Redefining xia: Reality and Fiction
in Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*, 1938-1944

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CONVENTIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The Chinese characters used in the thesis are written in today’s simplified script, even if the original text used unsimplified characters. Only when it benefits the scope of the research, the unsimplified version of the characters is given.

Unless referred to translations of other scholars, all translations from the Chinese into English are mine.

Extracts taken from ancient Chinese texts are all referenced based on their own internal division, not on written publications of the texts. Hence the reference will only refer to a text’s title, chapter, and verses (if applicable).

The phonetic system of transliteration overall used in this thesis is the pinyin system. Only well-established personal names, such as Sun Yat-sen, and direct quotes from other scholars, may be written with other phonetic transliteration systems.

The titles of Wang Dulu’s five novels that are used as case-study are abbreviated in the following manner:

HJKL:  *Crane frightens Kunlun (He Jing Kunlun 鹤惊昆仑)*
BJJC:  *Precious Sword and Golden Hairpin (Bao Jian Jin Chai 宝剑金钗)*
JQZG:  *Sword Force and Pearl Shine (Jian Qi Zhu Guang 剑气珠光)*
WHCL:  *Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon / Unnoticed Talents (Wo Hu Cang Long 卧虎藏龙)*
TQYP:  *Iron Rider and Silver Vase (Tie Qi Yin Ping 铁骑银瓶)*
ABSTRACT

Redefining xia: Reality and Fiction in Wang Dulu’s Crane-Iron Series, 1938-1944

This thesis aims to shed new light on the Chinese character xia 侠 and the literature and history of the Republican Era (1912-1949) that revolves around it. Xia refers to either a concept (identifiable with kindness, altruism, righteousness, etc.) or to a person who practices this concept. Ever since its arrival in Chinese texts in the sixth century BC, it has created controversy for some and sympathy for others. In Modern China, xia became the central aspect of a literary genre that reached its zenith in production and consumption in the Republican Era, i.e. wuxia fiction 武侠小说, which can be translated as “using martial arts (wu 武) to obtain xia”. The concept of xia was an integral part of presumably the most widespread literary genre of the time, but why were Republican-era readers so interested in it? Why did they relate to xia and what do the themes of these novels say about the chaotic Republican Era? To answer these questions, this thesis presents a case study of a wuxia pentalogy written by Wang Dulu at the end of the Republican Era and attempts to identify the topics and aspects most reflective of that historical period, showing that, despite the heavy criticism of intellectuals of that time, these “easy” popular novels contain innovative and modern aspects and can become today of great historical importance.

The thesis starts with two literature reviews. The first determines that the term xia has not received enough scholarly attention, calling for a reassessment. The second literature review focuses on Republican Era wuxia fiction, showing how there is a gap in scholarship on this period. This is followed by a discussion of the methodology used for the analysis of the case study on Wang Dulu’s Crane-Iron Series written in Qingdao (1938-1944), presented in the final three chapters of the thesis. Chapter one analyses the origins of the term xia in texts from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), presenting new interpretations for a more comprehensive understanding of the term. Chapter two gives a historical overview of xia-related literature and addresses the historical reasons for the changes that xia underwent throughout Chinese history. Chapter three includes a historiography of the Republican Era in combination with the life of the author Wang Dulu and identifies the aspects of the author’s life that will become important in the textual analysis in the chapters to follow. Chapter four focuses on xia in the Crane-Iron Series. After having collected the terms and identified the semantic spheres that include the Chinese character xia, the chapter demonstrates how the story of one of the series’ protagonist can be seen as an personification of Republican-era China, proving the historical dimension and value of these novels. Chapter five analyses yi 义 (righteousness) and represents the virtuous aspect of xia, concluding that, according to Wang Dulu, for the concept of xia, virtue is more important than being trained in martial arts (wu). Chapter six focuses on the literary figure of the baobiao 保镖 (protector) and is seen as the commercialisation of martial arts not necessarily linked to xia, showing how entrepreneurship and violence were characteristics of the time.
DECLARATION

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INTRODUCTION

The case for Republican-era wuxia fiction and its analysis

These new adventure stories, it is true, had their origin in the early novels, but the spirit of these later books is completely different: they praise heroic deeds and acts of rough justice only if these accord with the feudal concepts of loyalty and right.¹

The heroes of such novels, though rough and gallant like the earlier outlaws, had to serve under some important official and considered it honourable to do so. This could happen only in an age when the people were completely subdued and subservient.²

Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1925)

Lu Xun (1881-1936), one of China’s most important intellectuals of the twentieth century, wrote the above lines in 1925 regarding wuxia 武侠 fiction.³ He and other New Culture intellectuals⁴ of the Republican Era (1912-1949) did not have a high opinion of the wuxia genre. Any respectable author of that time would not consider reading, let alone writing, works that would be part of this genre. Nevertheless, wuxia novels reached their zenith of production and consumption precisely in the Republican Era and were read throughout China and by all social strata.

Although part of popular fiction, a phenomenon that had already been heavily promoted by intellectuals such as Liang Qichao 梁启超 (1873-1929)⁵

² Ibid., 351.
⁴ I discuss the New Culture Movement and its relation with wuxia fiction in chapter three.
during the Hundred Days’ Reform (1898), wuxia stories in the Republican Era were often seen as part of easy entertainment, based on “feudal” and non-progressive ideals, without any literary value. The genre was grouped together with other forms of popular fiction under the name Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School (yuanyang hudie pai 鸳鸯蝴蝶派), which I address in the analysis of scholarship on Republican-era popular fiction.

The question that arises then is how does this increase of consumption and production of wuxia novels relate to the historical period of the Republican Era? How did these novels “speak” to Republican-era readers and what can they “say” to scholars today?

The Chinese term of the genre, wuxia xiaoshuo 武侠小说, has been mainly translated as “martial arts (wuxia) novels (xiaoshuo)”. However, this translation only covers half of the term wuxia. In fact the character wu 武 on its own means martial arts, while xia presents a more difficult translation into English. For this reason, in this thesis the binome is taken apart and the focus is solely on xia. Hence, this thesis also aims to shed new light on the concept of xia 侠 and to assess why it came to the forefront in the Republican Era. The overall analysis carried out in this thesis is based on the telescopic structure of the binome wuxia, i.e. using martial arts (wu) to be or obtain xia. The questions regarding xia then become, what are

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6 For the Hundred Days’ Reform see: Luke S.K. Kwong, A Mosaic of The Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and Idees of 1898 (London: Harvard University Press, 1984); Rebecca E. Karl, Peter Zarrow, eds., Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002).

7 The term “feudal” is intended here in the same way as intended by Communist Party leader Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1983-1976) at the at the Yan’an Forum in 1942, where he denounces all that is related to traditional imperial China with this term. Instead literature promoted by the New Culture and May Fourth Movements should focus on the working classes. For example, at the start Mao says: “Since the May 4th Movement such a cultural army has taken shape in China, and it has helped the Chinese revolution, gradually reduced the domain of China’s feudal culture and of the comprador culture which serves imperialist aggression, and weakened their influence”. For Mao’s talks on Literature and Art at the Yan’an Forum see: http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-3/mswv3_08.htm.

the literary characters trying to obtain and what are they fighting for? What does *xia* mean? Are there other ways to obtain *xia*?

In this thesis I go against the opinion of the New Movement intellectuals and reinstate the importance of Republican-era *wuxia* fiction. The key concept in my research, as I stated above, is that of *xia*. The analysis of this concept and its importance in the Republican Era follow a centrifugal structure with *xia* at the core. First there are terminological issues discussed regarding an appropriate translation in English, and reasons for maintaining the term in Chinese are given. Then the introduction looks at the interpretation of *xia* provided by other scholars, noting that scholars outside of China have most often translated *xia* in relation to violence and martial arts (*wu*). This section solely on *xia* is followed by the broader *wuxia* scholarship that has been addressed by previous scholars. Here the discovery is made that Republican-era *wuxia* fiction has not been covered and the decision for choosing Wang Dulu's *Crane-Iron Series* (*He-Tie Xilie* 鹤-铁系列) as a case study is explained. I then propose a systematic methodology to be applied to create a coherent and consistent analysis of these novels. The introduction ends with the outline of the chapters of the thesis.

1. **To translate or not to translate?**

Before beginning a project on *xia* and *wuxia*, a note on the decision not to translate these terms into English is in order. Many other scholars have chosen to translate these terms in different ways, but each of these translations brings with them either unwished associations with already known concepts or do not completely cover the range of meanings implied by the original term.

Lydia Liu explains that when crossing cultures in academic scholarship, the only possible methodology is to “translate”. 9 However, Jorge Luis Borges has pointed out: “The dictionary is based on the hypothesis, obviously an unproven one, that languages are made up of equivalent synonyms”. 10 According to Borges, the

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10 As quoted in ibid., 3.
equation $A_{source\ language} = A_{target\ language}$ is not possible and is corroborated by Willis Barnstone who writes that terms are untranslatable when “the receptor language lacks an equivalent of the cultural phenomenon or situation in the source language”.$^{11}$

Although translations of the terms *xia* and *wuxia* have been used, these are distorted due to the lack of these phenomena in the receptor languages’ cultures. Previous scholars who wrote in English have used the term “knight-errant” to translate the figure of the *xia*. The problem with this term is that the concept of “knight-errant” in Western collective imagery corresponds to a figure quite far from the Chinese *xia*. The wandering knight is in search of adventure and desires to prove his own valour, often combined with a happy ending and the winning of a maiden. He does share the aspect of freedom with his Chinese counterpart but the main characteristics of any type of knight are that he is a mounted warrior and that he uses a sword and lance to fight. Furthermore, the category “knight” is always male and part of a specific social class.$^{12}$ It is true that in ancient times some of the first *xia* were men riding on horses and some of them used a sword, but these are not *conditio sine qua non* to make a person a *xia*. It is possible to be female, not to ride a horse, and not use a sword to fight and still be considered a *xia*.$^{13}$ These discrepancies make the translation of “knight-errant” unsuitable.

Another conflicting aspect with the *xia* is the European knight’s relations with other people. If we think of the medieval romance novels, courtly love, i.e. the relation with a fair maiden, becomes a fundamental aspect for the knight. On the contrary, in many *wuxia* novels there is a form of gender equality as both women and men are able to be *xia*. Furthermore, in Wang Dulu’s novels the romance causes more often hardship than happiness, aiding in the inappropriateness of the term knight. This literary structure hence escapes those regarding stories of the

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$^{11}$ Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation: History, Theory, Practice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 44. As pointed out by Barnstone, this view is sustained by others, such as J. C. Catford and Anton Popović.

$^{12}$ There are exceptions, such as for example Jean of Arc (1421-1431), who is considered a knight. In reality she was a peasant who wore a knight’s armour. However, cases like Jean of Arc are extremely rare.

knight. For this and the above reasons the translation of “knight” becomes a distortion and hence inappropriate.

Other terms that could be used in English include “rogue”, because of his freedom, lack of interest in the law, and roaming nature. However, in the English language this term often has a negative connotation, whilst xia is mainly positive in usage, although the xia himself is not always seen in a positive way, especially by the government. Another term that comes close to the figure of the xia is “outlaw”. This term also presents a semantically negative connotation and implies that the xia has acted against the law, which is again not necessary to be defined a xia. Robin Hood, a quasi-historical character in the Western literary tradition, is perhaps the European counterpart that is most similar to the Chinese xia, but he does not fit into a specific category.

Moreover, the Chinese character xia not only indicates a person but also a code of conduct. The translation of this concept seems to be even more difficult than that of the person. As is explained throughout this dissertation, the concept of xia stands for altruism, loyalty, and righteousness, and in the first chapter I bring evidence to hypothesise it also to be a virtue. Xia is hence a mixture of Western-known concepts and as such presents idiosyncrasies that are difficult if not impossible to convey within a single translation. For these reasons, in order to avoid misinterpretations and erroneous associations for both the person as well as the concept, the term xia will simply be maintained in Chinese. It indicates both the person as well as the concept, and can be grammatically singular and plural.

2. Xia and wuxia fiction

What is known about xia often comes from the study of wuxia novels. Although wuxia studies are a fairly recent area of research, the field has been rapidly expanding. In the case of academic research on wuxia fiction, often the binome wuxia has been taken as a whole, making the xia inevitably related to violence. The aim here is to take the binome apart and see what is understood with the character xia on its own. But what exactly does xia stand for? Why is xia so
important? Can *xia* also be obtained by different means than *wu*?

Chinese scholar Chen Pingyuan 陈平原 wrote that there are two approaches in studies concerning *xia*: a cultural one (*yi shi cong wenhua shi jiaodu* 一是从文化史角度) and a literary one (*yi shi cong wenxue shi jiaodu* 一是从文学史角度). This distinction will be maintained in this dissertation. The first section in fact focuses on the understanding and meaning of *xia* while the second section analyses *xia* and related aspects in the *wuxia* pentalogy called *Crane-Iron Series* written by banner author Wang Dulu and published between 1938 and 1944 in Japanese-occupied Qingdao.

The literature review below is consequently divided into two sections: the first one looks at how scholars have defined *xia*, and what the ultimate goals of the literary characters are. Particular focus will be on works of scholars outside of China as they have had the arduous task to make this concept understood by an audience not necessarily familiar with the concept or the culture surrounding it. This section constitutes the base for the analysis of *xia* in the first chapter.

The second section will focus on research carried out on Republican-era *wuxia* fiction. The reason for choosing the Republican Era as a base for research on *xia*, is aided by the fact that it is in this period that the “*wuxia* craze”, as defined by Republican-era intellectual Mao Dun 茅盾 and scholar Luo Liqun 罗立群, takes place. Furthermore, the Republican Era has been apparently neglected by scholars as most research has been carried out on *wuxia* fiction at the end of the Qing Dynasty and/or on that produced by authors outside of mainland China in the second half of the twentieth century, especially Jin Yong 金庸 (1924-). The

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14 Chen Pingyuan, *Dream of literary Xiake of all ages* 千古文人侠客梦 (Tianjin: Baihua wenyi chubanshe 白话文艺出版社, 2009), 204. In fact, Chen says that there are two approaches in *youxia* 游侠 studies, i.e. studies on the roaming *xia*, but as James Liu has noted in the first book on this character, it is possible to substitute *youxia* simply with *xia*. However, with the term *youxia* the same claim can be made, i.e. *youxia* can indicate a roaming *xia*, but also roaming to obtain *xia*, the same telescopic structure as for *wuxia*, making hence the character *xia* the most important aspect.


political and social instability of the Republican Era and the search for social justice are aspects that aid in the appreciation of wuxia fiction at that time, making it an interesting research topic. Below follows an overview on what has been researched to date by scholars on xia and Republican-era wuxia fiction.

2.1 文化史角度 – The cultural angle: “xia”

The first scholarly work on xia outside of China is that of James Liu, entitled The Chinese Knight-errant and published in 1967. The title of the book comes from the Chinese binome youxia 游俠 most often translated as “travelling xia”, although its translation could also be “travelling to bring xia”. As it constitutes the first work in discussing the xia, it has been heavily used by scholars outside of China and as it is the first work in English, a translation of the term is given.

The Chinese term thus translated is yu-hsia or simply hsia (in modern Pekinese pronunciation). Yu means ‘wandering’, and hsia (earlier pronunciation hsie) is etymologically cognate with the verb hsie, ‘to force’ or ‘to coerce’. The term is applied to the kind of men who roamed around the country and used force to right wrongs.18

As this extract shows, James Liu collapses youxia and xia into a single concept, although in reality these two are different. The youxia is the wandering individual who fights for justice throughout the different ancient reigns. A xia does not have to have these characteristics in order to be defined a xia. Furthermore, Liu puts forth the indissoluble link between xia and violence as he connects xia 俠 with xie 挟, which apart from coerce also means to embrace and to carry under one’s arm. The hand-radical (shou 扌) in xie indicates that the character is etymologically expressing actions that require physical effort, but Liu decided to link it exclusively with a violent action and bases the rest of his work on this axiom. The link between

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19 This topic is addressed in chapter one when discussing Sima Qian’s chapter on the youxia.
these two aspects is consequentially also taken for granted by most Western scholars of wuxia studies (see below). Although the connection between xia and violence is effectively very strong (especially as the binome wuxia of the literary genre implies the presence of wu) it is not exclusive, as this thesis will prove. But according to James Liu, the xia is only presented in a violent manner, focusing more on the xia’s fighting skills and not on his or her purposes.

Liu did not attempt to precisely define the character xia as a code of conduct. He did, however, sum up a number of ideals according to which the (you)xia would act. These are altruism, justice, individual freedom, personal loyalty, courage, truthfulness and mutual faith, honour and fame, generosity and contempt of wealth.\(^\text{20}\) He then analysed how the youxia relates to the four main philosophical traditions (Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, and Daoism)\(^\text{21}\) and concluded that none of these can be considered to be the sole framework in which this group of people arose.

These are followed by sections (all of which follow a chronological structure and stop at the Qing dynasty) on the historical knight-errant, the knight-errant in poetry, the knight-errant in fiction, and the knight-errant in theatre plays.\(^\text{22}\) These sections, which constitute 75% of the entire work, on the one hand give a rich display of works about (you)xia, but many of these focus on wuxia and some of them on solely violent people who are considered by Liu to be xia although in the story itself this is not pointed out anywhere.\(^\text{23}\) As the term xia is an appellative that is earned, not self-proclaimed, it is given by and to others based on one’s actions. This aspect has not been pointed out by Liu and has made some of the analysis

\(^{20}\) Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 4-7.
\(^{21}\) Ibid., 7-13.
\(^{22}\) Respectively these can be found in ibid., 13-54, 55-80, 81-137, 138-192.
\(^{23}\) For example, in the Chinese texts of the stories of Prince Wu Ji 公子无忌 (died 243 BC), Hou Ying 侯赢 (326-257 BC), and Zhu Hai 燕喜 which are narrated in the “Biography of the Prince of Wei” (Wei Gongzhi Liezhuan 魏公子列传), Chapter 77 of the Shiji (Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 17-25) the term xia does not appear. While in the stories of Jing Ke 荆轲 (died 227 BC, well known for his attempt to kill the Qin Emperor), Gao Jianli 高渐离 (died 221 BC), and Tian Guang 田光 (died 232 BC), are found in the “Biographies of Assassins” (Cike Liezhuan 刺客列传), chapter 86 in the Shiji (Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 25-37), xia appears for a total of eight times. Seven times it is part of the name of Xiang Xialei 相侠累, whose biography is not analysed by James Liu although it contains the term xia, while the eighth time it appears in this chapter in relation to Tian Guang who commits suicide as his reputation has become corrupted. He says that it is not possible to continue living when one is not considered to be a moral xia.
slightly off-focus as some works within his corpus are not necessarily on people that carry out xia, although they always carry out wu. I discuss this more in detail in the first chapter where I attempt to assess which biographies in Sima Qian’s Shi ji 史记 can be considered to be those of xia.

This remains the main issue with this groundbreaking book: although Liu gives a comprehensive view on xia, he bases his analyses on sources that include mainly violent people and often focuses more on the violent aspect of the stories, than those related to the above-mentioned ideals. The criteria taken into consideration by Liu to decide which people, poems, stories, and plays are based on (you)xia have not been doubted by scholars, and have since been taken for granted.

Following Liu’s fundamental book, Y. W. Ma published an article in 1975 with the title “The Knights-errant in Hua-pen Stories”. The decision here is again to translate xia (and its variants) with “knight-errant”, but acknowledging their differences. At the start of the article when deciding who can be considered a xia, Ma writes that “anyone who acts along the broad concepts of benevolence or justice, even when little extra physical effort is put forth… would be to render the term [xia] pointlessly vague”, 24 and towards the end of the article:

whether he [a xia] is an emperor-to-be, or a fame-seeker, or a shadowy figure of debatable character, or a swordsman (or swordswoman) with magical power, or an outstanding outlaw, or an individual challenging the forces of justice, there is one basic prerequisite in that … he has to be very good in fist-fighting and skilled in the use of arms... 25

The fighting component (wu) is hence overwhelmingly important for Ma in order to establish a character of a huaben 话本 story as a xia. 26 The union of “fighting” and “good intentions” appears again indissoluble. What is lacking in this article, as in Liu’s book, is the original Chinese text as evidence of whether these literary characters were defined as xia. In addition, most literary characters analysed by Ma are male. Although he does point out the existence of female xia, this trait seems to

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25 Ibid., 290.
26 The term huaben refers to stories written in vernacular. I discuss these stories more in depth in the second chapter.
be more exceptional than common. Overall, the article adds *huaben* stories to the research carried out by James Liu, but again identifies *xia* only in a violent fashion.

Production of *wuxia* novels in mainland China restarted after the death of Mao Zedong 毛泽东 (1893-1976) and interest in *xia* and *wuxia* by Chinese and Taiwanese scholars became more prominent in the 1980s and 1990s.\(^{27}\) It is in these decades that compiled volumes of *wuxia* novels were published. In Luo Liqun's *History of Chinese wuxia fiction* there is a textual analysis of *xia*, *youxia*, and *wuxia*. Luo is the first to introduce and discuss the term *wenxia* and acknowledge that the relation with *wu* is not exclusive but that other methods to obtain *xia* exist. “*Xia* is made of the union of *wenxia* and *wuxia*”, and “the spirit of these *xia* comes forth from that of the *youxia*, the roaming *xia* of the Warring States Period”.\(^{28}\) However, apart from the acknowledgment of the existence of *wenxia* this aspect has not been developed any further.

*Wu* and *wen* are considered by these scholars to be the two (opposite) ways in which *xia* can be obtained: *wuxia* and *wenxia* are the two umbrella terms in which all forms of *xia*-related actions are found. This brings forth a consideration on the study of *xia*-related literature. While *wu* has an evident understanding (martial arts or fighting in general), *wen* can be interpreted in multiple ways. It can refer to actions that involve writing and culture, as *wen* refers to education and literature. Hence a person that is part of the *wenxia* category can try to set wrongs right through his or her writings, but also more generally, *wen* can refer to civic duty, in the sense of a civic virtue that a person possesses and causes him or her to act in a manner that is socially and legally acceptable by a specific community. Although it would be possible to define the “civil *xia*” simply as *xia* without any adjective preceding it as no particular forms of actions are required apart from one’s social and legal duties, in this thesis *wen* is kept in front of *xia* to better separate these people from the more common *xia* who operate with *wu*.


At the end of the 1990s John Christopher Hamm, in the *Indiana Companion*, proposes to translate *wuxia xiaoshuo* as “gallant fiction”, or “martial arts novels”, or “chivalric fiction” and concludes by saying: “Literally it refers to ‘fiction’ (*hsiao-shuo*) which takes for its themes and settings the world of Chinese martial arts (*wu* 武) and that complex of altruism, gallantry, and sometimes anarchy associated with the figure of the *hsia* (俠).” Hamm gives another similar definition of *xia* in his monograph on Jin Yong: “altruistic and independent individuals and the values they practice”. This simple and concise definition seems to be the closest to what is intended with *xia* and includes (without defining) different forms of *xia*. However, the focus of Hamm’s *Paper Swordsmen* remains on characters using *wu* to obtain *xia* and does not further address the issue of the meaning of *xia*.

In the 2009 book *Green Peony and the Rise of the Chinese Martial Arts Novel*, Margaret Wan attempts to find the origin of the *wuxia* novels that became immensely popular at the end of the Qing Dynasty and still are today in China. Wan’s introductory chapter stands out for having captured the issues when one carries out research outside of China on *wuxia*. The Chinese terminology is explained (both *wuxia* and *xiaoshuo*) and she is the first to challenge the western translation of “knight” or “knight-errant”. Her preferred translation is that of “martial hero”. Although this translation is more neutral and less embedded in Western (Christian) culture than the term “knight”, the relation with *wu* is once again fundamental and almost intrinsic to *xia*. There is here no mention in this book on the *wenxia* or on other forms of being *xia*.

In the same year, Roland Altenburger’s book on the female *xia* was published and gives much credit to James Liu’s work. In fact, the book's subtitle *The female knight-errant (xia)*, echoes that of Liu by adapting once again the translation of “knight-errant” for *xia*. The assimilation of Liu’s definition and use of

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32 Roland Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle: The Female Knight-errant (xia) in Traditional Chinese Narrative* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2009), 29.
xia is overall seen in Altenburger’s book. All of the analysed subjects, like Liu’s, are linked to acts of violence such as killing and fighting. The only way here to obtain xia is again through wu, which is an interesting aspect as the female character often is more related to acts of kindness than those of violence, but these forms of acts have not been included in this work. Altenburger points out Sima Qian’s chapter “Biographies of Youxia” (Youxia Liezhuan 游侠列传) and concludes that the ancient xia cannot be seen as an expert in martial arts at that stage. However, similarly to James Liu, according to Altenburger the ancestors of the xia as he or she is known today are found in another chapter of Sima Qian’s Shiji, i.e. the “Biographies of Assassins” (Cike Liezhuan 刺客列传), which focuses on aggression and fighting skills.\footnote{Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 27.} This forces again the xia into a violent corner, which seems contradictory as Sima Qian clearly related xia to benevolence (ren 仁) in his postface, which I translate and analyse in chapter one on xia in ancient Chinese texts.\footnote{See Chapter one, section four, page 58.} Hence, does the xia always have to be related to martial arts or violence? Is it not possible for the xia to be independent from martial arts? The link between xia and violence was not promoted by Sima Qian himself and, apart from a personal name, the “Biographies of Assassins” uses the character xia once, but to indicate a virtuous aspect unrelated to violence.\footnote{See footnote 23 on page 19 on James Liu’s use of Sima Qian’s chapter “Bibliographies of Assassins”.} Altenburger then states

> it is better to define xia by means of certain ‘para-ethical’ concepts and patterns of behaviour, first and foremost, the key concept of bao 报 (reciprocity), which was, and continues to be, central to the management of social relations.”\footnote{Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 29.}

But, similarly to Liu, this aspect seems to fade within the actual analysis of the female xia he proposes. The research for wenxia has not been tackled and seems to have been ignored.

These scholars have all attempted to translate the concept xia but have mostly focused on the violent aspects that this concept allegedly brings with itself, making it one-sided. The attempt in the first chapter of this thesis is in fact to
retrace ancient texts that include the term xia and see its different uses and meanings.

2.2 文学史角度– The literary angle: wuxia fiction in the Republican Era

The Republican Era has been defined as the “turbulent period” (kuang chaoqi 狂潮期) when it comes to analysing wuxia fiction. Many wuxia stories were serialised in journals that were quickly shut down and later reopened, making research in this field challenging. As Perry Link points out in his study on popular fiction in the Republican Era, it is not possible to have an exhaustive list of journals and publications. In this section, what is known about Republican-era wuxia and popular fiction is analysed and the lacunae are highlighted at the end.

In a similar way to the compiled volumes produced in China in the 1990s by people such as Luo Liqun, Hamm divides the wuxia literary genre chronologically into three sections:

1. Martial arts novels in the dynastic era, sometimes within a judicial framework. Examples are: Biographies of Boy and Girl Heroes (Er nü yingxiong zhuan 儿女英雄传), Three Xia, Five Righteous (San xia wu yi 三侠五义), Seven Xia, Five Righteous (Qi xia qu yi 七侠五义), Cases of Judge Shi (Shi gong’an 施公案), Cases of Judge Peng (Peng gong’an 彭公安);
2. Martial arts novels produced during the wuxia craze in the 1920s-1940s (Old School);
3. Martial arts novels produced by the New School in Hong Kong and Taiwan since the 1950s. Famous authors of the New School are Jin Yong/Louis Cha, Gu Long, Liang Yusheng, etc.

Hamm, “Wu-hsia hsiao-shuo”, 192. The third category has not been taken into consideration here due to its irrelevance to the central topic.
We saw in the previous section that James Liu and Y. W. Ma wrote about the wandering knights and works prior to the Qing Dynasty, which are not included in this division by Hamm. Other authors outside of China, such as Margaret Wan, David Der-wei Wang, Pieter Keulemans, and John Christopher Hamm have all focused their research on *wuxia* novels in the Qing Dynasty.\(^{40}\) The latter also published a monograph on Jin Yong's works between the 1950s and 1970s (*Paper Swordsmen*). This leads to the conclusion that the Republican Era, the second category in the above list and the period known for its extensive production of *wuxia* literature, has been left uncovered. Only Roland Altenburger has given coverage to this period, dedicating two chapters to stories written in the Republican Era that focus on the female *xia*. The first chapter focuses on the story of Lü Siniang 吕四娘, the legendary granddaughter of Ming loyalist Lü Liuliang 吕留良 (1629-1683) and alleged assassin of the Yongzheng Emperor 雍正帝 (1678-1735), whose myth has been adapted to different genres in the Republican Era, especially to that of the fictionalisation of Qing history.\(^{41}\) The second chapter focuses on three stories published in the 1930s.\(^{42}\) All of these stories were published in Shanghai and the interesting aspect that comes forward is how the main characters of these three stories represent the “new women” of the Republican Era. For example, in Xu Zhuodai's story, which is set in 1920s Shanghai (a change from the canonical dynastic setting), the female protagonist is enrolled in university and her fiancée studies abroad in Germany.\(^{43}\) These aspects show the “modernisation” of the *wuxia* novel of the Republican Era, and promises more interesting material in the novels of this period.


\(^{41}\) Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 288.

\(^{42}\) These are Zhang Henshui’s 张恨水 *Predestined Marriage in Tears and Laughter* (*Tixiao Yinyuan 嘲笑因缘*), Xu Zhuodai’s 徐卓呆 *Female xia in Red Trousers* (*Nüxia hong kuzi* 女侠红裤子), and Gu Mingdao’s 顾明道 *Female xia from Huangjiang* (*Huangjiang Nüxia 荒江女侠*). See Roland Altenburger, 321-360.

\(^{43}\) Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 345-347.
In the 1980s and 1990s the *wuxia* genre was “rediscovered” by Chinese scholars and became part of China’s national heritage, adding to the interest in the genre. Systematic research on Republican-era *wuxia* fiction has been carried out mainly in China, but again, like in Altenburger's book, as part of a bigger framework, either within studies on Republican-era popular fiction or broad histories of *wuxia* literature. For example, Zhang Gansheng’s work on Republican-era popular fiction spotted at least 150 different categories (e.g. patriotic, female virtue, international, political, love story, fantasy, etc.), and put these together in four different groups:

1. mocking corrupt society
2. describing what goes on behind the scenes of visiting prostitutes and the court
3. encouraging the military/martial *wu* spirit
4. transplanting Western or Japanese books

The third category refers to *wu* but often implies other forms of literature related to *xia*. However, what is defined by Zhang Gansheng’s work as popular fiction (*tongsu xiaoshuo* 通俗小说) had been derogatorily defined by New Culture intellectuals as the “Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies School”. However, as Xueqing Xu states:

There never was a school of twentieth-century Chinese writers who called themselves the Mandarin Duck and Butterfly School, and no single writer has asserted its existence or acknowledged being a member. … [The term] came to be used as a derogatory phrase for a variety of fictional types that May Fourth writers rejected as socially irresponsible and mere frivolous and commercial entertainment. They widened the label’s meaning so to include all kinds of contemporary fiction, whether in classical or vernacular language, including, in addition to love stories, social, historical, detective, and knight-errant novels.

This description of the school and its name shows how in fact May Fourth intellectuals looked down on Republican-era popular fiction. Not only was the

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45 It is possible to assume that with “knight-errant” the author intends *wuxia* novels.
name Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies derogatory, but even the more neutral term *tongsu* 通俗, i.e. popular, part of the term *tongsu xiaoshuo*, i.e. popular fiction, started to obtain a negative connotation in this period,\(^{47}\) a viewpoint that continued to be promoted by the Communist Party throughout Maoist China.\(^{48}\) However, ever since Perry Links work *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies* in 1981,\(^{49}\) scholars have tried to set the record straight and given Chinese popular fiction of the Republican Era the place it deserves.

Although it is not possible to talk about a properly organised school, scholars have noticed how the centres of production of popular fiction novels started out in Shanghai and Suzhou and from the 1930s shifted towards Beijing and Tianjin.\(^{50}\) In the area of Shanghai and Suzhou many of the authors were those that could claim some fame from the end of the Qing dynasty, e.g. statesmen and famous members of society.\(^{51}\) Unfortunately, there is no exhaustive list of these publications, so it is difficult to determine exactly how many authors were operative in that area at that time. In fact, Perry Link talks about a “Mosquito Press”, due to the lightness of the stories in these newspapers, but also their short lives.\(^{52}\) It is estimated that there were around 500 authors towards 1929, which is twice as many as those known at the end of the Qing dynasty, hence an unprecedented booming within a short amount of time (not even 40 years).\(^{53}\) The production centre then shifted to the north in the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s due to the “Japanese-sponsored government, [which] encouraged popular fiction for reasons of political control”.\(^{54}\) In addition to this, the authors started to think about their works as “products” and as such had a specific audience as target, which indicates a more strategic approach.

\(^{47}\) Ibid., 68.  
\(^{48}\) Ibid., 47.  
\(^{49}\) See Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*.  
\(^{50}\) Zhang Gansheng, *Selection of Republican-era Popular Fiction*, 41-75. Zhang Gansheng has named these the Southern and the Northern School. However, as Xueqing Xu points out, the notion of “school” for Chinese popular fiction of this period might be inappropriate as none of these authors were conscious of being part of it or followed a specific manifesto.  
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 41.  
\(^{52}\) Link, *Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies*, 118-124.  
\(^{53}\) Ibid., 170.  
\(^{54}\) Ibid., 169. Unfortunately, Perry does not give any more explanations or references about this political control.
To return to the division of popular fiction by Zhang Gansheng at the beginning of this section, one of the categories is completely dedicated to martial arts (wu), showing how these are a fundamental part of the literary production of this period. The martial-spirit section often goes combined with the concept of xia and in fact some of these subgenres omitted the term martial arts (wu) only using xia but implying the martial spirit, showing a strong link between these two.55

In fact, wuxia stories occupy a different role within the production of popular fiction. According to Hamm, already from the 1920s onwards, it was not uncommon to find claims for a link between the concept of xia and the project of national restoration in the prefaces of the martial arts novels.56 Hamm also states that recent scholarship on Republican-era martial arts fiction has analysed the authors' reflections on the literary as well as the historical and social changes.57 However, Hamm also states that in all the Republican-era martial arts fiction there is a form of nostalgia for Chinese values and social forms of the past.58 As the analysis of Wang Dulu’s novels will show, this is not always the case. The plots in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy are embedded in a traditional Confucian society, but we find that there are more problems caused by this society and its rules than happiness. Nostalgia does not come to the forefront in his novels.

The serialised publication of the wuxia genre had actually already started in the 1910s and it continued throughout the 1920s where it reached its apogee.59 In Mao Dun’s words

the “knight-errantry craze” (wuxia kuang 武侠狂) [under the Southern School] was simply a ‘bowl of magic potion’ concocted by ‘feudal forces’

55 Zhang Gansheng, Selection of Republican-era Popular Fiction, 28-30.
56 Hamm, Paper Swordsmen, 21. On that same page he also specifies: [...] “but the aura of progressivism that may have accompanied such claims in the first decade of the century quickly dissipated in the face of the Literary Revolution’s vehement assertion of a very different model for a forward-looking culture and its relegation of contemporary popular literature to the category of the ‘old’.”
57 But he only states this without going into depth. The references he gives are Link, Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies, Luo, Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi, Zhang, Mingguo tongsu xiaoshuo lungao, and Chen Pingyuan, Dream of xiake of all ages, which can be found in this section.
58 In R. Bromley, Lost Narratives, Popular Fictions, Politics and Recent History, (London and New York: Routledge. 1998), 1-23, we can find an interesting debate about nostalgia and how it is used in popular fiction often as a tool to form popularised memory, which then becomes collective memory.
59 Luo, History of Chinese wuxia fiction, 197.
to distract the people by channelling their frustration and anger toward corrupt society and the ruling class into a fantasy world.  

Another example of this production in Shanghai at the beginning of the 1930s is the serialised wuxia novels which are analysed by Altenburger and which I have addressed in the previous section. However, in Shanghai publication stopped at the beginning of the 1930s. The Japanese had occupied Manchuria in September 1931 and attacked Shanghai only four months later at the beginning of 1932. “The Nanking government’s policy of nonresistance became the subject of acute controversy in Shanghai […]. Writers in the May Fourth tradition who pressed for resistance to Japan had to dodge government censors” and this eventually led to the downfall of Shanghai as the centre of production in the beginning of the 1930s.

According to Luo Liqun, the wuxia novels written in the 1930s and 1940s are characterised by a higher artistic quality than those written in the 1910s and 1920s. They had a wide distribution in Chinese cities, especially in Beijing and Tianjin, where these novels flourished. Being a very widespread phenomenon, it can be considered as a cultural expression appealing to more social strata. In fact, Luo Liqun gives examples of different authors on the topic. Most importantly Zhang Henshui writes in his book Martial Arts Fiction in the lower classes of society (Wuxia Xiaoshuo Zai Xiaceng Shehui 武侠小说在下层社会) that the reasons for the popularity of these novels amongst the lower classes in the 1930s and 1940s was threefold: firstly, feudalism (in the Communist sense) was too

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60 As quoted in Zhang Zhen, An Amorous History of the Silver Screen, 238. As is possible to notice, the wuxia genre in literature and cinema are closely linked. In this chapter, Zhang Zhen talks about the production of martial arts films (wuxia pian 武侠片) in Shanghai between 1928 and 1932, and uses in this specific case the words of a writer, and not those of a director, actor or producer. In fact, the number of martial arts films produced in these years was enormous and shows how the public was interested in the genre as a whole (where there were no cinemas, the films were simply replaced with paper versions). The martial arts films, however, were banned in 1932 by the Nationalist government through a policy against superstition. (See Prasenjit Duara, “Knowledge and Power in the Discourse of Modernity: The Campaign against Popular Religion in Early Twentieth Century China”, Journal of Asian Studies 50, (1991): 67-83). The wuxia craze was also based on the more direct identification of the audience with the warriors. Hence, the visual impact of the fighting warriors was believed to instigate the people to rebel, causing uprisings and social disorders. For more information regarding Republican Era wuxia films, see Zhang, An Amorous History of the Silver Screen, 199-243; Stephen Teo, Chinese Martial Arts Cinema: The Wuxia Tradition (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2009).

61 Link, Mandarin Ducks and Butterflies, 32.

62 Luo, Zhongguo wuxia xiaoshuo shi, 197.
overbearing on society and had turned many people from the lower strata into “slaves”; secondly, the topics in these novels are set in a fantasy world that offered its readers a place to escape to; thirdly, it informed people about fighting methods although there are many mistakes.\(^{63}\) Luo Liqun also cites Qu Qiubai 瞿秋白 (1899-1936), a member of the Chinese Communist Party, according to whom wuxia novels promoted too much individualism and readers were being “enslaved”.\(^{64}\) This “Communist” view on wuxia novels was shared later by Mao Zedong, who banned the production of wuxia products.

Other reasons for the success and importance of the wuxia genre in the Republican Era can be explained as a result of its close relation to the history and society of that period. A historical phenomenon defined by Lloyd Eastman as “The Yin Side of Society”, is one example of this.\(^{65}\) Folk sects and secret brotherhoods had become more and more widespread during the nineteenth century\(^{66}\) but after 1911, this phenomenon was present in Chinese society in a different form. Eastman calls these ‘Protective Societies’, which were led locally and had paramilitary forces. Religion and near supernatural events often played a role in these societies,\(^{67}\) especially during the training process of its members, which became a moment of initiation and purification. The members strongly believed in physical invulnerability and it was even believed that, at the more advanced levels, the slashes of a sword at the chest would leave no mark at all.\(^{68}\) These aspects of physical prowess and pseudo-magic related directly to the “magical martial arts” subgenre. In the 1930s, under Nationalist rule, the societies disappeared, but emerged at the surface again during the chaotic period of the war with the Japanese. During the Civil War these societies even became the “organisational vehicle of the

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\(^{63}\) This is quoted in ibid., 201.

\(^{64}\) Ibid., 201-202.


\(^{67}\) According to Eastman, religion is what differentiated this society from the local ‘self-defence corpses’ created by the villages, and often they were useless against large bandit gangs.

\(^{68}\) Eastman, *Family, Fields, and Ancestors*, 226. Once, a sceptical GMD official in the late 1920s after witnessing Red Spear members being cut by swords but displaying no wounds wrote: “I who was once highly suspicious of Red Spear claims to invulnerability, now believe that they undergo a physiological change which renders them resistant to bullets and sword wounds”, quoted in Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China, 1845-1945* (Stanford CA: Stanford University Press, 1980), 191.
local elites” and, maybe because of the different view held by the local elite towards these groups, they started to obtain more and more power.

In his final section, Eastman explains how China’s three big revolutions of the twentieth century (the Republican Revolution in 1911, the Nationalist revolution in 1927, and the Communist revolution in 1949) grew out of a context that saw a population characterised by violence for over a century. The bandits and members of sects, brotherhoods and protective societies played a decisive role in these important historic events and they can be viewed as “progressive forces that forced to the revolutionary movement”, or as “primitive revolutionaries”. This shows how the chaotic and lawless reality of the Republican Era was not too far from the contents of a wuxia story.

Another good historical example of wuxia values applied to historical events in the Republican Era is described in Eugenia Lean’s book Public Passion. Here she analyses the case study of a woman who, in the name of traditional Chinese ideals, such as filial piety (xiao 孝), revenge (baochou 报仇), and justice (yi 义), executes a ‘rightful’ homicide. Shi Jianqiao kills with a Browning gun the famous warlord, Sun Chuanfang, on the 13th of November 1935 in a Buddhist temple in Tianjin to avenge the death of her father, Shi Congbin. After the homicide she immediately distributes pieces of paper that present a poem written by her. It also describes her act and her apology for having carried it out in a sacred Buddhist temple.

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69 Eastman, Family, Fields, and Ancestors, 229.
70 Ibid., 229, we can find the example of the town of Xiemaxiang: “Everybody who is anybody belongs to [the Society of Elder Brothers] and it operated quite openly. The fact that it is outlawed by the Central Government does not seem to bother anyone […] the society does not operate directly in politics… But it does have great political power. Almost all the people of wealth and education in the xiang are members… Membership in the Brothers’ Society is virtually the sine qua non, in fact, for membership in local government…”
71 He reports H. J. Lamley’s words from “Hsieh-tou: The Pathology of Violence in China”, in Ch’ing-shih Wen-t’i 3, no. 7. (1977), that say how in fact South East China did not experience any moment of peace, not even during the ‘high Qing’ period of eighteenth century China.
72 Eastman, Family, Fields, and Ancestors, 239.
74 She signs these pieces of paper with “I dare not forget the revenge of my father a single moment; It breaks my heart to watch my mother’s temples turn grey. I am loath to let her suffer any longer, The opportunity should not be squandered. I cannot bear to look back to ten years ago. Things have remained the same, only the scenery has changed. I arrive at the Society not to find the Buddha, I seek death, not immortality,” signed by “woman of revenge / revengeful woman” (baochou nü 报仇女). See Lean, Public Passions, 22.
temple. The dynamics and main actors in this historical event were a very obvious inspiration for a \textit{wuxia} story, and in fact, only eleven days after the homicide, a serialised story called \textit{Blood splashing Buddhists} (\textit{Xiejian jushilin} 血溅居士林), appeared in the newspaper \textit{Xin Tianjinbao} 新天津报. Shi Jianqiao obtained the public’s sympathy because of how her story was told and because it focused on those specific Chinese cultural values that stemmed from Confucianism and that were still intrinsic to the Chinese society of the 1930s, eventually leading her to be absolved of the murder.

Shi Jianqiao’s example shows that, although May Fourth intellectuals were interested in progress and in writing a new literature in order to create a modern society, Confucian ideals were still very much embedded in Republican-era Chinese culture. Committing a righteous murder in order to obtain social justice was close to the hearts of the Chinese living in a disruptive and violent age. This intertwining of real and fictional social justice can be found in \textit{wuxia} novels, turning them into exceptional and interesting testimonies of their time. However, at this stage, the question regarding which novels to analyse arises. The confusion surrounding the \textit{wuxia craze} makes it difficult to decide what sources are apt for scholarly research.

When analysing the field of Republican-era \textit{wuxia} fiction there is a vast variety of authors whose works have not been studied by scholars. The name of Wang Dulu stands out for different reasons. First of all, he is described as one of “The Four Great \textit{wuxia} fiction writers of the Northern School in the Republican Era” (\textit{minguo wuxia xiaoshuo beipai si da jia} 民国武侠小说北派四大家),\textsuperscript{75} with “Northern School” referring to the centre of production of the north in the 1930s and 1940s. The subgenre Wang Dulu wrote for is defined as tragic love martial arts (\textit{yanqing wuxia} 言情武侠), combining martial arts with love and personal relations. In fact, Wang Dulu’s works present characters famous for their psychological

\textsuperscript{75} Luo Liqun, \textit{History of Chinese \textit{wuxia} Fiction}, 244. The other Great \textit{Wuxia} Authors of the North are Huanzhu Louzhu 还珠楼主 (1902-1961), Zheng Zhengyin 郑证因 (1900-1960), and Zhao Huanting 赵焕亭.
Wang Dulu’s work has been hugely appreciated by other *wuxia* writers and even by film director Ang Lee with his rendition of *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* in 2000, which received international success and acclaim (amongst which an Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film).\(^7\)

Finally, Wang Dulu’s biography, which I address in the third chapter, aids in making these novels interesting for scholarly research. Wang Dulu was born and grew up in the midst of the chaotic events of the Republican Era. Moreover, the author’s training at Beijing University and association with the New Culture Movement creates an interesting contrast with the “old and feudal” *wuxia* novels, which were so heavily despised by the intellectuals of the time. Wang Dulu in 1938 reluctantly accepted a post in Japanese-occupied Qingdao as *wuxia* novelist at the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* 青岛新民报, a journal led by the pro-Japanese organisation *Xinmin Hui* 新民会. Wang Dulu and his family needed money quickly, and writing *wuxia* novels, although a form of literature that the New Culture Movement did not hold in high esteem, was probably the best opportunity he was going to get in these dire circumstances.

Not only does this contrast of *wuxia* fiction written by an author trained in the New Culture Movement make these novels peculiar, also their publication in a pro-Japanese journal in Japanese-occupied China gives them a special status. Not much research has been carried out on literature produced in Japanese-occupied

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3. Methodology for the analysis of Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*

The question to answer is how do Wang Dulu’s *wuxia* novels enhance our knowledge of the Republican Era? As pointed out in the introduction, especially in the late 1930s *wuxia* novels were commissioned by pro-Japanese associations to actively promote the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperey Sphere. However, the zenith of production and consumption of *wuxia* novels had begun before the *Xinmin Hui*’s active promotion. Hence, why did the Republican-era Chinese enjoy reading these novels? How did these novels relate to and what do they say about the Republican Era?

In this thesis I will adopt a methodology that starts at the textual level of the Chinese terms used by Wang Dulu in his *Crane-Iron Series* and then broadens to a thematic analysis of literary characters and themes. After having more comprehensively defined the concept of *xia* in the first chapter, which is based on the lacunae shown in the first literature review here above, the three chapters analysing Wang Dulu’s novels each start with the introduction of a specific Chinese term: *xia*, *yi* 义 and *baobiao* 保镖. These three terms have been chosen specifically because: 1. *xia* remains the key concept that is analysed in this thesis, in order to answer the question regarding the reasons for the literary characters’ actions; 2. *yi*, i.e. righteousness, is seen as the virtuous aspect of *xia* as it is considered to be one of the main aspects of the code of *xia*; and 3 the *baobiao*, i.e. a protector and expert of martial arts, is seen as the commercialisation of *wu* and the separation from *xia* as he or she does not fight to obtain *xia*, but to earn a living. Hence, all

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79 Due to the difficulty of accessing and reading the original version of these novels in the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* newspaper held at the Qingdao Municipal Archive, the texts used in this research project are the ones compiled for publication in book format in Shanghai 1947-48.
these terms are closely related to xia. For each term a corpus is made to establish in which semantic spheres they are dominant. However, as Tony McEnery and Andrew Wilson have pointed out, the usage of corpora in cultural and historical analysis is not very frequent, due to the fact that it overly decontextualises the object of research: in fact “the samples are […] removed from their social and textual contexts”. Jeroen Van Daele arrives at a similar conclusion in his case study on the translation of Hollywood film in Francoist Spain, where the corpus approach does not suffice to give a comprehensive analysis, and he concludes by saying that “translational cultural analysis of narrative texts requires contextual, historicizing analysis”.

Hence, the corpora in each chapter do give interesting systematic results as they show the semantic spheres towards which the research broadens afterwards, but are insufficient to fully understand the term and its relation to the Republican Era. This “flaw” in the corpus-linguistics approach is resolved by the second section of each chapter. Here the findings are analysed in the historical context of the Republican Era. The literal-semantic level serves as a re-elaboration of the findings of the corpora to better establish the broader analysis that follows. This broader analysis is mainly a combination of semiotics and New Historicism.

The semiotic approach is used as these novels include many symbols, the most important one being the instigation to rebel against power structures. In wuxia novels these symbols are constituted by the construction of the “event (or person) that brings injustice” and the “person (or action) who resolves this situation”, i.e. xia. Most often the means of the xia to restore justice is through wu, martial arts, hence the term wuxia fiction. The meaning of these symbols (injustice, restorer of justice, martial arts), as those that can be found in most popular fiction novels, is rather self-evident. However, it is the semiotic approach that unveils what the underlying ideologies and myths in these novels are.

83 Jeroen Vandaele, “Corpus or Interpretation? How to censor film through small shifts (and how to study this strategy)”, (paper presented at the Research Models in Translation Studies II Conference at the University of Manchester, Manchester, 29 April – 2 May, 2011).
84 Dominic Strinati, An Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture (London: Routledge, 1995), 104. For an excellent study on Semiotics see Umbert Eco, A Theory of Semiotics (London: The
The semiotic method of interpretation has been studied by presumably the most important scholar on the analysis of popular fiction, Umberto Eco, although his view on the semiotic interpretation of texts has slightly changed throughout the decades.\textsuperscript{85} He advocated in his first famous work *Opera Aperta* of 1962 for “unlimited semiosis”, giving the scholar-interpreters a rather large amount of freedom to interpret the texts of their analysis.\textsuperscript{86} But in 1990 in *The Limits of Interpretation* he states that with this book he desires “to make clear that the notion of unlimited semiosis does not lead to the notion that interpretation has no criteria”.\textsuperscript{87} There are certain limits within the interpretation of a text and exceeding these would make the interpretation improbable, decontextualised, and ultimately incredible. Certain limits of the interpretation I present in this thesis are those formulated by the results of the corpora. For example, the term *yi* is present, amongst others, in the semantic sphere of family relations, hence, the analysis in relation to the Republican Era also focuses on this area.

To further the limits of interpretation of these novels in this thesis, the section of analysis comprises also a New Historicist approach. The symbols and signs that semiotics brings forth are interpreted in a historical fashion. Eco in fact states that in order for an interpretation to be valid, the addressee of the text (or interpreter), who is trained within a specific field, needs to be sure of the historical settings in which a text was produced, not to understand the intentions of the author, but the “cultural framework” in which it was produced.\textsuperscript{88} By failing to do so, any text can give an infinite number of interpretations. Hence I apply a New Historicist approach.\textsuperscript{89}

Interpreting literature from a historical point of view is a practice that came

\textsuperscript{85} For a study on Umberto Eco’s view on the interpretation of texts and its changes see Peter Bondanella, *Umberto Eco and the Open Text: Semiotics, Fiction, Popular Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

\textsuperscript{86} Umberto Eco, *Opera Aperta* (Milano: Bompiani, 1962).


\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, 5.

back in vogue again in the 1980s. This vision includes a literature that is inseparable from the historical period it was written in: there is a shift from history and literature to history in literature. John Brannigan says that “the focus on the status of history in literary text is probably the most important contribution” that New historicism (together with Cultural Materialism) has brought to literary studies. “[T]exts of all kinds are the vehicles of politics insofar as texts mediate the fabric of social, political and cultural formations”, making literature “an active part of a particular historical moment” or, as formulated by Howard, “an agent in constructing a culture’s sense of reality”. New historicism sees literary texts as the platform where power relations are made visible. Not only are the relations of power part of the historicity of the novels but also the characteristics of the Republican Era are intrinsic elements. In fact, Wang Dulu’s wuxia novels propose plots and structures of chaos and social disruption that require a hero to restore order, echoing the events of the Republican Era, which I address in the third chapter. As I will discuss in the chapters that analyse Wang Dulu’s works, the changes that China was undergoing in this period also come to the forefront in these novels, even if their historical setting is in the Qing Dynasty.

To conclude, by combining these different methodologies and theories, the attempt is to start from the most basic level and systematically analyse with Corpus Linguistics how a Chinese character (xia and yi) or binome (baobiao) is used. This is then followed by the analysis of the semantic spheres in which these characters appear. Once these spheres have been identified the analysis is broadened to the themes and plots of the novels, which, through a semiotic approach, present signs and symbols that are then interpreted. However, this interpretation is limited to that

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90 I use the adverb 'again' here, because “[i]t is almost a commonplace that post-structuralism was a form of ahistoricism, and that new historicism marked something like a ‘return’ to history. After the supposed formalist relativism of the 1980s, literary criticism found history again, although now in a more rigorous and enlightened form”. See Claire Colebrook, New Literary Histories, New Historicism and Contemporary Criticism (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 1.


of Republican-era history through the New Historicist approach, preventing thus impossible and fantastical conjectures. This systematic approach attempts to make the interpretation of these novels as coherent and as (Republican-era) history-bound as possible.

4. Chapter outline

However, before arriving at the analysis of Wang Dulu’s novels, the origins and development of *xia* need to be traced. The understanding of the term *xia* and its functions are paramount for the analysis of the Republican Era.

Hence, the first chapter retraces the origins of the term *xia*. The historical background of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) is given as it is this period in which the historical *xia* arose as a social phenomenon. This is followed by the vision of the four main schools of thought (Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, and Daoism) on *xia*. The Warring States Period serves as a prelude to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) in which the term is defined in the *Shuowen Jiezi* 说文解字 (100 AD), the first mono-character dictionary. Then the chapter reflects on these first findings and brings a new interpretation to the term *xia*, that of virtue, which will become fundamental again for the analysis of Wang Dulu’s novels in chapters four, five, and six.

The second chapter includes an overview on *xia* and its relation to history. The chapter initially discusses what sources to use for this overview, based on the new interpretations presented in the first chapter. It traces the character’s development and changes throughout Chinese dynastic history. Accounts on the historical *xia* became scant from the Tang Dynasty (618-907) onwards, while literary production flourished. Hence the chapter presents a historical overview of the literature that addresses *xia* and attempts to assess the development and different roles this character had in different dynasties. The chapter ends with a short history of on the Republican Era and its similarities with the Warring States Period.
The third chapter focuses on Wang Dulu’s biography and the publication of the *Crane-Iron Series* on the background of historical events. This section introduces four aspects of the author’s life: his banner ancestry, his formation in the New Culture Movement, his life in Japanese-occupied Qingdao, the newspapers in which his novels were published. These four aspects are presented at the start of each section and are then broadened to bigger discussions in these respective fields. These elements have all aided in forming the author and his works and hence introduce the analyses of the works in the following chapters.

The fourth chapter is the first of the three case-study chapters on Wang Dulu’s works. This chapter focuses on *xia*. First a textual analysis is carried out to see in what way the term *xia* is used by Wang Dulu. This analysis shows that the term is most predominantly used in personal names (e.g. the *xia* from Langzhong 阆中侠), that different binomes with *xia* correspond to different levels of *xia*, and that the term is not indissolubly linked to martial arts. After this textual analysis, the focus broadens and it looks at the literary character of Yu Jiaolong 玉娇龙 and how she represents a personification of the Republican Era, showing how Wang Dulu’s works directly relate to this period.

The fifth chapter focuses on *yi*, a Confucian value often translated as righteousness. This concept is seen here as the virtuous side of *xia*, showing ultimately that *yi* is more important to *xia* than martial arts (*wu*). To make this case stronger, as the views on *xia* by the four schools of thought of the Warring States Period (Confucianism, Mohism, Legalism, and Daoism) were analysed in the first chapter, here their view on *yi* is analysed, drawing similar conclusions to those on *xia*. Then a textual analysis in Wang Dulu’s novels is carried out and the results show that the most important aspects of *yi* are its relation with *xia* and the relations it establishes between people. This relation with *xia* is analysed in the figure of Xie Xianniang 谢纤娘, i.e. prostitute *xia*. She is the *xia* that does not know how to fight but is nonetheless defined a *xia*, showing that *yi* is more important for *xia* than martial arts. The chapter concludes with the analysis of “*yi*-bonds”, i.e. the type of relations between *xia* based on a mutual understanding of *yi*. The results show that *yi* between the *xia* of Wang Dulu substitutes free love and replaces a romantic
relation that would have taken place in a society without Confucianism. In fact, the 
plots of the three *xia* couples are analysed and seen as a progression similar to that 
of the Republican Era, which sees the transformation from old traditional values 
into new and modern ones, especially in the area of free marriage and romantic 
love.

The sixth and final chapter focuses on the *baobiao* 保镖, a literary character 
who is paid for his martial arts skills mainly in order to provide protection (but 
sometimes also to attack). As there has been no analysis yet on this literary figure, 
there is an attempt to see where the origins of this character lie. Then the *baobiao* in 
Wang Dulu’s novels are analysed. First the chapter analyses the commercial aspect 
of the *baobiao*, as he or she receives a salary and is often part of a protection 
agency business that provides insurance in case of failure of protection. Then it 
focuses on the character of Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲, a female *baobiao* who is also 
defined as a *xia* and who best represents the simultaneous presence of May Fourth 
and Confucian ideals. Finally it focuses on the quintessence of martial arts for this 
literary figure and how this violent aspect is key to the Republican Era, which 
includes figures such as warlords and their armies.

5. Conclusion

This introduction has addressed four issues prior to the analysis of *xia* and 
the case study of Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*.

The first one regards the decision not to translate the term *xia* (and 
consequently *wuxia*). As is often the case with other Chinese values and concepts 
(*ren* 仁, *zhong* 忠, *dao* 道, *de* 德, *yin-yang* 阴阳, *guanxi* 关系, etc.) the preference 
here is to maintain the Chinese term and to avoid assimilations with terms and 
concepts in English that can be suggested as translation. Forms of translation are 
possible but none of these effectively correspond to the term *xia*. Similarly, the 
above-mentioned terms can also be translated, e.g. *de* can be translated as “virtue”, 
but it always remains “virtue in the Chinese sense”, hence providing another reason 
not to translate *xia*.
The second issue, which also relates to the untranslatability of the term xia, is that of the partial definition of xia in wuxia scholarship. The link between martial arts (wu), or, by extension, violence in general, and xia has been taken often as indissoluble and exclusive. The notion of wenxia has been addressed by Chinese scholars but this connotation of xia without violence has not yet been taken into significant consideration, especially in Western scholarship. Hence, this section has given grounds to trace the historical origins and meanings of the term xia in the second chapter and to understand whether this violent connotation of xia is correct. The results of the second chapter will constitute the foundation on which the analysis of Wang Dulu’s novels is based.

The second literature review that has been presented in this chapter has analysed the existing scholarship on Chinese popular and wuxia fiction of the Republican Era. It has established that Republican-era popular fiction, of which wuxia fiction is a genre, was not a genre promoted by literary societies and was despised by those intellectuals that were part of the New Culture Movement or May Fourth Movement. Wuxia fiction constitutes one of the most important sections within popular fiction and reasons for this success have been addressed, making hence the case to study this literary genre.

Then it discussed the rationale behind the analysis of this literary genre and that will be applied in the final three chapters. After having retraced the origins of the term xia, the case-study on Wang Dulu’s novels is presented as a combination of approaches. First the expressions and words which contain the term xia is systematically put into a corpus and divided into semantic spheres. These results are discussed and form the base for a broader analysis regarding themes and plots in the novels. The approach used to identify such themes is a semiotic one, but limited to a historical dimension. By applying this methodology, these novels shed light on Republican-era social interactions and events.

The same structure is applied to the last two chapters. These concentrate on yi and baobiao. Yi (righteousness) has been chosen as a subject as it corresponds to a social virtue that a person applies to carry out good deeds, a definition that correspond to another interpretation of xia. This chapter will corroborate the
importance of righteousness, for *xia* making its virtuous aspect more important than that of martial arts (*wu*). *Baobiao* (protector) has been chosen, as a subject for analysis as it corresponds to a person trained in martial arts, a definition that corresponds to one interpretation of *xia*. This chapter will show how the *baobiao* represents the commercialisation of *xia*, focusing exclusively on martial arts and remuneration. By applying this methodology and analysing these terms, a more comprehensive meaning of *xia* will be revealed and its importance in the Republican Era explained.

The introduction concluded with the outlines of the chapters, which are ordered in a chronological manner. The first chapter starts with the origins of *xia* in the Warring States Period and its first acknowledged definition in the Han Dynasty. Then the development and changes of *xia* throughout Chinese imperial history are given in the second chapter and show that this literary phenomenon has a direct link with the historical period in which it is written. Then a case study on the Republican Era is given, which starts with the analysis of the author and is followed by the textual analysis of three concepts (*xia*, *yi*, and *baobiao*) within his most acclaimed novels.
CHAPTER 1

The origins of xia: identifying new interpretations

子路曰： “卫君待子而为政，子将奚先？”
子曰： “必也正名乎！”
子路曰： “有是哉，子之迂也！奚其正？”
子曰： “野哉由也！君子于其所不知，盖阙如也。名不正，则言不顺；言不顺，则事不成；事不成，则礼乐不兴；礼乐不兴，则刑罚不中；刑罚不中，则民无所措手足。故君子名之必可言也，言之必可行也。君子于其言，无所苟而已矣。” 1

Zilu said: “The ruler of Wei is waiting for you to govern, what will you do first?”
Confucius replied: “The necessary thing to do is to rectify the names (zhengming 正名)!”
Zilu said: “Is that it? You are beside the point! Why is there need for such rectification?”
Confucius replied: “Such a savage you are! An ideal man (junzi 君子), regarding what he does not know, shows reserve. If the names are not correct, then language is not true; if language is not true, then affairs are not completed; if affairs are not completed, the rites and music are not carried out; if rites and music are not carried out, the punishments will not be properly awarded; if punishments are not properly administered, the people do not know how to move hands and feet. Therefore, for an ideal man, names have to be able to be enunciated, and these enunciations have to be correct. An ideal man in regard to his words cannot have anything that is incorrect.”

Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BC)

1. Introduction

This section of Confucius’s Analects (Lunyu 论语) addresses the concept of zhengming 正名, i.e. “the rectification of names”. 2 This concept, as the above lines describe, stresses the importance of the correct understanding of terminology.

1 Confucius, Analects, Chapter XIII, section 3.
Without the appropriate understanding of the core concepts, all that follows and that is based on these concepts spirals in wrong directions causing confusion and misunderstanding. This concept was introduced by Confucius in a time famous for its philosophical fermentation and the first texts written in Chinese history. It becomes hence unsurprising that, before attempting to spread his teachings, China’s most influential philosopher calls for a rectification of the most basic aspects on which all his teachings are based, i.e. the terms he uses and their meanings. This same reasoning is applied to this chapter.

The Chinese character that I attempt to “rectify” here is 晧. The meaning of this Chinese ideogram is twofold: it can refer to a concept or a person. The concept of 晧 is often translated with “justice”, “altruism”, or “gallantry” towards friends and strangers and it is this conceptual aspect that I will attempt to stress in this chapter. The other meaning, that of a person defined as 晧, most often refers to a person who is altruistic and who actively takes action in order to restore justice, although it is not always clear who defines what is just or not. The 晧 often takes violent actions through swordsmanship or martial arts (武), the latter becoming a fundamental aspect for the popular literary genre which reached its zenith in the Republican Era and which I discuss in my case study. However, he or she can also undertake other forms of action that do not include violence in order to be altruistic or restore order. These courses of action go under the term of 文侠, i.e. adopting “culture” or “gentleness” (文) to obtain 晧, and has been far less researched by scholars.

In the introduction I have provided proof that scholars have not managed to give a comprehensive explanation of the term, and have called for a re-evaluation, which is carried out in this chapter. In order to shed light on 晧, which constitutes the basis of the subsequent analysis of the Republican Era, the first texts and the socio-historical and philosophical conditions in which these were written, i.e. those of the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and the Han Dynasty (206 BC-221

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3 David Der-wei Wang identifies this problem in late Qing popular court-cases and wuxia novels and it is applicable in fact to the overall concept and phenomenon of 晧. See, David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction 1849-1911* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 120.
AD), are analysed and put together in order to understand the term’s origins. However, in this analysis only those texts that refer to the “concept” of xia and the group of people that live and act according to xia are taken into consideration. The socio-historical context and the usage of xia in texts eventually led to the definition of the term in the Shuowen Jiezi 说文解字, (100 AD), the first mono-character dictionary of the Chinese language. Here it becomes clear what was defined as xia and what kinds of people and actions are xia-like at its origins.

Once the origins and definitions of the term have been retraced, I bring forth a new interpretation of the term that sees xia “upgraded” from concept to virtue. I give philosophical and philological reasons to sustain this argument, which will become key in the case study on the Republican Era.

2. Historical background of the Warring States Period

The origin of xia, both as person and as concept, can be traced back to the Warring States Period, “against a background of political instability, social unrest, and intellectual ferment”. While in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-454 BC) control of the land was based on lineage and family relations, the Warring States Period saw the development of the first true political states and apparatuses. The period between these two dynasties, i.e. the short-lived Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC), famous for being the dynasty that unified China under sole ruler Qin Shi Huangdi 秦始皇 (259-210 BC), saw a great amount of destruction of written texts. To the best of my knowledge there are no texts written in this dynasty that can further enhance our understanding of xia. There are other texts from the Warring States Period that use xia with completely different meanings. For example, the Inner Canon of Huangdi (Huangdi Neijing 黄帝内经), a text about Chinese medicine, uses the term xia (probably pronounced “xie”) as a verb that indicates “to reach” and is then followed by a part of the body. In the Book of Etiquette and Cerimonial (Yili 仪礼), one of the three Rites books and part of the Chinese Classics, the term xia is found twice as a verb in combination with movement or direction. In the Book of Rites (Liji 礼记) xia is followed by wu 鬓 and is translated by James Legge as “two bowls”. For more information on these books see Y.C. Kong trans., Huangdi Neijing: A Synopsis with commentaries (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2005); John Steele, trans., The I-li, or Book of Etiquette and Cerimonial (London: Probsthain, 1917); James Legge, Sacred Books of the East, vol. 28, part 4: ‘The Li Ki’ (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885).

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7 For more information on the Spring Autumn Period see Newell Ann Van Auken, “A Formal Analysis of the Chuenchiou (Spring and Autumn Classic)” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2006); Olivia Anna Rovsing Milburn, “History and Fiction: Tales of the Hegemons of the Spring and Autumn Period from c. 400 BC to AD 220” (PhD diss., University of London: 2003); Yuri
Zhou dynasty’s golden age was over and kingdoms arose and compared themselves to the Zhou. These kingdoms were hence smaller states with their own political structures and military powers, and these new groups of people based their power on wealth and military prowess. Rulers of this period employed officials who were divided into different ranks based on their salaries. These new groups in power applied new methods to maintain or take over other states. Proper warfare was used with the aim of annexing different states and destroying the enemy. According to historical records there were seven major states (Chu 楚, Han 韩, Qi 齐, Qin 秦, Wei 魏, Yan 燕, and Zhao 赵) and these were situated in the eastern regions of today’s China. Although there is not enough space here for an in-depth analysis of the specific wars between these states, it will suffice to mention that between 354 BC and 222 BC there were continuous and numerous attacks and alliances between two or more states at the same time. Tactics often included surprise attacks on states already engaged in war were rather common and caused continuous unrest and social disorder. Towards the year 230 BC, the state of Qin managed to conquer most territories. By 221 BC it had subjugated all Warring States and founded the first Chinese dynasty. The denomination “Warring States Period” comes from this continuous warfare being carried out in the timeframe (475-221 BC) that reaches roughly from the end of the annals written in the Spring and Autumn (Chunqu 春秋, 770-454 BC) until the unification of Qin in 221 BC.

The most important changes that occurred in the Warring States Period and that are peculiar to this period are those involving political ideology and the structure of the state. These state structures saw a sovereign ruler who executed

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9 Mario Sabattini, Paolo Santangelo, Storia Della Cina (Bari: Editori Laterza, 2000), 101.
11 See map.
12 Sabattini, Santangelo, Storia Della Cina, 103.
power according to laws and who was surrounded by dependent officials who would work in order to strengthen the ruler’s power. The final aim was to eliminate aristocracies, to have no social classes, and to have only two groups, i.e. “ruler” and “ruled”. The ruler was assisted by people that would make sure that the “ruled” were carrying out their tasks and that there were no uprisings. It is in this context of strong state control that xia appears for the first time.

A space that is linked to the xia of the literary genre is the jianghu 江湖. This space is not easily definable but it is often referred to as a magical dimension where supernatural events occur. However, the jianghu corresponds in many other works to the space between cities where the civil laws are not enforced. The jianghu, as a literary topos, arose much later, but the relation between xia and a space filled with perils and obstacles where the xia could thrive was already present in the Warring States Period. China has been defined as a “world of walled cities, [where] the city wall is sometimes regarded as a characteristic ‘Chinese’ feature”.

Walled cities have been part of Chinese civilisation since the Xia Dynasty (2070-1600 BC) and were the main form of settlement in the Warring States Period, and remained the norm until far into the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). This aspect is particularly interesting for the rise of xia as this literary character is known for being able to thrive and sometimes dwell for long periods in this space between walled cities.

The most important aspects of the phenomenon of the xia, i.e. the social and philosophical origins, are analysed here below, in combination with the texts in which the term xia occurs.

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15. The term jianghu 江湖 is composed of the characters jiang 江 meaning “river”, and hu 湖 meaning “lake”. The binome jianghu has been used with this literal sense of “rivers and lakes” in texts from the Warring States Period onwards. It is only in the Song Dynasty (eleventh century) in the poetry of Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989-1052) that this term obtained a metaphorical sense of “world where anything can happen”. It is then used in the fictional novel *Water Margin* 水浒传, which has been often seen as a predecessor of the wuxia genre, although the term xia never appears in this novel.
3. Philosophical context: The first written texts containing xia

During the Warring States Period religious and philosophical creativity and freedom were part of the historical context as the xia came into existence. This stage in Chinese cultural and philosophical history is defined as the “Hundred Schools”, due to numerous new schools of thought that were conceived. The major schools that will be addressed here and in this order are Legalism, Confucianism, Mohism, and Daoism. These clarify whether xia is to be considered part of one of the main philosophical schools of that time, and whether xia can be considered as a philosophical concept.

The document that often is considered by scholars to be the first where the term xia occurs is the Five Vermin (Wu Du), a chapter in the work of Legalist philosopher Han Feizi (280-233 BC). Its use here shows not only that the figure of the xia was present in the Warring States Period, but also that he was important enough to be firstly detected and secondly mentioned in the writings of the Legalists’ most important representative. The reason why it is to be found in the text of a Legalist thinker (and not in Confucian or Mohist texts of this period) can be explained by the fact that this school of thought looks at reality and does not suggest idealist models to which to aspire. They focus on society, on man, and do not give importance to tradition or ritual. Han Feizi’s Legalist view included strict obedience to the law (fa) and the authoritative position of the ruler, whose power was not personal but neutral as it was carried out according to the rules and regulations designed by the law. The xia, who highly values personal friendships and ignores state bureaucracy and rules, can hardly be in accordance with such a philosophy. Hence in Han Feizi’s work we can read:

儒以文乱法，侠以武犯禁。
The (Confucian) scholar with writing confuses the law; the xia with martial arts violates the prohibitions (rules).²⁰

而人主兼礼之，此所以乱也。夫离法者罪，而诸先生以文学取；犯禁者诛，而群侠以私剑养。²¹

Yet the lord of men respects both. That is the reason why disorder prevails. Indeed, every departure from laws ought to be condemned but all the professors are taken into office on account of their literary learning. Again every transgression of prohibitions ought to be punished, but all [xia]²² are accorded patronage because of their private swords.²³

From these sections it is interesting to notice immediately that the Confucian scholar and the xia are put in the same section and are treated equally. This link could be corroborated by Jian Zhao’s hypothesis that the historical xia and the Confucian scholar both come from the same social class, i.e. the shì 士. The shì class split into civilian and military camps at the beginning of the Spring and Autumn Period period (770-476 BC) and hence originated two new groups that were in search of work and roamed kingdoms, one who would carry out rituals (ru 儒) and one who would fight for lords (xia).²⁴ In the Warring States Period Han Feizi condemns both these new social phenomena as they both ignore the law: one by his writings, and the other by his actions.

In the second extract of the Han Feizi, xia refers to a group of people who use violence and therefore are in defiance of the law, which is the ultimate truth according to the Legalists. In the chaos and social unrest of the Warring States Period many people were forced to fight, or to employ those who would fight for them, in order to obtain justice or to defend themselves and others, a conduct that clashed with the beliefs of the Legalists. The Legalist view stresses here the union between xia and (illegal use of) martial arts (wu 武). This union is not always

²⁰ My translation. As this sentence is key in the understanding of ancient forms of xia I have preferred to provide my own translation which is as close to the Chinese original as possible for word order and meaning.
²¹ Han Feizi, Chapter 49, section 8.
²² The translation by Liao uses the word ‘cavaliers’, which, as seen in the introduction of this chapter, will be avoided as a translation.
inevitable or exclusive, as I discuss later in this chapter. Nevertheless, the Legalist philosophy condemned the figure of the *xia* as criminal and is represented by the definition of Han Feizi.

Apart from the famous section in the “Five Vermin” chapter, a previous chapter of the *Han Feizi*, the Eight Fallacies (*Ba Shuo* 八说) also contains the term *xia*. Here the *xia* is one of the eight fallacies that could potentially ruin a kingdom. This social group did not aid in the smooth government of the ruler and was considered an obstruction to the rightful execution of the law.

弃官宠交谓之有侠。… 有侠者官职旷也。^{26}

Who deserts official posts for cultivating personal friendships, is called a *xia*. … The appearance of *xia* [implies] vacancies of official posts.^{27}

Hence, not only were the *xia* poisonous for a good government, the above section also implies that the *xia* come from a high position, although they preferred not to be involved in State affairs. This connection with the upper bureaucratic classes corroborates the link with the other social class of the *shi* 士, from which also the Confucian scholar stems,^{28} but again, the *xia* is ruinous according to Legalist philosophy.

As to Confucianism, Luo Liqun analyses the similarities and differences between the *xia* and the Confucian ideal man (*junzi* 君子) through examples in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 礼记).^{29} He demonstrates that in fact these people initially had the same values, such as speaking the truth, being loyal, and despising wealth.^{30} Furthermore, the aspect of “wandering” also seems to be part of both figures: the

26 *Han Feizi*, Chapter 48 (*Ba Shuo* 八说), section 1.
29 The *Liji* or *Book of Rites* is one of the ancient “Five Classics” and is said to have been compiled by Confucius (551-479 BC) himself.
Confucian scholar, like Confucius and Mengzi themselves, wandered from state to state to find a king interested in their help and willing to take them at their court (where they according to Han Feizi disturbed the law with their writings). The xia had the same habit of wandering through kingdoms\(^{31}\) where they set wrongs right (also without consideration of the laws that were so important for the Legalists), and often would be employed by lords in whose service they would enter. These similarities can be again attributed to their shared origin in the shi class.

However, regarding the morals of these two figures, there are some differences. From a structural perspective, the Confucian ideal man carries out his acts based on the \textit{Book of Rites} and follows the codes that are supposed to be the same for all, as all people should act according to \textit{ren} (benevolence 仁). This assumption by Confucius is highly idealistic and often does not reflect reality. The more realistic xia bases his vision of right and wrong on the actions carried out by people and his personal friendships, and not on a set of rules.\(^{32}\) For Confucians, social order was maintained by specific bonds between people. These mainly followed a rigid hierarchy: son towards father, wife towards husband, subject towards king, etc. Through this social hierarchy, the main attempt of the Confucian scholar was to obtain social harmony,\(^{33}\) which again is an idealistic attitude towards reality. The xia is disrupter of this harmony due to the chaos caused to obtain xia-like justice. However, the Confucian bond of friendship stands out as being the only one to be based on terms of equality. This aspect is one of few that show a similarity to the types of bonds a xia would form. However, xia could also be applied between strangers, and friendship was not paramount for a xia to reach out to another person.

Tellingly, the Confucian interpretation of righteousness, i.e. \textit{yi} 义, differs substantially from that of the xia. For the Confucian ideal man (junzi), righteousness (yi) meant “doing what is right” according to the \textit{Book of Rites}, while

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\(^{31}\) The term for the wandering xia in Chinese is youxia 游侠, and is explained in more detail in a later stage.


\(^{33}\) For more information on social order in ancient times see Vilho Harle, \textit{Ideas of Social Order in the Ancient World} (London: Greenwood Press, 1998).
the xia did not follow a written code, but had an internal understanding of what was right or wrong, and would go far beyond what was required to undo wrongs.\textsuperscript{34}

For these reasons, although potentially they might have the same origin in the shi class, Confucianism cannot be considered to be the ideological background of the xia. Furthermore the term does not appear in any Confucian texts written in the Warring States Period, although the term is found in Confucian texts written during the Han Dynasty, and I analyse these in the following section.

Mohism shares more features with xia than Confucianism. Qing scholar Kang Youwei 康有为 (1858-1927) went as far as to state that “the xia actually were Mohists” (xiao ji mo ye 侠即墨也), and that they were “two different names of the same existent groups” (mo xia ze ju jiaoming, qishi yi ye 墨侠则举教名，其实一也).\textsuperscript{35} This view is supported by the fact that Mohists also appear to have originated from the military section that derived from the shi class.\textsuperscript{36} Moreover, as Anne Cheng points out, the last section of the Mozi (墨子, books 14 and 15) is dedicated to military techniques and a group of people is gathered around Mozi who are sent out in case of anti-military campaigns.\textsuperscript{37} Although the term xia does not appear in the Mozi, this association by Anne Cheng becomes valid when the xia is seen in relation to martial arts (without taking into consideration other ways to obtain xia, such as those included in wenxia). Furthermore, the Mohist central concept of “universal love” (jian’ai 兼爱) is similar to that of “altruism” held by the xia. They both have a strong sense of justice, trust, and a practice of sharing money in order to create an equal society. It could be argued, hence, that Mohism is the philosophical thought that includes the two main aspects of xia: the virtuous altruism (“universal love”) and the martial aspect (the last section of the Mozi) and comes closest to xia.

However, these two beliefs present three basic differences. First, the Mohist follower desires to advocate only for a weaker state in order not to be subdued by

\textsuperscript{34} Zhao, “Historical Development of the xia”, 61.
\textsuperscript{35} As quoted in Zhao, “Historical Development of the xia”, 68.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{37} Cheng, Storia del Pensiero Cinese, 81.
Another philosophy that arose during the Warring States Period is Daoism. This school of thought focuses mainly on the self and has egotistical nuances. It presents only two similarities with the altruistic xia, i.e. the freedom to follow one’s own natural inclinations and, consequentially, the lack of concern towards legal authority. But while Daoism was based on letting nature follow its course without imposing artificial artefacts (wuwei 无为) and without the necessity to act, the xia happily takes action and justice in his (or her) own hands. Daoism searches for the free expression of one’s own character especially through personal freedom, while the xia fights for the freedom and justice of those that are being repressed, and is also at times employed to fight for those who need to be defended or seek justice.

Although the term xia is absent from the most important Daoist text, i.e. the *Dao De Jing* 道德经, it is found once in the *Zhuangzi* 庄子 and three times in the *Liezi* 列子, two other fundamental Daoist works compiled in the Warring States Period. In the *Zhuangzi* the term is found in the following phrase:

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39 Although it is possible to find youxia who aided kings with their fighting skills.
41 Levenson, Schurmann, *China: An Interpretive History*, 63.
43 Ibid., 13.
侠人之勇力而不为威强

Grasping the courage and strength of others but not using it to be threatening or domineering

Here xia is used as a verb, but it is related to skills such as courage and strength that are used in a positive way, and not to dominate others. This phrase clearly puts the term xia in the semantic area regarding bravery and just actions.

In the Liezi we find xia in two different chapters. It occurs first in the chapter The Yellow Emperor (Huang Di 黃帝) where it indicates a group of people in collaboration with or at the service of a certain Fan Zihua 范子华. Lionel Giles translates xia as “the followers” of Fan Zihua, and seems to be the best translation as the term xia is not contextualised enough here to be understood more thoroughly. The second occurrence is in the chapter Causality (Shuo Fu 说符).

虞氏者,梁之富人也,家充殷盛,钱帛无量,财货无訾。登高楼,临大路,设乐陈酒,击博楼上,侠客相随而行,楼上博者射,明琼张中,反两摴鱼而笑。飞鸢适坠其腐鼠而中之。侠客相与言曰:“虞氏富氏之日久矣,而常有轻易人之志。吾不侵犯之,而乃辱我以腐鼠。此而不报,无以立慬于天下。请与若等戮力一志,率徒属,必灭其家为等伦。”皆许诺。至期日之夜,聚众职丘,以攻虞氏,大灭其家。

Mr Yü was a wealthy man of the Liang State (i.e. Wei State).

His household was rolling in riches, and his hoards of money and silk and other valuables were quite incalculable. It was his custom to have banquets served, to the accompaniment of music, in a high upper hall overlooking the

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46 Zhuangzi, Chapter 29 (Dao zhi 盜跖), section 3.
47 My translation. The translation by James Legge is as follows: “[...] his appropriation of the bravery and strength of others enables him to exercise a powerful sway, [...].” See James Legge, The Writing of Chuang Tzu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1891), 182.
48 Here follows the section in the chapter Yellow Emperor and its translation: "子华使其侠客,以智鄙相攻,强弱相凌。虽伤破于前,不用介意。终日夜以此为戏乐,国殆成俗。“Tzu Hua used to encourage his followers to contend amongst themselves, so that the clever ones were always bullying the slow-witted, and the strong riding rough-shod over the weak. Though this resulted in blows and wounds being dealt before his eyes, he was not in the habit of troubling about it. Day and night, this sort of thing served as an amusement, and practically became a custom in the State.” Lionel Giles, trans, Taoist Teaching from the Book of Lieh Tzu, (London: J. Murray, 1947), 40-41.  
49 Causality is the translation given by Giles.
50 Liezi, Chapter 8 (Shuo Fu 说符), section 21.
main road; there he and his friends would sit drinking their wine and amusing themselves with bouts of gambling.

One day, a party of young gallants (侠客) happened to pass along the road. In the chamber above, play was going on as usual, and a lucky throw of the dice, which resulted in the capture of both fishes, evoked a loud burst of merriment from the players.

Precisely at that moment, it happened that a kite which was sailing overhead dropped the carcass of a rat in the midst of the company outside. The young men (侠客) held an angry consultation on the spot: ‘This Mr Yü,’ they said, ‘has been enjoying his wealth for many a long day, and has always treated his neighbours in the most arrogant spirit. And now, although we have never offended him, he insults us with this dead rat. If such an outrage goes unavenged, the world will look upon us as a set of poltroons. Let us summon up our utmost resolution, and combine with one accord to wipe him and his family out of existence!’ The whole party signified their agreement, and when the evening of the day appointed had come, they collected, fully armed for the attack, and exterminated every member of the family.51

From this anecdote it is possible to see a just but violent aspect of the xia. They kill a person and his entire family based on an unfortunate incident which had made the group of travelling xia presume hostility and arrogance on behalf of Mr Yü. The course of action carried out by this group may seem rather exaggerated and dramatic, but the person behind this offensive act was, rich, “arrogant”, and had been selfish with his fortune and unkind to his neighbours.52 These selfish attitudes of Mr Yü constitute what the xia fights against. Mr Yü is the wrongdoer who needs to pay for his disrespectful actions. It is interesting to notice here particularly the disdain for wealth and the petty rich, an aspect that returns with the first definition of xia and which I address in the following section. Although this anecdote is reported in a Daoist text, the xia do not seem to have any direct relation to Daoism.

51 Giles, Lieh Tzü, 107-108. This story is also found in James Liu’s analysis (The Chinese Knight-errant, 6-7), but its philosophical importance is not taken into consideration there.
They rather seem to be playing a secondary role and are not the representative of a particular school of thought.

From the texts of the Warring States it has become clear that, even though this figure presents characteristics common to different philosophical thoughts, *xia* is not exclusively part of any of the main philosophical schools, but remains independent. The strongest link is with the Confucians and the Mohists, but the *xia* is not a sub-group of either of these schools. People defined as *xia* are used in Legalist and Daoist texts as antagonists, demonstrating how in fact these people have nothing in common with the philosophical credos of these two schools of thought. Although lacking a proper definition, the mere presence of *xia* in Warring States texts shows how in fact this phenomenon was important in this period, making it an intrinsic part of the society of that time. Even if the term *xia* does not refer here to a code of conduct but only to certain people acting in a specific manner, the descriptions and origins of the first *xia* in Chinese history include bravery, courage, and violence when justice needs to be carried out. In this period the focus is on the martial aspect and people defined as *xia* act with weapons, and physical strength in order to set wrongs right. They do so without respecting social hierarchy or social harmony.

4. The *xia* becomes virtuous: definition of *xia* in Han texts

It is in the texts of the Han period that it is first possible to notice a written distinction between the concept of *xia* and the category of people who wander around righting wrongs. The most common binomes that are found in these texts and that serve to distinguish these two meanings are *youxia* 游侠 (“travel” and “*xia*”) for a group of people wandering the empire trying to set wrongs right, and *renxia* 任侠 (“trust” and “*xia*”) indicating a form of conduct. This textual

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53 In fact, the Daoist moral is found just after the anecdote and it regards Mr Yü: “Pride and extravagance lead to calamity and ruin in more ways than one. Mr. Yü's family was destroyed, although in this particular instance he had no thought of insulting others; nevertheless, the catastrophe was due to an habitual lack of modesty and courtesy in his conduct.” Lionel Giles, trans., *Lieh Tzŭ*, 41.

54 Most predominantly in the *Records of a Historian* (*Shiji* 史记), *The Book of Han* (*Han Shu* 汉书) and *The Book of Later Han* (*Hou Han Shu* 后汉书), which I will also address later in this section.
differentiation indicates how the wandering swordsmen of the Warring States had a specific conduct that spawned the creation of a new concept. Although some texts discussed in the previous section were critical of the *xia*, the behaviour and actions of these men were more often seen as exemplary to the point that the *xia* became synonymous with a form of *yi* 义, i.e. “righteousness”, which can be translated with “altruism” when applied to the case of the *xia*. I address the relation between *yi* and *xia* in the fifth chapter, but Han Dynasty texts already present virtuous characteristics similar to *yi*.

In this section I address the texts that aid in understanding the *xia*’s historical origins, the virtuous aspect, and its first definition in a Chinese dictionary. The results are part of the formulation of a new interpretation of *xia* that I propose at the end of this chapter.

An interesting book that is not affiliated to any specific school of thought but rather combines many, is the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. “Concise but encyclopaedic and drawing on a wide range of sources”, it was written by Liu An 刘安 (179-122 BC), the king of Huainan, and in 139 BC given as a gift to his cousin Emperor Wu 武 (156-87 BC) “to rule successfully and well”. In this book there is no distinct section on the *xia*, but, like the *Han Feizi*, the *xia* is mentioned at the same level as the Confucian scholar.

喜武非侠也，喜文非儒也，[…] 此有一概而未得主名也。57

Taking pleasure in military matters (*wu*) does not make one a soldier (*xia*); taking pleasure in literature does not make one a Confucian scholar, […] This is to have an approximation [of the skill] but not yet to have earned a reputation as a master [of that skill].

*Xia* is related to martial arts (*wu*) and the Confucian scholar to literature (*wen* 文) as was pointed out by Han Feizi. By mastering these skills, one is defined as *xia* or

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57 *Huainanzi*, Chapter 16 (Shuo Shan Xun 说山训), section 8.
scholar, making these skills the epitome of that specific category of person. It is possible to assume that this particular verse was the result of Liu An’s study of Legalism and for this reason it is put here, but it shows again the significance of the *xia* in general and its relation with *wu*. However, a new vision of *xia* was described only four decades later.

Probably the most important work that refers to biographies of various historical *xia* roughly a century after the Warring States Period are the *Records of a Historian* (*Shiji* 史记, 109-91 BC) by Sima Qian 司马迁 (145/135-86 BC). The two most important sections can be found respectively in the chapter on the *Biographies of the Wandering Xia* (*Youxia Liezhuan* 游侠列传) and in the work’s *Postface* (*Taishigong Zixu* 太史公自序):

> 今游侠，其行虽不轨於正义，然其言必信，其行必果，已诺必诚，不爱其躯，赴士之厄困；既已存亡死生矣，而不矜其能，羞伐其德，盖亦有足多者焉。且缓急，人之所时有也。  

As for the wandering knights, though their actions may not conform to perfect righteousness, yet they are always true to their word. What they undertake they invariably fulfil; what they have promised they invariably carry out. Without thinking of themselves they hasten to the side of those who are in trouble, whether it means survival or destruction, life or death. Yet they never boast of their accomplishment but rather consider it a disgrace to brag of what they have done for others. So there is much about them which is worthy of admiration, particularly when trouble is something that comes to almost everyone some time.  

> 救人于厄，振人不赡，仁者有乎；不既信，不倍言，义者有取焉。作游侠列传第六十四。  

To save people from disaster, to help people that do not have support, is that not part of benevolence? Not to lose credibility, not to say what they do not mean, those that are righteous approve of that. For this reason, I wrote the *Biographies of the Youxia* in Chapter 64.  

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61 Sima Qian, *Shiji* 130, (*Taishigong Zixu* 太史公自序), section 143.  
62 My translation. Burtonson Watson did not carry out a translation of Sima Qian’s postface.
These extracts by Sima Qian show the benevolent and altruistic nature of the *xia*, combined with their trustworthy and loyal character. This is seen in how they understand and give their support to those in need, and once they have promised to help, they carry out this task, without fear of losing their own lives. These extracts unfold a completely different view from those of the above-mentioned Han Feizi and Liezi.

The first extract is followed by the biographies of five *xia*: i.e. Zhu Jia 朱家, Tian Zhong 田仲, Ju Meng 剧孟, Wang Meng 王孟, and Guo Xie 郭解. The first one became known as a *xia* by sheltering in his home eminent men to prevent them from being persecuted. Not only did he save these people, he did so without boasting about his *xia* actions. 63 Tian Zhong is simply defined as *xia*-like (*xiawen* 侠闻) and an enjoyer of swordsmanship (*xi jian* 喜剑) but without any further explanation. Ju Meng is known for having carried out actions similar to those of Zhu Jia. Wang Meng was simply known as a *xia* without again any explanation. However, after Wang Meng various members of clans started to obtain the same type of fame, to the discontent of the emperor who sent convoys to execute them. The last *xia*, Guo Xie, on the other hand was an ill-tempered criminal who had killed many people before having “a change of heart” and becoming a *xia*. Although his lawless past haunted him and was the reason for his and his family’s executions, he was known to some as righteous and altruistic due to his *xia* actions. 64 He even approved of the killing of his nephew once he had been informed that his nephew had acted in disagreement with the law, showing a character of incorruptible justness, as he preferred justice over family relations. This obedience to the law goes against the initial vision of the Legalists on *xia* as here the law is seen as just. Zhu Jia on the other hand protected people from being persecuted by the government, which shows that the relation between *xia* and the law and its executors changes based on whether the *xia* finds certain actions just or not.

Guo Xie is also the only one of the five who actually wandered for a part of his life, whilst the others did not, which makes the title given by Sima Qian, i.e.

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63 Watson Records, 412-413.
64 Ibid., 414-417.
Biographies of the Wandering Xia slightly inappropriate.

In this chapter, Sima Qian also categorises different forms of xia. These are the “ancient poor xia” (gu bu nong zhi xia 古布衣之侠) who come from a low status family and do not cooperate with the government; the “alley xia” (lüxiang zhi xia 阖巷之侠) whose actions occur in alleys away from the light; the “minister xia” (qingxiang zhi xia 卿相之侠) who in contrast with the “poor xia” treat the ruler well in order “to share the burdens with the scholars and to rescue the country from danger”; and the “rural xia” (xiangqu zhi xia 乡曲之侠) in the countryside away from the court and cities. The first category is considered to be the original lonesome wandering xia from the Warring States Period, while the others are evolutions of the Han Dynasty and sometimes are divided into groups or clans and already present an internal structure.

An overarching structure of these categories can hence be seen: those that fight to obtain xia, defined as wuxia 武侠 (an example from the Shiji is Guo Jie), and those that do not fight to act according to xia, but carry out their civic duty to obtain or be xia, i.e. wenxia 文侠 (e.g. Zhu Jia, Ju Meng, and Tian Zhong). The first category has become today known due to the wuxia literary genre that has become part of Chinese culture, but, as I will show in chapters four and five, within this genre it is possible to find characters that belong to the wenxia, making virtue the most important aspect of xia and not fighting skills. Furthermore, its link with benevolence (ren), expressed in Sima Qian’s postface, makes it even more associated not only with Confucianism but also with virtue in general.

Overall Sima Qian depicts quite a positive picture of the xia and points out how common people often confuse xia with assassins, a grave misconception which undermines the importance and benevolence of the true xia. Sima Qian’s fear that

65 The issue regarding the term youxia 游侠 and its significance will be addressed in the following section.
67 Watson, Records, 398.
69 Luo Liqun, History of Chinese wuxia Fiction, 3.
70 Consult the translated version of Burton Watson, Records of the grand historian of China, 409-18.
the xia would be mistaken for an assassin seems to have been well-founded, as in the xia-related studies I have discussed in the introduction, those that have been identified as xia have always been linked to fighting skills. However, Hamm points out how “Sima Qian’s admiring treatment” of the xia reflects the author’s “personal indignation against officially countenanced injustice” and shows how the cruel and criminal aspect of some of these men are not highlighted in order to fit the narrative of the work. However, even if Sima Qian’s depiction of xia is generous, there must have been a common selfless denominator between these people if the term xia has become closely linked to altruism and righteousness.

The reason for Sima Qian’s rather positive description of the xia can also be explained by the political ideology adopted in the Han Dynasty. Although during this dynasty Confucianism became the main state ideology, it appears that, after the brutal approach by the Qin emperor who usurped his power by using Legalism to justify his despotic actions, the first Han emperors were not particularly interested in political ideology and possibly were followers of Daoism. Then, with the arrival of Emperor Wu (153-86 BC), whose posthumous name corresponds to “martial”, Confucianism became state ideology, but he is claimed to have been “the most Legalist of all Han emperors” in his actions. The despotic Emperor Wu, who had commissioned Sima Qian’s Records and who had to approve it, did not appreciate imperial authority being questioned. He ruled with a firm hand and frequently handed out punishments to those who stood up to or even spoke against him and his actions. The emperor’s character might have had an influence on the contents of the Records, making the Biographies of the Wandering Xia less anarchic and less related to the creation of chaos, but instead focused on the positive aspect of the actions of these people, or at least ignoring the parts that involved actions carried out against the empire. The result of this decision, whether it was taken due to the personal belief of the author or to avoid the emperor’s discontent followed by

71 Hamm, Paper Swordsmen, 13.
72 Sabattini, Santangelo, Storia Della Cina, 162.
73 Ibid., 163.
74 An example if this can be seen by the forced castration of Sima Qian in 99 BC after he had spoken in favour of a dismissed general. This act was seen [by whom?] as contrary to a previous decision by the emperor and was set right [punished?] with the historian’s castration. Eventually, as a eunuch, Sima Qian’s relation with the court improved and he became the head of the emperor’s administration. (See Sabattini, Santangelo, Storia Della Cina, 166.)
certain punishment, was the creation of a concept of *xia* that did not necessarily involve practicing violence and creating chaos, but was primarily concerned with helping the weak and those in need. This rendition of *xia* by Sima Qian had a defining influence and it was after the publication of his work that the binome *renxia* 任侠, which indicates trust, loyalty, and altruism, became established in the Chinese language.\(^75\)

The above-mentioned biographies and categories are narrated again in the chapter entitled *Biographies of the Wandering Xia* (*Youxia Zhuan* 游侠传) of the *Book of Han* (*Han Shu* 汉书, 111 AD). In both the *Records* and the *Book of Han* the binome *youxia* is used to refer to the group of wandering swordsmen (although not all of these actually roam the empire as has been demonstrated above). To distinguish *xia*-like conduct the binome *renxia* in these works is used rather often. In the *Shiji* the binome *renxia* appears 16 times, out of the 48 times that the singular character *xia* appears (33%), and in the *Han Shu*, the binome appears only 11 times out of the 56 times *xia* occurs (almost 20%). This textual evidence shows how the difference has now fully been established, and it is possible to find other binomes that indicate *xia* as a conduct.

A clear difference between these two aspects of *xia* can be seen in the *Words To Live By* (*Fayan* 法言), a work by Confucian scholar Yang Xiong 杨雄 (53 BC-18 AD), where the two appear rather close to each other.

“滕、瓘、樊、郦？”曰：“侠介”[...] “游侠？”曰：“窃国灵也。”\(^76\)

Someone asked “What about Teng Houying, Guan Ying, Fan Kuai, and Li Shang?” Yangzi said: “They were chivalrous and upright.” [...] The other asked about wandering swordsmen. Yangzi said: “They stole the kingdom’s authority.”\(^77\)

\(^75\) The term was used only once before in the *Huainanzi*, Chapter 13 (*Fanlun Xun* 泛论训), section 25.

\(^76\) *Fayan*, Chapter 11 (*Yuan Qian* 淑骞), section 17.

\(^77\) Both the translations are by Jeffrey S. Bullock, *Yang Xiong: Philosophy of the Fa Yan* (forthcoming), accessed on http://ctext.org, 20 Jan 2012.
The first *xia* refers to the conduct of four people and it is combined with the character *jie* 介 which here means “upright”. Although there is no further explanation of the conduct, this phrase does not have any reference to violence or fighting skills, nor does it indicate a group of wandering swordsmen, as is intended in the second phrase. This example and the previous ones show the development of *xia* and how it evolved from a simple mono-character to binomes with clear distinct meanings. In this fashion it became possible to clearly distinguish between people that wandered using fighting skills to set wrongs right and the code of conduct that implied justice and altruism.

These developments ultimately led to the first definition of the term *xia* in the *Shuowen Jiezi*. This dictionary was compiled during the Han dynasty in 100 AD by Xu Shen 许慎 and was presented to emperor An of Han 汉安帝 in 121 AD. It is the first book that analyses single Chinese characters.\(^78\) The edition of the *Shuowen Jiezi* that is commonly used today\(^79\) is the version edited in 986 AD under the commission of the Song emperor Taizong 太宗 (939-997), which includes commentaries of that period.\(^80\)

侠，俠也。从人夹声。

*Xia* means *ping* 俜. It comes from *ren* 人 (“man”) and the sound from *jia* (夹).

To understand *xia* we need to see the definition of *ping*:

俠，俠也。从人粵声。

*Ping* means *xia*. It comes from *ren* 人 and the sound from *ping* 粤.

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\(^78\) The *Erya* 尔雅 (third century BC) and the *Shizhoupian* 史籀篇 (ninth or eighth century BC), the two previous Chinese dictionaries, had been compiled before the *Shuowen Jiezi*. However, these works do not analyse single characters, but mostly binomes. They, in fact, can also be considered to be encyclopaedias, more than proper dictionaries. For more information on the *Shuowen Jiezi* see Thomas B. I. Creamer, “Shuowen Jiezi and Textual Criticism in China” in *International Journal of Lexicography*, 1989, Vol. 2, No 3, 176-187.

\(^79\) A complete version of the *Shuowen Jiezi* can be found today online, and the characters are organised according to their number of strokes. See: http://www.gg-art.com/imgbook/index.php?bookid=53.

\(^80\) All translations from extracts of the *Shuowen Jiezi* are carried out by me.
Unfortunately, this definition of *ping* brings forth a loop, as each character is used to define the other. Luckily, the definition of the second *ping* gives more information.

三辅谓经财者为侠。  

*Ping* is *xia*. San Fu says that those who despise wealth are *ping*.

The definition of *ping* is expanded by the words of San Fu who explains that people who despise wealth are defined as *ping*. These definitions imply hence that, similarly to the transitive relation, 侠 = 俠 = 俠, which means that the definition of the second *ping* can be applied also to *xia*.

A more comprehensive explanation of *xia* can be found in the dictionary’s commentary to the term.

荀悦曰: 立气齐, 作威福, 结私交, 以立强于世者, 谓之游侠。

Xun Yue says: they have right morals and are upright, they carry out punishments and rewards, they form personal friendships, with righteous willpower do they oppose those (that follow) tradition, they are called “wandering *xia*”.

如淳曰: 相与信为任, 同是非为侠。所谓权行州里, 力公侯者也。

Ru Chun says: mutual aid and trust constitutes reliability, sticking together through right and wrong, that is the *xia*. The previously mentioned without rules (权) travel in the province, aiding the nobility.

或曰: 任气力也。侠, 侠也, 按侠之言, 侠也。夹者, 持也。

It is also said: trust fuels strength. *Xia*, is *ping*, referring to the code of *xia*, that is *xia*. *Jia* means to support.

According to the definitions and the commentary, a *xia* is a person who has good morals, despises wealth, makes personal bonds based on trust, acts righteously and

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81 Not much is known about this person. The only notion available is that San Fu was the mayor of Chang’an, one of the Han dynasty’s capitals.
82 Xun Yue (148-209) was a political philosopher and historian of the Han dynasty.
83 There is not much known about Ru Chun. It is believed that he lived during the compilation of the *Han Shu*. 
assures that others do so as well. It is interesting to notice how here the character wu 武 is absent, although there are references to violence in the comments such as the phrase containing the noun “punishment” (wei 威). However, an explicit reference to physical violence is not made, which suggests that the general definition of xia in the Han Dynasty did not necessarily entail wu or other forms of physical strength.

Furthermore, the last commentary refers to jia 夹 as etymologically connected to xia and not xie as James Liu had previously stated, turning xia into a broader concept not solely linked to fighting skills (wu). Making the interpretation of xia, again, more neutral and less linked to violence, opens an interesting question of interpretation of xia, discussed in the section below.

To conclude, texts from the Han Dynasty have provided the first distinction between people defined as xia, who often use swordsmanship or martial arts in order to restore justice (mostly corresponding to their own view of justice and not the state’s), and a form of conduct that corresponds to altruism and righteousness. In the Warring States Period the term only indicated a group of people, whereas in texts of the Han Dynasty it is discovered that, for various reasons, the xia has assumed a more ethical aspect. His actions are considered to be comparable to the Confucian value of benevolence (ren), as the historian Sima Qian pointed out in the postface of his work. This aspect has been found also in the definition of the term in the first mono-character dictionary of the Chinese language. It is this virtuous aspect I now bring to the forefront regarding a new interpretation of the term.

5. New interpretations: xia as virtue

Having established the characteristics of the person who is referred to by the term xia, the question that needs to be answered remains: is it possible to consider xia as a virtue, and not just as a vaguely defined code of conduct? Xia is not affiliated with any of the “Hundred Schools” that were conceived and that spread during the Warring States Period, but it presents different aspects of each. It

84 See introduction for James Liu’s definition.
remains a *sui generis* concept and character and “there is no implication that the *xia* resembled the Confucians [and others] in the sense of constituting a formal school or tradition of thought”. Its lack of inclusion within a philosophical school makes it less analysed as a concept by scholars of ancient China and, in fact, it is never treated as part of ancient philosophical concepts, but rather is defined in terms of a person who is a *xia*. This lack of analysis and the *de facto* exclusion of *xia* in the overall picture of China’s ancient philosophy is an area where new light can and should be shed. In Bryan Van Norden’s study on early Chinese philosophy, he analyses the concept of “virtue ethics” from different angles, ranging from the generalist to the particularist perspective, the latter claiming that “one should determine what the right action in a particular context is, not by consulting some moral rule, but rather by asking what a fully virtuous person would do in such a situation”. The code of *xia* seems to hold such content, i.e. it is not a set code for action, but it depends on the situation in which the *xia* finds himself (or herself). Furthermore, virtues are explained thus by Van Norden:

Virtues will often lead to characteristic actions, but being virtuous is seldom a matter of only external behavior. Virtues are dispositions to think, feel, perceive, *and* act in characteristic ways. A fully benevolent person does not only act to help others in distress, she does so out of a concern for their well-being. She is quick to perceive when others need assistance, especially in cases where the most of us would be oblivious. She recognizes easily the consequences of her actions for others, and she adjusts her behavior accordingly. She understands the difference between being helpful and being meddlesome, and between generosity and self-abnegation. She often feels compassion for the joys and sorrows of others.

This definition of “virtue” is applicable also to *xia*, as the *xia* is a person who acts according to a code of behaviour. This code of behaviour is not clearly written as are the *li* (“rites”) for the ideal man (*junzi*). However, it is the “virtuous” internal understanding that determines the behaviour of a person; without this internal understanding regarding which course of action to undertake, *xia* is not carried out. However, although Van Norden defines virtues as not only an “external behaviour”,

87 Ibid., 39.
in the case of *xia* its definition as virtue depends heavily on the presence of others. Contrary to that of the Daoist virtue, *de* 德, which can be obtained by personal and inner practice alone, *xia* manifests itself only between two or more people, as is the case with most Confucian virtues (especially *ren*), defined social virtues for this reason.\(^{88}\)

The etymology of *xia* 俠 supports this virtuous aspect. On the left we find the radical for person, *ren* 人, whilst on the right, the character *jia* 夾, which in the non-simplified version is written thus: 夾.\(^{89}\) *Jia* consists of the character *da* 大 in the centre symbolising a person with his arms spread, and two small people, *ren* 人, one on each side. These two people can either support the big person in the middle, or are sheltered by the bigger person.

Hence, the term is structurally similar to the Confucian ideal of *ren* 仁, indicating a human feeling that leads a person (radical on the left) to act rightly towards other people because of a common sense of humanity that is shared (the number two on the right). Also *xia* 俠 indicates a human feeling that leads a person to shelter and take care of those that are in need (although the method of this protection is not specified). It is therefore possible to conclude that the meaning of *xia* also includes that of a virtue. To further sustain this theory, the conceptual link between *xia* and *ren* was made already by Sima Qian in the postface of the *Shiji*, and which I have addressed in the section on Han Texts. In fact, Sima Qian explains the motivation behind writing the *Biographies of the Wandering Xia* as thus: “To save people from disaster, to help people that do not have support, is that not part of benevolence (*ren*)?” For the virtuous aspect of *xia*, *jia*’s meaning of “support” seems to be the most adequate. In fact, Sima Qian’s description of Zhu Jia giving shelter to those that required it corroborates this virtuous and supportive interpretation of the term *xia*. These seem reasons to “upgrade” the concept of *xia* to that of virtue.

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\(^{89}\) In the *Shuowen Jiezi* there is also the character *jia* 夾 with two *ru* 入 (entrance) instead of *ren* (person). The definition explains how in fact the one with two *ren* is the one in relation to *xia*. 

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The absence of xia within a specific school of thought makes it more challenging for scholars to understand its position in the ancient philosophical context, although it has been demonstrated that it was important enough as a social phenomenon to deserve mentioning in texts. Xia has often been seen by scholars solely in relation to wu (including fighting skill and swordsmanship), but, as shown, there is also another aspect of this term which is merely benevolence without force or violent action. This other aspect should not be ignored, nor the fact that xia is not explicitly part of a philosophical doctrine. Scholars and historians should acknowledge it as part of ancient Chinese philosophy and as an idiosyncratic virtue, whose origins might lie in the same social class as that of the Confucians and Mohists.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter the focus has been on the origins and changes of xia throughout Chinese history. The historical backgrounds of these developments have been given to show the relevance of xia and its relation to Chinese society and politics. Original texts have been integrated into the narrative in order to demonstrate the original meaning of this character. The importance of the origins of xia is paramount to understanding exactly what had been intended in the term. Here evidence has been given that xia indicates a person who carries out actions (possibly including violence) to restore justice, but also a virtue. For the latter meaning textual and etymological proof has been crucial in demonstrating this conceptual aspect. Although the conclusion remains that for now it is not possible to definitely add xia as part of the Hundred Schools, it has shed some light on areas where more research needs to be carried out in the future.

In particular, the virtuous aspect of xia makes the understanding of xia more comprehensive and helps shed light on the reasons why and how people that are considered xia operate. The internal motivation to desire the good for other people is a characteristic that became praised and looked for in times of social unrest and chaos, such as the Warring States period was and as the Republican Era would be in later times. In fact it does not come as a surprise that the production and
consumption of novels related to *xia*, a figure who easily lends himself to become a just and powerful hero in plots involving social injustice and disorder, started to appear in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and gave way to a literary tradition that reached its zenith in the Republican Era (1912-1949) and that is still popular today.
CHAPTER 2

Development of xia: the influence of history on xia literature

In any culture there is a general symbolic economy made up of the myriad signs that excite human desire, fear, and aggression. Through their ability to construct resonant stories, their command of effective imagery, and above all their sensitivity to the greatest collective creation of any culture – language – literary artists are skilled at manipulating this economy.¹

Stephen Greenblatt

1. Introduction

While the first chapter has attempted to highlight a comprehensive collocation of the term xia at its origins and to argue for an additional interpretation, i.e. that of a virtue, this chapter aims to identify the changes that xia underwent throughout Chinese history. As Stephen Greenblatt’s quote points out, the production of literary works foresees a “manipulation” of those signs that represent human emotions, what he defines as “symbolic economy”. These signs consequently can be retraced in literature. The symbolic economy Stephen Greenblatt refers to is also based within the historical changes and events that have permitted these emotions to appear. The historical context provides in fact the basis for the majority of changes that can be found in different forms of literature. Hence, this method of viewing texts is at the basis of the historical overview that is presented here.

Before this overview of historical changes and their impact on xia literature, the sources that are being used in this chapter have to be determined. Then, the main changes that have been identified by previous wuxia scholars on xia-related literature produced between the Tang and the Qing Dynasties are pointed out and

the historical dynamics that explain these changes are given. By doing so the historical aspects and functions of *xia* are highlighted and serve as a prelude to the case study on the Republican Era. However, by no means does this *percursus* intend to be exhaustive, as the main focus of the thesis remains on Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*. Hence only the most important developments are highlighted in this chapter.

The historical *percursus* is followed by elements of Republican-era history that are compared to those of the Warring States Period, i.e. the period of the origins of *xia*. The conclusion drawn here is that the Republican Era presents many similar elements to the period in which the *xia* became a well established social phenomenon and as important as the (Confucian) scholars, and freely roamed from kingdom to kingdom. This sustains the case for the importance of *wuxia* literature in the Republican Era.

2. **Choice of sources**

To continue with the analysis and understanding of *xia*, it is necessary to decide which written works to look at and which ones fall under the terms *xia* and *wuxia*. Previous attempts by scholars have already been made. For instance, there are other biographies in the *Records* by Sima Qian that are not included in the chapter of the *Wandering Xia* but that have been considered as stories regarding *xia*. However, in the original Chinese text, none of the people featured in these other biographies are explicitly defined as a *xia*; they are instead mainly related to swordsmanship and other forms of physical prowess. The question then becomes whether these biographies represent or correspond to the true meaning of *xia*. Is it possible to define somebody a *xia* if the term does not appear? This associative approach can be used only if the concept of *xia* has been fully defined.

In his work, James Liu points out the following as the ideals that identify a *xia*: altruism, justice, individual freedom, personal loyalty, courage, trustfulness and

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2 Liu, *The Chinese Knight-errant*, 17-34. In the first chapter I have explained more in detail why these biographies do not depict people that can be defined as *xia*.
mutual faith, honour and fame, generosity and contempt for wealth, and these have been proven to be correct by the textual analysis in the previous chapter of this dissertation. However, these values do not always appear in the biographies and works that Liu (and other scholars on *wuxia*) describes and analyses. In fact, as with the biographies in Sima Qian’s *Records*, in some of these other biographies martial arts and swordsmanship are highlighted and appear to be the dominant factors.

This overlap between *xia* and *wu* can be explained by the literary tradition in which the fighting *xia* is central. It appears not totally unreasonable to assume, that based on the knowledge of this literary genre, the *a posteriori* interpretation of *xia* by scholars has become slightly one-sided. However, based on the analysis carried out on the origins of *xia* in the first chapter, it is possible to state that the term *xia* definitely entailed in that period also a form of benevolence and did not have to include fighting skills. Hence, it seems appropriate to repeat here that not all people who are trained in martial arts and swordsmanship are *xia*, nor are all *xia* required to be trained in martial arts in order to carry out *xia* acts or to have the epithet *xia*.

The reason for the shift from *xia* to *wuxia* and its consequential overlapping can be found already in the Han Dynasty. According to Liu Feibin, in this period the *xia* became corrupt; from being friendly and altruistic the *xia* became tyrannical, he or she started to plunder, and to ally themselves with local despots. As previously seen, it is in the Han dynasty that Confucianism is formally adopted as State philosophy and executed with a Legalist touch. As discussed in the origins of the *xia* in chapter one, this person did not live according to the law imposed by the State and did not follow social conventions, but based his decisions on his own view of justice, and some did not shy away from using violence. This change in state philosophy made the *xia* appear even more as rebels, overshadowing their benevolent and altruistic aspects. As a result, the *xia* became mainly associated with violent trouble-makers.

This rebellious aspect of *xia* is enhanced by the fact that after the *Book of Han* no other Chinese historian dedicated an independent section to the biographies of different *xia*, nor were their altruistic aspects highlighted again without

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3 Ibid., 4-6.
4 Liu Feibin, ‘Wandering *xia* and Ballads’, 18.
emphasising the importance of fighting skills. Furthermore, the study from historical people and definitions of *xia* finished in the Han Dynasty and shifted to literature regarding *xia* (*xia wenxue*) in the Tang Dynasty with the formation of *chuanqi*. This transition from “origins” or “social phenomenon” to “literary character” is also evident at the terminological level as *youxia* became part of the umbrella term of *wuxia*. A similar structure which initially looks at the origins of *xia* and consequently focuses on the *wuxia* phenomenon in literature is found in the studies carried out by *wuxia* scholars which I have analysed in the introduction.

Nevertheless, although the aspect of martial arts (*wu*) is often intertwined with *xia*, the virtuous aspect should not go unnoticed. It is in this area of *xia* that more research is required. Having established that *xia* does not have to be accomplished solely through martial arts (*wu*), more research regarding this aspect of *xia* throughout Chinese history can and should be carried out.

Having acknowledged that *xia* transformed into a literary phenomenon and became mainly known as such, the initial question of deciding what works fall under the category of *xia* or *wuxia* remains. For instance, the beautiful poem written by Jia Dao 贾岛 (779-843) in the Tang Dynasty and entitled *Swordsman* (*Jianke*) has been considered to be an epitome of *xia*. However, as is also suggested by the title, it rather represents the world of swordsmanship.

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十年磨一剑，霜刃未曾试。
今日把似君，谁为不平事。
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“For ten years I have been polishing this sword; its frosty edge has never been put to the test.
Now I am holding it and showing it to you, sir; is there anyone suffering from injustice?”

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6. These include the works by James Liu, John Christopher Hamm, Margaret Wan, and Roland Altenburger.

It can be noticed that the term *xia* does not appear in this poem, but it is still considered by scholars to be part of *wuxia* literature. In fact, the second sentence relates to justice and to setting wrongs right, which is a typical aspect of *xia*. Hence, the previously mentioned *Biographies of Assassins* in Sima Qian’s *Records* which have been considered to be related to *xia* are in fact more focused on violence than on the noble and altruistic values that are included in *xia*. Can these examples then be placed under the umbrella term (*wu*)xia or should there be a subgenre of wu literature, where the reasons for practicing martial arts do not necessarily have to correspond to those of *xia*?

With these critical aspects in mind, the decision has been taken here to look at the literary works that have been chosen by previous wuxia scholars in the following section in order to highlight the evolution and developments of *xia* between the Tang Dynasty and the Republican Era. The reason for this course of action is explained by the fact that the main focus of this dissertation is *wuxia* fiction in the Republican Era and how *xia* is interpreted in that specific period. However, this task is carried out by keeping in mind the potential bias that other scholars may have had in selecting their works. Furthermore, where possible, works that contain the term *xia* are taken into consideration, aiming at eliminating the focus on the swordsman and to stay in the realm of *xia*.

3. **Gender equality, cultural vessel, and political critique: *xia*-related literature from the Tang to the Qing Dynasty**

Stories dedicated to the *xia* appear first in the Qing Dynasty. In the dynasties prior to this it is possible to find the *xia* as a character in different forms of literature, such as stories, ballads, poems, theatre, etc. The stylistic differences between these literary forms are not analysed here; importance is given only to the plots and to the changes related to the *xia*, such as the addition of supernatural elements or different types of characters. Outside of the above analysed dynastic histories (*Records*, *The Book of Han* and *The Book of Latter Han*), the Han Dynasty does not contain a literary tradition that includes *xia*. For the first works of *xia* we have to shift forward to the Tang Dynasty. In this section, where possible, the lives
of historical xia are also highlighted, although accounts of these people have become scant after the Han Dynasty.

The xia in the Tang dynasty (618-907) became a celebrated character in prose and verse, due to the idealisation and romanticisation of this character by Tang authors, who were quite prolific in their production of xia themed works. These authors were often themselves acquainted with the lifestyle of xia and wrote about their experiences. Wang Dulu’s novels also focus on the romantic aspect, but, as I discuss in chapter five, love more often became a reason for unhappiness and tragedy. However, even if in his novels the romantic aspect becomes an obstacle to happiness, the link between xia and romance is found already in Tang Dynasty.

A good example of romanticisation is the poet Li Bai (701-762), also known as the xia poet (shi xia 诗侠), who had roamed in his early years and wrote many poems regarding xia. The reason for the proliferation of stories about xia, is probably related to the problems the Tang court was facing. The aggressive factionalism and especially the influence of the eunuchs made the presence of military protection common in the Tang Dynasty. Authors were inspired by the actions occurring at court, and readers appreciated stories where justice was executed directly by the protagonists, making this a winning formula for the production of these literary works.

Stories about female xia and warriors also appeared in the Tang Dynasty and it does not come as a surprise that fearless “emancipated” women became

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9 Hamm, Paper Swordsmen, 14; Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 46 and 64.
11 Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 86.
12 Probably the most important female warrior of this period is Hua Mulan 花木兰. The ballad of Mulan was written in the Tang Dynasty, and was reprised in the Ming Dynasty as a novel, and as part of Chinese folklore tradition. Roland Altenburger convincingly argues that Mulan is a female
protagonists of literary works in this period. In this dynasty we find the reign of the only female emperor of Chinese history, Wu Zetian 武则天 (624-705), whose surname corresponds to the character wu, meaning martial, the same character of Emperor Wudi who had commissioned Sima Qian’s *Records*. Her “repressive style of government” was seen all over Tang China as she had made it her mission to eliminate the power of the local aristocracies and to promote the imperial examinations as the sole form of access to the Chinese bureaucracy. Although it would be oversimplifying to stigmatise Wu Zetian simply as a ruthless and ferocious ruler, her firm rule and stern governing, which did not exclude the direct elimination of opponents, was most likely an inspiration for the authors of stories on female xia. The most famous and influential of these stories is the tale of Nie Yinnang 聂隐娘, written in the ninth century and often considered to be the precursor of the wuxia tradition. This tale contains the first introduction of supernatural and magical elements in fighting techniques, which is not surprising as it is part of the chuanqi 传奇 tradition (“marvellous stories”). Again, Wang Dulu’s novels also present many female characters and often present more interesting cases for analysis.

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14 More precisely Wu Zetian had initiated the Zhou Dynasty, but in order not to create confusion with the previous Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BC), it is here referred to as Tang.

15 Twitchett, *The Cambridge History Vol. 3*, 14. It is specified here as well that the examination system was not an invention by Wu Zetian, but that her aim was to eliminate rivalries between aristocratic officials based on class and to shift it to those based on “differences of rival functional groups within the official structure”.

16 For more on the story of Nie Yinniang see Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 57-80.

17 Ibid., 57.

The Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960), like the Republican Era a millennium later, represent a period of disunity.\textsuperscript{19} It is in this period that \textit{huaben}\textsuperscript{20} stories appear and many of these have \textit{xia} as the main character.\textsuperscript{21} One of these stories narrates the early years of emperor Taizu 太祖 (927-976), founder of the Song Dynasty, showing how historical people and events were part of the inspiration for these plots. However, the difficulty of having a precise date of compilation or publication makes it difficult to determine exactly what specific historical context might have been the influence for these stories.\textsuperscript{22} Although their relation to historical acts or contexts is not easily deducible, their literary value shows how the characters and plots were modelled in order to continue “long-standing [literary] traditions” and to satisfy “the readers’ expectations”.\textsuperscript{23} This shows how in fact the proliferation of \textit{xia} works during the Tang Dynasty had created a basis from which this literary figure grew and developed.

An interesting change occurs in the Song dynasty (960-1279). The military, which was a prominent presence during the Tang and Five Dynasties, had lost part of its importance ever since the foundation of the dynasty by Taizu.\textsuperscript{24} The new


\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Huaben} stories are a group of vernacular short stories (i.e. in \textit{baihua} 白话) written during the Five Dynasties, Ten Kingdoms, and Song Dynasty. Often their authors and dates of composition remain unknown. For more information on \textit{huaben} stories see Patrick Hanan, \textit{Chinese Vernacular Story} (Cambridge: Haravrd University Press, 1981); Xiao Xiniao 萧欣桥, Liu Fuyuan 刘福元, \textit{History of Huaben Stories} 话本小说史, (Hangzhou:Zhejiang Guji Chubanshe 浙江古籍出版社, 2003).

\textsuperscript{21} For a detailed study on this topic see, Ma ‘The Knight-errant in \textit{hua-}pen stories’.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 296-297.

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 297.

emperor reduced the number of people employed within the permanent military (making it more competitive), and he increased control over local officials. This reduced presence of the military remained throughout the dynasty although there were moments of tension, especially at the northern borders, where the military was in high demand. In this new context, there are records of historical figures that lived according to the code of xia. In the biographies of these people it is possible to notice that enhancing their cultural capital was a prominent activity and that a position in the military or the government (which were now considered to be prominent posts) were often the end result of their noble and just activities. Most of the production of xia-related stories is expressed again in the vernacular genres, and as a thematic response to the decrease of the military prestige at court, there is the appearance of a different type of xia: the female “redresser of wrongs in the realm of human relations”. Although these women would still obtain justice through physically aggressive acts, the reason that spurred them to do so was unrelated to violence. The wrongs could have been caused by feelings such as disappointments, ingratitude, or disrespect, showing how a different form of injustice needed to be revenged. One of these female xia, i.e. Jing Shisanniang, is important because not only is she the “first narrative representation of a woman as roaming [xia]” but also a female merchant, which explains why in the story she was not confined in the house like most women. Merchants in the Song Dynasty rapidly increased as China’s commerce became more important and frequent, especially in the south. Contacts with central Asia had decreased due to problematic relations, and China faced eastwards, opening trade routes towards overseas kingdoms (such as Japan, Malaysia, Vietnam, and Arabia). This

25 Sabattini, Santangelo, Storia della Cina, 382.
26 Altenburger, The Needle or the Sword, 28.
27 According to Liu, these include Qiao Qixun, Guo Qin, Liu Kai, and Cao Xie. See Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 48-50.
29 Hamm, Paper Swordsmen, 16.
30 Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 103.
31 Ibid., 103-126.
32 As pointed out also by Altenburger, it is interesting to notice here that the heroin’s surname Jing is the same as that of the famous Jing Ke, who had attempted to assassinate the Qin emperor.
33 Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 106. The original quote saw the term “knight” which has been substituted here in brackets with xia.
phenomenon was largely helped by progress in cartography and naval techniques, but especially by the invention of the compass.\textsuperscript{34} As a result of the opening up of these new horizons, the merchant class flourished and some became as influential as the gentry, even being able to influence court officials. The fact that the protagonist in question here is a female merchant shows also how not only men were active in merchant activities, but that this class could include both genders as active participants. This aspect of the female merchant will be transformed in Wang Dulu into the female entrepreneur and is addressed in chapter six.

The Mongol court of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) is known for its uninterest in adapting to Chinese material life, and its preference for continuing to pursue social activities and lifestyles as they were carried out prior to the conquest of China, without imposing these on the Chinese.\textsuperscript{35} The production of literary works according to previous conditions seems to have come to a halt in this period. The literati, who were trained in the production of poems and stories, found themselves under rulers with a different cultural background and had to adapt to new ways of production that would be appreciated. Theatre became the most prominent form of artistic production. This form of art was not new to the Chinese, and had arisen already during the Song,\textsuperscript{36} but the Yuan court seemed to thoroughly enjoy this form of cultural production. The literati adapted and managed to create quite an impressive number of works. Many of these works had the \textit{xia} as the main figure, and one of the twelve categories within the works of the Northern Drama\textsuperscript{37} was entirely dedicated to this character.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{34} Sabattini, Santangelo, \textit{Storia della Cina}, 398.
\textsuperscript{37} Northern Drama refers to the plays (\textit{zaju} 杂剧) that emerged from the Yuan dynasty onwards in Beijing; Southern Drama refers to those emerging in the south of China during the Song and Yuan dynasties. Southern Drama works were mainly about love and romance with a forced happy ending.
The function of the *xia* in the Yuan Dynasty was twofold: on the one hand it was appreciated by the literati as these plots were based on justice, an aspect particularly valued as they were being ruled by “foreign barbarians” who were usurping their power in a country that did not belong to them; on the other hand the *xia* was appreciated by the Mongol court for the more spectacular aspects, such as *wu* and fighting in general. Some of the plots found here, regarding the heroes of the Liangshan marshes, such as Li Kui 李逵, were integrated later in what is considered by many scholars to be the first *wuxia* novel, i.e. *Water Margin* (*Shui Hu Zhuan* 水浒传), and which I discuss immediately here below. After the death of the most important Yuan emperor, i.e. Kublai Khan (1215-1294), the Mongol court quickly lost control and collapsed. One of the reasons for the downfall of the Yuan Dynasty was the adoption of the Chinese lifestyle by some of the Mongol officials. This caused major internal problems and fragmentations within the Mongol court as the two different cultures were supposed to remain separate. It seems that from a cultural perspective, the *xia* might have played an important role in the growing appreciation of Chinese culture by at least some of the members of the Yuan court, causing havoc once more for the ruling classes.

In the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) we find the circulation of what is often considered by scholars to be the first *wuxia* novel, i.e. *Water Margin*. However, whether this novel truly belongs to the *wuxia* genre is still up for debate. The *xia* values of the 108 rebels at Liangshan during the Song Dynasty has been questioned as important aspects such as individualism and gender equality are not present in this book. According to Roland Altenburger “the basic themes of *Shuihu zhuan* are not *xia* and swordsmanship, but outlawry, heroism and bravery”, although some

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39 Ibid., 151.
41 Sabattini, Santangelo, *Storia della Cina*, 453.
42 Traditionally this book, although the product of previous oral stories and Yuan drama, has been commonly attributed to Shi Nai’an 施耐庵, and its publication to the first years of the Wanli reign (1573-1620). This version comprises either 100 or 120 chapters, depending on the editions. An important critical edition had been made by Jin Shengtang 金圣叹 (1608-1661), which is a shorter version of 70 chapters, and is often used today.
specific themes on *xia* do overlap here.\(^{43}\) A terminological research shows how the term *xia* appears only once in the entire novel,\(^{44}\) making it possible to deduce that this aspect is effectively of little importance. Nevertheless it cannot be denied that *Water Margin* has been inspirational for the *wuxia* novels that followed and that some aspects of *xia* can be found here, making its analysis still relevant. The novel focuses on outlaws and their conflicts with the court, instead of personal justice, speaking volumes about the political and governmental view of the author(s) and readers of the Ming Dynasty. In other works that were produced in this period it is also possible to see a striking resemblance between the lazy, selfish, petty, and pleasure-seeking emperors of the late Ming, and the characters of these novels.\(^{45}\) The frustration of authors with their inept rulers clearly was brought forth in their works.

Other representations of *xia* are found in theatre plays (a continuation from the Yuan Dynasty) which focused again on the Liangshan marshes outlaws, and vernacular shorter stories by authors such as Feng Menglong 冯梦龙 (1574-1645) and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644), with the latter explicitly stating that his characters existed in real life.\(^{46}\) Although *xia* tales in the Tang Dynasty often had supernatural elements, as they were part of the *chuanshi* genre, it is in the Ming Dynasty that many supernatural elements were added to vernacular prose stories and novels, especially scenes of flying,\(^{47}\) which become an important element in Republican-era *wuxia* films.\(^{48}\) The inspiration for these magical elements can be attributed to the flourishing of Daoist thought, rituals, and anecdotes in this period.

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43 Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 127.
44 This research is carried out in the Jin Shengtan edition which comprises only 70 chapters.
45 An interesting study regarding the resemblances between emperors Zhengde 正德 (1506-1521), Jiajing 嘉靖 (1522-1567), Longqing 隆慶 (1567-1572), and Wanli 万历 (1572-1620), and characters in the *Xi you ji* 西游记 (Journey to the West) can be found in Richard Shek, ‘Fictional and Real-Rife Rulers: Journey to the West and Sixteenth-Century Chinese Monarchs’, in *Empire, Nation, and Beyond: Chinese History in Late Imperial and Modern Times – A Festschrift in Honor of Fredric Wakeman*, ed. Joseph W. Esherick, Wen-hsin Yeh, and Madeleine Zelin (Berkeley: University of California, Institute of East Asian Studies, 2006), 38-57.
One of these anecdotes is about a legendary martial arts trained Daoist monk called Zhang Sanfeng 张三丰, whose origins are unknown, but whose fame reached and influenced not only three of the Ming emperors, but also the common people to whom he became known as the god of plenty. Whilst some of the xia stories focused on supernatural elements, there were others that were heavily embedded in reality. It is in this period that we find the precursors of xia stories related to court-case fiction, but these would become extremely popular in the Qing Dynasty. These two new aspects of xia show how there were two tendencies in the Ming Dynasty: magical elements influenced by the heavy Daoist presence and that helped the reader to ignore the reality of inept emperors, but also the beginning of a critique on State law by authors. This critique continues in the Qing Dynasty and is also found in Wang Dulu’s novels, especially in the character of Yu Jiaolong, analysed in chapter four.

The Qing dynasty (1644-1911) sees a fundamental change in the figure of the xia. The intrinsic characteristics of altruism and fighting for justice alter in this period. The xia still maintains his or her sense of justice, which can be seen from the large quantity of production of court-case inspired martial arts fiction that was being produced at the end of the Qing dynasty where justice was a central theme. However, the justice in these novels corresponds to the laws enacted by government, whilst the xia’s justice in previous centuries, as we have seen, was based on his or her own morals and values. This preoccupation with court justice reflects an ideal alternative to the corrupt Qing state, which in the nineteenth century had been incapable of returning to the glory of the reigns of Kangxi 康熙 (1661-1722) and Qianlong 乾隆 (1735-1799).

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49 Sabattini, Santangelo, Storia della Cina, 532-533.
50 Wan, Green Peony, 22. For more information, see David Der-wei Wang, Fin-de-siècle Splendor: Repressed Modernities of Late Qing Fiction 1849-1911 (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 117-182.
51 Wan, Fin-de-siècle Splendor, 181.
A good example of a historical xia who was very critical of the Qing’s governance is Qiu Jin 秋瑾 (1875-1907), a fervent anti-Manchu activist and proto-feminist who had been in contact in Japan with the famous Tongmenghui 同盟会. When she returned to China she was eventually executed when it was discovered by chance that her girls’ school served as an arsenal for an imminent uprising. According to Florence Ayscough, who analysed her written work and interviewed the activist’s daughter, Qiu Jin was extremely patriotic and passionate about the position of women. This historical figure shows how in fact acts of xia were present in this moment of disorder and that women were an integral part of this social phenomenon. Qiu Jin’s intentions were to fight against the Manchu government, which for her represented all the problems and backwardness that afflicted China. Although she never put her plans into practice, her story has become that of a xia for the Chinese.

In the Qing dynasty an additional literary figure appeared: the baobiao 保镖 i.e. the armed protector. This figure corresponds to a type of bodyguard who possesses fighting skills and who works for an insurance company that protects the goods carried by people during long journeys. The importance of the baobiao in these novels suggest how in this period not only was there a specific need for protection from dangers while travelling between cities, but also that there were companies set up specifically for this purpose. This relation with the wu is evident although sometimes it is not possible to understand whether the literary character in question is a xia, a baobiao, or both (unless explicitly specified in the text).

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53 The Tongmenghui, also known as the Chinese Revolutionary Allegiance, was a secret society set up in Tokyo in 1905 by Chinese intellectuals and students abroad. Its most prominent member was Sun Yat-sen, first president of Republican-era China, and who established the base from which later the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 国民党) would originate. The society’s main goal was to overthrow the Manchus and played an important role in the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, which established the Republic. For more information on Sun Yat-sen and the Tongmenghui see Harold Z. Schiffman, Sun Yat-sen and the Origins of the Chinese Revolution (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968); Sidney H. Chang, Leonard H.D. Gordon, eds., Bibliography of Sun Yat-sen in China’s Republican Revolution (Lanham: University Press of America, 1991); Marie-Claire Bergère, Sun Yat-sen: Marie-Claire Bergère, trans., Janet Lloyd (Stanford: University of California Press, 1998).

54 Florence Ayscough, Chinese Women, Yesterday and To-day (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1938), 135-177.

55 A discussion on the translation of this term can be found in Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 210. The translation given here interprets the character biao 銃 as a metaphor for “weapon”.

56 Liu, The Chinese Knight-errant, 53.
What the people and goods on these long cross-country caravans needed protection from were chiefly bandits and members of brotherhoods. As we can read in a study on secret brotherhoods of the Qing:

[T]he Qing state of the late eighteenth century was also becoming increasingly superficial in its relationship to local society…. [O]verworked Qing officials were often simply overwhelmed by the undisciplined mobile order brought about by population growth and commercialization.  

The superficial governance, social disorder, and commercialization were contributors to the coming into existence of the baobiao, who effectively can be seen as a commercialised version of the original xia. Societies and brotherhoods were often the source of social problems, although they themselves were the result of social discontent. These organisations often strove for mutual aid or a common endeavour, sanctified with a ritual, most commonly a blood oath. They remained relatively untouched for extended periods of time due to their ties with local officials and elites who tolerated their actions and sometimes were even involved in them. This widely spread phenomenon clearly contributed to the instability of Qing society which heart-warmingly welcomed the figures of the xia and the employable baobiao, who would respectively act to obtain justice or protect from harm. The phenomenon of the baobiao is a frequent presence in Wang Dulu’s novels, outnumbering the xia. The reasons for the prominence of this new literary figure in his novels are addressed in chapter six.

Real life events and phenomena found a platform in stories and novels on wuxia. It is in this period that the genre starts to set itself apart, although it is only in the Republican Era that “genres” within popular fiction can be defined. At the end of the nineteenth century the use of lithography and block printing had increased the production of books and journals, and intellectuals such as Liang Qichao (1873-1929) during the 100 Days’ Reform (1898) promoted the production of

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58 Ibid., 33.
59 Ibid., 47-54.
60 I discuss this in the thesis’s introduction on popular fiction genres in the Republican Era.
fiction. This form of literature with stories on xia became more and more important and widespread as the Republican Era approached and unfolded.

4. The Republican Era and the similarities to the historical origins of xia

Stories about the xia continued to be produced and reached their peak in the Republican Era (1912-1949). In this section my aim is to give an overview of the most important events and characteristics and how these can be related to xia. In fact, it is remarkable to notice how the historical and political situation of the Republican Era was similar to that of the Warring States, when the xia came first into existence, contributing hence to the explanation for the xia’s prevalence and success as a literary character.

After the fall of the Qing and the attempt by general Yuan Shikai to form a monarchy (1912-1916), China was divided into areas led by different military factions. This period became known in Chinese history as the “warlord era” (1916-1928) and was characterised by a lack of central governmental power and the de facto division of China, resulting in problems between bordering warlords for land and control, a situation similar to the bordering kingdoms of the Warring States Period. The most important of these factions were the Anhui clique, the Zhili clique, and the Fengtian clique. In order for the warlords or cliques to maintain their power they relied on their armies, hence the most important priority for the warlords became the ability to remunerate their armies. This remuneration was carried out mainly through land taxes and by controlling

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62 Yuan Shikai was general of the Beiyang Army, i.e. the imperial Qing army, which was based on a Western format and constituted the greatest military force in China of that time. For more information on Yuan Shikai see Stephen R. MacKinnon, Power and Politics in Late Imperial China: Yuan Shi-kai in Beijing and Tianjin, 1901-1908 (London: University of California Press, 1980).
the capital city of Beijing, which would provide foreign revenue and investment. These cliques had made life particularly chaotic and violent especially in the north of China and in the capital, and this social chaos left an indelible effect on Wang Dulu, who resided in Beijing until his late twenties, and his writings.

The Fengtian clique, which controlled Manchuria and northeast China, had taken Beijing in 1924 and stayed in power there until 1928. This period permitted generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek 蒋介石 (1887-1975)\(^{65}\) and the Nationalist Party (Guomindang 国民党) to form the National Revolutionary Army in the South of China, which carried out the Northern Expedition in 1928\(^{66}\) and managed to reunify China.\(^{67}\) However, even if in 1928 the central government was restored and the Nationalist Party had taken the position of ruling party, in reality, the influence of the warlords remained present due to the weakness of this new but corrupt government.

The Nanjing Decade (1928-1937),\(^ {68}\) deriving its name from the new capital in the South, is defined by certain scholars as the Chinese counterpart of fascist rule.\(^ {69}\) The nationalists employed governing methods that included, for example, state-controlled industry, state-controlled society,\(^ {70}\) and the Blue Shirts, an organisation of Chinese youth similar to the Black and Brown Shirts in Italy and Germany respectively.\(^ {71}\) Furthermore, life in the countryside at the beginning of the 1930s was characterised by poverty and hardship due to floods, for which the government did not provide any relief as the money was used for the ever-growing

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\(^{69}\) Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 255.

\(^{70}\) Ibid., 258-260.

military. The countryside was also the area where the Chinese Communist Party (Gongchandang 共产党) operated. Apart from the two United Fronts, which saw the cooperation between the two parties, there were continuous combats between the nationalist and communist forces, resulting in an ongoing state of social distress and lack of peace.

Apart from China’s internal problems, an external agent also caused social distress and instability, and subsequently one of the most devastating wars in twentieth century China. The Japanese army had occupied Manchuria in September 1931 after the Mukden incident and would slowly advance their presence on Chinese soil until the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937.

The ongoing struggles during the Republican Era and the Guomindang’s heavy reliance on military-led actions resulted in continuous warfare and social distress. The clique-divisions of the warlord era, which remained throughout the Nanjing Decade, can be seen as a similar situation to that of the Warring States Period. War tactics and strategies were carried out to prevent one clique from overpowered the other, causing continuous social chaos and violence. However, on the contrary of the Warring States rulers, the situation in the Republican Era seems to have led to the promotion of martial arts (wu): if Legalist philosopher Han Feizi saw the xia and his use of martial arts (wu) as something to denounce and as an obstacle to the country’s smooth government, the Republican Era sees martial arts as a method of exercising power. In fact, in 1928 a national martial arts centre was set up by the Nationalist Party in Nanjing, the Central Guoshu Institute (Zhongyang

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72 Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 259.
73 The First United Front was formed in 1922 to fight warlordism in order to end China’s factionalism, but was ended by Chiang Kai-shek in 1927 during the Northern Expedition. The Second United Front was formed in 1937 to fight against the Japanese, but was terminated in 1940.
76 Han Feizi, Chapter 49, section 8. I discuss this extract in the second chapter.
showing the political importance of this typically Chinese fighting sport.

Furthermore, similar to the religious and philosophical creativity of the Hundred Schools in the Warring States Period, the Republican Era was characterised by the arrival of new ideas, political ideologies, philosophies, literary styles, and ways of viewing life, family and love. These different aspects consequently led to a re-evaluation of China’s own culture and main philosophy, i.e. Confucianism. In particular, the New Culture Movement, which I discuss in relation to Wang Dulu in chapter three, provided a call for innovation and change. Whether all these new concepts effectively became integrated in the life of the Chinese is open for debate, but the Republican Era represents a period in which China became very self-critical and strived for improvement and change.

These historical events, including social instability and philosophical and cultural ferment, made the xia a very popular literary character in the Republican Era.

As reader … [e]ach will seek out the particular different themes that concern him. Each will have different ways of making the text into an experience with a coherence and significance that satisfies. […] All of us, as we read, use the literary work to symbolize and finally to replicate ourselves.79

In these novels readers would be able to replicate themselves in plots concerning social injustice, violence, and chaos. The heroic figure of the xia, the redresser of wrongs, either symbolised a form of hope, or a personal extension of the reader, as if he or she were able to fight similar battles. Furthermore, the virtue of xia, i.e. altruism and kindness, similarly represented a form of behaviour to which

77 For information on physical culture in Republican Era see Andrew D. Morris, Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China (London: University of California Press, 2004).
78 The “Hundred Schools” refers to the great amount of different schools of thought that had surfaced during the Warring States Period, and which I discussed at the beginning of the second chapter.
Republican-era readers could aspire and in which they could find comfort. Hence, the fact that the production and consumption of these novels reached their zenith in the Republican Era does not come as a surprise.

5. Conclusion

This chapter on the development of xia has been introduced by explaining what works were to be taken into consideration here. The decision has been to base this section on the works found in secondary literature carried out by previous wuxia scholars, although the critical acknowledgment of a potential bias of these scholars to associate xia only with actions related to martial arts (wu) has been expressed.

The development of xia has been highlighted throughout the Chinese dynasties and it has been shown that xia-literature and history are in fact intertwined. The Tang saw a great proliferation of xia as there still were people roaming throughout the empire in a similar way to during the previous dynasties when the roaming xia was a widespread social phenomenon. It also saw the first female xia at the end of the dynasty, inspired by a ruthless woman, Wu Zetian. The Song saw the reduced importance of the military, which translated into less aggression in the settings of the novels. During the Yuan Dynasty the xia was put on stage where he or she entertained the Mongol rulers, so that some of these became interested in Chinese culture, making the xia a cultural vessel. The first long novels were produced during the Ming and (although it is debatable whether they are part of the wuxia tradition) Water Margin was a critique of Ming rule and government, whilst the Qing saw an even stronger critique of their government when the xia was related to court-case fiction. In addition, in the Qing the baobiao appeared, showing how commerce and insurance had become extremely important, but also that life was particularly dangerous between cities due to the presence of brotherhoods and called for physical protection.

The Republican Era presents many characteristics similar to those of origins of xia in the Warring States Period, including a society in distress and the
appropriation of new ideas and concepts. In this very chaotic period, readers were particularly keen on reading stories that involved justice being done and heroes fighting for good causes. Amidst this chaotic time readers would experience joy and self-identify in a context that was as characterised by violence as their everyday lives but where good prevailed and people still believed in kindness and altruism. Wuxia novels and their plots represented fun and escapism, but essentially promoted hope.
CHAPTER 3

Wang Dulu and the Republican Era

在江湖上落拓一世

In the jianghu it is all unconventional

Jiang Zhisheng 江志升 (HJKL, chapter 1)

1. Introduction

Wang Dulu describes his jianghu江湖, a lawless and sometimes magical dimension typical of wuxia fiction, as unconventional, without any rules. This sense of chaos, as discussed at the end of the previous chapter, is found in Republican-era history and clearly becomes a reflection of Wang Dulu’s own experiences in that time. The author’s life, events, and historical context have influenced his works, making this aspect important for the textual analysis that follows in the final chapters.

Wang Dulu had not written any wuxia fiction before being hired by the Qingdao Xinmin Bao newspaper, but had been trained in the new literary ideals of the Cultural Movement. How do these two contrasting aspects mix together? Is Wang Dulu’s banner origin of any importance for his life and did this influence his writings? I attempt to answer these and other questions throughout this chapter that sees the particularities of Wang Dulu’s life and the Crane-Iron Series serialised publication in the Qingdao Xinmin Bao青岛新民报 on the broader field of Republican-era history and events.

This chapter looks at the life of Wang Dulu in the Republican Era in combination with the most important events and aspects until the arrival of the Second Sino-Japanese War (1937-1945). It begins with Wang Dulu’s Manchu (or
banner) heritage, followed by his childhood and literature studies influenced by the New Culture Movement, the struggles during the many violent episodes that characterise the Republican Era, and finally his move to Qingdao just before the Second Sino-Japanese War broke out. To conclude, the newspaper and its role in Japanese-occupied Qingdao are analysed.

2. Wang Dulu’s origins: Manchus, banner people and their fate in the Republican Era

On the 29th of July 1909 at the very end of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912), not far from the Imperial Palace in the Northern part of Beijing, a poor banner family, with the common Chinese surname Wang 王, welcomed a new child in to the world. Today this child is known as Wang Dulu 王度庐, the name he adopted while writing novels in Qingdao during the Second Sino-Japanese War. At the time of his birth the family was extremely poor as the yearly allowance given by the court to banner families had been decreased over the course of the preceding decade and would eventually stop two years later when the Qing Dynasty fell and the Republican Era began.

In 1909 signs that the end of Manchu rule over China was nigh were rather visible. The arrival on the throne of infant emperor Puyi 爱新觉罗·溥仪

1 It is not possible to be certain whether this surname was the original surname or if the Wang family changed their “foreign” polysyllabic surname to a monosyllabic one after the fall of the dynasty – a common practice for families of Manchu origin to blend in with the Chinese. However, the fact that there are no existing archival records of this family makes it possible to assume that the family was part of a low banner rank, possibly Chinese bondservants, and that this was the original surname.

2 As Xu Sinian reports on the first page of Biography of Wang Dulu (Wang Dulu Pingzhuan 王度庐评传, Suzhou: Suzhou University Press, 2005), Wang Dulu was initially called Baoxiang 葆祥, later changed to Baoxiang 葆翔, and he took on the name (zi 字) Xiaoyu 霄羽. However, in this thesis the name Wang Dulu will be used exclusively. For more information on Chinese names see Yangwen Zheng, “From 居正 Live Righteously and 小兰 Small Orchid to 建华 Construct China: A Systematic Enquiry into Chinese Naming Practices” in Personal Names in Asia – History, Culture and Identity, ed. Yangwen Zheng and Charles J-H. Macdonald (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009), 52-76.

3 According to Edward Rhoads, the allowance to banner families was given in Beijing until 1928. However, it is possible to assume that, due to the low level of the Wang family, they were not privileged enough to receive it. See Edward J. M. Rhoads, Manchus & Han, Ethnic Relations and Political Power in Late Qing and Early Republican China, 1861-1928 (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2000), 358.
仪 (1906-1967)⁴ in 1908 had followed the reign of Empress Dowager Cixi 慈禧太后 (1861-1908).⁵ Although her conservative rule had managed to keep China united and the Qing dynasty in power during a very turbulent period that included majorly disruptive events such as the Great Northern Famine (1876-1879),⁶ the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895),⁷ and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901),⁸ these events and uprisings showed a dynasty on its last legs. After Cixi’s death, the succession of a two-year-old emperor as head of the country and a government in disarray, made the future of the Qing Dynasty look bleaker than ever. Intellectual dissatisfaction was reaching unprecedented peaks and the uprising at Wuhan in 1911 quickly turned into a nationwide revolution, known as the Xinhai Revolution, in order to overthrow the Manchus.⁹ As a result, on the 12th of February 1912 Empress Dowager Longyu 隆裕皇后 (1908-1912), the widow of the Guangxu Emperor 光绪 (1875-1908), signed the abdication in the name of the infant emperor, so ending the Qing Dynasty and giving way to the Republic of China.

Wang Dulu and Puyi, although from two very different families and with two completely different life paths ahead of them, shared their ethnic origin. They were both descendants of banner people. While Puyi was most surely of Manchu ethnic origin, it is not possible to know whether Wang Dulu’s ancestors were

⁵ These dates are given based on the period in which Cixi held power at court. With the arrival of the Guangxu Emperor in 1875, Cixi managed to have great influence on imperial decisions and with a coup in 1898 took control in her own hands after the Hundred Days’ Reform and placed the Guangxu Emperor under house arrest until his death 1908.
⁸ For more information on the Boxer Rebellion see Paul Cohen, History in three keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Diana Preston, Besieged in Peking: The Story of the 1900 Boxer Rising (London: Constable, 1999); Jane E. Elliott, Some did it for their country, some did it for civilisation: A Revised View of the Boxer War (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2002).
Manchu, Han, or Mongol. However, in the Republican Era this ethnic origin was not an issue, as the people that today are defined as “Manchu” were then commonly known as “banner people” (qiren 旗人)\(^{10}\) This denomination shows how they were part of a societal structure typical to the rulers of China of the Qing Dynasty, the banner system,\(^{11}\) which “was the principal institution which unified the Manchu people and defined Manchu identity.”\(^ {12}\)

Although the “founding father of the Chinese Republic”, Sun Yat-sen 孙中山 (1866-1925), had recognised the Manchus on the proposed flag, their fate in the Republican Era was often not a pleasant one, especially at the beginning. The Taiping Rebellion, the North China Great Famine, and the First Sino-Japanese War, events of the second half of the nineteenth century, had all stirred up anti-Manchu movements and culminated in the Republican Revolution (1911) that followed.\(^ {13}\) Social Darwinism became a crucial factor and the concept of different races was one of the tools used to remove the Manchus and banner people from their political and social position.\(^ {14}\) The ethnic origins of the banner people were not of any


\(^{11}\) The banner system was created by the initiators of Manchu culture and the subsequent Qing Dynasty, i.e. Nurhaci (1559-1626) and Hong Taiji (1592-1643). Many people (both at the beginning of the seventeenth century and today) say that the Jurchens were the original Manchus, but the matter is more complex. In fact, the term “Manchu” was coined by Hong Taiji in 1635 and included many different tribes of the Manchuria area. This new group had subjugated different clans and tribes in the area that later is referred to as Manchuria, dividing them into eight groups. Eight different banners were assigned to them and indicated their hierarchic position, thus creating the eight banner system. These banners could be of one colour only (“plain”) or with a coloured fringe (“bordered”), which was red for all colours except for the Red Bordered banner which was white. From the highest to the lowest the eight banners were: Bordered Yellow, Plain Yellow, Plain White, Plain Red, Bordered White, Bordered Red, Plain Blue, Bordered Blue. Nurhaci and Hong Taiji continued their expansion in Northeast China and the Han people that had resisted them were turned into house-slaves, who were referred to as “bondservants”. Due to the great number of the new people becoming part of the banner system, Hong Taiji in 1642 stopped enslaving the Hans but organised them within the already existing banner in a separate banner subgroup, called Hanjun (汉军). The third ethnic category was that of the Mongols that had been taken over by Hong Taiji and they too were put into a separate eight banner system, for a total of twenty-four banners. The previously mentioned colours of each banner were hence made of three groups: e.g. the Manchu Bordered Blue, the Mongol Bordered Blue, and the Hanjun Bordered Blue. With this military and social structure China was taken over in 1644. See Rhoads, *Manchus & Han*, and Marc Elliott, *The Manchu Way* for more information on the banner system.


relevance, but the sole fact of being a member of the banner system was reason enough to be considered different from the Han Chinese.

At the beginning of the twentieth century China had the opportunity to demonstrate itself to be on par with the West and to overthrow the Manchus and the banner system. These ideas were well-received by secret brotherhoods, which had extremely loyal feelings to their components because they were of the same heritage, and they shared the same destiny: “when they are brothers, they are naturally equal”. 15 This resentment towards the Manchus and banner people escalated in 1911 with the Republican Revolution and a proper “search” for these people was carried out and many of them were killed. The events highlighted by Pamela Crossley show how the military was eager to exterminate people with Manchu heritage and how they were transformed into a target that had to be eliminated because they had usurped the Chinese “Han” throne and prevented China from modernising itself. 16

Some moved to Manchuria where loyal warlords promised them safety, but most of them did not have the means so they just lay low and did not go into too much detail when questioned about their family histories. 17 In fact, during this period, many Manchus and banner people changed their official surnames to single character Chinese ones in order to blend in and escape the anger of the military, and so after 1911 many Manchu surnames had simply disappeared. 18 Many of them were ashamed of their ethnic background and not until after the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) 19 did they share this knowledge with their relatives: “Many speak of grandparents who acted all their lives as if they had had a guilty secret, and on their...

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17 Ibid., 194.
18 See Zheng, “From 居正 Live Righteously”, 59-60. She also points out how in this area not much research has yet been carried out.
deathbeds would suddenly recite banner and lineage revealing their Manchu ancestry."

However, it is after the fall of the Qing that scholarship on the Manchus becomes scant. Until recently only Edward Rhoads pushed analysis on the Manchus into the Republican Era until the government ended the annual payment to highly positioned Manchus in Beijing in 1928, which according to Rhoads was the effective dismemberment of the Banner System. The Banner system, the emblem of Manchu and banner culture, had provided those that were part of it with privileges and positions in Chinese bureaucracy, but most importantly, a monthly salary to banner families. Although most banner people stopped receiving this monthly amount of money after the fall of the Qing Dynasty in 1911, it was still given in the city of Beijing until 1928 only to families that were part of the highest ranks of the Eight Banner System, keeping it in existence for an additional seventeen years.

Apart from Rhoads, the only monograph that tackles the discussion of Manchus and Manchu ethnicity in the Republican Era is that of Shao Dan, written in 2011. Dan analyses the topic of Manchu ethnicity and the position of Manchuguo not only in Japan’s imperialist project, but also in that of the new Han Chinese government. This conclusion by Dan is interesting and deserves credit, but it focuses on the importance of Manchuria, not necessarily on the Manchus who had lived in other parts of China and that had become “undesired”, to say the least, after the fall of the Qing.

An example of Manchus or banner people outside of Manchuria is that of Wang Dulu. He found himself growing up in an anti-Manchu China and was caught in this difficult situation. Due to his dire circumstances there were no other options than to stay under the anti-Manchu radar and try to make a living. Simple survival was more important than ethnicity or heritage. However, there is a possibility that Wang Dulu never really felt like a banner man to begin with. In his article

“Smashing the homeland to pieces” (Posui Guojia 破碎国家), he refers to the entirety of China. He poetically compares how the moon shines on the United Kingdom and on the United States and how the people in those countries are free. When he then looks at what the moonlight shines on “our China” (women Zhongguo 我们中国), in the South the Yangtze River overflows and creates ten thousands of victims; to the North-East (Dong Bei 东北) bandits have entered the Changbai Mountains and many fellow countrymen (tongpao 同胞) had to surrender to the foreign invader (Japan). He ends the article by showing his sadness for his countrymen in the North-East although he does not know them. On a terminological and discourse level, this article shows a great amount of nationalism and compassion for all people considered Chinese. The fact that specific terms related to Manchuria are omitted and China is promoted as a whole would assume that Wang Dulu did not affiliate with his banner heritage, but in fact, maybe unknowingly, joins in the imperialist project of the Chinese government in Manchuria, as described by Shao Dan. His use of the terms terms tongpao and Dong Bei do not imply that there is a particular membership that is associated with these areas, but stresses that they are part of China, the “Central Country” (Zhongguo 中国).

Today Wang Dulu is referred to as “Manchu”. This comes forth from the decision in December 1952 by the Chinese Communist Party who assigned the name “Manchu” to more than fifty different ethnic minorities, including groups that until that moment had not been associated with the Manchus of the Qing Dynasty. Hence this group requires “a rather loose interpretation of the accepted Stalinist definition of a ‘nationality’, or ethnic group” due to its previous assimilation to the Han culture in the Qing Dynasty. This explains why today the term “Manchu” is used and “banner people” has disappeared in common speech. However, to conclude, it is more accurate to state that Wang Dulu was the descendant of a

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24 Rhoads, Manchus & Han, 277.
25 Ibid., 277.
banner family, which could be Manchu, Mongol or Han.\(^{26}\) As I discussed above, in the Republican Era this specification did not matter and today it is impossible to discover his ethnic origin.\(^{27}\) This did not stop other scholars from using Wang Dulu’s banner lineage to aid in the interpretation of his novels, and articles on this author can be found.\(^{28}\) In this thesis his membership to an ethnic minority is discarded as a tool of analysis. As there is not enough proof that he affiliated himself primarily with his ethnic origins, the attempt is to extrapolate Wang Dulu from a potential categorisation as a Manchu author, thus making his work a voice for all people of the Republican Era, not only for those that subscribe to the term “Manchu”.

3. Wang Dulu’s childhood and formative years: Modernity and Confucianism in Republican-era Society

After the court’s annual allowance had stopped in 1912 Wang Dulu’s family had lost their main source of income, and the situation worsened when his father died in 1916. Wang Dulu managed to finish secondary school at the age of 15 where he had been particularly interested in literature. After graduation he started, initially, to work in an optician’s shop as an apprentice but was eventually fired because considered to be clumsy and physically too frail. He tried to become a servant for a low rank army officer, but here he was fired again because he was not strong enough, and was eventually sent home with a handful of copper coins as his last pay.\(^{29}\) It was obvious that Wang Dulu was not able to perform in a job that required much, if any, physical strength. Fortunately the Beijing Library opened

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\(^{27}\) The Beijing archives do not hold any documents on Wang Dulu’s family. This lack of documentation makes it impossible to identify the author’s ethnic origin, but it also indicates the little importance the author’s family had within the banner system, indicating that they must have been from a low ran within their banner.


\(^{29}\) Xu Sinian, *Biography of Wang Dulu*, 5.
one of its buildings in the *hutong*\(^{30}\) where Wang and his family lived, giving him access to many books near home. Here he developed his interest in literature and sociology.\(^{31}\) Beijing was, in Rana Mitter’s words, the “intellectual centre of the (New Culture) movement” in 1920s China.\(^{32}\) Literature and society were undergoing changes like never before, and one of the most important places where these first came to light was, in fact, the University of Beijing where Wang Dulu was auditing for free. In fact, the University of Beijing had made their lectures accessible to the public, making it possible for a penniless Wang Dulu to sit in.\(^{33}\)

What has been defined as the New Culture Movement roughly corresponds to the period that goes from the foundation of the Journal *New Youth* (*Xin Qingnian* 新青年) in Beijing in 1915 combined with the fall of Yuan Shikai in 1916, to the May 30\(^{th}\) Incident in Shanghai in 1925.\(^{34}\) Yuan Shikai’s attempt to reinstate a monarchy over China was the beginning of the population’s disillusionment about China’s progress towards global modernity. This sentiment was reinforced by the aftermath of the First World War (1914-1918). China had participated in this war on the side of the Allies and had helped in the defeat of the German and Austro-Hungarian armies. However, the Treaty of Versailles did not treat the Chinese in an equal fashion as the other victors. In fact, the German colonies in Shandong province were not given back to China, but remained colonies under Japanese rule. This international mistreatment of China led on May Fourth 1919 to demonstrations by students of Beijing University causing what has been aptly named the May Fourth Movement.\(^{35}\) This first demonstration in Beijing spawned a number of

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30 A *hutong* 胡同 is a typical street in old Beijing’s city centre.
“nationwide protests against Japanese imperialism and the Chinese warlords who had fragmented and weakened the nation”.

This period saw the denunciation of old traditions as the illnesses that were plaguing China and prevented it from “modernising”. The first and most important aspect that was under attack was Confucianism. This Chinese philosophy constituted the very basis on which Chinese society was modelled. It promoted harmony, filial piety, and hierarchy. In particular, the hierarchical relations between parents and children, subject and ruler, and husband and wife were seen as the cause that prevented “the evolution of autonomous individuals”. The study of Confucian texts and the practice of Confucian teachings were considered the biggest hindrance to China’s nationalism, the lack of which had prevented the country from being seen as a geopolitical equal, as the case of the Treaty of Versailles had shown. Furthermore, the role of women had to be completely re-evaluated and practices such as footbinding, concubinage, prostitution, often in opium dens, were to be banned.

The plea for these social changes went combined with those on the literary front. Intellectuals such as Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936), Hu Shi 胡适 (1891-1962), Mao Dun 矛盾 (1896-1981), Chen Duxiu 陈独秀 (1879-1942), and Zhou Zuoren 周作人 (1885-1967) wrote articles in the New Youth advocating changes in writing style (the abandonment of the old and formulaic wenyan 文言 and the suggestion of a new written language similar to the spoken one), new literary genres (the translation of Western authors saw the interest in developing new forms of

References:
36 Denton, Modern Chinese Literary Thought, 114.
literature), and new authors (women and people from humbler backgrounds than those of the previous literati elite).

The question that remains to answer is whether this call for change had practical effects and whether life in Republican-era China substantially changed. On the one hand scholars such as Rana Mitter have written convincingly about the changes that the May Fourth Movement in the Republican Era have brought to Chinese society in areas such as the creation of new social classes, new forms of love, and in households (the formation of a small family nucleus, 小家庭, instead of a large extended family). Other scholars such as Qin Shao have demonstrated on the other hand that the lower strata of society and the countryside were not affected and continued their lives similarly to their ancestors who lived in the Manchu-ruled Qing dynasty. Although the urban population embraced the May Fourth values quicker than those in the countryside, changes were also visible outside of the cities. Hence the debate on the immediate effectiveness of the New Culture Movement still remains open and the best conclusion, for now, is to see Republican-era China and its society as a colourful combination where old values and new innovations, tradition and modernity could be found simultaneously in many aspects of life.

Wang Dulu’s work that is analysed in this thesis aptly fits this description. Although the framework is that of wuxia stories set in the Qing Dynasty (“feudal” literature in a traditional setting), the dynamics, plots, and themes are full of innovations and aspects of Republican-era ideals and change. The attempt in the following chapters is to analyse in general the historical aspects that can be found in these novels, and more specifically what aspects of change and modernity came to

39 On new literary genres in the Republican Era see Zhang Gansheng, A Selection of Republican Era Popular Fiction, 28-40.
the forefront. This attempt relates to Paul Cohen’s Tradition and Modernity paradigm, although I do not promote such a strong dyad as has been proposed by Joseph Levenson, but rather an analysis where tradition and modernity are not mutually exclusive but coexisting, as has been advocated by Mary Wright, Benjamin Schwartz, and Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph (the latter in the case of India). Even more provocatively, Thomas A. Metzger’s view is that of Neo-Confucians at the end of the Qing Dynasty welcoming modernity and the change of core traditional values “with which Confucians had long time been preoccupied”.

In fact, the attempt in this thesis is to prove that, like Wang Dulu’s analysis of societal change and innovation embedded in old literature and traditional values, this simultaneous presence of Confucian tradition and modernity is a typical characteristic of Republican-era life.

Wang Dulu creates xia that are part of a society, set in the Qing Dynasty and heavily based on traditional Confucian rules. Some of these xia embrace their fate in this society and have tragic destinies (Li Mubai 李慕白 and Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲), some try to escape from it (Yu Jiaolong 玉娇龙 and Luo Xiaohu 罗小虎), others manage to find happiness (Chun Xueping 春雪瓶 and Han Tiefang 韩铁芳).

However, even if these xia defy a society based on Confucianism, my analysis will show that the actions they carry out and that earn them their title of xia, are virtuous in a similar fashion to ren 仁 (benevolence) and yi 义 (righteousness), two core Confucian concepts. Although an apparent dichotomy, for Wang Dulu some aspects of society should not be based on Confucianism (arranged marriages, the focus on scholarly knowledge, footbinding), while the basic Confucian concepts of interrelation between people (benevolence, righteousness) still have value. This

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46 Ibid., 61-79.
50 As quoted in Paul Cohen, Discovering History in China, 88.
51 The synopses of Wang Dulu’s novels are contained in Appendix A.
dichotomy shows how in fact also in wuxia novels there are contrasting aspects between tradition and modernity that coexist.

Clear New Culture and May Fourth aspects in Wang Dulu’s wuxia novels written in Qingdao can be traced to the articles he wrote for the Small Journal (Xiao Xiao Ribao 小小日报) in 1930 in Beijing. These articles have been analysed by Xu Sinian 徐斯年 and he concluded that the most important topics for this Republican-era author were literature for common people, denouncing and solving poverty issues, saving the nation from collapsing, and theory and ethics. However, the theories that were advocated by the author shifted from New Confucianism to May Fourth thought, showing how in fact it is not possible to pigeonhole Wang Dulu as in favour or contrary to the New Culture Movement. Modernity should be embraced, but it is impossible to completely eradicate Confucianism. Wang Dulu’s works become a testimony of a time where old and new, tradition and modernity were going hand in hand, a plethora of contrasting aspects that constituted the Republican Era.


At the end of the 1920s and at the beginning of the 1930s Wang Dulu worked as a writer for the Xiao Xiao Ribao and as a private teacher. He fell in love with one of his pupils, Li Danquan 李丹荃, with whom he moved to Xi’an in 1934 where Li’s father lived, and they got married there in 1935. Here Wang Dulu worked for the Shaanxi Ministry of Education and as a journalist for a newspaper, the Minyi Bao 民意报. In 1937 Wang Dulu was asked by his wife’s uncle, who was

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52 Hereafter referred to as Xiao Xiao Ribao.
55 Xu Sinian, Biography of Wang Dulu, 7-10.
childless, to go to Qingdao and work there. In March that year the Wang family moved east to start a new life,\(^56\) without knowing that the Japanese invasion would occur only 10 months later. Qingdao had become in those years a strategic city within China, making it an important target for the Japanese. However, this was not the first time that the Japanese invaded this coastal city, whose turbulent history seems to be characterised by foreign occupiers and which is briefly addressed below.

The murder of two German Catholic missionaries in Qingdao on the 1\(^{\text{st}}\) November 1897 by members of the Big Swords Society was the pretext used by the German Empire to seize a portion of Chinese soil.\(^57\) The area was militarily occupied on 14\(^{\text{th}}\) November 1897 by Otto van Diederichs and his troops, and remained under a lease contract with Germany for 17 years.\(^58\) It was officially the first colony that was entirely situated on mainland China and not on islands (such as Hong Kong and Macau),\(^59\) and other European countries followed this example.\(^60\)

At the beginning of the German occupation, the city of Qingdao counted around seven hundred civilians and 1,600 to 2,000 German troops, and immediately economic activity in Shandong increased, with levels of trade in Qingdao growing by 750% in only seventeen years.\(^61\) The increase in population went together with the construction of streets, private houses and other buildings, such as schools and theatres. The relation between the Germans and the Chinese gradually improved and after 1904 it is almost possible to define it as a positive collaboration, not only from a governmental point of view, but also a social one. While the initial phase (1897-1904) saw a heavy militarisation and a clear segregation between the Chinese

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\(^{56}\) Ibid., 14.

\(^{57}\) This society was made up of experts in martial arts and they fought against the spreading of Christianity in northern Shandong. For more information on the Big Swords Society, see Elizabeth J. Perry, *Rebels and Revolutionaries in North China 1845-1945* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1980), 171-172.


\(^{60}\) These countries are for example Britain (Port Edward), Russia (Dalian and Lüshun), and France (Guangzhouwan).

\(^{61}\) George Steinmetz, *The Devil’s Handwriting*, 435, 439.
and the German areas and peoples, the second period (1904-1914) saw a change from “sinophobia to sinophilia”, combined with the demilitarisation of the area and a strong growth of German Sinology in Europe.\footnote{Ibid., 449-450, 467.}

The German colony, however, ended quite abruptly. At the start of the First World War in Europe, Britain preferred the expulsion of the Germans from Chinese soil as quickly as possible and the destruction of the German fleet in Qingdao. It asked for Japan’s help, which was granted firstly based on the Anglo-Japanese alliance (signed in 1902), and secondly by Japan’s desire to improve its status on the geopolitical map of the colonising ‘superpowers’. In November 1914 Qingdao was attacked by Japanese and British troops and subsequently occupied by the Japanese. The “Siege of Qingdao”\footnote{For more information see Charles B. Burdick, \textit{The Japanese Siege of Tsingtau: World War I in Asia} (Hamden: Archon Book, 1976); Waldemar Vollerthun, \textit{Der Kampf um Tsingtau: Ein Episode aus dem Weltkrieg 1914/1918 – nach Tagebuchblattern von Waldemar Vollthurn} (Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1920).} was swift (the actual fighting lasted eight days from 31\textsuperscript{st} October to 7\textsuperscript{th} November 1914) and did not cause many casualties (627 in total).\footnote{Chūshichi Tsuzuki, \textit{The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan, 1825-1995} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 189.}

After the success of the siege, Japan had risen to the same level of the United Kingdom, the United States, and France, and effectively became the first East Asian imperialist superpower. Japan stationed military troops in the area and on the 25\textsuperscript{th} May 1915 forced China to sign the Twenty-One Demands,\footnote{These demands consist of five major groups: 1. Japan’s influence in Shandong, and also on the railways; 2. Sphere of influence into Southern Manchuria; 3. control of Japan on Hanyeping mining company; 4. China cannot give control of other coastal cities to other foreign countries; 5. Various others such as Japanese Buddhist missionaries allowed in China (see Tsuzuki, \textit{The Pursuit of Power}, 190).} which were the beginning of Japanese influence outside of the Shandong area. In 1919 during the negotiations of the Treaty of Versailles, which China did not sign, Japan managed to convince the European delegation to allow Japan to take possession of the German colonies in China, which became the main event to spark the protests in Beijing on the 4\textsuperscript{th} May 1919.\footnote{China did not sign the Treaty because it was established that China sent troops to fight in Europe in exchange of the areas that were under German control on Chinese soil. Japan had made secret agreements with European countries during the war and hence managed to undo their previous promises with China. For more information see for example Marius Jansen, \textit{Japan and China: From}
Conference, Shandong province was returned to Chinese sovereignty and became a directly-controlled municipality under the government of the Republic of China.\textsuperscript{67}

This short overview of the history of Qingdao shows its strategic position within Qing and Republican-era China. Japan’s Twenty-One Demands and the Treaty of Versailles’s decision to give the German colonies to Japan in 1919 had emblematically spawned the new ideals and calls for change, culminating in the May Fourth Movement. These new ideals were at the core of the innovative lectures in literature that Wang Dulu attended at Beijing University only a decade before moving to this city in March 1937. However, luck was not on his and his family’s side. On the 10th January 1938, the city of Qingdao was occupied again by Japanese troops and the Second Sino-Japanese War had arrived in Qingdao. Japanese occupation was considered not as bad as in other parts of China,\textsuperscript{68} such as Nanjing.\textsuperscript{69} After the Japanese had taken over Qingdao in 1938, Wang Dulu was in need of a job to take care of his family. He quickly found one at the Qingdao Xinmin Bao (青岛新民报), a pro-Japanese newspaper published in Chinese, run by a Chinese organisation, called the Xinmin Hui (新民会) (“New People’s Organisation”) and which collaborated with the Japanese.

\textsuperscript{67} Chūshichi Tsuzuki, The Pursuit of Power in Modern Japan, 208-209.
5. Newspapers in Qingdao: *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* and *Xinmin Hui*

The *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* was founded in January 1938 by the *(Huabei) Xinmin Hui* (华北新民会), i.e. the “New People’s Association”. This organisation was founded on the 24th December 1937, only ten days after the formation of the Provisional Government of the Republic of China *(Zhongyang minguo Linshi Zhengfu 中华民国临时政府)*. It collaborated closely with Wang Kemin 王克敏 (1879-1945), the president of the Provisional Government, and its headquarters were in Beijing.\(^{70}\) The modus operandi of the *Xinmin Hui* was a spatial strategy that consisted in opening numerous offices on provincial, district and urban level. These promoted the ideals of the association from grass-roots level and worked closely with its headquarters.\(^{71}\) These ideals were part of a movement called “New-Citizenism” 新民主义 and included the promotion of the new regime and Manchuguo government, good and friendly Sino-Japanese relations which were the basis for the creation of a new East Asian order *(Dongya Xin Zhixu 东亚新秩序)*, a form of “Pan-Asianism”, and the attacking of Communism and Western political thought.\(^{72}\) In addition to the specific offices, many other social organisations were established by the *Xinmin Hui* in order to better promote the above-mentioned ideals. These organisations included *Xinmin* schools (all levels), education centres, libraries, youth groups, women’s associations, athletic clubs, and of course newspapers. It is highly likely that these groups and organisations served not only the promotion of the *Xinmin* values, but also to carry out espionage work for the Japanese puppet-state government.\(^{73}\)

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\(^{70}\) Due to its controversy in Chinese history, there is not much scholarship on the Provisional Government of the Republic of China and the people and organisations associated with it, such as Wang Kemin and the *Xinmin Hui*.

\(^{71}\) Liu Dake, “The *Xinmin Hui* and its actions in occupied Shandong” in *Journal of Social Sciences of Shandong University* (March, 2001), 50.


\(^{73}\) Possibly due to the sensitivity of the subject, in Western scholarship there seems to be no specific research regarding the *Xinmin Hui*, but it is simply mentioned by scholars of Chinese history. In Chinese scholarship there are some academic articles, but again a thorough research on this topic seems to be lacking.
Figure 1

Upper right and lower panels: The residence of the Wang family on Ningbo Street 4 in Qingdao (picture taken in May 2010)
In the Xinmin Hui’s project, Qingdao occupied a special position as it was one of the three cities directly controlled by the Provisional Government (Tebie Zhixiashi 特别直辖市).\textsuperscript{74} In fact, less than a month after the foundation of the Xinmin Hui and only a week after the occupation of Qingdao, the Qingdao Xinmin Bao was founded on the 18\textsuperscript{th} January 1938.\textsuperscript{75} The sections in the newspaper included current affairs, special reports on the war, international news, economic affairs, local news, and “supplements”. The latter included Wang Dulu’s novels and also weekly supplements specifically targeted at or regarding women, households, children, social services, entertainment, literature, theatre and cinema, and science. In the specific case of the war reports, which were the journal’s most important section, these were “embellished” (meihua zhanzheng 美化战争)\textsuperscript{76} in order to promote the Xinmin Hui ideals of good Sino-Japanese collaboration and peaceful Pan-Asianism. This mainly consisted in downplaying the numbers of Japanese casualties and exaggerating the number of Chinese casualties, making the readers assume that the Japanese had already won and conquered China, whilst in reality the battles continued.

Wang Dulu was invited by the editor Song Hai 松海 to write a serialised novel in the editor’s edition of June 1938. This first novel was Biographies of the Youxia of the Yellow River and Five Sacred Mountains (He-Yue Youxia Zhuan 河岳游侠转), which was highly successful. In this edition Wang Dulu was officially presented as the author of the novel but his address remained hidden because all letters would be forwarded via the editor,\textsuperscript{77} which could be interpreted as a method to control correspondences between Wang Dulu and his readers. In November 1938 he started his famous work, the Crane-Iron Series, which was completed in 1944. In this same time-span he also published other “social novels” (shehui xiaoshuo 社会小说) in serialised version, i.e. Corn Poppy (Yumeiren 虞美人), Rosy Clouds

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
    \item \textsuperscript{74} Liu Dake, “The Xinmin Hui and its actions in occupied Shandong”, 50; Yang Xiaojuan, “Enslavement Spreading of the Manchuguo Xinmin Hui in occupied Northern China” in Journal of Hebei Normal University / Philosophy and Social Sciences Edition 31, 2 (2008), 121. The other two cities were Beijing and Tianjin.
    \item \textsuperscript{75} Zhuo Yingchun, “Analysis of the «Qingdao Xinmin Newspaper»”, 10.
    \item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 15.
    \item \textsuperscript{77} Qingdao Xinmin Bao, issue number 139, page 5.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
and Rainbows on the Sea (Hai Shang Hong Xia 海上虹霞), and Willow Catkins create Fragrance (Luoxu Piao Xiang 落絮飘香).

The choice of writing mainly wuxia novels was most likely not an autonomous decision by Wang Dulu. This specific form of literature, as pointed out by Prasenjit Duara, was part of the Manchuguo strategy to promote pan-Asianism, and was used also in the territories occupied by the Japanese.\(^78\) Nevertheless, in Wang Dulu’s novels the characters are all common people and not outstanding heroes. These common people all possess intrinsic strength that they discover during their quests and problems, after which they find themselves stronger and free to make their own decisions. This turns the works by Wang Dulu from simple pastimes into sources of hope for the readers.\(^79\) Thus Wang Dulu subverted the Japanese intentions to promote martial arts, and instead focused on social relations, kindness and altruism, almost becoming a xia himself by promoting these forms of hope in a time of social distress and unrest. Wang Dulu did not use martial arts but his literary works to help other people by offering them optimism and momentarily alleviating their daily miseries, could potentially make him part of the wenxia 文侠 category (using writings, civic duties to be or obtain xia) and which I will discuss throughout the remainder of the thesis. Although the author has not been defined a xia by the people near him, his actions can be considered to have been xia-like.

After the end of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1945, the Xinmin Hui and its organisations were dismembered, a process that had already started in the second half of 1944. The Qingdao Xinmin Bao’s last edition was on the 9th September 1945, although it had cut down the number of pages since May.\(^80\) After the war ended, Wang Dulu’s serialised episodes were collected, turned into novels, and published in Shanghai between 1947 and 1948 by the Lili Chubanshe 励力

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\(^78\) “Nation-makers deployed Confucian civilizing processes (jiaohua, kyōka), redemptive religion (jiushi, kyūsei), the model of the self-sacrificing woman (xianqi liangmu, ryōsai kenbo), and the vernacular tradition of the knight-errant (lülin haohan), among other strategies.” Prasenjit Duara, Sovereignty and Authenticity, Manchukuo and the East Asian Modern (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003), 2. It is interesting to notice in this quote, how Duara refers to the Chinese and Japanese terms of these topics, apart from the knight-errant tradition, which remains idiosyncratically Chinese.

\(^79\) Zhuo Yingchun, “Analysis of the «Qingdao Xinmin Newspaper»”, 34.

\(^80\) Ibid., 11.
The publication of his novels gave the author nationwide fame, although it was rather short-lived. With the arrival of Mao Zedong, wuxia fiction was banned and Wang Dulu ceased writing novels.  

6. Conclusion

Wang Dulu’s life and experiences in the Republican Era, his attendance at the University of Beijing after the May Fourth Movement, his move to Qingdao and life under Japanese rule are all factors that have contributed to the formation of his masterpiece, the Crane-Iron Series. His training in the New Culture Movement and the wuxia genre framework in which he is asked to write by the newspaper’s editor are an interesting combination that turns these novels into interesting historical testimonies that combine traditional Chinese aspects (part of the genre) and new progressive aspects. Furthermore, what will become clear from the analysis is that Wang Dulu’s works in the newspaper did not only have the function of leisure, but also contain direct references to the Republican Era’s problems and events. Within this tragic picture that comes forth in the novels, however, Wang Dulu promotes a message of hope and invites his readers to be kinder to others, showing that xia is something that everyone can aspire to be. The aim here then becomes to analyse these novels on a conceptual level to see how they treat the concept of xia, and on a historical level to see how tradition and modernity blend, similar to the Republican Era.

81 Xu Sinian, Biography of Wang Dulu, 326-327.
82 Ibid., 203-211.
CHAPTER 4

**Xia in the Crane-Iron Series – The Redefinition of xia**

所以时时想学成一身武艺, 也像他父亲和江南鹤一般，做一个江湖侠士，却把功名富贵不放在眼里。

*Hence (Li Mubai) often thinks of completing a study of martial arts and, just like his father and Jiang Nanhe, become a jianghu xia江湖侠士; in fact, he looked down upon fame and fortune.*

Jiang Xiaohao (BJJC, chapter 3)

1. **Introduction**

The above extract refers to Li Mubai 李慕白, the main male character of the second and third novel of the *Crane-Iron Series* (*He-Tie Xilie 鹤-铁系列*). His desire to become a *xia* eventually becomes reality and he establishes himself as one of the most well-known people in the *jianghu*. These lines about Li Mubai also show an aspect of *xia* that had been highlighted before with the analysis of the term in the Han Dynasty: Li Mubai’s disdain for wealth. It appears that this aspect of the *xia* of ancient times found its way into the Republican Era and has been adapted by Wang Dulu in his novels. But are there aspects that have changed? How does *xia* manifest itself in the context of the Republican Era? What does it say about this period?

After tracing the origins and development of *xia* 侠 in chapters one and two and having provided the historical context in chapter three, it is hence now possible to “redefine” *xia* through the analysis of Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*. As pointed out in previous chapters, the redefinition of *xia* is crucial to the Republican Era as it is in this period that the amount of *wuxia* products that circulated in all strata of Chinese society reached unprecedented peaks.
Amidst the hardships of everyday war life in a territory occupied by the Japanese, the people of Qingdao would read the *Qingdao Xinmin bao* 青岛新民报 and look for its last page where a new section of the *Crane-Iron Series* was published. Here the values and thoughts of a Chinese (albeit of banner origins) author trained in the New Culture ideals were conveyed through the means of one of China’s most idiosyncratic popular genres: *wuxia* fiction 武侠小说. Although exponents of Chiang Kai-shek’s Nationalist Party (the Guomindang) had previously banned the production of *wuxia* films (*wuxia pian* 武侠片),¹ the Japanese promoted the creation of *wuxia* consumer products² handing to Wang Dulu a platform where he could write about social and historical events through the means of this well-known genre, creating a combination of the new literary ideals in the commercially entertaining context of the *wuxia* novels.

This chapter analyses the term *xia* and how it has been used by Wang Dulu in these novels. The importance of *xia* as a Chinese value has been proven in the previous chapters and its understanding and use by one of the most prominent *wuxia* authors of the Republican Era undoubtedly sheds new light on the society of that time.

As I explained in the introduction, the methodology applied in this first section is part of corpus linguistics: the different binomes, trinomes, and quadrinomes that contain *xia* are identified, translated, counted, and grouped together. The most important groups of *xia*-related terms include personal names, honorific titles, and expressions related to courage and justice. Each set of terms is followed by an analysis. With this textual micro-level analysis the author’s use of the term *xia* is unfolded.

However, a textual analysis only gives a partial understanding of *xia* as the context is missing.³ Some of the literary characters are defined as *xia*, but not all of these contain the character *xia* in their name and are only addressed as *xia* by others. Hence after the textual analysis this chapter proposes an analysis of the

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³ See methodology section in introduction chapter.
characteristics of the *xia*, how they become *xia*, and how the plot of one of the most important characters of the pentalogy relates to Republican-era China. By combining these two forms of analysis the attempt is made to obtain a balanced depiction of *xia* in the *Crane-Iron Series*.

2. **Textual analysis of *xia***

The *Crane-Iron Series* contains approximately 2,345,000 characters, in which the character *xia* occurs 1,683 times. Three groups in which the term occurs have been identified. The first one concerns general denominations of people defined as *xia*. There are different appellatives with which a person can be defined a *xia* and these and their differences are analysed first. Then the expressions and binomes that refer to courage and the body (which is a metaphor of courage), are grouped together and analysed. Finally, the biggest group, that of personal names that contain the term *xia*, is analysed. This final section aids in identifying the reasons why the textual analysis through corpus linguistics does not suffice for a comprehensive understanding of *xia*, hence leading to a broadening in the analysis that follows.

2.3 **General denominations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General denomination (male)</th>
<th>Grand total</th>
<th>1,682</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>侠客 <em>xiake</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠义 <em>xiayi</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>老侠 (客) <em>laoxia(ke)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大侠 (客) <em>daxia(ke)</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠士 <em>xiashi</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>豪侠 <em>haoxia</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>名侠 <em>ming xia</em></td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1
This first table summarises the denominations of the *xia*, i.e. how other people refer to a person who is considered a *xia*. The difference between the denominations seems minimal although can be of some interest.

*Xiake* has the most extensive usage and always refers to a person who is a *xia*, due to the nominalising aspect of *ke* 客 (i.e. person engaged in a particular pursuit) and which is always in relation to a person. However, the term *xiake* seems to refer mostly to important *xia*, because of its combination with the adjectives *da* 大 (i.e. big, great) and *lao* 老 (i.e. old, wise, great), the latter here having an
honorific function instead of simply meaning “old”. The terms *da xiake* and *lao xiake*, that refer to well-established *xia* are found 57 times, and also the expression “famous *xiake*” (*youming de xiake* 有名 的 侠 客) is used ten times. Other characteristics, such as *nianqing* 年轻 or *shaonian* 少年, both meaning “young”, and hence lacking experience, appear only four times with *xiake*. This would conclude that the term *xiake*, usually refers to an established *xia*, but can also refer to younger *xia*, remaining hence the most neutral denomination.

**Xiashi** also always refers to a person due to the character *shi* 士 (i.e. person, or person trained in a specific field), which, like *ke*, nominalises *xia*, but does not refer in any way to the *shi* class of the Spring and Autumn Period discussed in the first chapter. In the *Crane-Iron Series* the person defined as *xiashi*, on the contrary of *xiake*, can be young, but not old or well-known. The expression *lao xiashi* 老侠士 does not appear in any of the syntagmas. Hence *xiashi* is used for the young and inexperienced *xia*. This is also corroborated by the meaning of the character *shi* which can refer to scholars and people trained in a certain field. In this case a *xiashi* seems to have completed the training but has not put it into practice yet and lacks first-hand experience.

**Xiayi** has only a limited use as a noun referring to people. The character *yi* 义 refers to the concept of “justice”, or “justness” and the binome *xiayi* can be used as an adjective or a noun to indicate “*xia*” or “*xia* and just”. However, Wang Dulu also uses it a total of five times as a synonym of *xiake* and *xiashi*:

> 我看出来你亦是一位侠义。  
> I can see that you are also a *xia*. (HJKL, chapter 14)

> 可见这个人也是一位侠义。  
> It is possible to see that this person indeed is a *xia*. (TQYP, chapter 6)

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4 It is translated in Chinese-English dictionaries as “chivalry” (noun) or “chivalrous” (adjective). These terms imply that the *xia* is a knight-errant, a linguistic sphere where chivalry is applied. For this reason it is translated here as *xia*. 

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In these two cases the nominalisation and personification are made visible with the numeral “one” and its classifier (yi wei 一位). Yi, the second character of the binome, seems to hint at a higher level of xia, or of courtesy towards the person who is being addressed. In the following sentence (part of a dialogue) it is possible to note the difference between xiake and xiayi:

“他是位哑巴，但他是一位侠客，武艺很好。[…] 这哑侠曾两次救过我的性命，他实在是一位侠义。”

“He is a mute, but he is a xia (xiake), his martial arts are really good. […] This mute xia has saved my life twice, he really is a proper xia (xiayi).” (HJKL, chapter 18)

In these two sentences xiayi refers to a higher level of xia and xiake to a general definition. The close link between xia and yi reinforces the aspect of justice and righteousness, making it a stronger denomination for a just and righteous person, in this case because he has twice saved the life of the speaker. Furthermore, this is the only one of the three denominations that is found in relation with the term “hero” (yingxiong 英雄), giving it an even more valorous meaning. It is also possible to find the two characters inverted, i.e. yixia 义侠, which occurs a total of four times. All four times it is used to refer to a righteous xia, which is a logical conclusion as xia is here a noun and yi an adjective. This formation reiterates the intrinsic link between xia and righteousness and is addressed more in depth in chapter five.

Haoxia 豪侠 as a nominalised binome is known to indicate a good and strong xia and occurs in the pentalogy fourteen times. In these syntagmas it is never accompanied by any adjective that would define the xia, as this function is already carried out by hao 豪, which indicates the xia’s extraordinary talents. Wang Dulu also uses it with an adjectival function to indicate someone’s spirit or attitude:

因为他们没有一点豪侠气概，…

Due to the fact that they have no xia spirit at all, … (HJKL, chapter 9)
The interesting feature here is the character hao. This character is used in different binomes that indicate either good or bad people, events, or concepts. For example, haoke 豪客, haoheng 豪横, and tuhao 土豪 respectively mean robber, despotic, and local despot; whilst haoqi 豪气, haodang 豪荡, and shihao 诗豪 respectively mean heroic sprit, unconventionally gallant, and great poet. This ambivalent meaning of hao adds to the fact that the xia can be both virtuous and violent. However, for Wang Dulu this particular binome always has a positive meaning.5

The binome laoxia 老侠 is used extensively both as an honorary title next to the name and with the grammatical function of apposition, but also to refer to experienced and/or older xia. In Chinese the term lao 老 literally means “old”, but it also is used in order to be respectful towards the person who is being addressed or spoken about. Wang Dulu uses it to indicate well-known and established xia as can be seen in the following example:

[…]走在江湖上有人认识他, 便已呼他为“老侠”。

[…] walking through the jianghu there were people that knew him, so then he (Jiang Nanhe) was already called “old/experienced xia” (laoxia). (HJKL, chapter 20)

This appellative does not indicate his age, but rather his fame in the jianghu. In Wang Dulu’s pentalogy there are many syntagmas where laoxia is used as a denomination for the experienced xia. Examples regarding different people and in different novels are:

我并且听人说李爷乃是江南鹤、纪广杰两位老侠的门徒?

I have never heard people say that Father Li is the disciple of the two “old/experienced xia” Jiang Nanhe and Ji Guangjie. (BJJC, chapter 18)

老侠这句话一说出, 秀莲姑娘不禁脸红, 垂著头, 心中倒十分难过。

5 Altenburger translates the binome in general as “brave knights”, giving it also a positive meaning. Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 27.
When the “old/experienced xia” uttered those words, Xiulian could not help blushing, her head was hanging down, and she felt extremely upset in her heart. (JQZG, chapter 22)

Hence laoxia has the same function as xiayi or xiake (not xiashi), and is often followed by ke, resulting in lao xiake 老侠客 (42 times).

Another binome, i.e. daxia 大侠, “great xia”, is again used to refer to well-known xia but is not found next to names as honorary titles.

他也知道邱府中现在住着一位李慕白, 是江湖大侠, […]

He already knows that in the Qiu prefecture now there is a certain Li Mubai, he is a great xia from the jianghu, […] (WHCL, chapter 11)

These previous denominations all refer to male xia. The female xia is referred to as xianü 侠女 or nüxia 女侠, and these two binomes seem to be interchangeable, due to the fact that a woman that is a xia or a xia that is a woman gives roughly the same result: a female xia. The difference between these two binomes should be crucial based on the context, i.e. whether it is more important to focus on the gender or on the fact that the female character is a xia. In the Crane-Iron Series there seems to be a preference for the use of one or the other based on the name of the female xia. The four most important female xia are Bao Aluan 鲍阿鸾, Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲, Yu Jiaolong 玉娇龙, and Chun Xueping 春雪瓶.⁶ Aluan is referred to once as a xianü and once as a nüxia, but the title never appears directly next to her name. Yu Xiulian becomes a well-established female xia in the jianghu and hence is accompanied mainly by the apposition xianü (thirteen times), while nüxia is only used once next to her name. Yu Jiaolong, like Yu Xiulian, eventually becomes well known for her xia adventures and has the terms xianü (seven times) and nüxia (six times) used almost equally as honorary titles next to her name. And Chun Xueping, is called, like Aluan, once xianü and once nüxia.

⁶ See summary in Appendix A.
Although the grammatical functions of the characters xia and nü differ in the compositions of the two binomes, this difference appears to be significant only with Yu Xiulian who is predominantly a xianü. The use of this binome is explained by the fact that she was the other main character of the first two novels and in opposition to Li Mubai, the male character with whom she falls in love. Their life destinies as xia imply similar features (fighting skills, long travels outside the city, justice, temperamental characters, etc.), but their genders mark their difference, and are key for their (troubled) love story.

What becomes clear from all the denominations is that their use has a honorific function. They are attributed to outstanding individuals who are defined xia for their heroic and altruistic actions. In the novels, all of the above terms are used to define others, never oneself. This use of the term supports the virtuous aspect that I discussed at the conclusion of chapter two. It becomes a title that is given as the virtue of xia is put into practice in a social environment where others are able to acknowledge it. Without the personal understanding of carrying out altruistic deeds and without this acknowledgment from others, the term xia cannot be earned.

2.4 Expressions related to courage and the body

The term xia can also be found frequently in typical four-character idioms and binomes related to the body as shown in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Four-character idioms related to xia (justice and morality)</th>
<th></th>
<th>38</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>行侠仗义 xing xia zhang yi</td>
<td>have a strong sense of justice and desire to help the weak</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 The only exception to this is Yu Jiaolong when she escapes in the jianghu where she roams dressed like a man and acts without knowledge of how those that are defined xia should act. Hence her expression “I am a xia” is contrary to the normal use of the term. See WHCL, Chapter 10.
8 These four-character idioms are idiosyncratic to the Chinese language. Some of these are part of a specific group called chengyu 成语, which are four-character expressions that are often the result of an anecdote and the characters implied may or may not have a direct link with its overall significance. Others are syntagmas made of four characters for stylistic or poetic reasons.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>仗义行侠 ying yi xing xia</td>
<td>仗义行侠 zhang yi xing xia</td>
<td>have a strong sense of justice and desire to help the weak</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>任侠好义 renxia hao yi</td>
<td>任侠好义 renxia hao yi</td>
<td>to be xia and fond of assuming obligations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>行侠好善 xing xia hao xiang</td>
<td>行侠好善 xing xia hao xiang</td>
<td>to be xia and good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four-character idioms related to the body</td>
<td>四字 idioms related to the body</td>
<td>to have a strong sense of justice and desire to help the weak, to be xia and fond of assuming obligations, to be xia and good</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义胆侠心 yi dan xia xin</td>
<td>义胆侠心 yi dan xia xin</td>
<td>to have courage (courageous guts) and good intentions (xia heart)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠胆柔肠 xia dan rouchang</td>
<td>侠胆柔肠 xia dan rouchang</td>
<td>to have xia guts and a tender intestines</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠胆柔情 xia dan rouqing</td>
<td>侠胆柔情 xia dan rouqing</td>
<td>to have xia guts and a tenderness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>热心侠肠 re xin xia chang</td>
<td>热心侠肠 re xin xia chang</td>
<td>to have enthusiasm and xia heart</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Binomes related to the body</td>
<td>二字 idioms related to the body</td>
<td>actions according to xia and righteousness are carried out. This link to righteousness and justice shows how the intrinsic meaning of xia is still related to its virtuous aspect.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠骨 xia gu</td>
<td>侠骨 xia gu</td>
<td>xia bones (body)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠气 xia qi</td>
<td>侠气 xia qi</td>
<td>xia spirit</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠友 xia you</td>
<td>侠友 xia you</td>
<td>xia friendship</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠心 xia xin</td>
<td>侠心 xia xin</td>
<td>xia mind/heart (body)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠踪 xia zong</td>
<td>侠踪 xia zong</td>
<td>xia traces</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠胆 xia dan</td>
<td>侠胆 xia dan</td>
<td>xia guts (body)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠风 xia feng</td>
<td>侠风 xia feng</td>
<td>xia style or mood</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>行侠 xing xia</td>
<td>行侠 xing xia</td>
<td>desire to help the weak</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠烈 xia lie</td>
<td>侠烈 xia lie</td>
<td>xia and strength</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠影 xia jing</td>
<td>侠影 xia jing</td>
<td>xia scenery</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠爽 xia shuang</td>
<td>侠爽 xia shuang</td>
<td>xia and bright</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>群侠 qun xia</td>
<td>群侠 qun xia</td>
<td>group of xia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>任侠 renxia</td>
<td>任侠 renxia</td>
<td>responsibility and xia</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the *Crane-Iron Series* there is a division between the four-letter expressions: one group refers to xia and justice, while the other to xia and the body. The former includes expression such as *xing xia zhang yi* 仗侠仗义 and *ren xia hao yi* 任侠好义. These idioms respectively mean “to have a strong sense of justice and help the weak” and “to be a xia and assume obligations fondly”. They imply that actions according to xia and righteousness are carried out. This link to righteousness and justice shows how the intrinsic meaning of xia is still related to its virtuous aspect.

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The second group, which consists of four-character idioms and binomes and is significantly smaller, includes references to the gut (dan 胆), the intestines (chang 肠) and the heart/mind (xin 心). All these internal body parts are metaphors for courage and internal strength to carry out xia deeds and justice. The most frequent binome regarding body parts is xiagu 侠骨, i.e. xia and bones, which means xia-like. Xia permeates the entire body as if it were the founding skeletal structure on which a person is built. This link between xia and the body is not new, as the term xia appears thirty times in the Inner Canon of Huangdi (Huangdi Neijing 黄帝内经), a text from the Warring States Period that deals with Traditional Chinese Medicine.  

2.5 Personal Names

However, the most extensive use of the term xia is in names or nicknames of characters.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>xia in names</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>阆中侠 Langzong xia</td>
<td>xia from Langzhong</td>
<td>1,169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>病侠 Bing xia</td>
<td>Sick xia</td>
<td>485(+1 typo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>哑侠 Ya xia</td>
<td>Mute xia</td>
<td>303</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>龙门侠 Longmen xia</td>
<td>xia from Longmen</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>奇侠 Qi xia</td>
<td>Strange xia</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>袁志侠 Yuanzhi xia</td>
<td>xia Yuanzhi</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>侠妓 xia ji</td>
<td>Prostitute xia</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>汝州侠 Ruzhou xia</td>
<td>xia from Ruzhou</td>
<td>15(+1 typo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>钩侠 Gou xia</td>
<td>Hook xia</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>李振侠 Li Chen xia</td>
<td>xia Li Chen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>怪侠(Qi xia (Tie Zhangseng)</td>
<td>Strange xia (Tie Zhangseng)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>徐继侠 Xu Ji xia</td>
<td>xia Xu Ji</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>天涯孤侠 Tianya Gu xia</td>
<td>Orphan xia at the edge of the world</td>
<td>3(+1 typo)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>儒侠 Ru xia</td>
<td>Confucian scholar xia</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10 This text of traditional Chinese medicine was written between the Warring States Period (770-221 BC) and the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). It uses the character in the form of a verb of movement followed by body parts. For example: 侠鼻 “[it] reaches the nose”.

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This table shows that there are three types of names: proper names, those that indicate geographical areas, and nicknames. The total number of *xia* terms here is equal to 69.5% of the entire amount. Langzhong *xia* 阆中俠 is by far the most often occurring name. However, despite his numerical supremacy within the context of the term *xia*, he is classified as a secondary character in the HJKL novel. Not only his name but all the names in the above table are those of secondary characters. In the *Crane-Iron Series* there are other *xia* who are considered to be greater and better than for example Langzhong *xia*, although they lack the character *xia* in their names.\(^\text{11}\) The main protagonists are accompanied (at times) by above mentioned appositions and denominations (see table 1). However, it is possible to deduce that the secondary characters include the term *xia* in their names as this makes it easier for the reader to understand who they are without requiring further explanation.

This lack of the character *xia* within the name of the main characters indicates how useful the Corpus Linguistic approach is for indicating the different binomes and compounds there are of *xia*. However, only focusing on these terms would severely limit the analysis and hence the results. The results of this acontextual analysis are three: firstly, the term *xia* refers to men and women with (honorific) appositions (table 1), and nicknames (table 3); secondly there is a strong relation with justice (*yi*); and thirdly, there is a relation with internal body parts. *Xia* has an overall positive connotation in Wang Dulu’s novels and always refers to people with good intentions. When not referred to people but used as a concept, it reiterates the virtuosity that has been found in the historical analysis of *xia*, especially like those described by Sima Qian. All idiomatic expressions refer to courage, righteousness, and a desire to protect or help the weak. On a mere linguistic level, the link between violence or *wu* and *xia* is completely absent in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy.

\(^{11}\) In fact the main male protagonist in the HJKL is Jiang Nanhe (see table in Appendix A).
However, as previously mentioned, these results do not suffice for the scope of this research. When analysing texts from a perspective that transcends the merely numerical interest, the corpus is a fundamental step, but it is not exhaustive, as explained in the methodology section in the first chapter. For this reason, the above section, albeit fundamental, will hereby be followed by a second section. This analysis looks at different aspects of xia in Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series* which do not solely relate to the presence or absence of the Chinese term.

3. **General aspects of people defined as xia in Wang Dulu’s novels: who can be xia?**

The first question that arises for this analysis is who is a xia and who is not according to Wang Dulu. This becomes important as it aids in understanding who are xia and who are simply swordsmen. Hence, for this analysis, firstly all characters that contain the ideogram xia in their names are part of the category of xia (table 3). Secondly all the characters that are referred to with one or more denominations including xia (table 1) are also considered part of the category. Literary characters that do not present at least one of these two features have been discarded.

Once membership of the category of xia is established, the logical continuation is that of origin. Where do the xia come from and what is their background? As we can see from the wide range of xia characters, a xia can have different origins and backgrounds. Wang Dulu’s most acclaimed character, Yu Jiaolong 玉娇龙, is from a banner family. Li Fengjie 李凤杰 roamed around in the jianghu trying to fight for good and assisting military officials before becoming a xia. His son, Li Mubai 李慕白, became first a scholar and then a xia, as did another xia called Ji Guangjie 纪广杰. Liang Wenjin 梁文锦 and Xi Zhongxiao 席仲孝 were two rich dukes. Xie Xianniang 谢纤娘 is a prostitute. Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲 is an entrepreneur and a baobiao. These examples from the *Crane-Iron Series* show how

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there was no specific social stratum for the xia, but this figure could come forth out of all different types of families, milieus, and backgrounds. Hence, these dispersed origins show how the initial categories of xia that were identified by Sima Qian, and which I discussed in the first chapter, have drastically changed. Not only are there poor people who have become xia, but also a range of aristocrats. In fact, the path towards becoming a xia by Yu Jiaolong, a banner girl, is the main story line of the fourth novel and one of the highlights of the entire pentalogy.

Another important aspect of Wang Dulu’s xia is that they all have the potential to be real people. They have been completely stripped of superpowers and mythical elements, which were often part of the wuxia genre. They do not appear as fantastic and unreachable “heroes” but as common people, making thus the relation between the plot and the reader stronger because of their verisimilitude. Just like Clark Kent’s uneventful daily life in Metropolis recalled many readers’ own life in the United States, so do Wang Dulu’s xia recall many aspects of his readers’ daily life. This verisimilitude is enhanced by the geographical locations Wang Dulu uses for the settings of the plots. All of these are existing places within China, ranging from counties in Sichuan, Shaanxi, Henan and Xinjiang, to cities like Beijing, Xi’an, and Kaifeng. This verisimilitude is also reflected in Wang Dulu’s jianghu. This topical dimension in wuxia novels often constitutes a place where magical events can occur, but in Wang Dulu’s novels what is considered to be jianghu is the space between cities where it was difficult (if not impossible) to carry out the civil law. Hence, this close relation to reality conveys signs that are easier to recognise and draws the reader more into the story.

An interesting subcategory is the female xia. In this series there are five

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13 Sima Qian pointed out the following categories: the “ancient poor xia”, the “alley xia”, the “minister xia”, the “rural xia”.
14 The only aspect that can be disputed as mythical is the so-called Touch of Death, or dianxue 点穴, although some martial artists would consider it to be real. Its origin comes from ancient traditional Chinese Medicine and it is believed that by applying pressure on specific energy points, the body can be manipulated or even destroyed. For more information on dianxue in the Republican Era see Sun Lutang’s 孙禄堂 (1860-1933) manuals on Taiji and Mind-Body Boxing, published in the 1930s (some of these have been recently translated into English). See Brian Kennedy, Elizabeth Guo, Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals: A Historical Survey (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2005), 182-187.
15 Zhuo Yingchun, “Analysis of the «Qingdao Xinmin Newspaper>”, 34.
important female *xia*: Bao Aluan, main protagonist of the first novel (HJKL); Yu Xiulian, main protagonist of the second (BJJC) and third novel (JQZG); Xie Xianniang, called “Prostitute *xia*” and love interest of Li Mubai in the second novel (BJJC); Yu Jiaolong, who is the main character in the fourth novel (WHCL), although not defined a *xia* here as she does not act in accordance with its virtuous aspect, but is only defined as one when she retreats into the *jianghu* in the fifth novel (TQYP); Chun Xueping, the girl Yu Jiaolong had brought up in the fifth novel (TQYP).

From a literary point of view, the figure of a female trained in martial arts is actually quite common in China and stories regarding this figure can be traced back to the Tang Dynasty.\(^{17}\) It has been argued that many of the initial *wuxia* stories have women as their main characters because they were considered to be more interesting subjects.\(^{18}\) In fact a woman, who holds the role of independent symbol of freedom, is a rather complex one in the patriarchal Chinese society. The canonical vision of the pre-modern Chinese woman who was considered a result of the patriarchal Confucian society, a vision that stayed in place in the twentieth century thanks to the Communist scholars and Western feminist theory,\(^{19}\) would suggest this character exists only as a construct of male authors.

Chinese and Taiwanese scholars have debated extensively about the role of the female *xia*.\(^{20}\) Some claim that she represents female independence, others that she is a construct of male authors and hence not credible. Altenburger concludes his analysis of scholarship regarding female *xia* by saying that ultimately all critical positions “fail to, or cannot suffice to, explain the apparent contradictions inherent in the various representations of female knight-errant [*xia*] characters in traditional

\(^{17}\) I have discussed these in the second chapter.


\(^{19}\) Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 35.

Chinese narratives.” Unfortunately there is not enough space here to analyse in depth the figure of the female xia that have preceded those of the Republican Era, but it suffices to know that the female xia has been an integral part of xia-related literature.

Hence, to conclude the general and basic aspects of the xia in Wang Dulu’s novels, a character in the Crane-Iron Series is considered a xia when the term itself appears either in the name of the character or if he or she is addressed with a honorific title. These characters are portrayed here in a very verisimilar fashion, can be of either gender, and come from a variety of backgrounds. In short, everyone has the potential to become a xia, as long as he or she has the personal attitude to behave in an altruistic and helpful fashion. Wang Dulu depicted xia that would relate to all strata of his readers, showing that being xia was not difficult or unreachable, but a state of being that everyone could practice.

4. The xia and the relation with martial arts: an indissoluble link?

他是个哑巴，但他是一位侠客，武艺很好。

He is a mute, but he is a xia, his martial arts skills are really good. (HJKL, chapter 18)

Although the pentalogy is part of the wuxia genre, the binome wuxia 武侠 is absent in the entire text. However the succession of two syntagmas as in the above example, i.e. “he or she is a xia, his or her martial arts skills are good”, are numerous. In fact, the transition towards becoming a xia most often is combined with learning and mastering fighting techniques. The better fighting techniques a xia has, the more respected he or she is.

The importance of martial arts skills for the xia can be seen immediately in the first book of the pentalogy. Here Jiang Xiaohe desires to become an expert in

21 Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 52.
martial arts as he needs to avenge his father who had been killed by two disciples of Bao Kunlun 鲍昆仑, the master of the training school in the county of Zhenba in southern Shaanxi province and the head of a protection agency. He is taken under the protection of Bao Kunlun who had tricked the young boy into believing he would be taught fighting skills in exchange for carrying out chores. However, Bao Kunlun never kept his word. Jiang Xiaohe then leaves to find another instructor and based on an overheard conversation, discovers that the xia of Langzhong’s 阆中侠 skills are supposed to be extraordinary. He makes it his mission to travel from his native Zhenba County in Southern Shaanxi to Langzhong, a county in northern Sichuan, and to become the xia’s apprentice. During his voyage, he hears the opinions of different people about this famous xia. Not all of these opinions are positive, especially those of bandits, making him doubt whether this character really is a xia. His doubts are eventually proven to be wrong: the xia of Langzhong is severe but just and helps Jiang Xiaohe when he understands the injustice this boy had suffered. Hence, the honorific title of xia of Langzhong is appropriate. In fact, in the Crane-Iron Series, even if literary protagonists of the pentalogy may have doubts about or have lost faith in the upright nature of another literary character called xia, the actions of the latter always prove that they are worthy of this denomination. Hence the reader of the Crane-Iron Series is in the omniscient position when it comes to the xia and his or her morals.

This initial analysis may seem trivial to the expert in wuxia studies, but the relation between xia and fighting skills, as has been pointed out in the introduction and confirmed in the first chapter, is not necessarily obvious. In fact, there are also characters defined as xia without using martial arts skills (wu), and these are defined as part of the wenxia 文侠 category, which translates as “civic duties to obtain xia”. This literary character is extremely rare in these novels but one is present in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy, i.e. Xie Xianniang 谢纤娘, also known as “prostitute xia” 娼妓. Due to the rarity of being defined xia without having any martial arts knowledge or fighting skills, her role in the Crane-Iron Series cannot be underestimated.
In the novel BJJC Xie Xianniang falls in love with Li Mubai who is not able to marry Yu Xiulian, the woman he really loves. While the other novels concentrate on love stories concerning only two people, here Li Mubai falls in love with a second woman (Xie Xianniang) when he reaches Beijing. The love triangle finishes eventually when Xie Xianniang dies of grief because she understands that she has been rescued by Yu Xiulian, who still remained the real love interest of Li Mubai. Xie Xianniang provides the additional factor that complicates the storyline, making it unique compared to the plots of the other four novels.

Xie Xianniang stands out even more when we relate her to xia. She is the only character in the pentalogy that is defined with the honorary title xia, although she does not possesses any martial arts skills.

This is how Xie Xianniang is introduced to Li Mubai. She is a prostitute, incapable of fighting with knives, or swords, or performing any martial arts. Nevertheless, due to her natural disposition to do good, her “feelings of mutual sympathy”, and altruistic deeds, such as paying off the debts of a fellow-prostitute or defending prostitutes who are being abused and finding good homes where they can work as servants, she is considered a xia. In this case wu is not linked to xia. Xia becomes instead an attitude, a disposition that makes a person do good deeds no matter in what form. It effectively becomes a virtue, making the link between wu and xia not exclusive. This virtuous aspect, mainly based on the acknowledgment of the lack of yi 义, i.e. righteousness, I discuss more in detail in chapter five.
This form of xia would challenge the title of Roland Altenburger’s in-depth and fundamental analysis of the female xia,\(^{22}\) i.e. defining the nüxia 女侠 (or xianü 侠女) as a female “knight-errant”. The female xia he analyses are all implicated in fighting, assassinations, and violent episodes. However the prostitute xia is an example of nonviolent female xia. Xie Xianniang is hence not a female xia like the others that can be found in wuxia fiction, but she remains a xia, firstly because that is the denomination Wang Dulu gives her throughout the novel, and secondly because her actions are those of a xia, as understood from its earliest definitions, where xia is explained as people that are trustworthy and carry out good deeds.\(^{23}\)

To conclude, the relation between xia and wu is not always obvious or necessary. Not all of those trained in martial arts are xia, nor are all the xia trained in martial arts.

5. Yu Jiaolong “Jade Delicate Dragon”: personification of Republican-era China\(^{24}\)

Although there are many different xia in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy, the main focus of the author is on eight of these, who form four plots of love stories. Amongst these eight main characters, the xia that stands out the most is Yu Jiaolong. According to Hou Huijie, Wang Dulu, by analysing in depth such a tragic character, managed to capture Yu Jiaolong’s inner sentiments, which make her one of the most realistic characters of the book. She possesses “the feelings of love, hate, emotions, and revenge, like those of an average person” (changren yiyang de aihen qingbao 常人一样的爱恨情报).\(^{25}\) However the psychological depth of the

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22 See Roland Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*.

23 See section on the origin of xia.

24 Until recently, Yu Jiaolong has been analysed only by one other Western scholar, i.e. Tze-lan Deborah Sang. However, the approach of her analysis is based on gender and the female body. See Tze-lan Deborah Sang, “Women's Work and Boundary Transgression in Wang Dulu's Popular Novels”, in *Gender in Motion: Divisions of Labor and Cultural Change in Late Imperial and Modern China*, eds. Bryna Goodman, Wendy Larson (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers Inc., 2005), 287-308; “The Transgender Body in Wang Dulu’s *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*”, in *Embodied Modernities: Corporeality, Representation, and Chinese Cultures*, eds. Fran Martin, Larissa Heinrich (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2006), 98-112.

character is not the only aspect that makes Yu Jiaolong stand out. This section analyses Yu Jiaolong to identify in her story aspects that resemble those of the history of China. The analysis will show that, as her storyline unfolds, in which her name, friends, foes, and adventures all become signs, the reader is reminded of the history of China between the end of the Qing and the Republican Era. Hence first her storyline is summarised and then the analysis follows.

5.1 Summary

Yu Jiaolong, the main character in the fourth book, WHCL, is the beautiful daughter of the newly appointed provincial commander, Mr Yu, and lives with her family in Beijing. The Yu family are banner people (qiren 旗人). Her father was previously stationed in Xinjiang in northwest China for three years where she was trained by her master Gao Langqiu 高朗秋, who had stolen two scrolls containing secret and powerful martial art techniques. When he realised that Yu Jiaolong quickly mastered the subjects he was teaching her, he started introducing her to what was written in the scrolls.

Yu Jiaolong’s personal servant, the evil Blue-eyed Fox (Geng Liuniang 耿六娘) becomes a close friend and eventually her mentor. During her upbringing, Yu Jiaolong is heavily influenced by Blue-eyed Fox’s evil nature and starts to nurture her own evil side. In fact she had been already defined by her master Gao Langqiu as a “poisonous dragon” (du long 毒龙), a term that will be used to define her again at the end of the fourth novel after all those near her have either died or are living in misery. Her loyalty to Blue-eyed Fox is greater than her understanding of the

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26 A closer look at Wang Dulu’s novels reveals in fact that he never uses the Chinese character 满 man in any of his five books to form binomes or trinomes that refer to the people who today are called Manchus. These include for example: Manzu 滿族; Manzhou(ren) 滿洲(人), Manren 滿人. He always uses the binome 旗人 qiren, i.e. “banner people”. This is not surprising if we compare it with the chronicle of Owen Lattimore who travelled in Manchuria in 1929 and 1930: “The word ‘Manchu’ was and is almost never used in conversation and comparatively rarely in writing” in Owen Lattimore, Manchuria: Cradle of Conflict (New York: MacMillan Company), 1932, 62, n. 2. In the Qing Dynasty too the most often used term was “banner people”, although specific imperial edicts would make a clear distinction within the banners if required (see Mark C. Elliott, The Manchu Way, 14).

27 These included music, chess, calligraphy and painting (qin, qi, shu, hua, 琴棋书画).
difference between good and evil and her lack of critical analysis will have devastating consequences for the rest of the storyline. In Xinjiang Yu Jiaolong also meets and falls in love with Luo Xiaohu 罗小虎, a local bandit. Yu Jiaolong follows him and his gang when they overtake her family’s carts and their possessions. Luo Xiaohu, who is the leader of these bandits, treats her with respect and slowly they fall in love. She is aware that this love story cannot last as he is not part of the banner aristocracy. Hence she tells him to either pass the Imperial Exams
in order to become an official or to never present himself again as their love would be impossible and it would be unbearable for her to see him.

Once back in Beijing, Yu Jiaolong feels out of place in her aristocratic banner family and does not want to follow the traditional path her parents are guiding her towards. Instead of marrying her parents’ match, i.e. fat and stupid banner official Lu Junpei 魯君佩, she desires freedom, represented by the jianghu江湖, the space outside the cities where the civil law does not apply. However, once she dramatically escapes on her wedding day and enters the jianghu dressed like a man, she discovers that freedom is not possible to obtain here either: she will have to follow the rules of the jianghu, which she neither knows, nor is interested in learning.

In the jianghu, Li Mubai, one of the greatest and most respected xia in Wang Dulu’s world, cannot defeat her. He sees the force, energy and potential that she has, even though she is not using these in the correct manner nor for the right purposes, and he wants to help her to follow the path of xia. He says that her strength is unprecedented and that he wants to teach her how to use her skills and inner power correctly, but she arrogantly refuses. Her stay in the jianghu ends when she is kidnapped and brought back to her newlywed husband’s house, where she is forced to remain through intimidation and blackmail. This seems quite an anticlimax: from powerful and fearless fighter who won all the battles in the jianghu, to fragile and submissive housewife of a petty and ugly official in the ‘civil’ world.28

Yu Jiaolong’s husband and parents-in-law expel her from the Lu residence when rumours about her assisting the criminal Blue-eyed Fox circulate. These rumours make the Lu family ‘lose face’, and cause the death of Yu Jiaolong’s mother. At the end of the book, she makes amends with all the characters that she

28 A similar destiny was reserved also for Thirteenth Sister in Er nü yingxiong zhuan 女儿英雄传. In fact, James Liu argues how the character of the Thirteenth Sister, the heroine of the novel, is modelled after that of Wang Xifeng 王熙凤 of Dream of the Red Chamber (Hong Lou Meng 红楼梦). See Liu, Chinese knight-errant, 129. Although the dichotomy of these two characters is highlighted by the “efficient and ruthless” attitude in married life, Yu Jiaolong instead becomes weak and without will power, which is in clear contrast with her previous behaviour throughout the novel.
has hurt or offended and leaves Beijing to go to a sacred Buddhist mountain to jump of its peak in honour of the Buddhist Goddess that healed her father. After jumping off of it, she miraculously lands on the ground unharmed. She then encounters Luo Xiaohu, with whom she spends one night, but then escapes to live a single life in the jianghu, as she had promised her dying mother not to marry a bandit. This represents the end of Wo Hu Cang Long. At the beginning of the following novel, Tie Qi Yin Ping, Yu Jiaolong is in the jianghu where she has given birth to her son, but he is stolen and substituted by a girl. Time then shifts forward twenty years and Yu Jiaolong accidentally encounters her long lost son and recognises him. She then tries to make him marry the girl she had raised as her daughter, but Yu Jiaolong dies before succeeding in this quest.

What is interesting to notice is that she is not defined as xia until she enters the jianghu in the fifth novel (TJYP). She only becomes a xia after leaving her troubled past behind. The previous influence from her servant Blue-Eyed Fox and her personal disposition (poisonous dragon) had made her unfit for the title of xia, but she redeemed herself when she started her new life in the jianghu.

5.2 Analysis

The first aspect of this character that comes to the forefront is her name.29 The characters yu, jiao, and long 玉娇龙 can be translated as “Jade Delicate Dragon”. The dragon is known for being China’s national animal, its most important symbol. The Chinese emperor sat on the Dragon’s throne, it was on the Qing flag, and this animal often functions as a metaphor for the country.30 Furthermore, jade is China’s national precious gem. This material is worn by most Chinese as a symbol of good luck and protection from harm and has been produced in China ever since the Neolithic period.31 Moreover, the character Yu as a surname

30 For more uses on the dragon in China see Marinus Willem de Visser, The Dragon in China and Japan (Amsterdam: J. Mueller, 1913).
31 The character yu 玉 does not only refer to jade but to all precious gems. Nevertheless, this character, and its primary relation to jade, refer to China and its culture.
exists\textsuperscript{32} but is rather uncommon, which makes Wang Dulu’s choice appear even less incidental and suggests that he was aiming to refer to something else than simply a rebellious banner girl.

The name Yu Jiaolong also relates to the title of the book, \textit{Wo Hu Cang Long} 卧虎藏龙, which again is an interesting choice. Her love interest, Luo Xiaohu 罗小虎, i.e. “small tiger”, is the other reference in the title. In Chinese \textit{wo hu cang long}\textsuperscript{33} is a specific four-character idiom that literally means “crouching tiger, hidden dragon”.\textsuperscript{34} However, the meaning of this idiom is that of possessing “hidden or unnoticed talents”. If Yu Jiaolong’s interpretation as Republican-era China is maintained, then this idiom, in this context, also seems to refer to China itself. At that time, during the entirety of the Republican Era and especially during the Second Sino-Japanese War, China was a tiger that was lying low, a dragon that was hiding. It was waiting for this dark period to be over in order to regain power and be illustrious again. It is possible to say that this period had started in 1842 with the Treaty of Nanjing,\textsuperscript{35} the first of the so-called “unequal treaties”, and the zenith of China’s problems would be reached in the Republican Era, culminating in the Second Sino-Japanese War. Based on these aspects, it is possible to see Yu Jiaolong not simply as a metaphor but as a personification of Republican-era China.

If Yu Jiaolong stands for the personification of Republican-era China, then another name also stands out, i.e. that of fat and ugly official Lu Junpei 鲁君佩, the man Yu Jiaolong is forced to marry and from whom she so desperately escapes. Although the surname Lu is rather common, the character also refers to the state of Lu, which is famous as it is the birthplace of Confucius (551-479 BC). The second character \textit{jun} 君 refers to the \textit{junzi} 君子, the ideal man, an expression which is used in most, especially ancient, Chinese philosophies, but has a prominent position in Confucianism, and which is corroborated with the previous character Lu. The third character \textit{pei} 佩 either indicates something worn around the waist, or respect and

\textsuperscript{32} See the definition of \textit{yu} 玉 in the Kangxi Dictionary.
\textsuperscript{33} This idiom can also be found in reversed form, i.e. \textit{cang hu wo long} (藏龙卧虎) and it has the same meaning.
\textsuperscript{34} This in fact is the name that was adopted in translation for the title of Ang Lee’s film.
admiration. If this name is interpreted from a Confucian perspective, it could mean “admiration for the junzi of Lu”, i.e. admiration for Confucius. The character of the novel was a fat and stupid official, extensively trained in the Chinese Classics. He completely relied on familial hierarchy and was keen to continue the traditional values, which makes him an interesting metaphor or personification of Confucianism.

If Yu Jiaolong is seen as China and Lu Junpei as Confucianism, the tense relation between these two characters in the novel can symbolise Wang Dulu’s view on China’s intrinsic problems related to its traditional society, and the author’s desire to move away from it. Although the wuxia genre of the Republican Era has been linked to nostalgia, as I discussed in the introduction, Confucianism and “traditional” Chinese culture had been under attack by members of the New Culture Movement and it appears that Wang Dulu, who grew up listening to intellectuals denounce China’s weaknesses, reprises this struggle in his novel. China does not desire to “marry” Confucius, a fat and stupid official. China wants to be free and roam in the unknown world of the jianghu where she can be herself. Hence, she breaks all rules and escapes on the day of her wedding into the jianghu leaving all problems behind her, eager to be on a new journey and to find peace. The jianghu represents the lawless and chaotic Republican Era.

This goes against the claim on behalf of leftist intellectuals such as Lu Xun and Mao Dun, discussed in the introduction, that wuxia literature essentially promotes “feudal” values, and potentially could explain the success that Wang Dulu’s novels had nationwide after the Second Sino-Japanese War. Not only the love stories and the exciting fighting scenes, but the internal desire to break free from what is known and to achieve a new form of freedom must have been an aspect that appealed to many readers.

However, when she eventually breaks free, Yu Jiaolong seems not to “play” according to the jianghu (Republican-era) rules, instead continuously provoking and duelling with the other people roaming there, thus causing continuous friction

36 The expression “Chinese Classics” refers to all those Confucian works necessary to pass the imperial examinations.
37 Hamm, Paper Swordsmen, 21.
and earning herself a reputation for stubbornness. Just like Yu Jiaolong naively thought that leaving the city and her life as a banner girl would set her free and bring her happiness, many Chinese at the end of the Qing Dynasty believed that abolishing the empire and overthrowing the Qing government would be the end of China’s problems and the beginning of a new era. However, when the empire was dissolved and the Republic was set up, China faced many problems, especially on a political level. Initially the transition from empire to republic had only occurred on paper while general Yuan Shikai managed to rule the country until 1916 as the de facto sole ruler. The warlord period that followed increased the internal battles within China and the country’s unity was at stake. China had given support to the Triple Entente during the First World War, but did not manage to be recognised for it, which caused international friction and internal uprisings. The rule of the Nationalist Party had brought forth a corrupt and military state, and altercations remained frequent, especially against the Communists. Finally, Japan had started to slowly influence and occupy China starting with Manchuria in the northeast, and this eventually led to the Second Sino-Japanese War. China, just like Yu Jiaolong, had to learn to move within this new context and, according to Wang Dulu, made many mistakes.

On a conceptual level, it is interesting to notice how, despite the general repudiation of the wuxia genre by May Fourth intellectuals such as Lu Xun and Mao Dun as discussed in the first chapter, Yu Jiaolong instead embraces the ideals of this cultural movement. In fact, according to Chow Tse-Tsung, the May Fourth Movement tempted to “rejuvenate the nation, [while] the individual should be freed from the bondage of the traditional stagnant ethics and institutions. To have all individuals liberated from the old passive thinking and from the self-suffering and paternalistic family and clan system based on an agricultural society would strengthen the nation.” Although Yu Jiaolong is not part of the agricultural society, she does desire to break with tradition and the clan system, making her, again, a good representation of China during the Republican Era.

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38 I have discussed these Republican-era events more in depth in second and third chapters.
This youthful character also desires to break free for love, which is an innovation that the May Fourth Movement brought upon Chinese society. She is aware that her love for Luo Xiaohu can only exist in the jianghu, although she tries (in vain) to spur him on to pass the imperial examinations in order to have a possibility of socially-approved happiness together. However this task proves too difficult for someone without a proper education and Luo Xiaohu does not even attempt it, causing Yu Jiaolong to be furious with him. This impossibility of free love is also another theme of the May Fourth Movement and generation. Rana Mitter says on this topic:

Perhaps it is in the area of the new possibilities for love that the May Fourth era really belonged to the young. […] (T)his was the generation that had the first and fullest chance to think about the end of the extended family and arranged marriages, and explore romance […], and, more daringly, ideas of more anarchic ‘free love’.  

Yu Jiaolong in fact, at the end of WHCL leaves the city to go and live in the jianghu, where she gives birth to the child fathered by Luo Xiaohu. She decided to leave all the old problems and rules behind and to go and see her soul mate one final time before starting a new and virtuous life in the chaos of the jianghu.

Hence, to conclude, there are many aspects that indicate that Yu Jiaolong can be interpreted as a personification of Republican-era China. Her name, which includes the term long, i.e. dragon, which is China’s national animal, translates as “Jade delicate dragon”, which clearly was not a random choice on behalf of the author. The epithet “poisonous dragon” given by her master, critically relates to the many internal problems China was having. The name Jiaolong refers to the title of the book Wo Hu Cang Long, i.e. “crouching tiger and hidden dragon” or “unnoticed talents”, indicating either a period where China has to lay low until it can rise again to its full potential, or to the people that in this distressed period of war are capable of good and positive actions to help their fellow countrymen.

The storyline of her desires to break free from the old Manchu traditions and to step into the unknown (the jianghu) where she can be free would indicate the

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author’s desire for China to embrace freedom, a new life, and to leave “Confucius” behind. These desires to break away from her aristocratic and traditional family and to love freely are concepts that were promoted in the Republican Era by the New Culture Movement, but these could not be implemented immediately. Change takes time to be effective. Wang Dulu hence seems to address through Yu Jiaolong China’s historical transition from empire to republic, or from tradition to modernity. Like the problems that China had been facing in the Republican Era, Yu Jiaolong encountered many difficult situations, but especially violent duels as a result of stubbornly choosing not to understand how she was supposed to act in this new dimension.

Hence, after a careful reading, the character of Yu Jiaolong completely subverts the Pan-Asianist intentions of the pro-Japanese journal and, instead of promoting martial arts, is transformed into a nationalistic symbol by Wang Dulu.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has looked at *xia* in two different ways: first it analysed the term and its uses; secondly it focused on the literary characters defined as *xia* and their plots.

The terminological analysis made clear that a literary character can either have the term *xia* in his or her name (most often followed by a geographical location) or be defined as such with a denomination or “appellative”. These appellatives have the function of honorific titles as they are earned as a result of the actions carried out by the person who consequently is defined *xia*. Hence, the appellatives differ on a hierarchic basis and enlighten the reader as to whether the *xia* in question is well-established within society or is still an apprentice. Other meanings of the term are intertwined with justice and these expressions are found mostly in four-word idioms. Finally there is a relation to body parts used as a metaphor for courage, e.g. “guts” and “stomach”. These first findings corroborate how in fact *xia* has a twofold meaning: it can be intended as a person, but also as a virtue which includes justice and courage. The reference to justice becomes even
more evident as a person can be defined a *xiayi*, a nominalised binome made of the two terms *xia* and *yi*, justice.

The second analysis focused on characters and their features. The first feature that was analysed in the pentalogy was the origin of the *xia*, which can be of any kind, making the *xia* a phenomenon of all strata of society. This aspect of the *xia* being able to come from all paths of life, makes it more accessible for the reader to aspire to. The reader cannot only read about *xia*, but can potentially be *xia* in everyday life, and the verisimilitude of the novels’ characters also aids in this message.

The link with martial arts is also analysed and it was shown that although martial arts still have a fundamental part in these novels, they are not always the determining factor for someone to earn the title of *xia*. In fact, prostitute *xia* deserved her appellative of *xia* solely based on her altruistic and courageous actions to help out other less fortunate prostitutes. Although I discuss this virtuous aspect of *xia* without martial arts (*wu*) more in detail in the next chapter, it can be said here that by focusing more on virtue than on fighting skills, Wang Dulu firstly makes *xia*, again, more accessible to his reader, and secondly appears to go against the original intention of the editor’s choice of genre. Martial arts, this Pan-Asian feature that unites all of East Asia, are still very important, but kindness and altruism determine whether a person is *xia* or not. Hence Wang Dulu subverted the purpose of the journal by focusing more on this aspect of *xia*.

However, this subversion is perpetrated even more with the character of Yu Jiaolong, who becomes a personification of Republican-era China, and her story resembles in particular the beginning of the Republican Era. Her character clearly shows how Wang Dulu has taken a stance against Confucianism and is asserting that it is time to break away and to embrace new ways of life. The result of this break ends in disaster and violence, similarly to the events of the Republican Era, showing how China in fact was not ready to change immediately. Wang Dulu’s depiction of Yu Jialong shows how it is possible to see historical aspects in and give importance to these novels often considered of no literary value, a description used by literary intellectuals of the Republican Era.
The importance of this chapter hence lies in this historical importance of wuxia novels and in discovering xia’s virtuous aspect. This virtuous aspect of xia should be a tool for future research that aids scholars in understanding what person is xia in case this term is not used in the discourse. It should be an important criterion to discern between who is xia and who is a swordsman, a martial artist, or simply an expert in fighting, and an attempt to better define it is made in the following chapter.
CHAPTER 5

Yi: the virtuous aspect of xia and changes in Republican-era personal relations

别人说你是盗贼，我却说你是侠义。

Other people say you are a thief. I say instead that you are a just xia.

Li Mubai (JQZG, chapter 22)

1. Introduction

The above extract, taken from the third novel of Wang Dulu’s Crane-Iron Series, refers to Shi Pangzi, a good friend of Li Mubai, the latter being the main character of the second and third novels. Although Shi Pangzi is considered by some people (mainly those that have no experience of the lawless world of the jianghu) to be a thief, Li Mubai, an important xia, considers him to be a just (yi) xia. This second term has been related to xia ever since James Liu’s first analysis but, although it is been crucial in the better understanding of xia, it has not received much scholarly attention. After establishing in chapter four what is considered by Wang Dulu to be xia and how this concept is related to the Republican Era, this chapter analyses its most important underlying concept and that is closely related to xia’s virtuous aspect, i.e. yi.

Yi is a concept embedded in Chinese tradition and culture and many scholars have attempted to define it. It is most often translated as “righteousness”,

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1 The jianghu is a literay topos in wuxia novels. It often represents a dimension where anything can happen. In Wang Dulu’s novels it refers to the space between cities and where civil law is difficult to be practiced.
2 As the concept of yi presents the same issue of xia, i.e. it is not easily translatable as it can have different meanings, throughout the chapter yi is often used in the original Chinese without giving an English translation.
although of course it does not possess the same range of denotations and connotations as this English word. Over the centuries the meaning of yi in Chinese has been adapted to different semantic spheres and can be found today in words related to righteousness, justice (also legal), artificiality, adoption, and terminology.

In Wang Dulu’s wuxia context there are two aspects of yi that are most interesting. The first one is the virtuous aspect, the moral code according to which people act, and which is closely related to xia. People who operate in the jianghu are expected to abide according to a set of rules and what is known as yiqi 义气, i.e. a just spirit or code of justness. The second aspect that comes forth from yi is the way it defines relations between people. As I will discuss towards the end of this chapter, some of the love relations between the main characters in Wang Dulu’s novels are based on yi, which represents a substitute for the actual carrying out of love.

Hence the aim of this chapter is twofold. First it attempts to shed new light on the virtuous aspect of xia by analysing the virtue yi that, as will be proven, is closely related to it. Due to this close relation between the concepts, there is a historical digression on yi in the four schools of thought that have been analysed in chapter one regarding the origin of xia (Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, and Legalism). By looking at how different philosophical schools have considered yi in their doctrines and by adding these aspects to those regarding xia and discussed in the first chapter, a stronger relation between yi and xia is revealed. In fact, this section attempts to demonstrate that, similarly to xia, Confucianism and Mohism promote and value yi, while Legalism condemns it, and Daoism rejects it.

After this digression the focus shifts towards Wang Dulu’s Crane-Iron Series, on which initially the textual analysis is focused. The second aim is hence to analyse the relations between people that are based on yi and how these shed light on the Republican Era.

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2. Yi in Chinese philosophy

It is in the Analects (Lunyu 论语) by Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BC) that yi emerges as a fundamental philosophical concept, and it is subsequently included among the four “cardinal virtues” by Mengzi 孟子 (372-289 BC). In this Confucian context the meaning of yi, together with li 礼 (rites), is considered to be the way to obtain or carry out ren 仁 (benevolence), the most important virtue for Confucius.  

子曰：“君子义以为质，礼以行之，孙以出之，信以成之。君子哉！”

With righteousness as his substance, the ideal man acts in accordance with the rites, expresses himself with humility, and is complete with trustworthiness. That is a true ideal man.  

Yi is hence the basis of the ideal man’s (junzi 君子) entire existence and permeates all decisions taken by him. It is a parameter according to which an ideal man acts and views the world, making it one of Confucianism’s most important virtues for a person to possess. However, Antonio Cua has pointed out: “One main difficulty in understanding Confucian ethics lies in the absence of systematic exposition of its basic ideas, such as ren (humanity; humaneness), li (propriety), and yi (righteousness).” In fact, a clear definition of what exactly yi entails is never found. Confucius’s grandson Zisi 子思 (also known as Kongji 孔及 481-402 BC) and who supposedly was Mengzi’s master, aids in the definition of yi in the Doctrine of the Mean (Zhongyong 中庸):

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5 These four cardinal virtues are, yi, ren 仁 (benevolence), li 礼 (rites), and zhi 智/知 (wisdom). In a later stage a fifth virtue is added to these, i.e. xin 信 (faithfulness).  
7 Confucius, Analects, Chapter 15 (Wei Ling Gong 卫灵公), section 18.  
8 This translation is a modification of James Legge’s. See Confucius, Confucian Analects, the Great Learning, and the Doctrine of the Mean, trans. James Legge (New York: ACLS Humanities E-Book, 2012), 299-300.  
Yi 义 is what is yi 宜 (appropriate).

Hence, based on Confucius and his grandson’s writings, yi (righteousness) becomes the internal understanding of what is considered to be a morally and socially correct behaviour. In fact, the appropriateness takes “into account one’s social role”, making yi “agent-relative”, i.e. yi “matters” only when carried out in relation to other people, becoming thus a virtue similar to that of xia which has the same construction. Unsurprisingly, most virtues that are discussed in the Analects are known for their social aspect. Yi embodies this Confucian aspect and is highlighted especially in the wuxia contexts where it becomes closely related to xia due to its combination of righteousness and agency.

The etymology of the ancient character yi 義 corroborates this aspect, as it has yang 羊 (sheep or goat) on top, which often relates to positive characteristics and being good-natured, and wo 我 (I, me) underneath, which relates to the self. Yi is an ethical value that guides the self to carry out morally good actions and, in

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11 Zhong yong 中庸, section 20.
14 Schwartz, The World of Thought in Ancient China, 80. Victor Mair argues that the sheep/goat component in Chinese characters does not necessarily indicate a positive nature but is related to aspects of justice and ethics. According to him the introduction of pastoralism into China, an agricultural society, in the third millennium BC, left an important imprint on the core value system of the Chinese that can still be seen today in its characters. The use of the component yang 羊 shows that these animals were deeply embedded in ancient Chinese history. However, the article by Mair is followed by a comment by Heiner Roetz who acknowledges the importance of the introduction of pastoralism in China and its effect on Chinese social behaviour, but calls for more evidence to substantiate Mair’s conclusion that ovicaprids “dominated a core segment” within the Chinese value system. Hence the debate on the component yang in Chinese characters remains open. See Victor H. Mair, “Religious Formations and Intercultural Contacts in Early China”, in Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives, eds. Volkhardt Krech, Marion Steinickle (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 85-110; Heiner Roetz, “A Comment on Victor H. Mair’s ‘Religious Formations and Intercultural Contacts in Early China’”, in Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe: Encounters, Notions, and Comparative Perspectives, eds. Volkhardt Krech, Marion Steinickle (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 111-115.
15 This can be seen in other words such as mei 美 (beautiful) and shan 善 (good).
16 Cheng, Storia del Pensiero Cinese, 61.
contrast to other internal virtues such as de 德, it comes into existence when practised in relation with others, similar to xia.

Not only is yi fundamental in Confucianism, but Mohism also understands the importance of discriminating between good and bad on a moral level. According to Benjamin Schwartz yi “becomes quite central in the Mo-tzu where it refers to the unflagging determination to act in a way which will benefit mankind as a whole”.\(^{17}\) Mohism’s brotherly love (jian'ai 兼爱) provides the incentive for people to act according to yi: brotherly love becomes the result if humankind acts according to yi. Yi is the internal knowledge of all “gentlemen” of what is right or wrong, and desires such as power, wealth, and political corruption obfuscate this understanding, producing bad conduct and incorrect decisions as a result. According to Wang Dulu, yi was also lacking in the Republican Era, a period during which moments without social distress or war were extremely rare.

In the Mozi 墨子 the term yi not only means righteousness but can also indicate “shared values”, as in the following example taken from the second chapter of “Identification with the Superior” (尚同中):

子墨子曰：“方今之时，复古之民始生，未有正长之时，盖其语曰‘天下之人异义’。是以一人一义，十人十义，百人百义，其人数兹众，其所为义者亦兹众。是以人是其义，而非人之义，故相交非也。\(^{18}\)”

Mozi said: As we look back to the time when there was yet no ruler, it seems the custom was "everybody in the world according to his own standard." Accordingly each man had his own standard, ten men had ten different standards, a hundred men had a hundred different standards - the more people the more standards. And everybody approved of his own view and disapproved those of others, and so arose mutual disapproval.\(^ {19}\)

Like in Confucianism, yi is the base of the view of the world of the people. People have different “standards”, a condition that causes friction and that needs to be regulated. But Mohism admits that each person has a sense of what is right and what is wrong, turning it into a basic character trait, although only gentlemen


\(^{18}\) *Mozi*, Book 3, Identification with the Superior 2 (尚同中), section 1.

\(^{19}\) Yipao Mei, trans., *The Ethical and Political Works by Motse* (London: Probsthain, 1929), 59.
understand the “real” yi. Even if the virtuous aspect of xia is similar to that of yi, xia is obtainable by anyone. The connotation of “gentleman” is not inherent to that of xia, but, as previously seen, the term xia becomes a noun to indicate the person who possesses the virtue.

Daoism’s view on yi is rather different. In Chapter 18 of Laozi’s text, the Dao De Jing 道德经, he denounces the most important virtues of Confucianism (put together in the binome renyi 仁义) and identifies them as the reason for the decline of society. Chapter 19 is even more vehement against yi:

绝圣弃智，民利百倍；绝仁弃义，民复孝慈；绝巧弃利，盗贼无有。20

If we could renounce our sageness and discard our wisdom, it would be better for the people a hundredfold. If we could renounce our benevolence and discard our righteousness, the people would again become filial and kindly. If we could renounce our artful contrivances and discard our (scheming for) gain, there would be no thieves, nor robbers.21

According to Laozi, yi should be abandoned completely in order for people to become filial and kind. In fact, Laozi continues in Chapter 20 by saying that all learning should be abandoned in order for sorrow to be removed. Although it is not explicitly stated in his texts, Laozi’s ultimate goal seems to be a return to the origin, either infancy or a primitive society,22 where there is no learning, no understanding of social distinctions, and no consideration for differences of all kinds. This view obviously turns yi, the understanding and distinction of what is right and what is not, into an obstacle for the achievement of this goal. Xia presents this same issue: xia requires action in order to right wrongs, and action is not promoted by the Daoists.

Like Daoists, Legalists do not see yi as a virtue but it is regarded as a hindrance to carrying out good and smooth governmental decisions. To return to one of the most important historical quotes containing xia, which is in Han Feizi’s chapter of the Five Vermin and which I have discussed in the first chapter, here

20 Dao De Jing, Chapter 19.
22 JeeLoo Liu, An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy, 148.
both the *xia* as well as the Confucian scholar were condemned as social groups. The section however continues as follows:

故法之所非，君之所取；吏之所诛，上之所养也。法趣上下四相反也， […]。故行仁义者非所誉，誉之则害功； …

Thus, what the law prohibits is what the ruler himself recognizes; what the magistrate punishes is what the sovereign himself maintains. Thus legal standard and personal inclination are in conflict, […] Therefore those who practice benevolence and righteousness should not be praised; for if praised, they would damage meritorious achievements…

*Yi* is seen as a personal virtue that does not have any place in the public sphere, and Han Feizi continues by stating that righteousness and benevolence are “impractical and impossible” for the capable ruler, as his ultimate goal is to have absolute power over the people who should act according to his wishes. This condemnation of *ren* and *yi* is interesting as it reinforces the bond between Confucians and *xia*, and Mohists and *xia*. They both subscribe to *yi*, but although they execute it in different ways (the Confucian scholar with *li*  礼, i.e. rites., the *xia* with *wu* or *wen*), they both seem to have a particular moral inclination that is despised by the Legalists. For legalists, by using virtues to rule, the ruled do not necessarily become orderly, but will do so only by the understanding of reward and punishment. For Legalists, morality and politics should not mix.

To conclude, the analysis has shown that Confucians and Mohists appreciated and encouraged the carrying out of *yi*, while Legalists viewed it as an obstacle and Daoists as a behaviour that should be renounced to return to a primordial state. These views on *yi* are similar to those of *xia* analysed in the second chapter. Confucians and Mohists (groups that potentially originated from the same social class as the *xia*) seem to have had close links to the *xia* and their activities; Legalists saw the *xia* as an obstacle to smooth government; and the

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23 *Han Feizi*, Chapter 49, Five Vermin (五蠹), section 8.
26 Ibid., 187-194.
Daoists ignored the \textit{xia}, and certainly did not subscribe to a life that was based on taking action into one’s own hand. Hence, there appears to be a strong relation between \textit{yi} and \textit{xia} in ancient Chinese thought, and this relation can also be found in Wang Dulu’s novels, produced in a period that presented many similarities to the period in which \textit{xia} and \textit{yi} originated.

3. **Textual analysis of \textit{yi} in the \textit{Crane-Iron Series}**

\textit{Yi} is related to the virtuous sphere of \textit{xia} as it is the understanding and perception of \textit{yi} (or lack of it) on behalf of the \textit{xia} that triggers the action. The \textit{xia} is spurred into action when \textit{yi} needs to be restored. The attempt here is to see what is intended with \textit{yi} by Wang Dulu and how it relates to \textit{xia}. The following table contains all expressions in which \textit{yi} is found in the \textit{Crane-Iron Series}.

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<th>198</th>
<th>47 adj + 12 noun</th>
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<td>loyalty</td>
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<td>情义 \textit{qingyi}</td>
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<tr>
<td>尽义 \textit{jinyi} (and 义尽 \textit{yijin})</td>
<td>utmost righteous</td>
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<tr>
<td>名义 \textit{mingyi}</td>
<td>reputation / meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>礼义 \textit{liyi}</td>
<td>etiquette and justness</td>
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<td>道义 \textit{daoyi}</td>
<td>morality and justness</td>
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<td>作义 \textit{zuoyi}</td>
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<td>恩义 \textit{enyi}</td>
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<td>义友 \textit{yiyu}</td>
<td>justness and friendship</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>义烈 \textit{yilie}</td>
<td>staunch and upright</td>
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\textsuperscript{28} This abbreviation indicates the term as an independent unit and not part of an idiom or expression.
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<th>Chinese Meaning</th>
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<td>Lack of moral quality</td>
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<td>负义 fu yi</td>
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<td>非义 fei yi</td>
<td>injustice (money/things)</td>
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<td>忘义 wangyi</td>
<td>forget what is right</td>
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<td>无义 wuyi</td>
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<tr>
<td>仗义行侠 zhang yi xing xia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>慷慨好义 kang kai hao yi</td>
<td>generous and love for justice</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>忘恩负义 wang en fu yi</td>
<td>ungrateful</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大义分明 dayi fenming</td>
<td>clearly distinct big justness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>无情无义 wu qing qu yi</td>
<td>ruthlessly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义不容辞 yi bu rong ci</td>
<td>to be duty-bound</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>深恩厚义 shen en hou yi</td>
<td>deep empathy and kind justice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>深明大义 shenming dayi</td>
<td>have a firm grasp of right and wrong</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义胆侠心 yi dan xia xin</td>
<td>just guts and a xia heart</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>大义灭亲 da yi mie qin</td>
<td>uphold justness above one’s family</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>恩深义重 en shen yi zhong</td>
<td>deep favour and weighty righteousness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>刚强好义 gang qiang hao yi</td>
<td>unyielding and love for justice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>任侠好义 ren xia hao yi</td>
<td>to be xia and love justice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义重如山 yi zhang ru shan</td>
<td>integrity as strong as mountains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>见义勇为 jian yi yong wei</td>
<td>ready to battle for a just cause</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>多情多义 duo qing duo yi</td>
<td>full of affection, full of justness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>忘情背义 wang qing bei yi</td>
<td>let oneself go and turn away from justness</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>慨解义囊 kai jie yi nang</td>
<td>make generous contributions of yi (?). Similar to 慨解解囊 jiangkai jie nang, i.e. make generous contributions of money</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family bonds</td>
<td></td>
<td>45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义妹 yimei</td>
<td>sworn younger sister</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义女 yinü</td>
<td>adoptive daughter</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义兄 yixiong</td>
<td>sworn older brother</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese Characters</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义子 yizi</td>
<td>adoptive son</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义兄妹 yi xiongmei</td>
<td>sworn siblings</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义同兄妹 yi tong xiongmei</td>
<td>sworn siblings</td>
<td>3+1+1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>同义兄妹 tong yi xiongmei</td>
<td>sworn siblings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义父 yifu</td>
<td>sworn/adoptive father</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义母 yimu</td>
<td>sworn/adoptive mother</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义同手足 yi tong shouzu</td>
<td>sworn brothers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>结义弟兄 jie yi xiongdi</td>
<td>sworn brothers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义同姊妹 yi tong zimei</td>
<td>sworn sisters</td>
<td>1</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<td>孝义县/城 xiaoyi xian/cheng</td>
<td>Xiaoyi District / City (place)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义佩公 yi pei gong</td>
<td>Yi Pei gong (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>袁志义 yuan zhi yi</td>
<td>Yuan Zhiyi (person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>彰义门 zhang yi men</td>
<td>Zhangyimen (place)</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>意义 yiyi</td>
<td>significance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义断情绝/义断随绝 yi duan qing jue / yi duan sui jue</td>
<td>break off all ties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>亡友之义 wang you zhi yi</td>
<td>forget the “义” of a friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>义务 yiwu</td>
<td>duty, obligation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>三义刀 san yi dao</td>
<td>“Three righteous swords” (martial arts fighting technique)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(老镖头德)义于 yi yu</td>
<td>???</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total                                    | 381                  |

As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, *yi* has many semantic spheres it can refer to, but as the above table shows, in the *Crane-Iron Series* the vast majority of words and expressions in which *yi* is found are related to firstly moral values and secondly family bonds. Furthermore, the link between *xia* and *yi* is very strong, corroborating the importance of the virtuous meaning of *xia* discussed in the previous chapter. Here below the different uses of *yi* are discussed.

Firstly, the convincing link between *yi* and *xia* in its virtuous form comes forth from the numerical analysis. The total number of expressions that contain
these two characters amounts to 101, i.e. over a quarter of the entire usage of yi, showing that yi effectively is closely linked to xia. In this category the most obvious binomes are xiyi and yixia. As seen in the previous chapter, the binome xiyi can be nominalised and indicate a person that is a xia, an especially righteous xia. This is reinforced by the other binome yixia, which is only used in the last book of the pentalogy. Here yi’s function is that of adjective to xia, hence “a righteous xia”.

Of all the four-character expressions related to xia that are present in the series, “strong sense of justness and desire to help the weak” is the most prominent one. Yi is here undoubtedly again related and closely associated with xia. Xia and yi are two virtues that can be put on the same level, as they both indicate the morals of a person and they both, as part of a person’s inner understanding of right and wrong, cause a person to reach out towards others and restore justice.

Having established the direct link with xia, it is now possible to see other uses of yi that relate to the virtuous aspect of xia.

In the above table, the second most common term is yiqi 义气. This binome indicates the “spirit of righteousness” that groups of people dwelling in the jianghu (jianghuren 江湖人) follow.

你来了好极了，你帮助我们吧，你想要甚么就有甚么，只要记住了，咱们绿林人最要紧的是义气，遇见客商和镖车，彼此不认识的那是一定把东西留下。可是只要对面称道出字号来，咱们一听是熟人，立刻就得拱拱手叫人家过去。还有，遇见女的时候，只要她不是婊子，咱们一点也不可调戏人家。娘们车里就是有好宝贝咱们也不许搜，要不然传出去，就叫朋友耻笑了！

You arrived at the perfect time, you could help us out, anything you want you can have but remember, for us forest outlaws the most important thing is our code of justice: when we encounter travelling merchants or baobiao carts, if we do not know them, they will for sure leave their goods [here with us]. But if we are in front of them and they say their name and we are all acquaintances, we immediately make obeisance by cupping one hand in the other before our chests and we let them pass. Furthermore, when we encounter women, if they are not prostitutes, we cannot take liberties with them. In the carts of women there are many expensive objects, but we are

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29 These are xiyi (59 times), xing xia zhang yi / zhang yi xing xia (36), yixia (4), yi dan xia xin (1), ren xia hao yi (1).
30 See textual analysis of xia in previous chapter.
This extract contains a detailed code of behaviour for a group of forest outlaws living in the jianghu. They only steal from those they are not acquainted with and are respectful towards women, the latter rule also aids in preserving their reputation. This form of respect for acquaintances, friends and women is what Wang Dulu defines as “the spirit of righteousness of the jianghu” (jianghu (de) yiqi 江湖(的)义气), although not all people that dwell in the jianghu follow this behaviour. However, the jianghu’s code of righteousness that is respected roughly corresponds to the above description. It shows that stealing and robbing is consented in this space, but it should not exceed certain limits.

In addition to the more common spirit of righteousness in the jianghu there are also the “spirit of righteousness between friends” (pengyou yiqi 朋友义气) and the “spirit of righteousness in the protection business” (biaohang de yiqi 镖行的义气). As in the jianghu, friendships and the protection business are based on a set of behaviours that makes exchange equal. It becomes clear that yiqi, a moral and ethical behaviour, is applied only between people on the same level: jianghu dwellers, friends, and protectors when they encounter or deal with, respectively, another jianghu dweller, friend, or protector, are expected to follow an ethical code of behaviour. Yi establishes behaviour inter pares. Hence, yi here has the function of a pseudo-law, which people should follow, corroborating the original meaning of yi, where the good nature is above the self and guides it (yi 義).
Yi also forms binomes that indicate when this morality is missing. The most frequent “negative binome” is “moral indignation” (yifen 义愤) and I discuss this in the section on Prostitute xia below. The second most frequently used negative binome by Wang Dulu is the expression “ill-gotten gains” (bu yi zhi cai 不义之财). It is used five times which does not seem a lot quantitatively, but it corresponds to over a third of the overall references to the lack of righteousness (yi).

It is interesting to notice how one’s source of income is an aspect considered in these novels. While in the Warring States Period, the Han Dynasty, the first definition of the term xia included that of a person who has disdain for wealthy people and judged people who spent their wealth selfishly, in the Republican Era it is the origin of money that becomes an issue of moral judgement. The way of obtaining one’s income and capital is part of a person’s integrity. A person is considered to be unethical not only for the selfish attitude towards personal wealth, but also if the money has been obtained dishonestly. Hence, not only is the way in which money is spent reason for the xia’s disdain, but also its origins. This shift shows how the economic world has become an important factor in Wang Dulu’s novels, and I will discuss this more in depth in chapter six with the baobiao.

In conclusion, although Wang Dulu was not a supporter of the “feudal Confucian values” of the previous Manchu empire, yi, just like xia, has still much in common with the Confucian and Mohist interpretations seen at the beginning of the chapter. There is a shared morality on which people’s views and actions are based (as yi was intended by Confucianism) and by which people with the same views create bonds between them (as intended in Mohism). Yi defines how relations between people on the same level (inter pares) should be. When yi is lacking, a xia acts in order to reinstate it. It is the combination of understanding yi and acting in order to restore it that makes a person worthy of his or her denomination of xia, and the xia that best represents this is Xie Xianniang 谢纤娘, i.e. Prostitute xia 侠妓.

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34 I refer here to the anecdote in the Daoist text Liezi (Chapter 8, Section 21) and the definition of xia in the Shuowen Jiezi.
4. **Prostitute xia Xie Xianniang: the xia with no fighting skills**

The character that best represents the virtuous aspect of xia, and hence its relation with yi, is Xie Xianniang, i.e. Prostitute xia. Her storyline, which shows the importance of virtue for earning the title of xia, brings forth two interesting aspects that are analysed here: the importance of yi for xia, and the relation between xia and the law. However, before looking at this character and her story more in detail, Wang Dulu’s reason to choose a prostitute to fill this important role is first discussed.

The prostitute has been quite a common literary character in Chinese novels since the Tang Dynasty (618-907). Despite it being possible to assume that women of imperial China read or knew of novels that included prostitutes, most likely the vast majority of authors throughout imperial China were male, turning the fictional prostitute into the males’ invention and desire in order to appeal to male readers. While some scholars subscribe to this view, others have read proto-feminism in the actions and apparent freedom of the Chinese prostitutes. However, Xie Xianniang appears to play a different role.

In the case of Wang Dulu there is extra information regarding his view on prostitution in the Republican Era. Although it is not known whether the decision by Wang Dulu to create a prostitute xia was an autonomous literary one or whether it was part of a strategy enforced by the Xinmin Hui members running the journal, Wang Dulu wrote an article in 1930 in the Xiao Xiao Ribao, a decade before his employment in Qingdao, shedding some light on his stance on prostitution in Republican-era society. In this article, “The problem of prostitutes” (Jinü Wenti 妓女问题), Wang Dulu tackles the issues of Republican-era prostitution and argues that this job is degrading for women. He defines prostitutes as “poisonous snakes” (du she 毒蛇) and “evil spirits” (guiyu 鬼蜮) of Republican-era society, but then

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goes on to argue that they are the weakest amongst criminal people (zui’ei renqun de ruozhe 罪恶人群的弱者) and should in fact be pitied and understood. Wang Dulu makes the general claim that all countries of the world have had the system of prostitution in their societies making it hence a global phenomenon and not one that is solely related to China. However, he argues, this “trade of flesh” (pirou jiaoyang 皮肉交易) remains a cruel and brutal practice and, now that society has changed in China, it is possible to eradicate this system. He hopes that it will vanish from reality and that equality between the sexes will be restored. Not only should men stop using women as “living play toys” (huo wanwu 活玩物), but he argues they should also prevent their own moral character from sinking so low. Finally, he points out that women of the Republican Era can now choose proper career paths, and such emancipation should be welcomed and appreciated by men.

Wang Dulu’s vision of the equality of the sexes and the improvement of the position of women in Republican-era society is a clear sign of the influence of the New Culture Movement in which the author was trained. It shows him to be part of a generation that desired to get away from the traditional Confucian view of the fragile woman with bound feet and who was segregated in the space of the house, and instead believed that women should be independent and able to have a career. More particularly, in his article, Wang Dulu tackles the phenomenon of prostitution, a well-established practice and business in imperial China, as a criminal problem of society. He argues that, although they are the main players in this system, the women involved are not to blame. Instead the origin of this problem lies with the ill habits of the Chinese who are rooted in their imperial styles of living and do not want to embrace the changes that are occurring all over the world. For this reason it must have seemed apt for Wang Dulu to create a literary character that is a prostitute and who promotes mutual sympathy and social justice. By creating the character of Xie Xianniang and giving her a voice and a story, Wang Dulu manages

to show a different aspect to this phenomenon of China’s traditional culture. From mere sexual object, she becomes a person who is profoundly human, caring, and capable of deep emotions involving the personal and the social spheres.

The *topos* of the “prostitute with the heart of gold” is well-known the world over.\(^{40}\) Prostitute *xia*, however, stands out for her way of being a *xia*. As seen in the previous chapter, Xie Xianniang does not possess knowledge of martial arts skills or fighting techniques but, purely based on her moral disposition to help out those in need, she is defined a *xia*, showing how in fact kindness, altruism, and righteousness are more important for earning the title of *xia* than martial arts (*wu*). As she lacks any form of fighting skills and acts out of pure civic duty (*wen* 文), she becomes a representative of the *wenxia* 文侠 category, which is in opposition to that of *wuxia* and which to date does not have many well-known representatives. Here below is one of the two anecdotes that earned her the title of *xia*.

我就举出两件事来告诉你吧！有一次她同班中的一个妓女，因为花费太大，债台高筑，到了年底，被债主逼得过不了年。这个妓女既然无法挡债，又自伤身世，就在她自己的屋里上了吊。不料被人发觉，将她救活了；可是她想著生不如死，依然要趁人不备时共寻死。我说的那位侠妓，就慨然动了侧隐之心，拿出二百多两银子来，把那个妓女的债务还清，后来并帮助她寻了个稳当的客人从良去了，脱离了苦海。

I’ll give you some anecdotes. Once, a prostitute of her same class, due to too many expenses, was debt-ridden. At the end of the year, she was compelled by the creditor and she could not finish the year. This prostitute was then unable to ward off the creditor, and she was physically harmed, and she hanged herself in her room. Unexpectedly people found her and brought her back to life; however she still thought that death was better than life, and as before she wanted to take advantage that nobody was looking and to commit suicide. The Prostitute *xia* I told you before, whose heart was moved with deep feeling and inclined to secrecy, produced over 200 pieces of silver to pay off the debts of the prostitute. Afterwards she also helped her look for reliable visitors to get married off to and to separate her from the sea of woes. (BJJC, chapter 11)

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Prostitutute *xia* acted because of the cruelty done to other young prostitutes, who she saved by giving them money and aiding them to find a new life. This description of *xia* shows resemblances with the biography of Zhu Jia seen in Sima Qian’s *Records* discussed in the first chapter.\(^{41}\) They both helped people in need without boasting about their accomplishments and, more importantly, without using any form of violence. They not only helped oppressed people with their problems, but they went to great length to assure that these people were safe and sheltered from peril and aggression. Hence it is possible to conclude that the above extract shows how the human feeling to be altruistic and to “support” or “take care” is more important than martial arts (*wu*) in order for a person to be defined a *xia*. It is this aspect that can be seen in the aforementioned etymology of the unsimplified character *xia* 俠 where a bigger person protects the two smaller people. Helping people defines a *xia* more than knowing how to perform martial arts or swordsmanship.

A character like prostitute *xia*, who shows the importance of mutual care and an aversion towards violence, represents an aspect that may convey Wang Dulu’s reaction to everyday life in Qingdao. The troubles and perils that the war brought with it were constantly present in his surroundings, and while *wuxia* novels were promoted by the *Xinmin Hui* because of the Pan-Asianist aspect of the martial arts,\(^{42}\) according to Wang Dulu these were not the correct tools to obtain peace or to “fight” the current situation, and he instead advocated taking care of and protecting others. Xie Xianniang had fallen down the social ladder and had to work as a prostitute to sustain herself and her mother. Nevertheless, her natural disposition was to carry out good deeds, which made her famous in the city of Beijing. These events of her life show how even in unfavourable and adverse situations, it is still possible to act according to the code of *xia*. This exhortation at the very end of the 1930s to the people in Qingdao, occupied and humiliated by the Japanese, gave hope to the readers of the *Qingdao Xinmin Hui*. It showed how, even in the lowest of positions, there are good-natured people that are willing to help others in need, and this is a disposition that should and can easily be adapted by others. Reading *wuxia* fiction becomes, hence, not only an experience of leisure, but also an

\(^{41}\) See Sima Qian, *Records of a Historian* (*Shiji* 史記), Biographies of the Wandering *Xia*.

experience in which the reader can directly relate to the story and read a message of optimism.

But what were the reasons for Prostitute xia to act like she did? In the following extract it is explained that moral indignation (yifen 义愤) made Prostitute xia take action into her own hands. It is the lack of justness or righteousness for another person that makes a xia angry (fen 愤). The moral indignation was not felt directly by the person who is suffering the injustice, but by someone else, a bystander who understands the pain and distress of the person who has been wronged, and it is this altruistic action toward another that earns her the title of xia. There are no martial arts or fighting skills involved, but solely altruistic human feelings that trigger a person to act.

“还有一回，是她住的家里，隔壁有一户人家养著三四个雏妓。这家主十分厉害，把那三个雏妓虐待得猪狗不如。这位侠妓也动了义愤，她就联合两家街坊，在御史衙门里告了。当时把那养妓女的人判了罪。几个雏妓叫几个好心的人家讨去做丫环了。”

Another time, she (prostitute xia) was in her house, and next door there was a household that provided for three or four young prostitutes. The householder was particularly terrible; he treated those three young prostitutes worse than pigs or dogs. Prostitute xia, moved again by moral indignation, teamed up with two households of the neighbourhood and in the imperial censor’s office told what was going on. Then the householders of those young prostitutes were found guilty. The young prostitutes were hired by households of people with good hearts to work in the servant sector.”

Prostitute xia is appalled by the treatment young prostitutes are receiving in a particular household. She cannot bear seeing this cruelty and injustice continue, so she gets other households involved to solve this situation. The final action which prostitute xia undertook was to go and denounce the practices of malefactors to an imperial censor. The solution to the problem is the State law.

This link between xia and the law is not new. In fact, it is a feature of a literary genre that had emerged at the end of the Qing dynasty defined as xia and justice court-case fiction (xiayi gong’an xiaoshuo 侠义公案小说). This genre

43 My translation.
represents the merging of two genres, *xia* and court-case fiction, as these shared a common “moral landscape” where “justice, whether it be a matter of divine will, social consensus, governmental decree, or personal integrity, must be done.”

Although it is not always an easy task to categorically establish which literary genres or novels are more focused on *xia* and which on the court-case, the link between *xia* and *yi* in the legal sense has undoubtedly been present since this genre was first produced in the nineteenth century. And the role of the law as executor of righteousness is still present in Wang Dulu’s work.

As David Der-wei Wang points out, many of the late Qing novels represent a parody of justice. There are stories of blatantly corrupted judges and the fact that in novels such as *Three Xia and Five Righteous (San Xia Wu Yi 三侠五义)* there is close collaboration between an impartial judge and ex-outlaws, shows that the courts are limited in their ability to dispense justice:

When a chivalric hero [*xia*] trades his code of honor for a respectable job as a law enforcer, he is responding to the exigencies of a time in which myths of both personal and national sovereignty are rapidly disintegrating.

In Wang Dulu’s pentalogy this strong link between *xia* and court-justice has faded somewhat away, although some aspects, like those seen with Prostitute *xia*, are still present. The relation with the law is not as strong any more. Furthermore, the *xia* in this pentalogy are not carrying out services for judges, although they do tend to live according to the law. For example, Li Mubai is put into prison twice and the second time he uses this time wisely to reflect on his mistakes and how to improve, showing that his offence is considered to be justly punished. Wang Dulu’s prostitute *xia* also obeys the law of the State and even counts on its cooperation to

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46 For more information on Chinese literature concerning the topic of law without *xia* see Robert E. Hegel, Katherine Carlitz, eds., *Writing and Law in Late Imperial China: Crime, Conflict, and Judgment* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2007).
47 David Der-wei Wang, *Fin-de-siècle Splendor*, 174–175.
48 Ibid., 138.
49 Collaboration with the law is instead practiced by the figure of the *baobiao*, as they need to live according to it. I discuss the *baobiao* in chapter six.
obtain justice and restore justness. In order to do so she does not have to perform any physically aggressive actions on the wrongdoers, but simply to announce the problem to the court. She is not the court’s sidekick, but she is a good citizen who does her duty by reporting criminals.

Prostitute *xia* remains an interesting and exceptional character, but what does the complete absence of *wu* stand for and what is the significance of this literary character? Roland Altenburger states regarding Shisanmei 十三妹, female protagonist of *Biographies of Boy and Girl Heroes (Ernü yingxiong zhuan 儿女英雄传)*, a *wuxia* novel written at the end of the Qing Dynasty, that her “taming and domestication” after falling in love and succeeding in her amorous endeavour, “symbolises not only the correction of the gender order and the restitution of patriarchy, but also the re-establishing of the primacy of the civil (*wen*) over the martial (*wu*).”50 However, this seems to hypothesise that the civil (*wen*) cannot include *xia*. Xie Xiannian disproves this notion. Albeit female and hence closer to the civil than male characters, she never has to enter the martial (*wu*) in order to earn the title of *xia*. Her actions were all in the realm of the civil (*wen*). Hence, on the contrary of Altenburger’s view, *wen*, although in opposition to *wu*, is not in opposition to *xia*. Morality and righteousness are thus confirmed to be more important for *xia* than fighting skills, showing that the concept of *xia* reaches outside of the realm of the martial (*wu*).

Gender aside, Xie Xianniang, as a common person who does not present any outstanding feature apart from helping others, can be seen as a call by the author to all the readers to adopt this attitude. She wanders off the path that all other *xia* tread in Wang Dulu’s novels. Her denomination of *xia* without any knowledge of martial arts (*wu*) makes her stand out. Readers were most likely struck by her ways of dealing with problems without resorting to violence. She provides the message that it is not necessary to be trained in martial arts or to fight courageously on a battlefield; everyone is capable of good deeds and helping out others to the

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50 Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle*, 371. John Christopher Hamm also analyses this literary character as follows: “And the transformation of the dauntless swordsman Shisanmei in the devoted wife, efficient housekeeper, and proud mother He Yufeng constitutes this character’s participation in the triumph of orthodoxy”. See John Christopher Hamm, “Reading the Swordswoman’s Tale: Shisanmei and ‘Ernü yingxiong zhuan’” in *T'oung Pao* 84 (1998), 344.
best of their abilities. The choice of the surname seems to corroborate this as the character *xie* 谢 means “to thank” or “to be thankful”, a sign of recognition from others towards her. In a country at war and in a city occupied by foreign invaders, Wang Dulu was encouraging kindness instead of aggression.

5. Substitute for love: *yi*-bonds and the progression of the pentalogy’s love stories

As previously mentioned in the textual analysis, another interesting semantic sphere in which the term *yi* is used and which is not directly related to the virtuous aspect of *xia*, is that of pseudo-family relations. As the character *yi* in binomes can mean either “adoptive” or “artificial”, in family relations it comes to substitute what can or should be rightfully there. *Yi* in front of terms such as mother and father can be hence translated as “adoptive” and is found with this meaning solely in the last novel (TQYP) as the storyline sees the two main characters being both adopted.

Not only can *yi* precede “mother” and “father”, but also Chinese characters meaning “siblings” (older brother, younger brother, etc.) can have the character *yi* in front of it. “Becoming siblings” might be explained by the fact that those that are part of a brotherhood consider themselves “brothers” (or sisters or siblings). For this reason, within the *xia* community *yi* is often translated as “sworn” (brother, sister, etc.). These brotherhood members share similar ethics and views of life, which can change from brotherhood to brotherhood. This aspect of sharing and being divided according to ethical views resembles the Mohist interpretation of *yi* as “same standards”, which I discussed in the section about the origins of *yi* at the beginning of this chapter.

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51 Her first name Xianniang 纤娘 was given to her because she was able to write the character *xian* on a rice grain.

52 Wang Dulu also uses *gan* 干 but only for adopted sons and daughters (*ganer* 干儿 and *gannüer* 干女儿) and not adoptive parents. For example, both the terms that indicate adoption are found in the same phrase: 可是他收了不少干儿义女, i.e. “However, he (Fei Boshen 费伯绅) gathered many adoptive sons and daughters” (WHCL, chapter 13). In this storyline there does not seem to be a difference between the relations of the sons with the local despot (the above-mentioned Fei Boshen) and those of the daughters. Hence, the use of *gan* and *yi* to indicate people that have taken the role of sons and daughters is interchangeable without altering the meaning.
However, it is also possible that yi-bonds form in different circumstances, although these are rare in the novels. The most important yi-bond that is eventually formed is the one between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian.

总之，我虽爱慕那俞姑娘，但我心中并没有别的想头；只可把她作为我的义妹，却不可把她作为我的妻子，否则我对不起已死的俞老镖头！

In short, although I [Li Mubai] adore Yu Xiulian, in my heart there is absolutely no other form of hope; the only thing to do is that she becomes my sworn sister if she cannot become my wife, or else I would let down deceased Mr Yu [Yu Xiulian’s father]. (BJJC, chapter 13)

These two xia, who are in love with each other, are unable to wed due to Confucian moral and social practices in the Qing Dynasty.\(^\text{53}\) Yu Xiulian had been betrothed to another man, Meng Enzhao 孟嗯昭, and, even though she loves Li Mubai and eventually does not marry Meng Enzhao because he dies while they are still engaged, Yu Xiulian decides to follow the social and Confucian custom to remain chaste in widowhood.\(^\text{54}\) This decision is an interesting one as the xia normally is not interested in following social norms and rules. It shows how these xia, like others in Wang Dulu’s novels such as Prostitute xia, are acting within a framework that is decided by the government and society. Widowhood chastity, an originally Confucian practice, has become part of a collective social culture and is followed by these two xia who prefer to stay within the socially accepted rules, showing how tradition was a fundamental criteria in their lives.

Thus, the yi-bond between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian becomes not only one based on a shared set of values and ethics, but also functions as a substitute for consummating their love. Just like an adoptive mother becomes a substitute for the biological one, in the same way this sibling-relation becomes a substitute for the real internal desire and passion between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian. Hence, this

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example does not only show the Confucian context in which the relations between *xia* is embedded (an old “feudal” literary value), but also how the term *yi* in this case clearly substitutes a relation between two people based on love and passion, which was a New Culture Movement phenomenon.\(^{55}\)

In particular, the young people of the New Culture Movement promoted new forms of love and ways of forming families.\(^{56}\) In contrast to the big paternalistic family clan (*da jiazu* 大家族), typical of the traditional Confucian society,\(^{57}\) the New Culture generation of the Republican Era would instead focus on and form their own “small household” (*xiao jiating* 小家庭).\(^{58}\) This concept promoted the personal decision of individuals to decide their own spouses without interference of the parents, let alone a matchmaker, and, more importantly, to make a decision based on love. This new aspect of the New Culture generation was that love, and consequently marriage, was considered free from the overbearing presence of the traditional family.

Contrary to this new progressive aspect of love, it is possible to state that the relationship between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian is completely defined by the social Confucian society of the Qing Dynasty in which the plot was set. The Confucian ideals and traditional values that were put into practice here have obstructed the pursuit of the personal happiness\(^{59}\) of these two individuals, and caused sadness. There is never any physical expression of their love. Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian were not free in their decision, and as a substitution for their love and their own small household they created a pseudo-family relation that constituted for

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56 Ibid., 77-78.
59 I use the expression “personal” happiness as the new ideals of love of the New Culture Movement revolved around the fulfilment of the individual. Rana Mitter in fact states: “As with many other cultural understandings of the period, the idea of ‘romance’ and ‘love’ in the westernized ‘Romantic’ sense of being individualistic, passionate and self-centred was created in large parts in the Chinese mind through western templates which were then adapted”. Rana Mitter, *Bitter Revolution*, 78. He refers here to the work of Leo Ou-fan Lee, *The Romantic Generation of Modern Chinese Writers* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973), 295.
them the most intimate form of interaction. But when their story is compared to the love stories that follow, a progressive design of the author seems to appear.

In fact, the following love story is the one between Luo Xiaohu and Yu Jiaolong in WHCL, who are never defined as yi-siblings. It is possible to notice that, in comparison to the previous xia couple, their story constitutes a first step towards modernity. Yu Jiaolong not only desires but effectively manages to break free from the traditional Confucian society in which she is married to a fat and ugly official. Her unsuccessful escape into the jianghu shows a tentative attempt to rebel, to take matters into one’s own hands, although she later has to return to her life in the city with her husband. However, shortly after that her husband and parents repudiate her due to the amount of shame she had caused to both families. As a solution she returns to roam in the jianghu and to carry out good actions (hence why she earned the title xia in the following book), but she consummates her love with Luo Xiaohu before starting her life of solitude, and discovers later that this single encounter left her pregnant with Luo Xiaohu’s child. Hence, in contrast to the first love story, the second one takes place away from the traditional society, is consummated, and produces a child, although the two are never united again as lovers, let alone in a socially accepted relationship. Their story might not seem a success, but it includes progressive changes when compared to the first love story.

The final love story of the pentalogy in TQYP is between Han Tiefang, the son of Yu Jiaolong and Luo Xiaohu, and Chun Xueping, Yu Jiaolong’s adopted daughter. Also in this novel we find the yi-bond between the two main characters as if they were brother and sister. In fact, one’s biological mother became the other’s adoptive mother, and once the two children meet they share many adventures together. Then, amidst the sub-plots related to xia in this novel, the love story slowly blossoms between the two characters and towards the end of the novel Han Tiefang says to Chun Xueping:

“我们若作义兄妹也行，若一一遵依我父母之意，我们……”他把这话顿了半天，结果是把心一横爽直地说：“若作夫妻也对！”

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60 I have briefly discussed their plot in the previous chapter.
61 This “adoption” had not been consensual, but was the result of the abduction of the biological son by a bandit, and his substitution with another person’s daughter.
If we remain sworn brother and sister then that is OK, but if we each respect my parents’ desire, we…” He paused quite a while after these words, but then as a result he spoke straight from the heart and said: “If we were to become husband and wife then that is also appropriate!” (TQYP, chapter 18)

Chun Xueping initially does not react to Han Tiefang’s proposal, but at the end of the novel she accepts and they become husband and wife. The final love story sees thus the yi-bond transformed into marriage with the prospect of happiness and joy for the rest of the characters’ lives. What had been desired so strongly by Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian and had been opposed by a traditional society, finds its fulfilment at the very end of the pentalogy, two generations later.

Hence, these three love stories seem to form a development. The first couple were restricted by the traditional norms of chastity following the death of the first spouse (or fiancée in this case) and hence their love was never consummated or even recognised as a proper relationship. The second one sees an attempt to break free from traditional society. The two xia manage to do so and to produce a child, although it is not possible for this couple to have a socially accepted relationship, hence they do not spend their lives together. The final couple achieve a happy marriage based on love, and the reader is left with the assumption that the two protagonists will live happily ever after.

To conclude, this evolution of the love stories in Wang Dulu’s novels resembles changes that Qing and Republican-era societies were undergoing, and this corroborates Yu Jiaolong’s role as a personification of China in the Republican Era. Yu Xiulian and Li Mubai’s love story represents the traditional chaste view on love and marriage; Luo Xiaohu and Yu Jiaolong’s story corresponds to the transition from tradition towards modernity; Han Tiefang and Chun Xueping are the successful realisation of free love and the moving away from the Confucian patriarchal family. The fact that the sadness of the first two couples was caused by the social norms and traditional culture in which they were living, while the final couple manages at the very end of the pentalogy to fall in love and get married, shows how Wang Dulu supported this new phenomenon of the small household based on free love, promoting New Culture ideals in a traditional historical context.
6. Conclusion

This chapter has analysed the concept of yi and come to the conclusion that it is related to the virtuous aspect of xia. Not only is it related but it becomes the decisive criterion for a person to be defined a xia. Fighting skills (wu) do not define xia, but a person’s ability to carry out actions that restore justice, i.e. yi.

To prove this, it has been shown that the origins of yi are ideologically similar to those of xia (Confucianists and Mohists appreciate it, while Legalists and Daoists see it as an obstacle). Yi has a similar construction to that of xia: with the sheep/goat radical on top guiding the self, right and wrong being discerned and a person acting according to this understanding. However, the difference between these two concepts is that yi is often related to the ideal man (junzi) and the cultured man, while xia is practicable by everyone.

The analysis of Wang Dulu’s use of yi has shown that, based on its quantitative presence, it is convincingly related to xia and its virtuous aspect, corroborating the conclusions regarding the origins of yi. The code to which the xia subscribe is based on a general understanding of yi, as can be seen in the binome yiqi (brotherhood code) which also has highlighted the relations between people and the xia community.

The character of Wang Dulu’s novels who best represents the aspect of yi and wenxia is Xie Xianniang, i.e. prostitute xia. In this character the virtuous aspect of xia is most emphasised. It is her discernment of what is right and wrong combined with the actions that she has undertaken that have earned her the title of xia, not her martial arts skills which she does not possess. This character shows how in fact it is yi that is the most important attribute to have in order to be xia, not wu.

Yi can indicate aspects such as “artificial”, indicating the absence of what is rightfully supposed to be there (in the case of “adoptive”). It also became a substitute for the physical and social expression of love between Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian. The yi-bond that was created between these two characters obstructed the
physical expression of their love. In this case we see how Yu Xiulian and Li Mubai’s love story ends in sadness due to the strict Confucian and traditional practices that prohibited these two xia from being together and pursuing happiness. The love story that followed, that of Yu Jiaolong and Luo Xiaohu, still ended tragically due to similar social norms, but at least showed signs of progress, as they were able to be physically intimate once and produce a child. The final love story between Han Tiefang and Chun Xueping transforms an yi-bond into marriage and leaves the reader with a happy ending at the very end of Wang Dulu’s pentalogy.

These love stories show how in Wang Dulu’s novels it was the traditional society that caused the personal tragedies of the xia and that only by breaking away from these old ways of living and being able to profess “free” love would happiness be achieved. This progression resembles the struggles that the New Culture generation was undergoing and Wang Dulu’s position amidst these changes. From this interpretation it appears he subscribed to the “modern” view that only by breaking away from the old and traditional society people can obtain happiness. The historical elements that his pentalogy contain again show how wuxia novels can be valid testimonies of their time.
CHAPTER 6

**Baobiao: the commercialisation of martial arts and the separation from xia**

本书所说，就是直隶省巨鹿县，在前清时代出了一位老侠客。此人姓名名远，年纪有六十多岁了。他自幼学得一身超人的武艺，十八岁时就入了镖行，闯荡江湖，保镖各地，曾折服过许多江湖豪强，作过许多慷慨仗义的事情。

The present book starts thus, in Zhili province, Julu County, in the first part of the Qing Dynasty with an old xia. This man was called Yu Xiongyuan and he was about sixty years old. From a young age he had studied martial arts and he had become exceptionally good. At the age of eighteen he entered the protection business, he roamed in the jianghu, as a protector (baobiao) he went to various places, and he subdued many jianghu despots, acting in a just and generous manner in many situations.

Wang Dulu (BJJC, chapter 1)

1. **Introduction**

This section are the first lines of the *Bao Jian Jin Chai*, the novel Wang Dulu wrote first (although it comes second in the pentalogy’s chronological order) and appeared in the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* on the 16th November 1938. This introduction outlines the essential elements that follow in the pentalogy: stories about xia, baobiao (protector), protection agencies, and fighting local despots. The character that is introduced here is Yu Xiongyuan, an older man who has spent a great amount of his life in the jianghu江湖 as a baobiao, initially employed by others and later setting up his own business. The reason for his employment as a baobiao was his exceptional martial arts skills (wuyi 武艺). These skills are fundamental for the protector’s services, and they are needed in an environment characterised by danger, i.e. bandits or devil despots (haoqiang 豪强 or e’ba 恶霸), as mentioned in the extract. Furthermore, he is called a xia based on the fact that he
had fought in the *jianghu* to set wrongs right, showing good moral values and exemplary actions. Hence, he is a *baobiao* but also a *xia*, a combination that is not uncommon in Wang Dulu’s novels and an aspect that will be discussed in this chapter.

The aim of this chapter is to understand how the *baobiao* is related to *xia* and to the Republican Era. The relation between *baobiao* and *xia* lies in their link to martial arts (*wu*). Although in chapter five I argued that morality and righteousness (*yi* 义) are the most essential traits for *xia*, fighting skills still remain highly important in these novels and often are the fundamental means by which a *xia* operates. However, for the *baobiao* it is martial arts (*wu*) alone that are fundamental; martial arts become for them a commodity to possess and to commercialise.

The high number of *baobiao* present in Wang Dulu’s novels brings forth two aspects of the historical context of the Republican Era: the entrepreneurship of these characters and the constant need of protection. In this chapter, aspects of the New Culture Movement that are found in Wang Dulu’s *baobiao* are pointed out, showing how in fact Chinese society in the Republican Era was a hybrid between the old “Confucian evils”¹ and the changes it was trying to implement. By doing so, as with *xia* and *yi* in chapters four and five respectively, the attempt is to see the Republican-era reality in Wang Dulu’s novels, turning the novels into valuable historical testimonies.

My preliminary research has shown that there is no scholarship on the figure of the *baobiao* in Chinese literature; hence a short historiography on the potential origins of this character is provided, although this does not claim to be exhaustive as it is only a first attempt to tackle this subject. Wang Dulu’s novels represent an interesting first study on the *baobiao* in the Republican Era as it brings two important aspects to the pentalogy: the constant need of fighting skills (*wu*) to protect people and goods, and the presence of entrepreneurial literary characters.

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¹ The expression “Confucian evils” is used here in the same fashion as the intellectuals of the Republican Era, to indicate China’s issues that were caused by the old traditions, such as for example hierarchy (political and familial), respect for the older generations, and what is defined by Peter Zarrow as the “slave mentality” of the Chinese people. See Peter Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution 1895-1949* (London: Routledge, 2005) 137-140.
2. Historical ancestors: Where does the figure of the baobiao come from?

The broadest definition of baobiao\(^2\) is that of a person who possesses martial arts skills and offers a service to protect people or goods during long-distance voyages in the jianghu. The compound binome is made of “protect” (bao 保) and “dart” (biao 镖), where biao is possibly a metaphor for “goods”.\(^3\) Biao is also used to indicate “escort”, which would make the translation of the binome “protecting escort”. In fact, in Wang Dulu’s Crane-Iron Series we find these two types of baobiao: the protector of goods and people, and the employed fighter. The former corresponds to a protector while the latter is often an instigator of violence employed by local despots who want to exert their power over other people.

Although the term baobiao only appeared in the Qing Dynasty,\(^4\) the figure of the protector of goods or people can be traced back much further in Chinese history. Ever since the Han Dynasty there had been exchanges of gifts with other empires,\(^5\) and it is with the reign of emperor Wudi (141-87 BC), that the position of China started to become predominant in this geographical area due to the imperial tributary system.\(^6\) The emperor, as he was the “Son of Heaven”, was not only the ruler of the Chinese, but of all people, and those of other countries were required to pay respect to him and his decisions. The tributary system hence constituted an international network between China and the surrounding countries: the neighbouring countries came to occupy a subordinate position and tributes were

\(^2\) The term baobiao in this case refers to a specific type of person, which is its usual usage. It is also possible to find it indicating the protection agency business as a whole or simply “protection”.

\(^3\) For an attempt to find a proper translation see James Liu, The Chinese Knight-Errant, 210.


\(^5\) These empires are many and changed over the course of history as old ones fell and new ones arrived. For detailed information see Christopher Beckwith, Empires of the Silk Road: A History of Central Eurasia from the Bronze Age to the Present (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009).

\(^6\) Intiaz Hussain, Tyranny of Soft Touches: Interculturalism, Multiculturalism, & 21st Century International Relations (Mexico City: University of Mexico, 2004), 84-85; Yingshi Yu, Trade and Expansion in Han China (London: Cambridge University Press, 1967), 36-64.

\(^7\) These included Korea, Vietnam, Nepal, Thailand, and Burma. Countries towards the West, such as Tibet and Xinjiang, did not have the same relation with China. In fact, China had stationed military envoys in these countries and they were annexed to China during the Qing Dynasty following the military campaigns of Kangxi (1661-1722) and Qianlong (1735-1795). See for example Peter C. Perdue, China Marches West: the Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005); Mark C. Elliott, Emperor Qianlong: Son of Heaven, Man of the World (New York: Longman, 2009).
sent annually. Once these tributes were received by China, the tribute-paying country was permitted to carry out trade in specific areas decided by the court. This system and the exchange of goods between countries that it brought about, effectively initiated international trade within Asia and this newly formed relation also changed China’s position from simple neighbour to “sovereign regional leader”. In fact it was the tributary system that created the so-called Sino-sphere, where China occupied the primary position.

Although trade conducted at the lower levels of society has been present throughout Chinese history, even during periods when the government implemented Confucian-influenced anti-trade policies, the dynasty that most accepted, and even actively encouraged trade between China and the inner Asian empires, was the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). Due to their Mongol origin, this dynasty did not share the same Confucian views that snubbed strangers and trade with other countries. It is true that, for example, the Zheng He voyages (1405-1433), potentially the most important naval expeditions ever commissioned by the Chinese government, were undertaken during the reign of Ming emperor Yongle (1402-1424), but this and similar episodes during autochthonous Chinese dynasties are considered to be exceptional. Instead, under the Mongol Yuan, thanks to the government’s approval and promotion of trade, the merchants prospered and had considerable advantages such as lower taxes on their transactions and more freedom to trade. These economic advantages allowed some merchants to “commandeer soldiers on their journeys to protect them”, which is a similar function to that of the baobiao. However, there does not seem to be any more corroborating

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11 Ibid., 123.
information other than the simple acknowledgment that this armed escort was present.

After the Yuan Dynasty and especially after the Zheng He voyages, which had created the beginnings of the Chinese diaspora in Southeast Asia and established new trade routes, trade became an important aspect in Chinese society, and Chinese traders became part of an international network, especially on the seas. For the Chinese, this exchange of goods, which was carried out with other Asian empires both on land and sea, over time shifted from “gifts”, to “tributes”, to “trade”. For the Chinese, the protector of goods became a fundamental figure in these networks of exchanging tributes and trade. Without the presence of protectors, appropriate exchange of trade was at risk.

Hence, although forms of protective escort existed in China, the baobiao does not appear as an established figure in Chinese society until the Qing Dynasty. Qing poet Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797) uses baobiao to describe the people protecting his father:

吾父某亦为人保镖，路逢僧耳，与角斗不胜而死。  
My father and those who act like baobiao, when they encounter Buddhist monks on the street, they fight not to win but to kill.

This sentence shows how the baobiao, ever since its origins, has been related to protecting and fighting.

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15 My translation.
May Fourth intellectual and writer Lu Xun 鲁迅 (1881-1936) refers to the baobiao of the Qing Dynasty found in the wuxia novel Cases of Judge Shi (Shì Gōng’ān 施公案, anonymous 1820).\(^7\) He explains how there are literary characters here that act as baobiao,\(^8\) although, after having completed a textual analysis, the actual term does not appear in the novels. As will become clear here below, Wang Dulu gives a more complex picture of the figure of the baobiao in the Republican Era. Not only do these figures constitute the core group of his characters, they are also a central part of his novels’ society. The brotherhoods in which people are trained in martial arts are now not associated with xia anymore, but also with baobiao, who protect and attack when employed. We find in these brotherhoods of the baobiao a structure similar to that of a business plan: from initial capital to employees to “company carts”, turning them into a well-organised and established category of society.

3. Textual analysis of the Crane-Iron Series: the baobiao as entrepreneur

As mentioned in the chapter’s introduction, the baobiao literary character started to appear in wuxia novels during the Qing dynasty, and in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy this type of character has become a primary part of the novels’ context and plotlines. In fact, most characters in his novels have had experience as baobiao in their past, or still are employed by or run such an agency. Although it became a separate and distinct character, it is possible for the baobiao to also be a xia or xia-like. What emerges from Wang Dulu’s novels is that, before receiving their honorific title, the vast majority of xia have had at least some experience as a baobiao. Before being a xia, he or she has often worked for a protection agency (some still do such as Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲 and the xia of Langzhong 阆中侠) and through his or her morally good actions has subsequently been defined xia. This

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\(^7\) Research Bureau of Literature, Centre of Research on Ming and Qing novels at the Department of Society and Science in Jiangsu Province 江苏省社会科学院明清小说研究中心文学研究所, Lexicon of Chinese Literature 中国文学辞典 (Taipei: Jianhong Chubanshe 建宏出版社, 1999), 1450; Gu Tinglong 顾廷龙, Comprehensive Abstract of Chinese Popular Fiction 中国通俗小说总目提要 (Beijing: Zhongguo Wenlian Chubanshe 中国文联出版公司, 1990), 652-659.

\(^8\) Reference found in Hanyu Da Cidian, Vol. I, 591.
aspect turns the *baobiao* into an important change and addition to the *xia* of the previous dynasties.

In order to better understand the *baobiao*, the following table lists the terms related to this character in Wang Dulu’s pentalogy.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>鞭头 <em>biaotou</em></td>
<td>protector</td>
<td>880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>鞭店 <em>biaodian</em></td>
<td>protection agency/shop</td>
<td>546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>保镖 <em>baobiao</em></td>
<td>protector</td>
<td>140</td>
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<td>鞭行 <em>biaohang</em></td>
<td>protection business</td>
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<td>protection cart</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

From these results it is possible to see that the denomination binomes *baobiao*, *biaotou* 鞭头, and *biaoke* 鞭客, which all indicate a person employed for his or her martial arts skills, appear a total of 1,026 times, which is more than twice the amount of denomination terms for the *xia*. Furthermore, adding to this the number of other terms referring to this character’s business, i.e. the shop, the agency, and the carriage, the total amounts to 1,810, which is 128 more than the total number of terms including *xia* (1,682). Comparing these two numbers makes the *baobiao* a literary figure that competes with (or complements) the *xia* and that cannot be overlooked.

From the terms in the table it is possible to establish that the *baobiao* are organised in an enterprise-like structure (*biaohang* 鞭行 and *biaoju* 鞭局); they have shops which constitute the physical space wherein *baobiao* meet or where clients come to hire them for their services (*biaodian* 鞭店); they use carts that are owned by the company (often recognisable by the company’s symbol painted either on the carts themselves or on flags) to transport goods or people (*biaoche* 鞭车).

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19 Although there are three different denominations for the same type of literary figure, the term *baobiao* will be used here.

20 The table in chapter four reveals that denomination terms that indicate a *xia* are 464.
Protecting people and goods is a lucrative business in Wang Dulu’s novels and it has become the background on which the events develop.

This entrepreneurial aspect is completely opposite to what a *xia* originally stood for. The *xia* used to be a free spirit who disdained money, as I have discussed in chapter one regarding the first definitions found in the Han Dynasty.\(^{21}\) This organisation and remuneration did not use to be part of the *xia*, but are fundamental for the newly arrived *baobiao*, and sometimes overlap with the *xia*. As discussed in earlier, the vast majority of *xia* have started their “career” as *baobiao* or still are part of the protection business, showing that this commercialisation is a fundamental aspect of these novels. Apart from exceptions, such as Prostitute *xia*, both these literary characters use martial arts to obtain their aims, but those of the *baobiao* have been given a price for which they can be purchased. There are many more *baobiao* than *xia*, as only those who have good moral inclinations deserve the honorific title of *xia*. But where does this new entrepreneurial aspect come from? Why did the character of the *baobiao* come to the forefront in the Republican Era?

The importance of the entrepreneurial aspect of the Republican Era is reflected in how it has been coined by Marie Claire Bergère as the “the golden age of the bourgeoisie”.\(^{22}\) Chinese society had been mainly agricultural throughout all of its imperial history, and it is with the arrival of the warlords that the number of merchants, traders, and the bourgeoisie flourishes.\(^{23}\) The bourgeoisie can be divided into “lower” and “upper” bourgeoisie and the *baobiao* can be classified as petty or lower bourgeoisie.\(^{24}\) In fact, the Chinese entrepreneurial classes of the Republican Era were a very diverse group of people, where “petty tradesmen, for instance, were

\[^{21}\text{The first definition of } xia \text{ (which, based on the transative relation, corresponds to } ping \text{ (平) in the } Shuowen Jiezi \text{ clearly states that he or she disdains wealth.}\]

\[^{22}\text{Marie-Claire Bergère, } The \text{ Golden Age of the Chinese Bourgeoisie 1911-1937 } \text{(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).}\]

\[^{23}\text{Ibid., 63.}\]

\[^{24}\text{The term lower or petty bourgeoisie is intended here based on the Marxist definition of the lower strata of the bourgeoisie. These include shop owners and labourers who could sometimes afford to pay for the labour of others, with whom they also worked together, but did not have any surplus income to start capitalist ventures and expansion. For more information on determining the status of the petty bourgeoisie see Frank Brechhofer, Brian Elliott, } The \text{ Petite Bourgeoisie Comparative Studies of an Uneasy Stratum } \text{(London: Macmillan, 1981).}\]
frequently conservative in their outlook” while others preferred the “economic rationality, free enterprise, and an ideology of economic growth”.  

The widespread presence of the baobiao in Wang Dulu’s novels indicates how trade and small enterprises (petty bourgeoisie) flourished in Republican-era China, and he takes it even a step further by showing how this entrepreneurial aspect had become a common aspect of everyday urban life. In this period new social classes were emerging and these new entrepreneurs managed to obtain a foothold in the cities. The merchants were able to establish their businesses in the continually growing modern cities of the Republican Era, which had become a magnet for those who wanted to embrace the changes that China was undergoing after the collapse of the traditional system. Here the merchants, now turned entrepreneurs, opened shops, and exerted their power through the chambers of commerce (firstly established in 1902), and whose peak of influence was reached during the warlord era. The merchants and their entrepreneurial culture were now more than ever part of the lives of the urbanised Chinese, including Wang Dulu and his readers. As a result, with these new everyday aspects that influenced the author, the baobiao are found in large numbers in these novels and have become a newly established literary figure in wuxia literature that was being produced at the time.

A good example of how this protection business operates is that of the above-mentioned Yu Xiongyuan, who specialises in the transaction of goods. Yu's family business is explained as follows:

到了四十余岁时, 俞老镖头不愿再依人作计, 就回到家乡巨鹿, 开了一家雄远镖行。他这镖行也用不著许多镖头, 若是应了买卖, 只是在车前插上他的镖旗, 镖车的伙计带上他几张名帖, 便无论走多远的路, 也是毫无舛错。因此他这镖店很得一些客商的信任, 十几年来买卖也非常之好。

At the age of forty, experienced baobiao Yu (Xiongyuan) did not want to rely on many people to do the work, so he went back to his hometown Julu and he opened the Xiongyuan protection agency. His business did not

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28 Wen-hsin Yeh, *Shanghai Splendor*, 42-44.
29 Eastman, *Family, Fields, and Ancestors*, 196.
employ many protectors, and if he had to do business, he only had to put the flag of his agency in front of the wagon, the people of the protection wagon would have many name cards, and no matter how long the route, there would not be any problems along the way. Therefore his business had many trustworthy businessmen, and for over a decade his business was very prosperous. (BJJC, chapter 1)

This description tells us that there were distant business trips carried out by wagons from one city to another, and between these cities there were bandits or baobiao hired by other people that possibly could take over the wagons. In the case of Yu Xiongyuan’s protection agency, there are relations of trust built up with other businessmen situated in different geographical relations. Furthermore, the people roaming in the jianghu often also knew the agency and, based on previously established relations, they would not interfere in these transactions.

Although the term is not used here or in the novel’s extract, the main concept on which the forms of transaction are carried out is that of guanxi 关系, i.e. “relations”. With the post-Mao Reform Era and the opening up of China to trade in the 1970s and 1980s, this way of doing transactions based on connections and shared experiences has gained much interest from recent scholars who are trying to unravel the ways of doing business in China. The term is heavily embedded in Chinese culture and reflects a network structure that is based on the exchange of resources between two or more actors, followed by the reciprocation between actors, and involving trust, and face. In the Republican Era and in Wang Dulu’s novels the entrepreneur-baobiao came to the forefront and their interaction presented a network structure that is very similar to that of modern day guanxi. This aspect reiterates how Wang Dulu’s baobiao commercialised their fighting skills into an employable commodity in the Marxist sense, stepping away from the morally good

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31 Ibid., 6.
32 For a detailed analysis and conceptualisation of guanxi see Eike A. Langenberg, Guanxi and Business Strategy: Theory and Implications for Multinational Companies in China (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag Heidelberg, 2007), 38-118; James St. André, Guanxi, Face and Filial Piety: The differing fate of some Chinese concepts in English” (paper presented at Cambridge University, 29th October 2012).
xia and becoming an independent and separate literary figure who bases his existence solely on martial arts skills.

This form of organised business for the safe carriage of goods is vital for transportation and trade, in order to travel through areas characterised by bandits, warlord battles, and continuous warfare. The carriage of goods had become such a vital part of society that it required regulation according to Chinese law. In An Outline of Chinese Civil Law of the Republican Era the section on Carriage of Goods reads:

A carrier of goods must exercise due care and is responsible for any loss or damage unless caused through force majeur. When goods are damaged, the burden immediately falls upon the carrier to prove lack of negligence, otherwise it is responsible. A common carrier is liable for torts committed by its servants.  

The fact that there is a section in Chinese Civil Law that regulates the business of the carrier of goods, which provides insurance in case of negligence during the transportation of goods on behalf of an authorised company, convincingly shows that this phenomenon is not only structured in a business-like fashion similar to a contract, but also that it is an essential part of Chinese society, just like in Wang Dulu’s novels.

This regulation in Republican-era law differs greatly from the Great Qing Legal Code\(^34\) (Da Qing Lüli 大清律例) of the Qing Dynasty in which Wang Dulu’s stories are set. In this legal code there is no mention of “carriage of goods”. The sections on economic legislation provide regulations for situations that are similar but do not correspond to those involving the baobiao, namely, the commercial exchange of commodities. \(^35\) The physical exchange of commodities in the Qing

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34 The Great Qing Legal Code is mainly based on that of the previous Ming Dynasty, although it was revised several times throughout the Qing Dynasty. For a translation of the Great Qing Legal Code see William C. Jones, trans., The Great Qing Code (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).
35 For more information on the economic regulations contained in the Great Qing Legal Code see Jing Jujian, “Legislation Related to the Civil Economy in the Qing Dynasty” in Kathryn Bernhardt,
code only provided regulations between merchants, brokers, or shipping agents, of whom the latter two had to be appointed by the yamen official as he would be able to determine the reliability of these people based on their family background. The merchant, when transporting goods, was supposed to leave his merchandise in the custody of a broker until a commercial transaction had been concluded, but there is no mention of transportation. In contrast, the shipping agent was responsible for the reliability of the boatmen and of the safe arrival of the goods, and was considered liable in case of loss of property or swindle. Hence it does not cover the transportation carried out by a courier on land. However, in Wang Dulu’s Republican-era novels the baobiao and their businesses are central to many actions and stories. As I discuss in the following section regarding Yu Xiulian, the business was easy to set up and did not require any interference on behalf of magistrates or officials. Hence, the entrepreneur-baobiao is either a form of anachronism in Wang Dulu’s novels, or the baobiao already existed in Qing society but the business had not yet been regulated in Qing law.

In Wang Dulu’s novels being trained in martial arts, protecting (or attacking) goods or people, and transporting these in long-distance journeys effectively become a job, which included a head office (baodian), often located in the city, a salary, and an internal corporate structure. All these aspects found in Wang Dulu’s novels, show how signs of the new modernising society of the Republican Era are also present in the unjustly neglected wuxia fiction novels.

To conclude, the baobiao’s martial arts skills in these novels, as in Republican-era society, are not only used to fight against evil, as with the xia, but become a skill that can be desired by an employer or used for commercial purposes. They become a commodity in the Marxist sense. When it comes to the importance of fighting skills, the xia is still present but it is the baobiao who, for the right price,
will carry out the task of protection (or aggression). The *baobiao*, who does not have to fight for the purpose of restoring justice but does so on behalf of whoever pays money, represents the commercialisation of the *xia*. The *xia* who uses *wu* only comes into action if the cause is morally right. The *baobiao*, who has commercialised his martial arts skills and who, as a counter effect, pushes the *xia* even more towards morality and righteousness, is the new player in *wuxia* novels, and only shows his tricks for the right amount of money.

4. Yu Xiulian: the female *baobiao* and her relation to the Republican Era

I have analysed Yu Xiulian and Li Mubai’s love story in the previous chapter, but in this section I focus on Yu Xiulian’s role as a woman and as an entrepreneur. She is the main female character in the second and third books (BJJC and JQZG), and a secondary character in the fourth and fifth books (WHCL and TQYP). She is considered a *xia* for her upright character and the help she has provided to those who needed it. But she is also a *baobiao* as she is the daughter of Yu Xiongyuan, owner of the protection service agency I discussed in the previous section, and she eventually sets up her own company after her father’s death. Different aspects of the old and new values in China, a mixing that is so typical of the Republican Era, are intertwined in this literary character, making her a good representative of the Republican-era woman. When analysing the female *xia* of the Republican Era Roland Altenburger said that as a character she “ease(s) and rationalise(s) […] tensions and contradictions of the modern age”. 40 Yu Xiulian fits this description.

Yu Xiulian appears for the first time when she is around sixteen years of age and is introduced in BJJC as follows:

樱桃小口的两旁，衬衬著两个笑涡；虽然脚稍大些，但掩不住二八芳年的处女风流。

因为俞秀莲姑娘生在镖师之家，举止未免豪爽，不似一般书香之家的小姐永远不出闺房。俞秀莲家中没用著婆子丫鬟，买针买线总要她自

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40 Roland Altenburger, *The Sword or the Needle: The Female Knight-errant (xia) in traditional Chinese Narrative* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009), 372.
己出门去叫货郎，因此就时常被人睹见她的芳姿。[… ] 每日除了从母亲做些针黹之外，便随她父亲学习武技。[… ]

此时秀莲姑娘身穿著是青布短衣裤，头上挽著云髻，戴著白银簪子，弓鞋上也蒙著白布。

On both sides of her small cherry-like mouth, there are two dimples; even though her feet are a bit big, she is unable to hide that maiden attraction of a sixteen-year old.

Because Yu Xiulian grew up in a family of baobiao, her manners are rather straight-forward, different from those of a girl from a normal literary family who would never leave her chambers. In Yu Xiulian’s house there were no female servants, she buys needles, buys thread, and she always has to go out herself to call for street vendors, therefore, her graceful gestures have often been seen by people. […] E]very day, apart from doing needlework with her mother, she follows her father and learns fighting techniques.

This time Xiulian was wearing a short black jacket and trousers, on her head she has pulled up her hair where she was wearing a silver hairpin, and shoes for bound feet (gongxie 弓鞋) that were also white. (BJJC, chapter 1)

According to the text, Yu Xiulian is different from the girls from the more traditional households of the Qing Dynasty who do not leave their chambers and remain invisible to the public eye.41 Yu Xiulian grew up in a different type of family where women are more emancipated, have different roles in the house, and participate in the family business. From this description we see already the two sides of this character: on the one hand she still carries out female duties (needlework) and she has (slightly big) bound feet, but on the other she openly shows herself on the street and learns fighting techniques from her father. Already from her youth she presents contradictory characteristics of the traditionally Chinese woman of the Qing Dynasty and elements of modernisation and emancipation.

41 For the condition of women in the Qing Dynasty see Ellen Widmer, The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming through to Qing (Leiden: Brill, 2010); Harrier T. Zurndorfer, Nanxiu Qian, Grace S. Fong, eds. Beyond Tradition and Modernity: Gender, Genre, and Cosmopolitanism in Late Qing China (Leiden: Brill, 2004); Yi-Li Wu. Reproducing Women: Medicine, Metaphor, and Childbirth in Late Imperial China (London: University of California Press, 2010); Susan Mann, “Grooming a Daughter for Marriage: Brides and Wives in the Mid-Qing Period”, in Chinese Femininities, Chinese Masculinities: A Reader, eds. Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom, Susan Brownell (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2002), 93-119.
Yu Xiulian’s bound feet are a characteristic of the traditional role of women in China’s society. Footbinding was seen in the modern age by westerners as a barbaric Chinese tradition, and its study has been interpreted through ideas such as deformity, perversity, seclusion, and cultural immobility. However, new trends in scholarship have moved away from this purely negative view and shifted towards a more nuanced interpretation, where women would use their bound position to obtain power and rule households (i.e. the most important unit within Confucian society) and even family businesses. What becomes clear from these studies is that footbinding is neither positive nor negative, but nevertheless remains a physical expression of Chinese imperial society. And it is this society that the Republican Era and the May Fourth generation tried to change, starting with women. Fan Hong points out: “[f]or Lu Xun, therefore, revolution was simple: if you wanted to change the society, you had to change the family system, and if you wanted to change the family system, you had to change the women.” Yu Xiulian, however, despite her crippled feet, is still able to carry out excellent martial arts. As footbinding was a standard practice for Chinese women during the Qing dynasty, Yu Xiulian is not the only woman with bound feet in this series, and some of them possess martial arts skills equal to those of male characters. The combination of footbinding and martial arts transforms her body into a symbol of change: Confucian roots had made it part of the fragile female stereotype, but her physical prowess was a sign of the physically healthy woman of the Republican Era.

45 An example of this is Yang Lifang 杨丽芳 whose feet are described as follows: 她又追了我来，是有甚么事？同时看到丽芳的脚儿是很小的，跑著像是很费力，李慕白就回身迎过去，问道: “小姑娘，你来找我有甚么事？” She also followed me [Li Mubai], what does she want? At the same time he noticed Lifang’s feet were really small, to run would appear to be a great effort, Li Mubai then turned his body to leave and asked: “Young girl, what is it you want?” (JQZG, chapter 1). Yang Lifang not only has bound feet but has mastered martial arts and eventually manages to kill in a duel the family enemy (she is the estranged sister of Luo Xiaohu 罗小虎). Furthermore, WHCL’s opening scene sees Yang Lifang in the De residence (she is the wife of the banner man De Wenxiong 德文雄) practicing martial arts, showing how in fact her feet are not a hindrance.
Another aspect of Yu Xiulian as a symbol of the Republican Era is her position as a female entrepreneur.

“My deceased father one year opened the Xiongyuan protection agency here, after which he became old and went out of business. Last winter I returned from Jiangnan. I am a woman on my own, and in the house there is nothing to be done. [...] In Henan I had a senior protector, Yu Tianjie, he had a bit of wealth, but his two legs were permanently injured, after all the years of fighting. He lived in Henan, and it was hard [for him] to avoid his old enemies who were looking for him, so he sold his house, and the whole family came to live here with us, and added some capital, so the protection agency was opened. We continued to use the established brand name, he is the manager, and I am the head protector.” She smiled a bit and added: “In reality it is not that I confront [bandits] personally, but I use my reputation: to the north there is Baoding in Hebei, to the south the Weihui district in Henan, and [my reputation] is known throughout these regions. It has been open for over half a year, and nothing has ever happened and the profit is enough for daily family expenditure. There is only one more thing: last time I went to Beijing I did not speak with Mrs De,47 I am afraid that now that she is such a big manager, a female protector, she would make fun of me.” (BJJC, chapter 10)

This extract shows how she set up her own business, using capital, finding an investment partner and manager of the company. She is aware of the amount of money that the company makes and is apparently capable of obtaining enough profit to make a decent living, although there is no prospect of expanding the business, so limiting them to the petty bourgeoisie category.

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47 Mrs De is the wife of a banner official in Beijing. The De family is friends with Yu Xiulian and their friendship is often frowned upon by other high class members in the novel.
From this description regarding her role in the company and its setup, Yu Xiulian’s character becomes rather modern. As had been advocated by intellectuals such as Zhou Zuoren, Lu Xun, and Ye Shengtao, women of the May Fourth generation were now occupying independent roles in the working sphere. Emily Honig’s work in fact highlights the lives of women in Shanghai cotton mills, while Rana Mitter analyses how the “new women” were more likely to search for professional status (journalism, law, office jobs), and examines the views of entrepreneur Du Zhongyuan, who implicitly puts forward a solely male vision of Republican-era entrepreneurship, without considering the “new woman”. Furthermore, Marie-Claire Bergère’s groundbreaking book on the Chinese bourgeoisie in the Republican Era extensively researches this new social group, and also does not mention women. In her analysis of the social structures of the bourgeoisie she underlines the importance of the Confucian view on family, but also its patriarchal structure:

“It is impossible to grasp the development of these businesses without taking into account, on the one hand, the roles played by sons and sons-in-law and the partnerships between cousins or uncles and nephews, and, on the other, the relation forged with other families through marriage.”

Here only men are taken into account and in fact the entire book focuses on male agency. The role of women remains untold, except as providers of more male players through either marriage or birth. It is possible to hypothesise that in the lower bourgeoisie women played a bigger role than at the top levels, as has been revealed by recent scholarship in the case of women in late imperial China who stayed at home and who ran the family businesses while the men were attempting the imperial exams. Yu Xiulian is a female player in this world governed by men,

51 Ibid., 99.
and for this reason stands out. This gender-biased view is pointed out by Yu Xiulian herself, when she and Yu Jiaolong are confronted by people in the jianghu:

“这是我的朋友，她也是个女保镖的，从小跟男的一样，满处瞎走。她的脾气太坏，可是人很靠得住，[…]!现在我保她，你们二位就别拿她啦!”

This is my friend, she is also a female protector, ever since childhood she was like a boy, she has been everywhere [in the jianghu]. Her temperament is rather bad, but as a person she is very trustworthy, […] I protect her now, so you two gentlemen do not seize her. (WHCL, chapter 10)

As shown in the above extract, female protectors are not uncommon, but it is required from them to have characteristics similar to those of men in order to occupy such a position in a credible manner. This aspect is part of the gender reversal process that has been used by Roland Altenburger in his study on the female xia: the character of Yu Xiulian questions “the social positions and roles conventionally assigned to women” in the Republican Era, like the female xia has done over the centuries.54 Women engaged in family-run enterprises were not a new phenomenon in China as the majority of weavers in the late Qing and Republican Era were female,55 but a female owner and partner of a business takes the role of women in the economic sector to the next level.

Hence, Yu Xiulian’s role in the pentalogy becomes extremely interesting for the reader of Republican-era literature. The combination of her entrepreneurial spirit and her traditionally-formed body reflects this ensemble of Confucianism and modern transformations, becoming thus an idiosyncratic Chinese example of the post-May Fourth generation. Her bound feet and her decision to follow the socially imposed norm not to remarry (as I discussed in the fifth chapter) are elements of the traditionally fragile woman and a result of the “Confucian evils”. Instead, her role as business partner, her entrepreneurial spirit, and her physical prowess are characteristics of the condition of women that the New Culture was promoting. Hence, she presents a dichotomy that prevents a clear classification of this literary

54 Altenburger, The Sword or the Needle, 53.
55 Jacka, Women’s Work in Rural China: 24-25.
figure. Instead she harmoniously presents these contradicting elements. This is reflected also in the description of the physical characteristics of the different women working in the Shanghai cotton mills in the 1920s and 1930s: “[there were] women hobbling on bound feet, women wearing cloth shoes, women wearing high heels.” In a similar way, these different influences (respectively Confucian, modern Chinese, western), can all be found in Yu Xiulian, making her character an encapsulation of the different and contrasting aspects of the Republican Era.

5. **Fighting skills as gap in the market: why did the baobiao become so popular?**

The question I attempt to answer here is a socio-economic one and addresses the socio-historical reasons why the baobiao as a business appeared so frequently in Republican-era novels. Why did this literary figure come to the forefront in Wang Dulu's novels? Part of this question has been answered in the previous section, which explains the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in the Republican Era. But why was entrepreneurship applied to martial arts or, more in general, fighting skills? Why did these skills become a commodity?

The importance of having mastered fighting skills for protection in the *Crane-Iron Series* is highlighted immediately in the opening sequence of the first book in the pentalogy's chronology (HJKL).

Once upon a time there was a small town in the Zhenba prefecture in the south of Shaanxi province surrounded by a myriad of mountains. The scenery and local conditions were similar to the northern part of Sichuan province. However, the locals were quite ferocious, quite like the temperament of many savages. This was in the middle of the Qing Dynasty, and at that time a great turmoil had been calmed down, so many roving bandits had fled into the wilderness, and constantly robbed travelling traders, (making) the arrival of travellers extremely difficult.

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56 Honig, *Sisters and Strangers*, 139.
People that leave for another city, if they do not know how to practice martial arts themselves, they have to request for baobiao, if not it would be difficult for them to make a single step. Therefore at that time the protection service business was flourishing, and the people that studied martial arts were also increasing by the day.\(^57\) (HJKL, chapter 1)

The extract describes a small town, far away from the capital. The areas surrounding this town, or in fact any location between urban conglomerates, were filled with bandits, making it extremely difficult for people and goods to move from one city to the other. As a result, the town in the extract, and in fact all cities in Wang Dulu’s novels, seems to give some form of security and no protection is needed there. This picture of cities corresponding to safe havens as if they were “spheres of peace” amidst danger, looting, fighting, and in general a high level of violence, was not far from Wang Dulu’s own personal experience in Qingdao. His personal “entrapment” in Qingdao and his inability to leave the city once the war had broken out in 1937, and having to make there a living for himself and his family,\(^58\) helped shape in his novels these dangerous lands that were on the other side of the cities’ walls. Once the Japanese had conquered and settled in Qingdao, for a number of years there was relative peace in this coastal city when compared to other cities in China in the same period, such as Nanjing.\(^59\) The city became for him a space of security,\(^60\) while anything outside of it corresponded to violence.

This lawless space outside of the cities where violence and fighting were part of everyday life corresponds to Wang Dulu’s jianghu 江湖. The jianghu is a space peculiar to the wuxia genre; it is a parallel world where the xia normally thrives. Although it literally translates as “rivers and lakes”, the term jianghu has taken the meaning of “different universe”\(^61\) and is now a well-established “topos” in

\(^{57}\) My translation.  
\(^{58}\) Xu Sinian, Biography of Wang Dulu, (Suzhou: Suzhou University Press, 2005), 13-16.  
\(^{59}\) For scholarship on the atrocities in Nanjing during the Second Sino-Japanese War, please refer to footnote 70 in the introduction.  
\(^{60}\) Wang Dulu’s daughter, Ms Wang Qin, corroborated this by stating that the period in Qingdao was one of the happiest ones in the author’s lives, although he did not venture too much out of the house for his dislike of the Japanese soldiers stationed there.  
\(^{61}\) The binome jianghu had a literal meaning of “rivers and lakes” ever since its first appearance in texts of the Warring States Period; it appears seven times in the Daoist text Zhuangzi 庄子 with that meaning. However, the meaning changed to “different dimension where anything can happen without rules (legal, physical, temporal, etc)” with the poem Memorial of the Yueyang Tower
wuxia literature. Each novelist creates a different jianghu in which anything can happen. In Wang Dulu’s case it corresponds to the space outside the cities, where violence is frequent and only baobiao (and often also xia that have mastered martial arts skills) can survive. Wang Dulu’s jianghu strikingly resembles the battlefields where initially warlords operated and later the Second Sino-Japanese War was fought.

The violence outside the city of Qingdao during the Second Sino-Japanese War was more or less accurately reported62 and accessed by the city’s inhabitants through its newspapers. In these newspapers they could also read Wang Dulu’s works, entertaining stories of heroes and love, but also fighting and danger; stories that were realistic in their descriptions of geography and plots. This similarity between reality and fiction made the relation between the reader and the story stronger, as if they were themselves fighting through reading them,63 and shows how this form of entertainment was not only escapism but also becomes historical testimony.

The need for protection in the Republican Era had been present even before the Second Sino-Japanese War as a result of a combination of continuous warfare and rampaging bandits. From the Republican Revolution in 1911 to the beginning of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, the Republican Era never really saw any prolonged peace, making it a time of continuous social instability,64 which I have discussed in the second chapter. It seems hence unsurprising that so many characters in Wang Dulu’s novels are baobiao trained in fighting off enemies and

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62 Zhuo Yingchun, “Analysis of the «Qingdao Xinmin Newspaper»” (M.A. diss, Tianjin University, 2009), 15. According to Zhou, the Japanese-run newspapers, such as the Qingdao Xinmin Bao, exaggerated the Japanese victories showing how in fact the leaders of the city were the more powerful ones in this war.

63 Slavoj Žižek points out, albeit in a different context, this relation between the entertainment object and the reader’s personal carrying out of desires by reading them. See Slavoj Žižek, “Fantasy as a Political Category: a Lacanian Approach” in Modern Criticism and Theory, ed. David Lodge and Nigel Wood (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 1988), 695-705.

64 It is possible to argue that in reality the great period of instability started with the first Opium War (1839-1842) which resulted in the first of the so-called unequal treaties (see for example Dong Wang, China’s Unequal Treaties: Narrating National History (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2005); Michael R. Auslin, Negotiating with Imperialism: The Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004)), but as I argue that Wang Dulu directly addresses issues of the Republican Era, the emphasis here is on that specific period.
protecting clients and their goods. In fact, the similarities with studies on the period are striking. For example, James E. Sheridan gives an account on the Republican Era explaining the effects of warlordism on China’s society.

Chronic warfare and the disorderly conditions associated with warlordism devastated crops and farming facilities. Orderly and productive agriculture was constantly disrupted by the threat of hostilities, [...] (and) the omnipresent danger of bandit raids [...] The seizure of goods by troops or bandits, the frequent warlord manipulation of currency, the military control of transport systems, all damaged trade.65

And also Lucian Pye writes:

The one principal complaint of the modern merchant group was that the conflict of the tuchüns (warlords) disrupted transportation and interfered with commercial transactions. This resulted in impeding the movement of exports to the port cities and forced the distributors to refuse the purchase imports for transhipment into the interior.66

As in Wang Dulu’s novels, there is an overall sense of chaos and fear that going outside of the safe and “civilised world of the cities” would become a reckless adventure. The rest of the country is not only literally lawless, but has become so dangerous that there are now specifically trained protectors with the task to bring goods, people or simply themselves safely to their destination. But who rules this lawless space, i.e. Wang Dulu’s jianghu? Why is the spirit of yiqi 义气,67 the code of justice normally followed by those that venture here and that has been discussed in chapter five, not enough to ensure safe dwelling and travelling here? Why is there a need for fighting skills?

Similarly to the warlords in the extracts by James Sheridan and Lucian Pye, the people that cause the most trouble in Wang Dulu’s novels are those defined as tyrant (e’ba 恶霸) and local or land despot (bendi e’ba 本地恶霸, difang e’ba 地方恶霸). These people exert power over certain areas of land and have employed

67 For a discussion on yiqi see chapter four.
baobiao to protect either the despot or his power in the region. These characters appear to be very similar to the warlords in the Republican Era.68 A good example of an evil despot who thrives in the jianghu and whose relation with the Republican Era is apparent is that of Tyrant Dai.

Master Dai was in his fifties, he was wealthy and very powerful, not only in the village was there an enormous mansion, inside the town he also built many big residences, and he lived in both buildings, and each of them had over ten of his concubines, and the male and female servants were countless, and also the people in the government office all secretly had relations with him. The jianghu escorts (biaoke) and evil desots everywhere all cleared with him their coming and going. He had a big butler with the surname Jie, seventh child, who had a white face and a fat belly. He carried out all evil actions, and people all in secret called him “presiding judge Jie”. Related to that, they called Master Dai “Tyrant Dai”. Although he is called like that behind his back, the name also reached secretly common language. You have to understand that, whoever dares stare and look at him for a moment, well then, although he is not necessarily dead, it is possible to have some trouble. […] Everybody else [apart from Liu Kun], even the county magistrate, when they see Tyrant Dai, they have no choice but to first make a deep bow and then move on. (TQYP, chapter 3)

This description of Tyrant Dai clearly recalls the Republican Era warlords due to his possession of land and exertion of power over it. A Chinese warlord had two minimum requirements to be defined as such: he had to own land and control an army.69 The section here states that Tyrant Dai had built estates on his land. He annexed land to be transformed into arable fields (zhi le ge da tianzhuang 置了个大

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69 Zarrow, China in War and Revolution, 84.
and hence became a great “gentry official” (*cheng le da shenshi* 成了大绅士) and had secret ties with the governmental officials (*yamen li de ren ye dou an zhong yu ta jiejiao* 衙门里的人也都暗中与他结交). Although there is no reference to a personal army for Tyrant Dai in this extract, he does have servants at his disposition who carry out tasks of violence and, as is mentioned later in the novel, he knows many *baobiao* that he can count on when he needs their help.⁷⁰ These *baobiao* play a very similar role to that of a paid army of a warlord, his most important asset to exert power.⁷¹ Hence, the characteristics of Tyrant Dai reflect those of warlords in the Republican Era, who had armies on which they depended to exert their power or to wage war.

The aim of the warlord system was to prevent any one warlord from obtaining national power. Hence, when one warlord appeared to become too powerful, the other warlords would “gang up” against him and defeat him.⁷² This continuous need for gaining more power, defending against aggressors, and waging war against those who threatened to become rulers on a national level, made the presence of paid fighters extremely crucial. Similarly to the warlords’ armies, *baobiao* were hired to attack in the name of their employer (often a local despot). Hence not all *baobiao* fight for good causes or for protection, some fight for whoever is willing to pay. This commercial aspect takes the *baobiao* away from the definition of *xia*. As I have discussed in the previous chapters, *xia* is always related to ethical values, while the *baobiao* does not have this indissoluble link to good and morality. There are *baobiao* that do follow the code of *xia* and have good morals, but others simply accept money for any type of commission where fighting is required. Hence, the *baobiao* does not always correspond to the protection of people or goods, but he or she can also be part of the cause of the chaos. This characteristic, i.e. being both the creator of chaos as well as the protector from harm,

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⁷⁰ Within the same chapter after the above section we find: “戴阎王不但人多势大，知县怕他，而且他还认得许多江湖人物，那些人明著是保镖的，其实个个携刀带剑，今天来，明天走的 ...” “Tyrant Dai not only is he a person with much power, feared by the county magistrate, he also has many friends from the *jianghu*, and I have come to understand that these men are *baobiao*, and they walk around carrying knives and swords on their belts, one day they come, and the next they go.” (TQYP, chapter 3)


⁷² Zarrow, *China in War and Revolution*, 86-87.
makes the presence of the baobiao even more important in Republican-era society and fiction due to their omnipresence.

Hence, the reason for Wang Dulu’s overwhelming use of the baobiao in his novels shows that there was on the one hand a real need for protection in the Republican-era society that he was living in, while on the other hand this fighting was often the main cause for this danger to have come into existence. Although the Pan-Asianist strategy of the Xinmin Hui was to promote martial arts as a common Asian feature, making Wang Dulu write wuxia stories that focus on these typically Asian fighting skills, in reality the author underlined the continuous presence of violence caused by tyrants and their baobiao who take over certain parts of land and challenge and overthrow local authority, as seen with the example of Tyrant Dai. Wang Dulu depicted a scenario where martial arts are not the common denominator between Asian countries; instead it is the incessant need for them that continuously comes to the forefront in his novels, showing a Chinese society in continuous chaos and turmoil, just like during the Republican Era.

6. Conclusion

This chapter has shown the importance of the baobiao in Wang Dulu’s novels, its relation to xia, and how it is a reflection of the changes in the Republican Era.

The baobiao highlights in particular two aspects of the Republican Era that can be found in these novels: the martial character of society, something that was intertwined with literary figures similar to warlords; and the establishment of the lower bourgeoisie and their businesses in the cities. These cities represent the spaces away from Wang Dulu’s jianghu, spaces where fighting is not required on a regular basis. Wang Dulu’s position in the city of Qingdao, away from the battlefields of war, must have had some influence on his creation of the jianghu. It is possible also to hypothesise that the Pro-Japanese Xinmin Hui, were very keen on showing that life in the city was much quieter than outside it. By depicting cities in

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this manner, Qingdao itself became in the minds of the readers a safe haven and as a consequence the readers were somewhat more accepting of the Japanese presence there. However, it is also possible to state that the Xinmin Hui’s attempt to glorify the Pan-Asian aspect of martial arts did not have the desired effect. Instead, readers were continuously made aware that violence, either offensive or defensive, was present in the novels’ society, just like in their own. The historical period in which they were living, the Republican Era, saw one turbulent and violent episode after another, and created a generation characterised by chaos and instability.

Amidst this instability, the distinction between a person who employs martial arts to do good (xia) and one who does it for remuneration (baobiao) has become clear in these novels. The person that is employed to fight is now properly defined as baobiao, who defers to a head office and rides a company cart. The xia is not part of this structure and independently fights for good and moral causes. It is possible to say that the baobiao represents the commercialisation of martial arts and is separated from xia, although it is occasionally possible to find characters that are both, e.g. Yu Xiulian.

As the definition of xia in ancient times included people that carried out good actions for the community (social virtue) and those that would fight for the aristocracy, causing a potentially blurry understanding of the phenomenon, in the Republican Era the separation of these two phenomena has been completed. The baobiao represents in the Republican Era those literary characters that are heavily involved in violence, making this aspect quintessential for their existence. Characters such as Tian Zong, Ju Meng and Guo Xie from Sima Qian’s Records of a Historian and the heroes of the Water Margin (which I have discussed in the first and second chapter respectively) would most certainly be classified in Wang Dulu’s novels as baobiao, or yingxiong 英雄 (hero), but not xia. Xia for Wang Dulu always includes a moral and virtuous aspect. In fact, Yu Jiaolong, who has dubious moral actions in WHCL (stealing a sword for fun), is not defined a xia in this novel, but only in the following one (TQYP) after having dedicated her life to righteous actions in the jianghu.
Although there is a widespread presence of baobiao in the novels, and they relate to the unstable historical context of the Republican Era, Wang Dulu’s main characters are all xia. The most important people in his stories all carry out good and moral actions. These actions are recognised by a surrounding community who honour these people by naming them xia. Amidst all the fighting and violence, Wang Dulu’s ultimate focus is on those who fight or take action in order to improve the dire situations of others. By writing these storylines he depicts a world where morally good actions prevail, supplying an escapist form of entertainment amidst the Second Sino-Japanese War, but maybe also an admonishment to his Republican-era readers in Qingdao to take his characters as an example, to rise out of the Republican-era chaos and cruelty, and to become xia themselves.
CONCLUSION

This thesis has used Wang Dulu’s wuxia pentalogy *Crane-Iron Series* as a tool to reassess the concept of *xia* and to enhance our understanding of Republican-era society through one of its most produced and consumed literary genres. For the first aim, I have shown that what has been translated by previous scholars most often as “knight-errant” does not necessarily correspond to the Chinese meaning of *xia*. It is possible to have youxia (a wandering *xia*), wuxia fiction (*xia* obtained through *wu*), wenxia (*xia* obtained through civil acts), renxia (responsibility), etc. When the term *xia* is used on its own and indicates a person, it means that this person has at heart a desire to set wrongs right, whatever the method he or she feels fit, and without necessarily staying within the framework of legal justice.

The second aim regarding Republican-era wuxia literature has attempted to show through Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series* that these novels should not be discarded as historical testimonies. Rather, they can provide interesting and new views on society, economy, and history of the period in which they were written. Studies on wuxia novels are fairly recent and the Republican Era, zenith of the production and consumption of these novels, has largely remained untouched by scholars, which calls for more future research.

1. Contribution to knowledge of the term *xia*

In wuxia studies often the focus has been on *wu*, i.e. martial arts. However, novels of this genre do not simply revolve around people who practice martial arts, but rather focus on *xia*, which refers either to a concept or a person who practices this concept. The research carried out by other academics, which I discussed in the first chapter, showed that often the term *xia* has corresponded in English primarily to swordsmen (or swordswomen), not giving enough importance to the morality that is part of this term. The task of this thesis has been to unravel and to enhance
our understanding of this term. The attempt has been here to separate xia from wu and to determine what the term xia means.

By tracing the socio-historical origins of the first texts containing the term xia, it has become clear that the term came to the forefront in a period of “social instability and unrest”, i.e. the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). In Han Feizi’s famous text the term referred to a group of people of equal importance to the scholar (ru 儒) and who operated through fighting skills (wu). However, although the Legalists do not agree with the actions of the xia, there appeared to be similarities with the Confucians and the Mohists. In fact, although more in-depth analysis is lacking, other scholars have hypothesised that Confucians, Mohists, and xia all came from the same social category of the shi 士 in the Spring and Autumn Period (771-475 BC) and developed differently in the Warring States Period. The results of this thesis corroborate this hypothesis as the textual evidence I brought forth has shown a distinct conceptual similarity between xia and Confucianism and Mohism.

A defining moment for the understanding of the term xia was the “Biographies of the Wandering Xia” in Sima Qian’s Records of a Historian written in the Han Dynasty and which I discuss in the second chapter. Here the description of the people defined as xia was rather different. These people were not directly associated with fighting skills and were portrayed less negatively. The biographies included people who were kind and helpful towards others and Sima Qian, in his postface, explained that for him the actions of the xia are similar to those of ren 仁, i.e. Confucianism’s most important virtue, often translated as “benevolence”. His chapter on the xia has had a long-lasting effect on this term. This research has shown textual evidence for this, both in the Han Dynasty as well, in a later stage, in the Republican Era. As a result, I hypothesise that the term xia can be interpreted as a virtue, similar to ren not only due to its etymology but also for its social importance. Xia as a virtue can only be carried out between people, not singularly. A xia can only be xia towards others, and these others are fundamental for the

altruistic and helpful person to earn the appellative *xia*. The term *xia* thus becomes a title that is earned and given by other people, not appropriated by oneself (a grave *faux pas* that Yu Jiaolong makes in the *jianghu* due to her inexperience).

This social and moral aspect has become a fundamental part of *xia* in the analysis of Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*. This thesis has shown that for this author, although fighting skills still occupy a fundamental role, morality and righteousness (*yi* 义) are more important in order to define a person a *xia*. Prostitute *xia* fits this description. She does not know how to fight and yet is defined by other people as a *xia* due to her kind and altruistic actions. She is part of the *wenxia* 文侠 category, i.e. people that carry out civil actions (*wen*) in order to obtain *xia*, and it is this category that has received the least scholarly attention. It appears to have been overlooked as *xia* had previously been linked predominantly to fighting skills and martial arts.

Through the analysis of Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series*, this research has shown that the relation between *xia* and *wu* has also been complicated by the presence of a fairly new literary phenomenon, the *baobiao* (protector). This character appears to be similar to the conventional understanding of *xia*, as he or she uses fighting skills (*wu*) as a trademark. However, being a *baobiao* differs from being a *xia* because *baobiao* is not a title that is earned based on morally good actions but corresponds to a job, which includes a business structure, commissions, and remuneration. For this character, martial arts have been commercialised and turned into a commodity, which has nothing to do with the honorific title *xia*. In Wang Dulu’s novels there are characters that are both *xia* and *baobiao* (e.g. Yu Xiulian), but, as in the case of Prostitute *xia* or aristocratic banner girl Yu Jiaolong, all kinds of people from different social strata and different paths of life can earn the title of *xia*, making hence *wu* an essential trait for the *baobiao* to possess but not for the *xia*. This research has shown that in Wang Dulu’s novels *xia* becomes accessible for everyone and inspires goodness, altruism, and kindness to its readers.
2. Suggestions for future research on *xia*: ancient origins and *wenxia*

An area where research on *xia* would be beneficial is that of a better understanding of the term in ancient Chinese texts and which I have addressed in the first chapter. Although Zhao suggests the *shi* class were of a similar background for the Confucians and the *xia* in the Springs and Autumns Period, more evidence for this hypothesis needs to be provided. Research focused on textual evidence and whether this enhances the understanding of the social phenomenon of the *xia* in ancient China should be carried out. In fact, the results of this thesis have underlined the importance of textual analysis for the understanding of *xia*.

If the term *xia* is given by others, a person can only be a *xia* when this has been uttered or registered in writing. Hence, the question becomes whether it is possible to analyse texts that do not contain the term *xia* and assume that they are still related to this concept. Is it possible for the scholar to be in a position to interpret texts or stories of a person as *xia* even when this term does not appear? Should studies on *xia* be always based on the fact that others have already defined a person a *xia* and hence the term is present in a text? Does the fact that the famous Ming novel *Water Margin* does not contain the term *xia* make it part of *wuxia* literature or of a broader category of heroes and valid swordsmen? These questions require more in-depth analysis regarding the function of the term *xia* and the understanding of those people that have been defined as such. Analysing *xia* literature (or literature considered as such) written throughout Chinese history would certainly benefit from a close textual analysis in order to see whether the term needs to be given by others (making it hence essential), what characteristics a person defined as *xia* presents, and whether it is possible for scholars to imply the aspect of *xia* even when the term is lacking in the text.

This task becomes easier with the arrival of literary genres in the second half of the nineteenth century, and which become better established but more varied in the Republican Era. In fact, novels of the *wuxia* genre (and subgenres), as

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3 Ibid., 59-91.
defined by Hamm,\textsuperscript{4} are easily understood as stories on \textit{xia}, but novels written prior to the Qing Dynasty require a textual approach regarding the term \textit{xia} and should take into consideration its presence or absence.

The link between \textit{xia} and fighting skills (\textit{wu}) also requires more attention. Although preliminary research has shown that \textit{wuxia} studies are mainly related to fighting skills and violence, for Wang Dulu this link is not essential, which shows there is an interest in creating literary characters part of the \textit{wenxia} category. This type of \textit{xia} echoes the ones described by Sima Qian in his \textit{Records of a Historian},\textsuperscript{5} but what happened to the category of the \textit{wenxia} between these two works? Research regarding people (real or fictional) who have been defined as \textit{xia} without the tool of violence undoubtedly will shed more light on this concept.

3. Contribution to knowledge of Republican-era \textit{wuxia} literature and history

Previous \textit{wuxia} studies have focused either on the Qing Dynasty or Jin Yong (1924-),\textsuperscript{6} while research on Republican-era \textit{wuxia} fiction is still in its preliminary stage. Hence, Wang Dulu’s \textit{Crane-Iron Series} are both an addition to \textit{wuxia} studies and to the Republican Era.

These novels have confirmed that \textit{xia} is not necessarily linked to martial arts (\textit{wu}) and that the most important aspect remains righteousness and altruism for this concept to come into existence. Although the character of the \textit{baobiao}, who arrived in \textit{wuxia} literature at the end of the Qing, is numerically more present in these novels, the main characters are all \textit{xia}. There are fewer \textit{xia} because there are less people that carry out good and altruistic deeds. The fact that the focus remains on

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{5} Sima Qian, \textit{Records of a Historian}, Biographies of the Wandering Xia.
\item \textsuperscript{6} Jin Yong 金庸, also known as Louis Cha, is a famous \textit{wuxia} author of the “New School” who wrote a total of 15 books between 1955 and 1972 in Hong Kong. For more information on his work see John Christopher Hamm, \textit{Paper Swordsmen: Jin Yong and the Modern Chinese Martial Arts Novel} (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005); Ann Huss, Jianmei Liu, \textit{The Jin Yong Phenomenon: Chinese Martial Arts Fiction and Modern Chinese Literary History} (New York: Cambria Press, 2007).
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
characters defined as *xia* is because Wang Dulu fundamentally promoted for good, in the form of kindness, altruism, and righteousness, to prevail.

Amidst the fighting in which the *xia* are often involved, it is their love stories and search for happiness that are the focus of these novels. Wang Dulu did not promote martial arts (*wu*) as main aspect of his novels, and hence subverted the Pan-Asian strategy of the pro-Japanese organisation *Xinmin Hui* 新民会, who had set up the newspaper for which he worked. As I discuss in the fifth chapter, all the love stories end in tragedy apart from the last one, showing again how in fact Wang Dulu, after all the hardship and misfortunes, promoted hope for its readers. When these love stories are compared chronologically, a progression is brought to light. From impossibility to marry due to Confucian tradition, to the prospect of a happy marriage decided on free love, these stories testify to a development of love relations similar to that between the Qing Dynasty and the Republican Era.

Not only in regards to these love stories but also in other respects, Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series* has shown that, on the contrary to what was advocated by leftist critics such as Lu Xun, Mao Dun, and later Mao Zedong, these novels do not promote “feudal” values. It is true that they are set in a time in the Qing, a time when China’s society was more traditional and from which Republican-era intellectuals were trying to distance themselves. However, when a more sustained analysis is carried out, modern themes such as social economy, (commercialisation of martial arts with the character of the *baobiao*), family traditions (Yu Jiaolong’s rebellion against her arranged marriage), and the changes of relations between people come to the forefront. Furthermore, the character of Yu Jiaolong, “Jade Delicate Dragon”, and her character can be seen as a personification for this transitional period in which Chinese traditions were being challenged, changed and adapted in the name of modernity. This research has shown that *wuxia* fiction of the Republican Era is not simply easy entertainment that represented a form of nostalgia for the imperial past, but they too were undergoing forms of modernisation similar to other types of literature and urban life in general. The topics of these novels hence echo Paul Cohen’s “Tradition and Modernity” paradigm. They corroborate that tradition and modernity also coexist in these cultural productions. Wang Dulu’s *Crane-Iron Series* describes a society in which
tradition is not in opposition to modernity but they are both simultaneous aspects of the same society. The New Culture Movement promoted new values and challenged Confucius, but these were not implemented immediately; some caused friction and others lived together harmoniously. These contrasting aspects of the Republican Era can be found in characters such as Yu Xiulian, who on the one hand is a businesswoman who runs a protection agency and on the other a traditional Chinese woman with bound feet who does not remarry in widowhood.

As can be noticed, the female characters in Wang Dulu’s novels have become central in this analysis. The reason for this is that the historical changes that the Republican Era saw were particularly visible for women. The physical liberation from footbinding, their relations with men, especially their choice in love, their new role as entrepreneurs, and their unique way of portraying xia, are all aspects that have contributed in making historical aspects accessible to the reader of these novels. Women seem to have directly undergone historical changes and have obtained the biggest results from the new forms of modernity that had entered China. But even more importantly, this research has shown that Wang Dulu’s novels portray Republican-era women who desire to be free, make their own choices, and become an effective and equal part of society.

These results show that wuxia novels of the Republican Era become interesting testimonies for the historical period in which they were written and convey interesting aspects related to society. Especially due to the high number of production and consumption of these novels, they represent an excellent item of everyday life in which historians can find new and interesting aspects that shed more light on Republican Era society.

4. Suggestions for future research on Republican-era wuxia literature

As I have mentioned throughout the thesis, the Republican Era is the period in which wuxia fiction reached its zenith, but surprisingly the amount of scholarship on this particular topic is still rather scant. Research carried out by Chinese scholars on Republican-era wuxia fiction has established the most important authors of this
period and their work, and these are an excellent starting point to get familiar with this topic. However, very little critical analysis of any of these works has been carried out.

Wuxia scholars divide the Republican Era into two main schools that resemble the areas of production: the Southern School in Shanghai and Suzhou (1920s), and the Northern School (1930-1940s) in Beijing and Tianjin. Scholars have identified the shift of governmental power from the North to the South as a key factor in the areas of production (the further away from the government, the more artistic freedom), but there have not been any comparative studies in style, topic, or historical influence. Comparing and contrasting works from these different schools will show whether there is a form of continuity between them, or whether historical events and shift in geographical location effectively caused for distinct changes.

Interesting future research topics could also include the reassessment of the importance of martial arts in the Republican Era. Literature, cinema, and in general history related to wu and wuxia are overwhelmingly present in this period and constitute an interesting topic for future research, which will enhance scholars’ understanding of this period. In fact, the last chapter of this thesis has shown the importance of the martial aspect in Chinese society and history, as well as how it was commercialised and became part of everyday life. The massive production of wuxia novels and which I have discussed in this thesis, the Central Martial Arts Academy of 1928, the short-lived but intense production of wuxia films between the end of the 1920s and 1932, the first written manuals on martial arts

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7 These include, for example, the other three “Great Authors of the North”, i.e. Huanzhu Louzhu 还珠楼主 (1902-1961), Zheng Zhengyin 郑证因 (1900-1960), and Zhao Huanting 赵焕亭. Also from the North are Bai Yu 白羽, Zhu Zhenmu 朱贞木, and Xu Chunyu 徐春羽. From the Southern School important authors include for example Gu Mingdao 顾明道, Wen Gongzhi 文公直, and Pingjiang Bu Xiaosheng 平江不肖生.
techniques,\textsuperscript{10} are all historical elements that show that the link between the Republican Era and martial arts is very strong and requires more analysis.

\textsuperscript{10} For more information on martial arts manuals see Brian Kennedy, Elizabeth Guo, eds.,\textit{ Chinese Martial Arts Training Manuals: A Historical Survey} (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2005). This work has identified a high number of masters and manuals that were produced especially in the Republican Era.
APPENDIX A: OVERVIEW OF WANG DULU’S CRANE-IRON SERIES\textsuperscript{1} AND EXTRACTS FROM THE ORIGINAL COPIES CONTAINED IN THE QINGDAO MUNICIPAL ARCHIVE

This section aims to give a brief summary of the plots of the five novels written by Wang Dulu and which form the basis for the case study. The Crane-Iron Series includes five books that were all published in serialised version between 1938-1944. Here follows a table with the titles in chronological order (based on the plot), the dates of serialisation, and the two main characters of the love stories.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Xia couple</th>
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<tr>
<td>Crane frightens Kunlun - He Jing Kunlun 鹤惊昆仑</td>
<td>HJKL 07.05.1940 – 15.03.1941</td>
<td>Jiang Xiaohe</td>
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<td>Bao Aluan</td>
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<td>Precious Sword and Golden Hairpin Bao Jian Jin Chai 宝剑金钗</td>
<td>BJC 16.11.1938 – 29.04.1939</td>
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<td>Yu Xiulian</td>
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<td>Sword Force and Pearl Shine - Jian Qi Zhu Guang 剑气珠光</td>
<td>JQZG 30.07.1939 – 05.04.1940</td>
<td>Li Mubai</td>
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<td>Yu Xiulian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon / Unnoticed Talents - Wo Hu Cang Long 卧虎藏龙</td>
<td>WHCL 16.03.1941 – 06.03.1942</td>
<td>Yu Jiaolong</td>
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<td>Iron Rider and Silver Vase - Tie Qi Yin Ping 铁骑银瓶</td>
<td>TQYP 07.03.1942 – ??.1944</td>
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It should be noted that the first novel was written third but has the function of prequel to the following novels.

\textsuperscript{1} Xu Sinian, \textit{Biography of Wang Dulu}, 23-27.
Crane frightens Kunlun (He Jing Kunlun 鹤惊昆仑)\(^2\)

This novel was published for the first time in serialised form between 7\(^{th}\) May 1940 and 15\(^{th}\) March 1941 with the title Wu He Wu Luan Ji 舞鹤鸣鸾记 (Records of Dancing Crane and Crying Phoenix).\(^3\) It is 500,000 characters long and has two main storylines: the revenge quest of Jiang Xiaohe 江小鹤, and the relationship between Jiang Xiaohe and Bao Aluan 鲍阿鸾. In their childhood, these two were naïve and carefree children who eventually fell in love with each other. Xiaohe then discovers the truth of the death of his father who was killed by Bao Aluan’s father, the owner of a martial arts academy and his father’s master. In response to this Jiang Xiaohe leaves Aluan and roams in the jianghu to look for masters willing to teach him martial arts in order to obtain revenge. He then becomes an invincible xia and searches for Bao Aluan’s father. When Aluan hears this, she is angry with Xiaohe but still loves him. When Xiaohe sees Aluan again, he feels the same feelings he felt for her when they were children, but he cannot resist killing her father and obtaining his revenge. After he succeeds in doing so, Aluan dies of grief and Xiaohe goes back to the jianghu to leave his past behind.

This novel was written as a prequel to the following two volumes and to explain the story of Jiang Xiaohe (called Jiangnan He 江南鹤 in the following two novels), who is considered an invincible xia. The impossibility and love-hate aspect of the relation between him and Bao Aluan has been compared to that of Romeo and Juliet of Shakespeare.\(^4\) Also in this novel there is no distinction between right and wrong, which is in reality a feature typical of wuxia fiction. Instead it focuses completely on the tragedy of the events. Both characters and their families have plausible reasons for their actions, but fate is cruel and none of them experience true happiness.

\(^2\) For summary and brief analysis in Chinese, see Luo Liqun 罗立群, History of Chinese wuxia Fiction 中国武侠小说史 (Shenyang: Liaoning Renmin Chubanshe 辽宁人民出版社, 1990), 239-240; ibid., 40-47.
\(^3\) Xu Sinian, Biography of Wang Dulu, 26.
\(^4\) Ibid., 40-41; 48-62.
Precious Sword and Golden Hairpin (Bao Jian Jin Chai 宝剑金钗)\textsuperscript{5}

This novel was published for the first time in serialised form between 16\textsuperscript{th} November 1938 and 29\textsuperscript{th} April 1939 with the title \textit{Bao Jian Jin Chai Ji} 宝剑金钗记 (\textit{Records of Precious Sword and Golden Hairpin}) and was the first of the five novels to be published. It has 450,000 characters and tells the first part of the story of Li Mubai 李慕白 and Yu Xiulian 俞秀莲. Li Mubai’s father was a \textit{xia} and he was taught by a very famous \textit{xia}, Jiangnan He 江南鹤 (i.e. Jiang Xiaohe from the previous novel). Yu Xiulian is also the daughter of a \textit{xia} who runs a protection agency business (\textit{baobiao} 保镖). They meet when they are adolescents and Li Mubai falls in love with her. He becomes good friends with her father and asks him if he can marry her, but unfortunately, Yu Xiulian has already been promised in marriage to Meng Enzhao 孟恩昭. Due to this news Li Mubai moves to Beijing. Here he falls in love with a prostitute called Xie Xianniang 谢纤娘, also known as “prostitute \textit{xia}” 侠妓, and he also defeats a local ruffian which makes him famous in the city of Beijing. Without knowing that Meng Enzhao is Yu Xiulian’s fiancée, Li Mubai first becomes friends with him and then kills him in a battle. For this he is put into prison. At that time Yu Xiulian arrives in Beijing and rescues Xie Xianniang from Miao Zhenshan 苗振山, who had captured her. When Li Mubai is released from prison, Xie Xianniang understands Li Mubai’s feelings for Yu Xiulian, and realises that she has been a substitute for her and eventually dies of grief. Li Mubai kills in a rage some of his enemies and ends up in prison again. Here he rethinks his friendship with Meng Enzhao and what he has done to Yu Xiulian. Once he is released again he decides to cut all relations with Yu Xiulian and to live an “incomplete life”.\textsuperscript{6} He is then rescued by Jiangnan He and gives his precious sword to Yu Xiulian.

According to Xu Sinian this novel has again two threads: the first one about Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian’s \textit{wuxia} adventures, the second one about their love

\textsuperscript{5} For summary and brief analysis in Chinese, see Luo Liqun, \textit{History of Chinese wuxia Fiction}, 240-243.

stories. He defines it as a “tragedy of the heart” (心灵的悲剧).\(^7\) It describes the amorous tragedies of Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian, Li Mubai and Xie Xianniang, Yu Xiulian and Meng Enzhao, the evil deeds of Miao Zhenshan and others, the just friendship of people such as Shi Pangzi 史胖子 and De Xiaofeng 德啸峰. For these reasons the two major themes of the novel are feelings (情) and righteousness (义).\(^8\)

It is interesting to see the importance of the values of righteousness and justice: although initially the main character Li Mubai makes mistakes, he realises that he needs to change in order to restore the initial order, and to do so, he needs to go away from what he knows.

_Sword Force and Pearl Shine (Jian Qi Zhu Guang 剑气珠光)\(^9\)_

This novel was published for the first time in serialised version between 30\(^{th}\) July 1939 and 5\(^{th}\) April 1940 with the title _Jian Qi Zhu Guang Lu_ 剑气珠光录 (Records of Sword Force and Pearl Shine). It has approximately 400,000 characters and is the continuation of the stories of Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian. After Li Mubai recovers from his wounds, he follows Jiangnan He’s advice and goes into the _jianghu_ where he lives incognito. He finds a precious sword called “Qingming” 青冥 which is famous for being made out of iron but still soft and gentle. Li Mubai also steals from a Buddhist monk a map that explains the secret lethal points of combat, which he studies thoroughly on his own. At the same time Yu Xiulian works hard in the _jianghu_ for the protection agency and shows remarkable martial arts skills, which are learnt from the discipline of the secret map that Li Mubai had stolen. They encounter each other by chance and Li Mubai rescues her from bandits. The novel ends with Jiangnan He and De Xiaofeng each getting married respectively, Li Mubai apologising for the problems he had caused, and Li Mubai and Yu Xiulian going to Jiuhua Mountain to study together as brother and sister.

\(^7\) Xu Sinian, _Biography of Wang Dulu_, 48.
\(^8\) Luo Liqun, _History of Chinese wuxia Fiction_, 241.
The structure of this novel is much simpler than the previous two. It focuses initially on Li Mubai in the *jianghu*, his quests and the importance of honesty, while in the second half the focus is broadened towards the character of Yu Xiulian, her relationship with Li Mubai, and the concept of “having a strong sense of justice and desire to help the weak”  (行侠仗义). In this novel, people in the *jianghu* seem not to abide by the rules of this place and instead continuously fight.

*Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon / Unnoticed Talents (Wo Hu Cang Long 卧虎藏龙)*

This novel was published for the first time in serialised version between 16th March 1941 and 6th March 1942 with the title *Wo Hu Cang Long Zhuan* 卧虎藏龙传 (Tale of Crouching Tiger and Hidden Dragon / Unnoticed Talents). It has 500,000 characters and tells the story of Yu Jiaolong 玉娇龙 and Luo Xiaohu 罗小虎. The first section is set in Beijing and seen through the eyes of Liu Taibao 刘泰保, a *xia* whose honour was put into question due to the fact that Li Mubai’s famous sword was stolen from the household where Liu Taibao works and lives. He swears to get it back, but it is actually Yu Xiulian, called to the rescue by De Xiaofeng, who manages to convince the thief to bring it back again. The thief is Yu Jiaolong, the young and beautiful daughter of the new banner prefect who had moved back to Beijing after spending three years in Xinjiang. Through a long flashback we are informed of Yu Jiaolong’s story, how she became very skilled in the martial arts, how she was influenced by her evil servant Geng Liuniang 耿六娘 (also known as “jade-eyed fox”), and how she and local bandit Luo Xiaohu met and fell in love. Once back in Beijing she is supposed to marry a petty and ugly official because Luo Xiaohu did not manage to pass the imperial exams. However, disguised as a man and after stealing the Qingming sword again, she flees into the *jianghu*, which is seen as the place of freedom. Without understanding the unspoken rules of *xia* that are in force in the *jianghu*, she fights against everyone.

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she encounters. Finally she meets Li Mubai, who sees the potential she has and wants to train her to become a proper xia. She refuses and is kidnapped by her husband-to-be’s accomplices who bring her back to Beijing. Here she is firstly repudiated by her husband and his family because of the rumours that were circulating regarding Li Mubai’s stolen sword and her involvement. In this moment Luo Xiaohu tries everything to see her but she remains in her house desolated for all the pain she has caused around her. Luo Xiaohu finds his long lost sister and they go after their family foe, who they find and kill. The novel ends with Yu Jiaolong giving back the sword, making amends with the people in Beijing and jumping off of a Buddhist sacred mountain in honour of the goddess that made her father recover from his illness, induced by Yu Jiaolong’s bad behaviour. Between Beijing and the mountain she sees Luo Xiaohu and they spend the night together, after which they will never see each other again.

In this novel the character of Yu Jiaolong is central. Her struggles regard her position in society: she dreads her life’s destiny, but even in the long desired and “free” jianghu she cannot survive. Her relation with Luo Xiaohu is difficult from the start and in fact does not have a happy ending. However, in this novel it is not the love tragedy that is in the foreground but the personal dissatisfaction and distress of Yu Jiaolong. There are other factors and secondary storylines, but the struggles of Yu Jiaolong are those nearest to the reader and hence most interesting, making this the most acclaimed novel of the pentalogy. This also explains the reason for Ang Lee to have chosen this novel to be adapted as a film.

Iron Rider and Silver Vase (Tie Qi Yin Ping 铁骑银瓶)12

This novel was published for the first time in serialised form between 7th March 1942 and 1944 (no specific date is known) with the title Tie Qi Yin Ping Zhuan 铁骑银瓶 (Tale of Iron Rider and Silver Vase). It has 800,000 characters and it starts with Yu Jiaolong giving birth and her son being substituted with another baby girl by Ms Fang 方氏. The baby boy was stolen by a bandit called Hei

12 For summary and brief analysis in Chinese, see Luo Liqun, History of Chinese wuxia Fiction, 248-252; Xu Sinian, Biography of Wang Dulu, 87-103.
Shanxiong 黑山熊. From the second chapter the storyline is shifted 20 years forward. Han Tiefang 韩铁芳 (Yu Jiaolong’s son), is determined to have his revenge with Hei Shanxiong. In his quest he encounters Yu Jiaolong, who recognises him as her son and wants him to marry the girl she brought up, i.e. Chun Xueping 春雪瓶. So she guides him to her but on the way she dies of an illness. Han Tiefang then finds Chun Xueping and Luo Xiaohu, who erroneously think Chun Xueping is his daughter. Luo Xiaohu advises the two to get married. Luo Xiaohu is then taken prisoner and dies of a mortal wound in battle while he is being freed by Han Tiefang and Chun Xueping. On his deathbed he suggests to the two again that they should get married. Han Tiefang goes to take revenge on Hei Shanxiong. Chun Xueping initially does not go because she now knows what her biological mother has done and resents her for it, but when Han Tiefang is in trouble she rescues him. They meet Ms Fang (Chun Xueping’s biological mother) and Chun Xueping does not want to claim a family bond with her, after which Ms Fang dies. Han Tiefang proposes to Chun Xueping, but she refuses because she says that their life expectancies do not match. Desolated, Han Tiefang goes back to his native town. There he stands up for the weak and fights against local despots. Local scoundrels join together to fight against him. On this occasion Chun Xueping saves him for the second time and agrees to marry him.

The most striking difference between this novel and the previous ones is the happy ending. It seems that the circle has closed: the successful wedding between Chun Xueping and Han Tiefang symbolises the end of a series of negative events that have been passed on from father or mother to child, from master to disciple.
Section of BJJC (chapter 3) as published in the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* on the 27th November 1938 (Municipal archive Qingdao 青岛市档案)

Section of WHCL (chapter 14) as published in the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* on the 5th March 1942 (Municipal archive Qingdao 青岛市档案)

Section of JQZG (chapter 22) as published in the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* on the 2nd April 1940 (Municipal archive Qingdao 青岛市档案)
Entire page of the *Qingdao Xinmin Bao* published on the 5th April 1940 with the final section of the JQZG (chapter 22) and the anticipation of WHCL in the lower half of the page (Municipal archive Qingdao 青岛市档案)
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