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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Visible and Spectacular: Commentary on Geographical Writings in Medieval China

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Since the *Book of Songs*, commentary has been a crucial tool for interpreting and understanding previous literary works. In medieval China, commentary extended beyond the interpretation of classics to various genres, demonstrating diverse purposes and effects. This paper investigates the perspectives and techniques of commentators in two geographical writings in medieval China, Li Daoyuan's *Shuijing zhu* and Yang Xuanzhi's *Luoyang qielan ji*. It illustrates how these commentators represent landscape in a way distinct from the original text, offering a fresh approach to the study of commentary. By establishing organisational structures that differ from the main text, selecting words and citations from previous documents, supplementing this with their personal sensory experiences, and even extracting keywords from the main text for elaboration, commentators on geographical writings expand and deepen the descriptions of landscapes in the main text. This enriches the meaning of a location's scenery, constructing a more profound interpretation and thereby a distinctive landscape belonging to the commentators. As such, commentary functions not only as an analytical tool but also as a unique mode of representing landscapes.

自《詩經》以來，註疏一直是理解和解讀前代文獻不可或缺的輔助工具。到了中古時期，註疏不僅用於儒家經典的詮釋，還呈現出體裁跨越和功能多樣性的趨勢。本文以中古地理書寫中的兩部註疏——酈道元《水經註》和楊衒之《洛陽伽藍記》為例，嘗試為註疏研究提供新的視角。這兩部作品雖然依循正文的文句順序進行註解，卻呈現出獨立的文本架構。註疏者有意識地依照新的架構選擇詞彙和引文，融入個人的直觀體驗，並從正文中挑選出關鍵字進行補充和詮釋。這種註疏方式不僅擴展和深化了原有的景觀描寫，還塑造了註疏者對地景獨特的解讀。換言之，中古地理書寫的註疏不僅詮釋了地志文獻，還提供另一種地景再現的形式。

Keywords: geographical writings, Northern Dynasties, landscape, representation, history

關鍵詞： 地理書寫，景觀，再現，北朝，史

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Introduction[1]

Sometime before 527, a Northern Wei official named Li Daoyuan 酈道元 (d. 527) wrote a commentary on an anonymous gazetteer, the *Shuijing* 水經 (*The Classic of Waterways*), creating a new work known today as the *Shuijing zhu* 水經註 (*Commentary on the Classic of Waterways*). Twenty years after Li's death, Yang Xuanzhi 楊衒之 (fl. 528–547), another Northern Dynasties official, wrote a record of Buddhist monasteries in Luoyang, the *Luoyang qielan ji* 洛陽伽藍記 *(The Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*, hereafter *Records)*, to which he appended his own commentary. Although Li Daoyuan annotated the works of others, while Yang Xuanzhi annotated his own work, both of these works employ commentary to facilitate readers' understanding of geographical writings. Their choices illustrate how commentary contributes to the original text's meaning, creating a text appended, rather than subordinate, to the original text, providing an alternative rather than secondary geographical discourse.[2] Additionally, Yang's choice to annotate his own work indicates his awareness of the distinct effects of the main text and the commentary. His decision to express his thoughts through separate forms provides a valuable example for examining the crucial differences and fundamental impacts of original text and commentary.

As two of the few relatively well-preserved books from early medieval China, *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records* are important monuments in literary history, and have been the subject of considerable discussion. Due to limited historical records about Li and Yang, their works have also been crucial sources for understanding their lives and literary contribution.[3] *Shuijing zhu*, as a key work in both Northern Dynasties literature and in the genre of geographical writing, has had an impact on historical

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[1] This paper is part of my postdoctoral project at ICLP, Academia Sinica, discussing the interaction between geographical writings and their genre. I would like to thank my advisor at ICLP, Dr. Zeb Raft, for his thoughtful suggestions, as well as the helpful feedback from peer reviewers and the editorial assistance that significantly enhanced the clarity and language of this paper.

[2] Perhaps due to the different authors of the original texts, scholars have held opposite attitudes to Li's and Yang's commentaries. Because most of the scholarship recognises Li Daoyuan's innovation and unique ideas as a commentator on landscape description, Xiaofei Tian emphasises the constraints of the genre. She reminds her readers that the discussion of Li's inheritance and innovation should be based on the features of commentary. On the contrary, most scholarship does not separate Yang's commentary from his original text. Manling Luo suggests that the original text and the self-commentary in the *Records* should not be treated differently, as these two texts have been integrated for a long time. Luo further argues that the commentary is neither secondary nor supplementary. However, the combination of the original text and the commentary is not unique to the *Records*. For example, the original text and commentary of *Shuijing zhu* were not separated until the Qing Dynasty; such integration of texts was common in medieval China. Although, as Luo argues, we cannot definitively determine which parts of the *Records* belong to the original text and which to the commentary, what we regard as the distinct separation between *Shuijing zhu* and its original text is merely the result of rigorous scholarly examination from the High Qing period onward. See Xiaofei Tian, "Empire's Blue Highways: Li Daoyuan's Commentary on the *River Classic*," *Asia Major* 35, no.1 (June 2022): 75–120. Manling Luo, "The Politics of Place-Making in the *Records of Buddhist Monasteries in Luoyang*," *T'oung Pao* 105, no.1–2 (2019): 43–75.

[3] Qiaoyi Chen 陳橋驛 considers *Shuijing zhu* as part of Li Daoyuan's biography. Distinct from the crucial official portrait by Wei Shou in *Wei Shu* 魏書 (*Book of Wei*), Chen believes Li was more of a patriot dedicated to the glory of a unified empire. See Qiaoyi Chen, *Li Daoyuan pingzhuan* 酈道元評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1994). Wang Meishiu 王美秀 explores Yang Xuanzhi's self-identification and cultural preferences during the disunion. See Meishiu Wang, *Lishi, kongjian, shengfeng: Luoyan qielan ji de wenhua lunshu* 歷史、空間、身份——洛陽伽藍記的文化論述 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2007).

geography, literary aesthetics, and textual scholarship.[4] The *Records*, as both a personal memoir and a record of the capital, has long been noted for its duality (Lin 1985).[5] More significantly, scholars have recognised the substantial impact that form has on Li's and Yang's representation of landscapes. Jörg H. Hüsemann illustrates Li Daoyuan's pessimistic views on history and memory through decayed and obscure ruins Li referred to annotate the waterways in the original texts, while D. Jonathan Felt highlights the *Shuijing zhu*'s decisive role in shaping the genre of medieval geographical writings. This underscores the value of *Shuijing zhu* as a commentary in depicting geographical landscapes (Hüsemann 2017, Felt 2021). Manling Luo views Yang Xuanzhi's landscape descriptions as a means to reveal the subtle dynamics of power between individuals and between people and their time (Luo 2019, 53–55, 65–69). After bringing together the discussions of both *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records*, it becomes evident that the effective utilisation of the form is not merely a matter of the authors' personal creativity or preference. Xiaofei Tian uses the metaphors "riverine traveler" and "blue highway" to illustrate how Li Daoyuan effectively employs the commentarial genre to showcase his literary and textual knowledge, as well as his historical and imperial concepts, in his geographical writing (Tian 2022a, 84–89, 98–107). Her findings shed light on the interaction between genre and content, highlighting how commentaries serve as a method of geographical writing.

The transformative influence of commentary on the original text can be traced back to centuries before Li and Yang. The Confucian classics all came with commentaries, glossing their words and explaining their significance. Yet even there, commentary—as we see, for instance, in Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄(127–220) commentary on the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs)*—is not subordinate to the text, but guides its interpretation in certain directions (Nylan and Rusk 2021, 149–152). Commentary also gave texts authority, as (reportedly) in the case of Zuo Si's 左思 (fl. 250–305) "Sandu fu" 三都賦 ("Fu on the Three Capitals"), which reveals a scenario where, when a work struggles to gain widespread recognition, the inclusion of commentary from notable figures can affirm and elevate its perceived value. Commentators were also innovative, exploring diverse possibilities through their practices.

During the time of Li and Yang, commentary served as an essential means to collect, manipulate, and even reinterpret knowledge. As a result, commentaries on classics and contemporary anthologies

[4] Qiaoyi Chen's series of studies on *Shuijing zhu* provides an abundant resource for examining its contribution to historical geography. See Qiaoyi Chen, *Shuijing zhu yanjiu* 水經注研究 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1985). To explore Li Daoyuan's rhetorical representation of his political, aesthetic, and humanitarian concerns, scholars such as Michael Nylan, Yuanju Liu 劉苑如, and Peipei Chang 張蓓蓓 analyse his choice of locations and critique of former records to demonstrate his intentions. See Michael Nylan, "Wandering in the Ruins: The *Shuijing zhu* Reconsidered," in *Interpretation and Literature in Early Medieval China*, ed. Alan K.C. Chan (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 63–102; Yuanju Liu, "Visible and Invisible War: Records, Rhapsodies, and Liu Yu's Expeditions to the North" 見與不見的戰爭——論記體與賦體及劉裕北伐, *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* 中國文哲研究集刊 49 (September 2016): 1–40; Peipei Chang 張蓓蓓, "Li Daoyuan's Humanistic Concerns in *Shuijing zhu*" 由水經注看酈道元的人道人文關懷, *Chengda Zhongwen xuebao* 成大中文學報 29 (2010): 23–50. Yuanhang Bao 鮑遠航 collects and analyses Li's citations, especially from the southern gazetteers and travelogues, to remind his readers that much of what we praise in Li's contribution today should be credited to the southern writers. See Yuanhang Bao, *Shuijing zhu yu Wei Jin nanbei chao dili wenxue wenxian yanjiu* 水經注與魏晉南北朝地理文學文獻研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chunbanshe, 2019).

[5] Both Wenjin Wang and Meishiu Wang divide Yang's work into different layers, such as historical, literary, and religious. See Wenjin Wang, *Jingtu shang de fengyang: Luoyang qielan ji* 淨土上的烽煙——洛陽伽藍記 (Taipei: Shibao wenhua,1982) and Meishiu Wang, *Lishi, kongjian, shengfeng: Luoyan qielan ji de wenhua lunshu.*

flourished (Cheng 2017, 123–130). In the case of "Sandu fu", we can also observe the distinctiveness of commentary on geographical writings. While geographical writings serve to introduce and explain landscapes, why is there a need for an additional layer of introduction and explanation––the commentary?

The tradition of geographical writing exhibits a different approach to commentary. Commenting on the "Sandu fu," the Western Jin (266–316) scholars Zhang Zai 張載 (fl. 280–391) and Liu Kui 劉逵 (d.301) annotated geographical descriptions by aligning them with the grand context of astronomy, corresponding to the cosmological framework established in the pre-Qin period. Concentrating on the interpretation of the account, they meticulously annotated almost every word in the main text, explaining every term, location, and cited material. In contrast, Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi prioritise human experiences of interacting with the environment over the cosmological framework. Rather than adhering to the structure of the main text, they construct an organisational structure that reflects their perception of the landscape. Within the structure, they organise selected quotations and offer their own interpretations, guiding readers through emotional and sensory perceptions. Moreover, they opt to focus on "keywords" instead of explaining each word in the main text. This choice signifies their shift in focus from the account to the external landscape. Ultimately, their efforts yield a landscape that is distinct from what is portrayed in the main text, creating a multi-layered view when the text and commentary are read together.

How Commentaries Structure Geographical Writing

In their pursuit of a fitting and orderly geographical image, both Li and Yang employed specific structures to systematically list and organise landscapes within their works. The *Shuijing zhu* expands the range of the original *Shuijing* from 137 rivers to over 1000 waterways, extending coverage to modern India, Korea, and Southeast Asia. When discussing Li's innovation and purpose, Xiaofei Tian reminds readers to be cautious when referring to "Li's choice" as a commentator, observing that Li Daoyuan must have followed the structure of the original text (Tian 2022b, 709–710). However, by interconnecting rivers, Li Daoyuan constructs a structure that originates from the main text but extends beyond its boundaries. Li demonstrates that the expansion of the number of rivers and the scope of the countries serves not as a supplement but as an alternative representation of the landscape.

Unlike the *Shuijing*, which overlooks relationships among rivers, Li Daoyuan connects river channels through their confluences and branching points. He labels the intersection of two waterways with the term "mouth" 口 (*kou*), which signifies both the specific geographical location and a marker within the systematic landscape description. Li initiates the description with the main river first, halting at the "mouth" of the river that merges there and describing it from origin to terminus. Consequently, the description of the conjoined river begins and ends with the term "mouth." This method exhibits a methodical presentation, transforming the waterways into a hydrological network. On the top of that,

he organises different geographical facts from different categories, with a focus on river channels, structuring, interpreting, and defining these landscapes in his commentary. For example, because of a river flowing between them, Li refers to two mountains beside the river as *jia'an* 夾岸 ("banks that enclose the river") (*Shuijing zhu*, 138, 282, 364, 524, 782, 1210, 1764, 1954, 3057). By doing so, two individual mountains are connected to the river and to each other (Chu 2021, 4–7). In a sense, all the features connected with the riverbank, including trees, steles, cities, buildings, and stories, acquire new identities which are a part of the description of the river. In this new structure, Li Daoyuan's commentary incorporates additional geographical facts and reorganises the landscape with a framework centred around the river.

Moreover, Li also establishes an order for organising materials collected from textual sources, such as the Confucian classics, histories, and literary works. Li thereby creates a pattern for introducing each location's origin, important events, figures, and the emotions inspired by these landscapes (Chen 2008, 11–50). The final element in this pattern is Li Daoyuan's personal judgment. Li Daoyuan concludes the geographical description with his personal judgment, analysis, experience, and feelings. Li thereby creates a framework for organising the landscape that exceeds the original structure of the main text and moves from information toward the reader's response to information.

Li organises the quotations in his commentary not only to structure the descriptive framework but also to create the impression that the entire empire (all under heaven) belongs to the same cultural sphere.[6] The documents he cites remain consistent throughout the book—he especially favours cultural touchstones such as the *Shijing* 詩經 (*Book of Songs*), *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (*Zuo's Commentary*), or *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*). Although the frequency of citations of these sources varies across different volumes depending on the region, the works known to Han-ethnicity literati still permeate the entire work. This strategy transforms the river from a mere geographical element in the main text into a metaphor of cultural and political unity in the commentary. Even when discussing the region of remote Southeast Asia formerly known as Linyi 林邑, in today's central and northern Vietnam, Li Daoyuan tries to integrate descriptions of the region into a unified cultural context. Despite the lack of official historical records for Linyi, Li anchors this distant exotic land within the traditional framework of the Central Plains, quoting works compiled in the north such as *Linyi ji* 林邑記 (*Record of Linyi*) and *Jiaozhou ji* 交州記 (*Record of Jiao Region)*, as well as letters from sojourning literati (*Shuijing zhu*, 2984–3023).

Furthermore, in narrating the conflicts between the Liu-Song dynasty and Linyi, Li Daoyuan uses terms such as Linyi's "invasion" 進侵, refers to local customs that are "gradually becoming more akin

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[6] Referring to the concept of *Tianxia* 天下, Michael Nylan translates it as "all under heaven," and argues that it plays a central role in Li's work. This is evident in Li's site selections, choice of names, and the interpretation of historical sites. In comparison with two other works from a similar time period, *Huayangguo zhi* 華陽國志 (*Gazetteer of the Region South of Mount Hua*) and the *Records*, Li's choice clearly reflects his conception of landscape. Nylan also refers to Li's attempts to interpret conflicts over land as part of a unified tradition. See Nylan, "Wandering in the Ruins: The *Shuijing zhu* Reconsidered," 68. It is important to note, however, that *Tianxia* is more likely a political rather than geographical term. It implies that "all under heaven" belongs to the empire, more a theoretical concept than a factual representation.

to those of barbarians" 染同夷化, notes the people's "ferocity" and "stubbornness" 頑凶 and the difficulty of "civilising" them through the ages 歷代難化, and speaks of the general Tan Hezhi's attack on Linyi to "cultivate culture to pacify distant people" 脩文服遠. These expressions convey a viewpoint: that the Liu-Song represented justice, while Linyi represented rebellion. Surprisingly, as a Northern Wei dynasty official, Li expresses his cultural affinity for the Liu-Song, a politically opposed regime. In the dispute between Liu-Song and Linyi, he unhesitatingly chooses the side of Liu-Song. This choice is not only based on the greater cultural gap presented by Linyi but also reflects how Li Daoyuan is influenced by the documents he cites. When the materials he refers to are all composed by Han-ethnicity literati, the landscape he represents reflects a specific perspective. This also demonstrates how commentary as a method of presenting geographical landscapes differs from the authors' direct description.[7]

The purpose and impact of commentary in geographical writing is even more manifest in the *Records*, where both main text and commentary were written by a single author. Yang Xuanzhi fashions a systematic design for its main text, introducing the temples within the city of Luoyang according to the orientation of city gates. Following this order, Yang manipulates the materials in his book to represent the landscape. By placing each temple at a certain spot inside the city, the stories that unfolded in the past gather according to the region of the temple. Yang categorises every event according to different locations, enabling the systematic introduction of important events and people. Thereby, he connects monasteries dispersed throughout the city, creating an ordered and harmonious landscape.

Yang's self-commentary adds to this structure. According to the Tang historian Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721), self-commentary was uncommon, mainly resulting from an author with too much material who has been unable to make a selection (*Shitong* 史通, 322–323). However, it appears that Yang, like Li, used commentary as a part of his representational strategy. Yang's self-commentary transforms excess information into an example of how annotations and the main text can present different facets of a landscape.

Within the systematic order of his text, Yang divides selected materials into the main text and commentary to deliver different messages. In the main text, Yang usually focuses on the temple and the landscape. In the commentary, he concentrates on the story and events. In the main text, he diligently describes every architectural detail, vividly rendering the Buddhist temples' grandeur and allure to the

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[7] As regards landscape beyond the Central Plains, Li's surprisingly extensive discussion of India in the first *juan* stands out. Felt offers an innovative and inspiring explanation of the description, suggesting the *Shuijing zhu* presents two different cosmologies, those of China and India, by highlighting Mount Kunlun 崑崙山 as the centre of the world and the border between two civilisations. See Felt, *Structures of the Earth: Metageographies of Early Medieval China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2021), 19, 170–172. While Felt highlights the impact of Li's extension on readers, the India section also reflects his primary objective of debating the precise location of Mount Kunlun. While examining India's unique culture, which is closely tied to Buddhism, Li challenges the association of Kunlun with Anavatapta, as proposed in several Buddhist travelogues. Instead, he underscores the long-standing connection between Kunlun and the Queen Mother of the West, citing a range of works from Chinese literary tradition, reminding his reader that Kunlun has been long rooted in Chinese history and the traditional pantheon of immortals. In this sense, his description of India is more a textual examination of the term "Mount Kunlun" in the main text than a deliberate attempt to extend his writing to a broader world. Consequently, although the description of India takes up a substantial and seemingly more prominent portion than the Southeast Asia section in *Shuijing zhu*, it still reveals how the commentator employs his citation to construct a *tianxia* that belongs to a unified cultural sphere.

nobility and common people of that time. The order of the gates in the preface is a typical example. Yang lists the gates' location, order, and names in the main text, while in the commentary he adds the history of every gate, including its origin and whether the Northern Wei Dynasty reconstructed it, carrying the history of the gates from the Western Han (206 BC–25) to the Northern Wei (386–535). His commentary adds historical depth to every spot in Luoyang, creating an organised contrast between the present and the past, as well as between time and space.

With a clear division of historical and geographical writings between the annotations and main text, Yang's commentary appears intentionally crafted to resemble biographies in official histories. Many commentary passages start with a name, usually of an important character in the main text. Yang then introduces the person's life story. Such a consistent structure and repetitive terminology might make the commentary appear rigid, but this feature also provides a sense of coherence across the commentary passages (Wang 1982, 170), while at the same time it differentiates commentary and the original text despite the shared author. For instance, in the original text, Yang states that Jingning temple 景寧寺 was sponsored by Yang Chun 楊椿, then gives his official title. In the commentary, Yang introduces Yang Chun's family by the form of "Chun's younger brother Shen" and "Shen's younger brother Jin", then gives their official titles (*Records*, 88). The repetitive rhetoric, which resembles what is found in historical books, is differentiated from and complements the original text with landscape descriptions.

The repetitive rhetoric expands the main text's landscape focus, which is centred on Buddhist temples: where the main text is largely restricted to events within the spatial confines of the temple, primarily associating them with aristocratic religious activities, the annotations, adopting the tone of a historical narrative, detail the individuals appearing in the temple and the causes and consequences of the events. For example, in the account of Yongning Temple, the main text mentions the powerful minister Erzhu Rong leading troops into the temple, while the annotation introduces a biographical form: "Rong, styled Tianbao, a native of Xiurong in the Northern Territory" 榮字天寶，北地秀容人也, narrating his rise and the tragic Heying Incident (*Records*, 13). This transformation renders the temples in the main text not merely standalone structures but military camps dominated by Erzhu Rong, extending to become the final scene where the empress dowager and the courtiers resist Erzhu Rong, engaging in a fierce battle with devastating casualties. Yang Xuanzhi's approach associates the temples with other locations and periods, thereby expanding and enriching the depicted landscapes to accommodate more events, intricate actions, and intense emotions.

By incorporating these historical accounts, it can be said that Yang intentionally reverses the positions of history and geography. In the origins of geographical writing, a geographical treatise was typically one section within an official history. Consequently, in most Chinese bibliographies, geographical treatises are traditionally classified as a subgenre of history. However, in Yang's approach, he positions historical facts within the commentary to complement and elucidate geographical descriptions. Moreover, Yang, as geographer-historian, acts as the ultimate arbiter of events in the commentary. He strategically places his own opinions at the conclusion of his commentary passages. In certain segments, he delivers a judgment reminiscent of the "discussions" (*lun* 論) that typically conclude chapters in the official histories. For example, in his treatment of the Yongning temple, Yang notes that the rebellious

general Erzhu Zhao imprisoned Emperor Zhuang in the temple. In the annotation, Yang then elucidates the entire saga involving the royal family and the Erzhu clan, exposing the power struggle between the emperor and the influential generals and revealing the conclusion of the entire narrative: Emperor Zhuang's counterattack and its subsequent failure. Ultimately, he delivers his judgment:

> Xuanzhi (I) says: in the past when Emperor Guangwu [of the Eastern Han] assumed his royal duty, the icy bridge was frozen in the Hu River. During Emperor Zhaolie's ascent, his horse Dilu leapt from the muddy channel. All of these tales align with the laws of heaven, blessings bestowed by the gods to aid the entire universe and shelter its people. As for [Erzhu] Zhao, in contrast, with waspish eyes and wolfish voice, he displayed actions resembling the most rebellious and cruel beasts. Relying on the army, Zhao massacred members of the royal family. If the gods possess consciousness, they should ponder such heinous conduct! How could the gods allow the Meng River to run so low, barely reaching Zhao's knees, encouraging his rebellious heart? The *Book of Changes* maintains that the rule of heaven will punish the arrogant and bless the humble. Regarding the event between Zhao and Emperor Zhuang as a test of this principle, I consider it sheer nonsense!
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> 衒之曰：「昔光武受命，冰橋凝於滹水；昭烈中起，的盧踴於泥溝；皆理合於天，神祇所福，故能功濟宇宙，大庇生民。若兆者，蜂目豺聲，行窮梟獍，阻兵安忍，賊害君親，皇靈有知，鑒其凶德！反使孟津由膝，贊其逆心。《易》稱天道禍淫，鬼神福謙，以此驗之，信爲虛說。」(*Records*, 29–30)

Yang refers to himself in the third person, adopting a historian's stance to assess historical events. With this tone, he imparts historical depth to his examination of the conflict between Emperor Zhuang and Erzhu Zhao within a broader framework. By juxtaposing the tragic failure of Emperor Zhuang with two emperors from the Eastern Han (25–220) and the Three Kingdoms (220–280), Yang effectively draws on precedents to evaluate the historical event under discussion. He questions whether the lessons from history can be applied to contemporary challenges. The perceived ineffectiveness of history leads Yang to question the wisdom of the classic, transforming Yang's *lun* from a simple historical judgement into a nuanced reflection on history. This shift embodies Yang's emotional response to the historical narrative. Consequently, Yang's annotation not only alters the relationship between history and geography but also provides a place for him to include judgments, reflections, and emotions within the landscape description. Yang's organised and functional main text and self-commentary create different structures to place time and space, cause and effect, events and emotions in various sections of the entire text. This allows readers to extract relevant information more effectively and facilitates a comparative analysis between different narrative categories. Together, these elements contribute to the representation of the landscape.

The examples above demonstrate how commentary creates a structure that transforms or extends the landscape representation in the main text. Li's and Yang's commentaries, as paratext, by providing a changed structure, changed the perception of the original text. By adeptly manipulating various types

of information, they organise relationships among diverse natural and man-made features, align documents from various periods and genres, and incorporate personal experiences and judgments about historical events occurring in specific locations. In this way, landscapes are no longer just visible scenery but also encompass events, as well as the emotions and thoughts they provoke.

Making the Unseen into the Spectacular: Commentary as a Medium for Sensory-Related Personal Experience

Attention to emotions and thoughts also influences the way Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi "see" the landscape. Ways of viewing in the commentaries are divided into two patterns: "seen" (*jian* 見) and "spectacular" (*guan* 觀 "observed"). These respectively refer to visible objects and extraordinary scenes that evoke emotions. For example, Li Daoyuan introduces the story of Bu Zhi 步騭 in the late Eastern Han in the section on "Yin River":

> During the Jian'an era, Wu dispatched Bu Zhi to serve as the governor of Jiaozhou. Upon Bu Zhi's arrival in Nanhai, as he saw (*jian*) the topography and observed (*guan*) the previous administrative centre of Yu Tuo, he found the land nestled between mountains and seas, vast and expansive, with towering mulberry trees on the heights and fertile fields below. The woods and hills teemed with various birds and beasts. What wonders and creatures did not exist in such a place? In the sea, there were strange fish and turtles, rare alligators, and an abundance of extraordinary and unique items—manifold in variety, too numerous to be counted.
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> 建安中，吳遣步騭爲交州。騭到南海，見土地形勢，觀尉佗舊治處，負山帶海，博敞渺目，高則桑土，下則沃衍，林麓鳥獸，於何不有。海怪魚鼈，黿鼉鮮鱷，珍怪異物，千種萬類，不可勝記。(*Shuijing zhu*, 3099)

In this passage, "seeing" and "observing" point to distinct phenomena. The former refers to the restricted and objective thing that Bu Zhi "saw", while the latter emphasises the more evocative and exuberant subject experience of "observation". In this way, Li incorporates both objective scenes and thrilling wonders into Bu Zhi's vision, revealing not only the landscape within Bu's sight but also his emotional response to it. Bu's exhilarated reaction to Nanhai illustrates that the landscape does not merely exist objectively but has evolved through generations of human observation, discovery, perception, and even utilisation. Therefore, after emphasising that he "observed the previous administrative centre of Yu Tuo," Li presents a strange and abundant place beyond the imagination of people who lived in central China. In other words, a spectacular place.

Yang Xuanzhi also uses "see" and "observe" to refer to separate actions of people. Again, seeing is the reflection of an objective fact, while observation incorporates emotions. For instance:

> In the second month of the third year of the Yongxi era, a fire broke out and engulfed the pagoda. The emperor ascended the Lingyun Terrace to look at the fire and sent Baoju, the Prince of Nanyang and Concurrent Prime Minister Zhangsun Zhi to lead one thousand troops from the Yulin army to go to the fire. All were sad, shedding tears as they went. The fire had originated at dawn on the eighth level and quickly spread. At that time, thunderstorms shrouded the sky, mixed with hail and snow. People from all walks of life gathered to witness (*guan*, "observe") the fire, and the sounds of sorrow and lamentation reverberated through the capital. At that time, there were three monks who rushed into the fire and died.......In the middle of the fifth month of the same year, someone from Donglai reported that he had seen (*jian*) the pagoda in the middle of the sea, shining brightly as if renewed. The people on the sea all saw it (*jian*). Suddenly, a mist arose, and the temple disappeared.
>
> 永熙三年二月，浮圖爲火所燒，帝登淩雲臺望火，遣南陽王寶炬、錄尚書長孫稚將羽林一千就赴火所，莫不悲惜，垂淚而去。火初從第八級中平旦大發，當時雷雨晦冥，雜下霰雪，百姓道俗，咸來觀火，悲哀之聲，振動京邑。時有三比丘，赴火而死。.......其年五月中，有人從東萊郡來云：「見浮圖於海中，光明照耀，儼然如新，海上之民，咸皆見之。俄然霧起，浮圖遂隱。」(*Records*, 33)

Here, "observing" refers to a spectacular disaster in the capital while "seeing" implies an emotionally detached report from other regions months later. When the fire arose, people in the capital flocked to observe it. The action of "observing" connects to the emperor's anxious command, the soldiers' fearless commitment to the mission, and the martyrdom of the three monks. These intensely evocative and impactful actions stirred all the ordinary people in the capital, and they responded to the grand destruction with tears, their cries echoing throughout the city. A reciprocal and resonant cycle formed between humans and the environment, making what is "observed" in the text a doubly spectacular scene.

In contrast, three months later, people who lived far from the capital reported "seeing" a vision of the temple's phantom. People who lived in Donglai county had not witnessed the tragedy of Yongning temple. Nor had they felt the pain of watching people crying, working to save and in the end dying for the place. This distance is reflected in the report when they "see" the temple floating on the sea. The temple suddenly appears, is then covered and finally disappears behind the fog. The narrative has little emotion, merely reflecting a fact. In both places, Yang speaks of "all" 咸 the people, but the experiences of "all" who witnessed the fire in Luoyang and "all" who saw the phantom in Donglai were different in terms of time, space, and emotions.

Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi also use commentary to emphasise that some unseen places are spectacular and worth knowing about. For example, Li mentions a secret place connected with his childhood in his account of "Juyang River":

> Formerly, during the Taihe era, my late father served as an official in Shandong. I was a child so I followed him to the eastern province. In the scorching heat of summer, feeling fatigued at my residence, I invited friends with a zither, indulging in merriment all day long. We sought fragrant bamboo shoots amidst the bamboo waves. The light forest swayed with the billows. With harmonious music playing on the zither, joyous feelings would flow freely. It is in such moments that I found my refuge, truly a place of comfort. In the east, there is a small lake abundant with fresh bamboo shoots, not just fragrant like herbaceous peonies, but indeed pure, like leaping fish.
>
> 先公以太和中作鎮海岱，余總角之年，侍節東州。至若炎夏火流，間居倦想，提琴命友，嬉娛永日，桂筍尋波，輕林委浪，琴歌既洽，歡情亦暢，是焉棲寄，實可憑衿。小東有一湖，佳饒鮮筍，匪直芳齊芍藥，寔亦潔竝飛鱗。(*Shuijing zhu*, 2206–2207)

The previous discussion of the visible and the spectacular demonstrates that the term "spectacular" involves the observer's emotions. Through Li Daoyuan's childhood experience of playing by the water, we can see how private lyricism and sensory elements make landscapes spectacular. By describing sound, fragrance, and tactile sensations, Li resurfaces his childhood memories for readers. Yu-yu Cheng's study of Xie Lingyun's 謝靈運 (385–433) rhapsodies and poems observes that Xie began to explore the natural landscape through human agency (Cheng 2007, 193–219). She further posits that Xie's self-commentary on "Rhapsody on the Mountain Dwelling" 山居賦 served as inspiration for Li's commentary (Cheng 2017, 129). Despite Xie's evident influence, Li's commentary introduces two innovative elements: an emphasis on an obscure location in a gazetteer and a shift in focus from explicating the author's intent to describing the landscape itself. On one hand, while Xie experiences places by human action within a specific literary context, Li diverges significantly by incorporating his personal experience to introduce an unknown location in an "all-under heaven" geographical treatise. Li's decision not only introduces a specific locale but also establishes a unique connection between a localised site and the broader topography of the entire realm. On the other hand, unlike Xie's self-commentary, which aims to elucidate the motive behind his main text, Li's commentary concentrates on highlighting the distinctive features of the places. In other words, Xie's self-commentary helps readers understand the author better, while Li's commentary helps readers understand the landscape better.

By doing so, a previously unknown water area becomes worthy of inclusion in geographical writing, creating a shared and joyful spectacle for readers. This location is invisible to the readers because it is not a grand sight; rather, it is Li Daoyuan's personal spot. Even if someone could follow the directions precisely, they could never return to that moment of Li Daoyuan's carefree days. It belongs to the past, born from memory, making it impossible to revisit or replicate. Therefore, in this description, Li integrates personal memories and emotions into the commentary, distinguishing them from the public river courses in the main text. Through the classification of information between main text and commentary, he transforms the invisible into the spectacular.

Where Li relates a private experience, in Yang's case, a scene is unseen because of the power of the imperial court. Again, in his account of Yongning Temple, Yang recalls the memory of ascending the tower:

> After the decoration [of Yongning temple] was completed, Emperor Ming and the empress dowager climbed it [the temple] together, viewing the palace as if in the palm of their hands, overlooking the capital as if their own home. Because they could see into the palace, they forbade anyone from ascending. [Note:] Xuanzhi once ascended it together with Hu Xiaoshi, the Intendant of Henan. It overlooked the clouds and rain – truly a view not to be doubted!
>
> 裝飾畢功，明帝與太后共登之。視宮內如掌中，臨京師若家庭，以其目見宮中，禁人不聽升之。衒之嘗與河南尹胡孝世共登之，下臨雲雨，信哉不虛！

Yang creates a parallel between the observation of the royal family and his own experience. Yang, once an official of the Northern Wei, left the capital when the Northern Wei was divided into the Eastern Wei in Ye City and the Western Wei in Chang'an. Serving the Eastern Wei court, Yang returned to Luoyang in the course of his duties thirteen years later. There, witnessing the ruins in Luoyang, Yang decided to recreate the grand landscape in this work, taking monasteries sponsored by the royal family and aristocratic as representative icons, based on his memory.

As one of the most spectacular temples in Luoyang, Yongning Temple was established with the support of the Northern Wei imperial family. Yang concludes his description of its ornate details with the passage cited here, when Emperor Ming and the empress dowager climbed the tower. The grand ceremony showcased the towering splendour of Yongning Temple, while a royal edict simultaneously annexed this temple into the imperial domain. For ordinary people, the temple is spectacular yet forbidden. By inserting his own experience of ascending the tower in the annotation, Yang validates the visibility and spectacular landscape for readers. By using the same word, "overlooking" 臨, Yang parallelises two experiences, but slightly alters what is observed. In the main text, the royal family overlooks the capital. They enjoy the power to control everything and forbid the lower class to share their pleasure. However, when Yang ascends the tower, he overlooks cloud and rain. What he sees is the height of the temple. What he feels is freedom and boundlessness. Yang even uses the word "truly" 信 to confirm the message in the main text. The term *xin* 信 is often used in geographical writings to verify that what the authors saw on the ground corresponded to what they had read in the books. In this passage, Yang uses this term to confirm a scene that in fact has slightly changed from its original implication. It shows Yang's witty manipulation of his roles as author and commentator of geographical writings. This manipulation demonstrates the division between the public and the private, royal and minor officials, and the powerful and the lyrical. Regarding the transcendence of time and space, while the main text describes the peak of the Northern Wei through its grand temple, highlighting imperial control, Yang's commentary, by offering a contemporary witness to desolation and decay, reflects on the experience of the past to create temporal depth.

Therefore, Yang Xuanzhi helped many of his readers to overcome restrictions. Whether these readers were restricted by imperial decrees or were unable to visit Yongning Temple due to geographical and temporal differences, they had the opportunity to confirm the landscape documented in the literature, which was exclusive to the royal family, through Yang's personal experiences in the commentary. The ultimate destruction of Yongning Temple by fire made the spectacular view from the temple's summit a thing of the past. Thus, Yang Xuanzhi's ascent did not just break through authority but also transcended time and space.

Li's and Yang's commentaries complement their main texts' public voice with descriptions of personal sensations and emotions. By distinguishing between the public and private, objective knowledge and subjective experience, Li and Yang strategically place distinct events and experiences in the annotations. This enables mutual supplementation when the main text and the annotation are read together, enriching the landscape, and allows readers to conceptualise the information in the commentaries more effectively. By using sensory, personal experiences, the authors turn something that authority or time has rendered unseen into something spectacular. This includes the eye-opening experience of exotic wonders, such as strange flowers and mythical beasts, or the heartbreaking shock when a centre of faith inexplicably suffers a calamity. These descriptions demonstrate how commentators integrate two ways of viewing, allowing them to interact with and thereby enrich the meaning of landscape.

Keywords: Making the Spectacular Visible

A primary function of annotation is to explain terms in a text, and commentary undoubtedly serves this purpose in both *Shuijing zhu* and the *Records*. When the annotators explain terms in the original text, they draw readers' attention to them. However, Li's and Yang's annotations are distinct in also representing the landscape, making the spectacular visible. They classify and organise quotations and personal experiences, allowing readers to better understand the differences in information and the focal points of the narrative. By capturing, emphasising, and highlighting certain terms in the main text through explanation, Li and Yang transform the general effect of annotations into an approach to describing the landscape.

In other words, Li's and Yang's commentaries use keywords for both explanation and representation. Sometimes, the landscapes the commentaries highlight, the viewpoints they take, and the points they emphasise differ from those in the main text, creating contrasts or even contradictions. This showcases the commentators' subjectivity and agency in representing landscapes, introducing variations and tensions between the descriptions in the main text and annotations, making the portrayal of landscapes more subtle.

By highlighting keywords, commentators distinguish "information" from "noise", extracting content that proved helpful for their documentary explanations and landscape representations (Chen et al.

2021, xxiv–xxviii). In Li's and Yang's works, they comment on certain words in the original text; therefore, they help the readers capture their emphasis and the main points in the text. The distinction between noise and information separates the location, the event, and the figure from all other things to be presented to the readers. For example, when depicting the Yellow River, Li Daoyuan focuses on Longmen:

> Heading south from Longmen Gate, the Fen River merges with it [the Yellow River] flowing from the east. [Note:] This is where, in ancient times, Great Yu guided the river, piled stones, and excavated Liangshan. It is the same place as the *Classic of Waterways* here calls Longmen. The *Record of the Wei Land* states that to the north of Liangshan, there is Longmen Mountain, which was excavated by Great Yu. It connects to the mouth of the Mengjin River, is eighty paces wide, with traces chiselled into the rock, the remnants of his achievement still enduring. Temples and shrines line the bank, with three stone steles in front. Two of the steles have illegible and faded inscriptions, impossible to decipher, while one stele was erected in the Taihe era.
>
> 又南出龍門口，汾水從東來註之。昔者，大禹導河積石，疏決梁山，謂斯處也。即《經》所謂龍門矣。《魏土地記》曰：梁山北有龍門山，大禹所鑿，通孟津河口，廣八十步，巖際鐫跡，遺功尚存。岸上竝有廟祠，祠前有石碑三所，二碑文字紊滅，不可復識，一碑是太和中立。(*Shuijing zhu*, 288).

Originally, the main text states, "Heading south from Longmen Gate, the Fen River merges with it flowing from the east," aiming to explain the direction of the Fen River and its later convergence with the Yellow River. However, when Li Daoyuan highlights "Longmen", he introduces the history, records from previous documents, and the landscape description, shifting the original text's focus from the direction of the river to an introduction to the site. By choosing to explain Longmen's meaning, relating it to the surrounding landscape visible at the time, Li decides that Longmen will be the main point of the original text. That is, Li proposes that the essence of the main text lies not in the Yellow River's direction (as the main text suggests), nor in the relationship between the Yellow River and Fen River, nor in the explanation of water-related terms like "coming" and "confluence". Instead, it focuses on the origin of Longmen and the scenery at this moment. To relate his commentary to the scenery, Li, constrained by the limited information in the original text, needed to employ more techniques to guide the discussion towards the stone steles on the bank of the river. Thus, he expands the main text's term "Longmen" to include the Longmen landscape, then focuses on the stone tablets on the ground and their eroded inscriptions. By focusing on Longmen, Li Daoyuan transforms the term from a spot that the Yellow River passes to a place that is full of stories, human actions, and memorial structures. Li's annotation describes the local scenery, providing an opportunity for readers to visualise the three stone steles. This suggests that the "visibility" of the scenery is in the commentators' hands. They determine the focus of the original text, distinguishing between noise and information, and determining the extent and detail of the landscape––in other words, what it includes or excludes.

In the example of Yang Xuanzhi, we can further observe the annotator's ability to extract keywords from the main text according to his own writing purposes. The following example illustrates how the intention of the original text and that of the commentary can be opposed. When Yang comments on a detail, he draws readers' attention to a particular point in the original text, making the readers believe that term is the fact they should not miss:

> To the south of Nai Forest, there is a stone monument erected by Emperor Ming of Wei. It is titled "The Monument of Miaoci." The High Ancestor [of the Northern Wei] built a Miaoci Hall to the north of the monument. [Note:] During the Yong'an reign, Emperor Zhuang was holding a mounted archery competition in Hualin Park. All the officials came to read the inscriptions, and they suspected that the character *miao* was erroneous. Erudite of the National University Li Tonggui said, 'Emperor Wen of Wei was talented, renowned as one of the Three Ancestors. (The famed writers) Liu Zhen and Wang Can were his top aides. We don't know the meaning, but we cannot declare it erroneous.' At that time, Xuanzhi (i.e., I) was a court attendant, so I immediately explained, 'They thatched the roof of the temple with mugwort, thus the term "sprout (*miao*) temple." What error is there?' Everyone praised my explanation, acknowledging that it had captured the intended meaning.
>
> 柰林南有石碑一所，魏明帝所立也。題云苗茨之碑。高祖於碑北作苗茨堂。永安中，莊帝馬射於華林園，百官皆來讀碑，疑苗字誤。國子博士李同軌曰：「魏文英才，世稱三祖。公幹、仲宣，爲其羽翼。但未知本意如何，不得言誤也。」衒之時爲奉朝請，因卽釋曰：「以蒿覆之，故言苗茨。何誤之有？」衆鹹稱善，以爲得其旨歸。(the *Records* 52–53)

When discussing "Jinglin Temple", Yang mentions a "Nai Forest", and his commentary includes the stele and the palace of Miaoci. The original text's focus is the stone stele, yet the commentary concentrates on a detail, finding a problem that is not apparent in the original. Yang thereby leads his readers to focus on the term in the main text instead of the stele and palace.

Of course, the main text also involves the two emperors who commissioned the construction of the stone tablets and palaces: the Emperor Wen of Cao Wei and the Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei.[8] Coincidentally, although the main text refers to Emperor Xiaowen of Northern Wei as the "High Ancestor", using his temple name, both emperors actually shared posthumous titles which included the word "Wen", which is the word meaning literary, and the debate about characters (*wen*) arises from this.

In the annotations, the focus is on whether the term "Miaoci" is used correctly. Yang highlights that Emperor Zhuang, the nephew of Emperor Xiaowen, led the courtiers in discussing the Miaoci Stele's origin, much as in many Confucian and literary gatherings historically led by emperors. This shifts the

[8] According to Zhou Zumou's 周祖謨 commentary, through comparison with other references in the *Shuijing zhu* and an understanding of the context, "Emperor Ming" of Wei mentioned here should be a mistake for Emperor Wen of Wei (Cao Pi). (*Records*, 53)

focus from emperors' achievements to the knowledge and competition among literati. Yang's annotation even elevates Emperor Zhuang. As a puppet of powerful generals, Emperor Zhuang does not deserve to be mentioned with Emperor Wen and Emperor Xiaowen, the founders of their respective empires. However, by highlighting the discussion, Yang celebrates not only Emperor Zhuang but also the group of literati who became the central figures in this setting.

Ultimately, the commentator emerges victorious. In this annotation, Yang Xuanzhi becomes a character in the historical scene. As both a commentator and a character in the story, he speaks about the inscriptions. His remarks, quoted in the annotation, along with the audience praising his explanation, become the conclusion to this account of the inscriptions, demonstrating Yang Xuanzhi's scholarly expertise. This scholarly prowess, in turn, substantiates Yang's qualification as a commentator. The emphasis on this term turns the observable scenery into tangible knowledge and experience for the readers. In this way, the Miaoci Stele is not just a scene beside Jinglin Temple; it serves as a carrier of inscriptions and involves the use of words and phrases reflecting the dialectical scrutiny and interpretation of language and classics by literati throughout the ages. The term "Miaoci" also encapsulates a crucial moment witnessed by Yang Xuanzhi during a gathering of Emperor Zhuang with his courtiers, marking the significant occasion when Yang Xuanzhi's talent surpassed that of his peers. From Jinglin Temple, Nai Forest, and Miaoci Stele to the term "Miaoci", Yang Xuanzhi moves the focus by layers, capturing the deliberately interpreted, expanded, and supplemented keywords. This renders prominent within the main text the term "Miaoci" and the associated memories it refers to, not only forming a connection between the past and the present but also shaping how readers perceive the emphasis in the related accounts.

A comparison of the steles mentioned in Li's and Yang's commentaries clearly reveals that annotators provide information with their own emphasis and purposes in mind. Li Daoyuan describes the stone steles as material carriers of inscriptions rather than emphasising the inscriptions themselves. Among the three stone steles, two of the inscriptions have disappeared, and Li summarises the inscription on the surviving one only briefly, mentioning just the year of its erection. By contrast, Yang especially focuses on the language of the inscription. In doing so, he creates an arena for literati, allowing court officials to highlight their knowledge (or lack thereof) through attention to the origin and evolution of a single word. This served as a response to similar situations that happened many times in history: within the confines of the imperial court, led by the emperor, they engaged in literary reviews, comparing the merits and shortcomings among literati.

Li's and Yang's annotations show how annotators capture keywords, organise quotations from previous documents, and set up contexts and characters to engage with the concepts of spectacle, visibility, observability, and appearance. Annotators not only make the spectacular visible but also make the spectacular take on distinct dimensions. Through their annotation, Li and Yang transform people, events, and scenes they consider spectacular or noteworthy into the most prominent phrases and focal points within the text.

Conclusion

Imagine a totally different situation: Li Daoyuan might have composed an entirely new treatise on China's waterways, and Yang Xuanzhi could have integrated his experience into his book without self-commentary. Yet, both authors chose to employ commentary as a means to structure information, record personal experience, emphasise concepts within the geographical description, and ultimately, represent the landscape. Their choices not only enhance the readers' understanding of the main text but also underscore the potential of commentary, particular in the context of geographical writing. Li's and Yang's commentaries reveal a shift in focus for commentators, from merely explicating the main text to proposing alternative ways of experiencing the landscape. The role of commentary evolves from being a mere supplement to becoming a formidable counterpart to the main text.

The most distinctive feature of commentary becoming a competitor to the main text lies in the fact that Li's and Yang's commentaries both establish a descriptive structure that varies from the main text, adding nuance to the meaning of these places. Through the structure of commentary, Li and Yang offer an organised description of landscape, coherent citation of documents, and personal judgments. Ultimately, they reveal a cultural framework. Thus, rivers interact with one another, defining the landscapes along their banks. Similarly, temples transform into prisons, military camps, or scenes of disaster due to historical events. The personal perspectives supplied through annotations contribute to a more diversified valuation of these places.

A more diversified valuation of landscape involves how people perceive and observe it. As the definitions of natural and human-made features were continuously transforming, it reflects the way people view and respond to them. Two ways of viewing, *jian* and *guan*, demonstrate how commentators redefine visual perceptions. The definitions of vision contribute to the representations of landscape in the commentary that differ from those in the main text. By adding sensory experience and emotional expression, the commentary enables scenes unseen due to time or distance to appear vividly before the readers, becoming the spectacular. By capturing keywords from the main text, the commentary guides the reader's attention and influences how they understand and interpret the main text, making the spectacular become visible. In doing so, commentators skilfully employ the commentarial genre, creating a representation of the landscape that is not only closely intertwined with its competitor, namely landscape description in the main text, but also able to stand independently, complementing and defining its counterpart.

In the Chinese tradition, commentary represents a crucial category of document that serves different functions and achieves distinct effects across various genres, making it an indispensable tool for interpreting historical texts. In the case of medieval geographical commentary, we can observe how commentators such as Li Daoyuan and Yang Xuanzhi, while maintaining the traditional forms and employing shared techniques, transform their commentaries from functional to fictional. Instead of merely aiming for an efficient introduction of a place, their writings aspire to evoke sensory and emotional responses to the landscape. They distinguish themselves by utilising contrastive formats for the main text and annotations. In doing so, they create a convergence and dialogue between time and

space, individual and collective, private and official, knowledge and emotion, all within the same geographical location. This results in a broader and deeper geographical representation. Li Daoyuan's and Yang Xuanzhi's works highlight the more flexible and diverse functions and forms of commentaries during the medieval period. Their innovative commentaries allow people to reconsider the various possibilities of commentary in medieval China and the uniqueness of commentary on geographical writings, enriching the field of commentary studies.

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