

# *From Honoured Mound of Bones to Neglected Mound of Refuse*

The Mass Burial Site of Anti-Mongol Loyalists in Yuqiao Village,  
Jiangsu Province, China

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## *I. Locating the Mound*

In late February of 2003 I travelled to Jiangsu province in China with a group of Canadian university students bound for a semester-long study abroad programme at Nanjing University. After a few days of helping them get settled in, I travelled on a free day in search of a historical burial mound in Changzhou, a large city approximately a hundred kilometres southeast of Nanjing. I had been doing research on the Mongol conquest of Southern Song China (1127–1279) south of the Yangzi (Yangtze) River in the mid 1270s, and I had read about a particularly gruesome massacre of several hundred thousand people perpetrated against the citizens of Changzhou by Mongol forces in 1275. A massive and well-written four-volume history of the Mongol conquest of China by Li Tianming, a retired military officer in The Republic of China on Taiwan, gives the wrenching details about a mound in which a good portion of the city's massacred dead were buried:

Changzhou<sup>1</sup> in Song times is now Wujin County [*Xian*]. During the early years of the Chinese Republic,<sup>2</sup> there was within the county walls a place called Eighteen Family Village [*Shibajia Cun*]. The tradition from the elders

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<sup>1</sup> That is, Changzhou in its broader sense as both a city and the prefecture of which it was the capital.

<sup>2</sup> The Republic of China (Nationalist China) was on mainland China from 1911 to 1949 and since that time has been on the Chinese island of Taiwan, although in recent years its existence has been endangered by two threats: proponents of Taiwanese independence and communists in mainland China who are eager to crush it and impose their rule over the island.

was that it was inhabited by the descendants of people who fled for their lives and managed to escape slaughter by the Yuan armies. Inside the eastern gate was an earthen mound approximately two *zhang*<sup>3</sup> in height and with a surface area of around three *mou*.<sup>4</sup> Dry bones could often be dug out of it. This was the scene created when the Yuan armies of the time piled up the bodies after they had put the city to the sword.<sup>5</sup>



I wanted to see if any sort of sign, stele, fence, or temple still marked the site of this mound; if any did, I wanted a photograph of it for the book on the Mongol conquest of Southern Song China I am writing.<sup>6</sup> The very helpful and enthusiastic people at the Changzhou Historical Society (Changzhou *Wenhuiguan*) took me on a tour of the city's ancient relics and historical sites, including the well-known "Historical Village" (*Gucun*), a portion of which is still in remarkably good shape. When I asked them about the mound of bones, they called it the "Myriad People

<sup>3</sup> That is, around 6.3 metres.

<sup>4</sup> That is, about 2/10 of a hectare or about half an acre.

<sup>5</sup> T. Li, *Song-Yuan Zhan Shi*. 4 vols. Taipei 1988, 2: 1244.

<sup>6</sup> Currently published accounts of the Mongol conquest of Southern Song China (none of them comprehensive or book-length) include portions of R. L. Davis, *Wind Against the Mountain: The Crisis of Politics and Culture in Thirteenth-century China*. Cambridge, Mass. 1996; M. Rossabi, "The Reign of Khubilai Khan." in H. Franke and D. Twitchett, *The Cambridge history of China, Volume 6: Alien Regimes and Border States, 907–1368*. Cambridge 1994, 414–489.

Burial Pit" (*Wanrenkeng*) and told me that it no longer exists; the site of the mound, which was indeed by the city's former eastern gate, has been completely levelled and obliterated, and on it now stands Changzhou's main office of the Bank of Construction and Commerce (*Gongshang Yinhang*). They assured me, however, that "every household" in Changzhou knew well the tragic story of the massacre of the city's population in 1275.

The Mongol massacre of Changzhou was unusual for its brutality; indeed, the Mongol general Bayan's policy for most cities he attacked was to allow them to surrender peacefully and without general slaughter, even if they had previously resisted the Mongol onslaught militarily. (Khubilai Khan had ordered Bayan<sup>7</sup> to make the conquest of Southern Song China as bloodless as possible.) Changzhou, however, had made the critical mistake of surrendering to the Mongols earlier in 1275 and later reverting to Southern Song jurisdiction. Such inconstant perfidy the Mongols could not tolerate, and the annihilation of the city's population was punishment and warning.<sup>8</sup>

One of the two men from the Changzhou Historical Society had heard of a smaller burial mound of bones, also dating from 1275 and the Mongol invasion of Jiangsu, that existed somewhere out in the countryside of southern Jiangsu. I expressed interest in seeing it, and so the two men from the Historical Society, an indulging retired Nanjing University professor of Song history named Deng Rui, and a Nanjing University driver took me out on a long drive through the countryside of southern Jiangsu in search of the mound. We searched for most of the day, but late in the afternoon an obliging and helpful local cadre eventually guided us directly to the site.

The bone mound is located in a rural area of southern Jiangsu province, specifically half a kilometre or so east of the centre of Yuqiao Village, Loyang Township, Wujin District, Changzhou Municipality. A crumbling and neglected stele erected atop the mound in 1990 reads (in translation) as follows:

During the first year of the Deyou reign period<sup>9</sup> of the Southern Song emperor Gongdi, Bayan, commander of the Yuan<sup>10</sup> armies, led several tens of thousands of invading troops towards Changzhou. The military situation was perilous, and [the village of] Yuqiao's Upright Volunteers<sup>11</sup> Zhou De, Zhou Qi, and the five Yan brothers<sup>12</sup> went to Pingjiang (modern Suzhou)

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<sup>7</sup> On Bayan see F. W. Cleaves, "The Biography of Bayan the Bârin in the *Yüan-shih*." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 19 (1956), 185–303.; Ch. Hsiao, "Bayan (1237–1295)." in I. de Rachewiltz, et al. *In the Service of the Khan: Eminent Personalities of the Early Mongol-Yuan Period*. Wiesbaden 1993, 584–607. 1993, and D. C. Wright, "The Mongol General Bayan and the Massacre of Changzhou, 1275." *Altaica* 7 (2002), 108–121.

<sup>8</sup> On the Mongol massacre of Changzhou, which was nearly total, see Wright, "The Mongol General Bayan."

<sup>9</sup> AD 1275.

<sup>10</sup> I. e., the Mongols and the Chinese defectors who supported them.

<sup>11</sup> *Yimin*.

<sup>12</sup> Yan Xun, Yan Ji, Yan Yi, Yan Zhu, and Yan Shao.

and reported the urgent news to Wen Tianxiang. Yin Yu and Ma Shilong, generals in the Jiangxi Army, were dispatched with three thousand troops to hasten by night to offer aid, and in the Yuqiao area they joined [with Yuan forces] in fierce combat. Because they were hopelessly outnumbered, Ma Shilong and the five Yan brothers heroically gave their lives. [Meanwhile] Yin Yu and the two sons of the Zhou family led the remaining troops and took the battle to Wumu, where they all died for their country. Afterwards the villagers took the remains of the officers and men who met with death and buried them en masse here, [which place] they therefore named the Mound of Bones.<sup>13</sup> In Yuqiao they also built the Temple to Generals Ma and Yin to mark their commemoration.

In order to propagate nationalistic spirit, this stele is now erected. [May it] widely disseminate [this story] to future generations.

Tomb Sweeping Day,<sup>14</sup> 1990<sup>15</sup>

## II. The story behind the mound

The major city of Changzhou fell to the Mongols in the spring of 1275, but the Song loyalist generals Yao Shan (from Szechwan/Sichuan province) and Chen Zhao (from Wuxi in Jiangsu province) raised a volunteer army and succeeded in recovering Changzhou a few months later. The Southern Song court rewarded Yao Shan by making him Prefect of Changzhou and made Chen Zhao its Controller-general.

When the Mongol commander Bayan learned that Changzhou had been recaptured for Song, he took several tens of thousands of troops and surrounded and besieged the city. Yao Shan and his forces managed to hold the city, but the situation was dire because their forces were weak and few. Yao Shan ordered his son Yao Rang, two brothers surnamed Zhou, and five brothers surnamed Yan from among the Yuqiao volunteers, along with others, to break through the Mongol encirclement at night and proceed to Pingjiang (modern Suzhou) to report to Wen Tianxiang (Wen T'ien-hsiang)<sup>16</sup> and beg him to send reinforcements.

<sup>13</sup> *Guchengdun*, literally "bones-become-mound" or "bones-into-mound."

<sup>14</sup> *Qingming*, one of the twenty-four solar periods. Corresponding with 5 or 6 April, it is an occasion when the Chinese have traditionally visited and cared for the tombs of their ancestors.

<sup>15</sup> The stele has front and back sides. The front side reads (in translation): "Bone Mound Commemorative Stele respectfully erected by the Chinese Communist Party Committee, Loyang Township and the People's Government, Loyang Township. Tomb Sweeping Day 1990."

<sup>16</sup> Wen Tianxiang (1236–1283), the most famous Song loyalist, was the last Song prime minister to actively resist the Mongols. He was eventually captured by the Mongols, offered a high position in the Yuan government by Khubilai khan himself (Wen refused it), and eventually executed by the Mongols at his own behest. On Wen Tianxiang see W. A. Brown, *Wen T'ien-hsiang: A Biographical Study of a Sung Patriot*. San Francisco 1986, Davis, *Wind Against the Mountain*; H. Franke, *Sung Biographies*. 2 vols.

Wen Tianxiang responded to the report by sending Generals Yin Yu and Ma Shilong (from Jiangxi province) with three thousand troops, along with Generals Zhu Hua (from Guangdong province) and General Zhang Quan with two thousand troops, and sent them hastening day and night to relieve the beleaguered Changzhou. When they met up with Yuan forces near the village of Yuqiao, the battle went well for the Song loyalists at first, and they actually succeeded in capturing two Mongol generals.

After their initial victories the Song loyalist forces encamped at Yuqiao village, and about a kilometre east of the village they made an earthen mound their headquarters for viewing and directing the battle. Bayan was distressed and angered upon hearing that he had lost two of his generals, but he was unsure of Song loyalist strength and chose not to attack recklessly into the region around Yuqiao. Instead he sent one Wang Liangchen, a former Song official who had defected to the Mongols, to Yuqiao to urge the Song loyalists to surrender and also to learn what he could of their strength. When Yao Rang learned of the arrival of Wang Liangchen, a man he considered a traitor to the Chinese people, he told General Ma Shilong of his former perfidy. Ma Shilong responded by putting Wang Liangchen into a great vat of hot oil and frying him to death! These were the just desserts of Wang Liangchen the "traitor," a modern popular narrative history of Changzhou concludes.<sup>17</sup>

Bayan flew into a towering rage upon learning of the gruesome death of Wang Liangchen and personally led tens of thousands of troops on a rampage through the Yuqiao area, killing every living thing he encountered, not sparing even chickens or dogs. General Zhang Quan fled the battle along with his forces, leaving Ma Shilong to lead his few thousand troops into battle with enemy forces that outnumbered them ten to one. In the face of these overwhelming odds Ma perished in battle, as also did the five Yan brothers and the remainder of his forces. Soon after this Wen Tianxiang sent Yin Yu along with General Zhang Quan from Anhui province and General Zhu Hua from Guangdong province to resist the Mongol invaders, and they met in battle at Wumu. (General Yin Yu, a native of Ningdu in Jiangxi province, had come to the notice of the Southern Song government due to his proficiency in capturing bandits and was subsequently promoted to the Military Inspectorate<sup>18</sup> in Ganzhou, Jiangxi. He was involved in the Southern Song loyalist cause with Wen Tianxiang.) Most of the Song armies and troops at Wumu retreated or were defeated, and the Cantonese general Zhu Hua was killed. Eventually only five hundred surviving troops under Yin Yu fought to the death against the Yuan forces, and he himself killed several dozen Yuan troops with his own hands. (Indeed, Song historical materials

Wiesbaden 1976, 2: 1187–1201, H. Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang (1236–1283): Vorstufen zum Verständnis seines Lebens*. München 1983, and J. Jay, *A Change in Dynasties: Loyatism in Thirteenth-century China*. Bellingham, Washington 1991, 93–136 and *passim*.

<sup>17</sup> S. B. Changzhou, *Changzhou Gujin* v. 1 (Neibu Ziliao). Changzhou 1979, 83.

<sup>18</sup> *Xunjian*; cf. Ch. O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. Stanford 1985, 2724.1.

claim that enemy arrows bristling from his helmet made him look like a hedgehog.) At length the Zhou brothers were all killed, Yin Yu's reinforcements ran out, and he was captured. Yuan troops pinned down his neck with four long spears and beat him to death with clubs. His surviving troops fought for the rest of the night, and the corpses of men and horses covered the fields. Not one of his troops surrendered, but at noon the next day four of them returned alive. Yin Yu was posthumously named a Military Training Commissioner,<sup>19</sup> and his two sons were made government officials. Thirty acres of field land were given to benefit his family.<sup>20</sup> Yuan forces then proceeded to Changzhou and butchered the city.

After it was all over, the survivors of the village of Yuqiao took the bodies of everyone who had died in battle and buried them in the earthen mound that had been the Song loyalist headquarters. (This satisfied a Confucian funerary tradition which held that bodies ought to be buried, as opposed to being cremated or exposed.<sup>21</sup>) They renamed the mound the "Mound of Bones" (*Guchengdun*). Centuries later, after the Manchu conquest of China in 1644, the mound was again renamed, this time as "Outer Wall Mound" (*Guochengdun*), likely as a concession to the Manchus who of course would have found the entire story of heroic Chinese resistance against cruel barbarian invaders distasteful and subversive. The mound itself was and remains today a very crude place of burial and does not seem to correspond to any of the categories of Song burial sites Dieter Kuhn gives in his careful study of Song tomb burials.<sup>22</sup>

#### A. Temples and shrines

During the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644), which succeeded the Mongols' Yuan dynasty (1279–1368), the people of Yuqiao built in their village the Temple to Generals Ma and Yin (*Ma Yin Jiangjun Miao*) and burned incense there in memory of the two heroic generals. After many years the temple collapsed, but the local people took the idols of the two generals and stored them in a government building.

During the first century and a half of the Manchu Qing dynasty (1644–1912) there was no temple to the heroic generals and other Song loyalist martyrs of the area. In 1787, however, local people Xu Quan, Wu Jizhan, and others built a shrine with three buildings in which incense offerings could continue, and they added wooden tablets commemorating the five Yan brothers who perished in the

<sup>19</sup> *Tuanlianshi*; Hucker, *Dictionary*, 7387.2.

<sup>20</sup> SS 450.13253; Changzhou, *Changzhou Gujin*, 83–85.

<sup>21</sup> S. F. E. von Eschenbach, "Public Graveyards of the Song Dynasty." in D. Kuhn, ed. *Burial in Song China*. Heidelberg 1994, 250.

<sup>22</sup> The mound cannot be considered a "pit grave" described in D. Kuhn, *A Place for the Dead: An Archaeological Documentary on Graves and Tombs of the Song Dynasty (960–1279)*. Heidelberg 1996, 126–131, but it might be designated a "public graveyard," as in von Eschenbach, "Public Graveyards." Among the many types of public or charitable graveyards von Eschenbach describes are instances of Chinese soldiers massacred by Jin (Jurchen) troops being buried in mass graves.

fight against the Mongols and placed them alongside the idols of Generals Ma and Yin. In an apparent effort to placate the Manchus (the “barbarian” cousins of the Mongols) and make the shrine seem less hostile to Manchu rule, they also added two niches for idols of two notably filial sons from the area. Thus, the shrine commemorated filial piety as well as loyalty and military heroism, and the Manchus could hardly object. For good measure the name of the shrine complex was changed from “Temple to the Generals” to “Shrine to Loyalty and Filial Piety” (*Zhongxiao Ci*). But that the reconstruction of the site was intended primarily as a memorial to Generals Ma and Yin was still unmistakable; a stele written by Zhuang Zhi (a local low-ranking member of the gentry) and erected for the occasion was entitled “Stele Inscription for the Reconstruction of the Temple to the Two Generals Ma and Yin.”

In the early years of the Chinese republic (1912–1949) the Shrine to Loyalty and Filial Piety was used as a place for levying and collecting agricultural taxes. During the Japanese invasion and occupation of China (1937–1945), this was the site of the Yuqiao village administration offices. The shrine was torn down in 1976, the last of China’s “ten years of turmoil” (*shinian dongluan*), the Cultural Revolution.

Prior to the fall of mainland China to the Chinese communists in 1949, there was a Temple to the Courageous Generals (*Mengjiang Miao*) atop the mound itself. When it was first built is unclear, but we do know that it was rebuilt in 1870. Atop the mound was also a Pavilion to the Goddess of Mercy (*Guanyin Ge*)<sup>23</sup>, built in 1877, which included over twenty structures. Annual temple fairs were held here on the fifteenth day of the third lunar month, and on the fifteenth day of the seventh lunar month plays about the courageous generals were performed. According to the local government’s internal informational materials (*neibu ziliao*), the temple and the pavilion were torn down sometime “after Liberation” (i. e., likely during the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976), and local peasants erected in its place a nursery for plants.

### III. Making Sense of the Bone Mound Today

Today only a dilapidated shed and the already-crumbling commemorative stele erected in 1990 remain atop the mound. The entire site is in very sorry shape and is badly neglected. During the construction of a senior citizens activity centre several years ago, a significant portion of the mound (perhaps ten percent of it) was actually dug away to make room for the structure, and part of the mound is held in shape by a retaining wall. (Local peasants pointed out to us some white streaks in the soil of the still-bare escarpment and speculated that they were the calcified remnants of human bone.) Several unauthorised and illegal graves dug in recent years mar the surface of the mound. Huge piles of garbage are found around much of its base; the site is essentially a garbage dump today. And perhaps most startlingly of all, many of the villagers are in the habit of using the

<sup>23</sup> *Guanyin* or *Guanshiyin*, “Hearer of the Voices of the World,” is the feminine form of the Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva venerated in China in devotional varieties of Buddhism.

mound as a makeshift outbuilding; they actually empty their bowels on it.<sup>24</sup> (The people from the Changzhou Historical Society, apparently on instructions from the local cadre, politely steered me away from taking too close a look at the large open-air cesspit near the top of the mound.) The effluvium on top of the mound on a warm summer day must be overpowering.

How and why did the mound come to its current neglect and sorry state of repair? First of all, it is necessary to point out that the reason the mound has survived at all to the present is because it is not in the middle of a busy major city. If it had been located in Changzhou itself, it would long ago have been sacrificed without hesitation to the Juggernaut of China's current economic development.

Having accounted for its survival in the first place, it is now of course tempting, and perhaps too easy, to trace or follow its fate through the centuries as parallel and epiphenomenal to China's national political and ideological history. The Chinese during the Mongol Yuan dynasty could not very well openly commemorate national heroes who had died resisting the Mongol invasion of China. (Or could they? The Mongols were sometimes surprisingly tolerant of anti-Mongol expression, as long as this did not translate into direct rebellion or refusal to pay taxes.) The subsequent native Chinese dynasty of Ming obviously promoted anti-Mongolian nationalism and would have approved of the construction of the Temple to Generals Ma and Yin. The Qing dynasty of the Manchus, imperial China's last dynasty and also its longest-lasting dynasty of conquest by a minority people, frowned on overt displays of anti-Manchu sentiment. (Indeed, the Manchus were much more prickly and sensitive about their image and legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese than the Mongols had been.) This explains why the populace around Yuqiao in the late eighteenth century had to proceed prudently in constructing a temple commemorating loyalty and filial piety. The use of the temple as a tax collection centre by various post-Qing Chinese governments is a bit difficult to explain but might have been due to the poverty and desperation of the era. The Japanese, who invaded and occupied parts of China from 1931 through 1945, could obviously not tolerate a temple to resisters of alien rule, so they transformed it into an administrative and governmental facility. And lastly, the Chinese communists, especially during the madness of the Cultural Revolution of the mid 1960s through the mid 1970s, saw the temple as "backward" and "feudal," and as with so many other old structures and historical sites in China, it was destroyed by bands of Red Guard hooligan vandals.

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<sup>24</sup> A few well-meaning friends and colleagues have argued earnestly that this may not be as bad as it seems; bodily functions and the disposition of human waste, they maintain, are often not as distasteful and symbolically opprobrious in China as they are elsewhere. While this may well be true, especially in rural China, even semi-literate Chinese peasants know that one really should not dump refuse, human or otherwise, on truly important historical sites. The local cadre in Yuqiao understood this well and told me, with a discernible mixture of regret and hope, that the bone mound would likely not be better treated until someone outside China made it famous.

After Mao's death in 1976, China quickly came to its senses, and by the mid 1980s the overwhelming majority of China's population began rejecting the Marxist-Leninist drivel the Chinese communists had been peddling for several decades. The last remaining vestiges of ideological legitimacy the Chinese communists had with the Chinese people were wiped out in wee hours of 4 June 4 1989 when units of soldiers in the "People's Liberation Army" murdered hundreds if not thousands of unarmed students and protestors on the streets of Beijing in the vicinity of Tiananmen Square. The culturally appropriate time to mourn the murdered students and protestors would have been Tomb Sweeping Day in April 1990. The ideologically and politically bankrupt Chinese communists, having lost much legitimacy in the eyes of the Chinese people just as Zhao Ziyang had predicted they would,<sup>25</sup> sought a way to appropriate Tomb Sweeping Day (a holiday or festival formerly condemned as "feudal" or "superstitious") and change the people being mourned or remembered while simultaneously appealing to an important alternative source of legitimacy for communist rule: nationalism. This might help explain, at least in Jiangsu, the Chinese communists' sudden decision to commemorate the dead buried at the Yuqiao bone mound on Tomb Sweeping Day the year after the Tiananmen Massacre, the Rape of Beijing.

There are political and ideological reasons for the current state of the bone mound of Yuqiao. At issue is, of course, how the mound and all of its attendant dimensions, especially the political ones, are understood. "... in certain respects the past is up for grabs. It is really the *meaning* of the past that is of issue."<sup>26</sup> Making ideologically correct sense of the meanings of the mound and how they should best be remembered has preoccupied intellectuals in imperial, republican /Nationalist, and now communist (and post-Marxian?) times. In China and elsewhere, the political dimensions of historical relics and historical memory were and still are vital considerations for anyone involved in politics or participating in political struggle. "Memory is actually a very important factor in struggle ... If one controls memory, one controls their dynamism... It is vital to have possession of this memory, to control it, administer it, tell it what it must contain."<sup>27</sup> Thus, the cultural topography of historical relics, memory, and meaning is perilous terrain politically because "political authority ... requires a cultural framework in which to define itself and advance its claims, and so does opposition to it."<sup>28</sup> In Jiangsu and elsewhere in China, astute provincial and local officials and party members take their time traversing this topography and do so carefully and

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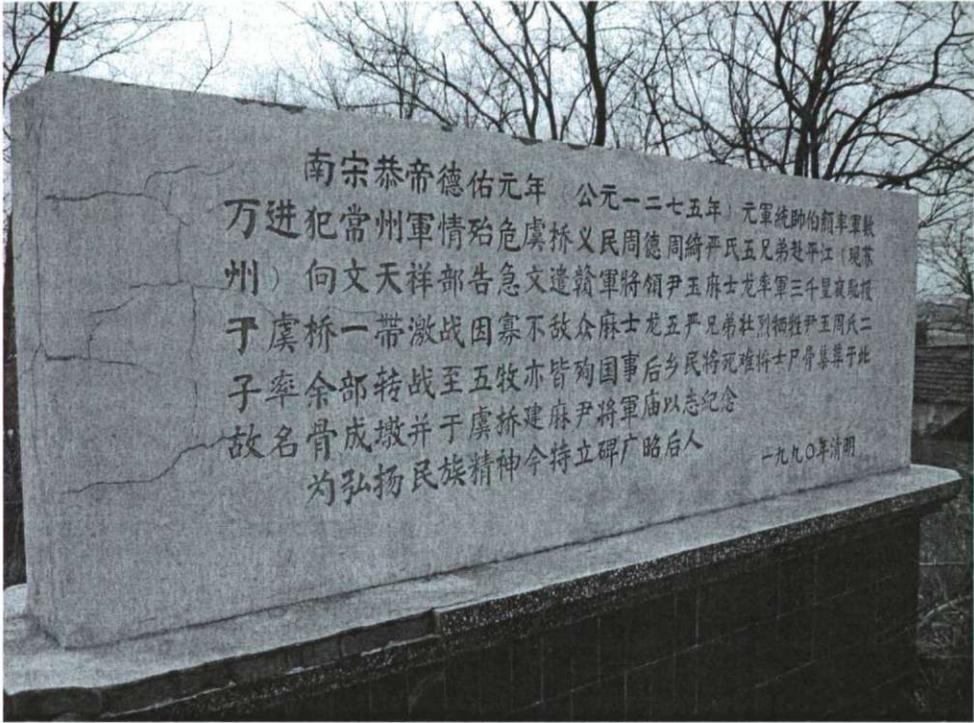
<sup>25</sup> In May 1989 Zhao Ziyang opposed Deng Xiaoping's plan to use military force to curtail the protests at Tiananmen Square and its environs. For this Zhao was stripped of all his positions and placed under house arrest for the rest of his life. He died in January 2005 still under official condemnation, but his posthumous reputation will of course eventually be rehabilitated.

<sup>26</sup> M. G. Kenny, "A Place for Memory: The Interface Between Individual and Collective History." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 41:3 (1999), 437.

<sup>27</sup> Foucault, quoted in W. Cohen, "Symbols of Power: Statues in Nineteenth-century Provincial France." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 31:3 (July 1989), 494.

<sup>28</sup> Geertz, quoted in Cohen, "Symbols of Power," 496.

tentatively. Unless they receive direction from higher levels of the government and Party, they hesitate both to remove old structures associated with the bone mound and to add new ones.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, the mound itself lapses into desuetude and neglect.



Today the mound of Yuqiao has been marked synchronically but is not remembered diachronically. It has been designated at a point in space with a monumental stele, but the dead buried there who give it meaning are not commemorated across time. The erection of what is essentially a substantial sign and nothing more can ever take the place of a meaningful and satisfying cycle of annual civic ritual of dramas and commemorations that encourages, even craves, communal participation. The continuous incense offerings and the annual temple fairs and dramatic performances of former times have not been replaced with even pale modern counterparts or roughly equivalent analogues. The deeds of the heroic dead buried there are recalled in writing but not enlivened in performance. Merely remembering them in writing, even monumental writing, is not

<sup>29</sup> This is because they understand, as did people in nineteenth-century France, that "Tearing down and erecting monuments were ways of taking vengeance on the past and shaping a new understanding of it. In revolutionary times the imprint of royalism had to be obliterated. When the monarchy returned in power, the emphasis was on destroying the symbols of the Revolution and celebrating its victims." (Cohen, "Symbols of Power," 493-494)

enough because “even in a literate society, we find that people are essentially visually oriented.”<sup>30</sup> The lack of visual performances on stage and in writing, of “body and brush” commemorations, is telling.

Thus, in the area around Yuqiao, where the avowed purpose of placing the monument on the mound was to encourage nationalism, nationalism has not been well served by an integration of the new monument with a new (or at least rejuvenated) and supplementary programme of commemoration. In nineteenth-century Switzerland, on the other hand, nationalism was effectively fostered through coherent association of festival occasions (based in part on former traditional practices) with new monumental structures:

Existing customary traditional practices – folksong, physical contests, marksmanship – were modified, ritualized, and institutionalized for the new national purposes ... A powerful ritual complex formed round these occasions: festival pavilions, structures for the display of flags, temples for offerings, processions, bell-ringing, tableaux, gun-salutes, government delegations in honour of the festival, dinners, toasts, and oratory.<sup>31</sup>

It is perhaps too easy to fault the Chinese communists of the Yuqiao region for their failure to attain to the Swiss example. They must, after all, act with the approbation of their superiors in the government and the Party, and the blame for the failure might well lie farther up the political and Party hierarchy, perhaps all the way to Beijing. Creating new monuments locally and regionally, while already perilous enough politically, might pale in comparison to the question of how, in a state and society that until very recently denigrated much of the past as backward and irrelevant, they are to decide which of the many old rituals and customs they seek to renovate are useful and which must be relegated to the junkyard of history or reinvented entirely.

If the Party and the government themselves are not clear about such questions, what are the villagers of Yuqiao to think? What are they to make of the massive burial mound in their midst? To them the meaning of Yuqiao’s mound of bones today seems ambiguous. To a significant extent it is still thought of as a relic of “old” or “feudal” (i. e., pre-communist) China, and the feeble and half-hearted attempt in 1990 to reverse some of this and imbue the mound with meaning by transforming it into a symbolic focus for “propagating nationalistic spirit” seems to have failed. Perhaps China’s steady economic development and its government’s ongoing cynical appeal to nationalism as an alternative source of political legitimacy will some day create the wealth and political will necessary to transform the mound of Yuqiao into something more significant. But for now the citizens of Yuqiao and surrounding areas are clearly indifferent to the mound, and they are quite literally dumping and defecating on it. What used to be a sacred and monumental place for honoured dead is now largely a forgotten and neglected heap of refuse and waste.

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<sup>30</sup> Cohen, “Symbols of Power,” 492.

<sup>31</sup> E. Hobsbawm, *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge 1983, 6.