

Political Territory in Imperial China: How to Map State Power

Ruth Mostern
Department of History
UC Berkeley
ruth@socrates.berkeley.edu

For Presentation at UCB Geography Department Tea Talk/ECAI and GIS in the Humanities Lecture Series, March 22, 2000

Draft—Not for Citation without permission

1. Introduction

From unification by Qin Shihuangdi in the third century BCE until the revolution of 1911, China was (or, during eras of disunity from the third to sixth centuries and the tenth century, had rulers who imagined its past and future as) a vast land-based empire, usually occupying a realm approximately the size of the continental United States. What do I mean when I say “occupied”? During this 2000 year imperial era, the court (located during almost every dynasty in north east or north central China) aspired to collect taxes on land and commerce and fund projects with the revenue, compel labor service, monopolize violence and adjudicate disputes, defend the north while colonizing the south, survey and map administrative territory and property, count the population, and depute officials (who were by law forbidden to serve in their home districts and required to change posts every three years) to distant corners of the realm to conduct and oversee these activities and remain in close communication with the court—implementing new mandates and conveying information about local affairs.

This kind of administrative ideal had profound implications for the organization of space. In fact there were several coexisting spatial discourses that spanned the imperial era; sovereign power could be expressed as the a cosmic, geopolitical, feudal or bureaucratic geography. And so, the empire was, variously *tianxia*, the sub-celestial realm, the earth aligned with the cosmos, and radiating power from the person of the emperor throughout the entire universe; *zhongguo*, the

middle kingdom, a term that originally denoted the city-states of pre-imperial China and always denoted a particular polity in a world of states, a global world order, albeit with China at its center; {overhead number one} *wufu*, the five feudatories, where the realm was a nested hierarchy of social relations with the person of the emperor in the central box, then outwards to his family, close advisors, the lords who paid fealty to him, and finally nomads and other tribal peoples in the furthest reaches; and finally *jiuzhou*, the nine provinces, a designation deriving from China's flood story which describes how the sage emperor Yu manufactured the territory of the empire by taming the rivers and in doing so created nine regions bounded by water, each of which produced particular commodities and sent them to Yu's court. All of these four spatial imaginaries existed simultaneously, and each had real parallels to governance, legitimacy and territorial organization in Chinese history, and, indeed, if we aspire to map the imperial Chinese world order, we ought to envision a way to map any of these spatial regimes. I am going to focus on one of these kinds of territorial footprints of state power in particular for the remainder of this talk.

The ideal of a bureaucratic state implies an organization of territory that allows for visibility and interchangability. A continuous (Couclelis) or vernacular (Jackson) landscape had to be re-imagined, made into, maintained and represented in the form of compartmentalized and nested discrete spatial objects, acknowledged as possessing a material existence by state and population alike. In terms of the vocabulary that I have introduced, viewing and controlling the domestic space of the realm demanded an administrative, or *jiuzhou*, form of spatial organization, a division of the empire into counties, prefectures and provinces.

What did it mean as a historical matter, and what does it mean for the practice of contemporary scholarship, that the small government of a pre-industrial empire possessed, and maintained for 2000, years, such grand ambitions for territorializing the political landscape? These are the questions that I want to address in the remainder of this talk. I will introduce some aspects of geographical history that made the landscape particularly complex and ambiguous, and then talk about the implications of that as a representational problem for the task of creating a digital historical atlas of China.

2. The case of Guangxi

I want to suggest, first, that conducting a detailed study of the historical political landscape of imperial China, and rendering what we have learned onto maps, can illustrate something about the history of the power of the state over population, production and places. I would like to illustrate this proposition first with reference to one region that I have studied in detail and for which I have found an interesting set of contemporary historical maps.

Guangxi overhead. These six maps represent the administrative geography of southeastern China during the history of its colonization and settlement, the modern provinces of (Guangdong and?) Guangxi. Although for the past several hundred years it has been one of the wealthiest and most densely populated parts of China, this region only began to attract significant Han ethnic migration from further north in the late thirteenth century, in the course of the wars between the Chinese Song dynasty and the invading Mongols. Not only was it at the edge of the empire, it was also bounded on the north by the Qinling mountains, and was accessible only through a few passes, or by sea. It was (and is to this day) home to non-Han peoples of Southeast Asia who did not share language, culture or political allegiance to China. Low-grade conflict, and sometimes open warfare, was ongoing. With swamps in the lowlands and steep mountains elsewhere, it could not support rice agriculture without a huge investment of capital and labor. Perhaps the most significant obstacle to settlement was malaria. Until the Ming dynasty, Guangxi was an exile destination, the place where the court sent its most ardent opponents to almost certain death. It was only when refugees from the Mongols in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries fled to Guangxi, fearing the troops at their rear more than the illness in front, and, with a very high rate of mortality, filling in marshlands to make fields, that the lowlands began to appear habitable. [get some population numbers]

With that in mind, let's look more closely at this series of administrative maps. Not surprisingly, in the earliest eras that Guangxi was under Chinese state control, (which it was, nominally, from the time that a unified empire first took shape in the third century BCE), it was divided into only a few administrative districts. In a political culture that called upon regions to be more or less self supporting with their own tax revenue, there was not sufficient land under cultivation to support a large field administration, particular in light of the dense state presence that colonization required. Those people who did cultivate land were did not necessarily remit tax grain, least of all to officials who feared venturing out of doors. Nevertheless, during the Tang dynasty (seventh to tenth centuries), Guangzhou emerged as an important trade entrepot, and, in addition, population throughout south China had begun the

explosive population growth that is one of the hallmarks of the era. Even Guangxi was beginning to be affected by this process. The Tang government, moreover, was willing to grant territory and tax-farming privileges to military supporters and local strongmen, and both of these factors were associated with major changes in administrative geographical arrangements. As you can see, tiny counties and prefectures proliferated in the relatively more domesticated eastern part of Guangxi, though the mountainous west, still beyond the scope of state control, remained outside the system of administrative subdivision as well. What is interesting is that on the subsequent maps you can see that as the region became more densely populated, and more integrated into a standardized administrative system (by the Ming dynasty, officials were being deputed from distant parts of the empire, no longer refusing to serve for fear of malaria), the number of administrative districts did not increase, but rather were consolidated. Look at how the number of units in the east continues to diminish from the peak it reached very early in the colonization process, while the number in the frontier west proliferates as that region comes under state control. The history of territorial organization in south China is associated with a process of colonization in which a very dense state presence was associated with the early stages of claiming authority over the land and its population, and could be greatly diminished when sufficient portions of a large and settled population comes to benefit from and share in the practice of hegemonic state authority.

I will come back to Guangxi again later in this talk. For now, let me reiterate that historical administrative geography can illustrate something about the history of state power. I also want to add that (at least in imperial China), geography is a topic for which we have rich data, data that can fruitfully be rendered onto maps, and for that reason is a particularly good point of entry into political and social history.

3. Fluidity I: Space

This paper is an expanded version of a talk that I delivered at the Electronic Cultural Atlas Initiative meeting in January. For that group, working on a digital historical atlas of China, I wanted to make the following point: If we aspire to study the spatialization of state power by looking at administrative geography (instead of just creating a base that icons about other economic, demographic or cultural formations can be associated with), then any map we make needs to be extraordinarily nuanced. One of the first questions that such a mapping project must confront is the ambiguity in what constitutes an administrative geographical unit in the first place. Particular kinds of territories emerged only gradually, and the

functional administrative geographical system contradicted the formal geography that has traditionally been mapped both by contemporaries and modern scholars. **overhead: Shui Anli on the late Tang or some other complicated era** This is a 12th century Chinese map; see the nested hierarchy of places. Let me problematize that.

In each era, the number of tiers in the administrative hierarchy mediating between court and village was different. Broadly speaking, this reflected changing notions about how much to centralize political power at the court. The dilemma was as follows: a system of thousands of counties and prefectures directly overseen by the court was extraordinarily unwieldy, particularly given an empire of continental scope, colonizing ambitions, and pre-industrial communications and transportation. Nevertheless, direct court management of the localities prevented the emergence of autonomous regional power holders who collected their own taxes revenue and raised their own armies. However, if, between locality and court there were provinces governed by resident officials who had the power to deploy resources and troops, it was far easier to respond quickly to uprisings, invasions and natural disasters and engage in all kinds of civil and military projects.

During most of the periods when China was unified, beginning with the Qin dynasty in the third century BCE, there were either two or three tiers in the administrative hierarchy. There were always counties (in fact there were usually about 1500 of them even as the population grew by an order of magnitude, though particular ones were abolished and established on many occasions), and they blanketed all the places where there were taxable subjects. There were also always prefectures, usually about 350, which oversaw the affairs of the counties and mediated between them and the court. There were sometimes provinces, anywhere from 10 to 50, imposed between the counties and prefectures (which were much more stable over long periods of time) and the court. And on two occasions, the two conquest dynasties Yuan and Qing, the number of tiers in the hierarchy rose to six, though not all of the intermediary jurisdictions existed in all places at all times.

On several occasions, Han (3rd century BCE to CE), Tang (7th-9th c CE), and Song (10th-13th c CE), the founding generations of the dynasty attempted a two-tier system, and provinces emerged only gradually as affairs demanded. On each of these occasions, provincial units were first inspection districts with no resident official or fixed and stable territorial extent.

In Han, such inspection routes were first instituted, 13 *zhou* above 130 prefectures (*jun*) and 1587 counties (*xian*). The provincial inspector was initially of low rank and had no fixed office or territorial jurisdiction. His status and the stability of the territory he governed gradually increased, but it was only in the wake of civil unrest, the Yellow Turban uprising of 184 CE, 300 years after the dynasty was established, and less than 100 years before its demise, that this official got power over provincial administration, military and public welfare, an office, and a fixed territorial extent.

The Tang story starts the same way, though it ends, famously, with the dissolution of the dynasty itself. In 639 CE, xx years after the era was proclaimed, the empire was divided into ten inspection circuits called *dao* or routes. Officials were sent out from the court at irregular intervals to inspect prefectural government along each of the routes, but the seat of administrative governance lay with the prefectures. The inspecting officials gradually took on administrative powers of their own, but their changed role was only institutionalized in the early 700s, when frontier armies were put under control of the governors. In the course of the almost successful and very bloody attempted rebellion orchestrated by the military officer An Lushan during the mid-700s, the military governors were granted increasing autonomy from the court. They founded their own armies with the taxes they themselves collected. Gradually, the northern part of the empire was divided into large districts that gradually ceased to remand taxes to the center at all. At the same time that these regional territories emerged, the number of provinces (still called *dao*, or routes, even after their administrative functions emerged) increased, gradually, to 50, a failed attempt by the court to place loyal officials throughout the realm to counterbalance the military governors. The court was starved and finally toppled by the emergent regional power holders.

Two generations later, in 960 CE, a new dynasty, called Song, was declared by a general of a military governor. This new emperor was well aware of the pitfalls of excessive regional autonomy, and, emulating the founding of Han and Tang before him, planned a two-tier county-prefecture organizational system. But it took more than 20 years to unify the empire, and by the end of the tenth century, the supply routes by which regional revenue was remanded to the court, and funds moved around from pacified regions to battlefronts, had crystallized into fairly stable administrative districts called circuits (*lu*). What makes the Song case unique is that, in response to the Tang problem, where fiscal and military responsibilities were centered in the same individuals, there emerged a system in Song where there were as many as four

kinds of circuits, often with different capitals, territorial extents and duties. In addition to the fiscal *zhuanyunshi* circuits, the first to emerge and the only ones ever to blanket the entire empire, there were military circuits, which began along the northern border in the eleventh century and gradually spread throughout the empire, judicial (or domestic policing and surveillance) circuits (which were usually much smaller than fiscal circuits, a geographical reflection of the differing needs of the two kinds of functions), and public works and disaster relief circuits, established on an ad hoc basis.

Now let me make the question of functional administrative geographical divisions even more complicated. I have said that the Tang military governors' territories became a parallel administrative system that overlaid the three-tier county-prefecture-province ideal. In similar fashion, during times of domestic uprising (coming all the way down in time to the communists in the 1940s), there have been regions that have lain outside of state control altogether and have established their own administrative geographical systems. There have been long periods during which the empire was not unified under a single dynasty, during which there were multiple coexisting political geographies. In one such case, during the sixth and seventh centuries, the government of one northern kingdom fled en masse to the south. Officials, who had in the north been paid salaries based on the size and rank of their territorial fiefs, no longer controlled the land that determined their income, so the ruler established *qiao* or sojourner prefectures for them to preside over, with names, tax quotas, staffs, but no territorial reality. In addition, at the peripheries of the empire, the distinction between domestic and foreign land was not clear. The Song dynasty, for instance, established "loosely bridled" *jimi* prefectures on territories at the southern and western peripheries whose status was ambiguous, lands that met one test of spatial affiliation, which is that they owed taxes to the Song state, but which remained under the suzerainty of non-Han tribal peoples, and so did not participate in mapping, surveying or census activities, and were permitted to retain their own laws and government. These places always appeared in Song gazetteers of domestic territory, but did not meet all of the criteria of belonging to a domestic political landscape.

Mapping these kinds of arrangements is a huge challenge that has never been effectively addressed by historical or modern cartographers.

4. Fluidity II: Time

One reason why a map of political territory that aspires to create real power relations is difficult to create is that what counts as administrative territory in the first place is hard to grasp. Territories can be ephemeral or ambiguous, and there might be competing entities with state-like authority controlling identical, overlapping or adjacent places. Another reason is that even counties and prefectures, which were always part of the hierarchical political landscape, were created, abolished or changed jurisdiction in quick succession in an attempt to manipulate geography to solve problems of rulership.

Beginning with at least the Sui dynasty, which reestablished an empire in 5xx CE following 300 years of division, every ruling house enacted major changes in the number and distribution of territories upon coming to power. In the case of the Sui, the reconfiguration of the map served to abolish the tiny autonomous jurisdictions that had proliferated during the era of disunity, kingdoms and latifundia that simply adopted the terminology associated with the units institutionalized by the 400 year long Han dynasty. Declaring that administering a bureaucratic empire with so many units would be “like having nine shepherds for ten sheep,” Sui general Yang what’s-his-name called for the abolition of xx counties and the abolition or demotion of xx prefectures. [get numbers out of ch. 4].

China’s map of remained very fluid throughout the imperial era. Sovereign control of space seems not to have ideologically required a reification of a particular distribution of territories, nor a myth of permanence, but rather a concept that each ruling house ought to remake the map to suit current realities. The maps created during the imperial era were often historical, depicting contemporary territorial organization overlaid on that of the legendary nine provinces of the flood-vanquishing Emperor Yu. **overhead: Yujitu** This eleventh century “Map of the Footprints of Yu,” carved in stone, is of such a type. In addition, gazetteers and territorial encyclopedias always began with a section called *yan’ge*, “perpetuation and amendment,” listing the history of each jurisdiction in its purview, and the official dynastic histories compiled after the fall of a ruling house by its successors always included, close to the beginning of the text, a geography monograph with a narrative of the territorial history of that regime. (Parenthetically, the vast number of gazetteers and geographical encyclopedias, and the fact that they include such detailed historical information is what makes the idea of a digital historical atlas of China plausible.)

I am going to talk in more detail about the Song dynasty, which is the era for which I am most familiar with the territorial history, in order to elaborate on the relationship between territorial change and state power. Each dynasty made major changes in the organization of its political territory upon founding, but Song (tenth to thirteenth centuries) and Qing (seventeenth to twentieth centuries) were the only two that had ongoing territorial renovation following the generation of consolidation. There were a total of 1,068 changes in domestic political territorial organization during the three hundred years of the Song dynasty, counting the creation and abolition of counties and prefectures, and the movement of counties from one prefectural jurisdiction to another.

More precisely, there were three cycles during the Song dynasty, each featuring great fluidity in the distribution of administrative territories, followed by a generation or more during which the map barely changed. The first period began in the mid 960s as the territories that had been independent since the fall of the Tang in 906 CE came gradually under Song control, and it came to an almost complete halt by the first decade of the 1000s. **Overhead: my yan'ge maps.** This is a set of maps that I have created to represent the first of the three eras of political change. As you can see, it is extremely low-tech and rather graphically confusing, though it depicts what I am trying to illustrate here. I'll come back to my plans for it in the final section of this talk. One map illustrates territorial changes in prefectures, and the other one shows counties. The icons are as follows... As you can see, the greatest change was in Guangxi, the region I discussed at the beginning of this talk. Early Song policy in the southeast, in contrast to that of late Tang and the interregnum state of Southern Han, was to massively consolidate territories. Guangnan (Guangdong and Guangxi) were conquered in 971, and Pan Mei, the general who led the campaign, was made head of the provincial circuit of Guangnan. Within months of taking power, he reported [get the details from the chapter], and ## counties and ## prefectures were abolished in ## amount of time. What were the consequences of such a massive and rapid change in territory? One thing which I cannot make a cause-and-effect for, but that is instructive, is [the following information about rebellion in the abolished territories.] In this sparsely populated region, when territories were abolished, people had to walk for days over treacherous roads in order to deliver taxes, in kind, in person to the county or prefecture. As a result, according to some complaints in the years following the abolitions, the ambitious plan to save money on official salaries by consolidating territory may have cost more in lost revenue than it saved in administrative expenses, as people evaded taxes with impunity, knowing that the officials, fearing disease and attack, would be unlikely to

come after them. Some territories in Guangxi were re-established and re-abolished as many as 4 (?) times during the course of the dynasty. According to the documents, this was, at least on one occasion, based on faked reports from local officials, eager to hold on to their posts, who claimed, falsely, that locals had petitioned them for the re-establishment of the jurisdiction.

Guangxi is the place where the most dramatic territorial change occurred in the first of the three cycles of re-mapping during the Song, but there are several other meaningful clusters as well. Counties were abolished for the same reason, consolidation in the face of changing rulership on a sparsely populated ethnic frontier, in western Sichuan as well as Guangnan. At the same time, as I mentioned earlier, the empire-wide territorial economy called for the size of the field administration to remain approximately constant at all times, and you can see that from these maps as well. Territories proliferated in two regions. Along the settlement frontiers of the lower Yangzi and the southeast coast, ## new counties were founded during these decades, an acknowledgement of the [figures from Hartwell or Liang] explosive rise in population that had begun several centuries before. If county foundings were, broadly speaking, associated with growth in population, arable land, and taxes, prefecture foundings were associated with military policy. You can see that there is a row of new prefectures in the north, standing off against the Khitan Liao and Tangut Xia states to the northeast and northwest, and counties were moved around in order to create enough tax revenue to support these new jurisdictions, a process that often engendered heated debates among local officials and wealthy landed and commercial interests over changes in tax and labor service burdens and the disposition of revenues. New prefectures were also founded out of ceremonial considerations. You can see a number of new prefectures near the capital; these jurisdictions were the homes of close imperial relatives or the tombs of imperial ancestors, and accordingly were raised from county status to that of prefectures, and counties were moved in from adjacent jurisdictions to support them. In 1005, Song signed a peace treaty with the neighboring Liao, and the creation, abolition and movement of territories slowed to a near halt at almost the same time. The map would remain quite stable until 1068.

I will talk about the next two eras of territorial renovation in less detail. A second extremely vigorous period of territorial change was associated with the fiscal and administrative reform era of the 1070s and its aftermath. While the border with the Liao in the northeast held throughout the dynasty, the border with the Xia in the northwest was contested throughout the dynasty. Open warfare broke out in the 1040s. Bloody and inconclusive, little territory changed hands, but it had two lasting

effects. One is that expansionist factions retained the upper hand in frontier administration, and the other is that the military spending associated with the war led to massive inflation. These two factors came together in the 1070s. In the northwest, territory was seized from Tibetan allies of the Xia, formed into a provincial circuit, and subdivided into new prefectures and counties. Song garrisons were established along the Xia frontier and even inside Xia territory, and, whenever possible, raised to counties as the territorial expansion took hold. Existing counties in the northwest were raised to prefectures to support the infrastructure of the war machine. Away from the military frontier, in the south, new counties continued to be formed steadily as population increased. How was this funded, with the expense of war and prices rising? The reforms of the 1070s known as the New Policies were an ambitious attempt to re-envision administration and economic management, and included such initiatives as xxx. They were, additionally, associated with tremendous change in the map, particularly in north china, where almost one third of all counties and prefectures were abolished, in an attempt to radically reduce the size of the paid government and the tax and labor service burdens that supported the local administrations. When Wang Anshi, architect of the reforms, was ousted in 1086, about half of the abolished territories were restored, though, as in Guangxi after the 970s, many were abolished and restored repeatedly in an attempt to achieve accord among competing interests.

The Northern Song state was overthrown in 1126 by the suddenly emerging Jurchens, relatives of the later Manchus. The Song state was reconstituted in South China, maintaining about half of its former territory. The years from the first peace treaty with the Jin (as the Jurchens named their Chinese style dynasty in the north), and the second one in 1163 [check this] represented a third, and final era of territorial fluidity. This one had two features. One is that, in the Huainan region, where the heaviest fighting with the Jin took place, there was an explicit policy that territories should be abolished provisionally in places whose residents had all fled the fighting and where the arable land was destroyed, and then reestablished after the population returned and grain production restored. Huainan in the 1130s and 1040s approaches Guangxi in the 970s as the other most intensely fluid part of the empire. Parenthetically, when the territories were re-established beginning in the 1140s, there was also an ambitious cadastral surveying initiative. The other feature is that, just as Song had inherited, from the small regional kingdoms it conquered, a more dense distribution of counties and prefectures, which is to say a larger administration, than it could maintain in its continent-wide empire, and just as in the southern kingdoms period of the 4th and 5th centuries, fictive jurisdictions were created for refugee

aristocrats, the Southern Song took an analogous path. In an attempt to extract the maximum tax revenue from a truncated empire (but one that had shed its arid wheat growing regions and was left only with the commercialized and wealthy south), the founding of new counties in the middle-Yangzi, a process that had been occurring, as I have said, throughout the dynasty, was intensified, and a total of xx new counties were founded in the southern Song, while only xx were abolished. Just as with the earlier periods of territorial change, this one was very concentrated in time, and with the final defeat of the hawkish elements who wanted to retake the north after power struggles in the 1160s, territorial changes came to an almost complete halt. They would resume only after the Mongol conquest of the 1270s.

The territorial changes I have been discussing clustered in time, and they also clustered in space. **Overhead: changes/circuit.** The most fluid parts of the empire were on the military frontiers on the north and the colonization frontiers of the far south. The settlement frontiers of the middle Yangzi and its tributaries were also fairly fluid, but the most densely settled, precisely mapped and intensely gazed upon part of the empire, the lower Yangzi, remained almost totally stable. You can get a quick picture from this of demographic and military change in the Song. The changes in the north were prefecture establishments and county abolitions, reflecting declining populations but great strategic significance. The changes in the far south, the colonial frontier, were abolitions of counties and prefectures, the beginnings of a normalized bureaucratic landscape, and the changes in the middle south, the settlement frontier, were county foundings. Places that did not meet these characteristics remained very stable, and just as demographic, cultural and economic historians have identified a southern shift of population, culture and tax revenue during the Song, the map came to reflect these phenomena as well.

5. Implications: ECAI and Digital Mapping

I have shown you some very ugly and rudimentary maps, and the final point I want to make is that it does not have to be this way...We want maps, but we want them to look good. How do we achieve that? I want to organize this section as a set of propositions.

Early in this presentation, I said that the ideal of the imperial Chinese state was to create a spatial regime that allowed for visibility and interchangability. In fact, as I have tried to suggest, these were principles most often honored in the breach, or, perhaps better put, were associated with a very particular kind of spatial

logic. Local officials faked documents, conquerors invaded, fiscal crisis emerged, and territories were accordingly made and remade, mapped and mapped again (In fact, throughout the Song,, all prefects were required to submit maps and gazetteers to the court every three years!) Yet modern historical maps have never developed an iconology that depicts territory as a contested, ambiguous or fluid thing—as a process rather than an object. Maps of China’s political territory have, in line with the assertions of the critics of cartography, been associated rather with a quest for order, a reification of authority, an effacement of ambiguity. **Overhead: Tan Qixiang.**

I would like to suggest, therefore, not that we cease to make historical maps, but that we aspire to make maps that depict ambiguity and the failures (or at least repeated approximations and triangulations) of the state to dominate the physical environment. If, as Denis Wood says, the point of the critique of maps is not to not use them, but to understand them as tools and make them in our own interests, then where does that leave us for the project of constructing a digital historical atlas? I am involved with ECAI and the project of digital mapping because I believe it has the promise to do this as earlier historical atlases have not. It does not make the project of representation less problematic, but it gives me new ways to store, display and query the vast amount of information about territorial change that exists in historical sources.

With little training this initiative will make it easy for me to take a geo-referenced database of places where territories were abolished, established or changed jurisdiction and represent that material in a way that is 1) good looking, 2) fully compatible with the very diverse databases that other people are creating, 3) easy to search, and 4) capable of storing and displaying massive amounts of data that a traditional map could never have accomodated, 5) easily accessible not only to mayself, but, as a web-based project, to colleagues working on other projects in Chinese or world history. 6) I can sort my data spatially and temporally without going through the project of making new maps for each query I envision. 7) I can translate between map bases so as to incorporate indigenous cartographic traditions. 8) I can depict boundaries as zonal and places as uncertain. 9) I can link my map to photographs, documentary material and other maps to facilitate a conversation between my map and other discursive worlds.

We just have to be committed to the project of making space as hybrid and as multiple as we believe it to have been, not to be tyrannized by the technology or by a

myth of scientificity that forces us to conform reality to a traditional GIS model, or a traditional paper historical model either, but instead to use the technology as a way of opening up our thoughts about what graphical representation from a humanistic angle can make possible.