

East Asian Attitudes towards Court Women: The Legend of Yang Guifei

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Themes and Goals

The years 755-756 were pivotal in Chinese history. The Tang dynasty (618 –906 C.E) capital of Chang'an (today's Xi'an) had become a cosmopolitan center and hub of the Silk Road, importing horses, musicians, acrobats, dances, and Buddhist scripts from Central Asia and exporting new forms of architecture, poetry, silks, paintings, government rule, and religious practice to such places as Korea and Japan. In 755, An Lushan (703-757), a general who had roots in Central Asia, led a rebellion that not only destroyed much of Chang'an but also weakened the court's confidence and openness to new ideas. Attitudes toward women, Buddhism, and foreigners changed precipitously.

This unit focuses on the shift in attitudes towards women in particular, using the case of Yang Guifei (719-756) to explore the wider transformation in values that occurred in 8th century Chang'an. Yang, the "Prized Consort" of the emperor, was blamed for the An Lushan Rebellion, possibly due to a purported relationship with the general. When An Lushan sacked the capital, the seventy year-old Emperor Xuanzong rode out of the city with Yang Guifei, but his men would go no further until she was killed. She was executed on the spot.

The shift in values in the late Tang may be attributed to any number of causes. The degree to which An's rebellion and Yang's actions spurred the transformation is subject to debate. It cannot be proven that what occurred with An Lushan and Yang Guifei kept China from developing new attitudes toward women, religion, or foreign ideas or people. But the hypothesis makes examination of these events particularly interesting. Was Yang Guifei a scapegoat or did she conspire to overthrow the emperor?

The value of the unit lies primarily in the conflicting views of Yang Guifei; from the evidence given in the written and visual texts listed in the Readings and Visuals section, she can seem either manipulative or bodhisattva-like. Students should be reminded that there is no "right" answer here. Rather, the consideration of different visual and written texts should help students to build a fuller understanding of history and its complexities. For freshman students in particular, an assignment that asks them to juxtapose different sources is helpful as they build fundamental analytical reading and writing skills.

The unit invites students to form and support their own opinions by a careful analysis of significant primary texts, both literary and visual. These include Buddhist art from Dunhuang and Bai Juyi's "Song of Lasting Pain," which the literary critic Victor Mair calls "the most famous of all Chinese poems." An exercise in which students are asked to make a case for or against Yang Guifei's execution is at the core of the unit.

The unit also offers instructors a related set of comparative readings centered on the Japanese author Murasaki Shikibu's (ca. 978-) novel *The Tale of Genji* (ca. 1010). Bai Juyi's story was widely read in Heian Japan (794-1185), and it is arguable that the attitudes and values encoded in Bai's text influenced Murasaki personally as well as broader attitudes in Japan.

After studying this unit, students should be able to give examples to demonstrate the following:

- Women in the early Tang dynasty and in the Heian Period included women of powerful families who were not merely "concubines" of men. Many were highly educated, wrote literature, and were active in sports (in China only), arts and political power relationships.
- The status of women changed depending upon economic and political variables rather than depending on "essential" East Asian value systems.
- Writers' biases can depend on such factors as religion, geographical base, and gender; independent close readings of texts can reveal these biases.
- Documents labeled historical accounts (such as Chen Hong's) may be no more objective than works of imaginative literature or art.
- Depictions of historical events change over time, reflecting the era in which they are written. Cultural notions of beauty or sensuality change within cultures and vary over time.
- Chinese culture has diverse origins including Central Asia as well as India. It has never been ethnically or culturally homogenous.

Audiences and Uses

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The unit was originally developed in two freshman year interdisciplinary humanities courses, one with a worldwide scope and one an introduction to Chinese Culture and Civilization. The students had no knowledge of Chinese or Japanese language. The unit could also be useful in a wide variety of other courses, including but not limited to:

- World Literature
- Art History
- Japanese Culture and Civilization
- Women in Literature, Women in World or Asian History
- Freshmen core courses that develop analytical reading, writing, and critical thinking skills.

In a general humanities or world literature course, Yang Guifei's story could be compared to Helen's story in *The Iliad*, and Eve's story in Genesis and Milton's *Paradise Lost*. In a Women in History course, Yang Guifei could be compared to Marie Antoinette.

Instructor's Introduction

Yang Guifei

The following information should be sufficient background for students. Extensive lecturing about Yang Guifei should not be necessary. There is actually a disadvantage to a teacher saying more; it leaves less for students to discover on their own.

“Yang” is a family name, and “Guifei” is an official title, translated as “Prized Consort,” held by the woman ranked most highly by the Emperor. Yang Guifei’s uncle and siblings rose to power from the time she was 27 until her death eleven years later in 756. There are many legends about her. When tourists go to Huaqing Springs in Xi’an today, they can bathe in hot water as she allegedly did when the aging Emperor first saw her among the court women. She is said to have formed a friendship with An Lushan, who became a general of Chinese troops despite his Central Asian origins; she may have even adopted An Lushan as a son. Both Yang Guifei and An Lushan are described as dancing the “whirl,” a Central Asian dance which can be seen in pictures of the Tang court preserved in Dunhuang’s caves on the Silk Road. The Emperor is believed to have been so in love with Yang Guifei, he neglected his duties. The location of Yang’s death is as famous as that of her bath; guidebooks will tell you exactly the location of Ma Lei Station, the place where she was throttled, hanged, or forced to commit suicide by the Emperor’s disgruntled associates.

The historian Susan Manning points out that paintings and plays about Yang Guifei made her a household name in China over the centuries. Many Tang dynasty sculptures said to resemble Yang Guifei are exquisite pieces of art. Bai Juyi’s poetry was also well known in tenth-century Japan. In the first chapter of the illustrious eleventh-century Japanese novel *The Tale of Genji*, Murasaki Shikibu quotes his poetry repeatedly; and, indeed, depictions of both Genji and his mother may have been influenced by descriptions of Yang found in Bai Juyi’s writings.

Women in the Tang Dynasty

In imperial China, alliances of consorts to the Emperor or the Emperor’s extended family could elevate the consorts’ families and served to tie outlying regions to the central government. Because women were useful for these marriage-like arrangements, families with ambitions would carefully tend to women’s upbringing, whether in dress or skills of music, dance, reading, and composing poetry. There was no foot-binding by the Tang dynasty; there are many images of women riding horses and even playing polo. Perhaps because of Yang Guifei’s promotion of her relatives, the importance of marriage alliances as a vehicle for political advancement diminished after the Tang dynasty. As in East Asia and the West today, family influence was held under control and meritocracy advanced by a strong system of rigorously maintained examination systems. This shift from a system that benefited many women to one where families funded the formal education exclusively of men is a major aspect of Chinese economic, political and social history. Women became more sequestered, and foot-binding of women gradually spread from aristocratic women to laborers. Reversion to earlier attitudes toward women was also accompanied by lower receptivity to Buddhism and arts from Central Asia.

In discussing slides depicting Yang Guifei in the Tang dynasty, students might be intrigued with the following information which is also reflected by Bai Juyi's poem:

- Women in the Tang had a hundred different styles of putting up their long hair. These were given names such as *yunji* (resembling clouds), and *hudie ji* (resembling the wings of a butterfly). Hairpins with bird and flower designs became a main accessory. Plucked eyebrows were considered a main feature of women's beauty. (*Women of the Tang Dynasty*, pamphlet published by the Shaanxi History Museum, 1995, p. 8.)
- In *Dunhuang Art*, Duan Wenjie writes, "Dong You of the Song dynasty observed, 'Human figures are painted in exuberance and in full bloom.... This is the Tang style. It is often said that Lady Yang had a delicate frame in full bloom. After seeing the paintings, I can appreciate what Master Han has described about the past, the arched eyebrows and plummy cheeks. It was the Tang fashion to admire plump figures'" (Duan, Wenjie. *Dunhuang Art: through the eyes of Duan Wenjie*. Ed. Chung Tan. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994. Page 150. Also available online: http://www.ignca.nic.in/ks_19.htm)

An Lushan

While An Lushan is not the central focus of this unit, more information about his background and motivations may be helpful. An Lushan is often described as of Turkic or Sogdian ethnicity. While he was not Islamic, the name "An" later became associated with ethnic groups in Central Asia who did later convert to the Muslim religion. These groups had never been won over to a Confucian ideology that placed one secular emperor at the top of an administrative hierarchy and sent taxes and tribute to the capital. An Lushan was powerful because he controlled three contiguous areas northeast of Chang'an, and he had been allowed to maintain control of these troops for at least a decade. Eventually, he led 200,000 troops. The exact nature of his relationship with Yang is the subject of some debate. In the popular imagination, some of the association of An Lushan and Yang Guifei was because both were portrayed as hefty, a body-type that might have been linked to what was perceived, from the Han Chinese point of view, as being of similar foreign extraction.

The Tale of Genji

Students are often confused about three basic facts in Murasaki's *The Tale of Genji*: 1) *The Tale of Genji* is written about two hundred years after Bai Juyi's poem about Yang Guifei; 2) Genji is a fictional character; and 3) all of *The Tale of Genji* occurs in Japan.

It is useful to explain how Murasaki knew this Chinese source. Murasaki lived in the Heian Period (794-1185). She started writing about Genji about the year 1000. Kyoto, the capital city of Japan at that time, was modeled after the Chinese capital of Chang'an, with similar parallel streets, gardens, and architecture. The life of aristocratic Japanese women was also somewhat similar to that of Tang Chang'an, even though that court life had largely disappeared in China by the year 1000.

Aristocratic women in Heian Japan were highly educated, clearly for the purposes of marriage alliances. Murasaki and some other court women, such as the famous writer Sei Shonagon, could read poetry written in Chinese characters, even if they knew no spoken Chinese. Manuscripts from China entered Japan and were recopied, including illustrations.

Readings and Visuals

The unit allows students to synthesize material from different disciplines. Secondary sources are used for an overview and balanced by close analysis of clusters of interdisciplinary texts of one time and place.

Sections A and B below are essential student readings. Section C offers a series of visual representations of Yang Guifei. Section D offers additional readings for instructors and/or interested students.

A. Tang Poetry: Essential Student Readings

“Interlude: Xuanzong and Yang the Prized Consort” in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, Stephen Owen, ed. and trans. New York: Norton, 1996. Pages 441-457.

Most important selections:

- Bo Juyi (Bai Juyi in pinyin; 772-846), “Song of Lasting Pain” (Sometimes translated as “Song of Everlasting Regret”)
- Chen Hong (early ninth century): “An Account to Go with the ‘Song of Lasting Pain.’”
- Bo Juyi, “The Girl Who Danced the Whirl.”


B. *The Tale of Genji*: Essential Student Readings

Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Trans. Royall Tyler. New York: Viking, 2001. Chapter I: “Kiritsubo: The Paulownia Pavilion,” pages 3-18.

Alternate translation: Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Trans. Edward Seidensticker. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

The Tyler translation has been selected because of its reputation for accuracy. The translation by Edward Seidensticker can also be used with confidence; in some ways Seidensticker may be more accessible to students. Arthur Waley’s translation is even more readable than Seidensticker’s, but it has often been criticized for inaccurate or incomplete translations.

C. Slide/Powerpoint Presentation and Discussion

 [download Powerpoint presentation](#) (We recommend saving this file to your computer instead of immediately opening it in your web browser: right click on the link, select "Save Target As," save the file as a "Microsoft PowerPoint Slide Show" or .ppt file.)

The following images can be presented in class. The instructor should not lecture but rather identify the pieces and ask the students questions for discussion.

With noted exceptions, the images and objects presented here are from the Tang dynasty during Yang Guifei's lifetime. This distinguishes them from the written materials by Bai Juyi, Chen Hong, and Murasaki, which were written after Yang's death. A key question is to what extent the visual representations conflict with the written sources. The statues in Dunhuang were created by Buddhists, living in an area far from the capital city, in a similar cultural area to the ones where An Lushan (and "the whirl") came from.

Students can use evidence from the visual representations of Yang Guifei in the essay assignment described in the Student Activities section below, using the same care as treating the written sources.

Click on thumbnails for larger images.



Photo: Fay
Beauchamp

1. Statue of Yang Guifei sold in a San Francisco shop in 2000, given here to allow students to contrast westernized conventions of female beauty and sensuality with the Tang dynasty statue.



Photo: © Xiang
Gang Lianhe
Chubanshe

2. Standing woman (traditionally identified as similar to Yang Guifei), Tang dynasty, excavated 1959, Shaanxi Province.

Tricolor-glazed pottery figures have been dated to the period 712-756 because of coins in the same tomb near Xi'an. Ask students to list words that give their impression of the woman, then to describe details that substantiate their adjectives. The discussion leads to discussion of "cultural relativism" of such words as beautiful or sensual, and may also lead to "reading" her gesture and position of her head compared to Buddhist statues of the time where hand gestures (mudras) have coded meanings. Students will contradict one another with their interpretations but some

answers will be better supported with attentive description of details of her dress, hair arrangement, facial expression, feet, etc.



3. Tang dynasty mural from Dunhuang, illustrating court ladies with the heavy style attributed to the fashion set by Yang Guifei.

4. Bodhisattva, Cave 45, High Tang (705-780).



Photo: © Xiang
Gang Lianhe
Chubanshe

This statue is described as having “the full figure and graceful posture of a woman. Moreover, the hair is tied high in a bun, with hairpins and decorations typical of the palace ladies.” (Duan, Wenjie. *Dunhuang Art: through the eyes of Duan Wenjie*. Ed. Chung Tan. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994. Page 150. Also available online: http://www.ignca.nic.in/ks_19.htm) Ask students to compare the face, pose, and stance depicted here with that of the statue of the standing woman identified as Yang Guifei (image #2). Why would Buddhists in Western China admire court ladies at this time? Dunhuang is the site of caves created for Buddhist worship along the Silk Roads and is in western China. Bodhisattvas are semi-divine beings that defer the state of Nirvana in order to help others.



Photo: © Xiang
Gang Lianhe
Chubanshe

5. Bodhisattva in Dunhuang from the Northern Wei Period (386-534).

Note: This image is from before the Tang dynasty and is included so that students realize that Buddhas and Bodhisattvas were not always depicted as plump. Body type changes from place to place and over time.



Photo: © Xiang
Gang Lianhe
Chubanshe

6. Second Bodhisattva from Cave 45 in Dunhuang High Tang (705-780).

The Second Bodhisattva shows that the heavier face appears in more than one statue in Cave 45 and reinforces the difference with # 5.



Photo: Fay
Beauchamp

7. Photo of a modern sculpture of Genji showing plumpness and similar hairstyle to the Dunhuang Bodhisattvas. Almost any illustration of Genji from any period will show similar characteristics, including those in the Tyler and Seidensticker editions. (For more illustrations of Genji, see Community College of Philadelphia Professor Diane Freedman's website:

<http://faculty.ccp.cc.pa.us/faculty/dfreedman/genji/genji.htm>

)



Photo: Freer
Gallery of Art,
Smithsonian
Institution,
Washington,
D.C., Purchase,
F1957.14 (detail)

8. Painting by Qian Xuan (1235-1307) of the Yuan dynasty, *Yang Guifei Mounting a Horse*, owned by the Freer Gallery, Washington, D.C. (Click on thumbnail for larger image.)

What is different about how Yang Guifei is depicted here?
How have the centuries between her lifetime and 1300
changed how she is viewed?

D. Additional Readings for Instructors and/or Students

Additional readings are marked according to the star* system:

*** Most important

** Recommended

*** Bai Juyi's "Song of the Lute," Burton Watson, trans and ed. *Columbia Book of Chinese Poetry: From Early Times to the Thirteenth Century*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.

This poem, written in 815, gives readers a fuller sense of women's status, with a lower-class character making marital and economic decisions that belie the dominant stereotype. It is a moving poem in a beautiful translation that also provides an insight into Bai Juyi's sympathetic attitudes toward women.

***Murasaki's "Akashi" chapter from *The Tale of Genji*. Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Trans. Royall Tyler. New York: Viking, 2001.

Alternate translation: Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Trans. Edward Seidensticker. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

The "Akashi" chapter can be assigned along with the first chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, or it can stand by itself as an independent narrative. The "Akashi" chapter presents Genji as an ambiguous figure who is motivated by political and economic considerations as well as desire in his pursuit of women. Bai Juyi's "Song of the Lute" is referred to in this chapter by characters who use the poem to justify their actions. In an essay assignment or an open-book exam, ask students to compare uses of music in "Song of the Lute" and the "Akashi" chapter, or to compare Yang Guifei and Genji.

*** Mack, Maynard, ed. *The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.

The Norton Anthology of World Masterpieces, Expanded Edition includes excellent introductions and selections of Tang dynasty poetry including short poems by Bai Juyi, Du Fu and Li Bai. It includes the “ Akashi” chapter from *The Tale of Genji* and others but not the first chapter. It also includes Zeami’s Noh play *Haku Rakuten* about Bai Juyi’s influence on Japanese poetry.

** Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

This is a good introductory secondary source on China by a respected contemporary historian. For an interdisciplinary course, the book’s color art reproductions and maps are very useful and Ebrey provides an excellent overview.

** Varley, Paul. *Japanese Culture*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000.

This is a good secondary text on Japan for students, by another respected contemporary historian. The book has the virtue of a good interdisciplinary approach that includes photographs of the Horyuji temple, for example. The text offers good background for students interested in Murasaki.

Student Activities

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Key Essay Assignment:

Give out this assignment two weeks in advance of the essay’s due date to allow for study of the readings and artwork. The study or discussion questions that follow the essay assignment are “pre-writing exercises” designed to help students sort through the material. The instructor should be careful not to discuss the material too extensively in class so that students can form their own insights.

*Based on the readings in Owen’s anthology, the first chapter of *The Tale of Genji*, and the visual texts given in sections A, B, and C of the Readings section above, take a stand as to whether you agree with the Emperor Xuanzong’s court officials who executed Yang Guifei in 756, blaming her for the An Lushan Rebellion. In a well-constructed essay, argue your stand persuasively using close analysis of the written and visual texts.*

Consider the following as you would witnesses at a jury trial. How reliable are they? Why might they have conflicting views? What insights do they offer? What are their biases?

*Bai Juyi
Chen Hong*

*Murasaki Shikibu**Creators of visual Tang dynasty representations of Yang Guifei**Study or discussion questions for “Song of Lasting Pain”*

- What is the impression of Yang Guifei created in the first seven stanzas? What words and phrases create this impression?
- What is the poem saying about parents’ attitudes about having daughters? How much can a poem written about sixty years after the fact be used to gauge social attitudes?

Study or discussion questions for Chen Hong’s “An Account to Go with the “Song of Lasting Pain.”

- The first sentence reads, “During the Kaiyuan Reign, the omens of the Stair Stars showed a world at peace and there were no problems throughout all the land within the four circling seas” (Owen p. 448)
- Questions: Is it possible that the “world” was at peace and there were no problems? What is the effect of Chen’s rhetoric? Why does he begin this way?
- After saying that the Emperor’s Empress and previous first consort have died, Chen calls the Emperor “fretful and displeased.”
- Questions: What are the denotation and connotation of “fretful”? What other word could Chen have used instead of “displeased”? What opinion of the Emperor are you forming from these words?
- Yang Guifei is called “coy.” What are the denotation and connotation of “coy”? What opinion of Yang Guifei does Chen seem to have of Yang Guifei? What other words back up your thoughts about Chen?
- Compare/contrast Bai Juyi’s and Chen’s attitudes. Note that the two are contemporaries.

Study or discussion questions for Bai Juyi’s “The Girl Who Danced the Whirl”

- How are the actions and motivations of Yang Guifei and An Lushan associated by parallel phrases in the poem?
- Both Yang Guifei and An Lushan are described dancing “the whirl” in front of the Emperor. The whirl is a Central Asian dance said here to have come from Sogdiana, the area immediately west of China. Why might this dance be significant to the legend of Yang Guifei?

Study or discussion questions for Chapter One of The Tale of Genji.

- What is the effect of beginning the chapter with characters referring to the “example” of Yokihi (Yang Guifei) (Tyler, p. 3)? What is the effect of Murasaki’s allusions to Bai Juyi’s “Song of Lasting Pain” in forming the readers’ impressions of Genji’s mother and her relationship to the Japanese emperor? What details from Bai Juyi does Murasaki use and what type of details does she exclude?

- What motivations does Murasaki give to the court ladies surrounding Genji's mother for disliking her? How might these motivations show Murasaki's perspective as a woman with knowledge of court life?
- How is the character of Genji's mother different from Yang Guifei? How is Genji himself similar to Yang Guifei?

Further Reading

Beauchamp, Fay. "From Creation Myths to Marriage Alliances: Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Murasaki's Akashi Chapter." *Education About Asia*, 6 (2001): 20-26.

This article suggests ways for teachers to use a comparison between Murasaki's chapter and Shakespeare's play in a world literature or humanities class.

Dunhuang Art through the Eyes of Duan Wenjie. Edited and introduction by Tan Chung. New Delhi: Abhinav Publications, 1994. Also available online: http://www.ignca.nic.in/ks_19.htm

This book gives an excellent description of almost 500 Dunhuang caves, with a good set of color reproductions, but is hard to locate outside of research university libraries. Pages 150-151 illustrate the influence of Yang Guifei on portrayal of Tang dynasty Bodhisattvas.

Graham, Masako Nakagawa. *The Yang Kuei-Fei Legend In Japanese Literature*. Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1998. Foreword by Victor Mair.

This book draws upon sources only available in Chinese and Japanese to give a full analysis of the myriad painting and works of literature based on Yang Guifei over the centuries, both in Japan and China. Chapters 1-4 are valuable to instructors and include descriptions of the introduction of Bai Juyi's poetry to Japan.

Mair, Victor H. Ed. *The Columbia History of Chinese Literature*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2001.

Chapter 54 "The Reception of Chinese Literature in Japan" includes discussion of Yang Guifei, pp. 1086-87. Note that Mair's Columbia anthologies of Chinese literature include many works about Yang Guifei, offering alternate translations to Stephen Owen.

Mann, Susan L. "Myths of Asian Womanhood." *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 59 No. 4, November 2000, pp. 835-862.

Mann pairs Yang Guifei and stories of Mu Lan and sets these stories in a framework where many historical women were blamed for disasters over the centuries, before as well as after the Tang dynasty. Strong women such as Mu Lan keep surfacing as the exception.

Murasaki Shikibu. *The Tale of Genji*. Translated by Royall Tyler. New York: Viking, 2001.

Additional chapters from the text can be additional reading.

Pulleyblank, Edwin G. *The Background of the Rebellion of An Lushan*. London: Oxford University Press, 1955.

Pulleyblank has conducted the research on An Lushan used by secondary sources to describe him; he has a chapter on his possible ethnicity and the conflicting accounts of his parents and family background, for example. More recent scholars have challenged Pulleyblank's emphasis on An Lushan's "foreign" origins.

Quest for Eternity: Chinese Ceramic Sculptures from the People's Republic of China. Los Angeles County Museum of Arts, and Chronicle Books: 1987.

The following illustrations are of particular note and augment the ones discussed above:

- Woman with a loose chignon, Tang dynasty, excavated 1955, Shaanxi Province. Page viii and 140 (catalog description).
- Woman with a high chignon, Tang dynasty, excavated 1955, Shaanxi Province. Page 56 and 140 (catalog description).
- Standing women, Tang dynasty, excavated 1959, Shaanxi Province. Page 86 and 138 (catalog description). These two tricolor-glazed pottery figures have been identified as from the period 712-756 because of coins in the same tomb near Xi'an.

The Silk Road. Prod. Isao Tamai. Dir. Junzo Tagawa. Videocassette. Central Park Media, 1990. Also available on DVD.

This is a magnificent series available in upscale video outlets (Video Library in Philadelphia.) Tape One has images of the location of Yang Guifei's bath in China and quotes Bai Juyi. Tape Three on Dunhuang provides an excellent commentary on these Buddhist caves accompanied by extraordinary visual close-ups of Tang dynasty sculpture and paintings that have survived with clear colors intact.

Additional materials on and by Bai Juyi and Murasaki are too numerous to list.

7. Acknowledgments

These teaching materials have evolved over a six-year period since 1997. That year, I collected materials on Yang Guifei on a Silk Road field trip organized by the Asian Studies Development Program of the East-West Center of Hawaii and led by art historian Steven Goldberg.

In 1998, a group of faculty was introduced to the Yang Guifei Chinese materials by Professor Paul Rouzer, and the Japanese materials by Professor Thomas Rimer at a seminar funded by the U. S. Department of Education Title VI project at Community College of Philadelphia.

In giving workshops in a series of colleges in China in 1999 in a community college project funded by the Ford Foundation, I found that the legends of Yang Guifei and Bai Juyi's poetry were very widely known, including Chinese whose formal education had little study of poetry. It

would be an interesting study of how this legend informs current Chinese attitudes toward women, for example in *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*. In *Madame Mao*, Anchee Min refers to the legend, comparing Mao Zedong's wife to Yang Guifei. But that is a different unit.