

To Be “Erudite in Miscellaneous Knowledge”: A Study of Song (960–1279) *Biji* Writing

When I was only a boy, my father ordered that I study in the capital. Ten years would pass before I earned a degree. Since then, driven by official appointments, I have traveled north and south; this has continued for almost three decades. If I learned anything from the comments of teachers and friends, the pleasant conversation of my guests and colleagues, and what my own eyes and ears saw and heard, I recorded it without fail. 予年甫成童, 親命從學於京師, 凡十閱寒暑, 始竊一第; 已而宦牒奔走, 輟環南北, 而逮歷三紀, 故自師友之余論, 賓僚之燕談, 與耳目之所及, 苟有所得, 輒皆記之.

So did Wang Dechen 王得臣 (1036–1116) begin his preface to *Zhushi* 麈史 (*History as Told at Leisure*,¹ literally, *History as Told Holding a Duster in Hand*), a *biji* 筆記 (miscellaneous notes) collection he completed in 1115.² Having hailed from Hubei, Wang spent most of his adult life away from his native place. After receiving a *jinshi* degree in 1059, he enjoyed a long career in the government. In addition to time spent in the capital, official orders also sent Wang to the northern, central, and southeastern parts of the country. Wherever he was, Wang would jot down things that interested him. All 284 entries in *Zhushi*, he declared, were “faithful records” of his life experience.

The centuries of Song rule marked a high point in *biji* production. Whereas only dozens of *biji* survive from Tang times (618–907), extant Song works amount to hundreds.³ Earlier texts were more vulnerable to loss in transmission, and the booming printing industry in the eleventh century and onward surely contributed to the preservation rate of

¹ Wang Dechen 王得臣, preface to *Zhushi* in *Song Yuan biji xiaoshuo daguan* 宋元筆記小說大觀 (*A Collection of Miscellaneous Notes and Trivial Anecdotes of the Song and Yuan Periods*) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), p. 1314. All the *biji* works under discussion in this paper, with the exception of Zhang Shinan’s *Youhuan jiwen* 游宦紀聞 (*Records of Official Travel*, hereafter cited as *YHJW* or *Official Travel*) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1981), are from this edition.

² *Zhu* (alternately, *mi* 麋) is an animal in the deer family. The hair on its tail was used to make brushes.

³ One authority estimates that 3,000 such works, in fragments or in their entirety, have survived from the imperial era. See preface to *Song Yuan biji xiaoshuo daguan*. The *Quan Song biji* 全宋筆記 (*The Complete Song biji*) project, undertaken by scholars at Shanghai Normal University (Shanghai shifan daxue), plans to compile about 500 Song works. So far, nearly 200 have been published by Daxiang Press in Zhengzhou, Henan.

Song works.⁴ Just as important, with the expansion of the publishing industry and a growing educated class, Song *biji* enjoyed much wider circulation.⁵ These considerations aside, it is still safe to assert that many more *biji* were written in the Song than in the Tang and many more Song writers than Tang writers made the choice to write in *biji* form. And no wonder, since the subject matter of Song *biji* ranged much more broadly. Staple topics in earlier works – court and capital life, famed political and literary figures, and strange occurrences – still featured prominently in Song works. But Song writers also increasingly turned their attention to regional conditions, everyday material culture, local practices and customs, and interesting personalities of more diverse backgrounds. This material has proven invaluable to our understanding of many aspects of Song political, social, and cultural history.⁶

This article is mainly concerned with writing about *wenjian* 聞見 (or *jianwen* 見聞), literally, “things heard and seen,” in Song *biji* and its

⁴ For an in-depth study of the printing industry from the Song to the Ming, see Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit: The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th–17th Centuries)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 2002).

⁵ Alister Inglis has documented the demand for Hong Mai’s 洪邁 (1123–1202) *biji* works during the author’s lifetime; they were so popular that Hong referred to being pressured to publish. See Inglis, *Hong Mai’s Record of the Listener and Its Song Dynasty Context* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 1–67. There is ample evidence that many *biji* works were widely circulated during the Song. Zhang Shinan (fl. late-12th to early-13th centuries) mentions five Song *biji* in his *Official Travel*. They are *Guitian lu* 歸田錄 (*Records on Retirement to the Farm*, hereafter cited as *GTL*) by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072), *Yijian zhi* 夷堅志 (*Record of the Listener*) and *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (*Random Notes at the Studio Named Rong*) by Hong Mai, *Bozhai bian* 泊宅編 (*Records Collected While Residing in Bozhai*, hereafter cited as *BZB*) by Fang Shao 方勺 (fl. 1080s–1110s), and *Tingshi* 程史 (*History as Told in Private*, literally, *History as Told While Sitting Next to a Bedside Table*, hereafter cited as *TS*) by Yue Ke 岳珂 (12th c.). See *YHJW* 1, p. 4; 1, p. 6; 2, p. 11; 2, p. 17; 3, p. 21; 8, p. 72.

⁶ Of all the Song *biji* works, Hong Mai’s *Yijian zhi* has probably been most widely used as a source. See, for example, Patricia Ebrey, *Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period* (Berkeley: U. California P., 1993); and Valerie Hansen, *Changing Gods in Medieval China* (Princeton U.P., 1990). Textual studies of *Yijian zhi* include B. J. ter Haar, “Newly Recovered Anecdotes from Hong Mai’s (1123–1202) *Yijian zhi*,” *Journal of Song Yuan Studies* 23 (1993): 19–41 and Alister Inglis, *Hong Mai’s Record of the Listener and Its Song Dynasty Context*, idem, “Hong Mai’s Informants for the *Yijian zhi*,” *Journal of Song-Yuan Studies* 32 (2002): 83–125, and idem, “A Textual History of Hong Mai’s *Yijian zhi*,” *TP* 93 (2007): 283–368. Paul J. Smith uses seven *biji* from the Song, Yuan (1271–1368), and Ming (1368–1644) to trace changing attitudes toward “factionalism, immorality, and fall to foreign conquerors of the Song and the late Ming”; Smith, “Impressions of the Song-Yuan-Ming Transition: The Evidence from *Biji* Memoirs,” in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, edited by Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), pp. 71–110. Stephen West, working from Song *biji* and other works, has detailed the consumption of fish and shellfish in the Northern Song capital Kaifeng. West, “Cilia, Scale, and Bristle: The Consumption of Fish and Shellfish in the Eastern Capital of the Northern Song,” *HJAS* 47.2 (Dec., 1987): 595–634. West has also done a thorough textual study of *Dongjing menghua lu* 東京夢華錄 (*A Record of Dreaming of Hua in the Eastern Capital*): “The Interpretation of a Dream: The Sources, Evaluation, and Influence of the ‘*Dongjing menghua lu*,’” *TP*, 71.1–3 (1985): 63–108. For another important study of the *Dongjing menghua lu*, see Pei-I Wu, “Memories of K’ai-feng,” *New Literary History* 25.1 (Winter, 1994): 47–60.

relationship to changing literati ideals about scholarship and knowledge accumulation. But the expression had broader connotations. In Song *biji*, it was often used to signify the authors' real-life experience as measured by the information they gathered from direct observation and hands-on investigation. A synonym of *wenjian* was *er'mu suoji* 耳目所及 (what one's ears and eyes hear and see). Wang Dechen used the term in the preface to his *biji* work, cited above, to illustrate the many things he had learned over his life time.

Based on an analysis of 38 prefaces to 32 *biji* collections, the first part of this paper shows that Song writers eagerly promoted their own *wenjian* and were equally fascinated by those of their peers. In so doing, they celebrated the role of extensive travel, social gathering, and personal exploration in transforming themselves into erudite scholars of "miscellaneous knowledge" (*zashi* 雜識).⁷ This contributes to our understanding of Song social and cultural history in general and developments in elite culture in three ways. First, it points to the Song literati's growing interest in and familiarity with the local, the everyday, and the particular. Second, it indicates a new emphasis on the role of personal and hands-on experience in learning and accumulating knowledge. Third, by portraying themselves as experts on places and things, Song literati promoted a new scholarly ideal, "erudition" (*bo* 博), one that was distinct from, yet ran parallel to, classical training and book- and examination-based learning. This last aspect carried special significance for men in the lower echelons of the literati class. Most of them served in obscure official positions and lacked the literary talent and political caliber that distinguished the leading figures of the time. In other areas, however, they saw themselves as no less accomplished. All traveled widely, maintained large social networks with people of diverse backgrounds, and were extremely well-informed on a large variety of topics, ranging from geography to social customs and from folklores to natural and man-made things/objects such as stones, flowers, and rare books.

Zhang Shinan 張世南 (active in the last years of the twelfth and the first half of the thirteenth centuries) is a representative figure of this group. The second half of this paper introduces him and his *biji*, *Youhuan jiwen* 游宦紀聞 (*Records of Official Travel*, hereafter referred to as *Official Travel*). It aims to shed light on the preoccupations of ordinary Song scholars as they traveled across the country and pursued practical and

⁷ For a comprehensive study on the role travel played in the lives of Song scholar-officials, see Cong Ellen Zhang, *Transformative Journeys: Travel and Culture in Song China* (Honolulu: U. Hawaii P., 2011).

particularized knowledge. In *Official Travel*, Zhang Shinan makes every effort to substantiate the value of his work and depict himself as an authority on diverse subjects. He accomplishes this goal most effectively by emphasizing the extent of his travels and the opportunities those trips offered for personal exploration. In the end, Zhang impresses his readers with both the scope of his knowledge and the detailed, often regionally specific, information he provides. Zhang's writing, and that of his peers, points to a new vision of status, learning, and scholarly ideals. Direct observation and personal experience became a legitimate and highly valued source of solid scholarship. More importantly, Song elite men found in *biji* an ideal vehicle for expressing and disseminating the "miscellaneous knowledge" they had acquired through their *wenjian* or their experiences.

SONG *Biji*: THEIR AUTHORS AND TOPICS

In the history of Chinese literature, the category *biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說 (miscellaneous notes and trivial anecdotes) referred to a large variety of works in classical Chinese, ranging from "records of anomalies" (*zhiguai* 誌怪) and "tales of the remarkable" (*chuanqi* 傳奇) to anecdotes on historical events, renowned personalities, and diverse aspects of everyday life. Traditional as well as modern scholars have long struggled to properly define *biji xiaoshuo* for bibliographical purposes and as a literary genre, if they agree this was a genre at all. The earliest reference to *xiaoshuo*, which appears in *Zhuangzi* 莊子, has nothing to do with "trivial anecdotes," the meaning of *xiaoshuo* in *biji xiaoshuo*, or "fiction" – the sense of *xiaoshuo* in modern Chinese. Rather, in its earliest appearance *xiaoshuo* can be literally translated as "small talk," which is presented as opposed to "great knowledge" (*dada* 大達).⁸ The Han-era scholar Ban Gu 班固 (32–92) was among the earliest to pay attention to works that would have been loosely labeled *biji xiaoshuo* when he mentioned "street chatter and alley gossip, made up by those who engaged in conversation along the roads and walkways." Ban further quoted Confucius (551–479 BCE) as saying, "Although a petty path [*xiaodao* 小道], there is surely something to be seen in it," but at the same time warned gentlemen against pursuing such a path too far.⁹ Despite the marginal status Ban assigned them, compilations that would be identi-

⁸ Miao Zhuang 苗壯, *Biji xiaoshuo shi* 筆記小說史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1998), pp. 1–6. Liu Yeqiu 劉葉秋, *Lidai biji gaishu* 歷代筆記概述 (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 2003), pp. 1–11.

⁹ Quoted in Laura Hua Wu: "From *Xiaoshuo* to Fiction: Hu Yinglin's Genre Study of *Xiaoshuo*," *HJAS* 55.2 (Dec., 1995): 340. For more general discussion of this topic, see the long

fied as *biji xiaoshuo* in later times steadily grew in number, and post-Han scholars continued their struggle to allocate these works a proper place in the corpus of historical and literary writing.

Biji as a term did not make its first appearance until much later, in the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420–589). It originally meant and can still loosely mean “casually recorded material.”¹⁰ It is important to note that the earliest use of *biji* in a book title was by Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061) in *Song Jingwen gong biji* 宋景文公筆記 (*Miscellaneous Notes of Mr. Song Whose Literary Name Was Jingwen*).¹¹ From the Song onward, *biji* often appeared together with *xiaoshuo*. But properly categorizing *biji xiaoshuo* as a genre proved to be a daunting task. The earliest reference to *biji xiaoshuo* appears in Shi Shengzu’s 史繩祖 (active in 1241) *Xuezhai zhanbi* 學齋占畢 (*Reading in the Study*). But the Southern Song scholar was not really interested in *biji xiaoshuo* as a literary form; he only used the term in the context of criticizing his contemporaries for not reading texts carefully and thereby perpetuating errors caused by typos and problematic editions.¹² In the late-imperial era, Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1602), Liu Tingji 劉廷璣 (1654–?), and the bibliographers of the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (*The Complete Library of the Four Treasures*) were among the most influential figures in classifying *biji xiaoshuo* into many categories, ranging from “records of anomalies” (*zhiguai* 誌怪) and “tales of the remarkable” (*chuanqi* 傳奇) to miscellaneous records (*zalu* 雜錄) and collections of conversations (*congtan* 叢談), to works of admonitions and regulations (*zhengui* 箴規) and those focusing on distinguishing and rectifying incorrect information in earlier texts (*bian ding* 辯定).¹³ Modern scholars of Chinese literature continue to attempt a proper definition for *biji xiaoshuo* and, more importantly, to separate *biji* from *xiaoshuo*.¹⁴ After summarizing the voluminous and often contradictory statements made by traditional and modern scholars, Liu Yequ has identified three types of work as *biji*:

prefaces to *Quan Song biji* by Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮 and to *Zhongguo lidai xiaoshuo xuba ji* 中國歷代小說序跋集 (*A Collection of Prefaces and Postscripts to Trivial Anecdotes in Chinese History*) (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 1996) by Ding Xigen 丁錫根.

¹⁰ Miao, *Biji xiaoshuo shi*, pp. 1–6; Liu, *Lidai biji gaishu*, 1–2.

¹¹ Liu, *Lidai biji gaishu*, p. 4.

¹² Miao, *Biji xiaoshuo shi*, pp. 2–3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–6; Liu, *Lidai biji gaishu*, 1–11.

¹⁴ See Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe, 1996), Liu, *Lidai biji gaishu*, and Ning Jiayu 寧稼雨, *Zhongguo zhiren xiaoshuo shi* 中國志人小說史 (Shenyang: Liaoning renmin chubanshe, 1991). For studies on earlier development of *biji xiaoshuo*, see Hou Zhongyi 侯忠義, *Sui Tang Wudai xiaoshuo shi* 隋唐五代小說史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1997), and Wang Zhizhong 王枝忠, *Han Wei Liuchao xiaoshuo shi* 漢魏六朝小說史 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1997).

1. ones that mainly contain short stories (*xiaoshuo gushi* 小說故事);
2. anecdotes on history and trivial news (*lishi suowen* 歷史瑣聞); and
3. records of evidential investigation and authentication (*kaoju bianzheng* 考據辯証).

Liu further points out that, from the Song onward, works of historical and miscellaneous anecdotes experienced rapid growth.¹⁵ Liu's categorization has been accepted by the editors of the *Quan Song biji* 全宋筆記 (*The Complete Song biji*), which promises to contain eventually about 500 *biji* works in ten parts.¹⁶

Using Liu's categorization as a guide, the study at hand considers the prefaces from *Song Yuan biji xiaoshuo daguan* 宋元筆記小說大觀 (*A Collection of Miscellaneous Notes and Trivial Anecdotes of the Song and Yuan Periods*) to survey the authors' professed motivations in producing such works. The collection contains 63 *biji* works composed from the early Northern Song (960–1125) to the late Southern Song (1127–1279). As table 1 shows, about half (32) of the works include at least one preface.¹⁷ Of the 38 prefaces under discussion, 31 were written by the authors and the remaining 7 by a son and friends or acquaintances. Also note that, while several leading literary figures were *biji* writers, most Song *biji* were written by scholar-officials of lesser stature.¹⁸ Of the

¹⁵ Liu, *Lidai biji gaishu*, pp. 4–5.

¹⁶ Fu Xuancong, preface to *Quan Song biji* 全宋筆記, di yi bian 第一編, edited by Zhu Yi'an 朱易安 and Fu Xuancong (Zhengzhou: Daxiang chubanshe, 2003), p. 6. So far, four parts, including about 200 titles, have been published.

¹⁷ Four collections included more than one preface. Wang Pizhi's 王辟之 *Mianshui yantan lu* 泗水燕談錄 (*Collections of Enjoyable Conversations at Mian River*, hereafter cited as *MSYTL*) has two prefaces, one of them by a friend of the compiler. Zhang Duanyi's 張端義 *Gui'er ji* 貴耳集 (*Collection of Things Heard*, literally, *Collection of the Valuable Ears*, hereafter cited as *GEJ*) has three, all written by himself. Zhou Hui's 周輝 *Qingbo zazhi* 清波雜誌 (*Miscellaneous Records While Living at the Qingbo Gate*) has two, one by himself, one by a long-time friend. The three prefaces to Luo Dajing's 羅大經 *Helin yulu* 鶴林玉露 (*Jade Dew at the Crane Forest*) were all composed by Luo himself.

¹⁸ Among the famous *biji* writers, Ouyang Xiu was the first nationally prestigious literary figure of the Song who had composed a *biji*. His *Records on Retirement to the Farm* was published in 1067. Ronald Egan has observed that "The major writers of the Tang Period, as well as those before Ouyang in the Song, did not produce works in this form, and those who did produce them were not leading literary men. Writers of great stature in their own time, for example Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) and Bo Juyi 白居易 (772–846) from the Tang, or Yang Yi 楊億 (974–1021) and Liu Kai 柳開 (947–1000) in the early Northern Song, avoided the 'random notes' form, presumably because they preferred to keep their literary energies focused on more prestigious types of expression"; Egan, *The Problem of Beauty, Aesthetic Thought and Pursuits in Northern Song Dynasty China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center), pp. 64–65. In the next several decades, however, leading writers and statesmen such as Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086), Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101), and Su Che 蘇轍 (1039–1112) followed Ouyang's example. Their *biji* include *Sushui jiwen* 涑水紀聞 (*Records of Things Heard Living Next to River Su*) by Sima Guang, *Dongpo zhilin* 東坡志林 (*Records by Dongpo*) by Su Shi, and *Longchuan luezhì* 龍川略志 (*Brief Records While Living in Longchuan*) and *Longchuan biezhì* 龍川別志 (*Other Records While Living in Longchuan*) by Su Che.

Table 1. Thirty-two Song Biji Titles: Their Authors and the Thirty-eight Prefaces

AUTHOR	AUTH. GOVT. SERVICE YES/NO	BIJI TITLE	DATE OF PREFACE	PREFACE WRITER
Zhang Ji 張洎 (933-996)	Y	<i>Jiashi tanlu</i> 賈氏談錄	970	self
Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953-1013)	Y	<i>Nan Tang jinshi</i> 南唐近事	977	self
Qian Yi 錢易 (11th c.)	Y	<i>Nanbu xinshu</i> 南部新書	1056	Qian Mingyi 錢明逸
Yang Danian 楊大年 (974-1020), Huang Jian 黃鑑 (n.d.), Song Xiang 宋庠 (996-1066)	Y	<i>Yang Wengong tanyuan</i> 楊文公談苑	?	Song Xiang 宋庠
Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072)	Y	<i>Guitan lu</i> 歸田錄	1067	self
Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019-1079)	Y	<i>Chunming tuichao lu</i> 春明退朝錄	1074	self
Liu Fu 劉斧 (11th c.)	N	<i>Qingsuo gaoyi</i> 青瑣高義	?	Sun Fushu 孫副樞
Wang Pizhi 王辟之 (1032-?)	Y	<i>Mianshui yantan lu</i> 澗水燕談錄	1095	self
			1089	Man Zhongxing 滿中行
Wang Dechen 王得臣 (1036-1116)	Y	<i>Zhushi</i> 塵史	1115	self
Wen Ying 文瑩 (11th c.)	N	<i>Yuhu qinghua</i> 玉壺清話	1078	self
Wu Chuhou 吳處厚 (fl. 1050-1100)	Y	<i>Qingxiang zaji</i> 青箱雜記	1087	self
Shao Bowen 邵伯溫 (1056-1134)	Y	<i>Shaoshi wenjian lu</i> 邵氏聞見錄	1132	self
Shao Bo 邵博 (?-1158)	Y	<i>Shaoshi wenjian houlu</i> 邵氏聞見後錄	1157	self
Fang Shao 方勺 (1066-?)	Y	<i>Bao zhai bian</i> 泊宅編	?	Hong Xingzu 洪興祖
Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077-1148)	Y	<i>Shilin yanyu</i> 石林燕語	1123	self
Ye Mengde		<i>Bishu luhua</i> 避暑錄話	1135	self

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AUTHOR	AUTH. GOVT. SERVICE YES/NO	BIJI TITLE	DATE OF PREFACE	PREFACE WRITER
Gong Mingzhi 龔明之 (12th c.)	N	<i>Zhongwu jiwen</i> 中吳紀聞	1182	self
Zeng Minxing 曾敏行 (12th c.)	N	<i>Duxing zazhi</i> 獨醒雜誌	1185	Yang Wanli 楊萬里
Fei Guan 費袞 (12th c.)	Y	<i>Liangxi manzhi</i> 梁谿漫誌	1192	self
Wang Mingqing 王明清 (1127-1202)	Y	<i>Touxia lu</i> 投轄錄	1159	self
Wang Mingqing		<i>Yuzhao xinzhì</i> 玉照新志	1198	self
Zhuang Chuo 莊綽 (12th c.)	Y	<i>Jilei bian</i> 雞肋編	1133	self
Zhao Yushi 趙與時 (1175-1231)	Y	<i>Bintui lu</i> 賓退錄	1224	self
Zhang Duanyi 張端義 (1179-?)	N	<i>Gui'er ji</i> 貴耳集	1241	self
			1244	self
			1248	self
Yue Ke 岳珂 (1183-1242?)	Y	<i>Tingshi</i> 程史	1210S- 1220S	self
Xu Du 徐度 (12th c.)	Y	<i>Quesao bian</i> 卻掃編	?	self
Wang Yong 王楙 (12th-13th c.)	Y	<i>Yanyi yimou lu</i> 燕翼貽謀錄	1227	self
Zhang Bangji 張邦基 (12th c.)	Y	<i>Mozhuang manlu</i> 墨莊漫錄	?	self
Zhou Hui 周輝 (12th c.)	N	<i>Qingbo zazhi</i> 清波雜誌	1192	self
			1193	Zhang Guimo 張貴謨
			1248	self
Luo Dajing 羅大經 (13th c.)	Y	<i>Helin yulu</i> 鶴林玉露	1251	self
			1252	self
Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308)	Y	<i>Qidong yeyu</i> 齊東野語	?	self
Zhou Mi		<i>Guixin zashi</i> 癸辛雜識	?	self

29 authors under discussion, only 6 left no record of government service.¹⁹ Zhang Shinan, whom I profile, below, is a good representative of this latter group.

The topics that Song *biji* touch on are extremely diverse, and the focus of individual works can vary greatly. We get a sense of that diversity from Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072). In the preface to *Guitian lu* 歸田錄 (*Records for Retirement to the Farm*), he claims that his work included:

[1] forgotten incidents at court; [2] things the official historians did not write down; and [3] what is fit for writing down concerning the residue of leisurely chatting and laughter among the gentlemen of the age 朝廷之遺事，史官之所不記，與士大夫笑談之餘而可錄者。²⁰

These three categories no doubt held much interest, and they may be seen as umbrella categories for the numerous topics taken up by *biji* writers generally. In table 2 I have classified the contents of Zhang Shinan's *Official Travel* into sixteen topics. These include such things as local products and practices, strange things and personalities, connoisseurship of antiques and art, accounts of literature and celebrated

Table 2. Sixteen Topics in the Contents of Zhang Shinan's Records of Official Travel

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES	CHAPTER AND PAGE
Things personally heard (<i>wen</i> 聞), witnessed (<i>jian</i> 見 or <i>guan</i> 觀), being told (<i>yan</i> 言), tried (<i>shi</i> 試), investigated (<i>fang</i> 訪), tasted (<i>chang</i> 嘗)	34	1.2; 1.4; 1.5; 1.6; 1.7; 1.9; 1.9; 2.11; 2.11-12; 2.12; 2.15; 2.18; 3.21; 3.21-22; 3.22; 3.6-27; 4.37; 5.42; 5.43; 6.49-50; 6.51-52; 6.53-54; 7.58; 7.59; 7.59-60; 7.60; 7.76; 8.70; 9.81; 9.82; 10.91-92
People and affairs of Poyang	19	1.1-2; 1.3-4; 1.5-6; 2.11; 2.11-12; 3.23; 3.24-26; 5.43; 6.49-50; 6.51; 6.54; 6.55; 7.58; 7.62; 8.74; 8.75; 9.80-81; 9.84
People and affairs of other regions	24	2.11; 2.11-12; 2.12-15; 2.15; 2.16; 2.18; 2.18-19; 3.23-24; 3.27; 4.30-37; 5.42; 5.44; 5.45; 5.45-47; 5.47; 6.51-52; 6.52; 8.71-72; 9.82; 9.82-83
Local but non-native products	15	2.11; 2.11-12; 2.12-15; 2.15; 5.44; 5.45-47; 5.48; 7.61-62; 9.82; 9.82-83; 10.92-93

¹⁹ This number includes one person, Wenying 文瑩 (fl. 1060s), who was a Buddhist monk.

²⁰ Ouyang Xiu, preface to *GTL*, p. 602, trans. Egan, *Problem of Beauty*, p. 65.

TOPIC	NUMBER OF OCCURRENCES	CHAPTER AND PAGE
Local histories (<i>tujing</i> 圖經)	7	1.1-2; 1.3; 6.51; 6.52; 7.60-61; 8.72; 8.73-74
Preserving and circulating information, correcting inaccurate information	17	1.3; 1.6; 1.7; 2.18; 3.24; 3.26-27; 3.28-29; 4.34; 4.37; 5.41; 5.42; 6.50; 6.53; 8.72; 8.74; 9.79-80; 10.86
Popular wisdom	3	2.11; 2.15-16; 2.16
Miscellaneous knowledge	23	1.6; 1.7; 2.11; 2.11-12; 2.12-15; 2.15-16; 2.16; 3.27; 3.8; 5.40-42; 5.47; 6.54; 7.58; 7.60; 7.61-62; 8.72; 9.77; 9.77-78; 9.78; 10.92-93
Collections of calligraphy, antiques, ink stones, etc.	26	1.1-2; 1.5; 1.6; 1.7-8; 1.8; 3.23-24; 3.26-27; 5.40-42; 5.44; 6.53; 6.55; 7.58; 7.59; 7.59-60; 8.69; 8.71; 8.72-73; 9.76; 9.78-79; 9.79-80; 9.80-81; 9.81; 10.90; 10.91-92
Anecdotes about famous personalities	23	1.4-5; 2.17; 2.18; 4.34-35; 4.36; 5.39-40; 6.1; 6.55-56; 7.60; 7.60-61; 8.67-68; 8.68-69; 8.71; 8.72; 9.76; 9.78-79; 9.81; 9.83; 9.84; 10.86-90; 10.91-92; 10.92.93
Spirits, (efficacy of) omens, strange things and people	11	3.22-23; 3.24; 4.30-31; 4.32-33; 4.34; 4.35-37; 6.53; 6.54; 8.73-74
Astronomy, calendar, divination	6	1.1; 1.2; 5.47; 7.62-65; 7.62-65; 8.69-70
Medicine	10	1.3; 1.6; 1.6-7; 1.9; 1.14; 5.42-43; 5.43; 6.51; 9.83
Women's work	2	8.67-68; 4.28
Meanings of words/characters	5	2.17; 9.76; 9.77; 9.77-78; 9.78
Institutional history	4	2.15; 2.16; 2.19; 5.47

figures, medicine, rituals, and the calendar. By comparing Ouyang's announced categories with the sixteen topics in *Official Travel* (table 2, left column), we see a certain consistency with Ouyang's statement, a consistency that holds true more broadly for the contents of *biji* writing from mid-Northern Song to the end of the Southern Song.

CELEBRATING *WENJIAN**The Growing Importance of Wenjian*

From Ouyang Xiu in the eleventh century to Zhang Shinan in the thirteenth, educated Song men showed increasing interest in publicizing their personal experiences and the significant place that travel and direct learning occupied in their self-perception as scholars. They accomplished this goal by always highlighting their commitment to learning (*xue* 學). However, in this context, learning was not limited to studying history and the classics or preparing for the examinations. Song elites counted such activities as socializing with friends and people of diverse backgrounds, as well as observing and investigating natural phenomena and social customs, as significant to their development as scholars. As a result, *biji* authors may be seen as having been experts on many topics and even adventurous and personable people.

A survey of this group of prefaces reveals that Song *biji* writers constantly drew attention to their devotion to learning to boost their scholarly credentials (see table 3). Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶 (953–1013) humbly declares that, although he is not a “great *ru* 儒 (Confucian) scholar,” he loves learning.²¹ Qian Yi’s 錢易 (eleventh century) son praised his father “for being broad in learning” because “his investigation of things was thorough and his thoughts refined.”²² Wu Chuhou 吳處厚 in the late-eleventh century describes himself as a person who “never stops reading books and loves to investigate things.”²³ These statements reveal that, while moral cultivation and mastering the classics remained the core literati preoccupation, and an extremely time-consuming endeavor at that, Song *biji* writers sought to validate and showcase other credentials, especially their erudition in all sorts of miscellaneous things. They make it clear that not only was extensive personal experience of the world highly sought after but that an individual’s *wenjian* virtually defined him as a scholar. Wang Pizhi’s 王辟之 (1031–?, *jinshi* 1067) description of his life and career is especially

²¹ Zheng Wenbao 鄭文寶, preface to *Nan Tang jinshi* 南唐近事 (*Recent Events of the Southern Tang*), p. 267.

²² Qian Mingyi 錢明逸, preface to *Nanbu xinshu* 南部新書 (*New Book of the South*, hereafter cited as *NBS*), p. 289.

²³ Wu, preface to *Qingxiang zaji* 青箱雜記 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Bookcase*), p. 1637. Similar claims can also be found in Song Xiang 宋庠 (996–1066), preface to *Yang Wengong tanyuan* 楊文公談苑 (*Conversations of Mr. Yang Yi*), p. 476; Wenying, preface to *Yuhu qinghua* 玉壺清話 (*Pure Conversations While Living next to Jade Pond*), p. 1451; Fang Shao, preface to *BZB*, p. 2105; Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1148), preface to *Bishu luhua* 避暑錄話 (*Records of Conversations While Escaping Hot Summer Days*), p. 2578; and Fei Gun 費昶 (12th c.), preface to *Liangxi manzhi* 梁谿漫誌 (*Random Notes of Mr. Liangxi*), p. 3348.

Table 3. Commonly Used Terms in the Thirty-eight Prefaces

Refer to table 2 for Chinese characters and dates of all preface writers and prefaces.

BJJI TITLE	PREFACE WRITER	ERUDITION 博	LAUGHTER, CONVERSATION 笑談	IMPORTANCE OF MISC. KNOWL. 雜識	PREDECESSORS 前輩	WENJIAN 聞見 耳目	NOT TO FORGET 忘	LOVE LEARNING 學	LEISURE 閑	CONSCIOUSLY RECORD 記
<i>Jiashi tanlu</i>	Zhang Ji	X	X	X		X				X
<i>Nan Tang jinshi</i>	Zheng Wenbao	X	X			X	X	X		X
<i>Nanbu xinshu</i>	Qian Mingyi	X			X	X	X		X	X
<i>Yang Wengong tanyuan</i>	Song Xiang	X	X	X						X
<i>Guitan lu</i>	Ouyang Xiu		X	X			X		X	X
<i>Chunming tuichao lu</i>	Song Minqiu					X			X	
<i>Qingsuo gaoyi</i>	Sun Fushu									
<i>Mianshui yantan lu</i>	Wang Pizhi		X						X	X
	Man Zhongxing		X	X						X
<i>Zhushi</i>	Wang Dechen		X			X			X	X
<i>Yuhu qinghua</i>	Wen Ying	X			X	X	X			X

<i>BJH</i> TITLE	PREFACE WRITER	ERUDI- TION 博	LAUGHTER, CONVERSA- TION 笑談	IMPORTANCE OF MISC. KNOWL. 雜識	PREDE- CESSORS	WEN/JIAN 聞見 <i>ERMU</i> 耳目	NOT TO FORGET 忘	LOVE LEARN- ING 學	LEIS- URE 閑	CON- SCIOUSLY RECORD 記
<i>Quesao bian</i>	Xu Du		X			X	X		X	X
<i>Yanyi yimou lu</i>	Wang Yong						X	X		X
<i>Mozhuang mantu</i>	Zhang Bangji		X				X		X	X
<i>Qingbo zazhi</i>	Zhou Hui	X	X	X		X	X	X		
	Zhang Guimo		X			X	X		X	X
<i>Helin yulu</i>	Luo Dajing		X						X	X
<i>Qidong yeyu</i>	Zhou Mi		X	X		X	X		X	
<i>Guixin zashi</i>	Zhou Mi		X	X		X		X	X	

illustrative in this respect. Wang describes himself as “having never received a position beyond the prefectural and county level and having never been able to escape hunger and cold.” He therefore had not had any opportunities to “participate in court debates and be exposed to the works of the court historians 不得與聞朝廷之論，史官所書。”²⁴ This humble statement placed Wang far away from the political center and the official historiography of the time. Yet, he proceeds to emphasize the significance of the records he had collected. Wang states that the 360 episodes in his collection had come from his contact with many “virtuous scholar-officials.” By revealing the extensiveness of his experience as a well-traveled and well-informed man, Wang substantiates the value of his *wenjian* and of his compilation.

Song accounts of things seen and heard often appear as unorganized records of personal experience, but the same cannot be said of earlier *biji* works. A brief survey of dozens of Tang *biji* shows that they largely concentrated on the deeds of rulers and the royal families, events at the court, life in the capital, and famous personalities and institutional history.²⁵ The shift in content and in the sources of information in Song *biji* is sounded clearly in the content of the *biji* works and in the rhetoric of their prefaces. As tables 1 and 3 show, of the 32 works under discussion here, 10 featured “conversations” (*tan* 談 or *yu* 語) or “things heard and seen” in their titles. Seven (7) contain a term that can be loosely translated as “miscellaneous” or “casual records” (*zalu* 雜錄, *manlu* 漫錄, *manzhi* 漫誌, *zazhi* 雜誌, *zashi* 雜識), a reference to the broad scope of the authors’ *wenjian*. Two-thirds of the collections (20) contain the topic “*wenjian*, *ermu*” in their prefaces, which highlights the authors’ experiences in direct observation and learning from others through word of mouth.

This emphasis on hands-on experience was used both to signal the personalness of the author’s erudition and the veracity of the information he recorded. Song *biji* authors, for example, often promoted the reliability of their records by claiming that they had personally witnessed some event or had learned about it from a family member, friend, or trusted colleague. Like Wang Dechen, already discussed, Shao Bowen 邵伯溫 (1056–1134) attributed what he had collected in *Shaoshi wenjian lu* 邵氏聞見錄 (*Records of Things Seen and Heard by Mr. Shao*) to personal interactions with senior scholars and family mem-

²⁴ Wang Pizhi, preface to *MSYTL*, p. 1224.

²⁵ Two good examples are Wang Dingbao’s (ca. 870–940) *Tang zhi yan* 唐摭言 (*Selected Conversations of the Tang*) and Liu Su’s 劉肅 (active in 820) *Da Tang xin yu* 大唐新語 (*New Discourse of the Great Tang*).

bers as well as his own assiduous attention to the words and deeds of people from diverse backgrounds.²⁶ To substantiate the authenticity of Zeng Mingxing's 曾敏行 (twelfth century) writing, Yang Wanli 楊萬里 (1127-1206) elaborates:

There are things in his book that I have seen or heard about, and others that I did not know. Since those entries on what I had seen or heard are all true, I must ascertain that those for which I had no knowledge must be reliable. How could those who read it later fail to learn from it? 蓋有予之所見聞者矣，亦有予之所不知者矣。以予所見聞者無不信，知予之所不知者無不信也。後之覽者，豈無取于此書乎!²⁷

In this assessment, Yang Wanli not only points out the overlap of his *wenjian* with those of Zeng, he also asserts the reliability of Zeng's writing based on that overlap. This focus on recording things one had personally seen and heard would shape the contents of Song *biji* as it had never done before. In 30 of the 108 entries in Zhang Shinan's *Official Travel* (see table 2), he employs the terms "heard" (*wen* 聞), "witnessed" (*jian* 見 or *guan* 觀), "was told" (*yan* 言), "tried" (*shi* 試), "investigated" (*fang* 訪), and "tasted" (*chang* 嘗).

Another indication that Song educated men particularly valued the extensiveness of their *wenjian* as compiled in their *biji* works can be seen from their frequent references to the fear of forgetting (table 3). One writer lamented that he was "forgetting things seen and heard on a daily basis 平日所見聞，日以廢忘."²⁸ Others painted an even gloomier picture. One writer stated that, of all the things he had previously experienced, he could probably only remember one in ten.²⁹ The fear of forgetting a richly lived and well-informed life must have been painful. Zhou Mi 周密 (1232-1308) complained that, in old age and sickness, "My biggest regret is that I am suddenly not alert and cannot remember 忽忽漫不省憶爲大恨."³⁰ Zhang Bangji 張邦基 (twelfth century) explicitly explains in the preface to his *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄 (*Casual Jottings at the Villa of Writing*, literally, *Casual Jottings at the Ink Villa*) that this

²⁶ Shao Bowen 邵博溫, preface to *Shaoshi wenjian lu* 邵氏聞見錄, p. 1132.

²⁷ Yang Wanli, preface to Zeng Mingxing 曾敏行, *Duxing zazhi* 獨醒雜誌 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Gentleman Who Was Awake Alone*), p. 1185.

²⁸ Ye Mengde, preface to *Shilin yanyu* 石林燕語 (*Enjoyable Conversations of Mr. Shilin*), p. 2469.

²⁹ Wang Mingqing 王明清, preface to *Touxia lu* 投轄錄 (*Records of Entertaining the Guests*), p. 3857.

³⁰ Zhou Mi 周密, preface to *Qidong yeyu* 齊東野語 (*Unrestrained Conversations in East Qi*), p. 5425.

work was not meant to show off. Rather, he had written it because “one might forget one’s *wenjian* 僕以聞見慮其忘也。”³¹

At a time when considerable amounts of information were being acquired, exchanged, and processed by scholar-officials as they traveled or served in regional offices, this sense of fear at forgetting seems to have been genuine and widespread. In the preface to *Official Travel*, Zhang Shinan framed his motives for composing the work similarly. After listing all the places he had traveled, Zhang continues,

My *wenjian* has been somewhat broadened, but since I am not an intelligent person by nature, I forget things quickly. In the first year of the Shaoding reign (1228), I happened to be in mourning. I closed my door, excused myself from guests, and recollected [what I had learned over the years]. I grabbed a brush to make a record and had filled scrolls before I realized it. I named my writing *Records of Official Travel*. I have done this to record the facts lest I forget. 聞見雖稍廣，性天不靈，隨即廢忘。紹定改元，適有令原之戚，閉門謝客，因追思，捉筆紀錄，不覺盈軸，以游宦紀聞題之，所以記事實而備遺忘也。³²

Self-deprecation aside, there was much truth to Zhang’s anxiety over forgetting as he makes clear the serious time and effort he had committed to the book project. This appears to be a common practice among *biji* writers. Many referred to such occasions as old age, retirement, semi-retirement, or an especially undemanding official position as allowing them to complete such works.³³ Indeed, these circumstances tended to motivate people to reflect on their lives and feel the need to preserve things they had seen and heard.

This concern with forgetfulness went beyond the individual’s fear of a failing memory. Seeing people who had witnessed past events pass away, Song *biji* writers would comment generally on the transience of time and history. But more importantly, they worked hard to salvage and leave behind their own legacies. If scholars in the Southern Song only knew “one out of ten things about the Xuanhe 宣和 (1119–1125) and Jianyan 建炎 (1127–1131) reigns,” as Zhang Duanyi 張端義 (active late-twelfth to mid-thirteenth centuries) wrote, one could only imagine

³¹ Zhang Bangji 張邦基, preface to *Mozhuang manlu* 墨莊漫錄, p. 4643.

³² *YHJW*, preface.

³³ See Qian, preface to *NBXS*, p. 289; Wang, preface to *MSYTL*, p. 1224; Wang, preface to *Zhushi*, p. 1314; Hong Xingzu 洪興祖, preface to *BZB*, p. 2105; Ye Mengde, prefaces to *Shilin yanyu*, p. 2469 and *Bishu luhua*, p. 2578; Fei, preface to *Liangxi manzhi*, p. 3348; and Luo, preface to *Helin yulu*, p. 5233.

their ignorance of “the earlier periods.”³⁴ Zhang believed that the older generations were obligated to record their experiences, even things that they took for granted or were tired of hearing about, for transmission. To Ye Mengde 葉夢得 (1077–1148), this was true simply because the same information might not be available to “those who are born later.”³⁵ Shao Bowen stated the purpose of his compilation more directly: he only composed *Things Heard and Seen* because he felt responsible as “one who will die later than others.” Someone needed to tell their stories. Others expressed this sentiment in different ways. But the gist of their message remains the same: Song writers cherished their *wenjian*, including their personal opinions, and were keen on circulating them.³⁶ Their compilations greatly expanded the pool of “unofficial” records of the time and enriched the everyday lives of their peers.

We should not assume, however, that committing such material to written form was taken for granted from the early Song onward. Ouyang Xiu, who must have foreseen potential disapproval from the scholarly community or perhaps was harassed by colleagues, devoted the bulk of his preface to the *Records for Retirement to the Farm* with a conversation he had with an unnamed person, who reproached Ouyang for “compiling a work that consists of nothing more than trivial anecdotes and stray notes.”³⁷ As Ronald Egan has observed, even in the mid-Northern Song, when Ouyang Xiu completed his *biji* work *Records for Retirement to the Farm* (1067), he still seemed under pressure to justify why a leading literary figure like him would author a *biji*. For this reason, Ouyang devoted the bulk of his preface to a conversation, very likely a fictional one, he had with an unnamed person. After quoting the latter’s reproaching him for “compiling a work that consists of nothing more than trivial anecdotes and stray notes,” Ouyang settled the argument by declaring that *Records for Retirement to the Farm* indeed included “things that were worthy of recording,” especially re-

³⁴ Zhang, preface to *GEJ*, p. 4281.

³⁵ Ye, preface to *Bishu luhua*, p. 2578; Shao, preface *Shaoshi wenjian lu*, p. 1697. Also see Gong Mingzhi 龔明之, preface to *Zhuwu jiwen* 中吳紀聞 (*Records of Things Seen and Heard in Central Wu*), p. 2816; Zhang, preface to *GEJ*, p. 1244; Xu Du 徐度, preface to *Que sao bian* 卻掃編 (*Collections While Closing the Door to Visitors*), p. 4473.

³⁶ For this very reason, Song writers took comfort in knowing that younger generations also recognized the usefulness of their *wenjian*. Ye Mengde attributed the completion of his *Records of Conversations While Escaping Hot Summer Days* to repeated requests from his two sons and a disciple. “Since it was all information unknown to the youngsters, all three of them said, ‘We are fortunate to have heard about it. We don’t dare not to record it lest it be forgotten’”; Ye, preface to *Bishu luhua*, p. 2578.

³⁷ Egan, *Problem of Beauty*, pp. 64–65; Ouyang, preface to *GTL*, p. 602.

cords concerning important historical events and activities of his fellow scholar-officials.”

This issue was not unique to Ouyang, since Song *biji* writers before and after him seemed to be acutely aware of the informal, miscellaneous nature of their works. To prove the value of these collections, authors sought literary and historical precedents. Writing eleven years earlier than Ouyang, Qian Mingyi 錢明逸 (active mid-eleventh century) highlighted the value of his father Qian Yi's *biji* work by listing the *Erya* and the *Shijing* (*The Book of Songs*) as its predecessors. Qian suggested that, since the former included entries on insects, fish, plants, and trees and latter on folk songs and local dialects, there were valid similarities between these classics and his father's work. As a result, the “miscellaneous knowledge” category found its precursor in ancient times and in this light people with broad experiential knowledge were able to establish themselves as solid scholars.

This justification of spreading “miscellaneous knowledge” characterized the entire Song period, indicating a large transformation in literati ideals on learning, scholarship, and erudition. Peter Bol's study of Zhang Lei's 張耒 (1054–1114) *Mingdao zazhi* 明道雜誌 (*Mingdao Miscellany*) has shown that, as a “collection of items that does not easily lend itself to making a point,” *biji* “draws attention back to the diversity and particularity of actual phenomena and experience and it contradicts the politicians and philosophers who believed they could understand history, the Classics, and man's relations to the cosmos in a systematic way and redirects human affairs accordingly.” Bol further argues that the *biji* thrives exactly because “in practice the court is no longer the center of culture and the source of social mores.”³⁸

If Ouyang Xiu felt the need to explain why a famous scholar like him would compose a *biji* work, later Northern Song and Southern Song scholars appeared much more assertive in their collection and dissemination of particularized knowledge. This led to an unprecedented number of treatises on specific topics ranging from crabs, wine, and fungi to flowers, coins, and calligraphy. By the Southern Song, the pursuit of these interests was no longer considered inappropriate for a gentleman. In fact, as Egan and James Hargett have argued, extensive experience in observing and investigating things and interest in connoisseurship concerning things or objects (*wu* 物) became integral to Song

³⁸ Bol, “A Literati Miscellany and Sung Intellectual History: The Case of Chang Lei's *Mingdao tsa-chih*,” *Journal of Sung-Yuan Studies* 25 (1995): 127, 150–51.

elites' cultural status.³⁹ The Southern Song scholar Fan Chengda 范成大 (1126–1203) authored six *biji* works.⁴⁰ All promoted his extensive experiences across the country. In *Meipu* 梅譜 (*Treatise on Mei-Flowers*), Fan wholeheartedly celebrated floral beauty and his expertise about outstanding (*you* 尤) things or objects. In this process, *biji* became a powerful vehicle for self-expression among the elite of their diverse interest and broad knowledge. As I will show soon enough, it was on this very foundation that Zhang Shinan from the late Southern Song was able to erect a reputation as a solid scholar.

The Sources of Wenjian: I. Social Activities

Song writers identified personal investigation and conversations with family, friends, and colleagues as the two main sources of their *wenjian*. Personal investigation will be discussed in the context of Zhang Shinan's writing below. For now, I will focus on the notion of social activities as occasions for accumulating knowledge.

Given the growing number and wide distribution of educated men around the country, elite social life expanded accordingly in the Song. *Biji* works often acknowledged this trend. Just as did Wang Dechen, who identified his sources as conversations with peers and knowledge gained from holding government positions in various regions, Song *biji* writers routinely attributed their information and insights to social occasions with friends and colleagues (table 3). Yue Ke 岳珂 (1183–1242) professed that the information in his work had all come from chatting with peer scholar-officials.⁴¹ Zhao Yushi 趙與時 (1175–1231) made a similar point when he wrote,

When I stayed at home waiting for appointment, guests would come to visit every day. I enjoyed telling them what I had heard

³⁹ Egan, *Problem of Beauty*; the phrase “things or objects” as translated in James Hargett's “Fan Chengda's 范成大 (1126–1193) *Meipu* 梅譜: A Twelfth Century Treatise on Mei-Flowers,” *Monumenta Serica* 58 (2010): 109–52.

⁴⁰ The six works are *Lanpei lu* 攬轡錄 (*Register of Grasping the Carriage Reins*), *Canluan lu* 驂鸞錄 (*Register of Mounting a Simurgh*), *Wuchuan lu* 吳船錄 (*Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu*), *Guihai yuheng zhi* 桂海虞衡誌 (*Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea*), *Meipu* 梅譜 (*Treatise on Mei-Flowers*), and *Jupu* 菊譜 (*Treatise on Chrysanthemum*). See *Fan Chengda biji liuzhong* 范成大筆記六種 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002). The first four have been translated by James Hargett: *On the Road in the Twelfth Century* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GmbH, 1989), *Riding the River Home, A Complete and Annotated Translation of Fan Chengda's (1126–1193) Diary of a Boat Trip to Wu (Wuchuan lu)* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2008), and *Treatises of the Supervisor and Guardian of the Cinnamon Sea* (Seattle: U. Washington P., 2011).

⁴¹ Yue, preface to *TS*, p. 4331.

and seen to that point in my life. Whenever I liked, I would set them down on paper after my guests left. Before I realized it, the entries I had collected filled several scrolls. I could not bear to discard them. So I polished [the manuscript] slightly and divided [the entries] into ten chapters and named the book *Records after the Guests Retreated*.” 余裏居待次，賓客日相過，平生聞見所及，喜爲客誦之。意之所至，賓退或筆于牘。閱日滋久，不覺盈軸。慾棄不忍，因稍稍傳益，析爲十卷，而題以賓退錄雲。⁴²

Indeed, the entries of Song *biji* works, which most often appear in no systematic order, resemble the flow of a casual conversation, with its focus moving from one topic to another, covering familiar material as well as topics strange to the participants. In the end, everyone who joins in the conversation leaves the gathering better informed of all sorts of “miscellaneous” information. Song *biji* are the lingering traces of such lively gatherings and the congregation of erudite and well-informed conversationalists. In the eyes of Hong Xingzu 洪興祖 (1090–1155), Fang Shao 方勺 was such a person.

When his ears became warm after drinking wine, he would clap his hands and chat eagerly. He would talk about the order and chaos of the past and present, and the success and failure of notable people. Listening to him makes one alert and forget about tiredness. 酒後耳熱，抵掌劇談，道古今理亂，人物成敗，使人聽之竦然忘倦。⁴³

For Hong, this was the epitome of a good conversationalist. Knowledgeable and charming, he knew how to engage his audience. Fang Shao was clearly not unique in this respect. We are told, for example, that Yang Yi’s 楊億 (974–1020) parties had such a great reputation, his guests, eager to contribute to a spirited chat, would go to great lengths to dig up interesting material.⁴⁴ Zhang Ji 張洎 (933–996) from the early Northern Song claimed that, since he had so much fun talking with an official named Jia, he named his *biji jiashi tanlu* 賈氏譚錄 (*Records of Chatting with Mr. Jia*) and hoped that the material would “aid others’ conversations.”⁴⁵ Song Minqiu 宋敏求 (1019–1079), Wang Pizhi, Ye Mengde, Gong Mingzhi 龔明之 (twelfth century), Zhang Duanyi, and Yue Ke all made similar remarks about their material having come from “colleagues,” “comments of virtuous scholar-officials,” and socializing with old friends and relatives. Their fascination with such material can

⁴² Zhao Yushi 趙與時, preface to *Bin tui lu* 賓退錄, p. 4128.

⁴³ Hong Xingzu, preface to *BZB*, p. 2105.

⁴⁴ Song, preface to *Yang Wengong tanyuan*, p. 476.

⁴⁵ Zhang Ji 張洎, preface to *Jiashi tanlu* 賈氏談錄, p. 238.

best be summed up by one author who stated, “One cannot grow tired from hearing too much” 聞不厭多。⁴⁶

In this way, Song writers collectively promoted the value of their knowledge of the world and the conversations that served to circulate “the words of virtuous scholar-officials of recent times and of elders in the prefectures and neighborhoods.” Yang Wanli expressed this sentiment most directly in his preface to *Duxing zazhi* 獨醒雜誌 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Gentleman Who Was Awake Alone*),

In ancient times, books were lost, but not words. The sayings of southerners, Confucius adopted. The proverbs of the Xia [twentieth to seventeenth centuries BCE], Yanzi [sixth century BCE] recited. Confucius was not from the south, nor did Yanzi live in Xia times. North and south are different regions and Xia and Zhou were different periods. Yet words [from those places and times] have been handed down, though not necessarily recorded in books. They only come to us through oral transmission. 古者有亡書，無亡言。南人之言，孔子取之；夏諺之言，晏子誦焉。而孔子非南人，晏子非夏人也。南北異地，夏周殊時，而其言猶傳，未必垂之策書也，口傳焉而已矣。⁴⁷

This emerging appreciation for oral transmission created an atmosphere in which each individual was keen to impress his audience. Zhou Mi recorded an episode about Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101) in the preface to his *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識 (*Miscellaneous Records at Guixin*):⁴⁸

Poweng [Su Shi] loved to listen to his guests talk. To those who said they could not, he would force them to speak about ghosts. If someone excused himself by saying that he did not know any ghost stories, Poweng would say, “Just make something up [literally, speak carelessly].” Those who heard this [would laugh so hard they] fell over. 坡翁喜客談，其不能者，強之說鬼。或辭無有，則曰：“姑妄言之。”聞者絕倒。⁴⁹

That social gatherings are occasions for gossip is certainly not unique to Chinese culture. Neither is it characteristic of any group from any particular class or educational background. By portraying a leading scholar, Su Shi, as a person who was willing to go to extremes to have fun at social occasions, Song *biji* accounts not only confirm that chatting was a popular and entertaining activity among the educated class,

⁴⁶ Zhang, preface to *GEJ*, p. 4302.

⁴⁷ Yang, preface to *Duxing zazhi*, p. 3200.

⁴⁸ *Guixin* was the name of the neighborhood where Zhou resided.

⁴⁹ Zhou Mi, preface to *Guixin zashi* 癸辛雜識, p. 5694.

but they also make us wonder about the ways gossip may have contributed to the development of *biji* as a literary genre from the Northern to the Southern Song. Between the time Ouyang Xiu's justification of the value of his *biji* work and that of Zhou Mi's exaltation of Su Shi as a high-spirited conversationalist, hundreds of *biji* were composed. More importantly, miscellaneous writing ceased to be a marginal form of literary writing. In the Southern Song, *biji* authors like the obscure Zhang Shinan could write with confidence that their works in general and the practical information they included in particular would be readily accepted and appreciated.

ZHANG SHINAN AND HIS *RECORDS OF OFFICIAL TRAVEL*

Zhang Shinan's Life and Travel

Compared to those of many Song *biji* writers, Zhang Shinan's life is quite obscure. His name appears neither in the official *Song shi* 宋史 (*Song History*), nor in local gazetteers from later dynasties. In fact, all we know about Zhang as a person comes from the fragmentary information offered in his *Official Travel*, and the postscript written by his friend Li Faxian 李發先 (n.d., active thirteenth century).

A native of Poyang, Jiangxi, Zhang Shinan was probably born in the last years of the twelfth century and was active the first half of the thirteenth century. As far as we can tell, the Zhang family maintained a tradition of government service and scholarship. At least one family member, Shinan's uncle, held a *jinshi* degree.⁵⁰ Zhang Shinan's father, whose name does not appear anywhere in his writings, apparently held a number of government positions in Sichuan and Fujian. In fact, it was travel with his father to these posts that originally took the young Zhang Shinan away from his native town.⁵¹

Since Zhang Shinan does not refer to the official titles that his father, uncle, or he himself ever held, it is impossible for us to assess in what capacities the Zhangs had served or the extent of their success.⁵² Nor does he associate himself or his family with any famous

⁵⁰ *YHJW* 6, p. 54.

⁵¹ *YHJW*, preface 2, p. 11; 2, p. 15.

⁵² Some speculation, then, is in order. It was certainly possible that Zhang held a *jinshi* degree and received his positions by his own merit. After all, he had maintained a lengthy service record and showed interest and expertise in examination-related issues. However, since Zhang never brought up the issue of his examination record, as he did concerning his uncle, it is more likely that he was not a *jinshi* degree holder, but had instead received his official positions as a result of the protection privilege. Were this the case, it would indicate that someone

personalities of the time. It seems safe to say that the Zhangs were not a nationally prominent family. We can be certain, however, that the family was well established in their native area of Poyang. *Official Travel* indicates that Zhang Shinan remained closely connected to his birthplace,⁵³ and he maintained personal contact with locally prominent figures and members of their families.⁵⁴ His older brother married into a local elite family, and we learn that the brother's godfather was also an elite figure.⁵⁵

Several entries from *Official Travel* reveal that the Zhangs, including Zhang Shinan, were experts on antiques and major collectors of books, paintings, calligraphic works, ink stones and jade objects.⁵⁶ Zhang Shinan often remarks about viewing private collections both at home and when he was on the road.⁵⁷ His ability to continue the family tradition suggests that, during Zhang Shinan's time, his family was wealthy and cultivated. Whether Zhang Shinan held a civil service degree or not, he apparently had undergone excellent training in the classics and current affairs, and considered himself legitimately a scholar. In addition to his interests in literature, history, calendar and rituals, Zhang was also an expert on medicine and wrote confidently about prescriptions for certain diseases.⁵⁸

Zhang's writing suggests that he enjoyed a lengthy if undistinguished government service career, which was the primary reason for his extensive travel throughout south China. About these trips, Zhang stated briefly in his preface,

from his or his wife's family was rather high on the echelon of the bureaucratic ladder. Again, Zhang was unclear on this matter.

⁵³ One of the local things that concerned Zhang was the exact quota of examination candidates Poyang was allotted and he conducted extensive research on the topic at two different places: *YHJW*, j. 6, p. 55; 1, p. 1. He wrote about prominent figures of his native place, such as the Hong brothers (Kua 洪括, 1117-1184; Zun 洪遵, 1120-1174; and Hong Mai) and the poet Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1154-1221); he was especially proud that "culture and material things in Poyang prefecture are among the best east of the Yangzi River" 鄱陽爲郡，文物之盛，甲於江東. *YHJW* 2, p. 17; 7, p. 58; 1, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁴ *YHJW* 1, pp. 3-4, pp. 5-6; 2, p. 18; 3, p. 23, p. 72; 9, pp. 80-81, p. 81, p. 84; 10, pp. 86-90.

⁵⁵ Zhang Shinan wrote about Cheng Jiong 程迥 (n.d.) several times. Cheng's son-in-law, who was said to be closely connected with local religious institutions and responsible for building activities next to a temple, was godfather to Zhang's older brother. *YHJW* 6, p. 50.

⁵⁶ *YHJW* 1, p. 5; 3, pp. 26-27; 4, pp. 32-37; 6, p. 53; 8, p. 67, p. 69; 9, p. 76, p. 81; 10, pp. 91-92. Li Faxian, in his postscript, described Zhang as constantly "searching for unusual books. [When he came up with any,] he acted as if he had found treasures. He then would work extremely hard to make a copy."

⁵⁷ *YHJW* 1, pp. 5-9; 2, pp. 12-14, p. 18; 3, pp. 23-24, pp. 26-27; 5, p. 44; 6, p. 53, p. 55-56, p. 58; 7, pp. 58-60; 8, p. 69, p. 76; 9, pp. 80-81; 10, pp. 90-91.

⁵⁸ *YHJW* 1, p. 3, pp. 6-7, p. 9; 3, p. 21; 5, p. 42; 6, p. 51; 9, p. 83.

From the time I was a child, I accompanied [my father] on official trips. We conquered [the roads leading up into] the blue sky⁵⁹ into Sichuan ten thousand *li* distant. After I started traveling the world [literally, the rivers and lakes], there has not been a single year when I did not move around. 僕自總角，隨侍宦游，便登青天，萬裏之蜀。及壯走江湖，無寧歲。⁶⁰

We can gather from this and from multiple entries in *Official Travel* that Zhang's trips occurred mainly along the Yangzi River valley over a span of three decades. Zhang claimed that he spent over twenty years in Sichuan alone.⁶¹ In addition, both Zhang Shinan and his father held official positions in Fujian and Hunan.⁶² It is certainly possible that Zhang Shinan visited other parts of the country later in life, but even if this is not the case, the information he provides in *Official Travel* sufficiently demonstrates that he was a seasoned traveler who lived much of his childhood and early adult life away from his native place.

The Sources of Wenjian: II. Direct Observation

Arranged in ten chapters, *Official Travel* includes 108 entries in no obvious chronological or thematic order.⁶³ Just like other *biji* writers, Zhang readily acknowledged that some of his material came second-hand. Its main text refers to five Song *biji* and cites forty-eight other contemporary and earlier works. Zhang also frequently uses referential language such as, "So and so said..."; "Once at a friend's house, I saw..."; and "I heard that..." in the main text (see table 2). This was especially true when he recounts "strange" things and personalities.⁶⁴

While he expanded his work by including a variety of hearsay accounts, Zhang especially drew readers' attention to his own engagement with the world around him and the personal investigations he

⁵⁹ "Blue sky" here alludes to the difficulty in traveling to Sichuan.

⁶⁰ *YHJW*, preface.

⁶¹ *YHJW* 1, p. 3; 2, pp. 11-12.

⁶² Although his account does not specify the reasons, Zhang also sojourned in Zhejiang. *YHJW* 2, p. 15; 10, p. 91.

⁶³ Zhang Shinan seems to have been rather young when he started compiling *Official Travel*. One entry, for example, suggests that he was with his father, who was on official duties in Sichuan, in 1214 and 1221. These two dates probably put Zhang in his late twenties or early thirties at the latest. By 1232, Zhang had already completed the bulk of his book, prior to Li Faxian's applauding his achievement in the postscript; *YHJW* 2, pp. 11-12; postscript, p. 95.

⁶⁴ In one episode, he refers to instances of a Daoist being seen with a hole in his neck that he used for playing the flute. Zhang wrote that although he never encountered this Daoist himself, two others did. The first was Cheng Jiong, a respected member of Poyang elite society and a friend of Zhang's (see above, n. 55), and the second was his own older brother. *YHJW* 6, p. 53.

had conducted. Zhang modestly suggests in his preface that his travels had only “slightly broadened [his] experience (*wenjian*)” 聞見雖稍廣, but Li Faxian articulates this notion more forcefully, in essence validating the journeys Zhang had taken and the sound scholar he had become thereby. Li stated,

Gaining extensive knowledge about things and investigating what one knows is the occupation of *ru* scholars. If it is not [knowledge about] places one has been [literally, where one has set foot] and things one has personally examined [literally, what one’s ears and eyes have heard and seen], [yet one goes ahead and distributes it], that would be spreading doubtful information when one is still in doubt. If the writer himself does not even trust his own work, how will he be able to make others believe him? 博物洽聞，儒者事也。非足跡所經歷，耳目所睹記，則疑以傳疑，猶未敢自信，況取信於人乎？⁶⁵

By emphasizing the negative impact of spreading unreliable information, Li Faxian praises Zhang Shinan as a true *ru* scholar who was willing to be assiduous in personally examining and investigating things. He further lauded the utility of Zhang’s work in two aspects: delighting readers and correcting historical writing.

If he [Zhang Shinan] kept on adding to his work, enlisting the hundreds of treasures of the mountains and seas and introducing them in this book, would it not be a delight for his readers? If someday his work were selected or helped correct errors in historical writing and textual revision, how would that be only a small contribution? 使用志不已，網羅山海之百珍，畢陳其中，不特染指者之一快。修史校書，它日或有採証，豈小補雲乎哉？⁶⁶

Indeed, Zhang Shinan impresses the reader with the level of labor he puts into building the reliability of his work. In one long entry, Zhang gives a detailed introduction to the distribution of jade deposits. For each kind of jade found in seven different prefectures, he lists the name, color, characteristics, and value. We are informed, for example, that “the quality of jade in Jiezhou 階州 (Wudu, Gansu) varies,” that one kind of jade from Xiazhou 峽州 (Yichang, Hubei) “is black with white lines shaped dimly like a dragon,” and that “another looks like the tail of a peacock and is rare.” Zhang also discusses the popularity

⁶⁵ Li, postscript to *YHJW*, p. 95.

⁶⁶ Li, postscript to *YHJW*, p. 95.

of certain kinds of jade among travelers. At Zhongzhou 忠州 (Zhongxian, Sichuan),

When boats moor on the riverbank, local people run to the boats and make transactions with the passengers. Some jade objects they sell have fingernail veins. Some are polished to the extent that they are pure white. Although these are shiny and lustrous and impressive, they are only jade-like stones. 舟至岸，人竟持來求售。有指甲紋，亦有磨見白質者。雖光鑒可觀，然皆砢砢也。⁶⁷

Comprehensive information on subjects such as the varieties of jade, paper, and ink and ink stones can certainly be found in many Song works as well as writings from earlier times. What separates Zhang Shinan's writing from those texts, however, is the emphasis he put on the trustworthiness of his accounts. In a convincing voice, Zhang declares, "I have seen all kinds of jade that are produced in these prefectures, so I can distinguish them from one another."⁶⁸ This claim of the value of personal investigation resonated with Yue Ke's remark: "Things witnessed by one's eyes are not as reliable as those experienced by one's body; things heard from others are not as reliable as those seen by one's own eyes."⁶⁹

Zhang Shinan's writing demonstrates that assuming the role of expert also required a critical examination of second-hand knowledge. He made note of unclear and incomplete texts and expressed the hope that his work would help eliminate any confusion. This is especially apparent in his discussion of the fruit called dragon's eye (*longmu* 龍目), found in Sichuan. Zhang originally read about this fruit in a work by the Jin dynasty (265–317) scholar Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250–305). The description of dragon's eye in Zuo's "Rhapsody on the Shu Capital" (*Shudu fu* 蜀都賦), however, did not agree with Zhang's own direct observations. Zhang first quotes Zuo declaring that "I rely on maps to describe the mountains and rivers and cities and towns and consult illustrated gazetteers for information on birds and animals and plants and trees." 其山川城邑，則稽之地圖；其鳥獸草木，則驗之方志。This is followed by Zuo's description: "Along a stand of dragon's eyes, out the side grow lychees; their green leaves luxuriant, their red fruits flourishing." 傍挺龍目，側生荔枝，布綠葉之萋萋，結朱實之離離。⁷⁰ Zhang then continues,

⁶⁷ *YHJW* 9, p. 82.

⁶⁸ *YHJW* 9, p. 82.

⁶⁹ Yue, preface to *TS*, p. 4331.

⁷⁰ Zuo's work can be found in *Wen Xuan* 文選 (*Selections of Refined Literature*), vol. 1, compiled by Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501–531) and annotated by Li Shan 李善 (630–689) (Shanghai:

Reading about this, I secretly have my doubts. I have traveled in Sichuan for over twenty years and trekked all the four circuits and their tens of prefectures. There are no social customs or local products I have not thoroughly investigated. I have never seen these so-called dragon's eyes. [I know] that at times dragon's eyes are brought into Sichuan from south China, but the Sichuanese all consider them a strange fruit. 讀至此，而竊有疑焉。世南游蜀道，遍歷四路數十郡，周旋凡二十餘年。風俗方物，靡不質究，所謂龍目，未嘗見之。間有南中攜到者，蜀人皆以為奇果。⁷¹

Compared to the entry on jade, here we find Zhang more confident and outspoken about his expertise in local Sichuan products. Zhang reminds the reader that not only had he resided in the region for lengthy periods of time and traveled extensively, he also took pride in investigating things personally. Given this stance, his readers are expected to have little doubt about the validity of his conclusions. Still, Zuo's statement is not completely dismissed, since Zhang agrees to having seen the fruit in Sichuan while pointing out that they were not locally grown. To bolster his argument, Zhang lists other fruits local to Sichuan, then concludes, "Could it be that Sichuan had dragon's eyes before but no longer does? Or perhaps Mr. Zuo did not thoroughly examine the local illustrated histories and local plants and trees?" 豈蜀昔有而今無耶？抑左氏考方志草木之未精耶？⁷² While willing to concede that the fruit might have once been produced in Sichuan, Zhang was clearly inclined to think that Zuo Si had not carefully researched his facts. Given all of Zhang's arguments, it would be natural for his readers to think that Zuo Si was the one mistaken.

Regional Characteristics and Miscellaneous Knowledge

Our discussion has shown that during the Song the very meaning of "knowledge" underwent tremendous changes. If familiarity with the classics, history, and institutional changes remained crucial to realizing a scholarly and official career, erudition in many subjects formerly considered trivial gained new value in Song men's scholarly and everyday lives. Among these various kinds of "miscellaneous knowledge," those about regional and local conditions became especially impor-

Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), pp. 175-99. For a full translation of Zuo's work, see David Knechtges, trans., *Wen xuan or Selections of Refined Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), vol. 1, pp. 341-471.

⁷¹ *YHJW* 5, p. 42.

⁷² *YHJW* 5, p. 42.

tant. The many trips that educated men were called upon to take to different areas of the country and their administrative duties as local officials greatly contributed to these interests and their value. As table 2 shows, new opportunities for direct observation and for participating in social gatherings where knowledge was exchanged made it possible for Zhang Shinan and men like him to access and circulate such information. Zhang's complaints at failing to find information in illustrated gazetteers and geographical records further indicate a growing curiosity toward the local and the regional. The widespread practice of compiling local gazetteers in the Southern Song additionally points to the development of local pride and local identity as well as reflecting increased knowledge of and interest in distinctively regional and local characteristics.⁷³

In this respect, Song *biji* writers, well-traveled and well-informed, would remain instrumental in spreading information about social customs and local products of their native areas and places they served. Their writings made disparate locales accessible to wide audiences, stirring the imaginations of other authors and readers regarding the diverse country that was the Song. As Peter Bol has shown, the most complete edition of Zhang Lei's *Mingdao zazhi* was published by the prefect of Huangzhou "because it provided detailed information on the prefecture that could supplement the local gazetteer."⁷⁴

Zhang Shinan's work could be of similar use as that of Zhang Lei. Much of the *Official Travel* focuses on introducing everyday material culture and social customs of Poyang, Zhang's native place, as well as other regions. In this way, his work resembles Southern Song local gazetteers (*difangzhi* 地方志, or *fangzhi* 方志). Both contain clearly categorized information on a host of specific topics and people of a specific locality. Zhang refers to himself consulting local gazetteers several times and points out that "Households really cannot do without illustrated gazetteers and pharmaceutical books" 圖經本草，人家最不可缺。When he describes a tradition from Sanshan (Fuzhou, Fujian), one "not recorded in the illustrated gazetteers," Zhang Shinan goes into some detail,

The custom in Sanshan is thus: the day before the Beginning of Spring, [people] build an earthen ox in front of the Drum Tower Gate. If the day is sunny and bright, from late afternoon all through

⁷³ For excellent studies on the rise of local histories during the Song, see James Hargett, "Song Dynasty Local Gazetteers and Their Place in the History of *Difangzhi* Writing," *HJAS* 56.2 (1996): 405-42 and Peter Bol, "The Rise of Local History: History, Geography, and Culture in Southern Song and Yuan Wuzhou," *HJAS* 61.1 (June 2001): 37-76.

⁷⁴ Bol, "Literati Miscellany," p. 122.

the night, people of the city go out to watch. The elite families ride around it in sedan chairs. Legend has it that “seeing the ox will bring in a good year.” The third day after the Beginning of the Spring, people customarily visit the Xiansha [Temple]; on the fourth day, the Tianning [Temple]; on the sixth day the Shengguang Temple on Mount Wushi and the Shuijing Palace at West Lake. They do not disperse until dusk. None of this is recorded in the illustrated gazetteers. 三山之俗，立春前一日，出土牛于鼓門之前。若晴明，自晡後達旦，頃城出觀，巨室或乘轎旋繞。相傳雲：“看牛則一歲利市。”三日游賢沙，四日游天寧，六日烏石山之神光寺，西湖之水晶宮，逮暮始散。此皆圖志所不載也。⁷⁵

The foregoing is an example of the kinds of fact Zhang Shinan thought it was important to record, lest he forgot. In all likelihood, it was also the kind of story that Su Shi wanted to elicit from his guests. Zhang’s descriptions typically went into considerable detail, and another excellent example of this is his lengthy entry comparing frogs and frog-catching in Sichuan, Hunan, and Jiangxi:

In the year *jiaxu* of the Jiading reign [1214], I accompanied my father, who was returning to his post in Kuizhou (Fengjie, Sichuan) from Chengdu (in Sichuan). As our boat was passing Meizhou (in Sichuan), I saw people casting lines from the riverbank. I approached and watched. They all had large frogs in their baskets. Two frogs would hold each other; they held on so tightly it was impossible to tear them apart. If one separated them by force, they would grab each other again immediately. I asked one of the men, who told me, “These are considered delicacies.” I then realized that the people in Chengdu prized them highly. They cooked them with various spices and wine, [a dish] called “grilled frog.” Friends and relatives give them to each other as gifts. 世南嘉定甲戌，侍親自成都歸夔門官所。舟過眉舟，見釣於水濱者，即而觀之，藍中皆大蝦蟆，兩兩相負，牢不可拆。極力分而為兩，旋即相負如初。扣釣者，雲：“世間以為珍味。”乃成都人最貴重。以料物和酒炙之，曰炙蟾。親朋更相餽遺，此也。

In the year *xinsi* (1221), I accompanied my father to his official post at Youyang (in Hunan). One day, we toured the ponds in the prefecture garden. There were dozens of pairs of frogs holding themselves fast together. The county magistrate of Yuanling (in Hunan), who was from Kuocang (Lishui, Zhejiang) heard this and

⁷⁵ *YHJW* 8, pp. 71–72.

immediately ordered them caught. He said that people in his native place considered them dainties and called them “wind clams.” 辛巳，侍親守酉陽。一日，游郡圃池岸，亦有相負者數十對。沅陵胡宰留，括倉人。聞之，亟令人捉去。謂其鄉裏以為珍品，名曰風蛤。

My family has lived in Dexing [in Jiangxi] for generations. Mount Mao lies between three prefectures and stretches several hundred *li*. Every year in the summer, those who live close to the mountain take torches at night and search in deep brooks and caves for large toads, called *shizhuang* (literally, rock bumpers). People consider them a delicacy. I once tasted them and found that they were actually just huge frogs. I asked the catcher and was told that, “They come in odd rather than even numbers.” This was contrary to what I had seen elsewhere. These are what Mr. Po [Su Shi] described as [things] “for which people in Mei(zhou) would trade their silk coats.” 予世居德興，有毛山環三州界，廣袤數百里。每歲夏間，山傍人夜持火炬，入深蹊或巖洞間，捕大蝦蟆，名曰石撞，鄉人貴重之。世南亦嘗染鼎其味，乃巨田鷄耳。扣捕者，雲：“奇而非偶，”又與所見者異矣。坡公：“眉人恨不脫得錦襖子，”即此物也。⁷⁶

Three salient features stand out in this entry. First, Zhang emphasized that similar but not identical practices and customs could be seen in different regions in south China. Second, such “trivial” local practices were fascinating to observant scholars like Zhang Shinan; this can be seen from the vividness of his account and the details he presents along with expert input from local people. In addition to descriptions of frog-hunting in Sichuan and Hunan, Zhang enriched his narrative by adding the local method of frog-hunting in his native Jiangxi and enhances the interest of his account by reference to the writings of Su Shi. Third, Zhang Shinan makes it clear that while his own observations and investigation allowed him to accumulate this information, he also found *biji* to be the appropriate medium by which to circulate it.

Official Travel records many similar tidbits. Through these writings on local practices and products, Zhang gives us a distinct sense of everyday life at a particular locality. About the olive, Zhang wrote,

Both Fujian and Sichuan have olives. In central Fujian, one kind of olive, the lilac clove (*dingxiang*), is very small, pretty, and elegant. Its flavor far exceeds those that grow in Sichuan. My father once planted a pit in the small garden. It budded and grew. The next year the tree was sturdy. Since it is averse to frost, my father built

⁷⁶ *YHJW* 2, pp. 11–12.

a shelter for it out of sod. Three more years would pass before it grew to be about twenty feet (two *zhang*) and began to bear fruit. 橄欖，閩，蜀俱有之。閩中丁香一品，極小，雋永，其味勝於蜀產。家君嘗手植核于小圃，伺其萌茁，再歲而樹壯。畏霜，覆以屋。又三歲，高二丈許。⁷⁷

Recounting this five-year period of observation, Zhang shows his amazement at the role the natural environment played in determining the nature of local products: “Alas! How can [differences in] soil, wind, and energy change the nature of things 嗚呼! 地土風氣之能移物性如是耶?”⁷⁸

Zhang’s attentiveness to everyday life in different regions is also clear from his discussions of popular ways of eating and making use of local products. Zhang’s attention to the olive, for example, extended to the utility of the fruit. He wrote, “Its skin can be used to clean clothes. It works better than the soap bean (*zaojiao* 皂角). People use its pits as rosary beads. 皮可洗衣，功不讓皂角，核則人以爲念珠者。”⁷⁹ He records how kumquats are stored in mung beans so as to preserve them longer,⁸⁰ and describes a method of transporting salt he learned from an innkeeper.⁸¹ Among the practical tips he recorded are how to get paint and oil off clothes.⁸² Zhang went into special detail when he wrote about the use of quince (*wenpo* 榲桲, a kind of persimmon). Again, we see Zhang combining his book knowledge with his own direct observation.

In Tang (Tangxian, Hebei) and Deng (Dengzhou, Henan) there are large persimmons. At first they are numbing and hard as rocks. [But if one] puts a piece of hawthorn among a hundred or so persimmons, then they’ll turn red and soft as mud and become edible. Quince can be used in place of hawthorn. This was recorded by Mr. Ou [Ouyang Xiu] in his *Records for Retirement to the Farm*. But people from south of the Yangzi River have no idea what quince looks like. I did not see one until I accompanied my father on official trips to Liang (Hanzhong, Shaanxi) and Yi (Chengdu, Sichuan). The large ones are like pears. They are sweet and fragrant. If cut with a knife, their flavor is damaged and the fruit turns black. When a person eats quince, he should use a towel to clean the fuzz

⁷⁷ *YHJW* 9, pp. 82–83.

⁷⁸ *YHJW* 9, pp. 82–83.

⁷⁹ *YHJW* 9, pp. 82–83.

⁸⁰ *YHJW* 2, p. 11.

⁸¹ *YHJW* 2, p. 15.

⁸² *YHJW* 2, pp. 15–16.

off, then wrap the fruit up and smash it open against a pillar. Its flavor is lovely. 唐，鄧問多大柿。初生澀，堅實如石。凡百十柿，以一椶楂置其中，則紅爛如呢而可食。椶椀亦可代椶楂用，此歐公歸田錄所載。但江南人不識椶椀，世南侍親官蜀，至梁，益間，方識之。大者如梨，味甜而香，用刀切，則味損而黑。凡食時，先以巾拭去毛，以巾包，於柱上擊碎，其味甚佳。⁸³

Zhang then added what he knew about the popular use of quince:

People in Sichuan take off the top and core it, then fill it with sandalwood, eaglewood powder, and a small amount of musk. They then cover its top, tie it up, and steam it. After they take it out, they wait until it is cool, then grind it into a paste. They then add a little borneol, mix it evenly, and make this into small cakes to burn [as a form of fragrance]. Its fragrance is no less than that of ambergris (literally, “dragon spittle”). 蜀人椶椀以切去頂，剝去心，納檀香，沈香末，並麝少許。覆所切之頂，線縛蒸爛。取出俟冷，研如泥。入腦子少許，和勻，作小餅燒之，香味不減龍涎。⁸⁴

Zhang’s erudition on local products is seen further in his writing on the lychees of Sanshan (Fuzhou, Fujian). Not only was Zhang familiar with the names of the fruit that ripen in different months, he was also aware of the development of technology in the cultivation of the plants. He then lists the kinds of fruits special to Sanshan and asserted that “Other places do not have [these].”⁸⁵

Lychees are the most beautiful in Sanshan when they are red. Those that ripen in the fourth month are called “volcano”. This fruit is small and tastes sour. Those that ripen in the fifth month are called “mid-season crowns” and those that ripen last are “late-season crowns.” The best are as good as those produced in Puzhong (Putian, Fujian). In the last twenty years, cut-and-plant propagation has been used. [This is done in the following manner:] Pick branches from excellent varieties and heap fertilizer over and around the roots, then wrap them with yellow mud and seal carefully. In time, they will grow roots. Cut the branches off and plant them somewhere else. [With this method it] takes less than a year [for new plants] to bear fruit. From then on, they will multiply

⁸³ *YHJW* 2, p. 11.

⁸⁴ *YHJW* 2, p. 11. Ambergris is a solid, fatty substance that forms in the digestive system of a sperm whale (*Physeter catodan*). Elsewhere, when introducing fragrances, Zhang identifies *longxian* as the most expensive fragrance; *YHJW* 7, p. 61.

⁸⁵ *YHJW* 5, p. 45.

gradually. 三山荔子，丹時最可觀。四月味成曰“火山，”實小而酸。五月味成曰“中冠。”最後曰“長熟中冠。”品佳者，不減莆中。二十年來，始能用掇樹法。取品高枝，壅以肥壤，包以黃泥，封護惟謹。久則生根，鋸截移種之，不踰年而實，自是愈繁衍矣。⁸⁶

The attention Zhang Shinan paid to such miscellaneous knowledge as local produce, festivals, and practical tips used by locals were welcomed by his peers. In the postscript to *Official Travel*, Li Faxian applauded Zhang's accomplishments.

Originally, I did not know that he [Zhang Shinan] had records of these outstanding things [that he had learned]. One day, he showed me what he had written, which shocked my mind and eyes. Most [of what he had recorded] I had never heard before. As rich as the first half of his life has been, I got to enjoy him completely [literally, “chew on it and stuff myself”] through his writing. 初不知異聞之有錄也。一日出示餘，洞心駭目，多聞所未聞者。以半生經歷睹記之富，而餘得大嚼焉，饜飫飽矣。⁸⁷

Even given the slight exaggeration (only to be expected in prefaces and postscripts) of the value of Zhang's work, it should not be surprising that Li truly enjoyed the book. Being rigorously empirical and broad of scope, Zhang's record made an ideal source of material for casual conversation as well as providing answers to specific queries. More importantly, Zhang's curiosity and ability to learn about other places made him a recognized expert on issues like local customs and natural products. Though Zhang was not renowned as a great essayist or a poet, his introduction to the material culture and everyday life nonetheless piqued his readers' interest and broadened their understanding of life in different parts of the country.

Song men's interest in these many “trivial” matters certainly had its historical precedents, but it was not until the Song, with the explosion of *biji* writing, that experiential knowledge was granted a prominent place in the intellectual and everyday lives of the Chinese literati. To a large degree, *wenjian* became a synonym for erudition. The more *wenjian* one accumulated, the more erudite a scholar one could claim to be. The elevation of *wenjian* not only offered an alternative for knowledge accumulation but also expanded the types of knowledge deemed desirable and crucial. This led to unprecedented fascination with and appreciation for popular practices, regional differences, and useful and

⁸⁶ *YHJW* 5, p. 45.

⁸⁷ *YHJW*, postscript, p. 95.

practical information, as well as a realization that expertise in such diverse topics could only be achieved through a life-long commitment to direct observation and investigation rather than through book-learning. With the elevation of personal experience, types of knowledge hitherto considered to be trivial, ungentlemanly, even “vulgar” became integral to Chinese ideas about scholarship and erudition. These developments only occurred because of the expansion of the educated population and their ever-growing social networks, the habit of keeping extensive travel records, and the accumulation of personal experience in diverse localities across the country. *Biji* writing, characterized by its casual tone and lack of structure, allowed even less-established scholar-officials who served away from political and cultural centers to assert their place in society and culture by means independent from their career trajectories or literary achievements. In this respect, the popularity of *biji* can be readily understood in terms of elite identity-building and as an indication of the increasingly diverse interests developed among Song literati.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BZB</i>	Fang Shao 方勺, <i>Bozhai bian</i> 泊宅編
<i>GEJ</i>	Zhang Duanyi 張端義, <i>Gui'er ji</i> 貴耳集
<i>GTL</i>	Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, <i>Guitian lu</i> 歸田錄
<i>MSYTL</i>	Wang Pizhi 王辟之, <i>Mianshui yantan lu</i> 沔水燕談錄
<i>NBXS</i>	Qian Mingyi 錢明逸, <i>Nanbu xinshu</i> 南部新書
<i>TS</i>	Yue Ke 岳珂, <i>Tingshi</i> 程史
<i>YHJW</i>	Zhang Shinan 張世南, <i>Youhuan jiwen</i> 游宦紀聞