

Textual research on Xu Chunfu's life

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Author contributions

Wang JY contributed to conceptualization, investigation, collecting historical materials, and manuscript drafting. Huang H and Wu LN participated in investigation, information collection and critical revisions of the manuscript. Wu WQ reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

Competing interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Abstract

Xu Chunfu was a famous medical expert in the Ming Dynasty, who authored the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* and the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*. This paper uses the Xu family genealogy, literature catalog, historical records to study the Xu family's life and deeds. Xu Chunfu was born in the second year of the Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty (1523) and passed away in the 24th year of the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1596). He served as an official in the Tai Hospital for about 20 years. His work *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* was written around the 43rd year of the Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty (1556), with a lower limit of the fifth year of the Longqing reign of the Ming Dynasty (1571), and the initial engraving time was not earlier than the eighth year of the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1580). This paper corrects the shortcomings and errors in previous research, and provides a comprehensive and systematic examination of Xu Chunfu's life and works.

Keywords: Xu Chunfu; life history; biographical verification; *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*; *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*; *Genealogy of the Xu Clan in Qimen, Tangtou, Yinan and Chiling*

Preface

Xu Chunfu, with the courtesy name Ruyuan, styled Donggao, was a famous medical expert in the Ming Dynasty. He authored the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* and the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*. There are few historical records of his life and deeds, and only the preface of the edited version of Cui Zhongping et al.'s *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* (People's Health Publishing House, 1991, hereinafter referred to as "Cui's thesis") [1]. In addition, two papers by Huang Hui and others, "A Study of the Life Story of Xu Chunfu, a New An Medical Expert" (Hereinafter referred to as "Huang's thesis"), and Zhang Zhibin, "A Study of Literature in the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*" (Hereinafter referred to as "Zhang's thesis"), have conducted research on Xu's life [2, 3]. On the basis of previous research, using the Xu family genealogy, literature catalog, historical records, and combined with on-site investigations, a comprehensive and systematic study of the Xu family's life and deeds is conducted.

Research on birth and death years

Regarding the birth and death years of Xu Chunfu, most academic works, papers, and dictionaries claim that he was born in the 15th year of the Ming Zhengde era (1520) and died in the 24th year of the Ming Wanli era (1596). The earliest source of this life and death year that the author has seen is the newly edited *Cihai* in 1999, but it does not provide evidence for textual research. "Zhang's thesis" conducted a textual research on *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu* and determined the birth and death years of Xu Chunfu.

Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu are divided into six volumes: Yin, Yang, Wind, Rain, Hui, and Ming. It includes six sub books: *Nei Jing Zheng Mai*, *Lei Gong Si Yao Gang Ling Fa Wei*, *Bing Ji Yao Xing Ge Fu*, *Zhu Zheng Yao Fang Ge Kuo*, *Er Shi Si Fang*, and *Mi Ping Ji Shi San Shi Liu Fang*. "Zhang's thesis" divided the book into two versions, namely the "Ru Men version" system and the "Zhi Nan version" system. The "Ru Men version" system only contains the last two sub books. It including Xu Chunfu's "Prefaces to *Er Shi Si Fang*" and Xu Chunfu's disciple Wang Tengjiao's "Postscript to *Key of medical scientist*", both of which were signed in Wanli Bingshen (1586). The "Zhi Nan version" system includes "Prefaces to *Er Shi Si Fang*" and "Postscript to *Key of medical scientist*", but the "Prefaces to *Er Shi Si Fang*" is dated Wanli Bingshen (1596), which is 10 years later than the "Ru Men version", and there is no annual signature in the "Postscript to *Key of medical scientist*". The "Zhi Nan version" also includes the overall preface of the entire book, which is the prefaces to the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan*

Jie Jing Liu Shu, signed as "Written by Donggao, 74th old man from Zhu Zi Alley in Xindu District".

Based on this, "Zhang's thesis" believed that the "Zhi Nan version" was a revised year after being reprinted. According to the "Ru Men version" in 1586, subtracting the age of 74, it is determined that he was born in the eighth year of the Ming Zhengde era (1513) and died after the 24th year of the Ming Wanli era (1596). "Zhang's thesis" conclusion is negotiable, because the "Ru Men version" does not have the "prefaces to the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*" signed by "Seventy Four Old Men". Therefore, the birth year should not be calculated by subtracting his age from 1586, but by subtracting his age from 1596, in order to obtain that Xu should have been born in the second year of Ming Jiajing (1523). The author stumbled upon Xu Ningxin and Xu Yuan'er's *Genealogy of the Xu Clan in Qimen, Tangtou, Yinan and Chiling* (hereinafter referred to as *Genealogy*) in the Shanghai Library in the 42nd year of the Qing Dynasty's Qianlong reign (1777), which contained two records about Xu Chunfu's life. The text is as follows, and the pictures are shown in Figure 1.

Chunfu, born in the Wanli period of the Ming Dynasty, was a scholar and skilled in medicine. He went to the capital to unveil the imperial edict and treat the Empress Dowager's illness. The Empress Dowager was cured by him, and the emperor gave him a golden hairpin, appointing him the position of YuanShi of Tai hospital. However, he refused and did not take up this position. The emperor bestowed upon him a mansion in his hometown.

Chunfu, courtesy name Donggao, was a scholar and skilled in medicine. He went to the capital to unveil the imperial edict and treat the Empress Dowager's illness. The Empress Dowager was cured by him, and the emperor gave him a golden hairpin, appointing him the position of YuanShi of Tai hospital. However, he refused and did not take up this position. The emperor bestowed upon him a mansion. He born during the Jiajing and died during the Wanli period. He lived for 73 years and was buried in Hongxiao, giving birth to six sons (Liangjie, Liangdong, Liangmeng, Liangming, Liangzhe, Liangwu).

According to the *Genealogy*, Xu Chunfu was born during the Jiajing period, so it is accurate to infer from the previous text that he was born in the second year of the Ming Jiajing period (1523). As for the year of death, the *Genealogy* states that he died at the age of 73, while the "Zhi Nan version" has an inscription for "74 year old elderly person". It can be inferred that the *Genealogy* mentions that the age of 73 may have been based on the lunar calendar of the heavenly stems and earthly branches, resulting in a difference of 1 year from the inscription. Based on this, it can be inferred that Xu Chunfu died in the 24th year of the Ming Wanli era (1596).

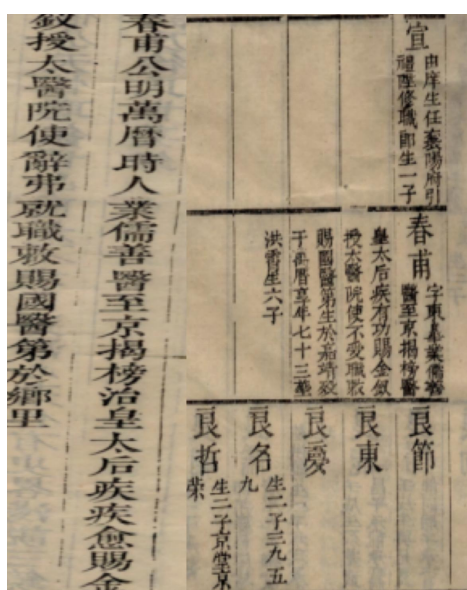


Figure 1 The life of Xu Chunfu in *Genealogy of the Xu Clan in Qimen, Tangtou, Yinan and Chiling*

Research on life stories

Xu Chunfu's life can also be found in various books such as the *Qimen County Annals*, *Huizhou Prefecture Annals*, *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu* and *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. *Qimen Annals*, Volume 3, Art during the Wanli Era states: "Xu Chunfu, with the courtesy name Ruyuan. He is a disciple of Wang Huan and has read a large amount of ancient medical books. He wrote *Gu Jin Yi Tong* and *Yi Xue Jie Jing*. He lives in Beijing, and many people come to him for medical treatment, including prominent individuals. He was once awarded the title of Medical Officer at Tai Hospital". *Huizhou Prefectural Annals*, Volume 17, during the Kangxi Era states: "Xu Chunfu was from the east of Qimen City. When he was young, he studied under Wang Huan and read a lot of medical books. Settled in Beijing, served as a medical officer at Tai Hospital, and treated many people". *Qimen County Annals* states that his courtesy name Ruyuan, while *Genealogy* states that his courtesy name Donggao. This should be correct based on the *Qimen County Annals*. The reason is that according to the *Huizhou Prefecture Annals*, he was from the east of Qimen City, so he was named Donggao, which is more in line with common sense.

According to the preface to Wang Qu in Volume 84 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, "Ru Yuan, my old friend Xiangyang Prefecture Dian Shan Xu Heshan's posthumous son. Xu Ruyuan was born intelligent and clever, and in his early year, he studied Confucianism with Tai student Ye Guangshan. Due to his weak and sickly physique, he also studied medical skills with my nephew Wang Ziliang. Xu Ruyuan, named Chunfu, styled himself as Sihe". Thus, Xu Chunfu's father was Xu Heshan. According to the *Genealogy*, Xu's father's name was Xuan, with the courtesy name Heshan, formerly served as Dian Shan in Xiangyang Prefecture, Yinli in Xiangyang Prefecture, and Xiuzhi Lang. Xu is a posthumous child, hence also known as Sihe, to commemorate his father. In his childhood, he followed Tai student Ye Guangshan to study Confucianism, but later due to multiple illnesses, he studied medicine with Wang Huan (with the courtesy name Ziliang). According to the preface to the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*, which states that Xu had been practicing medicine for over fifty years, it can be inferred that he began studying medicine around 1546 at the age of twenty.

"Since Renzi (1552), he has traveled extensively in the rivers and lakes". In *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, Volume 58, The Gate of Back Pain, it is said. "In the autumn of the Wuwu (1558), he passed by in Hangzhou". According to the *Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui Lu*, "I studied medicine at the beginning and made friends all over the world. I tasted and traveled to Wu, Yue, Jiang, and Xiang, experienced Lian, Luo, Guan, and Min, and arrived in Yang, Xu, Yan, and Ji". It can be seen that since 1552, he have traveled to various places and traveled throughout Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangxi, Henan, Shaanxi, Fujian, Hebei, Beijing, and other places.

After studying abroad in various places, Xu Chunfu settled in the capital. The exact time of his settlement is not yet known, but it was around middle age when he opened the Baoyuantang pharmacy on Chang'an Street to make a living. The reason is that Volume 6 of the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu* includes various parties involved in the preparation of Baoyuantang. Zhao's preface to *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* has a statement that "make a living by opening a pharmacy in the capital", and in Shen's preface, there is a statement that "this is why Xu Chunfu is famous on Chang'an Street". Xu Chunfu has superb medical skills and has cured many people. According to Zhao's preface in the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, "he haven't been in the capital for many years yet, countless people were cured, and there were often many people outside the door seeking medical treatment. Some people came to seek medical treatment without money, or encountered difficult and miscellaneous diseases, and most doctors were helpless. Xu Chunfu treated them one by one, with few mistakes". According to Xu's preface, "Xu's treatment was cautious and precise. He treated the disease by first regulating the vital energy and then attacking the pathogenic factors, not blindly pursuing quick results". Tang's preface records, "Xu Chunfu was famous in the capital for his knowledge of

medical skills and superb medical skills".

In the first year of the Longqing reign (1567), Xu Chunfu initiated and established the "Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui", with a total of 46 members. Among them, his son Xu Liangming (courtesy name Weishi) was one of the members. The association lists 22 medical terms, including "Sincerity, Diligence in Study, Enlightened reasoning, Lectures and Teaching, Pursue knowledge to the end, Identify pulse, Verify Syndrome, Prescription, Guideline and Regulation, Embrace compassionate heart, Uphold virtue, Benevolence, Disregard for Personal Gain, Poverty alleviation, Self-respect, Self-satisfaction, Emulate Nature, Understand Humanity, The Greatness of Medicine, Medical Exhort, Warn against Greed and Pettiness, Avoid concealed or malignant diseases". In the second year of the Longqing reign (1568), published the *Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui Lu*. *Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui* can be said to be the earliest medical academic group in the history of Chinese medicine.

Xu Chunfu also worked at Tai Hospital. The Preface to the *Ben Cao Yu Huang* in Volume 96 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* inscribe "preface by Xu Chunfu, a minister of the Imperial Hospital, on the 15th day of the first lunar month in the Jiazi year of the Jiajing reign". This indicates that he had already served at the Tai Hospital in 1564, but his position is unknown. According to the *Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui Lu: Association Members Surnames*, it is clearly recorded that Xu was Limu in the Tai Hospital. It is known that Xu Chunfu had already served as Limu in the Tai Hospital before 1567. "Huang's thesis" believed that "The Limu in the Tai hospital are of the sixth rank or below the sixth rank". This statement is incorrect. Upon examining the medical officer system of the Ming Dynasty's Tai Hospital, it can be found that the Tai Hospital system underwent multiple reforms in the early Ming Dynasty. It was not until the 22nd year of the Ming Hongwu reign (1389) that the Tai Hospital officer system was basically established [4]. According to the record in Volume 74 of the *Ming History*, "The Tai Hospital had one YuanShi of the fifth rank, two YuanPan of the sixth rank, and four imperial physicians of the eighth rank, which later increased to eighteen. In the fifth year of the Longqing reign, the number of imperial physicians was set at ten. One Limu of ninth rank, and in the fifth year of the Longqing reign, the number of Limu was set at ten". It can be inferred that the Tai Hospital's Limu position should be from the ninth rank. As for how Xu Chunfu entered Tai Hospital, "Huang's thesis" cited Wang Hongbin's article "Textual research on Li Shizhen for Employment in Tai Hospital", believing that Xu Chunfu entered Tai Hospital through the examination. Upon reviewing Wang Hongbin's article, it was discovered that his analysis of historical materials was incorrect. He quoted from *Ming History*, Volume 74, Official 3: for all thirteen medical disciplines, medical officials, doctors, and students. Take a trial every three to five years, and then try again and three times, and they are dismissed." Thus, he made a conclusion that becoming a medical officer in a hospital requires a rigorous examination. In fact, this historical record indicates that Tai Hospital has a strict examination and promotion system, and does not mean that one can enter Tai Hospital through the examination. Li Qiuyue has written a detailed article to elaborate on it, and I will not elaborate further on it here [5, 6]. Xu Chunfu's entry into Tai Hospital may have been recommended by Duke Chengguo. In the Ming Dynasty, there were four main avenues to becoming an imperial physician: local and official recommendations, selection from medical households, purchase of a medical post, and Direct appointments by emperor [7]. Given Xu Chunfu's family background in Confucian studies, we can exclude the route of selection from medical households. According to Shen's preface to the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, "he is now an official in the Tai Hospital, and is a guest of Duke Chengguo. His medical skills are praised by the officials and scholars". It can be inferred that Xu Chunfu was recommended to enter the Imperial Hospital by Duke Zhu Xizhong of Chengguo. As for the mention in the *Genealogy* of "going to the capital to unveil the imperial edict and treat the Empress Dowager's illness", it is extremely rare in the official history of all dynasties to unveil the imperial edict and treat the illness. Thus, more likely a folk tale. As the primary duty of imperial physicians was to

serve the royal family, it is highly probable that Xu Chunfu did indeed treat an empress dowager [6]. According to Xu Chunfu's life, the eligible Empress Dowagers include Empress Dowager Xiao'an Chen and Empress Dowager Xiaoding Li. The *Ming History* records that Empress Chen suffered from numerous illnesses in her later years, indicating Xu may have treated her.

Additionally, according to Wang's preface in *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, Xu Chunfu treated depression syndrome for the imperial attendant Hao Shaoquan. "Huang's thesis" inferred from the inscription "Longqing Gengwu" (1570) and the phrase "in previous years" (≥ 2 years ago) that this event likely occurred around the first year of Longqing (1567). In Xu Jie's *Shi Jing Tang Ji*, Volume 24, there is an article titled "Reply imperial attendant Shaoquan", which mainly discusses the fall of Jizhen and the lack of suitable generals to drive away prisoners [7]. In the first year of Longqing (1567), Xu Jie suggested that Tan Lun and Qi Jiguang go north to guard Jizhen. In the second year of Longqing (1568), Tan and Qi were officially appointed as governors. It is known that in the first year of Longqing (1567) and before, Hao Shaoquan served as an imperial attendant. Based on this, the inference from "Huang's thesis" is generally accurate, and this incident should have occurred before the first year of Longqing (1567).

Xu Chunfu served in the Tai Hospital for a long time. In the *Xu Wen Mu Ji*, Volume 3, *Qi Xiu Zhi Shu*, Xu Guo described own illness in the 11th year of the Ming Wanli era (1583), mentioning that "his right arm was almost flaccid and numb, and he consulted doctors such as Xu Chunfu and Jiang Yingsu, all of whom said that the disease was in the abdomen and could not be cured overnight" [8]. In the *Wang Wen Su Ji*, Volume 32, it is also stated that "according to the pulse diagnosis of medical officials Zhu Ru and Xu Chunfu, they all agreed that my illness stemmed from depression" [9]. In the same volume, there is a phrase "nearly sixty years old". Considering Wang Xiejue was born in the 13th year of the Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty (1534) and died in the 38th year of the Wanli reign (1611). We can infer that Xu Chunfu was still serving at Tai Hospital around the 22nd year of the Wanli reign (1594). From 1564 to 1594, Xu's tenure at Tai Hospital would have spanned approximately 20 years.

In the annotated edition of *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* edited by Xiang Changsheng, there is an image of Xu Chunfu, depicted in Figure 2. "Huang's thesis" claims that based on the style of the emblems on the official robe, it represents an egret, suggesting a sixth-rank official. However, the pattern of this emblem has the iconic three tails, which should be the silver pheasant, as shown in Figure 3. It is a fifth grade official, and the YuanShi of Tai Hospital is a fifth grade official. In the *Genealogy*, there happens to be a phrase that goes, "appointing him the position of YuanShi of Tai hospital". This statement in the genealogy might not be baseless. Scholars have verified, a contemporary of Xu, medical official Zhu Ru, was appointed as Limu in Xinwei year of

Longqing (1571), became royal physician in the Dingchou year of Wanli (1577), YuanPan in the Jimao year of Wanli (1579), and finally became YuanShi in the Jiashen year of Wanli (1584) [10]. Given the strict promotion process for Tai hospital and no precedent for two YuanShi, and considering Zhu Ru's name precedes Xu Chunfu's in the *Wang Wen Su Ji*, if Xu ever held the position of YuanShi, it would have been before 1584. But it is also not ruled out that Xu Chunfu did not serve as YuanShi and instead held other fifth grade official positions. In history, there were those who served as medical officials and then held other official positions higher than the fifth grade, such as Xu Shen, Luo Biwei, and others. Or someone who is not a fifth grade official but enjoys the salary of a fifth grade official, such as Wu Qian.

According to the proofreading instructions, the base version used in this book is a carved version by Chen Changqing of ancient Wu in the 36th year of the Ming Jiajing reign (1557). I have not seen a portrait of Xu Chunfu in Chen Changqing's original works. Therefore, I entrusted Professor Huang Hui from Anhui University of Traditional Chinese Medicine to consult with Mr. Xiang Changsheng, the proofreader, and replied, "The portrait of the Xu Chunfu might have originated from the *Genealogy of the Xu Family*". After consulting the *Genealogy of the Xu Family in Xin'an*, I found that the portrait was actually his ancestor, Xu Gui of the Song Dynasty. Behind the portrait, there is also an eulogy by Zhu Song. It can be seen that the portrait was mistakenly used during the calibration process. In addition, upon reviewing the *Veritable Records of the Ming Shizong Emperor*, *Veritable Records of the Ming Muzong Emperor* and *Veritable Records of the Ming Shezong Emperor*, there is no record of the Xu, but there are records of medical officials such as Zhu Ru. Therefore, I tend to believe that Xu Chunfu is still a ninth-rank Limu in Tai Hospital.

In his later years, Xu likely returned to his hometown of Qimen and possibly resided in a mansion bestowed by emperor. Firstly, according to the *Genealogy*, there is a record of "the emperor bestowed upon him a mansion in his hometown". Secondly, according to the Preface to the *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*, there is a signature with the words "Zhu Zi Alley". This small place name may be related to the Xu to show the emperor's favor. The *Qimen County Annals*, Volume 6, *Chengchi* from the Tongzhi era also records "Zhu Zi Alley".

Xu Chunfu died in the 24th year of the Wanli reign of the Ming Dynasty (1596) and was buried in Hongxiao, now part of Chunming Village in Qimen County.

Research on the date of the completion and first engraving of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*

Completion time

The writing of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* should be a dynamic process of compilation and gradual improvement. The book's preface is dated mid-winter of Jiajing Bingchen year, in 1556. Volume 2 of *Nei*



Figure 2 Portrait of Xu Chunfu



Figure 3 The portrait of the silver pheasant in the *San Cai Tu Hui*

Jing Yao Zhi preface to “in Jiajing Dingsi year mid-spring lunar sixteenth day, Xin’an area of the scholar of younger age Xu Chunfu preface”, in 1557. The inscription after *Jing Xue Chi Cun Tu Shuo* in the sixth volume of *Jing Xue Fa Ming* reads, “In lunar September of Jiajing Dingsi year, Xu Chunfu solemnly wrote”, in 1557. *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* Volume 96 of *Ben Cao Yu Huang*, is inscribed, “On the fifteenth day of the first lunar month of the Jiajing Jiazi year, the liegeman of the Imperial Hospital, Xu Chunfu, wrote a formal preface rigorously”, in 1564. According to the *Li Shi Sheng Xian Ming Yi Xing Shi*, there is the word “Shizong”, which is the temple name of Emperor Jiajing. It can be presumed that the main part of the book should be completed in 1556–1564 years, all of which should be completed in the Longqing years. *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, Volume 3, *Yi Yi Tong Kao* has the record of “dividing the profession and learning into thirteen sections”, and in the early Ming Dynasty, following the system of the Yuan Dynasty, medicine was divided into thirteen sections, including medical department for adults, medical department for children, gynecology, carbuncle and ulcers department, acupuncture and moxibustion, ophthalmology, stomatology, bone-knitting department, treatise on cold damage, pharyngology, traumatology, massage, and specialty of supplication. In the Longqing fifth year of the Ming Dynasty (1571), three sections were abolished, including the traumatology, massage, and specialty of supplication. The carbuncle and ulcers department was renamed surgical department, bone-knitting department was renamed bone-setting department, and pox rash department was added, synthesizing eleven sections. From this, it can be inferred that the minimum time limit for writing the book is 1571.

First engraving time

The *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* is a voluminous book with many preambles and signatures, totalling nine preambles. The book’s preambles are shown in Table 1. Therefore, *Zhong Yi Tu Shu Lian He Mu Lu* and *Zhong Guo Zhong Yi Gu Ji Zong Mu* contain many errors in the book’s recording. Some say that the book was written in 1556 (according to Xu Chunfu’s preface), and some say that the book was written in 1570 (according to Wang Jiaping’s preface), all of which are lost in detail. “Cui’s thesis” and Lu Lijuan et al determined that the book was first engraved between the Wanli third year (1575) and the Wanli sixth year (1578) of the Ming Dynasty, according to the official seal of “the second place at palace examinations in Jixu year” after the preface of Yu Menglin, and the official position of Ge Shouli, “Prince Shaobao” [11].

The official position of the author of the preface can further explore the date of the first engraving of the book. The official position of the Tang’s preface is “Prince Taibao”. According to the *Veritable Records of the Ming Shenzong Emperor*, Volume 51, “In the sixth year of the Longqing period, Lingbi marquis Tang Shilong governor water transport and guarded the place of Huai’an”, and in the Records of

Veritable Records of the Ming Shenzong Emperor, Volume 96, “In February of the eighth year of the Wanli reign, he added the general of the water transport, Lingbi marquis Tang Shilong as the prince Taibao”. Accordingly, it can be proved that the first engraving of the book is not earlier than the Wanli eighth year of the Ming Dynasty (1580). The Biography of Xu Guo in the *History of Ming Dynasty* does not provide detailed records of the various official positions held by Xu Guo. In the preface signed the name of “associate editor of *Hui Dian*”, scholars have verified that, the Wanli re-modification of the *Da Ming Hui Dian* in the Wanli fourth year (1576), completed the first draft in the Wanli eighth year (1580), and then, the editor in chief Zhang Juzheng appointed Xu Guo for the associate editor [12]. This official position again proved that the book of the first engraving time was not earlier than the Wanli eighth year (1580). Shen’s preface signed “Jiantao” and “Veritable Records of Shizong Emperor”, examining the *Ming History*, *Shen Yiguan Zhuan*, in Longqing second year (1568) awarded the Hanlin Yuan Jiantao, after the official position to the Left Minister of Appointments, the Prince Taibao, the Ministry of personnel, the Chief Grand Secretary. *Veritable Records of the Ming Shizong Emperor* was completed in Wanli fifth year (1577), and Shen’s official position did not see the left minister, etc. It can be seen that the preface was written between 1568 and 1577 years. Yu’s preface had a “compile *Hui Dian*” phrase; it has been known that Yu’s preface was written no earlier than the Wanli fourth year (1576). According to the *Biography of Zhao Zhigao* in the *History of Ming*, Zhao was appointed as an editor in the Hanlin Academy in the second year of Longqing (1568) to compile the *Veritable Records of the Ming Muzong Emperor*. In the fifth year of Wanli (1577), he was promoted to the position of assistant reader in the Hanlin Academy for his meritorious work in editing, and later served as the Chief Grand Secretary. According to this, Zhao’s preface was written between 1568 and 1577. Wang’s preface was written in the Longqing fourth year (1570), and Wang Jiabing was the chief minister of the Cabinet during the Wanli period. Viewing the six other prefaces, the preface authors are all essential ministers in the middle and late Ming Dynasty; it has been seen that the book should have had a more significant influence at that time.

According to the book, volumes 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, and 38, listed separately in the publisher’s surname. And in the first volume, there is a chapter titled *Zhu Zi Jin Shen Zhu Gong Xing Shi*, with a total of 38 people donating money to publish the book. It can be seen that the publication of the book before the donor is also increasing.

Research on other writings

In addition to the two books *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* and *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu*, Volume 14 of *Qian Qing Tang Shu Mu* records that Xu Chunfu also wrote two volumes of *You You Lei Ji*. In the *Dan Sheng Tang Cang Shu Mu*, Volume 10, *Zi Lei* records the two volumes of the

Table 1 Preambles to *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*

Preambles	Contents	Notes
Tang's preface	The imperial envoy, the General Military Officer of the Huai'an district, who supervised the water transport and guarded the Huai'an area, the Prince Taibao, the Lingbi marquis, the preface by Tang Shilong, a native of Guhao.	
Xu's preface	Awarded as a Jinshi, Zhanshi Prefecture, and concurrently served as a scholar in the Hanlin Academy. Formerly a Taichang Temple Minister, served as a wine sacrificial official in the Imperial Academy of the Two Capitals, washed horses in the Jingju Bureau, taught officials during the Jingyan Festival, and served as the Vice President of the National History Huidian. The preface written by Xu Guo, a native of Yinyang.	
Shen's preface	Awarded as a Jinshi, the Hanlin Academy of State History Jiantao, compiling and repairing the <i>Shi Zong Shi Lu</i> , the Cong Shilang, the preface written by Shen Yiguan, a native of Juyong Jiaomen.	
Yu's preface	Awarded as a Jinshi, the compiler of the National History of the Hanlin Academy, compiling and revising the <i>Hui Dian</i> , the Wenlin Lang, the preface written by Yu Menglin, a native of Xindu.	
Zhao's preface	Awarded as a Jinshi, the Hanlin Academy editor, Wenlin Lang, the compiler of the <i>Shi Lu</i> , the preface written by Zhao Zhigao (styled Huyang), a native of Wuzhou.	
Wang's preface	Longqing Gengwu, lunar June 15th, he has been given the Jinshi's Parentage, the Hanlin Academy, compiling the <i>Guo Shi</i> , Wang Jiaping (styled Duinan) wrote letters, a native of Yunzhong.	In 1570
Own preface	On the mid winter solstice of Jiajing Bingchen, Xu Chunfu, a native of Xin'an, wrote a preface.	In 1556
<i>Nei Jing Yao Zhi's</i> preface	In Jiajing Dingsi year, on the mid-spring lunar sixteenth day, the Xin'an area of the scholar of younger age Xu Chunfu prefaced.	Volume 2
<i>Zhong Si Guang Yu's</i> preface	Prefaced by Wang Qu, a Taoist of Hanxi in Xin'an.	Volume 84

Nei Jing Yao Zhi, two of the *Nei Jing Mai Xiu*, and one of the *You You Lei Ji*. In the *Ming History*, Volume 135, *Yi Wen Zhi San*, it is recorded that he wrote two volumes of *You You Lei Ji*. Guangxu version of the *An Hui Tong Zhi*, Volume 341, *Yi Wen Zhi*, recorded the *Gu Jin Yi Wan* (suspected to be *Gu Jin Yi Tong*). Danbo Yuanyin's *Zhong Guo Yi Ji Kao* recorded two volumes of *Nei Jing Yao Zhi*, three volumes of *Fu Ke Xin Jing*, one volume of *Zhong Si Guang Yu*, three volumes of *You You Hui Ji*, one volume of *Dou Zhen Xie Mi*. The *Nei Jing Yao Zhi* is Volume 2 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. The *Nei Jing Mai Xiu* is suspected to be the *Nei Jing Mai Hou*, which is Volume 4 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. The *You You Lei Ji* is suspected to be the *You You Hui Ji*, which is Volume 88 to 90 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. *Fu Ke Xin Jing* is Volume 82 to 83 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. The *Zhong Si Guang Yu* is Volume 84 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*. The *Dou Zhen Xie Mi* is Volume 91 of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*.

Overall, we can see that there should have been a single version of the *Nei Jing Yao Zhi*, *Nei Jing Mai Hou*, *You You Hui Ji*, *Fu Ke Xin Jing*, *Zhong Si Guang Yu* and *Dou Zhen Xie Mi* circulating at that time in the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*.

Chronology of Xu Chunfu's life

This paper clarifies the previous generation of scholars on the life of Xu Chunfu, researches some of the shortcomings and incomplete, and re-examines Xu Chunfu's life story and academic writings. Based on the previous text, the following chronology of Xu Chunfu's life and deeds can be summarized:

1523: Born in Qimen, the family lived in the east of the city, the courtesy name "Ruyuan", also styled himself as "Donggao" and "Sihe".

Early years: Studied Confucianism from the Tai Student Ye Guangshan.

Before 1546: He studied medicine under the tutelage of Wang Huan due to his many illnesses.

1552–1558: He studied tours in Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Hunan, Hubei, Jiangxi, Henan, Shaanxi, Fujian, Hebei and Beijing.

1556: Started compiling the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*.

1557: He completed the compilation of *Nei Jing Yao Zhi* and *Jing Xue Fa Ming*.

Middle age: Settled in Beijing and opened the "Baoyuantang" medicine shop in Chang'an Street. He was recommended by the Duke

of Chengguo to join the Tai Hospital.

1564: He completed the compilation of *Ben Cao Yu Huang*.

Before 1567: He served as a Limu of the Tai Hospital.

About 1567: He treated the depression of Hao Shaoquan, an imperial servant.

1567: Founded the "Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui" organisation in Beijing.

1568: The *Yi Ti Tang Zhai Ren Yi Hui Lu* was published.

Before 1571: He completed the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* compilation.

After 1580: The *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan* was published by Zhu Xizhong, an imperial duke who donated his salary.

1586: The *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu* was published.

Before 1594: He served in the Tai Hospital for about twenty years.

1596: The *Yi Xue Zhi Nan Jie Jing Liu Shu* was reprinted.

1596: He died and buried in Hongxiao.

Summary

This article fully utilizes materials such as genealogy, catalogs, historical books, and county annals to systematically verify Xu Chunfu's life story and academic works. For the first time, it clarifies Xu Chunfu's birth and death year, determines the lower limit of completion time and publication time of the *Gu Jin Yi Tong Da Quan*, and corrects some errors in previous research. The article provides assistance for in-depth research on Xu Chunfu's life and academic thoughts. Due to my level of expertise, I would appreciate criticism and correction from experts and readers regarding the shortcomings of the article.

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