

From Warhorses to Ploughshares: The Later Tang Reign of Emperor Mingzong.
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\$60.00.

Within the emerging field of Five Dynasties and Ten States studies, starting with Edward H. Schafer, Brigitte Amthor, and Wang Hongjie,¹ biographies of rulers have played an important part. The present study of Emperor Mingzong 明宗 (r. 926–933) of the Later Tang 後唐 by Richard L. Davis is thus a most welcome addition. Davis conveniently summarizes the history of the Shatuo 沙陀 and Shatuo rule in northern China until the end of the Later Tang dynasty. Previous studies have examined Shatuo rule in the general context of Five Dynasties history whereas Davis singles out the reign of one ruler, that of the second Later Tang ruler Mingzong, whom he clearly sees as an exemplary “good” ruler in terms of his adoption of cultural policies and leanings towards peaceful policies. The writing style is fluid, and the contents covers much more than just the life of Mingzong.

This book starts with a preface (pp. xi–xvi), followed by Chapter 1 “People and Places” (pp. 1–31), an introduction to Shatuo history, family relations, and the main political actors. Chapter 2 “Royal Passage” (pp. 33–61) describes the rise of Li Siyuan 李嗣源, the later Mingzong, to the throne of the Later Tang. Chapters 3 and 4 “Political Events” look at Mingzong’s reign according to his reign titles Tiancheng 天成 (pp. 63–87) and Changxing 長興 (pp. 89–119). Chapter 5 “Institutions, Reforms, and Political Culture” (pp. 121–54) is a survey of a number of topics such as officials, law, history-writing, and so forth, while Chapter 6 (pp. 155–76) provides insights into “foreign” policy dealing with the Khitan, the state of Nanping 南平 and Sichuan. The “Epilogue” (pp. 177–84) looks at the fates of Mingzong’s successors. These chapters are followed by a “Chronology of Events for the Reign of Mingzong” (pp. 185–89), “Table 1: Degree Conferrals under Mingzong, 926–933” (pp. 191–92), “Sources Cited” (pp. 193–98), and an “Index” (pp. 199–219).

The northern Five Dynasties usually receive a better treatment in terms of their “legal” status as a posteriori legitimate precursors of the Song than the southern states. *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5 Part One* made this point very

¹ Edward H. Schafer, “The History of the Empire of Southern Han: According to Chapter 65 of the *Wu-tai-shih* of Ou-yang Hsiu,” in Zinbun-kagaku-kenkyusyo, ed., *Silver Jubilee Volume of the Zinbun-kagaku-kenkyusyo* (Kyoto: Kyoto University, 1954), pp. 339–69; Brigitte Amthor, *Meng Chih-hsiang (874–935), der erste Kaiser von Hou-Shu: die Entstehung und Gründung des Reiches Hou-Shu 925–934* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1984); Wang Hongjie, *Power and Politics in Tenth-Century China: The Former Shu Regime* (Amherst, NY: Cambria Press, 2011).

clear as did Wang Gungwu's work that dealt with the north exclusively.² While calls for an inclusive treatment of the whole period are made at regular intervals—noticeably when a new study on the period is published and consequently reviewed—the reality is that it is impossible for a single scholar to cover all states with the same degree of competence. Therefore the publication of *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* was important because it brought together scholars who looked at the northern and southern states—with a prevalence for the north—in this period from a variety of angles.³

The validity of statements regarding the period ideally rests on the view of the individual author and his or her understanding of the influence of early Song dynasty attitudes towards the Five Dynasties or the states which only in the middle of the eleventh century came to be known as the Ten States.

The sources that are available play a major role. While studies on the political history rely mostly on the official records, some scholars have made available studies based on memoirs (Glen Dudbridge), others have made forays into the art (De-nin D. Lee) and literature of the period (Anna M. Shields).⁴

Though the limited number of truly historical sources available on the surface appears to make the writing of a historical biography easy, the contrary is true. Davis has done a remarkable job in presenting us with a detailed description of a life of an emperor. Davis's choice of an emperor of the Five Dynasties for his study is not accidental. His previously published book in Chinese was on Zhuangzong 莊宗 (r. 923–926), the predecessor of Mingzong.⁵ His most well-known work, a translation of the *Wudai shiji* 五代史記 by Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修, is one that represents a northern point of view on the southern kingdoms and empires.⁶ The south in Davis's present

² Denis Twitchett and Paul Jakov Smith, eds., *The Cambridge History of China, Volume 5 Part One: The Sung Dynasty and Its Precursors, 907–1279* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Wang Gungwu, *The Structure of Power in North China during the Five Dynasties* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Press, 1963).

³ Peter Lorge, ed., *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2011).

⁴ Glen Dudbridge, *A Portrait of Five Dynasties China: From the Memoirs of Wang Renyu (880–956)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); De-nin D. Lee, *The Night Banquet: A Chinese Scroll through Time* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2010); Anna M. Shields, *Crafting a Collection: The Cultural Contexts and Poetic Practice of the Huajian ji (Collection from Among the Flowers)* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2006).

⁵ Dai Renzhu 戴仁柱 [Richard L. Davis] and Ma Jia 馬佳, *Lingren, wushi, lieshou: Hou-Tang Zhuangzong Li Cunxu zhuan 伶人·武士·獵手：後唐莊宗李存勳傳* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009).

⁶ *Historical Records of the Five Dynasties* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

study is lurking in the background, but never comes to the foreground. This seems to be the crux of studies of the Five Dynasties and Ten States period: either one studies the north with the exclusion of the south, or vice versa. However, one may apologize for this kind of polarization with the fact that research on the period has only been slowly picking up in Western scholarly circles over the last three decades.

There are two major areas that I want to focus on in this review, that deserve closer scrutiny. Firstly that of the narrative and its format, and secondly the references, both original sources and secondary modern literature. I will touch only upon some exemplary issues to stay within the page limit.

Generally, the text suffers from sloppy editing. One example is found in the Contents which lists Chart 1 on p. xvi and Map 1 for p. xiv. In the present copy the Map precedes the Chart.

The map (Map 1)—and there is only one—shows the southern states in bright colours while it retains a serene beige for the Later Tang and precedes the text, as well as one list (entitled “Chart 1: Ancestry of Li Siyuan”). Table 1 is found towards the end of the book (pp. 191–92), with the heading “Degree Conferrals under Mingzong, 926–933.” The problem with the table is that in order to find the source for the numbers of various degrees awarded, one has to go back to pp. 143–47 (“Examinations”).

This table is preceded by a chronology of events for the reign of Mingzong (pp. 185–89). It is based on the basic annals of the *Jiu Wudai shi* 舊五代史 “supplemented by *Zizhi tongjian* in case of discrepancies” (p. 189). For the convenience of readers the publisher could have provided characters for places and people.

One incorrect dating occurs in the Preface (p. xi) where Davis has the Five Dynasties extend from 907 to 979. The Five Dynasties ended in 960 with the demise of the Later Zhou 後周 and the founding of the Song. That fact is clearly visible in the compilation of the *Wudai shi* 五代史 (History of the Five Dynasties) that was completed in 974. Chen Hongjin 陳洪進, warlord of Qingyuan 清源 (Fujian), surrendered in mid-May 978, and Qian Chu 錢俶 did likewise in the following month.⁷ Qian was the last king of Wuyue 吳越 (r. 947–978) and hence the last of the Southern rulers to surrender. The Northern Han 北漢 which only in the eleventh century was added as the tenth of the Ten States ceased to exist in 979.

The bias Davis displays here—to subsume the Ten States within the Five Dynasties—is clearly informed by his reading of the official records of the Five Dynasties and Ten States period.

⁷ See Tuotuo 脱脱 et al., *Song shi* 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), *juan* 1, p. 58. For a more detailed account of these events see Li Tao 李燾, *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian* 續資治通鑑長編 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), *juan* 19, pp. 424–26.

The “Tang models of governance” that he mentions did not only inform the northern regimes, but also a number of those in the south, such as the Former Shu 前蜀.⁸

One page on (p. xii) Davis extolls the strengths and achievements of second emperors and likens Mingzong to “the Yongle of the Five Dynasties.” This Ming emperor should properly be addressed as Yongle 永樂 emperor (r. 1402–1424) and he was not the second, but the third Ming ruler. The second Ming emperor was the Jianwen 建文 emperor (r. 1398–1402).

Davis tells us that “a considerably more detailed work” will be published in Chinese in the future (p. xiii). I wonder what the “practical reasons” were for publishing the present text when it provides bread crumbs only. Davis declares that he had “drawn upon a much wider body of primary materials.” Given that the majority of the references are to the *Jiu Wudai shi*, the *Xin Wudai shi* 新五代史 and the *Zizhi tongjian* 資治通鑑, I find the justification for the statement not well-founded.

The references to what Davis calls “quasi-literary sources like ‘historical anecdotes’ (*biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說)” (p. 193) remain manageable since he uses one such work only, namely the *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 by Sun Guangxian 孫光憲. The *Guixin zazhi* 癸辛雜識 by Zhou Mi 周密 (1232–1308) appears in connection with burials (p. 152), but is not listed in the “Sources Cited,” so may have been added as an afterthought. The *Luoyang jinshen jiuwen ji* 洛陽搢紳舊聞記 by Zhang Qixian 張齊賢 (934–1014) as well as the *Nanbu xinshu* 南部新書 by Qian Yi 錢易 (?–after 1023) appear in the “Sources Cited,” but not in the main text.

Davis refers “to the people of China” (p. 5), and this of course raises the question what “China” was at the time. Was it the whole territory previously ruled by the Tang? Or was China only the territory administered by the Five Dynasties. What was the term for China? *Zhongguo* 中國 or *Zhongyuan* 中原?⁹ The “Later Tang under Mingzong was the exceptional bright spot” (p. 3), not least because Ouyang Xiu had a weak spot for Mingzong who when compared to Later Liang 後梁 rulers appears rather able.¹⁰

⁸ See Wang, *Power and Politics*, pp. 147–93. These pages cover a chapter entitled “Legitimizing a Regional Empire, 907–918.”

⁹ Wang Mingsun 王明蓀 for instance discusses the “China” concept using the *Jiu Wudai shi* and *Xin Wudai shi* as main sources. See “Wudai shiqi de ‘Zhongguo’ guan” 五代時期的「中國」觀, *Shixue jikan* 史學集刊, 2012, no. 1, pp. 47–53, 63.

¹⁰ See Christopher P. Atwood, “The Notion of Tribe in Medieval China: Ouyang Xiu and the Shatuo Dynastic Myth,” in Denise Aigle et al., eds., *Miscellanea Asiatica: Mélanges en l’honneur de Françoise Aubin* (Sankt Augustin, Germany: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2010), pp. 616–17. Davis has not included this important essay in his “Sources Cited.” A more recent study of the topic is provided by Wu Hao 吳昊, “Ouyang Xiu baozan Hou-Tang Mingzong huangdi” 歐陽修褒贊後唐明宗皇帝, *Zawen yuekan* 雜文月刊, 2014, no. 6, p. 19.

Page 7 presents a portrait of Zhuangzong, but no title is given and Taiwan is provided as the location of the National Palace Museum. This is rather vague, and we are not told from which period this painting comes though it seems to fall into the category of stylized imperial paintings.

Davis leaves the reader to make up his own mind on the information he presents. We learn that Li Congke 李從珂 (885–937) grew to a height of “seven Chinese feet” (p. 20). The footnote (72) explains that “[o]ne Chinese foot is roughly ten inches.” Was seven *chi* 尺 (5’10”; 1,78 m) exceptionally tall for the time? Was the length of the Chinese foot (*chi*) in the Five Dynasties period the same as that of the Song that Ouyang Xiu probably referred to? A *chi* in the Tang measured 30.6 cm (12 in), in the Song 31.4 cm (12.4 in).¹¹ Hence Li Congke would have been well over 2 m/7 ft. tall either way. What the height simply meant was that Li Congke was taller than his contemporaries. However, Chinese historians tended to exaggerate heights to emphasize the importance of historical actors.¹²

Xie Yuangui 解元龜 is introduced as a Daoist master (p. 77) who was treated with honours by Mingzong before being sent back to his home. Because Xie claimed to be 101 *sui* 歲 old, Davis says he was interesting to the ageing emperor because he was looking for means to prolong his life. The *Jiu Wudai shi* account is only telling one version of the story. The *Beimeng suoyan* which Davis in this instance did not consult, tells a different story, in which Xie Yuangui who formerly was a soldier in Shu adopts for himself the title Taibai shan Zhengyi daoshi 太白山正一道士. He is invited to the palace because he submitted a laudatory poem, and consequently asks for a position as Regent of the Western Capital (Xidu liushou 西都留守) and Military Commissioner of Sanchuan (Sanchuan zhizhishi 三川制置使) to renovate the city walls of Luoyang.¹³ There is nothing “humorous” about the appearance of Xie. The “sobriquet Zhibai (‘Pristine Knowledge’)”—or rather Zhibai xiansheng 知白先生—in this context means Master of Blank Knowledge and, as the *Beimeng suoyan* makes clear, was not awarded by the emperor, but was the common reference to Xie at

¹¹ See Endymion Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A New Manual* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), p. 556. For a more detailed treatment and history of Tang and Song measures see Qiu Guangming 丘光明, *Jiliang shi* 計量史 (Changsha: Hunan jiaoyu chubanshe, 2002), pp. 352–67 on the Tang *chi*, and pp. 412–43 on the Song *chi*.

¹² Li Bian 李昇 (889–943), founder of the Southern Tang 南唐, was also 7 feet tall according to Long Gun 龍袞 (*fl.* 1011–1022), *Jiangnan yeshi* 江南野史, *juan* 1, in Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮, Xu Hairong 徐海榮, and Xu Jijun 徐吉軍, eds., *Wudai shishu huibian* 五代史書彙編 (Hangzhou: Hangzhou chubanshe, 2004), vol. 9, p. 5156.

¹³ *Beimeng suoyan* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2002), *juan* 19, p. 343. This anecdote is also contained in the early Song anthology *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記 (submitted in 984). See Li Fang 李昉 et al., *Taiping guangji* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1995), *juan* 289, p. 2302.

court. The *Beimeng suoyan* ends by stating: “This man was presumptuous” (*si nai kuangwang ren ye* 斯乃狂妄人也). The anecdote hence touches peripherally only on religion, but shows that Mingzong knew how to deal with pretenders.

Having not much new to say about the Historiography Office under the Later Tang, Davis makes it appear as if this agency was going to write a “comprehensive study of Shatuo rule in the Middle Kingdom” (p. 135). The reference is to Twitchett¹⁴ who basically already presented much of what Davis re-formulated in his own style. In short, Davis does not come up with any new sources nor does he refer to modern Chinese research on the topic.¹⁵

Davis missed completely an obviously important memorial by an official from the Historiography Institute asking for copies of official documents to be forwarded to the Historiography Office. The request was fulfilled which suggests that whatever historical work was compiled there was based on the copies delivered to the Historiographers.¹⁶

Davis tells the story of the emperor visiting the prince for a bachelor party prior to the latter’s wedding (p. 137). He writes that the emperor “brought along courtesans from his own palace to entertain the men. One beauty struck the fancy of the prince, causing the father to leave her as a wedding present. Emperors often conferred consorts upon esteemed officials and powerful governors, . . . but the giving of a consort to an imperial son was rather rare due to the appearance of incest, as the women generally had a history of intimacy with the father.”

This paragraph is puzzling. The source, the *Jiu Wudai shi* reads: “[The emperor] proceeded to the residence of the crown prince Congrong 從榮. He commanded that palace courtesans (*jile* 伎樂) attend the banquet. Congrong presented him with a horse and vessels and silk, and the emperor thereupon gave him the courtesans as a gift.”

There is no mention of a “consort” (*fei* 妃), nor is a “beauty” present in this entry. What it says is that father and son exchanged gifts at a party, the horse being as much a commodity as the courtesans who were most likely entertainers. The female

¹⁴ Denis Twitchett, *The Writing of Official History under the T'ang* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 191.

¹⁵ See for instance Zhang Minghua 張明華, “Zhang Zhaoyuan yu Wudai shiji” 張昭遠與五代史籍, *Shixueshi yanjiu* 史學史研究, 2007, no. 2, pp. 34–40, 92. More recently two more articles have addressed history-writing and the Historiography Institute during the Five Dynasties. See Niu Runzhen 牛潤珍 and Liu Xin 劉昕, “Wudai shiguan yu shishu zuanxiu” 五代史館與史書纂修, *Shixueshi yanjiu*, 2014, no. 2, pp. 26–36; and Zhang Feng 張峰, “Wudai shiqi: Lishi bianzuan youliang chuantong jingshou de kaoyan” 五代時期：歷史編纂優良傳統經受的考驗, *Renwen zazhi* 人文雜誌, 2014, no. 2, pp. 81–86.

¹⁶ Xue Juzheng 薛居正 et al., *Jiu Wudai shi* (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), *juan* 38, p. 526.

entertainers Ping Yao dealt with in her study for the Tang period¹⁷ were unfree people. They may have offered sexual services, but not necessarily. The entry from the *Wudai huiyao* 五代會要 that is given as a further reference in the footnote does not say anything about a wedding either, but is about solar eclipses. One such occurred prior to the emperor's outing to his son's residence.

Davis explains that Han Xizai 韓熙載 (902–970), a *jinshi* 進士 of 926, later “migrated” and became “a leading statesman in the state of Wu” (p. 144). Han did not migrate, but had to run for his life because of his father's implication in a local rebellion. If we want to believe the existing sources Han, contrary to Davis's statement, displayed a high degree of aversion to office and work after he had been welcomed in Wu 吳 (905–936). He certainly was one of the more prominent northern émigrés at the Southern Tang 南唐 (937–976) court, but is best known as the subject of a famous painting depicting his private excesses, the “Han Xizai yeyan tu” 韓熙載夜宴圖 (Night Entertainments of Han Xizai). This painting or rather one of its successors is a national treasure (*guobao* 國寶) in mainland China. Why does Davis mention Han at all when he does not provide one single piece of scholarship on either the man or the painting?¹⁸

Davis gives detailed information about “currency” (pp. 148–49), but not the designation of the currency issued by the Later Tang. Did the Later Tang continue to use Tang coins as was customary until even the early Song?

To use Nanping for the tiny state on the middle Yangzi as Davis does (pp. 162–64) is anachronistic as it was known as Jingnan 荆南 until its surrender to the Song in 963.¹⁹ In the *Jiu Wudai shi* it is addressed thus.²⁰ Lu Zhen 路振 (957–1014) refers to it as Bei Chu 北楚.²¹ Nanping is part of a title (Nanping wang 南平王) that was conferred on Gao Baorong 高保融 (r. 948–960) who held the position of Jingnan jiedushi 荆南節度使²² by the Later Zhou emperor Taizu 太祖 (r. 951–954) in or around 954.²³ The last owner of the Jingnan military governorship was Gao Jichong

¹⁷ Ping Yao, “The Status of Pleasure: Courtesan and Literati Connections in T'ang China (618–907),” *Journal of Women's History* 14, no. 2 (Summer 2002), pp. 26–53.

¹⁸ A biography of Han Xizai is provided by Johannes L. Kurz, “Han Xizai (902–970): An Eccentric Life in Exciting Times,” in Lorge, *Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms*, pp. 79–99. See also Fan Shizi 梵獅子, “Han Xizai: Nan-Tang guozuo de renge touying” 韓熙載：南唐國祚的人格投影, *Guoxue* 國學, 2010, no. 12, pp. 42–45. On the authenticity of the painting see Lee, *The Night Banquet*, pp. 9–32.

¹⁹ There is at least one doctoral dissertation on Jingnan, namely that by Zeng Yurong 曾育榮, “Gaoshi Jingnan shigao” 高氏荆南史稿 (Ph.D. diss., [Guangzhou] Jinan daxue, 2008).

²⁰ *Jiu Wudai shi*, *juan* 133, pp. 1751–56.

²¹ Lu Zhen, *Jiuguo zhi* 九國志, *juan* 12, in *Wudai shishu huibian*, vol. 6, pp. 3369–71.

²² Li Tao, *Xu Zizhi tongjian changbian*, *juan* 1, p. 22.

²³ *Song shi*, *juan* 483, p. 13952.

高繼沖 who arrived in 963 at the Song capital.²⁴ Nanping is the term used by Ouyang Xiu in the *Wudai shiji*. One of Davis's references for "Nanping" history is the *Shiguo chungiu* 十國春秋 by Wu Renchen 吳任臣 (?–1689)²⁵ (who incidentally refers to the state as Jingnan). Elsewhere I have stated my reservations about this text's historical value,²⁶ so suffice it to say, many sections in the *Shiguo chungiu* are excerpts from earlier sources.

Davis explains that he "often emended entries to reflect the consensus of the several texts" (p. 194). What does that mean? Do they all report the same information about an event or individual? Are they listed in sequence of their publication? Or does the pointing to these sources and the fact that they all record an event or an individual in more or less the same fashion mean they are specifically true or important? "Truthfulness" is definitely not established by the repetition of information from one source to the next. The cut and paste method of Chinese historians has long been recognized and the sources here certainly demonstrate this approach to the writing of history perfectly well.

A random example is a discussion between Fan Yanguang 范延光, a military commissioner, and Mingzong. Mingzong rejects Fan's warning against Meng Zhixiang's 孟知祥 designs in Sichuan with the following answer: "How can assuaging an old friend be characterized as 'humbling ourselves'?" (p. 175). We are given the *Xin Wudai shi*, *Jiu Wudai shi* and *Zizhi tongjian* as sources (footnote 82). Should not the *Jiu Wudai shi* come first as it is the earliest extant source?

The phrase in question is at the end of a longer statement and reads in the *Jiu Wudai shi*:

知祥予故人也，以賊臣間諜，故茲阻隔，今因而撫之，何屈意之有！

The *Xin Wudai shi* quite closely follows this:

知祥，吾故人也，本因間諜致此危疑，撫吾故人，何屈意之有？

The *Zizhi tongjian* has this:

知祥吾故人，為人離間至此，何屈意之有！

It is obvious that in the above case the two eleventh-century works are closely quoting from the earlier text; the minor distinctions are reflecting most likely stylistic

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 12953–54.

²⁵ Zhonghua shuju published the work in 1983, not in 1979 as Davis has it (p. 196).

²⁶ Johannes L. Kurz, "The Rebellion of Zhang Yuxian 張遇賢 (942–943)," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 3 (October 2014), pp. 537–38.

preferences. Or as some scholars may argue, the three texts all are based on one original source no longer available.

Davis asks an undue amount of patience from the reader when he says in the introduction to the “Sources Cited” that he could not include full documentation because of editorial sanctions (p. 194). It certainly would be important to learn what exactly these restrictions were, and how the existing titles in his “Sources Cited” survived the cut. Davis refers the reader to his Zhuangzong biography in Chinese for “important background information on Shatuo rule.” The remark may hint at the audience the work is directed to, namely Chinese Studies people, and not so much a general audience.

Davis’s comment on material available to Sima Guang 司馬光 in Luoyang, “capital of the Later Tang,” is interesting, but not confirmed by any evidence. Luoyang at the end of the Five Dynasties was finished as a capital after numerous takeovers, mutinies and invasions. At the start of the Song dynasty, books and book collections were in great demand to rebuild the holdings of the imperial libraries which at that point were said to have numbered 12,000 *juan* only.²⁷

How do we know that a work like the *Cefu yuangui* 冊府元龜 has “fewer of the biases of eleventh century writings” (p. 194)? Is this an admission that the *Xin Wudai shi* and the *Zizhi tongjian* are not to be taken as accurate as the older work with its “greater proximity to the period”? Does the proximity in time really make for a better record?

The statement that the *Cefu yuangui* was a late tenth-century work is incorrect, as its compilation was ordered in 1005. The finished handbook was submitted to the throne in 1013.²⁸

²⁷ Cheng Ju 程俱, *Lintai gushi canben* 麟臺故事殘本 (Sibu congkan xubian 四部叢刊續編 ed.), *juan* 2, p. 1a.

²⁸ See for instance Yves Hervouet, ed., *A Sung Bibliography (Bibliographie des Sung)* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), p. 321, that clearly states that work began on the *Cefu yuangui* after the Treaty of Chanyuan 澶淵之盟 which was signed in 1004. See also Johannes L. Kurz, “The Compilation and Publication of the *Taiping yulan* and the *Cefu yuangui*,” in Florence Bretelle-Estabet and Karine Chemla, eds., *Qu’était-ce qu’écrire une encyclopédie en Chine?, Extrême Orient, Extrême Occident, hors série* (Paris: Presses universitaires de Vincennes, 2007), pp. 39–76; and Su Jia 蘇嘉, “*Cefu yuangui*” 《冊府元龜》, *Chuban shiliao* 出版史料, 2007, no. 2, p. 1. In their rebuttal of Wu Hao’s 吳浩 earlier study on the topic Fang Rui 房銳 and Su Xin 蘇欣 aver that the *Cefu yuangui* was basically only reproducing material from the *Jiu Wudai shi*. See their “‘*Cefu yuangui* yin Tang shilu, zashi, xiaoshuo kao’ bianxi” 〈《冊府元龜》引唐實錄、雜史、小說考〉辨析, *Chengdu ligong daxue xuebao* 成都理工大學學報, 2005, no. 1, pp. 32–35.

The titles listed in the “Sources Cited” (pp. 195–98) are by no means all “cited” nor even sighted in the main text. Only about a quarter of the titles in the “Sources Cited” appear in the footnotes. The section provides works that one might expect there, but why are modern texts in English mixed with classical Chinese texts? In which sense is the *Cambridge History of China* a source? The latest instalment of the series, volume 5 part one, has ten pages on Li Siyuan (Mingzong) by Naomi Standen in her survey of Five Dynasties history (pp. 72–82), and also features a general introduction to Ten States history by Hugh R. Clark (pp. 133–205), that is not referenced.

Some general works that cover many of the topics dealt with in Davis’s sub-chapters, such as Ren Shuang’s 任爽 and Du Wenyu’s 杜文玉 studies, have not made it into the “Sources Cited” either.²⁹ The *Wudai shihua* 五代史話 is listed (and not cited), but Tao Maobing’s 陶懋炳 *Wudai shilüe* 五代史略 published in the same year is not.

Davis refers to his student Fang Cheng-Hua’s 方震華 work on “Power Structures and Cultural Identities in Imperial China: Civil and Military Power from Late Tang to Early Song Dynasties (A.D. 875–1063)” only as a Ph.D. dissertation (p. 195). The book has been available as a monograph under the same title since 2009 (Saarbrücken: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller). Moreover, no articles in Chinese on Mingzong are referenced such as those by Xu Tingyun 徐庭雲 or Wang Yongping 王永平 among others.³⁰

Wang Xusong’s 王旭送 article “Shatuo Hanhua zhi guocheng” 沙陀漢化之過程 is incorrectly recorded as having appeared in *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究 4, 2010, and no page numbers are provided. Instead we find an “(electronic)” at the end of the entry. The correct issue is 3, and the page numbers are 14–22, 136. The same author’s “Lun Shatuo de Han hua” 論沙陀的漢化³¹ is not listed. That may be a choice based on what the articles have to offer in terms of scholarship and material. However, it means that this bibliography is incomplete in terms of the scholarship referenced in it.

My book on the Southern Tang is listed (albeit my name has been stripped of its middle initial), but not that by Wang Hongjie on the Later Shu 後蜀 that was published in the same year (2011) and is dedicated to Wang’s “mentor, Professor

²⁹ Ren Shuang, *Wudai dianzhi kao* 五代典制考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007); Du Wenyu, *Wudai shiguo zhidu yanjiu* 五代十國制度研究 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2006).

³⁰ Xu Tingyun, “Yi wei you gongxian de Shatuo zhengzhijia: Lun Hou-Tang Mingzong” 一位有貢獻的沙陀政治家——論後唐明宗, *Zhongyang minzu xueyuan xuebao* 中央民族學院學報, 1988, pp. 31–35; Wang Yongping, “Lüelun Hou Tang Mingzong Li Siyuan” 略論後唐明宗李嗣源, *Lishi jiaoxue wenti* 歷史教學問題, 1993, no. 4, pp. 13–16.

³¹ *Sanxia daxue xuebao* 三峽大學學報, 2011, no. 1, pp. 103–8.

Richard L. Davis.”³² The selection and inclusion of modern articles and books hence appears accidental.

As for those texts that deserve to be generally regarded as sources we find some like the *Qing yi lu* 清異錄 attributed to Tao Gu 陶穀 (903–970), the *Wudai shi bu* 五代史補 by Tao Yue 陶岳 (fl. early Song), the *Wudai shiji zuanwu bu* 五代史記纂誤補 by Wu Lanting 吳蘭庭 (1730–1801), and the *Wudai shiji zuanwu* 五代史記纂誤 by Wu Zhen 吳縝 (fl. late 11th century) (p. 197), but again none of these are referred to in the text. The *Wudai shi quewen* 五代史闕文 by Wang Yucheng 王禹偁 (954–1001) and the *Wudai shiji zuanwu xubu* 五代史記纂誤續補 by Wu Guangyao 吳光耀 (fl. late Qing) are missing from the list. How far works on Five Dynasties history compiled in the Qing are sources is a question worth pursuing on its own in the future.

An asterisk is found after Wu Jing 吳兢 and Xie Baocheng 謝寶成 (p. 197), but that probably was an oversight by the editors because the use of the asterisk is not explained.

There are no references at all to Zhao Rongzhi 趙榮織, a PRC scholar specializing in Shatuo history who has published a number of articles on the topic.³³

Unification does not appear as an indexed term in the work, yet given that the Later Tang adopted the Tang heritage one would have expected an entry on this profoundly important topic. The cultural policies employed by Mingzong certainly were not sufficient to convince his neighbours in the south and north of the “political legitimacy” of the Later Tang. That legitimacy largely derived from the conferral of the Tang imperial family name and subsequently of the fabrication of a history of dynastic Shatuo rule. That is why it is tempting to explain Southern Tang efforts at territorial expansion after the adoption of a fake imperial genealogy as expressions of an ambition to unify the old empire.³⁴

The popularity of biography as history and the problems that come with it have been pointed out before,³⁵ and this work is no exception. The characterizations

³² Wang, *Power and Politics*, p. v.

³³ See his “Shilun Shatuo zhengquan Hou-Tang de xingqi” 試論沙陀政權後唐的興起, *Xiyu yanjiu* 西域研究, 2005, no. 4, pp. 35–38, 111; “Shatuo ‘Zhuyue’ xingshi shaoshi yu zhongxian yuanyin lice” 沙陀「朱邪」姓氏消失與重現原因蠡測, *Changji xueyuan xuebao* 昌吉學院學報, 2007, no. 1, pp. 40–41; “Qutan Shatuo san wangchao” 趣談沙陀三王朝, *Changji xueyuan xuebao*, 2007, no. 5, pp. 11–14.

³⁴ Johannes L. Kurz, “On the Southern Tang Imperial Genealogy,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 134, no. 4 (October–December 2014), pp. 601–20.

³⁵ See for example Michael Prestwich, “Medieval Biography,” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 3 (Winter 2010), pp. 325–46.

of Mingzong, his actions and speeches are really only reported in a handful of official sources. The distinctions between them may be linked to the transmission of manuscripts. The *Jiu Wudai shi* as a work recompiled in the eighteenth century is by no means the complete original. The *Cefu yuangui* does not help to reconstitute Mingzong as a person. After all it was conceived as a handbook and therefore categorized available material into handy bits of information. The *Xin Wudai shi* and *Zizhi tongjian* are basically following the same “text” and Davis admits as much by referring to them simultaneously in his footnotes. The circumstances of the production of a text and its nature as an officially or privately compiled history are crucial for our understanding of its historical value. Davis makes it appear that he had access to memoirs by “family and friends,” as well as “subordinate officers” (p. 13) to describe Li Keyong’s 李克用 character. In fact he refers to two entries in the *Jiu Wudai shi* and one in the *Xin Wudai shi*. These may look like personal recollections, but how can we be sure they really are and not just the creation of the relevant compilers, or ultimately hearsay?

The policies of preserving territory and soothing the people are perhaps something unusual for a northern ruler to pursue, but in the south, among the nine states this was standard practice.³⁶

From Warhorses to Ploughshares provides information on a northern Chinese ruler of Shatuo stock during the turbulent first half of the tenth century. How far this is helpful as an introduction to the period for students is debatable; how far this helps a better understanding of the period as a whole for researchers is a completely different question, given the limited scope of sources used and Mingzong’s position within the framework of the Five Dynasties. Chinese Studies scholars may find the book disappointing because of the careless approach to sources and misrepresentations of the original texts; for a general readership the work may be too tedious to read with all the minor details (e.g. “singing arrows,” pp. 139–40) it presents.

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³⁶ See Zeng Guofu 曾國富, “Wudai shiqi nanfang jiuguo de baojing anmin zhengce” 五代時期南方九國的保境安民政策, *Zhanjiang shifan xueyuan xuebao* 湛江師範學院學報, 2011, no. 1, pp. 127–33.