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The Process and Reasons for the Development of Printing Industry in Five Southeastern Place in Ming China

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Abstract: Since ancient times, local histories have been the necessary 'heirlooms' for historical and political records in various places. After the emergence of printing, the two forms of 'copying' and 'carving' coexisted in the compilation process of local records. In the middle and late Ming Dynasty, the economy of the southeastern region prospered, and the development of printing technology matured, and the printing industry ushered in the peak, and the traditional 'copying' was gradually replaced by the high-quality 'carving'. This paper reflects the specific period of printing transmutation and the fluctuation of the book market in the Ming Dynasty by studying the data of local history editions in some areas of the southeast during the Ming Dynasty and explores the social reasons behind the change and its influence on the future generations, in order to provide strong conclusions for the history of the development of China's printing and publishing industry.

Keywords: Local history, printing, publishing history, Ming dynasty, southeast region.

1. Introduction

Nearly 10,000 types of local histories exist in China, recording the political, economic, cultural, social, geographic, and natural history of each local administrative region in China, making it a unique local encyclopaedia in China. Since the emergence of Huayang Guozhi in the Eastern Jin Dynasty, local gazetteers have gradually become the best way to integrate the local history and customs and culture of the local government in all places throughout the dynasties, and later on, they also added the content of political colours, such as the construction of cities and ponds, recorded by the local government. Since the Ming Dynasty, the social and economic recovery and the breakthrough of printing technology made a large number of local histories to be printed, and the phenomenon of 'carving' instead of 'copying' began to become the mainstream trend in the publishing industry.

The changes brought about by the technological breakthrough of woodblock printing in the mid-Ming period have been discussed by previous authors, but they have mainly tended to be used as a link in the history of printing and publishing in China or as a separate argument for the whole of movable-type printing in the Ming dynasty [1, 2]. Very few people take the official history book of local records, which is the most representative of the transformation of 'copybook' to 'engraved book', as the entry point to analyse the data and draw conclusions. This paper tries to use the Joint Catalogue of Chinese Local Records as a reference blueprint, and Wuxi, Changzhou, Suzhou, Nanjing in Jiangsu Province and Jianyang in Fujian Province as the representative regions, to analyse the evolution of the 'codices' and 'engravings' of the local records of the various prefectures and counties in the

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southeastern region of the Ming Dynasty through visual data, in order to explore the trend of this phenomenon. The study analyses the evolution of 'codices' and 'engravings' of local histories in various prefectures and counties in the southeastern part of the Ming Dynasty through visual data in order to explore the reasons behind this phenomenon.

2. Reform and Development of the Printing Press

After the invention and popularisation of engraving and printing in the mid to late Tang Dynasty, the ancient Chinese society invented movable type printing by Bisheng during the Qingli period of the Northern Song Dynasty, which was known as 'ceramic movable type printing'. Soon after the invention of clay movable type, wood movable type was invented. Wooden movable type printing was widely used in the Ming and Qing dynasties. At present, there are about one hundred types of wood type books of the Ming Dynasty whose titles can be examined. Most of them were printed in the Wanli period, and very few were printed before Hongzhi [1]. In the process of printing with wooden movable type, China successively adopted tin movable type, copper movable type and lead movable type printing.

A notable example of early metal movable-type printing is the 1490 publication of the Song Zhuchen Zouyi by the Huasui Huitong Guan during the Hongzhi reign of the Ming Dynasty. This printed work is recognized as the earliest surviving metal movable-type print in Chinese history. Copper movable type was the most widely used metal movable type in China, and the earliest copper movable type printed book is currently the Imperial Test Ceremony printed in the Yuan Dynasty. These techniques were developed by the private sector and then gradually used for official publishing. As a record of the official information of various regions of the Fangzhi, in this process also follow the trend, gradually from the copybook to the engraved book. Among them, Zhengde Dongguang County Record is the only local record printed with copper movable type in China. All of the above reflects that in the context of the times, the official government has always been at the forefront of the use of printing technology.

3. Problems in the Selection of Transcriptions of Local Journals

Copper movable type printing became popular in the late 15th and early 16th centuries around southern China. Among them, Wuxi Hua and the families were the most famous for their copper movable type printing. Due to the limited economic development, copper movable type printing was mainly popular in Wuxi, Changzhou, Suzhou, Nanjing, Jiangsu Province and Jianyang, Fujian Province, etc. According to the Joint Catalogue of Local Records of China, the number of copies and engravings in the above five regions is now counted [2].

Table 1: Statistical chart of the editions of the five south-eastern local histories of the Ming Dynasty.

district		vintages	Hongwu to Zhengde period (1368-1521)		Jiajing to Wanli period(1522-1620)		Taichang to Chongzhen period (1620-1644)		note
		Local History	copying	carving	copying	carving	copying	carving	There are several versions of each square journal, for example, Nanjing Shangyuan
Jiangsu	Changzhou	5	1	1	3	9	0	1	
	Wuxi	6	1	2	0	2	0	1	
	Suzhou	10	2	4	1	6	0	2	
	Nanjing	10	1	4	3	9	0	2	
Fujian	Jianyang	12	2	4	2	8	0	0	

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Table 1: (continued).

Total	43	7	15	9	34	0	6	County Journal has 'Ming Wanli 25th year of the carving', 'copy' and 'Republic of China 37th year of the lead-printed book', here on the Shangyuan County Statistics for the Ming Wanli 1, copy 1, discard the Republic of China.

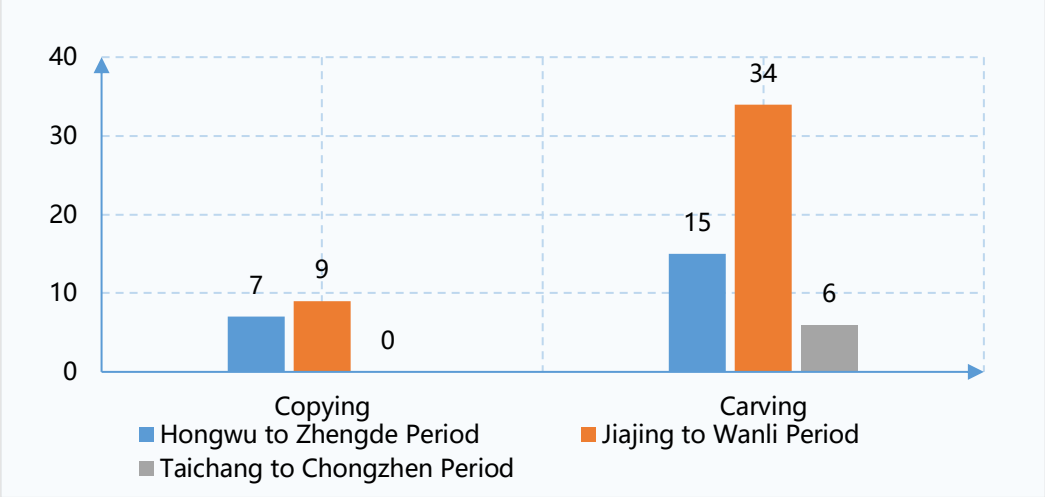

Figure 1: Comparison of the number of copies and engravings in five places in Southeast China during the Ming Dynasty.

With the rapid economic development of the Southeast in the mid- to late-Ming period, movable type printing appeared from the Southeast, with the most notable popularity in the Jiangnan area. Although each region has its own peculiarities, the overall prevalence can still reflect certain problems. Through the above data, it can be obtained that in the more than one hundred and fifty years between Hongwu and Zhengde, the bases of codices and engravings were 7 and 15; however, in less than one hundred years from Jiajing to Wanli, the publishing industry of the Ming Dynasty entered a period of heyday. The number and types of engraved books grew rapidly during this period, and codices were gradually being converted into engraved books and thus becoming known to readers. As can be seen from Figure 1, Jiajing to Wanli years, the figure in the local history of engraved books from 15 up to 34, an increase of up to 127%; at the same time, the increase in copies of only 28.6% [3]. To Tai

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Chang to Chongzhen years, the number of copies is zero, the number of engraved books has decreased, the reason for this, or because of the stage by the time span is small, the end of the Ming Dynasty, such as the impact of national war.

In short, the number of copies of local histories in the Ming Dynasty experienced a slow growth after a substantial decline, while the number of engraved copies experienced a substantial rise after a decline but has become the mainstream trend of the publishing industry. The intersection of the two and the transformation of time can be locked in the Jiajing to Wanli years. This is both the inevitable needs of social development, but also the official hand to facilitate the inevitable result of deliberate guidance.

4. Reasons for Changes in the Ratio of Inscriptions to Codices

The Ming Dynasty was a glorious period in the history of Chinese printing and publishing, and also an important period of transition and transformation. In this time and space, despite the prosperity of the Ming engraving industry, but the pre-copying activities are still very popular, with the characteristics of the masses, the Zhengtong period of the internal collection of books still accounted for 70% of the copy [4]. After the accumulation of time, a large number of Ming codices appeared at the same time, the local history books produced by the printing press sprang up after the Jiajing. Historians Susumu Inoue and Zhou Shaoming are of the view that the codex gave way to the printed books in circulation only in the late Ming Dynasty [5, 6]. The reasons for this phenomenon are analysed.

4.1. Economic Development in South-East China

Ming Dynasty national stability, national strength, rapid economic development in the southeast, and even the emergence of a clear division of labour market trend, especially the upstream and downstream industrial and commercial industry chain is perfect, the period can be called to a certain extent the phenomenon of rapid development of the commodity economy. Under the efficient operation of society, the way of book publishing was inevitably affected by the need for faster and wider dissemination of information, and the media and carriers carrying information were inevitably innovated in the face of the new social needs. The emergence of movable type printing, which not only solved the problems of inefficiency and waste of material in retyping, but also minimised cost consumption, became the mainstream of the times.

4.2. Cultural Development in the South-East

On the cultural level, since the Song Dynasty, the rise of the civic class and the massive demand for culture from the lower classes prompted the need for society to produce inexpensive and clearly read books. During the Yuan Dynasty, the cultural development process was hindered by the minority regimes until the Ming Dynasty, when movable-type printing was popularised and the appearance of engraved books compensated for the slow circulation speed, small number of editions, and difficulty in reading of copied books, thus conforming to the trend of the times and adapting to the people's needs. As an important medium for recording the historical and cultural heritage of various places, the transformation of the form of local records is also an inevitable trend of cultural development.

4.3. Promotion of the Political System

Ming Dynasty rulers throughout the country to promote learning and respect for Confucianism, the prefectures and counties are set up official schools. In the countryside, private ‘community school’ is also implemented. The increase in the number of readers inevitably led to the development of the

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printing and publishing industry. Coupled with the implementation of the Ming Dynasty clan system, many of the royal relatives assigned to various parts of the country, and pay great attention to culture and education, for the carving of the book is strongly advocated. Under the influence of this culture and system, the publishing industry in the Ming Dynasty and the previous dynasty is the most different from the emergence of the publication of the 'fief editions', or "fanfubens," which were printed versions produced by princely states in various fiefdoms. These high-quality editions were notable for their refinement and craftsmanship and played a crucial role in promoting the publishing culture of the Ming Dynasty.

However, local history transcripts have not been completely replaced by engraved books for three reasons. First, the local history itself has a strong historical continuity, many historical development and official records are passed from generation to generation, in the process of circulation in the previous dynasty will inevitably be pen errors or copying errors, which leads to the issue that 'local chronicles lack good editions', each version has its own historical value. Each version has its own historical value. When the latest version of the local history of a certain region is being redone, it must be combined with the previous versions. Second, the copy of the book was intended for the lower-class people to create a 'copyist' and other positions, which is the market needs; also, for some poor people to open the road to reading. Many scholars in the Ming Dynasty in the early years have had the experience of hard copying. Yang Shoucheng from Guoxian recalled, "In my youth, I was poor and often borrowed books to copy, but my handwriting was extremely unpleasant." This statement reflects the struggles of accessing knowledge and the challenges faced by scholars in historical China [7]. It is because of the poverty of the family, he needed to copy books.

The acquisition of engraved books was not so cheap and easy, which was mainly due to economic considerations. It is also because the engraved copies were not easy to buy, these readers chose to make copies themselves, forming the codex. Third, the existence of the codex for the official class, scholars (including hermits, calligraphers, etc.) and other social elites in the Ming Dynasty to provide a willingness to spend a highway to enjoy a more 'private custom' meaning of the codex, which is also the literati and elegant people between the wind and snow a kind of sentiment and means.

5. Conclusion

The invention of printing, engraving and copy of the contradiction between the book will arise, especially in the printing boom of the Ming Dynasty, the same square Zhi's engraving and copy of the market at the same time more often than not. Ming Dynasty book market is a mixture of a large number of engraved books and copies of the era, and due to the development of economic and technological development is unstoppable towards the number of engraved books more than the number of copies of the established fact, but this is not a cultural history of a change of dynasties, but the inevitable result of the development of the times. Copies of the value of the collection and time-consuming will make it into the high-end market and the bottom of society, and the mainstream market in the middle will inevitably be replaced by engraved copies.

Through the statistics of some local histories in five places in Southeast China, it shows the big picture from a small perspective and understand a great reform in social and cultural dissemination in the middle and late Ming Dynasty (especially during the period from Jiajing to Wanli). This reform also thoroughly affected the writing mode of local histories in the Qing Dynasty and later generations, and the contents of the books under the engraved mode became more standardised and systematic, and to a certain extent, the original characteristic writing style of each place was killed in an implicit way. Since then, in the writing of local histories in various parts of China, the codex has been reduced to the second echelon, and the dispute over the status of 'codex' and 'carving' in the history of Chinese publishing has basically come to an end.

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