
TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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MORE ABOUT SUN GUANG-XIAN AND *BEI MENG SUO YAN**

There is very little information remaining about Sun Guang-xian (孫光憲, 895?—968, second name Meng-wen 孟文, pen-name Baoguang-zi 葆光子); even his exact date of birth is not known [1]. His lifetime came at the very end of the Tang rule, the period of the Five Dynasties and the first years of the Song dynasty. Information on where Sun came from is also contradictory: well-known Song bibliophile Chen Zheng-sun (陳振孫, 1190—1249) wrote in his bibliography [2] that Sun Guang-xian was originally from Guiping in the region of Lingzhou (in the north-east part of what now is the Renshouxian district of Sichuan province) [3], and the meagre biography of Sun Guang-xian in Song dynastic history (j. 483) says the same. Still, one of the most well-known works by him *Bei meng suo yan* (北夢瑣言, “Short Sayings from Beimeng”) is signed 富春孫光憲, that is “Sun Guang-xian from Fuchong” (now in the province of Zhejiang). In *Si ku quan shu zong mu* [4] this circumstance is explained as follows:

“In *Shi guo chun qiu* (‘Springs and Autumns of the Ten Kingdoms’, 十國春秋) it is said that he is originally from Guiping, but Guang-xian himself indicated Fuchun. In the introduction to the collection he writes that he was born in Mine, and that means that [Guang-xian] is from Shu [the old name of the present-day Sichuan province — *I. A.*]. The mention of Fuchun apparently means that [Guang-xian] became a part of the nobility of that place” [5].

At the moment the generally recognized version of Sun Guang-xian's origin is the first, i. e. that he comes from Guiping.

“Generations [of the Song family] worked on the land, but only Guang-xian began studying diligently from a young age”,

it is stated in Song dynastic history. Sun Guang-xian was the first in his family who resolved to escape from poverty, and set his mind on science, book-learning, arts and achieved considerable results in these areas. He followed the path of an official: he successfully passed the examinations and joined the public service and his first appointment the post of administrative assistant of his home region of Lingzhou [6]. The author of “Springs and Autumns of the Ten Kingdoms”, Qing historian Wu Zhi-yi (吳志伊, second half of 17th—first half of 18th century), says that it was at the end of the rule of the Tang dynasty. On the one hand, this evidence stresses once again the circumstance that Sun Guang-xian was born before 900 — because the Tang dynasty ceased to exist in 907, and a seven year old boy could not be an official — but on the other hand, there is still an evident error by Wu Zhi-yi, to which contemporary Chinese scholar Liu Zun-ming pointed out: even if we suppose that Sun Guang-xian came into the world in 895, it is still unimaginable that he could occupy a serious official post of this kind at the age of twelve. Most probably, one should rather consider the reign of the Early Shu (907—925) when Sun Guang-xian served as a *panguang* [7].

While in Sichuan, Sun Guang-xian travelled quite a lot, went to Chengdu several times and became acquainted with many Shu scholars, and also hermits, Dao and Buddhist monks, who were given to writing verses. He also visited Shensi and Gansu, and after the accession of the Late Tang he left for the region of the downstream water of the Yangzi.

* This work is a part of a chapter from a book dedicated to Chinese author's collections on the preparation of which I am working at the monument. My previous publications on Sun Guang-xian are short and far from perfect: I. A. Alimov, “Preliminary information on ‘Short Sayings from Beimeng’ by Sun Guang-xian (d. 968)”, *XXI nauchnaia konferentsia “Obtshestvo i gosudarstvo v Kitae” I* (Moscow, 1990); idem, “Sun Guang-xian and the collection ‘Short Sayings from Beimeng’”, *Vsled za kist'iu: materialy k istorii sunskikh avtorskikh sbornikov bitszi. Issledovaniia. Perevody* (St. Petersburg, 1996), i, pp. 74—89.

The military governor-general of Jingnan (a part of the territories of the present-day provinces of Hunan and Hubei), Gao Ji-chang [8], when he became Nanping-wang, set up his own court and started to enlist the services of educated people and talented bibliophiles. Sun Guang-xian had a few acquaintances among his courtiers, and one of them, the adviser of the governor-general Liang Zhen [9], in the summer of 926 introduced Sun Guang-xian to the court of the smallest of all the state formations in the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. Gao Ji-chang gave Sun Guang-xian a warm welcome and appointed him to serve in his secretariat. His appointment was more in keeping with Sun Guang-xian's expectations than his previous post in the Early Shu where, as a contemporary scholar Zhuang Xue-jun, 庄學君 says, even the local learned men weren't much in demand, let alone the newly arrived offspring of a poor family [10].

After Liang Zhen retired because of old age, Sun Guang-xian inherited his post and became the adviser in state matters to Gao Ji-chang's successor, his son Gao Cong-hui [11], and was, as *Song shi* says, “awarded gold and purple”, that is the regalia of the high court officials, a golden stamp on a purple cord. Over the course of time Sun Guang-xian became very influential at the Jingnan court and started to have an active effect the internal and foreign policy of the principality. It was he who advised a milder taxation for the population and to maintain friendly relations with neighbouring rulers (for example, Sun Guang-xian persuaded Gao Ji-chang not to spoil their relations with the neighbouring kingdom Chu, arguing that the people and officials had just recovered from war disorders

and that it was not worth flinging Jingnan into another turmoil).

Sun Guang-xian stayed at the Jingnan court for thirty seven years, up to 963: he also served Gao Bao-zhong, Gao Bao-xiu and Gao Ji-chong [12]. It is well known that Sun Guang-xian occupied the posts of an assistant to a *jiedushi*, *yueshi zhongcheng* (the personal secretary to the prince), the head of the censorship office, and others. When in 960 the Song dynasty came to power in China, Sun Guang-xian was, perhaps, the most powerful and influential official in the lands of Jingnan. Making use of this, in 963 he easily convinced Gao Ji-chong to give the lands of Jingnan as a gift to the Song court and resign themselves to them, acknowledging the power of Song of their own free will. The Song Tai-zu was pleased by this display of obedience; after becoming aware of the role Sun Guang-xian played in the acquisition of Jingnan, the emperor appointed him head of the Huangzhou region (it was located on the territory of the present-day province Guangxi) and Sun Guang-xian occupied this post from 963 till 968. His management, apparently, brought fame to him, because the minister Zhao Pu (趙普, 922—992) recommended Sun Guang-xian for the post of *xueshi* (“learned man”) at the court academy of Hanlinyuan, but the wish of the scholar to become a member of that academy was not fulfilled, as his death prevented him from assuming the office.

Thus, in his lifetime, and he lived seventy three years, Sun Guang-xian witnessed the rule of seven dynasties and served at the courts of three of them, the Early Shu, Jingnan and Song.

Sun Guang-xian is rightly considered a prominent scholar and literary man — in Song dynastic history he is called a profound connoisseur of canonical and historical works, a man of immense learning, who sought after new knowledge, and also had a book collection of several thousand *juans* [13], all the books of which, his contemporaries say, he read and if necessary corrected himself. Sun Guang-xian left a great number of prosaic and poetic works behind, he was a recognized master of verses in the genre of *ci*, and was distinguished by the originality of his style, and the number of verses that belonged to his brush (61), included in the famous collection *Hua jian ji* (花間集, “Among the Flowers”) [14], is only surpassed by the number of verses

by the celebrated poet Wen Ting-yun (溫庭筠, 820?—870?) [15]. Sun Guang-xian was also a talented historian. His wide erudition, large book collection, indefatigable thirst for knowledge — all this served as the basis for his numerous works. It is well known that Sun Guang-xian wrote a number of works lost as early as in the reign of Song, of which only the titles have survived: *Xü tong li* (續通歷, “Continuation of the General Calendar”), *Ju zhai ji* (橘齋集, “Collection from the Ju zhai Cabinet”), *Jing tai ji* (荆臺集, “Jing Terraces”) and others [16]. We will focus our attention on the collection of *biji Bei meng suo yan* written by Sun Guang-xian.

Bei meng suo yan was written by Sun Guang-Xian during his stay in Jingnan at the service of the Gao family; some additions were made by him later [17]. The collection is recorded in the Song dynastic history in as many as twenty *juans* [18]. The above-mentioned Chen Zhen-sun says:

“*Bei meng suo yan*, thirty *juans*. The author is the head of the Huangzhou region, Lingjing Sun Guang-xian (Meng-wen). It records the events of the end of the Tang

and all the states [of the period] of Five Dynasties. Guang-xian went to serve under Jingnan Gao Cong-Hue and served three generations of his family. *Bei meng* means [a place] to the North from the lake Mengze...” [19].

Chao Gong-wu [20] says:

“*Bei meng sou yan*, 20 *juans*. The author is Jingnan Sun Guang-xian. Guang-xian came from Shu, travelled

with Yang Pi and Yuan Deng, and heard a lot [from them] about the sayings and deeds of the perfect sage from the time of the reign of the Tang, and so he collected it all together. He also added the events of the times of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms. From *Zuo[zhuan]* he took [the phrase]: ‘He hunted in Meng, which is to the South of the River’, meaning that he served the Gao family, in the lands to the North of the River — that is where the name comes from” [21].

The cited quotations probably imply that as early as in the time of Song at least two variants (versions) of the book were known, differing in that one of them had ten *juans* less; perhaps this is all because of errors in the bibliographies [22]; but most probably a part of *Bei meng suo yan* was already lost in the time of the Song dynasty — this supposition is supported both by the author’s foreword to the collection, where Sun Guang-xian himself wrote that *Bei meng suo yan* had thirty *juans*, and the contemporary critical edition of the text based on the manuscript that belonged to the library of the Qing textual critic Miao Quan-sun (繆荃孫, 1844—1919), in which, besides the main body of twenty *juans* described in later bibliographies, four more *juans* were enclosed of the earlier lost and reconstructed mostly with the help of the anthology *Tai ping guang ji* (太平廣記, “Extensive Notes of the Tai-ping Years”) [23]. The size of twenty *juans* is mentioned in *Jiang yun lou shu mu* (絳雲樓書目, “The Catalogue of Books from the Jiangyunlou

One glance at the table of contents of the contemporary edition of the collection by Sun Guang-xian is enough to make sure that *Bei meng suo yan* really does discuss the time of Tang and the Five Dynasties, — the time of action of the majority of the fragments is the end of the reign of the house of Tang, and also the Late Liang, Late Tang and Late Jin dynasties. It was no accident that Sun Guang-xian turned precisely to this period: firstly, he was a contemporary and witness of many of the events he recorded, and thanks to his social position he personally knew many historical figures; secondly, as Sun Guang-xian says in the foreword to his collection

“under the Tang in the time of turmoil and disorder of the years of the reign of Guang-ming (880—881) rare books disappeared without trace, and after the emperor Wu-zong [reigned from 841 till 847 — *I. A.*] everything was deserted and obscure, and there was no one to pass on the memory of the glorious deeds at the court and in the provinces”,

and Sun Guang-xian “ashamed of the incompleteness of his knowledge” decided to fill this gap [26]. In fact, the entire collection *Bei meng suo yan* serves one major task of preserving information on the historical events of the swiftly disappearing epoch of fragmentation, bogged down in disorder and struggle for power, when the once prosperous, powerful and flourishing

Tower”) by the early Qing Qian Qian-yi 錢謙益 (his library burned down in the winter of 1650, only a catalogue in four *juans* remained); the Qing Zhang Jin-wu 張金吾 mentions in *Ai ri qing lu cang shu zhi* (愛日精廬藏書志, “Notes on the Books Kept at the Airiqinglu Refuge”) that he has a copy of the book printed in Shensi as early as in the time of Song, which used to belong to Xin Yue-sue 忻悅學, but that list abounds in inaccuracies and mistakes —

“there are misprints in the text such as ‘日’ and ‘曰’, ‘雖’ and ‘難’, ‘纂’ and ‘筭’, ‘禍’ and ‘福’, that could be corrected in accordance with the meaning, but I refrained from doing it, fearing to distort [the text], and decided to wait for another copy”;

apparently, Zhang Jin-wu finally got hold of another copy and conducted a serious textual work, because it was his copy of the text of the collection that happened to be included in the Imperial Library. Although in the “General Catalogue” another copy of *Bei meng suo yan* is also mentioned, which circulated in the time of the Qing dynasty and was included in the Ming anthology *Bai hai* (裨海, “A Sea of Trifles”), and the commentary on this copy is that “it is printed with so many mistakes that it is unreadable” [24]. As for the first xylographic edition of *Bei meng suo yan*, Kong Fan-li supposed that this edition was probably organized by the author’s sons between 968 and 977 [25].

Tang state ceased to exist. In some fragments Sun Guang-xian, in accordance with the tradition, going back to *Shi ji* (史記, “Historical Notes”), gives after the main text his own opinion or addition that begins with the words “葆光子曰” — “I, Baoguang-zi, say”, as if distancing himself from the above-said and emphasizing the objectivity of the reported information [27]. Sun Guang-xian’s bitter intonations burst through once in a while in the few lines of the author’s digressions: it is hard for a person to see the customary, centuries-old system crumple before their eyes — and a reborn world, just as durable, never comes to replace it, but again and again new kingdoms crumble that were created only yesterday at the cost of a great deal of blood. And Sun Guang-xian did not live to see the long-awaited power come back to the Heavenly Empire in the form of the house of Song, because he only witnessed the very beginning of the new long reign...

Sun Guang-xian simply did his duty — as he understood it in the framework of a thousand-year Confucian literary tradition: not to create but to pass on, to preserve with care and to continue the work of many generations of historians who had laboured with the same thoroughness before him. His work is characterized by scrupulousness that partly dictated the laconic nature, precision and striving for coverage of all possible sources — besides written monuments Sun Guang-xian lists in his foreword the names of his two

“living” informants, in conversations with whom he got the information of interest to him which he included in the collection — they were a deputy head of administration of the region, Yang Pi from Fengxiang

In the text of *Bei meng suo yan* there are also some mentions of the fact that Sun Guang-xian checked various facts in personal interviews with the witnesses:

“I, Baoguang-zi, met in my time a *junjiao* from Jimeng, his name was Sun 孫, and he told me in great detail how master Zhang encountered an immortal”

(fragment No. 232, see the complete translation below). Also in a few fragments of the collection (these cases are especially frequent from the sixth till the ninth *juan*) there is an addition at the end “聞于劉山甫” “heard from Liu Shan-fu” [28]. The latter is the author of the collection *Jin xi jian tan*

We should once again stress the thoroughness of the examination of the information received, which Sun Guang-xian declares in his foreword to be one of the main principles of an author's work (and this thoroughness is respectfully mentioned in all the bibliographies that list the *Bei meng suo yan* collection): wishing to fill the gaps in official historical works, Sun Guang-xian made sure any information was

“checked three times [in other sources], not daring to rely solely on himself” [31].

The value and uniqueness of Sun Guang-xian's book was already evident to his contemporaries: during the compilation of the above-mentioned anthology *Tai ping guang ji*, the imperial commission actively used *Bei meng suo yan*, to which Lu Jian-zeng (盧見曾, 1690—?), the publisher of the book series *Ya yu tang cong shu* [32]: testifies in his foreword:

“Under the Song, when in the years of Tai ping xing-guo Li Fang and others compiled ‘Extensive Notes’ in five hundred *juans*, they took from the ‘Shorter Sayings’ more material than from anywhere else” [33].

However, the author of the contemporary critical text of *Bei meng suo yan*, Lin Ai-yuan, mentions that along with the truly unique information that is contained in this collection, the “Shorter Sayings” also contain regrettable instances of inaccurate interpretations of historical events, which he tends to call mistakes. Naturally, some of the inaccuracies became evident only at the present level of development of the Chinese humanities; besides to interpret correctly the maze of the names and events of the 10th century is sometimes hard for a present-day philologist armed with a vast arsenal of dictionaries and reference books; and Sun Guang-xian himself, who assigned primary importance to precision and thoroughness, using all sources avail-

鳳翔楊玘少尹 and a member of the suite of the heir of the throne Yuan Deng 元澄中允; that is all that is known to us about these people.

(金谿閒談, “Idle Conversations in Jinxi”), now lost [29]. Although, as a rule, it says *wen* (“heard”), in some places in Sun Guang-xian's work it says *jian*, that is: “見劉山甫閒談中” “saw/read in ‘Idle Conversations’ by Liu Shan-fu” (for example, fragment No. 160), and in one fragment it says quite definitely: “出劉山甫閒談”, “taken from ‘Idle Conversations’ by Liu Shan-fu” (fragment No. 174). In other cases, it is not quite clear if Sun Guang-xian received the information from Liu Shan-fu personally or copied it out of his collection [30]. If he copied it out then the extracts or at least the retellings of the plot-lines from *Jin xi jian tan* remained only in Sun Guang-xian's collection.

able to him, was unaware of this, although he traditionally gave his due to the limitations of human knowledge: “I hope that the experts don't find too many mistakes here”. But already in the text of his collection there are some additions by later owners who guardedly express their opinion on certain confusion that emerged in relation to one or other character:

“The nineteenth extract from the given *juan* [the ninth — *I.A.*], which talks of Lu Wo 盧渥, *guanchashi* [34] from Shen[zhou], and the story about *liangshi* Lu Hang 盧沆 from the eighth *juan* are very similar stories, I'm afraid Hang and Wo are, in fact, one person” [35].

Indeed, the fragments No. 147 and No. 171 contain somewhat similar stories about Lu Hang and Lu Wo, and the latter was a *guanchashi*, and the first was a *liangshi*, i. e. an *anchashi*, a district inspector, but probably in this case we are dealing with a contamination of characters, information about which is very meagre; although, of course, we should not rule out the possibility of an ordinary slip of the pen (mistake) made by Sun Guang-xian himself, as well as later copyists of *Bei meng suo yan*.

In the text of the collection there is some even more striking evidence of later interventions: thus, in the fragment No. 123 the name of the official post *buzouguan* is used (an official of regional administration whose responsibilities included supervising the collection of taxes and giving employment to and dismissing officials). This post only appeared, as far as I am aware, in the time of the Song dynasty, in 1080, and how else could the term for it appear in the text by an author who died over a hundred years before that, but through the fault of later editors or the carelessness of later copyists? This is not an isolated instance.

“Shorter Sayings from Beimeng” is quite an extensive collection of *biji* (I use a contemporary critical text in twenty *juans* of the main body and four *juans* of additions that include 416 fragments altogether [36]), mainly anecdotal works written in the style of an unofficial historical work; and although the material of *Bei meng suo yan* is not in any way organized by the author, the main topics of the collection are typical and can be singled out quite easily.

These fragments discuss historical figures and expand (supplement, disprove, clarify, add to) the information on them that we can find in official and semi-official historical works. Primarily, these are episodes from the lives of members of the various ruling families (for example, in the eighteenth and nineteenth *juans*, there are twenty three stories relating to the late Tang Ming-zong); there is also information in the collection about Tang emperors and the emperors' relatives: take the classic example with which *Bei meng suo yan* begins — the history of the Tang Xi-zong, who preferred having fun to everything else on Earth, especially playing ball games, which ends with the conclusion: “knowing the ruler's predilections, one can judge his rule” (fragment No. 1). This fragment is often quoted in diverse historical works of later times. The heroes of the collection are also rulers of the Five Dynasties period: the founder of the late Liang Zhu Wen, the late Tang Zhuang-zong (on the throne 923—926) and Ming-zong (on the throne 926—934), the Wu ruler Yang Xing-mi (楊行密, 852—905) and Yang Wo (楊渥, 886—908), the early Shu Wang Jian (王建, 847—918), members of the Chu family Ma, and many others, not to mention members of the Gao family, who ruled in Jingnan. Among the heroes of Sun Guang-xian's work, there are many famous poets and men of letters: Gu Kuang (顧況, 727—815), Bo Ju-yi (白居易, 772—846), Li Shang-yin (李商隱, 812—858?), Wen Ting-yun, Pi Ri-xiu (皮日休, 834?—883), Ne Yi-zhong (聶夷中, 837—884?), Du Xun-he (杜荀鶴, 846—904), Lo Yin (羅隱, 833—909), Wei Zhuang and others, and the fragments concerning them are quite extensive and informative, and often contain poetic quotations. The vast majority of the heroes of *Bei meng suo yan* are officials who occupied important posts at the courts of various dynasties, including Li De-yu (李德裕, 787—849), his father Li Ji-fu (李吉甫, 8th century), Niu Seng-ru (牛僧孺, 779—847), Cheng Rui (成汭, 9th century) and others. These are contemporaries of the author, and almost nothing is known about the vast majority of them except for their names — usually representatives of higher, educated sections of Sun Guang-xian's society, which is shown by the ranks and titles added to the names: dignitaries, ministers, the nobility, winners of state exams, and much more rarely, men of letters, hermits, Daos or followers of Buddha's teaching. Information about them is unique and frequently significantly broadens our ideas about the biography of a certain historical personage (if, of course, at least fragments of this biography have survived). For example, in official sources

about the successful late Tang official Liu Zang (劉贊, 10th century) it is not said that in his youth, when he became an orphan at a young age, he was

“ignorant and limited — he was taught to read and write, but [Zang] did not learn anything”

and his uncle on his mother's side was forced to use corporal punishment (in short, to beat his nephew with a cane), which did not have a positive result. Liu Zang's talents were revealed later — when he ran away from home to the Songshan mountains and met an old man there who had such a good influence on the youth that several years later Liu not only made up for the gaps in his education, but passed all his exams and embarked on a brilliant career as an official (fragment No. 175).

Other fragments discuss various details of events which took place at the end of the Tang Dynasty or during the Five Dynasties (in the seventh *juan* there are over 20 stories about incidents at state exams); modern researcher Zhuang Xue-jun notes that in comparison with other works of the time, it is *Bei meng suo yan* which contains such a large number of details about the end of the Tang Dynasty and the Five Dynasties [37]; these fragments often significantly broaden our knowledge of this historical period or give an interpretation of certain events which differs from the official one. For example, in *Jiu wu dai shi* (舊五代史, “The Old History of the Five Dynasties”), *j.* 2, it says of the death of the second to last Tang emperor Zhao-zong (on the throne 888—904):

“On the day of *ren-yan* in the eighth month of the first year under the rule of Tian-yu (904) Zhao-zong was killed in the imperial chamber”.

In *Xin Tang shu* (新唐書, “The New History of the Tang [Dynasty]), *j.* 10, there is more detail:

“In the eighth month on the day of *ren-yan*, Quan-zhong [ordered] the right and left heads of the imperial guard Zhu Yu-gong 朱友恭 and Shi Shu-cong 氏叔琮, and also the head of the military council Jiang Xuan-hui 蔣玄暉 to send troops to seize the palace gates. On that night the emperor died, he was 38 years old”.

Jiu Tang shu (舊唐書, “The Old History of the Tang [Dynasty]”) has even more detail:

“Zhu Quan-zhong ordered the left head of the imperial guard Zhu Yu-gong, the right head of the imperial guard Shi Shu-cong and the head of the military council Jian Xuan-hui to kill the emperor in the women's rooms. <...> At night, Jiang Xuan-hui chose 100 people for the second watch headed by the officer of the watch Shi Tai 史太, and [they] started shouting by the gates to the internal rooms that the troops had been defeated, and wish to report this urgently the ruler personally. The gates were opened. <...> The emperor was sleeping, but woke up from the noise. Shi Tai with a sword in hand entered

and women's rooms, and the emperor in his nightgown tried to flee, running between the columns, but Tai caught up with him and struck him down”.

Sun Guang-xian puts it somewhat differently in the 15th *juan* (fragment No. 246):

“Zhao-zong moved the border to Lo[yang], but everyone in his circle was from Bian[liang], and although there were important names among them, they were like empty vessels, and [in Luoyang] they felt as though they were trapped in a cage, dispirited and joyless. Zhu Quan-zhong, seeing that all the ruling princes were thinking about saving [the dynasty], began to worry that the emperor was [still] making plans to flee. The head of the palace guard Zhu Yu-liang [38] gathered soldiers in the courtyard before the palace — with complaints about lack of food and clothing. The emperor was dying, and

Yu-liang, leading the soldiers, moved into the palace. The emperor fell to the ground, and then tried to hide in the internal [rooms], but the officers found him. ‘Is this a rebellion?!’ the emperor cried. ‘You subject is unable to be so disrespectful’, Yu-liang replied. ‘A decree has been received from the head commander [i. e. Zhu Quan-zhong — *I. A.*].’ The emperor ran into the palace kitchen, [grabbed] a kitchen knife and killed several of his pursuers, but was eventually killed by the rebelling soldiers”.

It is not certain what really happened, but in Sun Guang-xian's version the second to last Tang emperor does not look like a coward, and Lin Ai-yuan is inclined to believe the opinion of the author of *Bei meng suo yan* [39].

Furthermore, there are also stories in *Bei meng suo yan* connected with the magical world and supernatural creatures — souls of the dead, saints and immortals, which are seeking vengeance, etc., but their weight, so to speak, is not as important and is mainly concentrated in the first four *juans* of additions; fragments of this kind in the main body are usually not self-sufficient in the sense of having a fantastic element, but are grouped with similar fragments — illustrating events from the life of a historical personage, simply in unusual circumstances: it seems that Sun Guang-xian was only interested in the supernatural

which goes outside the boundaries of the ordinary world as a background for stories [40].

On the whole, the collection *Bei meng suo yan* is unusually uniform and even — in this sense it is an extremely valuable source on Chinese history of the end of the Tang dynasty and the period of the Five Dynasties, and its merits were already appreciated by contemporaries — for example, the great Song historian Sima Guang (司馬光, 1019—1086) made wide use of *Bei meng suo yan* in compiling *Zi zhi tong jian* (資治通鑑, “A Universal Mirror to Assist Rule”) [41]. Comprehensive research of Sun Guang-xian's collection continues to this day [42].

The text of *Bei meng suo yan* is full of names, and because of the uniqueness of many of the materials, I think it is appropriate and even essential to give a list of the characters in this collection here. This list is very laconic and only contains the names of people figuring in the collection, both in pinyin and in the Chinese original (only obviously uncertain names have been

left out, such as “a certain Zhang”, “man of letters Liu”, etc., and also people whose identity is difficult to establish and requires additional comparative research — “Shilang Cui”, “Langzhong Wang”, etc.); the numbers indicate the fragments of *Bei meng suo yan* where the person is mentioned, regardless of his role in this fragment.

Pinyin	Chinese	Fragment No.	Pinyin	Chinese	Fragment No.
An Peixin	安轡新	241	Bi Cheng	畢誠	22, 53, 74
An Shijian	安師建	85	Bian Gang	邊岡	257
An Siqian	安思謙	342	Bian Xian	邊咸	32
An Zhongba	安重霸	6	Bo Juyi	白居易	8, 9
An Zhonghui	安重誨	253, 285, 290, 291, 294, 315	Bo Minzhong	白敏中	9, 43
An Zhongrong	安重榮	401	Bu Shang	卜商	180
Ban Gu	班固	7	Cai Chong	蔡崇	235
Bao He	包賀	133	Cai Jing	蔡京	45, 57
Baoguangzi	葆光子	3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 67, 114, 168, 169, 192, 203, 206, 217, 229, 231, 232, 235, 237, 253, 400, 401	Cai Shuxiang	蔡叔向	341
			Cai Tian	蔡旼	200
			Cao Que	曹確	74, 138
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Notes

1. Contemporary Chinese scholars have made a certain contribution to the solution of this problem. For example, Liu Zun-ming 劉尊明, analyzing the surviving historical evidence, says that Sun Guang-xian was born either in 895 or, which is less likely, a bit later; he also reasonably believes that the year of 900, often mentioned in reference books (for example, in the explanatory dictionary *Ci hai* 辭海, “The Sea of Words”) as the date of birth of Sun Guang-xian is improbable. See: Liu Zun-ming, “‘Huajian siren’ Sun Guang-xian shengping shiyi kaozheng” (“Essay on the extant biographical data of Sun Guang-xian, a poet [form the assembly] ‘Among the Flowers’”), *Wenxue yichan* VI (1989). Bai Gen-xing 拜根興 comes to the same conclusion. He first indicates the interval between 890—897 as the most likely, but at the end of his short study he writes unambiguously that “the year of birth of Sun Guang-xian must be 895 AD, or the second year under the rule of Qian-ning Tang Zhao-zong”. See: Bai Gen-xing, “Sun Guang-xian shengnian kaodian” (“The final solution to the question as to what year Sun Guang-xian was born in”), *Zhongguoshi yanjiu* I (1998).

2. The book in question is *Zhi zhai shu lu jie ti* (直齋書錄解題, “Annotated Bibliography of Books from the Cabinet of Zhi-zhai”), where Chen Zhen-sun, who inherited five book collections of famous families with a total number of over 50,000 *juans*, described all these books: he divided into 53 sections by chronology and provided annotations. There are a total of 22 *juans* in his bibliography, and this is one of the four Song bibliographies known to us (and one of the two surviving to this day; the second is Chao Gong-wu's bibliography, see below).

3. Chen Zhen-sun, *Zhi zhai shu lu ze ti*, Su Xiao-man, Gu Mei-hua jiaodian (*Annotated Bibliography of Books from the Cabinet of Zhi-zhai*, critical text by Xu Xiao-man and Gu Mei-hua) (Shanghai, 1987), p. 324.

4. *Si ku quan shu zong mu* (四庫全書總目, “General Catalogue of All Books from Four Archives”) — a global Qing bibliography of the imperial book archive, at the basis of which lies the principle of determining and classifying books in old Chinese library which dates from the 6th century: 四庫, “four archives”, i. e. the Confucian classics (經 *jing*), historians (史 *shi*), philosophers (子 *zi*), collections (集 *ji*). First published in 1790—1794.

5. Quoted from: Sun Guang-xian, *Bei meng suo yan* (Shanghai, 1981), p. 177. Evidently, in Fuchun Sun Guang-xian had an estate given to him.

6. The author of one of the latest editions of the critical text of *Bei meng suo yan*, contemporary Chinese scholar Lin Ai-yuan 林艾園, makes reference to *Jing nan gao shi jia shi* (荆南高氏家世, “The Genealogy of the Jing Gao family”) and *Shi guo chun*

qiu, and says that Sun Guang-xian was the *panguan* in Lingzhou (i. e. the deputy head of the region) (in this connection see his introduction in the book: Sun Guang-xian, *op. cit.*) But a well-known expert on the creative work of Su Shu, Kong Fan-li 孔凡禮 claims that Sun Guang-xian could not possibly have served as a *panguan* in the Tang period, because in the Tang period the post of deputy head of a region was called something else, namely *bejia*, and the post of *panguan* was a step higher in the hierarchy. See: Kong Fan-li, “Guanyu Sun Guang-xian he tade ‘Bei meng suo yan’ jige wentide yanjiu” (“Study on certain problems concerning Sun Guang-xian and his ‘Short Sayings from Beimeng’”), Sun Guang-xian, *Bei meng suo yan. Kong Fan-li xuanping* (Beijing, 2000). But if we assume that Sun Guang-xian served as *panguan* in the time of the early Shu, this seems to solve the problem.

7. Liu Zun-ming, *op. cit.*

8. Gao Ji-chang (高季昌, also known as Gao Ji-xing 高季興, 858—928) was the founder of the Jingnan (Nanping) principality that existed from 907—963 and had five rulers. Gao Ji-chang ruled from 924 till 928. In his younger years his situation was poor, and he served as salesman in a shop of a certain Li Rang 李讓 in Bianzhou. Later he found himself under the founder of the late Liang dynasty Zhu Wen (朱溫, 852—912, also 朱全忠, Zhu Quan-zhong), who made Li his adopted son and commanded him to make Gao his adopted son in his turn. As a result of this, Ji-chang had to change his name to Zhu. In his youth, Gao Ji-chang already revealed his inclination for military science, and with age he became a skilled warrior, and so the first appointment he received was *luanlianshi*, that is a military inspector of a regional scale. When he became independent, Ji-chang got back his name Gao, and in 907 he was appointed *jiedushi* (military governor-general) by Zhu Wen in Jingnan. At that time, when the central power was weak, officials of this rank would usually become rightful rulers of the lands entrusted to them, and very strong and powerful too, and the court often courted governor-generals and gave them titles and ranks in order to avoid insubordination or even an open rebellion (the rebellion of *jiedushi* An Lu-shan in 755 is a well known example of this). That also happened to Gao Ji-chang: in 924 he was given the title of the prince Nanping-wang. This did not stop Gao from later nominally recognizing the rule of the principality of Wu, for which he was immediately given the title of Qin-wang: because of a lack of money and a shortage of military force, and so unable to repulse the neighbours directly, Gao had to manoeuvre. One must admit he was quite good at it: being the ruler of the smallest and weakest domain of the time, and moreover surrounded by much more powerful and aggressive neighbours on four sides, Gao Ji-chang not only preserved Jingnan, but also laid such a foundation of the administration that the principality lasted for more than fifty years (for more details see, for example: Tao Mao-bing, *Wudai shilue (A Historical Sketch of Five Dynasties)* (Beijing, 1985)).

9. Official and literary man Liang Zhen (梁震, 10th century) took his degree of *jinshi* at the end of the Tang dynasty. Gao Ji-chang, who had immense respect for Liang Zhen, spent many years trying to persuade him to serve at his court, to which Liang Zhen would reply that he was a subject of the Tang; but with the downfall of the dynasty the situation changed. The son of Gao Ji-chang also admired Liang's talents and respected him as an elder brother.

10. Zhuang Sue-jun, “Sun Guang-xian shengping ji qi zhushu” (“Biography and works by Sun Guang-xian”), *Sichuan shida suebao* IV (1986), p. 67.

11. Gao Cong-hui (高從誨, 891—948), a Jingnan prince, the elder son of Gao Ji-chang, ruled from 929 until 948. He began as an official in the late Liang. He is well known because, as he was afraid of an aggression from the neighbours, he went much further than his father: he swore loyalty to everybody and started sending tribute to everybody, thus becoming a vassal of a number of kingdoms and principalities at the same time, for which he was nicknamed “shameless Gao”. He actively developed the economy, giving his special attention to the taxation of trade.

12. Gao Bao-rong (高保融, 920—960) was a Jingnan prince, the third son of Gao Cong-hui who ruled from 948 to 960. He occupied the post of the deputy to the military governor-general, and after his father's death became *jiedushi*, because all the military power of Jingnan was concentrated in his hands. In 951 he received the title of Bohaijun-wang, and in 954 became Nanping-wang. He did not have any talent for state administration, and so in anything relating to this he listened to the advice of his younger brother Gao Bao-xiu. He died at the age of 41. Gao Bao-xiu (高保勳, 924—962) was the tenth son of Gao Cong-hui who ruled from 960 till 962. He ruled for a very short time, still during this time he managed to receive the post of *zedushi* of Jingnan from the Song court. He was a talented politician who succumbed to his excessive passion for depravity and entertainment. He died at the age of thirty nine. Gao Ji-chong (高繼沖, 942—973), the eldest son of Gao Bao-rong, ruled from 962 till 963. When Gao Bao-xu fell ill, only Gao Ji-chong had full military authority in Jingnan, and after Bao-rong's death the Song court gave the post of *zedushi* to him. It was under his rule that the principality of Jingnan ceased to exist. The Song court sent troops to suppress the mutiny of Zhang Wen-biao 張文表, and when the Song army approached Jingnan, Gao Ji-chong, advised by Sun Guang-xian, allowed his lands to be incorporated into the new empire without a fight, for which he was given the post of *zedushi* back, but this time not just nominally, but as an official in the service of the Song with all the ensuing responsibilities to the court. He died at the age of 31.

13. A *juan* (“scroll”) is, as L. N. Men'shikov put it, a unit of book nomenclature, and the name dates from the time when books in China existed in the form of silk scrolls that were rolled around a wooden rod. With the invention of book-printing and books in the form of codex — it became a counting unit for books.

14. A poetic anthology compiled by the late Shu Zhao Chong-zuo (趙崇祚, 10th century) in 940, where in 10 *juans* 500 verses by 18 poets were joined — Wen Ting-yun, Wei Zhuang (韋庄, 847?—910) and others (fourteen of them were natives of Sichuan) — who wrote in the genre of *ci*. It is the first of such anthologies in China. Sichuan (Shu) was generally known for its literary traditions where many literary men took refuge in the time of unrest after the fall of the Tang dynasty.

“Interestingly enough, in the land of Shu the personality of the poet itself was respected and a literary talent was held in high esteem. Gao-zu, the founder of the early Shu kingdom, was illiterate, but he thought it necessary to patronize the poets”.

(E. A. Serebriakov, *Kitaïskaia poëziia X—X vv.: zhanry shi i tsy* (Chinese Poetry of 10—11th Centuries: *Shi* and *Ci* Genres) (Leningrad, 1979), p. 20).

15. In total eighty two *ci* verses by Sun Guang-xian have survived. For more details about his poetical works see: Yu Cui-ling, “Sun Guang-xian *ci* chutan” (“Preliminary study of the *ci* by Sun Guang-xian”), *Renwen jiazhi* IV (1985); Zhu De-ci, “Beyi Wen Wei ling yi jia: shilun Sun Guang-xian de *ci*” (“School, differing from Wen and Wei, another one: on the *ci* by Sun Guang-xian”), *Shehui kexue yanjiu* VI (1987); Liu Zun-ming, *op. cit.*, and others.

16. For more details on the works by Sun Guang-xian see: *ibid.*, pp. 80—1; Kong Fan-li, *op. cit.*, pp. 389—91; Zhuang Xue-jun, “Sun Guang-xian shengping *ci* zi zhushu” (“Sun Guang-xian's biography and works”), *Sichuan shida xuebao* IV (1986), pp. 69—70.

17. The latest dates mentioned in *Bei meng suo yan* are 961 and 962.

18. *Sunshi yiwenzhi. Bu fu bian* (Data on the Literature on the Song [Dynasty] History, suppl. and expanded) (Beijing, 1958), p. 126.

19. Chen Zhen-sun, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

20. This is the second surviving Song bibliography — *Jun zhai du shu zhi* (郡齋讀書志, “Notes on Reading Books in the Study of the Head of the District”), which was compiled by Chao Gong-wu (晁公武, 12th century), as he inherited an enormous library from his forefathers, and also was later given a considerable number of books by his colleague, in 1180—1187 embarked on compiling an annotated description of 24,500 *juans* of various works he found in his disposal. Chao Gong-wu also says that in the “Continuation of the General Calendar” there were ten *juans*, and the book encompassed the events of the time of the Tang dynasty and Five Dynasties, but under the Song it was discovered that they were mostly inventions, and so the work was destroyed.

21. Chao Gong-wu, *Jun zhai du shu zhi jiao*, Deng Sun Meng jiaodeng (Notes on Reading Books in the Study of the Head of the District, compared and commented by Sun Meng) (Shanghai, 1990), p. 571. By the River, the Yangzijiang is naturally understood.

22. Thus, Sun Meng, a textual critic who prepared one of the last editions of Chao Gong-wu's bibliography, made a note that in the original text *Bei meng suo yan* was said to have thirty *juans*; he corrected the text comparing the reliable copies of other bibliophiles (*ibid.*)

23. This collection, compiled by a special board headed by Li Fang (李防 924—996) by order of the Song emperor Tai-zong and completed in 978, is highly representative: as the foreword says, 344 collections were used in the compilation, mostly anecdotal prose *xiaoshu* by various authors (contemporary studies show that there were approximately five hundred collections) that dated from the Han until the Song period (until 977). Many of these collections are lost now, which makes this anthology unique. Besides that, the material in it is divided into 52 subject sections, with headings consisting of certain key notions (categories) of traditional Chinese culture (“immortals”, “werefoxes”, “trees” and so on).

24. All the quotations from the bibliographic descriptions are taken from the appendix in the book: Sun Guang-xian, *op. cit.*, pp. 176—181.

25. Kong Fan-li, *op. cit.*, p. 395. Sun Guang-xian had two sons — Sun Wei 孫謂 and Sun Dang 孫黨, about whom the biography of Sun Guang-xian in the Song dynasty history says that they “both passed the exam for the degree of *jinshi*” (j. 483).

26. Here and subsequently, quotations are from the author's foreword to the collection: Sun Guang-xian, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

27. Fragments Nos. 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19, 20, 67, 114, 168, 169, 192, 203, 206, 217, 229, 231, 232, 235, 237, 253, 400 and 401. The same thing was done by Liu Fu (劉斧 12th century) in his collection of *biji Qing suo gao yi* (青瑣高議, “High Judgements by the Palace Gates”). Also, Sun Guang-xian is present in *Bei meng suo yan*, and under his own name, but these fragments make up part of the later additions to the fragments of the collection that had been lost earlier, and this probably shows that the authorship of some of these fragments is not as evident. Incidentally, it is in these fragments from four additional *juans* that the character 偽 *wei* — 偽蜀 is used on the earlier Shu (907—925), that is “false”, “unreal”, “self-styled” Shu, which gives a certain idea of the author's attitude towards the very fact of the existence of the kingdom that he regarded as illegitimate. One does not encounter this combination in the main body of the collection. I cannot yet say for certain if this means that the fragments in which this state is called unrighteous do not belong to Sun Guang-xian, or if this is an interpolation by later editors who thus characterized their own attitude towards the all-powerful local princes of the time.

28. Reading: 彭城劉山甫自云 “Pengcheng Liu Shan-fu personally told”, fragment No. 375). Liu Shan-fu is also mentioned in the fragments Nos. 18, 121, 137, 138, 139, 140, 155, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 165, 174, 220 and 375. Other (isolated) informants to whom Sun Guang-xian refers in the same manner (i. e. mentioning a personal report) are a certain Lu Qing-Hong (關於盧卿宏, fragment No. 130), a colleague of the author Wang (同僚王行軍說, fragment No. 203), a Buddhist monk Guang-yuan (僧光遠說也, fragment No. 393), a certain “highlander” Qiang Shen (山人強紳, fragment No. 330), who “told Sun Guang-xian” 謂孫光憲曰, and also a Daos Li from the Yingzhenguan cloister in Sichuan (見應貞觀李道士<...>話, fragment No. 363) and some others.

29. Some fragmentary information that we have at our disposal allows us to describe the content of this collection as similar to Sun Guang-xian's, that is mainly containing information on the members of the imperial houses, higher government officials, the prominent rulers of regions and districts, the examination system, episodes from the lives of bibliophiles and literary men — but mostly all this is guess-work, of course.

30. The author of the now lost Song book collection “Zheng tang du shu ji” (鄭堂讀書記, “Notes on Reading Books from the Hall of Zheng”) believed that it was so: “These, probably, are the fragments selected from the twelfth *juan* of Shan-fu's work”. Liu Shan-fu, however, in the tradition of Chinese bibliophiles, before including information in his collection, also checked it in all other available sources, as well as trying to find the eye-witnesses of the events; the evidence of this has been preserved in *Bei meng suo*

yan in fragment No. 221, at the end of which there is a note saying that while editing his work, Liu Shan-fu had a personal meeting with the person in this fragment, who told him the story in all detail.

31. Sun Guang-xian used the character 校 — this means that he used literary monuments and not informants' accounts.

32. “Ya yu tang cong shu” (雅雨堂叢書, “Book Series from the Hall of Ya yu”) is the fruit of many years of bibliophilic works by Lu Jian-zeng, who collected and edited a book series named after his literary pseudonym (雅雨山人 Ya-yu shanren), 138 juans in 13 main and one additional volume. Every volume starts with a foreword by Lu, and he would ask his friends and acquaintances to write the afterwords.

33. Sun Guang-xian, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

34. An official post that was introduced in the Tang period. At the beginning of the Tang dynasty, the central government would send an official of this nature to regions and districts with the task of inspecting; after 758 the power of these officials already applied to several regions or even a whole province, and they were high-ranking officials who were immediately subordinate to the military governor-generals (*jiedushi*), although they were of the same rank as the *jiedushi*. In the time of the Song, these officials were responsible for court decisions, cases of punishment and problems of transporting tax duties to the capital on a district scale.

35. Sun Guang-xian, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

36. The Sun Guang-xian collection has been published several times in the People's Republic of China. (On the whole, it should be mentioned that fortunately the number of published and republished monuments of old Chinese literature have been increasing over the last years — not only monuments from the essential collection such as classical novels, verses from the “golden fund” and ancient philosophy monuments, but also quite rare texts which are only known to a small circle of specialists). The recognized paragon of a contemporary critical text of *Bei meng suo yan* is at present the edition prepared by Lin Ai-yuan and issued in 1981 by the famous Shanghai publishing house “Guji chubanshe” 上海古籍出版社 (“Song Yuan biji congshu” 宋元筆記叢書 series). On the basis of this text, editions were published in 2003 in Xian (“San qin chubanshe” 三秦出版社 publishing house, “Lidai mingjia xiaopin wenji” 歷代名家小品文集 series) — in simplified characters and even with meagre commentaries, the quality of which is far from being perfect; and also in 2002 in Beijing (“Zhunghua shuju” 中華書局, “Lidai shiliao biji congkan” 歷代史料筆記叢刊 series). *Bei meng suo yan* was published many times as a part of *biji* anthologies (for example, in one of the last collections of the kind — “Quan Song biji” 全宋筆記); also there were publications of selected extracts from *Bei meng suo yan*. Amongst noteworthy editions of the latter kind we should note the book by the Beijing publishing house “Sueyuan chubanshe” in 2000 (in “Lidai biji xiaoshuo xiaopin xuankan” 歷代筆記小說小品選刊 series), which was prepared by Kong Fan-li — an edition that includes 178 fragments from *Bei meng suo yan*, which is notable for detailed, very clear commentaries and footnotes that explain the general meaning of the fragments, and also a small but very informative study by Kong Fan-li, attached after the main text.

37. See: Zhuang Xue-jun, “‘Bei meng suo yan’ yanjiu” (“Study of ‘Bei meng suo yan’”), *Xinan shifan daxue xuebao* I (1990) pp. 89—90.

38. This is, of course, a mistake (slip of the pen? misprint?). It should read “Zhu Yu-gong”.

39. Lin Ai-guo, “‘Bei meng suo yan’ de shiliao jiazhi” (“Value of historical materials from ‘Bei meng suo yan’”), *Shudong shifan daxue xuebao* V (1982) p. 83.

40. It is not quite clear what the characteristics of this collection given by K. I. Golygina are based on: “A collection of 20 juans, mainly tales of the amazing people of the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties” (K. I. Golygina, “Velikiĭ predel”. *Kitaĭskaia model' mira v literature i kul'ture (I—XIII vv.)* (“The Great Limit”. The Chinese Model of the World in Literature and Culture (1st—13th centuries) (Moscow, 1995), p. 345). If this means that the vast majority of the heroes of *Bei meng suo yan* did not leave behind any information about themselves except in Sun Guang-Xian's collection, then in this sense, of course, the adjective “amazing” can be applied to them.

41. Zhuang Xue-jun made a comparative analysis of the descriptions of several historical events present in *Bei meng suo yan* and in “Wu dai shi” (五代史 “History of the Five Dynasties”), and as a result found numerous word-for-word borrowings in the “History” from Sun Guang-xian's collection (Zhuang Xue-jun, “‘Bei meng suo yan’ yanjiu”, pp. 90—2). The same applies to “Tang shu” (唐書, “History of Tang [dynasty]”), both old and new.

42. See, for example: idem, “‘Bei meng suo yan’ yanjiu”; idem, *Sun Guang-xian shengping ci zi zhushu*; Lin Ai-guo, “‘Bei meng suo yan’ de shiliao jiazhi”; and also numerous works by Sichuan researcher Fang Rui: “‘Bei meng suo yan’ jiyu” (“Things lost from ‘Short sayings from Beimeng’”), *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* VI (2004); “Cong ‘Bei meng suo yan’ kan wan Tang lodi shirende xingtai” (“The situation of pupils failing exams at the end of the Tang dynasty on the example of ‘Brief sayings from Beimeng’”), *Shehui kesuejia* V (2004); “‘Bei meng suo yan’ yu wan Tang Wudai lishi wenhua” (“‘Brief sayings from Beimeng’ and historical monuments of the Tang dynasty and the Five Dynasties”), *Sichuan shifan daxue xuebao* IV (2003); “Dui ‘Bei meng suo yan’ jieji shijiande zai zhishi” (“Additional information about the times of the formation of the ‘Brief sayings from Beimeng’”), *Leshan shifan xueyuan xuebao* VII (2005), and many others.