

“We Want to Be Recorded”: Market Town Elites and Town Literature in Late Qing and Early Republican Jiangnan*

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ABSTRACT

During the Qing dynasty, market towns proliferated in the Jiangnan region, which hosted booming commerce and handicraft industries. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these towns produced an increasing number of gazetteers and literary anthologies intended both for town residents and for future gazetteers at the county level and above. This article examines the various purposes behind the compilation of this town literature and argues that the presence of market town sources led to a greater representation of town figures in county gazetteers. Moreover, through their literary endeavors, town elites were better able to compete with the elites of higher urban centers for limited slots in county gazetteers and for cultural prestige.

Keywords: market town, town gazetteer, town anthology, historical memory, public genealogy, county gazetteer, late-Qing and early-Republican Jiangnan

Introduction

From the Song dynasty (960-1127) on, the Chinese rural landscape saw the emergence of market towns, mid- or small-size cities formed through commerce, industry, and transportation (Kawakatsu 1999, 18-19). Compared with administrative centers, such as county or prefectural seats, these towns generally enjoyed a smaller government presence and leadership was often in the hands of local people and organizations (Faure 2002, 75-79).

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, market towns in Jiangnan, the fertile delta located in the lower reaches of the Yangzi River, including southern Jiangsu and northern Zhejiang Provinces, proliferated as the silk and cotton textile industries developed and commercial grains and other crops flourished (Liu 1987; Fan Jinmin 1998, 318-26; Long 2003, 63-69; Fan Yijun 2005; Fan Shuzhi 2005).

The regional administrative system of the Qing period consisted of a province-prefecture-county hierarchy, with the county as the lowest unit to which local officials were appointed by the central government. Below the level of the county, rural areas, including market towns, were further divided into various hierarchical sub-units, the combinations and names of which differed by area (Zhang 2009, 6-7). During the late Qing and the Republican periods, market towns underwent administrative transformations. For instance, in 1908, the late Qing government, in its efforts to introduce local self-government programs, classified towns and villages with a population of over 50,000 as market towns (*zhen* 鎮),

and those with less than 50,000 as rural townships (*xiang* 鄉) (Kuhn 1975, 276; You 2011, 46). To enforce more rigorous state control, in 1928 the Nationalist government promulgated regulations on the sub-county administrative units, placing market towns below wards (*qu* 區), which were at the top of the four-tier system (Kuhn 1975, 284-87; You 2011, 48-50).

Market towns functioned as nodal points for collecting agricultural and industrial products and for distributing imported goods to the surrounding urban and rural populations. Over time, these towns grew in population as well as in geographic size. Merchants, most notably those from Huizhou 徽州 and Shanxi 山西, were instrumental in creating the wealth and expansion of these towns. In terms of economic prosperity, an increasing number of these towns far surpassed their neighboring county seats and other administrative centers (Long 1997, 425).

With this commercial efflorescence came changes in the social and cultural landscape of these towns. Charitable institutions, which had previously been largely confined to prefectural capitals, spread into the county capitals by the early nineteenth century and into market towns a few decades later (Fuma 1997, 307-08; Liang 2001, 240-306). Moreover, town residents in Jiangnan began to assert their urban identities by publishing their own gazetteers (Mori 1999, 85-88; Wu Jenshu 2007). During the Qing period, they also installed City God temples, which had originally been legally restricted to cities at the county level and above (Hamashima 1992, 13). As Hamashima Atsutoshi has persuasively argued, the existence of City God temples in market towns epitomized the assertion of an urban identity by town residents, a result of the commercialization and urbanization of towns since the late Ming and early Qing periods (Hamashima 1992, 21). In the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries, town residents in the Jiangnan region began to form a more concrete sense of a community that centered on the town but incorporated its surrounding rural villages (Inada 1993, 45-46; Wu Tao 2010, 133-76). From about 1800, managers of public works holding various titles began to appear in such towns (Inada 1992, 158-62). Before their emergence, public works in towns, such as water works and famine relief operations, were performed by local philanthropists with no formal titles. The adoption of managerial titles by these men strongly suggests that their public functions became more formalized and systematized (Inada 1992, 147).

Beginning in the nineteenth century, town gazetteers and anthologies appeared in large numbers. The compilers' motivation behind the proliferation of these works is the first topic that the present study aims to explore. Mori Masao has argued that the prevalence of town gazetteers in the Qing was prompted by the compilers' desire to compete with other market towns that had already produced such gazetteers and to prepare information for the future compilation of county gazetteers, from which prefectural, provincial, and ultimately the *Comprehensive Gazetteer* (*yitongzhi* 一統志)¹ would draw content (Mori 1999, 93-100). As the

* This paper was financially supported by Konkuk University in 2013.

¹ The *Comprehensive Gazetteer* was an empire-wide gazetteer organized by the Qing government. Three editions were compiled, with the last one completed in 1820. For more details, see Wilkinson 2012, 839-40.

present study will demonstrate, a survey of the prefaces of town gazetteers confirms Mori's conclusion that the desire of town residents to be recorded in the gazetteers of higher administrative centers, especially in the county gazetteers, fueled the voluminous production of market town literature.² This did not, however, constitute the sole motivation for producing such literature. This study will argue that the compilers of the genre also used it to promote a cultured image of their towns by emphasizing the literary achievements and scholarly traditions of their ancestors, to rescue and restore subdued local memories, and to consolidate the status of certain powerful families. Therefore, one aim of the present study is to illustrate the diverse motivations that contributed to the thriving of the genre in this period. For this research, not only gazetteers but also literary anthologies of towns will be examined. Historians have duly noted the proliferation of town gazetteers during the Qing and the Republican periods, but have seldom paid attention to the literary anthologies compiled by townspeople.

This article will also analyze the actual impact of town literature upon county gazetteers. How did town gazetteers and anthologies produced by the nineteenth-century town elites affect their representation in county gazetteers? How many market town residents were documented in nineteenth-century county gazetteers, and how did these numbers differ from those in the county gazetteers of the previous centuries? This article will address these questions by analyzing biographical entries in the county gazetteers of the Suzhou 蘇州 and Songjiang 松江 Prefectures.

Town Literature as a Source for County Gazetteers

Market town gazetteers made their first appearance in the Jiangnan region during the Song dynasty, but only began to appear in large numbers during the Qing, especially from the Jiaqing Emperor's reign (1796-1820). Table 1 shows the patterns of the compilation of town gazetteers during the Qing and Republican periods.

As this table illustrates, the reigns from Qianlong to Daoguang marked the first peak in the compilation of town gazetteers, especially during the first half of the nineteenth century, while the second efflorescence came in the latter half of the same century (Mori 1999, 85-88). Thus, throughout the entire nineteenth century, we can see how town residents endeavored to leave a record of themselves in local historical writings.

The cultural channels through which town elites could record themselves and perpetuate their reputations were not, however, limited to these gazetteers. Local poetry or prose anthologies were another effective means of preserving the merits and achievements of town residents.³ I have prepared the following list of extant town anthologies of the Jiangnan region.

² Here I use the term “literature” in a specific sense, to refer to town gazetteers and anthologies that contain the biographical information of town residents.

³ Town anthologies remain a neglected research subject that needs far more scholarly attention. This essay does not attempt an in-depth analysis of these anthologies, but will use them as a supplement to the discussion of town gazetteers wherever appropriate.

Table 1. Extant Market-Town Gazetteers in Jiangnan during the Qing and Republican Periods

| Reigns | Number of Gazetteers Compiled |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Shunzhi (1644-1661) | 3 |
| Kangxi (1662-1722) | 11 |
| Yongzheng (1723-1735) | 5 |
| Qianlong (1736-1795) | 25 |
| Jiaqing (1796-1820) | 25 |
| Daoguang (1821-1850) | 22 |
| Xianfeng (1851-1861) | 6 |
| Tongzhi (1862-1874) | 13 |
| Guangxu (1875-1908) | 35 |
| Xuantong (1909-11) | 7 |
| Qing (date not clear) | 11 |
| Republican period (1912-1949) | 50 |

Source: Mori 1999, 297

Table 2. Extant Town Anthologies in the Jiangnan Region

| Title | Publication Time |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Tangshu shicun</i> (唐墅詩存) | Originally compiled in the 18 th century, enlarged and supplemented in the 1820s. Published in 1930 |
| <i>Fenhu shiyuan</i> (分湖詩苑) | Compiled in the first half of the 19 th century, published in 1924 |
| <i>Zhapu jiyong</i> (乍浦集咏) | 1846 |
| <i>Meili shiji</i> (梅里詩集) | 1850 |
| <i>Lianyi wenchao</i> (漣漪文鈔) | 1858 |
| <i>Mudu shicun</i> (木瀆詩存) | Preface 1858, published in 1922 |
| <i>Shenghu shicui</i> (盛湖詩萃) | Xianfeng reign (1851-1861) |
| <i>Zhenfeng shicui</i> (貞豐詩萃) | 1864 |
| <i>Xiachuan shi xuchao</i> (硇川詩續鈔) | 1895 |
| <i>Zhuli shicui</i> (竹里詩萃) | 1895 |
| <i>Xunxi shizheng</i> (浚溪詩徵) | 1917 |
| <i>Huangdu shicun</i> (黃渡詩存) | 1926 |
| <i>Xinxi wenshu</i> (新溪文述) | 1930 |
| <i>Yuepu wenzheng</i> (月浦文徵) | 1935 |

As we can see from Table 2, the practice of compiling poetry and prose anthologies of market towns spread during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as with town gazetteers. However, there were far fewer town anthologies than town gazetteers. Typically, a town that had an anthology also had a gazetteer, but not necessarily vice versa.

Town gazetteers paid particular attention to recounting the achievements of local personages and information not included in county gazetteers (ZZZZ, Shou 首: 2b) and excluded detailed narratives if they were found in the latter (Liu Shufang 2008, 106). As the case of the 1844 Zhenze 震澤 town gazetteer illustrates, a town

gazetteer could also correct mistakes made about a town in a county gazetteer (ZZZZ, Mo 末: 1a-10a).

Many town gazetteers, in their prefatory sections, explained that the primary goal of the compilation was to document the lives of townspeople and other town-related details for the future. Garnering information was the preparatory work for future county gazetteers since an extensive collection of town-related information could better guarantee that people and other local details would be included in future county gazetteers (ZZZZ, “Xu” 序: 1a). Mori Masao has pointed out that the compilers of town gazetteers regarded their works as “private” (*si 私*) in contrast to the gazetteers at the county level and above, which they regarded as “official” (*guan 官*), but aspired to provide materials for the higher-level county gazetteers (Mori 1999, 312-14). The involvement of officials vested gazetteers at county level and above with greater official stature and authority, which increased townspeople’s desire to represent themselves in those gazetteers.

Indeed, as Cheng Chao 程超, who authored a preface to the Jiaqing edition gazetteer of the town of Ganxiang 干巷 (located in Jinshan 金山 County, Jiangsu) noted, town gazetteers were praised for successfully placing their own people and specific local stories in county gazetteers (GXZ, “Xu”: 3b).

Aware of the possible criticism that their writings were unnecessarily specific, the compilers of town gazetteers insisted that they preferred to include more local details rather than risk missing some (*Luodianzhen zhi*, 1: 2ab). The author of a colophon written in 1799 to the aforementioned Ganxiang town gazetteer explained that unofficial gazetteers (*yezhi 野志*) outperformed official ones (*guan zhi 官志*) in documenting local details, which is one reason that the latter relied on the former for their compilation (GXZ, “Ba” 跋: 6ab).

Similar to town gazetteers, town anthologies aimed to leave a record of residents whose names would otherwise remain unknown to the wider world. For example, Wu Dachun 吳大淳, who wrote a preface in 1858 to the *Mudu shicun*, the poetry collection of Mudu town in Wu 吳 County, Suzhou, stated that the purpose of this book was to “reveal and illuminate the obscure and the hidden [people]” (Wang 1922, “Ba”: 1b). An examination of the personages recorded in the *Mudu shicun* reveals the identities of these “obscure and hidden people.” The volume includes 158 town figures from the Ming to the mid-nineteenth century. Of the thirty-six Ming figures (*juan 1-2*), licentiates (*shengyuan 生員*), holders of academic degrees who passed the first stage of the civil examinations, and commoners without any academic degree each numbered eleven, or, taken together, 61% of the total, while the rest were holders of higher degrees and officials. In the Qing, the percentage of lower degree-holders and commoners increased, as they constituted an absolute majority among the entries (*juan 3-8*). Licentiates and Imperial College students (*jiansheng 監生*), the largest group in the entry, numbered fifty-two (42.6%); the second largest group, commoners, numbered forty-six (37.7%). When combined, these two social groups formed 80% of the total.⁴

⁴ Among the total of 158 entries, 61 people also appear in the biographical section of *Mudu xiaozhi* (1921), the gazetteer of the same market town.

The “Explanatory Remarks” in the *Zhenfeng shicui*, the poetry collection of Zhouzhuang 周莊 town in Yuanhe 元和 County, Suzhou, remarked that it was necessary for the residents of the town to collect and illuminate the works of their town ancestors, since these were very few and would be forgotten unless recorded (*Zhenfeng shicui*, “Fanli” 凡例: 1b).⁵ *Zhenfeng shicui* features 102 residents of the town from the late Ming to the late nineteenth century (*juan* 1-4),⁶ and of them, *shengyuan* and *jiansheng* together constitute 45% and commoners 43%. Thus combined these two groups account for 88% of the total. The dominance of lower degree-holders and commoners in the entry runs parallel to the case of *Mudu shicun*.⁷

A preface written to the *Fenhu shiyuan*, the poetry collection of Luxu 蘆墟 town⁸ in Wujiang 吳江 County, Suzhou, noted in 1924 that previous anthologies had prioritized the works of well-known and socially prominent authors. *Fenhu shiyuan*, in contrast, was designed to collect and publicize the works of ordinary and poor scholars in remote areas (*Fenhu shiyuan*, “Xu”: 1a). *Fenhu shiyuan* records a total of twenty-five people, all subjects of the Qing dynasty, from the Kangxi reign onward. Eighteen of these were *shengyuan* or *jiansheng*. Together with two commoners, these two groups constitute 80% of the total, an outcome similar to the cases of *Mudu shicun* and *Zhenfeng shicui*.⁹

Anthologies of market towns were also expected to supply biographical information on town residents for possible inclusion in future county gazetteers. For example, a preface written in 1822 to *Tangshu shicun*, the poetry collection of Tangshi 唐市 in Changshu 常熟 County, Suzhou, stated that the purpose of the book was to “preserve [the memory of] persons because of their poems” and to present them for possible inclusion in the county gazetteer (*Tangshu shicun*, “Xu”: 2a). Long Guangdian 龍光甸, who wrote a preface to *Zhapu jiyong* in 1845, also emphasized that the compilers of future county gazetteers could draw materials from his collection (Shen Yun 1846, “Xu”: 1b). The introductory remarks in the same volume explained, “This volume accumulated materials for the [county] gazetteer. Therefore, I have selected materials related to our town from various literary collections of previous dynasties up to now in preparation for the selection [by the county gazetteer]” (Shen Yun 1846, “Liyang” 例言: 1a). Tao Baolian 陶葆廉, author of a preface to *Xinxi wenshu*, the prose anthology of Xincheng 新塍 town located in Jiaying 嘉興 County, Zhejiang, expressed a similar opinion (Zheng 1930, 1b).

⁵ Zhouzhuang was a center of the cotton textile industry. See Fan Shuzhi 2005, 126.

⁶ *Juan* 5 is devoted to Buddhist and Daoist priests and therefore excluded here.

⁷ There is a significant overlap between the personages appearing in *Zhenfeng shicui* and *Zhouzhuangzhen zhi*, the gazetteer of the town (1882).

⁸ Luxu was still a village in the Ming period and only developed into a market town during the Kangxi Emperor’s reign (1661-1722). See Fan Shuzhi 2005, 131.

⁹ Nine out of the twenty-five figures included in *Fenhu shiyuan* also appear in the biographical categories of *Fenhu xiaozhi*, the gazetteer of the town published in 1847.

The people whose works were incorporated into these anthologies did not necessarily boast of literary talents; they were sometimes selected because they possessed other merits. The introductory explanations in *Xunxi shizheng*, the poetry anthology of Nanxun 南潯 town, a flourishing handicraft center specializing in silk textiles and located in Wucheng 烏程 County, Zhejiang, explained that the volume “preserved [the names of] people because of their poems, and preserved poems because of [the merits of the] people,” and that the anthology, “according to circumstances, preserved persons who[se names] deserved to be transmitted, even if their poems were not exquisite” (Zhou 1917, “Liyan”: 1a).

Elevation of the Town as a Literary and Scholarly Center

Market towns arose from a bustling commercial economy, but prosperity was not the sole source of pride among town residents. Literary or scholarly achievements and success in civil examinations helped establish the cultural identity of a town. David Faure has suggested that the leaders of Foshan in Guangdong sought to “wear the ready cloak of the literati,” while acknowledging that their prosperity stemmed from commerce (Faure 1990, 1-2). As Steve Miles has shown in his study of Jiujiang, Guangdong, town gazetteers tended to present their cities as places “boasting of a flourishing literati culture” (Miles 2003, 76).

Many town gazetteers and anthologies produced in the Jiangnan region similarly emphasized the strong Confucian traditions of their towns, refashioning their localities as literary or scholarly centers. The 1805 gazetteer of Huangxi 黃溪, for instance, insisted that its compilation was deserved not only because of the town’s commercial wealth but also because of the continual emergence of talented scholars (*Huangxi zhi*, “Wengxu” 翁序: 1b). Likewise, the Jiaqing edition of the Ganxiang town gazetteer took pride in the town’s significance as a center of literary production (GXZ, “Xu”: 3b). The Zhenze town gazetteer compiled in 1844 claimed that the town was praised for its Confucian heritage (*rushu* 儒術), despite its small size (ZZZZ, “Xu”: 2a). The gazetteer then listed a series of prominent Confucian scholars, all natives of Zhenze, from the Southern Song to the early Qing period.

Efforts to add a cultured image to the mercantile nature of towns is evident in the Republican period as well. The Shengze 盛澤 town gazetteer of Wujiang County, published in 1920, noted that despite the view of the town as a mere place of commerce it continuously produced eminent literary figures and scholars (*Shenghu zhi*, Shou “Taoxu” 陶序: 2a). The 1921 *Mudu xiaozhi*, the gazetteer of Mudu, trumpeted two earlier nineteenth-century literary anthologies that featured as many as 150 figures from the town, a fact interpreted by the compiler as underscoring its cultural prominence (3: 18a). In a preface written to the Nanxun town gazetteer in 1922, the author portrayed the town as a place of flourishing scholarship, eminent officials, and literary production (*Nanxun zhi*, “Liuxu” 劉序: 1a). The same gazetteer also described the town as a place in which “customs value Confucianism, and few people hold martial arts in high esteem” (*Nanxun zhi*, 33: 1a).

Confucianism had lost ground as a state-sponsored ideology with the demise of the Qing Empire in 1911, and modern educational institutions were established

to teach a new curriculum, including “Western” subjects. A literati culture based on Confucianism was no longer the cornerstone of Chinese society, especially in large commercial and industrial cities, such as Shanghai (Faure and Liu 2002). As the above examples illustrate, however, the lingering impact of Confucianism still influenced townspeople during the early Republican period.¹⁰

As mentioned earlier, some of the market towns published literary anthologies along with their gazetteers, which contributed to a semblance of cultural sophistication in the towns. The author of a preface to *Tangshu shicun* in 1822 emphasized that Tangshi (also known as Tangshu), in addition to its commercial wealth, exceeded other towns in its literary achievements (Ni Ci 1930, “Xu”: 2a). He proudly asserted that it was not coincidental that the town had produced so many literary talents (Ni Ci 1930, “Xu”: 2a). Li Daoyou 李道悠, the compiler of *Zhuli shicui*, lamented in 1892 that Meihuili 梅會里, one of the four market towns in Jiaying County, had already seen the compilation of a number of poetry anthologies, while his home town of Zhuli 竹里, also in Jiaying, had failed to produce any. The men of Zhuli town had in fact organized two different versions of its poetry anthology during the reigns of Daoguang and Xianfeng, but neither survived the Taiping Rebellion (Li Daoyou 1895, “Xu”: 1a). The emergence of *Zhuli shicui*, therefore, illuminated the rich literary tradition of the town, elevating its cultural status to the level of Meihuili’s.

A preface to *Xunxi shizheng* singled out Meihuili in Jiaying County and Nanxun in Wucheng County, arguing that the talents from the two counties were concentrated in these two market towns (Zhou 1917, “Lixu” 李序: 1a). Meihuili had already seen the compilation of its town gazetteer and poetry anthology, the preface continued, but Nanxun had produced nothing since the publication of *Nanxunzhen zhi* 南潯鎮志 [*The Gazetteer of Nanxun Town*, 1863] and *Lianyi wenchao* [*The Prose Collection of Nanxun*, 1858]. Zhou Qingyun 周慶雲 (1864-1933), the compiler of *Xunxi shizheng*, sought to place Nanxun’s cultural status on a par with that of Meihuili in this way.

The compilers of town anthologies were motivated by competition not only with other towns, but also with cities higher in the urban hierarchy. Li Xiang 李詳, who wrote a preface to *Xunxi shizheng*, argued in 1917 that the profusion of literary talents and the level of literary achievements in Nanxun and Meihuili nearly matched the level of famous cities (*mingduhui* 名都會), and even surpassed that of an entire province of a peripheral area (Zhou 1917, “Lixu”: 1a). Zong Shunnian 宗舜年, the author of another preface in the same volume, boasted, “There are many big market towns in the west of Zhejiang. The efflorescence of [their] music and poetry can match that of big cities (*duyi* 都邑)” (Zhou 1917, “Zongxu” 宗序: 1a). Here *mingduhui* and *duyi* seem to refer to cities at county or higher administrative levels.

The poetry and prose anthologies of market towns effectively allowed towns to “wear the ready cloak of the literati.” Both town gazetteers and anthologies often

¹⁰ A contemporary scholar writing about the eminent merchants from Nanxun town in the late Qing and early Republic emphasized the strong influence of Confucianism upon these merchants. See Li 2010, 126-31.

strove to elevate the towns' cultural renown so that they could be known for more than simply commerce. Existing scholarship on urban and rural identities in late imperial China has emphasized “rural-urban continuities,” that is, the blurred divide between cities and countryside in their respective characteristics (Rankin 1977; Harrison 2002, 85; Lu 2002, 126-31; Chen 2007). A factor that contributed to the blurring of this distinction was the power of literati culture, which, according to Faure, “extended outwards beyond the administrative cities and downwards from the immediate families of degree-holders to the inhabitants, not only of the towns but also of the villages” (Faure 2002, 63). The promotion of scholarly and literary traditions in town anthologies and gazetteers indicates the influence of gentry values and culture in town societies, which made their cultural milieus more like those of higher urban centers.

Rescuing History from Trauma and Oblivion

Market town gazetteers and anthologies frequently included local personages who had been involved in incidents that invited state persecution. Despite official stigmatization, town literary evaluations of the merits or achievements of such persons often ran counter to the orthodox position of the central government. They often expressed a localist understanding in presenting narratives that did not necessarily accord with state perspectives. Town gazetteers, because they were independent of state control, served as a vehicle to restore and transmit local memories previously subdued or deemed too dangerous for open discussion. This localist expression became more salient in the nineteenth century, when the balance of power between central government and local society tipped in favor of the latter (Kuhn 1970; Rankin 1986; Wang 2014).

The 1844 gazetteer of Zhenze town, for instance, featured in a section on artistic talents (*yineng* 藝能) a man named Yao Ge 姚格 who espoused the cause of Lü Liuliang 呂留良 (1629-1683), who he claimed was his teacher (ZZZZ, 9: 26b). Lü had been a scholar of Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the late Ming and the early Qing who had produced works replete with anti-Manchu sentiment. His writings later heavily influenced Zeng Jing 曾靜, a failed examination candidate from Hunan, who plotted a rebellion against the Manchu regime during the reign of the Yongzheng Emperor. Zeng was captured and interrogated by Yongzheng, who had the results of the interrogation and the eventual transformation of Zeng into a loyal subject recorded in a book entitled *Daiyi juemi lu* 大義覺迷錄 [*Records of Great Righteousness Resolving Confusion*] (Spence 2001). Yongzheng generously pardoned Zeng, but Zeng was subsequently executed by Yongzheng's successor Qianlong, who also saw to it that Lü's corpse was mutilated. The inclusion in the town gazetteer of Yao Ge, who claimed scholarly descent from a treacherous figure such as Lü, signified that the locals held Yao in high regard and valued his artistic achievements, despite his dubious loyalty to the Qing state and the official stigmatization of his scholarly lineage.

Sometimes the whole narrative of a town gazetteer revolved around a figure who had committed an offense against the state. The case of Shen Deqian 沈德潛 (1673-1769) illustrates this point. Shen, a native of Changzhou 長州 County,

Suzhou, managed to pass the last stage of the examination at the age of sixty-six. His late examination success, together with his talent in poetry, won him imperial favor. In 1778, nine years after Shen's death, however, Qianlong discovered that Shen had written a laudatory biography for a man who had composed seditious poems disapproving of the legitimacy of Qing rule. The emperor ordered the withdrawal of all posthumous honors granted to Shen, the demolition of Shen's tomb inscription, and the removal of his tablet from the Shrine of Local Worthies (Chang 2007, 271-80, 302). Despite Shen's misfortune and his serious offense against the Qing, *Mudu shicun*, the poetry anthology of Mudu compiled in the mid-nineteenth century,¹¹ did not even mention his posthumous disgrace. Instead, the anthology only highlighted Shen's late examination success and the imperial appreciation of his talents (4: 1a). In *Mudu shicun*, Shen was remembered as a local hero, the mainstay of the cultural pride and identity of the town. The 1921 gazetteer of Mudu town also featured a biography of Shen, which elaborated on the imperial favors that Qianlong bestowed on him, while ignoring his posthumous downfall (MDXZ, 2: 4b-5a). In both the gazetteer and the anthology of Mudu town, the entries of several local men were justified by their association with Shen or his appreciation of their literary talents (MDXZ, 3: 8a, 9b, 10b, 13a; Wang 1922, 4: 10a, 5: 5a, 8: 6b).

The case of Yuan Renhu 袁仁虎 also illustrates how town literature could reveal the tension between a localist perspective and the orthodoxy of the state. Yuan was a licentiate of Suzhou during the Jiaqing Emperor's reign and one of the three leaders of a student riot in 1799, triggered by the Wu County magistrate's illegal flogging of a fellow licentiate (Han 2012, 82). In the eyes of the Qing government, Yuan was a criminal, since he was sentenced to three years of penal servitude for his leading role in the riot, although he returned home under an imperial amnesty a few months later (Han 2012, 98-99). Yuan's biography, however, was safely included in *Mudu shicun*, along with his poems, without controversy (Wang 1922, 7: 14a). The compiler of the 1921 gazetteer of Mudu town also composed a biography of Yuan, emphasizing the legitimacy of the riot and his active role in it (MDXZ, 3: 16b-17a). While the transition from Qing to the Republican era might have made it less difficult for people to assert their understanding of their own history,¹² local challenges to state orthodoxy can be seen as early as the mid-nineteenth century.

The most dramatic illustration of town literature acting as a means of restoring subdued local memory and expressing localist sentiment was the discussion in the 1863 Nanxun town gazetteer (*Nanxunzhen zhi*) of the martyrs of the literary inquisition that originated with the publication of *Mingshu* (明書) in 1660, a history of the Ming. Compiled at the initiative of the wealthy Zhuang 莊

¹¹ The volume was published in 1922 but has a preface and a colophon dated 1858.

¹² Despite the efforts by Yuan Shikai, the first president of the Republic, to re-impose centralization in the 1910s, China dissolved into various warlord regimes, which made the unified rule of China difficult. The process of state penetration into local society resumed under the Nationalist government in the late 1920s. On state-society relations during the early Republic, see Kuhn 1975; Duara 1988; Rankin 1997.

family of Nanxun town, *Mingshu* was the product of the collective efforts of eminent Jiangnan scholars of the time. The book, however, was fraught with passages that were offensive to the Qing, as it often took a pro-Ming stance. When this was brought to the attention of the Qing central government, the incident escalated into a massive persecution that resulted in the execution of numerous local figures in and outside of Nanxun (Struve 1998, 32). The inclusion of biographical materials on these martyrs in *Nanxunzhen zhi* and the circulation of the book for public readership was risky—even in the nineteenth century when the state grip on the local cultural realm had relaxed—since the event was directly linked to the legitimacy of the Manchu conquest dynasty. Not surprisingly, the event was seldom discussed in county gazetteers, local records with greater official stature, during the eighteenth century, when state interventionist policies reached deeper into the local cultural realm. *Nanxunzhen zhi*, however, vividly retold the events as local ancestors had experienced them (*juan* 37-38; Kawakatsu 1999, 575-607). The biographical narratives of these martyrs radiated with positive evaluations of their moral integrity and scholarly achievements, downplaying the significance of their participation in anti-Qing activity and their tragic demise. In this way, *Nanxunzhen zhi* re-presented the story from the townspeople’s perspective, thus rescuing the local version of history from oblivion. A town gazetteer, relatively free from official intervention, was a natural choice for this kind of localist expression.

Town Literature as Public Genealogy

Biographical categories in town gazetteers suggest that the selection criteria adopted by the compilers for inclusion in the volumes was based upon the candidates’ personal merits, such as moral integrity, philanthropic actions, and scholarly or official achievements. The selection process, however, could also be affected by kinship ties or pressure from powerful local families. A preface to the 1844 *Zhenzezheng zhi* proudly stated that the book refused to add any undeserving figures, even if the descendants of candidates made requests (“Xu”: 1b). Similarly, the compiler of the 1863 *Nanxunzhen zhi* declared that it did not curry favor with powerful families by including their unqualified members (“Xu”: 1b). Conversely, these pieces of evidence show that the selection of local figures for town literature was not devoid of external pressure from influential local families.

Joseph Dennis has shown that the biographies in a county gazetteer had the potential to be no different from the records of the ancestors of some powerful local lineages who intermarried and dominated the compilation committee of a county gazetteer. As a result, a county gazetteer could in fact be the “public genealogy” of their extended families (Dennis 2001, 69-70). Attempts to enhance the prestige of a compiler’s agnatic and affinal families were not, however, limited to county gazetteers. Some town gazetteers also featured many persons from compilers’ extended families in their biographical entries. The 1920 edition of *Shenghu zhi* 盛湖志 is a case in point. The gazetteers of Shenghu (Shengze 盛澤) market town, Wujiang County, had been compiled by the members of the Zhong 仲 family since the early Qing period. A man named Zhong Shenzhu 仲沈洙 completed a manuscript version in 1653. The volume was enlarged during the

Kangxi and Qianlong reigns by other Zhong family members and published in the Qianlong period. During the Tongzhi Emperor's reign (1862-1874), Zhong Tingji 仲廷機, a fourth generation descendant of Zhong Zhoupei 仲周霽 (the publisher of the Qianlong edition), compiled another volume, which was later enlarged and supplemented by his son. The volume was eventually published in 1923, and was met with criticism for the preponderance of Zhong family members in it ("Taoxu" 陶序: 2b).

The Zhongs were indeed a well-established clan that continuously produced degree-holders and officials. Their prominence largely stemmed from successes in civil examinations. Among the sixteen provincial graduates (*juren* 舉人) in Shengze during the Ming, the Zhongs produced only one, but their percentage increased in the Qing, when the clan produced five of forty-one *juren* degree-holders of the town (8: 1a-5a). The town boasted seven metropolitan graduates (*jinshi* 進士) for the Ming and nine for the Qing, and the Zhongs produced one for each (8: 1b-5a). The biographical section (*juan* 9) of the 1923 Shengze gazetteer featured 268 figures in total, including thirty-seven Zhong clan members (13.8% of the total). The criticism that the volume was tantamount to a Zhong family genealogy was, therefore, surely an exaggeration, but the Zhongs did occupy a prominent position in the gazetteer they had compiled.¹³

Zhu Dong 朱棟, the author of the Jiaqing edition of the *Ganxiang zhi*, actually utilized the town gazetteer as the "public genealogy" of his extended family. He explicitly declared in the explanatory remarks (*fanli*) that he would not refrain from including his own ancestors, asserting that his family was well established locally (Shou: 11a). The origin of the Zhu family's settlement in Ganxiang was traced to Zhu Yuanda 朱元大, a licentiate and Zhu Dong's great-great-grandfather who migrated to Ganxiang from Huizhou, Anhui Province, in the early Qing period. By 1799, the Zhus had been settled in Ganxiang for almost 160 years ("Zixu" 自序: 8a; 2: 13b-14a). Zhu Dong claimed to be maternally descended from the Cao 曹, a powerful local family that continuously produced degree-holders and officials during the Ming period. Zhu's maternal grandfather was Cao Jianren 曹鑑仁, an Imperial College student who would become a department vice-magistrate (*zhoutong* 州同). It was not, however, the first time that the Zhus intermarried with the Caos. Zhu Yuanda's first son was already married to a daughter of Cao Weimo 曹偉謨, a tribute student (*gongsheng* 貢生) and a prominent literary figure (6: 13b).

The biographies in the *Ganxiang zhi* are indeed marked by an exceedingly large number of Caos, Zhu Dong's maternal relatives, and to a lesser extent by his agnatic kinsmen with the Zhu surname. The biographies featured Zhu Dong's maternal grandfather Cao Jianren, Jianren's father Ershan 爾埏, and Ershan's

¹³ This episode reveals that clan consciousness and solidarity persisted well into the Republican period. Recent scholarship has indicated that clans or lineages were still strong during this time, although they increasingly lost the ideological justification they derived from Confucianism during the process of the state's pursuit of centralization and nationalism (Duara 1988, 114; Faure 2007, 341, 345-46). In some parts of China, however, lineages experienced fatal setbacks during the warlord and Japanese occupation periods in the 1930s and 40s, when the rise of local strongmen eroded the economic and religious bases of local lineages. See Siu 1995.

father and two brothers (2: 8b-9a, 12ab, 15b, 20b-21a). Zhu Dong was also careful to include the biographies of Cao Weimo (the father of Zhu Dong's great-grandmother) and Weimo's grandfather, father, brother, and sons (2: 8a, 10ab, 15b, 17ab, 26a). From the Zhu family line, Zhu Dong's great-great-grandfather Zhu Yuanda, grandfather Tianxiang 天翔, Tianxiang's brother Long 澗, and Zhu Dong's uncle Tinglu 廷祿 were also included (2: 13b, 21b, 23ab; 3: 8a). Zhu Dong even featured his grandmother and mother in the section on virtuous women (3: 19ab, 20b-21a).

In addition, Zhu Dong, in the section on tombs, also provided information about the tombs of his great-grandfather, grandfather, great-uncles, mother, and paternal and maternal uncles (3: 34ab). In the part on literary works by local persons, Zhu presented a biography of Zhu Yuanda written by Cao Weimo and a tomb inscription for his mother penned by Chu Tingzhang 褚廷璋 (?-1797, *jinshi* 1763), a Suzhou native and renowned poet (6: 18a-21a). The writings of Zhu Dong on his ancestors and relatives are also a part of the volume. Zhu included his tomb inscription for Gan *Ruren* 干孺人,¹⁴ a concubine of his maternal grandfather, who had given birth to his mother and died shortly thereafter. Perhaps because of her status as a concubine and her premature death, Gan *Ruren* was not mentioned in the Cao family genealogy. Zhu Dong thus restored her status as his mother's birth mother (2: 20b-21a; 3: 20b-21b; 6: 18a, 33a-35a). In addition, he authored a number of prefaces, biographies, and records of the buildings in the town, which he included in his gazetteer. For Zhu Dong, the compilation of the town gazetteer was an opportunity to consolidate the supremacy of his paternal and maternal families in the local community, redress an omission regarding his own ancestry, and assert his status as a prolific writer and member of a prominent family.

Town Residents Recorded in County Gazetteers

Both town gazetteers and anthologies aimed to rescue from oblivion the records of prominent figures of towns and, furthermore, to publicize their merits more broadly by securing entries in county gazetteers. If this was one of their intended purposes, how did the existence of these works actually affect the representation of market townspeople in the biographical sections of county gazetteers? Did the county gazetteers of the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries allow more space to town residents than they did during previous centuries? Let us address these questions by examining some sample county gazetteers from Suzhou Prefecture and the adjoining Songjiang Prefecture.

Suzhou Prefecture

First, let us analyze the Wu County gazetteer for the Republican period (1933). At that time, the county also included the two Qing-period counties of Changzhou 長洲 and Yuanhe, the three having merged in 1912. The biographies in the volume contain numerous personages from various market towns within the county and

¹⁴ *Ruren*, literally meaning “child nurturer,” was the title of honor bestowed on the mothers or wives of both civil officials and military officers. See Hucker 1985, 273.

Table 3. Market Town Sources Quoted in the 1933 Wu County Gazetteer and the Frequency of their Quotation

| Market Town Source | Publication or Compilation time | Number of Quotations |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|
| Weiting zhi 唯亭志 | 1848/1933 | 54 |
| Fuli zhi 甫里志 | 1765 | 20 |
| Zhouzhuangzhen zhi 周莊鎮志 | 1882 | 17 |
| Mudu xiaozhi 木瀆小志 | Originally a manuscript, published 1921 and 1928 | 16 |
| Xushuguan zhi 澹墅關志 | 1827 | 13 |
| Hengjin zhi 橫金志 | Compiled in Tongzhi-Guangxu reign, published 1933 | 9 |
| Hengshan zhilüe 橫山志略 | Compiled approximately in the first half of the 19 th century | 7 |
| Zhenfeng nicheng 貞豐擬乘 | 1810 | 6 |
| Xiangshan xiaozhi 香山小志 | Compiled 1917 | 5 |
| Mudu shicun 木瀆詩存 | 1862 | 4 |
| Xinglu wenchao 杏廬文鈔 | 1901 | 3 |
| Guangfu zhi 光福志 | Manuscript compiled 1844, supplemented in 1897, published 1929 | 2 |
| Huangdai zhi 黃埭志 | 1922 | 1 |

also quote a number of town gazetteers and anthologies as sources of information. Table 3 is a list denoting the town sources that are quoted and the frequency with which each is quoted.

As the table illustrates, the Wu County gazetteer quotes various gazetteers and literary anthologies of market towns 157 times, thus including a significant number of town residents in its biographical section. The frequency with which these sources are quoted indicates that the compiler often consulted existing town sources. This also reveals that the incorporation of town figures into the county gazetteer was heavily affected by the presence or absence of market town sources.

Wujiangxian xuzhi 吳江縣續志, the 1879 edition of the Wujiang County gazetteer, explained the relationship between market town records and county gazetteers as follows. The magistrate of the county had planned to compile the county gazetteer in the early Jiaqing years, but this plan evaporated as he had to leave the post soon afterwards. His attempt, however, prompted several local scholars to embark on the project of compiling gazetteers of market towns located within the county, including the towns of Pingwang 平望, Lili 黎里, and Tongli 同里. In 1840, a scholar named Zhao Lanpei 趙蘭佩 completed a book entitled *Jiang Zhen renwu xuzhi* 江震人物續志 [A Sequel to the Record of Personalities in Wujiang and Zhenze Counties], the latest in a series of efforts in the first few decades of the nineteenth century to collect materials for the compilation of a county gazetteer. The purpose of this work, according to the compiler of *Wujiangxian xuzhi*, was “to provide materials for future gazetteer compilation” (*Wujiangxian xuzhi*, 22: 4b-5a).

The introductory note in *Wujiangxian xuzhi* also stated the importance of market town sources for the compilation of county gazetteers:

Tonglizhen zhi, *Lilizhen zhi*, and *Huangdai zhi* were compiled during the Jiaqing reign, and *Fenhu xiaozhi*, *Songling jianwen lu*,¹⁵ *Jiang Zhen renwu xuzhi*, and *Shunhu jilue*¹⁶ during the Daoguang reign. Only within the county seat was there no one who compiled [a gazetteer], so it is difficult to know events [within the city] in detail. After the outbreak of the [Taiping] war, government documents vanished, so it is only through these [town gazetteers] that we are able to understand [the past history of the town]. (*Wujiangxian xuzhi*, “Fanli”: 2b)

Thus, the 1879 Wujiang County gazetteer extracted a significant amount of information from the existing gazetteers and other types of records of market towns. In particular, after the serious damage that the Taiping Rebellion caused to government documents in the mid-nineteenth century, town gazetteers and other town sources became vital sources for county gazetteer compilation.

In the biographical section of this Wujiang County gazetteer, town sources were frequently quoted. For example, the compiler first listed a number of persons who had been exemplars of filiality and brotherhood, and then added, “[The information about these figures] appears in *Pingwangzhen zhi* 平望鎮志 [*Gazetteer of Pingwang Town*] by Weng Guangping 翁廣平” (18: 2a); and “[The information about these figures] appears in *Huangxi zhi* 黃溪志 [*Gazetteer of Huangxi Town*] by Qian Chi 錢墀” (18: 3b). In addition, the compiler of the Wujiang County gazetteer often quoted from the gazetteers of Tongli and Lili towns. In the biographies of the county gazetteer, people from market towns are found in various categories. Table 4 shows the number of town figures in each biographical category.

The biographical section of the county gazetteer mentioned 264 persons, of which 124 to 137 were from the market towns in the county (between 46.9 % and 51.8%).¹⁷ If we divide these town personages according to their hometown

Table 4. Market Town Figures Found in Each Biographical Category of the 1879 Wujiang County Gazetteer

| Biographical Category | Total No. of Figures/No. of Town Figures |
|--|--|
| Rulin 儒林 (Confucians) | 6/4 |
| Zhiji 治績 (Administrative achievements) | 22/10 |
| Xiaoyou 孝友 (Filiality and brotherhood) | 80/41-54 ¹⁸ |
| Xingyi 行誼 (Righteous behavior) | 16/7 |
| Zhongyi 忠義 (Loyalty) | 10/4 |
| Yinyi 隱逸 (Hermits) | 2/0 |
| Wenyuan 文苑 (Literary talent) | 34/12 |
| Yishu 藝術 (Artistic talent) | 57/29 |

¹⁵ Songling is the old name for Wujiang.

¹⁶ Shunhu is another name for Shengze market town.

¹⁷ This number excludes sojourners, Buddhist and Daoist priests, and exemplary women because their hometown origins are usually omitted or described vaguely in the gazetteers.

¹⁸ The reason the number of market town figures in this category ranges between 41 and 54 is that the gazetteer described them rather vaguely, after listing 13 filial figures, “Many among these are from the market town of Shengze.”

Table 5. Persons from Each Market Town in the Biographical Section of the 1879 Wujiang County Gazetteer

| Market Towns | Number of Persons |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Pingwang zhen 平望鎮 | 30 |
| Lili zhen 黎里鎮 | 24 |
| Shengze zhen 盛澤鎮 | 21-34 |
| Tongli zhen 同里鎮 | 19 |
| Luxu zhen 蘆墟鎮 | 15 |
| Huangxi shi 黃溪市 | 6 |
| Xinta shi 莘塔市 | 4 |
| Xinhang shi 新杭市 | 3 |
| Duncun shi 鹿村市 | 2 |

Table 6. The Publication of Market Town Gazetteers in Wujiang County during the Qing Period

| Market Town Gazetteer | Publication Time |
|------------------------------------|--|
| <i>Lili zhi</i> 黎里志 | 1805 |
| <i>Tongli zhi</i> 同里志 | 1812 |
| <i>Huangxi zhi</i> 黃溪志 | 1831 |
| <i>Pingwang zhi</i> 平望志 | 1840 |
| <i>Fenhu xiaozhi</i> 分湖小識 (Luxu) | 1847 |
| <i>Shunhu jilue</i> 舜湖紀略 (Shengze) | Daoguang reign |
| <i>Pingwang xuzhi</i> 平望續志 | 1887 |
| <i>Lili xuzhi</i> 黎里續志 | 1899 |
| <i>Duncun zhi</i> 鹿村志 | Compiled during the Shunzhi reign, pub. 1934 |

origins, we get the numbers found in Table 5. As is clear from this table, not all the market towns in the county were represented evenly in the county gazetteer. Five market towns—Pingwang, Lili, Shengze, Tongli, and Luxu—were predominant. Each had its own gazetteer, as shown in Table 6.

The 1747 Wujiang County gazetteer enumerates the following market towns within the county boundary: Shengze zhen, Lili zhen, Pingwang zhen, Tongli zhen, Luxu zhen, Zhangliantang zhen 章練塘鎮, Xian shi 縣市, Jiangnan shi 江南市, Bachi shi 八斥市, Xinhang shi 新杭市, Huangxi shi 黃溪市, and Duncun shi 鹿村市 (*Wujiangxian zhi*, 4: 16a-17b). Certain towns were particularly successful in securing spots in the biographical section of the county gazetteer. The five towns most successful in representing their residents in the 1879 Wujiang County gazetteer had all published their own town gazetteers. These were commercially flourishing towns with large urban populations and a strong sense of pride in their wealth and cultural traditions.

If the percentage of town inhabitants in the biographical section of the 1879 Wujiang County gazetteer ranged between 46.9% and 51.8%, how does this result compare with the gazetteer of the same county published in 1747? If we take the number of town personages from the biographical section of the Wujiang County

gazetteer of that year and compare them with the total number of figures in each category, we obtain the results found in Table 7.

Table 7. Market Town Figures in Biographical Categories of
the 1747 Wujiang County Gazetteer, Excluding Exemplary Women (*lienü* 烈女)¹⁹

| Biographical Categories | Market Town Figures / Total Number of Figures in each Category |
|--|---|
| Mingchen 名臣 (Eminent ministers) | 11/50 |
| Rulin 儒林 (Confucians) | 0/3 |
| Xiaoyou 孝友 (Filiality and brotherhood) | 12/37 |
| Jieyi 節義 (Fidelity and righteousness) | 3/27 |
| Wenxue 文学 (Literary talent) | 11/41 |
| Yinyi 隱逸 (Hermits) | 4/21 |
| Yineng 藝能 (Artistic talent) | 4/25 |

The above table shows that, excluding the category of exemplary women (*lienü*), the total number of figures entered into the entire biographical section was 204, of which 45 were from market towns. In other words, town figures comprised 22% of the total in the 1747 Wujiang County gazetteer. This 22% in the 1747 rose to 46.9%-51.8% in the 1879 edition of the Wujiang County gazetteer, a more than twofold increase. Thus the town residents in Wujiang County were much better able to represent themselves in the county gazetteer in the late nineteenth century than they were in the eighteenth. While the biographies of the 1747 gazetteer were largely dominated by elites of the county seat, the same section of the 1879 edition was more equitably balanced between them and those in the market towns.

This increased representation can also be confirmed for the neighboring counties of Changshu and Zhaowen 昭文. The total number of figures entered into the biographical section of the 1687 Changshu County gazetteer was 672 (excluding exemplary women), of which forty (5.9%) were from market towns. In the 1904 edition of the combined gazetteer of Changshu and Zhaowen Counties, 1,471 appeared in the biographical section, of which 173 (11.7%) were town residents. Thus, the ratio of town residents increased from 5.9% in the seventeenth century to 11.7% in the early twentieth century.

The number of residents of these two counties listed in the biographies of the 1904 county gazetteer varies. Zhitang 支塘, for instance, had twenty-six entries, and Meili 梅李 twenty-five. Tangshi had thirteen and was followed by Baimao 白茆 and Fushan 福山, with eight and six respectively. Of all the market towns in these two counties, the figures from Zhitang, Meili, and Tangshi formed the preponderant majority. These three towns had compiled their own gazetteers long before the appearance of the county gazetteer. For information about town residents, this 1904 county gazetteer also relied heavily upon market town sources,

¹⁹ The category of exemplary women does not usually reveal their hometown, and is thus excluded from this calculation.

quoting from such works as *Zhixi xiaozhi* 支溪小志, *Zhixi shilu* 支溪詩錄, *Tangshu xiaozhi* 唐墅小志, *Lishu xiaozhi* 李墅小志, and *Diaozhu xiaozhi* 釣渚小志.

Songjiang Prefecture

The gazetteers of the counties belonging to Songjiang Prefecture also reveal that they gathered related information from the gazetteers of market towns within its borders. For example, the compiler of the 1878 Jinshan County gazetteer stated that he had consulted the gazetteers of Zhujing 朱涇, Zhangyan 張堰, and Ganxiang towns (*Jinshanxian zhi*, “Fanli”: 3a). Similarly, the compiler of the 1882 Baoshan 寶山 County gazetteer states that it relied on the existing town gazetteers of Yuepu 月浦, Yangxing 楊行, Guangfu 廣福, Dachang 大場, Jiangwan 江灣, and Zhenru 真如, whatever their flaws or merits (*Baoshanxian zhi*, 1: 18a). As in the Suzhou Prefecture, one of the main purposes of these gazetteers was to provide sources for future gazetteers at the county level and above. For example, the 1882 Baoshan County gazetteer noted that the gazetteer of Zhenru town directly supplied materials to the departmental gazetteer of Taicang 太倉 (*Baoshanxian zhi*, 10: 22ab).

The compilation of market town gazetteers allowed town residents to claim greater representation in county gazetteers. There are 390 entries in the biographical section of the 1878 gazetteer of Jinshan County, and the residents of various towns numbered 179, or 45.8% of the total. Town gazetteers were frequently quoted as sources for biographical information. Among these gazetteers, the two different versions of the Zhujing town gazetteer were cited thirty-six times and the gazetteer of Ganxiang town nineteen times.²⁰

In the case of Jiading 嘉定 County, the 1742 county gazetteer contains a total of 272 persons (again excluding females in the category of exemplary women) in the biographical entries. Of this total, only forty-eight are identified as residents of market towns, or 17.6% of the total. In contrast, those recorded as residents of the county seat comprised 29.4%. In other words, the percentage of the figures from market towns is much smaller than that of those from the county seat. However, in the subsequent 140 years, this ratio underwent a significant change. In the Jiading County gazetteer of 1882, market town figures reached a total of 141, or 21.5% of all 655 entries.

The increase in the percentage of market-town men in the county gazetteer was more dramatic in the adjoining county of Baoshan. When the county gazetteer was compiled there in 1746, the number of town figures with biographical entries already outnumbered those from the county seat 47 to 14 (of a total of 125). In the 1882 edition gazetteer, 136 years later, the preponderance of market town figures increased further. Among the 629 figures included in the biographical section (*juan* 9 and 10, excluding *juan* 11 on exemplary women), market town personages numbered as many as 392. This means that the percentage of people from market towns in the overall entries of the biographical section increased from 37.6% in the 1746 edition to 62.3% in the 1882 edition. Nearly two-thirds of the figures mentioned in the 1882 county gazetteer of Baoshan were from towns.

²⁰ This calculation is based on *juan* 19 through 28 in the *Jinshanxian zhi*.

Conclusion

The late Qing and the Republican period marked the salient assertion of cultural pride and town identity among local elites. The proliferation of town gazetteers and anthologies represented the manifestation of the pride that town residents increasingly felt in their commercial prosperity and cultural sophistication. This was the expression of a collective awareness among townspeople that their achievements were significant enough to be recorded and transmitted. These compilation efforts were an attempt to show that their towns were places to be reckoned with. The social composition of town leadership differed by place and time. From the sixteenth century, however, degree-holders, whose social distinction derived from the state examination system, emerged as important players in town politics, diffusing literati culture through various lineage-building activities (Faure 2002, 63-79). As Kawakatsu Mamoru has demonstrated, a significant portion of those included in the biographical section of town gazetteers were lower degree-holders (Kawakatsu 1999, 627-79). The preponderance of this particular social group is also observed in the town anthologies, as discussed in this article. By having their biographies recorded in the more readily available market town records, these elite members of towns enhanced their chances of being represented in county gazetteers. As more town gazetteers and anthologies emerged in the nineteenth century, market town elites were better able to leave a record of themselves and were more conveniently positioned to compete with elites in higher urban centers over the limited slots in county gazetteers, and ultimately, for higher cultural status. In this sense, the nineteenth century was more congenial to the publication of the names and achievements of town elites. Therefore the cultural hegemony previously claimed by county-seat elites encountered greater challenges from the lower elites at the town level.

Town literature certainly functioned as a cultural medium to preserve and publicize local details and people, but it served other purposes as well. By presenting towns as centers of scholarship and literati culture, the compilers sought to situate these towns as important places on the Confucian cultural map of the empire, rather than simply emphasizing their economic importance. Some town gazetteers gave expression to long subdued local sentiments, resurrecting memories that were cherished by townsfolk but that clashed with orthodox state views. Other gazetteers functioned as “public genealogies,” as many biographic entries featured kinsmen of the compilers.

The rise of market town elites in the literary realm in nineteenth-century Jiangnan paralleled a similar phenomenon that was occurring in Chosŏn Korea around the same time. The *chungin* 中人 constituted a social stratum between the superior yangban aristocracy and inferior commoners, which largely consisted of government-employed technical specialists, government clerks (both in and out of the capital), and the illegitimate children of yangban. From the eighteenth century, men from the *chungin* stratum began to form their own literary societies and actively sought to enhance their reputations by publishing their own literary anthologies. They were claiming their place in the larger elite culture by

consciously emulating the literary styles of the “superior” *yangban* (Chǒng 2003, 79). Unlike the *chungin* stratum in Chosŏn, market town elites in China were in no sense a rigid, clearly defined social group for whom access to political power was legally restricted. Yet, to those in county seats, town elites were considered “lesser” in the sense that they largely consisted of lower degree-holders, and thus might have less access to power and prestige. It should, however, be noted that, in different contexts and conditions, both market town elites and the *chungin* stratum were, through literary endeavors, challenging their superiors in either urban or social hierarchies during the nineteenth century. This phenomenon represents an increasing urge on the part of the secondary groups in both countries to represent themselves in literary works, which stemmed from the pride they held in their growing wealth and burgeoning cultural sophistication.

GLOSSARY

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------|------------------------|------|
| Baoshan | 寶山 | Shen Deqian | 沈德潛 |
| Changshu | 常熟 | <i>shengyuan</i> | 生員 |
| Changzhou | 長洲 | Shengze | 盛澤 |
| <i>Fenhu shiyuan</i> | 分湖詩苑 | Songjiang | 松江 |
| Ganxiang | 干巷 | Suzhou | 蘇州 |
| <i>Ganxiang zhi</i> | 干巷志 | <i>Tangshu shicun</i> | 唐墅詩存 |
| Jiading | 嘉定 | Wujiang | 吳江 |
| <i>jiansheng</i> | 監生 | <i>Xunxi shizheng</i> | 潯溪詩徵 |
| Jinshan | 金山 | <i>zhen</i> | 鎮 |
| <i>jinshi</i> | 進士 | <i>Zhenfeng shicui</i> | 貞豐詩萃 |
| <i>juren</i> | 舉人 | Zhenze | 震澤 |
| Luxu | 蘆墟 | <i>Zhenze zhen zhi</i> | 震澤鎮志 |
| <i>Mudu shicun</i> | 木瀆詩存 | Zhouzhuang | 周莊 |
| Nanxun | 南潯 | Zhu Yuanda | 朱元大 |
| <i>Nanxunzhen zhi</i> | 南潯鎮志 | <i>Zhuli shicui</i> | 竹里詩萃 |

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