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Chinese Writings on Tea *Classifications and Compilations*

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Abstract

The present article deals with the historical evolution and the current state of the classification and compilation of Chinese writings on tea. The *Chajing (Tea Classic)* by Lu Yu was the first essay entirely dedicated to tea, inspiring the composition of other writings on this subject. In the bibliographical catalogues of the Tang and Song dynasties, texts on tea were classified under different categories. Tea literature was recognized as an individual genre in 1612 with the publication of the first dedicated collectanea, entitled *Chashu (Writings on Tea)*. During the Qing period there was no other comparable compilation of texts of this kind. In the twentieth century the term *chashu* was adopted by various scholars and compilers as a general label for tea literature. Nevertheless, there is at present neither a unique nor unequivocal term to denote tea literature, nor is there common acceptance of the scope and typologies of the texts that form this literary genre.

Keywords

Chajing, tea literature, bibliographical classification, book history

Introduction

The term *chashu* 茶書 (tea books) is today commonly used as a general label for the essays on tea produced in China in the course of the imperial era. Nevertheless, modern authors and compilers display substantial differences in their acceptance and understanding of the term *chashu*, as well as in the numbers and types of texts that they consider part of this literary genre. In the present article, I will address the historical evolution and the current state

of the classification and compilation of Chinese writings on tea. I will first give an overview of the rise of tea literature in the Tang dynasty and the ways that the texts dealing with tea and its related matters were classified and grouped in early bibliographical catalogues and collectanea. Next I will examine the evolution of tea literature during the Ming, when many works were produced and printed, and when tea literature was first recognized as a specialized genre. Then I will take into consideration the treatment of tea works within the Qing imperial catalogue and examine modern catalogues and collections of traditional Chinese writings on tea, considering the different interpretations of the meaning and scope of the term *chashu* as it has been adopted by various scholars and compilers.

The rise and early classifications of tea literature

The *Chajing* 茶經 (*Tea Classic*), composed by Lu Yu 陸羽 (733–804), is the world's first treatise entirely dedicated to tea.¹ This text is an encyclopaedic compendium, a comprehensive work that deals with various aspects of the beverage. Lu Yu discusses the origin of the tea plant, describes the method and tools used to process the leaves, ranks the production areas, gives precise instructions for the preparation of the beverage, and establishes the aesthetics of its appreciation. In the text, Lu Yu also includes a collection of literary references about tea available at the time of its composition.

As the title (*Classic*) indicates, Lu Yu intended to set his work as the foundation stone of the tea tradition. Indeed, the *Chajing* had a great impact on the diffusion of tea consumption in China. For centuries this text was read and used as a source of inspiration by tea connoisseurs and lovers, who revered it as the unmatched ancient core contribution to tea culture, even when the methods of manufacturing and consuming tea had departed completely from those prescribed by Lu Yu. The *Tea Classic* also inspired the composition of other essays dedicated to the beverage. Like the *Chajing* itself, some of these works comprehensively cover the many topics related to tea, while others focus on a single specialized aspect.²

By the end of the Song dynasty there was already a significant corpus of writings dedicated to tea, comprising texts of very heterogeneous types. The

¹ For the life of Lu Yu and the *Chajing*, see Ceresa 1990: 5–15, Zheng and Zhu 2007: 5–7, Benn 2015:96–116, Hinsch 2015: 55–70, Despeux 2015: 8–16.

² Ceresa 1993.

writings included treatises on the processing, preparation, and tasting of tea; reports on the imperial tea manufactures and the ranking of production areas; classifications of different kinds of water for preparing tea; depictions of tea instruments; personal notes on tea drinking; and collections of regulations on tea trade. The titles of these texts commonly include terms such as ‘memorandum’ (*lu* 錄), ‘treatise’ (*lun* 論), ‘register’ (*pu* 譜), ‘classification’ (*pin* 品), ‘notes’ (*ji* 記), and ‘regulation’ (*fa* 法).

In the bibliographical catalogues of the Tang and Song dynasties, tea writings were not treated as a consistent genre; they were instead classified under different categories such as ‘agriculture’ (*nongjialei* 農家類), ‘minor traditions’ (*xiaoshuolei* 小說類), ‘economics’ (*shihuolei* 食貨類), ‘geography’ (*dililei* 地理類), and ‘miscellaneous works’ (*zayilei* 雜藝類).³ In the *Suichutang shumumu* 遂初堂書目 (*Catalogue of the Suichu Hall*), a private bibliography written by the Southern Song scholar You Mao 尤袤 (1127–1194), the *Chajing* and seven other essays on tea were listed in a new bibliographical category called *pululei* 譜錄類 (vade mecums), which contained miscellaneous handbooks and essays on collectables, antiques, writing implements, food and drinks, gardening, and pet animals.⁴

In 1273, Lu Yu’s *Chajing*, together with *Dongxi shicha* 東溪試茶錄 (*Memorandum of Tea-Tasting at Dongxi*) by Song Zi’an 宋子安 (eleventh century), *Jiancha shui ji* 煎茶水記 (*Records of Water for Brewing Tea*) by Zhang Youxin 張又新 (*js* 814), and *Chalu* 茶錄 (*Memorandum on Tea*) by Cai Xiang 蔡襄 (1012–1067), were collected and printed for the first time in the large collectanea *Baichuan xuehai* 百川學海.⁵ In this publication, the four texts on tea were included in four separate sections; later, in the Ming reprint of 1501, they were grouped together in a single one. An analogous case of initial dispersal and ultimate consolidation is found in the collectanea *Shuofu* 說郛. The original hundred-juan version, published by Tao Zhongyi 陶宗儀 (?–1396), contains seven essays on tea scattered in different chapters.⁶ But in the later,

³ Ceresa 1993, 1995. All of these categories belong to the branch *zibu* 子部 (philosophy) of the traditional fourfold division of Chinese bibliographies.

⁴ *Suichutang shumumu* is contained in the *Siku quanshu*. For a biography of You Mao, see Franke 1976: 1258–61. The category *pulu* has been translated also as ‘scientific treatises’ or ‘miscellaneous handbooks’ (Wilkinson 2012: 945–54).

⁵ The *Baichuan xuehai* was compiled by Zuo Gui 左圭 (thirteenth century). It includes 101 books with a total length of 177 *juan*. For an early scholarly contribution on Chinese collectanea, see Hummel 1931. For a description of the texts on tea, see Zheng and Zhu 2007: 34, 76, 82.

⁶ The hundred-juan version of *Shuofu* was reconstructed by Zhang Zongxiang 張宗祥 (1882–1965) and published by the Shanghai Commercial Press in 1927. For the biography of Tao Zhongyi and the structure of *Shuofu*, see Li and Lü 1996: 2067.

expanded 120-*juan* version — edited and printed in the late Ming by Tao Ting 陶珽 (*js* 1610) — thirteen Tang and Song essays on tea are grouped together in a single *juan*. Similarly, the eleven Ming texts on tea in Tao Ting's supplement, the *Xu Shuofu* 續說郛, are also assembled in a single *juan*.

The flourishing of the writings on tea in the late Ming period

In the course of the Ming there was a remarkable increase in the production of texts dedicated to tea. About half of the total number of works on tea of the imperial period were written in the last century of the dynasty, following the boom in private and commercial printing. Many of these texts were originally published as single books or within discrete collections of personal writings. These new works on tea were then included with older works in commercial collectanea and daily-life encyclopaedias. Most importantly, essays on tea by different authors were also collected and printed together within dedicated editions.

The first example of this kind of specialized publishing is the reprint of the *Chajing* made in 1542 at Longgai monastery in Jingling, the monastery where Lu Yu was brought up. This edition, edited by the monk Zhenqing 真清 (active in the 1540s), is in two volumes, the first of which contains the text of Lu Yu's *Classic*. The second volume consists of two collections of writings compiled by the editor, the first of which contains Lu Yu's official biography and three Tang and Song essays dedicated to water.⁷ The second is a collection of six Tang and Song tea poems (one by Lu Yu and the other dedicated to him) supplemented by an additional thirty-four poems and a short essay, composed by Ming authors and dedicated to Lu Yu, the Longgai monastery, and the monk Zhenqing.⁸

The Jingling edition of the *Chajing* is the first example of the conjunct publishing of Lu Yu's text with other essays on tea, a practice common to successive Ming reprints of the *Chajing*. In 1588, the Zhejiang scholar and printer Sun Dashou 孫大綬 (sixteenth century) published another edition, which contains all the essays and the biography included in the Jingling edition but with additional texts. These are the illustrated *Chaju tuzan* 茶具圖贊 (*Illustrated Praises of Tea Instruments*) of the Song, the treatise *Chapu* 茶譜 (*Manual on Tea*) by

⁷ The *Jiancha shuiji* 煎茶水記 (*Records of water for brewing tea*), *Daming shuiji* 大明水記 (*Records of Water of Daming Monastery*) and *Fuchashan shuiji* 浮槎山水記 (*Records of Water of Mount Fucha*). The three texts have the collective subtitle *Shuibian* 水辯 (*Discrimination of Waters*). See Zheng and Zhu 2007: 186–8. Ceresa 1993: 39–93.

⁸ This collection is entitled *Chajing waiji* 茶經外集 (*Adjunct Collection to the Chajing*). See Zheng and Zhu 2007:188–93.

the Ming author Gu Yuanqing 顧元慶 (1487–1565), and two collections of Tang and Song poems and miscellaneous writings dedicated to tea, all selected and edited by Sun Dashou.⁹ In the course of the Wanli reign, this version of the *Chajing* was reproduced with this identical format in three other editions.

By the end of the sixteenth century, the notion of a tea literature existed de facto in the form of enlarged editions of the *Chajing*. Indeed, the *Chajing* was not only the nucleus but also the umbrella title under which other essays on tea were clustered and printed.

In 1612, tea literature received recognition as an independent genre of writing in its first dedicated collectanea, entitled *Chashu* 茶書 (*Writings on Tea*) and published by Yu Zheng 喻政 (*jinshi* 1595). This collection was printed in a first edition containing nineteen titles, one that was followed in 1613 by publication of the expanded and definitive version with twenty-seven works.¹⁰ In his preface, Yu Zheng explains the contents and title of the collection:

Together with Xu Bo, I made an extensive search of those ancient and modern [texts] that excel in the discussion of tea and its lore.¹¹ I put more than ten together and made the *Chashu*. To commend tea is not worth the slightest concern, but Lu Yu made the [*Tea*] *Classic*, which is still considered the model. Stitched together with its various wings, it is just like the *Diamond Sūtra*, which has commentaries (*lun* 論) and eulogies (*song* 頌).¹²

For Yu Zheng, the *Chashu* consists of the *Chajing* by Lu Yu and subsequent tea writings, or what he calls “its various wings”. The term ‘wing’ (*yi* 翊), which also means ‘to make fly’ or ‘to assist’, is a metaphor for exegetic literature to canonical works. Yu Zheng then compares the *Chajing* and the tea writings to the *Diamond Sūtra* and its commentaries, which consist of the prose (*śāstra*) by Vasubandhu and the metres (*gāthā*) by Asaṅga.¹³ By doing so, he customarily

⁹ The two collections by Sun Dashou are *Chajing waiji* and *Chapu waiji* 茶譜外集 (*Adjunct Collection to the Chapu*). The title of the first collection is identical to that attributed to the Ming monk Zhenqing mentioned above, but its contents are different. See Zheng and Zhu 2007: 225–235.

¹⁰ Nunome 1987: 12–76.

¹¹ Xu Bo 徐燭 (1570–1642). See biography in Goodrich and Fang 1976: 597; Chang Bide 1965: 467.

¹² Nunome 1987: 246.

¹³ The commentary by Asaṅga has been translated into Chinese by Yijing (*Neng duan jin'gang banruoboluomiduo jing lun song* 能斷金剛般若波羅蜜多經論頌, restored hypothetically as *Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra-śāstra-kārikā*, Takakusu and Watanabe 1934, n. 1514).

reaffirms the canonical nature of the *Chajing* and the subsidiary function provided by later tea writings. Besides this, the mention of these two kinds of prose and verse commentaries can also serve as an allusion to the different nature of the works he included in the collection. In fact, the *Chashu* contains not only prose works (such as treatises, handbooks, notes, depictions, and an encyclopaedic compilation of quotations about tea and related matters), but also an anthology of ancient and contemporary poems on tea selected and edited by Yu Zheng. Furthermore, the *Chashu* contains another collection of verses and laudatory writings that his friends and acquaintances dedicated to a tea painting he owned, accompanied by a woodblock reproduction of the painting. In this regard, it appears that Yu Zheng used the term *chashu* not only for ‘essays on tea’, but with the general meaning of ‘writings on tea’.

After the publication of Yu Zheng’s collectanea, many other new essays on tea were written. But in the course of the imperial era, authors and compilers never again used the term *chashu* as a generic denomination for tea literature. Even Xu Bo, the scholar who helped Yu Zheng in the compilation of *Chashu*, did not adopt this designation. In the catalogue of his huge library, the *Xushi jiacang shumu* 徐氏家藏書目, he listed the texts on tea in the section *Nongpu* 農圃 (Gardening), alongside writings on food, drinks, plants, and flowers.

Classification of tea literature in the Qing dynasty

Yu Zheng’s work has never been reprinted in China, nor has any other similar specialized collectanea been published since then. The most relevant scholarly Qing contribution to tea culture is the *Xu Chajing* 續茶經 (*Sequel to the Tea Classic*), edited by Lu Tingcan 陸廷燦 (eighteenth century) around 1734.¹⁴ The sequel consists of a voluminous encyclopaedic collection of quotations from a large array of works on tea, arranged according to the titles of the ten chapters of the *Chajing*. In chapter nine, “Summary” (*Lüe* 略), Lu Tingcan lists the titles of seventy-two essays on tea, plus twenty-five poems and miscellaneous prose texts he consulted. The essays on tea are listed under the title *Chashi zhushu* 茶事著述 (Writings on Tea-Related Matters), and include writings originally published as independent titles and also chapters dedicated

There are two translations of Vasubandhu’s commentary, one by Bodhiruci (*Jin’gang banruoboluomi jing lun* 金剛般若波羅蜜經論, *ibid.* n. 1511), and one by Yijing (*Neng duan jin’gang banruoboluomiduo jing lun yi* 能斷金剛般若波羅蜜多經論釋, *ibid.* n. 1513). See Tucci 1956, 5–8.

¹⁴*Xu Chajing* is contained in the *Siku quanshu* and in Nunome 1987:2,122–240.

to tea excerpted from larger works. This is the most complete dedicated bibliography of tea literature produced in the imperial period. More than half of the titles are from the Tang and Song dynasties. Many of them were lost but today have been partially reconstructed by collating the fragments quoted by Lu Tingcan.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the compilers of the *Imperially Authorized Annotated General Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries* (*Qinding siku quanshu zongmu tiyao*) devised a clustering of the subjects within the traditional bibliographic categories, adopting new approaches to the classification of knowledge.¹⁵ The category ‘Agriculture’ of the *zibu* branch underwent revision, and the texts on tea were moved to the category ‘Vade Mecums’ (*pulu*, borrowed from the *Suichutang shumu*), where they were grouped under the second of the three subjects into which the category was further subdivided (these being tools and objects, food, and plants and animals):

The catalogue of texts on agriculture is very cluttered. The works by the various authors mix together important and secondary questions. [...] The category of texts dealing with tea-related matters (*chashi yilei* 茶事一類) is quite close to that of agriculture, but the production of Dragon disks and Phoenix cakes,¹⁶ or the lavishness of silver spoons and jade cups, are not matters regarding ploughing and weaving. Now they are listed separately in the category ‘Vade Mecums’, making clear that superficial matters cannot come before fundamental ones.¹⁷

Only seven of the books dealing with the “superficial matters” of tea were printed in the imperial encyclopaedia: Lu Yu’s *Chajing* and the *Jiancha shuiji* of the Tang dynasty, Cai Xiang’s *Chalu* and three other texts of the Song, and the *Xu Chajing* by Lu Tingcan of the Qing dynasty. None of the Ming texts on tea submitted to the compilers of the *Siku quanshu* was included, and they were relegated to the annotated list of ‘extant titles’ (*cunmu* 存目). Middle Qing censors, influenced by the evidential scholarship movement (*kaozheng xue* 考證學) and maintaining a general bias against the whole literary production of the former dynasty, dismissed Ming essays on tea as works of poor

¹⁵ Elman 2005: 265.

¹⁶ Dragon disks (*Longtuan* 龍團) and Phoenix cakes (*Fengbing* 鳳餅) were some of the varieties of caked teas produced in imperial tea manufactures in the Song and Yuan dynasties. See Benn 2015: 117–144.

¹⁷ *Qinding Siku quanshu tiyao*, 102.

scholarship and lacking in rigorous investigation, or simply as whimsical writings that belonged to the contemptible genre *xiaopin* 小品 (minor works), all unworthy of consideration.¹⁸

Modern studies and compilations of tea literature

In 1914, Yu Zheng's collectanea was listed in the catalogue *Congshu juyao* 叢書舉要 with the title *Chashu quanji* 茶書全集 (*Complete Collection of Chashu*), by which it is commonly known today.¹⁹ Finally, in 1931, the agricultural historian and book indexing pioneer Wan Guoding (1897–1963) recovered the term *chashu*, which had been created in the early seventeenth century by Yu Zheng and which Wan Guoding now adopted as a general designation for essays on tea.²⁰ In 1958, he published the “Chashu zongmu tiyao” 茶書總目提要 (“Annotated Catalogue of Tea Literature”). In the preface, Wan explains the composition of the corpus of *chashu* and its origin:

Since the Tang dynasty, there was an accumulation of numerous books dedicated to tea (and also tea instruments and water). Of these, some are just literary divertissements written by scholars or are books made by copying and collecting materials. Still, some were written by people with personal experience in the practice of tea drinking or who had made specific research on tea. We can say that Lu Yu was the earliest and most famous tea expert. The *Chajing* written by him was the first specialized book on tea in the world.²¹

Wan's catalogue contains a total of ninety-eight titles, ranging from the *Chajing* of the Tang to the *Zhengchi wancha wendu* 整飭皖茶文牘, a late Qing collection of agronomical reports of the production of tea in Anhui province published by Cheng Yuting 程雨亭 (nineteenth century) in 1898. Of these, fifty-three are reported as works, the content of which have been transmitted as a whole text; the other forty-five are titles of works recorded in bibliographic

¹⁸ For an analysis of evidential scholarship, see Elman 2010. For an overview of censorship in the compilation of *Siku quanshu*, see Guy 1987: 1–8; Son 2010: 155–223

¹⁹ *Zengding congshu juyao* 增訂叢書舉要 (*Revised Summary of Collectanea*) edited by Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and revised and published by Li Zhiding 李之鼎 in 1914.

²⁰ The term was used in the title of the article “Chashu ershijiu zhong tiji” 茶書二十九種題記 (“Twenty-Nine Colophons to Tea Books”).

²¹ Wan Guoding 1958: 205–06.

catalogues or titles quoted within other writings of which he had not seen the text.

In 1941, before the compilation of the *Chashu zongmu tiyao*, the writer and translator Hu Shanyuan 胡山源, (1897–1988) published the *Gujin chashi* 古今茶事 (*Tea-Related Matters from Ancient Times to Present*), the first modern collection of literary materials on tea. In this work, Hu did not use the term *chashu*, but instead grouped twenty-two essays on tea under the title *zhuanzhu* 專著 (monographs). In this category, Hu also inserted a treatise on teapots and the entry on tea from Li Shizhen's 李時珍 *Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目), which deals with the curative properties of the plant. Hu's collection also includes a section of poems and one of informal writings on tea from miscellaneous sources; these sections are named, respectively, *yiwen* 藝文 (belles-lettres) and *gushi* 故事 (anecdotes).

Since the 1970s, many studies by Japanese and Chinese scholars have used the term *chashu* as a designation for traditional Chinese essays on tea (Fukuda 1974; Nunome and Takamura 1976; Wu Zhihe 1980; Chen and Zhu 1981).²² But the different authors and editors applied different criteria in defining the corpus of texts classified under the *chashu* denomination.

In their collection *Zhongguo chaye lishi ziliao xuanji* 中國茶葉歷史資料選集 (*Selected Historical Materials about Chinese Tea*) of 1981, Chen Zugui and Zhu Zizhen divided the historical materials on tea into three categories: *chashu* (tea essays), *chashi* 茶事 (tea matters), and *chafa* 茶法 (tea regulations). In his preface, Zhu Zizhen, describes an “old” definition of *chashu* and proposes a new reading of the term:

Chashu are the ancient Chinese books that discuss tea in a dedicated manner. According to the old classification, the term *chashu* comprehends not only books in which tea is discussed but also works on tea instruments, tea regulations, and on the water for preparing the beverage, which are all related to tea. Before the rise of modern tea science, *chashu* were indeed the ancient scientific and technical books on tea.²³

Complying with this definition of *chashu*, the first section of the compendium by Chen and Zhu contains fifty-eight essays dedicated to tea composed and

²² In Japan, we find the term *cha no sho* 茶の書 in the title of Okakura Kakuzo's *The Book of Tea* as translated into Japanese by Asano Akira 淺野晃 in 1951. The term *chasho* (the Japanese reading of *chashu*) was applied also as a general label for Japanese traditional treatises on tea (Hayashiya 1971).

²³ Chen and Zhu 1981: 1.

published as independent works in the imperial period. All other writings regarding tea — fictional works, poems, short essays, and notes on the beverage, all published within nonspecialized works — are collected in the second section for a total of 451 entries. The third section contains sixty-seven reports, edicts, and notes on tea from the dynastic histories and administrative writings. This interpretation of traditional tea literature as a prototype of modern scientific and technical literature has been adopted by other Chinese scholars, who have also applied the term *chashu* to post-Qing and contemporary monographs on tea science, cultivation, and manufacture, listing them together in a chronological continuum with the essays of the imperial period.²⁴

A similar acknowledgement of *chashu* — as veritable representations of tea technology and tea culture in ancient China, and as reliable sources for the study of its development — is expressed in 1999 by Ruan Haogeng 阮浩耕 in the preface to the collection *Zhongguo gudai chaye quanshu* 中國古代茶葉全書 (*Compendium of Ancient Chinese Books on Tea*), which he edited with Shen Dongmei 沈冬梅 and Yu Liangzi 于良子:

Ancient *chashu* authentically recorded the course of the development of the Chinese tea industry, as well as the formation and the transformation of the Chinese way of tea, tea etiquette, tea art, tea folklore, and other aspects of Chinese traditional culture; they condensed the experience and the knowledge of tea connoisseurs, dynasty after dynasty.²⁵

Ruan's collection contains sixty-four texts, including a work on teapots, some reconstructed texts, and an annotated index of fifty-nine titles of lost works.

Also in 1999, Chen Binfan 陳彬樊, together with Yu Yue 余悅 and Guan Bowen 關博文, edited a voluminous all-inclusive compendium of literary materials on tea entitled *Zhongguo chawenhua jingdian* 中國茶文化經典 (*Classics of Chinese Tea Culture*). The materials of this collection are arranged by dynasty and divided into four categories: *chazhu* 茶著 (monographs on tea), including only works that have been published as independent books (forty-five titles); *chawen* 茶文 (essays on tea), including parts of larger works; *chashi* 茶詩 (poetry on tea), containing compositions dedicated to tea and a few that

²⁴ This approach is found in Meng and Liang 1992; Yu Yue 1996: 215–235. The *Zhongguo chaye dacidian* 中國茶葉大辭典 (*Encyclopedia of Chinese Tea*), edited by Chen Zongmao 陳宗懋 (2000: 679–725), has the descriptive designations *gudai chashu* 古代茶書 for the essays produced in the imperial period and *xiandai chazhu* 現代茶著 for modern and contemporary works.

²⁵ Ruan and others 1999: 1.

marginally touch upon the subject; and *zazhu* 雜著 (miscellaneous writings), including untitled texts on tea excerpted from other works.

The collection *Zhongguo lidai chashu huibian jiaozhuben* 中國歷代茶書匯編校註本 (*Collected Annotated Edition of Works on Tea from Chinese history*), edited by Zheng Peikai 鄭培凱 and Zhu Zizhen 朱自振 in 2007, contains a hundred and fourteen texts and an annotated catalogue of sixty-five lost writings, showing a much broader definition of *chashu* compared to Wan Guoding's catalogue of 1958 and to the other collections mentioned above.²⁶ Zheng and Zhu included many works that they reconstructed collating fragments quoted in *Xu Chajing* and other sources. They also put under the label *chashu* the fictional work *Chajiu lun* 茶酒論, the paragraph on tea from the Ming text *Zunsheng bajian* 遵生八箋 (*Eight Memoranda on the Nurturing of Life*) by Gao Lian 高濂 (fl. sixteenth century), the agreement for the shipping of spring water drawn up by the Ming scholar Li Rihua 李日華 (1565–1635), and a few modern technical manuals on tea industry composed in the late Qing period.²⁷ One of these is actually the Chinese version of a book on tea cultivation written by a British agronomist, which was translated and published in Shanghai in the closing years of the Qing.²⁸

In a recent contribution to this subject, Chen Wenhua 陳文華 equates *chashu* to “canonical writings of tea culture” (*chawenhua dianji* 茶文化典籍) and proposes again a more restrictive interpretation of the term:

Chashu are the ancient works on tea studies that discuss in a dedicated manner the cultivation, processing, brewing, and tasting of tea. They also include many works that discuss historical policies and regulations on tea and tea trade. However, because these belong in great part to the category of socioeconomic history and law history [... and] as they do not have direct relation to the specific field of the art of tea or the concerns of authors who specialize in the study of the art of tea, this genre can be temporarily overlooked. There are also ancient books on agriculture [...]

²⁶ A table in the introduction to Zheng and Zhu's collection compares the titles included by them with those of the collection by Ruan Haogeng and the original collectanea by Yu Zheng.

²⁷ For a description of *Chajiu lun*, see Benn 2015: 44–53. For a description of *Zunsheng bajian*, see Clunas 1991: 13–20.

²⁸ The original text by George A. Cowie is entitled *Tea Cultivation*, a work translated partially into Chinese by the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary William A. Cornaby (1860–1921) and published in Shanghai by the Christian Literature Society in 1910 under the title *Zhongcha liangfa* 種茶良法 (*Enhanced Methods for the Cultivation of Tea*).

that include records on the cultivation of tea, but these are just chapters of books and, since they are not monographs, they do not belong to *chashu*.²⁹

Conclusion

The *Chajing* by Lu Yu is the first essay in history entirely dedicated to tea, and it became the nucleus around which other texts on the subject were clustered and printed. Tea literature was recognized as an individual genre in 1612 with the publication of the first dedicated collectanea, entitled *Chashu*. Three hundred years later, the term *chashu* was adopted in the twentieth century as a label for classifying tea literature, and today it is widely used by many scholars. Nevertheless, at present there is neither a unique nor unequivocal term to denote tea literature, nor is there common acceptance of the scope and typologies of the texts that form this literary genre. The differences among the various authors in the reckoning of works classified as *chashu* can be traced to two different orders of problems. The first is the formal definition of the bibliographical unit regarded as a *chashu*. The Chinese term *shu*, which forms the compound *chashu* and is today conventionally translated as ‘book’, is quite at odds with the modern accepted definition of the word ‘book’ as univocally “connecting an object, a text and an author”.³⁰ For this reason, some scholars include only texts that have been published as monographs, while others also include chapters and excerpts from larger works. The second problem lies in the contents of these texts. In its original usage, *chashu* was applied to specialized treatises dealing with multiple or single topics related to tea, and also to collections of quotations and poems dedicated to it. Today some scholars treat *chashu* as referring to the more technical treatises only, while others extend the label to a wider range of texts touching upon tea, including some fictional works.

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²⁹ Chen Wenhua 2007: 205.

³⁰ Chartier 1994: vii.

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