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Ownership of Knowledge

Beyond Intellectual Property

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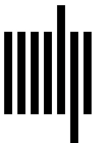
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NAMES FOR WORK: CRAFTS, BUREAUCRACY, AND LAW IN YUAN AND MING CHINA (THIRTEENTH–SEVENTEENTH CENTURY)

Dagmar Schäfer

“Bans on manufacturing (*jinzhi* 禁制) refer to the private production of things, such as weaponry and utensils produced privately without good cause.”¹ This entry is from the *Guidebook for Clerks* published in 1301 by a local clerk (*li* 吏) called Xu Yuanrui 徐元瑞 living under Yuan (1271–1368) rule. In this Chinese-language primer for legal and administrative practices, bans make up one of five categories—among a total of eighty-four (and 1,405 clauses)—that directly address craft knowledge and thus tackle how state and individual were able to own knowledge through owning bodies and the products of their work. The other four categories tackle the relation between land and silk taxes (*qianliang zaozuo* 錢糧造作), household registers (*huji* 戶籍), material provisions (*wuke* 五科), and tax services, as well as their distribution (*zhenglian chafa* 征斂差發).² Historians have therefore taken Xu’s *Guidebook* as quintessentially representative of the nature of craft knowledge and ownership in premodern China in three aspects: first, the imperial state as the center point; second, laws addressed “access to” craftsmen and not “ownership of” their craft “work”—nor their “knowledge”; and third, clerks who mediated as managers between craftsmen and the state were actually the knowers. Its author, Xu Yuanrui, represents a major stakeholder in this game by identifying himself as a member of the *Ru* 儒 literati.³ This historical group distinguished themselves at the most basic level by their ability to read and write, and they served Chinese imperial rulers in this function to order society and state.

As I suggest in this chapter, all three of the above-mentioned aspects are deeply flawed and biased, as they are resting on Eurocentric and modernist assumptions about how knowledge is approached or owned, and how it relates to law. I have chosen to focus on Xu’s work because it features the major practice by which the literati governed craft knowledge and its ownership in premodern China, and which still dominates our historical view of it today. In seven of his eight chapters, Xu explained legal and administrative processes by means of a process he called “rectifying names” (*zhengming*

正名). This meant he defined words in the style of a dictionary. Classical *Ru* (Confucian) literature connected this scholarly practice with a claim to the authority of organizing society and state. Over the course of imperial Chinese history, as historian Yang Shitie notes, “determining meanings became the contemporary method to settle affairs and understand things.”⁴ Such affairs and things, as the *Guidebook* illustrates, included the possibility of, or limits on, craftsmen owning their knowledge and skills, and of rulers and elites appropriating craftsmen’s bodies, their labor, and the fruits thereof, for their purposes.

The *Guidebook* reflects a particular moment in the practice of rectifying names that made practitioners’ abilities and talents visible in new ways. It also enabled clerks to manipulate ownership over craft knowledge in new ways, because clerks were tasked with naming abilities so that they could be owned by the state. The imperial house of the Yuan established a state-owned manufacturing network for textile, porcelain, and lacquer production in order to profit from crafts, and it honed its bureaucracy to secure access to the whole spectrum of craftwork through a complex of tax, trade, and transport. The *Guidebook* showcases the central role of bureaucracy. While it addresses the contents of codices (*lü* 律), it more prominently features administrative conduct (*ge* 格) and rules (*fa* 法), thus reflecting the mindset of a dynastic house that favored the ad hoc generation of regulative measures to rule its people and lands.⁵ It also showcases a major innovation of the Yuan Dynasty who were adamant that craftsmen be recruited and registered systematically in a hereditary system of household categories.

This moment of visibility had lasting consequences, as politicians and elites of the subsequent Ming and Qing dynasties would continue to employ and build on such registers and the abilities they cataloged to make use of crafts. To provide points of reference for the *longue durée* view, in the final section I compare this case study with another from the early Ming period, in which a *Ru* literatus categorized craft practices to fix craft knowledge and ownership. I offer this comparison as a chance to critically reflect on the perceived continuity of a world that placed crafts and craftsmen under the regime of an intellectually engaged scholarly elite. This continuity is caused by the fact that throughout the subsequent seven centuries, until the republican era, historians have seen the *Ru* as acting continuously in three major roles. First, *Ru* functioned as de facto clerks who ordered and classified bodies as “work” and materials as “goods” that could be appropriated for the benefit of society (that is, to serve elite needs) and the state. Second, as part of the social or political elite, *Ru* negotiated with the imperial house in order to specify the ownership of craft materials and products by identifying products as either “art” or conspicuous consumption, or by assessing such work within moral terms, warning emperors and elites when their desires for such goods

threatened social peace and political rule. Third, as the intellectual class, *Ru* defined which tasks counted as labor and crafts, and therefore, as knowledge or not. In short, then, *Ru* wielded words to determine who could know and own crafts in domains of epistemology, society, and the economy. But as will become clear later in this chapter, the traditional tripartite view of the function played by *Ru* has failed to grasp how these domains interrelate, while emphasizing the continuity of the *Ru*'s roles has led to a historiographic segregation in which researchers approach crafts and property in premodern China either as unrelated or as a resolved case of disinherited craftsmen set in opposition to an imperial state and literati elite to whom everything belonged.

In this chapter I critically engage with the notion of continuity and scrutinize it for fissures and cracks. The fact that the *Guidebook* is an artifact of the Yuan makes it an excellent case study inasmuch as this era was, in fact, not unambiguously “Chinese.” On the one hand, the Yuan rulers were Mongolian and assembled people from different regions, with varied practical and linguistic capacities and cultural backgrounds. But on the other hand, the crafts of this era were predominantly documented in and as Chinese. As philologist Victor Mair has emphasized, this is because “in the East Asian heartlands, dynasties came and went, and were headed by non-Sinitic people as often as not. What persisted was the bureaucracy and the command of the sinographic/sinophone script that constituted its very essence.”⁶ The *Ru*'s wielding of the power of words during the Yuan has enhanced the impression of historical continuity, even though historians are well aware that the Yuan mistrusted the *Ru* because of their association with the preceding Song dynasty and awarded influential office positions (*guan* 官) mainly to Mongols and their allies. Xu thus served as a minor clerk for rulers who appreciated and “needed artisans to provide them with the rich array of products and services available in the sedentary zone of their domain,”⁷ as they expanded their territories through Asia. This raises the question: How much actual power over crafts did words give clerks?

Xu's headings constitute the categories under which I trace notions of knowing and owning crafts and explore the roles that legal and bureaucratic framings played. The subheading to each section is a definition quoted from the *Guidebook*, with the key term in bold, followed by my gloss in parentheses. While previous research has elucidated the *Guidebook* as part of a linguistic effort of communicating with a multilingual elite, my focus is on the practice of explaining Chinese words by other words or by references to classical Chinese literature as a way to affix realities by affixing meanings.⁸ As I will trace throughout the chapter, Xu identified crafts variously as tax, labor, and work, while highlighting specific relations. He did not name crafts to learn about, appropriate, or own such knowledge, though. Instead, Xu is a prime example of an effort to claim the practice of rectifying names—that is, of matching words to realities

and objectifying meanings—as a skill and as a means to make himself relevant. The Yuan elites mistrusted exactly this skill of the *Ru*, however, and their use of words as a way to regulate social relationships and achieve (or improve) social status and power. We can thus infer that the actual power of naming as a way to know and own was limited.

There is no doubt, though, that the *Ru* of the Yuan era substantially affected how crafts became knowable and ownable to the state, in their own time and throughout time. Their efforts made the work and expertise of practitioners visible in public and to the ruling class in a way that, two centuries later, caused the scholar official and minister of rites, Qiu Jun, great concern. Qiu used the same scholarly weapon/skill/practice, the rectification of names—this time, within a context of ritual and ethics—to rein in the power of crafts and hinder the emperor from paying too much attention to the products of such work. A subversive reading could take this to mean that craftsmen *owned* their knowledge in performance in society and economy and clerks were once more in a weak position (and wanted to reassert control).

As different as their approaches may seem, Xu during the Yuan and Qiu during the Ming both operated in a world that knew and acknowledged many valid ways of owning knowledge—even though not all of the actors may have validated all forms equally. In this world, the two scholars executed naming as a collective meaning-making practice in the classical sense of Émile Durkheim in a given organizational setting⁹—while also defining and embracing it purposefully as a *skill* to manipulate knowledge ownership across different domains. Reflecting on a given craft culture, Xu had to rely on political enforcement and laws to empower his bureaucratic sense-making, whereas Qiu Jun operationalized ritual regulations (*lifa* 禮法) and morals as a frame of reference and authority in silencing practitioners' expertise and defining standards for the production of utensils (*qi* 器). Both efforts relied on premises of rights and duties, objects and work; and both defined the family unit (*jia* 家) and its validity as a taxable entity (*hu* 戶), the “economic family,” which formed a patri-corporation.¹⁰ In this sense we could say that Chinese actors defy a Durkheimian logic of sense-making and thus a sociology of organizations in that these actors *operationalized* classification as their practice and a worthy skill.¹¹ By giving names to the tasks a family or individual owned and had to transfer to the state as tax, *Ru* were not able to own craft skills, but they were able to actively influence how craft skills became visible to the state and therefore historically knowable and ownable.

造作謂：董督工程，確其物料也

“MANUFACTURING: means overseeing work processes, authenticating their materials.” (Or: the control of bodies as labor, and material as property, in order to control knowledge)

When seen through its artifacts, Yuan China appears to have been an innovative, extremely productive, and highly diversified manufacturing site. Zhou Liulang in Siming (Ningbo) as well as Zhang Cheng and Yang Mao in Xitang, for instance, verifiably carved red lacquer wares when commissioned by the imperial court. Zhu Bishan and Peng Baojun smelted and wrought silver wares in the county of Jiaxing; Zhang Linnan molded ceramics in Shangxi; Yu Shengkan carved fine wood sculptures in Hangzhou; and the Sun clan wielded sturdy armaments in Datong—all equally putting their skills into the service of the state.¹² Whereas we can only imagine their homes and lives, the names of these individuals—to which many could be added—can be verified, since practitioners of diverse crafts during the Yuan consistently inscribed their names on the products of their handiwork.

From a contemporary Yuan literati view, the carving of craftsmen's names (*wule gongming* 物勒工名) was an established practice by which the state calculated taxes and traced quality concerns. This practice can be linked back to a method of controlling bodies as labor and material as property, in order to make craft knowledge accessible to, and useful for, the state.¹³ As a clerk, Xu had to select and “oversee” (*du* 督) such craftsmen's work. In his namings, Xu emphasized the managerial role of *Ru*, stressing thereby his relevance and indispensability for the ruling house, rather than his power over or superior status to craftsmen. Overseeing meant fairly allocating the burden of corvée and balancing imperial demands with commoners' needs; goods had to be distributed without causing shortages, materials collected based on administrative rules, and people spared crippling taxes.¹⁴ Clerks were perfectly suited for this intermediary role between artisan and court, and Xu further substantiated their timeless authority as arbiters through his historical exemplifications. As Xu explained, countless accounts of historical “clerks” of both high and low ranking, with yielding or fierce mindsets, showed that the position of a clerk was central to any kind of rulership: “In the Qin and Han dynasties clerks functioned as generals and ministers. They were established to hold the reins of government. They held key positions and were no weaklings.”¹⁵ Referencing an earlier Song dynasty work, Xu recounted stories of individuals who exerted power and influence skillfully and ethically, or bluntly and by forceful acts of will, in order to demonstrate that the breadth of their proficiency included diplomacy and pragmatism, as well as the simple enforcement of imperial rules.¹⁶ In short, the *Guidebook* makes a strong case for giving power to clerks, during a period when, as historians largely concur, *Ru* of Chinese or local origin (*hanren* 漢人, *nanren* 南人) had to serve under officials (*guan* 官) who had been awarded such influential posts because of their Mongol pedigree (*Yuanshi baiguan* 元世百官).¹⁷ Clerkship thus offered a chance to regain higher social status along with greater political power, and wealth.

There is an obvious correlation between the availability of sources and historical analysis: the more sources, the more historical attention. Given that contemporary *Ru* scholars pontificated about their importance, or the necessary distinctions between themselves and those clerks who operated as lowly translators or mere scribes, historical analysis has concentrated on exploring the nuances of *Ru* power and posts—which once again highlights the role of *Ru*. It is thus important to note that the *Guidebook* makes no such distinction. Rather, Xu intentionally addressed the post generically, thus rejecting the idea that clerks were auxiliary figures in relation to such officials. For Xu, clerkship was the new pathway to power and wealth for the *Ru*.

The sum of Xu's interventions suggests that during the Yuan, the *Ru* were faced with rulers who not only had abolished the civil service exams as a possible route to political and social power, but also generally approached authority and ability based on values quite different to those of their predecessors, as the early disciple of Kublai Khan Wang E 王鶚 (1190–1273) noted in 1267: “Since the civil service exam has been abolished, literati can no longer enter the ranks of officialdom and they either practice writing [literally, carve words on bamboo] while acting as government clerks (*lixu* 吏胥) or organize corvée labor *or* act as craftsmen or traders producing, selling, or buying.”¹⁸ That the *Ru* were useful for the Yuan only when they applied their ability to read and write as a technical skill—rather than an intellectual agenda, as propagated in *Ru* books—is a point that Xu's meaning-making emphasizes in two regards: first, by highlighting the practical combination of talents that a clerk embodied; and second, by showing that the scholarly practice of ordering by meaning-making was a way to use the *Ru* to implement the state's control over craftspeople's talents. In his preface, Xu grounds his arguments for the importance of *Ru* by emphasizing that rulership needed order and clarity: “I have heard that ordering must be prioritized for good governance; attempts to order have to clarify laws/rules (*fa*).”¹⁹ For such ordering, he claimed, men who could read and write were key.

Four of the six skills that Xu identified as being crucial for the profession of clerks addressed clearly practical tasks that were related to administration, namely, “clear calligraphy, knowing the laws, good debating, and calculation skills.” Another skill concerned ethics, as clerks had to show “proper behavior.” Apart from all those issues, Xu insisted, clerks needed to know “how to interpret the books of the *Ru*.”²⁰ The books of the *Ru* represented an ideological entitlement to a role in governance that the Yuan may not have appreciated at all; Xu therefore carefully explained that their trained skill was necessary to enable clerks to act as intermediaries on behalf of rulers.

That Xu mentions the books of *Ru* at all, but also takes care to promote interpretation of them primarily as a practical or even technical skill (and not an intellectual

stance), is historically telling. It is the kind of fissure that is frequently identified by historiography that acknowledges a loss of political power but stresses the continuity of skill sets that the *Ru* wishes to offer the imperial state. Xu, at least, was treading a narrow path between being perceived as an asset or a threat to his Yuan rulers. Copious but also somewhat arbitrary references to classical pre-imperial literature following no clear pattern explicated and generated genealogies of meaning-making, while also testifying to the political authority and social power that such skills could engender. Xu quoted the “Discussion of Writing and Explanation of Words” (*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字) to substantiate his assertion that *Ru* were “flexible,” depicting the Han dynasty poet, musician, and politician Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (197–117 BCE) as the epitome of *Ru*. Of all the historical figures Xu could have chosen, Sima Xiangru was particularly appreciated during the Yuan for his relation to the literary genre of a rhapsody (*fu* 賦) that had been a key examination topic in the Song era, and his promotion of Confucianism as a method of governance.²¹ Xu explicitly pointed to Sima as a role model who had “wielded the art of the Dao (*daoshu* 道術),” which equally refers to the art of governing (*zhiguo zhi shu* 治國之術) and to devising convincing lines of rhetoric.²² Xu furthermore solidified the role of meaning-making by associating the style of his *Guidebook* with the literary philosophy of “The Literary Mind and Carving of Dragons” (*Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, ca. sixth century), which had “explained names and titles in an orderly sense (*shiming yi zhang yi* 釋名以章義)”²³ and had similarly been written during an era of foreign rule.

Showcasing the usefulness of his skills also guided Xu in his choice of judiciary themes, and in laying out a vocabulary of official documents. He took up terms essential for understanding social ordering, addressing topics such as disease, kinship and social relations, and military concerns.²⁴ Via careful headings, Xu signposted the *Ru* as being the imperial disciples for the control of social order and the key stakeholder group that would keep vital abilities accessible to the state: “The eminent and the humble; when status is high, they are respected and called eminent, the menial are without place and called humble.” Clerk Xu then explained that *Ru* “organize names [of high and low] in the household registration system. People of plain origin and commoners are high; shopkeepers, prostitutes, and private slaves of bureaucrats are low.”²⁵ The clarification of meanings and belongings was also key for clerks to make sure that craftsmen paid “tax provisions and without exception did their duty as manservants” for the state.²⁶

It is in passages like these that Xu is at his most convincing, yet it is also in such passages that we find one more of the fissures and cracks revealing that all was not well. In discussing social hierarchy, Xu added ominously: “Sometimes the gentleman resides among the humble.”²⁷ This signposting reflects the fact that the *Ru*'s obligation to organize and categorize objects, practices, and subjects for further use by the state, and thus

their skill to perform words, gave them power. Yet it also indicates that sociopolitical reality was defined by the very household categories that had to be clarified by clerks. Xu listed *Ru* as one of seventeen household categories (*hu* 戶) that served as the basis to calculate taxes during the Yuan, followed by representative “schools” such as Buddhist or Zen monks, nuns, Daoists, or male and female clergy.²⁸ Religious and intellectual-philosophical groups or factions thus clearly mattered to the Yuan, as Xu reflected by noting them first before continuing to list scholars/gentlemen and farmers and then “workers” (*gong* 工), which he grouped with merchants (*shang* 商) who established monetary relations and sold goods. These were followed by doctors and healers, and by traders and store holders, who mainly sought profit through the redistribution and transport of wares, and by socially defined groups such as elders without family to support them.

That Xu lists the *Ru* first is telling. But does this mean they were higher ranked or socially and politically more influential than workers or doctors? One reason to argue that any playing up of *Ru* signifies only Xu’s private opinion is that other official or historiographic listings are ordered differently.²⁹ Although I have not come across a list that put craftsmen first, many such lists expanded the categories and groups and gave detailed descriptions of craft expertise and work tasks.³⁰ The fact that clerks spent considerable time “naming” crafts invites a close look at their actual relation to practitioner groups and further scrutiny of the kind of power that words had over the artisans who owned their knowledge in performance and through the use of their bodies or tools.

作巧成器曰：工

“One who produces ingenuity and creates utensils is called WORK/CRAFTSMEN.” (Or: one who performs knowledge and achieves status and wealth.)

There is little doubt that the reality of being a craftsman was defined by an imperial desire to control craftsmen experts, and that craftsmen were far from being free and able to own their skills and products. Certainly, if we understand ownership of knowledge and skills as the freedom of craftsmen to express their creativity, then it is also correct that the legal canon strictly regulated sensitive crafts such as armaments, weaponry, and textile production—the latter of which provided an important source of income and status. The *Statutes of the Yuan Dynasty* (*Yuan dianzhang* 元典章, published ca. 1322, henceforth *Statutes*), for instance, introduced sumptuary laws that restricted the use of patterns.³¹ Like all other commoners, craftsmen were penalized for making “improper claims, threatening administrative clerks, or giving excuses, and [they] should not enter the bureau or hold up the work process. This is to be punished by cutting off limbs.”³² Laws kept craftsmen in place.

Historical scholarship has portrayed the roles of clerks and craftsmen in Yuan China in black and white terms, with them as *Ru* being the morally responsible protagonists who attempted to contain a willful ruling class of Mongol elites, who disdained them, and at the same time treated craftsmen as pawns in more or less sensible policies and power struggles. In contrast, the literature of the time actually reflects the ambiguities of social status and the realities that marked every person's life. Some of these ambiguities can be explained by the nature of the sources that historians have relied on to inquire about artisans and their roles during the Yuan. History is written by Chinese actors or, at least, in Chinese. Thus, it is Chinese voices, such as that of the late Song official Xu Ting 徐霆 (active ca. thirteenth century), that dominate our understanding of his period. Xu declared: "I have investigated it, the Tartars were originally quite uncivilized. They had nothing such as the affairs of the hundred works/crafts (*baigong* 百工)." ³³ We will return to the "hundred works/crafts" as an indicator of diversity in more detail later. Here it is mainly important to note its unique association with "Chinese" (imperial) culture and its standards. These standards prove to be of overbearing relevance. In analyses based on a comparison of material culture, Liu Liya and Chen Peng exemplify a type of scholarship that explains the Mongol elite's appreciation of Chinese crafts as being a question of quality; they further argue that the Mongols' own artisanship was not well developed and they had no highly qualified artisans. Following this argument, we can say that one of the reasons the Mongols conquered the XiXia, Liao, Jin, and finally Song territories was to access their artisanal riches and exquisite wares. ³⁴

Historians have pinpointed the fallacies that lie in following sources mainly produced by Chinese actors, without considering the texts and fragmented landscape of a material culture that has survived through a process of natural selection (as some products are more perishable than others) in research on the social, epistemic, economic, and political roles of clerks and craftsmen. Xu Yuanrui's assessment, like that of his predecessor Xu, may have willfully ignored, for instance, all arts relevant to a Mongol lifestyle—such as tannery, felt and leather processing, distillery techniques, and tent production. ³⁵ Clerks neither understood nor wrote about such crafts, which were carried out by Mongols themselves. Such crafts suffer from a double bias in historiography because the Yuan rulers identified and "owned" them as part of their identity—and consequently, Yuan rulers did not integrate these crafts into Chinese state governance, address them via laws, or make them economically relevant. An additional, important point regarding ownership is that not all cultures emphasize preservation. With use, objects decay and the very artifacts that perhaps could have attested to the Yuan's excellence are erased/have perished.

What has survived until today makes a valuable point about a distinctively imperial and elite Yuan-era approach to knowledge and its ownership in regard to the court's growing appreciation of certain individuals and their practical and aesthetic skills.³⁶ This appreciation stands in contrast to contemporary *Ru* who rarely acknowledged anything other than Chinese arts and crafts, while they mainly pitied laborers and craftsmen and called on emperors not to exhaust their labor force. Appeals like this often had little effect, as *Ru* themselves bemoaned and as a critical reading of sources also suggests. Historical scholarship, once again, has mainly toed the line and repeated such literati-*Ru* accounts.

Craftsmen were powerful actors in Yuan courts. *Ru*, by comparison were in a precarious position. When serving the emperor as scribes, *Ru* not only had to identify specialized talents among groups of hundreds and thousands of commoners or people seized as war booty, they also had to sift out those who were pretending to have craft skills in order to avoid prosecution or harm—and some of those “pretenders” were clearly from their own group (i.e., the literati).³⁷ After the civil service examination had been discarded, Yuan literati began craving a different household status, because craftsmen taken as spoils of war were spared from death and desired by the emperors for their skills.

As we will see later on, the Yuan offered more than one incentive that spurred clerks to attain the status of craftsmen, and not the other way around. With regard to the clerks' management tasks in manufacturing as well as in collecting various forms of levies (*zhenglian chafa* 征斂差發) and procuring and hiring artisans, the *Guidebook's* nomenclature indicates a state that controlled the role of clerks while thoughtfully caring about the artisans' life, work, and products. A clerk's duty was to handle construction projects: assigning work outside quota restrictions set by the imperial state (*hengzao* 橫造), segmenting tasks among different crafts (*sanzhi* 散支), and taking over project organization and measurements (*cuozhi* 措置).

In organizing and ordering work, clerks would neatly differentiate between different forms of recruitment, allowing us to conclude that the state carefully protected crafts rather than “willfully” appropriating or exploiting any possible skill, as scorned contemporary Yuan literati and, later, Ming scholars regularly implied. Clerks would assign or lay off recruits (*guicuo* 規措), finely distinguishing between corvée raised for military garrisons or forced labor (*yao* 徭) and work done as a levy (*yi* 役), and determining whether such work was to be forced on “one body” (*yishen* 一身= *yao*) or an entire household had to be conscripted. An “agreement of hiring” (*hegu* 和雇) points to an open labor market with free hiring policies, whereas in other fields, expert labor was exchanged for grain (*hezong* 和中). An “agreement of sale” (*hemai* 和買) meant that “both sides exchange money for products,” which usually included the state provisioning

necessary materials or funds in advance; this was so habitually practiced in textile manufacture over several different dynasties that it earned its own label of “agreement for weaving” (*hezhi* 和織).³⁸ The *Statutes* distinguished “proper craftsmen” (*zhengjiang* 正匠) who could be “turned” (*fa* 撥), “taken out” (*chou* 抽), “included” (*kuo* 括), or “recruited” (*zhao* 招), as appropriate, by changing their designation in the household register from “people” (*min* 民) to “craftsmen” (*jiang* 匠).³⁹ As the proliferation of nomenclature suggests, there was more than one way to appropriate—and thus also more than one way for craftsmen to own their knowledge and benefit from it.

Many of these terms—and practices—existed before and after the Yuan dynasty. It is their assembled listing here that invites a second look at the Yuan as a particularly exploitative state. From a chronological point of view, Xu compiled the *Guidebook* at a point in time when methods of recruiting artisans had been consolidated. Violent ransacking and other forms of compulsory employment were increasingly being replaced by a sophisticated and complex approach to recruitment through levy and hiring. Though this seems like two very different methods from a legal or social point of view, practices of enslavement, sparing expert lives, and institutionalizing intergenerational inheritance and training all have one thing in common: they situate the human body as the major reference point for knowledge circulation/transmission. Another literatus of the Song-Yuan transition, Hu Qiyu 胡祇通 (1227–1293), drove home this point by noting that whenever *Ru* as servants of the state selected workers and assigned tasks, they performed “the art of selection to obtain the people [i.e., their bodies and their arts/skills]” (*ze ren de ren zhi shu* 擇人得人之術).⁴⁰ With this emphasis in mind, the Yuan made the household register its major tool to control practitioners’ skills and keep them available to the state at all times.

戶籍：生齒之總

“HOUSEHOLD REGISTER: it gives the total of the population.” (Or: organizes the performance of knowledge and owns it as society.)

Census records exist for almost every period of imperial China, and they have been almost continuously analyzed by historians of China to reveal financial relations between subject and state, as well as social and political order. Although the Yuan continued many established ways of using this instrument, few historians would deny that the Yuan system was simply copied from its predecessor. For instance, the Yuan-era vocabulary provided by Xu mirrored the Jurchen Jin (1125–1234) system described by historian Hok-Lam Chan. Chan described the labor system of this dynasty that ruled the northern part of China in conjunction with the Song as “riddled with racial and ethnic inequalities and discriminatory haphazard practices.”⁴¹ Household categories of

the Yuan, however, were far from arbitrary; they specified practices and social skills that were either in demand or in need of control by the state. Standard categories in Yuan records are *Ru*, scholars, farmers, *yinyang* diviners, doctors, and Buddhist monks, and social roles such as elderly people and households with just one member. Apart from generic lists in scholarly literature, on the administrative and local level, we can also find an increasing number of categories that detail ironsmiths, tanners, weavers, reelers, and carpenters, as well as clerks, monks, hunters, and beggars.⁴²

The concern about skill is also reflected in basic tax distinctions between military and civilian tasks, and between commoner and artisan households.⁴³ Historical scholarship of the twentieth century regularly implied that such differentiation reflected, or was even a tool of, social and political ordering.⁴⁴ As one of the first of these historians, Gao Rongsheng in the 1990s cast doubt on historical ideas of any categorical dividing lines that made *Ru* the socially or politically high (or higher) group and craftsmen the low (or lower) group during the Yuan.⁴⁵ Into the twenty-first century, legal historians have critically engaged with this question from the viewpoint of contemporary legal debates. For instance, Liu Liya and Chen Peng asserted convincingly that even though the situation of craftsmen in the early Yuan days must have been hard and political control over them became increasingly strong, they cannot be sweepingly characterized as slaves or expelled convicts lacking any rights—not least because in the *Yiwei* (乙未) household registration system, expelled convicts and slaves were comparatively low in number and clearly distinguished from “workers” (*gong* 工) and “craftsmen” (*jiang* 匠).⁴⁶ Xu’s *Guidebook* substantiates this point by making no distinction between craftsmen or *Ru*—or any other household group. In another passage, Xu offers a refined and unique catalog of terms for different groups of servants: those performing menial duties in regard to supervisors (*siyi* 私役), or manservants (*shenyi* 身役). Another clue suggesting that craftsmen were an important rather than a suppressed social group is that legal and administrative regulations were put in place to ensure that practices and skills would survive the test of time.

紹業謂：承繼其產業

“CONTINUING AN OCCUPATION: means inheriting a producing business.” (Or: owning use and ordering society.)

The key topics to which legal historians refer to discuss property in China concern inheritance. Historian Brian E. McKnight pinpoints “transmitting assets across generations . . . and a vertical handing down . . . coupled with an abiding concern for the continuation of lineage.”⁴⁷ The research focus has been on “tangible” assets such as land and dowries, while the transmission of skills and practices among craftsmen has rarely been

examined, and even then, mainly as a secondary issue or collaterally within lineage concerns. *Ru* ideology enforced the family socially and epistemologically as the mandatory unit in which a father would hand his skills down to his son, and a mother to her daughters. While “tensions between government laws, Confucian ideology, social practice and ethnic norms”⁴⁸ are apparent during all periods, the Yuan code established some interesting nuances in determining, in the case of artisans (*jiang*), that “in all male and female offspring of the various craft households, the males have to practice labor and the females have to practice needlework. It is forbidden to avoid service or eliminate their status.”⁴⁹ Two issues are noteworthy. First, in relation to household registers, the Yuan instrumentalized intergenerational succession explicitly for the transfer of skills. Second, this demand addressed the workforce holistically, including both males and females, the latter in particular in the context of the textile industry.

While the topic of gender is too rich to be discussed sufficiently in this chapter, the explicit reference foregrounds the wholesale approach of the Yuan toward skills, which we see reflected in the rules of intermarriage as well. Women had traditionally played a central role in silk production, as Francesca Bray has noted,⁵⁰ and often organized large-scale weaving workshops in their households, with dozens of female workers weaving, reeling, and embroidering silk under the preceding Song (976–1279; presumably also between 1125 and 1234 under Jurchen Jin rule in the northern territories, which the Mongols conquered first). Local gazetteers substantiate that officials relied on women as the real experts in the setting-up and running of state-owned weaving and dyeing offices in the Southern Song territories,⁵¹ even though the nature of written language at the time concealed how central such female forces actually were, since the working units were household (*hu* 戶), taxpayer (*ding* 丁), or body (*shen* 身), meaning that gender was not specified.

The key authority files for tracking tasks and skills over time were the local mousetail registers⁵² at the village level, and the key feature that secured reliability in the intergenerational lines of transmission was the practice of leaving a page blank. With the mousetail register, accounting regulations aimed to secure a truthful record that reflected quantitative and qualitative changes in the workforce. A mandatory blank page after each household listing had a specific purpose: whenever a taxpayer died, or someone reached adulthood and thus became required to pay taxes, or when the number of workers and farmers increased or declined, the village head was to report this to the clerk, who was “ordered to annotate under each household issues such as tribute service (*chaifa* 差發), in silver or tax provisions, corvée (*fuyi* 夫役), cart horses, production, requisitions, and military service, scrutinizing the book so that each addition and subtraction to a household is made based on personal observation of physical strength.”⁵³ The

blank-page policy signifies a high level of control, as well as a pragmatic acknowledgment that a hereditary system needed to recognize dynamics of population growth and changes in the skill sets of people over time.

Reading further into Xu's administrative dictionary, we find two indications—one about eyewitnessing and the other about cross-checking—that invite questions with regard to who was actually controlling whom. While some regulations—and corresponding meaning-makings by Xu—confirm the clerks' supervisory function, others are mainly concerned with the accuracy of the clerks' work, which was done by “comparing calculations” (*bijiao* 比較), “comparing for matches” (*bidui* 比對), “surveying on the spot” (*jianta* 檢踏), or “inspecting amounts” (*jianliang* 檢量).⁵⁴ These tasks reflect imperial regulations that required clerks to

determine the household status on eyewitnessing the actual taxpayers, actual production, and suitable resources, and then produce the registers. Furthermore, [they are to] meticulously annotate following the original signature chronologically as to which category it subordinates; reaffirm the type of category and what category of tax service they have verified as an eyewitness on the day of recruitment, and then which of the household registers applies—civil register, postal station register, or craftsmen register. [They are also to] catalogue each and every detail meticulously, finishing the production of registers on all three accounts [that is, original household, service, and household category] so as to set an example.⁵⁵

The *Tongzhi tiaoge* 通制條格 (Legislative Articles from the *Comprehensive Regulations*), a fragmentarily preserved collection of law cases and edicts, equally stresses the clerks' duty of keeping the records up to date and making sure

not to appropriate craftsmen for special use from the various households who were attributed to either military or civil registers in the *renzi* year without having the supervising office change/amend the records with a clarifying statement. Whether they are named and enter the bureaus for manufacture on personal observation or are allocated funds for production in their private households, they are to rely on the registers to confine them to services.⁵⁶

The various levels of recording and the additional insistence on seeing things firsthand protected and controlled both sides—the craftsmen who had to deliver tax labor and the executors of the related bureaucratic measures, the clerks.

In 1301, three decades after the statewide introduction of such imperial regulations, Xu's *Guidebook* echoed their importance, in particular with regard to timeliness and precision of reporting, as household registers were useful instruments for recruiting labor and collecting tax only when clerks performed their work faithfully. Xu furthermore noted the clerks' crucial ability to keep track of changes over time: “Increase in household numbers: refers to a maximum of clan members. Civil registers increase

as new taxpayers appear or grow old; annotate and comment income and outcome; ascertain the facts as to whether there are escapees or some reluctant people who can be redirected to return to their craft."⁵⁷ It was the clerk's duty to ensure that households produced and reproduced knowledge important for the state.

This discrepancy between historical narration and the original Yuan historical viewpoint is the crux of the matter. Historians have highlighted how literati pitied the poor craftsmen who are exploited by the state. However, administrative books, of which the *Guidebook* is representative, focus on penalizing bad behavior or substandard performance in clerks—not craftsmen. It was the clerk's responsibility to promote and to police—that is, to select those with specific talents after mass recruitment or registration efforts, and to identify those who pretended to have certain abilities to avoid tax payments. In 1271 and again in 1280, for instance, orders had to be given to reassign those with no actual skills to the civilian households.⁵⁸ Similarly, in the sixth lunar month of 1290, an official ordered the “release of 341 Baoding Chutong laborers into civilian households.”⁵⁹ An often quoted example for the exploitative nature of Yuan rule states that a good one-third of Jiangnan's three hundred thousand civilian households were struck from the craftsman registers, “after every kind of craftsman had been selected and determined.”⁶⁰ In many of these cases, individuals hoping to become categorized as a craftsman tried to cheat the system to attain a change of rank.⁶¹

Clerks had to thwart these efforts because all kinds of commoners, including *Ru*, were trying to be classified as craftsmen—not only to escape beheading as representative of the former *Ru* elite, but to alleviate their tax burden or to become involved in a trade that was in high demand and regard during the Yuan. *Ru* trying to be registered as craftsmen were the target of court “officials and investigators who will survey the foundations of each household, the members' physical strength, and their hands to ascertain whether all of these fit with the categories noted in the registers.”⁶² Regardless of whether someone was registered as official, commoner, or craftsman, all were reassigned to their original household category if they lacked the wherewithal (*jiacai* 家財).⁶³ In a eulogy, for instance, Luo Wenjie 羅文節, an administrative assistant in Fuzhou (*Fuzhou panguan* 撫州判官), is praised for having offended influential figures because he relentlessly—and rightly—prosecuted all who attempted to evade service, both scholars and craftsmen.⁶⁴ The Yuan dynasty's great concern for artisans found expression in institutional structures as well, and with the “superintendency” (*tiling suo* 提領所), a special department in the Ministry of Works was established to deal with litigation from craftsmen.⁶⁵

It was not just that the status of craftsman protected *Ru* from political prosecution. The status of artisan was attractive during the Yuan economically, too, as a considerable part of the household registration laws (*hukou tiaohua* 戶口條畫) made sure that

craftsmen were taken care of and well fed whenever they were called on to perform labor for a state bureau.⁶⁶ Mongol laws made sure that Chinese clerks did not run wild. In his *Guidebook*, for instance, Xu noted that the “beating up of craftsmen by several officials resulting in the craftsmen’s death has to be equally penalized by execution.”⁶⁷ Between clerks and craftsmen, duty went both ways: craftsmen had to deliver service and perform their skills and clerks had to treat craftsmen well—and remain ethical in their behavior in order to survive.

良吏 謂政尚寬和，人懷其惠者，如晉吳隱之等

“BEING A VIRTUOUS CLERK means: governing with fairness, tolerance, and tenderness. Commoners cherish his benevolence as exemplified by Wu Yinzhi (d. 413) of the Jin Era.” (Or: performing words to own skill in order to achieve status and wealth.)

Because *Ru* as clerks were under as much scrutiny as artisans (and may have led even riskier lives), they had to work with great care. Xu invoked the prefect of Guangzhou in South China, Wu Yinzhi, who had fought against corruption and reestablished order under a foreign ruling house during the fifth century as an example. At that time, elite corruption and administrative misbehavior was the greatest threat to craftsmen’s lives. A considerable number of accounting mechanisms were set in place to protect not only the state but also craftsmen from greed. For instance, provisions for artisans were stored in the recruiting office, and the Ministry of Finance was usually in charge of funding them—to keep local officials in check. Whenever the court issued an additional order, it usually provided the funding required for materials and labor, as well. The details of these were quite complicated and changed frequently, but in general a “craftsman received a provision as the work process was investigated with each production.”⁶⁸

After 1273, as the Yuan pushed further south into Song territories, additional regulations were imposed to make sure craftsmen would still be compensated even if they fell ill and no additional labor for production was available, so that the workforce was not depleted unnecessarily. Or, in cases when a household was too small to support itself, it was decreed that an allowance should be provided by the storehouses.⁶⁹ In 1283 clerks were asked to consider an artisan’s household size when recruiting them to the labor force, by, for instance, calling one person up for service but paying enough to support three people.⁷⁰ By around 1287 at the latest, these payments were being calculated based on the number of mouths to be fed in each household. This system was changed again in 1314, when some craftsmen bought, or were given, a small patch of land mostly for subsistence farming, on which they had to pay taxes (*nashui* 納稅).⁷¹ Apart from military households, all craftsmen households were allowed to produce and sell their products or offer their services on the market.

Such institutionalization facilitated further exploitation, which historians have amply discussed, seeing such claims substantiated in the criticism of contemporary literati about the impoverishment of craftsmen or the fact that some craftsmen tried to escape service. However, when we read opinions against regulations that penalized corruption and officials who did not take proper care of artisans, we might also conclude that literati were highlighting the state's responsibility and craftsmen's poverty not primarily for humanitarian reasons, but to protect themselves. The state, for instance, held clerks responsible when craftsmen escaped service, which they did regularly. After all, the *Guidebook* emphasizes what clerks should do—namely, “check every month that all items are being produced according to the regulations. The standard procedure cannot be disregarded.”⁷² Xu cataloged instances of fraud or theft generically, while the state also made sure that its officials could not embezzle goods or compel craftsmen to produce items for them personally, issuing a “prohibition against ordering craftsmen to commence private production (*shadow possession* 影占)” to protect the very assets of the state. This section in the *Statutes* was tellingly titled “Harassed and Troubled Craftsmen” (*saorao gongjiang* 騷擾工匠).⁷³

From the viewpoint of penalty laws, it was clearly in the *Ru*'s own interests to champion craftsmen's needs—to make sure the office looked after the artisans and that they “took care of their tools, insisted that weavers' households carried out repairs to their looms, and ensured that everything else was taken care of, that their dwellings were protected from wind and rain, that there was sufficient firewood, window sheets (made of paper), lamp oil for night work, and paper for reports”⁷⁴—since the clerks would also suffer if the artisans were derelict in their duties. Occasionally, officials even bought agricultural implements for craftsmen to enable them to work.⁷⁵ Within the lines of state responsibility, the clerks had to become advocates for the craftsmen, complaining on their behalf to a higher power if necessary, to shield themselves from greater harm.

One reason why later generations have judged Yuan approaches to craftsmen as exploitative lies in the rigidity of the rules concerning keeping the accounts and records in the registers up to date. But the first addressee for any lack of control could only be the clerk who had to make sure that each household properly delivered its inherited levy over generations. Whenever clerks or state officials had to fill the ranks in state workshops, they relied on local lists that correctly designated abilities and skills.⁷⁶ According to the section “Prelude Record on Varied Crafts” in the “Great Statutes to Statecraft” (*Jingshi dadian* 經世大典) from 1304,

households for state manufacture were first determined in mid-summer, for which an [administrative] procedure already existed. All the workers under heaven were gathered and all masters' departments were classified so that the procedures and measurements could

be investigated and provisions assigned. By restoring the households, it is possible to have them concentrate on their craftsmanship.⁷⁷

By such means, local officials under the reign of Tugh Temür in the year 1304 allocated 240 tanners to a bespoke production of 587 pieces of armor.⁷⁸ The source also explicitly notes that the tanners were exempt from annual tax service so that they could concentrate on producing exemplary pieces for the court. Not exploitation or greed, but purpose and order ruled.

It thus seems that during the Yuan, *Ru* clerks wielded their power to make *meanings* by performing words in texts mainly to defend their own position. Or we could say that they claimed such performance of words as their knowledge and the very reason for their usefulness to the new ruling elite. It fits this picture that the imperial house treated *Ru* in the same way as craftsmen or traders, that is, as technicians, making no exception for them in terms of either household categories or social status. We can see such pragmatism in the imperial attitude of the Mongols toward social status, substantiated by the fact that in the early days of Yuan rule, workers (*gong*) and traders (*shang*) were allowed to participate in the civil service examination—unlike during the Song reign, which had restricted this route to literarily trained men. No source verifies that craftsmen successfully passed the exam—nor is there any indication that anyone attempted to or wished to participate in it, before its abolition in 1267. By comparison, in combing through biographies and the official historiography, we find several artisans such as bow makers, weavers, and masons who obtained esteemed posts in officialdom because of their excellent craftsmanship.⁷⁹ Under Shundi (1341–1368), the lacquer craftsman Mr. Wang from Pingjiang

tried to manufacture a boat out of a cowhide and adorned it on the inside and outside with varnish/lacquer; after taking a rest, he produced numerous decorative joints and transported them to the capital. Floating on the Luan River, it could hold 20 people. . . . He received a decree to produce a collapsible armillary sphere, which was easy to store. His brilliant ideas met and surpassed any expectation; thereafter the order was issued to designate him as a state craftsman.⁸⁰

Such cases show not only that craftsmen could rise in status based on their practical skills and innovative ideas rather than through exams or scholarship. Or to put it another way, craftsmen were in charge and clerks were subservient to them, and in fact, this was often the case.

As a final clue, we can consider contemporary notions of *Ru* toward their specific duty—namely, selecting skills and being selected for their skills. After the Yuan conquest, Hu Qiyu invoked the need of good tools for good craftsmanship, reinterpreting a passage of the *Classic of Rites*. That he therein criticized the Yuan approach to

expertise—of both craftsmen and clerks—becomes apparent only when one sees that Hu played with the double meaning of the Chinese term for “workers for the state” (*gong*) to address all crafts in the broad or literati arts in the narrow sense:

Gong who desire to be good at their affairs must first make use of/profit from their tools; if their tools are not effective, affairs will not succeed. Even if you have skilled workers, there is nothing for them to execute their ingenuity with.⁸¹

Hu continued by exemplifying the way of Tang Taizong (598–649), who had

showed this with the bow. The archer said: this is not a fine bow. The wooden core is not exact, the limbs are all arranged irregularly. Hence when you shoot, the arrow will not fly straight. When the very essence that Taizong uses to shoot an arrow is not good, then the mark will not be hit.⁸²

Xu alluded to the archers’ bow as well when explaining that “chaffing and felting (*jiqu* 箕裘) means to carry on the business/trade of the ancestors,”⁸³ making a connection, like Hu, to classic debates of governance from the pre-imperial period. One of these, the “Artificers’ Record” (*Kaogong ji* 考工記), was part of the “Rituals of Statecraft” (*Zhouli* 周禮) and explained the structure of the so-called Winter Offices organized by the Ministry of Works under Zhou rule, noting that simple skills had to be mastered before approaching the complicated ones mastered by the fathers (i.e., seniors of the trades): “The son of an ingenious archer had to learn chaffing; the son of a fine smith [which can also mean ruler] had to engage in fur-making/clothing.”⁸⁴ Xu was effectively pointing to a time when power lay in the hands of practitioners. Major classical texts trace the core influential hundred clans (*baijia* 百家) of antiquity back to core crafts such as carpentry, smithing, or weaving; only later, under subsequent imperial rulers, did scholars start to fill this role of “the hundred workers” (*baigong* 百工) and fill the ranks of the “hundred offices” (*baiguan* 百官).

It was this debate between the relative merits of scholarly and artisanal knowledge for political rule to which Ming scholars and politicians would allude two centuries later, in 1489, in negotiating the relationship of craftsman and clerk in their time. By then, the ruling house of the Ming dynasty had returned the power of statecraft to the *Ru*, as historians have seen verified in figures such as Qiu Jun 邱濬 (1421–1495), who reached the peak of his career as a highly decorated minister of rites. Unlike the Yuan, the Ming installed a codex that Qiu Jun acknowledged. Analyzing Qiu’s discussion of the contents of codices, the legal historian Huang Yin describes Qiu as more interested in structural issues than in specifics, noting mainly that he doubted the effectiveness of penalties.⁸⁵ In such contexts, Qiu never addressed crafts. However, when we examine the words Qiu used and his approach to rectifying names, we can see that Qiu was

extremely concerned about such themes, discussing crafts and their regulation thoroughly in relation to ritual norms and economy.

It is when one follows changes across political periodization in terms of dynasties that the question of continuity must be addressed. In contrast to Xu, who mainly quoted high antiquity and literature up until the Tang (leaving out Song scholars), two centuries later, Qiu carefully quoted *Ru* books, including other Yuan thinkers who upheld prior Song traditions. In such literature, crafts were important mainly when it came to the quality of ritual utensils (these were taken as the highest standard) and to how the imperial house was legitimized to rule only as long as it cared for the people and followed, among other proscriptions, the seasonality of work in order to not exhaust resources. On a practical level of governance practices, Qiu's entire debate was directed toward the fact that Yuan practices lingered on, probably most persistently when it came to crafts, as the Ming also relied on household registration to recruit workers for the construction of huge palace complexes and for the production of intricate lacquer boxes and textile wares.⁸⁶ The Ming thus profited from the lists that had been drawn up in each locality by the Yuan to recruit tax levies for the state, which ran into the thousands in terms of households in rich places such as Jinling and were equally available for metropolitan counties such as Jiangning and Shangyuan, or even rural counties such as Tanshouzhou and Tanyangzhou.⁸⁷ Even though this system was constantly adapted to meet new needs as it persisted over the subsequent centuries and into Qiu's time, one continuity was the partial association of household registers with practical tasks. The final section of this chapter sketches how the efforts of the Yuan to identify and name crafts for their appropriation by the state were thought of and received during the succeeding Ming dynasty, which also wished to profit from craftsmen's skills—by similar means, but clearly on its own terms.

工而謂之百，不止一工也

“WORK was named by a hundred, as there is not just one kind.” (Or: disowning skills by ignoring words.)

When Qiu Jun wrote down this comment on craftwork in 1489, he could look back on his steady upward career under three Ming rulers. His *Supplement to the Great Learning* was meant to guide the offspring of his ruling house through the arts of statecraft, which for Qiu included the management of crafts. Having conquered the weakened Yuan by 1369, the Ming emperor Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 had been able to build up his empire despite the destruction wrought by warfare, not least because he was able to make use of craftsmen recruited by the Yuan from all parts of Asia. He relied in particular on access to a cosmopolitan group of experts from the inner Asian lands, South Asia, and the Near

East, who could dye, weave, and carve, build, and tan; smelt metals, mine, and mint; and produce ceramics, weaponry, and lacquer works. This was, in short, a veritable army of masters in the practical arts.

Zhu continued the principle of household tax inheritance but added multiple innovations, among them a quota system that allowed craftsmen to rotate in and out of service. In an early effort to balance the demands of the state against craftsmen's needs to replenish their private coffers for sustenance and life, the Ming state institutionalized two forms of "shift craftsmen" (*lunban jiang* 輪班匠), who rotated in and out of service over cycles of three or five years, and "resident craftsmen" (*zhuzuo jiang* 住坐匠), who delivered the taxes for their household in permanent residential positions. Over the course of the Ming period, such tax assignments were negotiated among family members. Some cases culminated, as historian Thomas Nimick has shown, in legal disputes over how working for the state was to be compensated by other family members.⁸⁸

My focus in this chapter on the practice of name rectification and *Ru* literati meaning-making reveals a change in the role law played in the state's access to craftsmen's labor and knowledge during the Ming. Two trends are apparent. First, classic ritual texts provided the guiding framework for craft production—a return to a Song-era practice.⁸⁹ Second, legal measures no longer concerned access to crafts but rather almost exclusively the penalizing of craftsmen who did not perform well: "For the production of prohibited goods, bludgeon 100 times; when the goods are not up to standard, flog 40 to 50 times."⁹⁰ Whereas clarifying nomenclature and rectifying names and status remained an important legal practice—similar to rhetoric techniques of analogous argumentation, as legal historian Chen Xinyu has recently suggested—neither legal codices nor bureaucratic practices relied on such methods to manage crafts.⁹¹ The category of "workers" or "craftsmen" is not even mentioned in the "Ming Penal Code" (*Da Ming Lü* 大明律), and the "Collected Statutes of the Great Ming" (*Da Ming huidian* 大明會典) only cursorily touches on them as one of the four social groups—scholars, farmers, workers, and merchants. Many of the technical terms and processes that Xu identified around contracting craft work or recruiting levy, such as "agreements about weaving," are equally absent.⁹² Instead, official historiography suggests that Ming *Ru* officials began enforcing administrative regulations on craftsmen originally implemented by the Yuan in an ad hoc manner and mostly, it seems, on a local level.

It was this world, where the management of crafts relied on laws mainly as a penalizing tool, into which Qiu Jun was born and where he grew up as a fatherless child on the southern island of Hainan. He passed the provincial civil service exam at the age of twenty-three, gained his first ranked position in 1466 and thereafter served at a court and under emperors who favored eunuchs, skilled artisans, and artists.⁹³ He stood side

by side with artisans such as the craftsman Yao Wang 姚旺, who had entered the very institution that provided the court with luxury wares such as fine silks and jewelry, the Courtyard for Cultured Thoughts (*wensi yuan* 文思院) in 1464;⁹⁴ the carpenter-architect Kuai Xiang 蒯祥, who reached the exalted position of vice minister of work (*gongbu zuo shilang* 工部左侍郎, rank 2a, then 1) in 1465;⁹⁵ and Kang Yongshao 康永韶, a magistrate from the countryside of Fujian who was awarded the salary of an astronomy supervisor simply because he had helped to heal the Chenghua emperor when he had fallen ill.

By the early fifteenth century, as emperors no longer felt obliged to follow the restrictions set by their ancestors, the number of craftsmen attempting to evade service—by either fleeing or deliberately delivering substandard work—had risen to the thousands. Imposing legal penalties on artisans proved of little effect whenever the state asked for more than its share. Thus, in his first year of rule, 1436, Emperor Yingzong allowed “southern craftsmen” (*nan jiang* 南匠)—a term that originally denoted the geographic origin of such craftsmen but had come to designate high expertise more generally—to substitute their corvée with a tax payment in silver (*zhengyin* 徵引) so that the government could hire suitable craftsmen in Beijing “for the convenience of both sides.”⁹⁶ In the twenty-first year of Chenghua (1485), about two years before Qiu Jun published his *Supplement*, the Ministry of Works allowed craftsmen from Zhejiang, Jiangxi, and other places to pay tax as a substitute for corvée labor,⁹⁷ which marks the first evident signs of a shift to monetary payments that historians of the 1970s such as Peng Zeyi see culminating in the “first sprouts” (*mengya* 萌芽) of capitalist structures, a commodity economy, and a free labor market.⁹⁸

It was against this background that Qiu debated “naming” as a mechanism to regulate craft work—and for empowering or disempowering it by the state, promoting not laws but ritual and morality as the correct domain of exchange. Qiu had realized that craftsmen could exert enormous power because their exquisite and sophisticated wares stimulated emperors’ desire for acquisition, which strained the state’s coffers and caused the emperor to ignore literati advice. It was an essential part of Qiu’s strategy to caution the emperor and his peers against individual skillfulness and the ingenuity of the technical arts (*jiyi* 技藝), which, to Qiu, was primarily a question of how the state and emperor recognized the different categories of craft know-how—that is, the hundred crafts.

As Edward Farmer has noted, the Ming continued the Yuan system of household registers to the extent of “smaller specialized categories such as artisans (*jiang*), and physicians (*yi*).”⁹⁹ As a matter of fact, the “Yellow Register” tax system (*lijia huangceng* 里甲黄册), established in 1381, was based on Yuan records for the assignment of each tax household category. Until the end of the Ming dynasty, the household category could not be changed without the consent or signed release by an official.

In 1487, though, Qiu wanted to see the diversification of names limited—at least when it came to how such names made expertise visible to the emperors of the Ming. How many crafts actually were registered or whether the “hundred” indicated a specific number is debatable. Qiu’s initial quote points to a sophisticated culture of crafts during the early to mid-Ming—and probably to a proliferation of nomenclature as well, as there were indeed *many* “works/crafts,” as the quote at the beginning of this paragraph indicates—and according to Qiu, there was *no need* for emperors or officials to further itemize them. He reminded his colleagues that the grand Song thinker Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) had already noted that “when asked who was able to smoothly regulate the affair of bestowing the hundred works, the Yellow Emperor [pointed out that it was] passed down through the generations and named an office. This is a skillful thought.”¹⁰⁰ Qiu thus explicitly *denied* crafts their names. Or we could say he rectified names, and by refusing to name all crafts, he disowned the artisans—for without a name, there was no political and intellectual recognition of the work and the person/body who performed it.

This interpretation assumes that Qiu deliberately left out the Yuan period when making meanings, preferring to quote the *Rites of Zhou*, as “the Grand Steward recruited all people within nine assignments.¹⁰¹ The fifth, called the hundred workers/crafts, processes and transforms the eight materials.”¹⁰² Though literati may have argued about the institutionalization of crafts, as Qiu emphasized, any evaluation of such skills had always followed basic rules of decency:

Heaven has seasons, earth has *qi*, in materials there is beauty and in work there is artistry. Decency depends on the combination of these four factors. If materials are beautiful and work is artistic but indecent, then it is because it is out of its proper season and has not achieved the earthly *qi*.¹⁰³

With this reference, Qiu attempted to resituate crafts into an agricultural state model that recruited farmers who also could serve as skilled workers for public needs, but who did not produce luxury goods that threatened a morally upright and frugal emperor. Farmers had to secure grain first—in contrast to Xu and the emperors of the Yuan, who had employed and utilized crafts for a good life and associated skills with political authority. In due course, Qiu reverted to past incidents when the desire of elites—and in particular, the continuous emphasis of emperors on the hundred crafts over time—had wrought considerable confusion over political structures and social order: specifically, people had come to mistake the workers of the state—that is, officials—to mean craftsmen, and vice versa. For instance, in some eras, designations of social hierarchy (*shangxia* 上下) had been conflated with occupations and businesses/trades/jobs (*zhiye* 職業). Even early Song literati such as Wang Zhaoyu 王昭禹 (fl. 1080), as Qiu complained, had mistaken classic references that “do not particularly address an ‘official’s’ duties.

Producers of records set up the affairs of the hundred workers [hundred crafts].¹⁰⁴ And because officials held on to the principle that communal efforts ease affairs,¹⁰⁵ and there were more crafts than officials, “each [of the five offices] took over six of the businesses/trades/jobs.” The five offices, he further explained, “address the five materials processed by the hundred trades and also the possible usefulness of differentiating the people’s tools and utensils.”¹⁰⁶ Clerks were useful because they were able to classify, order, and summarize the otherwise multifarious crafts.

In tax records of the textile trade of this period, nomenclature was sophisticated. While reelers (*luosi* 絡絲), silk walkers (*daxian* 打線), and dyers (*ransi* 染絲) had always been identified, officials now frequently differentiated different weavers on the basis of loom type, such as “waist loom weavers” (*yaoji* 腰機) as opposed to those who worked on a drawloom (*tihua ji* 提花機).¹⁰⁷ Against this background, Qiu Jun concluded that “men of wit had especially clustered tasks with others of their kind (*lei* 類).” Qiu thus wanted to constrain the power of crafts by restricting their naming, as chaos was more likely to ensue if names increased beyond one hundred—at least on the level of court and central state debates.

From a *longue durée* point of view, Qiu’s efforts seem like an attempt to limit the consequences of the Yuan’s systematic state involvement in crafts, which had made craft expertise visible in new ways. Qiu’s countermeasure was to standardize and restrict names and meanings. Fast-forwarding, we can see these efforts bearing fruit by the end of the Ming. The editors of the “Local Gazetteer of Jiangxi” (*Jiaying fuzhi* 嘉興府志) in the year 1600 give seventy-two as the standard number for a generic list of registered craft occupations. While the tax and levy sections in local gazetteers—a genre that was published regularly over the entire territory of the Ming and would amount to ten thousand titles by the end of the Qing—include a considerable variety of terms, but few lists exceed one hundred.

Over the course of the centuries, the efforts of men such as Xu—a man who had embraced the rectification of names as a skill and a way to substantiate the *Ru*’s relevance and usefulness for the imperial state—thus had two significant effects. First, the lists that these efforts generated became important reference points for the continued recruitment of skilled labor by the state, to the point that intergenerational continuity was enforced because the state wanted to secure access to such knowledge and the economic benefits that came from performing such skills and producing craft wares. Second, the need to carefully record and register such skills locally over generations in order to ensure such access by the state led to a geographical mapping of such skills—as local and central state officials and local elites consulted such archived registers over the centuries to further recruitment drives. When we consider how local gazetteers in

China by the end of the Ming (the early seventeenth century) had started to contribute to local identity, generating and enforcing it,¹⁰⁸ we can see that the real power of the *Ru* and their practices lay in the *longue durée*, gaining new power with the modern emphasis on laws as a framework for knowledge property. This emphasis assigned new power to the Yuan identification of crafts when it began to identify such references to crafts as “traditional knowledge,” or when it related the Yuan household tax categories in local gazetteers and/or genealogical local sources to modern legal and economic entities such as the Chinese “old brands” (*Lao zihao* 老字號).¹⁰⁹ These are the most obvious signs of how modern ideas interfere with historical concepts and practices of regulating the ownership of knowledge.

察知也

“SCRUTINY is knowing.” (Or: ownership as knowing about know-how.)

As a legal clerk, Xu dedicated attention—as the quote says—to “knowing,” noting that for a sound judgement, a thorough scrutiny of all matters was key. As a scholar, Xu dedicated most of his attention to words and meanings, showcasing the main skill that the rulers of the Yuan appreciated about the *Ru*. In combining both roles, Xu contributed to the historical reception of craft knowledge and practical abilities in Chinese history, creating paper trails that survived the bodies that had originally performed such knowledge, and thus continued a nomenclature of skills.

In acknowledging that Xu advertised naming as a skill to achieve social relevance and political power over a group with abilities that were more important, a last point needs to be made about modern scholarship. For a historian of science, fascinating ambiguities lie in research on the historical and contemporary role of China’s bureaucracies and property rights in the 1950s to the 1980s—both in the comparisons between Eastern and Western models, and in a world in which the anthropology of Émile Durkheim, organizational sociology, and debates around economy, crafts, and science took place in separate and very different camps and ideological blocks, and were being applied in different ways in discussions about different regions of the world. Against the background of Cold War politics, Marxist-Maoist historians in China have explored the feudal character of labor relations in their past, while Western historians of science such as Robert Merton have revisited Marxian historiography as a question of how bureaucracy affected sciences in the West. The separation of individuals from their skills, as well as the rationalities and irrationalities of property relations, featured prominently in these debates, which identified the West as the origin of approaching knowledge as property and property as an individual’s right, and the East as being ruled by copious bureaucracies that created

heritages and pasts, but no legal framework for the protection of individual knowledge and skills. Through such debates, a fine but all-too-unyielding line of separation was drawn that researchers reflect when they approach law as authorizing the social norms for property and see governance defining the—public and private—policy structures that bureaucracy then implemented, while ascribing to bureaucracy the function of identifying the sum of institutional practices that enforce, utilize, or instrumentalize such property rights. Inasmuch as law historians accept such domains, they can pinpoint the emphasis of Chinese law on land and things and otherwise address property of knowledge in China as a subsidiary issue of marriage and inheritance rights.¹¹⁰ Historical, anthropological, and social science scholarship interferes in an equal way, as it similarly relegates craftsmen and crafts production to a research topic that is mainly relevant to economic or social history, while leaving epistemic issues aside.¹¹¹

In following the practice of rectifying names, however, we can see that Chinese historical actors both during the Yuan and Ming eras, *used* the fact that knowledge and its ownership cannot be broken apart to manipulate the ownership of craft knowledge. As I have attempted to make clear in this chapter, this worked by way of exclusion. Following the Chinese scholarly practice of meaning-making addresses the two major concerns in which historical scholarship sees bureaucracy enacting ownership of knowledge. These are claims to knowledge and rights to use it, and both are asserted in two ways: by managing information—codification—and by institutionalizing structural rules. Yet, as following this practice makes clear, practices can also operate in different domains. By tracing meaning-making, we can see that three different transformative logics define the way in which historical actors have used bureaucratic practices to manipulate the ownership of skills: (1) descriptive modes, (2) decision-making processes, and (3) the installation of procedural concepts. Tracing one practice of rectifying names, in this chapter I have highlighted descriptive modes to provide some insights into the possibilities and limits of knowing and owning crafts in historical China. Along those lines, we can see that accounting produces not only tangible objects but also barriers of knowledge ownership, and that scholars generate a very particular landscape of how knowledge can be owned—for instance, by naming some tasks but ignoring others; or by reinterpreting historical relationships. The procedural concept informing bureaucracy lays out possibilities for the scale and scope of ownership claims that then linger on, as in the case of the household categories installed by the Yuan, which lasted even far beyond Ming times. Today, the names that have survived in historical records can be used to claim ownership in the form of modern regiments such as brands or cultural and regional heritage, such as by determining which locality provided what skill set and since when.

One effect of historical tax and administrative practices is that nowadays crafts and craft categories are more closely linked with localities rather than individuals I have written elsewhere of how Chinese bureaucratic practice caused workers of the state—the craftsmen or the officials—to inscribe their names (*wule gongming* 物勒工名, *wule guanming* 物勒官名) directly onto products to guarantee their quality and verify the delivery of tax.¹¹² Texts and archives have no such names. They mainly count how many lacquer craftsmen were recruited, verifying Xitang, Jiaying Prefecture as a center of this trade; the prefecture of Jingdezhen as a porcelain hub or that weavers accumulated in Suzhou and Hangzhou. In combination with the increased importance that tax records in books, and genres such as the local gazetteers, gave to the naming of “crafts” for further appropriation by the state, an idiosyncratic landscape of how crafts were known and owned in imperial China emerges: a landscape in which practitioners’ knowledge became visible and relevant as a local resource, but was not attached to individual creativity and family names. Such visibility, though, is only a historical artifact. In the past, as today, the literati’s sharpest weapon—for good or bad—was and is the word. But it is also true that the word has to stand its ground against the knowledge contained in the exceptionally adept (*qiao*), splendid, and ingenious artifacts that have survived, and as knowledge in bodies that has to be transmitted over generations and survive in modern times—as a historical as well as an epistemic asset important to recognize for us today, too.

Notes

1. “禁制：私造：謂兵器之類，無故私造者” Xu Yuanrui 徐元瑞, *Lixue zhinan* 吏學指南 [Guidebook for clerks], Yuan keben (Beijing: Beijing Tushuguan Chubanshe, 2004), *juan* 6, 5b. The original Yuan edition has nineteen characters per line, the commentaries are in twenty-four characters in double-lines with black croakers, and it is framed all around. The oldest extant edition is the *Jujia biyong shilei quanji* 居家必用事類全集 [Complete collection of household necessities], preserved in Korea and Japan. In 1969 Wenhai published a version of the “Household necessities,” which contained several typos and other mistakes. Most facsimiles today use the 1673 version and correct mistakes with reference to the original classical texts. This incorporates the *Lidai lishi leilu* 歷代吏師類錄 [History of clerks], which chronicled popular historical master clerks up until the Song and included a final chapter of notes on varied warnings, sayings, and a biography, all in prose form. For the paratexts, see Xia Lingwei 夏令伟, “*Quan Song wen Quan Yuan wen buyi*” 《全宋文》《全元文》補遺 [Addenda to the complete collections of Song and Yuan prose], *Jiangsu daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 19, no. 5 (2017): 16–20.

2. Yang Shitie 杨世铁, “*Lixue zhinan de cishu xingzhi*” 《吏学指南》的辞书性质 [The dictionary nature of *Lixue zhinan*], *Huaibei shifan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue)* 35, no. 5 (2014): 47–49; Ye Xinmin 叶新民, “*Yibu Yuanchao gongwen yongyu cidian—Lixue zhinan jianjie*” 一部元朝公文用语

辞典——《史学指南》简介 [A dictionary of Yuan dynasty official documents—a brief introduction to *Lixue zhinan*], *Neimenggu shehui kexue (wenshizhe ban)*, no. 6 (1988): 68–71. According to Yang's counting, only 25 of the 1,450 give phonetics. Ye counts 91 categories in 2,109 paragraphs.

3. Not to be confused with the Yuan-dynasty hereditary household category *ruhu* 儒户 mentioned later, which was a legal identity. Those registered as *ruhu* were predominantly literati of the former Jin and Song, and their offspring; people with other legal identities, however, were allowed to study Confucian classics and take state examinations (when they were held again after 1313), who would be referred to as *Ru* in the sense of a social and cultural identity. See Xiao Qiqing 萧啟慶, “Yuandai de ruhu: rushi diwei yanjinshi shang de yizhang” 元代的儒户：儒士地位演進史上的一章 [The Confucian households of the Yuan dynasty: A chapter in the history of Confucians' social status], in *Yuandai shi xintan* 元代史新探 [A new exploration in the history of the Yuan dynasty] (Taipei: Xinwenfeng, 1983), 1–58.

4. Yang, “*Lixue zhinan de cishu xingzhi*,” 47–49; Guo Chaoying 郭超颖 and Wang Chenglüe 王承略, “Cong *Lixue zhinan* kan Yuandai liyuan yishi” 从《史学指南》看元代吏员意识 [On the consciousness of officials in the Yuan dynasty from *Lixue zhinan*], *Jiangxi shehui kexue* 35, no. 2 (2015): 114–119.

5. For a general overview, see Bettine Birge, “Gender, Property, and Law in China,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 44, no. 4 (2001): 575–599. Administrative regulations were promoted in 1297, though. See Xie Hongxing 谢红星, “Dianli falü tixi xingcheng zhi qianye: Yuandai qilüyong geli jiqi falüshi diwei” “典例法律体系”形成之前夜：元代“弃律用格例”及其法律史地位 [The eve before the formation of the “classical legal system”: Yuan dynasty “Qilüyong geli” and its status in legal history], *Jiangxi shehui kexue* 40, no. 3 (2020): 136–147.

6. Victor H. Mair, “Persian Scribes (Munshi) and Chinese Literati (Ru): The Power and Prestige of Fine Writing (Adab/Wenzhang),” in *Literacy in the Persianate World: Writing and the Social Order*, ed. Brian Spooner and William L. Hanaway (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 388–414.

7. Thomas T. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange in the Mongol Empire: A Cultural History of Islamic Textiles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 31–33. For an overview, see Morris Rossabi, ed., *Eurasian Influences on Yuan China* (Singapore: ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute, 2013), esp. 200–201.

8. Especially sociolinguists such as Michael Silverstein and Greg Urban, eds., *Natural Histories of Discourse* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), were among the first to connect how collectives construe, understand, and make sense of the world to a verbal and semiotic “meaning-making,” noting that as collectives made sense of the world, they created words that then again could come to create realities. Organizational sociologists such as Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations*, Foundations for Organizational Science (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), reconnect such notions back to Émile Durkheim, thereby pinpointing the processes of objectification and meaning-making that anticipate decision-making in bureaucracy.

9. Émile Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie* (Paris: Puf, 1912), 324.

10. Daniel Harrison Kulp, *Country Life in South China* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 1923), 148–150. Note that in this 1920s discussion, capital played much less a role than social wealth and prosperity and therefore collective ownership responsibilities and rights were discussed in different terms than in the post-WWII debates imbued by political dichotomies of communism-versus-capitalism.

11. For a summary of this literature and the development of the field, I refer to Frank Dobbin, “How Durkheim’s Theory of Meaning-Making Influenced Organizational Sociology,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Sociology and Organization Studies: Classical Foundations*, ed. Paul S. Adler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 200–222.

12. For a study of Zhu Bishan, see J. Keith Wilson, “The Fine Art of Drinking: The Chinese Silversmith Zhu Bishan and His Sculptural Cups,” *Bulletin of the Cleveland Museum of Art* 81, no. 10 (1994): 380–401. Studying the local culture of Suzhou where Xu lives, Michael Marmé notes that “the havoc Mongol rule inflicted on handicrafts has been greatly exaggerated.” Marmé, *Suzhou: Where the Goods of All the Provinces Converge* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 55. See also James C. Y. Watt, *The World of Khubilai Khan: Chinese Art in the Yuan Dynasty* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010), 295.

13. For the relation of the tax practice to law in the *longue durée*, see Yuan Yuanweiyang 袁远维扬, “Wule gongming zhi de lunli yunhan” “物勒工名”制的伦理蕴含 [The ethical implications of the “Wule Gongming” system], *Hubei jingji xueyuan xuebao (renwen shehui kexue ban)* 15, no. 4 (2018): 22. For a general overview of inscriptions, see Dagmar Schäfer, “Inscribing the Artifact and Inspiring Trust: The Changing Role of Markings in the Ming Era,” *East Asian Science, Technology and Society* 5, no. 2 (2011): 239–265. For the *longue durée* view on such practices, see Anthony J. Barbieri-Low, *Artisans in Early Imperial China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007).

14. “賦役平：謂理財之最，取辦有法，催科不擾者。” Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, *juan 1*, 6a.

15. Yao Sui 姚燧, “Song Li Maoqin xu” 送李茂卿序 [Preface to Li Maoqing] (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 2011), 4:71.

16. Guo and Wang, “Cong *Lixue zhinan* kan Yuandai liyuan yishi,” 115.

17. Sukhee Lee, *Negotiated Power: The State, Elites, and Local Governance in Twelfth- to Fourteenth-Century China* (Boston: Harvard University Asia Center, 2014), 220. Lee refers to the neo-Confucian scholar Cheng Duanli 程端禮 (1271–1345), Lu Wengui 陸文圭 (1252–1336), and Xu Qian 許謙 (1270–1337).

18. “貢學法廢，士無入仕之階，或習刀筆以為吏胥，或執僕役以事官僚，或作技巧販鬻以為工匠商賈。” Song Lian 宋濂, *Yuan shi* 元史 [History of Yuan] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1976), 1269.

19. Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, 1a. I have left the term *fa* here untranslated because it can be interpreted as both administrative rules or methods for regulating work and ordering society. The *Guidebook* does not, however, address craft methods themselves.

20. Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, *juan 1*, 1b. These talents are resonant with the “overseeing” tasks that Xu identified later, such as “calculating materials” (*jiliao* 計料) and “thorough inspection” (*jianhe* 檢覈).

21. On political stance, see Kang Jinsheng 康金声, "Sima Xiangru xinlun" 司马相如新论 [New findings on Sima Xiangru], *Shanxi daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexue ban)*, no. 4 (2002): 10–11, and Yang Fuyou 杨富有, "Yuan Shangdu yongshishi de neirong jiqi yiyi fenxi" 元上都咏史诗的内容及其意义分析 [The content and meaning of historical poems in the capital of the Yuan dynasty], *Neimenggu minzu daxue xuebao (shehui kexue ban)* 38, no. 3 (2012): 27–29. For Sima Xiangru's interest in language, see Ding Yiru 丁憶如, "Sima Xiangru fupian zhi yinyun fengge yanjiu" 司馬相如賦篇之音韻風格研究 [The study on the linguistic style of Sima Xiangru's rhapsodies] (master's thesis, Taipei, National Chengchi University, 2007). For the role of *fu* in Song exams, see Martin Kern, "The 'Biography of Sima Xiangru' and the Question of the Fu in Sima Qian's Shiji," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 123, no. 2 (2003): 304.
22. "以美人爲君子，以珍寶爲仁義，以水深雪霽爲小人，思以道術相報，貽於時君，而懼讒邪不得以通。" Zhang Heng 張衡, "Sichou shi xu" 四愁詩序 [Preface to the Four Sorrows], in *Wenxuan* 文選 [Anthology], ed. Xiao Tong 蕭統 (Taipei: Wunan Tushu, 1998), 751; "途之大者謂之道，小者謂之術 [...] 莊周以江湖對道術而言，則直指爲道路無疑矣。" Sun Yi 孫奕, *Lüzhai shier bian* 履齋示儿編 [Collection of instructions for my sons in the Lüzhai Study] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 669.
23. Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin diaolong zhu* 文心雕龍注 [The literary mind and carving of dragons with annotations], ed. Fan Wenlan 范文瀾 (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1962), 727.
24. Yang Shuhong 楊淑紅, "Yuandai qiye wenshu de kanbu yu yanjiu zongshu" 元代契約文書的刊布與研究綜述 [A survey of contract documents in the Yuan dynasty], *Zhongguoshi yanjiu dongtai*, no. 1 (2011): 28–34.
25. "良賤：名編戶籍，素本齊民。" Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, juan 6, 4a.
26. "賦役：謂徵催錢糧，均當差役也。" Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, juan 3, 2b.
27. "貴賤：身富位尊曰貴，卑下無位曰賤。《刑統賦釋》曰：貴賤之賤，君子有時居之。" Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, juan 6, 4a.
28. Xu notes nothing about the tax immunity that Allsen ascribes to these groups for the purpose of coopting them with patronage and tax immunities. *Commodity and Exchange*, 200. Allsen himself quotes Tao-Chung Yao, "Ch'iu Ch'u-Chi and Chinggis Khan," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 46, no. 1 (1986): 201–219, who focused in his study on the era of Chinghis Khan.
29. "職法：一官、二吏、三僧、四道、五醫、六工、七獵、八民、九儒、十丐，各有所統轄。" Zheng Sixiao 鄭思肖, *Zheng Sixiao ji* 鄭思肖集 [Collected works of Zheng Sixiao] (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1991), 186; Hu Zhiyu 胡祜適, *Zishan da quanji* 紫山大全集 [The big collection of Zishan], Siku quanshu (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1986), juan 23, 1–40.
30. Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, juan 22, for instance, notes thirty-six different groups.
31. Zhang, "Legal System," 345.
32. Huang Shijian 黃時鑑, ed., *Tongzhi tiaoge* 通制條格 [Statutes from the comprehensive regulations] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1986), 342.
33. "靈嘗考之，韃人始初草昧，百工之事，無一而有。[...] 後來滅回回，始有物產，始有工匠，始有器械。蓋回回百工技藝極精，攻城之具尤精。後滅金虜，百工之事，於是大備。" Xu Ting 徐霆, *Heida shilüe jiaoyu* 黑鞮

事略校注 [Brief account of the black tatars: An annotated edition], ed. Xu Quansheng 许全胜 (Lanzhou: Lanzhou Daxue Chubanshe, 2014), 99. Xu also mentioned that the Yuan “included” (i.e., conquered) the Uighurs (literally: Hui Hui) into their empire and that only then did the Yuan “begin to have craft products (*wuchan* 物產) and also craftsmen (*gongjiang* 工匠) and tools (*qixie* 器械). The techniques of the Hui Hui are refined.”

34. Liu Liya 刘莉亚 and Chen Peng 陈鹏, “Yuandai xiguan gongjiang de shenfen diwei” 元代系官工匠的身份地位 [The social status of craftsmen in the Yuan dynasty], *Neimenggu shehui kexue*, no. 3 (2003): 10–16.

35. For a thorough analysis of Mongol crafts based on archeological excavations in Central Asia, see Susanne Reichert, “Imperial Policies towards Handicraft: The Organization of Production in the Old Mongolian Capital Karakorum,” in *Craft Production Systems in a Cross-Cultural Perspective*, ed. Martin Bentz and Tobias Helms (Bonn: Verlag Dr. Rudolf Habelt, 2018), 185–208. This paper addresses handicraft production in the Mongolian steppes from the time of the Xiongnu.

36. Ankeney Weitz, “Art and Politics at the Mongol Court of China: Tugh Temür’s Collection of Chinese Paintings,” *Artibus Asiae* 64, no. 2 (2004): 248. Or see the investment of Yuan court actors into Tibet Buddhist religious art: Anning Jing, “Financial and Material Aspects of Tibetan Art under the Yuan Dynasty,” *Artibus Asiae* 64, no. 2 (2004): 213–241.

37. Allsen, *Commodity and Exchange*, 202.

38. Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, *juan* 7, 5a.

39. Chen Gaohua 陈高华, ed., *Yuan dianzhang* 元典章 [Statutes of the Yuan dynasty] (Tianjin: Tianjin Guji Chubanshe, 2011), *juan* 17, 580–591.

40. Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, *juan* 8, 24b. Here Hu explicitly refers to work processes.

41. Hok-Lam Chan, “The Organization and Utilization of Labor Service under the Jurchen Chin Dynasty,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 52, no. 2 (1992): 618. For the original source, see Tuo Tuo 脱脱, *Jin shi* 金史 [History of Jin] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), which was compiled by the Yuan court in 1344. No contemporary Jin records survived.

42. Zheng, *Zheng Sixiao ji*, 186

43. “應管軍民人匠諸色戶計官吏人等，今后毋得將所管戶計私自役使影占。” Chen, *Yuan dianzhang*, *juan* 3, 72.

44. Many of those works also take for granted that the literati gentleman ranked highest and was most sought after. See, e.g., Heinz Friese, “Zum Aufstieg von Handwerkern ins Beamtentum während der Ming-Zeit,” *Oriens Extremus* 6, no. 2 (1959): 160–176. Ho Ping-ti, “Aspects of Social Mobility in China, 1368–1911,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1, no. 4 (1959): 330–359. Zhu Cishou 祝慈寿, *Zhongguo gudai gongyeshi* 中国古代工业史 [An industrial history of ancient China] (Beijing: Xuelin Chubanshe, 1988).

45. Gao Rongsheng 高荣盛, “Yuandai jianghu sanlun” 元代匠户散论 [On craftsmen in the Yuan dynasty], *Nanjing daxue xuebao*, no. 1 (1997): 123–129.

46. Liu and Chen, “Yuandai xiguan gongjiang de shehui,” 14. Several prior studies come to another conclusion. See Wu Wei 吴伟 and Jiang Maofa 姜茂发, “Woguo Yuandai huji fenlei zhidu

yanjiu” 我国元代户籍分类制度研究 [Research on the classification system of household registration in the Yuan dynasty], *Ningxia shehui kexue*, no. 6 (2009): 111. See also Ota Yaichiro 太田彌一郎, “Gendai no juko to juseki” 元代の儒戸と儒籍 [A study of Ru households and Ru registers], *Tōhoku-Daigaku-tōyōshi-rōnshu* 5 (1992): 166–191. On the Yiwei registers, see Matsuda Koichi 松田孝一, “The Number of Military Households in the Yuan,” in *Neilu Yazhou lishi wenhua yanjiu. Han Rulin xiansheng jinian wenji* 内陆亚洲历史文化研究——韩儒林先生纪念文集 [Inland Asian history and culture research——Mr. Han Rulin Memorial Collection], ed. Nanjing daxue yuanshi yanjiushi 南京大学元史研究室 (Nanjing: Nanjing Daxue Chubanshe, 1996), 268–295. Matsuda has pointed out that none of these households were military in the sense of serving in warfare.

47. Brian E. McKnight, “Who Gets It When You Go: The Legal Consequences of the Ending of Households (JUEHU 絕戸) in the Song Dynasty (960–1279 C.E.),” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 43, no. 3 (2000): 314; for the role of marriage, lineage, and households, see 355.

48. Birge, “Gender, Property, and Law in China.”

49. Song, *Yuan shi*, 2639.

50. Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

51. “令織女為永妻，織帛償”；“懸巢巧婦子，拂水翦刀花”；“旌婦范氏。” Yu Xilu 俞希魯, *Zhishun Zhenjiang zhi* 至順鎮江志 [Local gazetteer of Zhenjiang from the Zhishun reign], 1863, *juan 2*, 28a; *juan 4*, 42a; *juan 19*, 17a.

52. Literal translation for a category of small taxpayer households extant since the Song dynasty; Hok-lam Chan translates them as “rats registers.” I have chosen the expression “mousetail” to better reflect that the major characteristic and purpose of these registers was to be continuously updated.

53. “縣政要式：軍、民、站、匠、諸色戶計，各鄉保村莊丁口鼠尾簿一扇，各戶留空紙一面於後，凡丁口死亡，或成丁，或產業，孳畜增添、消乏，社長即報官，于各戶下，令掌簿吏人即便標注，凡遇差發、絲銀、稅糧、夫役、車牛、造作、起發、當軍，檢點簿籍，照各家即日增損氣力分數科攤。” Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, *juan 22*, 1a.

54. Terms quoted here appear under the generic heading “amounts and substances” (*tiliang* 體量) in Xu, *Lixue zhinan*.

55. “據即目實在丁口、事產、物力符同，給戶貼、造籍冊，仍細注元簽起時屬何屬，再撥屬何屬，目今現屬何屬當役，因而將民籍、站籍、匠籍，諸一切戶籍細細目，手持造籍各三本，以為定例諸一切戶籍細細目，手持造籍各三本，以為定例。” Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, *juan 22*, 1a.

56. “諸壬子年附籍軍民、諸色人等，別無上司改撥充匠明文，雖稱即日入局造作或于各投下送納生活者，仰憑籍收系應當差役。” Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 8.

57. “戶口增：謂生齒之最，民籍增益，進入入老，批注收落，不失其實，若有流離，而能招誘復業者。” Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, *juan 1*, 6a.

58. Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 8.

59. “放保定工匠楚通等三百四十一戶為民。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 338.

60. 190,000 were returned to civil: “今已選定諸色工匠，余十九萬九百余戶宜縱令為民。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 266.
61. See Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 3–26.
62. “差官與察司、總府一同磨勘到各戶根腳、氣力、手狀，已是精當類攢冊帳，各路赴部分簡。” Wang Yun 王惲, *Qiuqian xiansheng da quanji* 秋澗先生大全集 [Collected works of Mr. Qiuqian], Sibū congkan chubian (Shanghai: Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1919), *juan* 22, 10b.
63. “諸投下官員，招佔已籍系官民匠戶計者，沒其家財，所佔戶歸本籍。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 2641.
64. Song Lian 宋濂, *Song xueshi wenji* 宋學士文集 [Collected works of scholar Song], Sibū congkan chubian (Shanghai: Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1919), *juan* 5, 3.
65. “管領隨路人匠都提領所；掌理人匠詞訟。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 2145, 2271.
66. Chen Dezhi 陳得芝, *Yuandai zouyi jilu* 元代奏議集錄 [Collected notes of the Yuan dynasty] (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe, 1998), 105.
67. “諸局院官輒以微故毆死匠人者，處死。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 2676.
68. Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 138.
69. Chen, *Yuan dianzhang*, *juan* 34, 1163.
70. Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 139.
71. Local documents from Heishui offer one possible confirmation for such practices. Such records were produced in multiple languages. I consulted mainly the Chinese volume. See Li Yiyou 李逸友, ed., *Heicheng chutu wenshu* 黑城出土文書 (漢文文書卷) [Documents unearthed in Heicheng (volume of Chinese documents)] (Beijing: Kexue Chubanshe, 1991); Wu Chao 吳超, “Heishuicheng chutu wenshu suojian Yijinailu nongye jishu tuiguang chutan” 《黑水城出土文書》所見亦集乃路農業技術推廣初探 [A preliminary study on the promotion of agricultural technology in Yijinailu in “Documents Unearthed from Heishuicheng”], *Nongye kaogu*, no. 4 (2011): 417–421; Pan Jie 潘潔, “Heishuicheng chutu Yuandai fushui wenshu yanjiu” 黑水城出土元代賦稅文書研究 [Research on Yuan dynasty taxation documents unearthed in Heishuicheng], *Xixiaxue* 4 (2009): 102–124.
72. Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 337.
73. “禁諸監官不得令人匠私造物器。” Song, *Yuan shi*, 245. See also Chen, *Yuan dianzhang*, *juan* 2, 71–76; Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 23–24.
74. “梯已出備”；“修朴机张什物、风雨箔、人匠夜坐灯油、柴灰、行移文字纸札。” Chen, *Yuan dianzhang*, *juan* 58, 1955.
75. See Song, *Yuan shi*, 127–144, 401–421.
76. “系官諸色原籍正匠並改色人匠，見入局造作者，仰依舊充匠除豁。” Huang, *Tongzhi tiaoge*, 8.
77. “國家初定中夏，制作有程，乃鳩天下之工，聚之京師，分類置局。” Zhao Shiyuan 趙世延 and Yu Ji 虞集, *Jingshi dadian jijiao* 經世大典輯校 [“Jingshi dadian”: An annotated edition] (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2020), 869.

78. Chen, *Yuan dianzhang*, juan 58, 1972.
79. Song, *Yuan shi*, 3264–3266. Such weavers were Wu Derong 吳德融, who was “good at multi-layered wefts” (*shan duan* 善緞), Song, *Yuan shi*, 1453; or Shi Dao’an 史道安, Su Tianjue 蘇天爵, *Guochao wenlei* 國朝文類, Sibü congkan chubian (Shanghai: Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1919), juan 42, 17a. See also Yang Qiong 楊琮, a mason ordered to manage the masons of Yannan and other provinces (*lu*). Xue Zengfu 薛增福, *Quyáng Beiyue miao* 曲陽北岳廟 [Beiyue temple in Quyáng] (Shijiazhuang: Hebei Meishu Chubanshe, 2000), 16.
80. Wang Ao 王鏊, *Zhengde Gusuzhi* 正德姑蘇志 [Local gazetteer of Gusu from the Zhengde reign], 1506, juan 56, 21b.
81. “工欲善其事，必先利其器。蓋器不利則事不成，雖有良工，無所施其巧。” Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, juan 8, 23b.
82. “唐太宗以弓示弓，人曰：‘非良弓也，木心不正，脉理皆邪，故發矢不直，以太宗之神射，弓不良則亦不能中的。’” Hu, *Zishan da quanji*, juan 8, 23b.
83. While the term itself has become an idiom, I chose the literal translation to make visible the addressed skill set. “箕裘：謂承祖父之業者。《禮》云：良弓之子，必學為箕；良冶之子，必學為裘。” Xu, *Lixue zhinan*, juan 5, 5b.
84. “Furs/felts” indicates ritual procedures in which all were asked to cover up the lamb fur coats. See *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 [Book of Rites], *Shisanjing zhushu (zhengliben)* 十三經注疏 (整理本), (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2000), juan 36, 1246.
85. Huang Ying 黃英, *Neisheng waiwang de fasixiang tixi: Qiu Jun “Daxue yanyi bu” tanyan*. 內聖外王的法思想体系：丘濬《大學衍義補》探研 [The legal thoughts system of the internal saints and external kings theory: A case study of supplementation to the explanations to the Great Learning by Qiu Jun] (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 2020), 24. Huang follows Qiu’s notion of *fa*, including, for example, political methods (*zhengfa* 政法) and teaching through persuasion (*xinfa* 心法), and critically engages with the “Western” and modern frameworks of legal studies. His study touches on ritual methods (*lifa* 禮法).
86. Aurelia Campbell, *What the Emperor Built: Architecture and Empire in the Early Ming* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020).
87. According to Zhang Xuan 張鉉, *Zhida Jinling xinzhì* 至大金陵新志 [New gazetteer of Jinling in the Zhida reign], *Siku quanshu* (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1986), juan 8, 1–17, Jiangning had 373 craftsmen households, Shangyuan 437, Jurong 1060, Tanshouzhou 524, and Tanyangzhou 963.
88. See Thomas G. Nimick, “Case Files from the Sichuan Provincial: Administration Commission, with Annotated Index,” *Ming Studies* 2003, no. 1 (2003): 62–85, who examines a set of rare archival documents about such disputes in Sichuan.
89. This is especially so in the case of dress, as Chen BuYun noted recently as well in BuYun Chen, “Wearing the Hat of Loyalty: Imperial Power and Dress Reform in Ming Dynasty China,” in *The Right to Dress*, ed. Giorgio Riello and Ulrika Rublack (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 416–434.

90. The Ming “Work Law” of the “Daming Law” specifically records the legal provisions for the classification of the handicraft. See Shen Shixing 申時行, *Da Ming huidian* 明會典 [Collected statutes of the great Ming], Wanli ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), *juan* 172, 880, which stipulates penalties when standards were not met by either the craftsman or the clerk in construction work, such as “those who lie about the construction materials, the applied funds and goods and the amount of labor, should be flogged 50 times. If the property has been damaged or the labor has been spent, the cost of the damaged goods and the labor shall be calculated together. If the crime is serious, it should be regarded as embezzlement.”

91. Chen Xinyu 陈新宇, “Bifu yu leitui zhi bian—cong ‘biyin lütiao’ chufa,” 比附与类推之辨——从“比引律条”出发, *Zhengfa luntan* 29 (2011): 113–121.

92. Shen, *Da Ming huidian*, *juan* 9, 55; *juan* 59, 363.

93. For an overview on the military implications of this incident, see David M. Robinson, *Bandits, Eunuchs, and the Son of Heaven: Rebellion and the Economy of Violence in Mid-Ming China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), 75–79. Natural disasters are increasingly reported—this can mainly also be read as a critique of the political disinterest of the Chenghua emperor, who was more interested in military affairs. After his release, the Zhengtong emperor reigned a second time under the reign name “Tianshun,” 1457–1464.

94. *Ming Xianzong shilu* 明憲宗實錄 [Veritable records of the emperor Xianzong in the Ming dynasty] (Taipei: Zhongyang Yanjiuyuan Lishi Yuyan Yanjiusuo, 1986), *juan* 2, 53a; Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 568 (7724), thus offers “crafts institute” as a possible translation.

95. Kuai Xiang 蒯祥 (1398–1481) was originally a Suzhou carpenter before he became Yongle's major adviser supervising the construction of the Beijing Forbidden City. *Ming Xianzong shilu*, *juan* 32, 4b.

96. *Ming Xianzong shilu*, *juan* 64, 7a.

97. Each person paid nine qian of silver a month. See Shen, *Da Ming huidian*, *juan* 189, 950.

98. Shen, *Da Ming huidian*, *juan* 189, 950. Then the scope gradually expanded and the amount of silver also changed. In the forty-first year of Jiajing that culminated in 1562 is the stipulation that “from this autumn it is not allowed to go to the Ministry of Works for service without permission.”

99. Edward L. Farmer, ed., *Zhu Yuanzhang and Early Ming Legislation: The Reordering of Chinese Society following the Era of Mongol Rule* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 42, 33.

100. Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Hui'an xiansheng Zhu wengong wenji* 晦庵先生朱文公文集 [Collected works of Zhu wengong Hui'an], Sibū congkan chubian (Shanghai: Shanghai Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1919), *juan* 65, 3171.

101. Qiu uses the term *zhi*, which can be translated as “duties” or “professions/trades.” I translated it as “assignments,” as he refers to the *Zhouli* narrating how the king of Zhou disseminated tasks for ritual performances among his people: (1) three forms of agriculture that produce

the nine grains; (2) gardening and growing plants; (3) materials of the woods and marshes; (4) husbandry; (5) the hundred crafts that adorn and transform the eight materials; (6) trade and merchandising; (7) women's work of reeling and weaving silk; (8) civil servants collecting and redistributing materials (as tax); (9) people roaming freely/freelancers.

102. Shisanjing zhushu zhengli weiyuanhui 十三經注疏整理委員會, ed., *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮註疏 [Zhouli: An annotated edition], *Shisanjing zhushu (zhengliben)* 十三經注疏 (整理本), (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2000), *juan* 1, 38.

103. *Zhouli zhushu*, *juan* 39, 1241–1242.

104. I choose a literal translation here of the word for scribes or authors to highlight Qiu's play of words, i.e., scribes “produce” (*zuo* 作) like craftsmen “produce” pots or tables.

105. This expression is habitually translated as “a division of labor that eases things.” However, the saying literally emphasizes the communal nature of an effort as well as the performance of varied tasks, not a division of labor per se.

106. Wang Zhaoyu's 王昭禹 (fl. 1080) *Zhouli xiangjie* 周禮詳解 [Detailed explanations of the ritual of Zhou] as quoted in Qiu, *Daxue yanyi bu*, *juan* 97, 3a. For a discussion of Wang Zhaoyu's approach to ritual, see also Hiu Yu Cheung, “Sequence of Power Ritual Controversy over the Zhaomu Sequence in Imperial Ancestral Rites in Song China (960–1279)” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2015), 232–239.

107. Luo Lixiang 羅麗馨 (Lo Li-hsiang), “Mingdai jiangji renshu zhi kaocha” 明代匠籍人數之考察 [On the number of artisan households in Ming China], *Shihuo yuekan* 17, no. 1–2 (1988): 1–20, gives an overview of tasks (or professions) acknowledged in central state registers based on the “Provisions and Tax” (*shihuo* 食貨) chapters of official historiography and Local Gazetteers of the Jiangnan Region.

108. Peter K. Bol, “The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2001): 37–76.

109. See Wang Hong 王紅, *Laozihao* 老字号 [Time-honored brand] (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 2018), and Thomas David DuBois, “China's Old Brands: Commercial Heritage and Creative Nostalgia,” *International Journal of Asian Studies* 18, no. 1 (2020): 1–15.

110. Song Guohua 宋國畫, *Yuandai fazhi bianqian yanjiu* 元代法製變遷研究 (Beijing: Zhishi Chuanquan Chubanshe, 2017), 72–86, shows the range of issues addressed in legal texts.

111. See, for instance, Christine Moll Murata, *State and Crafts in the Qing Dynasty (1644–1911)* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2018); Richard von Glahn, *Fountain of Fortune: Money and Monetary Policy in China (1000–1700)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Fan Jinmin 范金民, *Yibei tianxia: Ming Qing Jiangnan sichou shi yanjiu* 衣被天下: 明清江南丝绸史研究 [The world of clothes: A study on the history of Jiangnan Silk in Ming and Qing dynasties] (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 2016).

112. See Schäfer, “Inscribing the Artifact.”

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