

From Continuation to Reconstruction: A Study on the Compilation, Inheritance, and Transformation of Contemporary Jibu Literature

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The arrangement and study of contemporary Jibu (collected works) literature have made notable progress in two dimensions: the facsimile reprinting of rare editions and in-depth scholarly editing. Facsimile reprinting, through careful edition selection and scientific organization, achieves the regenerative preservation of texts. Scholarly editing—via collation, annotation, commentary, and recovery of lost passages—reconstructs the meaning of the texts, fostering a two-way construction of knowledge production and academic community. The coordinated development of these two approaches continues the spirit of traditional collation while integrating modern concepts and technologies, providing solid support for the inheritance and innovation of Chinese culture.

Keywords: Jibu literature, facsimile reprinting of rare editions, in-depth scholarly editing

Preface

As the category within the traditional Chinese fourfold classification (the sibu) that most closely reflects the intellectual and emotional world of the literati, Jibu (collected works) carries the emotional memories, aesthetic pursuits, and intellectual trajectories of writers across dynasties, forming the “human” writing tradition of Chinese culture. The contemporary arrangement and study of Jibu literature have achieved notable results in facsimile reprinting of rare editions and in-depth scholarly editing, creating a healthy ecosystem of diversified collaboration and joint development. This process both continues the millennia-old tradition of “meticulous collation and thorough verification” and creatively integrates modern editorial concepts and technological innovations, driving Jibu literature from seclusion toward openness, and from static textual existence toward dynamic knowledge reconstruction.

Publishing Achievements and Contributing Factors

Large-scale, systematic, and topic-focused facsimile reproduction of rare and uncommon editions is the foundation for the dissemination of Jibu literature. The core value of contemporary facsimile achievements is no longer mere “copying” but rather, through careful edition selection, scientific arrangement, and professional

Acknowledgments: This paper is the periodic research result of the research project: by the National Social Science Fund of China-General Project “Research on the Compilation, Block-Printing, and Publication of Song-Period Jibu Classics During the Song and Yuan Dynasties” (国家自然科学基金一般项目“宋元时期宋人集部典籍的编纂、刊刻与出版研究”) (Serial number: 20BXW046).

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presentation, achieving an academic reconstruction of the genealogical lineage of Jibu classics and realizing the regenerative preservation of the texts.

Large-scale facsimile projects of Jibu literature pay attention not only to comprehensive coverage but also to deep bibliophilic considerations. The *Han Wei Liuchao Jibu Zhenben Congkan* (Rare Books Series of the Jibu from the Han, Wei, and Six Dynasties), edited by Liu Yuejin, includes 261 titles ranging from the Northern Song Tiansheng Mingdao block-printed edition of the *Wenxuan* (Selections of Refined Literature) to the Qing manuscript *Wenzhang Yuanqi* (Origins of Literary Compositions). It encompasses 15 Song-Yuan block-printed editions, 154 Ming block-printed editions, three movable-type editions, and 31 manuscripts or handwritten copies by famous scholars, more than 110 of which contain marginalia and colophons by renowned critics. Its selection reveals the overall profile of Jibu classics from the Han to the Six Dynasties and systematically combs the textual lineages. The base texts are mostly the earliest extant editions or those that also bear marginalia and colophons. On the technical side, the series employs high-definition colour scanning and greyscale plate printing, with particularly fine treatment of annotated copies; the original title slips are preserved and enhanced by technical means, allowing the marginalia and annotations—a “dialogic text”—to be reproduced in bulk and to serve research as genuinely accessible primary sources.

The *Lidai Tangshi Zhenxi Xuanben Huibian* (Tang Song Jin Yuan Juan) (Compendium of Rare and Precious Tang Poetry Anthologies Through the Ages: Tang, Song, Jin, and Yuan Volumes), edited by Zhan Furui and Chen Hongyan, is a comprehensive and systematic collation and in-depth study of Tang poetry anthologies. The project on which it is based, “Collation and Study of Tang Poetry Anthologies Through the Ages”, was launched in 2016 and surveyed 476 Tang poetry anthologies held in the National Library of China, Shanghai Library, Nanjing Library, Zhejiang Library, Tianjin Library, and other collecting institutions. It holds significant academic value for the study of Tang poetry transmission, canonization, poetic styles through the ages, and poetic schools.

The core of facsimile reproduction of rare texts is the restoration of the physical object, reflecting a conscious attention to the “materiality” of the document. The Zhonghua Zaizao Shanben Gongcheng (China’s Reweaving Rare Books Project), initiated in 2002, has so far produced 1,341 rare ancient books in five series from Tang to Qing, covering the jing, shi, zi, ji, and cong (collectanea) divisions. Its editorial policy follows the principle of “transmitting the texts and propagating learning”, with a selection guideline of “lenient for Song and Yuan, strict for Ming and Qing”. This reflects both an urgent sense of preserving rare editions and a rational judgment of their scholarly value. The binding adopts traditional thread-binding, the covers imitate the indigo-blue colour of the Qing cabinet archive collection, and the main text is mostly printed on domestic xuan paper. These details go beyond formal restoration to embody a holistic respect for ancient books as “cultural carriers”. The French scholar D. F. McKenzie’s “sociology of texts” emphasizes the impact of a book’s material form on the production of meaning. By restoring the physical object, reweaving rare books allows viewers to approach the original context of the ancient texts, achieving a virtuous cycle from “storage” to “use” and from “use” to “preservation”.

In 2016, the National Library of China launched the *Guoxue Jiben Dianji Congkan* (Series of Basic National Classics). Its selected titles are all extant Song-and-Yuan masterpieces and fine Ming-and-Qing editions, such as the Song Duanping edition of the *Chuci Jizhu* (Collected Commentaries on the Chu Ci), the You Mao block-printed edition of the *Wenxuan*, the Shicaitang edition of the *Hedong Xiansheng Ji* (Collected Works of Mr. Hedong), and the Yuan block-printed edition of the *Jiaxuan Changduanju* (Long and Short Lyrics of Jiaxuan). The series focuses on “basic” classics, aiming to provide a reliable foundational text for academic research and cultural popularization. Behind the series lies a professional and systematic “canonizing” academic judgment:

which classics constitute the essential core of national learning, and which editions represent the optimal state of textual transmission. This judgment itself is the product of a deep integration of bibliography and intellectual history, laying a solid foundation for the basic dissemination of Jibu literature.

Scholarly Collation and Academic Publishing

If the facsimile edition is an accurate presentation of the “original appearance” of an ancient book, then the scholarly collated edition is a deep reconstruction of its “meaning”. Collation work—punctuation, annotation, compilation, critical examination, and so on—is essentially an academic research activity that is both professional and innovative. Its results are widely disseminated through academic publishing, ultimately creating a two-way construction of knowledge production and the academic community, and advancing the intergenerational transmission of Jibu literature research.

The *Zhongguo Gudian Wenxue Congshu* (Chinese Classical Literature Series) published by Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House is a model of the integration of scholarly collation and academic publishing. From 1978 to 2016, the series published a total of 136 titles, becoming the largest and most systematic collection of modern collated individual biejī (personal collected works) of antiquity. The punctuators and annotators of the series are all renowned scholars in the fields of literature, philology, and textual studies, including Qian Zhonglian, Gao Heng, Yu Jiayi, Zhu Dongrun, Deng Guangming, and others. The editors are mostly scholar-editors capable of in-depth dialogue with the authors and of offering constructive suggestions. Deng Guangming once praised Chen Zhenpeng for being “serious, rigorous, and meticulous... he posted hundreds of comments, all of which were precisely appropriate” (Li Guozhang, Shuanghui Xuan Ji). Thanks to this, the repeatedly revised *Jiaxuan Ci Biannian Jianzhu* (Annotated Chronicle of Jiaxuan’s Ci Poetry), since its publication, has been reprinted many times and enjoys a high reputation both in China and abroad. This is the result of the authors and editors striving for excellence and working together.

From the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, academic publishing is the core channel for recording, disseminating, and sharing academic achievements, providing an institutional platform for academic debate and innovation. The *Zhongguo Gudian Wenxue Jiben Congshu* (Basic Chinese Classical Literature Series) and the *Zhongguo Gudian Mingzhu Yizhu Congshu* (Chinese Classical Masterpieces Translation and Annotation Series) published by Zhonghua Book Company embody the painstaking efforts of several generations of scholars and have produced rich results, constituting an “academic long-distance race” that has lasted for decades and spanned multiple generations. This continuity vividly demonstrates the intergenerational transmission and knowledge accumulation of the academic community. Compared with facsimile preservation, scholarly collation began earlier and follows the publishing policy of “upholding orthodoxy while making innovations”, ensuring that the contemporary interpretation of traditional texts remains dynamic.

Topic-focused documentary compilations have opened up new paths for the collation of Jibu literature, achieving methodological expansion and interdisciplinary integration. Shandong University’s *Hanji Hebi Jinghua Bian* (Essential Compilation of the Combined Chinese Classics) focuses on rare ancient books held overseas but scarce in China. It has planned the punctuated and annotated collation of 161 titles, of which 86 have been finalized. A management model of five rounds of proofreading and progressive quality control is employed to ensure high standards, reflecting the international vision of research on “the circulation of Chinese classics”—overseas Chinese rare books are not simply scattered documents but important testimonies to the cross-cultural transmission of Chinese culture. Interdisciplinary methods are widely used in Jibu collation. For

example, the team of Xia Hanning at the Jiangxi Provincial Academy of Social Sciences used the *Xu Zizhi Tongjian Changbian* (Long Draft Continuation of the Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government) to collate the *Ouyang Xiansheng Wencui* (Literary Essence of Mr. Ouyang), systematically examining variant characters and correcting omissions and errors, achieving a deep integration of historical and literary studies. This method of “using historical texts to collate literary collections” breaks through the traditional collation limitation of “using one edition to correct another” and embodies the scholarly wisdom of “mutual verification among the four divisions”.

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