



Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700

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REVIEW ARTICLE

JOSEPH DENNIS, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015. xvi, 390 pp. US\$49.95 (HB). ISBN 978-0-674-50429-5

As the title suggests, Joseph Dennis in his new book attempts to outline all stages in the life cycle of local gazetteers in the period 1100–1700, especially those of Ming works, from compiling to printing, distributing, conserving, and using them. Dennis writes clearly about the roles gazetteers played in local Chinese society, governance, and cultural production. Also, he discusses the political, social, and financial dimensions that formed the official gazetteer's textual and physical features. In a total of seven chapters covering almost all aspects of the social and cultural history of gazetteers, Dennis argues that by the late fifteenth century gazetteers had become an important vehicle for collecting and disseminating local knowledge. His theories are inspiring for historical studies of the book in imperial China, as well as for the use of gazetteers as primary sources in academic research.

Dennis starts his study with the question of why the imperial government and local elites compiled gazetteers. In chapter 1, he first briefly outlines the emergence and flourishing of the gazetteer genre. Gazetteers originated from the earlier genre of map guides. They came to flourish in the twelfth century with the so-called “localist turn”, in which Chinese literati shifted their focus from the state to local society and emphasized the locality in their social and political activities, using local historical writing as a vehicle to promote their agendas (29–30). Biographical and literary writings were inserted into gazetteers to forge the local collective identity, yet more historical, geographical, and functional information was incorporated to enable central and local governments better to know their territories (31–36). Actually the central government was a main stimulation for gazetteer projects. In 1412–18, the Ming court issued the principles of compilation that would shape the contents and styles of most later gazetteers (37–38). Dennis finds that gazetteers were administrative tools that served to project official authority, provided better information about a locality, and also helped to bring about the political incorporation and cultural transformation of non-Han-Chinese-dominated regions (51–58).

In the Ming and Qing periods, however, more initiatives for compiling gazetteers came from local elites, as Dennis argues in chapter 2. He examines the social and political interests represented in the 1477 and 1579 editions of the *Gazetteer of Xinchang County* (*Xinchang xian zhi* 新昌縣志), in today's Zhejiang, and reads them in relation to contemporary local genealogies. The textual relationship between the two genres, according to him, indicates that Xinchang as a locale was an extended family organization and the gazetteer was compiled as a public genealogy of that extended family. “Extended-family genealogy could be the central

organizing principle of a county gazetteer" (69). Thus, gazetteers were made to legitimate the extended family's rights in local society and to consolidate its power (68, 77). Local elite families became relatives by blood and intermarriage. They worked together in improving social cohesion, security, and morality in their locale, all of which were exactly what the magistrates expected. Their political co-operation unsurprisingly extended to gazetteer compilation projects. Local elites financed projects, and individual members collected and selected sources, then wrote and edited entries. They inserted biographies of their paternal, maternal and affinal relatives into the gazetteer, and as a result their stories monopolized nearly all entries (80–109). Before ending this chapter, Dennis goes over discussions about the link between gazetteers as public records and genealogies as private writings. He finds that such discourses did not become extensive and explicit until the late fifteenth century (110–13), roughly simultaneous with the rise of lineages in Ming China. Increasing private family records made possible the genealogical aspects of gazetteers.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 discuss the textual and physical production of gazetteers, with some contributions to the publishing and printing history of Ming China. Chapter 3, "Editorial Process," describes how the gazetteer text was produced. In order to keep information up to date, according to Dennis, most Ming gazetteers kept being supplemented and revised on the basis of earlier works, official and private, in print and manuscript forms. In this sense, gazetteer compilation was an ongoing project and the gazetteer was a living text. In most cases, local scholars were invited to join editorial boards and were paid for their work, under local officials' supervision, in working spaces that local governments provided. Compilers collected materials from various sources including field research, and then tailored materials into a gazetteer in a chosen format according to the compilers' views on gazetteers (121–63). Local literati's involvement in editing gazetteers, Dennis reiterates, resulted from the "localist turn" and was further stimulated by imperial demand. In the Ming period, gazetteer production became normalized from the national level "down to the county level" and even lower, and the number of gazetteers accordingly kept increasing (164).

Chapter 4, "Publishing Gazetteers," focuses on the geography of printing technology reflected in gazetteer production. In contrast to the traditional assumption that the Ming publishing centers were in the Jiangnan area and Fujian, Dennis argues that, in terms of printing craftsmen's business zones, "both Beijing and Nanjing were central nodes in publishing networks that stretched across the country... Printing technology and labor were widely dispersed throughout the Ming state" (167). In spite of the continued use of manuscripts, printing became normative in producing gazetteers because it enhanced the textual fixity and survivability, facilitated reproduction, and increased distribution among more audiences (168–77). Xylography rather than movable type printing was the predominant technology in gazetteer imprints. Craftsmen were hired to cut woodblocks in local yamens, schools, examination halls, and even the compiler's home; sometimes commercial printing shops were entrusted to cut blocks (179–89). Many craftsmen were "highly mobile, operating both regionally and nationally" (191). Dennis conducts a survey of craftsmen's geographical movements from their home counties to the subject places of the gazetteers they worked on. By drawing their business zones he identifies some "previously

unknown regional printing centers" (190) including Jiangxi, Beijing, and Nanjing, among other places far from cultural centers but close to main transportation routes.

Chapter 5, "Financing Gazetteers," explores the economics of Ming gazetteer production, including the methods of financing the expenses and the quantitative information on costs. The most common way to finance labor and material costs was that local administrators and elites donated money. Government funds from fines and litigation fees were also used, together with money raised from local individuals and collected through the *lijia* 里甲 system and even lineage organizations (215–28). The quantitative data that Dennis collected from hundreds of Ming gazetteers include craftsmen's wages, living expenses, and production materials. His analysis of this information, unfortunately, does not lead to a sharp conclusion, as he admits a "cost variation by time, place, and type of book" (247), but he shows how a good understanding of technological procedures and printing materials, including papers of different sizes, helps in interpreting quantitative data.

In chapter 6, "Target Audiences and Distribution," Dennis states that gazetteers were intended for an expanding readership including both elites and ordinary people (254) and that as non-commercial books gazetteers mainly were distributed through official channels. Intended readers could be native or non-native, local or non-local (257). Gazetteers in manuscript form mainly were submitted to the court, provincial and prefectural yamens, while the original text tended to be kept in local Confucian schools and yamens. Some transcribed copies also circulated (258–63). As for printed gazetteers, the first imprints were presented to the local yamen, Confucian school, superior and inferior yamens and other government offices, compilers, preface authors, donors, and other interested people. After the initial run, copies would be produced on demand. The woodblocks were conserved in the yamen or Confucian school by administrative regulation, so that textual integrity could be maintained (263–69). Extant catalogs indicate that gazetteers were also collected in private libraries and academies, and used copies were available on the market (269–84).

Chapter 7, "Reading and Using Gazetteers," focuses on the uses of gazetteers made by administrators, local elites, travelers, people in lawsuits, as well as on the collection of gazetteers and their uses in genealogical research and lineage construction. Some uses have been discussed in Chapters 1, 2 and 6. Reading as a process of drawing meaning from the text is not the focus of this chapter at all. For resident administrators, gazetteers served them as reference books of local information, linguistic bridges in a polyglot state, and transmitters of policy ideas to later officials (288–96). Local elites commonly used gazetteers as "a strategic tool" to exert their influences on local government and society (297). For travelers, gazetteers were key sources of geographical knowledge that they would incorporate into their writings (302–09). The transmission of local knowledge in gazetteers, according to Dennis, enhanced the subject locales' ties to the national elite culture and helped situate the localities, for which literati advocated as part of the "localist turn," in national social and political processes (340).

Dennis supports, elaborates, and even slightly revises where necessary, the theories of the "localist turn" from the twelfth century onwards, the state–society reliance upon each other in late imperial China, the cultural expansion of the late imperial publishing industry found by Cynthia Brokaw (51–58), and the commodification of writing described by Kai-Wing Chow (142). His work differs from the

traditional studies of gazetteers (*fangzhi xue* 方志學) that have shaped the main Chinese understandings of gazetteers as a genre of historical writing for over two centuries since Zhang Xuecheng's (1738–1801) theoretical contributions. Dennis reads hundreds of gazetteers historically and focuses on the social and cultural dimensions of official gazetteer production more than on the textual features of this genre. His findings concerning the link between genealogy and gazetteers, the living nature of gazetteer compilation, the regional and national business zones of printing craftsmen, the interaction between resident officials and local elites in compilation projects, and various uses of gazetteers in administrative, social, and cultural practices, unquestionably enrich our understandings of book history of Ming China.

However, one could also tackle this topic by drawing on the approaches of scholars in the specialized field of the history of book. Book historians examine their tangible subject of the book as a trinity of text, physical form, and reading activity. The reader approaches the book by understanding a text as something that unfolds in physical form, and whose meaning ultimately is determined by a reader through his or her complex cognitive process and reading experience. These three dimensions of a book combine to present its meaning to the reader decoding its textual and physical features. This is exactly why the history of the book is an interdisciplinary field of history, bibliography, and literature (Howsam 2006). Dennis discusses writing, physical production, and reading. Also, he introduces his knowledge of Chinese bibliography into his study, yet he rarely applies literary criticism or textual scholarship because he intended his book not as a literary or textual study but as a social and cultural history of book production. An interdisciplinary effort is always encouraging as Dennis shows, and the multiple facets of a book often stimulate further explorations, as I will illustrate in what follows based on my limited experience of reading gazetteers.

Considering the period 1100–1700 in the title, Dennis fails to consider fully gazetteer production within some important political and social historical contexts, particularly dynastic transitions, as well as less decisive political changes, and some social transformations other than the rise of lineages in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. As he convincingly notes, the gazetteer is a “living” text by nature. Earlier gazetteers kept being updated, revised, supplemented, and even replaced by new ones. As indispensable references for territorial administration, however, Ming gazetteers continued circulating in the early Qing period and some were reprinted on resident officials’ demand. An early Qing copy of the 1614 *Gazetteer of Huayin County* (*Huayin xian zhi* 華陰縣志), Shaanxi, was produced for the magistrate (Shum 1999, 220). The front cover of each fascicle bears a square relief seal that reads “*Huayin xian yin*” 華陰縣印 (the Government Seal for Huayin County) in both Chinese and Manchu (see Figure 1). Dennis describes this seal cut into the “title block” that is not actually reflected in this copy, and dates it as a mid-Qing reprint (264). Yet as the only available gazetteer of Huayin in the late Ming and early Qing, this version could have been in use until the next official gazetteer was compiled in 1787 (Li Tianxiu 1928; Gao Feng 1985, 93–95). The original Ming edition consists of eight chapters, while this Qing reprint contains a ninth chapter that simply includes two stele inscriptions recording the 1710 project of dredging local rivers. In both inscriptions, the two Manchu authors criticize the Ming officials’ failures including that of Wang Jiuchou (1585 *jiuren*), co-editor of



FIG. 1. Wang Jiuchou 王九疇, and Zhang Yuhan 張毓翰. *Huayin xian zhi* 華陰縣志 (1614. Huayin, Shaanxi: Huayin County, 1710s). The square relief seal of the Huayin County yamen in Chinese and Manchu was impressed onto the front cover of every fascicle of this copy. (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call # TNC3155/4573.7)

the 1614 gazetteer, and praise highly the achievements under Manchu rule. Most likely this copy was produced in the early 1710s rather than in the mid-Qing. Perhaps it was intended to please the provincial authority, and more importantly, to be prepared as a reference for the magistrate and his successors. In producing this copy, politically sensitive phrases were not yet removed from the Ming woodblocks. The character *xuan* 玄 in the text appears unchanged (e.g. Wang & Zhang 1710s, 7:27b). Since the Kangxi emperor's (r. 1661–1722) inauguration, this character had become a taboo because it was a part of his Chinese name Xuanye 玄燁. When it had to be used, it should have been replaced by the character *yuan* 元 or have its last stroke removed. And in terms of page layout, references to both the Ming and Qing reigns and their emperors enjoyed the same spacing that visually marked their superiority in this copy, which was unusual in Ming and

Qing books. In terms of authorship, this copy appears anachronistic in that a chapter 9 consisting of two Qing inscriptions written nearly 100 years later was added to a Ming authored work without any note (a 1702 stele inscription on constructing a bridge was inserted to chapter 8; see 8:57b). More noticeable in this copy are hundreds of black spaces (*modeng* 墨等), which usually are intended to correct wrong characters and to fix rotten parts in blocks. If the block cutter fails to engrave the right characters, they will be printed as black squares or (in cases of more than one character) tall rectangles. Black spaces break sentences into unreadable fragments. Before this copy was printed out in haste in the early Qing, perhaps the

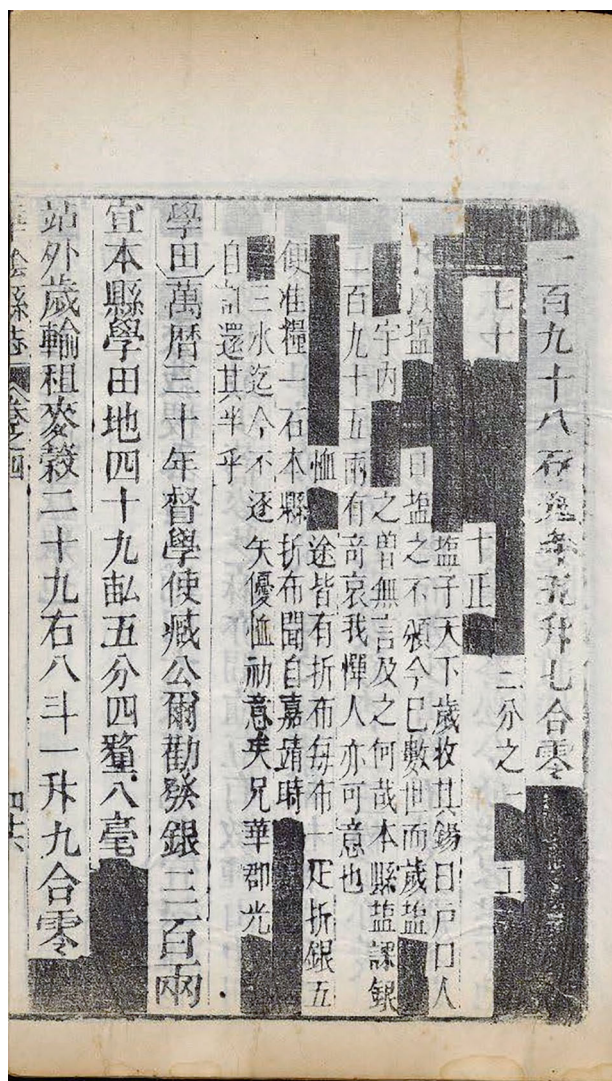


FIG. 2. Wang Jiuchou, and Zhang Yuhan. *Huayin xian zhi*. Black spaces usually were intended to correct wrong characters and to fix rotten parts in blocks. (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call # TNC3155/4573.7)

Ming blocks were closely examined in the attempt to fix the rotten and to censor the text (see Figure 2). Dynastic transitions and political changes in general left marks in the textual and physical production of a local gazetteer (and other kinds of books) in different editions. In terms of circulating and using an edition, however, its readers' activities made each copy distinctive and individual. The history of a book is reconstructed on the basis of understanding particular real copies. The more copies we examine, the more we know about a book's life cycle, the more possible it is to contextualize its life cycle in political and social history. Meanwhile, expanding from individual copies to a broader domain, textual criticism still matters.

In spite of some continued uses of Ming local gazetteers and their blocks made by Qing officials, more or less censorship was executed and remains visible in most of the early Qing reprints of Ming gazetteers. A good example is a copy of the 1561 *Gazetteer of Xuanfu Garrison* (*Xuanfu zhen zhi* 宣府鎮志, today's Xuanhua, Hebei) held in the Harvard-Yenching Library, unfortunately with pages missing. In this copy, the characters *xuan* (as mentioned above), *hong* 弘 and *li* 曆 (that combine into the Qianlong emperor's [r. 1735–96] Chinese name) were kept unchanged (Sun & Luan mid-1600s, 1:25b, 1:27a, 2:39a). Those ethnically sensitive characters such as *lu* 虜, *qiu* 酋 and *yi* 夷 (*lit.* barbarian), however, were removed from the blocks, as well as the defining character *huang* 皇 (*lit.* august, grand) prefixed to the Ming dynasty and emperors' posthumous titles (see Figure 3), with hundreds of blank spaces left, though a few escaped being caught. This copy was produced sometime between 1645 and 1661 for reasons we do not know yet. Reading marks (dots and circles) were made for punctuation on every page, though we do not know who did it.

One of the first run imprints of the 1616 *Gazetteer of Guyuan Subprefecture* (*Guyuan zhou zhi* 固原州志), in today's Ningxia, was still in use in 1875, when Prefect Liao Puming's 廖溥明 official file folder bearing that date was recycled to make the cover of this Ming title (Liu Minkuan 1616). No change was made in the text while circulating in the Qing. I am describing this gazetteer and that of Xuanfu Garrison not only because of the actual uses made of them by Ming and Qing readers but because they could inspire reassessment of Dennis's assumption that gazetteers could serve as public genealogies in Ming-Qing China.

In traditional Chinese historiography, genealogies were a main source for official gazetteers that in turn provided materials for state histories (Zhang 1985, "Xiu zhi shi yi" 修志十議, 843–44). Because of the high intertextuality among those three hierarchical genres, the eighteenth-century imperial editors of the Four Treasuries criticized the bibliographical sections in local gazetteers for "appearing like genealogies" of local powerful families (Yongrong & Ji Yun, 68.1454). Dennis goes further and argues that local gazetteers could function as "public genealogies." In the Chinese society of Ming China, lineages became institutionalized in the 1500s with the state's encouragement that they collaborate with officials in local governance. Lineage regulations and rituals were issued, genealogies compiled, and infrastructures constructed to serve lineage members, such as ancestral halls, granaries, family graveyards, gardens, and farms — some could be grand enough to be recorded in gazetteers (Faure 2007; Chang 2005). Gentry families were the core of lineages. Based on their cultural achievements obtained in classical education, they earned political and economic capital through their successes in civil service examinations. All these resources would enable their members to dominate cultural

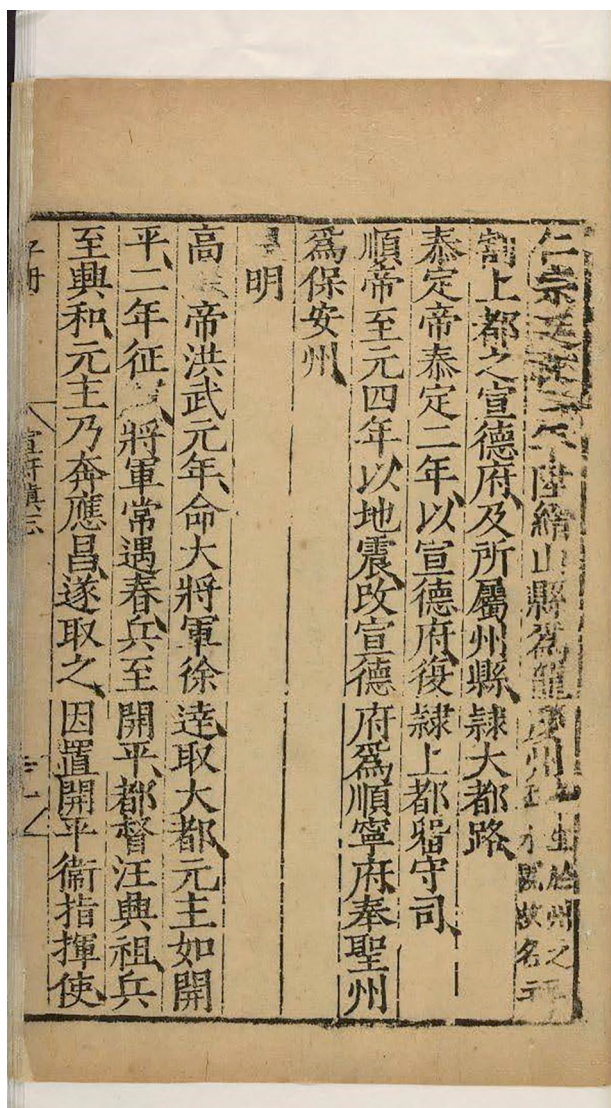


FIG. 3. Sun Shifang 孫世芳, and Luan Shangyue 樂尚約. *Xuanfu zhen zhi* 宣府鎮志 (1561. Xuanfu zhen: Xuanfu zhen, mid-1600s). On this page, the politically sensitive characters *huang* 皇 (lit. august, grand) and *lu* 虜 (lit. barbarian) were removed from the block before printing. (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call #T3269/3104.7)

production, including gazetteer compilation. Written materials requested for gazetteer compilation, as Dennis describes in chapter 3, were in general prepared by and about the local gentry community. A widow in a gentry family undoubtedly would have had greater advantages over her humbler counterparts in being recorded in a genealogy and recommended to the gazetteer office, let alone her male family members who were powerful in different domains in her locale. For gentry families with long cultural traditions, which were not unusual in late imperial China, it was

not surprising to see many of their sons and daughters listed in their local histories — so many that the official writings could appear as a collection of genealogical information.

This genealogical dimension, however, was possible only in a gazetteer at the county level or lower when (a) the gazetteer emphasized officials and local celebrities who played roles in local history, and (b) local lineages were organized well and powerful enough to control all local domains. The *Gazetteer of Xinchang County* that Dennis analyzes was the outcome of the above two conditions. A perhaps more illustrative example is the *Draft of a Private Gazetteer of Changshu County* (*Changshu xian si zhi gao* 常熟縣私志稿, c. 1617), a manuscript collected in the Harvard-Yenching Library. In the transcribed 1617 preface, the Ming reign titles Hongzhi 弘治 was changed into Hongzhi 宏治 and Wanli 萬曆 into Wanli 萬厯, clearly in order to avoid the taboos on the Qianlong emperor's Chinese name. This manuscript was made before 1756, when a Ding Chuwu 丁初吾 obtained it according to his friend Gui Qiuya's 歸秋崖 colophon dated 1757. The whole draft consists of fourteen chapters, among which seven are devoted to local lineages in biographical form (see Figure 4). The compiler Yao Zongyi claims in his introduction to the lineage section:

[In traditional biographical sections, sketches are categorized into] “obedient sons and good friends,” “loyalists and martyrs,” “the virtuous and heroes,” and “literary writers.” How could those categories indicate the listed people's government service and common lives? The ancients said, “We should be concerned with a man's personality more than his official title.” Thus the worthy from a gentry family should be sketched in the context of his family [rather than in officialdom]. Those who share a surname but belong to different clans will be accordingly listed in proper entries, which will facilitate reading. In this way I compile this Lineage Section.

.....孝友、忠烈、義俠、文翰則何論顯晦哉？古人謂，問其人不問其官。而士族之賢者，因歸之士族。其同姓殊宗者，亦以次見，俾閱者便焉。作敘族。

According to Yao, the local celebrity's family background fundamentally determined whether he would be able to enter officialdom or not. The lineage was the root and resource for its members' achievements, and in his gazetteer he put more weight upon lineage than upon other social and political institutions. More than half of his pages contain biographies selected from local genealogies.

The development of Ming-Qing lineages varied geographically, however. Not all counties saw the rise of well-organized lineages as Xinchang and Changshu did. Developed lineages tended to textualize themselves into genealogies. Those extant show that lineages developed better in south China than in north, in east than in west, and in central regions than in the periphery (Guojia dang'an ju erchu et al. 1997; Shanghai tushuguan 2000). Until the mid-seventeenth century, as Gu Yanwu (1613–82) observed, north China had witnessed the continuing decline of lineages and had been much less populated than the south (Gu Yanwu 1985 [1834], 23:19b, “Beifang men zu” 北方門族). Where local scholars were not culturally, economically and politically strong enough to take up the task of writing their

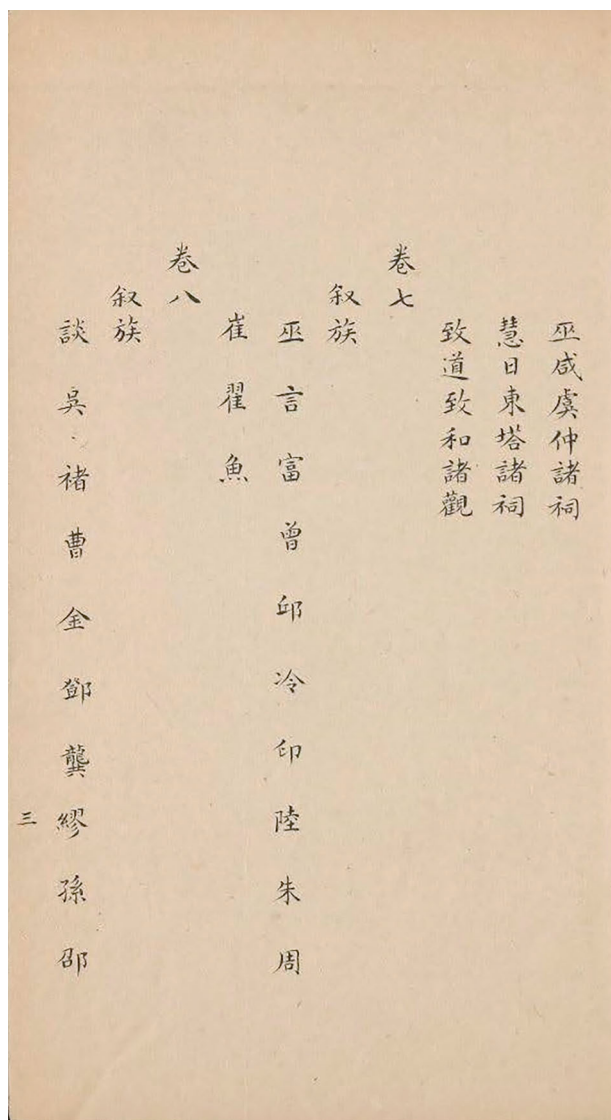


FIG. 4. Yao Zongyi 姚宗儀. *Changshu xian si zhi gao* 常熟縣私志稿 (c. 1617. MS. Changshu, 1756). One page from the table of contents, with surnames listed to highlight the local lineages in biographical form. (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call #T3205/9203.7)

local history, resident officials, who were not normally natives of the subject place, especially those sent to a frontier and undeveloped region, would assume the role of compiling the gazetteer, stressing their own administrative missions and personal preferences over local lineages' presence in the gazetteer. In such a case the outcome could not be biography oriented, but centered on the administrative functions of the subject place.

Let's turn to the gazetteers of Xuanfu Garrison and Guyuan Subprefecture. Both administrative units were strategic military bases, defending the Ming state against the nomadic tribes in the Mongolian Steppe and Muslims in the Gansu (Hexi) Corridor and beyond, respectively. Both gazetteers were edited by resident officials who were not native to Xuanfu or Guyuan. In the *Gazetteer of Guyuan Subprefecture*, only Chapter 7 among eight is devoted to biographical sketches of native people, past and present. Six chapters cover the topics of (in sequence) geography, official infrastructure, shrines, taxes and corvée, military system, and government and education. Obviously the focus was on the military and administrative missions. Even the literary writings in Chapter 8 are simply records about campaigns and defenses against nomadic tribes and extermination of rebels (Shum 1999, 222; Liu Minkuan 1616). More explicitly, the resident officials in Xuanfu Garrison clarified in the principles of compilation how to represent their missions and obligations in the gazetteer. Six categories were highlighted as central for this local historical writing: administrative institutions, natural phenomena, geography and infrastructures, economy, civilization and education, and military affairs. These six categories, according to the compilers, exhausted all administrative affairs within their jurisdiction. Biographies, for which they did not refer to genealogies at all, were edited to demonstrate the historical trends of the above six categories. Moreover, because Xuanfu Garrison sporadically was occupied by alien regimes, the compilers had to keep dynastic legitimacy in mind. Chronological entries were carefully arranged so that the reign titles and the calendric systems (*jinian* 紀年) of those regimes granted dynastic legitimacy appeared in big characters, while the equivalent of those regimes considered illegitimate were listed as interlinear notes in small characters. The same hierarchy was adopted in listing titles of states (Sun & Luan mid-1600s, "Fanli" 凡例, 5b, 6a–b, 10a–b). This device was meant to legitimate the Ming hegemony over this frontier region. Neither the presence of lineages in local society nor the Chinese state's cultural expansion and assimilation that Dennis finds in some Ming gazetteers (51–58) was their concern.

Whether or not a gazetteer contains so much genealogical information that it appears as a public genealogy of the local extended family, as the above examples illustrate, depends upon the lineages' participation in local governance at different levels, upon their cultural, political and economic power in cultural production, and ultimately upon the resident officials' understandings of their administrative missions and the specific function of their jurisdiction in the national system. In counties like Xinchang and Changshu, local governments heavily relied on the collaboration of well-organized lineages in day-to-day administration and cultural production. Their first task was to bridge the court and local gentry society and to keep the latter rolling smoothly in the imperial order. Along the northern border, the military importance of Xuanfu Garrison and Guyuan Subprefecture, among other administrative units, demanded their resident officials concentrate on frontier defense more than local lineages' participation in administration — if there were any. Lineages were fully represented in a gazetteer when they were there playing irreplaceable roles in local governance; otherwise, they were invisible in the gazetteers like those of Xuanfu and Guyuan, even if they did exist.

Dennis devotes Chapter 7 to reading and using gazetteers, which should have been the most difficult part of his study, just as the history of reading is in the broader field of the history of the book. His materials are refined mainly out of the search results

for keywords from the database *Scripta Sinica* and the *Siku quanshu* (287), and partly from some gazetteers and scattered records. His materials consist of fragmentary anecdotes that were originally citations of gazetteers in other writings. Perhaps they well illustrate how gazetteers were used, but it is hard to say they reveal how gazetteers were read by real readers. Reading is a decisive way of lending meanings to the text. More than citing, it is an internal experience in which the reader draws meaning out of the text he or she encounters. Citations are simply the result of reading. Historical studies of reading aim to reveal how the reader created the meaning of an encountered text in a particular historical context and cultural tradition, not only to list his or her citations from the text. While citations may be considered an indication of reading a book, a more fruitful approach is to examine how they were historically produced and imported into another book. Marks by the actual reader such as marginalia in an individual copy also could be more useful than fragmentary anecdotes to systematically reconstruct how the text was read.

There are very few written records of reading for historians to analyze reading experiences. Among the copies extant from Renaissance England when the

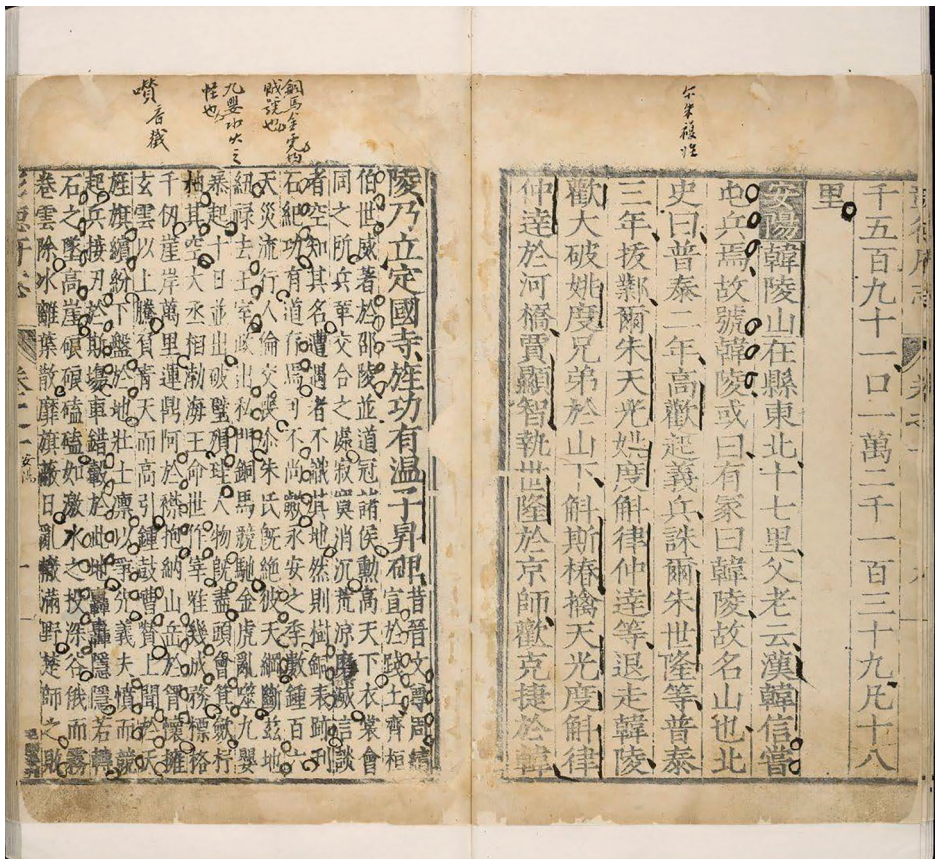


FIG. 5. Cui Xian 崔銑. *Zhangde fu zhi* 彰德府志 (1522. Anyang, Henan: Yuanlin 劉元霖, 1581), with marginalia and reading marks perhaps made by the first reader of this copy. (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call #T3144/0223.7)

annotation of books was common, only fifty percent are annotated (Sherman 2008). Among extant Ming and Qing books, there could be fewer annotated copies than those from Renaissance England, and extant annotated gazetteers could be much fewer. Fortunately, a few copies are available for the public, with two examples from the Harvard-Yenching Library, again. The copy of the *Gazetteer of Zhangde Prefecture* (*Zhangde fu zhi* 彰德府志), Henan, was produced in 1581 by Liu Yuanlin 劉元霖 (1556–1614) who was appointed the magistrate of Anyang 安陽 County just one year earlier (Shum 1999, 217–18, wrongly dates this copy to the Jiajing period [1521–67]). According to the 1935–36 colophons to it, this gazetteer was really rare with very limited circulation. Reading marks (dots and circles) were made on every page of this copy, apparently by its first owner active in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, to punctuate the text and to highlight what interested him. Also he wrote reading notes where he thought necessary (Cui Xian 崔銑 1581; Figure 5). The second example is a copy of the *Recompiled Gazetteer of Qinchuan* (*Chongxiu Qinchuan zhi* 重修琴川志) produced in the 1640s by Mao Jin 毛晉 (1599–1659). The first version of this gazetteer was compiled in 1196, supplemented in 1254, and revised and enlarged in 1363. Mao's version was derived from the 1363 one. Before publishing his version, Mao asked his friend and relative

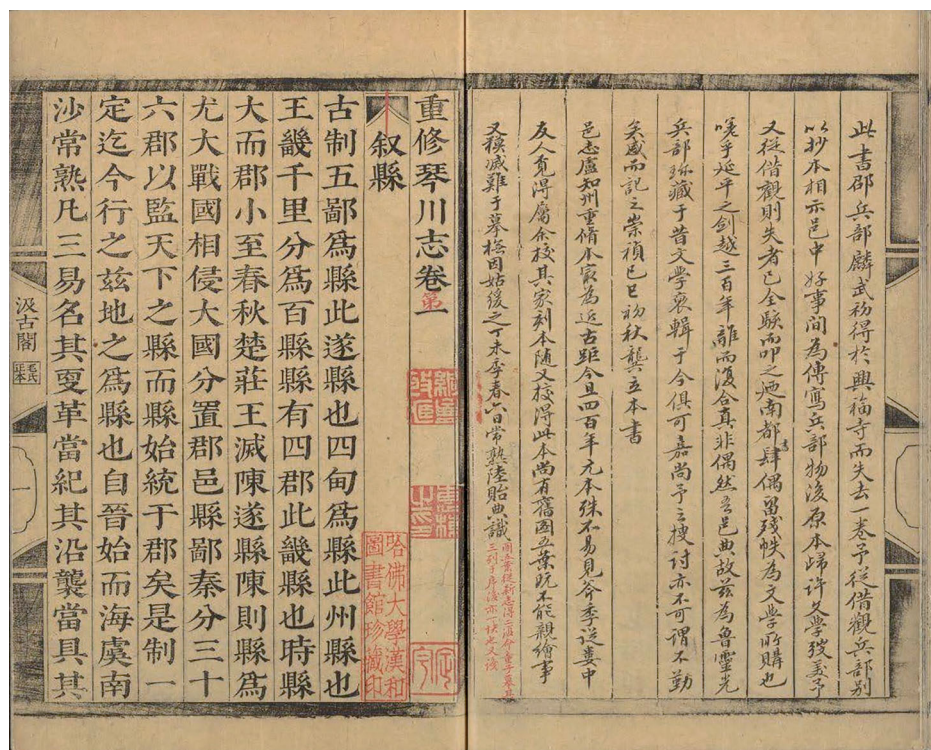


FIG. 6. Lu Zhen 盧鎮, ed. *Chongxiu Qinchuan zhi* 重修琴川志 (1363. Changshu: Mao Family Jigu ge, 1640s). The first page of Chapter 1 on recto (left), with Gui Tianqi's transcription of two earlier colophons on verso (right). (The Harvard-Yenching Library, Rare Collection. Call #T3205/9203.6)

by marriage Lu Yidian 陸貽典 (1617–86) to proofread. In 1667, Lu further collated the text of Mao's edition and Lu's work copy is currently held in the Shanghai Library (Shum 1999, 206–207). Lu's collations and reading notes were transcribed by Gui Tianqi 歸天圻 (fl. late 1700s) onto his own copy that is available in the Harvard-Yenching Library (Lu 1640s; Figure 6). Lu Yidian was a professional reader and worked as a collator in this case, yet his work can lead us to his experience of reading gazetteers. Mao's version was a commercial publication, as Dennis notes (189). It was relatively well known among literati in the Jiangnan region and widely cited in other writings. Other extant copies also make it possible to investigate the history of reading this gazetteer before and after Lu. A few copies of the 1363 version had been in circulation before Mao's republication. By 1629 Gong Liben 龔立本 (1572–1644) had read it twice (Shum 1999, 207), and his colophon was transcribed into later editions including one that Dennis notices as a used book (283–84). Gong's copy of the 1363 version was traced in 1805 by Yan Zhaoji 言朝楫 (1739–1816) into a manuscript that was collated in 1823 by Shao Enduo 邵恩多 (fl. late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries) (Chen 1987, 362–63).

Dennis grounds his theories mainly upon official gazetteers at the county level that are typical and form the majority of extant local historical writings. Clearly he realizes that the gazetteer genre in the Ming and Qing periods was adopted in various historical writings at different administrative levels from province down to town and village, in addition to specialized works on government salt-beds and the salt gabelle. Gazetteers of mountains, rivers, religious institutions, and academies were also flourishing. To what extent those writings were “local” and “gazetteers” according to Dennis' conceptualization and how his theories are applicable to those unexamined gazetteers deserves further investigation. Dennis notices the different formats (or styles) of compilation (152–53), yet he does not investigate how they shaped the writing and reading of gazetteers. Many gazetteers are extant. They should be read as individual works as Dennis admits (22). We cannot ignore their individual textual and physical features, nor simplify reading — a complex process of drawing meaning from text — into citations or fragmentary anecdotes. Thus Dennis' research will encourage book historians to make more specialized and deeper explorations.

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Dai's note: An erratum not printed out but perhaps helpful for readers:

p.19, "Zhu Houcong 朱厚叟", should be 朱厚燾.

p.68, "Zhang Xuecheng 張學誠", should be 章學誠.

p.151, "in the in the Hongwu era". One combination of "in the" should be removed.

p.275, "147 new titles were added to the preexisting 31, for a total of 188 titles..." 188 should be 178.

pp.283-284, Gong Liben's and Yan Chaoji's colophons to the Gazetteer of Qinchuan. "In the beginning of autumn of the Chongzhen yisi year (1629)." The "yisi" should be "ji si" 己巳. It was the year when Gong Liben wrote his colophon and cannot precede Yan Chaoji's as its date (see above). Qu Yong, whom Dennis cites, did not make this mistake in his catalog (Qu 1857, 11:10b-11b).

pp.326, 327 and onwards, "Qi Chengye" 祁承燦, should be read as "Qi Chenghan".

p.330, "Zongzheng who lives among the bamboo" 竹居宗正. This title refers to Zhu Qingeng 朱勤羹 (fl. the early 1600s), book collector Zhu Mujie's 朱睦㮮 (1517-1586) only son (Li Tongheng 1661, 5:60b). Zhu Qingeng was known as Zhuju xiansheng 竹居先生 (lit. Master living among the bamboo) and, as the Imperial Family Monitor (zongzheng 宗正) after his father, he supervised the clan academy of the Zhou Principality in Kaifeng, Henan (Qi 1640s, "He Zhuju zongzheng qi zhi xu" 賀竹居宗正七袞序, 8:35a-38a).

p. 330, "Ruan Dingbo 阮定博, [also called] Taichong 太沖". In the cited letter to Zhu Qingeng who still kept his father's library, Qi Chenghan suggested to hire Ruan to work with him. Taichong was Ruan Hanwen's 阮漢聞 (ca. 1572-1641) courtesy name. Before writing this letter, perhaps Qi had not met Ruan yet. The first sentence of this letter can be retranslated as: "The exalted scholar Ruan Taichong of Zhongzhou, whom you mentioned to me before, should be a learned and accomplished gentleman" 向所語及中州高士阮太沖, 定博雅君子也 (Qi 1640s, "Yu Zhuju zongzheng" 與竹居宗正, 18:53b).