

Women's Personal Hygiene in Premodern China: A Gendered Analysis of *History of the Toiletry Box (Lianshi)*

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ABSTRACT

The *Lianshi* 齏史 (*History of the Toiletry Box*) is a copious work about women's personal hygiene articles, compiled by Wang Chutong (1729-1821). The personal hygiene articles can be broadly divided into the following categories: articles for hand washing, dental care, hair grooming, going to the restroom, bathing, perfuming, and protection from evils. These items are living fossils of the premodern material culture and a testimony to the fusion of Chinese culture and Western culture. They reflected perception of health care at the time and are useful references for modern perception on preventive care. If viewed from a gendered perspective, these items are also objects used for "training" women. In analyzing the text of *Lianshi* and archeological discoveries, paintings, and murals, this paper reconstructs how women in premodern China cultivated and practiced their personal hygiene.

Keywords: *Lianshi*, premodern Chinese women, hygiene articles

INTRODUCTION

The *Lianshi* (*History of the Toiletry Box*) is a copious work exclusively about Chinese women compiled by Wang Chutong 王初桐 (courtesy name Yuyang 于陽; 1729 – 1821). He was from present-day Fangtai in Jiading District, Shanghai, and had worked as a transcriber for the compilation of the massive book series *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書. In 1776, he "rose to the second rank, became part of the *Siku quanshu* editorial board, and was appointed assistant to the Qihe County magistrate after passing an evaluation."¹ Wang Hongkai 王宏凱 believes there are four reasons that Wang Chutong was able to compile the *Lianshi*:

- 1) he was part of the tradition of the southern Chinese scholar-official culture of the Ming and Qing dynasties;
- 2) with the rise of the Qian-Jia school of thought (*qianjia xuepai* 乾嘉學派), an abundance of reference books were written;
- 3) he accumulated a wealth of materials while working on the *Siku Quanshu* editorial board for years,

¹Chen Qijue 陳其珏, (*Guangxu*) *Jiading Xianzhi* (光緒) 嘉定縣志 (*Annals of Jiading County in the Reign of the Guangxu, Local Annals of China - Annals of Shanghai Prefectures and Counties*), compiled by Yang Zhenfu 楊震福 et al. (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian Chubanshe, 1991), 19. 412.

and 4) he was assisted by other scholars and petty officials.²

We believe that an additional reason is his sympathy for women. For a time, he and a woman named Liuniang 六娘 were in love but were kept apart. After Liuniang fell into prostitution, Wang wrote several emotionally charged *ci* poems for her.³ Furthermore, assistance with the *Lianshi* came from his concubine Li Xiangzhi 李湘芝.⁴ Thus, there are *five* reasons that the classic *Lianshi* came into being.

According to Zhang Jianguang 張劍光, “For over 3,000 years, our ancestors have placed the utmost importance on personal hygiene, environmental hygiene, and dietary hygiene and thus cultivated a series of good hygiene habits.”⁵ We have looked at the women’s personal hygiene articles in the *Lianshi* for this study and compared them with material references to become familiar with them and understand the significance behind them to tell “her story” (as opposed to “history”).

The research on hygiene articles in the current realm of historical studies can be divided into two categories. The first is the study of their evolution and usage, as seen in Zhao Linjuan 趙林娟 and Zhao Shuangzhan’s 趙雙戰, *Zhongguo gudai jianchi yu yashua fazhan* 中國古代健齒與牙刷發展,⁶ Chen Yajian’s 陳亞建 *Xiaoqi damei — gudai yashua sheji wenhua liubian tukao* 小器大美——古代牙刷設計文化流變圖考,⁷ Feng Shuangyuan’s 馮雙元 *Yetan “Huzi” yu “Mazi”* 也談“虎子”與“馬子”,⁸ and Yang Zhishui’s 揚之水 *Xiangshi* 香識.⁹ The second category is the categorization, summarization, and basic research on hygiene articles from China and abroad, such as Tao Guangzheng 陶廣正 et al.’s *Wenwu kaogu yu zhongyixue* 文物考古與中醫學,¹⁰ Li Jingwei’s 李經緯 *Zhonghua yiyao weisheng wenwu tudian* 中華醫藥衛生文物圖典,¹¹ and Liang Jun 梁峻 et al.’s *Guoyi qiju shi* 國醫器具史.¹² However, we have yet to find any research from the perspective of gender on the women’s personal hygiene articles mentioned in the *Lianshi*.

In this paper, we conduct an in-depth, detailed study and analysis of women’s hygiene articles (for hand washing, dental care, hair grooming, private-part hygiene, bathing, perfuming, and protection from evil) discussed in the *Lianshi* in an effort to capture an image of the everyday life of premodern Chinese women, which has been long overshadowed by such issues as war and politics.

HAND-WASHING ARTICLES

The hands are the part of the human body that comes in contact with the greatest number of germs, so “hand hygiene is one of the most basic, simplest, and most easily carried out methods of preventing and

²See: Wang Hongkai 王宏凱, *Maosheng yu Wang Chutong* 《貓乘》與王初桐, *Wenshi Zhishi*, 3 (2018), 93.

³For a detailed account of Liuniang, see: Tang Guizhang 唐圭璋, *Cihua congbian* 詞話叢編 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2005), 1594-95.

⁴Shi Shuyi 施淑儀, *Qingdai guige shiren zengluo* 清代閩閩詩人徵略 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1987), 7. 426.

⁵Zhang Jianguang 張劍光, *Sanqiannian yiqing* 三千年疫情 (Nanchang: Jiangxi gaoxiao Chubanshe, 1998), 4.

⁶Zhao Shuangzhan 趙雙戰 and Zhao Linjuan 趙林娟, “Zhongguo gudai jianchi yu yashua fazhan” 中國古代健齒與牙刷發展, *Wenbo* 文博, 3(2005), 84-8

⁷Chen Yajian 陳亞建, “Xiaoqi da mei — Gudai yashua shejiwenhua liubian tukao” 小器大美——古代牙刷設計文化流變圖考, *Zhuangshi* 裝飾 9 (2010), 120-21

⁸Feng Shuangyuan 馮雙元, “Yetan ‘Huzi’ yu ‘Mazi’” 也談“虎子”與“馬子”, *Dongnan wenhua* 東南文化, 5 (2006), 68-71

⁹Yang Zhishui 揚之水, *Hunshilouji: Xiangshi* 楮栳樓集: 香識 (Beijing: Renmin meishu Chubanshe, 2013).

¹⁰Tao Guangzheng 陶廣正 and Gao Chunyuan 高春媛, *Wenwukaogu yu zhongyixue* 文物考古與中醫學 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao Chubanshe, 2017).

¹¹Li Jingwei 李經緯, Liang Jun 梁峻 and Liu Xuechun 劉學春, *Zhonghua yiyao weisheng wenwu tudian* 中華醫藥衛生文物圖典 (Xi’an: Xi’an jiaotongdaxue Chubanshe, 2017).

¹²Liang Jun 梁峻, Zheng Rong 鄭蓉 et al., *Guoyi qijushi* 國醫器具史 (Beijing: Shijie tushu Chubanshe, 2021).

controlling the spread of pathogens.”¹³ The people of the past knew this well too: “To prevent epidemics, the people of the Xia and Shang dynasties were highly concerned with personal hygiene. Oracle bone inscriptions mention the washing of hands, body, and feet. In the king’s tomb at the Yinxu 殷墟 archaeological site near Anyang 安陽 City, an entire bathing set of a kettle, broad-mouthed vessel, ladle, shallow dish, and copper implements has been unearthed.”¹⁴ The *Lianshi* also mentions hand-washing implements for women: the gourd-shaped pouring vessel and shallow dish, the basin, and the towel.

1. Gourd-shaped pouring vessels and shallow dishes

The gourd-shaped pouring vessel (Figure 1) was used to hold water and for hand washing.



Figure 1 The Adoptive Mother gourd-shaped pouring vessel from the Zhou Dynasty as illustrated in the *Xuanhe Bogutu*.¹⁵

“Gourd-shaped pouring vessels were implements for water commonly used with shallow dishes.”¹⁶ The Duke Wen of Jin shallow dish (*jin gong pan* 晉公盤) and the Zi Zhongjiang shallow dish (*zi zhong jiang pan* 子仲姜盤) are the only extant premodern water vessels for women. The former (Figure 2) was given by the duke to his daughter Mengji as part of her dowry, and the latter (Figure 3) was given by the Grand Preceptor of the state of Jin to his wife, Zi Zhongjiang.



Figure 2 The Duke Wen of Jin shallow dish (Shanxi Bronze Museum collection).¹⁷

¹³Li Yajie 李亞潔, Tan Linling 譚琳玲, Zhou Chunlan 周春蘭, and Fang Yugui 方玉桂, “Shoubu weisheng de yanjiu jinzhan” 手部衛生的研究進展, *Huli yanjiu (shangxun ban)* 護理研究 (上旬版), 4 (2006), 286.

¹⁴Zhang Janguang, *Sanqiannian yiqing*, 10.

¹⁵Wang Fu 王黼, *Xuanhe bogutu* 宣和博古圖, collated by Zhu Lijun 諸莉君, and edited by Gu Hongyi 顧宏義 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 2017), 20, 375.

¹⁶Gao Ze 高澤, “Cong jiuqi dao shuiqi — Lun yi de gongnengxing zhuanbian” 從酒器到水器——論匱的功能性轉變, *Yishu yanjiu* 藝術研究, 5 (2019), 60.

¹⁷ The picture comes from the official website of the Shanxi Bronze Museum, at <http://www.shanximuseum.com/sx/collection/detail.html?id=8202>.



Figure 3 The Zi Zhongjiang shallow dish (Shanghai Museum collection).¹⁸

Gourd-shaped pouring vessels and shallow dishes were originally simply used for washing hands, but over time, greater meaning was assigned to them.

First, they were the most critical part of a woman's dowry. Taiwanese scholar Chen Chao-jung 陳昭容 gives an in-depth analysis: "Toilet articles were common components of dowries, their main purpose being usage by women in political marriages for washing and keeping their appearances so as to please the husband's family continually."¹⁹ Within the Duke Wen of Jin's shallow dish are several animal figures, each conveying profound meaning: the water birds represent the love between husband and wife, while the fish and frogs symbolize the hope for numerous children. The figures are expressions of the blessings from and expectations of a father giving his daughter away in marriage.

Second, they were important marriage ceremony implements. "The service mutually provided by a husband and wife to each other and the communication between them symbolized that the two, who were originally of different families, would on that day break free from their former boundaries and become one"²⁰.

Third, they were a connection between the woman and both her parents-in-law and her husband.

婦事舅姑……雞初鳴……以適父母舅姑之所……進盥，少者奉盤，長者奉水，請沃盥。盥卒，授巾。

At dawn, a married woman went to her parents' rooms to wash their hands for them.²¹

2. Basins

Besides the gourd-shaped pouring vessels and shallow dishes used in unison for hand washing, basins were another option. A group of terracotta figures of women holding basins (Figure 4) from the Sixteen Kingdoms period unearthed in Xianyang are images of servants assisting their lady in washing her hands. *Hand Washing While Viewing Flowers* (*Guanshou guanhua tu* 盥手觀花圖, Figure 5) depicts a woman of the Song Dynasty washing her hands as one servant holds the basin and the other fans her. Basins were also used for bathing, as will be discussed later.

¹⁸ The picture comes from the official website of the Shanghai Museum, at <https://www.shanghaimuseum.net/mu/frontend/pg/article/id/CI00000699>.

¹⁹Chen Zhaorong 陳昭容, "Cong guwenzicailiao tan gudai guanxiyongpin ji qi xiangguan wenti—Zi Zhechuan xiasi Chunqiu chumu de qingtongshuiqi ziming shuoqi" 從古文字材料談古代盥洗用品及器相關問題——自浙川下寺春秋楚墓的青銅水器自名說起 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo, 2000), 901-02.

²⁰Hu Xinsheng 胡新生, *Zhoudai de lizhi* 周代的禮制 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016), 101.

²¹Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi* 十三經注疏·禮記正義, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1980), 27, 1461.



Figure 4 Painted terracotta Figures of servant women holding basins (Shaanxi Archaeological Museum collection).²²



Figure 5 Part of an unknown Southern Song Dynasty painter's *Hand Washing While Viewing Flowers*.²³

Women not only used basins to wash their hands but also to teach them “womanly virtue,” as clearly explained in this Tang Dynasty poem: “On the third day after her wedding, a woman must go to the kitchen to wash her hands and prepare food. As she is unfamiliar with her mother-in-law’s preferences for flavor, her husband’s younger sister must first taste what she has prepared.” (*San ri ru chu nei, xi shou zuo geng tang. Wei an gu shi xing, xian qian xiao gu chang* 三日入厨内，洗手作羹汤。未谙姑食性，先遣小姑尝)²⁴ The need for the sister to try out the food first indicated how important the woman’s preparation of food was, but the theme of the piece is best summed up in the clause “a woman must go to the kitchen to wash her hands and prepare food,” referring to her bound duty. The poem mentions no basin, but it is there in spirit, reminding the woman to do her duty. During the Republic of China period, a basin such as one in the Shenzhen Museum (Figure 6) was always part of a woman’s dowry to remind her that she had to serve her parents-in-law and put her husband at the priority in her life.

²²Photograph taken at Shaanxi Archaeology Museum.

²³Chen Bin 陳斌, *Zhongguo lidai shini huapu* 中國歷代仕女畫譜 (Xi’an: Sanqin Chubanshe, 2014), 133.

²⁴Wang Jian 王建, *Wangjian shiji jiaozhu* 王建詩集校注, checked and annotated by Yin Zhanhua 尹占華. (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2006), 3.108.



Figure 6 A basin held in a stand with gold-painted flowers, birds, auspicious animals, and human Figures (Shenzhen Museum collection).²⁵

3. Towels

Towels were used to wipe the hands and face (such as to wipe away tears). The Hunan Provincial Museum collection holds a crepe towel (Figure 7) from the Warring States period, a testament to the exceptional weaving skill of those times. When the highly talented woman E Lühua 萼綠華 married Yang Quan 羊權 in the Jin Dynasty, she wrote him a poem and gifted him an asbestos towel (*huohuanbu shoujin* 火浣布手巾).²⁶ Asbestos cloth (Figure 8), made from asbestos yarn, was a product of exchange from the Silk Road.²⁷ Tang Dynasty Princess Tongchang 同昌公主's dowry included a very singular towel. "The towel was snow-white and exceptionally soft. It would not feel wet upon coming in contact with moisture, and never became dirty even after years of use." (*ji shoujin ye. jiebai ruxue, guangruan teyi, fushui buru, yongzhi minian, weichang sheng gouni* 即手巾也。潔白如雪，光軟特異，拂水不濡，用之彌年，未嘗生垢膩)²⁸



Figure 7 Crepe towel (Hunan Museum collection).²⁹

²⁵The picture comes from the official website of the Shenzhen Museum, at <https://www.shenzhenmuseum.com/v/20220613-jmjh/>.

²⁶Wang Chutong 王初桐, *Lianshi 蠶史 (Xuxiu siku quanshu 續修四庫全書 edition, Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 2002), 1252:72.236.*

²⁷Zhou Weizhou 周偉洲 and Wang Xin 王欣, *Sichouzhilu cidian 絲綢之路辭典 (Xi'an: Shaanxi renmin Chubanshe, 2018), 336.*

²⁸Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition), 1252:72.236.*

²⁹The picture comes from the official website of the Hunan Museum, at <http://61.187.53.122/collection.aspx?id=2294&lang=zh-CN>.



Figure 8 Asbestos cloth.³⁰

Qing Dynasty painter Kang Tao's *Emergence from the Huaqing Pool After Bathing* (*Huaqing chuyu tu* 華清出浴圖, Figure 9) depicts one of Yang Guifei 楊貴妃's servants with a towel over her shoulder. In *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (*Fang Zhang Zeduan Qingming shanghetu* 仿張擇端清明上河圖), there is a shop selling towels and handkerchiefs (Figure 10).



Figure 9 Qing Dynasty painter Kang Tao's *Emergence from the Huaqing Pool After Bathing*.³¹



Figure 10 Part of Ming Dynasty painter Qiu Ying's *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Liaoning Provincial Museum collection).³²

In a mural at the Baisha tombs of the Song Dynasty (Figure 11) and a picture from the *Qingsu jiwen* 清俗記聞 (*Record of the Customs of the Qing Dynasty*) (Figure 12), there is imagery of towels, a basin and stand, and a hand-washing basin. "The picture of women grooming themselves in the tomb shows us what went on in the realm of the lady's chamber, which we overlooked in the past. With the realm of men, the two formed a united order of *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽, helping to form the dream of a utopia of political unity in

³⁰Rui Chuanming 芮傳明, "Huren" yu wenming jiaoliu zonghengtan "胡人"與文明交流縱橫談 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016), 141.

³¹Chen Bin, *Zhongguo lidai shini huapu*, 277.

³²Qiu Ying 仇英, *Qingming shanghetu* 清明上河圖, in Cao Yanwei 曹彥偉, *Lidai mingjia huihua* 歷代名家繪畫 (Hefei: Anhui meishu Chubanshe, 2013), 11.

the country. The picture also satisfied men’s desire to steal looks into women’s private rooms.”³³



Figure 11 A mural of women grooming themselves on the southwestern wall of Tomb 1 at the Baisha tombs.³⁴

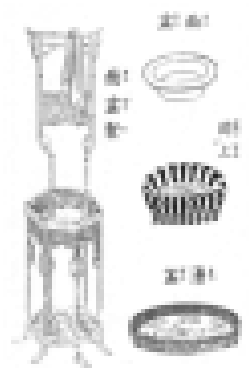


Figure 12 A basin, its stand, and a towel as illustrated in the *Qingsu Jiwen*.³⁵

Towels were originally merely articles used to maintain hygiene but were later given profound social significance. First, they represented the separation of the genders, as written in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記): “Men and women shall not sit together; use the same clothes hangers, towels, or combs; or directly pass objects to each other.” (*nannü bu zazuo, butong yijia, butong jinzhi, bu qinshou* 男女不雜坐，不同梳櫛，不同巾櫛，不親授)³⁶ Second, they were a means for mothers to educate their soon-to-be-wed daughters on “womanly virtue” (*fu de* 婦德): “In times of old, before a woman married, her mother would grab her towel and admonish her” (*guzhe nüzi jia, ze mu jieshui er jiezhi* 古者女子嫁，則母結帨而戒之)³⁷ by saying, “Once you are married, care well for your parents-in-law and properly serve your husband day and night.” (*mianzhi jingzhi, suye wuwei gongshi* 勉之敬之，夙夜無違宮事)³⁸ Third, the comb and towel were viewed collectively: “The wife must be pleased to serve with the towel and comb” (*nujia defeng jinzhizhuan* 奴家

³³Chen Changhong 陳長虹, “Daode, zhixu yu qingse——gudai muzang zhuangshi zhongde shuzhuangtu” 道德、秩序與情色——古代墓葬裝飾中的梳妝圖, in Lian Chunhai 練春海, *Zhiqi shang xiang: Zhongguo gudai qiwu wenhua yanjiu* 制器尚象：中國古代器物文化研究 (Guilin: Guangxi shifandaxue Chubanshe, 2021), 260-94.

³⁴Su Bai 宿白, *Baisha songmu* 白沙宋墓 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2002), Plate 6, 131.

³⁵Nakagawa Tadataka 中川忠英, *Qingsu jiwen* 清俗紀聞, translated by Fang Ke 方克 and Sun Xuanling 孫玄齡 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006), 2.119.

³⁶Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi*, 2.1240.

³⁷Wang Shizhen 王士禛, *Chibei outan* 池北偶談, punctuated and collated by Jin Siren 靳斯仁 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju), 23.555-56.

³⁸Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Yili zhushu* 十三經注疏·儀禮注疏, 6.972.

得奉巾櫛之歡)³⁹, this sentiment being a comment on how a woman must obey her husband.

In summary, if a premodern woman wished to have hands as soft as a newly budded leaf (*shou ru rou yi* 手如柔荑),⁴⁰ her room could not do without these articles for hand washing.

DENTAL CARE ARTICLES

Healthy teeth were a symbol of a woman's overall health. Those of old said, "The health of every part of the body begins with the teeth." (*baiwu yangsheng, moxian kouchi* 百物養生，莫先口齒)⁴¹ To maintain oral hygiene and prevent tooth decay, premodern women used toothbrushes and spittoons as basic instruments of dental care.

1. Toothbrushes

Toothbrushes are used to keep teeth healthy, their prototypes being willow branches according to the *Great Tang Records on the Western Regions (Da Tang Xiyu Ji 大唐西域記)*: "Upon finishing a meal, one may chew willow branches to clean the teeth." (*zhuan shi ji qi, jiao yangzhi er weiing* 饌食既訖，嚼楊枝而為淨)⁴² Tombs from the Tang and Song dynasties have produced toothbrushes (Figures 13 and 14).



Figure 13 A Tang Dynasty toothbrush unearthed on Zihui Street in Chengdu.⁴³



Figure 14 A Song Dynasty toothbrush made of bone (Luohe Museum collection).⁴⁴

³⁹Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng 蘭陵笑笑生, *Jinpingmei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話, annotated by Tao Muning (Beijing: Renmin wenzue Chubanshe, 2000), Chapter 16, 182.

⁴⁰Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Maoshi zhengyi* (毛詩正義), 3. 322.

⁴¹Yang Shiyong 楊士瀛, *Renzhai Zhizhi* 仁齋直指, with supplements by Zhu Chongzheng 朱崇正 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 1991), 21.418.

⁴²Xuanzang 玄奘 and Bianji 辯機, *Datang xiyuji jiaozhu* 大唐西域記校注, collated and annotated by Ji Xianlin 季羨林 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2000), 2.181.

⁴³He Zhongjun 和中浚 and Wu Hongzhou 吳鴻洲, *Zhonghua yixue wenwu tuji* 中華醫學文物圖集 (Chengdu: Sichuan renmin Chubanshe, 2001), 129.

⁴⁴Kaifeng Museum, *Fengyasong — Songdai wenwuzhan* 風雅宋——宋代文物展 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2022), 30.

A woman's chamber would not be complete without a toothbrush. "Princess Zhou Hanguo had ten jade toothbrushes and ten gold toothbrushes in her chamber." (*zhouhanguo gongzhu fanglian, you yuchishua shi, jinchishua shi* 周漢國公主房奩，有玉齒刷十，金齒刷十)⁴⁵ In describing the arrangement of items in a woman's bedroom from the *Qingsu Jiwen*, American scholar Francesca Bray says that a toothbrush was kept on the dressing table near the window (Figure 15).⁴⁶



Figure 15 A woman's room as depicted in the *Qingsu Jiwen*.⁴⁷

In Qiu Ying 仇英's *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Figure 16), we can see a large vertical banner ad that reads, "Sewing implements, steel needles, grooming articles, brushes, *min* hairbrushes, scissors, rulers." (*nügong, gangzhen, shuju, shuamin, jiandao, yachi juquan* 女工、鋼針、梳具、刷振、剪刀、牙尺俱全) The word "brushes" refers to toothbrushes.



Figure 16 Part of Ming Dynasty painter Qiu Ying's *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Liaoning Provincial Museum collection).⁴⁸

Toothpicks were also used by women to keep their teeth clean. Archaeologists believe the teeth of people who lived in the Huanglong Cave region, Hubei had large spaces between them "as a result of using thin, round, hard toothpicks to remove food from their teeth."⁴⁹ Fan Changxi 范長喜 states, "The term *shuya* 疏牙 (on a Han Dynasty wooden slip from Tushantun) probably refers to articles used to clear away filth from on and between the teeth. *Shuya* were funerary articles and, more specifically, probably small objects for

⁴⁵Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252: 72.235.

⁴⁶Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, translated by Jiang Mei 江湄 and Deng Jingli 鄧京力 (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin Chubanshe, 2006), 95.

⁴⁷Nakagawa Tadataka, *Qingsu jiwen*, 2. 111.

⁴⁸Qiu Ying, *Qingming shanghetu*, in Cao Yanwei, *Lidai mingjia huihua* 歷代名家繪畫, 9.

⁴⁹Liu Wu 劉武, Wu Xianzhu 武仙竹, Wu Xiujie 吳秀傑 and Pei Shuwen 裴樹文, "Renlei yachi biao mian henji yu renlei shengcun shiying ji xingwei tezheng — Hubei Yunxi huanglongdong gengxinshi wanqi renlei yachi shiyong henji" 人類牙齒表面痕跡與人類生存適應及行為特徵——湖北鄖西黃龍洞更新世晚期人類牙齒使用痕跡, *Disiji yanjiu* 第四紀研究, 6 (2008), 1019.

cleaning the teeth such as toothpicks.”⁵⁰ Women of the Ming and Qing dynasties often used gold and silver toothpicks and earpicks (*shi jian er* 事件兒) as decorative items. The Ming Dynasty novel *Xing shi yan* 型世言 says, “Geng Zhi 耿埴 saw that no one was around and took a silver toothpick and its holder from his sleeve, wrapped it in a white silk towel, and walked over to the woman who laughed and took it.”⁵¹ Gold toothpicks were found in the Ming Dynasty tomb of Wang Shiqi 王士琦 (Figure 17) and can be seen in the Palace Museum’s collection from the Qing Dynasty (Figure 18).



Figure 17 Gold sanitary items and their holder from Wang Shiqi’s tomb.⁵²



Figure 18 A Qing Dynasty toothpick and earpick with a calabash design connected by a chain.⁵³

2. Spittoons

Women “rinsed their mouths several times after eating” (*shibi, chang shukou shuguo* 食畢，常漱口數過)⁵⁴ “to prevent tooth maladies.” (*keyi wu chijibing* 可以無齒疾病)⁵⁵ Spittoons (Figures 19 and 20) were the vessels in which they spit after rinsing their mouths (or in which they spit sputum) and were important for personal dental care.

⁵⁰Fan Changxi 范長喜, “Qingdao tushantun liuhao hanmu qiance ‘shuya’ wei yaqian kao”青島土山屯 6 號漢墓遺冊“疏牙”為牙籤考, in the author’s *Chutu wenxian mingwu kao* 出土文獻名物考 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2022), 104.

⁵¹Lu Renlong 陸人龍, *Xing shi yan* 型世言 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 2001), Chapter 5 .59.

⁵²Deng Lili 鄧莉麗 and Liu Xiaodan 劉曉丹, “Mingdai jinyin ‘sanshi’er’ sheji meixue yu wenhua neihan yanjiu”明代金銀“三事兒”設計美學與文化內涵研究, *Zhuangshi*, 1 (2017), 85.

⁵³The picture is from the Digital Collections of the Palace Museum, at <https://digicol.dpm.org.cn/cultural/details?id=101921>.

⁵⁴Zhang Gao 張杲, *Yishuo* 醫說, collated and annotated by Cao Ying 曹瑛 and Yang Jian 楊健 (Beijing: Zhongyi guji Chubanshe, 2013), 9.330.

⁵⁵Zhang Gao, *Yishuo*, 4.170.



Figure 19 Spittoon with celadon glaze from the Western Jin Dynasty (Shaanxi History Museum collection).⁵⁶



Figure 20 Spittoon with celadon glaze from the Song Dynasty (Sichuan Provincial Museum collection).⁵⁷

Women of the royal family used spittoons. The *Donggong jiushi* 東宮舊事 (*Affairs of the Past in the East Palace*) reads, “When the crown prince took a concubine, she was given a lacquered spittoon with a silver band.” (*huangtaizi nafei, you qihua yindai tuohu yi* 皇太子納妃，有漆畫銀帶唾壺一)⁵⁸ The *History of Song* (*Song Shi* 宋史) says, “The empress dowager is frugal. An administrative agency paid her tribute with a pure gold spittoon, but she exchanged it for one that was merely gold-plated.” (*taihou xingjiejian, yousi jin jintuohu, taihou yi, lingyong tujin* 太后性節儉，有司進金唾壺，太后易，令用塗金)⁵⁹ Depicted in Tang Dynasty painter Zhou Fang’s *Ladies with Fans* (*Huishan shinü tu* 揮扇仕女圖, Figure 21) and in an unknown Song Dynasty painter’s *The Empress Dowager of Emperor Renzong of Song* (*Songrenzong Huanghou xiang* 宋仁宗皇后像, Figure 22) are ladies-in-waiting holding spittoons.



⁵⁶Photographed at the Shaanxi History Museum.

⁵⁷Liang Jun, Zheng Rong et al., *Guoyi qijushi*, 270.

⁵⁸Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:84.318.

⁵⁹Toqto’a 脫脫, *Songshi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 243.8643.

Figure 21 Tang Dynasty painter Zhou Fang's *Ladies with Fans* (Palace Museum collection).⁶⁰



Figure 22 Unknown Song Dynasty painter's *The Empress Dowager of Emperor Renzong of Song* (National Palace Museum in Taipei collection).⁶¹

One of the murals in the Baisha tombs depicts people having tea as was their everyday custom. The female servant in the background on the right is holding a spittoon to be used when her master needs it (Figure 23).



Figure 23 A mural of a husband and wife sitting across from each other on the western wall of the antechamber in Tomb 1 at the Baisha tombs.⁶²

Of course, men and women alike have teeth, but teeth were viewed with much more importance by women in premodern China. In that male-dominated society, red lips and white teeth were major standards of beauty. Just before Liang Nüying 梁女瑩, daughter of the famous General Liang Shang 梁商, was to be married to Emperor Huan of Han 漢桓帝, the palace sent servants to her to conduct a physical examination,

⁶⁰The picture is from the official website of the Palace Museum, at <https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/228711.html>.

⁶¹Zheng Yan 鄭豔, *Minghua zhong de nüxing* 名畫中的女性. (Beijing: Wenhua yishu Chubanshe, 2014), 59.

⁶²Su Bai 宿白, *Baisha Songmu* 白沙宋墓 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2002), Plate 5, 131.

the aspect of “crimson lips and bright white teeth” (*zhu kou hao chi* 朱口皓齒) being especially critical.⁶³ Liu Guifei 劉貴妃, a concubine of Emperor Huizong of Song 宋徽宗, was praised at the palace for having “teeth which sparkled like crystal” (*chi ying jie ru shui jing* 齒瑩潔如水晶) and thus affirmed as a *yun* 韻 (a woman of great beauty) who stood out within the six halls of the concubines. (*liugong chengzhiyue ‘yun’ gai shiyi furen you biao zhizhe wei ‘yun’* 六宮稱之曰‘韻’。蓋時以婦人有標緻者為‘韻’)⁶⁴ On the other hand, teeth were not an issue in measuring the appearance of a man; a man simply needed to be big and strong, have a good-looking beard, and appear brave.⁶⁵ In premodern writings, we see elderly men sighing about lost teeth merely as an expression of lament for becoming old. For instance, Bai Juyi 白居易’s *ci* poem *Lost Teeth* (*Chi luo ci* 齒落辭) reads, “My teeth have been in use for over 60 years. As a youth, I was robust in body, blood, and *qi*, and my teeth were strong. Now aged, my blood and *qi* falter and I lose teeth.” (*wei kouzhong zhiwu, huhu liushi yunian. xi junzhizhuangye, xuegang chijian. Jin junzhilaoyi, xueshuai chihan* 為口中之物，忽乎六十餘年。昔君之壯也，血剛齒堅。今君之老矣，血衰齒寒)⁶⁶ In *Losing Teeth*, (*Luochi* 落齒) Han Yu 韓愈 wrote, “I lost a tooth last year, and this year another. In a short time, I have lost six or seven, and the trend is by no means ceasing. Those that remain wiggle, and I fear such progression shall only end once all are gone.” (*qunian luo yiya, jinnian luo yichi. eran luo liuqi, luoshi shu weiyi. yucun jie dongyao, jinluo ying shizhi* 去年落一牙，今年落一齒。俄然落六七，落勢殊未已。餘存皆動搖，盡落應始止)⁶⁷ As can be seen, the loss of teeth signified for men that they were past their prime, a far cry from the role in the sexual appeal they played for women.

Proper care of the teeth is indeed beneficial for the overall health of a person, but it is unknown how many women with “sparkling white teeth” (*haochi chu hanxue* 皓齒初含雪)⁶⁸ used toothbrushes and spittoons for their health as opposed to their beauty.

HAIR-GROOMING ARTICLES

It has long been said that “one must often brush the hair to make it beautiful.” (*fa yi duo shu* 髮宜多梳)⁶⁹ The hair-grooming articles mentioned in the *Lianshi* are the comb, *bo* 撥, and *min* 篋 (a small hairbrush).

1. Combs

The comb and *bi* 篋 were the most common articles used by women to brush their hair, the difference being that the latter has a relatively close array of teeth compared to the former. Based on a large quantity of unearthed relics, Chen Hesui 陳鶴歲 believes that “People were using combs in prehistoric times, and the *bi* emerged no later than the Warring States period. Based on writings from the past, the two have histories of about 3,000 years.”⁷⁰ The Nanjing Museum has a wooden *bi* on display from the Western Han Dynasty

⁶³Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1251:25.511.

⁶⁴Zhou Hui 周輝, *Qingbo zazhi jiaozhu* 清波雜誌校注, collated and annotated by Liu Yongxiang 劉永翔 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1994), 6.274.

⁶⁵Duan Jianjun 段建軍 and Wang Mian 王勉, *Nanxing meixue* 男性美學 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2014), 11.

⁶⁶Bai Juyi 白居易, *Bai Juyi ji jianjiao* 白居易集箋校, collated and annotated by Zhu Jincheng 朱金城 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 1988), 71.3780.

⁶⁷Han Yu 韓愈, *Han Changli shiji biannian jianzhu* 韓昌黎詩集編年箋注, annotated by Fang Shiju 方世舉, and collated by Hao Runhua 郝潤華 and Ding Junli 丁俊麗 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2012), 2.89.

⁶⁸Zhang Hu 張祜, *Zhang Hu shiji jiaozhu* 張祜詩集校注, collated and annotated by Yin Zhanhua 尹占華 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2007), 61.

⁶⁹Leng Qian 冷謙, *Xiuling yaozhi* 修齡要指 (Beijing: Zhongguo yiyao keji Chubanshe, 2017), 6.

⁷⁰Chen Hesui 陳鶴歲, *Ta wuyu: Hanzi yu nüxing wushi* 她物語：漢字與女性物事 (Beijing: Hualing Chubanshe, 2019), 208.

(Figure 24). In the tomb of the Marquis of Haihun (*Haihun Hou* 海昏侯), a box for holding toiletries was found, in which were combs and *bi* (Figure 25). The painting *Admonitions Scroll* (*Nü shi zhen tu* 女史箴圖) by Gu Kaizhi 顧愷之 has a clearly depicted toiletry box (also containing a comb and *bi*) in the lower-right corner (Figure 26). A figurine of a woman combing her hair from the Tang Dynasty has an elegant look (Figure 27). An exquisite bone comb from the Song Dynasty (Figure 28) is part of the Shaanxi History Museum collection. A comb and *bi* are also seen in the painting *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (see Figure 16).



Figure 24 A wooden *bi* with carved ornamentation from the Western Han Dynasty.⁷¹



Figure 25 A lacquered toiletry box with three smaller ones inside where three combs and *bi* were placed and a silver fastener from the Western Han Dynasty was unearthed at the tomb of the Marquis of Haihun.⁷²



⁷¹Nanjing Museum, *Wen · Wan: Zhongguo gudai nüxing wenwu dazhan* 溫 · 婉: 中國古代女性文物大展 (Nanjing: Yilin Chubanshe, 2016), 168.

⁷²The picture comes from the official website of the Nanchang Relic Museum for Haihun Principality of Han Dynasty, at <http://www.hhhmuseum.cn/html/detailRelic.html?parentID=b320ac1b-29c8-4c68-a11f-dcffe58a0ad1&id=9f910332-2853-4aff-9f87-04741fe4b513&articleID=b7f870ca-4881-4abe-bc5c-4574989dc34f>.

Figure 26 Part of Jin Dynasty painter Gu Kaizhi's *Admonitions Scroll*.⁷³

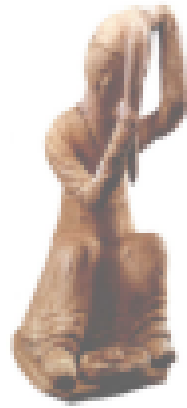


Figure 27 A figurine of a woman combing her hair from the Tang Dynasty found in Hejialong, Hubei.⁷⁴



Figure 28 A bone comb with a design in gold from the Song Dynasty (Shaanxi History Museum collection).⁷⁵

Combs and *bi* were used for maintaining health, such as for detoxification, warding off evil, and increasing hair quantity. The *Miaoman tuceye* 苗蠻圖冊頁 (*Collection of Paintings of the Miao nationality*) contains a picture of a Miao woman washing and combing her hair (Figure 29).



⁷³Chen Bin 陳斌, *Zhongguo lidai fengsuhua pu* 中國歷代風俗畫譜 (Xi'an: San Qin Chubanshe, 2014), 43.

⁷⁴Yang Jing 楊晶, *Zhonghua shubi liuqiannian* 中華梳篦六千年 (Beijing: Zijincheng Chubanshe, 2007), 200.

⁷⁵Photographed at the Shaanxi History Museum.

Figure 29 Picture of a Miao woman washing and combing her hair.⁷⁶

What they used for shampoo was mainly Chinese honey locust, egg whites, sesame leaves, and rice water.

2. Bo

The *bo* was another item used to arrange the hair. The *Lianshi* says, “The *bo* is used to loosen knots in the hair and make their hair into a bun. It is made of wood and shaped like the seed of a jujube, pointed at the two ends, and is two *cun* long.” (*bozhe, liekaiye. funü lihuan yong bo, yi mu weizhi, xingru zaohe, liangtou jianjian, ke ercun chang* 撥者，揆開也。婦女理鬢用撥，以木為之，形如棗核，兩頭尖尖，可二寸長)⁷⁷ Women used *bo* to unravel knots in their hair, fluff it, and make it clean and shiny, keeping away filth. A stone relief sculpture from the Han Dynasty depicts women grooming their hair with *bo* (Figure 30).



Figure 30 A stone relief sculpture of women from the Han Dynasty.⁷⁸

3. Min

The *min* looked like a brush and was used to apply oil to the hair (Figure 31). The Palace Museum collection has an ivory-handled one (Figure 32), and there is an image of another (Figure 33) in the *Beijing fengsu tupu* 北京風俗圖譜 (*Atlas of Beijing Customs*). In the painting *Replica of Zhang Zeduan's Painting Along the River During the Qingming Festival* (Figure 16) mentioned earlier, the *min* is one of the articles listed on the vertical banner in front of the shop. Such characters as Pan Jinlian, Li Ping'er, and Lin Daiyu in Ming and Qing Dynasty novels used *min*. Scholars say, “Premodern Chinese women often dipped their *min* into a beauty ointment made of pomelo tree wood shavings to care for their hair.”⁷⁹ They did the same with sesame seed oil and sap from the Chinese parasol tree too.

⁷⁶Author unknown, *Miaoman tuceye* 苗蠻圖冊頁, preserved at the Library of Congress, U.S., 1786 in the reign of the Qianlong Emperor.

⁷⁷Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:72. 233.

⁷⁸Editorial Board for an Encyclopedia of Chinese Stone Carvings, *Zhongguo huaxiangshi quanji: Shandong hanhuaxiangshi* 中國畫像石全集: 山東漢畫像石, edited by Lai Fei 賴非 (Jinan: Shandong meishu Chubanshe, 2000), Picture 105.97.

⁷⁹Yin Wei 殷偉 and Cheng Jianqiang 程建強, *Shishang congshu · Zhongguo shishang wenhua* 時尚叢書·中國時尚文化 (Xi'an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chuban zongshe youxian gongsi, 2012), 48.



Figure 31 A *min* as illustrated in the *Sancai Tuhui*.⁸⁰



Figure 32 An ivory handled *min* from the Qing Dynasty.⁸¹



Figure 33 A *min* as pictured in the *Beijing Fengshu Tupu*.⁸²

The comb, *bo*, and *min* were mainly used to brush and arrange the hair, but these acts were related to more than just beauty, implying social norms for women. “The things women did, look into mirrors, apply oils and powders to their skin, and wash, comb, and balm their hair, were always accompanied by self-examination inside out. The entire process of primping in front of the mirror was a process of character cultivation, self-reflection, and contemplation of virtue.”⁸³ Thus, descriptions of their wives grooming themselves were a major component of the works of writers of old. A Tang Dynasty epigraph on the tomb of Li Jitui 李季推, wife of the poet Han Yi 韓益, describes her as “able and virtuous since childhood, her

⁸⁰Wang Qi 王圻 and Wang Siyi 王思義, *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 1988), 1335.

⁸¹The picture is from the Digital Collections of the Palace Museum, at

<https://digicol.dpm.org.cn/cultural/detail?id=8b50f12a9ea54bf6b55728063a422dc7&source=1>

⁸²Aoki Masaru, *Beijing fengshu tupu* 北京風俗圖譜. explained by Uchida Michio, translation and annotation by Zhang Xiaogang 張小剛 (Beijing: Dongfang Chubanshe, 2019), 132.

⁸³Chen Changhong 陳長虹, “Daode zhixu yu qingse — Gudai muzang zhuangshi zhong de shuzhuangtu” 道德、秩序與情色——古代墓葬裝飾中的梳妝圖, in Lian Chunhai 練春海, *Zhiqi shangxiang: Zhongguo gudai qiwu wenhua yanjiu* 制器尚象：中國古代器物文化研究 (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue Chubanshe, 2021), 270.

reputation being praised among her kinsmen.” (*you bing xian shu, wen yu yin qi* 幼稟賢淑，聞於姻戚) After marrying, she was further praised as “able to restrain herself through deference and frugality, treat people kindly, empathize with her servants, and prepare the ancestral offerings within her well-kept house. As a result, guests always highly affirmed her.” (*neng yi gongjian yueji, huici xuxia. zhengchang beiyu juanjie, binke chengqi yibiao* 能以恭儉約己，惠慈恤下。蒸嘗備於蠲潔，賓客稱其儀表) This is why her husband expressed his feelings for her after her death with such fondness: “I recall how she looked making her toilet in the mornings, full of the sounds of joy and laughter.” (*husi xiaodan zhuangshuzuo, youyi xunchang xiaoyusheng* 忽思曉旦妝梳坐，又憶尋常笑語聲)⁸⁴ Literary giant Su Dongpo 蘇東坡 wrote a deeply emotional epigraph of praise on the gravestone of his wife (surnamed Wang) too: Regarding her treatment of his parents, “she gained quite a reputation for her discretion and dignity,” (*jie yi jin su wen* 皆以謹肅聞) and regarding her treatment of him, “she reminded me daily of the wise advice given by her late father.” (*riyi xianjun zhisuoyi jieshezhe xiangyuye* 日以先君之所以戒軾者相語也)⁸⁵ This makes it easy to understand how Su came up with this sentiment: “While she is making her toilet by the window, we look at each other but speak not as countless tears fall.” (*xiaoxuanchuang, zhengshuzhuang. xianggu wuyan, weiyou leiqianhang* 小軒窗，正梳妝。相顧無言，唯有淚千行)⁸⁶

A verse from an old poem goes, “I watch you brush your hair through the quartz curtain,” (*shuijinglianxia kanshutou* 水晶簾下看梳頭)⁸⁷, not only expressing the poet’s memory of his love but a picture of part of the daily routine of a woman who was expected to live by Confucianism’s “Four Virtues” of a woman.

ARTICLES FOR THE PRIVATE PARTS

Articles for the private parts refer to receptacles for excrement, materials for wiping away bodily waste, and sanitary belts.

1. Items for dealing with excrement

Several items were used as receptacles for excrement in premodern times.

(i) Mazi

Based on modern research, the *huzi* 虎子 (tiger) (Figure 34) was a urinal for men, and the *mazi* 馬子 (horse) (Figure 35) was one for women.⁸⁸ As can be seen in the image, the latter was designed for a woman to squat over and urinate. Since they were made specifically for women, the word *mazi* was also used to “refer to ‘prostitutes and indecent women,’ with the implication that ‘anyone may sit atop them.’” As a result, “the word *mazi* can be used as an insult to and means of debasing women.”⁸⁹ In films, when a male gangster calls a woman a *mazi*, “it not only shows how coarse and base their character is but also manifests their

⁸⁴“Tang Bian Song dengzhou guancha zhishi shi taichangsi xielulang Han Yi wangqi Longxi Lishi muzhiming bingxu”唐汴宋等州觀察支使試太常寺協律郎韓益亡妻隴西李氏墓誌銘並敘, in Liu Wen 劉文 and Du Zhen 杜鎮, *Shaanxi xinjian Tangchao muzhi* 陝西新見唐朝墓誌 (Xi’an: San Qin Chubanshe, 2022), 152.320.

⁸⁵Su Shi 蘇軾, *Wangqi Wangshi muzhiming* 亡妻王氏墓誌銘, in *Su Shi wenji* 蘇軾文集, compiled by Mao Wei 茅維, and punctuated and collated by Kong Fanli 孔凡禮 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1986), 15.472.

⁸⁶Su Shi 蘇軾, *Su Shi ci biannian jiaozhu · Jiangchengzi* 蘇軾詞編年校注 · 江城子, collated and annotated by Zou Tongqing 鄒同慶 and Wang Zongtang 王宗堂 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 141.

⁸⁷Yuan Zhen 元稹, *Yuan Zhen ji · Waiji buyi* 元稹集 · 外集補遺, punctuated and collated by Ji Qin 冀勤 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2010), 1.737.

⁸⁸Feng Shuangyuan 馮雙元, “Yetan ‘Huzi’ yu ‘Mazi’”也談“虎子”與“馬子”, *Dongnan wenhua*, 5 (2006), 68.

⁸⁹Ren Jing 任敬 and Xu Zhaoshou 徐兆壽, *Jiegou, yingxiang, tupo* 結構、映像、突破 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin Chubanshe, 2020), 55.

chauvinistic mindset that they are gloriously superior to women in every way and that they wish to control and subjugate women. It also tells us that women in gangs have almost no dignity or selfhood, evoking pity and sympathy from the audience all the more.”⁹⁰



Figure 34 A *huzi* from the Xin Dynasty unearthed in Jingwei Village, Xihu, Jiangsu.⁹¹



Figure 35 A blue and white porcelain *mazi* with flower imagery from the Qing Dynasty (Nanjing Museum collection).⁹²

(ii) Chamber pots

While the *mazi* was for urinating for women, the chamber pot, which evolved from the *mazi*, was a “lidded bucket for both urinating and defecating.”⁹³ According to the *Liunan suibi* 柳南隨筆, whenever the wife of the Ming Dynasty official Li Shixian 李世賢 urinated in the palace, she used a receptacle painted with imagery of dragons and phoenixes.⁹⁴ Mao Xianmin 毛憲民 believes that within the Ming Dynasty palaces, “latrine filth was collected in wooden buckets, and outside their walls were stationed eunuchs to clean them up when needed.”⁹⁵ Thus, the wife of Li Shixian used a chamber pot. The *Qingsu jiwen* also relates in detail that women of the Qing Dynasty did not go to the latrine but used a chamber pot in their room instead (Figure 36).⁹⁶

⁹⁰Ren Jing and Xu Zhaoshou, *Jiegou, yingxiang, tupo*, 55.

⁹¹Yangzhou Heritage and Archaeology Research Institute, *Guangling yizhen* 廣陵遺珍 (Nanjing: Fenghuang meishu Chubanshe, 2018), 97.

⁹²Nanjing Museum, *Wen · Wan: Zhongguo gudai nüxing wenwu dazhan*, 212.

⁹³Hao Mingjian 郝銘鑒 and Sun Huan 孫歡, *Zhenghua tanmingdian* 中華探名典 (Shanghai: Shanghai Jinxiu wenzhang Chubanshe, 2014), 7659.

⁹⁴Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252: 85.334.

⁹⁵Mao Xianmin 毛憲民, “Ming Qing huangong de ruce wenti” 明清皇宮的如廁問題, *Zijin Cheng* 紫禁城, 7 (2007), 204.

⁹⁶Nakagawa Tadataka, *Qingsu jiwen*, 2.132.

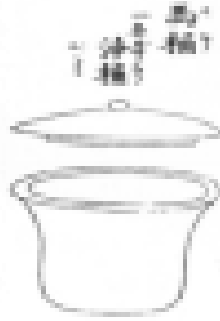


Figure 36 A chamber pot as illustrated in the *Qingsu jiwen*.⁹⁷

Chamber pot-related objects unearthed from the past include a lacquered wooden close-stool seat from the Western Han Dynasty (Figure 37), inside of which was placed a chamber pot, and two close stools (Figures 38 and 39) from the Qing Dynasty, which are not so different from toilets of the modern day.



Figure 37 A lacquered wooden close-stool seat from the Western Han Dynasty (Zhejiang's Anji County Museum collection).⁹⁸



Figure 38 A close stool from the Qing Dynasty.⁹⁹



⁹⁷Nakagawa Tadataka, *Qingsu jiwen*, 2.136.

⁹⁸Huzhou Heritage and Museum Society, *Tiao Zha boyuan 苕雪博苑 (2015-2016)* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji Chubanshe, 2017), 25.

⁹⁹Zhang Tongyao 張童瑤, "Zhongguo gudai ruce wenhua zhong de zaowu guannian yanjiu" 中國古代如廁文化中的造物觀念研究, a graduate thesis, Qingdao University of Technology, 2019, 38.

Figure 39 A close stool from the Qing palace.¹⁰⁰

(iii) Latrines

The time of emergence of the latrine is unknown. In early 2023, archaeologists found a 2,400-year-old latrine of good quality that had had running water at the Qin Dynasty Yueyang City archaeological site in Shaanxi. It consisted of an indoor toilet stall atop a foundation and a sewage pit outside the stall (Figure 40). Within the section on *palace maids in the Rites of Zhou* (*Zhouli · Gongren* 周禮·宮人) is the earliest-known record of a woman tasked with cleaning a latrine.¹⁰¹ The *Yi jian zhi* 夷堅志, a novel from the *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說 genre, speaks of women using a latrine: “The mother of the master went to the latrine, but no servants were on hand, so she told the master’s concubine to bring a candle and accompany her.” (*zhumu ye ruce, bang wu taren, shi xiezhu yixing* 主母夜如廁，傍無他人，使攜燭以行)¹⁰²



Figure 40 Part of a latrine from the Yueyang City site.¹⁰³

One expert believes that “Beginning in the Han Dynasty, latrines were enclosed rooms and gradually became separated based on gender. For instance, a model of a set of two latrines next to each other, one for women and the other for men, was unearthed at the Nanyang Eastern Han Dynasty gravesite (Figure 41). In front of the sewage pit for the men’s latrine was a urinal, but the women’s latrine did not have one, just as is the case with modern-day restrooms. However, the latrines were more often arranged as being indoors for women and outdoors for men. Of course, the terms ‘indoors’ and ‘outdoors’ are relative. The ‘outdoor’ men’s latrine at home could be considered ‘indoors’ when compared to a men’s outdoor public latrine. And the chamber pot inside home was ‘indoors’ compared to the outdoor men’s latrine at home. Regardless, women’s latrines were more ‘indoors’ and more concealed than men’s.”¹⁰⁴ Women did not like to go outside to use the latrine, instead preferring to use indoor chamber pots. The separation of latrines by gender was doubtlessly a sign of advancement in civilization, and it was “also a necessary product of a male-dominated society in which men seek to control women.”¹⁰⁵ In our times, “a restroom stop takes a

¹⁰⁰Mao Xianmin, “Ming Qing huanggong de ruce wenti”, 205.

¹⁰¹Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Zhouli zhushu*, 6.675-76.

¹⁰²Hong Mai 洪邁, *Yijian zhi · Yijian zhigeng juan* 夷堅志·夷堅支庚卷, punctuated and collated by He Zhuo 何卓 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006), 4.1164.

¹⁰³The picture comes from a Guangming Net article, “Latest Discovery in Xi’an: ‘Flush-type’ Toilet 2,400 Years Ago”, at https://m.gmw.cn/2023-02/17/content_1303286786.htm.

¹⁰⁴Liu Qin 劉勤, “Zhongguo ceshen nüxing xingbie chengyin jiqi neihan yanjiu” 中國廁神女性性別成因及其內涵探究, in *Zhongguo suwenhua yanjiu* 中國俗文化研究 (Volume 9), compiled by Xiang Chu 項楚 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2014), 110.

¹⁰⁵Liu Qin, “Zhongguo ceshen nüxing xingbie chengyin jiqi neihan yanjiu”, 111.

woman up to 2.3 times as long as it takes a man,”¹⁰⁶ but the restrooms for both genders are the same size. As a result, we often see long lines at women’s restrooms at schools and tourist attractions, but no lines for the men’s. And of course, the same was true, if not more so, for women in premodern times.



Figure 41 Model of a pigpen equipped with latrines from the Eastern Han Dynasty unearthed in Nanyang, Henan.¹⁰⁷

Latrines and chamber pots were related to women giving birth. According to Liu Qin 劉勤, “Giving birth was viewed as similar to defecating, a testament to how smooth it was, and some sages were born in latrines, indicating how divine they were.”¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the famous historian Fan Ye 范曄 was born in a latrine.¹⁰⁹ “In the Shaanxi region during the Ming and Qing dynasties, most children were born into a chamber pot. To this day in Zhejiang and Jiangsu, the custom of carrying a chamber pot during a wedding ceremony still lives on.”¹¹⁰

2. Materials for wiping

According to a western expert, before gentle, soft, “charming” toilet tissues were invented, any small object would clean oneself after doing one’s business. Even now, campers use whatever the local landscape provides. In the forest, leaves are an obvious choice. However, according to history, even stones, sticks, and the person’s own hand were used when needed. No matter what it was, people would use it if it worked.¹¹¹ “Though the discussion on customary materials used for wiping sounds insignificant, it is related to the developmental degree of civilization and culture.”¹¹² In the *Lianshi*, the materials women used for wiping were strips of wood (including bamboo), *wali* 瓦礫 (fragments of tile, brick, or stone), and paper.

(i) Strips of wood

The earliest strips used for wiping were made of wood or bamboo. According to the *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄 (*Record of Quitting Farmwork in a Southern Village for an Official Position*), “The temples of today make wooden strips and place them in the latrines, calling them *cechou*.” (*jin siguan xiaomu weichou, zhi hunqing zhong, mingyue cechou* 今寺觀削木為籌, 置溷圃中, 名曰廁籌)¹¹³ People of later times used the word *cechou* 廁籌 to refer to anything used for wiping. For example, “Shi Chong’s maidservant gave

¹⁰⁶Banks, Taunya Lovell (1911), Toilets as a Feminist Issue: A True Story, *Berkeley Women’s Law Journal*, 6:2 263-89, quoted from Caroline Criado Perez’s *Invisible Women*, translated by Zhan Juan 詹涓 (Beijing: Xinxing Chubanshe, 2022), 51.

¹⁰⁷Henan Museum, *Henan chutu Handai jianzhu mingqi* 河南出土漢代建築明器, compiled by Zhang Yong 張勇 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang Chubanshe, 2002), plate 71, 96.

¹⁰⁸Liu Qin, “Zhongguo ceshen nüxing xingbie chengyin jiqi neihan yanjiu”, 111.

¹⁰⁹Shen Yue 沈約, *Song shu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 69.1819.

¹¹⁰Liu Qin, “Zhongguo ceshen nüxing xingbie chengyin jiqi neihan yanjiu”, 111.

¹¹¹Julie L. Horan, *The Porcelain God: A Social History of the Toilet*, 120.

¹¹²Wang Zhixuan 王志軒, “Cechou zakao” 廁籌雜考, *Huaxia kaogu* 華夏考古, 1 (2010), 133.

¹¹³Tao Zongyi 陶宗儀, *Nancun chuogeng lu* 南村輟耕錄, compiled by Xu Yongming 徐永明 and Yang Guanghui 楊光輝 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji Chubanshe, 2014), 12.389.

him brocaded bags to serve as his *cechou*.” (*Shi Chong cebi chi jinnang jin yi wei chou* 石崇廁婢持錦囊進以為籌)¹¹⁴

(ii) Wali

The *Jiayi shengyan* 甲乙剩言 reads, “The custom in Anping is to use *wali* instead of paper in the latrines of both men and women. Anping is in Tangboling County, the home of Cui Yingying. One cannot help but plug his nose when it comes to the rear end of Cui Yingying.” (*Anping su, nannü cechou jie yong wali dai zhi. Anping, Tang Boling xian. Cui Yingying, xianrenye. buneng buwei Yingying yaochu yanbi* 安平俗, 男女廁籌皆用瓦礫代紙。安平, 唐博陵縣。崔鶯鶯, 縣人也。不能不為鶯鶯要處掩鼻)¹¹⁵ In the 1950s and 1960s, *tukela* stones (made of loess) were still used daily by women in rural northern China for wiping after defecation.

(iii) Paper

As yet, there is no evidence of when paper was first used for wiping, but we do know it was being used in China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. Yan Zhitui’s *Yanshi jiaxun* 顏氏家訓 (*Family Instructions of Master Yan*) reads, “Paper on which is written text from the Five Classics or the names of reputed people shall not be used for wiping the buttocks.” (*qi guzhi you wujing ciyi ji xianda xingming, bugan huiyongye* 其故紙有五經詞義及賢達姓名, 不敢穢用也)¹¹⁶ According to the *Ancient Accounts of India and China* (*Zhongguo yindu jianwen lu* 中國印度見聞錄), authored by an Arab and a Persian who visited those countries in the 9th century and translated by the French orientalist Eusèbe Renaudot, the Chinese were unparticular when it came to sanitation, as after defecating, they did not wash with water, instead opting for Chinese-made paper.¹¹⁷ This account verifies that those of the Tang Dynasty used paper. We have been unable to obtain any historical information on women’s use of paper for wiping from these two periods. The earliest evidence of women using paper comes during the Yuan Dynasty, when the paper was still quite rough. The *History of Yuan* (*Yuan shi* 元史) reads, “Empress Yuzong Huiren attended upon Empress Zhaorui Shunsheng in every detail. The former would even soften paper by wiping her face with it first before giving it to the latter for use in the latrine.” (*Yuzong Huiren Huanghou shi Zhaorui Shunsheng Huanghou, buli zuoyou, zhi hunce suoyong zhi, yi yimian ca, ling rouruan yijin* 裕宗徽仁皇后侍昭睿順聖皇后, 不離左右, 至溷廁所用紙, 亦以面擦, 令柔軟以進)¹¹⁸ In the Ming Dynasty, a government agency called the “Precious Paper Department” (*bao chao si* 寶鈔司) was established to manage paper for wiping.¹¹⁹ In the Qing Dynasty, wiping paper was essential in the latrines of the wealthy. For instance, *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢) reads, “Granny Liu’s stomach felt a bit uncomfortable. She grabbed a maidservant, requested two sheets of paper for wiping, and removed her clothing.” (*Liu laolao jue de funei yizhen luanxiang, mangde lazhe yige xiaoyatou, yaole liangzhangzhi jiu jieyi* 劉姥姥覺得腹內一陣亂響, 忙的拉著一個小丫頭, 要了兩張紙就解衣)¹²⁰

¹¹⁴Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:20.477.

¹¹⁵Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:85.334.

¹¹⁶Yan Zhitui 顏之推, *Yanshi jiaxun jijie* 顏氏家訓集解, with selected commentaries compiled by Wang Liqi 王利器 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1993), 1.55.

¹¹⁷*Zhongguo Yindu jianwenlu* 中國印度見聞錄, translated by Mu Genlai 穆根來, Wen Jiang 汶江, and Huang Zhuohan 黃倬漢 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1983), Chapter 23, 11.

¹¹⁸Song Lian 宋濂 et al., *Yuan shi* 元史 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1976), 16.2898.

¹¹⁹Liu Ruoyu 劉若愚, *Ming gong shi* 明宮史, compiled by Lü Bi 呂毳 (Beijing: Beijing Chubanshe, 2018), 41.

¹²⁰Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢 (Beijing: Renmin wuxue Chubanshe, 2000), Chapter 41.442.



Figure 42 Wooden strips used for wiping.¹²¹

Aside from the three types of materials for wiping discussed above, premodern women also used silk and other forms of soft cloth, such as the brocaded bag mentioned earlier and crepe cloth.

The evolution of the materials premodern Chinese women used for wiping is a testament to the advancement of their civilization.

3. Sanitary belts

Well-known Japanese feminist scholar and University of Tokyo Professor Chizuko Ueno gave a speech at the university's ceremony for freshmen at the beginning of the semester in 2019, during which she asked, "In the times before sanitary pads and tampons, what did women use during menstruation?"¹²²

Menstruation, also known as a period, is a normal biological phenomenon for women. "During menstruation, the blood chamber goes empty, making it easier for evil toxins to infect and invade cells, so keeping the vulva clean is a must."¹²³ Therefore, knowing how to handle menstruation is extraordinarily important.

The sanitary belt, also known as a menstruation belt, is made of cloth and used during a woman's period. In premodern times, it was called a "Granny Chen", as recorded in the *Yan Qing* 言鯖: "Women of these times wear a piece of cloth, which they call a 'Granny Chen', in their undergarments in the area of menstrual discharge." (*jinshi furen xiefu zhong you jinshui zhilei yongyu huichu, er huqiming yue 'Chen laolao'* 今世婦人褻服中有巾幌之類用於穢處，而呼其名曰“陳姥姥”)¹²⁴

The premodern sanitary belt we know of is from the Lady Huang Sheng tomb from the Southern Song Dynasty (Figure 43). The belts were sometimes called *tuoyue* 橐龠 (Figure 44)¹²⁵ and looked similar to homemade sanitary belts used today by women in poor countries (Figure 45) and women in China before the Reform and Opening Up started in 1978 (Figure 46).

¹²¹Zhuo Lianshi 卓廉士, *Bencao gangmu bowu dadian* 本草綱目博物大典 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi Chubanshe, 2010), 428.

¹²²The article was first published on the Women's Action Network (WAN), at <https://wan.or.jp/article/show/8345>.

¹²³Ma Baozhang 馬寶璋, *Zhongyi fukexue* 中醫婦科學, illustrated by Du Huilan 杜惠蘭 (Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu Chubanshe, 2018), 54.

¹²⁴Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:85. 335.

¹²⁵Gong Juzhong 龔居中, *Fushou danshu* 福壽丹書, collated and annotated by He Zhenzhong 何振中 (Beijing: Zhongguo yiyao keji Chubanshe, 2012), 118.

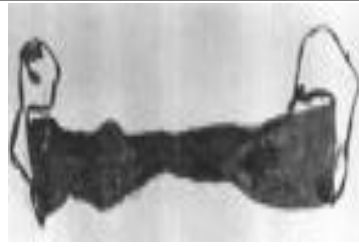


Figure 43 A brown sanitary belt unearthed at the Lady Huang Sheng tomb from the Southern Song Dynasty.¹²⁶



Figure 44 An image of a *tuoyue*.¹²⁷



Figure 45 Homemade sanitary belts used by women in poor countries.¹²⁸

¹²⁶Fujian Museum, *Fuzhou Nan Song Huang Sheng mu* 福州南宋黄升墓 (Beijing: wenwu Chubanshe, 1982), 43.

¹²⁷Gong Juzhong, *Fushou danshu*, 118.

¹²⁸The picture comes from an article under the WeChat account “He Zhi Meng”, titled “A Film about Menstruation Wins an Oscar”, at https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s?__biz=MzAwOTcyMDQzMA==&mid=2659856142&idx=1&sn=d71642dc239df5380e3f76147da54c12&chksm=8025c80fb75241198dafa550c296c5df16c8ca087eb4538f36d872c36fc49a423993fb788a60&mpshare=1&scene=1&srcid=0205LqYqQISK80W4qjRkci4Q&sharer_sharetime=1612532306772&sharer_shareid=1c56d42a71eef963434547545336e9a&from=singlemessage&ascene=1&devicetype=android-29&version=2700163b&nettype=WIFI&abtest_cookie=AAACAA%3D%3D&lang=zh_CN&exportkey=AwOXuysppq3c7hDIFYusa6s%3D&pass_ticket=H3fMrFE53%2FOrcPlhL8ARtiS2avXLxHcgDFAY5QRYUCGHzeTOJgFGxZ%2F0VM66g3eQ&wx_header=1.



Figure 46 An array of sanitary belts (Shaanxi Normal University Women’s Culture Museum collection).¹²⁹

So how are sanitary belts used? One writer explains, “In premodern times, most women in premodern China placed waste paper or waste cloth in the belt to absorb blood. It is unsanitary and frequently leads to infection, which is quite harmful.”¹³⁰ With progress over time, women started using medical cloth in place of waste cloth and tissue paper in place of waste paper. In 1921, the Guangyu Maternity Hospital in Shanghai placed an advertisement for a new menstruation article in *Funü zazhi* 婦女雜誌 (*Women’s Magazine*), which was “an improved medical cloth for use by women during menstruation and after giving birth.”¹³¹ The cloths were to be placed in the belt and viewed as superior sanitary cloth. “This type of cloth was made with cotton, crepe, and liquid medicine, making it the best sanitary cloth of all,”¹³² very obviously much better than waste cloth. The sanitary napkins used by women in those times were developed on the foundation of the earlier sanitary belts. So women started using disposable sanitary napkins, eliminating the hassle of cleaning and disinfecting the belts.

Menstruation is a normal part of a woman’s life, and the sanitary belt was just something with which to deal with this phenomenon. But “in a patriarchal society, physiological features of women were often disparaged and distorted as imperfections and unclean, especially menstruation and birth, which were mostly viewed as taboo and the opposite of sacredness.”¹³³ “In various sectors of community life, menstruating women were viewed as unclean (“*lah sap*” in Taiwan) and had to ‘temporarily’ adhere to related taboo rules. Only after the period of menstruation was over could they return to everyday life.”¹³⁴ For example, in premodern China, “women must remain in a side room while menstruating and giving birth” (*qi jiang shengzi ji yuechen, ju ceshi* 妻將生子及月辰, 居側室)¹³⁵ and “may not participate in rituals of offering while menstruating.” (*jian banbian, bude shici* 見嬖變, 不得侍祠)¹³⁶ “Menstrual blood is unclean, so men must stay away from women who are menstruating to keep the latter from harming their

¹²⁹Photographed at the Museum of Women’s Culture, Shaanxi Normal University.

¹³⁰Author unknown, “Nüzi yuejingbu zhi yanjiu” 女子月經布之研究, *Changshi*, 66 (1928). 261.

¹³¹Wang Yingpei 王瀛培, “Cong *Funü zazhi* guanggao kan nüxing richang shenghuo de gengzhang (1915-1931)” 從《婦女雜誌》廣告看女性日常生活的更張 (1915-1931), in Jiang Jin 姜進, *Shanghai: Dushi xiangxiang yu richang shenghuo de gengzhang* 上海: 都市想像與日常生活的更張, Shanghai: Shanghai cishu Chubanshe, 2020), 179-80.

¹³²Author unknown, “Nüzi yuejingbu zhi yanjiu”, 261.

¹³³Yang Li 楊莉, “Zongjiao yu funü de beixiang guanxi” 宗教與婦女的悖相關系, *Zongjiaoxue yanjiu* 宗教學研究, Z2 (1991), 51.

¹³⁴You Shujun 遊淑珺, *Nüjie menfeng: Taiwan suyu zhongde nüxing* 女界門風: 臺灣俗語中的女性 (Taipei: Qianwei Chubanshe, 2010), 282.

¹³⁵Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi*, 28.1469.

¹³⁶Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記, quoted, in Sima Zhen 司馬貞, *Shijisuoyin* 史記索隱, from *Han lü* 漢律 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1982), 59.2100.

yang energy and thus incurring sickness.” (*nüren ruyue, e’ye xinghui, gu junzi yuanzhi, weiqi bujie, neng sunyang shengbingye* 女人入月，惡液腥穢，故君子遠之，為其不潔，能損陽生病也)¹³⁷ It was believed that “if one catches a toad with a sanitary cloth and buries it in front of the latrine, it will keep women from becoming jealous” (*ling fu budu, qu yueshuibu guo hama yu ceqian maizhi* 令婦不妒，取月水布裹蛤蟆於廁前埋之)¹³⁸ and the strange idea that “the sanitary belt of a virgin can cure cholera.” (*tongnü yuejingyi zhi huoluan* 童女月經衣治霍亂)¹³⁹ From the above, one can see the strong misogynistic concepts of premodern times. It was no different in the West: “In premodern times, female Jews were restricted from having sex until 12 days after menstruation, otherwise they would be put to death. The Medes, Bactrians, and Persians also kept the custom of whipping or fining for sex during menstruation. The taboos for menstruation in some places and with some ethnicities developed to the point that women had to be isolated or incarcerated. The indigenous people of Congo and Gabon had a rule that menstruating women must reside in a separate room away from the rest of the family and could not see their husbands, fathers, or uncles during that time.”¹⁴⁰

The reason for menstruation being taboo is that dirtiness and contamination represent a breakdown of the existing social order and are used to refer to people and things that cannot fit into society’s classification system. The reason that menstruation is connected to these concepts is that menstrual blood has crossed over the body’s established boundaries, and it is unclean because the blood is in a place it should not be. The resulting fear of menstrual blood is a precise reflection of people’s desire to maintain social order.”¹⁴¹ More importantly, menstrual blood “is a natural physiological phenomenon unique to women. It not only symbolizes women’s ability to give birth but also represents the reason for the religious interpretation that ‘the bodies of women are contaminated,’ showing how both sacred and unclean views simultaneously exist. This view of the uncleanliness of such contamination is highly related to the taboos associated with menstrual blood.”¹⁴² These concepts are essentially means through which patriarchal societies control women and “an expression of the fear of men that the social structure contains a vague female power,” because “men have been the principal agents in structuring society, while women are usually viewed as unclean and sources of tarnished powers. Menstrual blood and women in menstruation are often viewed by the cultures they live in as unclean symbols of danger and destruction.”¹⁴³

In summary, we can see that the significance of women’s articles for the private parts in premodern times was not just related to Zhuangzi’s claim that the “Principle of Nature is found in both urine and excrement.” (*dao zai shi ni* 道在屎溺)¹⁴⁴

BATHING ARTICLES

¹³⁷Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng Chubanshe, 2004), 52.2953.

¹³⁸Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:85.335.

¹³⁹Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:85.335.

¹⁴⁰*Zhongguo xingkexue baike quanshu* Editorial Committee, and *Zhongguo dabaike quanshu* Chubanshe, *Zhongguo xingkexue baike quanshu* 中國性科學百科全書 (Beijing: Zhongguo dabaike quanshu Chubanshe, 1998), 432-33.

¹⁴¹You Shujun, *Nüjie menfeng: Taiwan suyu zhongde nüxing*, 270.

¹⁴²You Shujun, *Nüjie menfeng: Taiwan suyu zhongde nüxing*, 270.

¹⁴³Li Jinlian 李金蓮 and Zhu Heshuang 朱和雙, “Yuejing renleixue: Jujiao nüxing bei zhebi de shenghuo fangshi” 月經人類學：聚焦女性被遮蔽的生活方式, *Shijie minzu* 世界民族, 3 (2012), 42.

¹⁴⁴Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿, *Zhuangziyi jijiao* 莊子義集校, compiled and collated by Tang Jun 湯君 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2009), 7.404.

Regular bathing removes filth and germs from the body, effectively blocking the propagation and spread of bacteria and viruses. Bathing articles discussed in the *Lianshi* include washbasins and baths.

1. Washbasins

Washbasins, used for bathing in premodern times, “were mostly made of metal, but there were wooden ones as well.”¹⁴⁵ The Shaanxi History Museum has a copper washbasin from the Han Dynasty (Figure 47). The *Qingsu jiwen* mentions using washbasins to bathe themselves: “People usually fill washbasins with hot water when bathing, wetting a hand towel in the basin and wringing it out before wiping their body with it.”¹⁴⁶



Figure 47 Copper washbasin with imagery of two fish from the Han Dynasty (Shaanxi History Museum collection).¹⁴⁷

Premodern novels and paintings depict women bathing with washbasins. In *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅), Pan Jinlian and Ximen Qing bathe with a washbasin.¹⁴⁸ Qing Dynasty painter Gu Jianlong’s *Emperor Xuanzong Watches Yang Guifei Bathing* (*Tang Xuanzong kui Yang Guifei ruyu tu* 唐玄宗窺楊貴妃入浴圖, Figure 48) shows Yang bathing with a washbasin.



Figure 48 Part of *Emperor Xuanzong Watches Yang Guifei Bathing* (Yurinkan Museum collection)¹⁴⁹

For women, aside from being a tool for bathing, the washbasin was also related to childbearing.

¹⁴⁵Hua Fu 華夫, *Zhongguo gudai mingwu dadian* 中國古代名物大典, (Jinan: Jinan Chubanshe, 1993), 30.

¹⁴⁶Nakagawa Tadataka, *Qingsu jiwen*, 2.157.

¹⁴⁷Photographed at the Shaanxi History Museum.

¹⁴⁸Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng, *Jin ping mei cihua*, Chapter 29. 339.

¹⁴⁹Quoted from James Cahill, *Pictures for Use and Pleasure: Vernacular Painting in High Qing China*, translated by Yang Duo 楊多 (Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 2022), 16.

Whenever a woman of the royal household was pregnant, she was given all kinds of objects, including a washbasin. According to the *Minghuang shiqi shi* 明皇十七事 (17 Matters of Emperor Xuanzong), “When Suzong’s Consort Wu gave birth to Suzong’s first son, Daizong, Emperor Xuanzong gave her a golden washbasin.” (Suzong Wuhuanghou chusheng Daizong, Xuanzong cizhi jinyupen 肅宗吳皇后初生代宗，玄宗賜之金浴盆)¹⁵⁰ The *Wulin jiushi* 武林舊事 (*Affairs of the Past in Wulin*) reads, “Pregnant women in the palace are to be given a gilded basin, a silver one, and 15 others for various uses.” (*gongzhong youshen, ci dujinpen yimian, dayinpen yimian, zayongpen shiwuge* 宮中有娠，賜鍍金盆一面，大銀盆一面，雜用盆十五個)¹⁵¹ The Shaanxi History Museum collection contains two Tang Dynasty washbasins, a gold one (Figure 49) and a silver one unearthed at the Famen Temple site (Figure 50). It was not only women of the palace that this applied to, though. The *Dongjing meng hua lu* 東京夢華錄 (*The Eastern Capital: A Dream of Splendor*) reads,

凡孕婦入月於初一日，父母家以銀盆或鍍或彩畫盆，盛粟稗一束，上以錦繡或生色帕複蓋之，上插花朵及通草帖羅五男二女花樣

The first day after a woman has been pregnant for a month, her parents must place a bundle of millet stalks into a washbasin of silver or other metal, or one with painted imagery, and cover it with a headscarf that is either embroidered or brightly colored. On top of that, a flower is to be placed, and on top again is to lie a paper-cutting image of five men and two women.¹⁵²

These washbasins were used to conduct the “third-day bath” ritual for the child (its first bath, given on the third day after birth). The painting *Bathing a Child* (Figure 51) is “an auspicious image of celebration for a woman who bore a child, the reason for such success being attributed to the washbasin in the center of the picture.”¹⁵³ (Also see Figure 52.)



Figure 49 A solid gold washbasin from the Tang Dynasty (Shaanxi History Museum collection).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:57.92.

¹⁵¹Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:72.235.

¹⁵²Meng Yuanlao 孟元老, *Dongjing meng hua lu jianzhu* 東京夢華錄箋注, collated by Yi Yongwen 伊永文 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 5.503.

¹⁵³Huang Xiaofeng 黃小峰, “Fanhua, yingxi yu kulou: xunmi Song hua zhongde duanwushan” 繁花、嬰戲與骷髏：尋覓宋畫中的端午扇, *Zhejiang daxue yishu yu kaogu yanjiu* 浙江大學藝術與考古研究, 1 (2017), 208.

¹⁵⁴Photographed at the Shaanxi History Museum.



Figure 50 A large silver gilded washbasin with imagery of mandarin ducks unearthed at the Famen Temple site in Baoji, Shaanxi.¹⁵⁵



Figure 51 Unknown Southern Song Dynasty painter's *Bathing a Child*.¹⁵⁶



Figure 52 A painting on silk of a child being bathed unearthed from the Cangjing Cave.¹⁵⁷

2. Baths

Strictly speaking, a bath is not an “article” per se, but it was something premodern women often used to bathe and may basically be viewed as a large wash basin. The Yueyang ruins from the Warring States period contain the remains of a bathing room (Figures 53-56).¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁵Shaanxi Academy of Archaeology, Famen Temple Museum, and Baoji Cultural Heritage Administration et al., *Famensi kaogu fajue baogao* 法門寺考古發掘報告 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2007), colored plate 87.

¹⁵⁶Chen Bin, *Zhongguo lidai fengsuhua pu*, 132.

¹⁵⁷Tan Chanxue 譚蟬雪, *Dunhuang shiku quanji: Minsu huajuan* 敦煌石窟全集: 民俗畫卷 (Hong Kong: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1999), 87.

¹⁵⁸All four pictures taken at the Yueyang City Ruins.



Figure 53 Bathing room from above.



Figure 54 Bathing room and leaching well.



Figure 55 Clay piping.



Figure 56 Bathing room drain.

It can be seen that the structure of bathing rooms in the pre-Qin (Qian Qin 前秦) era was well developed, as it contained baths and good drainage systems.

Women used baths not only to clean themselves but also to treat illness. Hot spring water is rich in minerals and viewed as able to “kill parasite-induced toxins and keep away bad fortune.”¹⁵⁹ The *Zhida Jinling zhi* 至大金陵志 reads, “Han Huang’s younger daughter was afflicted with a foul disease that was cured by bathing in a hot spring.” (*Han Huang xiaonü you e’ji, yu yu wenquan jiyu* 韓滉小女有惡疾，浴於溫泉即愈)¹⁶⁰ The *Zhenzhoufu zhi* 真州府志 (*Records of Zhenzhou Prefecture*) states, “There is a spring that runs along stones on Mount Cangyan. It is said that Princess Miaoyang was cured over time from disease by bathing in the spring, and the Fuqing Temple was built as a place of self-cultivation.” (*cangyanshan you shiquan. xiangchuan Miaoyang Gongzhu youji, yu ciquan suiyu, yin jian Fuqingsi wei xiuxing zhisuo* 蒼岩山有石泉。相傳妙陽公主有疾，浴此泉遂愈，因建福慶寺為修行之所)¹⁶¹ Similarly, Chen Yinqe 陳寅恪 says, “After the Northern Dynasties period, the nobility followed the Central Asian trend of bathing in hot springs and believed doing so could cure illness.”¹⁶²

Though both men and women could bathe in baths, they were strictly kept separate (as with latrines), which was not only a sign of “respect” but a core element to maintaining morality in society.¹⁶³ The *Book of Rites* states that men and women should not use the same bath together. (*bu gong bi yu* 不共湏浴)¹⁶⁴ At the Tang Dynasty Huaqing Palace, the Haitang Bath was used exclusively by Yang Guifei (Figure 57) while the Jiulong Bath was used by her husband, Emperor Xuanzong. According to the *Bamin Tongzhi* 八閩通志, “large and small bathhouses [in Song Dynasty Yongfu County, Fujian] were located in 15 *du* in the south of the county. Large ones had four baths and the small had two, and each was flanked by rooms for men and women on the left and right.” (*datang, xiaotang zai xiannan shiwudu. zai datang fenwei sichi, xiaotang fenwei er’chi, juyou wushi, gefen zuoyou, yibie nannü* 大湯、小湯在縣南十五都。在大湯分為四池，小湯分為二池，俱有屋室，各分左右，以別男女)¹⁶⁵



Figure 57 The Haitang Bath at the Huaqing Bathhouse.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Wu Pu 吳普 et al., *Shennong bencao jing* 神農本草經, compiled by Sun Xingyan 孫星衍, and punctuated and collated by Lu Zhaolin 魯兆麟 et al. (Shenyang: Liaoning kexue jishu Chubanshe, 1997), 1. 12.

¹⁶⁰ Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:57. 92.

¹⁶¹ Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:57. 92.

¹⁶² Chen Yinqe 陳寅恪, *Yuan Bai shi jianzhenggao* 元白詩箋證稿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 1978), 23.

¹⁶³ Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, 99.

¹⁶⁴ Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi*, 27. 1462.

¹⁶⁵ Huang Zhongzhao 黃仲昭, *Bamin tongzhi* 八閩通志 (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin Chubanshe), 1990), 5. 91.

¹⁶⁶ Li Bingwu 李炳武, *Xiuling Ligong de qimei changge: Tang Huaqinggong yizhi* 繡嶺驪宮的淒美長歌：唐華清宮遺址 (Xi’an: Xi’an Chubanshe, 2018), 49.

This rule of keeping men and women separate was a restriction on women imposed by men. However, when women bathed, men frequently broke the rules through voyeurism or even bathing with women.

Voyeurism refers to “watching someone else as an object of sexual arousal to obtain pleasure.”¹⁶⁷ *Emperor Xuanzong Watches Yang Guifei Bathing* (Figure 61) is a depiction of such. No piece of art is more notorious in this aspect than the folk story of the cowherd and the weaver girl. “Among all the adaptations of the cowherd and the weaver girl story, the grand majority are based on the story as told by Ye Shengtao, and his version, the one that is always chosen for publication in the People’s Education Press Chinese textbooks, has been a major factor influencing people’s concept of the story since the founding of the PRC.”¹⁶⁸

According to Qi Lingyun, “Ye Shengtao’s adaptation is readily accepted by the public because it satisfies people’s inner yearning for the realization of the dream in which a divine woman and a mortal man fall in love, and it also fits with the people’s change in status after the establishment of the PRC. In light of that, the new government of the 1950s successfully borrowed the satisfied desire for love in the story to transmit their new ideology.”¹⁶⁹ The part of the story in which the cowherd peeps at the bathing weaver was covered up by intense political discourse. But in operas, this same part is a huge selling point. In the part with the old ox cart in *Tian he pei* 天河配 (*The Couple in the Milky Way*), a drama based on the story, Wang Yaoqing 王瑤卿 “added several things to the plot, putting in a large lotus pool in which a number of celestial women are bathing, which has always been very popular. The performances always sell out.”¹⁷⁰ Similarly, Li Wanchun’s opera school Mingchunshu made ads that mentioned celestial women bathing for their film version of *Tian he pei* at the Qingle Theater to attract audiences.¹⁷¹ Obviously, voyeurism is a violation by men of the rules they set for themselves on the separation of the genders.

Furthermore, men enjoyed bathing with women in bathing rooms. In the Sixteen Kingdoms period, Emperor Shi Hu 石虎 bathed with his concubines.¹⁷² In the Tang Dynasty, Emperor Xuanzong did so with Yang Guifei in the Huaqing Bathhouse.¹⁷³ Similarly, men and women bathing together “in joy and unrestraint”¹⁷⁴ happened in the West. These examples tell us that while bathing, the body of a woman is a spectacle for the male viewer. Through a variety of methods, the female body is presented as an object to be observed and arouse sexual appetite for the viewer.¹⁷⁵

Bathing was a regular part of life for women, but Ban Zhao 班昭 viewed it as more: part of the Confucian “Four Virtues” of a woman; “Washing clothing and bathing regularly to maintain the cleanliness and order of one’s apparel and body are part of the womanly virtue of preserving one’s appearance.”

¹⁶⁷He Lei 和磊, *Wenhua yanjiulun* 文化研究論 (Ji’nan: Shandong renmin Chubanshe, 2016), 156.

¹⁶⁸Qi Lingyun 漆凌雲, “Xingbie chongtu yu huayu quanli — Lun jianguo qianhou niulang zhinü chuanshuo de shanbian” 性別衝突與話語權力——論建國前後牛郎織女傳說的嬗變, *Minsu yanjiu* 民俗研究, 5 (2014), 115.

¹⁶⁹Qi Lingyun, “Xingbie chongtu yu huayu quanli — Lun jianguo qianhou niulang zhinü chuanshuo de shanbian”, 115.

¹⁷⁰Wu Zhongping 武仲平, “Niunian shuo niuxi” 牛年說牛戲, *Dangdai xiju* 當代戲劇, 3 (1997), 57.

¹⁷¹Du Guangpei 杜廣沛, “Shuoshuo jingju de hesuixi” 說說京劇的賀歲戲, *Zhongguo jingju* 中國京劇, 2 (2003), 13.

¹⁷²Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1252:57. 92.

¹⁷³Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1252:57. 92.

¹⁷⁴Marc Boyer, *General History of Tourism*, 86.

¹⁷⁵Michael Denning, “Licensed to Look: James Bond and the Heroism of Consumption”, carried in Francis Mulhern’s *Contemporary Marxist Literary Criticism*, translated by Liu Xiangyu 劉象愚 et al. (Beijing: Beijing daxue Chubanshe, 2002), 240.

(*guan huan chen hui, fushi xianjie, muyu yishi, shenbu gouru, shiwei furong* 盥浣塵穢，服飾鮮潔，沐浴以時，身不垢辱，是謂婦容)¹⁷⁶ Wang Hongchao agrees, “Bathing is not just a matter of the individual and her physical self; it is also related to culture and virtue. Bathing is a small matter, but it transcends the realm of the individual and concerns the realms of virtue, religion, politics, and even aesthetics. The spirit of aesthetics was everywhere in the lives of premodern people, and bathing is a clear verification of that.”¹⁷⁷

“A body comparable to the pureness of ice and jade must be refreshed and free from sweat.” (*bingji yugu, zi qingliang wuhan* 冰肌玉骨，自清涼無汗)¹⁷⁸ So aside from natural endowment, a woman’s beauty also required the washbasin and the bath.

ARTICLES FOR PERFUMING

Articles for perfuming refer to fragrant items or concoctions worn or rubbed onto the body to cover odors and make the body smell pleasant. The *Lianshi* mentions sachets and distilled floral water.

1. Sachets

Sachets are small bags filled with fragrant herbs. Women wore these or hung them on curtains in their rooms as decorations. A brick portrait from the Southern Dynasties period depicts a woman with a sachet tied to her elbow (Figure 58). Women with sachets attached to their bodies can also be seen in a mural from a Tang Dynasty tomb (Figure 59), one from a Liao Dynasty tomb (Figure 60), and a Qing Dynasty painting (Figure 61). Sachets were also an indispensable part of the decor in a woman’s room, as seen in this record: “Sachets hang in the four corners of the double-layered red silk bed curtains.” (*hongluo fu douzhang, sijiao chui xiangnang* 紅羅複斗帳，四角垂香囊)¹⁷⁹ Such sachets were present in the homes of 18th-century aristocratic French families, too. In French painter François Boucher’s *La Toilette* (Figure 62), we can see a Chinese-style sachet hanging from the edge of a short screen in the lower-left corner.



Figure 58 Southern Dynasties period hill censer brick portrait of a woman (Changzhou Museum collection).¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶Fan Ye 范曄, *Hou Han shu* 後漢書, annotated by Li Xian 李賢 et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1965), 84. 2789.

¹⁷⁷Wang Hongchao 王宏超, *Guren de shenghuo shijie* 古人的生活世界 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2020), 133.

¹⁷⁸Su Shi, *Su Shi ci biannian jiaozhu · dongxiange* 蘇軾詞編年校注·洞仙歌. 414.

¹⁷⁹Wang Chutong, *Lianshi* (*Xuxiu siku quanshu* edition), 1252:77. 281.

¹⁸⁰ The picture comes from the official website of the Changzhou Museum, at http://www.czmuseum.com/uploadspage/historyshow/?scene_id=64148393.



Figure 59 Painting of a female servant with a satchel on the western wall of the anterior passageway in the Tang Dynasty Princess Fangling's tomb.¹⁸¹



Figure 60 A woman with a satchel on the western wall of the antechamber in the Liao Dynasty Xuanhua tomb M6.¹⁸²



Figure 61 A Qing Dynasty painting of Noble Consort Mei and Chun Guiren.¹⁸³



Figure 62 François Boucher's *La Toilette*.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹Shaanxi History Museum, Xin Cheng, Fang Ling, Yong Tai gongzhumu bihua 新城、房陵、永泰公主墓壁畫 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2002), 46.

¹⁸²Hebei Institute of Cultural Relics, *Xuanhua Liaomu 1974-1993 nian kaogu fajue baogao xia* 宣化遼墓 1974-1993 年考古發掘報告 下 (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2001), plate 91.

¹⁸³The picture is from the Digital Collections of the Palace Museum, at <https://digicol.dpm.org.cn/cultural/details?id=61565>.

The primary function of sachets was to keep disease away. In the tomb of Xin Zhui 辛追 (the Marquise of Dai of the Han Dynasty) were found a sachet and censer, inside of which were pepper, *Eupatorium fortunei*, *Hierochloe odorata*, red magnolia, *Asarum forbesii*, Chinese lovage, sweet osmanthus, lesser galangal, and ginger¹⁸⁵. Most of these are “aromatic and helpful in clearing the channels of the *qi* and eliminating turbid dampness from the body to help prevent disease.”¹⁸⁶ With these bags full of herbs “the many active compounds placed in several target spots promote the transmission of signals in cells to combat viruses to boost immunity and thus prevent disease.”¹⁸⁷ Hanging sachets in one’s room was a way to improve the environment. Also, it had particular effectiveness in maintaining health: “The sensory organs and skin absorb the fragrance and natural therapeutic properties of purely natural herbs into the nervous and circulatory systems to relieve the body and mind of anxiety. It also affects the health of the skin and body, helping the body and mind achieve balance and harmony, in turn preventing disease.”¹⁸⁸

Spherical incense burners had the same function as sachets. “Most of these incense burners are round. At the top is a delicate chain, and the whole body is done in openwork with imagery of flowers and leaves. It is opened from the middle, dividing into two halves held together by several rivets between the hemispheres. Within the center of the body is a shallow cup held in place by thin rings. The clever mechanical design allows the cup to stay level whether the ball rolls upside-down, right side up, or on its side, so the herbs in the cup do not fall out.”¹⁸⁹ The *Laoxue’an biji* 老學庵筆記 (*Notes from the Laoxue’an Study*) reads,

京師承平時，宗室戚里歲時入禁中。婦女上犢車，皆用二小鬢持香球在旁，而袖中又自持兩小香球。車馳過，香煙如雲，數里不絕，塵土皆香

In times of peace in the capital, women of the imperial clan rode ox carts into the Forbidden City. Those in the cart each had two spherical incense burners by the buns in their hair and their sleeves. As the cart proceeded, the aroma filled the air like a cloud, leaving a pleasant scent that spread for miles.¹⁹⁰

The Tang Dynasty Famen Temple site has produced such an incense burner (Figure 63). A spherical incense burner with clearly Islamic designs from the 13th-century Mamluk Dynasty (Figure 64) has also been found.



¹⁸⁴Quoted from “Xunzhao kuabainian de zongji: menggong Sweet Osmanthus Palace de tansuo he chengqianqihou”尋找跨百年的蹤跡 夢宮 Sweet Osmanthus Palace 的探索和承前啟後, *Shoucang*, 8 (2021).

¹⁸⁵Chen Dongjie 陳東傑 and Li Ya 李芽, “Cong mawangdui yihao Hanmu chutu xiangliao yu xiangju tanxi Han dai yongxiang xisu”從馬王堆一號漢墓出土香料與香具探析漢代用香習俗, *Nandu xuetao* 南都學壇, 1 (2009), 6.

¹⁸⁶Deng Tietao 鄧鐵濤, *Zhongguo fangyishi* 中國防疫史 (Nanning: Guangxi kexue jishu Chubanshe, 2006), 63.

¹⁸⁷Wu Jieyan 吳潔雁, Xiao Xinqin 肖莘芹, Lin Shujun 林淑君, Qiu Dan 丘丹, Yan Xianxin 顏顯欣, and Ma Min 馬民, “Zhongyao fangyi xiangnang de yingyong tantao”中藥防疫香囊的應用探討, *Jinan daxue xuebao (zirankexue yu yixue ban)* 暨南大學學報(自然科學與醫學版), 6 (2020), 543.

¹⁸⁸Ye Peijie 葉培結 and Yu Jin 余瑾, *Yishu liaofa gailun* 藝術療法概論 (Hefei: An’hui daxue Chubanshe, 2019), 329.

¹⁸⁹Zhang Meiya 張梅雅, *Fojiao xiangpin yu xiangqi quanshu* 佛教香品與香器全書 (Taipei: Shangzhou chuban) 118.

¹⁹⁰Lu You 陸游, *Laoxue’an biji* 老學庵筆記, punctuated and collated by Li Jianxiong 李劍雄 and Liu Dequan 劉德權 et al., Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1979), 1.4.

Figure 63 A gilt openwork silver incense burner with imagery of bees and flowers (Famen Temple Museum collection).¹⁹¹



Figure 64 A spherical incense burner (The British Museum collection).¹⁹²

2. Distilled floral water

Distilled floral water (also called floral nectar) was much like today's perfume. The *Lianshi* speaks of four kinds: rose, rose leaf raspberry, jasmine, and multiflora rose.

(i) Rose water

Rose water came from the Arab region and Champa in Vietnam.

五代時，蕃使蒲訶散以十五瓶效貢，厥後罕有至者。今多采花浸水，蒸取其液以代焉。其水多偽雜，以琉璃瓶試之，翻搖數四，其泡周上下者為真，其花與中國薔薇不同

During the Five Dynasties period, the Champan envoy Pu Hesan presented 15 bottles of rose water as tribute, after which he rarely returned to pay tribute. Today, distillation is used to obtain liquid from flowers for perfume. A large amount of rose water is counterfeit. A glass bottle may be used to prove authenticity: Shake and turn over the bottle several times, and if bubbles fill the bottle up and down, the water is authentic. The roses of the West differ from those of China.¹⁹³

According to the *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties (Xin Wudai shi 新五代史)*, Champa “presented 15 bottles of rose water as tribute.... Rose water is said to come from the West. If sprinkled on clothing, even when the clothing is old and tattered, the fragrance remains.” (*gong qiangweishui shiwuping... qiangweishui, yun dezi xiyu, yi sayi, suibi er xiang bumie 貢薔薇水十五瓶.....薔薇水，云得自西域，以灑衣，雖敝而香不滅*)¹⁹⁴

Rose water, which had a strong scent, was made by distilling rose petals and kept in glass bottles. The *Baibao zongzhen ji 百寶總珍集 (Compendium of Numerous Treasures and Rarities)* reads,

泉客販到薔薇露，琉璃瓶貯噴鼻香.....到此用琉璃瓶兒盛賣。每瓶直百三二十錢以上，更看臨時商量何如

Fishermen sell aromatic rose water in glass bottles.... It is kept and sold in glass bottles, each at a price of at

¹⁹¹Photographed at the Famen Temple Museum.

¹⁹²Ran Wanli 冉萬里, “Kaogu jiaoxue zhong de zhonghua wenming chuancheng yu biaoda” 考古教學中的中華文明傳承與表達, *Wenbo*, 1 (2022), 30.

¹⁹³Zhao Rushi 趙汝適, *Zhu Fan zhi 諸蕃志*, collated by Zhong Chong 鐘翀 (Zhengzhou: Daxiang Chubanshe, 2019), 2. 222.

¹⁹⁴Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Xin Wudai shi 新五代史*, annotated by Xu Wudang 徐無黨 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1974), 74. 922.

least 120 *qian* based on the size of the inventory.¹⁹⁵

The tomb of Princess Chenguo of the Liao Dynasty has produced an Islamic glass bottle (Figure 65) that is very similar to one unearthed at Al-Fustat in Egypt (Figure 66). These thin-necked bottles were exclusively for holding rose water in Islamic regions.¹⁹⁶



Figure 65 A glass bottle unearthed from the Liao Dynasty Princess Chenguo tomb.¹⁹⁷



Figure 66 A glass bottle unearthed from Al-Fustat in Egypt.¹⁹⁸

(ii) Roseleaf raspberry water

Roseleaf raspberry water was produced outside China through distillation and kept in glass bottles.¹⁹⁹

(iii) Jasmine water

Jasmine was first grown in Persia and later introduced to China's South China Sea region. In the Ming Dynasty, it was cultivated in Yunnan and Guangxi. Jasmine water was also obtained through distillation.

(iv) Multiflora rose water

Multiflora roses were grown in China and made into floral water through distillation.

The primary function of floral water was facial skincare followed by body skincare and haircare. Most

¹⁹⁵ Author unknown, *Baibao zongzhen ji: wai si zhong* 百寶總珍集: 外四種, punctuated and collated by Li Yinhan 李音翰 and Zhu Xuebo 朱學博 (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian Chubanshe, 2015), 8. 55-56.

¹⁹⁶ Yang Zhishui, *Hunshilouji: Xiangshi*, 139-41.

¹⁹⁷ Yang Zhishui, *Hunshilouji: Xiangshi*, 140.

¹⁹⁸ Yang Zhishui, *Hunshilouji: Xiangshi*, 142.

¹⁹⁹ Qu Dajun, 屈大均 *Guangdong xinyu* 廣東新語 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1985), 14. 390.

importantly, it had therapeutic effects for ailments like heart disease, malaria, and dysentery.

Sachets and floral water were used to beautify the face and body, give the hair luster, and treat disease, and they were also manifestations of how women adhered to their patriarchal society's rules. First, while serving the elderly in her family, a woman had to wear sachets as a form of etiquette. The chapter "Pattern of the Family" in the *Book of Rites* states,

男女未冠、笄者，雞初鳴，咸盥漱，櫛、縱，拂髦；總角、衿纓，皆佩容臭。昧爽而朝，問何食飲矣

Boys and girls must wash, dress, prepare themselves for the day, and put on sachets when the cock first crows in the morning. At daybreak, they must call on their parents to pay respects and ask whether their parents have eaten yet.²⁰⁰

When they made these visits, they wore sachets "for fear of having any foul air about them that would disrespect their parents." (*kong shenyou huiqi, chu zunzhang ye* 恐身有穢氣，觸尊長也)²⁰¹ Second, pleasant fragrances appeal to men's sense of smell and aesthetic, so women could better attract men by using fragrances. When choosing his consort, Emperor Huan of Han made fragrance one of the aspects of the physical examination for candidates. (*fangqi penxi* 芳氣噴襲)²⁰² Therefore, fragrances were "accessories in inciting allure, couriers of love, and agents of beautification for the sake of one's love life. They were clearly items of seduction in premodern times."²⁰³

It is said, "The beauties who wear sachets (*xiaoyu yingying anxiangqu* 笑語盈盈暗香去)²⁰⁴ are no longer with us (*lingluo chengni nianzuochen* 零落成泥碾作尘),"²⁰⁵ but fragrances are just as pleasant and lasting as ever.

ARTICLES FOR PROTECTION FROM THE ELEMENTS

Articles for protection from the elements include various types of cloth used to cover the face or body. The *Lianshi* speaks of veils and face masks used by women for this purpose.

1. Veils

There were many kinds of veils (*mian yi* 面衣). Aside from the oldest type, a simple cloth veil used to cover the face in ancient times,²⁰⁶ there were also the *mili* 冪羅 (a hat with a long veil attached all around the hat), *weimao* 帷帽 (a similar type of hat with a short transparent veil), and *gaitou* 蓋頭 (a hood-like covering), all of which had evolved from the simple veil.

²⁰⁰Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi*, 27.1462.

²⁰¹Liu Yuan 劉沅, *Shisanjing hengjie jianjeben: Liji hengjie* 十三經恒解 箋解本·禮記恒解, annotated by Tan Jihe 譚繼和, Qi Hehui 祁和暉 (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 2016), 12. 204.

²⁰²Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1251:25. 511.

²⁰³Élisabeth de Feydeau, *History of Perfume*, translated by Peng Luxian 彭祿嫻 (Beijing: SDX sanlian shudian, 2020), 175.

²⁰⁴Xin Qiji 辛棄疾, *Xin Qiji ci biannian jianzhu* 辛棄疾詞編年箋注, annotated by Xin Gengru 辛更儒. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2018), 1. 57.

²⁰⁵Lu You 陸游, *Lu You ci ji* 陸游詞集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 2011), 3. 106.

²⁰⁶Gao Chunming 高春明, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao* 中國服飾名物考 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua Chubanshe, 2001), 296.

(i) Simple veils

Simple veils were pieces of cloth used to cover the face, an illustration of which (Figure 67) can be seen in the *Sancai tuhui* 三才圖會. From the perspective of hygiene, veils served as a barrier to keep wind-blown dust and filth off the face. Long journeys were difficult for women, and there was even a high chance of encountering danger. Veils protected them on these trips. Empress Zhao Feiyan received a veil in a set of 35 gifts from her younger sister Consort Zhao Hede.²⁰⁷

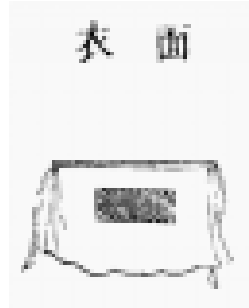


Figure 67 A veil as illustrated in the *Sancai tuhui*.²⁰⁸

(ii) Mili

“The *mili* was also a type of veil that covered not only the face but also the body. The earliest emerged in non-Han lands in northwestern China. Since sand is frequently blown about by the wind there, the *mili* was worn for protection, making horse-riding much more comfortable.”²⁰⁹ The *Kongshi zashuo* 孔氏雜說 (*Various Opinions of Kong Pingzhong*) says, “Women of the Qi and Sui kingdoms wore *mili* to cover their entire bodies.” (*Qi, Sui furen shi mili, quanshen zhangbi* 齊、隋婦人施幕籬，全身障蔽)²¹⁰ Aristocratic women of the Sui and Tang dynasties also wore them. Sui Dynasty Prince Yang Jun “had seven precious *mili* made for his concubine, but they were too large to be carried by cart and were thus transported by horse.” (*wei fei zuo qibaomili. che buke zai, yima fuzhi erxing* 為妃作七寶幕籬。車不可載，以馬負之而行)²¹¹ “In the early Tang Dynasty, those of the palace wore *mili*, as did those of noble families.” (*Tang chu, gongren zhuo mili, wanggong zhijia yi yongzhi* 唐初，宮人著幕籬，王公之家亦用之)²¹² The epigraph on the Tang Dynasty Princess Xincheng’s tomb reads, “The highly honorable [Princess Xincheng] wore a *mili* while on outings.” (*[Xincheng gongzhu]□chi shou zhi zun, jin zhi xing yu □mi* [新城公主]□螭綬之尊，尽至行于□幕)²¹³ In a mural in the tomb of Tang Dynasty concubine Yan, a maidservant holds a *mili* (Figure 68). “Once the *mili*, a form of apparel which originated in the West, had made its way to the Central Plains, it came to be used as a means of teaching women their place,” its use being “not only to keep wind-blown filth off the body but more importantly to hide the face from view.”²¹⁴ As the *Old Book of Tang* (*Jiu Tang shu* 舊

²⁰⁷Ge Hong 葛洪, *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2020), 1. 60.

²⁰⁸Wang Qi and Wang Siyi, *Sancai tuhui*. 1502.

²⁰⁹Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 296.

²¹⁰Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1252: 65. 168.

²¹¹Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1252: 65. 168.

²¹²Wang Chutong, *Lianshi (Xuxiu siku quanshu edition)*, 1252: 65. 168.

²¹³“Da Tang gu Xinchengzhanggongzhu muzhiming” 大唐故新城長公主墓誌銘, *Zhaoling muzhi tongshi* 昭陵墓志通釋, edited by Zhang Zhipan 張志攀 and written by Hu Yuanchao 胡元超 (Xi’an: San Qin Chubanshe, 2010), Chapter 19. 294.

²¹⁴Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 297.

唐書) says, “Women being looked at while journeying is undesirable.” (*buyu tulu kuizhi* 不欲途路窺之)²¹⁵



Figure 68. A maidservant carrying a *mili* depicted in a mural (Zhaoling Museum collection).²¹⁶

(iii) Weimao

“The *weimao* (curtain hat), whose predecessor was the *weimao* 围帽 (enclosing hat), was a brimmed rattan hat with meshed cloth attached. Women wore them on outings as a form of covering.”²¹⁷ Most of those for women were decorated with pearls and jade (unlike men’s). The *ximao* 席帽 (straw-matting hat) was similar to the *weimao* but was made to protect the wearer from wind and rain, much like today’s raincoats.

“The emergence of the *weimao* was related to the social atmosphere of the times. The Tang Dynasty was feudalistic China’s most developed and prosperous era. Economic development pushed progress in the spiritual culture, in turn changing social trends, one reflection of that being a shift toward simplicity and lightness in women’s clothing. While out, if a woman wore a *mili*, she would be considered clearly out of step with the times.”²¹⁸ Besides protecting the wearer from wind and rain and making it more convenient to move about, the *weimao* had the most critical function of allowing the wearer’s face to be seen. In the painting *Emperor Xuanzong’s Flight to Shu* (*Minghuang xing shu tu* 明皇幸蜀圖), one can see women on horseback wearing *weimao* (Figure 69). Also, archaeologists have found a figurine of a woman wearing a *weimao* with mesh cloth in Tang Dynasty Tomb 187 at the Astana Cemetery in Turpan, Xinjiang (Figure 70).



Figure 69 Tang Dynasty painter Li Zhaodao’s *Emperor Xuanzong’s Flight to Shu* (National Palace Museum

²¹⁵Liu Xu 劉昫, *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1975), 45. 1957.

²¹⁶Photographed at the Zhaoling Museum.

²¹⁷Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 298.

²¹⁸Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 299.

in Taipei collection).²¹⁹



Figure 70 A painted figurine of a woman on horseback from the Tang Dynasty.²²⁰

(iv) Gaitou

The *gaitou* (“head-covering”) was divided into two types: “The first was a hood sewn of cloth and looked much like a cowl on the bottom of which was a skirt. When it was worn on the head, the face was visible, while the skirt hung about the back.”²²¹ It functioned to protect the wearer from wind and rain. The two women in *The Peddler* (*Huolang tu* 貨郎圖, Figure 71) and the one in *Tilling and Weaving Paintings Made by Decree of the Kangxi Emperor: Bathing Silkworms* (*Kangxi yuzhi gengzhitu* 康熙御制耕織圖, Figure 72) wear this type of *gaitou*. “The second kind was simpler, just a piece of cloth that covered the head. The cloth was usually quite thin, covering the head, shoulders, and back.”²²² A figurine of a woman wearing a *gaitou* from the Song Dynasty (Figure 73) shows that such veils could cover as much as half the body.



Figure 71 Southern Song Dynasty painter Li Song’s *The Peddler* (Palace Museum collection).²²³



²¹⁹Wang Zhirong 王志榮, *Gugong huapu · shanshuijuan · dianjingqiaoliang* 故宮畫譜 · 山水卷 · 點景橋樑 (Beijing: Gugong Chubanshe, 2013), 53.

²²⁰The picture comes from the Xinjiang Digital Museum, at <http://xj.cd168.cn/Cultural.asp>.

²²¹Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 301.

²²²Gao Chunming, *Zhongguo fushi mingwu kao*, 302.

²²³The picture is from the official website of the Palace Museum, at <https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/228205.html>.

Figure 72 Qing Dynasty painter Jiao Bingzhen's *Tilling and Weaving Paintings Made by Decree of the Kangxi Emperor: Bathing Silkworms*.²²⁴



Figure 73 A figurine of a woman unearthed from a Song Dynasty tomb in Modaoshi, Poyang, Jiangxi.²²⁵

Though premodern veils cannot be viewed as medical face masks of the present day regarding the protection they offered, they were viewed as highly effective at screening the elements.

2. Face masks

The term face mask here refers to “something worn over the nose and mouth to filter air, keeping out harmful gases, odors, and respiratory droplets from leaving or entering the wearer’s mouth or nose.”²²⁶ “The invention of face masks was a gradual and profound result of accumulated knowledge and experience of human civilization, and it was an inevitable product of the millennia of accelerated development of human civilization.”²²⁷

The *Travels of Marco Polo* says of the Yuan court that those who waited on and prepared food for Emperor Kublai Khan were required to wear beautiful veils or silk cloth to cover their mouths and noses.²²⁸ These veils and cloths kept germs out of the emperor’s food by blocking the trajectory of any respiratory droplets from the servants, which is the function of today’s face masks. In the painting *Barbarians Riding Camels (Fanqi tu 番騎圖)*, Figure 74) are two Mongolian women wearing face masks. Yuan Dynasty cloth used for making masks (Figure 75) has been unearthed at the Gezi Cave archaeological site in Longhua County, Hebei.

²²⁴Jiao Bingzhen 焦秉貞, *Kangxi yuzhi gengzhi tu 康熙禦制耕織圖*, captioned by Yang Zhongxian 楊仲賢 (Tianjin: Tianjin meishu Chubanshe, 2006), 30.

²²⁵Tang Shan 唐山, “Jiangxi Poyang faxian Songdai xijuyong”江西鄱陽發現宋代戲劇俑, *Wenwu*, 4 (1979), 8.

²²⁶Tian Jun 田君, “Kouzhao sheji yu huxi fanghu de jinhua”口罩設計與呼吸防護的進化, *Zhuangshi*, 2 (2020), 30.

²²⁷Zhou Kai 周凱 and Gao Fujin 高福進, *Kouzhao wenhuashi 口罩文化史* (Shanghai: Shanghai jiaotong daxue Chubanshe, 2020), 4-5.

²²⁸Marco Polo, *The Travels of Marco Polo*, translated by Liang Shengzhi 梁生智 (Beijing: Zhongguo wenshi Chubanshe, 1998), 2. 121.



Figure 74 Part of the Ming Dynasty painting *Barbarians Riding Camels*.²²⁹



Figure 75 A brown woven mask of silk and horsehair decorated with squares.²³⁰

“The modern face mask was born of the social development and medical advancements made since the Industrial Revolution.”²³¹ In the West, “the Black Plague led to the quick spread of a type of mask that prevented the spread of disease—the ‘plague doctor mask’ (Figure 76).”²³² This mask “had a long front that looked like a bird’s beak to cover the mouth and nose, usually made of canvas or leather. The inner lower half of the beak held cloth bags of spices and medicinal herbs to block tainted air and foul odors, that is, the ‘miasma’ emanating from corpses. The medicinal contents in the beak were commonly ambergris, lemon balm, spearmint leaves, camphor, cloves, laudanum, rose petals, and storax. On the bottom of the beak were small holes to allow for air exchange. The beak kept out foul odors and respiratory droplets from patients, thus providing a certain degree of disease transmission prevention.”²³³ The idea was to cover the mouth to keep infected air away. (*yankou, kong qi chu ren* 掩口，恐氣觸人)²³⁴



Figure 76 The plague doctor mask.²³⁵

²²⁹Chen Bin, *Zhongguo lidai fengsuhua pu*, 92.

²³⁰Longhua Ethnic Museum, *Six Centuries in the Cave: Cultural Relics of the Yuan Dynasty Hidden in Pigeon Cave, Longhua, Hebei*. (Beijing: Wenwu Chubanshe, 2015), 96.

²³¹Zhou Kai and Gao Fujin, *Kouzhao wenhuashi*, 50.

²³²Zhou Kai and Gao Fujin, *Kouzhao wenhuashi*, 40.

²³³Zhou Kai and Gao Fujin, *Kouzhao wenhuashi*, 40-42.

²³⁴Ruan Yuan, *Shisanjing zhushu: Liji zhengyi*, 1. 1234.

²³⁵Zhou Kai and Gao Fujin, *Kouzhao wenhuashi*, 41.

Women wearing veils and masks for protection from wind-blown filth and germs in the air resulted from their social education.

These veils and masks of old have long been relegated to the past, but at this time when everyone is wearing medical masks, do we not think back on those days of old?

CONCLUSION

All in all, “Diseases, many of which are contagious, have been with humanity since the beginning. We can also see that humanity has always steadfastly persevered in combating these diseases, and such struggle is an integral part of our steps in social advancement.”²³⁶ The seven types of hygiene articles discussed above were the most used by premodern women in the war of survival against diseases in everyday life, and they also serve as verification in China that “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes a woman.”²³⁷

The gourd-shaped pouring vessel and shallow dish, the basin, and the towel were used by women to keep their hands clean. The repeated washing of the hands helped deeply ingrain in women a sense of the “womanly virtues.” There is no doubt as to the function of the toothbrush and spittoon in helping women maintain their dental health, but the main purpose of such was to ensure their sexual appeal to men. The comb, *bi*, *bo*, and *min* were the articles with the greatest sense of gender. Each day while grooming their hair, women were also grooming their spirits and reflecting on their successes and failures. Items for handling excrement, materials for wiping, and sanitary belts were the most personal and stigmatizing of women’s hygiene articles. Through the stigmatization, patriarchal society ensured women were second-class members of society. Washbasins and baths were undoubtedly the most essential elements in maintaining personal hygiene. However, the separation of men and women for bathing and men’s peeking at women while the latter were bathing were both invasive and controlling toward women under men’s protective umbrella of patriarchal society. Sachets and distilled floral water also played a part in keeping women safe from illness, but we must not forget that they too helped place expectations on women. Finally, women’s veils and masks protected them from the elements but not the opinion-filled gazes of men.

According to Li Xiaojiang 李小江, “In the past, it was assumed that women were not included in the writing of history; but in actuality, this is not true. We didn’t find the right way or pay enough attention to the relics and legacies left by women.”²³⁸ Women’s personal hygiene articles are extremely precious historical relics about women’s history. By looking at them, we can see how patriarchal society was like a hermetically sealed fence restricting women’s behavior through various methods at all times and in all places, and we can see how bodily practices (behavior, etiquette, work) were strong in two senses. The first sense is that they manifested the power relationship ... and second, bodily practices are very powerful in the sense of being powerful tools of cultural reproduction. As a result, they are unconsciously and doubtlessly influenced by society.²³⁹ We can also see the condition of everyday life for women, in turn capturing their marks left on history. Yi Junqing has said, “The basic site of the individual’s daily life was the immediate environment of the family and natural community. The reason for that was to maintain the daily consumption activities, daily exchange activities, and daily mental activities related to the survival and reproduction of the individual. It is a basic survival method based on repetitive thought and repetitive action, involving the cultural elements of tradition, customs, experience, and emotions related to the family and

²³⁶Zhang Jianguang, *Sanqiannian yiqing*, 1.

²³⁷Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, translated by Zheng Kelu 鄭克魯 (Shanghai: Shanghai yiwu Chubanshe, 2011), 9.

²³⁸ Li Xiaojiang 李小江, “Writing and Weaving: Engendering Documents in History”, *Asia Art Archive (AAA)*, 2018, at <https://aaa.org.hk/en/ideas-journal/ideas-journal/writing-and-weaving-engendering-documents-in-history>

²³⁹Francesca Bray, *Technology and Gender: Fabrics of Power in Late Imperial China*, Introduction, 29.

nature.”²⁴⁰

Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*, “One is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes a woman.”²⁴¹ Becoming a woman in this sense is strongly related to personal hygiene articles, traditional concepts of proper conduct, customs, and men’s aesthetics, the second of those three being the main driver. Writings by women on these concepts, such as Song Ruoshen 宋若莘 and Song Ruozhao 宋若昭’s *The Analects for Women* (*Nü lunyu* 女論語), are both verbal instructions and examples of what concepts women should be taught. Customs, which are social rules established over time through common practice, seem to be gentler and more humane than law. But behind that seeming affection lies a greater destructive force that can cause much more far-reaching influence, such as the stigmas toward menstruation. Men’s aesthetic is another important element in how women “become,” because women shape themselves based on such aesthetic.

To conclude, as women live within the fences of a patriarchal society, every object in their lives may be something with which they shape themselves. According to American scholar Xu Man, the home, boudoir, furniture, bathroom, and articles women use in daily life are powerful material media that instill ideas, forming the bodily practices of women and furthering gender constructs.²⁴²

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²⁴⁰Yi Junqing 衣俊卿, *Xiandaihua yu richang shenghuo* — ren zishen xiandaihua de wenhua toushi 現代化與日常生活——人自身現代化的文化透視 (Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2005), 31.

²⁴¹Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, 9.

²⁴²Man Xu, *Crossing the Gate: Everyday Lives of Women in Song Fujian*, translated by Liu Yunjun 劉雲軍. (Shanghai: Shanghai guji Chubanshe, 2019), 8-9.



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