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Research on the Gest Library “Cribbing Garment” A Very Belated Update

ANDREW H. PLAKS

The inauguration of the new East Asian Library of Princeton University during the 2000–2001 academic year brought to the minds of old-timers like myself nostalgic thoughts of halcyon days spent wandering the aisles of the old Gest Library, decades earlier, under the benevolent yet critical eye of some of the giants of twentieth-century Sinology. It was a different era in the world of learning, one in which research was still conducted with such primitive instruments as card catalogues, pencils, and three-by-five note cards. Browsing was done with the feet, not the fingers. Whether in the wire-mesh cages of the second floor enclave in Firestone, the gracious wood-paneled passageways of Jones, or the lofty towers of Palmer, one literally breathed in the heady aroma of old Chinese books, redolent with the pungent tang of camphor and the musty smell of mouldering paper. The only Annex to which one needed resort was situated just across Nassau Street, and it provided sustenance of a more material nature.

In those years, every day spent exploring the hidden recesses of the library brought us into intoxicating proximity to the celebrated Gest Rare Book Collection, with its untold wonders cloaked in legends of mad bibliophiles and Manchu princesses. On certain occasions we were allowed

to cross the threshold of the inner sanctum to marvel at its great yellow-bound repositories of palace records, its strange wood-encased Tibetan and Mongolian sutras, the oddly oblong green volumes of the "Hishi copies." Among these treasures one of the most exotic and mysterious was the famous Gest "cribbing garment" or as the tunic-length silk jacket was more commonly known to us, with considerable exaggeration of its actual length, the "cheating robe." (See figure 1.) At regular intervals the robe (or "gown") was brought out for inspirational talks on the glories of old Chinese literary civilization, and for some extended periods of time it was left on public display in its own glass case conspicuously placed at the entry to the Jones Hall stacks. There we could gaze with fascination at the densely-packed essays inscribed on virtually every inch of its surface area, in characters so tiny and compact that, from a distance, they seemed to merge into the



1. "Cribbing garment." Approximate measurements: back length, 72.5 cm.; width at underarm, 69 cm.; width at hem, 76 cm.; width across the back from sleeve opening to sleeve opening, 205 cm. Photograph of the object in the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University by Bruce White, courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

optical illusion of a plain gray cloth. (See figure 2.) Though we were aware that pieces of a similar nature had turned up in a few other collections of Chinese artifacts around the world, we believed at the time that the Gest Library specimen was perhaps unique, if not as the sole exemplar of this type of object, then at least for the fineness of its execution and, even more, for the highly polished examples of imperial examination essays that it contained.¹

In the spring and fall of 1978, a project was launched with the aim of learning as much as possible about this rare possession and using it as a special resource for the study of the classical prose of the late-imperial period and the examination-essay form in particular. The curator of the Gest Library in those years, Dr. James Shih-kang T'ung, had published a detailed description of the physical specifications and the contents of the "cribbing garment" in the *Princeton University Library Chronicle* nearly twenty years earlier, but we wanted to know more about this strange piece: where did it come from, when was it produced, and what could it tell us about the historical and intellectual significance of the so-called "eight-legged" (*bagu*) essay form?² With the support and encouragement of Professor Frederick W. Mote and a generous grant from Princeton's Committee on Research in the Humanities and Social Sciences, we commissioned the Photographic Services section of Firestone Library to prepare a set of enlarged photographic reproductions of the robe and its inscribed texts using the very best of 1970's technology. These forty-nine oversize sheets (approximately 36 x 52 cm) were then photocopied and used as basic reading material in a graduate seminar conducted in the first semester of that year. In the course of our weekly sessions, the students and their young teacher struggled to become accustomed to the personal writing style of the scribe—a style somewhere between the practiced hand of the professional copyist and the less elegant scrawl of abbreviated "popular characters" (*suzi*). Gradually we trained ourselves to wrestle with the syntactic and rhetorical complexities of eight-legged essay composition at its best, a reading exercise that requires one to wrap one's mind around dauntingly long chains of parallel constructions in order to follow the author's argument on great issues of Confucian morality or statecraft—all this woven around the core of a fragmentary canonic quotation set as the topic of a given examination.

此世學遠於之有本方之不與材... 天下之爭昂其爭固不致... 民可後存虛願乎此際之推... 一推之擊之而道生矣是在君子... 公之心而加四海其期以乎天下... 射人以始一放志再以此在... 夫不由下而推之場至于... 三耳乃至心然骨寄之而... 其全矣而未也又性而... 此惡以時惡也何不... 兩有以畏亦危于身之... 百後而欲前急不... 之抑也 今下十六... 而庫既武備惟命不于... 其能與此而于其不... 之惡以彼道之計際... 音故就其以甲之且... 朝夕與道而毛重... 其何身大捕人... 其所以知之元有... 其而有以當天下... 多信治也則... 所所為以見... 而山有... 不于... 矣以...

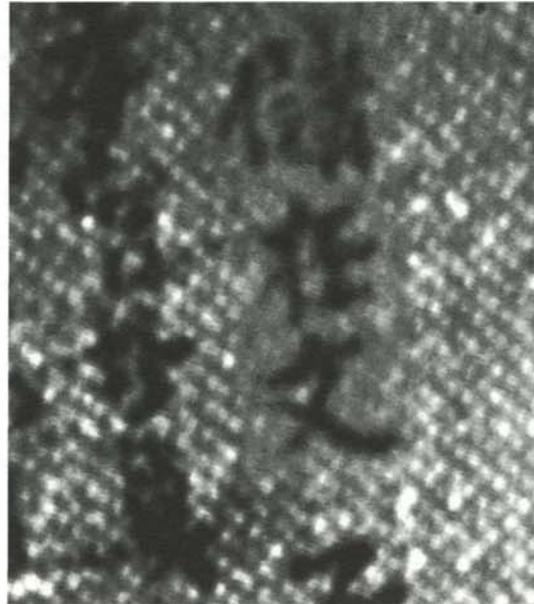
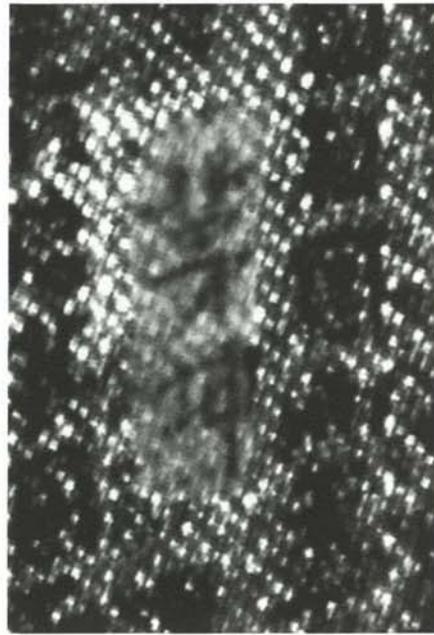
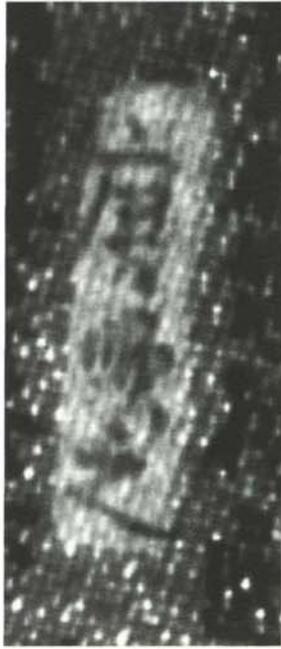
2. "Flyhead script" used to write essays on the "cribbing garment." Section shown (front outside of gown just below the left underarm) contains essays on the Daxue (Great Learning). Photograph of the object in the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection, Princeton University by Bruce White, courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

Around the same time, we began to treat the artifact as an object of study in its own right. Poring over the 722 essays inscribed on almost the entire surface of the cloth, we gradually observed and recorded details that might have a bearing on the outstanding questions regarding its original provenance and purpose.³ We noted that the headings inserted to separate the essays from one another took a variety of forms: many reduced the examination topic from the full or partial citation of a line or phrase from the relevant canonic text [the topics appearing on the robe are drawn only from the *Daxue* (Great Learning) and the *Zhongyong* (Doctrine of the Mean)] to a variety of shorthand notations. Some of these referred to the entire chapter (*yizhang*), the entire paragraph (*yiduan*) or the entire section (*yijie*) surrounding the topic-quote, or specified a certain number of sentences (*ju*) in the canonic passage. Some entries had no "topic-tab" at all; others simply made a ditto reference to the topic of the previous essay (*qianti*) or identified additional exemplars as "the second" or the "third" on a given topic. As we focused our attention on these notations, we saw that for almost every essay a thick ink-line—sometimes red and sometimes black—had been brushed in before the first line of the piece. It did not take long to figure out that the red markers were used only in the first portion of the robe inscriptions, the section devoted to examination topics taken from the *Great Learning*, with the black ones reserved for the essays explicating citations from the *Doctrine of the Mean*. At first these seemed to serve no function other than to make a visual separation between the individual pieces. But upon closer examination with the aid of a strong magnifying glass and a high-intensity light, we discovered a few instances in which the thinner ink swabs (those in red) did not completely hide the presence of additional characters written underneath. In ten or fifteen of these cases one could manage with some difficulty to actually read the characters, and we made the startling discovery that the copyist of this supposedly illicit item of cheating paraphernalia had taken the curious step of disclosing the names of the authors of all the model essays he had selected for inclusion. A bit of checking in the relevant historical sources soon revealed that these were not the random names of obscure individuals. They included in their ranks some of the most illustrious literati and prose stylists of the Ming (1368–1644) period, among them such names as Tang Shunzhi (1507–1560), Gui Youguang (1507–1571), and Mao

Kun (1512–1601), as well as the leading Qing (1644–1911) scholars Li Guangdi (1642–1718) and Fang Bao (1668–1749), and acknowledged Qing masters of eight-legged essay composition such as Xiong Bolong (1649 *jinshi*), Chu Zaiwen (1709 *jinshi*), Han Tan (1637–1704) and Zhang Yushu (1642–1711) (For images of the names of some of these literati as they appear on the “cribbing garment,” see figure 3.) Collating the names that we were able to read on the robe with those appearing in extant printed collections of examination essays, I was elated to find that the list was nearly identical to the roster of eminent essayists whose works were selected and presented as models of excellence in the highly influential early-Qing compendium *Qinding sishuwen* (Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized Edition) submitted to the throne by Fang Bao in 1737.⁴

These initial findings provided tantalizing new insight into the historical and cultural significance of the selection of eight-legged essays assembled on the robe, but they left the most puzzling questions regarding its dating and purpose unanswered. Back in the late 1970s I began to pursue several different lines of inquiry with the aim of shedding light on some of these mysteries. From the very outset, my attempt to determine a date of origin for this set of texts presented formidable obstacles. To begin with, we did not even have any clear idea at what point the object had been acquired and incorporated into the Gest Collection, as no record of its purchase or shipping could be located at that time in the known archival materials related to the old Gest/Gillis enterprise. Lacking this, I turned my sights back to the artifact itself, trying to zero in on its original date of fabrication by applying various methods of technical investigation to the ink and the weave of the cloth. Several experts of the time in such fields as ink and dye analysis, fiber chemistry, and the history of textiles were consulted.⁵ An array of cutting-edge techniques of the day was proposed, from thermoluminescence to carbon dating, but I was soon informed that fibers and dyes could not be accurately identified with any particular time and place until the advent of the keeping of industrial records in comparatively recent times, and the use of radioactive carbon to date the ink was dismissed as useless within a narrow time frame of just one or two hundred years.

This avenue of research having come to a dead-end, I then shifted to a more traditional mode of philological detective work, going through



3. Images (visible under red-ink swabs) of names of Ming literati: top row, left to right, Tang Shunzhi #309 and Mao Kun #037, and of Qing literati: second row, left to right, Xiong Bolong #106 and Chu Zaiwen #001. Infrared reflectography by Norman Muller and digital framing by Paula Hulick. Photographs courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

the inscribed texts word-by-word in search of taboo characters (*huizi*) and checking suspicious written forms against the basic lists of standard substitutions.⁶ The fact that I found no smoking gun of altered transcriptions that could peg the copying of the robe-texts to a specific period came as no great surprise: after all, the accepted characterization of the robe as an item of contraband should by all reason have made the observance of dynastic name-taboo pointless—unless practiced by the scribe out of sheer force of habit. Through this period I also continued to collect information on other “cheating robes” then known to exist in the hope of shedding comparative light on the Princeton exemplar. However, in those years only a handful of similar objects had been described in the scholarly literature, and, as I have noted above, none of these were close enough to the Gest cribbing garment in contents and workmanship to support any speculative conclusions about the general phenomenon.

This brought my primary focus of study back to the relation between the actual essay texts inscribed on the robe and the surrounding literary context of Ming and Qing classical-prose writing in general and the eight-legged examination essay in particular. The field of eight-legged essay studies in those days was, to say the least, rather marginal. When I first began to pursue this topic as a research objective, and when I compiled reading lists on these materials for Princeton graduate seminars on the examination essay and its relation to the classical-prose genres (*guwen*), the entire bibliography of major and secondary scholarly works barely filled a single page. The situation was not significantly improved when I undertook to write the entry on the “eight-legged essay” (*baguwen*) form for the *Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, and when I prepared a paper on the literary significance in late-Ming culture of the examination essay, the so-called *shuwen* (“contemporary prose”), for a conference on Chinese cultural history held in honor of the retirement of Professor Mote and Professor Ta-tuan Chen from Princeton in 1987.⁷

The only breakthrough of sorts in this initial phase of research arose from the discovery referred to earlier that a significant portion of the essays copied onto the robe exactly matched pieces collected in Fang Bao’s anthology *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized*. Around the same time I also discovered a few additional examples of identical texts in the early-Qing collection entitled *Keyitang yibaiershi mingjia zhiyi*

(Examination Essays by One Hundred Twenty Famous Writers, Keyitang Selection) edited by Yu Changcheng (1685 *jinshi*; preface 1669.)⁸ Presumably these examples of matching texts could have been multiplied by checking the robe essays against a much larger number of printed examination essay collections of the Qing period, but this search proved to be prohibitively time-consuming, inasmuch as the bulk of such materials are not compiled—as is the *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized*—according to the sequence of their topic-citations in the received canonic texts of the Four Books, thus making the cross-checking of essays by key lines a rather hit-and-miss affair.

The discovery of essays in the collections *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized* and the *Examination Essays by One Hundred Twenty Famous Writers, Keyitang Selection* identical to those on the robe, taken together with the birth and *jinshi* dates of the major writers whose names could be deciphered at this initial stage, seemed to set a tentative *terminus a quo* for the robe inscriptions around the early-eighteenth century. At this point, however, my investigation exhausted its momentum, and the competition of other long-term research pushed this project aside for what I thought would be just a year or so, but turned out to be more than two decades. During these years the great riddle of the original intent in inscribing seven hundred-odd essays of fine quality on a thin silk garment remained unsolved. At the very least, though, I already harbored serious doubts about whether, with so many of the model examination essays appearing on the robe widely disseminated in the premier collection of the realm, it could actually have served the presumed purpose of cheating in a real examination situation.

Through the twenty-five years that have sped by since the initiation and discontinuation of this project, the robe has lain peacefully in its plastic and cardboard crypt, oblivious to the events swirling around it in the world outside Jones Hall. In the interim, however, certain developments in the field of Sinological scholarship have emerged that now allow a more informed assessment of some of my earlier observations, and these have led to new findings that, though still far from conclusive, seem sufficient to warrant an updated report. This I offer as my own small contribution to an issue of the *East Asian Library Journal* tacitly—but for obvious reasons not explicitly—dedicated to the honor of the scholar and teacher whose contributions have been paramount in turning the Gest

Library into the preeminent institution of Chinese learning that it has become.

First, our general understanding of the workings of the imperial examination system in both theory and in practice has been sufficiently deepened, thanks to a wealth of new studies that go significantly beyond the "classic" works of earlier generations on the subject, to give a fuller picture of the ideological and administrative details of the institution, as well as the real-life experiences of those masses of men who underwent its rigors. These include comprehensive volumes such as Benjamin Elman's *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* and specialized studies such as Kai-wing Chow's "Writing for Success."⁹ Many of these accounts have focused particular attention on the phenomenon of cheating on various rungs of the examination ladder of success, a situation we now recognize to have been more widespread than one might have believed possible given the dense network of control and supervisory agencies surrounding the conduct of the examinations. The relevant sources documenting abuses of this sort include, in addition to a very large corpus of anecdotes in personal memoirs and the collections of jottings known as *biji*, compendia of legal cases and administrative manuals intended for the use of examining magistrates and other functionaries. Some of the most important among these include *Zhiyike suoji* (Miscellaneous Notes on the Examination System), *Qinding kechang tiaoli* (Imperially Authorized Regulations for Examination Grounds), and *Huang Ming gongju kao* (A Study of the Imperial Ming Examination System).¹⁰ In these works we read of a full array of cheating methods of varying degrees of ingenuity, from out-and-out bribery of examiners to obtain essay topics in advance, to more clever tricks for switching papers, employing stand-ins, using servants to hand papers in and out while attending to the candidates' daily needs (presumably bribing guards to look the other way), using secret codes to identify one's paper to a corrupt examiner, and many more.¹¹ One of the most comprehensive catalogues of these practices can be found in an introductory diatribe against debased mores that is delivered at the head of chapter forty-six of the seventeenth-century novel *Xu Jin Ping Mei* (A Sequel to Jin Ping Mei).¹²

In those sources that review actual cases of cheating and prescribe administrative measures to counter them, we are told of penalties for

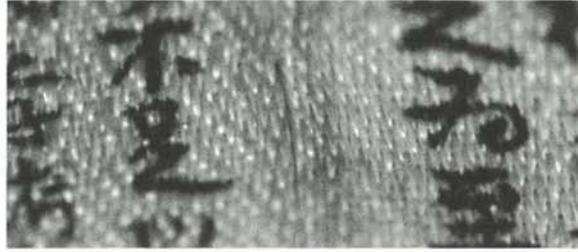
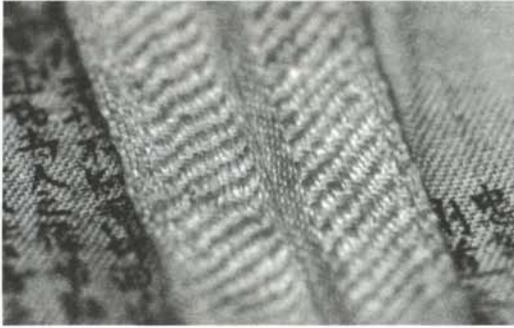
offenses that seem more lenient than one might otherwise assume: sometimes no worse than being barred from sitting for the exams for one or more subsequent rounds—punishment far less severe than my earlier imaginings of dire retribution, even death, for those caught flouting the system. On the other side of the bar, we also read of the arsenal of methods employed by the authorities to detect infractions and to attempt to root out the abuse. In administrative manuals such as *Imperially Authorized Regulations for Examination Grounds*, examiners are warned, among other things, to be on the lookout for different kinds of cloth or paper crib-sheets that could be stuffed into the soles of cloth shoes, hidden in the false bottoms of writing-brush cases or other admissible paraphernalia, or, precisely as is commonly envisioned for the Gest robe, sewn into the lining of clothing worn into the precincts of the examination grounds. The practice is described in a wide range of sources, where it is usually referred to only loosely as the “abuse of carrying in . . . [forbidden materials]” (*huaidai/jiadao . . . zhi bi*). One is tempted to conclude that our silk garment, and quite a few similar specimens that have come to light in recent years, are nothing more or less than material evidence of this ploy. We know that the examination authorities were acutely aware of this practice and were often quite vigilant in catching offenders, because a host of official and personal accounts describe the imposition of strip-searches on candidates, who were sometimes forced to stand naked in the hot summer sun or the biting winter cold while their clothing was checked for forbidden aids. Still, the siren allure of all the social and political advantages of elite status must have proven irresistible to men of weaker character, or to those whose desire to succeed was stronger than their fear of punishment, as we read in a wide variety of literary descriptions.¹³

A second aspect of the history of the Gest cribbing garment that continues to be wrapped in obscurity is the mystery of how and when it came into the possession of Irvin Van Gorder Gillis, the man who acted as book purchasing agent in Beijing for Guion M. Gest, or the hands of whatever dealer from whom he may have acquired it. Shortly after I had returned to the study of the robe in earnest during the summer of 2002, I managed to badger our indefatigable and erudite bibliographer Martin Heijdra into taking the time to rummage through dozens of cartons of archival materials related to the Gest Collection that had come to light

in the process of rebuilding the library facilities in Palmer/Frist Hall. A few days spent in the Princeton University Archives repository in Mudd Library (where the Gest Collection of rare books and the Gest Library Papers are now housed) sifting through piles of old correspondence, invoices, purchase orders, and packing slips produced no concrete evidence about the acquisition of this object—though some of the letters exchanged between I. V. Gillis and Nancy Lee Swann, or between the collectors and an assortment of booksellers and agents, provided some moments of amusement with their occasionally peevish outbursts of impatience. Several weeks later, by sheer coincidence, a visiting scholar named Dr. Su Chen, head of the East Asian Library of the University of Minnesota, made a brief visit to the campus in pursuit of materials related to her own interest in the sojourn of the Gest Collection at McGill University from 1926 to 1936. Having been alerted to our own searches in the same archives, she recognized the significance of a 1932 letter she just happened to come across—in a remarkable instance of serendipity—from Commander Gillis to a J. A. Doyle in the San Francisco office of Mr. Gest's company, mentioning the delivery of a "silk gown covered with Chinese characters."¹⁴ There seems to be little doubt that this notice refers to our renowned cheating garment, but unfortunately no further information on the circumstances of its acquisition is provided.

The only avenue of investigation that remained to be explored was to go directly to the robe itself in an attempt to unlock some of its stubbornly held secrets. After all those years of neglect, I dusted off the old photographic sheets and began, once again, to pore over the eight-legged essay texts. In the process of plowing steadily through the essays, I observed certain features that had apparently not been noticed before, some of which I wish to report in the following pages.

Let us begin with the physical shape and texture of the garment. When I first disturbed the robe from its long repose and subjected it to an initial reexamination with the naked eye—my own eyes supported by those of certain interested colleagues in the Department of East Asian Studies—small details of its weaving and sewing attracted my attention, such things as: the way in which the separate panels of fabric are joined at the seams, the presence of something like basting stitches in a few places, the pulling of a red thread through the cloth in one spot.¹⁵ (See figures 4 and 5.) Of particular interest to me were the finished edges of

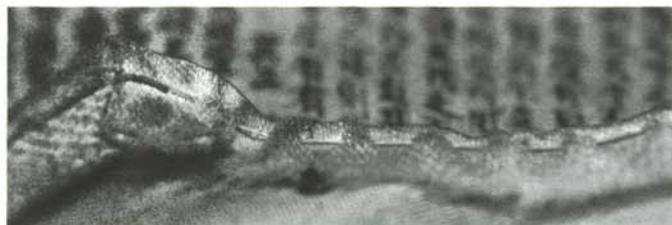


4. Robe detail: external seam and inside midseam of the "cribbing garment. Photograph by Paula Hulick. Courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.



5. Robe detail: red thread.
 Photograph by Paula Hulick. Courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

the cloth, showing a very regular pattern of parallel diagonal lines that seemed to my untrained eye to possibly bear the marks of a machine loom. (See figure 6.) This would, if verified, put the fabrication of the material of the robe in the age of industrial weaving. In order to obtain a professional assessment of these and other features, we needed to prepare photographic images of sufficiently high quality to be submitted to technical experts in textile analysis. After a first attempt at amateur digital photography with a hand-held camera belonging to Susan Naquin, the chair of East Asian Studies Department, we sought professional assistance from Paula Hulick, an applications specialist at the Educational Technologies Center on the Princeton campus, who used her more advanced equipment to produce close-up shots of the weave of the cloth



6. Robe detail: finished edges.

Photograph by Paula Hulick. Courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

with extremely high resolution. (See figure 7.) These images were then transmitted to some of the leading scholarly authorities on the history of Chinese textiles: Verity Wilson of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and Joyce Denney of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. Both concurred, however, in the disappointing conclusion that neither the basic plain-weave of the silk nor the configurations of the seams and edges could afford any datable information sufficient to fix the time of fabrication of the object.

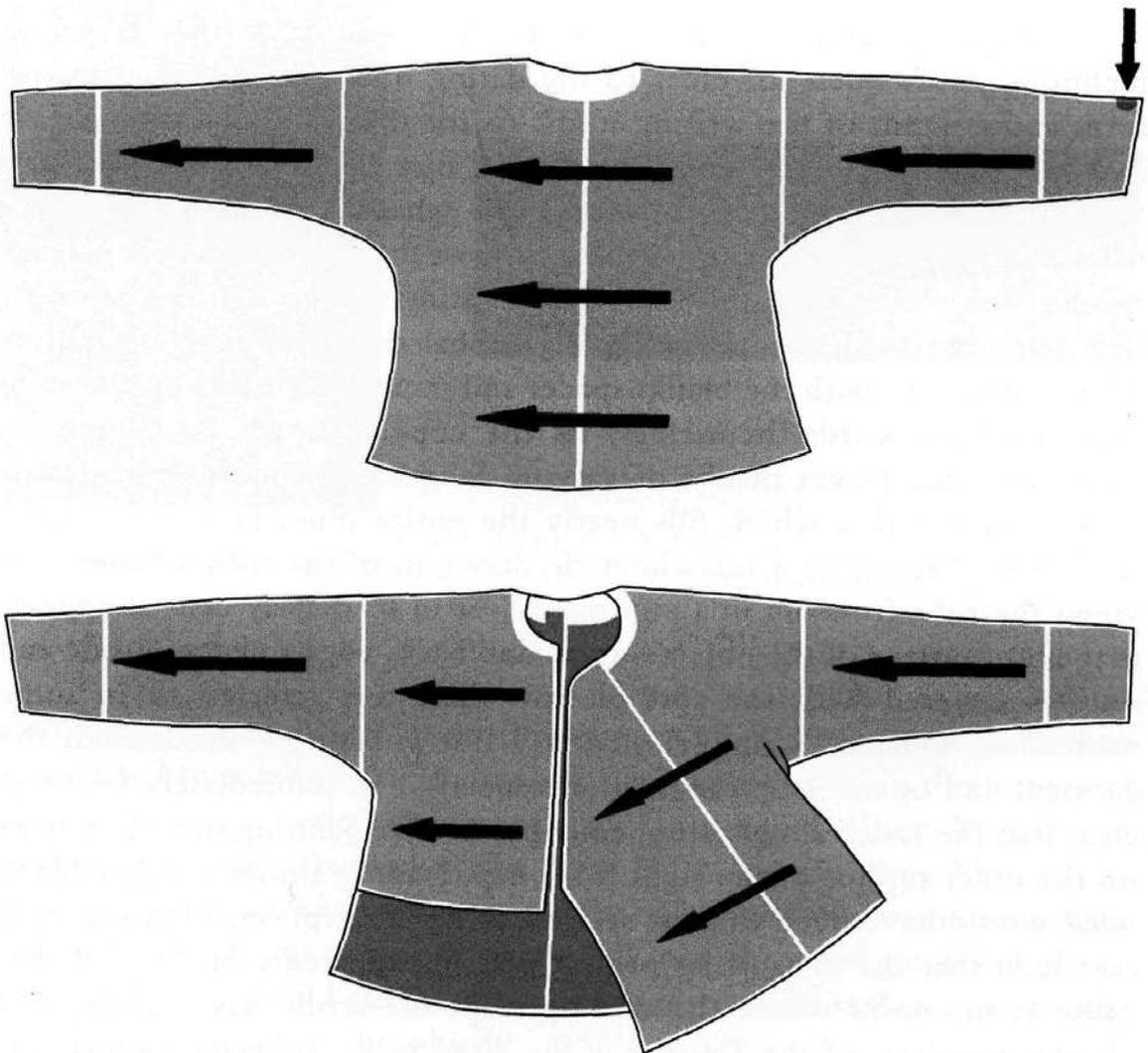


7. Robe detail: plain weave.

Photograph by Paula Hulick. Courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

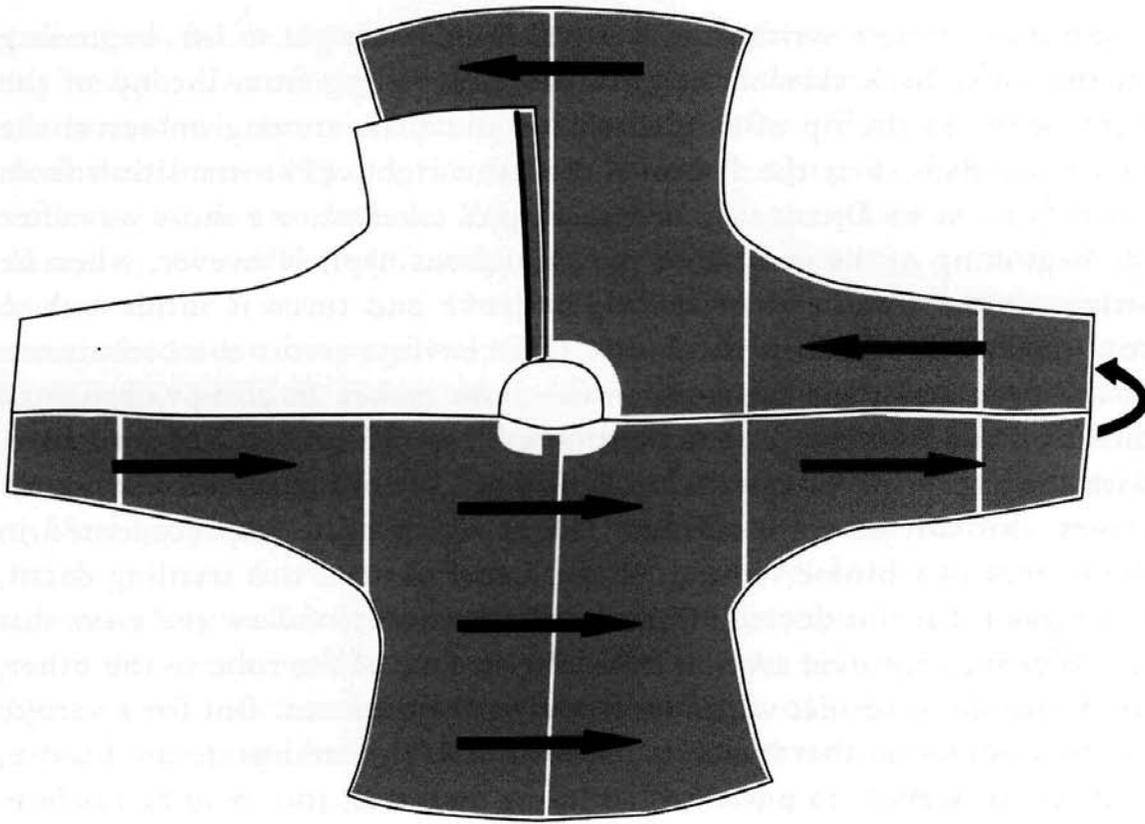
With this line of inquiry effectively closed at current levels of technology, my quest for clues to the dating of the robe turned to the form and content of the writing itself. As for the quality of the scribe's calligraphy, though a cursory glance at the tiny characters may give one the initial impression that they represent what Dr. T'ung dubbed "a marvel of penmanship," a closer inspection of the enlarged reproductions reveals that this is fairly ordinary handwriting.¹⁶ (See figure 2, above.) Instead, some of the more interesting scribal details of the inscriptions have more to do with the blank spaces and incidental marks on the robe than with the words themselves. As the copyist moves from essay to essay, he often leaves blanks of varying length. The most conspicuous empty space is that which fills nearly the entire inner face of the right front flap. (See figure 8 for schematic drawings of the robe.) When one views the robe frontally in a photograph or in its display case, it appears as if every surface of the object—front and back, edge to edge, inside and out—is covered with the sort of tiny characters referred to in some sources as "flyhead" script (*yingtouzi*).¹⁷ But as soon as one unfolds the garment and opens it up for further inspection, it immediately becomes clear that the scribe simply stopped copying after penning just a few lines on the inner surface of the right front flap, leaving almost entirely blank what would have been the last section of his inscription. One can only conclude that the exhausting project was unexpectedly broken off, because at the point where the writing stops the scribe has only reached chapter nineteen of the *Doctrine of the Mean* in his otherwise systematic progression through a sequence of model essays keyed to the order of passages in the two canonic texts.

A similar oddity is seen at the spot where the scribe comes to the center seam of the inner face of the back of the garment. Here he inserts a marginal note composed of the last few characters of an earlier essay, and then a brief comment directing the user—as far as we can decipher the uncertain words—to look for the end of the section somewhere at the "back seam" (*beifeng*).¹⁸ This makes no sense in terms of the actual sequence of texts on the garment, as the six character essay fragment inserted here clearly relates to a topic taken from chapter ten of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and essays on that subject appear just a short space away on the right side of the inner back panel, nowhere near the "back



8A. Schematic diagrams of the “cribbing garment.” Text reads vertically in columns from right to left, (Figure 8A, top) and moving next to the front outside, again reading vertically from right to left. (Figure 8A, bottom). Drawings by Heather Larkin.

seam” on the other side of the cloth. To compound the mystery, in the area where the essays on the tenth chapter of the *Doctrine of the Mean* do appear the scribe has left a blank line running the entire length of the robe, something he does nowhere else in his huge copying exercise. Could these puzzling details indicate that the robe may have been composed according to a section-by-section layout, perhaps designed by someone else? My own suspicion is that this line may be an instruction not *by* the copyist, but *to* the copyist, directing him to insert the extra



8B. The text continues on the inside back, reading vertically in columns, unconventionally, from left to right and then finally moving to the front inside, again reading in columns, unconventionally, from left to right. Drawing by Heather Larkin.

six characters at this point. In any event, this strange detail, together with a few places where the scribe apparently strikes out an unsatisfactory line here and there—that is, by drawing a black stroke through the unwanted characters (one of course cannot simply erase an ink-on-silk inscription and rewrite in the same spot)—seems to reveal a certain ad hoc manner of execution that may or may not have a bearing on our speculations about the intended use of the garment.

The most curious of these anomalies, however, has to do with a more basic element of the robe inscriptions that has hitherto largely escaped our attention. (To follow the layout of the texts on the robe, see figure 8.) In transcribing the essay texts onto the silk cloth of the robe, the copyist works his way across the surface, just as is required in normal

traditional Chinese writing, in vertical lines *from right to left*, beginning on the outer back side of the garment, proceeding from the tip of the right sleeve to the tip of the left sleeve and then moving on across the two front flaps, first the left one then the right. (The transition from *Great Learning* to *Doctrine of the Mean* topics takes place a short way after the beginning of the outside of the right front flap.) However, when he arrives at the front end of the right sleeve and turns it inside out to continue working across the inside surface—first across the back inside of the robe and then the front inside—he makes an abrupt change of direction and runs his vertical lines *from left to right*. As far as I am aware, with the exception of certain kinds of Chan, i.e. Zen, poems and word-games, this sort of compositional layout seems quite unprecedented in the history of Chinese writing. When I first noticed this startling detail, I imagined that this device might enable the user to follow the essay that straddles the crossover section from one surface of the robe to the other, from outside to inside, without removing the garment. But for a variety of obvious reasons that is clearly impossible. If this strange design feature, as it seems, served no practical function, then this, too, may be taken as support for the speculative view that our famous “cribbing garment” may have been intended for some purpose other than cribbing.

More substantive discoveries remained to be made with respect to the identification of the authors and the analysis of the contents of the essays. Building upon my earlier observation that a significant number of the pieces inscribed on the robe precisely replicated selections in Fang Bao’s *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized*, I now went back and carefully collated every text in the relevant sections of this compendium—it is divided into *juan* according to the chronology of Ming and Qing reigns and the canonic order of the topics in a given section—against the essays found on the robe. In doing so, I uncovered quite a few additional instances of exact equivalence between the authorized imperial collection and our own—very unauthorized—set of copies. When I first became aware of these correspondences back in the 1970s, I had speculated that the *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized* itself might have served as the primary master-text from which our scribe worked. However, this conclusion is clearly unwarranted given the fact that only about ten per cent of the robe-essays are duplicated in this

collection, while, conversely, many of the selections on the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean* in *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized* selections are not found on the robe. The next step would doubtless be to expand the search to other Qing examination essay collections, works such as Yu Changcheng's compilation *Examination Essays by One Hundred Twenty Famous Writers, Keyitang Selection* that I had examined years ago. One additional work that I have recently examined is another imperial collection held in the Gest Collection of rare books entitled *Huang Ming like sishu mojuan pingxuan* (Annotated Selection of Black-Ink Essay Transcriptions by Successful Candidates in Successive Examinations in the Ming) and annotated by Tang Binyin (b. 1568; 1595 *jinshi*), Zhang Nai (1604 *jinshi*), and Huang Ruheng (1558–1626), preface dated 1622.¹⁹ This work has also yielded a few pieces by famous Ming authors that appear in the robe inscriptions—though obviously this seventeenth-century collection cannot help us to identify any Qing examples closer in time to the fabrication of the object. In theory it should be possible to conduct an exhaustive review of all such collections of examination essays to uncover as many examples of texts replicated on the robe as possible with the hope of perhaps nailing down the direct source or sources used by our copyist. But this objective remains beyond practical reach, given the huge number of printed collections of *shuwen* prose extant in libraries around the world, and the inconvenient fact, already noted, that most of these collections are arranged by author, by locale or by examination year, not by the canonic sequence of topics, thus making it prohibitively difficult to check the robe essays that do follow such a sequence.²⁰ Even when one is successful in identifying equivalent essays, moreover, that gives no proof of direct copying from one particular text to robe, inasmuch as the most successful essays, once published, entered the "public domain" and could then be reproduced from printed collection to printed collection. Were one to be intimately attuned to the changing nuances of examination topic selection through the Ming and Qing periods, this information could conceivably provide useful clues for the dating of unidentified pieces, but for the most part the topics appearing on the robe are just the standard partial quotations and phrases characteristic of the system in general. Thus, we can only speculate about the process by which our scribe transferred this large

body of model essays to his silk medium: did he pick and choose from several different sources on his shelf, or did he have a master copy compiled by someone else, perhaps even a complete printed collection, which he simply transcribed onto the cloth of the robe?

In the summer of 2003, a productive new line of inquiry emerged focusing attention on the names entered before each essay and subsequently “blacked out” with a swab or streak of ink. Let us recall, by the way, the manner in which the copyist—or perhaps a subsequent owner—has used red ink to cover up the names prefaced to the entries on *Great Learning* topics, reserving black ink for the *Doctrine of the Mean* selections. Whatever the original purpose of the garment may have been this step makes little sense: if it were intended for cheating, then the little ink-swabs would make the bearer no less culpable, and if not, there would be no reason to hide the names of the famous authors represented—nor would there be any point in using a color-coding device to graphically distinguish the *Great Learning* from the *Doctrine of the Mean* entries, as this could have no practical value for any but the most ignorant of potential users. As I have mentioned earlier, of the dozen or so names I was able to make out with minimal optical aids in 1978, many could be readily identified as well-known scholar-officials who flourished in the Kangxi (1662–1722) and Yongzheng (1723–1735) periods (with the sole exception of a man named Liu Huizu who apparently earned his military *jinshi* degree in 1761).²¹ That seemed to place the left-hand bracket of the time-frame of my search in the Yongzheng reign, to be conservative, or in the early Qianlong (1736–1795) era, if one gives full weight to the lone exception. All of this conveniently matches the year (1737) in which the anthology *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized*, in which so many of these same names figure prominently, was presented to the throne.

In the latest phase of my investigations, I have been able to push this *terminus a quo* significantly forward with the kind assistance of experts in certain new technologies of textual forensics. First, Paula Hulick helped to capture some of the names hidden beneath the red swabs with the same photographic equipment she had used to such effect in preparing digital images for attempting to date the weave of the cloth. Reaching the limits of this technology, she then suggested that her colleague

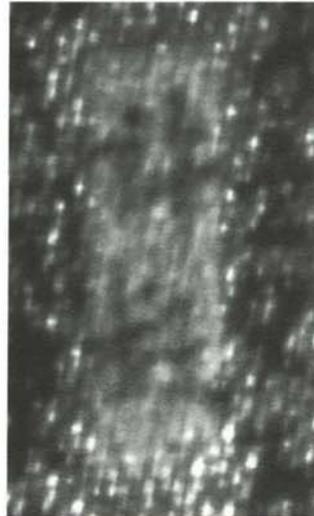
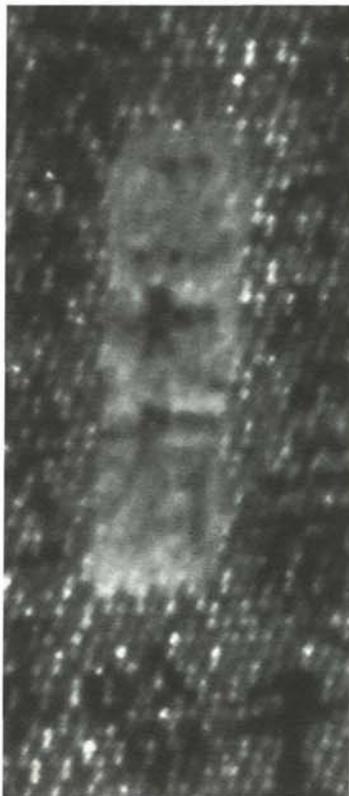
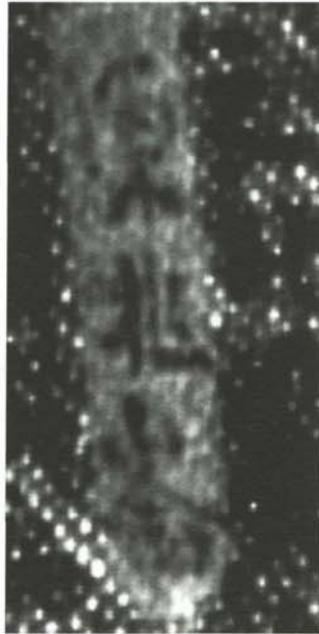
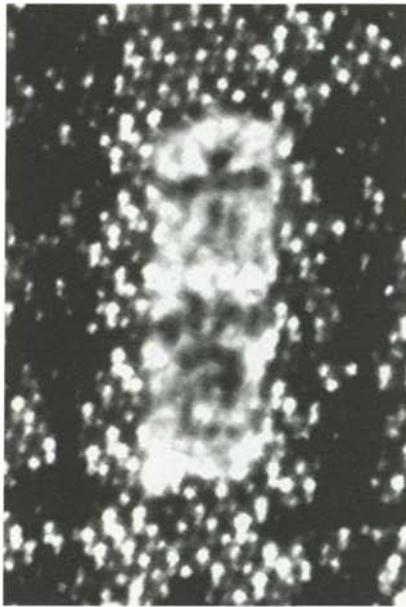
Normal Muller, conservator of the Princeton Art Museum, might have more success applying the technique of infrared reflectography—of the sort used to peel away virtually layers of palimpsest paintings and the like—to the robe inscriptions. Ma Tai-loi and Martin Heijdra graciously consented to the experiment, and Mr. Muller generously gave his time to go over the entire section of the robe containing the red ink-swabs with his infrared camera, recording all the information continuously on a digital video tape. The results were immediately striking, and many of the previously invisible characters miraculously emerged into view as legible, or nearly legible names.

In the following weeks, I painstakingly reviewed the tape frame-by-frame to capture, rotate, and crop the images of the name-tabs, and then applied the wonders of Adobe Photoshop software to enhance the images and assemble a master list of all the red-swabbed names—that is, the authors of many of the four hundred-odd essays on *Great Learning* topics—numerically keyed to their occurrence on the robe. (At this point in the development of the relevant technology, the black ink remains impermeable to “reading” by this process.) The next step was to scrutinize these images one by one on a computer screen. Fiddling with adjustment functions of the Adobe Photoshop software, I was able to come up with a significant number of additional identifications. After exhausting my own powers, I enlisted the help of one of the greatest living decipherers of standard and non-standard Chinese writing: Hai-tao Tang Emeritus Professor of Princeton’s East Asian Studies Department. Sitting together at the computer screen for many hours, we managed to arrive at around one hundred and thirty reasonable guesses, of which seventy-eight could be read with confidence. Our confidence was soon confirmed by the fact that every single one of the names in this latter group could be identified in the standard reference sources for Qing biographical materials. I am appending a list of those writers already identified, plus a separate list of the individuals whose names seem clear enough in the computer-enhanced images but have not yet turned up in the sources consulted in the hope that some readers of this report may recognize them and provide information about their dates and backgrounds. (See appendices 1 and 2, respectively.) In addition, all 405 images of the red-tab names, including even those that are com-

pletely illegible to all of us, have been published on the website of the *East Asian Library Journal* for readers to view and to help us decipher and identify additional names. See <http://www.princeton.edu/~ealj/robe.htm>.

The significance of determining the dates of these authors for our understanding of the origins of the Gest cheating garment should by now be obvious, as the essay collection or collections from which the robe-texts were copied could not have predated the latest of the writers represented. The biographical information derived from this new batch of names has already pushed the earliest date for the robe (or, at least, for its source-collection) significantly forward in time. The list in Appendix One now includes an additional fourteen men who passed their *jinshi* (or otherwise flourished) in the Qianlong period and seven who made the grade during the Jiaqing (1796–1820) reign. Within the roster of Kangxi through Qianlong authors, moreover, there appear certain names of considerable importance for the critical selection and theoretical discussion of examination essays in the Qing period: scholars such as Fang Bao, Chen Zhaolun (1701–1771, 1730 *jinshi*), and Ruan Kuisheng (1727–1789).²² In a handful of tantalizing cases we have evidence that seems to point to scholar-official careers as late as the Daoguang (1821–1850) reign. These include one Zheng Dunyun (if properly identified—the last character in the name looks more like “*yuan*” in the photographic image) who passed his *jinshi* in 1814; a scholar of some renown named Wang Dayou (fl. Daoguang era) who passed the provincial examination in 1816 and later became a pupil of the celebrated mathematician Dai Xu (1806–1860), brother of the famed painter Dai Xi (1801–1860); and a man named Xu Yu (dates unknown) recorded in the historical sources primarily as the husband of an important woman poet named Chen Chai, who seems to have flourished in the Daoguang era.²³ (For a sampling of the red-tab images of the names of Qing-dynasty authors, see figure 9.)

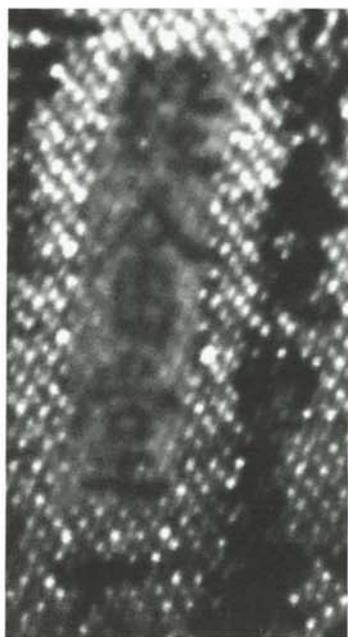
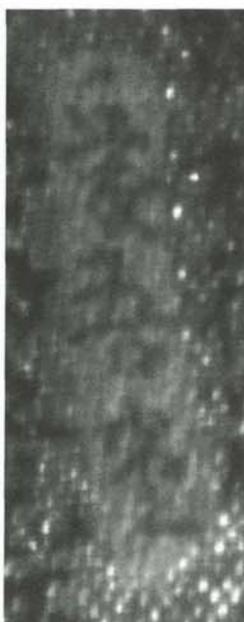
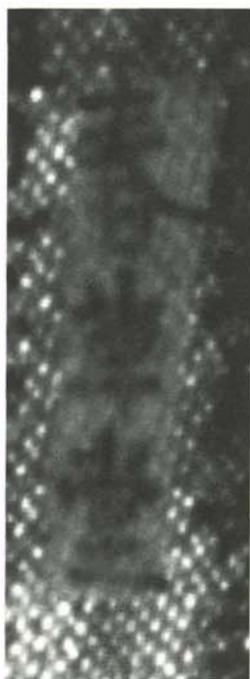
What the identification of these additional names means is that we can now shift the earliest possible date for the making of the Gest robe from around the 1720s or the 1730s—the latest of the first batch enumerated above were Chu Zaiwen and Huang Yue, both 1709 *jinshi* graduates, and Wang Ruxiang, who flourished during the Yongzheng period—up to at least the Jiaqing reign and quite possibly the Daoguang reign, a leap of as much as one hundred years. This, of course, is no great revelation,



9. Images (visible under red-ink swabs) of names of Qing-dynasty literati: top row, left to right, Fang Bao #026 and Chen Zhaolun #142; second row, left to right, Wang Dayou #245, and Xu Yu #269. Infrared reflectography by Norman Muller and digital framing by Paula Hulick. Photographs courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

since it had been assumed all along that the object probably dates from some point late in the nineteenth century or early in the twentieth century. In the final days of composing this report, it seemed for a moment that this gap could be compressed still further to a very narrow band in the late Qing, when I found the name of a hitherto unidentified member of the robe-author confraternity, a certain Shi Jin, mentioned in a biographical entry as compiler of a family genealogy bearing his own preface dated 1892. The bubble of euphoria was soon burst, however, when I recalled that this name had not been deciphered directly from the images captured on the robe, but had been determined by collating the robe texts against the essays printed in the *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized* (since the essay in question was on a *Doctrine of the Mean* topic, its name-tab, in black ink, was not susceptible to infrared reading), so obviously this Shi Jin must have been another person who lived prior to the assembling of Fang Bao's collection early in the eighteenth century. At the other end of our hypothetical brackets, one can with some confidence set a *terminus ad quem* at 1905, when the abolition of the examination system would presumably have rendered the object useless—at least as far as the cheating theory goes. But even then, there is no reason it could not have continued to exercise a great fascination for cultural conservatives, diehard Qing loyalists, or pedants and antiquarians of various stripes.

The process of deciphering the name-tabs on the robe also brought to light another set of unexpected items of special interest. It turns out that not all of the identifying tabs hidden under the red ink swabs are in fact the personal names of the authors whose essays follow. A few seem to be studio names: Zaichuncaotang (occasionally given as Chuncaotang), Moxiangtang, Aiwutang, Jingyutang, and Zailucaotang. (See Figure 10 for a sampling of the images of the studio names.) With the exception of the last mentioned, all of these studio names are common enough to have been adopted by more than one individual, so they cannot be positively identified. Only the Zailucaotang seems to refer unequivocally to one Chu Xin (1631–1706), a Kangxi-era essayist whose works gained considerable recognition and appear in a number of collections. One's first impulse is to also take these other examples as the literary "styles" of the prose writers in question, but since the vast majority of the red tabs

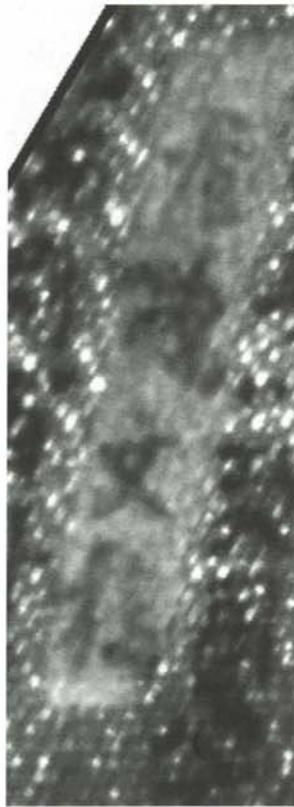
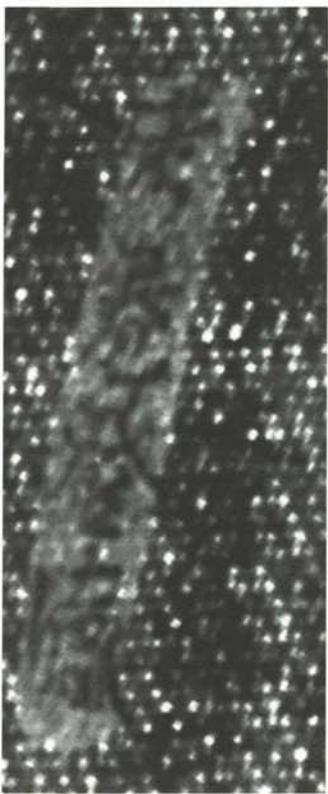
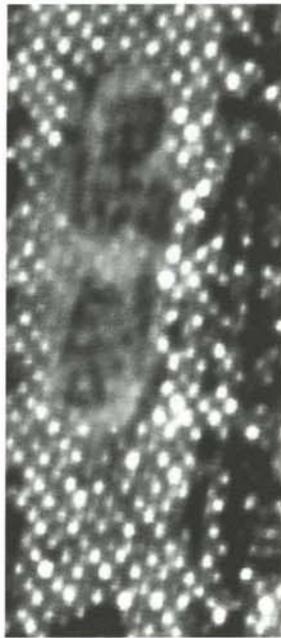
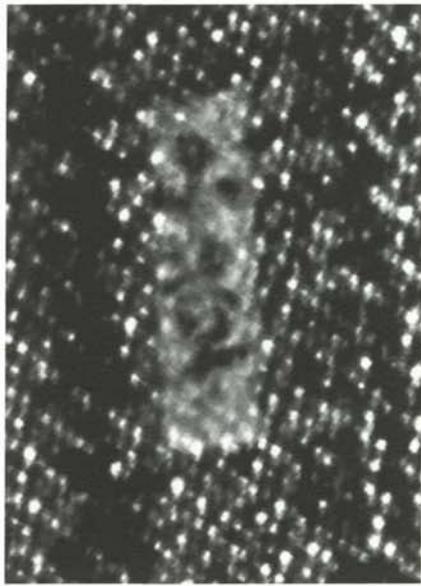


10. Images (visible under red-ink swabs) of studio names of literati: top row, left to right, Chuncaotang #149 and Aiwutang #328; second row, left to right Jingyutang #033 and Zailucaotang #099. Infrared reflectography by Norman Muller and digital framing by Paula Hulick. Photographs courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

inscribed on the robe contain the official surname and personal name (*xingming*) of a writer as found in the historical records—not his literary cognomen (*hao*) or other personal style—I believe these should be construed as the titles of essay collections from which the scribe copied certain unidentified pieces.

One final oddity occurs in a few spots where the identifying tag under the red ink is not a name at all but simply a descriptive notation. Four or five of the essays are introduced by the label *xiaocao*, presumably referring to the sort of preliminary draft sheets examination candidates would prepare in their cubicles to be corrected and recopied before final submission. How these would have gotten into the hands of the scribe and why he would have selected them for inclusion remains a mystery. In another place his introductory tag is a laconic *ouchao* indicating that the piece that follows was “copied at random.” Two additional examples of name-tabs that depart from the scribe’s usual practice are especially intriguing. Here the essays are prefaced by a pair of very similar expressions referring to an “examination paper” (*kaojuan*) or “essay draft” (*wengao*), plus an additional phrase—as yet undeciphered—that looks something like *denglu* (literally, “presentation copy”), possibly indicating that the piece was recorded in some official format.²⁴ (See figure 11 for images of descriptive notations.) Whatever the correct reading of these terms, they clearly refer to the type of essay drafts produced at different stages of the recopying process. In all of these instances, it appears that the scribe was unaware of the identity of the authors of the pieces in question; otherwise one can assume he would have entered them on the robe along with all the other well-known names he gives us. This seems to me to open the possibility that, in at least part of his exercise, he was not necessarily working from a single master-copy of selected essays.

The above findings based on the deciphering of the “blacked-out” name-tabs has helped us to significantly narrow the time-frame of the fabrication of the Gest cribbing garment (cutting the span of years by as much as one half), but they by no means resolve the issue of its dating. We can now establish that the essays were copied onto the robe at some point between 1820 to 1830 and 1920 to 1930, quite probably between about 1840 and 1905. To say that this prized object was most likely a product of the late-nineteenth century, however, simply reaffirms our



11. Images (visible under red-ink swabs) of descriptive notes: top row, left to right, *xiaocao* #018 and *ouchao* #153; second row, left to right, *kaojuan denglu* #206 and *denglu wengao* #252. Infrared reflectography by Norman Muller and digital framing by Paula Hulick. Photographs courtesy of the East Asian Library and the Gest Collection.

earlier assumptions—only now with a bit more confidence in the basis for this dating.

But what about the purpose of the robe? We have all heard (and retold with great gusto) the piquant stories, well corroborated by contemporary anecdotal and administrative literature, picturing the hopeful, but not overly qualified examination candidate who sews our “cribbing garment” into the lining of his robe, and once safely ensconced in his cubicle—having somehow managed to avoid detection through a series of harrowing inspections—then takes it out and either seeks some last-minute inspiration on the assigned topic, or simply copies a choice selection and claims it for his own. To my own mind and the minds of most of my colleagues in the East Asian Studies Department, however, this scenario is no longer convincing for the following reasons. The first point is something as basic as the size of the garment, which is much broader in the shoulders than an average person should be. True, the soft silk of the robe would naturally drape down over a narrower pair of shoulders, but this same feature would make it that much harder to conceal, without telltale lumps and wrinkles, inside the lining of one’s outer robe. The soft and floppy cloth also presents a special problem in reading, much less accurately copying, any individual essay, since the vertical lines of the text get very long where they trace the full length of the garment (they are shorter on the sleeves, near the shoulders, and at the corners of the front flaps). When one tries to direct one’s line of sight from the bottom of one line to the top of the next, it is no mean trick to find one’s place on the wavy cloth. One can only imagine how much more difficult it would have been to stretch the garment flat and smooth in the cramped quarters of an examination cell, on the same two wooden planks that served as writing desk, eating table, and bed—by the poor light of a flickering candle or the open doorway.

A second, more damaging weak point in the cheating scenario is the glaring fact that most of the selections copied onto the robe seem to be well-known essays, many of sufficient celebrity to be included in the major imperially sponsored collections of the dynasty. Could one simply copy one of these pieces onto one’s examination paper without fear of detection? One might perhaps count on local corruption or examiners’ incompetence to get one through a lower level examination session, but

what if the essay were then recorded in the official bulletins or printed in a commercial essay manual? As noted, the prescribed punishments for such infractions do not appear to have been as severe as I once believed, but even if this were little more than an administrative slap on the wrist, the shame of exposure could not have been without deterrent effect. Another "price" of using the robe concerns the actual cost of producing it. I had originally assumed that the toil of inscribing hundreds of thousands of miniscule characters on the cloth of the robe would have required years of work by a professional scribe or an accomplished household servant.²⁵ Recently, however, I conducted an experiment with the assistance of Hai-tao Tang to time the transcription of a sample piece of text, and we arrived at a revised estimate of about two or three months of copying work—making the robe a bit more affordable but still an object of considerable monetary value. Would it have been worth it? Could an enterprising cheater not have used the same amount of wealth needed to put a skilled scribe to work for a few months to more effective use in bribing examiners or buying his way directly into office? This would of course depend upon the ethical and practical conditions prevailing in a given time and place. For, though we know from a wide variety of historical and literary sources that abuses of all sorts were rampant in the system, we also know that, over the long run, the institution of the imperial examinations, for all its local failings, continued to function and, at its best, to embody one of the greatest achievements of Confucian civilization.

But if the robe was not designed for cheating, then what was it intended to be? Among the answers to this question that have been suggested, the more persuasive include: an elaborate gift by a wealthy individual to curry favor with a gentry patriarch or an official superior, an impressive offering to sweeten a proposed marriage alliance with an upwardly mobile clan, or similar *guanxi* connections. On a more positive note, the garment may have been conceived as an inspirational incentive to a wealthy patron's young son on the eve of his entry into the "examination hell." I myself would prefer to view it as a kind of *jeu d'esprit*—on the order of a Rubáiyát on the head of a pin, or the sort of nested carved ivory balls we marvel at in many collections of Ming and Qing artifacts. Perhaps further digging into the historical and literary

repositories of Qing examination lore will unearth clues that will make possible a more definitive explanation of this unique object. Until then, the “cribbing garment” remains an emblem of the rare combination of the sublime and the curious that marks the great world of learning housed within the Gest Collection.

APPENDIX ONE:

NAMES OF ESSAY AUTHORS ALREADY IDENTIFIED AS OF OCTOBER 2003

The names of these persons are presented in a loose chronological arrangement.

Ming Dynasty

Ding Jue 丁玨	fl. Yongle era
Xue Xuan 薛瑄	1389-1464
He Jingming 何景明	1483-1521
Zhang Bin 張賓	fl. Chenghua era
Huang Lian 黃璉	fl. Chenghua era
He Dongxu 何東序	1553 <i>jinshi</i>
Gu Dingchen 顧鼎臣	fl. Jiajing era
Zhou Nan 周南	fl. Jiajing era
Tang Shunzhi 唐順之	1507-1560
Gui Youguang 歸有光	1507-1571
Mao Kun 茅坤	1512-1601
Huang Hongxian 黃洪憲	1541-1600
Hu Youxin 胡友信	1568 <i>jinshi</i>
Gu Yuncheng 顧允成	fl. Wanli era
Ai Nanying 艾南英	1583-1646
Jin Sheng 金聲	1628 <i>jinshi</i>
Chen Jitai 陳際泰	1642 <i>jinshi</i>
Huang Chunyao 黃淳耀	1643 <i>jinshi</i>

Qing Dynasty

Xiong Bolong 熊伯龍	1649 <i>jinshi</i>
Liu Zizhuang 劉子壯	1649 <i>jinshi</i>
Zuo Jingzu 左敬祖	1649 <i>jinshi</i>
Li Laitai 李來泰	1652 <i>jinshi</i>
Duan Yansheng 段獻生	Kangxi-era <i>jinshi</i>
Li Fu 李紱	Kangxi-era <i>jinshi</i>
Jin Dejie 金德嘉	1630-1707, 1682 <i>jinshi</i>
Chu Xin 儲欣	1631-1706
Shi Jin 史晉	fl. Kangxi era
Lu Can 陸燦	1657 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhu Sheng 朱昇	1659 <i>jinshi</i>
Han Tan 韓菼	1637-1704, 1670 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhang Yushu 張玉書	1642-1711, 1670 <i>jinshi</i>
Li Guangdi 李光地	1642-1718, 1670 <i>jinshi</i>
Tao Yuanchun 陶元醇 (淳)	1646-1718, 1688 <i>jinshi</i>
Yan Yudun 嚴虞惇	1650-1713
Fang Zhou 方舟	1665-1701
He Zhuo 何焯	1661-1722, 1703 <i>jinshi</i>
Fang Bao 方苞	1668-1749, 1706 <i>jinshi</i>
Shen Jinsi 沈近思	1671-1728
Cao Yishi 曹一士	1678-1735
Chen Kaitai 陳開泰	1691 <i>jinshi</i>
Gong Duo 功鐸	1694 <i>jinshi</i>
Fang Muru 方燦如	1706 <i>jinshi</i>
Chu Zaiwen 儲在文	1709 <i>jinshi</i>
Huang Yue 黃越	1709 <i>jinshi</i>
Xu Baoguang 徐葆光	1712 <i>jinshi</i>
Tao Zhenyi 陶貞一	1712 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhang Jiang 張江	1723 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhou Dazhang 周大璋	1724 <i>jinshi</i>
Ren Qiyun 任啓運	1733 <i>jinshi</i>
Wang Ruxiang 王汝驤	fl. Yongzheng era

Zhang Yuan (1) 張瑗	1691 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhang Yuan (2) 張瑗	1737 <i>jinshi</i>
Chen Zhaolun 陳兆崙	1730 <i>jinshi</i>
Luo Qiongzhang 羅瓊章	1735 <i>jinshi</i>
Ye You 葉酉	1740 <i>jinshi</i>
Lin Renkui 林人樾	1747 <i>jinshi</i>
Wu Hong 吳鴻	1751 <i>jinshi</i>
Qin Dashi 秦大士	1752 <i>jinshi</i>
Li Zuhui 李祖惠	1752 <i>jinshi</i>
Yin (also Wang) Zhaoyan 殷(王)兆燕	1754 <i>jinshi</i>
Liu Huizu 劉輝祖	1761 <i>military jinshi</i>
Qin Dacheng 秦大成	1763 <i>jinshi</i>
Wu Xingqin 吳省欽	1763 <i>jinshi</i>
Zhou Zhencai 周振采	fl. Qianlong era
Cai Yindou 蔡寅斗	fl. Qianlong era
Ruan Kuisheng 阮葵生	1727-1789
Shen Hongling 沈鴻齡	fl. 1784
Zhu Wenhan 朱文翰	1790 <i>jinshi</i>
Shi Yunyu 史韞玉	1790 <i>jinshi</i>
Zheng Shichao 鄭士超	1795 <i>jinshi</i>
Zheng Jiancai 鄭兼才	1798 <i>juren</i>
Bao Guixing 鮑桂星	1799 <i>jinshi</i>
Ding Gonglu 丁公路	1801 <i>jinshi</i>
Chen Songqing 陳嵩慶	1801 <i>jinshi</i>
Yue Zhenchuan 岳震川	1805 <i>jinshi</i>
Zheng Dunyuan (yun?) 鄭敦元(允?)	1814 <i>jinshi</i>
Wang Dayou 王大有	fl. Daoguang era
Xu Yu 許鈺	wife Chen Chai, fl. Daoguang era

APPENDIX TWO:

NAMES OF ESSAY AUTHORS NOT YET IDENTIFIED AS OF OCTOBER 2003

The author would be grateful for leads on the identification of any of these figures.

Chen Shangrong 陳尙榮	Ni Rusong 倪如松
Chen Zhenghou 陳徵侯	Quan (Yu?) Kui 全(余?)魁
Chu Tongren 儲同人	Qu Chunwen 屈椿文
Chu Wende 褚文德	Sheng Chaosheng 盛超升
Chu Zhengde 儲正德	Song Tingxuan 宋廷選
Cui Fengji 崔鳳集	Wang Bangfan 王邦藩
Cui Yijie 崔以介	Wang Kaiyuan 王開元
Ding Jiuguang 丁九光	Wang Shiren 王師仁
Duan Kezhi 段可植	Wang Zengyu 汪曾鈺
Fang Renjie 方仁捷	Wan Mingjian 完明健
Gong Biao 龔蓀	Wan Zhu 萬翥
Guan Ying 管英	Wu Baoqing 吳寶卿
Gu Dingxin 顧鼎新	Wu Shiyong 吳世英
Hu Juyi (mu?) 胡菊衣(木?)	Xu Qingsheng 徐慶升
Huo Zhongdai 霍鍾岱	Yan Mei 晏梅
Jing Ji 荊棘	Ye Nan 葉南
Jin Jian 金鑑	Yu Fangruo 余方若
Jin Shao 金紹	Yu Guorong (hao?) 於國榮(毫?)
Li Liankui 李聯奎	Yu (Jin? Quan?) Shun 余(金? 全?)順
Liu Kuanhai 劉寬海	Zhan Dashan 詹大山
Liu Qiong 劉瓊	Zhang Yiliang 張義良
Liu Wuguang 劉悟光	Zhao Pilie 趙丕烈
Lu Wanyan 盧萬彥	Zhao Zongheng 趙宗恆
Nie Liangguang 聶亮光	Zhou Xianbang 周先榜
Ning Xiaoyan 寧小炎	

NOTES

1. Exemplars of similar objects known at the time were described in Miyazaki Ichisada, *Kakyo: Chūgoku no shiken jigoku* (The Civil Service Examination: China's Examination Hell) (Tokyo: Chūō kōron, 1963), p. 67ff, and Xue Ying, "Kechang jiadai chaoben" (Copy Sheets Carried into the Examination Grounds), *Wenxian* 1 (1985), p. 102ff. In the past few years, a steady stream of cribbing sheets and garments of various sizes and shapes have been advertised in booksellers' catalogues in China and Hong Kong.
2. James Shih-kang T'ung, "A Chinese Cribbing Garment," *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 20.4 (Summer, 1959), pp. 175-181.
3. This is the figure for the total number of essays given in Dr. T'ung's 1959 article. Other counts may differ, as the division between separate pieces is not always clearly marked on the robe.
4. On the political and intellectual background of the *Qinding sishuwen* (Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized Edition), see R. Kent Guy, "Fang Pao and the *Ch'in-ting ssu-shu-wen*," in ed. Benjamin Elman and Alexander Woodside, *Education and Society in Late Imperial China, 1600-1900*, Studies on China, no. 19 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 150-182. The primary extant text of the *Essays on the Four Books, Imperially Authorized Edition*, 41 *juan*, is the Siku quanshu zhenben edition, available in the Wenyuange reprint, vol. 1451 ([Taipei]: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983).
5. I would like to offer a much belated expression of thanks for the generous assistance of the textile experts Nunome Junrō of the Kōgei ken'i daigaku in Kyoto and Dr. May H. Beattie of the Embroiderer's Guild, Sheffield, England.
6. These reference aids include Chen Yuan, *Shihui juli* (Examples of Taboo Names in History) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1963) and Qu Wanli and Chang Bide, *Tushu banbenxue yaolüe* (A Summary of Bibliographical and Textual Studies) (Taipei: Zhongguo wenhua chubanshiye weiyuanhui, 1953).
7. See Andrew H. Plaks, "Pa-ku wen," in *The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1986), pp. 641-643; and Plaks, "The Prose of Our Time," in *The Power of Culture*, ed. Willard J. Peterson, Andrew H. Plaks, and Ying-shi Yü (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1994), pp. 206-217.
8. Despite my recollections of having gone through a Gest Library copy of this work, no complete copy of the work is currently found in the Gest holdings. Apparently I had examined this collection at the Naikaku Bunko in Tokyo. With the kind assistance of Ihor Pidhainy, I have recently collated my notes on this work with a copy held in the University of Toronto's East Asian Library (rare book number PL 2615 .K6 1699).
9. See Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Kai-wing Chow, "Writing for Success: Printing, Examinations, and Intellectual Change in Late Ming China," *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (June 1996), pp. 120-157. See

- also Sano Kōji, *Shisho gakushi no kenkyū* (A Study on the History of Studies of the Four Books) (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1988).
10. See Li Tiaoyuan (1734–1803), comp., *Zhiyike suoji* (Miscellaneous Notes on the Examination System), 4 *juan*, (ca. 1881), in various collectanea, such as *Congshu jicheng jianbian*, vol. 291 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1965), *juan* 1–2, esp. p. 72ff.; and Zhan Hongmou (fl. nineteenth century) et al., comps., *Qinding kechang tiaoli* (Imperially Authorized Regulations for Examination Grounds) (Beijing: Neifu, preface dated 1887), esp. *juan* 30, "Soujian shizi" (Inspecting the Scholars); and Zhang Chaorui (1536–1603), comp., *Huang Ming gongju kao* (A Study of the Imperial Ming Examination System) [Wanli (1573–1620) era], *juan* 1.
 11. Further information and anecdotes on cheating methods practiced during the Qing period can be found, among many other sources, in Xu Ke (1869–1928), "Kaoshi lei," in *Qing bai leichao* (Notes in Categories from Qing Anecdotal History) (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1917), ch. 21; Murakami Tetsumi, *Kakyo no hanashi: shiken seido to bunjin kanryō* (Tales of the Civil Service Examination: The Examination System and Scholar Officials) (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1980), pp. 181–189; Etienne Zi (Siu), S. J., *Pratique des examens littéraires en Chine, Variétés sinologiques*, no. 5 (Shanghai: Imprimerie de la Mission catholique, 1894), p. 37, no. 1.
 12. See Ding Yaokang (1599–1669), *Xu Jin Ping Mei* (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1993), chap. 46. My thanks to Dr. Yang Yu-chun for drawing my attention to this passage.
 13. Scenes portraying the experience of fictional characters enduring the "examination hell"—or cheating their way through it—are especially common in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century fiction, with many examples in works as varied as Pu Songling's (1640–1715) *Liaozhai zhiyi* (Records of the Strange from Desultory Studio), Li Lüyuan's (1707–1790) *Qiludeng* (The Lantern at the Crossroads), and, of course, Wu Jingzi's (1701–1754) *Rulin waishi* (Unofficial History of the Confucian Scholars), not to mention the huge corpus of *caizi jiaoren* (scholar-beauty) fiction.
 14. See I. V. Gillis to J. A. Doyle, 13 July 1932 and Doyle to Nancy Lee Swann, 22 August 1923, box 232, Gest Library Papers, Mudd Library, Princeton University. J. A. Doyle was Guion Gest's agent in the San Francisco office of the Gest Engineering Company. William B. Pettus, head of the North China Language School in Beijing and a mutual friend of Gillis and Gest, carried the robe wrapped in a length of hose and packed in his trunk on his visit to the United States late in the summer of 1932. A very recent search by Nancy Tomasko in the Gest archives has turned up tantalizing references to additional documents possibly mentioning the garment. Hence, the case is not yet closed.
 15. In addition to East Asian Library director Ma Tai-loi and Chinese bibliographer Martin Heijdra, the East Asian Studies colleagues who have given much help in examining the robe and speculating on its significance include, Hai-tao

- Tang, Susan Naquin, Benjamin Elman, Willard Peterson, Soren Edgren, Michael Reeve, and Nancy Tomasko.
16. T'ung, "Cribbing Garment," p. 180.
 17. The so-called "fly-head characters" are mentioned, among other places, in Xu Ke, *Qing bai leichao*, p. 4, and in Zhang Chaorui, *Huang Ming gongju kao*, *juan* 1, pp. 38a-b. Martin Heijdra recently found in the Gest Collection an uncatalogued example of texts also written in "fly-head characters." This is a selection of manuscript essays written on Chinese paper that have been cut out and tipped onto sheets of slightly heavier Chinese paper. These pages were then rebound in a Western-style, all-leather binding and given the title *Yingtou xiaokai hanyuan wenzhang* (Literary Essays in Small-Standard Fly-Head Script).
 18. The Chinese text reads "Bei/Ci(?) nanfang zhi qiang yu yijie wei zai er tong(?) shang xie guo beifeng." For passage in the *Doctrine of the Mean* referred to in this direction, see "Zilu wen qiang" (Zilu Inquires About the Meaning of Strength), *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 10.
 19. Wu Zhi (dates unknown), comp., *Huang Ming like sishu mojuan pingxuan*, 48 ce [preface dated 1622], Gest rarebook number TD95/650.
 20. For an extensive list of Qing-dynasty examination-essay collections and related materials, see Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, Appendices, pp. 633ff. Professor Elman reports that similar materials occupy an entire wall of shelves in the National Central Library, Taipei.
 21. In pursuing this information, I have relied on the most obvious reference aids, including Arthur W. Hummel, ed., *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period (1644-1912)* (Washington, D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1943); Du Lianzhe and Fang Zhaoying, eds., *Sanshisanzhong Qingdai zhuanji zonghe yinde* (Index to Thirty-three Collections of Ch'ing Dynasty Biographies) (Beijing: Yanjing daxue tushuguan yinde bianzhuanchu, 1932); Zhu Baojiong and Zie Peilin, eds., *Ming Qing jinshi timing beilu suoyin* (Index to Stele Records of the Names of Metropolitan Examination Laureates in the Ming and Qing) (1980; Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1963); Zhou Junfu, ed., *Mingdai zhuanji congkan suoyin* (Index to Biographical Collections of the Ming Dynasty), *Mingdai zhuanji congkan*, nos. 161-163 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1991); and idem., *Qingdai zhuanji congkan suoyin* (Index to Biographical Collections of the Qing Dynasty), *Qingdai zhuanji congkan*, nos. 203-205 (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1986). A particularly useful list of major Ming and Qing *bagu* essayists with their degree dates is appended to Liang Zhangju (1775-1849), *Zhiyi conghua* (Collected Discussions on Examination Essays), 24 *juan* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1976), vol. 2, following *juan* 24.
 22. See Chen Zhaolun, comp., *Zhiyi tiyao* (Important Points on the Examination Essay Form), 19 *juan*, ed. Sun Yiyuan (1814-1894) (Wuchang: Hubei lunwen shuju, preface dated 1877), and Ruan Kuisheng's discussion of the *bagu* form in his *Chayu kehua* (Conversations with a Guest After Sharing Tea), *Ming Qing biji congkan*, no. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959) *juan* 16.
 23. Chen Chai is listed in Shi Shuyi (b. 1878), *Qingdai guige shiren zhenglüe* (Qing-

Dynasty Poets of the Inner Chamber, Condensed Edition) (Taipei: Tailian guofeng chubanshe, 1970), *juan* 9, p. 11b.

24. In searching for a possible reading of this uncertain expression, Soren Edgren came across a notice of a Qing essay-collection entitled (*Zhisheng*) *kaojuan chengjingji*—for which we can venture the tentative translation *The Cleansed Mirror of Examination Essays, A Collection from Zhili Province*—which would nicely fit the hypothesis that what is referred to here may be the title of a book from which the scribe copied the piece. See *Naikaku Bunko Kanseki bunrui mokuroku* (Catalogue by Category of Chinese Books in the Naikaku Bunko) (Tokyo: Naikaku Bunko, 1956), p. 405. However, the characters in question do not look enough like *chengjing* to support this reading. Most recently, Hai-tao Tang has noticed the compound *dengying* (meaning "ascending to the isles of the immortals") in a specialized usage referring to a Qing ritual celebrating examination success and official appointment. If this identification is correct, this would provide a meaningful explanation of at least one of these notations.
25. Dr. T'ung estimated the total number of characters inscribed on the robe at five hundred twenty thousand. See James Shih-kang T'ung, "A Chinese Cribbing Garment," p. 180.

GLOSSARY

Aiwutang 愛吾堂	Chuncaotang 春草堂
bagu 八股	Chu Xin 儲欣
baguwen 八股文	Chu Zaiwen 儲在文
Bei/Ci(?) nanfang zhi qiang yu yijie wei zai er tong(?) shang xie guo beifeng 北/ 此(?)南方之強與一節尾在二筒(?)上 寫過背縫	Dai Xi 戴熙
beifeng 背縫	Dai Xu 戴煦
biji 筆記	Daxue 大學
caizi jiaren 才子佳人	denglu 登錄
Chan (Zen) 禪	denglu wengao 登錄文稿
Chayu kehua 茶餘客話	dengying 登瀛
Chen Chai 陳萑	Ding Yaokang 丁耀亢
chengjing 澄鏡	Fang Bao 方苞
Chen Zhaolun 陳兆崙	guanxi 關係
	Gui Youguang 歸有光
	guwen 古文
	Han Tan 韓菼

- hao 號
 huaidai/jiandai ... zhi bi 懷帶/夾帶 ...
 之弊
 Huang Ming gongju kao 皇明貢舉考
 Huang Ming like sishu mojuan pingxuan
 皇明歷科四書墨卷評選
 Huang Ruheng 黃汝亨
 Huang Yue 黃越
 huizi 諱字
 Jingyutang 經畚堂
 jinshi 進士
 ju 句
 juan 卷
 juren 舉人
 kaojuan 考卷
 kaojuan denglu 考卷登錄
 Kaoshi lei 考試類
 Keyitang yibaishu mingjia zhiyi 可儀堂一
 百二十名家制藝[義]
 Liang Zhangju 梁章鉅
 Liaozhai zhiyi 聊齋志異
 Li Guangdi 李光地
 Li Huizu 李輝祖
 Li Lüyuan 李綠園
 Li Tiaoyuan 李調元
 Mao Kun 茅坤
 Moxiangtang 墨香堂
 Nunome Junrō 布目順郎
 ouchao 偶鈔
 Pu Songling 蒲松齡
 qianti 前題
 Qiludeng 歧路燈
 Qinding kechang tiaoli 欽定科場條例
 Qinding sishuwen 欽定四書文
 Qing bai leichao 清稗類鈔
 Qingdai guige shiren zhenglue 清代閨閣詩
 人徵略
 Ruan Kuisheng 阮葵生
 Rulin waishi 儒林外史
 Shi Jin 史晉
 Shi Shuyi 施淑儀
 shiwen 時文
 Soujian shizi 搜檢士子
 Sun Yiyan 孫衣言
 suzi 俗字
 Tang Binyin 湯賓尹
 Tang Shunzhi 唐順之
 Wang Dayou 王大有
 Wang Ruxiang 王汝驥
 wengao 文稿
 Wenyuange 文淵閣
 Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓
 Wu Zhi 吳芝
 xiaocao 小草
 xingming 姓名
 Xiong Bolong 熊伯龍
 Xu Jin Ping Mei 續金瓶梅
 Xu Ke 徐珂
 Xu Yu 許鈺
 yiduan 一段
 yijie 一節
 Yingtou xiaokai hanyuan wenzhang 蠅頭小
 楷韓苑文章
 yingtouzi 蠅頭字
 yizhang 一章
 yuan 元

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Yu Changcheng 俞長城 | (Zhisheng) kaojuan chengjingji (直省)考卷 |
| Zaichuncaotang 在春草堂 | 澄鏡集 |
| Zailucaotang 在陸草堂 | Zhiyi conghua 制藝叢話 |
| Zhang Chaorui 張朝瑞 | Zhiyi tiyao 制藝提要 |
| Zhang Nai 張鼎 | Zhiyike suoji 制藝科瑣記 |
| Zhang Yushu 張玉書 | Zhongyong 中庸 |
| Zhan Hongmou 詹鴻謀 | Zilu wen qiang 子路問強 |
| Zheng Dunyun 鄭敦允 | |