

## TRAVELOGUE OF THE FIERY WASTELAND

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By “Source of Fragrance” Cai Tinglan of Penghu

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Our boat was moored within Vietnam's borders. The next day, which was the thirteenth day of the tenth month of the *yiwei* year [December 2, 1835], two coast guard officials rode a boat alongside our ship. They both wore black crinkly silk embroidered headbands, black robes with narrow sleeves, and red damask trousers with bare feet. (*Vietnamese officials go barefoot inside and out. They do not differentiate between summer and winter clothes. In the winter they still wear lightweight clothes. The high ranking ones tend to use blue and black for headbands and robes, but they all wear red trousers.*)<sup>1</sup> They brought along one interpreter (*the one who communicates is called the interpreter*) who spoke Hokkien (*he was from Zhao'an County [Fujian] and his name was Sim Liang*). He addressed the captain and said, “These are the guard officials of the Thới Cẩn station in the Tứ Nghĩa prefecture of Quảng Ngãi Province (*one was called Nguyễn Văn Loan, one was called Nguyễn Văn Lợi*).<sup>2</sup> They had heard that a Chinese ship had been blown off course and arrived here, and specially came to inspect it.” We invited them to board our ship, checking the cabins and all around the ship. Before they left, they asked how we ended up here and took our license (*in their country they all use Chinese characters, and the documents they use in the yamen are similar in form to those in China*). They implored us to move the ship into the inner harbor the next day and to follow the custom of submission to superiors with a copper tray. (*Each time they give people gifts, they always put them on a copper tray and enter kneeling while handing the tray overhead. This is called the submission of the copper tray.*)

On the second day near midday, we saw dozens of bulrush sails flying toward us; they were all fishing boats. The interpreter preceded several people boarding the boat: some grabbed the rudder, others pulled up the anchor. They fastened a rope from each of their small ships to our ship's bow, then the small ships plied their oars and dragged us in. Our ship slowly started to move. A mariner's song rose in the air, and they all sang it together, a call and response echoing across the water.<sup>3</sup> Soaring overhead, the gulls flew off when they heard the people's voices resounding through the air. At dusk we entered a river. We saw nearby mountains and verdant bamboo forests with impenetrable foliage. Smoke from cooking fires was rising from several hamlets. We soon reached the bank. There were more than ten thatched buildings, and the guard station was there. The guard officials personally came out to the beach to direct the fishing boats and ordered them to moor in front of the office. Once our ship was anchored, the fishing vessels left. (*It is an old rule of their country that when ships enter the station area, the guard officials do all they can to protect it in front of the station office. They bang a gong in front of the government office, and fishing boats gather like ants to run errands, and they do not dare to demand pay.*) In the middle of the night, the garrison drums sounded *dum dum dum* until dawn. (*The night watchman's drum sounds all night. They hit the drum once for each hour instead of according to the number of the hour. The high officials then ring a bell.*)

On the fifteenth day, we accompanied the interpreter to the shore. The captain brought along the goods from the ship (*ginger, flour, tobacco, tea—all the things people in that country like*). We presented them as gifts on the copper plate; I also added writing brushes and ink. The guard officials were pleased and invited me to sit on the platform. (*Officials high and low do not use tables and chairs. They often set up a short platform in the center. The most respected sit in the southern direction, and they set up platforms to the left and right, facing the east and west. The hosts are on the left and the guests on the right, as in the Han system. The esteemed sit at the inner side, and the junior sit at the outer side accordingly.*) They quickly prepared a letter to rush off to report to the provincial

governor. (*High officials stationed at the province are called provincial governor, and those in the prefecture are called prefectural governor.*)<sup>4</sup> We thus borrowed a fang of rice (*approximately four dou*) and one string of cash. (*These were lead coins stamped with the Minh Mạng reign date. Two could be exchanged for one copper coin. Each string had six hundred.*) Then we took our leave from the guard officials and returned to the boat.

On the afternoon of the sixteenth day, we saw that two “wheels” had been lifted on the bank (*sedan chairs are called “wheels”*). A person sat in each of the “wheels,” and behind him were several people, holding rattan whips. After a short time, the same guard officials boarded our boat. Then they called out to the interpreter, “We are sent by the provincial governor to verify the case.” (*One was Trần Hưng Trí, who was an unranked functionary of the provincial administration commissioner, and the other was Nguyễn Tiến Thống, who was an unranked functionary of the surveillance commissioner.*) According to our license and the number and names of the travelers (*they called recorded passengers on oceangoing vessels “travelers”*), they ordered that we each extend the middle finger of our left hands and stamped it, calling it “finger marking.” They again carefully examined the cabin to make sure that there were no forbidden goods. (*Opium and weapons were the most strictly forbidden. If found, people would be convicted as pirates and sentenced to decapitation.*) Then they measured the ship’s dimensions, the cabin’s depth, and compiled a register in order to levy taxes. (*If the ship had no merchandise, then we would pay no tax.*) They took out brush and ink, and each wrote on their papers, asking and answering questions. They arranged for me to meet with the high officials in the province, and then left.

The next morning, they really did board a small boat and invited us [to join them], and I went with the captain. There was a gentle breeze and the water was calm; we floated downstream for more than ten *li* and then came to the bank. When the sun was at its height, we followed small footpaths between field edges for about two or three *li* until we came to Lộ Vạn market.<sup>5</sup> (*In Tang pronunciation, it sounds like Liwan. It has a garrison of soldiers.*) That night we stayed at the interpreter’s house. The next day, we rose at the fifth watch [3 a.m.] and walked

in the light of the moon. We could hear the night watchmen's rattles sounding from village to village. Deep in the alleys, the barking of dogs sounded like panthers, and frogs croaked ceaselessly in the ponds. After we had gone a bit more than twenty *li*, the sky brightened, and we had our meal beside the road at a simple stand. Then we again went for more than a *li* and crossed a stream. The two functionaries competed in asking me to sit in their sedan chair, but I declined. Therefore, they called the soldiers to usher me at a strolling pace. (*The officials had no bailiffs, so they rely on soldiers to provide services.*) The main road was more than two *zhang* [6.4 meters] wide (*there is only one highway in their country, going directly north-south*), and jackfruit trees were planted on both sides. There was one tree every ten paces. Their leaves and branches intertwined, and the ground was completely in the shade. A light breeze was blowing, and I felt the coolness through my collar and sleeves. In the distance we saw a vast area covered by level farmland, planted with glossy rice paddy. People cultivated bamboo all around their houses with many banana and betel plants; the scenery was quite similar to Taiwan. There were bridges across the road all made out of layer upon layer of old and new bamboo poles. They were raised up on horizontal beams. It felt supple when I stepped on it. In the afternoon we crossed another river. More than a *li* away from the river, we were approaching Quảng Ngãi Province, which had one provincial administration commissioner, one surveillance commissioner, and one garrison commander stationed there. (*The position "fan" they call provincial administration commissioner and "nie" they call surveillance commissioner.*<sup>6</sup> *The commander they call Ông garrison commander. The three positions together they call the Office of the Three Officials.*) There was a small city (*locally called Cù Mông*), which had gates at the east, west, and north with a government office, a warehouse, and a military barracks inside the city, and most of the residents and market outside the city.<sup>7</sup> (*In every provincial capital, the people did not reside inside.*) When we went to the market, we encountered a Tang person (*in that country they call Chinese people Tang people, or they call them "people of the Heavenly Court."* *They can be easily recognized because of their shaved*

hair), Lim Sun (*he was from Tong'an [in Fujian]*), and he invited us to his home.

A short time later, the functionaries met with the high officials. I wore formal clothes to enter the city, and gawkers laughed at me.<sup>8</sup> When I arrived at the office, I was led into a large hall. (*The government office had only one large room, where morning and night all affairs took place. The staff members all gather in the hall to handle the cases. Afterward they leave the hall and go home.*) Two officials were sitting in the middle. The interpreter murmured to me, "One of them is the provincial administration commissioner, Mr. Nguyễn (*Bách*), from the royal house, and the other is the surveillance commissioner, Mr. Đặng (*Kim Giám*)." Therefore I bowed to the front. They both rose, took a good look at me, and laughed heartily. The whole room was surprised.<sup>9</sup> They pointed to a platform on the left and asked me to sit. They murmured something to the interpreter, and the interpreter could not pass it on to me. (*The interpreter knew only the common street language and not much more.*) The officials themselves wrote on a paper, asking my native place, my profession, and how I came to be blown here. I wrote back in detail the whole of our story. They nodded and sighed, seeming deeply sympathetic. They summoned the head of the Fujian Association Teng Kim (*from Tong'an*) to choose a building to settle me down in.<sup>10</sup> (*The Tang people were mainly from two places, Min [Fujian] and Yue [Guangdong]. The Min are called the "Fujian Association" and the Yue are called the "Guangdong Association." Each association has a headman to organize affairs.*) First they distributed to me two *fang* of rice and two strings of cash for daily use. Then they called the ship captain to enter, allowing him to give permission to open the cabin and to sell the remaining goods. I rose to thank them, then quickly retreated to stay at Lim Sun's house.

On the nineteenth day, I wrote a missive and asked the association headmen to send it [to the officials]. [After receiving it,] the high officials praised it, so they prepared a document and attached our missive to be delivered to the king. (*The king lived in Phú Xuân city [Huế], a seven-day journey from Quảng Ngãi Province.*)<sup>11</sup> That night, the provincial administration commissioner ordered the clerk to bring us a piece

of paper with examination questions on it (*one on the Four Books, one on classics, and another on shi poetry and fu poetry*), with a deadline of the next morning at seven before they would come to get it.<sup>12</sup> The next night, Mr. Đặng also sent the scribe with examination questions (*with the same number of questions as in the case of the provincial administration commissioner*). I answered them all within the allotted time and left them for their inspection. They kept the answers and did not return them to me.

On the twenty-second day, I took my leave and returned to the boat.

On the twenty-fourth day, my brother and I took all our luggage, bade farewell to the sailors, and returned to Quảng Ngãi Province. We never went back to the boat after that.

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On the twenty-sixth day, the high official heard that I had arrived; he ordered every staffer (*one provincial magistrate, two local magistrates, two registrars, two county magistrates, one county deputy, and one instructor*) to come out and meet me. Because the residence was narrow, they just greeted me and then left. I did not have a chance to learn their names. The next morning, I went to wait for the high officials. Everyone was present; therefore, I thanked them for meeting with me. Then there happened to be a big meeting for a criminal interrogation, so I just left. Several days passed, during which an unending stream of officials and gentlemen made every excuse to come visit me. They called me “Ông stipendiary student” (*they locally call respected people ông, or they call them thầy [teacher]*), and they asked for a sample of my writing.<sup>13</sup> I could barely put up with their interruptions. Only the provincial administration commissioners Bùi Hữu Trực and Nguyễn Sĩ Long and I had friendly and sincere relations.

On the fifth day of the eleventh month, the high official received the king's decree, so I hurried to the office. They read out loud a copy of the vermilion comments that said, “The above-mentioned was born to a literary household. He unluckily met with a storm and exhausted all of his travel money. It is truly pitiable. Already that province has given

him money and rice. In addition, we would like to demonstrate our kindness by increasing the gift by fifty strings [of cash] and twenty *fang* of rice, enabling him to have money for his expenses, to demonstrate our solicitude for this unfortunate scholar from the Heavenly Court. And give each of his shipmates one *fang* of rice every month." I then wrote a letter to express my gratitude and went to the storehouse to receive provisions, of which there was no lack. From this point on, the high officials increased their respectful treatment, and in their leisure time, they always came by to engage in brush talks.

On the ninth day, a new palace graduate named Mr. Lê (*Triều Quý*), accompanied by the provincial magistrate, Mr. Phạm (*Hoa Trinh*), came to visit me. Mr. Phạm had formerly served as an assistant envoy and had presented tribute to the Heavenly Court [of the Qing]. He had written a collection of poetry and pulled it from his sleeve to show me. I meticulously commented and praised it. Then I also wrote a poem for him as a present.

On the tenth day, I met Ng Bun (*from Longxi county [Fujian], currently living in Quảng Ngãi market town*). He said that he had returned to Fujian three times overland. (*There are two routes to return to Fujian. The one from Qiongzhou in Guangdong passing Chikan in Hainan is the outer route, but there are robbers, so you must go in a group. The other one is the inner route through Guangxi; it is comparatively far, but you do not have to worry about being ambushed by bandits.*) He said he was very familiar with the situation of the route. I was very pleased and then decided to go home. The next day I sent a letter to the high officials and asked for a loan of travel expenses so that I could take the overland route back home. Because it was against precedent, the high officials were reluctant. (*The precedent: for every Chinese boat that was blown off course and arrived here, if there are civil or military officials or members of the gentry or scholars on board, they are always accompanied by a government boat to bring them back to China. Merchants are the ones who return overland.*) I strenuously entreated them, so they sent a missive to the king to request permission.

On the thirteenth day, I went to Quảng Ngãi market town (*places*

with merchants are called *phố*, or “market town.” *Quảng Ngãi market is thirty li from the city, and Chinese boats gather there*) and stayed at Ng Bun’s house. I had a great time talking to him about our hometowns. The host also asked his wife and kids to greet me. The Tang people all rushed to visit me. I stayed at Ng Bun’s for two nights.

On the twentieth day, a private tutor named Trần Hưng Đạo used a poem to invite me for a drink. I looked at what books the children were reciting: the Four Books, classics, history, ancient literature, poetry; they were all the same as in China. And they were all handwritten manuscripts. Some people used bamboo pens to write on bricks that were smeared with mud.<sup>14</sup> The [learning conditions] were very poor. (*Writing brushes and ink were in short supply, and there were no writing books to follow in writing characters.*) The others held paper on their palms and write in cursive script, really quickly. Mr. Trần truly understood the classics and history, and he also knew poetry. People called him “Ông Teacher.” (*Teachers are called thầy.*) From then on, more and more people invited me to drink.

On the sixth day of the twelfth month, the king sent the envoy Bùi Kính Thúc (*he was a Provincial Graduate and about to become a county magistrate*) to visit. He personally came to my residence and very warmly consoled me. The next day he came to thank the high officials, and they all gathered in the provincial hall. The envoy and high officials surmised the king’s intentions and all urged me to abandon the land route and go by sea. They agreed that the next spring, when the winds from the south start up, they would prepare a government ship to escort me to Xiamen. All present thought that that would be most convenient. Citing my haste to get home to my mother as my reason, we wrote back and forth from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. My request became more and more insistent, and the envoy started to change his mind. He agreed that when he reported to the king, he would ask the court to decide. Then he immediately returned that night. I was homesick and anxious, which was turning into a full-blown illness, and I could not get out of bed for ten days. The high officials sent people to comfort and ask after me from time to time.



On the nineteenth day at daybreak, the man who had previously inspected our ship, Mr. Trần Hưng Trí, came in to congratulate me: "The office has granted permission!" I leapt up as though my illness had immediately dissipated and asked him about it. Master Trần urged me to straighten my clothes and go before the high officials. The high officials showed me the reply of the office and a copy of the king's vermillion comment, which said, "Since the person repeatedly requested to go home overland, it is difficult to keep him for a long time. It is more reasonable to assent to his request. The Ministry of Revenue will grant ten *liang* of silver for the travel expense. The officials of the province should arrange his trip well." When I finished reading it, I wept and thanked them. I spoke with the high officials about setting a date for my departure. As his tears fell, Mr. Đặng said, "While it is very good that you are returning, hereafter we will be poles apart, north and south. When will we ever meet again?" Nor could I overcome my sadness. I went back and ordered my brother to purchase what we needed for the journey, borrowing servants as travel companions, and then I went to bid farewell to my acquaintances.

The next day, the high officials sent over the money from the Ministry of Revenue and my traveling papers (*they delegated a representative, in charge of twenty soldiers, to escort me to Quảng Nam. They also gave me other travel papers to exchange for fresh soldiers along the way, and support for rations*), as well as an extra fifty *liang* of silver. Mr. Đặng also sent a retainer on his own with cinnamon and an ivory container [for writing brushes]. I took all of them and expressed my thanks with poems. The scribe Bùi Hữu Trục also made me a gift of three strings of cash, and the fellow townsmen Lim Khiám (*a Tong'an person*), Lim Sun, Teng Kim, and that group gifted me with medicines. I declined money from others who offered it.

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At daybreak on the twenty-first day, I went to bid farewell to the high officials and left a thank-you note, asking them to give it to the king. The high officials walked me from the office. From the provincial magistrate

on down, they prepared a farewell ceremony outside the city. Several people from the town gathered to see us off beside a creek, and tears fell as we parted. The ship captain and the passengers all stayed behind, waiting until a ship could come and escort them home. I calculated that I had resided in Quảng Ngãi for more than fifty days, during which time it had mainly been overcast and rainy with impenetrable mist. The ground was so muddy that one could barely take a step. Clothing, shoes, beds, mats were always damp, and mosquitos and flies circled night and day. On the rare occasions when the sky happened to clear, I had to socialize with the high officials and others without a break; nor did they have any gardens in which to while away the time. Therefore I paced around in boredom, and I felt stifled and uncomfortable. Now that it was suddenly time to start on my homeward journey, my brother and I were like cranes sprung from a cage, shaking our wings toward the firmament without pondering the ten thousand miles left to travel.

From Quảng Ngãi city we traveled forty *li* to Lô Vạn, one *gong*. (*Each gong is forty li; each has a barracks set up.*) It was windy and rainy the whole evening, so we spent the night at our interpreter Sim Liang's house. On the second day, we traveled forty *li* to Khẩn Bản. (*From Khẩn Bản we could board a river boat and reach Quảng Nam after one day and night of travel.*) Twenty *li* past the river, we arrived at Vạn market (*in Tàng pronunciation it is called Zuowan*).<sup>15</sup> In another one hundred and sixty *li*, we reached the Quảng Nam provincial capital (*commonly called Hội An; its provincial city was called Tọa Quì*). We lodged at the place of the headman of the market town, Hồng Tềng (*from Tong'an in Fujian*). Twenty *li* from the city was the market town Hội An (*where Chinese people were most numerous*), there was an old transport commission depot which was really spacious. (*Inside they offer sacrifice to every commissioner from the previous dynasty, but Chinese people do not maintain the sacrifice well. Now it has returned to local people's protection. It is often blocked off, and people are not allowed to go in.*)

On the twenty-fifth day, I saw the provincial governor (*he was also in charge of Quảng Ngãi [in addition to Quảng Nam], so he was called Nam Ngãi provincial governor*), Mr. Phan.<sup>16</sup> (*His name was Thanh Giản,*

his literary name was Plum River, he was a palace graduate, and once went to the Heavenly Court as an envoy.<sup>17</sup> Previously he had served as the grand secretary of East Hall, because of some accident he was demoted to provincial positions, and was moved to the current post.) He was full of erudition, modest by nature, and down to earth about rites and protocol. He invited me to chat twice on the same day and gifted me five strings of cash and several cakes of tea. We wrote poems responding to each other. The next morning, he sent a staffer with his name card to see me off.

On the twenty-sixth day, we went on the Quảng Nam road. I saw that the seedlings were really lush, and the new sprouts were like a beautiful mattress of green. Egrets stood motionless in the field, and trees were hazy in the distance. The Three Tower Mountains in the ocean stood distinctly, facing down one another. (*There are three rocky mountains in the ocean that are called Three Towers.*<sup>18</sup> *There is a large cave opening, making a natural house. The popular saying was that there were seven spiders nesting in it. They turned into beautiful women. Later they were destroyed by the Buddha. Now it is called the Seven Sisters Cave.*) Rising approximately two feet from the ground [*sic*], they look steep.<sup>19</sup> That night we lodged at a station at a mountain's foot. The *wangfu* (*wangfu* means *sedan-bearer*) admonished me to get up early the next morning to eat well and then climb Narrow Pass. (*This mountain range was the highest and steepest along the way. It is one of Vietnam's most difficult passes.*)

When the sun was just starting to rise, we left the hostel and traveled about two *li*. We were in the mist the entire way. When I raised my eyes to the ridge, the clouds were piled like a snowbank, fading off into the sky, so I could not see the peak. When the morning sun had already risen, we passed one small mountain ridge. The winding path bore up along the seacoast, and we could hear the waves crashing and the larger waves roaring, echoing across the rocks and valley. We reached the entrance to a small village; there was a coast guard official guarding it and he interrogated us very sternly. We skirted the edge of the mountains and then climbed a switchback plank road for more

than ten *li*. Brambles and weeds proliferated along each side amid a bristling bamboo forest. There were

birds warbling among the trees,  
a hundred kinds of bird call.

Wildflowers were all in bloom,  
the ground covered with petals.

The scenery was indescribable. When we were halfway up the mountain, high up amid rocky peaks, there were fish-scale stone steps, like a thousand-foot ladder to the clouds. The sedan bearers held the sedan chair horizontally on their shoulders and proceeded, and our guards all came to their aid; lifting their knees and straining their chests, the sweat dripped off their backs like rain. After seven or eight *li*, we approached the summit. We rested beneath an old tree. Looking up, we saw a solid rock wall against which hung a board made of redbud wood that was a few *chi* thick.<sup>20</sup> It said, “Ocean Mountain Pass” [now Hải Vân Pass]; there was a guard and dozens of elite soldiers stationed there.<sup>21</sup> It was ringed by weapons and cannons; truly a flying bird could not cross it. I climbed the pass and looked down. To the north was the vast endless ocean with masts coming in and out of view like so many gulls drifting across blue green. In front of the peak there were ports to the east and west; the interior was crisscrossed with streams that could hold a thousand ships. The clear water was pleated by waves, with even lines of whitecaps, and sun and shade playing across the surface of the water was enough to clear one’s heart of all cares. To the southwest was a deep bamboo jungle, home to a herd of elephants. Deer and apes proliferate within it as well, making this wilderness unfit for human beings.<sup>22</sup> The largest among old-growth trees on the mountain were several hundreds of *wei* around, with intertwined branches, making a thick canopy overhead.<sup>23</sup> Apes and monkeys scrambled around in packs, jumping up and down when they saw us. (*In the mountains there are many apes that go around with linked arms; the local people call them the “ape generals.”*) Soon, the wind howled and whistled across the tree-tops, making a desolate scene. I quietly descended. Bidding farewell

to the guards, we left the pass and traveled six or seven *li*. Day turned to dusk, and we lodged for the night in a rustic person's home. It was freezing that night, so I burned scraps of wood by the bedside to warm myself and my younger brother.

The next day we got a late start. We went two or three *li* through dense forest and came out to the right of the peak. When I looked



FIG. 1. "The scenery was indescribable." Photo taken in the general area where Cai Tinglan made this observation. Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.

FIG. 2. Hải Vân  
Pass. Photograph  
by Kathlene Bal-  
danza.



down from the top, we saw that it was jutting out over a precipice that was so deep I could not see the bottom. Then I got out of my sedan chair and asked two men to assist me in walking. Backing against the stone cliff, I stepped on the concave part of the steps. After three hundred steps, we rested under a stone ridge. Resuming our forward progress, we passed three small peaks that were all jagged and steep. After about ten *li*, we started to reach level ground along the coast. We followed the coast for several *li* until we arrived at a large stream. After crossing the stream, we came to a small town to the north with a station where we were inspected. The sedan bearers said to me, "When we climbed the peak and came here, we passed more than twenty shrines. (*[The deity in it is] locally called Bần Đầu Công; he is very efficacious.*) Passersby continually toss incense and paper. It is due to his protection that though people go through this area every day, they are untroubled

by snakes and tigers.” The pass was opened in the reign of Gia Long. (*Gia Long was the reign name of the current king’s father.*) It is right in the center of Vietnam; if one person guards the pass, even ten thousand people would not be able to besiege it. Therefore it is called the Narrow Pass. It is 140 *li* to Phú Xuân [Huế] (*and it is a hundred li away from Quảng Nam in the south*).

On the thirtieth day, we went to Phú Xuân city [Huế] (*popularly called Thuận Hóa city*). The city wall is constructed in brick and is very sturdy and well built; it is more than a *zhang* [3.2 meters] high, spanning four or five *li*, and has eight gates, with small, narrow towers. Every hundred steps there were five huge cannons linked together on top of the wall, all covered by pavilions, looking like a flock of birds with outstretched wings. The outside of the wall was surrounded by a moat. (*The water is deep, and it does not dry up.*) Beyond the moat there is a stream.<sup>24</sup> (*The stream is very deep and wide; it is connected to many streams inland, and it flows outward to the sea.*) Each warship and other kinds of ships big and small are lined up along the banks of the stream, covered by thatched canopies. Near the wall on all sides, the markets were bustling, with merchandise abundantly displayed, packed with people, and houses neatly lined the road.<sup>25</sup> When I reached the city, it was almost noon. The company commander (*company commander is the name of an official post; his job is like that of a leader of a thousand*) led us into the city to see the prefect of Thừa Thiên Prefecture, Mr. Nguyễn (*Thạc Phủ*), the vice prefect Mr. Lê (*Tiểu Hạ, with the title of palace graduate*). Mr. Nguyễn met me and then soon left. Mr. Lê was very eloquent. We wrote poems to each other, getting so immersed in writing out our commentaries that we lost ourselves completely. When the sun was about to set, I took my leave and went to New Market (*on a stream bank north of the city*) and slept at the house of Tân Chhin (*from Jinjiang county [Fujian]*). That day was the eve of Lunar New Year. Everyone was changing the couplets in their doorways and lighting firecrackers, just like the old traditions of seeing out the old year and welcoming the new in China. At such a sentimental season, I missed my family. My brother and I wept all night and did not sleep a wink.



The following year was *bingshen* [the thirty-third in the sexagenary cycle], the sixteenth year of the Daoguang reign [1836], first day of the first month (*in Vietnam it was the seventeenth year of the Minh Mạng reign*).

Approaching the celebratory start,  
the celestial omens indicate the beginning of the year.  
On the streets, in the city,  
the foreign dancing and barbaric singing  
and happy cries shake the ground.

I wrote a congratulatory essay and went with Hồng Liàng (*a person from Xiamen*) to the prefectural governor to extend my New Year's greeting and hoped that it would be sent to the king.<sup>26</sup> The grand secretary of the East Hall, Mr. Quan (*Nhân Phủ*), and the director of the



FIG. 3. Huế City walls. Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.



Ministry of Revenue, Mr. Nguyễn (*Nhưc Thủy*), happened to be at the prefect's office. My congratulatory essay was read and met with praise.<sup>27</sup> Mr. Quan wrote to instruct me, "Our country has a rule: when you hear the rooster crow at dawn on New Year's Day, all civilian and military officials come to the palace to send their New Year's greetings. They are given gold and sent out, and then the palace gate is sealed. They wait for the order to come down to open the gate, and only then are they permitted to come and go. Now if you wish to follow the proper ceremony of our country, I can wait until the door is opened, and then we send you for a visit. I think that if our king offers a boat to urge you to stay, you should not refuse. Otherwise, since you had received the previous order, you can go unimpeded with the paperwork from the provincial officials. Wait for seven days until they open the granary, and then you can receive provisions and set out. You can leave your congratulatory essay at the prefectural hall, and then I can personally convey the sincerity of your greetings." I had already decided to leave [soon], so I left and walked around the city center. The palace was located in the southeast corner facing Seal Mountain. (*The mountain is shaped like a scholar's seal. It is outside the city walls. On the mountain there are altars to the spirits of the mountains, rivers, earth, and grain.*)<sup>28</sup> Its appearance was magnificent; the buildings and pavilions at the top were a feat of engineering.

A golden calabash was placed on the ridge of the palace, and it was dazzling. The Meridian Gate was in front of the palace, and there was a huge flagpole on the road in front of it.<sup>29</sup> Battalions were arrayed on the left and right of the palace. The guards stationed there were drawn from elite troops and were well armed. A bit to the north lay the headquarters of the Generals of the Left and Right, where they had sixteen rooms to store the cannons and ammunition. The palace was encircled by a high wall with batteries in all four corners with redcoat cannons.<sup>30</sup> A deep moat had been dug all around the walls, more than a *zhang* [3.2 meter] wide. There were two layers of railings outside of the moat to keep out passersby who were not allowed in. They also built the Minh Viên building in addition to the main living hall. Its upper windows were brightly lit with all the rooms shining brilliantly; it was used as

FIG. 4. Golden calabash adorning building in Huế imperial city. Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.



a place for entertaining. There were several palaces to the west of the royal palace where the princes and their families lived. Farther west were the yamen of the inner high officials. Nearby to the northeast was the granary, which contained enough rice and provisions to last dozens of years. The rest was made up of civil and military government offices, barracks, palaces for royal relatives, and ancestral halls. There were few residents there.

On the second day, we went to a banquet with the officials of the Imperial Household Department. There was a crowd who had heard that I was a Chinese scholar and came to look at me one after another. The room was nearly full and I could not distinguish between the noble and the humble.

On the seventh day, I wrote a poem to say goodbye to the grand secretary of the East Hall and the officials of the Imperial Household Department. I hired a riverboat to take me to *Nghênh Hạ* (*place-name*). Mr. Lê personally escorted me out of the city. He ordered that several



FIG. 5. Cannons in Hué. Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.

members of my escort go first by the land route and wait at Quảng Trị Province. Tân Chhin's whole family escorted me to the riverbank. I traveled by river for two days through fog and mist. Mountains on all sides turned day into dusk. The rain lashed against the sail and shutters; rivulets babbled through the reeds. The water had suddenly risen two or three *chi*.

On the tenth day at dawn, we reached Quảng Trị. (*From Phú Xuân to here is 120 li by the water route.*) We moored the boat at a bend in the river and followed the boatmen ashore. We walked two or three *li* to the provincial capital. The soldiers had arrived earlier and were standing by the city gate. It was about to rain, so we hurried after a clerk to meet the provincial governor. (*He also served as the governor of Quảng Bình Province, so he was called provincial governor of Trị Bình*), Mr. Hà (*Đặng Khoa*). When he was lounging around half-dressed and scratching himself, he saw that guests had arrived; he straightened his clothes and angrily had the clerk whipped twenty times. I wrote to him,

“When we appeared he did not treat us rudely. Why is he suddenly being humiliated?” His countenance cleared and he rose to apologize, saying, “He did not notify me in advance. He made me panic, and I could not act appropriately. I was rude just now, but please forgive me.” Then he invited me to take inspiration from our surroundings and match verses with him. He enjoyed my poems and invited me to spend the night, but I could not. I urged him to process my travel papers. He provided fresh men for our escort and sent some of them to Nghênh Hạ first to wait for us. I took my leave, and the boatman carried me on his back to the boat in the rain. We came ashore the next afternoon (*it is forty li by the water route from Quảng Trị to here*) and spent the night in Nghênh Hạ (*Nghênh Hạ is 240 li from Quảng Bình*) and hired sedan chair bearers to set out again the next morning.

On the thirteenth day, we arrived at the provincial capital of Quảng Bình Province (*popularly called Đồng Hới; in Tang pronunciation it is called Longhui*), and we stopped at the market headman Hồng Kín’s home (*he is from Tong’an in Fujian*). When I entered I saw the provincial administration commissioner, Mr. Ngô. (*His name was Dương Hạo, his style was Tông Mạnh, and his literary name was Cối Giang; he had been student at the Imperial College.*)<sup>31</sup> His expression changed as he rose and said, “Your clothing is not like that of common people. I hope that you will instruct me in verse.” He called for wine and started to improvise poems. He really got into a lyrical mood, feasting all his followers with food and drink. When I was about to leave, he presented me with a handful of chicks and said he hoped I could come back the next day to chat more. The next morning he sent the clerk to hasten me. When I stepped through the doorway, he and the surveillance commissioner, Mr. Nguyễn (*Đặng Uẩn*), were just hearing legal cases. I hesitated and stopped walking. Mr. Ngô ordered the criminal to retreat and invited me to have a seat on the platform daybed. Again we exchanged poems with one another. He closely questioned me about Chinese customs, education, and people. After we had been sitting for a long time, lunch was brought in. We talked back and forth, paying

most attention to state affairs. I felt moved [by our conversation] and lingered, not leaving until dusk.

On the fifteenth day, Mr. Nguyễn had business to attend to; Mr. Ngô personally came to the market headman's house bearing wine. Holding a cup, he said, "Today is the Lantern Festival, so we ought to sing and dance together to laud the magnificent night sky." He pulled out the cup and set it up for the wine. I declined and did not dare to stay. He saw the sedan bearers outside in the street and said, "How could I treat you so poorly?" He gave them three strings of cash as a gift as well as rows of couplets. I also followed his rhyme and composed a poem of thanks. He rushed out and hurried to the courier station near the gate. He set out a farewell meal on the mat and waited for us to arrive. He again served me three cups to see me off. With tears



FIG. 6. Imperial College in Huế (Quốc tử giám).  
Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.

streaming down, he held my hand as we passed through the gate [of Quảng Bình] and walked with me for about two *li*. Then he returned and climbed to the top of the gate, watching for a while, saluting me from a distance. Hồng Kín and Ngô Sim, both from the same county (*Tong'an*), brought their wives and children, each carrying medicine as a parting gift. They accompanied me beyond the gates for five *li* and bid me a tearful goodbye. Soon after, an escort of soldiers and officials arrived to accompany us. One of them had been a close attendant of Mr. Ngô, personally sent by him, and he served me on the road (*later, when I reached Hà Tĩnh, I sent Mr. Ngô poetry to thank him*). That night we stayed in Chợ Luân.<sup>32</sup> (*In Tang pronunciation it is called Zuolun, it is forty li from Quảng Bình.*) It was overcast, and the moon was obscured. The owner of the guesthouse had lit the lights and gathered a banquet to celebrate the Lantern Festival. I felt even gloomier.

From Chợ Luân we walked for two days to Chợ Ròn (80 *li* on the route), through ceaseless driving rain. My clothes clung to my body; [the cold] penetrated my flesh, it was unbearably cold. From Chợ Ròn we crossed to the inner bank more than a *li* from the Ròn River and spent the night at Cổ Luân (*in Tang pronunciation it is called Julun*).

On the nineteenth day at daybreak, we walked twenty *li* to Transverse Mountain Ridge.<sup>33</sup> (*In Tang pronunciation it is called Buzhengling*.) We walked on a narrow steep road winding up the ridge for two or three *li*. A sign was hung across the summit inscribed, "Transverse Mountain Pass." There were guards defending it and dozens of pass soldiers guarding and checking [the pass] all the time as a major hub of the road to the north. After we crossed the pass, the mountains began to slope down, then the path started to straighten out for several *li*. We went for more than fifty more *li* and spent the night in Trung Cổ (*place-name*).

On the afternoon of the twentieth day, we passed through Hà Hoa prefecture.<sup>34</sup> (*The prefectural capital was more than two li east of the road.*) After another three *li* we arrived at the provincial capital of Hà Tĩnh. We spent the night at the home of Wong Cat (*a person from Chaozhou in Guangdong*). The provincial administration commissioner Mr. Cao

(named *Hữu Dực*. In the renchen year of the Daoguang reign [1832], he had followed his king's command to escort the former county magistrate of Zhanghua [county in Taiwan], Li Zhenqing, and his family by boat to Xiamen. After returning, he was rewarded with the title Grand Master for Excellent Counsel) was under the weather and did not come out to meet us. He sent a subordinate with a note to our residence to apologize, mentioning that he had been to China.

On the twenty-first day, Mr. Cao directed the local magistrate and the registrar to see me off. I left a note to bid him farewell and set off.

On the twenty-second day, I arrived at the provincial capital of Nghệ An (*it is 200 li from Trung Cổ to here*) and spent the night at Lim Sàn's house (*a person from Zhao'an [Fujian]*).<sup>35</sup> The four hundred *li* between Quảng Bình and Nghệ An was marshy. Our feet frequently sank in the muck, and it was hard to walk without slipping. Between the fields and wilderness, we would frequently travel dozens of *li* before we saw signs of human habitation. Travelers had to be prepared for bandits lurking in the wilds. The guest houses used *gu* poison to harm people. If they hide it inside beef and you eat it, then there would be no saving you. The antidote is foreign ginger.<sup>36</sup> (*Also called chili pepper, the seeds are from Holland, the flower is white and the stigma is green, when the fruit is cooked it turns bright red. It is filled with spicy seeds.*<sup>37</sup> *One can eat it with the hull. Some are long and pointed, some are round and slightly pointed.*) People add them to their food to guard against poison.

On the twenty-third day, we met the governor-general (*he simultaneously oversees Hà Tĩnh; he is called governor-general of Nghệ Tĩnh*), Mr. Nguyễn (*the governors-general are all related to the king. Mr. Nguyễn has so much prestige and power that people do not dare say his name*).<sup>38</sup> The clerk Trịnh Đức Hưng (*his family was from Dehua county in Fujian; he could speak the Quanzhou dialect*) translated for us. First he ordered four strong soldiers, swords dangling from their belts, to stand along either side of the hall. (*Ordinarily, when high officials ascend the hall, they do not line up according to insignia or call out the groups. Coming and going they do not make announcements in order to clear the road [for officials].*) We then were ushered in, exchanged a few words with Mr. Nguyễn,



and then left. The two main officials, the provincial administration commissioner and surveillance commissioner, were on an official trip [so they were out of town]. There was the teacher Trần Hải Đình, the cultivated talent Hồ Bảo Định (*his ancestors were from Shunde County in Guangdong*), who came to compose poetry together. Mr. Hồ's poems were precise and fine; he had agility with words. From dusk on we lit one candle after another, only stopping when the rooster crowed.

On the twenty-fourth day, the escort came and asked about the departure date, and then we set out. The fellow-provincials from Fujian and Guangdong collectively gave three strings of cash, and they all accompanied us past the town. It drizzled for the ten *li* outside of Nghệ An, but luckily it was not so bad. There were many peacocks perching in the trees along the sides of the road, dazzling the eye with emerald green.<sup>39</sup> Their feathers were damp with rain, and the heaviness prevented them from flying far. When we were about to reach Thanh Hóa, there were many rocky mountains rising steeply a thousand fathoms high, towering and lofty, as though fashioned by spirits, carved by nature with magnificence beyond words. Peacocks and white pheasants were gathered in the heights. Cinnamon is grown in the mountains; it has a strong flavor that is better than that of Đông Kinh.

On the twenty-sixth day, we arrived at the provincial capital of Thanh Hóa (240 *li* away from Nghệ An) and spent the night at Sím Jim's house (*from Zhao'an County [Fujian]*).

The next day, we saw the governor-general, Mr. Nguyễn. (*There are many people with the surname Nguyễn in Thanh Hóa. Because these noble families are too hard to manage, the king uses his close relatives to govern them.*) He pointed to the front of the hall and requested me to write couplets to hang on the pillars. He was very pleased and called his sons out to meet with us. (*His eldest son could play the zither; he served as deputy guard.*) He wrote a letter admonishing garrison commanders on the road ahead to keep a watch at night. Then we met the provincial administration commissioner, Mr. Nguyễn (*his name was Nhưc Sơn; his ancestors were from Fuzhou in Fujian. His uncle, now deceased, had been the minister of personnel*), and we received assistance from him. He



offered one *liang* of silver and some good tea as a gift. He also sent word to Hà Nội, enjoining the Chaozhou and Guangdong interpreters and the market headmen to assist us with ten [*liang*] of silver. I was moved by his solicitousness and wrote a poem for him in return.

On the twenty-eighth day, instructor Ông Ích Khiêm invited us to his office.<sup>40</sup> Once we entered the door, he clasped his hands when he came out to greet me. We talked and laughed together. Making fun of himself for his low salary, he gifted me two strings of cash. Several of our compatriots came and collectively gave us three strings of cash; I thanked them all and returned it. As the sun was already high in the sky, I bid farewell to the high officials and set out on the road.

On the twenty-ninth day, we reached the provincial capital of Ninh Bình (*colloquially called Bình Sáng*) and stayed at the home of Zog Lam (*from Chaozhou in Guangdong*). Ninh Bình is 160 *li* from Thanh Hóa, covered by jagged mountains poking out sharply in bizarre shapes, and dotted with unfathomably deep caves and ravines. Flying Phoenix Mountain looms over the provincial capital, and within the city there is a smaller mountain in the front, like a screen. The two mountains used to be known as a famous scenic spot, because the imposing peaks grant travelers a good view. People have previously inscribed many poems on them.

On the first day of the second month, we met with the provincial governor, Mr. Nguyễn (*Ninh Bình also has a lot of people surnamed Nguyễn, so the king also uses his relative as the provincial governor to manage them*). He happened to be returning from reviewing the troops. I stayed for breakfast, and he called for his subordinate officials to keep me company and to play a poetry drinking game for fun. Just before I left, I was given a stalk of areca palm and five strings of cash. I took the areca and returned the cash. That day I traveled sixty *li* and spent the night at Lý Nhân Prefecture.<sup>41</sup>

On the second day, the provincial magistrate [*zhifuguan*] (*the “zhifu” is called “zhifuguan,” and also called the “futangguan” or provincial governor*), Mr. Lê (*Tĩnh Uyển*), summoned me to drink.<sup>42</sup> I drained half a bottle and then left. (*They used a gourd as a wine bottle.*)

On the fifth day, I spent the night at Thường Tín (*it is 240 li from Lý Nhân*).<sup>43</sup>

On the sixth day, I called upon the provincial magistrate but did not meet him. As we passed Thường Tín and headed north, the land was fertile, and the local people were prosperous. The buildings became more gorgeous. After sixty *li* we arrived at the provincial capital, Hà Nội (*its ancient name is Đông Kinh, and it used to be called Thăng Long, but now it has been changed to Hà Nội*), stopping at the Fujian native-place lodge. We spent the night, then moved to the house of Cheng Thiam, fellow-provincial (*from Jinmen in Tong'an*).

On the eighth day, we met the governor-general, Mr. Nguyễn. When I sent in my card, he came out clasping hands and said, "I did not expect that today I would meet a scholar from the Heavenly Court!" Then we sat and had an intimate and moving conversation that lasted all morning, and only then would he allow me to go. Then I met the provincial administration commissioner, Mr. Trần. (*His name was Văn Trung. In the renchen year of the Daoguang reign [1832] he had followed his king's command to go to Xiamen by boat with Cao Hữu Dực. After returning, he was rewarded with the title Grand Master of Excellent Counsel.*) At the front of the hall was a brilliantly displayed table. He straightened his clothes and shoes and came out to meet us. He humbly and politely served me tea with his own hands. He inquired about things in Fuzhou and Xiamen as well as the officials and gentry that he knew there. He urged me to stay a few days, but I could not. He also gifted me ten silver taels, and I had to insist on rejecting it.

On the ninth day, the literati Can Jyu Sam, Can Fai Gwong, and Wong Bik Gwong (*they were all from Guangzhou in Guangdong, and were good at composing poems*) came to visit.<sup>44</sup> They said that Đông Kinh was large and rich in resources, its cities are strong, its markets bustling, it is the most affluent part of Vietnam, home to many scholar-officials and historical sites, not to be missed. They invited me into the city to see the palace of the Lê clan; the painted beams and engraved rafters as well as tall buildings with rows of attics are distinct amid greenery and mist. We passed the shopping district, where money was amassing



FIG. 7. Hai Bà Trưng Temple, Hanoi. Photograph by Kathlene Baldanza.

like clouds as I had never seen. We crossed the Nhị Hà River (*which used to be called Phú Lương River*) and checked out the hostel for envoys from the Heavenly Court (*on the left back on the Nhị Hà River*).<sup>45</sup> There were enormous stelae and stone tablets, creating an atmosphere of grandeur. We also went to Đồng Nhân Village to see the Temple to the Two Sisters. (*During the reign of Guangwu of the Eastern Han, the two sisters Trưng Trắc and Trưng Nhị rebelled. Ma Yuan came to pacify them. The two sisters died at Nguyệt Đức River. Their corpses floated back down the Phú Lương River, and the local people built a shrine to them.*)<sup>46</sup> We returned and spent the night at Jyu Sam's residence. Falling into a mood of nostalgia, we composed poetry back and forth all night. The more I reflected on past events, the deeper my feelings grew.

The next day I arose late. The Guangdong market headman, Ho Ji Hing, the interpreters Can Zan Gei (*both from Guangdong*) and Tin Hêng Khoah (*from Chaozhou*) came with various people from the na-

tive-place lodge and gifted us with ten *liang* of silver accompanied with other things. The Fujian market headman, Sím Lim (*from Zhao'an*), came with various people from the native-place lodge and gifted us with fifty strings of cash. I gratefully declined and only accepted the medicine offered by Yeoh Ban Kì, Chia Kì (*from Changtai county [Fujian]*), and Hô Êng (*the former market headman, from Zhangzhou [Fujian]*), and Cheng Thiam and others. That day, the native-place lodges each set up farewell banquets. I thanked them all in poetry.

On the eleventh day, when I took my leave from the high officials Mr. Nguyễn and Mr. Trần, they decided to follow the precedent of seeing off high officials and dispatched fifty soldiers to escort us. I thought that this would be too costly and asked to retain the original number. In the afternoon we arrived at Từ Sơn Prefecture, but the provincial magistrate had gone out for some other business. At sunset we arrived at the provincial capital of Bắc Ninh Province (*it is 130 li from Hà Nội*).

On the twelfth day, we met the provincial governor, Mr. Nguyễn (*a close relative of the royal family*). We exchanged pleasantries and he gave me one *jin* of incense.

On the thirteenth day, we spent the night at Lạng Giang prefecture and met with the provincial magistrate Mr. Lê (*his name is Trinh. He has earned the title of palace graduate*) and the Fengyan County county deputy Mr. Phạm (*his name is Hanh, he earned the title cultivated talent*). I chatted and composed poems with each of them.

On the fourteenth day, we arrived at Cần Dinh garrison (*there is a garrison commander*). Near the outpost's border with Văn Giang county there is Câu Lậu lake, which produces cinnabar.<sup>47</sup>

On the fifteenth day, we spent the night at Quang Lang garrison. (*There were seven patrol stations between the Cần Dinh and Quang Lang garrisons; all were manned with guards.*)

On the sixteenth day, we traveled approximately three *li* and reached the Ghost Gate.<sup>48</sup> In the past, people used to say, "Of ten people who pass through the Ghost Gate, only one returns." Legend has it that there is a ghost market. In the afternoon, ghosts go through the gate and gather to engage in trade. If people offend them they will be struck

with illness. As we rested beneath the gate, we felt a chill wind against our bodies, making our hair stand on end. Beside the gate there is a temple to the Wave-Quelling General [Ma Yuan] that is very efficacious (*every time envoys pass by they always offer incense in the temple*). Job's tears grows in front of the temple. (*It is what Ma Yuan took at that time to overcome the miasmatic air and dispel toxins in the water.*<sup>49</sup> *People call it "qian and kun plant."*<sup>50</sup> *I gathered some and filled my bag.*) About two *li* to the southeast of the temple there is a rocky mountain that has a bronze pillar on it. (*There are two bronze pillars, the other one is in the Fenmao mountains in Qinzhou.*) It is one *zhang* [3.2 meters] tall and more than ten in width. It is the same color as the stones [on the mountain]. It is covered in bird shit. The local people say that weird creatures often sleep on top of it.<sup>51</sup> That night we slept in Artillery Battery Five. (*In the past when the governor of Bianzhou went on an expedition against the Tây Sơn rebels, he built eighteen artillery batteries between Lạng Sơn and Tongking all within sight of one another.*<sup>52</sup> *Now there are still names like "Battery Three" and "Battery Five."*)

On the seventeenth day, we arrived at the provincial capital of Lạng Sơn (360 *li* from Bắc Ninh). South of Lạng Sơn all the way to Bắc Ninh is entirely desolate with narrow paths through the forest. Dense vegetation interlaced; hardy cogon grass grew taller than a *zhang*, filling our entire field of vision. There were very few homes, but empty mountains and deep valleys, as though still in primordial times. There was barely a sign that people had ever passed through, and cases of banditry were frequent. There were also rocky mountains dotted with tall peaks reaching into the empyrean. They were concealed by smoky miasma that did not disperse all day. Even in the spring, trees in the mountains were yellow and dried out. The rock was the color of iron, striated with moss. Streams flowed down from the summit where peacocks sometimes gathered to bathe. The intersecting branches of trees along the banks shaded the length of the streams, letting no sunlight through. Snakes and scorpions hid there, and their filth fell into the water; therefore the water's surface was the most poisonous. Travelers must wrap up their food supplies and dare not drink a drip of water

from there. We had to heat Job's tears soup to have with our morning and evening meals. When travelers from far away come here, they find the eating habits most odd. As we approached Lạng Sơn, the mountain ranges became even closer together, [trailing off into the distance] like a massive meteor shower. There is a Coiled Serpent Mountain that is more than twenty *li* high. As we wound our way up, we switchbacked over dozens of peaks. When we were halfway up the ridge, we encountered an old gentleman with salt-and-pepper eyebrows. He was the county magistrate appointee Mr. Vũ (*his name was Huy Nhất, his style was Đường Trạch, he was a Provincial Graduate*) on his way to Cao Bằng Province. He was carrying a gourd of fine wine; and every two or three *li* he would squat on the ground and invite me to have a drink. This would turn into a spontaneous poetry session and a chance to forget my fatigue. Once we passed the ridge, he clasped his hands in parting, that grand old gentleman.

It was already afternoon when we reached the city. We met the provincial governor (*he was simultaneously in charge of Cao Bằng, so he was called the Lạng Bằng provincial governor*), Mr. Trần. (*His name was Văn Tuấn. In the renchen year of the Daoguang reign [1832], along with Mr. Trần Văn Trung and Mr. Cao Hữu Dực, he had followed his king's command to go to Xiamen. After returning, he was rewarded with the title Grand Master for Excellent Counsel.*) When we walked through the door, the clerks were astonished, thinking we were important officials (*Vietnam does not have salaried students*). He [Mr. Trần] told me a topic, then he said, "A scholar from the Heavenly Court—even if only a student surely would still be talented and learned. Do not underestimate him." He was a large man with a handsome beard and mustache, with a youthful glow and white hair, gliding around like an immortal. He greeted us in the Chinese manner and talked about how he had a nice time with Zhou Yungao in Xiamen. When he heard that I was a student of Mr. Zhou, he was even more respectful, like he had never been happier in his life. He put me up in a guesthouse in the east of the city (*the proprietor Ou Bang was from Taiping in Guangxi*). He laid out a felt mattress. Everything was provided for us by the office, and a

banquet was presented to us every day. He went on to notify Taiping Prefecture in order to request a date for us to go through the pass. (*The precedent: every time a person from the Heavenly Court was delivered by that country to the border, the provincial governor makes a report and then waits for Taiping Prefecture to send an official response setting a date to receive the person at the pass.*)

On the twentieth day, since he [Mr. Trần] knew I was lonesome, he wrote, “Lạng Sơn is the frontier and has often been ravaged by war (*three years earlier, the local people in Lạng Sơn and Cao Bằng had rebelled, and they had only been pacified since last year*), the towns were destroyed and hastily rebuilt.<sup>53</sup> When it comes to scenery or people, there is nothing to see. The only refined sightseeing destinations are a few grottos. You should try to experience them.” He sent the clerk of the eighth rank Đoàn Văn Trung (*who could speak the Quanzhou dialect*) along with the market headmen from Guang[zhou] and Chao[zhou] to guide the tour.

From the city’s east side, we crossed the stream and saw a rocky mountain to the northeast. Soaring up from level ground, it is called “The Mountain That Flew Here.” Legend has it that Ma Yuan was about to build a fortification at the location of the mountain. When the foundation was laid, a mountain suddenly sprouted up overnight, so they moved the fortification to the west of the stream. Ma shot an arrow at this mountain; the arrow pierced the stone. Now the mountaintop is pierced with crevices just like it. After we had traveled about two li past the stream, we saw a region of rocky mountains. There were four connected peaks fused together with an amalgam of rocks. In front of the mountains there was a cave called Nhị Thanh. (*In the forty-first year of the Cảnh Hưng reign [1780] or jìhai year, Lạng Sơn garrison had just been established by Ngô Thì Nhậm.*<sup>54</sup> *There had been a natural pattern on the rock that looked like the three characters 二那青 “two then green,” and therefore the name of the cave is Nhị Thanh/“Two Green.”*) There was a high wall made of bricks at the cave opening with three door panels in it. About twenty steps in the cave opened into a natural palace as wide as a square *mu*. The walls were all speckled with holes, lustrous



and glistening like lamb fat. A stone base protruded from the center, like a lotus blossom stretching out of the water. In the base a statue of Confucius was carved. There were two smaller bases on either side. The one on the left was carved with Sakyamuni, and the one on the right with Laozi. It is called the Hall of the Three Teachings. (*Lê Hữu Dung wrote a record.*)<sup>55</sup> Pairs of stalactites hang down from the cave roof. Some look like bells, some look like chime stones, some look like small *ācārya* [preceptor] with the Anjali mudra [hands pressed together in prayer]. They are all the exact likenesses. There is a statue of the World Honored One [the Buddha] in the next cave. Then by winding along the edge we walked up into the last cave, where we passed through the north side of the mountain to Tam Thanh Cave.<sup>56</sup> It was so dark that we could not see a thing.

We exited the cave and walked a few steps to the right, crossed a small wooden bridge, and then explored another cave. The floor was broad, but the ceiling was narrow, like a bell. The floor was made of two flat sheets of rock that could hold dozens of people. Water was dripping and plinking all around, such that we forgot the sweltering heat of June. We lingered for a long time and then followed the face of the mountain for about two *li* until we arrived at Tam Thanh Cave (*opened in the forty-first year of the Cảnh Hưng reign [1780]*) which is wider than Nhị Thanh but not as curved. Inside, offerings are made to various heavenly bodhisattva statues, whose pearl and gem necklaces sent golden rays in all directions. Water without roots dripped down hanging stalactites from time to time.<sup>57</sup> Where it dripped it coagulated and patterned like stone. This was wonderful. There is a mountain facing the cave, with a single peak jutting out alone. It is called the “Awaiting Husband Mountain”; according to legend it is the place where Su Ruolan looked for Dou Tao, which is ridiculous.<sup>58</sup> When the sun was high in the sky, we looked for the old road to bring us back.

In the afternoon we went to the west side of the city and visited Đại Thanh.<sup>59</sup> (*I do not know when this one was carved out as there was no inscription to consult.*) The mountain path was steep and we had to pull ourselves up by vines and rocks, winding around several times before



we reached the top. When we were about halfway up the mountain, the cave door was open a crack. There was a boulder that seemed poised to fall. Engraved on the wall were four large characters 石佛古跡, “Ancient Traces of Stone Buddha.” We leapt into a magnificent realm. Inside an image of a bodhisattva had been made, solemn and stately. Its body and face had nothing strange. It was looking up with rapt attention as though the dust of this world were all empty, and the mind-nature was completely tranquil. Several paces behind the statue there was a hole that went to the top of the mountain that was dangerously narrow and hard to traverse. In front of the statue to the right there was a round hole. Ten paces past it one can see daylight. Our guide said that past this there was a cave that was even more secluded, and it was a pity that the sun was about to set and we were already footsore. So our tour of gorgeous scenery ended there. Truly it is an outstanding paradise abroad.

On the twenty-fourth day, the provincial governor arrived to offer sacrifices at the Temple of Literature. Officials and students all donned their official garb and held their tablets as they made their salutations. There were no sacrificial utensils prepared in the temple, no music and dance, only a flute and *huqin*, and the ceaseless ringing of bells. From the temple courtyard out they formed four lines oriented east to west, and strong soldiers held shields all around. Outside the gate they arranged two “fiery dragons.” Once the sacrifice had ended, an official was sent to convey the roasted meat.

On the twenty-seventh day, we received a response from Mr. Jing (*Kun*) of Taiping Prefecture. (*He required us to arrive at the pass by the fifth day of the third month.*)

When Mr. Trần knew the travel plans, he arranged for a huge feast in the guesthouse on the twenty-eighth day. He ordered five civil and military officials to accompany me: the provincial magistrate of Trường Định prefecture, Mr. Đặng (*his name was Huy Thuật; he was a palace graduate*); the registrar, Mr. Nguyễn (*Đặng Giảng*); the department magistrate of Lộc Bình department, Mr. Nguyễn (*Đình Diêu*); the county magistrate of Văn Khai county, Mr. Hồ (*Văn Trước*); and the deputy guard, Mr. Nguyễn (*Kim Đồi*). When we were tipsy, Mr.

Đặng proposed that we take turns composing couplets or else quickly drain a big cup as forfeit. Mr. Đặng had a high tolerance for alcohol and nimbly composed verses that were powerful too. We all had a great time that day.

On the twenty-ninth day, I entered to thank Mr. Trần [Văn Trung], and we agreed that I would start my journey the next day. On hearing that I wanted to leave, he looked melancholy for a long time, and then took out ten *jin* [of silver] and several kinds of medicine as a gift. I turned down the money but kept the medicine and thanked him with a poem.

On the thirtieth day, I said farewell, and he sent the company commander of the sixth rank Nguyễn Văn Lương, the clerk of the sixth rank Đoàn Văn Trung, and two border pass officials Nguyễn Đình Tây and Nguyễn Hạng Kiểm, and others, along with twenty provincial soldiers, with crisp uniforms and shiny weapons, to escort us to the pass. He personally led this group of officials outside the city walls to see me off. He told me that when I returned to Xiamen I should tell Mr. Zhou Yungao that he recalled him fondly. He dared not send a letter because it was not appropriate to engage in foreign communication. Then we wiped away tears and clasped his hands in a farewell gesture. We crossed a stream and arrived at Khâu Lư market town. (*Traders from Guangdong and Guangxi and other places are allowed here.*) After thirty-five *li*, we arrived at Văn Uyên department.

On the first day of the third month, the department magistrate Mr. Nguyễn (Diêu) invited me to a banquet. That night, the border pass official Nguyễn Đình Tây also arranged a banquet for me.

The next day, the department clerk Trương Sùng Lễ and the stipendiary student Nong Mengqu (*he was from Ningming in Guangxi, and lived here as a guest*) all joined us bearing poems.

On the second day, the provincial magistrate Mr. Đặng [Huy Thuật] sent a poem after me, as well as two strings of cash. When he heard that, the department magistrate [Nguyễn Đình Diêu] also sent a poem and two strings of cash. I replied to them both with poems.

On the fifth day, we set out for Văn Uyên at dawn, coiling along

small paths in and out of a jumble of mountains, where there was not the least sign of people or sound of chickens and dogs. We arrived at a defile after forty-five *li*. This was the South Pass. (*The Vietnamese call it the Oil Village Defile; it is at the border of Ningming Department, Taiping Prefecture in Guangxi Province. It forms the major crossroad of the border between Jiao [Vietnam] and Guang [Guangdong and Guangxi] and is defended by a squad leader.*) That day, the yamen of Zuojiang circuit, Mingjiang Subprefecture, and Ningming Department (*all near the South Pass*) all dispatched corvée soldiers from the barracks to collect me. I thanked my escort and bid them farewell and then headed north with the soldiers from Zuo River and the other places. From this time on, I left foreign soil and entered the Central Land. But when I recollect the earnest feelings of the Vietnamese officials and my countrymen living abroad, I cannot stop the tears that spring to my eyes.

When we first left the defile, there were very few residents, and the road was through rugged gorges, belonging to a mountainous frontier. After twenty-five *li* we rested at Xiashi (*place-name*) at Wenkou Hostel (*which is guarded by the staff of the Mingjiang office*), the proprietor, Mr. Sun (*his name was Beixiong, his style was Zijun, and he was from Jingui in Jiangsu. He was a descendant of Governor Sun Zhijun*) hosted me for a drink. Then we traveled another twenty *li* until we reached Shangshi department and spent the night at the office of the local department magistrate Mr. Bi (*Chengxiu, native from here*). (*The followers and corvée soldiers had food to eat that was provided by the office.*)

The next day, they moved the corvée soldiers to set out again (*the local department magistrate deployed them*), and at night we arrived at Ningming prefecture (*it is seventy li from Shangshi*).

On the seventh day, we met with the department chief of police, Mr. Lü (*Zhenlu, from Daxing county in Shuntian prefecture; the current department inspector and Wen Baogui had gone to the provincial capital on business; therefore, they deputized Mr. Lü*), and the advisor Mr. Jiang (*Xunxuan, from Jiangsu*) stayed to drink at the department office in the Blue Coral Studio. We engaged in intimate and cordial conversation until dusk, and then I retired.

The next day, departmental office staffer Mr. Yu (*Maodian, from Guangfeng county in Jiangxi, palace graduate of the dingmao year [1807]*) arrived to take up the post. I came to congratulate him and to request that he provide me with a long-form passport to avoid the hardship of seeking paperwork and messages along the road back to Min [Fujian].

On the ninth day, we received the papers and set off. After just over forty *li* we passed a small peak with a gate on top inscribed “Windswept Gate, Lofty Mountain.” We traveled another four or five *li* and lodged at Wang Village.

On the tenth day, we arrived at the prefectural capital of Taiping (*it is 135 li from the department town of Ningming*) and lodged at Jingui Village (*located north from the town across a river*). The prefect Mr. Jing (*Kun*) had gone to the province on business at that time, so we were not able to meet.

On the eleventh day the rain prevented us from traveling. The next day it was still raining, so we braved the rain for four days until we reached Nanning prefectural capital (*it is 210 li from Taiping prefectural capital*) and lodged on Shuisha Street.<sup>60</sup>

On the eighteenth day, we rented a small boat from Nanning up the stream and passed through the Yongchun county seat in the evening. (*It is 200 li by boat from Nanning.*)

On the nineteenth day we descended the Sanzhou rapids. (*The route is entirely down rapids.*) There were many hidden rocks in the water, rather hazardous. At night we lodged at Hengzhou city. (*It is 160 li from Yongchun county seat by boat.*)

At daybreak on the twentieth day we traveled fifty *li* to Bantang Cliff. There was a temple on the riverbank where, according to legend, Emperor Jianwen of the Ming dynasty had lived.<sup>61</sup>

On the twenty-first day we arrived at Tantou station and visited the Temple of the Wave-Quelling General [Ma Yuan]. The temple had a majestic appearance, beneath a mountain and girdled by water, in the midst of a dark forest. An arch in front of the temple had four golden characters 伏波勝跡, “Magnificent Traces of the Wave-Queller.” His spirit is very efficacious, and people who go down the rapids always

visit the temple to burn ritual money. That day at noon, we went to Qijing rapids. The stream was as fast as arrows, and because of the rushing river, we could not move straight. The river was full of stones and obstacles on both sides, snagged like dog teeth, and the boat had to navigate a narrow line between them, as if the boat and water were competing over the path. It was the most dangerous place of all. At sunset we anchored downstream from the Gui county seat. (*It is 180 li from Hengzhou city by boat.*)

On the twenty-second day we passed through the prefectural capital Xunzhou (*it is 190 li from the Gui county seat by boat*); in forty li we went down Tonggu rapids. The water flowed downward as though from a powerful waterfall. The boat floated down. Above the water we had to be aware of the checkered stones, while below the water we had to be aware of the mauve sandbanks. It was very dangerous.

On the twenty-third day, we passed through the Pingnan county seat (*it is 80 li from Xunzhou by the water route*) and went down the Jiangjun rapids. The high water surged past, churning torrentially. The boat scraped against boulders, which were spread as densely as stars, menacing us from all sides. At the very bottom there was a stone with an opening the size of a winnowing basket. If off by just a hair, we would be buried in the heart of the stone.

On the twenty-fourth day, we passed through the Teng county seat (*160 li from the Pingnan county seat by the water route*).

On the twenty-fifth day, we reached the Xima rapids at dawn. Once we passed this point, there were no more rapids. In the evening we passed through Wuzhou prefectural capital (*120 li from the Teng county seat by the water route*).

The next morning, we arrived at the Fengchuan county seat and crossed the border into Guangdong. (*It was subordinate to Zhaoqing Prefecture in Guangdong, 60 li from the Wuzhou prefectural capital by the water route.*) By sunset we were downstream of Deqing department (*100 li from the Fengchuan county seat by the water route*).

On the twenty-seventh day, we passed through Zhaoqing prefectural capital. (*It is 180 li from Deqing department by the water route.*)

Yuejiang Tower was along the bank. When we reached Longmen station, there was an Awaiting Husband Mountain. We passed the Sanshui county seat in the night. (*It is subordinate to Guangzhou Prefecture. It is 130 li from Zhaoqing prefectural city by the water route.*)

On the twenty-eighth day, we arrived at Foshan Town. (*It is 100 li from the Sanshui county seat by the water route.*) Foshan had attractive scenery, gorgeous people, rich merchants, and flowing merchandise. Its markets and shops were second only to Yangcheng [Guangzhou]. Three days previously, the Xi River had suddenly risen (*the water comes from Guangxi, so it is called the Xi or "west" River*), and the water in front of people's houses had risen to three or four *chi*. I rode a small boat through the market. It was like entering a valley of ten thousand flowers—more than the eye could take in! Seventy *li* from there is the Guangdong provincial capital. (*It is called "City of the Five Goats." To the south of the city is Fuxu Town and the harbor.*) The water route from Nanning to here is approximately 1,700 *li* or more. It was all smooth sailing, though we passed through sixty-eight rapids, all of them along the border of western Guangdong. The mountains along the river were dried out and not green. It drizzled incessantly. When we did see mountains, cities, or remote markets, they were quiet. In the clouds and mist, only Nanning and Wuzhou differed from the other places in having some hubbub. After we passed Zhaoqing, the landscape was more lovely, the scenery became more beautiful, the markets and towns more bustling, and very lively. It could be called a fertile land.

On the twenty-ninth day, we met with the salt commissioner, Mr. Zheng (*Kaixi, style name Yunlu. He was from Longxi in Fujian*). We chatted about our native place at great length, and he did not ask me about my experiences on my journey.

On the first day of the fourth month, I went to Yingxiang Street (*outside of Jinghai Gate*) to visit my friend Lin Boliao (*from Longxi in Fujian*) and chanced upon Du Guangji (*Tamsui, Taiwan*), a person from the same prefecture as me. He had brought along his friends Chen Tianyou and Cai Jie (*they were both from Xiamen, Fujian*) to invite me to enter the city. Then we visited the Shrine of the Five Goats together.

(Legend has it that when the city was being built, five old people appeared, then suddenly turned into five goats and disappeared. The people thought they were immortals, so they named their city after the five goats and built a shrine to worship them.) Then we climbed Guanyin Mountain. (It is to the north of the city and is the highest point, so it serves as the city's garrison.) When we arrived in front of the Guanyin Temple (the temple is at the top of the mountain), we saw the roof tiles of the city's buildings spread out as numerous as scales on a fish, and towers, temples, pagodas standing out distinctly before our eyes. Beyond the city, mountains surrounded all sides, abundant water swirled around, sparse woods standing in the distance, interlaced with hazy mist. The stupas towered in a row at the river's mouth. (There were Stupas One, Two, and Three.) The mountains of Xiangshan and Macao seemed close enough to touch.<sup>62</sup> I exclaimed about this grand view of mountains and the sea of the south. We entered the temple, performed a prostration, and went out. To the east we passed the Tower of Five Mirrors (the tower has five stories. It is more than twenty zhang [64 meters] tall), then went to the shrine of Mr. Zheng (the place where Anqi Sheng became an immortal.<sup>63</sup> Now there is a shrine there). We passed through the Cry of the Wind Pavilion and the Jade Mountains Villa, turned to exit through the Penglai Palace. (These are all places where officials and gentry occasionally come to relax and hold banquets.) Curving railings, finely wrought windows, flowering arbors—such tranquility that it seemed as though the world of immortals had suddenly sprung up from the dust of the mundane world. In the evening we went to the market and saw precious, lovely, and colorful objects spread out and valuable foreign commodities piled up like mountains. At dusk we went to Fuxu Town (south of the city). There the sound of flutes roiled the water, the boats were full of singing and dancing, and the reflection from candles and light from lamps illuminated the river from top to bottom. Poets and wealthy customers vied with one another on board the magnolia boats.

The next day we crossed to the south of the river and visited Hoi Tong Monastery (near the river's south bank). Shayuan is along the bank; this village has so much jasmine it is like entering a realm of

perfume. Turning around one sees the Pearl of the Sea Stone (*there is a temple called Cidu Temple; it is also called Pearl of the Sea Temple*) spurting out from the waves. Passing ships often go around it. At noon on the dot when the sun was beating down, an unexpected breeze from the river ruffled my face and clothes, hot and cold rapidly fluctuating. It was the way a person's life flashes before the eyes like fireworks, becoming nothing but a trace. Although I was enjoying myself, how could I get so attached to this place that I forgot about returning [home]? Then I took my fellow travelers back to our lodging, anxiously setting a time to return.

On the fourth day, Du Guangjin lent me twenty *jin*. I hired a cargo ship from Shi Jun again (*he is from Jinjiang county in Fujian*) that would take us to Laolong (*the name of a place in Longchuan county [Guangdong]*). We took our leave of several people and then immediately boarded the ship.

On the seventh day we passed the Boluo county seat. (*It is under the administration of Huizhou Prefecture; it is three hundred and ten li from the provincial capital by the water route. The town encircled the Hulu mountain.*) We saw Luofu Mountain. (*The saying goes, "In Huizhou they cannot see Luofu above, in Guangzhou they cannot see Luofu below."*)<sup>64</sup> In the evening we passed Huizhou prefectural capital. (*Huizhou has two cities, one for the provincial military commander and one for the provincial magistrate. It is thirty-five li from the Boluo county seat by the water route.*) Siwu Mountain, White Crane Grotto, Wujiang Pavilion, and [Wang] Zhaoyun Mausoleum are notable sites in the city; all were established when Dongpo [Su Shi] was here.<sup>65</sup> We crossed a stream east of the city and were in the Guishan county seat.

On the twelfth day we passed through the Longchuan county seat. (*It is four hundred and forty-seven li from the Huizhou prefectural capital by the water route.*) Five *li* south of the town is Ghost Tower. According to legend there are many ancient graves there. Back when the county seat was established here, a bunch of ghosts created problems by stealing all the peoples' bricks in the night and building a tower, so the town had to be moved elsewhere. The tower is ugly and leans to the side, but it



never fell down. Thirty-five *li* by boat from the county seat, we arrived at Laolong. It is more than eight hundred *li* from Goat City [Guangzhou] to Laolong. The nine days on the boat were all scorching hot and unbearably stuffy. Fortunately Lin Huishan (*from Longxi*) and Ding Gongchen (*from Jinjiang*) were fellow passengers that passed the time joking and chatting with me. Gongchen was well versed in astronomy. He had sailed to Luzon [in the Philippines] (*a foreign island to the south-east*) to trade and stayed there for several years and learned methods for measuring the heavens from Westerners. His textual criticism of it was also very proficient. He tirelessly discussed astronomy with me daily, instructing me about his maps of the earth and tools for measuring the heavens. In general, it set the equator, ecliptic, northern zone, and southern zones as the Western methods did. It used the horizon to measure the distance between the center of the earth and the north or south poles.<sup>66</sup> This method was based on the technique of the armillary sphere, but with quicker and easier measurement. I questioned him in detail, thinking about practicing this another day, in order to prove to the experts that I did not neglect the benefit of my boatmate's teaching.

On the thirteenth day, we came ashore at Laolong. It was thirty *li* to Qinling and then another twenty *li* to Languan; this is the road that one must take to get from Guangzhou to Chaozhou. At the top of the pass there is a shrine to Duke Wen of Han [Han Yu]; when Duke Zhao (*Shenzhen*) was inspecting Guangdong, he had it repaired and made like new.<sup>67</sup> Upon entering the shrine, I saw a lifelike statue of a deity, and I lingered to gaze at it in reverence before I resumed my journey. Ten *li* later we arrived at Qiling at sunset. We hired a small boat to carry us night and day in order to make haste.

On the fifteenth day, we arrived at the Three Rivers Dam at dawn. (*It is three hundred and thirty-four li from Qiling.*) The water takes three paths at this place: one [branch] goes to Dabu, one to Chaozhou, and one to Qiling. That is why it is called Three Rivers. There is a small town on the bank where we were stopped for an inspection. There is a very noisy market outside the town. In the evening we arrived at the county seat of Dabu County. (*It is under the jurisdiction of Chaozhou*

*Prefecture. It is one hundred and seventy li from Three Rivers Dam. We had to anchor the boat two li from the town.)*

On the sixteenth day we went ashore at Dabu. In the afternoon, once we reached the border of Yongding County, we then crossed into my home, Min [Fujian] (*under the jurisdiction of Tingzhou prefecture*).

On the seventeenth day, we reached the border of Nanjing County (*under the jurisdiction of Zhangzhou prefecture*), on the other side of the Tianling Mountains. When we reached the mountains, first we wound around the edge on a narrow path, switchbacking for five or six *li*, and it was not that arduous. But once we had traveled about two *li* up the face of the mountain, we looked up after every step, as though we were scaling a stairway to heaven. The sedan bearers were gasping for breath. When we descended the peak, we hurried straight down from the ridge, hurtling down more than three thousand steps before the terrain started to level out. Glancing down made me feel like I would fall, so I was too terrified to look. We came to a river just over twenty *li* past the mountain and boarded a small boat. We arrived at Guanxi on the afternoon of the second day. (*It is also called Xiaoxi. We took the lesser route from Dabu to here, so I cannot count the mileage in detail.*) I noted that from Guanxi to the south, the two counties of Hui[zhou] and Chao[zhou] were divided by high mountain ranges and deep valleys, crisscrossed by peaks and rivers. The people lived in *tulou* surrounded by mountains, secluding their dwellings in the rugged mountains where it is easy to conceal evildoing.<sup>68</sup> They had to clear mountain forests to cultivate their fields because there is little open country for farmland. It is also far away from the sea, so they cannot benefit from fishing and salt cultivation. Both men and women serve as porters and traders. The people are poor and their ways are rough—this is due to their situation.

From Guanxi we rented a night boat and arrived at the Zhangzhou prefectural capital at dawn on the nineteenth day. (*It is one hundred and fifty-two li by the water route from Guanxi.*) Then we went east to the prefectural office and climbed Zhi Mountain to the north, looking for traces of the former sage [Zhu Xi].<sup>69</sup> However, they were submerged by the passage of time, and there was no so-called Pavilion of Awe.<sup>70</sup> Only

an old shrine to him remained at the foot of the mountain. I bowed before the shrine, went to the southern part of the city, and spent the night within the south gate.

On the twentieth day, we went out the south gate and found a boat to go from the tributary river to the sea. The wind was with us, and we made it to Xiamen that night. On the twenty-second day, I met my teacher circuit intendant, Zhou Yungao, who felt like I had been reborn. He said that I must have seen and heard many strange things on this journey. He said, "You have already written 'A Record of Peril'; you should also write a 'Travelogue' And when you return one day to Taiyang [Tainan], you can use it to tell your friends and family [about your experience]."

On the second day of the fifth month, I boarded an oceangoing ship. On the eighth I returned to Penghu. My brother, Tingyang, and I bowed to our mother in front of the main hall. Surprised and happy, she shed a lot of tears. Reminiscing about the past, it really did feel like I was reborn.

As for this trip, I could not count how much we had traveled by sea. From when we set out from Quảng Ngãi on the twenty-first day of the twelfth month in the *yiwei* year [February 7, 1836] to when we reached Xiamen on the twentieth day of the fourth month of the *bingshen* year [June 3, 1836] took 42 travel days on land, traversing 3,300 *li*. We took 33 travel days by water, traversing 3,374 *li*. Because we lingered on the way, the whole journey by land and sea took 118 days in total. Despite enduring difficult roads and islands, I completed this epic journey. Since my good fortune is heaven's will, I documented it in detail.

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Master Yungao's commentary: He kept notes contemporaneously, taking inspiration from the dwellings and rare sights. The style is based on Li Xizhi's *Register of Coming South* (*Lan Nan lu*) and Gui Xifu's *Travelogue of the Renxu Year* (*Renxu jicheng*) but with more feeling of lushness. The parts depicting the sights in the work partially come from Liu Liuzhou's *Record of Mountains and Rivers* (*Shanshui ji*).

