

RESEARCH ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS OF CHINESE LOCAL GAZETTEERS: OVERVIEW, EVALUATION, AND POTENTIAL APPROACH FOR FUTURE STUDY¹

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Abstract

In the Chinese context, local gazetteers (fangzhi 方志) are mostly official or quasi-official standardized compendia of comprehensive materials on given administrative units. Over the course of the last fifty years, research on gazetteer illustrations has grown in relation to the more dominant study of Chinese cartography, gradually becoming an independent subject of study. Though the study of gazetteer illustrations has undergone considerable development, the overall state of research is still far from satisfactory. The quantity of existing case studies is very small and these studies mainly focus on the older and fewer Song gazetteer illustrations, rather than the vast number of more recent Ming and Qing gazetteer ones. When discussed, gazetteer illustrations are usually categorized as “maps”. This paper argues that this is an unsatisfactory method of categorization – one that simply cannot account for the wide variety of gazetteers. Moreover, research on gazetteer maps is, in general, introductory rather than theoretical or analytical, and is usually approached from a cultural, social, or artistic angle rather than from the angle of space. In my conclusion, I give some suggestions about gazetteer illustration selection and then appeal to the study of space in the field of visual culture, suggesting that the theoretical developments of the “spatial turn” should be incorporated into the future interpretation of gazetteer illustrations.

Keywords: gazetteer illustrations; literature review; evaluation; spatial turn

1. Introduction

In the Chinese context, local gazetteers (*fangzhi* 方志) are mostly official or quasi-official standardized compendia of comprehensive materials on given administrative units: nation, province (*sheng* 省), prefecture (*fu* 府) or sub prefecture (*zhou* 州), county (*xian* 县),

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canton (*xiang* 乡), or town (*zhen* 镇). Apart from these predominant forms, there are other types of gazetteers recording a certain geographical area, such as a mountain, river, lake, temple, or academy. Of the two categories, the former constitutes the majority and will be the primary concern of this paper.

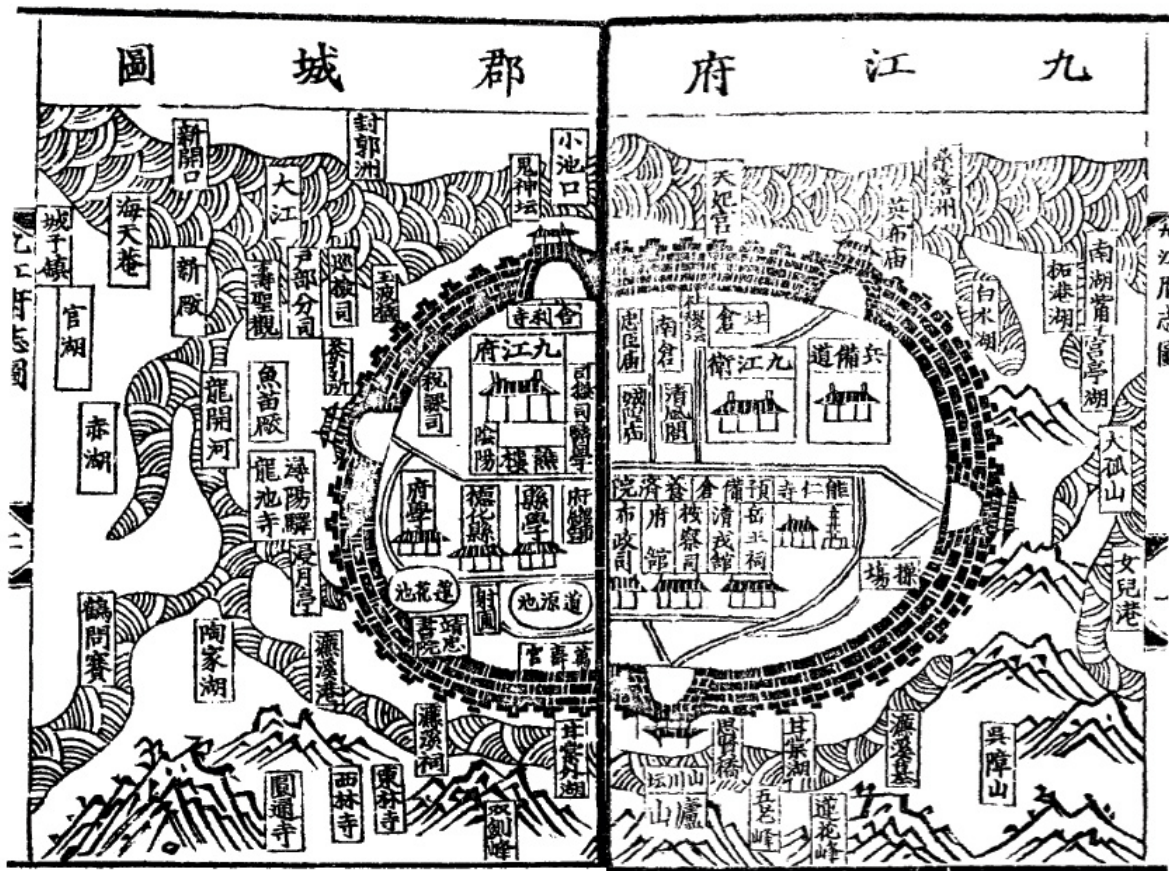
As a particular kind of ancient Chinese document, local gazetteers have existed in China since antiquity, taking their embryonic form, *diji* (地记), in the Wei, Jin, and Northern and Southern Dynasties (220–581), their rudimentary *tujing* (图经) form in the Sui and Tang dynasties (581–907), and finally their mature *fangzhi* (方志) form that we recognize today in the Ming and Qing dynasties (1368–1911). The Song dynasty (960–1279) serves as a transition period from *tujing* to *fangzhi*². These local documents, originally compiled by the elite members (*shidafu* 士大夫) of society, are brimming with vivid encyclopedic details concerning astronomical phenomena, local geography, and administration and social affairs covering almost every aspect of the region. As such, they are an important resource for understanding China in depth. The noted sinologist Arthur William Hummel (1884–1975) comments on the gazetteers in Chinese literature: “Anyone at all acquainted with Chinese literature is familiar with the host of ‘gazetteer.’[...] In other literatures there is little comparable to this forest of monuments which the industry of provincial scholars erected over the centuries” (Hummel 1931-2, cited in Needham 1959: 517).

Like many ancient Chinese books, local gazetteers are normally a combination of expository texts and relevant illustrations. Illustrations are used to make the content easier to understand and to give an unforgettable impression of the local region. Normally they are placed at the beginning of the book constituting a separate chapter (*juan* 卷), although sometimes they are scattered throughout the book. The number and content of the illustrations varies significantly, depending on what the compilers found necessary or helpful. Whilst some of the gazetteers are unillustrated, others, in certain specific cases, contain more than one hundred illustrations. These illustrations depict local boundaries and territories, mountains and rivers, city walls and moats, administration and education buildings, ancient sites, water conservancy facilities, and military facilities. Three kinds of illustrations are most

² J. M. Hargett demonstrates the major changes in *difangzhi*, comparing the identity of compiler and audience as well as focuses in the South Song period with previous dynasties, and further reveals the shifting social, economic, and political context together with the diverse and lively intellectual climate of Song. See Hargett (1996: 418-436). Peter K. Bol depicts the rise of local history in Wuzhou (婺州 now Jinhua 金华 Zhejiang Province) between the mid-twelfth century and the early fourteenth century. One of the three compilations he argues is the local gazetteer. See Bol (2000: 44-54).

popular: maps of territory (*Jiangyutu* 疆域图), maps of the city (*Chengchitu* 城池图), and plans of the government office and/or Confucian academy (*Yashutu* 治署图, *Xuegongtu* 学宫图). (See Fig. 1: Territory Map of Jiujiang Prefecture). Besides these three types of illustrations, various other illustrations can be found, including woodblock landscape paintings, such as *Eight Views* (*bajing* 八景) or *Ten Views* (*shijing* 十景), pictures of ritual issues, such as those in the *Confucius Memorial Ceremony* (*Jikongdianli* 祭孔典礼), and custom pictures of ethnic minorities in the border areas.

Figure 1 Territory Map of Jiujiang Prefecture



Source: *Gazetteer of Jiujiang in Jiajing Period* (*Jiajing Jiujiang fuzhi* 嘉靖九江志). See Feng Z., and Li X. (1962[1527]: preface)

There are numerous illustrations in Chinese ancient woodblock books depicting geographical issues. The *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* (*Guangyutu* 广舆图), compiled by the famous cartographer Luo Hongxian (罗洪先 1504–1564) in 1555, is famous for its grid proportions that demonstrate the quantitative approach of cartography, and which influenced

mapmaking and gazetteer illustrations until the late 17th century³. The illustrations in *An Extensive Guide Book for Daily Use* (*Shilin guangji* 事林广记), an everyday encyclopedia compiled in the late Song dynasty, help to bring general geographic knowledge to ordinary people⁴. The 114 maps of illustrations in the *Illustrated Book on Maritime Defense* (*Chouhai tubian* 筹海图编) depict the entire Chinese coastline and its fortifications, which demonstrate a clearer focus on the sea-land relationship⁵.

Despite the extensive details of these books, not one of them demonstrates an accumulated diversity of local narrative in the way that local gazetteers do. Gazetteer illustrations are cumulative visual records of specific geographic-administrative districts that transcend dynastic changes. A certain region can preserve these visual records for several centuries. Taking the Changshu (常熟) County in Jiangsu (江苏) Province as an example, there are seven kinds of gazetteers that have survived. The oldest one is the *Gazetteer of Qinchuan Region* (*Baoju zhongxiu qin chuan zhi* 宝祐重修琴川志), dating from 1227, while the most recent ones are the *Combined Gazetteers of Changshu County and Zhaohe County* (*Guangxu changshu zhaohe zhi gao* 光绪常昭合志稿), dating in 1904, which spans eight centuries⁶.

Their wide, if not universal, scope in depicting regions, along with their accumulation of information over a remarkably long time span, distinguishes these gazetteer illustrations from other forms of visual representation in ancient China. A more comprehensive understanding of premodern Chinese society is made possible when viewed through the lens of these gazetteer illustrations.

2. Research Overview

Over the course of the last fifty years, research on gazetteer illustrations has grown in relation to the dominant history of Chinese cartography, gradually becoming an independent subject of study. Wang Yong (王庸), a pioneer in the study of Chinese cartography, discusses the gazetteer maps so briefly that no specific gazetteer illustrations are mentioned in his work (1959: 29-32). The ‘Gazetteer map’ is one of the subsidiary issues tackled in J. B. Harley’s

³ The ten maps from the *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* are collected in *An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China*, with brief introductions. See Cao (1995: 11-12). For detailed research on the *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas*, please see Kazutaka (2010).

⁴ It was compiled by Chen Yuanliang (陈元靓 1200-1266) whose subjects cover astronomy, geography, politics, justice, society, literature, and entertainment. See Chen Y. (1963 [? c. 1101-1200]).

⁵ There are 114 maps in this book, which depict the fortifications along the Chinese coast along with warships and weapons. These maps were compiled by Zheng Ruozeng (郑若曾). See Zheng (2007 [1562]).

⁶ See Sun Y., Bao L., Lu Zh. (1990 [1227]) and Pang H. (2008 [1904]).

and David Woodward's colossal book, *The History of Cartography* (Volume 2, Book 2), which deals specifically with cartography in East and Southeast Asia. Despite being an extensive study, the book gives only a cursive introduction to gazetteers and their illustrations when discussing maps in Chinese politics and culture (Harley and Woodward 1994: 91-92).

Similarly, gazetteer maps constitute only a minor part of *An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China*, compiled by the cartographic historian Cao Wanru (曹婉如). This three-volume work is arranged in chronological order, including both maps spanning from the Warring States (475–221 BC) to the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368), Ming Dynasty (1368–1644), and Qing Dynasty (1644–1911), respectively and papers focusing some selective maps. The first volume of the work includes half of the illustrations in eight kinds of gazetteers compiled in the South Song dynasty (Cao 1990: 9-15). In the second volume, maps from some selective seven kinds of gazetteers are included in which maps in the *Gazetteers of Yong'an County* (*Yong'an xianzhi* 万历永安县志 1586) and the *Gazetteer of Huizhou Prefecture* (*Huizhou fuzhi* 万历惠州府志 1596) have been paid specific attention: one paper intensively discusses their relatively “scientific” grid proportion (*jili huafang* 计里画方) cartography and close relation to Luo Hongxian's *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* (Hu 1995: 94-95)⁷. In the third volume, no administrative gazetteer maps are included which makes an intense contrast with the most quantity of the existent gazetteer illustrations (Cao 1997). The fact that the number of gazetteer maps dwindles as the three-volume study proceeds suggests that the fewer numbers of older gazetteer maps are regarded as more valuable than the larger number of more recent gazetteer maps. Meanwhile, the specific research on maps in the *Gazetteers of Yong'an County* and the *Gazetteer of Huizhou Prefecture* implies that the accuracy of the maps which demonstrate the coincidence with the reality was one of the main research focus at that time.

To improve more general research, scholars have conducted specialized studies of gazetteer illustrations from a number of different angles. A book compiling most of the gazetteer illustrations of the Hunan (湖南) Province has been published, serving as an important material for further research (Liu and Liu 2009). This sort of specialized research has generally been carried out from a dynastic and regional perspective. Liu Tingxiang (1994)

⁷ Traditional Chinese cartography used the square grid as a cartographic tool to locate the elements in the map in order to make it correspond to reality. Each side of a square usually represents a fixed ground distance. Harley and Woodward's book provides a brief history of the Chinese cartographic grid and introduces the important cases in which the proportional grid is applied, such as the *Map of Tracks of Yu* (*Yujitu* 禹迹图 1137) and the *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* (1994: 46-52).

and Lai Hongwen (1997) have provided comprehensive introductions to the gazetteer illustrations of the Ming and Qing dynasties, respectively. Both studies are based on a sampling survey of the gazetteers available in Taiwanese libraries, and both explore cartographic elements such as scale, cartographic symbols, and notes from the angle of contemporary cartography. Meanwhile, there are a few introductory papers on the gazetteer illustrations of the Xinjiang (新疆), Zhejiang (浙江), and Anhui (安徽) Provinces. Relatively speaking, however, studies of Taiwanese gazetteer illustrations are more extensive and thoroughly conducted, covering a wider range of topics, from a general introduction to the state power's declaration in terms of its newly being brought to the Qing's territory in the Kangxi Period (1662-1722)(Xia 1996, 2004).

Quite a few individual maps, especially those from South Song, Yuan, and early Ming gazetteers, have been discussed. Cao has compared in great detail the text in the first surviving three chapters, and their corresponding illustrations, of the *Gazetteer of Yanzhou Region* (*Yanzhoutujing* 淳熙严州图经 1139), the oldest surviving gazetteer (1994: 376-381). Since the 1980s, Hu Bangbo, a prolific researcher in the field of gazetteer illustrations, has been contributing insights on a number of important gazetteer illustrations of the South Song and Yuan Dynasties, such as those in the *Gazetteer of Jiankang Prefecture* (*Jingding Jiankangzhi* 景定建康志 1261), the *Gazetteer of Jinling Prefecture* (*Zhizheng Jinlinxinzhi* 至正金陵新志 1344), and the *Gazetteer of Lin'an Prefecture* (*Xianchun Lin'an zhi* 咸淳临安志 1265) (1988a, 1988b, 1999, 2001). His studies investigate the mathematical elements and the capacity of gazetteer maps using a quantitative method in order to evaluate the accuracy of the illustrations (Hu 1988a, 2001). He analyzes cartographic techniques in a number of Song gazetteer maps, such as the concept of a flat surface, the grid system, multiple modes of presentation, and a variety of map orientations (Hu 1999).

Existing research also covers illustrations in the *Yongle Encyclopedia*⁸. In the second volume of *An Atlas of Ancient Maps in China*, some maps from eight kinds of gazetteers are included, especially those from the *Yongle Encyclopedia* (*Yongle Dadian* 永乐大典 1403 -

⁸ The *Yongle Encyclopedia* is the largest general encyclopedia the world has known so far, but only a few chapters have survived over time and the damage of war. These surviving illustrations function as a bridge in the history of cartography in China, connecting the handful of fragments from the South Song dynasty to those of the prosperous middle Ming dynasty and the following Qing dynasty. All of them are inherited from gazetteers of the Song and Yuan dynasties, which add to their great value. See Huang (1988: 145). The wide range of geographical regions in these illustrations stands to counterbalance the relatively restricted region of their early surviving gazetteers, which more depicts the Jiangnan Region. Given the imbalanced quantity of existent gazetteers, the maps in the *Yongle Encyclopedia* are therefore all the more unique and significant.

1408) depicting the *Wuzhou* and *Huzhou* Prefectures (now 梧州/Guangxi Province and 湖州/Zhejiang province) (Cao 1995: 12). Huang Yansheng (1988) records all of the geographic illustrations from twelve kinds of gazetteers in the *Yongle Encyclopedia*, providing brief studies on each group. Two papers disagree on the date of an illustration entitled *Map of Chaozhou City* (*Chaozhoucheng tu* 潮州城图, now Guangdong 广东 Province); one dates it to the Song dynasty (Chen, and Zheng 1989), the other to the Yuan dynasty (Cheng 2008).

3. Recent Focus

Towards the end of twentieth century, the research scope of Chinese cartographic history was expanded to a broader cultural context, which encompassed culture, society, and art. Harley and Woodward (1994) discuss a number of aspects of traditional Chinese cartography, including the relation between maps and military affairs, political culture, and documentary scholarship. Hu (1994) interprets most Chinese administrative gazetteer illustrations of the Song dynasty in terms of their cultural significance, analyzing them from the perspectives of political power, cultural context, and the visual arts. In another paper, he specifically looks at how political powers influence the production of maps, and how political power is strengthened in the gazetteers maps themselves (Hu 2007). Liu Dongyang (2011), an outstanding researcher of architectural theory, questions the practice of reading gazetteers and their illustrations separately. Taking an illustration entitled *Territorial Map of Jinzhou Ward's Mountains and Rivers* (*Jinzhouwei dilitu* 金州卫地理图) from the *Gazetteer of Liaodong* (*Liaodong zhi* 辽东志 1537 edition) as an example, he argues for a more historical approach to gazetteer illustrations; one that views the represented landscape as being interwoven with history and memory, so as to better interpret the particular political status embodied in the illustration. Zhang Zhejia (2003) discusses the visual characteristics of the Ming gazetteer illustrations. Significantly, his study unifies the three most popular illustrations: the map of territory, the map of city, the plan of the government office into a concentric spatial scheme centering the symbol of governing and therefore interprets gazetteer illustration characteristics such as detailing the near and briefing the distant. Pan Sheng's research provides background information on the illustrations: he reveals the identity of the illustration mappers, the process of gazetteer compilation, and the compilation intentions in the Ming dynasty from the angle of knowledge production process rather than its result (2004, 2005).

In general, the recent focuses are more introductory, interpretative than analytical concerning the culture and art issues. Harley and Woodward (1994) abandon the

chronological narrative which is a common way in cartographic history writing. In macroscopic level, they cite a lot of material to depict the connection between the cartography and politics, literature and arts in a practical way, without further theoretical construction. Their research gives valuable clues for future study instead of a research practice taken from a new angle. Hu's (1994) research uses the macroscopic angle developed in Harley's and Woodward's work to interpret the Song gazetteer illustrations, claiming to draw on a range of relevant cultural theories to interpret the content of the illustration. Whilst in practice, the content is more introductory than theoretical.

Meanwhile, other disciplines, such as architecture and history, have also broadened their research scope by including gazetteer illustrations as worthy objects of study. The research group led by architectural historian, Wang Guixiang (王贵祥), for example, has incorporated gazetteer illustrations into their research on local Chinese cities and architecture. As Wang's work(2012) reveals, when it comes to the study of the local city, the local government office, the Confucius temple-school, and local landscapes, gazetteer illustrations should be taken as an essential source of information, alongside documented records and archeological excavation⁹. Historian Ge Zhaoguang (2002) reads ancient maps in the same way as reading texts: he regards them both as part of an intellectual history, and believes that spatial images like maps proffer conceptual significance to this history. When considering Ming gazetteer illustrations, Ge draws attention to their focus on public spaces like governmental offices, shrines, and schools, along with a relative shortage of private spaces like domestic houses and markets. From such observations, he makes further extrapolations on the literati conceptions of the public and the private (2007: 243-251). Historian E. L. Farmer (2000) provides a vivid picture of the walled city of the Ming Dynasty through reading gazetteer illustrations. He keenly points out that reading gazetteer illustrations may allow us to divert our attention away from the popular emphasis on the Jiangnan (江南) area, and may thus help to establish a more comprehensive understanding about the Ming Empire regarding its heartland and periphery (Farmer 2000: 2).

⁹ Xie Hongquan lists the names of architecture and complexes noted in the city maps of the *Gazetteer of Shanxi* Province (*Shanxi tongzhi* 陕西通志 1542) so as to reveal the most popular public buildings in the Ming cities. See Xie (2012: 299-332). Yuan Lin hypothetically reconstructs the administrative institution complex of Jiankang Prefecture in the South Song dynasty based on analyzing its plan that survives in the *Gazetteer of Jiankang Prefecture* (*Jingding jiankang zhi* 景定建康志), as well as the text records. See Yuan, and Wang (2009: 285-304). Zhou Ying reveals the plan composition of the Confucius academies in the He'nan Province with the help of the relevant illustrations and text in the gazetteers. See Zhou (2010: 369-406).

When discussing the relation between the state and society in the Ming dynasty, Timothy Brook (2005) takes up Ye Chunji's (叶春及 1532-1595) gazetteer maps as a point of focus. He describes in detail the process of surveying and drawing involved in the production of the twenty-nine maps in the *Administrative Records of Huian County* (*Huian zhengshu* 惠安政书 1573) by Ye, after the local elites provides the inaccurate maps in order to stave off the state (Brook2005: 42-58). Through the administrative literate official's work such as Ye, Brook provides the evidence that the Ming state had the ability to bring the realm to the court's view, while, in turn, the power of the society can restrict the state policy in practice (ibid: 176).

4. Evaluation and Potential Approach to Future Research

Though the study of gazetteer illustrations has undergone considerable development, the overall status of research is still far from satisfactory, especially where the significance of gazetteer illustrations in Chinese studies is concerned.

4.1 Insufficiencies in Case Studies

Firstly, the quantity of case studies on gazetteer illustrations is very small and these studies mainly focus on the illustrations in the few remaining old Song gazetteers, while ignoring the illustrations in the large numbers of existent Ming and Qing gazetteers. Up to now, only a few dozen gazetteer illustrations have been briefly introduced. The few relatively in-depth studies that have been undertaken mainly focus on the South Song dynasty gazetteer illustrations, featuring Hu's researches (1988a, 1988b, 1990, 1994). As for the existing Ming and Qing gazetteer illustrations, a large number of them remain unstudied.

There is, therefore, a dramatic contrast between the quantity of current case studies on gazetteer illustrations and the number of existing gazetteers. *The Union Catalogue of Chinese Gazetteers in Public collection in Taiwan* (*Taiwan diqu gongcang fangzhi mulu* 台湾地区公藏方志目录) includes approximately 4600 kinds of existent gazetteers, of which many are the only existing editions in the world (Wang 1985). *The Union Catalogue of Chinese gazetteers* (*Zhongguo difangzhi lianghe mulu* 中国地方志联合目录) (Beijing Astronomy Observatory of Chinese Academy of Science, 1985) includes approximately 8200 kinds of existent gazetteers dating from the Song dynasty to 1949. Though the number of existent gazetteers is vast, there is a huge variation in their dates of origin, due to various periods of war and

disaster that led to the physical destruction of a number of gazetteers. For example, no illustrations in the *Tujing* gazetteers of the Sui and Tang dynasties have survived. A total of eighty-six sheets of illustrations in nine kinds of Song dynasty gazetteers have been handed down, though two-thirds of them are not the original versions (Hu 1994: 220-228). In contrast, approximately 1000 different kinds of Ming gazetteers have survived, but they are mostly dated after the Jiajing period (嘉靖 1522-1566), according to Ba Zhaoxiang's research (2004: 46). Gazetteers dating the Qing dynasty approximately total up to 5600 (Beijing Astronomy Observatory of Chinese Academy of Science, 1985).

To some extent, the prejudice that the large numbers of more recent gazetteers are of less value than the fewer older, and thus rarer, gazetteers can explain the current ignorance surrounding the Ming and Qing illustrations. The lack of case studies on the vast quantity of these more recent gazetteers forestalls the possibility of a comprehensive understanding of gazetteer illustrations. While the existent case studies could provide potential insights into the early times, we should remain cautious in making any generalizing conclusions before sufficient case studies are conducted on more recent illustrations. Meanwhile, the long spanning time of gazetteer illustrations makes the diachronic research possible which demonstrates the evolution of visual record on a certain administrative unit in a concrete way. The wide concerning realm of gazetteer illustrations makes the synchronic research possible which distinguish the local characteristic of visual representation in a certain period of time. But, currently, neither the diachronic nor the synchronic research has been fully carried out.

4.2 Overgeneralization in Categorization

The second aspect that falls short in current research is the way in which the discussions of gazetteer illustrations usually fall into the category of "maps". As the above literature review demonstrates, the study of gazetteer illustrations has grown out of research on Chinese cartographic history. This historical origin has led to the assumption that gazetteer illustrations are equal to "maps". As a result, a number of major studies, such as those by Wang, Cao, and Hu, predominantly focus on the geographical maps that appear in gazetteers, and take a historical geographic approach to these maps, while the non-geographical illustrations that are also represented in gazetteers are largely excluded from their research¹⁰.

¹⁰ For example, Hu merely discusses the eleven maps of nineteen illustrations in the *Gazetteer of Jiankang Prefecture (Jingding Jiankangzhi 景定建康志)*, while ignoring the other eight illustrations. Similarly, he discusses the fifteen maps of twenty-one illustrations in the *Gazetteer of Jinling Prefecture (Zhizheng Jinlinxinzhi 至正金陵新志)* while leaving out the other six. See Hu (1988a: 24).

In general, there are four relevant terms concerning gazetteer illustration in visual culture: painting, map, picture, and image. The most popular and majority of gazetteer illustrations (such as maps of territory, maps of the city, and plans of government buildings or the Confucius academy school) can be regarded as various types of map. Harley and Woodward have broadened the definition of “maps” as “graphic representations that facilitate a spatial understanding of things, concepts, conditions, processes, or events in the human world” (1987: xvi). According to this broadened definition, even the *Maps of Fenye* (*fenye tu 分野图*) which depicts the celestial “field” (*xingxiu 星宿*) to which certain administrative units belong can be included in the overall “map” category.¹¹

However, it is undeniable that there are a small amount of illustrations that cannot be classified as a “map”, especially when considering that the key function of maps is to orient human beings in the universe. Woodblock landscape paintings, for example those named Eight Views (*bajing 八景*) and Ten Views (*shijing 十景*), are closer to paintings than to maps in terms of their non-practical function of appreciating natural beauty¹². Pictures of ritual vessels (*liqi 礼器*), ritual instruments (*yueqi 乐器*), dance props (*wuqi 舞器*), and ritual dance (*yuwu 乐舞*), represented in the *Confucius Memorial Ceremony* (*Jikong dianli 祭孔典礼*) in some Qing gazetteers of the Hunan Province, help people to understand traditional values in a more vivid way¹³. Pictures depicting the garments, customs, and agricultural farming of ethnic minorities in some borderland gazetteers, such as Guizhou (*贵州*) and Taiwan (*台湾*) provinces, pique the curiosity of the public¹⁴. Forty-six influential pictures, first drawn by the local magistrate in the South Song dynasty, and which appear in a serial entitled *Pictures of Farming and Weaving* (*gengzhi tu 耕织图*) in the *Gazetteer of Yuqian County* (*Guangxu*

¹¹ In ancient China, Heaven and Earth are inseparable. Depictions of the Earth are always accompanied by relevant depictions of Heaven. Quite a number of gazetteers can include a *Map of Fenye* (*fenye tu 分野图*) through which establish the connection between the Heaven and Earth. According to Chinese belief, anything that occurs in a specific heavenly field might forebode relevant occurrences in the corresponding earthly region. See Chen (1982: 419-423).

¹² The famous Chinese painter, Song Di (宋迪 1015-1080), of the Song dynasty first created landscape paintings in a serial named *Eight Views of Xiaoxiang* (*Xiaoxiang bajing 潇湘八景*), which have become a classic topic of both Chinese landscape paintings and poets. See Shen K. (1975 [1086-1093]: Chapter 13, page 9). We can see *Eight Views of Ruijin County* (now Jiangxi 江西 Province) in the *Gazetteer of Ruijin County* (*Kangxi ruijin xianzhi 康熙瑞金县志*). See Zhu W., Yang Ch. (2002 [1757]: 10-14).

¹³ We can see these ritual pictures in the *Gazetteer of Xiangtan County* (*Qianlong xiangtang xianzhi 乾隆湘潭县志*). See Lv Zh., Ouyang Zh. (2002 [1756]: 90-100, 103-107, 108-114).

¹⁴ We can see these custom pictures in the *Gazetteer of Guizhou Province* (*Kangxi guizhou shengzhi 康熙贵州省志*) and the *Gazetteer of Zhuluo County* (*Kangxi zhuluo xianzhi 康熙诸罗县志*). See Wei J., Xue Z. (2010 [1697]: 545-564) and Zhou Zh., Chen M. (1999 [1717]: 324-327).

Yuqian xianzhi 光緒於潛縣志), help to memorialize the glorious history that they depict¹⁵. In conclusion, gazetteer illustrations should not be categorized altogether as “maps”; although a large majority of illustrations do function as maps, we must remember that an important number do not.

Indeed, the existing tendency to overgeneralize and consider gazetteer illustrations as maps leads to a fragmented attitude. Researchers extract relevant illustrations overlooking the basic fact that the illustrations and texts in gazetteers form an inseparable utility. The possibility of a more comprehensive and thoroughgoing discussion of the illustration-illustration relation and text-illustration interaction in gazetteers is thus restricted. Furthermore, woodblock book was one of the most important mass media in premodern society. Gazetteer illustrations, therefore, became part of this mass media presented as legible symbols, trying to convey a state ideology to the public. Based on the relatively narrow category of the “map”, research on the process and mechanism of gazetteer illustration production, consumption, and the “iconic circuit” seems difficult to account for¹⁶. Therefore, in the context of visual culture, discussions of corresponding categorizations and relevant terms become the fundamental and valuable issues to be discussed.

4.3 Ignorance in Ideological Development

Current research on gazetteer maps is, in general, more introductory than theoretical and analytical, and tends to be approached from the angle of culture, society, and art rather than from the angle of space. Current studies, such as Liu Dongyang’s(2011) dualistic spatial structure and Zhang Zhejia’s(2003) concentric spatial scheme, have been discussed only cursively, meaning that important suggestions for further study have only been glanced at.

Maps are a form of representation that transfers three dimensional material spaces into two dimensional graphical spaces. During this process, selection, omission, augmentation, and distortion of certain elements is inevitable. The representation of space in gazetteer maps is not simply a replication, or mirror, of reality, but rather a highly conventionalized human construct. Therefore, the knowledge and understanding about the space is embodied in this illustrative medium.

¹⁵ See Cheng J. (2000 [1884]: 3-15).

¹⁶ Graig Clunas explores the notion of the “iconic circuit” as “an economy of representations in which images of a certain kind of circulation between different media in which pictures were involved” (1997:46). Apart of gazetteer maps, there are kinds of manuscript maps depicting local territories such as those in the *Atlas of Huai’an Prefecture* and *Atlas of Jiangxi Province* (Cao 1995: 2, 4-5). So there is a potential “iconic circuit” between the manuscript maps and the woodblock maps can be speculated boldly.

Analyzing gazetteer illustrations thus helps to develop a better understanding of the real spaces depicted. Compared with the diachronic characteristic of text, graphic representation is synchronic, which coincides with the spatial characteristics of the environment. The graphic medium is thus a better object of study in terms of finding out more about space and its associated social, cultural, and political significance. Furthermore, given the accumulation and universality of gazetteer illustrations, research on the spatial qualities embodied in them will lead to more comprehensive and practical conclusions compared to those gained through looking at Chinese landscape painting or masterpieces in Chinese cartography.

The “spatial turn” is an important postmodern theoretical development in contemporary western ideology: “If modernity will always be remembered as an era dominated by questions of time and history, then perhaps the steady waning of modern ideals invites us to think of the entry into something called the postmodern as a passage dominated by questions of space and geography” (Bosteels 2003: 117). Michel Foucault developed the concept of “heterotopia” as “other space” to reconstruct the relation between space, knowledge, and power (Foucault 1986: 24). Meanwhile, Henri Lefebvre provided the concept of “the production of space” to bridge the gap between theory and practice, psychology and society, the space discussed by philosophers and the material space inhabited by ordinary people. He distinguishes three important issues – “spatial practices”, “representation of space”, and “representational space” – and provides a dialectical discussion of the relationship between them (Lefebvre, 1991: 36-59). Influenced by both Foucault and Lefebvre, geographer Edward W. Soja (1996) discusses the meaning of space in epistemology. He invents the concept of “third space” to challenge the ordinary dichotomous understanding of space in modernism and distinguishes three kinds of space: perceptive space, conceptive space, and existed space (Soja 1996).

This ideological development provides a theoretical tool to carry out research on the spatial elements of gazetteer illustrations. Based on these existing theories, gazetteer illustrations can be regarded as a “production” of social practice in the premodern society, which can be in turn categorized as a “representation of space”. What thus follows, is a number of challenging and interesting questions that call for further exploration: What is the concrete mechanism and process of such representation?; How does the knowledge controlled by the elites of society become the official discourse that determines the process of this

representation?; What is the function of the body in space recognition and representation?; How does the text-space interact with the illustration-space?

5. Conclusion

It is a gratifying fact that over the last fifty years, research on gazetteer illustrations has gradually become an independent subject of study, growing out of research on the history of Chinese cartography. However, considering the significance of gazetteer illustrations, the current size and depth of research is far from satisfactory. In order to avoid the confusion of gazetteer illustration selection caused by the sheer quantity of existing ones, I would like to suggest two methods of case selection: a “place-oriented” and “question-oriented” method. The first method focuses on a particular basic administrative unit and involves collecting gazetteer illustrations in chronological sequence. The second method involves selecting typical gazetteer illustrations according to the research objective. For instance, the late Qing gazetteer illustrations of treaty, port, or concession cities are suitable when discussing the cultural conflicts of East and West. Whereas when national power is at issue, gazetteer illustrations depicting newly obtained territories in the Qing dynasty (such as Tibet and Sinkiang in the west, Mongolia in the north, Taiwan on the southeast coast, and the original territory of Manchu in the northeast) are the suitable research object to be explored.

The present paper exposes the defects of the current category of the “map” in gazetteer illustration research. In recent years, some large, and relevant, claims have been made in the discipline of art history; the focus has switched from specific masterpieces to the entire field of cultural production. In this context, it is possible to reconceive gazetteer illustrations, which were originally categorized as “maps” in the field of the history of science, as “pictures” in the field of the history of art, or even as “images” in the field of history¹⁷. This helps to place gazetteer illustrations in the wider context of visual culture.

Though recent focuses reveal the numerous potential scopes for future research on gazetteer illustrations, they have not echoed the “spatial turn” of the latest theoretical development, leaving the space unconcerned. This circumstance greatly restricts the possibility of understanding China in depth through the essential resources of gazetteer

¹⁷ Historian Peter Burke regards almost every kind of visual representation as an “image” in a broader sense, including paintings, engravings, prints, photos, and even statues as historical evidence (2006:13). When discussing the visuality in the Ming dynasty, art historian, Craig Clunas, makes an attempt to discuss representation of earth, focusing the manuscript and woodblock maps rather than landscape painting which were ignored before (1997: 80-82).

illustrations. Therefore, in the visual cultural context, theoretical, rather than practical, studies based on enough case study, constitute a potential approach for future research.

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