Localizing Civilization:
The Poetics of Geographical Knowledge in Middle-Period China (ca. 600–1300)

by

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in the University of Michigan
2026

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Dedication

To György Szönyi, Juliann Vitullo, Stephen West, and Christian de Pee:

From Budapest to Tempe to Ann Arbor, thank you for being the light I needed. With your kind and generous support, I learned to grow as a tree does toward the sun, not to become the sun, but to become ever more fully myself. This dissertation is the fruit of that light, and my stubborn, grateful growth.

Acknowledgments

This dissertation project began amid the pandemic with a proposal to write a local history of water control. The initial plan was to examine writings about hydraulic structures in Ningbo during the Middle Period (ca. 600–1400 CE) and explicate their arguments about the relationship between text, governance, and the environment. However, a subsequent research trip prompted me to focus on the practice of writing local history itself and to explore what made that practice possible during the Middle Period. The narratives presented in the museums, libraries, and archives of Ningbo turned out to rehearse the same methodical ordering of the local past that I had recognized in Southern-Song gazetteers of the region. That realization first came to me in the Rare Books Reading Room of Tianyi Ge, but it resulted in a study of geographic writing and its generic conventions only because the people named here helped me discover what to do with it.

An initial attempt to formulate my thoughts on local gazetteers of the Song dynasty (960–1279) was presented at the Workshop "Scaling Time and Space" organized by the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies at the University of Michigan in January 2020. Ruth Mostern, Anna Freidin, and Eloise Wright shared individual insights about the construction of imperial space at competing scales. Two preliminary sections of Chapter Two were presented at an Interdisciplinary Workshop organized by the Lieberthal-Rogel Center for Chinese Studies at Michigan in March 2023. Peter Braden, Gavin Healy, and Lihong Liu encouraged me to reflect on wider implications of my close readings. An early version of my observations on Middle-

Period geography was discussed at the Third Middle Period China Humanities Conference, held at Yale University in June 2023. Ting-chih Wu, Neil Schmid, Anne Gerritsen, and Ruth Chen raised sobering questions while expressing a lively interest.

I am indebted to the scholars who read this dissertation at various stages of writing and whose engagement sharpened both its arguments and its language. Hitomi Tonomura shared a spontaneous enthusiasm for the power of place names and repeatedly illuminated what was at stake in my material by way of parallels in the Japanese past. Lihong Liu brought her ecological approach to art history and enriched my attention to relevant visual sources. Paolo Squatriti urged me to employ shorter phrases with more direct exposition and to articulate my own understanding of key concepts. Erik Mueggler contributed an anthropologist's instinct for making the familiar strange and encouraged me to experiment with alternative ways of framing my findings. Both provided insightful comments on an early draft of Chapter One that helped enhance its clarity. Christian de Pee has consistently read my work with a critical eye for English prose and a sharp sensitivity to classical Chinese texts. This project benefited immeasurably from his advice to trust both my own judgment and the sources themselves—to seek the interpretation that reveals what is already there, plainly waiting to be seen.

This project took shape during years when the work of archival research became anything but ordinary. As the pandemic reshaped foreign and domestic travel, library access, and research routines, librarians and archivists on both sides of the Pacific became indispensable partners in ways I had not anticipated. The staff of the Tianyi Ge Library, the Ningbo Library, and the National Library of China navigated shifting access policies while making available ancient manuscripts, print volumes, photocopies, microforms, and electronic databases. At the Hatcher Graduate Library of Michigan, the staff have responded to a continuous succession of requests

for obscure titles and interlibrary loans. Liangyu Fu at the Asian Library particularly secured purchases of key facsimile editions during the height of the pandemic. Their expertise, generosity, and flexibility allowed this project to move forward when it might have easily stalled.

A small and essential network of colleagues transformed what might otherwise have been a solitary endeavor into one sustained by conversation, empathy, and solidarity. Steven Mace, Craig Breckenridge, Chao Ren, and Frank Espinosa offered the welcome gift of distraction: impromptu meals, memes at odd hours, and countless excuses to leave the dissertation until tomorrow. Comfort Mtotha and Andrea Trapote provided the simple, repeated reassurance that finishing was possible, as well as invaluable advice on when a chapter was truly done. And Yihui Sheng, Yucong Hao, and Zach Berge-Becker lifted my gaze beyond the page, helping me glimpse not only what this dissertation was becoming but also what kind of scholar I might be after it was finished.

Above all, I owe more than I can express to my family. My wife Wendan Shi has been my steady companion throughout this journey, meeting my most distracted days with patience and my smallest victories with celebration. My parents have surrounded me with care and faith as I pursued a path that carried me thousands of miles and many years from home, long before I could describe where it would lead. And my son Ian always seemed to know when to climb into my lap and remind me that there is a world beyond the page. Every evening, after closing my books, I open his. Reading *What Do You Do with an Idea?* together has reminded me that ideas begin in curiosity, flourish through patient attention, and matter most because of the people with whom we share them.

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Abstract

This dissertation presents a genealogy of geographic writing in Middle-Period China (ca. 600–1400 CE) to demonstrate that local gazetteers by the twelfth century had been elevated from an auxiliary subgenre to an authoritative form (Chapter One). By juxtaposing imperial gazetteers and local gazetteers compiled from the Sui (581–618) through the Song (960–1279), it revises traditional narratives in which the rise of local gazetteers signifies the maturation of an ancient prototype and the formation of a new elite. Instead, it argues that twelfth- and thirteenth-century local gazetteers reconfigured geographical conventions to transform the imperial enterprise of civilization into an undertaking in the prefectures.

During the seventh century, the imperial courts of the Sui and the Tang (618–907) instituted a universal measure of regional difference while resuming the official appraisal of regional customs (Chapter Two). By authoring imperial gazetteers, geographical treatises, and an official bibliography, ministers sought to construct a hierarchical geography of civilization that would subordinate a regional competition for cultural prestige to the singular source of moral guidance in the capital. But as they documented diverse subjects including historical sites and exemplary persons, these officials also invited discordant regional claims of civilization into the imperial capital. By the ninth century, after a series of destructive rebellions against the Tang Empire, learned ministers refocused geographic writing on natural defenses, choke points, and trunk routes, and they elevated these strategic matters to the stable essence of geography

(Chapter Three). To these officials, previous authors had been distracted by a diffuse range of terrestrial features and neglected geographic subjects that were essential to the security of the imperial capital. To lay a geographical foundation for imperial governance, late-Tang imperial maps and gazetteers revealed the physical and organizational structures of the land and turned that infrastructure into a strategic asset of the dynasty.

During the eleventh century, ministers of the Northern Song (960–1127) compiled imperial gazetteers to present current conspectuses of the realm and to prioritize competing proposals on ritual, fiscal, and military policies (Chapter Four). These works continued to foreground the infrastructure of the land but were distinguished by an expansive conception of the geographical archive and a circumstantial selection of traditional subjects. As the imperial government regularly assembled charts and records from the prefectures, it prompted officials and scholars outside the capital to compile, supplement, and reform local gazetteers in anticipation of another centralized geographical project. After the loss of the northern half of the empire, local gazetteers of the Southern Song (1127–1279) elevated the prefecture to the primary site of documentation and governance (Chapter Five). By assembling, organizing, and verifying records of individual prefectures, these gazetteers offered guidance to both the imperial court and future governors. Produced through an official partnership between prefects and scholars, these documents ordered the written pasts of prefectures by successive tenures of prefects and narrated the civilization of local landscapes as the cumulative achievements of prefects.

This genealogy reveals that Middle-Period geographic writing was a polymorphic textual practice continually reconfigured by social aspirations, political exigencies, and technological inventions (Chapter Six). From the seventh century to the thirteenth century, authors and readers of geography reinterpreted inherited literary conventions to redefine the relationship between

territory and governance, between local landscapes and imperial authority, and between the written word and the civilized order.

Chapter 1 Introduction

> Looking out my window this lovely spring morning, I see an azalea in full bloom… This statement is abstract; but what I see is concrete. I perform an abduction when I so much as express in a sentence anything I see. The truth is that the whole fabric of our knowledge is one matted felt of pure hypothesis confirmed and refined by induction. Not the smallest advance can be made in knowledge beyond the stage of vacant staring, without making an abduction at every step.
>
> ——Charles S. Peirce (1901)[1]

This dissertation presents a genealogy of "geography" (*dili* 地理) in Middle-Period China, from the Sui (581–618) through the Song (960–1279).[2] In this process, it traces how local gazetteers

[1] Charles S. Peirce, "The Proper Treatment of Hypotheses: a Preliminary Chapter, toward an Examination of Hume's Argument against Miracles, in its Logic and in its History" (autograph manuscript, April-May 1901), in *Charles S. Peirce papers*, MS Am 1632, (692), Box 45, Houghton Library, Harvard University, 26-7.

[2] There are two main sources of inspiration for writing a genealogy of geographical knowledge during the Middle Period—one is methodological, and the other bibliographical. The methodological inspiration comes from the work of Foucault. Here, the genealogical approach assumes that ideas have no fixed essence or singular origin, but are historical constructs, and it looks for fractures, ruptures, and accidents in history, instead of a linear, evolutionary narrative. In my dissertation, this approach avoids taking granted modern geographic notions, such as the Kantian idea of space as a universal form of intuition, and by extension, as an unchanging box within which objects exist and events occur. Thus, it allows me to reconstruct dissimilar and even conflicting formulations of geography in Middle-Period China. See Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Harper & Row, 1972), 12-4; and Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text: The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 75-6. Regarding the bibliographic source of inspiration, authors and readers of the Middle Period usually explained the purpose of geographic writing by placing them in a lineage of exemplary works. This practice derived from bibliographic treatises, which defined textual traditions by tracing them back to canonical origins and by assessing achievements of previous authors in carrying on those traditions. Therefore, a genealogy of Middle-Period geography preserves a recurrent feature of my sources, while highlighting contrasts between different textual lineages in those sources. See Wei Zheng 魏徵, et al., comp., *Sui shu* 隋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 33.992; and Zheng Qiao 鄭樵, *Tongzhi* 通志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 65.772a. Finally, this approach makes explicit genealogy as a deliberate exercise of writing, not a pre-linguistic line of descent.

became separated from imperial gazetteers and accepted by the twelfth century as an authoritative genre of geographic writing.[3] To reveal recurrent and diverse experiments with geographical conventions in the Middle Period, I introduce a practice-centered approach to textual genres, instead of the evolutionary theory of genre adopted in twentieth-century surveys of the Chinese tradition of geography. Hence, imperial and local gazetteers are defined not as stable sets of literary conventions fixed in a unitary, evolving structure, but as recurring groups of stylistic, thematic, and structural features subject to innovation and manipulation. Changes in such formal features of geographic writing do not instantiate unilinear narratives of maturation toward standard or ideal structures of composition, but indicate deliberate efforts to interpret, adapt, and maneuver the geographical tradition. In other words, as authors and readers during the Middle Period received, evaluated, and composed geographic discourse, they did not bring to completion the basic rules of geographical representation laid down in certain established textual models. Rather, they evaluated exemplary precedents and introduced meaningful adjustments to received poetics of geographical knowledge.[4] This practice-centered approach to genres thus

[3] Although many county gazetteers were compiled during the Middle Period, and some prefectural gazetteers were largely aggregates of county gazetteers, only a few of them survive today. Therefore, "local gazetteers" in this dissertation mainly refers to prefectural gazetteers. See Pierre-Etienne Will, *Chinese Local Gazetteers: An Historical and Practical Introduction* (EHESS, 1992), 7-15.

[4] In this dissertation, poetics refers to the textual and generic conventions that make geography possible as a meaningful form of knowledge. Rather than asking whether a text accurately described a place, I ask what rules, narrative patterns, and ways of organizing written records allow readers to recognize it as authoritative geographical knowledge. This shift is important because it shows that geography was not simply a record of the world, but a literary and intellectual practice that embodied how people understood the relationship between place, power, and text. On writing as a literary and intellectual practice during the Middle Period, see Christian de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China: Text and Ritual Practice in the Eighth through Fourteenth Centuries* (SUNY Press, 2008), 1-20; and Peter K. Bol, *"This Culture of Ours": Intellectual Transitions in T'ang and Sung China* (Stanford University Press, 1992), 84-104. On genre as practice of discourse, see William F. Hanks, "Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice," *American Ethnologist* 14, no. 4 (1987): 668-92. On textual form in the production of geographical knowledge, see Julian Brigstocke, "The Poetics of Geographical Knowledge: For a Genealogy of Geographical Aesthetics in History and Philosophy of Geography," *Journal of Historical Geography*, vol. 85 (September 2024): 62-65; and Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 76-87.

reveals the contested, contingent, and creative processes that led to the changing poetics of geographic writing under the Tang and the Song, particularly to the growing distinction of local gazetteers.

1.1 A Missed Intersection: Imperial Power and Local Landscapes

Early studies of Middle-Period geographic writing in North America assumed an inherent conflict between the center and the local, neglecting the intersection between imperial power and local landscape in their sources. In the 1980s, historians of the Song had aligned the center–local distinction with a difference between the top and bottom of officialdom, between the central government headed by the emperor and the civil societies led by local families. The goal was to offer a spatial critique of the traditional, court-centered approach to understanding the Song period, and furthermore, to conceive of the local as an extra-political realm in which the historiography of the Song could be decentered. The most influential thesis as a result was the "localist turn" of the literate elite (also known as "elite localism") during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[5] Several articles published in the subsequent decade about geographic writing then accepted the center–local dichotomy postulated in the thesis of elite localism and drew a general parallel between the growing prestige of local gazetteers and the emerging leadership of local elites. In the past two decades, studies of Song-dynasty geographic writing have brought into question the rigid separation between the imperial court and local societies

[5] For previous reviews of this historiographic issue in English, see Song Chen, "The State, the Gentry, and the Local Institutions: The Song Dynasty and Long-Term Trends from Tang to Qing," *Journal of Chinese History* 1, no. 1 (January 2017): 147-64; Hilde De Weerdt, "Song Studies," in *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America*, ed. Haihui Zhang et al. (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2013), 26-7; Yongtao Du, "Locality, Literati, and the Imagined Spatial Order: A Case of Huizhou, 1200-1550," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42, no. 1 (2012): 407-11; Christian de Pee, "Cycles of Cathay: Sinology, Philology, and Histories of the Song Dynasty (960–1279) in the United States," *Fragments: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Study of Ancient and Medieval Pasts* 2 (2012): 52-9, 65-6; Yinan Luo, "A Study of the Changes in the Tang-Song Transition Model," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies*, no. 35 (2005): 108-13.

assumed in earlier studies of local elites, especially by considering the vertical mobility of scholars in officialdom and the horizontal mobility of officials across imperial territories. However, as an antinomy between an imperial civilization and local cultures survived from the dichotomy between the capital and prefectures, these studies anticipate that the encounter of the two in writing would inevitably lead either to the effacement of the former or the subjugation of the latter. A firm rejection of this antinomy reveals that the discursive construction of local landscape was an integral part of geographic writing under the Song as well as the Tang.

In the late twentieth century, North American historians of the Song dynasty aligned the distinction between center and locality with a difference in the hierarchical organization of government, that is the difference between the imperial capital and prefectures. Publications on local elite, popular religion, regional economy, and local governance advanced a spatial critique of the traditional, court-centered approach and departed from the foundational themes of Song studies such as court politics, official ideologies, and government institutions.[6] In this binary imagination of imperial space, the landforms, buildings, resources, communities, and agencies of prefectures maintained, not so much a physical distance, as an organizational distance from the imperial heartland, making it conceivable to explore the local as an extra-political realm that was separated from the imperial court and all its concomitant bureaucratic functionaries and protocols. It is also with this extra-political realm that leading historians of the Song developed in the 1980s the influential thesis of "elite localism" by showing the growing interest of a literate elite in affairs in prefectures, and how the "social activism" of this elite resisted, challenged, and even marginalized the imperial government.

[6] See De Weerdt, "Song Studies," 23-30.

For example, the separation between center and locality enabled economic historian Robert M. Hartwell to hypothesize "the social transformation of the Chinese bureaucratic elite" over the eleventh century from "a cohesive status group made up of families who specialized in government service" to "a multitude of local gentry lineages who encouraged a division of labor among their progeny with government service as only one possible career choice."[7] This spatial hierarchy was assumed by social historian Robert P. Hymes in his trailblazing investigation of changing marital strategies adopted by elite families in Fuzhou 撫州 (present Fuzhou, Jiangxi province) during the twelfth century and the increasing engagement of these families in local affairs.[8] The severance between the capital and prefectures was adopted by intellectual historian Peter K. Bol to expound an emerging ethic of cultural responsibility in the eleventh century, one that encouraged learned men to break the bonds of a court-centered, office-seeking mentality.[9] In other words, the "localist turn" of the literate elite during the Song is premised upon a dichotomizing conception of imperial space, that the center and the local represent two separate and antithetical environments of social action. These publications did not necessarily share the same conception of imperial space. But they regularly associated the center with the ruling house, the imperial court, and the bureaucratic apparatus, and linked the local to anonymous commoners, communal organizations, and elite families. As a result, this center–local formula

[7] See Robert M. Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China, 750-1550," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, no. 2 (1982): 416.
[8] One strong indication comes from Hymes's elaborate discussion about the proposal of a local official "to protect his jurisdiction from the demands of the center." See Robert Hymes, *Statesmen and Gentlemen: The Elite of Fu-Chou Chiang-Hsi, in Northern and Southern Sung* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 204-9.
[9] On the "the transformations of the shih from aristocrats to civil bureaucrats to local elites," see Bol, *"This Culture of Ours"*, 32-75.

often appears to paraphrase a figment of modern political theory, the dichotomy between state and society.[10]

The opposition between center and locality is supposed also in early studies of geographic writing under the Tang and the Song. In a pioneering article published in 1996, for example, James M. Hargett argues that the transformation of local gazetteers in the Song is a result of the "localist turn" of the literate elite during the Song.[11] According to Hargett, in the Tang and the Northern Song, local gazetteers were compiled by faceless bureaucrats to provide the imperial government with administrative records that were necessary for its centralized working. These bureaucratic documents were called "charts and records" (*tujing* 圖經, also commonly rendered "map-guides"). However, after armies of the Jin Empire drove the Song imperial court south of the Huai and Yangtze rivers, local gazetteers were increasingly compiled by scholars to supply local elites with historical records that were essential to their leadership in prefectures. These scholarly works were categorized as "regional compendia" (*fangzhi* 方志). To explain this marked shift in geographic writing Hargett adduces multiple historical developments during the Song period, notably the co-operation of an expanding urban economy and a thriving publishing industry. Nonetheless, to him the most significant context for comprehending this transformation is the "localization of elite interests":

> Northern Song efforts to collect and synthesize *tujing* into national-level compendiums were an attempt on the part of the state-centered elite to integrate local areas into a

[10] See, for example, Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn, eds., *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 19-30; and Robert P. Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer, eds., *Ordering the World: Approaches to State and Society in Sung Dynasty China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 4, 6-7, 16-7.

[11] See James M. Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and Their Place in The History of *Difangzhi* Writing," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56, no. 2 (1996): 405-42.

> unified empire. Gazetteer compilation, collection, and synthesis in the tenth and eleventh centuries were part of these state-building efforts. By Southern Song times, however, the elite had developed new values that were essentially local (rather than national) in orientation. Their main concerns were power, wealth, and influence on the local level.[12]

Adopting the social typology proposed by Hartwell and Hymes, Hargett distinguishes between the "state-centered elite" and the "locally-oriented elite," explaining the broadened scope and enriched contents of local gazetteers as a concomitant of the social transformation of the literate elite under the Song. The compilation of local gazetteers therefore appears to be one of the public affairs (e.g., "defense, social welfare, and temple-building") in which local elites increasingly engaged.

This rigid center–local dichotomy has been challenged by recent historians of geographic writing under the Tang and the Song, which are focused instead on the cultural difference between the capital and prefectures. In her study of Jizhou 吉州 (present Ji'an, Jiangxi province) during the Song and subsequent periods, for example, Anne Gerritsen draws attention to the broader implications of stele inscriptions written by learned persons to commemorate the construction and renovation of local temples. According to her, inscriptions about sacred sites in Jizhou afforded not only local gentlemen but also incumbent prefects, retired officials, and other "members of the local and national elites" the opportunity to write themselves into the landscape of Jizhou by expressing a special affinity with local religious communities.[13] Although Gerritsen's close reading of temple inscriptions retains a broad divide between state and society,

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[12] See Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers," 431, 432. To Hargett, similar to the social transformation of the elite, the development of local gazetteers resulted from the vibrant culture of examination learning that gradually subjected the inherited textual traditions to the rediscovered principles of antiquity from the eleventh century onward.

[13] See Anne Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming China* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 68.

it becomes blurred in the conceptualization of sacred sites as "socially integrative spaces" that included "outsiders" affiliated with imperial courts, particularly prefects and magistrates.[14] Rather than separating the local elite from the national elite, she conjoins these two sociological types in an anthropological understanding of landscape as a process of meaning-making in which writers negotiated their identity between material and imaginary realms. By implication, from the Song onward scholars and officials did not merely encounter in prefectures rare signs of cultivation such as idyllic retreats, historic sites, and pleasant attractions. Rather, they discovered places disposed toward civilization and reliable sources of virtue for themselves.

While the work of Gerritsen avoids the center–local dichotomy by considering the vertical mobility of learned persons across ranks of officialdom, Cong Zhang does so by focusing on the horizontal mobility of imperial officials on their journeys to local government posts, especially in remote prefectures and counties.[15] From institutional records and imperial edicts, Zhang draws an empire-wide transport system that facilitated and regulated the movement of people, goods, and documents to and from the imperial heartland.[16] Within collected works, notebooks, and travel diaries of scholars, she reveals a growing competition between prefectures for cultural prestige, one that increasingly impressed onto the imperial landscape physical and written traces of exemplary personages including prominent officials and distinguished scholars. In other words, the organizational distance between the capital and prefectures hardly resulted in two separate environments of social action. These broad observations also carry implications for geographic writing during the Song:

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[14] See Gerritsen, *Ji'an Literati and the Local*, 55-8.
[15] See Cong Zhang, *Transformative Journeys: Travel and Culture in Song China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011).
[16] See Zhang, *Transformative Journeys*, 181.

> From this perspective, local history writing and local literary and cultural landscape construction was anything but local in nature. Collaborative efforts among local elites and officials and literati visitors reflected the interests of both groups. The tradition of remembering a place's officials and famous visitors went hand in hand with the glorification of local celebrities, ranging from successful examination candidates, to prominent families, to filial sons and daughters. As the authors of gazetteers assiduously listed ancient sites, prominent personalities, and local specialties and products, they assured not only the continuity of their place's history, but also their region's place in the history of the realm. Across regions and over the centuries, the eagerness of outsiders to be remembered, and the willingness of the local population to remember them, shaped local history as much as that of the country as a whole.[17]

To Cong Zhang, as Song officials visited local destinations in person and lauded memorable occasions in writing, the revealing tours and commemorative efforts of such "cultural pilgrims" were included in local gazetteers, contributing to "a history of the entire country from the bottom up."[18] Although local gazetteers often recorded historical sites, worthy persons, exemplary actions, native products, and other aspects of prefectures, their significance was hardly restricted to individual locations. By creating landscapes that embodied the shared ideals of literati (e.g., filial piety and good government), these texts rather engaged prefectures and their associates in an endless contention for eminence in cosmic endowment, literary pedigree, and cultural heritage. As a result, the work of Zhang does not present the center and the local as two disparate worlds, but argues for the increasing similarity of local landscapes to the imperial heartland.

[17] Ibid., 210.
[18] Ibid.

However, Gerritsen and Zhang ultimately collapse the cultural distinction between the capital and prefectures by subsuming one into the other. Whereas Gerritsen recognizes in stele inscriptions for temples in Jizhou the aspiration of writers to identify with sacred sites in the local landscape, Zhang uncovers in writings about local destinations the ambition of officials to consolidate their cultural dominance. Encounters between imperial officials and local landscapes inevitably led either to the former's effacement or the latter's subjugation. An exchange between the two worlds seems inconceivable since the center and the local are supposed to be mutually exclusive. Behind a one-way process of acculturation, initiated at the capital or at prefectures, an antinomy between center and locality thus survives from early studies of local elites and local gazetteers.

This center–local antinomy is found also in recent publications about geographic writing under the Song, particularly in their sharp return to the center. In the first decade of the current century, Peter Bol published a series of articles on the writing of local history in Wuzhou 婺州 (present Jinhua, Zhejiang province) from the Song forward, arguing that "the rise of local history [particularly local gazetteers] ought to be seen as a sign that Song literati had begun to reconceptualize the nation as something less imperial, less derivative of court culture, and less centralized."[19] In contrast, several recent studies of local gazetteers from the Southern Song have emphasized the interest and investment of the imperial government in local gazetteers.[20] For example, Hilde De Weerdt observes that local gazetteers compiled during the Southern Song

[19] See Peter K. Bol, "The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2001): 76. For other publications by Bol on local history, see, for example, *Localizing Learning: The Literati Enterprise in Wuzhou, 1100-1600* (Cambridge ; London: Harvard University Asia Center, 2022), and "The 'Localist Turn' and 'Local Identity' in Later Imperial China," *Late Imperial China* 24, no. 2 (2003): 1-50.

[20] See Fan Lin, "The Local in the Imperial Vision: Landscape, Topography, and Geography in Southern Song Map Guides and Gazetteers," *Cross-Currents: East Asian History and Culture Review*, no. 23 (2017): 10-1, 12-6.

remained one of the "bureaucratic genres" that "made the empire legible to the most important stakeholders in the empire."[21] To De Weerdt, the transformation of local gazetteers from *tujing* to *fangzhi* indicates more precisely that "Native or residential places became another and, for many elite families, the main focal point of the social, political, and cultural life."[22] Similarly, Benjamin Ridgway argues that while local gazetteers from the Southern Song often juxtaposed official records of prefectures with literary compositions about local landscapes, this expansion in content does not necessarily indicate that there was a reorientation of the genre from central interests to local interests. Rather, according to Ridgway, by assessing the changing position of prefectures in the centered landscape of a civilizing empire, poems and inscriptions about prominent sites collected in local gazetteers indicate that "the newly risen gazetteer genre… had become an important vehicle for making geo-political arguments aimed at a contemporary audience of court and literati elite."[23] In other words, the reduced and uncertain territorial shape of the Southern Song seems to enhance the connections of local gazetteers with the civilized center and increase this genre's significance at the imperial court.

The quantity and sophistication of work on Middle-Period geographic writing have increased in the past two decades. But a sense of impasse lingers over the antinomy between center and locality. This impasse appears palpable in Robert Hymes's re-examination of social change during the Song period. As Hymes incorporates accruing scholarship on the "localist turn," he revises this influential thesis by proposing the co-existence of a vertical, "court-oriented

[21] See Hilde De Weerdt, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015), 102.
[22] See De Weerdt, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, 219-21.
[23] See Benjamin B. Ridgway, "Two Halls of Hangzhou: Local Gazetteers and the Grading of Geography for a Song Dynasty City," *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 8, no. 2 (June 18, 2014): 226-29, 241-46, 247.

culture" of officialdom and a horizontal, "[literati]-oriented culture" of fellowship.[24] This revised formulation does not preclude interaction between court-oriented and literati-oriented cultures, nor does it posit an inherent opposition between the two. However, this revision retains the categorical divide between center and locality from previous studies of local elites and consolidates it into a conceptual divide between two autonomous cultures. As Fan Lin urges in a recent reassessment of Song-dynasty local gazetteers, it is important to add that the central and the local in Hymes's formulation were "apparent but not necessarily conflicting."[25] To her, although the production of "charts and records" was sponsored by the government, and the compilation of "regional compendia" increasingly involved the participation of local scholars, an imperial gaze loomed over both types of local gazetteers. The increasing participation of local scholars in the compilation of local gazetteers during the Southern Song was a manifestation of "the deep-seated dynamic relationship between local scholars and the central state."[26]

Several historians of the Tang and the Song have given brief yet remarkable insights into the intersection between imperial power and local landscape in Middle-Period geographic writing, particularly its implicit assumption of a civilized or civilizing center. According to Stephen H. West in an essay on the consumer culture of the Song capital, Kaifeng 開封 (present Kaifeng, Henan province), a broad scheme of othering, from the celestial court to the subcelestial realm, inhered in the discursive practice of writing during the imperial period of Chinese history:

> Traditional Chinese historical and geographical materials are hierarchically constructed: they begin usually with the Heavens and the emperor and work their way down through

[24] See Robert Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," in John W. Chaffee and Denis Twitchett, *The Cambridge History of China Volume 5 Part 2, The Five Dynasties and Sung China, 960-1279 AD* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 631-32.
[25] See Lin, "The Local in the Imperial Vision," 10-39.
[26] See Ibid., 31.

> the royal family, the bureaucracy, institutions, meritorious individuals or places, agriculture, and finally end in a kind of ethnography of foreign lands and popular culture, both representing the "other" in the minds of traditional writers.[27]

To West, geographical texts from the imperial period epitomize the hierarchical spatiality of a written culture that valorized the emperor and his court over imperial subjects and their environments, and that juxtaposed these two positions in a unifying gradation of symbolic value. By implication, geographic writing postulated a grounding center of civilization, and that center constituted a fundamental point of reference from which a realm of relative civilization acquired identity and meaning. A similar cultural geography of writing was discovered by Christian de Pee in a poststructuralist exposition on weddings within the Middle-Period written discourse. According to de Pee, by assuming the Song imperial court as the prime example of civilization, the *Compendium of Wujun* (*Wujun zhi* 吳郡志, 1192) recorded the particular marital practices of Suzhou 蘇州 (present Suzhou, Jiangsu province) as concrete signs of difference from the proper wedding ritual at the civilized center. Moreover, instead of regarding the court as some hermetic, high society, local gazetteers constituted this kingly domain "through a negative discourse on regional difference."[28] The negativity of local customs recorded in the *Compendium of Wujun* was therefore a positive attribute of the imperial court, a clear sign of its cultural superiority, and a necessary proof of its salubrious influences.

The recognition of the civilized center assumed in Middle-Period geographic discourse offers resistance to both the absolute significance of an imperial court and the independent

[27] See Stephen H. West, "Spectacle, Ritual, and Social Relations: The Son of Heaven, Citizens, and Created Space in Imperial Gardens in the Northern Song," in *Baroque Garden Cultures: Emulation, Sublimation, Subversion*, ed. Michel Conan (Dumbarton Oaks, 2005), 319-20.
[28] See de Pee, *The Writing of Weddings in Middle-Period China*, 5, 8-11.

creation of meaning in the subcelestial realm. For example, Alexis Lycas, Masato Hasegawa, and Shih-Pei Chen draw attention to "the historical production of locality" in their introduction to a special issue of *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine*, "The Production of Geographical Knowledge in Medieval China." According to them, this focus has allowed the four relevant articles in this issue to move away from "the [traditional] binary framework between the imperial and the local" and towards "a more diverse framework for the study of knowledge production." Particularly, this themed issue encourages readers "to rethink [historical] actors' own notions of geographical knowledge as well as the values and processes that shape such knowledge."[29]

Indeed, with the preconceived antinomy between center and locality dismissed from their analysis, earlier studies of Middle-Period geographies could also contribute to such reflexive histories of geography by distinguishing between histories of places and histories of place-making and by recognizing the making of place as an inherently ideological operation. A clear example of this potential is found in a conference paper presented by Bol in 2003, some two years after the publication of his influential thesis on the rise of local history during the Song.[30] Drawing attention to the promise of local gazetteers as "one way of contesting national historical narratives," the paper suggests that imperial gazetteers from the Middle Period took "the perspective of a centralized bureaucracy" on the realm:

> For each prefecture it gives the name, rank, population, and the total number of [cantons]…, its administrative history, the extent of the prefecture measured east to west and north to south, the goods it was responsible for supplying to the court, and the

[29] See Alexis Lycas, Masato Hasegawa, and Shih-Pei Chen, "The Production of Geographical Knowledge in Medieval China," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 54, no. 2 (November 23, 2022): 161-65.
[30] Bol, "The Multiple Layers of the Local: A Geographical-Historical Approach to Defining the Local," in *Proceedings of the Conference on Chinese and Comparative Historical Thinking in the 21st Century* (Shanghai: Fudan University, 2004), 1-43.

> distance by road (and in some cases river) to the national capitals and surrounding prefectural seats. For each county it gave its rank, origin of its name, the direction and distance to the prefectural seat. In some cases it gives a river and whence it flows and a mountain, and in some cases it notes an event that makes a place significant.[31]

Since Middle-Period imperial gazetteers comprise mainly a succession of prefectural entries or sections, to give a sweeping overview of imperial territories was to present narrow views of individual prefectures.[32] These texts were configured by a poetics of imperial space in which these territories were differentiated into prefectures, and furthermore, individuated in a consistent template of territorial survey.

This poetics of imperial space, instead of effacing the heterogenous character of the land's surface, postulated regional difference and enacted a universal measure of that difference. The above quotation thus points to an intrinsic contradiction in imperial gazetteers of the Tang and the Song, namely the contradiction between the totality of a dynastic realm and the individuality of its administrative divisions. In short, the discursive construction of prefectural landscapes was a basic operation in geographic writing and a key tactic of imperial governance during the Middle Period. The centralized endeavor under the Tang and the Song to record,

[31] See Bol, "The Multiple Layers of the Local," 6.

[32] It is noteworthy that Bol's argument here about the writing of local history under the Song assumes a complicated process that involved the collaboration between government agencies and local scholars in accumulating and diversifying records about administrative places, a process that gradually allowed these places "to constitute [themselves]." As a result, "the rise of local history" becomes "a story about a new kind of national geography and a change in the nature of local records," and the correlated rise of local elites is more precisely the transformation of the "national political elite" from one defined by "family status" and "office-holding" to one "selected through a national system of examinations and prepared through a system of county and prefectural schools, supplemented by private academies." See Ibid., 22-6.

archive, and compile records about imperial territories was not separate from, but fundamental to "the rise of local history" during the twelfth century.[33]

1.2 The World into Words: Place Names as a Tool of Administrative Legibility

As recent studies of Middle-Period gazetteers expose the center–local antinomy assumed in previous scholarship, the evolutionary theory of genre remains a tacit assumption, notably in the differentiation of local gazetteers into an embryonic form of institutional documentation, "charts and records," and a mature form of textual scholarship, "regional compendia."[34] Adopted from twentieth-century surveys of the traditional geography of China, the evolutionary perspective on geographic writing has allowed these studies to make at least two important contributions, as discussed in the previous section. First, conceiving of geographical genres by analogy with biological species, this approach helped delineate the common formats, contents, and functions of imperial and local gazetteers compiled during the Middle Period.[35] Second, attributing the evolutions of these genres to changes in social context and cultural ideology, it yielded insights also into the connections between the gross social structure of groups and the broad geographical imaginations to which they subscribed.

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[33] See Charles Hartman and Anthony DeBlasi, "The Growth of Historical Method in Tang China," in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing: Volume 2: 400-1400*, ed. Sarah Foot and Chase F. Robinson (Oxford University Press, 2012), 27-8.

[34] For instance, in her recent revision of elite localism during the Song, Lin retains the typology of *tujing* and *fangzhi*. See Lin, "The Local in the Imperial Vision," 10-1, 12-6. For conjectures about the increasing priority of texts over maps in this transformation, see Liu Guanglu 劉光祿, *Zhongguo fangzhi xue gaiyao* 中國方志學概要 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhanwang chuban she, 1983), 25-8, 28-31; and Wang Yong 王庸, *Zhongguo dili xue shi* 中國地理學史 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1938), 211-16. For an assessment of the evolutionary perspective in the study of literature, see Laurence A. Gregorio, *Text in the Natural World* (Peter Lang US, 2017), 1-13.

[35] For example, in *A Comprehensive Study of the Learning of Local Gazetteers* (*Fangzhi xue tonglun* 方志學通論), Cang Xiuliang 倉修良 treats *tujing* as the rudimentary, Tang form of local gazetteers whose contents were restricted to the administrative desiderata of imperial governments, and views *fangzhi* as the full-grown, Song form that incorporated "humanistic" contents such as "refined writings" and "exemplary persons." See Cang Xiuliang, *Fangzhi xue tonglun* (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chuban she, 2013 [1990]), 219-33. For more recent examples, Gui Shixin 桂始馨, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu* 宋代方志考證與研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2021), 456-57, 496-98, 513-14, 550-52; and Gu Hongyi 顧宏義, *Songchao fangzhi kao* 宋朝方志考 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010), 5-9.

However, because this approach underestimates selective transmission, it equates transmitted imperial and local gazetteers from the Middle Period with the entire corpora and thus overstates the uniformity of these two genres.[36] Because the approach further derives from these historical gazetteers fixed textual types, it generalizes overlapping contents of these texts and obscures their distinct rhetorical situations and textual strategies. Instead of marking stages of generic evolution, extant geographies from the Middle Period are more precisely unique survivals of an ever-varied practice of geographic writing and embody situated, strategic engagements with geographic discourse. Consisting of transmitted works, excavated remnants, and recompiled fragments, these select and unusual survivals nonetheless afford the opportunity to reconstruct a genealogy of Middle-Period geographic writing and their diverse poetics by examining the cultural narratives, generic conventions, and rhetorical devices through which learned men during this period composed and authorized geographical knowledge.

Such a reflective genealogy requires careful consideration of one structural feature of geographic discourse, the names and hierarchy of administrative divisions, and an understanding of its function as a tool of administrative legibility. As Ruth Mostern has shown in her landmark study of spatial ideologies under the Song (and to a lesser extent, under the Tang), the "Prefecture and County system (*junxian* 郡縣) of spatial organization" during the Middle Period resulted from "an administrative construction of space in which all locations in the realm were comparable for the purposes of tax, census, and governance."[37] Although the book does not give an explicit analysis of administrative nomenclature, the spatial strategies of the Song imperial

[36] Notably, by aggregating the tables of contents of extant local gazetteers from the Song, Aoyama Sadao identified their common categories and generalized these categories to the genre in general. See Aoyama Sadao 青山定雄. *Tō Sō jidai no kōtsū to chishi chizu no kenkyū* 唐宋時代の交通と地誌地圖の研究, (Yoshikawa kōbunkan, 1963), 465-72.

[37] See Ruth Mostern, *"Dividing the Realm in Order to Govern": The Spatial Organization of the Song State (960-1276 CE)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011), 57-99.

court, as well as its distinct fiscal and military geographies, that it discussed therein involved a basic grasp of circuits, prefectures, and counties, particularly their names and affiliation. An accurate and well-ordered catalog of administrative divisions was not only necessary to the imperial court's many bold initiatives to adjust the number, the seats, and the boundaries of prefectures and counties in response to demographic, economic, and military pressures, but was also beneficial to the "spatial literacy" of imperial officials who referred to these "named places" as standard landmarks on the surface of the land.[38] At the top tier, names of circuits divided the realm along prominent landforms and standardized regional orientation. At the intermediate tier, names of prefectures divided the respective circuits in relation to regional landscapes and identified particular locales. At the bottom tier, names of counties split each prefecture in relation to local landscapes and pointed to specific locations. By distinguishing the realm into vertical layers and horizontal areas, the names of circuits, prefectures, and counties under the Song operationalized imperial power into a field of vision and action. By individualizing and totalizing imperial territories, they moreover enabled the imperial government to manufacture, archive, and compile records of specific administrative divisions, constructing empire-wide censuses, gazetteers, and other knowledges about its subjects and territories.

An early record of this tool during the Middle Period is found in an imperial gazetteer compiled during the reign of Zhenguan 貞觀 (627–649), the *Encompassing Record of the Land* (*Kuodi zhi* 括地志, 642; hereafter, the Zhenguan gazetteer).[39] Commissioned by the Prince of Wei 魏 of the Tang, Li Tai 李泰 (620–653), this official compilation had been lost around the twelfth century. However, a long extract from its preface (including, in notes, the names of

[38] See Mostern, *The Spatial Organization of the Song State*, 166-221.
[39] See He Cijun 賀次君 ed., *Kuodi zhi jijiao* 括地志輯校 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 1-3.

prefectures) has survived in the scroll of "Provinces and Commandries" ("Zhoujun" 州郡) in the *Records for Early Studies* (*Chuxue ji* 初學記, 727) authored by Academician Xu Jian 徐堅 (659–729).[40] According to this extract, the Zhenguan gazetteer adopted a complete register of 358 prefectures and 1,551 counties made by the Ministry of Revenue in 639 and incorporated two additional prefectures and six counties set up in 640. Furthermore, by integrating the Ten Circuits (*shidao* 十道) as the highest tier of textual organization, it arranged the names of contemporary administrative divisions into a three-tiered structure of geographical representation. This nested arrangement of administrative nomenclature embodied an agenda of the Tang court to make imperial territories legible and actionable.

At the top tier, the two-character names of the Ten Circuits signified a broad reticulation of natural landmarks that were oriented on the imperial capital. Enacted early during the reign of Emperor Taizong 太宗 (r. 626–649), the Ten Circuits were delimited by the empire's foremost mountains and rivers, including the Qin Mountains, the Yellow River, the Yangtze River, and the Five Ridges, and were designated according to their cardinal directions from the capital in Yongzhou 雍州 (present Xi'an, Shanxi province).[41] From Inside of the Mountain Passes (Guannei 關內) to South of the Ridges (Lingnan 嶺南), the names of the Ten Circuits do not simply identify the mountains and rivers that bounded these regions. Rather, the name of every circuit referred to the landform that matched its direction from the capital in Inside of the Mountain Passes. Therefore, for example, South of the Huai River (Huainan 淮南) was not North of the Yangtze River (Jiangbei 江北), and South of the Yangtze River (Jiangnan 江南)

[40] See Xu Jian 徐堅 et al., comp., *Chuxue ji* 初學記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 165-66.
[41] See Wang Pu 王溥 comp., *Tang huiyao* 唐會要 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1955), 70.1231-242.

was not North of the Five Ridges (Lingbei 嶺北), even though these names would match their actual positions.

In contrast to the archaic single-character names of ancient provinces, the names of the Ten Circuits explicitly denoted the features and directions of these topographic regions. While the names of provinces in earlier times were associated with cardinal directions and prominent landforms, in canonical texts such as the "Tribute of Yu," the alleged topographic boundaries of these historical regions had been subject to tendentious interpretations and aligned with competing physical landforms.[42] The connection between provincial names and their alleged referents in the world therefore remained an intricate matter of classical exegesis. Indeed, by regionalizing the empire along prominent mountains and streams, the court of Emperor Taizong prioritized the assured shapes of ten topographic regions over the unsubstantiated contours of historical provinces, and thereby disambiguated the names of these regions. By signifying prime landmarks and capital-oriented regions, the names of the Ten Circuits created a cartographic shorthand (or a mental map of the empire) and standardized geographic orientation on the imperial landscape. Moreover, within the nested structure of the Zhenguan gazetteer, the names of the Ten Circuits offered the regional context of prefectural and county names, strengthening the connection of these names to their physical referents.

At the intermediate level, the single-character names of 360 prefectures divided each circuit with reference to regional landscapes and identified particular locales in the empire. The distinctions between most of these names resulted from administrative reforms and adjustments since the founding of the Tang. To unwind the interfering tangle of "provinces" (*zhou* 州) and "commandries" (*jun* 郡) that had proliferated during previous periods, the court of Emperor

[42] See, for example, *Chuxue ji*, 167-94.

Gaozu (r. 618–626) had abolished the latter and adapted the former into a new intermediate level of administration, "prefectures" (*zhou* 州).[43] Meanwhile, the single-character format of provincial names, rather than the two-character format of commandry names, was applied to naming prefectures (with occasional exceptions). The application of this classical nomenclature enhanced the cultural authority of prefectural names through reference to the harmonious landscape of antiquity. Hence, the names of prefectures in the early Tang no longer combined landforms and directions as the names of commandries in earlier periods had done, but foregrounded local signs of imperial legitimacy. For example, Zhongzhou 忠州 ("loyalty prefecture"; present Chongqing) denotes that the prefecture pledges allegiance to the emperor, and the emperor retains that allegiance. Anzhou 安州 ("peace prefecture"; present Anlu, Anhui province) suggests that the place is peaceful, and the government ensures that peace. Aizhou 愛州 ("care prefecture"; present Thanh Hóa, Vietnam) indicates that the location receives loving care from the emperor and bears a moral responsibility to him in return.

However, this single-character format made it more difficult for the names of hundreds of prefectures to refer to specific locations in the realm. As a result of the sweeping administrative reform at the empire's founding, more than forty prefectures had identical names, and many of these prefectures were located in the same circuits. From a semiotic perspective, the enhanced symbolism of prefectural names thus weakened their indexical function. Subsequently, the court of Emperor Taizong attempted to reduce repetitions in prefectural names while renaming, abolishing, and creating prefectures. For instance, the Yizhou 義州 ("duty prefecture") in South of the Huai River was merged with an adjacent prefecture in 627, one Yizhou in South of the Ridges was abolished in 627 and reinstated in 632, and the other Yizhou in South of the Ridges

[43] See *Tang Huiyao*, 68.1196.

was renamed Laozhou 牢州 ("secure prefecture"; present Yulin, Guangxi province) in 637, after a local boulder.[44] Although the court's effort to distinguish prefectural names hardly followed a series of sequential adjustments and was even interrupted by other important considerations (particularly the continued use of stock auspicious names), by the year 640 prefectures with the same names could all be distinguished by their circuital affiliations.

The names of 360 prefectures recorded in the Zhenguan gazetteer in 642 could therefore differentiate the Ten Circuits into particular administrative units. Compared to the names of commandries in earlier periods, the names of prefectures in the 640s pointed to more specific areas of the land, not so because the prefectures were often smaller than commandries, but because the names constructed distinct geographic identities through reference to local landscapes. As several other reported cases of prefecture naming in this period suggest, by adducing stable landforms, historical events, astral correspondences, and other facts about prefectures, the court obtained many viable options for distinguishing prefectural names from one another.[45] Indeed, since Hedong 河東 ("east of the Yellow River"), Runan 汝南 ("south of the Ru River"), Linhuai 臨淮 ("overlooking the Huai River"), and many other commandry names identified regional landforms and relationships to these landforms, these names were usually applicable to adjacent commandries as well. In contrast, referring to distinctive features within jurisdictions, the names of prefectures in the Zhenguan gazetteer distinguished these

[44] See Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 et al., comp., *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 43.1109.
[45] See *Xin Tang shu*, 43.1107, 1111. In addition to administrative reforms and adjustments recorded mainly in later imperial gazetteers, the sustained attention of Emperor Taizong and his court to distinguish the names of prefectures can also extrapolated from a remarkable phenomenon in the Zhenguan gazetteer. According to recompiled fragments, the compilers paid special attention to the principles behind contemporary place names and specified nomenclatural techniques that were based on local facts, ranging from mountains and rivers to persons and buildings to native products and popular tales. See Hua Linfu 華林甫, *Zhongguo dimingxue yuanliu* 中國地名學源流 (Changsha: Hunan renmin chubanshe, 2002), 157-60.

places from one another. The regional positions and geographic orientations of prefectures were then derived from their circuital affiliation and names.

At the bottom tier, the names of 1,557 counties split the respective prefectures by reference to sites near county seats and pointed to specific administrative districts. Although the extant preface of the Zhenguan gazetteer itemizes only prefectural names, the attempt of the Tang court to reduce duplicated county names is traceable in many reported changes. According to Hua Linfu's 華林甫 extensive survey of name changes during this period, success in this effort was more limited, mainly due to the large number of counties.[46] Although many counties had identical names, they usually maintained clear distinctions by their prefectural affiliation. In other words, similar to how prefectural names were situated within the regional context of circuital names and divided the ten topographic regions into administrative units, county names were situated within the local context of prefectural names and divided these units into specific administrative districts. On the whole, the multi-tiered administrative nomenclature structuring the Zhenguan gazetteer transformed the landscape of the Tang Empire into vertical layers and horizontal areas, into a hierarchical field of vision and action.

The names of circuits, prefectures, and counties in the Zhenguan gazetteer resulted from administrative reforms and adjustments before 642. But this political technology was more than the cumulative effect of such coordinated and uncoordinated decisions by the emperor and his court. Rather, the increasing individualization of imperial territories into specific locations required the broad frame of reference provided by a preliminary catalog of administrative divisions. Similar to the population census in 638 and the Zhenguan gazetteer in 642, changes to the names and hierarchy of administrative divisions during the early Tang were an instrument

[46] See Hua, *Zhongguo diming xue yuanliu*, 143-44.

and product of geographic discourse, rendering the continuous surface of the land legible for governance. As this attempt to operationalize imperial power into a nested list of administrative place names continued under subsequent reigns, this nomenclatorial ambition found a direct expression in an edict issued by Emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–756) in 725 to change six pairs of homonyms (i.e., characters similar in orthography or in pronunciation) found in the names of prefectures.[47] For instance, according to this edict, because Bin 豳 resembled You 幽, it was changed to Bin 邠, and because Wu 舞 echoed Wu 武, it was replaced with He 鶴. By invoking one of the distinctive exercises of a sage emperor, "rectifying names" (*zhengming* 正名), this edict moreover reveals that the official names of administrative divisions, especially prefectural names, pertain to the proper distinctions between things in the universe. In other words, the empire's administrative nomenclature did not merely provide a useful tool by which the imperial government coordinated the location of features and occurrences in the realm, but constituted a powerful technology that inhered in the universal political order propagated from the civilized center.

Because the names and hierarchy of administrative divisions were a constructive feature of geographic discourse during the Middle Period, this dissertation presents is a genealogy of deliberate attempts to apply in a perceived situation the names and hierarchy of administrative divisions during a certain time. But these efforts did not merely extend the geographical tradition (or traditions) that they alleged to follow, nor were their achievements legitimized solely by the political authority of an emperor. Rather, these situated endeavors of geographic writing adapted inherited textual models by altering the proper scopes, structures, and categories of geographic writing. And these strategic engagements with geographic discourse reconfigured the epistemic

[47] See Liu Xu 劉昫 et al., comp., *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 187; *Tang huiyao*, 70.1245.

authority of geographic texts by considering overlooked styles of writing, standards of veracity, conditions of governance, and theories of morality. It is through these diverse poetics of geographical knowledge that local gazetteers became an authoritative genre during the twelfth century.

1.3 Chapters

During the seventh century, the imperial courts of the Sui and the Tang sought to contain a regional competition for cultural prestige by assessing regional customs throughout the realms (Chapter Two). In earlier centuries, official historiographers compiled geographic treatises as part of dynastic histories, but refrained from extending the centralized evaluation of regional customs established at the Han court. These authors found it difficult to determine the relationship between present commandries and their Han-dynasty predecessors, as wars and disasters along the Yellow River displaced populations, and as emigré commandries and counties obscured the linkages between present and past place names. Instead, a bewildering variety of chorographical works competed in reducing the cultural disparities between the midlands and peripheries in official accounts of regional customs dating back to the Han. During the Sui, enormous imperial gazetteers were compiled to survey terrestrial features and to evaluate regional customs. During the Tang, another imperial gazetteer was compiled to collect all records of the land since antiquity. Moreover, official historiographers devised an expansive category of geographic texts in a bibliographic treatise of the Imperial Library and derived from those texts an ancient lineage of making regional difference legible for governance. In the geographic treatise compiled at the same time, these official historiographers grouped commandries of the Sui by their location in the Nine Provinces of the Xia in antiquity and

recounted in detail how customs in these provinces had changed over time since antiquity. They asserted the inherent disposition of the subcelestial realm toward civilization and integrated successive changes in regional customs into a singular narrative of kingly governance. As a result, the new appraisal of regional customs accommodated the ambition of commandries for cultural prestige, but subordinated their conflicting criteria to an official measure of regional difference.

At the turn of the ninth century, prominent ministers authored imperial maps and gazetteers to bring subjects of strategic importance to the fore of geographic writing (Chapter Three). By adding under each prefectural name the travel distances to the capital and adjacent areas, they presented a coordinated configuration of prefectures in which the movement of goods, armies, and reports across the empire could be measured and predicted with quantitative precision. By investigating the chronologies of prefectures and surveying local landscapes, they revealed the physical and organizational structures of the land to give the central seat of the emperor a strategic advantage over the regional strongholds of imperial commissioners. As imperial gazetteers were elevated from the traditional tool for surveying the varied landscape of an empire to a critical device for laying out the infrastructure of the land, local gazetteers were no longer the negligible subgenre of geography. Rather, ninth-century authors of imperial gazetteers criticized authors of local gazetteers for their meandering digressions and demanded that these off-centered officials look after strategic assets of the empire. The formulaic profiles of prefectures in ninth-century imperial gazetteers not only enhanced the cultural authority of geographical knowledge: they also defined the quintessential form of local gazetteers.

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, ministers of the Northern Song compiled imperial gazetteers to present current conspectuses of the realm and to prioritize competing

proposals on ritual, fiscal, and military policies (Chapter Four). These authors commended their ninth-century counterparts for laying out a strategic infrastructure of the Tang Empire. However, these high officials incorporated additional textual categories useful for addressing current affairs. Rather than upholding the primacy of natural defenses, trunk routes, and choke points, they institutionalized these geographic essentials and qualified their importance by attributing these matters to the Office of Directions and subsuming them under its duty of assembling the topographic maps of administrative divisions. Northern-Song imperial gazetteers shared with their ninth-century predecessors a clear concern for strategic matters, but diverged in their expansive assumption about the geographical archive and their circumstantial selection of traditional subjects. The Bureau of Directions emerged as the institutional pivot of geographic writing, and its expedient mechanisms of documentation now paralleled the personal discernment that had characterized ninth-century imperial maps and gazetteers. Recurrent requests for divergent clusters of records from the prefectures did not necessarily justify the wide-ranging contents of contemporary local gazetteers. Yet by the end of the eleventh century, scholars outside the capital had begun to anticipate the compilation of another imperial gazetteer. Some authors of geography at the local level even derived authority from the imperial geographical enterprise and maintained that their works conditioned that centralized enterprise.

After Jurchen armies conquered the northern half of the Song empire in the 1120s, officials and scholars in the prefectures of the Southern Song (1127–1279) compiled local gazetteers that made the prefecture the primary site of governance and compilation (Chapter Five). While ministers in the capital refrained from proposing the compilation of an imperial gazetteer, local officials assumed the delicate task of representing imperial territories. Prefects especially recruited compilers, gathered materials, and raised funds, thereby prioritizing the task

of organizing local archives and taking on the role of sponsoring local gazetteers. Prefaces invoked classical precedents to justify the prefectural initiative of compilation, arguing that extensive, accurate, and updated records of prefectures were indispensable for good government at the local level. While some of these prefaces distinguished "compendia" from earlier "charts and records," they attributed this difference to the failings of earlier compilers rather than to any change in the nature or function of local gazetteers. The authority of Southern-Song local gazetteers was founded on a collaborative partnership between prefects who supplied institutional legitimacy and scholars who brought textual erudition and literary craft. Meanwhile, the chronological list of prefects became a standard feature of local gazetteers, providing a master temporal order that organized the written past of the prefecture into a progressive narrative in which the civilization of the local landscape unfolded across successive prefectural tenures.

The increasing distinction of local gazetteers and the localized authority of geographical knowledge traced in the above genealogy call into question the traditional correlation between the rise of local gazetteers and the rise of local elites from the twelfth century forward. By preserving the connection between imperial power and local landscape in geographic discourse, "Localizing Civilization" reveals instead the lasting importance of place-making for governing an imperial realm, the intrinsic use of regional difference to legitimize the universal rule of an empire, and the changing position of geography in a hierarchical regime of knowledge. By reconstructing the diverse, changing poetics of geographical knowledge, this dissertation also raises the broader epistemological question of how the concrete, changing surface of the land can be abducted by the semiology of an official language and converted into the singular form of an authoritative written text.

Chapter 2 A Universal Measure of Regional Difference: Refining the Geographical Tradition in the Seventh Century

> The region has sometimes been accorded the status of a 'theoretical entity' rather like an atom or a neutron which could not be precisely observed but whose existence could be inferred from its effects. The areal differentiation of the earth's surface could thus be 'explained' with reference to this theoretical object which governed human spatial organization.... The double role which the concept of the region has played in the history of geography can be confusing. In particular the danger of tautology in this double interpretation of a single concept has not always been avoided. Once spatial phenomena are classified into regions it is not useful to explain the existence of such classes by reference to the regional concept itself.
>
> ——David Harvey (1969)[48]

Early during the reign of Daye 大業 (605–618) of the Sui dynasty, Drafter in the Central Secretariat Dou Wei 竇威 (d. 618), Court Diarist Cui Ze 崔賾 (550–618), and over thirty other officials were charged with the compilation of an imperial gazetteer, *Charts and Records of the Subcelestial Realm* (*Quyu tuzhi* 區宇圖志; hereafter, the Daye gazetteer).[49] After presenting an

[48] David Harvey, *Explanation in Geography* (E. Arnold, 1969), 125.

[49] This incident during the compilation of the Daye gazetteer was recorded in an entry of a notebook titled *Remnants Gathered from the Daye Era* (*Daye shiyi* 大業拾遺). This entry survives in the section on compilation in an eleventh-century writing aid. See Li Fang 李昉 et al., comp., *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960), 602.2710.4b.

initial version in over 500 scrolls to Emperor Yang 煬 (r. 604–618), the compilers were ordered to evaluate customs in the Commandry of Danyang 丹陽 (the Lower Yangtze region today). Displeased by their evaluation, the emperor issued an edict rebuking them for a disparaging verdict on the people of Wu 吳 (present Suzhou, Jiangsu province, and its surrounding areas):

> Formerly, toward the end of the Han, when the Three Kingdoms consolidated their rule, the great kingdom of Wu [222–280 CE] was renowned for its personages. It is for this reason that Emperor Wu of Jin [r. 236–290] said: "The status of Wu and Kuai east of the Yangtze River resembles that of Ru and Yin west of the Yangtze River. This concourse of dignitary figures would appear only once in a thousand years." By the end of the reign of Yongjia [307–313], all the well-mannered from the civilized midlands migrated south of the river, making Wu a renowned metropolis in the world. After the Chen dynasty [557–589] was conquered by the Sui, great scholars and erudite classicists, cultured persons and talented individuals have all come to this place without exception. But when you wrote about its customs, you alleged that they were eastern barbarians, disposed to overstep the bounds of ritual propriety. Is this even acceptable to you? Moreover, with regard to the structure of your compilation, it lacks a discernable order. I grant each of you a caning.[50]
>
> 昔漢末，三方鼎立，大吳之國，以稱人物。故晉武帝云：江東之有吳會，猶江西之有汝潁。衣冠人物，千載一時。及永嘉之末，華夏衣纓，盡過江表，此乃天下之名都。自陳平之後，碩學通儒，文人才子，莫非彼至。爾等著其風俗，乃爲東夷之人，度越禮義，於爾等可乎？然於著述之體，又無序次，各賜杖一頓。

[50] *Taiping yulan*, 602.2710.4b.

On the same day that the original compilers were dismissed, Emperor Yang assigned eighteen academicians in the Palace Library to compile records about ten commandries under Gentleman in the Central Secretariat Yu Shiji 虞世基 (d. 618). Instead of denigrating customs in Wu, the new compilers conducted a structured assessment of its customs (in comparison to those in other regions) and derived from it an exemplary template of compilation (*tishi* 體式), because its compendious textual organization and moderate literary style suited all other commandries (in contrast to the ornate, exuberant account of the imperial heartland). The eventual outcome, integrating the previous version of the Daye gazetteer and incorporating numerous additional details, expanded to 1,200 scrolls and laid out an elegant, methodical overview of the imperial landscape:

> The beginning of each scroll has a frontispiece, a new design distinguishes it from the initial submission, and its paper scrolls are two feet long.[51] When it recounts mountains and streams, there is a "Chart of Mountains and Waters." When it recounts commandries and kingdoms, there is a "Chart of Enclosed Settlements." When it recounts walls and moats, there is a "Chart of Official Lodges." The characters that identify the mountains, waters, cities, and towns on the map are very small, and are written in the calligraphy of Ouyang Su [d. 653]. He is the eldest son of Director of the Watches Ouyang Xun [557–641]. Applying himself to the cursive-clerical script, Su is highly regarded in our time.[52]

[51] Two *chi* was about 60 centimeters or 24 inches, see Yan Wenyu 嚴文郁, *Zhongguo shuji jianshi* 中國書籍簡史, (Taibei: Shangwu yinshu guan, 1992), 105.
[52] *Taiping yulan*, 602.2711.5a.

卷頭有圖，別造新樣，紙卷長二尺。敘山川則卷首有山水圖，敘郡國則卷首有郭邑圖，敘城隍則卷首有公館圖。其圖上山水城邑，題書字極細，并用歐陽肅書。即率更令詢之長子，攻于草隸，為時所重。

The above anecdote was recorded and circulated in a time when the imperial courts of the Sui and Tang resumed the official appraisal of regional customs in geographic writing.[53] Before the seventh century, official historiographers of the Jin (266–420) and subsequent dynasties had included geographic treatises in dynastic histories, but had desisted from extending the official evaluation of regional customs begun in the Han by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) in his geographic treatise. These authors found it difficult to determine the relationship between present commandries and their Han-dynasty predecessors, as wars and disasters along the Yellow River forced the migration of populations to either side of the Yangtze River, and as temporary administrative arrangements such as emigré commandries and counties obscured the linkages between present and past place names. Instead, a bewildering variety of chorographical works by powerful governors, pedigreed houses, and aspiring scholars competed in reducing the cultural disparities between the heartlands and peripheries in official assessments of regional customs from the Han.[54] These works cited from official and non-official records about sacred peaks and numinous ponds, erudite classicists and dignified persons, as well as prominent ministers and

[53] For general surveys of geographic writing during the Sui and the Tang, see Hu Xin 胡欣 and Jiang Xiaoqun 江小群, *Zhongguo dili xue shi* 中國地理學史 (Taibei: Wenjing chubanshe, 1995), 299-301. For a survey with especial attention to local gazetteers, see Cang, *Fangzhi xue tonglun*, 144-59.

[54] See D. Jonathan Felt, *Structures of the Earth: Metageographies of Early Medieval China* (Harvard University Asia Center, 2021), 77. In his words, "…local compilations of biographies and local geographies of the late Han and Three Kingdoms period begin to articulate the agency of local figures to transform their own local *fengsu*. These virtuous men and women could rebuild their environment or effect moral changes to transform their local *feng*, thereby passing virtue down to subsequent generations of the same native place."

grand marshals in individual or multiple commandries to promote the overlooked virtue of regional landscapes.

During the seventh century, the imperial courts of the Sui and the Tang sought to contain this intensified competition for cultural prestige in commandries by assessing regional customs in their realms.[55] During the Sui, multiple enormous imperial gazetteers were compiled to survey varied terrestrial features and to evaluate regional customs. During the Tang, another imperial gazetteer was compiled to allegedly collect all records about the land since antiquity. Moreover, official historiographers devised an expansive category of geographic texts in a bibliographic treatise of the Imperial Library and derived from those texts an ancient lineage of making regional difference legible for governance. In the geographic treatise compiled at the same time, these official historiographers grouped commandries of the Sui by their location in the Nine Provinces of the Xia in antiquity and recounted in detail how customs in these provinces had changed over time since antiquity. They asserted the inherent disposition of the subcelestial realm toward civilization and integrated changes in regional customs into a singular narrative of kingly governance. As a result, the new appraisal of regional customs accommodated express wishes in commandries for cultural prestige, but subordinated their conflicting criteria to an official measure of regional difference.

But these geographic initiatives at the imperial courts of the Sui and the Tang were not necessarily uncontentious. The above anecdote from the *Remnants Gathered from the Daye Era* reports an otherwise unknown controversy surrounding the compilation of the Daye gazetteer.

[55] Cf. Xin Deyong 辛德勇, "Tangdai de dili xue" 唐代的地理學, in *Tangdai diyujiegou yu yunzuo kongjian* 唐代地域結構與運作空間, ed., Li Xiaocong 李孝聰 (Shanghai cishu chuban she, 2003), 439-44. According to Xin Deyong, the compilation of imperial gazetteers, and the concomitant collection of local gazetteers, under the Sui and the Tang was intended to inform prefects and magistrates of local conditions.

The original compilers led by Dou Wei amassed a treasury of geographic records yet prioritized "ritual propriety" (*liyi*) in their assessment of regional customs and overtly objected to commandries ruled by the Chen dynasty before their recent annexation. In contrast, the compilers supervised by Yu Shiji employed a common range of terrestrial features and compiled balanced appraisals of customs in ten regional capitals. The anecdote states a clear preference for the approach of the latter compilers by reiterating Emperor Yang's endorsement of that approach and by describing its textual features in detail. This unofficial record admits that a hierarchy of cultural prestige among commandries was inevitable, but praises the equalizing measure of regional difference in the final submission.

However, the circulation of this incident in the *Remnants Gathered from the Daye Era* suggests that officials of the Sui and the Tang recognized competing approaches to regional customs in the compilation of the Daye gazetteer. Circumlocutory mentions of the imperial gazetteer in several compilers' official biographies written in the early Tang further indicate that contemporary official historiographers made a deliberate effort to expunge recent controversies surrounding the official appraisal of regional customs—controversies that likely continued under the Tang.[56] Indeed, although the preference in the anecdote seems to align with the wider measures of regional difference found in extant geographic sources, the anecdote attributes such

[56] The notebook captured what standard histories and other official documents could not: the violence, the contingency, and the contentious nature of the new rules of geographical knowledge. The biography of Yu Shiji in the *History of the Sui* sketched an equable statesman known for luxuriance in writing and omitted how he became the editor-in-chief halfway and authored the Daye gazetteer eventually. Only the biography of one of the original compilers, Cui Ze, included a passing record of the incident. The biography mentioned that the emperor did not approve of their submission and reassigned the task to Yu Shiji and Xu Shanxin 許善心 (558–618), who then "expanded" (*yan* 衍) the earlier version. What the notebook recounted as a sensational incident with cruel, disgraceful, and alarming details, the biography of Cui Ze touched upon as a conflict-free turn of events occasioned by the emperor's dissatisfaction. *Sui shu*, 67.1569-574, 77.1757. On notebooks as a marginal genre in Middle-Period China, see Christian de Pee, "Notebooks (*Biji*) and Shifting Boundaries of Knowledge in Eleventh Century China," *The Medieval Globe* 3, no. 1 (2017): 129-68.

a measure to the account of Wu and gives special prominence to the region. While it is conceivable that geographic projects sponsored by the Sui and the Tang regulated the intense competition for cultural prestige in commandries. These projects also invited regional rivalries to the imperial courts of the two dynasties and skewed the production of geographical knowledge by contemporary officials.

2.1 Early Geographical Treatises: An Enumerative, Gradient Poetics of Imperial Space

Although many titles about ancient realms and competing accounts of their divisions appear in classical writings, seventh-century authors of geographical treatises assumed that the "Tribute of Yu" ("Yu gong" 禹貢) in the *Documents* was the earliest canonical work of geography.[57] More than one century earlier, in the preface of "Records of Terrestrial Formations" ("Dixing zhi" 地形志), Wei Shou 魏收 (507–572) had placed the classical text at the beginning of an enduring geographical tradition:

> The "Tribute of Yu" in documents of the Xia and the "Office of the Directions" of the Zhou both laid out the Nine Provinces at the center and extended outward to the Four Seas. These texts distinguish the products and soils of those realms and establish their boundaries and extents. These indeed were the prodigious institutions of sage kings. The warring states [c. 475–221 BCE] divided and annexed one another; the Qin [221–206 BCE] swallowed all within the seas, carving up cities and towns and merging the civilized and the barbarian into a single realm. With the rise of the Han, the dynasty inherited commanderies and counties from the Qin and increased their number and size.

[57] See Xiaofeng Tang, "From Dynastic Geography to Historical Geography" (Ph.D., Syracuse University, 1994), 40-54. A seventeenth-century guide on the canonical text stated that "the 'Tribute of Yu' is the progenitor of all geographic treatises in the past and present" 禹貢一書古今地理志之祖. Hu Wei 胡渭, *Yu gong zhui zhi* 禹貢錐指 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1996), 1.

> Ban Gu examined the "terrestrial structures," and Sima Biao [d. 306] recorded the "commanderies and states." During the Wei [220–265], former territory of the Han was divided into three; under the Jin [266–420], they were united again. What was documented in the "Records of the Terrestrial Way" forms the next stratum of this tradition.[58]
>
> 夏書禹貢、周氏職方，中畫九州，外薄四海，析其物土，制其疆域，此蓋王者之規摹也。戰國分并，秦吞海內，割裂都邑，混一華夷。漢興，即其郡縣，因而增廣。班固考地理，馬彪志郡國。魏世三分，晉又一統，地道所載，又其次也。

To Wei Shou, the "Tribute of Yu" laid out the Xia realm, particularly the boundaries and soils of nine provinces, thereby inaugurating a tradition of commemorating dynastic feats in dividing the known world. Geographical treatises in official histories of the Han and subsequent dynasties belonged to that venerated tradition, even though they had different titles, and that they covered dissimilar territories.[59] Wei Shou, by compiling the "Records of Terrestrial Formations" in the *History of the Wei* (*Wei shu* 魏書), continues the model established by the "Tribute of Yu" and inscribes the realm of his time, the Northern Wei (386–534), into the geographical tradition.

However, it is the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" ("Dili zhi" 地理志) in the *History of the Han* (*Han shu* 漢書, 111 CE) by Ban Gu that first adduced the "Tribute of Yu" as a canonical model and derived from the text basic generic conventions of geographic writing.[60] What appeared in commentaries on classical writings to be a proclamation of Yu's feats in draining a

[58] See Wei Shou 魏收, *Wei shu* 魏書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 160.2455.
[59] For a historical overview of geographical treatises compiled during the early Tang and before, see Alexis Lycas, "Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the 'Geographical Treatise,'" in *Monographs in Tang Official Historiography: Perspectives from the Technical Treatises of the* History of Sui (Sui Shu), ed. Daniel Patrick Morgan and Damien Chaussende (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 287-322.
[60] Ban Gu, *Han shu* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1975), 28.1523-538.

devastating flood from the world and instituting a tributary order of administration,[61] to Ban Gu exemplified a poetics of imperial space. The canonical text contained contrasting formal techniques and textual procedures for laying out a dynastic realm: the written itineraries of Yu across provinces, between mountains, and along rivers, as well as the final proclamation of the formation of a universal political order.[62] Among these structural components, Ban Gu focused on the delineation of two overlapping administrative arrangements, the "nine provinces" (*jiuzhou* 九州) and the "five zones of submission" (*wufu* 五服), thereby obtaining two interweaving procedures for recording a dynastic realm.

The itinerary of Yu through the provinces comprises an ordered succession of formulaic passages, and it presents the Xia realm as an aggregation of adjacent administrative divisions. In these passages, recurring categories of administrative survey render individual provinces legible in a shared cluster of terrestrial features. Meanwhile, the overall sequence of these passages away from the capital and back totalizes the nine provinces into one centered imperial landscape. As the itinerary of Yu begins, for example, the Xia realm appears first in a delineation of the sage's tour in the central province:

> In the record on Ji province, Yu started work on Hukou, he regulated Liang and Qi. He adjusted Taiyuan, and came to Yueyang. At Tanhuai he effected achievements, and he came to the Heng and Chang rivers. Its soil is white and moldy. Its revenues are of the upper first class, with admixture of lower-class cases. Its fields are of the middle second

[61] See, for example, *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed., Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849) (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 6.1a-2a. See also John D. Wong, "The Shifting Concept of Space and Territory in China during the Warring States Era," *Asia Major* 28, no. 1 (2015): 6-17.
[62] See Gao Shidi 高師第, "Shi lun 'Yu gong' pian zhong youguan jiuzhou ji daoshan daoshu zhi yili" 試論《禹貢》篇中有關九州及導山導水之義例, in *Yu gong yanjiu lunji* 禹貢研究論集 (Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 75-133.

class. As the Heng and Wei rivers were made to follow their courses and a mainland was created, insular barbarians began to wear skin garments. Yu then followed to the right the Jieshi rocks, and entered the River.[63]

冀州既載，壺口治梁及岐。既脩太原，至于嶽陽。覃懷底績，至于衡章。厥土惟白壤。厥賦上上錯，厥田中中。恆衛既從，大陸既作，島夷皮服。夾右碣石，入于河。

Subsequent passages repeat the serial plot, archaic diction, and level tone of the above quotation, in the rest of the itinerary. In these passages, the body of the sage moves through consecutive, actional syntaxes of arriving, clearing, dredging, and classifying—and through an administrative grammar of landforms, soils, products, and peoples—to transform the flooded surface of the land into administrative divisions, prominent landmarks, sources of revenue, fiscal classes, and regional customs. Meanwhile, a steady rhythm of imperial governance spreads along the sage's progress and throughout the known world, bounding nine provinces with the foremost landforms, classifying disparate territories by universal categories of administrative survey, and disposing divergent populations toward civilization.

Thus, the nine passages enumerate the Xia realm by delineating the interlocking tours of Yu through the nine provinces. Although the progression of the sage's journey suggests a continuous survey of the imperial landscape, these formulaic passages present the realm as a series of adjacent regions governable by the same standard, instead of an unbroken stretch along a route of inspection. In this written imperial landscape, the position of a province relative to the center not only matches but also affects its appearance in writing. For instance, the absence of

[63] *Han shu*, 28.1524.

tributes in the Ji province, and their presence in other provinces, are determined not by what was available within the boundaries of the nine provinces, but by the symbolic relations between them. The foremost position of Ji, signifying the province's closest proximity and alignment with the capital, exempts it from the obligation to pay tributes.

This implicit center–periphery principle of organization in the itinerary of Yu is made explicit in the final proclamation of a universal political order that encompasses "five zones of submission." After dividing the subcelestial realm into nine provinces and surveying their territories, the sage further imposes on these provinces moral orbits radiating outward from the capital. These concentric bands of relative civilization conform to a gradient of increasing remoteness from and decreasing affinity toward the civilized center. For example, the accounts of the first and fifth domains report analogous inclinations within the two domains and disparate customs between them. While the former sustains the imperial capital and fulfills varied fiscal obligations toward it, the latter neglects that source of moral guidance and deviates from its instructions:

> At 500 *li* [in each direction from the capital] is the submission of fields: the first 100 *li* bring as revenue whole grain stalks; the second 100 *li* bring grain ears, the third 100 *li* bring grain straws; the fourth 100 *li* bring unhusked grain; and the fifth 100 *li* bring husked grain.
>
> 五百里甸服：百里賦內總，二百里內銍，三百里內戛服，四百里粟，五百里米。
>
> At 500 *li* [in each direction, outside the previous domain] is the submission of wilds: the first 300 *li* are the savages, and the remaining 200 *li* are the vagrants.[64]

[64] *Han shu*, 28.1537.

五百里荒服：三百里蠻，二百里流。

Whereas the nine provinces are enumerated in a horizontal series of passages organized by the journey of Yu away from the capital and back, the five domains are itemized in a vertical array of statements ordered by remoteness from the capital. These simple, repetitive statements, the exact, rhythmic repetition of a copular syntax, affirm the absolute correlation between physical distances and moral grades, while authorizing a permanent arrangement of administration according to that binding correlation. In other words, after surveying the provinces by a universal measure of governance, and as the body of Yu merged with his proper station in the capital, the sage instituted a stable administrative structure that differentiated all kingdoms into consecutive bands of relative civilization from the ultimate source of moral guidance.

This enumerative, gradient poetics of imperial space informed how Ban Gu recorded administrative divisions of the Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE).[65] More than 100 commandries and kingdoms during the reign of Emperor Wu (r. 141–87 BCE) were enumerated one by one in standardized, declarative entries (Figure 1). The large characters of every entry stated the specific and generic name of a commandry (or kingdom), the numbers of households and people, the number of subordinate counties, and the specific names of the counties. The small characters of every entry noted first under the name of the commandry its predecessors since the Qin and its affiliated province in the Han, and then under the names of the counties their predecessors, landforms, events, cities, buildings, structures, and products, if any. The more than one hundred entries are moreover arranged according to a centripetal spiral from the capital commandry

[65] Similarly, in the subsequent account of the Zhou realm, a long excerpt from the *Rites of Zhou* first profiled nine provinces by common administrative categories and arranged these profiles according to a sequence from and back to the imperial capital. A short passage in the end stated three decreasing radiuses of kingdoms under the Zhou and ranks of lords corresponding to the three tiers, with kingdoms smaller than fifty *li* classified dependencies. See *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, ed., Ruan Yuan (Taibei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 50.1a-2b.

Jingzhao 京兆 (present Xi'an) to the remotest periphery Rinan 日南 (the central area of present Vietnam), and from the innermost kingdom Zhao 趙 (present Handan, Hebei province), to the outermost one Changsha 長沙 (present Changsha, Henan province).[66] As individual entries succeeded along a linear sequence departing from the capital, they radiated outward in a spiral that not only supposes but also reproduces the centrality of the capital.

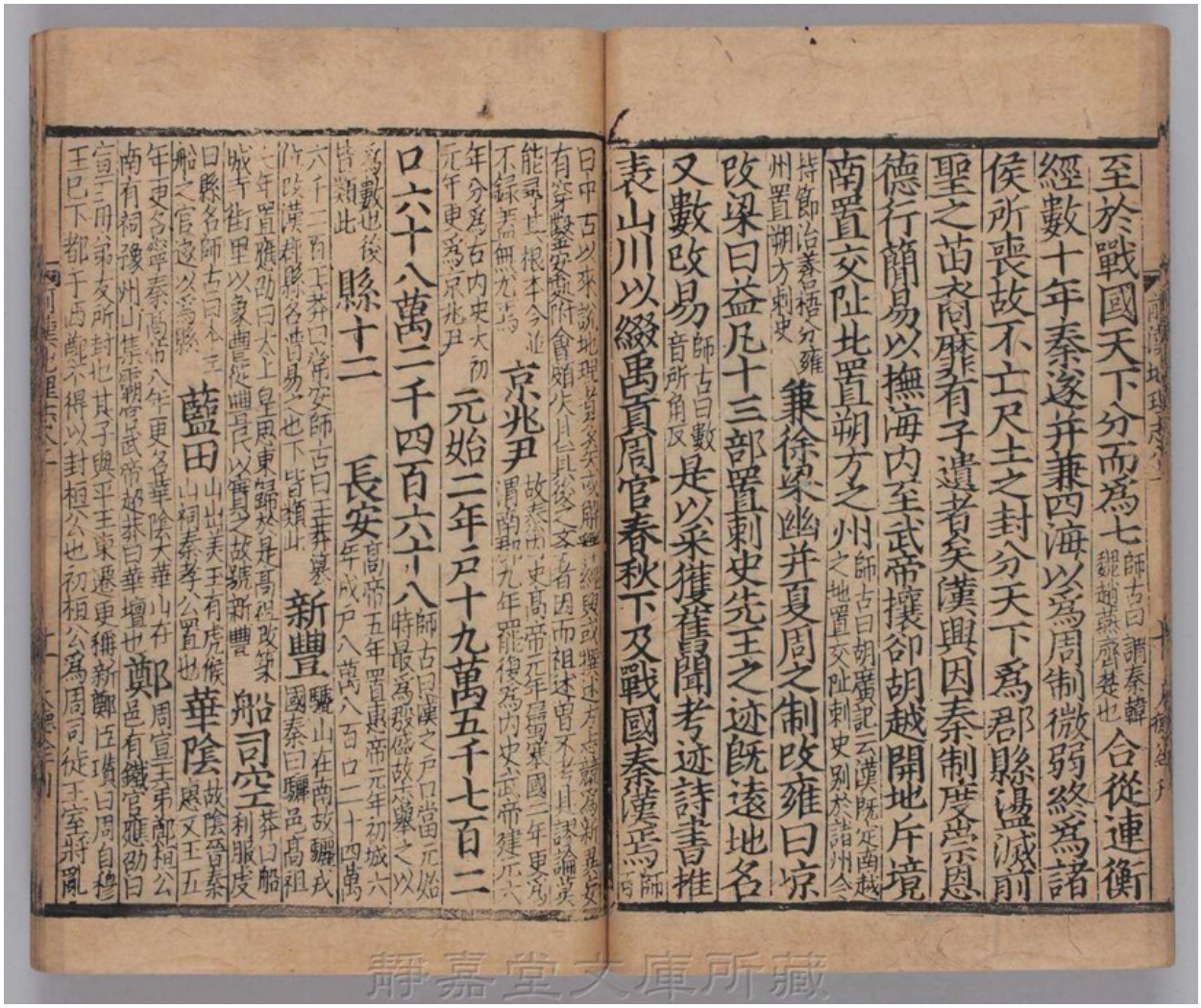


Figure 1. A double-page spread from a Southern-Song woodblock printed edition of the *History of the Han* (*Han shu*). The layout is characterized by inky borders, vertical columns, fine woodcut calligraphy, and large main text accompanied by smaller flanking or embedded notes. The two consecutive leaves (from right to left) belong to the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" ("Dili zhi"). The right leaf presents a prelude to the main body of the treatise. The

[66] *Han shu*, 28.1543.

left one shows the first entry, dedicated to the capital commandry, Jingzhao. The watermark at the bottom indicates its preservation in the Seikadō Bunko Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan.

Thus, the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" enumerates commandries and kingdoms of the Han in regional entries and organizes these entries into a radiocentric succession. Although these entries adopted the same elementary scheme of writing, they are hardly perfunctory. Rather, they asserted a universal administrative order and reported incontrovertible facts about the Han realm. While these entries follow a simple, sequential arrangement, they are not mechanical. Instead, they uphold the status of the capital as the ultimate source of civilization and declare a comprehensive grasp of the realm.[67] As an attached summary of these entries explicates, the aggregated number and extent of commandries, as well as their total arable fields and registered populations, represent the maximum strength of the Western-Han empire.[68] Similar to the center–periphery enumeration of the sage's provincial itinerary in the "Tribute of Yu," the enumerating catalog of administrative divisions presents the Han realm as a vast aggregation of adjacent administrative divisions and conveys an insistent rhythm of civilization radiating from the capital.

The third, final section of Ban Gu's geographic treatise assesses the civilization of commandries and kingdoms relative to the Han imperial court. To Ban Gu, the demise of most ancient geographic texts during the late Zhou and the replacement of kingdoms by commandries under the Qin had obscured the gradation of civilization in antiquity and its changes over time. Still, he claimed in an explanation of "regional customs" (*fengsu* 風俗) to grasp basic principles

[67] For a similar observation, see Luke Habberstad, "Local Administration, History, and Geography in the Han and Roman Empires: Ban Gu's 'Dili Zhi' and Strabo's Geographika," in *Place and Performance in Ancient Greece, Rome, and China*, ed. Hans Beck and Griet Vankeerberghen (Cambridge University Press, 2024), 59-86.
[68] *Han shu*, 28.1639-640.

for evaluating the moral stature of commandries.[69] According to this explanation, imperial subjects share a common human nature, but the growth of their moral potential is affected by regional variations in topographic structures and administrative patterns:

> In general, every subject has a nature constituted by five constant morals. However, the strength, temper, and speech of people are different, and these differences are tied to airs arising from waters and soils. Therefore, they are called "airs" [*feng*]. The preferences, choices, and dealings of people are erratic, and these shifts follow desires of lords and superiors. Therefore, they are called "usages" [*su*]. Kongzi once said, "To move airs and alter usages, no measure is better than musical performance."[70] This means that when a sage king resides above everyone and coordinates human bonds, he will shift the trunk and change the branches, so that the entire subcelestial realm is united into a centered, harmonious order. Hence, the king's instructions are complete.[71]
>
> 凡民函五常之性，而其剛柔緩急，音聲不同，繫水土之風氣，故謂之風；好惡取舍，動靜亡常，隨君上之情欲，故謂之俗。孔子曰：移風易俗，莫善於樂。言聖王在上，統理人倫，必移其本而易其末，此混同天下一之虖中和，然後王教成也。

According to this passage, an emperor constitutes the ultimate source of civilization in the world, whereas his subjects remain under the sway of regional customs. The human nature disposes people toward a universal source of moral guidance. But regional variations in topographic structures and administrative patterns give rise to discordant "airs and usages" that lead people

[69] On the "critical discourse on regions," and the associated idea of customs in early China, see Mark E. Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China* (State University of New York Press, 2006), 189-92, 202-12.
[70] On music as a classical instrument of civilization, see Erica Brindley, *Music, Cosmology, and the Politics of Harmony in Early China* (State University of New York Press, 2012), 43-61.
[71] *Han shu*, 28.1640.

away from that center. Therefore, the emperor, to realize the moral nature of his subjects, not only embodies the fundamental bonds of humanity, but also promotes these bonds through a broader structure of governance. The goal is to align regional customs with a civilized center and establish a universal political order that eliminates discordance between regional customs.

In other words, the rule of a sage king protects the innate moral disposition of his subjects against discordant regional customs. His achievement in dividing the realm lies in the horizontal division of imperial territories, as well as the vertical differentiation of regional customs. The explanation of regional customs by Ban Gu does not refer to the "Tribute of Yu." But the five zones of submission categorized kingdoms under the Xia with reference to prominent features of the land and broad patterns of governance within the nine provinces (as having distinguished by the sage in his structured survey of the realm). Furthermore, these concentric bands of decreasing civilization subsumed regional customs into a centered, harmonious order. The "submission of appeasement" (*suifu* 綏服) in the third 500 *li*, especially, marked a transition between the compliant and the refractory: the first 300 *li* engaged in textual learning and promoted moral instructions, whereas the remaining 200 prepared for wars and built up defenses.[72] By implication, a sage king organizes and moderates regional variations in "airs and usages," instead of eliminating that inevitable diversity.

The rest of Ban Gu's geographic treatise discusses regional customs in the Western Han. Because regional customs conformed to stable structures of the land and historical patterns of administration, Ban Gu followed Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77–ca. 6 BCE) in grouping Han-dynasty commandries and kingdoms by their location in thirteen dominant kingdoms during the late Zhou. Furthermore, he compiled earlier reports on regional customs by Zhu Gong 朱贛 (?) and

[72] Ibid., 28.1537.

expanded their discussions. The result is a series of chorographic accounts in which Han-dynasty customs are explained by distinct topographic features and administrative patterns in the thirteen historical regions. The former ranged from arable fields, fecund lakes, and rich mines to shallow soils, tidal marshes, and rocky terrains. The latter included virtuous kings and transgressive rulers, literary courts and temerarious lords, and magnanimous officials and cruel generals.

For instance, because many ancient rulers of Wu valued temerity, "their people, down to this day, are skilled with swords, think little of death, and are easily provoked." The availability of mineral resources made Wu a busy hub, but the low and damp ground doomed its people, causing premature death. Under the Han, because two imperial kinsmen were appointed to Wu and they gathered talented guests and sponsored textual projects, many writers rose to prominence in the capital. These imperial initiatives and exemplary personages prompted a swift interest in literary composition among local populations, but their character was nonetheless flawed by a tendency toward trickery and a lack of honesty.[73] In other words, the customs of Wu in the present were the sedimented result of topographic structures and administrative patterns in the region. As native scholars received recognition at the imperial court, they were removed from the landscape of Wu and lifted above its regional customs. These scholars became cultured persons in the center, and their local connections provided channels for promulgating the written culture of the empire, whatever its efficacy. Similar to the accounts of other lands, the customs of Wu were placed in an implicit gradient of civilization to commemorate the achievements of the Han in harmonizing regional customs.

[73] Ibid., 28.1666.

Later authors of geographic treatises accepted Ban Gu's treatise as their textual model, particularly its enumeration of administrative divisions and its discussion of regional customs.[74] For example, in the preface of his "Record of Commandries and Kingdoms" ("Junguo zhi" 郡國志) of the Eastern Han (25–220), Sima Biao 司馬彪 (d. 306) praises the treatise of Ban Gu as an excellent model that "records the basics of all the commanderies and counties, the remarkable features of mountains and streams, and the sources from which regional customs derived" 記天下郡縣本末，及山川奇異，風俗所由.[75] Because the foremost landforms and regional customs recorded by Ban Gu allegedly remained the same in the Eastern Han, Sima Biao's treatise enumerates only commandries and kingdoms in the reign of Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25–57). But the "Record of Commandries and Kingdoms," as well as the several other geographic treatises compiled between the Han and the Tang, used a new, hierarchical principle of textual organization. These treatises subordinated the horizontal arrangement of commandries by distance from a capital to a vertical arrangement of commandries by affiliation to provinces. Thus, they categorize commandries of a dynasty by their location in contemporary provinces, not historical regions.

It is plausible to attribute this structural change in geographic writing to one institutional change in administration after the Han, namely the establishment of permanent "inspector" (*cishi* 刺史) positions in the provinces.[76] However, this textual adjustment was hardly a passive response to the consolidation of provinces as a level of administration. Rather, it was more likely

[74] See Alexis Lycas, "Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the 'Geographical Treatise,'" in *Monographs in Tang Official Historiography: Perspectives from the Technical Treatises of the* History of Sui (Sui Shu), ed. Daniel Patrick Morgan and Damien Chaussende (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 287-322.
[75] Sima Biao, *Hou Han shu zhi* 後漢書志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1973), 19.3385.
[76] See Wu Xiu-An 吳修安, "Xian qin 'jiuzhou' shuo jiqi dui houshi de yingxiang—Cong liang Han cishi bu dao Tangdai dili wenxian bianzuan" 先秦「九州」說及其對後世的影響—從兩漢刺史部到唐代地理文獻編纂," *Taiwan shida lishi xuebao* 臺灣師大歷史學報, no. 55 (June 2016), 29-33.

an adaptation to a time when the traditional centrifugal arrangement of commandries and counties from the traditional heartland of civilization became disrupted and invalidated. Particularly, the rivalries between three kingdoms during the third century obscured the former preeminence of the Han imperial court by giving rise to a fierce battle for political legitimacy, intellectual superiority, and literary sophistication between regional courts. Coups, rebellions, and wars along the Yellow River during the fifth and sixth centuries moreover forced the displacement of commandries and counties in the Central Plain, confusing the known distribution of regional customs during the Han. Therefore, Shen Yue 沈約 (441–513) in the preface of his geographic treatise of the Liu-Song 劉宋 dynasty (420–479) complains that "barbarian" invasions of the Central Plain threw into confusion the connection between land and people in traditional accounts of regional customs. After northern provinces were lost, surviving populations reportedly migrated to the south and were resettled in émigré administrative divisions that no longer occupied their original environments.[77] Instead of using a spiral arrangement of commandries, the treatise organizes commandries and counties of the Song in 460s under its seventeen provinces. This textual structure asserts the status of the Liu-Song capital, Jianye 建業 (present Nanjing, Jiangsu province), as the center of the world by placing it at the top of a hierarchy of administrative divisions.[78] Thus, the "Record of Provinces and Commandries" by Shen Yue, and other post-Han geographic treatises likewise, also enhance the structural resemblance of the Song realm with its ancient predecessors, despite the increased number of provinces.

[77] Shen Yue, *Song shu* 宋書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 35.1027-28.
[78] *Song shu*, 35.1029.

Moreover, authors of geographic treatises between the Han and the Tang refrained from discussing regional customs. Some of them emulated the chronologies of thirteen kingdoms in Ban Gu's geographic treatise and wrote detailed chronologies of individual provinces. But these provincial chronologies did not include any discussions on regional customs. Instead, "airs and usages" became a favorite subject outside geographic treatises. A wide variety of chorographical works sponsored by powerful governors, pedigreed houses, and aspiring scholars competed in reducing cultural disparities between the midlands and peripheries in previous official accounts of regional customs.[79] Some of these works profiled exemplary personages born or serving in an area and inferred from the presence of these personages an improving social milieu in that place. Some itemized historic sites in a locality and adduced these sites to demonstrate the intrinsic virtue of its physical landscape. Some wove both exemplary personages and historic sites into regional chronologies of progressive civilization.

These works were often dedicated to individual commandries or aggregates of multiple commandries. But their assessment of regional customs was aimed to elevate the status of specific regions in an imperial geography of civilization. For example, in the postface of *Record of Kingdoms South of Mount Hua* (*Huayang guo zhi* 華陽國志), Chang Qu 常璩 (ca. 291–ca. 361) denounced the official account of his home commandries Ba-Shu 巴蜀 (present Sichuan province) in Ban Gu's geographical treatise, particularly the verdict that textual learning did not begin in Shu until a virtuous governor of the commandry sponsored the construction of schools

[79] See Felt, *Structures of the Earth*, 18, 49-55, 55-6; and Chittick, "The Wu Region as Locality and as Empire," *East Asian Science, Technology, and Medicine* 54, no. 2 (2022): 167-99; "The Development of Local Writing," 49-51; "Pride of Place: The Advent of Local History in Early Medieval China." (PhD diss, University of Michigan, 1997), 60-88. For a critical reflection on issues concerning geographical sources from this period, see Liu Ninghui 劉寧慧, "Wei-Jin Nanbeichao 'dili shu' 'diji' wenxian yu houshi fangzhi xingcheng de guanxi" 魏晉南北朝「地理書」、「地記」文獻與後世方志形成的關係, *Taibei daxue zhongwen xuebao* 臺北大學中文學報, no. 30 (September 2021): 535-600.

and offered instructions to people on how to read. Chang Qu adduces events, persons, and institutions in classical writings to prove that there was a lasting tradition of learning in the region long before the Han. He insists that the Ba-Shu region was always disposed toward civilization since high antiquity, rather than being an imperial frontier whose barbarian propensities were tamed only recently by governors appointed by the Han imperial court.[80] In the book title, *Record of Kingdoms South of Mount Hua*, Chang Qu therefore dos not invoke names of commandries in the region during the Han, but summons its location relative to a sacred mountain range marking the inspection tour of Yu in antiquity as documented in the "Tribute of Yu."

Thus, chorographical works compiled between the Han and the Tang carried a desire to revise or overwrite official geographies of civilization, particularly the geographic treatise by Ban Gu. The strength of this desire can be estimated by reactions from authors who were aligned with an imperial court. For example, a late-Han official Ying Shao 應劭 (ca. 140–206) asserted in the preface of *Comprehensive Explication of Regional Customs* (*Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義) that a sage king was the singular source of civilization, not merely the ultimate source of moral guidance. To him, "when a sage arises, his civilizing transformation will harmonize regional customs—all will return to correctness; when the sage disappears, the harmonized customs will revert to their original state" 聖人作而均齊之，咸歸於正；聖人廢，則還其本俗. Therefore, the highest priority of government is to "distinguish and rectify regional customs" (*bian feng zheng su* 辨風正俗).[81] Whereas Ban Gu's explanation of "airs and usages" admitted the influences of lords, officials, and scholars on regional customs, Ying Shao's formulation pays

[80] Chang Qu, *Huayang guo zhi jiaobu tuzhu* 華陽國志校補圖注, ed. Ren Naiqiang 任乃強 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 12.723-24.
[81] Ying Shao, *Fengsu tongyi jiaozhu* 風俗通義校注, ed. Wang Liqi 王利器 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 8-9.

exclusive attention to the unique status of a sage emperor.[82] In other words, the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" by Ban Gu, in adjudicating a broad regional competition for cultural prestige during the Han, also offered the conceptual means and official references by which imperial subjects in subsequent dynasties challenged his assessment of regional customs. This ideological resource became constricted by Ying Shao's theory of regional customs, formulated more than one century after in the late Han.

Nonetheless, during the early Tang, in an official commentary on Ban Gu's work, the erudite classicist Yan Shigu 顏師古 (581–645) found an excessive proliferation of geographical texts:

> Since the middle antiquity [i.e., after the late Han], there have been many who have discoursed on geography. Some have explicated canonical geographies, others have compiled regional compendia. All of them have vied with one another to produce novelties and oddities, contrived forced and far-fetched theories, and welcomed arbitrary connections and conflations. In doing so, these authors have departed from the truth. Following in their footsteps, later scholars have transmitted and elaborated upon these untruths, never once examining their fallacious words, nor proving capable of tracing things back to their roots. All such works I now set aside and do not record. There should be no blame for this.[83]
>
> 中古以來，說地理者多矣，或解釋經典，或撰述方志，競為新異，妄有穿鑿，安處互會，頗失其真。後之學者，因而祖述，曾不考其謬論，莫能尋其根本。今並不錄，蓋無尤焉。

[82] Cf. Lewis, *The Construction of Space in Early China*, 220-21.
[83] *Han shu*, 28.1543.

To Yan Shigu, many commentaries on canonical works and compendia about specific regions compiled after the Han did not merit consideration in his commentary, because their dubious exegeses and bogus analyses would only confuse the geographic treatise of the Han. By inference, these commentaries and compendia pertained to a wider geography of civilization, rather than being isolated from that geography. In addition, although few of the non-official geographic treatises and imperial gazetteers compiled during this period survives, the ambition to promote specific commandries would have also been discerned in these works.[84] In the face of this broad regional competition for cultural prestige, Yan Shigu found that the geographical treatise by Ban Gu provided a reliable basis for clarifying the true geography of civilization and its changes since antiquity. The classicist therefore chose to employ a negative approach by ignoring any works contradicting the Han treatise. But when contemporary officials considered the period between the Han and the Tang, some presented a positive treatment of geographic works in these times, containing a broad repository of records about the land and organizing these records by location and by subject.

2.2 Refining the Geographical Tradition: A Methodical Repository of Regional Difference

Since as early as the 630s, officials of the Tang refined the historiographic practice of compiling geographic treatises to encompass a comprehensive repository of records about the land. For example, the Zhenguan gazetteer sponsored by the Prince of Wei, Li Tai, contained an extensive archive of geographic records. After receiving Emperor Taizong's approval in 638, the prince

[84] This is suggested by shared records of historical sites in regional compendia and imperial gazetteers between the Han and the Tang. As a Tang-dynasty commentary on the *Historiographer's Records* (*Shiji*) mentions, the *Record of Kingdoms South of Mount Hua* and the *Record of the Thirteen Provinces* (*Shisanzhou zhi* 十三州志, lost) both record the genealogy of Shu people in high antiquity. See Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 1.11. See also Chu Hsienmin, "Visible and Spectacular: Commentary on Geographic writings in Medieval China," *The Journal of the European Association for Chinese Studies* 5 (December 2024): 149-67.

designated commodious premises, recruited masses of scholars, and invited multiple learned ministers including Director of the Palace Library Gu Yin 顧胤 (?). In the resulting 550 scrolls, this new imperial gazetteer digested written works from palace libraries and perhaps the prince's personal collections.[85] The Zhenguan gazetteer is no longer extant, mainly due to its colossal size and restricted circulation beyond palace libraries.[86] But the ambition of Li Tai and his learned aides to contain a sweeping repository of records about the land since antiquity is indicated by the title, *Encompassing Record of the Land*. How they organized this sweeping archive is observable in an excerpt from the preface, an institutional record, many disjointed quotations in later compilations, and a manuscript fragment preserved in the Imperial Household Agency of Japan. The official recognition of its compendious structure survives in an imperial edict rewarding its submission.

Compilers of the Zhenguan gazetteer derived a nested, place-based structure of textual organization from the hierarchy of administrative divisions in the early Tang. According to a brief institutional record about the gazetteer's compilation, to expedite the project, the task of searching and extracting materials was assigned to compilers based on location.[87] Moreover, an excerpt from the preface states that the gazetteer was based on an updated official census of the population in 638 and adopted its well-ordered list of circuits, prefectures, and counties to structure the Zhenguan gazetteer.[88] This three-tiered textual structure is confirmed by two other sources. First, brief passages quoted by Zhang Shoujie 張守節 (?) in his commentary on the *Historiographer's Record* consistently located individual sites by recording their orientations and

[85] For an introduction to the historical context and compilation of *Kuodi zhi*, see Siu Kam Wah 蕭錦華, "Lun Sui-Tang shidai de liangbu dili zongzhi: *Qüyu tuzhi* yu *Kuodi zhi*" 論隋唐時代的兩部地理總志：《區宇圖志》與《括地志》, *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 中國文化研究所學報 no.6 (1997): 46-54.
[86] *Kuodi zhi jijiao*, 1-3.
[87] *Tang Huiyao*, 36.651.
[88] *Chuxue ji*, 165-66.

distances from county seats. In other words, the Zhenguan gazetteer organized places from the most general to the most specific to facilitate the location of individual sites in the realm.[89] Second, a manuscript fragment of the gazetteer records the heading of Scroll 124 (Figure 2).

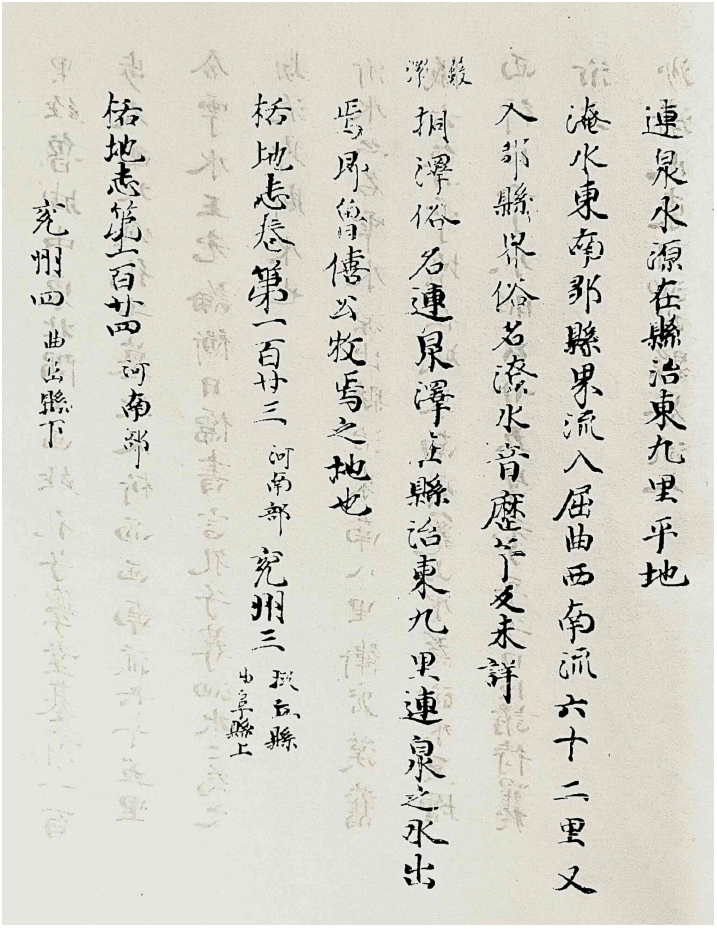


Figure 2. A facsimile of the surviving fragment of the *Kuodi zhi* housed in the Historiographical Institute, University of Tokyo. The text, ending Scroll 123 and beginning Scroll 124, shows the footer of the former scroll (column 6 from the right) and the header of the latter (column 7 and 8). The first six columns cover part of an entry on "streams and valleys" (*chuangu*) and "marshes and swamps" (*souze*).

[89] See, for example, *Shiji*, 1.6, 7. For instance, an annotation on the resting place of Yu reports that "According to the *Encompassing Record of the Land*, the Mausoleum of Yu is located in Yuezhou [Prefecture], Kuaiji [County], thirteen *li* south of the county seat; and the Temple [of Yu] is eleven *li* southeast of the same county seat." At the beginning of the above statement, Zhang Shoujie adds the prefectural and county names, Yuezhou 越州 and Kuaiji 會稽, to redeem the lost original frame of reference. Since the Zhenguan gazetteer arranged the names of prefectures and counties according to their administrative affiliation, it would be redundant to identify the prefecture and county again in reporting the location of the mausoleum and the temple.

After reporting the gazetteer title and the scroll number, the heading places the present scroll first under a circuital division, Henan 河南 (present Henan and Shandong provinces), then under a prefectural subdivision, Yanzhou 兗州 (present Jining, Shandong province), and finally under a county section, Qufu 曲阜 (present Qufu, Shandong province).[90] In these ways, the hierarchical affiliation between circuits, prefectures, and counties in the Tang was used not only to label and order useful extracts in the course of compilation, but also to present those extracts in the gazetteer. The administrative skeleton of a geographic treatise became an overarching scheme for classifying numerous geographic records by location.

The Zhenguan gazetteer was organized also by subject. This consistent structural feature is indicated by the aforementioned manuscript fragment, which covers most of the section on Qufu spanning Scroll 123 and Scroll 124. According to this fragment, the section on Qufu began with an extended chronicle of the county and then proceeded to introduce a wide variety of sites within its boundaries. These sites included "mountains and plains" (*shanyuan* 山原), "streams and valleys" (*chuangu* 川谷), "marshes and swamps" (*souze* 藪澤), "cities and enclosures" (*chengguo* 城郭), "altars and temples" (*jiaomiao* 郊廟), "palaces and residences" (*gongshi* 宮室), and "schools and colleges" (*xiangxu* 庠序), as noted above the initial column of every entry.[91] It is unlikely that all county sections covered the same aspects of the land. For example, the assemblage of diverse cultural sites recorded in the above section seems distinctive to regional centers of civilization such as Qufu, the hometown of Kongzi 孔子 (c. 551–c. 479 BCE). Nonetheless, it is tenable that compilers of the Zhenguan gazetteer applied a consistent method of grouping geographic records into thematic categories. Because of the sheer size of the

[90] See "Dongjing daxue shiliao bianzuansuo cang *Kuodi zhi* canjuan" 東京大學史料編纂所藏《括地志》殘卷, in *Yuwai hanji yanjiu jikan di er ji* 域外漢籍研究集刊第二輯, ed. Zhang Bowei 張柏偉 (Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 502.
[91] See "Dongjing daxue shiliao bianzuansuo cang *Kuodi zhi* canjuan," 499, 502, 511, 512, 516.

gazetteer, its county sections comprised not passing notes itemizing specific sites (as in the compact prefectural entries of a geographic treatise), but passages of varying length that recorded different types of sites across multiple scrolls. Whereas a complete catalog of administrative divisions was used to organize geographic records by location in the vertical, a wide variety of territorial surveys were adopted to arrange geographic records by subject in the horizontal.

The well-ordered repository of geographic records in the Zhenguan gazetteer was recognized in an edict issued by Emperor Taizong. According to this imperial edict, the gazetteer surpassed its partial and sketchy predecessors in recent times to revive the geographical tradition. The gazetteer reportedly achieved this remarkable success by organizing within a compendious textual structure many, various, and reliable records about the land since antiquity:

> The prince held extensive discussions with experts of geography, and received detailed advice from erudite classicists. By conducting a broad survey of regional compendia, he obtained substantial materials from previous accounts; by addressing additional queries to former elders, he verified written records with what was transmitted by word of mouth. Within, the gazetteer covered the Nine Zones of Submission in antiquity; without, it reached to the farthest edges of the known world. The gazetteer took canonical texts as models, and employed explicit rules and ordered divisions; it reached both the civilized land and beyond, and left nothing out from the past to the present; the work is brief but complete, and it is broad yet selective. It manages to surpass what was written before and establish an imperishable model.[92]

[92] "Weiwang Tai shang Kuodi zhi ciwu zhao" 魏王泰上括地志賜物詔, in *Tang da zhaoling ji* 唐大詔令集, comp., Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1959), 40.189.

討論輿地，詳延儒雅。博採方志，得之於舊聞。傍求故老，考之於傳言。内殫九服，外極八荒。憲章是程，規條有序。兼包戎夏，今古無遺。簡而能周，博而尤要。足以度越前載，垂之不朽。

In other words, the elegant prose, extensive reference, factual accuracy, and world-wide scope of the Zhenguan gazetteer allowed it to meet canonical standards of writing. Moreover, this was achieved by assembling, selecting, and organizing a vast repository of records about the land. While the imperial edict does not describe the organizational structure of the gazetteer, it acknowledges its "explicit rules and ordered divisions" as fundamental to its compendious survey of past and present geographic records. Emperor Taizong thus recognizes the efficient organization of the Zhenguan gazetteer.

Although the gazetteer appears in the edict to have reached an unparalleled completeness in space and in time, this was accomplished by culling from a multitude of materials written records that were allegedly accurate and elegant. Compilers of the gazetteer did not merely collate an otherwise chaotic mass of textual extracts and classify them by location and subject, but assembled a comprehensive geographical archive that was useful to Emperor Taizong and his successors for carrying on the undertaking of civilization handed down from antiquity. As implied by the emperor's criticisms of those earlier geographic works that were restricted to the south or the north, the *Encompassing Record of the Land* likely involved a deliberate effort to expunge records that conflicted with the status of the Tang and the court at Chang'an as the singular source of civilization. The imperial gazetteer did not merely commemorate the feats of the Tang in dividing imperial territories and governing imperial subjects, but demonstrated that its founders had recovered the proper scope of civilization in antiquity.

Soon after the submission of the Zhenguan gazetteer, official historiographers of the Tang created one bibliographic category of geography in textual holdings of the Imperial Library, despite the marked diversity in content and structure of texts in that category. In 641, Linghu Defen 令狐德棻 (583–666) and several other prominent ministers were instructed by Emperor Taizong to compile treatises on ten broad areas of civilization (to complement the "annals and biographies" of five previous dynasties submitted in 636).[93] Assuming the cultural authority of official historiographers, these ministers dedicated the last of the ten to the classification of 3,127 written works in the Imperial Library. In the resulting bibliographic treatise, titled "Record of Canonical Texts" (*jingji zhi* 經籍志), they created one special category, "Geography" (*dili*), for a diverse assortment of 139 writings whose contents ranged across mountains and waters, cities and palaces, commandries and counties, products and customs, routes and oddities, border regions and foreign kingdoms.[94] Furthermore, in a bibliographic postface they subsumed these writings into an ancient lineage in which exemplary works of geography represented extensive surveys of imperial territories, covered entire ranges

[93] The standard histories of five previous dynasties were commissioned by Emperor Taizong in 630. The first half of this project, "annals and biographies of the five dynasties" (*wudai jizhuan* 五代紀傳), was completed in 636. The second half, "records of the histories of the five dynasties" (*wudai shi zhi* 五代史志), followed a longer process of compilation. While several initial drafts had been prepared for formal discussion in the 630s, the progress was not satisfactory until a new group of compilers was designated in 641. On the compilation and transmission of the ten treatises, see Victor Cunrui Xiong, "*Sui shu*," in *Early Medieval Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed. Cynthia Louise Chennault et al. (Berkeley, CA: Institute of East Asian Studies, 2015), 330-33; Lai Xinxia 來新夏, *Gudian muluxue qianshuo* 古典目錄學淺說 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 103-09; Yu Jiaxi 余嘉錫, *Siku tiyao bianzheng* 四庫提要辨證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 195-203. The work then extended to the reign of Emperor Gaozong and concluded in 656. The *Records of the Histories of the Five Dynasties* are transmitted today as part of the *History of the Sui* (*Sui shu*). On the transmission of the *History of the Sui* and extant editions, see Huang Yongnian 黃永年, *Tangshi shiliaoxue* 唐史史料學 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 35; and *Sui shu*, "Notes on Publication."

[94] *Sui shu*, 33.982-87. On the bibliographical treatise in the *History of the Sui* "as a history of bookmaking and archives" and the prominence of "official scribes" in this political lineage of writing, see Evan Vincent Nicoll-Johnson, "Fringes and Seams: Boundaries of Erudition in Early Medieval China" (Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles, 2017), 96-107. On the construction of history writing as an official enterprise in the bibliographical treatise, see Stephen Durrant, "From 'Scribe' to 'History': The Keyword *shi* 史," in *Keywords in Chinese Culture*, ed. Wai-yee Li and Yuri Pines (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2020), 100-14.

of terrestrial features, and established a universal measure of regional difference. Thus, these official historiographers refined the accepted tradition of compiling geographic treatises to encompass diverse writings about the land and to assign these writings the common purpose of making regional difference legible and useful for governance.

The postface of "Geography" first traces geographic writing back to the perfect rule of ancient sage-kings, thereby asserting that the original and true purpose of geographic writing was to render regional difference legible and useful for governance:

> In times of yore, when the former kings transformed the people, [they understood that] from the lands and soils in the five directions [i.e., center, east, south, west, north] divergent airs arose, so that strength and weight, diet and clothing each had a distinct character that could not be changed.[95] Hence, the kings divided the subcelestial realm, surveying what suited the landscape of every administrative division and grasping its benefits and harms. They were able to see the hopes of local populations and understand their wishes, and to align the governments of administrative division and improve instructions to them. Therefore, it is said that between where the valleys are wide and where the rivers are great, there will be different institutions, and between inhabitants in such areas, there will be dissimilar customs. When the *Documents* recorded that Yu

[95] This explanation of "habits and usages" is compatible with Ban Gu's earlier explanation but it does not restrict variances among imperial subjects to regional customs, nor does it explain the provenances of regional customs by topographic structures and administrative patterns. Instead, it focuses attention on how the varying topography of the world occasioned significant dissimilarities among the people in bodily attributes and daily lives. Although the quotation also postulates that varied "waters and lands" engendered divergent "winds and airs," it thereby ascribes traits of imperial subjects to the varying landscape inhabited by them and infers the variation of these traits from region to region. In this way, it becomes possible to make legible for governance not only regional customs but also their origins in the imperial landscape. Similarly, the classical passage quoted at the end attributes difference in institution and custom to variation in topography. Thereby, it affirms the regional correlation between government institutions and human customs, and attaches importance to a comprehensive grasp of the distinct natures of individual regions.

separated nine provinces, determined their mountains and streams, distinguished their borders and boundaries, itemized their animals and products, and identified their tributes and taxes, this is what is meant.[96]

昔者先王之化民也，以五方土地，風氣所生，剛柔輕重，飲食衣服，各有其性，不可遷變，是故疆理天下，物其土宜，知其利害，達其志而通其欲，齊其政而修其教。故曰廣轂大川異制，人居其間異俗。《書》錄禹別九州，定其山川，分其圻界，條其物產，辨其貢賦，斯之謂也。

According to this opening statement, the geographical tradition began during the perfect rule of ancient sage-kings, who, upon recognizing regional differences in physical features and human attributes, sought to grasp these variances and accommodate them in governance. Although sage-kings resided at the harmonious center of the universe, they did not neglect the varying landscapes in which their subjects dwelled, or the disparate regional effects on their lives. Instead, they acknowledged regional variations in terrestrial features and comprehended these variations by dividing their realm, surveying administrative divisions, and evaluating local landscapes. Thus, the sage-kings not only embodied a universal source of civilization, but also made their remedial instructions agreeable to subjects and effective throughout their realm. As a result of this kingly endeavor, the "Tribute of Yu" reveals variations across the Nine Provinces of the Xia dynasty in an extensive range of terrestrial features, from "mountains and streams," "boundaries and borders," "goods and products," to "tributes and taxes." In other words, geographic writing assumed as inevitable environmental disparities between a ruler and his

[96] *Sui shu*, 33.987.

subjects. It negotiated the fundamental discrepancy between a lofty cosmic center from which salubrious influences emanated and regional landscapes where divisive forces obtained.

The rest of the postface then identifies exemplary works of geography from successive periods, itemizes diverse subjects covered in those examples, and places each of them in a wider effort to establish a universal measure of regional difference. Meanwhile, it recognizes an extensive range of territorial features as the primary mark of geographic excellence, as exemplified first by the "Tribute of Yu." For geographic writing during the Zhou dynasty, accounts of five offices are excerpted from the *Rites of Zhou* (or *Offices of Zhou*). According to these brief passages, the Zhou government surveyed regional variations across an extensive range of terrestrial features and by a wide variety of written texts. This thorough geographic project involved "natural barriers" and "trunk routes" on the map of the Nine Provinces in the Office of Checks (Sixian 司險); "ingrained customs" in regional compendia in the Office of Pronouncements (Songxun 誦訓); "celestial regions" on the star chart in the Office of Signs (Baozhang 保章); "foreign peoples" and "material resources" on the map of the subcelestial realm in the Office of Directions (Zhifang 職方); the "boundaries," "extents," and "landforms" of the Nine Provinces on topographic maps in the Office of Work (Situ 司徒).[97] By integrating these texts, official historiographers of the Zhou reportedly fulfilled the geographic imperative to make regional difference legible and useful for governance. Although the terrestrial features surveyed under the Zhou hardly matched the ones of the Xia as listed in the "Tribute of Yu," to official historiographers of the Tang, the former was as extensive as the latter to official historiographers of the Tang. Whereas the account of the Xia cites a final product of geographic writing, the account of the Zhou invokes a multitude of specific texts used to survey imperial

[97] Ibid., 33.987-88.

territories. The juxtaposition of these two accounts reveals the distance between specific types of geographic texts and their final integration to affirm the expansive scope of geographic writing beyond a geographic treatise or an imperial gazetteer.

As the lineage of geographic writing reaches the Han, the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" in the *History of the Han* by Ban Gu appears to culminate a succession of official initiatives to survey the realm and its varied aspects:

> In the early days of the Han, Xiao He [d. 193 BCE] obtained the charts and registers of the Qin and attained a firm grasp of "choke points" in the subcelestial realm. Later, he procured also the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which was said to be written by Yu of the Xia. Because under Emperor Wu [of the Han], official reports were already submitted to the Office of the Grand Historiographer, geographic records from commanderies and kingdoms were surely available. But what the historiographer Sima Qian [c. 145–c. 86 BCE] addressed [in *The Historiographer's Records*] was no more than "the Yellow River and its tributaries." Thereafter, Liu Xiang wrote a general discussion of "regional divisions," and Chancellor Zhang Yu [d. 5 BCE] commissioned Zhu Gong to make itemized reports on "customs." Thereupon, Ban Gu authored a "Record of Terrestrial Structures." In his work, "provinces, kingdoms, commandries, and counties," "mountains and streams," "plains and slopes" throughout the realm, differences in "current customs," the differentiation of "celestial fields," the sources of "social mores," the "extent of the realm," and the numbers of "households and people," all have their respective accounts. Indeed, his geographic treatise matches what was recorded in the "Tribute of Yu" and the *Rites of Zhou* in antiquity. Yet, those who authored geographic treatises afterwards were

confined to narrow views and minor learnings. Unable to extend far, they did no more than write down the names of provinces and commandries.[98]

漢初，蕭何得秦圖書，故知天下要害，後又得《山海經》，相傳以為夏禹所記。武帝時，計書既上太史，郡國地志，固亦在焉。而史遷所記，但述河渠而已。其後劉向略言地域，丞相張禹使屬朱贛條記風俗，班固因之作《地理志》。其州國郡縣，山川夷險，時俗之異，經星之分，風氣所生，區域之廣，戶口之數，各有攸敘，與古《禹貢》、《周官》所記相埒。是後載筆之士，管窺末學，不能及遠，但記州郡之名而已。

The above passage thus praises Ban Gu for making regional difference legible and useful for governance, without referring to the intended function of his geographic treatise to celebrate the feats of the Han in dividing imperial territories and governing imperial subjects. The "Record of Terrestrial Structures," by expanding prior efforts to survey imperial territories, covered a wide range of territorial features that emulated those of its two canonical predecessors. By contrast, Sima Qian, in his seminal work of history writing did not even prepare a geographic treatise, but included a "Book of the River and Its Tributaries" ("Hequ shu" 河渠書).[99] Geographic treatises in official histories compiled after the Han were inferior because their authors failed to reveal regional variations in an extensive range of terrestrial features. Although this criticism of post-Han geographic treatises seems to target the absence of discussions of regional customs in them, to official historiographers of the Tang the more significant implication of this absence is a

[98] *Sui shu*, 33.987-88.

[99] This historical verdict is arguably a misreading of Sima Qian's work, since the "Biography of Commodity Producers" ("Huozhi liezhuan" 貨殖列傳) covers regional customs and several other terrestrial features. See Roel Sterckx, "Agrarian and Mercantile Ideologies in Western Han," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 63, no. 4 (June 16, 2020): 465–504; and Vincent S. Leung, "Sima Qian's Critical Past," in *The Politics of the Past in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 153-76.

failure to continue the effort to illuminate regional difference. In other words, in this lineage of geographic writing, what had been acceptable to official historiographers during the Han and subsequent dynasties became apparent signs of geographic ineptitude.

The remainder of the lineage then ignores geographic treatises compiled from the Jin through the Sui. Instead, it turns to imperial gazetteers, geographic collections, and geographic collectanea.[100] During the Jin, Zhi Yu 摯虞 (d. 311 CE) reportedly emulated canonical works of geography and surveyed a wide range of terrestrial features in a 170-scroll imperial gazetteer, titled *Record of the King's Spheres* (*Jifu jing* 畿服經).[101] During the Southern Qi 齊 (479–502), Lu Cheng 陸澄 (425–494) and Ren Fang 任昉 (460–508) in succession amassed past and present geographic texts in palace libraries, and organized them first in a chronological order and then according to the proximity of a place to the capital. The *Geographic Books* (*Dili shu* 地理書) by the former comprised 160 items, while the *Geographic Records* (*Di ji* 地記) by the latter added 84 more titles. During the Southern Chen, Gu Yewang 顧野王 (519–581) extracted geographic passages from a multitude of written works and authored a collection titled *Record of the Land* (*Yudi zhi* 輿地志). Under the Sui, finally, "an imperial edict was issued to commandries throughout the subcelestial realm, ordering them to itemize local customs, native products, and

[100] The substitution of geographical treatises with imperial gazetteers, geographical collections, and geographical collectanea also carries an implicit qualification of the previous understanding that geographic writing was a custom of celebrating dynastic feats in establishing administrative divisions. It conveys a tacit affirmation that geographic writing is rather an official practice of illuminating regional difference in a thorough survey of terrestrial features. Whereas the former deepened the civilizational antithesis between northern and southern dynasties, the latter widened the cultural consensus among authors on both sides. The north–south antithesis is obfuscated especially by including authors from the south such as Gu Yewang whose works were not confined to the territories of a southern dynasty but encompassed the Nine Provinces in antiquity. In this geographical tradition, the Jin and the Sui stood out after the Han not because these dynasties were the true successors of ancient sage-kings, but because these dynasties emulated their ancient predecessors in gaining a comprehensive grasp of the imperial landscape.

[101] *Sui shu*, 33.988. The work of Zhi Yu reportedly covered "prefectures, commandries, and counties," "celestial fields," "boundaries of fiefdoms," "official initiatives," "regional capitals," "rivers and springs," "villages, watchtowers, and towns," "travel distances," "arable lands," "people's artifices," "local customs," "former worthies," and "old acquaintances."

topographic layouts and to submit those reports to the Imperial Secretariat" 普詔天下諸郡，條其風俗物產地圖, 上于尚書.[102] The multitude of records about the realm reportedly were compiled by imperial officials into three enormous imperial gazetteers, including the *Charts and Records of the Subcelestial Realm* discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

In the postface to the section on "Geography," official historiographers of the Tang claimed that the true and original purpose of geographic writing was to make regional difference legible and useful for governance by an extensive survey of terrestrial features. But in their lineage of geographic writing, the Sui was the only dynasty that undertook an explicit, concerted project of surveying imperial territories. In *The Historiographer's Records*, Sima Qian did not find it necessary to address regional variations in an extensive range of terrestrial features. The "Tribute of Yu" and the *Rites of Zhou* were adduced in the geographic treatise of Ban Gu to inaugurate a tradition of commemorating dynastic feats in dividing imperial territories and governing imperial territories. In other words, official historiographers of the Tang selected outstanding examples and characterized those models with a specific understanding of geographic writing, rather than conducting an objective assessment of previous works of geography. They did not present a pre-existing lineage of geographic writing but brought that lineage into being.[103] The geographical division of the "Record of Canonical Texts" was an

[102] Ibid.

[103] The unusual importance attached to a wide range of terrestrial features explains Felt's insight about "a new Tang imperial metageography that was more tolerant of elite regionalism within its domain than the Han imperial metageography had been." It supports his suggestion that local gazetteers manufactured by the Tang government both digested and subdued "early medieval local geographies." However, the above observation on early-Tang official historiographers' effort to repurpose past geographical works calls into question Felt's argument that geographic writing before the Tang followed a linear, tripartite course of development from "initial bourgeoning" to "dramatic expansion" to "final consolidation." To Felt, it is rewarding to dissect the lineage and utilize its associated bibliographic category while reconstructing "metageographies" that obtained during earlier times. But the attendant risk is to overstate the coherence of that lineage and the consensus between texts forced into that category. Instead of weaving textual traces of seventh-century geographic writing into a story of a steady march toward a definitive conclusion, it is beneficial to consider these lingering traces for moments of rupture, enforcements and resistances,

instrument of the expansive geographical tradition during the Tang, not a record of geographic writing before the Tang. This bibliographic category was created to prepare "geographic records" (*dili zhi ji* 地理之記) for a future effort to illuminate regional variations across a diverse range of terrestrial features, not to preserve remains of such efforts in previous times.

The postface to "Geography" subsumes the historiographic practice of compiling geographic treatises into a lineage of surveying terrestrial features. Meanwhile, it reassesses previous geographic treatises by their achievement in a universal measure of regional difference. Positioned at the end of this lineage, the geographic treatise of the Sui (compiled together with the "Record of Canonical Texts") complies with the imperative to make regional difference legible for governance. Similar to the seminal work of Ban Gu, this treatise bears the title, "Record of Terrestrial Structures" (*dili zhi*). It begins with a historical overview of realms since antiquity, organizes principal entries at the level of commandries, and includes detailed discussions of regional customs.

However, the geographic treatise on the Sui no longer carries the lofty ambition to differentiate commandries by their moral stature as in its Han-dynasty predecessor did. Rather, it arranges copious traces of moral progress since antiquity into provincial narratives of kingly governance. The compilers organized commandries of the Sui under the Nine Provinces of the Xia and recounted regional customs at the end of provincial divisions. They thus asserted the inherent disposition of provincial landscapes toward civilization and the positive influences of those landscapes on their inhabitants. Therefore, their accounts of regional customs within the Nine Provinces focus on how governance during historical periods elevated the moral stature of

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as well as strategies and contradictions. See Felt, *Structures of the Earth*, 18, 49-55, 55-6, 259-60. Cf. Pan Sheng 潘晟, "Han Tang shiqi muluxue zhong de dilixue" 漢唐時期目錄學中的地理學, *Zhongguo lishi dili luncong* 中國歷史地理論叢 23, no. 1 (2008): 122-31.

imperial subjects in commandries. This tendency is indicated by a broad principle stated in the final discussion of customs in the first division on the Province of Yong 雍:

> If one examines the old customs [around the imperial capital], the earlier histories have spoken of them in full detail. When they were transformed by the virtue of the Zhou dynasty, the people left no fields untended and embodied a vigorous ethos of yielding and deference; when they were accustomed to the deficiency of the Qin dynasty, they turned to mutual scrutiny and answered one another with backbiting and recrimination. How could this be due to difference in the land and soil? It is rather the transforming power of governance and instruction that moves the people.[104]
>
> 考其舊俗，前史言之詳矣。化於姬德，則閑田而興讓；習於嬴敝，則相稽而反脣。斯豈土壤之殊乎？亦政教之移人也。

In other words, regional variations in topography are less important than the nature of governance in shaping regional customs.

The account of customs in Jijun 汲郡 (present Hebi, Henan province) and Henei 河內 (present Wuzhi, Henan province) in the Province of Ji 冀 exemplifies an inclination among early-Tang official historiographers to amass signs of moral progress. The places on which the Han empire mounted ferocious crackdowns now tended toward ritual propriety:

> Jijun and Henei occupied the erstwhile heartland of the Shang dynasty. An examination of old accounts reveals that there were lingering teachings of Emperor Zhou of the Shang [r. 1075–1046 BCE]. Jijun was also part of the territory of Wei, where the people were accustomed to the valor of Zhong You [542–480 BCE]. For this reason, governors

[104] *Sui shu*, 29.816-17.

appointed by the Han imperial court were granted the discretion to act as required by local circumstances, and they frequently resorted to brutal slayings. The roots of such measures lay in that temerarious disposition. Today, the customs have shifted considerably, and all now incline toward ritual.[105]

汲郡、河內，得殷之故壤，考之舊說，有紂之餘教。汲又衛地，習仲由之勇，故漢之官人，得以便宜從事，其多行殺戮，本以此焉。今風俗頗移，皆向於禮矣。

The discussion of customs in the Province of Yu 豫 provides a more balanced example. While the passage on Luoyang 洛陽 (present Luoyang, Henan province) confirms the continuity of ancient inclinations, the passage on Xingyang 滎陽 (present Xingyang, Henan province) and Liangjun 梁郡 (present Shangqiu, Henan province) detects profound changes from the past:

Luoyang occupies the middle of the land, where tribute and taxes are balanced and equalized; it was for this reason that when the Duke of the Zhou [1042–1035 BCE] established Luoyi, this was the chosen location. The local customs favored trade and commerce, and people were habituated to ingenuity and craftiness. Thus the geographic treatise in the *History of the Han* states: "The failing of the people in the Zhou is clever artifice and the pursuit of profit, disparaging righteousness and esteeming wealth." Indeed, it has been so since antiquity. Xingyang is the ancient territory of Zheng; Liangjun was the former capital of Prince Xiao of the Liang. Wickedness, eccentricity, arrogance, and dissipation have long been reported to their customs. Today, however, they are fond of agriculture and esteem husbandry, and they place weight upon ritual and writing. Their character has entirely transformed from what it was in ancient times.[106]

[105] Ibid., 30.860.
[106] Ibid., 30.843.

洛陽得土之中，賦貢所均，故周公作洛，此焉攸在。其俗尚商賈，機巧成俗。故《漢志》云「周人之失，巧偽趨利，賤義貴財」，此亦自古然矣。滎陽古之鄭地，梁郡梁孝故都，邪僻傲蕩，舊傳其俗。今則好尚稼穡，重于禮文，其風皆變于古。

Therefore, regional customs in the Sui realm appear to approximate the cultural refinement of the imperial court.

The basic distinction remains between the civilization of a sage emperor and the relative civilization of his subjects. Yet the two are more similar than their Han-dynasty predecessors as recorded in the geographic treatise by Ban Gu: the disposition of the latter toward civilization is not only widely expected but also extensively evidenced.[107] The disparities between the capital and the remotest peripheries are still wide. But rites practiced by peoples at the edges of the empire are reported in detail and compared to practices familiar to cultured persons, rather than being dismissed as mere distortions or defiance of ritual propriety. For example, at the end of the final section on the Province of Jing 荊, a detailed passage is dedicated to one funerary rite in Nanjun 南郡 (present Jingzhou, Hubei province) and Xiangyang 襄陽 (present Xiangyang, Hubei province). Toward the end, the passage praises the rite's regularity, observing that "the ranks advance and retreat, and every movement follows a measured rhythm [*jiezou* 節奏]; their songs, chants, and calls also conform to a written protocol [*zhangdian* 章典]."[108] This funerary rite on a remote frontier bears profound resemblances to that practiced by the imperial house, despite its frightening procedure of removing decedents' flesh from bones (among other specificities).

[107] Cf. Lycas, "Intertextuality, Customs and Regionalism in the 'Geographical Treatise,'" 15-20.
[108] *Sui shu*, 31.897-98.

The "Record of Terrestrial Structures" of the Sui recounts regional customs not merely to determine the moral stature of commandries, but to draw positive attention to local landscapes and give broad guidance on how to govern local populations. Although the compact space and structural conventions of geographic treatises disallowed an extensive survey of terrestrial features, the treatise guides readers to such surveys. The three subdivisions of the treatise all begin with a directory of commandries arranged according to their sequence of appearance in the treatise.[109] By implication, the geographic treatise of the Sui structured an extensive archive of geographic records, rather than an isolated work of geography.

2.3 The Paradox of Regional Difference

It is difficult to assess how successful the geographic project of the early Tang was and whether its universal measure of regional difference was accepted beyond the capital. Excavated fragments of local gazetteers from the Tang seem to indicate a regular, coordinated program of geographic writing. According to Alexis Lycas's examination of several fragmented scrolls related to a gazetteer of Shazhou (*Shazhou tujing* 沙洲圖經) dated to the turn of the eighth century, this gazetteer covered more than twenty terrestrial features, from "waters" (*shui* 水) and "canals" (*qu* 渠) to "temples" (*miao* 廟) and "tombs" (*zhong* 塚) to "propitious omens" (*xiangrui* 祥瑞) and "folk songs" (*geyao* 歌謠).[110] A brief note in the gazetteer also points out its shortage of nineteen categories, including "famous persons" (*mingren* 名人), "loyal officials" (*zhongchen* 忠臣), "filial sons" (*xiaozi* 孝子), "chaste wives" (*zhenfu* 貞婦), and "martyred women" (*lienü* 烈女).[111] Thus, as Lycas observes, local gazetteers of the Tang were already "highly codified"—

[109] Ibid., 30.860.
[110] See Alexis Lycas, "The *Patterned Guidelines of Shazhou* (*Shazhou Tujing*) and Geographical Practices in Tang China," *Centaurus* 62, no. 3 (2020): 479-97.
[111] For photocopies of these manuscrits, see Alexis Lycas, *Documents géographiques de Dunhuang: Guides et traités illustrés, topographies et recueils du Moyen Âge chinois* (Collège de France, 2025), 236-47.

exhibiting a level of standardization that recent historians of Middle-Period China have attributed mostly to local gazetteers compiled under the Song.[112] By inference, as the imperial government built a methodical geographical archive in the capital, particularly the 550-scroll *Encompassing Record of the Land*, geographic subjects requested by central agencies were incorporated in local gazetteers and adapted to local conditions.

However, the compilation of local gazetteers at the local level, with the prospect of their inclusion into an imperial gazetteer, also made these texts susceptible to the competition for cultural prestige in commandries.[113] At the turn of the eighth century, an official historiographer, Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–712), found the elegant and impartial domain of geographic writing under threat by a relentless race among authors to promote individual commandries. While sorting out principal branches of history writing in his *Complete Historiographer* (*Shitong* 史通, 710), he recognized that geographic writing is a practice of regional difference:

> In the soils of the Nine Provinces, among the mountains and rivers of ten thousand lands, things and products had different environments, while airs and transformations induced divergent customs. If each kingdom keeps a record of itself, it will make clear that particular region. Sheng Hongzhi's *Record of Jingzhou*, Chang Qu's *Records of Kingdoms South of Mount Hua*, Mr. Xin's *Records of the Three Qin*, and Luo Han's *Records of Central Xiang*—these are what are called geographic writings.[114]

[112] See Lycas, "The *Patterned Guidelines of Shazhou*," 487.
[113] Cf. Chen Ruilin 陳銳霖, "Tangdai zhoujun ditu tujing bianxiu kaolun" 唐代州郡地圖、圖經編修考論, *Zhongguo Difangzhi* 中國地方志, vol. 1 (2026): 69-72.
[114] Liu Zhiji 劉知幾, *Shitong tongshi* 史通通釋, ed., Pu Qilong 浦起龍, 10.274-75.

> 九州土宇，萬國山川，物產殊宜，風化異俗。如各志其本國，足以明此一方。若盛弘之《荊州記》、常璩《華陽國志》、辛氏《三秦》、羅含《湘中》。此之謂地理書者也。

But in practice, as the historiographer observed, "authors deemed their own surroundings lands of delight and their own places metropolises of fame." And worse, as authors vied in extolling the regions where they dwelled, they amassed "old traces of city walls and moats, and the names by which mountains and rivers have come to be known," so that those untruths were transmitted in "crooked alleyways" (*weixian* 委巷) and then taken up as "established facts" (*gushi* 故實). In other words, the centered truth and authoritative record of geographic texts became confused by flights of fancy.

These critical remarks inadvertently reveal the tension at the heart of geographic writing during the early Tang: the imperial government sought to know imperial territories by a universal measure of regional difference, but the goal was to master local landscapes, to correct local customs, to speak *for* local populations. The local gazetteer that "extolled its own place" was threatening because it subordinated a universal measure of regional difference to a selfish pursuit of cultural prestige beyond the imperial capital. To Liu Zhiji, the latter was proper to another branch of history writing, namely "commandry books" (*junshu* 郡書).[115] In this genre, writers were authorized to celebrate worthy persons and eminent families of their home commandries, although the circulation of these works reportedly was restricted often to that commandry. The official historiographer was concerned not with the widespread desire to promote a native place, but with the infringed domain of geographic writing, particularly local gazetteers. His was the

[115] *Shitong tongshi*, 10.274.

denunciation by the impartial center of a periphery that dared to skew an official measure of regional difference toward its own advantage. To Liu, it seemed judicious for imperial officials to refrain from leaping into geographic texts, because this loose corpus "was exceedingly numerous and did not belong to a single lineage." Elsewhere in the *Complete Historiographer*, he put forward proposals to compile treatises on "regional products" (*fangwu* 方物) and "regional speech" (*fangyan* 方言), the latter of which could serve to "verify regional variations in customs and manifest the extensive might of an empire."[116] These bold proposals to reform geographic writing did not represent general opinions at the turn of the eighth century.[117] But the iconoclastic historiographer's observations confirm the ambition of officials at that time to establish a universal measure of regional difference, and these observations reveal how that geographic ambition nonetheless attracted into local gazetteers discordant stratagems.

[116] Ibid., 3.74-5.
[117] See Miao Xiaojing, "'Defying the Times': Liu Zhiji's Resignation Letter Reconsidered," *Tang Studies* 40, no. 1 (2022): 55-82.

Chapter 3 In Defense of the Fundamentals: A Strategic Configuration of Prefectures at the Turn of the Ninth Century

> [Lord Wei, Jia Dan,] grasped the pivot and key to all the myriad regions, and opened the eyes and ears of a thousand ages. Therefore, whenever people today speak of geography, they acclaim Lord Wei. Was his lordship's intention merely to obtain more facts, expand the record, and bring renown to his house with learning—and nothing more? Surely not. It was to understand the imperial polity and exercise far-reaching governance, to know the subcelestial realm without stepping out the door. To cherish the hundred surnames and to comfort the four barbarians, this is truly the work of a chief minister.
> 制萬方之樞鍵，出千古之耳目，故今之言地理者，稱魏公焉。公之意，豈徒洽聞廣記，以學名家而已哉？蓋體國遠馭，不出戶而知天下，親百姓，撫四夷，真宰相之事也。
>
> ——Quan Deyu 權德輿 (802)[118]

At the turn of the ninth century, ministers of the Tang brought matters of strategic importance to the fore of geographic writing. In the seventh century, official historiographers had expanded the geographical tradition to reveal regional variations in an extensive range of terrestrial features. Toward the end of the eighth century, however, as military commanders in key prefectures rebelled repeatedly, and as formidable enemies in the northwest threatened another invasion,

[118] Quan Deyu 權德輿, *Quan Zaizhi wenji* 權載之文集 (Sibu congkan edition), 35.2.

authors of imperial gazetteers elevated urgent subjects such as natural defenses, choke points, critical resources, trunk routes, and travel distances. Several ministers prioritized geography, not to aid the emperor in gaining a thorough understanding of regional difference, but to make the basic physical and organizational structures of the land useful for governance. They gave geographic writing that sharp focus, so that the emperor could not only erect an upright axis of civilization in the capital, but also secure the vital infrastructure configuring everything on the surface of the land.

This strategic imperative in geographic writing was a response to a turning point in the history of the Tang, the armed rebellion launched by the military commissioner in Fangyang 范陽 (present Beijing), An Lushan 安祿山 (703–757), between 755 and 763. Although the rebellion was eventually quelled in the 760s, key prefectures were captured by rebel armies, the imperial house was forced to take shelter in the Shu region, and fertile lands became depopulated. The government's expedient war-time policies moreover precipitated mounting administrative crises during the subsequent times by entrusting many "regional strongholds" (*fangzhen* 方鎮) with the responsibility for recruiting soldiers and levying taxes. It is therefore reasonable that ministers of the Tang compiled imperial maps and gazetteers to help recover lost territories outside the realm and reassert imperial authority inside.

In this regard, two well-known examples are the *Chart of Fine and Barren Lands within the Seas* (*Hainei huayi tu* 海內華夷圖, 801) by Jia Dan 賈耽 (730–805), and the *Charts and Records of Prefectures and Counties in the Yuanhe Era* (*Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* 元和郡縣圖志, 813) by Li Jifu 李吉甫 (758–814).[119] Moreover, these charts and records did not merely report

[119] See, for instance, Xin, "Tangdai de dili xue," 446-47, 448-51; Hu and Jiang, *Zhongguo dilixue shi*, 94-6; Shi Nianhai 史念海, "Li Jifu yu Yuanhe junxian tuzhi" 李吉甫與《元和郡縣圖志》, in Shi Nianhai and Cao Erqin 曹

natural defenses, population numbers, strategic locations, and material resources, and thus give instructions on how to install administrative seats, adjust territorial boundaries, plan military operations, design supply lines, and arrange prepare border patrols. Rather, these texts also positioned the capital at the center of the world, covered lost territories, and preserved the symbolic unity of imperial territories.[120] In other words, the value of imperial maps and gazetteers compiled at the turn of the ninth century was instructive as well as metaphorical.

Still, it is worthwhile to consider the rhetorical situations formulated in prefaces of these geographical works before a detailed examination of their contents.[121] These prefaces insisted that strategic subjects such as natural defenses, choke points, material resources, and trunk routes formed the stable essence of geographic writing. They did not reject the importance of making regional difference legible for governance, but argued that previous works of geography underestimated the sheer weight of a strategic grasp of imperial territories. In memorials accompanying the submission of their imperial maps and gazetteers, Jia Dan and Li Jifu admit that the empire's authority had been shaken by recurring rebellions and imminent invasions, and emphasize that a special urgency in the present was to obtain a firm grasp of basic physical and organizational structures of the land.

However, both ministers affirmed that this infrastructure was inherent in the civilization of a sage-king, instead of attributing it to some exceptional state of affairs that emerged after a

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爾琴 ed., *Fangzhi chuyi* 方志芻議 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang renmin chubanshe, 1986), 159-71. For another, earlier instance, see Li Zhiting 李志庭, "Li Jifu yu *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*" 李吉甫與《元和郡縣志》, *Shixue shi yanjiu* 史學史研究 no. 2 (1984): 24-31.

[120] See Wang, *Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China*, 39-43, 49-50, 58-59.

[121] According to Linda Feng, when Jia Dan presented his imperial map, the accompanying memorial often "anticipated the royal gaze and imparted an understanding of how the map was to be perceived by at least its primary user." See Linda Rui Feng, "Can Lost Maps Speak? Toward a Cultural History of Map Reading in Medieval China," *Imago Mundi* 70, no. 2 (July 3, 2018): 171-73; and "Merging into the Map: Sources of Imagined Cartographic Efficacy in Medieval China," *Word & Image* 34, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 326-8.

major armed rebellion. Their imperial maps and gazetteers fulfilled the solemn duty of official historiographers to elucidate the constant way of good government, rather than providing technical expertise in the geographical tradition. These works recorded trunk routes and precise distances under prefectural names, revealed strategic locations in extended prefectural chronologies, and noted critical resources in prefectural profiles. As a result, the invulnerable topographic barriers that hardened rebellious hearts in earlier geographic treatises became necessary advantages to the imperial court. The diverse range of terrestrial features in previous imperial gazetteers useful for illuminating regional difference signified a regrettable lack of discernment among their authors.

3.1 The Fundamentals of Geography

At the turn of the ninth century, Jia Dan, Du You 杜佑 (735–812), and Li Jifu brought strategic subjects to the fore of geographic writing. In the face of repeated invasions and recurring rebellions, these three prominent ministers compiled imperial maps and gazetteers to reveal the physical structure of the land and emphasized the emperor's control over this vital infrastructure. The prefaces that accompanied the submission of these gazetteers raised geographic writing to the central agenda of governance, but obscured the shared purpose of these works by charting dissimilar paths for a return to the geographical essence. These prefaces thus each appeared to put forward a distinct goal of geographic writing. However, these prefaces understated the shared interest in subjects of strategic importance, because earlier geographies had associated the reliance on natural defenses, choke points, and military strongholds with the moral inferiority of hegemonic rulers and their regional courts. The contents of two extant imperial gazetteers at the turn of the ninth century confirmed this special interest in strategic subjects by reporting the

compass orientations and travel distances from prefectures to the capitals and to adjacent areas. These imperial gazetteers thus transformed prefectures from the official landmarks of the empire to its standard milestones, alluding to a vast web of trunk routes that coordinated the subcelestial realm as well as its strategic locations. Therefore, strategic locations were not merely an overlapping interest among different new geographies but lay at the heart of the new geography and informed its primary purpose: to foreground the physical structure of the land in the emperor's dominance over the subcelestial realm.

Authors of imperial gazetteers at the turn of the ninth century accepted the importance of investigating regional variations in a wide range of terrestrial features, but paid special attention to some alleged essentials. For example, in 801, the eleventh year of the Zhenyuan 貞元 reign (785–805), Jia Dan submitted his *Chart of Fine and Barren Lands within the Seas* along with a 40-scroll imperial gazetteer (Figure 3; hereafter, the Zhenyuan map). The preface that accompanied the submission of his map negotiate between a wide variety of geographic subjects and an urgent focus on military planning. In a short retrospection of his intellectual development, Jia Dan admits a youthful enthusiasm for all things local before concentrating on the subcelestial realm and its administrative divisions.[122] For some three decades, he pursued an extensive investigation into the territories, peoples, and customs of the empire as well as its neighboring regions. In this tireless pursuit, he not only consulted documented facts and personal reports but also words echoing in the maze of alleyways and whispers carried by the anonymous wind. However, the avid student of geography allegedly remained careful about sorting out the essentials and getting rid of the untruths. The emergence of coherent patterns from scattered records, of intellectual sophistication from personal interest, and of illuminating insights from

[122] *Jiu Tang shu*, 138.3784-785.

broad expertise thus guided the increasing focus of his research on two neglected aspects of the empire: historical changes in administrative place names and travel distances along trunk routes.

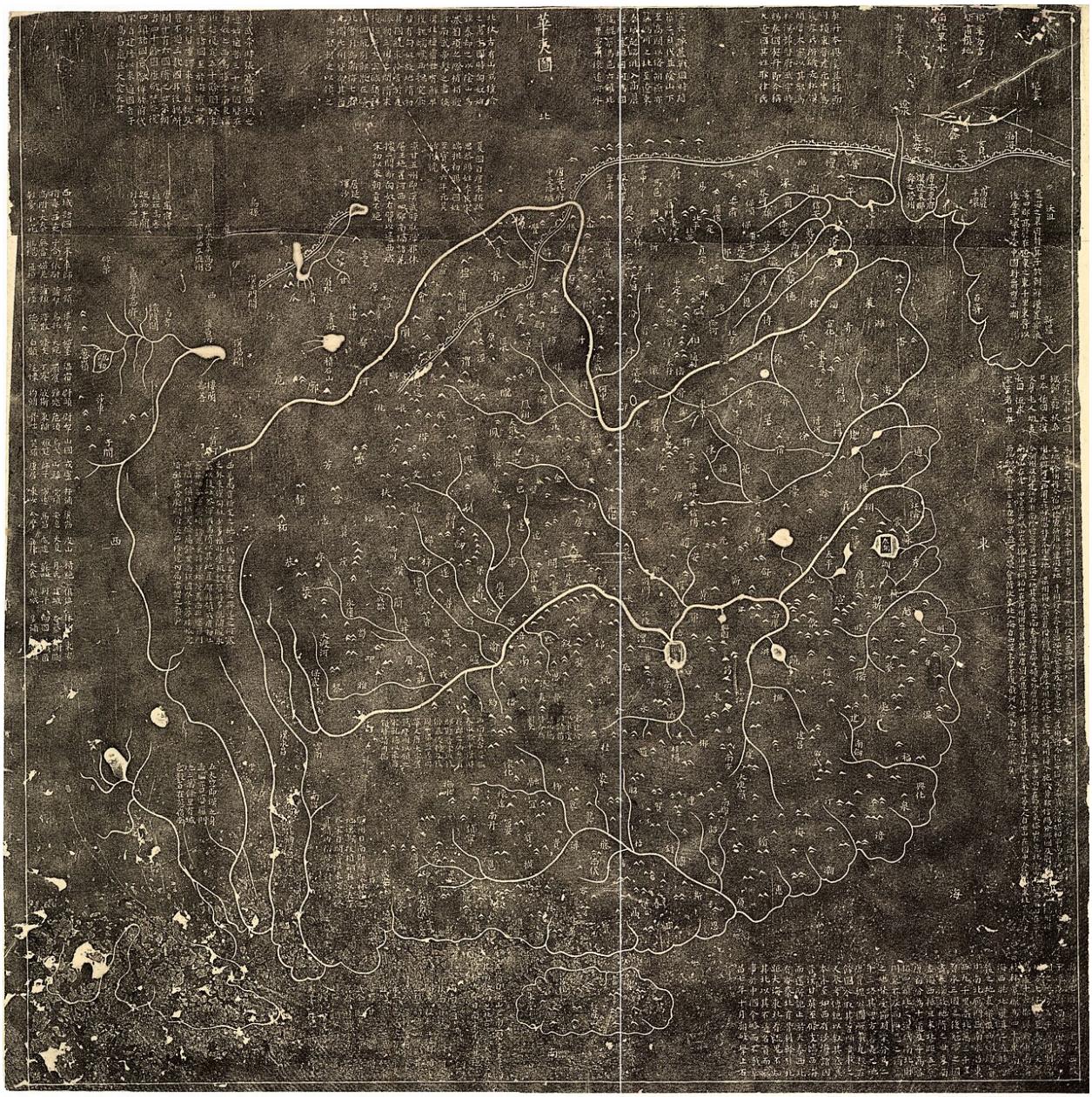


Figure 3. Stone rubbing of a *Chart of Fine and Barren Lands* (*Huayi tu*) engraved on stone in 1136 and housed now in the Forest of Stone Steles Museum in Xi'an, China. The map shows the former territory of the Song empire, including names and location of mountains, rivers, and lakes, as well as circuits and prefectures. The inscription on the bottom right states that the map was modeled after the Zhenguan map of Jia Dan. Retrieved from the Library of Congress, www.loc.gov/item/gm71005081/.

The second half of the memorial explains how these two aspects are addressed in the grand map and its accompanying gazetteer to give the ruling house a strategic advantage over its possible contenders. According to Jia Dan, the grand map is drawn on a sheet of white silk that is 30 feet by 33 feet and uses a scale of 1 *cun* to 100 *li* (approximately 1:150,000). This spreading chart lays out in accurate proportion the geography of the known world through its present structure of administration.[123] The accompanying gazetteer, in forty fascicles, lists the names of prefectures and counties during successive periods since primeval times and traces thereby the shifting arrangement of administrative divisions. The color-coded pages of the gazetteer cross-reference the names of historical places (in black) with their present equivalents (in red) and note thereunder relevant military operations in the written history of imperial rule. Together, the map and the gazetteer allegedly are intended to aid the emperor and his court in planning troop movements and supply lines with precise distance measurements, as well as in grasping strategic locations on the solid basis of factual records.[124] From an initial passion about local things to a full commitment to the strategic terrain of the empire, the memorial of Jia Dan thus directs attention away from the taxonomy of inherited tradition and towards the weighty matters of military planning.

Jia Dan's concern with a geographical essence is briefly echoed by Du You in the "Record of Provinces and Commandries" ("Zhoujun dian" 州郡典; hereafter, the Tianbao gazetteer) of his *Comprehensive Records* (*Tongdian* 通典, 801)—a gazetteer dedicated to the

[123] On the format of the grand map, see Linda Rui Feng, "Can Lost Maps Speak? Toward a Cultural History of Map Reading in Medieval China," 169-82; Hilde De Weerdt, "Maps and Memory: Readings of Cartography in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Song China," *Imago Mundi* 61, no. 2 (July 8, 2009): 145-67; Xin Deyong, "Tangdai de dili xue," 448-50; and Joseph Needham, "Geography and cartography," in his *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1959), 543-44.
[124] *Jiu Tang shu*, 138.3786.

Tang Empire during its perceived heyday, the reign of Tianbao 天寶 (742–756).[125] The final remark of the preface states that the crux of geography lies in "distinguishing the regional divisions, researching their inheritances and adjustments, grasping their strategic locations, and discerning their ingrained customs" 辨區域，徵因革，知要害，察風土.[126] According to Du You, however, previous authors of geography have woven into the inherent shape of the land a bewildering array of trivial discoveries and inconsistent observations. Besides such a massive, indiscriminate inheritance, he writes, the Tianbao gazetteer might well appear to some readers as too compendious and could even incur public censure. But unlike the preface of Jia Dan, the preface of Du You does not attach importance to the strategic advantage of the capital. Instead, the alleged goal is to distinguish the regional divisions to which the sage emperors of primeval times devolved the duty of governing local populations, so that the virtuous influences from the civilized center expanded throughout the subcelestial realm.

By dividing the Tianbao realm into ten regions based on their primeval counterparts, and by distributing the names of recent prefectures under the names of these primeval regions, the table of contents assumes the Nine Provinces of primeval times as the exemplary institution of regional divisions.[127] By presenting a historical overview of regional divisions since primeval times, and by noting under the names of historical regions natural defenses, choke points, and military strongholds that predict the outcomes of regional conflicts, the explanatory essay attached to the table of contents shows that the advantageous topographies of the Nine Provinces

[125] For introductions to Du You and his political thought, see David McMullen, "Views of the State in Du You and Liu Zongyuan," in *Foundations and Limits of State Power in China* ed., S. R. Schram (London: the School of Oriental and African Studies, 1987), 65-6; and Edwin G. Pulleyblank, "Neo-Confucianism and Neo-Legalism in T'ang Intellectual Life, 755-805," in *The Confucian Persuasion*, ed. Arthur F. Wright (Stanford University Press, 1960), 97-106. For an intellectual profile of Li Jifu, see Shi, "Li Jifu yu *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*," 157-96.
[126] Du You 杜佑, *Tongdian* 通典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 170.4451.
[127] *Tongdian*, 170.4451 and 172.4494-495. Cf. Felt, *Structures of the Earth*, 59.

continued to shape the vicissitudes of the subcelestial realm even after this exemplary institution was undermined. To Du You, the emperor and his court must secure strategic locations not because they are useful in planning military operations and arranging logistical support, but because these places inhere in the political enterprise of civilization and their guardianship requires the special consideration of regional topographies.

In contrast to the patient explanation by Jia Dan and the eager vindication by Du You, Li Jifu emphasizes the core essentials of geography in a more forthright manner. While presenting the *Charts and Records of Prefectures and Counties in the Yuanhe Era* (hereafter, the Yuanhe gazetteer) in 813, the eighth year of the Yuanhe 元和 reign (806–820), the chief minister in the second half of his memorial levels an unreserved criticism at previous works of geography:

> From the past to the present, thousands of authors have discussed the subject of geography. Those who admire the remote past sometimes inquire into antiquity and neglect the present; those who collect current folklore often transmit dubious claims and ignore the documented facts. Those who have embellished home prefectures by telling of local personages, and those who have visited mounds and graves to search for ghosts and deities, have strayed into misleading ends and departed from core essentials. As for matters fundamental to geography—such as terrains and soils, mountains and streams, as well as offense and defense, cost and benefit—these were neglected and not recorded. How then could these authors assist enlightened rulers in clenching the choke points of the world and regulating the destiny of all beings; in collecting the benefits of natural defenses and advantageous spots; and in pinpointing the foundations of impervious military alignments and seized territorial enclaves? For these reasons, your humble

servant has carried out subtle researches, which your majesty is well-advised to read extensively.

Hereby, I respectfully present the *Maps and Records of the Commandries and Counties in the Yuanhe Era*. From the Metropolitan Warden of Jingzhao to [the outlying prefectures of] Longyou Circuit, it arranges the forty-seven strongholds in forty fascicles. For each stronghold, a map is inserted at the beginning of the corresponding section, preceding an account of the stronghold's particulars. The whole gazetteer, including the table of contents in two fascicles, counts forty-two fascicles in total.

The learning of your servant is not at all broad, and my cognizance is not in the least far-reaching. However long I have examined the records, still I am leaving numerous gaps and omissions. Having thus brought an unintended slight to the regnal dignity of the palace, I now retreat with increasing apprehension.

Respectfully submitted.[128]

況古今言地理者凡數千家，尚古遠者或搜古而略今，採謠俗者多傳疑而失實，飾州邦而敘人物，因丘墓而徵鬼神，流於異端，莫切根要。至於丘壤山川、攻守利害，本於地理者，皆略而不書，將何以佐明王扼天下之吭，制群生之命，收地保勢勝之利，示形束壤制之端。此微臣之所以精研，聖后之所宜周覽也。謹上《元和郡縣圖志》，起京兆府，盡隴右道，凡四十七鎮，成四十卷，每鎮皆圖在篇首，冠於敘事之前，并目錄兩卷，總四十二卷。臣學非博聞，識愧經遠，馳騖雖久，漏略猶多。輕瀆宸嚴，退增戰越。謹上。

[128] Li Jifu 李吉甫, *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi* 元和郡縣圖志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), preface.2. For previous translations of the preface, see Ao Wang, *Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China: Geography, Cartography, and Literature* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2018), 58-9; Felt, "Patterns of the Earth: Writing Geography in Early Medieval China" (Ph.D., United States, California, Stanford University, 2014), 272-73; Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers," 411-12.

In other words, similar to Jia Dan in his grand map, Li Jifu approaches geography from the perspective of a grand strategist. Rather than rifling through the cumulated written history of imperial rule or poking around the layered landscape of the empire, the minister adheres to the core essentials of geography and sticks to the hard facts of institutional documentation. However, the chancellor delineates the military terrain of the forty-seven strongholds to aid the ruling house not only to gain a strategic advantage, but also to repair the disjointed structure of administration and to restore the undermined authority of imperial instructions. Instead of military planning and regional guardianship, Li Jifu emphasizes the use of "natural defenses and advantageous spots" for ensuring the efficiency of administration.

In their defense of a geographical essence, the three prefaces above admitted the taxonomic breadth of the inherited tradition. Even the withering remarks of Li Jifu do not reject "current folklore," "home prefectures," "local personages," "mounds and graves," and "ghosts and deities," however minimal he deemed these topics.[129] These prefaces, like the prefaces of several other geographical texts at the turn of the ninth century, do not admit the novelty of their sharp focus on strategic locations but subsume this special focus into an insistence on the fundamentals. They furthermore obscured the historical significance of this clear focus on strategic matters by characterizing the accomplishments of their authors as a matter of historiographical standards. As they raise geographic writing to the central agenda of governance and the primary duty of imperial historiographers, the prefaces by Jia Dan, Du You, and Li Jifu all promote their personal distinctions by invoking the moral rigor, literary discretion, and textual

[129] Cf. Felt, *Structures of the Earth*, 4-5, 17-8, 26-7, 58-65, 66, 68-72.

veracity that were expected, above all, of regnal annals and official biographies.[130] For instance, the preface by Jia Dan reminds readers that the statesman's intellectual journey was guided by a deep awareness of the need to address the essentials, keep what is right, to address the essentials, and to remove the fraudulent. As a result, especially in the prefaces by Du You and Li Jifu, writings focused on individual regions are unduly faulted for their remoteness from the office of historiographers: they are no longer evaluated on the basis of their contribution to the universal taxonomy of geographical knowledge (as in the "Records of Caonical Texts" compiled by earlier official historiographers), but were treated as secondary geographic subjects.

Natural defenses, choke points, and travel distances were controversial not because these strategic subjects were unconventional in the geographical tradition, but because the elevation of these subjects to a political imperative contradicted their traditional association with the moral inferiority of hegemonic rulers. In the "Record of Terrestrial Structures" in the *History of the Sui*, for example, ministers of the early Tang regularly recognized natural defenses, choke points, and military strongholds regularly as temptations for unprincipled rulers and unworthy governors. In their account of regional customs in the Shu region, the most defensible topography in the realm turned out to produce a sharp vicissitude of power in periods after the benevolent governance of Liu Bei 劉備 (161–223), because subsequent guardians of the region relied excessively on its advantageous topography.[131] In other words, as terrain advantages were effective only if they

[130] In the Tang, these historiographical standards were, by convention, epitomized by the canonical annals entitled *Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu* 春秋). In the succinct summary of Charles S. Gardner, "To [the *Spring and Autumn Annals*] may be traced the first authoritative expression of the idea that political morality should be upheld by the historian, that it is a function and responsibility of his calling to apportion praise and blame in due measure, not by extended personal comment, but by the manner and emphasis of his record." See Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography* (Harvard University Press, 1938), 13. For a special assessment of the canonical text's "foundational role" of this canonical text in the formulation of historiographical standards in Chinese history, see *Zuo Tradition/Zuozhuan: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* ed. Stephen W. Durrant, Wai-yee Li, and David Schaberg (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), lxix-lxxvi.
[131] *Sui shu*, 33.987.

were in the hands of virtuous rulers, strategic locations appeared as an ambivalent feature in the centered landscape of a civilizing empire.

Anxieties about this traditional association of strategic locations are discernible especially in the first half of Li Jifu's preface. After adducing a canonical statement to replace "the occasional use of checks" (*xian zhi shiyong* 險之時用) in the political enterprise of civilization, Li Jifu reminds the reader:

> Even though the sages of antiquity deployed checks [at strategic locations], they never relied solely on those checks. Instead, the sages applied them within a capital where every institution was ready and handled them at a center where virtue was cultivated. The use of checks was constant, yet their mechanism remained unobtrusive. The sages relaxed and tightened them, unlocked and shut them, in response to the changing circumstances. In this way, the sages were able to harmonize heaven and earth, aligning the myriad things.[132]
>
> 然則聖人雖設險，而未嘗恃險。施於有備之內，措於立德之中。其用常存，其機不顯。弛張開闔，因變制權。所以財成二儀，統理萬物。

In other words, to a sage emperor, the deployment of checks at strategic locations is not routine but circumstantial, and the operation of these points is not aggressive but preemptive. The political imperative to check strategic locations thus paradoxically necessitates removal of the intention to control these advantageous points from the imperial body, and dismissal of the will to exploit these strategic assets from the civilized center. Whereas the preface by Jia Dan treats strategic locations merely as a geographical fact useful in military planning, the preface by Li

[132] Li Jifu, *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*, preface.2.

Jifu locates them within the formation of an imperial polity. Although the second half of the preface foregrounds the use of strategic locations in optimizing the division of imperial territories and in maintaining the authority of imperial instructions, the clear impulse in the first half to resist the connotations of illegitimacy attached to choke points indicates that these are not merely a core essential of geography, but a political matter.

Similarly, the preface by Du You contains an attempt to assert the emperor's control over strategic locations. By tracing these choke points to the exemplary rule of ancient times and to the lucid topographies of the Nine Provinces, the preface implicitly annuls the traditional association of strategic locations with a ruler's shortage of virtue and legitimacy. By subsuming contested advantages of terrain into an extensive mechanism of regional security, the contents of the Tianbao gazetteer confirms this implicit intention to justify the complete integration of strategic locations into the political enterprise of civilization. This intention is made explicit in the detailed discussions on regional customs that are attached to the ten sections of the gazetteer. The discussion in the section of the Shu region or the Liang province, for example, does not treat its defensive topography merely as a potential threat to the security of the center. Rather, it treats this advantage of terrain as a positive consideration in official appointment:

> The people of Bashu have little distress but are prone to transgress the boundaries of propriety. At the founding of the Zhou, they followed Emperor Wu in vanquishing the Yin. After the Zhou house relocated the capital to Luoyang in the east, the house of Chu grew strong and expanded the principality so that it annexed the people of Ba and Shu. During the Warring States, they belonged to the Qin. It supplied the Qin with resources and manpower, and the kingdom increased in material abundance. During the reign of

> Emperor Jing [r. 188–141 BCE] of the Han, Wen Weng [?], as guardian of the commandry at Shu, set up governmental schools; and ever since, the learned scions of Shu have rivaled those of Qi and Lu [i.e., regional hubs of learning near the homeland of Kongzi]. Because the soil is fertile and rich, there are no bad harvests. Since the mountains are steep, the passes on all sides are precipitous and secure. Here, whenever the reign of a ruler dims and wanes, insolence will rise here first. Therefore, the responsibility of guarding this region must be shouldered by persons who are trusty and worthy.[133]
>
> 巴蜀之人少愁苦，而輕易淫佚。周初，從武王勝殷。東遷之後，楚子強大而役屬之。暨於戰國，又為秦有，資其財力，國以豐贍。漢景帝時，文翁為蜀郡守，建立學校，自是蜀士學者比齊、魯焉。土肥沃，無凶歲。山重複，四塞險固。王政微缺，跋扈先起。故一方之寄，非親賢勿居。

This discussion of local customs in the Liang province, in contrast to that in the imperial gazetteer of the *History of the Sui*, confines the negative effect of terrain advantages to one specific risk, namely the risk that regional guardians rebelling against the emperor in times of crisis. The final statement moreover emphasizes the manageability of this risk and proposes the institutional solution of entrusting "trusty and worthy" officials with the responsibility of governing this region. This discussion thus converts an ambivalent feature of imperial territories into an integral component of the imperial polity. In addition, although the above account reproduces from the imperial gazetteer of Ban Gu many details about the character of people in Bashu, unlike that earlier account, it does not attribute these qualities to the constrictive

[133] *Tongdian*, 176.4638.

environments of local populations or portray these qualities as inherently resistant to the exemplary government of Wen Weng. Rather, these uncultured qualities appear as primeval and to be remedied by the governor's initiative in constructing schools and promoting learning. The assertion of control over strategic locations in the Tianbao gazetteer thus entails a positive response not only to the manageability of terrain advantages, but also to the governability of local populations.

3.2 Toward a Strategic Understanding of the Imperial Landscape

The ambition of the Tang imperial court to assert control over the infrastructure of the land in the imperial gazetteers of Jia Dan, Du You, and Li Jifu, can be inferred from their shared interest in situating prefectures within a vast web of trunk routes that branched out from the capital. Because the emperor's effective control over strategic locations assumed not only knowledge of their precise distances from the center, but also an operational cartography that laid a gridwork for coordinating these territorial checks. By adding under the names of prefectures travel distances to the capitals and to adjacent regions, these geographies determined the precise locations of the prefectures. By transforming prefectures from the official landmarks of the empire to its standard milestones, furthermore, these geographies superimposed a cartographic grid on imperial territories, a prefectural grid within which the movement of goods, armies, as well as texts could be measured and predicted in quantitative terms. Indeed, authors of the new geography did not identify strategic locations as isolated spots on the earth's surface, but revealed these territorial checks as part of a physical structure that coordinated the subcelestial realm. To emphasize the emperor's control over this infrastructure of governance, these ministers

hence applied prefectures as a political technology. As they assessed the strategic terrain of the empire, they also re-investigated the territories of prefectures.

The estimation of travel distances between administrative seats in the grand map of Jia Dan exemplified the cartographic design of imperial gazetteers at the turn of the ninth century. In his preface to a border map submitted earlier in 794, the minister already discloses his cartographic program. According to this preface, in preparation for drawing a grand map, the minister first completed a small map of nine border prefectures in the west that achieves "an approximation of verisimilitude" (*yixi xiangzhen* 依稀像真).[134] By adopting the six cartographic principles of Pei Xiu 裴秀 (224–271), the border map pinpoints the relative location of the nine prefectures with reference to their travel distances to the capital, which are enumerated in the accompanying gazetteer. Thus, the border map depicts in accurate proportion "patrols and intersections along tortuous border routes as well as defense works and transportation hubs near military strongholds" in the nine prefectures and nearby garrisons. To supplement the map's compact surface, the accompanying gazetteer reports moreover the numbers of troops stationed at these prefectures and identifies the spots where major landforms began and ended. The alleged goal is to aid the emperor in dispatching military commanders and bestowing imperial instructions to the nine western prefectures. In this border map and its accompanying gazetteer, Jia Dan thus experimented with an operational cartography at a small scale.

[134] The six principles are "proportional measure" (*fenlü*), "a single point of reference" (*zhunwang*, lit. regulated view), "distance from a point of origin" (*daoli*, lit. "road measurement"), leveling of heights (*gaoxia*), determination of diagonal distance (*fangxie*), and straightening of curves (*yuzhi*). For introductions to the six principles of map-making proposed by Pei Xiu and their promotion by Jia Dan, see Cordell D. K. Yee, "Taking the World's Measure: Chinese Maps between Observation and Text," in *The History of Cartography, Volume 2, Book 2: Cartography in the Traditional East and Southeast Asian Societies*, ed. J. B. Harley and David Woodward (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 110-13, 113-15, 124-25; and Needham, *Mathematics and the Sciences of the Heavens and the Earth*, 537-41, 543-44.

This experiment informed the methodical investigation of travel distances and place names in the grand map and its accompanying gazetteer. Although this seminal cartography is no longer extant, the preface by Jia Dan claims that the spreading chart contracts the known world into a piece of fine silk and distinguishes hundreds of prefectures on a painted surface, to the effect that "all places that are reached by carts and boats become visible at a single glance."[135] The measurement of travel distances between administrative seats, in other words, allowed the *magnum opus* of Jia Dan to give a proportionate representation of the known world and, furthermore, to delineate a vast web of trunk routes that coordinated imperial territories. In his abridgement of the gazetteer accompanying the grand map, Jia Dan retained this operational cartography. According to the preface written in 802 by Regnal Annalist Quan Deyu 權德輿 (759–818), the four-fascicle abridgement reports travel distances from counties to prefectures, from prefectures to the capitals, and identifies the adjacent areas of each administrative division.[136] It is also on the basis of this cartography that the abridged gazetteer proposes twelve major adjustments to the current administrative divisions of the Tang Empire. To Quan Deyu, Jia Dan "grasped the pivot and key to all the myriad regions, and opened the eyes and ears of a thousand ages," and this handy gazetteer of Jia Dan aids the emperor "in reigning far and wide as an embodiment of imperial territories and in knowing the subcelestial realm without leaving the palace." Thus, the preface by Quan Deyu, unlike Jia Dan's preface to the grand map, with its singular emphasis on military planning, is more ready to suggest the emperor's control over not only imperial territories but also the physical structure of governance.

[135] Quoted from the submission memorial of Jia Dan for the grand map, see *Jiu Tang shu*, 138.3786.
[136] Quan Deyu, *Quan Zaizhi wenji*, 35.2.

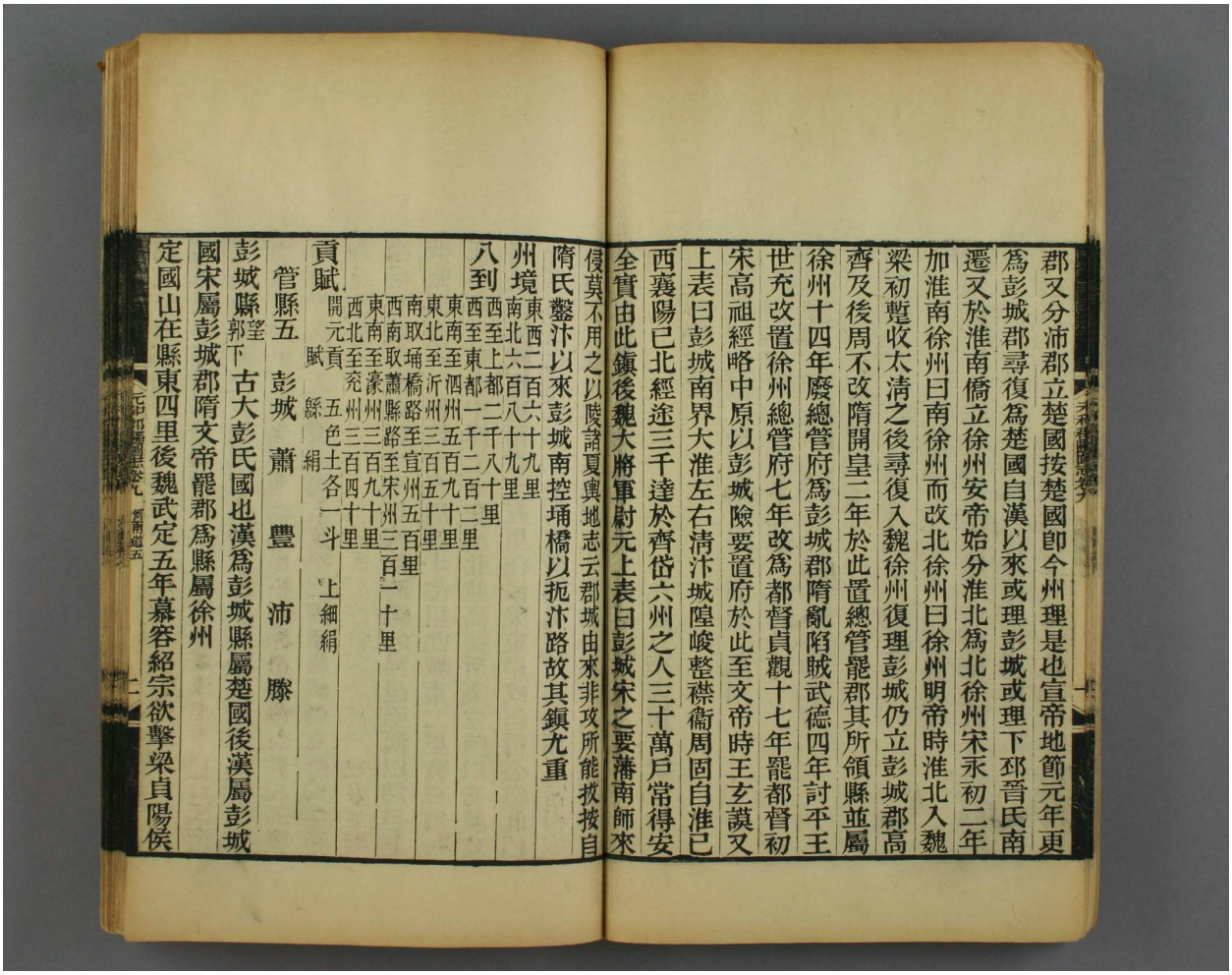
This operational cartography was also adopted by Du You in the Tianbao gazetteer. Under the commandry names of prefectures, the gazetteer situates prefectures within an extensive web of trunk routes branching out from the capitals and locates prefectures by reporting their travel distances to the capitals and to adjacent areas in the eight compass orientations. In the penultimate entry, for instance, the profile of Qiongshan 瓊山 locates the prefecture in the deep south at

> [tbd] in the east; from the south to Yande: 450 *li*; [tbd] in the west, [tbd] in the north, [tbd] in the southeast, from the southwest to Yande: 450 *li*; [tbd] in the northwest; [tbd] in the northeast; 8,600 *li* distant from the Western Capital and 7,200 *li* from the Eastern Capital.[137]
>
> 東……南至延德郡四百五十里。西……北……東南……西南到延德郡四百五十里。西北……東北……去西京八千六百里，去東京七千二百里.

This incomplete report of location is not representative of the gazetteer in general. But the structure of the above passage shows that Du You adopted a consistent cartographic template for reporting the location of the more than three hundred prefectures of the Tang in the mid-eighth century. The repeated reference to Yande in two compass orientations points to one problem of relying on travel distances between administrative seats for the basic cartographic relations, as the jurisdictions of prefectures might encompass enormous stretches of land. But to Du You, this weakness did not negate the general use of the method for estimating the location of prefectures. As a result, the territories of prefectures appear to be coordinated through a vast web of transportation within which all roads lead to the capitals (Figure 4).

[137] *Tongdian*, 184.4949.

Li Jifu enhanced the operational cartography in the Yuanhe gazetteer by creating a special subentry within the profiles of prefectures, namely "eight arrivals" (*badao* 八到).[138] However, in formalizing a template for the location of prefectures, the Yuanhe gazetteer differed from the Tianbao gazetteer in two revealing ways.


郡又分沛郡立楚國按楚國即今州理是也宣帝地節元年更爲彭城郡尋復爲楚國自漢以來或理彭城或理下邳晉氏南遷又於淮南僑立徐州安帝始分淮北爲北徐州宋永初二年加淮南徐州曰南徐州而改北徐州曰徐州明帝時淮北入魏梁初暫收太清之後尋復入魏徐州復理彭城仍立彭城郡高齊及後周不改隋開皇二年於此置總管罷郡其所領縣並屬徐州十四年廢總管府爲彭城郡隋亂陷賊武德四年討平王世充改置徐州總管府七年改爲都督貞觀十七年罷都督初宋高祖經略中原以彭城險要置府於此至文帝時王玄謨又上表曰彭城南界大淮左右清汴城隍峻整襟衡周固自淮已西襄陽已北經途三千達於齊岱六州之人三十萬戶常得安全實由此鎮後魏大將軍尉元上表曰彭城宋之要藩南師來侵莫不用之以陵諸夏輿地志云郡城由來非攻所能拔按自隋氏鑿汴以來彭城南控埇橋以扼汴路故其鎮尤重

州境 東西二百六十九里 南北六百八十九里

八到 西至上都二千八十九里 西至東都一千二百二里 東南至泗州五百九十里 東北至沂州三百五十里 南取埇橋路至宜州五百里 西南至蕭縣路至宋州三百二十里 東南至豪州三百九十里 西北至兗州三百四十里

貢賦 開元貢 五色土各一斗 上細絹 絹

管縣五 彭城 蕭 豐 沛 滕

彭城縣 望 郭下 古大彭氏國也漢爲彭城縣屬楚國後漢屬彭城國宋屬彭城郡隋文帝罷郡爲縣屬徐州

定國山在縣東四里後魏武定五年慕容紹宗欲擊梁貞陽侯

Figure 4. A double-leaf spread from the section of Xuzhou, Henan Circuit, of a late 19th-century woodblock edition of the Yuanhe gazetteer (9.1b-2a). The right half and the first two columns of the left continue to recount the chronology of Xuzhou starting from the previous leaf. The next six columns report the territorial extent of the prefecture, list routes and distances to neighboring prefectures in the eight cardinal directions, and itemize tributes

[138] In an article on the cartographical method of the Yuanhe gazetteer, Wang Qianjin argues that the estimate of travel distances from the prefectures to the capitals and to adjacent prefectures (and other places) also formed the "dataset" for drawing the forty-seven provincial maps. These maps referred to the network of official routes between prefectures, which were not only objects of geographical description but also the standard lines of cartography. See Wang Qianjin 汪前進, "Xiancun zui wanzheng de yi fen Tangdai dili quantu shujuji" 現存最完整的一份唐代地理全圖數據集,*Ziran kexue shi yanjiu* 自然科學史研究 Vol.17 No.3 (1998): 273–288.

and taxes. The ninth column states the number and specific names of counties in Xuzhou and the remaining columns form the beginning of the entry of the capital county, Pengcheng.

First, while the name, "eight arrivals," implies that Li Jifu also recorded the travel distances of prefectures to adjacent areas in the eight compass directions, the minister avoided repetitive references to adjacent areas and often reported distances in six compass directions. Second, instead of reporting travel distances *from* the capitals to prefectures at the end, Li Jifu records travel distances *to* the capitals and moves these records to the beginning, foregrounding the status of the imperial center as the universal point of reference and strengthening the status of prefectures as local points of reference at the same time. Thus, the Yuanhe gazetteer not only includes a more complete record of travel distances (partly due to its focus on the contemporary realm), but also applies a more methodical approach to the location of prefectures.

The enhanced cartography of the Yuanhe gazetteer is also traced in its extensive political geographies of prefectures. Whereas the Tianbao gazetteer pays special attention to the history of civilization at the regional level and includes chronologies mostly for the pivotal prefectures of different regions, the Yuanhe gazetteer focuses on the territories of local jurisdictions and records the institution and abolishment of most prefectures since primeval times. For example, the former includes an extended chronology of Xuzhou 徐州 (present Xuzhou, Jiangsu province) because the prefecture was located in the territory of a regional capital in the Nine Provinces of the Xia, and the latter treats the administrative past of Xuzhou in detail because the prefecture occupied a critical location of the present realm. In the Yuanhe gazetteer, the chronology of Xuzhou moreover raises from small-charactered notes to large-charactered texts several assessments of strategic importance:

Originally, when Emperor Gaozu [r. 420–422] of the [Liu-]Song, planned to conquer the Central Plain, because Pengcheng [i.e., present Xuzhou] had a precipitous terrain and was difficult to access, he set up a metropolitan prefecture here. During the reign of Emperor Wen [r. 424–453], Wang Xuanmo [388–468] presented a memorial that stated:

> The territory of Pengcheng in the south borders on the Huai River, and to the left and to the right on the Qing River and the Bian River respectively. The city is protected by forbidding walls and ready moats, and the territory is defended by an encircling screen of natural defenses and strong garrisons. West of the Huai River and north of Xiangyang, on a through road of three thousand *li*, one would reach the area of Qi and Dai [in the east of the Central Plain]. That the people in six surrounding provinces, comprising three hundred thousand households, can be safe and sound is due truly to this stronghold.

The Great Commander of the Later Wei [386–557], Wei Yuan [413–493] presented a memorial stating that "Pengcheng was a main bastion of the [Liu-]Song. Whenever southern armies launch an offensive, without exception they would choose this location to press on the fine lands [in the Central Plain]." According to *Record of the Great Earth*, "at no time has it been possible to take the city by assault." Note: since the ruling house of the Sui opened the Bian Canal [to the Huai River], because Pengcheng has been in charge of the Yong Bridge to the south, and checked the downstream of the Bian River, making its control even more important.[139]

初宋高祖經略中原，以彭城險要，置府於此。至文帝時，王玄謨又上表曰：彭城南界大淮，左右清、汴，城隍峻整，襟衛周固。自淮已西，襄陽已北，經途三千，達

[139] *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*, 9.223-24.

於齊岱，六州之人，三十萬戶，常得安全，實由此鎮。後魏大將軍尉元上表曰：彭城，宋之要藩，南師來侵，莫不用之以陵諸夏。《輿地志》云：郡城由來非攻所能拔。按自隋氏鑿汴以來，彭城南控埇橋，以扼汴路，故其鎮尤重。

In other words, Xuzhou occupied a strategic location in previous realms because its territory had natural defenses and was contiguous with main waterways that gave its armies expedient access to all surrounding areas, and its territory encircled a major gateway between the south and the north. The jurisdiction of Xuzhou attracted attention from the ruling houses of rival empires in the fifth century because the city, as an imposing fortress protected by an advantageous topography and impenetrable defense works, was a powerful lever for peace as well as for war. The administration of the prefecture has been an overriding concern for the current court, furthermore, because a bridge within its jurisdiction spans a shipping canal on which the imperial heartland depends for the reliable delivery of taxes and tribute from the southeast. As these historical assessments overlay in territorial palimpsests, the chronology of Xuzhou not only notes military operations and logistic arrangements of the past but operationalizes the prefectural territory within a strategic vision of imperial governance.

If earlier maps and gazetteers of the Tang Empire overlooked the precise location of prefectures, it was not because their authors did not have access to useful records. If high officials had wanted to investigate the trunk routes between administrative seats, they could have found the topographic surveys of prefectures in the Ministry of War. If they were interested in visualizing these trunk routes, as well as the location of prefectures and counties, they could have retrieved from the Imperial Library (or the Bureau of History) a record of the cartographic method of Pei Xiu and employed skilled mapmakers to sketch out administrative locations on a

large piece of white silk.[140] In other words, Tang ministers before the late eighth century were satisfied with knowing the designations of prefectures and counties, either in a nested list or in a schematic diagram.[141] Authors of the new geography, however, transformed prefectures from the official landmarks of the empire to its standard milestones, and thereby enhanced the prefectures' localities.

In geographies of the Tang at the turn of the ninth century, prefectures were distinguished from one another not only by designation but also by their distance to the two capitals and to adjacent areas. As a result, the names of prefectures became more indexical since they had more specific referents on the earth's surface. In the Yuanhe gazetteer, moreover, the profiles of prefectures acquired a manifest individuality. The minister's ambition to improve the structure of administration and increase the potency of imperial instructions thus involved an effort to further individuate prefectures. As he asserted the emperor's control over the physical structure of the land, Li Jifu also enhanced the locality of prefectures by placing them within a centered web of trunk roads and increased the individuality of these places by narrativizing their administrative pasts and by itemizing the territories they governed. Not unlike other authors of the new geography, Li Jifu thus intensified an inherent contradiction of geographic writing: as the emperor and his court projected the political unity of the realm by presenting a totalizing view of imperial territories, they simultaneously differentiated the realm into distinct prefectures and admitted their individuality.

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[140] The method was recorded by official historiographers of the Tang in writing the biography of Pei Xiu, as part of the *History of the Jin* (*Jin shu*, 648). See Fang Xuanling 房玄齡 et al., comp., *Jin shu* 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 35.1039-040.

[141] In addition, this indifference also matches the absence of scaled maps among and within these works, on the proportionate surfaces of which prefectures and counties would provide obvious points of reference so as to establish salient cartographic relations.

3.3 The Tension between Comprehensiveness and Essence

The demise of local gazetteers from the late Tang precludes a close examination of who compiled these gazetteers, how they were organized, which texts they were modeled after, and what relationships they had with the ambition of ministers such as Jia Dan to make the infrastructure of the land useful for governance. Some fragments of late-Tang local gazetteers have survived in later treasures of writings, institutional compendia, and collected works of literati.[142] This flimsy record suggests that late-Tang officials found local gazetteers useful tools for recording and obtaining overlooked facts about the imperial realm. Some authors of local gazetteers seemed also to recognize the especial importance of delineating the shapes of natural barriers, estimating travel distances along trunk routes, and determining the location of choke points, material resources, as well as imperial armies. For example, in 821, a distinguished minister, Yuan Zhen 元稹 (779–831), presented a series of charts and records of prefectures to the west and northwest of the capital to detail the names and location of major landforms, choke points, and military facilities.[143] In other words, the increased importance of strategic matters in geographic writing was not restricted to the compilation of imperial gazetteers, but was also traceable among authors of local gazetteers.

However, authors of local gazetteers in the prefectures continued to record a wide range of terrestrial features and prove thereby the improvement of regional customs, rather than treat natural defenses, choke points, and other strategic subjects as essentials of geographic writing. For example, the preface to the *Charts and Records of Zhangzhou* (*Zhangzhou tujing* 漳州圖經)

[142] For a survey of fragments, see Hua Linfu, "Sui-Tang tujing jikao shang" 隋唐圖經輯考上, *Guoli zhengzhi daxue lishi xuebao* 國立政治大學歷史學報, vol. 27 (2007): 141-213; and "Sui-Tang tujing jikao xia" 隋唐圖經輯考下, *Guoli zhengzhi daxue lishi xuebao* 國立政治大學歷史學報, vol. 28 (2007): 1-91.
[143] For an analysis of Yuan Zhen's work, see Feng, "Can Lost Maps Speak?" 174-75.

announces an exhaustive record of Zhangzhou (present Zhangzhou, Fujian province), elevating the status of the remote southern prefecture in the hierarchical geography of civilization. After recounting the chronology of Zhangzhou from the "Tribute of Yu" to the year of 785 and celebrating the foundation of the prefecture in 685, the second half of the preface presents a series of historical facts and promotes the prefecture as more than a strategic location:

> The mountains and rivers are clear and elegant, the plains and countries level and even. The Liang Mount recorded the wanderings of Dong Feng [d. 280 CE]; the Nine Marquises transmitted the sacrifices of the descendants of the Xia. The old ramparts of Zhao Tuo [d. 137 BCE]; the ancient city built by the king of Yue remain. The battlements of Yingtou still stand as before; the ruined foundations below the ridge can still be discerned. The loyalty and uprightness of General Chen [Yuanguang, 657–711] crowned the age; the achievements and renown of Governor Wang [Chao, 846–898] marked his time. Elder Zhou was a man of extraordinary talent; Vice Director Pan [Mengyang, 766–815] possessed profound virtue. In the Datong era [535–546], there were the auspicious sign of the nine dragons; in the Kaiyuan period [713–741], there appeared the portent of auspicious clouds. Sacred sites answer prayers; Mount Jin wards off bandits. The lingering fragrance of these occurrences has not faded; their splendid sights can still be sought. Clearly, this region is renowned as a celebrated prefecture beyond the Yangtze River, not only a strategic location in Central Min. All that is worthy of record is set forth below.[144]

[144] Dong Gao 董诰, comp., *Quan Tang wen* 全唐文 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 513.3a-4a.

山川清秀，原野坦平。良山記董奉之遊，九侯傳夏後之祀。趙佗故壘，越王古城，營頭之雉堞依然，嶺下之遺基可識。陳將軍忠貞冠代，王使君勳烈標時，周先輩之奇才，潘侍郎之重德。大同有九虬之瑞，開元出祥雲之符。靈跡應祈，筋山屏盜。遺芳未泯，勝概可尋。蔚為江外之名邦，不特閩中之要地。凡諸可紀悉具於後。

Toward the end, the anonymous writer invokes the strategic importance of Zhangzhou to add emphasis to the more important identity of the prefecture as a virtuous and cultured place. An extensive and detailed gazetteer of Zhangzhou was necessary not only because its topography brought critical advantages to the capital, but also because virtuous occurrences in Zhangzhou since antiquity had given special prominence to the prefecture and consolidated the inherent disposition of the local landscape toward civilization.

Similarly, in his preface to the *Compendium of Chengdu* (*Chengdu ji* 成都記, 855), a local official Lu Qiu 盧求 (fl. 820s) claims that the extraordinary strategic importance of Yizhou 益州 (present Chengdu, Sichuan province) justifies an extensive record of the prefecture as well as the wider Shu region.[145] First, Lu lauds the prefecture as one of the most "renowned strongholds" (*mingzhen* 名鎮) in the empire by presenting an extended chronology of Shu from a frontier fiefdom in the Qin to a prosperous center of learning in the Han, and from a contested territory in the Jin to a preeminent regional capital in the Tang—whose standing matched that of the two capitals when Emperor Xuanzong took shelter from the An Lushan Rebellion. According to Lu's preface, the strategic location of Yizhou allows it to outshine a more renowned stronghold in the Tang, Yangzhou 揚州 (present Yangzhou, Jiangsu province). While Yangzhou is renowned for its wealth, culture, and scenic beauty, it is said to be less than half as excellent as

[145] *Quan Tang wen*, 744.10b-15b.

Yizhou in several key respects. Yizhou is ranked alongside the capitals Chang'an and Luoyang, and its governorship is a position of immense prestige and difficulty—reserved only for the most virtuous and capable officials. This is because the governor must manage both internal governance and external relations with adjacent barbarian kingdoms, requiring a rare balance of civil and military skills. Indeed, "since the nature of people in Shu is staunch and courageous, they are easy to transform through the Way of the universe and difficult to deceive by the shrewdness of officials" 人性勁勇，易化以道，難誣以智, as Lu summarizes later in the preface.[146] In other words, the governance of the renowned stronghold requires an understanding of its special and intricate local conditions.

After recounting achievements and failures of several previous governors in the Shu region, Lu laments the perfunctory effort in recent times to prepare a one-scroll report of local conditions once a new governor arrives.[147] To him, the resounding success of the incumbent commissioner made it especially worthwhile to restore the former practice of compiling "charts and records" in the region. However, Lu received a draft of a new local gazetteer and resisted its scheme of textual classification. Instead of a gazetteer of Yizhou, Lu compiled a "record" of Yizhou in five scrolls despite the alleged synergy of "charts and records" in this compilation, and adopted in its title, "Chengdu," the more prestigious name of the regional stronghold. To him, the extraordinary strategic importance of Yizhou did not merely justify the compilation of a proper local gazetteer, but required the creation of a more extensive record of governance in the region. The preface does not mention how Lu's work moves beyond the drafted local gazetteer.

[146] Ibid., 744.13b-14a.
[147] Reportedly, a comprehensive local gazetteer was available earlier, so that many scholars and officials, both in the capital and in the prefectures, sent requests transcriptions. However, overwhelmed by the demand for copies, a local bureaucrat secretly removed and burned contents of the local gazetteer. See ibid., 744.15a-15b.

But it quotes the military commissioner's instructions to emend a verbose draft into an "incorruptible" document and claims to achieve such a document, thereby elevating the *Compendium of Chengdu* to a work of history writing that encompasses the present as well as the past of the region.

In other words, the increased importance of strategic categories among late-Tang officials occasioned a conflict between essence and comprehensiveness in geographic writing at the local level. The above two authors understood the ambition of the imperial court to know and control the infrastructure of the land, as well as the wider ambition to comprehend regional difference in a variety of terrestrial features. The former was a grave concern of the court in a time when the capital was threatened by unruly regional strongholds and covetous enemies in the northwest, whereas the latter was an accept imperative of the government inaugurated in the foundational era of the dynasty. When authors regarded local gazetteers as extensive and flexible, the tension between these two interests of the empire was resolved by subsuming records of strategic matters into regional narratives of civilization; when authors perceived in local gazetteers definite, aloof textual structures, it incentivized the creation of alternative, non-official records of prefectures.

But more authors of local gazetteers and their non-official alternatives seemed to pay no special attention to strategic matters like natural barriers and trunk routes. For example, in his preface to the *Compendium of Airs and Soils in Guilin* (*Guilin fengtu ji* 桂林風土記, 899; present Guilin, Guangxi province), Mo Xiufu 莫休符 (?) simply stated that it is a traditional pursuit of learning to keep a document of past and present events.[148] On the basis of this historiographic norm, the high-ranking official retiring in Guilin finds it unfair that whereas

[148] Mo Xiufu 莫休符, *Guilin fengtu ji* 桂林風土記 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1936), 1. For a discussion of several other examples, see Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 452-56.

historical records of many prefectures have been written, such a record of Guilin does not exist. While the opening chronology of the prefecture signals the importance of the place in protecting the southern frontier of the Tang, surviving entries of Mo's work cover temples and monasteries, pavilions and tombs, wells and ponds, mountains and rivers, prominent officials and erudite scholars, as well as supernatural events and miraculous occurrences. In contrast to the *Charts and Records of Zhangzhou* and the *Compendium of Chengdu*, the work of Mo exemplifies a more ordinary and perhaps more common approach to geographic writing at the local level.

This shared attention to a wide range of terrestrial features among authors of geographic writing in the prefectures also matches the impressions gained by readers of local gazetteers during the ninth century. Besides administrative records such as territorial boundaries and population numbers, officials found in local gazetteers historical traces of governance, including moral tales lingering around named pavilions, ancient palaces buried under present city walls, and virtuous deeds on eroded steles.[149] As some of them turned their writerly gaze away from the capital, local gazetteers became in their compositions a central motif registering forgotten persons, disregarded institutions, neglected sceneries, and other notable facts falling outside the court's official record. For instance, Wang Jian 王建 (767–830) claimed in a seven-character quatrain that a local gazetteer yielded rare insights into the true identity of a weathered tomb structure in Suanzao 酸棗 County, Huazhou 滑州 (present Anyang, Henan province):

> Green moss fills the inscribed characters and earth buries the tortoise pedestal,
> Wind and rain have worn away words of peerless wonder.

[149] See Wang, *Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China*, 135-84.

Had one not seen it before in the local gazetteer,

Who would have known this was the stele of Cai Yong [133–192]?[150]

蒼苔滿字土埋龜，

風雨銷磨絕妙詞。

不向圖經中舊見，

無人知是蔡邕碑。

In other words, if the resting place of an acclaimed man of learning in the Han had not been recorded in a local gazetteer, this place would have been consigned to oblivion as its physical structure and inscribed stele decayed over time. To Wang, the local gazetteer provided a more reliable means of knowing Suanzao County than the landscape of the county, although it is not clear from the quatrain whether Wang obtained that compilation in the prefecture or in the capital.

Jia Dan, Du You, and Li Jifu were not wrong by denouncing past and present authors of geography for missing or underestimating what they deemed as the fundamentals. But these ministers failed to acknowledge that they drew on past records of place names, historical sites, and topographic features, and that some of their predecessors paid careful attention to strategic subjects such as travel distances along trunk routes and natural barriers in border regions.[151] In other words, their declaration that strategic subjects constituted the true essence of geography derived not only from their insights into contemporary border and administrative crises, but also from their desires to achieve an unexampled written work and pursue a peerless cultural distinction as an official historiographer who documented the landscape of a civilizing empire.

[150] *Wang Jian shiji jiaozhu* 王建詩集校注, ed. by Yin Zhanhua 尹占華 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 2006), 9.407.
[151] *Sui shu*, 33.982-87; and *Jiu Tang shu*, 46.2014-16.

Although the three ministers all served in the court of Emperor Dezong, none of them refer to the geographic works of one another. Moreover, the maps and gazetteers by the three ministers were not impervious to the tension between comprehensiveness and essence. Jia and Li abridged their imperial gazetteers into compact geographic manuals, respectively in four and ten scrolls. The Yuanhe gazetteer by the latter, especially, still retained many traditional, non-strategic geographic records such as royal tombs and princely palaces, luminous ponds and sacred temples, ancient fiefdoms and ruined cities.[152]

Three other known titles of geography compiled during the nineth century, as listed in the geographic section in the *New History of the Tang*, also suggest that ministers of the late Tang hardly embraced a consistent understanding of the geographic essence. The *Chart of the Vital Routes across the Provinces* (*Zhudao xingcheng Xuemai tu* 諸道行程血脈圖) in one scroll seems to match the interest of Jia in recording the main arterial routes of communication and transportation for administrative and logistical use, and the *Essential Overview of the Nine Provinces* (*Jiuzhou yaolue* 九州要略) in three scrolls appears to assume a clear hierarchy of geographic subjects. But a surviving fragment of the *Essential Overview of Mountains, Rivers, Places, and Their Names across the Provinces* (*Zhudao shan he di ming yaolue* 諸道山河地名要略) in nine scrolls is organized by a wide variety of geographic categories.[153] For example, the profile of Bingzhou 並州 (present Datong, Shanxi province) begins by stating the official status and name of the prefecture and noting its rank and distance from the capital. The rest then

[152] See, for example, *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*, 11.291-97.
[153] See Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉, *Mingsha shishi yishu* 鳴沙石室佚書, in *Dunhuang congkan chuji* 敦煌叢刊初集 vol. 6, *Dunhuang shishi yishu bainian zhong* 敦煌石室遺書百廿種 (Taibei: Xinwenfeng chubangongsi, 1985), 623-42; and Rong Xinjiang, *Eighteen Lectures on Dunhuang* (Brill, 2013), 377-78.

presents the official chronology of Bingzhou and records its historical events and sites, places, rivers, and mountains, human customs, as well as native products.

Indeed, the tension between comprehensiveness and essence in geographic writing of the late Tang has been diminished especially by the favorable reception and wide dissemination of the Yuanhe gazetteer by Li Jifu in subsequent centuries. The guardianship of imperial security in the preface, the elucidation of strategic locations in prefectural chronologies, and the recording of travel distances in separate entries, were recognized and praised by later authors of imperial and local gazetteers. As discussed in the subsequent two chapters, these textual operations made the Yuanhe gazetteer a prominent model of geography to ministers of the Northern Song as well as local officials of the Southern Song. In 1175, a woodblock edition of the gazetteer was commissioned by the prefect of Xiangyang, Zhang Ziyan 張子顏 (?). In a set of three colophons to this edition, Vice Director of the Palace Library Cheng Dachang 程大昌 (1123–1195), the prefect of Wuzhou 婺州 (present Jinhua, Zhejiang province), Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202), and Zhang Ziyan himself derived from the work of Li the earnest intention of a minister to aid his lord in surveying the imperial realm and grasping its infrastructure.[154] Thereby, these colophons not only exhorted contemporary readers in the prefectures to follow the shining example of Li and contribute to the recovery of lost territories in the north, but also brought natural defenses, choke points, and trunk routes to the fore in the reception of late-Tang geography from the late twelfth century onward.

[154] *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*, colophon, 1101-103.

Chapter 4 A Current Conspectus of the Realm: The Changing Boundaries of Geographical Knowledge in Eleventh-Century Imperial Gazetteers

> Vehicles of the Xia dynasty assisted in the creation of five zones of submission, and the Office of Directions gained a complete knowledge of numerous essentials. Thereafter, records of the land arose in the Office of History and accounts of the commandries came out of the survey of regional customs.… The leap-year topographic maps of all prefectures today are analogous to those texts.
> 夏載弼成於五服，職方周知於數要，其後地志起於史官，郡記出於風土…. 今閏年諸州土地圖，亦其比也。
>
> ——Li Zonge 李宗諤 (1011)[155]

> Scholars read [about past and present prefectures] with tables of the "Tribute of Yu" and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and wear out the bindings of their books again and again. Yet when it comes to the transformations of later times, they are unable to grasp those transformations in their entirety. Scribes in the Bureau of Directions and clerks in ministerial residences rely on charts and consult reports, each familiar with prefectures of their own times. But as for the origins during earlier ages, many are unable to specify these origins in full details. A classicist who knows the past but not the present is pedantic; a classicist who knows the present but not the past is shallow. But when a

[155] Wang Yinglin 王應麟, *Yuhai* 玉海 (Yangzhou: Guanglin shushe, 2016), 14.32a.

gentleman approaches the world, he cannot be either shallow or pedantic. If one is forced to choose, pedantry is better than shallowness. Still, to escape shallowness, one must draw upon pedantry; to escape pedantry, one must draw upon shallowness. This is getting the best of both.

學者操禹貢春秋譜讀之，紙編屢敗，然于後世之所變，有不及悉也。職方之史，邸計之吏，據圖按牒，各熟其一時，然于前世之本初，有不能詳也。蓋知古而不知今，其爲儒也腐；知今而不知古，其爲儒也淺。君子之于天下也，何淺何腐？與其腐也寧淺。逃淺必資于腐，逃腐必資于淺，是爲兩得之術。

——Lü Nangong 吕南公 (1047–1086)[156]

Ministers of the Northern Song authored imperial gazetteers to present current conspectuses of the dynastic realm. Similar to their ninth-century predecessors, these ministers recorded matters of strategic importance such as natural defenses, choke points, and trunk routes. Similar to their predecessors, moreover, they covered these important categories while treating current government priorities, instead of regarding supposing a stable essence of geographic writing. As government priorities changed over time, and as divergent understandings of governance collided at the imperial court, ministers adjusted the focus of geographic writing accordingly and requested relevant charts and records from local officials. Meanwhile, the Bureau of Directions was recognized as the symbolic pivot of geographic writing where all records about the present realm converged. The shifting and competing standards of completion in eleventh-century imperial gazetteers allow consideration of imperial gazetteers as a composite genre that

[156] Lü Nangong 吕南公, *Guan yuan ji* 灌園集 (Siku quanshu edition), 8.5b-6a.

purposefully selected and organized geographic texts to make terrestrial features not only legible but also actionable to the imperial government.

Eleventh-century imperial gazetteers and their ninth-century predecessors are often grouped into one bibliographic category, "aggregated gazetteers" (*zongzhi* 總志), because they encompassed the entirety of the imperial territories during their times. As a result, the general similarity between these imperial gazetteers has become a broad consensus in studies of geographic writing during the Tang and the Song.[157] For example, the division of "Geography" in the *Annotated Bibliography of the Four Treasuries* (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, 1798) lists at the beginning of "Aggregated Gazetteers" the two earliest imperial gazetteers extant during the Qing dynasty (1636–1912), one from the Tang and the other from the Song. The Yuanhe gazetteer by Li Jifu was placed in the first because of its methodical, balanced profiles of prefectures. The exemplary textual structure of the Yuanhe gazetteer reportedly was added and reduced repeatedly in later imperial gazetteers but was never surpassed.[158] The *Records of the Entire Realm in the Taiping Era* (*Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記) by Yue Shi 樂史 (930–1007) was commended for encompassing a broad range of geographic subjects and initiating thereby an alternative trend in geographic writing. The bibliographic remark also praised this prodigious compilation for a similar tendency in later local gazetteers, including the popularity of categories such as "exemplary persons" and "refined writings."[159] By

[157] General surveys of geographic writings in Chinese history adopted the category from traditional schemes of bibliographic classification and thus grouped all imperial gazetteers by their coverage of an entire dynastic realm. Similarly, studies of geographic writing under the Song recognized that the content of eleventh-century imperial gazetteers was more detailed, diverse, and even more scholarly than their ninth-century predecessors, but emphasized their identical preoccupation with the unity of imperial territories and their similar uses at the Tang and Song imperial courts. See, for example, Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 5-22; Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers," 408-12; Hu and Jiang, *Zhongguo dilixue shi*, 94-7.

[158] Yong Rong 永瑢, et al., ed., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), 14.32-33.

[159] *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*, 14.33.

implication, the difference between the two excellent models of geographic writing was mainly a matter of breadth.

Nonetheless, these traditional evaluations underestimated the distinction between ninth-century imperial gazetteers and eleventh-century ones. The latter shared with the former a cultural assumption that geographic writing was a branch of history writing and a solemn responsibility of official historiographers. But the latter were distinguished from the former by their assumption of an expansive geographical archive and their deliberate integration of textual categories from that archive. They embodied a broad tendency to impose method on a chaotic profusion of records about administrative divisions and to present thereby a current conspectus of the imperial landscape. Their authors elevated the Bureau of Directions to the institutional core of geographic writing and recognized the bureau's expedient mechanism of documentation, rather than aggrandizing their personal discernment of the infrastructure of the land and subordinating geographic records in palace libraries and official archives to that unusual discernment.

4.1 Formalizing Strategic Affairs: The Bureau of Directions as the Pivot of Geographic writing

The Bureau of Directions (*zhifang* 職方) was recognized at the Tang imperial court as a central agency of military intelligence. According to an entry in the *Six Codes* of the Tang (an official institutional compendium compiled in the early eighth century), the Bureau of Directions had been a regular component of the imperial government since the founding of the dynasty, and it oversaw the surveying of the realm and foreign vassals. By negotiating between canonical

official positions and current bureaucratic operations, the entry constructs a singular central agency of military intelligence:

> The Director and Vice Director of the Bureau of Directions handle maps of the realm, as well as the numbers of fortresses, bastions, and watchtowers. They distinguish the distances between administrative divisions, and between cities and the capital, and those among the four barbarians who have submitted to the emperor's rule. They entrust the prefectures with making maps once every three years and submitting those maps to the Department of the Imperial Secretary together with the population registers. Whenever foreign officials arrive from outer barbarians in the capital, they commission the House of Imperial Reception to question those persons about their kingdom's mountains and rivers, as well as soils and customs, and to draw a map and present it to the emperor, with a duplicate submitted to the Department of the Imperial Secretary. They take up and rectify the boundaries of administrative divisions, the abolishment or establishment of administrative seats, and disputes about border regions.[160]
>
> 職方郎中、員外郎掌天下之地圖及城隍、鎮戍、烽侯之數，辨其邦國、都鄙之遠邇及四夷之歸化者。凡地圖委州府三年一造，與板籍偕上省。其外夷每有番官到京，委鴻臚訊其人本國山川、風土，為圖以奏焉，副上於省。其五方之區域，都鄙之廢置，疆場之爭訟者，舉而正之。

The entry on the Bureau of Directions traces the official organization back to the Office of Directions in the *Rites of Zhou*.[161] But the range of official responsibilities listed in the above

[160] Li Linfu 李林甫 et al., comp., *Tang liu dian* 唐六典 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 5.162. Cf. *Tang huiyao*, 59.1032-033.
[161] *Tang liu dian*, 5.161.

quotation were dispersed among several Zhou offices. Particularly, "the numbers of fortresses, bastions, and watchtowers" and "the distances of cities from the capital" had a more exact correspondence in the *Rites of Zhou* with the Office of Checks which was responsible for mapping natural barriers and trunk routes.[162] Moreover, although the Bureau of Directions appears within the division on the Ministry of War (Bingbu 兵部), the bureaucratic procedures described above overlapped with multiple central agencies of the Tang. Maps of the realm were made and collected in the same cyclical procedure by which censuses of the population in the Ministry of Revenue were made and collected from the prefectures and counties. Maps of foreign vassals were made occasionally by the House of Imperial Reception and were extrinsic to the Bureau of Directions. Finally, while the two sets of maps both belonged to the Bureau of Directions, their terminus in the contemporary bureaucratic apparatus lay not in the bureau nor in the Ministry of War, but in the government branch to which they were subordinate, the Department of the Imperial Secretary. In other words, the entry on the Bureau of Directions, by merging canonical offices and current procedures in a bureaucratic narrative, identified and legitimized the central agency of imperial intelligence.

Authors of imperial gazetteers at the turn of the ninth century accepted that the Bureau of Directions was the government agency overseeing the survey of imperial and foreign territories. For example, the Bureau of Directions was mentioned in Jia Dan's memorial accompanying the submission of his map of prefectures that lay between the capital and the Northwest. According to the memorial, a map of these prefectures was important because territories in the Northwest had for long been occupied by foreign armies and the Bureau of Directions had lost updated records of these former territories. The new map, by laying out trunk routes and strategic

[162] *Zhouli zhengyi* 周禮正義, in *Shisanjing zhushu*, 30.12b-13a.

locations in the Northwest, allowed the imperial court to strengthen its defense against foreign invaders in the region and to launch an effective counterattack.[163] By implication, to Jia Dan, his map was a necessary complement to the Bureau of Directions in the late eighth century. Similarly, the Bureau of Directions was the implicit reference in Li Jifu's memorial accompanying the submission of the Yuanhe gazetteer. Although the memorial does not include a direct mention of the bureau, Li Jifu's professed geographic agenda of surveying populations and territories correspond to two central agencies: the former was related to the Bureau of Revenue, and the latter was related to the Bureau of Directions. Moreover, the fundamentals of geographic writing that he claimed to cover in the Yuanhe gazetteer, particularly strategic locations and trunk routes, pointed to records associated with the Bureau of Directions.[164] In other words, the memorial by Li Jifu assumed that the bureau kept the official repository of topographic maps and was one of the two institutional hubs of geographic texts.

During the tenth century, after rebel armies led by Zhu Wen 朱溫 (852–912), the military commissioner in Bianzhou 汴州 (present Kaifeng, Henan province), brought the Tang dynasty to an end, the Bureau of Directions continued to be recognized at imperial courts as an agency of imperial intelligence and a hub of topographic maps.[165] But the bureau also became the pivot of geographic writing where different, updated records about the imperial landscape were gathered from the prefectures at an emperor's request. The bureaucratic routine of submitting maps to the Bureau of Directions every leap year was suspended in 929 under the Later Tang (923–936), but three years later Vice Director of the Ministry of Personnel Wang Quan 王權 (864–941) petitioned to continue and improve this standard practice. According to Wang's memorial, due to

[163] *Jiu Tang shu*, 138.3784-785.
[164] *Yuanhe junxian tuzhi*, preface.2.
[165] See Mostern, *The Spatial Organization of the Song State*, 91-8.

the chaos of recent wars and rebellions, the location and number of government seats and post stations, fortresses and watchtowers, and walls and moats had changed. Therefore, the emperor should issue an order to all prefectures requiring that the maps they sent to the Bureau of Directions must be collated with previous records and updated. Furthermore, as Wang adds, the maps must cover not only major water and land routes but also any "mountains, ridges, streams, and lakes that are traversable by troops or boats."[166] While the special emphasis on mapping the landscape of the present seems a mere remedy to an exceptional lapse in a normal bureaucratic routine, the refined cognizance of what constituted routes in this routine suggests a significant institutional adjustment. To Wang Quan, the Bureau of Directions became an active producer of geographic conventions as required by present needs, rather than a passive recipient of topographic maps as prescribed by an official compendium of institutions.

The emperor approved Wang's proposal and issued a more demanding set of instructions to the provincial capitals: the prefectures in each province first submit local gazetteers covering historical events, travel distances, mountains and streams, native products, and current customs, while local maps would await the arrival of official drawing paper and another directive about their accompanying gazetteers.[167] Imperial governments in prior centuries had obtained local gazetteers from administrative divisions. But now a central agency of imperial intelligence had been placed in charge of that task, and the agency's responsibilities for surveying imperial and foreign territories were the emblematic categories of geographic writing. In other words, as the fundamental importance of strategic locations and travel distances was accepted at the Tang court and its successors, some officials supposed that the Bureau of Directions coordinated the

[166] Wang Pu 王溥, comp., *Wudai huiyao* 五代會要 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 15.254.
[167] *Wudai huiyao*, 15.254.

production not only of topographic maps but also of geographic texts in general. This official record does not indicate that the bureau succeeded in assembling local gazetteers as ordained by the emperor. Nonetheless, it suggests that the negotiation between canonical offices and current procedures about the Bureau of Directions allowed the agency to occupy the symbolic center of geographic writing during the tenth century.

Similarly, under Emperor Zhenzong (r. 997–1022) of the Song dynasty, Vice Director of the Bureau of Directions Wu Shu 吳淑 (947–1102) recognized in a memorial dated 1001 the Bureau of Directions as the proper custodian of geographic texts. In this memorial, Wu Shu proposed to correct two procedural problems that had undermined the imperial government's ability to provide accurate military intelligence. First, he noted that the leap-year maps submitted by prefectures were copied meanwhile to the Bureau of Regalia (Yiluan si 儀鸞司). He argued that prominent landforms and strategic locations were "deep secrets of the dynasty" and "urgent matters of the empire" to be kept by the Bureau of Directions. Second, Wu Shu pointed out that each prefecture compiled only an isolated map of its own jurisdiction. This official routine had brought about inconsistent treatments of common borders and made it difficult to seam together prefectural maps. He therefore proposed that every ten years, the transport commissioner of each province should compile and submit a provincial map to the Bureau of Directions.[168] Although the memorial focused on topographic maps and emphasized their military importance, Wu Shu distinguished a geographical archive in the Bureau of Directions by invoking an expansive interpretation of its canonical predecessor in the *Rites of Zhou*. To Wu Shu, the Office of Directions in the Zhou oversaw "all charts and records of the subcelestial realm," while the

[168] Xu Song 徐松, comp., *Song huiyao jigao* 宋會要輯稿 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2014), 3405; and Li Tao 李燾, *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑒長編, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1979), 49.1070.

Office of Topographic Report (Tuxun 土訓) was responsible for informing the emperor of prominent landforms and strategic locations on an inspection tour. The creation of the latter in addition to the former indicated the enormous weight of mastering prominent landforms and strategic locations. The extraordinary importance of these matters justified their preservation in the single agency in custody of geographic texts, as well as their accurate and coherent mapping across multiple levels of administrative divisions. Wu Shu's proposals were approved, but the geographical archive was a figment of his imagination of a centered production of geographical knowledge.

Wu Shu's memorial suggests that the Bureau of Directions housed a special geographical archive. Multiple edicts were issued in subsequent reigns to require that the prefectures submit local gazetteers to the Bureau of Directions.[169] Yet multiple geographic corpora existed within the central government. Since the Tang, population registers had been a basic geographic genre, and a comprehensive population register was fundamental to the compilation of a geographic treatise or an imperial gazetteer. The responsibility of collecting, archiving, and compiling population registers from the prefectures belonged to the Ministry of Revenue.[170] Therefore, the corresponding entry in the *Six Codes* includes a miniature imperial gazetteer of the Tang. This gazetteer, modeled upon the archetypal text of geography, the "Tribute of Yu," comprises ten provincial entries—each documenting the ancient equivalent of the province, as well as its subordinate prefectures, physical boundaries, famous landforms, mighty streams, special products, and adjacent vassals.[171] In other words, tenth-century officials, by placing the Bureau of Directions at the center of geographic writing, not only made adjustments to contemporary

[169] *Song huiyao jigao*, 3405; and *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 68.1537.
[170] *Tang liu dian*, 3.64.
[171] Ibid., 3.64-5.

bureaucratic routines by which geographic records were obtained, classified, and archived, but also contributed to the reconstruction of proper official procedures in which geographical knowledge was produced.

This special prominence of the Bureau of Directions in geographic writing is observed in prefaces of geographic treatises and imperial gazetteers compiled in the tenth century. An early example is found in the geographic treatise in the *Old History of the Tang* (*Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書, 945) sponsored by the Later Jin 晉 (936–947). This geographic treatise, attributed to Chief Minister Liu Xu 劉昫 (888–947), enumerates the realm of the Tang during its heyday, recording the official ranks, administrative chronologies, population numbers, travel distances, and subordinate counties of 328 prefectures. The final passage in the preface indicates that the geographic treatise was based on a complete population register compiled by the Bureau of Revenue in 740. Yet it concludes by emphasizing the use of the treatise in the Bureau of Directions:

> After the Yongtai era [765–766], the regions of Heshuo [north of the Yellow River] and Longxi [present Gansu] fell to rebel bandits. During the Yuanhe era, the ministers in charge of fiscal records once compiled population registers, but because these two regions did not submit their household numbers, they cannot be known in detail. Now, we only record in full the years of establishment and abolishment since the Wude era [618–626]. For the inheritances and adjustments in previous dynasties, we will briefly note them at the beginning of each prefecture or county entry. This is so that officials in charge of the Bureau of Directions will not be at a loss when consulted.[172]

[172] *Jiu Tang shu*, 38.1393.

永泰之後，河朔、隴西，淪於寇盜。元和掌計之臣，嘗為版簿，二方不進戶口，莫可詳知。今但自武德已來，備書廢置年月。其前代沿革，略載郡邑之端。俾職方之臣，不殆于顧問耳。

In other words, the main value of geographical knowledge lay in the central agency of military intelligence, despite the fact that the geographic treatise in the *Old History of the Tang* was based on a population register.

Yue Shi made a similar assumption about geographic writing in his imperial gazetteer, *Records of the Entire Realm in the Taiping Era* (hereafter, the Taiping gazetteer). According to the preface, Emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 960–976) had accomplished a great feat by merging into one political order "the enfeoffed kingdoms under the Five Thearchs and the civilizing domains of the Three Augusts." However, an imperial gazetteer commensurate with this monumental achievement had not yet been compiled. Because "the archive [or archives] of charts and records remains disorganized, and a book of prefectures and counties remains non-existent," there was no way to extol Emperor Taizu and illuminate his virtue. To rectify this deficient situation, Yue Shi compiled a gazetteer of the Song that presented a conspectus of the subcelestial realm during the Taiping Xingguo 太平興國 (976–983) reign, including its prominent landforms and strategic locations.[173] The preface assumes an integrated assemblage of geographic texts in the imperial capital and brings to the fore those pertaining to a grasp of military intelligence. Without an explicit reference to the Bureau of Directions, Yue Shi nonetheless envisions the centered production of geographical knowledge.

[173] Yue Shi 樂史, *Taiping huanyu ji* 太平寰宇記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 1.1a-1b.

During the eleventh century, authors of geographic treatises and imperial gazetteers began to name their works after the Bureau of Directions. For example, the geographic treatise compiled by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) on his own initiative in the 1030s, as part of his *History of the Five Dynasties* (*Wudai shi* 五代史), was titled "An Investigation at the Bureau of Directions" ("Zhifang kao" 職方考). In the preface, Ouyang Xiu criticizes official historiographers under the Tang for excluding "regional strongholds" (*fangzhen*) from geographic treatises of the dynasty and rejects their reported rationale that these military matters fell outside the purview of the Office of Directions in the Zhou. Rather, it was appropriate to cover regional strongholds in a geographic treatise, because administrative and military arrangements had become so interwoven since the late Tang that the two were hardly distinguishable. Moreover, these records were essential for the Bureau of Directions to conduct a more accurate assessment of contemporary prefectures and their strategic importance, because many recent prefectures were converted from military units and meanwhile falsely accorded superior administrative status.[174] To Ouyang Xiu, the Bureau of Directions under the Song resembled the Office of Directions under the Zhou in its coordination of the production of geographic texts, despite evident discrepancies in their specific functions. Hence the title of his geographic treatise in the *History of the Five Dynasties*.

4.2 Reordering Current Priorities: Divergent Understandings of Geographical knowledge

During the tenth and eleventh centuries, the Bureau of Directions was recognized at the Song imperial court as the symbolic pivot of geographical knowledge. However, at this metaphorical hub of geographic texts, a succession of divergent overviews of the empire collided. As the

[174] Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974), 60.713-14, 745.

bureau received and archived topographic maps, local gazetteers, and specific categories of geographic records requested by the court from time to time, ministers compiled imperial gazetteers to give a useful conspectus of the realm. Meanwhile, they found the work of their predecessor inadequate owing not only to outdated place names and administrative boundaries, but also to a deficient understanding of the government's priorities. All of these authors claimed to create a coherent geographic conspectus by selecting from a rich profusion of local records the most important categories and by devising prefectural profiles accordingly. Yet they disagreed over what the most important categories were. None of these officials disputed the special importance of prominent landforms, strategic locations, and fiscal resources. But they no longer equated these critical matters with a timeless essence of geographic writing. Rather, they situated these evident essentials within a wider range of useful geographic texts, and some even asserted the composite nature of geographic writing.

During the early Song, Yue Shi claimed that the Taiping gazetteer surpassed two major geographic works from the Tang—the Zhenyuan gazetteer by Jia Dan and the Yuanhe gazetteer by Li Jifu. According to his preface, an imperial gazetteer of the Song was necessary to honor Emperor Taizu's feats in "weaving" together the entire subcelestial realm, and its compilation was inherent in the duty of official historiographers to document the dynastic past. Although the realm of the Tang at the turn of the ninth century was more extensive than the realm of the Song in the late tenth century, Yue Shi did not deem the latter inferior to the former. Moreover, he claimed that the works of Jia Dan and Li Jifu were "too selective" (*tai jian* 太簡) to be a textual model. In other words, the narrow focus of these works on military matters made them inadequate in manifesting the civilizing scope of a sage emperor. Yue Shi presumed to rectify the

omissions of his Tang-dynasty predecessors and unfold in front of the imperial reader a whole series of records about the realm in 200 fascicles:

> The mountains and rivers stretching for ten thousand *li*, the strategic defiles and obstacles in the four directions, the advantages and perils of offense and defense, as well as the origins and antecedents of administrative divisions—before one has even fully unrolled the paper, they already stand copiously before one's eyes. Without descending from the imperial court, one knows the five soils; without stepping outside the imperial palace, one observes the myriad lands. For the instrumentality of charts and records, nothing exceeds these aspects.[175]
>
> 萬里山河，四方險阻，攻守利害，沿襲根源，伸紙未窮，森然在目。不下堂而知五土，不出戶而觀萬邦，圖籍機權，莫先於此。

Accordingly, Yue Shi derived from an extensive archive of records about the realm a geographic aid to the enterprise of civilization. The Taiping gazetteer did not merely give the capital a strategic advantage, but made visible the foremost aspects of the world from the imperial palace and allowed the emperor to master the imperial landscape and beyond while embodying the steady center of civilization.

The structure of the Taiping gazetteer confirms the more abundant conspectus announced in the preface. The nested, center–periphery arrangement of circuits, prefectures, and counties resembles that in the works of Jia Dan and Li Jifu, despite the different location of the imperial capital under the Song in the circuit of Henan and at Kaifeng. The succession of prose entries then profiles individual prefectures and counties according to a standard template comprising a

[175] *Taiping huanyu ji*, 1.1b.

wide range of geographic categories. While every main entry records the chronology, subordinate counties, territorial extent, location, households, customs, surnames, personages, and products of a prefecture, every sub-entry reports the location, chronologies, and prominent sites of a county.[176] If these chronologies of prefectures and counties merely updates and expands those compiled by Li Jifu in the Yuanhe gazetteer, the inclusion of customs, surnames, and personages marks a clear distinction between the Taiping gazetteer and its nineth-century predecessor.

The rich conspectus presented in the Taiping gazetteer subsumes military intelligence into a broader understanding of geographical knowledge useful in imperial governance. The professed intention in the preface to commemorate the foundation of a new dynasty and its attribution of geographic writing to official historiographers align the Taiping gazetteer with the traditional, early-Tang bibliographic essay on the geographical tradition. The wide-ranging categories structuring its prefectural profiles match the broad measure of regional difference by which that bibliographic narrative defined the nature of geographic writing.[177] But Yue Shi devised a standard template for profiling prefectures and reveals the foremost aspects of an imperial landscape, instead of organizing a wide range of geographic records with a complete catalog of administrative divisions and assessing provincial customs according to local records varying from place to place. In this way, the Taiping gazetteer differed from its early-Tang predecessor, the Zhenguan gazetteer. The early-Tang work commemorated the foundation of a new dynasty by organizing a massive accumulation of geographic records since antiquity in the absence of a hierarchy of geographic categories. It moreover revived an ancient tradition of

[176] See the section of Suzhou, for example, ibid., 91.1a-14a.
[177] *Sui shu*, 33.987-88.

documenting dynastic feats in dividing imperial territories and governing imperial subjects in the past, without emphasizing the power of geographical knowledge to aid the governance of imperial territories in the present. By contrast, the Taiping gazetteer not only commemorated the foundation of the Song dynasty but also provids a powerful instrument of government. Yue Shi professed in the beginning of the preface an authorial intention to honor the feats of Emperor Taizu in merging regional kingdoms into a universal political order. Yet toward the end, he alleges to reveal "the instrumentality of charts and records."[178] In other words, the Taiping gazetteer accommodates the ninth-century interest in military intelligence in an effort to present a rich conspectus of the imperial landscape.

Emperor Zhenzong 真宗 (r. 997–1022) and his court expanded the imperial geographic project further. Another initiative was pursued to expand, collect, and emend local gazetteers, so that they could provide guidance to the emperor's grand tours of inspection along sacred and historic sites.[179] As a result, a new gazetteer, titled *Charts and Records of Prefectures and Counties during the Xiangfu Era* (*Xiangfu zhouxian tujing* 祥符州縣圖經, hereafter, the Xiangfu gazetteer), was also completed in 1011. No longer extant, the gazetteer reportedly comprised 1,566 fascicles, in addition to a table of contents in two fascicles.[180] In the preface, Hanlin Academician Li Zonge 李宗諤 (964–1012) states that the compilation of the Xiangfu gazetteer derived from a successful program in 1007 to survey the imperial landscape. Emperor Zhenzong, after visiting ancestral tombs and meritorious cities, and inspecting major landforms and local

[178] *Taiping huanyu ji*, 1.1b.
[179] On an inspection tour to the Western Capital, Luoyang, in 1007, Emperor Zhenzong reportedly reviewed a local gazetteer of Luoyang and found its record insufficient. Therefore, he ordered the prefectures to expand current local gazetteers and send the expanded versions to the Bureau of Directions. Furthermore, the emperor assigned a group of officials to collate the latest local gazetteers and another group to compile a new imperial gazetteer according to a standard template. See *Yuhai*, 14.31b-32a.
[180] Ibid., 14.32a.

gazetteers, issued an edict ordering the prefectures to expand, collate, and submit local gazetteers to the Bureau of Directions. With half a year, all local gazetteers were received. Li Zonge and his fellow compilers then conducted an exhaustive, wide-ranging investigation of those local gazetteers and paid especial attention to "virtuous prefects and magistrates" (*shouling xunliang* 守令循良) as well as "excellent products and personages" (*junliang youchan* 畯良攸産).[181]

Similar to Yue Shi, Li Zonge and his fellow compilers modeled themselves on official historiographers, and not unlike the Taiping gazetteer, their work covered categories about local surnames and native personages. But in the preface, Li Zonge reported that they edited past and present geographic records by performing the exercise of "emendation" (*bixue* 筆削) and organized a vast archive by upholding the principle of "preparing extensive records" (*guangbei* 廣備) of a dynasty. Thus, these officials completed a methodical and extensive survey of the imperial landscape, rather than a standardized geographic conspectus.[182] In the same year, another edict was issued ordering officials to recompile based on the new imperial gazetteer local gazetteers received earlier from the prefectures, so that the Bureau of Directions could return those gazetteers to the prefectures as models for future submissions. In other words, the Xiangfu gazetteer not only rendered the landscapes of prefectures and their historic sites visible to the emperor and his court, but also made the universal order of the imperial center legible through a proper arrangement of local things in space and in time. The gazetteer recorded "virtuous prefects and magistrates" and "excellent products and personages" to recognize at the imperial capital these peripheral traces of civilization, as well as to promote these instructive exemplars at the local level.

[181] Ibid., 14.32b
[182] Ibid.

Still, in 1075, more than six decades later, Vice Director in the Bureau of Punishment Liu Shidan 劉師旦 (?) proposed in a memorial to recompile the geographic manual in use, *Chart of the Nine Regions* (*Jiuyu tu* 九域圖), used by central agencies—a handy guide to the ranking of prefectures and counties abridged from the Xiangfu gazetteer. According to him, since the *Chart of the Nine Regions* was compiled, there had been significant changes to the arrangement, names, and ranks of prefectures and counties.[183] Moreover, many historical sites recorded in the manual came from "vulgar and uncanonical" sources. Liu Shidan therefore proposed to compile a new geographic manual and to select compilers from "those who were learned in the geographical tradition" (*you dili xue zhe* 有地理學者). Emperor Shenzong 神宗 (r.1067–1085) accepted his proposal. The new manual, *Record of the Nine Regions* (*Jiuyu zhi* 九域志), enumerated the realm during the reign of Xining 熙寧 (1068–1077) in ten fascicles and was submitted to the emperor in 1080.

In the memorial accompanying its submission, Drafter of Imperial Edicts Wang Cun 王存 (1023–1101) announced that a geographic manual should conflate a judicious selection of geographic texts according to the changing priorities of government:

> Your servant has learned that when the former kings founded a kingdom, their means to gain a comprehensive grasp of the boundaries of kingdoms in the Nine Provinces as well as the numbers of local populations were charts to report on matters about the land, records to report on matters worthy of the ruler's inspection, and registers to reckon numbers about the people. In recent dynasties, the grand essentials of these texts were collected into a single document. Such documents conformed to their times and applied

[183] *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 265.6486.

> appropriate adjustments. They adopted a compendious form yet multiplied the entries. Such are the *Chart of the Ten Circuits* in the Tang and the *Chart of the Nine Regions* of our dynasty.[184]
>
> 臣聞先王建國，所以周知九州封域與其人民之數者，詔地事則有圖，詔觀事則有志，比生齒則有籍。近世撮其大要會為一書，趣時施宜，文約事倍，則唐之《十道圖》，本朝之《九域圖》是也。

In other words, geographic manuals were a practical genre. Though a recent invention, these manuals combined geographic texts that were integral but separate in the perfect rule of antiquity and brought these texts into co-operation as when they were applied by ancient sage-kings in practice. No matter how compact, these portable gazetteers offered a tight, accurate, and formative conspectus of imperial territories that aided good government. By implication, geographic writing was a practice of "composition," one that encompassed diverse means of surveying the land's surface but prioritized an operative range useful to address the paramount needs of government in the present. Therefore, Wang Cun leveled in the preface two additional criticisms about the *Chart of the Nine Regions*. First, the generic name, "chart" (*tu*), in its title was inappropriate and replaced by "record" because the manual did not includ drawings.[185] In other words, compilers of the prior geographic manual had mistaken the historical precedence of maps under the Tang for a generic convention. Second, the pedigrees of local surnames itemized in its prefectural profiles were distractive and dismissed, since they had no precedent in the "Tribute of Yu" or the *Rites of Zhou*, nor were they a prime concern in the present. Similar to Liu

[184] Wang Cun 王存 et al., comp., *Yuanfeng Jiuyu zhi* 元豐九域志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), preface.1.
[185] *Yuanfeng Jiuyu zhi*, preface.1.

Shidan, Wang Cun found that the *Chart of the Nine Regions* deviated from the geographical tradition, particularly from its canonical models.

Moreover, the *Record of the Nine Regions* introduced two improvements. As Wang Cun announces next in the memorial, the compilers included a careful record of "material resources" (*yuheng* 虞衡) throughout the realm, and refined previous figures of "road distance" (*daoli* 道里) and "territorial extent" (*guanglun* 廣輪, measured lengthwise and breadthwise). About resources, they recorded mines and factories, canals and dams, as well as marshes and plants. Whereas resources supervised by prefectures were itemized in the profiles of respective prefectures, those overseen by counties were noted under the names of respective counties.[186] Regarding distance and extent, the profile of every prefecture begins with an entry titled "Geographic Distance" (*dili* 地里), that reports routes and distances in the four cardinal directions from the administrative seat of a prefecture to its borders and further to the seats of adjacent prefectures.[187] This method enabled the compilers to cross-reference relevant records across profiles of neighboring prefectures and avoid the confusion caused by conflicting records in previous gazetteers. Thus, the compilers "straightened" the writing of the manual and "verified" its records, allegedly making it easier for readers to grasp facts and patterns in the imperial landscape.

The *Record of the Nine Regions* embodied a careful deliberation about the top priorities at the Song imperial court in the 1070s—a time when a series of sweeping reforms in the structure of government and the mobilization of wealth were initiated to reduce expenses and consolidate revenue. The keen conspectus of the realm presented by the geographic manual would facilitate the implementation of specific policies such as imperial monopolies on basic

[186] See, for example, ibid., 3.103-39.
[187] Ibid., preface.1.

necessities and critical resources, from salt and wine to iron and copper, and moreover signify the determination of Emperor Shenzong and his court in pursuing these policies. Although the *Record of the Nine Regions* was not committed to print until 1083 and not enacted until 1085, the memorial by Wang Cun brought a minor bureaucratic genre to the fore of the geographical tradition. Central agencies had long consulted the *Chart of the Nine Regions* for its ranking of prefectures and counties as well as the relative civilization of local populations. For example, the manual was used in the Ministry of Personnel to calculate the salaries of local officials, and in the Ministry of Punishment to determine the severity of local cases.[188] In other words, the compilation of the new geographic manual moved geographic writing from an enterprise of imperial intelligence to an integral component in the working of an imperial government.

However, in 1097, eleven years after the *Record of the Nine Regions* was implemented, Vice Director of the Ministry of War Huang Shang 黃裳 (1044–1130) deemed "its records too approximate" (*suo zai shen lue* 所載甚略). In a memorial to Emperor Zhezong 哲宗 (r. 1085–1100), he proposed to complement the manual by obtaining from the Bureau of Directions records of "mountains and rivers," "folk customs," "native products," and "historic sites" and by compiling a new imperial gazetteer covering these categories. In support of Huang Shang's proposal, the emperor ordered the Imperial Library to send a copy of the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanghai jing* 山海經).[189] Despite its lack of success, this initiative to compile another imperial gazetteer based on a more comprehensive geographical archive represented a deliberate attempt to reorient the imperial government toward an integrated understanding of civilization. The four categories proposed by Huang Shang matched the embodied survey of the Nine

[188] See, for example, *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, 81.1851
[189] *Yuhai*, 15.37b-38a.

Provinces recorded in the "Tribute of Yu," and these categories constituted the exemplary governance of the founder of the Xia dynasty. Moreover, instead of the "Tribute of Yu," a copy of the more detailed, wide-ranging, and expansive account of Yu's survey, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, was sent to the Bureau of Directions. Although its coverage of fabled lands and legendary kingdoms, as well as its record of wondrous beasts and mystical treasures, had long invited doubts about the authenticity of the ancient text, the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* served to broaden the narrow scope of geographical knowledge used in the *Record of the Nine Regions*.[190] Huang Shang's proposal did not negate the value of the *Record of the Nine Regions* for governing the empire. But the compilation of an imperial gazetteer modeled upon the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* rendered inferior the manual's narrow focus on current priorities of the government.

During the eleventh century, ministers of the Song Empire authored imperial gazetteers to present a meaningful conspectus of the realm. Each of them selected from a profusion of local records the most important categories and devised prefectural profiles accordingly. But these authors hardly agreed on the proper scope of geographical knowledge. Similarly, Shen Kuo 沈括 (1031–1095) submitted his *Chart of Prefects and Magistrates* (*Shouling tu* 守令圖, no longer extant) in 1088 after seven years in exile. In the memorial, the erstwhile Acting Commissioner of the Three Fiscal Agencies (Quan sansi shi 權三司使) observed that previous authors of geography had lapsed into two opposing errors while ignoring the basics.

> Your humble servant submits that in all the writings handed down through the ages, geographical charts and records have accumulated. Every author held to a different

[190] Chen Zhensun 陳振孫, *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 8.237-38.

theory, and structures of their works were not continuous. Those striving for breadth widely covered remote peripheries that were difficult to verify; those inclining toward brevity randomly omitted county roads that were well documented. But when the names and substance of the realm are not fully recorded, how could these works contribute to discussions about good government? Now I have examined the old texts and incorporated the fresh insights [transmitted by recent scholarship]. All responsibilities that fall within the official duties of prefects and magistrates are fully discussed and investigated. As for regions that the civilizing influence of our teachings has not yet improved, I have for the time being left doubtful matters as lacunae. I have searched for truths in extensive repositories of the Four Treasuries and sought to fill gaps [in the canonical record] with regional speeches across the Nine Provinces. As the Year Star [i.e., Jupiter] made one full circuit, I have gathered those fragmentary records and exerted myself to complete the task. After the manuscript was revised five times over, I am astonished that these worm-eaten pages could be reassembled into a work.[191]

竊以載籍以還，圖牒猥具，人秉異説，制不相沿。務博洽者，廣着難考之要荒；趨簡約者，漫棄備存之縣道。未盡奠方之名實，何補建邦之講求。今考舊文，參傳新意，凡守令之所職，咸具討論；在聲教所未加，姑從疑闕。稽經於四庫之廣藏，抵隙於九土之方言。歲星一周，抱殘編而自力；更書五易，驚爛簡之復收。

This passage confirms in two ways the above discussion about the uncertain scope of geographical knowledge at the imperial court of the Northern Song. First, Shen Kuo juxtaposes authors "striving for breadth" and authors "inclining toward brevity." This bifurcation suggests

[191] Shen Kuo 沈括, *Changxing ji* 長興集 (Siku quanshu edition), 4.5b-6a.

that the exiled official recognized how previous works of geography contained contrasting and even disparate ranges of categories. Second, Shen Kuo illustrates the former tendency with accounts of unverifiable remote peripheries and the latter with disregard for well-documented county roads. These two examples attach importance to an accurate survey of the imperial landscape, particularly the routes and distances between prefectural and county seats. This approach is essential if an author of geography intends to facilitate "discussions on good government." Although Shen Kuo's memorial conceals specific geographic categories covered by his work by invoking "the official duties of prefects and magistrates," the *Chart of Prefects and Magistrates*, too, supposes a hierarchy of geographic texts and embodies an ambition to reorder priorities at the imperial court.

4.3 Beyond the Compilation of Imperial Gazetteers: A Broader Culture of Geographic Learning

The geographical enterprise of the Northern Song reached its peak when a special agency was created in the early twelfth century to coordinate not only the production and organization of geographic texts but also the integration of those texts. In the beginning of the reign of Emperor Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1100–1126), the Bureau of Charts and Records across the Nine Provinces (Jiuyu tuzhi suo 九域圖志所) was created. Distinguished officials, especially directors of the Palace Library, were appointed supervisors of the new agency, and talented officials were appointed as compilers to "collate in detail" (*xiangding* 詳定) geographic materials obtained from throughout the empire.[192] However, this ambitious project did not surpass its less equipped predecessors and failed to yield a new imperial gazetteer before the bureau was dissolved in

[192] For a historical overview of the Bureau of Charts and Records in the Nine Provinces, see Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 458-65.

1120. Scanty records about the Bureau of Charts and Records indicate that the geographic project during the early twelfth century exposed conflicting variances between imperial canons and local records, as well as inconsistent periodic layers of official documentation. These conflicts and inconsistencies were not only onerous to resolve but also made it difficult to integrate the growing geographical archive into a conspectus of the imperial landscape. Nonetheless, the last attempt of the Song to assemble, organize, and compile geographic records strengthened the emerging assumption among the literate elite that an updated and accurate imperial gazetteer was necessary to the governance of a civilizing empire. By the end of the Northern Song, officials and scholars in the prefectures had begun to make supplementary compendia in anticipation of another centralized geographic project. Some authors even asserted the limits of imperial gazetteers in space, in time, and in capacity, thereby claiming to transcend those limits in their own works of geography.

The ambition of Emperor Huizong and his court to obtain a thorough survey of the realm added a significant burden on the bureaucratic apparatus. In 1108, Deputy Director of the Palace Library Qiang Yuanming 强淵明 (?) called for the impeachment of officials responsible for undue delays in the submission of requested geographic materials:

> Charts of the land are the means to gain a complete knowledge of the names of mountains and rivers, marshes and lowlands, grains and crops, and birds and beasts in the realm, as well as what is suitable for which the land of each place, so that tributes may be sent up accordingly. If one examines the *Rites of Zhou*, matters in this regard are treated with the utmost thoroughness. Now, though the land within the Four Seas has long enjoyed peace, we have not yet been able to match [the geographical excellence of] antiquity. Although

offices have been set up and functionaries assigned to continue the compilation of such books, the four quarters of the realm have not yet presented their materials as requested.[193]

輿地之圖，以周知天下山川、 藪澤、黍稷、鳥獸之名，與土地之所宜，而致其貢。稽考《周官》，其事至詳。今四海承平之久，未能如古。張官設屬，續修其書，而四方未以其事來上。

The fragment from Qiang Yuanming's memorial provides an official measure of the imperial court's commitment to obtaining a thorough grasp of the imperial landscape, while exposing a bureaucratic constraint placed on their ability to fulfill that commitment. To the deputy director of the Palace Library, because the Song empire created a political order emulating the perfect rule of the Zhou, it was essential to consolidate this brilliant order as its ancient predecessor had done. But for all its wealth and peace, the Song had not risen to the geographical attainment of the Zhou. To Qiang Yuanming, one cause of this unsatisfactory situation was the delinquency of some officials. While all the necessary institutional and personnel arrangements had been made in the capital for assembling, organizing, and compiling geographic materials from throughout the realm, the charts and records that were supposed to flow smoothly from the periphery to the center were stalled at the local level. Therefore, the emperor should issue an edict to impeach officials who were responsible for those delays.

But holdups in the submission of geographic materials were not necessarily caused by neglect among some local officials and were due more likely to irreconcilable variances between central and local archives, as discernable in three complications reported by the Bureau of Charts

[193] "Qiang Yuanming qihe gongbao Jiuyu zhi wenzi chiyan guan yubi" 強淵明乞劾供報九域志文字遲延官御筆, *Quan Song wen* 全宋文, ed., Zeng Zaozhuang 曾棗莊 and Liu Lin 劉琳 (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2006), 164.3568.

and Records. First, local records received by the bureau conflicted with records in palace libraries and central archives. In 1111, Director of the Palace Library He Zhitong 何志同 (1070–1132) found many dubious local records in the category of "temples and shrines" (*cimiao* 祠廟). According to his memorial, many temples and shrines reported by prefectures were dedicated to figures favored by local customs, rather than to persons "who had rendered meritorious service to the people."[194] These temples and shrines were accorded only de facto recognition in exceptional times. While these buildings were allegedly registered in the "imperial canon of sacrifices" (*sidian* 祀典), they were not found in records kept by the Bureau of Imperial Sacrifices (Taichang si 太常寺). Moreover, He Zhitong inferred from cases found in three counties surrounding the capital Kaifeng that if such incorrect sacrificial practices occurred even near the imperial center, the problem must be far worse in distant frontier towns and remote villages. Therefore, the Director of the Palace Library proposed instructing officials in charge of ritual matters to compile a current imperial canon of sacrifices, so that it may serve as a complementary counterpart to the new imperial gazetteer.

Second, geographical records received by the bureau included occurrences that were inappropriate for the written culture of a civilizing empire. In 1112, He Zhitong reported in a memorial that infelicitous local names were found in the charts and records of seventeen prefectures to the west of the capital. According to his memorial, certain names of wards, streets, towns, and villages in these prefectures conflicted with the names of palace halls and imperial mausoleums, and others involved vulgar customs and folkish sayings. These inappropriate names could not be included in "a geographic work intended to be transmitted for ages to come."[195]

[194] *Song huiyao jigao*, 992.
[195] Ibid., 9365.

Therefore, He Zhitong proposed to alter those local toponyms and attached a list of alternatives with detailed explanations.

Third, geographic records sent from the prefectures contained factual inconsistencies. In 1113, He Zhitong and another official in the Bureau of Charts and Records, Cai You 蔡攸 (1077–1126), presented a memorial stating that "many of the household and population figures collected by our agency from across the empire are false." In the memorial, they cite the case of two prefectures as an example. In Dezhou 德州 (present Dezhou, Shandong province), there were 52,599 registered households, but the total population was only 69,385. In Bazhou 霸州 (present Bazhou, Hebei province), there are 22,477 registered households, yet the population was only 34,716. In both, Cai You and He Zhitong concluded that there was an evident statistical discrepancy, since the ratio of households to people was too low to be accurate. Upon the two officials' request, the emperor issued an edict ordering "the judicial commissioner of each circuit to scrutinize population figures and aggregate actual ones."[196] In other words, it was suspected that officials in many prefectures were inflating local numbers of households while underreporting numbers of local residents. These conflicting reports resulted, presumably, because whereas the number of households was tied to the ranking of administrative divisions and the rating of official salaries by the Ministry of Personnel, the number of residents to the assessment of tax and corvée obligations in the Ministry of Revenue.

The twelfth-century geographic project of the Song Empire thus confronted a persistent tension. By collecting and verifying records on more subjects, the Bureau of Charts and Records brought on itself a vast repository of uncertainties, conflict, and schemes. The increased attention to detail and consistency amplified the intrinsic tension between imperial canons and local

[196] Ibid., 6261.

records, because local officials had their own incentives (e.g., tax evasion, popular cults, colloquial names) that did not align with the priorities of the government. As a result, compilers in the bureau could not simply accept and combine the growing archive. They were forced into repeated, costly interventions: auditing population figures, renaming county sites, and verifying local temples. It is therefore not surprising that the Bureau of Charts and Records did not become an institutional pivot of geographical knowledge, but was disintegrated soon when the opportunity emerged for the Song to regain the dozens of former Tang prefectures in the north that had been ruled by the Liao Empire (916–1125).[197] Moreover, regardless of what materials were amassed by the Bureau of Charts and Records, and no matter how useful they were, the investigation of these materials did not dissuade the court of Emperor Huizong in 1118 from seeking a temporary alliance with the Jin Empire against the Liao, nor did they help devise a strategy that might have prevented armies of the Jin from besieging the capital Kaifeng twice in 1126 and seizing the city in January 1127—resulting in the capture of members of the imperial family, including Emperor Huizong and his scapegoated successor, Qinzong 欽宗 (r. 1126–1127).

As the Jin troops plundered libraries and archives in the imperial palace, the Bureau of Charts and Records faded into oblivion, appearing in dispersed official records of the Northern Song to be an obscure, hasty institution. Rather, it is in a later local gazetteer that the bureau makes a substantial and meaningful appearance. In his preface to the *Charts and Records of Siming* (*Siming tujing* 四明圖經, 1169), Huang Ding 黃鼎 (?) associates the new gazetteer of

[197] Cheng Ju 程俱, *Lintai gushi jiaozheng* 麟臺故事校證, ed., by Zhang Fuxiang 張富祥 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 2.95.

Mingzhou 明州 (present Ningbo, Zhejiang province) with that erstwhile bureau of geographic writing:

> In the first year of the Daguan era [1107], the imperial court established the Bureau of Charts and Records in the Nine Regions and ordered all prefectures to compile a local gazetteer. In Mingzhou, Prefectural Steward Li Maocheng [?] and others undertook the task of compilation. Thus, from geographic distances, settled and migrant households and residents, the suitable conditions for local products, and the submission of taxes and tributes, up to exemplary persons, historical sites, Buddhist and Daoist masters, and down to mountains and forests, rivers and lakes, bridges and streets; and even down to the smallest details of birds and fishes, flowers and trees, fruits and vegetables, herbs and teas, as well as utensils and implements—everything was fully documented.[198]
>
> 爰自大觀元年，朝廷創置九域圖志局，命所在州郡編纂圖經，於是明委郡從事李茂誠等撰述，故地里之遠近，户口之主客，與夫物産之異宜，貢賦之所出，上而至於人物、古跡、釋氏、道流，下而至於山林、江湖、橋梁、坊陌，微而至於羽毛鱗介、花木、果蓏、藥茗、器用之類，靡不畢備。

To Huang Ding, the Daguan gazetteer of Mingzhou was compiled as a result of the geographic initiative during the reign of Emperor Huizong, and the rich, wide-ranging record in the gazetteer fulfilled the requirements of that centralized project. Moreover, this excellent predecessor mediates between the former institution of geographic writing and the initiative of the incumbent prefect, Zhang Jin 張津 (?), to compile a new local gazetteer. As Huang explains in the rest of the preface, although the old gazetteer of Mingzhou was later lost in times of war, several of its

[198] Huang Ding 黃鼎 et al., comp., *Qiandao Siming tujing* 乾道四明圖經 (SYFC edition), 4874.1a–1b.

sections were found recently as Zhang Jin ordered his assistants to gather useful materials for another gazetteer of Mingzhou. These sections were then expanded and incorporated. In other words, the Qiandao gazetteer of Mingzhou was initiated by a prefect at the local level without instructions by the imperial court. However, because the compilers modeled it upon the predecessor that had resulted from that enterprise earlier, and because they adopted the textual conventions embodied by the prior precedent, the gazetteer is nonetheless a contribution to the geographical enterprise of the empire.

Indeed, the regular compilation of imperial gazetteers under the Northern Song affected how contemporary and later authors in the prefectures approached geographic writing. Already during the eleventh century, the centralized geographic initiative became a normal expectation for the imperial government among officials and scholars outside the capital.[199] Learned persons in the prefectures investigated the geographical tradition to contribute to the collection, organization, and compilation of records about the realm, by overcoming the alleged generic limitations of imperial gazetteers in historical depth.[200] For example, in his *Extensive Record of the Land* (*Yudi guangji* 輿地廣記), Ouyang Min 歐陽忞 (?) claimed to have devoted himself to studying the entire geographical tradition in order to reveal how imperial governance since ancient dynasties was affected by contemporary administrative divisions:

> Geographic books are disordered and intermixed, a chaotic jumble. When one steps back to look at them, these texts are so vast and sprawling that they cannot be comprehended. Even a gentleman of profound discernment and broad learning would regard them as

[199] *Yuhai*, 14.35a-36b.
[200] See Pan Sheng, *Songdai dili xue de guannian, tixi, yu zhishi xingqu* 宋代地理學的觀念、體系與知識興趣 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2014), 129-48.

> deficient. And how, moreover, is one to know where the distinction between truth and falsehood lies? There must surely be a proper way for dealing with them.[201]
>
> 地理之書，紛雜殽亂，卒然視之，漫不可省，雖深識博聞之君子，亦且以爲病，而又安知是非之所在？其所以處之，將必有道矣。

Instead of restricting his work to the present, Ouyang Min cross-references in the first four fascicles the names of administrative divisions in dynastic periods since the Xia with the names of prefectures in the Song, and in the remaining fascicles records detailed chronologies of present prefectures and counties. To him, the fundamental truths of geography unfolded in a thorough understanding of those chronologies, not in a more detailed, accurate, or extensive survey of the present realm. These truths would be useful not only to the Bureau of Directions, but also to all gentlemen in the world.

By contrast, in the preface to his *Topographic Chart of the Eighteen Circuits* (*Shiba lu dishi tu* 十八路地勢圖), Lü Nangong 吕南公 (1047–1086) critiques the limitations of both scholars and officials in understanding the changing surface of the land.[202] To him, scholars tend to be pedantic, as they study classical writings such as the "Tribute of Yu" in depth, but fail to grasp historical changes later. Officials lean toward what is shallow, since they focus on the contemporary prefectures recorded in bureaucratic records, but cannot trace their origins in earlier ages. A true gentleman must avoid both extremes and achieve the best of the two by using accounts of historical realms to remedy shallowness and records of the present realm to correct pedantry. Moreover, because imperial gazetteers by the government were hardly circulated outside the palace, it was especially worthwhile to compile an accurate map of the Song realm on

[201] Ouyang Min 歐陽忞, *Yudi guangji* 輿地廣記 (Chengdu: Sichuan daxue, 2003), 1247-248.
[202] *Guan yuan ji*, 8.5b-6b.

the basis of available charts and records. Hence, he compiled the *Topographic Chart of the Eighteen Circuits* to accompany many conflicting maps drawn on the basis of the "Tribute of Yu" and to counterpoise the pedantry of their authors. By implication, authors of geographic compendia and maps during the late eleventh century situated the compilation of imperial gazetteers in a wider culture of learning and perceived the capacity of the imperial geographical enterprise as well as its limits.

Similarly, authors in the prefectures documented local landscapes and distinguished their local compendia from "charts and records" of prefectures in anticipation of the compilation of another imperial gazetteer. The geographic project leading to the Xiangfu gazetteer in 1011, especially, endowed prefectural archives with exemplary local gazetteers and official guidelines for their compilation, since the imperial government ordered to emend local gazetteers submitted by the prefectures and return the emended versions. As a result, even when no immediate request was issued from the imperial court, officials and scholars in the prefectures might suppose such a request will arrive in the near future and make preparations for it nonetheless. For example, in the 1080s a retired official Zhu Changwen 朱長文 (1039–1098) put together a three-fascicle compendium of Suzhou as an addendum to the local gazetteer compiled in the 1011s, and titled it *Supplementary Account to the Charts and Records of Wu* (*Wujun tujing xuji* 吳郡圖經續記, 1084; hereafter, the *Supplementary Account of Wu*).[203] At the end of the preface, Zhu professes his intention to contribute to a prospective geographic project by the imperial government:

[203] Zhu Changwen 朱長文, *Wujun tujing xuji* 吳郡圖經續記. Reprinted in *Song-Yuan fangzhi congkan* 宋元方志叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), preface.1a-2b. See on the gazetteer and its political implications, see Takashi Sue, "Revelations of a Missing Paragraph: Zhu Changwen (1039-1098) and the Compilation of Local Gazetteers in Northern Song China," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 52, no. 1 (2009): 57-84.

> At present, the sage emperor has wise plans and divine decisions, and his resounding instructions spread far and wide like light. From the corners of the sea where the sun rises, no one does not submit to his rule. Expanding the territories and opening up new frontiers, he has established extra prefectures and counties. If he should once again issue orders to the provinces to revise and update their charts and registers, then this work may perhaps find some use.[204]
>
> 方聖上睿謨神烈，聲教光被，海隅出日，罔不率俾，廣地開境，增為郡縣。倘或申命方州，更定圖籍，則此書庶幾有取也。

Unlike the *Record of Chengdu* by Lu Qiu in the ninth century, the *Supplementary Account of Wu* by Zhu does not merely provide extra records for the compilation of a new local gazetteer in the future, but presents a separate repository of records about the prefecture. Whereas Lu refused to follow the structure of a draft local gazetteer, Zhu accepted the organization of the prior gazetteer of Suzhou and collected categories of records omitted in that gazetteer. Although both authors maintained a deliberate distance from a local gazetteer, the latter was more confident in the value of his work in relation to a centralized geographic initiative.

Indeed, to Zhu, the imperial enterprise of geographic writing is founded upon a long-established area of textual learning. At the beginning of the preface, he declares a "learned tradition of regional compendia" (*fangzhi zhi xue* 方志之學) to which belonged great geographic works in the past, including Jia Dan's *Record of the Ten Provinces* in the Tang.[205] Whereas Li Zonge's preface to the Xiangfu gazetteer emphasizes the power of leap-year maps during the Song and compares them to texts by which the sage emperors of antiquity surveyed their realms,

[204] *Wujun tujing xuji*, preface.2b.
[205] Ibid., preface.1a.

Zhu's preface to the *Supplementary Account of Wu* highlights the limitations of these maps by discussing the compilation of the Xiangfu gazetteer seven decades ago. According to following passages of the preface, during the Xiangfu era, the imperial court commissioned another project of geographic writing, and the prefectures appointed officials to prepare local gazetteers. But whether those "charts and records" were extensive or compact depended in the end on the persons in charge. Moreover, because ministers in charge of the geographic project established standard textual categories and gleaned from local gazetteers accordingly, they had to be selective. Thus, the discriminate and constrictive compilation of imperial gazetteers makes them unsuitable for preserving "antiquated occurrences and extraordinary accounts" (*chenji yiwen* 陳跡異聞).[206] In short, besides local gazetteers and imperial gazetteers, regional compendia constitute an integral area of geographic writing and are necessary to fulfill the imperial geographical enterprise. By preserving extensive records of administrative divisions beyond that selective and variable enterprise, these compendia allegedly provided a basis for the discussion of local affairs.

The function to aid government announced in the preface matches the flat and plain structure of the *Supplementary Account of Wu* and its detailed investigation of government affairs in the prefecture. The succession of twenty-eight sections covers major geographic subjects such as seats and boundaries, products and goods, and populations and customs, as well as minor ones such as wards and markets, bridges and stela, and gardens and schools. These sections supplement the prior gazetteer of Suzhou by including more diverse categories of records and by adding more detailed accounts to existing categories. These detailed accounts about Suzhou are made navigable and retrievable through a systematic arrangement of tables,

[206] Ibid., preface.1b.

headings, and closings: at the beginning of every fascicle, a short table arranges the covered subjects according to their order of appearance; in the opening column of every section, a heading states the subject and the total number of entries (if more than one); and at the end of every entry, a note specifies the position within the series of the section. The result is a useful and methodical regional compendium that expands the textual basis for the discussion of government affairs.

The section "Regulating Water" ("Zhishui" 治水) exemplifies the declared function of the compendium as a useful instrument for understanding governance. It presents a detailed chronological overview of water management in Suzhou from antiquity to the present, reporting official projects, the debates surrounding them, and their eventual outcomes. Particularly, the overview includes a passage on the proposal of a former prefect in Suzhou, Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (989–1052), to solve recurrent flooding in the low-lying coastal area by dredging rivers and canals connecting to the Yangtze River and the sea. According to this passage, the dredging project proposed by Fan restored and multiplied the exit points so that water drained faster than it came in, especially during the summer flood season when rice crops were most vulnerable. In addition, the passage itemizes four objections among local families (i.e., river levels were too high, tides would block drainage, silt would refill channels, and labor costs were excessive) and Fan's methodical rebuttals to those objections. Thus, the passage does not merely celebrate a judicious and purposeful governor who "quelled unfounded controversies and resolved to drain the accumulated floodwaters, so that the people to this day still receive the benefaction of his work" 力破浮議，疏淪積潦，民到于今受其賜.[207] Rather, it documents a successful dredging

[207] Ibid., 3.3a.

project in Suzhou and explains the reasoning behind it, thereby establishing an effective model of water control and enhances its binding force in the region.

Therefore, while the *Supplementary Account of Wu* lies at the margins of the centralized official enterprise of recording, organizing, and compiling the imperial landscape, it represents a distinct domain of geographic writing that offers instructions on governance at the local level. The political significance of the regional compendium is not immediately obvious in sections that hardly provide direct guidance on any government affairs, especially the last two, "Records of Events" ("Shizhi" 事志) and "Miscellaneous Accounts" ("Zalu" 雜錄). The former documents historical occurrences in Suzhou, including moral paragons and pedigreed families, brilliant scholars and virtuous governors, official institutions and government measures, obscure recluses and uncollected writings. The latter records anecdotal accounts in the region about special products and distinctive tributes, faithless officials and their fateful deeds, portentous temples and beautiful sceneries. However, these records are all meaningful and conducive to good government in Suzhou, if not beyond. Therefore, a local scholar, Lin Fu 林虙 (1059–1124), in his colophon praises that the *Supplementary Account of Wu* serves to advance the undertaking of civilization passed down from the ancient sages. To Lin, this universal value distinguishes Zhu from writers simply seeking fame and separates his work from records merely surveying the surface of the land:

> The abolishment and reinstatement [of Wu] during a millennium and several centuries, and its customs and soil across one thousand and several hundred *li*, lie here so brilliant as if I can point to them in the palm of my hand. Truly stunning! How complete is this! The work of our master [Zhu Changwen] has three fascicles with a certain number of

entries, yet these comprise innumerable charts and records from the past and the present. Even writings by Buddhists and esoteric masters, and phrases from small talk and vulgar sayings, he has excerpted in full and included, if they could serve to prove the antiquity of Wu and preserve it for the future. Certainly, Mr. Zhu did not merely want to boast of his erudition and display sumptuous literary ornaments. Instead, he holds up the worthiness of "Governors" in the past, hoping that future incumbents will inherit and maintain this worthiness; he recounts the abundance of "Personages" in former generations, hoping that posterity will exert itself. "Dikes and Ditches" lists the measures taken to dredge water, and "Granaries and Storehouses" records the methods used to enrich people's lives. He discusses habits and manners in "Customs" and boasts the prosperity and abundance of people in "Population." This gazetteer therefore touches upon the great work of "Transformation by Teachings" [*jiaohua*] and "Rites and Music" [*liyue*], revealing that Master [Zhu]'s intent plainly concerns all under Heaven. How could one simply regard it as a text about one region and terrestrial mapping?[208]

千數百載之廢興，千數百里之風土，燦然如指諸掌。嗚呼，何其備哉！先生之書三卷若干條，而所包括者，古今圖籍不可勝數，雖浮圖方士之書，小說俚諺之言，可以證古而傳久者，亦畢取而并錄。先生豈欲矜淹博而耀華藻哉。舉昔時牧守之賢，冀來者之相承也；道前世人物之盛，冀後生之自力也。溝瀆條浚水之方，倉庾記裕民之術。論風俗之習尚，夸戶口之蕃息，遂及於教化禮樂之大務，於是見先生之志素在於天下也，豈可徒以方域輿地之書視之哉?

[208] *Wujun tujing xuji*, 2.41a.

In other words, through a thorough investigation of written records about Wu, the work of Zhu illuminates enduring models of moral cultivation and stable patterns of good government, thereby making a regional contribution to the civilization of the subcelestial realm.

During the Northern Song, the imperial court repeatedly issued edicts to the prefectures ordering local officials to compile and submit charts and records of their jurisdictions. The regular collection of topographic maps and the occasional request for local gazetteers from the local level made natural barriers, strategic locations, and material resources available to the capital with greater accuracy. The steady accumulation of records about the imperial realm in the Bureau of Directions and other central agencies also presented temples, monasteries, dams, canals, personages, and customs in increasing detail. This expanding geographical archive supported the ambition of the imperial court to obtain an inviolable grasp of the structures of the land, as well as ministers' competing proposals to prioritize ritual, fiscal, and military matters. During this period, officials in the prefectures also launched individual initiatives to survey their jurisdictions. The resulting charts and records aided the imperial court in planning border defenses, deploying armed forces, checking tributary goods, and adjusting administrative boundaries. Finally, recurrent initiatives to compile an imperial gazetteer, along with routine and occasional efforts to assemble geographic charts and records from the prefectures, incentivized officials and scholars in the prefectures to compile or supplement local gazetteers. But authors of local gazetteers subsumed their works under a future imperial gazetteer whose compilation they anticipated. This anticipation reveals a paradox about the subgenre of geographic writing during the Northern Song: although local gazetteers were compiled in the prefectures by local officials and local scholars, the sponsorship, authority, and significance of these gazetteers arose from the imperial center.

Chapter 5 The Canonical Document of a Prefecture: The Civilization of Landscape in Twelfth- and Thirteenth-Century Local Gazetteers

The use of local gazetteers to report government affairs was an institution of the Zhou, and later times followed it. During the Song, these documents have become even more detailed. Now it is stipulated in the imperial codes that gazetteers of all prefectures shall be submitted to the Bureau of Directions every ten years to secure the completeness of reference. Thus, the creation of local gazetteers was by no means a light matter. Chaozhou formerly possessed a local gazetteer, but since the wars and upheavals, the document has been almost entirely lost. What remains today merely records the distances along trunk roads, and the number of counties, towns, villages, and wards. Officials in the prefecture regard the local gazetteer as little more than compliance with written rules. As for the reasons for the establishment or abolishment of prefectures and counties, increases and decreases in the number of population registers, the customs that the people uphold, and the products suited to the soil—all these are utterly obscure and beyond verification. Indeed, in this prefecture an authoritative document remains absent.

圖志以詔事周制也，後世因之，至宋而益詳。今著在甲令，凡諸州圖經十年一上之職方氏，以備參考，是則圖經之設，豈苟然哉。潮舊有圖經，兵火以來，散逸殆盡，厥今所載，不過敘其道理之遠近，縣鎮鄉里之若干，有司徒以為文具而已。至

若州邑廢置之由，戶版登耗之數，風俗之所尚，土地之所宜，則漠然無所考，蓋一邦之闕典已。

——Chang Yi 常禕 (1178)[209]

After armies of the Jin empire conquered the northern half of the Song empire between 1126 and 1127, officials and scholars in prefectures of the Southern Song (1127–1279) compiled local gazetteers in separation from imperial gazetteers. Prefects, especially, recruited compilers, gathered materials, and solicited prefaces to prioritize the task of organizing local archives and take on the role of sponsoring local gazetteers. Some prefects even commissioned woodblock editions to enable the transmission of local gazetteers among local families and facilitate the circulation of those texts throughout the realm.[210] Although the imperial court stopped organizing centralized geographic projects, prominent prefectural officials often brought copies of local gazetteers to present to the emperor upon concluding their terms and returning to the interim capital, Lin'an 臨安 (present Hangzhou, Zhejiang province). Since the beginning of the thirteenth century, directors of the Palace Library had supposed the availability of local gazetteers in the prefectures and requested the submission of those works.[211] During this century, as suggested by the bibliographic treatise in the *History of the Song* (*Song shi* 宋史, 1345), local gazetteers became the overwhelming majority in the collection of geographic texts in the Imperial Library.[212] By implication, official and scholars of the Southern Song continued the imperial geographical enterprise in a localized form.

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[209] Ma Rong 馬蓉 et al., eds., *Yongle Dadian fangzhi jiyi* 永樂大典方志輯佚, vol. 4 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 2714-715.
[210] See Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 515-52.
[211] For a brief mention of such a request, see Ren Feng 任逢, "Dianjiang zhi xu" 墊江志序, in Zhou Cheng 周澄 et al. *Qianlong Hezhou zhi* 乾隆合州志 (woodblock edition dated in 1789), 13.2b-3a.
[212] Toghto 脫脫 et al. *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), 284.5156-165.

Previous studies of Southern-Song local gazetteers have observed that these texts underwent a fundamental transformation from bureaucratic records to scholarly works during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[213] This important shift was marked by their expanded thematic scope, increasing intellectual stature, and circulation beyond official channels as printed publications. The earlier "charts and records" (*tujing*) served as practical tools for imperial administration, whereas the later "regional compendia" (*fangzhi*) became vehicles for scholarly expression, moral instruction, and the assertion of local identity. According to this observation, the Southern-Song local gazetteer represented the culmination of a long-term process from the Tang through the Song in which bureaucratic records were elevated to the status of learned works, and the scholar-compiler displaced the government clerk as the primary agent of their production.

But Southern-Song local gazetteers resist a clear dichotomy between "charts and records" and "regional compendia," as well as a simple linear progression from governmental offices to scholarly networks.[214] The extant local gazetteers from the Southern Song are authoritative documents of the local landscape and its history of governance, governmental and scholarly at the same time. By adopting in titles historical names of prefectures and the prestigious generic designation "compendium" (*zhi*), many authors distinguished their works from earlier "charts and records" (*tujing*), but they attributed that difference to the failings of earlier compilers rather than asserting a change in the nature and function of local gazetteers. Prefaces to these works

[213] See Li Tsong-han 李宗翰, "Cong zhengfu dang'an dao chubanwu: Songdai fangzhi de zhuanbian ji qi lishi yiyi" 從政府檔案到出版物：宋代方志的轉變及其歷史意義, *Taiwan shida lishi xuebao* 台灣師大歷史學報, no. 70 (2023): 1-47; Pan Sheng, "Songdai tujing yu jiuyu tuzhi: cong ziliao dao xitong zhishi" 宋代圖經與九域圖志：從資料到系統知識, *Lishi yanjiu* 歷史研究, vol. 1 (2014): 79-96; Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers," 428-36.
[214] For a recent critical assessment of the linear transformation from *tujing* to *fangzhi*, see Lin, "The Local in the Imperial Vision," 10-31.

justify the prefectural initiative of compilation by invoking classical precedents and arguing that detailed local records were indispensable for good government in prefectures.

The authorization of local gazetteers depended upon a collaborative partnership between prefects and scholars. The prefect supplied institutional legitimacy by identifying the need for a new gazetteer, recruiting learned compilers, opening official archives, and ratifying the finished work. The scholars, in turn, brought intellectual authority by their textual erudition and literary craft, gathering and sifting through diverse sources, organizing materials into meaningful categories, and writing with the moral insight and stylistic virtuosity that gave the gazetteer an enduring value. Within these gazetteers, the chronological list of prefects became a standard and structural feature, providing the master temporal order for the entire work. This list aligned the tenure of each prefect with the dynastic timeline and organized the history of the local landscape as a cumulative process of improvement. The Southern-Song local gazetteers thus served as authoritative documents that celebrated the transformative power of emperors as well as prefects, mediating between local and imperial concerns through a progressive history of the local landscape shaped by prefects. These canonical documents asserted the cultural prestige of individual prefectures, authorized definitive records of governance at the local level, and constructed progressive narratives of civilization outside the imperial capital.

5.1 The Prefectural Initiative of Compilation: The Assertion of a Generic Distinction

Officials and scholars in prefectures of the Southern Song sponsored the compilation of local gazetteers in separation from imperial gazetteers. The resulting titles and prefaces distinguish the former from the latter and mark the emergence of a localized form of geographic writing. Titles of local gazetteers compiled during previous centuries usually include the official names of

prefectures in two characters (with some exceptions), each combining a specific part that refers to a special local trait and a generic part, "prefecture" (*zhou*), that indicates the level of administration. In contrast, twelfth- and thirteen-century authors of local gazetteers often adopted traditional place names to convey the cultural prestige of prefectures and the graceful contours of local landscapes. For instance, the title of the only known Northern-Song gazetteer of Luzhou 廬州 (present Hefei, Anhui province) includes the current official name of the prefecture, whereas those of three known Southern-Song gazetteers of Luzhou use the official name of its predecessor during the Han dynasty, "Hefei" 合肥 (lit. "confluence of bounties").[215] This old name is not necessarily more historical than the current official name, which refers to a minor kingdom, Lu 廬, during the Zhou in the region.[216] But after a prefecture named "Luzhou" was established in this area during the Sui, the textual distinction of "Hefei" persisted with influential Han-dynasty works of history writing, including the *Historiographer's Record* by Sima Qian and the *History of the Han* by Ban Gu. In other words, the name of its predecessor during the Han has a longer history than its name since the Sui. Moreover, the historical name identifies the distinctive location of Luzhou at the confluence of several major rivers.[217] In his preface to the *Records of Hefei* (Hefei zhi 合肥志, 1188), Zhen Xingyi 鄭興裔 (1126–1199) explains that the Han predecessor of Luzhou was given the name "Hefei," because the place "overlooks rivers and lakes to the south, reaches Weiyang [i.e., Yangzhou] to the north, where the rolling waves of the Huai River join with the Fei River" 南臨江湖, 北達維揚, 淮水湯湯, 流與肥合.[218] The

[215] *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, 8.252; and Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 150.
[216] See Zang Lihe 臧励龢, ed., *Zhongguo gujin diming da cidian* 中國古今地名大辭典 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1931), 291, 1341.
[217] See Zang, *Zhongguo gujin diming da cidian*, 291.
[218] Zheng Xingyi 鄭興裔, *Zheng Zhongsu zouyi yiji* 鄭忠肅奏議遺集 (Siku quanshu edition), 2.9a.

traditional name of Luzhou thus distinguishes the prefecture by evoking the particular features and effects of the local landscape.

Similarly, the titles of two non-extant gazetteers of Yuezhou 越州 (present Shaoxing, Zhejiang province) compiled during the Northern Song contain the contemporary official name of the prefecture, whereas the titles of two extant Southern-Song local gazetteers invoke "Kuaiji" 會稽, the name of a famous mountain in the region.[219] The latter conveys the superior standing of the prefecture, because, as the preface to one of the Southern-Song gazetteers mentions, the sage emperor Yu, who founded the Xia dynasty performed a grand sacrifice to Earth on Mount Kuaiji (after a grand sacrifice to Heaven on Mount Tai).[220] The name serves to conjure up not simply a prominent feature in the local landscape but a major landmark in the entire written history of civilization. In addition, by the time these two Southern-Song local gazetteers were compiled, Yuezhou had been elevated to a metropolitan prefecture due to its proximity to the capital of the Southern Song, and renamed "Shaoxing" 紹興 (lit. "continuing prosperity"), after the second reign title of Emperor Gaozong 高宗 (r. 1127–1162). Yet only an obscure local gazetteer of the prefecture compiled during the reign of Shaoxing (1131–1162) adopts the new place name.[221] The use of "Kuaiji" in two local gazetteers compiled later thus implies a definite preference for the exceptional heritage of the prefecture over its immediate connection to the present dynasty.

In both of the above examples, the adoption of a traditional name in Southern-Song local gazetteers preserves the legibility of a prefecture in the imperial government, while situating the

[219] See Zang, *Zhongguo gujin diming da cidian*, 1021. On the meanings of the toponym, see James M. Hargett, "會稽 : Guaiji? Guiji? Huiji? Kuaiji? Some Remarks on an Ancient Chinese Place-Name," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, no. 234 (March 2013): 16-28.
[220] Shen Zuobin 沈作賓 et al., comp., *Jiatai Guiji zhi* 嘉泰會稽志 (SYFC edition), preface.1a, 2a.
[221] See Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 318.

prefecture in a more extensive chronology of civilization and a more esteemed series of writings. A traditional name serves not merely to label the prefecture with reference to a special trait and individuate it from other prefectures, but also to evoke meanwhile the distinctive local landscape and convey its cultural prestige. Most of the known titles of Southern-Song local gazetteers include historical names of prefectures, instead of their present ones.[222] But the desire to raise the status of prefectures and elicit contours of local landscapes with prefectural names was detectible, even when the present official names of prefectures were adopted in titles of some local gazetteers. For instance, the authors of three Southern-Song gazetteers of Yanzhou 嚴州 (present western Hangzhou, Zhejiang province) all adopted "Yanzhou" to title these gazetteers. However, prefaces to two of these local gazetteers give a new explanation of the specific part of the name. Named "Mu" 睦 (lit. "concord" or "comity") during the eleventh century, the prefecture was renamed "Yan" 嚴 (lit. "stern") after an armed insurrection during the early twelfth century to signify the formidable power of the empire.[223] But in his preface to the *Charts and Records of Yanzhou* (*Yanzhou tujing* 嚴州圖經, 1139), the prefect Dong Fen 董弇 (?) omits this toponymic adjustment. Instead, Dong claims that the prefecture is named "Yan" because its mountains and waters exhibit a limpid and remote air that matches the imperturbable manner of a virtuous hermit during the Han, Yan Guang 嚴光 (39 BCE–41 CE).[224] This explanation is then adopted in a preface by Fang Fengchen 方逢辰 (1221–1291) to a later gazetteer of Yanzhou completed in 1262.[225] Although Southern-Song gazetteers of the prefecture used "Yanzhou" in

[222] See the geographical section of the bibliographic treatise in the *History of the Song*, *Song shi*, 284.5156-165.
[223] Hong Mai 洪邁, *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1978), 6.84.
[224] The preface by Dong Fen survives in a later local gazetteer bearing the same title, see Chen Gongliang 陳公亮 et al., comp., *Chunxi Yanzhou tujing* 淳熙嚴州圖經 (SYFC edition), preface.6b.
[225] Qian Keze 錢可則 et al., comp., *Jingding Yanzhou xuzhi* 景定嚴州續志 (SYFC edition), preface.1b.

their titles, it was neither synonymous nor equivalent with the admonitory predecessor conferred by the court in the early twelfth century.

Therefore, prefectural names in titles of Southern-Song local gazetteers distinguish these compilations from their predecessors in the Northern Song. This tacit distinction is made explicit in the generic part of some gazetteer titles, especially the "compendium" (*zhi*) replacing the official generic designation, "charts and records" (*tujing*). For example, in his preface to the *Records of Guiji* (*Guiji zhi* 會稽志, ca. 1201), Intermediate Grand Master in the Palace Lu You 陸遊 (1125–1210) states that the compilers employ "compendium" in the title, instead of "charts and records," to resolve a conflict between the prefectural initiative of compilation and the geographical enterprise of the empire:

> Although this book is based on "charts and records," the "charts and records" began under earlier reigns of [our dynasty, in the north], and this [generic designation] is not to be affixed by any strongholds and prefectures. Therefore, the compilers use relevant precedents established by Chang'an, He'nan, Chengdu, and Xiangtai and named the present local gazetteer *Compendium of Guiji*.[226]
>
> 書雖本之圖經，圖經出於先朝，非藩郡所可附益，乃用長安、河南、成都、相臺之比，名會稽志。

The distinction between *tujing* and *zhi* drawn by Lu is primarily formal and legal, not based on written content or textual structure.[227] To the esteemed imperial official, the *Compendium of Guiji* maintains an overall resemblance to previous "charts and records," but those predecessors

[226] *Jiatai Guiji zhi*, preface.2a.
[227] Cf. Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers," 418-19.

were products of central orders issued by the imperial court of the Northern Song, and officials in the prefectures have no authority to launch the compilation of another one.

Therefore, the compilers derive a new generic name from several non-official compendia of major metropolitan prefectures such as Chang'an and Chengdu from the Northern Song,[228] thereby signaling that the *Compendium of Guiji* was not ordered by the imperial court but the product of a local textual initiative. Earlier in the preface, Lu commends the compilers for gathering over many months an exceptionally wide range of sources—from classical writing such as the "Tribute of Yu" to imperial canons such as dynastic histories, and from minor traditions including dictionaries, Buddhist texts, and unofficial histories to unwritten records transmitted by word of mouth. However, the preface writer links this thorough, extensive investigation of local sources to the scholarship and diligence of the compilers, rather than distinguishing the *Compendium of Guiji* from its Northern-Song predecessors. In other words, to Lu, the main difference between Northern-Song and Southern-Song local gazetteers lies not in what they contain, but in whether they were ordered by an emperor.

Moreover, Lu's explicit differentiation of "compendium" from "charts and records" is more than a technical adaptation of naming conventions in the compilation of local gazetteers during the Southern Song. Rather, the categorical and inviolable association of the latter with the emperor and his court contributes to his goal to advocate a persistent policy regarding the restoration of former prefectures now under the rule of the Jin Empire.[229] At the beginning of the

[228] For an account of the nature and purpose of "regional compendia," see the preface by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) to the *Compendium of Henan* (*Henan zhi* 河南志) in *Wenguo wenzheng Sima gong wenji* 溫國文正司馬公文集 (Sibu congkan edition), 65.12b-13a; and a preface by Li Qingchen 李清臣 (1032–1102) to the *Compendium of Xiangtai* (*Xiangtai zhi* 相台志, 1089) in *Li xueshi xinzhu Sun shangshu neijian chidu* 李學士新注孫尚書內簡尺牘, cited in Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 46.

[229] For another example, see a preface by Zeng Feng 曾豐 to the *Charts and Records of Yuzhang* (*Yuzhang tuzhi* 豫章圖志, 1184), in *Yuandu ji* 緣督集 (Siku quanshu edition), 17.4a-4b.

preface, Lu compares Emperor Gaozong's arrival in Guiji in the year of 1130 to the summit of all regional lords held by the ancient sage emperor Yu, in the same region, and he praises the Southern-Song emperor for preparing to resume from this landmark the "tracks of Yu" (*yuji* 禹跡).[230] By drawing this historical analogy, Lu places Shaoxing at the beginning of an unfolding narrative when the emperor resolved to recover the former glory of the dynasty, particularly all prefectures falling inside the Nine Provinces of the Xia. As a result, the *Compendium of Guiji* becomes a confident prediction for the restoration of lost prefectures and for the concomitant edict to launch the compilation of another imperial gazetteer.

Lu You's consideration of the term "compendium" thus seems to provide a reasonable explanation for the use of that generic designation in titles of many Southern-Song local gazetteers. While prefaces to these compilations acknowledge their origins in prefectures, few of them declares an ardent endorsement for the policy of territorial restoration favored by Lu. For instance, in a preface to a gazetteer of Zhangzhou titled *Compendium of Qingzhang* (*Qingzhang zhi* 清漳志, c. 1250), Assistant Prefect Wang Nanyi 王南一 (?) states that recent gazetteers of the prefecture use "compendium" in their titles simply to register the prefectural initiative of compilation:

> Zhang is subordinate to the circuit of Min and adjacent to that of Guang. It is an important prefecture. The prefecture formerly had "charts and records" that were continued under the name "compendium." Under our dynasty, during the more than two hundred years from the Xiangfu Era to the Jiading Era [1208–1224], the gazetteer of Zhangzhou has been printed and edited multiple times. The compilers expanded the past

[230] On the "tracks of Yu" in the context of Middle-Period geographic writing, see De Weerdt, "Maps and Memory," 145-67.

and present of the prefecture, and summed up the structures and essentials of its records. The prefaces of previous compilations have detailed those endeavors.[231]

漳隸閩接廣，要郡也。郡舊有圖經，續之謂志。國朝自祥符至嘉定二百余年，屢經刊輯，推以古今，撮其綱要，舊序詳之矣。

To Wang Nanyi, officials and scholars in the prefecture have continued the compilation of "charts and records" during the Northern Song, and established in the prefecture an abiding custom of preparing local gazetteers. Nonetheless, it is necessary to distinguish these continuations from the earlier local gazetteer or gazetteers whose compilation was ordered by the imperial court. Instead of affirming an imperial symbolism of "charts and records" similar to the explanation given in Lu You's preface, the above quotation centers on the difference between imperial mandates and prefectural initiatives.

Still, titles of some Southern-Song local gazetteers adopted "compendium" due to the perceived prestige of that generic designation. As observed by Lu You, records of multiple metropolitan prefectures had been authored by learned officials during the Northern Song. Their non-official initiative of compilation and the parallel status of Shaoxing with these prominent prefectures made "compendium" an appropriate alternative to "charts and records" in the title of the gazetteer of Guiji. A similar pattern is detected in the titles of three Southern-Song gazetteers of Mingzhou 明州 (present Ningbo, Zhejiang province). The first gazetteer of the prefecture compiled in the Southern Song is titled *Charts and Records of Siming* (*Siming tujing*), combining the name of a prominent local mountain and the official generic designation of local gazetteers. But the subsequent local gazetteer was completed in 1228, after the promotion of Mingzhou to a

[231] Wang's preface survives in an eighteenth-century gazetteer of Zhangzhou. See Aohan Tetonga 敖漢特通阿 et al., *Zhangzhou fuzhi* 漳州府志 (1777), old prefaces.5a.

metropolitan prefecture, named "Qingyuan" 慶元 (lit. "felicitous prime") after the inaugural reign title of Emperor Ningzong 寧宗 (r. 1195–1224). Compilers of this gazetteer, as well as those of the next one completed in 1259, employed "compendium" in the titles to match the elevated status of the prefecture.[232] But the prestige of the name also made it the most favored alternative to "charts and records" among Southern-Song authors of local gazetteers, besides "account" (*ji* 記), "register" (*lu* 錄), "transmission" (*zhuan* 傳), "vehicle" (*sheng* 乘), and "genealogy" (*pu* 譜),[233] even when the status of a prefecture hardly matched that of Chang'an or Chengdu during the Northern Song.

As a result, by the end of the twelfth century, it became hardly feasible to separate "charts and records" from "regional compendia." During the previous century, it was evident to Zhu Changwen that regional compendia constituted a traditional domain of learning, and the compilation of these non-official works conditioned the narrower geographical enterprise of the empire. But during the Southern Song, more authors of local gazetteers appropriated the generic part of regional compendia, thereby blurring the boundaries between the two classes of writings. As a result, the difference between the two most widely-accepted generic names of local gazetteers became rather nuanced: whereas "charts and records" was used to affirm a direct association with the imperial government, "compendium" was adopted to appeal to the interests of current readers. For instance, the 1139 gazetteer of Yanzhou survives in an official edition titled *Charts and Records of Yanzhou*. But a thirteenth-century catalog of a private library and several other contemporary sources indicate that outside the imperial government circulated a

[232] The alleged reason for changing the tile of the second gazetteer is that there are a few maps but numerous records, see Luo Jun 羅濬 at al., comp., *Baoqing Siming zhi Song keben* 寶慶四明志宋刻本 (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2003), preface.2a.
[233] See Gu Hongyi, *Songchao fangzhi kao*, 3-5; and Zhang Guogan 張國淦, *Zhongguo gufangzhi kao* 中國古方志考 (Shanghai: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 95-6.

commercial edition of the same gazetteer. The title of that edition, *Compendium of Xinding* (*Xinding zhi* 新定志), combines a traditional name of the prefecture and the prestigious generic name of regional compendia.[234] By inference, as the new naming convention of local gazetteers became accepted by more authors during the Southern Song, "compendium" conveyed a subtle difference in meaning from "charts and records." The former retained the firm connection of Northern-Song regional compendia with an extra-official readership that had been multiplied by the competitive operations of governmental and commercial printers.[235] The latter continued to carry its prior connotations of a centralized geographic project guided by current priorities of the imperial court.

Finally, "charts and records" continued to be used in titles of local gazetteers compiled during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Different from Lu You's preface discussed earlier, prefaces to these gazetteers did not find the prefectural initiative of compilation in conflict with the geographical enterprise of the empire. To them, the compilation of local gazetteers in prefectures was integral to the governance of a civilizing empire and necessary to record, organize, and compile the imperial landscape. In this sense, whether they identified gazetteers as "charts and records," "regional compendia," or other phrases, prefaces to Southern-Song local gazetteers concurred in justifying the prefectural initiative of gazetteer compilation. While explaining the origins and value of local gazetteers, these prefaces also asserted the textual erudition and literary accomplishment of their writers by presenting witty turns of phrases and unusual readings of well-known precedents. For example, prefaces to the two full Southern-Song

[234] *Zhizhai shulu jieti*, 8.246

[235] For clues on the readership of "regional compendia" during the Northern Song, see Sima Guang's preface to the *Compendium of Henan* in *Wenguo wenzheng Sima gong wenji*, 65.12b-13a; and Li Qingchen's preface to the *Compendium of Xiangtai*, found in Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 46.

gazetteers of Mingzhou contain successive yet contrasting strategies to legitimize a growing custom of compiling local gazetteers in the prefecture. At the beginning of his preface to the first Southern-Song gazetteer of Mingzhou, *Charts and Records of Siming* (1169), Huang Ding 黃鼎 (?), the assistant magistrate of a neighboring county, asserts the profound importance of local gazetteers to the prefectures through clever choice of words and careful manipulation of sentences:

> For "mountains and seas" there is a classic [*jing*]; for "territories and lands" there is a chart [*tu*]; for "prefectures and towns" there are charts and records [*tujing*]: the past and present both issue from these [practices] and they are indispensable even for one day.[236]
> 山海有經，輿地有圖，郡邑有圖經，此古今所共由而一日所不可闕者也。

In this confident, rhythmic opening, Huang does not discuss the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shanhai jing*) or the *Map of Territories and Lands* (*Yudi tu* 輿地圖), nor does he explain their relationship to the origins of local gazetteers. Instead, he connects "charts and records" to the two seminal titles of recording and mapping in the geographical tradition, and presents them at the culmination as the synthesis of recording and mapping. Thereby, the writer elevates local gazetteers to the same level of importance as two of the most ancient geographic works and official maps of an imperial realm. He even implies that local gazetteers and their aggregation constitute a superior form of geographical knowledge as they combine recording and mapping. Thus, Huang makes a forceful argument about local gazetteers through the cadence of the sentence, while also showing off his literary and scholarly dexterity.

[236] *Qiandao Siming tujing*, preface.1a.

In the preface to the next local gazetteer, *Compendium of Siming* (*Siming zhi* 四明志, 1228), Luo Jun 羅濬 (?), the administrative supervisor of a nearby prefecture, gives a more technical explanation of "charts and records," employing a similar rhetorical strategy:

> Terrestrial charts were iterated to memorialize on matters of topography, regional records were iterated to memorialize on matters of government inspection. The ancients regarded these as especially important. If the charts and records are not detailed, even the prefectures themselves would have no means to inspect their own condition. How much less could they serve to inform the ruler![237]
>
> 道地圖以詔地事，道方志以詔觀事，古人所甚重也。圖志之不詳，在郡國且無以自觀，而何有於詔王哉。

In this passage, Luo first sets up a parallel between two classes of geographic texts mentioned in the *Rites of Zhou*, "terrestrial charts" and "regional compendia," but centers neither on the use of these two, nor on the contrast between them. Rather, he conflates those classical precedents into a single bibliographic category corresponding to local gazetteers. Finally, the writer inverts the inspective gaze of a ruler supposed in those two classes of texts during the Zhou and declares the prime importance of detailed local gazetteers in the imperial geographical enterprise. Together, these rhetorical moves constitute a reasoned argument: in order to inform the ruler properly, it is essential for officials to first inspect themselves by preparing detailed local gazetteers (Figure 5). The witty play of words makes the argument more memorable and more forceful by turning the classical ideal of informing the sage king on its head and by subverting the reader's expectations about the direction of the king's gaze.

[237] *Baoqing Siming zhi*, preface.2a.

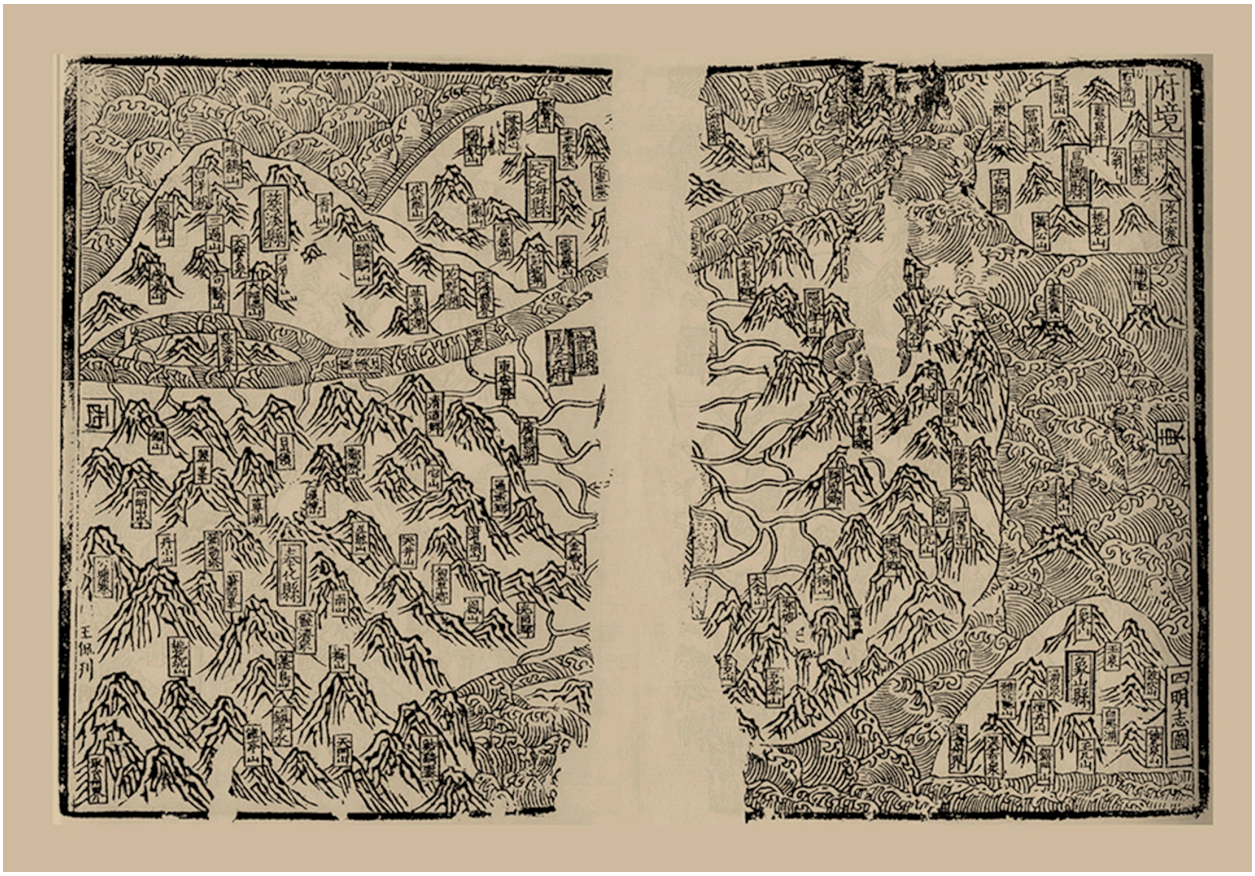


Figure 5. A woodblock map from the *Compendium of Siming*, printed during the Southern Song. This map, along with other frontispieces, extends a metaphor for the mediation stated in the preface between the eyes of an emperor and the eyes of a prefect. This specific spread depicts the territorial extent of the metropolitan prefecture (*fujing*). The landscape-oriented map supposes a bird's-eye perspective, where physical topography (mountains and water) provides the overall spatial structure, with text labels superimposed onto the landscape.

Thus, the prefectural initiative of gazetteer compilation appears to derive from the exemplary polity of antiquity and constitute an inherent component of good government in the present, more than merely a legitimate practice of recent dynasties. This localized mode of geographic writing involves a thorough investigation of the past and a continuous effort to record, organize, and compile the present. Local gazetteers were still perceived in the context of imperial governance, not in the context of local educated communities. For example, in a preface to a local gazetteer of Zhangzhou, *Compendium of Qingzhang* (*Qingzhang zhi* 清漳志), a local

official Huang Gui 黃桂 (1190–1255) juxtaposes two ancient geographic titles to refute the hypothetical criticism that it is redundant to compile another local gazetteer:

> [While emending the *Offices of Zhou*,] Kongzi recounted the "Office of Directions" of the Zhou instead of the *Nine Mounds* [*Jiu qiu*] before. Now, "mounds" means "gathering": the resources of the Nine Provinces, the yields of the land, and what the winds and airs favor were all gathered in that book. Why did Kongzi discard it? The Great Minister of Work in the *Offices of Zhou* handled a map of the subcelestial territory, fully knowing the extents and perimeters of the Nine Provinces. All mountains and forests, rivers and marshes, plains and swamps by name and classification were distinguished on this map. This was sufficient. In addition, there was a map of the Office of Directions, which recorded the populations, material resources, the nine grains and six live stocks, and all profits and losses, down to mountains and strongholds, marshes and rivers, irrigated fields, regional products, and the numbers of people and their children, leaving nothing out, whether large or small. The map of the Office of Directions was especially detailed in the dimensions of breadth and length, and compared to that map, the records of the *Nine Mounds* were even further removed [than the map of the Great Minister]. Thus, since the Office of Directions already recorded everything, the *Nine Mounds* fell out of use; Kongzi did not so much discard the book as let it fade away.[238]
>
> 孔子述職方，以除九丘。夫丘言聚也，九州所有，土地所生，風氣所宜，皆聚此書。孔子去之，何也？周官大司徒掌天下土地之圖，周知九州廣輪之數，凡山林、川澤、原隰名物皆辨焉，亦足矣。又有職方氏之圖，若人民也，財用也，九穀六畜

[238] *Zhangzhou fuzhi*, old prefaces.4a-b.

也，利害悉記，曰山鎮、曰藪澤，曰川、曰浸，曰區産，曰民生男女之數，細大不遺。職方氏之圖，詳于廣輪之數，而九丘之書，其視職方之圖益又相遠。然則職方述矣，九丘自亡用也，孔子非除之也。

Thus, Huang presents a learned defense against the doubts raised by an imagined interlocutor about the recurrent proposal to compile a new local gazetteer. To him, a comparison between three geographic texts in antiquity reveals that Kongzhi chose to preserve the "Office of Directions" in the *Office of Zhou*, instead of other geographic texts, because the texts was the most extensive, accurate, and current. Therefore, the continuous, detailed, and up-to-date compilation of local gazetteers is indeed the norm. After this sustained discussion grounded in classical exegesis, Huang concludes with a balanced and parallel aphorism:

> Alas! The subcelestial realm is the sum of its prefectures. What a prefecture records is the record of that one prefecture; what the empire records is the record of all prefectures. Therefore, if the empire takes the records of all prefectures as its own record, then what each prefecture records ought to be detailed rather than brief. [239]
>
> 嗟夫！天下者，郡國之積也。郡國所志，志一郡也。天下所志，志諸郡也。天下志諸郡以爲志，則諸郡所志者，宜詳不宜略也。

By implication, the imperial enterprise of geographic writing depends on the dutiful preparation of local gazetteers in the prefectures. If local gazetteers are incomplete, erroneous, or outdated, imperial gazetteers will inevitably be incomplete, erroneous, or outdated as well. Thus, the geographic responsibility of each prefecture is not merely a local matter: it is a matter of imperial significance. Indeed, as prefaces to Southern-Song local gazetteers justified the prefectural

[239] Ibid., old prefaces.4b.

initiative of gazetteer compilation and asserted the generic characteristics of local gazetteers, they exposed a basic contingency of the imperial geographical enterprise: the quality of record-keeping in the prefectures.

5.2 Prefects and Scholars: The Authorization of Local Gazetteers

The prefaces to Southern-Song local gazetteers authorize these works by presenting two complementary roles in the compilation process. While the prefect is credited with the "creation" (*chuang* 創) or "revision" (*xiu* 修) of a local gazetteer, the scholars are praised for "compiling" (*zuan* 纂) them.[240] The former identifies the urgent need for another local gazetteer, recruits learned compilers, opens official archives, and ratifies the completion. The latter gather abundant sources, select accurate materials, organize meaningful categories, and write instructive comments. Although the two figures could correspond to contrasting accounts of the compilation process, the prefect and the scholars appear together to fulfill the historiographic norm of maintaining a local gazetteer. The initiative, support, and recognition by dutiful prefects provide the authority of local gazetteers, alongside the erudition, diligence, and writing of talented scholars. In contrast to "charts and records" compiled during the Northern Song, the compilation of local gazetteers during the Southern Song required the approval, not from an emperor, but from prefects, and their authorship resided in the prefectures, not in the capital.

The prefect mandates, patronizes, and oversees the preparation of a local gazetteer as an extension of his official duties. As discussed in the above section, while justifying the prefectural initiative of compilation, the prefaces to local gazetteers repeat that it is essential to prepare in

[240] See Liang Xiaowen 梁瀟文, "Song-Yuan fangzhi bianxiu moshi yu zuozhe qunti tanxi" 宋元方志編修模式與作者群體探析, *Zhongguo difangzhi* 中國地方志, vol. 6 (2020): 22-37; Wang Lingling 王菱菱 and Liu Xiao 劉瀟, "Nan Song difang zhengfu de fangzhi bianxiu" 南宋地方政府的方志編修, *Hebei daxue xuebao* 河北大學學報, no.3 (2018): 9-15.

the prefectures detailed, accurate, and current local records. The continuous compilation of local gazetteers is moreover a historiographic imperative, one that lies in the alleged duty of prefects to preserve useful records and instructive models of governance in their jurisdictions. As Zheng Xingyi explains in his preface to a gazetteer of Yangzhou, *Compendium of Guangling* (*Guangling zhi* 廣陵志, 1190), prefects are responsible for preserving the written pasts of their jurisdictions, because those local records are essential to good government:

> A local gazetteer of a commandery is comparable to an official history of an imperial dynasty: it serves to examine the customs of the people and verify the practices of the land, so that the past may be consulted and the future may take guidance from those records. The local gazetteer is truly an important canonical document! Having received my appointment and transferred from Luzhou to govern this land, I seek to exalt former sages and bring benefit to the myriad people, striving daily for the well-being and order of the region; yet when there are no documents to examine, my heart is grieved by the silence…. In the Tang dynasty, Cao Xian [d. 645] first created a *Compendium of Yangzhou*. However, after the calamities and chaos of the Five Dynasties, and only bits of chapters and fragments of sentences remained, and the work was lost. After Our Dynasty established its rule, it used Weiyang [i.e., a classical name of the region] as a strategic stronghold. For more than two hundred and thirty years, the court has pursued policies of recuperation and rest, and the people have attained wealth and abundance. But the written past of this celebrated region was allowed to fall into oblivion in the end. This deficiency contradicts the duty of one who guards the land and shepherds its people. Therefore, I

commissioned Professor Zheng Shaowei [?] and Constable Yao Yiqian [fl. 1184] to compile the present gazetteer, in twelve fascicles.[241]

郡之有志，猶國之有史，所以察民風，驗土俗，使前有所稽，後有所鑒，甚重典也。余奉簡書，自廬移守茲土，表章先哲，利賴兆民，日求康治，而文獻無徵，心竊悼焉.… 唐曹憲始創揚州志，五代喪亂之餘，殘編斷簡，無復存者。我國家定鼎，以維揚爲重鎮，歷今二百三十餘年，休養生息，民臻富庶，而名邦掌故，終令淪亡，殊非守土牧民之責。爰命鄭教授少魏、姚尉一謙輯之，爲卷一十有二。

To Zheng, the gazetteer of a prefecture is fundamental to the governance of that prefecture and integral to the office of its governor. It is not merely a body of records about the prefecture to be integrated into an imperial gazetteer, but a canonical document that possesses an intrinsic value for the prefecture.

Similarly, in the preface to the *Compendium of Siming* discussed earlier, Luo Jun is referring to the prefect Hu Ju 胡榘 (1163–1244), when he states the importance of inspecting the prefecture before informing the ruler of local conditions. In the subsequent passage, Luo explains in detail how the local gazetteer helps the prefect know his jurisdiction and pursue good government:

If one wishes to know the sequence of governance and transformation, one must consider the rise and decline of the schools; if one wishes to know whether expenditures run a surplus or a deficit, one must consider the sources and flows of wealth and goods. Inspecting whether local customs flourish or decline is a prompt to conduct oneself with care and lead by example; inspecting how the mountains rise and the rivers flow is a

[241] *Zheng Zhongsu zouyi yiji*, 2.11a.

> prompt to promote benefits for the people. If one inspects every matter; every matter yields profit. This is what is meant by "knowing the whole world without stepping out of one's door."[242]
>
> 欲知政化之先後，必觀學校之廢興，欲知用度之贏縮，必觀財貨之源流。觀風俗之盛衰，則思謹身率先，觀山川之流峙，則思為民興利。事事觀之，事事有益，所謂不出戶而知天下者也。

Thus, the prefecture is the imperial realm in miniature. It is not merely an administrative division of the realm, but embodies a particular configuration of schools, resources, institutions, customs, landforms, and other universal aspects of civilization (Figure 6). In this microcosm, the local gazetteer is more than an administrative manual by which imperial officials in the prefecture familiarize themselves with local conditions. It is a canonical document whose creation is tantamount to a systematic inspection of the local landscape and its historical past. This document encompasses a comprehensive and methodical knowledge of the prefecture that is structurally identical to knowledge of the whole realm. Therefore, the final remark in the above quotation contains a paronomasia. In the metaphorical sense, the remark places local gazetteers in the lineage of imperial gazetteers, geographic works rendering the entire world legible in the palace, and declares their comparable function of making prefectures readable inside government premises. In the literal sense, it addresses the universal taxonomy of things in local gazetteers and asserts their homology with a comprehensive record of the entire imperial landscape. As

[242] *Baoqing Siming zhi*, preface.2ab.

prefects govern the subcelestial realm as representatives of the emperor, local gazetteers record the imperial landscape as constituents of the dynastic history.

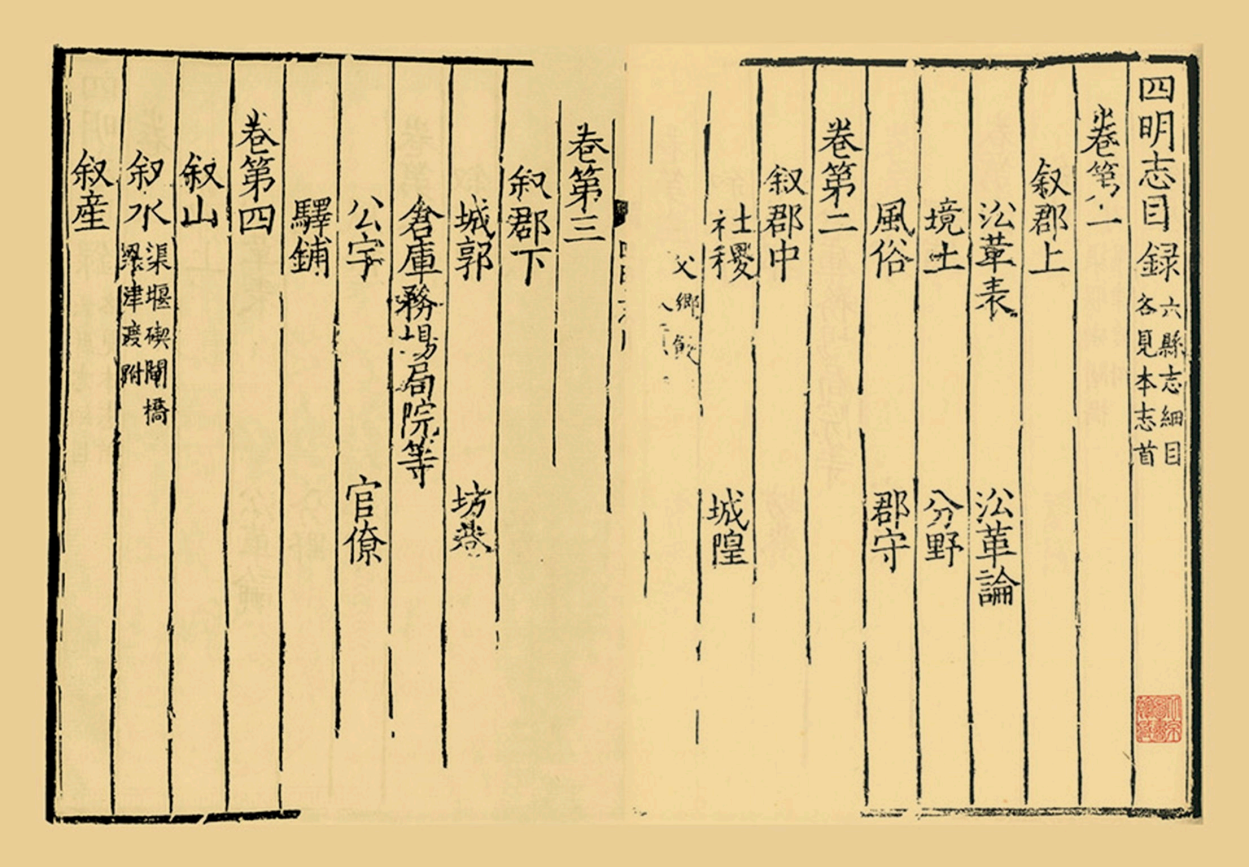


Figure 6. The first two leaves of the table of content from a Southern-Song woodblock edition of the *Compendium of Siming*: the first fascicle recounts the prefecture in general, consisting of "Chronological Table," "Discussion on the Chronology of the Prefecture," "Administrative Boundaries," "Celestial Fields," "Local Customs," and "Worthy Prefects."

However, in prefectures of the Southern Song, official archives repeatedly remained disorganized, and local gazetteers were frequently unsatisfactory. In major metropolitan regions such as Lin'an, Siming, and Chengdu, multiple local gazetteers were compiled after the Song court migrated to the South. But these cases are exceptional rather than normal, as Zheng's preface to the *Compendium of Guangling* confirms. In prefaces to local gazetteers, this inconsistency across space and time elicited regrets and criticisms, revealing that the authors

regarded the regular compilation of local gazetteers as a norm. Yet this historiographic norm did not necessarily entail a transformation of archives and records in the prefectures, let alone a homogenous one.

The general lack of consistency in compiling local gazetteers during the Southern Song contributed a typical plot by the construction of the prefect as a discursive figure, inviting his initiative, patronage, and recognition. For example, a new gazetteer of Huizhou 徽州 (present Huangshan, Anhui province) titled *Compendium of Xin'an* (*Xin'an zhi* 新安志, 1175) was completed when Zhao Buhui 趙不悔 (fl. 1148) served as the prefect. According to his preface to the gazetteer, Zhao discovered the deficiency of a previous local gazetteer, conceived the present project, and supported its completion:

> Huizhou has been a commandry since the Han, and from then until now, this status has endured. Therefore, the "records and charts" of the region ought to document its affairs in full detail. Yet when I examined it, the documentation was fragmentary and incomplete, leaving the reader with regrets. This is why the *Compendium of Xin'an* has been made. Some time ago, when I, Buhui, was about to assume the guardianship of this prefecture, the clerks brought the "records and charts" to me of their own accord. Upon seeing how sparse and sketchy that work was, I immediately formed the intention of supplementing and rearranging it. One day I stated this intention before my assembled guests, and a guest said that the newly appointed vice-prefect of Zhanggong, Mr. Luo, had long set his heart on precisely this task—searching out and gathering materials, editing and polishing writings, collecting and adding supplements, diligent in his labors and long engaged in them. Pleasantly surprised, I then asked him to bring the work to completion, to make of

it a singular work, and to display it to the age. Thus, the *Compendium of Xin'an* came into the world. Across the thousand years, the gazetteer gathers widely and selects with care, discusses merits and discovers failures, all based on evidence. In total, it counts ten fascicles.[243]

徽爲郡自漢始，至於今久矣。圖經紀述其事宜詳也。試考之，則遺闕而不備，讀者恨焉。此新安志所以作也。不悔昔將承乏此州，而吏以圖經先至，見其疏略，即有意於補次。一日，對衆客語之，客言新章貢倅羅君，蓋志存於此者，訪拾編摩，蒐取附益，用心勤且舊矣。僕爲驚喜，因請之卒業，成一家書，以表見於時，於是新安志出焉。上下千載間，博采詳摭，論正得失，皆有據依，釐爲十卷。

In other words, the substandard production of local gazetteers in Huizhou inspired not only the conception of the *Compendium of Xin'an*, but also the literary construction of a hero official who resolved to remedy that inadequacy upon his arrival in the prefecture. Although Zhao did not carry out or participate in the work of compiling the local gazetteer, he represents himself as the official patron who understood the need for a new local gazetteer, legitimized a work in progress, and promoted the completion and publication of that work.

Besides prefects, scholars appear in prefaces to carry out the work of compilation and to provide the literary refinement and textual expertise necessary for realizing the historiographic norm of recording the local landscape. As Zhao Buhui's above preface reports, the compilation of the *Compendium of Xin'an* was carried out by a learned official, Luo Yuan 羅願 (d. 1184), and involved a sustained labor of searching, gathering, editing, polishing, and supplementing that

[243] Luo Yuan 羅願 et al., comp., *Xin'an zhi* 新安志 (SYFC edition), preface one.1ab.

predated the prefect's arrival. In the concluding remark, Zhao praises Luo for his broad learning and fluent writing:

> Mr. Luo, through his classical learning, won an early reputation for brilliance early on. It is precisely because of his extensive knowledge and wide-ranging erudition that discussions in the present gazetteer cover such a wide scope. His narrative style moreover naturally embodies the proper method of composition. Readers will surely be able to discern this for themselves.[244]
>
> 羅君以儒學早馳雋聲，惟其博物洽聞，故論載甚廣，而其敘事又自得立言之法，讀者必能辨之。

In his own preface to the *Compendium of Xin'an*, Luo Yuan makes a fuller statement on the learned foundations of the local gazetteer, the moral instructions of its sections, and the subtle meanings of its records:

> The reason for recording mountains, rivers, and distances is not to display vastness and remoteness, but rather to ensure knowledge of what is perilous and what is level, so that one does not forget to remain vigilant. The reason for recording of population figures and land acreage is not to boast of wealth and abundance, but rather to monitor growth and decline, so that the people are not subjected to exploitation. The reason for documenting levies, tribute, and local products is not to gratify desires and appetites, but rather to regulate surpluses and shortages, so as to share benefits with the people. As for the historical changes in administrative divisions, the successes and failures of official governance, the goodness or baseness of local customs, and the abundance or scarcity of

[244] *Xin'an zhi*, preface one.1b.

local talent—all of these have subtle underlying meanings, and they must be compiled by those who are learned.[245]

夫所為記山川道里者，非以示廣遠也，務知險易不忘戒也。其録丁口頃畝，非以覽富厚也，務察息耗毋繇奪也。其書賦貢物産，非以給嗜欲也，務裁闊陋同民利也。至於州土沿革，吏治得失，風俗之媺惡，與其人材之衆寡，是皆有微旨，必使涉於學者纂之。

Thus, Luo reminds the reader that the *Compendium of Xin'an* is a learned work founded on a thorough grasp of textual traditions and their implications for governance. In subsequent lines, he criticizes the misconception that local gazetteers are the menial task of clerks and do not concern classicists. To him, instead of "deserting the world" (*fei yu shi* 廢於世), classicists must dedicate themselves to enabling good government in the prefectures by creating instructive local records.[246] In this way, Luo's preface not only produces but also reproduces the scholar in the compilation process.

Not all extant prefaces to local gazetteers of the Southern Song discuss in detail the role played by scholars. But all of them affirm the learned nature and instructive function of local gazetteers. For example, although Zheng Xingyi's preface to the *Compendium of Guangling* simply identifies its two compilers, Zheng Shaowei and Yao Yiqian, his extended reflection on

[245] Ibid., preface two, 2ab. The preface by Luo places the gazetteer of Huizhou at the end of a more extended narrative about the recording of the local landscape. According to him, the written past of Huizhou can be traced in classical writings, official histories, and geographical texts since antiquity, and several excellent gazetteers of the prefecture were compiled during recent dynasties. However, earlier records fell into neglect, and a major rebellion in the 1120s destroyed the latest gazetteer of Huizhou held by the prefecture. As a result, for more than five decades, local officials had relied on makeshift booklets patched together from tax registers and village headmen's oral accounts. Lamenting this dire situation of loss, Luo then spent years gleaning previous histories, imperial canons, and miscellaneous accounts, recovered a copy of the lost local gazetteer from a local family, and consulted elders about what was left unwritten. But the work was not finished until Zhao Buhui recognized its worth and supported its completion, granting access to official archives, ensuring the assistance of government agencies, and launching an extensive search for inscriptions in the counties.

[246] *Xin'an zhi*, preface two, 2ab.

the local gazetteer testifies to their success of them in recording the local landscape. Toward the end of this reflection, Zheng acknowledges that the breadth of writing and depth of meaning in the local gazetteer fulfill the historiographic responsibility of a prefect:

> The affairs within a territory of several hundred *li* are all gathered together and written in this book. Thus, even if one never steps down from the hall, the interlocking lands of Guangling spread out before one's eyes in a single glance. Does not this fulfill the duty of those who protect the soil and shepherd the people? When the Sage Son of Heaven surveys local conditions and inquires about regional customs, the gazetteer may serve as the Grand Historiographer's presentation. And those who come later to govern this prefecture will likewise have something to rely upon. Hence, I write this preface.[247]
> 數百里封域中之事，群匯而筆之於書，則身雖不下堂階，而廣陵錯壤，恍然在目，斯無負守土牧民之責乎！聖天子採風問俗，藉以當太史之陳，後之來守是邦者，亦庶乎其有所據依矣。是為序。

Indeed, the writing of the preface itself enacts the recognition of the compilers' exceptional achievements. Although Zheng does not directly compliment the textual erudition and literary craft of the two compilers, he promotes the excellence of their work by appearing as a reader and beneficiary, by crafting a substantial and thoughtful preface engaging deeply with the contents of the local gazetteer. Indeed, it is the duty of the prefect to ensure the completion of a local gazetteer, to leave behind a lasting legacy that serves both the court and future governors. But it is the two scholars who carried out the compilation of the local gazetteer. Zheng's preface thus affirms the prefect's historiographic duty while conferring scholarly merit upon the compilers.

[247] *Zheng Zhongsu zouyi yiji*, 2.12b-13a.

By deeming the local gazetteer indispensable to governance in Yangzhou and worthy of imperial attention in the capital, Zheng even compares the compilers to official historiographers: their broad learning, moral insight, and literary virtuosity enabled them to transform the records of a prefecture into a written work of enduring political and cultural significance.

In some Southern-Song local gazetteers, it is possible to draw a further distinction between the compilers by their relationship to prefectures, as either native scholars or local officials. Whereas the participation of the former contributes to the compilation of local gazetteers careful records of prefectures and a direct grasp of local conditions, the involvement of the latter lends these written works instant credence and a wider reputation. For instance, Luo Yuan, in signing his preface to the *Compendium of Xin'an*, identifies himself as a "person of the commandry" (*junren* 郡人), instead of a vice-prefect elsewhere.[248] Although he promotes the compilation of local gazetteers as a suitable employment for scholars and invites contributions from classicists in general, Luo also attributes his sustained attention to the written past of the prefecture and his ongoing engagement with local records to his personal connection with Huizhou. Toward the end of his preface, Luo reports his departure from Huizhou after completing the local gazetteer and expresses a wistful yearning for his native region and a continued commitment to documenting the local landscape. Thus, in his preface, Luo appears simultaneously as a learned official and a native scholar; the gazetteer of Huizhou is a courteous tribute to the emperor as well as a cordial gift to local residents.

While Luo Yuan draws the distinction between native scholars and learned officials in a spontaneous manner, this nuance in the role of compilers could also be overtly tactical. In a preface to a gazetteer of Zhangzhou, *Compendium of Linzhang* (*Linzhang zhi* 臨漳志, 1178),

[248] *Xin'an zhi*, preface two, 2a-b.

Professor of the Prefectural School Li Lun 李綸 (fl. 1160) quotes the prefect's remark on the importance of employing non-native scholars as compilers:

> Now, if scholars of Zhangzhou were to record the customs of Zhangzhou, exhausting all that is beautiful and without concealing anything, I fear that later generations would not trust those records. But if a worthy man came from afar and was able to learn about the customs of Zhangzhou from beginning to end, and then found one or two men to take up the brush, then even if these customs were writ large and engraved deeply, later generations surely would not dare dispute them. Then the beauty of Zhangzhou would perhaps be preserved without the slightest loss.[249]
>
> 夫以漳士紀漳俗，極所美而無隱，恐後人莫之信，或有遠來之賢，能習漳俗始末者，得一二人以秉筆，雖大書深刻，後世必無敢異議者，漳之美庶乎其無毫髮湮矣。

Accordingly, the prefect acknowledges that native scholars of Zhangzhou would be capable of preparing an excellent local gazetteer. They know the refined local customs closely and would hold nothing back. The problem is not the native scholars' knowledge or their commitment but their credibility. Because of the scholars' personal attachments to the prefecture, later readers will suspect them of bias, of exaggerating the virtues of their homeland, of failing to record its flaws. In other words, the very proximity of native scholars to the subject undermines their authority. After receiving the prefect's instructions, and through an extensive search in nearby prefectural and county schools, Li found two suitable candidates and invited them to join the project.

[249] *Zhangzhou fuzhi*, old preface.3b.

Finally, the patronage by prefects and the application of scholars did not necessarily ensure the public acceptance of local gazetteers. In one recorded instance, the preface by Zhao Rutan 趙汝談 (d. 1237) to the *Compendium of Wujun* (*Wujun zhi* 吳郡志, 1229) exposes the fragile, contingent social forces that resulted in the eventual publication of the gazetteer.[250] According to Zhao, the gazetteer of Suzhou was completed in 1191 by Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126–1193), an eminent official of the empire and a native scholar of the prefecture. His gazetteer was approved by the prefect at that time and almost committed to printing. However, certain local families discovered that records presented by them had been excluded, and hence spread rumors alleging that the local gazetteer was written not by Fan but by other local scholars. The controversy surrounding Fan's authorship then intimidated the prefect into canceling the publication and locking the copy away in the prefectural school. For nearly four decades, Fan's brilliant work lay hidden, until a new prefect, Li Shoupeng 李壽朋 (?), arrived in 1228. Having learned about the *Compendium of Wujun* from his father, once a retainer of Fan, Li was shocked to find that masterwork unpublished. After retrieving the original manuscript from Fan's descendants, he ascertained its authenticity by comparing the manuscript with the unpublished copy in the prefectural school. Rather than printing it unchanged, Li convened scholars to supplement it with recent affairs in the prefecture, and commissioned Zhao Rutan to write a preface. At last, in 1229, the woodblocks were carved, and Fan's work was released.

When the *Compendium of Wujun* was completed in 1191, neither the compiler's erudition nor the prefect's endorsement guaranteed its favorable reception in Suzhou. Yet, Zhao Rutan's preface adduces that earlier failure as evidence that the worth of Fan's local gazetteer was always independent of contemporary reception. To Zhao, while the old slander slowly faded away, Fan's

[250] Fan Chengda 范成大 et al., comp., *Wujun zhi* 吳郡志 (SYFC edition), preface.1a-3a.

work has remained intact and awaited the right time. Once a competent prefect such as Li Shoupeng arrived, Fan's work could finally follow its destined course: to be printed, circulated, and transmitted across generations. Thus, the aborted initial plan to print the *Compendium of Wujun* is not a tragedy but a test. The eventual publication of the local gazetteer is not an accident contingent upon the passing of the controversy surrounding its authorship, but a probable outcome owing to its status as "an imposing canon of the commandry" (*yijun judian* 一郡鉅典).[251] Similar to the *Supplementary Account to the Charts and Records of Wu* completed by Zhu Changwen more than a century before, the *Compendium of Wujun* was compiled by a local scholar and approved by a prefect. However, Zhao Rutan's preface does not declare a learned tradition of "regional compendia" that conditions the geographical enterprise of a civilizing empire, but supposes that the *Compendium of Wujun* is a constituent of the imperial geographical enterprise.

5.3 Progressive Narratives of Governance: The Civilization of the Local Landscape

In local gazetteers compiled during the Southern Song, the chronological list of prefects became a standard and expected component of local gazetteers. It refined the chronological table of establishment and abolishment years that was characteristic of earlier local gazetteers. This list functioned not as a self-contained reference tool, but as the master temporal order for the entire local gazetteer. It provided the official timeline for a progressive narrative of governance in which each successive prefect was supposed to build on the achievements of his predecessors, and in which the tenure of every prefect should register a written advance in the civilization of the local landscape. The record of water management exemplifies this progressive narrative of

[251] *Wujun zhi*, preface.1a.

governance, with its interlocking projects of dredging, diking, and channeling attributed to one prefect after another. Therefore, the prefect was emblematic of the Southern-Song local gazetteer not only in the sense that he played a key role in the compilation process and was associated with the historiographic norm of documenting the local past, but also in the sense that he was the structural, temporal, and narrative center around which the entire document was organized.

During the Southern Song, the chronological list of prefects emerged as a standard, almost obligatory component of the local gazetteer.[252] This recurrent, formulaic textual feature signifies that the region has been governed in an orderly (if intermittent) succession by agents of imperial courts. Earlier local gazetteers had included records about governors, and some had even arranged them into broad sequences. But it was during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the self-contained, consecutive list of prefects became a fixture that readers could expect to find in local gazetteers, typically recording personal and courtesy names, native places, years of tenure, concurrent posts, and major achievements. For example, in the *Charts and Records of Yanzhou* (*Yanzhou tujing* 嚴州圖經, 1185), an incomplete list of prefects appears toward the end of the first fascicle, after multiple sections about local affairs and as an appendix to "Worthy Shepherds" ("Xian mu" 賢牧).[253] The appendix, titled "Signatures" ("Timing" 題名), presents a columnar record of prefects from the Tang onward in two parts, each starting with a summary of the main sources and its principle of selection. The first half reproduces a "record in the main office]" (*dating ji* 大廳記) during the early Song and follows its exclusion of governors who were not appointed by the imperial courts of the Tang and the Song. An interjection then reports

[252] For studies of prefect lists during the Tang and the Song, see Gui, *Songdai fangzhi kaozheng yu yanjiu*, 506-10, 530-33; and on signatures on walls of prefectural premises during the Tang, see Wang, *Spatial Imaginaries in Mid-Tang China*, 146-66.
[253] *Chunxi Yanzhou tujing*, 1.23b-38a.

the lack of records for the subsequent 135 years between 985 and 1121 and mentions six renowned officials who served as prefect in Yanzhou during this period.

The second half copies a "record of signatures" (*timing ji* 題名記) by Zhu Yi 朱翌 (1097–1167) and identifies prefects of Yangzhou since 1121. While the list contains a major omission for the Northern-Song period, it acknowledges and explains this omission, and thus displays an implicit intention to present a complete chronology consisting of all prefects who were appointed by the Tang and the Song. In addition, because the *Charts and Records of Yanzhou* was continuously updated afterwards, the prefect list ends not with Chen Gongliang 陳公亮 (fl. 1160), who sponsored this gazetteer, but with Wu Pan 吳槃 (?), the prefect between 1254 and 1256.[254] By implication, to maintain a chronological list of prefects in Yanzhou became an official routine during the thirteenth century. This official routine is confirmed in the next gazetteer of Yanzhou, *Continued Compendium of Yanzhou* (*Yanzhou xuzhi* 嚴州續志, 1262), particularly the second fascicle, "Institution of Prefectural Offices" ("Junguan jianzhi" 郡官建制). Beginning with a historical overview of the local government since antiquity, the fascicle devotes the second section, "Signatures of Prefects" ("Zhizhou timing" 知州題名), to extending the prefect list in the previous gazetteer.[255] The prefect chronology is moved to precede "exemplary prefects" as well as a description of local affairs, and its individual entries include extra notes on governmental achievements (if any), as the opening remark of the section announces. Thus, the prior list of prefects is not simply continued but is elevated to a prominent position in the gazetteer and enhanced with a careful record of major advances in governance.

[254] Ibid., 1.34b, 38b
[255] *Jingding Yanzhou xuzhi*, 2.2b-6a.

More than a record of who governed in Yangzhou, the chronology of prefects aligns the region and its written past with the sequence of those who governed it.

As the prefect list became a common feature in local gazetteers during the Southern Song, the lack of such a list became a sign of deficiency. The acceptance of the prefect list as a standard component can be inferred from its recurrence across all extant Southern-Song local gazetteers, and from its improvement across gazetteers of the same prefecture. In addition to the above two gazetteers of Yanzhou, two local gazetteers of Mingzhou offer another couple of examples. Whereas the *Charts and Records of Siming* (1169) presents in the twelfth, final fascicle a list of prefects under the Song, the *Compendium of Siming* (1228) expands in the second half of the first fascicle the prior list into a full chronology of prefects since the creation of the prefecture under the Tang.[256] While the introduction to the former list gives an overview of prefects in Mingzhou, the introduction to the latter list states its underlying principle: the prefect is "the handle of imperial governance and the pivot of moral transformation" 宰制之權, 教化之樞.[257] In the former, entries of even length fill halved columns with the names and titles of individual prefects. In the latter, entries of uneven extent either occupy one double-line column noting the names and titles of prefects, or run across multiple columns profiling extraordinary prefects in detail. Because the former list focuses on the Song period, the latter notes under the section headings of the Tang and the Five Dynasties that these records are not available in the prior gazetteer. When Wang Xiangzhi 王象之 (fl. 1196) compiled a geographic compendium, *Splendors of the Land Recorded* (*Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝, 1227) and consulted

[256] Cf. *Qiandao Siming tujing*, 12.1a-7a; and *Baoqing Siming zhi*, 1.18a-41a.
[257] *Baoqing Siming zhi*, 1.18a.

numerous local gazetteers,[258] he noted that a prefect list is absent in a gazetteer of the capital county of Quzhou 渠州 (present Guang'an, Sichuan province), *Compendium of Dangqu* (*Dangqu zhi* 宕渠志).[259] By implication, the chronology of prefects was not necessarily a universal feature of local gazetteers compiled during the Southern Song, but contemporary readers of this genre anticipated to find it.

Moreover, a chronological list of prefects provides the master timeline coordinating the entire local gazetteer. More than a self-contained reference tool, the chronology establishes the primary temporal order along which historical events, building projects, institutional changes, and even advances in local customs are plotted. This organizing principle is exemplified by the *Compendium of Jiankang* (*Jiankang zhi* 建康志, 1260s). From fascicle 6 to 14, the gazetteer of Jiankang (present Nanjing, Jiangsu province) presents the "Table of Jiankang" ("Jiankang biao" 建康表), a chronological table of the prefecture since ancient dynasties, in which the tenures of prefects and the annals of imperial dynasties concur (Figure 7).[260] This encompassing table conforms to an invariant template consisting of four horizontal rows. The first row, "Time" ("Shi" 時), follows the annals of successive dynasties and divides the entire table into yearly columns. The columns of the three rows below, "Place" ("Di" 地), "Person" ("Ren" 人), and "Event" ("Shi" 事) respectively report changes in administrative boundaries, official appointments, and government affairs, if any.[261] For the Song dynasty, especially, as the succession of blocks in the first row unfolds through reigns and years, the corresponding blocks in the third row identify an arriving or departing prefect, if any, and those in the fourth row

[258] On the *Splendors of the Land Recorded*, its transmission and its approach, see Jeffrey Moser, "One Land of Many Places: The Integration of Local Culture in Southern Song Geographies," *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 42 (2012): 235-43, 43-78.
[259] See Wang Xiangzhi 王象之, *Yudi jisheng* 輿地紀勝 (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1963), 162.6b.
[260] Zhou Yinghe 周應合, et al., comp., *Jingding Jiankang zhi* 景定建康志 (SYFC edition), contents.3a-5a.
[261] *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 6.2a, 7.1a, 8.2a, 9.1a, 10.2a, 11.2b, 12.1a, 13.2a, 14.1a.

recounts major events in or concerning the prefecture, if any.[262] The chronological table thus creates a continuous march of time in which the tenures of prefects in Jiankang serve as the direct, local expression of the dynastic timeline. It aligns every significant occurrence to the reign of an emperor as well as the tenure of a governor, and builds a unified temporal spine for the entire written past of the prefecture.

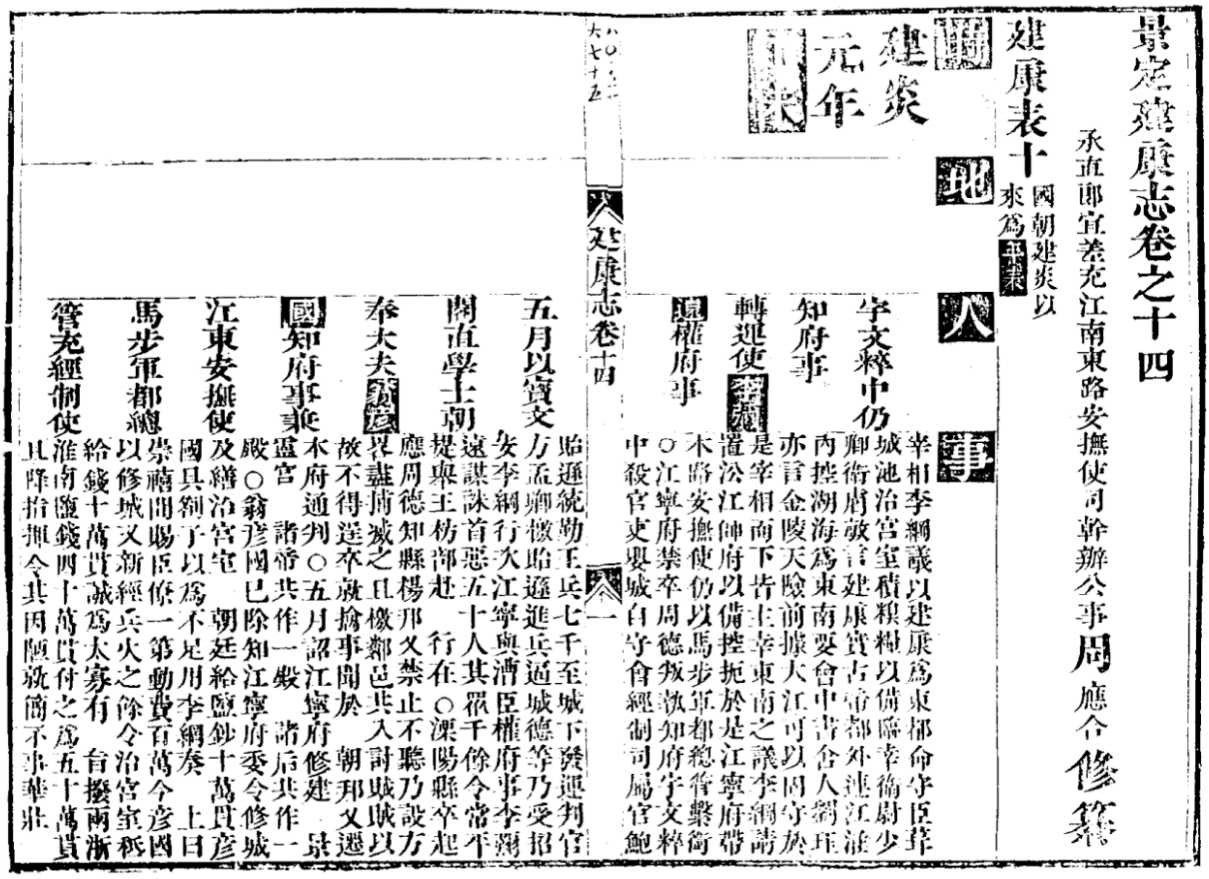


Figure 7. A two-page spread from the *Compendium of Jiankang*, reprinted in 1801. The right page displays the beginning of the Southern-Song section in the chronological table in fascicle 14. The table confirms to a rigid categorical template of four vertically stacked headers: "Time" ("Shi"), "Place" ("Di"), "Person" ("Ren"), and "Event" ("Shi").

A chronology of prefects could also provide the temporal order through which records about a specific local affair are arranged. For example, the list of prefects in the *Continued*

[262] *Jingding Jiankang zhi*, 13.2a-14.54b.

Records of Yanzhou registers under the names of many prefects their governmental achievements, and these achievements appear in corresponding sections to constitute fuller historical narratives organized by the terms of relevant prefects. For instance, the inauguration, renovation, and expansion of the Fishing Terrace Academy (Diaotai shuyuan 釣臺書院) in 1228, 1240, and 1251 are recorded as major official achievements under the names of three prefects.[263] These events appear also in the third fascicle on local schools and scholars, particularly the special section on the Fishing Terrace Academy.[264] Moreover, rather than appearing as singular achievements by three prefects at different times, they become part of a detailed overview of the local center of learning across the terms of nine prefects. Because the academy occupied a building in the Memorial Hall for Master Yan, the section begins with the foundation of that hall in 1034 by Fan Zhongyan and reports additional contributions to the site by three other prefects, before the formal inauguration of the academy by Lu Ziyu 陸子遹, the prefect from 1226 to 1230.

The prefect-by-prefect narrative structure continues in the rest of the section, recounting the successive contributions made by four prefects over the next three or four decades, notably the comprehensive expansion of the academy in 1251 under the direction of Zhao Ruli 趙汝歷 (?) with inscribed plaques, decorated gates, lecture halls, pavilions, dormitories, storehouses, and kitchens. After the dense and rich description of the academy during Zhao's term follows an evaluation of recent improvements, including the renovation of the academy sponsored by the current prefect, Qian Keze 錢可則 (?) after a major flood in the region:

[263] *Jingding Yanzhou xuzhi*, 2.2b, 3b, 4b.
[264] Ibid., 3.2a-4a.

The following year, Prefect Ji Yong memorialized the court to appoint the professor of the prefectural school concurrently as head of the academy. Following established precedent, in each of the four mid-season months, the prefect would deliver a formal address, dispatching the head of the academy to lead the staff in performing the sacrifice. The prefect, too, would occasionally attend the sacrifice in person. The institutional structure of the academy was by this time largely complete. However, because it rested on a high foundation suspended over empty space, in the great flood of 1252 the channels filled in and the soil collapsed; within less than a decade the buildings were on the verge of collapse. In 1261, the present prefect, Qian Keze, urgently undertook repairs, and the result surpassed the former condition. Since the Kexing Pavilion had lapsed into a dwelling for monks and become extremely dilapidated, the prefect ordered the monks to demolish the old structure, and for the Dharma hall, he selected a more open and elevated site to the left of the monastery. From this point onward, the very trees and grasses on the mountain gained even more vitality and charm.[265]

明年，知州季鏞聞于朝，以州學教授兼山長，循故實以四仲月守致詞，遣山長率職事致祭，守亦時往。書院之制，蓋略備矣。然枕高懸虛以爲基，壬子巨浸，溝湮土頹，不十年廩廩欲壓。景定辛酉，今侯錢可則亟修治之，視舊益勝。客星閣舊淪於僧舍，頹圮滋甚，命僧撤其故，為法堂更卜爽塏，於佛廬之左建焉。此山草木自是益精神矣。

Thus, the history of the Fishing Terrace Academy is ordered into an extensive series of prefectural tenures and rendered as the accumulated product of successive initiatives by prefects.

[265] Ibid., 3.3b.

As each of the nine prefects built on the work of his predecessors, they left the site not merely intact or enlarged but improved.

Finally, the prefect chronology transforms the succession of governmental achievements into a progressive narrative of civilization by presenting later achievements as building upon earlier foundations, and by deploying a vocabulary of restoration, improvement, and innovation. For example, an extended passage from the section, "On Water" ("Xu shui" 敍水), in the *Compendium of Siming* focuses on a water network in Mingzhou and its historical formation.[266] Before giving a detailed overview of the successive hydraulic projects that led to the water network, the passage provides a lush evocation of the ultimate achievement: a beautiful, livable, and productive landscape centering on the capital county, particularly the Sun Lake and Moon Lake. It lingers over the sources and dimensions of the two lakes, the ten named islets with their poetic appellations, the pavilions and terraces oriented to capture the shifting seasonal views, the pleasure boats and promenading sightseers whose canopies cast shade on the water, the branching channels that wind through the city so that households draw clear water at their doorsteps.

But next the reader is reminded that this all-beneficent landscape is not a natural phenomenon, but a hydrological crisis averted. The charm of the lakes, the pleasure of the sightseers, the fresh drinking water of the households, and the very possibility of agriculture all rest on a fragile infrastructure that guards against saline tides from the sea, diverts torrents from the surrounding mountains into the fields, and collects fresh water in the two county lakes.[267] The agents of that achievement are the local officials whose interventions it proceeds to narrate:

[266] *Baoqing Siming zhi*, 4.5b-6a.
[267] Ibid., 4.5b.

the Tang magistrate Wang Yuanwei 王元暐 (?), the Tang prefect Yu Jiyou 于季友 (?), the early Song official Qian Yi 錢億 (927–967), and on through the chain of later prefects, magistrates, and commissioners who built, repaired, financed, and regulated the beneficent network of reservoirs, channels, weirs, and sluices.[268] The formation of this hydraulic network appears to involve contributions by officials other than prefects. But the list of prefects in the *Compendium of Siming* does not include these officials or their achievements. In other words, their presence in the historical narrative does not weaken the centrality of the prefect. Rather, it reveals the principal plot by which the gazetteer subordinates all governmental achievements to the prefectural chronology. These other officials appear within a narrative of water control that is itself embedded in a local gazetteer whose master chronology remains the list of prefects. They act within the prefectural sequence, between the tenures of named prefects, and their achievements are recorded as contributions to a prefecture whose history of civilization is ultimately told through the succession of its governors.

The opening passage closes with a stern reminder by the present prefect Hu Ju: "Dredging and channeling must be done at the proper times, dikes and embankments must be carefully maintained, and the opening and closing of sluice gates must follow the prescribed regulations. This brings great benefits to this prefecture; may later generations not neglect them" 浚導必時，隄防必謹，啓閉必如式，一邦之大利也，後之人毋忽. The civilizational achievement that the *Compendium of Siming* records is never secure without the vigilance of the next prefect. The civilization of the local landscape is progressive not in the sense that improvement is guaranteed or uninterrupted, but in the sense that it constructs a chronological order in which improvement is always demanded and always possible. The list of prefects is a

[268] Ibid., 4.5b-6b.

chain of obligation, each link bound to the ones before and after. To record the chain is to exhort its continuation. The local gazetteer is not only a record of past governance but an instrument for securing its future. It is the authoritative document of the local landscape and its history of governance.

Southern-Song local gazetteers are simultaneously governmental and scholarly. These authoritative documents assert the cultural prestige of individual prefectures, provide definitive records of local governance, and construct progressive narratives of civilization outside the imperial capital. Authors distinguished these works from earlier imperial "charts and records" by adopting traditional place names and the prestigious generic designation "compendium," yet they attributed this difference to the inadequacies of earlier compilers rather than regarding it as a fundamental change in the nature of local gazetteers. Prefaces justified the prefectural initiative of compilation by invoking classical precedents and arguing that detailed local records were essential for good governance. The production of these gazetteers depended on a partnership between prefects and scholars. Whereas the former supplied institutional legitimacy by initiating projects, recruiting compilers, and ratifying finished works, the latter brought intellectual authority through their textual erudition and literary skill. Within the local gazetteers themselves, the chronological list of prefects emerges as a standard organizing feature, providing the master temporal order that aligns the tenure of each prefect with the dynastic timeline and frames the history of governance as a cumulative process of improvement at the local level. Southern-Song local gazetteers are canonical documents of prefectures that celebrate the transformative power of imperial rule, mediating between local and imperial concerns through a progressive history of the local landscape shaped by the prefect.

Chapter 6 Conclusion: Civilization Localized

> There is a vast plurality of ways of representing landscape—as of place generally. Landscape, as we perceive and remember it, is a decidedly polymorphic affair. Thanks to its intrinsic variety (even a desert is amazingly diverse in landforms and life-forms) and to its all-embracing and open prospect, it offers countless perspectives and vistas, all of which are subject in turn to multiple modes of representation in various media. A complete catalog of these modes and media would be an endless project.
>
> ——Edward S. Casey (2002)[269]

The preceding genealogy of geographic writing in Middle-Period China reveals how authors and readers across four centuries produced and reproduced the relationship between geographic texts and imperial governance. Throughout this genealogy, a practice-centered approach to textual genres resists teleological narratives marching toward some inherent structure of compilation. The authors examined here evaluated exemplary precedents and introduced meaningful adjustments to received poetics of geographical knowledge. Their maps and gazetteers comprised recurring groups of stylistic, thematic, and structural features subject to innovation and manipulation. Changes in formal features indicate deliberate efforts to interpret, adapt, and manipulate the geographical tradition—efforts that were always contested, contingent, and creative, and that were based on earlier practices and current needs, and not oriented on some

[269] Edward S. Casey, *Representing Place: Landscape Painting and Maps* (The University of Minesota Press, 2002), 262.

future inevitability. Thus, this genealogy uncovers a series of strategic reconfigurations, each responding to distinct political pressures and intellectual currents, yet each contributing to a long-term shift in the place, method, and significance of the production of authoritative geographical knowledge.

During the seventh century, the imperial courts of the Sui and the Tang imposed a universal measure of regional difference while resuming the official appraisal of regional customs. Through centralized geographic projects like the Daye gazetteer and the Zhenguan gazetteer, Sui and Tang ministers sought to contain the competition for cultural prestige in commandries by subordinating local claims to a common taxonomy of terrestrial features and an official appraisal of regional customs. They did not simply record variations in diverse terrestrial features, but constructed a hierarchical geography of civilization that placed the heartlands at the high center while integrating the imperial peripheries through measured evaluation. Even as official historiographers of the Tang devised lineages of geographic texts that hearkened back to canonical origins, they hardly suppressed competing accounts that circulated in unofficial records. Rather, they brought a massive accumulation of geographic records to the imperial capital and invited their discordant claims of civilization to the celestial court.

By the turn of the ninth century, this universal measure of regional difference had given way to a strategic infrastructure of the empire. After a series of destructive rebellions against the Tang Empire, ministers such as Jia Dan and Li Jifu refocused geographic writing on natural defenses, choke points, trunk routes, and material resources. Their imperial maps and gazetteers were hardly more detailed or more extensive than their predecessors. But these works reoriented geographical knowledge toward documenting the basic physical and organizational structures useful for securing the empire against internal and external threats. The prefaces to these works

insisted on the stable essence of geographic writing, distinguishing strategic fundamentals from the diffuse range of terrestrial features that had preoccupied earlier compilers. In affirming that this imperial infrastructure was inherent in the rule of a sage king, Jia Dan and Li Jifu also preserved the symbolic status of the emperor as the ultimate source of civilization. Their geography was both instructive and metaphorical, providing practical guidance for strengthening the security of the capital while performing the centered order of civilization regardless of the threats perceived on all sides.

During the eleventh century, ministers of the Northern Song compiled imperial gazetteers to present current conspectuses of the realm and to prioritize competing proposals on ritual, fiscal, or military policies. These works shared with their ninth-century predecessors a clear concern for strategic matters, but diverged in an expansive assumption about the geographical archive and a circumstantial selection of traditional subjects. The Bureau of Directions emerged as the institutional pivot of geographic writing, and its expedient mechanisms of documentation paralleled the personal discernment that had characterized the works of Jia Dan and Li Jifu. The competing standards of completion in eleventh-century imperial gazetteers—the debates over what constituted a comprehensive record of the imperial landscape, what traditional categories deserved inclusion, what relationship obtained between the past and the present—reveal a composite genre in frequent negotiation with shifting priorities of the imperial government. With recurrent initiatives to compile an imperial gazetteer, officials and scholars in prefectures were incentivized to compile and supplement local gazetteers, in the expectation that the court would launch another centralized project of geographic writing.

After the loss of the northern half of the empire, officials and scholars in prefectures compiled local gazetteers that were independent from centralized projects of geographic writing.

They made the prefecture itself the primary site of governance and compilation. Prefaces to these gazetteers invoked classical precedents to justify the prefectural initiative of compilation, arguing that extensive, accurate, and updated records were indispensable for good government in the prefectures. While authors distinguished their "compendia" from earlier "charts and records," they attributed this difference to the failings of earlier compilers rather than to any change in the nature or function of local gazetteers. Moreover, their works drew authority from a collaborative partnership between prefects who supplied institutional legitimacy and scholars who brought textual erudition and literary craft. Within these works, the chronological list of prefects became a standard feature, providing a master temporal order that organized the written past of the prefecture as the progressive civilization of the local landscape under successive prefectural tenures. Therefore, the Southern-Song local gazetteer was simultaneously governmental and scholarly, bureaucratic and intellectual; its authority rested on the synergy of official sanction and learned composition. The circulation of these works beyond official channels as printed publications, and their eventual predominance in the official collection of geographic texts, confirmed their status as authoritative documents that celebrated the transformative power of emperors as well as prefects.

These transformations across the Middle Period are united by a continuous process of localization, in which the ancient mission of civilization was understood and represented in more local terms. In the seventh century, the salubrious influence of a sage emperor radiated from the capital of an imperial dynasty and was measured by uniform standards imposed from that lofty center. Meanwhile, imperial gazetteers recognized the inherent disposition of prefectures toward civilization. In the ninth century, the forces of moral transformation inhered in the physical and organizational structure of the land, and the stability of the realm depended on the emperor's

control of that strategic infrastructure. Imperial maps and imperial gazetteers of this period acknowledged the dependence of imperial security on an accurate grasp of individual prefectures and their physical and organizational relations. In the eleventh century, the governance of an imperial realm was realized with competing current conspectuses of the land, and the prosperity of the people was based on a flexible grasp of terrestrial features. This centralized geographical enterprise depended on the prefectures not only for their regular submission of local records, but also for their accurate survey of local landscapes. By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the course of civilization unfolded through the cumulative improvements of successive prefects, each adding to the canonical record of a local landscape. Southern-Song local gazetteers served no longer as mere submissions to the Bureau of Directions, but as authoritative documents of individual prefectures to be collected in the Imperial Library. Their elegant titles, impressive prefaces, and prefectural chronologies transformed local archives and local landscapes into "canonical" documents that celebrated the transformative power of governance at the local level. With each transformation, geographic writing became more closely tied to local conditions, local archives, and local agents, even as it continued to serve the ideals of a civilizing empire.

But these transformations are also united by the polymorphic nature of geographic writing. Throughout the Middle Period, authors of geography encountered excesses that resisted the universal taxonomy of imperial governments, such as southern customs that could not be placed on a definite scale of civilization, local attractions that diverted officials from the security of the ruler, contrasting patterns of the land that clouded the focus of imperial attention, and non-official contributions to local well-being that disrupted the tempo of civilization led by prefects in succession. In each case, the margins of the geographical enterprise persisted as a generative condition that pushed authors at the center to experiment with new forms. But it was only during

the twelfth and thirteenth centuries that the margins moved to the center. Southern-Song local gazetteers made the prefecture itself the primary site of geographic writing. These authoritative documents organized local records around its successive prefects and its distinctive features as integral to the course of civilization. The polymorphic character of geographic writing thus persisted through each period, not as a failure of geographic writing, but as a condition that ultimately authorized the localization of civilization itself.

In the end, the story of geography in Middle-Period China is a story of civilization in the making. It is not a story of discovery or accumulation, of gradually more accurate descriptions of the world. It is a story of how authors and readers used texts to create, contest, and reconstitute the relationship between territory and governance, between local landscapes and imperial authority, between the written word and the civilized order. The local gazetteers that emerged as the legitimate geographic genre by the thirteenth century were not simply more detailed or more scholarly than their predecessors; they were the product of a long genealogy in which civilization itself had been progressively localized, made manifest in the canonical documents of individual prefectures and in the cumulative achievements of their successive governors. This is the genealogy of "Localizing Civilization": not a story of imperial geography giving way to local geography and historiography, but of civilization being reconstituted as something that could be realized, documented, and transmitted in the prefectures.

Appendices

Appendix A: Timeline of Middle-Period China and Before

Years	Dynasty/Period
ca. 2100–1600 BCE	Xia 夏
ca. 1600–1050 BCE	Shang 商
1046–256 BCE	Zhou 周
221–206 BCE	Qin 秦
206 BCE–220CE	Han 漢
	Western Han (206 BCE–8 CE)
	Eastern Han (25–220)
220–589	Six Dynasties
	Three Kingdoms (220–265)
	Jin 晉 (265–420)
	The Northern and Southern Dynasties (386–589)
581–618	Sui 隋
618–907	Tang 唐
	An Lushan Rebellion (755–763)
907–960	Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms
907–1125	Liao 遼

1032–1227	Western Xia 夏
1115–1234	Jin 金
960–1279	Song 宋
	Northern Song (960–1127)
	Southern Song (1127–1279)
1271–1368	Yuan 元

The timeline above is based on the *Chronological Table of Chinese History* (*Zhongguo lishi jinian biao* 中國歷史紀年表) by Fang Shiming 方詩銘.

Appendix B: Map of East Asia in 1000 CE, with Focus on the Song Empire



Appendix Figure B.1. Map of East Asia in 1000 CE, with Focus on the Song Empire. Source: Jeremy Adelman et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the World from the Beginnings of Humankind to the Present*, Sixth edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 2021).

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