exchanged between the Timurid and Ming courts. Her study was published in 1995 as *Orta Asya'da Timurîler, Çin'de Ming Münâsebetleri Ch'en Ch'eng Elçilik Raporu*.⁶⁰ However, even though her translation was published after the appearance of Zhou Liankuan's annotated edition of Chen Cheng's reports, Çandarlıoğlu did not utilize Zhou's critical edition, and instead relied solely on the *SBCS* text. As a result, her translation reflects certain salient flaws of the *SBCS* text and is in need of update.⁶¹

In 2012, Michel Didier published a monograph on Chen Cheng that contains Didier's French annotated translation of the *XCJ*, *FGZ*, Chen Cheng's travel poems and diplomatic correspondence, among other essays from the *ZSWJ*.⁶² Didier's book has brought a number of lesser-known works of Chen

57 Felicia J. Hecker, "A Fifteenth-Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3/1 (1993).

58 Chapter 4 in Kauz, *Politik und Handel zwischen Ming und Timuriden: China, Iran und Zentralasien im Spätmittelalter*.

59 Sally K. Church, "Xiyu xingcheng ji 西域行程記 (Record of the Journey to the Western Regions) by Chen Cheng 陳誠 and Li Xian 李暹," accessed April 10, 2022. <http://www.thelongridersguild.com/Chen%20Cheng%20Diary%20-%20China%20to%20Herat.pdf>; "Using GIS to map Chen Cheng's Journey," presented in Chinese in the Proceedings of the conference on Topography, Geography, and Cartography held in Nanjing, China, on 20–23 July 2008.

60 Gülçin Çandarlıoğlu, *Orta Asya'da Timurîler, Çin'de Ming Münâsebetleri Ch'en Ch'eng Elçilik Raporu* (Istanbul: Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi Fen - Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1995).

61 For example, the accounts on Tashkent and Bukhara in the *FGZ* are erroneously arranged in the end of the report.

62 Didier states that he has consulted both the *SBCS* and the *ZSWJ* but without indicating which edition(s) of the *ZSWJ* he used; nor does he sufficiently introduce the importance of the *ZSWJ*. *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 8.

to the non-Chinese speaking audience, thereby substantially contributing to the study of Chen Cheng and Ming foreign relations. However, several fundamental problems in Didier's methodology must be noted. First, Didier's historical inquiry is not a well-founded one, as it is mostly restricted to the Hongwu era and is dependent on Chinese histories and a very limited number of outdated translations of Timurid sources.⁶³ Second, despite his attempt to highlight the geographic information in Chen's literature, Didier does not sufficiently consult histories and archeological studies to identify the meanings of place names at the time of Chen's writing. In addition, Didier's pairing of the localities in the *FGZ* with the dates on which those places were visited in the *XCJ* is redundant and misleading, as the two works were not produced at the same time.⁶⁴ Third, it seems that Didier resorts to assumptions where he fails to make sense of Chen's text, leading to the overinterpretation of phrases at times and causing absurd mistakes at other times. For example, Chen wrote the poem, "Baysonghur: Son of Shahrukh," on his visitation of the Timurid prince Baysonghur, yet Didier translates the proper name "Baysonghur" as "la fratrie du tigre blanc des bois de pins" and comments that this strange and obscure title could be a poetic and symbolic expression.⁶⁵ Free, uninformed interpretations such as this one constitute the most regrettable aspect of Didier's translation.

As discussed above, in the past decades, the study of Chen Cheng's travel literature has seen considerable progress while remaining inadequate from the viewpoint of Islamicate and Eurasian history. First, there is still no complete translation of the *FGZ* in English. Though Church and Didier have produced annotated translations of the *XCJ* in English and *FGZ* in French respectively, their works are heavily influenced by Zhou Liankuan's Chinese annotated edition, which itself is in urgent need of revision. Second, the majority of scholars still tend to treat Chen's literature principally from the perspective of Sinology and thus ignore or misrepresent information from sources in Persian or Arabic,

63 Didier's unsatisfactory use of Timurid sources is pointed out by other reviewers of his work: Jerome Kerlouegan, "Reviews." *Ming Studies* 72 (2015); Ralph Kauz, "Michel Didier's *Chen Cheng (1365–1457), ambassadeur des premiers empereurs Ming: A Review Article, or Some Considerations of the Geographical Knowledge on the Silk Road During the Early Ming Dynasty.*" *Journal of Asian History* 49/1–2 (2015).

64 The *XCJ* was written on the journey westward and the *FGZ* on the way back to China. See section "Chen Cheng's travel literature on the Western Regions."

65 *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 505n250. Apparently, Didier translates the phonetically transcribed Persian name according to the meaning of each character as *bai* 白 (white)-*song* 松 (pine)-*hu'er* 虎兒 (tiger), and thus coming up with a distinctly bizarre result.

and the political backdrop of Islamicate history. Last but not least, in the studies that do consider Chen's works within a global framework, the focus is mostly on the Timurid capital of Herat and Ming-Timurid relations, whereas the significance of Chen's report on Moghulistan and its connections with the Timurids is rarely identified and examined.⁶⁶ The inadequacy in the investigation of Chen's reports reflects a gap in the study of the medieval history of Iran and Central Asia, where certain important sources are yet to be read with a multi-disciplinary approach, combining the knowledge of Islamicate studies with a good understanding of Turco-Mongol traditions and Eastern Asian history and languages.

Notes on Translation, Transliteration, and Annotation

This translation includes Chen Cheng's *Xiyu fanguo zhi* and my selection of his poems on the Western and Central Eurasian regions. The main text I used for my translation is the 1729 edition of the *zswj*, which was photocopied and published in volume 26 of the *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* series by the Qilu shushe in 1997 (Abbreviated as *zswj/sk*). I have checked this text against the *SBCS* edition, Zhou Liankuan's annotated edition, Wang Jiguang's compilation of Chen Cheng's documents, which is based on the 1819 edition of the *zswj*, and Didier's French translation. Where major differences in the text and disagreements of interpretation occur, I have indicated them in my notes and explained my reading when necessary.

Naturally, many geographical descriptions in Chen's texts, especially those regarding direction and distance, do not meet our contemporary standards of accuracy. However, those descriptions reflect how early fifteenth-century Western and Central Asia were perceived specifically by a Ming traveler, I have not altered the text for the sake of "accuracy." Instead, I have created a map, using GIS and historical gazetteers, to indicate the precise locations of the places mentioned in Chen Cheng's accounts (see map 1). In addition, I have supplemented necessary information regarding particular Islamicate and Persianate phenomena mentioned in the accounts and provided my readings in the notes.

66 As examples of the few exceptions, Eiji Mano mentions Chen Cheng's visit to Moghulistan in an early article; and Bakhyt Ezhkenkhan-uli draws attention to Chen's description of Moghulistan in the latter half of the *FGZ*. See Mano Eiji, "Two Notes on the Genealogy of Moghul Khans in the Early 15th Century," *Journal of Turkish Studies* 17 (1993): 121. Bakhyt Ezhkenkhan-uli (巴哈提·依加汉), "Du Chen Cheng *xiyu fanguo zhi zhaji er ze*" 读陈诚《西域番国志》札记二则, or "Two Notes on the Sections of Halie and bieshibali in Chen Cheng's Travelogue," *Yuanshi ji minzu yu bianjiang yanjiu jikan* 38 (2019): 168–76.

It must also be pointed out that Chen Cheng uses a number of words referring to the concept of “foreign,” that is, not Han Chinese, such as *yi* 夷, *hu* 胡, *rong* 戎, and *qiang* 羌. Each of these words usually has a specific original meaning, indicating a certain non-Han race, and they all, to some extent, contain a negative connotation and serve the purpose of otherizing those peoples. However, Chen Cheng mostly uses these terms interchangeably to allude to “foreign” or “western,” regardless of their original meaning, and does not necessarily imply the inferiority of any foreign race. Thus, it would be inaccurate to treat these terms as proper nouns or to translate them as “barbarians.” When such a term appears, I often render it as “foreign” and indicate the original term next to it.

I have translated most proper nouns into English whenever the modern American standard can be applied. For Chinese, I have adopted the Hanyu Pinyin romanization system. Where needed, I have inserted the Chinese characters immediately after the romanized versions to help readers identify the terms. Though I choose to use the traditional Chinese characters, I make exceptions for publications in Chinese, in which cases I stick to the writing system of each publication. For Persian and Arabic transliterations, I have followed the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* guidelines. For transliteration of Turkic terms, I have followed the forms used by Gerard Clauson in *An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-Thirteenth-Century Turkish*.

An Annotated Translation of *Xiyu fanguo zhi*

A Record of the Countries of the Western Regions

or

Record Submitted to the Emperor of the Landscapes, Sceneries,
Traditions, and Customs of the Western Regions⁶⁷

67 *Xiyu fanguo zhi*, or “Record of the countries of the Western Regions,” is the name given to Chen’s report when it was collected into the Ming archives and thus it is now the most commonly known name for Chen Cheng’s report. “A Record of the Landscapes, Sceneries, Traditions, and Customs of the Western Regions Submitted to the Emperor” is the title of the report in Chen’s personal literary collection, the *zswj*.

[Timurid lands]

*Herat (Halie 哈烈)*⁶⁸

Herat⁶⁹ is located southwest of Samarkand (*Sama'erhan* 撒馬兒罕). It is 12,700 *li*⁷⁰ from Jiayu Pass (嘉峪關)⁷¹ of the Suzhou Guard (肅州衛)⁷² of the Shanxi Regional Commission (陝西行都司). It lies in a level plain of over 100 *li* wide. There is a westward-flowing river in the middle [of the plain]; there are big mountains in all four directions. The city is close to the foot of the mountain to the northeast; it is over 10 square *li*.

68 Herat (Herāt), currently situated in Afghanistan, was the Timurid capital under Shahrukh. Chen mentions two versions of the name “Herat” commonly used in Ming Chinese sources: *Halie* 哈烈 and *Heilu* 黑魯. Other variants of Herat seen in Chinese sources include: *Yeli* 也里/野里 and *Yilu* 亦魯. Herat is situated in the fertile valley of Hari River (Harī-Rūd), which flows from the mountains of central Afghanistan following a relatively straight course to the west—This is the river mentioned in Chen’s text. For an overview of the landscape and history of Herat, see Terry Allen, *Timurid Herat* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1983): 11–16. See also Christine Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in its Midst: Herat and the Mapping of Khurasan (15th–19th Centuries)* (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2014): 15–43. It has to be noted that the content of this section is not restricted to the description of Herat but also include Chen’s introduction of the Timurid lands and people, as it is common to refer to a state or dynasty by the name of its capital in pre-modern Chinese geographical accounts.

69 The original text is “哈烈一名黑魯,” lit., “*Halie* 哈烈, also named *Heilu* 黑魯.” I omitted the two Chinese versions to keep the style consistent.

70 *Li* 里 is a Chinese unit of length; the measurement of *li* varied in different periods of the history of China. During the Ming period, a *li* was commonly considered equivalent to 360 footsteps (*bu* 步), and has been estimated to be 1/3 mile (536 meters) and 576 meters, see “Ming weights and measures” in *The Cambridge History of China, vol. 8: The Ming Dynasty*; Liu Chunying 刘春迎, “Cong beisong dong jing waicheng de kaogu faxian tan beisong shiqi de zaoying chi” 从北宋东京外城的考古发现谈北宋时期的营造尺, *Wenwu* 2 (2018): 58. However, Didier suggests that a *li* actually only measures about 350 meters in Chen’s travel literature, see *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 15. In this translation, I do not convert any unit of distance to the modern standard units. Readers may refer to annotations, maps and exiting studies for geographical information of the places mentioned in the account.

71 Jiayu Guan 嘉峪關, lit., “Excellent Valley Pass,” located in Gansu province, was the first frontier pass at the west end of the Great Wall of Ming China.

72 Suzhou 肅州, now known as Jiuquan 酒泉, is located in the northwesternmost part of present-day Gansu province of China.

The ruler of the country⁷³ resides in the northeast corner of the city.⁷⁴ Bricks and stones were piled up to build [his] residence, which is flat and square, looking like a high platform. Beams, rafters, and earthenware tiles are not used. There are several dozen empty vaulted chambers (中拱虛室). The walls and windows are decorated with gold, jade, and green glaze. The door panels are engraved with decorative patterns, inlaid with bone and horn. The floor is covered with felt carpets. There is also a multicolored embroidered tent erected next to the chamber; it is where the ruler rests. A golden bed with several layers of mattresses sits in the room. There are no chairs; [people] often sit cross-legged on the floor.⁷⁵

The ruler of the country wears narrow-sleeved attire, a robe, and a little embroidered hat (罩刺帽).⁷⁶ He wraps his head with a white cloth, and shaves his head and then wears a wig. Like the people of the country, he prefers to dress in white. People commonly address him as *sultān* (*Suolutan* 鎖魯檀),⁷⁷

73 “The ruler of the country” refers to Shahrukh (1377–1447), who had been governor of Herat since 1397 and had claimed succession of his father Timur when the latter died in 1405. In 1409, Shahrukh ousted his nephew Khalil-Sultān from Samarkand and became the principal Timurid ruler, ruling from Herat while delegating his sons to other regions.

74 By 814/1412, Shahrukh had moved to the Bāgh-i Zāghān, “garden of ravens,” a former Kartid estate, to the northwest of the city. Allen, *Timurid Herat*: 18. This must be where Chen Cheng had visited, though he reports the location of the residence to be in the northeast of the city. In addition, Chen wrote two poems on his visit of Shahrukh’s residence, describing the garden and a banquet scene.

75 Chen describes the interior decorations of the residence and notices commonly used structure in Timurid architecture such as the vault or dome, and tent. He also makes acute observation of the materials used in construction: frequent use of bricks and stone, and the lack of use of wooden structures such as beams and rafters. For more discussion of Timurid architecture, see Lisa Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*, ed. Donald Newton Wilber (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 1:73–136.

76 This must be the indication to a fine turban.

77 *Sultān*, which originally bears the abstract meaning of “power” or “authority,” passes to denote “holder of power” by the tenth century and was often used as a title by Islamicate sovereigns. “Sultān,” in *EI*². Chen’s report provides evidence for an important development of Timurid ideology. Timur, father of Shahrukh and founder of the dynasty, had never used the title *sultān* for himself. Being a non-Chinggisid commoner (*qarachū*), Timur proclaimed the Ögödeid prince Suyurghatmish, and his son Sultān-Mahmūd after the former’s death, as figurehead khans, while using the modest title *amīr* (commander) for himself. He also married the Chinggisid princess Saray-Malik Khanum and gained the title *küregen* (M.) or *fuma* 駙馬 (C.), “imperial son-in-law.” Beatrice Forbes Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 14; “Tamerlane and the Symbolism of Sovereignty,” *Iranian Studies* 21 1/2 (1988): 105–22; John E. Woods, “Timur’s Genealogy,” in *Intellectual Studies on Islam: Essays Written in Honor of Martin B. Dickson*, ed. Martin Bernard Dickson, et al. (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1990): 101. Shahrukh, in contrast, resorted to Islam as a new form

which is similar to the honorable title of “sovereign” (君主) in Chinese. The ruler’s wife is commonly addressed respectfully as *āghā* (*aha* 阿哈);⁷⁸ his son is addressed as *mīrzā* (*mī’erzan* 米兒咱),⁷⁹ which is similar to “born of a nobleman” (舍人) in Chinese. Whenever people from different ranks address one another, they do so directly by name; even the ruler [is addressed] this way.⁸⁰

There are no different bureaus (衙門),⁸¹ and there is no bureaucratic system (官制).⁸² Those who run affairs are called *dīwān* (*diaowan* 刁完)⁸³ officials; all [administrative] affairs, great and small, are handled by the *dīwān* officials.⁸⁴

of legitimization and did not restrict himself by the Mongol imperial customs—which is reflected in his adoption of the title *sultān*, or *al-sultān al-a’ẓam* (“the greatest sultan”), as inscribed on his coins. Linda Komaroff, “The Epigraphy of Timurid Coinage: Some Preliminary Remarks,” *Museum Notes (American Numismatic Society)* 31 (1986): 216–19. See also Christopher Markiewicz, “The Timurid Vocabulary of Sovereignty,” in *The Crisis of Kingship in Late Medieval Islam: Persian Emigres and the Making of Ottoman Sovereignty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019): 154–66.

78 *Āghā* is a title of Mongolian origin used to address princesses or noble ladies. See “21. آغا (āghā),” in *TMEN* 1.

79 *Mīrzā*, or *mīrzā*, a Persian title meaning “born of a prince,” is a contraction of the Persian term *amīrzāda*, which consists of *amīr*, the Arabic title for prince or commander, and *-zāda*, the Persian passive participial suffix meaning “born of” or “lineage.” See “Mīrzā,” in *ET*². It is a title commonly used for Timurid princes.

80 雖國主亦然, which may be interpreted either “Even the ruler of the country does the same (i.e., address others by name)” or “even the ruler is likewise addressed (i.e., addressed by others by name).” This sentence in the *FGZ/SB* reads “雖稱國主亦然,” which can only be interpreted in the latter way. Though Chen Cheng clearly and accurately noted the honorable titles used by the Timurid imperials, including *sultān*, *āghā*, and *mīrzā*, the Timurid system of naming and address must have struck Chen as being too simple. In most periods of imperial China, Chinese, particularly members of the elite, should be addressed and referred to by a variety of names depending on the social and official context of the moment. Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual*, fifth ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Asia Center, for the Harvard-Yenching Institute, 2018): 119–54.

81 *Yamen* 衙門 is a generic term for offices and bureaus; a description of this term can be found in Wilkinson, *Manual*: 274.

82 This is an interesting remark on Timurid bureaucracy, or lack thereof. Khvāndamīr’s comment on the appointment of officials during the late Timurid era that “It was the habit of those sultans to quickly install and dismiss officials (*wuzarā*),” which implies the lack of an official selection system, seems to have substantiated Chen’s observation. See Ghiyās al-Dīn Khvāndamīr, *Dastūr al-vuzarā*, ed. Sa’id Nafīsī (Tehran: Iqbāl, 1317/1938): 340–41.

83 In Islamicate government and politics, *dīwān* generally indicates a governmental or administrative body. For connotations of the term in different regions and times, see “Dīwān,” in *ET*².

84 Under Shahrukh the chancellery and financial administration—the *dīwān*—was a significant locus of power. In addition to introducing the term *dīwān* to his Chinese audience, Chen remarks two aspects of the Timurid administration: First, there did not seem to be

There is no etiquette at all when meeting with each other; [they] only bend their bodies slightly and say the phrase *al-salām* ‘alaykum (*sali mali* 撒力馬力).⁸⁵ If [two people] have not seen each other for a long time, or meet for the first time, they may show formal courtesy, bending one knee and genuflecting several times. When an individual of lower rank meets with a person of higher rank, [the former] steps forward, kneels, and [they] shake hands and that is all. People of the same rank only shake hands or embrace to show courtesy; this applies to both males and females. One salutes another by saying “*salām*” (*salan* 撒藍).⁸⁶ In all gatherings and meetings, the king and his officials, men and women, the elders and the young all sit in a circle.

No spoons or chopsticks are laid out for food and drink. They take meat and rice with their hands and drink soup mostly from small wooden ladles. They usually like the tastes of sweet, sour, and oily. Although they often eat rice, they mix it with fat and oil. Dishware is mostly porcelain and earthenware pottery, and is seldom glazed. Only wine flasks, footed cups (臺盞) and the like are made of gold and silver. No tables or chairs are set; [people] all sit on the ground in order to eat. In the case of a banquet, low tables are used for food and drink. Various types of broths and soups are taken at the same time. [People] leave right after the food is eaten.

Houses are all built with bricks and stones. The affluent and powerful families [build] massive houses, like that of the ruler of the country. Some even use embroidered silk, *saqallāt* (*sahala* 撒哈刺)⁸⁷ and the like to cover and to

any specialized *dīwāns*. Chen’s statement is in accordance with Manz’s observation that a specialized *dīwān* is very rarely seen in Timurid sources and that, if several *dīwāns* were mentioned, they meant *dīwāns* serving different princes or provinces. Beatrice Forbes Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007): 79–81. Second, there is no civil service system with sophisticated rankings as that of Ming China. Charles O. Hucker, “Ming government,” in *The Cambridge History of China Volume 8: The Ming Dynasty*, ed. Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998): 29–54.

85 Both *al-salām* ‘alaykum (“peace be upon you”) and *salām* (“safety”; “peace”) are greetings in Arabic commonly used by Muslims. For their Qur’anic connotations, see “Salām,” in *ET*².

86 See previous note.

87 The term “*sahala* 撒哈刺” is transcribed from the Persian term *saqallāt* (سقلات), “scarlet cloth.” This is confirmed by the Ming Chinese-Persian glossary. See “撒哈刺,” in *HHZZ/Hongda*: 173; *HHZZ/Liu*: 488. According to Laufer, the term is also associated with Saqlāṭun (سقلاطون), “a city in Rūm where scarlet cloth is made,” see Berthold Laufer, *Sino-Iranica: China and Ancient Iran: Commodities and Cultural Exchange from 1000 BC to Medieval Times*, ed. Brian Spooner (London: I.B. Tauris, 2018): 313. Didier adopts Zhou Liankuan’s interpretation of the word as “sagheree,” which does not seem to have a solid ground. See *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 324n27; *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 78. Hecker also reads the word as *saqallāt* (سقلات), see Hecker, “A Fifteenth-Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat”: 92.

protect the walls, showing pride and wealth.⁸⁸ The commoners below them live in flat-roofed earthen houses or felt tents. No tiles are used in houses. Because it seldom rains, [houses] do not collapse.

On both sides of the markets and streets, buildings are erected. The top [of the markets and streets] is covered with cloth or enclosed with bricks, with windows in the roof for light. There is no [need to] avoid the sun on clear days, or to set up awnings for the rain. When dust accumulates due to dryness, water is sprinkled [on dusty areas]. Each booth [in the market] offers a separate category of goods: bows, arrows, saddles, bridles, clothes and so on, and [the merchandise] is not mixed. Conflicts and quarrels are seldom seen. Sellers of horses, camels, and [other] livestock, too, gather in separate places. Cooking stoves are seldom seen in the urban households. Food is sold at stores, and thus marketplaces do not close at evening; trading takes place with lamps and candles burning all through the night.⁸⁹

Silver money is commonly used in trade. The largest weighs one *qian* 錢 six *fen* 分 (approx. 5.96g);⁹⁰ it is called *tanka* (*dengge* 等哥).⁹¹ The second weighs

88 Wall tapestry is a common decorative element in Islamic architecture. As Lentz notes, hangings are among the productions in which the distinctive theatrical bent of Timurid aesthetics was given unfettered expression. Thomas W. Lentz, *Timur and the Princely Vision: Persian Art and Culture in the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Glenn D. Lowry, et al. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989): 216–18.

89 This must be Chen's observation of the intersection marketplace (*chahār-sū*) or markets on the main streets of Herat. Prior to Timurid rule, Herat under the Karts consisted of a square inner city quartered by major market streets. When Shahrukh made Herat his new capital, he embarked on programs of reconstruction and new developments. Golombek, *The Timurid Architecture of Iran and Turan*: 25–26. The prosperity of the commercial district of the Timurid Herat had been reported by other contemporary authors such as Ḥāfiẓ Abrū and Isfizārī. Ḥāfiẓ Abrū, *Ḥorāsān zur Timuridenzeit nach dem Tārīḥ-e Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū* (verf. 817–823 h.) des Nūrallāh b. Lutfallāh al-Ḥvāfi genant Ḥāfeẓ-e Abrū, ed. Dorothea Krawulsky (Wiesbaden: L. Reichert, 1982): 18. Mu'in al-Dīn Muḥammad Zamji al-Isfizārī, *Rawzāt al-jannāt fi awṣāf-i madīnat-i Harāt*, ed. Muḥammad Kāzim Imām (Tehran: Danishgāh-i Tihrān, 1959): 78. See also Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in its Midst*: 23–24; Bernard O'Kane, *Timurid Architecture in Khurasan* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers in association with Undena Publications, 1987): 16–17.

90 *Qian* and *fen* are Chinese units for weight and currency. 1 *qian* equals to 10 *fen*, and, during the Ming and Qing periods, 1 *qian* weighed about 3.73 grams. See Wilkinson, *Manual*: 612.

91 Chen notes three denominations for silver coinage in Herat: *tanka*, ½ *tanka* or *dīnār*, ¼ *tanka* or "jiajimei." Stephen Album notes that the local silver coins of Herat deriving from the late Kart issues became known as the *tanka*. In 792/1390, its weight was reduced to about 6.2g. The weight of *tanka* was reduced gradually in the following years until 822/1419 when Shahrukh establishes the weight of the *tanka* at approximately 5g through his currency reform. Chen's observation of the weights of the coinage was confirmed by the surviving coins from Shahrukh's time. Stephen Album, *A Checklist of Popular Islamic Coins* (Santa Rosa, CA: Stephen Album, 2011): 257–61. Bahrām 'Alā' al-Dīnī, *Sikkah 'hā-yi Īrān: dawrah-i Gūrkāniyān (Ṭaymūriyān)*, vol. 1 (Tihrān: Pāzīnah, 2018): 67–149.

eight *fen* (approx. 2.98g); it is called *dīnār* (*dina* 抵納). The one that is of even lesser value weighs four *fen* (approx. 1.49g); it is called *jiajimei* 假即眉.⁹² These three denominations are produced by the workers (從人, lit., retinue or servants) themselves. After minting, they pay a tax to the ruler of the country, who [then] stamps the money. It is [then] circulated in trade. Without the stamp, the money cannot be used.⁹³ For denominations less than *jiajimei*, only copper money is minted; it is called *pūl* (*puli* 蒲立).⁹⁴ Either six or nine of them are equal to one *jiajimei*. It is only used locally and cannot circulate generally.

Measuring vessels (斗斛) are not set; only scales (權衡) are used. The scale has a plate on each extremity, and is balanced at the center. Pieces of irons and stones of big and small sizes are placed in one plate according to their weight, until it is balanced. Even the five grains (五穀)⁹⁵ are weighed in the scale plate. The standards of weight vary from place to place; there is no fixed system. The tax rate is two in ten.⁹⁶ In a trade, the buyer compensates for taxes. State expenditures all come from this money.

Governmental letters and notes do not use the official seal. When the ruler of the country, as well as every official, issues an order, he only uses a small piece

92 The origin and the exact meaning of the term *jiajimei* 假即眉 remains unclear, though it is certainly a reference to the $\frac{1}{4}$ *tanka*, the basic unit of silver coinage. For an example of the quarter *tanka* minted in Herat, see *Sikkah'hā-yi Īrān*, 1:28. The characters 假即眉 might be a phonetic transcription “qazimi” based on what they might have sounded like during the Yuan and Ming periods. Based on the pronunciation, the term may be transcribed from *qaz*, a Persian copper denomination, or *qazm*, “worthless.” Album suggests, with uncertainty, that the term *miri*, “of the amir,” was used to denote $\frac{1}{4}$ *tanka* under the Timurids. Album, *Islamic Coins*: 259. But neither of these two speculations is supported by sufficient evidence. It is also highly possible that the confusion about this term is due to an error in transcription or translation.

93 Album interprets this statement as a report of the practice of countermarking the coins in circulation, see *Islamic Coins*: 260–61. However, the practice of countermarking is not evident from the text, as the name of the sovereign—Shahrukh in this case—was stamped at the time of the initial minting, not over the stamp of any previous ruler. Album may have based his statement on other material evidence. For a coin minted in Herat in the name of Shahrukh, see, for example, ‘Alā’ al-Dīnī, *Sikkah'hā-yi Īrān*, 1:92. For a countermarked coin, see #246830 on ZENO.RU-Oriental Coins Database (accessed Oct 27, 2021).

94 *Pūl* is a generic term to denote any copper coin in Central Asia from the thirteenth century onward. This is a reference to what is generally known as “civic coinage.”

95 This phrase usually refers to rice, two kinds of millet, wheat, and leas. Though the exact definition of the phrase may vary from region to region and from time to time, it is a general reference to cereals and grains.

96 That is, 20%, which appears to be the *tamgha*, a tax on commercial goods and services levied on the urban population after the Mongol invasion of West Asia. See “*Tamgha*,” in the *ER*². Interestingly, despite Shahrukh’s observance of certain Islamic legal practices, he did not employ the *zakāt* tax, the rate of which (2.5%) is one eighth of what was demanded by Shahrukh.

of paper on which text is written directly. Each uses his own signature (花押) to mark the document, so it becomes effective immediately. The method of affixing the signature is to make a ring from gold or silver, on which the name of the signee is carved.⁹⁷ There is no other official seal and there is no forgery.

Criminal law is seldom applied in the country. Lawsuits are rare among the military and common people. If there is a case that involves the killing of a person, the punishment will not go beyond compensation for a certain amount of money. There is no death penalty. As for other lesser crimes, only light punishments or flogging would be carried out.⁹⁸

The prohibition of alcohol is rather strict. Violators are punished by flogging with a leather whip. Thus [the people] do not brew rice wine; they ferment grapes.⁹⁹ Occasionally, there are illegal sellers.¹⁰⁰ Those who have moral

97 Such seal rings owned by the Timurid royals Miranshah and Gawharshad have survived, see Lentz, *Timur and the Princely Vision*: 225. Other Timurid seals are also preserved on manuscripts, see, for example, MS 7628, f.623r, *British Library*; and Bruno De Nicola, “The travels of a manuscript: Rashid al-Din’s Compendium of Chronicles (Add.7628),” *Asian and African studies blog, British Library*, 2015, <https://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2015/08/the-travels-of-a-manuscript-add-7628.html>, for the seal of Shahrukh on a manuscript of Rashid al-Din’s *Jāmi’ al-tawārikh*. See also Evrim Binbaş and Will Kwiatkowski, “Iskandar b. ‘Umar Shaykh’s Farman in the David Collection,” *Journal of the David Collection* 5 (2021): 44–45.

98 Flogging was indeed one of the most common punishments for lesser crimes, though it is not accurate to assert that the death penalty was not exercised, as it was possible to sentence those who committed serious political crimes to death during the Timurid period. Ma’sūma Samā’ī Dastjirdī and Vaḥīd ‘Abidīnpūr Jūshqānī, “Āyin-i muḥākama va mujāzāt dar dawra-yi Timūriyān.” *Tārikh-i Irān va Islām* 22/14 (1391/2012): 129–56. Chen’s account thus reflects the relative peace of Herat under Shahrukh’s rule during the time of his visit.

99 Didier interprets this sentence as “C’est pourquoi ils ne préparent pas d’alcool de riz fermenté ni de vin de raisin” (That is why they do not make fermented rice alcohol or grape wine) based on “context,” see *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 327n42. However, Didier’s translation seems to have been based on his assumption that Muslims should not drink, rather than any grammatical or historical grounds. Though Chen reports the prohibition of alcohol, his observation of the violators, illegal sellers, and that “those who have moral principles do not drink alcohol” implying the existence of those who do drink alcohol, confirms the practice of wine making. Further, wine (*putao jiu* 葡萄酒) is a common motif in Chen’s travel poems. His account exhibits an interesting contradiction between the Islamic law on the consumption of alcohol and the reality of drinking in the Timurid lands. This may be explained by the tradition of drinking in Iran and Central Asia, the influence of Sufism, and the Mongol rulers’ fondness of drinking. See also Rudolph P. Matthee, *The Pursuit of Pleasure: Drugs and Stimulants in Iranian History, 1500–1900* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005): 37–43; Stephanie Honchell, “The Story of a Drunken Mughal: Alcohol Culture in Timurid Central Asia” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2015).

100 “Sellers” (賣者) in the *ZSWJ/SK*, “buyers” (買者) in the *FGZ/SB*. Zhou Liankuan adopts “buyer” in his annotated edition, see *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 68. I believe that “sellers” is more appropriate, though the word choice here only makes a nuanced difference, as the activities of buying and selling usually take place simultaneously. About twenty-five years after

principles do not drink alcohol; they pray to God in the morning and in the evening, lest they commit blasphemy.

[According to] the rules of the country, if someone of a different origin (別色人)¹⁰¹ wishes to become a Muslim, it is said that he will be granted ten thousand in cash, in addition to clothes, saddles, and horses.

Men usually marry sisters as wives and concubines, to become a family close as bones and flesh.¹⁰² Even patrilineal cousins can marry.¹⁰³ As for a younger brother marrying his elder brother's widow, or an elder brother marrying his younger brother's widow, it is also a common arrangement in this country.¹⁰⁴

In the country, men shave their heads, wrapping them with white cloth. Women also cover themselves in white cloth, with their eyes slightly revealed. When there is a funeral, they wear dark blue or black clothes instead. Curtains are all dark blue or black. [People] mourn for no more than a hundred days, and remove their mourning apparel soon after. Coffins are not used for burial

Chen's visit of Herat, in 844/1440, Shahrukh issued an edict prohibiting the consumption of alcohol by both aristocrats and commoners and ordered the destruction of all the stores of wine in Herat. See Faṣiḥ al-Dīn Aḥmad Khvāfi, *Mujmal-i Faṣiḥi*, ed. Muḥsin Nāji Naṣrābādī (Tehran: Intishārāt-i Asāṭir, 2007):1148; 'Abd al-Razzāq Kamāl al-Dīn ibn Ishāq Samarqandī, *Maṭla'-i Sa'dayn wa Majma'-i Bahrayn*, ed. Muḥammad Shāfi'i (Lahore: Kitābkhānah-i Gilāni, 1941): 739–41.

- 101 *Biese ren* 別色人, lit., person of a different kind. In Ming China, “Muslim” (回回) is an ethno-religious social identity. This is reflected in Chen's vocabulary *biese ren*, which not only has a religious aspect but also connotes difference in race, class, occupation etc.
- 102 婚姻多以姊妹為妻妾，為一門骨肉至親。The sentence may be interpreted either as “the wife and concubine(s) of a man are sisters” or “men marry their *own* sisters.” Neither case seems likely. I suspect that Chen may be referring to a type of guardianship or levirate union.
- 103 In *zswj/sk*, “雖同堂兄弟姊妹一皆得為婚姻。” In *FGZ/SB*, “雖同祖胞兄弟姊妹亦皆得為婚姻。” Though the texts in the two editions differ slightly, the meaning seems to be clear: patrilineal cousins can marry. While cousin marriage was a common practice in imperial China and worldwide in earlier times, marrying patrilineal cousins, i.e., cousins sharing a same family name, was a taboo, sometimes unlawful, in Chinese tradition, and thus must seem shocking to Chen. According to laws on marriages in the *Great Ming Code*, marrying persons with the same surname is punished with 60 strokes of beating with a stick, and divorce is mandated. See *DML/Jiang*: 85.
- 104 Chen's observation confirms that the practice of levirate favored by the Mongol elites had a far-reaching influence in the societies they ruled. For the practice of levirate, see “1907. 孃 (yengä),” in the *TMEN* 4. See also George Qingzhi Zhao, *Marriage as Political Strategy and Cultural Expression: Mongolian Royal Marriages from World Empire to Yuan Dynasty* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2008): 25–30; J. Holmgren, “Observations on Marriage and Inheritances Practices in Early Mongol and Yuan Society, with Particular Reference to the Levirate.” *Journal of Asian History* 20/2 (1986): 127–92; Musa Şamil Yüksel, “Türk kültüründe 'levirat' ve Timurlularda uygulaması.” *Turkish Studies, International Periodical for the Languages, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic* 5/3 (2010): 2027–58.

at all. Bodies are only wrapped in shrouds and are buried in mounds. Affluent and powerful families usually build up tall earthen structures upon the tombs, making them as luxurious and sumptuous as they wish.¹⁰⁵ Indigent and humble families dig graves next to their houses, and there is absolutely no taboo [on doing this].

[People] do not offer sacrifices to ghosts and gods, do not establish temples for the god of the land, do not worship ancestors, and do not build family altars. They only offer sacrifices at the tombs [of holy persons] (墳墓).¹⁰⁶ They face the west and pray several times each month; this is called *namāz* (*namasi* 納馬思).¹⁰⁷ If people assemble, they gather in one place and construct a large earthen building. It is called a *muṣallā* (*moxi'er* 默息兒).¹⁰⁸ Whenever it is time to pray, [people] gather in the earthen house, forming rows and lines. One person among them shouts out loud several times; the crowd kneels and prays in rows. If [one] is on the road, he prays wherever he is.

The tenth month of each year and the second month of spring are the fasting months.¹⁰⁹ [People] do not drink or eat during daytime; they only eat after

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- 105 Timurid funerary structures, secular or religious, have survived in a variety of forms. Chen's description provides additional information on the social functions of some these monumental structures. See also Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 49–52.
- 106 The term *fenmu* 墳墓 is usually translated as “tomb” or “grave,” which may cause a certain extent of obscurity here, as Chen makes it clear that the people do not worship gods or their ancestors but “offer sacrifices at the tombs.” Didier expresses such a confusion in *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 329n52. However, given the Islamic tradition of visiting shrines for blessings (*barakāt*), there is little doubt that Chen Cheng is referring to the tombs of holy persons here. It is not clear, though, if Chen himself was able to distinguish a secular tomb from a shrine, as both may look either modest or monumental. As Golombek stresses, the most common term for shrine, *mazār*, literally means “place of visit or pilgrimage” and has no architectural connotation. Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 51. For a list of *mazārs* in Timurid Herat, see Allen, *Timurid Herat*: 76–78.
- 107 *namāz* (P.) denotes the obligatory five daily prayers for Muslims. It seems that either the author or a transcriber has mistaken “month” for “day.”
- 108 *muṣallā* (A.), an oratory, a place of prayer; a mosque. Zhou Liankuan reads this term as “maseere,” see *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 79n14. He must be referring to *musaiyar* (P.), a pleasant or celebrated place worthy of a traveler's curiosity. His explanation is cited by Didier uncritically. However, the meaning of *musaiyar* (or “maseere”) does not fit in the context. It is important to note that “兒 er” was commonly used to transcribe both the consonants “r” and “l” in Persian and Arabic languages during the Yuan and Ming periods. Taken into account the context and multiple possible pronunciations of “默息兒 *moxi'er*,” *muṣallā* is the most likely word for “mosque, place of prayer” Chen refers to here.
- 109 The ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, Ramaḍān, is the obligatory fasting month for every Muslim. “The tenth month of each year” is most likely a reference to Ramaḍān, but it is not clear what Chen refers to by “the second month of spring.” For fasting in Islam, see “Ramaḍān,” in *EI*²; “Şawm,” in *EI*².

sunset. After a whole month, regular [patterns of] eating and drinking are resumed.

On the occasion of breaking the fast, they shoot at gourds as an entertainment. The method of gourd shooting is to insert in the ground a long pole, which is several *zhang* 丈¹¹⁰ tall, with a gourd hanging at the end and a white dove hidden in the gourd. A pair [of men] who are good at horsemanship and archery shoot at it from a galloping horse. The one who breaks the gourd and releases the dove wins a prize.¹¹¹

The person who understands the classics and the interpretations of the Muslim (*Huihui* 回回)¹¹² religion is revered by all. He is called *mullā* (*manla* 满刺).¹¹³ He stands and sits above everyone. Even the ruler of the country respects him. Whenever there is a worship ceremony, only the *mullā* recites prayers.

There are people who give up their family property and positions, with disheveled hair and dirty feet, wearing shabby clothes and sheepskins, holding crutches in their hands and wearing the bones of cows or sheep. They mostly have unusual appearances. They do not avoid cold or heat, begging on the road and mumbling when encountering passers-by, appearing pitiful. If it is extremely difficult to find shelter, [they] may gather outside houses or in graveyards, or reside in caves in the name of practicing their religion. They are called *dielimishi* 迭里迷失.¹¹⁴

110 During the Ming period, 1 *zhang* is approximately 320 centimeters.

111 Chen witnesses and thoroughly reports the *qabaq* game, an important horseback archery (*furūsiya*) competition and performance in Turko-Mongol and Islamic traditions. *Qabaq* (Turkish *kābak*, Persian *qabāq*, “gourd”), or a gourd-shaped object, is the target for this mounted archery competition. See “1419. قباق (qabāq),” in *TMEN* 3. The game and its variants are reported by a number of medieval Muslim authors; the Timurid *qabaq* game elaborated by Chen Cheng is very similar to one version described by the Mamluk author Ibn Taghrībirdī al-Atabākī (d. 1470), see Abū al-Mahāsīn Yūsuf Ibn Taghrībirdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-al-Qāhira*, vol. 8 (al-Qāhira: al-mu’assasah al-miṣriyyah al-‘amah li-l ta’lif wa-al-ṭabā’ah wa-al-nashr, 1963): 16. For a study of the social functions of the *Qabaq* in the Mamluks Cairo, which throws light on the significance of the game in medieval Western and Central Asia in general, see Li Guo, *Sports as Performance: the Qabaq-game and Celebratory Rites in Mamluk Cairo*, ed. Kolleg Annemarie Schimmel (Berlin: EBVerlag, 2013).

112 During the Ming period, “Huihui” is a term with ethno-religious connotations; it may refer to Muslim or persons of Western or Central Asian origin. Chen’s usage of the phrase “Huihui religion” indicates that the followers of this religion were not uncommon in Ming China.

113 Transliterated from the Persian term *mullā*, a title derived from the Arabic *mawlā* in its sense of “lord” or “master,” which has been commonly used in Islamicate regions as a title for someone who is educated in Islamic theology and sacred law. See “Mollā,” in *ET*².

114 These are undoubtedly members of a local dervish community, the disciples of which would avoid ostentatious dress and behavior and keep the company of the poor. However,

In the middle of crowded markets, there are medical practitioners who gather people seeking cures, make them sit down in a circle, talk with them about illness and disease, and do a variety of other things. Afterwards, these people all pay cash, and [the practitioners] distribute a small amount of medicine to each person and leave. The effects are ultimately unknown.

There are intrusive people in the crowd who wave big axes and gesticulate outrageously with hands and feet in the marketplace of the city, shouting loudly. The reason is not clearly known. It is probably just to admonish people to virtue.¹¹⁵

There are people good at running who can cover two or three hundred *li* in one day. They lightly lift their feet and [run] faster than a horse. However, they are not born good runners and they practice from childhood to acquire this skill. Whenever the local authorities have urgent affairs, these people are ordered to run with an arrow to deliver a message in order to convey the level of urgency.¹¹⁶ They usually have bells hanging at their waists and stick-shaped weapons (骨朵) in their hands, running as though flying.

the exact word Chen intends to transliterate here may be debated. Interestingly, the words, *darvīsh* (P.), “dervish, the poor”; *tilemchi* (T.), “beggar, alms-seeker”; and *tilmiz* (A.), “disciple, pupil” would all denote the same meaning—dervish—in this context, and they all could have been transcribed as “透里迷失” in my opinion. Chen’s testimony of the group is particularly valuable as evidence of dervishes of the Late Middle Period is scanty. For a study of dervish groups of this period, see Ahmet T. Karamustafa, *Sufism: the Formative Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007): 114–15; , *God’s Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), “Chapter One” and “Chapter Five.” As a rich capital city, Herat attracted many Sufi shaykhs; Chen’s account lively describes the popularity of Sufi practices of this period. See Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*: 208. For investigations of some peculiar situations of Sufism of the Timurid period, see Jo-Ann Gross, “The Economic Status of a Timurid Sufi Shaykh: A Matter of Conflict or Perception?,” *Iranian Studies* 21/1–2 (1988): 84–104; Ilker Evrim Binbaş, “The Anatomy of a Regicide Attempt: Shāhrukh, the Ḥurūfīs, and the Timurid Intellectuals in 830/1426–27,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 23/3 (2013): 391–428.

115 The “intrusive” person in Chen’s account must be a *muhtasib*, someone entrusted with the application of *ḥisba* (the duty of every Muslim to “promote good and forbid evil”) in the supervision of moral behavior and particularly of the markets. See “Ḥisba,” in *EI*². The *muhtasibs* described here seemed to be authorized to threaten or use physical force against individuals in public spheres.

116 This appears to be a description of a messenger within the *yam* system, the courier network established during the Mongol empire. For the *yam* system in Iran and Central Asia of the Mongol times, see Hosung Shim, “The Postal Roads of the Great Khans in Central Asia under the Mongol-Yuan Empire,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 44 (2014). Chen’s description shows that the *yam* system survived or was restored, at least in some form, in Timurid Central Asia. This chimes with Clavijo’s observation that there were special messengers and envoys under the service of Timur, and that they could use government horses cared for by *yamchis* (*anchias*). *Clavijo/Estrada*: 126.

Men and women seldom carry burdens; they depend on horses, camels, donkeys, and mules for riding and carrying loads. If it is a small charge or the objects are light, they carry it on their heads, walking swiftly, swaying and keeping the objects from falling.

Women all go about on horses or mules. When encountering others on the way, they talk and laugh and tell jokes, appearing totally unashamed. [Women and men] even wantonly salute one another with flirtatious words. Men are especially loose in morals.

The customs of the country are mostly extravagant. Bright-colored clothes are preferred.¹¹⁷ Even the saddles and reins of the horses and riding mules are usually embellished with gold, silver, and colorful [decorations]. The front and back [of the saddles] are carpeted with felt, and bells are attached [to them]. Young people from wealthy families all ornament their clothes and robes with green jade, decorate their belts with gems, and adorn their scabbards with gold, silver, or pins and jewelry, in order to show extravagance and opulence.

Within the city walls and in the countryside, people live peacefully. In the deep mountains and open fields, people and horses walk alone. There are no tigers and wolves during the daytime, and there are no ghosts or evil spirits during the night.

The climate of the four seasons is usually warm and seldom cold. The winter months are like springtime. Grasses grow at the same time as shepherd's purse (薺) and wheat. They cover the fields by the end of the year. Farming activities start in the spring. People seldom sit around the fire. Though snow accumulates on remote mountains, it is rare on the plains. Spring rains are frequent, but they do not last throughout the day. Water channels are led to all of the fields and farms, streets and alleys, households and yards, to wash off the dust and dirt. Though it does not rain much, water flows continuously in all four seasons.¹¹⁸

In remote places, cisterns are often constructed in rural areas to store water for people and horses. Their method is to erect high earthen structures over broad brick lined pools like icehouses. This is because running water seldom collects [naturally].

117 Chen previously states that "like the citizens, he [ruler of the country] prefers to dress in white," thus it is not clear what he refers to by "bright-colored" (鮮色) here. But in any case, he provides valuable information on the extravagant decorations favored by the Timurid elites, whose aesthetic taste was also reflected in the surviving illustrations and paintings. See "Clothing ix. In the Mongol and Timurid periods," in *Et*; "Libās," in *Et*².

118 The Hari River (Hari-Rūd) which traverses the Herat valley from east to west formed the artery of the oasis, carrying abundant water for irrigation to the entire valley. The oasis proper was divided into multiple districts on the basis of the major irrigation channels branching off from the Hari River. Noelle-Karimi, *The Pearl in its Midst*: 24.

In the cities and villages, public baths are widely established. Men and women each [bathe] in separate places. The system is different¹¹⁹ from that of China. There are dozens of empty rooms in the bath hall, to house numerous bathers. When the bathers first take off their clothes, they use bath towels to cover their bodies and then enter the bathing room. They do not use plates and buckets. Each [bather] holds a water jar in which he takes [a little] water from each of the warm and cold tubs, in order to clean and wash his body. The rest of the water drains out and no dirt accumulates. There are also people who rub and knead muscles and joints of the body for the bathers, to make them relaxed and comfortable. Upon finishing the bath and leaving the room, each person is given two towels, one to cover the head, and the other to cover the body, and to make sure that [the bather] is dry and clean before he leaves. The bather gives [the massager] one or two copper coins and that is all.¹²⁰

Waterwheels are the same as those in China. Occasionally, there are windmills.¹²¹ The method is to build low walls to enclose a space on a height, open up gates in all four directions, establish screen walls facing the wind outside the doors, erect a wooden pillar within the walls, construct planks around the pillar to catch the wind, and to fix a millstone at the bottom. When the wind comes the pillar rotates. It can operate regardless of the direction [of the wind]. Because of the power of the wind in the vicinity, there are many [windmills].

Earthen houses are built along the roads; they are called *langar* (*langge'er* 朗哥兒).¹²² [They are] for travelers to rest and to stay away from the dangers of cold, heat, wind, and rain. At every twenty *li*, a wooden post is set. Sometimes an earthen house is constructed at every post. [The earthen house] is in turn named *laba'er* 臘巴兒.¹²³ Food and drink are prepared inside for the travelers who are hungry and thirsty.

119 “not different” (不异) in the *FGZ/SB*. I choose to stick to “different” as in the *ZSWJ/SK* due to the context.

120 Though there is no shortage of sources on the public bathhouse (*hammām*, *garmāba*) in the Islamic world, Chen’s detailed report provides unique information on the bathhouse staff in Timurid times. See also “Bathhouses,” in *Elr*.

121 See also Chen Cheng’s poem “The Windmill.” Windmills are extensively used in the eastern part of Persia, and their Persian origin is agreed upon by most modern historians of technology. For the development, mechanics, and illustrations of the Persian windmill, see Hans E. Wulff, *Traditional Crafts of Persia: Their Development, Technology, and Influence on Eastern and Western Civilizations* (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1966): 284–89.

122 *Langar* (P.), “an anchor; a stay or rope for supporting a tent”; “an alms-house.”

123 This is most likely an imprecise transcription of *ribāṭ* (A.), “inn for travelers, caravansary, hospice.” See also “hospices” in Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 49.

In the villages, markets are often set up. All the trading places are called *bāzār* (*bazan'er* 巴咱兒).¹²⁴ People gather every seven days to exchange needed goods. [The markets] disperse at sunset.

There is no calendar promulgated [by the emperor].¹²⁵ The sexagenary cycle (花甲)¹²⁶ is not applied. [People] have their own fixed rules of choosing dates for conducting affairs. Every period of seven days is a circle going around and starting again. Of the seven days, the first day is *ādīna* (*adina* 阿啼納), the second day is *shambih* (*shanbo* 閃伯), the third day is *yak-shambih* (*yi shanbo* 亦閃伯), the fourth day is *dū-shambih* (*du shanbo* 都閃伯), the fifth day is *sih-shambih* (*qie shanbo* 且閃伯), the sixth day is [*chahār-*]*shambih* (*shanbo* 閃伯),¹²⁷ and the seventh day is *panj-shambih* (*pan shanbo* 攀閃伯).¹²⁸ *Ādīna* is the most auspicious for all praying and gathering.¹²⁹ Each other day is preferred for different activities.

In the middle of the city there is a big earthen house named *madrassa* (*mode'ersai* 默得兒塞).¹³⁰ Rooms and corridors are wide on its four sides. In

- 124 It is noteworthy that Chen Cheng mentions the street markets in the urban center of Herat earlier without referring to the term *bāzār*. Though the exact connotation of the term *bāzār* is not evident from his account, it is clear that Chen noticed at least two types of markets: permanent street markets in the city and fairs gathering weekly in the suburb.
- 125 正朔不頒, lit. *zhengshuo* is not promulgated. *Zhengshuo* 正朔, literally signifying the first month of the year and the first day of the month, means the new calendar most Chinese monarchs would promulgate upon the founding of a new dynasty, that is, proclaiming a new era. Since the era system is an essential part of Chinese traditional dating system, Chen naturally comments on the absence of such a system where he visits.
- 126 The sexagenary cycle, or the *ganzhi* 干支, is a main counting system in Chinese tradition. *Huajia* 花甲 is a complete sexagenary cycle. Again, Chen remarks the differences between the calendars used in Ming China and the Timurid Iran and Central Asia. For details of dating systems in Chinese tradition, see Wilkinson, *Manual*: 548–55.
- 127 “閃伯 *shanbo*” in *FGZ/SB*, and “亦閃伯 *yi shanbo*” in *ZSWJ/SK*. Both are apparently mistakes. Hecker cites Chen Cheng’s transcription for the sixth day of the week as “扯閃伯 *che shanbo*” in a list of Chen Cheng’s Chinese-Persian vocabulary that she offers. Hecker, “A Fifteenth-Century Chinese Diplomat in Herat”: 92. However, I am not aware of her sources.
- 128 Chen records the seven days of the week in the Iranian calendar and their names in their correct order, though he asserts *ādīna* the first day of the week, which is not accurate. Conventionally, *shambih* (Saturday) is considered the first day of the week and *ādīna* (Friday) the last.
- 129 *Ādīna* (P), corresponding to Friday, is the weekly day of communal worship in Islam. The Arabic name for the day, *jum’a*, directly indicates that it is the day when people come together, see “*Djum’a*,” in *ET*². Chen acutely points out the two most important aspects of this day: praying and gathering.
- 130 The *madrassa* was well developed as the chief institution for the teaching of religious sciences during the Timurid period. This *madrassa* mentioned here is likely the *madrassa* founded by Shahrukh in 813/1410. Unfortunately, no trace of it has survived. Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 45; Allen, *Timurid Herat*: 17–18.

the courtyard (天井), a bronze vessel similar to a large cauldron is erected; its perimeter is several *zhang*.¹³¹ Inscriptions are carved on it in the style of a *ding* 鼎.¹³² The front and back, left and right [of the courtyard] are particularly spectacular.¹³³ Students and scholars, along with those who understand religious classics of different kinds, often assemble here. It is like the imperial college (大學) of China.

Copper and iron are locally produced, from which sharp tools can be made. The production of porcelain is particularly exquisite: flowers and grasses are depicted and painted colorfully. Its style is quite beautiful, but it is not as light, clean, and glittering as that of China. Tapping on it results in no sound because of its earthen nature.

Colored glazed objects are produced. They are not often used in households, but serve as a decoration (玩好) and that is all. Thin five-colored glass panes are often arranged in windows in order to produce beautiful lights.

White salt is produced from the ground of Kesh. It is as solid and bright as crystal. If it is carved and polished into plates and dishes, then moistened, meat can be eaten from it.

There is plenty of gold, silver, gems, coral, amber, crystal, diamonds, cinnabar, ruby, pearls, and jadeite (翡翠).¹³⁴ It is said that [they] are not produced locally, but come from other places.¹³⁵

Breeding silkworms and planting mulberry trees are common. [People] are good at making fine silk fabrics, which are better than those of China in their

131 周圍數丈. Alternatively, the phrase may be interpreted as “surrounding [the bronze vessel] is [empty space with a radius of] several *zhang*.”

132 *Ding* 鼎, a bronze vessel standing on legs with two facing handles, is one of the most important ritual vessels in China. *Dings* are mostly decorated with motifs or inscriptions engraved on the body.

133 These are likely the *iwans* facing onto the court of the madrasa. For the structure of *ivan*, see Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 73–74.

134 Precious stones produced in Western and Central Asia had attracted the attention of Chinese authors during the Yuan and Ming periods, and records of them are found in other contemporary sources such as the *Mishu jianzhi* 秘書監志 [Chronicles of the Imperial Archives] and Tao Zongyi's *Chuogenglu* 輟耕錄. Noticeably, the *HHZZ* contain a rich vocabulary of precious stones; according to the Ming glossary, the Persian equivalences of the terms of stones used by Chen are as follow: *gawhar* (gem), *marjān* (coral), *bulūr* (crystal), *kahrubā* (amber), *almās* (diamond), *shangarf* (cinnabar), *la'l* (ruby), and *marwārīd* (pearls). The last stone Chen records is *feicui* 翡翠, which is commonly translated as “jadeite;” however, it is very likely that Chen is in fact referring to emerald here. Though both are green gemstones, jadeite is more commonly seen in East Asia and emerald in West and Central Asia. More importantly, emerald, or *zumurrud*, was known to Ming Chinese authors as a “Huihui” precious stone.

135 There is another sentence, “有不可知 [it is unknown];” in the end of the paragraph in *FGZ/SB*.

lightness, fineness, and closeness of weave. However, they are not as firm and thick as those of China. Besides, [people] do not know how to weave *luo* 羅 [a kind of gauze].¹³⁶ Their woven gold threads can be melted down [and reused] (回爐). Among [their] cloth and silk, there is something called *ṣūf* (*suofu* 鎖伏)¹³⁷ that is extremely similar to fine silk fabric (綉綺). It is in fact woven with wool. [They] are good at weaving fine felt carpets, the color of which does not fade even with the passage of time. Cotton textiles are especially wide, but there are also small and exquisite ones.

The land produces mulberries, elms, poplars, willows, locust trees, sandalwood, pines, cypresses, and white poplars. Fruit trees are frequently planted. From the ruler of the country downward, powerful families cultivate extensive fruit gardens (果園),¹³⁸ and commonly plant peaches, almonds, plums, pears, apples (花紅),¹³⁹ grapes, walnuts, pomegranates and the like. There is a type of grape that is transparent, glittering, and crystal-like; it is seedless and very sweet. There is a type of almond called *bādām* (*badan* 巴旦),¹⁴⁰ the seed of which [can] be eaten; it is savory and tasty. There is a large date-like sweet thing named *khurmā* (*huluma* 忽鹿麻);¹⁴¹ I have not seen its tree. There is a

136 *Luo* 羅 is a kind of fine, light silken stuff. In the Ming Persian-Chinese glossary, the Persian equivalence of *luo* 羅 is *lāy* (لای), “*layi* 刺衣.” See “羅” in *HHZZ/Hongda*: 203; *HHZZ/Liu*: 224. The term *lāy* is defined as “a kind of silken stuff brought from India and China” in Steingass. Apparently, it is a loanword adopted from the Chinese term “*luo* 羅,” and Chen’s description implies their importation of *luo* to the Timurid lands.

137 *ṣūf* (P./A.): wool; a kind of silk stuff.

138 *Guoyuan* 果園, “fruit garden,” is the equivalence for *bagh* in Persian, as indicated in *HHZZ/Liu*: 413; *HHZZ/Honda*: 186. They were large and often elaborate garden estates that Timurid elite used as residences. Chen’s account provides detailed information on the fruit trees of great diversity planted in these gardens. See also Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 174; “The Gardens of Timur: New Perspectives,” *Muqarnas* 12 (1995): 137–47.

139 The term Chen uses here is *huahong* 花紅. Technically, *huahong* refers to *malus asiatica*, or the Chinese pear-leaved crabapple, in the family of Rosaceae. The species has long been cultivated in north and northeast China, and it was also known by the other Chinese names such as *shaguo* 沙果, *wenlin langguo* 文林郎果, and *linjin* 林擒. See *Flora of China* (花紅 *hua hong*; accessed Nov 3, 2021). Chen must have used *huahong* as a generic term to refer to apple. As noted by travelers, apple trees are common to see in many Central Asian regions. For example, Babur notes that Samarkand is renowned for apples with the saying, “Apples of Samarkand (*sīb-i Samarqand*) and pomegranates of Khodzhen.” *Bābur/Eiji*: 7; *Bābur/Thackston*, 1:37. See also note 226.

140 *Bādām* (P.), an almond. Iran was the center from which the almond spread to different regions of Eurasia; see Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*: 221–25.

141 *Khurmā* (P.), a date. The Persian date and the date palm had drawn the interest of Chinese authors for long; as early as the Yuan period, *khurmā* was seen transcribed in Chinese sources. *Ibid.*: 201–2.

ginkgo-like small tree called *pistān* (*bisitan* 苾思檀),¹⁴² the branches and leaves of which are similar to those of camellia. There is a type of plum that is yellow and as small as a cherry; it tastes very sweet. Apples (花红) are extremely large and bulky. They can be stored. Their color does not change for one year, and it is better to add new ones to the old ones.

The planting of the five grains¹⁴³ is the same as in China. Hemp, beans (豆), peas (菽),¹⁴⁴ wheat, millet,¹⁴⁵ rice, and sorghum are all grown. Also, there is a type of red bean as round as a pearl. There is a type of cotton that is light red; if cloth is made from it, it looks like cloth made of camel fur. Melons are large and extremely sweet. There is a type of onion (葱)¹⁴⁶ as large as a fist. There is a large and red vegetable root in the shape of a radish.¹⁴⁷ It weighs over ten *jin* 斤.¹⁴⁸ Plowing and sowing are usually crude and irregular; [people] widely sow seeds but seldom turn the soil and hoe up weeds. However, the results of the harvest are not bad. It is because their fields are fertile and plentiful, and are left fallow by turns every year so that the fertility of the land is preserved. Seasonable rains are rare, and even early season rice,¹⁴⁹ cotton, and wheat depend upon irrigation. It is difficult to cultivate where the water cannot reach.

Quality horses are frequently bred. [People] love them dearly and protect them closely. They all breed them deep within the earthen houses where wind

142 *Pistān* (P.), a place abounding with pistachio-nuts. Apparently, Chen is referring to a pistachio tree. For the records of pistachio in Yuan and Ming Chinese sources, see *ibid.*: 67–68. Laufer mentions the appearance of the word *pistān* in the *Ming yitong zhi* [Geography of the Ming Dynasty], and it is worthy to note that Chen's account was the primary source for that record.

143 See note 95.

144 Though it is difficult to determine which variations of the species of pulse Chen is referring to exactly, it is certain that the species had played a dominant role in the nutrition of Iranian people and had been introduced to China long before the Ming period. See Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*: 121–24.

145 Two terms of millet are listed here: *gu* 穀 and *su* 粟, meanings of which are not always distinguishable. Chen may be describing two types of grains or using them as generic terms for millet.

146 In Chinese, *cong* 葱, “onion,” usually indicates the green onion native to China. In the *HHZZ*, the translation for the term *cong* in Persian is *pīyāz*, transcribed as “痞丫子,” which is the equivalent of “onion” in English. See *HHZZ/Honda*: 183; *HHZZ/Liu*: 430. The equivalence of *pīyāz* in modern Chinese is *yangcong* 洋葱, “foreign onion.” Chen's account records an early encounter of *pīyāz* by the Chinese. In the *ZSWJ/SK*, the term is “葱 *xi*,” which appears to be an error.

147 This appears to be a reference to the carrot. See also *HHZZ/Honda*: 182; *HHZZ/Liu*: 438; Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*: 267–70.

148 During the Ming period, 1 *jin* is approximately 596.8 gm or 21.1 oz. See Wilkinson, *Manual*, 613.

149 “*zaodao* 早稻” (early season rice) in *ZSWJ/SK*; “*handao* 旱稻” (dry field rice) in *FGZ/SB*.

and sunshine do not reach, and it is warm in winter and cool in summer. Sheep, horses, chicken, dogs, geese, and ducks are raised in households. Pigs alone are not raised; their flesh is not eaten either. It is the most [prohibited] taboo. Whichever livestock is not slaughtered by Muslims is not eaten.¹⁵⁰ Candles are filled with the tallow of cows and sheep. Tallow and cotton are also entwisted into chunks and put onto plates under which iron handles are affixed in order [that people] may hold [the torch] in their hands and walk. When they stop [walking], they let [the torch] stand upright on the ground, without avoiding wind or rains.

[People] do not know to wave fans in hot weather. They sometimes suspend, high up in the tent room, a cloth curtain, at the lower edge of which tassels¹⁵¹ are often attached. They set ropes at the two sides [of the curtain]. Wind comes naturally when they pull [the ropes]. It is called a “wind fan” (風扇).

All objects for giving gifts and paying tributes—no matter if they are money, gems, or animals¹⁵²—are always grouped in nines. [Objects in groups of nine,] ranging from nine (一九, lit., one nine) to eighty-one (九九, lit., nine nines)¹⁵³ can be given as gifts.

Whenever there are banquets, the elite (尊者) drink wine, and the commoners all kneel down. Immediately after drinking wine, silk is presented, and then jewelry, gold and silver money are all together (雜和于一) distributed to the seated people.¹⁵⁴ The rest is randomly scattered in between seats and everywhere, front, back, left, and right. Those who are in charge of guarding and serving order [the commoners] to compete in picking up [the gifts], making

150 Since the flesh of pigs is considered to involve major impurity in Qur’anic law, Muslims should not eat it. The prohibition of eating pig meat *ipso facto* implies the illegality of raising the animal. For other food prohibitions and the method of slaughter in the Islamic laws, see “Ghidhā,” in *ET*.

151 “*toufa* 頭髮” (hair) in *ZSWJ/SK*; “*xutou* 須頭” (tassels) in the *FGZ/SB*.

152 幣帛, 珠玉, 羊馬, literally, money and silk (which was used as a currency), pearls and jades, goats and horses. In the context, it is more accurate to read these terms as generic references to money, gems, and animals that are used as gifts and tributes.

153 Though Didier also translates the phrase “nine nines” (九九) as “eighty-one,” he adds that he accepts the interpretation of the phrase as “ninety-nine,” given that ninety-nine is also a multiple of nine, see *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 345m125. I believe this additional note is unnecessary, as the meaning of the phrase “nine nines” (九九) is clear and does not allow an alternative interpretation.

154 The description of the banquets again confirmed the reality of wine drinking despite the prohibition of consuming alcohol, especially among the Mongol elites, see along note 99.

loud noises, yelling, and laughing, and to proclaim extravagancy. [The gift] is called “joyful money” (喜錢).¹⁵⁵

Lions breed in the reeds on the bank of the Amu River.¹⁵⁶ It is said that their eyes are closed at birth; they only open them after seven days. Those who want to obtain a lion to raise it have to take it when it is just born and has not yet opened its eyes, [in order to] facilitate the taming and training. When the lion grows up, its nature [becomes] hard and fierce, and it is difficult to tame and control it. Besides, it has very powerful strength and extraordinarily sharp claws and teeth. When it is enraged, it is not for one or two people to control. [The lion] is good at fighting against large beasts; it can eat over ten *jin* of meat at one meal. There are people who seek its tail; they employ bows and arrows and set up nets to kill it. It is extremely difficult to obtain the tail while the lion is alive.¹⁵⁷

155 Describing the Timurid custom, Chen Cheng uses the Chinese term, *xiqian*, meaning “money given as a gift at joyful events.”

156 “*Amu* 阿木,” the Chinese name of Amu River used here is a phonetic transcription of *Āmū*. The river is also commonly known by its Persian name, *Āmū Daryā*, or its Latin name, Oxus. Rising in the Pamir mountains and flows in a northwesterly direction towards Lake Aral, Amu Darya is a major river in Central Asia. See “*Āmū Daryā*” in the *EI*.

157 The “Asiatic lion,” or Persian lion, was a common sight in Iran and Central Asia. Chinese authors’ knowledge of the lion must have come from Iran—Chinese documentation of the lion that dated back to the first century CE was in reference to the Parthian Empire, and the character for lion, 獅 *shī*, was a phono-semantic compound created based on the phonetic transcription of the Middle Persian word *šīr*, “lion.” See August Nabe Samie, “The Shibanid Question: Reassessing 16th Century Eurasian History in Post-Soviet Uzbekistan” (PhD diss., The University of Chicago, 2020): 157. During the Timurid period, the lion is often used as a gift sent by the Timurids to China. As a potent figure of strength, the lion has been used in Iranian, Turco-Mongol, and Chinese traditions to exemplify the power of a ruler. Thus, Chen Cheng’s amazement at the lion is well grounded. In addition to the report, Chen submitted to the Yongle Emperor the *shizi fu* 獅子賦, “Poem for the Lion”; see “Introduction.”

There is a type of striped beast (花獸);¹⁵⁸ its head and ears resemble those of a donkey, and it has the hoofs of a horse and the tail of a donkey.¹⁵⁹ There are stripes all over its body, checkered with black and white, as though woven. Their distribution is so clearly demarcated that it is perfectly exact.

Samarkand (Sama'erhan 撒馬兒罕)¹⁶⁰

Samarkand is located northeast of Herat. Jiayu Mountain¹⁶¹ of the Suzhou Guard of the Shanxi Regional Commission is over 9900 *li* to the east, and Herat is over 2800 *li* to the west.¹⁶² It lies in a wide level plain. The beauty of its landscape is breathtaking, and the soil of its land is fertile. There is a big northward-flowing river east¹⁶³ of the city. The city is built on the plain, with a

158 See also Chen Cheng's poem "The Striped Beast." Didier translates this sentence as "Il existe un animal au pelage zébré." *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 346. Though Chen Cheng is undoubtedly describing a zebra, his phrasing "a type of striped beast" is worthy of attention. Apparently, there was no fixed term for zebra, and Chen uses a descriptive phrase to introduce a bizarre animal. It is documented that the African zebra was presented to Mughal rulers and Safavid rulers as an exotic animal in the seventeenth century; and even by that time, zebra did not seem to be well known. The Mughal emperor Jahangir was so impressed that he wrote, "One might say the painter of fate, with a strange brush, had left it on the page of the world." See "The arts of the Mughal Empire," articles, Victoria and Albert Museum, accessed November 10, 2021, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/the-arts-of-the-mughal-empire>; "Gift Giving iv. In the Safavid Period," in the *Elr*. Chen Cheng's observation of a zebra is therefore very valuable as it indicates the trading or exchange of exotic animals between Africa and Asia of an earlier time. For this reason, I maintain that the reference to zebra in the text, *huashou* 花獸, should be translated literally as "striped beast," not as "zebra." Morris Rossabi remarks that zebra was among the wild animals of Herat; this is not an accurate reading of the text. See Rossabi, "Two Ming Envoys": 22.

159 "lū 驢" (donkey) in *ZSWJ/SK*; "luo 騾" (mule) in *FGZ/SB*.

160 Samarkand, currently in Uzbekistan, has always been an important city in Transoxiana. In 1371, Timur made Samarkand his capital; he fortified the city, and built gardens and residences around it. Because its location on the Silk Roads, it had been known to Chinese authors since the first century BCE by various names, including Kangju 康居地, Kang Guo 康國, Samojian 薩末鞑, Xusigan 尋思干, and Xuemisigan 薛迷思幹. See *XYDM/Feng*: 81. Notably, Samarkand is known as Xuemisigan 薛迷思幹 or a similar form, apparently a phonetic transcription of *Semiz-kent*, "Fat city," the epithet of Samarkand used by the Mongols and Turks. The epithet is also mentioned by Clavijo (as *çimiscante*) and Babur. See *Clavijo/Estrada*: 207; *Clavijo/le Strange*: 150. *Bābur/Eiji*: 68; *Bābur/Thackston*, 1:82.

161 Jiayu Mountain (*Jiayu shan* 嘉峪山) in *ZSWJ/SK*, Jiayu Pass (*jiayu guan* 嘉峪關) in the *FGZ/SB*.

162 "southwest" (*xinan* 西南) in the *FGZ/SB*.

163 The river mentioned here is Zarafshan River. It acquires the name from the Persian term *zarāfshān*, "the spreader of gold."

length of more than ten *li* in the east-west direction, and a width of five to six *li* in the north-south direction. The city has six gates facing different directions.¹⁶⁴ The dry moat is deep and dangerous. There is a subsidiary city north [of the main one].¹⁶⁵

The ruler of the country¹⁶⁶ resides in the northwest corner of the city.¹⁶⁷ [The ruler's residence] is not less majestic than that of Herat. There is a large population in the city. Streets and alleys crisscross lengthwise and sidewise; stores and shops are dense. Foreigners (*fan ke* 番客) from the west or south usually gather here. Although there are various types of merchandise, they are not locally produced; they usually come from multiple foreign regions. The silver money used in Samarkand is locally minted,¹⁶⁸ and people from Herat use it [in Samarkand] too.

Alcohol is banned in neighborhoods. Butchers of cows and goats do not sell the blood of animals; they dig a hole in the ground and bury it. There is an earthen building (土屋) in the northeast corner of the city. It is where the Muslims pray to God. It is precisely structured and designed; its pillars are all made of dark green (青) stones with particularly exquisite engravings. There are wide corridors on four sides of the structure, with a place for sermons in the middle.¹⁶⁹ Their holy book is covered with sheepskin and is written in golden ink.

164 This description is in accordance with that of Babur, who writes about eighty years later and provides a detailed account of the city plan of Samarkand with the names and locations of the six gates. See "A Description of Samarkand," in *Bābur/Thackston*: 55–64; *Bābur/Eiji*: 67–73.

165 This must be a reference to the old city Afrasiyab, the ruined site of which is now located in the northern part of the modern city of Samarkand. See "Afrāsīāb" and "Samarqand i. History and Archaeology," in the *EIr*.

166 The governor of Samarkand was Ulugh Beg at that time. When Shahrukh became the prominent ruler of the Timurid dynasty and made Herat the new capital, he bestowed Samarkand on his eldest son Ulugh Beg. Chen Cheng's poem, "Reaching the Fruit Garden of Ulugh Beg, Ruler of Samarkand," confirms that Chen was received by Ulugh Beg in his residence.

167 Though little is known about Ulugh Beg's residence or gardens, Golombek suggests that the Baghcheh of Ulugh Beg had been excavated in Samarkand, though most of the findings are not published. See Golombek, "Gardens of Timur," esp., notes 1 and 20.

168 For examples of coins minted in Samarkand in the name of Ulugh Beg, see Album, *Islamic Coins*: 261.

169 Though the name of the mosque is not given, it is likely the Friday Mosque of Timur, popularly known as the Bibi Khanum. The Bibi Khanum Mosque is based on the four-*īwan* plan; in the middle, there is a rectangular open courtyard. Chen's description closely matches the plan of the mosque and provides additional evidence for its fine structure. It is suggested that Timur chose the four-*īwan* plan to embody his ambitions of an heir

The people of Samarkand are handsome, skillful, and talented. Their local products include: gold, silver, and copper money,¹⁷⁰ iron, and felt carpets. They usually grow white poplars, elms, willows, peaches, almonds, pears, plums, apple,¹⁷¹ and grapes. The soil there is suitable for growing the five grains. Their traditions and customs are the same as those of Herat.

Andkhoy (Anduhuai 俺都淮)¹⁷²

Andkhoy is located northeast of Herat, which is about 1390 *li* to the southwest; Samarkand, meanwhile, is about 1360 *li* to the northeast. The city lies within a vast agricultural area (大村)¹⁷³ with a width of 100 *li*. Its soil is fertile; its population is large. There are no forbidding mountains at all within an over-ten-*li* radius of the city. Though it is subordinate to Herat, its revenues only go to the chief family (頭目之家) of the city.

to glorious empires. See Elena Paskaleva, "The Bibi Khanum Mosque in Samarkand: Its Mongol and Timurid Architecture," *The Silk Road*, vol. 10 (2012): 83; figure 4.

170 The original text is 金銀銅錢 (*jīn yīn tóng qián*), which can be interpreted as either "gold, silver, copper, and money" or "gold money, silver money, and copper money." Though it may seem unusual to categorize money as a local product, this is not an error in my opinion. In the *HHZZ*, several types of money or coinage are listed in the category of jewel (珍寶門), including *qián* 錢-噶石 *qāsh* (a coin whose silver coating is inferior); *jīn qián* 金錢-底納兒 *dīnār* (a gold coin); *yīn qián* 銀錢-得藍 *dīram* (a silver coin). Thus, it does not seem to be a coincidence or mistake that Chen considers money or coin as a type of local product.

171 See note 139.

172 Andkhoy (Andkhūy) is located in what is now northwestern Afghanistan. Historically referred to as Andakhūdh among other names, Andkhoy was long an assembly point for caravans beading north to Bukhara. See "Andkhūy" in the *Elr*.

173 *da cun* 大村, lit., "a big village." This is in accordance with Clavijo's account saying that Andkhoy (*anchoy*) "lies in a plain and for two leagues all round it are seen orchards and vineyards with many hamlets, for all this land is fully irrigated with water courses." See *Clavijo/Estrada*: 139; *Clavijo/le Strange*: 103.

*Balkh (Balahei 巴刺黑)*¹⁷⁴

The city of Balkh¹⁷⁵ is located northeast of Andkhoy. It is surrounded by a ten-*li* level plain with no difficult features. [The city] is close to a mountain to the south. The farms of Balkh are vast, and food is plentiful. Foreign (*fan* 番) businessmen and travelers from the west and south usually gather in the city, and thus foreign merchandise is the most common. Shahrukh¹⁷⁶ of Herat appointed his son¹⁷⁷ to protect [the city].

*Termez City (Dielimi cheng 迭里迷城)*¹⁷⁸

The city of Termez is located southwest of Samarkand, and over 2000 *li* from Herat. The city sits on the eastern bank of Amu River; it was built beside the river. The river is rather wide; it cannot be crossed except by boat or raft. The city is quite strategically situated and difficult of access.¹⁷⁹ There are several hundred families living both inside and outside the city walls. Livestock are abundant

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- 174 Balkh is located in what is now northern Afghanistan. The city has been known historically as Bactra. Owing its importance to the position at the crossing of major routes connecting China, India, Central Asia, and Iran, the city of Balkh has been known to Chinese since the sixth century if not earlier. Balkh, or Bactra, has been transcribed in Chinese sources variously as Boluo 薄羅, Boquluo 薄佉羅, Fuhe 縛喝, Fukeluo 薄渴羅, Banli Cheng 班里城, Balihei 巴里黑 among other forms, see “Bahlika” in *XYDM/Feng*: 9; “Balk” in *EIr*. Both Zhou and Didier include a detailed annotation on the appearance of Balkh in Chinese sources, see *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 86–90; *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 352n152. I shall therefore not repeat such information here. Additionally, Balkh is registered as “بلخ” and transcribed as “白勒黑” (Bailehei) in the *HHZZ*, see *HHZZ/Honda*: 195; *HHZZ/Liu*: 329.
- 175 The original text, “巴刺黑城一名八里,” translates literally as “The city *Balahei* 巴刺黑, also named *Bali* 八里,” showing two versions of the place name in Chinese. I omit the variants and translate it as “the city of Balkh” to maintain consistency in style.
- 176 Shahrukh’s name is erroneously written as “哈魯沙哈” (Halushaha) in *ZSWJ/SK*. I therefore adopt the transcription of “沙哈魯” (Shahrukh) in the *FGZ/SB*.
- 177 After 817/1414, Shahrukh might have given the governorship of Balkh to his son Soyurghatmish. Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*: 26n40.
- 178 Termez, or Tirmidh, is located in southern modern-day Uzbekistan. As one of the oldest towns in Central Asia, Termez has been recorded in Chinese sources since the Tang dynasty by various names, including Danmi 咄蜜, Dami 怛满, Die’ermi 疊兒密, Dielimi 迭里迷; see “Termid” in *XYDM/Feng*: 95.
- 179 *ZSWJ/SK*: 略無險要, “There are no dangerous territories”; *FGZ/SB*: 稍略據險要, “The city is somewhat strategically situated and difficult of access.” Based on the author’s description of the geography of Termez, I have chosen to follow the phrasing of *FGZ/SB* here.

and fish are plentiful in the river. The old city¹⁸⁰ is over ten *li* distant. The land on the eastern bank is subordinate to the rule of Samarkand. It is said that lions breed in the reeds on the western bank of the river.

Shahrūkhiya (Shaluhaiya 沙鹿海牙)¹⁸¹

The city Shahrūkhiya is located east of Samarkand at a distance of over 500 *li*. The city is built on a low hill, and is bordered by a mountain and a river on the northwest side. The river is named Khujand (*Huožhan* 火站).¹⁸² Its current is swift; a floating bridge has been constructed to connect [the two sides]. There are also ferries. [Shahrūkhiya] is close to the mountain in the south, facing a level plain on the other three sides.¹⁸³ The city is over ten *li* wide; its population is large, mostly residing by the valley.¹⁸⁴ The vegetation

- 180 The old town of Termez was destroyed by Chinggis Khan in 1221. According to Rashīd al-Dīn, the inhabitants of Termez, trusting in their fortifications and proud of their manliness and bravery, refused to surrender to Chinggis Khan. Chinggis Khan then sieged the city and killed all its inhabitants. See *RJT/Rawshan*, 1:518; *RJT/Thackston*: 255. This event is also recorded in the *Shengwu qinzheng lu* [Emperor Shengwu's conquests] as "The emperor [Chinggis Khan] personally defeated the city of Termez (透兒密城)." See *QZL/Jia*: 287. In the early fourteenth century, ibn Baṭūṭa reported the reconstruction of Termez, saying "it was laid waste and never afterwards repopulated, but a [new] city was built two miles distant from it, which is nowadays called Tirmidh." See *Ibn Baṭūṭa/Gibb*, 3:553.
- 181 Shahrūkhiya, "the city of Shahrūkh," also known historically as Banākat or Fanākat, is located on the upper Syr Darya, in present-day Tajikistan. The *zswj/sk* mistakes "塵" (*chen*) for "鹿" (*lu*) in the name of Shahrūkhiya, clearly because of the similarity of the two characters in shape. This mistake does not seem to appear in other editions. According to Ibn 'Arabshāh, in 1377, during a chess game, Timur attacked his opponent with the *shāh rukh* (king rook) and thereby weakened and defeated the opponent. At that very moment, he learned of the birth of his fourth son as well as the completion of the building of the city near the site of Banākat as he ordered. Thus, Timur named his son "Shahrūkh" and named the new city "Shahrūkhiya." See *Ibn 'Arabshāh/Hīmsī*: 103; *Ibn 'Arabshāh/Sanders*: 47. The city flourished for a time and then decayed. See also Chen Cheng's poem "The City of Shahrūkhiya."
- 182 Khujand River is an alternative name for Syr Darya, or Jaxartes. Babur describes the river in relation to Shahrūkhiya: "As it passes on the northern side of Khodzhent and the southern side of Fanakat, which is now known as Shahrūkhiyya, it turns again to the north and goes in the direction of Turkistan." See *Bābur/Eiji*: 4; *Bābur/Thackston*, 1:35. Khujand (in various forms of transcription) is the name Chinese authors have used to refer to Syr Darya since the Tang period. See Yong Yuan, "An examination of Khujand." In Xiao Li, *Non-Han literature along the Silk Road* (Singapore: Springer, 2020): 122.
- 183 This description does not seem in accordance with the earlier one on the river and mountain. I have nevertheless retained the literal meaning of the text ("南邊山近三面平川").
- 184 *zswj/sk*: 多依崖谷而居 ("mostly residing by the valley"); *FGZ/SB*: 依崖谷而居 ("residing by the valley").

is widespread and luxuriant. Crossing a big plain westward, [one finds] little water for 200 *li*. Where there is water, it is generally alkaline; if oxen and horses drink from it, they often get sick. There is [a type of] foul herb growing on the land; its stem stands alone, with the height of no more than a *chi* 尺;¹⁸⁵ its leaf resembles a lid. It sprouts in spring and dies in autumn, and has an extremely fetid smell. [If one] extracts the juice from a live plant and stews it until it thickens, [the paste] is named *a wei* 阿魏.¹⁸⁶ There is another herb, which is one or two *chi* tall, with thick stems and branches covered with thorns; its leaf is as narrow as that of the indigo plant (藍). On clear autumn days, dew falls and condenses into drops of water, hanging on the stem [of the plant]. [These drops] are as sweet as syrup and honey, and can be boiled into sugar. The foreign (夷)¹⁸⁷ name of the herb is *tarangubīn* (*dalanggubīn* 達郎古賓);¹⁸⁸ it is in fact sweet dew (甘露).

Sayram City (Sailan cheng 塞藍城)¹⁸⁹

The city Sayram is located east of Tashkent (*Dashigan* 達失干); Samarkand is 1300 *li* to the west. A level plain faces the city from all four directions within a two-or-three-*li* radius surrounding the city, which is not difficult to access

185 During the Ming period, 1 *chi* was approximately 32 cm.

186 *a wei* 阿魏, asafetida, is a vegetable product consisting of resin, gum, and essential oil in varying proportions. The resin is exuded from several species of *Ferula*. In the *HHZZ*, the Persian equivalence of *a wei* 阿魏 is *ānghūzih* (آنغوزه), transcribed as “昂古則” (*Angguze*). See *HHZZ/Honda*: 184; *HHZZ/Liu*: 427. For an examination of the nature of asafetida, the origin of its names, and its appearance in Chinese sources, see Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*: 169–78.

187 There is no “*yi* 夷” in the *FGZ/SB*. Here, “foreign” or “barbarian” (夷) may as well be interpreted as “local” or “Persian,” that is, foreign to Chinese.

188 This is a phonetic transcription of *tarangubīn*, a sweet-tasting medicine made from a latex or dew that accumulates on the branches of the plant *khārshutur* (*Alhagi*). See “ترنجبین” in *Amid dictionary*. Didier, adapting Zhou Liankuan who cites Zhang Xiangliang, considers “達郎古賓 *dalanggubīn*” an erroneous copy of “達郎吉賓 *dalangjibīn*,” the phonetic transcription of *taranjubīn*. See *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 357n169; *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 93n3. However, this is an overcorrection. In addition to the fact that *tarangubīn* (P.) and *taranjubīn* (A.) are both valid forms of the term, the “foreign” language with which Chen deals in the text is Persian; thus, his transcription “達郎古賓 *dalanggubīn*” is faultless and precise.

189 Sayram is located in southeastern Turkistan Region of present-day Kazakhstan. *Sailan* 塞藍 is a phonetic transcription of *Sāyram* (P.); the term also appears as “賽藍” (*Sailan*) in Yuan and Ming sources. The locality is also known by its name in Arabic, *Isfjāb*. *Xishi ji* 西使記 [Embassy to the West] by Liu Yu, a thirteenth-century Chinese report of the Mongol western campaigns, contains a description of the Buddhist stupa (浮圖) near Sayram, indicating the practice of Buddhist religion there; see *xsj* (accessed from the *ARS*

at all. The population is dense. The trees are always luxuriant; flowing water surrounds [the city]; the five grains grow in abundance. During summer and autumn, there are little black spiders¹⁹⁰ breeding in the grass; their venom is very poisonous. If a person is bitten by one of these spiders, they will feel pain all over their body and groan in anguish. No medicine can detoxify [the wound]. There are “foreign”¹⁹¹ people who can lift curses; they brush and beat the poisoned person’s body with peppermint and rub their entire body with raw goat liver, uttering incantations. After a day and a night, their pain will finally go away. After the person recovers, flakes of skin will fall from all over their body. If one’s head or foot is wounded by the spider, one will most likely roll over and drop dead. Therefore, whoever retires for the night must go to the riverbank in order to avoid the spiders. There is an aromatic herb (香草) growing on the land whose shape is similar to that of wild wormwood (野蒿). Its fruit is fragrant and can drive away vermin (蠹蟲). It is called *waishishi* 瓦失實.¹⁹²

Tashkent (Dashigan 達失干)¹⁹³

Tashkent is located west of Sayram and over 700 *li* from Samarkand. A level plain of two *li* surrounds the city. All four directions of the city face flat hills,

database, Dec 21, 2021). See also “Sayrām” in *ET*² and “Asfijāb” in *Elr*. See also Chen Cheng’s poem “The City of Sayram.”

190 This must be a reference to “black widow,” a species in the genus *Latrodectus*. Throughout Central Asia, it is known by the name *karakurt*, “black insect,” in Turkic languages. See *Clauson*: 648. The poisonous spider is reported by Liu Yu as well: “There is a spider-like insect. A person poisoned by its venom will frequently feel thirsty. If he drinks water, he will die immediately. [The poison] can only be treated by drinking superabundant grape wine and vomiting.” *XSJ* (accessed from the ARS database, Dec 21, 2021). Didier cites Zhou Liankuan’s annotation on the spider, though it must be noted that Didier mixes up the two sources *Xishi ji* [Embassy to the West] by Liu Yu and *Xiyou ji* [Travels to the West of Master Changchun] by Li Zhichang.

191 Or “local.” See note 187.

192 *Washishi* 瓦失實 must be an alternative transcription of the herb “*wakhshish*” (瓦黑失失/وخشش) mentioned several times in the *Huihui Yaofang* [Muslim medical prescriptions]. See *HYYF/Song*, 2: 209/13; 352/6; 58/6. In my opinion, it is a different or corrupted form of *wakhshīrak* (P.), “Khurasani wormwood.” According to Song Xian’s annotation of the *HYYF*, *wakhshish* is the equivalence of *wakhshīzq* (A.), which is a yellow-colored herb that has a smell of fish and is of Khurasani origin; the herb is also known as *al-ḥashishat al-khurāsānīyyat*, the “Khurasani hashish.” See *HYYF/Song*, 1:202.

193 Tashkent is located in the oasis of the Chirchik and watered by one of the right bank tributaries of the Syr Darya. In the present day, it is the capital and largest city of Uzbekistan. The town was historically known as Chāch; its name was gradually supplanted by that of Tashkent from late Saljuq and Mongol times onwards. This change of name is reflected in Chinese sources as well: Pre-Ming Chinese authors refer to the town as Zheshe 者舌, Zheshi 赭時, Zhezhi 赭支, Chachi 察赤 or other phenetic transcriptions of Chāch, whereas Ming and post-Ming authors use terms including Dashigan 達失干

where many gardens can be found, fruit trees are planted extensively, and waters flow constantly. The soil is suitable for growing the five grains. The inhabitants live close together. Carts and oxen are used for carrying burdens.

Bukhara (Bohua'er 卜花兒)¹⁹⁴

The city of Bukhara is over 700 *li* northwest of Samarkand. The city is located on a plain with a radius of over ten *li*. It is populous and has abundant products. The streets and markets [of the city] are prosperous and bustling. The population reaches tens of thousands. The land is low and the soil is humid. The weather is mild; in the winter, [people] do not build fires for warmth. The soil there is suitable for growing the five grains, mulberry trees, and flax. Cloth, cotton, and silk textiles are produced. In the winter, [people] eat raw vegetables, and any kind among beef, mutton, chicken, goose, fish, rabbit, and swan.¹⁹⁵

Kesh (Keshi 渴石)¹⁹⁶

The city Kesh is about 260 *li* southwest of Samarkand. The city lies in a vast settlement with a radius of over ten *li* and has multiple paddy fields to the

and Taishihan 塔什罕. See “Tashkend” in *XYDM/Feng*: 93. See also “Tashkent” in *EI*²; “Čăč” in *EIr*.

194 Bukhara is an oasis city situated on the lower course of the Zarafshān River in the present-day Uzbekistan. As an important locality on the Silk Roads, Bukhara has long been a center of trade, scholarship, and religion; and it has been known to Chinese authors since as early as the seventh century. The name of the town has appeared in Chinese sources in numerous variants, including An Guo 安國, Buhe 捕喝, Bohuo 布豁, Puhua 蒲華, and Boha'er 卜哈兒. In 1220, during the Mongol invasion, Bukhara was sacked and burned; most parts of the city were left in ruins. Later, Bukhara recovered from the devastation, though the speed of its recovery is debated. Chen's report shows that, even though Bukhara played a relatively unimportant role in the political life of Transoxiana under the Timurids, the prosperity of its economy was impressive. See “Bukhārā” in *EI*2, “Bukhara” in *EIr*. and “Bokhara,” in *XYDM/Feng*: 15–16.

195 The order of the food listed in the *FGZ/SB* is slightly different from that in the *ZSWJ/SK*. Besides, the former does not include “鵝” [goose]; instead, it lists “肉” [meat].

196 Kesh, now known as Shahrisabz (*shahr-i sabz*, “green city” in Persian), is a present-day Uzbekistani city. Historically, Kesh was a significant center of southern Sogdiana since antiquity, as it was situated on the great trade route between Samarkand and Balkh. The political importance of early medieval Kesh in Sogdiana can be seen in Chinese sources; the name of the city had appeared in Chinese sources as Shi Guo 史國 and Shi Cheng 史城 as early as the seventh century. See “Kash” in *EI*2; “Keš” in *EIr*; “Kesh” in *XYDMCD*: 48. As the birthplace of Timur, Kesh enjoyed considerable patronage during the early years of Timur's reign. Many buildings in Kesh were constructed by Timur's order—a process to which Clavijo bear witness. See Clavijo/Estrada: 142–56; chapter “The Oxus to Samarkand” in Clavijo/le Strange.” Clavijo and Chen verify each other while presenting quite a different image of Kesh. See also note 200.

southwest.¹⁹⁷ [The city] is close to a mountain that lies to the northeast.¹⁹⁸ In the city there is a garden, which is said to have been built by the former ruler of the country, Timur *fuma* 帖木兒駙馬.¹⁹⁹ In the middle [of the garden], there are dozens of large-scale pavilions [laid out in] grand manner with wide gates and corridors. There are white stone pillars at all four corners of the hall; they are no more than a few *chi* tall, and look like green jade. The walls are adorned with gold and jade; the windows are decorated with colored glaze (琉璃). All of them have decayed and collapsed [now].²⁰⁰ Over ten *li* westward, there are many small hills and *pistān* (*bisitan* 苾思檀) nut trees.²⁰¹ Another 300 *li* westward, there stands a big mountain, dividing the south and the north. In the middle [of the mountain] there is a rocky gorge, connecting the east and the west. The precipitous rock faces and sheer cliffs are tens of *zhang* tall, as if cut cleanly by an axe. The road extends to two or three *li* before it goes out

197 It is “四周 (on four directions)” instead of “西南 (southwestward)” in the *FGZ/SB*.

198 It is “東南 (southeastward)” instead of “東北 (northeastward)” in the *FGZ/SB*.

199 *Fuma* 駙馬 (C.), or *kürgan* (M.), “imperial son-in-law,” is a Mongol royal title granted to who is allied with the Chinggisid family by marrying a direct descendant of Chinggis Khan. See “340. کورگان (*kürgān*)” in *TMEN* 1. Timur married the daughter of Qāzān Sulṭān Khān of the Chaghatayids, Sarāy Malik Khānum, in 1370, gaining the title. John E. Woods, *The Timurid Dynasty* (Bloomington: Indiana University, Research Institute for Inner Asian Studies, 1990): 18.

200 This must be Chen’s description of the ruins of Aq Saray, the construction of which was ordered by Timur following his successful campaign against Urgench in 1394. In the present day, the proportional entrance portal of over 70 feet wide is the only part of Aq Saray that has survived. The façade, the flanking towers, and the interiors of the two *iwans* constituting the portal are entirely covered with tiles. While most of these decorations are now destroyed, the remaining glazed tile panels and inscriptions manifest how richly adorned the building must have been. For a detailed examinations of the remaining structures of Aq Saray and the inscriptions on them, see Golombek, *The Timurid architecture of Iran and Turan*: 271–75. When Clavijo reached Kesh, Aq Saray already had an impressive structure but was still under construction. According to Clavijo, the palace had a very high portal and a long entry with brick arches coated with blue tiles on both sides. Under the arches were reception rooms whose floors were covered with blue tiles. In the middle of the court of the palace, there is a large pool of water. *Clavijo/Estrada*: 148; *Clavijo/le Strange*: 109–11. Chen Cheng’s account also sheds light on the court construction and confirms that Aq Saray was a massive complex that consisted of, but not restricted to, halls, pavilions, and gardens; at the same time, it shows the decline of Kesh and the abandonment of the buildings of the city in the ten years after Clavijo’s visit. A comparison of the two accounts also seems to indicate that the plan for the city’s construction, however it might have been, was not carried out fully. In addition, Chen Cheng expresses his sympathy for the ruins he sees in Kesh in his poem “Visiting Kesh, the Former Residence of Timur Fuma.”

201 The nut of the *pistān* tree is pistachio; see note 142.

of the gorge. At the mouth, there is a pass, namely the “Iron Gate Pass” (*Tiemen guan* 鐵門關).²⁰²

Yangi (Yangyi 養夷)²⁰³

The city Yangi is 260 *li*²⁰⁴ east of Sayram. The city is located in the midst of a jumble of mountains. Northwest of the city, there is a large westward-flowing river.²⁰⁵ The ruins of the desolate city are overgrown with weeds with the passage of years. The city lies among Beshbalik Mongol tribes,²⁰⁶ who have been fighting with the Uighurs (*Huihu* 回鶻),²⁰⁷ people have not been able to live

202 The Iron Gate Pass is also known as *darband* (P.), “closed door,” or *Demirkapu* (T.), “iron gate.” It is located in the south of Kesh, leading towards Termiz of historical Bactria. There are other great passes named “Iron Gate” in Central Asia and China; they should not be confused. See also Chen Cheng’s poem “Iron Gate Pass.”

203 Yangyi 養夷 is apparently a phonetic transcription of *yangi* (or other forms such as *yaŋi*, *yéji*, *yéngi*), meaning “new” in Turkic languages. See *Clauson*: 943. There are a number of towns named Yangi, Yangikent/Yanghikent, or Yangibaliq, all signifying “new city” or “new settlement,” it is necessary to distinguish them. The Yangi Chen Cheng visited was Taraz (Ṭarāz), also historically known as Talas, located on the Taraz river bank in Jambyl Region of present-day Kazakhstan. During the Mongol times, the name of the town of Yangi started to appear alongside that of Taraz, sometimes in the combination Yangi-Ṭarāz. See “Ṭarāz” in *ET*². The renaming of the city took place probably because that the Mongols destroyed Taraz around 1220, and later, a new city was constructed on its site. Yelü Chucai, the important advisor to both Chinggis Khan and Ögödei, says in the *Xiyōu Lu* 西遊錄 that four hundred people were ordered to move from Transoxiana to Taraz to convert the conquered land into agricultural land (*tun tian* 屯田), and Yelü Chucai himself was appointed to govern them. *XYL/Xiang*: 16–17. Not much is known about Yangi or Taraz between the period of the Mongol Empire and the coming of the Kazakh tribes in the sixteenth century. Chen Cheng’s report thus provides important information about the city in the fifteenth century: it was left in desolation because of the lack of governance and the Mongol-Uighur conflicts on the western borders of Moghulistan, or the Eastern Chaghatayid Khanate. This account of Yangi can be read together with Chen’s poem “Reaching the City of Yangi,” which also indicates that the city was situated on the Timurid-Chaghatayid borders.

204 360 *li* in the *FGZ/SB*.

205 Following this sentence, there is “一大川長數百里 ([and] a big ridge hundreds of *li* long)” in the *FGZ/SB*, which is likely the repetition of a copyist. See also *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 365n198.

206 This is Chen Cheng’s reference to the Eastern Chaghatayid tribes. See note 210.

207 Here, “the Uighurs” refers to the Gaochang Uighurs, most of whom were Buddhists at the time of Chen’s visit. In this text, Chen uses two terms interchangeably to refer to this group: the *Huihu* 回鶻 and the *Weiwu’er* 畏兀兒. To distinguish this historical group from the modern Uyghurs, who are arguably the descendants of the Uighurs, I shall stick to the spelling “Uighur” to translate the group Chen encounters. For a detailed examination of the Uighur group and their society, see Yingsheng Liu, *Chahetai Hanguo shi yan jiu* (Shanghai: Shanghai gu ji chu ban she, 2006): 522–38.

in peace. Only a few hundreds of garrison soldiers are left here to guard this lone city.²⁰⁸

[Moghulistan]

Beshbalik (Bieshibali 别失八里):²⁰⁹ *The Mongol Tribes*²¹⁰

Beshbalik is located in the desert. It is currently ruled by Prince Muhammad (馬哈木氏王子),²¹¹ one of the remaining descendants of the steppe-Yuan

²⁰⁸ Chen does not specify the affiliation of the garrison soldiers, but his verse “this is the first pass into the western (*rong-qiang*) territory” of the poem “Reaching the City of Yangi” indicates that they had entered the Timurid territory by reaching Yangi. Thus, the small number of garrison soldiers were likely sent by a Timurid governor. See “Chen Cheng’s Poems on the Western Regions” in “Introduction” and note 266.

²⁰⁹ *Bieshibali* 别失八里 is the transcription of Beshbalik, lit., “five towns” in Turkic languages. See *Clouston*: 335–36. However, it must be stressed that the “Beshbalik” in Chen Cheng’s accounts is not the equivalent of the well-known ancient town of Beshbalik, the ruins of which are located near the present-day Jimsar County in Xinjiang, China. Chen Cheng’s use of “Beshbalik” to refer to Moghulistan is discussed in the introduction of this article. Collating information from the *XCJ*, we know that Chen’s group met with the Chaghatayid ruler Muhammad in the Ili Valley. If the group returned to China via the same route, he probably wrote this account somewhere in or near the Ili Valley, which is in accordance with the order of the accounts as the valley is located between Yangi and Turfan. Additionally, there is no evidence from Chen’s writings showing that he had visited the town Beshbalik. Disregarding the history of the Mongol Empire, especially the Chaghatayid khanate, or misinterpretation of Chen’s indication by “Beshbalik: The Mongol Tribes” will lead to profound misunderstanding of this account. Zhou Liankuan’s identification of “the Mongol Tribes” as the Oirats is certainly mistaken; his annotation in turn had an influence on Didier, whose annotations of this section, albeit painstakingly long, are mostly misled and misleading. On another note, the town of Beshbalik is mentioned in a number of sources. For example, the *Jiu Tangshu* 舊唐書 relates to the naming of the region to the eastern Han period (25–220): by that time, the Posterior Jushi had five towns, thus their territory was called the land of five towns. See *JTS*, v. 5, *juan* 40: 1646. The name of the region appears in most Islamic and Chinese sources as Beshbalik or similar forms; its transcriptions in Chinese include Bieshiba 别石把, Bieshibali 别十八里, and Bieshibali 别失拔里. See “Beshbalik” in *XYDM/Feng*: 14. For an investigation of the five towns originally constituting Beshbalik, see Liu, *Chahetai Hanguo*: 582–87.

²¹⁰ “The Mongol Tribes” (即蒙古部落是也), appearing next to the title, is Chen’s original subtitle or note to the section “Beshbalik.” This is Chen’s reference to Moghulistan, the eastern successor state of the Chaghatayid Khanate, ruling the steppes on the borders of Central Asia and China. Due to the political instability and the high mobility of the Chaghatayids, the extent of their influence was largely fluid. Thus, Chen’s first-hand report on the geographical extent of “the Mongol tribes” around 1415 is particularly valuable. Chen’s designation of Moghulistan as “the Mongol tribes” precisely describe the mobility of the Chaghatayid khanate. For an examination of the structure of tribes in the Chaghatayid ulus, see Manẖ, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*: 28–32.

²¹¹ *Mahamu* 馬哈木 is a transcription of Muhammad; it is a reference to the Eastern Chaghatayid ruler Muhammad Khan, son of Khidr Khwāja Khan. During his reign, the

(胡元);²¹² his forebears were granted rule here.²¹³ [They] do not build city walls or palaces; their dwellings are of no particular directional orientation. [They] simply live in accordance with climatic conditions, migrating to wherever water and grass are available to pasture [their] cattle and horses. Thus, [they] set up tents and felt carpets wherever they reside; they sit and rest on the ground with no regard to cold or heat. Their ruler wears a small embroidered hat (罩刺帽),²¹⁴ a cormorant (鸕鶿)²¹⁵ plume, and a sleeveless shirt. His head is shaved, and his ears are pierced. Women cover their heads and necks with white cloth,²¹⁶ and wear narrow-sleeved garments. They only eat meat and cheese (酪), and occasionally rice and noodles; they seldom eat vegetables. They rarely ferment alcohol, and only drink milk. They do not plant mulberry and hemp; do not farm or weave, and sometimes plant panicle millet (稌麥). They also make felt. There are pines, cypresses, elms, willows, and narrow-leaved phoenix trees. Sheep and horses are found everywhere. There is a lot of snow and frost; the weather is extremely cold. On the plains, the climate is somewhat warm during summer and autumn, whereas in the deep mountains or large gorges, it snows

Chaghatayids and Ming court had reciprocal exchanges envoys and gifts. See Eiji, “Two Notes on the Genealogy of Moghul Khans in the Early 15th Century.” See also Chen Cheng two poems entitled “Reaching the Tent of Muhammad, Ruler of Beshbalik.”

- 212 *Hu* 胡 indicates the non-Han steppe peoples who lived in the north or west of China; sometimes, the term means “foreign” in a general sense, but it often has a “nomadic” connotation. It must be noted that the designation of the northern Yuan dynasty in contemporary Chinese source is *Gu Yuan* 故元, “the former Yuan.” Chen particularly adds the modifier *hu* to the Yuan, establishing a connection between this line of the Chaghatayids and the Yuan dynasty, while clearly distinguishing them. To acknowledge Chen’s identification of this particular Chaghatayid line, I choose to translate *hu* as “steppe.”
- 213 This must be a reference to Chinggis Khan’s *qismat*, “apportionment” of the Mongol Empire, during which Chinggis Khan assigned appanages to his sons and kinsmen. House Chaghatay, which were “his forebears” in the text, received the territory extending from the borders of the Uighur regions to Samarkand and Bukhara. Rong Fan, “The Mongol Empire: Fragmentation, Unity, and Continuity (1206–c.1300)” (Ph.D., The University of Chicago, 2021): 37–38.
- 214 The “embroidered hat” must be an indication to a fine turban. Notably, Muhammad’s imposition of turban wearing was one of his severe measures of enforcing Islam on the people. The *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī* reports that, if a Moghul (*Mughūl*) did not wear a turban (*dastār*), a horseshoe nail would be driven into his head—Such measures were common. *Haydar/Thackston*, 1:36 (text); 2:31 (trans.). Chen Cheng provides evidence of Muhammad Khan’s enforcement of other Muslim traditions such as the veiling of women and the prohibition of alcohol.
- 215 “*ci yu* 鸕鶿” in the *FGZ/SB*. Both are names of birds.
- 216 “婦女以布帛裹首纏頭” [Women cover their heads with a cloth] in the *ZSWJ/SK*; “婦女以白布裹首纏項” [Women cover their heads and necks with white cloth] in the *FGZ/SB*. Both versions, especially the *FGZ/SB* text, emphasize the veiling of women in the region. I have chosen the *FGZ/SB* version because the two phrases “*guo shou* 裹首” and “*chan tou* 纏頭” seem repetitive.

[even] in June. Their social customs are rough and strange; their clothes and food are crude and filthy. There is absolutely no order between the ruler and the ruled or different ranks of the hierarchy. Tracing their former borders, they reach Hami in the east and Samarkand in the west.²¹⁷ Later, [their lands] was seized by Timur *fuma*.²¹⁸ Now, their [western] borders stop at Yangi. They reach *Toqmaq* (*Tuohuma* 脱忽麻)²¹⁹ northwestward, connect with the Oirats (*Wala* 瓦剌)²²⁰ in the north, and reach Khotan (*Yutian* 于阗)²²¹ in the south. The *He Zhi*

217 By “their former borders,” Chen is clearly describing the geographical extent of Chaghatayid ulus before its division.

218 For the title of Timur, see note 199. By 1370, Timur gained control of the western Chaghatayid Khanate. For Timur’s rise to power and his relations with the Chaghatayid ulus, see Manz, *The Rise and Rule of Tamerlane*: 41–65.

219 *Tuohuma* 脱忽麻 is the phonetic transcription of *Toqmaq*, an alternative name for the Qipchaq Steppe or the Jochid ulus of the post-Mongol period prior to the sixteenth century. For the discussion of the term *Toqmaq*, also *Tūqmāq* (P.) or *Toymay* (M.) in Persian and Buddhist Mongolian sources, see Joo-Yup Lee, *Qazaqliq, or Ambitious Brigandage, and the Formation of the Qazaqs: State and Identity in Post-Mongol Central Eurasia* (Leiden: Brill, 2016): 136–37. In the Ming sources, *Toqmaq* is also one way to refer to the post-Mongol Qipchaq Steppe or Jochid ulus; the term is also transcribed as *Tuohuoma* 脱火麻. See Nurlan Kenzheakhmet, “The Tūqmāq and the Ming China: The Tūqmāq and the Chinese Relations during the Ming Period (1394–1456),” *Golden Horde Review* 5 (12/29 2017): 773–75. <https://doi.org/10.22378/2313-6197.2017-5-4.770-785>.

220 The *Wala* 瓦剌, or Oirat, are a group of Mongols whose ancestral home is in the Altai region of Western Mongolia. The name of this group also appears as *Woyila* 斡亦剌, *Woyilate* 斡亦剌得, *Wailate* 外剌, *Weilate* 衛拉特 in Chinese sources starting from the Mongol-Yuan period. See “Oirats” in *XYDM/Feng*: 70. The Oirats had played an ambiguous role in Mongol history; their identities and origins have been debated as well. See “Oirats” in *EMM/Atwood*.

221 The oasis of Khotan is located between the northern foot of the Kunlun mountains and the edge of the Taklamakan desert, where abundance of water could be found in the middle of the arid land. Before the Muslim conquest of the region around 1000, Khotan remained a multicultural Buddhist kingdom, and was a center for the exchange and transmission of people, goods, languages, religions, and art, which show the influence of various civilizations. Since the Han period, Khotan has been known to Chinese historians, and its name appears in Chinese sources as *Yutian* 于阗, *Yudun* 于遁, *Huodan* 豁丹, *Wuduan* 五端, *Wudan* 兀丹, among others. See “Khotan” in the *Elr*; *XYDM/Feng*. In the present day, the locality corresponds approximately to the Hetian (or Hotan) 和田 Prefecture in Xinjiang, China.

河誌²²² says: There are rivers in Khotan, from which jade is produced.²²³ From the land of Kashgar (*Hashiha* 哈石哈),²²⁴ precious stones, gold, silver, mulberry, hemp, and millet are produced. Within their allotted territory (封域), only a few places, such as Luchen 魯陳, Huo Zhou 火州, Turfan 土爾番,²²⁵ Kashgar, and Almalig (*Alimali* 阿力馬力),²²⁶ are somewhat inhabited; there are occasionally city walls, inhabitants, fields, alleys, and other dwelling places. Although there are sites of former cities, the city walls are in ruins, and everything is desolate. People usually reside in mountains and valleys; this is because they are afraid of being invaded by their neighbors due to the weakness of their ruler. To measure their area,²²⁷ it is more than 5000 *li* east to west, and no less than 1000 *li* south to north. Its population numbers in the tens of thousands. [For them to] still know to respect elders and to circumvent any change of order, isn't it based on the virtue accumulated by their ancestors?²²⁸

222 *He Zhi* 河誌, "Treatise on Rivers," appears to be a geographical treatise or catalogue of rivers available to Chen Cheng. However, I am not able to identify the exact source. This phrase only exists in the *zswj/sk*. Bakhyt Ezhenkhan-uli provides the alternative reading that *He Zhi* is a place name, though his interpretation also seems provisional, see Ezhenkhan-uli, "Two Notes on the Sections of Halie and Bieshibali in Chen Cheng's Travelogue," in *Yuanshi ji minzu yu bianjiang yanjiu jikan*, v. 38: 168–76.

223 The oasis of Khotan was irrigated by two main rivers: the White Jade River (alternatively, Baiyu 白玉 or Yurung-kash/玉龙喀什, connotating "white jade" in Chinese and old Uyghur respectively) and Black Jade River (alternatively, Wuyu 烏玉 or Kara-kash/喀拉喀什, connotating "black jade" in Chinese and old Uyghur respectively). For the location of the rivers and the production of jade in Khotan, see "Khotan" in the *EI*.

224 *Hashiha* 哈石哈 is the phonetic transcription of Kashgar, a region west of the Khotan oasis, corresponding approximately to the present day Kashgar Prefecture in Xinjiang, China. Kashgar was the seat of several eastern Chaghatayid Khans and is mentioned extensively in the *Tārikh-i Rashīdī*.

225 See the following sections on Turfan, Huo Zhou, and Luchen.

226 Almalig was a medieval city in the Ili basin located in the present-day Huocheng County 霍城縣 in the Ili Kazakh Autonomous Prefecture of Xinjiang, China. Yelü Chucai relates that there are large numbers of apple trees (林檎木) surrounding the city Alima 阿里馬; because the local people call the apple *alima*—apparently a transcription of *alma*, "apple" in Turkic languages, see *Clauson*: 146—the city is named as such. See *XYL/Xiang*: 2. The name of the city is spelt valiantly as Almalik, Almaligh, or Armalec in contemporary sources.

227 That is, the territory of the "Mongol Tribes," or Moghulistan.

228 "長其所長而無變態者豈不由其前人積德乎" There is a certain degree of obscurity in this remark on the rulers and people of Moghulistan, but reading it with Chen's poem "Passing the Tomb of Prince Khiḍr Khwāja" is helpful. Both Chen's report of Beshbalik and his poem on Khiḍr Khwāja indicates that the current Moghulistan had developed upon their inheritance of what was given to them by their ancestors. The poem clearly traces the history of Moghulistan to "the division" (*fen maotu* 分茅土), that is, Chinggis Khan's apportionment of people and land (*qismat*).

Turfan (Tu'erfan 土爾番)²²⁹

Turfan is only a hundred *li* west of Huo Zhou 火州;²³⁰ it is the ancient Anle City 安樂城²³¹ of Jiaohe County 交河縣.²³² The city is about one or two square *li*; it is located on a level plain. There are mountains far away on four sides of the city.²³³ The weather is usually warm and seldom cold; rain and snow are rare. The soil is suitable for [growing] flax and wheat; rice cannot grow. There are peaches, apricots, dates, and plums. Grapes are common. Sheep and horses are being bred. The [ruins of the old] city is close to households; houses widely exist. [People] believe in the Buddhist religion; there are many monks and monasteries. During the Tang period, the city was the seat of the Area Commander of Yixi Ting (*yixi ting jiedu shi* 伊西庭節度使).²³⁴ During the Han

229 Turfan, or Turpan, is located in the east of the present-day autonomous region of Xinjiang, China. The Turfan Chen visited is the ancient Anle city two kilometers east of the modern prefecture-level city of Turfan 吐魯番. Today, the ruins of Anle are designated as Yingsha Ruins 英沙古城, or Yangi-shahr, “new town” in the Uyghur language. For the exact location of the modern Turfan and the Anle city, see Rong Xinjiang 榮新江, “Cong Tulufan chutu wenshu kan gudai Gaochang de dili xinxi” 从吐魯番出土文书看古代高昌的地理信息. *Journal of Shaanxi Normal University* 45/1 (2016): 20. In the same article, Rong points out that the application of Google Earth and GIS in archaeological studies have yielded important results that have verified the limited historical records about Turfan and other regions of northern Xinjiang and have largely advanced our understanding of pre-Mongol history of these regions.

230 See section “Huo Zhou.”

231 Anle Cheng 安樂城 (C.), lit. the city of peace and joy. According to the *Ming Shi*, the town was formerly a part of the Gaochang Kingdom (高昌) during the Sui period (581–618) and then it became subordinate to the Tang dynasty. Later, it was ruled by the Uighur Kingdom of Qocho (*Huihu* 回鹘). The Mongol-Yuan court established a brigade (*wanhu fu* 萬戶府) in Turfan. By the time of Chen Cheng's visit, Turfan was a part of Moghulistan but had little political power. See *MS*, v. 28, *juan* 329: 8528–30.

232 See note 246.

233 “四面大山而遠.” This sentence exists in the *ZSWJ/SK* but not the *FGZ/SB*.

234 *Jiedushi* 節度使, or “area commander” or “military commissioner,” is an important military office (or the title of the official) set by imperial Chinese central government on the borders of the country. See Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), s.v. “772 chieh-tù.” Established in 712, the Area Commander of Yixi Ting was a critical actor of the Tang dynasty inserting influence into the “Western Regions.” *Ting* 庭 is the name of an administrative unit. The exact indication of the geographical term Yixi Ting 伊西庭—whether it refers to the two particular prefectures, Yi and Xi, or a larger area—is much debated, but it must be noted that this term is almost always associated with Bei Ting 北庭 (lit. *ting* of the north). And recent studies generally suggest that the Yixi Ting is not to be understood in a narrow sense but refers to a large area in the “Western Regions” of Tang China. See Liu Zifan, “Tangdai Yixi jiedushi kaobian” and Liu Zhi'an “Yixi yu Beiting” 伊西与北庭原载《魏晋南北朝隋唐史资料》第二十六辑. Didier's translation of Yixi Ting as “Yi 伊, Xi 西, et Ting 庭” appears to be a mistake; *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 372.

period, it was the residence for the king of Jushi 車師.²³⁵ Thirty *li* west of the city, there is a small city located on a cliff on an islet; it is named “Yar City” (*Ya'er cheng* 崖兒城).²³⁶ It was the seat of the former Jiaohe County.

More than a hundred *li* northwest of the city, there is a sacred (靈) mountain.²³⁷ Legend has it that a hundred thousand arhats (*luohan fo* 羅漢佛)²³⁸ had reached nirvana there. Close to the mountain there is an earthen platform, which is more than ten *zhang* high. It is said that it was built during the Tang dynasty. Beside the platform there is a monastery. At the foot of the temple, there is a spring coming from the rocks and several *mu* 畝²³⁹ of woods. Entering from here and walking in the mountains for about 20 *li*, passing the south side of a gorge, there is an earthen house surrounded by a lot of willows. Climbing the hill on the south side of the earthen house, [one will find] a cabin made from rocks. It is no more than five *chi* high, seven or eight *chi* wide. Inside of the cabin, there are five small buddha statues. Beside them are many wooden tablets, on which foreign (*yi* 夷) characters are written; travelers to the mountain write down their names [on the tablets]. In front [of the cabin], there is an earthen pond. It is shallow and without water; it is clean and without dirt. On the eastern side of the pond, the mountain rocks are greenish black, looking like hair from afar.²⁴⁰ It is said that (a hundred thousand)²⁴¹ arhats had washed their hair and taken tonsure here, leaving this sacred relic.

Leaving the gorge and walking southeastwards for six or seven *li*, [one will] come to a high precipice. There is a range of small mountains standing below. Their earth is red, smooth, soft, and ethereal. Their ridges and peaks are magnificent, arranged in lines and rows. On that earth, there is a pile of white stones, as if they are jaspers, light and crisp. There are sacred (靈) bones

235 Jushi 車師 was one of the minor oasis kingdoms inhabited the Turfan basin. The earliest written history of Jushi comes from the *Han Shu* 漢書, which records Jushi, among other minor states of the Western Regions, was dominated by either or both of the Han dynasty and the Xiongnu people during the late second and early first century BCE. See also note 247.

236 See section “Yar City.”

237 This may be a reference to the Bogda mountain. See also *Chen Cheng/Didier*: 372n227. The word “*ling* 靈” is used repeatedly in this passage and may be rendered variably as spiritual, sacred, efficacious etc. according to the context. For more examples of its usage, see Lewis Hodous, and William E. Soothill, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms: With Sanskrit and English Equivalents and a Sanskrit-Pali Index* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2014): 489.

238 “*Luohan* 羅漢,” arhat; perfect man of Hinayana. Hodous, *Chinese Buddhist Terms*: 472.

239 During the Ming period, 1 *mu* equals to 608 m². See Wilkinson, *Manual*: 614.

240 “紛若毛髮狀.” The phrase *fen ruo* 紛若, “in a jumble,” only exists in the *FGZ/SB*.

241 The phrase “a hundred thousand” (*shi wan* 十萬), exists in the *FGZ/SB* but not in the *ZSWJ/SK*.

of strange shape; they are as hard as stones, have clear lines, bright color, and smooth texture. It is said that (a hundred thousand)²⁴² arhats had reached nirvana here. The white stones have never changed; the immortal sacred bones are the remains of the arhats. Walking along the gorge eastwards and down a rocky cliff, several *li* southwards, in the rocks on the cliff east of the gorge, [one will find] stalagmites (石笋) that look like human limbs. Another few *li* southwards, there is a pile of white stones in the red earth on a low hill. They are sparkling and clear like jades, and are two or four *chi* higher than the ground. Legend has it that Pratyeka-buddha (*pizhi fo* 辟支佛)²⁴³ had reached nirvana here. Walking around the mountains for more than twenty *li*, [one will be] surrounded by wilderness of sand of five colors, sparkling and dazzling. In the four directions, inaccessible gullies and cliffs are of thousands of shapes and cannot be described. Grasses and trees do not grow; birds and animals are rare. It is truly a sacred and blissful (靈) place!

Yar City (Ya'er cheng 崖兒城)²⁴⁴

The city of Yar is twenty *li* west of Turfan. The city is built on a steep plateau carved out by two rivers that merged [at one end of the plateau]. Thus, the city is named *Yar*.²⁴⁵ The city is no more than two *li* wide; it is inhabited by about 100 families. In the past, there were many temples. Engravings on stones remain.²⁴⁶ [The city] was once the residence of the king of Jushi 車師. Later,

242 The phrase “a hundred thousand” (*shi wan* 十萬), exists in the *FGZ/SB* but not in the *ZSWJ/SK*.

243 “*Pizhi fo* 辟支佛,” Pratyeka-buddha, one who seeks enlightenment for himself. Hodous, *Chinese Buddhist Terms*: 414.

244 The city of Yar is located in the Yarnaz valley in present-day Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China. The remains of the city are currently a preserved site known as the Jiaohe Ruins; it became part of the Silk Road UNESCO World Heritage Sites in 2014. It was also named Jiaohe 交河 in Chinese and *yārghūl* (يارغول) in Uyghur.

245 *Yar* means cliff in Turkic languages; see *Clauson*: 953. As Chen notes, the name was given to the city because of its location on the steep plateau carved out by two rivers. The Chinese transcription, “崖兒 Ya'er” also means cliff; thus, it reflects both the meaning and sound of *yar* precisely. Historically, the city was also known as Yarkhoto 雅爾和圖, a combination of *yar* and *khot*, “city” in Mongolian. The Chinese name of the city, Jiaohe 交河, means “river junction.” For the details of the unique location of Yar and the layout of the ancient city, see Meng Fanren 孟凡人 “Jiaohe gucheng xingzhi buju tedian yanjiu” 交河故城形制布局特点研究. *Acta Archaeologica Sinica* 4 (2001).

246 Jiaohe (or Yar) was an important city in the Buddhist history. Large numbers of temples and stupas were built and reconstructed in several periods since the sixth century CE. At the present, about 80 still remain in the ruined city, see Meng, “Jiaohe gucheng”: 493–495; 502.

the government of Jiaohe County was established.²⁴⁷ Now it has been annexed by Turfan.²⁴⁸

*Yanze City (Yanze cheng 鹽澤城)*²⁴⁹

The city of Yanze is located southwest of Yar, and is over thirty *li* from Turfan. The city lies in a level plain. The width of the city is no more than two *li*, and 100 families reside there. On the east side of the city, there are two tall tombs (冢), surrounded by trees and enclosed by walls, constituting the burial place of former ruler of the country (國主) Khiḍr Khwāja (*Heidi'er Huozhe* 黑的兒火者) and his wife.²⁵⁰ Close to it are smaller graves, which are said to be those of their favored ministers who were buried with them. North of the city, there are low hills from which rock salt is produced. [The rock salt] is solid and

247 For the earliest recorded history of Jushi, see note 235. In 60 BCE, when the Han army defeated the Xiongnu in a battle, the Jushi lands, which had been a focus of the Han-Xiongnu contention, split into the Anterior Jushi (車師前部) and the Posterior Jushi (車師後部). The former inhabited the Gaochang region, while the latter dwelled further north. Jiaohe was the seat of the Anterior Jushi which was then administered by several Chinese dynasties through the offices such as Wuji Commandant (戊己校尉) and the Protector General of the Western Regions (西域都護府) until the end of the eighth century.

248 In 866, the Uighurs (*Huihu* 回鶻) took control of Gaochang, establishing the Qocho (or Gaochang Uighur) kingdom. Since then, Turfan has taken the place of Jiaohe as the seat of governance of the Gaochang region. The decline of Jiaohe in this period is indicated by archeological findings as well, see Meng, "Jiaohe gucheng": 502.

249 The name of the city means "where salt accumulates" in Chinese, and thus may be translated as "salt city." Several localities in Xinjiang had been historically named as such. Based on Chen's description of its location and Khiḍr Khwāja's tomb which survives today, this "salt city" can be identified as the present-day Yemushi Kan'erzi Cun 也木什坎儿孜村 in the Turfan region of Xinjiang, China. This identification is also supported by studies of Turfan documents in Old Uigur, see Dai Matsui, "Old Uigur Toponyms of the Turfan Oases," in *Kutadgu Nom Bitig: Festschrift für Jens Peter Laut zum 60. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2015): 292–93.

250 Khiḍr Khwāja Khan (d. 1399) was the ruler of Moghulistan between 1390–1399. He was the father of the Muhammad (Mahamu) mentioned in the section of Beshbalik. According to the *Ming Shi*, Khiḍr Khwāja sent envoys with gifts to the Ming court in 1391, and the Hongwu Emperor received them and sent back envoys and gifts. However, Khiḍr Khwāja was not content with the gift and therefore detained one of the envoys, Kuanche 寬徹, who was released a few years later after some official negotiation. *MS*, v. 28, *juan* 332: 8606–7. According to the *Tarikh-i Rashidi*, Khiḍr Khwāja led the *ghazāt*, "raids against the infidels," against Turfan (Ṭurfān) and Qarakhoja (Qarākhwāja), i.e. "Huo Zhou" in Chen Cheng's account, to convert the Buddhist Uighurs there to Islam by force. See *Ḥaydar/Thackston*, 1:32 (text); 2:28 (trans.). Chen's report on his tomb in Yanze confirms that the Turfan region was a base for Khiḍr Khwāja's later activities. Khiḍr Khwāja was buried in Yanze; his tomb, the Khiḍr Khwāja Mezar (*Heizi'er huojia mazha* 黑孜尔霍加麻扎), still survives in the present day and is a local cultural heritage site.

white like the jade; it can be carved and polished into containers for holding food, to which salt need not to be added. This is how the city is named *yanze* (“where salt accumulates”).

Huo Zhou (Huo zhou 火州)²⁵¹

Huo Zhou is seventy *li* west of Luchen City 魯陳城. The city is close to a mountain northward. It lies in a low land. The color of the mountain is blue and red like flame; the weather is always hot. Thus, [the city] is named *Huo Zhou*.²⁵² The city is more than 10 square *li*. Its landscape is desolate. Even though a large population and many temples once existed here, they all have decayed. On the east side is the site of a desolate city, which is said to be the seat of governance of the ancient Gaochang. During the Han Dynasty, the Aide of the Western Regions (西域長史) and Wuji Commandant (戊己校尉)²⁵³ used to reside there at the same time. The Tang court established the Area Commander of Yixi Ting [in the region].²⁵⁴ Today, it is subordinate to Prince Muhammad of Beshbalik. It is a one-month journey here from Jiayu Pass of the Suzhou 肅州 Guard of the Shanxi Regional Commission.

Luchen City (Luchen cheng 魯陳城)²⁵⁵

The city of Luchen, on the land of the ancient Liuzhong County 柳中縣, is located east of Huo Zhou 火州, about 1000 *li* from Hami. There is a big plain in

251 Huo Zhou 火州 was an important trading center on the Silk Roads. Chen associates the naming of the city with its climate and the meaning of Huo 火 in Chinese, see note 252; I therefore choose to keep its original Chinese form in my translation, even though the city is commonly known as Qocho (an equivalent to Gaochang 高昌) or Qara-khoja (which is commonly used in the Mongol and post-Mongol period). Qara-khoja appears in various forms of transcriptions in Chinese, including Hala huozhe 合拉火者, Hala Huozhou 哈拉霍州, Hela Hezhou 合拉和州, and Hala Huozhou 哈拉火州. See Liu, *Chahetai Hanguo*: 581–82. Huo Zhou 火州 can thus be considered both a phonetic transcription of Khoja—an abbreviated form of Qara-khoja, and a Chinese name as explained by Chen. The ruins of the ancient Gaochang are located in the present-day Turfan region of Xinjiang, China. For details of the ancient city, see Meng Fanren 孟凡人, “Gaochang gucheng xingzhi chu tan” 高昌故城形制初探, in *Xinjiang kaogu lun ji* (Lanzhou Shi: Lanzhou daxue chubanshe, 2010): 37–63.

252 *Huo Zhou* 火州, “fire prefecture” or “fire state” in Chinese.

253 *Xiyu zhangshi* 西域長史, “Aide of the Western Regions” and *Wuji jiaowei* 戊己校尉, “Wuji Commandant”: Both are offices of Han dynasties established on its northwestern borders to administer the Western Regions. See also note 247 and Hucker, *Official Titles*, s.vv. “185 chǎng-shìh,” “7740 wù-chì hsiào-wèi.”

254 See note 234.

255 Luchen, or Lukchen, is currently known as Lukeqin Zhen 鲁克沁镇; it is located in the present-day Shanshan County 鄯善县 in the Turfan region of Xinjiang, China. In pre-Mongol Chinese sources, the town is named Liuzhong 柳中, and it was the seat

between them. There is a boundless stretch of sand and gravel but no water-weeds. If draught animals cross it, they would mostly die. If a heavy wind blows, people and their horses would be separated. On the side of the road, there are many human bones and ghosts; if a traveler is separated from his companions during the day or at night, he must get lost and die. The local (*yi* 夷)²⁵⁶ people call it *han hai* 瀚海.²⁵⁷ [If one] crosses that plain, there are rivers of drift sand (*liusha he* 流沙河). In the [sand] rivers there are dunes, which are mounds of drift sand brought together by the wind. On the north side of the road there is a mountain, remarkably red as fire; it is named “the mountain of flame” (*huoyan shan* 火焰山).

The city is two or three square *li*. There are many gardens, running waters, and luxuriant trees surrounding the city. The soil is suitable for growing broom-corn millets, hemp, soy. Grapes, peaches, apricots, apples, walnuts, small dates, melons, and calabashes are widely grown there. There is a [type of] small grape, sweet and seedless; it is named *suozì* 鎖子 grape.²⁵⁸ The soil produces cotton, from which cloth can be made. [The people there] are good at making wine and raising oxen, cattle, horses, and camels. The weather is warm, and people are plain and simple. There are [people] of a Muslim origin: men shave their hair and wear small embroidered hats, and women cover their hair with white cloth. There are [people] wearing Uighur (*Weiwu'er* 畏兀兒)²⁵⁹ clothes; men tie their hair like a cone, and women cover themselves with black cloth, with their hair hanging on their forehead. They all wear steppe (*hu* 胡) clothes. Their local dialects are all Uighur. The three places of Huo Zhou, Turfan, and Luchen have similar traditions and local products.

of the Aide of the Western Regions established by the Han dynasty. See also note 253. In Mongol-Yuan and post-Mongol Chinese sources, the town has been known as Lukechen 魯克塵, Lucheng 魯城, Lukechake 魯克察克 or other similar names. See also Liu, *Chahetai Hanguo*: 580–81. Dai Matsui, “Old Uigur Toponyms of the Turfan Oases,” 275–304.

256 From the translations of *yi* 夷 in context, see note 187.

257 *han hai* 瀚海 (C.), “extensive sea.” The term has been used to refer to a number of deserts in Mongolia and Xinjiang. This *han hai* must be the desert Kumtag (“sand mountain” in Turkic languages, see *kum*, “sand,” and *ta:ǰ*, “mountain” in *Clauson*: 625; 463).

258 The *suozì* grape, also called *suosuo* 鎖鎖 grape, has been described in several Chinese sources as a product of Turfan regions. See Laufer, *Sino-Iranica*: 45–46. The *HHZZ* collects the term *suosuo* grape with its Persian or Turkic equivalent transcribed as “默都子 (moduzi);” it is unclear what the original word is. See *HHZZ/Liu*: 440; *HHZZ/Hongda*: 41.

259 See note 207.

Hami (Hami 哈密)²⁶⁰

The city of Hami lies in a level plain. It is about three or four square *li*. There are only two gates, east and north. There are several hundred households living in low earthen houses. East of the city, there is a creek flowing southwestward. There are two or three fruit gardens in which only *qiu* 楸 apricots are being grown. Though manure is spread for farming, only panicle millet, rice, peas, barley and wheat grow. The land is mostly low-lying and saline-alkali. North [of the city] there is a big mountain; [the other] three sides face the level plain. To the southeast, Suzhou 肅州 Guard is about 1600 *li* away. Between them, there is also a big river that extends for more than three hundred *li*. It takes two or three days to get beyond the river. [The city] reaches the land of the Oirats (*Wala* 瓦剌) in the north, which takes a month of speedy travel. It is about a thousand *li* from the land of Huo Zhou in the west. [The city] was a part of Yi Zhou 伊州²⁶¹ during the Tang dynasty. Today, it is a strategically important spot for the communication between different steppe (*hu* 胡) peoples of the northwest [of China]. The residents of Hami are usually tough and ferocious; of whomever passes this place, they will demand something. The Mongols and the Uighurs (*Huihu* 回鶻) live together here; their ways of clothing and customs are distinctive.

Selected Poems

Reaching the Tent of Muhammad, Ruler of Beshbalik (1 or 2)

Heaven and earth are vast and mighty; they are unbounded and without
limit

The rain and dew of [their] grace moisten even these distant people
Pleased were we to see horses and cattle divided in herds

Only then did we realize that there is a ruler and his subordinates²⁶² in
the crowd like bees and ants

260 Hami, or Kumul, is situated in the eastern part of present-day Xinjiang, China. As an important location on the Silk Roads, Hami had been known to Chinese since the Han dynasty and had been referred to in Chinese sources as Yiwulu 伊吾廬, Yiwu 伊吾, Yihe 宜禾, Hamili 哈密力, Kemeili 渴密里 and other names. See "Hami" in *XYDM/Feng*: 31–32.

261 Yi Zhou 伊州, or the Yi Prefecture, is the administrative unit established by the Tang dynasty in 630 governing what corresponds to the present-day Hami.

262 *Junchen* 君臣, commonly translated as "the ruler and his ministers." It should be noted, however, that "minister" has more specific meanings and does not seem appropriate here.

Drinking wine with cheese; the silver bottles become cold
 Sitting together on a woolen carpet under an embroidered tent; it feels
 [warm] as spring
 Their etiquette is not like ours and their customs different
 All in this grand world are subjects to the Getian 葛天²⁶³

Reaching the Tent of Muhammad, Ruler of Beshbalik (2 or 2)

Bestowed with favor, jade plates filled with gift money lined up
 The chieftain's joy beams from his face²⁶⁴
 Neighing horses with golden bridles stand by the door
 People crowd around the felt tent, looking through the curtains
 [The ruler] shakes [my] hand with graciousness and geniality
 [He] lowers his head and, through many rounds of translations, asks
 about the safety [of our journey]
 [He] warmly greets us, the ambassadors of the emperor
 Snow has completely covered the Yinshan 陰山 Mountains²⁶⁵ and it is
 cold even in June

Reaching the City of Yangi

On dangerous paths and in rugged areas, [we] emerged from ten thousand mountains
 The lone city stands aloft in the white clouds
 Foreign men (*Hu er* 胡兒) on their horses come to talk with us
 This is the first pass into the foreign western (*rong-qiang* 戎羌) territory²⁶⁶

Using the phrase *junchen*, Chen describes the existence of a certain degree of order and hierarchy that he does not expect to see among the nomads "like bees and ants."

263 *Getian* 葛天 is a tribal name in pre-historical Chinese legend; its leader *Getian shi* (of the Getian) is regarded as a key figure in forming the common cultural ancestry of China. The term is used here as an allusion to "a common ancestry" or "the emperor of China." The idea that peoples, Chinese and non-Chinese alike, all bow to the rule of the Chinese emperor repeatedly appears in Chen's travel narratives.

264 *yi meidian* 溢眉端, lit., "overflows on his eyebrow tips."

265 The Yinshan Mountains or Yin Mountains, are a mountain range that form the southeastern border of the Gobi desert.

266 The terms *rong* 戎 and *qiang* 羌 originally refer to two specific non-Han Chinese groups west of China. Though the phrase is used here to allude to "foreign" and "west," it is not a common word choice for Chen, as this verse is the only occasion the phrase is used. Reading the verse in the context of the Ming ambassadorial group's recent travel through

The City of Sayram

The willows surrounding the levee are green; their branches are long and graceful
 The empty city by the levee is called "Sayram"
 Outside its outer walls, people mostly reside in earthen houses
 The scenery before my eyes is similar to that of Jiangnan²⁶⁷
 In every village, the melons and fruit trees in the gardens are ripening
 Cups are filled with sweet wine and plates are loaded with luscious food
 As the night approaches, the sound of laundry beating²⁶⁸ resonates in the moonlight
 I woke up from a dream of home, overwhelmed by yearning

The City of Shahrukhiya

The mountains sit south and the river runs north
 Beside the river, the city is built on a low hill
 Disorderly, the uncivilized people received the imperial ambassadors
 Passenger boats docked lengthwise and sidewise by the governmental wharf
 [We] have traveled ten thousand *li* in a difficult journey; the desert frontiers are [now] far away
 Incidents of the past thousand years remain in books
 Reeds on both riverbanks rustle in the wind
 Warning of the arrival of early autumn²⁶⁹ in a mournful tone

Reaching the Fruit Garden of Ulugh Beg, Ruler of Samarkand

Magnificent golden-colored bricks pave the lofty platform
 Exquisite windows open in eight directions

Moghulistan, it becomes clear that Chen signifies here that they had reached a new foreign territory, i.e., the Timurid lands.

267 Jiangnan 江南 is the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River; the region is known for its rivers, canals, and bridges. Using the expression "similar to Jiangnan," Chen remarks that the geographical appearance of Sayram are drastically different from the arid places he visits on the way.

268 *zhen shang* 砧聲, the sound of knocking on the cutting board; commonly used to describe the sound of beating clothes. In this context, Chen may be referring to any noise sounding like knocks on a wooden board in the environs.

269 According to the *XCJ*, the group arrived in Shahrukhiya in day 13 of month 7 of Year 12 of Yongle era, corresponding to July 29, 1414, shortly before autumn. See *Chen Cheng/Zhou: 44*.

Breaths of majestic wind blow the silky curtains
 Abundant flows of fresh air come from the sky
 [The ruler] sits cross-legged on the ground, receiving homage
 Regardless of their status, people greet each other with a *salām*
 [They] do not understand [the etiquette of] bowing with hands folded
 in front
 Only knowing repeatedly to kneel and express respect
 Cooked rice has both fine color and appearance
 [They] use not spoons to eat their food but take it with their hands
 Could the Han envoys merely seek to fill their stomachs
 and let their jade-white fingers become soiled?
 Golden saddles, fine horses, and jade-ornamented fur garments
 Gem-decorated belts, beaded tassels, and embroidered bracers
 [They] know not the expanse of the sky and the earth beyond themselves
 Absurdly equating richness with nobility

Visiting Kesh, the Former Residence of Timur Fuma

The traveling carts move forward and stop
 From the woods [we] look into the distance
 A lofty tower on a luxuriant slope
 stands erect beside the empty city
 It is said that the chieftain (*chanyu* 單于)²⁷⁰ used to live here
 When was this magnificent structure built?
 exquisite windows and doors [lead] deep inside
 twisted knots clustered at the eaves of the roof
 golden decorations are particularly bright
 bricked walls almost collapsed
 In the dark building, ghost flames²⁷¹ are dim
 During the day, desperate apes cry out
 Serene springs feed into the fragrant marsh
 Cold jade lies at the bottom of the shallow pond
 the rise and fall are common since ancient times
 [I] lowered my head to measure both honor and disgrace
 His Majesty's management and guidance of the people are superior
 The world is as one

270 *Chanyu* 單于, originally title of the chief of the Xiongnu people, is used by Chen to refer to Timur, the chief of his tribesmen.

271 *Gui huo* 鬼火, "ghost flame" or *ignis fatuus*, is a motif commonly seen in Chinese poetry to describe wilderness, empty places, or other depressing scenes.

People who live in distant lands look at [us] with smile
 [they] hold up their goblets and serve fine wine
 Drunken, [I] sing out loud freely and unrestrained
 A strong wind shakes the dead trees

Staying in Chichaktu (*Chechetu* 車扯秃)²⁷² Waiting for the Return of the Ruler
 of the Country²⁷³ (1 of 2)

Having ridden in a cart for several days, [we] stopped in a desolate suburb
 [They] were registering households, collecting taxes, and granting provi-
 sions and rewards [to the army]²⁷⁴
 Fine horses are fattened in the autumn, and alfalfa is harvested
 Sweet fermented juice matured at the night presses [the newly picked]
 grapes
 The nomad soldiers went far way, sending smoke signals
 Swan geese flew high, dodging the yak tail [standard] (*jie mao* 節旄)²⁷⁵
 How can I, a guest, endure the length of the night?
 Anxiously, [I] listened to the crowing roosters across the wood
 The chieftain has not yet returned from his border patrols
 Leaving his guests and retinue here for the time being
 The misty autumn sky connects with fragrant grass
 The pale morning sun shines on the ancient terrace

272 *Chechetu* 車扯秃 is the transcription of Chichaktu (Chichaktü or Jijaktü in Persian). Ḥāfiẓ Abrū mentions its location between Herat and Balkh, and it also appears to be a journeying-stage (*manzil*) where the Timurid armies used to rest. It is now a subdivision of the Maimana district in Afghanistan. See HAJ: 59; HAZ, 3:366; Ludwig W. Adamec, *Historical and Political Gazetteer of Afghanistan, Vol. 4: Mazar-I-Sharif and North-Central Afghanistan* (Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1979): 163.

273 According to the *xcj*, the ambassadorial group arrived in Chichaktu in day 12, month 9 of Year 12 of the Yongle era (September 25, 1414). They stayed there for half a month, waiting for the return of Shahrukh who was on a campaign. See *Chen Cheng/Zhou*: 48. Shahrukh's campaign mentioned by Chen Cheng must be the one against Iskandar, Timur's grandson who was among the princes that attempted to claim the throne in the aftermath of Timur's death. Shahrukh headed against Iskandar earlier in 1414, and in July, Shahrukh gained decisive victory in Isfahan. Manz, *Power, Politics and Religion in Timurid Iran*: 31. This poem is not only in accordance with Ḥāfiẓ Abrū's account on Shahrukh's campaign, but also provides rich first-hand information of the activities in Chichaktu as a rear area that provided for Shahrukh's military.

274 編戶徵求餽餉勞. The author does not indicate the subject of this verse but is simply describes the activities. Most likely, the implied subject is "they," that is, people of that place.

275 *jie mao* 節旄, the yak tail ornament on the tip of a standard, usually a token bestowed upon the ambassador by the emperor.

The army returned from their expedition with songs of triumph²⁷⁶
 Young women, one by one, quickly arrived
 In an old garden, [I] watched the southward flying swan geese²⁷⁷ in vain
 It is hard to compose a letter to be sent [home] on such a long route

Gazing at the City of Herat (2 of 2)

Walking out of a narrow pass, [we] have reached a level plain
 Again, the horizon appears in the distance
 City walls and houses meet the grass and trees
 Extensive streets and alleys are full of vitality
 The wind wheels by the walls are turning in the breeze
 Facing the sun, gourds are hanging from the trees
 Having experienced many foreign traditions and different customs
 [I am] no less broad-minded than Zhang Qian of the Han²⁷⁸

Visiting the Residence of the Ruler of Herat, Shahrukh (1 of 2)

Tall and elegant trees conceal the terraces
 Royal pavilions and tents appear one after another
 The court cavalymen leisurely enter from the other side of the clusters
 of flowers
 The magnanimous kindness of the ruler comes from the direction
 of the Sun
 All strive to observe the arrival of auspicious stars and phoenixes²⁷⁹
 The various foreign tribal people (*yi mo* 夷貊) and guests act informally

276 The poem does not indicate whether Shahrukh had arrived in Chichaktu with his army, but it shows that, when Shahrukh's campaign was over, his army encamped in Chichaktu and celebrated their triumph there. According to Ḥāfiẓ Abū, Shahrukh arrived in Herat on 22 of Rajab 817 (October 2, 1414); see *HAZ*, 2:573.

277 The swan goose (*yan* 雁) is native to East Asia, dwelling between Mongol Daguur and the Yangtze River Basin. In autumn, swan geese migrate south, and thus "southward flying swan geese" is a motif in Chinese literature related to travel and homesickness.

278 Zhang Qian 張騫 (d. 114 BCE) was a traveler and diplomat of the Former Han period (206 BCE–8 CE). Serving as an imperial envoy of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, he traveled to a number of localities of the "Western regions" and was among the first diplomats to bring reliable information of the lands of Central Asia to China. For the record of Zhao Qian's travels, see *Shi Ji* 史記 *juan* 123; for its translation, see Sima Qian, *Records of the Grand Historian of China*, trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), 2: 231–52.

279 *Xingfeng* 星鳳, lit. "auspicious star and phoenix;" the phrase is used to refer to rare and wondrous items.

Just as the decree of the Da Ming Emperor (*da ming tianzi* 大明天子)²⁸⁰
was read out
Cheerful laughter breaks out like spring thunder

Visiting the Residence of the Ruler of Herat, Shahrukh (2 of 2)

The host persuades the guests to stay and the banquet resumes
The courtesans (官妓) cease singing and the instrumentalists (管弦)²⁸¹
line up [to play]²⁸²
Wine drinking goes on and gift money (彩幣) is displayed
Clamor rises among those seated as gold coins are tossed about
The ruler and his ministers (君臣) dance following the steppe (*hu* 胡)
custom
The roads [between this place and China] have been open since the
Han era
And since then, all lie under the moral influence [of China]
There is no need for expeditions to pacify the three frontiers²⁸³

Brother Bāysunghur,²⁸⁴ Son of Shahrukh (1 of 2)

Handsome young men in twos and threes
Talk and laugh with others, enjoying the beauty of spring
Precious swords girded in their golden belts

- 280 “Da Ming 大明” is the official title (*guohao* 國號) of the Ming dynasty; the term is often rendered, according to its literal meaning, as the “Great Ming.” *Tianzi* 天子, lit., “son of Heaven.” Notably, “Da Ming” had been translated phonetically to Persian in the Timurid sources. In the Persian version of the letter from the Yongle Emperor to Shahrukh, the title of the Ming emperor is rendered as *Dāy ming pādishāh-i muʿzam* (دای منگ پادشاه معظم), “the supreme sovereign of the Da Ming.” See HAZ, 3:460.
- 281 *guanxian* 管弦, “wind instruments and string instruments;” the term also generally refers to musical instruments. In this verse, Chen describes the scene where singers perform first and instrumentalists perform next.
- 282 This verse provides evidence for two aspects of Timurid music and musicians: First, there were women musicians performing at Timurid court; second, singers and instrumentalists were separate groups with precedence being given to the singers. See also Owen Wright, “On the Concept of a ‘Timurid Music.’” *Oriente Moderno* 15 (76) /2 (1996): 665–81.
- 283 During the Ming period, the three frontiers refer to the regions of Yansui, Gansu, and Ningxia. In this context, the phrase refers to the northwestern frontiers of China in general.
- 284 Bāysunghur (1397–1434/799–837) was Shahrukh’s son who, by the time of Chen’s visit, was about eighteen and lived in Herat. See Woods, *The Timurid Dynasty*: 46. The title brother may indicate that Chen had a personal friendship with the prince.

Fine white horses, with light quivers and purple brocade saddle blankets
 Centuries of time are in fact passing in a flash
 [As he] spent half a lifetime like a living *shenxian*²⁸⁵
 Knowing that the imperial blessings are as vast as the sea
 Do not mention that another heaven exists beyond the heavens

The Lion

I have heard that this animal is the king of beasts
 Now I see its extraordinary form
 Both its pupils are clear and bright as jade-colored autumn waters²⁸⁶
 [Its fur] is pure light golden yellow
 A slight show of its power and dignity would astound the rhinoceros and
 the elephant
 A small movement of its teeth and claws would terrify the tiger and the
 wolf
 Since ancient times, [China] has collected products of distant lands with
 the aid of images²⁸⁷
 [The lion] might as well be harnessed and presented to His Majesty (吾皇)

285 *Shenxian* 神仙, a type of Taoist immortal being. When used in a non-Taoist, non-supernatural folktale context, it is a common metaphor of a carefree person, someone with the demeanor of a *shenxian*. It is quite a precise depiction of Prince Bāysunghur who was an important patron of art, literature, and architecture, a known drunk, and—as implied by Chen—a good-looking young man. The expression half a lifetime (*bansheng* 半生) is used to describe a long time in one's life, usually is not to be understood in its literal sense; however, it is ironic that Bāysunghur had in fact died young because of drinking, making Chen's verse an exact description of a prince who spent half of his life living carefree.

286 "Autumn water" (*qiushui* 秋水) is a metaphor for clear and beautiful eyes in Chinese.

287 自古按圖收遠物. In this verse, Chen Cheng relates to the Chinese imperial tradition of collecting foreign products and the type of art known as "illustrations of tributary states." The significance of such a practice and art form is examined in Ge Zhaoguang 葛兆光, "Imagining a Universal Empire: a Study of the Illustrations of the Tributary States of the Myriad Regions Attributed to Li Gonglin." *Journal of Chinese Humanities* 5/2 (2020): 124–48. Ge articulates in the article: "Images of foreign emissaries were used to convey the Celestial Empire's sense of pride and self-confidence, with representations of strange customs from foreign countries serving as a foil for the image of China as a radiant universal empire at the center of the world." Thus, Chen Cheng had all the reasons to depict the lion and the zebra ("striped beast") and participate in this honorable intellectual tradition. The last couplet of this poem is translated by Church as "Since ancient times only images of animals could be received from foreign lands | Who would have thought I'd be presenting a live one to our emperor?", which is not accurate. Church, "A Lion Presented as Tribute," 212.

The Striped Beast

Mane of the horse, hooves of the deer; its build is fine
 Its hide is naturally striped with bands of black and white
 As if woven by a skilled woman on her loom
 As if divided by an adept craftsman with his pen
 Strange animals created by Heaven are not known to common people
 Auspicious signs that appear from time to time have been heard by men
 The book of *Zhou* does not omit the mastiff from the tribute from the
 west²⁸⁸
 I am willing to depict [this beast] to present to the supreme [emperor]

The Windmill

A wheel [rotates] on a massive foundation in a structure with no walls
 Its movement completely depends on natural wind
 The activity of the heavens and the earth can vary
 the rotation of the sun and moon is in harmony
 How could they exhaust their own bodies
 When they may employ their ingenuity to surpass the work of nature
 [But] tomorrow, the trees will stand at rest when the god of wind (風姨)
 is gone
 It would be laughable that these people should run out of schemes

Gourd Shooting

A long pole stands erect and extents into the sky
 A gourd is fastened to one end and suspended in midair
 The steppe men (*qiang er* 羌兒) show off their skills on horseback
 Pulling back the golden strings of bows compounded with horn at full
 draw
 In the act of galloping like the passing of a shooting star
 [They] then turn around and shoot, breaking the gourd

²⁸⁸ 周書不削西獒貢。This is a reference to the text of “The Mastiff from the [Western] Lü” (*Lü Ao* 旅獒) in the book of *Zhou* (*Zhou Shu* 周書) within the *Book of Documents* (*Shang Shu* 尚書). See also note 287.

and throwing white feathers (霜翎)²⁸⁹ up high into the sky
The crowd greets [the horsemen] with applause and praise

Iron Gate Pass (1 of 2)

The mountain stands south and north and the route connects the east
and west
The tall precipices are steep as if cut by an axe
The heaven and the earth have no intention to create dangerous terrains
The emperor is virtuous as he causes Chinese to mix with others²⁹⁰
Uncivilized men strike wooden clappers, startling the falcons
The magistrates at the pass open the gate, listening to the crowing roosters
Is it known throughout history how many years have passed?
The empty city fruitlessly blocks the icy stream

Passing the Tomb of Prince Khiḍr Khwāja²⁹¹

The celestial raft (星槎)²⁹² arrived at a deserted village at dusk
[I] leisurely visited the desolate walls and mourned an old tomb
The wind blew up the sand and the sunny day became dull
The sky met with the grass as the evening mist darkened

-
- 289 Shuangling 霜翎, “white feathers,” could be interpreted as its literal meaning, thus implying “the bird is shot and its white feathers are blasted into the sky,” or as an allusion to a white bird, thus “the white bird inside the gourd is released and flies away.” In the account on Herat, Chen Cheng describes the method of the gourd shooting game, clarifying that a white dove is hidden in the gourd and that whoever breaks the gourd and releases the dove wins a prize. Therefore, it is clear that “white feathers” in this sentence is used as an allusion to the white dove. For the tradition of gourd shooting (*qabaq*), see note 111.
- 290 *Hun hua yi* 渾華夷, lit., “mixing the Hua with the Yi.” *Hua* 華 originally denotes the pre-historical culture of the eastern “Central Plain” (*zhongyuan* 中原) of China and had come to indicate Han Chinese. *Yi* 夷, on the other hand, are the “others,” as has been seen many times in Chen’s accounts. The phrase thus signifies mixing the Chinese with non-Chinese people, or causing them to integrate with one another.
- 291 For a discussion of Khiḍr Khwāja and the location of his tomb, see note 250. This poem is better read together with Chen Cheng’s accounts on Beshbalik and Yanze City.
- 292 *Xingcha* 星槎, lit., “astral raft,” or a raft traveling on the Milky Way (“celestial river” in Chinese). This phrase is used several times in Chen Cheng’s poems (most of which are not translated in my selection), often in scenes associated with the distance of their trip and homesickness. In my opinion, *xingcha* is used here to allude to the group of travelers, i.e., Chen Cheng and his fellow envoys.

The power of the prince was founded on the division of royal property
(分茅土)²⁹³

Loyalty and kindness would always reach the offspring

If it were not for the imperial benevolence as vast as the sky

How can the humble progeny (遺孽)²⁹⁴ remain until this day?

Appendix 1: Selected Records of the *xcj*

Date		Location		Notes
<i>xcj</i> records	Common era	<i>xcj</i> records	English translation and alternative forms	
Year 12 of the Yongle Era, month 1, day 14	1414/2/3	肅州衛 Suzhou wei	Suzhou Guard	Suzhou is the first step recorded in the <i>xcj</i> . The group prayed for safe travel outside Suzhou.
day 17	1414/2/7	嘉峪關 Jiayu guan	Jiayu Pass	Jiayu Pass was first frontier fortress at the west end of the Ming Great Wall; for this reason, the locations of all cities recorded in the <i>FGZ</i> are described in relation to the Jiayu Pass.

293 *Fen maotu* 分茅土, lit., “the division of [colored] earth.” The term originally refers to a ritual of appanage assignment in ancient China but had come to mean the action of appanaging. Here, Chen Cheng is making reference to Chinggis Khan’s apportionment (*qismat*). In the section “Beshbalik” of the *FGZ*, Chen also remarks that the land of the “Mongol tribes” was inherited from Chinggis Khan.

294 The phrase *yinie* 遺孽 indicates progeny of a lower status or a humble lineage. This may be related to Khiḍr Khwāja’s origin in the Chaghatayid house, which Chen may consider inferior to, or not as legitimate as, the Toluid house who established the Yuan dynasty in China.

(cont.)

Date		Location		Notes
<i>xcj</i> records	Common era	<i>xcj</i> records	English translation and alternative forms	
month 2, day 9	1414/2/28	哈密 Hami	Hami	Representatives from Hami picked up the group on day 8—one day prior to their arrival in Hami. The group camped in a fruit garden southeast of Hami and stayed there for five days.
day 16	1414/3/7	臘竺 Lazhu	Lazhu	the <i>xcj</i> records that Lazhu is an ancient city that is decently populated but has desolate walls and temples. Chen Cheng transcribes the name of the city as “蠟燭” (Lazhu) in his poem. Both the <i>xcj</i> and the poem remarks its fine climate.
day 25	1414/3/16	魯陳城 Luchen cheng	Lukchen; Lukeqin	The group stayed there for four days.
month 3, day 1	1414/3/21	火州城 Huozhou cheng	Qocho; Qara-khoja	The group stayed there for three days.
day 5	1414/3/25	土爾番城 Tulufan cheng	Turfan; Turpan	The group stayed there for one day.
day 7	1414/3/27	崖兒城 Ya'er cheng	Yar; Jiaohe	The group stayed by the city for seventeen days, after which they split into two sections, taking a southern and a northern route respectively.
month 4, day 17	1414/5/6	忒勒哈喇 Telehala	Tela-hala	Prince Muhammad sent someone to pick them up at this location.

(cont.)

Date		Location		Notes
<i>xcj</i> records	Common era	<i>xcj</i> records	English translation and alternative forms	
day 19	1414/5/8	衣烈河 Yilie he	Ili River; Xinyuan	The exact location of Muhammad's royal tent is not named in the <i>xcj</i> , but it is clear that it was located in the Ili valley and was by the Ili river, in the present day Xinyuan County. The group stayed there for thirteen days.
month 5, day 15	1414/6/2	衣烈河 Yilie he	Ili River	The two sections congregated. They sent Hasan 哈三, a <i>baihu</i> 百戶, "commander of a hundred," to take the horses back to the capital.
day 19	1414/6/6	阿力馬力口子 Alimali kouzi	Almaliq; Huocheng	The group traveled along Ili River and they crossed the river at Almaliq.
month 6, day 4	1414/6/20	亦息渴兒 Yixi ke'er	Issyk Kul	The group arrived at east end of Lake Issyk Kul. The <i>xcj</i> describes the lake as about 100- <i>li</i> wide in the north-south direction but cannot be measured in the east-west direction. They walked along the lake in the next few days.
day 26	1414/7/12	養夷 Yangyi	Yangi; Taraz; Yangī-Ṭarāz	According to Chen Cheng's poem and the <i>FGZ</i> , Yangi was the eastern border of the Timurid territory at this time.

(cont.)

Date		Location		Notes
<i>xcj</i> records	Common era	<i>xcj</i> records	English translation and alternative forms	
month 7, day 2	1414/7/18	塞藍城 Sailan	Sayram	The group camped near the water and they stayed here for two days. Sayram had sent representatives to pick them up two days previously.
day 6	1414/7/22			The group camped somewhere close to a village. Samarkand sent representatives to pick them up.
day 7	1414/7/23	達失干城 Tashigan	Tashkent	The group camped in a field near Tashkent and stayed there for two days.
day 11	1414/7/27	*大站 Dazhan	Khojend	The <i>xcj</i> records the river “大站 dazhan,” which may be an erroneous transcription of “火站 huozhan,” the Khojend river—Syr Darya. Many of their horses died crossing the river.
day 13	1414/7/29	沙鹿黑葉 Shaluheiye	Shahrukhiya	Envoys were dispatched to send gifts to the chief of Shahrukhiya, Yādigār Qabān (<i>Yediger haban</i> 也的哥兒哈班). In the <i>FGZ</i> , Shahrukhiya is transcribed as “沙鹿海牙 Shaluhaiya.”
day 21	1414/8/6	撒馬兒罕城 Sama'erhan	Samarkand	The group stayed in the fruit garden east of the city for ten days. Chen Cheng's poem confirms that they were received by Ulugh Beg.

(cont.)

Date		Location		Notes
<i>xcj</i> records	Common era	<i>xcj</i> records	English translation and alternative forms	
month 8, day 5	1414/8/19	渴石城 Keshi	Kesh; Shahrisabz	
day 11	1414/8/25	鐵門關 Tiemenguan	Darband; Derbent	
day 15	1414/8/29	迭里迷 Tielimi	Termez	The group camped for two nights by the bank of Amu River.
day 22	1414/9/5	八剌黑城 Balahei	Balkh	The group camped north-east of the city and stayed for two days.
day 28	1414/9/11	俺都淮城 Anduhuai	Andkhoy	The group stayed there for three days.
month 9, day 12	1414/9/25	車扯秃 Chechetu	Chichaktu	The group stayed here for half a month, waiting for the return of Shahrukh from his campaign.
leap month 9, day 14	1414/10/27	哈烈城 Halie	Herat	Herat is the final destination of their trip; the <i>xcj</i> stops here, but their official visit of the Timurid had just started.

This table presents the major stops and activities in the 1414 trip of the Ming ambassadorial group from Suzhou to Herat. The source for these records is Chen Cheng and Li Xian's *xcj*.

Appendix 2: Chen Cheng—a Biography

Chen Cheng was born in 1365.²⁹⁵ His courtesy name was Zilu 子魯; he was also addressed by the pseudonym Zhushan 竹山, “the bamboo mountain,” after which the *Zhushan wenji* was named. Chen Cheng’s family had been earning their living as scholars for generations in the city of Ji’an 吉安²⁹⁶ in Jiangxi 江西, but had never made their way to become an established family. Chen Cheng’s father, Chen Tong 陳同, abandoned scholarship to be a traveling merchant during the chaotic years at the beginning of the rule of the newly founded Ming dynasty, thus becoming an experienced traveler. Chen Cheng’s family background may count for Chen Cheng’s enthusiasm for visiting foreign lands, his ability to put together lucidly-worded reports, and his passion for composing engaging poems and essays.

Chen Cheng earned his *jinshi* degree in year 27 of the Hongwu era/1394, and subsequently started to serve in the government.²⁹⁷ His career as an envoy began at the age of thirty-two when he was sent to the land of the “Yellow Uighurs” (*Sali Weiwu'er* 撒里畏兀兒)²⁹⁸ to re-establish the Anding Guard 安定衛 after the Mongol general Dorjba 朵兒只巴 revolted.²⁹⁹ Being one of the seven guards to the west of Jiayu Pass, Anding Guard held an important position strategically on the Ming borders. Shortly after successfully completing this task, Chen Cheng was dispatched to Annan where he managed to mediate a frontier dispute with its ruler. He must have carried out the mission outstandingly, for

295 The year of birth of Chen Cheng is referenced in several writings of the *zswj*. For example, in the “Yilaotang ji” 逸老堂記, a short biography of Chen Cheng by Zeng Qi 曾棼, the author indicates that Chen Cheng is sixty-four by the time. The biography is dated year 3 of the Xuande era/1428, and thus Chen’s year of birth can be deduced. This can also be confirmed by the genealogy of the Chen family, which was brought to light by Yang Fuxue and Zeng Caitang. See *zswj/sk*: 381–82; *Chen Cheng/Wang*: 133; 147–49.

296 Also named Jizhou 吉州 or Luling 廬陵.

297 Information of Chen Cheng’s appointments mentioned in this section comes from the section “*li guan shiji*” 歷官事蹟 [Record of Credentials] authored by Chen himself in the *zswj*. See *zswj/sk*: 355–57.

298 *Sali* 撒里, transcribed from *Sariğ* (T.), means “yellow.” *Clauson*: 848. The *Sali Weiwu'er*, or “Yellow Uyghurs,” dwelled on the boundaries of the present-day Gansu, Qinghai, and Xinjiang, at the northwest corner of Qaidam Basin. Their descendants make up the current ethnic group Yugur (*Yugu zu* 裕固族).

299 See record of *renwu* day of month 3 of year 3/ May 2, 1396, in *juan* 245 of the *Taizu shilu* in *MSL*, v. 8: 3556.

he was promoted to examining editor (rank-7a)³⁰⁰ at the Hanlin Academy³⁰¹ in the following year. In 1401, Chen Cheng, again, stepped up to the rank-4b position of left assistant administration commissioner of Guangdong and other provinces,³⁰² skipping several grades.

While there is no doubt as to Chen Cheng's fine performance at his post, his social network also played an important role in his career. A letter and an essay by Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺³⁰³ collected in the "outer chapters" of the *ZSWJ* give a glimpse into this matter.³⁰⁴ In both pieces, Chen Cheng is highly praised for his talent and personality. The recognition from Fang Xiaoru, perhaps the most important councilor of Jianwen Emperor at Hanlin Academy, must have accounted in large part for Chen Cheng's smooth and rapid career advancement. It was probably the same recognition, however, that cost Chen Cheng his job, even though he was far away from the vortex of politics, as a consequence of the famous execution of Fang Xiaoru when the Prince of Yan overthrew his nephew and proclaimed himself the Yongle Emperor in 1402.³⁰⁵

After enduring a year of financial hardship, in 1403, Chen Cheng made his way back to bureaucracy to serve at the rank-6a position, secretary at the office of pure functionaries.³⁰⁶ He kept this position for seven years, spending most of this time editing the massive *Yongle dadian* 永樂大典, or "Yongle encyclopedia." In 1413, Chen Cheng was assigned to escort a group of Timurid envoys back to their capital, Herat. This was a turn for Chen Cheng's diplomatic

300 For the system of the Nine Ranks and its English translation, consult Hucker, *Official Titles*: 4–5; Wilkinson, *Manual*: 282. For the ranks of these official title, see *MS juan* 72–76, the chapters on the *zhiguan* 職官.

301 *Hanlin yuan jiantao* 翰林院檢討. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, s.v. "868 chièn-t'ǎo," "2154 hàn-lín yüàn."

302 *Chengxuan buzheng shi si zuo canyi* 承宣布政使司左參議. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, s.v. "487 ch'eng-hsüan pù-chèng shǐ sù."

303 Fang Xiaoru (1357–1402) was an orthodox Confucian scholar-bureaucrat of the Ming Dynasty, famous for his continuation of the Jinhua school of Zhu Xi and later for his loyalty to his former pupil, the Jianwen Emperor. He was Academician Expositor-in-waiting at Hanlin Academy during Jianwen period.

304 The two pieces are "Song Hanlin jiantao Chen Zilu guixing Luling xu" 送翰林檢討陳子魯歸省廬陵序 [Seeing off examining editor Chen Zilu of Hanlin academy back home to Luling], written in 1400; and "Zilu zi shuo" 子魯字說 [The Courtesy Name Zilu], written in 1395. See *ZSWJ/SK*: 369–70; 79–80.

305 When the Prince of Yan summoned Fang Xiaoru to write an inaugural address for him, Fang refused, responding to the threat of the nine familial exterminations with "Never mind nine agnates; go ahead with ten!" His wish was granted; himself, his blood relations and their spouses were killed, along with all of his students and peers as the tenth group. Altogether, 873 people are said to have been executed in the aftermath of the incident.

306 *Qingli si zhushi* 清吏司主事. Hucker, *Official Titles*, s.v. "1273 ch'ing-li sù."

career. Learning this assignment, Chen was overjoyed and announced his pride to spread the emperor's fame to the faraway lands. His colleague noted his words at the scene—"Even if I will be brought face to face with cold and heat, or encounter difficulties and dangers, I shall still devote myself to the mission without evading [any hardship]."³⁰⁷ In 1414, at the age of forty-nine, Chen Cheng traveled to the Western Regions for the second time, and for the first time he reached the Timurid court at Herat. In 1415, the envoys came back with gifts from territories that they visited. Upon their return, Chen Cheng submitted to the throne the *Shizi fu*, *XCJ*, *FGZ*, and his previous diplomatic correspondence with Annan, along with seven western horses (西馬).³⁰⁸ He was rewarded a silk robe of honor and was soon assigned the position director of the Bureau of Honors at the Ministry of Personnel, and was granted the 5a-rank prestige title grand master for consultation.³⁰⁹

Less than a year after his return, Chen Cheng was sent to the same destination on the same mission—to escort some Timurid envoys back to Herat. After two years of travel, Chen Cheng returned to Beijing in 1418, bringing with him gift from the foreign countries—fifteen horses, and was rewarded handsomely in cash money. In the same year, he was granted a 4a-rank prestige title and undertook another expedition to the Western Regions. This would be the third and last time he reached the Timurid capital. In 1420, Chen Cheng completed the mission, returned to the Ming court, and was finally promoted to the position right executive administration commissioner of Guangdong Province and was granted the 3b-rank prestige title lesser grand master of the palace.³¹⁰

In 1424, when the sixty-year-old Chen Cheng was about to cross the Jiayu Pass to start his fourth journey to the Timurid territory, he was recalled to the Ming court upon the death of the Yongle Emperor. The new Hongxi 洪熙 Emperor (r.1424–1425) officially terminated all the on-going diplomatic missions immediately after his accession to the throne. Soon after, Chen Cheng retired on account of his old age and returned to his hometown.

307 "Song Chen yuanwai shi xiyu xu bing shi" 送陳員外使西域序并詩 [Seeing off Chen Yuanwai on his trip to the Western Regions with a poem] by Zhou Mengjian 周孟簡, year 8 day 29 of year 11/ September 23, 1413, shortly before Chen left the Ming capital.

308 Chen Cheng's submission of written reports is recorded in "Feng shi xiyu fuming shu" 奉使西域復命疏 in *ZSWJ/SK*: 315. See also "Introduction" of this article. Chen's presenting of the western horses is recorded in his "*li guan shiji*" [Record of Credentials], see *ibid.*: 356.

309 *Libu Yanfeng si langzhong* 吏部驗封司郎中; *zheng wupin sangan fengyi dafu* 正五品散官奉議大夫. See Hucker, *Official Titles*, s.vv. "7936 yèn-fēng ssü," "3565 láng-chüng," "1992 fèng-ì tà-fü."

310 *Guangdong buzheng shi si you canzheng* 廣東布政使司右參政, *Ya zhong dafu* 亞中大夫. See *ibid.*, s.v. "5094 shào chüng tà-fü."

After his retirement, Chen Cheng lived in his hometown for over thirty years. It seems from the *Juxiu yigao* 居休遺稿 [Posthumous Essays on Retirement] in the *ZSWJ* that his later life was quite full and interesting. The activities he describes in his literary collection include managing family property, erecting houses, painting, and reciting poetry with friends. It was also during these years that Chen Cheng composed the *li guan shiji*, “Record of Credentials,” and added a few more works recollecting his experience in Annan and the Western Regions. By 1447, Chen Cheng was eighty-three when his great grandson Chen Rushi finished the editing of the *ZSWJ*.

In 1457, Chen Cheng was promoted to the position of the Right Commissioner at the Office of Transmission, supervising the affairs of the Court of Imperial Entertainments.³¹¹ At the age of ninety-two, he moved all the way to Beijing for the new job. This senseless assignment may have reflected the absence of talents in the court due to the liquidation following the restoration of Zhengtong Emperor (r.1435–1449; 1457–1464).³¹² In the following year, 1458, Chen Cheng expired at his post.

Abbreviations

<i>Bābur/Eiji</i>	<i>Bāburu nāma: mugaru teikoku sōsetsusha no kaisōroku</i> . Edited by Eiji Mano.
<i>Bābur/Thackston</i>	<i>The Baburnama: Memoirs of Babur, Prince and Emperor</i> . Translated by Wheeler M. Thackston.
<i>Chen Cheng/Didier</i>	Michel Didier. <i>Chen Cheng (1365–1457), ambassadeur des premiers empereurs Ming</i> .
<i>Chen Cheng/Wang</i>	<i>Chen Cheng xiyu ziliao jiaozhu</i> 陳誠西域資料校注. Edited by Wang Jiguang 王繼光.
<i>Chen Cheng/Zhou</i>	Chen Cheng 陳誠. <i>Xiyu xingcheng ji. Xiyu fanguo zhi</i> 西域行程記, 西域番國志. Edited by Zhou Liankuan 周連寬.
<i>Clauson</i>	Gerard Clauson. <i>An Etymological Dictionary of Pre-thirteenth-century Turkish</i> .

311 *Tongzheng si you tongzheng* 通政司右通政. See *Juan 274* of the *Yingzong shilu* 英宗實錄 in *MSL*, v. 35: 5820.

312 In 1449, the Crisis of Tumu Fortress, a frontier conflict between the Oirat Mongols and Ming China, led to the capture of the Zhengtong Emperor and the enthronement of Jiāngtāi Emperor. A year later, the Oirats released the former emperor but the new emperor refused to abdicate, which resulted in the *Nangong* coup in 1457. After Zhengtong Emperor restored his throne, he cleaned up most of Jiāngtāi Emperor’s trusted officials.

- Clavijo/Estrada* Ruy González de Clavijo. *Embajada a Tamorlán: Estudio y edición de un manuscrito del siglo xv*. Edited by Francisco López Estrada.
- Clavijo/le Strange* Ruy González de Clavijo. *Embassy to Tamerlane, 1403–1406*. Translated by Guy Le Strange.
- DML/Jiang* *The Great Ming Code: Da Ming lü*. Translated by Jiang Yonglin.
- EI²* *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, second edition.
- Elr* *Encyclopædia Iranica*.
- EMM/Atwood* Christopher Pratt Atwood. *Encyclopedia of Mongolia and the Mongol Empire*.
- FGZ* *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域番國志, or *Jincheng yulan Xiyu shanchuan fengwu jilu* 進呈御覽西域山川風物記錄
- FGZ/SB* *Xiyu fanguo zhi* 西域番國志. In the *Shanben congshu* 善本叢書.
- HAIJ/Haravī* Ḥāfiẓ Abrū. *Jughrāfiyā-yi Ḥāfiẓ Abrū: Qismat-i Rub-i Khurāsān, Harāt*. Edited by Riḍā Māyil Haravī.
- Ḥaydar/Ross* *A History of the Moghuls of Central Asia: Being the Tarikh-i-Rashidi of Mirza Muhammad Haidar, Dughlát*. Translated by N. Elias and E.D. Ross.
- Ḥaydar/Thackston* *Tārīkh-i Rashīdī: Tārīkh-i Khavānān-i Mughūlīstān: Matn-i Fārsī*. Edited and translated by W.M. Thackston.
- HAZ* Ḥāfiẓ Abrū. *Zubdat al-tawārīkh*. Edited by Kamāl Ḥājj Sayyid Jawādī.
- HHYF/Song* Song Xian 宋峴. *Hui hui yao fang kao shi* 回回藥方考釋.
- HHZZ* *Huihui guan zazi* 回回館雜字
- HHZZ/Hongda* Honda, Minobu. *Huihui guan yiyu nitsuite* 「回回館譯語」に就いて, “On the Hui-hui-kuan i-yü (Chinese-Persian Vocabulary).”
- HHZZ/Liu* Liu Yingsheng 刘迎胜. *Huihui guan zazi yu Huihui guan yiyu yanjiu* 《回回馆杂字》与《回回馆译语》研究.
- Ibn ‘Arabshāh/Ḥimṣī* Ibn ‘Arabshāh. *‘Ajāib al-maqdūr fi nawāib Taymūr*. Edited Aḥmad Fāiz Ḥimṣī.
- Ibn ‘Arabshāh/Sanders* Ibn ‘Arabshāh. *Tamerlane, or, Timur, the Great Amir*. Translated by John Herne Sanders.
- Ibn Baṭūṭa/Gibb* Ibn Baṭūṭa. *The Travels of Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, A.D. 1325–1354*, volume III. Translated by H.A.R. Gibb.
- JTS* *Jiu Tang Shu* 舊唐書
- MS* *Ming Shi* 明史
- MSL* *Ming Shi Lu* 明實錄

- QZL/Jia *Shengwu qinzheng lu* 聖武親征錄. Annotated by Jia Jingyan 賈敬顏. Edited by Chen Xiaowei 陳曉偉.
- RJT/Rawshan Rashīd al-Dīn, *Jāmi' al-Tawārīkh*. Edited by Muḥammad Rawshan and Muṣṭafa Mūsavī.
- RJT/Thackston *Rashiduddin Fazlullah's Jami'u't-tawarikh: Compendium of Chronicles*. Translated by W.M. Thackston.
- SBCS *Shanben Congshu* 善本叢書
- TMEN Gerhard Doerfer. Orientalische Kommission. *Türkische und mongolische Elemente im Neupersischen: unter besonderer Berücksichtigung älterer neupersischer Geschichtsquellen, vor allem der Mongolen- und Timuridenzeit*.
- XCJ *Xiyu xingcheng ji* 西域行程記.
- XSJ Liu Yu 刘郁. *Xishi ji* 西使記.
- XYDM/Feng Feng Chengjun 馮承鈞. *Xiyu diming* 西域地名. Edited by Junling Lu 陸峻嶺.
- XYDMCD *Xiyu diming cidian* 西域地名詞典.
- XYL/Xiang Yelü Chucai 耶律楚材. *Xiyou lu* 西遊錄. Edited and commented by Xiang Da 向達.
- ZSWJ *Chen Zhushan Xiansheng Wenji* 陳竹山先生文集.
- ZSWJ/SK *Chen Zhushan Wenji* 陳竹山文集. In the *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* v. 26.

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