

Chinese Medieval chronicles in Song 宋 (960–1279) booklists

A survey

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By the Song period (960–1279), very few chronicles compiled before the tenth century were preserved in the imperial and private book collections. Early chronicles served as sources for the compilation of dynastic histories and comprehensive accounts; later, as their transmission was no longer valued, they were largely forgotten. As it is widely known, a great deal of these texts was neither transmitted nor fully lost, as fragments survived in Song institutional and literary compendia. Thanks to these compendia, we can glance at their content and form, and make hypotheses concerning their value, readership, and early transmission. Descriptive booklists of the Song -eleventh to the thirteenth century- imperial and private collections are another valuable source of information on the content, cataloging criteria, and later reception of medieval works of a historical nature. Through a reading of the synoptic descriptions of the items listed in the *biannian*, “accounts arranged chronologically,” sections of book catalogs from the Song period, this article aims to cast some light on the features of these early chronicles.

Keywords: booklist, chronicle, *gushi*, *biannian*, *Chongwen zongmu*

1. Towards the definition of a rubric

Few of the medieval historical narratives written in the form of the chronicles and annals listed in the booklists of the imperial library holdings survived the Song 宋 (960–1279) period. As it is well known, most of these texts were transmitted to us only partially in fragments collected in later compendia and encyclopedia. We therefore know little of their value at the time of their production, circulation, and later transmission. Indeed, the interest of potential early modern readers shifted to works that best met their tastes and needs, and this led to the gradual abandonment of the transmission of works considered obsolete. An interest in chronologically arranged general histories of the empire from antiquity grew in the early eleventh century and flourished in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and later periods. The most eminent example, and model for later historical works, is the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑 (Comprehensive mirror for the aid in governance), the comprehensive chronicle of pre-imperial and imperial history from the Warring States period to 959, compiled by the Song historian

Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019–1086) in the second half of the eleventh century. Even more relevant for the change in readers' taste, and for the significant enlargement of the readership, is the legacy of *tongjian* 通鑑 (comprehensive mirror), or *gangjian* 綱鑑 (outline and mirror), texts that developed in the ensuing centuries, with its different branches and abridgments, and especially Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200) *Tongjian gangmu* 通鑑綱目 (Outline and detail of the Comprehensive mirror for aid in governance), a digest of the *Zizhi tongjian* whose main purpose was didactic. Song to Qing *gangjian* aligned with the ancient annalistic tradition, presenting themselves as heirs and innovators of a normative genre.¹ The earlier chronicles and annals were almost entirely overshadowed by the new comprehensive histories, their fortunes entirely dependent on the antiquarian interest of private collectors. This was not enough to ensure transmission to the present day, and by the time of the Southern Song book collections we find mostly *tongjian* titles. Any survey of medieval chronicles necessarily deals with booklists and the information about book titles preserved in them. When we are lucky, these catalogues provide thorough synoptic descriptions of the books, but most often they offer just a few sketchy details. This article aims at providing a general overview of medieval - mostly Tang to early Song - chronicles and annals in Song imperial and private holdings. Through a reading of the synoptic descriptions of the *biannian* 編年, "accounts arranged chronologically," sections of the book catalogues of Song imperial and private collections, it describes some aspects of their content, format, and authorship.

Throughout the Chinese early medieval period, the ruling houses periodically commissioned the compilation of booklists that served the dual purpose of cataloguing the imperial collections and recovering and censoring texts in private holdings scattered around the empire. The seventh-century *Sui shu* 隋書 (Book of Sui) holds a rubric for booklists (*bulu pian* 簿錄篇) that lists thirty catalogues compiled between the Han 漢 (206 BC–220 AD) and the Sui 隋 (581–617) period (*Sui shu* 1973: 33.991). The system of book classification underwent significant changes in the early medieval period: the early six-part rubric devised by the Han scholars Liu Xiang 劉向 (77–6 BC) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (49 BC–23 AD), the *Qi lüe* 七略 (Seven summaries),² underwent modifications, and new sections were introduced in order to catalogue more accurately the enormous number of texts from the imperial libraries and to track down books from all over the empire. In the third century, a four-branches (*sibu*

¹ For a comprehensive overview of Ming Qing *gangjian* histories see Standaert (2018) and Lee (2008).

² For recent in-depth discussions of the early imperial book collections see Fölster (2018); see also Hunter (2018).

四部) systematization was allegedly devised by the Western Jin 西晉 (266–316) officials Zheng Mo 鄭默 (213–280), an assistant of the Director of the Palace Library (*Bishu jian* 秘書監), and Xun Xu 荀勗 (ca. 210–289), the Director of the same institution. The four-branches system was used to catalogue the holdings of the empire, a project commissioned by the early Jin court and undertaken in the years 281–83 (Yu 1963: 87ff, Goodman 2010: 305–312, and Dudbridge 2017: 150). This early four-branches catalogue included for the first time a rubric for “historical records, old [court] matters, registers of imperial digests, and miscellaneous matters” 史記、舊事、皇覽簿、雜事 (*Sui shu* 1973: 32.906).³ Whereas in the Han bibliographic catalogue “Yiwenzhi” 藝文志 (Treatise on classics and literature) the rubric *chunqiu* 春秋 listed the exegetical commentaries and works of historical nature, in the new four-branches system *chunqiu* would become the exclusive rubric of the numerous commentarial and exegetical traditions linked to the Eastern Zhou chronicle of interstate relations traditionally ascribed to Confucius, the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Annals), as canonized in Han times (Dudbridge 2020: 197).

The introduction of a rubric for historical texts clearly shows that there was an ever-increasing number and variety of texts of a historical and institutional nature that needed to be classified and catalogued. By separating “the growing body of historical records away from the Confucian scriptures into a section of its own” Xun Xu found “a rational way to redistribute bulky holdings” (Dudbridge 2017: 150). Even more significantly, the new history rubric testifies to the development of history writing—in the most general sense of the term that included all kind of archival and institutional material—towards an independent discipline, recognized for its autonomy from the tradition of the classics (*jing* 經).

During the fifth and sixth centuries, the southern courts commissioned the compilation of several lists of the imperial holdings. The compilers experimented and modified the existing rubrics based on cataloguing needs. During the Southern Qi 南齊 (479–502) and Southern Liang 南梁 (502–557) periods, Wang Jian 王儉 (452–489) compiled a *Qizhi* 七志 (Seven records), and Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 (479–536) a

³ On the compilation of the “Jingji zhi” see Twitchett (1992: 87ff). Recent studies focused on the compilation and meaning of single rubrics of the monograph: see Sung (2010) and Durrant (2017: 184–200) on the *shi* 史 (historiography) rubric, Blitstein (2019, 287–322) on the *ji* 集 (compilations) rubric; see also Dien (2012: 509–535, here 513–515). For a general discussion on the evolution of the bibliographic categories see Li (2017: 163–169). On book catalogues in the medieval period see, in the same volume, Dudbridge (2017: 149). As is the case for all the bibliographic monographs included in the dynastic histories, the “Jingji zhi” is not a descriptive catalogue, in that it does not include a synopsis for each item and provides only the name of the author (when the attribution is known). Qing scholars expanded the information concerning the works listed, see for instance Yao ([1955] 1998, 4: 5039–5904).

Qilu 七錄 (Seven registers). Both catalogues formally maintained Liu Xin's division into six compartments, yet with some changes: allegedly, Ruan Xiaoxu's rubric for historical works was called "register of records and accounts/biographies," *ji zhuan lu* 記傳錄 (*Sui shu* 1973: 33.907).

In the seventh century, the Wei-Jin system of classification into four branches would go on to be officially adopted for the compilation of the "Jingji zhi" 經籍志 (Treatise on classics and literature), the book catalogue of the Sui dynastic history (*Sui shu*). Like its earlier model, the "Jingji zhi" includes a rubric for historical and institutional works, and for the first time the term *shi* 史 (history) is used as an umbrella term for the category.⁴ After the compilation of the "Jingji zhi," the sectional classification for historical works would remain relatively unchanged, with only minor modifications, throughout the medieval period until the thirteenth century, and all novelty in history writing would be assessed according to this scheme (Sung 2010: 3).

The impressive number of items listed in the rubric *shi* shows the popularity of the genre in the early medieval period.⁵ Thirteen subsections form the monograph's history rubric, of which five list historical texts. The remaining eight rubrics include geographical works (*dili ji* 地理記), genealogies (*puxi* 譜系), and administrative compendia of archival documents from different imperial agencies; the last rubric is dedicated to "booklists" (*bulu* 簿錄). Chronicles and annals are classified as "ancient-style histories" (*gushi* 古史)⁶ and occupy the second position after the "standard histories" (*zhengshi* 正史). Next are the "miscellaneous histories" (*zashi* 雜史), the "histories of usurpers" (*bashi* 霸史) and the "court diaries or notes on [daily] activities and repose" (*qiju zhu* 起居注). The latter, even if written in the form of a day-by-day chronicle, has a separate rubric for several reasons. For a start, it is plausible that the extremely high number of *qiju zhu* texts collected in the imperial holdings required a separate rubric. And second, by the fifth and sixth centuries, the production of *qiju zhu* had become the prerogative of specific offices, and hence the texts produced may have already been assigned such a

⁴ On the transformation of the meaning of the term *shi* see Hartman and De Blasi (2012: 17-37, here 21-22).

⁵ The "Jingji zhi" contains 874 titles of historical works; its correspondent rubric *chunqiu* 春秋, a subsection of the "classics" (*jing* 經) in the bibliographic catalogue of the *Hanshu* 漢書, includes only eleven works (see Dien 2012: 509-35, here 511).

⁶ Sung (2010: 10) translates *gushi* as "ancient historiography," meaning "historiography produced in antiquity and later historiographical works produced in a similar chronological style."

rubric in the governmental archives.⁷ The cataloguing criteria were thus necessarily linked to the use and provenance of the texts.

Use and provenance were but one of the cataloguing criteria. The postface to the “ancient-style histories” (*gushi*) rubric begins with the assertion that chronicles such as Xun Yue’s 荀悅 (148–209) *Hanji* 漢紀 (Annals of the [Former] Han) display a narrative in which “speeches are brief, and affairs are detailed” 言約而事詳 (*Sui shu* 1973: 33.959). As is well known, the *Hanji*, as a summary of Ban Gu’s 班固 (32–92) *Hanshu* 漢書 (Book of [Former] Han), is generally praised for its substantial account of events, a much-appreciated quality in the historiographic practice that goes back to Confucius’ idea of history.⁸ The focus on narratives of events, arranged chronologically, is a necessary but not sufficient feature for chronicles to be classified as “ancient-style histories.” Indeed, the designation refers to the value attached to the historical narratives listed therein, as histories of the deeds of rulers and their governments acting within their rights as legitimate sovereigns. These histories are not restricted to chronicles of court activity but deal also with interstate diplomatic relations and foreign exchanges. The designation “ancient-style histories” implicitly hints at the role of historians as having been derived from court officials in charge of compiling state chronicles in the Warring States period, before the creation of a unified empire under the Han.⁹ Positioning itself in line with the pre-imperial “old” tradition, the genre responds to the urge to return to chronicling competing states. Freed of the rigid exegetical Han tradition, the genre still retains the moral authority to confer judgment on the work of legitimate sovereigns and their governments. The postface to the rubric reiterates the idea of a political and cultural continuity with the Wei-Jin legacy (of both the recent and ancient past) by linking the revival of interest in histories written in the chronological format to the archeological find of the Ji tomb annals (*Ji zhong jinian* 汲冢紀年),¹⁰ the bamboo texts allegedly recovered from the tomb of King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318–296 BC) in the Ji 汲 Commandery in 280. The “Jingji zhi” treats the recovery of the Warring States Wei and Jin states’ court annals as the main motive for early medieval historians’ revival of annals, recognized as “the standard rule of the scribes’ records in ancient times” 古史記之

⁷ The number of texts included in the *qiju zhu* section is far larger than the *gushi* section (44 items, 1189 *juan* against 34 items, 666 *juan*; *Sui shu* 1973: 33.957ff). On the *qiju zhu* see Twitchett (1992: 35–42).

⁸ The critique of *Hanshu*'s verbosity is widely known; for an in-depth examination of the idea of substantiality as a positive quality of historiographic practice see Vogelsang (2005: 143–175).

⁹ For a discussion on the role of chronicles in the Warring States period see Lewis (2012, 440–463).

¹⁰ Also known as *Zhushu jinian* 竹書紀年 (Bamboo documents organized chronologically). See Shaughnessy (2006: 131ff) and Goodman (2010: 279ff).

正法. Beginning with the Ji tomb bamboo annal discovery, whenever scholars “had something to record and narrate, in most cases they would rely on the annal style” 有所著述，多依春秋之體 (*Sui shu* 1973: 33.959). This sentence also attests to the sense of nostalgia for an idealized past and the antiquarianism that characterized the revived interest in earlier annalistic writing.

The “ancient-style histories” rubric includes many works that were produced in the southern dynasties and that are not connected to the discovery of the bamboo annals. Many of these works served as primary sources for the compilation of dynastic histories in the ensuing decades and had already been lost by the Tang period. One of these is the *Qi Chunqiu* 齊春秋 (Annals of Qi), a chronicle of the Southern Qi dynasty (470–502) compiled by Wu Jun 吳均 (469–520). The history of its transmission is interesting because, despite the ban imposed by emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 (r. 502–549) on the circulation of the book and the subsequent destruction of the copy submitted to the court, an edition of the text survived well into the Tang period (Dien 2012: 527).¹¹ The title appears in the Tang and Song booklists and disappears thereafter.

Some of the works listed as “miscellaneous histories” (*zashi*) happen to be in chronological form. In a similar manner, the rubric “histories of usurpers” (*bashi*) for instance, clearly attests to the illegitimacy of the kingdoms whose history is told in the chronicles listed therein. The latter display different formats; some might have been written in the chronological form (for instance, the *Dunhuang shilu* 敦煌實錄, Veritable records of Dunhuang, now lost), while others are histories written in the annal-biography form. The latter group includes the *Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志 (Record on the states south of Mt. Hua) by Chang Qu 常璩 (ca. 291–361), a history of the southwestern states of modern-day Sichuan, Shu-Han 蜀漢 (221–263) and Cheng-Han 成漢 (304–347) (*Sui shu* 1973: 33.963).¹² By classifying the text as a “history of usurpers,” the Sui catalogue does not say much about its format or content, but clarifies to the reader that the line of dynastic legitimacy of the Sui passed from the Wei 魏 (220–265) and Jin 晉 (265–420) dynasties.

¹¹ On Wu Jun see also Klein (2019: 269-70).

¹² On the *Huayang guozhi* and Sichuan historiography see Farmer (2001: 39-77).

2. The rubric *biannian* and late medieval booklists

By the mid-tenth century, the more technically accurate term *biannian* 編年 “accounts arranged chronologically” substitutes for *gushi* in the classification of historical narratives in annal form.¹³ The bibliographic catalogue of the tenth-century *Jiu Tang shu* 舊唐書 (Old book of Tang, 945) lists seventy-five items under this category, of which more than fifty are pre-Tang texts. Its counterpart, the eleventh-century catalogue included in the *Xin Tang shu* 新唐書 (New book of Tang, 1060), includes sixty-nine titles. As is well known, the two monographs are summaries of booklists of what may have been held in the imperial libraries in the seventh and early eighth centuries. Abridged versions of these lists were included in the Tang “state history,” or “court-centered history” (*guoshi* 國史),¹⁴ and then edited into the dynastic histories. As such, they hardly represent the real holdings of the Tang imperial libraries throughout the dynasty. Instead, they provide a snapshot of the imperial collections at the beginning of the eighth century, with some additions for the following centuries.¹⁵

It is notable that most of the titles listed in the *biannian* section of the Tang bibliographic monographs were already lost, either partially or entirely, by Song times. The Northern Song *Chongwen zongmu* 崇文總目 (General catalogue in honor of literature) records only thirty-six titles: from the late second-century *Hanji* to the early eleventh-century *Lidai junchen tu* 歷代君臣圖 (Chart of sovereigns and ministers from successive generations). With few exceptions, nearly no pre-Tang chronicles were preserved in the imperial libraries. Some medieval annals and chronicles recorded in the Tang

¹³ For an extensive discussion on the use of *biannian* see Sung (2010).

¹⁴ I follow Michael Nylan’s (2019: 187-213) translation of *guoshi* into “court-centered history.” Clearly, later historians paid little attention to the suggestions of their colleague Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661-721), who advocated that the bibliographical treatise of a “court-centered history” lists only the works produced during the dynasty. For a discussion of Liu Zhiji’s criticism to the *Sui shu* “Jingji zhi” and *Hanshu* “Yizhen zhi” see Chaussende (2019: 343-357, here 349-350).

¹⁵ Commissioned by Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712-756) in 715, the bibliographic monograph of the *Jiu Tang shu* is a summary of the extensive list of the books stored in the imperial library; it thus represents the holdings of the imperial library at the beginning of the eighth century. Among the compilers are the historians Wei Shu 韋述 (d.757) and Wu Jiong 毋熨 (d. 722). The extensive catalogue in 200 *juan*, called *Qunshu sibu* 群書四部 ([Catalogue of] books of the four branches), was submitted to the court in 723. Afterwards, Wu Jiong wrote a shorter version in 40 *juan*, entitled *Gujin shulu* 古今書錄 (Register of past and present books). A summary of the latter, providing only the title, number of *juan* and author of each item, was included in the “court-centered history” (*guoshi*) and from there was copied into the *Jiu Tang shu* (Jiang 1935: 231ff). The bibliographical monograph of the *Xin Tang shu* is mainly based on Wu Jiong’s *Gujin shulu*, which was still existing in the eleventh century and catalogued with the title *Kaiyuan siku shumu* 開元四庫書目 (Catalogue of the four branches [of the Imperial Library] from the Kaiyuan era). It also lists titles of texts that were probably derived from biographies and other accounts in the *Xin Tang shu* (van der Loon 1984: 9). This is the case, for instance, of two chronicles written by Wu Jing 吳兢 (670-749) and Wei Shu 韋述 (d.757), both entitled *Tang Chunqiu* 唐春秋 (Tang annals; *Xin Tang shu* 1975: 58.1461).

monographs were not fully lost, however, and fragments have survived in Song institutional, literary, and geographical compendia, as well as in Sima Guang's critical apparatus *Zizhi tongjian kaoyi* 資治通鑑考異 (Critical commentary to the *Comprehensive mirror for aid in government*).¹⁶

Some Tang chronicles were structured into diagrams and purported to serve as digests or summaries for didactic purposes; thus, they may not have needed to be published and were soon lost. This is the case for instance of Liu Ke's 劉軻 (ca. 835) *Diwang li shuge* 帝王歷數歌 (Songs on the history of kings and emperors), a chronicle of emperors from high antiquity to the early Tang period, structured into four speeches and reportedly meant to serve as a textbook for children's education (*Xin Tang shu* 58.1461, *Chongwen zongmu* 1939: 50, *Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 203, *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 1986: 112). The early censorship of Song Taizu 太祖 (r. 960–976) on texts dealing with the history of the late Tang and Five Dynasties periods would also feasibly have affected the transmission of medieval chronicles. This is the case of the *Xu Tongli* 續通曆 (Continuation of the comprehensive calendar), attributed to Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (900–968), a text that is (purportedly) not mentioned in the *Chongwen zongmu*.

3. Chronicles and annals in Song imperial and private book holdings

Completed under the auspices of Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023–63) and presented to the court in 1042, the *Chongwen zongmu* provides a picture of the imperial library holdings by the 1040s. It was compiled by a board of officials that included Wang Yaochen 王堯臣 (1001–1056), Wang Zhu 王洙 (997–1057), Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1072) and others. The history of its transmission, which came to us in a shortened edition without the original synopses, is rather complex. During the reign of Huizong 徽宗 (r. 1101–1125), it was renamed *Bishu zongmu* 秘書總目 (General catalogue of the Palace Library), its original name being subsequently restored during Gaozong's 高宗 (r. 1162–1187) time, when a version of the catalogue without synopses was used as a search list to retrieve lost books in the empire (*Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 1933: 1775ff; Winkelmann 1974: 27–32; Barengi 2014: 265–86, here 271–72).

The catalogue's history section is divided into fourteen subsections, of which the first five are dedicated to “standard histories” (*zhengshi* 正史), “accounts arranged chronologically” (*biannian* 編年),

¹⁶ This is the case of Qiu Yue's 丘悅 (early 8th century) chronicle *Sanguo dianlüe* 三國典略 (Outline of the affairs of the Three Kingdoms), which has been partially reconstructed by Dudbridge and Zhao Chao (1998: 27ff).

“veritable records” or “factual records” (*shilu* 實錄),¹⁷ “historical miscellanies” (*zashi* 雜史), and “histories of hegemonies” (*weishi* 僞史). The only difference from previous catalogues is the substitution of the “court diaries” rubric with “veritable records.” This choice was presumably dictated by the fact that the latter genre reached its maturity in the Tang period, when “veritable records” were systematically compiled for each ruling period. As a result, the imperial archives collected a substantial number of such books that needed to be catalogued. The change also implies that the limited number of “court diaries” preserved justified the removal of the rubric.

Although the *Chongwen zongmu* was compiled by a team of officials, the prefaces to the bibliographic sections are ascribed solemnly to Ouyang Xiu. The preface to the *biannian* section provides a definition of the genre:

It is the intention of the Annals of the Springs and Autumns to be most careful in recording the beginnings; wherever there are no affairs in one [period of] time, [the Annals] record the first month all the same, as they say that if the four seasons are not complete, a year cannot be considered fulfilled. [The Annals] thus respect the heavenly chronology as well as rectify human affairs. When Xun Yue compiled the *Hanji*, he returned to the chronological form for the first time, and the scholars praised him. Among the following generations of authors, [the genre] was as popular as the standard histories.

《春秋》之義，書元最謹，一时无事，猶空書其首月，以謂四時不具則不足成年，所以上尊天紀，下正人事。自晉荀悅為《漢紀》，始復編年之體，學徒稱之。後世作者，皆與正史並行云 (Ouyang Xiu *quanji* 2001, v. 5: 1885)

Ouyang Xiu emphasizes the importance of the calendar as a unified timeline that dominates the chronicle and on which to place the unfolding of events. The phrase “recording the beginnings” (*shu yuan* 書元) refers to the practice of opening the chronicle with a ruler’s primal act in the exercise of his authority in the spring’s first month of the first year (*yuannian chun Wang zhengyue* 元年春王正月). The correspondence of the ruler’s ordinances with the seasonal subdivisions represents the link between human affairs and heavenly manifestations.

Ouyang Xiu’s preface rather addresses the traditional idea of what chronicles and annals ought to be then provides a description of the works included in the rubric. Indeed, the list of titles provided by the *Chongwen zongmu* attests to a rather diversified range of texts. Although the transmission of most of them was after a certain time no longer carried forward, pieces of information can be gathered from

¹⁷ On the ambiguity of the meaning of the term *shi* 實 see Vogelsang (2005: 143-175, here 153-158). On the *shilu* see also Twitchett (1992: 119-159).

the synopses preserved in the two extant Southern Song private holdings' booklists, Chao Gongwu's 晁公武 (1105–1180) *Junzhai dushu zhi* 郡齋讀書志 (Record of [My] Readings of the Prefectural Studio [Collection]) and Chen Zhensun's 陳振孫 (ca. 1186–ca. 1262) *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 直齋書錄解題 (Annotated Record of the Books of the Zhizhai Studio [Collection]). Based on the description of their form and content, I tentatively grouped the titles into three typologies: chronicles limited to reign periods, historical narratives organized chronologically and covering more than a dynasty, and terse annals mostly arranged into tables and covering long periods of time (from high antiquity to the Song). Works written in roughly the same period, or in the same century, show similar formal features. It is notable, for instance, that most of the early Song historical works are comprehensive chronicles from high antiquity to modern times.

3.1. Chronicles limited to reign periods

It is widely understood that Tang historians were greatly inspired by the early examples of history in chronological form of the *Zuozhuan* and the *Hanji*. Scholars such as Wu Jing 吳兢 (670–749), Wei Shu 韋述 (d.757) and Liu Fang 柳芳 (*jinsi* ca. 741), officially engaged as compilers of the “court-centered histories” (*guoshi*) in annal-biography form, in their private capacity preferred to write historical accounts in chronological form. The preference for the chronological form is undoubtedly to be linked to the development of studies on the *Chunqiu* annals in the Tang period. Private chronicles were often compiled based on the same administrative and archival material that the historians used for the compilation of the official histories. However, in the privacy of their studios the authors did not suffer the political pressure and agenda of their superiors, and consequently enjoyed a certain degree of freedom of authorship (Twitchett 1992: 171–172, 177 and 1996: 63–64). The official sources testify of the production of these chronicles, unfortunately not passed down to us. The only example of which we have considerable knowledge, and which was of enormous importance to early modern historians is Liu Fang's *Tang li* 唐曆 (Tang calendar). As Denis Twitchett explains, the word *li* 曆 “calendar” in the title recalls the genre of “daily calendars” (*rili* 日曆), a type of monthly report that developed in the late Tang period. Since the early ninth century the court promoted the compilation of “daily calendars” by the compilers of the Historiographical Office (*shi guan* 史館). “Daily calendars” were conceived as preliminary monthly summaries of the various types of documentation (“court diaries” and other administrative reports) produced daily at court meetings and aimed at the drafting of the “veritable records” (*shilu*) and subsequently of the national history. As Twitchett says, one of the reasons why the

court recommended the officials of the Historiographical Office to compile such monthly accounts was to keep them from compiling stories privately at home, and to prevent such works from escaping the control of the court. Indeed, the court aimed to exert a strong control over such reports, which had to be delivered to the Historiographical Office, duly edited, and archived. None of these documents have been transmitted to us, but the bibliographical catalogues contain several titles of chronicles written privately which contain the term “calendar.” To Twitchett, these could be private copies of the originals submitted to the Historiographical Office that circulated among historians and scholars (Twitchett 1992: 57-9). The *Tang li*, however, differs from the “daily calendars” for several reasons. Firstly, it consists in a chronicle of events from the foundation of the Tang to 778. Moreover, it is not entirely based on official documents: a great part of the information used by Liu Fang to compile his chronological history is based on the oral testimony collected from a former member of Xuanzong’s 玄宗 (r. 713–756) entourage, the eunuch Gao Lishi 高力士 (684–762). Liu Fang and Gao Lishi met on their way to the southern frontier provinces, where they had been sent in exile by Suzong 肅宗 (r. 756–762). On the road, Gao Lishi allegedly revealed to Liu Fang aspects of the administrative and political affairs of Xuanzong’s court. Liu Fang “made verbatim notes” and later transcribed them in chronological form in his historical account (Pulleyblank 1950: 460; Twitchett 1992: 59,182 and 1996: 66-68; *Jiu Tang shu* 1975: 149.4030; *Xin Tang shu* 1975: 132.4536).

Despite being harshly criticized by contemporary and later historians, the *Tang li* became popular in the following decades and in the Song period. Over the ninth century the court ordered the compilation of its sequel, the *Xu Tang li* 續唐曆 (Continuation of the Tang calendar), a chronicle of events from 778 to 820 redacted by Wei Ao 韋澳 (*jinshi* 832), Cui Guicong 崔龜從 (*jinshi* 817) and others (Twitchett 1996: 68-69). The *Xu Tang li* is missing from the *Chongwen zongmu*, whereas in the two bibliographical catalogues of the old and new standard histories of the Tang, it is recorded with discrepancies in the number of chapters.¹⁸ Both the *Tang li* and the *Xu Tang li* were already badly damaged by the second half of the eleventh century, and in the early 1070s the historian Liu Shu 劉恕 (1032–1078) lamented that the extant editions presented discrepancies in the number of chapters. According to the historian, this was because Liu Fang had disseminated an incomplete draft of his book (*Sima Guang ji* 2010, v.3: 1353). On the other hand, Li Tao 李燾 (1115–1184) maintained that the original

¹⁸ The biography of Cui Guicong in the *Jiu Tang shu* (1975: 176.9713) refers to a *Xu Tang li* in thirty *juan* presented to the throne in 851, while the catalogue of the *Xin Tang shu* (1975: 58.5518) records a text in twenty-two *juan*.

edition of the *Tang li* closed with the year 783 and was probably wrongly copied by later editors: He argued that Liu Shu had possessed an incomplete edition of the chronicle and that the text was probably already partially missing when the *Xu Tang li* was redacted in the second half of the eighth century. This would explain why Wei Ao and Cui Guicong open the record with the year 778 (*Wenxian tongkao* 1936: 193.1631).

3.2. Collections of historical narratives organized chronologically and encompassing dynastic limits

The rubric *biannian* includes several titles of comprehensive histories. Two of these are the *Tongli* 通曆 (Comprehensive calendar) by Ma Zong 馬摠 (d. 823), followed by the already mentioned *Xu Tongli* 續通曆 (Continuation to the comprehensive calendar), compiled in the tenth century and attributed to Sun Guangxian. Despite the similarity in the name, these are quite different from the early Tang “daily calendars” too. The *Tongli* covers the empire’s history from high antiquity to the Sui dynasty. Ma Zong includes in the text his comments (*an* 按) and thirty-eight discussions (*lun* 論) from the *Diwang ge lun* 帝王略論 (Summary discussions on sovereigns), compiled by the early Tang scholar Yu Shinan 虞世南 (558–638), who is mostly renown for the compilation of the compendium *Beitang shuchao* 北堂書鈔 (Excerpts from the books of the Northern Hall) (*Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 202).¹⁹

The *Tongli* and *Xu Tongli* are also recorded as *Tongji* 通紀 (Comprehensive records) and *Xu Tongji* 續通紀 (Continuation to the comprehensive records) in some booklists after the Song period. The two texts were passed on in a single edition and several hand-copies circulated among book collectors in the late imperial period. The modern edition is based on a copy preserved in Ruan Yuan’s 阮元 (1764–1849) collection that was later included in the *Xuxiu siku quanshu* ([1995] 2002: 336.55–167). Several hand-copies of the book circulated in the Ming and Qing periods among book collectors, until Ye Dehui’s 葉德輝 (1864–1927) printed edition (Zhang 1985: 94–6). The first three *juan* are lost, and the fourth to the tenth consist of accounts concerning emperors from the Six Dynasties to the Sui (fifth and sixth centuries). The *Xu Tongli* runs from *juan* ten to fifteen of the modern edition, and it consists of historical accounts from the beginning of the Tang through the tenth-century Five Dynasties period (*Tongli* 1992: 5–6).²⁰ Despite the title, neither text is a chronicle or annal in the strict sense: each consists

¹⁹ A current edition of the *Diwang beilun* is a reconstruction of fragments recovered in Dunhuang (Qu 1999: 359; Rong 2013: 374).

²⁰ For more information see also Qu (1989: 291–305), Fang (2005: 27–38), Lu (2009: 49).

of collections of narrative accounts concerning the sovereigns and their court. The stories narrated differ substantially in length, some of them occupying only a few lines. They address political aspects of rulers' deeds. In content and structure, they resemble historical miscellanies, a genre that flourished from the ninth to the eleventh centuries. We can thus presume that the single events were selected and ranked with respect to their value for those members of the literati committed to rewriting their own history. Rather than an ideal reader, the prospective audience was assumedly a specific group that shared the author's perspective of the true nature of the events narrated. Based on the available sources, it is difficult to determine why Song bibliographers listed the two texts in the *biannian* rubric. Most likely it is because the title "calendar" recalls the *rili* "daily calendar" genre.

As mentioned above, the *Xu Tongli* is missing from the *Chongwen zongmu*, conceivably because of the censorship imposed on the book by Song Taizu. The *Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* (1990: 203) reports that "Taizu's court issued the order to destroy the book, as most of what it recorded was not reality" 太祖朝詔毀其書，以所紀多非實也. Censorship notwithstanding, copies of it presumably still existed in the eleventh century, as Sima Guang could dispose of the book for the compilation of the *Zizhi tongjian* (*Zizhi tongjian* 264.8603).

3.3. Terse comprehensive annals topically arranged into tables

Most of the works dating to the early Song times listed in the *biannian* section are comprehensive and terse chronicles. The titles contain terms that define their character as concise chronologies of events: "chart" (*tu* 圖), "chronological record" (*nianpu* 年譜), "comprehensive record" (*tongpu* 通譜), "record" or "collection" (*lu* 錄, *mulu* 目錄). Although most of these texts are lost, based on the synoptic descriptions we can say that they mainly consisted of chronological surveys arranged into tables. The *Chongwen zongmu* registers a dozen similar titles (some of author unknown), of which only a few survived into the Southern Song period. Three of these titles are the *Nianli tu* 年歷圖 (Chronological chart of the past, *Chongwen zongmu* 1939: 51, or *Yunli tu* 運曆圖, *Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 204)²¹ by Gong Ying 龔穎 (fl. 11th cent.), the *Jinian tongpu* 紀年通譜 (Comprehensive record of the annals) by Song Xiang 宋庠 (996–1066), and the *Biannian tongzai* 編年通載 (Comprehensive chronicle) by Zhang Heng 章衡 (fl. 11th cent.).

²¹ By Chao Gongwu's time, two *juan* of the text had already gone missing.

Of the three comprehensive chronicles, only a partial edition of the *Biannian tongzai* has been transmitted to us. The text consists of a comprehensive historical survey from the legendary ruler Yao 堯 to the Zhiping 至平 era (1064–1067) of the Song dynasty, more than three thousand years in all, of which only four *juan* are still extant (*Biannian tongzai* 1966, v. 31; *Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 206–208; *Zhizhai shulu jieti* 1986: 112; *Song shi* 1977: 203.5093).

A court diarist and academician of the Jixian Academy during the era of Shenzong 神宗 (1067–85), according to his biography Zhang Heng “lamented that scholars did not know history, so he compiled a chronology of successive emperors and titled it *Biannian tongzai*” 患學者不知古今，纂歷代帝系，名曰編年通載. Shenzong 神宗 (r. 1067–1085), who apparently could be very generous in positive assessments and rewards, read the work and praised it by saying that it was greater in quality than any other history (*Song shi* 1977: 347.11008).

The *Yunli tu* by Gong Ying reportedly was a chronological chart of events beginning in 256 BC, the year in which King Zhaoxiang 昭襄王 (325–251 BC) of Qin 秦 invaded the Zhou 周 territories and continuing into the Yongxi 雍熙 era (984–987) of the Song period. The text, now lost, consisted of an account of the major events that led to the rise and fall of successive dynasties, and it was arranged into two charts. It was submitted to the court of Song Taizong 太宗 (r. 976–997) in 987. As in the case of the *Biannian tongzai*, the synopsis describes how the sovereign liked the work and generously rewarded its author (*Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 204). The chronicle was reportedly also praised by the historian Ouyang Xiu, who drew on it for the compilation of his *Jigu mulu* 集古目錄 (General register of collected antiquities) and for the chapter “Shiguo shijia nianpu” 十國世家年譜 (Genealogy of the hereditary houses of the Ten Kingdoms) of his new history of the Five dynasties period (*Xin Wudai shi* 71.883).

The Song sources tell us little about the *Jinian tongpu*. Its author, Song Xiang, is better remembered for his poetry and his career at court than as a historian, an occupation his brother, Song Qi 宋祁 (998–1061), was famous for. Song Xiang submitted the *Jinian tongpu* to the court between roughly 1043 and 1044 (*Xu Zizhi tongjian changpian* 1993: 159.3840). The sources indicate that the text was still circulating among scholars by the fourteenth century. By the late Ming, however, it was lost. The *Jinian tongpu* is not recorded in the *Chongwen zongmu*, and most of the information we have on its form and content is gathered from synopses found in Song private catalogues. Despite its title, which literally means “comprehensive genealogy” (*tongpu*), Song Xiang’s chronicle is not a genealogical record: it consists of an account of events chronologically arranged from Han to Song times, in which the historical time

calculated according to reign titles is unified under a single calendar. The text is further divided topically into two sections. The first part, titled *Tongyuan* 統元 (Unified beginnings), has nine chapters covering events from Han Wendi 漢文帝 (195–188 BC) to the year 959, and a chapter covering events from 960 to the Qingli 慶曆 era (1041–48). A second part, titled *Leiyuan* 類元 (Categorized beginnings) is divided into five headings: “legitimate” (*zheng* 正), “illegitimate” (*run* 閏), “usurpers” (*wei* 偽), “bandits” (*zei* 賊), and “Man and Yi” (*manyi* 蠻夷) (*Junzhai dushu zhi jiaozheng* 1990: 206).

As is the case with other lost works, Sima Guang’s *Kaoyi* preserves a dozen excerpts from the *Jinian tongpu*. Sima Guang compares it with other sources mostly in cases of basic data discrepancies, for instance, to ascertain the date the Kitan 契丹-led Liao 遼 (916–1125) dynasty was founded, an event that was much discussed by eleventh-century historians (Kane 2013: 27–50). Song Xiang mentions a “Qidan rili” 契丹日曆 (Kitan calendar) that he allegedly got in the winter of 1036, on his journey as a court envoy to Youji 幽薊, a shortened name for the sixteen southern prefectures of the Liao empire, as well as a discussion concerning the reconstruction of the date of the first year of reign of the Liao sovereign Taizu 遼太祖 (r. 916–26), a date that is now widely acknowledged as the first year of reign of Abaoji-阿保機 as emperor of the Liao dynasty (*Zizhi tongjian* 269.8809). This excerpt, as well as others preserved in the *Kaoyi*, shows Song Xiang’s interest - shared with many of his contemporaries - in calendrical calculations to establish reliable comprehensive chronologies based on a unified calendar. By that time, Sima Guang, Liu Shu 劉恕 (1032–1078), and others had begun working on the skeleton structure of what was to become the *Zizhi tongjian*: the well-known *Linian tu* 歷年圖 (Charts of the past), the chronological digest of the major events concerning the rise and fall of rulers from the interregnum of Gong bo He 共伯和 (841 BC) to 959, structured into five diagrams and sixty sections (Chan 1974–1975: 5).

4. Concluding remarks

The synoptic descriptions of items listed under the *biannian* rubric in Song booklists offer glimpses of a broad array of texts whose formal features vary significantly. The immense and articulated production of administrative reports and archival material by the Tang Historiographical Office benefitted some of these chronicles and is an example of the professionalization of the role of the historian in the Tang period. Copies of the texts probably circulated outside the control of the court, to be used and referred to by a readership consisting mainly of officials or aspiring officials. While the

chronicles varied in their level of detail and chronological accuracy, they were essentially collections of precedents of the legitimate exercise of the court, the sovereign, and the government. The late medieval historical narratives, on the other hand, display different formal features in which time's role appears to be subordinated to deploying anecdotal stories arranged chronologically, narratives in which the moralistic and censorial function plays little role. The stories collected in the *Xu Tongli* are remarkably similar in structure and content to those collected in miscellanies such as the *Wudai shi quewen* 五代史闕文 (Missing texts from the *Five Dynasties history*) and the *Wudai shi bu* 五代史補 (Supplements to the Five Dynasty history). Like these other two collections, the *Xu Tongli* consists of brief and unlinked records providing variations on the official narratives of the dynastic histories. One could therefore suppose that the production of these later narratives moved away from the circle of the official historians and compilers of the historiographical office, and that the authors had little or no access to the imperial archives. During the late imperial period, these texts were mainly transmitted in handwritten form through private literary networks, and they attracted the antiquarian interest of Ming and Qing book collectors. Finally, the early Song chronicles show the keen interest of late tenth- and early eleventh-century historians in experimenting forms of unified chronicles that went beyond the limits of the temporal breakdown measured in terms of dynastic periods and reign years. These comprehensive chronicles from high antiquity demonstrate an evolution in the primary role of normative categories and of time over narrative, in the form of comprehensive chronologies.

Appendix: Medieval chronicles included (V) or missing (X) in Song booklists (eleventh to thirteenth century)

| <i>Chongwen zongmu</i> (1040s) | <i>Junzhai dushu zhi</i> (1150s) | <i>Zhizhai shulu jieti</i> (13 th cent.) |
|--|----------------------------------|--|
| Xun Yue 荀悅 (148–209), <i>Qian Hanji</i> 前漢紀 | V | V |
| Yuan Hong 袁宏 (330–378), <i>Hou Hanji</i> 後漢紀 | V | V |
| X | X | Wang Tong 王通 (584–617), <i>Yuan jing Xue shi zhuan</i> 元經薛氏傳 |
| Hu Dan 胡旦 (955–1034), <i>Han chunqiu</i> 漢春秋 | X | X |
| Hu Dan, <i>Han chunqiu wenda</i> 漢春秋問答 | X | X |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| Xiao Fangdeng 蕭方等 (528–549), <i>Sanshi guo chunqiu</i> 三十國春秋 | X | X |
| Du Yanye 杜延業, <i>Jin chunqiu lue</i> 晉春秋略 | X | V |
| Wang Shao 王韶 (526–593), <i>Taiqing ji</i> 太清紀 | X | X |
| Yuan Xingchong 元行沖 (653–729), <i>Wei dian</i> 魏典 | X | X |
| Qiu Yue 邱悅, <i>Sanguo dianlüe</i> 三國典略 | X | X |
| Cao Gui 曹圭, <i>Wuyun lu</i> 五運錄. | X | X |
| Liu Fang 柳芳 (<i>jinshi</i> end of the Kaiyuan era, 713–741), <i>Tang li</i> 唐曆 | V | V |
| X | X | Cui Guicong 崔龜從 (<i>jinshi</i> 817), <i>Xu Tangli</i> 續唐曆 |
| Chen Yue 陳嶽 (8th cent.), <i>Tang tongji</i> 唐統紀 | X | <i>Da Tang tongji</i> 大唐統紀 |
| X | Liu Rengui 劉仁軌 (601–685), <i>Heluo xingnian ji</i> 河洛行年記. | X |
| See under <i>zashi</i> | Wen Daya 溫大雅 (575–637), <i>Da Tang chuangye qiju zhu</i> 大唐創業起居注 | See under <i>qiju zhu</i> |
| Miao Tai 苗台, <i>Gujin tongyao</i> 古今通要 | X | X |
| Cui Ling 崔令, <i>Tang li mulu</i> 唐曆目錄 | X | X |
| Ma Zong 馬摠 (?–823), <i>Tongli</i> 通曆 | V | V |
| X | Sun Guangxian 孫光憲 (900–968), <i>Xu tongli</i> 續通曆 | X |
| X | X | Jia Wei 賈緯 (fl. mid–10 th cent.), <i>Tang nian bulu</i> 唐年補錄 |

| | | |
|---|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Fang Zhi 范質 (911–964), <i>Wudai tonglu</i> 五代通錄 | V | V |
| Zheng Xiang 鄭向 (?–1038), <i>Kaihuang ji</i> 開皇紀 | X | X |
| Jiao Lu 焦璐, <i>Tang chao niandai ji</i> 唐朝年代紀 | X | X |
| Liu Can 柳璨 (d. 906), <i>Zheng run wei li</i> 正閏位曆 | X | X |
| Zhang Dunsu 張敦素, <i>Jianyuan li</i> 建元曆 | X | X |
| Feng Yan 封演, <i>Gujin nianhao lu</i> 古今年號錄 | X | X |
| Wei Mei 韋美, <i>Jia hao lu</i> 嘉號錄 | X | X |
| Shen Fen 沈汾, <i>Yuan lei</i> 元類 | X | X |
| Wang Qi 王起, <i>Wangshi wuwei tu</i> 王氏五位圖 | X | X |
| Liu Ke 劉軻 (ca. 835), <i>Di wang li shu ge</i> 帝王曆數歌 | <i>Di wang jing lue</i> 帝王鏡略 | <i>Di wang zhaolue</i> 帝王照略 |
| Li Fang 李昉 (925–996), <i>Lidai nianhao</i> 歷代年號 | X | X |
| Li Kuangyi 李匡乂, <i>Xi Han zhi Tang nianji</i> 西漢至唐年紀 | X | X |
| Jia Qin 賈欽, <i>Gujin niandai li</i> 古今年代歷 | X | X |
| Gong Ying 龔穎, <i>Nianli tu</i> 年歷圖 | <i>Yunli tu</i> 運曆圖 | X |
| Wu Mi 武密, <i>Dihuang xingfei niandai lu</i> 帝皇興廢年代錄 | X | X |
| Zheng Boyong 鄭伯邕, <i>Dihuang niandai tu</i> 帝皇年代圖 | X | X |
| Du Guangting 杜光庭 (850–933). <i>Gujin julei nianhao tu</i> 古今聚類年號圖 | X | X |
| <i>Nian hao li</i> 年號歷 | X | X |

| | | |
|---|---|-------|
| Lidai di wang zhengrun wuyun tu 歷代帝王正閏五運圖 | X | X |
| Nianji lu 年紀錄 | X | X |
| Tang zhi Wudai jinian ji 唐至五代紀年記 | X | X |
| Lidai junchen tu 歷代君臣圖 | X | X |
| X | Song Xiang 宋庠 (996–1066), Jinian tongpu 紀年通譜 | V |
| X | Zhang Heng 章衡 (1025–1099), Biannian tongzai 編年通載 | V |
| | [...] | [...] |

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