

Preface for the Revised Zhuang Lineage Genealogy

增修常州庄氏族谱序

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During the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the rich delta lands of Jiangnan became the chief suppliers of China's granaries. Literati there initiated most of the great movements in art, letters, and scholarship that dominated later Chinese civilization. The rise of the Zhuang family and lineage in Changzhou is an important example of the historical role kinship groups played in the Yangzi Delta's remarkable intellectual, social, and economic development.

1. Schools of Scholarship 家学

Contemporaries classified the diversity of ideas during the Qing dynasty according to schools of scholarship that centered on the Yangzi delta. School divisions were taken for granted as evidence of personal or geographical association, philosophic or literary agreement, or master-disciple relations, which could be linked together into "schools of learning." Local schools also represented distinct sub-communities within specific urban areas in Jiangnan.

It is important to recognize that the diversity of ideas current during the Qing dynasty usually was perceived through the traditional prism of "schools." Although the reality behind this approach is worth exploring, it has often been applied in a vague manner. We are on firmer ground, however, when "schools" refer to specific geographical areas during particular periods of time. To speak, as Chinese scholars did, of the "Changzhou school" during the Qing dynasty is a case in point.

The turn to Han Learning 汉学 among Changzhou literati can be traced in part to the influence of the commitment of families such as the Zhuangs and Lius to New Text studies 今文学 in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Accordingly, the origins of New Text Confucianism arose from among the currents of scholarship championed by Confucian literati in the Zhuang lineage.

2. Lineages and Schools of Scholarship 家族与家学

Family traditions in scholarship have played a very important role in the history of Chinese thought. Confucian scholars like the Zhuangs did not construct a vision of their political culture in a social vacuum. Their mentalities were imbedded in larger social structures, whose premise was the centrality of kinship ties. In the day-to-day affairs of local gentry society, the Confucian elite frequently was defined by kinship relations and cultural resources centering on the formation and maintenance of lineages.

In Changzhou, scholars associated with the Yanghu school of ancient-style prose 古文 and the Changzhou school of lyric poetry 词 also navigated the literary and philosophic currents separating Han Learning from Song Learning. In both classical scholarship and traditional Chinese prose and poetry, the Zhuang family played a leading role.

3. Lineages and Political Legitimacy 家族与政治

What is remarkable about these social developments is that they were legally authorized by the Confucian state. In contrast to its unceasing opposition to gentry associations or parties, represented by the seventeenth-century demise of the Donglin Academy 东林书院 partisans in Wuxi, the imperial state during the Ming and Qing dynasties had no ideological problems accepting the principle of descent as the primary means of local organization. The ideology of Chinese family and lineage solidarity, which placed primary focus on maintaining good relations with one's relations, overlapped smoothly with the acceptance of gentry as a mediating force between the state and commoners.

The Confucian state and its ideological representatives saw in lineages the convergence of kinship ties and community interests, which incorporated the broader egalitarian ideal of equitable distribution of wealth and resources throughout the society. Many in Changzhou prefecture, noted the importance of kinship solidarity in the social order. Where gentry associations based on non-kinship ties were defined as "private" [私, that is, "selfish"], social organizations based on descent were perceived as "public" [公]. For example, the charitable estate 义庄 enjoyed a privileged tax status because in the Confucian ideal of kinship the charitable estate in Ming-Qing times symbolized the ancient goal of equitable distribution of wealth, not its privatization. Consequently, lineage organizations, as long as they operated within the limits imposed by the imperial bureaucracy, had a profound theoretical justification for their very existence, a justification upon which state and society were both agreed.

In the face of growing commercialization and social differentiation, exacerbated by population pressure and rural subsistence problems, kinship organizations like the Zhuang lineage appeared legitimate ways to cope with the problems of local poverty and hunger during the last years of the Ming dynasty. Urban-based families with ties to kin living in the countryside could provide relief for poorer members of their lineage groups.

Granted ideological justification as "public" institutions designed for charitable and philanthropic purposes, lineages escaped the restraints placed on gentry alliances.

4. The Beginnings of the Zhuangs 庄族之起源

The Zhuang lineage, particularly the second branch [*erfen* 二分] to which the New Text scholar Zhuang Cunyu's (1719-1788) family belonged, first came to prominence in Changzhou in the late fifteenth century. Like many other lineages south of the Yangzi River, the Zhuangs traced themselves back to families that had migrated from North China during the great social and economic dislocations that preceded the eventual fall of the north to the Jurchen in the twelfth century. In the eleventh century, the Zhuangs had already established a beachhead in Jiangsu province at Zhenjiang 镇江, on the southern bank of the Yangzi River, from where the Grand Canal continued its way south toward Changzhou, Suzhou, and Hangzhou.

During the six centuries preceding the establishment of Ming rule in 1368, major waves of migration had filled in the frontiers in the various macro-regions in the south. These dynamic processes of interregional settlement were accompanied by rapid population growth and a "filling up" of the rice-producing areas in the Yangzi delta. Part of this migration, some of the Zhuangs, after settling in Zhenjiang, moved on in the eleventh century (ca. 1086- 1092?) further inland south from the Yangzi River. This migration pattern was typical of segmented branches of core lineages that move to hinterland counties to seek their fortune. Thereafter, segments of the Zhuangs continued to scatter to other parts of the Yangzi delta region.

In the eighth generation, Zhuang Xiujiu (fl. ca. 1405) became a son-in-law in a Changzhou family surnamed Jiang that had no male heir. Accordingly, he took the place of a son for this family and moved to Changzhou. This was a common strategy among important lineages in the Yangzi delta region since at least Song times. The son of a family with higher social status could establish a new segment of the lineage by moving to another community and marrying the daughter of a family with no heir. But rather than carrying on the family line for the heirless family, Zhuang Xiujiu continued to use his own family's surname in a new community. By moving to Changzhou, Zhuang Xiujiu could take advantage of an entrenched family that became fused with the Jintan Zhuangs. Thus, by the fifteenth century another segment of the Zhuangs had come into existence, dating from Zhuang Xiujiu's move to Changzhou.

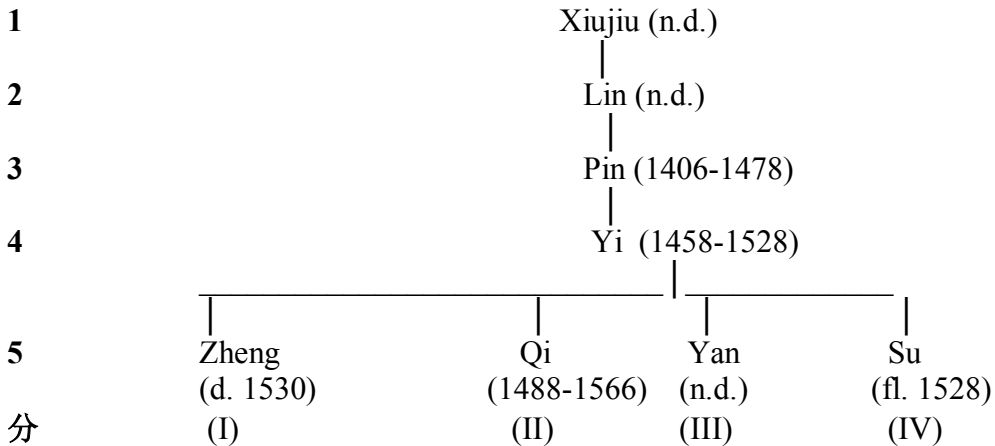
The rise of the Changzhou Zhuangs to high social standing began in the fourth generation (in Zhuang Xiujiu's line), when Zhuang Yi (1458-1528) took the *jinsshi* degree in 1496. Zhuang Yi's academic success, and the high political office such success brought him, provided the financial resources from which four major branches in the Changzhou lineage developed. It was the second branch of the Zhuangs in Changzhou, who descended from Zhuang Yi, which rose to particular eminence during the Ming and Qing dynasties. From the sixteenth century on, this particular branch of the Zhuang lineage

succeeded in producing in almost every generation a highly placed government official who owed his success to high achievement on the imperial examinations.

Through marriage politics, this second branch of the Zhuang lineage, to which Zhuang Cunyu's family belonged, had established relations with other important lineages in Changzhou. Such intermarriage was a sign during the Ming dynasty of the emerging status of the Zhuang lineage vis-à-vis other more established lineages in the area. The Zhuangs could now define themselves within a community of prestigious outside relatives such as the Lius and build around strategic marriages.

TABLE 1. Outline of Major Segments of the Zhuang Lineage in Changzhou during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

Generation



The eldest daughter of Zhuang Qi (1488-1566), for example, was married to Tang Shunzhi (1507-1560), who was one of the most celebrated scholar-officials from Changzhou in the Ming period. In addition, Zhuang Qi's grandson Zhuang Yilin (1528-1581), a major patriarch in the second branch of the Zhuangs, married a woman from the Tang lineage, and was intimate with Tang Shunzhi. Tang Shunzhi's distinguished family was itself part of what was one of the most important lineages in Changzhou during the Ming dynasty.

5. The Rise to Prominence of the Zhuangs 庄族之发达

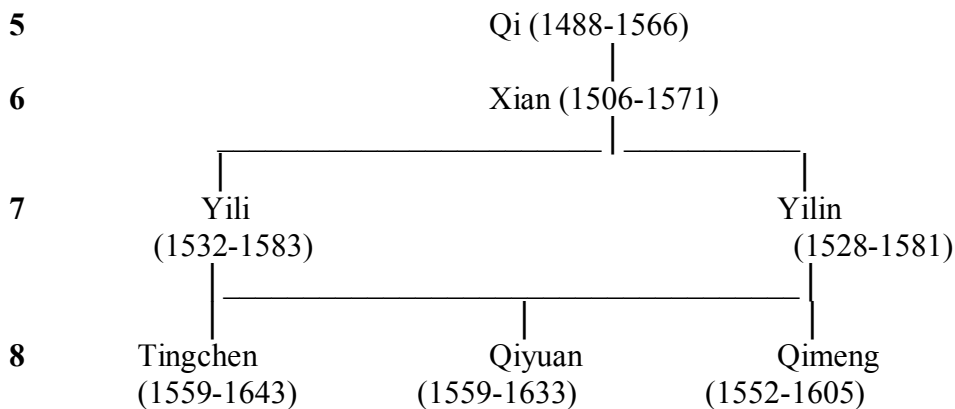
By the late Ming, the Zhuang lineage, particularly its second branch, outstripped other lineages in prestige and influence in Changzhou. The Zhuangs first married their women into more elite gentry families and then received women from other less elite lineages such as the Lius as brides for their increasingly well-placed sons. Such social climbing also brought with it increased educational opportunities for Zhuang women. Looking forward to the eighteenth century, we may note that the marriage strategies of the Zhuang

lineage in Changzhou were well entrenched, as families in the lineage successfully arranged prestigious links for both its sons and daughters.

In 1580, Zhuang Yilin (1528-1581), one of the major scions of the second branch, saw to it that a genealogy of the Zhuang lineage was compiled, which indicated that the descent group had reached a major point in its development as a higher-order lineage. The Zhuangs were brought together as a descent group focused on Zhuang Xiujiu as their common ancestor with shared estate property that had accrued via Zhuang Yilin. Ancestral halls, sacrificial fields (land whose income was designated for use in financing sacrificial rituals associated with ancestor worship), and updated genealogies were important elements in the development of lineage solidarity.

TABLE 2. Outline of Major Segments of the Second Branch 二分 of the Zhuang Lineage during the Ming Dynasty.

Generation



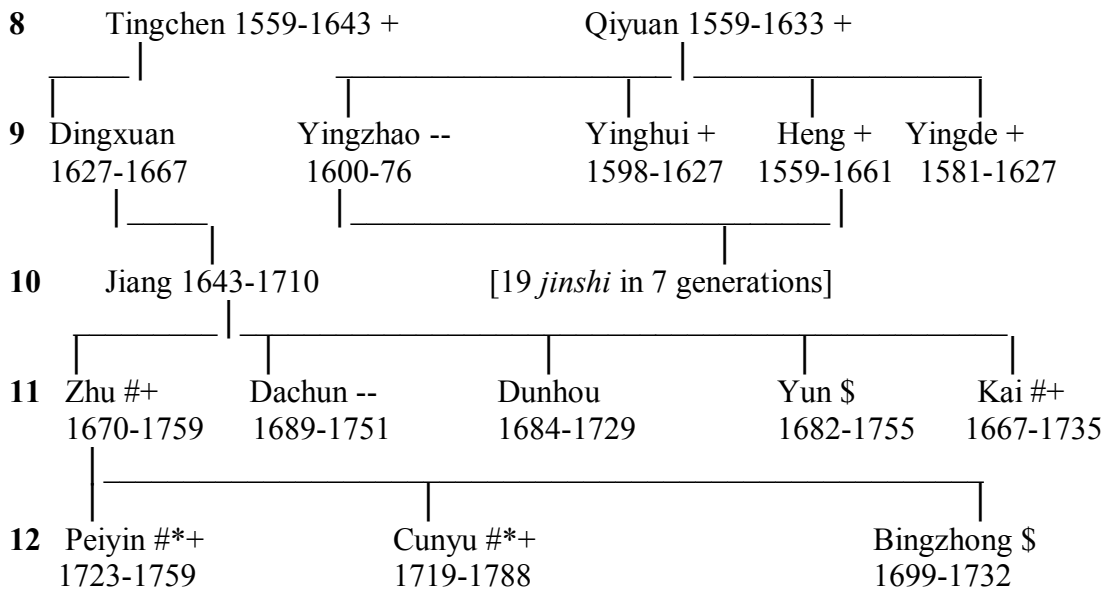
Subsequent editions of the Zhuang genealogy were compiled regularly: 1611, 1651, 1699, 1761, 1801, 1838, 1883, and 1935. In addition, the Zhuangs had progressively moved from being a rural-based lineage to a lineage whose most prestigious lines were urban-based, taking advantage of the economic and cultural advantages that cities provided. The prestigious second branch of the Zhuangs, for example, was so urbanized that its two chief wings in Changzhou city were known as the "Eastern and Western Zhuangs" 西庄与东庄. Localized in Changzhou, the Zhuangs could also include in their genealogy dispersed segments in nearby Yangzi delta centers, as well as in Fujian and Guangdong.

Formation and development of the Zhuang lineage was also a product of the response of elite segments to the new set of circumstances in the regional economy and the political turmoil surrounding the fall of the Ming dynasty. The net result of the Zhuangs' successful response to these external non-kinship factors served to enhance the prestige and prominence of the Zhuangs as a higher-order lineage. Just as the favorable economic climate of the late-Ming encouraged lineage formation, the powerful organization forged by the Zhuangs in the seventeenth century aided them in their competition for land,

wealth, and power in Changzhou during the Qing dynasty. Only after the dislocations of the mid- seventeenth century did many of the large corporate lineages of the eighteenth century come into existence. We can trace an elaborate structure of lineage organization of the Zhuangs in Changzhou during "High Qing" to the era of prosperity that followed the social turmoil of the seventeenth century. The enhanced local power of the Qing elite via higher-order lineages dates from or was substantially expanded.

TABLE 3. Outline of the Second Branch of the Zhuangs in Changzhou During the Late Ming & Early Qing.

Generation



KEY: * Grand Secretary 大学士 # Hanlin Academician 翰林院
 + *Jinshi* 进士 \$ *Juren* 举人
 -- *Fubang* 副榜 = Supplemental *Juren*

The Zhuang lineage as a whole showed relatively little effect from the wars and economic dislocation brought on by the fall of the south in the 1640s to invading Manchu armies, which sealed the fate of the Ming dynasty. Some members such as Zhuang Cunyu's great-grandfather and grandfather, out of loyalty to the fallen Ming house which his great-great-grandfather Zhuang Tingchen had served (see Table 3 above), retired to private life. Despite this, the Zhuangs, particularly Zhuang Qiyuan's line (see above) went on in the new Qing much as before. How could the Zhuangs in Changzhou survive the Ming-Qing transition relatively intact? The mid-seventeenth century threat to the elite forced lineage leaders to make important strategic decisions. To insure local order and reestablish their local preeminence, the elite acknowledged the new central power. The Zhuangs soon became an elite lineage that fully accepted and thrived in unprecedented

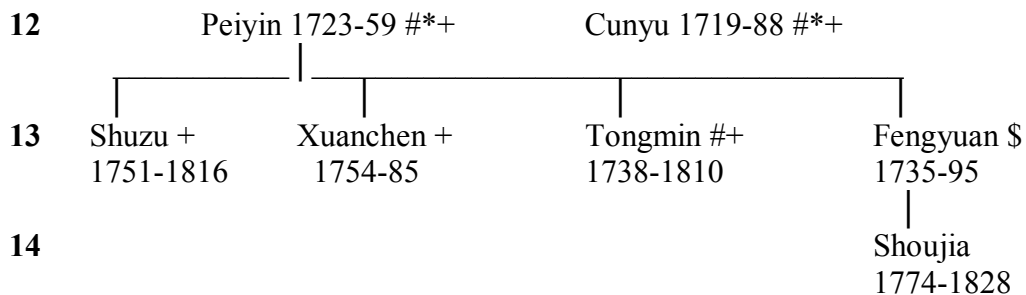
terms under the new alien central government in Beijing. In return for such local support, the Kangxi Emperor (r. 1661-1722) reaffirmed imperial support for lineage organization and the special tax status for charitable corporate estates.

Two lines within the second branch, which emanated from Zhuang Tingchen (1559-1643) and Zhuang Qiyuan (1559-1633) respectively (both became *jinshi* in 1610) produced many *jinshi* degree-holders." Zhuang Qiyuan's line, for example, produced nineteen *jinshi* in seven generations, including three among his four sons. Nearly as productive was Zhuang Tingchen's line, which produced Zhuang Cunyu in its eighth generation (counting from Zhuang Xiujiu).

An inordinate number of this line were in successive generations appointed to the Hanlin Academy, the highest academic honor that could be conferred on successful *jinshi* examination candidates and the ticket to high office. In fact, the Hanlin pattern for official advancement into the Ministry of Rites became a prominent feature of the Zhuangs' rise to national prominence.

TABLE 4. Major Segments of the Second Branch of the Zhuang Lineage in Changzhou during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Generation



KEY: * Grand Secretary 大学士 # Hanlin Academician 翰林院
 + *Jinshi* 进士 \$ *Juren* 举人
 -- Fu-pang 副榜= Supplemental *Juren*

Zhuang Cunyu's father, Zhuang Zhu (1690-1759), and uncle, Zhuang Kai (1667- 1735), were appointed to the Hanlin, as were Cunyu and his younger brother Peiyin (1723-59), *optimus* [状元] on the palace examination of 1754. Cunyu had had the distinction of achieving *secundus* [榜眼] on the 1745 palace examination. This remarkable run continued when Cunyu's son, Tongmin (1738-1810), finished near the head of the palace examination of 1772 and was also appointed to the Hanlin Academy. Another son, Xuanchen (1754-1785), finished high on the 1778 palace examination. Zhuang Peiyin's son, Shuzu (1751-1816), passed the palace examination in 1780 and Cunyu's great-great-great-nephew Shouqi (1810-66) was also appointed to the Hanlin Academy in 1840.

6. The Zhuangs as a Professional Elite 庄族与做官

During the Qing dynasty, the Zhuang lineage became the most important intellectual force, when measured by success on the imperial examinations, in the prefectural capital of Changzhou. For the Qing period alone, the Zhuang lineage had a total of ninety-seven degree-holders compared with a total of seven during the Ming dynasty. The lineage was accorded the further honor of twenty-nine *jinshi*, compared with only six during the Ming, earning eleven places on the Hanlin Academy. Five of the latter came from Zhuang Cunyu's immediate family. From 1644 until 1795, a total of thirty-four Hanlin academicians came from Wujin County. Nine of these (26%) were from the Zhuang lineage, and four (12%) from Cunyu's line. Using figures for the total number of *jinshi* in Changzhou prefecture during Qing times (618), we find that the Zhuangs received 4.7% of that total. If the combined figures for Wujin and Yanghu counties (the latter was separated from Wujin in 1724) are used (265), then the Zhuang lineage accounted for over 11% of the total number of *jinshi* there during the Qing dynasty.

Such highly placed members within the lineage meant that Zhuang Cunyu's family, by virtue of its prestigious line, assumed a leadership role in the lineage as a whole from the late Ming until the late Qing, a period of three centuries. Because only the wealthy and literate segments were responsible for lineage ritual and worship, ordinary members would not be directly involved in management of ancestral halls, organizing rituals, or allocating funds derived from corporate estates. The eminence of Cunyu's family line thus overrode considerations of seniority based on age or longevity within the lineage as a whole. Within its own segment, Cunyu's line brought both imperial and local prestige and influence to bear on its position as gentry spokesmen for the Zhuangs in the Changzhou social and cultural world. In effect, the Zhuangs became a "professional elite" of office holding families specializing in government service for generations.

The unparalleled academic success of the Zhuang lineage in the imperial examination system can be directly tied to their private lineage school known as the Dongpo Academy 东坡书院, named after the great Song dynasty Confucian and man of letters Su Shi (1036-1101), who had visited Changzhou during his travels through South China. Su purchased property in Changzhou and had hoped to retire there. In fact, he died in Changzhou after being recalled from exile in Hainan Island.

The phenomenal success of the Zhuang lineage on the examinations means that the private preparation course and curriculum in their lineage school was more rigorous and demanding than other such schools. Not only males but also females benefited from the educational facilities provided by wealthy lineages in traditional Chinese society. Lacking freedom of movement and barred from the official examinations and any possibility of holding political office, women in scholarly families were nonetheless well-versed in literature and the arts. The Zhuang lineage in Changzhou, by way of example, was also famous for its female poets.

Including women who married into the lineage (suggesting the important role of female relatives), twenty-two female poets of note came from the Zhuang lineage during the

Qing dynasty. Among these were Zhuang Cunyu's second daughter and Zhuang Panzhu, who was perhaps the best-known female poet from the area in the eighteenth century. The important function of poetry and the arts in gentry cultural life allowed both men and women, who stood outside the patrilineal system of descent, within prestigious lineages to spend their leisure moments indulging in aesthetic pursuits.

Success of lineages often hinged on success in the examination system more than anything else. Philanthropic and charitable aspects of higher-order lineages, however, frequently meant that such private strategies for education were complemented by more public-minded concerns, which derived from the public rhetoric by which kinship groups legitimated their local activities.

For instance, outsiders such as Hong Liangji (1746-1809) were permitted to study with the Zhuangs. After his father died, Hong, then only six, and his mother were left very poor in Changzhou. One of his teachers at his mother's (née Jiang) lineage school came from the Zhuang lineage. In addition, Hong's mother had a sister who had married into the Zhuang lineage. These links enabled Hong to study with several Zhuang children his own age. In 1762, for example, Hong was busy reading both the *Kongyang* 公羊 and *Guliang* 穀梁 commentaries to the *Spring and Autumn Annals* in the Zhuang lineage school. Hong Liangji's eldest son later married into the Zhuang lineage.

Another Changzhou native who benefited from Zhuang lineage largess was the historian Zhao Yi (1727-1814). In his biography for Zhuang Qian (n.d.), included in the earlier Zhuang genealogy and written after Zhao had gone on to fame and fortune via appointment to the Hanlin Academy after passing the *jinsshi* examination of 1761, Zhao wrote in thanks of the help he had received from the Zhuangs to further his studies. Zhao Yi's granddaughter later married into the Zhuang lineage.

Similarly, Liu Fenglu (1776-1841), whose family and lineage had long been tied to the Zhuangs, also received help in his early studies from the Zhuang lineage. Because his mother, Zhuang Taigong (1744-1808), was a typically well-educated Zhuang woman, daughter of Zhuang Cunyu, Liu was permitted to study with the Zhuangs. At an early age, he impressed his grandfather with his abilities in classical studies. In this manner, the Zhuang lineage could demonstrate that it was fulfilling its public obligations to the larger community while at the same time benefiting kin.

Lineage schools, particularly high-powered ones, thus were schools in both the institutional and scholarly sense. The Zhuang "school" represented a "tradition of learning" by which the teachings of its distinguished members and examination graduates were passed down to generations of lineage disciples by personal teachings within the lineage itself. The special theories or techniques of a master, passed down through generations of disciples by personal teaching, which usually demarcated a "school," could take place in a nurturing social and institutional setting provided by an influential descent group. The Changzhou New Text "school" was actually an eighteenth-century outgrowth of the Zhuang tradition in learning, a tradition that drew its roots from the Zhuang lineage's distinguished place in Changzhou society, which continues today.