The Influence of Bookshop Printing on the Creation of the Sequels to the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

by

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ABSTRACT

In the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties of China, there was a close relationship between the printing industry and the creation of novels. The commercialization of novels, free from strict cultural policies, began in about 1522, the first Jiajing year of the Ming dynasty. This trend reached a peak during the Wanli era (1573-1620), reflected by bookshop printing houses, owned by booksellers, that primarily focused on the printing, publication, and sale of novels. Between the mid-16th century and the early 17th century, reader demands and scarcity of material encouraged commercial publishers to become amateur writers themselves. As the popularity of novels increased, more literary authors devoted themselves to writing novels, allowing booksellers to concentrate on publication and transmission while still recruiting professional and experienced writers. Commercial publishers in the Ming-Qing dynasties notably contributed to popular literature (*tongsu wenxue*) in its early stage, especially the rise of historical and supernatural novels (*shenmo xiaoshuo*). These publishers and their works not only satisfied Ming-Qing audiences' need for leisure reading but also stimulated interactions among and the evolution of different genres.

The creation of the three early sequels to the *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [Romance of the Three Kingdoms] (hereafter referred to as the *Three Kingdoms*) – the *Xu Sanguo yanyi* 續三國演義 [Continuation of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms], the *Dongxi jin yanyi* 東西晉演義 [Romance of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties], and the *Hou sanguo Shi Zhu yanyi* 後三國石珠演義 [Romance of Shi Zhu after the Three Kingdoms] – was influenced by commercial publishers. Many previous scholars have paid attention to the relationship between commercial publishers and novels in terms of circulation and formation, but there has not been sufficient

attention to the sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*. My study situates these three texts within the Ming-Qing print culture, examines the strong commercial purposes behind these texts, and argues that the popularity of historical novels since the mid-Ming dynasty was not solely due to the success of the *Three Kingdoms,* but also because Ming commercial publishers created materials that catered to popular taste of the time. Historical novels simplified official history in order to distribute it among less-educated, and even unlearned, audiences, expanding both readership and market. History, once reserved for the elite, became a common subject of popular fiction from the mid-16th century onward. The use of simplified classical language (*Wenyan*) or vernacular (*Baihua*), reading aids such as annotations and illustrations, and commentaries all contributed to the creation of a public, distinct from an elite, reading community. Moreover, the disordered society of the late Ming created a desire for the Confucian values of benevolence, morality, and sage-kings, which are often stressed in historical novels, and also highlighted social problems and dynastic changes. However, in the mid-17th century, the dynastic change from the Ming to the Qing lessened readers' interest in political struggles; as well, with the maturing of book-shop novels, commercial publishers began producing a variety of genres and later combined genres, so that crime-case novels, supernatural novels, gentlemen-beauty novels, and story-telling novels competed in the marketplace against historical novels. Thus, early Qing historical novels, such as the sequels to the *Three Kingdoms,* tended to be mixed with other popular genres and were sometimes even overshadowed by imported features, in order to meet the new demands of the market.

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Bookshop Printing and the Rise of "Bookshop Novels"

1. Bookshop Printing Since the Mid-Ming Dynasty

The printing industry in late imperial China was divided into three sectors: official printing (*guanke* 官刻), private printing (*sike* 私刻), and bookshop printing (*fangke* 坊刻). Generally, official printing was controlled by government institutions such as the Imperial College[1], or local cultural institutions that were intended to spread social values and educate people.[2] As a result, official printing institutions mainly published reference books or works of classical literature. Private printing was sponsored by members of the upper class, such as nobles and prestigious scholars, who also published classical works and masterpieces for academic purposes. Bookshop printing was the work of booksellers aiming to make profits; these booksellers published anything that would satisfy the demands of the book market and the reading public. The main types of books published in this manner were popular literary works such as plays and novels.

[1] The Imperial College (*Guozijian* 國子監) was the highest institution of learning in China's traditional educational system, and from the Sui dynasty onward was the national central institution of higher learning, responsible for educational administration.

[2] During the Ming dynasty, princely publishing (*fanke* 藩刻) was operated by members of the imperial clan (Kerlouégan 40). Princely publishing combined features of official printing and private printing. On the one hand, as a regional printing institution owned by the imperial house, princely publishing was first defined as a branch of official printing. On the other hand, like private printing, princely publishing also published canonized works for academic purposes. According to Jérôme Kerlouégan, Ming princely publishing was active throughout two-thirds of the Ming dynasty, until it was replaced by commercial publishing (bookshop printing) in the seventeenth century (44).

In imperial China, poetry and prose were treated as orthodox literature (*zhengtong wenxue*) or elegant literature (*zhengya wenxue*), which carried a high status in society. On the other hand, novels were considered popular literature (*tongsu wenxue*) and were generally ignored and excluded by producers and/or readers of orthodox literature. Bookshop printing brought popular novels (*tongsu xiaoshuo*) to public attention and helped preserve and disseminate these works. The earliest known bookshop printers appeared in the Tang dynasty (618-907). However, it was not until the Jiajing period (1522-66) during the mid-Ming dynasty[3] (1488-1620) that bookshop printing started to flourish, for three main reasons: relaxed cultural policies, economic development, and technological improvements.

Since the early Ming dynasty (1368-1487), the emperors enacted extremely strict policies to ideologically control the population and consolidate the regime. For example, the first Ming emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-98), commanded local schools to study Confucian classics as mainstream literature, while other books, particularly those that were suspected might do harm to the regime, were discouraged or even banned. These restrictions also applied to oral performances such as drama, opera, and storytelling. Oral performances were the primary means of transmission for popular novels in the Ming period, while reading was restricted to the literate minority. Thus, novels and oral performance must be considered together when discussing restrictions placed on the transmission and reception of popular novels.

[3] This project uses the historical division established by Qi Yukun 齊裕焜, the author of the *Mingdai xiaoshuoshi* 明代小說史 [History of Ming Novels]. See Chapters Two, Five, and Eight for the definitions of the early Ming period (明代前期) (1368-1487), the middle and the later Ming period (明代中後期) (1488-1620), and the late Ming dynasty (明末) (1620-44).

According to one announcement posted in 1389:

> People who live in the capital will have their tongues cut out if [they] learn oral performances. Actors in drama performances can only play roles of immortals, righteous husbands, virgin wives, and worthy progeny. They must persuade people to do good things as well as express the motifs of happiness and peace. Anyone who is disrespectful to the emperors or sages will be severely punished by the judicial department.[4]

> 在京軍民人等，但有學唱的，割了舌頭；倡優演劇，除神仙、義夫、節婦、孝子、賢孫、勸人為善，及歡樂、太平不禁外，如有褻瀆帝王聖賢，法司[5]拿究。(Dong 24; supplement of juan 1)

The laws established in 1411 further stipulated:

> [people] who collect, spread, and publish songs or scripts that go against the emperors or sages will be penalized. Within five days of this announcement, collectors of anti-establishment works must hand in their collections to the local authorities for burning; otherwise, all of their family members will be killed.

> 但有褻瀆帝王聖賢之詞曲、駕頭雜劇，非律有所載者，敢有收藏、傳誦、印賣，一時拿送法司究治。奉旨："但這等詞曲，出榜後，限他五日，都要乾淨將赴官燒毀了，敢有收藏的，全家殺了。(Q. Gu 347; juan 10)

[4] All translations of Chinese texts, unless otherwise noted, are my own.
[5] 法司 (Judicial Department) was a judicial institution that took charge of laws and crimes in ancient China.

Although the laws were meant to prohibit subversive works, they did not actually specify what would be regarded as a subversive work As a result, the Ming dynasty saw many literary inquisitions, during which some scholars were killed merely because they used characters that were not favoured by the emperors. The trend of literary inquisition began with the first Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang, as the Qing scholar Zhao Yi 趙翼 (1727-1874) mentioned in the *Nian'ershi zhaji* 廿二史箚記 [Reading Notes of the Twenty-two Histories]:

> The Ming Founder had a good understanding of writing, which tends to be a talent bestowed by heaven. However, when he did not have deep knowledge at the very beginning, he always killed people for suspecting or misunderstanding the texts; (these kinds of literary inquisitions) were not a small number.
>
> 明祖通文義，固屬天縱。然其初學問未深，往往以文字疑誤殺人，亦已不少。
>
> (Y. Zhao 740, juan 32)

Later scholars of Ming literary inquisitions noted that the Ming Founder did not really misunderstand the texts, but rather, felt offended (XL. Wang; sec. *wenziyu yu baguwen* 文字獄與八股文 [Literary Inquisition and Eight-legged Essays]). For instance, a scholar named Jiang Zhi 蔣質 was killed because his article included the word "則" (*ze*), which was pronounced like "賊" (*zei*), and another scholar named Jiang Zhen 蔣鎮 was beheaded for using "生" (*sheng*), which was pronounced like "僧" (*seng*) (Y. Zhao 740, juan 32). Before Zhu Yuanzhang established the the Ming empire, he was described as "賊" (thief) and "僧"(monk) due to his poverty, so he considered the use of these characters as a satire of his past experience. However,

apart from the taboos that directly related to the emperor's name and past experience, it was difficult for scholars to predict in what situation their works would be considered taboo. As a result, scholars were in danger of violating the law if their works explicitly criticized the emperor, or if they used word choices, no matter how inadvertent, that he did not like. Therefore, not only did the scholars have to be careful in the creation of literary works, but so did the printers and sellers of those works.

The tightly-controlled cultural policies of the early Ming dynasty negatively affected the creation and circulation of popular literature, especially novels. Playwrights and novelists feared breaking the law, leading to a dearth of Chinese novels for over a century and a half. The known and collected manuscripts found no newly-published novels in this period (Y.P. Cai 34), and so it is widely accepted that a creative gap existed at the time. However, later scholars such as Ouyang Jian have put forth a different hypothesis: in the article *Against "The Assumption of Creation Gap in the Early Ming Dynasty,"* Jian argued that there may have been novels written during that time, but they have not come down to us due to the rulers' prohibition against, and destruction of, popular novels, combined with the people's fear of breaking the law. Although modern scholars do not have access to editions of novels published in the early Ming dynasty, it is an oversimplification to conclude that no novels were created at all during that period. Nevertheless, no matter what the explanation for this creative gap, it is undeniable that the production of novels was in decline during the early Ming period.

In addition, strict censorship policies hindered the publication and transmission of existing novels. For instance, the *Three Kingdoms* and the *Water Margin* were written in the period between the Yuan and Ming dynasties (the mid-14th century), but were not widely read

for about two hundred years afterward. This was a common situation for other pre-existing novels, though not due to failure to attract readers, but rather to the strict censorship policy of the early Ming dynasty.

Fortunately, as the Ming regime gradually stabilized, the emperors gradually changed their attitudes towards popular works. In the Zhengde period (1491-1521), Emperor Zhu Houzhao was a fan of popular works, not only collecting play scripts and lyrics himself, but also rewarding those who collected them. As Qian Xiyan 錢希言 noted in *Tongxin* 桐薪: "When Wuzong (temple name of Zhu Houzhao 朱厚照) traveled to southern China, he unexpectedly commanded the minister to get an edition of the *Jintong cantang ji* 金統殘唐記 [The Story of the Later Tang Dynasty]. The minister spent lots of money and bought one folk edition, which cost fifty dollars" (武宗南幸，夜忽傳旨取《金統殘唐記》善本，中官重價購之肆中，一部售五十金。) (juan 3). This example demonstrates the emperor's support for popular novels, which made the revival of bookshop printing possible.

Moreover, by the Zhengde and Wanli eras, the economy had recovered after the fall of the Yuan. The transition from the Yuan to the Ming dynasty resulted in a long period of economic chaos that hurt many industries, including agriculture and handicrafts. Bookshop printing, as one of the handicraft industries, was virtually decimated. Fortunately, by the turn of the 16th century, these industries recovered, and the revival of the economy provided solid financial support for the popular press. This is especially true as the commodity economy improved in the 16th century and many farmers were inspired to move to urban areas, thus expanding the number of urban commoners. The urban commoners tended to enjoy leisurely

lives, and their power of consumption sparked interest in activities such as listening to stories and watching plays. Educated urban commoners also desired leisure reading. Popular fiction not only satisfied the people's need for reading, but also offered many sources for oral performances. In this way, the urban commoners became the most important group of consumers of popular novels. As the buying habits of the urban commoners motivated writers and commercial publishers, the composition of novels was influenced by the tastes of the urban commoners. As a result, modern scholars consider novels the representative examples of urban literature (*shimin wenxue*).

The improvement in the economy also led to changes in commercial policy. During the mid-Ming dynasty, limitations on private merchants were revoked, so booksellers could freely travel anywhere and promote their novels. As recorded in the *Jianyang xianzhi* 建陽縣誌 [County Annals of Jianyang], the location of a national print centre during the Ming and Qing dynasties, "The book market is in Chonghua bookshop, in which the books are on sale, and the room is packed with booksellers from different places" (書市在崇化裡，比屋皆鬻書籍，天下客商販者如織。) (qtd. in Z. Huang 66). The change in business restrictions made the book-selling market more flexible, which stimulated the formation of networks of publication and circulation.

A third barrier to the development of the print industry was the infancy of print technology. Although moveable type printing (*huozi yinshuashu* 活字印刷術)was created in the Jinli period (1041-48) in the Song dynasty, it experienced several problems, such as different font sizes, irregular composition styles, and discrepancies in ink colour, that were not solved

until the middle of the Ming dynasty (L. Zeng 16). Furthermore, the efficiency of printing was not improved significantly over the centuries, which led to high publication costs. These problems prevented bookshop printers from achieving mass publication numbers and bulk sales.

However, by the mid-Ming dynasty, clay type (*ni huozi* 泥活字), wooden type (*mu huozi* 木活字), lead type (*qian huozi* 鉛活字), and bronze type (*tong huozi* 銅活字) were widely used by the printing industry, and wooden type was favored by many printers for its low cost and high efficiency. Wooden typography further improved in the Wanli period (1573-1620) of the Ming dynasty. The Wanli period saw the rapid advancement of the overprint technique, which made it possible to print text and comments simultaneously and even add graphic patterns around the text. These breakthroughs helped bookshop printing become successful.

The changes in cultural policies, newly-emerging readerships, dynamic marketing, and modifications of moveable type all aided in the revival of bookshop printing and the rise of the Chinese popular novel. In 1522, the first year of the Jiajing period, the first edition of the *Three Kingdoms* was published by the printer Zhang Shangde. Soon, many official editions of the *Three Kingdoms* and the *Water Margin* gradually appeared, encouraging the publication and sale of other pre-existing works, so that Chinese novels and bookshop printing experienced a renaissance. Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551-1602) referred to the popularity of novels in *Shaoshi shanfang bicong* 少室山房筆叢 [Notes from a Small Room in the Mountain]:

> Now people are addicted to the *Water Margin*, including some noblemen and scholars ... In the Jiajing (1522-1567), Longqing (1567-1572) period, there are no other books on people's desks except an edition of the *Nanhua jing* 南華經 [The

Holy Canon of Nanhua][6] on the left and a *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 [Water Margin] on the right.

今世人耽嗜《水滸傳》，至縉紳文士亦間有好之者 .... 嘉、隆間一巨公案頭無他書，僅左置《南華經》，右置《水滸傳》各一部。”（437; juan 41)

Scarcity of novels soon became a concern. In addition to the *Water Margin* and the *Three Kingdoms,* only a few popular novels were created and printed during the Jiajing and Longqing periods (1522-72). According to the *Mingdai xiaoshuo shi* 明代小說史 [History of Ming Novels], there were seven new novels confirmed to have been printed by bookshops in the Jiajing and Longqing periods (D. Chen 257). However, among these seven newly-published novels, only the *Yinglie zhuan* 英烈傳 [Biography of the Heroes] was produced prior to 1552, when bookshop publishers began to write their own novels to satisfy reader demands.[7] Additionally, printing houses spared no efforts to publish numerous editions of the *Water Margin* and the *Three Kingdoms*. As the well-known Ming publisher Yu Xiangdou 餘象鬥 (approximately mid-16th century-1637) stated, “The editions of the *Three Kingdoms* published by bookshops were far more than ten” (*Piping sanguo zhizhuan,* preface). The same was true for the publication of the *Water Margin*, as Yu pointed out: “The *Water Margin* has been printed by numerous bookstores” (《水滸》一書，坊間梓者紛紛) (*Shuihu zhizhuan pinglin* 1; preface). This created a saturation in the book market and led to readers desiring new material rather than

[6] *The Holy Canon of Nanhua* is another name for *Zhuangzi* 莊子.
[7] The first mid-Ming publisher-writer, Xiong Damu 熊大木 (approximately 1506-78) published the *Dasong zhongxing yanyi* 大宋中興通俗演義 [Romance of the Resurgence of the Great Song] in 1552, which was followed by other novels written by bookshop publishers. These commercial publishers produced a respectable number of novels, thus solving the problem of novel scarcity.

simply re-reading the same works. Therefore, it was necessary for new novels to be published so as to refresh the book market.

However, the challenge was that in the mid-Ming dynasty, despite a wide-ranging readership across social classes, high-status literati were reluctant to write novels, because novels were still looked down upon by readers and scholars of orthodox literature. The dearth of professional writers led to difficulty among commercial publishers calling for contributions. In order to continue their business and satisfy readers' strong desires for new novels, educated printers such as Yu Xiangdou and Xiong Damu 熊大木 (approximately 1506-78) attempted to write novels by themselves, while illiterate booksellers tended to hire lower-class writers. This situation provided commercial publishers with the opportunity to create their own novels; these authors and their works dominated novel-writing from the mid-16th to the early 17th century. Novels created by commercial publishers, or by writers who were hired by the bookshop owners, are generally known among modern scholars as "bookshop novels." Unlike "historical novels" or "supernatural novels," "bookshop novels" is not a literary genre, but a term that has been widely used to refer to these novels.

2. Three Early Sequels of the *Three Kingdoms*

2.1 Early Sequels of the *Three Kingdoms* as "Bookshop Novels"

The emergence of sequels is a crucial phenomenon in the history of Classical Chinese novels, which began with the Southern and Northern dynasties (420-589) and lasted for more than one and a half millennia. Creation of sequels flourished from the early-Yuan to the early-Qing dynasty, and reached a peak between the mid-Ming and the early-Qing dynasty. It was

during this time that many sequels to famous works, such as the *Xiyou bu* 西遊補 [Supplement to Journey to the West] and the *Shuihu houzhuan* 水滸後傳 [Epilogue of the Water Margin], appeared. Generally, the creation of sequels was stimulated by the success of the original books. As one of the popular works in the Ming-Qing dynasties, the *Three Kingdoms* also inspired several sequels. However, because there are different definitions of the term "sequel," there are also different accounts as to how many sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* exist. There are six books that are generally considered sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*, but three of these, the *Sanguo yin* 三國因 [Causes of the Three Kingdoms], the *Xin sanguo zhi* 新三國志 [New History of the Three Kingdoms], and the *Xin Sanguo* 新三國 [New Three Kingdoms], remain controversial among scholars. The *Causes of the Three Kingdoms* is a prequel to the *Three Kingdoms* focusing on a a low-class literatus,[8] Sima Miao, who accidentally substituted for the Yama for half a day. During this time, he dealt with retribution against some famous historical figures during the Qin (221-207 BC) and Han (220 BC-AD 202) dynasties, such as Han Xin 韓信 (231-196 BC), Xiang Yu 項羽 (231-202 BC), Liu Bang 劉邦 (256-195 BC) and Xiao He 蕭何 (257-193 BC). Based on the personal animosity among these figures during their lifetimes, they were destined to become the main characters of the *Three Kingdoms* in their next lives. Since the *Causes of the Three Kingdoms* was only tangentially associated with the story of the *Three Kingdoms,* it will not be the focus of this paper. Two other works, the *New History of the Three Kingdoms* and the *New Three Kingdoms*, were written during the late Qing period. They emphasized national reformation and expectations for modernization such as a constitutional monarchy, a modern

[8]"Low-class literatus/scholar" in this paper generally refers to literati/scholars who have a low social status, such as scholars who failed the imperial examination (*keju kaoshi* 科舉考試) or who passed the exam but lived in poverty in their lifetime.

police system, a newspaper office, and banks. All three of these works are far removed from the context of the original, so that readers and scholars who define "sequel" as a continuation of the original do not regard them as sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*. By contrast, the three early sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*, the *Xu sanguo yanyi* 續三國演義 [Continuation of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms] (hereafter referred to as the *Continuation),* the *Dongxi jin yanyi* 東西晉演義 [Romance of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties] (hereafter referred to as the *Romance of the Jin*)*,* and the *Hou sanguo Shi Zhu yanyi* 後三國石珠演義 [Romance of Shi Zhu after the Three Kingdoms] (hereafter referred to as the *Romance of Shi Zhu*), have long been widely accepted as sequels because they continue the story after the period of the three kingdoms.

Apart from their status as sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*, the three early sequels are also examples of bookshop novels, either written by commercial publishers or collected directly from lower-class writers. The *Romance of the Jin* was written slightly before 1612 by the commercial publisher Yang Er'zeng 楊爾曾, while the *Continuation* and the *Romance of Shi Zhu* were created in 1609 and 1680, respectively, by anonymous writers who had close relationships with commercial publishers. Like other "bookshop novels," these three works were produced for commercial purposes and were influenced by pressure from the audience and the book market.

Because the three sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* were responses to reader demands and aimed at generating profits, it is likely that these works shared the intent of placating readers' disappointment with the tragic ending of the original story. The *Three Kingdoms* describes a chaotic period in China, marked by political and military struggles among the three dynastic contenders Cao Cao, Sun Quan, and Liu Bei. These three generals spent their lives fighting one

another and hoping to control the Chinese empire. However, none of them succeeded, and their achievements were stolen by a member of the Sima family. The authors of the sequels did not rewrite the ending of the *Three Kingdoms*, but instead found other ways to relieve the disappointment of the readers. The sequels depicted the misfortunes of the Sima family after stealing the victory of the protagonists of the *Three Kingdoms*, as well as the restoration of the Han kingdom by the Liu clan. In these three books, both the Cao lineage and the Sima lineage came to a bad end, which pleased the supporters of Liu Bei. More inspiring is that in the *Continuation*, later generations of the Shu-Han Kingdom eventually conquered the Sima Family and established the Han-Zhao Kingdom. This ending corresponds to the official history of the Western Jin dynasty. However, the real founder of the Han-Zhao Kingdom, Liu Yuan, was not a descendant of Liu Bei, but rather a "xiong nu" (匈奴) whose ancestor was rewarded with the surname "Liu" (劉). To alleviate readers' disappointment over the failure of Liu Bei, the authors of the sequels decided to change the history in order to satisfy reader support of the Liu family.

In addition, writers of "bookshop novels" capitalized on popular trends within the book market, which is reflected in the *Three Kingdoms* sequels. The *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* concentrated on the history of two Jin dynasties, while in the *Romance of Shi Zhu*, the significance of history was eliminated in favour of the interpretation of supernatural elements. At the same time, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* also invoked elements of scholar-beauty novels,[9] such as the marriage of the two main characters, Shi Jilong and Liu Yuanhai. Thus, these works used the

[9]"Scholar-beauty Novels" (*Caizi-jiaren xiaoshuo* 才子佳人小說) is a genre which appeared during the Ming-Qing transition period (mid-17th century), and is a branch of human-relationship fiction (*renqing xiaoshuo* 人情小說). In this type of novel, the male protagonists are usually young scholars while the female protagonists are beautiful young girls. The love stories between the main characters often start with "love at first sight" (*yijian zhongqing* 一見鍾情), proceeding through obstacles to end with reunions. Notably, love and marriage between young people are the main focus of scholar-beauty novels.

history merely as a backdrop against which the stories unfolded. The syncretic narrative present in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was an innovation in response to the bottleneck in which Chinese historical novels found themselves after the mid-17th century, at which point novel confluence in the market allowed for further developments in this genre. In order to ensure profits, commercial publishers were always the first to be aware of changes in readers' tastes. For example, in the case of Jianyang bookshops, the first successful bookshop owner, Xiong Damu, published mostly historical novels during his lifetime in the early- to mid-16th century. A later publisher, Yu Xiangdou, focused primarily on history during the late 16th century, but at the turn of the 17th century, he began to write supernatural novels such as the *Beiyou ji* 北遊記 [Journey to the North], *Nanyou ji* 南遊記 [Journey to the South], and *Dongyou ji* 東遊記 [Journey to the East]. Hangzhou publisher Yang Er'zeng's works follow a similar pattern, further reflecting changes in the book market.

Historical liberties and supernatural elements are two examples of themes and tropes used by "bookshop novels" such as the *Three Kingdoms* sequels, and the following two chapters explore in greater detail the motifs and interpretations of historical figures and events in the Eastern and Western Jin dynasties that are covered in these novels.

2.2. An Overview of the Three Sequels

2.2.1. *Continuation of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms*

The *Continuation*, also known as the *Sanguo zhi houzhuan* 三國志後傳 [Epilogue of the History of the Three Kingdoms], is the first known sequel to the *Three Kingdoms*. Like many Ming popular novels whose authors were known only by pen names, the authorship of the

Continuation is uncertain. The preface notes that the book was written in 1609 by an author known as the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" (*youyang yeshi* 酉陽野史), from Western Shu (西蜀). Since in the *Three Kingdoms*, Liu Bei built his kingdom in Shu, which was previously Sichuan province, it is possible that the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" was a supporter of Liu Bei from Sichuan. No other information about this author has been found in any historical records, and the *Continuation* seems to be the only known work of the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang," Initially, the obscurity of the author inhibited the progress of textual research; however, in the mid-20th century, the scholar Sun Kaidi (1898-1989) discovered important information from a Japanese bookstore where he had acquired an old edition of the *Continuation.*[10] Sun noticed the signature of the engraver, "Jinling Wei Shaofeng" (金陵魏少峰), in the illustrations. The same signature could also be found in the edition exhibited at the Beijing Library and a 1985 photocopy edition printed by Taiwan Tianyi Press, but the Shanghai Library exhibition does not include the name of Wei Shaofeng (N. Chen 1990). Wei Shaofeng (approximately 1555-1610) was known as a Jinling illustrator and engraver of woodcut pictures, with several works signed as either "engraved by Baixia Wei Shaofeng" (白下魏少峰刻) or "carved by Jinling Wei Shaofeng" (金陵魏少峰刻像). Apart from the *Continuation*, Wei also carved the illustrations of an edition of the *Three Kingdoms* for the famous Jinling printing house Wanjuan lou (萬卷樓) in 1591 (N. Chen 1990). This new information indicates that the *Continuation* was very likely to have been produced in Jinling, which was one of the Ming-Qing

[10] *Riben dongjing suojian xiaoshuo shumu* 日本東京所見小說書目 [A Booklist of Chinese Novels in Tokyo]. Beijing: People's Literature Press 人民文學出版社, 1991 (Third edition), juan 3, 46.

printing centers. Moreover, it is unfortunate that, despite the plan for the book to be divided into two volumes with a total of 20 *Juan* (卷), the author had only finished one volume and left the stories of the two Jin dynasties incomplete for unknown reasons.

The *Continuation* picks up the story after the Sima family's unification of the three kingdoms: the descendants of the Shu Kingdom were scattered to many places, but eventually reunited and rebuilt the Han-Zhao kingdom. However, after the new kingdom was established, Liu Yuan, the emperor of Han-Zhao, and his successors became licentious, self-satisfied, and tyrannical; as a result, the Han-Zhao regime quickly collapsed. Like the *Three Kingdoms*, this book also expressed the readers' desire for merciful rulers. Hence, the *Continuation* compares Liu Yuan's idea of benevolent governance with the Sima family's tyranny, and expresses support for Liu Yuan. Nevertheless, the author also criticizes the rulers of the Han-Zhao Kingdom when their policies create trouble for their people.

2.2.2. *Romance of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties*

The *Romance of the Jin* was written when bookshop owners dominated the book market, and the author, Yang Er'zeng, was a relatively little-known bookseller in Hanzhou. Unfortunately, the exact year of composition of the *Romance of the Jin* cannot be determined from the text, and Yang Er'zeng's dates of birth and death are also unknown. Nevertheless, scholars have inferred from one of his works, the *Han xiangzi quanzhuan* 韓湘子全傳 [Story of Han Xiangzi], which specified "the third year in the Tianqi era (1623)" at the end of the preface, that he most likely lived during the late Ming dynasty, around the Wanli (1573-1620) or Tianqi (1621-27) era. However, this was still insufficient information for determining the composition

date of the *Romance of the Jin*. In the preface of the *Romance of the Jin,* Yang Er'zeng noted that the owner of Taihe tang (泰和堂) asked him to compile *Dongxi liangjin zhuan* 東西兩晉傳 [Annals of the Eastern and Western Dynasties]. He wrote the annals based on an older edition, and the specific edition from which he drew for his annals became a key source of information about his work. Afterwards, scholars were able to find a *Zhoushi daye tang* (周氏大業堂) edition of the *Dongxi liangjin zhizhuan* 東西兩晉志傳 [History of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties] (hereafter referred to as the *History of the Jin)*. This edition had the same preface as that presented in the *Romance of the Jin,* written by Yang Er'zeng under his pen name "Hermit of Zhiheng" (*zhiheng shanren* 雉衡山人). Both texts told the history of the two Jin dynasties. The appearance of the same preface in two books led scholars to wonder whether or not the "older edition" Yang Er'zeng mentioned was indeed the *History of the Jin*. First, the similarities between the two books led scholars to doubt that they were two editions of the same book. However, despite their similarities, they differ in their descriptions of events and organization of chapters. For example, the length of the chapters in the Zhoushi edition is uneven, whereas Yang Er'zeng's Wulin edition is better-organized. Furthermore, the *Romance of the Jin* was published by a Hangzhou publisher, while the *History of the Jin* was printed by a Nanjing printing house. There was no evidence of cooperation between the two printing houses, which suggests that the two texts are the same novel. If so, the *History of the Jin* might be the "older edition" on which the *Romance of the Jin* was built. However, if the Zhoushi edition was published before the *Romance of the Jin,* it would not have used a preface that was written in a later edition. This puzzle was solved by Li Mengsheng and Shu Mu (Gong 2008, who pointed out that the preface belonged to Yang Er'zeng's *Romance of the Jin,* and the Zhoushi edition merely reprinted it

(Gong 2008). The Zhoushi edition was published in 1612, which means that the *Romance of the Jin* was circulated before then. Moreover, it has been claimed that an original edition, now lost, of the *History of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties,* had appeared prior to the Zhoushi edition. Both the Zhoushi edition and Yang's edition were based on this original edition.

The circulation process of the *Romance of the Jin* is less complex than that of the *Continuation.* During the Wanli period (1573-1620), the *Romance of the Jin* was printed twice. In addition to the original Taihe tang edition, Xiangdou's Santai guan (三台館) in Jianyang also published an edition of the *Romance of the Jin* (Cheng 363). Later, during the Tianqi period (1621-1627), Taihe tang (泰和堂) republished the *Romance of the Jin* (379). Afterwards, in the Chongzhen (1628-44) period, an unknown bookshop in Wulin [Hangzhou] printed its own edition, which was its only surviving version (G. Wen 599). The fourth and fifth reprints were produced by Shirong tang (世榮堂) during the Ming-Qing transitional period (mid-17th century) and Jingshu tang (敬書堂) in 1799. Even though the exact number of copies of the *Romance of the Jin* sold and printed by these three printing houses is unknown, the information we do have allows us to speculate on its sales. It is likely that this book was initially prevalent in the Jiangnan area and then became known to the Jianyang publisher due to the circulation of the Jiangnan edition; or, possibly, Jiangnan printers distributed the *Romance of the Jin* to the Jianyang market as well, where it became popular and motivated publishers in Jianyang to produce similar editions to serve a broader class of readers. Furthermore, since the *Romance of the Jin* circulated in the book market from the Wanli period to the mid-Qing period, it is likely that the text attracted many readers.

While editing *The History of Jin,* Yang Er'zeng explored a fairly complete history of power shifts during the Jin dynasty in the *Romance of the Jin.* Yang traced the decline of the Western Jin dynasty due to tyranny and corruption, particularly the "wars of the eight princes" (八王之亂); and the defeat of the Eastern Jin dynasty by Liu Yu, whom the story portrays as a descendant of Liu Bei.

2.2.3. *Romance of Shi Zhu after the Three Kingdoms*

The *Romance of Shi Zhu* was written by an author known only as "Meixi Yu Anshi" 梅溪遇安氏 during the Qing dynasty. According to the information in the preface, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was written during the "Geng Shen" (庚申) year of the Qing dynasty. However, the "Geng Shen" year can refer either to the nineteenth year of the Kangxi period (1680) or the fifth year of the Qianlong period (1740). This ambiguity led to disagreement over the exact publication date of the *Romance of Shi Zhu*. Scholars such as Hu Sheng (2003) and Wen Gehong (2006) have cited evidence that the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is likely to have appeared before 1680. One of these pieces of evidence is the appearance of the carver Huang Shunji's (黃順吉) name in the Deshan (德山) edition of the *Romance of Shi Zhu.* Since Huang Shunji carved the *Wusheng xi* 無聲戲 [Silent Operas] and the *Xu jingpingmei* 續金瓶梅 [Continuation of the Golden Lotus] during the Shunzhi era (1643-61), as well as the *Saihualing* 賽花鈴 and *Nükaike zhuan* 女開科傳 during the Kangxi era (1662-1722), the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is also believed to have been carved during these two periods (G. Wen 362). Second, information about the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was recorded in the *Hakusai Shomoku* 舶載書目 [List of Chinese books Imported to Japan

in the Edo Period], a work written in the Yuanlu period (1688-1703) of Japan, which further confirmed that the work appeared much earlier than 1740 (362).

Like the other two sequels, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* also focuses on the story of the founder of the Han-Zhao Kingdom, Liu Yuan. However, in order to introduce the supernatural into the novel, the author brought in a new character, Shi Zhu, a goddess sent to earth and born from a stone. She received a heavenly book from a Taoist, which taught her many military strategies, and asked her to help a person named Liu Yuan to build a country. Afterwards, disappointed with the rule of the Sima family, Shi Zhu built an army to fight them. While structuring her army, she won the support of people who were proficient in the magic arts. Shi Zhu was encouraged to be the queen of the Zhao Kingdom, but she finally went back to heaven and gave the throne to Liu Yuan.

Unlike the first two sequels, which mainly described historical events, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is written in the style of supernatural novels such as the *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the West] and the *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義 [Investiture of Gods]. Thus, it not only features gods and immortals, but also includes competitions of magic arts as well as more traditional warfare.

Apart from its use of supernatural elements, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* also ends differently from the other two sequels. Where the *Romance of the Jin* ends with the coronation of an emperor from the Liu family, the *Romance of Shi* ends with the marriages of the story's heroes. From this, it seems that Karma (*yinguo baoying* 因果報應) was no longer the most important motif of the three kingdom stories.

3. Commercial Purposes and Literary Criticism of the Three Sequels

The commercial purposes of the three sequels were largely determined by their special relationship with the book market. During the age of bookshop novels, the book-selling market drove the creation and distribution of novels. When a particular genre became successful, it would remain the dominant genre for a time, until another genre took its place. The success of the *Three Kingdoms* led to the popularity of historical novels, as mentioned in the preface of the *Xin lieguo zhi* 新列國志 [New Records of the States]:

> Since Luo Guanzhong's one hundred-chapter edition of the *Three Kingdoms* interpreted history in a popular way, it was favored by the people. Then a large number of literati tried to mimic the *Three Kingdoms*, so the *Xia shu* 夏書 [Book of the Xia Dynasty], the *Shang shu* 商書 [Book of the Shang Dynasty], *Lieguo zhi* 列國志 [the Annals of the States], the *Lianghan yanyi* 兩漢演義 [History of the Han Dynasty], the *Tang shu* 唐書 [Book of the Tang Dynasty], the *Jintong cantang ji* 金統殘唐記 [Story of the Later Tang Dynasty], and the *Nanbeisong yanyi* 南北宋演義 [Romance of the Southern and Northern Song Dynasty] were published in a short time; the amount of historical novels is comparable to the amount of official historical records.
>
> 自羅貫中氏《三國志》一書以國史演為通俗，汪洋百餘回，為世所尚。嗣是效顰日眾，因而有《夏書》、《商書》、《列國》、《兩漢》、《唐書》、《殘唐》、《南北宋》諸刻，其浩瀚幾與正史分簽並架。(“Keguan Daoren” 可觀道人, 864)

The popularity of the *Three Kingdoms* and the resulting upsurge of historical novels led to the retelling of much of the history prior to the Ming dynasty within a short period of time.

According to the *Influence of the Owner of the Book Workshop on Historical Novels in the Ming Dynasty*, the mid-to-late Ming period saw the writing and publication of 37 historical novels (J. Wang 2009).

Compared with sequels to other classic novels, the sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* have a clearer objective: to lighten the tragic ending of the Shu-Han Kingdom, by appealing to the readers' sense of regret and satisfying their anticipation. The foreword of the *Continuation* expresses this intention on the part of the author:

> When [readers] read the ending of the *Three Kingdoms*, they usually felt angry and could not keep reading, as they saw the Han Kingdom was so weak and Cao Cao overstepped the authority of Han. And then it was disappointing when I found that good generals like Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhuge Liang, Zhao Zilong could not restore the Han Kingdom; am I the only one who feels disappointed? .... Now as I write this book, I just want to vent my resentment and please future audiences, and display the loyalty of Guan Yu, Zhao Zilong and others. If I wish to show their respectful loyalty so as to leave a good name for them and vent the eternal disappointment of later generations, nothing can be better than emphasizing the importance of the Liu clan to the Han Kingdom...
>
> 及觀《三國演義》，至末卷見劉漢衰弱，曹魏僭移。往往皆掩卷不懌者眾矣。又見關張葛趙反居一隅，不能恢復漢業，憤歎扼腕，何止一人?.... 今是書之編，無過欲洩憤一時，取快千載，以顯後關趙諸位忠良也。其思欲顯耀奇忠，非借劉漢則不能以顯揚後世，以泄萬世蒼生之大憤... (2; foreword)
>
> However, in order to relate the Han Kingdom to generations of the Liu clan, the author

misrepresented the history of the historical figure Liu Yuan, which resulted in much criticism. The *Jin shu* 晉書 [Book of Jin] says of the historical Liu Yuan, "Liu Yuanhai (another name of Liu Yuan), a rising *xiongnu*, is the descendant of Modu ... Emperor Gaozu granted a girl of imperial descent as the princess, married her to Modu, and became sworn brother with Modu, so the descendants of Modu have the surname 'Liu'" (劉元海，新興匈奴人，冒頓之後也 ...漢高祖以宗女為公主，以妻冒頓，約為兄弟，故其子孫遂冒姓劉氏。) (Fang 1766; vol. *Zaiji* 載記, juan 1). This record indicates that Liu Yuan should not be associated with the Shu-Han Kingdom. It also indicates that the author actually knew this, yet made up another story to convince readers that Liu Yuan was indeed the descendant of Liu Bei. In the *Continuation,* Liu Yuan was described as the son of the Liang Prince Liu Li, whose former name was Liu Qu. After the Shu Kingdom was conquered by the Wei Kingdom, Liu Qu fled and changed his name to Liu Yuan. The name change was a reason the author gives as to why Liu Yuan could be considered Liu Bei's offspring. Apart from Liu Yuan, many characters in this book are forced to become descendants of the heroes in the *Three Kingdoms,* some of whom are fictional characters such as Zhuge Xuanyu and Guan Fang. Although the author tried to give reasonable explanations for these modifications, this did not stop critics and commentators from dismissing them as distortions of history. In the preface of *Pingyao zhuan* 平妖傳 [The Suppression of the Demons], the Ming critic Zhang Wujiu 張無咎 stated that the *Continuation* seemed to be "the patient's sleep talk, which makes no sense" (如病人囈語，一味胡談) (qtd. in S. Hu 73). Similarly, the Qing critic Liu Tingji 劉廷璣 ridiculed the book, calling it "a dog's tale" (狗尾續貂) (73). Likewise, Sun Kaidi, a scholar of premodern Chinese literature, also regarded this book as

"confused by the stubborn idea that the Shu Kingdom is legitimate, so [it] treated the *xiongnu* as the descendant of Shu. Getting into this point, its shortcomings need no more words" (困惑於蜀為正統之迂說，至遂認賊作子，末流至此，其弊實不可勝言。) (69). Much of the criticism was directed at the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang's" willful distortion of history, because Chinese scholars expect historical novels to be faithful to history and minimize the use of fictional elements. For example, the 15th-century Chinese historian Lin Han 林瀚 claimed in the preface of the *Suitang liangchao zhizhuan* 隋唐兩朝志傳 [Romance of the Sui and Tang Dynasties] that this book is intended to be "a supplement of official history" (正史之補) (qtd. in A. Cai 34). Likewise, in the 16th century, the scholar Zhang Shangde 張尚德 stated in his preface to the first edition of the *Three Kingdoms* that the objective of historical novels is "letting people know the historical events, and understanding the meaning of those events" (欲天下之人，入耳而通其事，因事而悟其義) (S. Zhang 888). As a result, historical novels were considered supplements to official history (羽翼信史). However, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" held a different view, tending to separate historical novels from history books, which somehow diminished the authenticity of the historical novels and left more space for fiction. He declared his standpoint at the end of the foreword:

> Someone said that this book might bring a moment's comfort, but the plots are unrealistic, not without fallacious and illusory commentaries. I responded: Do people watch legends and drama? There is nothing true in them, but people still watch them over and over again without tiring; who was pleased? It just pleased people momentarily ... Perhaps it is more suitable for readers to regard this book as a novel rather than an official historical

document.

客或有言曰：書固可快一時，但時機欠實，不無虛誕渺茫之議。予曰：世不見傳奇戲劇乎？人間日演而不厭，內百無一真,何人悅而眾豔? 但不過取悅一時 ... 大抵觀是書者，宜作小說而覽，毋執正史而觀。(2; foreword)

As with the *Continuation*, the production of the *Romance of the Jin* was also driven by business purposes. In the preface, Yang Er'zeng claimed that this book would be "circulated along with the *Three Kingdoms*" (當與《三國演義》並傳). Yang did make the effort to romanticize the historical figures and events, but his monotonous writing style and apparent imitation of the *Three Kingdoms* made his work seem to be a low-level parody. Wu Yanren's 吳研人 (1866-1910) 1906 rewriting of the *Liangjin yanyi* 兩晉演義 [Romance of the Two Jin Dynasties] includes the following commentary on Yang Er'zeng's *Romance of the Jin*:

> The most touching thing about historical novels was reading the ending of the *Three Kingdoms*; there are few people who do not feel sorrow and regret for knowing nothing about the Jin dynasty, so I would like to continue the *Three Kingdoms* and write the *Romance of the Jin Dynasties.* Although we already have the *Romance of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasty,* the narration of this book is discontinued and unsuited for the genre of historical novels.
>
> 歷史小說之最足動人者，為《三國演義》，讀至篇終，鮮有不悵然以不知晉以後事為憾者，吾請繼《三國演義》以為《兩晉演義》。雖坊間已有《東西晉》之刻，然其書不成片段，不合體裁 ... (Y.R. Wu 942)

Although we cannot entirely exclude the possibility that Wu Yanren was dismissing the *Romance of the Jin* in favour of his own book, it is undeniable that Yang Er'zeng's version did not present a satisfactory interpretation of the Jin history. On the one hand, the historical events retold in the *Romance of the Jin* were not clearly explained, so that readers would not learn the proper history of the Jin from reading it. On the other hand, the historical figures described in this book were unremarkable and the narration was relatively tedious.

The *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* merely made up characters and events that differed from the original history; the *Romance of Shi Zhu,* however, cannot be considered a historical novel at all. According to the *Analysis of Two Sequels of the Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, two-thirds of the contents of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* are fictional (S. Hu 70). Moreover, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* no longer tried to mimic the *Three Kingdoms;* instead, it mainly focused on imitating the best-selling supernatural novels of that time. For instance, the main character, Liu Yuanhai, was born in a meat ball while Shi Zhu was born from a stone, similarly to the birth of Nezha (哪吒) in *the Investiture of Gods* and the birth of the Monkey King in the *Journey to the West.* The battles depicted in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* were also similar to those in the two supernatural novels, primarily focusing on the use of magic rather than military strategy. The author's attempts to break from the restrictions of historical novels and integrate that genre with the supernatural novel were not sufficient. As the critic Sun Kaidi stated, "This book is very shallow and just follows the Wanli edition [the *Continuation*] with flashy words" (此編甚是淺陋，蓋襲萬曆本[11]而益以浮詞) (*Xiqu xiaoshuo* 10).

[11] The original comment compared the *Romance of Shi Zhu* with the *Continuation*: "[This] book is also called the *Sanguo houzhuan* 三國後傳 [Epilogue of the Three Kingdoms], which has the same name as the *Xu sanguozhi* 續三

In general, based on the commentaries and critiques, the three sequels were of questionable literary merit. The main criticisms of the novels were that they deviated from history and were uncreative. The flaws of the three sequels can be traced to three main factors that were common to bookshop novels as a whole.

First, since the authors of "bookshop novels" were commercial publishers and lower-class scholars, the quality of the writing could not be guaranteed. Though some commercial publishers were well-educated and had the talent to create great books, others were familiar with writing from their job but were not skilled at it themselves. Further, because the commercial publishers wanted contributions quickly, they might recruit inexperienced writers to do them an immediate favour. Some of these authors simply copied the historical record with a few small alterations, while others parodied the structure of the *Three Kingdoms,* and still others imitated the styles of popular authors such as Xiong Damu and Yu Xiangdou.

The primary aim of "bookshop novels" was to become best-sellers in the market, so the authors of these novels would use any and every technique that could contribute to acquiring a wider readership. The authors of the sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* were aware of readers' disappointment with the ending of that work, and thus sought to relate the history of the three kingdoms to the destiny of the Jin kingdom. By coincidence, in history, the Western Jin Kingdom was conquered by Liu Yuan, whereas the Eastern Jin was overturned by Liu Yu; both of them could be considered descendants of the Liu clan, even if they were not the direct

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國志 [Continuation of the Three Kingdoms], an edition in the Wanli era of the Ming dynasty. [The only difference is that] the *Continuation of the Three Kingdoms* did not seriously follow the official history, while this book is very shallow and just follows the Wanli edition with flashy words" (書亦名《三國後傳》與明萬曆本《 續三國志》名同, 唯彼不甚違乎史, 此編則甚淺陋, 蓋襲萬曆本而益以浮詞) (*Xiqu xiaoshuo* 10).

descendants of Liu Bei. The writers used these coincidences to please their readers.

Due to the scarcity of books in the market, the authors had to produce their works quickly. Not having sufficient time to frame the novels carefully would decrease those novels' literary merit. The wide readerships of the *Continuation* and the *Romance of Shi Zhu* reduced some of the pressure on the authors because, regardless of the actual aesthetic quality of the books, the authors would not be unanimously criticized or praised.

In fact, not only were the three sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* criticized for their lack of literary quality, but so were bookshop novels in general. Even so, the contributions of commercial publishers to the creation of Ming-Qing novels should not be overlooked. According to Ji Dejun in *The Creation of Bookshop Owners and the Genres of Ming-Qing Popular Novels*:

> In the Ming-Qing period, bookshop owners produced many popular novels either, by self-creation or hiring lower-class literati. Although the ways they created popular novels tended to be by coping, adding, editing, combining, and imitating, and the novels they created were satisfactory, they stimulated the rise of historical novels, supernatural novels, detective novels, erotic novels, as well as novels of beauty and scholars. They facilitated the development of different genres of popular novels, which had a profound influence in the history of novels.
>
> 明清時期，書坊主或親自操瓢，或聘請下層文人編創。炮製了大量的通俗小說。儘管他們編創通俗小說的方式多以抄改、輯補、拼湊、模仿為主，其所編的小說的藝術品質乏善可陳，但卻先後促進了歷史演義、神魔小說、公案小說、豔情小說、才子佳人小說編創的星期，致使通俗小說種類繁多，在小說史上產生了深廣的影響。

(4)

4. Research Gaps and Significance of This Project

There have been many studies of the Ming-Qing bookshop printing industry within the previous half-century, many of which have focused on the distribution of bookshop novels in regions such as Jianyang (Chia 2002; Tu 2010), Nanjin (Y. Wang 2004; L. Wang 2008), and Suzhou (H. Xie 2011). These studies and others have identified connections between the flourishing of bookshop printing and of novels during the Ming and Qing dynasties (Cheng 2008; J. Wang 2009), particularly the role of commercialization in the popularization of novels in China. They have also drawn attention to several famous printers and writers of the time, such as Yu Xiangdou, Xiong Damu, Ling Mengchu, Lu Yunlong, and Lu Renlong (Y. Xu and Y. Zhang 2008). Because of the uneven quality of bookshop novels, most scholars did not closely analyze individual books, but rather discussed them as a whole, though there have been studies of works that were associated with individual printers. To date, only one MA thesis prior to this one has discussed the authorship of the *Romance of the Jin* (Liang 2010), and five articles have focused on the three sequels (Ouyang 1990; S. Hu 2003; Duan 2009).

The sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* have also suffered from lack of critical attention due to the success and popularity of the original *Three Kingdoms*, as well as the perception that sequels can never overtake their originals and are thus less attractive to scholars. Compared with studies of sequels to other classical novels such as the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 [Water Margin], the *Xiyou ji* 西遊記 [Journey to the West] and the *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 [A Dream of Red Chamber], it is surprising that only two MA theses deal with the sequels of the *Three Kingdoms*

(Xiao 2011; H. Hung 2013) and a few studies of Ming-Qing novels do mention them (X. Wang 2004; D. Ji 2008; Duan 2009). Although these works are not as aesthetically successful as the *Three Kingdoms,* they were favored by audiences of their own time, and thus it is worthwhile to consider how they engaged Ming-Qing-era readers and how they both set and reflected trends and demands in the bookselling market. Therefore, the main focus of this study is not so much the literary quality of the *Three Kingdoms* sequels, but rather their popularity in their own time.

As the first genre popularized by bookshop printing, historical novels maintained their appeal with readers for over a hundred years. Although the market influence of the *Three Kingdoms* is undeniable, it is an oversimplification to regard it as the only reason for these works' popularity. More importantly, as reader-centered bookshop novels, historical romances were created to cater to the demands of the public. As mentioned above, commercial publishers facilitated a public reading of history, which engaged an inestimable amount of non-elite audience members who found official history unapproachable. During the creation process, commercial writers also incorporated patterns and themes that were favored by the audience. Additionally, the historical context of the early 17th century also contributed to the popularity of historical novels. It is known to us that historical novels became popular in the mid-Ming dynasty, which was also the time that the Ming regime began to decline. From the 1540s onward, Emperors Shizong, Shenzong, and Xizong could not stop the Ming regime from going downhill, as the kingdom experienced political corruption, monopolies of power, peasant uprisings, and foreign invasions. The chaos and turbulence the people experienced drew their attention to the social problems and dynastic transformations depicted in historical romances, which eventually inspired the writing of contemporary novels describing the conditions of late-Ming society

(1620-44). The transition from the Ming to the Qing dynasty under Emperors Shunzhi and Kangxi was not seriously disruptive, but the early-Qing population was still experiencing subjugation and sought escape from political and social problems. As a result, historical novels declined in popularity in the Qing period, a change in taste that is reflected in the third sequel to the *Three Kingdoms,* which will be examined in detail in Chapter Three.

Chapter Two of this thesis focuses on the two sequels created in the late period of the mid-Ming dynasty. It discusses the demands of the book market that led to the writing of sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* and the potential target audiences of those works. In addition, the chapter examines the commercial characteristics of the two sequels to determine how authors' compositional choices were influenced by the reading demands of the market.

Chapter Three concentrates on the early-Qing sequel to the *Three Kingdoms*. By exploring the changing features in the text, including the dominance of supernatural elements, the incorporation of scholar-beauty patterns, and the style of syncretic narrative, this chapter shows why and how these changes were made, and the relationship of the book to the early-Qing literary market.

This study seeks to answer why the sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* gained reader support despite their relatively low quality, especially by demonstrating how the history of the two Jin dynasties was told in the three sequels. Additionally, by investigating the relationship between the three novels and the Ming-Qing publishing business, this thesis explores the reasons for the popularity of historical novels in the late Ming and early Qing periods.

This project contributes to the study of the correlations between Ming-Qing printing

culture and the formation of popular novels, particularly bookshop novels. Furthermore, the present work will also be beneficial to studying the creation of novels in a specific social context; in this case, how the creation of bookshop novels catered to the audiences' reading practices in specific historical periods, and what the underlying reasons for readers' preferences were.

Chapter II. The New Reading Public and the *Three Kingdoms* Sequels in the Mid-to-Late Ming Dynasty

1. The Growing Demand for Recreational Reading

With more people being able to afford recreational reading, bookshop printing flourished in the mid-Ming dynasty. According to Zhou Hongzu's 周弘祖 *Gujin shuke* 古今書刻 [Ancient and Present Block-printing], 367 of 470 collected Ming editions were printed by bookshops after the Jiajing period (1522-66) (D. Wu 9). In addition to some practical books, such as references for civil service examinations, morality books, manuals of mathematics and medicine, and a few classical Chinese novels (*Wenyan Xiaoshuo* 文言小說), a large number of the Ming editions produced by bookshops were popular novels.

Owing to the growing reading demands of the audience, novel publication burgeoned during the Wanli era (1573-1620) and reached a peak during the second half of that era. As Cheng Guofu notes in *Mingdai shufang yu xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明代書坊與小說研究 [Studies of Bookshops and Novels in the Ming Dynasties], since the middle of the Wanli era, an increasing number of literati participated in the creation of novels (59), which gave commercial publishers a rich set of sources. Apart from buying and soliciting manuscripts, several major publishing centers such as Jianyang, Jinling (Nanjing), and Suzhou were able to maintain long-term relationships with lower-class writers. On the one hand, the participation of literati encouraged commercial publishers to focus on publication instead of taking on several roles at the same time as they had done in the past; on the other hand, the participation of literati also significantly increased the quality of the novels being produced, which expanded the influence and appeal of

popular novels. In the late period of the mid-Ming dynasty, reading and discussing novels became a trend. As the Qing literati Qian Daxin 錢大昕 (1728-1804) stated:

> In the past there was Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, but since the Ming dynasty one more sect was added. This sect was called the "Novel." Although novels were never considered as "religion," scholars, farmers, artisans, and merchants all often hear them. Even children and illiterate women know them as if they have seen them before. As a result, the sect of novels has a broader base of followers than that of the three religions.
>
> 古有儒、釋、道，自明以來，又多一教曰小說。小說演義之書，未嘗自以為教也，而士大夫、農、工、商無不習聞之，以至兒童、婦女不識字者，亦皆聞而如見之，是其教較之儒釋道而更廣也。(Qian 282)

Where classical texts were solely appreciated by the educated class, popular novels were favored by both educated and uneducated audiences. Nevertheless, the majority of popular fiction was mainly designed for less-educated or lower-class readers rather than for elite readers. According to Cheng Guofu, the readership of popular novels in the late period of the Ming dynasty consisted of members of the urban class, merchants, and scholars, but with lower-class people making up the largest segment of this readership (334). These readers, such as peasants and street traders, tended to be less-educated urban commoners whose reading and appreciation skills were limited. As a result, a key characteristic of bookshop printing in the middle and late Ming is the lack of an absolute correlation between the circulation frequency and the artistic achievement of the written work. If we examine the bestsellers of the 16th and 17th centuries, it is

not surprising that many subpar books succeeded in the market because they were easier for the general audience to read than their competitors. They had simple structures, more annotations and illustrations,[12] and were written in an easy-to-follow language.

2. The *Three Kingdoms* Sequels in the Late Period of the Mid-Ming Dynasty

2.1 Constructing New Reading among the Public

During the late Wanli year, two sequels to the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* were published: the *Continuation* by the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" in 1609*,* and the *Romance of the Jin* by Yang Er'zeng in 1612.

As discussed in the previous chapter, historical fiction was the first genre to emerge under the influence of commercialized printing. Furthermore, historical novelists were mainly commercial publishers and low-class literati, such as unsuccessful candidates for the imperial examination, "village pedants" (*cun xuejiu*), and "village school teachers"(*xiangshu*)[13] who wanted to benefit from novel publication; hence, the overall creation of historical fiction tended to be profit-centered. With commercial purposes in mind, historical novelists created public readerships of national histories. For instance, Xiong Damu, the first publisher-editor of Chinese historical fiction, claimed in the preface of the *Dasong zhongxing yanyi* 大宋中興通俗演義 [Romance of the Resurgence of the Great Song] that his aim was to retell standard history in such a way that even "ignorant men and women" (*yugong yufu* 愚公愚婦) would be able to

[12] The three sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* all have some illustrations; however, the *Romance of the Shi Zhu* is the only one that has a few brief comments (*jiapi* 夾批).
[13] The terms "village pedants" (*cun xuejiu*) and "village school teachers" (*xiangshu*) are taken from Brokaw and Chow 166.

understand it (980). Likewise, Yu Shaoyu 余邵魚, another productive publisher, stated that his reason for rewriting the *Lieguo zhuan* 列國傳 [Annals of the States] was that "the history of the Spring and Autumn Period could not be known by average people" (春秋列國之事，非淺夫鄙民所能盡知也) (qtd. in "Creation Motivations" 1). These examples illustrate the need for historical romances even after complete historical records had already been established. Starting with Xiong Damu and Yu Xiangdou, the idea of creating history for public reading prevailed throughout the entire age of historical fiction.

Although the creation of historical novelists was originally motivated by the business opportunities and profits generated by historical writing, it is undeniable that an important function of historical novels was to educate people who did not know the historical events and figures for themselves. As historical novelists, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" and Yang Er'zeng attempted to popularize Official Histories to educate common readers. The prefaces of both their works illustrate their intents:

> Since the rise of book printing, there has been no lack of dynastic histories to record people's contributions and speeches... However, they (historical records) are written in classical language and rare rhythm, and convey endless and profound principles which can be enjoyed by the educated but cannot be appreciated by the common people. Therefore, some amateur collectors (*haoshizhe*) always explicate their meanings, simplify their language, and recreate the stories in order to make historical knowledge more accessible. They also incorporate road songs, common sayings, and gossip....

粵自書契肇興，而記功記言代不乏史...顧其古調奇韻，員機奧理，可以賞知音，不可以入俚耳。於是好事者往往敷衍其義，顯淺其詞，形容妝點，俾閭巷顓蒙皆得窺古人一斑, 且與途歌[14]俗諺並著口實.... (*Continuation* 1; preface)

The rise of a dynasty must be followed by its dynastic records; however, both official and unofficial historical records appear at the same time. Some amateur collectors (*haoshizhe*) gathered the resources, romanticized, and presented them to people in a popular (*tongsu*) way; this is what we called "Romance"....

一代肇興，必有一代之史，而有信史，有野史，好事者叢取而演之，以通俗諭人，名日演義.... (*Romance of the Jin,* preface)

For the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang," the greatest problem with the distribution of classical historical literature is the difficulty of the language. Although the historiographers did not intentionally limit the readership of historical works, the use of classical language restricted their circulation to the literati circle. Therefore, novelists saw the need to rewrite historical accounts for non-elite audiences. Yang Er'zeng did not stress the profundity of standard historical accounts, but he did mention that historical romances are "interpreted in a popular way" (以通俗諭人), which also suggests that the existing historical texts were somehow unreadable by the average audience.

[14] "Road Songs" (途歌) are often used as omens in historical romances. For example, in the *Three Kingdoms*, General Pang Tong's death is preceded by a children's song about "a phoenix with a dragon, serving together for the Shu. It was only half way, the phoenix died in the east of the fallen valley" (一鳳並一龍，相將到蜀中。才到半路裡，鳳死落坡東。) In the *Three Kingdoms,* "Phoenix" is a laudatory name for Pang Tong. This song later became a prediction of Pang Tong's death in the "Valley of the Fallen Phoenix" (ch. 63).

Both authors use the term *haoshizhe*, thus defining themselves as "compilers" or "editors" rather than as "creators" (Brokaw and Chow 163). This is self-evident in the ways in which they reinterpret historical accounts by editing, modifying, and simplifying existing texts rather than creating entirely new works. However, the term *haoshizhe* sometimes seems to be an excuse for historical novelists to escape from taking responsibility for their misinterpretations and distortions of history. For example, in the preface to the *Romance of the Jin,* Yang Er'zeng provides the following disclaimer:

> If this book presents wrong names, time discrepancies, different county names, inaccurate official rates, reversed sequences of events, or disorganized content, they are not my original ideas; I have just made slight modifications based on the old texts.
>
> 竟間有姓氏之錯謬，歲月之參差，郡邑之變更，官價之窪誤，先後之倒置，章法之紊亂，皆非我意也，乃舊文而稍加潤色耳。 (preface)

Furthermore, both the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" and Yang Er'zeng refer to the idea of "supplying omission for official history" (正史之補). Unlike traditional historians, historical novelists usually collected a variety of miscellaneous materials from folklore. With the increasing commercialization of historical writing, historical novelists often needed to revolutionize historical themes so as to stand out from their competition. In practice, historical novelists found it too monotonous to retell only history, and thus incorporated fantastic materials such as legends, anecdotes, and supernatural tales in order to attract readers (Brokaw and Chow 9). As Yang Er'zeng notes in his preface, "amateur collectors (*haoshizhe*) gather official and unofficial resources and romanticize them" (好事者叢取而演之).

Apart from spreading historical knowledge and satisfying the interests of non-elite readers, another function of historical novels is to morally and politically educate the people. This aim is frequently emphasized in the prefaces of these novels, as the authors attempt to address the moral principles and political lessons to be found in historical events and heroic legends. According to the preface of the *Romance of the Jin*, Yang's composition has four main objectives:

> This compilation is intended to strengthen Chinese people's preparedness, their respect for the boundaries between monarch and subjects, classify the orthodox and unorthodox traditions, and denounce the crimes of cunning Central China; thus, this book should be circulated along with the *Three Kingdoms*.
>
> 且是編也，嚴華裔之防，尊君臣之分，標統系之正閏，聲猾夏[15]之罪愈，當與《三國演義》並傳。(preface)

These concerns should be understood within their historical context: the Eastern and Western Jin dynasties represented the dark ages in Chinese history, when society experienced frequent regime changes, continuous invasions of non-Chinese people, and serious moral disintegration. With a strong sense of responsibility, it seems that Yang Er'zeng tried to warn

[15] The term "Hua Xia" (猾夏) has two meanings in Chinese scholarship. An older interpretation treated "猾" as a verb which means "disturb" (擾亂), so "猾夏" was often translated as "disturb Central China"(擾亂中原). However, in 1986, Wen Xiaoli noted that "猾" was also an adjective meaning "cunning" (狡猾). In this case, "猾夏" became "cunning Central China" (X. Wen 1986). This paper uses Wen's meaning for two reasons. First, classical literati always pay attention to parallelism of sentences; therefore, since "華裔" (*huayi* 'ethnic Chinese'), "君臣" (*junchen* 'monarchs and subjects'), and "統系" (*tongxi* 'the orthodox system') are nouns, "猾夏" is also expected to be a noun. Second, in the story, the Jin empire is located in Central China. Since the author had a negative attitude towards the conflicts within the Jin imperial family, it is possible that the Jin empire was labeled as "cunning Central China."

people not to repeat this "nightmare" by portraying this dark chapter of history.

Likewise, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" presented his intentions of moral and political education in the foreword to the *Continuation*:

> Now as I write this book, I just want to vent my resentment and please the future audiences, then display the loyalty of Guan Yu, Zhao Zilong, and others. If I wish to show their respectful loyalty so as to leave a good name for them and vent the eternal disappointment of later generations, nothing can be better than emphasizing the importance of the Liu clan to the Han Kingdom. The sudden mention of Liu Yuan was also to take advantage of the Qin-Han's repercussion to alert future careerists, which was merely exhorting [the careerists] to [consider] the next life and rebuking [them] for being flagitious and stubborn....Although it might be known to the defenders (ministers of the Cao-Wei kingdom) of the Cao-Wei [regime], [they] could hardly absolve themselves from the fact that they assisted the traitor.
>
> 今是書之編，無過欲洩憤一時，取快千載，以顯後關、趙諸位忠良也。其思欲顯耀前忠，非借劉漢則不能以顯揚後世，以泄萬世蒼生之大憤。突會劉淵亦借秦漢餘以警後世奸雄，不過勸懲來世、戒叱凶頑爾....雖使曹魏扞力諸臣有知，亦難自免事偽助逆之咎矣。(2; foreword)

If we connect this passage with the main story told in the *Continuation*, we can see that the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" is both outlining his educational objectives. First, he intended to reward the virtue of the Liu clan and the Shu heroes by praising their loyalty and contributions to the Han line. This is revealed in the first two sentences in the passage quoted

above, which, as discussed in the previous chapter, also demonstrated his response to readers' disappointment over the tragic ending of the *Three Kingdoms*. Second, he also hoped that the stories of the Liu clan, the Cao clan, and the Sima clan as described in the *Continuation* could function as warnings to future conspirators such as Cao Cao and the Sima family. With the tendency of pro-Shu/Han and anti-Wei/Jin sentiments in mind, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" made his position clear in the opening poem of the first chapter. First of all, when referring to the Wei emperor Cao Cao, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" uses Cao's nickname "Cao Man" (曹瞞), while he respectfully addresses the Shu generals as "righteous heroes" (昭烈英雄). Sima Yi, an accomplice of Cao Cao, and Sima Yan, an usurper of the Wei regime, are also alluded to here. Furthermore, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" also discussed the attitudes toward Jin's unification of the Chinese empire among the ministers of Wei, Shu, and Wu: "The Ministers of Wei submitted to the Jin while the Ministers of Wu all surrendered; they should be ashamed of their behaviours. Conversely, the Shu-Han generals all fled from home with loyalty; none of them submitted to the Jin" (魏臣順服吳臣降，忘君事仇真可愧。漢將懷忠盡逃避，曾無一介歸晉氏。) (1; juan 1). The remainder of the story is told with these sentiments about the Wei, Shu, Wu, and Jin in mind, and the author directs the reader to pay attention to the lessons conveyed by these historical events.

The third function of historical fiction is tied to the nature of "fiction" (*xiaoshuo* 小說). X*iaoshuo* literally means "small talk of the street" (Chang 6), which was usually created for entertainment, as the *Continuation* points out:

Fiction, the popular talk of the streets, is neither national history nor standard guides.

It just provides you with some entertainment for the long nights and endless days, or distracts you from worries and sadness, so as to please you.

夫小說者，乃坊間通俗之說，固非國史正綱，無過消遣於長夜永晝，或解悶於煩劇憂愁，以豁一時之情耳。(2; foreword)

Because historical novels were meant largely for recreational purposes, historical authenticity did not seem to be a priority. In order to present the history in an interesting manner, novelists added fictional stories, unexpected plots, and imaginary figures to their works. As a result, despite the efforts made by generations of novelists, the authenticity and reliability of Ming-Qing historical novels still varies from novel to novel. Some novels rely heavily on standardized history and chronological histories of dynasties such as the "Twenty-four Histories" (二十四史), whereas others mainly build on unofficial historical accounts and folklore. The mixture of history and fiction in historical novels caused concern among Ming-Qing traditional scholars, as Shelly Chang points out in *History and Legend* (4). Since historical novels were widely distributed, scholars worried that a large percentage of readers who were poorly educated might not be able to distinguish fact from fiction, and were given distorted information without knowing it (4). With this concern, Ming-Qing scholars always evaluated historical novels by how closely they followed Standard History (4). However, in reality, it is difficult to determine how much content is based on truth and how much is created by the author's imagination; these criteria lead the *Continuation* to be rated poorly, and even its readability was brought into question. However, scholars were not the intended readers of the *Continuation*. According to the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang," the *Continuation* is meant to be regarded

only as unofficial history, and mainly targets common audiences rather than the elite, as noted in the preface: "tentatively, this (the *Continuation*) is supposed to be treated as unofficial history which serves as something that you can easily believe. [It] does not dare to profane the eyes of the knowledgeable and refined" (聊當野史，以供耳食，非敢汙博雅之目。) (1; preface).

2.2 The Influence of Readership on Textual Characteristics

This section explores the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* as works that specifically catered to the demands of the reading public, particularly their popularization of language and moralization of history.

The use of popular language is a key element in the expansion of readership. Official histories were written in obscure and difficult language, so that many readers who otherwise would have been interested in history had no direct access to it. This is reflected in the preface of the *Beishi yanyi* 北史演義 [Romance of the Northern Dynasties]:

> Now I tried to ask people: "do you want to know the stories of the present and the past?" There is no one that was not eager to read. [I] asked them once again: "[if] you want to learn the stories of the present and the past, why not read [classical] history?" There were few who were [still] enthusiastic to read. Why is this? [This] is because the language of classical history is pale and abstruse. People have no patience to read it. Even if they read it, they can barely understand a small portion.
>
> 今試語人曰："爾欲知古今之事乎?"人無不踴躍求知者。又試語人曰："爾欲知古今之事，盍讀史?"人罕有踴躍求讀者。其故何也? 史之言質而奧，人不耐讀，讀亦罕

解。(B. Xu 945)

Although this preface was not written in the mid-Ming period, it is still valuable for demonstrating common audiences' attitudes towards classical history, and the need for a simplified history. To solve the contradiction between audiences' desires to read history and the inaccessibility of historical accounts, bookshop publishers introduced a new type of historical accounts: historical romances. Based on historical records, historical romances translated these records into more vivid and accessible language, making them readable by common audiences.

Like the popularization of the language, the moralization of history is another feature associated with the commercialization of historical romances. This moralization took two basic forms: moral principles and political guidance. By interpreting moral and political lessons, historical romances significantly expanded their influence, as the moral principles introduced in these works contributed to improving social morality, so that the novels served as agents of moral education, as shown in the preface of *Gujin Qiwen* 古今奇聞:

> Nowadays, when people see [exhortative] books like *Yaodian* 堯典, *Dayu Mo* 大禹謨, *Yixun* 伊訓, and *Tanggao* 湯誥, as well as virtue and morality books, they are quick to feel tired. [However,] when they see legends and fiction, they feel engrossed and can not tear themselves away. Social morality has degenerated to this point. Nevertheless, the novelists' creations were also credited with influencing social manners and customs.....
>
> 今人見典謨訓誥[16]仁義道德之書，輒忽忽思睡；見傳奇小說，則津津不忍釋手。嗚

[16] The term "典謨訓誥" (*dian mo xun gao*) is an abbreviation of the volumes of *Yaodian* 堯典, *Dayu Mo* 大禹謨,

呼！世風日下，至於此極。然稗官[17]小說亦正有移風易俗之功.... (“Zuixi Sheng” 醉犀生 854)

The political values espoused by historical romances, such as “patriotism and loyalty to the throne” (忠君愛國), contributed to maintaining social order, not only to serve the interest of the ruling class but also the overall interest of the nation. Furthermore, the examples presented in the novels might also provide experiences and lessons from previous dynasties that would be useful to the ruling classes. All of this contributed to the popularity of historical novels with the reading public.

2.2.1 Popularization of Language

In order to simplify official history for non-elite readers, commercial publishers retold the historical events in popular language. This measure helped historical fiction gain popularity among everyday readers, as the “Master of the Eastern Mountain” (*dongshan zhuren* 東山主人) acknowledges in the preface of the *Yunheqizong* 雲合奇蹤[18]: “Self-cultivated people in the field and streets/alleys, never keep an eye on historical records. However, as for books like the *Lianghan yanyi* 兩漢演義 [Romance of the Two Han Dynasties], the *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 [Three Kingdoms], the *Dongxi jin yanyi* 東西晉演義 [Romance of the Eastern and Western Jin Dynasties], and the *Suitang yanyi* 隋唐演義 [Romance of the Sui and Tang Dynasties], they were often keen on looking for them” (田間裡巷自好之士，目不涉史傳，而於兩漢三國、東

Yixun 伊訓, and *Tanggao* 湯誥 in the *Shangshu* 尚書, which consisted of the exhortations of ancient sages (聖賢).

[17] “稗官” (*baiguan*) originally referred to minor officials, but later also came to mean “novelist” (小說家).

[18] *Yunheqizong* 雲合奇蹤 is another name for the *Yinglie zhuan* 英烈傳 [Biography of Heroes].

西晉、隋唐等書，每喜搜覽。) (“Dongshan Zhuren” 東山主人 1005).

Though the publishers initially targeted non-elite audiences, vernacular historical novels were actually widely distributed among various audiences. One reason for this is that both less-educated readers and moderate readers were often overwhelmed by the difficult language of official historical chronicles. The second reason was that, compared with historical chronicles, the historical romances promoted by commercial writers created a more engaging reading experience for readers of all classes. According to the Ming scholar Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610):

> In the present world, from literati and officials to village men and women, from old men at seventy years old to children at three feet tall, when they talk about such things as how Liu Ji (another name of Liu Bang) raised an army in Pei county, how Xiang Yu could not cross the Wujiang river, how Wang Mang usurped the throne, and how Emperor Guangwu revived [the empire], there is nothing of which they could not enumerate the beginning and end, and could not expatiate upon the details such as names and addresses. They gathered together to talk about these events without feeling tired; from morning to evening, from sunset to sunrise, they almost forgot to eat and sleep. [However], when [we] use the *Hanshu* 漢書 [Book of the Han] and the *Hanshi* 漢史 [History of the Han] to show the people, not only were they unable to understand, even if they did understand, they could not understand everything. [The two books] almost made listeners become crestfallen, and viewers shrink back at the sight.

今天下自衣冠[19]以至村哥裡婦，自七十老翁以至三尺童子，談及劉季起豐沛，項羽不渡烏江，王莽篡位，光武中興等事，無不能悉數顛末，詳其姓氏裡居；自朝至暮，自昏徹旦，幾忘食忘寢，聚訟言之不倦。及舉《漢書》、《漢史》示人，毋論不能解，即解亦多不能竟，幾使聽者垂頭，見者卻步。(Yuan 882)

Being aware of audiences' demands for popular history, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" and Yang Er'zeng presented simplified retellings of Jin history in their respective works. For instance, Chapter 10 of the *Romance of the Jin* features a competition between Emperor Wu's uncle, Wang Kai, and a rich merchant, Shi Chong. Even though Wang Kai received a grant from Emperor Wu, he still lost the contest. The original version as described in the *Jinshu* 晉書 [Book of Jin] is as follows:

> Emperor Wu often helps Kai; once he gifted Kai with a rare coral tree, which was two feet tall and had lush branches, and there was little in the world to compare with it. Kai showed the coral tree to Shi Chong, Chong hit it with an iron stick (*tie ruyi*), and the coral tree broke into pieces. Regrettably, Kai thought Chong was jealous of his treasure, so his voice and face became stiff. Chong said, "Do not fret, [I] will pay for my actions today."

武帝每助愷，嘗以珊瑚樹賜之，高二尺許，枝柯扶疏，世所罕比。愷以示崇，崇便以鐵如意擊之，應手而碎。愷既惋惜，又以為嫉己之寶，聲色方厲。崇曰：

[19] The term 衣冠 (*yiguan*) originally referred to clothes and hats. However, in imperial China, only the class of 士 (*shi* 'literati') and above wore the 冠 (*guan* 'hat'), so "衣冠 (*yiguan*)" was used to refer to people such as literati and officials.

“不足多恨，今還卿。 (Fang 656: *Liezhuan* 列傳, juan 3)

Yang Er’zeng rewrote the story to make it more accessible to a broader audience by adding details such as explanations of cause and effect, transitions, and descriptions of characters’ conversations, actions, and facial expressions:

> Emperor Wu heard of Wang Kai and Shi Chong’s competition of treasures, so he summoned Kai and gave him a two-foot-tall coral tree. Kai was surprised. He thanked the Emperor and then showed the coral tree to Shi Chong. Shi Chong took the coral tree, had a look, and then he hit it with an iron stick (*tie ruyi*). Enraged, Wang Kai said, “You do not have such a treasure, so you broke it out of jealousy.” Chong burst into laughter and said, “There is no need to feel regretful. I will pay for it.”
>
> 武帝聞王愷與石崇鬥寶，乃宣愷入，取珊瑚樹高二尺者賜愷。愷大喜，拜謝出內，即以珊瑚示石崇。石崇接過看了，以鐵如意擊碎。王愷大怒曰：“你無此寶，故打碎，欲與相妒。”崇大笑曰：“君不足為恨，吾自償之。 (16; ch. 10)

The language used in Yang’s version seems to be more simplified classical language than vernacular. Compared to the original version, Yang’s reinterpretation avoids using unfamiliar expressions such as “lush branches” (枝柯扶疏) and “rigid voice and face” (聲色方厲). Instead, he provides details in Wang Kai’s response to demonstrate the value of the coral tree he received from Emperor Wu, and his anger at Shi Chong breaking the coral tree. These elaborations not only reduced potential obstacles for less-educated readers, but also made this story more vivid

and lively. Furthermore, Yang added some transitions and connecting expressions within the story, such as "Emperor Wu heard of the competition and summoned Kai" (武帝聞王愷與石崇鬥寶) and "Chong took the coral tree, had a look" (石崇接過看了). The former illustrates the relationship between the Emperor and Kai: Kai is the Emperor's uncle, and thus receives the Emperor's support in the competition. Furthermore, Emperor Wu's participation in the competition also suggests his attitude towards comparing wealth among the people. The second supplement adds the action of Chong hitting the coral tree in front of Kai, as well as Kai's and Wang's reactions, "enraged" (大怒) and "burst into laughter" (大笑). This comparison implicitly suggests how wealthy Chong is. In the end, Chong commanded his servants to get some coral trees, six or seven of which were three to four feet tall and had unique branches, to compensate Kai for his loss (乃使人取珊瑚樹高三四尺者六七株，條幹絕俗，光彩耀目，以示王愷，因以賠愷。) (15; ch. 11). However, it is not acceptable for a merchant to be wealthier than the Emperor, which later becomes one of the reasons for Chong's death later in the story (Fang 657, *Liezhuan* 列傳, juan 3; *Romance of the Jin,* ch. 11, *Continuation* ch. 7).

2.2.2 Moral Themes

Since the formation of the genre of historical fiction, moralization (*jiaohua* 教化) has been an important theme. In Chinese historical fiction, moralization is tied to the belief in the dynastic circle in the history of the Chinese empire. As demonstrated in the *Three Kingdoms,* the story began with an opening line: "The empire, long divided, must unite; long united, must divide" (Moss 3) (話說天下大勢，分久必合，合久必分), and ended with a reversed line: "The empire, long united, must divide; long divided, must unite" (Moss 2295) (天下大勢，合

久必分，分久必合). Dynastic changes, in this model, are like the transformations of the four seasons, following the laws of nature. In the long history of the Chinese empire, the process is always as follows: the establishment of a regime, the development and prosperity of that regime, decline and warfare, and then the birth of a new regime. However, in Chinese history, historians and historical novelists tend to link dynastic changes to moral principles. This tendency is clearly demonstrated in the preface of the *Three Kingdoms,* written by the Ming scholar "Yongyuzi" (庸愚子) (Jiang Daqi 蔣大器, 1455-1530):

> Historical accounts not only transcribe the events of the successive dynasties, [but also] intend to demonstrate the prosperity and decline of the past, to discern the good and evil of the monarchs and ministers, to record the success and failure of politics, to observe the auspiciousness and inauspiciousness of talents, and to be aware of the favourable and unfavorable experiences of the nation. As a result, everything is intentionally recorded such as the cold and hot [weather variations], the fortune and misfortune, the praise and criticism, and the bestowed and deprived.
>
> 夫史，非獨紀歷代之事，蓋欲昭往昔之盛衰，鑒君臣之善惡，載政事之得失，觀人才之吉凶，知邦家之休戚，以至寒暑災祥，褒貶予奪，無一而不筆之者，有義存焉。(Jiang 886-87)

"Yongyuzi"'s preface outlines the intentions of historiographers to inspire their readers to discern lessons from past events, such as distinguishing "good and evil" (善惡) and discovering "success and failure" (得失). By doing so, historical accounts take on the purpose of recording and carrying historical experiences to provide future generations with information and

learning opportunities. Adapted from historical chronicles, historical romances unsurprisingly inherited the lessons carried by historical records. Just as the novels simplified the language of the chronicles, they also interpreted those lessons in ways that were more easily understood. "Xiuranzi" (修髯子) (Zhang Shangde, 張尚德), the first publisher of the *Three Kingdoms,* acknowledges the awareness of historical novelists about the lessons to be learned from history:

> [In] historiographers' records, the events are detailed and the language is antiquated; the meaning is implicit and the gist is profound. If they are not knowledgeable scholars, many want to sleep [i.e. are bored] at the moment they open the scroll. Therefore, amateur writers use popularized language to re-edit [these historical records] into a compilation; they wish people could know the [historical] events when they hear them and understand the meanings of the events and then become inspired by these meanings. Without deep consideration, [people] would know that legitimacy must be supported while usurpation must be punished; loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness should be encouraged, whereas duplicity, greed, compliments, and flattery should be erased. Right and wrong are very clear in people's minds. The benefits of customs and moralization are wide and significant....
>
> 史氏所志，事詳而文古，義微而旨深，非通儒夙學，展卷間，鮮不便思囤睡。故好事者以俗近語，隱括成編，欲天下之人，入耳而通其事，因事而悟其義，因義而興乎感，不待研精覃思，知正統必當扶，竊位必當誅，忠孝節義必當師，奸貪諛佞必當去，是是非非，了然於心目之下，裨益風教廣且大焉 .... (S. Zhang 888)
>
> As a result of the authors' desire to promote a positive social climate, historical novels

advocate moral principles such as "loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness" (忠孝節義), and discourage negative behaviors such as "duplicity, greed, [insincere] compliments, and flattery" (奸貪諛佞). The idea of improving social morality through popular novels was seized upon by later publishers, as demonstrated in the preface of the *Sanjiao Kaimi Guizheng Yanyi* 三教開迷歸正演義: "If the book is concerned with education and moralization, its creation was not in vain. A book that was not written in vain can be circulated longer. However, long circulating [books] would have a relation with education and moralization again, and this relation is immortal" (夫書關世教風化，則為作不徒作，作不徒作則可長久，可長久則又與世教風化相關，系與不朽)[20] (1-2; preface).

The moral lessons taught by novels did not affect readers' enthusiasm, but did engage them. For instance, the early Qing commentator Cai Yuanfang 蔡元放 said of the educational purpose of the *Dongzhou lieguo zhi* 東周列國志 [Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Kingdoms]: "Other books also discuss retribution and also have the intention of exhortation. [However], only in the *Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Kingdoms* is every event a real-life story, so that its exhortation is more real" (他書亦講報應,亦欲勸懲，但他書勸懲多是寓言，惟《列國志》[21] 中，件件都是實事，則其勸懲為更切也。) (Y.F. Cai 7). Cai's comment exemplifies the positive responses of readers toward the aim of "exhortation" (勸懲) in historical novels, as does

[20] Although the *Sanjiao Kaimi Guizheng Yanyi* 三教開迷歸正演義 is a supernatural novel, its preface suggests that the idea of moral education was not restricted to historical novels but was applied to other kinds of popular novels as well.

[21] Here, 列國志 (*lieguozhi)* refers to the *Dongzhou lieguo zhi* 東周列國志 [Chronicles of the Eastern Zhou Kingdoms] written by the late-Ming literati Feng Menglong instead of the *Lieguo zhizhuan* 列國志傳 [Chronicles of the States] created by the mid-Ming publisher Yu Shaoyu.

a comment of the scholar Feng Zhenluan 馮鎮巒 (1760-1830) on the *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 [*Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio*]: "The *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* ... looks like prestigious scholars are giving lectures, old monks are making Zen (*chan* 禪) speeches, or rural elders are reading and reciting the *Words to Caution the World.* Reading it would be beneficial to [people's] body and mind, and [could] warn and caution stubborn and ignorant people. When it discusses 'loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness,' it brings people to tears and jolts them awake" (聊齋... 如名儒講學，如老僧談禪，如鄉曲長者讀誦勸世文[22]，觀之實有益於身心，警戒頑愚。至說到忠孝節義，令人雪涕，令人猛醒) (preface).

The lessons taught in historical romances involved political advice as much as moral principles. Political advice was directed at two main groups of readers: first, the everyday reader of historical fiction; second, the ruling classes themselves. As the *Guidance* points out, writers of historical fiction reinforced the idea of dynastic legitimacy, that "legitimacy must be supported while usurpation must be punished" (正統必當扶，竊位必當誅). Driven by this concern, writers and publishers seemed to be consciously trying to promote ideological guidance, as the preface of the *Wuhu pingxi qianzhuan* 五虎平西前傳 [Prequel of the Wuhu Pingxi] demonstrates:

> Fictions and legends do not go beyond joys and sorrows, separations and reunions, and satisfying people's hearts and their appreciation for reading for a while. However, they

[22] *Quanshiwen* 勸世文 [Words to Caution the World] is a widely-circulated folk poem which provides moral guidance. It is also known as *Jinshiyan* 警世言.

> [fictions and legends] must place an emphasis on faithfulness to the monarch and dedication to the country. They must give priority to promoting virtues and punishing evils. When reading [stories of] the heroes who have sacrificed, there is none that failed to awe the people. Meanwhile, reading [stories of] the traitors who endangered the country made people feel hateful. As a result, historical books must reduce flattery and eliminate trailers; they must praise virtues and blame evils ....
>
> 小說傳奇，不出悲歡離合，而娛一時觀鑒之心。然必以忠君報國為主，勸善懲惡為先。閱其致身烈士，無不令人起敬起恭；觀此誤國奸徒，又皆令人可憎可忿。史書必削佞鋤奸，褒善貶惡 .... (*Wuhu pingxi* 997)

In order to offer political guidance to their readers, historical novelists integrated their own emotions and feelings towards loyal and disloyal ministers into their interpretations of the history. Historical novelists tended to make clear distinctions between good and evil for the audience, either by praising those who were "faithful to the monarch and dedicated to the country" (忠君報國) or criticizing those who "endangered the country" (誤國).

Although most historical novels did not identify the ruling class as their target audience, it is known that nobles and officials, including the emperor, did read them. Notably, historical accounts included many political instructions, such as "the good and evil of the monarchs and ministers" (君臣之善惡) and "the success and failure of politics" (政事之得失), from which the ruling class could certainly benefit. Implicit evidence of historical novelists' intentions to influence the ruling class can be found in the introduction of *Suiyangdi yanshi* 隋煬帝豔史 [The

Merry Adventures of the Emperor Yang],[23] by an author known only as "Rustic from the Sticks" (*qidong yeren*, 齊東野人):

> Although *The Merry Adventures of the Emperor Yang* exhausted all the licentious and extravagant events, the sublime words, the sarcastic remarks, as well as poems and lyrics in the text, all implied a sense of satire and expostulation. It would make readers realize that debauchery will result in death, while construction will subjugate a nation, when they look at it ....
>
> 《豔史》雖窮極荒淫奢侈之事，而其中微言冷語，與夫詩詞之類，皆寓譏諷規諫之意。使讀者一覽，知酒色所以喪身，土木所以亡國 .... ("Qidong Yeren" 齊東野人 953)

Despite the "Rustic from the Sticks" using the broad term "readers," we can imagine that people whose personal behaviours would influence the destiny of a nation would not be ordinary people. If so, *The Merry Adventures of the Emperor Yang* seems to be a warning to the ruling classes, persuading them not to indulge in debauchery and not to waste manpower and money.

The sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* contain examples of moralization, alongside their mission of providing those who could not read official history with political education. The moral themes in these two sequels were initially illustrated by the authors' pro-Shu Han (Liu) and anti-Wei (Cao) sentiments. As Moss Roberts noticed, Chinese history tied lineage to dynastic legitimacy, displayed an idea that "the ruling house is the dynasty"; with this idea,

[23] The translation is from Hegel (84).

followers of the *Three Kingdoms* reached a consensus that "the Liu are the Han, the Cao are the Wei, and the Sima are the Jin" (3042; afterword). Therefore, Liu Bei, who has the imperial surname, had an innate advantage though his remote kinship to the imperial house is unconfirmed. Combined with his outstanding virtue, Liu Bei was considered as the legitimate leader for the Han succession; consequently, the Shu Han empire he established was treated as legitimate. On the contrary, even though Cao Cao never takes the final step of deposing Emperor Xian, his regency has already given him the label of usurper.[24] Therefore, the two authors' pro-Shu Han (Liu) and anti-Wei (Cao) sentiments showed an essential support of dynastic legitimacy and opposition to usurpation. By focusing on the establishment of the Han-Zhao kingdom by the descendants of the Shu heroes, "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" made his position of supporting Han legitimacy very clear in the *Continuation*. Yang Er'zeng's sympathy to the Han in the *Romance of the Jin* is somewhat less obvious but is still present. For example, at the establishment of the Western Jin, Emperor Wu implemented a series of policies that encouraged economic development (Fang 33-56, *Diji* 帝紀, juan 3); however, the *Romance of the Jin* ignores Wu's economic policies in favour of presenting a licentious, extravagant, and fatuous image of him. Emperor Yuan of the Eastern Jin is portrayed in a similar manner as well. Hence, it seems that even though the Sima clan acquired the throne from the Han dynasty, their victory is generally treated negatively in the *Romance of the Jin*.

In their interpretations of Jin history, the "Wilderness Historian of Youyang" and Yang Er'zeng intentionally directed their readers towards the moral and political lessons to be learned from it. Historically, the two Jin dynasties represented a dark period of about one hundred and

[24] For a detailed discussion of the issue of legitimacy, see Moss 3031-3109.

fifty years over a fragmented empire, the time period when China was under the governance of the Sima clan and the sixteen co-existing regimes of the "five barbarians" (五胡). During the Western Jin period, the most glaring problem was the internal power struggles within the Sima clan, especially during the regime of Sima Zhong (290-306), the second Jin emperor (Fang 57-72, *Diji* 帝紀, juan 4). As the emperor, Sima Zhong never had a chance to be the real governor; over his seventeen-year regime, he was controlled by numerous regents, including his uncle Yang Jun, his wife Jia Nanfeng, and seven princes in turn. In addition to being a puppet emperor, Sima Zhong was also deposed from his throne several times. Each of Sima Zhong's regents asserted his/her authority for about one or two years, with the exception of Empress Jia Nanfeng, who controlled the court for nearly ten years. The appearance of a new regent was usually at the expense and death of the previous regent, so the whole period of Sima Zhong witnessed much conflict and warfare among the princes. It was not until Sima Zhong was poisoned in the year 307 that the "wars of the eight princes" (八王之亂) came to an end. While the Jin imperial family was occupied with their internal struggles, the non-Han Chinese from neighbouring countries seized the chance to wage war, which resulted in the period known as the "invasion of the five barbarians" (五胡亂華).[25] The military conflicts between the Han and the non-Han Chinese continued during the Eastern Jin period, which led to the co-existence of the Eastern Jin regime and sixteen small regimes[26] in the Chinese empire.

[25] The "five barbarians" (*wuhu* 五胡) include *xiongnu* (匈奴), *jie* (羯), *xianbei* (鮮卑), *qiang* (羌), and *di* (氐).
[26] The sixteen regimes primarily consisted of non-Chinese regimes, including the Qian-Zhao (前趙, ruled by *xiongnu*), Hou-Zhao (後趙, ruled by *jie*), Qian-Yan (前燕, ruled by *xianbei*), Qian-Liang (前涼, ruled by Han people), Qian-Qin (前秦，ruled by *di*), Hou-Qin (後秦, ruled by *qiang*), Hou-Yan (後燕, ruled by *xianbei*), Xi-Qin (西秦, ruled by *xianbei*), Hou-Liang (後涼, ruled by *di*), Nan-Liang (南涼, ruled by *xianbei*) Xi-Liang (西涼, ruled by the Han people), Bei-Liang (北涼, ruled by *hu* (胡)), Nan-Yan (南燕, ruled by *xianbei*), Bei-Yan (北燕, ruled by

The long-term divisions and struggles for imperial power during the two Jin dynasties raised the following concerns in the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin*: what constitutes a long-term stable reign? What kinds of rulers did the people expect? What is the proper monarch-subject relationship? These questions informed the moral themes in the *Three Kingdoms* sequels: "benevolent government " (仁政), a "rule of morality "(德治), "idealized kings" (理想君主) and "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" (三綱五常).

Sun Hao, the third ruler of the Wu (吳) Kingdom, is held up as a lesson in "benevolent government" and "rule of morality." According to the *Three Kingdoms,* the Wu kingdom was ruled by the Sun clan for generations, and its geographical location prevented it from being attacked by the Wei and the Shu for years. However, as a result of Sun Hao's tyrannical governance, the Wu kingdom was easily conquered during his reign. As told in Chapter 3 of the *Continuation*, Sun Hao had little regard for the lives of his ministers, and killed them in extremely cruel ways, such as "sawing off their head" (鋸斷其首), "peeling off their skin" (剝人面皮), or "gouging out their eyes" (鑿人眼目) (22-23; ch. 3); hence, the people were upset and had no faith in him. In one incident, when he was frolicking with concubines and maids during a heavy snowfall, he was indifferent to the soldiers who were frozen to death. As a result, angry soldiers even said, "if the enemy comes, we are going to surrender" (若遇敵至，便當倒戈矣) (22). Sun's tyranny inescapably caught the attention of his rivals, the Jin Kingdom, and later brought the Wu Kingdom to ruin.

From the fall of the Wu, one can see that if rulers are not benevolent, they may put the

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the Han people), Xia (夏, ruled by *xiongnu*) and Cheng-Han (成漢, ruled by *di*) [listed in sequential order].

state itself at risk. This idea was discussed earlier in the Confucian Classics *Daxue* 大學 [The Great Learning], in reference to the collapse of the Shang Dynasty (1650-1046 BC). King Zhou of Shang, who created the "Cannon Burning Punishment" (炮烙之刑) to please his concubine Da Ji and once commanded the loyal minister Bi Gan to tear out his heart in the palace, ultimately ruined the country because of his inhumanity. *The Great Learning* says of King Zhou: “One can gain a country if he gains people. One will lose a country if he loses people” (得眾則得國，失眾則失國) (31; ch. 11). Mencius (372-289), the great Confucian after Confucius (551- 478), further noted, “if one wants the people’s support, he should win their hearts first” (得其心，斯得民矣) (154; ch. *Li Lou* 離婁). The best way to win people’s hearts is by governing them with “benevolence” (仁) and “virtue” (德). In order to further illustrate this point, the “Wilderness Historian of Youyang” presents the viewpoints of three Jin ministers regarding Emperor Wu’s hesitation about attacking the Wu kingdom. Though the other ministers are afraid of the kingdom’s power, the Yangzhou governor Yang Gu suggests, “We should take advantage of people’s dissatisfaction of Sun Hao’s tyranny and heavy penalties, and take action” (宜乘孫皓酷虐，刑繁民怨, 但當速濟大功耳。) (21; ch. 3). After several Wu generals surrender to Jin, Du Yu notes that Sun’s inhuman behaviour has provided the Jin with their best opportunity: “If Sun Hao realized his problems in fear, and then remorsefully made a change to implement benevolence, strengthen guides, repair walls, and set watchers, the Wu Kingdom would no longer be attackable....” (若孫皓一旦懼怖，悔過遷善，內修文德，外嚴武備，補葺城邑，擇人守治，如此則進不可攻....) (22；ch. 3). Zhang Hua agrees: “There is no need to hesitate. The Emperor of Wu, who killed many talented and virtuous ministers, is licentious and brutal; if

we fight against him, we can win by paying nothing" (吳主淫虐，誅殺賢能，若往討之，可不勞而定，何必疑焉?) (22). After gathering the evidence of Sun Hao's atrocity, Emperor Wu of Jin successfully conquers the Wu Kingdom. Thus, regardless of the other reasons for the collapse of the Wu kingdom, the author presents Sun Hao's lack of "benevolence" and "virtue" as the main reason.

In service of the ideal kingdom based on moral principles, historians considered benevolence and virtue as signs of the "ideal king" (理想君主). During the age of the three kingdoms, Liu Bei was widely presented as the "idealized ruler," though he did become arrogant in his later years. Like Liu Bei, the founder of Han-Zhao, Liu Yuan (in the *Continuation*), and the king of Qian-Qin, Fu Jian (in the *Romance of the Jin*), were also regarded as ideal rulers in the chaotic Jin era. Where Liu Bei's benevolence and virtue distinguished him from other dynastic contenders, Liu Yuan's and Fu Jian's mercy and morality made them stand out from the dozens of emperors mentioned in the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin.*

Like Liu Bei, Liu Yuan also attached great importance to talented people. In Chapter 41 of the *Continuation*, Liu Yuan, who had already become the king of Han, intended to recruit the wise man Chen Yuanda. However, when Liu Yuan's messengers arrived at Chen's house, they were refused. In fact, it was a test by Chen Yuanda, as he said to his confused friends: "I knew Yuanhai (courtesy name of Liu Yuan), who has impressive appearance, has the ambition to unify the empire. His ministers all have great talents, so I believe he will succeed. However, if I rashly pledge myself to him solely on the note of a messenger, I cannot escape from the ridicule of the many" (吾久知元海姿度卓犖，有籠羅宇宙之志，其下諸臣皆經濟開創之才，大事必成。

今若只憑一使之箋，輕身屑就，不能無事於眾口之嗤嗤矣。) (311; ch. 41). His friends had no expectations for Liu Yuan to come himself; yet, several weeks later, Liu not only visited Chen in person, but also prepared many gifts. In fact, Liu Yuan was busy at war at that time, but he chose to put his military responsibilities aside and give priority to Chen Yuanda, which indicates his respect for talented people.

Liu Yuan was a leader who was magnanimous and considerate to his subordinates, as shown in Chapter 88, when Yuan's adopted son Liu Yao lost two battles against the Luoyang, losing seventy thousand soldiers. Yao was worried about being blamed for the losses. However, to Yao's surprise, Yuan did not blame him, but instead comforted him: "Wars are dangerous, and nobody can promise victory, so there is nothing to be punished for. We just need to try harder, and achieve our plan together" (兵者危事，焉能保其必勝，何得言罪！但當勵心再舉，共圖大計可也。) (683; ch. 88). Afterwards, to enhance morale, Liu Yuan treated the generals and soldiers generously. To illustrate that it was not Liu Yao's relationship to Liu Yuan that exempted him from punishment, another general, Wang Mi, was also forgiven for the outcome of the battle. Liu Yuan did not listen to his prime minister, who objected to the war, and thus blamed himself for what happened: "The prime minister predicted that now was not the time for Jin's ruin [but I did not listen], so it is my fault. Besides, the King of Shi'an (Liu Yao) also failed; therefore, you are not the only person who should be responsible for the failure" (斯時晉數尚未該破，丞相曾言之，是朕自誤，始安王亦敗，豈汝一人之罪乎?) (683). Later, Liu Yuan gave him a promotion and treated him to a feast.

The narrative of Liu Yuan presents the image of a wise leader. Regarding the failure of

the war, the first thing he did was to comfort the two defeated generals and encourage them to continue working hard. Furthermore, Liu Yuan rewarded generals and soldiers at the same time, which shows his fairness. In addition, as a leader, Liu Yuan was brave enough to admit his mistake, and was comfortable with taking responsibility alongside his subordinates, which made him respectable.

However, Liu Yuan's kindness does not mean unlimited tolerance. In Chapter 40, after the Han army conquered the Jiexiu county, general Qiao Xi molested the county magistrate's wife. When she scolded Qiao Xi, he killed her and her family. Knowing this, Liu Yuan recalled Qiao right away, and rebuked him severely: "If Heaven knows your cruel behaviour, do you think you will have future generations?" (汝所為殘忍，使天道有知，其望有後乎?) (308; ch. 40).

In contrast to the emphasis on Liu Yuan's leadership skills, the depiction of Fu Jian focuses more on his morality. In the *Romance of the Jin,* Fu Jian first appeared as a national hero with a strong sense of justice. Originally, Fu Jian was not the successor, but a Qin (秦) prince with great reputation due to his virtue. In contrast, his brother, King Fu Sheng, was a bloody and violent ruler who always randomly killed ministers. Unsatisfied with King Fu Sheng, two ministers persuaded Jian to replace his tyrannous brother.

The internal conflicts occurring before Fu Jian makes his decision are examples of the struggle between "loyalty"(忠) and "righteousness" (義), the virtues that are frequently celebrated in historical novels. Loyalty to the emperor is a key virtue in Confucianism; usurping the throne from the emperor violates that principle and brings shame. Therefore, Fu Jian initially

refuses the suggestion to overthrow King Fu Sheng. Meanwhile, "righteousness" (義) is as important as "loyalty" (忠) in Confucian principles. As a righteous prince, Fu Jian sees his mission as the well-being of his people, and he therefore desires to fight the unmerciful ruler and save the people from his tyranny. In this case, it seems that the values of righteousness and loyalty are in conflict and cannot be achieved simultaneously.

However, Fu Jian eventually solved the contradiction between "loyalty" and "righteousness" without breaking either. In the episode *Fu Jian Prepares Presents to Hire Wang Meng* (苻堅備儀聘王猛), Fu Jian claims: "If one can save people from fire and water, and practice the idea of Yao and Sun; that is loyalty" (救民於水火之中，致君於堯舜之化，此謂忠矣) (310). Here, Fu Jian defines "loyalty" (*zhong* 忠) as not being restricted to the King, but rather as applicable to all the people. With this in mind, Fu Jian further determines that being faithful to the king is the "smaller righteousness" (*xiaoyi* 小義), while saving the people from cruel governance is the "greater righteousness" (*dayi* 大義). In order to "uphold the greater righteousness in the world" (伸張大義於天下), the "smaller righteousness" must be put aside (310). Fu Jian's decision earned the people's support, and his efforts succeeded. After the war, Fu Jian gave up the throne to his elder brother Fu Fa, who also contributed to defeating King Fu Sheng. It was after Fu Fa's rejection that Jian took the throne. Hence, it seems that what motivated Fu Jian to overthrow the King is not the temptation of the "throne," but responsibility towards the people.

Fu Jian became a wise and virtuous ruler who set good examples for his people. For instance, when the Qin kingdom experienced a drought, King Fu Jian gave up feasting and

entertainment and had his concubines do needlework, so that he would share the burdens of his people who were suffering due to the drought. Under his governance, the Qin kingdom experienced peace and prosperity: "tyrannical landlords were no longer arrogant; property left by the roadside remained untouched until the owner returned for it; a positive social atmosphere prevailed; and people all lived in harmony and happiness" (豪右屏氣，路不拾遺，風化大行，百姓安堵) (312). Fu Jian himself is described using phrases such as "the broad-minded, merciful, and generous King of Qin Jian."

In addition to benevolent governance and idealized rulers, another underlying theme in these works is the proper relationship between the monarch and the subjects. This can be determined from the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" (三綱五常), the Confucian values concerned with human relationships. The concepts of the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" derive from Confucius' idea of proper government, as recorded in the *Lunyu* 論語 [*The Analects*]: "[Let] the prince be a prince, the minister a minister, the father a father and the son a son"[27] (君君、臣臣、父父、子子) (131; ch. Yan Yuan 顏淵). Dong Zhongshu, a great Confucian in the Han dynasty, further interpreted Confucius' description of the ideal government as a prearranged and timeless principal-subordinate relation between sovereign and minister, father and son, and husband and wife that determined individuals' roles in society. These relations are the three cardinal guides, "ruler guides subject, father guides son, and husband guides wife" (君為臣綱、父為子綱、夫為妻綱), which contribute to creating a proper social order. Hand in hand with these three relationships are the "five constant virtues":

[27] The translation is from Waley.

benevolence, righteousness, proper rite, knowledge, and integrity (仁、義、禮、智、信). Therefore, the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" are the crucial components of an orderly society. Though the Confucians did not consider the implications of those cardinal guides and constant virtues, such as ministers being loyal to the emperor when he is benevolent, or sons being obedient to fathers who are kind (Chang 100), they still remained prevalent throughout China's imperial period.

Unfortunately, in the history of the Western Jin, the values of the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" were destroyed. Under the temptation of power and desire, the principles of the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" no longer mattered. As a result, the authority of the monarchs was challenged. One example of this is the Emperor Hui of Jin (Sima Zhong). During his reign, Sima Zhong was controlled by his relatives, his wife, and his brothers, with Empress Jia Nanfeng exerting the greatest influence on the kingdom. When Jia Nanfeng was the Crown Princess, she was already keeping a firm hand on the Prince Sima Zhong. After becoming the Empress, Jia's control of Sima Zhong further intensified. As described in the episode "Jia Nanfeng takes over the power" (賈氏南風奪朝權)in the *Romance of the Jin*, when Emperor Hui (Sima Zhong) went to the court, Empress Jia always sat behind a bead curtain and interfered in the discussions without permission. Additionally, Empress Jia made all the decisions, while Emperor Hui dared not disagree with her (*Continuation* ch. 15; E. *Romance of the Jin* ch. 24). Clearly, Jia Nanfeng was the real power holder, whereas the Emperor Hui was merely a puppet emperor.

The story of Empress Jia Nanfeng well illustrates the power struggles among the Jin

imperial family. In order to strengthen her authority, Empress Jia first murdered and replaced the previous regent, Yang Jun, the uncle of Emperor Hui, with the help of Prince Chu and Prince Runan. Afterwards, she took advantage of the conflicts between the two princes and killed them one by one. Finally, Empress Jia poisoned the Crown Prince, Sima Yu, to maintain her supreme authority. During Empress Jia's ten-year regency, the Jin Kingdom was dominated by her viciousness and ruthlessness. Ultimately, Empress Jia was replaced by the next Prince Regent of Zhao (Sima Lun), who usurped the throne from her.

The disorders of the Jin imperial family eventually pushed the Jin empire towards destruction. The dark Jin period did not directly demonstrate what a proper relationship between emperor and ministers is supposed to be; however, by showing the problems within the Jin imperial family, the authors of the *Three Kingdoms* sequels used the fall of the Jin as a warning to immediate readers and future generations.

3. Conclusion

The mid-Ming dynasty witnessed increasing demands for recreational reading, which facilitated the rise of bookshop printing and popular novels. Targeting non-elite audiences who were interested in history but had difficulty understanding historical chronicles, bookshop publishers introduced historical romances to the market. While historical chronicles were written in classic language that had a restricted readership, historical romances used a simplified language that was understandable to readers and audiences at a variety of literacy levels. Historical romances also provided moral and political lessons for their readers. All of these characteristics helped historical romances become the first genre in the Chinese book market to

gain widespread popularity. Until the early 17th century, historical romance was still one of the best-selling genres of Chinese literature.

Created under the trend of historical romances, the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* were also written in popular language and provided moral and political education. The moral themes present in these works included "benevolent government "(仁政), a "rule of morality "(德治),"idealized kings" (理想君主), and the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" (三綱五常). The authors of the *Three Kingdoms* sequels used these ideas as models to direct their readers to reflect on the experiences and lessons to be gained from the history of the Jin period.

As the preface of "Meixi Yu Anshi" points out, popular novels are expected above all to bring enjoyment to their readers:

> Taking a panoramic view of ancient and contemporary legends and Yuefu [樂府 Music Bureau] poems ... [They] are either touched by loyalty and filial piety, or affected by romantic affairs, or inspired by the fickleness of human relationships, or enlivened by the voices and airs. [Nevertheless, all of them] are playful words, which were improvisational. [Those] which made readers feel both joy and sorrow, making them want to sing and cry, were very common.
>
> 曆觀古今傳奇樂府 ... 或為忠孝所感，或為風月所牽，或為炎涼所發，或為聲氣所生。皆翰墨遊戲，隨興所之，使讀者既喜既憐而欲歌欲哭者，比比然矣。(4; preface)

However, it is evident that popular fiction created during the Ming dynasty, especially historical fiction, became a way to reinforce morals and politics. Although the educational aim of popular fiction did not necessarily affect the enjoyment of readers, undue emphasis on lessons could risk alienating readers. Nonetheless, teaching lessons through popular fiction continued to be a goal of Ming commercial publishers and writers of all genres.

To understand why commercial publishers attached a great importance to the educational functions of popular fiction, it is necessary to look into the status of fiction in the history of Chinese literature. Since ancient times, fiction was treated as a "little way" (*xiaodao* 小道), a literary mode of lower status than, for example, poetry or non-fiction prose. In the *Hanshu:yiwenzhi* 漢書: 藝文志 [Book of Han: Treatise on Literature], the historian Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) summarizes the elite attitudes toward fiction:

> The school of novelists probably stems from minor officials, which consists of people who talk along the streets and small alleys as well as people of hearsay. Confucius stated: "Even little ways must have something that is worth reading. However, if it [the little way] intends to be circulated for a long time, it is probably not going to work. Therefore, gentlemen will not [study] it." Nevertheless, the little way will never disappear. What people from small villages with little wisdom can attain to, should also be compiled so that it would not be forgotten. If there is one sentence [from their creations] that is worth using, it is also an opinion from woodcutters and madmen.
>
> 小說家者流。蓋出於稗官，街談巷語道聽塗説者之所造也。孔子曰："雖小道必有可觀者焉！致遠恐泥，是以君子弗為也。" 然亦弗滅也，閭裡小知者之所及，亦使

綴而不忘；如或一言可采，此亦芻蕘、狂夫之議也。(172；sec. *Xiaoshuo* 小說)

This passage demonstrates the low status of novelists among more educated members of society. Furthermore, although Confucius admitted that fiction may contain some positive values, he seemed to have little confidence in its circulation and reception. These opinions of fiction continued to have an effect on literary circles for centuries afterward. It was not until the Song dynasty that the status of fiction increased, due to the popularity of novels and dramas. In the preface of the *Leishuo* 類說, a collection of Song "literary sketches" (筆記小說), the author Zeng Zao 曾慥 notes: "[What is] worth reading in the little way is the admonishment of sages" (小道可觀，聖人之訓也) (qtd. in M. Chen 46). Zeng highlights four social functions of fiction: "supporting governance and laws" (資治體), "assisting the education of the Confucian ethnic system" (助名教[28]), "providing materials for conversation" (供談笑) and "increasing knowledge" (廣見聞) (46). These functions, particularly that of moral education, helped the literate classes appreciate the value of fiction. For instance, the scholar Ling Yunhan 凌雲翰 (mid-14th century) states in the preface of the *Jiandengxinhua* 剪燈新話: "Although this edition [comes from] the school of novelists, it [has an effect on] promoting virtues and punishing evils. [Additionally,] it always contains lessons [that people] can draw from, [so we] cannot say it is useless for the world" (是編雖稗官之流，而勸善懲惡，動存鑒戒，不可謂無補於世) (Ling 600). Likewise, in the preface of the *Jinghuayuan* 鏡花緣, the Qing critic Hong Diyuan 洪棣元 claims that the value of this book is its desire to "rectify people's hearts" (正人心) and "correct the social

[28] The term "名教" refers to "the Confucian ethnic system," a series of ideologies and behavioural criteria that were meant to maintain and strengthen the feudal system.

atmosphere" (端風化) (Hong 1442-43).

From these examples, we can see that the educational purposes of fiction were the key factors in bringing it to public attention and encouraging positive responses. As promoters of popular fiction, commercial publishers and writers were fully aware of the significance of its educational function. Therefore, they often used prefaces to highlight their intention of educating their readers. Not only did the writers of historical fiction, which had close relationships with morals and politics, consciously try to teach readers, but so did writers of supernatural fiction. As Wu Cheng'en, author of *Journey to the West,* claimed in his collection of short fiction, the *Yudingzhi* 禹鼎志: "Although my book is called a supernatural [novel], it is not merely concerned with ghosts. It [also] records the changes in the mortal world, and slightly implies some exhorted meaning" (雖然吾書名為志怪，蓋不專明鬼，時紀人間變異，亦微有鑒戒寓焉) (C. Wu 611).

While the need to elevate the status of popular fiction inspired its use as an instrument of moral and political education, the social context of the mid-Ming period further contributed to this practice. Like the Jin dynasty, the late period of the mid-Ming dynasty also experienced various social problems. Since the Wanli era (1573-1620), the emperors had been neglecting their duties. For example, from the fourteenth year of his reign,[29] Emperor Wanli had avoided his court. According to the *Mingwang qingxing liushi nian* 明亡清興六十年 [Sixty Years over the Destroyed Ming and Emerging Qing], Emperor Wanli's indifference toward his administrative

[29] The exact year of Emperor Wanli's neglect of political affairs was in dispute; however, it is widely accepted that it began shortly after the death of Zhang Juzheng 張居正 [Grand Secretary and teacher of Emperor Wanli] in 1582.

affairs included “no worship of Heaven and Earth” (不郊[30]), “no worship of ancestors” (不廟), “not going to the court” (不朝), “not meeting the ministers” (不見), “not reading the documents” (不批), and “no communication” (不講), which lasted about thirty years (Yan 20). Emperor Wanli’s lax attitude toward politics disappointed Ming officials, which resulted in many resignations. Consequently, the Ming court was in crisis, as the official Ye Xianggao’s [31] 葉向高 *Lunfeizoucao* 綸扉奏草 indicates: “The Nine Ministers and the Grand Commandant are in desperately scarcity. There is merely one official [who serves in] every government department ... In the road of Chang’an, there is almost no trace of the Nine Ministers [that can be found]” (九卿[32]太尉缺乏至極。每衙門不過一人 .... 長安道上，遂幾無九卿之跡) (qtd. Q.Wu and Ma 19). Regarding this crisis, the *Book of Ming* further pointed out, “The fall of Ming was actually triggered by Shenzong of Ming [temple name of Emperor Wanli]” (明之亡，實亡于神宗) (232；juan 21).

Moral degeneration in the late period of the mid-Ming era was also a notable problem. As described by the Wanli scholar Xiong Zhenji 熊振驥 in the *Dupian xinshu* 杜騙新書 [A New Book to Prevent Fraud], the late Ming empire witnessed a serious decrease in social morality:

The present day has been far from the old times. The social customs have been corrupted,

[30] 郊 (jiao) refers to 郊祭 (jiaoji), which is a kind of holy ceremony in which the Emperors will worship Heaven and Earth.
[31] Ye Xianggao 葉向高 was a late Ming-dynasty official who served in the Grand Secretariat under the Wanli Emperor from 1607 to 1614 and under the Tianqi Emperor from 1621 to 1624.
[32]The Nine Ministers are the most important ministers in the central government: the “Minister of Ceremonies” (奉常), the “Supervisor of Attendants” (郎中令), the “Commandant of Guards” (衛尉), the “Minister of Coachmen” (太僕), the “Commandant of Justice” (廷尉), the “Grand Herald” (大行令), the “Director of the Imperial Clan” (宗正), the “Grand Minister of Agriculture” (大司農), and the “Small Treasurer” (少府).

> and fraud is growing. Opportunists benefit from clumsy men, while wise men take advantage of foolish people. People all have the insidiousness of a glib tongue and a dastardly heart. Some harbour cunning while others have suspicions, so that the world has no friendship that can speak out about everything in their heart and gall.
>
> 今之時, 去古既遠; 俗之壞, 作偽日滋。巧乘拙, 智欺愚,人含舌鋒腹劍之險; 此挾詐, 彼懷猜, 世無披心吐膽之交。(3; preface)

Xiong's observation illustrates the strained human relationships in the society of the time, as distrust among the people was common. Disordered politics and social immorality led people to consider the Confucian political ideals of "benevolent government "(仁政), a "rule of morality "(德治), and "idealized kings" (理想君主) as well as the ethical ideals of the "three cardinal guides and five constant virtues" (三綱五常) and "loyalty, filial piety, integrity, and righteousness" (忠孝節義). Therefore, the moral themes of the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* were not only responses to the demands of the market, but were also replies to the social reality of the time.

Chapter III: The Diversified Book Market and *Three Kingdoms* Sequels in the Early Qing Dynasty

1. An Early Qing Sequel to the *Three Kingdoms*: The *Romance of Shi Zhu*

Among the three early sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is the only one that was published in the early Qing dynasty. As discussed in Chapter One, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is more likely to have been published in 1680 than in 1740, based on sources such as the engraver Huang Shunji the and Japanese work *Hakusai Shomoku* 舶載書目 [List of Chinese books Imported to Japan during the Edo Period]. Moreover, from the signatures that appear in the book, it is known that the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was created by the "Meixi Yu Anshi" (signatures) and had a preface written by the "Master of the Danyuan" (*danyuan Zhuren* 澹園主人). Unfortunately, further information about the "Meixi Yu Anshi" and the "Master of the Danyuan" has yet to be discovered, resulting in the authorship of the novel being uncertain.

More is known about the publication history of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* than about its author. During the early Qing dynasty, three printing houses published the *Romance of Shi Zhu*. The first edition was published in 1680 by Gengshu wu (耕書屋), a bookshop in Huzhou (湖州), with the inscription "*An Illustrated Critics Edition of the Romance of Shi Zhu after the Three Kingdoms*, published by Gengshu wu" (繡像批評後三國石珠演義，耕書屋梓行) presented on the book (G. Wen 362). In addition, the phrase "carved by Huang Shunji" (黃順吉刻) and "engraved by Huang Junda (courtesy name) from Xin'an" (新安黃君達刻) appear in the text (362). This first version is considered the original edition, which is currently kept in Japan and known as the Deshan (德山) edition. The second edition was published by Dacheng zhai (大成

齋), a bookstore in Wulin (武陵) (now Hangzhou), with the inscription "[Jin] Shengtan commented, and Sir Li Zhuowu critiqued" (聖歎外書，李卓吾先生批評)[33] (268). The exact publishing year of this edition is unclear, but it is known that it was printed during the periods of Kangxi (1662-1722) and Yongzheng (1722-35) (268). Notably, the Wulin edition is the same as the Deshan edition, except that the Wulin edition has many blurry illustrations and unclear characters, and is thus regarded as a reprinted version of the Deshan edition (268). The third edition, which is a partial facsimile that only has 12 surviving chapters, was also produced in the early Qing dynasty (418). Unlike the first two editions, neither the publication year nor the publishing house of this version is known. However, since this version has the same contents and format as, but different highlights from, the Deshan edition, it is still considered a re-edited version of the Deshan edition (418). Both the Wulin edition and this incomplete edition are currently in the collection of the Shanghai Library (268; 418).

Unlike the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin,* which have hundreds of chapters, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* has only thirty chapters, the first four of which tell the background of the story. The story takes place in the Taikang era (280-89), a period during the regime of Emperor Wu of Jin (265-90), when the Wu kingdom (222-80), the last kingdom among the three kingdoms, had just been defeated. Due to her occasional admiration of the mortal world, the heroine Shi Zhu, a weaving fairy, was banished to earth. Later, she received a heavenly book that taught her magic arts and military strategy. She also received a mission from Heaven, which required her to "assist the Divine Empyrean, and finish a great task" (輔佐神霄，共成大事) (10;

[33] The *Romance of Shi Zhu* did contain some marginal comments, but these were neither insightful nor systematic. According to Wen Gehong, the inscription of "[Jin] Shengtan commented, and Sir Li Zhuowu critiqued" (聖歎外書，李卓吾先生批評) is most likely a marketing strategy and is not credible (268).

ch. 1), from the Immortal "Taoist Wu" (*Wu zhenren* 吳真人). The next three chapters tell of the birth of "Divine Empyrean" (*shenxiao* 神霄), who is actually a reincarnation of an ancient prince, and of his preparation for accomplishing the "great task" (*dashi* 大事). This "great task" is a revolt against the Jin kingdom, as Shi Zhu points out: "The Jin imperial family disobeyed the three cardinal guides and Empress Jia has stolen political power. Anyone who has ambition is angry, resentful, and belligerent" (恣者晉室不綱，賈後竊政，凡在有志之士，無不忿怨思奮.) (58; ch. 5). However, it is noteworthy that the generals in Shi Zhu's rebel army were mainly composed of Taoists who are highly skilled in magic power. From Chapter 5 to Chapter 29, Shi Zhu retreats into the background after giving the leading position in the army to Liu Yuan, the reborn "Divine Empyrean." Liu Yuan thus becomes the main character of the rest of the story, and with the help of the skilled Taoists, he is able to fight against the Jin court, which has received help from demons and monsters. In Chapter 11, the Han-Zhao kingdom is established; however Shi Zhu temporarily takes the throne at the army's request. Afterwards, Liu Yuan's rebels achieve several victories and finally conquer the Jin kingdom. The final chapter presents a happy ending in which Shi Zhu successfully returns to Heaven, while Liu Yuan becomes the king of the Han-Zhao kingdom. Meanwhile, the three contributing generals, Shi Jilong, Duan Kun, and Murong Gui, receive lavishly funded wedding ceremonies.

With the participation of Taoists and monsters in the battle between the kingdoms of Han-Zhao and Jin, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was inevitably dominated by supernatural elements, though it is built on the history of the Jin. The presence of supernatural elements in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is its greatest difference from the Ming-era sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*, a change

that was stimulated by the changing demands in the market. Additionally, the story ending with a romantic wedding is a motif borrowed from scholar-beauty stories. This chapter explores the distinctive features of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* to show that these features were added to the story to satisfy the market demands of the time, in which supernatural stories, scholar-beauty novels, and syncretic narratives all enjoyed high sales figures.

2. Publishing and Bookselling Over Time

Scholars examining the history of Chinese books and publishing tend to treat "books" as indicators of the times in which social contexts are portrayed and historical changes are presented. This view assumes close links between print culture and the politics, commerce, and culture of its age (Tobie 791). Nevertheless, many studies of Ming-Qing print culture seem to treat this four-hundred-year period as a single coherent unit, the "late imperial period" (792). This unifying term suggests an emphasis on the flourishing of popular literature and the printing industry during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Common features of the print cultures of the late imperial period did contribute greatly to the holistic, even monolithic, view of Chinese print culture. However, as Cynthia Brokaw reminds us, the print culture of the Ming-Qing era has its own specific characteristics that are worthy of further study and examination (Brokaw 23). The *Romance of Shi Zhu* is a representative example. Although, like its two predecessors, it was published in the 17th century, it is a product of a different age than the other two, having experienced a distinct creation process and publication history. As a result, the significant features of the *Romance of Shi Zhu,* such as its use of supernatural elements, the scholar-beauty style, and syncretic narrative, require explanation in their own context.

The print history of 17th-century Chinese novels can be divided into three periods: the later period of the mid-Ming dynasty (1600-20), the late Ming period (1620-44), and the early Qing period (1644-1700).[34] In each period, the emergence of new literary trends would influence the development of the book market, coordinated by commercial publishers.

During the last twenty years of the mid-Ming dynasty, the popularity of historical novels was challenged by new genres such as crime-case novels (*gong'an xiaoshuo* 公案小說), supernatural novels (*shenmo xiaoshuo* 神魔小說), and human-relation novels (*renqing xiaoshuo* 人情小說). However, readers' interest in historical novels did not significantly decline even despite the presence of these newer genres. In this period, historical novels were further developed and improved, with records of "the states" (*lieguo* 列國), stories of "the generals of the Yang Family" (*Yangjiajiang* 楊家將), the legend of Yue Fei, and stories of the Eastern and Western Han dynasties being popular in the market.[35]

[34] See Chen Taikang (Chapters 4 and 5), Qi Yukun (Chapters 5 and 8), and Zhang Jun (Chapter 2) for further information on these historical divisions. Although Chinese scholars have divided the 17th century into three periods, there are some overlaps, such as the Ming-Qing transition period.

[35] If we investigate the catalogue of middle and late Ming novels, we can see that these were frequent topics for novels of the time. Stories of "the states" (*lieguo* 列國) included the *Lieguozhi* 列國志 [Annals of the States], the *Lieguo zhizhuan* 列國志傳 [Chronicles of the States], the *Xin lieguozhi* 新列國志 [New Chronicles of the States], and the *Lieguo qianbian shi'erchao* 列國前編十二朝 [Prelude to the Twelve Dynasties: A Prequel to the Annals of the States] (G. Wen 600). Stories of "the generals of the Yang Family" (*Yangjiajiang* 楊家將) included the *Yangjiafu yanyi* 楊家府演義 [Romance of the Yang Family] and the *Yangjiajiang yanyi* 楊家將演義 [Romance of the Generals of the Yang Family]. The Legends of Yue Fei included the *Dasong zhongxing tongsu yanyi* 大宋中興通俗演義 [Romance of the Resurgence of the Great Song], the *Yuewumu jingzhong zhuan* 岳武穆精忠傳 [Biography of Loyal Yue Wumu], the *Yuewumu jinzhong baoguo zhuan* 岳武穆盡忠報國傳 [Legend of Yue Wumu's Devotion to the Empire], and the *Shuoyue quanzhuan* 說岳全傳 [Telling the Complete Stories of Yu Fei]. Stories of the two Han dynasties included the *Quanhan zhizhuan* 全漢志傳 [Stories of the Whole Han Dynasty], the *Lianghan kaiguo zhongxing zhizhuan* 兩漢開國中興志傳 [Legend of the Beginning and Resurgence of the Han Dynasty], the *Xihan tongsu yanyi* 西漢通俗演義 [Romance of the Western Han Dynasty], the *Donghan shi'erdi tongsu yanyi* 東漢十二帝通俗演義 [Romance of the Twelve Emperors of the Eastern Han Dynasty], and the *Donghan zhizhuan tiping* 東漢志傳題評 [Comments on the Stories of the Eastern Han Dynasty] (G. Wen 599).

In the late Ming period, the social and political upheavals experienced by the Chinese empire did not diminish readers' enthusiasm for the creation and publication of popular novels. According to a rough estimate of late-Ming novels, about two to three novels were produced yearly, with approximately seventy novels published during this period as a whole (D. Chen 534). The social conditions of the time inspired novelists to treat events from the present rather than only the past; thus, current-event novels (*shishi xiaoshuo* 時事小說) became the new favorite in the marketplace. Like historical novels, current-event novels also focused on the destiny of the nation and the importance of Confucian values; however, current-event novels directed the audience's attention to the challenges faced by current society, as well as the conflicts between loyal and treacherous officials in the late Ming dynasty. Under this new trend, the book market was dominated by critiques of political corruption, the dictatorship of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian,[36] and the Manchu conquest, until the early Qing dynasty (Qi 313). Although current-event novels have very specific themes, their similarities to "historical fiction" in terms of general patterns allow them to be considered as a special branch of "historical fiction" (Ouyang 228; Qi 315; J. Zhang 12). Correspondingly, scholars tend to perceive the development of current-event novels as an evolutionary trend of historical novels in the chaotic late-Ming period.

The prevalence of current-event novels led to new trends in commercial publishing of the

[36] Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 (1568-1627) was a court eunuch in the late Ming dynasty who served under Emperors Wanli, Taichang, and Tianqi. He is best known for his service during the Tianqi era (1620-27), during which his power was comparable to the Tianqi Emperor. On the authority of the emperor, he arrested and convicted dissidents so as to fully control the court. Soon after he died in 1627, Chinese writers portrayed him as a bloodthirsty, cruel, merciless, and crafty regent (see e.g. Fang 6257-64, vol. *Liezhuan* 列傳, juan 193).

early Qing dynasty. One of these trends was the production of sequels to the best-selling novels of the previous dynasty. For instance, following numerous reprints of the *Journey to the West* and the *Water Margin,* sequels to these works, such as the *Hou xiyouji* 後西遊記 [Continuation of the Journey to the West], the *Shuihu houzhuan* 水滸後傳 [Epilogue of the Water Margin] and the *Hou shuihu zhuan* 後水滸傳 [Continuation of the Water Margin] emerged in the market. The *Romance of Shi Zhu* first appeared in 1680, though two other sequels to the *Three Kingdoms* – which we have discussed in the previous two chapters – had already been produced by that time.

Additionally, scholar-beauty novels (*caizi-jiaren xiaoshuo* 才子佳人小說), a newly-emerging genre during the Shunzhi era (1644-61), quickly came to dominate the market. During the Shunzhi (1644-61) and the Kangxi period (1661-1722), forty-seven scholar-beauty novels were published, while other circulating genres such as historical novels, supernatural novels, current-event novels, and erotic novels only boasted five to fifteen new works (G. Wen 580-92). The *Ping Shan Leng Yan* 平山冷燕, the *Yujiaoli* 玉嬌梨, and the *Haoqiuzhuan* 好逑傳 are widely considered as the representative works of the scholar-beauty genre, as the Qing scholar Xie Youheng 謝幼衡 commented in the preface of the *Zhuyuanchun xiaoshi* 駐園春小史:

> [I] have read through all kinds of legends, excluding the *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 [Stories to Awaken the World] and the *Jueshi mingyan* 覺世名言 [Words to Enlighten the World], and there is always nothing more than scholar-beauty novels. [However], the only works that stand out are the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* and the *Yujiaoli*, which feature extraordinary narratives and are typically elegant. Additionally, the the *Haoqiuzhuan* also has a unique style that avoids conventional patterns ... Others are all pedestrian, which are

just a calamity for jujubes and pears.

曆覽諸種傳奇，除《醒世》、《覺世》，總不外才子佳人，獨讓《平山冷燕》、《玉嬌梨》出一頭地, 由其用筆不俗，尚見大雅典型。《好逑傳》別具機抒，脫卻俗韻 ... 其他則皆平平無奇，徒災梨棗[37]。(Y. Xie 1306)

Apart from praising the *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, the *Yujiaoli*, and the *Haoqiuzhuan*, Xie's comment also demonstrates the success of scholar-beauty fiction among the reading public. Likewise, He Zhuo 何焯 (1661-1722), a celebrated scholar in the Shunzhi and Kangxi periods, compared his works to the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* in *A Letter to a Friend* (與友人書): "[I am] ashamed; my poems are not worth mentioning; it is the numerous poems of *Plum Blossom* and the style of *Ping Shan Leng Yan* that deserve to be mentioned" (僕詩何足道，《梅花》諸詠，《平山冷燕》體，乃蒙稱說，惶愧!) (qtd. in B.F. Qiu 24). He Zhuo's letter further suggests that the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* were well-known and well-received among the literati. Furthermore, represented by the *Ping Shan Leng Yan,* the pattern of scholar-beauty stories was influential during the early Qing period.

Not only did prestigious scholars admire the *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, but so did high officials and nobles. For instance, in the Kangxi period, the "Master of Ice Jade" (*bingyu zhuren* 冰玉主人), Yiqin Wang 怡親王 (1722-78), wrote a preface to the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* that outlined his experience of reading the book: "In the summer of the Gengshen year (1740), a novice eunuch bought the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* from the book market. I took and read it in my

[37] In the age of woodblock printing, jujube wood and pear wood were usually used as raw materials; therefore, printing valueless/useless books was considered a waste of jujube and pear trees.

free time after returning from the court, so as to pass the time during the long summer" (庚申夏月，小監於肆中購得《平山冷燕》一書，餘退朝之暇，取而觀之，以消長夏。) ("Binyu Zhuren" 冰玉主人 1246)

In addition to elite readers, common readers also contributed to the popularity of scholar-beauty novels, though there were not many materials testifying to their readership. Valuable evidence of the popularity of these novels was found in a critical version of the *Ping Shan Leng Yan*:

> I used to read numerous short stories, but they all made me feel tiresome, as if [I was] chewing wax. [However], the first time I saw *Sicaizi shu* 四才子書 [Book of the Four Talents], I was too surprised to comment on it. I regretted being born so late, as it prevented me from appreciating [this work] carefully.
>
> 予向閱諸小言，味都嚼蠟，今始見'四才子'[38]，異而評之。第恨妾生較晚，不及細為點綴耳。 (qtd. in Qiu BF 24)

The character "妾" (*qie*) is a modest form that females in imperial China used to refer to themselves, which indicates that educated female readers enjoyed scholar-beauty novels. Despite the difficulties of finding more information about common readers, the emergence of female readers suggests that the audience of scholar-beauty fiction was diverse.

[38] The *Ping Shan Leng Yan* 平山冷燕 narrates the stories of two gifted young men and two talented girls, Ping Ruheng (平如衡) and Yan Baihan (燕白頷), Shan Dai (山黛) and Leng Jiangxue (冷降雪). Thus, this book is also called the *Sidacaizi shu* 四大才子書 [Book of the Four Talents].

The trend of scholar-beauty novels was initially stimulated by the special circumstances of the dynastic transition. After the establishment of the Great Qing, adherents of the Ming dynasty feared the repercussions of the conquest (Xiang 198) as their dreams and aspirations of an official career were disillusioned, though some of the Ming literati were promoted in the new court (Hegel 67). The literary class felt an urgent need to express their disillusionment and disappointment. Fortunately, the early Qing rulers, Emperor Shunzhi and Emperor Kangxi, did not prohibit the circulation of current-event novels, even those that criticized the Qing conquest (Y.Q. Cai 27). Thus, several writers such as "Wandering Unofficial Historian" (*manyou yeshi* 漫遊野史) and "Woodman in the south of Yangtze River" (*jiangzuo qiaozi* 江左[39] 樵子) continued to record their recollections of the tragic defeat of the Ming empire. Meanwhile, other writers took different approaches to easing their pain through literature, as described in the preface of *Ping shan leng yan* 平山冷燕 by "Master of the Heavenly Flower Sutra" (*tianhuazang zhuren*, 天花藏主人):

> Looking back at the bad fortune of [my] destiny ... I wish to devote my body but cannot, and I would like to shorten my breath but cannot bear to do that. I cannot think of other approaches, so I have to relieve [the pain of aiming for an] unachievable career through imaginary men ... All the happiness and surprises written on this paper are the songs and cries in my heart ....
>
> 顧時命不倫，... 欲人致其身而既不能，欲自短其氣又不忍。計無所之，不得

[39] "Jiangzuo" (江左) is another name for the south Yangtze River.

已而借烏有先生[40]以發洩黃粱[41]事業。... 凡紙上之可喜可驚，皆胸中之欲歌欲哭 …. (233; Appendix of the Preface)

The majority of the early scholar-beauty authors, such as the "Master of the Heavenly Flower Sutra," had mixed feelings about the dynastic change from the Ming to the Qing. On the one hand, they dreamed of success at the imperial examination (*keju kaoshi* 科舉考試); on the other hand, their loyalty to the Ming Empire made them unwilling to serve the new court. Suffering from this ambivalence, they tried to comfort themselves in fictional worlds. This partly explains why many scholar-beauty novels feature protagonists who enjoy lives of success thanks to the examination system. These early writers in the Shunzhi era invented a popular pattern for future scholar-beauty novels, which included the following three plotlines: a gifted scholar and a beauty who fall in love with each other at first sight;[42] they experience troubles that threaten their relationship; and the scholar passes the imperial examination. This pattern became the "model of scholar-beauty novels" (才子佳人模式).

Moreover, it is notable that the later group of scholar-beauty writers mainly consisted of low-class literati from the "Jiangzhe areas" (Zhejiang and Jiangsu). Being disappointed by the highly competitive imperial examination, these authors devoted their talents to the creation of

[40] The term "Wuyou Xiansheng" is derived from *Master Zixu* (子虛賦), written by Sima Xiangru. In *Master Zixu,* Sima Xiangru describes a conversation between Mr. Zixu from the Chu kingdom and Mr. Wuyou from the Qi kingdom. They boast to each other about the wealth and power of their own country, while the majority of the things they discuss are greatly exaggerated. In fact, both "zixu" (子虛) and "wuyou" (烏有) are fictional characters; "zixu" (子虛) means *unrealistic*, while "wuyou" (烏有) means *unreal or imaginary*. The idiom "zixu wuyou" (子虛烏有), taken from the *Master Zixu,* refers to something that has never existed and that is just a figment of people's imagination.

[41] *Huangliang* originally referred to a kind of corn; however, since the fable *Fond Dream* (黃粱一夢), it is used as a metaphor for dreams that one cannot achieve.

[42] In scholar-beauty fiction, the characters are always endowed with both beauty and talent, thus the name.

novels. For instance, in the preface of the *Mengzhongyuan* 夢中緣 [Fate in the Dream], the author Li Xiuxing 李修行 (?-1729) tells of how he "accumulated rancor in his chest during the late years and thus, released his resentment through his pen, creating this book" (晚年胸有積憤，乃怨隨筆出，遂成是書。) (1-2; preface). Li Xiuxing had already obtained the honor of *Jinshi,*[43] but he never had the chance to be an officer in his lifetime. The difficulty of pursuing an official career forced many literati like Li Xiuxing to find another means of living. At this time, the financial rewards of novel publication in the Jiangzhe areas were attractive to lower-class writers such as Li Xiuxing, and so many of them turned to fiction.

Though the dynastic transition and the difficulty of attaining official careers served as the motivating factors behind the writing of scholar-beauty novels, there were other factors that contributed to their popularity with the general public. One is the ideological emancipation of the late 16th century that was further developed in the early Qing dynasty, which promoted the idea of pursuing freedom in love and marriage, an idea often demonstrated in scholar-beauty fiction. Since the late period of the mid-Ming, criticism of Neo-Confucianism (*chengzhu lixue*, 程朱理學) had become more common in the fields of ideology and culture. Represented by the scholar and philosopher Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602), enlightened scholars tended to doubt the idea of "keeping the celestial principles, and wiping out human desires" (存天理，滅人欲) that was advocated under official Neo-Confucian ideology. Instead, they pointed out that "human feelings" (*renqing* 人情) and "human desires" (*renyu* 人欲) both have reason to exist (Xiang 151). The

[43] "Jinshi" (進士) is one of the degrees in the imperial examination system. If the examinee passed the triennial court exam, he would attain the title of "jinshi," or advanced scholar.

acknowledgement and respect of human desires sparked a trend of liberation that encouraged people to break away from the traditional principles and their restrictions on human nature. Thus, expressing individuality, true feelings, free love, and independent marriage were frequent themes in literature. The late Ming playwrights, represented by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖(1550-1616) and Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646), created a large number of love stories in which women's courage to pursue love and freedom in marriage were praised. During the early Qing period, the portrayals of love and marriage in novels formed two distinct branches: erotic novels (*yanqing xiaoshuo* 豔情小說) and scholar-beauty novels. Erotic novels appeared earlier,[44] but because they often openly described sexual scenes, they were poorly received by more educated readers. For example, in the *Xiupingyuan* 繡屏緣, the scholar-beauty author "Master of Su'an" (*su'an zhuren*, 蘇庵主人) said of erotic fiction: "Today's novelists, as soon as they start to talk, like to mention 'personal affairs' (*siqing* 私情). Mediocre men and vulgar women, and lotharios and intrigants, are what has created a foul atmosphere" (如今做小說的，開口把私情兩字說起，庸夫俗婦，色鬼奸謀，一團汙穢之氣) (3, ch. 1). In the second year of the Kangxi era (1663), Emperor Kangxi banned erotic novels as negative influences on society.[45] This prohibition left a

[44] During the late Ming and the beginning of the Qing, erotic novels were popular, with approximately 31 examples being produced in that time. However, many of the authors of erotic novels were lower-class, and the middle and upper classes tended to dismiss these authors and their works. Emperor Kangxi's prohibition did not eradicate them, but the creation and circulation did decrease dramatically. The discouragement of writing and distributing erotic novels was beneficial to scholar-beauty novels, which retained the theme of love and marriage but were not sexually explicit. Therefore, they gained the support of readers of all classes.

[45] In 1663, Emperor Kangxi imposed a ban on these novels as follows: "If there is anyone who has printed trivial and pornographic words/books, and is destructive to social morality, the investigating censors in the internal court and regional governors in the external court will inspect and verify who wrote these books, then specify the names and report it, and finally determine the penalty" (如有私刻瑣語淫詞，有乖風化者，內而科道，外而督撫，訪實何書系何人編造，指名題參，交與該部議罪) (qtd. in L.Q. Wang 23). In 1687, he issued a second edict against pornographic literature: "people like to read pornographic poems and novels, but they can degrade (social) manners and morality, and undermine people's minds. As I saw, the majority of people who are fond of (these) novels are not

larger market share for scholar-beauty novels. Because scholar-beauty novels could satisfy readers' desire for love stories without resorting to pornographic elements, they attracted readers from a variety of social classes.

During the early Qing dynasty, the Jiangnan area, the economic and cultural centre of the time, boasted many "talented women" (*cainü* 才女) (Lei 1994), who were educated in classical literature and skilled at writing poetry. The scholar Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582-1664) included a section known as "Xiang Lian" (香奩)[46] (The fourth section of Runji 閏集) in his *Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集 [Anthology of Poetry], in which the poems of sixty-seven female poets were collected. These educated women became the prototype for the "talented women" portrayed in the scholar-beauty novels, such as Shan Dai and Leng Jiangxue in the *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, Miss Hongyu in the *Yujiaoli*, and Miss Caiwen in the *Feihuayong* 飛花詠. The existence of "talented women" significantly increased the reliability and authenticity of the stories of both male and female scholars, which further enhanced the reception of scholar-beauty novels. Women also constituted a particular readership of scholar-beauty novels in themselves. With the advancement of Jiangnan education in the early Qing dynasty, the number of women readers should not be underestimated.

As a commercialized writer, the author of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* was aware of the popularity of scholar-beauty novels. However, love stories seem more of a supplement to the narrative structure of these novels than an essential part of it. As a result, without importing the

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doing well ... (these works) should be strictly forbidden" (淫詞小說，人所樂觀，實能敗壞風俗，蠱惑人心。朕所見樂觀小說者，多不成材 ... 俱宜嚴行禁止。") (qtd. in L.Q. Wang 25).

[46] 香奩 (*Xianglian*) is a kind of dressing case used by females in ancient China.

entire pattern of scholar-beauty fiction, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* imitated its language style when describing the love affairs of the main characters. Unlike its two predecessors, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* did not provide an ending like that in historical fiction, but instead presented a happy ending in which all three heroes married attractive wives and enjoyed satisfying lives. This ending is a typical feature of scholar-beauty fiction.

The integration of multiple genres influenced the early development of those various genres (J. Zhang 102). This trend of confluence has already been seen with the conflation of historical romance with heroic legends, as histories such as those of General Yang and Yue Fei were retold in the manner of literary romance. Nonetheless, as historical romance and heroic legends are interrelated, the confluence was not obvious. It was not until the early Qing dynasty when the tendency to mix multiple genres became clearer, and a variety of combinations emerged.

The trend of syncretic writing was noticed by many scholars in the field of Ming-Qing novels. For instance, Zhang Jun, a contemporary scholar of Qing novels, says of the evolution of early Qing legends: "Heroic legends presented a clearer trend of interacting and mixing with novels of other genres" (英雄傳奇與其他流派小說互相影響、融合的現象，更為明顯。) (J. Zhang 116). Likewise, Lin Chen, a modern specialist of classical Chinese novels, discusses the syncretic narrative of Ming-Qing novels in the article "The Phenomenon of Mixing Genres and the Development of Novels" (小說的混類現象和小說發展的軌跡): "The phenomenon of mixing genres not only happened within supernatural fiction and historical fiction, but also existed between supernatural fiction and human-relation fiction, historical fiction and human-

relation fiction" (混類現象不僅僅發生在神怪小說和歷史小說之間，在神怪小說和人情小說之間，在歷史小說和人情小說之間，也都存在著。) (121). Lin Chen's study identifies two directions of confluence within historical novels. One is the increasing presence of the supernatural. For example, the *Liang Wudi yanyi* 梁武帝演義 [Romance of Emperor Wu of Liang] is a biography of Emperor Wu, but includes stories of divine intervention. Likewise, the *Nüxian waishi* 女仙外史 [Unofficial History of the Goddess], which tells of the "Jingnan campaign" (靖難之役) in the early Ming dynasty, incorporates battles between deities and monsters. Compared to earlier historical novels, novels like the *Romance of Emperor Wu of Liang* and the *Unofficial History of the Goddess* have already broken the boundaries between historical romance and supernatural fiction. A recent study of the *Unofficial History of the Goddess* defines it specifically as a supernatural novel (M. Yang 54).

The combination of historical romance and supernatural narrative allowed them new opportunities to develop. After their golden period between the late 16th century and the early 17th century, both genres began to decline in influence (J. Zhang 104). By this time, the system of historical romance was relatively complete, leaving little room for the early Qing novelists. Meanwhile, supernatural novels after *Journey to the West* and *The Investiture of God* did not make significant breakthroughs in the market. As a result, the trend of confluence seemed to be inevitable in order to keep these genres fresh and active.

The early Qing period also saw the integration of historical novels with scholar-beauty novels, as authors sought to illustrate the social contexts of specific historical periods through love stories. For instance, the *Jinxiangting* 錦香亭, a story that took place during the Tianbao

age (742-756) of the Tang dynasty, narrated the period of the "An Lushan Rebellion" (安祿山之亂) from the point of view of a newly-married couple's separation and reunion. Other examples of the conflation of history and scholar-beauty stories include the *Huatuyuan* 畫圖緣, the *Yuanyangmei* 鴛鴦媒, the *Yanzijian* 燕子箋, the *Guilianmeng* 歸蓮夢, the *Huanzhongzhen* 幻中真, and the *Tiehuaxianshi* 鐵花仙史 (J. Zhang 163).

Created and published during this period of confluence, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* incorporated supernatural elements and the style of scholar-beauty novels, so that in addition to historical events, it includes elements of myth, legend, and love affairs. From the standard of novel creation, it is definitely a subpar work in the age of commercial publishing. However, from the perspective of book culture, it clearly indicates the shift of popular taste in the early Qing dynasty.

3. The Influence of the Changing Market on the *Romance of Shi Zhu*

3.1 The Dominance of Supernatural Elements

While the *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin* focus on presenting a simplified continuing history of the Three Kingdoms period, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* instead tells a mythical version of the follow-up story. With this in mind, the author, known as "Meixi Yu Anshi," no longer follows the traditional manner of elaborating historical chronicles. Instead, he creates a new adventure fantasy in which the dynastic history has only minor significance. For example, one of the main characters, Sima Jin (256-90), had already died in the year 290 (Fang 735; vol. *Liezhuan* 列傳, juan 8); however, in the novel he lived to witnessed the "wars of the

eight princes" (291-306) (Ouyang 34). Likewise, the character Helian Bobo (381-425) historically lived a century after Liu Yuan, but he is one of the top generals in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* (34). These and other liberties with historical fact indicate the story's fictionality.

Notably, influenced by the trend of mixing genres, the author incorporates supernatural elements into his narrative of Jin history, which distinguishes the *Romance of Shi Zhu* from earlier sequels to the *Three Kingdoms*. The earlier sequels primarily consisted of stories pertaining to Liu Yuan's uprising to restore Shu-Han legitimacy. In the *Romance of Shi Zhu*, the struggle between Liu Yuan and the Jin empire remains as the central plotline; however, the reason why Liu Yuan opposed the rule of the Jin has changed from wanting to revive the Shu to fulfilling a heavenly task. Significantly, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* modifies Liu Yuan's original identity so that he is no longer a member of Xiongnu nobility as in the *Romance of Jin*, nor is he the descendant of Liu Bei as in the *Continuation.* Instead, he is the reincarnation of the "Divine Empyrean" (*shenxiaozi* 神霄子). His first appearance in the story is described as follows: "Every sunrise and sunset, the heavenly light emerges. Ocassionally, hundereds of crows fly and chirp to shelter [it]" (每到了黃昏清早，便有神光透出，或時有幾百十隻老鴉，飛鳴蓋覆) (33; ch. 3). It is not until the ball is split by a light from the heavens that a baby appears (35; ch. 3). This unusual birth marks Liu Yuan as a special man. Over the years, wise people who received hints from heaven came to seek him, which leads him to his divine mission of saving his people from the chaotic Jin regime.

It is worthy to note that Liu Yuan is portrayed as a divine savior in the *Romance of Shi Zhu*. In Chapter 22, he is proved to have been the Prince Huainan of Han 淮南王 (199-174 BC)

in his previous life. Although Prince Huainan was an ordinary man, he was worshipped as a deity after his death. According to the story, when Liu Yuan came across the temple of the "Divine Empyrean," he saw "a Taoist sitting inside, wearing a gold crown, and dressed in a black-and-white cassock, looking graceful as if he did not belong to the mortal world" (裡面坐著一個神道，頭戴金冠，身穿黼服，飄飄有出塵之概) (254; ch. 22). This unexpected finding uncovers Liu Yuan's mysterious identity, and suggests why he was chosen for the heavenly mission. Historical novels often feature legends about their protagonists' extraordinary background; however, in traditional historical novels, these legends merely distinguish the heroes from other ordinary men, where Liu Yuan is portrayed in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* as more a deity than a commoner, as his relationship with the immortal Taoist Wu demonstrates:

> One day, when Councillor Liu (Liu Yuan's adoptive father) brought him (Liu Yuan) to play in front of the living room, a Taoist walked through the door as if he was floating outside the objects. After seeing Hongzu (nickname of Liu Yuan), the Taoist said: "Xiao'er, you are crouching here. I have been looking all over for you." Hearing this, Hongzu stepped forward and hugged the Taoist, and replied: "Master, not only do you want to look for me, but every moment I have been looking for you."
>
> 忽一日，劉員外攜了他在廳前閑玩，只見一個道人，飄然物外之格，走進門來，見了弘祖說道："霄兒，你卻在此蹲著，我那[47]一處不找尋你來？"弘祖見

[47] The original text uses "我那一處不尋你來?", which is translated as "I did not look for you at that place?"; however, according to the context, it is more likely to be "I have been looking all over for you" (which literally means: in which place I have not been looking for you?)" (我哪一處不尋你來?). As a result, the character

說，走上前一把將道人抱住，說道："師父，非但師父要尋我，我那[48]一刻不要尋見師父。 (38; ch. 3)

This excerpt makes it clear that Taoist Wu and Liu Yuan have a master/disciple relationship. However, according to the story, Liu Yuan had never seen Taoist Wu before. If so, this relationship should have begun before Liu Yuan was born. Perhaps Prince Huainan became one of the deities after death. It is worth mentioning that after finding Liu Yuan, Taoist Wu gave Liu Yuan a treasure with the name "Divine Empyrean" on it (ch. 3). Later, this treasure directed people to an ancient sword which was also marked with Liu Yuan's name (ch. 4). In this way, regardless of whether Liu Yuan was originally an immortal or not, his image is closer to a reincarnated deity, such as Xu Xun in the *Zhanjiao ji* 斬蛟記 [Story of Dragon Killing] and Tang Sai'er in the *Unofficial History of the Goddess*. Like Liu Yuan, these reincarnated deities were all born with special tasks given to them by heaven, though they may have not been aware of it. In the *Story of Dragon Killing* and the *Unofficial History of the Goddess*, Xu Xun's mission is to subdue the Dragon Monster from destroying the world, whereas Tang Sai'er's task is to help the Jianwen Emperor of the Ming back to the throne.

In addition to Liu Yuan's holy mission, the author adds a new storyline: the self-cultivation of the penalized fairy Shi Zhu in the human world. Shi Zhu was "originally a goddess of weaving, but as the Jade Emperor noticed her laziness in weaving and occasional admiration

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"那"(that) in the phrase "那一處" (that place) is supposed to be a misspelled word, while "哪" (where) should be the right word: "哪一處" (which place).

[48] Again, based on the context, "我哪一刻不要尋見師父" (every moment I have been looking for you; the literal meaning is "in which moment do I not want to find you?") is more accurate than "我那一刻不要尋見師父" (at that moment I did not want to find you) in the original text.

of the human world, she was banished to earth" (原是上界一位織錦仙女，因惰於織錦，偶有思凡之念，玉帝察知，故將他[49]降於塵世。) (8; ch. 1). In order to return to Heaven, Shi Zhu is expected to cultivate herself in the mortal word. However, this process of development was not simply a spiritual one, as she thought "Providence asks me to practice truthiness" (天意要我修真) (10; ch. 1). On the basis of the immortal Taoist Wu's instruction, Shi Zhu is specifically tasked to help the "Divine Empyrean" with his business (11; ch. 1). Through the mission announced by Taoist Wu, the storylines of Shi Zhu and Liu Yuan are closely interwoven.

The motif of banishment to the mortal world is very typical in supernatural stories. In the *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King, Zhu Bajie, and Sha Monk have all been banished and are then required to establish themselves in the human world. Taking a closer look at this pattern reveals that most of the description of Shi Zhu is not original to the *Romance of Shi Zhu,* but rather is traceable to the interpretation of the Monkey King portrayed in the *Journey to the West*. First of all, the record of Shi Zhu's rebirth seems to be a revision of the Monkey King's birth. The original version described in the *Journey to the West* is as follows:

> There was once a magic stone on the top of this mountain ... Ever since Creation began it had been receiving the truth of Heaven, the beauty of Earth, the essence of the Sun and the splendour of the Moon; and as it had been influenced by them for so long it had miraculous powers. It developed a magic womb, which burst open one day to produce a stone egg about the size of a ball. When the wind blew on

[49] The Chinese character "她" (*she*) was invented in the early twentieth century, so the original text shows "他" (*he*) instead of "她".

this egg it turned into a stone monkey... (Jenner 4, ch.1)

那座山正當頂上，有一塊仙石... 蓋自開闢以來，每受天真地秀，日精月華，感之既久，遂有靈通之意。內育仙胞, 一日迸裂，產一石卵，似圓球樣大。因見風，化作一個石猴。(3；ch. 1)

Though "Meixi Yu Anshi"'s recomposition made marginal changes, it is clearly a reference to the description of the *Journey to the West*:

That cliff reaches up to the cloud. As absorbed the air from the essence of the sun and the moon, it looks colourful and dazzling ... Suddenly one day, wind and rain raged, and thunderbolts shook the valley... After a little while, the wind and rain stopped. With a sound of "huola," it looked like the appearance of earth cracking. Suddenly, the cliff cracked, and a beautiful girl walked out.

那石壁高並青雲[50]，因得日月精華之氣，故彩色射人 ... 忽然一日，風雨大作，霹靂震動山谷... 少間，風息雨止，只見豁喇一聲，竟似天崩地裂之狀,霎時間那石壁裂開，內中走出一個美貌女子來。 (7-8, ch. 1)

It is likely that both Shi Zhu and the Monkey King are portrayed as children of Heaven and Earth who were born from divine rock. Shi Zhu not only has a similar backstory to the Monkey King, but also a similar learning experience and holy mission. The Monkey King studied magic and skills from the Buddha "grandmaster Puti" (*puti laozu* 菩提老祖), while Shi Zhu learned magic and military strategy from the immortal Taoist Wu. Later, they were both

[50] *Qingyun* (青雲) refers to the cloud of the sky, or a metaphor for the sky instead of "green cloud."

summoned to help a reincarnated man and were rewarded for returning to Heaven. This imitation of the Monkey King clearly exemplifies the author's intention to learn from supernatural fiction. However, as a relatively early integration of historical romance with supernatural fiction, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* seems to be an immature work. Regardless of the aim of innovation, the anonymous writer, "Meixi Yu Anshi," could not avoid incorporating existing patterns and rearranging them into his own narrative.

The *Romance of Shi Zhu* features similar characters to the *Investiture of the God.* The latter includes various supernatural beings, such as gods, demons, spirits, and humans with magical abilities, who provide the kingdoms of Shang and Zhou with assistance in battle Likewise, in the *Romance of Shi Zhu*, many Taoists with high proficiency in magical power join Shi Zhu and Liu Yuan's army. Among them are the military counsellors Ji Youguang, who can "summon deities and enslave ghosts" (噓神役鬼), with five hundred divine soldiers who can "access fire and water, and ride clouds across the fog" (出入水火，騰雲跨霧) (24-25; ch. 2); and Hou Youfang, a disciple of Taoist Wu, who is also able to command ghosts and demons (ch. 1).

In contrast with the participation of Taoists in Shi Zhu's army, the Jin court receives assistance from demons and monsters. Chapter 9 of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* features a battle scene between the counsellor Ji Youguang and the elm spirit Yu Kui, told in a very different manner than traditional battle scenes in historical novels:

> Getting excited by killing, Yu Kui became ten feet longer with a shake of his body, carrying an axe as big as a plaque, and chopped at [Ji Youguang], with staring eyes

that looked like bells and a fierce-looking mouth like a bloody basin. Ji Youguang was scared at the sight of him, so he also shook his body and shouted "Change." At once, he had four heads and eight arms, and the big sword in his hand also turned into eight weapons. Holding [all the weapons], he rushed straight at Yu Kui.

俞魁殺得性起，將身一聳，就長了一丈多長，眼如銅鈴，口似血盆，惡狠狠的，提匾大的鉞斧砍來。稽有光看見，吃了一嚇，也將身一搖，叫聲變，立刻變出四頭八臂，將手中大刀也變作八般兵器，八手執定，竟向俞魁殺來。(108; ch. 9)

With the application of magic, the description of the war scene is no longer limited to the wisdom and courage of the heroes. Instead, the heroes use magic to subdue demons and monsters. The passage cited above is very similar in style to a corresponding excerpt from *Journey to the West*:

"Change," yelled Nezha in a passion, and at once he had three hands and six arms, which made him look most ferocious. In his hand he held six weapons ... and wielding all these he rushed straight at Sun Wukong. At the sight of him Sun Wukong exclaimed with astonishment, "Well, my boy, you certainly know a trick or two …" Our dear Great sage shouted "Change," and he too had three hands and six arms … (Jenner 70, ch. 4)

那哪吒奮怒，大喝一聲，叫："變！"即變做三頭六臂，惡狠狠，手持著六般兵器 ... 撲面來打。悟空見了，心驚道："這小哥倒也會弄些手段！..." 好大聖，

喝聲：“變！”也變做三頭六臂 ... (46; ch. 4)

The comparison of these two passages reveals that “Meixi Yu Anshi” took his inspiration not only from the *Three Kingdoms,* as with the earlier sequels, but also from supernatural fiction such as *Journey to the West,* which he acknowledges in his preface: “When attacking the enemy, there are a variety of magic powers; even the *Journey to the West* and the *Water Margin* have no more than this” (攻取對敵之際，幻術多方，雖《西遊》，《水滸》，無過於此。) (4; preface)

Finally, the religious theme of predetermination is a central motif in *Romance of Shi Zhu*, although the abbreviated length of the story (30 chapters in total) leaves little space to fully demonstrate it. This theme is frequently present in historical romances, as Shelly Chang notes: “in almost every dynastic novel, the founding of a new dynasty replacing an old one is believed to be predetermined by fate” (Chang 169). However, where traditional historical fiction prefers to explore the moral lessons behind dynastic transformations, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* examines predestination from a different angle: how Heaven predetermines what happens in history.

Typically, divine intervention occurs when the human world experiences disaster or catastrophe. In the *Romance of Shi Zhu*, what draws the attention of Heaven is the frequent regime change in the Jin dynasty:

> During the Three Kingdoms period, Emperor Wu of Jin Sima Yan, received the Wei’s abdication and came to the throne. [He] destroyed the Wu kingdom and conquered the Han kingdom, giving the throne to Emperor Hui Sima Zhong.

> Emperor Hui passed the throne to Emperor Huai, who was succeeded by Emperor Min. At that time, the world was in chaos, with manpower and material resources being exhausted.
>
> 那當年三國時，晉武帝司馬炎，受魏禪稱帝，滅吳取漢，傳位於孝惠帝司馬衷，惠帝傳位懷帝，懷帝傳位湣帝，斯時天下紛紛然，其時之民生物力，盡已憊矣。(7; ch. 1)

Amidst the chaos, the immortal Taoist Wu appeared as a messenger, conveying the will of Heaven to Shi Zhu and Liu Yuan. Those who will join the army have been predetermined by the will of Heaven; they either respond to the call of Taoist Wu or follow the guidance of Heaven to aid Shi Zhu and Liu Yuan. Liu's success has also been predestined, long before the battle began. For example, in Chapter 22, on the way to the temple of the Divine Empyrean, Liu Yuan finds a poem that reads: "The bloody battle has not ended for years. The world will belong to divine Liu. " (血戰年來久未休，縱橫四五屬神劉) (253; ch. 22). Here, it seems that the *Romance of Shi Zhu* intends to claim that the war between Liu Yuan and the Jin was not caused by human factors, but by the predestined arrangement of heaven. It is Heaven's will that Liu Yuan will succeed in conquering the Jin kingdom and be remembered forever as a hero who saved the people from chaos.

3.2 Application of the Style of Scholar-Beauty Fiction

Scholar-beauty fiction was the best-selling genre in the early Qing dynasty. With the popularity of this genre in mind as well as the trend of genre confluence, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* adopts some of the motifs of scholar-beauty fiction in order to attract a broader readership. The

Romance of Shi Zhu specifically uses the two most prominent features of the scholar-beauty genre, "love at first sight" (一見鍾情) and "happy ending" (大團圓結局). These features were not original to scholar-beauty fiction, but were inherited from traditional drama; nonetheless, the formulaic language in which these motifs are presented shows the influence of scholar-beauty fiction.

"Love at first sight," a stereotypical beginning of love stories, is a common element of scholar-beauty stories, such as the *Tiehuaxianshi* 鐵花仙史 (ch. 2), the *Dingqingren* 定情人 (ch. 2), the *Nükaikezhuan* 女開科傳 (ch. 2), the *Wujiangxue* 吳江雪 (ch. 5), and the *Saihualing* 賽花鈴 (ch. 2). This element appears in Chapter 16 of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* with Liu Yuan's first meeting with his future wife, Wu Mengyue, in a battle scene. Liu Yuan and Mengyue were from the rival kingdoms of Han-Zhao and Jin, respectively, but were both impressed by each other at their first unexpected meeting:

> Mengyue silently admired Hongzu (nickname of Liu Yuan) when she saw he was brave at a young age, and had an impressive appearance that was as pretty as the jewel of the crown. [He] was holding a golden whip, and sitting on a cyan-white dragon-horse, looking as if he were a god descending from heaven. Also, Hongzu secretly appreciated Mengyue when he saw her incomparable beauty as well as her outstanding military strategy.
>
> 夢月看見弘祖少年英勇，氣宇軒昂，更且美如冠玉，手提金鞭，坐下龍騅，卻像天神臨凡，心下暗暗稱羨。弘祖看見夢月美麗無比，況又武藝絕倫，也自誇獎不已。(186; ch. 16)

The attraction between Hongzu and Mengyue makes the battlefield into the setting of a romantic encounter, and a foreshadowing of their marriage in the following chapter. A very similar scene occurs in the *Dingqingren* 定情人, when the protagonist Shuangxing first meets Ruizhu in her parents' house:

> When he suddenly saw Ruizhu get closer as a fairy, Shuangxing was fascinated and lost his head over her as if his soul and heart were not there. [He] thought to himself: "How does he have such a beautiful girl at home?" .... Ruizhu could not help sneaking a look at Shuangxing when she saw him, "slim, graceful, brilliant, and handsome."
>
> 雙星忽看見蕊珠小姐如天仙一般走近前來，驚得神魂酥蕩，魄走心馳。暗忖道："怎的他家有此絕色佳人。"... 蕊珠小姐初見雙星亭亭皎皎，真可稱玉樹風流，也不禁注目偷看。(58-60; ch. 2)

Both these passages demonstrate the attraction that the couples had for each other at first glance, creating a sense of admiration between them. They both focus on the "impressive appearance" of the characters, the male characters in particular. Emphasis on the heroes' (男主角) appearance is a common element in scholar-beauty stories, though more traditional scholar-beauty stories tended to pay more attention to the male protagonists' talents (L. Xu 157). Furthermore, the phrase "美如冠玉" (as beautiful as the jewel in a crown) that is used to describe Hongzu's appearance is itself frequently used in the scholar-beauty genre. For example, Ping Ruheng, protagonist of the *Ping Shan Leng Yan*, is said to "look like a beautiful jewel" (面

如美玉), whereas Su Youbai in the *Yujiaoli* is "as beautiful as the jasper in a crown, and brilliant as a pearl" (美如冠玉，潤比明珠).

Scholar-beauty stories commonly end with happy marriages, a favorite element among both authors and readers of this genre. The best-selling scholar-beauty novels of the early Qing dynasty, such as the *Yujiaoli* 玉嬌梨, the *Ping Shan Leng Yan* 平山冷燕, the *Haoqiuzhuan* 好逑傳, the *Dingqingren* 定情人 and the *Jinyunqiao* 金雲翹, all ended in this manner, reflecting the preferences of their audience. Unlike the previous *Three Kingdoms* sequels, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* does not concern itself primarily with the ending of the chaotic Jin dynasties, choosing instead to end the story with Liu Yuan's victory and happy wedding, typical of scholar-beauty fiction.

The romantic ending of the novel is demonstrated in the title of its last chapter, "合歡亭眾美團圓 [All Beauties Reunited in Hehuan Pavilion]". Here, the terms "合歡" (*hehuan*) and "團圓" (*tuanyuan*), which mean "happy reunion," are used to refer to the wedding at the end of the story. The final chapters of other scholar-beauty novels bear similar titles; for example, "金鑾[51]報捷美團圓" [Good News Came from the Hall of Supreme Harmony and Beauties Reunited] (*Ping Shan Leng Yan*, ch. 20), "死生說破大驚大喜快團圓" [The Myth of Life or Death was Clear; Hurry to the Reunion after a Huge Surprise] (*Dingqingren*, ch.16), and "錦上錦大家如願" [Embroideries Upon Embroideries: General Satisfaction] (*Yujiaoli*, ch.19). None of these titles

[51] "金鑾" refers to "金鑾殿" (*jinluan dian* 'Jinluan Hall'), which is an informal name for the "Hall of Supreme Harmony" (*taihe dian* 太和殿), the biggest hall in the "Forbidden City" (*zijin cheng* 紫禁城) of Beijing. During the Ming-Qing dynasties, Jinluan Hall was the location of the emperors' coronations and of royal weddings.

contain words directly relating to marriage, but they do indicate the happy outcomes of the stories. The *Romance of Shi Zhu* also continues the scholar-beauty tradition of describing the wedding itself, as with this example of General Shi Jilong's wedding night:

> Shi Jilong entered the wedding room, commanding the maid to uncover Miss Fengying's veil .... He (Shi Jilong) could not help throwing a stolen glance at Fengying again; he saw a brilliant face with charming pink and tender white skin. This sight made him supremely happy, as if his soul had been freed from his body.
>
> 石季龍歸入繡房,命女侍將鳳英小姐兜巾揭去 .... 石季龍忍不住又將鳳英一看，只見容色鮮妍，真是嬌紅嫩白，石季龍看了，喜得出魂。(349; ch. 30)

The description of Shi Jilong's wedding is, with some small differences, an adaptation of Su Youbai's wedding scene in the *Yujiaoli*, a best-selling work of the early Qing dynasty:

> Under the perfumed tapers, Su Youbai stole a glance at Miss Bai, whose beauty was capable of attracting fish from the bottom of abysses, bringing down cranes from the heights of heaven, eclipsing the light of the moon, and making the flowers blush; [this beauty] indeed deserved a great reputation. This glance filled [Su Youbai] with joy.
>
> 花燭之下，蘇友白偷眼將白小姐一看，真個有沉魚落雁之容，閉月羞花之貌，可謂名不虛傳，滿心快暢。(277; ch. 19)

Love and marriage among the main characters plays a smaller role in the *Romance of Shi Zhu* than the element of the supernatural. However, passages such as the above demonstrate

the definite influence of scholar-beauty fiction on the novel and its author.

4. Conclusion

The *Romance of Shi Zhu* is an example of the ways in which the bookshop printing industry of the early Qing dynasty responded to audience demands and changes in the marketplace. Among the trends of the early Qing book market that this work reflects are the appearance of sequels to existing novels, the popularity of scholar-beauty fiction, and the tendency to conflate genres. To adapt to these trends, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* imported supernatural elements and patterns of scholar-beauty fiction into its retelling of Jin history. Thus, it is not as much of an imitation of the *Three Kingdoms* as the earlier sequels to that work had been, but rather uses figures and events from Jin history to tell a followup story to the *Three Kingdoms* that is heavily influenced by supernatural and scholar-beauty fiction. However, despite using Jin history as the basis of the story, the *Romance of Shi Zhu* takes liberty with the historical facts, so that the story contains frequent misinterpretations of the history. In addition, despite his intention of making innovations to the story to meet reader demands, the "Meixi Yu Anshi" left many traces of similar passages from earlier texts, calling the originality of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* into question. Thus, Sun Kaidi has said of the *Romance of Shi Zhu*: "This book is very shallow and just follows the Wanli edition with flashy words" (此編甚是淺陋，蓋襲萬曆本而益以浮詞) (*shenmo xiaoshuo* 10).

The reasons for these characteristics of the *Romance of Shi Zhu* can be traced to the connections between bookshop printing and the book market. Because the bookshop printing industry had a direct connection to the book market, bookshop publishers were

notably aware of reader demands and market changes. Where readers in the early 17th century tended to prefer single genres, later 17th-century readers showed greater interest in mixing genres. As a result, early-Qing historical novels such as the *Romance of Shi Zhu* were syncretic narratives combining historical, supernatural, and romantic elements. With the emphasis shifting from historical narrative to syncretic writing, the *Three Kingdoms* was no longer the most substantial example of Chinese popular fiction; depending on what kind of element was the center of the narrative, the author would use representative works of the corresponding genre for references, demonstrated by the imitations of the *Journey to the West* and the *Investiture of the God* present in the *Romance of Shi Zhu.* Syncretic writing is an example of the development, evolution, and innovation of mature literary genres, significantly promoted by the early-Qing book market and reader demands. For example, because early Qing readers enjoyed scholar-beauty fiction, historical novels created during this period often touched upon the love affairs of their main characters. It is currently unknown how bookshop publishers surveyed the market; however, it is obvious that they were able to cater to popular tastes.

It is known to us that authors of bookshop novels were mainly commercial publishers or low-class literati who were not necessarily highly proficient writers. The early Qing book market witnessed a significant increase in the percentage of literati publishers as compared to its Ming counterpart; however, commercial publishers were still in the majority. According to Wen Gehong, in the early Qing period, commercial publishers accounted for 77% of the total number of publishers, with 124 bookstores owned by commercial publishers, while literati publishers only made up 23% of the total and owned

37 bookstores (G. Wen 445). Because of the variation in the writing skills of commercial publishers and hired writers, bookshop publishers frequently produced subpar works, and the *Romance of Shi Zhu* is often considered an example. Both its interpretations of literary models and its borrowing of existing language suggest that it is not a carefully crafted work.

The primary aim of bookshop printing was profit. With this intention in mind, commercial writers were not responsible for the quality of their creations, so that imitating and copying other works were very common. Furthermore, commercial writers targeted a wide public audience who had a relatively lower level of appreciation than elite readers, such that the quality of the works was not always relevant. With further improvements in the publication of novels, many earlier bookshop novels were rewritten by more-educated writers of later generations, which encouraged the re-evaluation of the earlier works. Apart from the *Romance of Jin*, which was rewritten by the Qing literati Wu Yanren, the *Lieguo zhi* 列國志 [Annals of the States], a work produced by the commercial publisher Yu Shaoyu in the Ming Shizong period (1522-66), was also rewritten by the late-Ming scholar Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646). In the preface of the *Xin lieguo zhi* 新列國志 [New Annals of the States], the scholar "Keguan Daoren" 可觀道人 says of the the *Annals of the States:*

> this kind of sleep talk can only be [distributed by] sitting on the field ridges of three villages, making gestures like waving your hands and feet, and waking up sleepy peasants; [it] is not for discussion with people who know even a little about literary standards.... Other [flaws], such as omissions in narratives, reversal of characters,

the lack of research on the imperial system, and imperfect language, were beyond description.

此等囈語，但可坐三家村田塍上指手畫腳，醒鋤犁[52]瞌睡，未可為稍通文理者道也 .... 其他鋪敘之疏漏，人物之顛倒，制度之失考，詞句之惡劣，有不可勝言者矣 (“Keguan Daoren” 可觀道人 865).

Such a commentary is a reminder of the lack of quality guarantees for works created by commercial writers and publishers, not just for single works but for the profession as a whole. For example, Sun Kaidi has said of crime-case fiction produced by commercial writers: “Popular (*tongsu*) books of the bookstores, copied from place to place, look like law books but are not law books. They are similar to novels but are not novels. They are not worth reading” (書肆俗書，輾轉抄襲，似法家書非法家書，似小說亦非小說，殊不足一顧耳) (141). Similarly, Lu Xun considered supernatural novels created by commercial publishers “disordered and shallow, with nothing worth looking at” (蕪雜淺陋，率無可觀) (104, ch. 16). However, even though bookshop printing was market-oriented and profit-centered, it is an oversimplification to say that early-Qing publishing was entirely dependent on the market. There are other factors that might have also influenced commercial writers’ compositional choices, such as political and cultural changes, that need further examination.

[52] 鋤犁 (*chu li*) originally meant *hoes and ploughs*; however, it is more likely to refer to peasants [people who use hoes and ploughs] in this context.

Chapter IV. Conclusion: The Interplay between Commercial Printing and Popular Novels

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed the rise of commercial printing (bookshop printing) and the rise of popular novels, stimulated by a growing demand for recreational reading among the public. Historical fiction, introduced into Chinese literature by commercial publishers, became the prevailing genre in the book market from the mid-16th to the early 17th century. As discussed in Chapter Two, the introduction of historical fiction had two significant effects on the circulation of popular fiction. First, historical fiction made national history approachable to readers of all classes and skill levels by popularizing the difficult language and eliminating the profound meanings in official history. In this way, historical fiction constructed a new readership and explored a new market for popular fiction. Second, historical fiction undertook the task of moral and political education, hoping to create a positive social atmosphere and maintain orderly governance. By advertising the functions of historical fiction as moral and political instruction, commercial publishers and writers expanded the genre's influence. The *Continuation* and the *Romance of the Jin*, produced in this era, featured the simplified language and strong moral and political undertones typical of fiction of the time. However, as the Ming dynasty gave way to the Qing, the market shifted due to the emergence of new demands from readers. To cater to the varying needs of readers, new genres such as scholar-beauty fiction, and merged genres, appeared in the literary market and quickly became favorites. The *Romance of Shi Zhu* reflected these trends in its use of syncretic narrative, supernatural elements, and romantic subplots. The presence of these

textual characteristics in the *Romance* illustrates how publishers and writers of popular fiction responded to the changing demands of readers.

It is evident that bookshop publishers played a substantial role in the creation and distribution of popular fiction. With the aim of making profit, bookshop publishers always kept a close eye on the book market. They observed market requirements and monitored market trends. The participation of bookshop publishers in the market was generally twofold. In reply to the best-selling work of a particular period, bookshop publishers would mass-produce similar works in a short period of time. For example, inspired by the popularity of the *Three Kingdoms*, bookshop publishers produced a significant number of historical romances in a few decades. They would also create adaptations of and/or commentaries on existing works, such as offering prequels and sequels or hiring commentators to produce critical editions. These measures allowed bookshop publishers to actively coordinate the production and distribution of popular fiction.

The emergence of a common readership inspired commercial publishers to develop popular literature. Distinct from elite literature, popular literature had close relationships with folk culture. Writers of popular fiction extensively drew upon materials from folk culture, such as folktales, storytelling, or drama. After being distributed into the marketplace, popular fiction would itself become the source of folk performances. In this way, popular literature was integrated with folk culture. Moreover, the demands of the common audience accelerated the innovation of popular fiction in terms of contents and form. On the one hand, the diversified reading demands of the audience encouraged the

development of multiple genres, and novels of mixed genres. On the other hand, their limited reading ability inspired the use of illustrations, annotations, and commentaries.

Overall, this thesis has sought to demonstrate the interactions between Ming-Qing print culture and the creation of popular fiction using the three sequels of the *Three Kingdoms* as examples. However, because obtaining direct sources on the marketing of these works is difficult, I have had to piece together fragments of information from the historical records, and from these, speculate on the distribution and reception history of Ming-Qing popular fiction. Furthermore, due to the limited amount of first-hand materials on the influence of common readership on the composition of popular fiction, such as reading demands during a specific time period and responses to particular trends, this project has relied on relevant references from secondary resources like prefaces and guidances of novels, literary notes and commentaries. Nonetheless, this thesis can at least offer some useful resources for future studies in the field of commercial publishing and Ming-Qing popular fiction.

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