Introduction

China has a long history and, accordingly, a rich tradition of commemorating that history in both ritual and writing. Chinese intellectuals have honored their forebears and significant historical figures through allusions in poetry, the establishment of temples and cults, the construction of monuments, and the composition and carving of inscriptions, to name only the most common of such practices. Cultural memory plays an important role in shaping the Chinese literary and historical tradition, and the subgenre of Chinese verse known as poems on history (*yongshi shi* 詠史詩) has been a major vehicle for producing and transmitting cultural memory. Chinese poets have long cited historical events and quoted the figures featuring in them, on topics such as political administration, literary refinement, and diplomatic negotiation, as a means to shape Chinese cultural memory and identity.[1] This introduction discusses the methodological framework of cultural memory and outlines the book structure.

Lore and Verse provides a detailed analysis of *yongshi shi* in early medieval China (220–589) from the perspective of cultural memory.[2] Lore refers to a body of knowledge transmitted orally and eventually written down, and verse refers to poetry. Written Chinese history was passed down as part of a larger body of lore that is no longer fully extant. Stories that were passed down orally were at a particularly acute risk of being lost as channels of transmission were disrupted. Poets in early medieval China likely had access to a larger swath of lore than is available to us today. While it is impossible for us to reconstruct this lost lore and difficult to determine which accounts of lore poets may have been aware of, one can nevertheless read and search as broadly as possible through sources such as standard histories (to which this book gives preference if the content is the same as or similar to other sources), pseudo-histories, anecdotes, regional histories, literary collections,

and writings of philosophy, a process expedited through the use of databases and computer-assisted searches.[3]

This book treats *yongshi shi* as a prime example of the operation of cultural memory in the reception and transmission of Chinese history and literature. Through the study of *yongshi shi* and cultural memory, I will answer a series of key questions: What kinds of historical events are remembered by poets? What approaches do they adopt to deal with cultural memory? Aside from praising historical people and articulating their emotions, what other purposes do poets aim to achieve? As poets capture the essence of historical moments and employ them in a short-form literary genre such as *yongshi shi*, they must necessarily abbreviate the historical accounts on which they draw. Given that constraint, why do they choose to retain certain details and omit others? Which historical moments inspire poets to compose these poems? Posing these questions allows us to investigate the political, historical, and social contexts shaping *yongshi shi* and cultural memory. The answers to these specific questions are useful for broader research into the development and transformation of early medieval Chinese culture and, thinking beyond this particular period, crucial to grasping how poets use their writing to both convey and shape their understanding of cultural memory.

A recent volume on memory studies in Chinese literature divides the scholarship on memory in early and medieval China into five categories, saying,

> The most fertile topic has been how the dead or departed are remembered. . . . The historiography of events, dynasties, time periods, customs, regions, and places as both shaping and shaped by social memory, and social memory as shaped by standard narrative tropes and cultural patterns, have drawn increasing scholarly attention. . . . Reception studies have highlighted a third aspect of memory in medieval China. . . . mnemonic techniques used by individuals, and the value placed on memorization of texts, are aspects of memory in medieval China that have received relatively little study to this point. . . . A final aspect of memory to be discussed here concerns the many ways in which the new was justified by grounding it in a purported, remembered old.[4]

Considering the above-listed works, the present book aims to contribute to the existing scholarship surveyed above by applying a cultural memory framework to premodern Chinese literature and focusing on *yongshi shi* in early

medieval China. Cultural memory is a concept and methodology pioneered by Jan and Aleida Assmann.[5] According to Jan Assmann, cultural memory

> has become a central concern, not only for archaeology and comparative literature, the two disciplines in the context of which we started, but also within all branches of cultural studies as well as history, arts, and even politics.[6]

Jan Assmann believes that cultural memory, as distinct from the psychological and scientific concepts of memory, constitutes "the exterior dimensions of the human memory."[7] He divides this external aspect of memory into four categories: mimetic memory, memory of things, communicative memory, and cultural memory.[8] Mimetic memory refers to the memory generated from imitating a behavior or following an instruction, as in memorizing instructions for machine or tool usage.[9] Memory of things refers to memory based on the items associated with one's own identity, such as the memory of personal clothing and food preferences.[10]

Cultural memory and communicative memory are two forms of collective memory, a concept introduced and developed for the study of psychology by Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945). Assmann extends the theory into the realm of culture. He defines communicative memory as "memories related to the recent past. . . . These are what the individual shares with his contemporaries. A typical instance would be generational memory that accrues within the group, originating and disappearing with time or, to be more precise, with its carriers."[11] By way of contrast, cultural memory encompasses such social mechanisms for remembering the more distant past as rituals and ceremonies, oral transmission, written accounts, and such physical objects as monuments, museums, and stelae.[12] The influence of cultural memory endures longer than generations of communicative memory. Assmann explains that the difference between communicative and cultural memory is "the difference between the everyday and the festive, the profane and the sacred, the ephemeral and the lasting, the particular and the general. It can perhaps best be grasped in terms of the fluid as opposed to the fixed, but care must be taken not to equate this contrast with the difference between the oral and the written."[13] My book will focus on the spaces created by early medieval Chinese literati for fostering and celebrating the cultural memory of historical figures and events.

With respect to the commemoration of past historical figures, Assmann, following the scholarship of Karl Schmid, Otto G. Oexle, Joachim

Wollasch, and K. E. Müller, divides memories of the deceased into two categories: retrospective memory and prospective memory. He defines retrospective memory as "the more universal, original, and natural form . . . the one through which a group goes on living with its dead, keeping them present, and thereby building up an image of its own unity and wholeness, of which the dead naturally form a part."[14] Retrospective memory focuses on the "presentification" of historical figures, bringing them into contemporary dialogues in order to shape an identity and origin for them similar to that of those still living. In employing retrospective memory, the living often place themselves alongside their role models in the stream of the tradition. Whereas retrospective memory legitimates and rationalizes the words and actions of the living by situating them among past exemplary figures, the second category, that of prospective memory, "consists in 'achievement' and 'fame'—the manner in which the dead have rendered themselves unforgettable."[15] Prospective memory focuses on how the reputation of historical figures is transmitted.[16] The concept of retrospective memory aids us in examining how historical figures were received in poems, while the concept of prospective memory aids us in understanding how poets fashioned their works to be remembered by later literati. Positive reception, culminating in canonization, conveys one's reputation to future generations.

Cultural memory and reception studies form the macro perspective that guides my research,[17] while intertextuality provides the micro perspective necessary to establish textual connections and cultural continuities between historical sources and individual poems. As Jan Assmann points out, "Textual continuity entails a framework of references that cancel out the break inherent in writing—a framework within which the texts may remain present, effective, and accessible even over thousands of years."[18] New writing that borrows diction and style from previous sources renews the cultural lineage, drawing on the strength of these rich intertextual links while at the same time popularizing and securing the status of the older sources.

The concept and methodology of cultural memory is crucial for analyzing *yongshi shi*. In writing *yongshi shi*, Chinese literati and poets often retrospectively crafted the same (or at least a similar) identity as the historical figures they celebrated, and they prospectively created a continuous lineage for transmitting their values and reputation to future generations. This continuous tradition of cultural memory informs a poet's reception of historical figures, which then in turn shapes that tradition through further intertextual connections. When poets compose poems about historical figures and their stories, they do not simply reiterate longer historical accounts,

but rather select which parts of the stories they wish to lyricize, a choice which speaks to their own agendas and/or the contemporary reception of historical figures and events.

This monograph is the first English-language book dedicated entirely to studying *yongshi shi*. Prior to this book, Hans Frankel devoted an entire chapter of his book on Chinese poetry to poems on historical themes, in which he offers close readings of a selection of poems from the Western Jin (265–316) to Northern Song (960–1127) dynasties, focusing on explaining allusions, elucidating moral lessons and values, and analyzing literary techniques, particularly the contrasts drawn between ephemeral human history and the eternity of nature.[19] This book integrates Frankel's close reading, an appropriate and useful method in analyzing history-oriented poems that are often loaded with allusions and symbols, with insights drawn from cultural memory in interpreting *yongshi shi*.

This book also builds on the discussion of nostalgia and the past in Stephen Owen's *Remembrances*, which analyzes classical Chinese texts drawn from a wide range of genres: poems, rhapsodies, lyrics, anecdotes, and fiction.[20] He points out the use of synecdoche in discussing literati experiences. The fragments and incomplete parts become the media through which literati thought of and imagined past events and composed literary pieces to express feelings of melancholy and nostalgia. Owen's book has inspired me to continue an investigation into the relationship between memory and Chinese literature, focusing on the specific problem of cultural memory and *yongshi shi*.

With respect to Chinese-language scholarship, Zhao Wangqin 趙望秦 and Zhang Huanling 張煥玲 point out that there is scant research on *yongshi shi* in the early medieval period compared with the substantial work done on *yongshi shi* in the Tang and Song dynasties, and especially *yongshi shi* from the Mid- and Late Tang. The bulk of modern Chinese scholarship puts forward a grand, progressive, linear literary-historical narrative for the development of *yongshi shi* over time, providing a broad overview of the genre and of major and minor figures who wrote *yongshi shi*.[21] However, these works do not typically provide much analysis based on a close reading of the poetry itself, nor do they explore newer, nontraditional critical approaches. Rather than seeking to cover every example of *yongshi shi* in early medieval China, or to narrate its development over multiple periods, the present work instead focuses on analyzing a selection of representative poems that show how cultural memory is demonstrated and negotiated in the *yongshi shi*.

The first chapter lays the foundation for the core discussion, defining the term *yongshi shi* in early medieval China via an exploration of previous scholarship on its connotations. Robert Joe Cutter identifies the poems composed by Cao Zhi 曹植 (192–232), Wang Can 王粲 (177–217), and Ruan Yu 阮瑀 (ca. 165–212) on the "three good men" 三良 as "poems on visits to famous sites" (*denglin shi* 登臨詩), a subgenre closely related to "poems meditating on the past" (*huaigu shi* 懷古詩). Cutter argues that the three poets probably visited the tomb of the "three good men," though these poems were titled "Yongshi."[22] Cutter's observation raises important questions that merit further investigation: What were *yongshi shi* in early medieval China? What is the relationship between *yongshi shi* and *huaigu shi* in this period? As these questions are key to the larger concerns of the book, this opening chapter addresses them by investigating the definition and scope of *yongshi shi* in early medieval China, the necessity of rectifying our understanding of the term, and its current (sometimes problematic) usage by modern scholars. In contrast to previous scholarship that has taken a broadly retrospective approach, this chapter explores the definition and scope of the term *yongshi shi* within the confines of a specific time period, early medieval China. This chapter also examines the usage of the words *yong* 詠 and *shi* 史 in classical Chinese materials, focusing on the "Bibliographical Treatise" ("Jingji zhi" 經籍志) of the *History of the Sui Dynasty* (*Suishu* 隋書) and the "Yongshi" section of the *Selections of Refined Literature* (*Wen xuan* 文選). Through this analysis, this chapter delves into the deeper connotations of *yongshi shi*. The final part of the chapter explains why poems with titles that include the term *yongshi* might not belong to the *yongshi* category. The fluidity of manuscript culture meant that titles were highly mutable and might be given to the poem by anthologists, editors, literary critics, or the poets themselves. In summary, this chapter examines the importance in early medieval China of historiography, literary culture, allusion, social dislocation, and "pure conversation" (*qingtan* 清談)—all of which enabled writers to make full use of cultural memory and to compose *yongshi shi* that articulated their emotions through historical allusions.

After the first chapter delineates the scope and definition of *yongshi shi* within the context of the early medieval period, the second chapter explores the relationship between retrospective memory and *yongshi shi*, focusing on the Western Jin (265–316) poet Zuo Si's 左思 (ca. 250–ca. 305) "[Poems] on History" ("Yongshi" 詠史) series, which has often been regarded as a milestone in the development of the poetic subgenre *yongshi shi*. Michael Farmer interpreted these poems as a way to "ruminate on

historical themes in order to criticize contemporary affairs and reflect Zuo's frustration at his inability to advance politically or socially in Luoyang."[23] Farmer rightly points out the sociopolitical implications and significance of these poems. This chapter builds on this insight, but moves in another direction, highlighting how Zuo used retrospective memory to actively place himself alongside exemplary figures from the past and bring those figures into contemporary debates. Through this application of retrospective memory, Zuo consoles his emotions, legitimates his pursuits, and makes sense of his frustration. In this vein, this chapter investigates the purpose behind his use of historical figures within his poetry. Zuo actively pursues an affinity with the historical figures in his poems: what happens to him in the present also happened to these figures in the past. This chapter argues that Zuo used historical figures not only to express his emotions but also to skillfully place himself into the larger context and lineages of exemplary historical figures. Zuo is thus telling later generations that they should remember him with the same reverence—he is invoking history as a force for self-idealization and promotion. Viewing this from the perspective of retrospective memory reveals the complexity of Zuo's appropriation of earlier historical sources, and it deepens and complicates our understanding not only of the purpose of Zuo's "Yongshi" series but also of how and why history was disseminated through poetry in early medieval China.

While the second chapter focuses on Zuo's "Yongshi" from the perspective of retrospective memory, the third chapter traces the prospective memory and reception of Zuo Si's "Yongshi" in early medieval China—that is, how the poet's reflections on historical figures influenced later understanding of the personalities, historical themes, and even the poems associated with those figures. Scholars such as Kōzen Hiroshi 興膳宏 and Xu Chuanwu 徐傳武 have recognized Zuo's "Yongshi" as representing an alternative to the poetic style of ornamental amplification popular in his time. Zuo's poems break from the norms of the *yongshi* subgenre, which usually mimic historical narration, and conclude with a conventional moral assessment.[24] How did this style, which was somewhat unconventional during his time, come to be largely accepted later in the early medieval period? How did the reception of the style and content of Zuo's "Yongshi" influence his prospective memory? To better understand how this prospective memory was formed, this chapter examines three levels of reception for these poems. First, it discusses the poetic practice of establishing intertextual links between Zuo Si's poems and other literary works, followed by an analysis of the earliest literary criticism of Zuo Si's poems. It then analyzes an anecdote about the

Northern Wei official Xue Cheng 薛憕 (fl. 520), which illuminates how these poems were employed in educated elite discourse. Finally, the chapter explores the literary and cultural factors that influenced the decision of the editors of the *Wen xuan* to include these poems in the "Yongshi" section of the anthology. The choices made by the editors stand as both a powerful indicator of the aesthetics of poetry in that historical moment and as a significant influence on later poetic reception. Investigating these stages of reception allows us to understand how poets, critics, and readers imitated, commented on, and used these *yongshi shi*. Furthermore, reception studies can help to uncover similarities and discrepancies in literary borrowing (of diction, imagery, figure of speech, etc.) in the processes of poetic composition and transmission. The retrospective self-idealization and promotion and the process of prospective reception of Zuo's poems illustrate how the memory of the literary past is shaped and mediated by the intellectual and cultural zeitgeist of this period.

Both retrospective and prospective memory are vehicles for commemorating historical figures. Early medieval Chinese poets adopted, adapted, and negotiated with cultural memory to place themselves retrospectively in a long lineage of exemplary figures, and to prospectively convey their reputation to the future by highlighting, identifying with, following, and praising the virtues of these figures from the past. Cultural memory influenced which figures they chose and how they represented those figures, but poets also negotiated with cultural memory in order to make sense of the past and articulate their own emotions and views. The next chapter, chapter 4, shifts focus to the Eastern Jin period (317–420) and explores how Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365–427), one of the best-known and most-studied Chinese poets from before the Tang dynasty (618–907), communicated his personal sense of history. Over the years, Tao's pastoral-style poetry, his biography, and his reclusive lifestyle have received much attention from scholars using both traditional text-centered approaches and new approaches informed by manuscript culture, reception studies, and research into reading practices.[25] This chapter diversifies recent research by focusing on Tao's *yongshi shi*, which constitute roughly one-fourth of Tao's extant oeuvre.[26] It discusses Tao's perspective on life reflected in these poems.[27] Tao was fascinated by history and developed an idiosyncratic but relatively stable perspective, which encompassed three main issues: the concern for the appreciation of scholars (or lack thereof), the possibility and means of following the Dao in poverty, and the relationship between engaging in versus retreating from politics. Tao engaged in critically evaluating historical figures and events

according to his own idiosyncratic principles, which led him to sometimes even reject the verdicts rendered by conventional history. This chapter also integrates the various aspects of Tao's perspective on life with his cultural memory of historical figures, delineating the intricate relationship between the two in order to better understand Tao's thought and his literary works. Tao internalizes and is aware of these different issues, adding his own individual memory, logic, and aesthetic touches, which distinguish him from his predecessors.

Yongshi shi not only reflected the relationship between poetry, cultural memory, and reputation construction but also demonstrated the relationship between politics, power legitimation, and memory, which are investigated in chapter 5. It moves chronologically to the transition between the Eastern Jin and Liu Song dynasties, examining how poetic composition, ritual, and ceremony continued the cultural memory of Han dynasty general Zhang Liang 張良 (ca. 250–186 BCE), forming a tradition that had profound political implications. This chapter primarily focuses on a less-studied figure from the well-known Xie clan, Xie Zhan 謝瞻 (385–421), and his long poem on Zhang Liang, which was composed during Liu Yu's 劉裕 (363–422; r. 420–422) northern expedition. This chapter places Xie's poem in the context of other poems, composed during the same expedition, on visiting the temples dedicated to Zhang Liang and Liu Bang. Andrew Chittick, citing the opinions of early medieval Chinese historians, describes Liu Yu's northern expedition as "the most ambitious and successful ever undertaken by any Jiankang military leader."[28] Chittick argues that although Liu's concrete objectives were somewhat murky, he was not aiming, as is often the popular perception, at reunifying China. Instead, Chittick believes that Liu sought, first, to strengthen the Yellow River as a protective screen against invasion and, second, to obtain valuable documents, materials, and scholars from the Later Qin (384–417) court and aristocratic families.[29] The analysis of the poems in this chapter facilitates our understanding of Liu's objectives and concerns in his expedition, and offers new insight into the sociopolitical significance of the *yongshi shi* as a manifestation of cultural memory. In an article that focuses on the Xie family, Cynthia L. Chennault stresses the changes in the status of the Xie family during the Southern Dynasties period (420–589).[30] Looking at Xie Zhan, Xie Zhuang 謝莊 (421–466), and Xie Tiao's 謝朓 (464–499) response to these changes, she concludes that the "common thread through the case studies is the instability at court that posed dangers to the lives of high officials."[31] Chennault's research focuses on the influence of dynastic changes exerted on the eminent Xie

family, particularly their response to the family's declining influence in the political and military arena. Departing from her research, this chapter attaches more importance to the other side of the story: the rising power of the lower social class, represented by Liu Yu, in obtaining power from the aristocratic families. In order to do this, this chapter contains a full English translation and close reading of Xie Zhan's poem on Zhang Liang. It then explores how Xie Zhan, Zheng Xianzhi 鄭鮮之 (364–427), and Fan Tai 范 泰 (355–428) paid tribute to Liu Yu, their ruler and first emperor of the Liu Song dynasty, by commemorating Zhang Liang and Liu Bang. Liu Yu employed this cultural memory of Han figures as political propaganda to legitimate his rulership and promote his governance abilities and virtues. While these poems served a political function, they also reveal the idiosyncrasies of the writers and their complex psychological states during a period of social transition and transformation.

Finally, chapter 6 addresses the importance of the literary anthology *Wen xuan*, which was compiled and edited at the end of the early medieval period. This chapter highlights the different ways poets connected cultural memory to poetry and, by focusing on poets' approaches to lore, it demonstrates the sophistication of *yongshi shi* in early medieval China. Stephen Owen has examined poems on visiting historical sites in the Late Tang (827–860). He focuses on how natural images, historical figures, and diction used in one poem influenced other poems on the same topic, as well as how later poems expanded the connotations of those elements. Therefore, through intertextuality, a family of formulas and patterns for poems on certain historical sites and figures is formed.[32] In another book on the characteristics of early classical Chinese poetry (dating from roughly the first to third century CE), Owen cautions us that poetry in this period often had "its recurrent themes, its relatively stable passages and line patterns, and its procedures."[33] Poets adopted shared templates, shared topics, and a common language to compose poems. Our perception of these poems has been largely shaped by Qi–Liang literati at the end of the early medieval period. His arguments have challenged the established narrative of literary history, instead suggesting that writing poetry was a shared cultural practice and was less creative and innovative than we previously thought. This chapter treats all the materials related with historical figures and events as a collective lore to which a poem refers. Although it is impossible to trace all the oral and written sources that an early medieval writer could access, this chapter lays out the stable and fluid aspects of the relationship between lore and poetry with the aid of databases of ancient classical Chinese texts. It exam-

ines how lore of historical figures and events is circulated and distributed into poems. Specifically, this chapter looks at the relationship between the *yongshi shi* poems collected in the "Yongshi" section of the *Wen xuan* and the accounts of lore to which they correspond. The assumption is that the historical elements in *yongshi shi* are an amalgam of historical, unofficial, and anecdotal texts combined in a way that creates a new meaning in poetry. The relationship between a *yongshi shi* and the accounts of its associated historical figures or events is complex, less a dichotomy than a spectrum, with completely personal expression at one end and neutral historical accounts at the other. The approaches of poets to lore can be roughly divided into three major categories, based on the relationship between a poet's own emotions and the lore: close citation of lore, the use of such accounts as supporting commentary, and the contextualization of lore in the form of allusions. Analysis of the direct links between the poems and these accounts reveals some similar words and phrases, suggesting that poets may have read these sources, or at the very least, that the sources available today drew upon the same body of lore that the poets drew upon.

In early medieval China, cultural memory was conveyed through a variety of media and forms: through writing, such as historical accounts, collections of anecdotes, and literary works; through physical monuments, such as temples or stelae; and through visual arts, such as painting and calligraphy. *Yongshi shi* were a particularly important tool for commemorating historical figures and shaping cultural identity. As a document of how historical figures and events have become part of the poetic tradition, *yongshi shi* illustrate the issues surrounding history, cultural memory, and the commemoration of absence.