TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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SONG *BIJI* 筆記 AUTHORIAL COLLECTIONS: PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS

1

One of the major characteristics of Chinese culture is the continuity of its written tradition development. Over the centuries, canonical texts were copied and supplied with commentary, forming the basis for the concept of learning and laying the groundwork, by virtue of their very existence and ceaseless reproduction, for the emergence of new texts. The appearance of a written work was conditioned (and supported) by the existence of others. In their remarks on ancient events, authors relied on written works; the written text was perceived as the only historical testimony. The rigorous checking of reported accounts is a characteristic feature of Chinese literature; it is especially evident in those works which are traditionally considered historical. In presenting information about people and events in the 史記 ("Historical Notes"), Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145/135 B.C.—?) frequently adds his own personal remarks, but only at the end of his writing, thus emphasising his objectivity.

A great number of various texts with a special focus on history appeared in China relatively early. The written culture was greatly supported by the system of administration which existed in ancient China; literacy and a knowledge of certain canonical texts was an obligatory condition for receiving an official position. The system of state exams to fill vacant posts in the administrative apparatus ensured the uninterrupted "production" of state men of letters. A broad knowledge of texts, the ability to interpret those texts and create on their basis new texts were a solid foundation for the further development of written culture both in depth (commentary) and in breadth (new works of prose and poetry, fiction and history, which could or could not have their special subject).

Among the great many Chinese written texts, which have reached us, an important group consists of *biji* authorial collections. These literary works, despite their rather significant quantity and the diversity of the material they contain, have received only scant attention in scholarship [1].

2

One must seek the roots of *biji* genre in ancient Chinese historical texts, the oldest philosophical works, and in texts which are today considered prose with well-outlined subject. In their classical form, prototypes of *biji* writings began to appear in the Tang era (618—907), but the *biji* truly flourished during the Song dynasty (960—1279), in a period of rapid rise of Chinese culture, and especially literature. A shift from scrolls to stitched books in quire form, the spread of xylography, and an increase in book production made books available to broad layers of the population as well as easier to use. Education also became more available, due to the 1044 government decree, which announced the establishment of schools in regional and provincial cities. But what is more important, changes also took place in attitudes toward scholarship and the knowledge necessary to pass the exam for the right to occupy a vacant post in the government apparatus. In turn, higher standards appeared, which led to the appearance of numerous specially arranged selections from various works on a variety of themes (類書, "encyclopaedia").

These general trends could not but affect *biji* collections. It seems that each major Song literary figure and official left us such a collection. Some of them are significant in size and required substantial time and effort from their authors: the material is strictly organised into sections according to the author's interests. Others are small and chaotic, reminiscent of a scholar's preliminary thoughts, observations, notes, and information not included in other works. But even early Song *biji*s tend to be of an encyclopaedic character. Their seemingly chaotic nature may be delusive because we do not fully understand the organisational principles of these texts. Such understanding will come only as the result of the multi-faceted study of *biji* in historical context as a special form of authorial collections.

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歸田錄者朝廷之遺事史官之所不記與夫士大夫笑談之餘而可錄者錄之以備閒居之覽也有聞而誚余者曰何其迂哉子之所學者修仁義以爲業誦六經以爲言其自待者宜如何而幸蒙人主之知備位朝廷與聞國論者蓋八年於茲矣既不能因時奮身遇事發憤有所建明以爲補益又不能依阿取容以徇世俗使怨嫉謗怒叢于一身以受侮于羣小當其驚風駭浪卒然起於不測之淵而蛟鱷黿鼉之怪方駢首而闖伺乃措身其間以蹈必死之禍賴天子仁聖惻然哀憐脫於垂涎之口而活之以賜其餘生之命曾不聞吐珠銜環效虵雀之報蓋方其壯也猶無所爲今既老且病矣是終負人主之恩而徒久費大農之錢爲太倉之鼠也爲子計者謂宜乞身於朝退避榮寵案祠堂本有夾注一作遠引疾去以深戒前日之禍十三字而優游田畝盡其天年猶足竊知止之賢名而乃裴回俯仰久之不決此而不思尚何歸田之錄乎余起而謝曰凡子之責我者皆是也

Fig. 1

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Preliminary observations on Song *biji* collections make us to share the views of those modern Chinese scholars who, like for example Zhan Hui 張輝, distinguishes the following features of a *biji*: (i) a complete form freedom — the material it contains may display a certain internal organisation and may be divided into, for example, *juan*s, or it may not be organised at all; the collection may be enormous as, for example, 容齋隨筆 by Hong Mai (1123—1202) or it may be quite small; finally, the fragments of which it consists may be significant in size or may represent short notes of a few hieroglyphs; but a nearly indispensable part of *biji* are *shihua* 詩話 fragments ("thoughts on verse"); (ii) the spontaneity of the collection's internal construction, the tacit compositional structure which is declared by the authors themselves in their forewords [2].

Liu Ye-qiu 劉葉秋, the author of the only historical essay on *biji*, describes them similarly, if less concretely: "I feel that the most characteristic feature of *biji* is 'diversity' 雜 of content, a lack of links through thematic framing, records of what people themselves heard, while as concerns form — 'freedom, lack of ties' 散 — the long or the short, free composition" [3]. As for the content of *biji*, Liu Ye-qiu expresses a rather common opinion, proposing that these collections be divided into 小說故事筆記, i.e. *biji* which contain fragments with a certain theme, be they small or short; 歷史瑣聞筆記, i.e. collections of unofficial historical information which was either absent in official sources or which augments them; and 考据辨証筆記, i.e. collections on various types of inaccuracies, errors, difficult passages, words, concepts, corrections, adjustments, and explanations.

Another Chinese scholar, Chu Bin-jie 褚斌杰, proposes a similar classification: 小說故事筆記; 野史舊聞筆記, i.e. collections which contain records of a historical nature; 叢考雜辨筆記, i.e. collections which contain observations of a scientific nature made while reading other works, as well as archeological, etymological, and textological observations; and 雜錄叢談筆記, i.e. collections of utterances, jokes, and varied information, in a word, everything that does not fit into the preceding three groups [4].

It should be noted that any division which is based solely on content can be regarded as only conditional, and it is quite difficult to employ the classification cited here when discussing concrete collections [5]. In any case, a separate group of *biji* writings constitute travel diaries and notes made during journeys, which also became widespread under the Song dynasty (they are not under discussion in the present study).

3

According to the classification of *biji* collections mentioned above, the majority of Song *biji* collections I have studied must belong either to 歷史瑣聞筆記 or 考据辨証筆記, as is clear from their content. To start with, Song Qi 宋祁 (998—1061), a native of the Nothern Song, was the first to employ the term *biji* in the title of his collection the 宋景文公筆記 ("Notes of Master Song Jin-wen"). The text of the "Notes" which has come down to us contains three *juan*s comprising 166 fragments. All three *juan*s have headings.

The first *juan* bears the title 釋俗 ("Interpretation of customs"). One can identify several relatively clear thematic groups among the fragments of which it consists (in all, there are 32 fragments in this *juan*). The first group are the author's notes and observations on hieroglyphs which are, in Song Qi's view, written or used incorrectly. He provides the correct form and explains why the error arose. He also gives the original form and explains the specifics of various hieroglyphs' usage, citing in support of his view examples from the works of his predecessors which contain these hieroglyphs, including the most ancient texts.

The second group constitute fragments where Song Qi elucidates the meaning of certain words, noting also their history and origins. For example, he mentions the *fanjie* system of conveying the reading of hieroglyphs used in Chinese dictionaries.

Fragments which concern various customs encountered in the Chinese society of Song Qi's day may be considered as the third group, while fragments on poetry which are very reminiscent of early Song *shihua*, where Song Qi expresses his opinions on verses (individual lines) by various authors, compares them, enumerates poets whom he considers worthy or exceptional, constitute the fourth group. The author also cites the views of others on poetry and poets which interest him.

The second *juan* (68 fragments) entitled 考古, which we translate tentatively as "Research on the subject of antiquities", does not differ fundamentally from the first *juan*. In essence, the work of Song Qi, who was a typical Chinese bibliophile, was concerned with various antiquities, or searches for the original meanings of words and concepts. All of the major themes of the first *juan* are also found in the second one, but the theme of customs is less pronounced here.

The main thematic groups in this *juan* can be distinguished as follows: the first comprises fragments on well-known, primarily Confucian scholars of the past and contemporary to Song Qi. We include here comments on poets and poetry, such as remarks on how one should correctly write the name Bao Zhao 鮑照 (?421—?466). There are also notes on the utterances, as well as the utterances themselves, of various historical figures and acquaintances of Song Qi. One can also find here evaluations of various statesmen.

The fragments in the second group explain why the contemporaries of Song Qi make so many mistakes. Among the reasons indicated is a low level of education, caused in particular by the ignorance of the dictionary 說文解字, where they could find information on the original meanings of certain hieroglyphs. A number of examples illustrate the errors which arise because of such ignorance.

Fragments which clarify passages in various works constitute the third group. These are primarily comments, explanations, and textological commentaries on fragments of text or even individual hieroglyphs from the 漢書 ("History of the Han [Dynasty]") or clarifications of meaning through Yan Shi-gu's 顏師古 (581—645) commentary on the "History of the Han [Dynasty]"; also found here are remarks on the commentaries of Wan Bi 王弼 (226—249) on the 易經 ("Book of Changes").

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The fourth group of the second *juan* discuss prose with no plot and their authors, both ancient and contemporary to Song Qi. These fragments are of a textological nature and contain evaluations (utterances) by Song Qi or others on certain works or authors.

The final, fifth group contains thoughts on government. Song Qi cites examples of contemporary rulers, for example, the Han Gao-zu (r. 205—195 B.C.), who was, in Song Qi's words, such a wise ruler that his successors could firmly hold the reins of government and experienced no unease. Song Qi is of the opinion that only enlightened people should hold power.

If the first two *juan*s' text is more or less uniform, the third, of 66 fragments, conforms entirely to its title 雜說 ("Various remarks"). They comprise relatively extensive remarks on government, on relations between a ruler and his subjects, remarks on the structure of the world and the interrelation of earth and heaven. Far from all of the maxims cited here belong to Song Qi himself, but he does not list his sources. There are also short (from 8 to 20 hieroglyphs) remarks of an aphoristic nature on various topics, like "There is nothing more life-giving than rain and dew, but luxuriant grasses once again grow dry. There is nothing fiercer than hoar-frost and snow, but the pines and cypresses are green in the winter as well".

Four fragments stand apart at the end, they differ from the others in both length and content. These are texts of a personal nature, where we find the text of the epitaph and memorial stela for the author's grave, as well as an address to his relatives with the explanation of what should be done with his body after his death.

Thus, Song Qi's collection presents us with separate essays which do not have a definite subject or share a unifying theme; rather, they are notations (fragments), usually laconic. We find there a free intermingling of purely informational fragments, aesthetic evaluations, poetic verses, aphorisms, and fragments of an autobiographical nature, but works with a definite subject are absent. The "Notes of Master Song Jin-wen" can be compared to a scholar's notes which contain various working materials not used in other works, for example, the 新唐書 ("New History of the Tang [Dynasty]"), to which Song Qi dedicated 10 years of his life. And though these materials do not obviously display thematic categories, one can notice some overriding themes which reflect the author's main interest and to which he repeatedly returns. These are government, correcting errors, evaluating poetic works, etc.

Let us turn now to another authorial collection, 北夢瑣言 ("Short Utterances from [the] Beymen") by Sun Guang-xian 孫光憲. The author lived at the very end of the Tang dynasty, the time of the Five Dynasties, and the first years of the Song dynasty, which determined the basic content of his collection. The "Short Utterances" treats the end of the Tan dynasty and the Five Dynasties. Sun Guang-xian had a special reason to address this time: first, he was an eyewitness to many of the events he recorded, and knew many of the figures in person thanks to his position in society; second, as Sun Guang-xian writes in the foreword to his collection, "under Tang, during the troubles and unrest of the years known as the rule of Guang-ming (880—881 — *I. A.*), rare books disappeared without a trace, and after the emperor Wu-zong (r. 841—847 — *I. A.*), there was desolation and obscurity, and there was no one to tell of the glorious deeds at court and in the provinces". In Sun Guang-xian's own words, "ashamed at the fragmentary nature of his knowledge", he decided to remedy this omission.

"Short Utterances from [the] Beymen" is a rather extended collection of works possessing a well-outlined subject, in the spirit of an unofficial history. While the whole of the material in the collection is not organised in any thematic fashion, one can nonetheless note a certain grouping of works. For example, the 18th and 19th *juan*s collect 23 stories about the late-Tang emperor Ming-zong (r. 926—934). The 7th *juan* contains more than 20 tales on incidents at state exams. Among the heroes of Sun Guang-xian's work are quite a few well-known poets and bibliophiles: Gu Kuang 顧況 (727—815), Bo Ju-yi 白居易 (772—846), Li Shang-yin 李商隱 (812—?858), Pi Ri-xiu 皮日休 (?834—883), Ne Yi-zhong 聶夷中 (837—?884), Du Xun-he 杜荀鶴 (846—904), Lo Yin 羅隱 (833—909), Wei Zhuang 韋莊 (836—910), and others. Furthermore, the fragments dedicated to them are quite extensive and informative. The collections also presents unique information on the Tan emperors and their relatives.

The "Short Utterances from [the] Beymen" also contains stories about the magic world and supernatural beings — the souls of the dead, saints and the immortals, as well as about retribution, but there are not many of these.

Somewhat different is the collection entitled "Story of the Fly-Swatter" 蠅史 by Wang De-chen 王得臣. Wang De-chen organises the material in his collection into 44 sections (門) of equal size, however, thematically varied content. These are, for example, 音樂 ("Music"), 治家 ("Running a household"), 任人 ("The service class"), etc. Some sections contain only a single record, for example, 志氣 ("Decisiveness"), while others are rather large and diverse. In all, one can attribute a certain thematic colouring to each of the three *juan*s.

The first *juan*, containing 12 sections, brings together fragments which are largely concerned with emperors, the imperial court, and high-ranking officials. The episodes from the lives of the Song emperors (Gao-zu, Shen-zong, Ying-zong) cited here testify to their high virtues and are intended to illustrate wise rule over the Celestial Empire.

The short sections which consist of two—four fragments, like 朝制 ("Institutions at court"), 官制 ("Statutes for officials"), 任人, and other, speak of officials and customs at court and among the upper nobility. Here, as elsewhere in Wang De-chen's collection, the focus is primarily on mid- and high-level officials who are still performing their duties, rather than those who have retired or are not working in an official capacity. The content of these fragments is clear from the section titles: 忠讜 ("Faithful to the ruler and just"), 惠政 ("Merciful government"), 賢德 ("Wise and just"), etc. Wang De-chen displays an interest in well-known people and statesmen as individuals who rule the people and exercise power. It is important to him to stress the qualities which allow such a person to serve and govern in such a way that the people flourish and the state grows rich. Among the high-ranking officials he mentions are such well-known North Song figures as Kou Zhun 寇準 (961—1023), Han Yi 韓億 (972—1044), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007—1072), Fu Bi 富弼 (1004—1083), Ding Wei 丁謂 (966—1037), Fan Zhong-yan 范仲淹 (989—1052). Wang De-chen cites interesting episodes from their official careers. Much is said about just tax policy in the provinces, especially about the tax in tea, in connection with which Zhang Yong 張詠 (946—1015) is for example mentioned.

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右歸田錄二卷宋歐陽修撰宋史藝文志入史部傳記類作八卷今所傳文忠公集本及稗海學津討原本皆一卷與陳振孫書錄解題合振孫云或言公爲此錄未傳而序先出裕陵索之其中本載時事及所經歷見聞不敢以進旋爲此本而初本竟不復出王明清揮麈後錄四庫提要誤作三錄則曰歐陽公歸田錄初成未出而序先傳神宗見之遽命中使宣取時公已致仕在潁州以其間所記述有未欲廣者因盡刪去之又惡其太少則雜記戲笑不急之事以充滿其卷帙既繕寫進入而舊本亦不敢存今世之所有皆進本而元書蓋未嘗存之周煇清波雜志所記與明清之說同惟末云元本亦嘗出廬陵集所載上下繚二卷乃進本也四庫提要引清波雜志係內府所藏影宋精本與稗海本並作原本亦嘗出鮑氏知不足齋所刊清波雜志作原本未嘗出惟鮑刻出婁江曹彬侯所藏東海焦氏本後得明姚舜咨寫本校之補錄別志三卷張貴謨序一篇不及庫本爲可據且原文下云廬陵集所載上下繚二卷則煇意在證元本不止二卷亦以作亦嘗出者於義爲長案此三說皆出宋人一云初本竟不復出一云元書未嘗存之一云原本亦嘗出而初稿爲一

涵芬樓

Fig. 2

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Of special interest in this *juan* is the large section 禮義 ("On the essence of etiquette"), which deals with curious details of official garment: hats, belts, etc.

The second *juan* (17 sections) deals with noteworthy high officials (the erudite and scholarly) and scholarship and knowledge in the broad sense: poetry, elegant speech (*wen*), painting, calligraphy. A number of short sections, such as "Running a household", 碑碣 ("Square and round stelas"), and 書畫 ("Painting and calligraphy"), contain fragments which discuss the exceptional human qualities of historical figures, many of whom were noted above. But they are shown to be exceptional not because of wise acts of governance, but in various happenings of minor importance.

Another large section, 神守 ("Aid from the spirits"), brings together fragments on omens, foretellings, and prophetic dreams. For example, we read of the mother of the Song brothers before their birth, who saw in a dream a man in red who gave her a large gem; before the birth of Song Qi (998—1061), the same man presented her with a "Literary anthology" 文選. This *juan* also contains "Discussion of poetry", which consists of 32 fragments comprising well-known verses from the poetry of Wang De-chen's contemporaries with his clarifications and judgments, utterances and opinions on the verses, the poetry and poetic mastery of Wang De-chen's acquaintances and people he considered authoritative. He cites what he finds curious or not entirely correct (in which case he provides corrections). We find here also verses on the death of Wang De-chen's younger brother.

The third *juan* (15 sections) collects thematically varied fragments such as 古器 ("Ancient utensils"), 戒殺 ("The prevention of murder"), 真僞 ("The true and the false"), 語讖 ("Prophecies"). This *juan* contains the largest number of unusual fragments, often of a supernatural character. The section 奇異 ("The surprising and unusual") cites, for example, a well-known story found in other *biji*s of how Kou Zhun, exiled to Leizhou, appealed to the Heavens with a prayer, cut off a piece of bamboo, stuck it into the ground, and the bamboo put down roots.

The content of the third *juan* is perhaps best reflected by the title of one of its sections: 雜志 ("Various notes").

Despite this diversity, the overwhelming majority of the fragments in the "Story of the Fly-Swatter" concern officials performing their duties, their service to the state, or certain incidents, at times wonderful; also treated are their utterances, verses, statutes, and the institutions (制) common in their midst.

Wang De-chen's collection, which is essentially 史 ("history"), brings together fairly varied notes of an informational nature: those without definite subject (among which fragments predominate), those with a definite subject (志人小說, jokes), poetic notes. In many of the fragments, the action takes place in the author's place of origin — Anlu — or in places he has been. For the most part, the material does not come from books or texts, but from the author's direct impressions in the form of his personal observations. This personal element, on the one hand, unifies the disconnected fragments into a single collection; on the other, it renders the content of the "Story of the Fly-Swatter" valuable and unique. The work is without any doubt an important source for the study of culture in Song China, illuminating its most varied aspects, especially the ethnographic.

Lu Fu's 劉斧 collection 青瑣高議 ("Lofty Judgements by the Palace Gates") differs considerably from the others. This is perhaps the best-known *biji* collection in Russia (fragments of it were translated by Russian scholars B. L. Riftin and K. I. Golygina). We know very little of the author himself, except his name, or the name with which he signed the collection. We also know that the person who went by that name held the scholarly degree 秀才, meaning that he had passed the first-stage exam for a vacant state post. This allows us to assume that Lu Fu came from a family of officials and was himself preparing for service.

We provide a few brief remarks on the collection's composition. "Lofty Judgements by the Palace Gates" consists of three parts: the first two contain 10 *juan*s each, while the third — 7. In total, we find here 144 works in various genres. The first part contains 49 of them; the second, 72; the third, 23. One must also note the 36 fragments, which make up the appendix to the main section (in the 1983 Peking edition). The collections combine *chuanqi* 傳奇 novellas, 唐前小說 style prose — which predominates and is about both the miraculous (志怪) and events and people (志人) — subject-less prose (remarks and thoughts), individual poetic works, thoughts on poetry. All of the works included in the collection bear headings which consist of a varied number of hieroglyphs (usually three). Subheadings of seven signs reveal the content. It shoud be noted that about one fourth of the works in "Lofty Judgements by the Palace Gates" have summaries. It may be that Lu Fu added these summations, which begin with the words 議曰 or, more rarely, 評曰 ("[My] judgement is such") to the works of others, and that the presence of such summations indicates that Lu Fu is not the author.

In content and genre, Lu Fu's collection, while displaying the characteristic features of a *biji*, stands apart. Among Song books which have reached us, it is only in this collection that we find many large subject works (*chuanqi* novellas). The "mix of genres", which results from the author's selections, enables us to study various aspects of Song culture: the author surveyed not only actual historical figures, but a number of Daoist saints — Lü Dong-bin 呂洞賓, Han Xiang-zi 韓湘子, and He Xian-gu 何仙姑 — and Buddhist mentors. The subject works, in turn, allow us to discuss the characteristics of world-outlook among Song high officials and bibliophiles, and, more broadly, the mentality of the epoch. The "Lofty Judgements by the Palace Gates" is an authorial collection, but is to a large extent a compilation. Hence, we can speak of it as a reflection of the views and biases not only of Lu Fu (as expressed in his selections) but also, in mediated form, the views of the educated classes in Song society on the world and man's place in it.

4

Bearing in mind to achieve accuracy in knowledge and information, the authors of *biji* collections use sources of three types. The first one comprises written texts they consider trustworthy. Generally, many of these texts have not come down to us, but owing, for example, to Lu Fu, who included in his collection 14 works by his contemporaries, we know both the texts and their authors' names. The second includes stories of elder contemporaries, usually rela-

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tives, mentors or people the author considers authoritative, and, finally, personal research and the impressions of "those who saw and heard" constitute the third type of sources employed. In the last two cases, however, authors of *biji* collections still attempted to re-check the information they received against written texts to which they had access. For example, Gong Ming-zhi 龔 明 之 (1091—1182) writes in the foreword to his "What I Heard about Central Wu" 中吳紀聞 that his work is based on stories he heard from his grandfather and his acquaintances. "When in my youth I served my grandfather, each time I heard him begin to speak of our ancestors in this region, I listened without distraction", — he reports. He also uses information received from his father, his colleagues at work, acquaintances and friends he knew from his travels with his father from one place of service to another. The author says: "Upon becoming an adult, I travelled with my father and those who served with him, and these were all well-known people and outstanding scholars". Finally, information Gun received in the process of teaching or from conversations with friends and colleagues was used as well: "I received information about the days of old from people with whom I became close...".

Gong Ming-zhi reports that he checked this information with the appropriate written sources and concludes: "None of this is to be found either in the old 'Book of All the Lands' or in the 'Records of Wu Lands'". Another collection's author, Wang De-chen describes his method of work as follows: "I received new appointments for 36 years. During that time, I wrote down everything I heard in conversations with my mentors and school-mates, in conversations with guests and colleagues, or what I saw and heard myself".

The information we can obtain from *biji* collections is in many ways unique. First, because *biji* texts present the personal impressions of their authors and, second, because other sources for this information have simply not survived. Primarily, this applies to information about the authors of *biji* collections — actual historical figures of whom we know only through their works — who are often significant figures in Chinese history. Frequently, we also learn about the relatives of *biji* authors, and the collections are once again our only source. For example, in his collection "From Conversations in Pingzhou" 萍 洲 可 談, Zhu Yü 朱 彧 (?1075—after 1119) provides extensive information about Hu and his maternal relatives; he enumerates them and the state posts which the male members of the family occupied. Overall, Zhu Yü's collection contains such information in 28 fragments. To cite another example, nearly all of what is known about Gong Zong-yuan (10th century) is found in the collection of his grandson, Gong Ming-zhi.

We also find episodes from the lives of well-known historical figures, poorly or completely not reflected in official historical works. They provide additional materials to describe these individuals and sometimes present previously unknown biographical facts. For example, Wang De-chen recounts that Kou Zhun became famous in his youth for being courageous enough to answer, during a drought, the emperor's question of why there was no rain. Kou Zhun explained that the drought was due to the unjust, rapacious administration of the first minister. The minister was removed and it began to rain. Zhu Yü provides information about the family life of the famed Chinese encyclopedist Shen Ko 沈 括 (1029—1093), whose wife "beat him and dragged him by his mustache along the ground so [violently] that she tore out hair with blood and flesh". The woman, Zhu Yü comments, compromised the scholars in the eyes of his colleagues; yet Shen Ko stoically endured her behaviour, and his wife's death so grieved him that he nearly drowned himself.

A curious fragment in Wang De-chen's collection recounts how temples were built for the ministers Kou Zhun and Fan Zhong-yan in Dengzhou: grateful residents began to make sacrifices there for Kou Zhun's spirit after his death; Fan Zhong-yan himself decreed the construction of his temple. Wang De-chen writes that "there was at first no god-protector in Baihuazhow, and when Wen-zhen (Fan Chzhun-yan's posthumous name) was appointed to serve there, he ordered that a shrine be erected. The carpenters began to ask who they should depict in the statue of a spirit, and the lord answered: 'Why, myself!' And so they built a shrine for lord Wen-zhen".

Of definite value for scholars are the many fragments in Zhu Yü's collection on the regulations for officials of his time, on official dress according to rank, rules for the inheritance of positions by the relatives of high-ranking officials, and other rules (for example, pillows of *rong* fur and rules relating to the ranks which permitted certain officials to sit on certain pillows at certain times).

Authorial collections provide no less interesting, diverse, and unique information on various customs and details from everyday life. For example, the following passage about paper in Song Qi deserves a note: "In ancient times, all books were written exclusively on yellow paper, which is why they were called 黃 卷 ("yellow scrolls" — *I. A.*). Yan Zhi-tui writes: 'All of the books in the Celestial Empire cannot be counted, all of the mistakes cannot be covered over in yellow'. [He speaks of] yellow paint, the same colour as the paper, which was used to correct mistakes. Today they write on white paper, while experts [continue to] correct errors in yellow. The colours do not match. Only Dao and Buddhist works are still written on yellow paper".

Wang De-chen describes in some detail 折 上 巾, 牛 耳 幞 頭 head scarves, the history and production of 藤 巾 子 hats, woven from reeds, and 紗 巾, from crepe, and grass scarves. He also cites a description of the evolution of memorial plates (笏), a requisite attribute of an official at a high audience, their sizes and the material of their manufacture: "The memorial plates of those who wear purple dress are made from ivory", — he writes — "they are bent at the top and straight on the bottom; for those who wear green dress, they are boards of *sophora* wood, curved at the top and rectangular at the bottom. Boards of ivory were first made short and thick, then long and wide. In the years of Huang-yu, these boards became large and thin, slightly concave; they were called 抱 身 ("enveloping the body"). Then, straight boards of moderate size came into use. As concerns wooden boards, they were at first also very thick; now they are thin and are no longer made from *sophora*".

Information is also frequently of an ethno-linguistic nature, like in Song Qi, who writes: "People in the south call all rivers 江, people in the north 河, because of differences in dialect, the names of the Huai and Ji rivers are not entirely clear". Several fragments in his collection treat customs common in the Song Shu 蜀 (the modern-day province of Sichuan): for example, old people there were called 皤, not 老. Or: "Under Qin and Han, they said of

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themselves 臣 ("subject"), and the Son of Heaven addressed the *gong*s and *qins* as 君 ("master"). But later this was not done: there was 君 ("ruler") and 臣 ("his subjects")".

Ouyang Xiu provides information about Longfeng tea and the cases sewn for it by women of the palace: this type of tea was so valued that the emperor would present it to officials of the capital as an incentive.

Also valuable is information on customs and everyday life in specific places. This is all the more important, because so little has reached us from the Song period. Of primary interest in this regard is Gong Ming-zhi's collection whose title speaks for itself: "What I Heard about Central Wu". The author's attention is focused on the customs, mores, events and historical figures of his native Central Wu (the Suzhou region and Kunshan in the modern province of Jiangsu). Gong Ming-zhi's collection may be considered as a veritable encyclopaedia providing rich information on these places, especially about people who came from U, which is lacking in other sources.

The second *juan* of Zhu Yü's collection gives as well a precious information about the south of Song China, primarily Guangzhou and the foreigners' quarter in that city, the customs service and rules for customs fees, taxation for merchants, and goods. The collection contains one of the first mentions of the use of the compass on Chinese sea-faring ships (the compass and rules for its use were also described in another *biji* collection, "Records of Conversations in Mensi" 夢溪筆談 by Shen Ko).

Of no less interest is the information about the supernatural as presented in *biji*. In Lu Fu's "Lofty Judgements by the Palace Gates" a magical world with a complex and strict hierarchical organisation is shown, and one can find here a partial description of both spheres of the other world — beneath the ground (hell) and the sphere of those who dwell in heaven. Hell is depicted in the story "Chen Shui". Three sections of hell are named: hell where one is roasted, hell where one is boiled, and hell where one is sawed. A strict order prevails in the underworld: officials go about their business, orders are issued, and a chancery functions much as it would in normal life. A newly arrived soul is interrogated and the matter undergoes a detailed review. The degree of guilt is determined and a level of harshness is set for punishment. Afterwards, the soul can be reborn. A certain number of souls reside for a time in an unreborn state (they are called "lost souls"), either because they were buried improperly or because that is the will of the ruler of the underworld. Errors are possible in the "hearing" beyond the grave, but they are usually rectified. One can gain a sense of the hierarchy of the saints from the novella "Lists of the saints from the mountain Cunyufeng", which reproduces an entire table of ranks. The saints move up in the hierarchy by perfecting their *dao* though temporary immersion in the world of people, where their moral sanctity is tested in the sinful temptations of the vanities as in a crucible. Lu Fu writes that the grandees of the world of people are, in the main, temporary incarnations of the saints. When they die, they take up appropriate positions in the heavenly realm. Such information is interesting because, unlike canonical Dao or Buddhist works, it reflects actual beliefs about the supernatural and is closer to the views found among ordinary people.

5

Biji collections do not constitute an independent literary genre. They can merely be termed writings which are distinguished by a special form for organising an authorial collection. At the base of *biji* writings in China lay collections, which had their individual titles and by which they became known. The collections brought together individual fragments, more or less complete, but usually without their own headings. The person whose name stood on the title page of the collection was primarily the author of the work of a compilation nature: not all of the works included were in fact written by him. A part of the fragments, frequently a significant one, could be borrowed (with partial alterations or without any changes) by the author from his predecessors' collections. The author's contribution lay not in the composition of works, but in the principle of selection. We find the same phenomenon in *biji* collections, which unite in a single collection prose of various genres, intermingled with verses, both plotted and un-plotted. It is in this activity that *biji* authors created a new form of text, one for all practical purposes free of genre limitations.

One of the main characteristics of *biji* is its pronounced penchant to history. Everything must be recorded and preserved so that later generations will be able to compare, correct, or refute information provided. This, together with continuity of the Chinese literary tradition, allows one to study not only the historical events and the details of those events, but also details of details, as well as their transformations and changes in perception. *Biji* authorial collections provide a special opportunity to do this. They are fundamentally open texts, absorbing the most varied materials. The information they contain is like a gold-bearing layer of rock: sometimes one finds more, sometimes less.

In terms of the information they bring together, *biji* collections can be conditionally divided into three more or less stable thematic groups: 歷史瑣聞筆記, collections which contain unofficial historical information not found in official historical works or which augments the latter; 考据辨証筆記, collections dedicated to various inaccuracies, errors, difficult passages, concepts, and corrections, adjustments, explanations; 小說故事筆記, i.e. *biji* which contain primarily short fragments of a plotted nature (historical incidents, episodes, notes on supernatural phenomena, etc.). The majority of *biji* collections examined in the present study fall into the first or second group.

Biji authorial collections are the most promising sources for the reconstruction of the world of Song China as reflected in the *biji* compositions. We find here none of the chaotic, disorganised elements of ordinary life, for the Song bibliophile was a carrier of the "wisdom of books". Nor do we find the dogmatic constructions characteristic of philosophical theories and religious teachings, for the Song author lived the life of the people and checked his knowledge against it. The confirmation of incidents from everyday life with notes from the works of predecessors and contemporaries is not incidental; nor are the refutations of what is known, the additions and adjustments.

One should note especially a good quality and veracity of the *biji* as a historical source: these are documents re

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老學庵筆記卷第一

徽宗南幸至潤郡官迎駕於西津及御舟抵岸上御棕頂轎子一宦者立轎旁呼曰道君傳語衆官不須遠來衛士臚傳以告遂退」徽宗南幸還京服栗玉並桃冠白玉簪赭紅羽衣乘七寶輦蓋吳敏定儀注云

高宗在徽宗服中用白木御倚子錢大主入覲見之曰此檀香倚子耶張婕（何校作嫕）好掩口笑曰禁中用烟（何校作胭）脂皁莢多相公已有語更敢用檀香作倚子耶時趙鼎張浚作相也

建炎苗劉之變內侍遇害至多有秦同老者自揚州被命至荆楚前一日還行在尚未得對亦死焉又有蕭守（毛本作中）道者日侍左右忽得罪絀爲外郡監當前一日出城遂免

臨安父老言苗劉戕王淵在朝天門外今都進奏院前然日曆及

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Fig. 3

flecting a concrete historical period and providing information on the most insignificant incidents or extensive descriptions of customs common at the time. Therefore, the introduction of Song *biji* authorial collections into scholarly circulation might create a solid source base for those who study the whole variety of China's material and spiritual life. Unfortunately, *Biji* collections remain insufficiently examined. They seem to have been overlooked because it is a rather difficult task to study this kind of source which needs first of all labour-consuming identification of a variety of texts *biji* collections contain.

Notes

1. A brief overview of the scholarly literature on this subject and a more detailed classification of *biji* collections by Song authors can be found in the first volume of my monograph, see I. A. Alimov, *Vsled za kist'iu. Materialy k istorii Songskikh avtorskikh sbornikov biji. Issledovaniia. Perevody* (Following the Brush. Materials on the History of Song Dynasty Authors' *Biji* Collections. Research. Translations.), pt. 1 (St. Petersburg, 1996).

2. 張輝, "散論宋筆記的几個問題 ("A brief discussion of certain problems connected with Song *biji*"), in 四川大學學報, No. 3 (1989), p. 88.

3. 劉葉秋, 歷代筆記概述 (Historical Essay on *Biji* of Various Eras) (Peking, 1980), p. 5.

4. 褚斌杰,, 中國古代文體概論 (An Essay on Ancient Chinese Literary Genres) (Peking, 1990), p. 463.

5. In the first volume of my monograph (see n. 1), I attempted to draw up a list of promising Song collections which can be classified as *biji* on the basis of existing scholarship. This list contains some 60 collections; it will, of course, be amended, mainly through additions.

Illustrations

Fig. 1. The first page of a block-print edition of the *biji* collection *Gui tian lu* ("The Notes of One Who Returned to the Fields") by Ouyang Xiu (1007—1072).

Fig. 2. The last page of a block-print edition of the same *biji* collection.

Fig. 3. The first page of a block-print edition of the *biji* collection *Lao xue an biji* ("The Notes from 'The Small Secluded Monastery Where I Am Gaining Wisdom in My Old Age'") by Lu You (1125—1210).

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