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INTRODUCTION

Visual Materials in Chinese Local Gazetteers

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The six contributions in this volume offer a new way of thinking not only about visual materials included in gazetteers, but also about the genre of gazetteers as a whole. By considering the visuals, and exploring the relationships between visual and textual materials, we understand the significance of the genre of gazetteers in a new light.

本期專題系列的六篇文章以方志中的視覺史志為主題,並把方志作為一種資料體例從整體來考察。通過討論視覺影像和探索視覺材料與文本材料之間的關係,我們對方志這種體例的特點有了新的認知。

Keywords: local gazetteers, history, visual materials, maps

關鍵詞: 地方志,歷史,視覺資料,地圖

In his study of the place of the past in classical Chinese literature, Stephen Owen argues that writing was an endeavour meant to "perpetuate the self" of the author, positing a powerful link between the moment of literary creation and the transmission of the writer's consciousness to later times. As a result of this yearning for connection across time, Chinese literature "internalized its hopes, made them one of its central topics, and everywhere concerned itself with intense experience of the past." On the one hand, in Chinese literature, Owen notes, "The master figure here is synecdoche, the part that leads to the whole, some enduring fragment from which we try to reconstruct the lost totality." But at the same time, a "gap occurs between remembering and what is remembered: memory always moves *toward* what is remembered, but a gap of time, loss, and incompleteness intervenes" (Owen 1986, 1-2).

These observations delineate one mode of connection with the past, which emphasises what has been lost and can only be recalled. Yet there are also modes of relating to the past which yield a sense of fulfilment, of the present as a time when the cumulative attainments of former times can be summarised and celebrated, not in a search for lost time, but as the trajectory to a glorious present. The great editorial compilations of *leishu* 類書, from Cao Wei's lost *Huanglan* 皇覽 down to the great Qing *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書, exemplify this practice, assembling and displaying the development across time of China's literary cultural treasure house. Both the remembrance evoked by Owen and the massive archives of literary compendia are textual vehicles for trans-temporal interaction. They draw upon the richness of literary sources and the power of language to evoke a state of mind in the reader linking her to another moment or era.

While cultural connectivity with the past has been an overwhelmingly literary activity, there are also other ways to embody relationships between past and present. Visual representations can be an effective means of conjuring a sense of how things appeared in earlier times, and even of tracing the processes of change across time through a series or sequence of images. Visual materials can convey a sense of spatial relationships more clearly than textual narrative, or may more effectively and immediately illustrate a process which evolves over a lengthy time span by showing its step-by-step advance through successive versions. One particular genre of visual imagery can be seen, in at least a few instances, to have been used to vividly connect the viewer to another historical framework. Cartography, the illustration of geospatial forms and relations, has been paired with textual materials in relating information about specific places. The incorporation of maps in Chinese local gazetteers has generated a significant reservoir of images of geography, some of which have been of an historical nature.

Chinese local gazetteers (*difangzhi* 地方志) have long been recognised as important sources for the history of particular places in China. Beginning in the Song dynasty, though drawing on earlier antecedents, and continuing through the rest of imperial history, local gazetteers, at the county (*xian* 縣), prefectural (*zhou* 州), or provincial (*sheng* 省) level, have recorded immense amounts of information about the political, economic, and social lives of the people and places within their purview. Routinely compiled by local officials, in collaboration with members of elites in the relevant area, gazetteers served as sources of information for administration, for the promotion of pride of place, or for travellers seeking to understand a particular destination. New editions were submitted to higher administrative levels, up to the central imperial government, which sought to maintain an overall awareness of events and circumstances across the

empire. Gazetteers were often printed in commercial editions as well, and were attractive objects for collectors or as memorials of places in which an official had served or which a private individual may have visited (Dennis 2015).

Modern scholars of Chinese history have made extensive use of local gazetteers in a wide variety of studies, mining them for data about people, products, geographic features, and many other kinds of specific facts and figures. Most of these studies have involved the in-depth exploration of a single locality, perhaps using a series of gazetteers produced over a certain span of time. Gazetteers were regularly updated or replaced by later editions as conditions changed or new developments took place. Consulting a sequence of such works for a particular place has been an essential component of research producing valuable insights into change over time in many localities, from rural counties to major urban centres.

In recent years the development of digital technologies has given rise to new approaches to the exploitation of the research potential of local gazetteers. Advances in text mining, the ability to search within the printed blocks of characters for particular words or phrases, has opened up vast new horizons of investigation, allowing the interrogation of not just one or a few gazetteers devoted to a specific location, but of huge numbers of texts over the whole space of the empire and across long swathes of historical time. This has brought us to the threshold of a new era in the study of Chinese history. Gazetteers are by no means the only kind of materials which can be explored digitally, but the richness of the extant body of gazetteers, preserved from the Song dynasty through to the end of the imperial era in the early twentieth century, is an especially exciting reservoir of information for analysis and interpretation. As greater numbers of surviving gazetteers in libraries in China and the West are digitised and made available to researchers, the potential for new approaches to the local and comparative history of China continues to expand.

The Max Planck Institute for the History of Science (MPIWG), in Berlin, has been a vital centre in the creation of digital tools for research into Chinese local gazetteers. A major result of this effort has been the crafting of a search engine called LoGaRT (Local Gazetteers Research Tool). Initially this was concerned with developing the ability to search within textual materials, but over the last four years MPIWG has augmented its LoGaRT system to enable the searching of digitised gazetteers for visual materials as well, such as maps, pictures, diagrams, or other forms of graphic representation. This new application of digital research technology is generating a wave of innovative studies, of which the papers in this journal issue are a representative sample (Chen 2020).

Use of the LoGaRT search engine is a means of finding and aggregating large amounts of data from within the vast reservoir of extant *difangzhi*. The ability to search through many gazetteers, from a wide range of locations over long spans of time, can yield valuable statistical insights into Chinese local history, and to Chinese history more broadly. The creation of large data sets which can be queried and parsed in various ways is a primary value created by such digital tools. But LoGaRT searches can also reveal exceptional materials, rare examples of information or practices of recording which can be of great interest or value as well.

The set of historical maps and other imagery which emerged from the Pages-With-Images searches conducted in 2018 and 2019 provided a unique window into how some Chinese scholars and officials augmented their understanding of China's urban and local history by creating visual expressions of the information available to them beyond what they recorded in the gazetteer texts they were compiling. While these remain exceptional artefacts, they deepen and broaden our own understanding of the richness of Chinese historical consciousness and production. The essays in this volume by six scholars who have taken part in the ongoing work of the Max Planck team cover a wide range of topics, each displaying in different ways the potential of the LoGaRT tool.

Daniel Burton-Rose provides a consideration of one type of primary source in the study of certain architectural features built in educational institutions in late imperial China, towers dedicated to the celestial and Daoist figure Wenchang. He traces the history of the term Wenchang and the development of a cult combining both astral elements and an association with success in the imperial civil examinations. He examines the visual materials available in local gazetteers, accessed via the LoGaRT search engine. He uses the visual representations of these towers to explore the place of these structures within the urban landscape of the Ming and Qing periods, situating them within a complex cultural environment in which religious, intellectual, and local elite interests interacted over long periods of time.

Sander Molenaar's essay on images of the seacoast in late imperial gazetteers highlights the utility of searching large numbers of gazetteers in revealing patterns which would be more difficult to discern on a case-by-case reading. Molenaar shows that, while gazetteers produced in areas bordering the sea regularly featured visual representations of the coast, nearby islands, and maritime traffic, and often featured symbols marking coastal defence elements, these were almost always generic in nature, rather than detailed images of geographic or constructed forms. He argues that this suggests that details of the maritime environment were of less administrative interest to local officials, the primary consumers of gazetteer information, than data pertaining to the land and people under their oversight. Awareness of the sea was not excluded, but was not localised, remaining a marginal zone of concern.

Xin Yu provides a study of the production of "scenic views" in Ming dynasty gazetteers. These were images of locally famous sites known for their natural beauty or historical significance. Sets of scenes of local views began to appear in gazetteers as early as the Song. Over the course of the Ming the inclusion of such sets of images became increasingly common in gazetteers, reflecting, Xin Yu argues, the desire of local officials to assert a kind of administrative oversight of the cultural and political landscape of the areas for which they were responsible. By the late Ming such views were common to gazetteers produced throughout the empire.

Qin Yang's contribution considers visual representations of the Yellow River in gazetteers dating to the early Qing, in conjunction with textual representations. Texts included in gazetteers often follow strict genre guidelines; visual materials in gazetteers, in contrast, are less constrained by genre, and thus, Qin Yang argues, a closer representation of the experiences of those whose lives were shaped by the proximity of the Yellow River. Based on *ca.* 160 visual representations of the Yellow River included in gazetteers, dating mostly to the late Ming and Qing dynasties, Qin Yang is able to distinguish the particularly local

experiences of the river from the more generic representations of place and environment that shape the genre.

Daniel Knorr focuses on the ways in which cities have been depicted, and especially on the representations of the spaces outside the city walls in Qing gazetteers. City walls have long been understood as a distinct feature of urban spaces in premodern China, even when urban spaces and constructions such as walls appeared in an endless variety of distinct forms. Visual representations of urban spaces in gazetteers (*chengtu*) also formed a distinct yet fluid genre. The variability within the genre in turn points to a wide range of conceptualisations of the relationship between the space within the city walls and the spaces without. The gazetteer images explored by Knorr serve to demonstrate the vibrancy of the discourse that both emerged from and constituted urban spaces in early modern China.

Anne Gerritsen, finally, explores the representation of ritual implements in local gazetteers. A distinct subset of gazetteers included such images, with some gazetteers including a handful of images of ritual vessels or musical instruments, and other gazetteers including large sets of images of vessels and other implements, musical instruments, items of clothing, and ritual postures or dances and their choreographies. While ritual texts have been studied for almost as long as rituals have been performed, and visual representations of ritual implements have been key sites for discussions of the correct form of such implements, gazetteers have rarely been included as sources of information on ritual discourse.

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