

COMMUNICATION, EMPIRE, AND AUTHORITY IN THE QING
GAZETTE

by
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Abstract

This dissertation studies the political and cultural roles of official information and political news in late imperial China. Using a wide-ranging selection of archival, library, and digitized sources from libraries and archives in East Asia, Europe, and the United States, this project investigates the production, regulation, and reading of the Peking Gazette (*dibao, jingbao*), a distinctive communications channel and news publication of the Qing Empire (1644-1912). Although court gazettes were composed of official documents and communications, the Qing state frequently contracted with commercial copyists and printers in publishing and distributing them. As this dissertation shows, even as the Qing state viewed information control and dissemination as a strategic concern, it also permitted the free circulation of a huge variety of timely political news. Readers including both officials and non-officials used the gazette in order to compare judicial rulings, assess military campaigns, and follow court politics and scandals.

As the first full-length study of the Qing gazette, this project shows concretely that the gazette was a powerful factor in late imperial Chinese politics and culture, and analyzes the close relationship between information and imperial practice in the Qing Empire. By arguing that the ubiquitous gazette was the most important link between the Qing state and the densely connected information society of late imperial China, this project overturns assumptions that underestimate the importance of court gazettes and the extent of popular interest in political news in Chinese history. Through engagement with previously unstudied gazettes, manuscripts, and diaries, the project demonstrates that political news and information derived from court gazettes influenced both individual encounters with the state and, more broadly, the evolution of administrative practice in

the Qing Empire. In so doing, this project connects scholarship in the emerging field of information history with work on Qing political institutions, print culture, and the history of newspapers. The project highlights the encounters of readers, publishers, and administrators with gazettes in order to illustrate the complexity and richness of information practices in a non-Western early modern context. In addition to demonstrating that court gazettes are important and underutilized sources for the study of Qing history, this project's findings should encourage scholars of information and the state in other global contexts to investigate popular encounters with the state through the lens of news and information.

In five thematic chapters, the project undertakes a multidimensional study of the role of the gazette in the Qing court, territorial bureaucracy, and empire. The first chapter explores the evolution of Qing information policy from the Qing conquest through the empire's decline in the nineteenth century. The second chapter establishes a detailed history of the evolution of the gazette industry and its relationship to the growth of commercial publishing in late imperial Beijing. The third chapter provides evidence for how readers engaged with the gazette in their daily lives and careers. The fourth chapter examines how the gazette found a place in newspapers published in China and around the world, and posits that gazette information shaped the stories that could be read about China, especially in the nineteenth century. Finally, the fifth chapter looks at efforts to reconceive the gazette at the end of the Qing as representative of ongoing elite-led efforts to remake relationships between print and politics in a modernizing state.

Advisors: Tobie Meyer-Fong, William Rowe

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Abbreviations

Dates

For readers' convenience, I generally accompany Chinese reign dates with Western dates in the text. The footnotes refer to Chinese reign dates or Western dates depending on the original reference. Therefore, the dates and abbreviations of Chinese reign periods may be useful for readers.

Ming

<u>Reign Period</u>	<u>Years</u>
Wanli (WL)	1573–1620
Tianqi (TQ)	1620–1627
Chongzhen (CZ)	1627–1644

Qing

<u>Reign Period</u>	<u>Years</u>
Shunzhi (SZ)	1644–1661
Kangxi (KX)	1662–1722
Yongzheng (YZ)	1723–1735
Qianlong (QL)	1736–1796
Jiaqing (JQ)	1796–1820
Daoguang (DG)	1821–1850
Xianfeng (XF)	1851–1861
Tongzhi (TZ)	1862–1874
Guangxu (GX)	1875–1908
Xuantong (XT)	1909–1912

Abbreviations for Citations

BdFA: Kenneth Bourne, Donald Cameron Watt, Michael Partridge, and Ian Nish, eds., *British Documents On Foreign Affairs--Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print. Part I, From the Mid-Nineteenth Century to the First World War* (Frederick, MD: University Publications of America, 1989).

BL: British Library. London, England.

CR: *Canton Register*. Guangzhou, 1827-1843.

CWM: Council On World Missions Archive, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

ECCP: Arthur W. Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period, 1644-1912*, 2 vols. (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943-4).

FHA: First Historical Archives, Beijing.

FO: British Foreign Office Archives. Kew, England. Cited as: TNA, FO file number, date, title.

GSA: Neige dang'an (Grand Secretariat Archives). Academia Sinica, Taipei. Cited as: GSA, file number, date.

GXHD: Guangxu *Huidian*, 1899.

GZD: Qingdai gongzhong dang zouzhe, National Palace Museum, Taiwan. Cited as: GZD file number, date.

HDSL: *Qinding Da Qing Huidian shili*, 1899. Cited as *HDSL*, date, volume: page number.

IOR. India Office Records. British Library, London, England. Cited as: BL, IOR, shelf mark, item description.

JSWB: He Changling and Wei Yuan, eds., *Huang chao jingshi wenbian*, 120 j. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 3 vols.

KMZZ: Zhongguo di yi lishi dang'an guan, ed., *Kangxi chao manwen zhupi zouzhe quanyi* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 1996). Cited as "summary," (date), *KMZZ*, pages.

LFZZ: Lufu zouzhe (Routine file copies of Grand Council Memorials). First Historical Archives, Beijing. Cited as: *FHA*, *LFZZ*, file number, date, "summary."

LMS: London Missionary Society archives. In CWM archive, University of London.

LRCC: Li Delong and Yu Bing, eds., *Lidai riji congchao* (Beijing: Xueyuan chubanshe, 2006), 200 volumes.

MS: *Ming shi*. Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku. Academia Sinica, Taipei.

MSL: *Ming shi lu*. Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku. Academia Sinica, Taipei.

NCH: *North-China Herald*. Shanghai, 1850-1941.

NPM: National Palace Museum, Taiwan.

QSL: *Da Qing li chao shi lu* (Veritable records of successive reigns of the Qing Dynasty) Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku. Academia Sinica, Taipei. Cited as: *QSL*, date, volume: page number.

QSG: *Qing shi gao*. Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku. Academia Sinica, Taipei.

SB: *Shenbao*. Shanghai, 1872-1849.

SSDJ: *Suishou dengji* (Grand Council Document Register). Qianlong reign from Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan bian, *Qianlong chao junjichu suishou dengji dang*, 46 volumes (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000). Jiaqing, Daoguang, and Xianfeng reigns from the National Qing History Compilation Project database. Tongzhi reign from *FHA*.

SYD: Shangyu dang (Archive of Imperial Edicts). First Historical Archives, Beijing.
Cited as: FHA, SYD, file location, date.

TNA: The National Archives. Kew, England.

ZPZZ: Zhupi zouzhe (Grand Council Palace Memorials). First Historical Archives,
Beijing. Cited as: FHA, ZPZZ, file number, date, “summary.”

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Introduction

One late spring day in 1805, guards discovered a man skulking around the magistrate's yamen in Liangxiang, a county seat in the southwestern suburbs of Beijing, the imperial capital of the Qing Dynasty. The man, one Tu Zhongting 塗中亭, carried a barely legible message, written on yellow paper in red ink, and composed of a hodge-podge of prognostications delivered to him through “spirit-writing” divination at a Daoist temple near his home in Hubei Province.¹ Tu, aged forty-four *sui*, was destitute, mentally unstable, and marginally literate. He had been learning to carve characters, and the official report written on his capture commented that his writing looked like characters hewn in wood.² Along with his message to the Shunzhi Emperor—the first Qing Emperor to rule in Beijing, more than a century and a half earlier—Tu carried two publications primarily intended for serving and aspiring officials, the court gazette (*dibao* 邸報) and a *Directory of Officialdom* (*Jinshen lu* 縉紳錄). He had arrived in Liangxiang on his way to Beijing to deliver his message to the deceased Emperor.

Tu's home in Hubei was in the heart of the Qing Empire, a highly integrated early modern land empire that encompassed all of modern China and stretched from the Silk Road oasis city of Kashgar in the far west to Jilin in the cold northeast. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Qing conquerors rose out of the northern forests and steppes

¹ “Yamen” refers to a governmental office in imperial China, especially the office of the local county magistrate. Spirit-writing (*fujī* 扶乩) was a popular religious practice in Qing times, in which a spirit-medium used a forked stick to write an oracular message on a table covered in sand or ashes, often at a Daoist temple as in this case. Richard J. Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers: Divination in Traditional Chinese Society* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), 222-30.

² Tu's testimony recorded that he had previously run a tobacco shop in Anlu Prefecture, but he had closed the shop due to lack of funds. He went to the temple shortly afterwards. In Badu, a village near the Xianning County seat, Tu left behind a wife, three sons, aged nineteen, fifteen, and ten, and a daughter, aged five. Multiple archival copies of two separate confessions record the details of his journey. FHA, LFZZ, 03-2194-003, 03-2442-017 and 03-2442-018.

and led campaigns south, west, and east, extending Qing imperium to the deserts of Xinjiang, to the Tibetan Plateau, to the forested mountains of Southeast Asia, and to the maritime entrepôt of Taiwan. Tu's destination, Beijing, was the administrative heart of the empire, and since 1644, the seat of the Qing court. For ordinary people like Tu Zhongting, as well as merchants, officials, secretaries, clerks, and literati, documents like the court gazette provided a source of information about, and thus an imaginative link to, capital and court. While secret communications and imperial archives remained off-limits, people of all classes could buy both official gazettes and unofficial newsheets on the street, and read (or listen to) proclamations posted at the gates of local administrative offices. Qing rulers sought to quash socially unsettling rumors, established strict standards for the circulation of official documents, and controlled the official gazette industry in Beijing. Nonetheless, in China the Qing ruled a society rich in information, and replete with news, commentary, gossip, rumor, and scandal, circulating both orally and in printed and manuscript texts.

Most readers of gazettes and directories used them to learn about official appointments, read imperial mandates, and acquire news of distant wars, floods, and criminal cases. Tu, in contrast, used his gazette and directory to guide him to the long-dead Shunzhi Emperor. After he received his prognostication at the Qingshan Temple, Tu returned to Anlu, on the northern outskirts of Hankou, where he had until recently run a failing tobacco shop. In Anlu, Tu went to the Xianning County lodge (*huiguan* 會館), and, in the company of men from his native place, he assembled tools for the journey to Beijing. First, he obtained a page from a recent court gazette. On this page were the name and title of Prince Ding (Mian'en 綿恩, 1747-1822), the nephew of the ruling Jiaqing

Emperor. Next, Tu took up a recent issue of the *Directory of Officialdom*. He found Prince Ding listed as a member of the Office of the Imperial Lineage (*Zongren fu* 宗人府) on the very first page. Tu planned to deliver his message to Prince Ding, who would pass it on to the Jiaqing Emperor, who would deliver the message to his great-great-grandfather himself by praying to his ancestors.

Tu's journey ended abruptly when he was detained for loitering outside the magistrate's yamen. As he neared Beijing, Tu had realized he didn't know the directions to the Prince's office, and decided to stop in the busy transport hub of Liangxiang. In the *Directory* that he had carried this long way, Tu looked up the name of the current county magistrate and prepared a separate envelope addressed to him. Tu had reasoned that the magistrate would relay the message to Prince Ding on his behalf. The letter would not be sent. County officials found that Tu had written out in full the given name of Shunzhi Emperor in his missive to the throne, a form of *lèse majesté* and thus a capital offense.³

Tu's story raises intriguing and important questions about the status of textual artifacts associated with the Qing state—bureaucratic documents and communications, official and semi-official publications, and court and provincial gazettes—within the wider social and cultural realm. Although impoverished and barely literate, in his testimony Tu demonstrated familiarity with official texts and publications. He understood the court gazette and the official directory to be authoritative repositories of useful

³ During questioning, Tu explained that he'd heard the prohibition on employing an Emperor's given name applied only to "exam-takers." Tu was sentenced to death by slicing; this sentence was reduced by the Jiaqing Emperor, who referred to Tu's disturbed nature in reducing his sentence to death by strangling. Tu's family also escaped penalty due to his insanity. FHA, LFZZ, 03-2442-017, "Tu Zhongting gong dan"; 03-2194-002, memorial of Qiu Xingjian. For the edict reducing his sentence, see *QSL*, JQ 11/01/07, 156:11a-b.

information.⁴ In them, he found the names of officials and princes, the locations of offices throughout the empire, and the route he would take to the capital on a journey that lasted for over a month.⁵ Tu saw these publications as bridging his everyday world and the worlds of official elites and even the Emperors themselves. Although texts like the court gazette nominally belonged to the official world, people both within and beyond administrative offices recognized and even pursued these publications for the news and intelligence and prestige they carried. The fact that even marginal people like Tu interacted with texts printed for the use of administrators suggests that the state, in the form of its informational texts, was everywhere.

However, Tu's story also adumbrates a persistent tension between state and society in the Qing period. His mishandling of official documents signified to the state a breakdown of social hierarchy and of standards of information control.⁶ Tu—like numerous clerks, gazette publishers, couriers, and officials profiled in this study—collided with imperial authorities because he used documents in improper ways. People in late imperial China read gazettes for news, mined gazettes for information, and archived gazettes as a record of the times. They also inserted into gazettes stolen documents and fantastical stories, provided gazette information to imperial enemies, and forged gazettes to obtain personal rewards. Likewise, people both borrowed details from gazettes to narrate scandalous and imaginative tales, and inserted gazettes into plays,

⁴ Tu's motives appear to have been sincere, if misguided. For cases of individuals in history and literature employing official directories to assume false personas, see Mark P. McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China: Popular Deceptions and the High Qing State* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 52-64.

⁵ If he followed the route in the *Directory*, Tu would have traveled 2815 *li* 里 (about 941 miles) in his journey to Liangxiang. *Da Qing jinshen quanshu* (Beijing: Ronglu Tang, 1804), 1:19b; 2:2b.

⁶ This case attracted considerable attention: the governor of Zhili reported it to the throne, and Tu's sentence was deliberated upon by the Grand Council. Later, the governor of Hubei Province conducted an investigation into the monks at Qingshan Temple whose prognostications had begun Tu's question. FHA, LFZZ, 03-2442-005, JQ 11/01/16.

literature, and poetry as markers of real life. The trade in official information and political news commingled with unlicensed news publishing, extensive spy networks, and insidious rumors. In imperial edicts and courtroom discussions, subduing rumors had as much to do with political intrigue as it did social control. Terms like “snooping” (*tanting* 探聽) and “leaking” (*louxie* 漏洩) litter regulations on the handling of government communications, even when these statutes were applied to clerks whose crime was as mundane as forgetting to seal a memorial folder, or improperly affixing a summary. The language of conspiracy flavored official mandates against idle talk and discussion of news. As a result, the history of the gazette is as much a history of political scandal as it is a history of a political institution.

Tu Zhongting went on a quixotic, if ultimately ill-fated journey based on his reading of the gazette. What did, or what could, less suggestible readers learn about the Qing state from reading the gazette? The court gazette, or “Peking Gazette,” was a court-sanctioned daily bulletin of official documents and communications published throughout the Qing dynasty through the close collaboration of state authorities and commercial agents. Why did the Qing choose to work together with commercial publishers to disseminate official documents, and what does this say about the divide between official and non-official realms in the Qing dynasty? What function did the court gazette hold within the Qing bureaucracy, and how did it evolve alongside the bureaucracy? As this dissertation shall demonstrate, the Qing gazette circulated widely both within the Qing empire and globally. What role, then, did it have in disseminating images of and ideas about the Qing state, both within China, and globally? Did the gazette, as a structuring

institution of empire, affect the political drama of the Qing dynasty, or the formation of a national community of readers and an emergent public sphere?

Unquestionably, the court gazette was the most important publication for both officials and non-officials in late imperial China eager to learn about court activities, policies, and politics on a timely basis. Despite this, it has never been the subject of a book-length study.⁷ Although earlier dynasties circulated gazettes to their territorial officials, the Qing was the only dynasty to collaborate with commercial publishers in the production and circulation of the gazette, and the only dynasty to prioritize the open circulation of authentic copies of imperial communications as a bureaucratic tool and a measure of the integrity of imperial security. Furthermore, although evidence in literature, government documents, and elite writings points to the growing importance of the gazette for administrative practice and history writing in the Southern Song and late Ming dynasties respectively, in the Qing period the audience for the gazette grew dramatically from elites and officials to encompass ordinary people, foreign missionaries and diplomats, and newspaper readers around the world.

This project therefore addresses the reading, production, and use of the Qing court gazette. By considering how readers—including officials, literati, missionaries, diplomats, editors, couriers and others—interacted with the gazette, this dissertation sheds light on how ordinary people and officials obtained, used, and understood news in late imperial China. In terms of production, I establish a detailed history of gazette publishing within the vibrant commercial publishing industry of the Qing capital city. This investigation

⁷ While working on this dissertation, I have been pleased to encounter others working on projects that embrace the late Qing gazette as subject and source. See Zhao Ying, “19 shiji xi ren dui jingbao de yijie chuanbo yu Zhong-Ying guanxi,” (PhD diss., Fudan University, 2015) and Hyun-Ho Joo, “Between Culturalism and Nationalism: Late Qing Chinese Media’s Representation of Chosŏn Korea,” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2010).

overturns prevalent assumptions about state control of official texts in late imperial China, and contributes a broader view of the relationships between state and commercial interests that powered both commercial printing and the imperial bureaucracy. Finally, by looking at the gazette's role in imperial strategy, politics, and diplomacy, I explore the evolution of Qing information policy from the seventeenth century to the twentieth century.

Even as the Qing state sought to consolidate and control the communications order, its actions played out against the indefatigable buzz of trades in news and information throughout society. For most of the dynasty, state scrutiny focused on official misconduct rather than the involvement of non-officials or the prevalence in society of news, rumors, and political information. Readers of the gazette adapted and reused official information for purposes of research, public instruction, and entertainment. Messengers, servants, and couriers sent political news and gossip to superiors in the provinces, and capital officials collected news and intriguing details from conversations with sojourners. Most of these activities elicited little notice from the state, until they collided with court agendas or concerns.

However, some tears in the integrity of the imperial communications order—as mundane as a miswritten name and as intriguing as tales of monsters inscribed within official reports—emerged as moments of scandal.⁸ This project focuses on documentary

⁸ These deserve to be called scandals, rather than “cases” (*an* 案) or “literary inquisitions” (*wen zi yu* 文字獄). By using the term “case,” in their reports, Qing officials suggested that they had established jurisdiction and complete understanding of a scandal, crime, rebellion, or other disturbance. The term implies coherence even when the investigating officials lacked full knowledge or control of the situation. Events in or involving gazettes often became the subject of “case studies” (*an*) in official memorials and legal and administrative writings, but an unfolding scandal cannot be called a coherent “case.” On the other hand, the term “literary inquisition” is inappropriate because it has been used to imply the systematic and pervasive, yet arbitrary and cruel, persecution of Han intellectuals and elites by the Manchu rulers. “Scandal,” on the other hand, correctly suggests that these were not secret investigations, but often received

scandals—incidents involving the corruption or misuse of official documents that elicited widespread interest and official action—in order to elucidate the changing nature of the social and political order. Readers of imperial news wrote about scandals of confidential drafts bought and sold, forgeries of official memorials, and the trading of gossip and secrets. Publishers and copyists faced punishment and interrogations for their participation in these illicit activities. Officials who reported on these cases—or dodged culpability in them—condemned documentary scandals as especially dangerous because falsified and spurious documents, far more than ordinary rumors, could disturb and misinform the public. Scandals involving official documents shook state power precisely because the Qing state sought to reinforce its authority through the circulation of authorized copies of official documents and communications.

The dissertation begins with the collapse of the Ming communications system and the restoration of the court gazette by the early Qing state, and ends with the presumed demise of the Peking Gazette in 1907 as it was superseded by a national gazette that drew on ‘modern’ international models. While the early Qing state (1636-1683) resurrected the court gazette in order to obtain the support of Ming officials and elites, the late Qing state (1875-1911) reconceived the court gazette as an instrument of public instruction and an indispensable institution for an aspiring member of the modern family of nations. In covering the entire Qing period, this dissertation seeks to be comprehensive in its chronology of gazette publishing and policy, but also to describe both continuities and

notice in Qing society, and had echoes in literature and popular culture. On the long history of reading and writing about cases, see Charlotte Furth, “Introduction: Thinking with Cases,” in Charlotte Furth, Judith Zeitlin, and Ping-chen Hsiung, eds., *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007), 1-25. While R. Kent Guy used the term “literary inquisition” in his study of the Imperial Four Treasuries (*Siku quanshu*) compilation project, he also argued against the assumptions and political agendas that it carried in twentieth-century historiography. R. Kent Guy, *The Emperor’s Four Treasuries: Scholars and the State in the Late Ch’ien-lung Era* (Harvard: Council on East Asian Studies, 1987), 197-200.

changes in the intellectual and administrative uses of the court gazette and in its prominent cultural role within a highly connected society.

Spatial, as well as temporal, frameworks are important for understanding the uses and cultural importance of the court gazette. This project considers the production, reception, and use of political news in domestic contexts of office and home, in local contexts of city and court, and in global contexts of empire. The Qing doubled the size of the predecessor Ming empire, which has led scholars to attend closely to the nature of Qing rule on its diverse maritime and land frontiers. Because the Qing gazette was written in Chinese and built on the precedent of the Song and Ming gazettes, its distribution and audience seem to have been limited within the empire to the provinces of China proper. However, the gazette also exemplified to readers displays of Qing military and administrative power on the frontier in its coverage of, for example, rebellions in far western Kashgar, and therefore portrayed for readers the full territorial extent of Qing imperium. Spatial contexts are important because they alert us to the real exigencies of the circulation of print and manuscript pamphlets throughout an extensive and expanding empire. In many cases, these domestic, local, and global spaces became intertwined, as clerks moved between city streets and court offices, and the gazette traveled from the seat of the Qing empire to the homes of newspaper readers around the world.

This dissertation explores the travels and trajectory of the Qing gazettes in five chapters that cover thematically the reading, production, and politics of the gazette throughout the Qing dynasty. The first chapter, “Communications and Authority in the Qing Bureaucracy,” begins by demonstrating how the Qing conquest organization

obtained leaked Ming gazettes as intelligence sources, yet quickly re-established the court gazette upon taking Beijing. This tension between the gazette as a document vulnerable to spies and imperial enemies and as a valuable and necessary communications institution animated debates concerning the gazette throughout the Qing period. In this chapter, I use official memorials, imperial edicts, and court rulings to argue that agents of the Qing state, influenced by the devastating effects of the breakdown of Ming communications and authority, saw communications security and administrative authority as linked endeavors. The early Qing state prioritized the reconstruction and expansion of communications infrastructure and attempted to quash rumors, rectify insecure communications, and impose social control in recently conquered territories. By the eighteenth century, Qing rulers sought foremost to quell imbalances of power within the bureaucracy. Eighteenth-century policies towards the distribution of documents and information to territorial officials reflected this imperative to balance influence between the metropolitan bureaucracy and the provinces. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, officials began again to connect signs of communications breakdowns with weakening dynastic authority.

Against this backdrop of territorial and bureaucratic concerns on an imperial scale, in Beijing the gazette industry flourished throughout the dynasty, growing especially after 1820. Chapter 2, “The Capital Gazette,” surveys the production and distribution of gazettes and related texts as part of Beijing’s publishing industry and urban landscape. As the administrative hub of the empire, Beijing was a center for the publication of books and other printed materials intended for the use of officials and would-be officials. Gazette publishing connected the activities of this publishing hub with the street-level life of an urban center in which authoritative gazettes and unofficial newssheets mingled with

political gossip. In the first part of the chapter, I give a chronological overview of gazette publishing in Beijing. This overview, based on archives relating to the Beijing capital police and city censors, illustrates the existence of a fairly unregulated gazette publishing industry in the early Qing that relied heavily on links between publishers and metropolitan clerks, followed by efforts to regulate and curtail private publishing in the eighteenth century, and finally the blossoming of private gazette publishing in the late nineteenth century. As with communications agendas in the wider bureaucracy, officials who sought to reform the gazette industry targeted potent issues of information security and administrative discipline. Increased interest in the court gazette after the mid-nineteenth century powered the industry's growth and commercialization. The chapter concludes with an in-depth look at the evolution of the material qualities of gazettes, important for discussions of reading and individual-level experiences with the court gazette in Chapters 3 and 4.

As I argue in Chapter 3, "Reading the Qing Gazette," the wider availability of the court gazette during the Qing dynasty led to its incorporation into official practices, texts, and daily lives. While Chapter 1 argued that field officials guarded their access to the gazette as a source of intelligence about court activities, this chapter looks more closely at the ways in which officials read and used information that they found in the gazette. Qing readers copied excerpts from the gazette, borrowed it from acquaintances, and used gazette material in their letters, treatises, compendia, and official memorials. By looking at administrative handbooks, this chapter explores how reading the gazette became a standard practice for Qing officials, especially those interested in practical "statecraft" (*jingshi* 經世) thought and administration. Based on evidence from diaries, memorials,

and other official writings, the chapter further argues that Qing officials relied on the authority of the gazette as an official document when they cited it as evidence in their memorials and private records, despite the fact that it was privately produced and distributed.

For those outside officialdom, the gazette served as a key source of information about the state and official politics. Examples from compendia, historical texts, and scrapbooks that employed the gazette as a source, explored in the second half of Chapter 3, demonstrate that editors and private authors saw the gazette as an ideal one-stop source for a text that could showcase the spirit of the times, relate contemporary events and scandals, and offer models for those composing judgments and policy memorials. I continue to explore the ways in which the court gazette was, by the late nineteenth century, increasingly read by non-officials in Chapter 4, “The Gazette in the Newspaper.” Drawing on missionary, periodical, and trading archives, this chapter traces the incorporation of gazette information into the periodical press, from English-language papers and missionary journals published on and about the China coast in the early nineteenth century to Chinese-language newspapers like *Shenbao* 申報 in the 1870s and after. More broadly, the chapter discusses the reception and adaptation of gazette information in European and American publications in order to explore the reception of timely news about China in the nineteenth century. Direct citations of the Peking Gazette in the global press created a sense of immediacy for readers, and brought together the geopolitical concerns of the British, Russian, and Qing Empires. Newspapers such as foreign-language China-coast papers and Chinese-language papers including *Shenbao* used gazette information to promote their own journalistic authority and legitimacy.

Chapter 5, “The Qing Gazette in the World,” both builds on the previous chapter’s discussion of global and Chinese newspapers and considers the intersections of information security, readership, and court politics in the late Qing (1860-1911). Thus, it explores the Qing court’s strategies to prevent the court gazette from revealing strategic military weaknesses and failures, traces changes in the production and publishing of gazette information in the era of telegraphic transmission and lithographic printing, and probes how late Qing officials, especially diplomats and envoys, used court gazettes in their official lives. This chapter draws on the archives of the British Foreign Office in China in order to trace how diplomatic interactions between the British and the Qing encouraged Qing court representatives to think of the gazette as an official mouthpiece and to use it to effectively communicate with government officials and the wider populace in new ways. The chapter offers a revisionist view by showing the importance of the court gazette to the development of the modern press in China—not as a simple precedent to the newspaper, but as the subject of active debate over proper modes of communication between the state and the public.

The Conclusion, “Eulogies for the Gazette,” explores the death and revisits the life of the Peking Gazette. When the Qing court founded a “modern” government gazette in 1907, a flurry of newspaper reports in the English and American press responded with comments on the demise of the Peking Gazette. By juxtaposing these reports with obituaries of a prominent late Qing diplomat, Zeng Jize, I explore the reasons the Western press overwhelmingly employed metaphors of death and extinction to describe the lapse. The Western press presented the decline of this information institution as a harbinger of Qing collapse. These characterizations of the gazette as timeless yet

outdated, valuable yet flawed, have confused attempts to make sense of the role of the court gazette in the politics and culture of late imperial China since the early twentieth century. As a final retelling of the life story of the gazette illustrates, the story of a “court mouthpiece” can be far more dynamic than a century of misunderstandings has led us to expect.

Historiographical Interventions

Historicizing the Gazette

The most sustained research on the history of the court gazette in imperial China has come in the context of the history of newspapers and journalism, a field founded in the early twentieth century by early journalists and cultural critics like Liang Qichao (1873-1929), Ge Gongzhen (1890-1935), and Lin Yutang (1895-1976). These accounts evaluated the gazette as “China’s ancient newspaper.” For Liang Qichao, who sought to promote his own journalistic enterprises, the court gazette was merely a restricted and ineffective antecedent to the modern newspaper.⁹ Ge Gongzhen, an industry insider, provided informative accounts of gazette production in the late Qing, and ambitiously sought to integrate the Qing gazette and its predecessors into a long-extending history of indigenous Chinese newspapers.¹⁰ Writing for an English-language audience, Lin Yutang disputed the social import of the court gazettes, arguing that court gazettes did not publish timely news or independent narratives and gazette publishers performed no

⁹ Barbara Mittler describes this turn-of-the-century phenomenon as part of “Liang Qichao’s self-constructed myth” in *A Newspaper for China?: Power, Identity, and Change in Shanghai’s News Media, 1872-1912* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2004), 23n87. See also Natascha Vittinghoff, “Unity vs. Uniformity: Liang Qichao and the Invention of a ‘New Journalism’ for China,” *Late Imperial China* 23, no.1 (2002): 91-93, and Natascha Vittinghoff, *Die Anfänge des Journalismus in China (1860-1911)* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), Ch. 9.

¹⁰ Ge Gongzhen, *Zhongguo baixue shi* (Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1927).

editorial gatekeeping.¹¹ Each of these perspectives viewed the gazette as significant only as a predecessor to the newspaper, and failed to evaluate the social and political role of the gazette on its own terms.

At the same time that treatments of the gazette within the history of journalism dismissed the nineteenth-century gazette as an antiquated reminder of the authoritarian traditions of imperial China, they also worked to establish a historical lineage for the Qing gazette as an indigenous “newspaper.” Ge Gongzhen attributed the origins of the court gazette tradition to the Han Dynasty Capital Liaison Offices, the Chang’an offices of representatives of regional powers. Even if the capital liaisons did not facilitate the distribution of standardized gazettes, their existence points to the early institutionalization of horizontal communications between the capital and outlying territories. In fact, early Chinese newspapers such as *Shenbao* anticipated these arguments when they traced the origins of the gazette to an ancient tradition of horizontal communications in order to assert the indigenous origins of newspapers in Chinese political culture.¹² In the early twentieth century, when contemporaries searched to articulate a distinctive Chinese pattern to history, journalism, art, and architecture, Ge and others picked up these arguments in order to argue for an indigenous—and exclusively Han Chinese—tradition of journalism and political communication.

In contemporary China, interest in the history of premodern gazettes remains strong, especially within the field of journalism history. The most prominent modern scholar of Chinese newspapers, Fang Hanqi, discusses court gazettes in his comprehensive histories of newspaper publishing in China, for the most part following

¹¹ Lin Yutang, *History of the Press and Public Opinion in China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936).

¹² See “Dibao bie yu xinbao lun,” *SB*, July 13, 1872.

the assumption that the court gazette matters only as a limited predecessor to the modern newspaper.¹³ Since the publication of his authoritative histories of the press, however, Fang has broadened his interest in the gazette by authoring articles that locate the court gazette as the foundation of the Beijing commercial publishing industry and pointing out the contradictions in traditional scholarship on the gazette.¹⁴ In addition to Fang Hanqi's work on the Qing gazette, twentieth-century scholars in China and Taiwan published synthetic summaries of research on gazettes in imperial China.¹⁵ These projects tend to rely heavily on listing references to gazettes in archival and published sources in order to elucidate the institutional set-up of state communications systems. Few, however, say much about the ramifications of state communications for the circulation of news and ideas in imperial China.

More recent scholarship on the gazette engages a much wider variety of sources, including recent reprint compilations produced by the National Library of China, and electronic database resources for private writings, archival materials, and local gazetteers. Yet, in many cases Chinese scholars working today still follow directly on the agendas proposed by Ge Gongzhen almost a century ago, for example in treating certain "false memorial" scandals (*weigao an* 偽稿案) within the rubric of the history of news. Shi Yuanyuan's 2008 monograph on news and information in pre-Opium War Qing China traces the origins of Qing information policy to before the Qing conquest of China proper.

¹³ Fang Hanqi, *Zhongguo xinwen shiye tongshi*, 3 vols. (Beijing: Renmin daxue chubanshe, 1992-1999), 1:166-186.

¹⁴ Fang Hanqi, "Qing shi baokan biao zhong you guan gudai baozhi de jige wenti," *Lishi dang'an*, no. 2 (2007): 13; "Qingdai Beijing de minjian baofang yu jingbao," *Xinwen yu chuanbo yanjiu*, no.4 (1990): 205-220.

¹⁵ Zhu Chuanyu, *Songdai xinwen shi* (Taipei: Zhongguo xueshu zhuzuo jiangzhu weiyuan hui, 1967); Lin Yuanqi, *Dibao zhi yanjiu* (Taipei: Hanlin chubanshe, 1976); Yao Fushun, "You guan dibao jige wenti de tansuo," *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao* 9 (1981): 107-124; Huang Zhuoming, *Zhongguo gudai baozhi tanyuan* (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1983); Yin Yungong, *Zhongguo Mingdai xinwen chuanbo shi* (Chongqing: Zhongqing chubanshe, 1990).

Shi concludes by suggesting that indigenous change tending towards the birth of a modern-style print industry was already on the horizon in mid-nineteenth century China.¹⁶ Nonetheless, most Chinese scholarship continues to presume a clear break between traditional gazette publishing before the Opium War and the rapid development due to forces of modernization and imperialism thereafter even as the growing availability of sources creates problems for those assumptions.

As in China, the self-defining voices of the late Qing “reform press” have influenced treatments of the gazette in Western-language scholarship. Roswell Britton’s 1933 history of the Chinese periodical press largely followed Ge’s research, although he went further to argue that publication of the gazette represented “a fundamental concession to the demand for information” by the imperial state.¹⁷ Beginning in the mid-1980s, the attention of historians of popular culture and media returned to the gazette after a long hiatus. These scholars sought to identify the beginnings of mass media and politics in China, searching for antecedents to the political partisanship of the last years of the Qing and the Republican period.¹⁸ For the most part, these works dismissed the court gazette as a collection of dull emanations meant to prop up court authority. In the 1990s and early 2000s, scholars reconsidered the social role of Chinese newspapers, especially the Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao*, in positing the existence of a nascent public sphere in late nineteenth-century China. Scholars like Barbara Mittler, Andrea Janku, and Natascha Vittinghoff pointed to *Shenbao*’s publication of gazette excerpts as a measure to

¹⁶ Kong Zhengyi, “Qingdai dibao yanjiu,” (M.A. thesis, Renmin University of China, 2011); Shi Yuanyuan, *Qingdai qianzhongqi xinwen chuanbo shi* (Fuzhou: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2008), 6.

¹⁷ Roswell S. Britton, *The Chinese Periodical Press, 1800-1912* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1933).

¹⁸ See Leo Ou-fan Lee and Andrew J. Nathan, “The Beginnings of Mass Culture: Journalism and Fiction in the Late Ch’ing and Beyond,” in David Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, and Evelyn S. Rawski, eds., *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 362; Joan Judge, *Print and Politics: ‘Shibao’ and the Culture of Reform in Late Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), 17-8.

bridge traditional expectations and new discourses and formats.¹⁹ Although Mittler argued that including the gazette helped *Shenbao* appeal to elite scholar-literati readers, none of this scholarship considered the political role of the gazette itself. Meanwhile, in all of these accounts, inherited biases about the censorious nature of the Qing state have affected judgments on the value of the court gazette as a contemporary publication and as a historical source.²⁰

While the majority of scholarship on the court gazette, in both English and in Chinese, has evaluated it as a premodern government newspaper, some scholars, especially in Taiwan and Japan, have framed the gazette as an instrument of bureaucratic administration. Scholars of the state in middle imperial China discuss the court gazette within analyses of documentary conventions, administrative efficiency, and the formation of a coherent empire-wide bureaucracy.²¹ Accounts of the bureaucratic role of the gazette define the court gazettes of the Song dynasty as the antecedents to the court gazettes of the Ming and Qing dynasties. In the late 1960s, the Taiwan scholar Zhu Chuanyu began to argue that the gazette's origins should be traced to the Song Dynasty, when the Capital Liaisons and Memorials Offices (*jinzou yuan* 進奏院) were responsible for the transmission of a standardized gazette as well as other official document types.²² More

¹⁹ Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*; Vittinghoff, *Anfänge des Journalismus*; Andrea Janku, "Preparing the Ground for Revolutionary Discourse: From the Statecraft Anthologies to the Periodical Press in Nineteenth-Century China," *T'oung Pao* 90, no.1/3 (2004): 65-121; Andrea Janku, *Nur Leere Reden: Politischer Diskurs und die Shanghaier Presse im China des späten 19. Jahrhunderts* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 2003).

²⁰ On these biases, see Timothy Brook, "Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China: A View from the Book Trade," *Canadian Journal of History* 22 (1988):178-9; and Guy, *Emperor's Four Treasuries*, 157-8.

²¹ Chelsea Zi Wang, "Communication, Paperwork, and Administrative Efficiency in Ming China," (PhD diss., Columbia University, in progress). See also Yin, *Mingdai xinwen chuanbo shi*.

²² Hilde De Weerd, "'Court Gazettes' and 'Short Reports': Official Views and Unofficial Readings of Court News," *Hanxue yanjiu* 27, no.2 (2009): 170-2; Zhu, *Songdai xinwen shi*; Zhu Chuanyu, *Xian Qin Tang Song Ming Qing chuanbo shiye lunji* (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1988). See also Deng Xiaonan, Cao Jiaqi, and Hirata Shigeki, eds., *Wenshu, zhengling, xinxi goutong: Yi Tang Song shiqi wei zhu*

recently, Hilde De Weerdts has pointed to the court gazettes of the Song dynasty as part of a wide-ranging and expanding catalog of official communications developed to deal with new information imperatives and imperial concerns.²³ Most importantly, new forms of documentation and communications emerged outside of state auspices, with important ramifications for political culture.²⁴ Overall, these considerations of the administrative uses of official documents and information open up new approaches to understanding the nature of the imperial bureaucracy—but they neglect the wider social importance of news based in official sources.

Another growing body of scholarship focuses on the court gazette as a medium for the circulation of information in society. While approaches from the history of the bureaucracy use mainly official writings and administrative texts as source material, these scholars mine literature, theatre, poetry, and private writings to demonstrate the cultural role of the court gazette and the connectedness of late imperial Chinese society.

Importantly, these studies take as their starting premise that the expansion of commercial activity and printing in late Ming society allowed for a massive increase in the circulation of texts and information akin to a “media revolution,” especially in urban settings.²⁵ In so doing, they suggest that market forces trumped state control in facilitating the dissemination of news and information in society. In her work, Lynn Struve has

(Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2012) and Deng Xiaonan, ed., *Zhengji kaocha yu xinxi qudao: Yi Songdai wei zhongxin* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008).

²³ Hilde De Weerdts, *Information, Territory, and Networks: The Crisis and Maintenance of Empire in Song China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, forthcoming 2016), especially Chapter 2.

²⁴ Devin Fitzgerald’s dissertation promises to examine the global impact of the “open archive” in the Ming-Qing transition. Devin Fitzgerald, “News in the Making of Early Modern China: The Ming-Qing Conflict in Global Information Networks,” (PhD diss., Harvard University, in progress). See also Joseph P. McDermott and Peter Burke, eds., *The Book Worlds of East Asia and Europe, 1450-1850: Connections and Comparisons* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015) and Paize Keulemans, “Tales of an Open World: The Fall of the Ming Dynasty as Dutch Tragedy, Chinese Gossip, and Global News,” *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 9, no.2 (2015): 190-234.

²⁵ Ōki Yasushi, *Chūgoku Minmatsu no media kakumei: shomin ga hon o yomu* (Tokyo: Tōsui Shobō, 2009).

suggested that the Ming-Qing conflict initiated a high point in the production of unofficial news and likewise in history writing that draws on unofficial sources.²⁶ Chinese scholar Liu Yongqiang compiled a long register of plays, poems, stories, and novels of the late Ming and early Qing that feature or draw on the court gazette, and suggested that loose state control of gazette publishing allowed for the proliferation of news in society.²⁷ Japanese scholars Ōki Yasushi and Kishimoto Mio have analyzed information flows between Beijing and Jiangnan in the 1640s by attending to how Jiangnan residents obtained information about events in Beijing.²⁸ Taiwanese scholar Wang Hung-tai has suggested that gazettes, novels, and plays served as powerful “information media” in the late Ming that connected the populace to state politics and instigated the rise of an indigenous “public society” (*gongzhong shehui* 公眾社會), comparable to, but distinct from, the “public sphere” of Enlightenment Europe.²⁹

Interest in the gazettes of late imperial China comes from three directions: the history of the press, the history of the state, and the history of information in society. While the rise of the mass press in China elicited early attention to court gazettes, more recent revisionist approaches sidestep teleological and politically loaded narratives of the rise of the modern press in favor of intensive investigations of bureaucratic and social operations. Likewise, these revisionist projects mine new source genres and engage with

²⁶ See Lynn Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict, 1619-1683: A Historiography and Source Guide* (Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 1998), 8-10.

²⁷ Liu Yongqiang, “Ming-Qing dibao yu wenxue zhi guanxi,” in *Beijing daxue bai nian guoxue wencui, wenxue juan* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1998), 558-571. Also on the significance of gazette references in fiction, see Li Han, “News, Public Opinions, and History: Fiction on Current Events in Seventeenth-Century China,” (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2009), 8-17.

²⁸ Ōki Yasushi, *Minmatsu Kōnan no shuppan bunka* (Tokyo: Kenbun shuppan, 2004), 152-161; Kishimoto Mio, “Sūtei 17 nen no Kōnan shakai to Pekin jōhō,” in *Min-Shin kōtai to Kōnan shakai: 17-seiki Chūgoku no chitsujo mondai* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1999), 143-195.

²⁹ Wang Hung-tai, “Information Media, Social Imagination, and Public Society during the Ming and Qing Dynasties,” *Frontiers of History in China* 5, no. 2 (2010): 169-216.

transnational scholarship on administration and society. Working at the intersection of these historiographies, this dissertation contends that the Qing gazette was much more than an official circular or a newspaper: it was also a tool of empire, a source of entertainment, and an information source for authors, editors, officials, and scholars. In its portrayal of the Qing gazette as a multivalent institution of an early modern information empire, this project contributes to recent scholarship on empire, information, and print both within and outside the China field.

Information and Empire

Empires are unwieldy enterprises. The term “empire” refers both to the amalgamation of diverse territories and polities under a single authority, and to the expansive ambitions of universal rule, extending beyond real territorial boundaries. Studies of information and empire in early modern and modern European contexts focus overwhelmingly on the collection and management of information and knowledge. In early modern Europe, polities in places like Venice, Seville, Rome, and Paris developed increasingly intricate archival and communications systems that aided centralized decision-making and participated in the production, transmission, and preservation of political, church-based, and commercial information.³⁰ Scholars have examined activities like building roads, collecting observations and statistics, and making maps and manuals

³⁰ In recent years, scholars have pointed to the influence of key administrative masterminds and their staff in the development of administrative information management. Filippo de Vivo, *Information and Communication in Early Modern Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Geoffrey Parker, *The Grand Strategy of Philip II* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Peter Burke, “Rome as a Centre of Information and Communication,” in *From Rome to Eternity*, ed. Pamela Jones and Thomas Worcester (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 253-69; Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean-Baptiste Colbert’s Secret State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009); John C. Rule and Ben S. Trotter, *A World of Paper: Louis XIV, Colbert de Torcy, and the Rise of the Information State* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2014).

in light of the ways in which they supported or complicated the state's universal reach.³¹ These investigations assert that early modern empire was made on the ground and in the archives in conjunction with—or even before—the development of political and intellectual models associated with Enlightenment Europe. Scholarly studies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries highlight the repercussions of imperial expansion. Knowledge-collection enterprises are recast as the rise of surveillance and state invasion of privacy, facilitated by the deployment of new technologies and infrastructures.³²

Chinese empires deployed effective bureaucratic organization and centralized communications much earlier than European counterparts. Scholars of the bureaucracy in China have demonstrated that the Qing centralized decision-making and created surveillance methods through communications reform. In monographs tracing the development of the palace memorial system and the Grand Council respectively, Silas Wu and Beatrice Bartlett showed how the expansion of imperial control over privileged information included strategic maneuvering of documentary genres, Manchu-Han relationships, and complicated politics in the inner and outer bureaucracies.³³ Thomas

³¹ There are many examples of literature on these areas. Just a few examples: C.A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Information Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the 'Government' of the World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). On the ways in which these accounts over-represent the coherence of historical empires, see Loïc Charles and Paul Cheney, "The Colonial Machine Dismantled: Knowledge and Empire in the French Atlantic," *Past and Present* 219, no.1 (2013): 127-131.

³² On surveillance, planning, and the modern state, see James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 53-83. More specifically on information, technology, and empire, see Daniel R. Headrick, *The Tools of Empire: Technology and European Imperialism in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) and *When Information Came of Age: Technologies of Knowledge in the Age of Reason and Revolution, 1700-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also James L. Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-Building in Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

³³ Silas H.L. Wu, *Communications and Imperial Control in China: Evolution of the Palace Memorial System, 1693-1735* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970); Beatrice S. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers: The Grand Council in Mid-Ch'ing China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991).

Metzger argued that the Qing state effectively communicated laws and norms to both officials and the general populace.³⁴ Other scholars have examined the protracted imperial investigations and inquisitions of the eighteenth century to illuminate political and intellectual alliances within the Qing bureaucracy and the movement of tracts, memorials, and other texts through official and informal communications networks.³⁵

Likewise, scholars of the expanding Qing empire show the development of geographic, linguistic, and administrative knowledge-making techniques. Recent work has focused on related processes of state integration and centralization, the gathering of frontier intelligence, and the circulation of legal and administrative knowledge. Both the absorption of new lands and a broader “Inner Asian turn” in imperial priorities required the Qing bureaucracy to develop new expertise in languages, geography, and administrative practice.³⁶ In addition to the expansion of the empire to encompass diverse frontier territories and peoples, the Qing state contended with waves of population growth and commercialization. Population growth, not matched by bureaucratic expansion, imposed new burdens on governors and magistrates, leading them to rely on specialists and refer to new legal and administrative references in print.³⁷

As an early modern land empire whose existence spanned the rise and decline of European overseas colonial empire, the Age of Revolutions, and the emergence of

³⁴ Thomas A. Metzger, *The Internal Organization of Ch'ing Bureaucracy: Legal, Normative, and Communication Aspects* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973).

³⁵ Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* (New York: Penguin, 2002); Philip A. Kuhn, *Soulstealers: The Chinese Sorcery Scare of 1768* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Guy, *Emperor's Four Treasuries*; Liu Wenpeng, *Shengshi beihou: Qianlong shidai de weigao an yanjiu* (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2014).

³⁶ Peter C. Perdue, *China Marches West: The Qing Conquest of Central Eurasia* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2005), 436-526; Matthew W. Mosca, *From Frontier Policy to Foreign Policy: The Question of India and the Transformation of Geopolitics in Qing China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Laura Hostetler, *Qing Colonial Enterprise: Ethnography and Cartography in Early Modern China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

³⁷ Ting Zhang, “Information and Power: Printing, Law, and the Making of Chinese Legal Culture, 1644-1911,” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2014).

nation-state polities, the Qing offers a useful comparison to European empires, as well as to other Eurasian land empires. The Qing state's longstanding commitment to the circulation of official information in gazettes—and willingness to contract this publishing to commercial agents—suggests that more attention should be paid to the ways in which early modern empires disseminated, rather than collected, information. The management of a vast bureaucracy that encompassed both specialists and generalists necessitated the regular dissemination of official information, effected through the open circulation of court gazettes. In gazettes, the state displayed examples of its successes and challenges on the frontiers and in local society. In contrast, studies of news before the newspaper in Europe describe official gazettes, subject to strict licensing laws and pre-publication censorship, as weak attempts to counter the incipient public sphere, and studies of news writing in Mughal India interpret court diaries authored in princely courts as merely the state's attention to gather information from the provinces.³⁸ Not just in China, but also in other imperial contexts, reconsidering the imperial state's interest in compiling, publishing, and circulating information about itself can lead to a fuller understanding of the workings of the state in social context and how people on the ground encountered the state in the form of official documents and news.

Print and Politics

In contrast to the state-centered approach employed by historians of empire, cultural histories of print in Europe look to the marketplace and the streets as key sites for mapping the emergence of an “information society” in the early modern era. Although it

³⁸ P.M. Handover, *A History of the London Gazette, 1665-1965* (London: H.M. Stationery Office, 1965); Andrew Pettegree, *The Invention of News: How the World Came to Know About Itself* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 201-242; Michael H. Fisher, “The Office of Akhbār Nawīs: The Transition from Mughal to British Forms,” *Modern Asian Studies* 17, no. 1 (1993): 47-50; see also C.A. Bayly, “Knowing the Country: Empire and Information in India,” *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no.1 (1993): 3-43.

is now commonplace to caution against placing too much importance on the impact of the “print revolution,” the proliferation of imprints powerfully influenced the development of reading practices and popular culture.³⁹ Inquiries into the ramifications of the expansion of print, literacy, and information in society have been positioned at the level of both individual and shared experience. Intellectual historians examine how scholars and specialists used new technologies and techniques in order to organize and understand the information explosion.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, cultural historians describe societies and spaces where news and rumors, often based in political scandals or stories, flourished and traveled through different layers of society and in different media formats.⁴¹ In both cultural and intellectual approaches, the overuse of metaphors of density, connectedness, and “explosion” compound to exaggerate the broad impact of the growth of information and connectivity in early modern societies, even as their cases are overwhelmingly drawn from cities and the lives of elites.

Scholarship on early modern China likewise identifies major social transformations connected to the proliferation of books and popular texts and the

³⁹ Lucien Febvre and Henri Martin, *The Coming of the Book: The Impact of Printing, 1450-1800*, ed. Geoffrey Nowell-Smith and David Wootton, trans. David Gerard (London: New Left Books, 1976); Elizabeth Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change: Communications and Cultural Transformations in Early-Modern Europe*, 2 vols. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). Questioning the “print revolution” in Europe and China, see Adrian Johns, *The Nature of the Book: Print and Knowledge in the Making* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), Ch.5 and Kai-Wing Chow, “Reinventing Gutenberg: Woodblock and Movable-Type Printing in Europe and China,” in Sabrina A. Baron, Eric N. Lindquist, and Eleanor F. Shevlin, eds., *Agent of Change: Print Culture Studies After Elizabeth L. Eisenstein* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2007), 169-192.

⁴⁰ See for example Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information Before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) and “Reading Methods for Coping with Information Overload, ca. 1550-1700,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 64, no.1 (2003): 11-28; Peter Burke, *A Social History of Knowledge: From Gutenberg to Diderot* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Robert Darnton, “An Early Information Society: News and the Media in Eighteenth-Century Paris,” *American Historical Review* 105, no. 1 (2000): 1-35. Manuel Castells, Anthony Giddens, and others also use the term “information society” to refer to the economic, social, and cultural importance of information in a post-industrial society. See the contributions to Frank Webster, ed., *The Information Society Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

expansion of commercial and communications networks in a period of expanding literacy. Scholars of publishing and intellectual culture have identified the rise of private printers, editors, and authors outside the purview of the state beginning in the Song dynasty.⁴² Scholars of Ming-Qing popular and elite culture have demonstrated the connections between oral mediums, fiction, news, and drama in a period of expanding literacy.⁴³ In publishing and literature, the seventeenth-century Ming-Qing conflict served as the backdrop for new literary and prose styles used to comment on recent and contemporary events.⁴⁴ Like scholars of Europe, however, scholars of early modern China also exaggerate the growth of literacy, the availability of books, and the impact of commercialization. The Qing empire encompassed a wide range of ethnically and linguistically diverse populations. It can be difficult to reconcile the fact that more books circulated in late imperial China than in any other early modern society with the fact that even in coastal cities and traditional centers of wealth and learning, only a minority of the population was literate.

The court gazette stands out as a printed product that was produced and sold by non-elites, published with a variety of methods including movable type, and sold cheaply on the streets of late imperial towns and cities. Gazettes were undoubtedly the most commonly available printed product in Qing China. In Beijing, the court gazette was

⁴² Hilde De Weerd, *Competition over Content: Negotiating Standards for the Civil Service Examinations in Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Kai-Wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th-17th Centuries)*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Cynthia J. Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Joseph R. Dennis, *Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100-1700* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2015).

⁴³ See Ōki, *Chūgoku Minmatsu no media kakumei*; Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁴⁴ See Struve, *Ming-Qing Conflict*, Ch. 1; Li, “News, Public Opinions, and History.”

printed with wooden movable type, probably beginning from the late Ming period, and continuing through the first decade of the twentieth century.⁴⁵ Although the field of print history has moved past an earlier focus on rare and luxury editions, still most studies of print culture in late imperial China focus on woodblock printed books printed outside state auspices.⁴⁶ The ubiquity of the court gazette in Qing China complicates assumptions about the dominance of woodblock printing and even book publishing in late imperial China.⁴⁷ Gazette publishers—like publishers of directories, legal compendia, and other informational texts—developed strategic practices in order to improve the efficiency of their printing enterprise. These practices enabled the movable type gazette to remain relevant for readers even as it coexisted with the rise of lithographic print technologies.⁴⁸

Published on a daily basis, gazettes outnumbered by far any other printed product available in early modern China, and abridged gazette digests were among the cheapest texts available. Gazettes were instantly recognizable to educated readers, the marginally literate, and non-readers alike through key visual markers such as a yellow cover, a unique pamphlet shape, and their use of movable type printing. Gazette publishers were

⁴⁵ The earliest movable-type gazettes that I have seen date from the mid-Qianlong period. However, these are also the earliest extant gazettes. Many scholars have pointed to a statement by Gu Yanwu in a letter, “As for the gazette (*dibao*) of ancient times, there has been a movable-type edition since the 11th year of Chongzhen [1638]; before then, it was still manuscript.” Gu Yanwu, “Yu Gong Susheng shu,” quoted in Ge, *Zhongguo baoxue shi*, 33-4. On evidence of print gazettes in the Song Dynasty, see De Weerd, “‘Court Gazettes’ and ‘Short Reports,’” 172.

⁴⁶ In these studies, scholars argue that woodblock printing was an effective technology for publishing and disseminating printed works in order to contradict assumptions based on European contexts that movable type was necessary for the expansion of the print industry. See the discussion of this issue in Cynthia J. Brokaw, “On the History of the Book in China,” in Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-Wing Chow, eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 8-10.

⁴⁷ Besides palace editions printed with copper movable type, genealogies and gazettes were the most common texts printed with less expensive wooden movable type. Other less common materials included porcelain and clay. In addition, publishers of directories and other informational texts employed printing strategies somewhere in between solid woodblock and wooden movable type printing. Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo huozhi yinshua shi* (Beijing: Zhongguo shuji chubanshe, 1998), 50-97.

⁴⁸ On lithographic printing and print capitalism, see Christopher A. Reed, *Gutenberg in Shanghai: Chinese Print Capitalism, 1876-1937* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2004).

not elites, or even state employees, but commercial printers and copyists who specialized in the rapid production of pamphlets of official information. The Qing state supervised the publishing of gazettes in Beijing, and required provincial authorities to supervise gazette publishing in provincial capitals, but for the most part did not tax, license, or censor gazettes. The publishing of gazettes in Qing China relied on a unique and unprecedented alliance between the central state and commercial publishers to rapidly and regularly produce a cheap, widely available source of information about the state sold to both official and non-official consumers.

Far more people, not just in China, but also globally, read about the Qing state in the pages of the Peking Gazette than scholars have previously acknowledged or understood. By the early-eighteenth century, the Qing court gazette was well known in Europe; by the mid-nineteenth century it had been the subject of writing in newspapers and books published all over the world. Dispatched from China to Europe, the Qing gazette connected European readers to timely news about China for the first time. In order to comprehend this print representative of the Qing empire, readers compared it to the official and unofficial gazettes of early modern Europe and called it the “Peking Gazette.” Through the dissemination of official texts and gazettes, the Qing state sought not to censor the exchange of news and ideas, but to promote its agendas and authority to a variety of audiences. As a result, understanding the social, political, and cultural role of the Qing court gazette not only helps us make informed comparisons between European and Eurasian early modern empires, it also enables us to better understand the circulation of news and knowledge about empire in the early modern world.

Gazettes, Routine Information, and Capital News

In late imperial China, terms like *dibao*, *jingbao* (京報), *jingchao* (京抄 or 京鈔), *dichao* (邸抄 or 邸鈔), *chaobao* (朝報) and others referred to (1) court bulletins compiled by commercial publishers in Beijing and distributed by government couriers to serving officials and commercially to others; (2) more generally, official documents periodically received from the capital; and (3) most generally, news received from the capital, usually of an official nature. Serving officials also used the terms listed above to refer to (4) packets of documents (*buwen* 部文) received periodically from the capital. These packets consisted of edicts, imperial rescripts, and other communications from the six administrative boards (*liu bu* 六部) of the metropolitan bureaucracy. Packets were customized by province, and the six boards and the courier superintendents kept corresponding records of the documents sent to each province. Officials relied on the regular (every few days) receipt of these packets, as they contained authoritative versions of communications from Beijing, such as time-sensitive authorizations to commute a sentence or orders dispatching the official to a new post.

Because of the wide interest in court news and equally wide interest in anything that looked official, the terms used for the court gazette—a specific publication of fixed format—overlapped with terms that referred more generally to news emanating from the court, or to copies of official documents that circulated in wider society. Some informal newsheets included excerpts from court gazettes.⁴⁹ Other publishers invoked the gazettes' title to gain trust with their potential audience. Commoners who came in contact with official documents or simply official-sounding news about the empire were so

⁴⁹ See discussion of “short reports” (*xiaobao* 小報) in De Weerd, *Information, Territory, and Networks*, Ch.2.

accustomed to the association of gazettes with imperial news that they referred indiscriminately to these news items using terms associated with gazettes (most often *dibao*). In each case, from the very specific numbered and registered court gazette to the vague and allusive “capital news,” the use of the term *dibao* suggests information about the state derived from reading official documents, issued periodically and in a timely manner, for which the reader was not the author or primary addressee.

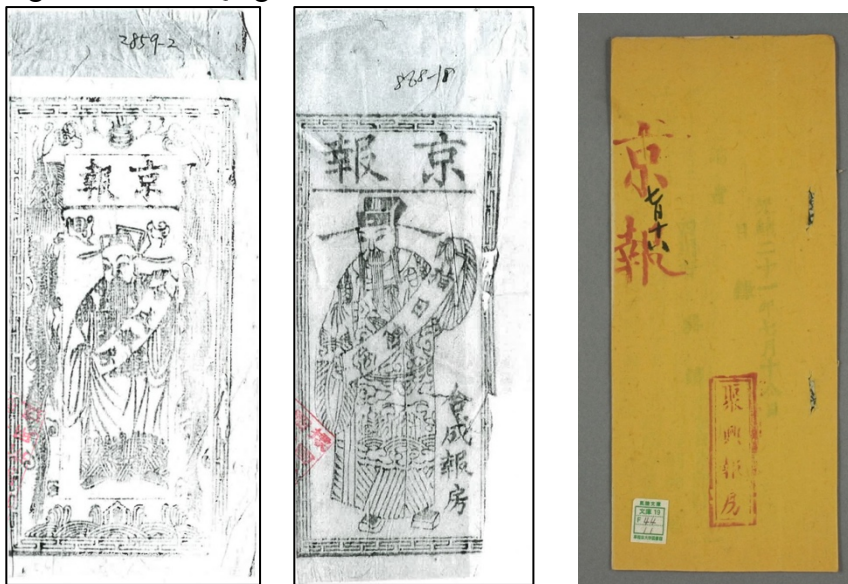
Although the majority of extant court gazettes are from the nineteenth century, surviving copies of eighteenth-century gazettes and references to gazettes in fiction, diaries, and official writings make it clear that these bulletins were published throughout the late imperial period and were well known not only to officials, but also to the wider public. Both officials and non-officials understood the the court gazette to consist of official and authoritative documents originating from the imperial court and therefore comprising a trustworthy source of information on imperial affairs. Both groups of readers closely tracked the appearance of news and rumors about the capital, the bureaucracy, and the court, and often referred to these in amalgamation as “reports of the capital.” Overall, “capital news” as a genre encompassed both official and unofficial publications, tied by their common origin in (or focus on) Beijing, and etiologically by their connection to the official news of the gazettes of imperial China. Thus, while this dissertation focuses on official gazettes, it also addresses the management of both secret and open channels of communications and the lively trade in unofficial news.

Anatomy of the Gazette

While the material characteristics of court gazettes varied over the course of the dynasty, and publishers circulated gazettes in a variety of editions and formats, the Qing

gazette maintained certain conventions with regard to format and composition that made a gazette instantly recognizable in wider society. This began with the cover. By the late Qing, commercial publishers almost uniformly enclosed their gazettes in a yellow cover stamped in red. The convergence of yellow background and red ink evoked the imperial family and the “vermillion pencil” of the emperor. As seen below, some late Qing gazette publishers produced elaborate covers that depicted an official in a Song dynasty official’s hat, holding a scroll.⁵⁰ On the stroll was printed either the name of the publisher or a proverb associated with official life and the civil service examinations. Some covers also featured elaborate frames around the official, with dragons to either side representing the imperial house, clouds above representing Heaven, and the hills of earth below.⁵¹

Figure 0.1 Late Qing Gazette Covers



Source: (left) NPM, Biographical Packet for Liu Dian 劉典 (Hecheng baofang gazette dated GX 6/5/28); (middle) NPM, Biographical Packet for Liu Rong 劉蓉 (Hecheng

⁵⁰ In addition to the examples below, similar illustrated covers can be found at the British Library: BL, Peking Gazette Collection, Boxes 45 (XF 11) and 50 (TZ 1).

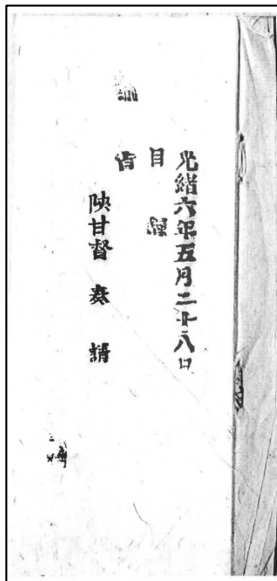
⁵¹ On the cover design, see Samuel Mossman, “The Peking Gazette,” *The Leisure Hour*, February 25, 1865, 119. On the image of the official in advertisements in *Shenbao*, see Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, 209-10. One extraordinary advertisement for a Shanghai pharmacy used the image of the official to sell medicine, riffing on China as a “sick” country in contemporary global discourse. “Zhi ri gao sheng,” *SB*, August 17-19, 1908.

baofang gazette dated TZ 13/10/05); (right) Waseda University Library, Juxing baofang gazette dated GX 21/07/18).

Note: (left) The scroll carries the name of the publisher, Hecheng baofang, and the character “to speak” (*yue* 曰) features to the left of the official’s head; (middle) the scroll carries the set phrase “May you soon be promoted” (*zhi ri gao sheng* 指日高陞).

Once past the cover, court gazettes typically offered readers a short table of contents (*mulu* 目錄), listing the typical contents: edicts and rescripts (*yu zhi* 諭旨) and memorials. This list featured an abbreviated description of the post held by the memorialists, their name or surname, and the genre of memorial (see Figure 0.2).

Figure 0.2 Gazette Table of Contents



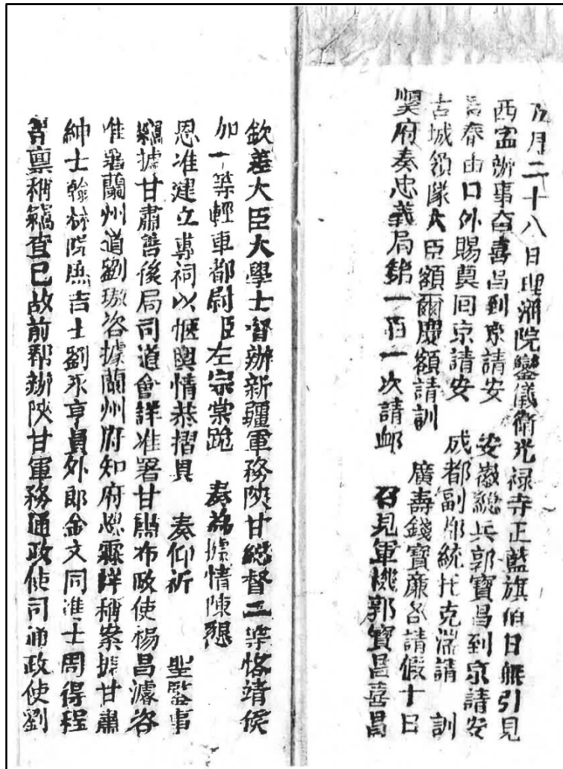
Source: NPM, Biographical Packet for Liu Dian.

Note: This gazette included only one memorial, from the Shaanxi-Gansu governor-general Zuo Zongtang. For some reason, it does not include Zuo’s surname in the table of contents. The listing specifies that the memorial contained a request to the throne.

The main text of the gazette encompassed three main sections of material. The first was the “palace notes” (*gongmen chao* 宮門鈔). These included records of duty assignments at the palace, imperial audiences, and ordinary personnel records such as appointments, dismissals, promotions, and demotions. Next came imperial edicts and rescripts, transcribed in full but without the memorials that they referenced. The final

section of the gazette was selected memorials, usually between one and three, which were supposed to be included in full (Figure 0.3). In fact, publishers would sometimes devote multiple issues to a single lengthy memorial. For example, the final report, published in 1882, concerning a notorious murder that had taken place five years earlier in Nanjing, took up four consecutive issues of the gazette.⁵²

Figure 0.3 Palace Notes and Memorial in Late Qing Gazette



Source: NPM, Biographical Packet for Liu Dian.

Note: The palace notes (right-hand page) record that on GX 6/5/28, rituals overseen by the Lifan yuan were carried out at the Guanglu si, and that the Solid Blue Banner was on duty. There were no audiences presented. Three officials arrived to the capital to pay greetings to the Emperor, and two arrived to ask instruction. Two officials requested leave of ten days each. The Shuntian prefecture offices reported donations and requested the awarding of honors in recognition. The Emperor summoned the Grand Council, as well as Guo Baochang and Xi Chang for audiences. On the facing page, Zuo Zongtong proposes the awarding of honors to Liu Dian for his service as a military communications officer in Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

⁵² *Jingbao (dibao)* (Beijing: Quan guo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2003), 1:271-313.

Although the palace notes, edicts, and memorials made up the standard component sections of the court gazette, a particular issue of the gazette could omit one or more of these categories of material. A fourth genre of material found intermittently in gazettes consisted of lists of examination results, batches of official appointments, and other personnel lists that were appended at the beginning or end of a gazette issue. Certain gazette editions did not include the palace notes; on the other hand, Beijing residents in the nineteenth century could subscribe to these “palace notes” alone. Depending on the day’s materials, a gazette might include only edicts, only memorials, or a mix of the two documentary genres.

Gazettes maintained the textual patterns and visual layouts of the official documents that they excerpted and repackaged. Adherence to these conventions allowed gazette publishers to protect their status as legitimate publishers of official documents. The gazette’s replication of the format of official documents also subtly reinforced readers’ impressions of court authority.⁵³ Qing regulations allowed publishers to circulate memorials only after they had received an imperial response and been released to the Grand Secretariat. Publishers did not append explanatory information about the contents of official materials, but simply allowed these communications between the throne and high officials to speak for themselves. As in official documents, references to emperors, the ruling dynasty, or the court were always placed on a new line and in the margin above the main text. Since most gazette publishing houses were commercial enterprises, publishers needed to adhere to these format conventions in order to remain in favor with state authorities, who regularly inspected gazettes for errors and inconsistency. When

⁵³ See the argument in Henrietta Harrison, “Newspapers and Nationalism in Rural China, 1890-1929,” *Past and Present* 166, no.1 (2000): 192.

readers copied excerpts from the gazette, either into their diaries or as notes for their own writings, they maintained this practice of placing references to imperial authority on a new line above the main text. Markers like these suggest that the gazette had a privileged status in the minds of Qing readers as a symbol of court authority.

While the court received and responded to many memorials per day, gazette publishers could only print a few samples in their pages. Certain types of notice or discussion were more likely to appear in the pages of the gazette. Common topics included reports of natural disasters that resulted in tax forgiveness for afflicted districts, descriptions of military campaigns reported by military commanders, and notes on criminal cases that were particularly odious or difficult to adjudicate. Many readers within the bureaucracy relied on the palace notes for information on the assignment, promotion, demotion, and dismissal of colleagues, friends, and family members. As a result, the gazette offers a useful record of publicly available personnel information, as it was available to Qing readers. While most communication in the bureaucracy took place in a vertical hierarchy, from inferior to superior (and vice versa), reading the court gazette allowed individual administrators to look horizontally across the strata of officials spread throughout the empire.⁵⁴ In administrative offices, one might find stacks of gazettes covered with annotations regarding instructive examples, intriguing details, and *au courant* policy agendas.

By leafing through the court gazette, we see it as a late imperial reader might have. While many imperial administrators encountered gazettes on a regular and even daily basis, the average late imperial reader probably took a gazette into his hands only on

⁵⁴ This important observation was first made by Jonathan Ocko in his influential research note on the gazette, "The British Museum's Peking Gazette," *Ch'ing shih wen-t'i* 2, no. 9 (1973): 45.

occasion. More often, he heard associates speak of distant floods, disgraced officials, and sordid murders that had featured in the pages of the gazette. Through the dissemination of their memorials in the gazette, imperial administrators became well known characters in conversations about current events and politics. Mention of the gazette, even for a non-reader, might have evoked images of the distinctive yellow cover of a gazette as hawked by a street seller (Figure 0.4). The visual and material qualities of the gazette, for the ordinary subject as well as for the imperial administrator, connected the reader to the authority of the court and the politics of the state.

Figure 0.4. “Distributing the Peking Gazette.”



Source: William Simpson, “Sketches in China,” *Illustrated London News*, March 22, 1873.

Note: Simpson visited China on a world tour and described his encounter with the gazette salesman in his memoir of the journey. This image was reprinted widely in England.

In the sketch of a gazette seller published in the *Illustrated London News*, the vendor and his gazettes represent the pervasive presence of the Qing state in ordinary society. While images of Beijing captured by foreign viewers more typically depict sights of secluded imperial power, such as the imperial palaces, this image exemplifies the lasting relationship between the state and street in Qing China. From the image, we can imagine

the paths of the gazette seller and his associates, from palace hallways into busy commercial printers and out into the streets of Beijing to supply news to shops, subscribers, and passersby.

By tracing the paths and trajectories of the Qing gazette over the course of this dynasty, this project has followed the gazette through the city of Beijing, the Qing empire, and the world. In so doing, it demonstrates the global reach of the gazette and news of the Qing empire. For the court, sending the gazette into the streets meant managing infrastructure, personnel, and populace, but also promulgating displays of military victory, righteous administration, and bureaucratic discipline. Encounters with the gazette summoned for readers diverse and changing visions of the state. The presence of the state in the streets suggests not just censorship and control, but more importantly, extraordinarily widespread interest in the communications and politics of the Qing empire.

Chapter 1. Communications and Authority in the Qing Bureaucracy

For members of the Qing territorial bureaucracy, reading gazettes (*dibao*) and dispatch packets was a standard and essential component of official life. Issued daily or every other day, gazettes featured lists of examination results and appointments, a daily record of audiences, and selected memorials and imperial edicts. In gazettes, officials noted the vicissitudes of imperial politics, found out about the activities of friends and rivals, and read of administrative cases relevant to their official responsibilities. Dispatch packets included documents relevant to each province from the administrative boards (*buwen*). Provincial officials used gazettes and dispatches to get ahead in licit and illicit ways, and to formulate and contribute policy suggestions and critiques. Although new communications institutions, such as the palace memorial system, developed in the first century of Qing rule contributed to the strengthening of central authority, open channels of routine communications and widely available court gazettes worked in the opposite direction by allowing the wider official population to learn about and act upon court agendas, state matters, and the general political mood.

Rather than focusing on the emergence of private communications channels or secret deliberative bodies as past studies of Qing communications have done, I address in this chapter conflicts between secrecy and the wide-scale distribution of standardized information to the Qing bureaucracy through public channels.¹ Among these open channels, court gazettes put together by Beijing publishers consisted of records of official information and imperial affairs for the reference of officials in the expansive territorial bureaucracy. Courier superintendents in the capital (*zhujing titang* 駐京提塘) assembled

¹ See for example, Wu, *Communications and Imperial Control*; Kuhn, *Soulstealers*; Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*; R. Kent Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces: The Evolution of Territorial Administration in China, 1644–1796* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

dispatch packets of outer court documents for provincial officials. Officials often referred to these collected documents by the same terms as they did the standard gazettes produced by Beijing publishers. By extension, “reading the gazette” implied reading about state affairs in trustworthy, verifiable documents. Reading gazettes gave geographically distant officials access to a shared archive of administrative and political knowledge. Court packets and gazettes powerfully connected the dispersed officials of the Qing empire; as a result, the failed delivery of public communications forced officials into isolation and potentially endangered the integrity of the territorial state. Furthermore, the major undertaking of sorting and distributing public and secret information on a daily basis was complicated, leading to conflicts between the consolidation of authority and the use by provincial officials of available communications sources.

In the archival record, criminal prosecutions involving information security in the bureaucracy can be categorized as either content issues or distribution issues. In some cases, a copyist or clerk wrote the name of one official in place of another in an appointment notice, or a copyist carelessly wrote the wrong standard imperial response to a memorial. Beyond these simple errors, an agent of the provincial governor solicited draft memorials or confidential documents and attempted to pass them along as innocuous gazette dispatches, or a falsified document was fraudulently inserted into the court gazette for wide distribution. If dispatches went misplaced or undelivered, a notice of promotion or transfer might not reach its intended recipient, or a messenger might facilitate the distribution of court gazettes to those beyond the sanctioned subscription list, such as enemies, criminals, or foreigners.

The expansive Qing bureaucracy handled thousands of confidential palace memorials, routine memorials, board memoranda, and lateral communications each month. In managing this communications infrastructure, Qing rulers were not driven by an overwhelming desire to censor and control information, but rather reacted to particular circumstances. Shifting court and bureaucratic agendas included concerns about territorial control and the balance of authority between the center and the provinces. During its protracted war with the weakened Ming state from 1619 onward, the emergent Qing had learned that if territory and communications routes remained vulnerable, even non-secret communications like gazettes were subject to manipulation and could become intelligence for military opponents. As Qing control of communication routes and territories grew less secure in the mid-nineteenth century, anxieties about the interception and compromise of official communications emerged once again.

While anxiety about territorial control arose most often in the context of war, conquest, and rebellion, conflicts over the proper sources of administrative power occurred throughout the Qing. The infrastructure for secret communications developed in the early Qing set the stage for the granting of expanded authority to governors and other high-ranking provincial officials. Governors sought to consolidate further their access to information from the capital, despite ongoing efforts to centralize decision-making power. Meanwhile, metropolitan authorities worried about governors' attempts to cultivate autonomous or corrupt power through spying in the capital or manipulating routine communications like the gazette.

In the Qing period, themes of territorial control and administrative authority came together in bureaucratic conversations and conflicts about communications security. Each

section of the chapter focuses on a space—the expanding empire, palace offices, the provincial yamen—where such conflicts unfolded. I begin by describing imperial communications vulnerabilities at the close of the Ming dynasty, and how the early Qing state (1636-1722) responded by implementing measures to ensure the security of imperial communications, including the court gazette. Next, I argue that conflicts about communications and information can be interpreted as arguments over the proper concentration of administrative and political authority, first focusing on cases that took place in the capital, specifically in and around palace offices, and then on those occurring in the provinces. Finally, I return to problems of imperial territorial authority that emerged in the nineteenth century to show continuities and developments in attitudes towards territorial security and official communications in the face of new challenges.

The Late Ming Communications Breakdown

In the Ming relay post system for official communications, the state kept up government roads, wealthy local families supplied horses and boats, and corvée laborers served as couriers.² Entering the palace, memorials from the provinces to the throne first passed through the Transmissions Office (*Tongzheng si* 通政司). Once the Emperor had reviewed the memorial, the newly formed Grand Secretariat, a semi-formal replacement for the Prime Minister, prepared draft rescripts for imperial approval.³ These rescripted memorials, if approved by the Emperor, could be copied by clerks or courier superintendents (*titang guan* 提塘官) and sent to the provincial grand coordinator (*xunfu*

² See Hoshi Ayao, “Transportation in the Ming Dynasty,” *Acta Asiatica* 38 (1980): 14-26; Timothy Brook, “Communications and Commerce,” in Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, eds., *The Cambridge History of China*. Vol 8. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 582-596.

³ Silas H.L. Wu, “Transmission of Ming Memorials, and the Evolution of the Transmission Network, 1368-1627,” *T’oung Pao* 54, no. 4/5 (1968): 277-283; Yin, *Mingdai xinwen chuanbo shi*, 24-26; Brook, “Communications and Commerce,” 635-639.

巡撫) or regional commander (*zongbing* 總兵).⁴ These dispatches were called *dibao*, a term contemporaries also used to refer to unofficial, privately copied and published papers reporting on court news.⁵

In reality the Ming communications system worked less effectively, and by the final years of the dynasty the system had crumbled both in court chambers and on the imperial roads.⁶ In 1629, responding to the catastrophic financial situation of families that provisioned the government road system, the Ming state cut the number of relay posts by thirty percent. Meanwhile, social disorder became endemic. Couriers who lost their jobs became bandits plaguing the same roads they previously traveled. Private trade, mercenaries, and bandits dominated the post roads previously devoted to state traffic. The communications breakdown left the Ming court in 1644 unaware of the approach to Beijing of the army of the rebel leader Li Zicheng, himself a former courier; the court had learned of Li's formal declaration of war only two weeks earlier. The message had taken almost two months to reach Beijing from Xi'an.⁷

Messages travelling in the relay post system were in those years particularly susceptible to interception by opposing military forces. Li Zicheng, who drew strong support in the provinces of Henan, Shanxi, and Shaanxi, led armies towards Beijing from the west. Meanwhile, the Qing, a coalition conquest organization led by Manchus of the

⁴ Yin, *Mingdai xinwen chuanbo shi*, 100-130.

⁵ Yin Yungong suggests, quite reasonably, that Ming people used the term *dibao* to refer to unofficial papers simply because they did not consider the distinction between official and unofficial gazettes and their contents as dramatic as we might today. Yin, *Mingdai xinwen chuanbo shi*, 112.

⁶ As early as the Jiajing reign, the Ming struggled to deal with time-sensitive messages and long distances. See James P. Geiss, "Peking Under the Ming (1368-1644)," (PhD. diss., Princeton University, 1979), 120-137.

⁷ Frederic E. Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise: The Manchu Reconstruction of Imperial Order in Seventeenth-Century China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 16-17; 260. In the Qing courier system, the message should have taken at most 13 days by horse traveling at standard speed. See J.K. Fairbank and S.Y. Teng, "On the Transmission of Ch'ing Documents," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 4, no. 1 (1939): 27.

Aisin Gioro clan also aiming to topple the Ming, approached from the north.⁸ Both movements commanded intelligence networks that could circumvent Ming communications breakdowns in order to undermine Ming troops.⁹ Li Zicheng employed intelligence gatherers such as “Shanxi merchants, shopkeepers, fortune-tellers, and yamen clerks [in Beijing] who reported back to him by mounted courier.”¹⁰ Likewise, in their conquest of the Liaodong Peninsula, the Manchu forces recruited Chinese collaborators who helped intercept Ming communications.

By the time of their final approach to Beijing in 1644, the Manchus had already been using Ming military reports and court gazettes as intelligence for some time. In 1619, intelligence about Ming military preparations obtained from gazettes contributed to the crushing defeat of four Ming armies in the battle of Sakha. That same year, the censor Feng Jiahui warned that memorials revealing imperial military activity had been appearing in gazettes even though the Manchus were known to be reading the gazette.¹¹ A notorious case involved the Ming courier superintendent Liu Bao who, bribed by the turncoat Ming general Li Yongfang, sent gazettes to the Manchus, receiving the extravagant sum of one hundred taels for each monthly delivery.¹² After discovering this crime in 1621, the Ming court tried to strengthen its control of gazettes by ruling that courier superintendents could only send dispatches involving their own province.

⁸ The best account of the events of this period is Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, Ch. 3-4.

⁹ Although it is anachronistic to use the term “Qing” before the establishment of the dynasty in 1636, I use it here to suggest continuities between pre-conquest events and Qing imperial policy.

¹⁰ Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 258n99.

¹¹ Shi, *Qingdai qianzhongqi*, 31-32; *MSL*, 582:11055.

¹² *MSL*, TQ 1/4/28, 1:121-24. Liu Bao was a Ming courier superintendent. He was said to have enlisted his two sons’ assistance in carrying the gazettes to the northeast, and all three were executed when the affair was reported. On Li Yongfang, see *ECCP*, 499. On the fall of Guangning, see Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 67.

As officially compiled court gazettes were interrupted, censored, and compromised, private publishers edited unofficial gazettes that interspersed official documents (both real and faked) with rumors and news from other sources.¹³ Rumors and private gazettes flourished in the capital city, their content sometimes overlapping with and sometimes contradicting the documents that leaked persistently out of the Ming court offices. In another famous scandal, a clerk carelessly assumed that a note from the Chongzhen Emperor on the desk of Chen Xinjia, Minister of War, was a standard rescript, and brought it to be published in the gazette. Unfortunately for both Chen and the clerk, the document was a note concerning secret peace negotiations with Hong Taiji, the Manchu leader (1592-1643, r.1626-1643).¹⁴ In 1641, even as the leaders of the newly declared Qing Dynasty led banner forces towards the Great Wall, the Ming Board of War continued to urge the maintenance of secrecy in written communications to avoid leaks.¹⁵

In their conquest of North China between 1619 and 1644, Manchu forces took advantage of pre-existing and worsening weaknesses in the Ming communications system and, with the assistance of collaborators, gathered intelligence from both confidential military reports and more widely distributed court gazettes. Aware of the importance of intelligence gathering and communications to their victory, Qing officials after the conquest sought to restore a safe and effective communications system around the capital, and then to extend this system throughout the northern provinces. In early autumn 1644, months after taking Beijing, the court feared that bandit activity in surrounding forests endangered their contact with Qing troops handling violent uprisings in nearby Tianjin

¹³ See Struve, *Ming-Qing Conflict*, 8-10.

¹⁴ Although the casual mistake may seem unbelievable, Chen was executed as a consequence of the incident. Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 152; *MS*, 6636-6639.

¹⁵ “Bingbu ti wei wenyi louxie feng you jinji zhangzou,” CZ 14/06/22 (1641.07.29), *Ming-Qing shiliao, yi bian* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2008), 4:355.

and Shandong. In order to gain control of the roads, the Qing completely leveled the forest between Beijing and Tianjin.¹⁶

The Qing—transformed from a mobile conquest organization to a vast and sedentary bureaucratic state—needed to set up quickly the communications infrastructure linking the capital to the civil bureaucracy and to the military.¹⁷ Alongside the restoration of the government post system, the new Qing state also re-established the court gazettes and military reports (*tangbao* 塘報) similar to the Ming system. The Qing rulers did not compile gazettes in any languages besides Chinese, nor prior to the conquest of Beijing. After conquest, the Qing court used the gazette to garner legitimacy with the extant bureaucracy. Although many non-Han officials served in the provinces during the Qing, I have not found references to non-Chinese courier superintendents or to the placement of non-Chinese language documents in gazettes.

Since upon conquest the Qing court attempted to recruit acting officials stationed in the provinces, the court prioritized the restoration of the gazette in order to generate a legitimate and familiar mode of communicating with the territorial bureaucracy. Laudatory memorials (*hezhe* 賀摺) written as early as the summer of 1645 cited gazettes as their source for news of the surrender of Nanjing and the reported death of Li Zicheng. These memorials, reports, and gazettes moved quickly between distant locations.

¹⁶ Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 488-492.

¹⁷ For sixty-eight documents on reforms to the courier post system in the Shunzhi reign, see *Qingdai dang'an shiliao congbian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), 7:1-160. See also Liu Wenpeng, *Qingdai yichuan ji qi yu jiangyu xingcheng guanxi zhi yanjiu* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2004), 168-175.

Alongside official documents, news and rumors moved quickly from Beijing to Jiangnan in those tumultuous years.¹⁸

The Shanxi military governor Ma Guozhu and Tianjin Governor Zhang Xin both specifically cited reading in the gazette (*dibao*) of the Prince of Yu (Dodo)'s military report of the surrender of Nanjing.¹⁹ Dodo had compelled refugee officials of the Ming court to surrender the city in early June 1645. Zhang Xin wrote in his memorial that he received and read the *dibao* in Tianjin on June 29, 1645, less than one month later. Likewise, Ma Guozhu referred to the forcible return of the Prince of Fu to Nanjing, which occurred on June 18; Ma's message was sent from Taiyuan and received at the capital on July 17. Over the course of approximately one month, a military report containing the news of Prince Fu's capture and return was relayed from Nanjing to Beijing; the news was published in the gazette; the gazette was received in Taiyuan by Ma Guozhu; and Ma Guozhu's message of congratulations was delivered from Taiyuan to Beijing. After struggling to control the territory around the capital, Qing forces had moved quickly to resurrect communications routes between the Jiangnan region, the metropolitan region, and the northwest.

Just as impressive as the assertion of control over roads and communications is the fact that Qing gazettes, unlike their late Ming counterparts, were almost immediately regarded as legitimate intelligence sources stemming from the court itself. Manchu

¹⁸ Ōki, *Minmatsu Kōnan*, 152-161; Kishimoto Mio, "Sūtei 17 nen no Kōnan shakai to Pekin jōhō," in *Min-Shin kōtai to Kōnan shakai: 17-seiki Chūgoku no chitsujo mondai* (Tokyo: Tokyo daigaku shuppankai, 1999), 143-195.

¹⁹ Direct similarities between the texts of memorials composed by officials who cited the gazettes specifically and those who did not suggest that many got their information from the gazette. Zhang Xin: GSA, 086169-001. Ma Guozhu: GSA, 037312-001 and 060934-001. Together with Ning Wanwo, Ma Guozhu had submitted a plan for the conquest of China to Hong Taiji in 1632. See Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 485-6; Hummel, *ECCP*, 592; *QSG*, 239:9517-18. Other examples from Wang Yan, SZ 02/09/01, GSA 186748-006; Wang Zhengzhi, SZ 02/09/01, GSA 186748-005, and Liu Fangming, SZ 02/09/02, GSA, 186748-009.

officials criticized the insufficiency of the Ming gazette as a symptom of dynastic decline. Although Qing forces had previously made use of the Ming gazettes, Dorgon, while serving as regent in the early Shunzhi reign, stated that he had stopped reading the court gazette (*chaobao*) in the last years of the Ming because the state's lack of control over the gazette meant it had comically little intelligence value.²⁰ In contrast, when Chinese elites accepted the authority of the Qing gazette, they accepted the legitimacy of Qing rule. The official and literatus Wang Wan wrote later of locating a copy of a gazette (*dichao*) that he had saved concerning the presence of Ming pretenders in Beijing in the winter of 1644 to show his son, who had questions about the period.²¹ Even in Jiangnan, a seat of resistance to the Qing conquest, gentry families like Wang's were already seeking out gazettes released by the Qing court in Beijing in these first months of Qing rule.

Overall, the choice to adopt a court gazette after the conquest of Beijing was closely connected to goals of cementing authority over the gentry and bureaucracy, establishing state institutions, and crushing wider resistance. Like the careful maintenance of court archives and the publication of imperial histories and court annals, the restoration of the court gazette was an effort to legitimize the rule of the Qing dynasty. By publishing court gazettes, the Qing state could also communicate major news items efficiently to officials in the provinces, thus preserving a stable and cooperative bureaucracy. Finally, communications systems were essential to the territorial consolidation campaigns that continued into the eighteenth century.

²⁰ *Duoergun shezheng riji*, quoted in Shi, *Qingdai qianzhongqi*, 34.

²¹ Cited in Meng Sen, *Ming-Qing shi lun zhu jikan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 1:37.

Rebuilding Roads and Crafting Surveillance Infrastructures

As shown by immediate post-conquest communications among the military, bureaucracy, and court, the early Qing court prioritized the restoration of long-distance communications routes and multiple courier systems. These included the express messengers who travelled at top speeds to deliver secret communiqués; the standard government post relay system that handled the bulk of government communications; and the couriers that delivered packets of routine information, including court gazettes, from the court to the provinces. Reestablishing the express and government post systems enabled the Qing court to keep abreast of military campaigns in the south and west, and communicate with its adopted and newly posted territorial officials.

Early Qing governors particularly sought the restoration of reliable communications because they found it difficult to assess local conditions and distinguish between baseless rumors and authentic intelligence. Although the development of secret memorials allowed Manchu governors to communicate freely and directly with the emperor, these messages were still delayed by the challenges of terrain and distance. In a secret memorial to the Kangxi emperor, Mamboo (Ch. Manbao 滿保), newly appointed as governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang provinces in 1714, expressed concern about false information and rumors printed in the gazettes distributed in his jurisdiction. He attributed the problem to the great distance between the capital and the southeastern coastal provinces, and to widespread interest in imperial military action on the western frontier of Xinjiang.²² In his private response, Kangxi instructed Mamboo to forward all falsified reports and tabloids (*jia bao* 假報, *jia xiaobao* 假小報) to the capital. He also

²² Mamboo often submitted detailed reports of provincial conditions and news in his secret memorials. See for example, “Fujian xunfu Manbao zoubao shuli zongdu yinwu bing difang qingxing zhe,” KX 53/01/26, KMZZ, 929.

sent a full synopsis of military action in Xinjiang, instructing the governor-general to share this report with relevant civil and military officials so that they could avoid confusion caused by false rumors. Later that year, Kangxi approved the Board of Punishment's recommendation to prohibit the printing of any sort of tabloid or unofficial material.²³

A few years later, Mamboo reported that he had used his exclusive source of intelligence to intimidate the Fujian courier superintendent in Beijing and couriers had stopped delivering unreliable and unverified reports. In the past month Mamboo had received ten issues of the court gazette (*dibao*), and had verified that the gazettes were trustworthy official editions, "copied and transmitted by the offices" that contained no false reports.²⁴ Mamboo's struggles to verify the information delivered to him and available in his jurisdiction illustrates the challenges of territorial consolidation for the Qing administration. Alongside the concrete work of rebuilding roads and post stations, new territorial officials faced an overload of information and rumor at their posts.

In outlying regions, by contrast, it was necessary to build even the basic infrastructure to carry military orders and reports. In areas without Ming-era post stations, military courier stations (*juntang* 軍塘) and outposts (*juntai* 軍臺) were built first. After incorporating the territory into its administrative structure, the Qing supplemented or

²³ Falsified information about the western campaigns continued to enter the gazettes. In Guizhou, the governor Liu Yinshu read in a false gazette about the Kangxi emperor's plans to lead a military expedition to Hami in the northwest, and in response submitted a memorial urging the emperor to delay the expedition. Kangxi, incredulous that an official with no military experience serving in far-off Guizhou would offer advice, dismissed Liu from his post and sent him to the far northwest to gain some first-hand understanding of the military. "Kangxi chao weichuan 'dichao' an," in Qiu Runxi and Liu Guangsheng, eds., *Zhongguo youyi shiliao* (Beijing: Beijing hangkong hangtian daxue chubanshe, 1999), 246-247; *QSL*, KX 55/03/22, 267:626a. Biography of Liu Yinshu: *QSG*, 276:10076.

²⁴ "Min-Zhe zongdu Manbao zou wei xiangcha jia chuanchao xiaobao," KX 58/03/06, *KMZZ*, 1374-5.

replaced these military stations with post stations (*yizhan* 驛站).²⁵ In the northeast, the Ming military had built post stations for defense against the Manchus that linked to the central location of Liaoyang. In the Kangxi reign the Qing expanded and reconfigured this network. The northeastern post stations, now centered on Shengjing (Mukden), home of the Qing secondary capital, were strategically arranged to ward off Russian imperial encroachment.²⁶ In the process of military conquest in the eighteenth century, the Qing built military stations (*taizhan* 臺站) in far western Xinjiang, with the earliest links from the Jiayu Pass into Xinjiang established in 1715; the route was finalized by 1767. To reach Tibet, the Qing adapted Ming post station routes that had been used to facilitate the passage of tribute and envoys. These routes originated in Qinghai and Gansu in the north, and Sichuan in the south, but Qing military transportation and communications to Tibet exclusively employed the southern route after the integration of Sichuan as a province.²⁷

Although in all territories the post station network encompassed both communications and defense, in frontier areas defense mattered more. In Xinjiang, military posts were not converted to post stations until after the establishment of Xinjiang as a province in 1884. In the inner provinces, the Board of War and regional circuit intendants (*daotai* 道台) oversaw the relay post stations. In the northeast and far west, separate administrative infrastructures managed the postal system. In Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Tibet, this was the Lifan yuan (理藩院), a metropolitan body in charge of administering areas outside of the boundaries and cultural scope of China proper.

²⁵ *Juntang* relayed military reports and communications. *Juntai* served in this role, and were also used for the transportation of goods, troops, and provisions. See Liu Wenpeng, "Titang kao," *Qing shi yanjiu* 4 (2007): 87.

²⁶ Liu Wenpeng, *Qingdai yichuan*, 98-99.

²⁷ Liu Wenpeng, *Qingdai yichuan*, 105-6; 117-119.

Transportation protocol in these areas followed the model of the inner provinces, but the Lifan yuan provided specialized personnel, seals, and tallies for recordkeeping and authentication.²⁸ In frontier areas, roads and communications networks were essential to both the military conquest and the ritual diplomacy employed by the Qing to incorporate new territories.

In the inner provinces, the restoration of regular dispatches like the court gazette allowed the Board of War, the administrative body responsible for roads and communications, to keep watch for interruptions in the road network in the inner provinces. Only high-ranking officials had the right to send memorials directly to the throne. Provincial officials typically sent these memorials in batches, sending out their boxes of memorials rarely more than a few times in a month, and even less frequently in distant posts, a situation illustrated in Table 1.1 below.²⁹ Responses, if sent, were likewise delivered in batches. In fact, provincial officials worked without court guidance relatively often. The limited passage of government couriers meant that days might pass before disrepair or other problems were discovered on a particular postal route.

In August 1755 (QL 20/7), the Grand Council processed 317 palace memorials, of which 201 came from provincial governors and governor-generals.³⁰ The table below shows that during this month, the Grand Council received an average of just over two batches containing about four memorials each from each serving governor-general. Thus each official sent about seven memorials in total to the throne for the entire month. Of these memorials, typically at least one or two were taken up with reporting grain prices,

²⁸ Liu Wenpeng, *Qingdai yichuan*, 128-163.

²⁹ See also Guy, *Qing Governors and their Provinces*, Ch. 9.

³⁰ These numbers may have been higher during typical months. In QL 20/7, a large number of military officials sent in congratulatory memorials concerning recent military victories.

crop growth, and rainfall. The official who sent the smallest batches of memorials with the most frequency, Fang Guancheng, was not coincidentally stationed in the Zhili provincial seat of Baoding, not far from Beijing. Provincial governors submitted memorials slightly less frequently (2.1 batches per month), but sent more memorials overall (4.7 per batch, and 9.4 during the month).³¹ Therefore, even though together correspondence with these highest-ranking provincial officials dominated the business of the Grand Council, each individual official had only limited regular contact with the court. For most of the month, they might not know what was going on in other areas of the empire, and likewise the court might remain unaware of incidents in the locale.

Table 1.1. Memorials sent by Governor-Generals, QL 20/7 (August 1755)

Jurisdiction	Name	No. of Batches Sent	Total No. of Memorials	Average No. per Batch
Zhili	Fang Guancheng	6	14	2.3
Liangjiang	Yengişan (Yinjishan)	1	5	5
Shaanxi-Gansu	Huang Tinggui	4	11	2.8
Sichuan	Kaitai	1	4	4
Fujian-Zhejiang	Kaerjishan	2	10	5
Huguang	Şose (Shuose)	1	4	4
Liangguang	Yang Yingju	2	11	5.5
Yunnan-Guizhou	Aibida	2	7	3.5
Grain Transport	Hūboo (Hubao)	1	2	2
Southern Grand Canal	Fulehe	1	4	4
Northern Grand Canal	Bai Zhongshan	3	7	2.3
Average		2.2	7.2	3.7

Source: *Qianlong chao junjichu suishou dengji dang*, 8:208-242; Qian, *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 1413. See notes later in chapter about the types of messages sent to the Grand Council. Several of these officials, including Liu Tongxun, Huang Tinggui, Shuose, Kaitai, and Aibida, were shuffled around on QL 20/06/11, but most retained positions of the same rank. The Grand Council record books do not record the positions of memorialists, just their names.

³¹ Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan, ed., *Qianlong chao junjichu suishou dengji dang* (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000), 8:208–242; Qian Shifu, ed., *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 1606.

To monitor communication routes and the behavior of officials up and down the administrative hierarchy, the metropolitan bureaucracy distributed a standardized, numbered, dispatch. Courier superintendents sent out numbered issues from the imperial capital to provincial seats every two days, thus constantly testing road conditions and the courier transport system. Official behavior was also put to the test. If a governor, promoted to a new position, failed to acknowledge his promotion, this signaled road-based delays or official negligence, both situations requiring investigation. The frequency of these dispatches was also a check on the government post system. If a gazette, typically delivered by the slowest transport option, were received before the delivery of an official communication, this suggested malfeasance or disorder in the relay post system.³²

Finally, distributing regular gazettes allowed the metropolitan boards and the court to keep distant officials abreast of events throughout the empire, saving the transport cost and clerical effort of recopying and dispatching documents for each provincial office. A response from the capital to the inquiries of a bewildered official like Mamboo serving in the southeastern coastal city of Fuzhou could take as many as twenty-seven days to arrive by horse, and forty-eight days on foot.³³ The regular dispatch of gazettes compressed these distances and information gaps for territorial officials.

Enforcing Secrecy at the Center

While the reliability and frequency of communications decreased as one traveled further from the imperial capital, the centrality and constant activity of palace offices

³² One case where a provincial official apologized for not receiving notice of his appointment sooner is: FHA, LFZZ 03-4997-034, TZ 1/10/22, “Hubei zheng kao guan Yan Zongyi zou wei hui jing shi jian jianfang Yunnan xuezheng dichao, xunji qicheng furen shi.”

³³ Fairbank and Teng, “Transmission of Ch’ing Documents,” 25.

made leaks and spying common tropes in bureaucratic complaints about communications problems. Imperial edicts habitually reminded metropolitan officials, clerks, and messengers that spying, selling documents, and otherwise leaking information were all punishable acts; predictably, such acts nonetheless regularly recurred. After the institutionalization of the Grand Council, a new high-level deliberative council, in the early Qianlong reign, gazette copyists and courier superintendents worried that documents desired by provincial officials were being hidden away behind the walls of the Council. It took time for the court to recognize that most substantive memorials still moved into open channels after being deliberated upon in secret. Although clerks and other lackeys were the ones who stole, borrowed, and copied documents, scheming governors and other high officials scared the court more.

The determination of the Qing court to protect court secrecy developed in reaction to the perceived negative example of the Ming court, and from the personal convictions of early Qing emperors, especially the Yongzheng Emperor. Early in the Shunzhi reign, the court ordered that reference summaries (*jietie* 揭帖) of communications that had not yet received a rescript could not be casually distributed around the metropolitan offices.³⁴ The edict specified amnesty for previous offenders, which suggests that these summaries in fact floated around quite frequently. All memorials redirected from the emperor to the Six Boards first went to the Six Sections (*liu ke* 六科), censorial units attached to each of these administrative ministries. In the Six Sections, clerks composed reference summaries

³⁴ *QSL*, SZ 02/08/26, 20:178a. In a memorial criticizing disorderly behavior by clerks in two metropolitan Boards, an official of the Transmissions Office noted that reference summaries were originally “for the purpose of consulting archives (*fu jietie yuan wei cun dang bei yong* 夫揭帖原為存檔備用); these summaries of documents were to be used after they were filed away, as opposed to short *tiehuang* 貼黃 summaries of routine memorials used while the documents were transferred between offices in the deliberative process. GSA, 016393-001, QL 01/08/02, “Tongzheng sishi zuo tongzheng wei xingbu siyuan mengbi tangguan tuolei wugu,” (also published in *Ming-Qing dang’an*, j.A068-060).

to facilitate quick deliberation. This made clerks and copyists working in these key areas, as well as messengers (*you di ren yi* 郵遞人役) particularly suspect as potential spies, informants, or conduits.³⁵ A subsequent Kangxi-era edict referred to copyists in the Six Sections who might “leak” (*lou xie* 漏洩) documents.³⁶ Suspicious bureaucratic officials and emperors alike saw clerks and messengers as corruptible and likely to collude to leak documents or alter them in order to extort or blackmail.³⁷

Indeed, the court environment was fraught with opportunities for leaks. Each day, after memorials submitted to the throne received imperial responses, clerks sorted documents according to their contents and intended recipient. Private couriers brought responses to secret memorials directly back to their authors. Clerks archived some documents, and brought others to the Grand Secretariat, where they were registered and copied, then archived or transferred to one of the administrative boards for further action. Upon entry into this register, the memorial, rescript, or edict would be read aloud or posted where clerks from the different boards, capital courier superintendents, and copyists employed by gazette publishers (*baofang* 報房) lingered, waiting to copy relevant memorials and edicts and make notes of audiences and appointments.³⁸

³⁵ The functions of these offices followed directly from Ming precedent, although personal memorials, and subsequently items sent in using the secret memorial system and out in the form of court letters specifically circumvented these units. See Silas H.L. Wu, “The Memorials System of the Ch’ing Dynasty (1644-1911),” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 27 (1967): 12-25; and “Transmission of Ming Memorials,” 278. The six sections have also been called the “Six Offices of Scrutiny,” and the “supervising secretaries” (*jishizhong* 給事中) that manned them also called “supervising censors.” Cf. Charles O. Hucker, *A Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1985), 2:317.

³⁶ *HDSL*, KX 17, j.1014, *duchayuan* 17, *like*. Penalties for supervising secretaries, fixed at a fine of six months’ stipend in the Kangxi edict, were reiterated in the first year of the Yongzheng reign. *HDSL*, YZ 1, *ce* 11, 176b.

³⁷ *HDSL*, j.112.

³⁸ For a description of this process from a gazette publisher in the Jiaqing reign, see Chapter 2. *FHA*, SYD, JQ 24/06/28, #2.

In the early Qing, all memorials other than personal memorials traveled through the Grand Secretariat on the way into the palace as well as on the way out.³⁹ After the rise of the Grand Council as a formal institution in the 1730s, routine memorials (*tiben* 題本) went through the Grand Secretariat as before, but palace memorials (*zouzhe* 奏摺) were sent directly to the Grand Council. As a result, these memorials skirted the Grand Secretariat and its copyists upon entering and leaving the palace. This lessened the institutional power of the Grand Secretariat, and increased the influence and authority of a select number of high officials who served concurrently in both the Grand Council and in a metropolitan board or in the Grand Secretariat.

Over time, high-level officials sent more palace memorials, adding to the workload of the Council and dampening its ability to process documents efficiently or wield substantive power.⁴⁰ Even as the number of palace memorials increased, the Council still “passed down” (*jiao* 交) most memorials to the Grand Secretariat or the Six Boards after deciding on a response (See Table 1.2 below).⁴¹ Thus although the deliberations around palace memorials occurred in closed chambers, afterwards the document and its imperial response emerged into wider purview.

³⁹ Personal memorials related directly to the individual affairs of a given official.

⁴⁰ See Wook Yoon, “The Grand Council and the Communications System in the Late Qing,” (PhD diss., Yale University, 2008), 108-114.

⁴¹ Since most Grand Council ministers held concurrent posts in the Grand Secretariat or the Six Boards, they were often directly involved in the document transfer. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 5-7; 186-190.

Table 1.2. The Paths of Palace Memorials

Action	QL 20/7 (1755)	QL 40/7 (1775)	JQ 18/9 (1813)	DG 6/9 (1826)
Average Memorials Per Day	12.8	15.7	13.2	16.3
No Transfer (不抄 or no notation)	88 (69%)	77 (49%)	35 (27%)	61 (37%)
Transferred (交, 隨旨交, 同摺交)	25 (19%)	76 (49%)	85 (64%)	79 (49%)
Returned Directly to Memorialist	7 (5%)	0 (0%)	8 (6%)	18 (11%)
Held (存)	6 (5%)	1 (1%)	4 (3%)	
Misc.	2 (2%)	3 (2%)		5 (3%)
Total	128	157	132	163
Action	DG 15/5 (1835)	DG 28/2 (1848)	XF 3/11 (1853)	TZ 10/7 (1871)
Average Memorials Per Day	13.6	13.7	36.7	21.2
No Transfer (不抄 or no notation)	45 (33%)	36 (26%)	117 (32%)	93 (44%)
Transferred (交, 隨旨交, 同摺交)	85 (63%)	92 (67%)	193 (53%)	92 (43%)
Returned Directly to Memorialist	2 (1%)	1 (1%)	21 (6%)	6 (3%)
Held (存)	1 (1%)	2 (1%)	20 (5%)	6 (3%)
Misc.	3 (2%)	6 (4%)	16 (4%)	15 (7%)
Total	136	137	367	212

Source: QL: *Qianlong chao junjichu suishou dengji dang*, vols. 8 and 32; JQ, DG, XF: National Qing History Compilation Project; TZ: FHA.⁴²

Note: The chart above includes entries from the first ten days of each month. Transfers categorized as “miscellaneous” included the transfer of documents to various court institutions through private channels.

Grand Council clerks (*zhangjing* 章京) noted in the Grand Council Document

Register (*Suishou dengji*) the items processed by the Council each day, predominantly imperially rescripted memorials (*zhupi zouzhe* 硃批奏摺), but also edicts, court letters,

⁴² Since the *Suishou dengji* was a Grand Council document register, the earliest extant records are from the Qianlong reign. Only after QL 8 did the records begin including the transmission information noted in the table. This chart includes data only for the first ten days of each month. I chose these dates to ensure a relatively even chronological distribution, and selected months where Grand Council clerks' handwriting was most legible.

non-rescripted memorials, lists, and other miscellany.⁴³ For rescripted memorials, all entries were organized under the name of the memorialist, and each included a short summary, the text of the rescript, and a note of the transmission of the document after it left the Council. As seen in the table above, the Council “passed down” a low of about twenty percent of documents in QL 20 and a high of seventy percent of documents in DG 28, averaging just over fifty percent in the periods sampled. If the imperial response was not written directly on the memorial, then it was noted that the memorial would be transferred when it received a rescript (*sui zhi jiao* 隨旨交). The entry for the corresponding rescript or edict, if recorded separately, would likewise include the notation “transfer with memorial” (*tong zhe jiao* 同摺交). These documents subsequently entered outer court spaces and the public channel of communications through the process described above. Other items were archived immediately (*cun* 存), or, in the case of secret communications carried by private courier, returned to the sender.

The remaining palace memorials (as many as seventy percent in QL 20, but averaging about forty percent in the periods I sampled) were restricted from transfer to the Grand Secretariat or the administrative boards. In registers from the first half of the Qianlong reign, items designated for “no transfer” typically included the explicit notation of “do not copy” (*buchao* 不抄), but in later years it was more common to simply leave the bottom of the register blank to signify that the document should not to be transferred. The use of the annotation “do not copy” did not direct the exclusion of the document

⁴³ For images of these registers, and much more detailed descriptions of their contents and of the operations of the Grand Council, see works by Beatrice S. Bartlett, including “Ch’ing Documents in the National Palace Museum Archives. Part One. Document Registers: The *Sui-shou teng-chi*,” *National Palace Museum Bulletin* 10, no. 4 (1975): 1-17; and *Monarchs and Ministers*, 212-13 and throughout.

from public channels on grounds of secrecy or sensitivity.⁴⁴ Instead, most communications that did not enter into public channels were in fact of marginal interest to the wider bureaucracy. Truly secret communications, such as military reports (*bao* 報) were explicitly marked to be returned to the memorialist by courier.

Many documents that received the “do not copy” notation dealt with mundane details or private communications between the throne and the memorialist. As seen in the table, almost seventy percent of documents were marked “do not copy” in QL 20/7. However, the vast majority of these were congratulatory messages on the pacification of the Zunghar Mongols in the far west, a feat for which Qianlong also commissioned a celebratory inscription that year.⁴⁵ These messages were received from a range of military officials who had the right to memorialize, but rarely did so except to submit congratulatory or gratitude memorials. Congratulatory messages rarely received a written response besides “read” (*lan* 覽) and were almost never distributed to the wider bureaucracy. Gratitude memorials, submitted upon receipt of an appointment or an honor, were likewise rarely conveyed to the Grand Secretariat. Nor did the outer court receive periodic reports of rainfall and crop prices, lists appended to memorials, and other data-heavy appendices whose contents were summarized in memorials.

The cohort of clerks and copyists that idled in Grand Secretariat corridors could access much of the substantive communications between the provinces and the throne, and chose what to copy and transfer to employers or sponsors, or gazette printers and other private publishers. Such informal connections between state and non-state agents made possible the remarkable continuity of gazette production throughout the late

⁴⁴ See, for example, Fang, *Zhongguo xinwen shiye*, 1:189-90.

⁴⁵ Perdue, *China Marches West*, 270-75; 433-34.

imperial period. Nonetheless, the evolution of the Grand Council from an ad hoc advisory group to a routinized Inner Court institution confused copyists and the courier superintendents in charge of funneling information to provincial governors. Courier superintendents operating in the mid-eighteenth century knew documents moving in and out of the Grand Council often involved issues of interest to provincial governors, but they were now formally barred from access to many of these documents.

A case from 1746 (QL 11) illustrates how the formation of the Grand Council confused these communication experts of the outer court. That spring, the acting governor of Guangxi province, Toyong (Ch. Tuoyong 託庸) received a shocking letter from his courier superintendent in the capital, Yu Zhuo (俞焯). In the letter, Yu reacted to a recent scolding for incompetence in gathering intelligence at the capital. Yu explained that although courier superintendents typically compiled digests of Board documents (*baochao* 報抄) for provincial governors, the Grand Council now strictly guarded its documents so that courier superintendents struggled to procure Council documents. Yet, provincial governors were eager to hear news from the Council, because it was their memorials on which the Council deliberated. Yu reported that after asking around among colleagues, he had found a Grand Council clerk (*gongshi* 供事) who would help.

Introducing the scheme, Yu noted its risks by alluding to the case of a former associate who had been punished for leaking a Council document, but assured the governor that since he treated his duties as “as important as life itself,” the risk was worthwhile. Yu’s contact charged a steep fee for access to Grand Council documents, more than ten taels (*liang* 兩) per month. As for “the most important” documents, Yu was allowed to copy only the general sense rather than the particulars of the document, which

he estimated at perhaps twenty to thirty percent of the content. Since the fees exceeded his own modest means, Yu wrote in evident expectation that Toyong would be pleased with this new channel of secret intelligence and provide the cash.

Toyong may indeed have been pestering Yu Zhuo about obtaining intelligence from the capital. But as an acting governor in charge of a failing copper mining scheme in Guangxi, he was vulnerable to censure and dismissal.⁴⁶ Toyong saw clear weaknesses in Yu's plan and forwarded the incriminating message to the capital with a note detailing his own shock and horror at reading it.⁴⁷ He may well have hoped to delay his own comeuppance for mismanagement of the Guangxi copper mines by exposing the courier superintendent's intended transgressions. In a subsequent investigation of Yu Zhuo and his accomplices, the capital police (*bujun tongling yamen* 步軍統領衙門) found a chain of associations from Yu Zhuo to the Grand Secretariat clerk Qian Wu, who worked as a messenger between the Grand Council and the Grand Secretariat. Many of the intermediaries in this plot were Zhejiang natives, and according to their confessions they relied on native-place ties to secure documents for Yu Zhuo and other courier superintendents, each taking a fee along the way. Chen Yaowen, a clerk implicated in the plot, reported in his confession that in a two-month period the group obtained "forty to fifty" items, among which thirty had been marked "for copy" (*ying fachao* 應發鈔), and the rest marked "do not copy" (*bu ying fachao* 不應發鈔).⁴⁸ Although Toyong's message

⁴⁶ References to the copper mining project and its problems in *QSL*: QL 11/02/29, 259:358a; QL 11/03/02, 260:364b; QL 11/R3/26, 263:410b-411b.

⁴⁷ FHA, ZPZZ 04-01-01-0138-012, QL 11/R3/8, "Shuli Guangxi xunfu Tuoyong zou wei jushi zouwen titang Yu Zhuo huiqiu michao qing gequ wu jinshi yanshen zhizui shi."

⁴⁸ GSA 197535-001, QL 11/04/12, "Wei chashen fuzou titang Yu Zhuo deng jiang jimi digao chaobao dengyou."

helped instigate a spate of greater scrutiny of conniving couriers and clerks in the capital, he was still cashiered from the Guangxi position.

Around the same time, authorities discovered several other cases in which courier superintendents and metropolitan clerks had colluded to smuggle Grand Council documents out of the palace. In an edict, the Qianlong Emperor accused the courier superintendents for Zhili, Jiangnan, and Zhejiang of habitually paying for Grand Council documents. The edict blamed provincial officials for their negligence in allowing these illegal activities to go on.⁴⁹ The next month, these governors sent in a flurry of apologetic memorials.⁵⁰ Anhui governor Wei Dingguo wrote, “Every time I peruse the gazette (*dichao*), although in places the courier superintendent has copied side notes (*pianbao* 偏報), because it is a long-standing practice, I did not pay attention or investigate.”⁵¹ In these memorials, each governor apologized profusely but said nothing about their future prosecution of these and similar abuses, suggesting that they, like Toyong, were at least partially responsible for the superintendent’s decision to spy around the Grand Council.

Copyists and others hanging around Grand Council and Grand Secretariat offices continued to trouble the court in later years. An 1801 imperial edict set a surveillance secretary to monitor the area and discourage potential snoopers, described as outer-court personnel, mid-level board personnel, and employees of princes and other imperial relatives, among others. Later in the Jiaqing reign, an investigation revealed that

⁴⁹ *QSL*, QL 11/04/12 (1746.04.26), 264:426a-b. The particulars of these cases, as well as the Guangxi case, do not appear in the *QSL* or *HDSL*. A lengthy routine memorial from the Grand Council on the Zhili case is preserved in the Grand Secretariat archives. The particulars were similar to the Guangxi case. See GSA 050475-001, QL 11/06/10, “Zhang Tingyu deng tiwei canzou shi.”

⁵⁰ The governors Nasutu (Zhili), Yinjishan (Liangjiang), Chen Dashou (Suzhou), Wei Dingguo (Anhui), and Chang’an (Zhejiang) were affected. For their apologies, see FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-12-0049-001 (QL 11/05/04, Chang’an); 04-01-01-0130-058 (QL 11/05/22, Nasutu); 04-01-01-0130-057 (QL 11/05/24, Wei Dingguo); 04-01-12-0050-025 (QL 11/07/10, Chen Dashou).

⁵¹ One other governor, Nasutu, also referred to the inserted text as *pianbao*. Some late Qing gazettes at the British Library have the title *pianbao*, a term I have not seen referenced elsewhere.

employees of gazette publishers, board clerks, and personal servants and messengers of the Imperial Household Department (*neiwufu* 內務府) and various imperial princes all loitered around the palace, gossiping and waiting for news. Although the Board of Punishments initially sentenced them, the emperor pardoned these functionaries, while maintaining punishment for Imperial Household Department ministers and imperial princes. Thus although the Board of Punishments sought to clear low-level employees from palace offices, Jiaqing found spying copyists, clerks, and couriers worked for provincial governors and other power-holders seeking to advance their own interests to be more threatening. In the next section, I discuss in more detail the relationship between the provincial governor and the capital courier superintendent, and the use of open channel documents by provincial governors.

Using and Losing Court Documents in the Provinces

Metropolitan and court officials readily believed stories of provincial governors using courier superintendents and other subordinates as spies in the capital. However, a closer look at the challenges that governors encountered in managing subordinate staff and different types of communications suggests that few had the capacity to mastermind a network of spies. Instead, governors struggled to sort through the communications that they received, anxious that the loss of an important document would imperil their careers. Provincial governors relied on open channels of communications to back up their records and to improve their understanding of affairs in other places, but also suspected the gazette could be manipulated by courier superintendents and other subordinates whose misdeeds could waylay the governor's reputation.

Soldier-couriers under the supervision of the capital and provincial superintendents delivered routine documents from the capital to the provincial seat, and thereafter from the provincial seat to local offices. In addition to routine documents and gazettes, these couriers also carried seals of office sent out from metropolitan boards, and special gifts or rewards sent from the throne to officials or even private citizens. On the road, they passed through forwarding posts (*tangbo* 塘撥) manned by either Green Standard soldiers or civilian attendants.⁵² Forwarding posts were not identical to relay post stations (*yizhan*); for example, in the eighteenth century there were thirteen forwarding posts between Jinan, the provincial seat of Shandong, and Beijing, but fifteen relay post stations.⁵³ Both the sixteen courier superintendents stationed in Beijing and the provincial superintendents maintained registries of documents and gazettes dispatched and received. Although the transport of these routine documents was not subject to the same stringent measures to ensure delivery speed and confidentiality as documents traveling in the relay post system or by express messenger, governors could check on provincial registries and city censors or the Board of War could check registries of capital superintendents to track the circulation of routine documents.⁵⁴

As illustrated in Table 1.3 below, the provinces funded courier superintendents and the distribution of gazettes somewhat differently. Some provinces funded provincial and capital postmasters jointly, and some separately. Although unrelated to—and indeed

⁵² Liu Wenpeng, “Titang kao,” 88. The couriers (called *tangbing* 塘兵 or *tangding* 塘丁), were typically appointed by the governor from provincial garrisons, although this could vary. It was not uncommon for commoners living along communications routes to work as couriers, a situation approved as practical by some and criticized as insecure by others. See Qiu and Liu, *Zhongguo youyi shiliao*, 247-54.

⁵³ Liu, *Qingdai yichuan*, 50-54.

⁵⁴ Courier superintendents were assigned to Hubei, Hunan, Zhili, Guangzhou, Guangxi, Jiangnan, Shaanxi-Gansu, Yunnan-Guizhou, Shandong, Shanxi, Henan, Fujian, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Sichuan, and the Grand Canal system.

dwarfed by—the total expenses of the provincial relay posts, occasional petitions to cut courier funds in order to relieve budget problems cited these costs as major burdens on provincial budgets. A Yongzheng-era proposal to restructure the courier system by the Shandong governor Selengge (Ch. Sailenge塞楞額) noted that the “officials in each office that read the gazette” were required to remit fees quarterly to the provincial treasury to fund rations and provisions (*gongshi yinliang* 工食銀兩) for routine couriers.⁵⁵ Besides this, provincial arrangements did not always cover the full expense of bringing the gazette to individual readers. County gazetteers often list a gazette attendant, courier, or horseman paid at a daily rate set by the locale.⁵⁶ Officials also sometimes also employed their own document couriers (*zhechai* 摺差) or gazette deliverymen (*zoubao ren* 奏報人).⁵⁷

Table 1.3 Annual Allotments for Capital Courier Superintendents (by Province) (in taels)

Province	Amount	Notes
Zhili	200	Only includes Fengtian Prefecture.
Jiangsu	120	Noted for food, soldiers, and upkeep of offices.
Anhui	1506	Listed as “paper funds,” shared among provincial superintendents (2) and capital superintendent (1).
Fujian	1200	Listed as “gazette funds.”
Henan	3000	Listed as “paper funds.”
Shandong	6861	Listed as “gazette funds,” allotment for both provincial and capital <i>titang</i> .
Shanxi	2560	Listed as “jingbao funds,” decreased from 3200 <i>liang</i> at unspecified date.
Guangdong	6000	Shared among provincial (1) and capital (1) <i>titang</i>
Yunnan	2240	Listed as “gazette funds.”

Source: *HDSL*, j. 170.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Selengge, “Zou qing jiang yuan bo tangbing jinxing caiche gui yingwu,” *YZ* 05/11/24, in Qiu and Liu, *Zhongguo youyi shiliao*, 249.

⁵⁶ For various examples, see Weng Tianhu and Lü Weiyong, comp., *Xuxiu Pucheng xianzhi* (1900), 10:10b; Xia Yiyu, comp., *Yongnian xianzhi* (1877), 12:3a; Yang Chen, comp., *Dingxing xianzhi* (1891), 5:9a.

⁵⁷ Zeng Guofan’s diary entries often note the arrival of his gazette courier in the evenings while he served as governor-general of Liangjiang in the 1860s. Zeng Guofan, *Tongzhi riji* (in *LRCC*), 732, 750, 1273, 1585.

⁵⁸ See also the discussion in Cheng Lihong, “Qingdai xinwen kongzhi sixiang de fazhan,” *Huaxia wenhua luntan* (2007): 231; Shi, *Qingdai qianzhongqi*, 51-4.

Perceived malfeasance among the capital courier superintendents caused successive Qing emperors to repeatedly increased the requirements to serve in this unranked military position. Provincial officials also worried about the unreliability of courier superintendents. In the early Yongzheng period, one Manchu governor, Hiyande (Ch. Xiande 憲德), proposed to completely eliminate both capital and provincial courier superintendents, and redirect the funds previously designated to these posts towards the relay post system. With the resulting elimination of the court gazette, Hiyande suggested that “all official notices would be transmitted directly from bureau to bureau” (*yiying gongwen zong zi bu shou bu fa* 一應公文總自部收部發), and by banning couriers from carrying private correspondence together with official notices, the state could end the persistent leakage of official information and documents.⁵⁹ In essence, Hiyande proposed to eliminate the public channels of communications that both enhanced local administrators’ capacity and tempted them to seek personal gain based on the information received.

In his response, Yongzheng defended the gazette as too venerable a bureaucratic institution to eliminate entirely. Instead, he focused on the misdeeds of courier superintendents and the consequences of their actions. Yongzheng hypothesized that an individual accused of a crime might be able to collude with courier superintendents to falsify their sentencing record or pardon in the gazette and thereby escape punishment. Therefore, the integrity and discipline of those serving as courier superintendents should be improved by raising the qualifications for the post. Candidates would henceforth be

⁵⁹ “Sichuan xunfu Xiande zou feng zhupi xunjie jushi che qing bing qing chuge titang yi du jingchao xielou zhi bi zhe,” YZ 6/01/22, *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian* (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1989), 11:468.

selected from among those who had passed the highest military examination and expectant candidates for the position of assistant brigade commander (*shoubei* 守備). Terms, previously variable, would be strictly fixed at three years, and courier superintendents who had successfully completed their terms would be immediately placed as assistant brigade commanders. Superiors—including governors like Hiyande—would be held accountable for abuse of office, and thus motivated to supervise the activities of courier superintendents more closely.⁶⁰

Despite these reforms, a few years later Governor-General Wang Shijun (王士俊, d. 1756, 1722 *jinshi*), serving concurrent positions in Shandong and Henan, lambasted the discipline of capital and provincial courier superintendents in a secret memorial.⁶¹ Wang wrote that these men “had always been rootless scoundrels” whose major abuses included “cooking up tabloids (*xiaochao* 小抄), falsifying imperial pronouncements, disseminating rumors, and alarming the people,” as well as “leaking the particulars of important and urgent documents, causing delays, and absconding in the middle of the night.” He argued that in the Ming dynasty, the superintendent positions had been self-funded, which gradually led to habitual abuses of the position. These abuses were even more egregious now that provinces and locales directly paid courier superintendents.⁶² He suggested overhauling the system so that all serving superintendents would be removed from their positions, replaced with assistant brigade commanders in the provinces and minor-rank

⁶⁰ *QSL*, YZ 06/02/22, 66:1015b–1016a.

⁶¹ “Hedong zongdu Wang Shijun zouchen jiang xian zai neiwai titang jinxing gechu,” *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe*, 27:609. R. Kent Guy calls Wang “the quintessential Yongzheng official.” Guy, *Qing Governors*, 130. See also Wang’s official biography, *QSG*, 294:10347-10350.

⁶² As shown by Table 1.3, Wang’s estimation of “over one thousand taels annually” from the province and locale was not correct in every case.

metropolitan officials in the capital, and henceforth supervised by provincial governors and the Board of War respectively.⁶³

Wang's memorial was shelved; for the remainder of the Qing period capital courier superintendents were selected from military degree holders and provincial governors oversaw the selection of both provincial and capital courier superintendents. Incidentally, Wang's official career ended a few years later when he submitted a memorial condemning the imbalance of power between territorial and metropolitan officials at the beginning of Qianlong's reign.⁶⁴ In this memorial, he argued that ministers in the capital could control government affairs by mere proximity, leaving provincial officials weak by comparison. As a career provincial official, Wang felt his position was threatened by the growth of central institutions like the Grand Council. High-level provincial officials benefitted from their access to secret communications channels and privileged access to open communications channels. However, as seen in cases that placed governors at odds with courier superintendents, both newly appointed and incumbent officials also struggled to gain control of the communications experts who managed the information and documents traded in these channels.

After the institutionalization of the Grand Council, many accusations of spying in the capital continued to hinge on the link between a high-ranking provincial official and the courier superintendent responsible for that province. Early in the Qianlong reign, Anning (安寧, d. 1762), an official in charge of the Suzhou silk manufactory and the Hushu customs station, sent in a critical memorial noting that recently gazettes distributed to the provinces recorded in detail the tribute items sent by provincial officials

⁶³ "Wang Shijun zouwei michen guanjian," YZ 13/02/02, Guoli guguong bowuyuan, ed., *Gongzhong dang Yongzheng chao zouzhe* (Taipei: Guoli gugong bowuguan, 1977), 24:88.

⁶⁴ Wang was initially demoted for a local tax exemption scandal. See Guy, *Qing Governors*, 130-1.

to the palace, as well as imperial gifts and awards bequeathed to officials. Anning felt this was inappropriate, explaining:

Originally the gazette was established to allow each provincial official of high and low rank to generally know of governmental affairs (*zhengwu* 政務) and from reading these to contemplate their advantages and disadvantages. For this reason, everything concerning governmental affairs was recorded in utmost detail for their reference. But as for the tribute presented by the governor of a certain province from time to time, although these reflect a minister's loyalties, they have fundamentally nothing to do with governmental affairs.

At surface level, Anning complained about the unnecessary inclusion of irrelevant material in the gazette. However, his deeper concerns lay with the ways in which the courier superintendent obtained information from the palace, and the means by which inappropriate material was inserted into the gazette. He reasoned that the information about tribute and gifts could not be found in the departmental digest (*kechao* 科抄) of any office in the capital. By extension, "if the postmasters did not make inquiries on the sly and note these [gifts], how could they be able to list them in such a detailed fashion?"⁶⁵ The criticism targeted both the governor who desired such intelligence and his agent in the capital, the courier superintendent.

In response, the Grand Council issued a recommendation that echoed Anning's request that tributes and gifts no longer be printed in the gazette. This statement made the dangerous connection between the governor and the courier superintendent even more explicit:

[The] messengers and personal servants of the provincial governors are extremely familiar with the courier superintendents for that province. Therefore, whenever a tribute is presented, the superintendent finds out, and then informs each provincial superintendent, leading to this being carelessly inserted into the *dibao* for each province. As for gifts awarded [to officials], then the servants of the provincial

⁶⁵ FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-16-0005-011, QL 05/06/04, "Anning mi zou tangbao xing lie jingong shang ci shu shu wu yi," FHA, LFZZ, 03-0331-015, QL 05/06/04, "Anning zou qing yan chi jinshi dibao kaizai xian shang wujian shi."

governors will generally tell the superintendent, and they place this into the *dibao* to showcase the receipt of imperial benevolence (*enrong* 恩榮). But they do not know that none of these affairs should be included in the *dibao*.⁶⁶

The Council's statement implied that governors' basic motivation to want their gifts and tributes listed in the gazette was to advertise these honors to other officials. In addition, the Council saw the provincial governor's subordinates as complicit in helping governors to develop clout. This behavior, tantamount to enlisting social inferiors in factional competition, threatened the stability of the provincial bureaucracy. The appropriate solution was to ban the inclusion of such notices in these gazettes. From the perspective of the court and others attuned to bureaucratic politics, the capital courier superintendent seemed to be the eyes and ears of provincial governors in the imperial capital. The situation in reality was somewhat more complex. Incoming provincial officials struggled to establish authority with their subordinate communications experts in cases involving both capital and provincial superintendents. In addition, courier superintendents on both levels sometimes worked independently of governors' orders in order to gather information of potential interest, even if these pursuits led them outside of the law.

In the aftermath of repeated violations of court confidentiality by capital courier superintendents who purchased documents from Grand Council and other metropolitan clerks, the court issued stringent rules to curb courier superintendents' ability to illicitly gather information and rush reports to governors and others. In 1748, the court approved Guangdong governor Yue Jun's (岳麋, 1704-1753) proposal to force courier superintendents to adhere to a ten-day delay in sending out documents in order to avoid the arrival of gazettes and dispatches to provincial offices prior to official board notices.

⁶⁶ FHA, SYD, QL 05/06/21, *he* 554, *ce* 2; QSL, QL 05/06/21, 119:740b; HDSL, 703:758a-b.

Yue suggested that slowing the arrival of gazettes would improve communications confidentiality and thereby improve officials' ability to prosecute criminal cases and deal with other major agendas, such as piracy.⁶⁷ The Board of War added the provision that if gazettes were sent out too quickly, provincial governors would be responsible for punishing errant courier superintendents.⁶⁸ This stipulation targeted the fact that spying courier superintendents were typically understood to have been goaded into wrongdoing by someone in the provincial yamen, whether a governor seeking information about a rival, or a lowly clerk scheming to extort money out of a convict hungering for news about his sentence.

The case reported by Hiyande, the Sichuan governor whose proposal to eliminate the courier superintendents was dismissed by the Yongzheng Emperor, highlights the consequences for governors when gazettes overtook secret communications. Early in the sixth year of the Yongzheng reign, Hiyande faced a tricky situation: Cheng Rusi (程如絲, d.1727), a disgraced former provincial judge (*anchashi* 按察使) for Sichuan Province who had been convicted of administrative crimes and was lingering in jail, had committed suicide. At that point, Hiyande had not yet received an official notice (*buwen*) from the Board of Punishments confirming sentence for Cheng Rusi, but the imprisoned Cheng had by some means already heard of his intended sentence of beheading.⁶⁹ In a follow-up memorial, Hiyande established that the jailed man must have read the advance information in an unofficial gazette. In an investigation, the governor found that privately published digest abridgements of the court gazette (*jingbao zhi xiaochao* 京報之小抄)

⁶⁷ FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-01-0168-036, QL 13/03/29, "Guangdong xunfu Yue Jun zouwei jinyao kechao yi fen qingzhong yanfang xielou shi."

⁶⁸ HDSL, 703:758b.

⁶⁹ "Sichuan xunfu Xiande zou feng zhupi xunjie jushi chen qing bing qing chuge titang yi du jingchao xielou zhi bi zhe," YZ 06/01/22, *Yongzheng chao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe*, 11:468.

relating to this case had reached Sichuan five days earlier than his board notice. Hiyande pointed out that “every military and civil official of high or low rank in every yamen” read the unofficial digest, so that its contents quickly became general knowledge. Cheng Rusi might have obtained the information from a former associate. The distribution of information such as criminal sentences through public channels made officials accountable for carrying out the correct sentences, as they were publicly known; but the vulnerability of the channel to leaks, and the fact that officials like Hiyande could not act upon the sentence until they received a direct notice could also limit their decision-making authority.

Governors also faced communications challenges when asked to handle issues that spanned provincial borders. In the Sun Jiagan false memorial scandal of the early 1750s, governors of several provinces headed investigations tracing copies of a memorial attributed to the well-known metropolitan official Sun Jiagan. None among the court and high officials ever believed that Sun was the actual author of a false memorial which, in various versions seized during the affair, initially criticized favored members of the Grand Council, and then targeted the mistakes of the military campaigns in Jinchuan, the execution of the disgraced general Zhang Guangsi, and Qianlong’s southern tours.⁷⁰ Instead, those who faced scrutiny in the long investigation included the traveling merchants who passed and copied the memorial, and the territorial officials who first neglected the case and then bungled the inquiry.⁷¹

⁷⁰ As Liu Wenpeng points out in his recent monograph, the ongoing investigation no doubt put enormous pressure on Sun Jiagan to reassure colleagues and the Qianlong Emperor of his innocence. Sun, who died in QL 18 near the end of the investigation, had his letters and drafts destroyed before his death. Liu, *Shengshi beihou*, 19.

⁷¹ The Sun Jiagan case has been likened to a measure to test the loyalty and responsibility of high-level territorial officials, thus representing an early instance of Qianlong’s hardened and critical attitude towards provincial administrators. See Philip Kuhn’s discussion of the “Case of the Bogus Memorial,” Kuhn,

In different subsets of the case, officials traced the path of the documents from Yunnan to Jiangxi, from Zhili to Fujian, and from Shandong to Jiangnan. The carriers and copyists of the false memorial were typically clerks and other sub-bureaucratic employees and long-distance merchants, some of them illiterate, who gathered in shops and association halls to share prices, trade information, and news of mutual interest.⁷² Official reports compressed a long chain of arrests and confessions, with individual suspects representing mere links in the chain that received only perfunctory contextualization of native place or occupation: “the Jiangxi native So-and-So got it from So-and-So.” But behind the façade of these reports, logistical and communications problems impeded the investigations. As the highest power-holders in their provinces, provincial governors engaged their ample resources in deputizing and dispatching local and provincial officials to carry out the investigation and transport suspects. But when documents or suspects crossed provincial lines, the governor faced the troublesome task of coordinating with the governor of another province. Testimony from suspects was typically taken at the provincial seat, where the suspects in a case could be imprisoned separately and brought together for cross-examination, one of the strongest tools in the judge’s arsenal. If the investigation crossed provincial borders, the governors were forced to send messages both to the relevant province and to the capital to obtain approval to act

Soulstealers, 61-62; and Pierre-Étienne Will’s response to Kuhn’s assessment in the footnotes of his review of Beatrice S. Bartlett’s *Monarchs and Ministers*, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 54, no. 1 (1994): 317n7. In a recent article, Liu Wenpeng has suggested that the stubborn persistence of the “Sun Jiagan false memorials” that popped up intermittently over a period of about fifteen years reflects an undercurrent of shared or at least commonly understood dissent towards the throne in the mid-century period. Liu Wenpeng, “Lun Qingdai shangye wangluo chuanbo yu guojia de shehui kongzhili—yi Qianlong shiqi de wei Sun Jiagan zougao an wei zhongxin,” *Qingshi yanjiu* 4 (2012): 30-31. I am less inclined to describe the circulation of the documents as dissent than as prevalent interest in court affairs and political gossip.

⁷² The Jiangxi merchants who are the focus of Liu Wenpeng’s article traded on a regional scale between Hankou and the southwest, in contrast to Shaanxi merchants whose networks operated nationally. Liu Wenpeng, “Lun Qingdai shangye wangluo chuanbo,” 25-28.

together. The two provincial heads had to decide where to conduct investigations, and whether to bring all suspects together, or just those linked in the chain of investigations. Meanwhile, the amount of time that it took to send all of these messengers and reports meant that news of the investigation leaked out, leading potential suspects to destroy their documents and flee the province. Another consequence was that the suspects sometimes colluded to peg the document's authorship on unlikely or opportune targets, including personal enemies, the already deceased, and acquaintances in distant locations.

Official reports presented a protracted and frustrated effort to locate the person who had authored the fraudulent text. Other suspects were sorted according to the degree of their crime, the worst being degree- and office-holders who had distributed the false memorial to multiple people, next merchants or others not affiliated with the government who distributed or copied the false memorial, and next those who shared the document with just one individual. The lowest level of culpability was assigned to those who had simply read or looked at the document. People who destroyed their copies of the memorials in advance of the investigation were condemned for trying to evade detection, but generally did not receive a much harsher penalty.⁷³

An aspect of this case that has escaped notice so far is that in several instances, courier superintendents relayed the false memorial between official and unofficial environments. For example, in the summer of 1751, the Guizhou courier superintendent Wu Shizhou obtained the false memorial and sent the document to the garrison

⁷³ Illustrating this, in January 1752, the governor-general of Shaan-Gan, Huang Tinggui, sentenced eight suspects who had each admitted to transcribing the memorial and passing it to others to three months in the cangue followed by a beating; in contrast, twenty-three others who showed the false document to one other person but did not make a copy, were sentenced to a beating for this comparably lesser crime. "Shaanxi (Shaan-Gan) zongdu Huang Tinggui wei banli weigao an nei Xu Zongru deng ren shi zouzhe," QL 16/11/17, in *Zhongguo diyi lishi dang'an guan*, ed., "Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao (4)," *Lishi dang'an* no.4 (1998): 15-16.

commander Song Ai.⁷⁴ In questioning, Wu described visiting the home of the expectant military official Peng Chaogui, where a few other expectant officials were struggling to read documents brought by a Jiangxi merchant on his way to Yunnan. Since he thought the memorial would be included in the gazette (*shang bao* 上報), Wu Shizhou decided to copy it to send it to his superiors right away. Subsequently, a company commander (*qianzong* 千總) stationed at the garrison noticed the memorial was “extremely irregular” (*shu bu jing* 殊不經) and brought it to the commander’s attention.⁷⁵ Wu, as provincial courier superintendent, apparently sought out whatever looked like an official document to save time and impress his superiors with his resourcefulness. Later, in Zhejiang, suspects tried to pin the case on the provincial courier superintendent by claiming he had delivered the false document along with the provincial gazette.⁷⁶

Courier superintendents from different locales also communicated with one another about the appearance of the false memorial and the progress of the investigation. The Hubei provincial courier superintendent Li Shixia sent a copy of the false memorial to his counterpart in Hunan, Xiao Yinpeng, writing, “Recently, this document has been in Hubei, and I don’t know if it has been around in Hunan or not, but after reading it I felt it was trouble.”⁷⁷ Although varying in their degree of circumspection, provincial courier superintendent intercepted documents to get news and information to their superiors and other associates. As a result of the frequent exchange of news, gossip, and documents

⁷⁴ “Yun-Gui zongdu Shuose wei bao titang Wu Shizhou bing nei weigao shi zouzhe,” QL 16/07/02, “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao (1),” 12.

⁷⁵ “Guizhou xunfu Kaitai wei shenxun titang Wu Shizhou deng ren shi zouzhe,” QL 16/07/22, “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao (1),” 13.

⁷⁶ “Jiangsu xunfu Zhuang Yougong deng wei shenli Chen Gonghuan deng chuandi weigao shi zouzhe,” QL 18/01/10, “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao (1),” 21-28.

⁷⁷ “Shu Hunan xunfu Fan Shishou wei shenli chuanchao weigao zhi Luo Bangfu deng shi zouzhe,” QL 17/12/18, “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao (1),” 16-17.

among individuals implicated in and watching the proceedings of criminal cases and broader investigations, provincial governors navigated a dense, often impenetrable, communications environment in both local and inter-provincial investigations.

Provincial officials faced difficulties in managing the mixed loyalties of their subordinate staff and negotiating relationships with other high-level officials in the province.⁷⁸ These complicated relationships often challenged governors' abilities to the truth amidst the dense traffic of news, documents, and rumors. Although institutional changes had strengthened central control over imperial communications and the balance of power between the capital and the provinces in the eighteenth century, managing a provincial yamen and its personnel challenged administrators throughout the dynasty. In the first year of the Daoguang reign, a prominent provincial official's struggle to gain control of documents and staff exemplifies the centrality of communications to the responsibilities of a provincial governor.

In 1821, in the midst of massive flooding in Shandong, Qishan (琦善, d.1854), who had until earlier in the year served in the province's number-two position as provincial administrative commissioner (*buzheng shi* 布政使), replaced Governor Qian Zhen. Qian Zhen had been abruptly demoted after a frustrated county magistrate named Jiang Yinpei stormed into the provincial yamen shouting about corrupt practices in the assignment of local officials and had his proposals for the reorganization of appointment

⁷⁸ Many scholarly works have described this phenomenon; indeed, the travails of the virtuous magistrate working against a scheming and malfeasant sub-bureaucratic staff was a rampant trope of administrative discourse. Although some "clerks and runners" misbehaved, Bradley Reed has used the case of Ba County to suggest that most performed their jobs effectively and with something like a professional ethic. Bradley W. Reed, *Talons and Teeth: County Clerks and Runners in the Qing Dynasty* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

practices printed and distributed around the capital.⁷⁹ Eager to prove himself as a competent administrator after this mess, Qishan set to looking over the official accounts. He noticed that his predecessor had nominated a certain military official for promotion, but the yamen had not received an approval from the Board of War.

Rather than questioning his staff, Qishan wrote directly to the Board and learned the approval had been sent to the Shandong capital courier superintendent on July 23, 1821. The Board noted that the document had been “enclosed with” (*fengru* 封入) the “No. 78 dispatch packet” (*jingbao*), sent out from the capital on July 27. Qishan then asked the provincial courier superintendent in Jinan, Zhang Shouxun, who said he had received packet 78 (he referred to it as the *chaobao*, or manuscript gazette) on July 30 and had sent it out for delivery promptly. Zhang noted that the copied documents included thirteen total items from five administrative Boards.⁸⁰

Qishan had received the seals of office just one day after *jingbao* no.78 was supposed to have been delivered, but after his predecessor’s abrupt discharge, the office had remained unsupervised for a few weeks. He speculated that in this unsupervised period, the clerks had worked carelessly and had hidden or thrown out the documents in their haste to go home.⁸¹ With effort, by the next spring he tracked down the clerical staff that had served under Qian Zhen and questioned them, but they claimed to have never received dispatch no.78. Qishan then checked with two other provincial offices and discovered they also had not entered this *jingbao* issue in their document register (*shouwen haobu* 收文號簿). In Qishan’s estimation it seemed the mistake had been

⁷⁹ *QSL*, DG 1/5-6: 18:344b-345a; 19:346a-b; 20:360b-361b, 20:369b-370b.

⁸⁰ This is an example of a case where *jingbao* referred to several official documents carried together, not a single item. The court gazette carried together with the dispatches may have lent the package its name.

⁸¹ The yamen staff must have been dismissed in the aftermath of the Jiang Yinpei affair.

committed by the provincial courier superintendent's office, and so he sent a request to the Board for new copies of the documents.⁸²

The investigation narrowed in on the servant (*changban* 長班) assigned to deliver documents that day, Liu Fu. As Liu later testified, before going to work that day, his mother, Xu *shi*, had come over to his house, and he had invited her in for a drink (or two).⁸³ After they parted, Liu Fu headed to the provincial courier superintendent's office and received three copies of dispatch no. 78 in a cloth wrapper to deliver to the provincial yamen, the offices of the lieutenant governor, and the offices of the provincial judge. Liu made it as far as "in front of the temple on Shunjing Street," vomited, and then passed out in front of the temple gate. When Liu Fu woke up, the package was gone. That evening, Liu Fu was sitting in his dorm-room at the courier offices, fretting, when another servant hectorated him into confessing the source of his anxieties and then threatened to alert the courier superintendent and have Liu Fu arrested. Liu Fu, afraid of punishment, implored his assistance, and finally his colleague, Li Shangxuan, obliged and the two searched for the missing documents. They again had no luck, but Li Shangxuan agreed to help Liu Fu cover up the matter. Subsequently, Liu Fu returned home, and told the whole story to his mother. She advised him to hide the error, reasoning that if he couldn't find the documents, there was no point in "spreading it about." At last, Qishan had figured out why his documents were missing.⁸⁴

⁸² Qishan's request for a new copy: FHA, LFZZ 03-2844-024, DG 02/03/11, "Shandong xunfu Qishan zou wei shengtang disong gongwen yishi qing zhi chi bu bufa zhe."

⁸³ In Qing legal documents, women were typically referred to by a combination of their husband's surname (here Liu) and their born surname (here Xu).

⁸⁴ FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-01-0641-018, DG 02/05/02, "Shandong xunfu Qishan zouwei shenming titang changban yishi gongwen bingwu qingbi zunzhi dingni"; GSA 216654, DG 02/03/22, "Libu feng shangyu Qishan zou shengtang yishi gongwen qing chibu bufa yizhe." For corresponding Board of War communications (*yihui* 移會), see GSA 225124.

Despite all of this rigmarole, after the case was solved, Qishan treated Liu Fu generously. Rationalizing that Liu Fu's story as corroborated by Mrs. Xu and Li Shangxuan was "entirely believable" and "realistic," Qishan declared that Liu Fu must not have been at fault for greater crimes because he had admitted the situation to his colleague.⁸⁵ It may be that Qishan treated the case as a test of his subordinate staff, inherited from a corrupt predecessor. After imposing the ordeal of investigation and interrogation, he felt he had sufficiently imposed his authority. Liu Fu seemed to be innocent, if dull-witted, and most importantly uncorrupted by outside influences.

In the process of trying to make the Boards send him the documents from dispatch no. 78, Qishan pointed out that one such communiqué from the Board of War had involved the pardon of a certain convicted criminal. The Board of War was currently considering a large batch of criminal cases submitted for pardon by his predecessor Qian Zhen. Qishan wrote that if he did not receive the official notice of pardon from the Board, then he could not comfortably release any of the pardoned convicts. The fact that Qishan raised this point suggests that he already had access to an unofficial version of the communiqué, or at least had knowledge of its contents (and of the list of pardoned convicts), but did not want to reveal this fact. Indeed, the whole process of the investigation had taken months due to the time-consuming relay of messages back and forth between Jinan and Beijing, but Qishan did not trust his subordinates in the provincial capital. As in the governor Hiyande's representation of the case of the disgraced official Cheng Rusi, who killed himself when he learned of his sentence from a leaked copy of the gazette, governors disliked the release of official judgments to the

⁸⁵ FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-01-0641-018.

population at large, and carefully guarded their control of communications in order to protect their administrative authority.⁸⁶

Provincial officials found court gazettes and other open channels to be both a great resource and a dangerous vulnerability. Some governors managed to form relationships with courier superintendents that they exploited for expanded access to documents from the imperial capital. Yet public communications channels could also disrupt the ability of the provincial official to act with authority within his province. At the outset of their terms, provincial officials often had limited understandings of local affairs, and even inadequate control over the members of their own staff. Matters spanning provincial borders exacerbated these limitations as communications and logistics problems impeded the progress of official investigations. Provincial officials fought to improve the quality of the gazette and the trustworthiness of courier superintendents not out of a generalized fear of the lack of secrecy, but rather in order to protect their own options and autonomy. But these were concerns for relatively good times, when most information delivered by couriers could be trusted and acted upon. Later in the nineteenth century, widespread fighting in the central provinces and foreign threats on the coast threw communications security into turmoil and severed the routes that the Qing state had so laboriously reconstructed in the seventeenth century.

Communications Vulnerabilities in the Nineteenth-Century Crisis of Empire

In the late 1830s, with the onset of hostilities between Qing armies and the English naval expedition sent to defend and expand trading interests in China, the Daoguang Emperor and other official voices began to articulate a link between the military crisis and communications. In edicts, the Daoguang Emperor used the phrase

⁸⁶ GSA, 225124, Board of War *yihui*.

“urgent military affairs” (*junwu jinyao* 軍務緊要) repeatedly between 1839 and 1842 to demand funds for coastal defense, create special measures for appointing individuals with expertise, and establish new strict regulations for communications related to the Opium War.⁸⁷ Incidents of delayed or missing communications raised anxiety in the court about the speed and efficacy of communications traveling from the southeast coast. In one case, the Daoguang Emperor noticed that the governor of the coastal province of Zhejiang had failed to send his updates in a timely fashion and had sent them by ordinary post rather than express courier.⁸⁸ A few days later, Daoguang reviewed the reports of a Board of War functionary and was angered to find that the Board allowed a full day for transport between Liangxiang, the transport hub south of Beijing, and the palace. The emperor’s edict ordered that communications delays should henceforth be punished harshly in order to strengthen the communications infrastructure.⁸⁹

In succeeding years, both metropolitan and territorial officials continued to draw links between communications security and military preparedness in their censure of low-level functionaries blamed for inefficient or slow communications. As the Daoguang Emperor reminded officials that it was necessary to strengthen communications, one censor, Yu Dongzhi, rushed to report that the capital courier superintendent for Sichuan Province had left his post and transferred his duties to another for pay without authorization. Following up on the case, the Board of War reprimanded the censor, as the courier superintendent in question had in fact followed all procedures in clearing his trip

⁸⁷ Daoguang used the phrase twenty-one times between DG 20/7 and DG 22/7, and five of these usages had to do with communications. See *QSL* (Daoguang reign), j.336-j.377. Over the course of the entire dynasty, the phrase was employed most often in edicts of the 1850s and 1860s, corresponding to the major mid-century rebellions.

⁸⁸ *QSL*, DG 20/7/7, j.336, p.104b-105a.

⁸⁹ *QSL*, DG 20/7/10, 336:108a-b.

home with the Board and setting a temporary replacement.⁹⁰ Long after fighting ended between Qing and British troops, the order to attend closely to communications for military purposes remained salient. In 1848, the Manchu general (*dutong* 都統) Weiqin, stationed in Urumqi, submitted a list of names to the Board of War and cited the now-years-old order to report those responsible for inappropriate communications delays.⁹¹

In the 1850s and 1860s, new threats to Qing control emerged in large-scale popular rebellions in several central and peripheral regions of imperial territory. In these contexts, late Qing officials drew explicit connections between the integrity of the communications infrastructure and discipline and control of the military and civil bureaucracy writ large. These proposals expressed more concern with internal weaknesses than foreign threats. From this perspective, the health and unity of the Qing state could be assessed by reviewing its essential functions, including communications. Weaknesses in communications such as improperly managed deliveries and document registrations and the failure of subordinate provincial officials to respond to metropolitan requests signaled a general bureaucratic malaise. The proposals of the governor and military leader Zhang Fei, and the writings of the censor, Liu Qing on imperial communications exemplify this connection between improving information security and righting the operations of the Qing state and military.

In 1853, just a few weeks after Zhang Fei 張芾 (1814-1862) was appointed acting governor of Jiangxi province, he watched as Taiping forces took control of the upriver city of Nanjing, where they would maintain their capital for the next eleven years. Zhang

⁹⁰ FHA, LFZZ, 03-2703-029, DG 21/02/23, “Jiangxi jiancha yushi Yu Dongzhi zou wei chi bu chaxun tan li zhi shou Sichuan titang Pan Tingzhu size huiji shi,” and 03-2913-018, DG 21/02/26, “Bingbu shangshu Yucheng deng zou wei zunzhi chaming Sichuan tidu tang Pan Tingzhu bing fei size huiji shi.”

⁹¹ QSL, DG 28/01/25, 451:693b.

had a first-hand view of the chaos from the provincial seat of Nanchang, where he headed defense against the Taiping forces' progress down the Yangtze River, heading towards the central river hub of Hankou. That month, the imperial forces led by Zhang Fei failed to prevent the taking of Jiujiang.⁹² Fighting on the river continued. In the summer, the Taipings surrounded and besieged Nanchang for three months, but under Zhang's command the city held and the rebel forces retreated in the early autumn.⁹³

As in the late Ming, paranoia spread about the ability of rebels, invaders, and enemies to obtain state and military information published in the gazette. Imperial proclamations from the period grappled with reports of rebel spies apprehended and commanded Qing troops to divert communication routes in order to avoid interception.⁹⁴ That spring, Zhang Fei himself reported the capture of over forty spies carrying cloth bags and false placards.⁹⁵ After the miraculous defense of Nanchang, Zhang Fei was seemingly redeemed, but his fortunes quickly sank when, invited to memorialize the throne with a list of meritorious troops, gentry, and civilians involved in the defense of the city, he sent in a long list of over two hundred names, which was regarded skeptically by the court. In the meantime, the ambitious general submitted proposals for sweeping reorganizations of finances and defense. Among these was a proposal to reduce the number of messengers traveling through the war-ridden provinces.

In his proposal, Zhang wrote that in current conditions, couriers could retrieve copies of official documents (*dichao*) from Beijing only once or twice a month. Although

⁹² As punishment for the defeat, Zhang was cashiered and retained in office (*gezhi liuren* 革職留任).

⁹³ "Guoshi liezhuan" in *Zhang wenyi gong zougao* (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 1:4-12.

⁹⁴ For example, *QSL*, XF 03/01/21, 83:45a.

⁹⁵ "Guoshi liezhuan," *Zhang wenyi gong zougao*, 1:7. On false identities and spies, see Tobie S. Meyer-Fong, *What Remains: Coming to Terms with Civil War in 19th Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), 65-98.

the contents of the gazettes, frequently pertaining to military affairs, were ever more important, delays and communications problems were so rampant that the gazettes amounted to little more than waste paper and the delays stymied time-sensitive activities. Furthermore, the lack of official news had led to troublesome rumors circulating among the populace about the outcomes of military encounters between about the imperial and rebel troops. The absence of verified information on serving officials had even led people to resist paying taxes. In order to cope with the situation, Zhang suggested drastically standardizing the court gazette system. His plan stipulated that the Grand Secretariat would directly publish gazettes in twenty-page monthly issues. After this, they would be sent out in sealed packages by horse transport to each provincial capital, and couriers could pick up the gazettes at appointed intervals. This method, Zhang argued, would improve the capacity of officials, head off rumors, and appease the people.⁹⁶

A few weeks later, the Grand Council issued a sharp rebuttal to the proposal. The responding court letter began, “[As for Zhang Fei’s proposal], his ideas, blunders, and lack of administrative knowledge are entirely laughable.” The edict faulted Zhang for not understanding that set regulations determined the methods by which dispatches and gazettes would be sent out, and further for not understanding that the Grand Secretariat had nothing to do with the printed gazettes or the commercial printing houses that produced them. His plan would lead to needless intercourse between provincial governors and the Grand Secretariat clerks that would be tasked to produce the gazette under the plan. Furthermore, conditions had recently been improving. There were no

⁹⁶ FHA, ZPZZ 04-01-01-0848-67, XF 03/12/04, “Zhang Fei zou qing chixia Neige meiyue jiang kanke tongxing dichao pai yuan fajiao Bing bu yidi shi.” Also filed as LFZZ, 03-4183-065, XF 03/12/26.

communications delays (the edict claimed) on routes to Fujian, Hunan, or Guangdong.⁹⁷ The Grand Council concluded its rebuke by referring to a precedent under the Qianlong and Jiaqing emperors to avoid needless waste of relay horses. “Zhang Fei has been really heedless in submitting these memorials,” it scolded.⁹⁸

From the imperial capital of Beijing, the censor Liu Qing 劉慶 (1825-1868) articulated a different set of measures to improve communications security, focusing on the communications infrastructure in the capital rather than the routes extending through the provinces. As a Board employee in the 1850s, the young Liu Qing had maintained a reputation as diligent and meticulous, and was promoted to censor for these qualities. As a censor, Liu became famed for his detailed proposals, instructions, and diagrams for putting down the Hui and Nian rebellions in the western and northern provinces. Liu’s biography in the gazetteer for his home county of Nanfeng, Jiangxi, described his writings as driven by an overall strategy of measures to prevent disaster, and his memorials as a censor received imperial commendation.⁹⁹ In the early 1860s, alongside these proposals on ongoing military and social crises, Liu turned his attention to communications, offering his opinions on the lack of discipline among capital courier superintendents and the accumulation of unprocessed routine memorials in the Grand Secretariat. He advocated for a general revitalization of communications to improve the operations of both state and military.

⁹⁷ Nonetheless, the problem of delays did not go away. Later in 1854, Yuan Jiasan, a supervising secretary for the Board of War, warned that memorials dealing with financial provisions for the war effort should be sent directly between concerned offices, and not released to the Grand Secretariat (or to the capital’s printing houses). In contrast to the abrupt dismissal of Zhang Fei’s proposal, Yuan’s suggestion received approval. *QSL*, XF 04/01/22, 119:40b.

⁹⁸ FHA, SYD, XF 03/12/26, no. 1, box 1176, ce 3 (court letter *ziji* 字寄). Only about half of the court letter was included in the corresponding entry in the *QSL* (XF 03/12/26, 126:836b-871a). None of Zhang’s proposals from this year appear in his collected memorials.

⁹⁹ Bai Chun, comp., *Nanfeng xian zhi* (1871), 27:12a.

As the eighteenth-century remarks of Wu Shizhou and Anning exemplify, by the mid-nineteenth century, capital courier superintendents had been long singled out for their tendency to serve as eyes-and-ears in the capital for provincial governors, contract their duties to private gazette publishers, and even abandon their posts. Liu Qing wrote that at the beginning of his official career, he had attended to communications (*youzheng* 郵政) in the Board of War. There, he saw numerous incidents where courier superintendents failed to ensure the prompt delivery of routine communications because they sought to collect subscription fees (*baozi* 報資) beyond the end of their three-year term and devolved their responsibilities onto hired printers and other underlings. In further inquiry, Liu found systemic collusion among the capital courier superintendents. Resident superintendents pressured newcomers to pay extortionate fees and deposits in order to take over the position. Lacking funds, the newcomers would often give up and resign from their nomination. Liu expressed horror that at present, the Shandong superintendent managed affairs for Hunan, Zhili for Yunnan and Guizhou, Guangxi for Shaanxi and Gansu, and Fujian for Zhejiang. With these transgressions, the courier superintendents in Beijing managed to run things entirely amongst themselves and escape their obligation to serve in military garrisons subsequent to their three-year term.

Liu's response to the problem suggested that regulations on the appointments and transfers of courier superintendents be enforced more strictly by both provincial and metropolitan authorities, and that the Board of War should be more attentive in overseeing the transfer process to make sure newcomers were not pressured out or drawn into bad practices. Restoring the superintendents' discipline and attention to their

provincial affairs, Liu argued, would ensure that “courier affairs (*tangwu*) do not fall to general ruin, and imperial communications (*youzheng*) can be, in time, improved.”¹⁰⁰

Commenting further on the disordered state of imperial communications, Liu drew on his experience as a supervising secretary (*jishizhong*) to criticize the accumulation of routine memorials at the Grand Secretariat. The problem, Liu argued, was that all routine memorials came together into a general clearinghouse in the Secretariat’s current document handling system, rather than being immediately filed and sorted by province. Furthermore, clerical mistakes that could be fixed on the spot, such as a miswritten character, occasioned unnecessarily long delays. Liu tied this proposal on righting the documents administration to his concerns about delays in the approval of official appointments. If the Grand Secretariat could handle documents involving appointments and transfers more quickly, and the Board of Appointments issued regulations on timely assumption of new positions, fewer positions would be left vacant or understaffed, and the Qing’s imperial operations would be improved. In these matched proposals, Liu portrayed a systematic chain of actions and consequences linking the documentary and personnel administrations.¹⁰¹

With his recommendations to rectify abuses in the courier superintendent system and in the Grand Secretariat, Liu contributed to a broader agenda of “improving devotion to law and strengthening institutions” that he had introduced in an earlier memorial. In this memorial, Liu complained about the disturbing trend for provincial civil and military officials to pick and choose from imperial commands and regulations and promulgations, or to allow months to pass before responding to an order to investigate a matter. Here,

¹⁰⁰ Liu Qing, “Qing zhengdun zhujing tangwu shu,” in Chen Tao, comp., *Tongzhi zhongxing jingwai zouyi yuebian* (Beijing: Xiao you shanfang, 1875), 7:24a-25b.

¹⁰¹ *QSL*, TZ 1/12/11, 52:1415b-1416a.

Liu implicitly advocated against the devolution of power to provincial authorities in process during recent years, although he used only the example of a recently issued Board regulation on nominations (*baoju* 保舉) that had been summarily ignored by provincial authorities. Liu suggested that provincial officials should face more concrete limitations: one month to respond to an imperial order, with a maximum limit of three months in exceptional cases (for which delays should be reported). In Beijing, the Six Boards and the Grand Council would be responsible for maintaining registers of outstanding business for each province. The metropolitan authorities would be required to report provincial authorities for punishment if they missed deadlines.¹⁰² Taken together, Liu Qing's proposals on communications demonstrate a clear link between the effectiveness of imperial institutions and official personnel and the effectiveness of communications. While some officials advanced fears that foreign threats could obtain intelligence from compromised communications institutions, Liu argued that the greatest threat came from irresponsible couriers and power-hungry governors who would undermine the communications infrastructure.

Communications problems still continued to affect the coordination between the court and provincial officials during the rest of the war and into the Tongzhi reign.¹⁰³ An 1864 edict condemned the mishandling of Zeng Guofan's memorial reporting his victory at Jiangning. The memorial, while being returned with imperial annotations to Zeng, had been delayed for four days after it was temporarily lost between Anqing and Jiangning.¹⁰⁴ The botched delivery of the general's declaration of victory in the mid-1860s recalls the

¹⁰² *QSL*, TZ 1/10/22, 47:1268b-1269a.

¹⁰³ Liu Qing's proposal on reforming the courier superintendents was published in Chen Tao's compilation of memorials from the Tongzhi Restoration, showing the continuing relevance of concerns with communications institutions.

¹⁰⁴ BL, Peking Gazette Collection, Box 53, vol. 7 (TZ 3/08/01-TZ 3/08/30).

autumn of 1644, when the Ming court received no warning of the approach of Li Zicheng's troops due to the breakdown of the courier communications infrastructure. While the Qing had in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries painstakingly reconstructed and augmented this infrastructure, weaknesses reemerged in times of crisis.

The proposals formulated by Zhang Fei and Liu Qing in the 1850s and early 1860s articulated concerns with strengthening the unity of the Qing information order, rather than protecting its boundaries against invaders. As shall be shown in Chapter 5, other nineteenth-century official voices expressed explicit concern with foreign spies and ordinary readers who came into contact with official news and documents of the Qing. Yet for a generation of mid-century officials most concerned with eliminating threats originating from within Chinese society, the problem of foreign spies and readers remained secondary. In his proposals to centralize and standardize the court gazette, Zhang Fei sought to reduce human risk by eliminating the widespread and poorly controlled circulation of private couriers throughout the unstable countryside. In proposals to improve official responsiveness to imperial directives by enforcing discipline in capital communications institutions such as the courier superintendents and the Grand Secretariat, Liu Qing expressed concern for the stability and reliability of the Qing territorial bureaucracy.

Conclusion

Although gazettes had been associated with the security failures of the Ming court, the early Qing court saw the restoration of the court gazette as an essential component of restoring the health of imperial communications and the bureaucracy. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, court and provincial agents engaged in conflicts over the

compilation, distribution, and manipulation of the court gazette and other routine information channels. This chapter has demonstrated how these conflicts formed a series of arguments about the balance of authority between the court and provincial offices. While provincial officials sought out new sources of information and tried to protect their autonomy, the court worried about spying and communications leaks as signs of systemic weaknesses in the bureaucracy. Yet throughout the Qing, open communications channels linked agents of the territorial bureaucracy to the court and formed an invaluable secondary layer of communications infrastructure that allowed the widespread bureaucracy to work quite efficiently despite the vast distances traveled by its couriers.

After taking over the wreckage of the Ming government communications infrastructure, the Qing sought first to repair and improve roads and transportation security, speed, and reliability, and second to expand road networks for military and communications purposes into new territories in Inner Asia, the northeast, and the southwest. The creation of a reliable and speedy government communications system, which carried documents secret and public, routine and urgent, enabled territorial administrators stationed far from the capital to work effectively despite distances. Assured of receiving a constant supply of routine documents in the form of the court gazette and board dispatches, and less frequent confidential messages, the provincial governor theoretically could remain aware of relevant events, policy proposals, and personnel changes from throughout the empire.

Meanwhile, the Qing enacted communications reforms affecting the balance of power between the court and the provinces. Secret memorials opened channels for confidential exchanges between the throne and trusted field officials. The expanded use

of palace memorials gave territorial officials a more direct route to the emperor, providing power to the emperor and high officials in the provinces, but skipping many previously powerful metropolitan officials. The Grand Council, which became a formal advisory institution in the Qianlong reign, deliberated on palace memorials; the memorial and its response were subsequently either released to the Grand Secretariat for wide release to the bureaucracy, or a response was returned to the memorialist or a small group of recipients in a confidential court letter. Communications reforms thus consolidated the deliberative process to elite metropolitan and provincial officials.

But once copied at the Grand Secretariat, memorials could be distributed to administrative offices of all rank throughout the empire through dispatch packets or court gazettes. Court gazettes did not cover all substantive communications, but some types of information, like official appointments and transfers, appeared reliably. Policy proposals, important or precedent-setting criminal cases, and imperial edicts could all be read in the court gazette. Reading the gazette was a standard part of an administrator's life, and these readings affected official practice. Therefore, it does not make sense to think of official communications in the Qing as consisting exclusively of private channels between the emperor and high-ranking officials or between superior and subordinate officials. Instead, the court—sometimes against its will—released a wealth of information to its officials through open channels.

By interrogating the concerns of Qing emperors and officials about communications security within the frameworks of the empire, the court, and the province, this chapter has demonstrated that many bureaucratic discussions about routine communications and secrecy dealt with larger questions of control—over territory,

personnel, and information. For provincial officials, the ability to sort out fact from rumor was an essential component of the job. Typically trustworthy, Qing court gazettes provided important reference material for everyday affairs and long term career strategies. At times, some territorial officials used contacts in the capital to obtain unauthorized information from the court. But such cases, used as persuasive tropes in service of centralizing court agendas, were infrequent. Although discussions in official documents often depicted failure and disorder, by understanding the agendas of control and authority that motivated the construction and maintenance of open communications channels we are in a better position to see the broad capacities of Qing institutions.

Chapter 2. The Capital Gazette

In Qing Beijing, a force of nearly thirty thousand capital police patrolled a lively streetscape full of shops and stalls, rumors and conversations, news and texts. John Barrow (1764-1848), who visited with the English Macartney mission in 1793, described the city streets vividly:

The multitude of movable workshops of tinkers and barbers, cobblers and blacksmiths; the tents and booths where tea and fruit and rice and other vegetables were exposed for sale; with the wares and merchandise arranged before the doors of the shops, contracted the spacious street to a narrow road in the middle. The procession of men in office, attended by their numerous retinues bearing umbrellas and flags, painted lanterns and a variety of large insignia of their rank and station; trains accompanying, with lamentable cries, corpses to their graves, and others conducting brides to their husbands with squalling music; the troops of dromedaries laden with coal from Tartary; the wheel-barrows and hand-carts loaded with vegetables; occupied nearly the whole of this middle space. All was in motion; the sides of the streets were filled with people buying and selling and bartering their different commodities. The buzz and confused noises of this mixed multitude, proceeding from the loud bawling of those who were crying their wares, the wrangling of others, and the mirth and laughter which prevailed in every group, could scarcely be exceeded. Pedlars with their packs, and jugglers, and conjurers, and fortune-tellers, mountebanks and quack-doctors, comedians and musicians, left no space unoccupied.¹

Barrow's description reflects the mingling of the operations of the imperial capital with the chatter, cries, and shouts of the social and commercial worlds of the streets. Entering the city from the south, one navigated a dense commercial space full of sojourners and shopkeepers, passing signs of imperial power like police patrols, the city execution ground in the southwest, and the vast Temple of Heaven complex in the southeast. Closer to the three southern gates to the Inner City, one might encounter bookshops, native place and trade associations, and shops oriented towards examination candidates and sojourning officials. This space was the border between imperial state and urban society.

¹ This description, printed in *The Chinese Repository*, was slightly modified from Barrow's description in his travel memoir. "Description of the City of Peking," *The Chinese Repository* 2, no. 10 (1834): 436-7; cf. John Barrow, *Travels in China* (London: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1804), 96-7.

This chapter considers the history of the production of the Qing court gazette in its local context of the capital city. On the southern margins of the Inner City, private editions of the gazette were published from the early years of the Qing dynasty through its last decade. Publishing the court gazette involved collaborative relationships, both licit and illicit, between printers and copyists, officials and clerks.² Arrangements between gazette publishers and the official state apparatus evolved from loose surveillance in the early Qing to close oversight in the late Qing, even as the number and specialization of commercial editions of the gazette grew. Increased attention to the gazette from domestic and foreign audiences—both friendly and threatening—compelled state authorities to impose detailed rules on gazette publishers in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The local history of the court gazette has never been fully outlined. Although many scholars and historical observers have referenced the flourishing of private gazette publishing in Beijing in the late Ming and in the late Qing, few have noted the continuities of private gazette publishing throughout the Qing dynasty.³ In addition, the paucity of extant editions of pre-nineteenth century gazettes as well as dominant presumptions about the censorious impulses of the Qing state through the Qianlong reign have led scholars to underestimate the extent of private gazette publishing throughout the Qing period, or doubt continuities between the late nineteenth century and previous eras.⁴ I argue that although the number of gazette publishers—and hence the circulation and

² By clerks, I mean more generally non-ranking employees in official offices who performed clerical duties such as copying. I try to provide more specific and consistent terms for these employees when they are included in sources.

³ One exception is Fang Hanqi, who has suggested that commercial-state cooperation in gazette publishing was a carry-over from the late Ming. See Fang Hanqi, “*Qing shi ‘baokan biao’ zhong you guan gudai baozhi de jige wenti*,” *Lishi dang’an* 2 (2007): 12-13.

⁴ Some recent works in China continue to perpetuate this stereotype. For example, Kong, “*Qingdai dibao yanjiu*,” 198-201. Timothy Brook has argued against exaggerating the dominance of censorship in the Qing, as has Lynn Struve. See Brook, “*Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China*,” 192; Struve, *The Ming-Qing Conflict*, 28-9.

readership of gazettes—grew significantly in the late nineteenth century, there was no great divide between the two periods.

Finally, this chapter integrates the history of gazette publishing in the capital into the story of the rise of commercial printing in Beijing during the Qing period. The city's status as imperial capital ensured that Beijing maintained its stature as a major bookselling and publishing center, even as printing and publishing activity spread beyond traditional hubs during the Qing period.⁵ Yet the capital's imprints, including many products associated by content or readership with officialdom and the activities of the imperial bureaucracy, extended far beyond the showpiece productions of the palace's imperial publishing house (Wuying dian 武英殿), famous for beautiful editions rather than efficient or extensive production.⁶ Instead, commercial bookseller-printers, operating sometimes in conjunction with and sometimes parallel to state offices, assembled and published texts for the many officials and would-be officials who sojourned to the capital for audiences, examinations, and other reasons.⁷ Their publications included administrative texts, official directories, guidebooks and custom

⁵ Joseph McDermott, "The Ascendance of the Imprint in China," 73-76 comments on the relative paucity of Beijing-printed editions (compared to editions sold in Beijing) through the sixteenth century. Cynthia Brokaw argued that the Qing period was key in the geographical diffusion of printing and publishing, due to expanded trade networks, low costs, and accessible technology. See Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*, 6-13.

⁶ Zhang, "Information and Power," 38-57; Shio-w-jyu Lu Shaw, *The Imperial Printing of Early Ch'ing China* (San Francisco: Chinese Materials Center, 1983). Even Wuying dian printing, however, relied heavily on carvers, binders, and other craftsmen recruited from outside, as seen in the wages for printing and bookbinding listed in *HDSL*, j.1199.

⁷ Thousands visited and stayed longer periods in the capital for the purpose for taking examinations. See Susan Naquin, *Peking: Temples and City Life, 1400-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 415-417. For more on the *huiguan* where examination candidates stayed, see Naquin, *Peking*, 598-612 and Richard Belsky, *Localities at the Center: Native Place, Space, and Power in Late Imperial Beijing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2005), 62-68. Rui Magone, "Once Every Three Years: People and Papers at the Metropolitan Examination of 1685," (PhD diss., Free University of Berlin, 2001), 170-185 describes the flood of candidates to the capital for metropolitan examinations.

editions of memorials, examination results, and other commemorative documents.⁸

Gazette publishing and distribution are best understood as akin to these commercial publishing activities that served both resident and sojourning official communities.

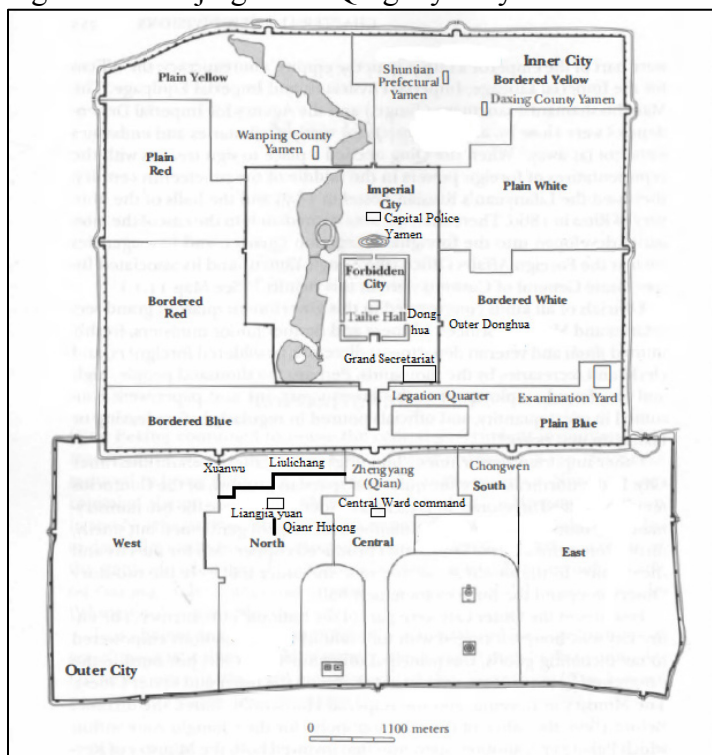
The chapter begins with a short sketch of the geographical organization of the city in the Qing period as well as of the city police and other administrative offices important to the conduct of the book and gazette trade. The second section offers a chronological overview of gazette publishing during the Qing, which illustrates the flourishing of gazette publishing throughout the Qing dynasty, especially in the late nineteenth century when over a dozen private gazette publishers operated in the city. In the early Qing, the court mandated police attention to rumors and official information circulating in the city, but largely permitted the unofficial gazette industry to continue publishing. Increased state attention to abuse of communications structures and gazettes by imperial officials caused the state to curtail the extent of private gazette publishing and distribution in the capital in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. By the late nineteenth century, gazette publishers complied with increased state regulation but benefited from an expanded audience. The third section of the chapter takes a second look at the material qualities of gazettes from these different phases of gazette publishing, and suggests that the choice of gazette publishers, like other commercial publishers in the city, to supply more specialized products in the late nineteenth century suggests a large increase in the reading market for these materials.

⁸ These were analogous to the “library of public information” available to a hypothetical clerk in Tokugawa Japan, including: “maps, atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, calendars, almanacs, rural gazetteers, urban directories, travel accounts, personnel rosters, biographical compendia, manuals of work, manuals of play, guides to shopping and local products, and school primers.” Mary Elizabeth Berry, *Japan in Print: Information and Nation in the Early Modern Period* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 15. The “library” available to Qing officials included most of these, as well as forensic manuals, compendiums of memorials, legal compendia, administrative handbooks and more.

Cities, Gates and Wards: The Administrative Structure of Qing Beijing

The Qing state prioritized social control in the capital city. Administrative and police districts overlaid the spaces of the city with overlapping levels of surveillance. A square city wall enclosed the so-called Inner City, Manchu City, or Northern City, housing the imperial family at its center within a walled Imperial City. The bulk of metropolitan offices, including the Six Boards, Grand Secretariat, and Censorate, were located within the Inner City, but south of the palace. The Qing also divided the Inner City into eight zones, corresponding to the Eight Banners of the Manchu military organization.

Figure 2.1. Beijing in the Qing Dynasty



Source: Modified from Naquin, *Peking*, 356, with reference to Wu Changyuan, *Chenyuan shilüe*.

Note: Most late Qing gazette publishers were situated outside the Zhengyang Gate, in the Central Ward, but earlier they seem to have concentrated in the Northern Ward. The Liben tang manuscript gazette publisher was located near the Outer Donghua Gate, in the

Inner City. The mid-nineteenth-century gazette publisher Gongli baofang was located in Liangjiayuan, south of Liulichang, where many print shops catering to official audiences were located. Li Jiashan's gazette delivery office operated out of his residence on Candlestick (Qian'r) Hutong, also in the North Ward of the Outer City.

To the south of this Inner City was a second walled district, built during the mid-sixteenth century as a measure to protect the commercial and religious zone outside the three southern gates against Mongol raiders. This area, known as the Outer City, Southern City, or Chinese City, continued through the nineteenth century to house most of its population in the commercial zones around the gates to the Inner City.⁹ Like the Inner City, the outer city was divided into zones, five "wards" (*cheng* 城) of police and censorial oversight that in fact extended beyond the walls of the Outer City, north into the Inner City and south, east, and west into the suburbs.¹⁰

The extension of these administrative boundaries past the city walls mirrors the way that Beijing, like other cities in late imperial China, straddled multiple administrative boundaries. The city of Beijing was located in the expansive Shuntian Prefecture, which included eighteen counties and five departments in the Qing period. The immediate eastern and western suburbs were split between Daxing County to the east and Wanping County to the west. As described above, Beijing was also divided into urban wards for surveillance and policing. Both the Inner and the Outer City were divided into five wards, and these were further subdivided into ten sub-wards (*fang* 坊).¹¹ The Inner City was primarily overseen by a military-banner organization, whereas the Outer City was

⁹ Naquin, *Peking*, 3-6. For population density, see G. William Skinner, "Introduction: Urban Social Structure in Ch'ing China," in G. William Skinner, ed., *The City in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 532. Skinner uses data from 1917-18 first published by Sidney Gamble, but asserts that basic characteristics were consistent throughout the Qing period.

¹⁰ Naquin, *Peking*, 360, 418n112. Although Naquin notes that few sources use ward names to refer to areas of the Outer City after the early Qing, I found many such references in case files from the investigations of city officials. Wards may not have been part of the literary or cultural landscape of the city, but for administrative purposes, their boundaries remained relevant into the late Qing.

¹¹ Naquin calls *cheng* "boroughs." Naquin, *Peking*, 360.

primarily administered by civil officials. In late 1644, the newly established Qing court proclaimed that the city would be divided into Banner and Han cities. Henceforth Chinese residents were expelled from the northern Inner City, and banner garrisons were established in their place. Separate policing systems for the Chinese Outer City and Banner Inner City followed.¹²

Beijing dominated the metropolitan zone, but relied on its suburbs for transport of food, grain, water, and people. Religious sites and imperial tombs tied the suburbs symbolically to the imperial city, and sightseers flocked to scenic sites in the city's outskirts. Among the suburban settlements that surrounded imperial Beijing, Tongzhou in the east linked the capital with the Grand Canal, the main transport route for grain imports to the capital. Southwest of the city, Liangxiang, and, further afield, Zhuozhou, were important junctions in the government post relay system (*yichuan* 驛傳).

By imposing a major banner, military, and police presence, the Qing state firmly exercised social control in the capital, especially in comparison to other contemporary Chinese cities that experienced only loose surveillance.¹³ The combined police and garrison population of the city numbered around thirty thousand in the early nineteenth century, a prominent population even relative to the million-plus population of the city.¹⁴ The number of police garrisons in the city grew from two in the early Shunzhi reign to five in 1781.¹⁵

¹² Naquin, *Peking*, 290.

¹³ Alison Dray-Novoy, "The Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie, 1900-1924," *Modern China* 33, no. 3 (2007): 351; cf. William T. Rowe, *Hankow: Conflict and Community in a Chinese City, 1796-1895* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989), 313-15.

¹⁴ Alison Dray-Novoy, "Spatial Order and Police in Imperial Beijing," *Journal of Asian Studies* 52, no. 4 (1993): 905; On the city population and on estimates of the size of the initial Banner influx, see Naquin, *Peking*, 292-4. The number of bannermen residing in and around city in the early Qing seems to have been about three hundred thousand.

¹⁵ Na Silu, *Qingdai zhongyang sifa shenpan zhidu* (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1992), 158.

The supposedly strict division of the city into Manchu and Chinese zones seems to have been an administrative fiction from quite early in the Qing period. Hypothetically, the capital police (*bujun*), part of the military bureaucracy, kept order among the banner populations of the Inner City, and the city surveillance censors (*xunshi wucheng yushi* 巡視五城御史), part of the civil bureaucracy, oversaw the Han Chinese population of the Outer City.¹⁶ Yet by the nineteenth century, these two bodies had overlapping jurisdictions and collaborated in their work. Although either the city censors or the capital police initially investigated most cases in the capital, it was relatively arbitrary which body investigated which case. Civil cases were typically handled entirely by the city censors, but criminal cases might involve both bodies; serious cases were subsequently referred to the Board of Punishments.¹⁷

The capital police, always headed by a Manchu or Mongol official, had headquarters first near the Xuanwu gate to the Southern City and later north of the Forbidden City.¹⁸ According to Alison Dray-Novey, the capital police “took an expansive

¹⁶ I have adapted these terms for the bodies for the sake of simplicity and accessibility. Although “Gendarmerie” has been commonly used, I see no reason not to call these police forces “police.” Likewise, the city censors have been given a wide range of appellations (“roving censors of the five wards” in Andrea S. Goldman, *Opera and the City: The Politics of Culture in Beijing, 1770-1900* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 73; “security office” in Zhu Jianfei, *Chinese Spatial Strategies: Imperial Beijing, 1420-1911* (New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004), 68-9, but most of these obscure rather than reveal the function of these officials. The city surveillance censors were often referred to as simply the “censors of the five wards” (*wucheng yushi*).

¹⁷ Na Silu, *Qingdai zhongyang sifa panduan zhidu*, 296. The capital police and city censors were the main bodies responsible for investigating and sentencing in petty (*qing*) crimes occurring within the capital. If the crime by statute required a punishment of exile to enslavement (*tuzui*) or higher, then the case would be referred to the Board of Punishments. Thus, the capital police not only had the initial power of investigation in petty criminal cases, but also oversaw sentencing and punishment in these cases. Accusations or claims between capital residents were commonly presented to the Capital Police, although they were on occasion also presented in difference offices. It was also common for the emperor to order the Capital Police to oversee an investigation, even if it did not fit into these parameters. City censors investigated and oversaw the investigation of crimes resulting in sentences of corporal punishment; as in the case of the Capital Police, crimes to be punished with exile to enslavement or greater would be transferred to the Board of Punishments.

¹⁸ Dray-Novey, “Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie, 1900-1924,” 352.

view of their responsibility to society.” They handled tasks including mediating disputes, regulating traffic, maintaining roadwork, supervising gatherings, fire-fighting, census-taking, regulating grain stores, distributing rice porridge, tracking visitors and migrants, investigating crimes and making arrests.¹⁹ The capital police worked together with the families and headmen in the mutual-surveillance (*baojia* 保甲) system to maintain census records and investigate crimes.

Especially in the early Qing, surveillance forces kept close watch over information and rumors, both oral and written, moving through the city. The head of the capital police had the privilege of sending direct secret memorials to the Emperor, and these often featured updates on “current conditions” in the city. In one such report from the early eighteenth century, the head of the capital police stated that a few patrons in a restaurant and tea shop had mentioned feeling a small earthquake the day before, but as he himself had felt nothing, and heard no more such rumors the following day, he concluded that there was no substance to the talk.²⁰ Within the metropolitan offices, cases involving improper documentary or communications procedures were typically reported by Board Secretaries; outside the walls of government offices, the capital police and the city censors were the main bodies to report cases involving the transmission of documents and information. Thus the reports of the police authorities for the capital are valuable sources for understanding the everyday activities of urban residents, including those involved in printing, publishing, and delivering court gazettes.²¹

¹⁹ Dray-Novey, “Twilight of the Beijing Gendarmerie,” 352.

²⁰ Longkodo (Ch. Longkeduo) served as head of the capital police from 1711 to 1725. “Bujun tongling Longkeduo zoubao Jing yanlue gan dizhen zhe,” (#3950, undated), *KMZZ*, 1596.

²¹ Other works that have used the records of the capital police to illustrate urban life in Qing Beijing include: Naquin, *Peking*; Goldman, *Opera and the City*; Belsky, *Localities at the Center*; Luca Gabbiani,

Gazette Publishing in Beijing

As depicted in cases generated by the capital police and city censors, surveillance of gazette publishing increased between the early eighteenth century and the late nineteenth century. Capital police and city censors were the arbiters of most low-level criminal investigations and responsible for maintaining order in the streets, a system unique to the capital city. Gazette publishers operated under the purview of these authorities for the entire Qing period. The attention paid to gazette publishers moved from loose oversight and ad hoc prosecution of criminal cases in the early eighteenth century, to the detailed registration and regulation of gazette publishing by the late nineteenth century. In this later period, the capital police and city censors responded to pressures from the imperial state to tighten control of gazette publishing in response to perceived security risks and an enlarged reading audience for the gazette.

The sixteen courier superintendents (*zhujing titang*) in the capital were sometimes, but not always, involved in the management and oversight of gazette publishing. For much of the Qing period, courier superintendents contracted with privately operating gazette publishers. The courier superintendents were responsible for vouching for gazette copyists (*baofang ren* 報房人) that visited imperial offices, but did not as a rule supervise the gazette publishers. Instead, the courier superintendents were in charge of registering and transporting documents like the court gazette from the capital to provincial offices.²² The reports of the capital police and city censors, closer to the action, reveal how gazette publishing was imbricated in urban society. Gazette publishing involved formal and

Pékin à L'ombre du Mandat Céleste - Vie quotidienne et gouvernement urbain sous la dynastie Qing (1644-1911) (Paris: EHESS, 2011).

²² See the case involving Qishan in Chapter 1. In this case, the capital and provincial courier superintendents were involved because the misconduct concerned the transmission and delivery of gazettes and documents, rather than their publication.

informal connections between government functionaries, especially metropolitan clerks, and commoners living in the city.

“What’s New?” Informal Networks and News in the Late Ming and Early Qing

In the late summer of 1718, the capital police made a startling discovery. A tabloid gazette (*xiaobao*) printed in the capital had published a faked memorial attributed to the Sichuan-Shaanxi governor-general Ohai (鄂海, Ch. Ehai, d.1725). The document claimed that an earthquake had occurred in the western region shortly after the appearance of a clutch of headless monsters. The police investigation began at an unnamed gazette publisher (*baofang*) owned by Hu Mengzhao, who had at least two employees, Jin Xiang, a Shaoxing native who had inserted the offending document, and Jin Picheng, a Suzhou native who had brought the document to Mr. Hu. Jin Picheng then testified that he had obtained the document from a friend who worked as a clerk (*shuban* 書辦) in the Board of Punishments, the Chizhou native Gao Daitian. Gao had himself brought the document to the printing house calling the document, in Jin Picheng’s words, “fresh news” (*xinxian shi* 新鮮事).²³

The police investigation wound from person to person in pursuit of the original author of the document (see Table 2.1 below). Those questioned included various metropolitan Board clerks and even Yuan Yuping, a medical practitioner, who had been given a copy of the document when he asked about “fresh news” while treating a patient in the home of another clerk. The case illustrates urban residents’ avid interest in news stemming from government offices. Almost every testimony presented in Longkodo’s

²³ Because these memorials were transcribed from Manchu, the names of Gao Daitian and others are written inconsistently. For example, Gao’s name is transcribed Gao Taitian, Gao Daitian, and Gao Daidian.

report describes someone asking, “What’s new?” and copying a document to bring home or to show to associates.²⁴

Table 2.1. Individuals Questioned in the Tabloid Gazette Case of 1718

Name	Native Place	Occupation
Hu Mengzhao	?	gazette publisher
Jin Xiang	Shaoxing	gazette scribe
Jin Picheng	Suzhou	gazette scribe
Gao Daitian	Chizhou	clerk, Board of Punishments
Zhao Sitang	Shaoxing	clerk, Shanxi office
Zhao Zhiwen	Shaoxing	
Qin Boru	?	clerk, Board of Works
Wang Yizheng	?	
Tong Shengqi	?	clerk (<i>shuban</i>)
Xu Xiewen	?	clerk, Board of Works
Ruan Yuping	?	itinerant medical practitioner
Ruan Fuqing	?	clerk, Shuntian Prefecture
Zhou Shu	?	clerk, Shuntian Prefecture
Shen Mingshi	Shaoxing	clerk, Board of Appointments
Wang Erqiang	Shaoxing	
Chen Dali	Shaoxing	
Dahan	?	Manchu clerk (<i>bitieshi</i> 筆帖式)
Lu Risheng	?	clerk, Board of Revenue
Dan Hongwen	?	clerk, Board of Revenue
Zhao Shengshu	?	clerk, Board of Appointments

Note: Individuals are listed in their order of mention in police reports.
Source: *KMZZ*, 1318-19; 1613.

²⁴ “Bujun tongling Longkeduo zoubao nahuo xiaobao nei shanlu yaoyan zhi renyuan zhe” (undated but ca. KX 57/08/10), *KMZZ*, 1613; “Bujun tongling Longkeduo zouwei jishen zaoyao huozhong zhi zuifan zhe” (KX 57/08/19), *KMZZ*, 1318-19.

The testimony that the clerk Shen Mingshi offered to investigators spotlights the role of metropolitan clerks as information conduits between government offices and private homes. Shen Mingshi was a clerk in the Section of Civil Appointments (*like* 吏科) and a Shaoxing native. Having heard about the investigation, Shen tried to evade punishment by changing his story multiple times. In one of these permutations, Shen claimed that the Manchu clerk Dahan had orally translated a Manchu document for him to copy down in the *yamen* kitchen, after which another clerk took the translated document and leaked it. Unfortunately for Shen, Dahan's testimony did not support Shen's alibi. Shen finally broke down and testified to the police's satisfaction under "twisting" torture. Apparently, a group of metropolitan clerks had been gossiping together about a picture of a three-armed monster, and Shen Mingshi decided to copy down the story. In the final confession, he rationalized, "...since I work in a *yamen*, my relatives and friends always ask me if I have any news. And they want me to write down anything I've heard and bring it home and give it to my family to read."²⁵

Although his eagerness to please his family and friends' hunger for news doomed him to punishment, Shen's coerced confession demonstrates the important role that metropolitan clerks and employees played as a funnel for information and news from government offices. They distributed this information not only to friends and family, but also to associates in private printing offices, most likely for a fee. The focus of the investigation was on finding the source of the rumor, and sidestepped the private production of tabloid gazettes in the capital, suggesting that official forces saw no need to

²⁵ "Bujun tongling Longkeduo zouwei jishen zaoyao huozhong zhi zuifan zhe" (KX 57/08/19), *KMZZ*, 1318-19. I have not been able to locate the follow-up correspondence from the Board of Punishments sentencing Shen Mingshi, Gao Taitian, and the others involved.

restrict private gazette publishing outright. The speed with which the police headed to the printing house owned by Hu Mengzhao suggests that the police kept regular tabs on the gazette publishers operating in the capital, and that they read the tabloids printed by these outlets carefully each day. The “impermissible” act described by Longkodo, head of the capital police, and the Kangxi Emperor, was the leaking of superstitious rumors out of the palace offices, not the printing of the rumors in a tabloid. Despite its surveillance of printing and publishing activities in Beijing, the Qing state under Kangxi also permitted gazette and tabloid publishers to operate with few constraints.

In content, these tabloid gazettes probably offered a mixture of the authoritative style of the court gazette (suggested in the 1718 case by the fabrication of an official memorial as a standard “frame”) and the chatty, narrative style of ephemeral news sheets (*xinwen zhi* 新聞紙) traded throughout the empire. Such news sheets were everywhere in late imperial China, according to foreign observers like the longtime Canton resident Robert Morrison (1782-1834), who described them in the *Chinese Repository* as “a slip of paper which is published when any extraordinary circumstance occurs which the printer thinks will excite interest.” Morrison quoted in full one such news sheet that he had recently obtained in Canton for the price of a single copper coin. It recorded the story of an autodidact named Wang, a wood cutter. Interrogated upon failing to move out of the road for a passing official, he impressed the official by writing out a few lines describing his livelihood and ignorance of “the rigorous requirements of the royal law.”²⁶ The highly stereotypical interaction between the precocious wood cutter and the initially skeptical official seems less likely to have been an “extraordinary circumstance” than a

²⁶ Robert Morrison, “Gazette,” *Chinese Repository* 1 (1833): 492.

short, easy to understand, generic story pleasing to readers that could earn printers some extra cash.

News and stories were brought together in texts like the *Tianbian dichao* (*Reports of a Heavenly Cataclysm in the Capital*), a batch of short accounts of the explosion of a gunpowder storehouse in Beijing in May 1626.²⁷ The information in the accounts ranges from the highly specific to the conventional, explaining scenes of crumbling buildings, bloody bodies, and general panic in the city. The first lines of the tract give a birds-eye view of the event:

...the color of the sky became bright and clear. Suddenly there was a sound like a roar from the northeast, gradually moving through the capital city to its southwest corner. The smell of ash began to gush forth, and the houses rocked violently. At that moment there was a large boom. Heaven and earth began to collapse and crumble. The sky was dark like night. Thousands of residences were sunken to the earth...in an area of circumference about 13 *li* all was pulverized, totally tens of thousands of roofs and ten thousand men...

Besides its detailed and often euphemistic description of the bombed-out landscape as in this introductory section, the text also reads like a collection of rumors and anecdotal accounts, many beginning with a formulaic opening of “There was a person at such-and-such a place who...” The subjects of the account include clerks, teachers, women, servants, and monks, and one description even speculates on the disorder within the imperial court: “at that time the Emperor would be typically taking his meal...” The tales, whether embellished or truly reported, were collected from multiple perspectives in order to provide a fuller account of the scene.

The *Tianbian dichao*, sometimes described as a collection of private gazettes, is thus better understood as part of the emergent genre of “real-time” stories (*shishi*

²⁷ Anonymous, comp., *Tianbian dichao*, 1 j., in *Zhihai congshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai datong shuju, 1935). See the contributions to Geng Qingguo ed., *Wang gong chang da baozha: Mingmo Jingshi qizai yanjiu* (Beijing: Dizhen chubanshe, 1990).

xiaoshuo 實時小說). Beginning in the seventeenth century, novels addressed contemporary events from a much closer temporal divide than earlier works. These stories, plays, and poems often featured real or mimicked gazette excerpts, which the scholar Liu Yongxiang has tracked by noting the presence of classical or documentary language in a primarily vernacular (*baihua* 白話) narrative.²⁸ In addition to “real-time novels,” there were also “gazette plays,” “gazette poems,” and other news-oriented literary works. Works set in Beijing or with plots involving officialdom frequently featured characters mentioning or referring to gazettes. For example, characters in the mid-eighteenth century novel *Rulin waishi* (*The Scholars*) read of the dismissal of an acquaintance from official service in a gazette obtained at the county yamen.²⁹ In real life too, appointments, dismissals, and deaths were among the most typical items that serving officials recorded reading in the court gazette. The intermingling of sensational news (like the accounts of *Tianbian dichao*) and more realistic items shows that regular people in late imperial China, like those who passed around the fake memorial in the 1718 case that Longkodo reported, saw the boundary between sensational and serious news as porous. Readers and even publishers knew that gazettes had to do with news of officials, officialdom, and official documents, but these legitimating frames could hold somewhat more fantastical contents.

²⁸ Liu, “Ming-Qing dibao,” 568-9. Since the date of the original text is unknown, it is impossible to decide whether *Tianbian dichao* qualifies as a “real-time” story. The text has been preserved though its inclusion in compendia of the late Ming, including *Songtian lubi*, *Bixue lu*, *Mingji beilu*, and others. Fang Hanqi, “Baozhi yu lishi yanjiu (shang),” *Lishi dang’an*, no. 4 (2004): 31.

²⁹ Wu Jingzi, trans. Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang, *The Scholars* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 16.

The Rise of the Official Gazette Publisher

Although the early Qing state generally tolerated the private gazette industry, the Kangxi and Yongzheng courts did from time to time issue directives banning unofficial gazettes and tabloids. These bans reacted especially to the problematic mixing of unfounded information into official gazettes and of confidential information into unofficial gazettes. Most galling to both emperors was the dissemination of false rumors about the personal conduct of the emperor and his family.³⁰ In order to quell the flow of rumors and unverified documents from the palace into Qing society, the court mandated that courier superintendents should personally obtain from the Grand Secretariat the transcripts of official documents and records that made up the contents of the gazette. The *titang* or his servant would bring the transcribed documents directly to private printers. This relationship between courier superintendents and their underlings and private printers and their employees became the focus of state attention at times when gazettes were delayed or featured errors or omissions. The response was an experimental effort to establish an official gazette printer, known as the *Gongshen tang* (公慎堂, “Hall of Carefully Selected Public Documents.”)³¹

As described in Chapter 1, *titang* in the capital were reputed to frequently spy on behalf of governors or for more sinister personal reasons. In the first year of the Qianlong reign, the capital police followed up on reports that metropolitan clerks were conspiring to deliver documents to courier superintendents and private copying rooms (*chaofang* 抄房) who paid for documents supplied before their approved distribution dates. In

³⁰ See *QSL*, KX 53/12/13, 261:574a; *HDSL*, KX 53, js. 622 and 703; *HDSL*, YZ 1, ce 2, p.437b; *HDSL*, YZ 1, ce 11, p.176b; *QSL*, YZ 4/05/09, 44:646a-647a; *HDSL*, YZ 5, 114:474a-b.

³¹ I have not been able to locate the origins of the publisher’s name, but the name may refer to the need to be selective, cautious, and prudent (*jinshen* 謹慎) in publishing official documents (*gongwen* 公文).

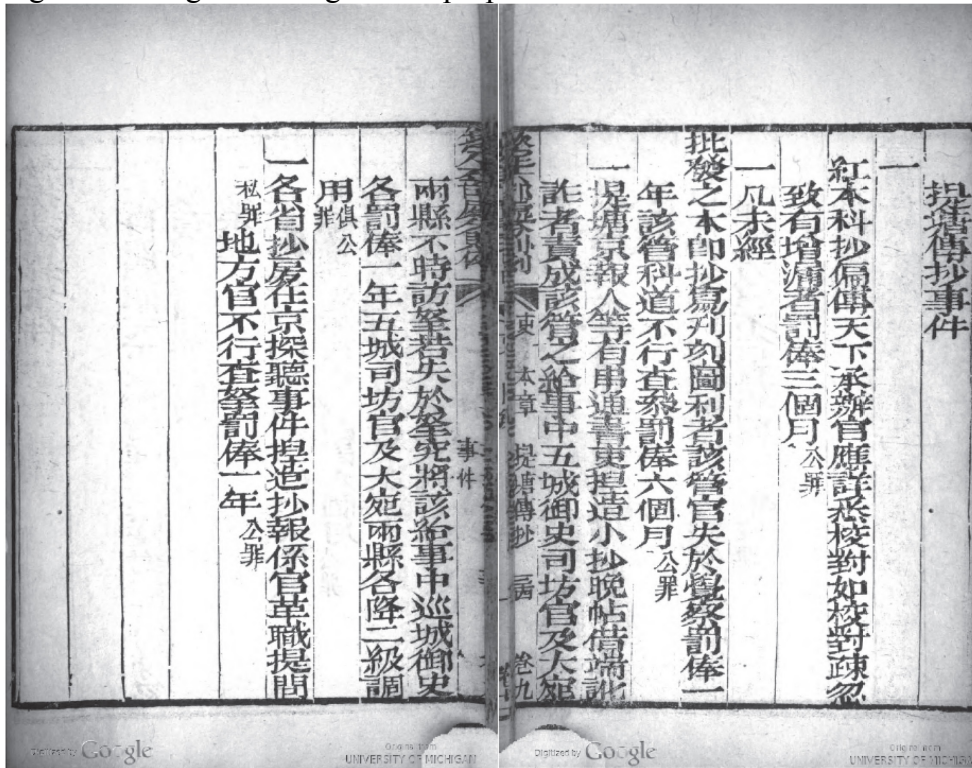
response to this scandal, metropolitan offices reorganized procedures in order to prevent similar collusions from occurring. The new regulations required copying to be done under the supervision of the Six Sections, the oversight units attached to the Six Boards.³² The censor Zou Yigui (鄒一桂, 1686-1772) reported on the new arrangements. Each courier superintendent had a copying room near the Six Sections. Since clerks copied documents to be sent to the Boards at the Six Sections, in this location *titang* employees could quickly copy edicts and rescripted memorials and send them on to the courier superintendent, who could choose to send the information on to the provincial governor, his immediate superior. The copyists were chosen from among the Section of the Board of War, and there was a regularized process for dealing with omissions or errors.³³ As seen in Figure 2.2, the *Imperially Prescribed Precedents for Punishments in the Six Boards* (*Qinding liubu chufen zeli*) included a ruling that specifically warned against employees of these copying rooms spying in government offices (*tanting shijian* 探聽事件) or writing unofficial tabloid reports (*niezao xiaobao* 捏造小報) and assigned a fine equal to one year's stipend to local officials who did not detect and report such crimes among their subordinates.³⁴ Even as these regulations named gazette writers and clerks as individuals liable to trade and smuggle documents, the law placed responsibility for document leaks on the supervising city and local officials.

³² FHA, LFZZ 03-0329-005, QL 01/04/04, "Bujun tongling Eshan [Ošan] zou qing jiang weili chaolu zoushu shuyi jiaobu shenni shi."

³³ Zou Yigui, "Yi zou shijian yi yiti fachao zhe," (QL 07/06/09), quoted in Shi, *Qingdai qianzhongqi*, 56. The "Six Sections" have also been called the "Six Offices of Scrutiny," "supervising secretaries," and also "supervising censors" (cf. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 2:317; On the role of the Six Sections in the memorial transmission process, see Chapter 1, as well as Wu, "Memorials System of the Ch'ing," 12-25.

³⁴ *Qinding liubu chufen zeli*, 52 juan, (Beijing: Li bu, 1828 [DG 8]), 9:34a-b.

Figure 2.2. Regulations against improper circulation of documents



Source: *Qinding liubu chufen zeli*, 9:34a-b.

After the investigation of the Sun Jiagan false memorial case in the early 1750s, when various versions of a falsified critical memorial with the name of the esteemed official Sun Jiagan circulated around the empire, official scrutiny moved from the link between courier superintendents and governors to the link between courier superintendents and private printing houses. In 1754, supervising secretaries of the oversight section for the Board of Appointments submitted a memorial reporting that several time-sensitive documents produced by the Board had been delivered to provincial offices through the courier system (*tangdi* 塘遞) at a delay of up to two months.³⁵ The accusations involved the nine courier superintendents (more than half of the total number

³⁵ Supervising secretaries (or “supervising censors,” as they were part of the Censorate) were the ranked officials that staffed the Six Sections. On the evolution of the office, see Ma Zimu, “Shunzhi chao liuke zhidu shulüe,” *Qing shi yanjiu* (August 2013): 87-96.

in the capital) for Zhili, Zhejiang, Jiangsu-Anhui, Hubei, Jiangxi, Shandong, Henan, Shaanxi, and Guangdong.³⁶

In fact, the reasons for these delays could be found in the capital. The censor Yang Kaiding (楊開鼎, 1736 *jinshi*) followed up on the case in early 1756, describing the situation of the courier superintendent responsible for Zhili Province, Mu Yaonian (穆堯年). Mu had a contract to purchase gazette documents for delivery to the provincial yamen in Baoding from a *baofang*, but he owed money. The publisher refused to print documents until the courier superintendent paid his debts, and so Mu had to go to the Six Sections and copy the documents himself. Unfortunately, Mu had not done the job in so long that he did not know proper procedures, and he failed to get his documents checked when leaving the office. His mistakes illustrate that, contrary to regulations, the print shop rather than the courier superintendent usually sent copyists to the Grand Secretariat offices.

Yang described the longstanding practice of forming “small printing houses”: individuals who wanted to start a printing house and holding a guarantee (*baojie* 保結) from a *titang* could register at the Grand Secretariat’s clerical section. Yet these were private enterprises, run by individuals without regular occupations and purely in pursuit of profits. As a result, they were liable to open and close without notice, and produced a low-quality product. Yang complained that in this commercial relationship, “the transcripts of the state affairs of our dynasty to be transmitted far and wide instead become documents that are hoarded and speculated on (*juji* 居奇) in the marketplace.”

³⁶ “Li ke zhang yin jishizhong Dai Tu zou wei li ke suo ban shi yi,” in Zhang Weiren, ed., *Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiusuo xian cun Qingdai Neige Daku yuan cang Ming-Qing dang’an* (Taipei: Academia Sinica, 1986), A187-072 (GSA 016503-001).

He particularly criticized how private print shops run by unscrupulous operators demonstrated their disregard for the requirements of government communications by stopping gazette production at will.

Yang Kaiding proposed to remove the temptation to employ private printers by pooling resources from all sixteen of the capital's courier superintendents to establish an official gazette printer. The *titang* would continue to copy documents and register their copies at the Six Sections, and city censors would continue to oversee the activities of the official printing house.³⁷ This reform, evidently approved in the following year, resulted in the establishment of the Gongshen tang.³⁸ This institution printed gazettes daily using a movable type apparatus, and was jointly funded by the sixteen capital courier superintendents.³⁹ The courier superintendents were not involved in the typesetting or printing of gazettes, although they were responsible for the regular delivery of the gazette. Officials like Yang Kaiding saw the establishment of a joint gazette printer as restoring the printing of the gazette to an honorable, officially supervised task, not one contracted out for a price.

Financial responsibility for the printing house was shared among the sixteen superintendents, an arrangement that occasionally led to disputes. In August 1802, Chen Wenhui's term as Fujian courier superintendent had ended. Accordingly, the Board of War appointed the Zhejiang superintendent Wu Dading to temporarily hold the position before a replacement from Fujian arrived. While the temporary official served,

³⁷ FHA, LFZZ, 03-0342-023, QL 20/12/04, "Fujian dao jiancha yushi Yang Kaiding wei qing chu kaishe xiaobaofang zhi bi zhe." See also Shi, *Qingdai qianzhongqi*, 56-59.

³⁸ See reference to a jointly established gazette publisher in *HDSL*, 703:16b.

³⁹ It is possible that courier superintendents used their existing ties with commercial printers in Beijing who might have lost work with the closure of small gazette printing operations to recruit these printers into the joint printing house, but I have seen no records from the set-up period.

administrative fees totaling 1,120 taels were to be remitted from the Fujian provincial yamen. Wu Dading submitted a request to draw the funds. However, the Fujian provincial yamen stated that they had already given the funds to newly appointed capital titang Zheng Shangrong, then on his way to Beijing. Zheng arrived in May 1803, and Wu Dading approached him to obtain the funds.

At this time, the Fujian courier superintendent's office housed the Gongshen tang office and its printing equipment. Zheng, upon taking up his position, needed to pay a deposit for the use of this property. The amount of this deposit depended on the accounts of his predecessor, Chen Wenhui. Furthermore, it had to be ascertained whether or not Wu Dading had used the facility's printing equipment. For this reason, Chen was wary when Wu Dading requested the full sum of 1,120 taels, and believed that the acting *titang* was attempting to misappropriate funds.

Chen filed an official complaint at the ward offices, and subsequently the ward censor ordered Zheng Shangrong and Chen Wenhui to complete the transfer process and account for each sum. Chen Wenhui and Zheng Shangrong gathered in the residence of a close acquaintance in the presence of the other capital courier superintendents (to verify their honesty) and did the accounting. A small scuffle ensued. The dispute was referred back to the city ward offices and thereafter to the Board of Appointments. The Board investigated and found no irregularities.⁴⁰

This case shows that the Gongshen tang was a highly structured joint enterprise. This arrangement persisted for over fifty years, from the 1750s through the early 1800s, with apparently few problems. The move to a structured relationship between printer and distributor foreshadows the increasingly well regulated organization of gazette printing

⁴⁰ GSA 228847-001, JQ 8/7, "Xingbu wei shenni daiban Fujian titang Wu Dading chengkong an."

later in the century. Yet although the courier-publisher relationship had been resolved, the manner in which gazette publishers collected documents remained quite unregulated.

Shortly after the disagreement between Zheng Shangrong, Chen Wenhui, and Wu Dading was resolved, the Gongshen tang joined other bookstores and print shops in the commercial zone outside the Zhengyang Gate in the Southern City. Private managers took over publishing operations. Nonetheless, even after the Gongshen tang moved out of the *titang* premises, employees regularly entered metropolitan offices to obtain materials for the gazettes. As before, gazette clerks permitted to take notes in the palace complex were vouched for by the courier superintendents, although they were now required to register with both the Grand Secretariat's clerical sections and with the city censors. After entering the imperial city, gazette clerks lingered in the corridors and entryways of the Grand Secretariat alongside clerks and the personal servants of princes and imperial household department officials.

In 1820 (JQ 24), tales spread throughout the city of a “Cantonese crazy” (*Guangdong fengzi* 廣東瘋子) who had sought to deliver a cryptic message to the Emperor. One summer night, imperial guardsmen had apprehended the half-deaf man with garbled speech, in the neighborhood of the Imperial Academy (*Guozijian* 國子監). The man, Fu Ruixiang, explained that he merely wanted to deliver to the Jiaqing Emperor a message that he had written in a wine shop the previous evening, after journeying from his native Guangdong to Beijing. Fu had written a set of verses mourning the death of his wife in childbirth, which the investigating officials struggled to decipher and assessed as of “no literary value.” Recent history caused imperial forces to react harshly to Fu's furtive approach to the palace. Only a few years earlier, believers in a millenarian sect

had conspired with eunuchs to besiege the palace, and metropolitan forces remained on high alert against potential threats to palace security.⁴¹ The court sought to deal with Fu in secrecy, but rumors about Fu leaked into the city when an imperial order concerning the man was accidentally inserted into the court gazette.⁴²

The incident occasioned an investigation of the clerks and gazette copyists who occupied palace corridors and courtyards on a daily basis. Shao Yucheng, the manager of the Gongshen tang, explained to investigators that he was a native of Shaoxing prefecture in Zhejiang Province.⁴³ He explained that during the Qianlong era three separate gazette publishers had taken care of the capital gazettes for each province, but when complications in this setup led to an investigation at the Board of War, their operations had been consolidated in the Gongshen tang.⁴⁴ Shao himself had been running the Gongshen tang for twelve years. Typically, his firm interacted with a clerk (*shuli* 書吏) named Zhang to obtain documents. Zhang worked in the Six Sections, the oversight offices attached to the six administrative Boards. The Gongshen tang printed gazettes using movable type, and then distributed them “everywhere”; *titang* also obtained gazettes to dispatch to provincial offices from the Gongshen tang. Shao emphasized that

⁴¹ See Susan Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion in China: The Eight Trigrams Uprising of 1813* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1813).

⁴² Unfortunately, I do not have space to delve further into this bizarre case. Relevant documents include FHA, SYD, box 900, *ce* 2, JQ 24/06/09; FHA, LFZZ 03-1699-009, JQ 24/06/18; FHA, LFZZ, 03-2253-025, JQ 24/06/24; JQ 24/06/24, LFZZ, 03-2253-026; FHA, SYD, JQ 24/06/27 and JQ 24/06/28, box 900, *ce* 2; FHA, LFZZ, 03-2253-021; FHA, SYD, JQ 24/07/28, box 901, *ce* 1. An annotated copy of the poem that Fu Ruixiang was attempting to deliver to the Emperor is transcribed in FHA, LFZZ, 03-2253-027, JQ 24 [exact date unknown], “Guangdong Panyu xian min Fu Ruixiang zhangnei shiwen.”

⁴³ As seen also in the preponderance of Shaoxing natives in the 1718 rumor case, Shaoxing was a major exporter of clerical talent. See James H. Cole, *Shaohsing: Competition and Cooperation in Nineteenth-Century China* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986), 111-3. Other locales, such as coastal Shandong, were also important sources of gazette clerks.

⁴⁴ I have been unable to find evidence of more than one officially sanctioned publisher operating during the Qianlong reign in archival sources. Two other publishing houses whose output has been associated with gazette publishing, the Ronglu tang and the Duji tang, were in existence during this period, and they may account for the discrepancy. Another possibility that in the eighteenth century there were multiple printing sites known as Gongshen tang, subsequently consolidated into a single site.

the Gongshen tang only produced printed editions, not manuscript editions. He described, “Our gazette consists of the edicts and rescripts received each day, and the “Memorials of the Capital” (*jingcheng tizou shijian* 京城題奏事件).”⁴⁵ In his testimony, Shao sought to assure his questioners that his printing house worked solely with legitimate documents stamped by the supervising Six Sections, and never printed rumors or copied suspicious or false documents.⁴⁶

Indeed, the primary focus of the investigation was not the gazette clerks, but the other attendants and messengers that lingered outside of the oversight offices for the Six Boards. These men worked for various imperial princes and ministers in the Imperial Household Department. One by one, they explained that the office corridors were a casual space in which they spent most of their time chatting and waiting for announcements of audiences, the issuance of documents, and other news of interest, upon receipt of such news, they speedily alerted their masters. The Jiaqing Emperor, outraged, assigned punishments to the Imperial Household Department ministers and clansmen, with the harshest penalties going to the imperial princes with no administrative duties. Although their various clerks, messengers, and attendants had been dismissed after an earlier Board of Punishments investigation of the case, the Emperor restored these subordinates to their positions.

In clearing the palace of lackeys, spies, and attendants, Jiaqing sought to head off the rivalries and factions emerging in his court. Thus, the real target of these actions were not the subordinates themselves, but the power-seeking clansmen and Imperial Household Department ministers who employed them to spy and nose around the court.

⁴⁵ FHA, SYD, JQ 24/06/28, #2 (p. 285-309 in printed version). As seen in Figure 2.3, *Tizou shijian* was the title given to the memorials section of the gazette by the Gongshen tang.

⁴⁶ FHA, SYD, JQ 24/06/19, #1; JQ 24/06/28, #2.

Jiaqing's angry response to the Fu Ruixiang case, and his focus on princes and ministers, echoed the sharp rebuke issued by the Qianlong Emperor towards governors who used courier superintendents as spies in the capital nearly a century earlier. In contrast, gazette copyists and clerks typically moved easily through government offices and halls, and were seen as legitimate occupants of these official spaces. This combination of court connections and inconspicuousness benefitted some entrepreneurial individuals, as a case from the early Daoguang reign demonstrates.

Li Jiashan's Underground Delivery Business

Most gazette house employees and managers named in archival cases were long-term residents in the capital, but hailed from other areas of the empire. They used personal and professional relationships within metropolitan offices to gain both legitimate and illicit copies of documents of interest. The case of Li Jiashan 李嘉山, a former metropolitan clerk (*gongshi* 供事) who moved into private life and established a grand scheme involving the packaging and delivery of court gazettes and private mail to administrative offices in the metropolitan region, reveals the physical and social reach of a former Inner Court clerk with access to clerks in offices all over the city and the region.⁴⁷ His case, like others discussed above, reveals close collaboration between private entrepreneurs and low-level government employees in various schemes to cut costs, earn profits, and satisfy the capital region's demand for news.

In early 1824, the capital police made a startling discovery in a hutong alleyway in the Southern City of Beijing. Out of his home on Candlestick (Qian'r) hutong, a man

⁴⁷ Li had received the official rank of 9b for his service. The *gongshi* were "highly literate clerks employed by the Grand Secretariat, the Hanlin Academy and other offices with special requirements, and had to pass an examination." Kaske, "Metropolitan Clerks and Venality," 238n56.

named Li Jiashan ran a large-scale operation to deliver mail throughout the southern suburbs of the capital region, as well as daily court gazettes to about thirty subscribers. As the police approached, Li told his underlings to burn his collection of wooden official seals. Still, upon entry, the police found an vast collection of business materials, including a total of 2,056 envelopes stamped with the seals of six different official offices in the Beijing area, blank certificates awarding official rank (*gaofeng* 誥封), personal letters, gazettes, an account book, and printing materials.⁴⁸

Li, a native of Caozhou in Hunan Province, had a large network of associates working as clerks in offices in the capital region. He approached clerks at offices in Beijing, such as the central district police auxiliary command station (*zhong fu zhihui* 中副指揮), and the jail warden's office for the western section of Shuntian Prefecture. He also contracted with individuals working in the suburbs, including the offices of the Shijingshan district in the hills west of Beijing, the Wan County yamen south of the city, the Tongzhou district judge, and the surveillance commissioner for Zhili province. Li's ability to connect with associates in offices throughout the capital region is especially impressive given the variety of administrative districts that these offices governed: a suburban district under urban administration (Shijingshan), a district station of the metropolitan police, two county-level offices, a prefectural office and a provincial office.

⁴⁸ Only a few documents relating to this case are extant, but especially the report of the Capital Police head Yinghe includes revealing details into the nature of Li's business. See FHA, LFZZ 03-3920-010, DG 4/02/12 "Bujun tongling Yinghe zou wei nahuo minren Li Jiashan deng siyong yinxin guanfeng dai ren disong shuxin wenbao raolei gongbing youyi qing jiao xingbu shenming banli shi"; FHA, SYD, DG 4/02/12, no.1, *tiao* 2, box 929, *ce* 2. Details of the subsequent sentencing of Li Jiashan and his associates were published in *Xing'an huilan*, an extensive conspectus of criminal cases published in the late nineteenth century, many of them culled from the court gazette. See Zhu Qingqi and Bao Shuyun, comps., *Xing'an huilan* (Taipei: Chengwen chubanshe, 1968), 51: 3194-5.

In addition to this thriving delivery business, Li also dealt illegally in official titles. His home held both stamped award certificates that he had procured for individuals, and blank award certificates in preparation. Li acted as a procurement agent for these minor awards of rank that typically carried only minor emoluments but a promised a bump in the awardee's official status.⁴⁹

Although the contents of Li Jiashan's account books are not discussed in archival files on the case, the Hunanese man was obviously clearing tidy profits. Subscribers to the gazette delivery service, more than thirty administrative offices in the surrounding region, each paid Li between two and three taels per month for the service. Li paid each of his three employees three strings of coins per month.⁵⁰ The investigation report does not mention money changing hands between Li and his contacts in administrative offices, but this likely occurred. In addition, Li earned unknown profits from his side-business procuring and selling awards of rank.

Li's circulation included thirty or more subscribers at local level administrative offices in the metropolitan region. Li also shipped mail for these offices and other customers. From home, Li packed the mail and gazettes into envelopes bearing official seals so that they could pass into the government post system. Each day, his two underlings procured the items for delivery and brought them to Liangxiang County. One of Li's employees, Pei Ge, had credentials (*ma paizi* 馬牌子) as a horseman for the Liangxiang post relay station. Clerks (*shuli*) named Wu and Jing in the local yamen ensured that the mail going to more distant areas entered the government post system.

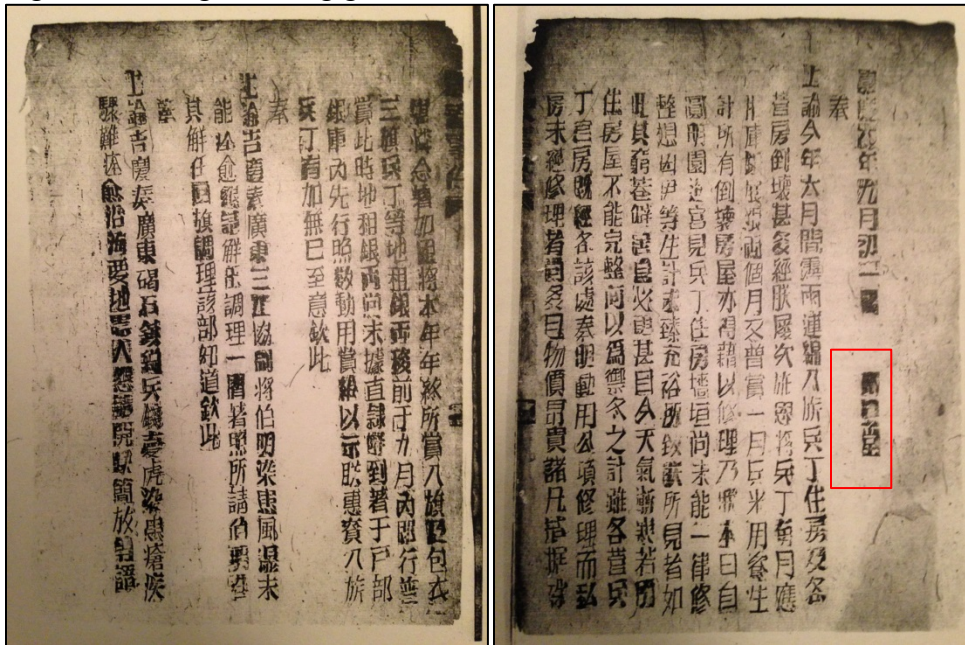
⁴⁹ For another case involving counterfeit gazette announcements, licenses, and awards, see McNicholas, *Forgery and Impersonation*, 112.

⁵⁰ Each string held 1,000 copper coins of the type cast and circulated in the capital (*san diao jingqian* 三吊京錢). On cash accounting in Beijing, see Frank H.H. King, *Money and Monetary Policy in China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1965), 58-63.

Li's delivery business targeted his customers' desire to receive their letters and gazettes as quickly as possible, even if this meant circumventing courier deliveries overseen by the *titang*. Under normal practices, courier deliveries of gazettes were brought in a single batch directly to the provincial seat. There, more copies were printed if necessary and a provincial supplement (*yuanmen chao* 轅門抄) was sometimes added. Only then were the gazettes forwarded to local offices under the supervision of the provincial *titang*. For the localities that sat directly between the capital city and the Zhili provincial seat in Baoding, this must have seemed an inordinate waste of time. Indeed, the success of Li's business model shows that regional administrative offices wanted gazettes to be delivered at more rapid speeds than government couriers could accomplish.

The sentencing report for the case noted that the establishment of gazette copying and delivery services in the capital was in no way illegal. Rather, the violation of law consisted of the fraudulent use of official stamps and stationery and the post relay system. The report suggested that thereafter, it should be made perceptible from looking at a gazette whether the document in question had been obtained from the capital courier superintendents, or from a private distributor.

Figure 2.3 Gongshen tang gazette, JQ 06/09/01



Source: National Diet Library, Tokyo.

Note: The first two pages (of four) of the Gongshen tang gazette for October 8, 1801. The name of the printing house is included under the date in the right-hand image. In the left-hand image, the title *tizou shijian* can be discerned (although barely legible) in the center margin. The contents for this date were entirely edicts. The first edict on the right-hand page refers to recent bad weather, and the two on the left-hand page respond to memorials from Jiqing, governor of Guangdong province. The printed characters are much cruder than examples from gazette publishers later in the century.

In debating why gazette publishers suddenly started printing their names and a masthead on gazettes in the late Qing, some scholars have suggested that that fear of censorship and prosecution led early publishers to omit identifying information, or that only in the late nineteenth century did competitive measures like brand names emerge among publishers. In fact, extant editions show that the Gongshen tang labeled its gazettes during the entire period in which it was actively publishing, beginning in the mid-Qianlong reign. When publishers began to note their brands and editions in more conspicuous ways in the mid nineteenth-century, they may have responded to more than the stresses of commercial competition. In explicitly associating certain editions with the capital courier superintendents, they responded to the ruling in the Li Jiashan case that

ordered publishers to clearly distinguish the editions that would enter the official courier post system. This ruling would have been widely known to gazette publishers through its inclusion in the *Conspectus of Legal Cases (Xing'an huilan)*, an important compendium of legal cases from the period first published in 1834.

Disorder and Flux in Gazette Publishing

After the end of the Gongshen tang monopoly, a new era began for gazette publishing in Beijing. In the second half of the nineteenth century, multiple independent gazette publishers, offering more specialized products, operated in southern Beijing. In turn, they were subjected to increased regulation and supervision by the capital police and urban censors. These publishers used both legitimate and covert connections to court and metropolitan offices to obtain and print documents as their circulations expanded. Beginning around the same time, a complex set of interests including military and security concerns, the need to maintain administrative integrity among officials, and concern about the legitimacy of the gazette guided regular court interventions. The court compelled city police and censors to enforce more stringent rules for the formatting, content, and publishing of court gazettes by private publishers. Even with this increased attention, gazette publishing flourished through the end of the nineteenth century.

In late 1853, order and security in the capital city seemed to be collapsing under the threat of rebel attacks. As Taiping forces moved north, the court worried about a potential invasion of the capital. Metropolitan Beijing was no longer secure, and rebel infiltration in advance of an open incursion seemed possible. A memorial submitted by the northern ward secretary (*xunshi beicheng jishi zhong*) Wu Tingpu (吳廷溥, 1840 *jinshi*) prompted the Xianfeng Emperor to order the Changlu (Tianjin) Salt

Commissioner to collect registries of laborers (*xunyi* 巡役) employed by area salt merchants, to deter outsiders who might make trouble in Tianjin or even threaten the capital.⁵¹ The court also ordered that metropolitan and provincial officials verify the identities of examination candidates from rebel-occupied areas in case Taiping rebels tried to disguise themselves as examination candidates.⁵² Meanwhile, the commanders of the capital police oversaw the expansion of troop presence and the training of a civilian defense corps (*tuanfang* 團防) in the commercial Southern City (*qian sanmen* 前三門), the Inner City, and the northern suburbs.⁵³

Meanwhile, military discipline around the city continued to decline. The city's ward secretaries submitted a joint memorial suggesting major changes were urgently needed in the defense and policing of the capital city. Their memorial narrated a desperate situation. The capable troops that previously guarded the city had been dispatched to fill vacancies in the area's Green Standard garrisons. Since the remaining troops were inadequate, the makeshift solution had been to raise militias, poorly trained troops, often hungry and exhausted, that spent most of their time shivering at their posts with inadequate clothing and arms. The temporary troops had even been seen wrestling shirtless or huddled draped in funeral coverlets (*yongqin* 擁衾). The ward secretaries argued that in such a situation, were there to be an outbreak of disorder, bandits roaming the countryside might easily sneak into the cities and cause havoc.⁵⁴ This urgently phrased memorial received an imperial response on the same day suggesting that city

⁵¹ FHA, SYD, XF 3/08/28.

⁵² *QSL*, XF 3/01/23, 41:49, cited in Belsky, *Localities at the Center*, 174.

⁵³ FHA, ZPZZ, 04-01-01-0848-018, XF 3/12/09, "Bujun tongling Lianshun, bujun tongling Airen zou wei sheli tuanfang yi zhong difang jingchen guanjian shi."

⁵⁴ FHA, LFZZ 03-4241-125, XF 3/11/29, also listed in that date's *SSDJ* along with three other supplementary memorials (*pian*) from Fengbao.

censors and ward secretaries work together with Wang Maoyin (王茂蔭, 1798-1865), the metropolitan official whose proposals for regional defense against the Taipings were then guiding imperial policy, to rectify the situation.⁵⁵

The need to protect official information had already entered the agenda with a Board of War secretary's proposal to restrict discussions of military expenditures in the court gazette. Under the new proposal, such information would be transmitted only to relevant agencies and offices through lateral communications, rather than more widely via the Grand Secretariat and the court gazette. Xianfeng had agreed to the suggestion, instructing the Grand Council to "take care" to excise thoughtlessly released information from the widely available gazettes.⁵⁶ Under that policy, the joint memorial on waning troop discipline should not have appeared in the court gazette, because it dealt with a sensitive defense-related issue.⁵⁷ But it was indeed published.⁵⁸ An investigation was immediately launched, headed by the ward secretaries and city censors—who by this time maintained registries of gazette publishers operating in the capital and routinely inspected publishers' output—in coordination with the capital police. In recent months, these officials had dealt with at least two minor clerical problems involving the gazette printing houses without reporting the incidents. Ad hoc decisions governed interactions between city officials and gazette publishers, even though gazette regulation had intensified.

⁵⁵ *QSL*, XF 3/11/29, 113:775a-b. See Wang Maoyin's biography. *QSG*, *lie zhuan*, j. 422.

⁵⁶ *QSL*, XF 04/01/22, 119:40b.

⁵⁷ Notations in the *SSDJ* makes clear that although the memorial and imperial response were forwarded to the officials and bodies named in the imperial edict, they were not to be released to the bureaucracy at large, and therefore were not to be printed in the gazette.

⁵⁸ The one copy of the gazette held at the British Library for XF 3/11, a printed set of "monthly editions," does not include the offending edict.

The findings of the investigation exemplified these informal patterns of collaboration and decision-making. Police found a peculiar series of mistakes traceable to the ward secretary Wu Tingpu (“old Wu Du”), who had submitted the memorial on migrant laborers.⁵⁹ One day, Wu Tingpu had noticed the imperial edict responding to the joint memorial on city defense in the ward offices, and saw that it hadn’t been included in the gazette. He thought this to have been a mistake, and later noted in his testimony that the Beijing gazette printers often inadvertently omitted documents. At this time, the majority of the city’s gazette publishers were located in the Northern Ward (roughly the area between the Xuanwu gate and the Zhengyang gate from the southern wall of the Inner City to the southern wall of the Outer City). Wu resided near the Northern Ward offices, and therefore handled routine handled interactions with these proprietors.

To remedy the issue, Wu made a copy of the edict and gave it to his messenger Luo Xiang to deliver to Gongli baofang, the gazette publisher managed by Zhang Yixing and located in the Liangjia yuan area, not far south of the book markets of Liulichang. He included a message instructing Zhang Yixing to distribute copies of the edict to two other gazette publishers.⁶⁰ Accordingly, Zhang, a native of Zhaoyuan County in Shandong Province who had moved to the capital to establish the Gongli baofang, printed more than two hundred copies of the supplementary document for his own gazette business, and distributed copies to the other publishers to reproduce in their own establishments.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Wu had been recently appointed as a secretary for the Northern Ward after stints in the Hanlin Academy and Censorate.

⁶⁰ These were the three gazette publishers in the Northern Ward, but there may have been other gazette publishers operating in other areas of the city.

⁶¹ FHA, LFZZ, 03-4578-062, XF 03/12/22, “Lianshun deng zou wei nahuo sikan zouzhang ren Zhang Yixing deng qing song Xingbu shenban shi.” This document is also transcribed in the *SYD* for XF 03/12/22 (box 1176, *ce* 3); FHA, LFZZ 03-4579-001, XF 04/01/06.

When the erroneously inserted edict was discovered and Wu Tingpu realized his mistake, he panicked. The secretaries of the five wards received orders to submit a joint memorial explaining the circumstances of the mistake. The memorial they drafted included the statement that Wu had himself recently changed residences in order to better supervise the gazette publishers. Wu volunteered to deliver the joint memorial and on the way altered the text in order to obscure his own name and position. But in his haste, he failed to properly enumerate the co-authors of the joint memorial. After this second mistake was discovered, Wu gave himself up in hopes of evading severe punishment, and the details of the peculiar case were revealed. Wu received credit for having admitted to the crimes of releasing confidential documents and altering a memorial, and was exiled to the far west for three years.⁶²

Association with this case may have harmed the reputation and fortunes of the three gazette publishers named in the investigation. After the heyday of the Gongshen tang, four gazette publishers (Gongli, Gongxing, Tianli, and Juxing) were operating in the capital by the time of this 1853 case.⁶³ But I have found no post-1854 gazettes attributed to the Gongli or Gongxing gazette in extant collections. Five years later, another case involving errors in the gazette found the capital police interrogating a somewhat different list of publishers, including Juxing baofang, Juheng baofang, Hecheng baofang, and the Liben tang, which specialized in manuscript gazettes.⁶⁴ The changing rosters of gazette

⁶² Documents in this case (all at the FHA): LFZZ 03-9677-002, XF 03/12/19; LFZZ 03-9677-004, XF 03/12/20; LFZZ 03-4578-062, XF 03/12/22; SYD box 1176, ce 3; LFZZ, 03-9677-003, XF 03/12/24; LFZZ 03-9677-006, XF 03/12/24; LFZZ 03-9677-007, XF 03/12/24; LFZZ 03-9677-009, XF 03/12/24; ZPZZ 04-01-12-0479-190, XF 03/12/26. Wu's sentence: ZPZZ 04-01-12-0480-115, XF 04/01/12. Wu Tingpu was back in the metropolitan government and once again under investigation five years later.

⁶³ Juxing baofang was located at Tieniao hutong, also in the Northern Ward. It is unclear why they did not also receive a copy of the supplementary edict from Wu Tingpu. Wang Bin and Xu Xiushan, eds., *Beijing diming dian* (Beijing: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2001), 327.

⁶⁴ GZD 406010511, XF 09/04/24.

publishers under city surveillance show that the gazette printing industry in Beijing was in flux during the 1850s.

During this decade, operating procedures had changed from the years when the clerks of the Gongshen tang sat around with the attendants of princes, waiting to copy documents from the clerical offices of the Grand Secretariat. Employees of gazette publishers copied documents from the Chinese Registry Office and the Manchu Registry Office of the Grand Secretariat. Gazette publishers coordinated to collect documents, perhaps rotating the responsibility. In 1859, Zhang Tonghe, the proprietor of the Liben tang manuscript gazette publisher, was interrogated by the capital police. Zhang was a former scribe (*tiexie* 貼寫) in the Board of Rites.⁶⁵ As a gazette publisher, Zhang visited the Manchu Registry Office daily to copy relevant documents. After this, each gazette printer came to the Liben tang offices inside the Donghua Gate to obtain a copy.⁶⁶

Mistakes and errors in the court gazette involving the misreporting of an official's death or transfer elicited quick notice from readers who tracked officials' career paths through reading the gazette. Zhang Tonghe's interrogation occurred as part of a case in which a notice about a vacant department magistracy that was in fact not vacant was wrongly included in the gazette.⁶⁷ Testifying about the established procedures for copying documents, Zhang reported that this notice had been item number four in the office's registry, although he did not know the names of those working in the Registry Office on that day. A few years later, gazette publishers erroneously printed that the Guangxi education official Sun Qin'ang had died. The official Weng Tonghe, who kept a

⁶⁵ Such copying houses are more commonly mentioned in early and mid-Qing sources.

⁶⁶ GZD 406010511, XF 09/04/24.

⁶⁷ These cases were apparently increasingly common in the late Qing, as attested in an 1874 memorial from Grand Secretariat officials urging greater discipline in transcribing documents for transmission to various metropolitan institutions. Memorial from Ruilin in "Jingbao," *Shenbao*, August 21, 1874.

comprehensive diary, noted the mistake, and suggested that the “palace notes” (*gongmen chao* 宮門抄) section of the gazette might be eliminated.⁶⁸ The notoriety of the mistake led to a proposal in the winter of 1865 from a supervising secretary named Bo Gui, who suggested that gazette publishers were too scattered for the censors of the central ward to effectively police their activity, and proposed that a joint publisher on the model of the former Gongshen tang be reestablished, but his proposal received no response.⁶⁹ In this period, the interactions between metropolitan and city offices and privately established gazette publishers had become more standardized than in years past. Pressing security concerns in the capital city led the court to stress regulation and consolidation, but these agendas often conflicted with the routine practices and interactions between publishers and city officials.

As a result, the number of gazette publishers in Beijing continued to grow, and their circulation numbers expanded as well. By the end of the century, more than ten commercial *baofang* operated in Beijing. These shops clustered primarily in the Liulichang area, with a possible secondary cluster around the Donghua Gate in the east.⁷⁰ Signaling continuing ties between the gazette publishers and courier superintendents, the offices of courier superintendents in Beijing were also typically located in the Liulichang neighborhood. Unlike most metropolitan offices, whose locations in the city were long

⁶⁸ Weng Tonghe, Chen Yijie, ed., *Weng Tonghe riji*, 6 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1:345 (TZ 3/08/11).

⁶⁹ FHA, LFZZ, 03-4681-049, TZ 03/12/18, “Huke zhangyin jishizhong Bo Gui zou qing chi zhongcheng zheli baofang reng xun jiuzhi zhuan ren fuze ze you yougui shi.”

⁷⁰ Their locations are difficult to pinpoint unless mentioned in archival files relating to scandals or mistakes, because few gazette publishers produced anything besides gazettes, and they were well known, and so did not achieve notice from book connoisseurs, nor did they advertise in guidebooks like the other bookshop-printers of Liulichang who hawked more diverse wares.

fixed, these offices relocated periodically.⁷¹ The Hubei titang was in fact located inside the native-place association (*huiguan*) for the city of Hanyang. The Jiangxi titang was located in Liangjia yuan, near the Gongli baofang and a scrap paper collection society devoted to proper disposal of inscribed text.⁷² Only the Fujian titang was located in the Inner City, and with the exception of the Hubei titang in the Southern Ward, all other titang offices were located in the Outer City's Northern Ward.

Table 2.2. Capital Courier Superintendent Locations in Beijing, 1886

Post	Location	Post	Location
Zhili	Shaanxi xiang 陝西巷	Zhejiang	Xuanwu men wai Guan jia hutong 宣武門外賈家胡同
Henan	Xianglu ying tou tiao hutong 香爐營頭條胡同	Sichuan	Haibei si jie 海北寺街
Shanxi	Mianhua liu tiao hutong 棉花六條胡同	Hunan	Bao'an si jie 保安寺街
Shandong	Xuanwu men wai Qiu jia jie 宣武門外裘家街	Fujian	Maxian hutong 麻線胡同
Shaan-Gan	Xianglu ying si tiao hutong 香爐營四條胡同	Guangxi	Yongguang si jie 永光寺西街
Jiangnan	描畫頭條胡同 Miaohua tou tiao hutong	Guangdong	Fen fang liulie jie 粉房琉璃街
Hubei	Caochang ba tiao hutong, Hanyang guan 草廠八條胡同漢陽館	Yun-Gui	Banchang hutong 板章胡同
Jiangxi	Liang jia yuan, west alley 梁家園西夾道		

Source: *Chaoshi congzai* (Jingdu: Songzhu zhai, 1886), j.3, p.46.

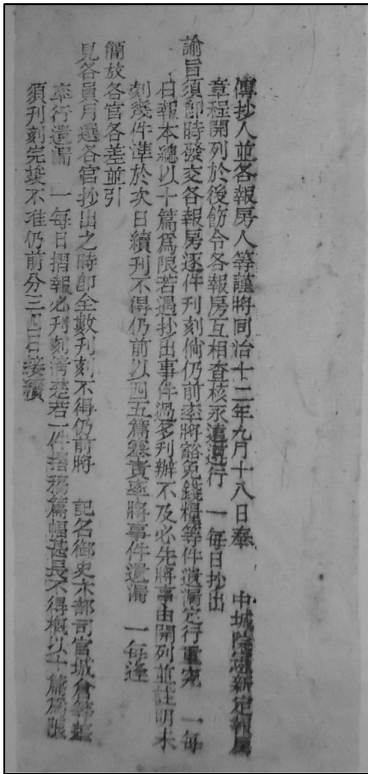
⁷¹ Guidebooks of the period like *Dumen jilüe* and *Chaoshi congzai* recorded these updated addresses alongside the locations of provincial associations and trade associations (*huiguan*). The inclusion of these addresses in guidebooks intended for visiting scholars, merchants, and sojourners suggests that the *titang* offices in fact provided more services to visiting provincials than has been previously understood.

⁷² On “treasuring the written word” in the Taiping period, see Meyer-Fong, *What Remains*, 26-8.

By 1873, most gazette publishers seem to have moved to the Central Ward, outside the Zhengyang Gate to the Inner City. In November of that year, the Central Ward issued new regulations for the capital's printing offices (*Xinding baofang zhangcheng* 新定報房章程). The four rules instructed printers to first, print all issued decrees expeditiously in their entirety, not omitting any items; second, print issues of around 10 folded pages (*pian* 片) in length, never splitting individual documents between issues; third print notices of all official appointments and audiences in their entirety, not omitting temporary duties or appointments; and finally, to print all included memorials in their entirety, even if this requires expanding the issue beyond ten pages. W.F. Mayers, Chinese Secretary at the British Legation, noted that the "Rules have been printed on strips of paper, without any individual name, seal, or other mark of authentication appended, and have been distributed among the Gazette offices in the outer city."⁷³

⁷³ TNA, FO 233/58/18. Mayers, "Memorandum on the 'Peking Gazette,'" April 14, 1874.

Figure 2.4. Regulations for Gazette Printers, 1873



Source: Mayers, “Memorandum on the ‘Peking Gazette.’”

These regulations reflected a strong tendency towards intervention and regulation of the gazette on the part of city officials. The new regulations do not seem to have been the result of any high-level intervention from the metropolitan board, the Grand Secretariat, or the Emperor. Rather, the city censors and secretaries—the ones who faced censure if irregularities in the gazettes occurred—sought to enforce standardized rules for gazette publishing. Yet the very basic quality of the rules outlined above suggest although full inclusion of documents and information was a general principle for gazette printers, this principle had remained an implicit principle rather than an explicit rule until late in the nineteenth century.

Contrary to portrayals of the long reach of the eighteenth-century court and the relative laxity of an incapacitated nineteenth-century state, this chapter has demonstrated

that gazette printers in the capital were in fact subject to more, rather than less, regulation in the nineteenth century as compared to the eighteenth century. Problems with the gazette were investigated in the eighteenth century on a case-to-case basis, and standards for the gazettes were only vaguely established and enforced. Rather than actively restricting the contents of the gazette, eighteenth-century Qing rulers chose to investigate stringently the human motives behind manipulations of the gazette but did not issue formal rules or terms of production. But by the mid-to-late nineteenth century, city officials closely monitored the activities of gazette publishers.

Nonetheless, gazette production and the market for gazettes grew dramatically in the late nineteenth century. Alongside their bookseller-printer peers in the Liulichang area specializing in other types of information texts, commercial gazette publishers used new techniques of customization and distribution to market their gazettes through the end of the nineteenth century.

Looking at the Gazette

The first part of this chapter recounted changes in the gazette publishing industry and its associations with official entities during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. By numbers alone, the capital's gazette printing industry flourished most in the late nineteenth century, when over ten gazette printers operated in the city. Even so, gazette publishers could not operate independently. They needed to maintain relationships with both private and official distributors (i.e. courier superintendents) and official sources (clerks and others within metropolitan offices) throughout the entire period, becoming more routinized and coordinated over time. In this second part of the chapter, I describe the gazette editions attributed to different publishers during the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries, including both print and manuscript gazettes, and the technical process of their production. Understanding these characteristics helps us to better evaluate the business of gazette publishing during the Qing dynasty.

Table 2.3. Gazette Publishers in Beijing, 1771-1890

Name	Dates Active	Location (if known)
Gongshen tang	Ca. 1770- ca. 1840	Fujian <i>titang</i> offices, later outside Qianmen
Duji baofang ¹	QL?	
Liben tang ³	XF	Outside Donghua Gate, Inner City
Hecheng baofang	XF 9, TZ	
Juxing baofang ⁵	XF, TZ	Tieniao hutong, Outer City
Juheng baofang ⁵	XF, TZ, GX	
Xinyi baofang ⁵	TZ 11	
Gongli baofang ⁴	XF	Liangjiayuan, Outer City
Gongxing baofang ⁴	XF	
Jiwen baofang ⁵	TZ	
Tongxing baofang ⁵	TZ	
Tianli baofang ⁴	XF	
Jusheng baofang	Late Qing	
Tongshun baofang	Late Qing	
Tianhua baofang	Late Qing	
Liansheng baofang ¹	Late Qing	
Taicheng baofang ¹	Late Qing	
Hongxing baofang	Late Qing	
Yongxing baofang	Late Qing	
Tongwen baofang	Late Qing	

Sources: ¹ Pan Xianmo, “Qingchu de yulun yu chaobao.” ² Fang, *Zhongguo xinwen shiye tongshi*, 208. ³ GSA 406010511. ⁴ Fengbao and Wu Tingpu case. ⁵ TNA, FO 233/58/15, April 15, 1872.

Although archival evidence shows that gazette printing and publishing was already a dynamic industry in early eighteenth-century Beijing,⁷⁴ the first extant examples of Qing gazettes in library collections are from the era of the consolidated publisher Gongshen tang. Examples of Gongshen tang’s print editions of the gazette for

⁷⁴ For example, the capital police named Hu Mengzhao as proprietor of a gazette publisher in 1718; in 1736, the police noted that the “east and west copying houses” (*dong xi chaofang*) were purchasing documents from errant metropolitan clerks. FHA, LFZZ, 03-0329-005, QL 01/04/04.

dates ranging from QL 35 to DG 21 (1770 to 1841) can be found in library collections around the world (See Table 2.3 and Figure 2.3).⁷⁵ The earlier gazettes, typically titled *Tizou shijian* (*Memorialized Matters*), tend to be of the crudest print quality and the worst legibility. Gongshen tang imprints from the Daoguang reign in the British Library collection are of much higher quality. Although at first glance the print quality of characters in commercial editions of gazettes from the late nineteenth century look similar to those in early Gongshen tang editions, they exhibit much greater legibility. The characters, which are irregular and crude in early Gongshen tang editions, are much more standardized in later editions. The common linkage between these gazettes from two different publishing eras was a fast and cheap printing technique using crudely produced limited-use movable type.

The print scholar Zhang Xiumin has argued that early Gongshen tang gazettes were printed using waxed blocks (*la ban* 蠟板).⁷⁶ According to Zhang, in order to print with wax blocks, beeswax is mixed together with pine rosin, and then painted in a thin layer onto a wooden block. After it has hardened, characters are carved into the wax. About four to five hundred copies of fairly low quality can be printed this way before the print becomes entirely degraded.⁷⁷ Thomas Wade, the British translator and diplomat who made a career of translating and analyzing the gazette, also referred to a “scarcely

⁷⁵ I have seen the *Tizou shijian* from the National Library of China, the National Diet Library in Japan, and the Nanjing Library. Of the three collections, the Nanjing Library edition includes the earliest dates (QL 35/R5/09), and is in the best condition.

⁷⁶ Zhang also includes images of possible gazettes from the Kangxi period and Yongzheng 9 (1731), which he describes as held in Rome’s Franciscan archives and in the Austrian National Library in Vienna, respectively.

⁷⁷ Zhang describes evidence of this printing process as early as the Song dynasty, when wax printing was preferred to woodblock printing for examination result lists due to its relatively quick speed. Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo yinshua shu de faming ji qi yingxiang* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, [1958] 2009), 79-82.

legible impression taken off wax.”⁷⁸ Another scholar, Pan Xianmo, argued that earlier gazettes were printed with blocks made of plant starch. In this process, the plant starch was mixed with lime and shaped into blocks. Characters were etched on the surface, and then the blocks were fired, becoming as hard as stone. After this, printing could be accomplished using a mixture of water and coal filings, the use of which produced the uneven coloration of the printed characters.⁷⁹

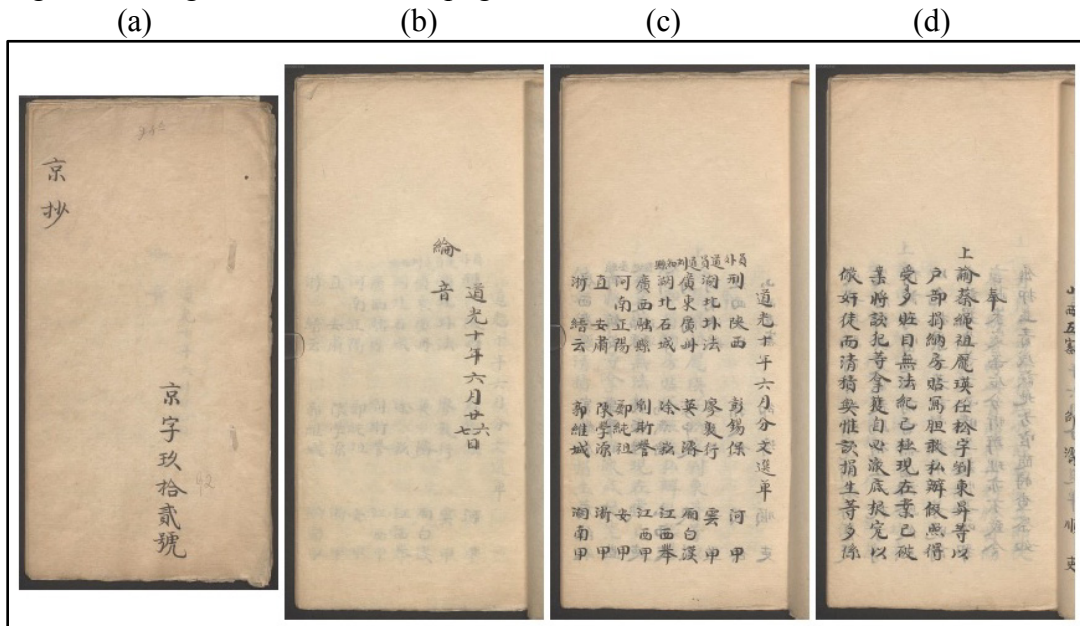
After the heyday of the Gongshen tang, a few printers split the market in the 1850s, followed by a period of dramatic growth with more than ten printers operating at any given time between the 1860s and the end of the gazette production. Juxing and Gongli are the most numerous brands among the 1850s gazettes at the British Library. Only a few Gongli or Gongxing gazettes at the British Library date from after the 1850s, but Juxing editions remain common through the late nineteenth century. Corresponding to this increase in publishers, the number of publishing techniques employed also expanded in number to include higher-quality printed copies, low-quality “long editions,” and high quality manuscript editions.

Although it may seem odd that manuscript editions remained common in the late nineteenth century, prior to the spread of lithographic printing many well-heeled readers preferred the relatively expensive manuscript editions. Rapidly produced printed gazettes were often close to illegible. The superior quality of a manuscript edition of the gazette is shown below (Figure 2.5).

⁷⁸ T.F. Wade, *Note on the Condition and Government of the Chinese Empire in 1849* (Hong Kong: China Mail Office, 3). Other contemporary references to the use of wax printing: *Chinese Repository* 1 (1833): 419; Samuel Mossman, “The Peking Gazette,” *The Leisure Hour* (London), February 25, 1865, 119. Mossman’s account was subsequently reprinted in *The North China Daily News* on January 3, 1866, and *The China Mail* on January 11, 1866.

⁷⁹ Pan Xianmo, “Qingchu de yulun yu chaobao,” *Xinwen yanjiu ziliao*, no.8 (1981): 254-7.

Figure 2.5. Pages from a manuscript gazette, DG 10/06/26-27



The gazette packet is 16 pages in total. This is issue no. 92 (image a). This edition begins with a (image c) list of personnel assignments in the civil bureaucracy. Such lists were frequently appended to both manuscript and printed gazettes. The first imperial edict in this issue (image d) involves the arrest of scribes (*tiexie* 貼寫) in the Board of Revenue. Like most manuscript gazettes, the name of the *baofang* is not listed. Source: Bayern State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek).

In 1867, the student interpreter Frank Porter, working in the British Legation in Beijing, wrote to his father of his “ordinary routine in the office—translating the Peking Gazette every day.” He commented that the printed gazettes were “so badly done that by any one but a Chinaman they are almost illegible.” A widely held misconception at the time held that manuscript gazette editions were obtained directly from the palace, whereas printed editions were produced by private printers and were therefore less authoritative.⁸⁰ As we have seen above, these different editions in fact simply represent different levels of product customization for consumers. Porter affirmed this in the same

⁸⁰ This question was debated in the *North China Herald* in 1850. See letter from “A constant Reader of the Peking Gazette,” *NCH*, September 7, 1850; the editorial response, *NCH*, September 14, 1850; letter from “An Inquirer,” *NCH*, October 5, 1850; response from William Charles Milne, *NCH*, November 2, 1850.

letter: “The work is...conducted by a private firm, which gets the documents from the clerks and underlings in the offices on duty in the palace, and who copy it for sale.”⁸¹

Thus at the top of the spectrum of gazette products available for purchase or subscription in the late nineteenth century were manuscript editions. Below this was the “courier edition,” and finally the maligned “long edition” (*changben* 長本). Manuscript editions were produced on both long, narrow pages akin to the “long edition” and on shorter, fatter pages. Manuscript gazettes featured neat, legible handwriting and rarely included the name of the publisher or copyist. Since the gazettes were produced in standard lengths, the occasional larger or longer sheet would be folded into the packet in the case of exceptionally long or numerous entries. Manuscript gazettes, like the courier edition, were distributed every two days.⁸²

Some nineteenth-century manuscript gazettes were copied on printed red-lined paper that featured the title *Neige jingchao* (內閣京抄) printed at the central margin (*banxin* 版心) of each page.⁸³ This title referring to the Grand Secretariat does not imply that the Grand Secretariat was the author or publisher of the gazette, but simply associated the gazette with the central government institution from which gazette clerks obtained copies of edicts and memorials. Many manuscript gazettes were also copied on lined templates with no title or text added to the spine.

The “Courier Office edition” was printed by the Juheng baofang beginning around 1860. It was distributed every two days (in contrast to the lower quality daily

⁸¹ “December 8th 1867,” J.L. McCracken, ed., *From Belfast to Peking, 1866-1869: A Young Irishman in China, Frank Knowles Porter* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 130.

⁸² Gazettes came out every two days except at the end of the twelfth month, when they appeared at intervals of four to six days. E.C. Bridgman, “Extracts from the Peking Gazette, Nos. 5 to 8 for the twenty-sixth year of the reign of his imperial majesty Tau-kwang, A.D. 1846,” *The Chinese Repository* 15 (1846): 273.

⁸³ There are examples from Daoguang 12 (1832) in the British Library.

editions), to the capital courier superintendents for dispatch to provincial capitals, and in “limited” quantity for commercial sale in Beijing.⁸⁴ These gazettes, printed on short, white paper with relatively small and clear print, have also been called the “Shandong edition” by scholars and archivists, because the title *Shandong tangwu* 山東塘務 sometimes appears at the central margin or on the first page of the issue.⁸⁵ In most of these editions, the interior pages were printed on a template, featuring the phrase “joint establishment of the sixteen capital courier superintendents” (*zhujing shiliu tangwu gongshe* 駐京十六塘務公社) at the central margin.

The maligned “long editions” typically featured yellow covers with a title and often an issue number written or stamped in red ink on the cover. The paper used for long editions was lower-grade bamboo paper, yellowish in color.⁸⁶ Sometimes, the name of the gazette publisher was also included on the cover or on the first page. In addition, some gazettes featured elaborate images on the front cover (See Figures 0.1 and 2.6). It was rare for any more specific information, such as an address or price, to be printed or recorded on the cover or within the gazette. These gazettes made up for their poor quality with frequency, and were issued every day.

For daily editions, movable type was practical because official documents employed a fairly regular vocabulary. It would also be illogical to print gazettes with woodblocks because there was little if any demand for reprints or additional copies, and

⁸⁴ TNA, FO 233/58/15 “Gazette,” April 15, 1872.

⁸⁵ The exact reasons for this are still unclear to me. The attribution of this edition to the Shandong *titang* office may have been a vestigial reference to the Gongshen tang, for which we have examples from the 1770s to the 1840s, and whose operations were at some point housed in the Fujian *titang* office. Li Jiashan, who ran a gazette delivery service, hailed from Zhaoyuan, part of Dengzhou Prefecture in coastal Shandong. In addition, a number of gazette publishers in the late nineteenth century were known to have originated from Dengzhou. “Peking,” *NCH*, June 9, 1882.

⁸⁶ According to Fang Hanqi, the paper used was mainly low-quality *Chuanlian* (Sichuan *lianshi*). Fang Hanqi, “Qingdai Beijing de minjian baofang yu jingbao,” 52.

in any case registries of gazette's contents were maintained at several points, including the publisher, the city authorities, and at the Grand Secretariat. Using movable type, printers could thus efficiently meet demand.

Figure 2.6. Gazette Cover Illustration (from facsimile in *The Leisure Hour*)



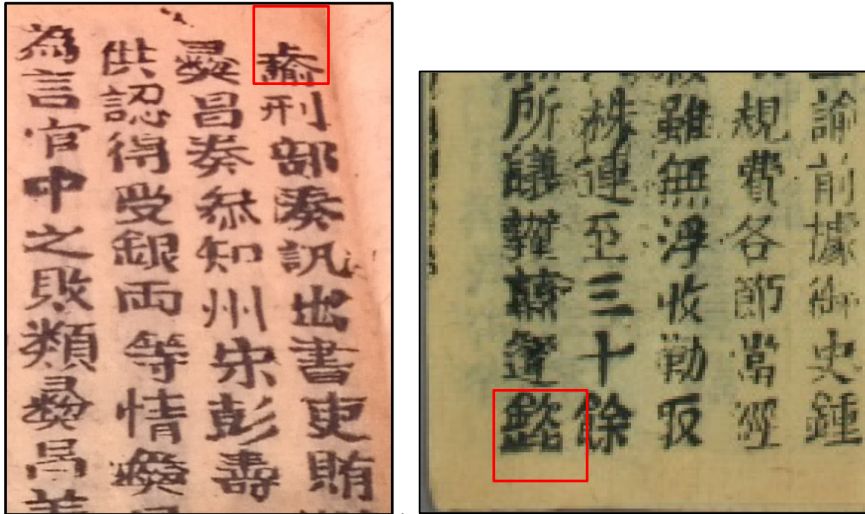
Source: Mossman, "The Peking Gazette," 120.

Other adaptations to the market included custom combined types and the omission of given names of memorialists. Printers coped with the limitations of movable type by omitting given names of memorialists that might include rare or less common characters. The practice of omitting the personal names of officials in the gazette stretched back at least as far as the early eighteenth century.⁸⁷ Combined types were used for common phrases used in memorials and edicts. The most common examples are types for the terms *Shang yu* (上諭, imperial pronouncement) and *qin ci* (欽此, let it be), in which the two characters were reduced in size and placed horizontally on a single type

⁸⁷ In a 1720 compilation of cases collected from the *dibao*, the bookseller Li Zhen wrote that he had to add the given names of memorialists, because otherwise future readers might not recognize these officials. Li Zhen, *Benchao tibo gong'an* (Jingdu: Rongjin tang, 1720), Preface (*xu*).

piece for convenience.⁸⁸ But such adaptations were not uniformly followed in all editions of the gazette, and thus it appears that there were no specific rules to regulate their practice.

Figure 2.7. Examples of Combined Types used in Gazettes



Source: (left) BL, Peking Gazette Collection, Box 75; Xinyi baofang edition, TZ 11/02/01; (right) Waseda University Library (digitized), Hecheng baofang edition, GX 20/11/12.

It remains unclear where gazette publishers obtained large quantities of ink and paper that their trade required. However, some examples of gazettes with papermaker's marks from the British Library suggest that gazette publishers purchased paper from commercial papermakers.⁸⁹ These marks are simple red-bordered stamps that include an attestation of quality and the name of the brand. For example, one blank verso page of a Daoguang 11 gazette holds two stamps, the first reading: “Luo Weiji hao huang weixiu zao” (羅維吉號 黃維修造), and the second “xuanliao jiebai” (選料契白, choice material of pure white) in a second framed box. Another gazette at the British Library,

⁸⁸ Rutherford Alcock also noted the occurrence of these condensed “double characters” for official titles and reign titles in his tour of gazette printing houses in the Liulichang area. Rutherford Alcock, “The Peking Gazette,” *Fraser's Magazine* 7, no. 38 (1873): 252.

⁸⁹ On papermaking in Ming-Qing China, see Pan Jixing, *Zhongguo zaozhi jishu shigao* (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1979), Ch.6.

from Daoguang 12, is stamped, “chiming gaochu She Yan hao xuanliao jiebai” (池明高澆舒顏號選料潔白, clear and bright, She Yan brand, choice material of pure white). According to the scholar Chang Pao-San, this marking of “choice material” or “select material” (*xuanliao*) is one of the hallmarks of a paper manufacturer’s mark.⁹⁰ A third paper manufacturer’s mark, in a gazette from DG 26, reads “*Wenchuan di yi Ji Cheng hao*” (文川第一 吉呈號).⁹¹

As a rule, gazettes were bought and sold in great numbers, and at low prices. Purchase or subscription price were not written on any of the gazettes that I have surveyed. This could suggest that either most customers subscribed to the gazettes, and so did not require a purchase price to be affixed directly to the item, or they were of such fixed and common value that they could be bought and sold without such notation. At Stockholm’s Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities (Östasiatiska museet), a note filed together with a set of long-format gazettes for Guangxu 4 (1878) published by the Juheng baofang shows us how affordable the gazette was in the late nineteenth century.⁹² During that year, there were a total of 338 issues. Each thread-bound issue cost 7 copper cash (*wen* 文), for a total of 2,366 *wen*. Twelve book covers, made of cloth and paper with bone closures, cost 115 *wen* apiece, for a total of 1,380 *wen*. A consumer’s total expense for the gazette in that year was therefore 3,746 *wen*, listed on the note as equivalent to 3 silver dollars (*yang yuan* 洋元) and 4 *jiao* 角 in the foreign silver currency then used

⁹⁰ Chang Pao-San, “Qingdai Zhongwen shanben guji zhong suo qian zhichang yinji yanjiu,” (Paper presented at the “Texting China” Symposium, University of Chicago, May, 2012).

⁹¹ BL, Peking Gazette Collection, Box 1A, DG 9/11/01-DG 9/11/30; Box 2, DG 12/02/30-12/03/27; Box 11, DG 26/03/13-DG 26/03/26.

⁹² Osawa Akahiro, “Sūeden ōritsu toshokan no kanseki ni tsuite,” *Gengō, Bunka, Shakai* 2 (2004): 181-2. Although the gazettes held in Stockholm are “long editions,” Osawa lists describes their pages as having printed central margins with a “double fishtail” (*shuang yuwei* 雙魚尾) layout, which is more common for square editions and rarely seen in long editions.

widely in China.⁹³ This seems consistent with Roswell Britton's statements: "Cheaper gazettes cost about ten cash a copy, or some 25 cents by monthly subscription.

Manuscript editions might be as high as \$5 monthly...." In the capital, he wrote, gazettes could also be rented for "a fraction of the purchase price." Rented gazettes were delivered, picked up, and re-delivered by carriers who also delivered gazette subscriptions.⁹⁴

Foreign readers were the most likely to record the costs of purchasing and reading the gazette. Until the end of the East India Company monopoly in 1834, Elijah Coleman Bridgman, editor of the missionary-oriented journal *The Chinese Repository* in Canton, paid two silver dollars per month for gazettes, after which the rate rose to six silver dollars per month.⁹⁵ In 1867, the student interpreter Frank Porter reported that the British Legation subscribed for the manuscript copy of the gazette, at \$8 per month,⁹⁶ while printed gazettes were available for "four *tiao*, about half a crown a month."⁹⁷ A mid-century British audience reading *The Leisure Hour* would have learned that in the first part of the nineteenth century, manuscript copies of the gazette "cost so much that none but the wealthy could purchase them," but by the time of writing, in the mid-1860s, printed copies could be obtained for "about the price of twopence each."⁹⁸ Foreigners in China typically paid something of a premium over the going price of the gazette, but their

⁹³ An exchange rate is listed on the note as 1 *yang yuan* = 1,100 *wen*. On the rise of the *yuan* monetary standard in China in the nineteenth-century, see Richard von Glahn, "Foreign Silver Coins in the Market Culture of Nineteenth Century China," *International Journal of Asian Studies* 4, no. 1 (2007), 53.

⁹⁴ Britton, *Chinese Periodical Press*, 9-10; Rutherford Alcock wrote that printed gazettes could be subscribed to for six dollars annually, and manuscript gazettes at about ten times that price, and that one could "hire his *Gazette* for the day, and return it if he does not approve of the cost of purchasing." Alcock, "The Peking Gazette," 252.

⁹⁵ *Tiao* 條 refers to strings of copper cash. Wellcome Library, MS 5827/50, J.R. Morrison to R. Morrison, April 11, 1834; MS 5827/58, J.R. Morrison to R. Morrison, May 1, 1834.

⁹⁶ References to \$ and "dollars" are typically to the silver pesos used as currency in China and elsewhere the nineteenth century. In fact, the use of \$ as a symbol for "dollar" is a reference to the design of two columns encircled by a banner on pesos.

⁹⁷ "December 8th 1867," McCracken, *From Belfast to Peking*, 130.

⁹⁸ Mossman, "The Peking Gazette," 119.

observations indicate that the print gazette was quite cheap, manuscript gazettes were somewhat more expensive, and the price declined over the course of the nineteenth century.

The English diplomat Rutherford Alcock, based on a visit to the “baofang district,” described a total circulation of “several thousand copies” in the late 1860s.⁹⁹ A communication from the Zongli yamen to the British Legation in 1872 noted that the Juheng baofang edition had 174 daily subscribers, which the yamen called a minority of the gazettes distributed daily in the capital and certainly in the empire.¹⁰⁰ Somewhat earlier, the American missionary and diplomat Samuel Wells Williams (1812-1884) asserted that the total circulation of the gazette, including copies that were reprinted in the provinces, amounted to tens of thousands, remarking, “in the provinces, thousands of persons find employment by copying and abridging the Gazettes for readers who cannot afford to purchase the complete edition.”¹⁰¹

In summary, the nineteenth century court gazette was a commercial publication produced by several different publishing houses in multiple editions at any given time. The different editions available varied by production quality and intended audience. Publishing of the gazettes was, throughout the nineteenth century, concentrated in the Southern City, proximate to the southern gates of the Inner City and to the bookselling district of Liulichang. Some publishers managed delivery and sales directly, whereas others seem to have contracted with private delivery operators who themselves managed

⁹⁹ Alcock, “The Peking Gazette,” 252.

¹⁰⁰ TNA, FO 233/58/7, “Memo,” April 4, 1872.

¹⁰¹ S. Wells Williams, *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants* (New York: C. Scribner’s Sons, 1883 [1848]), 1:420. Roswell Britton pointed out that the 1883 edition represented a “careful revision” after years of living and traveling through China, and thus the estimate was trustworthy. Britton, *Chinese Periodical Press*, 10.

subscriptions and even rental subscriptions. This was a flourishing business for a wide-ranging, official and non-official reading audience eager to obtain authentic records of official notices as rapidly as possible. If the number of editions is correlated with the size of the reading audience, then the reading audience seems to have grown dramatically between the first half and the second half of the nineteenth century.

However, other reasons may have caused the vast increase in the availability of gazette editions and options for purchase and delivery in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although an expanded reading audience certainly must have compelled entrepreneurial publishers to expand their output, the expansion of the virtual catalog of gazette products in the nineteenth century mirrors the similar expansion in the variety of text products available from Beijing publishers during this same period. Therefore, it is worthwhile to contextualize gazette publishing as a major component of the commercial publishing industry in nineteenth-century Beijing.

Gazettes and Commercial Publishing in Beijing

The court gazette was closely intertwined with the rise of the commercial publishing industry in nineteenth-century Beijing. Historically, most scholarship on Qing-era Beijing imprints has focused on the production of palace editions and neglects commercial printing in the capital. A second area of interest has been in the purchase and sale of rare books and editions in the city's Liulichang neighborhood. Ordinary books, on the other hand, have received scant attention. In recent years, some scholars have attempted to redress this, pointing to the publication of guidebooks, fiction, and Manchu-language books by private booksellers and printers. In this concluding section, I go further to describe the publication of the gazette and other useful texts that predominated

in the catalogs of bookseller-printers in Beijing. Both industries grew dramatically in the nineteenth century, such that the local output (i.e. the number of editions actually produced in Beijing versus those published elsewhere but bought and sold in Beijing) of ordinary publishers and gazette printers, measured by bulk alone, clearly exceeded the local output of palace imprints and of valuable editions.

A well-known narrative by the literatus and official Li Wenzao (1730-1778) describes the author's walking tour of Liulichang bookshops in the mid-Qianlong period. It is a story of leisure and escape in the midst of a business trip. Li describes how browsing through Liulichang and dropping in on specialist shops, with their highly knowledgeable proprietors, was one of the greatest pleasures associated with a trip to the capital for official business. In Li's description, the practice of browsing for books is not depicted as a search for new or unknown texts, but rather a practice of searching out texts one might have heard of, but had not the opportunity to see in person. He very rarely mentions non-literary texts, though he does mention the other types of shops located in the area, selling medicines, calligraphy models, daily-use goods, stationery, and examination materials.¹⁰²

In a later sequel to Li's narrative authored by Miao Quansun (1844-1919), the practice of browsing remains similar, yet the district's offerings and consumers' interests have changed. Miao bases his description on over forty years of "pleasant times with books" and many years in the capital between 1867, when he began his official career, and 1910, when he spent a year working at the newly established Capital Library (*Jingshi tushuguan* 京師圖書館). Miao attempts in his narrative to follow the same trajectory as

¹⁰² Li Wenzao, *Liulichang shusi ji* (Shanghai: Zhenchu tang, 1925 [1769]).

Li, and makes note when the circumstances have changed significantly. Thus, Miao tells us much more about the sale of cheap editions and shops devoted to selling directories and informational texts. Miao, unlike Li, also mentions other places that one might purchase books, including around temples and at temple fairs. Yet “lately,” Miao complained, these venues seemed to only distribute cheap volumes and editions, not necessarily all authentic.¹⁰³

Shops that sold directories, while scorned by connoisseurs, catered to the sojourning officials and examination candidates that frequently visited the city. Products ranged from utilitarian directories to guidebooks to the capital city. Other texts available for purchase included compendia of legal codes and administrative precedents, administrative guides and forensic texts useful to aspirant officials, primers, and custom manuscript and printed editions of documents like examination lists, examination essays, and memorials. Informational texts like official directories, legal and administrative compendia, and guidebooks to the capital were updated and revised frequently (official directories quarterly, other texts less frequently), and advertised that their products were periodically revised and always up-to-date.

In particular, *Directories of Officialdom*, like the one employed by the ill-fated pilgrim Tu Zhongting, were among the most prominent products of the ordinary print shops, and also the most frequently updated.¹⁰⁴ Employing information obtained directly from the metropolitan Board of Appointments, the *Directories* represent the prototypical

¹⁰³ Miao Quansun, *Liulichang shusi houji* (Shanghai: Zhenchu tang, 1925 [1919]).

¹⁰⁴ These official directories provided quarterly lists of names of officials in the civil bureaucracy and in the military (titled *Jinshen quanshu* and *Zhongshu beilan* 中樞備覽 respectively). Each entry also included background information including alternate names, native place, official degree and the date it was received. The directories, typically four volumes in length, also included a preface and principles of compilation, a list of positions at each rank, the number of vacancies for each post, rules for making a court appearance for officials of each rank, various rules and regulations, and transport routes between the capital and the provincial seats.

informational text produced by the bookseller-printers of Beijing. Like gazettes, *Directories* were available for purchase in a variety of editions of varying appearance and quality, from a very basic pocket edition on bamboo paper for 2 *qian*, 8 *fen*, to a large “Official Format” volume bound in red thread for 4 *liang*.¹⁰⁵

The most famous of these directory publishers (*jinshen pu* 摺紳舖) was the Ronglu tang (榮祿堂), a print-shop that also managed an extensive catalog of stationery goods, custom imprints, and information texts.¹⁰⁶ *Directory* publishers like Ronglu tang staked their claim on their publication of readily updated, accurate directories, but also sometimes had difficulty obtaining accurate information.¹⁰⁷ In a mid-Qianlong *Directory*, the publisher Tongsheng ge urged the Eight Banners to provide full information for bannermen, citing confusion over Manchu names that looked too similar. This publisher used the court gazette as its primary source for the *Directories*, but complained that names for appointments within the Imperial Household Department were not recorded in the gazette, and requested special registers from the Department in order to keep the *Directories* up to date.¹⁰⁸

Like gazette publishers, the bookseller-printers of Liulichang obtained updated information for their guidebooks and directories through formal and informal practices that linked the print shops with clerks in the imperial offices and bureaus that neighbored the Liulichang neighborhood. Such connections were easy to form, as the district where

¹⁰⁵ *Da Qing jinshen quanshu* (Beijing: Rongbao Songzhu hekan, Guangxu 25 [1900]), inside cover.

¹⁰⁶ Ronglu tang was also written as 榮祿堂. A short history of Ronglu tang included in the preface to a 1916 *New Bureaucratic Directory* described the proprietors’ embrace of the values of humility, erudition, and distinctiveness. According to this preface, the shop embraced humility by changing the character of *lu* in order to suggest their connection to texts and clerical work. See Table 2.4, appended.

¹⁰⁷ Ge Gongzhen influentially suggested an association between the Ronglu tang and gazette publishing, which Fang Hanqi later refuted. Ge Gongzhen, *Zhongguo baoxue shi*, 49; Fang, “*Qing shi* ‘baokan biao,’” 13.

¹⁰⁸ *Jinshen quanben*, 4 j. (Jingdu: Tongsheng ge, 1761 [QL 26]), *fanli*.

bookshops and print shops produced guidebooks and other informational texts neighbored the Grand Secretariat and outer clerical offices, concentrated on the southern edge of the Forbidden City. These publishers had longstanding official and unofficial ties with metropolitan offices and employees that they engaged in order to compile informational texts for sale to resident and visiting officials and visiting examination candidates.

There were major similarities between gazette publishers and Liulichang's bookseller-printers in terms of period of greatest activity, location, intended audience, low cost of publications, high levels of product customization, and collaboration between private publishers and state offices and employees in order to obtain official information. Their products, seemingly diverse, can in fact be grouped in that they contained easily excerpted chunks of useful information: names, appointments, locations, regulations, memorials, and precedents. These were books for use, not for browsing or collecting. Finally, their staff plied their trades in relative anonymity, and lacked the distinctions or prestige of literati book collectors, compilers, or authors. Rather than standing alone as a peculiar industry, gazette publishing is better understood as a robust subset of commercial publishing in Beijing during the Qing dynasty. Likewise, considering the connections between Beijing's commercial publishing and state offices helps us to better understand the nature of the industry.

Conclusion

“These gazette publishers are all worthless individuals,” wrote the censor Yang Kaiding scornfully in 1756 as he maligned the failure of the courier superintendent Mu Yaonian to properly manage gazette publishing and delivery for his province. Yang felt

that the authority and security of state documents was threatened by the commercialization of gazette publishing, and sought to thwart the common agreements between amongst officials and private publishers to copy, print, and distribute gazettes to official offices and private subscribers. Yet while Yang bemoaned this violation of standards and debasement of official communications, others clearly cared more about quick access to information than the proper handling of official texts. In 1824, the private entrepreneur Li Jiashan had been running a lively business in delivering gazettes to subscribers in government offices around the metropolitan area for six years. These subscribers were willing to pay Li a monthly fee, just to receive gazettes a few days earlier than provincial couriers would provide them. Likewise, powered by a primary audience of aspirant, expectant, and serving officials, the purchase and sale of informational texts that compiled snippets and excerpts of memorials, regulations, names, and appointments, was a major growth industry in nineteenth century Beijing.

The contrast between Yang's scorn and the flood of quasi-official publications available to purchasers illustrates the larger tensions in the interactions between the official and commercial worlds that occurred in the streets, offices, shops, and homes of Beijing. The thirst for useable information among officials and would-be officials was so great that it was impossible for the state to encompass all functions of compiling, printing, and distributing gazettes, directories, compendia, and other quasi-official publications. As a result, for the most part the Qing state permitted—or even ignored—these private publishing activities. Surveillance of the populace was left to city police and censors, whereas the Boards were responsible for reporting misconduct among their numbers.

In between these restrictions, however, a steady stream of documents moved out of metropolitan offices and into the shops and offices of entrepreneurial printers, many of whom capitalized on relationships with clerks in metropolitan office to ensure continuing access to these sources. When gazette publishers worked illicitly to obtain drafts and memorials not approved for circulation, they typically sought speed, rather than novel material. As a British Legation staff surgeon commented, “[t]he information contained in the *Gazette* is indirectly official inasmuch as it is strictly authentic.”¹⁰⁹ Officials who looked to the gazette for a response to their submitted memorial, or for news of a new appointment, were not looking for an unverified scoop on palace gossip. Readers of the gazette expected a standard set of verifiable information about the official world. This demand for “indirectly official” information powered the gazette publishing industry in Beijing.

Table 2.4. Summary of Known Ronglu tang Publications

Title	Dates of Known Editions	Notes
<i>Jinshen quanshu</i> 摺紳全書	1644-1919	Directory of civil bureaucracy, often packaged together (under same title or <i>Juezhi quanhan</i> 爵秩全函) with directory of military bureaucracy.
<i>Zuozhi yaoyan</i> 佐治藥言	Qing	Administrative handbook
<i>Xinzeng xiuyan baojian</i> 新增洗冤寶鑑	Qing	Forensic manual
<i>Muling shu</i> 牧令書	1848	Administrative handbook
<i>Chouxiang xianxing xinli</i> 籌餉現行新例	TZ, GX reigns	Regulations
<i>Dumen jilue</i> 都門紀略	1864, 1874	Guidebook
<i>Zhongshu beilan</i> 中樞備覽	1869-1912	Often packaged together with civil directory (under title <i>Jinshen quanshu</i> or <i>Juezhi quanhan</i>).
<i>Xuezhi yishuo</i>	GX reign	Administrative handbook

¹⁰⁹ D.F. Rennie, *Peking and the Pekingese: during the first year of the British Embassy at Peking*, Vol. 1 (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1865), 212.

學治臆說 <i>Xuezhi yishuo xushuo</i> 學治臆說續說		
<i>Hubu chouxiang haifang xin zhang juanli</i> 戶部籌餉海防新章捐例	GX reign	Regulations
<i>Xiyuan lu xiangyi (Washing Away of Wrongs)</i> 洗冤錄詳義	1878, 1887	Forensic manual
<i>Wu liutang xiansheng leiwen zheng xu hebian</i> 吳柳堂先生誄文正續合編	1883	Compilation of eulogies
<i>Rumu xuzhi wuzhong</i> 入幕須知五種	1884, 1887	Manual for private secretaries
<i>Huanhai zhinan: wuzhong</i> 宦海指南：五種	1886	5 titles include administrative manuals, forensic manuals, and regulations
<i>Menghen lu jiechao</i> 夢痕錄節鈔	1886	Administrative handbook
<i>Chao shi congzai</i> 朝市叢載	1886, 1887, 1888	Guidebook
<i>Da Qing lüli jianming mulu</i> 大清律例簡明目錄	1888	Legal index
<i>Xingbu zouding xinzhang</i> 刑部奏定新章	1892	Regulations
<i>Muling xuzhi</i> 牧令須知	1892	Administrative handbook
<i>Hong wenxiang gong zoudui</i> 洪文襄公奏對	1893	Memorial compilation
<i>Zouzhe pu</i> 奏摺譜	1893	Sample memorial compilation
<i>Rao Songsheng zhepu</i> 饒崧生摺譜	1894	Memorial compilation
<i>Chongxiu mingfa zhizhang</i> 重修名法指掌	1900	Pictorial guide to criminal cases
<i>Huanxiang xin yaoze</i> 宦鄉新要則	1901	Administrative text
<i>Shuixiang zhenggao</i> 稅項政稿	Late Qing	Regulations; manuscript edition
<i>Tongxing zhangcheng</i> 通行章程	1906	Regulations
<i>Qiushen shihuan bijiao hui'an</i> 秋審實緩比較彙案	1907	Lithographic print; Compendium of legal cases
<i>Xinzeng dumen jilue</i> 新增都門紀略	1907, 1910, 1917	Guidebook

<i>Zengxiu fabu zouding xinzhang</i> 增修法部奏定新章	1908	Regulations; publication date listed incorrectly in catalog as 1887.
<i>Zengxiu xingbu zouding xinzhang</i> 增修刑部奏定新章	1908?	Regulations; listed in catalog as 1896.
<i>Xinzeng huanxiang yaoze qibing yaojue</i> 新增宦鄉要則啟稟要訣	1911	Administrative text and rhymed guide to letter writing

Source: Title and publication information for listings at National Library of China, Tianjin Library, CASS, and Harvard-Yenching Library obtained through individual catalog searches; title and publication information for other university library listings obtained through the *Union Catalog of Rare Books Collections in Chinese Universities* (*Gaoxiao guwenxian ziyuan ku* 高校古文獻字源庫). This method has drawbacks, but it adequately reveals Ronglu tang's extensive catalog in directories, administrative texts, compilations of laws, cases, and regulations, and guidebooks.

Chapter 3. Reading The Qing Gazette

The famous late Qing official Weng Tonghe (翁同龢, 1830-1904) recorded a dream in his diary. In the dream, he had returned from Beijing to his study in Jiangsu.¹ While he idly browsed the bookshelves, the sixteenth-century collector and connoisseur Xiang Zijing (項子京, 1525-1590) appeared.² Xiang's ghost explained that he had come to admire the fine books in Weng's study, and the two discussed recent catastrophes that had caused the loss and destruction of books in both the mortal realm and in the underworld. Many books, Xiang said, had been burnt so badly by the fires of war that in the underworld they appeared tattered and incomplete, as if damaged by water. Recounting this, Weng wrote, "He also told me that he read the gazette every day, as he had in the living realm. If unsettled events occurred on earth, they were also known in the underworld." The subject of discussion shifted, and Weng woke with a start.³

This dream, recorded near the end of the first year of the Tongzhi reign (1862), not long before the collapse of the Taiping capital in Nanjing, connects two men who witnessed crises of imperial authority. Xiang Zijing, whose own accomplishments as an official were overshadowed by his brother's bureaucratic career, collected books, paintings, rubbings, and inscriptions at his family estate in Zhejiang. During Xiang's lifetime, the Ming emperor Wanli battled with critical censors and other officials who

¹ "Weng T'ung-ho," in Hummel, ed., *ECCP*, 2:860-1. Weng's father, Weng Xincun, became gravely ill a few days later and died in late December 1862. Weng Xincun had served in metropolitan office until shortly before his death, and Weng Tonghe attended his father while still in Beijing. Weng, *Weng Tonghe riji*, 1:249-52. Weng remained on mourning leave until February 1865, but he never returned to war-torn Changshu during this time. "Weng Tonghe," *Qing shi lie zhuan* 63:56, in *Qingdai zhuanji congkan* (Taipei: Mingwen shuju, 1985), 103:795.

² Xiang's given name was Xiang Yuanbian (項元汴). "Hsiang Yüan-pien," in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), 1:539-544.

³ Weng, *Weng Tonghe riji*, 1:247 (TZ 1/10/17).

targeted his negligence and personal failings.⁴ By contrast with Xiang, Weng Tonghe passed quickly through the civil service examinations, receiving a *jinshi* degree in 1856. When he recorded this dream, Weng was a member of the Hanlin Academy and a few years away from a coveted position as tutor and advisor to the young Tongzhi Emperor. Yet from his high position, Weng watched imperial control wither as provincial leaders throughout the empire gained prominence and autonomy through grueling struggles against bandits and rebels.

In the dream-encounter between Weng Tonghe and Xiang Zijing, we see that even as dynastic authority crumbled and rare and valuable books scattered and burned in both the human world and the afterlife, ghosts and people “read the gazette every day.” While Weng and Xiang shared an affinity for collecting rare manuscript and print editions—and some of the same texts passed through the hands of both Xiang and Weng—their dream conversation concerned the vicissitudes of human events as recorded in a more mundane text, the court gazette.⁵ Though three centuries separated Xiang and Weng, in Weng’s dream, court gazettes entered the conversation naturally. Both man and ghost referred to them as the most reliable and widely available record of “unsettled events.” Moreover, their perception of the gazette as reliable, routine, and able to convey information across long distances—penetrating even the underworld—suggests the

⁴ Ray Huang, “The Lung-ch’ing and Wan-li Reigns, 1567-1620,” in Frederick W. Mote and Denis Twitchett, eds., *Cambridge History of China, Volume 7: The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 514-18.

⁵ In fact, the Weng family collection includes at least three valuable editions once owned by Xiang and his elder brother Xiang Dushou: *Sui shu* (Xiang Dushou); *Chongdiao zuben jianjie lu*, and *Dingmao ji* (Xiang Yuanbian). Sören Edgren, “The Weng Family Rare Book Collection,” *East Asian Library Journal* 7, no. 2 (1994): items 17, 47, and 57. Weng’s father purchased a portion of the collection of fellow Changshu-native Chen Kui to start the family collection. The Weng collection grew to contain many rare print and manuscript editions of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing, a number of which passed through the hands of several famous collectors. See *Changshu Weng shi cangshu tulu* (Shanghai: Shanghai keji jishu wenxian chubanshe, 2000). For more on the characteristics of the remarkable family collection, and how Weng Tonghe shaped the collection with acquisitions at Liulichang and from associates in Beijing, see Edgren, “Weng Family Collection,” 73; 76-82.

persistence of imperial institutions that promoted dynastic authority notwithstanding tremendous crisis in the minds of Weng and other mid-nineteenth century Chinese elites.

The court gazette presented readers with information about the Qing empire from the perspective of the court and higher echelons of the bureaucracy. Interested parties, including officials in the capital and in the provinces, read the gazette to stay apprised of current events. In addition, in the gazette, with its lists of court events and audiences, appointments and dismissals, imperial edicts and selected memorials from metropolitan and field officials, they found information about the progress of imperial wars, tracked the fortunes of a famed statesman, noted devastation caused by a flood or a famine, and pictured the emperor carrying out scheduled rituals at the imperial altars around Beijing. The first two chapters of this dissertation considered the role of the gazette within the Qing information order and the relationships between bureaucratic offices and private publishers that fueled the commercial expansion of gazette publishing in the Qing. This chapter examines how individuals read and used the gazette and its ramifications for their careers and activities as officials, memorialists, publishers, and editors.

In forming habits of reading the court gazette, officials in the civil bureaucracy followed the recommendations of administrative guides and exhortations that stressed the importance of a comprehensive understanding of contemporary news and the changing players in imperial politics. Citing the examples of exemplary statecraft thinkers, these accounts offered the court gazette as a foil to classical texts on which officials had traditionally concentrated, but which held limited relevance for understanding contemporary problems. The first half of this chapter lays out strategies adopted by officials in embedding material from the gazette in their memorials, and the reasons that

they excerpted gazette material in their diaries. Gazettes served as an authoritative and portable archive of commands, decisions, and precedents that could be cited and acted upon in even in the absence of a formal publication or proclamation. Acting strategically, memorialists quoted from gazettes in order to establish a knowledge claim about a certain subject; more conventionally, they quoted from gazettes when referring to official appointments and dismissals, including their own.⁶ Diaries, then, were repositories of relevant names, positions, and proposals of interest. Diarists used gazette excerpts to provide a contextual scaffold of events to place their personal lives in broader contexts.⁷

The second half of the chapter considers other readers that chose to purchase, collect, and read the Qing gazette. Officials, commercial and specialized booksellers, and private writers compiled information and excerpts from the court gazette into directories, collections of case precedents and memorials, and historical annals. These compilers repackaged material from the court gazette by organizing the material as lists or in anthologies and chronicles. Commercial publishers produced updated directories to the bureaucracy for officials and their staff. Anthologists and editors saw the gazette as an ideal one-stop source for a text that could showcase the spirit of the times, relate contemporary events and scandals, and offer models for those composing judgments and policy memorials. As most editors had no official access to the closed court archives that provided source material for officially produced chronicles and compendia, these texts reveal that the Qing gazette served as a storehouse of information about judicial cases and regulations, people, events, and scandals for those outside officialdom.

⁶ On the ways that fiction writers used material from the gazette to bolster their narrative authority, see Li, “News, Public Opinions, and History,” 16.

⁷ I located diary sources for this chapter by searching the Erudition Database of Biographical Materials (*pudie* 譜牒) in spring 2013 and fall 2014. Because this database is not widely available, and because all diaries included are also available in published forms, I cite their published editions herein.

“To Read the Gazette Has Benefits”

In their time, court gazettes were widely regarded as essential news sources and even as tools for administrative practice. The textual training of a late imperial scholar-official precluded ephemeral and non-canonical texts like the gazette. Training to take examinations and enter official life, students focused on the classical canon, supplementing this with commercially published commentaries, crib sheets, and examination guides. Once on the job, officials began to gather expertise from practice and experience and relied heavily on local subordinates and assistants. Even so, in texts written in the Qing that celebrated the successes of certain officials, the court gazette featured prominently. Comments made by and about famous administrators and statecraft authors, including Gu Yanwu (顧炎武, 1613-1682), Chen Hongmou (陳宏謀, 1696-1771), and Zeng Guofan (曾國藩, 1811-1872), pointed to reading the gazette as an essential component of official life. These commentaries alluded to the gazette as a tool to construct a comprehensive view of past and present events and personages, but offered few practical strategies for reading this complex document.

Gu Yanwu and Huang Chunyaoyao: Exemplary Readers

Tributes to and anecdotes from the biography of the seventeenth-century writer Gu Yanwu celebrated his fastidious attention to the court gazette despite the fact that he never served in office.⁸ A colophon to Gu’s famous *Record of Daily Knowledge* (*Rizhi lu*) praised Gu’s comprehensive use of sources, from official materials like the dynastic histories and the Ming *Veritable Records* down to disparate maps, local gazetteers,

⁸ See for example Zhang Chen, *Richu riji*, in *LRCC*, 105:333-4.

official communications, and gazettes.⁹ In his autobiographical writings, Gu attested that he had read the gazette together with his adoptive grandfather and compared the proposals found in the court gazette with the *Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Zizhi tongjian*), an important Song-period history.¹⁰ In later comments on the drafting of a dynastic history for the Ming, Gu stated that the court gazettes of the 1620s, which he had read together with his adoptive grandfather, made up the most authoritative source on the history of a decade wracked by contentious factional politics.¹¹ For enthusiasts of statecraft-style administrative practices that emphasized practical learning and comprehensive reading about current events, establishing a habit of reading gazettes as a young child or student—or having been read gazettes aloud by a parent, guardian, or teacher—was in some ways equivalent to the trope of having read or been read the classics as a young child.¹²

The late Ming poet-philosopher Huang Chunyao 黃淳耀 (1605-1645), according to the eighteenth-century official Chen Hongmou, earned posthumous praise for his habit of closely and regularly reading the gazette and other official documents.¹³ In a letter included in the *Collected Essays on Statecraft* (*Huangchao jingshi wenbian*) compilation, Chen Hongmou used Huang's example to argue for the utility of regular readings in the

⁹ Zhang Shao, "Rizhi lu ba," *JSWB*, 1:82.

¹⁰ Willard J. Peterson, "The Life of Ku Yen-Wu (1613-1682): Part I," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969): 125. See also John Delury, "Despotism Above and Below: Gu Yanwu's *Record of Daily Learning* on Power, Money and Mores," (PhD diss., Yale University, 2007).

¹¹ Willard J. Peterson, "The Life of Ku Yen-Wu (1613-1682): Part II, Ku's Traveling After 1657," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 29 (1969): 242.

¹² The practice of reading the gazette with a male relative at a young age seems to have been a common practice among elites, or at least a trope in biographies and autobiographies. For example, in his autobiography, Wang Wensi (1831-1886) noted that at the age of seven *sui*, he read the court gazette together with his uncle, and discussed with various townspeople the emerging disturbances in South China, weighing the policies and actions of Muzhanga, Lin Zexu, and Qishan, the Qing officials designated to deal with the British threat. Wang Wensi, *Wang Anfu nianpu*, in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 171:750.

¹³ On Huang Chunyao see *ECCP*, 1:338-39.

court gazette as opposed to deep reading in the classics.¹⁴ According to Chen, a thorough understanding of current events through reading the gazette made Huang's compositions universally well grounded in reality with nothing spurious, solid and practicable in all cases.¹⁵ He suggested that every town and village academy should subscribe to the gazette; even poor scholars could afford the cost of the subscription were it shared with their colleagues in the same town.¹⁶ While some academies, such as the academy that Chen attended, purchased subscriptions to the gazette, more commonly only local administrative office received subscriptions. The choice of Gu Yanwu, who did not hold office, and Huang Chunyao, who served the Ming only briefly, as exemplary gazette readers draws attention to the power that reading the gazette gave to those who did not hold official positions. Reading the gazette gave one familiarity with contemporary politics; a personal library of gazettes provided evidence for historical and political analysis.

Gazettes in Statecraft Thought and Practice

Characterized as a constantly growing repository of up-to-date information for developing incisive responses to administrative problems, the gazette was an instrument of statecraft thought. Reading the gazette and referring to the proposals and writings of

¹⁴ See William T. Rowe, *Saving the World: Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness in Eighteenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 114, 137.

¹⁵ Chen's choice of Huang instead of other exemplary readers (such as Gu Yanwu) is interesting, as Huang, a devoted diarist, was deeply absorbed in introspective problems, and was a reluctant examination taker who received his *juren* and *jinshi* degrees in 1642 and 1643, and who committed suicide in the Qing siege of Jiading. See Jerry Dennerline, *The Chia-ting Loyalists: Confucian Leadership and Social Change in Seventeenth-Century China* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 229-250. Huang was celebrated in the High Qing as a late Ming loyalist. See Lynn A. Struve, "Chinese Memory Makes a Martyr: The Case of Huang Chunyao (1605-1645)," *History & Memory*, 25, no. 2 (2013): 9-13, 17-23; "Self-Struggles of a Martyr: Memories, Dreams, and Obsessions in the Extant Diary of Huang Chunyao," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 69, no. 2 (2009): 343-394.

¹⁶ Chen Hongmou, "Ji Zhang Mozhuang shu," in *JSWB*, 1:81. Chen built his suggestion on his own student experience at an academy that encouraged students to closely read the gazette. See Rowe, *Saving the World*, 27-8.

contemporaries allowed an official to develop a practical (*shi* 實) prose style. But few handbooks of practical instructions for officials explicitly discussed the use of the court gazette in official responsibilities.¹⁷ Many of these texts reproduced documents and communications drafted by the authors and their colleagues, such as a printed appeal to local gentry for donations in a flood crisis, or a sample letter recruiting a private secretary. As a result, in practical manuals the court gazette received only passing mention, like when a document informed its readers that according to the court gazette, similar situations existed in other areas, or that a certain order for the locale had been received from provincial offices and could be read in the court gazette.¹⁸

A few administrative handbooks featured general instructions on how to use the gazette and stressed the importance of reading the court gazette both to understand contemporary affairs and to establish comparison by finding distinctions and parallels between cases. Reading the gazette, according to the eighteenth-century magistrate, Yuan Shouding (袁守定, 1705-1782), could help an official improve his own moral rectitude and official practice:

To read the court gazette has benefits. Not only itemized proposals and new precedents, also criminal sentences and completed cases, are entered in its pages. It can be used to [improve] adherence to laws. Whenever provincial officials are censured and dismissed, they enjoy not a whit of leniency even for minor offenses. A bit of knowledge like this makes crime and punishments hugely terrifying. Is this not helpful to the body and mind? As *The Analects* states, ‘If one

¹⁷ Scholars have divided administrative handbooks (*guanzen shu* 官箴書) into three types. First, handbooks for magistrates offered basic know-how and the principles of governance for rookie officials. Second, a text might showcase and promote the work of a specific administrator. Third, compilations of regulations, laws, exemplary cases, and documents concerning specific situations (especially natural disasters) guided the hands-on daily work of clerks, secretaries, and other sub-bureaucratic functionaries. Gong Rufu, “Lüe lun Zhongguo gudai guanzen de zhengzhi zhihui,” *Renmin daxue xuebao* 19, no. 1 (2006): 150-55; Pierre-Étienne Will, Li Bozhong tr., “Ming-Qing shiqi de guanzen shu yu Zhongguo xingzheng wenhua,” *Qingshi yanjiu* no. 1 (1999): 3-20.

¹⁸ “Qing huomian she qian liujie qianliang,” in Huang Liuhong, *Fuhui quanshu*, in *Guanzen shu jicheng* (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 1997), 3:273.

does not know how to be an official, one should review established affairs (*yicheng shi* 已成事).’ The affairs of the gazette are these established affairs.¹⁹

Yuan listed four categories of material in the gazette important for officials: itemized proposals, new precedents, criminal sentences, and completed cases, glossing these together as “established affairs.” Most of these materials simply informed an official as to contemporary goings-on and allowed him to form better judgments and rulings. He encouraged his readers to scrutinize the many cases in the gazette where provincial officials were punished and removed from office, and to notice that the risks of malfeasance were many and potentially terrifying in their consequences. Yuan’s anticipated audience was the large cohort of county and sub-county officials who were concerned more with local affairs and preserving their careers than the vicissitudes of court politics or the formation of persuasive memorials and proposals. After all, these low-level officials did not have the right to memorialize the throne, and therefore their names and writings would not enter into the pages of the gazette—unless they were caught extorting funds, mishandling cases, or in some other abuse.

In *Menghen yulu*, Wang Huizu (汪輝祖, 1731-1807) wrote from the perspective of a legal secretary turned county magistrate, evincing a different understanding of the uses of the gazette:

One should discuss laws and precedents, becoming rooted in their basis; one should read the court gazette to see their realization, review the imperial rescripts that are used to rule those below, and write judicial rulings in order to make appeals to those above.²⁰

In this statement, Wang referred to the use of the gazette in crafting fair and informed judicial rulings. In the Qing legal system, magistrates and other judges assessed criminal,

¹⁹ Yuan Shou ding, *Tumin lu*, in *Guanzhen shu jicheng*, 5:230.

²⁰ Wang Huizu, *Menghen yulu*, in *Qingdai Minguo cangshujia nianpu* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2004) 2:225.

civil, and administrative cases on the basis of statutes, sub-statutes, and precedents.

“Leading cases” (*cheng'an* 成案), Board proclamations, and imperial edicts all generated new precedents. The Six Boards regularly forwarded these precedents and regulations to the provinces, but provincial offices needed to compile the precedents and regulations and make appropriate use of them. While one could study judicial practice by reading published laws and precedents, to effectively keep up with the times, one needed to read the continually published and always current gazette. The gazette contained leading cases that had not yet been published, aiding judges and legal secretaries to understand how different statutes and rulings should be properly exercised.²¹

A final example shows the association between official diligence, personal responsibility, and the gazette. Zeng Guofan, the nineteenth-century official and architect of the reconstruction of post-Taiping society in Jiangnan, wrote a short entry titled “The Duties of an Official,” which was widely circulated in the late Qing.²² Under this heading, he included three items:

1. Cull through everything, know its origins.
 2. Punctuate and mark up the gazette.
 3. Look through and annotate lists of officialdom.
- These three items should be considered nightly tasks. They also comprise a method to keeping one’s mind on the matters of administration.²³

By culling, punctuating, and annotating, one could remain familiar with all matters in the local jurisdiction, keep up with the names and positions of important officials throughout the empire, and follow closely the memorials and proposals that had recently been

²¹ See Pierre-Étienne Will, “La paperasse au secours de l’homme: Communication et militantisme, 1600-1850,” *Études chinoises* 13, no.1-2 (1994): 80-84.

²² Both the late Qing and Republican-era official Du Yu (born 1854), and the Shanxi schoolteacher and diarist Liu Dapeng referred to these comments in their diaries. Du Yu, *Yuanmu riji*, in *LRCC*, 88:353; Henrietta Harrison, *The Man Awakened by Dreams: One Man’s Life in a North China Village, 1857-1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 12.

²³ Zeng Guofan, “Zhi dao,” in *Qiu que zhai riji leichao* (1: 51b), *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995), 559:841.

submitted to the court. Zeng's "method" for administration relied on diligent attention to a variety of informational materials that eased the substantive practices of official life. By this logic, a strong knowledge of national and local affairs and a confident grasp on the autobiographical details of the constellation of officials positioned throughout the empire made the tasks of administrative rulings and navigating policy disputes much easier.

In late imperial China, the position of the gazette reader, whether a secretary, a county-level official, a bureaucratic elite, or a non-serving literatus, dictated the benefits of reading the gazette. Unlike Yuan Shouding and Wang Huizu, Zeng wrote from the perspective of a high official with many opportunities to showcase his knowledge and administrative acumen in policy proposals that would be received at court, published in the gazette, and debated throughout the empire. While Yuan and Wang had described the gazette as a tool for researching judgments and finding relevant comparisons for a case, Zeng articulated a vision of the gazette as a more personal resource. His comments hearkened to the cases of Gu Yanwu and Huang Chunyao, who received praise not for using the gazette in arbitrating cases, but for developing a thorough understanding of contemporary politics. The next section considers in more detail Qing officials who employed gazettes in their memorials, not just comprehending politics through reading the gazette, but also contributing to national-level policy discussions.

Memorializing with the Gazette

Bureaucratic actors deployed references to the court gazette as springboards for proposals, evidence to bolster arguments, or to access an audience of gazette readers that stretched far beyond the court. Among the most common strategies was for an author to cite an example from the gazette as an opening premise to offer his own opinions. For

example, in 1646 (SZ 3), one censor wrote that having read in the gazette that the emperor wished to compile revised imperial tax registers (*Fuyi quanshu* 賦役全書), he felt compelled to submit his recommendations on tax regulations.²⁴ The metropolitan official Li Zhifang (李之芳, 1622-1694) opened his proposal on post transfers (*jiaodai* 交代) with a reference to reading the Zhili provincial governor's memorial on a related subject in the gazette. Li's argument focused on the impropriety of allowing sub-bureaucratic functionaries to assume acting positions as magistrates during post transfer without provincial approval. He bolstered it with a list of clerks and secretaries who had assumed acting positions in recent years—material clearly drawn from the gazette.²⁵

Some authors also used gazette examples to close an essay or memorial after describing their views at length, as when Shen Tong (沈彤, 1688-1752) concluded a discourse on the community law enforcement system (*baojia*) with the line, “Review the gazette, and you will see that both metropolitan and provincial officials are discussing *baojia* in great numbers. This is why I have sketched out this discussion.” Here, Shen validated his commentary by offering a casual, if carefully inserted, reference to the prevalence of his chosen topic in the gazette's pages.²⁶

Other memorialists used gazette materials to lend persuasive touches to their arguments. In a memorial countering a proposed imperial ban on popular liquor production, the metropolitan official Sun Jiagan (1683-1753) quoted from the gazette proposals for prohibiting the brewing of alcohol advocated by his counterpart and rival

²⁴ Zhang Mao, “Qing cheng fushui ding'e fangce shu,” in *JSWB*, 1:783.

²⁵ Li Zhifang, “Qing jin zaliu weishu shu,” in *JSWB*, 1:433-4. This memorial can also be found in Li's collected works. In another of Li's memorials, he cited his reading in the gazette of Jiangxi governor Zhang Chaolin's memorial on dishonorable practices among clerks, runners, and subordinate officials. “Yan cha jia mao guntu shu,” in *Li Wenxiang gong zouyi* (1702), 1:7a-9a.

²⁶ Shen Tong, “Baojia lun,” in *JSWB*, 2:1819.

Fang Bao (方苞, 1668-1749). While enemies of alcohol brewing argued that alcohol contributed nothing positive to society, and potentially wasted grain, Sun pointed out that the state itself contracted burdens when it confiscated liquor and arrested peddlers and brewers. What would be done with the alcohol if it could not be sold? He also noted that most people in North China involved in liquor production were poor peasants with few other options, and warned against increasing these people's hardships.

Sun Jiagan and Fang Bao were contemporaries, and longtime opponents on many issues besides alcohol. Thus Sun did not need to go to the gazette in order to find information about Fang's proposal, or points against it. But by referring to Fang Bao's memorial in the gazette, Sun appealed to an implied audience of gazette readers who might read his new counter-proposal in the gazette and critically compare the two documents. In this way, his memorial appealed to an implied and much larger audience of gazette readers as well as to the Qianlong Emperor and his advisors, the real arbiters of the proposal. Skilled memorialists such as Sun Jiagan knew that their proposals circulated widely in the gazette, and sought to use this publicity to their own advantage. Additionally, by referring to the openly circulated gazette in his counter-proposal, Sun strengthened an appearance of neutrality. In this way, when Sun wrote a sharp assessment near the end of his memorial, "The recent proposals of the Grand Academicians and Fang Bao are all empty talk, and not appropriate to this situation," it appeared less a personal rebuke than a neutral critique based on review of openly circulated documents.

While these examples show that certain officials deployed gazette material in their memorials as evidence, to improve their persuasiveness, and to appeal to their implied audience, the prevailing narrative of exemplary readers placed emphasis on

private study of the gazette, rather than the ways in which gazette information could be used effectively in policy writings. Indeed, the most prevalent use of the gazette in official memorials seems to have been as a reference to one's new appointment.²⁷ Notes on exemplary readers like Gu Yanwu and Zeng Guofan pointed out that they created personal archives of gazette material, not simply storing or browsing the gazettes, but reading them in full on a regular basis. Journaling the gazette, by recording excerpts from and comments on the gazette in one's diaries, was an important and prevalent practice among official circles during the Qing. The next section of the chapter therefore turns to look through the pages of these diaries. The section begins by profiling two avid nineteenth-century readers of the gazette, Wang Zhonglin and Li Ciming.

Wang Zhonglin: Disorder and Normalcy in the Gazette

While he served a Board appointment in Beijing in the late Xianfeng reign, Wang Zhonglin (王鍾霖, 1816-1896?) received gazette deliveries every two days.²⁸ Wang, a native of Licheng in Shandong Province, used his readings of the gazette to keep track of his friends and relatives serving in the civil bureaucracy and to note events of particular interest. He also noted the comings and goings of officials serving in his native province of Shandong. Wang followed ongoing efforts to defeat Taiping and Nian rebels who threatened the Yangtze River Valley and Northern China respectively, and watched warily as British ships threatened the capital from the sea at Tianjin.²⁹ In 1861, the court announced that embattled Shandong should shore up its defense through the training of

²⁷ See for example a collection of memorials by the late Qing official Wang Jiabi, in which he cites the gazette in each "gratitude memorial" sent after receiving a new appointment. Wang Jiabi, *Diyun xingguan zouyi* (Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2009).

²⁸ Wang Zhonglin, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, in *LRCC*, 59:450 (XF 9/12/30).

²⁹ Wang, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, 59:381-3 (XF 9/5/21, British approach); 59:471 (XF 10/2/19, Nian rebels); 59:473 (fall of Hangzhou, XF 10/2/26); 59:477 (XF 10/03/12, recovery of Hangzhou).

local militias on the model of nearby Henan, and asked natives of Shandong in the capital to submit proposals for provincial defense. Wang carefully recorded the names of those involved in forming militia defense forces in his province and noted the imperial state's support for these defense projects.³⁰

Wang's journals from the late Xianfeng reign show his careerist interest in the people around him, localist concerns for the protection of his province, and the leisure habits of a metropolitan official in Beijing. Additionally, the journals hint at the powerful sense of disorder that characterized this chaotic period. Reading the gazette sometimes allowed Wang to feel reassured of the power of the Qing state, such as when he read of the recovery of Hangzhou, the meritorious deeds of military leaders, or the devoted attention of the Xianfeng Emperor to the plight of his people. Other times, Wang read more confusing tales in the gazette. In a single edition, Wang learned of the unforgivable misdeeds of Qing officials and of the righteous military leadership of a former rebel. An acting prefect magistrate in Jiaying, Zhejiang had used the approach of bandits as an excuse to seize the holdings of the official treasury and abscond to Shaoxing. Another garrison commander had simply abandoned his post in advance of a bandit attack. And on this same day, the court awarded imperial honors to Xue Chengliang (薛成良, given name Zhiyuan 之元), a Henan native who defected from the Nian rebels to the Taiping rebels and finally to the Qing forces.³¹ Some weeks later, Wang mentioned a case where a private adviser (*muyou* 幕友) in Sichuan Province had tried to report a prefectural magistrate for fabricating reports of the war dead in order to receive awards. Worse, other local officials had tried to cover up the adviser's

³⁰ Wang, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, 59:280-2 (XF 8/8/26); 59:514-5 (XF 10/5/10); 59:518-20 (XF 10/5/20).

³¹ Wang, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, 59:522-3 (XF 10/5/24).

revelations.³² Wang and others who read cases such as these in the court gazette must have felt the state of the empire to be profoundly disturbed, as imperial officials fled and stole while rebel defectors led Qing troops.

Evincing his devotion to the gazette, Wang made sure to record in his diary when the court gazette had been interrupted or delayed. In the summer of 1860, he reflected that he had been reading the gazettes every day, almost obsessively. He fretted that rumors abounded in Beijing about a potential foreign invasion and secret imperial evacuation. Local officials had gathered up all the carts in the city, and banner soldiers patrolled the streets at night. Especially telling, express messages had been arriving from Prince Yi, stationed in Tongzhou, but few of them had been released to the gazette (*duo wei fachao* 多未發抄). That day, the Xianfeng Emperor issued an edict to reassure capital denizens, and rebuked gossips, pledging to have arrested all individuals who had claimed that Xianfeng's court was preparing to flee under cover of a planned annual autumn hunt. A few weeks later, Wang reported that things were settling down in the capital, but he grumbled that the local gazette office had not delivered his subscription in several days. As winter covered the city a few months later, Wang Zhonglin reported, "The gazette is as before arriving once every two days. At Qihe [in northwestern Shandong] we all saw that the couriers had delivered the provincial edition."³³ In tumultuous times, Wang Zhonglin measured normalcy by the routine delivery of his gazettes.³⁴

³² Wang, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, 59: 540-2 (XF 10/7/05). Several entries can be found in the *QSL* concerning the Tian Liang case. See *QSL*, XF 10/07/03 (324:802a-803a); XF 10/07/09 (324:817a); XF 10/07/15 (325:828a).

³³ Wang, *Wang Zhonglin riji*, 59:552 (XF 10/7/28); 59:576 (XF 10/8/13); 60:52 (XF 10/11/20).

³⁴ Tellingly, when British officials required the wide dissemination of the Treaty of Tianjin in the aftermath of the 1860 invasion of the Yuanming yuan, Prince Gong requested that the British navy transport copies of

Li Ciming: From Gazette to Personal Archive

A “bamboo-branch poem” (*zhuzhi ci* 竹枝詞) titled “Reading the Gazette” (*Kan jingbao* 看京報) appeared in mid-nineteenth century guidebooks to Beijing alongside lists of shops, urban dangers, and famous sites found in and around the city. Arriving in Beijing in the late 1850s, a time when the city brewed with anxiety about rebel unrest, foreign threats, and the dissipating efficacy of the Xianfeng Emperor, Li Ciming (李慈銘, 1830-1894) might have encountered this poem, which celebrated the gazette as a marker of a capital literatus:

惟恐人疑不識丁 Because I fear people will think I can't read a word
日來送報壯門庭 Each day I have the gazette delivered to my door
月間只費錢三百 In a month I only pay three hundred cash
時倩親朋念我聽 Sometimes I ask my friends to read it to me.³⁵

The chatty snippet of poetry voiced the perspective of a newcomer to the capital city, who, seeing the people around him as informed, erudite, and most importantly literate, signs up for a daily subscription of the gazette.

While more privileged than the ambitious but insecure subject of the poem, Li Ciming arrived in Beijing as a young man with limited connections and without a provincial or metropolitan degree. After selling off family land, Li had amassed a considerable sum of money, which he gave to a friend to help him purchase eligibility for a metropolitan board position.³⁶ When he arrived in Beijing, however, Li was told he

the treaty, the Peking Gazette, and other official correspondence to southern provinces from which the capital had been cut off. TNA, FO 682/1993/86, Prince Gong to Bruce, November 16, 1860.

³⁵ Yang Jingting, *Dumen jilüe* (1864), 3:28b-29a, reprinted in Zhang Qin et al zengbu, *Dumen jilüe*, in *Zhongguo fengtu zhi congkan* (Yangzhou: Guangling shushe, 2003), 14:330-1. Yang's preface on bamboo-branch poetry is dated 1845 (DG 25).

³⁶ Li paid for eligibility to hold a Board department head position (*langzhong* 郎中, rank 5a). See Elisabeth Kaske, “Metropolitan Clerks and Venality in Qing China: The Great 1830 Forgery Case,” *T'oung Pao* 98 (2012): 241.

would have to pay an additional sum to take up the position due to a clerical snafu. Reminiscent of guidebooks' warning to visitors to avoid hucksters and money-changing schemes, Li soon found out that a longtime acquaintance who had facilitated his purchase had actually taken a cut of the fees.³⁷ Li hung about in the city, and soon received a low-paid training position (*xingzou* 行走) in the Board of Revenue through the patronage of the Board secretary Zhou Zupei (周祖培, 1793-1867). Li's expenditures as a young metropolitan official almost always exceeded his meager salary in those years, and he was forced on occasion to pawn his winter coats. Li returned home to Zhejiang in 1866, where he earned money by mortgaging family land and working at the recently established Provincial Books Bureau (*Zhejiang shuju* 浙江書局), a component of the postwar reconstruction (*shanhou* 善後) in Jiangnan. After several tries Li obtained a *juren* degree in Hangzhou in 1870. He then returned to the capital, and earned a small salary bump when he became an expectant (*houbu* 候補) official. As Li earned more, he began to spend more, renting a lavish home and employing several servants. Li finally obtained a *jinshi* degree in 1880, and subsequently became a censor in 1881.³⁸

Li's diaries, kept between 1854 and 1894, constitute the most extensive and accessible record of the gazette's contents prior to the founding of the newspaper *Shenbao* in 1872. Li began to include occasional notes about the gazette in the mid-Xianfeng reign, before he began his official career in Beijing.³⁹ By the early Tongzhi reign, Li wrote in his diary every day, and most days included a record from the court

³⁷ On the degree purchase scheme and the betrayal by his distant relatives Zhou Xingyu and Zhou Xingyi, see Lu Dunji, *Panghuang qilu: wan Qing mingshi Li Ciming* (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2012), 16-18.

³⁸ "Li Tz'u-ming," in *ECCP*, 1:493. See also Zhang Dechang, *Qingji yige jingguan de shenghuo* (Hong Kong: Xianggang Zhongwen daxue, 1970), 33-4, 45-57.

³⁹ See Li Ciming, *Yuemantang riji bu bian* (Taipei: Wenguang tushu gongsi, 1965).

gazette. Li, like many diarists, began his entries with a note of the date and the day's weather, before continuing to detail meetings, visits, recreation, and reading. Gazette records, marked with triangles or circles, concluded most of these daily entries. Li indulged wide ranging literary, philosophical, and historical interests by reading and taking notes from many different texts in his diaries. Yet, Li did not systematically mark or separate these reading entries and book notes from the main content of his daily entry. Only for his notes on the court gazette, Li Ciming took care to separate the notes from the main entry and annotated them for easy reference.

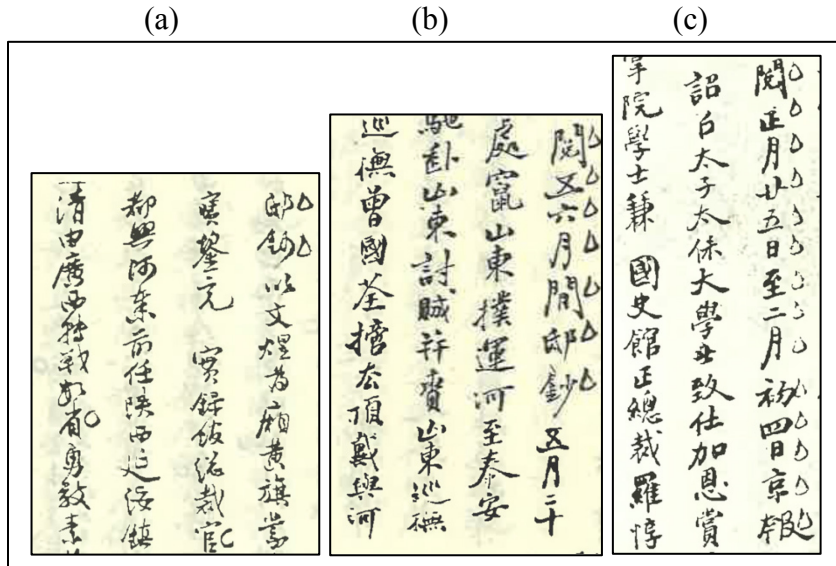
Although Li remained a consistent follower of the gazette for his entire career, changes in his practice of recording gazette items over the years reflect his trips away from the capital and his rise through the metropolitan bureaucracy. In the early years, while Li served in Beijing as an unsalaried Board of Finance functionary, Li recorded gazette entries almost every day, under the heading of "*dichao*." In these entries from the early Tongzhi reign, Li's gazette recordings sometimes made up the bulk of a day's lines. Li occasionally recorded purchases of subscriptions to the court gazette or the court digest (*gongmen chao*) in his diaries, but it is unclear whether he maintained a home subscription in the long term.⁴⁰ More likely, Li read gazettes while in the Board office, and the fees he recorded represent his contributions to the office subscription.⁴¹ In this

⁴⁰ For Beijing residents, it was possible to subscribe to only the *gongmen chao* for a cheaper price than subscribing to the full gazette. Zhang Dechang's economic analysis of Li's spending records in his diaries shows that he paid 2,000 *qian* per month for the gazette digest in TZ 2; 500 *qian* for the *dichao* in TZ 7 (while in Zhejiang); 7,000 *qian* for the *dichao* in TZ 10; 4,000 *qian* for the *dichao* in TZ 13; 6,500 *qian* for the *jingbao* in GX 2; 5,400 *qian* for the *jingbao* in GX 3; and 2,500 *qian* for the *jingbao* in GX 4. Zhang, *Qingji yige jingguan de shenghuo*, 105-218. The fluctuation in the cost of gazettes that Li recorded may be due to his purchase of different quality editions in different years. For more on the price of the gazette in the late nineteenth century, see Chapter 2.

⁴¹ At the provincial level, gazette funds were often pooled from the offices and officials who read the gazette. See Selengge, "Zou qing jiang yuan bo tangbing jinxing caiche gui yingwu," (YZ 5/11/24), in Qiu and Liu, eds., *Zhongguo youyi shiliao*, 249.

case, while Li had easy access to gazettes on a daily basis, he did not keep them in his home. Lacking a personal archive, Li copied a tailored gazette archive into his diaries.

Figure 3.1. Excerpts from Li Ciming's Diary



Source: Li Ciming, *Yuemantang riji* (Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1963), 1:356, 3:1496, 3:1672.

Note: In the three images above, Li has indicated an excerpt from the gazette in his diary in three different ways. In (a), he specifies merely reading the day's gazette (*dichao*). In (b), he specifies reading entries from the fifth and sixth months in the gazette (*dichao*). In (c), written while Li was away from the capital, he specifies reading entries from the fifth day of the first month through the fourth day of the second month in the gazette (*jingbao*). In each entry, the beginning of this gazette excerpt is not afforded a new line, but is marked with circles or triangles for emphasis.

Li's early entries, beginning before his move to Beijing, concentrate on the opening pages of the gazette. The court digest recorded information involving official appointments and careers, including promotions, demotions, transfers, requests for sick leave, and so on. By reading and chronicling these entries, Li built up a small archive of information about ranked officials throughout the empire. With his careerist ambitions, Li sought to find out which positions were in flux, which officials were favored, and who might be a useful ally. While ranked officials like Wang Zhonglin or Zeng Guofan

recorded this information primarily concerning family members and friends, Li copied the official digest indiscriminately.

Showing his thirst for biographical and career details about members of the bureaucracy, in late spring 1867 (TZ 6), after he had returned home to Zhejiang, Li wrote that he borrowed the summer issue of the *Directory to Officialdom* (*Jinshen lu*).⁴² In his diary, Li recorded, “Reviewing it, it seems there have been many transfers of high-level officials (*daliao* 大寮), and I will summarize (*lüe* 略) as follows...,” including details for the rosters of the Grand Council, Board Secretaries, the heads of the Censorate and Lifan yuan, and other prominent metropolitan appointments. Li went on to name newly appointed provincial governors, appending details on their subordinate officials and occasionally biographical information for individuals he did not already recognize. Li sought to maintain a comprehensive index of the highest-level provincial and metropolitan officials in the bureaucracy.

As it happened, the day after he borrowed the *Directory*, Li Ciming received bad news through the court gazette. On this rainy morning, Li awoke late. A friend, Qin Jingshan, came to see him, and told him that he had just seen the newest court gazette, which stated that Zhou Zupei, whom the two called, “The Prime Minister of Shangcheng,” had passed away two months prior.⁴³ Zhou had served as a mentor to Li in his early years in the metropolitan bureaucracy. After Zhou’s death, Li composed a commemorative inscription, and Zhou Zupei’s son also paid Li to write a short biography

⁴² Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 3:1475. Li also bought copies of the directory in TZ 2, GX 4, and GX 13. Zhang, *Qingji yige jingguan de shenghuo*, 105-218.

⁴³ Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 3:1478.

of his father.⁴⁴ Though for the most part Li's records of the details of officials with whom he might cultivate favor evinced him to be a utilitarian reader of the gazette, on this day the news in the gazette hit him personally.

While away from the capital for a long period, Li adapted his reading schedule and his diary entries reflect this. As he traveled between locations, Li went weeks without mentioning the gazette in his diary. At home in the southeast, Li recorded items from the court gazette on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis, introducing these entries with precise annotations of the dates of the gazettes. Midway through 1867 (TZ 6/7), Li recorded, "Browsed gazette entries for the fifth and sixth months," nine days later, "Browsed the gazette entries for the seventh day through the sixteenth day of the sixth month," three days later, "Browsed the gazette entries for the seventeenth day through the twenty-second day of the sixth month," another eight days later, "Browsed the gazette entries for the twenty-second day through the twenty-seventh day of the sixth month," and nearly a month later, "Browsed the gazette entries for the twenty-eighth day of the sixth month through the tenth day of the seventh month."⁴⁵ With only occasional access to the gazette, in order to maintain an encyclopedic record of gazette material in his notes, Li kept meticulous notes on the dates of the items that he had read and when he had read them. In these longer annotations, as when he introduced his shorter daily entries, Li made sure to mark the reference so that the gazette entries could be easily found by flipping through the diary's pages.

During the years that Li spent away from Beijing, he read longer segments of the gazette at intervals, rather than reading an issue each day. In the capital, Li did not date

⁴⁴ Xu Yishi, "Li Ciming yu Zhou Zupei," in *Li Ciming zhuanji ziliao* (Taipei: Dianyi chubanshe, 1979), 1:46-49.

⁴⁵ Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 3:1496, 3:1503, 3:1505, 3:1509, 3:1534.

his daily entries, because he read gazette issues on the same day that they were published. But while away from the capital, Li needed to specify the dates that he was reading, often, as in the summer of 1867, at a delay of about one month, similar to other officials stationed in the provinces who habitually read and recorded gazette entries. Li typically called the gazette the *jingbao*, rather than the *dichao*, while he was away from the capital.⁴⁶ Within his longer entries, he marked the specific date (for example, “the twenty-second”) in small characters after the individual extract. This practice ensured an accurate reference date for all gazette items even when he read gazettes in larger batches.

In the winter of 1871, Li journeyed back to Beijing to resume his official life, having obtained a provincial degree in Hangzhou while absent from the capital. After his arrival by boat in Tongzhou, Li hired two carts and a palanquin to transport him and his belongings to the capital. His entourage skirted Tongzhou proper, and then picked up the road to Beijing, entering the capital in the evening through the Eastern gates, where they were required to pay a tax. Entering the city, Li’s party found that many inns were full of travelers, and they had to split up into a few different inns and *huiguan*. Li spent his early days back in Beijing receiving guests, looking for appropriate lodging, and trying to restore his Board position. On his very first full day in the capital, Li visited each of the heads of the six metropolitan Boards. A few days later, Li found out that arrangements had been made for him to resume his Board position.

⁴⁶ Beginning with his first gazette entry of TZ 6/11, Li suddenly began to alternate marking these entries as from the *jingbao* rather than the *dichao* or *dibao*, and in TZ 7 he consistently used the term *jingbao*. (For the first instance see *Yuemantang riji*, 3:1488). He continued to mark and date the entries as before. Li called the gazette *jingbao* and read it in several-day chunks through TZ 7, 8, and 9 (1868-1871). In 1871 (late TZ 9), during Li’s journey back to the capital, his diaries reflect scant access to the gazettes, with concentrated and lengthy records on the days when he obtained recent gazette issues.

Seven days after re-entering the capital, Li sat down for a marathon session with the court gazette (again labeling it the *dichao*), copying nine pages of entries, covering the past six weeks of the gazette's issues into his diary. While out of the capital, Li had read his gazettes at a delay, but once in the capital he quickly secured access to the most recent gazettes.⁴⁷ The next day, Li returned to his habit of recording gazette entries at the end of each day's entry, and he stopped recording the dates of his gazette entries, since as a capital resident he had the privilege of reading issues as soon as they were published.

Although Li never explains why he so carefully marked out his gazette records in his early diaries, his careful attention to marking entries and noting the date of individual items and the date received show that Li hoped to use the gazette information, not simply record it for perpetuity. In this way, Li's diary did not constitute a simple record of past events, but a working document that could be referenced for its records of events, personages, and appointments. Among officials who kept diaries, Li's practices are unexceptional, although they are exceptionally consistent. That is, many diarists recorded gazette items at the end of a day's diary record and began a new line when copying material from the court gazette. The practice of beginning a new line or even beginning a line above the top margin when quoting gazette contents may have been a measure to indicate respect for the court. Li and other diarists consistently begin entries recording imperial edicts above the top margin, just as these items are written in official memorials. Beyond respect and deference, however, these copying methods made gazette excerpts more usable as individual entries were easier to visually sort on the page.

⁴⁷ Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 5:2617-2626.

“Like a Country Bumpkin Coming into the City”: Encounters with the Gazette

The habits and practices undertaken by Wang Zhonglin and Li Ciming in their diaries reflect wider trends across Qing officialdom, and are instructive for understanding how, when, and why late imperial officials read the court gazette. Concerned with their own career paths and the fortunes of others, officials read gazettes to find news of appointments and dismissals, particularly their own and those of famous individuals, relatives, and friends.⁴⁸ They tracked the progress of major military endeavors, such as when Wang Zhonglin and his more renowned contemporary Weng Tonghe followed imperial campaigns against Taiping rebels in the mid-nineteenth-century. These diarists reported tersely as cities fell to the Taipings and were later recovered, sometimes using the gazette to verify a rumor they had reported a few days earlier. Diarists also noted the occurrence of distant floods and droughts and relief efforts and tax remissions for stricken areas.⁴⁹ Officials also recorded examination results, which were regularly announced in an appendix list to the court gazette.⁵⁰ Some paid special attention to scandalous cases involving the downfall of rivals. They also noted strange, quirky, or scandalous events from the gazette. Meng Chaoran (孟超然, 1731-1797), while traveling through Sichuan as an examination supervisor in 1771, combined notices of the strange with records of examination results when he related that in the recent Shuntian Prefecture

⁴⁸ Yanchang recorded in his autobiography that in 1883 (GX 8), he followed a case where two provincial officials, Zhang Zhenxuan and Qingyu, were suspected of colluding to shuffle appointments, but were eventually cleared of suspicion. Yanchang, *Nian shi jilüe*, n.p., in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 1999), 173:545. Wu Jing recorded in his chronological biography learning of his removal from office in a scandal involving official malfeasance in a river works project headed by Nayanceng. Wu had already retired by this point. Wu Jing, *Wu Songpu fu jun ziding nianpu*, in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan*, 117:203. Officials who recorded reading their own appointments in the gazette: Yang Guozhen, *Yang Guozhen hai liang shi zixu nianpu*, in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan*, 138:19-20; Xu Zonggan, *Si wei xin zhai zhuren ziding nianpu*, in *Beijing tushuguan cang zhenben nianpu congkan*, 148:478-9.

⁴⁹ Lu Longqi, *Sanyutang riji*, in *Congshu jicheng chu bian* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 6:6b.

⁵⁰ Jiang Shiche, *Tai you riji*, in *Congshu jicheng xu bian* (Shanghai: Shanghai shudian, 1994), 64:865.

examinations, a student (*jiansheng* 監生) degree had been awarded to an eighty-five-year-old man, and licentiate (*shengyuan* 生員) degrees had been awarded to men ranging in age from ten to eighty.⁵¹

While officials in the territorial and metropolitan bureaucracies formed the majority of the gazette's audience, individuals without formal bureaucratic positions and non-officials also routinely sought out political news. Legal secretaries working for administrative offices performed the most hands-on work in drafting judicial decisions and compiling precedents and regulations. These legal professionals, numbering thousands across the Qing Empire, may have, like one Fang Yurun (方玉潤, 1811-1883), habitually consulted the gazettes found in their offices for working knowledge, news, and entertainment.⁵² Moreover, non-official actors in the Qing widely understood the gazette to be an authoritative source of political news composed of official documents. In the Sun Jiagan false memorial case of the early 1750s, officials in eighteen provinces questioned more than a thousand individuals who had read about, copied, or passed around a falsified and scandalous memorial impugning court officials and the Qianlong Emperor. Individuals including yamen guards, Beijing elites, couriers, yamen guards, and private secretaries recounted that they had checked court gazettes to find out if the seditious document before them was real.⁵³

In their testimonies for the false memorial case, traveling merchants often revealed that they passed around the false memorial while sharing news and gossip in late

⁵¹ Meng Chaoran, *Shi shu riji*, in *LRCC*, 29:547-8.

⁵² Fang Yurun, *Xinglie riji huiyao*, in *LRCC*, 58:143-4.

⁵³ “Jiangsu xunfu Zhuang Yougong deng wei shenli Chen Gonghuan deng chuandi weigao shi zouzhe”; “Jiangxi xunfu Echang wei bao Shi Yixue weigao yuan zi Zhao Yinzhong shi zouzhe”; and “Zhili zongdu Fang Guancheng wei bao shenxun chuanchao weigao zhi Chen Shaoren deng shi zouzhe” in “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao.”

night banquets and conversations. In literati and official diaries, the experience of reading the gazette was likewise connected to sharing news with an acquaintance or friend.

Writing in late sixteenth-century Jiangnan, Feng Mengzhen (馮夢禎, 1548-1605) described in his diary visitors coming over to discuss matters in the court gazette.⁵⁴ Jia Zhen (賈臻, 1809-1868), traveling in 1849, borrowed the court gazette from his host and learned that the longtime official Wu Qijun had died, and the Daoguang Emperor had awarded honors to him and his progeny. Jia knew Wu's name because as Shanxi governor a few years earlier Wu had headed a notorious investigation into excessive fees in the regional salt administration.⁵⁵ In early 1861, Liu Shunian (劉書年, 1801-1861), arriving in Daming in Zhili Province, spent the evening catching up with old friends, his head "hitting the pillow at the cock's crow," and borrowed the gazette to learn that the Guizhou governor had been transferred to Shaanxi.⁵⁶

Social occasions for reading the gazette commonly occurred when diarists read the gazette by borrowing or sharing it during a travel stop. As the early nineteenth-century transport official Zhao Hengqian (趙亨鈐, 1820 *jinshi*, d. 1846) wrote after borrowing the gazette during his journey from Guiyang to Beijing, "As soon as I saw it, I understood the recent events. To reside in the hold of a boat is like being in the deep woods or mountains. One has no awareness of current events. When I saw [the gazette], it was like a country bumpkin entering the city."⁵⁷ Traveling examination supervisors in particular placed importance on obtaining recent copies of the court gazette as they made

⁵⁴ Feng Mengzhen, *Kuai xue tang riji*, in *Jiaxing wenxian congshu* (Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2010), 96.

⁵⁵ Jia Zhen, *Jiehu Yuenan gongshi riji*, in *LRCC*, 49:302.

⁵⁶ Liu Shunian, *Guicheng riji*, in *Guji zhenben youji congkan* (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 2003), 10:5051-2.

⁵⁷ Zhao Hengqian, *Qian chai riji*, in *LRCC*, 47:242.

their circuit around a province. Pan Zuyin (潘祖蔭, 1830-1890), accompanied by Weng Tonghe, traveled from the capital to the northwestern provinces of Shaanxi and Gansu in 1858 to supervise provincial examinations. Just five days after he left Beijing, Pan borrowed the court gazette from Li Mingde, the county magistrate of Wangdu County, in the outskirts of Baoding. Alongside his remarks on the gazette in his diary, Pan recorded details about the magistrate, noting that Li was related to an acquaintance of his, “the *gengzi* (DG 20, 1840) degree holder Li Weisheng,” and “held a *guimao* (DG 23, 1843) *juren* degree.”⁵⁸ Borrowing and reading the court gazette accompanied rituals of establishing and cementing relationships as examination officials traveled and visited various administrative offices. Since serving as a traveling examination official was often an early stage in the career of a metropolitan official, developing these social networks was a strategy for later advancement.

Understanding Official Readers' Interest in the Gazette

In memorials and correspondence, Qing officials often wrote that while traveling they read about official business in the court gazette. As with the active choice that Weng Tonghe and other officials made to record the court gazette as a source while on the road, it may be that officials used the phraseology of describing notice of an appointment in a “dispatch from the capital” (a literal reading of *dibao*) to express the cognitive distance between the everyday business of the provincial officeholder and the decisions made in the capital. In 1751, recently appointed as acting governor of Henan, Chen Hongmou wrote to the throne that he had read edicts about the emerging false memorial scandal in the gazette while traveling, and planned to launch an investigation upon arrival in the

⁵⁸ Pan Zuyin, *Qinyou riji* (Taipei: Guangwen shuju, 1971), 7-8.

province.⁵⁹ Providing the court gazette as source established a plausible reason for access to authentic documents and information while away from the office. In 1862, the examination supervisor Yan Zongyi (顏宗儀, 1822-1881) wrote in a memorial accepting a new position that he read the court gazette and learned of his appointment “only upon returning to the capital.”⁶⁰ Yan’s claim that he had no access to the court gazette while traveling served as a viable excuse for a late arrival to his new post. Adding the clarification that news arrived in a gazette read while away from one’s post gave administrators some leeway for delay.

Whether at home or on the road, Qing officials had an impetus to track information about appointments and transfers in the gazette because they might have the chance to read this information before the arrival of official notifications. The arrival of an official announcement would put into effect a chain of actions and responsibilities for the transfer of office. County magistrates sought to learn about their transfers as soon as possible in order to prepare for the onerous responsibilities that accompanied changing positions. For example, once transferred away from a post, county magistrates were responsible for concluding (*wan jie* 完結) administrative affairs. Within this, reconciling recent accounting records was especially time-consuming, and those who left with the books in a mess could face consequences. Yet, as has become well known in the study of local administration in the Qing, the business of a district magistrate was often conducted

⁵⁹ “Shu Henan xunfu Chen Hongmou wei bao fengzhi jinan weigao’an fan shi zouzhe,” QL 16/09/18, in “Qianlong nianjian wei Sun Jiagan zougao an shiliao.”

⁶⁰ FHA, LFZZ 03-4997-034, TZ 01/10/22, “Hubei zheng kaoguan Yan Zongyi wei hui jing shi jian jianfang Yunnan xuezheng dichao.” In QL 3, a descendent of Confucius, Kong Guangqi, submitted a gratitude memorial, noting that he had learned in the gazette he had been designated to preside over sacrifices to accompany an imperial visit. GSA 117820-001, QL 03/02/13.

through remarkably ad hoc arrangements.⁶¹ Officeholders needed to read the gazette—or assign a subordinate to read the gazette—because they stood to benefit if early notification in the gazette meant that there was extra time to wrap things up.

Literati and official diarists also drew together jottings from the gazette based on their direct concerns with political events. Other officials who withdrew from their careers, as well as some individuals who prominently abstained from official life, also compiled gazette information out of a desire to bring together ephemeral news into a more permanent record. These notes could facilitate participation in political debates and discussions. Gu Yanwu used the gazette to strengthen his disquisitions and proposals, even though he refrained from entry into official life. Huang Daozhou (黃道周, 1585-1646), who faced political exile and chose to retreat from official life several times during his late Ming career, claimed in a memorial to the Chongzhen Emperor that he had diligently read court gazettes while attending his parents' tomb. Reading the gazettes kept him apprised of the tumultuous upheavals in the court of the late Jiajing Emperor.⁶²

Gazette jottings in diaries linked and connected imperial political events to the trajectories and upheavals of one's life and career.⁶³ As made clear in Weng Tonghe's dream described at the beginning of this chapter, for readers of the late imperial period, the court gazette was a routine and dependable part of daily life, even when it recorded

⁶¹ John R. Watt, *The District Magistrate in Late Imperial China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); T'ung-Tsu Ch'u, *Local Government in the Ch'ing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962).

⁶² Ying Zhang, "The Politics and Practice of Moral Rectitude in the Late Ming: The Case of Huang Daozhou (1585-1646)," *Late Imperial China* 34, no. 2 (2013): 60-61; Huang Daozhou, "Jiu Qian Longxi shu," *Huang Zhangpu wenxuan*, in *Taiwan wenxian shiliao congkan* (Taipei: Taiwan datong shuju, 1995), 150:6.

⁶³ On the flourishing of "newsbooks" in mid-seventeenth-century England, Joad Raymond commented, "Making a collection depended upon both available resources and a selfish desire to keep them for reference. This spirit of collection represents a sensitivity to political events and a feeling for the historicity of the times, to which newsbooks contributed." Joad Raymond, *The Invention of the Newspaper: English Newsbooks 1641-1649* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 256.

turmoil and upheaval. Weng Tonghe's father died shortly after he recorded this dream, and for a time his diary entries included little other than notes on his immense grief and the process of funeral planning. Soon after, Weng recommenced his record of military losses and victories in the Jiangnan region derived from the gazette and other sources.

As official readers relied on the gazette to serve as a legitimate source that could be cited in memorials of various types, they understood the gazette to be an extension of the bureaucracy and thereby authoritative, even as they acknowledged that the business of gazette printing was a commercial and profit-motivated endeavor. The gazette maintained authority among readers through its connection to the state. In their careers and in their personal lives, late imperial officials depended on the gazette to be a reliable and official record. They deployed this material to different purposes—Li Ciming in his networking, Gu Yanwu in his treatises, Sun Jiagan in politicking, and Wang Zhonglin in following news from Shandong. Nonetheless, the authority connoted by the gazette's connection with the state was the most important factor in making it required reading for many late imperial officials. These readers also encountered material derived from the gazette in publications that used the gazette as a source, authored by individuals themselves highly familiar with the Qing gazette.

From Gazette to Book: Gazettes as Sources

In late imperial China, information from the court gazette entered into published materials in four primary ways: compilers of directories mined the gazettes for factual details such as officials' names and offices; compilers of case precedents and memorial collections selected individual memorials and memorial excerpts from the gazette; editors selected gazette material as source material for narratives of an event or a local history;

and authors excerpted and merged gazette entries into a narrative or annalistic account. Examples from these different genres show how gazette items entered into informational texts, while prefaces and other information from these texts help us to understand the process by which authors and compilers obtained and sorted information. Gazette material was important for the compilation of timely and news-oriented texts such as directories, compendia of recent cases, and compendia describing local conditions, because these documents offered authoritative accounts of events occurring in the past few years, before a sanctioned official publication had been issued. Although the Qing court and bureaucracy headed an expansive knowledge production and printing enterprise that produced informational texts in genres new and old (such as military chronicles and collections of leading cases), commercial publishers in the Qing also conducted a strong business in compiling and printing informational texts. For private individuals looking to create a record of an event, gazette documents were the perfect source to serve as a narrative's backbone.

Editors in bookstores and official institutions also drew details from gazettes in order to illustrate biographical accounts and fill in personnel records. Liulichang publishers used gazettes to maintain official directories of the civil and military bureaucracy that they published quarterly in a variety of formats.⁶⁴ These publishers also had ties with bureaucratic offices, and therefore had more access to information and documents than the average reader of the gazette. The Qing Historiography Institute (*Guo shi guan* 國史館) assembled biographical packets (*zhuanbao* 傳包) of primary source materials concerning the biography's subject, including gazettes, to write official

⁶⁴ *Jinshen quanben* (1761), *fanli*.

biographies.⁶⁵ However, for both official directories and official biographies, compilers could access major archives and other documentary resources. In this section, I focus instead on compendia and texts produced by private individuals with no special access to palace offices, for which the court gazette and other published informational texts were the primary sources.

Case Compilations

In Beijing's book market, Liulichang, booksellers published and sold texts conducive to learning about imperial laws, administrative statutes, judicial cases, and personnel. While connoisseurs preferred to collect rare books, commercial editions of informational texts dominated the catalogs of Liulichang booksellers.⁶⁶ More than anywhere else in the empire, residents and sojourners in Beijing could access gazettes and a variety of documentary texts that used the court gazette as a source and boasted timely and updated information. Informational texts, such as directories, collections of statutes and leading cases, and specialized treatises, served as references for aspirant and serving officials seeking to improve their performance.

The enterprising early Qing publisher Li Zhen 李珍 of the Liulichang print shop Rongjin tang, sorted through daily gazettes to find completed cases that could introduce novel situations to magistrates, or whose results might impact interpretations of the legal code. As Li wrote, anyone could read these cases in the gazettes, but the immense volume of daily gazettes made it difficult for individuals to grasp all potentially important

⁶⁵ NPM, Biographical Packets and Drafts from the Archives of the Ch'ing Historiography Institute. I found court gazettes in the biographical packets of the following individuals: Tong Hua, E'ergenbatu, Zao Bao, Li Peijing, Liu Dian, Jiming, Wen Lin, and Liu Rong, all of whom lived and died in the nineteenth century.

⁶⁶ Liulichang publishers sometimes printed or appended selections of their catalogs in their late Qing publications, for example *Chaoshi congzai*, 8 juan (Beijing: Ronglu tang, 1887), 5:1a-8b and *Da Qing jinshen quanshu* (Beijing: Songzhu Rongbao hekan, 1900), inside cover. See Chapter 2 for a list of Rongjin tang publications that shows the predominance of administrative texts in their catalog.

cases.⁶⁷ Based on ten years of reading the court gazette, Li compiled two books, and published them for the use of two different audiences, though both audiences were related to the ranks of officialdom. The first compilation, published in 1715, was a set of cases and precedents titled *Overview of Established Precedents (Dingli quanbian)*, intended for the use of magistrates and legal specialists. While bringing together these materials, Li read in the court gazette a large number of cases and proposals from provincial officials that had resulted in criticism or rejection from the Six Boards or the Emperor.

As Li enumerated in the “Principles of Compilation” to the resulting second volume, *Overtured Cases of the Kangxi Reign (Benchao tibo gong’an)* (1720), this compilation contained first memorials and Board opinions that had been rejected by the Kangxi Emperor, second judgments on criminal investigations by provincial officials that were impugned as not adhering to statute or precedent, various uncommon cases “rarely seen or heard of,” and several notorious cases of the last decade. The compilation, totaling approximately five hundred cases from the period 1712 to 1720, was intended for readers embarking on or awaiting the beginning of their official careers, and in reading the texts, Li offered, readers might appreciate the Emperor’s exercise of his heavenly authority, and also weigh for themselves the righteousness of the outcomes of the cases.

Li’s comments about the faults in his primary source material, the court gazette, tells us that not only did many people receive and read the court gazette (which he referred to as a daily paper *ribao* 日報) on a regular basis, but savvy Beijing residents also had access to official documents and memorials through other sources. Li wrote that although it was custom in the court gazette to include only the family names and omit the

⁶⁷ Li, *Benchao tibo gong’an*, j.1, “Preface.”

given names of high officials, he, thinking that “readers in distant locations and future ages would still want to know who so-and-so was,” had sought to include the given names, and he begged forgiveness for this. Li also wrote that the gazettes occasionally contained textual errors, or shortened or omitted some important matter. On these occasions, he had researched in various places, including “memorial storage, archived copies of clerical memoranda (*kechao* 科抄), Board offices, and bookshops,” but had not made any changes or alterations if he could find no alternate source.

While Li saw serving magistrates and legal secretaries as interested in a cut-and-dry compilation of established precedents, such as those offered in his *Overview of Established Precedents*, he anticipated a wider audience for his selection of overturned and curious cases. Li worried that readers far in the future and in distant locations would not be able to identify the most famous statesmen of the day from their family names alone. He also spoke to the potential of the compilation to serve as a source of entertainment for readers, referencing explicitly several “major cases” in his preface where high officials had faced the wrath of the Kangxi Emperor, such as the downfall of the Manchu official Gali, the case of the chief examiner Zhao Jin, or a peculiar case involving roving ruffians (*guanggun* 光棍). Whereas a set of precedents might be a guide to administrative practice that ensured predictable and safe outcomes for judgments, this compilation showcased the arbitrary nature of imperial rule. Perhaps in order to avoid seeming too critical of the Kangxi Emperor’s imperious nature, Li began and ended his preface with fawning comments on the approaching sixtieth year of the Kangxi reign.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Li, *Benchao tibo gong'an*, j.1, “Preface.”

Thus, like reading the court gazette, Li Zhen's compilation of famous, rejected, and peculiar cases offered a combination of edification and entertainment. Among the "strange" overturned cases were rulings on individuals who had emigrated and sought to return to China by boat; the problem posed by a daughter inheriting the position of native chieftain, and the story of a magistrate who claimed members of his household had died in a fire in order to avoid admitting the occurrence of a local bandit uprising. A report from Fujian and Guangdong officials in 1718 described the consequences of the Kangxi-era maritime restrictions, when Chinese-run merchant ships chose to stay abroad, and foreign-run merchant ships refused to carry Chinese passengers. Yang Lin, governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi, proposed to distribute a notice urging Han Chinese to return to their native places, and forbidding foreign ships from refusing to carry Han passengers.⁶⁹ In the inheritance case, when a female native chieftain (*tusi* 土司) died in southern Sichuan, the governor Nian Gengyao suggested appointing her daughter, Sangjie, as the inheritor of the post. The Board of War submitted its opposition on the grounds of no established precedent, and further expressed doubt that the thirty-eight-year-old Sangjie had not yet married (in which case the husband would be the rightful heir). Li Zhen's account of the case concludes with the Board's order for Nian to further investigate and find a proper heir, but it seems that Sangjie did in the next year become a local leader, and she held this role until her death seven years later.⁷⁰ While both sagas offered some instruction to administrators dealing with related problems, it seems more likely that Li included these cases due to their novelty rather than for practical applications.

⁶⁹ "Juzhu waiguo zhi ren hou yichuan daihui," in Li, *Benchao tibo gong'an*, 7:6b-8a.

⁷⁰ "Tusi nü chengxi bu zhun," in Li, *Benchao tibo gong'an*, 7:32a-b. *QSL*, YZ 04/08/21, 47:711a.

Besides Li's somewhat idiosyncratic compendium of overturned proposals and notable cases, a number of other legal and administrative compendia published during the Qing drew on court gazettes as source material (summarized in Table 3.1 below). While Li's compendium was noteworthy for its inclusion of cases that he found interesting simply because of their notoriety or strangeness, other compilers also produced compilations along the rubric of "overturned" cases found in the court gazette. One such compilation, published in 1764, established stricter principles of compilation: the *Collection of Cases Overturned by the Board of Punishments* (*Xingbu bo'an huichao*) summarized only criminal cases in which the sentence applied by provincial authorities had been overturned by metropolitan authorities. This compilation apparently circulated widely: it was reprinted in Kyoto in 1778.⁷¹ Other collections employing the gazette these included general conspectuses of administrative precedents and legal cases; probably the best known among them was the *Conspectus of Legal Cases* (*Xing'an huilan*) project, first published in 1834. The *Conspectus*, which billed itself as a tool to help administrators make "conscientious" judgments by providing examples of cases, organized by statute and sub-statute, together with the sentences awarded and any notes made by the Board of Punishments.⁷²

The *Conspectus* brought together more than five thousand cases from the Qianlong, Jiaqing, and early Daoguang reigns. Its compilers had pulled these cases out of a number of already published compilations as well as source materials including memoranda (*shuotie* 說帖) and circulars (*tongxing* 通行) of the Board of Punishments, and the court gazette (*dichao*). Cases gathered from the court gazette amounted to around

⁷¹ "Zhengli shuoming," in Yang Yifan and Xu Lizhi, eds., *Lidai pan li pan du* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2005), 6:1.

⁷² Bao Shuyun, "Xing'an huilan xu," in Bao and Zhu, *Xing'an huilan*, 3.

two hundred, dating from between 1829 and 1834, the five years immediately preceding the publication of the conspectus. Since none of the published compilations were dated later than 1815 (JQ 20), memoranda, circulars, and the court gazette provided information on cases that had occurred in the past twenty years. Therefore while cases taken from the court gazette made up a minority of overall selections, or about four percent of the contents, the gazette materials contributed a more substantial portion of recent cases, since the compilers could not draw on other published compilations for contemporary cases.⁷³

In general, the comments made in prefatory materials by editors and compilers of legal and administrative compendia reveal that gazette materials were especially important for outsider editors and for treatment of geographically distant or extremely recent matters. Commoners, like Li Zhen, the Beijing bookseller and compiler of two administrative case compendia, could through the gazette obtain authoritative records of recent cases, and publish their accounts of these cases even before the publication of official legal compilations. As seen in the *Conspectus*, the court gazette allowed people at a distant geographical remove to read about cases that had occurred relatively recently. If an editor relied only upon published case sources in compiling a compendium, he would be hard pressed to include cases that had occurred in the past few years. Moreover, if the editor relied only on cases occurring within his purview, or local to his province, both editor and readers would miss out on a wealth of edifying and entertaining material.

⁷³ Likewise, in the *Cheng'an xubian* compilation, produced by two provincial officials in Zhejiang, the entries for cases that occurred in Zhejiang Province were quoted from documents received directly from the Board of Punishments, whereas the entries for cases occurring in other provinces drew on the court gazette (*dichao*). Pierre-Etienne Will and collaborators, *Official Handbooks and Anthologies of Imperial China: A Descriptive and Critical Bibliography* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Though a commoner, Li Zhen's background and career suited his habits of reading the gazette. Li, like many Beijing booksellers, was a Jiangxi native who had been a resident of the capital city for many years. Although Li called himself an ignorant commoner, he came from an important family in the Xiugu and Linchuan areas, south of Poyang Lake in the northwest of Jiangxi. For his first compilation, Li had solicited a distant relative, Li Fu (李紱, 1673-1750), who served for many years in the Hanlin Academy during the late Kangxi reign.⁷⁴ Li Zhen was a man with connections, and it was a combination of his privileged background, his working experience in the book industry, and his habitual reading of gazettes, statutes, and cases that allowed him to be creative in developing his case compilations. Li's more eccentric second work, the *Overtured Cases of the Kangxi Reign*, lacked the laudatory prefaces that accumulated in some works, including his first compilation. Indeed, his relative Li Fu had suffered disgrace in the last year of the Kangxi reign in a scandal over unfair examination grading, and Li may have purposefully chosen not to solicit Li Fu, who had been sent to toil for a year in river work.⁷⁵ Independent of his connection to Li Fu, however, Li had developed an intimate familiarity with the cases that appeared in the court gazette through a decade of close reading. Li's work was particularly innovative because his compilation of "overtured" cases included also those cases that would seem scandalous, exciting, or weird to contemporary readers. Through the gazette and his family relationships, Li claimed to understand the talk of the times, and a comprehensive knowledge of contemporary politics.

⁷⁴ *Zongren* 宗人 and *shu* 屬 were some of the terms that Li Fu used to refer to Li Zhen in his preface. Li Zhen, comp., *Dingli quanbian* (Beijing: Rongjin tang, 1715).

⁷⁵ See Li Fu's biography in *QSG lie zhuan* 293:10321-10325; see also "Li Fu," in *ECCP*, 1:761-764. Li was involved in the compilation of and penned a preface to a Qianlong-era (1740) Linchuan County gazetteer. The prefaces to the 1740 edition are preserved in the more accessible 1823 edition.

Table 3.1. Legal and Administrative Compendia Based on Gazette Material

Title, <i>juan</i> #	Author/Compiler Information
<i>Overview of Established Precedents</i> Dingli quanbian 定例全編, 50 j., revised edition with additional 6 <i>juan</i>	Comp. Li Zhen, 1715 (revised edition 1723)
<i>Overtured Cases of the Kangxi Reign</i> Benchao tibo gong'an 本朝題駁公案, 11 j.	Comp. Li Zhen, 1720
<i>A Classified Copy of Established Regulations</i> Dingli leichao 定例類鈔, 26 j.	Comp. Huang Wenwei 黃文煒, ca. 1732
<i>Continued Compilation of Established Cases</i> Cheng'an xubian 成案續編, 12 j.	Comp. Tongde 同德 and Li Zhiyun 李治運, 1755
<i>Collected Jottings of Cases Overtured by the Board of Punishments</i> Xingbu bo'an huichao 刑部駁案彙鈔, 8 j.	Comp. Ding Renke 丁人可, preface dated 1764
<i>Laws of the Great Qing, With Explanation of Precedents</i> Da Qing lümu fuli shizhang 大清律目附例示掌, 4 ce	Comp. Xia Jingyi 夏敬一, 1774
<i>Conspectus of Legal Cases</i> Xing'an huilan 刑案匯覽, 62 j.	supervised (參定) by Bao Shuyun 鮑書芸, compiled (編次) by Zhu Qingqi 祝慶祺, first edition 1834
<i>Short Account of Clerical Affairs</i> Lishi shi xiaolu 吏事識小錄, 4 j.	by Yang Shida 楊士達, 1837

Source: Pierre-Etienne Will and collaborators, *Official Handbooks and Anthologies of Imperial China: A Descriptive and Critical Bibliography* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming).

Topical Compendia and Gazetteers

Gazette materials also found their way into administrative compendia falling into a few different sub-genres, including famine relief and local histories. The *Complete Guide to Disaster Relief (Zaizhen quanshu)* was a manual on famine relief by a private secretary, Yang Ximing, serving in the Hangzhou area. Yang compiled the text after a major drought affected the region in 1818 and 1819. Before offering case studies and

detailed information the Hangzhou experience, the compilation opened with more general information that Yang derived mostly from the *Regulations and Precedents of the Board of Revenue (Hubu zeli)*. He also used the court gazette to fill in information about the impact of hailstorms and typhoons, and relief efforts against them in various locales.⁷⁶ Another specialized treatise, this time on the management of the salt administration, drew from the compiler Wang Shouji's experience as an official in the salt administration, and also sourced material from the *Collected Statutes (Huidian 會典)*, various compilations of Board precedents (*zeli 則例*), and the court gazette.⁷⁷ Li Ciming, who proofread the compilation, praised it as the “most detailed” book on salt administration published in the Qing, and also commended Wang for basing his compilation in official documents, without “changes or flourishes.”⁷⁸

In compendia devoted to providing overviews of events and regulations relevant to a single province, editors again used gazette materials to supplement outdated published material. In *General Surveys (bianlan 便覽)* for Anhui and Zhejiang provinces published in the late Guangxu reign, compilation notes indicated that court gazettes helped fill in the deficiencies and gaps of out-of-date provincial gazetteers.⁷⁹ Li Yingjue (李雁珪), a prolific author and editor of the post-Taiping period who also produced accounts of the Taiping War, authored both of these provincial surveys. In his introduction to the Anhui *General Survey*, Li noted that a provincial gazetteer of 350 *juan* had been first published in the early Daoguang reign under the supervision of governor

⁷⁶ Will, ed., *Official Handbooks*.

⁷⁷ Wang Shouji, *Yan fa yi lue* (Shanghai: Jing yi ge, 1873).

⁷⁸ Li, *Yuemantang riji*, 3:1390 (TZ 11/9/27); Li, *Taohua sheng jie an riji*, 80:158 (TZ 12/6/27).

⁷⁹ Li Yingjue, *Zhe zhi bianlan*, 7 *juan*, (Hangzhou: Liyin zhai, 1896); *Wan sheng bianlan*, 6 *juan*, (Anqing: Zhongyun ge, 1902).

Tao Shu, and updated in an 1878 (GX 3) edition under the long-serving Manchu governor Yulu.⁸⁰ But, Li explained, even this recent edition was difficult to purchase and indeed too vast to read comprehensively.⁸¹ Li wrote that in the past he had contributed to a *General Survey of the Empire*, with introductory entries for each province, prefecture, and independent department. From this, he had excerpted entries relating to Anhui, and consulted with the new gazetteer as well as various court gazettes and local gazettes (*ge shu bing bao* 各屬稟報), which he labeled as particularly important for consultation. Although he was remarkably prolific, Li designated his texts as “the work of one man,” and welcomed critical readers to offer additions and emendations so that the usefulness of the next would not wither away.⁸²

In another late Qing compilation, devoted to policy memorials of the “Tongzhi Restoration,” (*Tongzhi zhongxing* 同治中興) the compiler Chen Tao (陳弢) adopted a similarly humble posture in prefacing his eight-volume preface of policy memorials submitted during the Tongzhi reign. Chen described his compilation, *An Overview of Memorials of the Tongzhi Restoration from the Capital and the Provinces* (*Tongzhi zhongxing zhongwai zouyi yuebian*), as a private work that friends had urged him to publish and share.⁸³ The text bore similarities to both the compilations of legal and administrative precedents and to the more focused, subject-based compilations that have been the subject of this section. Chen, a Zhejiang native, wrote in his preface that he had

⁸⁰ Li Zhenyong, and Han Mei, eds., *Anhui tong zhi* (Anqing, 1829), 260 *juan*; He Shaoji and Yang Yisun, eds., *Chongxiu Anhui tong zhi* (Anqing, 1878), 350 *juan*.

⁸¹ Li, *Wan sheng bianlan, lie yan*, 1:1a.

⁸² Li, *Wan sheng bianlan, lie yan*, 1:6b.

⁸³ Chen, *Tongzhi zhongxing*, j.1, preface (*xu*). I consulted two editions of this compendium. One lists blocks carved and held in Beijing by Xiao you shanfang 小西山房, which may have been a branch of a Suzhou-publisher, and one in the “Cases and Purses for Swords and Lutes” (*Qie jian nang qin* 篋劍囊琴之室) Studio.

resided in the capital since 1864, and perused the court gazette on a daily basis, copying out memorials that carried the spirit of a restoration. Citing inspirations from volumes like the *Collected Essays on Statecraft*, Chen included in his compilation both accepted and rejected proposals, arguing that since these memorials represented contemporary affairs, and had been printed in the court gazette, there would be no reason to exclude proposals that had failed to garner acceptance.⁸⁴

As he was not an official himself, the compendium showcases not the agendas of Chen and his cohort, but rather the writings of some of the most notable names in contemporary politics. The one hundred and twenty-three memorials in the compilation represented seventy-five memorialists. Of the memorials, over half were authored by provincial governors and high officials in the metropolitan government. The other half were authored by censors, education commissioners, and other low-ranking metropolitan officials. Four were from Li Hongzhang, six from Zuo Zongtang, and eleven from Zeng Guofan. The book even included a memorial coauthored by Li, Zuo, and Zeng. Chen's compendium therefore provides a record of both the names and the political agendas that could be read in the court gazette during the Tongzhi reign. Late Qing notables such as Li, Zuo, and Zeng grew famous not just through deeds alone, but through the publication of their memorials in the gazette. Drawn out of the gazette by readers, their names and words could be excerpted and reprinted widely.

The texts described in this section at first sight share little in common except their use of the court gazette as a source. In fact, the gazette as source material influenced the production of compilations on topics as disparate as law and administration, geography,

⁸⁴ Chen, *Tongzhi zhongxing*, j.1, principles of inclusion (*fanli*).

and contemporary politics. Editors working in these genres developed case-focused compendia, in which they presented memorials that concerned interesting legal cases, a specific region, or were authored by well known officials. These editors added comments to their cases only in relatively short prefatory material. The mark of the editor can also be seen in the organization of material. For example, Chen Tao organized the one hundred and twenty-three memorials in his compilation into eight categories, including “Easing Military Expenses,” “Rations and Grain Supply,” and “Honors for the Meritorious.” His categories suggest the agendas for which the Tongzhi Restoration reforms had become known, and which Chen hoped to highlight in his text. Other than these paratextual markers, the editors suggested to their imagined audience that the cases stood for themselves.

Chen’s memorial did not even tell readers the dates upon which memorials had been submitted, letting the general distinction of the Tongzhi reign suffice.⁸⁵ The next section concerns texts compiled from the gazette around a single event or case, in which editors prioritized chronology. While the administrative compendium described in this section can be seen as reference manuals, the texts in the next section can be seen as preparatory drafts for narrative accounts.

Gazettes as Sources for Chronological Accounts

In addition to the published texts described above, I have located several handwritten draft compilations that draw primarily on gazettes. These sources suggest a relatively widespread practice of sampling from gazette material to update compilations.

⁸⁵ Interested readers could figure this out by referencing the current official position of the memorialist at the time the memorial was submitted.

Draft texts present an interesting category of source material because they demonstrate the range of items present in the gazette that could be used to narrate very different types of historical events. All of the texts that I located excerpt solely from documents publicly available in the court gazette, not internal or secret materials. While most of these described a single event or a chronological series of events, a draft compilation found at Suzhou University presents a much broader historical overview of the mid-to-late Qing. This compilation began with the abdication edict of the Qianlong Emperor and finished with a memorial from the early 1870s about the renovation of the Zhejiang provincial examination yards. These scattered notes, all taken from the memorials printed in the court gazette, seem to be evidence of the making of a comprehensive historical text, or source notes for a series of discussions of Qing history.⁸⁶

Working entirely from publicly available materials published in the court gazette, private individuals could assemble detailed chronicles of current events. These events include crises of national importance such as the siege of the imperial palace by White Lotus adherents in the Jiaqing reign and military campaigns to eliminate enemies in southern Xinjiang but also events of local significance such as a triple murder case in Anhui province in the early nineteenth century. Each compilation presents a set of edicts, memorials, and other excerpts from court gazettes in a chronological organization. Three pamphlets found in the Shanghai Library and in the Beijing University library excerpt items from court gazettes of the 1810s and the 1820s to portray events of national and local significance. While there are few extant editions of the court gazette for this period, these draft pamphlets show that it was possible for readers to obtain a comprehensive

⁸⁶ *Za chao dibao* (n.d., n.p., late Qing).

view of events such as notorious judicial snafus, anti-Qing uprisings, and palace invasions by relying on information in the gazette.

Chronicling Scandal: The Shouzhou Triple Murder Case

The “Shouzhou triple murder case” exploded in notice and notoriety when the mismanagement of its investigation caused the downfall of two important provincial officials. A pamphlet on the case, found at the Shanghai Library, includes eight memorials and edicts from 1806 and 1807 (JQ 11-12), after the Jiaqing Emperor appointed a special commission to investigate the complicated case.⁸⁷ In initial investigations of the murders, which occurred in 1804, officials reported that a father-and-son pair, Li Gengtang and “Little Diligent” Li, had discovered a Shouzhou woman, Mrs. Hu, having an affair with one Zhang Lun, who turned out to be a distant relative of Zhang Daxun, Mrs. Hu’s husband. Li and his son told the husband, who fell into a fit of rage and poisoned Zhang Lun together with both Li Gengtang and his son in order to avoid the embarrassing situation becoming public knowledge. The Zhang family paid out bribes to the local constable (*dibao* 地保) and family members of the deceased. The case attracted suspicion when it turned out that local officials had also taken bribes in the case. In a second review, the Suzhou-based official Zhou E managed to produce a different account of the case; the differences hinged on the method of poisoning. But, once again, supervising officials detected malfeasance.

A third set of investigations revealed the real state of affairs. As it turned out, Mrs. Hu had actually been having an affair with her husband’s brother, Zhang Dayou. When he heard of the second affair, Zhang Dayou planted in Zhang Daxun’s mind the

⁸⁷ Anonymous, comp., *Shouzhou san ming an* (n.d., n.p.). My summary relies on the relevant entries in the *QSL*: JQ 10/01/11, 139:899b-900a; JQ 12/02/02, 174:275b-276a; JQ 12/02/11, 174:285b-287a; JQ 12/03/13, 176:307b-308a; JQ 14/02/17, 207:772b-773a.

idea of poisoning the three victims. The story that Zhang Daxun had constructed had actually been written and submitted in an accusation by the local pettifogger Liu Ruheng. The brothers, on Liu's advice, had attempted to mold their story to the Qing law that stated that a wronged husband, if he found his adulterous wife together with another man, could kill the pair on the spot. The Zhangs and their advisor could not manipulate the circumstances so that Zhang Daxun caught his wife in the act, but hoped to avoid a murder charge by implying that Zhang was enraged at his cuckoldry.⁸⁸

The court gazette followed the Shouzhou case not because of the juiciness of the scandalous story, but due to the accusations of administrative wrongdoing meted out to local and provincial officials involved in the case. Several local officials, including the county magistrate and the local coroner, were found to have accepted bribes and suffered the influence of the Zhangs and their legal advisor. Actions taken against these officials resulted in details of the case being recorded in the gazette. When the case was set to be retried, the new Liangjiang governor-general Tiebao appointed two provincial officials to supervise the case. One, Zhou E, almost immediately reported that several individuals had reversed their testimonies. But the stark inconsistencies in his account of the case caused suspicion, and it was quickly discovered that Zhou had accepted bribes from members of the Zhang family. The misdeeds of Tiebao's appointed deputy caused problems for the governor-general, who was accused of negligence and demoted in rank. On the other hand, the case contributed positively to the reputation of the Anhui

⁸⁸ This law seems to have been widely known. See Zhang, "Information and Power," 1-2.

governor, Chu Pengling, who received special commendation for his righteous handling of the matter.⁸⁹

The Shouzhou triple murder case offered readers sordid details of murder and adultery, depictions of administrative and judicial malfeasance, and harsh consequences. The compelling story has had an afterlife as one of the “Ten Strange Cases of the Qing” in popular histories, and the existence of the pamphlet suggests that the scandal was already a topic of widespread public discussion in the first decade of the nineteenth century.⁹⁰ Yet the court gazette, the primary source for contemporary readers interested in the case, stressed not the scandalous misadventures of the Zhang brothers, but rather the plotting and cover-ups orchestrated by the officials in charge. As the gazette account drew attention to official misbehavior rather than commoner crimes, it provided “a bit of knowledge” of the potential repercussions to local officials who might be tempted to cover up a complicated case in their own jurisdiction, reminiscent of the warnings of Yuan Shouding’s guide for magistrates.

Chronicling the Restoration of Order

Court gazettes could be useful records of events of national as well as local importance. Focusing on a much better known event, a manuscript of edicts compiled from the gazette held at Beijing University chronicles the aftermath of the Eight Trigrams sect’s invasion of the imperial palace in 1813, nine years after the Shouzhou murders.⁹¹ The compilation, which lacks any prefatory material in its draft format, establishes the basic outline of information available to readers of the court gazette throughout the

⁸⁹ The case is mentioned in the *QSG* biographies of both officials. Tiebao: *QSG lie zhuan*, 352:11280-11282; Chu Pengling: *QSG lie zhuan*, j.355.

⁹⁰ Ke Yuchun, ed., *Qingchao shi da qi an* (Beijing: Renmin ribao chubanshe, 1993).

⁹¹ Anonymous, comp., *Dibao* ([Jiaqing 18]).

empire. It begins with the Jiaqing Emperor's pronouncements on the attack, issued three days after the palace invasion. The imperial edict traces the origins of the rebellion in the border regions of Henan, Shandong, and Zhili provinces, labeling the rebels as "heretical adherents of the *Tianli hui* (天理會)" under the leadership of a one Lin Qing. The edict celebrated the capture of Lin Qing one day before in a village outside the capital, and the bravery of the imperial princes who helped defeat the palace invasion.

The remainder of the text, which covers the six months after the incursion, includes primarily edicts concerning the aftereffects of the uprising, such as the awarding of honors to military leaders and local officials. As Susan Naquin notes in her analysis of the uprising, the Qing government "knew what it had to do to suppress this rebellion" from prior experience in facing the earlier White Lotus rebellions in central China. The compilation, based on publicized official documents, portrays swift victory for official forces in Beijing and its surrounding countryside.⁹² The last few entries in the text are edicts on topics not directly related to the Eight Trigrams Rebellion, including a proposal for the use of paper money, and a proposed reduction in provincial military expenditures and outlays. Therefore, while the volume at first appears to focus on the Eight Trigram invasion, in fact it offers a more comprehensive view of items that could be read in the court gazette in this six-month period.

An imperially commissioned chronicle of the Eight Trigrams rebellion, published three years later, includes many of the edicts that make up this compilation.⁹³ However, while the official chronicle, the *Imperially Sanctioned Record of Pacifying the Sectarian Bandits* (*Qinding pingding jiaofei jilüe*), also appended memorials from field officials in

⁹² Naquin, *Millenarian Rebellion*, 265-6.

⁹³ Tuojin, comp., *Qinding pingding jiaofei jilüe* (Beijing, 1816).

charge of eliminating further resistance in the metropolitan countryside and accounts of confidential Grand Council meetings, the manuscript includes only edicts, and only those addressed to the Grand Secretariat, and thus approved to be distributed in the court gazette. From comparing the manuscript selection to the official chronicle, we see clearly that the court gazette consistently included promotions and awards for meritorious service, meritorious death, as well as demotions and sanctions for official inaction, whereas these privileges and demerits were often excluded from the official chronicle.

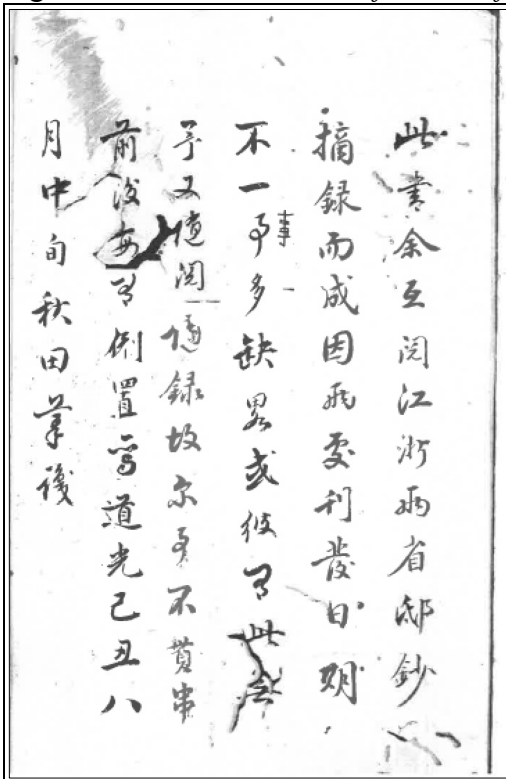
Chronicling Frontier Rebellion

A third pamphlet, found at the Shanghai Library, covers the Qing military campaign to eliminate threats to Qing control in Southern Xinjiang from followers of Jahangir, a popular leader descended from a family with hereditary religious and political claims to the region. The text includes a preface dated 1829 (DG 9/8), and the material in the chronicle ranges in date from 1821 through the summer of 1828.⁹⁴ Entries from 1821 and 1822 appear to have been included to offer context on the Jahangir rebellion, as this leader had challenged Qing power once before, in 1821. However, the bulk of the entries are from later in the decade. Somewhat less than half of the entries can be easily traced to the published *Veritable Records* for the Daoguang reign, which supports the hypothesis advanced by Jonathan Ocko in his 1973 article introducing the “Peking Gazette” that the gazette covered a broad range of communications and topics, often in more detail than the subsequently edited and published *Veritable Records*.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ Anonymous, comp., *Pingyi dichao jielu* (preface dated 1829), n.p.

⁹⁵ Ocko, “British Museum’s Peking Gazette,” 40-42.

Figure 3.2. Notes on the Pacification of Barbarians (*Pingyi dichao jielu*), Preface



Source: Shanghai Library Rare Books Collection.

Under the leadership of Cao Zhenyong (曹振鏞, 1755-1835), then the senior Grand Council member, the Qing court published in 1830 an official history of the campaigns against Jahangir.⁹⁶ The Shanghai text, while not as comprehensive as this specialized history, nonetheless fills nearly four hundred manuscript pages with day-by-day selections of imperial edicts concerning the military campaigns and responding to reports from commanders on the front. Although the compilation was basically arranged

⁹⁶ Cao Zhenyong, comp., *Pingding Huijiang jiaoqin niyi fanglüe* (Beijing, 1830).

chronologically, the dates of individual entries are not always in exact order, suggesting that the compiler wrote entries in this manuscript text as he found them, rather than bringing together all of the material before beginning to write.

In his preface, the anonymous author notes that the text was compiled from gazettes collected in Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, and suggests that he had access to multiple editions of the gazette. The dates for corresponding entries are about one month later than the *Veritable Records*, accounting for the amount of time it took for the material to be published in the court gazette. The fact that the compiler was working on a chronicle of a Qing military campaign against a local Muslim leader in the far west, from sources available to him in southeastern China, suggests that the Qing court made its version of the events in Kashgar available widely. In the next chapter, we shall see that stories of the rebellion circulated not just nationally, but internationally in the late 1820s. From Zhejiang to London, interest in the Qing empire's fortunes in the far west motivated readers to follow "Tales of Jahangir." Meanwhile, the court strategically disseminated notices of the rebellion in the gazette and quickly later published an official chronicle in order to superimpose its version of events onto the more complicated swirl of gossip and rumors circulating throughout Qing society.

Considering these three draft compilations provides a suggestive view of what people read in the court gazette in the early nineteenth century, and the terms with which events of major social and political significance were read and discussed among this reading population. By browsing the gazette's pages each day, one could read about a scandalous murder case in Anhui, the attempts of sectarian rebels to overthrow the Jiaqing Emperor, and the setbacks faced by the Qing military in the oasis cities of

southern Xinjiang. However, alongside these accounts of disorder and crisis, accounts compiled from the court gazette contain clear messages of the righteousness of state authority. In the Shouzhou murder case, the gazette portrayed not only the misdeeds of adulterers, pettifoggers, and corrupt magistrates, but also the triumph of justice, represented by the unimpeachable figure of the governor, Chu Pengling. Likewise, gazette entries on the Eight Trigrams uprising skipped over the detailed confessions and accounts of rural violence collected by the Grand Council, instead focusing on the swift and triumphant restoration of order, and the awarding of honors to local officials who faced rebels courageously and suffered personal losses. Thus, although readers could find a wide range of political and social events addressed in the pages of the gazette, this text maintained a bias towards the righteousness of state power.

The seventeenth-century author Huang Zongxi (1610-1695) began his preface to *Jottings on the Veritable Records of the Hongguang Reign* (*Hongguang shilu chao*), by recounting a disturbing incident. One night, Huang awoke to hear the scratching sound of a rat chewing on paper. Lighting a candle, Huang saw the rat munching on his stacked copies of gazettes from the Southern Ming court of the erstwhile Hongguang Emperor. Seeing his documents so threatened, and reflecting on the other documents that had been lost in frequent moves, Huang resolved to begin writing his chronicle of the Nanjing refugee court.⁹⁷

The urge to read and collect official gazettes united readers of disparate time and place in late imperial China. Officials read gazettes for personal and career reasons, and

⁹⁷ This passage is also described in Timothy Brook, *The Troubled Empire: China in the Yuan and Ming Dynasties* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010), 238-9. Huang Zongxi, *Hongguang shilu chao*, in *Huang Zongxi quanji* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985), 2:1.

copied material from the gazettes into their personal diaries and official memorials respectively. Authoritative information from the gazette could bolster one's knowledge of currently serving officials, lend credence to a proposal or claim, and provide advance warning of an order to change positions or a drastic change in imperial policy. Other readers drew material from the gazettes into informational texts geared at readers from both official and unofficial worlds. For these readers-turned-authors, gazette material was the most recent, the most authoritative, and the most complete source of information about the imperial state and its officials available. By transcribing the gazette, or using it as the basis for historical narratives, writers sought to give greater longevity to ephemeral events—and the gazettes that documented them.

Chapter 4. The Gazette in the Newspaper

In December 1827, a notice appeared in the *Canton Register* about unrest near the far western border of the Qing Empire: “We have heard that official papers from Peking arrived on the 24th of November, from which it appears that His Imperial Majesty had lost a number of officers and men, who had gone in pursuit of the Mahomedan Rebel....”¹ With these remarks, the newspaper initiated a long series of comments on the fortunes of the Qing military—headed by “Chang-lin,” (Changling 長齡, 1758-1838) who the *Register* later dubbed “the Hero of Cashgar”—against a series of ongoing rebellions in the southwestern reaches of Xinjiang, territory conquered by the Qing in the mid-eighteenth century. In subsequent issues over the next few years, the *Register* commented whenever possible on the vicissitudes of Qing control in the far west, offering reports of the pacification of a revolt led by “Chang-ki-hur” (now better known as Jahangir Khoja, 1788-1828), the attempts of local administrators to restore order, and a subsequent invasion of Kashgar by Kokandi armies in 1830.

News of Jahangir’s last stand against the Qing spread much further than Canton (Guangzhou). The emergence of newspapers and the commercial expansion of the court gazette in China facilitated the global circulation of news about the fight for Kashgar. Reports from the front in Xinjiang moved first to Beijing in the form of official memorials. Next, through the medium of the Qing court gazette, word spread to the provinces. In Canton, a few foreign sinologues received and translated the reports, published their translations in local newspapers, and sent them onwards for reprint in the

¹ *CR*, December 14, 1827.

metropolitan press as dispatches from the “Peking Gazette.”² As a result, reports circulated in the British press about Jahangir’s failed campaign, the embattled exile’s third attempt to overturn Qing control in southern Xinjiang. While the rebellions of 1814 and 1820 had attracted little notice in the global press, metropolitan and colonial newspapers printed numerous reports on the final revolt.

The source for these reports, as for nearly all of the “national” news printed by the *Register* and “Foreign Intelligence” on China published in British newspapers, was the Peking Gazette, the “official papers” referred to in the *Register*’s report above. With its translations from the gazette, a small enterprise like the *Canton Register* could offer a view of the affairs and workings of the Qing Empire to the British and American traders in Canton and Macao, and also to a wider audience worldwide. Publications like *The Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, *The Canton Register*, and *The North-China Herald* employed translated Chinese official documents in translation to illustrate recent news and politics in the Qing Empire. In both the China-coast and British presses, Peking Gazette materials provided a previously unknown vantage on events in China. For the editors of China-coast papers, establishing a reputation as a paper with access to gazettes and the linguistic knowledge and local expertise to translate the reports granted prestige and authority as a purveyor of news on China. In providing gazette translations, China-coast papers wrote for both local and international markets.

During the nineteenth century, Qing officials delegated control of gazette publication and distribution to private publishers who specialized in deliveries and

² This transmission pattern was not exceptional. In 1832 America, newspapers made up ninety-five percent of the weight of the mail. Plagiarism between newspapers generated chains of references that can be followed as records of information flows. Headrick, *When Information Came of Age*, 191; Allen Pred, *Urban Growth and City-Systems in the United States, 1840-1860* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980), 58-60.

subscriptions in the city of Beijing and began to brand their products with distinctive covers. These changes heralded the wider commercialization of the gazette and its broad availability to both official and nonofficial readers. In the first half of the nineteenth century, Anglophone papers obtained for the first time direct and regular access to the Qing gazette. These papers, operating in Malacca, Canton, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, published translations of the gazette, and international newspapers picked up the translations to improve their coverage of China.

Meanwhile, important technological developments and global political changes reshaped the appearance of the newspaper and its social and cultural role in Western Europe and its colonies and former colonies.³ While an active and diverse news industry emerged in Western Europe and the American colonies in the seventeenth century, these papers had a limited reach and states often subjected newspapers to strict licensing and censorship. The professional roles of the journalist and reporter would not emerge until the mid-nineteenth century, so editors often doubled as printers, merchants, clerks, and other careers. Editors borrowed directly from each other's pages, using papers sent by mail or correspondents to fill out their international coverage. Columns of "Foreign Intelligence" often attributed their information to government gazettes associated with the state and that printed either official documents or privileged accounts of state affairs. Likewise, although many British papers clipped gazette reports from the pages of China-coast papers, editors rarely disclosed this borrowing to readers.

³ See the contributions to Brendan Dooley and Sabrina Baron, eds., *The Politics of Information in Early Modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2001); Jeremy D. Popkin, "Periodical Publication and the Nature of Knowledge in Eighteenth-Century Europe," in Donald R. Kelley and Richard H. Popkin, eds., *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Dordrecht, NL: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1991), 203-213; Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power, and the Public in Nineteenth-Century England* (Aldershot, UK: Scolar Press, 1996); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics, and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Newspaper editors in London, Liverpool, and Glasgow labeled their Chinese dispatches as obtained directly from the “Pekin Gazette.” The use of the term “gazette” allowed readers to understand the Peking Gazette as similar to other official gazettes with which they were more familiar, such as the *London Gazette* or the *Gazette of Paris*.⁴ Published “by authority,” the *London Gazette* served (and still does) as the official government organ in England, printing notices of legislation, copies of diplomatic correspondence, information about government personnel.⁵ In contrast, the eighteenth-century *Gazette de France* operated with a license from the crown, but drew its content from the wide-ranging personal networks and correspondence of its compiler. In the nineteenth century, a succession of French official journals conformed more strictly to publishing official decrees and announcements.⁶ Although government gazettes varied in their formats and reliability, they were typically associated with and funded by the state, and provided a record of official notices.⁷ To be “gazetted,” in the eyes of contemporary readers, was for notice to be placed in the government organ, a phrase usually employed

⁴ A common theory is that “gazette” referred originally to a Venetian coin, the cost of a daily newsheet (*gazetta*) in Venice. John Florio investigated these meanings in his 1598 Italian-English dictionary *A Worlde of Wordes*, as described in Mario Infelise, “News Networks Between Italy and Europe,” in Brendan Dooley, ed., *The Dissemination of News and the Emergence of Contemporaneity in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 54. In 1901, the *North-China Herald* reported, “It is said that we owe the idea to the Italians, and it would be of interest to trace back and find if their *gazettas*—from *gazzera*, a magpie or chatterer, —did not give the name to our modern gazettes.” *NCH*, December 18, 1901.

⁵ Handover, *History of the London Gazette*.

⁶ These included *Le Moniteur Universel* (1799-1868); *Journal officiel* (1869-present), now known as the *Journal officiel de la République française*. Christopher Todd, *Political Bias, Censorship, and the Dissolution of the “Official” Press in Eighteenth-Century France* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1991), 310. The current *Journal officiel* publishes laws and decrees, parliamentary debates, and other legal notices.

⁷ Besides Todd, *Political Bias*, most studies of official gazettes in Europe focus on the seventeenth century. For example, see Sonja Schultheiß-Heinz, “Contemporaneity in 1672-1679: The Paris *Gazette*, the *London Gazette*, and the *Teutsche Kriegs-Kurier* (1672-1679),” in Dooley, ed., *The Dissemination of News*, 115-135. Government gazettes were in fact widespread in the mid-nineteenth century, especially in European and former colonial states, as can be seen by a survey done in 1841. P.L. Simmonds, “Statistics of Newspapers in Various Countries,” *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 4, no. 2 (1841): 111-136. The translators of the Peking Gazette and readers of Anglophone newspapers discussed in this chapter would have been most familiar with the *London Gazette*.

in reference to the employment or dismissal of a government official.⁸

This chapter highlights the Qing court gazette as an information source *within* newspapers. Newspapers from Canton to Belfast used dispatches from the “Pekin Gazette” to provide glimpses of China for their readers. Early periodical and missionary accounts presumed that the Chinese Emperor directly controlled the publication of the Peking Gazette. For some, like the missionary Amiot, this system compared admirably to the “pell-mell” gazettes of Europe. After discussing eighteenth-century European encounters with the gazette, this chapter scrutinizes how nineteenth-century newspapers used gazette reports to cover military crises and diplomatic scandals. Editors on the China coast and abroad used gazette translations to chronicle events in China alongside other foreign news. Beginning in the 1870s, *Shenbao*, the most important early Chinese-language newspaper, followed in this pattern by giving the gazette a privileged place in its pages and using material from the gazette to weigh in on political debates and controversies. This view of the gazette in the pages of newspapers from the 1720s to the 1880s demonstrates the remarkable distance that gazette reports traveled in translation and their influence on representations of the Qing Empire in the press.

“all the Gazettes of China”: Early European Descriptions of Qing Gazettes

In the early eighteenth century, London newspapers had begun to include occasional summaries of events in China, drawn from reports authored by missionaries residing in the imperial capital of Beijing and sent via the southern trading port of Canton. These summaries focused on events of major interest: for example, a major earthquake

⁸ Newspaper and British official translators of the gazette also followed this convention. For example, “Heenqua the Hong merchant who preceded old Manhop, and run away, as some supposed, with a great deal of money, is Gazetted by the express order of the Emperor, as restored to the Official rank of Taoutae.” *CR*, August ? 1828; “A great number of promotions are gazetted in consequence of these successes.” TNA, FO 228/154, January 18, 1853.

near Beijing in 1721 was said to have almost “swallow’d” the Changchun yuan, an imperial garden retreat better known as part of the Yuanming yuan (and now known as the Old Summer Palace).⁹ The report, dated at Beijing on January 12, 1722, claimed that the earthquake had occurred on July 11, 1721.¹⁰ News of the earthquake thus took more than nine months to reach the readers of the London-based *Daily Courant*. Lacking any means to verify the information on their own, early-eighteenth century British newspapers that printed accounts attributed to the Chinese court gazette did not speculate about the authority of the gazette and represented accounts they drew from the gazette as incontrovertibly factual.

In these years, reports from China reflected European concerns about the prosecution and expulsion of missionaries. Readers learned of pressures and dangers facing French and Portuguese missionaries in China. One such report, on the arrest and subsequent execution of the Portuguese missionary João Mourão (1681-1726), explicitly noted the connection between the priest’s persecution and court politics. Mourão, previously a court favorite, was accused of conniving with an imperial prince, a former competitor to the throne for the Yongzheng Emperor, and still a dangerous rival in the mind of the Emperor.¹¹ London papers printed Mourão’s confession to conspiracy with the note, “This confession has been inserted in all the Gazettes of China, which are never published but by the Emperor’s Command... The Sentence pronounced against this last was posted up in the streets and at the Gates of the Merchant Houses...”¹² The letter

⁹ *Daily Courant*, April 26, 1722.

¹⁰ About four months was required for the news to travel from the Qing capital at Beijing to Europe. News from southern China took a shorter time, about two months.

¹¹ On Mourao’s downfall, and the circulation of reports about his fate in Portugal and among the Jesuits, see Eugenio Menegon, “*Surinama Tragoedia*, Religious and Political Martyrdom in the Yongzheng Period,” (Paper presented at Symposium on the History of Christianity in China, Hong Kong, October, 1996).

¹² “Extract of a Letter from Canton, dated the 2d of January, 1727,” *Daily Post*, December 28, 1728.

expressed concern that such public notices in the Chinese court gazette and posted in the streets had referred to the Father merely as “an European,” thereby drawing unfavorable attention to other Europeans in China. The report suggested for English readers that gazettes and other written notices were commonly known among the Chinese, and held the power to influence public opinion.¹³

The correspondent’s note that Chinese gazettes “are never published but by the Emperor’s Command” pointed to the role of the Emperor himself in imposing Father Mourão’s sentence, but also established a key distinction between Chinese and European gazettes. In seventeenth-century Europe, gazettes had originated as collections of documents, correspondence, and testimonies collected by editors with privileged positions close to the court. Although considered official by their association with the state, gazettes were also closely linked with the personal leanings and networks of the editor.¹⁴ The distinction made in this letter indicated that the news of the Chinese gazette was probably true and verifiable, not inserted by a willful or biased editor. The remark connoted despotism by connecting the Emperor to the gazette, yet also established a critical distinction between European and Chinese gazettes and praised the Chinese gazette for its impartiality, authenticity, and authority.

Consistent with positive evaluations of the “oriental despot” circulating in Enlightenment Europe, the French Jesuit Jean Joseph Marie Amiot (1718-1793) affirmed a positive view of the Qing court and its gazette. In a 1787 letter, Amiot defended the gazettes as his primary news source against a different source employed by competing

¹³ Ongoing research by Eugenio Menegon shows that Jesuits in Beijing frequently copied from the Chinese gazette in their reports to Rome. Jesuits in Canton in the late seventeenth century also obtained copies of the Chinese gazette. Noël Golvers, *Francois de Rougemont, S.J., Missionary in Ch’ang-shu (Chiang-nan): A Study of the Account Book (1674-1676) and the Elogium* (Leiden: Leuven University Press, 1999), 22.

¹⁴ Pettegree, *The Invention of News*, 200-207.

missionary correspondents in Canton to evaluate the extent of severe floods on Taiwan. Amiot wrote that because the gazette was attached to the government, gazette copyists and printers were not allowed to alter the official text. He compared the Chinese gazette to its European counterparts:

The name of ‘Gazettes’ that we are accustomed to give them might suggest that they can be seen as roughly similar to the Gazettes of Europe, in which the Editors (*Compositeurs*) enter pell-mell all that they see fit to insert, truth beside falsehood, the reality of events concealed by disguising circumstances, the frivolity of conjectures, false reasoning, and the absurdity of popular rumors, following political revelations. It is not in these traits that we can recognize the daily reports in use among the Chinese.¹⁵

Amiot criticized unofficial news sources in China that, while perhaps faster or occasionally more detailed than the official gazette, might, like European gazettes, tend to bias or falsehood. When comparing Chinese and European gazettes, he emphasized the authority of the Qing gazette in comparison to both less reliable European papers and unofficial Chinese sources. Amiot declared that the reliability of the gazette originated in its close proximity to centralized political power, an argument that bolstered his claims that his residence in the Qing capital gave him privileged access to reliable information.

Writing from late-eighteenth century Beijing, Amiot had urged his European correspondents to heed the dispatches that he relayed from the Peking Gazette. According to Amiot, the gazette was a supremely reliable record because the Qing throne closely controlled its contents. During the eighteenth century, emergent European newspapers expanded their coverage of international affairs by borrowing shamelessly from the pages

¹⁵ “Extrait d’une lettre de M. Amiot, Missionnaire,” in *Mémoires concernant l’histoire, les sciences, les arts, les mœurs, les usages, &c Des Chinois; par les missionnaires de Peking*. (Paris: Nyon, 1789), 14:523-525.

of gazettes published in other countries.¹⁶ Borrowing and sometimes fabricating translations of the Peking Gazette, editors sought to expand their coverage of international news to China. In so doing, they established a practice of obscuring intermediary correspondents and translators of the gazette. By depicting direct, rather than mediated, access to the gazette, newspapers represented themselves as having an authoritative connection to the Qing gazette, and by proxy, to the Qing Emperor.

Canton Newspapers and the ‘Peking Gazette’

In Canton, where Protestant missionary interest in the region grew alongside a burgeoning trade in opium, tea, and luxury items in the early nineteenth century, multiple obstacles challenged foreigners’ access to information about the Chinese court, including lack of fluency in the local language, comprehension of written classical Chinese, or trustworthy informants.¹⁷ Newcomers to the Canton coast seeking information about local events, government attitudes, and national trends felt both overwhelmed by the immense quantities of written and oral information and disappointed at the lack of a newspaper industry similar to that recently developed in the West. These interlocutors sought, but could not locate, a local press that would offer both digests of information secured from throughout the empire and commentary to help them understand the importance of these events. Contributors to the early English-language press in South China employed court and provincial gazettes for information about the administration of

¹⁶ Individual news items were reproduced many times in different papers through chains of translation and slight modification. Will Slauter, “The Paragraph as Information Technology: How News Traveled in the Eighteenth-Century Atlantic World,” *Annales. Histoire, Sciences sociales* 67, no. 2 (2012): 258-268.

¹⁷ Michael Greenberg, citing the data in H.B. Morse, *Chronicles of the East India Company Trading to China, 1635-1834*, 5 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926-9) suggests an increase in the total value of the combined (company and private) import trade from approximately \$13.6 million in 1817 to approximately \$23.5 million in 1833, and in the export trade from approx. \$9.8 million in 1817 to \$13.4 million in 1833. Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China, 1800-42* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1951), 216-7.

justice in China, the fates of missionaries and converted Christians, and general information about the Qing state and bureaucracy.

The Protestant missionary Robert Morrison, whose translations of the gazette featured in many news items about China published in the 1810s through early 1830s, first wrote about the gazette to his sponsors, the London Missionary Society, shortly after his arrival in Canton in 1807. The English East India Company appointed the penniless missionary as a translator in 1808. Prior to this time the Company had only occasionally referred to the court gazette in its reports, and it appeared infrequently in Anglophone publications. After Morrison's appointment, gazette translations became a regular fixture in Company reports and Anglophone papers. At the Company, the Peking Gazette was Morrison's primary tool for language instruction and for obtaining intelligence about the state of the Qing empire and especially the attitudes of the Jiaqing and Daoguang emperors towards Christianity, opium, and the English traders.¹⁸ In addition to his busy career as a missionary Sinologist and translator for the East India Company, Morrison produced copious translations and summaries of news and information for his personal and business correspondents and China-coast periodicals.¹⁹

Morrison's translations of the gazette first entered the English market in 1815, when the East India Company incorporated his translations into a pamphlet designed to publicize the Company's new linguistic capacities and printing press.²⁰ In 1815, the

¹⁸ BL, IOR/G/12/20 ff.505-10. Extract letter from the Select Committee 12 Mar 1815, forwarding an edict translated by Morrison; BL, IOR/G/12/185, p. 37, April 13th: "Contents of Some Extracts from Peking Gazette."

¹⁹ BL, Mss EUR F140/50(b) Amherst Papers. Information about China Supplied by Mr. Morrison, Nov 1820-Nov 1821; CWM/LMS. China. Personal. Morrison to Fisher.

²⁰ Morrison had sent an item translated from the Gazette to the Edinburgh *Missionary Magazine* in 1813, but as he related, "The following Edict was translated from the Chinese into Spanish, by a Romish Missionary at Macao; and translated out of Spanish into English. I have not seen the original Chinese paper. I have seen several papers in the Peking Gazette; of which the following is indeed to substance." Morrison

Company published a pamphlet containing Morrison's translations and others by J.F. Davis and George Thomas Staunton, three men known as the most learned sinologues in the company's employ. Morrison had persuaded the Company to open a printing press in Canton at considerable expense, so this pamphlet demonstrated the impressive ability of the press to print attractive Chinese and English text and the developing linguistic skills of the Company's staff. In a review in London's *Quarterly Review* that year, the publication and its contributors received enthusiastic praise.²¹ The editors commended this work as *useful* translation, as opposed to the "theories" of French missionaries and other Continental predecessors in the study of Chinese language and culture.²²

Subsequently, Morrison found a home for his gazette translations in the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*. The *Gleaner* was a missionary journal, intended to link London Missionary Society missionaries working in distant and isolated stations around the world. "[In] our present state," the journal's editor, the missionary William Milne (1785-1822), wrote in the journal's first issue, "we seem, from a paucity of mutual communications to be rather too much isolated."²³ Although Milne had hoped to bring together communications from stations in Africa and the Indian Ocean as well as the South China region, in practice, the journal concentrated on news and translations produced by Morrison in China and Milne in Malacca.²⁴ Morrison's contributions mainly tracked current events in China in a column titled "Journal of Occurrences," and he also offered

became famous as a translator, missionary, and Sinologist later in the decade. "China. Edict Against Christianity," *The Missionary Magazine* (January 1813): 18.

²¹ The *Quarterly Review*, founded in 1809, was one of the two most influential English journals (next to its rival, the *Edinburgh Review*) of the time.

²² "Translations from the Original Chinese; With Notes," *The Quarterly Review* 13, no.26 (1815): 409.

²³ See note prefacing *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, No. 1, May 1817.

²⁴ The LMS printing press at Malacca also produced evangelical material in Chinese and English. On this mission, see Ching Su, "The Printing Presses of the London Missionary Society among the Chinese," (PhD Dissertation, University College London, 1996), 97-232.

comments, musings, and observations in letters signed “Amicus.”

Morrison drew almost all of the items in his “Journal of Occurrences” from the Peking Gazette. In each quarterly issue (twenty issues were published in total), the column included digests of interesting or important events covered in the Gazette. As shown by the table below, in a single issue of the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, Morrison contributed translations of sixteen items from at least six different dates of the Peking Gazette, on topics ranging from criminal prosecutions to natural disasters. For this issue, published in October 1818, Morrison used gazettes dating no later than May 1818, five months earlier. This delay of five months to a year was typical of the gazette translations featured in the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*.

Table 4.1. Gazette Items in the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* (October, 1818)

Gazette Date	Title	Summary
May 14, 1818	Hurricane at Peking	Sandstorm at Beijing; critical memorial from three censor interpreting the event; imperial response to censors; memorial from “The Mathematic Board.”
February 4, 1818	The Late Prime Minister Sung	Edict on emperor’s intentions to visit imperial tombs, condemnation of “Sung Taijin.”
January 15, 1818	THE PEKING GAZETTE	Gazette “exceedingly barren of intelligence”; death sentence for two officials who accepted bribes; arrest and release of Beijing residents accused of secretly manufacturing gunpowder.
February 1, 1818	A FEAST ON A SACRIFICE	Invitation from Emperor to various princes and officials to share in New Year’s feast.
March 29, 1818	FALL OF SNOW. EXHIBITION OF ARCHERY	Dearth of snowfall leads to suffering in Gansu region; Emperor attends archery exhibition.
March 29, 1818	MUNGKOO TARTARS	Edict on prosecution of crimes committed by Chinese while in Mongol lands.
March 29, 1818	BANDITTI PARDONED	Capital region families involved in a bandit association pardoned from punishment.

March 29, 1818	LITERARY EXAMINATION	Notes on palace examination.
	EMIGRATION PROHIBITED	Censor's suggestion to ban emigration to locate those involved in recent White Lotus Rebellion.
	A JUDGE DEGRADED	Chang (Shandong) degraded to a low rank.
January 20, 1818	NAVAL AFFAIRS—KIDNAPPING	Criticism of local governments for not remitting full tax revenues to central government; Minister Tung-kaou requests sick leave; new appointment at Tianjin; last year's bad harvest in Yunnan has led to social unrest.
	MILITARY ETIQUETTE, &c.	Emperor's displeasure at sorry state of military.
	THE HOOKAH: TOBACCO	New law forbidding tobacco cultivation.
	PUNISHMENT, TORTURE &c.	Executions in rebellion of 1813; government relief for debt-ridden salt merchants of Shandong ; many criminal cases in Sichuan Province; two recent cases of suspects dying under official torture.
	THE CROSS TRODDEN	Manchu nobles "trod on the cross" and burn Christian images to prove rejection of Christianity.
	DISCOVERY OF A MURDER IN KEANG-NAN	Complicated murder case in Sanyang [in present-day Jiangsu].

Source: [Robert Morrison], "Journal of Occurrences," 175-187.

Morrison offered these translations as "some papers containing accounts of such of the daily occurrences of China," which explains his inclusion of a highly miscellaneous set of material. In addition, Morrison adopted the role of interpreter, offering comments on many of the accounts. Among other things, Morrison in his comments assessed the execution of justice in China by describing the predilection of the Chinese authorities to frequent executions, excessive torture, and other cruelties.²⁵ The

²⁵ For example, in "Cruelties Exercised," Morrison quoted a case from the Peking Gazette where a censor reported the excessive use of torture by local magistrates, and stated, "I think you will agree with me, Mr. Editor, that the above, is a very lamentable state of society. When my Moonshe [secretary/translator] read this paper, he said, "I knew this was the state of things in Canton, but I never thought it was so in the other provinces." *Indo-Chinese Gleaner*, No. 4, May 1818.

focus on evaluating the despotic nature of the Chinese through attention to their laws and punishments would, as Li Chen has observed, serve as a common thread through British assessments of China in China-coast writings.²⁶ Other scholars have shown that the attention to punishment and justice in China paralleled a negative shift in evaluations of the Chinese among Europeans. Morrison, for his part, was critical of official cruelty, but his comments overall reflected a comparatively neutral attitude towards China.

With growing interest among Britons in trade and missionary activity in China, journals and learned societies featured the writings and translations of Morrison and other renowned Sinologues. Morrison's gazette translations from the *Gleaner* were picked up on occasion in the London *Morning Chronicle*, and more regularly in *The Asiatic Journal and Monthly Miscellany*, a London journal founded in 1816 under the auspices of the East India Company.²⁷ After the *Gleaner* ceased publication in 1822, the *Asiatic Journal* quoted briefly from the *Malacca Observer and Chinese Chronicle*, another paper to which Morrison contributed.²⁸ By the 1830s, the *Asiatic Journal*, following Morrison's career, relied exclusively on the *Canton Register* for gazette translations. When Morrison's student John Francis Davis (1795-1890), who would become the governor of British Hong Kong in 1844, finished a set of translated extracts from the Peking Gazette, these were read aloud at three successive general meetings of the Royal Asiatic Society in

²⁶ Li Chen, *Chinese Law in Imperial Eyes: Sovereignty, Justice, and Transcultural Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), Ch.4.

²⁷ "(Untitled)," *The Morning Chronicle*, August 5, 1819; "Police in China," *The Asiatic Journal* (July 1819): 30-32; "Sinesiana," *The Asiatic Journal* (October 1819): 341-5; "Sinesiana," *The Asiatic Journal* (February 1820): 137-9; "Sinesiana," *The Asiatic Journal* (June 1820): 562-4; "China," *The Asiatic Journal* (Nov. 1820): 442-6; "Internal Polity of China," *The Asiatic Journal* (May 1821): 450-2; "Internal Polity of China," *The Asiatic Journal* (June 1821): 561-4; "Chinese Coronation," *The Asiatic Journal* (April 1822): 332-5; "Chinese Miscellanea," *The Asiatic Journal* (September 1822): 234-6; "Indo-Chinese Miscellanea," *The Asiatic Journal* (Dec.1822): 566-8.

²⁸ I have not been able to see this rare paper, which was founded in 1826 and is, as far as I am aware, only available at the British Library. For the association with Morrison, see Alexander Andrews, *The History of British Journalism, From the Foundation of the Newspaper Press in England to the Repeal of the Stamp Act in 1855, with Sketches of Press Celebrities* (London: Richard Bentley, 1859), 2:314.

London.²⁹

While *The Asiatic Journal* remained a specialized journal with a limited audience, British newspapers with more broadly based readerships began in the mid-1820s to feature original news from China. These papers, lacking correspondents in East Asia, instead relied on copies of China-coast newspapers sent to them by ship, especially the *Canton Register* and the *Malacca Observer*. In short summaries of news from China, the papers excerpted and summarized the gazette translations featured in China-coast publications. The content of these excerpts, recycled as they were from China-coast papers, were also recycled from larger London papers, such as the *Times* or the *Morning Chronicle*, to smaller and less central papers. The frequency of “Peking Gazette” items in British newspapers, and their most frequently attributed sources, are shown in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Gazette Items in British Newspapers, 1800-1879

Dates	No. of News Items	Attributed Source Locations (if noted)
1800-1809	1	Canton (East India Company)
1810-1819	6	Malacca (1)
1820-1829	9	Malacca (2); Canton (2)
1830-1839	3	Canton (1)
1840-1849	17	Canton (1); Hong Kong (2); London (<i>Times</i>) (2)
1850-1859	79	Shanghai (14); Hong Kong (33); Tianjin (1)
1860-1869	14	Shanghai (3); Hong Kong (5)
1870-1879	117	Shanghai (57); Hong Kong (11); Beijing (4)

Source: Drawn from “19th Century British Library Newspapers,” “Times Digital Archives,” and “Proquest Historical Newspapers” databases. Newspapers in these databases that most commonly printed gazette items between 1800 and 1880 were all London papers, including: the *Daily News*; the *Morning Chronicle*; the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and the *Times*.

Note: I selected only short news items or summaries that explicitly cite the Peking

²⁹ “Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,” *The Asiatic Journal* (January 1826): 67; “Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,” *The Asiatic Journal* (February 1826): 223; John Francis Davis, “Extracts from the Peking Gazette for 1824, Being the Fourth Year of Taoukwang,” *Transactions of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 1, no. 2 (1826): 386-412. Extracts for 1825 were read on Nov. 4, 1826. “Proceedings of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland,” *The Asiatic Journal* (December 1826): 691.

Gazette as a source, not descriptions of the gazette or news about China that may or may not have come from the gazette. “Attributed Source Locations” refers to items clearly marked as obtained from a correspondent, paper, or other source.

Scholars of the early modern European press have noted newspapers’ tendency to indiscriminately borrow material from other papers, only sometimes attributing sources. In the late eighteenth century, a new understanding of news as a series of topical paragraphs, rather than an extended unbroken narrative, facilitated the exchange of paragraph-long news items between papers.³⁰ The style developed by Robert Morrison for translating the gazette, in which he summarized key gazette entries in a paragraph, similarly allowed newspapers to excerpt specific items for their international coverage. Some papers noted that they had received the material via a China-coast newspaper, but it was more common for papers to attribute information directly to the Peking Gazette itself. By omitting notice that that the material in fact had been translated and quoted from an intermediary source, less central papers like *The Ipswich Journal* suggested a direct connection between their paper and the Chinese gazette.³¹

As seen in Table 4.2, the succession of source locations attributed by foreign newspapers illustrates the changing centers of the British press and resident population on the China coast, from Malacca to Canton, Canton to Hong Kong, and Hong Kong to Shanghai. Predictably, as the British gained an official presence in five treaty ports after 1842 and a legation in Beijing (and several more treaty ports) after 1860, the volume of information attributed to the court gazette increased significantly. Yet even after the expansion of treaty ports, information and news moved primarily through the major

³⁰ Slauter, “Paragraph as Information Technology,” 258-268.

³¹ Slauter, citing Denis Reynaud, suggests this was an aesthetic choice and also to give the impression of neutrality (by not citing a paper known to be biased or partisan). But citing from Chinese papers seems to be a special case. Slauter, “Paragraph as Information Technology,” 268.

China-Coast newspapers in Canton, Hong Kong, and Shanghai, rather than from correspondents in the newly opened ports.

Robert Morrison's contribution of gazette translations to the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* set a precedent for his subsequent work for the *Canton Register*, a newspaper that began publishing on November 8, 1827. Of the founding of the paper, Morrison wrote to a correspondent, "An American youth [William Wood] is about to establish a new thing in the earth, 'A Canton Register' or newspaper in the English language. There is reason to fear his talents, principles & information will be inadequate to the task."³² Morrison did not elaborate on his concerns, but perhaps owing to Wood's inadequacies, he quickly began contributing to the *Register*. From its early issues, just as he had for the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* and *Malacca Observer*, Morrison sent translations and remarks on Chinese documents and intelligence, once again relying on the Peking Gazette. In the *Register's* early years, translated content from court and provincial gazettes made up a significant portion of the paper's bimonthly issues.

Following the *Canton Register*, other key China-Coast periodicals in the nineteenth century began regularly including translations from the Peking Gazette (see Table 4.3). Most, like the *Register*, offered one or two paragraph-length translations per issue, on topics of interest due to their urgency (a drought or sandstorm); local interest (cases involving local officials were of particular interest); relevance to religious or missionary interests (cases involving persecution of Christians, or cases demonstrating the prevalence of "superstition" among the Chinese), or relevance to trade and foreign relations. The newspapers generally did not explain what the Peking Gazette was or attempt to justify the choice to excerpt from it for their audiences. Instead, translations of

³² CWM. China. Personal Box 3c. Robert Morrison Papers. Morrison to Fisher, November 3, 1827.

the gazette were designated under the headings “Translations and Selected Excerpts from the Peking Reporter,” “Peking Gazette,” “Journal of the Capital,” and others. The fact that editors did not seem to need to explicitly introduce the gazette suggests that they assumed readers’ relative familiarity with the Chinese gazette, or at least that it fit into readers’ preconceptions about government gazettes.

Table 4.3. Key China-Coast Periodicals, 1817-1860

Title	Location	Dates Active	Editor/ Key Contributors
<i>The Indo-Chinese Gleaner</i>	Malacca	1817-1822	W. Milne (editor); R. Morrison [Amicus] (contributor)
<i>Malacca Observer and Chinese Chronicle</i>	Malacca	1826-1829	? (R. Morrison, contributor)
<i>The Canton Register</i>	Canton	1827-1843	Editors: W. Wood (1827-1830); J. Matheson, R. Morrison (1828-1830); A.S. Keating (1830-1833); J. Slade (1834-1843)
<i>Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette</i>	Canton	1831-1833	W. Wood
<i>Chinese Repository</i>	Canton	1832-1851	E. Bridgman; S. Williams
<i>Canton Press and Price Current</i>	Canton	1835-1844	W.H. Franklyn (1835); E. Moller
<i>Friend of China and Hongkong Gazette</i>	Macao, Hong Kong, Canton	1842-1859	J. White and J. Shuck (1842); J. Carr (1843-1849); W. Tarrant (1850-1859)
<i>Hongkong Register</i>	Hong Kong	1843-1861	J. Slade (1843); J. Cairns (1843-1849); W. Mitchell (1849-1850); T. Dale (1850); W. Bevan (1851-1859); R. Phillips (1859); M. MacLeod, J. Beecher (1860); J. Jeffrey, J. Brown (1861)
<i>China Mail</i>	Hong Kong	1845-1911	A. Shortrede (1845-1856); A. Dixson (1856-1858); A. Wilson (1858-1860); J. Kemp (1860-1863);
<i>North-China Herald</i>	Shanghai	1850-1949	H. Shearman (1850-1856); J. Smith, C. Compton (1856-1861); S. Mossman (1861-1863)

Source: Frank H.H. King and Prescott Clarke, *A Research Guide to China-Coast Newspapers, 1822-1911* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1965).

Besides gazette translations, the *Canton Register* was filled with discussion of local news and rumors, shipping and trade information, weather reports, excerpts from international newspapers, and occasional excerpts from other books and journals, often concerning Chinese history or geography. The paper's editors authored columns of commentary on matters of local interest, and readers responded with lengthy letters, often coded or filled with sarcasm. In the case of pre-Opium War Canton, these matters were almost exclusively problems of trade and representation between England and Qing China, including local disputes with Chinese merchants and customs officials, arguments about the proper role of the English crown in advancing the position of British trade, and commentary on the propriety of the opium trade.³³ However, in late 1827, the *Canton Register* began to alert its readers to the events of the rebellions against Qing imperium in Kashgar led by Jahangir Khoja. The circulation of knowledge about the Jahangir rebellion illustrates how the circulation of Peking Gazette reports linked the edges of maritime and land empires and voiced geopolitical anxieties both in China and abroad.

“Tales of Changkihur”

In the first years of the *Canton Register*, Robert Morrison's gazette translations chronicled the rebellion of “the Mahomedan Rebel,” Jahangir (called Chang-ki-hur in the *Register*).³⁴ During the late Jiaqing and Daoguang reigns, the Qing court gazette

³³ The *Canton Register* was funded by James Matheson, a Scot who partnered with William Jardine to form Jardine, Matheson and Company, one of the most prominent “private firms” (i.e. outside the monopoly of the East India Company) in Canton. Beginning in 1835, their rival firm, Dent and Company, funded the *Canton Press*. For a study based on the Jardine, Matheson and Company archives, see Greenberg, *British Trade and the Opening of China*.

³⁴ By his own request, Morrison's gazette translations were published anonymously, but his style is easily traceable to his published translations and his references to gazette items in his private correspondence. Morrison wrote to the editor of the *Canton Register* shortly after the paper was founded, requesting, “In

frequently published reports authored by administrators in Kashgar, the furthest west outpost of the Qing empire.³⁵ As described in Chapter 3, the publication of these reports in the gazette fueled wider interest in the rebellion throughout the empire; Morrison's translations of gazette reports ensured that Jahangir's rebellion also drew the attention of European readers. As a devoted gazette reader, Morrison had been reading for years about the challenges to Qing control in southern Xinjiang from Jahangir, a rebel leader previously held captive in Kokand, but with emergent popular support in the area around Kashgar.³⁶

Jahangir's lineage, the Afaqi, had been vying for power in southern Xinjiang (Altishahr) since the mid-seventeenth century, battling both a rival Sufi order and Qing forces.³⁷ In the 1750s, Qing armies defeated the Zungar Mongols and set up bureaucratic administration in Xinjiang. At this time, the Qing chose the Afaqi leader Khoja Burhan ad-Din, previously held hostage by Zunghar forces, to rule as proxy in Altishahr. But

contributions to your paper of a purely speculative kind, where no assertion is made, the truth or falsehood of which may require proof or personal responsibility, I trust the cloak intended to cover anonymous correspondents will never be withdrawn by you; and that you will give a pledge to the community to that effect." He signed the letter with his usual pseudonym, AMICUS. *CR*, November 10, 1827.

³⁵ Morrison's correspondence with the LMS and his financial adviser are contained in the Council for World Mission archives at SOAS (University of London); much of his correspondence with his son is held at the Wellcome Collection; some correspondence with the East India Company is held at the British Library.

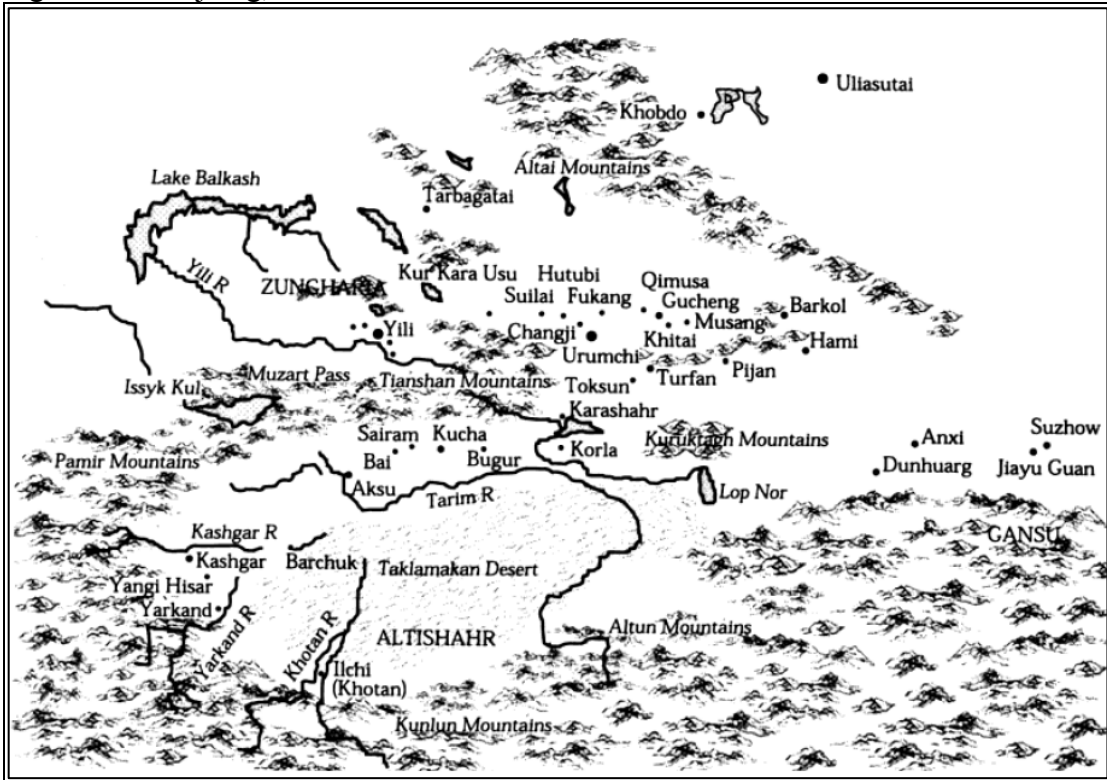
³⁶ The discussion below is synthesized from several secondary works: Laura Newby, "Xinjiang: In Search of an Identity," in Tao Tao Liu and David Faure, ed., *Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), 67-82; Joseph F. Fletcher, "Ch'ing Inner Asia c. 1800," in John K. Fairbank, ed., *Cambridge History of China Volume 10: Late Ch'ing 1800-1911, Part I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978): 35-106. James Millward and Laura Newby, "The Qing and Islam on the Western Frontier," in Pamela Kyle Crossley, Helen F. Siu, and Donald S. Sutton, eds., *Empire at the Margins: Culture, Ethnicity, and Frontier in Early Modern China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 113-134; L.J. Newby, *The Empire and the Khanate: A Political History of Qing Relations with Khoqand, ca. 1760-1860* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); James A. Millward, *Beyond the Pass: Economy, Ethnicity, and Empire in Qing Central Asia, 1759-1864* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998); Hodong Kim, *Holy War in China: The Muslim Rebellion and State in Chinese Central Asia, 1864-1877* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 8-26.

³⁷ "Khoja" is a Persian term for a religious and political leader. On the history of Sufi orders in Xinjiang, see Joseph Fletcher, "The Naqshibandiyya in Northwest China," in Beatrice F. Manz, ed., *Studies on Chinese and Islamic Inner Asia* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1995), 1-46. The authoritative account of the Zunghar wars is Perdue, *China Marches West*, 174-299.

once installed, Burhan ad-Din led a revolt against the Qing that ultimately failed.

Afterwards, the Khojas went into exile in the Ferghana Valley, an area controlled by the khanate of Kokand, then growing rich as a conduit zone for central Asian trading routes.

Figure 4.1. Xinjiang, ca. 1820



Source: Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 22.

Although the Khojas derived their popular support from religious claims, Qing administrators remained unaware of the religious affinities that heightened the population's loyalty towards Jahangir and their resentment toward the Qing local administration. The Qing had a great deal of knowledge about Islam, but overlooked complex rivalries between Sufi orders in the area. Officials stationed in Xinjiang did not scrutinize religious affinities and ruptures among the area's Muslim population.³⁸ As a

³⁸ The treatment of Muslim populations under Qing law and administration has been the subject of a growing body of work. See contributions by Lipman and Millward and Newby to *Empire at the Margins*, as well as Jonathan N. Lipman, *Familiar Strangers: A History of Muslims in Northwest China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998) and Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, Ch. 6.

result, Qing reports glossed over social conflicts defined by religious sympathies and grievances, describing them as simple local conflicts caused by poor administrative oversight. Even as Jahangir lingered in the mountains, the Qing claimed that the descendants of Burhan ad-Din had been wiped out from the area entirely.³⁹

Jahangir first attacked the city of Kashgar in 1814, and a second, more serious attack followed in 1820. The final revolt of 1826 would end with his death, but would also be most consequential in shaking the Qing court's sense of authority in the area. During this time, Jahangir relied on the region's rival power to the Qing, Kokand for support and shelter. A Central Asian khanate with major territorial ambitions in the early nineteenth century, Kokand was also an important trading partner for the Qing in goods like rhubarb and tea.⁴⁰ The Kokandi leader, Umar Khan (r.1811-1822), did not offer direct military support to Jahangir, but released him to attack Qing territory and later offered him sanctuary in the pursuit of a strategic advantage in bargaining for better trade privileges with the Qing.⁴¹ After Umar Khan's death in 1822, his son Muhammad Ali (r.1822-1841) offered indirect support to Jahangir, but not out of friendliness to Qing interests. Punished by the Qing with an embargo for harboring and aiding Jahangir, in 1830 Muhammad Ali would instigate yet another invasion of Kashgar.

In spring 1826, Jahangir resolved to take Kashgar. On the way to the city, he stopped at a local shrine in order to validate his religious credentials and affirm his

³⁹ There was also a son under surveillance in Beijing. There was a later, abortive plan to install him as proxy. The Qing official Songyun, then serving as military governor of Ili, had reported in 1814 that Sarimsaq (Jahangir's father) had no descendants at the very time that his son was preparing his attack. Only much later, in 1821, did the official Qingxiang reveal to the court that Jahangir was the valid claimant as Afaqi khoja.

⁴⁰ Kokand's territory stretched among present-day Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan. In 1868, it became a vassal state of Russia, and the khanate was abolished in 1876.

⁴¹ Umar Khan may have in fact kept tabs on Jahangir while he hid out in Kokand, in trade for tax and trade privileges from the Qing, but this is a contested point. See Kim, *Holy War in China*, 24; Newby, *Empire and the Khanate*, 58-61; Millward, *Eurasian Crossroads*, 111n45.

mission against the Qing as a holy war. Jahangir drew significant support in the region due to his popular reputation as a religious savior. His adherents soon took Kashgar, overpowering Qing forces after a 70-day stand. By autumn, they had captured the regional cities of Yangi Hisar, Yarkand, and Khotan. A compounding blow to Qing authority in the region came with the rebellion of the Dolans, a small Muslim group who served as conscripted laborers manning the area's military post stations. Their revolt quickly severed Qing military communications.

Within months, Jahangir's rule in Kashgar devolved into chaos and pillage, and his authority crumbled. Meanwhile, the Daoguang Emperor put the Mongol general Changling, along with the military officials Yang Yuchun and Ulungge, in charge of recovering the cities of Altishahr. Changling requested and received forty thousand Green Standard troops for the effort, recruited from Ili, Urumchi, Sichuan, Shaan-Gan, Jilin, and Heilongjiang.⁴² Changling was ordered to treat harshly all locations that had risen up against Qing troops, but to offer mercy to areas that had remained docile. Once again, the official rhetoric espoused by Qing commanders followed simplistic understandings of rebellion and did not attend to religious alliances that animated popular support for the rebellion. Thus, the Qing chose not to presume that Afaqi Sufis had supported Jahangir, or to discriminate, investigate, or purge along these lines.

Jahangir lost control of Kashgar in March 1827, quickly followed by the regional cities of Yangi Hisar, Yarkand, and Khotan. Yet he escaped, and the Daoguang Emperor, who had recently awarded honors to Changling and his deputies for their military

⁴² The Qing military was split into two standing armies: the eight banners, organized into Manchu, Mongol, and Han banner units, and the Green Standard Army, composed primarily of Han Chinese troops. See Mark C. Elliott, *The Manchu Way: The Eight Banners and Ethnic Identity in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 39-171 and James B. Bonk, "Chinese Military Men and Cultural Practice in the Early Nineteenth Century Qing Empire (1800-1840)," (PhD diss., Princeton University, 2014), 16-19.

successes, stripped them of these prizes. A long and exhausting search for the fugitive Jahangir finally resulted in his capture in February of 1828. The captive rebel was transferred to Beijing for questioning and execution. In response to the ease with which Qing control had broken down during the rebellion, Qing frontier officials, led by Nayanceng, sought to reorganize administration in the area, clearing out and prosecuting transients and traders who they saw as having exacerbated local social tensions. Nayanceng imposed a trade embargo on Kokand for its support of the Jahangir rebellion. Kashgar would not remain quiet for long, however, as the city was rocked by invasion from Kokandi and allied forces, and brutal killing at the hands of the Qing commanders who once again restored order in the city.⁴³

Accounts of these events featured regularly in the court gazette and subsequently in the *Canton Register*. Though the events of the rebellion occurred thousands of miles from coastal Guangdong Province, the reports included in the *Canton Register* show that the Jahangir rebellion had local importance for the city of Canton. Morrison cited an account, “the production of a Cantonese,” that described the recruitment of over one thousand convicts from the area into the frontier army, and the role of these ““short, small, active, and unfeeling”” men in the “killing and frightening [of] poor Changkihur’s rebel banditti.”⁴⁴ On other occasions, Morrison cited “private letters” to illustrate the anxieties felt at court in Beijing, signaling to his readers his connections to a network of correspondents in China.⁴⁵ He also sometimes borrowed reports from an “occasional newspaper...issued in Canton, containing extraordinary documents from the Peking

⁴³ See Millward, *Beyond the Pass*, 211-223.

⁴⁴ “Tales of Changkihur,” *CR*, May 3, 1828.

⁴⁵ “Tartar War,” *CR*, December 14, 1827.

Gazette and wonderful tales of passing occurrence.”⁴⁶

In addition to reflecting newly cultivated relationships within the Canton community and with distant correspondents, the reports of the siege on Kashgar also spoke to prevalent geopolitical and social anxieties among the British reading population, especially anxiety about the imperial ambitions of the Russian Empire. In his reports on the rebellion for the *Malacca Observer*, Morrison wrote of rumors that Russian troops aided Jahangir’s rebellion.⁴⁷ He reiterated these concerns the next year in the *Canton Register*, commenting, “Popular rumour has all along affirmed that the rebel *Changkihur*, had Russian assistance...It is not at all improbable, that the Tartar pretender had some Russian Officers in his service.”⁴⁸ A writer for the London *Morning Chronicle* echoed these suspicions of links between the Russian Empire and the region’s unrest:

[W]e should not be surprised if some of the parties appealed to Russia, whose power is not very remote, and who has long anxious to extend her commerce, if not her authority, into those regions. In that case British India will have that empire for a near neighbor. In a direction in which we have not been accustomed to anticipate its advance.⁴⁹

This comment, appended to the *Chronicle*’s reprint of a report from the *Malacca Observer* showed concern less for Jahangir’s threat to Qing authority in Central Asia, and more for the threat against British authority in India.

Attesting to the direct connection that British readers drew between the breakdown of Qing control in Kashgar and miscellaneous threats to British India, scholarly associations and press outlets affiliated with the East India Company followed the rebellion closely. In May 1827, the Royal Asiatic Society distributed to its members

⁴⁶ “Popular News,” *CR*, March 29, 1828.

⁴⁷ News on the rebellion attributed to the *Malacca Observer* appeared in the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Times*.

⁴⁸ “Revenue and War Department,” *CR*, March 15, 1828.

⁴⁹ *Morning Chronicle*, September 8, 1827.

copies of translated Chinese maps of “the seat of war in western Tartary” together with translations from the Peking Gazette concerning the misadventures of Qing troops in quelling the rebellion.⁵⁰ The *Morning Post*, a paper that advocated the agendas of the Conservative government, wrote of an account “brought to the Jerusalem Coffee-house,” the nerve-center of East India Company social life and operations in London.⁵¹ This account spoke of the rebellion in even more polemic terms:

The Tatars of Central Asia, if United, would be perilous foes both to China and Hindostan. If arrayed under the banners of a single Chief, as in the days of ZENGHIS [Genghis Khan] and TAMERLANE, they might again sweep and ravage Asia from the gates of China to the Persian Gulf.⁵²

With its references to the long-past days of Mongol dominance in Eurasia, the *Morning Post* story suggested to readers that the rebellion on the borders of the Qing empire could have consequences for the balance of power across the entire continent.

While London newspapers commented freely on the geopolitical implications of the rebellion, the reports published in the *Canton Register* usually followed official logic and presented themselves as honest translations. Discussing the causes of the rebellion, the *Register* followed the narrative of reports authored by Changling and published in the court gazette. According to this narrative, in the period prior to the 1828 rebellion, Qing administrators had been corrupt and inattentive to local affairs. They had allowed moneylenders and merchants to upset the cities, they had allowed Kokandi and other foreign merchants to enter and escape established trade regulations, and they had conducted themselves poorly with the population. Yet these official explanations could

⁵⁰ BL, Mss. Eur D638, letter from Benjamin Guy Babington on behalf of Royal Asiatic Society, May 19, 1827.

⁵¹ “The Jerusalem Coffee-House in London,” *The Oriental Herald and Journal of General Literature* 8, no. 26 (1826): 284.

⁵² *Morning Post*, April 10, 1827.

not obscure signs of further complexity. Shortly after the reported capture of Jahangir, Morrison cited a story circulating in the city that more fundamental social divides had caused the great rebellion in Kashgar:

But the Chinamen, both common people and Government officers, insulted and oppressed the Mahommedans, just as the Gentry of Canton insult the poor Tanka-boat people. [This is our native correspondent's comparison—we think he might have included the European barbarians]. This insult and oppression were not for one day only, but continual; and the Mahommedans cherished their indignation and resentment against the Chinese.⁵³

In his argument that mistreatment by Qing officials had driven the local Muslim population to anger and rebellion, Morrison drew comparisons to the indignation of European residents of Canton who felt perpetually mistreated by local officials. Thus the *Register* accounts typically accepted the narratives drawn by Qing official reports in the court gazette, but also established grounds for criticizing the hypocrisy of official conduct.

Although the reports in the *Canton Register* drawn from the Peking Gazette portrayed Qing affairs in Central Asia with more detail than previously possible, foreign interpreters of gazette reports encountered linguistic obstacles in translating this material for the newspaper. Ethnonyms and toponyms used by Qing authors were particularly incomprehensible. In the *Register*, Morrison faithfully translated reports that “the rebel CHANGKIHUR formed a coalition with a great many of the *Poolootih* Tartars,” (elsewhere called the Poolootih Mahomedans, and based on the Chinese term *bulute* 布鲁特), most likely unaware that the term referred to Kirghiz peoples. On occasion, the *Register* added references to commonly available maps so that readers might be able to

⁵³ “Tales of Changkihur,” *CR*, May 3, 1828.

find distant areas.⁵⁴ After the defeat of Jahangir and the celebration of Changling as the hero of this hard-fought campaign, the *Canton Register* referred to Changling in reports as late as 1834 as “the hero of Cashgar,” reminding readers that this name came “from his having been supreme in command when the unfortunate mahommedan Changkihur was taken prisoner....”⁵⁵ Having spent years reporting on the fortunes of the Qing in Southern Xinjiang, the *Register* had built up an eccentric vocabulary of terms and epithets for people and places associated with the 1828 rebellion.

Experienced translators like Morrison knew that the court gazette drew its content directly from the memorials of serving officials. As a result, the rhetorical techniques and strategic omissions employed by, for instance, a general leading a botched campaign, influenced the descriptions to be read in the gazette. Military success was the most favored report for circulation in the gazette; thus the *Register* noted when reports from Kashgar lapsed, “A good deal of mystery prevails in the Government offices about news from the seat of war, the despatches being kept secret; whence it is inferred they are of an unfavorable tendency.”⁵⁶ As a result, reports from the front often contradicted one another, inducing skepticism among readers. The Canton trader Robert Inglis developed a summary of the events of the 1826 rebellion for the *Chinese Repository* assembled from Gazette translations published in the *Register* and the *Malacca Observer*. After comparing the reports, Inglis wrote:

⁵⁴ For example: “The Peking Gazettes of June 26th and 29th, announce officially the occurrence of most destructive earthquakes a few days before, on the frontiers of PE-CHE-Li [Bei Zhili] and HO-NAN [Henan] Provinces. By consulting Du Halde’s Maps (which we refer to as being most accessible,—or to D’Anville’s which seem copies of the same original documents) our readers will see, in latitude 36.5°, TAY-MING-FOU, on the south of Peking Province at Lat. 36°, TCHANG-TE-FOU, on the north of HO-NAN Province, where the Provinces seem to splice by two dove-tails.” “An Earthquake,” *CR*, August 25, 1830.

⁵⁵ “Cashgar and Yarkand,” *CR*, March 25, 1834.

⁵⁶ “Canton,” *CR*, February 2, 1831.

We can only mention the facts as they present themselves, which will involve occasional repetition and inversion of dates. . . . It may be well to premise, that the Peking Gazettes have been “famous for describing battles that were never fought, and for announcing victories that were never gained,” as was confessed by the emperors [Kangxi] and [Jiaqing.]⁵⁷

Inglis’s quotation, drawn from John Barrow, a controversial commentator on China at the time, may have been apocryphal, but his remarks foreshadowed the complaints of future readers and translators of the court gazette. When it came to reports of rebellions, uprisings, and investigations, official reports demanded skepticism.

Conflict among South China Newspapers

Not all readers of the *Register* were pleased with their unprecedented access to Qing frontier affairs and other matters covered in the Gazette translations. The letter of the irked correspondent “B.C.D.” from 1828 is worth quoting in full:

Mr. Editor—

As you know, Interest is quasi dicit, Interest being *inside*, or *concerned*, in an affair. Now Sir, I fear that in your paper there is a want of the *inter* and the *con*. What boots it to us Europeans and Americans is, what the Chinamen either do or suffer. Their internal doings affect us not; their sufferings we cannot relieve. Being so completely excluded, we cannot sympathize with them. It is true that according to abstract principles, they are our fellow-creatures, and indeed children of the same Almighty Parent. These are truisms which certainly have some place in our creeds. But still these principles are only for Sundays and Holydays. The practical Truth is that with these people we have no *inter*-est—we are not *con*-cerned; and therefore we have no *sym*-pathos: no fellow-feeling. What are your tales of Changkihur, & his kindred, or of oppression superstition and murder?—we are not—interest-est-ed. This circumstance, will, I apprehend, be fatal to your Paper. Opium it is true, is an everlasting subject, in which a few are interested. But then many have no concern in the precious drug, and Opium sales are stale topics. Cave! or your weekly lucubrations will soon become, waste paper.

⁵⁷ Robert Inglis, “Notices of Modern China: the late rebellion in Turkestan, headed by Jehangir (Changkihurh); origin of the rebellion; progress of the war; &c.,” *Chinese Repository* 5, no. 7 (November 1836): 321. The quoted material is somewhat modified from Barrow, *Travels in China*, 391-2. Barrow corroborated his statement in a footnote, “* The words of *Kaung-shee*’s proclamation, repeated by *Kia-king*, are: ‘At present when an army is sent on any military service, every report that is made of its operations, contains an account of a victory, of rebels dispersed at the first encounter, driven from their stations, killed, and wounded, to a great amount, or to the amount of some thousands, or in short, that the rebels slain were innumerable.’ *Pekin Gazette*, 31st July, 1800.”

B.C.D.⁵⁸

B.C.D.'s grouchy letter dismissed the potential for foreign interest in tales drawn from the Qing gazette (or indeed any other Chinese source), whether relating to war and conquest (“tales of Changkihur”) or local society and culture (“oppression superstition and murder.”) The editor of the *Register* responded defensively to the critical stabs made by B.C.D., and continued to print gazette updates as before. The heavy coverage of gazette reports in the *Register* continued for a few more years, but then tapered out due to a change in editors and a shift in the mood of the foreign population at Canton.

In the early 1830s, traders began to advocate for the end of the East India Company monopoly and the allowance of free trade and to agitate for greater protection and even military force on their behalf from Parliament. In the *Canton Register*, these speeches and opinions took a prominent place and occupied much column space. After William Wood, who had relied heavily on Morrison as a translator, was removed from the editorship in 1830, A.S. Keating and John Slade subsequently assumed the editorship (Slade would become sole editor after 1834). These two editors expressed far more partisanship than Wood, and as a result merchant affairs dominated the pages of the *Register*. Especially under Slade, the *Register* began to publish more strident political conversations and to advocate a strong free trade position. A counterpart, the *Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette*, for which William Wood served as editor after he was pushed out of the *Register*'s editorship, also advocated a free-trade agenda. In September 1835, Dent & Co., along with some former East India Company officials, founded the *Canton Press* to serve as a rival to the growing prominence of free-trade interests in these

⁵⁸ CR, July 12, 1828.

two papers.⁵⁹ The Canton press became mired in the politics of maritime trade and overseas empire.

These developments diminished the quantity of information available on local affairs and derived from Chinese sources in Canton newspapers. Just as significantly, Robert Morrison had died in August 1834, leaving the *Register* without a source for its translation of court gazettes and other Chinese material. Thereafter, the *Register* primarily borrowed its translations of Chinese documents from the *Chinese Repository*, an influential missionary journal founded in 1832.⁶⁰ The rival *Canton Press* summed up the situation in November 1835:

During the existence of the East I. Company's Factory, Dr. Morrison, their interpreter, was in the habit of supplying translations of Edicts, & Notices, from the Peking Gazette, and from other sources of Chinese information, to the only news paper which we then possessed, whilst his son was engaged with a liberal Salary as interpreter to the private merchants. After Dr. Morrison's lamented death, his son succeeded to the situation, which had been changed into that of Interpreter to His Majesty's Superintendents of Trade in China. By this event the information to the news paper was discontinued, and at a period too, when its importance was expedient and almost indispensable; and the Free Trade merchants were most illiberally left to get their own documents translated, in the best way they could possible devise.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See King and Clark, *Research Guide*, 44-46. Under editor Edmund Moller, the *Canton Press* swung around to offer an agenda that was pro-free-trade and anti-Company, but also anti-Matheson. The rivalry between the *Register* and the *Press* dominated the pages of the *Press* despite the weak boundaries between the papers' political positions, demonstrating Canton papers' growing engagement in the debates of the times.

⁶⁰ On the founding of the *Chinese Repository*, see Michael C. Lazich, *E.C. Bridgman (1801-1861), America's First Missionary to China* (Lewiston, NY: E. Mellen Press, 2000), 81-92.

⁶¹ *Canton Press*, November 28, 1835. The *Press* repeated this jab a couple of weeks later when they printed another translation from the "young gentleman," and repeated, "As we have stated previously, we again observe, the time may need more explicit details of the proceedings of the Chinese authorities, and, as the two *Interpreters paid by Government*, for the service of the Superintendents (such Superintendents being designed for the guardianship of British Commerce) never, to our knowledge, afford us any service whatever, in submitting, for the use of the Commercial Residents at Canton, any interpretation of the various edicts, mandates, and other documents, promulgated by the Chinese authorities, and especially we apprehend, applying, in many instances, to the Foreign residents in China, of which the British comprise upwards of two thirds of the number, it is time that they should begin to look round for some intelligent person as an Interpreter, through whose assistance they may desire some knowledge of the various documents promulgated by the Chinese, although the individuals *paid* by the British Government do not, or are not permitted, to afford such information." *Canton Press*, December 12, 1835.

These comments prefaced a “translation from a Chinese newspaper, or whatever it may be denominated,” made by a “youthful novitiate” in Macao. In his remarks, the *Press* editor took the opportunity to stress the irony of a circumstance in which the dismantling of the Company monopoly had led to a dearth of willing interpreters for independent merchants, and the new British official presence, in not circulating translations, thereby denied support of the traders’ liberal enterprise. Meanwhile, the new editor of the *Register*, Slade, did have some capacity in Chinese, but, as he too bemoaned in an opening editorial in 1836, “The Canton Register is now in the 9th year of its existence; but alas! Its early and great supporter, MORRISON *the Sinalogue*, is no longer here to inform the public, in it’s [sic] pages, on the local or general news of the Chinese empire.”⁶²

Even so, as the jealous remarks of the *Canton Press* hinted, the *Canton Register* had formed a claim to journalistic authority among the expanding field of China-coast publications. As rival papers emerged, the *Register* guarded its reputation for authoritative translations and solid understandings of the Qing state and the Chinese people. Thus, when the *Canton Press* became an antagonistic rival and the editors of the two papers exchanged barbs week after week, the editor of the *Register* attacked the *Press* for including a “willful plagiarist” of its gazette translation.⁶³ In another spat in late 1836, the *Register* criticized the *Press* for publishing a certain imperial edict on opium and labeled the document as a hoax.⁶⁴ This argument continued over the next three years, and the papers still bickered about the stolen translation of 1836 in the early months of

⁶² *CR*, January 5, 1836. See Slade’s obituary: *Hong Kong, Late Canton Register*, July 18, 1843.

⁶³ *CR*, April 12, 1836.

⁶⁴ *CR*, November 1, 1836.

1839.⁶⁵ By this time, the *Press* paid the two official interpreters for the Superintendent of Trade in Hong Kong, Samuel Fearon and J.R. Morrison, for occasional translations of documents and gazettes.⁶⁶ In effect, the rise of British official interests in South China put an end to the Canton papers' prominent role in channeling translations and interpretations of the court gazette outwards to global audiences.

The Gazette and the Taiping Rebellion in the *North China Herald*

As the British presence in China expanded to new coastal and inland cities, British newspapers referred more frequently news and events in China. As noted in Table 4.2, the number of news stories in British newspapers attributed to the Peking Gazette grew between the 1820s and the 1880s. "Peking Gazette" stories peaked in the 1850s, when newspapers covered the Taiping Rebellion, and in the 1870s, when more regular contact with Shanghai and a number of diplomatic controversies between Britain and the Qing kept these stories in the news. During periods of direct military engagements (as in the Opium Wars of 1839-42 and 1858-61) between Britain and the Qing, however, gazette stories were sparser. In these cases, newspapers were more likely to quote directly from the reports of British diplomatic agents or military commanders than from the presumably biased Peking Gazette.

The London *Times* sent a special correspondent to China in 1860 to cover the punitive expedition to Beijing and Tianjin led by Lord Elgin, and also maintained correspondents in Hong Kong around the same time and Shanghai in the 1870s. Besides these few direct connections, however, British newspapers largely relied on key papers based in China for news and information. The *North-China Herald* in Shanghai and the

⁶⁵ *Canton Press*, December 3, 1836; December 10, 1836; February 16, 1839; February 23, 1839.

⁶⁶ *Canton Press*, October 6, 1838, October 20, 1838, February 16, 1839.

China Mail in Hong Kong were the most frequently cited papers for gazette translations and for news from China more generally. In turn, editors of China-coast papers relied on correspondents with linguistic and cultural knowledge, typically on the basis of their diplomatic appointments and missionary backgrounds, to fill out its reports on local news and translations from the Chinese gazette. This could be a competitive field. In 1854, the *North-China Herald* suggested that the correspondents of its Hong Kong rival, the *China Mail*, did not have the experience or acumen to comprehend the tendency towards exaggeration or obfuscation in the Peking Gazette.⁶⁷

The first issue of the *North China Herald* came out on Saturday, August 3rd, 1850. The paper was priced at 15 dollars per annum, and the first issue included a list of all current foreign residents in Shanghai and their occupations. In an “Address to the Public,” Editor Henry Shearman (a native of Prince Edward Island who doubled as a local auctioneer) declared his free-trade agenda, but also his mission to “dissipate the erroneous impressions, or remove the obstacles, which have hitherto obstructed the path leading to an accurate knowledge of China and the Chinese.”⁶⁸ With this didactic mission in mind, from the first issue the paper published “Select Extracts from the Peking Reporter,” which summarized in translation the only memorial “worthy of note,” in the most recently received Peking Gazette (for the August 3rd issue, these were the gazettes of June 12th through June 17th, six weeks prior). Among the contributors who translated excerpts of the court gazette for the *North-China Herald* were the missionary Walter Henry Medhurst (1796-1857), his diplomat son (also named Walter Henry Medhurst, 1822-1885), and the missionary-turned-diplomat William Charles Milne (1815-1863, son

⁶⁷ *NCH*, May 20, 1854.

⁶⁸ “Address to the Public,” *NCH*, August 3, 1850.

of William Milne, who had edited the *Indo-Chinese Gleaner* in Malacca).

In the years that the Medhursts and Milne contributed gazette translations to the *North-China Herald*, the paper gained repute for its coverage of the Chinese court gazette and the expertise of its contributors. The early *North China Herald* is a lively document full of letters from anonymous (by newspaper policy) correspondents, of varyingly curmudgeonly, pugilistic, instructive, and merry voices. The on-page conversation in autumn 1850 included much discussion of the gazette: what was the official role of this document being translated? How was it sent around? How on earth did Chinese people send letters to one another? What was the difference between the hand-written and printed versions of the gazette? Were its proclamations to be taken seriously? One reader identified the translations as “among the best, if they be not *the* best, contributions,” to the newspaper and advocated for more copious editorial notes.⁶⁹ In response to readers’ questions, Milne wrote a multi-part discourse on the government and private post in China, including an informed discussion of the production of the court gazette.⁷⁰

When concerns, both among the foreign community and Qing officialdom, arose about rebel activity in South China, memorials detailing the struggle filled the “Select Extracts from the Peking Reporter” section. In May 1851, the paper changed the format of the section, compressing memorials into summaries and organizing items by topic rather than chronologically.⁷¹ From then on, the paper placed items related to the incipient “KWANGSE [Guangxi] REBELLION” under a specific subheading. Writers for *North-China Herald* dutifully acknowledged delays and gaps in its coverage of

⁶⁹ “Letter to the Editor,” *NCH*, No. 10, October 5, 1850.

⁷⁰ William Charles Milne, “The Government Post,” *NCH*, November 2, 1850; “The People’s Post, Part I,” *NCH*, December 14, 1850; “The People’s Post,” *NCH*, December 28, 1850.

⁷¹ *NCH*, May 31st, 1851.

gazette material, and made clear when they suspected that fighting had led to communications problems.⁷² The papers obtained its gazettes from an unnamed Chinese agent who purchased them from a gazette printer in Shanghai that had reprinted them from copies previously relayed to Suzhou, the provincial capital, from Beijing.⁷³

In offering updates on the progress of the Taiping Rebellion, which ravaged central China for a full decade, Shanghai-based contributors had a much closer vantage on the war than had earlier translators of the court gazettes that documented the Jahangir rebellions in Xinjiang. Even in the late 1820s and early 1830s, local sources in Canton had suggested that the court gazettes were fallible records, authored by officials who sought to portray their actions in the best possible light. Much earlier, in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, accounts of the gazette as a source of information had focused on its authority as the official press organ of the Chinese Emperor. In the 1850s, correspondents for the *North China Herald* argued that the gazette offered a true, and often unflattering, depiction of the workings of the Qing state and military.

Articles in the *North China Herald* frequently compared gazette reports to other information sources and rumors. As it became clear that the Taiping Rebellion would be a protracted struggle, an editorial opined:

The insurrection in the Province of Kwang-see, which has for a considerable time

⁷² Delays: “For nearly three months the usual series has been stopped, and from the 29th March, up to the date above named, no news has from the capital had been communicated to the public.” *NCH*, July 9, 1853; “After a considerable lapse we again give a few scraps of the *Peking Gazette*...” *NCH*, March 24, 1855; “We have not received *Peking Gazettes* for more than a month, it may be that the communication is stopped in consequence of these outbreaks.” *NCH*, March 8, 1856; “The north road is open once more, as is proved by the arrival of *Gazettes* reaching to the 1st March...” *NCH*, April 7, 1860.

⁷³ Location of Shanghai gazette publisher: “we have one in Shanghae, at *Se-tseang-kiaou*, near the west gate,” *NCH*, November 2, 1850; obtaining gazettes: “We present our readers with *Peking Gazettes* down to the 3rd of August, but we believe this is the date of their publication at Suchau [Suzhou], and we are now adopting means to obtain the very earliest information direct from Peking.” *NCH*, August 27, 1853; “The native agent however declares himself unable to supply those dating from the 8th to the 18th...The regular supply, so far as there is such a thing, is supposed to leave the north once in ten days.” *NCH*, April 7, 1860.

past formed a standing topic of comment and conjecture for our contemporaries of the Hongkong press, has of yet but little engaged our attention.

But although in common with the natives of the central and northern parts of China, we entertain little apprehension regarding the ultimate result of the troubles in that remote province, we cannot view their existence with indifference, nor are we insensible to the injurious influences on the public mind, which will surely flow from their long remaining unsuppressed. Public opinion it is true, is not in this country either so urgent in expressing itself, or so loud in its demands, as in those regions enlightened by a free press; here, no noisy political orator may thunder forth his “cataracts of declamation;” we cannot hope to provoke any extraordinary excitement by serving up letters “from our own correspondent,” dated “from the seat of war;” such intelligence regarding the aspect of political affairs, as it pleases the Government to promulgate, we may glean from the pages of the *Peking Gazette*, and for its truth or falsehood, we must look to the whispers of our private acquaintances, or trust to time to reveal.⁷⁴

The editorial thus introduced the paper’s continuing coverage of the Taiping Rebellion by describing its primary sources for reports on the conflict. While contemporary papers from other parts of the world sought the power of a first-hand perspective by sending correspondents to the front, the *Herald* contended that this practice was still impracticable in China. Instead, the editorial resolved, the paper would rely on the documents published in the Chinese court gazette, and evaluate these with measured skepticism and through comparison to other sources. The editorial continued with a description of past rebellions of the earlier part of the nineteenth century in China and the current position of the government towards the rebellion.

The article concluded by offering support “for the side of the existing Government,” for the sake of practicality rather than principle: “We feel less interest, we confess, in ‘universal suffrage,’ than in an extended consumption of Tea...” In demonstrating the paper’s grasp on official sources and measured position on the rebellion, the *Herald* sought to distinguish itself from other papers (like the London

⁷⁴ *NCH*, March 13, 1852.

Times, called out by name in the editorial) that offered opinions without local evidence. In this jab at London papers that delivered superfluous pronouncements on the conflict in China, the paper sought to affirm its cool-headed expertise in local matters, defending its journalistic and territorial authority against competitors.

Gazette reports made up the major body of the *Herald's* reports on the progress of the Taiping Rebellion, with stated caveats. Presuming that its local readers had some contextual understanding of the tumult of the war (in April 1854 the paper warned “the Community” to stop crowding a church tower in order to watch fighting near the city walls), the *Herald* even printed summaries of gazette reports that it deemed false or incorrect.⁷⁵ Walter Henry Medhurst in particular saw that in the memorials included in the gazette, officials constantly attempted to persuade the court of the success of their campaigns, and to avoid prosecution or blame for their failures.⁷⁶ In these criticisms, which echoed the sentiments of a new generation of Sinologues-turned-diplomats, we can see a transformed understanding of the nature of the Chinese state, and a more nuanced view of the connection between the state and the gazette. From Medhurst’s perspective, one found in the court gazette’s misstatements and exaggerations proof of the disarray of the state, rather than the authentic views of the Qing emperor.

Even as translators cultivated a critical skepticism towards the Peking Gazette and relayed this skepticism to their readers in the *North China Herald*, they claimed that the gazette was an essential record for understanding the workings of the Qing state. Indeed,

⁷⁵ “We have been requested to caution the Community against ascending in large numbers on to the Church Tower, in order to watch the attack of the Imperialists against the city. The upper portion of the Tower is very slightly built, and if it be crowded as on Wednesday night last, and again on Thursday, a catastrophe too painful to contemplate may be the result.” *NCH*, April 1, 1854; Inaccurate gazettes: Walter Henry Medhurst, “Peking Gazettes,” *NCH*, July 9, 1853.

⁷⁶ *NCH*, August 27, 1853.

some maintained that the very falseness of the record made it an essential document. The power of the *Gazette*, a translator wrote in the *Herald*, lay in its revelation of “[the] national vice of resorting to the expedient” that would eventually lead to “...disastrous consequences, when the extent of the disorganisation that at this time threatens the government...will burst upon all, in its full proportions.”⁷⁷ In the pages of the court gazette could be seen a window to the unraveling Qing Empire.

Thus, compared with unsubstantiated rumor and unofficial papers, Medhurst felt the gazette was a far less “unsafe” document for consultation. He challenged an adversary in *Dr. Macgowan’s Chinese Serial* to produce evidence that (as the adversary had claimed), the Qing had ceded significant territory to Russia. Since no evidence of such an agreement had appeared in the gazette, Medhurst argued, “the whole statement is probably a myth, derived solely from the tittle-tattle of local news-mongers, and not emanating from Peking at all.” Just as the French missionary Amiot had done in his 1787 letter, Medhurst defended the gazette as based on official documents and therefore more authoritative than rumors or unsubstantiated news circulating in the provinces. But while Amiot traced the gazette’s authority to the direct control of the Emperor over the gazette, Medhurst saw the gazette as authoritative because it contained not simply reports, but official documents with real existences and repercussions within the Qing state. Although he understood the tendency of officials to exaggerate and obscure, he felt assured that a treaty could not have been concluded without notice in this official record.⁷⁸

Amid a number of competing papers that began publication in Shanghai in the late 1860s and early 1870s, the *North-China Herald* assumed distinction with its long

⁷⁷ “Peking Gazettes,” *NCH*, November 10, 1855.

⁷⁸ Medhurst was not entirely correct. Russian forces had in fact moved into the Amur River area, although a formal treaty would not be concluded until 1860.

history of translating the court gazettes for its readers. In the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion, the *Herald* expanded its issues from four pages to a twenty-four-page weekly issue with an enlarged Peking Gazette section. The paper also founded a Chinese-language weekly, the *Shanghai Xinbao*, which ran from 1861 to 1872, and a daily edition, the *North China Daily News*, which began publishing in 1864.

Beginning in 1872, the paper compiled its gazette sections annually, and published the volumes, selling them for two dollars each. The newspaper sought moreover to make these volumes useful, or at least to give them the appearance of encyclopedic coverage. This was accomplished by producing an index to the events described in the year's gazettes, divided into topical sections such as "Public Instruction," "Rivers and Canals," and "Virtuous Females." Thus, in 1874, the annual compilation included 771 items, for which "Public Service" (a category including all personnel changes) was the most prevalent with 92 items, followed by 82 items relating to "Movements of the Court," and 72 incidents of "Crime."

Like the gazette translations included in the pages of the newspaper, these annual volumes circulated internationally as well as within China. The 1872 volume could be purchased at the *North-China Herald* Office in Shanghai and at an agency in Canton; by 1876 *Gazette* compilations were available at booksellers in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and London (See Figure 4.2). Just as the *Peking Gazette* translations produced by the *Canton Register* were reprinted in global newspapers in the early nineteenth century, copies of translations produced by the *North China Herald* circulated internationally in great numbers in the late nineteenth century, aided by steamship transport and telegraphic transmission.

Figure 4.2. *North-China Herald* Advertisements for *Peking Gazette* Translations, 1873 and 1875

<p>Advertisements.</p> <hr/> <p>NOW READY.</p> <hr/> <p>A TRANSLATION OF THE "PEKING GAZETTE" for 1873; 8vo. cloth. Price—\$ 2.</p> <p>For Sale, at the <i>North-China Herald</i> Office, and at Messrs. KELLY & Co.'s, No. 1a Canton Road.</p> <hr/> <p>ALSO,</p> <p>A TRANSLATION of the GAZETTE for 1872. Price—\$ 2. Reprinted from the <i>N.-C. Herald & S. C. & C. Gazette.</i></p> <p>tf 666 Shanghai, 4th March, 1874.</p>	<p>OUT AGAIN.</p> <hr/> <p>APPLY TO MESSRS. TRUBNER & Co., 57 a 59, Ludgate Hill, London.</p> <hr/> <p>Cloth Bound—in Imperial Yellow.</p> <hr/> <p>A TRANSLATION OF THE PEKING GAZETTE FOR 1875. WITH A COMPLETE INDEX.</p> <hr/> <p>AND A GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE IMPERIAL FAMILY OF CHINA.</p> <p>IMPORTANT DOCUMENTS. DEATH OF H. I. M. TUNG-CHE, APPOINTMENT OF REGENTS, &c. &c. &c.</p> <p>Copies of the 1872 and 1873 Editions can also be procured.</p> <p>Price, \$2.00 per Copy.</p> <p>To be had at the <i>N.-C. Herald</i> Office, at Messrs. KELLY & WALSH, HALL & HOLTZ, and LANE, CRAWFORD & Co., Shanghai; Messrs. LANE, CRAWFORD & Co., Hong- kong; Messrs. TRUBNER & Co., Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.</p>
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Source: *North-China Herald*.

The Gazette in the Early *Shenbao*

Like its English-language counterparts, the Chinese-language newspaper *Shenbao* used the court gazette to relay authoritative records of state affairs and domestic news to its readership. *Shenbao*, founded in April 1872 by the English businessman Ernest Major, included a full issue of the court gazette in each of its own issues. In the first issue, the paper announced a policy of printing the gazette each day in its entirety without omission, out of respect to the dynasty and acknowledgment that the gazette was a court document.⁷⁹ In later years, the paper continued to refer to its respect for the court when explaining its decisions with regard to publishing the gazette insert. This final section of the chapter examines how *Shenbao* used the gazette to enhance its claims of journalistic authority. Arguing for the benefit of Qing officials suspicious of newspapers, and against

⁷⁹ “Ban wei maibao ren fanzi,” *SB*, April 30, 1872.

rival papers in China, *Shenbao* editorials made exaggerated shows of respect to the court in its descriptions of its own superior gazette coverage. When disputes occurred between papers, *Shenbao* referred to the gazette as the only official document that could dispel rumors and serve as an authoritative record. Although these rhetorical agendas suggested *Shenbao* printed the gazette primarily to appease the perceived expectations of the court, in printing the gazette section *Shenbao* also followed the established example of English-language newspapers published in China since the 1820s.

Published in Shanghai, *Shenbao* had no choice but to offer its gazette insert to readers at a delay owing to the time needed for publishing and transit from Beijing to Shanghai. Thus, for example, the second issue of *Shenbao*, published on May 2, 1872, included the court gazette of April 17 (TZ 11/03/10), a delay of 15 days.⁸⁰ *Shenbao* obtained gazettes from an unnamed connection in Beijing who sent the gazettes to Tianjin. From Tianjin, gazettes traveled by steamship to Shanghai. The typical transit time was seven or eight days, and as the paper described, “reports from three-thousand *li* nonetheless reach us in seven days. Such a marvel!”⁸¹

On several occasions, writers for *Shenbao* responded to criticism from rival papers about its publication of the gazette. First, in 1875, another newspaper disparaged *Shenbao* for deferring its publication of several days’ gazettes. In response, *Shenbao* attributed this delay to problems in the steamship mail transport, and then scrutinized the gazette section published by the other paper. The other paper, *Shenbao* alleged, had mixed up content from different dates in the same gazette section, including edicts from

⁸⁰ The gazette was also included in *Shenbao*’s first issue; although the paper did not give the publication date for the gazette as it did in later issues, it was published between April 12 and April 16. “Jingbao,” *SB*, April 30, 1872; “Jingbao,” *SB*, May 2, 1872.

⁸¹ “Lun jingbao gui su bu gui chi,” *SB*, March 4, 1882.

one day, the court digest from another day, and memorials from a third day. As it had in its initial pledge to publish the entire gazette, the paper appealed to proper allegiance to the imperial monarch, and scolded, “How could those who once pledged to respect a monarch dare to heedlessly misprint imperial pronouncements?”⁸²

In the early 1880s, after the construction of a telegraph line between Tianjin and Shanghai, the paper began paying to obtain the contents of the court gazette by telegraph. Another rival paper alleged that telegraph delivery would lead to problems of mistaken characters due to homophones, a serious breach of diligent respect. In response *Shenbao* argued that its large expenditures for the telegraph service more than proved the paper’s appropriate respect. It then segued into a lengthy recounting of the recent history of the distribution of the gazette, describing how in the first half of the nineteenth century, provincial officials had paid hefty sums for gazettes delivered by a service based outside of Beijing that circumvented the slow and problematic official courier network. Afterwards, the advent of steamship transport had allowed even faster transport of gazettes, and this option again had been hastily adopted. “After all,” *Shenbao* argued,

[If] it is, as other papers state, that the majestic imperial edicts should not be freely disseminated, and that for the delivery of gazettes, we need delay, rather than speed, and we would rather the gazettes arrive later than allow them to be perused quickly, then why, when the Liangxiang Delivery (*Liangxiang bao* 良鄉報) was established, did we not hear of the postal bureaus (*xinju* 信局) being officially charged with the crime of great disrespect? After steam-ships began to carry [the gazette], why were the ships not prohibited for this great disrespect? From this, we can see it is universally felt that we should value speed, not delay, for the gazette.⁸³

⁸² “Jingbao yi ci denglu,” *SB*, November 11, 1875.

⁸³ “Lun jingbao gui su bu gui chi,” *SB*, March 4, 1882. Interestingly, *Shenbao* serialized this column in four parts in 1941, in a feature called, “Sixty-eight years ago in *Shenbao*.” “Jingbao gui su (Parts 1-4),” *SB*, August 13-16, 1941. The Liangxiang Delivery might refer to Li Jiashan’s delivery service (described in Chapter 2), or a related enterprise.

The paper continued to argue that by paying heavy fees to have gazettes sent quickly to Shanghai each day, it showed devotion to this state document.

Like its English-language predecessors, *Shenbao* used the gazette as a font of reliable accounts of matters involving the government and Qing officials. Since *Shenbao* published in Chinese to a readership already familiar with the court gazette, the paper did not need to translate or explain items from the gazette for its readership. While the *North China Herald* and earlier English-language newspapers in China summarized gazette contents, often omitting the details of the “palace notes” (*gongmen chao*) that listed audiences and noted members of various metropolitan bodies on duty that day, *Shenbao* included this information in full. However, instead of printing its gazette insert without commentary, the paper often used items in the court gazette as a springboard to its own articles commenting on the situation, as in the spring of 1873 when the paper commented on recent petitions in the Shanghai region to build memorial shrines to meritorious local officials.⁸⁴ Conversely, the paper would often let a gazette item stand in as coverage of a matter, stating briefly in the main paper that readers should consult the gazette insert for more details, such as the December 1872 case of the beheading of a young woman in Suzhou.⁸⁵

The paper especially relied on the gazette as a reference point when disputing rumors. *Shenbao* was often in dialogue with other contemporary papers, including the Chinese-language papers *Shanghai Xinbao* (published 1861-1872), *Huibao* (published 1874-1875),

⁸⁴ “Lun huyi dang qing jian Liu Gong zhuanci,” *SB*, May 6, 1873.

⁸⁵ “Ji Su sheng jianjue shaonian funü shi,” *SB*, December 12, 1872. During a scandal over a proposed plan to rebuild the imperial summer palace, *Shenbao* included articles on the matter and referred readers to the coverage of the scandal in the gazette insert. “Li Guangzhao an lue,” *SB*, October 22, 1874. See Emily Mokros, “Reconstructing the Imperial Retreat: Politics, Communications, and the Yuanming Yuan Under the Tongzhi Emperor, 1873-4,” *Late Imperial China* 33, no. 2 (December 2012): 98.

Xinbao (published 1876-1882), and *Hubao* (published 1882-1908), and English-language papers like the *North-China Daily News* and the weekly *North China Herald*. From time to time, *Shenbao* reminded readers that competing news outlets published unfounded rumors that could be harmful to gullible readers. These rumors varied from descriptions of local conditions in Beijing to announcements of important dynastic transitions or official pronouncements. Thus in 1873, *Shenbao* referred to a notice in the Hong Kong paper *Huazi ribao*, the Chinese edition of *The Chinese Mail*, that the government had enacted a new ban on opium, but warned that since no confirmation had appeared in the gazette, this might be untrue.⁸⁶

A few days later, *Shenbao* returned to the issue, noting that acquaintances had reported that orders for the prohibition of the opium were being hung up in the streets of Beijing. Once again, the paper warned readers not to believe these unfounded reports, writing “we think this may be a rumor, because although this would be a national policy, we have not seen any mention [of it] in recent gazettes.”⁸⁷ Here, *Shenbao* represented itself as diligently respectful of the Qing state’s deliberative and communications processes. The early *Shenbao* allowed the court gazette to stand as an authoritative source above personal testimonies and the reports of other papers.⁸⁸

Shenbao built on the precedent of earlier China-coast newspapers in including its gazette insert and established new practices for dealing with the court gazette. The newspaper used the gazette as a tool to provide evidence, defend its authority against

⁸⁶ “Lun jinzhi yapian,” *SB*, June 6, 1873.

⁸⁷ “Jingdu jinwen,” *SB*, June 9, 1873.

⁸⁸ While they championed the gazette when disputing with other papers, *Shenbao*’s writers sometimes criticized the court gazette’s failure to include relevant information. In spring 1874, a contributor commented that while the gazette had not acknowledged the crisis of authority in Taiwan due to the Japanese invasion, this issue was widely known and discussed among the public. *SB*, May 28, 1874.

rival papers, and justify its mission to officials and critics. While the gazette had been important to English-language papers as a source of authentic information by virtue of originating as Chinese-language documents from the court, *Shenbao* sought to support its own legitimacy to the court and Chinese society by advertising its publication of daily gazette inserts. While other papers summarized or elided gazette contents, *Shenbao* paid costly fees to ensure express publication of full gazette updates. As the next chapter will show, in public conflicts over the conduct of the Qing court with foreign envoys, *Shenbao* and other newspapers focused on the role of the court gazette as both a source of authoritative information and as a communications medium that linked the Qing court and its populace.

Conclusion

In the eighteenth century, Jesuit missionaries with an eye on the imperial court described the Chinese gazette as an authentic record of court events published by the approval of the Qing Emperor. While European gazettes claimed to contain official and privileged information, variable quality and biases made them unreliable. By contrast, the Chinese court gazette served as a reliable record of the attitudes of the Emperor and events at court and around the empire. By the mid-nineteenth century, the unprecedented access granted by reading the Qing gazette complicated foreign readers' understanding of the authority of the gazette and of the throne. Although previously it had been claimed that the gazette was supremely authoritative, this claim became difficult to defend when reading gazettes day after day, and especially when reading the gazette in conjunction with other accounts. Reading of military action and social unrest, translators found exaggerated claims, untrustworthy numbers, and contradictory dates. Even so, students of

the gazette defended the privileged vantage that it granted on the conditions of the Qing government. The real authority of the Peking Gazette, Walter Henry Medhurst argued, lay in its unfiltered portrayal of the flawed state of the Qing bureaucracy.

Early sinologues like Robert Morrison found in the gazette a record of events directly reproduced from the reports of officials and the responses and orders of the throne. Morrison used this information in every area of his diverse career, sending translations to newspapers, journals, traders, and missionary and personal correspondents. Following Morrison's example, newspapers in China and in England began to print updates from the court gazette as a record of news in China. In the nineteenth-century English-language press, translations and summaries of the *Peking Gazette* became a key medium through which readers could track and interpret events in China. In the late 1820s, readers learned of the failed rebellion of Jahangir, and of the Qing government's struggles to maintain order in far western Kashgar. English readers of gazette summaries and Chinese readers of court gazettes read the same accounts. From Canton to Edinburgh, readers followed dispatches from Kashgar with a new contemporaneity.

As China-coast newspapers used the court gazette as a marker of legitimate and authentic news stemming from the Qing court, they contributed to the gazette's persistence in late-nineteenth century newspapers, in political discussions, and in routine communications. Newspapers from the *Canton Register* to the *Shenbao* relied on their gazette sections to showcase their access to official information. Even as editors and translators developed more critical attitudes towards the information relayed in gazettes, as during the tumultuous years of the Taiping Rebellion, defenders of the gazette recognized the importance of drawing news directly from official sources. The

newspapers that used the gazette most consistently, such as the *Canton Register* and the *North China Herald*, advertised their gazette sections and translations as a mark of local expertise. With the advent of *Shenbao*, the first commercially operated and widely circulated Chinese language newspaper, the gazette became even more prominent in the pages of the newspaper. In addition to publishing a complete gazette section, *Shenbao* writers used gazette information to form commentary on current events and contribute to emergent public debates. For *Shenbao*, the court gazette was a key source of journalistic authority. In the next decades, the court gazette would be invoked in contentious discussions over the ideal form of the modern press of the Qing empire.

Chapter 5. The Qing Gazette in the World

In the early 1870s, a war of words erupted in newspapers representing Chinese and foreign communities in Shanghai. Editorialists, members of the public, officials, and journalists debated a diplomatic controversy over arrangements for a formal audience between the Tongzhi Emperor and foreign diplomatic envoys to China. As the *North China Herald* weighed in on the so-called “audience question,” it blamed the Qing court’s reluctance to hold an audience on persistent and damaging delusions of Chinese supremacy. An 1870 editorial opined on this “monstrous extravagance of pretension,” comparing the veneration afforded the Emperor in China to the reverence paid to the Pope and to the Russian Czar. In each of these cases, the editorialist remarked, oversized pretensions could not fix real problems of weakness.¹

Shenbao, already the most prominent Chinese-language paper in Shanghai, soon started to offer its own comments on the audience question. In the spring of 1873, rumors in the city claimed that a date had been set for the audience. The paper reminded readers that these rumors remained unverified and therefore unfounded until a notice was printed in the Qing court gazette. It mocked reports that many London newspapers had falsely reported that the audience had already taken place.² Finally, on June 25, *Shenbao* informed its readers that the audience had been formally announced in the gazette.³

Even after the audience took place on June 29, 1873, public conversations about its proceedings remained contentious, and these conversations came back again and again to the court gazette. English-language papers complained that the gazette entry announcing the audience had employed a number of Chinese-language terms that implied

¹ “The Audience Question,” *NCH*, March 29, 1870. See also “Our Position in China,” *NCH*, June 30, 1870.

² “Xi bao wuchuan chaojin xinxi,” *SB*, May 28, 1873.

³ “Xi shi jinjian yi zhun,” *SB*, June 25, 1873.

submission and subordination by the foreign representatives to the Tongzhi Emperor.⁴ After the audience, the *North China Herald* and the *Shanghai Evening Courier* speculated as to why an account of its proceedings had not been printed in the court gazette.⁵ The *Herald* complained that obtaining the audience had required so much effort that it had been forgotten that audiences should be mere components of the diplomatic process, not major goals of diplomacy.⁶ Turning to satire, the *Herald* caricatured an imagined Chinese official reading about the audience in the gazette:

“Ahya!” we can imagine a constant reader of the *Peking Gazette*, District Magistrate of Nanchang-fu, exclaiming, “here are those rascally dogs of foreigners actually teasing to get a sight of the face of the Son of Heaven, and our too timid Ministers consenting to admit them to the privilege. What is the world coming to?”⁷

At the same time that it mockingly depicted the Chinese official reader’s xenophobic attitudes, the *Herald*, like *Shenbao*, asserted here that the court gazette was the appropriate venue for publishing authoritative details about the imperial audience.⁸ When the court gazette failed to publish a description of the audience, the *Herald* hypothesized that satirical accounts of the audience printed in both the *Herald* and the satirical magazine *Puck* had been collected by agents of the Qing foreign ministry, the Zongli yamen (總理衙門), then translated and deliberately affixed to provincial gazettes.⁹ It had been the aim of certain provincial officials, the *Herald* argued, to disseminate these

⁴ See Zhao, “19 shiji xi ren dui jingbao,” 130-1. On the persistent politics of gestures and terms of inequality, see James L. Hevia, “‘The Ultimate Gesture of Deference and Debasement’: Kowtowing in China,” *Past and Present* 203, Supplement Issue: *The Politics of Gesture: Historical Perspectives* (2009): 212-234.

⁵ Zhao, “19 shiji xi ren dui jingbao,” 132.

⁶ “The Audience,” *NCH*, July 19, 1873.

⁷ “The Audience Question,” *NCH*, July 12, 1873.

⁸ In Paris, the *Journal des débats* likewise commented that the gazette had failed to make any mention of the audience ceremony. “Télégraphie privée,” *Journal des débats politiques et littéraires*, July 20, 1873.

⁹ The full name of the magazine was *Puck, or the Shanghai Charivari*. Since it had ceased publication in 1872, it seems unlikely that the account came from its pages. On *Puck*, see Christopher G. Rea, “‘He’ll Roast All Subjects That May Need the Roasting’: *Puck* and Mr Punch in Nineteenth-Century China,” in Hans Harder and Barbara Mittler, eds., *Asian Punches: A Transcultural Affair* (Berlin: Springer, 2013), 389-422.

satires—which painted the Western envoys as cowards awed by the Emperor’s visage—as truthful accounts.¹⁰ With its suggestion that Chinese officials had attempted to perpetrate an image of Western diplomats as weak, the *Herald’s* commentary simultaneously labeled both Chinese officials and media as xenophobic and ridiculous.¹¹

Figure 5.1. Audience with Tongzhi Emperor, 1873



Source: University of Bristol, Historical Photographs of China Collection, NA01-62. Original in TNA, CO 1069/421 CHINA 1. Social Life of Chinese Customs Service in Peking, 1889-1891.¹²

Shenbao took care to dismiss the allegations concerning the false account of the audience. For its readers, *Shenbao* offered a translation of the false account, remarking

¹⁰ “Summary of News,” *NCH*, August 23, 1873; “Chinese Account of the Audience,” *NCH*, November 13, 1873; “Summary of News,” *NCH*, December 18, 1873; “The Chinese Account of the Audience,” *NCH*, July 4, 1874.

¹¹ Just like rumors about the audience circulated far beyond China, so did the story of the satirical account. Cf. the description of the story in London’s *Athenaeum*, in Christopher Rea, *The Age of Irreverence: A New History of Laughter in China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 31-32.

¹² This is a photograph of an ink drawing. The photograph is signed by Thomas Child, who worked for the Imperial Maritime Customs Service in Beijing. Standing in a row in the foreground (backs facing) are: Prince Gong, General A. Vlangaly (Russia), Frederick F. Low (USA), Thomas Wade (Britain), L. de Geofroy (France), and J.H. Ferguson (Holland). Their interpreter, M. Bismarck, stands behind them.

that the document was an obvious joke. It suggested that some trickster had pranked the *Herald* writer by persuading him that Chinese readers could be so gullible. After all, “The Japanese and Western ambassadors all have easy manners, how is it that they could be fearful of an emperor in his tender youth who has just assumed the throne?” Perhaps, *Shenbao* posited, a prankster had also falsified the tale of the fictitious account’s circulation in the provincial gazettes. After making this point, the article turned more serious:

As for putting [a fictitious account] into the gazette, this would impinge on Chinese governmental affairs (*Zhongguo guojia zhi shi* 中國國家之事). But the Chinese government has specially established laws against mocking foreign envoys, and [mockery] is not the proper way of diplomacy. The ambassadors stationed in the capital could immediately verify this. Although the Westerners have all found this affair funny, now they might see its importance.¹³

In other words, from the perspective of *Shenbao*’s editorial staff, the official gazettes of the Qing state were no joke, nor could trivial jokes circulate in this medium. *Shenbao* referenced the gazette frequently as an antidote to the swirl of rumors around the court and government policy.¹⁴ Also not open to ridicule were the actions of Qing governmental agencies, especially the Zongli yamen. *Shenbao* lauded the agency’s efforts to cultivate proper diplomatic methods and instill wider tolerance towards foreigners. In so doing, it drew parallels between the court gazette as an authoritative government organ and the Zongli yamen, a symbol of the modernization of the Qing state. Public, diplomatic, and official debates like the matter of the “Audience Question,” encapsulated

¹³ “Xishi ru jin yi lun,” *SB*, July 1, 1874.

¹⁴ Other such instances included disputing the rumored date of the Tongzhi Emperor’s accession to the throne, commenting on a Tianjin correspondent’s report of a rumor of the Emperor’s plans to visit the imperial tombs, and when a Beijing correspondent reported a potential shift in state policy towards opium. “Yi xizi xinbao shu huangdi qinzheng riqi,” *SB*, November 12, 1872; “Tianjin lai xin,” *SB*, March 1, 1873; “Jingdu jinwen,” *SB*, June 9, 1873.

emerging concerns over the proper relationship between state publications and the nascent printed public sphere in late Qing China (1860-1911).

This dispute over the portrayal of the court audience and the attitudes of Chinese towards foreigners built on the growing global circulation and reputation of the late Qing gazette. As the last chapter demonstrated, newspapers founded in China during the nineteenth century were important media for the export of opinions, reports, and translations of Chinese material to foreign audiences. Gazette excerpts were among the most commonly reprinted items on China in foreign newspapers. In England, newspaper writers and reading audiences alike interpreted dispatches from the Peking Gazette through the politics of the Victorian era, in which champions of liberalism advocated at home for transparency of urban and civic life, and abroad for the construction of an economic and colonial empire based on free trade and the civilizing mission.¹⁵ British efforts to influence and reform the Qing gazette bore the marks of liberal politics, as imperial agents urged their Qing counterparts to be more transparent, impartial, and authoritative. The lens of liberalism positioned the Peking Gazette—like Chinese “penal law” and capital punishment—as both a window to the workings of the Qing state and a mirror of the intense corruption, xenophobia, and injustice latent in Chinese state and society.¹⁶

¹⁵ On the connection of metaphors of transparency to liberalism in the city, see Patrick Joyce, *The Rule of Freedom: Liberalism and the Modern City* (London: Verso, 2003); for liberalism as an ethos of imperial expansion in England, see Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); for an account that considers both Britain and France, see Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

¹⁶ Western translations and meditations on Chinese law and punishment incorporated contradictory references to its systematic and detailed nature and its arbitrary application. See Chen, *Chinese Law*, 136-151; Timothy Brook, Jérôme Bourgon, and Gregory Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts* (Harvard University Press, 2008), Ch. 6.

Despite this, until recently most scholarly work on the Chinese press has assumed that the court gazette had little to do with diplomacy, foreign relations, or even the politics of the late Qing.¹⁷ Beyond the court gazette, most scholarship has dismissed official journals and government gazettes as irrelevant to the political currents of the late Qing and the development of the press in China.¹⁸ Recent and important work addresses the role of the pre-1895 commercial press, especially *Shenbao*, in cultivating ideas of the public sphere among Chinese elites.¹⁹ Some of this work recognizes that *Shenbao* strategically employed the court gazette to obtain legitimacy with the Qing court and with its readers.²⁰ In works on the post-1895 political press, scholars have addressed the rise of Chinese nationalism and mass politics through the political and intellectual journals of the last sixteen years of the dynasty.²¹ However, these studies both deny the possibility of a coherent politics of the late Qing extending across the 1895 divide and ignore the fact that political journals also reprinted the court gazette. Even as they encountered multiplying new forms of journalism, people read the court gazette more frequently and in new contexts, as it was repackaged and published in telegraphic dispatches, compendia, newspapers, and political and official journals (*guanbao* 官報).²² New formats changed the experience of reading the gazette. In addition, late Qing readers found in the gazette

¹⁷ Some recent dissertations convincingly argue that the gazette had a major role in late Qing foreign relations. See Zhao Ying, “19 shiji xi ren dui jingbao,” and Hyun-Hoo Joo, “Between Culturalism and Nationalism.”

¹⁸ An advertisement for Ge Gongzhen’s *Zhongguo baoxue shi* included the line, “When [officials] wanted to establish an official gazette in order to snuff out the popular press, it was like blocking the mouths of the masses in order to indulge the opinions of a single individual.” *SB*, October 31, 1926.

¹⁹ See especially Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, and Rudolf Wagner, ed., *Joining the Global Public: Word, Image, and City in Early Chinese Newspapers, 1870-1910* (Albany: State University of New York, 2007).

²⁰ Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, Ch.3.

²¹ On 1895 as the beginning of the political press, see Lee and Nathan, “The Beginnings of Mass Culture,” 360-95, and Judge, *Print and Politics*.

²² See Roger Thompson, “New-Style Gazettes and Provincial Reports in Post-Boxer China: An Introduction and Assessment,” *Late Imperial China* 8, no.2 (1987): 80-101.

details of the empire's military and diplomatic engagements, institutional reforms, and bitter factional struggles.

This chapter begins by tracing how Qing communications policy began to account for the ramifications of an expanded audience for the gazette in the Opium War (1839-1842) period. In the context of perceived British infiltration of coastal China, Qing officials expressed increased anxiety about the breakdown of communications institutions and the potential for information leaks and violations of official security. As a result, the court increased its regulation of the court gazette even as it permitted its commercial expansion. Meanwhile, British diplomats, seeking to impose greater accountability on Qing officials who they perceived as skirting moral and diplomatic norms, encouraged their Qing counterparts to publish treaty agreements, laws, and notifications to the public in the gazette. In so doing, the British drew on their experience in imposing control over the official press in the larger British Empire in order to subvert the power of non-official print publications.²³

As the Qing court sought simultaneously to protect communications security and shape the contents of the court gazette, the global reputation of the Qing state and its gazette suffered. British officials, even as they relied on the gazette for intelligence, suggested that the gazette's coverage of social unrest and official misdeeds testified to the shrinking authority of the state and the withering morals of its officials. Meanwhile, the gazette lost prestige due to its close connections to the state in press accounts that

²³ On intelligence gathering and the imperial "communications order" in British India, see especially Bayly, *Empire and Information*. See also the contributions to the *Modern Asian Studies* special issue, "How Social, Political and Cultural Information is Collected, Defined, Used and Analyzed": *Modern Asian Studies* 27, no.1 (1993). On press controls and propaganda in early twentieth-century India, see Chandrika Kaul, *Reporting the Raj: The British Press and India, c.1880-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 119-58 and N. Gerald Barrier, *Banned: Controversial Literature and Political Control in British India, 1907-1947* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1974), 16-65.

celebrated the growing power of the popular press, and by proxy, the public. Some Western accounts labeled the gazette as inscrutable, whereas others compared the Qing gazette to official gazettes of notoriously authoritarian regimes. Even defenses of the gazette as a distinctive element of Chinese political culture implied that the Qing dynasty, in keeping with historic Chinese dynasties that restricted political commentary and reporting, could not support a modern press.

In the late Qing, the court gazette became a key site for officials and journalists to debate the history and future of political communications in China. Qing envoys and officials introduced the gazette to foreign audiences, identified its foreign counterparts, and used it to justify new modes of communication and genres of print media. Especially after the 1870s, local elites began to advocate on behalf of a national public and newspapers articulated criticisms on behalf of the public. In the context of both abortive and successful government reforms, some officials suggested that the state adapt its methods of organizing administrative information and its modes of communication with the public. In response, political figures sought state financing for official gazettes that would address both the public and a narrower audience of officeholders. Even as these proposals advocated divergent political agendas, they expressed moralizing impulses that placed the state as the instructor of the populace, and therefore government gazettes as media of popular instruction. In these visions of the modern imperial state, official gazettes would be not only didactic tools, but also transparent records of government decisions based both on the legacy of the court gazette and modern international models. The primacy of the court gazette in debates over the relationship between official and

public realms at the end of the Qing dynasty speaks to the significance placed upon political communications in modern China.

Information Security, Newspapers, and Gazettes

War and Information

In 1842, Qiying 耆英 (1787-1858), commander of troops at Guangzhou and Governor-General of Liangjiang, submitted a memorial reporting with alarm that the British were reading court gazettes (*jingbao*) daily. By reading the gazettes, Qiying warned, the British had obtained sensitive military intelligence. He proposed a complete ban on the publication of military information in gazettes, and severe punishments to both those who gave gazettes to foreigners, and those who leaked military information to gazette publishers. Two Zhejiang officials responded to this proposal by arguing that although the court gazette, a core bureaucratic institution, could not be abolished, the court should eliminate the private gazette publishers in the Beijing suburbs who specialized in producing “more detailed” accounts of court news for fast delivery.²⁴ The imperial response, published in an edict, ordered the arrest of unspecified individuals who directly funneled information to foreigners, but contrary to the thrust of the Zhejiang proposal, did not direct any action against the private gazette publishers.²⁵

Qiying’s memorial reveals how brewing anxieties among Qing territorial officials about British imperialist ambitions in China intersected with concerns about communications security. Qing officials serving in the south expressed anxiety about

²⁴ As mentioned, this *Liangxiang bao* could be related to Li Jiashan’s delivery service, described in Chapter 2. I have not been able to locate the original memorial from Qiying, but it is quoted extensively in the memorial from Liu Yunke and Bian Shiyun. “Liu Yunke deng zou zunzhi mi na wei niyi disong jingbao zhi ren,” Tsiang Tingfu, ed., *Chouban yiwu shimo buyi* (Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku), DG 22/06/29. This memorial was also translated and commented upon in J.K. Fairbank and S.Y. Teng, “On the Types and Uses of Ch’ing Documents,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 5, no. 1 (1940): 62.

²⁵ Wenqing, Jia Zhen, and Baoyun, eds., *Chouban yiwu shimo* (Hanji dianzi wenxian ziliaoku, [1851]), 57:27b–28a (DG 22/06/29).

British access to both official and unofficial editions of the court gazette. Jesuit missionaries in Beijing, well integrated into court and official circles, had obtained easy access to gazettes for a century or more, but British use of the gazette in the Opium War period was seen as more threatening. Qing officials in South China began to question whether foreigners should have access to this information. Was it safe to allow foreigners to read the court gazette? Was even having a court gazette at all safe?

Although newspapers representing the foreign community such as the Hong Kong *China Mail* and the Shanghai *North China Herald* often tracked legal proceedings involving foreigners in China, these newspapers did not refer to cases involving foreign spying, information leaks, or espionage in the post-Opium War period. This might suggest that the Daoguang Emperor's instructions to bar foreigners from access to gazettes and other forms of state information went unenforced. In fact, official anxiety about foreign access to the gazette coincided with the commercialization of the Beijing gazette industry and the expansion of access to the gazette in newspapers, as described in Chapters 2 and 4. After the lapse of the official gazette publisher (Gongshen tang) around 1820, Beijing's commercial gazette industry flourished. As both Western- and Chinese-language newspapers were founded in Chinese cities and treaty ports, the reading audience for gazettes grew dramatically as more people read gazette translations, summaries, and excerpts printed in newspapers. At face value, this evidence indicates that the Qing court saw little risk in the open circulation of state information in published gazettes.

In fact, the Qing court expanded its control over gazette publishing in Beijing even as it encouraged the expansion of the industry. Although official anxiety about the

availability of gazettes to foreigners in the first half of the nineteenth century might suggest that the Qing court would condemn the expansion of commercial gazette publishing, in fact, the expansion of commercial publishing actually faced little official opposition. A steady cohort of about a dozen gazette publishers dominated business in Beijing after 1850, a major increase from the first half of the century. The Beijing capital police and city censors maintained registries of the publishers' locations, names, and the contents of their publications. These Beijing-based gazette publishers most frequently ran afoul of the state when they failed to verify the authenticity of documents and printed false or erroneous information. These were not minor administrative hiccups, but major altercations often involving criminal prosecution. As a result of an error in the gazette, gazette publishing would lapse for a day or two, publishers might be arrested, and both newspapers and private individuals recorded their comments on the incidents.

Priorities based in concerns about information security and especially securing information about military preparedness and defenses guided information policy. In the mid-nineteenth century, anxiety about Taiping rebels' infiltration of North China and the breakdown of imperial defenses as a result of years of civil war motivated imperial information policy more than the presence of British officials on the China coast. In 1853, memorialists cited the threat of Taiping rebels accessing military information in the gazette.²⁶ Later that year, three gazette publishers printed without authorization a memorial concerning lapsed defense in the face of a potential Taiping attack on Beijing. The publishers, as well as the local clerks who had supplied the document, were quickly

²⁶ *QSL*, XF 04/01/22, 119:40b.

prosecuted and went out of business soon afterwards.²⁷ This incident points to the existence of a surveillance arrangement with commercial publishers that allowed quick detection of inappropriate information and mistakes in the gazettes.

In addition, the court's immediate reaction to the scandal of the leaked memorial, which featured vivid descriptions of city guards huddled in blankets and unable to protect their stations, evinces its apprehensions about revealing strategic weaknesses in the gazette. The court also entertained proposals to eliminate all non-secret discussion of military expenditures from open channels like the court gazette. Grand Council records exhibit the results of these policy initiatives: messages sent by commanders in the field, such as Qishan, who was dispatched as Imperial Commissioner to direct troops in Jiangbei, were primarily sent and returned by military courier and therefore not released to open channels.²⁸ On the other hand, gazettes from the same period document donations (*baojuan* 報捐) for military campaigns against the Taiping rebels, policy discussions concerning information security, and even reports on the scandal of the unauthorized memorial.²⁹ Thus, the Qing court used a fairly rigid system to designate items as appropriate or inappropriate for gazette publication, focusing on the memorial's authorship and relevance to military and defense concerns.

In fact, Beijing's gazette publishers were wary enough of investigation and prosecution that they took initiative to keep unverified material out of the gazette. Around the time of the court audience dispute, the diarist and official Li Ciming wrote,

“Yesterday the gazette did not arrive, I heard it was due to a misprint. There was one

²⁷ FHA, LFZZ, 03-9677-002, XF 03/12/19; LFZZ, 03-9677-004, XF 03/12/20; LFZZ, 03-4578-062, XF 03/12/22; SYD box 1176, ce 3; XF 03/12/24; LFZZ, 03-9677-003; 03-9677-006; 03-9677-007; 03-9677-009 (all XF 03/12/26); ZPZZ 04-01-12-0480-115, XF 04/01/12.

²⁸ SSDJ, XF 3/11.

²⁹ BL, Peking Gazette Collection, Boxes 20-23 (XF 3).

edict. The city censor Tan Junpei rounded up all of the gazette clerks, and meted out punishment to them. They were only released today, I don't know why."³⁰ In 1886, *Shenbao* noted that Beijing's city censors had made inquiries with the capital gazette publishers due to their failure to print the gazette digest in the last several days. As the newspapers reported, the publishers revealed to the authorities that they had committed an act of self-censorship. Noting that their received copy of an imperial edict had some mistakes, they had decided not to publish the document "in order to avoid suffering."³¹

As these examples show, the Qing state took seriously the problem of information security as it related to gazette publishing. However, state scrutiny of gazette publishing did not prevent the inclusion of reports involving sensitive subjects in China's foreign relations. Between 1876 and 1879, British officials stationed in China translated documents concerning the cultivation of poppies for opium in China, a mission to intervene against the coolie trade to Cuba, a proposed international alliance against Russian expansion, and the conduct of the Qing army in northwest China, among others.³² The court did not censor "foreign affairs," but blocked specific genres of military and defense information from the gazette.³³ Given that court agents only prosecuted gazette publishers for the release of sensitive information a few times in the mid-century-period, its information policy appears to have been quite effective. Agents of

³⁰ Li Ciming, *Taohua sheng jie an riji*, in *LRCC*, 80:154 (TZ 12/6/21).

³¹ "Ruan hong chun ying," *SB*, April 18, 1886.

³² TNA, FO 233/88, "Papers & Translations on Miscellaneous Subjects 1860 and 1876-1879."

³³ For example, Natascha Gentz, "From News, *Xinwen* 新聞, to New Knowledge, *Xinxue* 新學: Newspapers as Sources for Early Modern Chinese Encyclopedias," in Milena Doleželová-Velingerová and Rudolf G. Wagner, eds., *Chinese Encyclopaedias of New Global Knowledge (1870–1930): Changing Ways of Thought* (Heidelberg: Springer, 2014), 76n87. Two recent works ably demonstrate that it was possible to learn about Qing relations with both Asian neighbors like Korea and Western powers through the gazette: Hyun-Ho Joo, "The *Jingbao* as Late Qing China's News Medium and Its Reports on Korean Affairs," *Sungkyun Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (2013): 235-249; Zhao Ying, "Jingbao de liuchuan yu 19 shiji Zhong-Ying guanxi goujian: yi 'qinjian wenti' wei li," *Guoji xinwen jie* 35, no. 7 (2013): 151-9.

the British Empire in China, who relied heavily on the gazettes as a source of information, therefore worked with an uneven source base: in the gazette they read only those documents cleared for public consumption.

The Peking Gazette and British Imperial Agendas in China

The British Foreign Office's gazette translations drew on the legacy of the English East India Company. After the East India Company began to recruit in-house translators in the early nineteenth century, it relied heavily on court gazettes for language instruction, news of the capital, and hints of evolving Qing policy towards foreigners, Christianity, and opium circulation.³⁴ In 1834, after the dissolution of the East India Company monopoly in China, the British Foreign Office established the position of "Chinese Secretary," with duties including interpretation, translation, and the collection of Chinese documents.³⁵ Thomas Francis Wade (1818-1895), who began to work for the Superintendent of Trade in Hong Kong in the 1840s and later became Chinese Secretary and then British Minister to China, zealously led the way in using the gazette as an intelligence source.

Wade became publicly known for his work on the gazette through two publications that surveyed and analyzed the contents of the court gazette in order to better

³⁴ The English East India Company's use of gazettes in China probably drew on Company experience with the court diaries (*akhbārāt*) of the Mughal Emperor and regional courts of eighteenth-century India. Fisher, "The Office of Akhbār Nawīs," 59-60. However, there were important differences. There was no commercial publishing of court diaries in Mughal India. The Mughal court itself sent these dispatches to the Company in the late eighteenth century. In addition, the East India Company had increasing control over news-writers (*nawī*) in India, in comparison to China, where they had no hope for oversight over gazette publishing.

³⁵ Pottinger to Earl of Aberdeen, Hong Kong, July 31, 1843, quoted in George Thomas Staunton, *Memoirs of the Chief Incidents of the Public Life of Sir George Thomas Staunton, Bart* (London: L. Booth, 1856), 216.

understand the workings and the fate of the Qing government.³⁶ In 1850, Wade, then an Assistant Secretary in Hong Kong, published a ninety-three-page study, *Note on the Conditions and Government of the Chinese Empire in 1849*, which he subtitled as “Chiefly from the Peking Gazette.” After the *Note* was published in Hong Kong, laudatory reviews of the *Note* circulated in the English- and French-language press, ensuring Wade’s reputation as an expert on the subject of the Chinese gazette. In this study, Wade argued that the Peking Gazette portrayed like no other source the flaws and even the imminent dissolution and collapse of the Qing empire, making it an indispensable, if enigmatic, intelligence source.

To preface his study, Wade wrote, “Of the origin of the Peking Gazette, the study of which has suggested the following Note, we have no account upon which we can depend.” He continued, “the Gazettes of a year are, in fact, a collection of State Papers...which it might be assumed, from the variety and importance of the topics of which they treat, and the exalted position of their authors, would furnish materials for compiling a satisfactory record of the passing history of the nation. This is far from being the case.” By making these vocal complaints about the lack of useful information in the gazette, Wade strategically displayed his own critical acumen, and established the grounds for his critique of the Qing state: even its “state papers” did not yield satisfactory information for those interested in compiling a record of the empire’s “passing history.”³⁷

We can picture Wade despondently leafing through his painstakingly collected gazettes, frustrated by his inability to find useful information and abandoning them.

Already, the British press had named the gazette to be the most fundamental source of

³⁶ The better known of these is Wade, *Note*. See also Wade, *Decree of the Emperor of China Asking for Counsel, and the Replies of the Administration, 1850-51, With Other Papers* (London: Harrison, 1878).

³⁷ Wade, *Note*, 3-4.

real knowledge about China, yet Wade found its contents to be discouragingly variable. First, he felt that official memorials buried valuable information in pedantic rhetoric. Second, the characteristic structure of memorials included in gazettes embedded excerpts of reports from subordinates, but often omitted seemingly relevant information. Third, Wade often heard of official initiatives related to matters covered in the gazette, but patterns of gazette inclusion seemed random to him.³⁸ In sum, he found that there was nothing predictable or comprehensive about the gazette's contents.

However, Wade did not put aside the gazette, but continued his *Note* with a series of synthetic judgments about the nature of the Chinese state and its bureaucracy that he bolstered with evidence from the gazette. His basic opinions were that the Qing empire was plagued by major financial and personnel problems attributable to widespread corruption in the territorial bureaucracy and to a paralyzed court incapable of taking up reform. Trawling the gazette's "judicial proceedings," Wade concluded that "official backslidings" were rampant through evidence of officials' removal from office for infractions including "corruption; defalcation; concealment of crime; erroneous decisions; remissness in not preventing, or tardiness in repairing, evil; incapacity; mediocrity; inexperience; informality; litigation; malingering; contumacity; presumption; and unpopularity."³⁹ These criticisms reinforced assumptions that not only were Chinese officials almost universally corrupt and inefficient; but also that the system itself was arbitrary and unjust.

³⁸ Wade, *Note*, 5-6.

³⁹ Wade's comments on these legal cases covered in the gazette suggest that he had read and followed Staunton's comments on the Qing code. For example, "As has been observed, the grand defect of Chinese legislation is, that its provisions, affecting those in office, admit that simple honesty is not absolutely essential to the character of persons selected to serve the state." Wade, *Note*, 30-39.

Wade's colleagues followed his lead in arguing that the gazette was a valuable information source precisely because it revealed the growing cracks in the integrity of the bureaucratic administration. In one report on the nascent "Kwang-se Uprising," (a name for the Taiping Rebellion pointing to its origin in Guangxi Province) Chinese Secretary Walter Medhurst professed uncertainty about the nature of the rebellion due to unreliable intelligence sources like the gazette. He complained, "not to mention the mis-statements with which the mass of these papers is known to abound, the amount of pertinent information contained in them is limited, and withal so vague and defective, that little can be gathered from them."⁴⁰ In the gazette, Medhurst saw self-interested memorialists repeatedly refer to isolated incidents of "thievish vagabonds," ignoring the existence of a region-wide crisis in motion. His argument attributed the unreliability of the gazette to the disingenuous behaviour of Chinese officials.⁴¹

For these British readers of the gazette, inconsistencies and failings revealed more than they obscured. Following his official predecessor George Thomas Staunton (1781-1859), who had selectively translated the Qing legal code and publicized it in Europe as a record of China as it really was, Wade claimed that the source's authenticity explained its peculiarities and incommensurability with Western standards for gazettes and state papers.⁴² Medhurst also defended the gazette as a source of information about the Qing government in the *North China Herald*, writing: "All state Gazettes, under an arbitrary government, are merely such exhibitions of the state of matters affecting the nation as the

⁴⁰ TNA, FO 228/154. W.H. Medhurst, "Memorandum on the Origin and Progress of the Kwangse Rebellion," March 8 1853.

⁴¹ A similar transition in the British valuation of Mughal court diaries happened in nineteenth-century India: "the British of the mid-nineteenth century asserted that they personally felt these akhbārāt were irrelevant to 'real' political information. Nevertheless, the British continued to patronize the genre rather than risk either missing something of value to themselves politically or be seen by Indians as violating a cultural norm." Fisher, "The Office of Akhbār Nawīs," 76.

⁴² Li Chen, *Chinese Law*, 106.

ruling power and his subordinates wish to appear.”⁴³ For each of these imperial agents, the idiosyncrasies of the court gazette mapped onto deficiencies of the Chinese state. While Staunton had highlighted the “penal” nature of the Qing code in order to support claims about the prevalence of violent and unjust punishment in Chinese society, Wade adduced the frequency of administrative crimes reported in the gazette to the persistent breakdown of morale and ethics within the bureaucracy. Meanwhile, Medhurst’s claim that the Qing gazette was comparable to the “*Moniteur* under Napoleon” and “Russian official journals, under Nicholas and Alexander” implied that the gazette amply displayed the authoritarian and “arbitrary” qualities of the Qing state.⁴⁴

As a result, Wade did not abandon his work on the Peking Gazette in 1850: in fact, he led the British to build comprehensive archives of gazettes at the headquarters of the Superintendent of Trade in Hong Kong and later at the Chinese Legation in Beijing.⁴⁵ Chinese clerks transcribed the contents of gazettes into large bound ledgers; interpreters and student interpreters translated selected items into English; the Chinese Secretary then summarized these items, added commentary and explanations, and sent them to the

⁴³ W.H. Medhurst, “Letter to the Editor,” *NCH*, April 5, 1856.

⁴⁴ Writers for the *Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette* also described Chinese imperial edicts as expressing “arbitrary” power: “We frequently have occasion to see translations of Chinese Edicts the terms of which appear most arbitrary and insulting.” *Chinese Courier and Canton Gazette*, September 7, 1833.

⁴⁵ TNA, FO 233/58/7, “Peking Gazette,” April 4, 1872. There are copious collections of Peking Gazettes at the British Library and the National Archives. For more details of the collections, see Appendix A. The British Library collection of was inherited from the Foreign Office; because the Gazettes were understood as “State Papers,” they were transferred from the Peking Legation to the British Museum in 1958. Since the British Library also holds the East India Company archives, pre-1834 editions held by the EIC may have been merged with the Foreign Office holdings; another hypothesis is that these holdings were associated with the interpreters who transferred from Company to diplomatic service. See David Pong, “The Kwangtung Provincial Archives at the Public Record Office of London: A Progress Report,” *Journal of Asian Studies* 28 (1968): 139-43; Ocko, “The British Museum’s Peking Gazette,” 35-49; P.D. Coates, “Documents in Chinese from the Chinese Secretary’s Office, British Legation, Peking, 1861–1939,” *Modern Asian Studies* 17 (1983): 239-255.

Foreign Office.⁴⁶ As would-be interpreters and diplomats cut their teeth on the Chinese language by toiling over gazette translations, gazette material formed the main substance of British Foreign Office intelligence on the Qing state. Wade's interest in finding practical information about the Qing state fit in with a mission expressed by British representatives in mid-nineteenth century China who portrayed themselves as gatherers of intelligence about the state of the country. Through fact-gathering expeditions on the China coast and up the Yangtze River, they solicited information from local Chinese about customs, cultivation of crops like cotton and opium, and popular allegiance to the Qing and to the Taiping rebels, who controlled large swaths of central China in the mid-century period. These expeditions were performed against the background of more mundane and persistent intelligence-gathering operations like the gazette translation enterprise.⁴⁷

Today, remnants of the archives of the Chinese Secretary's Office attest to the extent of the gazette translating enterprise overseen by Wade, who one junior translator called "the overseer of students."⁴⁸ The archives hold hundreds of pages of transcriptions, translations, and summaries of gazette materials from the 1830s through 1890s. Given that the British Legation incorporated gazette translations into its instruction of student interpreters, it is no wonder that these translations suffered from lack of attention. Student interpreters treated gazette copying as a necessary chore, as recorded in the diary of

⁴⁶ These were major undertakings, and my focus on Wade herein should not obscure the work done by Chinese writers and clerks employed by the Legation and Consulates. According to P.D. Coates, through the twentieth century Chinese writers always produced the written Chinese versions of despatches that went out, and the archived transcriptions of Chinese documents (such as gazettes). Frequently, they were called upon to convert a consul or interpreter's written work or "oral explanation in halting Chinese" into documentary language. See P.D. Coates, *The China Consuls: British Consular Officers, 1843-1943* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 34-5.

⁴⁷ Elgin to Malmesbury, January 5, 1859, *BDF*, 19:41.

⁴⁸ McCracken, ed., *From Belfast to Peking*, 66.

Chaloner Alabaster (1838-1898), who later became a consular official at Shanghai and Guangzhou. At the age of eighteen, working as a student interpreter, Alabaster wrote, “Took up very late & then afterwards onto Wade as usual—we worked away but did not do much today the teachers being remarkable stupid at 12 1/2 down to office & when there wasted my time nicely reading extracts from the Peking Gazette however as it was by Wades order it was alright.”⁴⁹

Wade, whom one student interpreter called “the chief,” liked to have his gazettes translated for him in the morning so he could read them at lunch.⁵⁰ As the leading intelligence expert for the British in China, Wade alluded constantly to information in the gazettes that he read. In late 1858, as the British contemplated a naval expedition to Beijing, Wade wrote confidently to the Foreign Office, “We knew from the gazettes that the forts were being rebuilt—this, of course, was in itself no matter of surprise.”⁵¹ British officials in China read gazettes in order to gather facts, construe imperial intentions, and monitor court usage of terms like “barbarian,” (*yi* 夷) banned in recent treaty negotiations. Student translations written under Wade’s tutelage often made their way into the Shanghai press and then into English-language newspapers published around the world, as seen in the previous chapter.

⁴⁹ Diary of Sir Chaloner Alabaster, 1856, n.p.

⁵⁰ Frank Porter wrote: “I am moved into the office of the Chinese Secretary where I see a good deal of the manner in which business is carried on with the Chinese Government. When I am some time there, I shall now and then have the translating of some despatches, and there can be no better practice. I have besides to translate the Peking Gazette every morning for the Chief who gets it at lunch time to read.” McCracken, *From Belfast to Peking*, 128.

⁵¹ T.F. Wade, “Memorandum,” *BDF*, 19:131. For other mentions, see Elgin to Malmesbury, November 5, 1858, *BDF*, 19:4 and Bruce to Malmesbury, July 5, 1859, *BDF*, 19:119.

Figure 5.2. Sketch by Frank Porter, Student Interpreter, 1867



Source: TNA, FO 233/32 “Peking Gazette, 1867.”

Note: Frank Porter was the student translator in charge of copying this volume of translations. “Resurgam” means “I shall rise again” in Latin, and was a popular motto in literature and poetry in nineteenth-century England. Porter also refers to his experience translating gazettes in his published letters to his father.

Yet the inexpert translations performed by students and junior-level British diplomats could not generate a full view of diplomatic intelligence through the lens of the court gazette. On the quality of the translations, diplomat and translator Herbert Giles (1845-1935) wrote in his memoirs, “The future historian, who uses the existing translations from *Peking Gazettes* of by-gone years, may well be warned against accepting them with implicit confidence.” Giles recounted an occasion in 1885 when he contested a junior colleague’s translation as “singularly inaccurate,” to which the subordinate admitted that his translation had been neither careful nor exact.⁵² Giles had himself served as a student interpreter alongside Frank Porter, so he cited personal experience to justify his skepticism towards the quality of the student translations.

⁵² Charles Aylmer, ed., “The Memoirs of H.A. Giles,” *East Asian History* 13/14 (1997): 28.

British agents in China represented to their superiors in England and to a broader reading public a masterful command of Chinese government intelligence through their acquisition, reading, and translation of the Peking Gazette. However, as Herbert Giles' sarcastic commentary alluded, student interpreters could not claim mastery of the communications of an entire empire. Moreover, the gazette remained a difficult source. Importantly, the Qing court had more control over the bounds of information available to gazette readers than British agents represented to their superiors in England. In the 1850s, the Qing censored reports of crumbling defenses in mid-century Beijing, while they promulgated more optimistic reports of the reconstruction of coastal defenses in the capital region. British officials observed that gazettes often withheld information or distorted difficult truths, but assigned these information gaps to inherent failings in the Qing government system rather than to Qing policy or effective information control. The gap between rhetoric and actions, in which British officials both maligned the gazette and relied on it as an information source, led foreign officials in China to attempt to use the gazette to influence reform agendas for the Qing state in the aftermath of the Taiping Rebellion.

Jingbao Diplomacy

Around 1860, representatives of France, Great Britain, and the United States in China began to articulate a new understanding of the gazette as an instrument of public instruction to the officials and people of China. Although the 1858 treaty signed at Tianjin between Qing and British representatives did not order the Qing to disseminate the treaty or other instructions to territorial officials, British officials later pushed the Qing court to disseminate copies of the treaty and "notifications" accompanying it in the

provinces.⁵³ Meanwhile, the French version of the treaty included specific provisions for the publication in the Peking Gazette of a notice concerning the punishment of a magistrate charged with the murder of a French missionary.⁵⁴ In 1863, American Minister Anson Burlingame wrote to the Secretary of State of a shipwreck of American passengers in China, “If I could obtain the insertion of a notice in the Peking Gazette that the prefect of Fah-chan had been allowed to receive a present for this kindness to American citizens, the effect might be encouraging to other officials in similar cases.”⁵⁵

Burlingame’s message suggested that the Peking Gazette could be used as an instrument of communication with provincial officials and even the common people in order to inspire positive public feeling towards foreigners. Likewise, the gazette notice required in the Sino-French treaty imagined an audience composed not of metropolitan and court officials, but of provincial officials and even commoners. These invocations of the court gazette as an instrument of public information for uninformed subjects channeled the exaggerated portrayals of the Peking Gazette and its readers present in the Western-language press in China and abroad. These Western diplomats wished to insert their voice and vision into what they envisioned to be the authoritative, if imperfect, communications instrument of the imperial order.

The role of the Peking Gazette in diplomatic negotiations was so commonly known that a newspaper as distant as the *New Orleans Picayune* devoted a column to the

⁵³ TNA, FO 233/88, Translation, November 12, 1860.

⁵⁴ Imperial Maritime Customs, ed., *Treaties, Conventions, Etc., Between China and Foreign States* (Shanghai: Inspectorate General of Customs, 1908), 1:624.

⁵⁵ Burlingame to Seward, November 6, 1863, in *Papers Relating to Foreign Affairs, Accompanying the Annual Message of the President to the Second Session of the Thirty-Eighth Congress*, 1864, p. 337, in *Foreign Relations of the United States* (<http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1711.dl/FRUS>).

“Pekin Gazette” in 1860. The article, later reprinted by other newspapers like the *Charleston Mercury*, explained:

The newspapers in the provinces are obliged to republish that official portion of the *Gazette* for which the public has the greatest reverence, and which is, by that way, a powerful instrument of government, centralization, and justice. It can be understood by that, how important it is for Christian diplomats, concluding treaties with the Chinese Government, to insist on having them published in the Imperial *Gazette*. It is the best sanction which they can receive, and, moreover, a kind of public consecration.⁵⁶

In this explanation, the *Picayune* presented the Peking Gazette as comparable to official papers of the Western world, in that its announcements constituted binding examples of government actions and decisions. However, the newspaper account attributed the power of the gazette in China not to the rational forces of law, but rather to the “greatest reverence” of the public. The account inserted the gazette into an understanding of Chinese imperial power that was fundamentally based on assumptions of subjects’ quasi-religious reverence for the Emperor. Further religious comparisons between the West and China are made clear in the explanation through the use of terms like “reverence,” “Christian diplomats,” and “public consecration.”⁵⁷

The *Picayune*’s comments on treaties and public documents in China came at the tail end of a year of important developments in diplomacy. In late October 1860, after the siege of the imperial summer palace by British and French troops, the Qing signed the Convention of Peking with the United Kingdom, France, and Russia. Shortly thereafter, the Qing court sanctioned the creation of the Zongli yamen, a new foreign affairs

⁵⁶ “The Peking Gazette,” *Charleston Mercury* (South Carolina), December 29, 1860, attributed to *N.O. Picayune*.

⁵⁷ In these ways, Western interpretations of the Chinese gazette connected with interpretations of Chinese law. Chen, *Chinese Law*, 136.

ministry, and the British established a permanent legation in Beijing.⁵⁸ As everyday relationships between diplomats in Beijing settled into a comfortable rhythm, recurring incidents of violence against foreigners, especially missionaries, troubled the Western powers in China.⁵⁹ The deaths of missionaries and foreign officials in China led British officials to claim that the Chinese government was doing nothing to quell anti-foreign sentiment among the populace. Meanwhile, minor incidents, such as an alleyway confrontation between Thomas Wade and a group of Beijing teenagers, also initiated tense conversations about the role of the court in guiding public behavior. In both major and minor incidents, British officials used the distribution of gazettes and official proclamations to measure the extent of Qing conformity with their demands.

In June 1870, violence at a French missionary orphanage in the northern city of Tianjin led to multiple deaths and considerable outcry. Although the Qing court quickly dispatched the prominent provincial officials Zeng Guofan and Li Hongzhang (李鴻章, 1823-1901) to investigate the case, members of the British legation suspected the central government of not doing enough to compel local officials to educate the populace about proper treatment of foreigners. The legation insisted, as they had after the signing of the Treaty of Tianjin, that government notices be issued in the Peking Gazette and posted

⁵⁸ The classic account of the founding of the Zongli yamen is Masataka Banno, *China and the West, 1858–1861: The Origins of the Tsungli Yamen* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964). For more recent, revisionist accounts involving the Zongli yamen, see: Jennifer Rudolph, *Negotiated Power in Late Imperial China: The Zongli Yamen and the Politics of Reform* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010), Chs. 3-6; Pär Cassel, *Grounds of Judgment: Extraterritoriality and Imperial Power in Nineteenth-Century China and Japan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁵⁹ As Wade wrote in 1880, “When we were first installed in Peking, nineteen years ago, it was my lot, as Sir Frederick Bruce’s Chinese Secretary, to be constantly in communication with the Prince [Gong] and the Ministers of the Tsung-li Yamen, a new and very unpopular institution, and in those days there was no subject hardly upon which we did not talk most unreservedly.” Wade to Salisbury, January 27, 1880, *BDF* 22:205.

throughout the provinces for public attention.⁶⁰ Later, Wade protested that his “General Proclamation” that was to be issued “in every Provincial Capital, Prefecture, and District, and market town throughout the empire,” had only appeared at four places, and in Shanghai “on an insignificant piece of paper.” British officials in Beijing frequently asked the Qing court to publish items in the gazette in order to bring announcements or orders into force. They reasoned that because all Chinese elites read gazettes, publication in the gazette was an effective means of disseminating material to the general public.⁶¹ Publicity in commercial newspapers was considered insufficient notification, as in 1877 when Thomas Wade complained that the text of the Chefoo Convention had “appeared without authority in the native newspapers at Shanghai.”⁶²

As a result of their firm conviction that the gazette enjoyed enormous influence and authority, British diplomats pressed the Qing court to exercise control over the gazette and its contents. These efforts colored even mundane exchanges and reflected British anxiety about the Qing court’s unwillingness to compel the populace to cooperate with the expanded foreign presence in China. This dynamic can be seen in an incident that took place in 1872. On January 28, Thomas Wade, walking in an alleyway near the eastern wall of the Inner City of Beijing, heard a group of boys shout “devil” (*guizi* 鬼子) at him. Wade later reported: “as I usually do in such cases I merely shook my hand at the

⁶⁰ TNA, FO 228/513/6, March 7, 1872, Wade to Alabaster; FO 228/513/9, March 11, 1872; FO 230/89/8, February 12, 1874, “Correspondence about the Engraving of the Tientsin Massacre.”

⁶¹ Comments in the Hong Kong newspaper *The Friend of China* are illustrative: “The Peking Gazettes come out at present during frequent intervals, are widely circulated, and extensively read and believed. We can well imagine the effect of such documents as above upon credulous and self opinionated natives of the middle and higher classes. The Gazettes are regarded as emanating from the highest official sources in the Empire and therefore worthy of implicit credit and fullest confidence.” “From the Peking Gazette,” *The Friend of China*, July 7, 1842.

⁶² The negotiation of the Chefoo Convention of 1876 followed the death of Augustus Margary in southwest China. Wade considered this agreement to be his greatest diplomatic triumph. See James C. Cooley, Jr., *T.F. Wade in China: Pioneer in Global Diplomacy, 1842-1882* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 117. For examples of Wade’s emphasis on posting documents to inform the public of the agreement, see *BDF*, 22:2-17.

group admonishingly.” But after Wade continued on his way, one of the boys threw a stone, and subsequently in an altercation in which Wade “told him to be civil or he might be taken before a magistrate,” struck him on the leg and head with a large tree branch. The Zongli yamen apprehended the boy on Wade’s behalf, and the Zongli yamen ministers proposed a severe punishment. Wade disagreed: “I answered that what I should wish him to remember was that though he had struck a British Minister, the British Minister had interceded for him.” He interpreted the incident in light of the recent violence at Tianjin and the broader anti-foreign sentiment prevalent in the provinces, arguing that the “language and attitudes of the governing class in China” encouraged the common people to hold foreigners in contempt.⁶³

Wade continued to insist that the Zongli yamen take measures to sway more effectively the general population’s attitude toward foreigners. In a subsequent interview, Wade asserted that “the matter in itself was unimportant, but the question behind it was one of extreme gravity.” Zongli yamen officials proposed to draft a memorial reiterating the proper standards of conduct towards foreigners, but after a long discussion, Wade responded that the only effective solution would be an Imperial Decree from the Tongzhi Emperor. He argued that an imperial edict would through its use of proper terminology and expressions of goodwill allow the people to “see...that the Govt of England is looked upon as the equal of the Govt of China.” In response, Prince Gong claimed that such a Decree might be mentioned to the Emperor, but it could not in any way be dictated. The

⁶³ TNA, FO 230/89/12, February 21, 1872, “Assault on Mr. Wade.”

two parties managed to work around the issue by agreeing that a memorial could be sent to the throne that would be responded to agreeably by the Emperor.⁶⁴

Legation staff brought along to the meeting exhibits of how the Chinese government had demonstrated disregard for proper diplomatic relations by making improper references to (and using improper terms for) foreigners in official documents.⁶⁵ At one point, Wade produced the “latest edition of the Code of the Board of Revenue,” in which “the term ‘Barbarian’ is still being used as in the old editions.” Later, he revealed an edict of the Xianfeng Emperor from 1860, which he had obtained in 1864 from a government copyist who was working on the compilation of the records of the Xianfeng reign. In Wade’s translation, one particularly damning line of the edict read, “Everything [therefore] will depend upon the ability of the high officers in charge of the provincial government to keep [the barbarians] within bounds.”⁶⁶ For the past seven years, Wade had held in secret the document that seemed to prove his fears that the court was willingly allowing provincial authorities to work against the spirit of the Treaty of Tianjin. Apparently unimpressed by the documents, Prince Gong argued that the edict was irrelevant to present concerns, and the Zongli yamen quickly ordered the revision of the problematic Board regulations.⁶⁷

Noting that these documents exemplified the past failures of Qing officials to comply with requests to employ proper language and post copies of treaties and proclamations, Wade insisted the Zongli yamen guarantee the publication of the imperial

⁶⁴ TNA, FO 233/62, February 22, 1872, “Notes of a Conversation between Mr. Wade and the Members of the Tsung-Li-Yamen.”

⁶⁵ On the British agenda against the use of “barbarian” (*yi*), see Lydia H. Liu, *The Clash of Empires: The Invention of China in Modern World Making* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004), 40-55.

⁶⁶ TNA, FO 233/88, “Translation, November 12, 1860;” “Confidential note on Decree of 1860 enclosed in the Desp. of the 26th Feb 1872.”

⁶⁷ TNA, FO 230/89, March 9, 1872, “Anti-foreign laws in Penal and Revenue Codes;” FO 230/90, March 25, 1872, “Penal and Revenue Codes are Being Altered.”

edict on goodwill towards foreigners in the gazette. Zongli yamen ministers in attendance made repeated arguments that “the Gazette office is a private concern, and...the yamen has no control over it.” The conflict only abated when one minister, Mao Changxi, promised (“non-officially”) that he would “endeavor privately to have the Memorial published in the Gazette.”⁶⁸ Since the British Legation had subscribed for delivery of the gazette for years, Wade knew well that a private printer published the bulletin. In this exchange, he saw the opportunity to press the Zongli yamen to establish an official claim over the gazette, which would open the door for the court gazette to be used as the official paper of record in China.

After six days, Wade returned to review the memorial that the Zongli yamen had drafted for submission. He rejected the draft because of its formatting and the language in which his title as Minister was couched. The yamen had in all cases but one failed to elevate the title of British Ministers above the column head of the page as the British demanded. In making his objections known, Wade once again used a prop: a recent item in the gazette which reported the presence of a Korean envoy in the capital. Wade pointed out that his own title had been unacceptably written in the same format as that of the envoy from a tributary nation. He informed the ministers Mao Changxi and Dong Xun that each of these formats and terminologies had to be corrected in order to convince Chinese officials throughout the empire that non-tributary foreign powers should be treated with equality (*pingxing* 平行).⁶⁹ As the meeting stalled, Wade declared that

⁶⁸ TNA, FO 233/62, Memo of Feb 22, 1872.

⁶⁹ *Pingxing* is the term that Wade used for equality in the discussion. In an aside, Mao asked Dong, “Had not Russia always been treated as an equal power?” Dong responded in the affirmative.

without the necessary adjustments to format and title, the memorial whether printed in the gazette or not “would be void of any advantageous effect upon the People.”⁷⁰

Years later, Wade recalled in a letter that he had not insisted on punishment for the boy or other forms of redress, and had instead “substituted for all other reparation” the publication of a memorial in the Peking Gazette.⁷¹ Through this series of negotiations, Wade attempted to compel the Zongli yamen to issue a binding decree mandating that territorial officials treat foreigners well. The court gazette was central to Wade’s prosecution of the incident as well as to his proposed solution. Wade used the gazette as evidence of the Chinese government’s failure to support British claims for equal treatment, and as evidence that the Chinese had previously violated the terms of an international treaty. In addition, he hoped that the publication of the decree in the court gazette would require the territorial administration to enforce its terms.⁷² Ultimately, Wade argued, publication would allow the edict to serve as proof for wider audiences of the court’s compliance with foreign demands.

A second glimpse at the comical scene fabricated in response to the “Audience Question” scandal suggests that the satire, like the *Picayune*’s description and Wade’s protests, promoted an image of Chinese readers gullibly following the court gazette, blind to the abuses of power rampant in the Qing government. This satirical passage portrayed not just the “District magistrate of Nanchang-fu,” but also “one of the literati”:

Another constant reader, one of the literati, say in Kai-fung-fu, we observe in spirit reading the Edict, but dashing it down amongst the cups at his favorite

⁷⁰ TNA, FO 233/62, Memo of Feb 28, 1872.

⁷¹ Wade to Derby, July 14, 1877, *BDF*, 38-39.

⁷² Cooley does not mention this minor incident in his account of Wade’s career, but he does state that Wade perceived the negotiations of the Chefoo Convention following the Margary Affair as the highlight of his career. He also argues that they signaled a major transition from the unsatisfying cooperative policy of the 1860s to Wade’s own policy of “cultural diplomacy.” Publication in the Gazette was also an arguing point in these negotiations. Cooley, *T.F. Wade in China*, 116-131.

teashop with a tremendous malediction, and we hear him vociferating: “I will write post haste to my revered uncle, the Secretary of the Inner Council, and pray him to move Censor Woo to denounce those wretched ministers as traitors to their own country, for having even contemplated the possibility of an interview between the outside barbarians and the Son of Heaven. I had thought long ago that our brave troops and invincible ships had exterminated the hellish brood!”⁷³

Whereas the first imagined reader had been an official, the second was a literatus elite with no official post, but who through his family ties had close connections to the highest levels of the government. The literati reader’s reference to Censor Woo reflects widespread Western commentary that censors seemed to hold remarkable liberty to criticize the court’s actions and policies. In his *Note*, Wade had called the power of the Censorate “a deference to public opinion almost anomalous in an absolute monarchy, but consistent with the comparatively temperate despotism of China.”⁷⁴ The reference to “brave troops and invincible ships” implies that the imagined literatus believes the exaggerated reports of Qing military readiness published in the court gazette to be literal fact, and does not understand them to encompass the biases of individual officials and their interests. In this passage, we see the convergence of diplomatic work and press distortions. The diplomats’ insistence on characterizing the court gazette as authoritative, and a wider Western press agenda to portray the Chinese state as morally corrupt and the public as hoodwinked by the state’s machinations shaped the public image of the court gazette both in China and abroad. The gazette became, by way of such representations, simultaneously authoritative and entirely lacking in authority. In fact, anxiety about the authority of the gazette drew not just on critical attitudes towards the Qing state, but also on the consequences of the global rise of the mass press.

⁷³ *NCH*, July 12, 1873.

⁷⁴ Wade, *Note*, 34.

Surveying the World's Gazettes

In the nineteenth century, newspapers established fuller coverage aided by telegraphy and railroads, participated in polemical and revolutionary politics, and celebrated their own contributions to modern life. Indeed, the spread of government gazettes in the nineteenth-century world responded to the growth of the political and popular press and the expansion of popular literacy. Government gazettes were press outlets for binding statements of law, court judgments, and other official notices that countered the morass of opinion in the popular press. An 1841 survey of global newspapers compiled for the Statistical Society of London referred to official gazettes “read by authority” in England, France, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Russia, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Gibraltar, Turkey, Egypt, the Island of Bourbon [Réunion], Persia, India, Prince of Wales’s Island [Malaysia], China, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Bermuda, Bahamas, Barbados, St. Kitt’s, Trinidad, British Guiana, French Guiana, and Mexico.⁷⁵ In other words, these governments published gazettes that offered not ephemeral news or political opinions, but state documents validated by their official sanction and by their presentation to the public. Whether actually read or not, publication in the government gazette granted notice of an official measure to the public, upon which it became binding as law.⁷⁶ As a result, courts looked to gazettes as official records of public information.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Simmonds, “Statistics of Newspapers in Various Countries,” 113-136. Western press discussions of the gazette echo the language of authority. For example, “The whole contents of the *Pekin Gazette* are composed of documents issued by authority, and ‘the liberty of the press’ consists only in being allowed to make copies . . .,” in “Newspapers in China,” *Glasgow Herald*, Feb. 28, 1866.

⁷⁶ In colonial India, the British considered items printed in government gazettes to be facts “of a public nature.” Ameer Ali Syed and George Woodroffe, *The Law of Evidence Applicable to British India*, 3rd Ed. (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink, & Co., 1905), 417-18.

⁷⁷ While the Qing Code and legal texts did not articulate this relationship between gazette publication and use as legal evidence, the gazette was acknowledged in the Qing bureaucracy as a valid source of evidence.

The predecessors of the press agencies of modern governments, government gazettes contained little editorial or narrative content, but were filled with dry excerpts and summaries from legal, legislative, and court documents. In the Statistical Society's list of gazettes, the enumeration of Western European states together with both colonial states and former possessions of the British Empire signals the importance of government gazettes as requisite institutions of modern colonial and national states. Printing government communications in a publicly accessible gazette bolstered claims to rational and transparent governance, even in colonial states. European government gazettes notified imperial agents of awards, postings, and legislation; these gazettes thus played a role rather like that of the Qing gazette.⁷⁸ However, in their analyses of the Peking Gazette's role in post-Opium War China, Europeans paid more attention to the gazette's public role than its bureaucratic functions. In so doing, they considered the gazette's lack of public authority to represent the court's lack of effective authority with its officials and larger populace.

In Europe, nineteenth-century government gazettes, unlike the "pell-mell" gazettes of earlier eras, were conscious efforts by governments to reign in the growing power of the press and promote state policy. Proponents of the free press argued that these gazettes amounted to dull mouthpieces for the state. The Qing gazette became entwined in this wider debate over the proper relationship between the state and the press. British diplomats in China claimed that the Qing gazette failed to uphold the qualities of a government gazette because it did not consistently print the documents and

⁷⁸ In 1859, James Bruce (better known as Lord Elgin) wrote to the Earl of Malmesbury in England, "Permit me to tender through your Lordship my humble duty to her majesty, and my grateful thanks for the honour which Her Majesty, as I learn from the "Gazette," has been pleased to confer on me, by bestowing on me the distinction of the Grand Cross of the Bath." Elgin to Malmesbury, January 7, 1859, *BDF*, 19:56.

communications that they wanted to see in it. Meanwhile, members of the press criticized the Qing gazette precisely because of its perceived close ties to the throne and lack of editorial content. For example, a mid-nineteenth century French missionary traveler, Évariste Régis Huc, compared the Peking Gazette to Napoleon's official gazette. He called the Peking Gazette, "a real *Moniteur Universel*, in which nothing can be printed which has not been presented to the Emperor, or which does not proceed from the Emperor himself."⁷⁹ Thus, Huc deemed the Chinese gazette as akin to the press outlets of the all-controlling French dictator. The gazette's connections to state authority no longer guaranteed that it—or the Qing state—would be perceived as legitimate by foreign observers.

As they traveled abroad, late Qing envoys attended closely to the newspapers and periodicals that they found abroad, and wrote about them in diaries intended for publication upon their return to China. As visitors to Europe like the Chinese envoy Zhang Deyi (張德彝, 1849-1918) noted, newspapers there had diversified by focusing on specialized topics of trade, commerce, and entertainment, or marketing to distinct audiences like children and housewives.⁸⁰ While Zhang laboriously translated the titles of about two hundred and fifty newspapers published in England, noting that his translations were inexact, other diarists seamlessly incorporated Chinese-language terms associated with the Qing gazette into their discussions of foreign government gazettes. In these foreign gazettes, envoys found information relevant to contemporary problems of sovereignty, institutional reform, and social change. The envoy Cui Guoyin (崔國因,

⁷⁹ "Tranquility of the Chinese Mind," *Manchester Times*, April 21, 1855, quoting Évariste-Régis Huc, *Journey Through the Chinese Empire* (London: Longmans, 1855): 1:115-117.

⁸⁰ Zhang Deyi, *Liu shu qi* (Zhongguo jiben guji ku), j.2.

1831-1909) recorded excerpts from the gazettes of the German and Russian empires, including notes on the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War in Europe.⁸¹ Cui's notes identified the Qing gazette and the foreign gazettes as variants of the same genre, possessed of the same attributes and useful for the same functions. In effect, while describing the Qing gazette as insufficiently authoritative suited the interests of British diplomats, and describing it as overly official suited the interests of the Western press, Qing envoys sought to demonstrate that the Qing gazette was a modern institution comparable to foreign government gazettes.

Changing Uses for the Late Qing Gazette

While in the nineteenth-century Western press the court gazette became more closely associated with stereotypes of the Chinese state as stolid and unchanging and its institutions as ineffective and corrupt, evidence from the writings of late Qing officials and envoys shows that the gazette remained relevant to officials during the last half-century of Qing rule. As the previous section demonstrated, Qing officials abroad had little difficulty recognizing and developing parallels between foreign gazettes and the gazette of the Qing empire. Meanwhile, changes in the contents, dissemination, and readership of the Qing gazette testified to more systemic changes in late Qing China. In court gazettes, late Qing officials read evidence not of unchanging patterns, but of institutional reform and new-style diplomacy. Information pertaining to treaties, rebellions, reforms, and upheavals all could be found in the gazette. Like their earlier counterparts, these officials often turned to the court gazette for authoritative transcripts of important announcements and documents and to clear up the swirl of rumor that

⁸¹ Cui Guoyin, *Chu shi Mei-Ri-Bi guo riji* (Hefei: Huangshan shu she, 1988), 66 (GX 16/01/07), 494 (GX 18/09/15).

surrounded both distant wars and court scandals.

In its coverage of the 1873 audience, the *North China Herald* had claimed that the Qing court gazette systematically neglected foreign affairs, which reflected the court's ill-founded presumptions of superiority. However, just a decade later, Qing diplomats debated with their foreign counterparts the publication of details of diplomatic negotiations in the gazette. In 1883, Weng Tonghe, a powerful voice within the court and a careful reader of the gazette, recorded his notes on the brewing conflict between the Qing and French empires over control of Annam (Northern Vietnam) and other areas in Southeast Asia. As a prominent court official, Weng had privileged access to telegraph transmissions of negotiations carried out in Europe by representatives of the Qing. In the middle of the night on July 11, Weng received a dispatch concerning the breakdown of negotiations between Qing and French representatives: at stake were the removal of troops, the payment of a hefty fine, and the promulgation of the details of the proposed agreement in the court gazette.⁸² The next spring, Dong Xun (董恂, 1810-1892), who had recently retired after reaching the position of Secretary of the Board of Finance, read the gazette notice of the end of the war. In his autobiography, Dong noted that his jottings from the court gazette and various Shanghai newspapers filled an entire notebook in that year.⁸³ Thus, not only did officials use the gazette in diplomatic exchanges, it was possible to track the progress of wars and diplomacy in the gazette.

The diary writings of the late Qing official Ye Changchi (葉昌熾, 1849-1917) demonstrate not only the continued relevance of the court gazette for late Qing readers,

⁸² Weng, *Weng Tonghe riji*, 4:1842 (July 7, 1884).

⁸³ Dong Xun, *Huan du wo shu shi laoren shouding nianpu*, 2:65a-b (receipt of gazette dated as April 13, 1885).

but also the ways in which the gazette was a desirable source for tracking the vicissitudes of late Qing politics.⁸⁴ In the summer of 1894, Ye watched the pages of the gazette critically. He noted in his diary that the gazette had recently contained nothing of substance, merely shallow laudatory memorials.⁸⁵ Later, he recorded having seen in the gazette evidence that the Qing naval forces were crumbling in their war against the Japanese.⁸⁶ Four summers later, after the Empress Dowager suddenly crushed the Hundred Days of Reform, Ye described what he had read in the court gazette: the rolling back of proposed eliminations of imperial institutions, the closure of the “road of words” (*yanlu* 言路) that had temporarily expanded the privilege of directly addressing memorials to the throne, and the immediate abolishment of the erstwhile official journal, *Shiwu bao* (*The Chinese Progress*, 時務報). He also found in the day’s gazette an imperial edict that condemned the notorious would-be reformer Kang Youwei (康有為, 1858-1927) for cultivating treacherous factions, while promising amnesty to those who had been drawn in by Kang’s guiles. In the diary, Ye wondered whether recent events would give rise to increased and unwelcome foreign intervention.⁸⁷

After Ye was appointed as an examination supervisor, he often wrote about official proposals regarding the examination system, and accusations of abuse leveled at test-takers and examiners. Yet he was more interested in his own pursuits than his official career, and one day he had the chance to record a new type of gazette entry. He wrote: “I read the gazette, and the Emperor announced a joint proposal by the Government Affairs

⁸⁴ Rong Xinjiang, “Ye Changchi: Pioneer of Dunhuang Studies,” *International Dunhuang Project News* 7 (1997): 1-4.

⁸⁵ Ye Changchi, *Yuan du lu riji chao*, in *Xuxiu siku quanshu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1995): 576:514 (August 20, 1894).

⁸⁶ Ye, *Yuan du lu riji chao*, 576:517 (March 25, 1895).

⁸⁷ Ye, *Yuan du lu riji chao*, 576:545 (September 26, 1898).

Bureau (*Zhengwu chu* 政務處) and the Education Bureau (*Xue chu* 學處) to eliminate the education supervisors (*xuezheng* 學政) and establish education superintendencies for each province.” Ye did not mourn the elimination of his post, but wrote, “Gazing at these benevolent imperial pronouncements is like watching the emergence of a rainbow from the clouds. From today, I can finally lay down my burden and retire.”⁸⁸ As seen through Ye’s encounters with the court gazette during his career, the gazette lent witness to both political turmoil and institutional overhaul in late Qing China. Not just committed loyalists of the court read the gazette: Ye criticized court initiatives and celebrated the elimination of his own official career.

The attention of Qing officials abroad to gazette dispatches shows further the continued relevance of the gazette in the age of new-style diplomacy, the newspaper and the telegraph. Officials stationed overseas continued to monitor the gazette from afar, even as did their peers in the provinces. Like their domestic counterparts, Qing officials abroad used the court gazette to maintain emotional and informational connections to home. As he traveled by sea to Europe from the United States, envoy Dai Hongci (戴洪慈, 1853-1910) learned about the establishment of schools of practical learning in China when he read a recently published commercial edition of the Qing gazette.⁸⁹ While representing the Qing in Europe, envoy Zeng Jize (曾紀澤, 1839-1890) noted that a colleague had come to congratulate him on a new title after reading about it in the gazette insert of *Shenbao*. Afterwards, celebrating guests “came endlessly,” suggesting that they

⁸⁸ Ye, *Yuan du lu riji chao*, 576:718 (April 26, 1906).

⁸⁹ Dai Hongci, *Chu shi jiu guo riji* (Changsha; Hunan renmin chubanshe, 1982), 107.

too read the paper and its gazette insert.⁹⁰ New technologies helped information travel across unprecedented differences, even as the medium remained the gazette.

The Gazette as a Distinctive Chinese Institution

While many Qing envoys interacted with the Qing gazette and referenced it in their personal and professional writings, few representatives abroad articulated directly to foreign audiences a general portrait of the Qing gazette in relation to the workings of the Qing state and society. The exception here was Chen Jitong (陳季同, 1851-1907), who wrote an extensive article on “the Chinese press” in 1891, just before he returned to China after a seven-year stay in Paris.⁹¹ Chen’s discussion of the Peking Gazette, with which he introduced his discourse on the Chinese press, told readers that the “Gazette de Pékin” was the “veteran” of the Chinese press. As he clarified, “It is not a journal of doctrines, it does not publish anything other than pieces of information.” He went on to describe how this journal of information was composed of authorized excerpts from government archives, which “any man is authorized to copy or print.” In this vague description, Chen pointed to the Qing state’s willingness to outsource its publication of gazettes to commercial agents, and its willingness to allow authorized and authentic information about the state to circulate widely. In this way, his commentary repeated the distinction made between the European press of opinions and the Chinese press of information by earlier missionaries like Amiot.

In contrast, Chen’s essay countered current descriptions of the Peking Gazette that

⁹⁰ Zeng Jize, *Zeng Hou riji*, in *LRCC*, 142:217.

⁹¹ Tchong-Ki-Tong [Chen Jitong], “La Presse chinoise,” *Revue illustrée*, April 1, 1891. Thanks to Ke Ren for sending me this article. Chen enthusiastically relayed information about Chinese institutions and culture to his French audience in writings and public appearances that reflected his idiosyncratic perspectives on both fin-de-siècle Paris and China. On Chen’s view of the French press, and his portrayal of the Chinese press, see Ke Ren, “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat: Chen Jitong (1852-1907) and Cosmopolitan Possibilities in the Late Qing World,” (PhD diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2014), 114-18; 169-71.

framed the Chinese press, like Chinese law, in terms of arbitrary despotism. Huc, the French missionary who had compared the Peking Gazette to Napoleon's *Moniteur Universel*, had claimed that the Chinese emperor held supreme authority over the contents of the gazette, and its editors "would not dare to change or add anything" (presumably under threat of harsh punishment). Likewise, in 1873, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* commented, "The *Gazette* then contains only what the Government wants to make known."⁹² Such imagery even eclipsed the fall of the Qing. In 1913, the *Nottingham Evening Post* told its readers of the "Chinese London Gazette," referring to the Emperor as the "managing editor *ex-officio* of the sheet."⁹³

Chen argued that both "fundamental elements" and the "ancient law" of Chinese politics barred from the press the freedom to offer comments on contemporary politics. Chen assured his readers of the measures in place to prevent "odious tyranny" in China through his description of the Censorate, which he named to be the "institution that is above all particular to China."⁹⁴ In his celebration of the power of criticism held by the censorate, and his description of the Chinese gazette as merely a "journal of information," Chen pointed out the qualities that made the Chinese gazette distinctive and difficult to

⁹² "Tranquility of the Chinese Mind," *Manchester Times*, April 21, 1855, quoting Évariste-Régis Huc, *Journey Through the Chinese Empire* (London: Longmans, 1855): 1:115-117. Many authors exaggerated this point, as in the following claim "The only independent editor in China, is the Emperor, who superintends the Peking Gazette, a 'respectable Daily.'" "Recollections of China, II," attr. Erasmus Doolittle, in Silas P. Holbrook, *Sketches, by a Traveller* (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1830), 266. "The Peking Gazette," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 28, 1873, p.3. This article summarized an essay by British official Rutherford Alcock, published with a rather different agenda of supporting an optimistic view of the capacity of the Qing state. Cf. Alcock, "The *Peking Gazette*," and "The *Peking Gazette*, Part II," *Fraser's Magazine* (March 1873): 341-357.

⁹³ "World's Oldest Newspaper," *The Nottingham Evening Post* (Nottingham, England), December 27, 1913.

⁹⁴ Tellingly, Chen's discussion drew on a commonplace comparison made between censors and the press in Europe, in which journalists styled themselves as performing surveillance and criticism of the state and its officials. In contrast, some contemporary Western accounts suggested that the critical censors served as a Chinese alternative to the Western press. See for example, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, *Description géographique, historique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (Paris: P.G. Lemercier, 1735), 1:4; "Freedom of the Press in China," *CR*, September 22, 1835; "Democracy of the Chinese," *Harper's Magazine*, 37 (1868): 842; "The 'Censorate' at Shanghai," *NCH*, September 11, 1880.

assimilate into concepts of the relationship between the state and the press based in European contexts. Yet, Chen's discussion also reinforced the notion that the Chinese gazette was fundamentally dissimilar from elements of the Western press. In fact, Chen's description of the court gazette and its audience failed to account for important developments in the press and within the state that were changing the ways that both officials and non-officials used the gazette and conceived of its purposes.

The Press, Reform, and the Circulation of Administrative Knowledge

In his *Revue* essay on the Chinese press, Chen Jitong assured his French readers that "All of the officials, and all of the people of a certain level of education, prefer to receive this publication, a veritable *Official Journal*, which keeps them aware of the politics of the day." With this statement, Chen reaffirmed that the Qing gazette could not be considered an analogue to the European mass press, but was a closer parallel to the government-sponsored *Official Journal* of late nineteenth-century Paris. He further asserted that the Chinese gazette remained relevant to the working lives and personal interests of Chinese elites, both officials and non-officials. Chen connected elite interest in the gazette to interest in politics: the gazette was a mundane "journal of information," yet it contained intriguing political news. Meanwhile, his characterization of the "veteran" journal as essentially timeless failed to account for ongoing developments in China.

Reading the court gazette in telegraphic dispatches and in the pages of newspapers changed how late Qing readers encountered official documents, announcements, and opinions, in terms of speed, format, and appearance.⁹⁵ New technologies speeded the transmission of information and helped reduce the sense of

⁹⁵ On the "materiality" of telegraphic edicts, see Roger R. Thompson, "The Wire: Progress, Paradox, and Disaster in the Strategic Networking of China, 1881-1901," *Frontiers of History in China* 2015 10, no. 3 (2015): 407-8.

distance and isolation. In the late nineteenth century, newly constructed telegraph lines allowed even officials at remote frontier posts to read the gazette bulletins regularly. In newspapers, officials and other readers might read commentary on current policy and affairs at the same that they perused the corresponding memorial. *Shenbao* often published articles that commented on the daily gazette insert, many with titles like “Notes After Reading the Gazette.”⁹⁶ Other articles foregrounded reporting and opinion, and followed this with a note to readers that more details could be found by referring to the gazette insert.⁹⁷

Institutional reforms also brought new readers to the court gazette in the last decades of the Qing. In 1901, the court implemented curricular reforms in the civil examinations that placed expanded emphasis on candidates’ ability to understand history and politics, rather than classical texts.⁹⁸ The inclusion of more policy questions in the civil examinations spurred new encyclopedia projects and the publication of monthly digests of gazettes under the titles *Yuzhe huicun* 諭摺彙存 (see Figure 5.3) and *Neige huichao* 內閣匯抄.⁹⁹ Such publications packaged together a larger range of documents than did daily gazettes, and included tables of contents for easy reference. The incorporation of gazette material into encyclopedias and in monthly commercial editions enabled even casual readers to perform research in gazette materials. While a traditional portrait of the gazette-reading official had emphasized steady and diligent daily study, new formats eliminated these demands for consistent note-taking. Compilations brought

⁹⁶ For example, “Du dichao shu hou,” *SB*, April 2, 1874; “Du dichao shu hou,” *SB*, January 21, 1875; “Shu dichao hou,” *SB*, February 13, 1875.

⁹⁷ For example, “Li Guangzhao anlüe,” *SB*, October 22, 1874.

⁹⁸ Benjamin A. Elman, *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 578-608.

⁹⁹ On encyclopedias, see Gentz, “From News,” 55-79.

all of this information to hand, eliminating these tasks and supplanting the daily rhythms of reading the gazette. By the end of the century, expansion of the commercial gazette industry and ancillary publishing industries made gazette information available to a vastly larger audience, and in a diverse range of publications.

Therefore, while new material contexts and purposes for reading marked important changes in the ways that officials encountered the gazette, these changes dwarfed in significance compared to a major transition much harder to trace in diaries and official sources: many more people read the court gazette, now that it was printed in newspapers. The publication of the court gazette in telegraph dispatches, monthly compilations, and new-style newspapers also expanded the varieties of experience a reader might have with the gazette. A reader could pore over a set of memorials in order to research a given topic, or he could simply glance at the court gazette in reading his daily newspaper. A wide variety of newspapers and journals founded in the late Qing, ranging from new-style commercial papers to reformist political journals to official gazettes, printed a gazette section. In so doing, each of these publications paid homage to the court and legitimated their commentary on current affairs.

Figure 5.3. *Yuzhe Huicun*, Table of Contents, GX 17/9

諭摺彙存目錄		光緒十七年九月初一日 訖三十日
初一日	御史訥奏藩王私立燒鍋	恩承等奏查覆藩王燒鍋
	熱都德奏查明藩王叅款	崇善奏回任接印日期
	熱都德奏蒙員越界緝賊	
初二日	吉將軍長奏補燒鍋句缺	閩督下奏徵收錢糧數目
	又奏知縣短交銀兩叅追	吉將軍長奏揀補協領缺
	又奏借補蒙旗協領遺缺	又奏委充統領管帶各缺
初三日	又奏練軍接充協領等缺	又奏解省發回人犯脫逃

Source: *Yuzhe huicun*, GX 17/09/01-30.

Even as commercial publishers aimed their encyclopedias and gazette compendia at potential advocates of new-style learning and governance, in the context of the court-sponsored New Policy Reforms, some officials advocated for the state to play a greater role in publishing modern educational and administrative materials. These initiatives modeled themselves on the government publishing bureaus (*guan shu ju* 官書局) founded in Jiangnan and other areas in order to replenish book collections which had been greatly diminished due to the destruction of the Taiping Rebellion.¹⁰⁰ In 1901, Wu Yusheng (吳郁生, 1854-1940), a rising political figure then serving as Education Commissioner for Sichuan Province, submitted a memorial that advocated the publication under government auspices of new practical compendia of documents for the use of examination candidates, officials, and others.

Wu opened his argument as follows:

¹⁰⁰ On the establishment and characteristics of the publishing bureaus, see Wu Ruixiu, *Qing mo ge sheng guan shuju zhi yanjiu* (Yonghe: Hua Mulan wenhua gongzuo fang, 2005).

Should not knowledge of administration circulate throughout the realm? From ancient times, is there not substantive [knowledge] that should circulate? From now, are there not applications? Nowadays, those who wish to understand the roots of court-initiated reforms would be especially well served by consulting documents and examples that have been put into circulation.

This introduction framed the problem of outdated compilations in terms of recent changes mandated by prominent officials like Zhang Zhidong (張之洞, 1837-1909), who advocated combining Chinese and Western learning for national improvement. Wu's opening also picked up on the extended metaphor of circulation, linked to a bodily metaphor of health through circulation. He thereby connected the operations of national communications to the integrity of the state. Such metaphors appeared frequently in reformists' arguments for newspapers and educational reform, such as Liang Qichao's famous 1896 essay on newspapers which had opened with the line, "The relative strength of nations comes from their flows and blockages."¹⁰¹

Wu built on this opening premise by pointing out that the genres and topics of administrative knowledge necessary to improve the health of the nation had changed recently. Traditional official compilations, such as collections of precedents and sub-statutes, did not reflect the workings of new metropolitan institutions important for understanding current affair, rendering the old-style compilations useless. Wu suggested that each central bureau should compile a handbook based on their internal documents and correspondence within two years. This handbook would focus on relevant topics for modern administrators. Thus, the new Foreign Affairs Bureau (*Waiwu bu* 外務部) would offer documents on diplomacy and the revision of treaty port agreement, the Board of

¹⁰¹ Liang Qichao, "Lun baoguan you yi yu guo shi," in *Huang chao jingshi wenbian xin bian*, 21:8a-9b. As Mittler points out, many late Qing newspapers deployed bodily metaphors to make comparisons between Chinese and foreign institutions. Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, 110-1. Liang would continue to use body metaphors in later work.

Finance would offer documents on monetary policy, taxes, the salt and tea monopolies, and so on.

Principles of effective circulation figured in to the rebuttal of the recently established Government Affairs Bureau, which opposed the particulars of Wu's agenda. Although the throne had commended Wu's proposal and ordered metropolitan agencies to comply, the Bureau, a figurehead of the recently commenced New Policies program, pointed out the plan's impracticalities.¹⁰² The Bureau began its response by quoting a condensed version of Wu's grand opening statements. It reminded readers of the examples of the famed statecraft administrators Chen Hongmou and Zeng Guofan, each of whom had made a standard practice (*chengke* 程課) of reading the court gazette. Since Wu's proposal had drawn on the "ancient" tradition of circulating "substantive knowledge," the Bureau response cited these exemplars in bolstering its objections. While the goal of compiling specialized texts to address current administrative issues was laudable, it was simultaneously impractical. Filled with minutiae, these compilations would inevitably end up voluminous, heavy, esoteric, and difficult to circulate.

As an alternative to circulating compendia, the Bureau suggested an expanded mandate for publishing and circulating the court gazette, the chosen reference of administrative exemplars Chen and Zeng. The court gazette could become a more effective instrument of government by printing more material originating from the metropolitan government, in order to reflect recent institutional reform at the center. In the past, gazettes had published many memorials originating from provincial officials that established policy precedents, but few of the notices and memorials generated by

¹⁰² "Zouyi luyao," *Beiyang guanbao*, issue 1, [summer 1901]. See also Wu's memorial and the court response in "Wan Qing chuangban baozhi shiliao (1)," *Lishi dang'an* no. 2 (2000), 60-61.

metropolitan institutions. The gazette needed to be made more comprehensive in order to document new government policies and thereby bolster central authority. This argument signaled that the Bureau and other metropolitan counterparts were the heart of the New Reforms transforming government. The Bureau concluded its proposal by recommending that metropolitan agencies should release all non-classified materials to Beijing's gazette publishers. The publishers would print selections from these documents daily, and compilations monthly.¹⁰³

These reforms to gazette publishing, the Bureau concluded, would fulfill the court's recent mandate to propose reform measures that ensured "the masses fully know the proper way" (*zhong xian zhi zheng* 眾咸知正). This statement connected the pursuit of administrative efficiency to the expansion of popular knowledge (*min zhi* 民智). Thus the Bureau's emendations to Wu's agenda shifted the imagined focus of the proposed publishing program away from the official ranks and towards a much larger reading public. As demonstrated in the previous section, the audience for official texts had grown dramatically as newspapers and journals incorporated edicts and memorials into their pages. Seen together, Wu Yusheng's proposal and the Government Affairs Bureau response incorporated the court gazette, a traditional administrative tool, into a broader reconceptualization of the role of official texts in the functioning of a nation. In these views, texts originating from the center should circulate not only to improve administrative efficiency, but also to make knowledge and moral instruction—as seen through the lens of the central state, not the local state—available to the public. This privileging of the voice of the center would recur in later official proposals to establish a

¹⁰³ This proposal was the origin of the thirty-volume *Guangxu zhengyao* compilation published in 1909. Shen Tongsheng comp., *Guangxu zhengyao* (Shanghai: Chongyi tang, 1909), "Fan li," 1:1a.

“national-level” gazette, such as that forwarded by Zhao Binglin (趙炳麟, d.1927) in 1907, which resulted in the establishment of the *Neige guanbao* (內閣官報, *Official Gazette of the Grand Secretariat*), also known as the *Zhengzhi guanbao* (政治官報, *Government Gazette*).¹⁰⁴

However, not just state institutions invoked reforms to the court gazette as a way to transform communications and knowledge in the Chinese state. As the next section demonstrates, newspapers and journals of all political stripes invoked the gazette as an accountable official text of record available to the public, even as they advanced very different visions of the role of the press in Chinese politics. In this final section of the chapter, I examine how *Shenbao*, *Shiwu bao*, and *Beiyang guanbao* (*Official Gazette of the Beiyang Government*), representing commercial, reform, and official papers, deployed the court gazette in interpreting the political role of the press and describing visions for its future in China.

The Gazette and the Commercial Press

This chapter began with a discussion of the conflict over the “Audience Question” in the Shanghai press. Writers for both the *North China Herald* and *Shenbao* interpreted the court gazette as the proper source of information on official ceremonies like the Tongzhi Emperor’s audience with foreign representatives, and lamented the gazette’s failure to publish a record of the event. As Barbara Mittler has pointed out in her study of *Shenbao*, the newspaper’s editors used its gazette section to ease distinctions between

¹⁰⁴ FHA, LFZZ, 03-9285-011, Zhao Binglin, “Zou wei yong Dong Xi ge guo guanbao tili she yin guanbao ju shi.”

new-style newspapers and this traditional communications organ.¹⁰⁵ The newspaper published the court gazette daily, and after the establishment of telegraph links between Beijing and Shanghai, it also printed telegraph transmissions of court edicts. In addition to the court gazette, *Shenbao* reprinted provincial gazettes from throughout the Lower Yangtze region at irregular intervals of one to five days between 1872 and 1898, amounting in total to more than six thousand reports over the twenty-six year period.¹⁰⁶

Over the years, writers for *Shenbao* published a number of essays and articles advocating for the power of the press in which they invoked the historical role of the court gazette in China. In a front page article published in 1895, *Shenbao* pointed out its own role in expanding the reading audience for the court gazette. The article described that while China had always had the court gazette, outside of government offices, only serving and aspiring officials and their families had access to it. For others, the contents of the gazette were disconnected from their own circumstances. Some never laid eyes on the gazette, and some were even ignorant as to what it was! Therefore, the article concluded, daily newspapers had in fact transformed and rescued the court gazette from obscurity. Now that the gazette was printed as a daily insert in newspapers, even if it had no direct relevance to readers, it would be hard to find a reader who did not at least glance at the gazette insert on a regular basis.¹⁰⁷

Shenbao's description placed the modern newspaper above the traditional gazette by asserting that newspapers had expanded popular knowledge of the previously obscure

¹⁰⁵ Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, Ch.1. On *Shenbao*'s self-promotion as a voice of the people and an outlet for improving public literacy and knowledge, see Mary B. Rankin, "Alarming Crises/Enticing Possibilities: Political and Cultural Changes in Late Nineteenth-Century China," *Late Imperial China*, 29, no.1S (2008): 42-45.

¹⁰⁶ These numbers are my estimate based on the Green Apple *Shenbao* database. My survey finds regular reprints of provincial gazettes for the Liangjiang governor-general's office, as well as Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Fujian, and less frequent reports from Fujian, Guangdong, and Hubei.

¹⁰⁷ "Kuochong baowu yi," *SB*, October 28, 1895.

court gazette. In this way commercial newspapers had eliminated traditional divides between elites and the public. In fact, however, newspapers like *Shenbao* depended on the existing infrastructure of gazette sales and distribution, and on widespread public interest in the court gazette. Public interest in official news made gazettes essential source material for *Shenbao*. The newspaper reassured its readers repeatedly in the early 1870s of its efforts to obtain gazettes from Beijing more efficiently.¹⁰⁸ By late 1874, *Shenbao* described its reprinting of the court and provincial gazettes in matter-of-fact language: “We publish the provincial gazettes (*yuanmen chao*) because people are always coming to our office and asking about such-and-such an official or vacancy.”¹⁰⁹ In the early 1880s, it advertised prominently its new capacity to obtain gazettes via steamship delivery. Gazette purveyors were the main distributors of *Shenbao* in cities like Beijing, Hangzhou, and Yangzhou, in some cases through the 1890s.¹¹⁰

Thus, even though *Shenbao* relied on gazette distributors and appealed to an audience of gazette readers, it frequently argued that the gazette lacked relevance for its imagined audience. In this article and in other essays concerning the history of the press, *Shenbao* writers portrayed the court gazette as an authoritative source of evidence used almost exclusively by officials and elites. This can be seen, for example, in an editorial, “On the Difference Between the Court Gazette and New-Style Newspapers,” published in 1872, that traced the court gazette’s origins to a long-standing precedent that required official memorialists to “always communicate proof.” Although this evidentiary function

¹⁰⁸ This notice was printed several times in June 1872.

¹⁰⁹ “Lun ribao,” *SB*, November 7, 1874.

¹¹⁰ Advertisement for sales at the Hangzhou gazette (*jingbao*) outlet run by Tao Wenyan ran in *Shenbao* throughout October 1872. In Beijing, *Shenbao* was sold at the gazette publisher Juxing baofang through the summer of 1873. For updated lists of outlets in the 1890s, see “Waibu shou bao chu,” *SB*, August 10, 1892 and January 11, 1895.

was most relevant to the bureaucracy, it also affected the literati more broadly. For example, wrote the editorialist, seventeenth-century scholars like Qian Qianyi and others had used the court gazette to compose historical and even satirical narratives based on current events. The editorial reflected, “From perusing the gazette, these gentlemen not only obtained a wide purview of events, but also expanded their opinions and arguments.”¹¹¹

In his portrayal of the esteemed history of the court gazette, the *Shenbao* writer did not criticize the gazette’s lack of relevance to the wider populace, but drew a parallel to the ways in which new-style newspapers could increase knowledge among the wider populace just as the court gazette had expanded learning among elites. After all, the gazette focused on court matters and did not describe the “trivialities” of the rural population. The editorial summarized this point with a spatial distinction between elites “above” and the populace “below”: “we could say the gazette is a product for those above, whereas new-style newspapers are a product for those below.” The newspaper’s portrayal of separate spheres for the court gazette and new-style publications suggested a segmented view of the public in China, in which elites and commoners existed in parallel and therefore non-intersecting worlds. Traditional communications in China thereby enforced a divide between elites and the public. Only new-style newspapers, *Shenbao*’s writers advocated, would bridge this divide. Yet, according to the editorialist, the situation was different in Western countries: both rulers and villagers read the same

¹¹¹ “Dibao bie yu xinbao lun,” *SB*, July 13, 1872.

papers, and therefore shared knowledge of “every action, every speech, every tool, every creature, whether beautiful or ugly, elegant or coarse.”¹¹²

With this comparison, the message of the editorial shifted. Instead of suggesting that the court gazette and newspapers improved knowledge in their respective realms, the editorialist now implied that the situation in China was undesirable. In this view, the court gazette became the negative foil to the free and open Western press.¹¹³ Such a portrayal of the press in the West obscured political divisions, state control and censorship, and limitations on readership in favor of emphasizing the benefits of readers across social divides interacting with the same newspapers. This stylized image contrasted with envoy Zhang Deyi’s detailed exposition of the diversity and fragmentation of the English press. *Shenbao*’s depiction might have struck informed readers as exaggerated. Still, the idea that the press could connect disparate social realms, and transform the relationship between state and society resonated in Chinese reformers’ views of the power of the press, which the next section addresses.

The Gazette in the Reformist Press

While *Shenbao* writers envisioned new-style newspapers as breaking down social divides and hierarchies, other voices in the late Qing press espoused a firm commitment to hierarchy and state control of communications. Throughout his lifetime, the publicist and intellectual Liang Qichao (梁啟超, 1873-1929) founded a succession of political journals, both in China and in exile, which promoted the watchdog functions of the press

¹¹² These descriptions of Western newspapers were recycled two months later in a review of the *Zhong-Xi wenjian lu* (*Peking Magazine*): “Shu Zhong-Xi wenjian lu hou,” *SB*, Sept. 26, 1872.

¹¹³ For example, in late 1874, *Shenbao* wrote, “In the West, no matter the affair, it is legitimate for the newspaper to write about it; in this way, even non-officials can contribute to official matters. If there is something wrong, this becomes a matter of public debate, and the editors deal with it.” “Lun ribao,” *SB*, November 7, 1874. *Shenbao* had argued its anti-censorship agenda during the Yang Yuelou scandal in 1874. See Natascha Vittinghoff, “Readers, Publishers, and Officials in the Contest for a Public Voice and the Rise of a Modern Press in Late Qing China (1860-1880),” *T’oung Pao* 87, no. 4/5 (2001): 393-455.

and elucidated a “middle-level” zone of political discourse. Because Liang would go on to become an influential commentator on the press, literature, and politics, his personal agendas have heavily influenced histories of Chinese journalism. However, even as Liang and his mentor Kang Youwei advocated for an early press endeavor, *Shiwu bao*, they both also argued for state control of the press and appealed to conservative court interests wary of the popular press in order to gain state funding for their enterprise.

Shiwu bao was based in Shanghai and funded mainly by the powerful late Qing official Zhang Zhidong.¹¹⁴ In its first issue, published in August 1896, Liang Qichao penned a discourse on the power of the press. Liang’s treatise on the press both influenced official press voices emergent in the same period, and drew on the arguments and agendas of earlier advocates of the commercial press, such as essays published in *Shenbao* that argued for newspapers as a source of popular education.¹¹⁵ Liang employed a set of bodily metaphors for discussing the health of the nation, with which he developed connections between communications and metaphoric “circulation.” The essay began with the description of a number of different “channels” that needed to remain clear and connected:

The strength and weakness of various states comes from their circulation and blockage (*tong sai* 通塞). If blood does not circulate (*bu tong* 不通), then there is sickness. If learning is not disseminated (*bu tong*), then there is backwardness. If roads are not passable (*bu tong*), then relations will become distant. Because their languages are not mutually intelligible (*bu tong*), the southeast coast has become an entirely separate region from the Central Plain. For countries it is the

¹¹⁴ Seungjoo Yoon, “Literati-Journalists of the *Chinese Progress* (*Shiwu bao*) in Discord, 1896-1898,” in Rebecca E. Karl and Peter Zarrow, eds., *Rethinking the 1898 Reform Period: Political and Cultural Change in Late Qing China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002), 48-53.

¹¹⁵ Mittler points out how Liang replicates *Shenbao*’s agendas in his 1896 essay on the press. Mittler, “Domesticating an Alien Medium: Incorporating the Western-style Newspaper into the Chinese Public Sphere,” in Wagner, ed., *Joining the Global Public*, 20.

same. If rulers and subjects do not communicate (*bu tong*), then virtue cannot be effectively disseminated and instilled.¹¹⁶

In this opening, Liang played with various meanings of the term for “connection,” employing it in contexts of body, region, language, and state. He established a parallel between the body and the state, demonstrating that proper circulation of information was parallel to the circulation of blood in the body and the circulation of traffic on the roads. Mutual exchange is important in this vision, as in the case of the linguistic divide between Canton and the Central Plain leading to destructive disunity. Yet Liang emphasizes centrality more. In the state, it is essential for “virtue” to be disseminated from rulers to subjects, just as it is essential for blood to be sent from the heart to the rest of the body. Liang’s portrait of communications as a source of popular education diverged from that of *Shenbao* writers as his stress on the court as a source of moral suasion and instruction reinforced a hierarchical view of both governance and communication.

Later in the essay, Liang’s appeal to historical precedents for newspapers also placed importance on a proper hierarchical connection between rulers and subjects. He alluded to an episode in the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), in which the Son of Heaven appoints an official to collect songs and poems sung in the different states in order to understand the people’s conditions: if they were starving they would sing of food, if laboring they would sing of work. This information would be collected in each village, each town, and each state, then channeled up to the Son of Heaven. This, Liang argued, was parallel to popular newspapers. In addition, local dignitaries in villages would extol

¹¹⁶ Liang Qichao, “Lun baoguan youyi yu guoshi,” *Shiwu bao*, August 1896. This essay is cited extensively in scholarship on the early Chinese press. See especially Judge, *Print and Politics*, 22.

the Emperor's virtue and offer discourse on rules and governance. Liang defined this practice as parallel to official gazettes.

Although Liang's essay went on to describe the ideal national press as encompassing a wide ranging of publications on every subject (education, agriculture, commerce, and so on), his opening nonetheless stressed a proper hierarchical relationship between state authorities and the population as the basis of an effective national communications order. His concluding remarks returned to the theme of state control, by discussing of the limits that countries like England, Japan, and Germany had placed upon the popular press in order to prevent disruption of the proper social order. By enumerating examples of legal regulation of press discourse, Liang appealed to official anxieties about the potential of the press to disseminate unfounded rumors and stir up social conflict. The essay suggested that by funding an official press, and by establishing press laws, the state could establish a strong control over the public sphere. Meanwhile, Liang's discussion ignored the potential for gazettes to serve as forums for policy discussions among officials, and in emphasizing its timeless didactic function, minimized the contemporary political relevance of the gazette.¹¹⁷

About two years later, Liang Qichao's mentor and fellow reformer Kang Youwei submitted a proposal to obtain government funding for *Shiwu bao* as part of the package of reforms that he promoted to the Guangxu Emperor in the summer of 1898. As Kang argued, the lofty mission of newspapers—and the considerable expense associated with publishing and distributing them—justified government subsidies for particularly

¹¹⁷ The missionary Timothy Richard suggested in his memoirs that the *Zhongwai jiwen* (*Sino-Foreign News*), a predecessor to the *Shiwu bao* published in Beijing, was reprinted in the "Peking Gazette offices." Timothy Richard, *Forty-Five Years in China* (New York: Frederick A. Stokes, 1916), 245. Mittler accepts that the *Zhongwai jiwen* was printed by gazette publishers, pointing out that it had the same yellow cover and similar proportions as the commercially published court gazette. Mittler, *A Newspaper for China*, 47-8.

important papers. In fact, *Shiwu bao* had been losing money and subscribers despite its initial popularity, and the editors appealed to the state for a new source of funding.¹¹⁸ Like Liang, Kang opened by evaluating the fortunes of different countries around the world. He argued that “as newspapers increase in number, the people become more knowledgeable, and countries become wealthier and therefore more powerful.” He produced a prestigious list of what he called “official papers” (*guanbao*), distinctive for the fact that they obtained at least partial state funding, not that they served as the official press organ for foreign governments.¹¹⁹

While Kang grandiosely stated that the mission of the newspaper was to “uphold the national constitution and expand popular knowledge,” he conceded that not all papers held such merits, and included a caveat on the freedom of the press:

As for the popular newspapers established in the provinces, although the extent of their opinions (*yanlun* 言論) is certainly impressive, in structure and method they are as yet imperfect, and furthermore they occasionally put out absurd opinions (*yilun* 異論) and inaccurate reports. They should be sent to the Official Gazette Bureau [before publication] and Liang Qichao should be charged with surveying and reviewing their contents, and then bringing together the most meritorious among them, and advancing those for imperial perusal. Those that are absurd or inaccurate should be banned.

Kang’s willingness to suggest that newspapers should be subjected to official scrutiny and approval before publishing indicates that he saw himself not as an advocate of the free press, but as an advocate for his own pursuits and agendas, which included the establishment of a newspaper.¹²⁰ In signaling his approval of this enterprise, the Guangxu

¹¹⁸ Chen Qingnian, *Wuxu jihai jianwen lu* in *Qingting wuxu chaobian ji: wai san zhong* (Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue, 2008), 87-88.

¹¹⁹ These included the British *Times*, the American *Globe*, the French *Le Temps*, the Russian *Novoye Vremya*, the Japanese *Tokyo [Nichinichi] shinbun* and *Mainichi shinbun*. Kang Youwei, “Qing she Shanghai *Shiwu bao* wei *guanbao*,” in Jiang Yihua and Zhang Ronghua, eds., *Kang Youwei quanji* (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2007), 4:331-2.

¹²⁰ Luke S.K. Kwong, *A Mosaic of the Hundred Days: Personalities, Politics, and Ideas of 1898* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 188-99; Yoon, “Literati-journalists,” 71-76.

Emperor echoed the connection between newspapers' important missions and the necessity of limiting the powers of the press. The edict, reprinted in *Shenbao* and widely elsewhere, directed: "Editorials authored by the newspaper should serve to raise up popular morals and root out deep-seated corruption. Given these important tasks, newspaper should not invoke petty and slanderous matters to incite trouble."¹²¹ The edict thus instructed Kang to translate foreign press laws and draft a set of regulations and limitations for the press based on the current situation in China. Kang went into exile soon after this edict was released, and a comprehensive set of press laws would not be drafted until 1907.¹²² However, as this episode demonstrates, self-styled reformers of the late Qing laid the groundwork for a restrictive view of the press advocated in the final decade of the Qing and in the Republican era.

The Gazette in the Official Press

Compelled to acknowledge the court gazette as both an important predecessor to newspapers in China, writers for *Shenbao* had emphasized the gazette's limited readership, limited relevance, and limited content. Meanwhile, the proponents of *Shiwu bao* clearly designated the official press as an inculcator of virtue and morality in the populace. These descriptions characterized the ideal court gazette as a direct channel of information from above to guide the proper edification of the public, not to mention to counter the power of the popular press.

After the Qing court signaled the beginning of modernizing "constitutional" reforms in 1901, conservative officials who sought state funding for "official journals" (*guanbao*) sought to identify precedents for these journals within Chinese history and in

¹²¹ "Ben guan jiefeng dian yin," *SB*, August 12, 1898.

¹²² Yu Heng, *Da Qing baoli zhi yanjiu* (Taipei: Taiwan Zhonghua shuju, 1985).

classical texts. These officials advocated for the power of the press, but continued to elucidate themes of hierarchy, instruction, and control in their vision of the modern state-funded press. Official advocates of the press argued that newspapers were tools for popular education: they augmented popular enlightenment (*minjian fengqi* 民間風氣) and advanced the levels of civilization. However, while writers in commercial papers like *Shenbao* had advocated an erasure of boundaries between official and public realms, official advocates saw the press as achieving harmony, not unity, between rulers and subjects. Instead of public voices shaping politics in the popular press, the state-run press would account for public needs. The didactic functions of the state-sponsored press, which could encompass materials from commercial records to translations of foreign materials, contributed to a conservative didactic vision of moral education (*jiaohua* 教化). Like their press counterparts, these official advocates, including the powerful leader of North China, Yuan Shikai (袁世凱, 1859-1916), saw a need for modern state-sponsored publications to address the public, not just officials. In their portrayal, the importance of this task justified state-imposed limitations on the press.

A few months before Kang Youwei submitted his memorial to obtain state funding for *Shiwu bao*, a censor named Huang Guiyun (黃桂鑿, 1858-1903) had already suggested placing all newspapers under the control of a government publishing bureau. Huang described the recent tremendous growth and diversification of the newspaper industry in wary terms, arguing that while newspapers could enlighten the people, promote learning, and contribute to economic development, they could also confuse, mislead, and corrupt readers, especially uneducated readers. In contrast to *Shenbao*, Huang framed Western newspapers as a negative example, suggesting that Western

papers all had insidious and undisclosed ties to the state which contributed to bias in their coverage of politics. Huang continued to argue against the growing influence of Shanghai newspapers to the detriment of officially sponsored papers published in Beijing. He articulated, “Capitals are the central pivot (*gangling* 綱領) of the realm. Official gazettes should therefore be the leaders of all newspapers.” In conclusion, Huang recommended that the publication of misleading rumors in the press should be punished with exile “according to the statute for treachery and deception.”¹²³

From Huang’s perspective, the expansion of papers like *Shiwu bao* through obligatory subscriptions at government offices, schools, and academies had depressed the capital gazette industry. Furthermore, the careless rhetoric employed by both political and commercial papers could lead to social instability. Early issues of *Beiyang guanbao*, a government gazette under the jurisdiction of Yuan Shikai’s Beiyang Intendancy in Tianjin, espoused a similar rhetoric as they described the mission of an official gazette. A series of six prefatory essays published in the journal articulated a vision of the ideal state in which relationships between rulers and subjects were made harmonious through proper communication. The essays postulated that highly regulated government gazettes could in fact be instruments of government. Each preface began with references to classical texts and history in order to create a justification for understanding the role of communication in government. Then, the essays raised observations about the role of newspapers in Western countries, criticizing foreign papers for sowing discord even as they recognized how such newspapers augmented popular enlightenment.

¹²³ FHA, LFZZ, 03-5615-038, GX 24/04/03, “Huang Guiyun zou qing zhengdun guanbao zhangcheng yi duheng yi shi.”

The first preface argued that restoring harmony between rulers and subjects was an urgent task: if not accomplished, then the blockage of communication would lead to a dangerous “explosion.” The references to circulation and blockages echoed Liang Qichao’s 1896 essay on the press. After offering a historical account of state information collection and dissemination in China’s Three Dynasties, the preface skipped forward to recent history:

Ever since relationships have been formed between China and foreign countries, Chinese scholars who are cognizant of the times also in certain ways have begun to imitate Western ways, and to establish newspapers. . . . Now, the erudition and knowledge of private newspapers is wide-reaching, which allows them to enlighten and entertain the ignorant people, so their benefits are many. However, within these papers, there are unrighteous discussions which have lost their way, and may even serve to hold back or confuse the ignorant people.¹²⁴

This preface echoed Huang’s argument that political papers stirred up popular sentiment, with potentially alarming results. Ill-founded or “unrighteous” material in newspapers could distort or even destroy the educational effects of reading newspapers for the uneducated population.

Official gazettes thereby counterbalanced the polemical and unruly popular press. Both the first and third preface addressed the proper contents of an official gazette. An official gazette should not include polemics, but only authorized versions of texts, including:

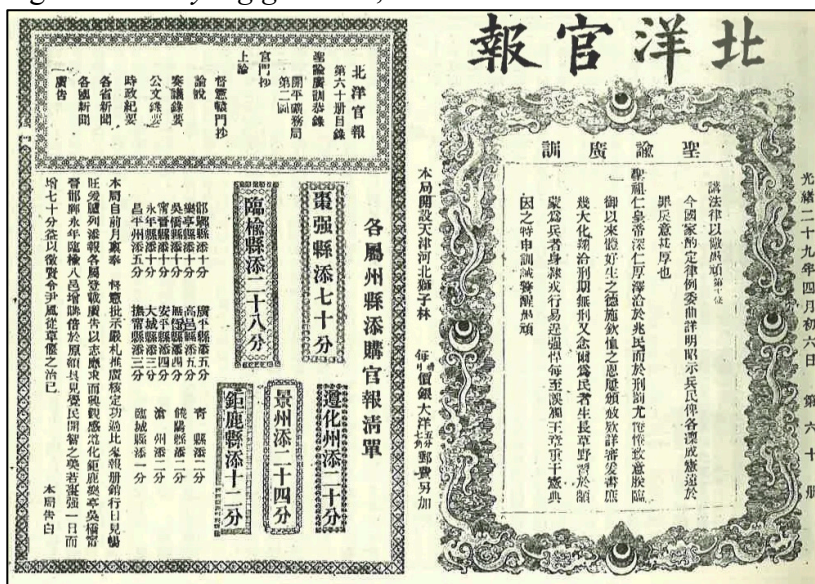
[First] amplifications of the Sacred Edicts; second, edicts; third governance of this province; fourth, educational matters of this province; fifth, military matters of this province; then current affairs, agriculture, industry, commerce, military science, missionary cases, diplomacy, news from other provinces, and finally international news.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ *Beiyang guanbao*, issue 1, preface 1.

¹²⁵ *Beiyang guanbao*, issue 1, preface 1.

This description not only provided a topical, rather than opinion-based, description of materials to receive coverage in the official gazette, it also established a hierarchy of information and authority that began with the Sacred Edicts of past emperors and descended through the seat of imperial government in Beijing, then the Zhili area, national issues, and finally the rest of the world. The third preface clarified further the issue of authorized texts, pointing out that because newspapers had a commitment to truth in their reporting, they needed to publish verified copies of official speeches, correspondence, and documents.¹²⁶ In this way, the official gazette presented itself as a repository of authoritative materials, not as a collection of miscellaneous opinions like popular press outlets. As promised, subsequent issues of the *Beiyang guanbao* presented translations of foreign-language materials on agriculture, military science, commerce, and industry.

Figure 5.4. *Beiyang guanbao*, GX 29/04/06



Source: Jiang Yasha, ed., *Qingmo guanbao huibian* (Beijing: Xinhua shudian, 2006) 1:11. Note: The cover and first page of the sixtieth issue of *Beiyang guanbao*, published May 2, 1903. The cover (right) includes an amplification of the Kangxi Emperor's Sacred Edict. The first page (left) features a table of contents, but more prominently displays an

¹²⁶ *Beiyang guanbao*, issue 2, preface 3.

advertisement that various counties in Zhili had expanded their orders for the gazette, thus “doubling the initial expectations.” Zaoqiang County, in southern Zhili, gained the highest prestige, as the ad lauded, “That Zaoqiang can increase by seventy copies in one day truly attests to a sage county magistrate whose governance cultivates virtue in the people.”

The publication of the *Beiyang guanbao* heralded a “vogue” of state-funded gazettes, many of which espoused a didactic function towards the public even as their main readership in reality remained officials. Each retained a commitment to presenting official documents from the court at the beginning of each issue. However, given their numbers, the journals typically presented only a few recent memorials relevant to their mandate or jurisdiction. As a result, while state-funded gazettes built on the connection between the court gazette and state authority, they did not replace the court gazette outright. *Shenbao*, a commercial press product, had more comprehensive coverage of gazette materials than did these official gazettes. For the fullest coverage of court affairs, readers still needed to purchase the court gazette itself or one of the new commercial gazettes that brought together larger numbers of memorials and edicts.

Just as seemingly distinct genres of the press converged in reprinting gazette information, prominent voices among the political, commercial, and official press in China also sought to elucidate the relationship of the press to governance in the last years of the nineteenth century. All three genres cited classical and historical precedents that placed communications prominently in the proper operations of government. All three also claimed that newspapers were the major innovation that had quickened the process of civilization in Western countries, and that therefore newspapers had the potential to spread popular enlightenment. Representatives of both the reformist press before 1898 and the official press after 1898 sought to impose controls on the commercial press and

saw their respective outlets as counterweights to the polemical power of editorialists writing in the popular press. These arguments justified strict controls on the press due to the high priority of communications in government and the possibility that misleading and false information in the press could radically upset local society.

Conclusion

In the autumn of 1900, in the midst of heavy Chinese and foreign military buildup to counter the Boxer uprising that had threatened Qing control for the past two years, *Shenbao* reported on a shocking development in the southern city of Guangzhou. A *Shenbao* journalist described how a recent version of the provincial gazette (*yuanmen chao*) published in Guangzhou had been found to contain several false proclamations attesting support of the anti-foreign cause. This copy of the gazette was traced to the Shengyuan gazette publisher, and investigated by local authorities. Shengyuan's manager (*sishi* 司事) told investigators that he had obtained these falsified edicts from a man named Li at a local inn. Li subsequently told investigators that he'd first seen the edicts at an outpost of messengers for Guangzhou Prefecture, and when he met up with Li at the Three Phoenixes Inn, Li had offered to reprint the material for him together with a notice that these edicts were based on "inquiries" (*tanwen* 探聞). However, Li instead published the falsified edicts in the provincial gazette itself, lending the doctored edicts an aura of authority.¹²⁷ This alarming story demonstrated for *Shenbao* readers the vulnerabilities of

¹²⁷ "Baofang hu qian," *SB*, September 23, 1900. A week later, the newspaper reprinted a proclamation authored by two local magistrates and distributed throughout Guangzhou. This proclamation described a second incident of a provincial gazette publisher disseminating rumors and false information supporting the Boxers. The publisher admitted that he had intentionally inserted the unverified materials into the provincial gazette. The proclamation described the publisher's punishments in detail and pointed out that imperial official Li Hongzhang was on his way to Tianjin for negotiations with foreign diplomats, and warned the populace against spreading rumors and falsehoods that might compromise Li's efforts to defuse the Boxer crisis. "Shi jin e hua," *SB*, October 2, 1900.

official information sources that many presumed to be authoritative and protected from forces of disorder.

Anxiety about severed communications routes and false information swept the empire in the last years of the nineteenth century as officials, journalists, and diplomats encountered uncertainty and doubt about the true state of affairs in Beijing and elsewhere. Did the court support the Boxers? Who was in control? Where was the Emperor? These questions reflected the lack of information about the crisis flowing outwards from Beijing. In sharp contrast to their mid-century counterparts, which reminded readers of the durability of dynastic institutions announcements in the gazette increasingly convinced diarists of the frailty of state structures. The government gazettes founded one after another beginning in 1902 therefore represented an official response to establish new sources of authentic and controlled information.

In 1902, commenting on the recent establishment of yet another state-funded journal, *Shenbao* offered its readers a synopsis of the Western press with comparison to conditions in China. Western countries had popular papers (*minbao* 民報); hybrid popular-official papers, which were private outlets that nonetheless drew on official funding and thus hewed to the state's narrative; and official papers, which contained only official materials. The newspaper continued to point out that the category of hybrid newspapers was barely known in China, and that people wouldn't even know how to describe this type of newspaper. A stark divide persisted between official papers and popular papers—even though the Qing state had not yet created comprehensive legal regulations on the press. Then, *Shenbao* suggested a telling comparison. “Extending this to the court gazette distributed from our Chinese capital, Westerners saw this as a type of

official paper (*guanbao*).”¹²⁸ The newspaper’s phrasing in this statement alluded to the fact that the court gazette and Western official papers were not exact equivalents, but that they had been “seen” as such. Furthermore, it hinted at the global contexts in which the court gazette was reframed as an “official paper” in the last decades of the nineteenth century.

As this chapter has demonstrated, more than just Westerners tried to “see” the court gazette as an official paper. Beginning around the time of the Opium War, and continuing through the early twentieth century, the gazette received scrutiny in processes of war, diplomacy, intelligence-gathering, news-making, and institutional change. Diplomats—both representatives of the Qing and of foreign powers—sought to make the Qing gazette equivalent to foreign gazettes in order to smooth processes of diplomatic negotiations, treaty-making, and fact-finding. Newspapers and journalists depicted the court gazette as an elite official publication and a channel between the public and official realms in order to play up their own innovativeness and justify the role of the press in a modern state. In the late Qing, technological and infrastructure innovations made the gazette far more accessible than ever before. As the gazette encountered the public, discussions in the press and in diplomatic and official realms about communications and the press encoded anxieties about authority, control, and the relationship between the state and the public realm.

Reformers and conservative officials alike returned to the idea of authority by arguing that official gazettes and press laws should stand above the popular and commercial press in order to impose orthodox and controlled visions of state and society. These conversations relegated the court gazette to the past, as an outdated instrument of

¹²⁸ “Yue zuo bao ji Esheng chuangxing guanbao shi te shu biyi ru zuo,” *SB*, February 22, 1902.

elites and administrators. Each of these visions positioned the court gazette at the beginning of an incipient history of the Chinese press at the same time that they defined it as a key element of the historical tradition of political communications in imperial China. With its historical origins, a modernized court gazette could sit at the top of a hierarchy of public communications, both offering guidance to the public and representing the Qing to the world. The official gazette could speak directly to the populace of the Qing Empire, to ordinary readers of newspapers, journals, and gazettes, and to foreign governments. These wide-ranging conversations both redefined the history of the court gazette in terms of contemporary agendas and presaged an ongoing and contentious dialogue about the politics of public communications in modern China.

Conclusion. Eulogies for the Gazette

In May 1890, the Shanghai *North China Herald* announced the death of “Marquis Tseng” —Zeng Jize, the son of one of the most important political leaders of nineteenth-century China, made famous by his own international travels as an envoy of the Qing court. The eulogy, published more than a month after the paper first reported Zeng’s death, recorded his final moments:

On Friday the heart’s action began to show symptoms of failure, and stimulants with proper nutriment only temporarily alleviated the distress. On Saturday morning at 3:30, after having asked to see the manuscript copy of the *Peking Gazette*, he turned round, as it were to sleep, and his heart ceased to beat.¹

In placing the gazette at Zeng’s deathbed, the newspaper unwittingly situated this late Qing official, who it called “the only statesman of his race,” into a scene more reminiscent of his father, Zeng Guofan, a Hunanese official who had famously chronicled his reading of the gazette in his diaries. Zeng Guofan’s recommendations for reading the gazette were widely known in official circles. Zeng Jize, unlike his father, had never led armies to defend Qing imperium, but he had represented the Qing Empire abroad. As a metropolitan official and foreign envoy, Zeng had received renown for his skill in writing, diplomacy, and public speaking.² Zeng’s death ostensibly with the court gazette in his arms alluded to the legacy of his father, and of the Qing Empire’s past and present.

Signs of court and imperial authority converged with honors and sentimental narrative in Chinese-language accounts as well. The prominent Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao* had reported Zeng’s demise just two days after his death. On the front page of its April 14 issue, *Shenbao* included a brief notice that “Westerners in Shanghai” had

¹ “The Death of the Marquis Tseng,” *NCH*, May 30, 1890. Zeng died on April 12. The *North China Herald* first reported his death on April 18. “The Death of the Marquis Tseng,” *NCH*, April 18, 1890. The *Herald* printed a series of articles on the life and legacy of Zeng throughout spring 1890.

² See obituary of Zeng Jize in the *Times* (London), April 15, 1890, pg. 9.

received a telegraph alerting them to the news of Zeng's death.³ Two days later, the newspaper printed an imperial edict ceremoniously announcing Zeng's death, sent by telegraph from Shenbao's correspondent in Beijing.⁴ The newspaper had privileged speed over authority by reporting Zeng's death on the basis of a private message, rather than waiting for formal receipt of the imperial edict. Subsequently, the paper reconfirmed the authority of official communications by using a court announcement just like one Zeng might have read in the court gazette a few minutes before his death to validate the initial, unverified news of the passing of the famed statesman.

Like the *North China Herald*, *Shenbao* followed up on these early reports with a series of eulogistic articles about the career of Marquis Zeng. One such homage also incorporated elements of Zeng's final moments with symbols of the new face of the Qing Empire. The notice described the details of Zeng's final illness, involving a contagious infection and intestinal bleeding, which had been treated in vain with both Chinese and Western medicine. Then, late in the evening (between nine and eleven p.m. in this account), Zeng "released his grip [on life] and returned to Heaven" (*che shou xi gui* 撒手西歸). *Shenbao* attributed this eyewitness account to Zeng's son. The account went on to note that mourners, including officials and merchants from many nations, had lined the streets, and that all of the foreign legations in the city had lowered their flags to half-staff out of respect for Zeng. The inclusion of details regarding foreign merchants, officials, and legations in this brief newspaper account brought together elements of Zeng's private life and public image.⁵

³ "Dian chuan ehao," *SB*, April 14, 1890, p.1.

⁴ "Ben guan jiefeng dian yin," *SB*, April 16, 1890, p. 1-2.

⁵ "Jin ao sui bi," *SB*, April 28, 1890.

Ambivalent Obituaries

Seventeen years later, in the last days of October 1907, newspapers throughout the English-speaking world carried obituaries for another venerable institution of the Qing Empire: the Peking Gazette. Based loosely on a short news item published in the *North China Herald*, these reports, published in papers ranging in prominence from the *New York Times* to the *Caucasian* of Shreveport, Louisiana, recognized the antiquity of the Qing gazette and the significance of its demise.⁶ However, while reportage in Chinese and foreign newspapers of Zeng's passing had celebrated his importance to the preservation of the Qing state, in this case newspapers described the supplanting of the Qing Gazette as the elimination of an outdated vestige of imperial China. The *New York Times* reminded readers that the gazette was merely "an official circular," and continued:

Its contents were news in a way, but not in any way analogous to the one understood by the modern newspaper, and as long as The Peking Gazette lasted there was little sense in hoping for an advance of China into the family of understandable nations.

In these sharp comments, the *Times* ridiculed the Peking Gazette's position at the top of lists of the world's oldest newspapers and the history of journalism, and celebrated the lapse of this antiquated remnant of the Qing court. The connection drawn between the demise of the Peking Gazette and the "advance of China into the family of understandable nations" suggested that modern newspapers were requisite institutions for modern nations and international exchange. Even though the Peking Gazette had been translated, quoted, and analyzed in Euro-American newspapers since the early eighteenth century, the *Times* commentary suggested that it remained incomprehensible.

⁶ "The 'Peking Gazette,'" *NCH*, Aug. 30, 1907; "Pekin Gazette No More," *The Caucasian*, October 29, 1907; "History Can Now Be Corrected," *New York Times*, Oct. 29, 1907, pg.10.

Other accounts personified the Peking Gazette as a “venerable patriarch among newspapers,” and announced both the gazette’s hoary (and exaggerated) antiquity and its timely death, with headlines like “Failed After Ten Centuries” in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* of Honolulu, and “Died of Old Age” in the *Ocala Evening Star*.⁷ Antiquity afforded prestige to the Chinese gazette in some cases, as when the *Chicago Daily Tribune* commented, “When a newspaper has attained the dignity of years and wisdom enjoyed by this reminder of ancient China it is entitled to create a little flutter in the world by a deviation from the serene and innocuous policy of centuries.”⁸ Even this praise, however, suggested to readers that the gazette had remained unchanged for centuries. Such comments ignored the fact that translations from the Peking Gazette were for many Euro-American newspapers the leading source of information about China, and that they had only become widely and regularly available in the last century. The massive worldwide expansion of the Peking Gazette’s circulation and audience seemed not to merit comment.

Meanwhile, in Beijing, the establishment of a new “national gazette,” the *Zhengzhi guanbao*, was part of two connected programs of reform: one intended precisely improve the Qing Empire’s standing in the family of nations, the other to improve the central state’s authority over a growing and increasingly unruly mass press. Over the years since 1901, the Qing had eliminated the civil service examination system, reorganized the central state, conducted legal and judicial reforms, and recommended the

⁷ Newspapers cited a bevy of dates for the origin of the gazette, including “for several thousand years,” “since the Tang dynasty,” 713, 760, “the 9th century,” 911 A.D., 1340, 1361, and other arbitrarily assigned dates. “Failed After Ten Centuries,” *Pacific Commercial Advertiser* (Honolulu), Dec. 9, 1907, pg.5; “A Journalistic Antique,” *The Sun* (Baltimore), Nov. 3, 1907, pg. 16.

⁸ “The Esteemed Peking Gazette,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 29, 1907, pg. 8.

drafting of a national constitution and the establishment of a national assembly.⁹ In other words, the Qing reforms, like the *New York Times*, positioned modernizing the court gazette as an essential feature of modern international exchange between equal nations. The censor who proposed the establishment of the national gazette, Zhao Binglin, cited the example of the Meiji government, which had begun in 1883 to promulgate an official gazette that provided to the public comprehensive coverage of all laws and government mandates. Zhao's proposal explained that the Meiji gazette fulfilled a traditional ideal of circulating law to the public in order to quell popular ignorance (*dufa xuanshu* 讀法懸書). This proposal, as well as successive drafts of press laws issued in 1906, 1907, and 1911, advocated for strict state control of the press, with the official government gazette leading the way as the most important and most legitimate forum for the dissemination of government laws, commands, and reforms.¹⁰

The late Qing press laws articulated the urgent need for the state to adopt a more direct role in regulating the growing newspaper industry. The laws required that founders register their newspapers with authorities upon establishment; report information about their contributors to authorities; submit copies of newspapers for pre-publication review; and face strict punishments for the publication of government secrets, sedition, false information, slander, and the acceptance of bribes.¹¹ Likewise, in his proposal for a

⁹ On the significance of the reforms, see the articles by Roger R. Thompson, Richard S. Horowitz, Luca Gabbiani, Julia C. Strauss, and Jérôme Bourgon in *Modern Asian Studies* 37, no.3 (2003), especially Horowitz, "Breaking the Bonds of Precedent: The 1905-6 Government Reform Commission and the Remaking of the Qing Central State," 775-797.

¹⁰ Several iterations of press laws were published: *Da Qing yinshuawu zhuan li* 大清印刷物專律 in July 1906, *Baozhang yingshou guize* 報章應守規則 in October 1906, *Baoguan zanxing guize* 報館暫行規則, *Da Qing baolü* 大清報律 in March 1908, and *Qinding baolü* 欽定報律 in January 1911.

¹¹ The Qing court had recently become embroiled in prosecutions of newspapers, including the notorious "Subao case" of 1903, in which the court, with the cooperation of the Shanghai Municipal Council, banned the Shanghai newspaper *Subao* after it published Zhang Binglin's preface to Zou Rong's *Revolutionary Army* (*Geming jun* 革命軍), a stringently anti-Manchu text, and the closure of Wang Kangnian's short-

national gazette, Zhao concluded that the court needed to take control of its information by “making secret that which should be secret, and suppressing the dissemination of that which should not be disseminated.”¹² Zhao sought to strengthen further the “official” character of the new government gazette by wresting its publishing away from commercial publishers and placing it under the auspices of the Government Affairs Bureau. Although the Qing government had long navigated a successful relationship with commercial gazette publishers, Zhao’s memorial suggested that the workings of state authority needed to be made more clear in the era of the mass press. While Zhao suggested that state supervision would ensure that the gazette correctly reflected the institutional reforms of the times, he also implied that the gazette’s basic purpose, of reproducing verified copies of official communications, would remain unchanged from the court gazette model.

A few American and British papers picked up on the modernizing intent behind the founding of the national gazette, and focused on these novel qualities rather than the antique characteristics of the court gazette. A newspaper in Manchester, England wrote, “The replacing of the old ‘Peking Gazette’ by a modern newspaper is an instance of the rapidity with which events are moving in China,” suggesting that the elimination of this imperial vestige was a natural component of ongoing political, social, and economic transitions in China. It continued to remind readers that in the modern era China was

lived newspaper *Jingbao* in Beijing for reputedly impugning Prince Qing as corrupt. For classic studies of the *Subao* case, see J. Lust, “The ‘Su-pao’ Case: An Episode in the Early Chinese Nationalist Movement,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 27, no. 2 (1964): 408-429 and Y.C. Wang, “The Su-Pao Case: A Study of Foreign Pressure, Intellectual Fermentation, and Dynastic Decline,” *Monumenta Serica* 24 (1965): 84-129. On the comparatively unknown *Jingbao*, see “*Jingbao* tingzhi chuban zhi ge yuanyin,” *Shenbao*, September 3, 1907.

¹² FHA, LFZZ, 03-9285-011, [GX 32.10.30], “Zhao Binglin zou wei yong dongxi ge guo guanbi tili she yin guanbao ju shi.”

perhaps not as much “at the other end of the world” as it sometimes seemed.¹³ The *Washington Post* framed the creation of the *Zhengzhi guanbao* in more specific terms as an instance of reform and innovation. As the *Post* recounted, the Keep Commission appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1905 had recommended the creation of an official newspaper “to contain governmental information,” but Congress had not yet adopted this recommendation. The *Post* writer commented, “It is a little humiliating to have China get ahead of us in this fashion. If the Keep Commission had not tangled itself with red tape, there might have been an administration newspaper in Washington by this time.”¹⁴ Some reports also assigned significance to the new gazette’s resemblance to the government gazette of Meiji Japan, an exemplar of modernization in East Asia, while others disputed any connection between the official gazettes of the two countries.¹⁵

In fact, the Peking Gazette did not die completely in 1907, even though the Qing court sanctioned the creation of a national gazette with language that condemned the disorderly character of the mass press and the commercial gazette industry. While publishers of the distinctive yellow Peking Gazette pamphlets appear to have silently ended production in 1907, some commercial gazette publishers continued to publish court gazettes using lithographic printing through the end of the Xuantong reign.¹⁶ The “death” of the Peking Gazette was a narrative created and enthusiastically disseminated by the Euro-American press to interpret the news of the creation of the national gazette as the necessary deathknell of the imperial gazette. That Euro-American newspapers were

¹³ “Newspaper Enterprise in China,” *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, Dec. 6, 1907, pg.2. See also “New Newspapers in China,” *Washington Post*, Oct. 30, 1907, pg. 3.

¹⁴ “The New Chinese Invention,” *The Washington Post*, Oct. 29, 1907, pg. 6.

¹⁵ “The New Chinese Invention”; “New Paper for Peking,” *New York Times*, Oct. 28, 1907, pg. 4.

¹⁶ Post-1907 gazettes can be found in at least two reprint compilations: *Dichao* (Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2004), vols. 118-120; *Jingbao (dibao)*, vols. 155-163. These gazettes were printed with lithography, not movable type, and were probably produced by the publishers of late Qing gazette compilations.

drawn to the opportunity to riff on the demise of a storied and ancient, yet little understood, institution of imperial China is evinced by the fact that even years after the fall of the Qing, newspapers published articles on the Peking Gazette as “the world’s oldest newspaper” that implied the continued existence of the imperial gazette, and using strikingly similar terms to those employed in the obituaries for the Peking Gazette.¹⁷

To observers and chroniclers of the Qing dynasty’s final decade, it seemed incomprehensible that the Peking Gazette could persist into China’s modern era. Like other formerly lauded institutions of the Qing state, such as the civil service examinations and bureaucracy, the gazette seemed to be a timeless and unerasable echo of the imperial past.¹⁸ Portraits of the death of Zeng Jize also juxtaposed elements of modern diplomacy (flags and foreign legations) with the Peking Gazette, a vestige of the imperial era. For contemporaries, as well as historians rediscovering his legacy in the present moment, Zeng represented the possibilities of diplomatic successes and connections abroad.¹⁹ Nonetheless, the Peking Gazette held profound relevance to a man who spent years outside the borders of the Qing empire.

In the waning years of the dynasty, court and provincial officials led reforms intended to legitimize the Qing state in the eyes of the international community and consolidate state power at home. These reforms entailed the creation of a far stricter information policy than had applied for most of the Qing dynasty. In 1907, as in 1644,

¹⁷ For example, “World’s Oldest Newspaper,” *Nottingham Evening Post*, among others.

¹⁸ Similar rhetoric surrounded the demise of the traditional civil service, which “lost its precocious luster and became instead an archaic object of ridicule.” Elman, *Cultural History of Civil Examinations*, 586-620.

¹⁹ Tan Sitong wrote, “if you were to name those men who really grasped the essence of foreign affairs, then you would list Guo Songtao from Xiangyin, and Zeng Jize from Xiangxiang.” Quoted in Stephen Platt, *Provincial Patriots: The Hunanese and Modern China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 68. For more recent accounts of Qing envoys’ cosmopolitan careers, see Zhengzheng Huangfu, “Internalizing the West: Qing Envoys and Ministers in Europe, 1866-1893,” (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2012), 216-222; Ren, “Fin-de-Siècle Diplomat,” Chs. 2 and 3.

the state drew legitimacy through the public circulation of official documents. The rise of the mass press, however, drew the court gazette into a more complicated political realm. As the political press encompassed radical, progressive, and conservative agendas, its activities elicited harsh responses from representatives of the court in the form of new and more restrictive laws and regulations. While the rise of the press in effect killed the court gazette, the gazette was at the point of its demise a lasting institution of political communications. The Peking Gazette died not as the victim of its own failings, but of the confrontational and violent politics of the last years of the Qing dynasty.

The True Biography of the Peking Gazette

When newspapers published obituaries for the Peking Gazette, they characterized the Qing court gazette as an ancient official circular that contained news but compared unfavorably with modern newspapers, and whose demise opened possibilities for the future of the press in China. In embedding assumptions about the fall of the crumbling Qing dynasty itself, these death notices reflected not on the life of the court gazette over the course of the dynasty, but rather established parallels between the dynasty itself and the gazette. Both were hopelessly archaic and embedded in an imperial system that found itself out of step with the modern world. The obituaries shed light on the politics of the court gazette in the contemporary moment, but neglected its life story. This dissertation is the life story of the court gazette, told through thematic investigations of its politics, reading, and production. In concluding, it is useful to reconsider the biography of the court gazette, elucidating the ways in which the links between imperial communications and state authority—whether represented, perceived, or imagined—can be better understood through events in the life of the gazette.

The Qing gazette lived for about two hundred and sixty years, nearly as long as the dynasty itself. It evolved from the antecedents of earlier dynasties which had sponsored the circulation of authorized copies of government documents to serving officials. More directly, it grew out of the disorderly political and print environment of the late Ming dynasty. In the late sixteenth century, shortly before factions, war, and corruption split the realm, an explosion of commerce and publishing brought printed texts to increasingly large and diverse audiences. When imperial production of gazettes and maintenance of archives lapsed in the early seventeenth century, private authors stepped in to write unofficial news records and compiled these into histories of the tumultuous era. As one late Ming official wrote, “The banning of copying and reporting will make the world deaf and blind, casting us into eternal darkness.”²⁰ After the Chongzhen court failed to compile the records of its reign, former Ming officials now in service to the Qing stepped in to fill the gap with their own personal archives of gazettes and private historical writing.²¹ When Huang Zongxi woke to find rats nibbling on his piles of gazettes, he felt prompted to begin writing his history of the Southern Ming; Cao Rong, a late Ming official who surrendered and served under the Qing, donated his gazette collection to supplement the palace archives.²²

In the early Qing, the court sought to impose regulations and order on the documentary chaos it had inherited. During their conquest of China, Qing commanders

²⁰ Quoted and translation in Wang Hung-tai, “Information media,” 175; see original context in *Wanli dichao* (Yangzhou: Jiangsu Guangling guji keyin she, 1991), 1629. On the authorship of the *Wanli dichao*, see Ono Kazuko, “*Banri teishō* to *Banri soshō*,” *Tōyōshi kenkyū* 39, no. 4 (1981): 667-686.

²¹ Lynn Struve, “The Hsü Brothers and Semi-official Patronage of scholars in the K’ang-hsi Period,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 42, no.1 (1982): 241-2; Zhu Xizhu, “Qing Neige suo shou Ming Tianqi Chongzhen dang’an qingzhe ba,” *Guoxue jikan* 2, no.2 (1929): 383-87. *QSL*, SZ 08/R2/06, 54:426a; *QSL*, KX 22/08/28, 111:143b.

²² On Huang, see Ch. 3. On Cao Rong, see Li Ji and Li Fusun, comp., *Hezheng lu* (1810), 3:9a. This record commemorated those who participated in the *boxue* examination of 1679.

had profited by intercepting Ming communications and bribing local officials for copies of documents and gazettes. The crumbling of communications networks paralleled the military and administrative demise of the Ming empire. Once established in Beijing, the early Qing rulers moved quickly to publish official reports of their military successes and circulate them throughout the bureaucracy. The Shunzhi court drafted regulations to stem the leak of official documents from the palace. When the Manchu official Mamboo was appointed to a post on the southeastern coast, he found his courier superintendent in the capital to be forwarding false documents and rumors about the fortunes of Qing forces in the far west. The Kangxi Emperor banned tabloid gazettes and personally sent Mamboo digests of the military's activities, instructing him to disseminate these trusted materials to local officials. Around the same time, police in Beijing cracked down on a group of clerks, scribes, and gazette publishers who had circulated in the capital a fanciful tale in the guise of an official memorial. These measures reflect not only the court's efforts to standardize and secure the production of official news, but also the resilience of gossip, rumor, and unofficial news.

Throughout the eighteenth century, clerks, copyists, and gazette publishers supplied a mixture of authoritative and unverified news about the court and bureaucracy to an eager audience of Beijing residents and sojourners. In southern Beijing, commercial gazette publishing proceeded with the full sanction of the state; gazette publishers mixed with editors, copyists, printers, and other participants in the publishing district at Liulichang. In the provinces, governors relied on courier superintendents stationed in Beijing to send periodic deliveries of both authorized gazettes and unauthorized notes, drafts, and rumors. In certain cases, courier superintendents carried on an extensive side

business in selling secrets and digests. In other cases, they devolved their official duties onto private copyists, or paid for secret documents. These misdeeds came to the fore in cases where provincial officials repeatedly shifted blame for transgressions onto their communications experts. In response, courier superintendents and the gazette delivery system became the target of increased court scrutiny in the Yongzheng and Qianlong reigns, as the court imposed more stringent requirements for vetting superintendents, banned them from colluding in the production of unofficial gazettes and imposed a ten-day delay on the transmission of legitimate gazettes.

By the 1750s, the Qing state had for a century permitted the commercial publishing of official gazettes in Beijing, but two major events in the Qianlong reign convinced the court to draw gazette publishing under closer oversight. The first event was the creation of the Grand Council, an event that drew palace communications and decision-making into closed quarters. In 1746, capital police uncovered a ring of courier superintendents, clerks, and copyists who bought and sold documents smuggled out of this confidential council and sent them to officials seeking news from the capital. A few years later, a scandal involving a forged memorial falsely attributed to the famous official Sun Jiagan swept through the bureaucracy, resulting in the arrest of over nine hundred people throughout Qing China and the censure of numerous officials. In the aftermath, a censor's report revealed that most capital courier superintendents outsourced almost all of their work to commercial gazette publishers. The court responded by following a censor's advice to establish an official gazette publisher jointly funded and run by the sixteen capital courier superintendents. The censor, Yang Kaiding, envisioned that this joint

publisher, Gongshen tang, would uphold the noble mission of disseminating authoritative transcripts of government documents for review.

Yang's proposal echoed a common refrain in official policy on the court gazette throughout the dynasty: in its ideal form, the gazette informed the realm of the true conditions of government affairs. The state demonstrated great capacity by soliciting and assembling information from the myriad locales, then authorizing a digest of this information to be disseminated in the gazette. In poems, the Qianlong Emperor portrayed himself at the very top of this empire of texts as the surveyor of "capital reports" (*jingbao*): summaries of weather reports solicited from throughout the empire.²³ Likewise, in its presentation of authentic transcripts of edicts and memorials, the court gazette represented the authority of the imperial state for its readers. Lin Zexu, serving as imperial commissioner in Canton, voiced this perspective in a strongly worded memorial to the throne after receiving in the gazette news of expanded penalties for opium consumption. After transcribing the relevant edict, Lin wrote, "The official dispatch (*buwen*) has not yet arrived, but I took up the gazette and fell to my knees, reciting praise three times. I then raised my head and pictured my emperor extolling the importance for the people of expelling this evil."²⁴ Lin's reaction, real or fictive, powerfully embodied the power and authority of official texts presented in the gazette. The sight of the edict in the gazette summoned for Lin a vision of the Emperor himself.

The letters and missives of Jesuit missionaries who traveled to the Qing Empire in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries attested to the constant and powerful presence of the court gazette. Jesuits in Beijing sent translations of Chinese gazettes to Rome at the

²³ Qing Gaozong, *Yuzhi shi er ji*, 7:28, 22:29-30; 81:8.

²⁴ Lin Zexu, "Li chen minjian yantu qiangju reng yi shoujiao pian," in *Lin Wenzhong gong zheng shu*, 4:5a.

same time that they begged correspondents for gazettes and other news of Europe. These reports fed the growing reputation of the “Pekin Gazette” in Europe as a strictly controlled official mouthpiece of the powerful Qing emperor. In the early nineteenth century, when English missionaries and traders arrived in China in greater numbers, they looked for the Peking Gazette as a long-desired connection to the elusive Qing court in Beijing. Reports from the Peking Gazette became key elements of newly founded China-coast newspapers, and an increasingly standard component of foreign newspaper coverage of China. Showcasing the new global reach of the Peking Gazette, a late 1820s frontier rebellion in Kashgar made global headlines and prompted a variety of responses to the suggestion of waning fortunes for the Qing military in Central Asia. Although most eighteenth-century European portrayals of the gazette had drawn positive connections between the authority of the gazette and the authority of the imperial throne, by the early nineteenth century European interlocutors of the gazette produced far less optimistic views of the power of the Qing state and the authority of the gazette.

In the context of repeated diplomatic and military confrontations between the Qing and British empires during the nineteenth century, British officials stringently analyzed the Qing gazette for hints of weaknesses in the integrity of the Qing state. Meanwhile, the Qing court published in the gazette extensive records of a thwarted palace invasion, the failed border rebellion, and case after case shaming bureaucrats for their indiscretions. The publication of these materials, interpreted by many European readers as evidence of the gradual breakdown of Qing rule, were the result of the court’s deliberate efforts to promote its own narratives of the resolution of crises and the restoration of moral order. Around the same time, the court backed off from direct state

control of gazette publishing and allowed commercial publishers to expand production under the supervision of the capital police. The growth of gazette publishing in nineteenth-century Beijing paralleled the broader expansion of the capital's publishing industry. By the mid-nineteenth century, Beijing publishers produced thousands of gazettes daily in a variety of editions. Guidebooks to the capital celebrated reading the gazette as a requisite component of life in Beijing.

Although crises brewed for the Qing throughout the nineteenth century, cataclysmic rebellions in the 1850s through 1880s thoroughly shook the power of the court and initiated the gradual lapse of central authority. For official readers in Beijing, the court gazette became paradoxically more authoritative as its reports resolved rumors and confusion about the progress of the Taiping war. Natives of central and southern provinces, such as Wang Zhonglin, Weng Tonghe, and Li Ciming relied on the gazette for news of their homes, families, and friends. In his diary, Weng Tonghe recorded a dream encounter with the late Ming literatus Xiang Zijing, in which Xiang watched from the underworld the massive destruction and loss of books, yet the court gazette continued to narrate for the dead and alive the progress of events in the living realm. Weng's telling of the dream expressed parallels between the chaotic late Ming and his own era. In both eras, it seemed that although when war and disaster threatened precious books, gazettes provided a lifeline of verifiable and authoritative news of distant events. Indeed, some readers interpreted the severing of communications routes and the failure of gazettes to appear as dangerous omens for the Qing dynasty. A pattern of local officials interfering with the distribution and contents of the gazette signaled to the court the breakdown of administrative discipline and state authority. Amidst the chaos, beginning in the mid-

century period the court in fact articulated a more stringent policy towards regulating commercial publishers and excising sensitive information from the gazette.

In the aftermath of mid-century wars, the audience for the court gazette expanded to its greatest extent as readers found gazette sections in a variety of new journals and newspapers. Although regulations and official rhetoric had always acknowledged that the gazette should be publicly circulated in order to support state authority, the rise of the press compelled certain officials to rethink the gazette as an instrument of public instruction. How could officially sponsored communications simultaneously promote the authority of the imperial state and assert its qualifications as a modern sovereign nation? Within these debates, carried out among officials, in diplomatic exchanges, and in newspapers, participants invented a longer history for the court gazette that justified its new public role. New global models of the official press, including the government gazettes of Europe and its former colonies, and the strictly controlled official gazette of the Meiji government suggested that the court gazette should be reformulated to combine binding records of government decisions and commands with translations of news and knowledge solicited abroad and presented in judicious didactic fashion. In 1907, the court nationalized the gazette as a measure to promote its authority against regional leaders, the mass press, and foreign incursion. Although some publishers continued to produce gazettes for a few more years, the legitimacy of the court gazette had been irreparably shaken and in 1911 it finally died along with the dynasty.

With the rise of the national gazette and the fall of the dynasty, the life story of the Qing gazette intersects with the obituaries presented in global newspapers. As we

have seen, the gazette, like the Qing dynasty, was not an ancient and unchanging artifact of Chinese civilization. A series of challenges to this ideal communications order emerged, mirroring the fundamental crises faced by the state in maintaining administrative networks, upholding bureaucratic integrity, quelling social disorder, and appeasing foreign and domestic critics. In reacting to these challenges, the state consistently held up the court gazette as an essential institution of empire. The Qing state's long-term commitment to publicizing government communications in the court gazette counters prevalent assumptions of arbitrary and extensive censorship under the Manchus. The mighty task of publishing a daily gazette and distributing it to the far corners of the Qing imperium could only be accomplished through a strategic alliance between commercial publishers and the state. This alliance enabled gazettes to become the most important news source in the Qing empire, and the most widely traded news instrument about the Qing empire in the world. Challenges to the primacy of the court gazette at the end of the dynasty therefore threatened the ways that the Qing state communicated with its bureaucracy, empire, and world.

Appendix A. Gazettes in Library Collections and Published Compilations

This appendix lists relevant information about accessing copies of the Qing gazette—including originals and reprints—in libraries, archives, and published compilations. In this list, I have tried to be as exhaustive as possible, with a few caveats. My designation of a collection as “major” implies that the collection holds gazettes of particular value for their early date, number, comprehensiveness, and accessibility. My selection of “minor” collections implies the widespread presence of gazettes in libraries around the world.

To that effect, the Waseda University collection of gazettes is not particularly large, but uniquely accessible in that Waseda has posted high-quality digital images of the collection online. Major collections include only those that I have personally accessed, whether in those repositories or in their published format.

The list of minor collections reflects that gazettes from the Guangxu era (1875-1908) are held widely in repositories around the world, though scattered in small collections. Thus, this Appendix may not list every single gazette held in libraries worldwide, but its inclusion of libraries in the United States, Europe, Asia, and Oceania should suggest to readers just how widely these documents spread. It should be taken as given that provincial libraries in the PRC also hold gazettes from various periods, but my expectation is that most of these items are from the late Qing period.

Finally, the list of three published compendiums of gazettes is intended as a guide for researchers who might be interested in using these collections. All three are recently published, lengthy, and extremely expensive. Therefore, they are at this time held in few university libraries. In including information on their contents here, my intention is to

help researchers understand the coverage of these collections and whether or not they will be helpful for research. Readers of the dissertation will be aware that for the late Qing, gazette information can also be found in newspapers like *Shenbao* (1872 and after), and in translation in newspapers like the *North-China Herald* (1850 and after). The *North-China Herald* also published yearly indexed compilations of translations from the Peking Gazette between 1873 and 1899. Further comparison of these collections follows in Appendix B.

Major Archival/Library Collections (by earliest date)

1. National Library, Beijing: Gongshen tang edition for QL 30s; microfilm access only.
2. Nanjing Library, Nanjing: Gongshen tang edition for QL 30s; earliest from QL 35; access to digitized version only.
3. National Diet Library, Tokyo: microfilm versions of Gongshen tang editions for QL 30s, 40s, and early JQ reign.
4. British Library, London (APAC): about 200 boxes of holdings from various jingbao publishers. Mostly complete from 1850 through end of dynasty. Collection includes some of the modified gazettes of the late Guangxu reign. Catalog record lost, but boxes record dates in Wade-Giles.
5. National Library, Beijing: print (see Published Collections, #1).
6. National Library, Beijing: manuscript (see Published Collections, #2).
7. Zhongshan University Library, Guangzhou: manuscript (see Published Collections, #3).
8. Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing: various print and manuscript editions, ca. 1882-1911.
9. Waseda University Library, Tokyo: late GX jingbao, scanned and available online at Waseda's Kotenseki Sogo Database: <http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/>

Minor Archival/Library Collections (by earliest date)

1. Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris, France. 9 volumes, both printed and manuscript, 1823-24.
2. Bayerische Library, Munich, Germany. Manuscript gazette (*jingchao* 京抄), 1830.

3. National Library of Austria, Vienna, Austria. From collection of Paul Schilling de Canstadt. Print gazettes, 1830-1856.
4. Staatsbibliothek-Berlin, Berlin, Germany. From collection of American Oriental Society, donated by missionary D.J. MacGowan. 1 volume of manuscript gazettes (*Jingdu neige chao* 京都內閣抄), Daoguang 12 (1832); 1 volume of print gazettes, Xianfeng 11 (1861).
5. Yale University Library, New Haven, CT, USA. Miscellaneous issues, 1850, 1865, 1868-9, 1871, 1873, and 1877.
6. Leiden University Library, Leiden, Netherlands. Quantity unknown, 1867-?.
7. Columbia University Library, New York, NY, USA. Miscellaneous holdings and various editions, 1872-1911.
8. School of Oriental and Asian Studies Library, University of London, UK. Miscellaneous issues, 1875-6 and 1899-1900.
9. New York Public Library, New York, USA. From collection of James Legge. 2 volumes of *Jingbao jixuan* 京報節選, ca. July-September 1880. Miscellaneous print gazettes, various editions, ca. 1885-86 and 1897-8.
10. Harvard-Yenching Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, USA. Several editions, 1884-1907.
11. University of California-Berkeley: CV Starr East Asian Library, Berkeley, CA, USA. 48 issues from 1888, published by *Shenbao*.
12. Phillips Library, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA, USA. 2 volumes, ca. 1890, published by Juheng baofang.
13. University of Minnesota, Twin Cities: Law Library, Minneapolis, MN, USA. Several volumes, ca. 1900-1907, published by Juheng baofang.
14. University of Toronto Library, Toronto, Canada. 1 volume, date unknown.
15. Claremont Colleges Library, Claremont, CA, USA. From London Missionary Society collection. Quantity unknown.
16. National Library of New Zealand, Wellington, New Zealand. 1 volume.
17. National Library of Australia, Canberra, Australia. 37 digitized issues.

Published Collections

1. *Jingbao (dibao)* 京報 (邸報). 163 volumes. Beijing: Quan guo tushuguan wenxian suowei fuzhi zhongxin, 2003.

Volumes 1-157: Guangxu Reign; Volumes 158-163: Xuantong reign.

This is a compilation of 163 volumes from the collection of the National Library of China. This compilation includes only printed gazettes, mainly of the “long-book” pamphlet style published daily by Beijing gazette publishers. This compilation presents the characteristics of movable type printing used within the Beijing gazette industry. One can find examples of custom type, flaws in printing, and other interesting details. Some volumes include gazettes that cover two days in a single issue. The publisher has printed the gazettes in facsimile, with a mock-up of the margins that might have occurred in the original texts. Unfortunately, the publisher has not included the covers for these daily gazettes, upon which publisher information was typically printed. Also, the preface to the compilation suggests that all of these issues are the “courier edition” (*zhujing tangwu*) that was purchased by courier superintendents and distributed to provincial authorities under official auspices, but this cannot be verified. Volumes 154-163 are lithographic editions.

The compilation begins in March 1882 (GX 8/2) and ends in June 1911 (XT 3/5). For the most part, the compilation is very complete, with issues missing only for a few periods of crisis which interrupted gazette publishing, such as the summer 1900 siege on Beijing during the Boxer Rebellion (Volume 141). Most volumes include gazettes for nearly every day, although the volumes covering 1900 and after are much sparser. The publisher has attempted to devote most volumes to either one or two months. As a result, the page range of these volumes varies significantly, from a low of 337 pages for Volume

149 to a high of 783 pages for volume 79 (which covers two months). The Table of Contents in Volume 1 includes the date ranges covered by each volume, but, puzzlingly, not the page numbers, and the compilation is not numbered continuously. Nonetheless, the compilation is incredibly complete overall, and its utility is marred only by the exclusion of the gazette cover pages.

2. *Dichao* 邸抄. 120 volumes. Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2004.

Volumes 1-7: Xianfeng Reign (XF 2-11); Volumes 7-22: Tongzhi Reign; Volumes 22-120: Guangxu reign (miscellaneous undated items also included in Volume 120).

This compilation of 120 volumes of manuscript gazettes from the collection of the National Library of China is a valuable testament to the persistence of manuscript gazette publishing after the beginning of the modern print era. The publisher has included text-heavy pages, such as the court digest with its lists of official business and correspondence at a 1:1 ratio on the page, whereas most sparser gazette pages containing the texts of edicts and memorials are printed four to the page.

Given that each volume averages 550 pages, and that full issues of the gazette run to 12 pages each in this compilation, I estimated about 46 issues of the gazette per volume. Therefore, I calculated that the coverage of the compilation (i.e. the number of issues in the compilation compared to the number published historically) ranged in the compilation quite dramatically. In general, there was a trend where the compilation volumes are less comprehensive in earlier eras, and more comprehensive in the Guangxu era. My survey showed average comprehensiveness of 12% and 18% for the Xianfeng and Tongzhi reigns respectively compared to 47% for the Guangxu period, giving an overall average of 41%. However, while the comprehensiveness of most Xianfeng and

Tongzhi volumes lies between 10% and 25%, the comprehensiveness of Guangxu volumes ranged much more greatly; the least comprehensive volume was Volume 23 (GX 2/7-GX 9/1), which had a comprehensiveness of only about 2%. On the other hand, Volume 68 (GX 21/4-21/R5) had a comprehensiveness of near 100%. Most volumes were closer to 50%. These are all, of course, estimates, but should give some indication of the likeliness of finding a given date's gazette in this compilation.

3. *Jingbao zhaichao* 京報摘抄. In *Liu bian Qingdai gao chao ben* 六編清代搞鈔本. Pts. 283-299. Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 2014.

An extensive collection of jottings from late Qing gazettes, beginning in TZ 10 (1870) and continuing through the end of the dynasty. Does not include information on the editions of the original sources. Based on the collection in the Sun Yat-sen University Library.

Appendix B. A Note on Gazettes as Sources

A translator for the *North-China Herald* wrote in 1878: “A conviction of the usefulness of [gazette translations], to the future historian as well as to the student of the present day, has encouraged the translator to persevere in a task which has now been discharged during four consecutive years.”¹ In this dissertation, I have focused on the ways in which individuals and institutions in the Qing dynasty interacted with the court gazette, but I have not used the gazettes themselves extensively as sources. In this Appendix, I would like to point out some characteristics of gazettes as historical sources. Gazettes presented readers with archival materials; these materials can be found today in a number of different genres and formats. I have chosen to compare gazette materials with the summaries and documents found in the *Qing Veritable Records (Qing shilu)*, the summaries of criminal cases found in the *Conspectus of Legal Cases (Xing’an huilan)*, the transcriptions of gazettes found in the Shanghai newspaper *Shenbao*, and the summaries of gazettes produced by Shanghai newspaper *North China Herald*. In so doing, the appendix demonstrates the distinctions between the ways that each of these formats (official gazette, annals, legal conspectus, Chinese newspaper, English-language newspaper) presented the same material. The goals and priorities of the source compilers predictably dictated the way that they organized, sorted, and edited information.

My hope is that in the future large gazette collections (such as the British Library collection) will be digitized and made available for user annotation, allowing users to note connections between different source collections. In the meantime, the most widely accessible sources of text files of gazette information are digitized versions of *Shenbao*. *Shenbao* printed a complete gazette insert daily, at a delay of about two weeks after

¹ *Translation of the Peking Gazette for 1877* (Shanghai: North-China Herald, 1878), preface.

gazettes were published in Beijing. However, *Shenbao* only began publishing in 1872. For dates earlier than that, we can cross-reference gazettes to translations published in English-language newspapers, like the *North-China Herald* and the *Canton Register*. In particular, annual compilations of *Peking Gazette* translations for 1873 through 1899 published by the *North-China Herald* office are widely available. The *North-China Herald* translations are indexed between 1874 and 1884. For earlier dates, one must access the China-coast papers directly. For obvious reasons, these papers were not as consistent as *Shenbao* in offering gazette content, and their translations often summarize and gloss information not of interest to the reading audience. On the other hand, the *North-China Herald* translations highlight the interests and biases of the British translators and their intended audience. For example, the index to the translations explicitly notes each case resulting in a sentence of “death by a thousand cuts,” attesting to the strong interest of British readers in cases of extreme punishment.

Although both the *Qing Veritable Records* and *Conspectus of Legal Cases* summarized archival and gazette information, the compilations were developed with very different goals. The *Veritable Records* were compiled within the metropolitan bureaucracy in a closed enterprise. These compilations were not sold during the dynasty. As the historical annals of the dynasty, the *Veritable Records* tend to present information as it was summarized within an imperial edict, and, less often, within an official memorial. Extensive and complicated cases are significantly truncated and details eliminated. Often, the *Veritable Records* will present a case only at the point of its final settlement, leaving questions about what actually happened. In contrast, the *Conspectus of Legal Cases* was a compilation produced by former legal secretaries and sold

commercially from its creation. The first edition was compiled in 1834, and continuations were published in 1884 (covering 1838-1871) and 1886. The *Conspectus* summarized cases for the use of readers interested in learning about the prosecution of criminal cases during the late Qing. The *Conspectus* editors specifically noted that they drew on gazettes, in addition to other archival documents, as a source for the compilation of this very large text. The legal conspectus almost always included information about the sentence dealt out in the case, as well as narrative details of the matter, showing dual purposes of information and entertainment.

The court gazette linked closed archival collections to the larger world of commercial and newspaper publishing. As described in the dissertation, cases documented in the court gazette appear frequently in published compilations. It seems clear that publication in the gazette has actually ensured the longevity of certain cases. For example, in the “San Pailou Murder” case, gazettes published reports on a protracted murder investigation over the course of a number of years. By the time that the case was finally resolved, the court had been forced to appoint Imperial Commissioners to go to Nanjing, the scene of the crime, and re-investigate the case. Their extensive final report covered four issues of the gazette in the spring of 1882—despite the fact that the murder had occurred five years earlier. There are two plausible reasons that the gazettes revisited the scandal—first, because the court sought to publicly demonstrate that it had dealt with a longstanding and notorious scandal; or, second, because the sordid case had already attracted the attention of audiences. The extensive coverage afforded to the prosecution of the case in the gazettes has fueled its continuing legacy: in September 2015, the CCTV talk show *Falü jiangtang* (*Legal Classroom*) broadcast four episodes analyzing the case.

Although researchers may be most curious about whether individual memorials, memorialists, or cases are included in the gazette, it is unfortunately impossible to state conclusively which materials were published in the gazette. A large proportion of gazette entries cannot be tracked to the *Veritable Records*. Many of these involve personnel matters which did not receive attention in the dynastic annals, especially items relating to officials below the provincial level (See Table B.1. These can be found under the category of “Civil and Military Administration” in the *North-China Herald* translations).

Table B.1. Distribution of Topics in the Peking Gazette, 1874-1878

<i>NCH</i> Category	1874	1875	1876	1877	1878
Court Affairs	139 (18.0%)	118 (14.4%)	50 (6.1%)	54 (5.2%)	79 (5.5%)
Judicial and Revenue Administration	231 (30.0%)	186 (22.8%)	202 (24.7%)	217 (21.1%)	267 (18.6%)
Civil and Military Administration	169 (21.9%)	233 (28.5%)	289 (35.3%)	383 (37.2%)	808 (56.2%)
Instruction, Worship, and Usages	90 (11.7%)	71 (8.7%)	85 (10.4%)	122 (11.8%)	125 (8.7%)
External Relations	72 (9.3%)	91 (11.1%)	87 (10.6%)	78 (7.6%)	20 (1.4%)
Provincial and Colonial Affairs	70 (9.1%)	118 (4.4%)	106 (12.9%)	176 (17.1%)	159 (11.1%)
Total	771	817	819	1030	1438

Source: *Translation of the Peking Gazette* (Shanghai: North China Herald, 1874-1878).

Note: I have adhered to the somewhat idiosyncratic categories assigned by the *NCH*. The *Herald* index often counted a single item into several categories. Therefore, while the coverage of the gazette seems at first to have grown significantly between 1874 and 1878, this is more likely the result of counting items for multiple categories. The relative expansion of the category of “Civil and Military Administration” was, according to the editors, the result of extensive coverage of the North China Famine beginning in 1877.

In addition, memorials requesting sick leave, and memorials describing conditions upon arrival at a post were more frequently published the gazette than in the *Veritable Records*. Second, the *Veritable Records* often contains a brief edict referring to a complicated matter, such as a criminal case, but omits the memorials and communications submitted by subordinate officials to the throne. In the gazette, we are

often presented with a memorial corresponding to the edict, often several days after the edict itself was printed in the gazette. Gazette publishers were typically meticulous in maintaining editorial quality. In some cases, the omission or alteration of details elicited severe responses from Beijing police and court authorities, as discussed in the dissertation. In other cases, minor errors in dates and the omission of non-essential characters received no notice.

Cases from the open archive were often incorporated into the legal and administrative code as sub-statutes and precedents. For example, in August 1830, an imperial edict appeared in the gazette responding to a reported by the censor Shao Zhenghu (邵正笏, 1819 *jinshi*). Shao's memorial described the spread of opium cultivation and sales in China, pointing out that certain regions in Zhejiang, Guangdong, Fujian, and Yunnan were known for opium cultivation and specifying the brand names associated with these districts. The responding edict quoted the memorial at length, and suggested that the censor's allegations needed to be investigated and reported on by provincial officials. The edict corresponds to an edict included in the *Veritable Records* and dated about a week earlier.² The two edicts are nearly identical, and the few differing characters between the two versions do not change the general meaning. After the edict and memorial were published in the gazette, they were not republished in other contemporary compilations such as the *Chouban yiwu shimo* (which included many communications relating to opium) or the *Conspectus of Legal Cases*. However, after its publication in the gazette, Shao's memorial served as an important prompt and starting-point for other official memorials on opium cultivation and sales. In both collections,

² *QSL*, DG 10/06/24, 170:643b-644a.

memorials can be found that employed Shao's report as a precedent for subsequent investigations.³ Given the prevalence of these memorials, the editors of a later supplement to the *Chouban yiwu shimo* glossed Shao's reports as "the censor Shao Zhenghu memorialized so-and-so (*zou yun yun* 奏云云)" in its publication of these memorials.

Meanwhile, the notice drawn by the "San Pailou" murder case up to the present day can also be attributed to the publication of relevant memorials in the court gazette. Although the original murder took place in 1876, the court dispatched two Imperial Commissioners to re-investigate the case in 1882. In the winter of 1882, four successive issues of the gazette were filled with the Imperial Commissioners' initial report; a few days later, their extensive follow-up occupied another four days of the gazette.⁴ *Shenbao* published a number of articles commenting on the exigencies of the case. Although the newspaper faithfully reprinted the gazette entries covering the case, the newspaper writers seem to have tired of the investigation, and stopped reporting on it in 1882 after a great deal of discussion in earlier years. However, the case had become so notorious that the newspaper referred casually to it by nicknames like "the San Pailou murder case" and "the Mao'er shan murder case," referring to two linked murders in the case.⁵ The *Conspectus of Legal Cases* revision of 1886 published a four-page exegesis of the case.⁶

³ *Chouban yiwu shimo buyi*, DG 10/11/18; DG 10/12/18; DG 10/11/25; DG 11/03/29; DG 11/04/08; DG 11/05/06, DG 11/05/24, DG 11/06/06, DG 11/06/21, DG 11/06/29, DG 11/07/03, DG 11/09/08, DG 11/09/27, DG 11/10/01, DG 11/12/30, DG 12/01/29, DG 12/12/20; *Xing'an huilan*, 12:902-5. The memorial was also published in the Guangxu *HDSL*: 828:1015b.

⁴ *Jingbao (dibao)*, 1:271-313 (GX 8/3/19-22 and GX 8/3/25-28).

⁵ "Lun xing xun nan shi shu Jinling San Pailou jiu an," *SB*, November 4, 1881; "Shu Liu zhijun zou qing zan ge Hu canjiang pian hou," *SB*, November 21, 1881; "Jie lu Mao'er shan ming'an gong ci," *SB*, January 10-17, 1882; "Lun zhi gong lu," April 23, 1882; "Jinling suowen," January 7, 1883.

⁶ *Xin zeng xing'an huilan* 15:5129-5133.

The circulation of gazettes created an open archive of archival cases for public perusal. Examination of court gazettes can answer questions about the state of common knowledge about major and minor events as they happened. In addition, consideration of the gazettes as widely circulating and widely reproduced information sources influences our understanding of the logic of source survival. Criminal cases, officials, and policies became known in the pages of the court gazette, and achieved renown through the circulation of reprinted, recopied, and redacted versions of gazette material, even years later. In short, gazettes help us understand why some tales from the Qing dynasty became famous and why some faded into obscurity.

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SSDJ. Suishou dengji (Grand Council Document Register).

SYD. Shangyu dang (Archive of Imperial Edicts).

ZPZZ. Zhupi zouzhe (Grand Council Palace Memorials).

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SSDJ. Suishou dengji (Grand Council Document Register). JQ, DG, XF reigns.

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Selected Presentations

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