



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Thinking Outside the Walls: Illustrations of Cities and Extramural Space in Chinese Gazetteers

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Walls have long been understood as a distinguishing feature of premodern Chinese cities. Serving both practical and symbolic purposes, they set off urban space from the surrounding countryside. This article examines illustrations of cities (*chengtu*) in Qing-era gazetteers to determine to what extent and in what ways our assumptions about the importance of walls correspond to a common genre of visually representing urban space. Some *chengtu* reflect these assumptions very directly, presenting walled cities as islands floating in the blank space of exurban space. However, most *chengtu* contain some amount of extramural detail, and there is considerable variety in how these illustrations treat the relationship between intramural and extramural space. No single factor, such as geography, the presence of topographical features or religious structures, or the specific title attached to a given *chengtu*, can explain this variation. Instead, *chengtu* reflect tremendous fluidity in visual discourse around cities in the Qing period beyond what existing scholarship on gazetteers and representations of urban space would lead us to expect.

古代中國的城牆一直被視為城邑的一個顯著特徵。它分隔城郭與郊野，既實用又具有象徵意義。本文通過考察清代方志中的城市圖錄，來印證人們對城牆重要性的認知與城市視覺史志之間的相符程度。有些城邑在城圖中被呈現為游離在汪洋中的孤洲，明顯契合主流意象。但大多數城圖則包含畫外音，對城郭內外空間關係的處理也不盡相同。而無論是地理位置、地形特徵，還是宗教結構，抑或賦予城圖的特定標籤，沒有任何一項能成為解釋這種差異的單一因素。由此，城市圖錄在清代城貌的視覺話語中展現出的高度流動性，實非傳統方志和城邑表徵研究令人始料能及。

Keywords: urban space, gazetteers, maps, *chengtu*, walls

關鍵詞： 城邑，地方志，地圖，城圖，城牆

It is unlikely that any feature of imperial Chinese cities is so emblematic as their walls.¹ Of course, the word “wall” (*cheng* 城) is one component of the modern word for city, *chengshi* 城市, and has long been used as a shorthand for referring to cities. From early times, the ideally rectilinear shape of walls made them microcosmic symbols of the earth, and a concerted wall-building campaign in the early Ming spread this cosmological symbolism across the empire’s landscape as part of an effort to reassert Chinese culture after extended periods of rule by non-Chinese dynasties (Wright 1977; Farmer 2000, 486). Walls also offered protection from rebels, pirates, and foreign armies. To be sure, no two city walls were exactly alike, but their combination of form and function helped make imperial Chinese cities recognisable as variations on a shared spatial theme. The fact that walls were not merely state impositions but invested with meaning by local people, who of course made substantial contributions in money and labour to their construction and maintenance, only increases their significance to the identity of Chinese cities (Cheung 2009). “The premodern Chinese city has no life independent of walls,” Nancy Steinhardt goes so far as to claim (Steinhardt 2000, 421). By the same token, the destruction of city walls in more recent times—as well as the intentional preservation of a select few—has been a definitive feature of the modern transformation of Chinese urban space (Carroll 2006, 90–94; Des Forges 2009, 50–71; LaCouture 2021, 41–43).

As we would expect, many representations of Chinese cities reflect the importance of their walls. Figure 1, in which urban space is neatly bounded by perfectly shaped walls, is representative of this tendency and is exemplary of one of the most common genres representing Chinese cities—*chengtu* 城圖—which appear in a great number of local gazetteers. Images such as this, in which the walled city floats like an island in an empty sea of white space, seem to substantiate Wu and Gaubatz’s claim that “In symbolic (and literal) terms, city walls separated urban residents from the rest of the world” (Wu and Gaubatz 2013, 54).

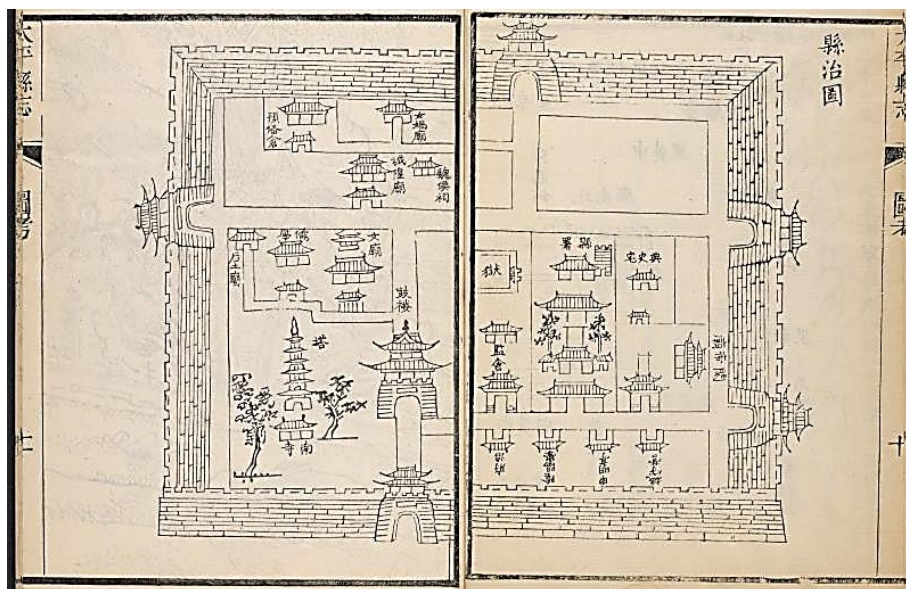


Figure 1: *Chengtu* of Taiping County seat. *Taiping xian zhi, tukao*.10b–11a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:12855654?n=34>)

¹ This material is based upon research conducted while affiliated with the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, and sources were made available during this affiliation via Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin’s CrossAsia portal.

In both image and reality, though, the spatial composition of Chinese cities was more complicated than this quotation and image suggest. Even in gazetteers, which bore the imprint of the prerogatives of the imperial state, we find great variation among *chengtu*, which often depict urban space spilling beyond the confines of city walls. Not only are features located outside the city wall (extramural) a common presence in gazetteer *chengtu*, but in some rare cases, such as figure 2, they even dominate these illustrations that we would expect to forefront walled space.

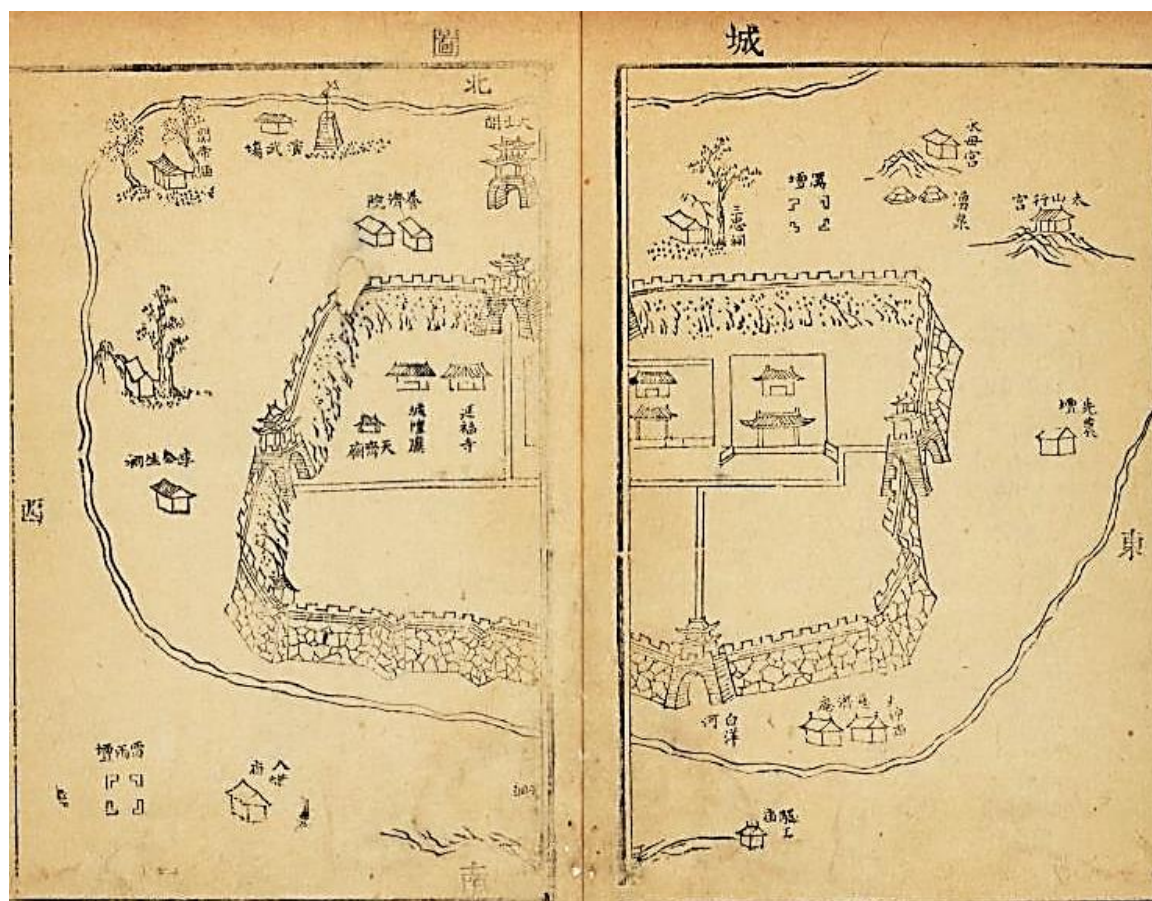


Figure 2: *Chengtu* of Qixia County seat. *Qixia xian zhi*, 0.18b-19a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:12229266?n=21>)

To some extent, the presence of extramural features in *chengtu* reflects another well-established feature of Chinese urban space, namely the lack of formal jurisdictional distinctions between urban and rural areas. In the absence of autonomous municipal governance, the same magistrate bore responsibility for administrative affairs inside and outside the walled city. In fact, some large cities were split between two different counties, sundering the spatial unity suggested by a single set of walls. Among other factors, this spatial feature led Max Weber to draw a firm distinction between Chinese cities and their European counterparts, whose autonomous municipal governance provided, in his view, indispensable preconditions for the development of capitalist modernity (Weber 1968, 13-20). Weber's dichotomy of Western and Chinese cities has long-since fallen out of favour, but the vague delimitation of Chinese urban space—walls notwithstanding—remains a recurring problem for scholars (Chang 1977, 99; Rowe 1984; Naquin 2000, 256-57, 428-29, 438-39; Xu 2000, 82-83, 154-65; Fei Siyan 2013, 330-35).

The ubiquity of *chengtu* combined with the fact that they bear directly on the question of how or whether people in premodern China understood the boundaries of urban space makes them a valuable source for study. The fact that they offer contradictory and ambiguous answers to this question makes them more complicated than we might expect. This article analyses the diversity of ways in which *chengtu* reflected choices about how to bound urban space and considers possible explanations for this divergence. In the end, no single factor or any simple set of factors can explain how a given *chengtu* represents extramural space. Instead, *chengtu* constituted a flexible genre that allowed artists to express diverse visions of urban space.

One way to interpret this phenomenon would be to revert to the Weberian paradigm, emphasising what *chengtu* as a whole lacked: a clearly bounded sense of urban space (Li 2016, 72). Rather, I consider the diversity of *chengtu* reflective of the generative ambiguity of urban space in early modern China. In the absence of an incontrovertible dictate regarding the boundaries of the Chinese city—and despite some degree of standardisation in gazetteers generally and *chengtu* specifically—*chengtu* offered readers diverse approaches to bounding and representing urban space. In so far as these differences cannot be explained purely by local factors, such as geographical location or the surrounding topography, then they suggest a degree of representational fluidity that contradicts scholars' claims about the overriding significance of walls to defining Chinese urban space. Rather than leaving Chinese cities shapeless, this fluidity allowed people to apply a great variety of shapes to Chinese cities.

The research for this article is primarily based on an analysis of 125 *chengtu* from 66 county (*xian* 縣), departmental (*zhou* 州), and prefectural (*fu* 府) gazetteers during the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong reigns (1662–1795) of the Qing dynasty. By this time, the genre of gazetteers (*fangzhi* 方志) had become both established as a genre distinct from its predecessor, the *tujing* (圖經), and common enough for even many smaller counties to have produced at least one gazetteer (Will 1992, 7–9). These factors, combined with the political stability of China proper in this period, make it possible to conduct a meaningful synchronic analysis of *chengtu* across multiple regions of the empire. This period is certainly long enough to justify considering change over time, but doing so robustly would require either an even larger dataset or a more regionally concentrated one, and so is beyond the scope of this article.

I have conducted this research using the LoGaRT platform developed by the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science. LoGaRT offers two key advantages to this research. First, the platform's Pages With Images (PWI) section makes identifying and digitally collecting illustrations matching certain parameters (e.g. *chengtu* from the time period in question) much easier than using paper sources. Second, LoGaRT makes accessible a selection of gazetteers provided by the Harvard-Yenching Library that, although relatively small (currently 267 for the period under study), includes full-text digitisation of the entirety of these gazetteers, including the labels incorporated in their illustrations. This feature facilitates large-scale quantitative analysis of the textual content of *chengtu* alongside close reading of individual illustrations. To make the most of this opportunity, I have focused my research on *chengtu* with high-quality text digitisation (i.e. with the largest percentage of recognisable characters).

The body of this essay consists of five parts. The first section introduces the genre of *chengtu*, explains how features of it account for some aspects of the diversity it contains, and reviews relevant scholarship.

The second section provides a general picture of the results of quantitative analysis of the inclusion of labelled extramural features in the 125 *chengtu* that compose the dataset. Although we see signs of regional patterns in terms of how detailed *chengtu* are, these patterns break down when we look at the relative number of extramural features specifically. The next section discusses religious sites, which constitute the largest single category of extramural features. The uneven inclusion of altars associated with officially sanctioned religious rituals demonstrates that the mere presence or absence of extramural religious institutions did not determine the inclusion of extramural features in *chengtu*. The next section examines topographical features, demonstrating that while the presence of extramural topographical features did affect the composition of *chengtu*, it did not straightforwardly determine whether and how the authors of *chengtu* depicted extramural space. The last section addresses the place of *chengtu* in the illustrative economy of gazetteers more broadly and again shows the lack of a clear pattern governing the representation of extramural features. Taken together, these sections demonstrate how the possibility of expressing individual (and perhaps collective) creative licence was inherent in the genre of *chengtu*. Rather than pre-empting questions about the boundaries of urban space, this mode of representation allowed literati and craftsmen to experiment with different ways of conveying the relationship between cities, walls, and extramural space.

The Genre of *chengtu*

Chengtu are a common and recognisable genre of illustration in Qing gazetteers. They are recognisable both in terms of their own characteristics and in comparison to other kinds of illustrations alongside which they frequently appear. That said, the genre of *chengtu*, like *tu* 圖 more broadly, is characterised by considerable multivalence. To some extent, this multivalence explains the diversity of *chengtu* we find in gazetteers, although it does not offer a ready explanation for why *chengtu* took such divergent approaches to depicting extramural space.

For our purposes, a *chengtu* is an illustration of a part of a jurisdiction focused on an urban centre, usually a walled city. In rare cases, *chengtu* depict unwalled administrative seats or non-administrative cities and towns. I will focus on *chengtu* that purport to be contemporaneous with the compilation of the gazetteer in which they appear, excluding the historical illustrations of cities that a small number of gazetteers include. Although the names attached to these illustrations vary, variations of *chengtu* are the most common; I therefore refer to the genre as a whole by that name. Versions of *zhitu* 治圖 are also common and somewhat difficult to parse at first glance, since *zhi* can refer to an administrative seat as a whole or specifically to the compound of a presiding official. Both uses appear in gazetteers, but it is usually obvious which one is intended based on the content of the illustration. Other variations are less common and in some instances they do correlate to the *chengtu* giving particular attention to areas outside the walls (*guo* 郭) or to streets (*fang* 坊), alleys (*xiang* 巷), and markets (*shi* 市).

The focus of *chengtu* on walled cities differentiates them from two kinds of illustrations that also frequently appear in gazetteers: illustrations of entire administrative units (*jingtu* 境圖) and illustrations of specific sites, most commonly administrative compounds, such as the magistrate's office (Farmer 2000, 470–71). Often, both the titles of individual illustrations and the co-presence of all three indicate a clear distinction

between them. However, sometimes the boundaries are blurred. *Jingtu* usually include no substantial amount of information about the interior of cities, marking them purely with a square symbol (resembling an empty set of walls) and a text label. However, sometimes they include text labels and even icons of structures inside the city walls. When these illustrations are accompanied by a separate, clearly identifiable *chengtu*, then this does not pose a major challenge to distinguishing between them. However, some gazetteers, particularly prefectural gazetteers that include illustrations for multiple counties, include hybrid illustrations of subordinate counties and their seats that could be classified as either a *jingtu* that contains an inordinate amount of urban detail or a *chengtu* that contains an inordinate amount of extramural detail. Likewise, although *chengtu* are by definition not focused on individual sites within cities, there is considerable variation in how much detail they provide about individual buildings within multi-structure compounds: sometimes they depict and label individual structures, sometimes just the compound as a whole. Similarly, the artistry of *chengtu* varies widely, and those that include a limited number of text labels but considerable artistic flair can resemble illustrations of scenic sites as much as they resemble other *chengtu*.

The pictorial quality of *chengtu* and other geographical *tu* generally is suggestive of the distinctiveness of this genre vis-à-vis “maps”. To be sure, contemporaneous European maps also employed considerable artistry and cannot be reduced to their pragmatic uses. However, two distinctive features of *tu* indicate the importance of taking them on their own terms, rather than imposing on them expectations derived from the history of European cartography. First, geographical *tu* remained closely related to the media of both painting (especially of landscapes) and poetry (Yee 1994; Clunas 1997, 81–85). Although the creators of *tu* in gazetteers were of diverse origins, they were by and large literati with some aptitude for painting or craftsmen skilled in painting or woodblock carving, not professional cartographers (Pan Sheng 2004; Liu Gaowei 2018, 27–56). Compared to painting and poetry, verisimilitude was prized more highly in geographic *tu*, and gazetteers sometimes trumpet the quality of their *tu* by referring to in-person investigations undertaken by their creators (Teng 2003, 457; Zhang Andong 2008, 134). However, in *tu* as well as poetry and painting, there was considerable emphasis on revealing underlying truths about the world and expressing the moral quality of the artist, and so technical precision was never the sole priority (Yee 1994, 134–35, 157–62).

Second, from their earliest appearance, geographical *tu* were designed to accompany, not replace, textual descriptions. Thus, the schematic quality of many *tu* did not necessarily imply a lack of concern for mathematical precision, since readers interested in more exact details could be expected to consult the accompanying text, of which there was a great deal in gazetteers. The process of producing gazetteers through woodblock printing and the need to limit costs may have further contributed to the divergence between geographical *tu* in gazetteers and more detailed and map-like representations of space that appeared on stone steles or in print without large amounts of accompanying text (Yee 1994, 138; Su Pinhong 2003, 278–80). This is not to say that *chengtu* were ornamental instead of useful. No less an authority than Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801)—one of the great masters of the gazetteer genre—insisted that the value of *tu* lay in their practical utility, not their artistry (Liu Keming 2010, 15–17). However, what it meant for *tu* in gazetteers to be useful was conditioned by these features of the genre, which differentiated them from

(or made them a very specific form of) maps, and made it possible for *chengtu* to be useful in multiple senses.

Four different terms for viewing images encapsulate the multivalent utility of *chengtu*. First, *chengtu* could enable readers of gazetteers to quickly ascertain the primary features of a city through “surveying” (*lan* 覽). This mode of viewing made the most of the text-image relationship by using the *chengtu* to help the readers visualise the more minute information conveyed in the text (Teng 2003, 460–63). However, *chengtu* could also demand greater depth of attention through “contemplation” (*guan* 觀). In this meditative mode of viewing, the readers looked “into” the image rather than over it. This allowed them to appreciate deeper truths about the place in question, which was supposed to facilitate effective governance, and could also serve as a vehicle for vicarious travel (Clunas 1997, 117, 120; Teng 2003, 467). Third, *chengtu* could draw the readers’ eyes across the image, as though reading it (*du* 讀), especially when the *chengtu* itself contained a large number of text labels. Some *chengtu* even varied the orientation of their labels, anticipating that the readers would turn the image in order to reorient it/themselves. Finally, given their tendency towards artistry, *chengtu* could be objects of aesthetic enjoyment (*shang* 賞) (Teng 2003, 467).

Far from being mutually incompatible, *chengtu* could elicit many different permutations of these ways of viewing. Some *chengtu* were clearly designed more for one purpose than another. For example, those with very few text labels were less amenable to “reading,” and *chengtu* with fewer pictorial details are more suggestive of “surveying” than “contemplation” or “enjoyment.” Along these lines, Bray suggests a bifurcated typology of *tu* more broadly in which some “revealed or explained cosmic processes and were thus endowed with symbolic or ritual power” while others “represented or organised secular information or knowledge” and served didactic purposes (Bray 2007, 34). *Chengtu* span this spectrum of functions and exemplify how, as Bray anticipates, it can sometimes be difficult to separate the symbolic and practical import of *tu*. Similarly, the limited artistry of *chengtu* in general, their production for a reading public through woodblock printing, and their tendency to obfuscate rather than foreground the relationship between author and artifact are features they share with other late imperial *tu* and which distinguish them from the more high-brow medium of painting (*hua* 畫). Again, though, *chengtu* illustrate the fuzziness of the boundaries between these media, since many clearly served aesthetic purposes at least as much as ritual or practical ones and since it was possible to combine these purposes in a single image, as many *chengtu* do (Bray 2007, 46–61).

The principles of compilation (*fanli* 凡例) and notes accompanying illustrations (often called *tushuo* 圖說 or *tukao* 圖考) in gazetteers provide some direct indications of the philosophy that underlay *chengtu*. *Sanshui County Gazetteer* (*Sanshui xian zhi* 三水縣志) reflects on how illustrations should enlighten readers and facilitate good governance, which requires some amount of detail to be included in *chengtu*. Its compilers explain:

We have also drawn an illustration of the walled county seat, lining up the office rooms and granaries, each with their established regulations, so as to cause viewers to understand thoroughly.

又繪邑治城圖，臚列廨宇、倉庫各有定制。庶使觀者豁然。(41).

Meanwhile, the compilers of the *Yangchun County Gazetteer* (*Yangchun xian zhi* 陽春縣志) emphasise the aesthetic import of *tu* as representations of the landscape, saying,

The maps (*yutu* 輿圖) at the front of the gazetteer are to illuminate the land. With things depicted at scale, it is easy to see. The present *chengtu* follows the illustration of the administrative unit in the prefectural gazetteer...and adds illustrations of the mountains and caves. And so it records a glorious moment of the whole county.

志首輿圖以詔地，事約而易見也。今城圖遵照府志四境圖...外增崆峒巖圖，志一邑之勝時。(25).

A more economising perspective comes from the *Revised Jiashan County Gazetteer* (*Xuxiu Jiashan xian zhi* 續修嘉善縣志), which notes that its *chengtu* “records the broad outline (*lu dagang* 綠大綱).” Illustrations of the magistrate’s compound, the granary, and the school provide more detail, but aspects of the county like its topographical features, astral charts, and roads had not changed enough to justify producing new *tu* for them specifically (31). These explanations of *chengtu* lend themselves to a typology of enlightenment, elaboration, and economy, which is of some use. Again, though, strict typologies quickly break down. The most oft-repeated refrain in prefatory material is that the illustrations are meant to facilitate “viewing” (*guanlan* 觀覽), which dissolves the distinction between the *guan* and *lan* modes of seeing described above.

Moreover, texts accompanying *chengtu* generally do not rationalise specific design decisions, including their precise spatial scope. Discussions of *tu* in principles of compilation sections are generally brief, address the full range of *tu* included in the gazetteer, explain their significance in terms of general principles, and say very little about *chengtu* themselves. Texts accompanying *chengtu* primarily amplify the illustrations by providing information not contained in the images themselves, like the height of the walls and the distances between different places, rather than explaining the presence or absence of specific features and areas.

The remainder of this essay, then, works to reconstruct and identify patterns in how *chengtu* do and do not depict space outside city walls. In so doing, it builds on scholarship on the genre of *tu* (Yee 1994; Clunas 1997; Teng 2003; Bray 2007) and gazetteers (Will 1992; Bol 2001; Brook 2002; De Weerd 2003; Dennis 2015). It contributes to a wide range of scholarship that uses illustrations of cities (in gazetteers and other media) to study urban space in specific places by providing more of a macro-level perspective on the composition of *chengtu* that can be used to contextualise individual cases (Xu 2000; Naquin 2000; Meyer-Fong 2003; Zhu 2004; Fei 2009; Fei Siyan 2013; Wooldridge 2015). It builds on Chinese-language scholarship on gazetteer *tu* and *chengtu* specifically, which is much more developed than its English-language counterpart, both by conducting in-depth analysis of the features of *chengtu* beyond a single case and by addressing a question—the spatial boundaries of *chengtu*—that has so far received little attention (Su Pinzhong 2003; Yang Yuzhen 2008; Zhang Andong 2008; Zeng Xin 2013; Pan Sheng 2019; He Peidong 2020).

The most significant exception to the lack of scholarship on the spatial boundaries of *chengtu* is a valuable 2016 article by Yin Jie, Xu Xinghua, and Li Chenchen. Yin, Xu, and Li study *chengtu* from Zhejiang

Province across the entirety of the Qing and are particularly concerned with both the general types of features included in *chengtu* and the location of these features vis-à-vis the city walls. Their general emphasis on the diversity of (representations of) Qing cities is consonant with the findings I present here. Their methodology differs from mine in three respects, each offering its own advantages and disadvantages. First, their research quantifies visual rather than textual features of *chengtu*, which keeps their research closer to the illustrative nature of *chengtu*. The downside of this approach is that it does not support as fine-grained analysis of the content of *chengtu* as I will present here. Second, focusing on a specific province means that the data they present is far more concentrated spatially and thus supports statistically robust analysis of intra-regional variations. Obviously, my use of *chengtu* from a range of provinces offers the complementary benefit of engaging in inter-regional comparison. Finally, by drawing on *chengtu* from across the entirety of the Qing they are able to investigate change over time, a topic I do not address. Their finding that the amount of extramural detail in *chengtu* decreased after 1850 and the inference they draw that this reflects a growing sense of distinct urban identity in the late Qing would be worth testing using a larger number of *chengtu* from different provinces (74–76).

Regional Analysis of *chengtu* and their Depiction of Extramural Space

For the purposes of quantitative analysis, I have narrowed the full dataset of 125 *chengtu* down to those that depict the capital seat of the jurisdiction in question. That is, I have excluded *chengtu* of subordinate county seats in department- and prefecture-level gazetteers in order to prevent their inclusion of multiple *chengtu* from overly distorting the data. I have further removed two highly exceptional *chengtu* that include no labelled intramural or extramural features at all, which makes it impossible to calculate the ratio between the two. This leaves 68 *chengtu* from 64 gazetteers. Analysing these *chengtu* produces three main conclusions. First, while intramural features are generally more numerous in *chengtu*, the inclusion of at least some extramural detail is the norm. Second, this general pattern is subject to a wide degree of variation. Third, while the level of detail in *chengtu* varies by region, the ratio of extramural and intramural detail varies within regions as much as across them.

To analyse the content of these *chengtu*, I have used LoGaRT's text-tagging function to code the entirety of the text contained in these *chengtu* into six categories.² Two categories describe text not associated with specific features: title and paratext. Text associated with features is categorised as follows: inside walls, outside walls, between walls and moat, and feature of walls (e.g. gates). From this coding, I have calculated total numbers of items in each category for each of the 68 *chengtu* in the dataset used for quantitative analysis.

Unsurprisingly, *chengtu* generally contain more labelled intramural features than extramural ones, but within this general pattern there is a surprising amount of variation. The average *chengtu* in this dataset includes 26.46 intramural items and 7.04 extramural ones. 20 of the 68 *chengtu* contain no extramural

² The combination of the fact that coding/text-tagging is manual, not automatic, and that the availability of texts with high-quality digitisation is limited accounts for the small size of the source base relative to the number of gazetteers available for the period in question.

detail at all, but most include at least one labelled feature. 14 of the *chengtu* even contain as many or more extramural features as intramural ones. This variability and the existence of a set of *chengtu* especially heavy on extramural detail belie the orthodox image of perfectly wall-bound Chinese cities.

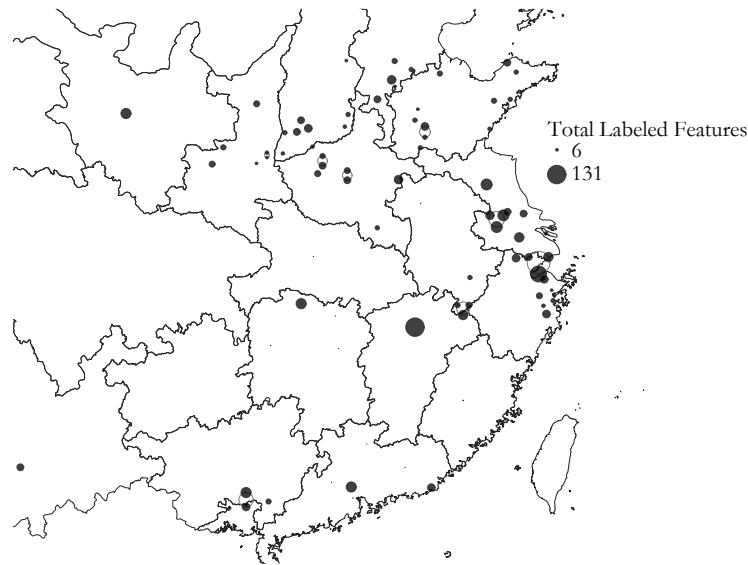


Figure 3: Geographic distribution of total number of labelled features in *chengtu*. Map by author with QGIS.

Figure 3 illustrates the geographic distribution of the 68 *chengtu* in this dataset and the relative number of total labelled features they depict. As summarised in table 1 below, *chengtu* from southern provinces, particularly in Jiangnan, tend to include a larger number of labelled features (average of 49.48) than those from northern provinces (average 28.48).³ More detailed southern *chengtu* may reflect the tendency for cities in the south to be larger and more complex than their northern counterparts, but this discrepancy could also indicate different regional patterns in the production of *chengtu*.

	# <i>chengtu</i>	Total Features	Intramural	Extramural	Ratio of Extramural to Extramural+Intramural
Jiangnan Provinces	23	49.48	35.91	7.00	0.16
Northern Provinces	31	28.48	20.13	5.90	0.20
Full Dataset	68	37.91	26.46	7.04	0.21

Table 1: Average number of labelled features in *chengtu* of Jiangnan (Anhui, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, and Jiangxi) and northern (Shandong, Shanxi, Zhili, and Henan) provinces.

³ To keep the regions in comparison relatively coherent and comparable in sample size, this categorisation excludes the smaller number of *chengtu* in the dataset from provinces in the far south and the west.

However, these regional differences diminish, if not entirely vanish, when we consider the balance of intramural and extramural detail. For the entire dataset the average number of extramural features in each *chengtu* is 7.04. Both the northern and Jiangnan *chengtu* fall slightly below this average: 5.90 and 7.00, respectively.⁴ Despite the *chengtu* from Jiangnan including, on average, slightly more extramural features than their north China counterparts, the ratio of extramural to intramural features is actually lower for the Jiangnan *chengtu* because of the larger number of intramural features they contain. This makes it difficult to draw any firm conclusions about inter-regional (at least north-versus-Jiangnan) variation in the depiction of extramural features based on the current dataset. It does indicate, though, that as far as *chengtu* are concerned the walled space of large southern cities was not necessarily more porous than smaller northern ones.

Moreover, as figure 4 illustrates, there is a considerable amount of intra-regional variation within the dataset. It is not uncommon for *chengtu* of cities in close proximity to each other to fall at opposite ends of the spectrum of relative amounts of extramural detail. This phenomenon is particularly evident in the provinces of Jiangsu and Zhejiang, which contain one of the highest spatial concentrations of data in the set. Of the 18 *chengtu* from these two provinces, 4 fall into the lowest third of ratios of extramural features to intramural ones; 9 in the median third; and 5 in the highest third. *Chengtu* from Shanxi and Shaanxi are even more polarised: 6 each in the lowest and highest thirds and only 3 in the median third.

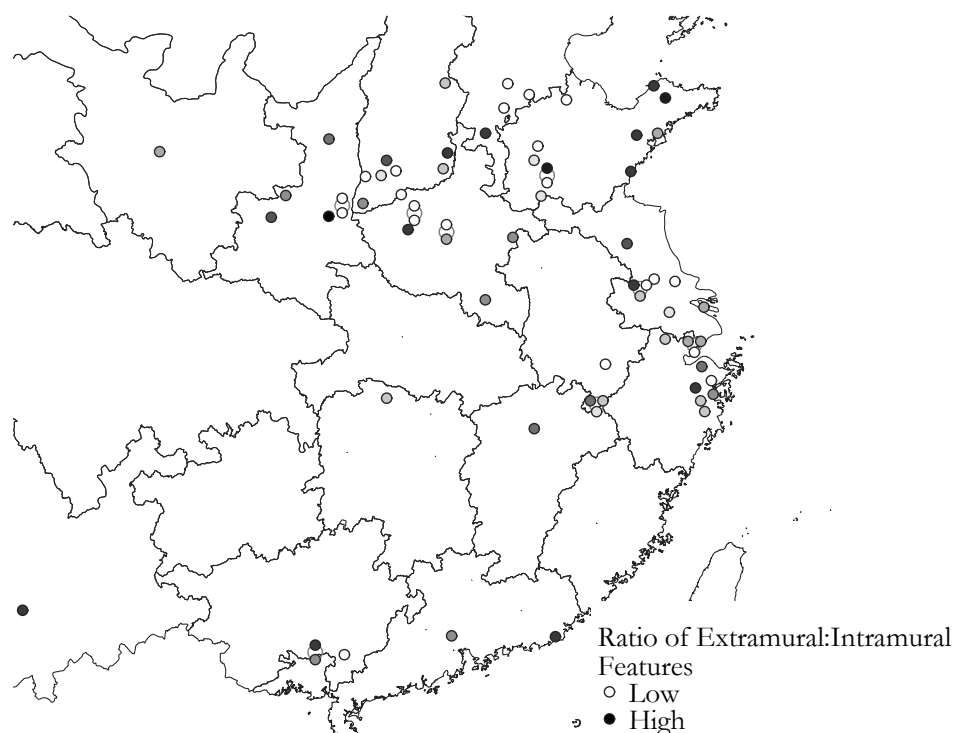


Figure 4: Geographic distribution of ratios of number of extramural features to sum of intramural and extramural features. (White represent a relatively small number of extramural features and black a relatively large number.) Map by author with QGIS.

⁴ Both fall below the overall average because some of the *chengtu* with the largest number of extramural features come from Guangdong and Guangxi, which are excluded from this regional comparison.

To conclude, *chengtu* in Jiangnan tend to include more labelled features than their counterparts in the north. Further research using an even larger dataset, allowing for more nuanced inter-regional comparisons, would be worthwhile. However, the data I have collected do not suggest clear inter-regional differences in the inclusion of extramural detail in *chengtu*. Instead, intra-regional differences predominate. This finding demonstrates that, even within relatively small geographic areas, very different kinds of images of cities could circulate and be available to producers and viewers of *chengtu*. It also suggests the need to examine other factors that could account for these differences between *chengtu*. Doing so will provide an opportunity to examine the types of extramural features that appear most frequently in *chengtu*.

Extramural Religious Sites

The 125 *chengtu* I have analysed include a total of 816 individual extramural labelled features. One of the advantages of using this particular set of materials and the LoGaRT platform is that they facilitate identifying and analysing these extramural features based on the digitised text of the *chengtu*. The vast majority (588, 72%) of these features fall into one of three general categories: religious structures (348), bodies of water or structures and features related to them (145), and mountains and hills (95). Initially, this suggests that we might be able to attribute variability in *chengtu* composition largely to two main factors: the presence of significant extramural natural features and the importance of extramural religious sites. This section will demonstrate why this conclusion is problematic in the case of religious sites in light of the uneven inclusion of extramural altars associated with officially sanctioned religious rites in *chengtu*. The next section will discuss the issue of topography.

Religious structures are ubiquitous in *chengtu* generally. Institutions dedicated to official or other major cults—such as temples to city gods (*chenghuang miao* 城隍廟)—tend, unsurprisingly, to be located inside walled areas of cities. Outside the walls, there is tremendous variety among the 182 extramural temples, shrines, pagodas, and monasteries in the dataset.⁵ The largest single sub-category of these is temples to Guandi, of which there are only 13 and which appear far more frequently inside the walls. Other deities associated with extramural religious structures include the Dragon King (*longwang* 龍王) and the God of the Eastern Peak (*dongyue* 東岳) with 7, the Eight Agricultural Immortals (*ba zha* 八蜡), and Xuandi/Zhenwu (玄帝/真武) with 6 each, and the Three Officials (*san guan* 三官) with 5. Neither the common but inconsistent inclusion of extramural religious sites on *chengtu* nor the eclectic selection of such sites we encounter is especially surprising (Naquin 2000). Both likely reflect a combination of the

⁵ These include a variety of categories of structures: *ta* 塔, *ge* 閣, *an* 庵, *ci* 祠, *dian* 殿, *gong* 宮, *guan* 觀, *miao* 廟, *si* 寺, and *yuan* 院. For categories of structures that are not necessarily religious in nature, I have counted only features that appear to be religious in purpose. This count of extramural religious structures is probably conservative in so far as it does not include features that were not possible to categorise based on available information, some of which were likely religious sites.

local particularities of the distribution of religious sites—some cities certainly had more and more important religious sites outside the walls than others—and the fact that extramural religious sites were not the primary subject of *chengtu*.

The remaining 166 features related to religion tell a different story. These features are all altars (*tan* 壇) associated with official cults (Farmer 2000, 468). The largest number of these altars are those used for making offerings to vengeful ghosts (*litan* 厲壇) and the Gods of Grain and Soil (*sheji tan* 社稷壇), which number 43 and 40 respectively. The other major categories of altars are those dedicated to the agricultural deity Xiannong (先農) (22), gods of mountains and rivers (*shanchuan* 山川) (20), weather deities (20), and directional deities (19).

The fact that these altars were present in virtually every county and were associated with official rituals but are only inconsistently included in *chengtu* makes them illustrative of how decisions about whether and how to depict extramural space in *chengtu* were less straightforward than choosing to adopt or depart from a state-defined view of the city. Let us take *sheji* altars as a case study.⁶ Extramural *sheji* altars appear on *chengtu* of the primary county seat in 24 of the 66 gazetteers in the dataset. Four additional *chengtu* depict *sheji* altars in other locations: one (very unusually) inside the walls and three between the walls and moat. Of the remaining 38 gazetteers, all but one include textual information in one or another part of the gazetteer about the jurisdiction's *sheji* altar, signifying its existence at the time. Clearly, then, we cannot attribute the inconsistent representation of *sheji* altars to their simply not existing or not being present elsewhere in gazetteers. In a minority of cases, we can find *sheji* altars in other kinds of illustrations in gazetteers: illustrations of entire administrative units (10), an illustration dedicated to the *sheji* altar (1), and a scenic illustration of another site (1). However, that still leaves 25 gazetteers that do not include *sheji* altars in their *chengtu* or other illustrations. There is no obvious way to account for this inconsistency. Again, there is no readily apparent geographic pattern to this treatment of *sheji* altars. The distance of *sheji* altars from the city gates is unlikely to be a factor since they were usually located within a mile of the walls. Whereas other extramural religious sites seem to have been less likely to be associated with the government in any way, *sheji* altars were officially sanctioned.

By virtue of *sheji* altars' association with the state, *chengtu* from which they are absent are not any more state-centred than those where they are present. Contrary to what we might assume, *chengtu* focused exclusively on walled space in fact provide a less complete picture of the ritual significance of urban space than those that include at least some information about extramural sites that were closely associated with government-sanctioned ritual practices and would have been, in all likelihood, of interest to sojourning officials. While this is particularly evident in the case of *sheji* altars, it may be true of other kinds of extramural sites with less obvious associations with the state. For example, Baotu Spring, located immediately southwest of the walled city of Jinan in Shandong, had long been one of the city's most prominent scenic sites. Unsurprisingly, it appears in the *chengtu* in the 1640 and 1773 Licheng County gazetteers (*Licheng*

⁶ The advantage of more closely examining *sheji* altars as opposed to *li* altars is twofold. First it is much more feasible to conduct full-text searches for the two-character term *sheji* than the single-character term *li*. Second the orthography of *sheji* in both original texts and the digital transcriptions in LoGaRT is much more consistent than that of *li*.

xian zhi 歷城縣志) and the 1840 Jinan Prefecture gazetteer (*Jinan fu zhi* 濟南府志). It would be unwise, though, to assume that this pictorial prominence necessarily reflects an extramural assertion of local culture against the administrative offices and other signs of state authority tightly clustered inside the walls. Both the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors visited Baotu Spring on their southern tours and made it—rather than a place inside the city walls—the city’s primary repository for steles bearing imperial calligraphy. After 1736, the Shandong salt administration took responsibility for maintaining these steles, which is the most likely explanation for the inclusion of a detailed illustration of the area around Baotu Spring—which was otherwise unrelated to the salt administration’s primary functions—in the 1809 edition of the gazetteer of the Shandong salt administration, whereas the 1724 edition had contained no such illustration (Knorr 2020, 119–24, 141–44). In other words, we cannot assume that *chengtu* that depict a larger number of extramural details reflect an anti-statist exercise of representational licence.

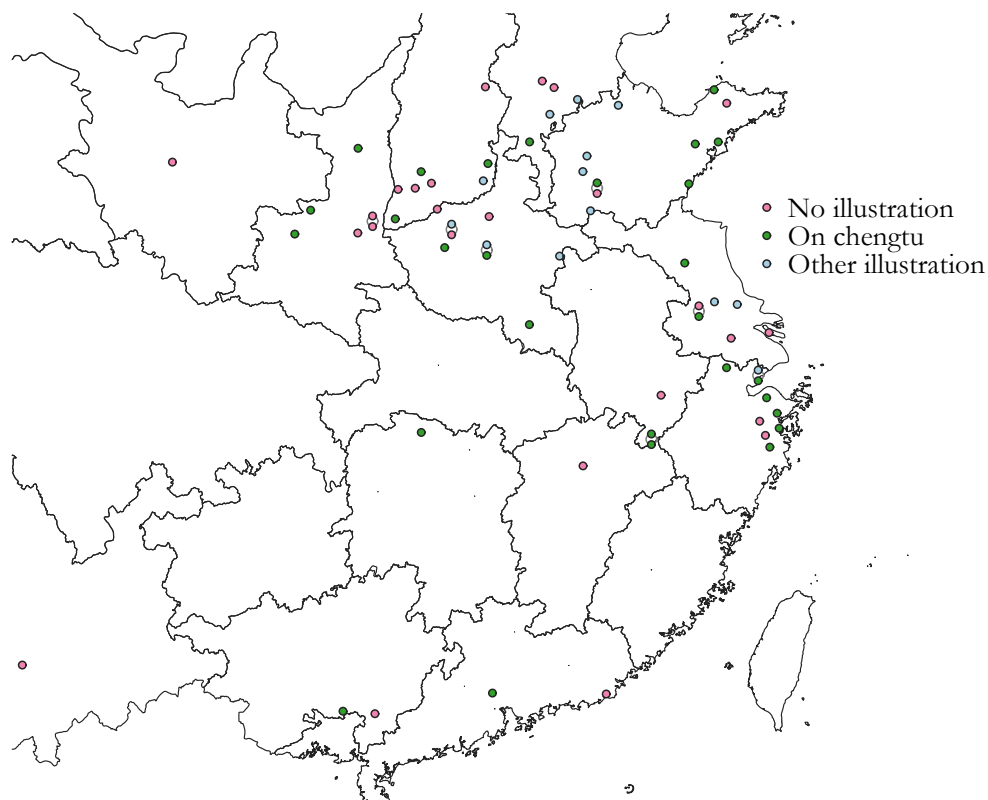


Figure 5: Geographic distribution of illustrations of *sheji* altars in gazetteers. Map by author with QGIS.

Instead, the inclusion of *sheji* altars, like extramural detail more generally, reflects an aesthetic choice about how to depict urban and peri-urban space. Rather than a dichotomy between a normative *chengtu* and departures from it, we see a remarkable lack of clarity about what a *chengtu* should depict. This lack of clarity reflects the ambiguity of urban space in late imperial China as both strictly wall-bound and jurisdictionally boundless, but we can observe this ambiguity only because the genre of *chengtu* sustained a rich and diverse discourse around the boundaries of urban space.

Topography: Textual and Pictorial Depictions

Next to religious sites, items related to topographical features—mountains and bodies of water—are the most numerous extramural features appearing in *chengtu*. 95 of the 816 extramural features in the dataset are related to mountains or hills. Almost all of these are designated as *shan* 山. The 145 features related to water are more diverse. They include various kinds of bodies of water: rivers and streams (38), springs and wells (17), and lakes and ponds (14). They also include a variety of human-made structures related to water, like bridges (20), sluice gates (12), and levees (8). I also include 27 islands in this total.⁷

Two characteristics distinguish topographical features from other kinds of items included in *chengtu*. First, urban and peri-urban topography varied far more widely than the basic set of human-made structures, like magistrate’s offices, schools, and temples, that we find in almost all *chengtu*. In the absence of rivers or mountains, it is implausible that one city’s *chengtu* would contain as many topographical features as another’s. Wright’s observation that normative urban morphology, which was first developed on the North China Plain, where flat terrain was in abundance, had to adapt to the more complex terrain of southern China might lead us to expect that extramural topographical features might be especially numerous in southern *chengtu* (Wright 1977, 49–50). As demonstrated already, the *chengtu* I have analysed do not exhibit a stark north-south difference in terms of numbers of extramural features. The premise that more complex physical topography might correlate to greater departures from the idealised form of the “orthodox” *chengtu* might still carry weight at the sub-regional level, though. Yin, Xu, and Li make this argument in their study of *chengtu* in gazetteers in Zhejiang, showing that *chengtu* with larger amounts of extramural detail are more prevalent in mountainous areas of the province (Yin Jie, Xu Xinghua, and Li Chenchen 2016, 74.) A larger dataset might make it possible to extend this analysis to the empire as a whole.

The other distinctive characteristic of topographical features, which is particularly germane to Yin, Xu, and Li’s study, is that they lend themselves to pictorial illustration just as much, if not more than, the textual labelling that is central to my methodology. In this sense, Yin, Xu, and Li’s method of counting visual rather than textual features is better poised to quantify the full extent to which topographical features appear in *chengtu*. For example, mountainous terrain is ubiquitous in the *chengtu* of county seats in the 1680 *Yan’an Prefectural Gazetteer* (*Yan’an fu zhi* 延安府志), producing distinctive urban morphologies, as in the *chengtu* of Ansai County 安塞縣 in figure 6. Nestled between boldly drawn cliffs that seemingly make a portion of its wall redundant and a rocky crag topped by a gnarled tree, the sparsely-depicted walled city is almost an afterthought. Despite the visual impression of this *chengtu*, though, none of the mountains are labelled with text, nor are any other extramural features. Textually, then, it strikes a sharp contrast, despite their similar visual style, to the *chengtu* of the prefectural seat (figure 7), which includes four labelled mountains (and six other features) outside the city walls. Inevitably, then, the method I have adopted in the foregoing analysis underplays the preponderance of extramural topographical features in *chengtu*. However, in so far as such features enhance the diversity of *chengtu* beyond what their text conveys, then it only strengthens the argument this essay makes about the tremendous variation within the

⁷ Rivers and streams: *he* 河, *jiang* 江, *qu* 曲, *qu* 渠, *fu* 滄, *shui* 水, and *xi* 溪; springs and wells: *quan* 泉 and *jing* 井; lakes and ponds: *hu* 湖, *chi* 池, *tan* 潭, and *wan* 灣; bridges: *qiao* 橋, *pi* 皮, and *ba* 霸; sluice gates: *zha* 閘; levees: *di* 堤 and *tang* 塘; islands: *zhou* 洲.

genre, demonstrating that in *chengtu* we see divergent approaches to depicting not only the spatial boundaries of cities but also their general aesthetic appearance in relationship to their natural surroundings.

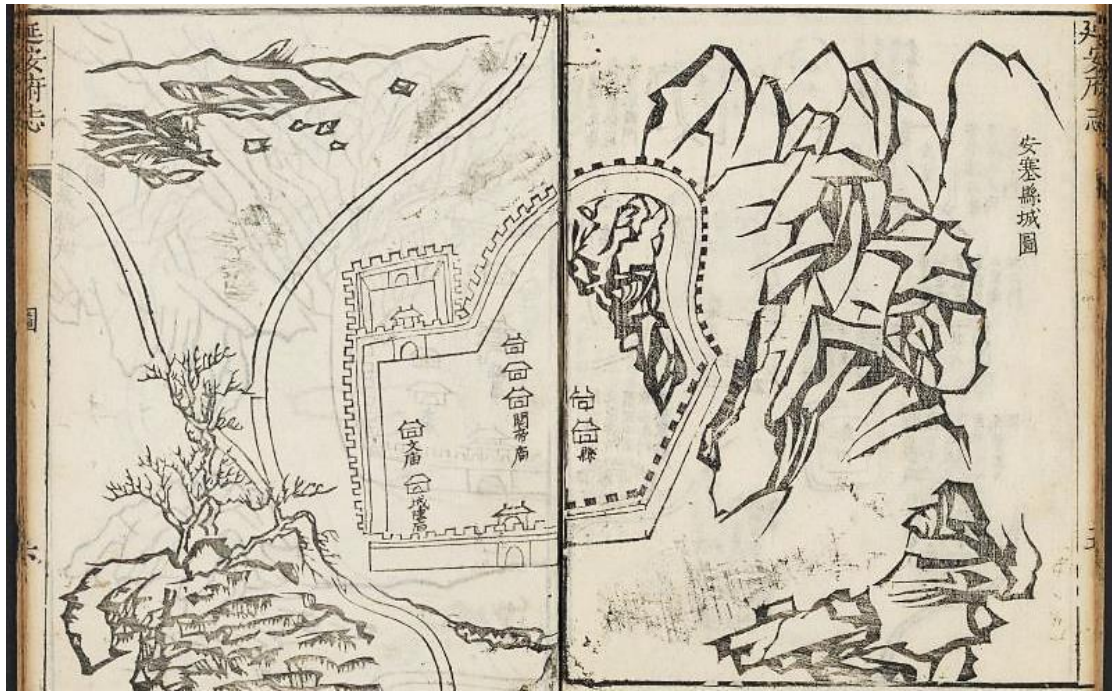


Figure 6: *Chengtu* of Ansai County. *Yan'an fu zhi*, tu.5b-6a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:13034892?n=76>)

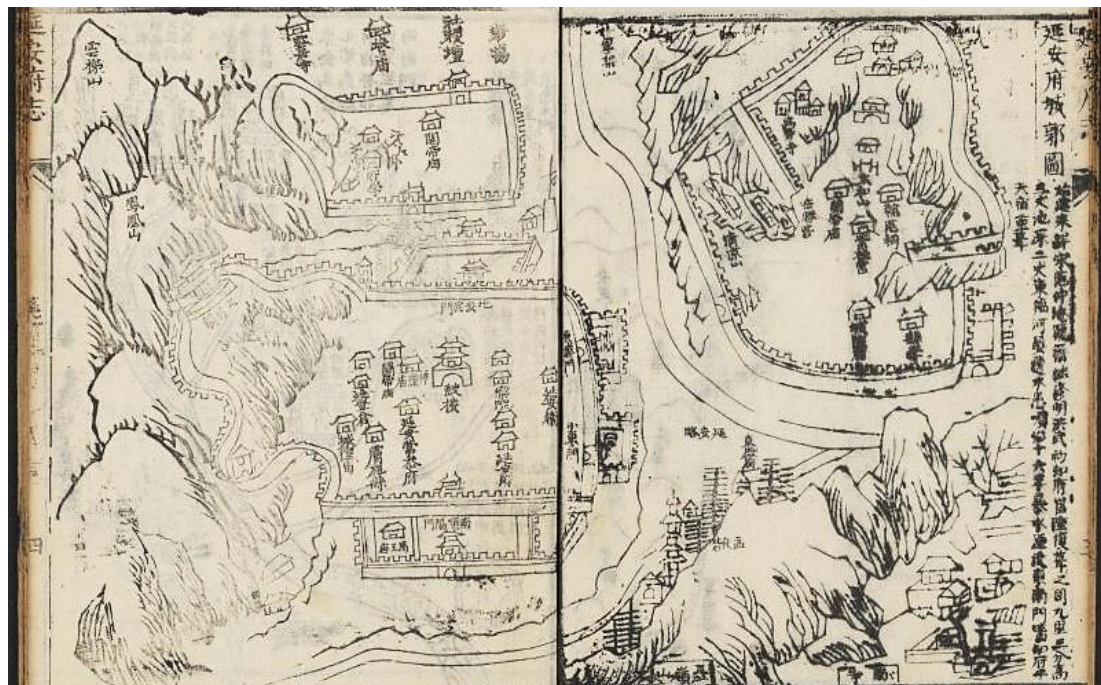


Figure 7: *Chengtu* of Yan'an prefectural seat. *Yan'an fu zhi*, tu.3b-4a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:13034892?n=74>)

However, even in the realm of topography—putatively permanent and unavoidable—we can discern *chengtu*-creators exercising considerable agency to produce distinctive visions of Chinese cities. Illustrations of Weinan 渭南 in Shaanxi, two from prefectural gazetteers of Tongzhou 同州 (1741 and 1781) and one from a county gazetteer of Weinan itself (1778), illustrate the negotiability of topography in *chengtu*. The *chengtu* in the prefectural gazetteers (figures 8 and 9) are just different enough to prove that the 1781 *chengtu* was not an exact replica of the 1741 one, although it was likely based on it, which was a common practice (Liu Gaowei 2018, 62). Both depict the crescent-shaped enclosures around the city's gates in an unusual amount of detail, but neither contains any extramural features. The *chengtu* in the county gazetteer (figure 10) is almost completely unrecognisable as the same place. The crescent enclosures around the gates are gone, and the city's shape is reduced to a perfect square. More strikingly, the surrounding landscape is now alive with mountains, buildings, a bridge, and, most prominently, two waterways running along the western and northern edges of the city: the Qiu 澇 and the larger river into which it flows, the Wei 渭, which is a tributary of the Yellow River and lends Weinan its name. Besides the city's four gates, these waterways are, in fact, the only labelled items on the *chengtu*. In terms of composition, it is a mirror opposite of the *chengtu* in the prefectural gazetteers, and it is the depiction of the city's topography—presumably one of its more non-negotiable characteristics—that makes all the difference. Again, this reflects how no single factor on its own, be it geographic location or topographical environment, determined the form of a *chengtu*. Instead, we see artists exercising considerable and sometimes contradictory discretion in representing the boundaries and shapes of urban space.

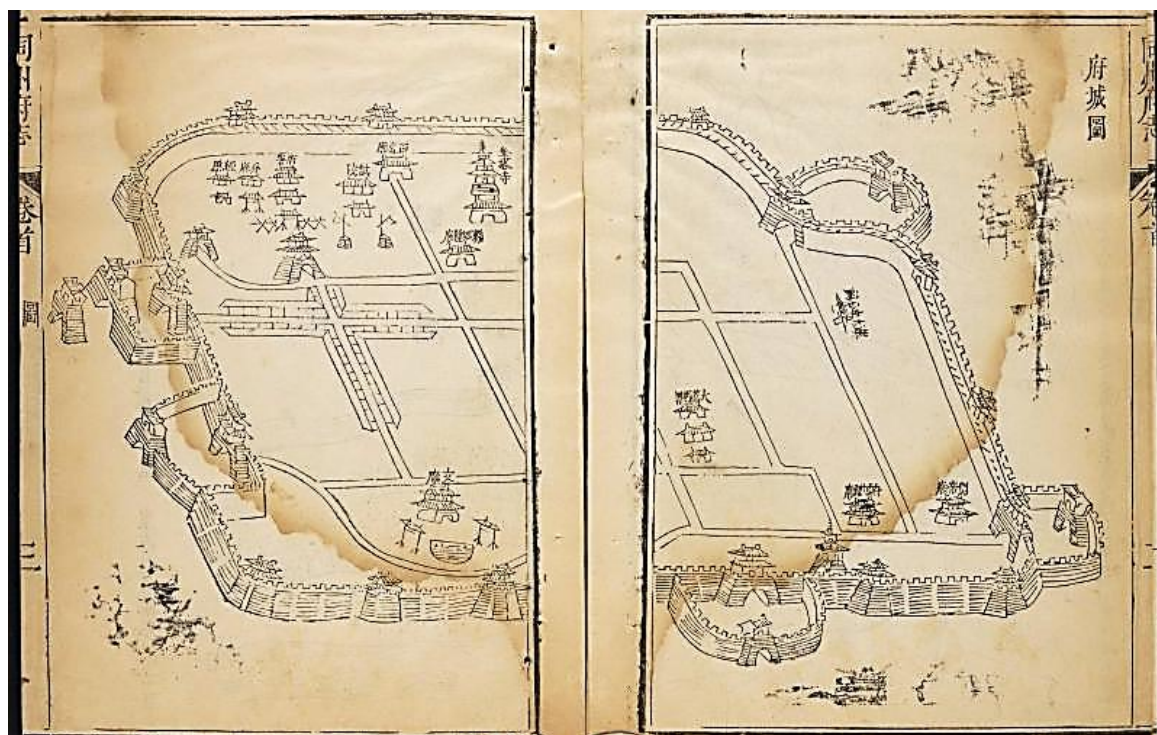


Figure 8: *Chengtu* of Weinan. *Tongzhou fu zhi* 1741, *tu.2b-3a*. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:13012868?n=43>)

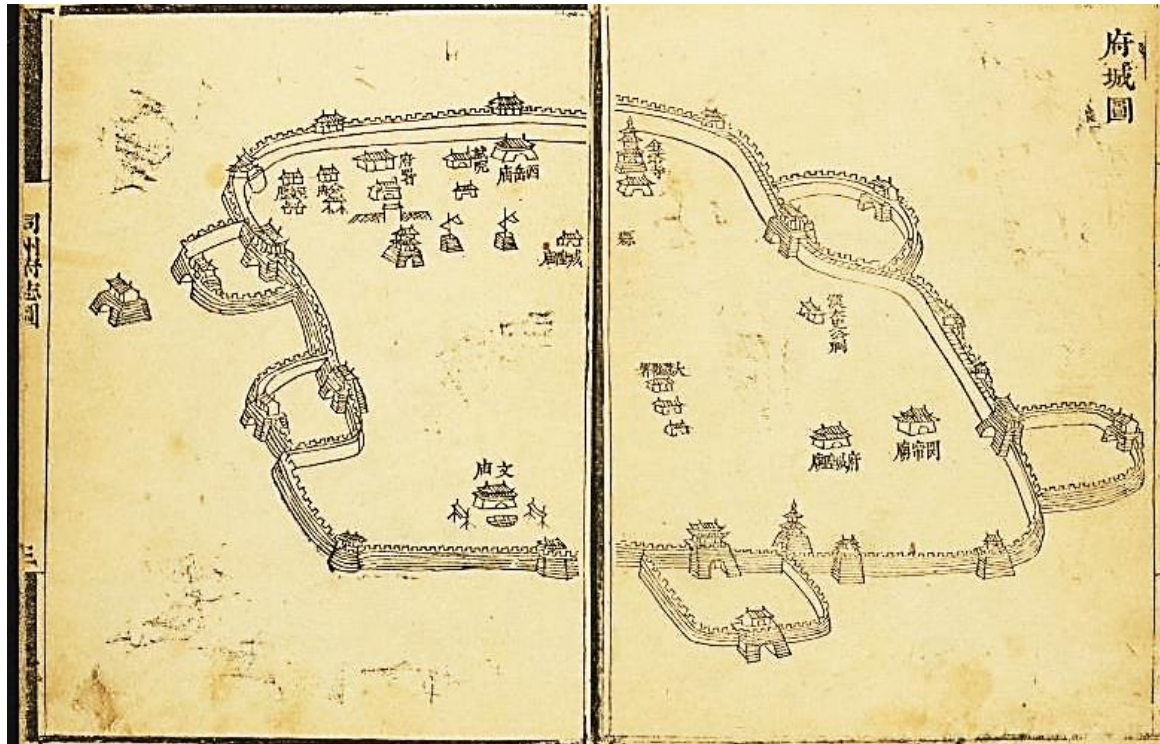


Figure 9: *Chengtu* of Weinan. *Tongzhou fu zhi* 1781, tu.11b-12a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:12988056?n=19>)

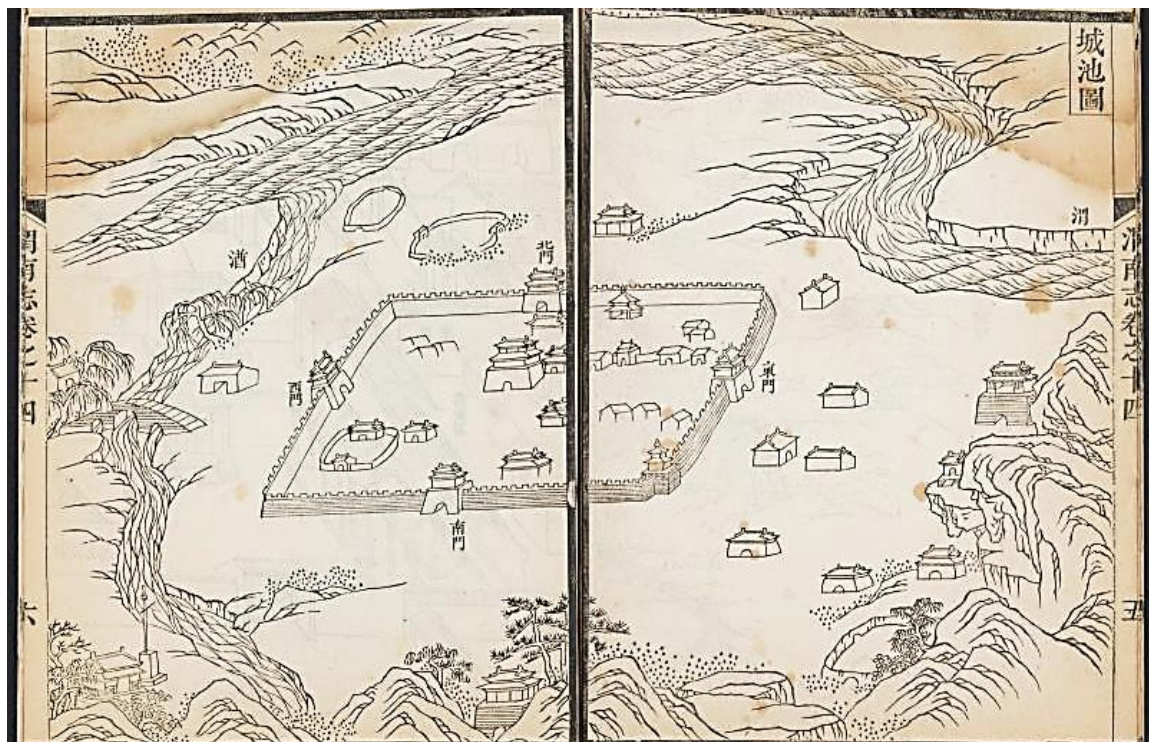


Figure 10: *Chengtu* of Weinan. *Weinan zhi*, 14.5b-6a. Image source: Harvard Yenching Library (persistent link: <https://nrs.lib.harvard.edu/urn-3:fhcl:13042587?n=481>)

The Weinan *chengtu* raise two further questions that bear examination. First, how equivalent were *chengtu* of the same city in prefectural and county gazetteers? Second, whereas the prefectural gazetteer *chengtu* are both titled *chengtu*, the one in the county gazetteer is titled *chengchi tu* 城池圖, as are other *chengtu*. Did different titles for *chengtu* reflect specific approaches that affected the depiction of urban space? The final section considers both questions through examining *chengtu* within the larger context of gazetteers in which they are included.

Chengtu and Their Gazetteers

Having dissected a large number of *chengtu* in order to examine their spatial features, we should now consider them pieced back into the context of the gazetteers in which they were published. Doing so will allow us to examine how three facets of compilation might have affected the composition of *chengtu*. These factors are (1) the naming of *chengtu*, which could reflect different intentions on the part of creators and compilers, (2) the place of *chengtu* in the context of other illustrations included in gazetteers, and (3) the administrative level of the gazetteers in question. In all cases, we find considerable variety within subsets of *chengtu* that make it impossible to identify any particular factor determining the amount of extramural detail any given *chengtu* depicts.

57 of the 68 *chengtu* of primary administrative seats I have analysed are titled according to one of the following four conventions (sometimes with small variations): *chengtu*, *chengchi tu*, *chengguo tu* 城郭圖, and *zhitu*. Translated somewhat literally, these are, respectively: illustrations of walls, of walls and moats, of walls and areas around the gates, and of administrative seats. The largest group is *chengtu* (30), followed by *chengchi tu* (15), *zhitu* (8), and *chengguo tu* (4). Of the remaining illustrations, 9 have other more unique titles, and 2 are not clearly titled. As the name suggests, all four of the *chengguo tu* include some number of extramural features and a slightly greater average number (8.87) than the entire dataset (7.04). There is some variability between the other three categories but all of them display the kind of internal variability that characterises the dataset as a whole. Three of the *zhitu* contain no extramural detail at all, while two contain more extramural than intramural features. We might expect the *chengchi tu* to be similar to the *chengguo tu*, based on the title, and, indeed, 5 of the 15 contain as many or more extramural features as intramural ones, which is a higher ratio than for the dataset as a whole. However, 6 of them include no extramural features, which is also a higher proportion than the rest of the dataset. The numbers for *chengtu* track the entire dataset closely, except that they contain slightly fewer intramural *and* extramural features than average. The variability within each of these sub-groups is more reflective of the diversity of the genre as a whole than any firm distinction between *chengtu* bearing different titles, except in the case of *chengguo tu*.

The large range of illustrations and permutations thereof in gazetteers makes it difficult to analyse how the presence of other illustrations might affect the composition of individual *chengtu*. When *chengtu* that include few extramural details are accompanied by separate illustrations of extramural sites, then we might be tempted to say that the compilers have compensated for the former with the latter. This is the case, for example, with the very rare instance of the gazetteer that includes a dedicated illustration of a *sheji* altar

mentioned above. The *chengtu* of this gazetteer from Jingzhou 景州 in Zhili contains no extramural features and fewer intramural features (19) than average (26.46). However, the gazetteer as a whole contains an inordinate number of individual illustrations, including the magistrate's compound, a granary, three altars, the Confucian temple, and a local river. There is also a series of maps of rural districts. In other instances, though, the lack of extramural detail in a *chengtu* is indicative of a paucity of illustrations in the gazetteer as a whole. Even then, illustrations of the entire administrative unit can compensate for a lack of detail in *chengtu*, as with the ten gazetteers that include the locations of *sheji* altars there rather than in the *chengtu*.

I have drawn the *chengtu* that I am analysing from a mix of county, departmental, and prefectural gazetteers. Up until now, the quantitative analysis I have presented has mixed these types of gazetteers but has excluded the *chengtu* of subordinate county seats included in prefectural gazetteers. Doing so prevents prefectural gazetteers with a large number of *chengtu* of subordinate counties from distorting the data. However, it leaves open the question of exactly how equivalent these *chengtu* are and whether their appearance in county versus prefectural gazetteers has any bearing on the depiction of extramural space.

Regarding the first question, we need to consider two distinctions: (1) between *chengtu* of prefectural seats and *chengtu* of county seats that appear in county gazetteers and (2) between *chengtu* of county seats that appear in county gazetteers and those that appear in prefectural gazetteers (as subordinate counties). The disparity we see in the second case is more significant (particularly for quantitative analysis) than in the first. *Chengtu* of prefectural seats do tend to be more detailed than *chengtu* in county gazetteers, with the former containing, on average, 46.20 labelled items from all categories and the latter 37.09 items. However, this disparity is unsurprising in so far as prefectural seats tended to be larger than county seats and contained more of the kinds of structures that we expect to find in all *chengtu*, particularly government offices. *Chengtu* from prefectural gazetteers contain, on average, more extramural items (8.80) than *chengtu* in county gazetteers (7.19), but the ratio of extramural to intramural features is actually a bit higher in county gazetteer *chengtu* because of the larger number of intramural features in prefectural *chengtu*. In other words, *chengtu* of prefectural seats and *chengtu* of county seats in county gazetteers are not identical, but they are not necessarily less comparable than we would expect *chengtu* of cities of different sizes to be, which suggests that they are basically different manifestations of the same genre.

The disparity between prefectural seat *chengtu* and *chengtu* of subordinate county seats in the same prefectural gazetteers tends to be much larger. Of the ten prefectural gazetteers in the dataset, four contain no *chengtu* of subordinate county seats. In five of the remaining six, the total number of features in the county seat *chengtu* is significantly (40% or more) lower than for the prefectural seat *chengtu*. In the one other case, the difference is less than 10%.

As this suggests, there is also some disparity between the *chengtu* we find in county gazetteers and *chengtu* of county seats in prefectural gazetteers, summarised in figure 11. In five of the six prefectural gazetteers, the average number of intramural and total features in subordinate county seat *chengtu* is considerably lower than the averages for *chengtu* in county gazetteers. In the one other case (Nanchang), both the prefectural and county seat *chengtu* are inordinately detailed. There is, however, a remarkable degree of

variability in the average number of extramural features in the county seat *chengtu* in the prefectural gazetteers. In three of the six cases, there are noticeably fewer extramural features in the county *chengtu* in prefectural gazetteers than in *chengtu* in county gazetteers, in line with there being fewer intramural and total features overall. In the other three prefectural gazetteers, though, there are actually, on average, more extramural features than the average *chengtu* in a county gazetteer. One of those cases is the Nanchang gazetteer, in which the *chengtu* of the prefectural seat also includes an exceptionally large number of extramural features (41). Likewise, in the case of the *Guangping Prefectural Gazetteer* (*Guangping fu zhi* 廣平府志), the *chengtu* of the prefectural seat contains a larger-than-average number of extramural features (21). In both these cases, then, there is stylistic consistency between the gazetteers' prefectural seat *chengtu* and subordinate county seat *chengtu*. The final case, the *Huzhou Prefectural Gazetteer* (*Huzhou fu zhi* 湖州府志), is anomalous both in the sense that there is a very large gap between the number of intramural sites in the prefectural versus county seat *chengtu* (37 versus an average of 6.2) and in the sense that there is also a large but opposite discrepancy in the number of extramural features (only 4 in the prefectural seat *chengtu* versus an average of 11.4 in the county seat *chengtu*).

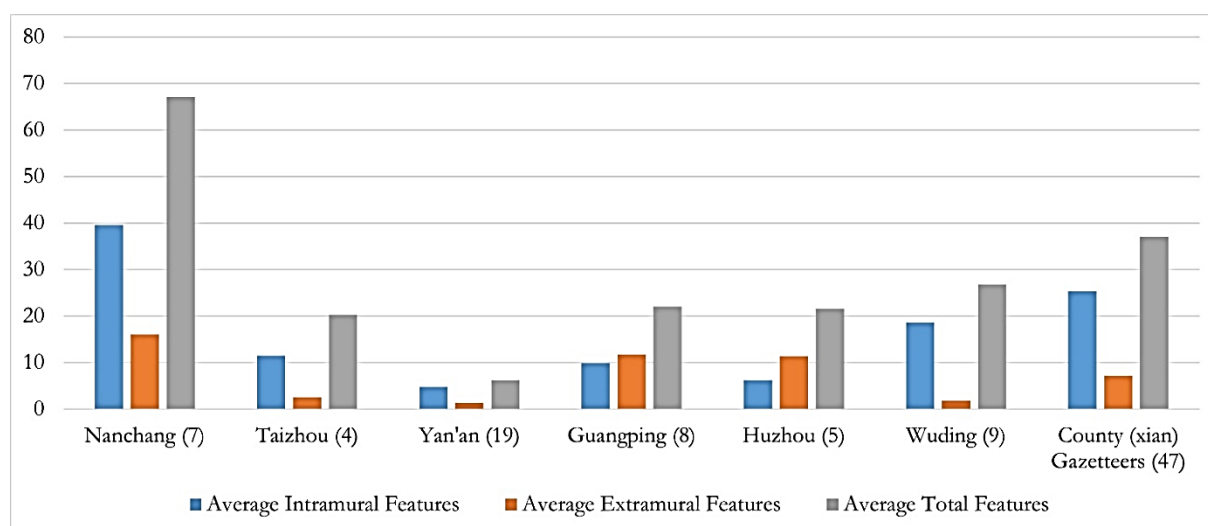


Figure 11: Average number of labelled features in county seat *chengtu* in prefectural gazetteers versus *chengtu* in county gazetteers. Number of *chengtu* in parentheses.

In general, then, we can conclude that there is usually a degree of comparability between *chengtu* from different kinds of gazetteers, but with two caveats. First, *chengtu* of prefectural seats tend to be more detailed than *chengtu* in county gazetteers, which is a pattern we should expect and does not necessarily affect our interpretation of these two kinds of *chengtu*. Second, and more significantly, *chengtu* of subordinate county seats in prefectural gazetteers tend to be less detailed than *chengtu* in county gazetteers. This is likely a product of the pragmatic considerations attendant on compiling larger prefectural gazetteers—reflected by the fact that some prefectural gazetteers do not include *chengtu* of subordinate county seats at all—and corresponds to our expectation that we would find less county-specific textual information in a prefectural gazetteer than a county one. As a result, we should not consider *chengtu* of county seats in county and prefectural gazetteers to be interchangeable, even if the nature of the disparities between the two groups—such as in the inclusion of extramural features—may be difficult to predict.

Conclusion

While *chengtu* appear consistently enough in similar enough forms to speak about them as constituting a genre of illustration, this genre contains a tremendous amount of variability. In the case of extramural features, that variability sometimes reflects, at least roughly, predictable contours, like the surrounding topography of a city and, to some extent, its administrative status. Even then, though, neither these features nor others we have considered, such as region, sub-regional patterns, or the presence of other illustrations in gazetteers, precisely predicts the nature of a given *chengtu*. Instead, *chengtu* reflect not only the material diversity of Chinese cities but also the diverse ways artists and compilers approached representing urban space. Polar opposite approaches to extramural space—completely excluding or emphasising it—can be leveraged to question whether cities in premodern China had distinctive identities, since they suggest, in turn, that conceptions of urban space either conformed to state-dictated norms that defined cities with reference to their administrative and ritual functions or lacked any clear sense of division.

To be sure, the *chengtu* I have examined should help put to rest the notion—if this is still needed—that “the Chinese city” is a meaningful historical type. In *chengtu* we can observe a diverse set of urban forms that do not cohere into a monolithic archetype, even if they share some characteristics like walls—and even then not universally or uniformly throughout history. Moreover, *chengtu* also reflect the diverse modes of representing urban space that circulated during the Qing dynasty. This diversity transcends the idealisation and standardisation we might expect to see and to some extent do see in *chengtu*, given their production for local gazetteers, which reflected (even if not exclusively) the priorities of the imperial government. To this extent, even the basic functionality of LoGaRT’s PWI feature is a great boon for making evidence of the rich diversity of Chinese cities readily accessible to a wide audience of researchers, teachers, and students. Nevertheless, it should be used with the caveat that *chengtu* were meant to be consulted alongside the text of gazetteers, which, thankfully, LoGaRT also facilitates.

While *chengtu* provide no single picture of cities in early modern China, their sheer number and diversity indicate the vibrancy of discourse around urban space in this period, even in the context of what we might expect to be a constrained and formulaic genre of representation. Rather than seeking a Chinese conception of urban space in an elusive settled vision of the city, we should appreciate how this discourse itself was constitutive of urbanism.⁸ *Chengtu* formed only one aspect of city-making, which scholars will no doubt continue to explore in other textual and visual media. Beyond being a livelier genre than we might expect, one of the great benefits of *chengtu* is their ubiquity. Through them, we can see how people across the empire, not just in major metropolises, worked out how to represent urban space. Further research expanding on the dataset I have used here will allow us to answer questions about change over time and intra-regional variation that have so far been addressed in narrow and/or imprecise ways and greatly expand our understanding of the material and representational construction of urban space in Chinese history.

⁸ For a further elaboration of this approach to theorising urbanity in Chinese history based on the effects of social processes, see Fei Siyan 2013, 327–40.

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