

Note on Pronunciation

In transliterating Chinese, I use the *pinyin* system of romanization. Pinyin names are generally pronounced as written with the following exceptions:

- c: At the beginning of a syllable, *c* has the sounds of *ts*; thus Cai Zhongguang is pronounced Tsai Zhongguang.
- q: *Q* sounds like a hard *ch*; thus Mao Qiling is pronounced Mao Chiling and Sun Quan is pronounced Sun Chuan.
- x: *X* is pronounced halfway between *s* and *sh*, in another romanization written as *hs*. Sun Xuesi is thus pronounced Sun Hsuesi.

The only exceptions to *pinyin* usage are Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek, the forms of which are best known in Western writings and which give Cantonese, not Mandarin, pronunciations of the Chinese characters.

Keith Schoppa,
Xiang Lake: Nine Centuries of
Chinese Life

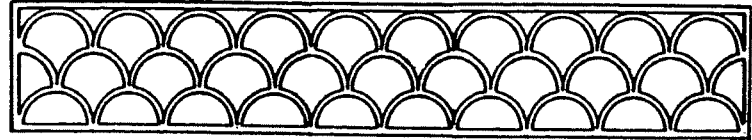
VIEW

*From North Trunk
Mountain, Late Twelfth
Century*

CHAPTER

*The Beginnings, 1112–1214:
Four Servants of the People*

I



VIEW: From North Trunk Mountain, Late Twelfth Century

The panorama from North Trunk Mountain's Jade Peak was dominated by water. In all directions, in the early summer months, the very land itself seemed afloat. The rice seedlings showing above the water level of the paddies gave the landscape a delicate emerald sheen. Lakes and streams fed a weblike network of canals and drainage ditches with sustaining water flowing to every bounded plot.

To the west and beyond the lake to the south was the broad river the Qiantang, at its widest almost two miles across, at its narrowest, at least half a mile. Flowing from headwaters in the mountains of southwestern Zhejiang, it deposited its heavy load of sediment from constantly shifting currents as it made three sharp bends around the peninsula that was the western part of the county. Reports of the rapid changes brought by its currents and alluvium continually startled area residents and travelers alike. In the early days, one of the eight scenic wonders of Xiaoshan county had been the sound of the river tide against the Raksha rock, a large boulder with precipitous slopes, which, like the Buddhist demons for which it was named, devoured men as it wrecked their boats. In the tenth century the river, as if showing mercy, began to cover it with silt; by the sixteenth century the tremendous rock could no longer be seen.¹ The constantly changing river prevented Hangzhou, the Zhejiang provincial capital—in the Southern Song dynasty (1127–1279), the imperial capital—from ever developing as a seaport.

At times the existence of the river and its extreme unpredictability provided the county with protection from the west against marauding enemies. In several cases of such outer threat, local wisdom credited the spirit of North Trunk Mountain with the county's escape. The mountain, it was said, held the spirit of Li Di, a general who had forsaken the oppressive Qin dynasty (221–207 B.C.) to follow into battle the aristocratic warrior Xiang Yu, a native of Shaoxing, east of Xiaoshan. Killed in battle, Li was buried on the mountain; he was said to have embodied a special virtue that allowed him both to see the misrule of the Qin and to serve Xiang loyally. For this reason, local people had constructed a temple for him on the mountain, where every year on the fourth day of the first lunar month sacrifices were offered.²

The case of the fearsome bandit-rebels under the leadership of Fang La, a disaffected owner of a lacquer tree plantation southwest of Xiaoshan, was often described to prove the spirit's efficacy. Poised in 1121 on the western bank of the river only about six miles from the county seat, the rebels were a particularly bloodthirsty lot.³ Not only were they animated by a bitter hatred of all officials, depicted as exactors of a never-ending series of taxes, but their grievances were undergirded by Manichean religious ideas that treated killing as a positive vehicle for salvation.⁴ In addition, the rebel army adopted psychological tactics that unnerved their opponents. Donning clothes of bright colors, painting their faces, and fashioning tall likenesses of wild animals and phantasmic creatures from skins, costumes, and mechanical devices, they strode into battle with loud cries, panicking the local inhabitants. Fearful that the river might not keep this scourge away, the populace offered prayers to the spirit of North Trunk Mountain. That night a strong wind blew miraculously from the northeast, wrecking rebel boats and preventing the river crossing. Apparitions of a massed army with a giant among them dressed in tiger skins were said to have appeared on Xiaoshan's riverbank. The spirit of the dead general had mimicked the rebels' own techniques. The astonished rebels dared not cross the river and attack the county.

For Xiaoshan inhabitants during the Song dynasty, the natural world was not simply the scenic beauty of the tall pines on North Trunk Mountain, renowned as one of the county's scenic spots. Uncontrollable natural forces also provided a continual challenge. That Li's ghost chose to dress in tiger skins reflected the fact that as recently as the century before man-eating tigers had their bloody lair less than half a mile from North Trunk Mountain.⁵ Wild animals, of course, could not compare with

the awesome power of nature at its most terrifying in the seemingly unstoppable power of raging floods. When heavy mountain storms to the south made the Qiantang River a raging torrent, it slammed with devastating force into the Xiaoshan bank between Fish Lake and Wen Family Dike. Chinese legend tells of the great King Yu, who through his flood control efforts saved the Chinese from becoming fish. Yu's home has traditionally been associated with the present area of Shaoxing prefecture in which Xiaoshan county is located,⁶ and the danger and reality of frequent flooding here made that understandable. The view from North Trunk Mountain revealed that the terrain only exacerbated the flooding problem. Land sloped to the sea from the mountains to the south. Instead of ultimately draining into the sea, however, much of the water remained in low-lying areas that were rapidly transformed to swamp. It was Yu's contribution to set up an intricate network of drainage canals to deal with this problem.

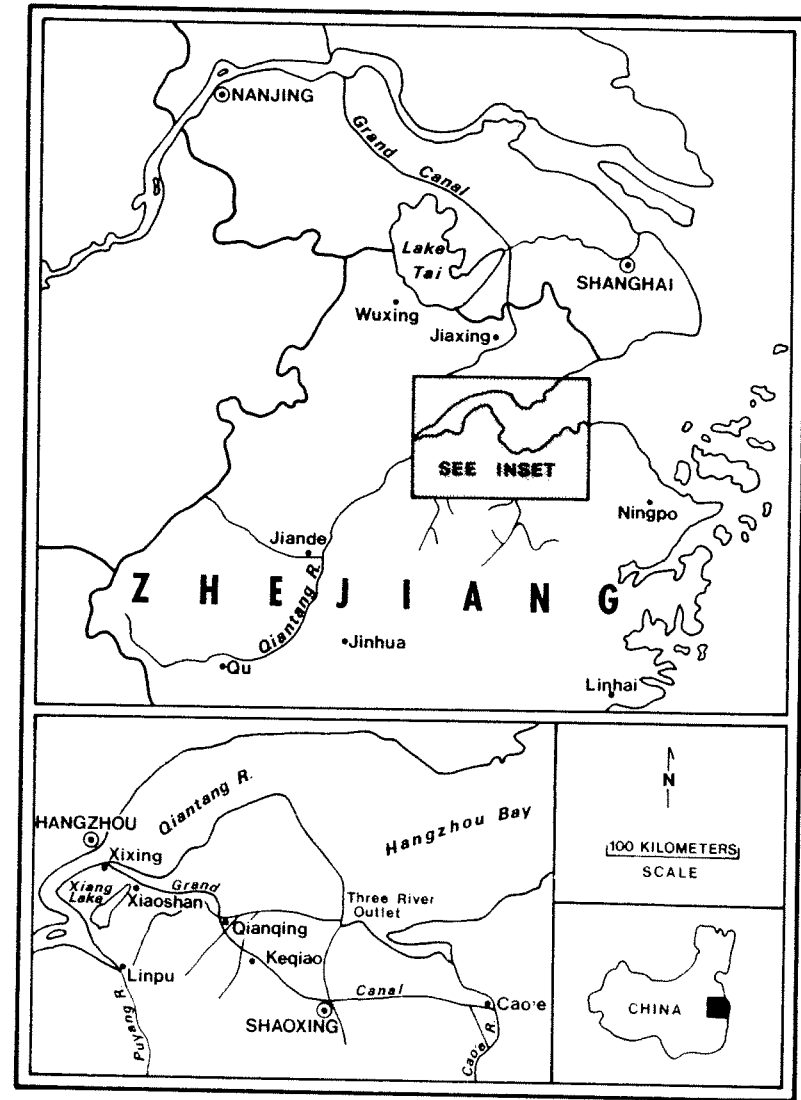
Between North Trunk and the bay to the north lay alluvial flats deposited by the river and peopled by squatters in the eternal search for more productive, if treacherously impermanent, land. From the sea came the salt fields with a commodity so important in Chinese society that its production and distribution early on became a government monopoly. But like some jealous water god ruling by whim, the sea could turn its fury on those alluvial flats and salt fields, taking what it had given. Storms frequently sent seawater towering in destructive waves over the land, leaving its deadly saline residue.

Each year at the time of the Mid-Autumn Festival, the top of North Trunk Mountain itself was the destination of crowds of sightseers who climbed to watch one of the sea's most spectacular water displays: the arrival of the tidal bore pushing up the river's estuary. The tide rushed in ten to twenty feet high at some thirty miles per hour; its roar could be heard thirty to forty minutes before it reached Hangzhou. Such displays of the force of water brought early Chinese to respect the god of the tide, and well it might: in September 1132, several hundred spectators on specially constructed wooden stands on the river's bank were swept to their death in the surf when the tide unexpectedly destroyed their viewing place.⁷ The Ningqi Temple at Xixing was established to sacrifice to the spirit of the tidal bore.⁸ Imputing natural phenomena to the designs of spirits, like the story of Li Di's ghostly machinations to forestall Fang La's attack, was a Chinese effort to explain awesome forces in more understandable, if fabulous, human terms.

Flowing west directly past the base of the mountain was the Grand Canal, carrying from Shaoxing, about twenty-five miles to the southeast, many boats loaded with goods from south China. After reaching Xixing on the Qiantang River's Xiaoshan bank, they would be ferried to Hangzhou.⁹ Dubbed "the finest and noblest in the world" when Marco Polo visited it in 1286, this city was clearly visible from the pavilion on North Trunk's Jade Peak.¹⁰ Outside the city wall on the west edge of the city was West Lake, which provided drinking water for the city's inhabitants but was known chiefly for its natural beauty and for the poetry, painting, and convivial social gatherings it stimulated.

In the water-dominated world of Xiaoshan perhaps most notable from the mountain were the lakes. The larger Ning-Shao (Ningbo-Shaoxing) Plain in which Xiaoshan is situated is bounded by ocean (the East China Sea on the shore of Ningbo prefecture), river (the Qiantang alongside Shaoxing prefecture), Hangzhou Bay, and mountains to the south (see map 1). In the Song dynasty, it had 217 lakes—a large lake every twenty square kilometers—the greatest density of lakes in all China.¹¹ Lakes served as retaining basins to contain inordinate rainfall and mitigate the flooding problem. More important, they were reservoirs, collecting precious water for irrigating paddies when little rain fell. For this is the irony of life in Xiaoshan: in a world dominated and constrained by the abundance of water, the actual problem year in, year out tended to be drought. When a local official was asked in 1353 to climb North Trunk Mountain to the general's temple, it was to pray for deliverance not from bandit-rebels but from drought.¹² The plight of the unfortunate Chinese farmer was literally flood or famine. Lakes became a way to help balance natural precipitation.

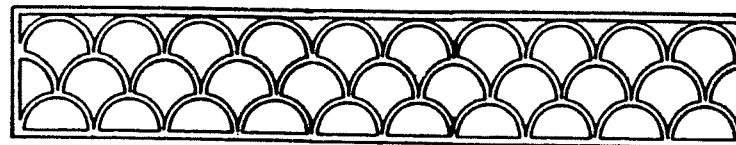
Many lakes in the area had been constructed for irrigation. Mirror Lake, for example, a large reservoir in Shanyin county to the east of Xiaoshan, had been created in A.D. 140 by building embankments around a number of natural springs.¹³ Smaller lakes in Xiaoshan county—Shooting Star Lake, Catalpa Lake, Dripping Melon Lake—had been built in similar manner for such a purpose. Xiang Lake, the largest in the county, was built to contain the water from many springs in the surrounding mountains and to retain rainfall as well.¹⁴ From the view atop North Trunk Mountain, it stretched to the south, roughly in the shape of a gourd, narrow in the north, rounded and fuller to the south. Less than a third of a mile farther south flowed the great river, menacing in its potential for destructive floods.



Map 1. Xiang Lake in Its Regional Context

The concept of *fengshui* (literally, “wind-water”), or geomancy, shaped the Chinese response to the natural world. Buildings and gardens were constructed and gravesites placed only in favorable geomantic spots ideally where natural topographical conditions combined an appropriate amalgam of *yin* and *yang*, dichotomous but complementary forces. Yang, the male force in the universe, was symbolized in the natural world by mountains, the heavens (where the sun made its daily course), and the south (the source of the life-giving warmth of the sun).¹⁵ Yin, the female force, had among its many manifestations, valleys, water, and the north.

The historical descriptions of North Trunk Mountain associate it, in its protective qualities, with the county itself; its base was located only a few hundred paces from the county seat, where the representative of the imperial government acted as chief county official, or magistrate. To the yang or life-giving south of North Trunk lay Xiang Lake. More significant than the mountain, symbol of the county and alleged protector of its people, the lake became life-giver and sustainer to its surrounding nine townships. It is reported that the famous Song dynasty poet Su Dongpo once said that Hangzhou had West Lake like a person has eyes. In contrast, in 1501, Liu Zhang, a Ming dynasty scholar-official, wrote that Xiaoshan had Xiang Lake like a person has a stomach. “If one covers the eyes, he can’t see; but if one’s stomach has serious problems, he can’t live.”¹⁶



CHAPTER: *The Beginnings, 1112–1214:*
Four Servants of the People

In the early winter of 1271, two young men, Cai Panlong and Sun Dehe set out from the town of Xiaoshan to a pavilion about five miles south on the shore of Xiang Lake and in clear view of the Qiantang River.¹ Both were involved in studies in Xiaoshan and wanted a break from the routine; in the mode of Chinese gentlemen, they had decided to spend their leisure viewing the scenery from the pavilion, playing music, and drinking. Sun had invited Cai to the pavilion; he apparently felt a special tie to the place because his older brother, Sun Delin, widely known for his literary skills, had been commissioned to pen a new name for the pavilion shortly before he suddenly and unexpectedly died. The pavilion had been built by a member of the Han family, whose lands were to the southeast of the lake and who had been accustomed to referring to it as the Officials’ Pavilion, since it was generally used for the convenience of officials coming from and going to Hangzhou. Evidently someone in the Han family decided a new name written on an identifying tablet by an illustrious litterateur would dignify their pavilion. The new name: Pavilion for Viewing the River and the Lake.

It was cold. The day alternated between periods of sunlight and mist, and as the two men leaned on the pavilion’s railing, occasional gusts of wind whistled through the structure. We do not know if they played the four-stringed guitar, how much they drank, or how long they stayed. What survives from this outing, reflecting the Chinese love of natural beauty, is

Cai's reverie on the lake scenery and the view from the pavilion. In his prose, the lake, renowned as one of the eight scenic beauties in the county, displayed autumnal and winter images that, though this outing bespoke no outward sign of mourning, must have reminded Cai of the brevity of existence in light of the recent death of his friend's brother. The images of nature, especially those of the lake, seemed to overwhelm Cai.

In the sparse forest, leaves laden with frost mask the sun. The heavens are studded with rosy clouds. The reeds along the shore and the fishing boats undulate in the waves blown by the west wind; on the sandy beach, the shadows of wild geese; swirling waters around the shoal—images of untamed wilderness.

All around, cloudy mists accumulate in the skies while the slanting rays of the sun shimmer like gold on the lake. The sound of waves from the river assaults my ears—I seem to be hearing several kinds of music and singing. I am overwhelmed. The appearance of the water invades my senses. I have lost all track of time. Images, pictures come and go—one forgotten as it is replaced by the next. I am both amazed and confused.

The waves play while wild ducks, tier upon tier, dance. . . . The distant mountains are bright in the mists; a waterfall cascades down the cliff. The scenery is rare and wonderful; on the shore a twisted pine together with a tiger-shaped stone; tall bamboos surround an old plum tree. In the distance a sail quickly falls while fishhawks skim over the water.

Xiang Lake's unrestrained, heroic spirit pervades all; and all this is pressing in on my eyes here in this pavilion, fixing my gaze.

Imagine! A year has four seasons—four different views. If it is like this in winter, imagine what it is like in spring, summer, and fall. Whether it will be clear or cloudy is not certain, but imagine if it is like this on a clear day what it is like when the wind blows strongly and there are clouds and rain. If it is like this in the day, imagine what it will be like at night with a bright moon glittering on the waves.

Cai's celebration of the vitality and beauty of the lake as seen from the pavilion pleased Sun, who grasped his hand enthusiastically and later remarked that Cai had given the name of the pavilion a proper descriptive record. If the lake was indeed to the county as a stomach to a body, it also obviously displayed some of the quality of eyes.

Re-creating the Lake: The Contribution of Yang Shi

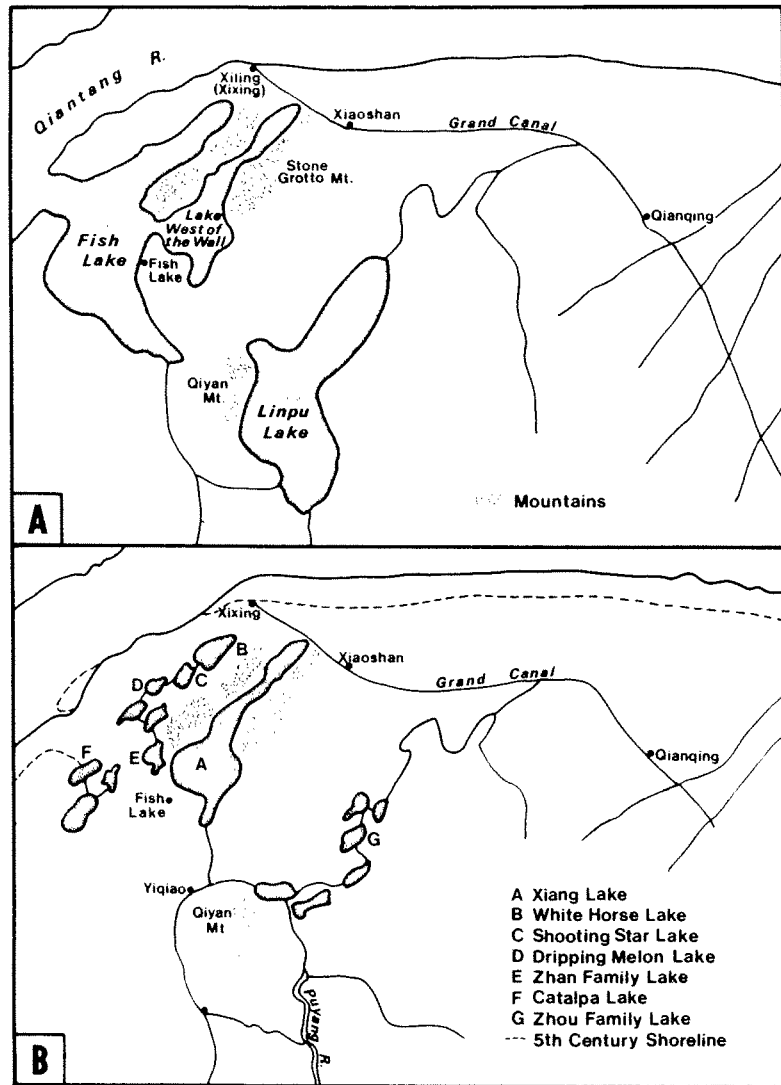
Xiang Lake was constructed as a reservoir in the closing decades of the Northern Song dynasty (960–1126) in a site where there had once been a

natural lake.² We know little about the earlier natural lake. Called the Lake West of the Wall (the wall of the county seat), it flourished from approximately the third to the ninth centuries as an appendage of an even larger lake to the west, Fish Lake (see map 2A). But the Puyang River flowing past it silted up its outlet to the larger lake, and little by little the Lake West of the Wall was reclaimed and became dry.³ Farmed for two to three centuries, the former lakebed was natural lowland and subject to frequent floods. In part for this reason, proposals to turn it back to lake were heard by the late eleventh century.

There were other more compelling reasons to consider returning it to lake. Beyond the lakebed itself, there was great concern about the persistent problem of drought in nine surrounding townships. And in two low-lying townships north of the county seat, the solicitude was the periodic floods that poured from higher altitudes. The proposed reservoir would serve the dual function of flood-control facility and irrigation source. The Song court gave local elders permission to discuss construction of such a lake.⁴

But discussions brought no local consensus. Wealth largely determined elite status during the Song, and wealth was at stake in the proposal to build a lake covering almost nine square miles.⁵ Some of the rich would have to give up their land for the lake at the very time when the rich in other nearby areas were reclaiming lake land as an appealing investment opportunity.⁶ The idea was dropped.

But in the period 1107–1110, unnamed people in the county again asked for the re-creation of a lake. In 1112 an energetic county magistrate, Yang Shi, called a meeting of village elders (*qilao*) of the nine townships, men whose roles usually included caring for public works and supporting agriculture.⁷ The detailed records of this important meeting have been lost. We do not know who supported or opposed the idea. There is also unfortunately no indication of how the landowners of the proposed lake land were induced to turn over private property for what might be called the gain of the Xiang Lake region. Patriarchal lineages like the Zhan lineage, five miles west of the county seat, and the Zhou lineage, eight miles to the south, had in the past given up productive land to form reservoirs for their lineages.⁸ But Xiang Lake was built on a far different scale and for a far more heterogeneous community. With a circumference of about twenty-three miles, the lake covered over 37,000 mu, or about 5,600 acres (almost five times larger than West Lake), and was intended to irrigate almost 147,000 mu, or about 22,250 acres, of paddy land.⁹ Mao

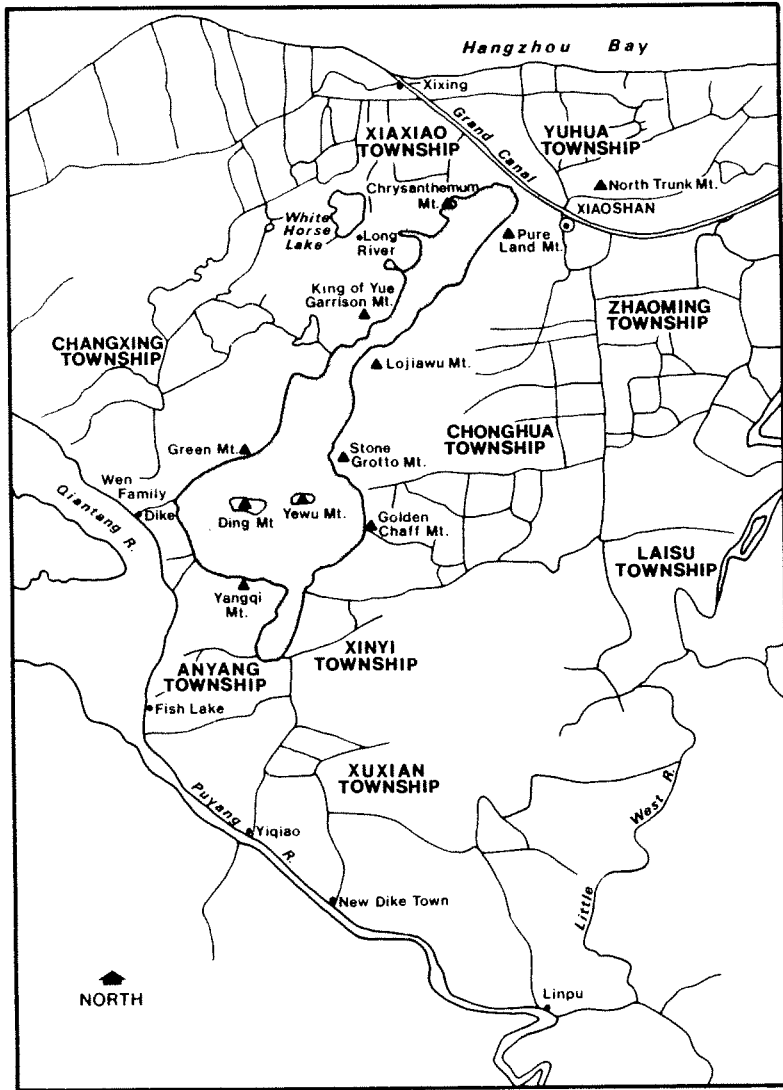


Map 2. Xiang Lake Area, (A) Fifth Century and (B) Early Twelfth Century

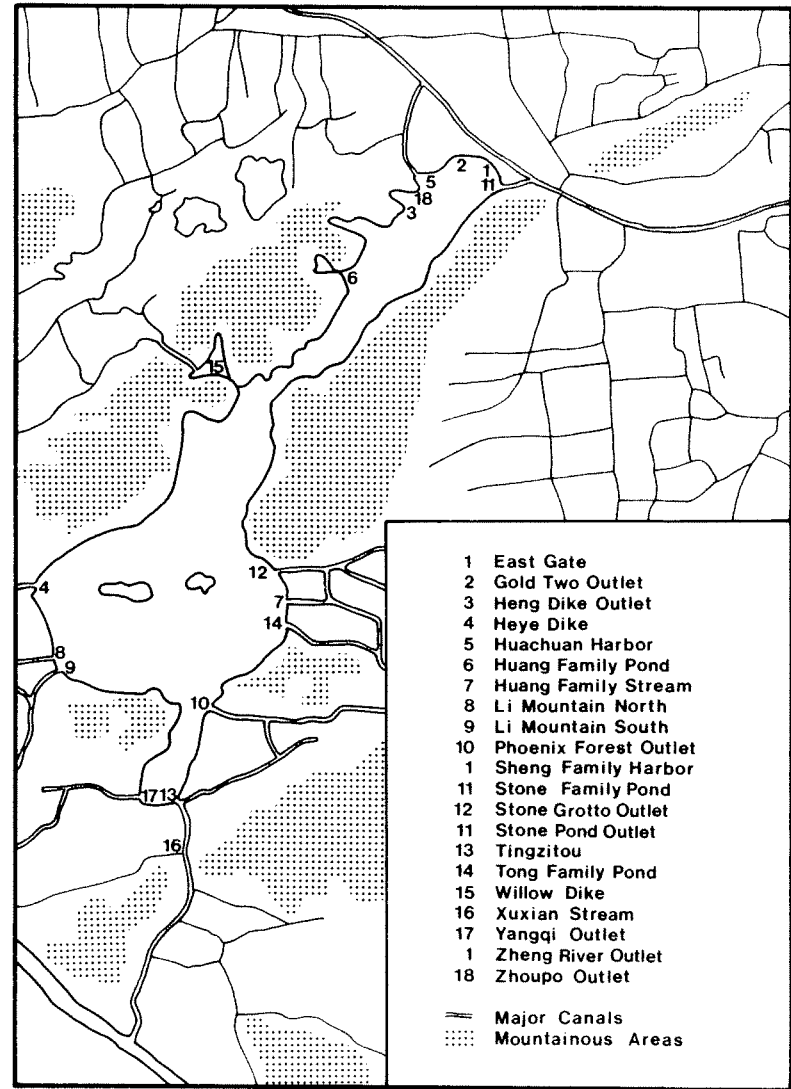
Qiling, the early Qing chronicler of the lake, provided no clues to the general situation or the motives of the landowners—whether they were forced to accede to the formation of the lake because of political weakness or were willing to assent because of economic desperation. Mao dealt only with the details of land tax policy. The state's interest in the lake's establishment centered mainly on taxes, which it did not want to lose from the productive cropland now covered by lake water (16,000 mu out of the 37,000 total). The elders of the nine townships satisfied the government's concern by agreeing to add an amount per mu to their land tax to cover what would have been collected on the cropland.¹⁰

The reservoir was built with mountains to the east and west serving as natural dikes along the length of the lake. Constructed dikes were necessary only in the north and south. The dikes were obviously higher than the lake; the lake was about 1.5 meters higher than the surrounding land. Water simply flowed from outlets in the dikes. The one-and-a-half mile southern dike had four irrigation outlets into two townships—Xinyi and Xuxian—which contained more than one third of the total acreage irrigated from the lake (see maps 3 and 4). The southeastern dike, two-thirds of a mile long, included three outlets draining into the four eastern townships. Through these seven outlets came water for over 80 percent of the total acreage irrigated from the lake. The major dike in the north, running about two-thirds of a mile from near the county seat to Chrysanthemum Mountain, had five outlets that provided water to three townships in the north. In addition to these dike outlets, six were located at various places along the mountains to the west and southwest of the lake.¹¹ A dike chief (*tangzhang*) was assigned to each outlet to oversee and keep it in good operating condition. His job was crucial in the equitable allotment of water. Also with authority in the regulation of the lake were “upper households” (*shanghu*), the wealthiest in the area, who, under the Song dynasty socioeconomic grading system, bore heavy local service obligations.¹²

For his role in re-creating the lake and thereby benefiting those around it, the magistrate Yang Shi won much acclaim.¹³ Using methods not detailed in the sources, he initiated the project, dealt with the lake's landowners, oversaw dike construction (with its necessary gathering of laborers and supplies), and set down allotment regulations for the eighteen irrigation outlets. For these accomplishments the nine townships remembered Yang as one of the four “senior officials” of the lake. The remainder of this quartet—Zhao Shanqi, Gu Zhong, and Guo



Map 3. Physiographic and Political Features of the Xiang Lake Area



Map 4. Original Lake-Dike Outlets

Yuanming—were essentially definers of the lake, delineating and rectifying its use through regulations and protecting its limits against encroachments. Theirs was a difficult task, perhaps even more so than Yang's. Once the decision to build the lake had been made, Yang could depend on the excited commitment of the benefiting community to complete the task. To sustain over many years that commitment in the more mundane tasks of surveillance and maintenance was the challenge that faced later preservers of the lake.

Defending the Lake: The Courageous Stands of Zhao Shanqi

The allotment regulations set down by Yang in the early twelfth century have been lost, but whatever they were, by 1158 they were not being followed. In that year a drought brought on many disputes over the allotment of water. Disputes went beyond words, as the Xiang Lake community was torn by numerous bloody fights and by litigation prompted by personal attacks. The assistant magistrate Zhao Shanqi, assembled all dike chiefs and “upper household” heads to discuss the problem and decide on an equitable system of water usage.¹⁴ The regulations, taking into account the altitude and placement of the irrigated land, set down six time periods for drainage outlets around the lake to be opened on a staggered basis. The acreage to be irrigated per village, the amount of water, and the amount of time the water could flow to each village's paddies were clearly specified. The lake could only be used for irrigation purposes from three days after the beginning of autumn (*liqiu*) in the lunar calendar (early to mid-August) until three days after the lunar calendar's White Dew (*bailu*) (mid- to late September).¹⁵

The size and construction of drainage outlets were prescribed: five Chinese feet wide (about 70 English inches) and three Chinese feet (about 42 inches) below the water surface. The sides were to be of cassia wood and the bottoms of stone to prevent the flowing water from tearing the outlet deeper and wider. Punishments were prescribed for violators. Anyone caught taking water from the lake out of the proper sequence for opening lake outlets would have his arms cut off; anyone found cutting his own drainage outlet in order to steal water would have his feet cut off.¹⁶

The sources do not detail how Zhao dealt with local figures whose anxiety for water had produced illegal drainage outlets cut into dikes or more ingenious ways of water pilferage. The Xiang Lake community acquiesced to Zhao's new regulations, though sources indicate that some

were probably not satisfied either with the regulations for their native place or that equity had been reached in the apportionment of water. Zhao stood firm in his resolve to end irrigation contentions. In the end, as Mao Qiling simply stated, “There were none who dared dispute [Zhao].”¹⁷

A more serious threat to the lake's integrity was on the horizon: encroachment on the lake by people from outside the Xiang Lake community.¹⁸ Less than two decades after the lake was completed in 1112, the Northern Song government was defeated in invasions by Jurchen tribes from Manchuria. In 1127, with the establishment at Hangzhou of the refugee Song court, Hangzhou became the imperial capital. The city's changed status transformed Xiaoshan county into an area of great strategic importance for the court. Permanent garrisons were established at Xixing on the Qiantang River across from Hangzhou, at three locations on Xiaoshan's Hangzhou Bay coast, and at the town of Fish Lake on the Qiantang River south of Xiang Lake. The number of soldiers and military guards stationed in the county were greater than anytime previously or anytime since.¹⁹ With powerful government figures and bureaucrats less than ten miles away, Xiang Lake and other lakes in its environs became lures for various types of encroachers and reclaimers.

In 1167 three higher level officials colluded with some men around the lake to transform lake into land for private use. Two Hangzhou military commissioners, Li Xianzhong and Zhou Ren, took steps to become owners of lake land. Li wanted land in a beautiful natural setting in order to construct a country house. Zhou, who apparently already owned land in the area and was married to the daughter of a powerful area family, the Zhangs, simply instructed his tenants to encroach on the lake by planting a number of mu of rice.²⁰ In addition, area prefect Wang Qu conspired with a certain man near the lake to change lake to paddy land.²¹

When Zhao Shanqi became aware of these actions by officials, he took advantage of a previously planned trip to Hangzhou to approach the court about these matters. His petition reached officials at the highest level of government. Zhao met the vice president of the Board of Revenue and, after preparing a memorial on the matter, the prime minister himself. There he spoke vigorously in defense of the lake, stressing the plight of farmers should the lake be encroached upon. From Hangzhou, Zhao traveled to Shaoxing, the prefectural capital, using harsh and emphatic language to make his points with the offending prefect himself. Zhao becomes a symbol of the upright lower official, putting his own career in jeopardy for the sake of the local community, jawboning with the

prime minister and prefect, and battling imperial commissioners and his bureaucratic superior out to further their own interests. To his credit, his courage seemed to have carried the day. Embodying in part the Chinese belief in the power of the written word, a signboard was posted at the lake forbidding the various encroachment schemes. But since there is no record that Li, Zhou, or Wang were reprimanded or penalized in any way, the “solution” seems one of form—to pacify Zhao and other accusers temporarily—rather than substance. Extremely important in the Chinese context, however, the formal “solution” provided a way for those in Hangzhou to express concern for the people of Xiang Lake, while the substance—failing to take substantive action against the indicted—gave evidence of the equation of political power at the capital.

Gu Zhong and the Crisis of Encroachment in the 1180s

When Magistrate Gu Zhong came to Xiaoshan in 1182, the lake had provided water to the area for seventy years and Zhao’s regulations had been in effect for over two decades. Gu undertook a study of the whole area’s water conservancy. Most of his findings related to Xiang Lake and circumstances around it. Gu found that there was indeed still a problem in the water allotment: while eight townships generally received enough, Xuxian to the southeast of the lake was receiving little. During the twenty years, some measures had been taken by the townships to rectify the situation, but the old regulations had not been changed to reflect that adjustment. Gu called together local elites, who quickly ratified the arrangement.²²

But the question of water allotment was the least of Gu’s difficulties. The first half of the decade of the 1180s was filled with disaster for the people of Xiaoshan county. Severe drought in 1180 and 1182 alternated with devastating floods in 1181 and 1185 to produce a farm populace fleeing elsewhere in desperation. Wives and children were sold. While fields lay fallow, the harvest of the dead was abundant. Gu described the situation as an unprecedented tragedy.²³ The government in Hangzhou provided general official relief grain and canceled tax payments for a year, action Gu attributed to the love of the Son of Heaven for his people and to his compassion for their fates.

Gu believed that the floods and drought came in large part from the widespread policy of reclaiming lakes on the Ning-Shao Plain. Little by little, people encroached on the sides of lakes, planting and harvesting rice,

slowly filling them in. The lakes, thereby reduced in size, could not contain almost continuous spring rains that began in May and often overflowed from the sudden cloudbursts of summer.

At the crux of the problem was the relationship between population, land, and water. Water nourished the rice paddies, which in turn supported people. As the population increased, land per capita decreased and more land was sought; but as land was reclaimed and increased, water to nourish the rice paddies decreased. The area of Xiaoshan is subtropical, with an annual precipitation of 1,300 to 1,500 millimeters, generally sufficient for farmers’ use. However, roughly between mid-July and the end of September, there is great heat with much evaporation. For late ripening, nonglutinous paddy rice, generally planted in June and harvested in October, natural rainfall was insufficient in the crucial part of the growing season; therefore, measurable water reserves for irrigation were needed.²⁴ In maintaining an ecological balance between land and water, however, the crucial variable was population, which increased markedly during the latter Northern Song and the Southern Song. In part the population swelled in the late 1120s from northern refugees following the victory of the Manchurian tribes over the government. In part the increase came from waves of northern emigration following such natural disasters as the flooding of the Yellow River in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.²⁵

The population of the seven counties of the Ning-Shao Plain passed 1.5 million by the mid-twelfth century, an estimated 600 percent increase from the third century. Such population pressure stimulated trends to reclaim lake land to produce more food. The historical record appears to verify Gu’s analysis. The Tang dynasty (618–907), when the area had seen many lakes built or restored, had seen only six floods in the period from 648–831, an average of one every thirty years; in that time, only one drought had occurred. From 1134 to 1272, however, after years of lake reclamation, there were nineteen floods and eight droughts, one every five years.²⁶ The weather-related disasters of the early 1180s were clear indicators to Gu that the balance of water and land was askew and that lake encroachers were largely to blame.

Gu faced encroachment not only at Xiang Lake but at nearby White Horse, Shooting Star, and Zhan Family lakes as well. At all but the last, a wealthy civil official, an intendant named Zhang, turned out to be a central schemer. At Xiang Lake the problem came to light with petty violence among commoners.²⁷ Near the end of July 1184, a man named

Wang disclosed to authorities that Farmer Li and six others were occupying lake land and planting rice on it. Four days later, when Li and several other poachers met Wang's older brother on the road, they blocked his way and began to curse him, attacking him for his brother's disclosure. Taunts turned to violence. Grabbing a large stone as a weapon, they fell on him, cutting open his head and injuring his back. They dragged the bleeding Wang to Zhang's mansion on the northern edge of the lake. We do not know what happened there, but Wang probably faced hostile interrogation and treatment.

Another investigation about the same time led directly to Intendant Zhang and began to open for Gu the range of Zhang's flagrant actions. Farmers in the northern part of the lake accused another farmer of planting rice on a large area of lake land near the northern dike. Gu discovered that Zhang had hired the farmer to plant the land. Angered, Gu made Zhang's encroachment known to his superiors, who ordered Zhang to rectify the situation. Zhang's proxy poachers each received sentences of one hundred blows with a heavy wooden rod. Such penalties informed the local community that Gu was intent on dealing harshly with encroachers.

Even more than his encroachment, Zhang's construction of an imposing residence behind one of Xiang Lake's most important northern dike outlets reveals his almost incredible arrogance.²⁸ Xiang Lake lay to the south of the Grand Canal, while parts of two townships that received water from the lake were to the north.²⁹ Irrigation water traveled from the lake through the Zheng River outlet to the canal and from there through the Wanghu Bridge outlet to the townships. Zhang had built his home between the Zheng River outlet and the canal; behind the outlet he had constructed an earthen embankment strengthened with stones, creating a personal small lake in front of his mansion in which he kept boats and planted lotuses. Lake water, in fact, had not been able to pass through Zheng River outlet for over two decades, depriving farmers north of the canal. Yet the sources reveal not a single word of protest or petition for redress. This astounding fact points to Zhang's ability to cow and silence farmers who depended on the lake for irrigation. Apparently, only Gu's aggressive policies of lake restoration made possible the unleashing of the area farmers' complaints against Zhang and others. Zhang had further constructed a boathouse atop the Zheng River dike, the building of which damaged the body of the dike itself. After these misdeeds came to light in the wake of Gu's initial investigations, Gu personally directed fifty local men in the removal of the embankment, thus restoring the site destroyed by Intendant Zhang.

Encroachment at White Horse Lake, a smaller reservoir (about 450 acres) just over the mountains to the west of Xiang Lake, also involved Zhang.³⁰ Since 1173, he and another local power-holder had steadily turned the lake into paddy land and constructed residences that blocked irrigation flow. In late winter 1184, the prefect received a petition asking that the lake be dredged and restored, claiming that the unauthorized reclamation of the lake had produced successive years of drought, which was spawning starvation and vagrancy.³¹ Authorities ordered the lake's restoration. Their specific instructions illustrate the political use of shame, often a potent instrument in Chinese culture.³² Zhang, official though he was, was ordered to personally remove the soil that had filled the lake. The government further attempted to shame him by erecting alongside the lake a placard castigating Zhang and his co-reclaimer as members of elite families who brazenly assumed that their private affairs superseded the interests of anyone else.³³ Both Zhang's removal of the soil and the placard meant great loss of "face" for the guilty official.

Probably because of his widespread guilt in encroachment, the sources blame Intendant Zhang for enticing into reclamation activities Military Commissioner Zhou Ren (with whom Zhao Shanqi had already dealt). Zhang was apparently seen as some sort of an embodiment of vice whose alleged influence reached much farther than was actually possible. In this case, Zhou had been encroaching on lake land almost a decade before Zhang. In 1166, a year before he instructed his tenants to usurp land from Xiang Lake, Zhou had moved to take almost half of Shooting Star Lake, eight miles west of the county seat, an area landmark since the Han dynasty; he also took portions of Catalpa Lake and Dripping Melon Lake.³⁴ Zhou's wife, née Zhang, apparently with higher scruples than either her husband or blood relative and a remarkably independent woman for the time that saw the beginnings of the custom of foot-binding, asked the court that the lakes be returned to the people since they had existed originally for irrigation. Zhou had obviously been unable to intimidate his wife as he had the local populace. The court, dominated by men and protecting its own officials, did not act, on the grounds that none of the area's people had lodged complaints about it.

The natural disasters of the 1180s and the activities of Gu Zhong, however, prompted a number of men from western townships to accuse Intendant Zhang of destroying Shooting Star Lake. Military Commissioner Zhou was not impeached even though he had been the foremost encroacher on this lake for almost two decades. Such a glaring omission suggests important dynamics in Chinese social behavior. It is likely that

Zhou was seen by area inhabitants as too powerful a presence on the local scene to accuse directly. Silence before and acquiescence to authority was a cultural approach deeply embedded in Chinese society and politics (though, as with any cultural norm, exceptions occurred under various circumstances). Intendant Zhang, who had earlier silenced those behind the Zheng River outlet at Xiang Lake, was by this time seen as one whose power and authority had been deeply undercut by the public awareness of his misdeeds. In other words, it had become possible to accuse and attack Zhang without great fear of retaliation. Because of the connections between Zhang and Zhou, it also became possible to touch Zhou indirectly by accusing Zhang. Circumstances thus permitted maintaining the *form* of the power-status relationship (that is, commoners subservient to a sociopolitical superior—not accusing Zhou directly), but they also allowed the expression of dissatisfaction through indirection.

In a culture where personal standing and relationships rather than impersonal law were decisive in attaining social and political goals, the climate for redress depended on the status, motivation, and relationships of the people in key roles. If Zhang's position had not been undermined, we may conjecture that the Zhang-Zhou alliance could have better withstood accusations. More importantly and with more certainty, if Magistrate Gu had not waged such open campaigns against encroachers, it is unlikely that accusatory petitions seeking to end encroachment would ever have been sent. If Gu had not so aggressively defended the lakes, some of Zhang's unscrupulous actions would likely have been sustained because of Zhang's connections (*guanxi*) to Zhou. Gu was thus the central character in the restoration of the 1180s. His willingness to contend with higher officials makes it likely that he himself had higher official "connections," though sources do not disclose them.

Not sharing the hesitancy of the petitioners, Gu accused Commissioner Zhou directly, charging illicit involvement in reclamation. Zhou's wife, he averred, would never have requested the restoration of the lake if her husband had been acting with propriety. The proper policy, he argued, was lake conservation: if Zhou's wife's request were granted, the flood-drought problems of the county would be solved. When it became known that Gu would take up the request of the townships, Zhang, probably to forestall further formal charges of wrongdoing, hit upon the plan of petitioning for the restoration of the lake himself, which he did in December 1184.³⁵ It is notable that despite his culpability Zhang still held his official position as intendant. Though Gu had successfully challenged

his actions, Zhang, probably on the basis of continued support from higher places, retained his post.

Finally, at Zhan Family Lake just west of Xiang Lake, Gu faced an encroacher who was a member of the imperial family itself.³⁶ The lake had been built by a strong lineage, the Zhan; however, the lineage fell on hard times, and members scattered, with the area's land falling into the hands of other families. During Gu Zhong's tenure as magistrate, a commoner presented some of the lake to an official, a relative of the imperial family. The presenting of land to officials was a common strategy of reclaimers and their accomplices; in this case, as in other similar instances, it is difficult to determine whether the presentation was initiated by the commoner or engineered by the official.

Gu was besieged with petitions on the Zhan Family Lake reclamation since the imperial relative had turned much of the small maple-surrounded lake to paddy and blocked the remainder from being used for irrigation. Petitions asked Gu, whom area people already saw as an opponent of reclaimers, to restore the lake and repair the dikes. Gu's investigation showed that the imperial relative had indeed obstructed the irrigation process. Unable to contend directly with the relative, Gu asked for funds to repair the dikes. His superiors responded that funds were unavailable since the boat on which the emperor often traveled via the Grand Canal to the imperial tombs near Shaoxing needed repair and thus required available funds. The emperor, his consorts, and relatives often used the Grand Canal for excursions to Xiaoshan and Shaoxing; on more than one occasion, empresses carried tablets from the court to be placed in local temples in the Xiang Lake area.³⁷ For the boat repair, the county provided more than four hundred strings of cash although only something more than three hundred had been requested. On Zhan Family Lake, by contrast, there was no action at all.

The original petitioner broadened his plea, asking that official usurpation of lake land in general be halted.³⁸ Hangzhou's response was that the imperial relative had purchased the paddy land but that the remainder of the lake was a reservoir. The imperial relative arrogantly refused to allow farmers with irrigation equipment access to the portion that even Hangzhou recognized as a reservoir. That refusal stimulated more petitions, which, with Gu's leadership, set in motion a long chain of events leading eventually to the lake's restoration.³⁹

Gu congratulated himself on the restoration of the lakes, as well he might.⁴⁰ Within two years after his arrival he had succeeded, if not in

breaking the arrogant stranglehold of some officials on the locality's resources, at least in controlling some of the more flagrant excesses. He also dealt with local minor wrongdoers in Xiang Lake—farmers who raised fish or planted lotuses to the disruption of irrigation.⁴¹ In addition to meeting the encroachment threat directly, Gu also dealt successfully with the threat of wider disaster in the June 1185 floods. After heavy rains inundated the area, Gu personally traveled by boat to view the dikes, calling together local leaders to make dikes higher and to reinforce earth around the dike outlets.⁴² He feared the breaking of the dikes not only because of resulting floods but also for the lack of irrigation water in the succeeding months should they wash out. To decrease water pressure by allowing the excess to drain into Hangzhou Bay, Gu opened the Zheng River outlet to the Grand Canal, possible only because he had been able to deal with Intendant Zhang's blockage of this outlet. He ordered that it be closed as soon as the rain stopped. The wisdom of Gu's care in maintaining the water in Xiang Lake was evidenced by the bumper crops in the area that year even though little rain fell after the floods of June.

Drawing the Color Line: The Work of Guo Yuanming

Three decades after Gu's magistracy, Guo Yuanming assumed the post.⁴³ The intervening years had seen people who lived at the foot of the mountains along the east and west shores of the lake construct some buildings on the lake's bank. Investigation by area elders confirmed these developments. The alleged encroachers argued that they had built not on lake land but on mountain land; the elders argued otherwise. Guo was called into the wrangle to settle the boundary issue. The sources picture him as uncertain and hesitant over how to delineate specifically the demarcation between the two types of land.

At that moment his fifteen-year-old son came forward with a suggestion: "The land is easy to distinguish: the land which is yellow is mountain land; the land which is greenish and light is lake land." This outspokenness of an adolescent in matters of public policy is as remarkable in Chinese cultural terms as the forceful assertion into political affairs of Zhou Ren's wife. Guo's son's suggestion, in contrast to that of Zhou Ren's wife, was adopted; while it might threaten the position of poor poachers, it obviously did not threaten the official male powers. Guo Yuanming reacted with enthusiasm; after dredging the lake, which caused no small uproar among those encroachers who had feigned inno-

cence in their constructions, he proclaimed the line of soil color the boundary between the foot of the mountains and the body of the lake.

As one might expect, some sought to use the color line to their own advantage. Not much later one or more people dumped baskets of yellow soil into the water along the lake bank and set out to construct a dwelling. When Guo went to investigate, he saw the yellow of the mountain soil and was initially deceived. But the would-be encroacher was foiled by none other than Guo's son, who encouraged his father to return to the site and dig in the soil. When Guo followed his son's suggestion, the green was clearly visible. The dwelling was destroyed and the culprit dispatched to the army.

The Legacy of the Four

In the first century of Xiang Lake, then, four distinguished officials—Yang Shi, Zhao Shanqi, Gu Zhong, and Guo Yuanming—created and preserved the lake intact for the use of the irrigation community. The proximity of the imperial capital, with its plethora of grasping, self-interested officials, had made this period a particularly dangerous one for the integrity of the lake. In 1377, Magistrate Zhang Mou built a public temple on the edge of the lake to commemorate the accomplishments of the lake creator and preservers at spring and autumn sacrifices: it was called the Shrine of the Four Senior Officials.

Not only irrigators would have been willing to sacrifice there; many others benefited from the lake as well. Fishermen netted many varieties of fish: especially prized were the bream known for its jade green color and delicious delicate flavor, said by an early account to be "Yue's crown" (Yue, an ancient kingdom in the area, had given its name to the region), and the *dufu*, most abundant in the spring when the peach was in blossom, and especially delicious, it was said, when water in the lake rose after spring rains.⁴⁴ The lake teemed with delicious crabs. There were other water-products as well: two varieties of water chestnut; seeds of a plant akin to a water lily, used as coarse food and medicine and collected in autumn by the area's women; aquatic grasses eaten as vegetables; and, most famous of all, a type of lotus called the water-shield plant (*brasenia purpurea*), whose leaves and stems were a silky delicacy in soup and whose roots were used like wild rice by the poor and by many in time of famine.⁴⁵ The flavor of this edible plant from Xiang Lake was renowned. It was said that only the local people around the lake could distinguish it

from the duckweed and other plants with which it grew intermixed; and it was averred that only the locals knew the secret method of washing and cooking it to make it soft and succulent.⁴⁶

Poets, artists, and Chinese in general, who evidenced a deep love of nature's scenery, also owed debts to the Four. The scenery surrounding the lake prompted its name, according to Qian Zai, a Ming dynasty writer from Shaoxing, because it reminded someone of the landscape around a tributary of the Xiang River in Hunan province.⁴⁷ A few Song and early Yuan poems on the lake survive, and several point out the practical irrigative function of the lake: "One-tenth of an ounce of lake water is intimately related to the ten thousand mu."⁴⁸ But they describe primarily the lake's natural abundance and beauty: the luxuriance of the water-shield plant, the fragrant grasses, and the lotus flowers; the boats and oars of the fishermen; and the waterbirds—the crane in the shore grasses and the seagulls, ever-present reminders of the proximity of the bay. The domain of nature that overwhelmed Cai Panlong on his outing in 1271 is the world of the poets.⁴⁹ It is predominantly a world of the late afternoon, of dusk, when the blue haze and the slanting, weakening rays of sunlight bring a sense of loneliness, perhaps even of pathos, in the realization of the brevity of life compared to the lasting natural world of beauty into which this man-made lake had developed.

What remains notable about Yang, Zhao, Gu, and Guo, in light of the world of nature depicted by poets, is their humanity evidenced in the historical record. In contrast to Intendant Zhang (whose personal names we are never told) or Commissioner Zhou (whose only human quality seems to be his wife), images of the Four spring readily to mind: Yang bucking the trends of history to establish a lake when most were being reclaimed and dealing with landowners whose land, however unproductive, would thenceforth be submerged by water; Zhao, a minor official, gesturing, declaring, and going to extremes to convince his superiors to protect a lake for which he, through force of character, had set down regulations; Gu taking on his superiors who were trying to reclaim the lake, sincerely concerned for the populace to restore all area lakes, and personally visiting dikes endangered by flood; and Guo, human in his hesitancy and uncertainty, but with the enthusiasm and courage to accept the advice of his teenage son. Zhang Mou, the builder of their shrine, clearly saw that they were larger than life and that their legacy should be respected and perpetuated.

It is not surprising that Mao Qiling, the lake's seventeenth-century

chronicler, was obviously disconcerted in reporting the subsequent history of the Shrine of the Four Senior Officials: "Afterward—I don't know when—the name was suddenly changed to the Shrine of the Two Senior Officials—Yang and Gu—and they were made the dukes of the Xiang Lake area. [Later] the name was distorted from Yang-Gu to Yang-Guo and the shrine was moved alongside the Pure Land Temple near the lake's Stone Pond Outlet."⁵⁰

Like the Qiantang River currents and silt that obliterated the Raksha rock, the passage of time blotted out the accomplishments and differences of the Four. Gu's superhuman work of the 1180s became merged in the collective historical consciousness with the bumbling, though human, Guo. The efforts of the Four commemorated by the public shrine came to coexist with a Buddhist temple, a high irony, given considerable encroachment at area lakes by Buddhist monks in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries.⁵¹ One is reminded of Cai Panlong's musings on Xiang Lake: "I have lost track of time. Images, pictures come and go—one forgotten as it is replaced by the next. I am both amazed and confused."

In the early fifteenth century a scholar named Huang Zong, concerned with the obliteration wrought by time, wrote a poem and commentary on the Pavilion for Viewing the River and the Lake, the views from which had so moved Cai Panlong.⁵²

Pavilion long since destroyed—but the name seems to suggest it still remains:

The lake water with waves the color of the heavens, separated from the sound of the river.

We hurry to find the foundation where our ancestors collected the arts. Though willing to carry on their traditions, we are ashamed Because posterity finds only wild grass and spring flowers in villages along the shore.

The records show this pavilion was destroyed long before the Yong'le period (1403–1424). It is, in fact, sometimes confused by people with the One View Pavilion on Stone Grotto Mountain. Along the lake shore at Tingzitou village, there is a bit of wasteland where there are many pieces and fragments of broken stone—perhaps this was its site.

II

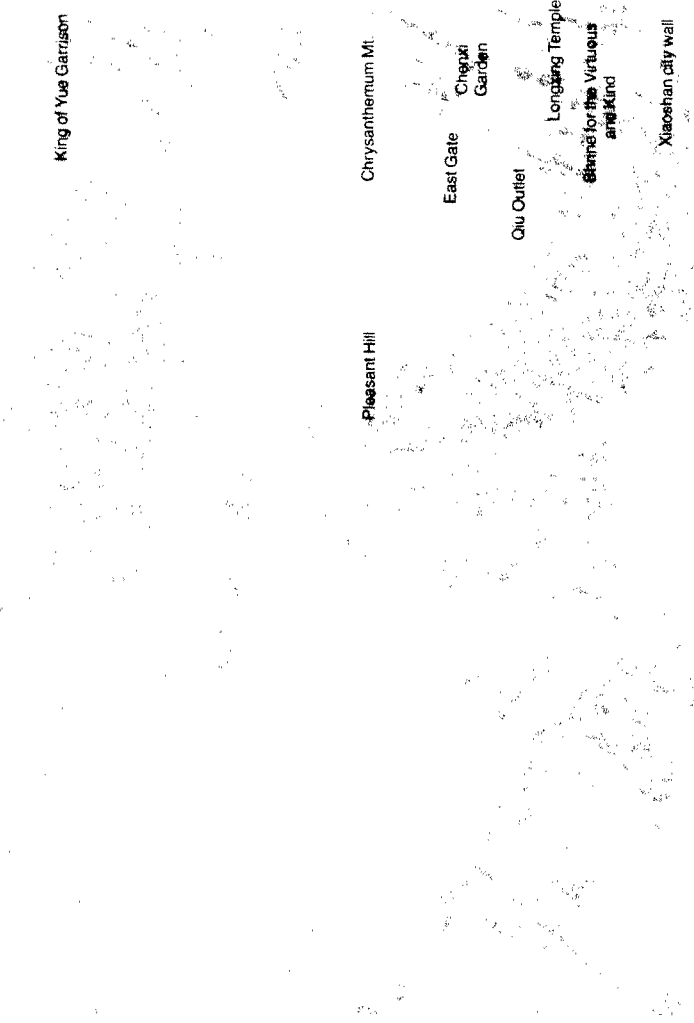
VIEW

*Chenxi Garden, Late
Fifteenth Century*

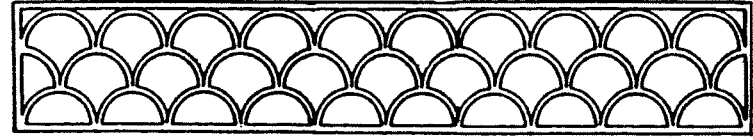
CHAPTER

*Obligation and Death,
1378–1500*

King of Yue Garrison



Map 5. Xiang Lake Sites, Fifteenth Century

VIEW: *Chenxi Garden, Late Fifteenth Century*

It was not a notably large garden. But if a Chinese garden was meant to replicate natural scenes by incorporating elements within—pavilion, rocks, bamboo—with vistas beyond the garden, then it was undoubtedly a popular site for serious viewers of scenic beauty.¹ Located on the lake's northern shore, it would have allowed onlookers from its almost obligatory pavilion many prospects of lake, mountains, heavens, and natural plant and animal life. Though the county seat with its ruined ancient wall could be seen in the distance through the clumps of bamboo, the garden was far enough into the country to allow those from town to escape, however briefly, into the world of nature.²

No record remains of the arrangement of the garden, though from accounts of other gardens in the area we may make reasonably accurate assumptions about its component features. In all four seasons the garden should have offered the cultivated viewer pleasing sights.

Winter in Xiaoshan often ignores the subtropical categorization of the lake and its environs. In a later period, Cai Mingheng described the piercingly cold north wind driving snowflakes into his face as he passed the nearby garden at the base of North Trunk Mountain.³ During such cold spells, the garden should have continued to exude signs of life. The “three friends of winter”—bamboo, pine, and chrysanthemum—were thus essential components.⁴ So crucial were they that for the Chinese they have become significant symbols: the durable and resilient bamboo, whose



Figure 1. Chrysanthemum Mountain (1986)

segmented growth evinced a sense of standards and limit, symbol for the Chinese gentleman-official; the pine, green in winter with gnarled bark against the slate sky or wind-driven snow, symbol of the Confucian scholar's persistence and tenacity in the face of oppression and hard times; and the chrysanthemum, which flowers when others have long died, symbol of endurance amid the vicissitudes of season and condition. Less than half a mile to the west of Chenxi Garden rose Chrysanthemum Mountain, and it is likely that on an early winter day, perhaps framed by pine or bamboo in the garden, the golds, lavenders, and coppers of the chrysanthemums that covered the mountain could be seen against a blanket of snow (figure 1).⁵ The snowfall would have made stark the line between dark lake and white mountain, certainly a more distinct and immovable demarcation than Guo Yuanming's color line could ever have been.

While bamboo and pine retained their rich greens throughout the year, the first sign of spring came with the almost miraculous appearance of delicate red-and-white plum blossoms on naked, rough branches. Able to endure the still wintry blasts of late winter, these blossoms clothed

the mountains around Xiang Lake in February and March. From the garden they appeared on the mountains to the west and south in natural abundance. The creator of the garden would almost certainly have cultivated one or more plums, which shared with the pine the symbolism of hardiness amid bleak hostility. Each year it seemed that the appearance of plum blossoms was in part simply the signal for other, more colorfully and fragrantly flamboyant flowers to spring forth: wintersweet blossoms of intense jasmine fragrance; the magnolia's creamy pink-white flowers; the crab apple's mildly fragrant clusters of tiny red, pink, and white blossoms; and by May the peony's wealth of petals in yellows, purples, and reds.

It was almost certainly the peonies that Magistrate Wu Shu noted on the northern shore of the lake and on Chrysanthemum Mountain one clear spring evening in 1480.⁶ Taking a sedan chair from the Shrine for the Virtuous and Kind, established for the memory of Yang Shi of the Song and Wei Ji of the early Ming, who had worked to uphold the lake, Wu passed the Longxing Temple on his way to the first drainage channel from the lake, the Stone Pond Outlet. Both shrine and temple were clearly visible from Chenxi Garden and, to a scholar familiar with the area, were reminders of the transcendent importance of water and defense for the area's survival. Longxing Temple had been built by a general in the 930s, had been destroyed in the bloody turmoil at the end of the Mongol's Yuan dynasty, and had been rebuilt only in the early fifteenth century.⁷ Because spring rains had flooded the path around the lake, Wu traveled by boat after reaching the Stone Pond Outlet. Although he passed Chenxi Garden, it did not elicit his comments; perhaps he was more interested in the silhouette of bamboo and cassia against the setting sun, perhaps the wine he was drinking had combined with the rocking boat to produce a groggy drowsiness. In any case, he headed for a county landmark, the King of Yue Garrison Mountain, for the night.

As one journeyed west from the county seat, Chenxi Garden was located at the East Gate, the second drainage opening along the dike. In mid-August it began to be opened for periods of over twenty-one hours during the third of the lake's staggered openings. By then the lotus blossoms in the garden pond had become great disks of color in the air above the lotus leaves; the daylilies and irises along the pool's edge were swatches of purples and oranges and blues against the dark green azalea and wintersweet leaves; the cicadas throbbled in the shimmering humidity; and the whine of the mosquitoes, omnipresent in this water-filled world,

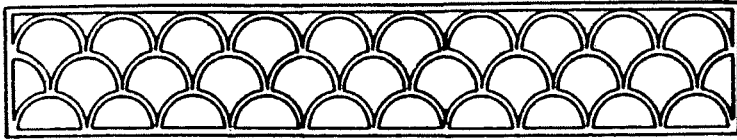
could be halted only temporarily by the vigorous fan waving of a determined scholar as he absorbed the summer scenery.

Viewed from the garden, the lake was the realm of fishermen, irrigators, mud-dredgers, and, especially in late afternoon and evening, those escaping the heat of town and the rigors of work by sailing or rowing with friends and, more than likely, by drinking wine. In gardens thoughtful Chinese sought release from the irritations, frustrations, discord, and cares of life. Magistrate Wu Shu, in his 1480 journey around the lake, did note a garden east of Xiang Lake with pavilion and pond amid a flourishing of flowers, great bamboos, birds, and a herd of deer: viewing that garden, he recorded, removed his anxiety and the cares of his heart, and he was even moved to write a song expressing his happiness. And what was Xiang Lake except a garden writ large? Its mountains, its waters, its foliage and flowers, its clouds and mists, its ability to bring relaxation and closeness to nature—all this drew people to the lake, eliciting poetry and essays extolling its beauty.

About the time the period of irrigation ended in September, the first signs of autumn began to appear in the garden.⁸ The catalpa, which provided the wood for imperial coffins, began to turn color, a certain signal, people said, of the approach of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Immediately before and during the rice harvest, the view of the lake from the garden was most majestic: the summer's heat and its lake haze dissipated; the days were cooler and clearer; the lake's water shone a deeper blue to match the "kingfisher blue" of the heavens.⁹ In days of autumn brightness, the cinnabarine maples on the mountains around the lake, and perhaps juxtaposed in the garden with the pine and bamboo, vaunted the splendid contrasts of nature. But if autumn brought splendor, it also brought death; with the harvest came the end of the growing season. The maples dropped their blood-red leaves to stand stark against the sky. The *wutong*, it was said, dropped one leaf a day to mark the passage of autumn.¹⁰ The lake's harvest of the luxuriant water-shield plant was snuffed out when the first frost descended.¹¹ And the lotus, regal in the summer amid floating duckweed in the lake and garden pond, turned brown at the first cold weather, burned by the frost into a contortion of tendrils, petals, and leaves.¹²

Like the accomplishments of the Four Senior Officials and like the fate of the Pavilion for Viewing the River and the Lake, within several centuries Chenxi Garden was no more. The beauty of its human-planned and created scenery—tree, flower, rock, and pond—had been over-

whelmed and destroyed by the natural growth of a bamboo forest, which in its luxuriance had also eliminated all open vistas of the lake.¹³ Like Wu Shu, who passed by without comment, one might assume that this scenic garden view simply depicts the seasonal flora of Xiang Lake; but it is more important in the story of Xiang Lake as the setting of an extraordinary, violent episode that occurred one early autumn day in the year 1500.



CHAPTER: *Obligation and Death, 1378–1500*

Historical sources have not provided information about the reactions of lake viewers Cai Panlong and Sun Dehe to the advancing Mongol armies late in the decade of the 1270s. Conscientious young men in Xiaoshan reacted in different ways to the conquest by brutal outsiders. He Zongju, in his mid-thirties and associated with the Hangzhou court, fled in 1275 to Xiaoshan to live as a hermit, unable to serve a new lord.¹ Ding Shen, a brilliant twenty-three-year-old scholar, out of loyalty to the Song emperor threw himself to his death from a cliff when the Mongols crossed the Qiantang River: “Three centuries of the ancestral temples and altars to the spirits of the land destroyed in one day—how can I go on?”² Not all Xiaoshan men, of course, dropped out of society, either figuratively or literally. While the emphasis on loyalty to one’s master or lord does not have the same unconditional force in Chinese tradition as the vassal-to-lord loyalty in feudal Japan, the obligation (and loyalty) one owes to one’s superior—be he ancestor, father, teacher, or emperor—is grounded deeply in the classical culture.³

Given the cultural norms, the individual must decide, for example, if allegiance to particular ideals or a new regime should supersede other obligations to person or regime. Li Di, the Qin general whose spirit inhabited North Trunk Mountain, forsook the Qin regime to follow Xiang Yu: he was honored for his death in the service of Xiang Yu. A more famous general, Yue Fei of the early twelfth century, insisted on opposing

the advance of northern tribes into the territory of the Southern Song even when his emperor, supported by a chief minister, refused to sanction that action. Eventually executed on a trumped-up charge of treason, he was posthumously canonized as loyal (*zhong*)—to ideals that transcended allegiance to individuals.⁴ The Chinese had many varied, and acceptable, models in this regard.

Time obliterates not only natural gardens and man-made pavilions but also memories. For many Chinese, the political legitimacy of a regime generally seemed to be strengthened the longer it existed: even a regime as harsh and discriminatory to the southern Chinese as the Mongol held the Mandate of Heaven. Within less than a century, with the Mongol regime in disintegration and the rise of regional would-be emperors, county records make supporters of the Mongols seem positive forces of virtue when compared to their opponents, the future founders of the Ming dynasty.

In the beginning it seemed that Li Di’s spirit might protect Xiaoshan from bloody warfare. Xiaoshan was, in the words of one commentator, the “throat” through which Eastern Zhejiang (*Zhedong*), with its flourishing trade, salt production, rice paddies, and sericulture, could be entered from Hangzhou.⁵ In 1352, Fang Guozhen, an independent military leader who supported his ventures by raids on coastal towns, shipping, and government granaries in the present-day provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, made ready to cross the river into Xiaoshan.⁶ Zhao Cheng, a county official known for his public spirit, ascended North Trunk Mountain.⁷ The results of his supplication were as spectacularly dramatic as the case of Fang La over two centuries earlier. In the middle of the night supernatural lights appeared on the Xiaoshan bank of the river, seeming to Fang Guozhen and his troops to be the lanterns of encamped soldiers. The apparition again proved efficacious: Fang did not cross.

Seven years later, however, it was a different story. In February 1359, the forces of Zhu Yuanzhang, who would establish the Ming, took Zhuji county to the south of Shaoxing.⁸ In March his leading general planned an attack on Qianqing, nine miles southeast of the Xiaoshan county seat. The attack involved the purposeful destruction of over 235 yards of dike and caused considerable flooding with loss of property and life in both Xiaoshan and Shaoxing counties. It appears that Li Di’s magic could check enemies only from across the Qiantang. What followed was high irony, given the county’s sense of Li Di’s place in its defense. In May a Ming general launched a devastating attack from Zhuji directly

on Xiaoshan. When Yuan loyalists could not hold out, the Ming army plundered and burned the countryside: “Smoke darkened the sky” as Yuan loyalists fled across the river to the west. Ensnared in the county, the Ming army chose its headquarters, North Trunk Mountain, the very home of Li’s spirit. There was a temporary reprieve from the Ming rule of Xiaoshan when Yuan generals brought together “righteous” soldiers on more than three hundred boats at Fish Lake. Ming forces retreated for a time, taking booty from the area. But by 1368 all of China came under Ming control.

We are not told of the plights of farmers and fishermen around Xiang Lake either in the victory or in the defeat of the Mongols. Certainly the opening of the dikes and the smoke-blackened sky suggest that the lives of the area’s people were almost negligible to those who fought. Nor do we know if any of the lake community knew or cared who was fighting whom and for what. Endlessly repeating cycles of planting and harvest, punctuated by birth, marriage, death, and festival days, formed the rhythm of life. Such natural disasters as the tremendous wind and rain storm in the spring of 1333 that uprooted trees, destroyed crops and houses, and caused an unknown number of casualties only added to the sense of being a small part of an awesome natural world.⁹

Xiang Lake: Late Yuan, Early Ming

The situation at Xiang Lake had deteriorated rapidly during Mongol rule. By the late 1340s, much of its shallower sections were clogged with weeds, and, as a whole, water was insufficient.¹⁰ Paddies around the lake became barren, and hungry people were ready to join bands of thieves that reportedly were forming in the mountains. A minor struggle occurred in the years 1338–1341 between two county officials, the magistrate and the chief judicial official: the magistrate, seeing the deteriorated shape of the lake, wanted its complete destruction, while the judge insisted on its preservation despite its clogged, encroached-upon state.¹¹ Though the judge won the dispute, at the end of the decade the lake’s condition had not much improved. In 1349 a new county judicial official championed the lake, paying special attention to dredging lake areas and building up leaking and unrepaired dikes.

The political instability and the military exigencies of the era also took their toll on the lake. In addition to the fighting of the 1350s and 1360s, which damaged or destroyed lake dikes, drainage channels, water gates,

and embankments, one magistrate actually promoted a policy of reclamation for the benefit of area residents. In the battles for control of territory to the southwest of the county, military on both sides demanded that county rice be shipped to the troops, leaving an already desperately hungry populace with no grain for themselves. The magistrate benevolently opened government granaries to feed the hungry and relaxed prohibitions against Xiang Lake reclamation.¹²

A new dynasty, like a new year, meant a fresh start. Nine years after its beginning, Magistrate Zhang Mou, who had the Shrine of the Four Senior Officials constructed, worked to reestablish the lake as a functioning irrigative reservoir. It had been two centuries since Gu Zhong’s work. After his visit to the lake, Zhang described the crumbled stele with the regulations in dust, the private drainage outlets that had been cut, and the theft of water. He searched for the old records to discover which drainage openings were legal, but it was, he tells us, a vexatious task. He clearly saw himself as carrying on the work of the Four; his goal was to restore the system by reengraving the regulations in stone. By restoring the lake, Zhang was fulfilling an obligation not only to the people of the Xiang Lake irrigation community but also to the memories and records of Yang, Zhao, Gu, and Guo. He was also thereby placing himself in a line of protectors of the lake, marking himself as an upholder of the tradition begun by the Four. In a real sense he was establishing himself in an ancestral line, not of patriarchy but of role and accomplishment.

Buying the highest quality stone available, as the symbol of a new start, Zhang had the regulations carved and placed before the right column of the county hall in the county seat.¹³ He finished the task in early October 1378, shortly after the Double Nine Festival, a day when people bought meat pies with little paper flags of different colors, held large banquets, or picnicked among the chrysanthemums in the mountains. Chrysanthemum and dogwood petals were traditionally placed on cups of wine as charms to eliminate evil powers. One can imagine Zhang’s hoping that, with the new start he had given systematic irrigation at Xiang Lake, the Double Nine floral amulets would do their part to preserve the lake from harmful influences.¹⁴

The Work of Wei Ji

Wei Ji, who was honored with Yang Shi, the creator of Xiang Lake, in the building of the Shrine for the Virtuous and Kind in 1473, was of a

different mold from Yang, Zhao, Gu, Guo, or Zhang. While the others were officials who served the area through their posts in the imperial bureaucracy, Wei was a native of Xiaoshan who in his retirement from a long line of distinguished positions made important contributions to his county's water conservancy. Such a career pattern was common for Chinese officials and points to the great significance of birthplace for Chinese in general. One felt a strong sense of the significance of one's native place as the home of familial ancestors; a strong social tie to others sharing that native place—whether village, county, prefecture, or even province; and an obligation to further the well-being and standing of that area vis-à-vis other areas.

Wei was born in 1374, three years before Zhang began his effort at historical restoration. He passed the provincial-level civil service examination at age thirty-one, thereby gaining for himself the second-level civil service degree, the *juven*. Whether he failed to pass the examination for the highest degree, the *jinshi* (at the metropolitan and palace examination), we are not told, although his quick appointment to serve at a prefectural school in Jiangsu province suggests, in light of early Ming practice, that this may have been the case.¹⁵ He built a fine reputation at the school, serving for twelve years and helping during that time in the preparation of the Great Encyclopedia of the emperor Yong'le. He served in several posts in the Court of Imperial Sacrifices and was vice minister in the Board of Personnel and in the Board of Rites. During his years at court he also directed the metropolitan examination three times and the Jiangsu provincial examination twice. He ended his official career as Minister of Personnel of Nanjing in 1451, when he retired at age seventy-seven. During his retirement, which lasted another twenty years (he died at ninety-seven, the oldest Ming dynasty official¹⁶), he wrote at least ten poems on Xiang Lake and, more significant for his contemporaries, contributed to the lake's preservation.

Wei's poetic legacy is remarkable for its content and tone, especially when compared to the rather large body of Xiang Lake poetry.¹⁷ Much of Chinese poetry is haunted by a sense of the brevity of life, of time running out, of the vanity or futility of human works. It is laden with images of autumn and evening, overwhelmed by an almost painful sense of endings. From a near octogenarian we would perhaps expect somber dirges, especially when we discover that seven of the ten poems he left are descriptions of trips to or past his planned gravesite. A clue to Wei's disposition and outlook comes from the name he gave the gravesite: Pleasant Hill.¹⁸

Wei's poems on Pleasant Hill generally take place in early morning or midday; despite allusions to and comments on retirement and death, their themes are life and the bounties of nature. In Wei's poetry, Xiang Lake indeed becomes a garden, providing varied views through the four seasons. Four poems are dated according to time of year: mid-August, late September, December, and April. At dawn in mid-August in 1453, Wei set sail for Pleasant Hill, recording the scenery of the lake. The tone is peaceful, bountiful, contented.

There are ripples on the still lake.
I take advantage of the dawn wind, let it
push the sail to wherever it will.
The glint of the sunlight is like
gold flowers in the lake.
In the heart of the waves are the
strong-stemmed water-plants.
Overhead are the mists; on the rocks are
pines; cranes swoop over the water.
Farmers cease from their labors and come
quickly to welcome [me] . . .

The poem of late September mentions the seasonal chrysanthemums counterposed to the jade green trees, a faraway shrine on the lake's shore, and a monk's yellow-thatched hut. Wei's treatment of human activity is remarkable: the world of nature is for human use and profit—a contrast to earlier (and later) descriptions that render humanity inconsequential amid the awesome power of nature. In the September poem, Wei talks of the farm family whose “sweet-smelling rice has already borne fruit” and of the woodcutter coming out of the valley who stops to loosen his load.¹⁹

Although Wei's descriptive December poem is filled with thoughts on his own situation, he paints a picture of purity and abundance—of snow falling onto his head and into the lake while streams cascade down mountains in the distance.²⁰ Only in his poem of April—ironically in springtime—does Wei turn to the more somber themes: the futile plans of men to direct their world, the ending of the day, the drinking of wine. But even then, it is a picture of nature's bounty with the mention of the lake filled with water, stocked with fish, and his passing the shrine to Yang Shi, the lake's creator.²¹ Like the Chinese gentleman who viewed the garden from a pavilion, Wei from his boat sketched a world of the green willows growing near lake dikes, the smell of lotuses, the splash of oars, the “beautiful water and wood”—Xiang Lake infused with his own life-filled vision.²² Nature's bounty was Wei's frequent theme. In a poem written in

the summer of 1458, Wei juxtaposes the barrenness of drought with the bounty following use of the lake water for irrigation, significantly linking lake water to the happy shouts of farmers growing the grain that should lead to a successful harvest.²³

Finally, in his “A Song about Xiang Lake,” Wei sets forth his awe at the legacy from the past and his fears for the future:

One hundred *li* around; vast areas of sand beaches.
 The bequest of Tortoise Mountain [Yang Shi]—who can ever forget this?
 The water, stored to irrigate, can contain the water from a thousand mountain torrents
 To flow to nine townships at time of drought.
 Farmers take edible water-plants and lotus to sell at markets: many seek to taste the water-shield and other plants.
 County leaders should stop treating the lake lightly: they should look to the dikes and manage carefully.²⁴

Even before his return from official position and involvement in specific local water conservancy problems, Wei had shown a serious interest in water issues, especially lake management. In a memorial drafted in the summer of 1440, he had written that in the first years of the dynasty, each administrative state division (*fu, zhou, xian*) had dredged lakes and built dikes to ward off flood and drought.²⁵ But, he said, later officials failed to continue such vigilance, deputing people in lackadaisical fashion to see after the facilities and failing to question them about deteriorating situations. Local bullies and devious people assumed leadership of the dike building in order to set up their own diked areas where they could plant lotuses (all parts of which could be sold for medicine or food) or raise fish (setting basket traps for them on the dikes). Little by little the lakes became clogged, and the water available for irrigation decreased, thus harming the county by limiting food supply.

The court had responded to Wei’s memorial with a prohibition on the building of private dikes by officials and calls for renovation of the lake lands. Punishment for transgressors included the possibility of jail, placement in a cangue and fetters, or assignment to an army unit on the northern frontier.

Though Wei did not necessarily have Xiang Lake specifically in mind in 1440, the history of the lake in the early Ming was punctuated with occasional attempts by area residents to grab lake land for themselves. At the turn of the fifteenth century, a tenant farmer named Su farmed alluvial

soil built up on the river bank (apparently in the mouth of the Qiantang).²⁶ When the soil, termed official land (*guan tian*), collapsed into the unpredictable current, Su reported to officials that he would reclaim a similar acreage in lake land near the river to make up for his collapsed land. Officials took no action against Su: an illustration of the lackadaisical officials described by Wei. A few years later, others followed Su’s lead; the government issued perfunctory prohibitions but apparently took no firm action to restore the lake.²⁷ Finally, during Wei’s retirement, the situation had reached the point where area elders petitioned the county seat to clear away households that had reclaimed the lake and to figure an appropriate fine of grain per mu of reclaimed land to be placed into an official fund for relief purposes. Mao Qiling’s account of the lake notes that even then the encroachment continued.²⁸

Wei’s first involvement in Xiaoshan water issues, however, came as a result of tremendous floods in June 1456. Heavy rains to the southwest in Quzhou and Yanzhou raised the Qiantang River, which flooded over Xiaoshan from the south, while the Little West River flooded from the east. Eighty-two years old, Wei took on the responsibility of managing emergency flood control, even carrying baskets full of stones to bolster dikes along the river to the east and southeast of Xiang Lake.²⁹ Though the flood damage was great, Wei’s actions helped in reducing the disaster. Another serious flood in 1461 prompted Wei to undertake a general reconstruction of dikes and sluiceways.

The Excavation of Qiyan Mountain

During this period of Wei’s reconstruction program, the government sponsored a momentous water control project about three miles southeast of Xiang Lake’s most southern point. It had dramatic implications for some in the lake’s irrigation community, far surpassing in importance the bit-by-bit encroachment irritations of petty reclaimers.

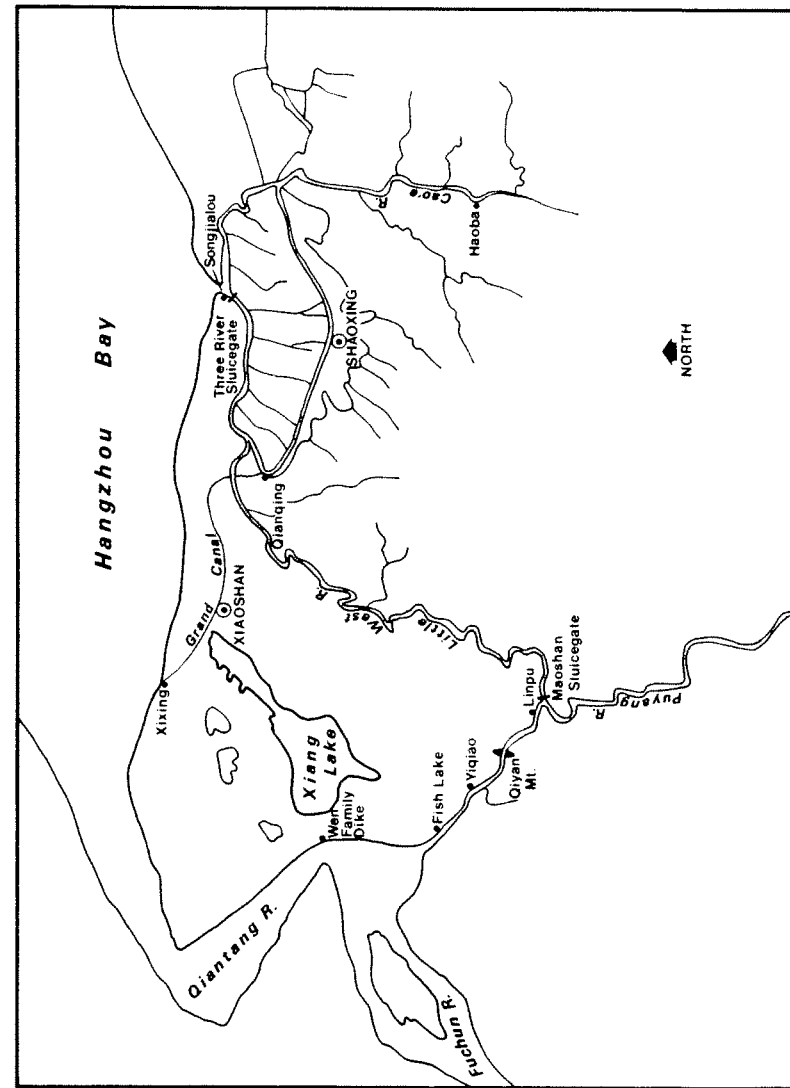
Before the period of the Tianshun reign (1457–1465), the Puyang River flowed from the southern counties of Yiwu, Pujiang, Dongyang, and Zhuji. Forming the boundary between Xiaoshan and Shanyin counties, it flowed past Maoshan, became a part of the Little West River, and flowed out to the sea at the Three River Outlet (*Sanjiang kou*). When heavy rains fell over the southern mountains, the narrow riverbed frequently could not contain the rushing river, which flowed over dikes, flooding the low-lying land in Xiaoshan and Shanyin counties. To try to solve this perennial

flooding problem, Shaoxing prefects Peng Yi and Dai Hu made a study of the topography of the area and decided on a solution.

Less than a mile to the northwest of Maoshan was Qiyan Mountain; Peng and Dai decided to excavate a passageway through the mountain to rechannel most of the water of the Puyang to the northwest, where it would join the Qiantang River. In addition to relieving the pressure of excess water by diversion, Peng and Dai built an embankment and sluiceway at Maoshan to allow some regulation of the flow of water through low-lying areas to the sea (see map 6).³⁰

This project, successfully completed by 1465, had two major effects on Xiang Lake. Most directly, it increased the risk of flooding from the south. When heavy rains fell on the central Zhejiang mountains, the Qiantang often rose to flood stage; after the project was completed, floodwaters from the Puyang River were added to the flooded channel of the Qiantang River. In effect, the project made flooding in northern low-lying areas near the sea less likely while increasing the risk in the Xiang Lake area. This new situation meant that Xiang Lake's viability as a reservoir depended on vigilant maintenance of the West River dike between Linpu and Xixing: breaches in the dike at time of flooding could destroy drainage ditches, lake dikes, and sluiceways and could deposit sediment harmful for irrigation.

A second major result of the excavation of Qiyan Mountain was that the flow of the Puyang River on its path to converging with the Qiantang cut across two townships, Anyang and Xuxian, that used lake water. This new development, placing some territory south of the river, permanently separated 80 percent of the land in these two townships from the lake.³¹ There is no record of how the people affected by this drastic development reacted, nor is there even evidence that Peng and Dai were aware of all the effects of their water control project on the area. The irony of the situation is readily apparent: Xiang Lake could have a distinguished array of upholders of the lake—Yang, Zhao, Gu, Guo, Zhang, Wei—whose energy and diligence preserved the lake as reservoir. But government decisions to resolve another water control problem, seeming perhaps as arbitrary to the Xiang Lake community as nature's might itself, placed the effective long-term functioning of the lake in jeopardy and cut off all access to the lake water for some. The Qiyan Mountain project in the mid-fifteenth century began a long process of the diminution of the Xiang Lake community of irrigators and set up a permanent threat to the lake's effective functioning.



Map 6. Three-River Drainage System

The Affair of Censor He

Increasingly serious for the viability of the lake as reservoir was the level of encroachment reached around the lake by the 1460s. In most cases, encroachers simply planted rice or lotuses in a small area near the shore that had grown shallow over time. In some cases sheep were pastured or willows planted on dikes. Both practices eroded the dikes, making leakage or outright breaks more likely. Small-scale farmers took relatively small amounts. But taken together, the amount of the lake destroyed by encroachment was 7,318 mu (over 1,100 acres), almost 20 percent of the original size of the lake.³²

Wei was determined to right the situation and restore prosperity through a major repair of dikes, sluiceways, and embankments and the dredging of encroached-upon land. In all this, he was remarkably successful. He had to deal with two relatively new families involved in encroachment, the Sun and Wu lineages. One of the Sun lineage, married to a Wu woman, secretly encroached on the lake to benefit himself and his wife's family. How active any of the Wu lineage was in this scheme we are not told, but Wei Ji was able to make known the Wu's encroachment and restore all their land to lake. He was not, for whatever reason, able to restore all of the land seized by Sun, who seemed the main culprit. The Sun threat could not, however, have seemed that ominous at the time: his personal name was not even recorded in the sources. Yet Wei was concerned, and before his death in October 1471, he charged his protégé He Shunbin with clearing the lake, declaring, "Whoever clears this lake is a man of virtue (*junzi*)."³³

Through such a declaration, He Shunbin was charged with two obligations, one to his teacher and the other, through the Confucian import of the words of the charge, to be the servant of the people. We do not know the nature of Wei's and He's relationship. Shunbin received his juren degree in 1468 and his jinshi degree in 1469; it is possible that Wei tutored him. One of a long line of distinguished officials, He became a censor in Nanjing and in the Huguang circuit. Personally upright, he incurred the enmity of obstinate and undutiful officials, who, through ties to the court, were able to have him exiled to a garrison in Guangxi province.

During He's exile, the encroachment situation at Xiang Lake worsened dramatically. Leaders of the Sun lineage, adopting a strategy of intermarrying with the Wu lineage, had embarked on a major campaign to

usurp lake land for their own uses. In the Chenghua reign (1465–1488), Sun Quan and his in-law Wu Can occupied 1,231 mu (over 185 acres), turning it into paddy land. Furthermore, even before the arrival of magistrate Zou Lu in the county in 1496, they had bribed him to remain silent about their betrayal of the lake. In contrast to the Song period pattern of encroachment (wealthy officials hiring local lackeys to extend their personal estates), the mid-fifteenth century saw the leaders of strong local lineages seducing local officials into silence and connivance.

When Censor He was pardoned for his offense, he returned to Xiaoshan; apprised of the reclamation by Sun and Wu and remembering the charge of his mentor, Wei Ji, he set out to restore the lake by eliminating the control of the lineages.³⁴ When he sent a memorial to the throne to rectify the situation, he was not yet aware of the involvement of Magistrate Zou. We know little about Zou Lu. He had taken the magistracy of Xiaoshan after serving in a military garrison on the western frontier. He was an active magistrate who saw after the needs of the county; in 1498, the year of He's return, Zou had sponsored the reconstruction of the Xixing town lighthouse.³⁵

We do know that he took umbrage at He's intrusion into the affairs of Xiaoshan county. Even if Zou had not been colluding with the usurpers, one can imagine his irritation with the native son, so recently returned from exile by the throne, pointing out Zou's inadequacies. The actions of He were certainly intolerable to Sun Quan, who reportedly dispatched more presents to Zou; whether that was necessary to firm up Zou's resolve is not known. When Zou made known his intention to oppose Censor He's involvement, He reacted by attacking Zou. The animosity between the two men escalated rapidly. The official *Ming History* reported that Zou was "covetous, cruel, crafty, and ruthless." Mao Qiling, more to the point, recorded that Zou began to feel a great hatred for He, who must have seemed unbearably self-righteous, especially in the context of the imputation of wrongdoing that had led to his exile.

Zou hit upon a plan to discredit He, using the exile itself as the main weapon. Zou ordered Sun Quan quietly to spread the word that Censor He had illegally returned to Xiaoshan without an official pardon. Because he therefore had no official seal with which to send the memorial, He had been forced to steal one. His memorial on the lake was thus fraudulent. Unable to argue on matters of substance, Zou resorted to attacks on form and procedure to undermine He's position. Zou declared that He should be arrested and returned to his exile. Local police officials, however, did

not carry out Zou's orders, claiming it was not within their authority. Zou's shamelessly bold attitude must have come from a sense of his power on the local scene through his connections with Sun; it was, after all, the nonofficial Sun on whom Zou relied to make known He's supposed official misconduct.

Meanwhile, word reached Zou that He intended to send the real pardon that he had received with a memorial to the throne. He's inability to this point to use it in the county to prove the falsity of Zou's claims simply underscores the lack of credibility He had and, obversely, the power of Sun. Zou arranged a meeting with one of He Shunbin's disciples, an education official named Tong Xianzhang, who was home for a three-year period of mourning for his father.³⁶ Careers of Chinese officials were often marked by several-year interims to fulfill the proper mourning procedures. Zou apparently wanted Tong to help in devising some way to deal with the problems. Tong, however, well aware of Zou's duplicity, rebuffed him.

Zou's reaction perhaps more than any other event in this sordid story justifies the epithet "ruthless" as applied to the magistrate. In great anger at Tong but with great genius, he fabricated a story that Tong, on mourning leave, had been discovered digging up graves seeking treasure; such a sacrilegiously ghoulish act in a society that emphasized filiality and propriety was scandalous. Zou had Tong arrested and charged, and he then asked the judicial officer in Shaoxing, the prefectural seat, for death by strangulation. The judge had strong doubts about the charge, however, and dismissed Tong and the charges.

The brilliance of Zou's strategy depended not on the reactions of this prefectural judicial officer but in his assessment of how to mobilize the area's people to his side. While they might never be aroused by two government officials battling over esoteric issues that involved official seals and pardons, the image of someone scavenging graves, disturbing corpses, and stealing from ancestors was titillatingly horrifying. If this is the action of the disciple (Tong), then, one can hear them saying, what must the teacher (He) be like. The answer was clear: a stealer of official seals, a man arrogant enough to ignore proper official power, pretend a pardon, and return to his native place as one with authority.

Knowing that Tong would go to He's residence following his release, Zou dispatched county clerks and runners to He's house. They were joined by remnants of military units and area farmers, who approached He's house shouting: "Shunbin, you have rebelled against the emperor; we will

imprison you." The chanting mob of perhaps several hundred people, brandishing agricultural tools and implements, tore down the door and entered the compound. They seized and bound both Tong and He. They stole He's official seal and the pardon that he had received. After looting his house, they grabbed both men and took them to court. Because we do not know the source or composition of the attacking crowd, it is difficult to gauge the dynamics of the situation. If these were area farmers without particular ties to Sun, enraged by the alleged evil of He and Tong, it becomes a case of people striking out at the man who was trying to salvage the source of their livelihood—a case of enthrallment to local power-holders at the expense of their own best economic interests. If, on the other hand, they were people with specific connections to the Sun family—tenants or workers in the brick and tile industry—then their actions were obviously self-interested. In either case, they did not see or understand the long-term economic necessity of conserving the lake and sought instead short-term security or satisfaction. The episode points to the power of the Sun family in lake affairs, the power of an unscrupulous magistrate who could manipulate opinion, and the galvanizing power of the idea of cannibalizing the dead. It suggests that political opponents have traditionally been bested in Chinese culture by the imputation of gross immorality.

Both Tong and He were flogged forty times. Tong was thrown into prison.³⁷ He Shunbin, however, met a much more tragic end. Ordered by the provincial court into exile in Qingyuan, Guangxi province, without appeal, He was fettered and led roughly away under the custody of an eleven-man escort led by one Ren Guan. In the court of the provincial judge, it turned out, were friends and confidants of Zou Lu; the administration of justice, like political and social affairs in general, depended in the main on personal liaisons rather than impersonal laws. After they had left, Zou Lu dispatched with special instructions thirteen men to catch up with He and his escort. The pretext was the fear that He's son, Jing, and daughter (married to a Fujian provincial official), who had not been arrested and were in hiding, might seek to rescue their father on the road. Driven by Zou's secret orders, the pursuers rapidly trailed the prisoner to the southwest. Entering Jiangxi province, they even jettisoned their supplies to be able to make better time. On July 19, 1498, they finally caught up with He and his captors as they spent the night in the Changguo Temple at Yugan; there they attacked and stripped He Shunbin, stuffed soaked clothing in his mouth, and suffocated him. Zou Lu hushed up

He's violent end at Changguo Temple when He's body was brought back for burial; the full story only emerged later.

The charge of Wei Ji to his protégé He lay unfulfilled amid the spasms of violence that shook Xiang Lake that summer and eventually snuffed out He's life. Certainly He had neither shrunk from controversy nor shirked Wei's instruction. But the challenge to the lake had changed from that which Wei faced three decades earlier: the power of lineage leaders and their allies had increased dramatically, and they seemed by the year 1500 so strong that one wonders whether even Wei could have handled them.

The story of the He-Zou controversy does not end here.³⁸ Zou had wanted the arrest of He Shunbin's wife and his son, Jing; but they fled to the home of Wang Ting in Changshu, Jiangsu province. Wang, a longtime friend of Shunbin, the two having received their civil service degree the same year, had served on the Board of Punishments in the central government. In obligation to his murdered friend, Wang took it upon himself to serve as a kind of teacher-father to Jing, inculcating in him the essentiality of avenging his father's death. Wang had taken Jing and his mother in; as Jing had a filial obligation to be the agent of retribution for his father's death, Jing also had an obligation to repay Wang for his friendship and guidance. On the wall of his room, written in blood, were the characters *baochou*—"Revenge!" Each day Jing would sit in the middle of the room, repeating endlessly the two syllables; every night Wang would call from outside his door, "He Jing must pay off this grudge," to which Jing would assent, firmly and with respect for Wang's training.

In late summer 1500, word came to Jiangsu that Zou Lu was being transferred to Shanxi province to serve as secretary in the offices of the provincial judge. Jing asked Wang if he could return to fulfill his obligation of revenge. Wang agreed and told him that he should seek help from his relatives. Wang himself offered to have some soldiers in his control follow and watch out for Jing. At a special farewell meal in the courtyard of Wang's residence, dice were thrown for a sign about the auspiciousness of Jing's departure. "Six-red" was thrown, and it seemed the gods had approved the undertaking.

When Jing arrived in Xiaoshan, it happened that the seal for Zou's new post had already been delivered to Hangzhou; Zou was to depart soon to receive his official credentials. Jing immediately went into hiding at the house of the lineage leader, He Ning. It was clear to both men that they must act quickly; first they needed the support of relatives. Without

divulging Jing's presence, He Ning invited several tens of relatives and close friends for an evening of wine drinking. Whether the mood of the evening had been convivial is uncertain, but when about half of the available wine had been consumed, Ning began to weep quietly, saying, "Zou Lu's actions! Shunbin detested him." Continuing to weep, he called out, "What is to be done?" The bitter tragedy of Shunbin, an outstanding lineage leader, the display of Ning's deep emotion, and undoubtedly the effects of the wine brought tears to all at the gathering. He Ning raised his goblet to drink more, saying, "If Jing were here, we would have to avenge Shunbin; now, alas, where is he?" The group wept openly, many of them having become drunk.

At that point, the wine having helped to move the lineage members to a state of readiness, He Ning rose and said, "The matter is urgent: He Jing is here now! Are you willing to follow him in avenging his father's death?" They all answered, "Yes!" It is a strange scene: one wonders why, if He Shunbin had been such a respected member of the lineage, it was necessary for He Ning to get the group drunk before they would agree to act; likely the prospect of an act of revenge against an official of the emperor required some additional wine-assisted screwing up of courage. In any case, only after they agreed to act did He Jing emerge. He knelt before them, murmuring, "I am here; I am here." He followed Ning's lead, asking them if they would be willing to give their own lives to avenge Shunbin's death. Without hesitation, they agreed.

On the next day the group, dressed in white mourning clothes and armed with weapons, went to wait for Zou to pass on his way from the county seat to Hangzhou. The ambush site: Chenxi Garden. It was early autumn, most likely the period of irrigation from the lake. Probably still very warm, the weather on that day may or may not have reflected the violence that would occur, though the holistic Chinese world view would perhaps have been served had a storm brought destruction. The maples and catalpas would not have begun to change color, and the world of nature was predominantly arrayed in shades of green. In the garden, the greens may have been studded with red daylilies or the fragrant white banksia roses that would have matched the mourning garb of the attackers.

In their hands they carried staffs; Jing himself concealed an iron hammer and a sword in the sleeve of his robe. We are not told how long they waited for Zou and his escort to pass; but when he neared their hiding place in the garden, the ambush began with terrifying wails loud enough

“to shake heaven and earth.” Some in Zou’s startled mounted escort fell prostrate on the ground; others fled. In his sedan chair Zou was stripped and received repeated blows from the group’s staffs; he was so frightened, according to the sources, that his hair stood on end. Jing drew his sword during the melee. Intending to kill the magistrate now petrified from fear, Jing slashed his left thigh, but some of the group intervened, stopping Jing from killing him. The attack was over as quickly as it had begun; the garden was quiet. Zou, battered and bleeding, lay helpless.

Seizing him, the group crossed the Qiantang River for Hangzhou and a visit to the provincial judge in order for the lineage elder to state their grievance before this representative of the emperor. Even here, the group ran into problems: the official with whom they first had to deal, Xiao Zhong, was a close friend of Zou Lu. Enraged about the treatment of Zou, Xiao berated Jing and had him tortured. Jing was beside himself with anger (and perhaps pain); he screamed, “You must want to kill me, but I am not one who fears death. Don’t you have a father and mother [whom you might have to avenge if necessary]? I already have demanded justice at the court. You can’t slay me without the approval of higher authority.” So wrought up was Jing that he savagely bit a chunk of flesh from his own arm and threw it on the judge’s table; he then spat the blood from his mouth into Xiao’s face. Everyone at the court was stunned by this action, which abruptly ended the audience. In any event, Xiao did not enjoy paramount authority in this case.

Jing, probably on the advice of his father’s friend on the Board of Punishments, had already prepared his case in writing to the Board of Punishment’s senior secretary Li, who at that time was concurrently serving as supervising censor. Li and the Shaoxing area circuit censor Deng Zhangza heard the case. They determined that Zou was guilty in his collusion with the lake encroachers and in the death of He; they sentenced him to death. But Li and Deng also judged the lineage attack on the former magistrate to be the symptom of a “dangerous illness”—disrespect for imperial officials. Jing was also therefore sentenced to death by strangulation. The several hundred people who were involved with Jing, it was determined, had different degrees of guilt. Jing’s mother beat the drum outside the court as manifestation of her grievance against a system that had allowed her husband to be destroyed and would now destroy her son. Zou Lu also sent people to make accusations against the lineage.

Eventually the head of the Grand Court of Appeals, Cao Lian, was appointed to rehear the case with circuit censor Chen Quan. In his

interrogation of Jing, Cao was very pointed: “Why did you beat up the magistrate?” Jing’s reply echoes the substance of the famous Confucian analect on the preeminence of filiality over obligation to the state.³⁹ “I am not aware of a county magistrate; I am only aware of my father’s enemy.” Then, as if almost in apology, he continued, “I hate him; my only regret is that I still have not killed him.” Cao was determined to get to the root of the revenge attack. He ordered that He Shunbin’s body be exhumed and examined, since what had happened at Changguo Temple was as yet generally unknown and there was no proof of the cause of Shunbin’s death. The medical examiner reported the wounds on He’s body. At that time Ren Guan, who had been in charge of He’s escort, came forward with the story of what had happened that night at the temple; moreover he produced a letter supposedly written by Shunbin in his dying moments. Ren is described in the sources as “public-spirited,” but his silence about He’s tragic death for over two years suggests otherwise. On the other hand, it also perhaps clearly emphasizes the tyranny that Zou Lu and his party held over the area and suggests the extent to which subordinates—whether government functionaries or people in general—were cowed and intimidated by their political and social superiors. As a result of Cao’s investigation, Zou Lu was sentenced to death by beheading and Jing was to be banished for three years.

There was, however, again considerable legal discussion about Jing’s sentence, for he had attacked the emperor’s servant. Many argued that it was Zou Lu who had become like a “dangerous illness,” that Jing was only acting in retribution for his father and was therefore justified. At stake here was the confrontation between obligations: one to the state; the other to the family. At its heart was a dispute over the relative legitimacy of different types of authority among a people whose moral training stressed subordination to authority.

In Jing’s case, the highest authority, the emperor, played an important role. The Hongzhi emperor (r. 1488–1506) or those around him decided Jing’s crime was serious enough to necessitate as indefinite exile, which began in the early spring of 1501. But in the reign period (1506–1522) of the Zhengde emperor, both Jing and Zou Lu (whose death sentence had apparently not yet been carried out) were pardoned in one of the court’s general amnesties. Jing returned home, where he died in 1514 and was buried next to his father. Many years later, the grave markers having long since been destroyed, those in the area were unable to remember which grave was father’s and which was son’s.⁴⁰ It seemed almost to be like the

obliteration of the memory of the Pavilion for Viewing the River and the Lake or like nature's growth concealing the fact that there was ever a Chenxi Garden. Even before Jing's death the general amnesty from the few strokes of the emperor's vermilion brush had, for the purposes of law, equalized—and thereby wiped out—the moral differences between Jing and Zou.

And yet Jing became an enduring symbol of the filial son; his obligation to his father had been the obsessive and shaping force of his life. In a culture that emphasized obligation to father even to the point of death, the goal of his personal sacrifices (*not* those sacrifices themselves) elevated him to a position of great respect and honor. Jing, it is significant to note, lost his individuality in avenging his father; historical sources most often refer to him not as Jing but as "He, the filial son." The individual found his meaning only in his social position of son and in fulfilling that position flawlessly. After death, individual and social position were transmogrified to moral model. The creation of moral models to be inculcated by young and old alike was crucial in a civilization built on the subordination of young to old and female to male.

Among all the worthy defenders of the lake, Wei Ji and He Shunbin among them, it is Jing who is most clearly remembered in the annals on the lake, even though he had nothing to do with the lake itself. In the late nineteenth century poems were still being written extolling Jing and that "ancient drama of filiality."⁴¹ Fu Tingyi, a scholar who wrote in the wake of one of the area's most devastating experiences, the Taiping rebellion, mused on violence and retribution.

I visualize Chenxi Garden that same year:

Relatives and friends all arrayed in white clothes and caps, pulling their hair, eyes weeping.

[With such memories] people cease being startled that beheading the enemy is the method of retribution.⁴²

Magistrate Yang Duo came to Xiaoshan in the aftermath of the tragedy and set out to deal with the Sun lineage encroachment on the lake, the issue that had precipitated the violent events. It would be a mammoth job: 1,327 mu (201 acres) had become paddy land; there were dikes with ninety-six openings and pools that divided the land into twenty-six strips; and there were 210 kiln households living on former lake land. Mao Qiling suggests that all this was restored to lake, that the prefect appointed a manager to help the county to return to the proper principles, and that

eight elders were named to assist in the realization of these goals. But there is no other record that these reforms were realized. For the traditional crowning—and by then, it should have been seen, futile—touch, Yang ordered prohibitions carved in stone against encroachment, planting rice, draining water, and building on the dikes. The penalties ranged from exile to death. The irony was, of course, that less than three years earlier Shunbin had suffered both exile and death for trying to carry out Yang's very stone-inscribed objectives.