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# Fieldwork on the Social and Economic History of Chinese Print Culture

## A Survey of Sources

CYNTHIA J. BROKAW

**L**ucille Chia's essay in this issue, "Counting and Recounting Chinese Imprints," outlines many ways in which thorough analysis of texts can tell us a great deal about the history of the book and even about the output of a specific publishing site. Her fuller study of Jianyang publishing from the Song (960–1279) through the Ming (1368–1644), together with briefer works like Ellen Widmer's study of the seventeenth-century Huanduzhai publishing house, demonstrates in greater detail this same point: intensive and extensive library searches, combined with careful and informed interpretation of imprints, can provide much of the basic information we need to understand the history of publishing and book culture in China.<sup>1</sup>

It is often the case that historians of the book have to rely solely on this approach, for it is difficult to find much in the way of on-site sources or local physical evidence of commercial woodblock publishing. Certainly the great urban publishing centers of the late-imperial period—Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, and Beijing—yield today only scraps of information about the organization or even the location of late-Ming and Qing (1644–1911) print shops and book-selling neighborhoods, while the imprints they produced fill libraries. It is likely, then, that publishing operations in these cities and other major urban centers are best studied through the techniques of imprint analysis and biographical reconstruction employed by Widmer and Chia in the works mentioned above.

Here, however, I want to describe—and argue for the value of—another approach to the study of publishing and book culture: fieldwork at historical publishing sites and the collection of on-site data. Fieldwork allows the researcher the opportunity to study commercial woodblock publishing *in situ*; it involves recording oral histories, the collection of local artifacts of publishing (imprints, woodblocks, tools, and so forth), and consultation of a range of local documents—largely genealogies, property-division documents, and land and labor contracts.<sup>2</sup> Where available in sufficient numbers, these materials may provide information not always accessible through the study of imprints alone: the local socio-economic conditions that shape the development of publishing businesses, the structure of book production and the organization of publishing businesses, the pattern of book distribution and marketing, and so forth. Information collected from fieldwork, then, does not simply supplement the library and archival study of texts; it can supply new and otherwise inaccessible insights into the social and economic relationships of Chinese woodblock publishing in the late-imperial period.

The purpose of this essay is to present a survey of the types of materials potentially accessible through fieldwork at publishing sites. The focus here is on the collection and use of sources. I do not attempt to describe any of the publishing operations referred to here in full, though I do indicate, sketchily, what kinds of information such sources can yield about Chinese publishing and print culture.<sup>3</sup> The examples presented in this essay are drawn largely from intensive field research done between 1993 and 1997 in a range of block-carving, publishing, or book-selling sites. These sites vary widely in significance and size. Sibao township, an isolated cluster of Hakka peasant villages in the mountains of western Fujian, was the center of a thriving regional publishing concern serving villages, market towns, and county seats in eastern Jiangxi, southern Zhejiang, northern Guangdong, and Guangxi from the late-seventeenth through the early-twentieth century; Sibao even established a branch bookshop in a provincial capital, Nanning, Guangxi, in the late-nineteenth century. Xuwan,<sup>4</sup> a market town in Jinxi county, northeastern Jiangxi, was, in contrast to Sibao, an economic center of some importance before it became a publishing center in the late-eighteenth century; its strategic location on the Fu river facilitated shipment of its texts



Places related to fieldwork on Chinese printing and publishing. Map based on *Biaozhun*



Zhongguo quantu (Map of China) (Hong Kong: Yanyuan chubanshe, [after 1999]).

northward to Anhui and Hubei and eastward to Zhejiang. Mianzhu, north of Chengdu in Sichuan province, is a somewhat different site: noted for its production of *nianhua* (usually translated as New Year's prints), Mianzhu provides an opportunity to compare different types of print, as well as book, cultures. And not all of the sites here were necessarily important publishing centers: Yuechi, in eastern Sichuan province, though it did develop a local publishing industry of its own, played its most significant role in Qing publishing as a source of skilled block carvers, most of whom worked for distant publishing concerns. Yuechi peasants originally took up block carving as a subsidiary handicraft in the late-eighteenth century; many, finding it more lucrative than agriculture, specialized in the craft, providing the publishers of Chengdu and Chongqing with a steady supply of carvers. So too, Magang, a peasant village in Shunde, Guangdong, developed block carving as a sideline; here, however, the carvers were all women—cheap female labor made these blocks attractive to publishers as far away as Suzhou and Sibao.<sup>5</sup> Selection of such a range of different sites—including block carving as well as book- and print-publishing centers, and peasant villages as well as market towns and provincial capitals—provides an opportunity to consider a wide variety of different sources, yielding insights into a range of differences in local business conditions, organization of publishing operations, market structures, and local book cultures.

#### IDENTIFYING FIELD SITES

First, however, before surveying these sources, it is necessary to address one basic question: how does one identify a field site in the first place? The great commercial publishing centers of the late-Ming, Qing, and early-Republican (1911–1949) eras—the cities of Jiangnan (Nanjing, Suzhou, Hangzhou, Yangzhou, and Huzhou, to name the major centers), Jianyang in northern Fujian, Beijing, Shanghai, and so forth—are widely known. And it is easy enough to identify important provincial capitals outside the Jiangnan area, cities like Guangzhou and Chengdu, as likely sites of commercial publishing in the Qing and early Republic. But such large urban sites are usually least susceptible to productive fieldwork; the rapid physical changes of the past century have swept away the material

remains of the industry, and high rates of social mobility have made it difficult to locate knowledgeable informants.<sup>6</sup>

How, then, do we discover the more obscure, and especially rural, publishers operating at the lower end of the book market? Gazetteers from the late-imperial and Republican periods are usually not very helpful; indeed, gazetteers for even some of the largest publishing sites often do not refer in any detail to their publishing activities. The large-scale publishing industry of Xuwan, for example, identified by a nineteenth-century literatus, Jin Wuxiang (dates unknown), as one of the most productive in the empire,<sup>7</sup> is not mentioned in contemporary gazetteers of Jinxi county. Imprints themselves, of course, if they list on their cover pages (*fengmian*) or title pages the site of publication and name of the publishing house (*tangming*), will reveal names of sites, but this is certainly a somewhat laborious procedure for finding heretofore little-known sites. Catalogues of private collections and libraries are frequently of only limited aid in this large task, as they do not necessarily give full or precise publication information for each title. This is a particular problem for texts published during the Qing, and certainly for those published after the end of the Qianlong era (1736–1796), the official date that now separates rare books from regular string-bound texts.<sup>8</sup> As “non-rare” books, these imprints are often rather carelessly and inadequately catalogued.

And there are times when even examination of the imprints themselves will not help; many texts, particularly cheap and poorly produced ones, do not list complete publication information—date of publication, *tangming*, and site of publication—thus limiting the number of commercial concerns we can identify with any assurance. (Listing of a *tangming* alone is often not conclusive, for many print-shop names—Wanjuanlou, for example—are used by different publishers.) The major secondary works in Chinese on Chinese publishing are also not particularly helpful, as they tend to revisit the same major sites over and over: even the magisterial *Zhongguo yinshuashi* (History of Printing in China, 1989) by the leading scholar of printing Zhang Xiumin, for example, focuses almost exclusively on the largest centers, sparing only a few pages for glancing references to smaller rural sites.<sup>9</sup>

Until quite recently, the best way of identifying potential field

sites was through discussion with scholars of the study of editions (*banbenxue*) and, most important, wide reading in journals and local serial productions like the county and provincial *Wenshi ziliao* (Source Materials for Cultural History), which sometimes include articles on local publishing concerns, bookstores, and paper industries in the pre-1949 period.<sup>10</sup> Over the past few years, however, it has become easier to identify possible field sites as a consequence of efforts by the provincial Office of Media and Publishing (Xinwen chubanju), under the direction of the central office in Beijing, to compile provincial publishing histories. These histories appear in a variety of forms: in Sichuan, as a serial, *Sichuan xinwen chuban shiliao* (Historical Sources on the Media and Publishing in Sichuan, 1992–), which publishes articles on the history of book and newspaper publishing in that province; in Nanchang, Jiangxi, as a multivolume set of books, including a bibliography of Jiangxi imprints and a dictionary of Jiangxi authors and editors;<sup>11</sup> in Jiangsu, as a narrative history of publishing, *Jiangsu keshu* (Publishing in Jiangsu) edited by Jiang Chengbo, Du Xinfu, and Du Yongkang and an extensive bibliography of Jiangsu publications;<sup>12</sup> and in Guangdong, as a volume of the new provincial gazetteer, *Guangdong shengzhi*, that is devoted entirely to the Guangdong publishing industry,<sup>13</sup> to give just a few examples. There is a considerable range in the quality and usefulness of these works, but, by listing fuller references to publishing sites within each province, they provide researchers with a starting point, places to visit and begin inquiries. Helpful, too, is what seems to be a general nationwide trend toward the compilation of fuller library catalogues, electronic and print, that more regularly provide, where possible, precise publication information not only about rare books, but about nineteenth- and twentieth-century texts as well.<sup>14</sup>

#### PRIMARY SOURCES AND ARTIFACTS

Once potential sites for field study have been identified, what primary materials, what range of sources, can a researcher reasonably hope to find? Before describing the sources I have found, let me emphasize that the availability and usefulness of these vary widely from place to place. First, the format and value of certain genres of sources may differ.

Genealogies, for example, might consist of quite detailed accounts of lineage history, including biographies of prominent lineage members and precise information about landholdings and migration—or they might simply be rather short and sketchy outlines of generational charts, not very helpful to any effort to trace the histories of publishing households. Second, as suggested above, most of my successful field experiences have been in the countryside, in relatively poor rural areas (such as western Fujian and Yuechi county in eastern Sichuan), where, because of low mobility rates and a slower pace of development, local sources are more likely to have been preserved. In these areas, a researcher is more likely to find genealogies, residents who had participated in the print or book-selling business or who were descendants of publishers and booksellers, and some documentary evidence of publishing. Generally speaking, the closer one gets to a city, the harder it is to find physical remains of publishing businesses or people with some first-hand knowledge to interview. Xuwan in Jiangxi, for example, though only a moderately important market town in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was not a particularly fertile site for fieldwork; the more mobile society of the town and its location on a major waterway offered economic opportunities that lured the families of prosperous publishers away. Now it is very difficult to find genealogical records for the important publishers, or, for that matter, anyone who had been actively involved in the publishing trade to interview. In a major metropolitan center like Chengdu, it is even more difficult to find traces of local publishing concerns (other, of course, than the imprints themselves).

Finally—and rather obviously—it seems unlikely that fieldwork will yield much useful information on publishing before the nineteenth century. While it is possible to get rather rich materials on nineteenth- (and particularly late-nineteenth) and early-twentieth-century publishing, it seems that information for earlier periods must come largely from published sources—genealogies, references in *biji* (collections of notes) and writings by local literati, and locally produced imprints. Contemporary informants can also provide some local color in the form of oral traditions and legends, but these, unless verified in the written sources, are of only limited usefulness.

With these qualifications in mind, I list below the range of

different source materials that can be gathered through fieldwork at commercial publishing sites, suggesting briefly in each case at least something of what we can learn from them about the social and economic organization of commercial publishing—specifically, about the structure of publishing concerns, competition between them, the process of book production, and decisions about marketing.

### *Genealogies of Publishing Households*

At their fullest and most useful, genealogies of publishing households can supply important information about the history of a local publishing industry and the social relations that shaped the industry. For example, in Sibao township, the genealogies of the Zou lineage of Wuge village and the Ma lineage of Mawu village (Wuge and Mawu were the primary publishing sites within Sibao township) include biographies of the leading lineage figures from the Kangxi era (1661–1722) through the Republican era.<sup>15</sup> Since many of these men were publishers, their biographies often provide useful information about the development of individual household print shops.

So, for example, from the biographies of the father and son Ma Quanheng (1651–1710) and Ma Dingbang (1672–1743), we learn about the evolution of one of the more important of the Ma print shops. Orphaned in his teens and responsible for the care of his younger brothers, Ma Quanheng invested capital borrowed from his well-to-do uncle in the carving of woodblocks of popular texts for examination study, Zhu Xi's (1130–1200) *Sishu jizhu* (Collected Annotations on the Four Books), *Sishu jicheng* (Complete Collection of the Four Books),<sup>16</sup> and the *Sishu beizhi* (Preparation Guide to the Four Books). These texts, all explications of the Four Books, were very popular; they sold so well that within four years the brothers were able to divide the family profits between them and establish their own households. Ma Quanheng then generously handed all the blocks over to his youngest brother, thirteen years his junior, who presumably would otherwise have had a hard time starting a business on his own. Ma Quanheng took for himself a little land and twenty *liang* of silver. With the silver he once again invested in woodblocks for educational texts, hiring carvers to cut the *Sishu* (The Four Books), *Shijing zhu* (Book of Odes, Annotated), and a popular

elementary primer, *Youxue zengguang* (Enlarged and Expanded Children's Primer). When these texts were printed, he took them out on the road to sell in Guangdong, entrusting the management of the household to his fifteen-year-old son, Ma Dingbang, who, as the genealogy explains, "though young, was rich in talent." The father left behind two reels or hoops (*gu*) of paper to supply the daily needs of the household:

This paper was worth three *qian* [one *qian* equals one-tenth of a *tael*, a Chinese ounce of silver]. [Ma Dingbang] used it to print texts. When these were all sold, he went into the mountains to buy more paper, which he carried back himself and again used to print up texts. He continued this cycle, and the family never suffered hunger or cold, all on the strength of those two reels of paper. . . . Thus those two reels of paper were made into ten million [*qian*].<sup>17</sup>

A few years later, Ma cut the blocks for the *Sishu zhu daquan* (Great Compendium of Annotations on the Four Books)—yet another examination study aid—a text apparently so popular that, the genealogy notes, "family circumstances were made more comfortable, and providing daily necessities ceased to be a difficulty."<sup>18</sup>

These biographies, however exaggerated their claims for the generosity of Ma Quanheng and the genius of Ma Dingbang may be, reveal a great deal about the organization of print shops in Sibao: that the print shops were household operations, run by fathers and sons or brothers until property was divided; that woodblocks were partible property, divided among heirs, who might use them to establish their own publishing shops; that Sibao book sellers were sojourning merchants (and that Guangdong was one of their markets); that Sibao printers had direct access to paper factories (in the mountains of Changting county); and, perhaps most strikingly, that the great demand for examination texts made them the staples of the Sibao publishing business.

This particular set of genealogies is also extremely useful for information on the book-selling routes and the sites of branch bookstores established by the Sibao publishers. In the generational tables, the editors have indicated which lineage members traveled to other parts of south China to sell books or migrated out to Jiangxi, Guangdong, or Guangxi

to establish branch bookstores. See, for example, the text reproduced in figure 1: it is recorded here that Zou Xidao (1815–1884) moved from Wuge, one of the major publishing villages of Sibao township, to Wenzhou in Zhejiang during the Daoguang era (1821–1851) to establish a bookstore.<sup>19</sup> This kind of information allows us to reconstruct the distribution routes for Sibao imprints and, of course, to pinpoint the location of branch bookshops.

Unfortunately, most genealogies are not as forthcoming or as detailed as this particular set about the business activities of publishing families. The Zou and Ma texts are, in fact, rather unusual in the information they provide. Much more typical are the genealogies of many of the Jianyang publishing families (the Liu, Yu, or Xiong, for example); these texts do not refer to the publishing activities of the lineage members, focusing rather on the examination honors that the more prominent men of the lineage attained. Clearly business practices and relationships, even within a relatively respectable business like the production of books, were not considered worthy of mention.<sup>20</sup> We might attribute the willingness of the editors of the Zou and Ma genealogies to discuss their business concerns quite openly to their lineages' failure to achieve any higher or more glorious distinction, for neither the Zou nor the Ma ever enjoyed consistent examination success. It was perhaps natural, then, for them to fall back on their one reasonably respectable claim to fame, "assisting the empire's literati to become generals and ministers of state" (that is, to pass the civil-service examinations) by disseminating texts that "are of great benefit to culture and education, which, as a result, are permeated with the spirit of the Classics."<sup>21</sup>

But even those genealogies that do not provide information about the publishing business are still invaluable sources for understanding the kin relations within lineages and thus, relationships between publishing families and other families within a lineage. The generational charts clarify kin ties and relationships—they may reveal that publisher Y, now known only as a name in a printer's colophon in a text, is in fact the son of publisher X, and so on.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, genealogies, at least the fuller and richer ones, also provide information about lineage traditions—the worship of founding ancestors, the disposition of land among lineage mem-

bers, the family instructions designed to guide behavior and career choice—that help scholars analyze the place of households within each lineage and the role of the lineage at large in local society, both important factors in assessing the significance of publishing firms to local economies and local and regional book markets. Finally, prefaces by local officials or local scholars—and other writings within genealogies by men outside the lineage—often provide useful information about the social and intellectual connections between lineage members and local and regional officials and elites.<sup>23</sup>

*Property-Division Documents (fenguan or fenjia)*

Property-division documents were drawn up to distribute property when an extended family decided to divide, either on the death of the patriarch or after his sons and heirs had reached adulthood. As David Wakefield explains in his study of the traditions of family division, usually each heir would receive an equal portion of the total value of the property, though each type of property might not be equally divided.<sup>24</sup> In the case of publishing families, since the woodblocks used to print books and the print shops where they were printed were both important parts of a household's property, these would be divided among the heirs along with houses, furniture, and land. Figure 2 provides an example of a page from a Sibao property-division document, dated 1839, listing the print shop and the sets of blocks, by title, that were to go to one of the sons of Ma Cuizhong (1770–1848), the manager of the Zaizitang.

Since the woodblocks are identified by title, these documents provide some evidence of what titles were still considered valuable—and possibly what texts were being produced—at certain times in a household print shop's history. If the principle of equal distribution among heirs was followed, it might also be possible to calculate, in very crude terms, the value of certain titles, by comparing the portions given to each heir. And a reading of the whole document, and all the property listings, can help us put printing into the context of the entire household economy for each print shop, suggesting what portion of that economy—in an area where most households enjoyed mixed incomes, earning support from agriculture as well as a range of handicraft industries and trades—was devoted to and dependent on book production.

希驥

女一

貴姬適長

校李榮昌

光年間往浙

卒光緒十一

江温州府開

年乙酉十一

書店卒光緒

月初二享年

十年甲申十

五十一終于

月初六日辰

浙江金華府

時享壽六十

蘭溪縣葬蘭

九葬温州上

溪縣東門外

河鄉箭下老

配温州府金

翁山坐甲向

氏生未詳卒

庚兼卯酉分

同治甲戌十

金與蕭氏夫

月十六日

婦合葬壽文

繼配嚴氏生

附後

未詳卒光緒

原配羅岳秀

乙酉年七月

生嘉慶廿一

十八日戌時

鄒氏家譜

卷之三

1. Genealogy entry indicating the migration of a Zou family member to Wenzhou to establish a bookstore; see the second section from the top (beginning on page 19) for the entry for Zou Xidao. That entry reads: "During the Daoguang era [1821-1851], he went to Wenzhou prefecture in Zhejiang to open a bookstore."

乾隆四十六年辛丑六月  
 初十日戌時  
 卒未詳葬清  
 流四堡里竹  
 青裡水口大  
 溪邊壽文附  
 後  
 配李月鳳生  
 乾隆四十八  
 年癸卯十月  
 初十日酉時  
 卒未詳葬下  
 馬鞍山  
 生子三

滿文適黃  
 視坑馬姓

希道 字  
 克任

號毅夫  
 際唐公沈子  
 生道光廿八  
 年戊申由俊  
 秀授京  
 剛授國學生  
 生嘉慶廿年

庚寅八月十

九日子時

光緒年間卒

於浙江温州

葬上河鄉與

希道公相近

宜 字  
 為韶

號來儀  
 希道公長子  
 生光緒四年  
 戊寅由俊秀  
 授京  
 剛授國學生  
 生道光十五年

查克仁公房

廿一世至廿

三世遷往浙

江蘇州是任

不知詳情民

國三十六年

丁亥第五期

譜修在廿四

世下未列

希天

乙亥二月初

年七未五月

譜內

Fanyang Zoushi zupu (Genealogy of the Fanyang Branch of the Zou Lineage)  
 (Dunbentang, 1947), juan 22, pp. 50b-51a. Photocopy from a text  
 held privately by a member of the Zou lineage in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian.

一南山上印房壹所 廳子下廊並近周通全出入

廳子右畔正棟壹間 書屋半間

一羅川屋內壹間半又餘坪左畔上堂又間幫出錢拿文

書板

老四書合講

四書監本

書經體註

大清新律部全

三十家文

鄉党文集

墨卷標準

古文雅正

新幼學

地理訣要

辨字彙

詩鑑十錦

老酬世錦囊

韻府珠璣

一夕話

一世新屋內左畔橫屋巷路下第叁壹間抽此

務周名下以補先年造屋銀息批照

源慎筆

2. A page from a property-division document, dated 1839, listing the titles of the woodblocks that were to be given to one of Ma Cuizhong's six sons. Note that three of the fifteen titles are identified as either "new" (xin) or "old" (lao) editions of a text, indicating that Ma Cuizhong's print shop, the Zaizitang, might sell different editions of the same title. Note also that this son was to be given a printing shop (yinfang yisuo) as well as blocks (see the first line at the right of the page). Photocopy from the original manuscript, held privately by a member of the Ma lineage in Mawu, Sibao, Fujian.

But these texts are perhaps most useful for the information they yield about inheritance practices, the formation of new print shops, and the size of print-shop stock. The practice of equal division of property had the effect, of course, of encouraging the development of new print shops: the oldest son might continue the shop established by his father, retaining the original name, but his brothers could take their woodblock heritage and use it to establish new shops.<sup>25</sup> Thus the 1839 division of 107 titles originally belonging to the Zaizitang resulted in the formation of at least three new print shops: while the eldest son, with 19 titles, continued to manage the Zaizitang, the next three sons, receiving 16, 18, and 22 titles respectively, used their woodblock capital to establish new shops, the Nianzitang, Wenzitang, and Wenlintang. The two youngest sons, Ma Yuming and Ma Yuting, also received some blocks (15 and 17 titles respectively) and became booksellers, but the names of their shops are not known.<sup>26</sup> The Zaizitang, with its store of 107 titles, was obviously a major concern. Yet there are documents that define the division of far fewer titles: for example, in the 1897 division of the 14 titles belonging to the Wanjuanlou of Zou Bangyu (1843–1881) among three sons, the largest share is a mere 6 titles. Here apparently even just a few titles might be enough to supply a family with the capital for developing a print shop.

In short, property-division documents, supplemented by information from genealogies, can provide valuable information not only about titles of locally produced imprints, but also about the development of different print shops and the relationships between print shops established by members of the same extended family.

### ACCOUNT BOOKS

There is little point in devoting too much space to publishing account books (*zhangben*), for the simple reason that few seem to have survived. In fieldwork in eight sites, I have found only one account book—and it has survived only in part and not in very good shape. This book, dating from the 1880s, records twenty-five different lots of texts printed by the Sibao Wenhailou (in Wuge village) and sold wholesale to different branch shops. Each entry includes an abbreviated title, a note of the number of sets, and a per-title wholesale price. At the end of the

document, there is a brief notation of the different distribution routes for each lot and the total amounts paid for each by the different Sibao branch shops. (See figure 3; note that the numerical notations are made in a “secret” accounting script, presumably to disguise the value of the texts should a non-expert happen to see the account book.)

The value of this source is obvious, though, just as obviously, its value is limited by its rarity. Clearly, as a single example, it cannot be used to reconstruct the financial transactions of the Wenhailou and other Sibao publishing houses in any detail. And the fact that we cannot link specific surviving editions of texts to those listed in the account book by abbreviated title and price alone restricts the conclusions we can draw about book prices, since we do not know anything about the size, length, or other physical qualities of the texts: we don’t know what *kind* of edition of the *Yingxiong pu* (Catalogue of Heroes), a popular combined edition of the *Sanguo tongsu yanyi* (Romance of the Three Kingdoms) and *Shuihu zhuan* (Water Margin), cost 3.2 *qian*. Nonetheless, this source does tell us something about prices—and any source that reveals anything at all about book prices in pre-twentieth-century China is extremely valuable. For it does give wholesale prices for a variety of texts, from 2.5 *fen* (one *fen* is one-tenth of a *qian*) for *Mingshen feng* (this is an abbreviated title of a fortune-telling manual), to 8 *qian* for a multivolume dictionary, the *Xinban Kangxi zidian* (New Edition of the Kangxi Dictionary), suggesting something of the range in value of books printed and sold by Sibao publishers. Supplemented by other local information about prices (taken, for example, from surviving contemporary account books from ancestral halls, which seem to have survived in Sibao in several volumes), it is possible to put these wholesale prices in a local economic context—that is, to develop an understanding not only of the wholesale price of a text, but of its relative value in the local economy.

The listing of numbers of copies of titles per lot provides some evidence about how titles were stocked and possibly about the relative popularity of texts. We learn, for example, that the *Gongxue zhu* (an abbreviated title for what appears to have been an annotated guide to examination study), at three hundred copies, was apparently a text in fairly high demand, as were the almanac *Baizhongjing* (Classic of Miscellaneous Things) and the common children’s primer *Dazi zengguang*



3. A page from the account book of the Wenhailou, Wuge, dating from the 1880s. The record, handwritten on a printed form, includes two rows of entries. At the top is the wholesale price per copy, an abbreviated title of the text, and the number of copies. Numbers are written in a special script. Photocopy of a photograph from the original, held privately by a member of the Zou lineage in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian.

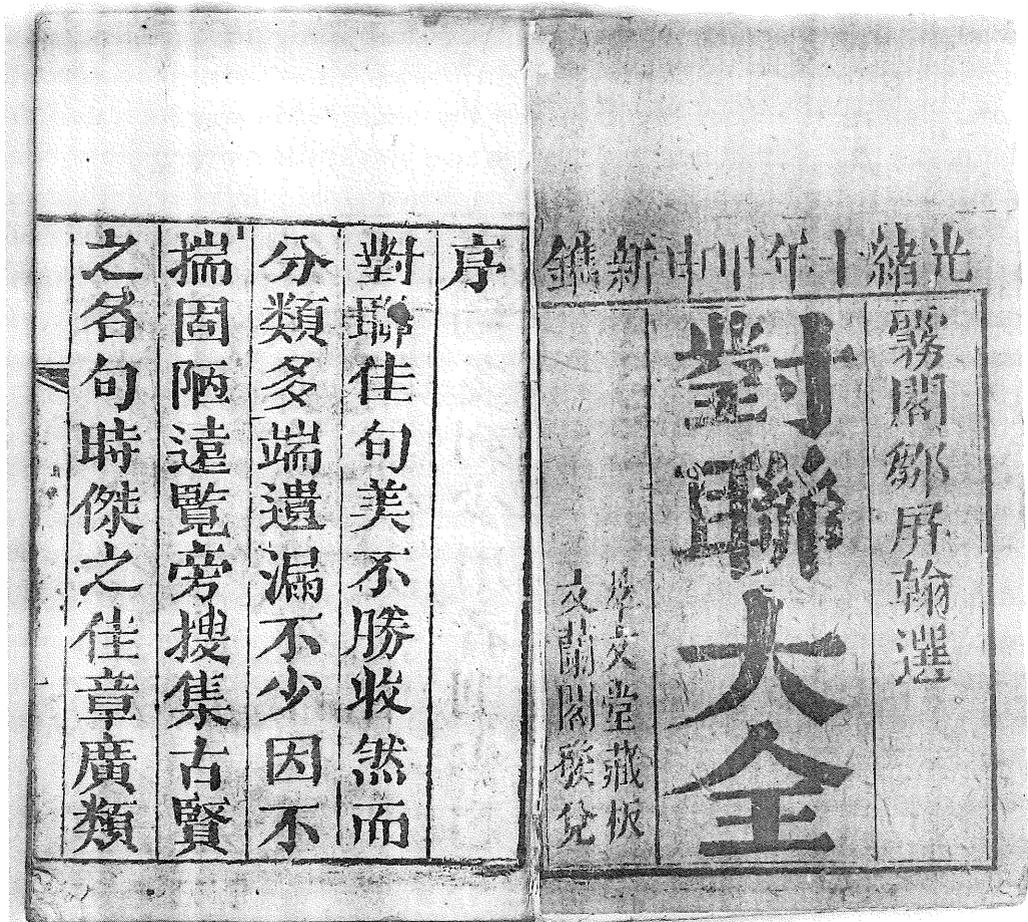
*xianwen* (Supplemented and Enlarged Essays of the Worthies, Large Character Version), at one hundred copies each;<sup>27</sup> whereas *Xinban shixue* (New Edition of Poetics), at two copies, or the eighteenth-century geomancy manual, Zhao Tingdong's *Dili wujue* (Five Secrets of Geomancy), at only one copy, were perhaps less sure sellers. (Without other supporting information, however, it is difficult to be too sure about such conclusions, for the differences in numbers of copies shipped might simply indicate fluctuations in stock, not market demand.)

The organization of the account book—the division of titles into lots and the notations at the end about the different channels of distribution of the texts—gives us information, too, about the business methods of this particular print shop. The existence of this single account of different lots of texts destined for different sale routes and branch shops does suggest that the operation was centralized in Sibao, overseen by a manager who kept fairly close tabs on distribution and, thus, on sales and profits. This supposition is supported by information from both the Zou lineage genealogy and local traditions: Zou Jianchi (1848–1898), the manager of the Wenhailou in the late-nineteenth century (and perhaps the keeper of this account book), was noted for his strict oversight of the Wenhailou branch shops.<sup>28</sup> It is said that he regularly left Sibao on much-dreaded visits to these various shops, during which he would insist on a close and suspicious examination of their books, invariably haranguing his branch managers about the necessity of passing a just portion of their profits back to the head shop in Sibao.

#### IMPRINTS

Of course one of the best sources for the study of publishing is the imprints themselves—in many cases, as I have said, they provide us with the only information we have about a publishing concern. Chia has made the value of imprint analysis clear in her paper, and I do not want to repeat her points here, but I would like to supplement her observations by discussing some other ways in which the study of imprints can provide information about publishing practices—about production processes and production quality, projected markets, and, to some extent, reading. Then I want to point out some of the advantages of studying imprints *in situ*, in the field.

First, we can learn something about business relationships from imprints. The cover page from the Sibao imprint *Duilian daquan* (Great Compendium of Parallel Couplets, 4 *juan*; see figure 4), compiled by a Wuge publisher, Zou Binghan (fl. early-nineteenth century), and cut in 1884, reveals that print shops at times sold their texts through other local print shops. The blocks for the text were owned by the Cuiwentang of Wuge (Cuiwentang *cang ban*), and presumably the text was printed by



4. The cover page (on the right in this figure) states that this text, the *Duilian daquan* (center column; Great Compendium of Parallel Couplets), was compiled by the Wuge publisher Zou Binghan (first column on the right) and published (that is, the blocks for the text were cut) in 1884 (right to left, reading the horizontal text at the top) by the Cuiwentang of Wuge (right side of left column; Cuiwentang *cang ban* or “Cuiwentang holds the blocks”). It was, however, sold by another Wuge publishing house, the Wenlange (left side of left column; Wenlange *fadui* or, literally, “Wenlange sells”). ([Wuge]: Cuiwentang, 1884; block 19 x 12.2 cm.). Photocopy of a text held privately by a member of the Zou lineage in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian; there is also a partial copy of this text in the Fujian Provincial Library, Fuzhou.

this print shop as well. Yet it was distributed—that is, sold—by the Wenlange, also of Wuge (Wenlange *fadui*). This evidence is confirmed by oral histories of Sibao publishing; print shops might make all sorts of arrangements—here to distribute texts for, but also to rent blocks from, other shops—as long as the nature of the relationship was indicated on the cover page. They might also purchase blocks from other shops but, in that case, could replace the name of the original publisher with their own. Some of the more sloppily produced Sibao texts provide evidence for this arrangement as well: the cover page lists one publisher, presumably the new owner of the blocks, but the internal title pages for each *juan* list the original print-shop name, as the new owner neglected to have the old name replaced or obliterated on all the blocks.

Second, the study of imprints reveals a great deal about book-production processes and quality: the kind and quality of paper used; the quality of the carving; the nature and quality of the calligraphy (whether it is the ubiquitous craftsman's style, *jiangti*, or a more artistic or idiosyncratic calligraphic style); the state of the blocks when that particular copy was printed; the size of the text page; the frequency, quality, and placement of illustrations, and so on. The format of the page—the arrangement of the “fishtail” (*yuwei*) folding guides, the presence of either *heikou* (a black fore-edge, literally, “black mouth”) or *baikou* (a white fore-edge, literally “white mouth”),<sup>29</sup> the height of the upper margin (*tiantou*), and so forth—sometimes identifies a text with a certain regional or specific print-shop carving or printing style.

By using these techniques, we can investigate also the range in production quality that may exist within a single local industry. Figures 5A–D are pages from four texts, all printed by Sibao publishers, but each representing quite different production qualities. The first is from a rather fine edition of a calligraphy and picture collection by Sibao's most distinguished editor and publisher, Zou Shengmai (1692–1762), *Shuhua tongzhen* (Script and Pictures—Precious Together; see figure 5A), a text that can be dated only very roughly to the late-nineteenth century.<sup>30</sup> The second, published in 1884, is from a well-cut annotated collection of essays selected to provide students with models of classical prose, the *Zengding guwen jingyan xiangzhu pangxun hebian* (The Best of Classical Prose, Edited with Both Detailed Annotations and Sideline Instructions,

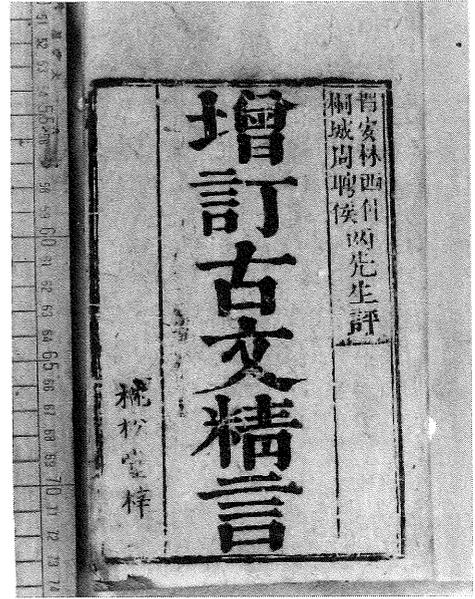
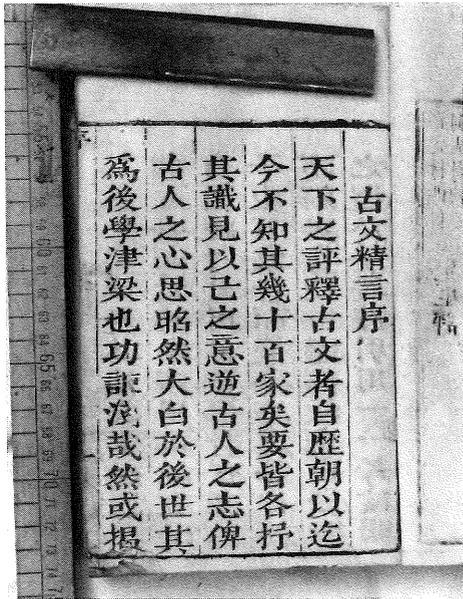
Expanded and Verified; figure 5B) in 16 *juan*.<sup>31</sup> The third, from a difficult-to-read (and error-ridden) edition of the Four Books designed for examination study, the *Sishu buzhu beizhi tiqiao huican* (Collection of Enhanced Annotations, Preparation Hints, and Key Themes for the Four Books; see figure 5C),<sup>32</sup> presents a good example of the flattened-character carving style (*bianti zi*), particularly popular in the late Qing as a means of cramming as many characters as possible on a page. The last is from a crudely illustrated, annotated version of the widely popular children's primer *Sanzijing* (Three-Character Classic; figure 5D). The difference in quality in these texts, produced at roughly the same time, in the late-nineteenth or early-twentieth century, suggests that the Sibao firms were targeting a somewhat varied market, one that might include consumers interested in cheap—and not very well produced—editions, as well as those with the interest and funds to purchase relatively well-cut and produced editions, including even what we might call “art” editions.

Comparisons of quality across publishing businesses—that is, comparison of the production quality of editions of the same title published by different concerns—can provide a good sense of the range in quality published at any one time; and may help us to situate a particular firm within a hierarchy of publishers by production quality. Thus a comparison of pages from Sibao and Xuwan editions of *Yixue sanzijing* (Three-Character Classic of Medicine, 4 *juan*; see figures 6A–B) and *Shennong bencao jingdu* (The Classic Reader of Shennong's Pharmacopoeia; see figures 7A–B),<sup>33</sup> both popular medical works by the physician-official and prolific popularizer of medical knowledge, Chen Nianzu (*zi* Xiuyuan, 1753–1823), makes quite clear the finer quality of the Xuwan texts and allows us, tentatively at least, to guess that Sibao occupied a lower place on the publishing hierarchy than did Xuwan—and perhaps that Sibao was targeting a lower end of the market than was the Jiangxi market town.

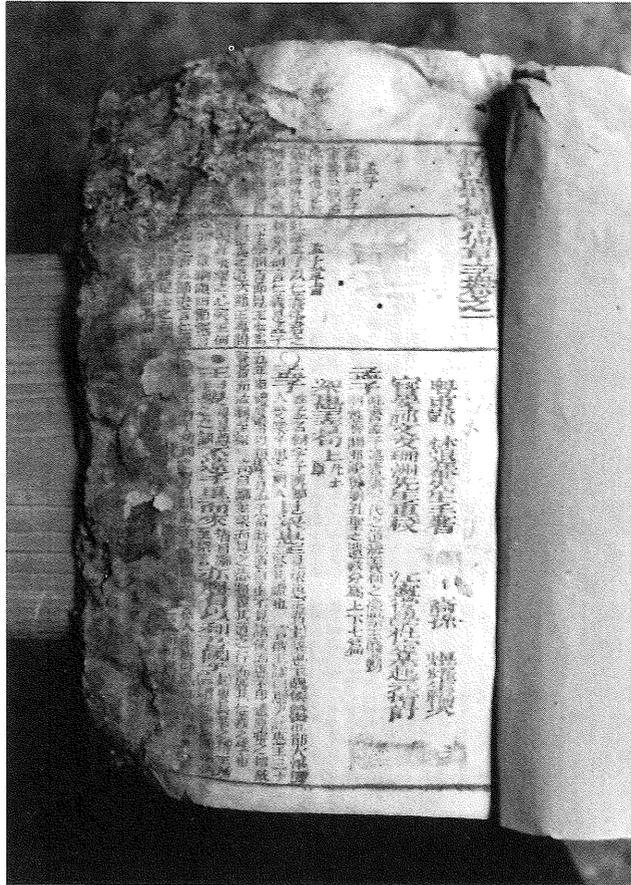
Reading the prefaces of imprints, particularly if these are prefaces added by the publisher, also often helps us define, if not the real market for a text, at least the author's and publisher's assumptions about the nature of its appeal and its intended market. Prefaces, particularly for practical how-to texts, often functioned as advertisements, either in the



5A. A page from Zou Shengmai's *Shuhua tongzhen* (Script and Pictures—Precious Together; block approx. 38 x 32.4 cm.). This sample, though poorly reproduced from a fragment of the original, demonstrates that the Sibao publishers could produce large and finely cut texts when the occasion demanded. This appears to be a vanity publication, dated tentatively to the late-nineteenth century, of the fine calligraphy of Sibao's leading editor-publisher, Zou Shengmai, manager of the Ji'ao shanfang in Wuge. Photocopy of a text held by a private collector in Longyan, Fujian.



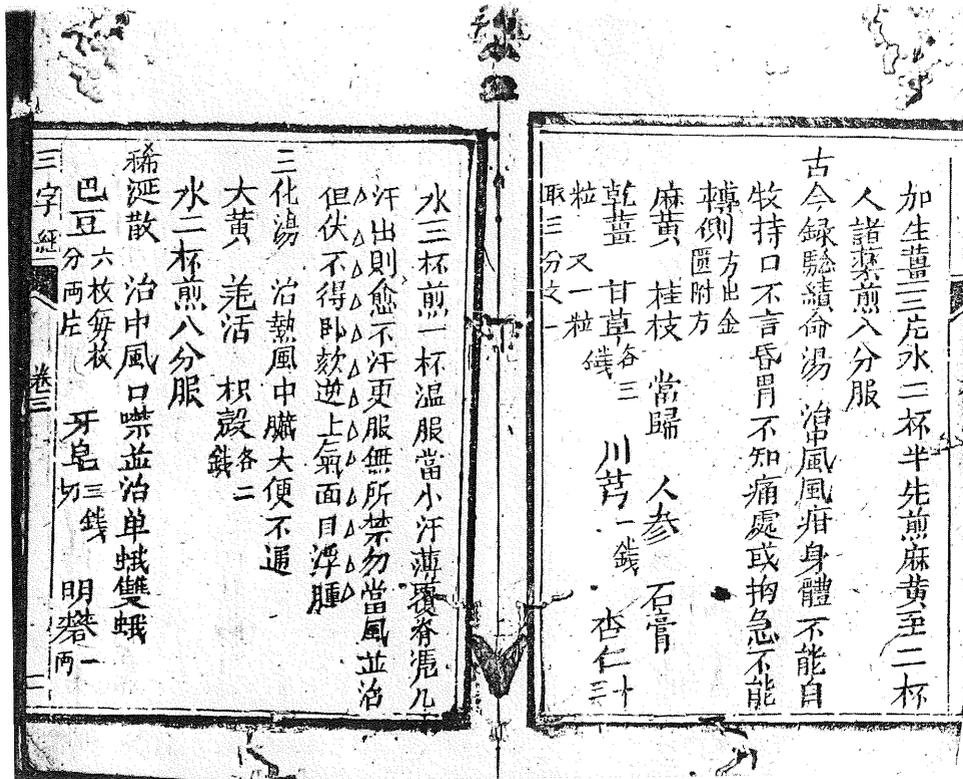
5B. The cover page (right) and first page (left) of the preface from the *Zengding guwen jingyan xiangzhu pangxun hebian* (The Best of Classical Prose, Edited with Both Detailed Annotations and Sideline Instructions, Expanded and Verified, in sixteen *juan*; block approx. 28 x 17.2 cm.), compiled, with annotations by Lin Yunming (*zi* Xizhong), with later comments added by Zhou Dazhang (*zi* Pinhou). This text, edited by the Sibao editor-publisher Ma Kuanyu and published in Mawu at the Zhensongtang in 1884, is an example of a relatively high-quality Sibao production. Photograph of a copy held privately by a member of the Ma lineage in Mawu, Sibao, Fujian.



5c. Opening page of *Meng Zi* (Mencius), from a late-nineteenth-century Mawu edition of *Sishu buzhu beizhi tiqiao huican* (Collection of Enhanced Annotations, Preparation Hints, and Key Themes for the Four Books; *juan* 1, 1a; block 31 x 22.6 cm.). This text, based on an examination-study guide first compiled by Deng Lin in the early Ming and later edited by Zhang Chengyu, is cramped (in the *bianti zi*, or “flattened character,” style) and difficult to read. It includes, in addition to the standard Cheng-Zhu reading of the classic (with the main text, in the lowest register), full explications of the text (in the top two registers). The very poor condition of this text suggests one of the difficulties of studying imprints on site: if not stored properly, they quickly deteriorate.



5D. The first text page of the pamphletlike Sibao edition of the *Zengzhu sanzijing* (Three-Character Classic with Expanded Annotations; block 20.4 x 14.5 cm.). Although the characters here are clearly carved, the illustration is quite crudely cut. Photograph of a copy held privately by a member of the Zou lineage in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian.



加生薑三片水二杯半先煎麻黃至二杯  
人諸藥煎入分服

古今錄驗續命湯治風風疔身體不能自

收持口不言昏胃不知痛處或拘急不能

轉側

方世金  
匪附方

麻黃 桂枝 當歸 人參 石膏

乾薑 甘草

各三錢

川芎 一錢

杏仁 三十

粒又一粒  
取三分支

水三杯煎一杯溫服當小汗薄覆脊憑几

汗出則愈不汗更服無所禁勿當風並治

但伏不得臥欬逆上氣面目浮腫

三化湯 治熱風中臟大便不通

大黃 羌活 枳殼

各二錢

水二杯煎八分服

稀涎散 治中風口噤並治單蛾雙蛾

巴豆 六枚每枚

分兩片

牙皂 三錢

明礬 一兩

三字經

卷三

6A. From a partial Sibao edition of Chen Nianzu (zi Xiuyuan), *Yixue sanzijing* (Three-Character Classic of Medicine; block 18 x 11.6 cm.), *juan* 3, pp. 1b–2a. Compare the crude carving and small characters of this text to the relatively clear carving and larger characters of the Xuwan edition following (figure 6B). Photograph of a copy held privately by a member of the Zou lineage of Wuge, Sibao, Fujian.

閩陳脩園著

# 醫西學三字經

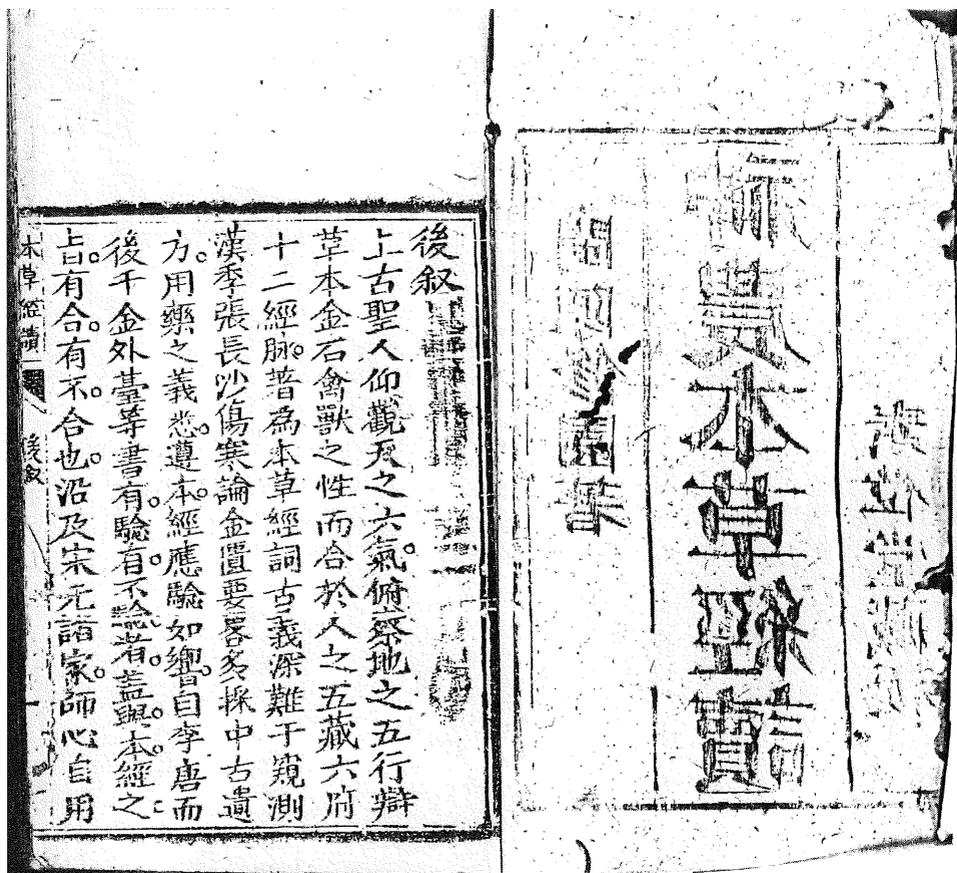
兩儀堂藏板

醫學三字經小引

江西通俗圖書館

童子入學塾師先授以三字經欲其便誦也識途也學醫之始未定先授何書如大海茫茫錯認半字羅經便入牛鬼蛇神之域余所以有三字經之刻也前曾托名葉天士取時俗所推崇者以投時好然書中之奧旨悉本聖經經明而專家之技可廢謝退谷於注疏書室得縉本惠書千餘言屬歸本各幸有同志今付梓而從其說而仍名藥而不以為僻者採集經文還之先聖海內諸君子可因此一字而共知所趨且可因此一字而不病余之作嘉慶九年

6B. Cover page and first page of the "Short Forward" (Xiaoyin) by Chen Nianzu, in his *Yixue sanzijing* (Xuwun: Liangyitang, n.d.; block 20.2 x 16.1 cm). Photocopy from the edition in the Jiangxi Provincial Library.



7A. Obverse of cover page and first page of the “Later Preface” (Houxu), in Chen Nianzu, *Shennong bencao jingdu* (The Classic Reader of Shennong’s Pharmacopoeia; block 17.8 x 11.5 cm.) (Wuge: Suweitang, n.d.). Again, compare the quality of this relatively small text with that of the following example from Xuwan, figure 7B. Photocopy of a partial edition held privately by a member of the Zou lineage in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian.

閩陳脩園著

# 本草經讀

兩儀堂藏板

神農本草經讀序

江西通俗圖書館

陳修園老友精於岐黃之術自負長沙後身世醫壇而  
 笑之及遇危症疆斷梳橫萬手齊束修園往脫冠几上探  
 手舉脈目霍霍上聳良爪乾笑曰侯本不奇治之者擾之  
 耳主人曰某名醫曰悞矣曰法本朱張王李曰更悞矣天  
 下豈有朱張王李而能愈疾者乎口吃吃然罵手吃吃然  
 書方其則又自批自贊自解自起調刀圭火齊促服之服  
 之如其言嘗以李時珍綱目為謬陋著有神農本草經註  
 六卷其言簡其旨該其義奇而不軌於正其鉤深索隱也

本草經讀

7B. Cover page and first page of preface (by Jiang Qingling) in Chen Nianzu, *Shennong bencao jingdu* (Xuwan: Liangyitang, n.d.; block 21 x 16.9 cm.). Photocopy of the edition in the Jiangxi Provincial Library.

form of testimonials (real or imaginary) from satisfied readers or as direct appeals to prospective readers about the usefulness of a text. For example, the *Chuxue zibian* (Distinguishing Characters for the Beginning Learner; preface dated 1876), a two-*juan* text that both aids students to distinguish the meanings and pronunciations of similar characters and provides rules for proper mercantile conduct, has a preface that clearly announces its usefulness to merchants. The preface writer, identified only as Baopu shanren (Mountain man who embraces simplicity), explains that his father ordered him to abandon his studies at the age of eighteen to “travel to distant places as a merchant.” Now he bitterly regrets the resulting deficiencies in his education: “Whenever I have to write anything, I cannot distinguish clearly the forms of the different characters. I scratch my head, bitterly wasting much time and energy trying to think of the right character.” Returning home to visit his family, he is shocked to see that his son, who has been studying for five years, has the same problem; he cannot distinguish between *bu* (record book) and *bo* (thin) or between *wei* (minute, tiny) and *zheng* (proof, to summon). The son, shamed by his father’s anger and disappointment, procures a copy of *Chuxue zibian* and, after a mere month of study, is able to pass an extensive test, involving several tens of similar characters, of his ability to read accurately. “That only one month of hard work would be enough to supplement five years of study—this is indeed extraordinary!” marvels the proud father, and he then goes on to praise the clarity and convenience of the textbook.<sup>34</sup>

This text has been presented, through this rather pointed preface, as particularly appropriate for the use of merchants (and merchants rather like the Sibao booksellers, sojourners with only limited education). The rhetorical reader, the reader addressed in the preface (and, indeed, throughout that portion of the text that provides rules for mercantile conduct), is a merchant or the son of a merchant who is likely to follow his father’s profession. This does not, I should emphasize, tell us anything about the *real* readers of the text—on that point we have almost no evidence. But it does give us some idea of the market imagined by the Sibao publishers of this text.

I would like to point out, however, that the rhetorical reader identified and addressed in the preface or the body of a text is not

necessarily always the same as the consumer targeted by the publisher—that is, the person who is seen, more narrowly and practically, as the most likely buyer of a text. Here I am thinking of texts that advertise themselves as for “all the four categories of people” (*simin*) or for “both poor and rich families,” like the Sibao prescription manual *Yanfang xinbian* (New Edition of Efficacious Prescriptions in 8 *juan*), which claims in its preface that “every household should have a copy of this text.” Here the rhetorical reader is everyone, “all the four categories of people,”<sup>35</sup> but I think it is fairly clear that the targeted buyer, the consumer practically imagined by the publisher, is someone below the status of the gentry, someone who might be attracted to a text that would associate him with the reading habits of the elite. Presumably few members of the elite would find the thought of consulting a text prescribing medicine for “everyone,” “all the four categories of people,” very attractive. Here, then, this text, despite its rhetorical appeal to all people, is designed for marketing to lower-ranking socioeconomic groups.

Certainly the kind of imprint analysis I have described here need not necessarily be done in the field; it can be performed just as easily, perhaps more easily, in libraries. I have discussed this kind of research here because there are times when it is necessary to collect imprints in the field, precisely because they are not easily available anywhere else. This is particularly likely to be a problem when studying rural, lower-end publishers of the post-Qianlong era: their texts are not rare books, usually not beautifully enough produced to merit the attention of collectors, and they often lack publication information. These difficulties impose a painful limitation on this kind of research; a scholar relying simply on texts that have survived at a publishing site may never be able to accumulate the broad range of texts or assemble the large database of titles that would allow for a comprehensive overview of output at that site.

But there are nonetheless some advantages to collecting imprint information in the field. First, there are certain types of texts, particularly very popular works or products of local cultures and linguistic practices, that are not likely to be preserved in great numbers—or even preserved at all—in libraries. Song books (*changben*), for example, very valuable reflectors of local culture, are only sporadically collected in libraries.<sup>36</sup>

*Zhao Yulin*, a Sibao song book, exists to my knowledge only in a single, late-nineteenth-century woodblock version in Wuge—and in contemporary mimeographed editions that are passed around the village, still in use. Educational song books published in Shaoyang, Hunan, in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries appear to have survived (with one known exception) largely in private hands or in the stock of street-side book peddlers. Or *Renjia riyong* (Everybody, Everyday), a glossary for beginning readers written in the Sibao subdialect of Hakka and still being published as late as 1910 (by the Linlantang of Mawu), apparently survives today only in private hands.

Second, it is useful to consider *all* texts—whether woodblock, movable type, lithographic (fairly common by the early-twentieth century), or manuscript—that appear at a specific site, regardless of their source in official or institutional, literati, or commercial publishing and regardless of their site of origin, for such a study provides something of an overview of the local book and publishing culture as a whole. It also raises questions about the transmission, use, and significance of print technology and about the availability of books and print culture: What is the significance of the coexistence of different book-producing technologies in early-twentieth-century texts found at a single site? How do we explain the persistence of hand copying as a means of publication when obviously more efficient technologies of reproduction were available? To what extent were different types of texts associated with different technologies? How deeply did new print technologies and “modern” texts penetrate Chinese society in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries?

The local genealogies cited earlier can provide a good example of the value of such a comprehensive survey of all extant texts at a given locality, if we consider them not as sources of information about local lineages, but rather as samples of locally produced imprints. The Ma and Zou genealogies were printed, *not* by Sibao publishers, but by specialists devoted exclusively to the production of genealogies—in the case of the Ma genealogy, a printer the name of whose printing house (*tang*) was, appropriately for a publisher of genealogies, Xiaositang, literally House of Filial Remembrance. Typically using movable wooden type rather than woodblocks (the use of this movable-type technology can often be

deduced from the slight unevenness in the alignment of the characters within a column or in the unevenness of the ink density), these specialists were itinerant printers, men who traveled, within a broad circuit, wherever genealogies needed to be printed, living at their work sites until they had completed their job.<sup>37</sup> The availability of this other specialized form of publishing suggests that, even in an isolated rural area like Sibao, access to print technology was relatively easy and that books themselves might have been, at least by the late-nineteenth century, widely available. The presence (or absence) of other local printing operations—and here we might consider those initiated by individual literati, county governments, private academies (*shuyuan*), temples, and monasteries, as well as these specialized genealogy printers—could reveal much more about the depth, range, and richness of local book culture. And finally, research into the interaction between different types of publishing operations and their networks at the local level could also help us to modify or overturn the overly rigid labels—“official” (*guanke*); “private,” or “literati” (*sike* or *jiake*) family; and “commercial” (*fangke*)—that have been used to categorize Chinese publishing.<sup>38</sup>

There are other benefits to be gained from a comprehensive survey of all extant local books. Although, of course, we cannot develop any comprehensive sense of what was available at any given time from a body of texts whose survival was somewhat arbitrary and fortuitous, such research may provide some limited—and much-needed—information about what texts were in use and in demand. We might also learn about the extent and complexity of distribution networks. Contemporary Sibao book collections of woodblock texts include, for example, works published by print shops in Guangdong and Guangxi, a fact that argues for some degree of textual exchange with publishers in those areas.

To some extent it is possible to get a sense, too, of reading interests and practices from the study of local imprints. Many surviving texts were rather actively read, their readers adding comments along the side of characters deemed of particular interest, marginal annotations, punctuation, marks of emphasis, and other signs of engaged interpretation that can, with careful study, give us hints about how texts were received. These are texts that have survived not simply as artifacts of

Sibao's (or some other site's) publishing past, but as texts that were (and even today still are) read and consulted. Most of these texts are practical works—medical manuals and geomancy handbooks—that can be seen to have some contemporary value, particularly as they aid in the recovery of almost lost but still-honored technologies and rituals.<sup>39</sup> Song books, too, remain fairly popular; in Chaozhou, for example, it is apparently still possible to find older women who use old song books as promptbooks in private performances.

Thus examination of all imprints and texts surviving at a site can provide useful information about the general character of the local book culture and, to some extent, local literacy. This information can then be used to make comparisons between different localities—to compare, for example, the titles published and read in Sibao, to those in Xuwan, Yuechi, Shaoyang, Chaozhou, and so on, to develop a larger picture of the book market and reading abilities and preferences in the late-imperial period.

I should add here that though the focus of this essay has been book culture, somewhat the same kind of analysis can be usefully applied to other products of print culture. *Nianhua*, for example, though usually largely textless, are also carriers of cultural images and messages, messages that are shaped by the formal characteristics and production qualities of the prints. Comparison of the different images and stories depicted on New Year's prints from different and geographically distant printing sites—the towns of Mianzhu in Sichuan, Zhangzhou in Fujian, and Weifang in Shandong, and the printing houses Taohuawu in Suzhou and Yangliuqing in Tianjin, to name just a few possibilities—should, as with the comparison of texts, provide us with a clearer sense of how widely certain cultural and religious references were shared and how local markets defined and perhaps restricted the range of images produced.

#### WOODBLOCKS

The value of woodblocks is quite obvious—they provide more information about production and production quality by making it possible to determine the kinds of wood used to make the blocks and to examine the quality of the carving somewhat more precisely than is possible from



8. A woodblock from Wuge, Sibao, Fujian. One face of a single block has been economically used to carve the cover pages of two different primers: in 1865, *Sìyán zazi* (Four-Character Glossary), and, in 1868, rotating the block 180 degrees, *Zengzhu sanzijing* (Three-Character Classic, Expanded with Annotations). The publisher is the Linwentang. The former text does not survive; though the edition of *Sanzijing* does, it is missing the cover page carved here. Photograph by the author of a block in the Sibao Wenhua Zhongxin (Sibao Cultural Center).

examination of a printed page. On occasion, when woodblocks survive without matching imprints, they supply information about titles published and about variation in different versions of the same title (see figure 8).

The storage of woodblocks is also an interesting point to investigate. Of course adequate means of storing blocks, so that they would not mildew, rot, or suffer insect damage, was essential to the survival of a print shop; successful publishing relied to some extent on the ability to print up new “runs” of popular texts over a long period of time, perhaps decades. Two modern showcase woodblock-publishing houses, the Jinling kejingchu in Nanjing and the Guangling guji keyinshe in Yangzhou, still store their blocks in the manner traditionally believed the safest and most efficient: on shelves, vertically in rows, with air between the blocks to prevent the spread of mildew, insects, and moisture. But in sites where

xylographic publishing has died out completely, blocks are no longer stored so carefully. In Sibao, those few blocks that survive are piled randomly in any available storage space, with no effort to protect them from wet or insects (see figure 9). It is still possible, however, to see there the large storehouses (*zangku*) within the old publishing households that, during Sibao's prime as a publishing center, had been used to store a print shop's blocks.



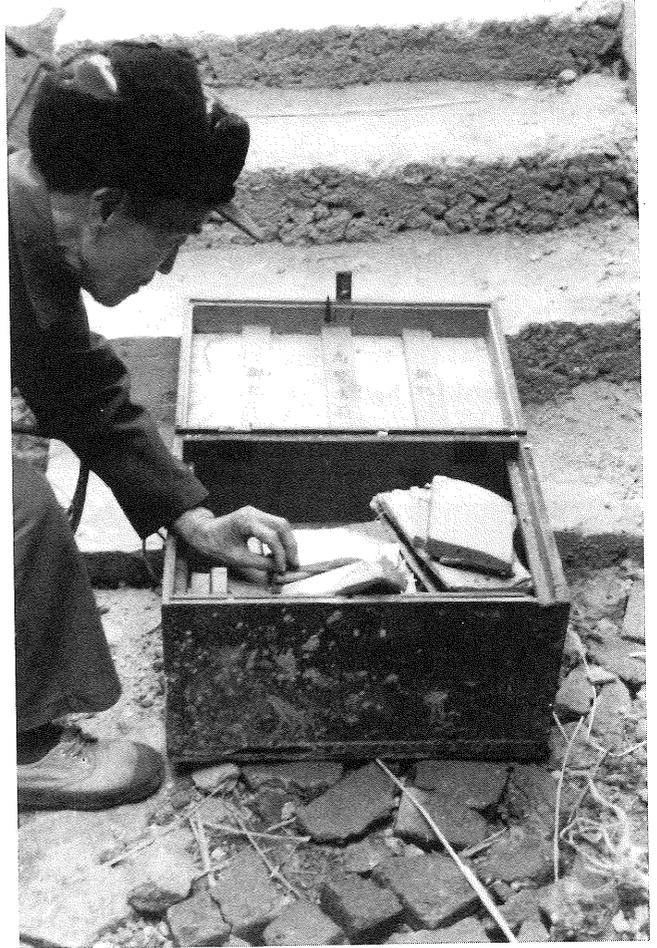
9. Woodblocks piled in a loft in Wuge, Sibao, Fujian. Photograph by the author.

## PRINT SHOPS AND PUBLISHING ARTIFACTS

Certain sites might also preserve some of the print shops or print shop-bookstores that were the production centers of old publishing businesses. In Sibao, one can still see the lines of facing stalls, organized around a small courtyard, where the actual printing of texts was done; a large stone tub in the middle of the courtyard was filled with ink, so that when the printers in the various rooms ran out of ink, they could simply step outside to get more. Here printing operations were literally embedded in the household; the printing courtyard, as it were, formed one of many different compartments of an extended family's large multiple-courtyard house.

In contrast, in a site like Xuwan, print shops were establishments separate from the household, and combined with bookstores on two parallel blocks in the heart of the market town: Qian shupu jie (Front Bookstore Street) and Hou shupu jie (Back Bookstore Street). This separation between the home of the extended family and the place of the publishing business in Xuwan reflects the difference in the social organization of publishing there; though print shops were often family concerns, passed from father to son, they were not tied into the extended family structure as tightly as they were in Sibao. Xuwan print shops, for example, relied to a large extent on laborers hired from outside the family;<sup>40</sup> Wuge and Mawu shops were staffed by members of the extended family. Here the contrast in the physical location and setup of the print shops (and in Xuwan, the bookstores as well) reflects the greater separation between business and family organization in Xuwan.

The arrangements of the publishing and the bookselling operations also indicate different relationships between production and distribution in each site. In the isolated, mountain-bound villages of Wuge and Mawu, books could be produced easily enough, but they could not be effectively and profitably distributed wholesale to book merchants; nor was the local market large enough to support the industry. Sibao booksellers thus carried their products outside the production center, selling books along market routes in the surrounding provinces and establishing bookstores along these routes, well outside of Sibao. Not surprisingly, then, we find in Sibao today traces of print shops only—



10. A book box that was used by Wuge booksellers to carry their merchandise to market. Two such boxes would be carried on a shoulder pole. Photograph by the author.

there are no bookstores.<sup>41</sup> In contrast, Xuwan publishers, benefiting from the more fortunate location of Xuwan on a major provincial transport line, the Fu river, and its status as a market town, could expect some book merchants to come to them to purchase texts wholesale as well as considerable local retail sales. Thus Xuwan operations combined production and sale in the same building, the bookstore at the front, the print shop at the back.<sup>42</sup>

The arrangement, placement, and functions of the buildings housing publishing and bookselling operations, then, can also tell us something of the organization and division of labor and the relations within publishing businesses. A range of artifacts—book presses (used to compress and cut the pages of a book before it was bound), brushes, ink-and-

water dishes, book boxes used to carry books to market (see figure 10), and so forth—can also often be found on site; these naturally improve our understanding of the technology of printing and the physical conditions of production and sale.

### ORAL HISTORIES

Fieldwork provides, in addition to an understanding of the specific physical context for the development of a publishing industry, invaluable opportunities to conduct interviews with local informants and to collect oral histories of publishing and the book trade from direct participants or the recent descendants of direct participants. There are, to be sure, problems with this method of collecting evidence: the vagaries of human memory, the difficulty of finding a sufficient number of informants, the near certainty of disagreement among informants—all make interview material a source that must be used cautiously and critically. But by talking to as many informants as possible, by structuring questions carefully and consistently, and by returning, as often as necessary, for repeat interviews to confirm or correct information—and, of course, by attempting to find primary textual support for oral histories—it is possible to build up a core of reliable material generally not available in written sources.

The first task in interviewing is to find knowledgeable informants. One of the best ways of identifying potential interview subjects is through the county Gazetteer Compilation Office (Fangzhi banshichu) and Cultural Affairs Office (Wenhaju). Here one can consult the local *Wenshi ziliao* and get help identifying local experts, the local scholars who have written on publishing or bookselling (or on the related industries of paper- or ink-making) for the local gazetteer and the *Wenshi ziliao*. These men were usually my first informants, as they were the ones who knew the most about local history and the local economy and sometimes had had some experience in the publishing industry themselves. And they were also useful as sources for other informants—they knew who within the county had had direct experience in publishing or bookselling.

There are, to be sure, certain dangers involved in relying too

heavily on such local scholars, in that they often felt they knew more about the publishing industry than less-well-educated informants with hands-on experience—and would often interrupt and “correct” such informants in interviews. But they nonetheless provided the best introductions to potential informants. With their help, one can usually set up interviews with print-shop owners and booksellers (or, as is the case with all the potential informants listed here, their descendants); craftsmen and women who had been directly involved in book production; managers and workers involved in associated businesses; and other local residents able to supply information about education, reading practices, book culture, and socioeconomic conditions in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

In the first category, older members of families that had once operated print shops often had experience as printers or booksellers and could speak with some authority about the physical process of printing, how labor was organized within the family, and how the actual process was performed. It was from such men that I learned about the customary regulations that developed to manage competition among the different Sibao print shops.<sup>43</sup>

Those men who had been booksellers were able to outline fairly precisely the routes they had traveled, the means used to carry books, the methods developed to transport funds, relations between the Sibao head print shops and branch shops, and so on. One of my most interesting set of interviews in Sibao was with a man who had, when the Sibao industry was in precipitous decline in the 1930s, worked as a book peddler, traveling to surrounding villages, selling cheap, pamphletlike versions of the ever-popular children’s primers *Sanzijing* and *Baijiaxing* (Myriad Family Names) on market days. Thus former book merchants were sources of useful information about both long-distance bookselling routes and denser local distribution networks.<sup>44</sup>

Such informants were also able to transmit rare information about the economics of the printing business, providing, for example, a rough idea of production costs relative to profits. And these men—and they were all men—were probably the best sources of information about relationships among print shops and between print shops and booksellers.

They knew in great detail about the customary regulations, that is, the unwritten rules that governed the rent and sale of blocks and the exclusive publication “rights” to certain titles that had developed to manage print-shop competition. They also knew, and were often willing to tell, the most about conflicts within the printing industry and bookselling trade. Whereas the genealogies consistently emphasized the harmony of interlineage relations, these men often provided good, vivid anecdotal evidence of tensions both among printing and bookselling families within each lineage and between the Zou and Ma printing and bookselling families.

Even in the absence of these older informants with first-hand experience of the book trade, the descendants of print-shop managers and booksellers usually had some knowledge of the history of their family print shop and some information about the local organization of the industry. They often had imprints and other documents, such as property-division documents, that substantiated their family’s involvement in the trade. And these informants also helped to identify other informants—Zou and Ma lineage members now living in other parts of south China who were descendants of the managers of branch shops—thus providing me with another source of oral histories, from Nanning, Lingyun, and Baise (Guangxi), about the organization of branch shops and about relations between the branches and the center.

Second, it was also possible, at certain sites, to interview men and women who had been block carvers or printers, either serving a local publishing industry—like the men I interviewed in Yuechi—or working within a community of block carvers providing distant publishing centers with a cheap source of carving labor—like the women of Magang, Guandong, who carved blocks for publishers in Guangzhou, Sibao, and even as far away as Suzhou. These informants supplied valuable information about and often demonstrations of the processes of carving and printing. In particular, in areas where *nianhua* prints were produced, it is today often possible to find craftsmen continuing to produce prints; in both the town of Mianzhu (in Sichuan) and the printing house of Yangliuqing (in Shandong), for example, these specialty prints are still produced from woodblocks.

More interesting in terms of the socioeconomic relations of publishing is the information one can get from former carvers about the apprentice system through which most trained to become carvers and about labor conditions—wages, trade associations, relations with publishers, block-carving shops (*kezidian*), and so forth. Here perhaps the most interesting informants were from Magang, the home of a group of professional female block carvers in the nineteenth century. They described a carving industry whose workers were all female, peasant women taught, in their early teens, to carve blocks as a means of supplementing the family income from agriculture. Recruited and taught by older, experienced female carvers, but managed by a man who worked as the liaison with publishers, these women, most of them illiterate, worked for very low wages, supplying publishers in the Guangzhou, Fujian, and even the Jiangnan area with cheap blocks.

Third, informants in industries supportive of publishing are also useful sources of information. The existence of local paper and ink-making industries, for example, was often crucial to the success of rural publishing businesses; certainly in the case of Sibao and probably in Longhui (in Hunan), Yuechi and Mianzhu (in Sichuan), and Xuwan (in Jiangxi), as well, it is difficult to imagine how publishing could have flourished without access to local sources of paper and printing ink. And study of the nature of local paper and ink production, the seasonal rhythms of the industries, the structure of the local market, and the business relationships between local paper and ink factories, brokers, and publishers is necessary for a full understanding of the operation of publishing concerns. What different types and quality levels of paper were available locally? How did the range in availability affect production quality within the local publishing businesses? Did publishers develop exclusive, direct, relationships with individual paper and ink factories, or were all transactions handled by intermediaries or brokers? Did publishers ever own and control paper and ink factories themselves? Interviews with former managers of paper and ink firms and on-site visits to factories still producing paper by the traditional methods can help to answer some of these questions.

Finally, almost any discussion with an older resident of a publish-

ing site (or, indeed, any village) can be of use, even if he or she is ignorant of the details of the publishing industry. Such informants can provide useful information about socioeconomic conditions and local political changes that help to put publishing operations in a larger context. More specifically, discussions about reading practices and educational methods and texts in use in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries can tell us a great deal about the kinds of audiences rural publishers were targeting. Informants in Sibao testified to the widespread use of “traditional” educational texts like *Sanzijing* and *Zengguang xianwen*, mentioned above, well through the Republican era—they report continuing to attend “family schools” (*jiashu*) that taught these texts and the Four Books while, at the same time, they studied from the new textbooks issued by the Republic. In the realm of entertainment literature, they emphasized the impressive, but largely undocumented, popularity of simple song books; some could even recall the lines of several now-lost lyrics. This kind of information adds to our understanding of early-twentieth-century reading habits and practices, and thus helps us to place the output of publishers like the Zou and Ma of Sibao in the context of the local book culture and market.

#### OTHER SOURCES

A host of other documents and sources can be useful for understanding the publishing trade in late-imperial and Republican-era China: land contracts, for example, often provide a sense of relative wealth, allowing us to assess the economic prominence of publishing families vis-à-vis their neighbors. Ancestral-hall account books, as I have already mentioned, are useful as means of comparing prices, of putting information about book prices in the context of a range of prices for articles of everyday life. Records of a range of social organizations—loan clubs, temple associations, benevolent societies, and so forth—also provide useful information about local social organization and religious practices that, while perhaps not directly relevant to publishing, nonetheless assist by deepening knowledge about the social and economic context within which the publishing industry developed.

## CONCLUSION

Fieldwork, though it can yield valuable and unusual information essential to our understanding of commercial publishing in late-imperial and Republican-era China, also presents certain challenges to the researcher, particularly the foreign researcher working in hinterland villages. If he or she is not familiar with the local dialect, then it is necessary either to take the time to learn it or to hire an interpreter (preferably one with some knowledge of or sympathy for the project). Though most younger rural residents speak standard Chinese (*putonghua*), many older villagers, particularly women, do not—and the older residents are usually the most useful informants.

Reliant almost entirely on the grace of local officials and the helpfulness of local experts and residents, fieldworkers have to be prepared for considerable variation in the access they are allowed at different sites. Local leaders, informants, and holders of important local sources are often (and often justly) suspicious of county and provincial officials and outsiders; it takes patient, sustained, and repeated efforts—and often long residence on site—to assure them that one is both serious and harmless. And there are also, of course, tensions among local officials, local leaders, and their constituencies. Thus, although fieldworkers are dependent on the approval and sponsorship of local officials, it is often best not to emphasize this connection when interviewing residents; usually the best go-betweens are local scholars or respected villagers who, for some compensation, are willing to introduce the fieldworker to informants.

Informants of course also have to be compensated for their time, according to the local hourly wage scale; it is important to establish a consistent, rational schedule of payment that is made clear and applied as fairly as possible to all informants. It is important, too, to emphasize that one is not interested in purchasing local materials or taking them permanently out of the site; the danger here is that one may otherwise come to be perceived as a merchant interested in exploiting the local population (though refusal to purchase items may also disappoint informants eager to sell their materials). Photographing, photocopying (if a machine is available), hand-copying, or simply taking notes on local documents are more appropriate means of collecting materials; again, holders of

these materials should be compensated according to some standard scale for the opportunity to copy or make notes on their materials.

There remain all sorts of pitfalls that even the most scrupulous, cautious, and knowledgeable of researchers will find difficult to avoid. Local factions, tensions, and antagonisms—between county and local officials, between local officials and villagers, and among the villagers themselves—often interfere with the research process in unpredictable ways. (Efforts made in Sibao to arrange for the collection and preservation, in Wuge, the administrative center of the township, of imprints, woodblocks, and other artifacts of the site's publishing history foundered on just such antagonisms.) Yet it is virtually impossible for the researcher, as an outsider, to avoid or even fully understand these tensions, and researchers often run the risk of becoming, unwittingly, a pawn in local struggles. Ideally, a fieldworker should live for some time at a site before beginning work (though even then, it is unlikely that one could learn as much as necessary about local society and politics); yet often such extended site visits are difficult to arrange.

Thus fieldwork presents special difficulties and challenges quite different from those confronting the library researcher. The rewards, however—in the form of local sources available only on site; a deeper knowledge of local geography, history, and local socioeconomic conditions; and rich, often anecdotal detail about the organization of publishing businesses—fully justify the effort.

#### NOTES

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1. Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, 960–1644* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2002). Ellen Widmer, “The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 56.1 (June 1996), pp. 77–122.
2. The model for this kind of fieldwork is the pioneering work of Fu Yiling and his students at Xiamen University. See, for just a few examples, Fu Yiling and Yang Guozhen, eds., *Ming Qing Fujian shehui yu xiangcun jingji* (Society and

- Rural Economy in Ming and Qing Fujian) (Xiamen: Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 1987); Yang Guozhen, *Ming Qing tudi qiye wenshu yanjiu* (Research on Land Contract Documents from the Ming and Qing) (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1988); Zheng Zhenman, *Ming-Qing Fujian jiazu zuzhi yu shehui bianqian* (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), translated by Michael Szonyi as *Family Lineage Organization and Social Change in Ming and Qing Fujian* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001); Chen Zhiping and Zheng Zhenman, "Qingdai Minxi Sibao zushang yanjiu" (The Lineage Merchants of Sibao, Western Fujian, in the Qing), *Zhongguo jingjishi yanjiu* (Research on Chinese Economic History) 2 (1988), pp. 93–109.
3. For a fuller presentation of the conclusions that can be drawn from such materials—and for more background on Sibao, one of the sites treated here—see Brokaw, "Commercial Publishing in Late Imperial China: The Zou and Ma Family Businesses of Sibao, Fujian," in *Late Imperial China* 17.1 (June 1996), pp. 49–92. I am working on a full-length study of this industry in the context of commercial publishing in south China in the Qing, "Commerce in Culture: The Book Trade of Sibao, Fujian, 1663–1947."
  4. The first character in the name of this town is more commonly pronounced "hu"; the local (and official) pronunciation is, however, "Xuwan."
  5. I have also included some information garnered from preliminary field investigations done since 1999 in Shaoyang and Longhui counties in Hunan; Chaozhou and Shantou in Guangdong; and in Huizhou, the once-famous block-carving center in Anhui. This series of field trips was part of a larger collaborative project, directed with Professor Hou Zhenping of Xiamen University, entitled "Mapping the Book Trade: The Expansion of Printing in Late Imperial China." Funded by the Henry Luce Foundation, this project is designed to identify late-imperial and Republican-era publishing sites worthy of future, more intensive study.
  6. There are certain exceptions. Yangliuqing, the great center for production of New Year's prints in Tianjin, has been preserved as a working site, and it is possible to interview craftsmen who are still producing *nianhua* there (see also, under "Woodblocks" below, on the Jinling kejingchu in Nanjing and the Guangling guji keyinshe in Yangzhou). And in some Jiangnan cities it is also possible to find men who were active in the early-twentieth-century book trade; these men are able to provide information about bookselling, if not publishing.
  7. Jin Wuxiang states that Xuwan block carvers are rivaled in productivity only by the carvers of Magang, Guangdong. See Jin Wuxiang, *Suxiang sanbi* (Shanghai: Saoye shanfang, 1894), *juan* 4, p. 10b, cited in Nagasawa Kikuya, *Wa Kan sho no insatsu to sono rekishi*, vol. 2, Nagasawa Kikuya chosakushū (Kyūko shoin, 1982), p. 84. Unlike Magang, however, Xuwan was also a publishing center.
  8. The difficulty here is compounded by the fact that this point of division, the year 1796 (which corresponds roughly to the point, 1800, used to identify western rare books), is not by any means universally accepted. See, for ex-

- ample, Mao Chunxiang's discussion of the meaning of *shanben* in his *Gushu banben changtan* (Talks on Old Books) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), pp. 3–7; here, although he considers the traditional, much earlier, cut-off date of 1567, the end of the Ming Jiajing era (1522–1567), as a means of identifying rare books, he ultimately suggests that criteria of production quality and excellence in editing, rather than date of publication, ought to be the primary measures of *shanben*. Thus a finely produced and carefully edited Qing edition might qualify more for the designation “*shanben*” than a poorly printed and shoddily edited Ming edition.
9. Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo yinshuashi* (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 1989), pp. 558–559.
  10. See, for example, the useful article on Sibao publishing in the Liancheng county series: Zou Risheng, “Zhongguo sida diaoban yinshua jidi zhi yi—Sibao: Qiantan Sibao diaoban yinshuye de shengshuai” (One of the Four Great Chinese Printing Bases—Sibao: Introduction to the Rise and Decline of the Sibao Publishing Industry), *Liancheng wenshi ziliao* 5 (1985), pp. 102–115.
  11. Du Xinfu and Qi Shenqi, *Jiangxi lidai keshu* (A Chronology of Publishing in Jiangxi); Huang Rixing and Zhang Deyi, *Jiangxi qikan zonglu* (A Summary Record of Jiangxi Periodicals); Huang Rixing and Jiang Qinyun, *Jiangxi bianzhu renwu zhuanlue* (Brief Biographies of Editors and Authors in Jiangxi), all published by the Jiangxi renmin chubanshe in 1994.
  12. Jiang Chengbo, Du Xinfu, and Du Yongkang, eds., *Jiangsu keshu* (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1993). This single history is supplemented by several other studies of Jiangsu publishing, including a fifteen-volume bibliography of Jiangsu publications, Qiu Yu, ed., *Jiangsu yiwenzhi* (Jiangsu Bibliography) (Nanjing: Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 1994–1996).
  13. Guangdongsheng difang shizhi bianzuan weiyuanhui, ed., *Guangdong shengzhi—Chuban zhi* (Guangdong Provincial Gazetteer—Annals of Publishing) (Nanhai: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1997). See the notes to the introduction, “On the History of the Book in China,” in Cynthia Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, eds., *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming) for a fuller list of similar titles.
  14. For example, the provincial libraries in Shenyang and Nanjing and the rare-books collection of the Zhejiang provincial library were all, in 1999, engaged in revising their catalogues.
  15. The three most useful genealogies for the study of Sibao publishing are: Zou Wenjun, ed., *Fanyang Zoushi zupu* (Genealogy of the Fanyang Branch of the Zou Lineage) (Dunbentang, 1947) in 33 *ce*. An alternate title for this text is *Minting Longzuxiang Zoushi zupu* (Genealogy of the Zou Lineage of Longzu Village, Tingzhou, Fujian). Zou Hui, ed., *Sixiu Zoushi zupu* (Fourth Revision of the [Fugong Branch] of the Zou Lineage) (Dunbentang, 1911), in 21 *ce*. Ma Xuanliang, ed., *Mashi dazong zupu* (Genealogy of the Great Ma Lineage) (Xiaositang, 1944), in 44 *ce*. An alternate title of this text is *Changting Sibaoli Mashi zupu* (Genealogy of the Ma Lineage of Sibao, Changting County). Mawu, the village of the Ma lineage, and Wuge, home of the Zou, were

- located in Changting county until 1951, when they were transferred to Liancheng county.
16. It is possible that this text is the *Sishu jicheng* attributed to a Song-dynasty scholar, Wu Zhenzi (dates unknown). See *Zhongguo guji shanben shumu* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), “Jing” section, vol. 3, p. 54b.
  17. *Changting Sibaoli Mashi zupu*, ji 7, juan 1, pp. 74a–75b.
  18. *Ibid.*, p. 75b. Since no identifiable copies of these titles survive—and since, in any event, the titles given in the genealogy may well be abbreviated—it is not possible to provide any bibliographical information about these texts, except for the obvious point that they were published in the late-seventeenth century in Mawu. It is possible that this last text, the *Sishu zhu daquan*, is either an edition of or a text closely related to the *Sishu daquan* (Great Collection on the Four Books), the compilation of commentaries on the Four Books that, commissioned by the Yongle emperor in 1415, firmly established Cheng-Zhu readings of the Four Books as the standard for examination study. (See Thomas A. Wilson, *The Genealogy of the Way: The Construction and Uses of the Confucian Tradition in Late Imperial China* [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995], p. 54.) Like all the other texts mentioned in this paragraph (with the exception of the reading primer), however, the title of this work indicates that it would have been attractive as a guide to the Classics and thus to examination study.
  19. *Fanyang Zoushi zupu*, juan 22, pp. 50b–51a.
  20. Chia, *Printing for Profit*, chap. 1.
  21. *Fanyang Zoushi zupu*, juanshou, pp. 4b, 17b.
  22. See, for example, Fan Yanshou, “Jianyang Liushi keshu kao” (Study of Publishing by the Liu of Jianyang), *Wenxian* (Documents), 36 (1988.2), p. 207.
  23. See Robert P. Hymes, “Marriage, Descent Groups, and the Localist Strategy in Sung and Yuan Fu-chou,” in Patricia Buckley Ebrey and James L. Watson, eds., *Kinship Organization in Late Imperial China, 1000–1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 115–128, for a discussion of the significance of genealogy prefaces in the later imperial period.
  24. David Wakefield, *Fenjie: Household Division and Inheritance in Qing and Republican China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1998), pp. 21–25, 57.
  25. This tradition was not always followed, though often it is not clear why not. In many cases, it seems that an eldest son with a reasonable chance of examination success, or one who had earned or purchased some sort of official position, would not take over the management of the father’s shop. According to informants in Sibao, a father might also take into account the various talents of his sons, bypassing an eldest son if he felt he was not competent to manage the family print shop. Or, as in the case of Ma Quanheng cited earlier, the decision to give all of a print shop and its woodblocks to the youngest son may have been a way of ensuring an income to the family member least able to strike out on his own.
  26. It is possible, of course, that they joined one or two of the other brothers, bringing their woodblock inheritance to what would then become a joint venture.

27. *Baizhongjing* seems to have been a generic title for popular “almanacs for future years” (*weilaili*), which included calendars for several decades as well as astrological charts and fortune-telling advice. See, for example, the entries in Andrew C. West, *Catalogue of the Morrison Collection of Chinese Books* (London: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 1998), p. 133. The *Dazi zengguang xianwen*, a primer of unknown authorship, consisted of a series of rhymed couplets expressing orthodox moral and social messages. See Mao Shuiqing and Liang Yang, eds., *Zhongguo chuantong mengxue dadian* (Great Compendium of Chinese Traditional Primers for Children) (Nanning: Guangxi remin chubanshe, 1993), p. 155.
28. *Fanyang Zoushi zupu*, *juan* 33, pp. 98b–99b.
29. When a text has *heikou* markings, a portion of the center of the printing block was left uncarved. When pages were printed from this block, the uncarved portion showed as a wide band of black on the “mouth” or fore-edge of each folded page. But when the segment at the center of the printing block was carved out, a wide band of white or “white mouth” (*baikou*) was visible at the fore-edge fold of the page.
30. Indeed, for many of the texts that I refer to in this section, complete bibliographical information cannot be given. Some texts are incomplete, missing the crucial *fengmian* or cover page that often supplies important—though at times misleading—information about authorship, date of publication (that is, the date the blocks for the text were carved), place of publication, and publisher. Others lack whole *juan*—and if the first *juan* is missing it is often difficult to determine the full contents or length of a text. Finally, even when a text survives whole, it does not necessarily include full bibliographical information. This is particularly true for the very lowest-level productions of popular commercial publishers like the Zou and Ma of Sibao; their pamphletlike editions of children’s primers rarely contain information about publication date or publisher. In the following discussion, I supply whatever bibliographical information can be gleaned from the texts in question.
31. *Zengding guwen jingyan xiangzhu pangxun hebian*, edited by the Mawu publisher Ma Kuanyu (1670–1754) and published by the Mawu Zhensongtang, seems to have been based closely on the *Guwen xiayi* (Analysis of the Meaning of Classical Prose) of the Kangxi-era scholar Lin Yunming (*zi* Xizhong, *jinsi* 1658), first published in 1717. To Lin’s text, it adds, as the title implies, another set of comments, by a Zhou Dazhang (*zi* Pinhou) of Tongcheng (fl. Yongzheng era, 1723–1736).
32. *Sishu buzhu beizhi tiqiao huican* is one of at least two titles presenting very similar commentary on the Four Books. This particular version was edited by a Zhang Chengyu (dates unknown), apparently from a text compiled originally by the Hongwu-era (1368–1399) official Deng Lin. This work presents, with the texts of the Four Books, the officially approved commentary by Zhu Xi, as well as lengthy and often laborious explanations by Deng.
33. Since *Yixue sanzijing* appears in a property-division document dated 1839, we know that a version of this text, though not necessarily the one depicted here, which lacks its cover page (*fengmian*), was published by a Mawu publisher no

- later than that date. The Xuwan edition was published by the Liangyitang—but no date of publication is given. The undated Sibao edition of *Shennong bencao jingdu* was published by the Wuge Suweitang; the also undated Xuwan edition by the Liangyitang.
34. Baopu shanren, “Xu” (Preface), pp. 1a–2b, *Chuxue zibian* (preface dated 1876).
  35. “Xu” (Preface), p. 1b, Bao Xiang’ao and Mei Qizhao, *Yanfang xinbian* (1883); the publisher is not given. This work was originally compiled by Bao in 1846, when he was serving as an official in Wuxuan, Guangxi; it was revised and expanded by Mei Qizhao of Nanchang, Jiangxi, in 1878.
  36. The Shoudu tushuguan in Beijing has a collection of song books from a variety of provinces. In Chaozhou, Guangdong, efforts have been made to preserve song books in the local dialect; many such song books have been recently reprinted and collected in the Chao-Shan lishi wenhua yanjiu zhongxin (Center for Research on Chaozhou and Shantou History and Culture) in Shantou. For a sampling of titles, see Guangdongsheng Zhongshan tushuguan and Shantou tushuguan xuehui, eds., *Chao Shan wenxian shumu* (Bibliography of Writings from Chaozhou and Shantou) (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1994), pp. 389–399.
  37. Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo yinshuashi*, pp. 710–715. Itinerant genealogy printers in Sibao—now using a small hand-operated press—still print the new editions of the Zou and Ma genealogies, living and setting up their printing operation in the relevant ancestral hall until the job is done.
  38. Many secondary studies of publishing in Chinese rely on these categories without exploring the connections between them, so that “official” publishing, “private,” “family,” or “literati” publishing, and “commercial” publishing are treated in separate sections. These distinctions appear quite early; though he employs somewhat different terminology, Ye Dehui (1864–1927) accepts them in his pioneering study *Shulin qinghua*, first published in 1920 (Beijing: Yanshan chubanshe, 1999). For a more recent example, see Ji Shaofu, *Zhongguo chuban jianshi* (A Brief History of Chinese Publishing) (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 1991).
  39. Geomancers in Sibao were still, as recently as 1996, consulting local editions of old geomancy (*fengshui*) texts; there is also some evidence that medical manuals published in Sibao in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries were still in use or at least highly prized as sources of medical knowledge.
  40. Xu Zhengfu, “Jinxi shu” (Jinxi Books), *Jiangxi chubanshi zhi* (Annals of Jiangxi Publishing History) 3 (February 1, 1993), pp. 36–37.
  41. An effort was made to establish a book market in Wuge in the eighteenth century, but this failed, presumably as a result of Sibao’s isolation and difficulty of access. See *Fanyang Zoushi zupu*, *juan* 29, pp. 2a–3b.
  42. Xuwan publishers also shipped some of their texts for sale to the port cities of the lower Yangzi. Some Xuwan publishers also established branch shops in Nanchang and Jiujiang in Jiangxi and Wuhu and Anqing in Anhui. See Zhao Shuiquan, “Xuwan yu muke yinshu” (Xuwan and Woodblock Publishing),

- Jiangxi difangzhi tongxun* (Newsletter of the Jiangxi Gazetteer) 9 (February 1986), p. 52.  
 43. See Brokaw, "Commercial Publishing in Late Imperial China," pp. 73-75.  
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

## GLOSSARY

- Anqing 安慶  
*Baijiaxing* 百家姓  
 baikou 白口  
 Baise 百色  
*Baizhongjing* 百中經  
 banbenxue 版本學  
 Baopu shanren 抱朴山人  
 Bao Xiang'ao 鮑相璈  
 bianti zi 扁體字  
 bo 薄  
 bu 簿  
 changben 唱本  
 Changting 長汀  
*Changting Sibaoli Mashi zupu*  
 長汀四堡里馬氏族譜  
 Chaozhou 潮州  
 Chengdu 成都  
 Cheng-Zhu 程朱  
 Chen Nianzu 陳念祖  
 Chubanzhi 出版志  
*Chuxue zibian* 初學字辯  
 Cuiwentang 翠文堂  
*Cuiwentang cang ban* 翠文堂藏板  
*Dazi zengguang xianwen* 大字增廣賢文  
 Deng Lin 鄧林  
 Dili wujue 地理五訣  
*Duilian daquan* 對聯大全  
 Dunbentang 敦本堂  
 fangke 坊刻  
 Fangzhi banshichu 方志辦事處  
*Fanyang Zoushi zupu* 範陽鄒氏族譜  
 fen 分  
 fengmian 封面  
 fengshui 風水  
 fenguan 分關  
 fenjia 分家  
 Fu 撫  
 Fugong 敷公  
*Gongxue zhu* 貢學注  
 gu 箍  
 Guangling guji keyinshe  
 廣陵古籍刻印社  
 guanke 官刻  
*Guwen xiyi* 古文析義  
 heikou 黑口  
 Hou shupu jie 後書鋪街  
 Houxu 後敘  
 hu 滸  
 Huanduzhai 還讀齋  
 Huizhou 徽州  
 Huzhou 湖州  
 jiake 家刻  
 Jiangnan 江南  
 Jiang Qingling 蔣慶齡  
*Jiangsu keshu* 江蘇刻書  
 jiangti 匠體  
 Jianyang 建陽  
 Ji'ao shanfang 寄傲山房

- jiashu 家塾  
 Jinling kejingchu 金陵刻經處  
 Jin Wuxiang 金武祥  
 Jinxi 金谿  
 Jiujiang 九江  
 kezidian 刻字店  
 Liancheng 連城  
 liang 兩  
 Liangyitang 兩儀堂  
 Lingyun 凌雲  
 Linlantang 林蘭堂  
 Linwentang 林文堂  
 Lin Yunming 林雲銘  
 Liu 劉  
 Longhui 隆回  
 Longyan 龍巖  
 Ma 馬  
 Ma Cuizhong 馬萃仲  
 Ma Dingbang 馬定邦  
 Magang 馬崗  
 Ma Kuanyu 馬寬裕  
 Ma Quanheng 馬權亨  
 Mashi dazong zupu 馬氏大宗族譜  
 Mawu 馬屋  
 Ma Xuanliang 馬選良  
 Ma Yuming 馬玉鳴  
 Ma Yuting 馬玉廷  
 Mei Qizhao 梅啓照  
 Meng Zi 孟子  
 Mianzhu 綿竹  
 Mingshen feng 命神峰  
 Minting Longzuxiang Zoushi zupu  
 閩汀龍足鄉鄒氏族譜  
 Nanchang 南昌  
 Nanning 南寧  
 nianhua 年畫  
 Nianzitan 念茲堂  
 Pinhou 聘侯  
 putonghua 普通話  
 qian 錢  
 Qian shupu jie 前書鋪街  
 Renjia riyong 人家日用  
 Sanguo tongsu yanyi 三國通俗演義  
 Sanzijing 三字經  
 shanben 善本  
 Shantou 汕頭  
 Shaoyang 邵陽  
 Shennong bencao jingdu 神農本草經讀  
 Shenyang 瀋陽  
 Shijing zhu 詩經註  
 Shuhua tongzhen 書畫同珍  
 Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳  
 Shunde 順德  
 shuyuan 書院  
 Sibao 四堡  
 Sichuan xinwen chuban shiliao  
 四川新聞出版史料  
 sike 私刻  
 simin 四民  
 Sishu 四書  
 Sishu beizhi 四書備旨  
 Sishu buzhu beizhi tiqiao huican  
 四書補註備旨題竅匯參  
 Sishu daquan 四書大全  
 Sishu jicheng 四書集成  
 Sishu jizhu 四書集注  
 Sishu zhu daquan 四書注大全  
 Sixiu Zoushi zupu 四修鄒氏族譜

- Siyán zazi* 四言雜字  
*Suweitang* 素位堂  
*Suxiang sanbi* 粟香三筆  
 tang 堂  
 tangming 堂名  
 Taohuawu 桃花塢  
 tiantou 天頭  
 Tingzhou 汀州  
 Tongcheng 桐城  
 Wanjuanlou 萬卷樓  
 wei 微  
 Weifang 濰方  
 weilaili 未來曆  
 Wenhailou 文海樓  
 Wenhuaaju 文化局  
 Wenlange 文蘭閣  
 Wenlange fadui 文蘭閣發兌  
 Wenlintang 文林堂  
 Wenshi ziliao 文史資料  
 Wenzhou 温州  
 Wenzitang 文茲堂  
 Wuge 務閣  
 Wuxuan 武宣  
 Wu Zhenzi 吳眞子  
 Xiaositang 孝思堂  
 Xiaoyin 小引  
*Xinban Kangxi zidian* 新版康熙字典  
*Xinban shixue* 新版詩學  
 Xinwen chubanjū 新聞出版社  
 Xiong 熊  
 Xiuyuan 修園  
 Xizhong 西仲  
 Xuwan 潛灣  
*Yanfang xinbian* 驗方新編  
 Yangliuqing 楊柳青  
 yinfang yisuo 印房壹所  
*Yingxiong pu* 英雄譜  
*Yixue sanzijing* 醫學三字經  
*Youxue zengguang* 幼學增廣  
 Yu 余  
 Yuechi 岳池  
 yuwei 魚尾  
 Zaizitang 在茲堂  
 zangku 藏庫  
*Zengding guwen jingyan xiangzhu pangxun he-*  
*bian* 增訂古文精言詳註旁訓合編  
*Zengguang xianwen* 增廣賢文  
*Zengzhu sanzijing* 增注三字經  
 zhangben 帳本  
 Zhang Chengyu 張成遇  
 Zhangzhou 漳州  
 Zhao Tingdong 趙廷棟  
*Zhao Yulin* 趙玉麟  
 zheng 徵  
 Zhensongtang 枕松堂  
*Zhongguo yinshuashi* 中國印刷史  
 Zhou Dazhang 周大章  
 Zhu Xi 朱熹  
 Zou 鄒  
 Zou Bangyu 鄒邦鈺  
 Zou Binghan 鄒屏翰  
 Zou Hui 鄒輝  
 Zou Jianchi 鄒建池  
 Zou Shengmai 鄒聖脉  
 Zou Wenjun 鄒文峻  
 Zou Xidao 鄒希道