

Scribe in the Wilderness: The Manchu Conquest and the Loyal-Hearted Historiographer's (*xinshi*) Mission

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As this is not the heart-and-mind of one single gentleman [Zheng Sixiao], but the heart-and-mind of all men in the world for a myriad of generations, so is his chronicle not merely a chronicle of the times from the late Song to the early Yuan dynasty, but the truthful chronicle of All-under-Heaven for a myriad of generations. (Cao Xuequan , in 1645)¹

This paper deals with the *Xin shi* , or *A History of a Loyal Heart*,² an extraordinarily peculiar work of Chinese history writing, which has traditionally been attributed to Zheng Sixiao (1241–1318), poet, painter, and a preeminent Song loyalist. Having allegedly been wrapped in waxed paper, sealed in an iron case (*tiehan*) and suspended in a well at a Suzhou monastery on the 7th day of the fourth month, 1283, the *Xin shi*, or (*Tiehan*) *Xin shi* , was presumably retrieved after more than 355 years, on the eve of the imminent Manchu conquest of the Ming dynasty, to be precise: on the 8th day of the eleventh month, 1638, after a longer drought that had dried up the well.

The controversy over the *Xin shi*'s authorship is a *cause célèbre* of Chinese textual criticism. Down to the present day it has remained a fervently debated question whether Zheng Sixiao is to be considered the author or whether the work was “forged” by one or more persons from the late Ming period,³ presumably with a background in Ming loyalism. To date, neither assumption can be proven beyond doubt.

Over this debate a most characteristic feature of the *Xin shi* has gotten out of sight, namely the fact that it encompasses a spectrum of very different voices. These range from the restrained historian's voice that gives a well-informed matter-of-fact account of the Song dynasty's demise (“Dayi lüexu ”, pp. 157-191) to an agitated autobiographical voice which may well be interpreted as indicative of a process of “working through” of traumatic experiences, be it that this voice belonged to a real person or is partly or entirely fictitious.

1 “Chongke *Xin shi xu* ” in: *Zheng Sixiao ji* , punctuated and edited by Chen Fukang , Shanghai: Shanghai guji, 1991, p. 317. – The given page numbers in the main text and the footnotes refer to the *Xin shi* in this edition.

2 For further remarks on the title and its translation, see below.

3 In the present article “late Ming” is understood in a broader sense, including the restorationist attempts in the 50s and 60s of the seventeenth century. Similarly, “Ming-Qing transitional period” roughly refers to the seventeenth century. For further definitions of this period, see Koon-piu Ho: “Should We Die as Martyrs to the Ming Cause? Scholar-officials' Views on Martyrdom During the Ming-Qing Transition,” in: *Oriens Extremus* 37:2 (1994), 123-151, here p. 123, n. 2.

The synthesis of so different voices in one single work that is allegedly authored by one single person presupposes a finely structured composition which speaks to certain historiographical and literary contexts. Assuming that the *Xin shi* is in fact a significant work of late Ming historiography, the following discussion is aimed at highlighting various facets of these contexts under five headings:

- (1) the basic character of the *Xin shi* as an “ego-document;”
- (2) the *Xin shi*’s peculiar mélange of historical accounts, personal memories, and prose writings, and the literary concept that underlies the juxtaposition of historical narration and poetry;
- (3) the *Xin shi*’s doctrine of “legitimate rule” (*zhengtong* 正統);
- (4) the notion of *gonglun* 公論, “the discourse that holds to the general norm of what is right and wrong;”
- (5) the author’s pose as a “scribe in the wilderness” (*yeshi* 野史).⁴

I begin with a brief survey of the work, including the discussion of an argument which in my estimation tips the scale in favor of the late Ming authorship hypothesis.⁵

The *Xin shi* is a collection of 250 poems and forty texts of different genres – historical and biographical accounts, autobiographical notices, solemn manifestos, and other miscellaneous writings which are all related to the Mongol conquest of the Song dynasty, supposedly covering the time from 1268 to the eve of the *Xin shi*’s alleged suspension, i.e. the 7th day of the fourth month, 1283 (final postscript of “Jiu jiu shu 九九書,” p. 114). Allegedly, the *Xin shi* was printed in the year following its retrieval and first published in early 1640. This edition carries a foreword by Zhang Guowei 張國偉 (1594–1645, *jinsbi* 金史 1622), who, after the Manchu conquest of Nanking in the fifth month of 1645, played a significant role in establishing the temporary court of the Ming Prince of Lu 魯 in Zhejiang.⁶ Apart from Zhang’s foreword, there are seventeen other persons’ postscripts (*ba* 跋) and afterwords, the latest of which is dated as of the first intercalary month of 1640 (pp. 297-315). A revised edition, presumably done with newly cut printing blocks, carries two forewords and one afterword, dated between the first intercalary and the seventh month of 1640 (pp. 315-319).⁷

As to the controversy over the *Xin shi*’s authenticity, suffice it to say that the two prominent early Qing scholars Xu Qianxue 徐謙學 (1631–1694) and Yan Ruojun 顏若君 (1636–1704) were the first to raise suspicions against the alleged authorship of Zheng Sixiao.⁸

4 For the sake of readability, I speak of “the author” although we must reckon with a multiple authorship. – For the multiple meanings of *yeshi*, see below note 51.

5 This does not exclude *per se* the possibility that a number of the *Xin shi*’s poems and prose writings might well originate from the hand of Zheng Sixiao or any other Song loyalists.

6 The Prince of Lu, also known under his assumed title of “administrator of the realm” (*jianguo* 監國), was supported by a group of Ming loyalists, to which also Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695) belonged; see Arthur W. Hummel (ed.), *Eminent Chinese of the Ch’ing Period (1644–1912)*, 2 vols. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943/44, pp. 180-181.

7 For a detailed account of the alleged discovery of the *Xin shi* and its two early editions, see Chen Fukang, *Jingzhong qishu kao* 景中奇書考, Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2001, pp. 134-149; for biographical materials on the altogether twenty persons (plus three persons who assisted at collating the text for the second edition), see *ibid.*, pp. 153-169.

8 Cited in Chen Fukang, *Jingzhong qishu kao*, pp. 267-268.

Obviously basing themselves on the same source,⁹ they concurred in identifying Yao Shilin (1561 – c. 1651) as the forgerer.¹⁰ Since then numerous arguments in favour of the spuriousness hypothesis have been advanced; they can be grouped under four categories:¹¹

- (1) the *Xin shi*'s miraculous discovery, along with the questionable durability of the iron case and the allegedly well-preserved state of the manuscript;¹²
- (2) a conspicuous lack of any independent sources, in particular of any records in local gazetteers, that could certify the various reports of the *Xin shi*'s discovery and publication, which are given in the paratexts accompanying the two early editions;¹³
- (3) there is a number of the *Xin shi*'s reports and references to historical events and figures which are suspected to be incorrect,¹⁴ misdated,¹⁵ anachronistic,¹⁶ or, considering the closeness of certain events, just overly well-informed;¹⁷
- (4) internal errors and other mistakes.¹⁸

9 According to Yan Ruojū, his source of the information about the *Xin shi*'s forgery was a certain Cao Rong (1613–1685). As from 1690–1692 Yan Ruojū assisted Xu Qianxue at compiling the *Da-Qing yitong zhi* at Xu's private villa at Dongting Mountain on Lake Taihu (see Hummel, *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*, pp. 310-312 and 908-910), it is very likely that Xu got his information either from Yan, or also from Cao Rong.

10 On Yao Shilin, see the biographical entry in L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang: *Dictionary of Ming Biography 1368–1644*, 2 vols., New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1976, pp. 1559-1560; Yu Jiayi : *Siku tiyao bianzheng* , first edition 1958, 4 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1985, pp. 1541-1542.

11 See Horst Huber: *Wen T'ien-hsiang (1236–1283). Vorstufen zum Verständnis seines Lebens*, Phil.Diss. München 1983, pp. 300-301, n. 147 (with a summary of the state of the field up to 1980); Jennifer W. Jay: *A Change in Dynasties: Loyatism in Thirteenth-Century China*, Western Washington: Center for Asian Studies, 1991, pp. 74-76; Jiang Weitang : “Bian *Xin shi* fei Zheng Suonan yizuo ” in: *Wen shi* 18 (1983), 203-210; id.: “Zai bian *Xin shi* fei Zheng Suonan yizuo – da Chen Fukang tongzhi yizuo ” in: *Xueshu yuekan* 1987: 4, 42-48; Lu Tongqun : “*Xin shi* shi yi bu weishu ” in: *Nanjing shida xuebao (shehuikexue ban)* 1984: 1, 40-42; Li Zefen , “*Tieban Xin shi* wei Mingren de weishu ” in: id., *Song Liao Jin Yuan lishi lunwenji* , Taipei: Liming wenhua, 1991, pp. 696-700. – A chronologically arranged review of the voices doubting the *Xin shi*'s authenticity is found in Chen Fukang, *Jingzhong qishu kao*, ch. 8, pp. 266-324.

12 See Li Zefen, “*Tieban Xin shi* wei Mingren de weishu,” pp. 698-699.

13 The earliest such source seems to be an account contained in the *Wu shi hu* by Liu Tingluan (*jinsbi* 1662), cited in Chen Fukang, *Jingzhong qishu kao*, p. 138. Note that this account may have been written down years after 1644. – Another point that arouses suspicion is the absence of Zhang Guowei's foreword from the edition of his collected writings.

14 E.g., the assertion that work on the Song dynastic history started prior to 1283 (p. 190).

15 E.g., the surrender of Suzhou in 1276; see Lu Tongqun, “*Xin shi* shi yibu weishu,” p. 42; Lu raises here an acute argument; Chen Fukang's refutation (id., *Jingzhong qishu kao*, pp. 310-311) is not very convincing.

16 E.g., the reference to followers of the Lamaist Yellow Sect; see Li Zefen, “*Tieban Xin shi* wei Mingren de weishu,” p.700. In contrast, the reference to the Mongol habit of wearing a queue seems not to be an anachronism; see Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang*, pp. 300-301, n. 147.

17 E.g., the second failed Yuan naval expedition to Japan in 1281 (p. 95), but especially Wen Tianxiang's imprisonment and execution in late 1282 (pp. 127-128); as to the latter point, see Li Zefen, “*Tieban Xin shi* wei Mingren de weishu,” p. 699.

18 E.g., the given date of “Deyou sixth year ” which is mistakenly referred to as the year *jimao* (instead of *gengchen* ; p. 117); see Lu Tongqun, “*Xin shi* shi yibu weishu,” p. 42; the inclusion of Wen Tianxiang's name in a commemorative text dedicated to the Song martyrs, which is dated the

Yet the proponents of the authenticity hypothesis – among them notably Yu Jiayi and, in recent years, Chen Fukang, who must be credited with a fine edition of the *Xin shi* (cf. n. 1) – made great efforts to refute each and every argument challenging the *Xin shi*'s authenticity.¹⁹ The outcome is that the case remains unsettled and the dispute will go on for certain.

The argument which eventually convinced me of the late Ming authorship hypothesis has to do with the *Xin shi*'s title. In Western literature it has variedly been translated as “History from the heart” or “History in terms of the *xin* philosophy (*xin*, the heart), the subjective power, the inner values.”²⁰ Judged from the *Xin shi*'s contents, it appears that the *Xin shi*'s author, when using the term “*xin*,” probably had in mind the concept of the heart as the inner agency which regulates our “sentiments” (*qing* 情) in accordance with the “Five Basic Human Relationships” (*wulun* 五倫). As such the heart is the organ of filiality (*xiao* 孝) and loyalty (*zhong* 忠), the core values which form the very basis of the state (p. 122). They are the two key themes that run like a leitmotiv throughout the *Xin shi*. The following passage well expresses the ardour with which the *Xin shi*'s author contemplated these two supreme ethical norms:

I have heard my father say: “To live or die is a small matter, but a moral lapse is a great matter. The servitor of one ruler will die in preference to serving another.” Moreover, he told me: “The family teaching that I received from my father and grandfather, and that sustained the family, has consisted purely of filiality and loyalty. I pass it on to you. Do not forget your father's words!” Often I have sat through the night, alone and forlorn, overcome with grief and choking with sobs, turning over and over in my mind these thoughts of country and of family.²¹

Throughout the *Xin shi* lingers the author's anxiety over the insufficient observance of his filial and loyal duties; thus, self-admonitions (*li* 箴) abound:

twelfth month 1281, i.e., one year before Wen's execution (p. 156); see Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang*, p. 85; the disregard of Song Gaozong's taboo character *gou* 苟 in the case of a reference to Li Gou (1009–1059; p. 135); see *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, reprint in 2 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1981, 174/1544a-b.

- 19 Yu Jiayi, *Siku tiyao bianzheng*, pp. 1528–1545; Chen Fukang, “Lun *Xin shi* jue fei weituo zhi shu” 論《新史》絕非魏倣作, in: *Zheng Sixiao ji*, Appendix V, pp. 389–415; and id., *Jingzhong qishu kao*, 266–324. For yet another article questioning the spuriousness thesis, see Yang Zhijiu 楊志久: “*Xin shi* zhong jizai de Aqama bei sha shijian – jian lun *Xin shi* zhenwei wenti” 《新史》中記載的阿伽瑪被殺事件 – 兼論《新史》真偽問題, in: *Zhongguo shehuikexuyuan minzu yanjiusuo* 中國社會科學院民族研究所 (ed.), *Zhongguo minzushi yanjiu* 中國民族史研究, Peking: Zhongguo shehuikexue (1987), 11–21.
- 20 Jay, *A Change in Dynasties*, p. 65, and Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang*, p. 63 (“Geschichte im Sinne der Philosophie des *Hsin* [*xin*, des Herzens], des subjektiven Vermögens, der Gesinnung”). Huber's translation brings to mind the identification of the heart-and-mind with the Principle (*xin ji li* 心即理), a central concept of Wang Yang-ming's (1472–1528) philosophy, which was of great impact on the intellectual world of the Ming-Qing transition; see Wang Fansen 王 Fansen: “‘Xin ji li’ shuo de dongyao yu Mingmo Qingchu xuefeng zhi zhuanbian” 《心即理》說的重要與明清學風之轉變, in: (*Zhongyang yanjiuyuan*) *Lishi yanjiu yanjiusuo jikan* 中國中央研究院歷史研究所集刊 65 (1994), 333–373. Going through the *Xin shi*, we find, however, that the author abstains from entering into any profound philosophical discussions.
- 21 “Hou chenzi mengxi,” p. 108; the translation is adopted from Frederick W. Mote: “Confucian Eremitism in the Yuan Period,” in: Arthur F. Wright (ed.), *The Confucian Persuasion*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1960, 202–240, p. 234.

My heart will not change for all times
I have sealed this pledge with drops of blood. (p. 27).

In using the term *xin* in the book's title, we also might suspect an allusion to a famous poem by Wen Tianxiang (1236–1283), the paragon of Song loyalism who also occupies an important place in the *Xin shi*.²² In the two closing lines of this poem Wen expresses his unflinching loyalty to the Song dynasty even in face of its imminent demise:

“In this life since antiquity who can escape death.
Better to preserve a pure heart (*dunxin*) to illuminate the pages of history.”²³

The allusion to Wen Tianxiang is further corroborated by a strange story according to which, following Wen's execution, his heart is dissected and finally devoured by Khubilai Khan and other Mongol leaders (p. 128) – a story for which the *Xin shi* seems to be the only source.

These remarks on the *Xin shi*'s title – here understood as “a history of a (loyal and filial) heart” – may suffice. In contrast to what *xin shi* means in the *Xin shi*'s title, the term takes on quite a different connotation in a passage found in Lü Zuqian's (1137–1181) *Donglai [Zuoshi] boyi* (*Comprehensive Expositions [of the Zuo Commentary]*),²⁴ which, to my best knowledge, is its earliest occurrence. In this passage, *xin shi* refers to the historiographers (*shi*) who record the movements of the ancient sage-ruler's heart-and-mind (*xin*). There is no direct nor indirect reference to this passage in the *Xin shi*, which is significant in two respects:

Firstly, in late Song times Lü Zuqian was considered a leading authority in historical matters and his *Donglai boyi*, intended for providing guidance in the preparations for the state examinations, circulated widely; hence, it is rather unlikely that a scholar as broadly educated as Zheng Sixiao would have ever overlooked the reference to “*xin shi*.” In contrast, it is not at all surprising that a late Ming author missed it.²⁵

Secondly, Lü Zuqian's use of the term *xin shi* evokes the archaic idea of two historiographers to the right and the left of the ruler, of whom one was thought to record the latter's words, the other his actions.²⁶ The underlying concept of historiography as a court-centered enterprise contrasts starkly with the *Xin shi*'s concept of historiography which gives weight to the role of the educated elite (see below Sections 4 and 5).

22 There are two texts devoted to Wen: “Wen chengxiang xu ” (pp. 122-129) and “Wen chengxiang zan bing xu ” (pp. 153-154); for an analysis of these two texts (primarily the first one), see Huber, *Wen T'ien-hsiang*, pp. 62-81.

23 “Guo Lingding yang ,” cited from Jay, *A Change in Dynasties*, p. 57.

24 *Donglai boyi* (reprint from the *Shijie shuju* edition of 1936 in 4 *juan* , Peking: Beijingshi Zhongguo shudian, 1986) 2/163-166. In this passage Lü discusses the *Zuo zhuan* entry under the year 653 B.C. (Duke Xi 7th Year), which records the feudal lords' meeting at Ningmu, summoned by Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–642 B.C.). See James Legge: *The Chinese Classics*, 5 vols., 2nd ed. Oxford 1893–1895, reprinted Hongkong: University of Hongkong Press, 1960, Vol. V: *The Ch'un T's'ew with the Tso Chuen*, pp. 148-150.

25 By the Ming, Zhu Xi had become the “master historian,” second only to Confucius; see Benjamin Elman: *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China*, Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2001, pp. 490-492, 498.

26 See Denis Twitchett: *The Writing of Official History Under the T'ang*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 5-6.

Once we begin to perceive the *Xin shi* as a late Ming work published not earlier than 1645, some interesting things come into sight such as, for instance, the pervasive use of veiled language.²⁷ Another meaningful facet concerns the place where the *Xin shi* was retrieved: the Chengtian Monastery in Suzhou; for Ming “surviving subjects” (*yimin*) this was a place to which were attached memories of the Ming dynasty’s glorious founding era.²⁸ As for the *Xin shi*’s title, it is worth noting that a new edition of the *Ting shi* (*Stories Noted on a Small Table*) by Yue Ke (1183 – later than 1240), published during the Jiajing era (1522–1566), included a supplement containing the biography, prose writings, poetry, and other biographical materials of his grandfather, the celebrated Southern Song general Yue Fei (1103–1141).²⁹ In a word, this was a rudimentary model for a “history” (*shi*), conceived as an amalgam of the protagonist’s poetry and other historical and biographical materials.

1.

In her introduction to the recently published journal issue on “Traumatic Memory in Chinese History,” Professor Lynn Struve has stressed the tremendous variety of memory-texts throughout Chinese cultural history. As she points out in her own contribution to this theme issue, the broad genre of memory-texts saw a conspicuous growth in the Ming–Qing transition: “the middle of the seventeenth century in China was marked by a phenomenal outpouring of memoir-like personal accounts, which, in their variety of content and general lack of genre adherence, are best subsumed by the inclusive term ego-document.”³⁰

As an example of such a memoir, Lynn Struve discusses the *Yusheng lu* (*Record of Life Beyond my Due*) by Zhang Maozi (b. 1634?), in which the author reports his traumatic experiences encountered during the Qing conquest – mass suicide among the household members, a massacre, jailing, and humiliations. What keeps Zhang Maozi alive –

27 We permanently encounter phrases which can be read as, “Qing will crumble” (*chui qing*, p. 84), “burn down Qing” (*ran qing*; p. 42), “restore Ming” (*guang ming*; pp. 42, 84), etc.

28 Zhu Yuanzhang (r. 1368–1398) adopted Zhang Shicheng’s (1321–1367) prerogatives as King of Wu before founding the Ming dynasty. Prior to his defeat against Zhu in 1367, Zhang had established his palace at the Chengtian Monastery; see (*Jiaqing chongxiu*) *Yitongzhi* (reprint 35 vols., Peking: Zhonghua shuju, 1986), “Suzhoufu III,” 79/3b, h.8-10 (p. 3344). Zhang, who was married to a woman who descended from the house of Song, was held in esteem by the local people, in particular the Suzhou literati; the practice of commemorating him persisted until modern times; see Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 99-103, especially p. 102.

29 *A Sung Bibliography*, edited by Yves Hervouet, Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978, pp. 338-339; *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 141/1200a-b. The *Ting shi* ranks among the Song foremost “off-brush notes” (*biji*) that deal with historical subjects; it was highly regarded by late Ming scholars, which is attested, e.g., by Zhu Guozhen (1557–1632?) in the preface of his *Yongzhuang xiaopin*; cited in Liao Ruiming: “Mingdai zhangqu biji de shixue jiazhi – yi *Shuyuan zaji* wei zhongxin” in: *Di san jie shixueshi guoji yantaohui lunwenji*, edited by Guoli Zhongxing daxue lishixuei, Taizhong: Qingfeng, 1991, 171-195, p. 173. A collated re-edition of the *Ting shi* was published during the Tianqi era (1621–1627) by Yue Yuansheng (1557–1628), Yue Fei’s descendant in the eighteenth generation; see Shao Yichen and Shao Zhang, *Zengding Siku jianming mulu biaoqiu*, Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1979, p. 595.

30 Lynn Struve: “Confucian PTSD. Reading Trauma in a Chinese Youngster’s Memoir of 1653,” in: *History & Memory* 16: 3-4 (2004), 14-31, here pp. 14-15.

amidst enormous guilt feelings about his survival – is to transport the remains of his revered paternal grandfather, Zhang Kentang, back to the family’s hometown and to immortalize him through the very act of composing the *Yusheng lu*. Thus, this memoir, says Lynn Struve, “is cast as an account of how the cosmic forces of loyalty and filiality have quasi-supernaturally guaranteed the perpetuation of the family line and the transmission of the sterling example of Zhang Kentang _____, whose name opens and whose death-poem closes the *Yusheng lu*.”³¹

Basically, this characterization of the *Yusheng lu* applies as well to the *Xin shi*, with the difference that in the latter it is the father (or the purported father), Zheng Qi _____ (1199–1262), rather than the grandfather, who is at the very focus of the author’s mind.³² Thus, the *Xin shi* begins and ends with showing reverence for the father; while the opening preface contains an elementary poetics which is put into the father’s mouth (pp. 3-4), the author writes in the two postfaces:

If someone asks me, “Whom do you look upon as your teacher in the philosophical teachings and the art of composing prose writings and poetry?” I shall reply in all my born days by one single sentence, “In all my life I have orientated myself to nothing else than learning from my father!” (p. 193).

That today I have some faint idea about humaneness and righteousness and can make up some phrases consonant with the Way – all this is owed to my father’s words. (p. 195).

In contrast to the *Yusheng lu*, the *Xin shi* is silent about any eye-witnessed atrocities or shattering experiences. And yet a tense atmosphere of looming disaster, anxiety, despair, and psychological suffering is created throughout the book. Things come to a crisis with the surrender of the author’s hometown Suzhou:

As I remember my father’s teachings [on filiality and loyalty]
Day and night I shed tears of blood, and am nearly mad with grief.
There is my old mother, ill with her old illness,
Dependent on me to keep her alive a bit longer.
I want to die, but cannot do so in my pursuit to be a filial son.
I want to live on, but cannot do so in my pursuit to be a loyal servitor.³³

What makes the *Xin shi* comparable to the *Yusheng lu* – despite all differences in form and content – is that it also qualifies as an “ego-document” par excellence. Thus, the intense personal voice speaks to us not only throughout the two hundred and fifty poems, but also throughout the prose writings, being finely modulated in accordance with the varied sorts of texts: self-hortations (“Zi jie _____,” p. 121), solemn manifestos (“Jiu jiu shu _____,” pp. 103-114), a fantasy travelogue of a dream travel to mythical regions in Western Sichuan (“Meng you Yuzhenfeng can meihua ji _____,” p. 117-120), a highly stylized autobiographical portrait (“Yishi jushi zhuan _____,” pp. 137-138), the father’s biography (“Xianjun Jushanweng jiazhuan _____,” pp. 141-144), and the many

31 Struve, “Confucian PTSD,” p. 25.

32 Another difference is that Zheng Sixiao, the *Xin shi*’s purported author, is childless and is aware of the disruption of the family line beyond his death (see, e.g., pp. 108, 144).

33 “Xian lu ge,” p. 42; translation adapted from Mote, “Confucian Eremitism,” p. 235.

forewords and afterwords accompanying the various parts of the book. In fact, there are only three major texts in which the personal voice is distanced.³⁴

2. In the Catalogue of the Imperial Library (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*) the *Xin shi* is categorized under the fourth rubric of “collectanea” (*jibu*). However, the book is much more tightly organized than any usual edition of an individual author’s collective writings since the items are arranged in strict chronological order (see the table below).³⁵

Table: Contents of the *Xinshi* as related to major historical events of the late 13th century

general history	parts I-VI of the <i>Xin shi</i>	contents
2nd month 1273: fall of Xiangyang	I) “Xianchun ji ”, 1 <i>juan</i> preface dated 17th day of the first month 1279	50 poems covering the period from 1268 to the New Year’s Day of 1276
2nd day of the twelfth month 1275: surrender of Suzhou first month 1276: surrender of Hangzhou 2nd month 1279: Song defeat in the battle of Yaishan ; end of the house of Zhao	II) “Dayi ji ”, 1 <i>juan</i> preface dated the 21st day of the first month 1279	70 poems covering the period from the New Year’s Day of 1276 receding in time to the twelfth month 1275
six and seventh month 1281: Khubilai’s failed naval invasion of Japan at Kyushu	III) “Zhongxing ji ”, 2 <i>juan</i> preface dated 15th day of fourth month 1280	<i>juan</i> 1: 61 poems covering the period from the fourth month 1279, to the eighth month 1280; <i>juan</i> 2: 69 poems covering the period from the ninth month 1280, to after the sixth month, 1281; “Zixu ” (dated ninth month 1281)
	IV) “Jiu jiu shu ” preface dated sixth month 1282; final postscript: 7th day of fourth month 1283	“Chenzi mengxi ” (dated ninth month 1276), “Hou chenzi mengxi ” (dated first month 1278), three postscripts (dated ninth month 1278; eleventh and twelfth month 1282); “Jiu jiu shu jiu ba ” (dates ranging from first month 1279 to eleventh month 1281)

34 Namely the main historical account (“Dayi lüexu”), Wen Tianxiang’s biography (“Wen Chengxiang xu”), and a biography of a Song martyr’s widow (“Ouyang Menggui zhongjie rourou zhuan ”, pp. 154-155).

35 Note that the poems in Part III overlap in time with the prose writings in Parts IV and V. The same is true with the items in Part IV which were allegedly added later on. Also, the historical account in Part VI, “Dayi lüexu,” does not fall under the chronological framework.

general history	parts I-VI of the <i>Xin shi</i>	contents
3rd day of third month, 1281: death of the Queen Dowager in Dadu 8th day of twelfth month, 1282: execution of Wen Tianxiang in Dadu	V) “Zawen ”, 1 <i>juan</i>	twenty-seven texts, dates ranging from tenth month 1279 to twelfth month 1281, except of Wen Tianxiang’s biography (“Wen chengxiang xu ”, undated), which has later additions
	VI) “Dayi lüexu ” dated first month 1283	chronicle of events from tenth month 1274 to second month 1279, with passages at the beginning and end that relate to an earlier and later time
	[VI: Epilogue]	“Houxu ” and “You houxu ” (both dated twelfth month 1281); “Zong houxu ” (dated 18th day of twelfth month 1281); poem (undated); “Ziba ” (dated eleventh month 1282); “Mengyan ” (dated 26th day of third month 1283); incantation (undated)

What is striking about this arrangement is that it subtly imitates the classical model provided by the *Book of Odes* (*Shijing*) and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Chunqiu*). According to Mencius (*Mengzi* IVB.21), the two canonical texts record, respectively, the history before and after “the extinction of kingly rule” (*wangzhe zhi ji xi*), i.e. the demise of the Western Zhou dynasty.³⁶

Significantly, the idea of poetry and historical narration complementing each other in their genuine function to retain and represent the historical memory was a particular strand of late Ming literary thought. Above all, this strand was represented by the renowned literary critic Jin Shengtan (d. 1661), who also hailed from Suzhou. Jin perceived of the *Odes* and the *Annals* as having set a precedent for remembering the historical past; according to Jin, this precedent was followed, in early times, by Qu Yuan’s (c. 340–278 B.C.) “Lisao ” and Sima Qian’s (c. 145–90/85 B.C.) *Shi ji* , and, in more recent times, the *Xixiang ji* (*Romance of the Western Chamber*) and the *Shuibu zhuàn* (*Water Margins*), respectively.³⁷ We may conclude that in a way the *Xin shi* brought Jin Shengtan’s concept to the full by incorporating poetry and historical narration in one single work.

36 Since poetry expresses “sentiments” (*qing*), which were thought to be more authentic than what is seen or heard, poetry was traditionally considered an important medium of historical memory – a fact that is, among others, reflected by reckoning the *Odes* among the “Three Histories” (*san shi*) edited by Confucius.

37 This idea is developed in particular in the following two texts: “Guanhuatang pi di wu caizishu *Shuibu zhuàn*: xu yi ” and “Guanhuatang pi di wu [sic] caizishu *Xixiangji* II: Du di liu caizishu *Xixiangji*’ fa ”, in: Jin Shengtan *wenji* , compiled by Ai Shuren and punctuated by Ran Ran , Chengdu: Ba-Shu shushe, 1997, pp. 221-226 and 341-351. See also the biographical entry on Jin Shengtan in Hummel, *Eminent Chinese*, pp. 164-166.

3.

The most important single treatise of the whole *Xin shi* is an essay on the topic of “legitimate rule” (“Gujin zhengtong dalun”; pp. 132-137).³⁸ From Song times onward this topic had become a hotly debated issue in the field of historiography.³⁹ The tone that is struck in the essay under discussion suggests that the *Xin shi*’s author reckoned his treatise as the final word in this debate. Thus, he does not shy away from criticizing Ouyang Xiu (1007–1072) and even Zhu Xi (1130–1200) for their alleged miscomprehensions of two concrete points (pp. 135-136).

At the core of the author’s argumentation lies the distinction between “China” (*Zhongguo*) and the “barbarians” (*yidi*). Since times immemorial, says the author, there has been no greater man-made disasters than those caused by subordinates running the affairs of a lord and by barbarians running China’s affairs. Running China’s affairs was never to the benefit of the barbarian tribes themselves; in the contrary, it caused their inborn nature getting perverted, eventually sending them to their doom. Thus the author concludes that it is only in the barbarians’ own interest to run their own affairs and follow their inborn nature.

At a different place, the author points out that the principle of “legitimate rule,” inaugurated by the “sage-rulers” (*shengren*), defines “China” as the land of man, as distinguished from the barbarians who are like dogs and sheep and do not belong to the human species (*renlei*; p. 103). Acknowledging that barbarians have come to reside in China at one or another time, the author compares them to oxen and horses which strangely acquired human language, dress in clothes, and wear shoes, yet will forever remain animals (p. 132).

From the foregoing remarks it is clear that, in the view of the *Xin shi*’s author, no barbarian ruling house can possibly be categorized as having attained to the lofty principle of “legitimate rule,” not even the glorious Tang dynasty (618–907). However, pointing to the Tang dynasty’s long enduring rule and noting the great peaceful order achieved during the Zhenguan reign era (626–649), the author argues that the Tang still should be classified under “China” as the second best category, together with the Western and Eastern Jin (Xi-Jin, Dong-Jin) and the four southern dynasties, Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen. The eminent status of “legitimate rule” is exclusively reserved to the early sage-kings, the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, Zhou), the Western and Eastern Han (Xi-Han, Dong-Han), the Shu-Han and Song dynasties. The main part of the treatise is dedicated to the remaining rulers and ruling houses which are rigorously sorted out from the two-layered scheme “legitimate rule”/“China.” The two distinguishing categories employed are “traitors” (*ni*; Wang Mang, Cao Cao) and “usurpers” (*jian*), under the latter category fall (a) rulers with a barbarian ancestry

38 *Zhengtong* is usually translated as “legitimate succession;” the translation that is preferred here takes into account that the aspect of “succession” in the sense of “legitimate inheritance” is ignored in the *Xin shi*’s *zhengtong* treatise.

39 Ruan Tingzhuo: “Songdai youguan zhengtonglun zhi shiji zhishi,” in: *Zhongguo wenhua yanjiusuo xuebao* 15 (1984), 109-137. For a general historical overview, see Rao Zongyi: *Zhongguo shixue shang zhi zhengtonglun*, Hong Kong: Longmen, 1978; Hok-lam Chan: *Legitimation in Imperial China. Discussions under the Jurchen-Chin Dynasty (1115–1234)*, Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1984, pp. 19-48, 124-137.

(Sui Wendi 隋文帝), (b) woman rulers (the two empresses Lü 呂 and Wu 吳), and (c) “bandits” (*daozei* 盜賊; the Chinese ruling houses of the Five Dynasties). In addition, the Qin 秦 dynasty is branded as “immoral” (*bu dao* 不道).

There are a number of details from which it becomes sufficiently clear that this treatise originated against the backdrop of the late Ming *zhengtong* debate. One such detail, for example, is the deprecation of Cao Cao (155–220), who is being lumped together with Wang Mang (see also p. 94). This reflects the influence of the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), which took shape and gained popularity over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and in which the historical figure of Cao Cao is cast in a distinctly unfavorable light.⁴⁰

A more thorough exploration of the treatise under discussion as part and parcel of the Ming *zhengtong* debate must be left to a later point of time; here I will limit myself to three remarks:

1) It is worth noting that the treatise, when speaking of the Chinese/barbarian distinction, persistently uses the term “*Zhongguo*” instead of the more conventional term “*Hua* 華.” The use of “*Zhongguo*” suggests the idea of a geographical entity which is separated from the regions inhabited by the barbaric people. This brings to mind Wang Fuzhi’s (1619–1692) reflections on the Chinese/barbarian dichotomy. According to Wang, the fundamental difference between Chinese and barbarians must be ultimately attributed to the different climatic and natural environments, which again account for different nutrition, bringing about two different modes of living – the Chinese agrarian society and the nomadic life of the barbarians. The conclusion that Wang drew from this reasoning is that China has definite natural boundaries, a conclusion that effected his historical judgments in one way or the other.⁴¹

2) The Ming debate on “legitimate succession” gained fervor in the course of the sixteenth century, along with various attempts to rewrite the Song dynastic history.⁴² A new chord was struck by a treatise which has traditionally been attributed to the venerated Confucian martyr Fang Xiaoru 方孝孺 (1357–1402), but which is likely to have originated from the second half of the fifteenth century.⁴³ This treatise compares with the one contained in the

40 Zhao Keyao 趙 Keyao : “Zhengtong guannian yu *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義,” in: *Fudan xuebao* 復旦學報 1985: 6, 103-105.

41 Thus, Wang Fuzhi approved of Han Wudi’s (r. 141–87 B.C.) expansion into the south, but at the same time condemned his expansionist policy against the Xiongnu in the north; see Ernstjoachim Vierheller, *Nation und Elite im Denken von Wang Fu-chih (1619–1692)*, Hamburg 1968, pp. 29-39; John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1984, pp. 237-238; Pamela Kyle Crossley: *A Translucent Mirror. History and Identity in Qing Imperial Ideology*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1999, pp. 67-70.

42 See Chen Xuelin 陳雪琳 (Hok-lam Chan): “Mingdai Songshixue – Ke Weiqi *Song shi xinbian* shuping 宋史新編述評,” in: id., *Mingdai renwu yu shiliao* 明代人物與史料, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001, 283-319.

43 See John Fincher: “China as Race, Culture and Nation: Notes on Fang Hsiao-ju’s Discussion of Dynastic Legitimacy,” in: *Transition and Permanence: Chinese History and Culture. A Festschrift in Honor of Dr. Hsiao Kang-ch’uan*, edited by David C. Buxbaum and Frederick W. Mote, Hong Kong 1972, 59-69. Note that this article does not touch on the problem of the treatise’s authorship. Its tone is so radically anti-barbarian that it is more than reasonable to assume that it was written *after* the 1449 Tumu 土木 incident. Moreover, it is to be remembered that Fang Xiaoru’s writings were suppressed for over one century; see Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, p. 432.

Xin shi in two respects: Firstly, it equally emphasizes the fundamental distinction between Chinese and barbarians, similarly comparing the latter to beasts (“If they were elevated to a position above the Chinese people, this would be to lead the world to animality. If a dog or a horse were to occupy a human’s seat, even small boys would be angry and take a club to them.”⁴⁴). Secondly, it also rigorously excludes all dynasties founded by “frontier barbarians” (*bianyǐ* 边夷) from the “legitimate succession.”

Another *zhengtong* treatise which needs further study in the present context is a treatise by Wang Shiqi (王世琦) (b. 1554, *jinsbi* 1589), son of the eminent Wang Shizhen (王世贞) (c.1526–1590), in which the topic is intelligently discussed under six categories of “sovereign rule” (*tong* 统).⁴⁵

3) As the *Xin shi*’s author points out, his *zhengtong* treatise was originally intended as the basis of a projected “world chronicle” with the designated title of *Comprehensive Mirror According to the Doctrine of Legitimate Rule* (*Zheng tong tongjian* 正統通鑑), but due to various obstacles, the author had to give up on his ambitious plan (pp. 136-137). The inquiry into the historiographical genre of “world chronicles” referred to and the treatment of the *zhengtong* issue in the works of this new genre of history-writing is yet another desideratum.⁴⁶

4. A characteristic trait of Ming historical culture is a discourse that went on over time and acquired a much more general tone than any previous debates over historical issues. In contemporary language, this discourse was referred to as *gonglun*, “the discourse that holds to the general norm (of what is right and wrong).” In fact, to maintain and develop this discourse was considered the ultimate aim of the “study of the historical past” (*shixue* 史學). A forceful expression of this idea is found in the preface of a world-chronicle modeled on Zhu Xi’s *Tongjian Gangmu* (通鑑綱目) (*The String and Mesh of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*), which is attributed to Wang Shizhen. It opens with a definition of what history is about:

Historical works are books in which one age is summed up and which represent the discourse that holds to the general norm (of what is right and wrong) [*gonglun*] for ten thousand generations. What is meant by the term *gonglun* is that there is a definitive standard for praising what is good and condemning what is evil (*shan qi shan, e qi e* 善其善, 惡其惡), for acknowledging what is true and refuting what is false (*shi shi, fei fei* 是是, 非非).⁴⁷

As to the subject matters of this discourse, none stirred up more emotions or aroused more debates than, firstly, the affair of the Jianwen (建文) emperor’s (r. 1398–1402) “abdication” (*xunguo* 遜國) and the Yongle (永樂) emperor’s (r. 1402–1424) questionable accession to the throne and, secondly, the infamous coup d’état known as “the seizing of

44 With minor changes cited from Vierheller, *Nation und Elite*, p. 22, and Fincher, “China as a Race,” p. 59.

45 “Zhengtong lun 正統論,” cited in Qian Maowei (錢茂威): *Mingdai shixue biannian kao* 明代史學編年考, Peking: Zhongguo wenlian chubanshe, 2000, pp. 277-278.

46 Here I must limit myself to draw attention to three works which are especially relevant for this inquiry, yet not easily available: Qiu Jun (秋瑾) (1420? – 1495), *Shishi zhenggang* 史時正綱, 32 *juan* (completed in 1481, printed in 1488); Yuan Huang (袁黃) (1533–1606), *Lishi gangjian bu* 歷時綱鑑補, 39 *juan* (preface dated 1606); Zheng Jiao (鄭蛟) (b. 1612), *Shi tong* 史通, 146 *juan*. See Qian Maowei, *Mingdai shixue biannian kao*, pp. 27-30, 268, 413-419.

47 “Yuan Xu II (袁旭二),” in *Yuan Wang Gangjian hebian* 元王綱鑑合編, Ed. Shijie shuju, 4 vols., Peking: Beijingshi Zhongguo shudian, 1985, p. 4.

the palace gates” (*duo men*) through which the Jingtai emperor (r. 1450–1456) was forced to abdicate.⁴⁸ The enduring debate on these two key events in Ming history was accompanied by notorious criticisms of the virulent “Veritable Records” (*shilu*) of the Jianwen and Jingtai reigns, which mounted during the Wanli era (1573–1619).⁴⁹ Thus, with regard to the official historiography, the “discourse that holds to the general norm” functioned as a kind of independent truth-keeping agency.⁵⁰

Moreover, criticism of the deliberate distortions in the Ming dynasty’s official records went hand in hand with attempts that aimed at sorting out fact from fancy throughout the abundant “non-official histories” (*yeshi*)⁵¹ and “stories relating to historical matters” (*xiaoshuo*).⁵² To set right the historical facts vis-à-vis a growing mass of unreliable reports was considered another primary task of the “discourse that holds to the general norm.”⁵³

The *Xin shi*’s use of the notion of *gonglun* places the work clearly into the later Ming intellectual world. There are three occurrences to be investigated. At the first instance, the “eulogy” of a Song martyr’s high-minded widow opens with the statement that, “From the ancient past to the present it is only ‘the discourse that holds to the general norm’ which cannot be extinguished.” Hence, even a person of as low a social status as a woman can become the object of high respect by later generations (p. 155).

Next comes the occurrence of “*gonglun*” in a short introductory note to the “Dayi lüexu,” the historical account of the Song dynasty’s demise, which forms one of the *Xin shi*’s main items. Stressing his intention to give a straightforward account, the author opines that it would not help to camouflage the evil caused by some Song officials who kept their

48 See Zhao Yuanzhu : *Ming Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu* , Peking: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2000, pp. 165–191.

49 See Wolfgang Franke, “The Veritable Records of the Ming Dynasty (1368–1644),” in: W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1961, 60–77; Xie Gu’an : *Ming shilu yanjiu* , Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995.

50 An interesting piece of evidence of the high regard for the “discourse that holds to the general norm” is provided by a contemporary author who negatively commented on the requests to revise the “Veritable Records” of certain reign eras, on the grounds that, as long as such a discourse held sway, any revisions were unnecessary; see Shen Defu (1578–1642), *Wanli yebuo bian* , 3 vols., Peking: Zhonghua, 1959, 21997, p. 801.

51 Note that *yeshi* refers either to the privately working historiographer or to the product of his writing, that is an “unofficial history.” The term originated in the later Tang period. It appears for the first time in a poem by Lu Guimeng (d. 881), and in a book title in a work by Sha Zhongmu , written between 889 and 905. See Che Jixin and Wang Yuji (eds.): *Zhonghua yeshi* , 16 vols., Jinan: Taishan chubanshe, 2000, Vol. I: 1. In a more narrow sense, however, the term *yeshi* refers to “off-brush notes” (*biji*) on historical subjects.

52 On the growth of miscellaneous records (contemporarily referred to as *yeshi*, *biji*, and *xiaoshuo*) in the second half of the Ming period, see Xie Guozhen , “Ming Qing yeshi biji gaishu ,” in: id., *Mingmo Qingchu de xuefeng* , Peking: Renmin, 1982, 88–104.

53 See, e.g., Jiao Hong’s (1539–1597) proposal submitted in connection with the large-scale project of compiling a Ming state history (*guoshi*), in which the notion of *gonglun* figures prominently; see “Xiu shi tiao chen si shi yi ,” in: *Danyuan ji* (provided with text-critical notes and punctuated by Li Jianxiang , 2 vols., Peking: Zhonghua, 1999), pp. 29–31; Edward T. Ch’ien: *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, pp. 52–55.

monarch uninformed because “the discourse that holds to the general norm’, once it prevails throughout the realm, cannot be extinguished for a thousand years” (p. 157).

The third and last instance occurs in the “Overall Postface” (“Zong houxu ”), which reviews the *Xin shi*’s structure and considers the book’s title before contemplating historiography in general:

Histories are meant to account for the alternation of order and chaos, to analyze what proved to be successful and what went wrong, to clarify the periods of legitimate and illegitimate rule, and to set straight the fundamental principles of human relationships. If this is not achieved, “the discourse that holds to the general norm” cannot eventually be settled and the work does not earn to be called a history. (p. 196).

The *Xin shi*’s use of the term *gonglum* makes it clear that the inherited system of official historiography was no longer seen fit to warrant a “definitive standard” in historiography. This is also reflected by the fact that the *Xin shi*’s author finds it necessary to discuss at length the twofold problem that a historian is confronted with: establishing the facts vis-à-vis a mass of contradictory reports of a certain event and making a suitable record of it (p. 191).

5. Central to our interpretation of the *Xin shi* is its author’s adoption of the pose as a “scribe in the wilderness” (*yesbi*). “When the empire is in good order,” says the *Xin shi*’s author, “the historical records (*shi*) are lodged in the court, but in times of turmoil they are entrusted to the common people” (p. 196). Elsewhere he remarks: “Presently the court is without a Bureau of Historiography and the routine affairs (of record-keeping) are taken care of in all four directions so that in the mountains and forests there must be those who compile ‘histories in the wilderness’ (*yesbi*)” (p. 147). And later on, towards the end of the text from which the latter quotation is taken, the author regrets his knowledge (*wenzhi*) lacking broadness to compile a “history in the wilderness” (*yesbi*) and expresses his wish to discuss the compilation of such a historical work with an experienced gentleman of high moral character (*ibid.*).

Here as well as elsewhere, the term *yesbi* is used without the pejorative tone which accompanied its use by those late Ming critics cited above who were concerned about the spread of private and semi-private historical accounts. This positive connotation of “*yesbi*” is closely associated with Yuan Haowen (1190–1257), the prominent Jin dynasty’s scholar and poet, who, after the Mongol conquest, threw himself into the preservation of the Jin historical records and cultural heritage. Working in a complex of houses named the “Pavilion of the Scribe in the Wilderness” (*yesbi ting*), he collected all sorts of materials which later served as an indispensable source of the Jin history’s compilation.⁵⁴

Another Jin scholar, Wang E (1190–1273), who joined Yuan Haowen in his unrelentless efforts to lay the ground for the Jin dynastic history, memorialized in 1261 to Kubilai Khan, recommending the compilation of the Liao and Jin histories. It is in this memorial that the later often repeated dictum originated, “A state can be vanquished, but its history may not be destroyed” (*guo ke wang, shi bu ke mie*).⁵⁵

54 Hok-lam Chan: *The Historiography of the Chin Dynasty. Three Studies*, Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1970, pp. 5-9.

55 Cf. Hok-lam Chan: “Wang O’s Contribution to the History of the Chin Dynasty (1115-1234),” in: Ping-leung

Among Song loyalists the compilation of the Song history did seemingly not mobilize such great energies as did the Jin history project for Yuan Haowen, Wang E, and other Jin loyalists. There may be several reasons for that; one perhaps being the Mongol takeover of the complete archival materials pertaining to the Song history after the fall of Hangzhou in 1276.⁵⁶ In contrast, the writing of Ming history was greatly en vogue after the fall of the dynasty in 1644.⁵⁷ A formidable example of the widespread devotion among Ming loyalists to the writing of the history of their fallen ruling house is provided by Tan Qian (1594–1658), author of the voluminous Ming chronicle *Guo que* .⁵⁸

The idea that the “scribes in the wilderness” are responsible for preserving the historical memory after a dynasty’s demise was also forcefully articulated by no less scholar than Huang Zongxi (1610–1695):

As soon as the historical records of the state have ceased to be kept, the “histories compiled in the wilderness” become the state histories. Consider Chen Shou’s (233–297) *Shu zhi* (*Records of Shu*) or Yuan Haowen’s *Nan kou lu* (*An Historical Account of the Southern Invasion*) – who decreed their compilation? And yet who would not call them state histories?⁵⁹

Chan, Shu-tim Lai, Kwok-hung Yeung, Tak-wai Wong, Ngok Lee and Ling-yeong Chiu (eds.): *Essays in Commemoration of the Golden Jubilee of the Fung Ping Shan Library (1932–1982). Studies in Chinese Librarianship, Literature, Language, History and Arts*, Hong Kong: Fung Ping Shan Library of the University of Hong Kong, 1982, 345-375, here p. 366. In fact, similar opinions had already been expressed some years earlier; see Lien-sheng Yang: “The Organization of Chinese Official Historiography: Principles and Methods of the Standard Histories from the T’ang through the Ming Dynasty,” in: W. G. Beasley and E. G. Pulleyblank (eds.), *Historians of China and Japan*, London: School of Oriental and African Studies, 1961, 44-59, here p. 46-47.

56 For the beginnings of the work on the Song history, see Hok-lam Chan: “Chinese Official Historiography at the Yuan Court: The Composition of the Liao, Chin, and Sung Histories,” in: John D. Langlois, Jr. (ed.), *China under Mongol Rule*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981, 56-106, here p. 66.

57 See Zhao Yuanzhu, *Ming Qing zhi ji shidafu yanjiu*, pp. 436-445.

58 Goodrich and Fang, *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, pp. 1239-1242.

59 *Hongxiang shilu chao* (edition *Nan-Ming shiliao* (*ba zhong*)), punctuated and annotated by Meng Zhaogeng and Li Changxian, Nanking: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1999), “Xu”, p. 3.

In our context it is important that Huang Zongxi, through his choice to abandon military resistance, to devote himself to studying and teaching for the rest of his life, and to take an active, albeit indirect part in the state project of compiling the Ming history, assumed a kind of role model for many Ming “surviving subjects” (*yimin*).⁶⁰ His personal conduct and his writings provided for orientation and guidance amidst a fundamental orientational crisis, which definitely was more intensively felt than by the Song “surviving subjects” almost four centuries earlier.⁶¹ The tense atmosphere of self-indignation and guilt feelings, paired with a general pressure of a stridently moralizing debate, is exemplarily reflected by the discussion about the question whether one ought to die as martyrs of the Ming cause or not.⁶²

Against the backdrop of this general picture of the intellectual climate in the Ming-Qing transition we can perceive a possible key motive behind the writing of the *Xin shi*, namely, to carve out a niche in which the “surviving subjects,” tormented with guilt feelings and troubled by mutual excluding moral obligations, could accommodate themselves to the circumstances of their own survival. According to this interpretation then, it was through the *Xin shi* that the historical figure of Zheng Sixiao rose to become a kind of patron of a precarious, yet meaningful existence as a “scribe in the wilderness.”

60 This aspect needs to be further investigated in the larger context of a reappraisal of Huang Zongxi, for which Lynn Struve has prepared the ground with her magisterial article: “Huang Zongxi in Context: A Reappraisal of His Major Writings,” in: *Journal of Asian Studies* 47 (1988), 474-502.

61 See Jay, *A Change in Dynasties*, pp. 243-256; Lao Yanxuan (Lao Yan-shuan), “Yuanchu nanfang zhishi fenzi – shi zhong suo fanyingchu de pianmian – ,” in: *Journal of the Institute of Chinese Studies of the Chinese University of Hong Kong* 10: 1 (1979), 129-158.

62 See Koon-piu Ho, “Should We Die as Martyrs?” (cited above, n. 3).