SHAO Peiren

New Perspectives on Geography of Media

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New Perspectives
on Geography of Media

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Introduction

Based on the ancient Chinese concept of the unity of Heaven and Man (天人合一, 'tian ren he yi'), guided by principles governing the connections and interdependencies between Heaven, Earth, Man, and the media, and in accord with the coexistence of these four elements in balance and in harmony, this monograph outlines the scope of the study, fundamental concepts and theories, and future directions of research in the interdisciplinary field of the geography of media.

The author delves deeply into the themes of time, space, place, landscape, and scale to introduce readers to a wide array of intriguing concepts that add new dimensions to this relatively new academic field. In addition, this monograph presents a history of media geography as it has evolved in the West and in China over the past several decades and introduces principles and values from traditional Chinese culture that shed light on the nature, direction, and significance of media studies and communication research now being conducted around the globe.

Translator's Note

The first Chinese edition of *Geography of Media: Mass Media as Cultural Landscape* was co-authored by SHAO Peiren and YANG Liping and was published in 2010 by the Communication University of China Press in Beijing. Some years later, and in response to rapidly growing interest in the geography of media, Professor SHAO revised this book after consulting with his former postgraduate student, YANG Liping, about proposed changes. In 2021, the second edition of this book was published by the Zhejiang University Press in Hangzhou under the title *New Perspectives on Geography of Media.*

To create an English translation of the 2021 book, chapters written by YANG Liping were removed due to the obsolescence of certain materials and statistics. Professor SHAO then added new material on recent developments in the field, particularly in Chinese academic circles, as well as material he has developed over the past ten years. This translation is therefore based on the 2021 Chinese edition of *New Perspectives on Geography of Media.*

The process of translating an approximately 300,000-character Mandarin manuscript into English was both difficult and extremely rewarding for me. Before you begin reading, I would like to clarify a few aspects of this translation project that may help you better understand the text as it now appears.

The book includes numerous quotations from ancient Chinese classics such as the *I Ching* (《易经》, *Book of Changes*) and the *Analects* of Confucius, ancient poetry, folk legends, folk songs, and sayings, as well as descriptions of locations in China and references to prominent Chinese scholars, calligraphers, and other famous persons. I chose English translations of Chinese classics by James Legge from the Chinese Text Project's online, open-access digital library (https://ctext.org/), which contains the largest database of pre-modern Chinese texts and translations freely accessible to readers and scholars around the world. James Legge (1815–1897), a Scottish linguist, missionary, sinologist, and translator, was the first professor of Chinese at Oxford University. When English translations of excerpts from classic Chinese texts, such as ancient poetry and folklore, were unavailable, I translated them myself and added notes as necessary. When describing China's people and locations, I used straightforward language and concise explanations.

In the body text and notes, Chinese surnames are consistently capitalized and placed before given names (as in SHAO Peiren or Professor SHAO), in accordance with the style for writing ancient Chinese names and to avoid confusion regarding differences in the way modern and ancient Chinese names are written. In the References section, I adhered to the publisher's instructions regarding in-text citations and entries.

I should also mention that, during the translation process, I modified the passages and structure of the English text as necessary and with the assistance of Stephen Johnson, my talented collaborator and the native English-speaking editor for this project, who labored tirelessly to accurately convey the author's intended meaning in translation into the linguistic and cultural context of English. Mr. Johnson had a lengthy career as a technical writer for international high-tech companies, and he also taught English at a college in Ningbo, China, for five years. He has edited over a dozen of my research articles that were published in international journals such as *Critical Discourse Studies*, *Social Semiotics*, and *Journal of Language and Politics*. In addition, he is interested in Chinese culture, enjoys reading ancient Chinese classics, and has recently begun practicing *Qigong* and studying traditional Chinese medicine (TCM). Mr. Johnson was able to provide valuable insights into my translations due to his experience living in China, our long-standing collaboration, and his knowledge of ancient Chinese philosophy. Whenever he and I had difficulty comprehending a passage, we reached a consensus on possible revisions prior to the final edit. Throughout the process of revision and editing, Mr. Johnson meticulously added comments and explanations for all significant clarifications, changes, and additions made from the perspective of a Western reader and editor. Although this translation is far from perfect, I assume full responsibility for any errors.

Despite the fact that many references in the original Mandarin text are based on Chinese-language translations of Western sources, I was able to gain a more precise and culturally accurate understanding of Professor SHAO's writing because I had access to the original texts written in these Western languages. In some instances, I found it challenging to reconcile differences in meaning between original texts and target texts. Fortunately, I was able to seek Professor SHAO's counsel, upon which we based our final editorial decisions.

Time passes quickly! This multi-year project, which resulted in an English translation of *Geography of Media: Mass Media as Cultural Landscape*, an improved version titled *New Perspectives on Geography of Media*, and an English translation of the same, as well as extensive translation practice for my students, has nourished me.

Professor SHAO has given me and my students an extraordinary opportunity to learn a great deal about geography, modern communication and the media, ancient Chinese culture and philosophy, and sociology. I would like to express my deepest gratitude for his confidence in my translation skills and for providing us with this opportunity.

I am indebted to Mrs. HUANG Jingfen, Editor of Zhejiang University Press, for her endless patience in answering my questions about the publication process and for her invaluable assistance in preparing the materials required to apply for funding,

in our project proposal, and in our final report to be submitted to China's National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences.

My gratitude extends to my graduate students at Shanghai Normal University who have or will soon earn Master's degrees in Translation and Interpretation. To practice their English translation skills, YU Lu, XIE Wen, ZHANG Yingting, GAO Yiqing, NI Liping, CAI Yujie, CHEN Piao, YU Meijuan, QIN Mei, HUANG Minmin, FENG Jianlong, GU Yanhong, and JIANG Qihang translated the original 2010 Chinese edition, and LI Lingzhi, LIU Yuan, and LIU Yuting translated Chaps. 2, 4, 5, and 8 of the revised 2021 Chinese edition. Prior to beginning my work on the 2021 edition, the efforts of my diligent postgraduate students helped me clarify a number of terms and references. Before submitting the final version of my translation to the publisher, I would also like to thank WEN Liqian and XU Zhuo for reviewing the references format.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences for its generous financial support of project 20WXWB007, as well as the staff at Zhejiang University Press, whose friendly collaboration motivated me to translate Professor SHAO's monograph within two years' time.

<div align="right">WANG Guofeng
December 2022</div>

Contents

About the Author

SHAO Peiren, author of this monograph, is Professor of Journalism and Communication and Doctoral Advisor at the College of Media and International Culture, Zhejiang University, China. Former positions held by him include Director of the Journalism and Communication Research Institute at Zhejiang University, Deputy Director of the Department of Journalism and Communication, Associate Dean of the School of Humanities, and Deputy Director of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. He is currently President of the World Huallywood Association (in the USA), Chairman of the China Media Research Association (in the USA), Vice Chairman of the World Cultural Alliance (in the USA), Vice President of the Chinese Association of Communication, Founding President and Lifetime President of the Zhejiang Association of Communication, Director General of the Zhejiang Convention and Exhibition Society, and Proprietor of the journal *China Media Report*.

Professor SHAO has published more than 360 research articles in addition to 32 monographs, textbooks, and collections. *Principles and Applications of Communication Science* has laid a solid foundation for his research in this field, and *Contemporary Communication Series* for which he has worked as Chief Editor has expanded his research scope. In addition, *Communication Studies* conveys the essence of his theoretical exploration on communication science, while *Huaxia Communication Theory* and *Asian Communication Theory: Asian Perspective in International Communication Studies* reflect his profound thoughts on how to conduct the research on media and communication and how to carry out communication activities from the angle of a modern Chinese intellectual. More importantly, he has devoted himself to exploring new frontiers in interdisciplinary fields. *Media Management*, *Geography of Media: Mass Media as Cultural Landscape*, and *Media Ecology: Media as a Green Ecology* are but three of his representative works. At the provincial and ministerial levels, Professor SHAO has won First Prize twice and Second Prize three times. In addition, he received the sixth FAN Jingyi Journalism Education Award (for Excellent Teachers), the Baosteel Excellent Teacher Award of the Ministry of Education, and the title of Young and Middle-Aged Expert for his contributions to Zhejiang Province.

Chapter 1
Scope and Significance of Geography of Media

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In the 1980s, the new academic discipline of geography of media emerged as an interdisciplinary field at the intersection of geography and the study of media and communication. Its theoretical framework, which is situated at this intersection, integrates select theories, concepts, and methodologies from various branches and subfields of geography, as well as from other disciplines such as cultural studies, political science, sociology, and economics. An additional area of interest is the occurrence of conflicts and crises that involve the media.

The emergence of the geography of media is neither speculative nor the result of academics' fantasies or fabrications. The following two passages from the ancient *I Ching* (*Book of Changes*) and *Guanzi* capture the philosophical essence of research in this field now being conducted in China:

> 'Heaven and Earth are in communication with each other, and all things in consequence have free course; the high and the low (superiors and inferiors) are in communication with one another, and they possess the same aim;'[1] and 'Earth is the source of all things and the source of life.'[2]

In this monograph, we integrate the Taoist concept of the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Man with contemporary studies in the geography of media to investigate the relationships among humans, geography, environment, culture, society, media, and communication in the context of time and space.

1.1 Geography of Media as an Interdisciplinary and Inclusive Discipline

Geography is the scientific study of spatial variation from one location to another on the surface of the earth, as well as the temporal evolution of observable spatial patterns. As the study of location, space, and the environment, geography is closely related to the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. Geographers also study the distinctions and interrelationships between different localities,

as distinguished by their unique combination of resources, cultural activities, and sociopolitical systems.

In comparison, the geography of media (also known as media geography) studies the interactions between individuals, the environment, society, and the media, the effects of mass media consumption on individuals and societies, the responsibility of the global media to create and disseminate content that promotes harmonious relations between societies, regions, and countries, and the negative effects of media bias in global communication.

The fundamental hypotheses of media geography are derived from the physical world where geography, humans, and the media interact over time. In the context of the increasingly globalized framework of human–environment, human–human, and human–media interactivity, and given the complexity and constant flux of these diverse interactions, media geographers are developing new ways to examine and predict the local and global effects of related phenomena.

Maps, meteorological charts, and GPS data, as well as orbital infrastructures such as the Chinese-built BeiDou Navigation Satellite System are indispensable tools that enable humans to precisely locate themselves on the earth's surface and navigate this space, as well as synchronize communications, survey and map terrestrial geographies, and provide support for disaster mitigation and relief operations. Without such advanced technologies, contemporary society could not function properly. Similarly, the media-geographic concepts presented in this monograph can serve as starting points for cognizing, analyzing, and understanding the relationships between individuals and physical environment, society, and the media.

1.1.1 Geography: A Discipline of Intersectionality and Interconnectedness

Geography is the study of the earth's surface and its topographic features, as well as human–environment interaction, which encompass both natural and cultural phenomena. The Chinese characters for 'geography' are 地理 ('di li'). The single Chinese character 地 ('di') can be translated as soil, land, earth, terra, or topography; the character 理 ('li') can be translated as law, principle, science, or pattern. Therefore, the literal translation of 地理 ('di li') is 'science of the earth.' Of course, the people in ancient China believed that the earth was flat and square. The etymology of 地理 ('di li') can be traced back to the *I Ching*:

> The Sage, in accordance with 'Yi' (易, 'change'), looking up, contemplates the brilliant phenomena of Heaven and, looking down, examines the specific arrangements of the earth (地理, 'di li').[3]

During the Tang dynasty (618 AD–907 AD), the famous philosopher KONG Yingda wrote in *Memorial to the Throne* about the emergence of 理 ('li'): 'There are mountains, rivers, plains, and lowlands on the earth, which are arranged in good

order and with good reason, and in accordance with the laws of the earth (理, 'li').[4] The same two Chinese characters 地理 ('di li') were used in the 'Jiao Si Zhi' (郊 祀志, 'Treatise on Sacrifices') of the *Han Shu* (*History of the Han*): 'Three sources of light—the stars, the sun, and the moon—illuminate and activate Heaven, while mountains and rivers are how the earth (地, 'di') persists.'[5]

In the volume 'Ji River' of *Notes on Watercourses* (*Shui Jing Zhu*), LI Daoyuan described a location where a major battle had occurred many years ago and noted, 'The participants in this battle have long since passed away, but geographic patterns (地理, 'di li') from this conflict remain.'[6] Later, 地理 ('di li') appeared in the poem 'Appreciating a Lone Mountain' by Huibiao, a famous poet who lived during the Southern and Northern dynasties (420 AD–589 AD): 'There is a solitary mountain on the Central Plains, but when this terrestrial feature (地理, 'di li') was formed remains a mystery.'[7]

Earth is the home of humanity. The morphological and environmental conditions on the earth's surface, which obviously are of great importance to all life on Earth, give rise to a wide variety of geographic concepts, theories, and related lore. In ancient China, geographers observed and studied natural phenomena and analyzed the relationships between them. *The Geographical Map of the Tribute of Yu* (*Yu Gong Shan Chuan Di Li Tu*) by CHENG Dachang[8] and *Interpretations of Geographical Names in History as a Mirror* (*Tong Jian Di Li Tong Shi*),[9] by WANG Yinglin, are two of the earliest examples of major geographic works, both of which were written during the Southern Song dynasty (1127 AD–1279 AD).

The first scholar to describe a field of study called 'geography' was the Greek polymath Eratosthenes of Cyrene in his book *Geographica*, written over 2000 years ago in the third century BC. The etymology of 'geography' derives from the ancient Greek word γεωγραφία (geōgraphía), comprised of the syllables γῆ ('gê' or 'Earth') + γράφω ('gráphō' or 'write'), and which together form the term γεωγραφία ('geōgraphía' or 'description of the earth'). The etymology continues with 'geōgraphia' in Latin, 'géographie' in Middle French, and 'geography' in English. In *Geographica*, reports of which were preserved by Greek and Roman historians, Eratosthenes described the earth as a spherical body where change only took place on the surface. He also calculated the earth's circumference and drew a map of the world, dividing the land into various countries and regions.

Modern geographers observe and analyze natural phenomena and associated spatial changes, as well as human, ecological, and biological phenomena on the earth's surface, investigate the relationships between these phenomena, and catalog the physical characteristics of terrestrial areas. The English geographer Alison Blunt (2003, p. 68) interpreted the meaning of geography as 'writing the world,' in the sense that geographers are scholars who study the world, reflect upon it, and write about it from various perspectives.

The emergence of geography over the centuries is an indication of people's desire to learn about nature and its processes, not only because they were (and still are) curious about what lies beyond the horizon, but also because the natural environments in which humans live have a significant effect on human culture. Consequently, different forms of geographic inquiry have existed in virtually all civilizations (Claval

1995). In this regard, geographic methods of studying and comprehending the world have long influenced the thought and findings of scholars in other academic fields.

Due to its long history, expansive scope, and its influence on other scientific disciplines, geography has been referred to as the 'mother of all sciences.' As a discipline with a high rate of generative learning and broad scope, geographic concepts and findings are frequently incorporated into the research of other disciplines to help people better understand the dynamics of human-to-human and human-to-environment relationships, to interpret findings from a cultural perspective, and even to influence how individuals conceive of the world. As a multidisciplinary endeavor, it also seeks to identify the sociocultural and philosophical causes underlying the origin and evolution of nature and environment.

Alfred Hettner (1859–1941), a German geographer and follower of Immanuel Kant, considered geography a branch of cosmology and, as such, a science that investigates the cosmos (i.e., a harmonious and orderly system governed by natural law). In Hettner's opinion, the purpose of geography is not to interpret or establish rules or laws, but rather to explore phenomena that exist in time and space in the realm of human experience. He also noted that modern concepts of time and space had a significant impact on the theories of the German philosopher Immanuel Kant (as cited by Claval 1995).

Geography underwent a paradigm shift when researchers became increasingly interested in the relationship between society and economy in terms of spatial distribution. In 1968, the American Peter Gould (1932–2000), then Emeritus Professor of Geography at Penn State University, published an article titled 'The New Geography' in *Harper's Magazine* that laid the groundwork for the newly-emerging fields of cultural geography and geography of media.

In his widely acclaimed book *Explanation in Geography* (1969), the British geographer, Marxist, and neopositivist David Harvey described the emergence since the late 1950s of a 'new geography.' Harvey emphasized the significance of data collection and the need for geographic theories to have practical, real-world applications. Later, the British geographer and humanist Peter Haggett (1933–) published *Locational Analysis in Human Geography* (1965) and the English geographers Richard J. Chorley (1927–2002) and Barbara A. Kennedy (1943–2014) co-authored *Physical Geography* (1971), which promoted the development of a new geography.

In this new geography, living spaces (e.g., cities, urban landscapes, industrial clusters, and urban greenbelts), social scale, social time, and social meaning were the foci of research. Concurrently, the dual influences of globalization and the mass media were contributing to the complexities and difficulties of inter-societal relationships between geographic regions. Moreover, according to the British human geographer Ronald J. Johnston (1941–2020), the most influential factor in the well-being of humans in the modern era is no longer differences in physical space but differences in social space (Johnston 1979).

Various societal problems in the late 1970s and early 1980s influenced the subject matter of geographic studies and prompted the development of innovative research initiatives. Several of these initiatives used postmodern concepts and methodologies

to challenge the including of the growing need for a feminism-oriented subfield of human geography.

Space, location, place, and landscape, which are as tangible and real as natural geography, can be represented culturally through narrative descriptions, films, advertisements, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and even poetry. A 'cultural turn' occurred in the field of geography around the time geologic texts began to be analyzed from a cultural perspective. The German geographers Carl Ritter (1779–1859) and Friedrich Ratzel (1844–1904) founded cultural geography as the study of the differentiation, distribution, and evolution of human cultural phenomena on the earth's surface through their respective works *Geography in relation to nature and to the history of mankind; or general, comparative geography* (1836) and *The Earth and Life: A Comparative Geography* (1902). In an effort to comprehend the complexity and fragility of human experience, its mission, vision, and practice emphasized quality over quantity and psychology over economics. The emergence of a culture-focused subfield of geography occurred at an opportune time.

In 1936, the Chinese geographer GE Suicheng translated and edited *Cultural Geography in the World*, which examined various landforms such as plains, plateaus, basins, deserts, rivers, lakes, straits, and oceans through the lens of cultural geography. He also investigated climate, human population, cities, countries, nationalities, transportation, and industry from the perspective of cultural geography, and discussed the complex problems resulting from these cultural and geographic phenomena (Ge 1936). The contents and scope of the book's 18 chapters are diverse and extensive.

Given that the subject of human culture encompasses a vast number of discrete elements (e.g., material culture, language, aesthetics, education, religion, art, literature, values, and social organization), it can be interpreted in a variety of ways from a geographic standpoint. As a result, new disciplines have emerged, including the geography of media, the geography of symbols and signs, the geography of literary and artistic creation, the geography of cinema, the geography of Chinese calligraphy, the geography of music, the geography of education, and the geography of news broadcasting. Clearly, the range of interactivity between culture and geography is much broader than any single discipline in the natural or social sciences.

The term 'geography of media' did not appear in print until the 1985 publication of Jacquie Burgess and John Coldwell's *Geography, the Media and Popular Culture* (cited in Johnson et al. 2000, pp. 493–494). 'Geography of media' later appeared four times in SHAO Peiren's 2002 article 'Computers and the Internet: The Subverters of Geography of Media.' Professor SHAO believed that the use of computers and digital networks as standard tools in academic and laboratory research would not only alter the trajectory of research in morphology and communicology, but also revitalize and re-design the geography of media as a bona fide field of scientific inquiry. In 1993, the first edition of the 74-volume *Encyclopedia of China* was published by the Communication University of China Press in Beijing (Hu 1993). At the time, neither this encyclopedia nor contemporary Chinese dictionaries contained the term 'geography of media' or 'media geography,' and related academic studies were unknown in China.

Since its inception as a field of study, media geography has developed an interactive relationship with media forms such as publishing, broadcasting, and the Internet. As a fundamental concept in the creation of media content, media representations depict subjects of interest, individual experiences, and the human geography of communities, countries, and regions, and in the process, these representations preserve historical memory and cultural inheritance by recording, storing, and disseminating texts and images related to the evolution of human culture and civilization.

In ancient times, words carved or etched on oracle bones, leaves, bamboo slips, wood chips, sheepskins, goatskins, metal, and stone were used to pass down knowledge of China's millennia-old culture. Today, computers with advanced data storage devices, such as compact discs (CDs), digital video discs (DVDs), and hard disk drives, connect to networks that transmit messages almost instantaneously to any location on the planet. The incredible differences between past and present methods of communication illustrate how the study of geography and different forms of media have evolved concurrently over time.

Media representations are a type of cultural carrier that can project or transfer cultural, ideological, or spiritual content onto material entities, despite the fact that neither the carrier (the media content) nor the material entities are comparable in essence. 'Media materialization' involves the recording, storage, transmission, extension, and modification of sociocultural texts and signs in such a way that will allow the texts and signs to be reconstructed in the real world. Based on the volume and quality of their recent publications on media geography and media ecology, the academic team at Zhejiang University has taken the lead in China in new research on these and related areas of interest. Their work is introducing innovative concepts into Chinese academic circles, which will expand the scope of these subjects and attract the interest of scholars in other fields and nations.

Media geographers readily integrate theories, concepts, and methodologies of media and communication studies into their own academic frameworks. They also focus on the management, production, and transmission of cultural information in the form of media content through the channels of newspapers, magazines, television and radio broadcasts, films, cartoons, computer applications, and the Internet. Current directions in media geographic research address these topics within a conceptual framework of time, space, scale, and landscape, as well as in terms of locality and globality.

Based on the principles of humanism and the Taoist concept of the unity of Heaven, Earth, and Man, the geography of media, as practiced in China, supports the right of all humans to benefit from their natural environment while also encouraging and supporting the protection and conservation of the earth's natural resources. As media geography continues to expand the scope of its research and incorporate knowledge from other disciplines, new fields of inquiry consistent with its vision and fundamental concepts will no doubt emerge.

1.1.2   Interaction and Synergy Between Media and Geography

Because media forms, content, and audiences vary according to region, regional geographies have a substantial impact on the production and dissemination of media content; the synergies between geography and the media were not fully recognized until the arrival of electronic media. The following five perspectives describe aspects of this synergistic process:

Regional ecologies influence the selection of media form

The ancient Chinese saying, 'Heaven, Earth, and I were created together; all things and I are one,'[10] means that everything in the Universe is interdependent and interconnected (Shao et al. 2017, p. 85). Due to these interdependencies and interconnections, media representations of people's lives, societies, and cultures are influenced and sometimes constrained by geographic and environmental factors. For example, prehistoric cultures inhabiting forested areas gathered materials from local sources and scratched messages on leaves and tree bark, or engraved characters on wood chips or bamboo slips. Those who lived near rivers and lakes developed the skill of inscribing their thoughts and feelings on reed leaves. To facilitate long-distance communication, those who lived in arid regions inscribed messages on clay tablets.

In China, the oracle bone scripts of the Shang dynasty, the bronze inscriptions of the Zhou dynasty, and the seals, cloth, and pottery of the Spring and Autumn period (770 BC–476 BC) and the Warring States period (475 BC–221 BC) were all indicative of local geographic environments that existed at the time.

The ancient Egyptians invented papyrus paper, and the inhabitants of the Middle East developed parchment. Both of these materials were obtained from their respective geographic environments to facilitate long-distance communication. The oldest known book was written on papyrus scrolls in ancient Egypt around 3000 BC. Papyrus is an aquatic, reed-like plant of the sedge family with large, triangular leaves; the fibrous stems of papyrus plants can reach more than three meters in height and the width of an adult's wrist. In antiquity, papyrus plants grew primarily in the Nile Valley in the northern part of Khartoum, Egypt, where they thrived in swamps and near ponds.

In the eighth century BC, the inhabitants of Pergamum, a region in northwestern Asia Minor (present-day Turkey) created parchment, a primitive writing material made of sheep, goat, or lamb skin. The origin of the English word 'parchment' derives from the Latin place name 'Pergamum' (Greek: 'Pergamon'). During the reign of Eumenes II (197 BC–159 BC) in the Greek city and kingdom of Pergamon, the Egyptians cut off their papyrus paper supply, motivating the city's inhabitants to learn how to create books from animal skins. The Greek artisans quickly learned that the texture and durability of parchment made from calf and lamb skins were far superior to papyrus for bookmaking.

Media forms can reflect different geographic samplings

As we have seen from the preceding examples, communications created and distributed using various forms of media both externalize human nature and reflect the environmental characteristics of senders and receivers. In this regard, many ancient Chinese classics described the physical characteristics of local geographic morphologies. Such works include 'Tribute of Yu' in the *Book of Historical Documents*,[11] 'Di Yuan' in *Guanzi*,[12] *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* (*Shan Hai Jing*),[13] *The Regional Map of Tribute of Yu* (*Yu Gong Di Yu Tu*),[14] *Commentaries on the Water Classic* (*Shui Jing Zhu*),[15] *Si-Yu-Ki: Buddhist Records on the Western World* (*Da Tang Xi Yu Ji*),[16] *Annals of Yuanhe Counties* (*Yuan He Jun Xian Tu Zhi*),[17] *Enlarged Terrestrial Atlas* (*Guang Yu Tu*),[18] *The Travels Diaries of XU Xiake* (*Xu Xia Ke You Ji*),[19] *Pandect of Pros and Cons about Social, Political, and Economic Conditions Throughout the Ming Empire* (*Tian Xia Jun Guo Li Bing Shu*),[20] *Zhao Yu Zhi*,[21] and *Essentials of Geography for Reading History* (*Du Shi Fang Yu Ji Yao*).[22]

In 1927, television was first successfully demonstrated in the United States. Soon after this new technology was introduced to East Asian nations in the 1950s, local geographers began using it to record images of diverse communities and geographic morphologies. In 1983, China and Japan collaborated on a documentary titled *The Story of the Yangtze River*, which was released to the public in 1983 and depicted the river's geographic characteristics as well as the lives of its inhabitants on the upper and lower banks. China Central Television (CCTV) popularized it in the mid- to late-1980s, when it was widely considered the pinnacle of Chinese documentary filmmaking.

At the time, the majority of Chinese citizens became familiar with the documentary's theme song: 'You come from the snow mountain, spring tide at full moon is your style; you run to the East China Sea, and crashing waves are your spirit.' Images of the beautiful scenery along the banks of the Yangtze, as well as the documentary's relatable, sensory, and emotional narratives and legends about the river and its history, captivated Chinese viewers.

The Story of the Yangtze River covered the entire length of the Yangtze, from its magical source to its spectacular estuary, as well as nearby rivers and mountains, renowned historical sites, and local customs and conditions. It was an in-depth and accurate description of the geographic morphology of the Yangtze River, which at the time consisted of 49 rivers, lakes, and canyons, 28 famous mountains, 52 well-known cities and towns, 25 projects, 27 historical allusions and folk tales, 110 scenic spots, and 104 ancient and modern celebrities. The prose-style narratives of *The Story of the Yangtze River*, which focused colorful descriptions of scenery, allowed those who did not have the opportunity to travel to witness the living conditions of people in this region.

Twenty years later, a sequel titled *Rediscovering the Yangtze River* was filmed with high-definition 1080i HDTV cameras, recording images with a level of quality that could not be attained in the original documentary due to technological limitations. This sequel, which was released in July 2006, is the most comprehensive video recording of the Yangtze River in the history of Chinese television.

During the 20-year interval between *The Story of the Yangtze River* and *Rediscovering the Yangtze River*, many previously unknown locations along the river became popular tourist attractions. As a result, the focus of the narratives in *Rediscovering the Yangtze River* was to contrast the many changes in the Yangtze River region with the broader changes in China as a whole: 'But most importantly, we would like audiences to understand that the foundation for these twenty years of great change lies in the unchanging core of Chinese culture.' Under this guiding principle, and through the lens of the media, CCTV revealed to its audience the stunning beauty of the Yangtze River's natural landscapes.

Photographers and filmmakers can capture and archive images that reflect a nation's culture, society, and physical geography. By tapping into this nearly limitless media resource of photos and films, geographers can obtain the materials needed to create geospatial semantic maps that media managers and media audiences can use to comprehend the meaning of diverse geographic entities, to identify their counterparts in the physical and virtual world, and to facilitate the movement of individuals between these two worlds. Media communicators frequently emphasize the significance of geographic morphology and its influence on audiences. To make media content more appealing to specific audiences, media producers create content that depicts particular morphological features that are of particular interest to target audiences.

People who live in different geographic environments have different styles of communication

In *The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn Annals*, the Han dynasty philosopher DONG Zhongshu wrote that Heaven, Earth, and Man are the foundation of all things: 'Heaven created it, Earth nourished it, and Man shaped it.' These three elements came into existence simultaneously, and none can exist without the others. Because humans develop and survive in a variety of natural environments, local geographies and morphologies shape regional differences in terms of climate, available natural resources, agriculture, society, culture, politics, and communication. Similarly, the specific characteristics of the geographic environment in which an ethnic group, community, or culture lives profoundly affect the ability of members to adapt and prosper.

For example, people who live in tropical regions have physiological adaptations such as dark skin to prevent sunburn, curly hair to protect the head from intense solar radiation, and broad noses, thick lips, and large mouths to facilitate heat dissipation. Additionally, they possess an extensive vocabulary for describing inflammation and heat. The inhabitants of colder climates are generally tall and robust. They have high, narrow noses and light-colored skin to prevent frostbite. In addition, their language has evolved to the point where they can describe various qualities of cold, ice, and snow in great detail.

Throughout history, specific geographic environments have given birth to numerous civilizations. The Yellow River and Yangtze River valleys and alluvial plains were the cradles of Chinese civilization, the Nile was the cradle of ancient Egyptian civilization, the Tigris and Euphrates rivers were the cradles of ancient