A STUDY OF THE DECEIVING TRICKS EMPLOYED BY THE CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION AIDS PUBLISHERS IN THE MID- AND LATE-MING PERIOD

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ABSTRACT

There were two common deceiving tricks employed by the commercial publishers who published civil service examination aids in the mid- and late-Ming period. One of the tricks was the names of the eminent persons being dishonestly used on their publications. These works were usually written or compiled by unknown literati who were engaged by the publishers. The other trick was pirating the best selling titles that were originally published by other commercial publishers. Some of the pirated works had their titles altered with the intention of misleading the readers into regarding them as new works. This paper explores these two commonly used deceiving tricks employed by the commercial publishers which published examination aids in the mid- and late Ming period.

KEYWORDS

Common Deceiving Tricks
Civil Service Examination Aids
Mid- and Late-Ming Period
Ancient Commercial Publishers

People generally advocated good character traits such as honesty, uprightness, fairness, modesty, and amiability in ancient Chinese agricultural society. However, those characteristics were no longer conformed to in the new era after the arrival of the social commercialization in the mid-Ming period. Based on the observation of Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲, a political theorist and philosopher in the early-Qing period, the human heart had been transformed into a machine in that period and different classes of people deliberately planned to take advantage of others and seized the goods that did not belong to them. Falsifying goods and products could be seen everywhere after the mid-Ming period.

Like other merchants after the mid-Ming period, the commercial publishers were also keen on employing trickery to deceive their customers, i.e. the readers. One of the commonly used tricks employed by them was using the names of eminent persons, such as officials and literati, dishonestly on their publications. Those
eminent persons were generally officials with remarkable social status and literati with respectable reputations in that time. This trick was usually employed without the consent of the eminent persons. Yang Shoujing, a private book collector in the late-Qing period, remarked, “The commercial publishers during the Ming dynasty were keen on dishonestly using the names of eminent persons on their publications in order to earn huge profit. The printing of red and black editions by Min Qiji were mostly forged.” The commercial publishers engaged unknown literati (they were usually literati who gave up on the civil service examination after several attempts or examinees who failed in their provincial examination and were waiting to sit for the next examination) to compile the civil service examination aids and then publish those works under the names of eminent persons at that time. This trick would produce greater impact as well as strengthen the reliability on the titles and could effectively catch the attention of the potential readers. If the readers were unaware or uninformed that these publications were actually forged titles and were lured by their cheaper price, they might possibly acquiring them and joyfully studying them.

Based on a thorough examination by some Chinese book scholars, the following titles listed in the table below were some of the forged examination aids published under the names of eminent persons without their consent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Edition</th>
<th>Authors Appeared on the Books</th>
<th>Notes (Sources)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Xinjuan Jiao taishi huixuan baijia pinglin mingwen zhuji</td>
<td>Wangli (1573–1619) edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Jiao Hong, collated by Tao Wangling, revised by Liu Yingqiu and Dong Qichang</td>
<td>Names of Jiao, Tao, Liu and Dong were being falsely used by commercial publishers. (see Qu Wanli, p.528.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xinjuan Jiao taishi huixuan zhongyuan wenxian</td>
<td>Wanli edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Jiao Hong, revised by Xu Guo, appraised by Tao Wanling</td>
<td>Names of Jiao, Xu, Tao and Zhu were being falsely used. It was very probably compiled by...</td>
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<td>Title</td>
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<tr>
<td>Xu mingwen zhuji新文珠 (Gem of remarkable writings, a continued compilation of earlier edition)</td>
<td>Wanli edition</td>
<td>Compiled by HuangFengxiang黄凤祥 and YangDaobin杨道宾 and Li Tingji李廷机 and Shi Jixie史继楫</td>
<td>Names of the four Hanlin academy scholars (翰林), i.e. Huang, Yang, Li and Shi, were being falsely used. It probably compiled by either Li Guangjin李光缙 or Yang Jiujing杨九经. (see Wang Zhongmin, p.450; Qu Wanli, p.523.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dingjuan zhu fangjia huangming minggong wenjuan鼎中新鼎四新新文鼎镌 (Remarkable essays from well-known public figures in Ming dynasty)</td>
<td>Taichang泰董(1620) edition, published by Kuibi Tang奎綺 and Li Tingji李廷机 and Shi Jixie史继楫</td>
<td>Yuan’s name was being falsely used without his consensus. (see Siku, p.1757)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gu qwen pinsheh古文胜 (Commentary on remarkable ancient writings)</td>
<td>Tianqi 天启(1621–1626) edition</td>
<td>Compiled by KongZhenyun孔振元 and supplemented by Zeng Chuqing曾楚清 and revised by QiuZhaolin邱載林 and interpreted by WuCongxian吴从先 and apprised by Chen Wanyan陈万言</td>
<td>Names of Kong, Zeng and Qiu were being used under false pretences. (see Wang Zhongmin, p.453; Shen Jin, p.588.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiale Zhai sansu wenfan嘉三文乐 (Model writings by three Sus from Jiale’s study)</td>
<td>Tianqi edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Yang Shen杨慎 and revised by Yuan Hongdao袁鸿道</td>
<td>This examination aids did not seem to be compiled by Yang. Yang’s name was being falsely used. (see Siku, p.1745; Qu wanly, p.514)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhuzi huihan王子镌 (Collection of various schools of thought)</td>
<td>Tianqi edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Gui Youguang顾有光 and revised by Wen Zhenmeng文振孟</td>
<td>Name of Gui and Wen were being falsely used by commercial publisher without their permission. (see Siku, p.1121; Qu Wanli, p.133)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tang Shuian xiansheng jianding yijing yizhu 睡睡新生 睡睡 睡楚 经 (Annotation of Yijing Yi [Assistance to Book of Change], appraised by teacher Tang Binyin)</td>
<td>Chongzhen 崇祯(1628–1644) edition</td>
<td>Appraised by Tang Binyin 汤宾, revised by Qiu Zhaolin 丘藻, collated by Yang Guoqiu 海 国球</td>
<td>Names of both Tang and Qiu were being falsely used. It probably compiled by Yang (see Wang Zhongmin, p.5.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chen xiansheng xiuanshi Guoce bianqi pangxun pinglin 新生 海先 古先 武 鍾 (Selection and commentary on remarkable writings on Guoyu [Discourses of the states] and Zhanguoce [Discourses in the Warring States] by teacher Chen Zilong)</td>
<td>Late-Ming edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Chen Zilong 陈龙, annotated by Zhang Pu 张溥</td>
<td>Name of Chen and Zhang were being falsely used by commercial publishers without their consensus. The list of articles for Zhanguoce was identical with Zhanguo Ce Pangxuan Biandu 海先先 国 读 compiled by Zheng Weiyue 郑维岳. (see Qu Wanli, p.144-145.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gulun daguan 古性 (Complete compendiums of ancient discourse essays)</td>
<td>Late-Ming edition</td>
<td>Compiled by Chen Jiru 陈儒, edited by Wu Zhenyuan 吴文金</td>
<td>This book was probably compiled by Wu Zhenyuan or three Chens (Chen Mengxi 陈梦溪, Chen Menglian 陈梦连, and Chen Mengcao 陈梦樵). (see Wang Zhongmin, p.448; Li Fengping, p.105-106)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hexuan wenzhang guifan 合文 章嘉 镌选 (Combine editions and selection of model compositions, original and supplementary editions)</td>
<td>Late-Ming edition</td>
<td>The earlier edition was compiled by Xie Fangde 杨枋枋, supplemented by Wang shouren 王守王, revised by Zhang Nai 张鼐; the later edition was supplemented by Chen Jiru 陈儒</td>
<td>This edition was combined and abridged by the commercial publishers. It claimed that it was supplemented by Zou Shouyi 邹守彝 at the section on Guide to Use the Book 凡例. however, in the main body of the text, it stated that it was supplemented by Wang Shouren. Wang’s name was probably being falsely used without his consensus. It was a common trick by the commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juye riyong midian</td>
<td>Late-Ming</td>
<td>Compiled by Chen Jiru 阮儒, revised by Feng Mengzhen 梁梦, collated by Tu Long 屠隆</td>
<td>The qualities of this book were poor. It was probably compiled by Xu Yizhong 许以忠. Names of Chen, Feng and Tu were dishonestly used to strengthen the influences. (see Li Fengping, p.102.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Li xiangguo Jiowo xiansheng pingxuan suwen huijing 李想国 景文新 言 声</td>
<td>Late-Ming</td>
<td>Appraised and compiled by Li Tingji 李李李, annotated by Chen Jiru 阮儒</td>
<td>Names of both Li and Chen were being falsely used. (see Qu Wanli, p.532.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pingzhu baide wenzong 楚八五文陶镌</td>
<td>Late-Ming</td>
<td>Compiled by Yuan Huang 袁黄</td>
<td>Yuan’s name was being falsely used without his consensus. (see Siku, p.1756)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qinghan wenkuai 秦文 汉文镌</td>
<td>Late-Ming</td>
<td>Compiled by Chen Jiru 阮儒</td>
<td>It was probably compiled by Zou Diguang 邹迪光. (see Li Fengping, p.106.) Names of the Gu, Ye and Li were being falsely used. It was probably compiled by Li Pengyuan 李鹏元. (see Qu Wanli, p.42–43.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Xinke Gu huiyuan zuzuozhu qizhen zuozhuan pingyuan 浙新 灵文 新 哲新 新 古新</td>
<td>Late-Ming</td>
<td>Appraised by Gu Qiyuan 郭修订, annotated by Ye Xianggao 叶孝高, revised by Li Tingji 李李李, compiled by Li Pengyuan 李鹏元</td>
<td>Names of both Li and Ye were being falsely used by Jianyang’s commercial publisher. (see Wang Zhongmin, p.450.)</td>
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</table>
It is believed that the forged titles were very common in the book market in the mid- and late-Ming period. Eminent persons such as Jiao Hong 焦竑, Yuan Hong-dao 袁宏道, Zhong Xing 钟惺 and Chen Jiru 壬女 were always being targeted by commercial publishers. Their names were repeatedly used dishonestly by the commercial publishers for the examination aids that they published.

Xu Wuru 许吴儒, a student of Jiao Hong, remarked that a number of books published under the name of his teachers were spurious copies. In addition to the works mentioned in the table above, examination aids such as Shiji cuibao pinglin 史记镌《史记》A collection of remarkable commentaries on Shiji [Records of the historian], Lianghan cuibao pinglin [Qian] Hanshu and Hou Hanshu [Histories of the Former Han and Later Han], Shiyan hechao (史合汉丛) Collected writings in Shiji and Hanshu), Xinkan Jiao taishi huixuan baijia pinglin集新太史汇镌《新太史汇镌》四文珠矶 Collection of hundred critics on gem of remarkable Ming writings, by Hanlin academy scholar Jiao Hong and newly engraved, Huangming guanke jingshi hongci xuji 鼎四馆馆经资《鼎四馆馆经资》Compilation of schoolwork in Ming Hanlin academy, supplementary edition, Zengzuan pingzhu wenzhang guifan增选镌选《增选镌选》Collection of commentaries on model compositions, enlarged edition, Xinxuan xuanshi like chengmo ersanchang yifu qunyu选新镌选陈历三浙三玉《选新镌选陈历三浙三玉》Selected model writings in second and third examination sessions, with explanation and newly engraved, Xinqie hanlin biaolu panxue xiangshi选锲汇陈经镌《选锲汇陈经镌》Detailed explanation of judical writings by Hanlin academy scholar, newly engraved, Xinqie er taishi huixuan zhushi jiuzi quanshu pinglin选二太史汇镌《选二太史汇镌》九子全编《九子全编》Compilation of remarkable writings in nine schools by two Hanlin academy scholars, which were falsely identified with Jiao and were widely circulated in the late-Ming period, were identified as spurious titles being published without his consent.
Yuan Hongdao, Zhong Xing and Chen Jiru had written and compiled many books during their lifetime. Qian Xiyan, a scholar in Wanli period, recalled that *Kuangyan* (狂言 Wild language), a book which was originally written by Jin Sheng from Hangzhou, had only become popular after it was published under the name of Yuan Hongdao. In addition, it is observed that there were numerous spurious titles published under the name of Zhong Xing. Zhong has sixteen works listed in *Zhongguo shanbenshu tiyao* (中国稀本提要 Notes on Chinese rare books). The commercial publishers who published those titles claimed that they were commented on, reviewed or selected by Zhong. However, we can say confidently that they are spurious titles published under Zhong’s name. Zheng Zhenduo, a modern Chinese scholar, concluded that some of Chen Jiru’s works that have been handed down were originally written or compiled by unknown literati. The commercial publishers in the late-Ming period published those works under the name of Chen with the intention of attracting more buyers to acquire these spurious copies.

In addition to Jiao, Yuan, Zhong and Chen, Wang Shizhen, Dong Qichang, Feng Menglong, Qiu Zhaolin, Li Tingji, Yuan Huang and Su Jun were eminent persons that the commercial publishers were fond of using their names on publications to deceive and to mislead the readers. It was very seldom that the eminent persons pursued the matters when their names were being dishonestly used on those examination aids.

Besides, it was common that the prefaces were being arranged before the main texts of the examination aids. These prefaces were usually composed by the relatives or friends of the authors. From time to time, the commercial publishers would engage unknown literati to compose prefaces on spurious copies they produced. They would then deceitfully name those prefaces composed by the unknown literati under the names of the eminent persons in that time. Based on careful examination by Shen Jin and Wang Zhongmin, the prefaces in *Sishu tushi hekao* (四书文合考 Combined Inspection on the pictures and histories in the Four Books), *Dingjuan Zhaotian Liaofan Yuan xiansheng bianzuan guben lishi dafang* (鼎田赵田袁新先生编纂本史性中镌), *Combined Inspection on the pictures and histories in the Four Books, Scholarly Outlines of the Annalistic Histories by teacher Yuan Huang, supplementary edition and newly engraved*, and *Xinqi hanlin san zhuangyuan huixuan ershi jiu pinhui shiping* (新镌翰林三状元汇选二十四品汇评 Collection of remarkable writings in twenty-nine schools by three Hanlin academy scholars and Zhuangyuan [first in final imperial examination], with commentary and newly engraved) were believed to be composed by unknown literati and were dishonestly named under Zhong Xing, Hanjing and Li Tingji respectively.

To pirate the best selling titles that were originally published by other commercial publishers was another common deceiving trick employed by the commercial publishers in the mid- and late-Ming period. Some of pirated copies had their titles altered with the intention of misleading readers into regarding them as new works.
As profits for pirated best sellers were huge in that time, some commercial publishers would try every possible way to pirate them without the consent of the publishers who had originally produced the books. Yuan Hongdao 袁袁道 recalled that the reproduction of the pirated copies were sometimes quicker than the original copies.11 Lang Ying 郎郎 observed that the prices of pirated copies by the Jianyang publishers were cheaper than the original editions and some of them only cost half of the price of the original editions. Although the qualities of the pirated copies were poorer than the original editions, some readers still were keen on acquiring them as they were cheaper than the original copies. 12 Feng Menglong 冯龙 remarked that the commercial publishers in Suzhou had made huge profits on publication business. However, they were annoyed by their best sellers being repeatedly pirated by other publishers.13

This deceiving trick could be spotted on Xinkan hanlin kaozheng gangmu dianyin zizhi tongjian zhengyao huicheng (浙新翰武文史新音治文礼朝灵古证资资资治鉴Complete compendiums on the textual research of Gangmu [Outlines of Mirror for Government] by Hanlin academy scholar, with punctuation and pronunciation, newly engraved, original edition). It was published by Zhangyi House (裔绍术) in late-Ming. Shen Jin remarked that the original title of this book was Xinkan hanlin kaozheng gangmu dianyin zizhi tongjian jieyao huicheng (浙新翰武文史新音治文朝灵古资鉴Complete compendiums on the textual research of Gangmu [Outlines of Mirror for Government] by Hanlin academy scholar, with punctuation and pronunciation, newly engraved, abridged edition). The marks from the word “Zheng” which was being cut out of the woodblocks and then patched up with the word “Jie” were still visible.14

Another example of this deceiving trick could also be found in Shiji zongfen pinglin 史记评林 (A collection of remarkable commentaries on Shiji [Records of the historian]), published by the Jianxing Book House 建兴经术 in the Wanli period. The owner of the Jianxing Book House was Wei Weisuo 魏魏魏. Shen Jin discovered that there were two words in the title between Shiji and Pinglin which were blank and missing at the book mouth (口) at the beginning chapters. Besides, he also spotted that the title at the book mouth on the concluding chapter was entitled Shiji cuibao pinglin 史记镌 炳. Shen Jin concluded that Shiji zongfen pinglin was in fact a pirated work of Shiji cuibao pinglin. The two blank words between Shiji and Pinglin, were deliberately cut out from the woodblocks by the Jianxing Book House. Wei Weisuo then renamed the title of this book to Shiji zongfen pinglin in order to mislead readers.15

Some of the commercial publishers employed this trick on their own publications. For example, the publishing house of Yu Xiangdou 豢斗, a famous Jianyang publisher, had offered Scholarly Outlines of the Annalistic Histories (性中资资Dafang Gangjian) with at least three differently titled works between 1600 to 1610. The content of these works was mostly the same and consisted of portions from various Tongjian (通关Mirror for Government) and Gangmu (纲目Outlines of Mirror for Government). The compiler of the first printing in 1600 was named un-
order Li Tingji and the title of this printing was *Xinke Jiuwo Li taishi bianzuan gu-\ben lishi dafang gangjian* (新刊九武李太史编次古武史性中大方通编). It is suspected that the name of Li Tingji was falsely used on this book. The second printing was published in 1604. However, the title had been altered to *Xinke Jiuwo Li tingshi jiaozheng guiben lishi dafang tongjian* (新刊九武李太史正稿古武史性中补大方通编). “Li taishi bianzuan” (李太史编纂 compiled by the Hanlin academy scholar Li Tingji) had been altered to “Li tingshi jiaozheng (李太史正正 revised by the Hanlin academy scholar Li Tingji)” and “Dafang gangjian” (大方通编) had been changed to “Dafang tongjian” (大方通鉴). Although it was still named under Li Tingji, his editorial responsibility had been reassigned from compiler to reviser. There was a major change in the title for the third printing in 1610. The title had been altered to *Jingqie Zhao-\tian Liaofan Yuan xian sheng bianzuan guiben lishi dafang jian bu* (鼎镌。田了凡袁先生编次古武史性中补大方通编). In addition, the compiler had also changed from Li Tingji to Yuan Huang 袁黄. It is obvious that the name of Yuan was being falsely used by Yu’s publishing house in order to mislead readers to regard this printing as new publications. It is also interesting to note that the content of this book is mostly the same as the *Xinkan hanlin kaozheng gangmu dianyin zizhi tongjian* that was discussed above.\footnote{17}

In order to discourage other commercial publishers from pirating their publications, some of the commercial publishers had declared “reprinting will be surely investigated” (翻印必究) in their publications. Besides, some publishers had even brought local authorities into play to prevent piratization. Before Yu Xianzhang 畏章 published his new title *Tang leihan* (全子类), he falsely made a report to the local authority that some copies of the *Tang leihan* had been stolen. This trick had successfully prevented the other publishers from pirating *Tang leihan*.\footnote{18}

According to the estimates by Yuan Yi 袁逸, the profits of publishing a book were about twelve times of the production costs in the Wanli period.\footnote{19} As the profits of the publication business that could possibility come to the publishers were irresistible to them and new titles were not easily obtainable from renowned authors due to the intense competition among the commercial publishers on securing new titles, some commercial publishers in the mid- and late-Ming period switched to employing the deceiving tricks that were discussed above in order to take a share of the profits. In addition, unlike the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) where it was a requirement for publishers to submit the drafts of books that they intended to publish to the government for examination and approval for publication, there was no such procedure in the Ming dynasty.\footnote{20} As there was not governmental organization and procedure in place to guard the contents of the publications in the Ming dynasty, the commercial publishers could then unscrupulously employ deceiving tricks on their publications to mislead readers and bring the publishers huge profits.
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Zhang Zhenduo 张振多  Xidi Shuhua 西地抒话  Xianggang: Sanlian shudian, 1983.
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8. When Xu Guangqi (1562–1633) found out his draft of *Maoshi liutie jiangyi* was being published without his noticed, he insisted that the woodblocks of that book to be recalled and destroyed. See Xu Xiaoman, “Xu Guangqi de ‘Maoshi liutie jiangyi’ ji qi yanjiu jiazhi”, pp.190-191.

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