

from him, he wouldn't hit me anymore. How was I to know that Brother would start hitting me with his fists? I panicked, and I hit him back with the first thing at hand, which was the shoulder pole. I never thought that I would hit Brother on the right temple of his head and that he would fall down on the ground. Just then, Hong Shize and Hong Wentao also ran up, and they carried Brother to the nearest place, which was Hong Wentao's house, to give him treatment. As quick as I could, I got the doctor to come, but his medicines had no effect. Four days later, on the night of the eleventh, Brother died. It was all my fault, and I deserve to die. There's no excuse I can make."

Question: "Your brother also had injuries on the ribs in the back on the right side and on his right buttock. How did you hit him there?"

He testified: "Those injuries on the ribs in the back on the right side and on his right buttock are scrapes he got when he fell on the ground. I never hit him there."

Further questioning: "So whose manure pit was it, after all?"

He testified: "It was my own."

These were the words taken in testimony at my court.

The following summary by Magistrate Du Xun merely restates the facts as revealed in testimony, adding nothing new. He concluded:

This humble magistrate having submitted reports of autopsy and evidence, and having respectfully received the order to examine the case, carried out an investigation at this court. The aforementioned criminal having confessed to all the details above without hesitation, Hong Yaozhang corresponds to the law stipulating that a younger brother who strikes his own elder brother, resulting in death, will be decapitated.² Therefore, I recommend that he be sentenced to immediate decapitation. According to statutes, he should be tattooed.³ As for Hong Wentao and Hong Shize, who tried to stop the violence but failed, I cannot make a recommendation as to their punishment. I should submit this to the prefecture for its investigation and determination as to whether or not this is appropriate.

At this point, the report records that the Changsha prefect Qian Rubi and the Hunan provincial judicial commissioner Yan Ruilong both reviewed the case, only to reach precisely the same conclusion: that Hong Yaozhang should be beheaded without delay. The case was then submitted to the Censorate, and from there to the Board of Punishments in the capital. No substantial changes were made in wording in summarizing the case; only at the Board were the nephews Hong Wentao and Hong Shize

released without punishment for failing in their attempt to prevent the tragedy. The case concludes with the note that all investigations and decisions had been reached within the time limits established by law. The final submission is dated Qianlong 3.10.12 (November 23, 1738) and signed by Zhang Qu, in the Censorate. According to its cover, the imperial decision was to remand the case to the Three Judicial Offices for their investigation and decision concerning punishment. It is possible, then, that Hong Yaozhang was given a reduced sentence; certainly this report provides a sympathetic view of the circumstances and the acts that resulted unintentionally in this devastating family tragedy.

NOTES

Source: *Neige tiben Ming'an Douou lei* [Grand Secretariat routine memorials, Homicides during Affrays], Qianlong 106 *bao*, Qianlong 3.10.12 (November 23, 1738).

1. The case begins by erroneously reporting a "patricide" (*fuming*) rather than a "fratricide" (*xiongming*) by beating.
2. This is in accordance with Article 318 of the Qing penal code. See Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 303.
3. This is Article 317 of the Qing penal code. See Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 301-2.

CASE 13

Ms. Wang: Incest and Violent Homicide (Jilin, 1738)

TRANSLATED BY MARAM EPSTEIN

In this case, the deposition of the accused, a young adulterous woman, is placed first in the record, unlike most cases, in which a respected family or community member establishes the authoritative version of the events.¹ Perhaps due to the briefness of the clandestine relationship between the father-in-law and daughter-in-law, no outsiders had information worth recording. Many of the questions or pieces of information common to depositions in other homicide cases are absent: there are no comments on the nature of the relationship between the victim and his wife, on when she entered the household, or on the relationship between the victim and his father. In fact, there is no information about the victim at all, such as age or physical size. The wound on Ms. Wang's shoulder is not clearly accounted for, nor was there any attempt to make sense of the brief but garbled testimony given by the victim's mother. Also absent are terms denoting emotional states conventionally used in narrating the motivations for homicide. The nature of the relationship between father-in-law and

daughter-in-law is handled somewhat delicately—the woman's reported silence after each incident is to be taken as proof that she did not resist his advances and suggests that the case is to be treated as consensual illicit sex rather than rape. However, the Board of Punishments' Office of Scrutiny (which had authority over the banner administration) was unwilling to allow the father to avoid all culpability and raised probing questions about the testimony of the principals in the case.

Secretary of the Board of Punishments [and other titles], Your subject Yijishan respectfully submits this MEMORIAL on the case of a woman murdering her own husband forwarded by the general of Ninguta, Jidang'a, and others on Qianlong 2.12.18 [February 6, 1738]. His memorandum is based on the report from the deputy lieutenant general at Baidunuo, Jueluo Qishiwu, concerning a dispatch from Anabu, a platoon commander of the Plain White Banner stationed in the military-agricultural settlements of Wujiazi.

The memorandum reports: Du Yuncheng, who worked as a hired laborer in the household of the manor head Zhang Xun, filed a report that on the twenty-sixth of the intercalary ninth month [November 18, 1737], the son of Zhang Xun, Zhang Zhisheng, was murdered. Thereupon, this office together with the soldier Yi'er Hana and the manor head Feng Ji and others proceeded to the home of Zhang Xun to investigate. The victim, Zhang Zhisheng, had four wounds on his shoulder and one wound on his palm. Next to the corpse on the kang were two footprints in the blood; on the floor, there was a vegetable knife with blood on it. The hair of the wife of Zhang Zhisheng, Ms. Wang, had been hacked off with a knife, and there was a stab wound on her shoulder. There was no evidence of anyone entering or leaving through the window or the door. Thereupon, this office ordered Funa, the assistant commandant of the Left Office, to assemble the clerk Cui Alin and the coroner Luo Xiuzhi, who had already conducted an examination of the wounds on the body of the victim Zhang Zhisheng, along with all concerned parties and to transport them to the yamen to continue the investigation on the second of the tenth month.

The written report submitted by Funa after he and the others returned states: This office led the clerk Cui Alin and the coroner Luo Xiuzhi [to conduct an inquest in the presence of] the family of the victim. The autopsy revealed that the deceased Zhang Zhisheng had one wound on the right side of his neck, 2 cun long, 3 fen wide, and 4 fen deep; on the left of the neck was a wound 4.2 cun long, 3 fen wide, and 9 fen deep; the windpipe was severed at the base of the neck was a wound 3.9 cun long, 3 fen wide, 6 fen deep, reaching the bone; on the back of the skull was a wound 4.5 cun long, 4 fen wide,

1.8 cun deep, with injury to the skull. A wound 3 fen long partially severed the ear from the head. A wound on the right palm was 2 cun long, 2 fen wide, and 6 fen deep, reaching the bone. On both sides of the corpse were bloodstains; each side had a footprint. An examination of Ms. Wang's wounds revealed that she had a wound on her left upper arm 3 cun deep, 2 fen wide, and 4 fen deep; her hair had been cut off. Beyond these, there were no indications [of injury]. The autopsy report was filled in by the coroner and validated. There was no evidence of anyone having entered or exited by the window. This office then ordered all persons in Zhang Xun's household to remove their socks. It was discovered that Ms. Wang had traces of blood on the soles of her feet. After ordering a comparison, it was discovered that Ms. Wang's feet corresponded with the bloody footprints. This office then ordered Zhang Zhisheng's father Zhang Xun, his mother, Ms. Zhou, his wife, Ms. Wang, and the hired laborer in Zhang Xun's household as well as two neighbors to be taken to the yamen for interrogation.

According to the deposition of Ms. Wang: "In the afternoon of the seventeenth of the sixth month [July 14] of this year, my mother-in-law was in her bedroom and I was sitting on the edge of the kang in the outer room nursing my child.² My father-in-law came over and said he wanted to hold the child. As I was handing him the child, my father-in-law looked at my nipple with a smile. As he picked up the child, he brushed [the child's] leg across my face. I didn't say anything. That same month on the twenty-first [July 18], my father-in-law wanted to ride out to check the fields and asked me for the saddle blanket. As I handed him the blanket, he gave my left hand a squeeze. Again, I didn't say anything. On the evening of the twenty-fifth of the seventh month [August 20], my father-in-law was lying on his back in his bedroom when he called me to bring him his robe and cover him up with it so he could sleep. As I stood there on the floor to hand him his robe, my father-in-law groped my crotch with his foot. Again, I didn't say anything.

"At dusk on the third day of the eighth month [August 28], both my husband and my mother-in-law were out of the house and my father-in-law was by himself in his room. When I came in from outside and went into my room [through her parents-in-law's room], my father-in-law stood up and grabbed my arm and told me that he wanted to have illicit sex. I told him I was afraid someone might come, and my father-in-law said not to worry. He took me and pinned me down on the kang and took off my underclothing and had sex one time. On the twenty-first of the eighth month [September 15], my mother-in-law took my son off who knows where and my husband was also out of the house. I was in the inside room doing some housework on the

kang, when my father-in-law came in and said he wanted to have illicit sex with me. We each took off our pants and had sex one time.

"Late in the day on the twenty-fourth of the ninth month [October 17], I was in the outer room. My father-in-law was holding me and was about to kiss me on the mouth when my husband suddenly came in from outside and saw us. He didn't say anything at all but just continued on into the inner room. My father-in-law was ashamed and left. Later that night, my husband came into our room to sleep. I was too ashamed to look at him and waited until he had fallen asleep to go in to sleep. On the morning of the twenty-fifth, my husband cursed at me, saying, 'Father was holding you and kissing you; it is obvious he has had illicit sex with you.' I said, 'I have not had illicit sex with your father at all. If your father was holding me and kissing me, what could I do about it?' He then stopped cursing and went out.

"At midmorning, my father-in-law came in and took advantage of the opportunity to ask me about what we had done the night before. 'Were we seen by your husband? What did he say to you?' I misled my father-in-law, saying that my husband must not have seen anything since he didn't say anything. That same evening, my husband again cursed at me, saying, 'With you and my father behaving in this way, what's the point of keeping such a shameless woman?' He cursed for a while. I was thinking how shameful it was that I had already been seen by my husband and was being reviled every day so that everyone could hear it. It would be better to kill my husband and pay with my life than to have him yell at me again. If I were somehow lucky enough to get away with it and escape punishment, I would just act as a [widowed] mother raising a child and survive by relying on my father-in-law for support.

"With my mind made up, when my husband went to sleep first on the night of the twenty-sixth, I took my son Liushi'er over to my mother-in-law to sleep with her. I was with the wife of our courtyard neighbor Guo Cheng; we worked in our room until the second watch, when I went out with Guo Cheng's wife. She went home, and as I went back inside, I took the vegetable knife off the stove, wanting to kill him. I was afraid that my parents-in-law might not have fallen asleep, so I hid the knife in the bed. When I went over to where my mother-in-law was to get my child Liushi'er, I saw that my in-laws were already both asleep. As I was picking up the child, my mother-in-law woke up. Afterward, I undressed and nursed the child and dozed off.

"I awoke to the sound of my husband opening the window in order to go outside to urinate.³ When he came back and lay down, he again reviled me. I couldn't take it and cursed him back. I then took the knife I had hidden,

turned around, and stabbed at my husband's forehead, but I missed and slashed the pillow instead. My husband got up and started hitting wildly in my direction; I then butted him with my head and knocked him over. Using all my strength, I pinned him down and covered his mouth with my hand; my right knee pinned down his chest, but he used both hands to grab wildly at me. He seized my hair and wouldn't let go. I wanted to break free, so I used the knife, and with one hack, I cut off my hair and slashed him on the right palm. As he was pulling back his hand, I sat astride him and started cutting at his neck. My husband rolled toward the side, and I again made a cut across the side of his neck. As he rolled onto his front, I got off his body and stood on the edge of the *kang*. I heard him struggling for life and slashed the back of his skull and neck two more times until he died. This is the truth; no one helped me plan it or carry it out."

According to the deposition of Zhang Xun: "This year I am sixty-one *sui* in age. I adopted this Zhang Zhisheng in Kangxi 59 [1720]. He was the son of a fellow manor worker, Liu Guangzi. This year, on afternoon of the seventeenth of the sixth month, . . .

The father-in-law's testimony is identical to that of his daughter-in-law; he corroborates her statement that he initiated their first sexual encounter.

. . . I took off my daughter-in-law's pants and had illicit sex one time. On the twenty-first of the eighth month [September 15, 1737], I walked into the room from outside and saw my daughter-in-law sitting by herself on the edge of the *kang* in the inner room doing some housework. I said "Let's have illicit sex." We then each took off our pants and had sex one time.

"On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month [October 16], as I was holding and kissing my daughter-in-law in the outer room, my son Zhang Zhisheng suddenly walked in from outside and saw us kissing. He didn't say anything and walked into the inner rooms. I was ashamed and left the room. On the morning of the twenty-fifth, I took advantage of the fact that no one was home to ask my daughter-in-law, 'Did your husband see what the two of us were doing yesterday? Did he say anything to you about it?' My daughter-in-law said, 'My husband must not have seen anything; he didn't say anything at all.' That my daughter-in-law and I had illicit sex is the truth; as to how she killed her husband, I know nothing at all."

According to the deposition of Ms. Zhou: "At the second watch of the twenty-sixth day of the intercalary ninth month [November 18], I was suddenly awakened by noise from the inner apartment.⁴ I felt around for my

grandson Liushi'er and called for my daughter-in-law two or three times. My daughter-in-law suddenly opened the door and came out, saying that somebody had killed Liushi'er. I got up and lit the lantern, and when I went into the inner room to look, I saw that it was my son Zhang Zhisheng who had been killed. As to whether my husband and my daughter-in-law had sexual relations and killed my son, I know nothing about it."

According to the deposition of Ms. Xie, the wife of farm laborer Guo Cheng, Zhang Xun's courtyard neighbor: "On the twentieth of the intercalary ninth month, my husband had gone into town to deliver the tax grain and was not at home. I did housework with Ms. Wang in the inner apartment every night. Each night, I would do some chores in the inside room with Ms. Wang. On the evening of the twenty-sixth, I was doing some work with Ms. Wang. Ms. Wang's husband Zhang Zhisheng, Zhang Xun, and his wife had all gone to bed. Ms. Wang and I worked until the second watch, when we headed out. As to how Ms. Wang killed her husband, I was fast asleep and know nothing."

In addition to entrusting the corpse of the deceased Zhang Zhisheng to his mother, Ms. Zhou, and the manor head Feng Xiu, I recorded all depositions and took Ms. Wang and Zhang Xun into custody. Since Zhang Xun's wife Ms. Zhou and the others knew nothing of the facts, there was no need to interrogate them in detail. At the *yamen*, I carried out a strenuous interrogation of Zhang Xun and Ms. Wang, but there was no difference between their depositions and what they confessed to the deputy lieutenant general of Baidunu.

Funa then summarizes the testimony above with neither interpretation nor addition. He concludes:

According to the law, a wife or concubine who commits adultery and plots to murder her own husband is subject to dismemberment; the penalty for the adulterer is beheading. Also according to the law, however, when the adulterous woman kills her husband but her lover knows nothing about it, his sentence takes only the crime of adultery into account. To wit: Ms. Wang and her father-in-law had illicit sexual relations, and afterward, because her husband Zhang Zhisheng discovered it, she then got the idea to take a knife secretly at night and kill her husband. At no point did she inform or consult with Zhang Xun. Not considering Ms. Wang's lesser crime of adultery, she should be judged according to the statute concerning a wife or concubine who commits adultery and kills her husband and should be provisionally sen-

tenced to dismemberment.⁵ On this, I await the consideration of the Board for appropriate action.

Zhang Zhisheng was the adoptive son of Zhang Xun of a different surname. Ms. Wang killed her husband Zhang Zhisheng. Although Zhang Xun was unaware of these facts, he nonetheless had an illicit sexual relationship with Ms. Wang. By analogy, Zhang Xun, who had illicit sexual relations with the wife of an adoptive son, should be judged according to the statute on [a man] who has illicit sexual relations with the daughter of his wife's previous husband and should be sentenced according to the crime of having illicit sexual relations with the daughter of one's wife's previous husband and beaten one hundred strokes with the heavy bamboo and exiled to penal servitude for three years. The law states that the sentence should be one hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and three years penal servitude; however, under the substitute statute concerning manor farmworkers who are bannermen, there is a question of whether it is appropriate to commute the sentence to forty days of wearing the cangue and one hundred strokes of the light bamboo.⁶ On this, I await the consideration of the Board, following precedent.

Interrogation of Zhang Xun's wife, Ms. Zhou, revealed that she knew nothing of these events. After interrogating all the neighbors [names deleted here], it was determined that they were not involved and there is no need to report in detail. As for the corpse of the deceased Zhang Zhisheng, the deputy lieutenant general of Baibunuo should entrust his adoptive mother, Ms. Zhou, to bury him.

Forwarded to the Board [of Punishments] on Qianlong 3.3.11 [April 29, 1738].

The officials of the Court of Judicature and Revision, having reviewed the case concerning the manor head Zhang Xun under the command of Anabu, Platoon Captain of the Plain White Banner, who had illicit sexual relations with Ms. Wang, the wife of his adopted son, in which Ms. Wang killed her husband Zhang Zhisheng. The memorandum submitted by Jidang'a, the general of Ningguda, reports the following:

According to the deposition of Ms. Wang: "I am nineteen *sui* this year. My father-in-law Zhang Xun frequently flirted [*tiaoxi*] with me, but I said nothing. At dusk on the third of the eighth month [August 28, 1737], my husband Zhang Zhisheng and mother-in-law, Ms. Zhou, were both out of the house. My father-in-law was sitting by himself in the bedroom. When I was about to enter my own room, my father-in-law Zhang Xun stood up and grabbed my arm and wanted to have illicit sex. I consented, and we had sex

one time. On the twenty-first, my mother-in-law and husband were both out, and I was sitting in the inner room on the *kang* doing some housework, when my father-in-law came in and had sex with me one time.

The rest of her deposition on this occasion is identical to her previous testimony.

According to the deposition of Zhang Xun: "This Zhang Zhisheng was the son of a farmer from my manor, Liu Guangzi. In Kangxi 59, I adopted him as a son. It is true that I had illicit sexual relations several times with my daughter-in-law. But I know no details as to how she killed her husband." His testimony accorded with that of Ms. Wang.

According to the deposition of Ms. Zhou: "During the second watch of the night of the twenty-sixth of the intercalary ninth month, I was suddenly awakened. I heard banging sounds inside the room. I called my daughter-in-law two or three times; my daughter-in-law opened the door, and I got up and lit the lantern. When I went inside the room to look, I saw that my son Zhang Zhisheng had already been killed. As to whether my husband and daughter-in-law had illicit sexual relations and my daughter-in-law killed my son, I know nothing at all."

After several interrogations, they confessed everything without exception. According to the statute concerning a wife or concubine who commits adultery and plots to murder her own husband, Ms. Wang should be provisionally sentenced to dismemberment. Zhang Xun should be provisionally sentenced according to the statute concerning a woman who commits adultery and murders her own husband while her paramour knows nothing; his sentence takes into account only the crime of adultery. A man who has illicit sexual relations with the wife of his adopted son, by analogy, should be provisionally sentenced according to the statute concerning a man who has illicit sexual relations with the daughter of his wife's previous husband, to the appropriate degree of wearing the cangue, penal servitude, and beating with the light bamboo as communicated in the dispatch.

A more abbreviated summary of the facts of the case as drawn from the depositions follows.

... We note that when Ms. Wang killed her husband, if there was no one who abetted her, when Ms. Wang was holding the knife but had not yet managed to slash her husband and he got up and was hitting her, how was it that a woman could pin him down? Zhang Zhisheng was a man in the prime of his

life who was already on his feet and knew that this was a matter of life and death. How could he not have fought with all his strength and called out for help? How could he have tolerated her pinning him down and taking his life?

Furthermore, according to the testimony of Ms. Wang, "I straddled his body and slashed at his neck and then the base of his skull," and so on. We note that there was a wound on Zhang Zhisheng's neck that went down to the bone, that his windpipe had been severed, and that the wound at the base of his skull also went to the bone. If Zhang Zhisheng was being pinned down on his back so that his neck was sliced and his windpipe severed, there is no way he could have rolled his body over. How could he have been stabbed to the bone at the base of his skull? Consider the number of wounds—how could one young woman have been able to cause them by herself? Moreover, there is only one wall separating the bedrooms of Zhang Xun and Zhang Zhisheng. How could [Zhang Xun] not have heard anything? Furthermore, his son had discovered Zhang Xun and Ms. Wang embracing and kissing. Would [Zhang Xun] not have been thinking about this and watching their actions morning and night? Given their close proximity, how could he not have heard the noise coming from the room? Zhang Xun must have been nervous that Zhang Zhisheng would kill his daughter-in-law and perhaps himself as well. How could he have had the peace of mind to sleep so deeply that he did not get up to look?

Given the details of this case, there must have been an accomplice in the plotting and murder of Zhang Zhisheng. The office of the general did not investigate thoroughly enough. The accused have fabricated evidence in order to escape punishment. Because this is a serious case involving adultery and premeditated homicide, the general should try the case with greater diligence and establish the true facts and then resubmit a report. At that time, this Board will deliberate the case.

Upon deliberation, the here named officials of the Board of Punishments respectfully submit this MEMORIAL requesting YOUR COMMAND.

The cover has the terse imperial decision: "As recommended." The case was thus retried in an effort to discover whether Ms. Wang was covering up for her father-in-law.

NOTES

Source: *Xingke tiben* [(Board of Punishments) Office of Scrutiny routine memorials] 2/80/9, dated Qianlong 3.6.17 (July 19, 1738).

1. Theiss concludes that when confronted with the murder of an elder male who had raped his daughter-in-law, the highest authorities during the Qing regularly overlooked his sexual predation and punished his killers, often the son or other male relatives, with the harshest penalties for their crimes against the patriarchy (*Disgraceful Matters*, 116–17). For the commentary on Article 366 of the Qing penal code that outlines the requirements for evidence of rape, see Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*, 89. Sommer notes that punishments for rape grew in severity over time and reached a new level during the Qing (*Sex, Law, and Society*, 70–71).

2. She uses the northern pronoun *wo* rather than some more deferential form.

3. He goes out the window in order to avoid going through his parents' room, which lies between the couple's room and the outer door.

4. She also uses the general northern pronoun *wo*.

5. Reference is made here to Article 285 of the Qing penal code. See Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 271.

6. References are to Articles 368 and 9 of the Qing penal code. See Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 349, 42. This is a clear example of preferential treatment under the law for bannermen.

CASE 14

Ms. Ma: Disguised Poisoning (Shandong, 1795)

TRANSLATED BY MARAM EPSTEIN

Of interest in this case are the details that designate the victim a shrew. The employment in the summary constructs Ms. Ma as the primary agent in the events—it is her resentment of her husband's poverty that sets the conflict in motion. Her husband, who admits to premeditated homicide, is presented as a secondary character and a victim of her shrewish behavior. The real issues in their marital conflict seem to be Ms. Ma's resistance to her marital family and her close relationship with her mother. Her mother was willing to shelter her from an unhappy marriage and supported her for long periods of time. Her mother's deposition repeats none of the details about her daughter playing the shrew. She only provides the dates of how frequently and how long her daughter ran "home." Even though daughters were said to be temporary residents of their natal homes, this case illustrates that a young wife might resist the expectation that she transfer her filial loyalties to her husband's family.

Several other facts are of particular interest here. For one, it never occurs to Wang You that he could divorce his wife and send her back to her parents as a way of light-

ening his burden. Likewise, no one seems interested in pursuing the degree of Wang Deshun's knowledge of what happened that night (popular understanding of poisoning by arsenic is that it is extremely painful, so it is unlikely that Wang You's father did not hear any moans). Finally, the more serious crime of premeditated poisoning is elided into a less serious charge of homicide as a result of a husband striking his wife (even though the punishment remained the same for husbands who struck their wives with intention to kill).¹ As can be seen from Wang You's final explanation of what he did with the arsenic that poisoned his wife, the possession of compounds that could be used as poison was tightly regulated by the state.

Your subject Agui [here follows a long list of titles in very small characters] respectfully submits this MEMORIAL to clarify a matter.

Jiang Lan, former recording secretary for the governor of Shandong now serving as judicial commissioner, records a matter according to the memorandum submitted by Acting Judicial Commissioner Cedan based on documents first processed under the previous judicial commissioner and transferred over to him. This report states that Wang You of Putai District poisoned his wife, Ms. Ma, and disguised it as suicide by hanging. According to the detailed report submitted by Prefect Xiang Lin of Wuding Prefecture, Liu Fushan, the magistrate of Putai District, reported:

On Qianlong 59.4.9 [May 7, 1794], the local warden Lu Haoshun reported that the villager Wang You had reported that his wife, Ms. Ma, had hanged herself on the evening of the eighth. When [Lu] inspected the corpse, he saw that she had already been laid out but there were no markings on her neck. As appropriate, he reported this for investigation. I [Magistrate Liu Fushan] then proceeded to where the corpse lay and in accordance with the law conducted an investigation.

In his oral report, the coroner declared: "According to the questioning, the deceased, Mrs. Wang née Ma, was nineteen *sui* in age. From the front, her complexion is dark, and blood is coming from her nostrils; her upper and lower lips are contorted and purplish black. Her mouth is open, and her tongue has contracted and is showing pustules. Her ten fingernails are all cracked and blackened. Her torso, chest, and abdomen are all black in color. There are no other injuries. Indeed, she was poisoned while still alive. Unquestionably, her death could not have been caused by suicide by hanging."

¹ [Magistrate Liu] personally examined the body and found no discrepancies. The testimony of the local warden Lu Haoshun corresponded with the written plaint.