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Printing and Divination Books in the Song

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Let us start with two stories in Song. The first one is about a geomancer.

Zhang Guiling 張鬼靈, a native of Sanqū 三衢 [in modern Zhejiang], obeyed his father's order and followed a person in his hometown, learning the skills of choosing tomb sites (*xiangmushu* 相墓術, geomancy). One day he suddenly achieved his ability and used Extremely-Responsive (*guiling* 鬼靈) as his name. He arrived in Qiantang 錢塘 county [in modern Zhejiang] in the Jianzhong Jingguo 建中靖國 (1101) period. . . . Huang Zhengyi 黃正一, sheriff of Qiantang 錢塘, told me: “The magistrate, Mr. Zhou also likes to talk about geomancy.” [One day] he gave a dinner for Guiling, and asked him: “Without going to the spot and simply by looking at a painting, can you do the siting?” Guiling replied: “If the position and the shape of the mountain are not so different, and the burial date is correct, I can give a general idea.” [Zhou] then pointed a painting on the wall and asked him about it. Guiling stared at the painting carefully for quite a while, and said: “According to this painting, the pond in the position of *wu* 午 is good. However, if there is a son of the family who rides on a horse and both fall into the pond and is almost drowned, he will pass the prefectural examination and will take the *jinshi* degree. That is an auspicious site. By then, the family will rise.” The magistrate said: “That did happen.” Guiling said: “That year this person who fell [into the pond] must have passed the prefectural examination and took the *jinshi* degree the next year.” The

magistrate could not help take Guiling's hand and said: "I don't know how good Master Qingwu [*Qingwuzi* 青烏子] and Guo Jingchun 郭景純 [*Guo Pu* 郭璞] were, [but] you are as good as they. That year when the spring sacrifice was offered to my ancestors, I was riding on a horse. Upon passing by the pond, the horse was suddenly frightened. I could not control him and we both fell into the pond. When I was rescued, I was in the last gasp. I was the person who passed the prefectural examination and took the *jinshi* degree." . . . Guiling often said: "I also have the problem of short life. I will not live long. It is a pity that there is none to whom I can transmit my skills." He was only twenty-five when he died two years after.¹

The second story is also about a geomancer.

Luo Yanzhang 羅彥章 of Linchuan 臨川 [in modern Jiangxi] was a person who deeply trusted in geomancy. Foreseeing Master Lai (*lai xianzhi* 賴先知) was good at "the learning of water city" (*shuicheng chih xue* 水城之學[geomancy]). He had no home, always wandered about, and loved to drink. Nevertheless, Luo respected him and housed him. Luo's wife happened to pass away. He asked [Lai] to decide on the tomb site. [Lai] found one. In front of the cave were three streams passing by. However, the third one simply ran into the paddies, without passing by. Lai exclaimed: "Marvelous! This is a superb *zhuangyuan* 狀元 form. It is regrettable that the third one is not long enough. If your offspring takes the civil service examinations in the future, he can only attain the third place [*bangyan* 榜眼]. His [Luo's] son, with his thirteenth-year-old son standing aside, touched his son's head

¹ He Wei 何蘊, *Chunzhu jiwen* 春渚紀聞 (Beijing: Zhunghua shuju, 1983), *juan* 2, "Zhang Guiling xiangmushu 張鬼靈相墓術," 28-29.

and said: “This is good enough. If you can just pass by *zhuangyuan*, this is good enough. . . .” At the age twenty-six [his son] took the second place in the palace examination. Lai died while living with the Luo. Although he left some writings, none could learn his knack.²

It has been acknowledged that divination is a common practice in Song society. By divination, it usually includes to two categories: first, *suanming* 算命 or *bugua* 卜卦, meaning fortune-telling; second, *kanyu* 堪輿, *fengshui* 風水, or *dili* 地理, meaning geomancy. Elsewhere I have said noted that Song society witnessed a growth of diviners. One reason was because of the feeling of uncertainty among the growing body of literati and scholar-officials, leading them to look for answers from diviners. Furthermore, due to the competitiveness of the civil service examinations, many literati abandoned their hope to pass the “thorny gates,” and made their living as diviners in the Southern Song.³

It has become a common observation that the wide use of printing technology contributed the growth of literacy in Song. Is it true that the development of divination culture during this period was also facilitated by printing technology? We may answer this question by asking another question: “How did diviners learn divination in Song?”

I. Literati as Diviners

It is conceivable that, to a large extent, literati learned divination from books. Such

² Hong Mai 洪邁, *Yijian sanzhi* 夷堅三志, *juan ren* 壬, “Lai shanren shuicheng 賴山人水城,” 1470.

³ See Liu Hsiang-kwang, “Liang Song shiren yu busuan wenha de chengzhang 兩宋士人與卜算文化的成長,” in Poo Mu-chou 蒲慕州, ed., *Guimei shenmo: zhongguo tongsu wenha cexie* 鬼魅神魔: 中國通俗文化側寫 (Taipei: Maitian chuban, 2005), 221-277. Also see Patricia Buckley Ebrey, “Sung Neo-Confucian Views on Geomancy,” in Irene Bloom and Joshua A. Fogel, eds., *Meeting of Minds: Intellectual and Religious Interaction in East Asian Traditions of Thought: Essays in Honor of Wing-tsit Chan and William Theodore de Bary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 75-97.

an observation is suggested by the fact that many tomb inscriptions or biographies clearly mention that literati understood or were familiar with divination. For example, in his tomb inscription for Liu Chang 劉敞 (1019-1068, *jinshi*, 1046), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072) praised him saying

[He] is very erudite. Starting from Six Classics, Hundred Schools, biographies of ancients and contemporaries, down to astrology (*tianwen* 天文), geomancy (*dili* 地理), fortune-telling and medicine (*buyi* 卜醫), numerical methods (*shushu* 數術), Buddhism, and Daoism, there is nothing that he did not learn.⁴

In the tomb inscription for Zhang Yuxi 掌禹錫 (990-1066), Su Song 蘇頌 (1020-1101) pointed out that

[He] read broadly. He studied not only Classics and histories, but also Five Phases (*wuxing* 五行), astrology (*xingli* 星曆), fortune-telling (*zhangshi* 占筮), geomancy (*dili* 地理). There is nothing [he] did not study and annotate, including extant [books of] Hundred Schools. He could learn them all. . . . [He] took divination (*tuiming zhi shu* 推命之術) as a hobby and wrote (*zhouyi liuyan dunjiatu* 周易流演遁甲圖)”⁵

Again, in the tomb inscription for Liu Keshi 劉可仕 (1216-1285), Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁 (1232-1297, *jinshi* 1262) said that

[He] specially admonished [his sons and friends] that people should not be buried

⁴ Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, *Wenzhong ji* 文忠集, juan 35, “Jixianyuan xueshi Liugong muzhiming 集賢院學士劉公墓誌銘,” 10a-b.

⁵ Su Song 蘇頌, *Su Weigong wenji*, juan 56, “Gongbu shilang zhishi Zhang gong muzhiming 工部侍郎致仕掌公墓誌銘,” 11b.

sites faraway, remote, or dangerous, or in those for benefiting posterity, or those that may incur lawsuits. He divined the site where he was buried.⁶

Words cited above may sound like rhetoric. However, if we consider that among thousands of tomb inscriptions and biographies, only several tens of such works mention that some literati know divination.⁷ Judging from Patricia Ebrey's paper on Song Neo-Confucian views on geomancy, which analyzes Neo-Confucians' different attitudes toward such practice, it is probably not far-fetched to say that literati know more or less about divination.

For instance, during the Qingli 慶曆 period (1040-1048) Northern Song was repeatedly invaded by the Tangut Xixia, greatly worrying the Emperor Renzong 仁宗. Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (988-1052) then introduced Xu Fu 徐復, a diviner, to the Emperor for consultation. It is said that Xu Fu was originally a literatus, preparing for the civil service examinations, but later he abandoned hope for success.⁸

Other examples are from the farewell essays. Wang Tinggui 王庭珪 (1080-1172) had two such pieces for diviners. In the first, he pointed that "Mr. Rao was originally a literatus. [Later,] he depended on divination, roaming over the world." In the second, he said: "Mr. Wu used to be a literatus."⁹ In an essay on physiognomy written for an diviner, Zheng Gangzhong 鄭剛中 (1088-1154, *jinsi* 1132) was told by a diviner that "I was originally from a literati family in Sanqu [in modern Zhejiang]. Since my family's

⁶ Liu Chenweng 劉辰翁, *Xuxi ji* 須溪集, juan 7, "Leqiu chushi muzhiming 樂丘處士墓誌銘," 21b.

⁷ I have collected more than thirty-five pieces of tomb inscriptions and biographic descriptions from Song *wenji*.

⁸ See Ye Mengde 葉夢得, *Bishu luhua* 避暑錄話, in *Songyuan Biji Xiaoshuo Daguan* 宋元筆記小說大觀, 2675. Su Che 蘇轍, *Longchuan Biezhì* 龍川別志 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), juan 2, 98.

⁹ Wang Tinggui 王庭珪, *Luxi wenji* 廬溪文集, juan 37, "zeng Raozi xu 贈饒子序," "song buzhe Wu Tangzuo xu 送卜者吳唐佐序," 3a, 6a.

circumstances went downhill, [I] therefore practiced divination.”¹⁰ Wang Yingchen 汪應辰 (1118-1176, *jinshi* 1135) also wrote a farewell essay for a diviner, whose case was similar.¹¹ Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1192), a Neo-Confucian thinker who thought little of divination, wrote a farewell essay for a diviner named Wang Yanchang, mentioning that he “used to know books [meaning he used to be a literatus]. One day he abandoned his profession due to his old man’s request and practiced the profession [of divination].”¹² Again, Zeng Feng 曾丰 (b. 1142) wrote a farewell essay for his countryman Deng Hao who practiced divination, mentioning that he was “a son of a literati family (*rujia zi* 儒家子) for generations. When he reached the prime of life, he became poor. He temporarily lives on divination.”¹³ Liu Zai 劉宰 (1165-1238) also has such a piece, pointing out that the diviner Shi Boyu is a grandson of a transport intendant.¹⁴ Cheng Mi 程秘 (1164-1242) also cited Yang Xiong’s 揚雄 words, saying that “ancient Confucians were also well-versed in divination and medicine.”¹⁵ Lü Wu 呂午 (1179-1255) mentioned in his essay for his countryman: “[The diviner] said that he used to be a literati.”¹⁶ In his farewell essay for a diviner called Li Qiaogu, Liu Chenweng mentioned that Li came from a literati family (*jia guru* 家故儒). Again, in the farewell essay for a diviner named Guo Dagan, Liu also mentions that Guo was a literati (*ru*儒).¹⁷ Again, in a similar piece, Ouyang Shoudao 歐陽守道 (1209-1273) also pointed out that the diviner Song Yifu was

¹⁰ Zheng Gangzhong 鄭剛中, *Beishan ji* 北山集, juan 5, “Xiangshuo 相說,” 14b.

¹¹ Wang Yingchen 汪彥常, *Wending ji* 文定集, juan 9, “Zeng Xu Chaoqing xu 贈徐朝卿序,” 7a-b.

¹² Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵, *Lu Jiuyuan ji* 陸九淵集 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1981), juan 20, “Zeng Wang Yanchang 贈汪彥常,” 248.

¹³ Zeng Feng 曾丰, *Yuandu ji* 緣督集, juan 24, “Dengshi Lijianli xu 鄧氏立見曆序,” 195-196.

¹⁴ Liu Zai 劉宰, *Mantang ji* 漫塘集, juan 19, “song Shi xinguan xu 送史星官序,” 15b.

¹⁵ Cheng Mi 程秘, *Mingshui ji* 洺水集, juan 8, “song Wu jinshi xu 送吳進士序,” 18b.

¹⁶ Lü Wu 呂午, *Zhupo leigao* 竹坡類稿, “song Zhu Boyi dongyou xu 送祝伯益遊序,” 269.

¹⁷ Liu Chenweng, *Xuxi ji*, juan 6, “zeng Li sheng tanxing xu 贈李生談星序,” 23b; juan 6, “zeng xingdu Guo Dagan xu 贈星度郭大觀序,” 48.

“a member among the literati rank (*shilei* 士類).”¹⁸

It was probably not difficult for literati to learn divination. We are told that, Li Chunfeng 李淳風, a famous diviner in Tang Taizong’s 唐太宗 reign (627-649), was from a literati family. His father, Li Bo 李播, was a sheriff of Gaotang 高唐 (in modern Shandong) in Sui Dynasty. Later, Bo abandoned his office and became a Daoist priest. It is said that Chunfeng was smart while he was still a child and “was well-versed in books. He specialized in astrology, astronomy.”¹⁹

Probably the most famous literatus who practiced divination is Xie Fangde 謝枋得 (1226-1289), a Song martyr. After obtaining the *jinshi* degree in 1256, he was assigned to different regional offices. In 1275 when the Mongols launched an expedition to Southern Song, he was assigned to be the prefect of Xinzhou 信州 (in modern Zhejiang) to organize the area’s militia. After the resistance failed, he fled to Fujian. Refusing to serve under the Mongol rule, he moved to Jianyang 建陽. Before he was arrested and taken to Dadu 大都, he opened a divination shop, Dependant Studio for Yi-Divination (*Yizhai yigua* 依齋易卦), and lived on on his divination practice.²⁰

Furthermore, scholars also wrote divination books. Zhu Xi 朱熹(1130-1200) once saw a divination book titled *The Book of Changes Annotated by Linen Garment* (*Mayi xinyi* 麻衣心易 or *Mayi yishuo* 麻衣易說). A friend of his lent a copy to him. After scrutinizing the content, Zhu Xi did not believe the book was written by the famous early Song Buddhist monk Mayi. He argued:

I skimmed the book in the past. Since the style was ordinary and modern, I doubted that it was like those written two hundred years ago. I currently have a copy which

¹⁸ Ouyang Shoudao, *Xunzhai wenji*, juan 11, “Zeng Song Yifu xu 贈宋義甫序,” 8b.

¹⁹ Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 and Song Qi 宋祁, *et al. Xin Tangshu* 新唐書, juan 204, “fangji 方伎,” 5798.

²⁰ “Dieshan xiansheng xingshi 疊山先生行實,” in Xie Fangde 謝枋得, *Dieshan ji* 疊山集, juan 5, 4b-5b.

was passed down to Mr. Huang. I scrutinized the content and I am even surer that what I previously suspected Over the years, minor schools of divination have collected groundless talk, picked up some shallow views from Daoist, Buddhist, medical, and fortunetelling books, and put them into a book. The reason why the book was under his [Mayi's] name is because those who practiced divination over the years all modeled themselves after Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011-1077). What Shao Yong learned was from Xiyi 希夷 (Chen Tuan 陳搏, d. 989), so that those diviners further looked for what Xiyi respected and found the so-called Mayi [group]. They thus declared that their skills were from [Mayi] as such. [They] considered that, if they proclaimed that all they learned was from Shao Yong or the like, none would criticize them.²¹

It is worth noting that the copy Zhu Xi had was “passed” on to his friend, not purchased from the market. It is very likely that the copy is probably a manuscript. Zhu Xi wrote this piece of short note in 1177 in Fujian.²² Two years after, he wrote another one for the same book.

Right after I just took my office in Nankang 南康 military prefecture (in modern Jiangxi), a former recorder (*zhubu*主簿) of Xiangyin 湘陰 [in modern Hunan], Dai Shiyu 戴師愈 visited me. He was senile and lame. . . . Right after we exchanged greetings, he talked about *The Book of Changes Annotated by Linen Garment*. His words were vague and hard to understand, totally making no sense. I asked about his

²¹ Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Huian ji* 晦庵集, juan 81, “Shu Mayi xinyin hou 書麻衣心易後,” 18b-19b. For Mayi and Chen Tuan, see my “Liang Song shiren yu busuan wenhua de chenghang,” 224-225.

²² See Wang Maohong 王懋竑, *Song Zhu Zi nianpu* 宋朱子年譜 (Taipei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, 1987), juan 2a, 65.

teacher. He replied the person was a recluse. Since the teacher did not want to be known, he did not dare to tell me the name. I asked some local men about the book afterwards. They all replied: “Only Dai has the book. We do not know where it was from.” Then I made a visit to him and asked again. He said: “If you study the *Book of Changes* and do not know this book, you will not realize the function of the diagrams. Therefore their uses will be limited.” . . . I realized how absurd he was and stopped asking. I saw a book written by him on the table. I took the book and read. Its language and style is just like that of *The Book of Changes Annotated by Linen Garment*. Although the contents include discussion of minor things, many are not appropriate and boldly draw a farfetched analogy to cheat people. Because of this, it was this old man that I had previously doubted [that the book was written by] persons in the past thirty or fifty years ago.²³

Dai Shiyu apparently was a scholar-official. However, Dai was not a single example. According to a Southern Song annotated book catalog, *Zhizhai Shulu Jietie* 直齋書錄解題 by Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1220), at least four divination books are surely written by literati.²⁴

II. Non-Literatus Diviners

How did those ordinary diviners learn divination? Since there is hardly any tomb inscription or life descriptions for diviners, we do not know much. Nevertheless, some

²³ Ibid., juan 81, “zai ba Mayi yishuo hou 再跋麻衣易說後,” 20a-21a.

²⁴ Chen Zhensun, *Zhizhai Shulu Jietie* 直齋書錄解題 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1987), juan 12, 371, 374, 377, 380. These four books are *Yinyang Beiyong* 陰陽備用, *Wuxing Jingji* 五行精紀, *Jingshi Yishi* 京氏易氏, and *Zhujia Xiangshu* 諸家相書.

sources may shed some light on this. The above-mentioned Zhang Guiling, as we are told, learned divination from his fellow townsman. It is not sure whether that person used any book to teach him. However, he lamented that he could find none to transmit his superb skills. It is very likely that he did not put his divining skills in written forms, i.e., his skills could only be transmitted *orally*. It is probably similar to the case of Foreseeing Master Lai also mentioned above. Although he did leave some works on geomancy, none could obtain his matchless feat. Moreover, Yuan Neo-Confucian master Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333) compared transmission of knowledge in geomancy to that in the Chan School in Buddhism. He argued: “Among those who practiced Buddhism in the past, Shenxiu 神秀, Master of the Northern School, read broadly. Nevertheless, Huineng 慧能, Master of the Southern School, was illiterate. So was the case of geomancy.” He recalled that when he was young, he met a geomancer in Jiangxi. He discussed geomancy with the person. The geomancer responded: “You are an erudite literati, whereas I am just an illiterate man. If you ask me about my skills, I do not even have a single word to transmit, or a sentence to say. I cannot answer your question.”²⁵ Evidently, for those diviners, *oral* instructions probably were the major source of skills.

Some diviners were from families that had practiced divination for generations. In an essay for a geomancer, Chen Zhu 陳著 (1214-1289, *jinshi* 1256) said that this diviner were from a family that had practiced geomancy for generations.²⁶ In a farewell essay for a diviner called Xu Xinyi, the writer mentioned that a diviner named Hu Yijian, Xu’s maternal grandfather, was very accurate in foretelling that two literati would obtain the *jinshi* degree. Furthermore, the writer pointed out that Hu’s skills were not transmitted in

²⁵ Wu Cheng 吳澄, *Wu Wenzheng ji* 吳文正集, juan 23, “Dili leiyao xu 地理類要序,” 11b.

²⁶ Chen Zhu 陳著, *Bentang ji* 本堂集, juan 34, “Jianshan shuo 見山說,” 9a.

the divination tradition, and only his grandson Xu Xinyi inherited the skills.²⁷ He Menggui 何夢桂 (*jinsi* 1265) also wrote an essay for a geomancer whom he had long acquainted, saying that “the family of Mr. Li [the diviner] has practiced the profession for generations.” Moreover, among his many poems for diviners, two are very special—one for the father, the other for the son.²⁸ Perhaps the case of Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236-1283), also a Song martyr, draws our attention most. There are nine farewell essays or colophons for diviners in his extant collected works. Of the nine pieces, only one was for a literatus-diviner. Furthermore, two of the geomancers were from families which practiced divination for generations. Another geomancer learned from his grandfather. All of them, according to Wen Tianxiang, were well known in that area.²⁹ All these cases reveal that many diviners learned from their forbears. This is especially true in the second half of Southern Song.

The cases cited above show that learning skills from a *person*, rather than solely from books is a major way to acquire the knowledge. However, this does not mean that book-learning was not important for diviners. So far as we know, there were many books of geomancy in the market at least in the second half of Northern Song. Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) once complained: “Among various kinds of divination, books of geomancy are most absurd.”³⁰

Although we cannot be sure whether those books in the marketplace had been

²⁷ Liu Chenweng, *Xuxi ji*, juan 6, “Zeng Xu Xinyi yishu xu 贈徐心易易數序,” 32b-33a.

²⁸ He Menggui 何夢桂, *Qianzhai ji* 潛齋集, juan 3, “Zeng dili Zhang Yueyan 贈地理章月岩,” “zeng Zhang Yueyang naizi Defu 贈章月岩乃子德父,” 5a-b, 36b; juan 5, “Zeng Liu Jinglei xu 贈李景雷序,” 4b.

²⁹ Wen Tianxiang 文天祥, *Wenshan ji* 文山集, juan 13, “Yu shanren Li Duanji xu 與山人黎端吉序,” “zeng shanren Huang Huanfu xu 贈山人黃煥甫序,” “Zeng Huang Lin Cuiwei xu 贈黃璘翠微序,” 17b, 26a, 27b.

³⁰ Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, *Ercheng ji* 二程集, juan 22a, “Yichuan zalu 伊川雜錄,” 290.

consulted by diviners/geomancers, evidence from the Southern Song suggests that diviners did consult certain books. Wang Yingchen mentioned that the book consulted by a diviner was *The Plan of Yellow River and the Book of River Lo* (*Hetu luoshu* 河圖洛書), which was kept in his family for generations. “No one knows where it came from.”³¹ Zhou Zizhi 周紫芝 (*jinsshi*, 1142) recalled that a friend of his introduced a diviner to him. Later, the diviner brought three hundred volumes of divination books written by him to visit Zhou.³² In an essay Ouyang Shoudao wrote a piece for a diviner, Zhu Yuechuang, Ouyang said: “Zhu Yuechuang employs a book by Recluse Baigu 白顧 to divine, which is totally different from what general diviners employ. Although there are various ways of divination that I have known, I have never heard about this. . . . I have no idea why only Yuechuang acquires this book.”³³ He Menggui had been long acquainted with a geomancer for thirty years. He mentioned that the geomancer got a book titled *Elbow-Back Knack* (*zhouhoujue* 肘後訣). He further pointed out that the geomancer was diligent. “If he did not realize the purport of those ancient, recondite, and *difficult* geomancy books, he would study them until he forgot to sleep or eat.”³⁴ These examples show that book-learning was important for some diviners. According to a Southern Song book catalog, *Zhizhai Shulu Jietie* 直齋書錄解題 by Chen Zhensun 陳振孫 (ca. 1220), a divination book titled *Xinzhai Baizhongjing* 信齋百中經 had been “considered the best by diviners.” Interestingly enough, this book was circulated by the Anqing 安慶 (in modern Jiangxi) prefectural office,³⁵ suggesting that scholar-officials in the area found it

³¹ Wang Yingchen, *Wending ji*, juan 9, “zeng Xu Chaoqing xu,” 9a.

³² Zhou Zizhi 周紫芝, *Taicang timi ji* 太倉稊米集, juan 50, “xinwei zashu 辛未雜書,” 8a-9a.

³³ Ouyang Shoudao, *Xunzhai wenji*, juan 9, “zeng Zhu Yuechuang xu 贈朱月窓序,” 7a-b. Wen Tianxiang also wrote two farewell essays for this person. See his *Wenshan ji*, juan 13, “zeng tanming Zhu Dounan xu 贈談命朱斗南序,” “youzeng Zhu Dounan xu 又贈朱斗南序,” 22b-25b.

³⁴ He Menggui, *Qianzhai ji*, juan 5, “zeng Liu Jinglei xu 贈李景雷序,” 4b.

³⁵ Chen Zhensun, *Zhizhai Shulu Jietie* 直齋書錄解題 (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji chubanshe, 1987), juan

useful.

In a farewell essay for a diviner, Ouyang Shoudao criticized geomancers in general for not reading (or being able to do so):

[V]ulgar geomancers can actually be illiterate and follow only one way [to divine]. If you ask them what they know, they mostly tell you that they learn from their father or teacher when they were children. [What they have learned] is vulgar, rustic, mistaken, and absurd. However, they consider it treasure all their life. They do not read those appropriate books mentioned above. They would rather follow those vulgar, rustic, mistaken, and absurd books.³⁶

Here, Ouyang Shoudao clearly pointed out that some diviners did have books to learn from or to consult, or that those books they did use were simply inappropriate in the eyes of Confucians/literati. Other farewell essays also express the same view.

Furthermore, some diviners even wrote their own books. A geomancer called Yang Nanchuan wrote *Three Dragon Book* (*sanlongjing* 三龍經), claiming: “My skills can make the poor rich, the base noble, and the hard easy.”³⁷ A gentleman from a family, which had chosen its own tomb sites for several generations and had prospered since, decided to publish their secret of success. He entitled the book *Utmost Keys of Geomancy* (*dili xinji* 地理心機).³⁸ It is very likely that books such as these two were common in Southern Song. Also according to Chen Zhensun’s catalog, at least four divination books

12, 373.

³⁶ Ouyang Shoudao, *Xunzhai wenji*, juan 11, “Zeng Song Yifu xu,” 7a-b.

³⁷ Xie Fangde, *Dieshan ji*, juan 2, “Zeng dili Yang Nanchuan xu 贈地理楊南川序,” 39a-b.

³⁸ Fang Fengchen 方逢辰, *Jiaofeng wenji* 蛟峯文集, juan 6, “Ba Hong Zhitang dili xinji 跋洪智堂地理心機,” 13b-14b.

were compiled or written by diviners.³⁹

We may also look at these books from another angle. Yuan Neo-Confucian thinker Wu Cheng 吳澄 (1249-1333) pointed out there were

The “Dynastic Bibliography” (*yiwenzhi* 藝文志) of the *History of Han* catalogued *Features of Land for Palaces and Dwellings* (*gongzhai dixing* 宮宅地形) in twenty chapters, which is a geomancy book. However, it was only kept in government offices and not seen among the people. Not only there was no such book among the people, but no such skills. . . . Yang Wenggei learned the skills from the secretary in Tang court. Later, he fled to Jiangxi to escape the Huang Chao rebellion. He taught geomancy to the locals and, from then on, geomancy was prevalent in Jiangxi. It was a narrow escape from death when [Yang] fled from Chang’an in a hurry. He had to trudge more than ten thousand *li* and barely survived. How could he have any books with him? Generally speaking, he instructed people orally and transmitted what he knew to them. There was no book. After the skills were gradually spread out, books [of geomancy] increased as well. Nevertheless, [those books] are simply the works of busybodies.⁴⁰

If we compare what I cite above about Wu Cheng’s recollection of meeting an illiterate geomancer with what he says here, it seems that non-literati diviners had a way of learning divination different from the literati’s. None of the latter mentioned above came from a family that practiced divination for generations, and did not even claim to

³⁹ These books are *Luoluzi* 珞珞子, *Wuxing sanming zhi’nan* 五星三命指南, *Yusige* 聿斯歌, and *Yizhai Baizhongjing* 怡齋百中經. See Chen Zhensun, *Zhizhai Shulu Jietie*, *juan* 12, 371-374.

⁴⁰ Wu Cheng, *Wu Wenzheng ji*, *juan* 16, “Diili zhenquan xu 地理真詮序,” 2a-2b. Also see his “Zeng zangshi Lai Shanquan xu 贈葬師賴山泉序,” *ibid.*, *juan* 26, 16a-b.

have learned it from their fathers. Under such circumstances, *oral* tradition was very important. In other words, non-literati diviners had to learn face to face from their “teacher.” Book-learning alone was not enough, so that in this area, the influence of printed works appears limited. Nevertheless, given the divination works available in the bookmarket, we should consider their circulation and uses.

Circulation of Divination Books

How many divination books were circulated in the book market? Since we do not have numerical data, the only way to guess is to examine the descriptions by literati. In an farewell essay, Wang Yan 王炎 (1137-1218) made mention of that many geomancers visited him after his wife passed away. Not greatly trusting in geomancers, he collected various schools of geomancy books to choose the tomb site himself. He took some books as examples and commented on them.⁴¹ In order to understand the appropriate way for those some to bury their parents, Cheng Xian 程先 (ca. 1210) collected geomancy books and found that “After Guo Pu, [those books] are enough to fill the roof and cause cows to perspire hauling the cart. They were all written by later generations.”⁴² Ouyang Shoudao recalled: “There were plenty of geomancy books. Although I am ignorant and ill-informed, I have gone through more than twenty books. As for those that were vulgar, rustic, mistaken, and absurd, I dumped many after skimming.”⁴³ Obviously, by the Southern Song, there were already many divination books in the market.

Moreover, a collectanea, *Complete Collection of Geomancy* (*Dili quanshu* 地理全

⁴¹ Wang Yan, *Shuangxi leigao* 雙溪類稿, *juan* 25, “Song Cao Chengzhi xu 送曹成之序,” 17b-18a.

⁴² Cheng Xian, “ba dilishu 跋地理書,” in Cheng Minzheng 程敏政 ed., *Xin'an wenxian zhi* 新安文獻志, *juan* 22, 18a.

⁴³ Ouyang Shoudao, *Xunzhai wenji*, *juan* 11, “Zeng Song Yifu xu,” 7a.

書), appeared in the book market. It was first mentioned by Ouyang Shoudao in late Southern Song. He was sorry about a book, which was not specified, was simply left out of this collectanea. Wu Cheng was the second person made mention of the collection. He recalled: “[B]y the end of Song, every literati family [in Jiangxi] took pride in possessing geomancy books; every person who busied themselves on the way wanted to sell their skills of geomancy.” Furthermore, he remembered that when he was young, he “saw the *Complete Collection of Geomancy* in the book market. The collection was so huge that could fill a cart.” And the collectanea were printed in Jian’an 建安 (in modern northern Fujian).⁴⁴ Although we are not sure whether the collectanea could be sold separately, this collection must have included many geomancy books.

The circulation of books on geomancy probably had something to do with the reemphasis of a certain kind of consciousness. As Patricia Ebrey has pointed out, Cheng Yi opposed theories of geomancy. One major reasons is that he thought that: “If the intention of burial is not to lay the parents’ bodies to rest, but only to benefit the descendants, this is certainly not the purpose of filial sons who bury their parents.”⁴⁵ The Buddhist monk Shi Qisong 釋契嵩 (1007-1072) also said: “To bury parents for the purpose of wealth and social standing is nonsense [propagated] by geomancers to confuse ordinary people.”⁴⁶ Nevertheless, latter development prove that people’s general concern was for “benefiting descendants,” although it was apparently not taken seriously by many in the Northern Song.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7b, Wu Cheng, *Wu Wenzhang ji*, juan 16, “Dili zhenquan xu,” 2a-2b; juan 23, “Dili leiyao xu 地理類要序,” 11b.

⁴⁵ Cheng Yi and Cheng Hao, *Ercheng ji*, juan 10, “Zangshuo 葬說,” 623.

⁴⁶ Shi Qisong, *Tanji ji* 鐔津集, juan 11, “Yu Zhou Ganzhi yuanwei shu 與周感之員外書,” 10a.

As the practice became more prevalent in Southern Song, even scholar-officials found it hard to avoid its influence. Zhu Xi is certainly an example in point, as Ebrey discusses in her paper. Zhou Bida 周必大 (1126-1209) is another. In the spring of 1167, Zhou was traveling in Jiangnan with his friends, including a Buddhist monk practising geomancy. They would look for good sites along the way.⁴⁷ However, the consciousness that burying parents ought to be in accord with filial piety was reemphasized. When Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180) served in Jingjiang 靜江 (in modern Guangxi), he discovered that, upon suffering from disasters or illness, locals usually listened to sorcerers' [*shiwu* 師巫] advice, and considered the tomb sites of their fathers or grandfathers to blame. Therefore, they would dig out the coffins and store them in other places, not reburying the corpses for years, a practice called "excavating ancestors [*chuzu* 出祖]." Zhang Shi prohibited such practice and admonished: "How can it be that, since your fathers or grandfathers had been buried, you presumptuously claim that their tomb sites are unfavorable to you and dig them out?"⁴⁸ When Chen Zhu learned the death of his younger brother, he discussed burial with one of his nephews. In the postscript of the letter, he said: "One definitely should not be influenced by geomancers. . . If they say that practicing geomancy is for benefiting descendants, then [you] are pursuing benefits while exploiting your father. This is most unfilial, let alone there is no such thing."⁴⁹ Here, we see the awareness of such an attitude emerge again.

Due mainly to the reemergence of such an idea, the above-mentioned Cheng Xian considered that "burial was an important matter [*songsu dashi ye* 送死大事也]." Therefore, even though books on geomancy were suspicious, "without those books there

⁴⁷ Zhou Bida, *Wenzhong ji* 文忠集, *juan* 167, "Fanzhou youshan lu 泛舟遊山錄," 13a-16a.

⁴⁸ Zhang Shi, *Nanxuan ji* 南軒集, *juan* 15, "Yusuwen 諭俗文," 15b.

⁴⁹ Chen Zhu, *Bentang ji*, *juan* 81, "Wen Boqiudi si yu zhi shen 聞伯求弟死與姪深," 13b.

would be no way to let latter generations understand to burial being carefully attended.” He thus collected excerpts from books on geomancy, compiling them into a book.⁵⁰ Accepting geomancy burying one’s parents was probably best elaborated by Ouyang Shaodao.

Master Cheng Yi said: “If [you] send for a quack when parents are ill, you are neither loving nor filial.” Sons cannot be ignorant of medicine. It is especially important when parents pass away. Can you send for a mediocre geomancer? Master Zhu [Xi] said: “When the ancients buried [the deceased], they all choose the tomb site by divination. Nowadays, people are ignorant of divination. They can only follow current practices and send for geomancers to choose it.” I think that among geomancers there are good and bad ones. [If the geomancer’s] skill is bad, he is like a quack. Not all doctors are quacks. If you consider that there is no [good] doctor simply because [you met] [a quack], that is not correct.

[What I said that] sons should know about medicine has two meanings. First, if you know roughly the symptoms and treatments [of some diseases], your parent will not be mistreated by quacks. Second, there are doctors and doctors. [We should] get in touch with them on ordinary days. We can measure how good they are with what we know. If parents unfortunately passed away, we should likewise choose geomancers. . . . When parents are alive, we should keep their bodies comfortable. When parents passed away, we should keep their bodies comfortable. It is the same that we choose doctors as we choose geomancers. Alas, when parents are alive, [we as] sons always carefully avoid mentioning [the matter] indeed. When parents unfortunately passed away, relatives and friends frequently recommend [the

⁵⁰ Cheng Xian, “ba dilishu,” 18a-b.

geomancers] they know. Suggestions pour in. We do not know [how good] their skills [are]. We are confused by recommenders' suggestions from without and are forced by urgency of deciding the burial date from within. Besides, geomancy is not what we are familiar. It is hardly impossible not to make wrong decision.⁵¹

Here, Ouyang Shoudao's attitude differed slightly from Cheng Yi's. While Cheng Yi rejected geomancy, Ouyang conditionally espoused it. Obviously, literati like Cheng Xian and Ouyang Shoudao acknowledged that geomancy had been widely accepted. It was useless to curb the trend. Rather, what they wanted to do was to direct such custom into an "appropriate" way. They thus emphasized that filial piety should be the major concern for burial.

Whether the viewpoints such as those of Cheng Xian or Ouyang Shoudao were well received is unclear. But when they tried to associate geomancy with filial piety, it justified literati's interests in geomancy, or even motivated literati to write, compile, or annotated books on geomancy. Some prefaces for books on geomancy testify such development.⁵²

Concluding Remarks

To what extent did printing technology in Song facilitated the spread of divination books? The picture is complicated. First, if we look at this question through how non-literati diviners learned their skills, then the answer is "not much" at least in

⁵¹ Ouyang Shoudao 歐陽守道, *Xunzhai wenji* 巽齋文集, juan 8, "Song buzangzhe Qin sheng gui Ningdu xu 送卜葬者覃生歸寧都序," 10b-12a.

⁵² See Lü Wu, *Zhupo leigao*, "Huowen xu 或問序," 280; Wu Cheng, *Wu Wenzheng ji*, juan 23, "Dili leiyao xu," "Zangshuzhu xu 葬書注序," 11a-12b.

Northern Song. As we have seen in Southern Song cases, oral instructions were important to them. In those cases, although they did have books to consult, those books were rarely seen in the book market. How books were passed down to them diviners was hardly discussed. Actually, one cannot help thinking that these “books” were all manuscripts. Under such circumstances, print played no role in the transmission of these divination books.

Second, if we look at the question through literati-diviners, i.e., diviners from literati backgrounds, the answer is “maybe” imprints did have an impact on the spread of divination texts the Northern Song. We have examined some cases in which the literati included divination in their studies, although we cannot be sure where those divination books came from. Nevertheless, we need to remember that the *Book of Changes* was considered a divination book, and there were many different annotated versions of this work, not to mention books on astronomy or astrology. It is certainly possible that literati purchased general divination books in the market.

Nevertheless, as awareness and uses of divination spread, diviners might write down what they knew into books, bookshops might compile their own version, and literati might wrote divination books. The market for divination books was expanding, especially in the Southern Song.