

The Writing of Scholarly Lives in Marginalia

Zhao Yi 趙翼 (courtesy name Yunsong 雲崧, alternative name Oubei 甌北, 1727–1814), a great historian, poet and critic from the mid-Qing period, wrote in one of his poems:

Busy collating in my study all day long. / Stepping outdoors, it is already
the dry autumn I had not felt at all.

鎮日書帷校勘勞，出門不覺已秋高。¹

These two sentences describe the intellectual life of a scholar in the mid-Qing. In Zhao Yi's description, "all day long" and "dry autumn" are the temporal elements; "curtain of books" and "outdoors" are the spatial elements; "collating" and "had not felt at all [the coming of the autumn]" manifest the practices and the mental state of a scholar in a particular temporal and spatial context.

Time and space are two of the most fundamental elements in pre-modern Chinese writings. Writers either intentionally or unintentionally selected particular temporal and spatial elements to encapsulate what they had done or what they were thinking so as to sculpt images in their writings. Therefore, analyzing the temporal and spatial elements and deciphering the hidden meanings underlying these elements can help us to comprehend the writer's thoughts, attitudes and mental states. This chapter will examine the temporal and spatial elements in the Qing scholars' marginalia in order to envision their scholarly life, the characteristics of their scholarship, and their attitudes and thoughts on scholarship and the world they lived in and perceived.

1 Temporal and Spatial Records in Marginalia

In the marginalia of Ming–Qing China, what is impressive are the detailed records of various temporal and spatial elements in colophons. Colophons in pre-modern Chinese marginalia came in various forms. There were very long colophons either at the beginning or the end of the book or both, called

¹ Zhao Yi 趙翼, "Wan bu cunluo" 晚步村落, in Zhao Yi, *Oubei ji* 甌北集 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), *juan* 43, 478.

“*ba*” 跋 (postscript) that introduce and evaluate its main ideas, state the history of its circulation, and describe its physical features. There were also short colophons, usually called “*tizhi*” 題識 (remarks and notes) or “*ji*” 記 (records), commenting on the contents of the book and usually, recording the readers’ reading practices.

Below are several colophons composed by He Zhuo that give a better sense of what the colophons may contain. There are a number of them by He in the *Hou Hanshu* held at the PKU Library (call number: LSB/7288) and all of them record the temporal and spatial elements in detail. At the end of the fourth *juan*, one of He’s colophons reads:

Written in the Babaixuan in the western chamber of the Qingyuan Auxiliary Palace in the six month of the *xinsi* year of the Kangxi reign [1701]. Zhuo.

康熙辛巳夏六月清苑行臺西序，八柏軒。焯。

The colophon at the end of *juan* 9 reads:

In the *jiawu* year of the Kangxi reign [1714], my younger brother Xinyou received an incomplete Song edition from *juan* 3 to the middle of this *juan* held by the Ye family in Baoshan. He sent me the variants after collation, and I corrected dozens of errors [in this copy].

康熙甲午，心友弟得包山葉氏所藏殘宋本第三卷至此卷之半以所校字寫寄，因改正數十處。

The colophon at the end of *juan* 57 reads:

From *juan* 45 to this point, collating by the light of an oil lamp, and comparing it with an incomplete Northern Song edition, in the tenth month of the *guisi* year of the Kangxi reign [1713]. Written by Yimen the recluse.

自四十五卷至此，以北宋殘本，燈下手校。時康熙癸巳陽月，義門潛夫記。

The colophon at the end of *juan* 90 reads:

When I first read this book, I was upset at the number of mistakes. Once I had read the pieces on the *Hou Hanshu* in Liu Ban’s [*Liang Hanshu*]

Kanwu (Corrections to the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu*), I finally realized that there were few exquisite editions in the Northern Song dynasty because people did not value this book as much as Ban Gu's book. Some of the annotations in the Jiajing edition carved by the Directorate of Education were cut. This copy, though, is still a complete version, which is one good feature. Its master copy does not have so many mistakes. I corrected the mistakes created while carving in this edition. Written in the western chamber of the Baoding Auxiliary Palace in the Middle Autumn Day of the *xinsi* year of the Kangxi reign [1701]. Zhuo.

初讀此書，嫌其訛謬為多，及觀劉氏《刊誤》諸條，乃知在北宋即罕善本，緣前人重之不如班書故也。嘉靖中南京國子監刊者，注經刪削，此猶完書，故是一長。其舊本不差，此復滋謬之字，略為隨文改定云。康熙辛巳中秋後題於保定行臺西序。焯。

The colophon at the end of *juan 22* of the *Xu Hanzhi* reads:

From the nineteenth to the twenty-second *juan*, in the *dingyou* year of the Kangxi reign [1717], when I worked in the Wuying Publishing House, I chanced to see an incomplete copy of the big character edition which had been carved in the Yijing Hall of Cai Qi (courtesy name Chunfu) in Jian'an in the *wuchen* year of the Jiading reign in the Song dynasty. It has Congshu Hall's seal impression. I thought it must be good. Therefore, I borrowed it from the keeper and collated [my copy]. However, the mistakes could be infuriating.... I recorded [them] to show that Song editions can also be so unreliable, without presuming to defame them. Written by Yimen, an old man, on the sixteenth day of the seventh month.

自十九卷至二十二卷，康熙丁酉，祇役武英書局，偶見不全宋嘉定戊辰建安蔡琪純父一經堂開雕大字本，有敢書堂印，心以為必佳，因從典掌者乞以校對，則舛誤可為憤歎……識之以見宋本亦有不足據信如此，非敢為訐激也。七月既望，義門老民書。

The colophon at the end of *juan 23* of the *Xu Hanzhi* reads:

In the sixth month of the *guiwei* year of the Kangxi reign [1703], I attended the eighth prince in the Nanxun Palace. There was a copy [of the *Hou Hanshu*] carved by Wang Wensheng, which I used to collate this *juan*. The Wang edition still kept the mistakes, just as in the "Treaties on Geography" of the *Hanshu*. I am afraid to compare them critically.

Is it because of carelessness that there are no good editions? Noted by Zhuo.

康熙癸未六月，侍八貝勒于南薰殿，架上有汪文盛刊本，因取以校此卷。汪氏亦仍訛襲舛如《前書·地理》，亦憚於互勘。書無善本，豈非苟簡之過哉？焯記。

The colophon at the end of *juan 30* of the *Xu Hanzhi* reads:

In the early summer of the *xinsi* year of the Kangxi reign [1701], I finished reading the thirty *juan* of the *Xu Hanzhi* in Shaobo's boat. The master copy of the *Hou Hanshu* carved by the Mao family was far from good compared to that of the *Hanshu*. The boat was sailing so I had no chance to collate it with other editions. For the time being, I must wait and reread it [the *Hou Hanshu*] after going back to the South. Written by Zhuo.

康熙辛巳首夏，于召伯舟中閱完《續漢志》三十卷，毛氏《後漢書》所據之本遠不逮班書，舟行，又無從假他本互校，姑俟南歸再閱云。焯識。

From the twenty-third *juan* to this one, collated with an incomplete Northern Song edition in the winter of the *guisi* year [1713].

自二十三卷至此，癸巳冬日得北宋殘本校。

According to these records, we know that He Zhuo read and collated the *Hou Hanshu* from 1701 to 1720, over a period of about twenty years. The spatial elements he mentions include Qingyuan, Baoding, the Imperial Palace, sitting under an oil lamp in a study, and even reading on a boat. Whenever he had access to a new edition of the *Hou Hanshu*, he would borrow it and use it to collate the text in a copy of his own. It seems that He Zhuo never stopped reading and collating books, regardless of the time or the place, during those twenty years. His biographies tell us that he was never appointed to a position of real political power or involved in any administrative practical affairs. He worked as an academic advisor in the Southern Study and as an editor in the imperial printing office in the Hall of Military Glory for decades, devoting himself to reading and editing and occasionally giving his opinions to the emperor and princes. He was a professional scholar who lived on a salary supplied by the imperial government. His job was to read and collate books, i.e., to produce new (reliable) texts. One of the most essential features of the scholarly culture

of late Imperial China can be illustrated by He Zhuo's case: "to preserve the old while making it nevertheless new – to maintain continuity with a tradition without freezing it" – using an argument made by Daniel Boyarin about midrash.²

"To preserve the old while making it nevertheless new," as emphasized by Boyarin, was the task of every successful culture.³ As discussed in chapter 1, in Chinese history every generation of classicists proposed new ideas from new interpretations of the Classics. The Qing dynasty was no different: there were some new characteristics in the interpretation of the ancient Classics, one of the most prominent of which was that scholars paid more attention to the text itself. Qing scholars searched for the Way (*dao* 道) or the means to recover the Way of antiquity through careful study of the text of the Classics.⁴ In the scholarly culture of the Qing dynasty, new ideas were generated from new interpretations of old texts; new interpretations came into being according to newly "collated" and "edited" texts. Catalogues and other sources demonstrate that it was very common for scholars to collate, transcribe and analyze texts and marginalia, and there were many more textual experts in the Qing than in any other period. This intellectual culture was created by scholars in the late Ming and early Qing period in a particular political and social context. It spread especially to Beijing and the Jiangnan region, but also to other parts of the Qing empire, and was, perhaps unconsciously, practiced by a growing number of scholars. When this scholarly culture was formed, it became an invisible influence, shaping all the scholars' thoughts and practices.

While devoting themselves to this textual enterprise, the ultimate goal of the scholars was to find the Way or recover the Way of antiquity and build a better world. But they still had to live in *this* world (*cishi* 此世) and deal with annoying and sometimes even dangerous affairs. Still taking He Zhuo's colophons as an example, those at the end of *juan* 16 of the *Xu Hanzhi* read:

During *shen* [3–5 PM] on the twentieth day of the fourth month of the *bingshen* year [1716], when I went out from the Royal Palace, a strong wind was blowing. The bolt of the Duan Gate had been destroyed and the Wu Gate, opened wide, could be seen in the distance. I was shocked by this so I recorded it here.

2 Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990), 22.

3 See Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash*, 22.

4 See also Ori Sela, *China's Philological Turn: Scholars, Textualism, and the Dao in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), 4–5. Sela refers to this approach as "textualism."

丙申四月二十日申時，自內直出，適大風吹，端門牡壞，午門遙望洞開，異而識之。

From the twenty-sixth to twenty-seventh day of the sixth month of the *gengzi* year [1720], there were billions of turtles blocking the Lu River and going into the sea from Tianjin. Transport ships could hardly sail. [People] were seated in a barn and sacrificed a lamb and pig with music, [and] afterwards, they opened the sluice to let them out. In this way, they were gone. From the seventeenth to nineteenth days of the seventh month, it happened again.

庚子六月廿六日至七日，二日有鼈億萬，梗塞潞河，由天津入海，漕船至不可行。坐糧廳，具中牢，鼓樂致祭，開牓送之，始不復見。七月十七日至十九日又如是。

These two colophons recorded exceptional events: damage caused by an odd wind and an disruption brought about by billions of turtles. This can reveal some of He Zhuo's hidden feelings. Damage to and the disappearance of a gate bolt was long considered an omen of internal disorder in Chinese history. The “Wuxing zhi” 五行志 (Treatise on the five elements) of the *Hanshu* states:

In the first month of the first year of Emperor Cheng's reign, the bolt of the Zhangcheng Gate of Chang'an disappeared; so did the bolt of the second gate of the Hangu Pass. Jing Fang's *Yizhuan* (Annotation on the *Book of Changes*) states: “If [the government] announces peace reigns over the land without relieving the famine, there will be flooding and the bolt of the gate will be gone.” The *Yaoci* (Demonic words) reads “The gate moving and bolt going missing are omens of malevolent ministers carrying out misdeeds, and traitorous ministers will usurp the throne.”

成帝元延元年正月，長安章城門門牡自亡，函谷關次門牡亦自亡。京房《易傳》曰：“飢而不損茲謂泰，厥災水，厥咎牡亡。”《妖辭》曰：“關動牡飛，辟為亡道臣為非，厥咎亂臣謀篡。”⁵

5 *Hanshu*, *juan* 27, 1401.

As an expert of the *Hanshu* and *Hou Hanshu*, He Zhuo would have been very familiar with this omen and its meaning. During the latter part of the Kangxi emperor's reign, nine of the emperor's sons fought for the throne. He Zhuo was also involved in these events. During his life, he was accused falsely and put into jail; after his death, he was defamed because he was once the tutor of the Eighth Prince and helped him fight for the throne. In this sense, this piece of marginalia manifests his hidden worry about his life and reputation. For scholars who participated in political affairs, it was difficult to escape calamities and keep their bodies and reputations intact. Was devoting oneself to antiquities and burying themselves in books the best choice for most scholars? For He Zhuo, a scholar who worked in the royal palace and was intimate with political figures, this does not seem to have been the answer. But scholars sponsored by local governments, merchants, or family resources had fewer concerns of this kind. They concentrated on all kinds of scholarly affairs at different times and spaces. Lu Wenchao's case is a good example.

Lu Wenchao was one of the most prominent classicists, textual experts, and bibliophiles in the mid-Qing period. He collated many books and wrote and transcribed enormous amounts of marginalia. The *Yili zhushu* 儀禮注疏 (*Rites and Ceremonies* with annotations and sub-annotations) held at the Shanghai Library (call number: XS797827-36) is filled with Lu's marginalia that manifests his painstaking work in reading and collating this book. Lu's work was influential on later scholars. At the end of the preface there are colophons written by two scholars from the late Qing, Huang Sidong 黃嗣東 (courtesy name Xiaolu 小魯, 1846–1910) and Huang Pengnian 黃彭年 (courtesy name Zishou 子壽, 1824–1890). Huang Sidong's colophon reads:

This is the original manuscript of Lu Wen's *Yili xiangjiao* (Complete collation notes on the *Rites and Ceremonies*). Lu is a scholar in my home town. This book has ten volumes and seventeen *juan* in total. The dates of reading and collating are at the end of each *juan*, recorded by Master [Lu] himself. [Master Lu] devoted [himself] to this book for forty-four years, starting in the *gengwu* year [1750] and ending in the *jiayin* year [1794] of the Qianlong reign.... [Master Lu's] collation and evidential research are careful and refined, far beyond the capacity of recent classicists and scholars. I acquired this book from a bookstore in Chang'an. After reading it once, I felt like I was in possession of an extremely valuable treasure. It would be good if my sons and grandsons could keep it for generations. Otherwise, I will send it to those who can read it to avoid its loss and dispersal. In so doing, I can also be Lu's meritorious servant.

Written sincerely by Huang Sidong, a scholar of a later generation, on the fifteenth day of the second month of the *dinghai* year (the thirteenth year) of the Guangxu reign [1887].

此吾鄉盧弓父先生《儀禮詳校》原本也。書凡十本，共十七卷，每卷末皆有先生自記校閱年日，始乾隆庚午，訖甲寅，用力於茲者凡四十有四年……考校精密，誠非近世經生家所及。余得之於長安市中，細讀一過，如獲拱璧。吾子孫能世守之固佳，否則以遺世之能讀是書者，俾免散佚，亦盧氏之功臣也。光緒十三年丁亥二月望日後學黃嗣東謹識。

Huang Pengnian's colophon reads:

Seeing Lu Wenchao's careful, hard work expended on this book even when he was aged, I hurriedly borrowed it from Xiaolu and transcribed [the marginalia] to show my respect. Written by Huang Pengnian a scholar of a later generation, in the eighth month of the thirteenth year of the Guangxu reign [1887].

觀此本用力之精勤，老而不倦，急從小魯借臨一過，以志嚮往。光緒十三年八月後學黃彭年識。

In this book, Lu Wenchao recorded in detail the reading and collating time at the end of every *juan*. Owing to these temporal records and the enormous amount of marginalia, Huang Sidong and Huang Pengnian were able to piece together the entire story of Lu Wenchao's reading and collating of this book. Moved by Lu's sincerity and diligence, they also devoted themselves to the transcription of marginalia. From Lu Wenchao to Huang Sidong and Huang Pengnian, what was transmitted were not only research materials but also mental fortitude and faith in the belief that meaning resided in books and in the study of the classics. All of this is encapsulated in the detailed records of time spent.

Much like Lu Wenchao, another prominent textual scholar in the Qing, Guan Guangqi, also habitually recorded the times he spent reading and collating books. The *Huayangguo zhi* 華陽國志 (Chronicles of the state of Huayang) held at the National Library of China (call number: 6226) contains a great many of He Zhuo's and Gu Guangqi's marginalia copied by an unidentified transcriptionist. The following table summarizes Gu's colophons at the end of some *juan*:

TABLE 5.1 Gu Guangqi's colophons in the *Huayangguo zhi* held at the National Library of China

Location	Gu Guangqi's Colophons
<i>juan 1</i>	Reread in my residence in Jiangning, in the <i>guiyou</i> year of the Jiaqing reign [1813]. By Jianpin. 嘉慶癸酉，再讀於江寧寓中。潤蘋記。
<i>juan 4</i>	Collated in the tenth month of the <i>guihai</i> year of the Jiaqing reign [1803]. By Jianpin. 嘉慶癸亥十月校。潤蘋記。 Recorded again after rereading in my residence in Jiangning in the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉五月江寧寓中再讀又記。
<i>juan 5</i>	Reread in the fourth month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉四月重讀。
<i>juan 7</i>	Reread in my residence in Jiangning in the fifth month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉五月再讀於江寧寓中。
<i>juan 8</i>	Reread in my residence in Jiangning in the third month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉三月再讀於江寧寓中。
<i>juan 9</i>	Collated on the twenty-seventh day. Jianpin. 廿七日校。潤蘋。 Reread in Jiangning in the fourth month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉四月再讀於江寧。
<i>juan 10</i>	Collated in the tenth month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. 癸酉十月校。 Reread in my residence in Jiangning in the fifth month of the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813]. Recorded by Jianpin. 癸酉五月再讀於江寧寓中。潤蘋記。
<i>juan 12</i>	On the first day of the eleventh month. By Jianpin. 十一月朔潤蘋記。 By Jianpin in the light of the lamp on the twenty-first day in the <i>guihai</i> year of the Jiaqing reign [1803]. 嘉慶癸亥廿一日潤蘋居士燈下記。 After ten years, in the <i>guiyou</i> year [1813], I collated this book for Sun the Surveillance Commissioner in Jiangning. All things have a destiny like this. Written again. 閱十年癸酉，為孫觀察校勘於江寧，凡事自有定數如此。又記。

This is a detailed record of his reading and collating the history of the *Huayangguo zhi*, and of his special relationship with this book. This kind of record does not make much sense to readers of the main text, but for Gu Guangqi himself, recording the temporal sequence in detail made this book his “reading diary.” What was encapsulated within these temporal records were the events and emotional states he experienced at that time.

Some marginalia composers and transcriptionists also had the habit of recording the weather and other natural conditions they were experiencing while they were reading a book, such as He Zhuo’s record of the odd wind in the *Hou Hanshu* mentioned above. These records can reveal such things as their emotional state and attitudes to scholarship. For instance, the *Zhongwu jiwén* 中吳紀聞 (Record of events heard of in the Wu Region) held at the National Library of China (call number: SB13319) has He Zhuo’s marginalia transcribed by an unknown scribe. At the end of the preface, He’s colophon states how he obtained various editions for collation. The last sentences read:

On the nineteenth day of the *gengchen* year of the Kangxi reign [1700], the snow ceased and the window was clear and bright. By Zhuo with a brush unfrozen by my breath.

康熙庚辰十二月十九日，雪霽窗明。呵凍書，焯。

Interestingly, another copy of the *Zhongwu jiwén* at the National Library of China (call number: S2195) has He Zhuo’s marginalia transcribed by Wu Zhizhong 吳志忠 (alternative name Miaodaoren 妙道人, a scholar in the latter part of the Daoguang reign). For this particular colophon by He Zhuo, Wu’s transcription lacks these last sentences. Yet at the end of *juan* four, Wu’s colophon reads:

In the eleventh month of the *renchen* year of the Daoguang reign [1832] ... on the nineteenth day, blowing away the chill. Miaodaoren.

道光壬辰十一月……十九日，呵凍，妙道人。

It’s difficult to know why Wu Zhizhong “forgot” to transcribe the last sentences. However, to be sure, he must have read the whole colophon and even been impressed by the last sentences as he imitated He’s expression in his own colophon.

The *Sanguo zhi* held at the National Library of China (call number: SB06264) is filled with marginalia by He Zhuo and other scholars and transcribed by Weng Tongshu. At the end, Weng's colophon states:

Finished reading amidst the wind and rain on the eighteenth day of the seventh month.

七月十八日風雨中閱竟。

The *Wudai shiji* at the National Library of China (call number: SB14710) has He Zhuo's marginalia transcribed by Zhang Yu, as well as some marginalia composed by Zhang Yu himself. At the end of *juan 22*, Zhang's colophon states:

Collated on the eighteenth day when the rainy season began and suddenly became so cold that we needed to put on cotton-padded jackets.

十八日校，梅雨驟涼，可御薄棉衣。

The *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* held at the National Library of China (call number: SB15338) has He Zhuo's marginalia and colophons by Zhu Yun 朱筠 (1729–1781), Yu Ji 余集 (1738–1824) and Xia Huang 夏璜 (*jinsi* 1809). Xia's colophon at the end of the book states:

Collated on the fifth day of the second month of the *bingzi* year [1816]. It was raining and a little cold. I tried the old ink Yeting sent me, writing [this] casually at the end of the book. The sparse raindrops tapped at my window, and the plum blossoms in the vase seem to smile.

丙子二月五日校對畢。是日雨，天氣微涼，試液亭所惠古墨，漫書卷尾。小雨點牕，瓶梅欲笑。

These poetic writings about the weather resemble the artistic description in Zhao Yi's poem, "Busy collating in my study all day long. / Stepping outdoors, it is already the dry autumn that I had not felt at all." They manifest scholars' aesthetic mental states when viewing the physical world and engaging in self-reflection within the realm of their studies. Textual criticism and evidential research in marginalia are both forms of rationalistic scholarship, but Qing scholars treated them in a very perceptual and poetic manner. Comparatively

speaking, in modern scholarship, it is common in prefaces and sometimes acknowledgments to take a much more personal tone than in the main body of academic writing. This predisposition in Qing scholars was shown not only in their writings on time and weather, but also in the way they did their writing and treated their books.

2 The Artistic Lives of Scholars

He Zhuo was a well-known calligrapher who was especially good at regular small and semi-cursive style script. Books containing marginalia that he had written were therefore treated as artwork and treasured by both bibliophiles and calligraphers (see figure 4.5). The Ming manuscript edition of *Zhuozhong zhi* 酌中志 (Impartial records of palace events) held at the National Library of China (call number: SB11564) contains He Zhuo's holographic marginalia. There is a short colophon written by an unknown collector on the cover, reading:

Fifteen *juan* of the manuscript are still in existence. The seven comments in the top margin and the red characters in the interlinear spaces were written in Yimen's own hand. They are exquisite and endearing.

存原抄十五卷，頂批七處及行間紅字乃義門親筆，精緻可愛。

The *Zhuozhong zhi* has twenty-four *juan* in total. This manuscript copy has fifteen *juan*, i.e., more than half of the whole book. There are just seven pieces of He Zhuo's eyebrow marginalia and several of his interlinear marginalia. However, the collector emphasized these marginalia, which show their special significance for him.

In pre-modern China, people learned calligraphy by imitating the handwriting of previous calligraphers. He Zhuo's students, later scholars and calligraphers all practiced their calligraphy based on marginalia written by him. Sometimes, "transcribing marginalia" was also called "imitating (*lin* 臨) marginalia." In this practice, transcription of marginalia was not only a process of transmitting research materials, but also a way to practise calligraphy. As mentioned in chapter 4, Jiang Gao, one of He Zhuo's students, was known for transcribing and imitating his teacher's marginalia. Similarly, Yao Shiyu, who personally studied under He Zhuo, was also skilled at imitating He's handwriting while transcribing his marginalia. A copy of a Ming edition of the *Wudai*

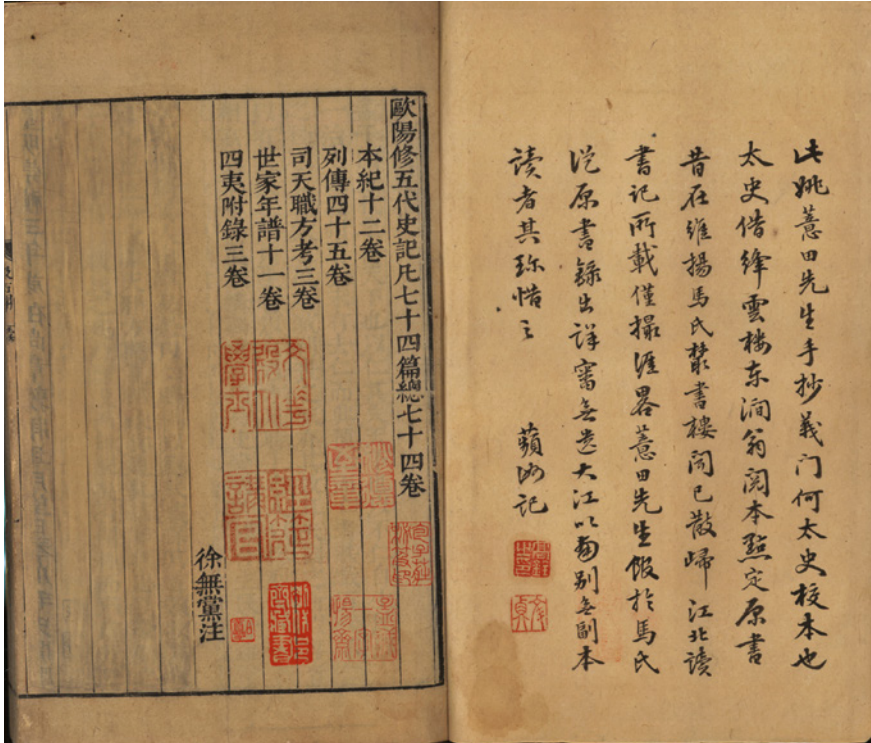


FIGURE 5.1A First page and the table of contents of the *Wudai shiji*, woodblock edition carved at the Mao family's Jigu ge in the late Ming. Colophon by Gao Quan COURTESY OF THE SHANGHAI LIBRARY (CALL NUMBER: XS847873-78)

shiji carved in the Mao family's Jigu Pavilion held at the Shanghai Library (call number: XS847873-78, see figure 5.1) contains He Zhuo's marginalia transcribed by Yao Shiyu. Yao's handwriting in regular small style script is quite handsome. Gao Quan's 高銓 (courtesy name Pinzhou 蘋洲, ca. the Jiaqing reign) colophon at the beginning of this book reads:

This is a collated edition with Junior Compiler He Yimen's marginalia transcribed by Mr. Yao Yitian. The Junior Compiler collated it with a copy read by Dongjianweng (Qian Qianyi) in the Jiangyun Tower. The original copy [with He Zhuo's own handwriting] was formerly held at the Congshu Tower of the Ma family in Weiyang, and is said to have already been scattered to the north of the Yangzi river. Recorded in the *Dushu ji* [of He Zhuo] are just some important points. Mr. Yitian once worked as a teacher for the Ma family. He transcribed He's marginalia [into this copy]



FIGURE 5.1B Last leaf of the *Wudai shiji*. Colophons composed by He Zhuo and transcribed by Yao Shiyu in imitation of He's handwriting
COURTESY OF THE SHANGHAI LIBRARY (CALL NUMBER: XS847873-78)

in detail without any omissions. There is no duplicate south of the Yangzi River. I expect readers will treasure this book. Written by Pinzhou.

此姚蕙田先生手抄義門何太史校本也，太史借絳雲樓東澗翁閱本點定。原書昔在維揚馬氏叢書樓，聞已散歸江北。《讀書記》所載僅撮涯畧，蕙田先生館於馬氏，從原書錄出，詳審無遺，大江以南，別無副本，讀者其珍稀之。蘋洲記。

Gao Quan stated how Yao Shiyu did the transcription and pointed out its value. Decades later, Zhang Yu transcribed all the marginalia from this copy into another copy (the one held at the National Library of China mentioned above). Zhang Yu's colophon at the end of that copy states:

The copy that bears Mr. Yitian's transcription of He Yimen's marginalia is now held at the Tianjin Library.⁶ [The marginalia] are so exquisite that they are unrivalled in the world. In the seventh month of the *renxu* year [1922], I borrowed it and transcribed the marginalia into another copy in two days. It was done carelessly and I would have been reprimanded by the wise men of the past. By Shizhi.

蕙田先生手傳何義門先生本今藏天津圖書館，精整無匹。壬戌七月借傳一本，竭二日之力卒事，草率當為前賢所訶，式之。

Some of Yimen's marginalia [in this copy] are not included in the *Dushu ji* that is currently circulating. Yitian's [Yao Shiyu] handwriting greatly resembles that of He Zhuo's. Further noted by Yu.

義門識語，現行《讀書記》有未及載者。蕙田書跡，極似何氏。鈺又記。

It was not rare in the Qing dynasty for a scribe like Yao Shiyu to be capable of imitating He Zhuo's handwriting to the degree that it passed as genuine. Generally, He's students and most other scholars would have been perfectly happy to record in their colophons their transcription and all other encounters with that book in detail, with specific reference to temporal and spatial elements of their experience. The benefits of this practice – a habit widely practised in paintings, calligraphic works, and books – were manifold. It was a way to actively interact with the book, especially its text. By so doing, they were involved in the history of the circulation of that book and even the history of the transmission of the text beyond the limitations of the physical book. This practice was a way to show not only that they once held and read the book, but also that they contributed to the text. In short, by writing in the book, a scholar made himself present with the text of the book over the temporal span of its history.

“Exquisite and neat” (*jingzheng* 精整), “exquisite and refined” (*jing-gong* 精工), and “exquisite and fine” (*jinghao* 精好) are words that Qing scholars employed to praise the beauty of the calligraphy of marginalia. These words manifest the extreme care exercised by marginalia writers and transcriptionists while writing in a book, regardless of the calligraphic style. Transcriptionists sometimes needed to transcribe more than one kind of marginalia. In order to tell them apart, multicolour inks were employed – red and yellow being the most widely used colors. Therefore, expressions such as “eyes

⁶ This copy is now held at the Shanghai Library. Its call number is xs847873-78.

filled with red and yellow” (丹黃溢目) and “exquisitely and carefully written in red and yellow” (丹黃精謹) often appeared in colophons. In this regard, for Qing scholars, the significance of a text lay not only in its content but also in its form. Scholars, bibliophiles, and calligraphers not only copied the contents of the text, they also tried to improve their calligraphic skills and incorporate some aesthetic values during this process. Transcription supplied new possibilities for using, not just “reading,” the text.⁷

For many Qing scholars, it seems that scholarly *practices* themselves were of great significance. They enjoyed practices related to the collection and reading of the book, the process of making sense of the text, and the production and transcription of marginalia. This can be illustrated by the case of Weng Tonghe 翁同龢 (courtesy name Shuping 叔平, alternative name Pingsheng 瓶生, 1830–1904). When Weng Tonghe was fifteen *sui*, he bought a copy of the *Tang Liu xiansheng ji* 唐柳先生集 (The collected works of Liu Zongyuan in the Tang Dynasty) with He Zhuo’s handwritten marginalia in it.⁸ Weng was so excited that he composed a poem about this book, wrote it down on a separate piece of paper and put it inside. About fifty years later, Weng transcribed He’s marginalia into a new copy.⁹ He wrote a colophon at the end of this copy:

I obtained the *Liu xiansheng ji* with marginalia from the Chen family’s Jirui Pavilion when I was fifteen *sui*. The red marginalia were rather illuminating. They were written by He Qizhan. I intended to make a copy but have not managed to. In my spare time this spring when I was lecturing in the Yuchun Palace, I roughly collated it once. My eyes were almost blind and my wrist unsteady. I am not as strong as when I was young, for which I sigh sorrowfully repeatedly. Recorded by Weng Tonghe on the seventh day of the fourth month in the *renwu* year [1882].

余年十五得批本《柳先生集》於稽瑞樓陳氏，朱書爛然，何屺瞻手跡也。意欲臨寫一本，卒卒不果。今年春於入直毓春宮勸講之暇，就殿西箱小窗下粗校一過，目眇腕澀，非復少強健矣，為之三歎。壬午四月初七日翁同龢記。

7 It is worth mentioning that there were also many anonymous transcriptionists who imitated He Zhuo’s handwriting but left no information about themselves, making it difficult to authenticate He Zhuo’s marginalia. Some of the marginalia were produced for commercial purposes: merchants hired professional scribes to forge He Zhuo’s marginalia so as to raise the price of the book. See chapter 4.

8 This copy is now held at the National Library of China, call number SB06251.

9 This copy is now held at the National Library of China, call number SB04405.

Weng Tonghe was a noted scholar-official and the teacher of two emperors, Tongzhi 同治 (r. 1861–1875) and Guangxu 光緒 (r. 1875–1908). He was especially well known for his calligraphy and had a great deal of confidence in it. At the end of the table of contents of the *Tang Liu xiansheng ji* on which Weng transcribed He Zhuo's marginalia, Weng's colophon reads:

The copy with Mr. Yimen's marginalia was a Masha edition from the Yuan dynasty. This copy is a Ming edition produced in the Zhengtong reign. It is the same as the Yuan edition in its chapter order and phonetic notation, but different in the number of columns per page and characters per column. I transcribed Mr. He's marginalia into this copy in the *renwu* year [1882]. After twenty years, in the *renyin* year [1902], I read it again and felt that the characters [I wrote] were big and beautiful, a bit better than Mr. He's handwriting. Recorded by Weng Tonghe (Songchan) on the last day of the second month.

義門先生手批本係元時麻沙本也，此明正統本，與元刻篇第音注悉同，惟行數字數多寡互異耳。余於壬午年臨先生評校於冊內，越二十年壬寅重閱，覺字大悅目，較勝先生手跡也。二月晦松禪翁同龢記。

This comment not only reveals Weng's confidence in his calligraphy, but also shows that in transcribing marginalia, calligraphy was a concern. However, there was no evidence (e.g. no seals) showing that the marginalia in the copy he got when he was fifteen *sui* were actually written in He Zhuo's hand. In fact, it is more likely that they were transcribed by some unknown scribe.

Besides calligraphy and textual criticism, Weng was also interested in the marginal comments composed by He Zhuo. He had transcribed He Zhuo's marginalia in numerous works, such as the *Hanshu*, *Sanguo zhi*, *Shitong*, *Gengzi xiaoxia ji* 庚子消夏記 (Record of whiling away the summer of the *gengzi* year), *Han wen chao* 韓文鈔 (Collected works of Han Yu 韓愈), *Tang Liu xiansheng ji* and *Jiayou ji* 嘉祐集 (Collected works of Su Xun 蘇洵). He transcribed both the collation notes and He's comments from all of these works. There are two colophons by Weng at the end of the table of contents of the *Shitong* held at the Shanghai Library (call number: SX782275–79). The one in blue reads:

I have a copy [of the *Shitong*] with marginalia by [Qian] Muweng (Qian Qianyi) transcribed by Qian Xiangling. I collated this copy with it and found that the comments that start with “Feng says” in this copy were all by Muweng. He Zhuo perhaps concealed [the truth and avoided mentioning Qian Qianyi's name]. I supplemented the emphasis marks in blue

ink and added on the top and side margins several pieces of what was left out by He. Written by Tonghe in the sixth month of the *jiashen* year [1884]. The emphasis marks seem to have been made by Xiangling rather than Muweng.

家藏錢湘靈先生臨牧翁批校本，用以對勘，乃知此本內所稱馮云者，皆牧翁評也。何蓋諱之耳。因以藍色補其圈點，並補何所漏者數條於闌上及行側。甲申六月同穌記。圈點似湘靈先生所為，非牧翁也。

The one in red states:

The copy kept in my house has the comments of Royal Attendant Wang Genzhai. So I transcribed them in this copy in purple ink. The emphasis marks are a little careless, and the comments unreasonable most of the time. So, I suspect that they were not composed by [Wang Jun the] Royal Attendant. However, they point out the literary ingenuity of the text, so I transcribed them in order to make the text convenient for beginners to read. Noted by Shuping.

家藏本有王艮齋侍御評語，因以紫色筆臨之，其圈點頗爛漫，且與評語多違戾處，疑非侍御手筆。然頗畫文章之妙，故並臨之，便於初學誦讀。叔平記。

Qian Qianyi was a prominent poet and scholar in the late Ming and early Qing periods. Wang Jun 王峻 (courtesy name Genzhai 艮齋, 1694–1751) was a scholar-official, specializing in history and geography. Weng transcribed their comments and emphasis marks. He also transcribed those that he suspected were not composed by Qian and Wang because “they point out the literary ingenuity of the text.” For Weng Tonghe, previous scholars’ comments were useful for “beginners” to grasp the literary features of the text. At the same time, we can also see that Weng paid a great deal of attention to the emphasis marks made by previous readers. Obviously, the “comments” here mentioned by him were mostly literary comments; the emphasis marks were also devices for helping to point out and analyze the literary features of the text. As discussed in chapter 2, literary comments and emphasis marks were introduced to analyze the literary features of classical prose in order to help students prepare for the civil service examinations in the Song dynasty, and in the late Ming were widely used in works of fiction and drama to guide readers in appreciating the aesthetic values of these texts. Scholars in the Qing dynasty still used them in their marginalia, and Weng also expended much effort transcribing

them. Weng asserted that they were for “beginners,” but how many “beginners” could have had access to his transcriptions? The more reasonable explanation is that the comments and emphasis marks were for Weng himself to appreciate the literary beauty of the text. At a time when evidential research was the mainstream scholarly approach, when pure beauty and pleasure were excluded from scholarship and scholarly practice, scholars managed to find other ways to meet this need. Weng rationalized his practice of pursuing beauty in the text by asserting that it was for unspecified “beginners.”

3 The Mental World of Scholars

Sometimes, the marginalia writer's brush reached beyond the space of his study to the much broader external world, revealing the extension of his gaze from one room (*yishi* 一室) to all under heaven (*tianxia* 天下). Outside the study, there was not only the objective natural environment but also a variety of more complicated human affairs. For instance, the *Nanshi* 南史 (History of the Southern Dynasties) held at the National Library of China (call number: SB04309) has He Zhuo's and Wang Mingsheng's 王鳴盛 (courtesy name Fengjie 鳳喈, 1722–1797) marginalia transcribed by Liu Lüfen 劉履芬 (courtesy name Yanqing 彥青, 1827–1879). There are three colophons composed by Wang Mingsheng at the end of this book. The first states that he read this *Nanshi* and wrote some marginalia in it in 1772. The second and third colophons read:

On the twenty-third day of the first month of the thirty-eighth year [of the Qianlong reign], the *guisi* year [1773], I transcribed the comments from other copies again, starting from the thirty-fourth *juan*. This work was finished in the afternoon of the second day of the second month. In the morning of that day, another daughter of mine was born, when I was fifty-two *sui*.

三十八年癸巳正月二十三日，重臨諸本批評，自三十四卷起，至二月初二日午後畢工，是日清晨，又產一女，時予年五十有二。

In the eighth month of the *renchen* year [1772], my two concubines, both surnamed Chen, went back home. Their fathers harbour malice in their hearts. I was depressed. What was worse was that I sold the houses at a loss in the eighth and ninth months, which wasted money and energy beyond words. Worse yet, my son was stricken by a serious disease and

the money I spent was incalculable. In that half year, I was almost buried by depression, so that I neglected my own business. In the spring of the *guisi* year [1773], when I consented to my fourth daughter's marriage to the Yao family, I was still upset. I snatched a moment of leisure and finished collating this book. Amidst all this chaos, I did not stop learning from the ancients. Perhaps it is because this is what I love.

自壬辰八月，兩陳妾又忽回家去，其父頗懷惡心，予情緒既不佳，又八九兩月連次貼賣房屋，費財勞頓，不可勝言。又兒嗣構病危，醫藥之費不訾，半載之中，日在愁城，遂亦廢業不理。癸巳初春，時方遣嫁第四女于姚氏，情緒亦煩撓，偷閑校畢此書。刺促之中，不輟稽古，蓋予之所好在此也。

Wang Mingsheng was one of the greatest historians and classicists in the mid-Qing. He took second place at the palace examination (*bangyan* 榜眼) in 1754 and was the author of the masterwork *Shiqishi shangque* 十七史商榷 (A discussion of problems in the Seventeen Histories). Among the enormous number of objective historical comments in his marginalia in the *Nanshi*, these two colophons stand out: the former that recorded the birth of his daughter when he was 52 *sui*; and the latter that recorded various annoying family affairs. Yet during all these happy or frustrating times, Wang never “stopped learning from the ancients.” At the very moment when his brush touched on external matters, he withdrew to his study where he could find peace and happiness. Here, learning and reading were not only a job or hobby; they became a mental pursuit, a habit and an important part of his daily life. Reading books, collating them, and the many other scholarly practices played a crucial role in his life.

Another relevant example of such movement between external spaces and the spaces of scholarship is the case of Weng Tonghe. The *Han wen chao* held at the National Library of China (call number: 06252) has Weng Tonghe's transcription of He Zhuo's marginalia. At the end of this book, Weng's colophons read:

On the sixteenth day of the second month of the *wuwu* year [1858], I saw a copy of Han Yu's classical prose with Li Rongcun's [Li Guangdi] marginalia. I borrowed it and transcribed the marginalia. There were just a few comments by Li. Most of them were He Yimen's comments. At that time, my wife had already been ill for several years and her breathing was feeble. I was reading by the light of a lantern at night and my mood was unbearable. Remote in time and space, who can understand my sadness! Finished on the twentieth day and recorded here. By Tonghe.

戊午二月十六日，於廠肆見李榕村先生批本韓文，假歸臨校一過，李氏說不過數條，大抵義門何氏之說居多。時余妻病瘵累年，至是，氣僅如縷。篝燈夜讀，意境不堪，悠悠此中，孰知余悲也。二十日臨畢，因識。同穌。

In the ninth month of the *wuchen* year [1867] of the *Tongzhi* reign, I escorted home the coffins of my deceased father whose posthumous title was Wenduan, and my deceased older brother whose posthumous title was Wenqin. We started south of the Lu River and stopped in Linqing. There was no water in the river there, so we took the land route thenceforth, and returned to the boat again in Zhangqiu. I read and punctuated this book in great sorrow and depression. I took another boat carrying my wife's coffin and watched from the distance the limitless mist covering the water. Recorded by Tonghe, on the lake at Mount Wei on the fourth day of the month.

同治戊辰九月挾護先文端公及先兄文勤之喪，由潞河南還臨清，無水，乃出陸，復自張丘入舟，憂傷憔悴中點讀一過。別以小艇載正妻柩相望於煙波浩渺間也。是月四日，微山湖中，同穌記。

These two colophons record the domestic tragedies Weng experienced. In this depressed state he could only take slight comfort from reading and put down his sadness in the margin of the book he was reading.

But, life recorded in marginalia was not always grievous. The *Jinshi lu* 金石錄 (Catalogue of ancient bronzes and stone tablets) held at the Shanghai Library (call number: XST03117-122) has a colophon at the end by Weng Tonghe stating that he was fortunate to acquire this book in a book market and that He Zhuo's marginalia in it had been transcribed by a noted scholar-official and calligrapher, Dong Chun 董醇 (1810–1892). Following this, another colophon by Weng reads:

In the past, my friend Pan Boyin (Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭, courtesy name Boyin 伯寅, studio name Pangxi Study [Pangxi zhai], 1830–1890) got an incomplete copy of a Song edition formerly held at the Yeshi Garden [Yeshiyuan]. Pan was extremely surprised and considered it a very rare and valuable treasure. He carved a seal that read “the family that has ten *juan* of the *Jinshi lu*,” and invited friends to drink and compose poems for it. Pan declared, “The lost treasure stopped wandering.” This certainly deserves our cheers. Noted by Pingsheng.

昔吾友潘伯寅得也是園宋槧殘本，詫為奇寶，刻“金石錄十卷人家”小印，置酒邀人賦詩。滂喜云“亡風流歇”，絕可勝歎哉。瓶生記。

Pan Zuyin was a high-ranking Qing dynasty official, a noted art collector, and a prominent calligrapher. The *Jinshi lu*, co-written by the famous epigrapher Zhao Mingcheng 趙明誠 (1081–1129) and his wife, Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1081–c.1141), one of the great female poets, was considered one of the earliest and most important catalogues and study works on ancient Chinese bronzes and stone tablets. It enjoyed a great reputation from the time of its publication in the Southern Song dynasty. But by the Qing dynasty, scholars believed that there were only ten *juan* of the Song edition (one third of the whole book) left. This incomplete Song copy (*can Songben* 殘宋本) thus enjoyed a very special reputation. Every collector who held it would carve a seal reading “the family that has ten *juan* of the *Jinshi lu*” (金石錄十卷人家), as did Pan Zuyin. His seal was carved by Zhao Zhiqian 趙之謙 (1829–1884), a renowned calligrapher, seal carver and painter in the late Qing.¹⁰ Here, Weng recorded this anecdote, reflecting his admiration for his friend Pan Zuyin who held a Song edition (albeit incomplete) of the *Jinshi lu*, his regrets that most rare books were scattered and lost, his happiness that Pan stopped this incomplete Song copy from wandering, and his satisfaction at managing to get his own copy filled with previous scholars’ marginalia.

In their colophons, the scholars did not say much about theories, principles, the Way of former sages, or any kind of concrete knowledge. What they recorded was their life style, various practices with books, and their feelings about these practices. Through transcribing previous scholars’ marginalia, and the colophons in particular, they learned from their predecessors the way to do their research, a way of life, and a way to think about their lives. They inherited from their predecessors not only concrete knowledge, but also faith in – or at least a certain attitude toward – books and ancient texts. That is, they were living in a particular kind of culture: they were shaped by it and maintained it. I am not arguing that one particular cultural form can continue in a society without any changes. On the contrary, I am trying to show that the condition of a culture is influenced by political, social, economic, and other factors and undergoes very slow but certain change.

In the late Qing and Republican periods (late nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries), when China was going through a transformation from pre-modern

10 See Xu Ke, *Qingbai leichao*, 4246; Pan Zuyin 潘祖蔭, *Pangxi zhai cangshuji* 滂喜齋藏書記, in *Xuxiu Suku quanshu*, vol. 926, 429–435.

to modern, the scholarly culture of the Qing dynasty was still intact. Many scholars continued the scholarly practices of their predecessors. They occupied themselves with reading and collating ancient books, transcribing marginalia, and discussing books with friends. Zhang Yu was one of them. The *Wudai shiji* held at the National Library mentioned above has a colophon by Zhang at the end of *juan* seven, reading:

In the sixteenth day, we held a celebration for my little son Yuanyi's first full month. I got my son's hair cut and had a delightful talk with my relatives. I snatched a moment of leisure and collated this book.

十六日，稚子元義滿月，翦鬚，與親戚情話，抽暇校此。

The colophon at the end of *juan* 62 states:

Collated for thirty-three days. I did not do anything else or contact any friends: I just read and collated a lot.

三十三日校。不治他事，朋從絕跡，故校讀較多。

Busy with family affairs, he competed against time to read and collate; in his leisure time, he read and collated more. When he was happy because of his son's full-month celebration and the talk with his relatives, he did not forget to read and collate; during a lonely time when he had no contact with his friends, he devoted himself to reading and collation. At the end of *juan* forty-two, another colophon reads:

Collated on the twenty-first day, which was my forty-ninth birthday, twenty-seven years after my father's death, seven years after my mother's death. Ten years ago, I became an official. On the same day, when I lived in the capital, I went to Father Wang's and tried to write a policy essay. A decade earlier, I was in my home (in Suzhou). [My son] Yuanshan was less than one-year-old at that time, but now he has already gone to the U.S. to study and will graduate soon. Another decade earlier, I was in Xumen (in Suzhou) studying at an elementary school named Sixian. Yet another decade earlier, I was learning to read the *Mencius* from master Ding. Recalling past events, I saw everything vividly [in my mind] as if it were a painting. Qu Yuan (courtesy name Boyu) a senior official [of the Wei in the Spring and Autumn Period] said that when he was fifty *sui* he realised the mistakes he had made at forty-nine. I will say that what I did

in the last decade was perhaps right, in comparison with what I am doing now. About the reasons therein, with whom can I talk?

二十一日校，是日為余四十九歲福度，去先君之亡二十七年，先母之亡七年。前十年為通籍之年，是日寓京，達子營汪丈處試寫策一本。又前十年在里門，是時元善尚未試週，今已遠道美國求學，將次畢業。又前十年，時在胥門，由斯銜處蒙館。又前十年，從丁師讀《孟子》。回望前塵，歷歷如繪。蘧大夫（名瑗，字伯玉，春秋時衛國大臣）謂知四十九年之非，余則謂，以今校之前數十年，或較是耳。此中消息，將與誰語邪？

Here, on his forty-ninth birthday in 1913 when he lived in Tianjin,¹¹ Zhang Yu looked back at his life in decade-long segments. In those forty-nine years, Zhang moved from his home to Xumen in Suzhou, then to the capital (Beijing), and then to Tianjin. At any particular time and space, reading and learning were always the cornerstones of Zhang's life. For a reading seed like Zhang Yu, external time and space changed, but his reading life did not; nor did his relationship with books.

In 1911, the Xinhai Revolution ended the Qing dynasty, the last empire in Chinese history and a new regime was established. In this colophon, Zhang Yu also mentioned that his son had gone to the U.S. to study. The world had changed drastically, and he was confused. Perhaps it was time for him to change how he saw the world and responded to it. But Zhang continued to read the world according to texts that had been read and altered by past wise men. He was defending the tradition in his way. His colophons, at times, are inundated by confusion, bewilderment and depression about the world and his destiny in it. At the end of *juan* fifteen of the *Wudai shiji*, Zhang recorded discussions with one of his friends about one of Su Shi's 蘇軾 (1037–1101) song lyrics, the "Shui long yin (Ci yun Zhang Zhifu yanghua ci)" 水龍吟 (次韻章質夫楊花詞) (Tune: "The Water Dragon's Chant," After Zhang Zhifu's Lyric on the Willow Catkin Using the Same Rhyming Words). This colophon reads:

Collated on the seventeenth day. That night, Shi Zhonglu came to discuss Pogong's [Su Shi's] song lyric, the "Willow Catkins" (Tune: "Water Dragon's Chant") with me. He said: "The two sentences that start with

11 See Su Jing 蘇精, *Jindai cangshu sanshijia* 近代藏書三十家 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009), 46.

'bu hen' (do not grieve) in the second part mean that the willow catkins are not worthy of pity, yet what went with them is to be greatly pitied." When I ask him why, [he said that] the willow catkins and what were not willow catkins both returned to dust. The six sentences from "When dawn comes" to "flowing water" mean that the myriad things all perish together. This [reading] grasped the profound meaning [of this poem]. In my opinion, the first part of this poem talks about *this* life, and the second part discusses *this* world. These sad words throughout all the ages have someone to corroborate them. The second day when I got up in the morning, I briefly sketched this.

十七日校，夜施仲魯來與談坡公《水龍吟·楊花》一闕。渠云：“下半‘不恨’二語，謂楊花不足惜，隨以俱亡者乃大可惜。”及問其究竟，則是楊花非楊花，同歸於塵土，“流水”“曉來”六語有萬類同歸於盡之意，極得微旨。余於此詞，每謂上半為我生說，下半為世界說，千古傷心之辭，有人為之印證。翌日晨起擬書，為記其畧。

Su Shi's entire lyric reads:

It seems to be a flower, yet not a flower, / and no one shows it any pity: let it fall! / Deserting home, it wanders by the road; / When you come to think of it, it must / have thoughts, insentient as it may be. / Its tender heart twisted by grief, / its delicate eyes heavy with sleep, / about to open, yet closed again. / In its dream it follows the wind for ten thousand miles, / to find where its lover has gone, / but then it is aroused by the orioles' cry once more.

似花還似非花，也無人惜從教墜。拋家傍路，思量卻是，無情有思。縈損柔腸，困酣嬌眼，欲開還閉。夢隨風萬里，尋郎去處，又還被、鶯呼起。

I do not grieve that the willow catkins have flown away, / but that, in the Western Garden, / the fallen red cannot be gathered. / When dawn comes and the rain is over, / where are the traces they have left? / A pond full of broken duckweed! / Of all the colors of springtime, / two-thirds have gone with the dust, / and one-third with the flowing water! / When you look closely, / these are not willow catkins, / but, drop after drop, parted lovers' tears.

不恨此花飛盡，恨西園，落紅難綴。曉來雨過，遺蹤何在？一池萍碎。春色三分，二分塵土，一流水。細看來，不是楊花點點，是離人淚。¹²

The first paragraph of Su Shi's song lyric writes that the willow catkins seem to be have no feelings, but they actually have deep thoughts. The second stanza states that the willow catkins, as well as all the flowers, have gone with the passing of spring, which triggers in Zhang the feeling that "the myriad things all perish together." Zhang thought that "the first part of this poem talks about *this* life, the second part discusses *this* world," which implies that everyone under heaven will come to an end in the political and social transformations at that time, when the order of the world is lost, even though one still has feelings for the world, people and the myriad things. This kind of helpless, confused and depressed feeling is a vivid example of what was in the minds of many reading seeds at that time.

The reading seeds in late imperial China who had carefully read the Confucian Classics and other ancient works, to some extent possessed a romantic mindset. They dreamed of building a utopian society and renewing the glorious customs recorded in ancient texts. To their way of thinking, all the principles of the natural world and human society were encapsulated in the classics, so they could understand and establish a relationship between themselves and the external world according to the doctrines in those classics. They derived knowledge from various texts and tried to apply it to the practical world. However, there was always a great gap between the ideal and the reality, between what ought to be and what was so. Because it was almost impossible to cross this great gap, they withdrew from the external world to their studies and tried to rebuild their ideal world in texts. This is the faith they had inherited from their predecessors and would hand down to later generations. They accepted this faith, and the practices of enacting this faith, out of a kind of cultural inertia born of the fact that they grew up in that culture, lived in that culture, and were shaped by that culture.

The text had rational contents and artistic features. In this regard, it was actually a rational, artistic intellectual world that was built by the scholars. In textual criticism and evidential research, scholars rigorously complied with

12 Su Shi 蘇軾, "Shui long yin" (Ci yun Zhang Zhifu yanghua ci) 水龍吟 (次韻章質夫楊花詞), in Zou Tongqing 鄒同慶 and Wang Zongtang 王宗堂, *Su Shi ci biannian jiaozhu* 蘇軾詞編年校注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), 314. Translation by James J.Y. Liu, in *Sunflower Splendor: Three Thousand Years of Chinese Poetry*, Wu-chi Liu and Irving Yucheng Lo, eds. (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1975), 349–350.

rational principles. Their works relied on observation and rational deduction. This “textual rationality” was never truly and successfully applied to the real world, yet it provided a mental realm to which scholars could return, a secret getaway (*taohua yuan* 桃花源, lit. a Peach Garden, referencing the story of the same title) established in the scholars’ collective imagination. Therefore, in the real world, they chose an artistic life style: they had a poetic eye for all the things in the natural world, and they appreciated and held on to books and to all the objects in their studies as well. They focused on the calligraphy of marginalia, wrote poems to eulogize rare books, and more. Generally speaking, some Qing scholars leaned toward the rational and practical aspect of their mode of reasoning, while others leaned toward the artistic aspect, but neither group abandoned the other side completely. They managed to find a balance point in between. Even when building their ideal world in the text, their purpose was never to simply “finish” a project (composing a book or article). The scholarly practices themselves mattered. The process was more important than the result; the experience and the comprehension were a more important part of the purpose. Scholarship was not only their occupation, but also part of their life.

These reading seeds had a kind of rational aesthetic personality. On the one hand, they had gained the ability and inclination to pursue the truth through extensive reading and training in how to be a scholar (that is, with critical thinking applied to the classics); on the other hand, they comforted their hearts and found enjoyment by finding and appreciating the beauty of books and the practices of their scholarly life. The *Zhongwu jiwén* held at the National Library of China (call number: S2196) has He Zhuo’s marginalia transcribed by Wu Zhizhong 吳志忠 (alternative name Miaodaoren 妙道人, abb. Daoren). After the table of contents, there is a colophon composed by Wu that reads:

[I.] Daoren have collated this book by drawing on four copies: an old manuscript copy collated by Mr. He Yimen and transcribed by Mr. Shen Qiutian; a copy of the Mao edition that was collated by Mao Zijin and Lu Chixian; the copy that was collated by Wuyuan according to a Song edition; and the copy compiled in the *Shuofu* (Persuasion of the suburbs) in a Ming manuscript edition. In addition to that collated by Shoujie according to the Tao and Jiang editions, there are six editions. Now I have come across the copy held by Ye Wenzhuang and collated by Mao Fuji, and know that it was the master copy used by He Yimen. After comparison, I corrected a lot of mistakes. How deep is Daoren’s special tie with this book!

道人於是書凡四校：何義門先生舊抄本沈秋田先生臨校者也，毛子晉刻錄原本經子晉及陸敕先所訂定者也，武源氏以宋本校者也，明人抄《說孚》所錄本也。合之舊有綬階所校陶、蔣二氏本而六矣。今又遇毛斧季手校葉文莊藏本，乃知即為何義門本所祖，覆勘下，實補掛漏甚多。道人於是書也，亦何緣之深邪！

Wu believed that he had a “special tie” with the *Zhongwu jiwén*. Many scholars in late imperial China believed that they had a special relationship with certain books. These reading seeds were devoted to scholarly practices related to books and texts all their lives. It seems less important whether there is an ultimate answer to their questions about their life and the world. What they treasured and were obsessed with, as least as expressed in marginalia, was this special tie with books.