

state, and literary genres seems to be more complicated than that. Poetic composition is problematized in the novel not just because of the terror of literary inquisition, but also because it is often appropriated by charlatans and self-styled “famous scholars” (*mingshi*) for whom the author Wu Jingzi seems to reserve his sharpest barbs. And for all his foibles, the zealous anthologizer of examination essays, Ma Chunshang, is after all one of the very few morally unimpeachable characters we come across in the novel.

In the last chapter, Ge reads *Dream of the Red Chamber* as a dramatization of “all the emotions and commotions involved in the process of a young literatus’s repudiation of the examinations and officialdom” (p. 140). The commitment to government service is here symbolized via the trope of “mending heaven” (*bu tian*), an enterprise the novel’s protagonist Baoyu is famously unfit for. It would have been interesting to see the author discuss the reasons for the radically different value and function attributed to poetry in *Dream* vis-à-vis *The Scholars*, considering that the two works were virtually coeval.

On a general note, a more explicit explanation regarding the choice of primary texts would have been helpful in clarifying the scope of this study. With the exception of chapter 3, this study concentrates on the “usual suspects,” the great masterworks of Ming and Qing fiction. How about other works? The fiction on current events (*shishi xiaoshuo*) that flourished during the seventeenth century would seem to offer ideal material for this kind of analysis.

There are very few minor typos and oversights (*pinyin* misspellings and information duplicated in the text and the notes). In a few cases, I felt that a more literal translation would have done better service to the author’s arguments. For example, the quotation from *The Scholars* in which Wang Mian foresees that the civil service examination will prove detrimental to “genuine scholarship and correct behavior” (p. 106, translation slightly modified from Yang & Yang’s “real scholarship and correct behaviour”) could have been rendered more literally as “literary accomplishment, conduct, service, and withdrawal” (文行出處, a composite reference to *Yijing* and *Lunyu*) in order to reinforce Ge’s argument about the significance of Wang Mian’s voluntary withdrawal from active service as couched in Confucian, rather than Daoist, terms.

Quibbles and reservations aside, Ge’s study is an important new contribution to the field and a timely reminder of the challenges and rewards attending a rigorous historicization of traditional Chinese fiction. The book’s broad scope and remarkable clarity of style make its rich material particularly suitable for classroom use.

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Writing, Publishing, and Reading Local Gazetteers in Imperial China, 1100–1700. By JOSEPH R. DENNIS. Harvard East Asian Monographs, vol. 379. Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY ASIA CENTER, HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2015. Pp. xvi + 390. \$49.95.

Joseph Dennis’s book on Chinese gazetteers (*difangzhi* 地方志, local gazetteers or local histories) is the synthesis of many years of research on this subject. This research began with his doctoral studies, when he set out to fill the information gap in Western academic work about the production, circulation, and “use” of this category of historical literature. Dennis avoids using gazetteers as source material for research on specific topics, but rather uses them as objects of study in themselves to analyse certain key questions that he mentions in the introduction: the dissemination of knowledge in late Imperial China; the relationship between local societies and the central state or between the central state and peripheral regions; and the Chinese publishing industry (p. 3). Despite the title, Dennis essentially deals with gazetteers from the end of the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) to the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), and his presentation does not cover the entirety of the subject, but focuses on certain points. This is probably an unavoidable choice, considering the breadth of the subject and the characteristic contents of gazetteers, which, although they may at first sight seem similar and repetitive, often present specific elements

in each edition. He organizes this presentation into seven chapters brought together into three parts: “Impetus to Compile,” “Production Process,” and “Reading and Using Gazetteers.” The volume also provides numerous maps, figures, and tables, and concludes with an extensive bibliography.

The first chapter summarizes governmental initiatives, starting with operations undertaken by Imperial order, and includes gazetteers dealing with the entire Empire, for example, the comprehensive gazetteers of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, *Huang Yuan da yitongzhi* 皇元大一統志 (1279) and *Da Ming yitongzhi* 大明一統志 (1461), as well as the guidelines for the compilation of local gazetteers promulgated in the years 1412 and 1418. The second part of this chapter focuses on local compilations ordered by officials of superior rank in the territorial regions. In some cases, officials who wanted to take over peripheral areas and assimilate the non-Chinese population found a way to deploy their plan by rewriting local history and including this story in the Imperial narrative. Compiling a new gazetteer was part of the assimilation process, but in some cases could lead to violence: Dennis gives as an example the story of the An 安 family and the 1555 *Gazetteer of Mahu* (*Mahu fuzhi* 馬湖府志), a prefecture between Sichuan and Yunnan.

In contrast to this description of the editorial process as seen from an institutional and official point of view, in the second chapter Dennis analyses the gazetteers compiled in Zhejiang’s Xinchang County (*Xinchang xianzhi* 新昌縣志, 1477 and 1579 editions), which provided a tool for the local lineages to establish themselves as local elites, particularly at the county level. These lineages, interconnected by marriage, had members on the editorial boards of the gazetteers and in the sponsor groups. In order to clarify the “kinship background” of the Xinchang gazetteers, Dennis combines information from the gazetteers and the genealogies of the families concerned by, or excluded from, the compilation process. The result is a good example of monographic research on the elites of Xinchang County in the mid-Ming dynasty. This research also demonstrates that the distinction between public and private publishing, which is still applied in studies of the history of Chinese books, although perhaps useful for classifying imprints, is insufficient for the analysis of complicated and nuanced editorial processes.

This point is also discussed in the second part of the book, where three chapters are dedicated to different stages of editing, publishing, and funding. Chapter 3 (“Editorial Process”), the first chapter in this second section of the book, provides a composite body of information concerning various gazetteer projects which include the story of some “private” compilers who were selected to work for official editions; the cases of numerous manuscripts that were compiled to keep gazetteers updated but were then never published; the description of the composition of the editorial staffs and their compensations; the collection of heterogeneous data, their processing and final arrangement in different formats; and the selection of suitable, orthodox content. The following chapter opens with an anachronistic critique of Zhou Hongzu’s 周弘祖 (1529–1595) sources and Zhang Xiumin’s 張秀民 (1908–2006) studies, to move on to a comparison between gazetteer publishing and other publishing activities and businesses at the end of the Ming dynasty. According to Dennis, even if it would be a mistake to underrate the importance of manuscripts or to forget that handwritten texts were part of the “gazetteer life cycle,” the fact remains that engraving and printing became the normative practices that increased the distribution (through printed copies) and encouraged the conservation (through engraved wood-blocks) of gazetteers. Indeed, the second part of the chapter describes the networks of engravers from Nanjing, Beijing, Jiangxi, etc. Dennis’s conclusions are extremely succinct: the findings about engravers’ mobility “affect our understanding of the spatial dimensions of the late Imperial economy” and the printing of gazetteers was normative from the period of the Song dynasty (960–1279; pp. 212–13). In fact, by making this assertion, Dennis is taking a side in the argument about the role of manuscripts and the dissemination of printing culture during the second millennium in China. This very pithy formulation may go unnoticed by readers who are unaware of the academic discussions that have been going on for many years between scholars who believe—or do not believe—that imprints were quite common in China before the middle of the second millennium. Furthermore, Dennis’s opinion is again highlighted in the last pages of Chapter 5, where he writes that the cost of publishing gazetteers before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries should not be overestimated. In the chapter “Financing Gazetteers,” he also makes a list of various ways of raising funds—either government unspecified funds or special collected funds—as well as donations by officials, compilers, and members of the local elite. He also attempts to

explain the different costs involved in the editing and publishing process. He goes even further, using information from eleven gazetteers dating from 1510 and 1642 as well as scattered data about other books, woodblocks, and paper prices, to speculate about the details of the different production costs (for blocks, paper, and labor). Although some readers may find the figures and calculations confusing, it has to be said that, given the limits of the sources available, scholars are obliged to look for alternative systems in order to correlate these scarce data.

In the last part of the book, Dennis demonstrates not only that the gazetteers were essentially printed items, but that they addressed many more readers than is usually estimated, even though they were non-commercial books. Although officials, would-be officials, and Confucian school teachers and students were the main target audience, Dennis also mentions families with lower level officials among their members, “commoners,” isolated examples of a farmer and an artisan, and even women (p. 253). Moreover, the diffusion of gazetteers, and the resulting audience they reached, often surpassed the local dimension of the editorial project as a result of the mobility of the administrative staff, the distribution of volumes to private people (compilers and donors) and to institutions (schools, academies, libraries), and the possibility of making copies or reprints on demand. Therefore, gazetteers are presented in Chapter 6, “Target Audiences and Distribution,” as a part of the parallel process of increasing the number of available books and their potential readers, on the one hand, and of spreading Chinese culture even to the outlying regions, on the other. Following the same logic, the chapter “Reading and Using Gazetteers” opens with a presentation of officials reading gazetteers in order to learn about the locality where they were assigned before undertaking administrative tasks: “When scholar-gentry first arrive, they necessarily rely on the gazetteer” writes one of them in 1502. Dennis then proceeds to enumerate other types of readers and forms of reading: travellers, such as Du Mu 都穆 (1459–1527) or Xu Xiake 徐霞客 (1587–1641), who read or bought gazetteers; collectors who analysed the contents to make lists and catalogues, but also to find information needed to complete their own works, such as the historian Qi Chengye 祁承燾 (1563–1368); editors who extracted passages to enrich other publications (encyclopaedias, for example); *litterati* who transferred content from *difangzhi* to *biji* 筆記 (notebooks) and vice versa; and finally, as already mentioned in Chapter 2, people who were looking for information about their lineage and their ancestral home. Contained in this last chapter is also a key study on water control in Shangyu 上虞 and neighboring counties (Zhejiang province) over a period of two hundred years, beginning in the middle of the fifteenth century. These pages show how opposing and competing groups may have shaped the contents of the successive editions of local gazetteers, as well as how, at the present time, these same gazetteers are precious sources for retracing the story of the litigations and lawsuits over water control for the Zaoli 皂李 and Xiagai 夏蓋 lakes.

Although the number of gazetteers, especially for the Qing dynasty (1644–1911), is so huge that there remains plenty of material for other studies devoted to this subject, this monograph is an important contribution to understanding the publishing of this category of books over several centuries and in different regions of the Empire. Through his multi-faceted approach, Joseph Dennis has enriched a field in the history of Chinese book production that has received little attention, up to now, in Western studies, demonstrating its wealth and potential for development.

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White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates: Crisis and Reform in the Qing Empire. By WENSHENG WANG. Cambridge, Mass.: HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS, 2014. Pp. 252. \$42.

On Lunar New Year, 1796, the Qianlong Emperor abdicated after sixty long and glorious years on the throne. Almost immediately, the new Jiaqing Emperor faced a rebellion in the internal borderlands of Hubei, inspired by the millenarian teachings of White Lotus sects. On the southeast coast of Guangdong he faced another crisis: pirate raiders allied with the new Vietnamese Tay Son regime