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MOUTON

*Hanmo Zhang*

**AUTHORSHIP  
AND  
TEXT-MAKING  
IN EARLY CHINA**

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Hanmo Zhang

**Authorship and Text-making in Early China**

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# Volume 2

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To my parents and my teachers



## Preface and Acknowledgments

When, as a graduate student studying early Chinese art, I approached what seemed (to me) a simple question, that of the manner in which one arrives at a date for early Chinese texts, I soon realized that I had begun an arduous process of understanding something much greater. As a result, what was a mere “side issue” for an art historian became the central topic of my Ph.D. dissertation.

I approached the topic by investigating the twin topics of authorship and text-making, and the four case studies included in this book best represent the most salient parts of my discovery. Nevertheless, this book does not deliver a secret methodology for dating early Chinese texts; rather, the original problems of dating became secondary when compared to questions regarding early Chinese authorship and text-making, for they provided more meaningful and more productive approaches to the understanding of early Chinese texts and of the socio-political and religious context that produced them. This shift of focus not only opened my eyes to the complexity of ancient text culture, but also helped build my confidence in answering my original inquiry. Now I can confidently reply that, in order to date an early text, we need to engage in the study of the entire culture of text production.

The study of early Chinese texts has entered into a new era of excitement not only methodologically, but also inspired by new discoveries from the field of modern archaeology. My work has benefited tremendously from these new developments. As for what this work contributes to the field of Early China studies, I would underline its encouragement in dealing with the age-old questions that have consumed scholars for many centuries. Among the solutions this work offers, some are of course more convincing than others, but I hope that they are all honest explorations and will contribute to a continuing discussion.

The scope of this book is necessarily limited. It does not address issues surrounding the authorship and making of early Chinese administrative documents, nor does it compare the issues of early Chinese text production to that of other textual cultures of the ancient world. Additionally, besides the four types of authorship examined in this book, there are further equally important models worth exploring but excluded from this work. Finally, this book is experimental: it is meant to be a conversation with previous scholarship and on-going investigations. But whilst we wait for more comparative and comprehensive studies to emerge, hopefully the present work constitutes an unconventional yet inspiring part of a long journey that will be joined by many others. For this reason, everything this



book offers, including its methods and conclusions, is humbly open to questions and criticism.

This book has grown from my Ph.D. dissertation completed at UCLA in 2012. I should first thank David C. Schaberg, my official advisor and Chair of my dissertation committee; Lothar von Falkenhausen, a mentor who unflinchingly supported and followed closely the entire writing process of the dissertation, and other committee members: Richard E. Strassberg, Jack W. Chen, and Li Min, who were all so generous with their time and always available when I sought help from them. Besides the dissertation committee, my other teachers at UCLA also offered their help with my study and writing in one way or another: Andrea S. Goldman, Natasha Heller, Richard von Glahn, Lee Hui-shu, and the late Michael Heim. Their scholarship and friendship have always encouraged and inspired me to be a better scholar and better person.

I am thankful to Chen Zhi, professor of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology at Hong Kong Baptist University and chief editor of *Bulletin of the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology*. We became acquainted by mutual esteem for each other's scholarship. His recognition and generous support are vital for the publication of this work. I also thank Lai Guolong, professor of Chinese Art History at the University of Florida, who has provided me with friendly encouragement to publish a book based on my dissertation. I should also thank Professors Timothy Light and Victor Xiong of Western Michigan University, Professor Li Ling of Beijing University, Professor Edward Shaughnessy of Chicago University, Professor Martin Kern of Princeton University, and Professors Jin Ge, Yang Huilin, and Wuyun Bilige at Renmin University for their continuous support for the writing of this book.

I am also thankful to my colleagues and friends Andrew Miller, David Hull, Joseph Tingle, and Anthony Lappin, who helped edit the manuscript of this book at different stages of its making. Their relentless editing work has greatly improved the readability of this book. That being said, all the mistakes and errors are mine. I also thank Prof. Dirk Meyer, Dr. Adam Schwartz, and Ms. Lai Wing Mi, Director of the JAS Library of Sinology book series, who have worked tirelessly to ensure the timely publication of this book. Dr. Zhu Mengwen and Ms. Olena Gainulina have helped with the final stage of making this book and I sincerely appreciate their meticulous work. I also appreciated the comments and suggestions offered by the two anonymous reviewers and the editorial board members. Their advice has guided the rewriting and editing work of the book manuscript.

A number of new works related to the topics discussed in this book have emerged in recent years: a volume on the *Huainanzi* edited by Sarah Queen and Michael Puett, selected *Shiji* 史記 papers put together by Hans van Ess et al, a

book exclusively devoted to “The Letter to Ren An” and related issues by four renowned scholars of this field, Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, Michael Nylan, and Hans van Ess, Dirk Meyer’s and Matthias Richter’s monographs on newly excavated early Chinese texts, and Oliver Weingarten’s and Michael Hunter’s works on the *Lunyu* and Confucius, to name a few. These works are very helpful to the rewriting of this book, and readers will see how their views are integrated in this study.

Organizations at UCLA, my alma mater, Hong Kong Baptist University, and Remin University of China generously offered financial support to this project at different stages. I thank UCLA Graduate Division, UCLA Center for Chinese Studies, UCLA Asia Institute, UCLA Center for Japanese Studies, Department of Asian Languages and Cultures at UCLA, Research Institute of Renmin University of China, and the Jao Tsung-I Academy of Sinology at Hong Kong Baptist University in this regard.

My friends and family have always been supportive and patient during these years of my carrying out this project. My friends Huo Zhonghe, Fei Honghuan, Hu Lujun, Meng Fanzhi, Zeng Cheng, Su Rongyu, Lang Jianfeng, He Nu, Feng Shi, Yu Qibo, Jiang Jin, Wang Deling, Yang Li, Liu Yan, Song Chao, Wang Jue, Zhou Kangqiao, and many others, have always been available when I asked them for various kinds of help. My parents always encourage me to be devoted to what I do. My younger sister has taken good care of my parents while I have been absent over the years. Timothy, my dear son and good pal, has accompanied me through all my hardships and happiness, and learned to take on the responsibilities of dealing with some household chores while I was “busy.” To my friends and family I am deeply thankful.

I dedicate this book to my parents—my first teachers—and all the teachers who have taught me how to read, write, and think.



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# Introduction

This work addresses the development of four models of authorship in relation to the formation of early Chinese texts to facilitate the understanding of the nature of this textual corpus.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike the familiar Greek example of Herodotus, early Chinese texts as manifested in newly excavated writings on wood and bamboo strips do not typically contain clear indications of authorship.<sup>2</sup> Currently available information demonstrates that explicit identification of the author in the text was not a matter of concern in early China: there was no explicit Herodotean “seal” of authorship heading texts, nor was there typically any traditional attribution. Only during the late Warring States period and the Western Han dynasty—roughly the second half of the first millennium BC and the subsequent century—did political stability and the professionalization of scholarly culture make possible new efforts to bring order to the corpus of received texts. For many texts this movement led to the retrospective attribution of a legendary or historical author.

The present monograph identifies and investigates four models of attributed authorship, and outlines the functions associated with each. The first authorship model is that of the cultural hero, demonstrated through the figure of the Yellow Emperor and the texts attributed to him. The next is that of the author as the head of a teaching lineage, as demonstrated by the revered Confucius and the *Analects*. The third is that of the author as a scholarly patron, such as Liu An, his scholar-

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1 Although the term authorship usually denotes the source, such as the author, of a piece of writing, music, or art, in this work it is limited to the discussion of the corpus of early Chinese literary writing. It in this sense excludes the investigation of music, art, or even early Chinese writings for administrative purposes. In a modern-day dictionary, the authorship of a piece of writing usually means the identity of its writer, and this concept used to be projected as a useful tool to discuss the date or authenticity of early writings. This study endeavors to prove that such projection mostly operates anachronistically and the author concept should be understood differently. Nevertheless, the term author or authorship in its modern-day definition still appears in the main text of this monograph not only for the purpose of making comparisons, but also for the necessity of arguing against it. A more detailed discussion of the concepts of author and authorship will be found throughout Chapter One.

2 *The Histories* by Herodotus may be the most famous example of this sort. It states: “Herodotus of Halicarnassus here displays his inquiry, so that human achievements may not become forgotten in time, and great and marvelous deeds—some displayed by Greeks, some by barbarians—may not be without their glory; and especially to show why the two peoples fought with each other.” Herodotus 2003: 1.

clients, and the *Huainanzi*. Finally, there is the model of the individual author, as demonstrated through Sima Qian and the *Shiji*. My discussion and categorization, then, of how order was brought to what had been, in pre-imperial times, a vast and chaotic repository of textual exchange, through the invention and application of models of attribution, will demonstrate how the concept of authorship became useful to both scholars and rulers. The selection of works considered in this investigation is meant to facilitate the establishment of a pre-history for authorship, textual production, and bibliographic work that would characterize China's long literary history. Additionally, this study aims to reveal the in-depth socio-political infrastructure, ritual-religious developments, and dynamics of the relationship between rulers and scholars, the cultural matrix accordingly embedding the development of the function of authorship.

For further clarification, I consider the convention of using authorship as a hermeneutical device for interpreting early Chinese writings. As seen in the *Documents* (*Shu* 書) and the "Greater Preface" (*Daxu* 大序) to the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩), the postulation of authorial intent began to play a significant role in the hermeneutics of Chinese literature quite early.<sup>3</sup> As part of the age-old interpretive tradition associated with authorial intent, interpreting early Chinese writings through an author's biographical information has remained a steady focus of scholarship even down to the present day. While this work explores authorial intent in its first chapter, its focus is on the attribution of authorship, its function, and how such attribution could influence the interpretation of the text.

As such, the thesis of this work is as follows: by investigating the above-mentioned four models of authorship in early Chinese literature, this work demonstrates how the notion of author functioned as the key to classifying, preserving, and interpreting a body of ancient knowledge. An examination of the various types of authorship exemplified in the creation, circulation, categorization, and function of early Chinese texts shows that, for early Chinese scholars, the attributed author was crucial to the body of knowledge incorporated in texts. The author not only served as a foundation upon which different elements of knowledge were brought together, conceptually and materially manifested in a text, but also furnished cues to the interpretation of composite texts and thus created a notional coherence in texts that might otherwise have been in danger of disintegrating into disconnected fragments in the reader's apprehension. On a deeper level, the inquiry into these four models of authorship also sheds light on the ritual, religious, and sociopolitical contexts influencing authorial attributions and how such attributions are associated with early Chinese intellectual

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3 *Maoshi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 1.6; *Shangshu zhengyi* 尚書正義 3.79.

history. As an historical phenomenon, especially during the Western Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 8), the connotations associated with authorship not only played a role in legitimizing the Han empire by connecting it to mythicized and politicized narratives, but also provided a lens through which we see how early Chinese intellectuals reconfigured their role and expressed themselves in the new and coercive model of imperial government.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis may be further illustrated via a comparison with what Mark E. Lewis and Alexander Beecroft have accomplished in their research on authorship in early Chinese writings. A thesis of Lewis's *Writing and Authority in Early China* is that

the ultimate importance of writing to the Chinese empire and imperial civilization did not derive from its administrative role. Rather the Chinese empire, including its artistic and religious versions, was based on an imaginary realm created within texts. These texts, couched in an artificial language above the local world of spoken dialects, created a model of society against which actual institutions were measured.<sup>5</sup>

To prove this thesis, Lewis examines a considerable number of early Chinese texts within a neatly structured scheme, clearly outlined by his carefully arranged chapter titles.<sup>6</sup> My purpose here is not to dispute Lewis's thesis; rather, I frequently find his statements on author and authorship in early Chinese writings useful for provoking questions and framing discussions.

Although not the main focus of Lewis's work, the authorship of early Chinese texts constitutes a meaningful part of his argument, as seen in his discussions on the function of the author as the master, such as Confucius, and the attribution of the "Lisao" 離騷 (Encountering the Sorrow) to Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 339–278 BC). In the chapter "Writing the Masters," taking the *Analects* as the example, Lewis points out that "the text, the master, and the disciples were inextricably bound together," because these textual collections of quotations obtained authority from the supposed wisdom of the masters, who in turn derived their authority

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<sup>4</sup> Here and elsewhere in this work, the word "intellectual" does not have its contemporary connotation originating in the *intelligentsiya* of Tsarist Russia, a social class of educated people that arose in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, or its counterparts the German *Bildungsbürgertum* or the French *bourgeoisie éclairée*, generally termed the enlightened middle classes. I use this word mostly in its plural form denoting a group or groups of educated men studying and thinking with a degree of complexity. See Williams 1983: 169–171.

<sup>5</sup> Lewis 1999: 4.

<sup>6</sup> Although using a different method, Yuri Pines reaches a similar conclusion in his recently published monograph. Cf. Pines 2009 and Lewis 1999.



from the presence of the disciples who produced the texts.<sup>7</sup> In this sense, the master as the author became the source of authority. Such authority, as Lewis acknowledges throughout his monograph, asserts that it is the masters rather than the rulers who should “be the unique holders of the secrets of kingship” and as such the masters “claimed the ability to define the monarch and dictate his policies.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the authority claimed by the masters through the texts attributed to them constituted a challenge to political authority.

The function of an individual master as the author, however, was secondary to the importance of his writing following the emergence of the essay and dialogical forms of philosophical writing toward the late Warring States period.<sup>9</sup> The shift from collecting quotations to writing essays and dialogues between rulers and masters, Lewis argues, suggests that textual transmission superseded teaching as the primary motive for philosophical writing. During this time, when authority became connected to an all-encompassing knowledge, the name of any particular master to whom a tradition of texts was attributed now became a symbol marking the deficiency and limitations of his philosophy.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the appearance of a master as an author of texts from which his disciples are missing, Lewis argues, inevitably leads to the “disappearance” of that master as a fundamental textual authority. And it was at this moment that the authorship in Chinese philosophical writing emerged.<sup>11</sup>

Another discussion on authorship in Lewis’s work involves the relationship between the *Chu ci* 楚辭 (*Songs of Chu*) and Qu Yuan. According to Lewis, the Han dynasty compilation of the *Chu ci* anthology and its identification of Qu Yuan as the author of the “Lisao” began the tradition in which the prominence of Qu Yuan’s authorship dominates the interpretation of the *Chu ci*. Even now, many pieces in this anthology are read as Qu Yuan’s compositions and accordingly interpreted as a reflection of Qu Yuan’s political life: the loyal, virtuous minister who falls victim to the slander of his political enemies. Qu Yuan, according to Lewis, was acknowledged as “the first author to be identified for an individual, poetic voice, and as such became the archetype for later Chinese poets.”<sup>12</sup> Lewis sees this model not only as the precursor for writing as an expression of individual virtues in Chinese literature, but also as “a mode of sociability between like-

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7 Lewis 1999: 58.

8 Lewis 1999: 73.

9 Lewis 1999: 62–63.

10 Lewis 1999: 62, 332–36.

11 Lewis 1999: 63, 97.

12 Lewis 1999: 186.

minded individuals” and “a model for the later, author-based anthology.”<sup>13</sup> In short, the significance of Qu Yuan as an author is a result of his authorial invention by Han readers.

Whereas Lewis highlights the connection of authorship to authority and individual voice, Alexander Beecroft sees authorship as the means through which the transformation of literary systems can be traced.<sup>14</sup> Inspired by Sheldon Pollock’s analysis of Sanskrit literature, Beecroft crafts a model of literary transformation involving multiple phases through which literary texts are circulated, prestige is transmitted, and both the text and prestige are linked to their corresponding political and cultural power.<sup>15</sup> By examining how verbal art and textual performance were transformed in the first three phases, i.e., the epichoric (local), the panchoric (cultural), and the cosmopolitan (political), both in early Greece and in early China, Beecroft argues that a series of cultural and political assimilations occurred moving from the local level to the broader cultural and political spheres. These assimilations finally led to the appearance of the “scene of authorship,” a sort of textual performance that took the place of verbal art and enabled the formerly epichoric or panchoric texts to retain their authority and constitution even as they were shared in wider settings.<sup>16</sup> In other words, the epichoricity—which stressed a tradition of performance in the cases of both ancient Greece and China—of a given text was subdued, normalized, and potentially reassembled to serve the construction of the notion of a state, an empire, or the world. As a result, the birth of the author, in Beecroft’s words, “is at once the death of performance and the emergence of a cultural world empire, a marker of a given literature’s capacity to generate meaning far beyond and long after the creation of its central texts.”<sup>17</sup>

While these works inspire my study, my research emphasizes a different aspect of authorship. As Beecroft admits, the major concern of his research is the stories of the authors pertaining to textual interpretation; the construction of text is excluded from his discussion. My interests, however, include the situations under which early Chinese texts were produced and transmitted, as well as how the attributed author functioned in this process. The formation and transmission of texts constitute a significant piece of the study of the development of authorship. Certainly, theoretical trends since the 1960s have dealt a death-blow to the

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**13** Lewis 1999: 193.

**14** Beecroft 2010: 282.

**15** Beecroft 2010: 5.

**16** Beecroft 2010: 284–286.

**17** Beecroft 2010: 286.

author by defining him as a textual property and consequently putting him in an empty position.<sup>18</sup> On the other hand, an interpretive framework focusing on authorial intent emerged fairly early and has exerted tremendous influence on Chinese literary interpretation.<sup>19</sup> The issue of authorship, although tied with the interpretation of text, deserves a close examination for its own sake.

In comparison with Lewis's interest in the author's expression of authority and individual voice via literature, my work focuses on the historical and material manifestation of the notion of authorship. Recent discoveries have no doubt enriched our understanding of the development of early Chinese writings in terms of their form, content, and function.<sup>20</sup> These discoveries link this study to the historical context in which the author was situated. Here I follow Donald F. McKenzie's argument that the form of a text defines its reading and that a change in form affects its meaning.<sup>21</sup> Our understanding of expressions of authority and individual voice in transmitted literature, therefore, must also be connected to the conditions responsible for the forming and re-forming of early texts as well as the conditions behind the development of a concept of authorship inseparable from the arrangement of texts in their many forms.

In short, this subject is characterized by a focus on the formation and function of early Chinese authorship and the noticeable influence of a text's material form on its literary interpretation. In other words, this project explores the early history of Chinese text making and interpretation by understanding the emergence and development of the concept of authorship. The major period covered in this study is often referred to as "early China," a vague term used for convenience to refer to the Eastern Zhou (770–221 BC), the Qin (221–206 BC), and the Western Han periods. This period witnessed how early Chinese texts evolved from brief single *pian* to more voluminous units, how pedagogical use of texts expanded from royal and aristocratic families to the classes of lower elite, how texts were collected by local nobles and the imperial library, and how texts could serve a range of functions, from talismanic to ideological. The creation, dissemination, and application of writings not only made Chinese history more recognizable and readable, but also made such reading more interesting and meaningful.

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**18** Barthes 2002; Owen 2006: 7; Beecroft 2010: 16–20.

**19** Zhang Longxi 張隆溪 1992: 133–146. I will return to this point later in this introduction.

**20** Among the numerous recent discoveries, the Guodian 郭店 and Mawangdui 馬王堆 texts serve as two excellent examples in this regard. For the texts excavated from these two places, see Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 荊門市博物館 1998; Hunan Sheng Bowuguan 湖南省博物館 and Fudan Daxue Chutu Wenxian yu Guwenzi Yanjiu Zhongxin 復旦大學出土文獻與古文字研究中心 2014.

**21** McKenzie 1999.

In addition to the issues surrounding the formation and transmission of early texts, early Chinese authorship is complicated by the fact that it has various manifestations in different social and historical contexts. Inevitably its full richness cannot be thoroughly studied and presented in a single project. The four types of authorship this work focuses on are carefully chosen not only for their being representative in reflecting the complexity of early authorial attribution, but also for a sense of the history of early Chinese authorship as reconstructed through the examination of these four models. Each model is illustrated by examining an author and a text attributed to him. Each study will offer answers to long-standing questions regarding the authorship and the formation of a specific text. Additionally, it is my hope that each study may provide a guide for understanding similar cases, and that all four studies will prove helpful in explaining how the concept of the author formed, and how texts may be understood through the author's relation to early Chinese text formation and transmission.

Chapter One sets up a framework for the discussion of the four case studies. While making a condensed introduction to the concept of the author and its development over time in the context of Western literary trends, this chapter establishes early Chinese authors in connection with newly discovered early texts written on wood or bamboo strips. It also examines how authorial intent functioned in the *bianwei* 辨偽 (identifying the fakes) tradition as a key part of its methodology.

Chapter Two discusses the Yellow Emperor as an example of the type of authorship that views the author as a cultural hero. It begins with a description and analysis of the types of works attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwen zhi” 藝文志 chapter of the *Hanshu* 漢書. It then answers the following three questions in relation to various intellectual, religious, and political discourses: (1) Why was the Yellow Emperor excluded from the Confucian Classics? (2) Why do the majority of the Yellow Emperor's writings concern methods, calculations, recipes, and techniques? (3) Why has the Yellow Emperor received significantly more textual attributions than any other cultural hero?

I suggest that the answers to all three questions are associated with the argument that the figure of the Yellow Emperor was forged out of Eastern Zhou ritual and religious thought that bears the mark of the ancestral veneration of great antiquity while also reflecting the concerns of the changing social realities of the time. At the end of this chapter, I also discuss the debate on the authorship of the newly excavated text from Mawangdui Tomb 3, the “Huangdi sijing” 黃帝四經 (Four Classics by the Yellow Emperor) from the perspective of early Chinese text formation and transmission.

Chapter Three focuses on Confucius (551–479 BC), the “quotable” author portrayed in the *Lunyu* 論語, or *The Analects*, to explore the type of author regarded

as the head of a teaching lineage. It begins by addressing the ongoing debate in mainland China on Li Ling's reading of the *Lunyu*, in which he identifies Confucius "as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak truth to power,"<sup>22</sup> a *de facto* reading against the influential convention that views Confucius as a sage, and, thus, the *Lunyu* as the collection of the sage's wise words. To explain why Confucius has been understood as a sage, this chapter links the sanctification of Confucius to the Early Western Han. In an attempt to reconstruct the history of the *Lunyu*'s formation and transmission, this chapter argues that the written materials later incorporated into the *Lunyu* originally served different purposes and were interpreted as such in differing contexts. The compilation of the *Lunyu* in the early Western Han was concomitant with the trend of elevating and mythicizing Confucius as the creator of the Han governmental ideology, as he filled the need for a tangible, quotable authority.

Chapter Four examines the type of author identified as a patron, with the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and its owner-author Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BC) provided as an example. Liu An has long been considered the author of the *Huainanzi*. He is said to have established the overall design of the compilation, written parts of the text, and composed and presented the postface, the "Yaolüe" 要略 (Summary of the Essentials) chapter of the *Huainanzi*, to the Han imperial court, although his precise role in fashioning the text is uncertain. By examining the remaining sources documenting Liu An and the *Huainanzi*—including the *Hanshu* accounts, Gao You's 高誘 (fl. 205–210 AD) annotations and commentaries, and related archaeological finds on early Chinese writings—and the development and function of early Chinese postface writing, this chapter argues that the "Yaolüe" was composed after Liu An's death as a means to impart a cohesive unity to those writings left from Liu An's Huainan court. It further explores the significant role of patronage as represented by the compilation of the *Huainanzi*, the nature of this type of authorship, as well as the relationship between the patron-author and the actual writers or compilers.

Chapter Five explores the concept of the author as an individual writer via Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145/135–86 BC). This chapter begins with an examination of the *Shiji* interpretation which places it in a framework stressing the authorial voice as a vent for individual frustration. This interpretive strategy rests upon the assumption that the *Shiji* postface, known as the "Grand Historian's Self-Narration" (*Taishigong zixu* 太史公自序), and the "Letter in Response to Ren An" (*Bao Ren An shu* 報任安書), another "autobiographical" piece of literature, were indeed written by Sima Qian. Nevertheless, a careful reading of both accounts reveals

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22 Said 1994: xvi.

the possibility that neither was written by Sima Qian himself, and that the voice of frustration should be understood as the collective voice of the Han intellectuals. It also shows that epistolary writing developed as a form for Han writers to convey their dissent without risk of public exposure by hiding themselves behind a pseudonym. This function was closely associated with the centralized power of the newly established imperial system that diminished an individual's voice in civil service when compared with the Eastern Zhou's multi-centered political structure and its looser social control.

In conclusion, this work considers the physical form of manuscripts and the formation of authorship as key approaches to advance new understanding of early Chinese texts. Each chapter addresses specific issues that have been widely studied for centuries, each chapter challenges previous scholarship by adding new evidence to the argument and offering new interpretations of old information, each chapter aims to find new solutions to old questions from different and more meaningful perspectives. Put together, hopefully these chapters form a group of examples strong and inspiring enough to present a more effective way of viewing and understanding early Chinese texts, and “raise one corner” (*ju yiyu* 舉一隅)<sup>23</sup> to facilitate more comprehensive and systematic studies of this sort in the future.

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<sup>23</sup> *Lunyu zhushu* 論語註疏 7.87.

# 1 Text, Author, and the Function of Authorship

Two questions run throughout this work. The first examines the impact of authorship on the interpretation of texts. The second examines the concept of authorship as concretely related to textual formation and transmission in early China. Now, we must first review our understanding of several fundamental concepts related to this discussion: What was a text in early China? What was an author in early China? What distinguishes an early Chinese text and an early Chinese author from their modern forms and meanings? Why does authorship matter, and how does its study stand as meaningful viewed from the perspective of Chinese text history? Our understanding of these concepts provides a common vocabulary for the main discussion of this work. We begin with a general understanding of writing's significance in early China and the formation of early Chinese texts that differed from present-day book writing.

## 1.1 A Text in Early China

Thanks to archaeological discoveries, especially those occurring in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we now have a glimpse of the physical forms of Warring States and Early Han texts.<sup>1</sup> Most of the excavated early Chinese “books” are written on bamboo or wooden slips or silk cloths.<sup>2</sup> Paper might have been made and used in the time

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1 Xing Yitian's 邢義田 and Ma Yi's 馬怡 recent works are especially worth noting in this regard. Both apply recent discoveries, including archaeologically recovered texts and visual art information to explore the material aspects of pre-modern Chinese writings. See Xing Yitian 2011a: 1–50; Ma Yi 2013: 72–102.

2 There is a distinction between some of the English words (“book,” “manuscript,” “text,” and “literature”) used to translate the Chinese term *gu shu* 古書 or *gu wenxian* 古文獻. Both “book” and “manuscript” refer to the material form of a text, while the word “book” suggests a bound volume but “manuscript” emphasizes a scribal copy. The word “text” underlines the *written* nature of a piece of writing and “literature” stands for the body of written work produced in a given field. According to Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin, “The writings preserved on hard surfaces, including bones, shells, metal, stone, jade, pottery, and clay, are generally called inscriptions; while those on perishable materials, such as bamboo, wood, silk, and paper, are usually considered “books.” (Bamboo and wood are hard, but perishable.) In this work the word “text” underlines the written form of a text, while “book” refers to its material sense. See Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin 錢存訓 2004: 199; for the Chinese translation of this passage, see Tsien Tsuen-Hsuin 2002: 153; Li Ling 李零 also mentions this issue in different occasions; see Li Ling 2004: 2; 44–46; 47–49.

when some of the excavated texts were produced, but either because it was not the primary writing material or due to its easily perishable nature, we do not have any evidence indicating that early Chinese texts were written on paper.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, the materials used for writing offer telling information about the social status and personal wealth of those who had access to writings. For example, Michael Nylan infers that writings found in early tombs functioned as items for public display.<sup>4</sup> Although the presence of writings in tombs does not necessarily reveal whether or not the tomb occupants could read, the overall high social status of those in whose tombs writings have been found at least indicates that they were major consumers, if not readers, of various writing products. Understanding the interaction of the patron, the author, the scribe, and the text, as well as the interpretation of the text, therefore necessarily requires consideration of this context.

Most early Chinese texts did not have titles. The titles we now have for transmitted early texts, even among the most well-known, such as the *Changes*, the *Documents*, and the *Odes*, originally were and should continue to be viewed as textual categories under which multiple textual units were able to be grouped together rather than as titles of the unified texts we see today.<sup>5</sup> Other texts simply used the names of the given authors, as seen demonstrated by texts entitled after the names of the masters of teaching lineages. These writings are known as Masters Literature or Masters Writings (*zishu* 子書).<sup>6</sup> In either case, the titles are the result of later editorial efforts to group and categorize texts. Their contents, however, could comprise a wide range of materials, which we may speculate partly stem from an oral tradition gradually subsumed by writing. As content that could have been originally performed and transmitted orally began to coalesce into written form, that content became the inherited texts that were analyzed as traditional literature. If, as we see in the Masters Writings, the projected authors were originally textual categories functioning as book titles, the traditional hermeneutics emphasizing authorial intent has to be reconsidered. In other words, if the attributed author turns out to be a set of text attributes, as Stephen Owen proposes,<sup>7</sup> the position of the author in relation to the text as generally understood is vacated. This inevitably leads to the nullification of authorial intent and finally, that of the entire traditional hermeneutics resting upon that authorial intent. Nevertheless,

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3 We do have the fragment of a paper map found from an early Western Han tomb at Fangmatan, Gansu province, but it is hardly enough to prove that early Chinese texts might have also been produced on paper. See He Shuangquan 何雙全 1989: col. pl. 1.

4 Nylan 2005.

5 Li Ling 1998: 110.

6 Lewis 1999: 53–97; Denecke 2010.

7 Owen 2006.



compilers and editors who finalized the written products we now regard as literature filled this vacated position during the long process of text formation. The recognition of the compiler's or editor's role in early Chinese text formation is crucial for our understanding of the concept of author and authorship in early China. The author-oriented traditional hermeneutics may still be a valid approach to understanding the texts, but the compilers and editors must fill the author's place, as they were the ones who did perform a role in text-making. Even if authors contributed to the process of text-making, their intent, defined by the historical moment at which a piece of literature was originally conceived, became unidentifiable by the time the long process of text compiling and editing was complete. To summarize, understanding early Chinese authorship necessitates a full consideration of the position of compilers and editors in traditional hermeneutics, as they may have projected their own intent into their textual amalgams seen through the pieces of texts they selected, categorized, edited, arranged, and rearranged.

Archaeological evidence suggests that early Chinese texts circulated mainly as short units.<sup>8</sup> For most newly discovered manuscripts, they each look more like short chapters in comparison with received multi-chapter volumes that are appropriately labeled as books in our contemporary understanding of the term. This point, previously raised by scholars working on transmitted texts, has now been validated by archaeological finds. Short writings did not always have titles in their early forms, and when they did, their titles were often composed of a few (as we see in the *Analects*) characters from the introductory sentence.<sup>9</sup> Brief, anonymous, and often untitled, these textual units awaited compilers and editors to adopt and assemble them into larger units in which they became meaningful by being placed together with other pieces. This process of textual formation and transmission was one of constant construction, alteration, and reconstruction of meaning.<sup>10</sup> The writing of postfaces, for example, developed as a witness to this process, and, from an interpretive perspective, was obviously associated with the construction, stabilization, and transmission of meaning and authority.

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**8** Among many others, a recent publication provides a comprehensive view on the format and other material aspects of newly discovered texts, which are listed under three categories (literary writings on wood or bamboo strips, administrative writings on wood and bamboo strips, and writings on silk or cloth) based on both their writing materials and their contents. See Wu Wenling et al 2011.

**9** For discussion on titles of early Chinese texts, see Yu Jiayi 1996; Huang Ren'er 2002b; Lin Qingyuan 2004.

**10** Two recent works focusing on newly discovered early Chinese texts touch upon this point, illuminating it especially from the aspects of textual formation and construction of meaning. See Meyer, D. 2011 and Richter 2013.

In many excavated texts, scholars have identified a fair number of passages with parallel counterparts in the received textual traditions, a phenomenon also suggesting that transmitted texts are the result of generations of editing. Even the transmitted materials themselves contain traces, sometimes identified as later additions, of how freely compilers and editors stitched passages from various sources.<sup>11</sup> Such vestiges of the process of textual formation and transmission can generally be used to identify the different traditions contributing to the received text. They may also reflect certain affinities to other texts sharing similar passages. We can examine how similar passages are deployed in different textual contexts to recognize different teaching traditions at work in the production of a text, as well as how compilers reinterpreted certain schools of thought.

One final note, in contrast to the function of many modern books, early Chinese texts were more than just a medium for transmitting knowledge. As previously discussed, early Chinese writings have primarily been uncovered in the tombs of high-ranking officials, nobles, and social elite.<sup>12</sup> Since the literacy of tomb occupants cannot be attested, we do not know for certain whether the writings found therein belonged to the collections they acquired and read when they were alive. But in considering the texts in their burial context, these writings, like other luxury objects, could have constituted part of the assembly of “spiritual articles (*mingqi* 明器)” for the purpose of public display, as suggested by Michael Nylan.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, we ought not to neglect the fact that large-scale production and consumption of texts accompanied the change in religious mentality and practice from the Eastern Zhou period onward. Both tomb structure and its furnishing began to embrace the (in many aspects unprecedented) idea of the afterworld as an extension of the mundane world; thus, they aim to pacify the dead and separate them from the living.<sup>14</sup> In this context, the increased consumption of writings cannot simply be a coincidence, and the religious function of early Chinese writing needs to be taken into consideration when examining early Chinese textual formation and transmission.

This brief introduction to text formation, format, and transmission in early China relies primarily on the belief that “forms affect meaning.”<sup>15</sup> We may infer that even in the murky era of oral tradition, the meaning of a certain narrative

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<sup>11</sup> See Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 1996: 179–184; Li Ling 1988a: 108–113.

<sup>12</sup> Falkenhausen 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Nylan 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Lai Guolong 來國龍 2015.

<sup>15</sup> McKenzie 1999: 13.

changed with where, when, how, and by whom it was told.<sup>16</sup> The meanings of written passages were no less volatile than orally transmitted information, as writings were constantly being reread, remade, and reedited throughout their long history of transmission. This phenomenon of book culture, called the “Sociology of Texts” by Donald McKenzie, highlights the human presence in texts and exposes the “human motives and interactions which texts involve at every stage of their production, transmission, and consumption.”<sup>17</sup> Human interaction is observable at many points during the long process of text formation, as texts are made and remade. These points of interaction include those times when a scribe wrote down what he heard; when teaching circles adopted and further crafted piecemeal written passages to satisfy their own needs; when compilers and editors read, reread, arranged, and categorized their collections of written texts; and when transmitted texts were reformatted and supplemented with commentaries, annotations, and corrections. In this process, even errors and interpolations were introduced into the texts, and now may resist alteration and stubbornly cry for interpretation. The “history of the book,” argues McKenzie eloquently, “must be a history of misreadings,” for “[e]very society rewrites its past, every reader rewrites its texts, and if they have any continuing life at all, at some point every printer redesigns them.”<sup>18</sup>

If a meaning is a function of a particular form and new meanings are the functions of new forms, the study of the textual forms—text formation and transmission in the history of early Chinese writing—helps elicit the meanings contained in those early writings. Over the length of this monograph, the meanings and significance of early Chinese writings will be explored through the concept of authorship and its relation to textual formation and transmission. McKenzie points out that few authors are indifferent to how their works are presented and received; in one way or another, authors express their concerns in this regard.<sup>19</sup>

Yet I shall explore a different dimension of authorship. It is simultaneously associated with and differentiated from issues of authorial intent; it has little to do with, but often touches upon, the “intentional fallacy” as famously raised by

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**16** This does not mean, however, that oral transmission is less reliable or less accurate than textual transmission. Both oral and textual transmission is affected by such limits as receivers’ own understanding and interpretation of received contents. Human memory capacity, mnemonic techniques, and the nature of transmitted materials that both types of transmission rely upon also play important roles in determining whether either type of transmission is reliable. See Toelken 1969, Carr 2005.

**17** McKenzie 1999: 15.

**18** McKenzie 1999: 25.

**19** McKenzie 1999: 23.

William Wimsatt and Monroe Beardsley but dramatically deconstructed by Donald McKenzie.<sup>20</sup> As previously discussed, the position of the author in most texts before the Western Han was virtually vacated and replaced by compilers and editors. But a compiler was a compiler, and an editor, an editor: did authorship mean anything at all to early Chinese? In the sections that follow, we examine the concepts of the author and authorship in early China, and the role each played in the formation and transmission of early texts.

## 1.2 Authorship

Although considered a divine being by Romantics, sentenced to death by Roland Barthes, and claimed to have been resurrected by Burke and Irwin,<sup>21</sup> today, the meaning behind the term “author” seems fairly straightforward. It conventionally denotes the creator and the owner of a piece of work (or a piece of text, as is the case in this study). The author’s work is both his intellectual and economic property; the author receives credit and acclaim, as well as responsibility for his product.<sup>22</sup> Following this understanding of the author, authorship naturally encompasses a set of attributes possessed by an author. The idea that the literary author is tied to the origin of the text persists in spite of the strong influence of late twentieth-century literary theory seeking to remove the author from his position as the creator of the text. Just as a conventional definition of an author prevails in the West, so it has in contemporary China.

The conventional definition of the author clearly bears the birthmark of literary commodification with its obvious emphasis on ownership and origination.<sup>23</sup> Accordingly, Barthes, Foucault, and others consider the author as a recent cultural construction inseparable from the commodification of literature.<sup>24</sup> The central feature of this definition is established through the author-text relationship: the author is the autonomous creator of the text, making the text an exclusive property of the author.

Here, we review what factors led to the formation of this defining feature, and what contributed to the idea that the author should be evacuated from his position as the creator of the text. These are questions deeply embedded in Western

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**20** Wimsatt and Beardsley 1967; McKenzie 1999: 18–29.

**21** Burke 1995; Barthes 2002; Burke 2008; Irwin 2002.

**22** Abrams 2005: 15–18; Woodmansee 1994, 35; *Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* 1987: 117.

**23** Woodmansee 1994.

**24** Rose 1993: 1.

literary theory, and can be addressed by an investigation into the argument for vacating the author's position in modern hermeneutical theory.

According to Harold Bloom, the putative emptying-out of the authorial subject, as we see in the claims of Barthes and others, is linked to resistance to any transcendental presupposition regarding the relationship of the author and the text.<sup>25</sup> The recent trend of evacuating the author from his or her autonomous position belongs to a radically impersonalizing discourse that had been in existence even before the time when Barthes's claim was received and disputed. This discourse had its precedents in mimetic theory. In seeking the unmediated representation of objectivity championed by both the idealistic formulation and the literary naturalism of the mimetic tradition, the author has already been evacuated. Barthes uses the anti-mimetic rhetoric to legitimize his declaration of "the death of the author" by proposing an alternative reading in which "only language acts, 'performs,' and not 'me'."<sup>26</sup> This successfully avoids the disinterested overtone of mimetic objectivity, but it does not depart from the inspirational tradition of classical and medieval theories. According to one medieval theory regarding divinely-inspired writing—such as that of the Bible, the role of originator is not ascribed to the human author but to the inspiration and authority of divine being. The author is like the prophet in the act of prophesying, who acts as the "instrumental agent" to serve God, the "principle agent."<sup>27</sup> Barthes merely replaces the role of God with that of language, while equating the role of the author with that of "the modern scriptor," for whom,

the hand, cut off from any voice, borne by a pure gesture of inscription (and not of expression), traces a field without origin—or which, at least, has no other origin than language itself, language which ceaselessly calls into question all origins.<sup>28</sup>

In short, the dichotomous author (i.e., dividing the author's role between God and a prophet, or similarly, into the role of language and that of "the modern scriptor"), is anticipated in the classical and medieval traditions. This is attested by the notion that inspiration for poetry catches the poet but is inaccessible to him; this can also be seen in the Biblical exegetical tradition that traces authorship to the Holy Spirit. Logically, the difference between the radical modern depersonalization of the author and the classical and medieval theories is none other than the former's

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<sup>25</sup> Bloom 1975: 62.

<sup>26</sup> Barthes 2002: 4.

<sup>27</sup> Based on the words of Nicholas of Lyra (c. 1270–1340) quoted by Minnis. See Minnis 1984: 91.

<sup>28</sup> Barthes 2002: 5–6.

unwillingness to acknowledge the influence of the concept of the dichotomous author.

Notwithstanding the similarity between contemporary theory and classical and medieval traditions, recent anti-author theories do not build upon the traditional concept of authorship. This significant shift in the concept of authorship, suggested by Seán Burke, is in connection with the Romantic revolution and eighteenth-century philosophical and aesthetic discourses.<sup>29</sup> Modern anti-author theory belongs to the romantic tradition which it also stands against.

Eventually, the influence of mimetic theory declined, as becomes evident in the Renaissance celebration of Genius, the notion that a writer transcending tradition emerged and gradually prevailed. This notion continues in Romanticism, which further transforms the author's Classical and Medieval role as passive mirror, or prophet, into the individual consciousness that creates the world. It was Kant's philosophy that allowed the transcendental ego to extend to the aesthetic realm via the power of imagination. As Shelley claims, "It [the imagination] creates anew the universe after it has been annihilated in our minds by the recurrence of impressions blunted by re-iteration."<sup>30</sup> The emphasis on creative and originating imagination, however, does not exclude inspiration, the term inextricably tied with divine power and the medieval tradition. This voice of reconciliation between the authorial subject and the otherness can be heard among Romantics, such as Shelley, Wordsworth, and Coleridge. Even so, the author is no longer the scribe of Divine will, but is considered to be imitating the act of creation itself. The author becomes a Creator-God. As Schiller writes, "Like the divinity behind the world's structure he [the naïve poet] stands behind his work; *he* is the work and the work is *he*."<sup>31</sup>

Transcendent though it may be, the author described by Schiller is depersonalized. Here, the author is identified with the whole work while being totally invisible within the work. The Romantics' manner of conceptualization can certainly be traced to the theological tradition in which God is the figure who is both transcendent to and omnipresent within creation.<sup>32</sup> The cause of this obvious irony, Burke argues, is associated with the Romantic consideration in which

impersonality functioned as a guard against the potentially nihilistic implications of Kant's subjective idealism, as an attempt to preserve something of the Enlightenment notion of

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<sup>29</sup> Burke 1995: xix.

<sup>30</sup> Shelley 1974: 151.

<sup>31</sup> Schiller 1988: 156.

<sup>32</sup> Abrams 1953: 239–241.

disengaged reason in an era which could no longer see truth as mimetically grounded or divinely sanctioned.<sup>33</sup>

Here Kant's "subjective idealism" refers to his claim in the *Critique of Judgment* that all judgments are grounded on subjectivity, and thus the "subjective universality" inevitably appears.<sup>34</sup>

It is for the same reason that modern anti-author theories arise. They arise directly against the dominant notion of criticism that defines literature as a revelation of personality. This manner of criticism hails literature as a record disclosing the author's personal life without contradiction, while also celebrating the author as the transcendent genius behind the text. As the precursors of the modern anti-author theorists, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, and others often made their anti-Romanticism statements while presenting themselves as Romanticists of a higher level. New Criticism takes a similar stance by exclusively focusing on text itself. Accordingly, New Criticism defies the self-expression model that dominated the literary world in the latter half of the nineteenth century and turns the issue of writing into that of reading. It is from the same vein that Barthes's claims of "The Death of the Author" and others' pronouncements on theories of language, anonymity, and *écriture* have been developed. Barthes's claim does not break through the transcendental/impersonal impasse; what makes his argument distinct is his extreme impersonalization of the author.

The detachment of the author from the text resulting from the transcendental/impersonal dilemma has not been without detractors. First came Friedrich Nietzsche, who challenged Kant's notion by suggesting the author's relationship to philosophically defined impersonal consciousness. The discourse of authorship, Nietzsche contends, is inalienably personal, but it has been constructed in a self-erasure mode which misplaces the author and the reader out of ignorance of the fact that both knowledge and textuality have foundational subjective concerns. Text readings cannot bypass the author. Nietzsche pioneers a relocation of the author. Freud, Marx, Heidegger, Foucault, and others, like Nietzsche, attempt to return the author to the text, and subject to discourse. Such relocation is anchored in the recognition that, using Burke's words,

[P]roblems that bedevil the author-debate arise from the failure to realise that the notion of the author has been falsely analogised with the transcendent/impersonal subject and that the only way to deconstruct this latter subject is not to replace it with theories of language, *différance*, anonymity and *écriture féminine* and so on, but to reposition authorship as a

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33 Burke 1995: xxii.

34 Kant 1952: 50–51.

situated activity present not so much as to itself as to culture, ideology, language, difference, influence, biography.<sup>35</sup>

Nonetheless, the relocation of the author has yet to be accomplished, despite Nietzsche's postmodern path of approaching authorship occurring a century ago. The reason is simply that trends in contemporary theory pay less attention to the situated author than to the locality of discourse, and current trends seem unwilling to consider the situated author as the principle of locality.

Some other scholars, however, abstain from placing the author issue in philosophical, linguistic, and aesthetic discourses, and prefer to see the genesis of the author as the result of the proliferation of a middle-class population of readers. Martha Woodmansee, for example, considers authorship a product of the development of the capitalist economy in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, following Foucault's call that

it would be worth examining how the author became individualized in a culture like ours, what status he has been given, at what moment studies of authenticity and attribution began, in what kind of system of valorization the author was involved, at what point we began to recount the lives of authors rather than of heroes, and how this fundamental category of 'the-man-and-his-work criticism' began.<sup>36</sup>

Beginning in England and then spreading to other European countries such as Germany, the increasing demand for books by a quickly rising middle-class readership gradually enabled writers to free themselves from the need for patronage and to make a living by selling their works supported by publishers, booksellers, and, most importantly, a growing number of readers. With success in the flourishing book market came writers' call for copyright laws to institute ownership of the works they produced, and protect their economic gains. Accompanying their newly established ownership came authors' claim to their originality, creativity, and genius. As a result, their books were legalized and institutionalized as both their intellectual and material properties. This transformation of the author into the owner of his intellectual product coincided with the Romantic movement, but the concept of the author was fundamentally economic and statutory in nature, and thus its emergence cannot be solely examined through late-seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European philosophical and aesthetic discourse.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Burke 1995: xxvi.

<sup>36</sup> Foucault 2002: 9.

<sup>37</sup> Woodmansee 1994; Rose 1993.



Stressing the formation of authorship as intertwined with the economic and legal circumstances of the seventeenth-century book market is considered at odds with historical fact. According to Meyer H. Abrams, the genesis of the author can be traced far before the seventeenth century. Abrams argues that the concept of the author was referenced two thousand years ago by the Roman lyric poet, Horace, who discusses the *scriptor* (writer), *poeta* (maker), and *carminis auctor* (originator of poem), as well as the genius (*ingenium*) and skills an author ought to possess in order to move the audience. A successful book, according to Horace, should instruct and bring pleasure to readers, “make money for the bookseller,” and “cross the sea and spread to a distant age the fame of its author.”<sup>38</sup> Abrams believes Horace’s concept of authorship does not fundamentally differ from its modern definition because “Horace distinguishes between material and authorial, or intellectual, ownership, in that the author, even if he has no proprietary interest in a published book, retains the sole responsibility and credit for having accomplished the work that the text incorporates.”<sup>39</sup>

This survey of the debates on authorship in the Western literary tradition and its connection with the economic and legal development from the seventeenth century onward redefining the term of the author, however oversimplified, exposes the continuous construction of the concept of the author and authorship. The meaning of *auctor*, the Latin origin of the word “author,” is relatively comprehensible, but the author as a concept is fluid, constantly debated and redefined in different discourses. It is no surprise that the connotations and functions of the author vary in different discourses, but, historically, no matter how different, these discourses are hermeneutical in nature, and the debates mostly focus on understandings of texts. While the Romantics privilege the author’s creativity and imagination with the absolute authority in the interpretation of texts, the poststructuralists aim to free the interpretation of text from the author’s domination, declaring that the Author is dead.

The definition of the author in contemporary China essentially transplants the Western legal and economic definition discussed above into its own discourse of modernization, dating back to the nineteenth century. Although many contending political ideologies over the past one and a half centuries have led to disputes regarding the concept of authorship, legal and economic privileges granted to the author have survived. Western Romantic and the later debates on the concept of the author are absent in Chinese scholarship. Nevertheless, it is difficult to imagine that there is nothing more to the concept of the Chinese author than a legal and

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38 Abrams 2005: 17.

39 Abrams 2005: 17.

economic shell. In fact, the concept of absolute authority over text is deeply embedded in traditional Chinese poetics and has, to a large extent, helped shape modern Chinese understanding of authorship. With the influence of a traditional hermeneutics stemming from the *Maoshi* 毛詩 (Mao Version of the Odes) and other classical works, the contemporary Chinese concept of the author appears to be a hybrid covering the old hermeneutical tradition with the veneer of legal and economic considerations.

### 1.3 Authorship in Early China

The modern Chinese word for “author” is 作者 (*zuozhe*), a compound consisting of a verb *zuo* and pronoun *zhe*, referring to the subject who performs the action of the verb preceding it. The verb *zuo* first appears in oracle inscriptions and has been used ever since. While its root meaning remains contested, Michael Puett insists that its general denotation of “to do,” “to act,” “to make,” “to build,” or “to create,” like its Greek counterpart ποίω (*poieo*), emerged fairly early and is not necessarily derived from any concrete meaning suggested by its graphic form.<sup>40</sup> A *zuozhe*, therefore, is considered one who creates a text. This interpretation makes *zuozhe* a perfect Chinese translation of *auctor*, the Latin word for “author,” denoting the “originator,” “founder,” or “creator.”<sup>41</sup> We should bear in mind, however, that the connotations associated with the term *zuozhe* were much broader than the modern connotation that exclusively associates it with the creator of a work of art, be it a text or other object.

The invention of culture, institutions, and writing is usually associated with semi-legendary figures and sages. In his *Writing and Authority in Early China*, Mark Lewis develops a three-stage model of sages and their connection to writing and governance in early China. Fu Xi 伏羲, the Duke of Zhou 周公 (Zhougong), and Confucius are all related to writing and political authority: in high antiquity, Fu Xi exemplifies the individual who creates the signs of writing and establishes peaceful kingship; the Duke of Zhou parallels the achievements of Fu Xi in the

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<sup>40</sup> Puett 2001: 22–25, 217–224.

<sup>41</sup> Lewis’s and Short’s initial definition of the term *auctor*, with a broad connotation, is as the following: “he that brings about the existence of any object, or promotes the increase or prosperity of it, whether he first originates it, or by his efforts gives greater permanence or continuance to it; to be differently translated according to the object, creator, maker, author, inventor, producer, father, founder, teacher, composer, cause, voucher, supporter, leader, head, etc.” Lewis and Short 1879.

middle period of early China; and Confucius marks the separation of textual authority from political power in the later period of early China.<sup>42</sup> While this is a useful model for understanding the role of writing in creating authority and establishing the sages as the inventors of writing, I shall argue that the literature regarding sages does not portray itself as a creation of the sages.

The most frequently cited passage regarding the creation of writing appears in almost identical passages in the “Xici” 繫辭 (copulative words, also known as “The Great Treatise”) section of the *Changes* and in the preface to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, the earliest extant Chinese dictionary compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 58–147 AD):

古者庖犧氏之王天下也，仰則觀象於天，俯則觀法於地，視鳥獸之文與地之宜，近取諸身，遠取諸物；於是始作易八卦，亅垂憲象。

In the past when Pao Xi [Fu Xi] became the king under heaven, he faced upward and observed the images in the sky, he looked downward and observed the norms on earth, he watched the patterns of the birds and animals and other appropriate matters on earth, near at hand he obtained what he needed from his body, and at a distance he obtained what he needed from the outside world; based on all this he began to make the eight trigrams of the *Changes* in order to pass down the models and images.<sup>43</sup>

Although Xu Shen traces the origin of writing to Fu Xi, the legendary sage-king did not invent writing per se, but rather invented a system of signs—the eight trigrams in which the images and patterns of the whole universe are crystallized. These eight abstract trigrams are the seeds of civilization that would burgeon and flourish in future ages. Indeed, after recounting how Fu Xi created the eight trigrams, the “Xici” continues to demonstrate how the myriad of inventions, as mentioned in the later reconstructed *Shiben* 世本, occurred with inspiration from the various hexagrams, which were generated by combining trigrams into pairs.<sup>44</sup> The actual invention of writing as recorded in the preface to the *Shuowen jiezi*, is ascribed to Cang Jie 倉頡, a scribe of another legendary sage-king, the Yellow Emperor. The circumstances of

<sup>42</sup> Lewis 1999: 195–240. We should be aware, however, that the historical sense of Lewis’s model cannot be regarded as history, but is merely later political and textual construction. For example, the attribution of the *Changes* to Fu Xi and Duke of Zhou should have occurred later than the time when the core of the *Changes* was formed.

<sup>43</sup> *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 15.753.

<sup>44</sup> *Zhouyi zhengyi* 8:298–302; Sun Fengyi 2008, 6; Chen Qirong 2008, 3; and passim in the *Shiben bazhong*, see Qin Jiamo et al 2008.

the invention of writing as described by Xu Shen clearly associate it with increasing social complexity.<sup>45</sup>

While Cang Jie's invention of Chinese characters is supposedly derived from the trigrams made by Fu Xi, this process should have been far more complex. Imitating the patterns, forms, and images of the myriad of things in this world, he created the *wen* 文 graphs; combining the radicals, he made the various *zi* 字 characters. These basic writing elements enabled documents to be written and history to be recorded, as the *Shuowen jiezi* preface notes, “putting the words on bamboo strips or silk is referred to as writing; and writing, complying with [what things are]” 箸於竹帛謂之書; 書者如也.<sup>46</sup> Writing provides the human past a concrete form through which it could be read, checked, carried around from place to place, and passed down from one generation to another, just as Xu Shen observes:

蓋文字者，經藝之本，王政之始；前人所已垂後，後人所已識古。

As for graphs and characters, they are the basis of the Classics and Arts and the beginning of the king's governance; they are the means by which people of the past could transmit their heritage to later ages and by which people of later ages could recognize the ancient.<sup>47</sup>

This statement implies a framework in which the significance of the invention of writing could be assessed. Comparing it with the concerns about authorship in Western literary theory, we see that early Chinese authorship is related to the public discourse rather than to the discourse of individual consciousness prominent in the Romantic tradition. This public discourse encompasses issues related to forms of governance, cultural affiliations, ritual, history, transmission and acceptance of shared memory, knowledge, and identity. Authorship in Western classical and medieval traditions was also situated in public discourse, but in the case of early China, authorship is grounded neither on the classical mimetic model nor on the aforementioned medieval inspirational theory. It deals with a patterned world rather than pure nature; authority originates not from God but from sages. Early Chinese literature describes a sage, or *shengren* 聖人, as a wise and knowledgeable man who well comprehends (*tong* 通) the world.<sup>48</sup> In such early Chinese texts as the *Mengzi*

<sup>45</sup> *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 15.1:753. The legend regarding Cang Jie's inventing Chinese characters is also recorded in the *Liushi chunqiu lu* 呂氏春秋, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, and *Lun Heng* 論衡; see Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷 1984: 1051; He Ning 1998: 571; Huang Hui 黃暉 1995: 249.

<sup>46</sup> *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 15.754.

<sup>47</sup> *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 15.763.

<sup>48</sup> *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 12a.592; *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 說文通訓定聲 17.880; Gu Jiegang 2011: 626–639; Xing Yitian 2011b.

and the *Xunzi*, as well as the newly excavated Guodian manuscripts archaeologically dated to late Warring States period, the meaning of this term is moralized and politicized, and consequently the status of a sage becomes more often tied with that of a king responsible for enlightening, educating, and governing common people.<sup>49</sup>

Nevertheless, a sage is not defined as a god or even god-like figure, and even a commoner can achieve his sagehood by accumulating (*ji* 積) knowledge.<sup>50</sup> In this sense, a sage does not emulate God to create anything, but as attributed to Confucius in the *Lunyu* (The Analects), he “transmits without creating” 述而不作.<sup>51</sup> Sages stand between heaven (the transcendental realm) and man (the personal realm) as a mediator, freeing the concept of authorship from the transcendental/impersonal impasse that Western discourses have been trying to disentangle from the beginning of the conceptualization of the author. It seems, then, that the author functions in the public discourse of early Chinese writing as the transmitter of the transmitter; as a recorder, or a copier, rather than an originator or creator of the text.<sup>52</sup> The introduction of the sage as mediator prevents the formation of the dichotomous author seen in the author/nature and author/God models in Western mimetic and Biblical exegetical traditions.

It is also noteworthy that early Chinese authors, acting as transmitters, did not need to actually write anything. Confucius illustrates this point. He is unmistakably identified in the *Lunyu* as one who “transmits without creating,” and despite the fact there is no substantial evidence suggesting that Confucius ever wrote anything himself, he has still been celebrated in intellectual history as China’s most important author. In the early Chinese context, then, authorship

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**49** For a textual survey in transmitted early texts, Gu Jiegang 2011. For a typical *Mengzi* passage discussing the sage kings, see Yang Bojun 2010b: 148–149; for examples of this regard in the Guodian manuscripts, consult “Wuxing” 五行, “Liude” 六德, “Zun deyi” 尊德義, “Tang Yu zhidao” 唐虞之道, and “Chengzhi wenzhi” 成之聞之; see Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998: 147–154, 185–190, 171–176, 165–170, respectively.

**50** Both the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi* offer expressions as such. For example, it says in the *Mengzi* that “each and every person can become a Yao or a Shun” 人皆可以為堯舜; see Yang Bojun 2010b: 255–256. In the *Xunzi*, it also says that “a man in the street can become a Yu” 塗之人可以為禹; see Wang Xianqian 2010: 442–444.

**51** Yang Bojun 2010a: 65.

**52** As a side note for future study, I would like to mention that, from this aspect, early Chinese writing contains similarities with the ancient Near Eastern wisdom literature, a genre of traditional oral story-telling transmitted in written form, mainly including teachings about virtue and divinity from sages. Some most representative examples of this genre can be found in the Bible. See Crenshaw 1985 and Anderson 1988: 586–603. I thank Professor Anthony Lappin for bringing my attention to this aspect.

becomes a condition of attribution and its purpose. But a written text, no matter how brief and rudimentary, must be written down by someone, even when the name of the writer is unknown. For these reasons, a distinction between author and writer becomes conceptually necessary, especially when we deal with texts attributed to Warring States authors.<sup>53</sup> Generally, the author of an early Chinese text is not necessarily its writer and vice versa. Moreover, since the names of writers were not circulated along with the texts they composed, little is known about early writers of physical texts except for anecdotal information accidentally scattered in transmitted texts.<sup>54</sup>

It is observable that collectors, compilers, and editors of written texts continuously participated in the process of early Chinese text formation and transmission. This was especially the case during the Han dynasty, when the imperial court collected scattered texts and appointed editors to rearrange and categorize them.<sup>55</sup> In their work, compilers and editors changed the layout of texts, and consequentially generated new meanings and interpretations of the texts, in this way reshaping people's understandings of them. Just as these editorial changes influenced the reception of texts in the world at large, the social, political, and religious conditions of the times influenced the editorial work. Because these changes are often marked in texts, we gain insight into those historical moments when texts took on new forms. Changes in the physical medium, textual format, and contents (including errors and interpolations) reflect both the history of the book, as well as early Chinese intellectual history. Similarly, both the history of early Chinese texts and early Chinese intellectual history can be explored through an examination of the roles played by authors (real or hypothetical), writers, compilers, and editors.

Although the terms “compilers” and “editors” today refer to those who work on texts as a profession, we should not assume that such professions existed in early China. I do not exclusively use these terms to refer to ancient textual specialists and officials appointed to work on the imperial collection, but instead apply them to anyone who, on any occasion, disassembled, combined, and changed

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53 It is interesting to note that although *The Histories* by Herodotus clearly contains indications of authorship, the common word for author in Europe from the tenth to twelfth centuries is “dictator,” denoting one who dictates instead of writing. I thank Professor Anthony Lappin for pointing this out.

54 For example, in Han Fei's 韓非 *Shiji* biographical account, it says that when the King of Qin 秦 read some of the writings now incorporated in the *Han Feizi* 韓非子, he liked them greatly and expressed that he would like to befriend the author of those writings. Li Si 李斯 then told the King of Qin that it was Han Fei who had written them. See *Shiji* 史記 63.2155.

55 *Hanshu* 漢書 30.1301.

a text during writing, presentation, or performance. Consequentially, I echo Stephen Owen: we should not consider an early Chinese text a product of a specific moment, but rather, a reflection on a process of transmission through which it was constantly reproduced and re-formed.<sup>56</sup> Since each remaking led to a specific textual production, either a different form or different interpretation, sometimes it is difficult to draw a clear line between compilers and writers, or between editors and authors. From this perspective, we may lay aside the concept of the singular author, usually bound with the idea of solitary genius, and imagine the author as a collective form. As Jack Stillinger suggests, we should treat the text as the result of a collaborative effort made by the nominal author as well as “a friend, a spouse, a ghost, an agent, an editor, a translator, a publisher, a censor, a transcriber, a printer, or—what is more often the case—several of these acting together or in succession.”<sup>57</sup> I would suggest that the concept of multifarious authorship is also applicable to the making of early Chinese texts. Moreover, the collective effort emphasized in the concept of multifarious authorship has been the force behind the transmitted texts we have today. Surviving early Chinese texts are the results of a collective effort both in synchronic and diachronic senses; the authorship of those texts, correspondingly, should be defined as an historical, multi-layered relationship between the author and the text. If the author is defined in any way responsible for shaping texts, the author must be understood in a plural sense.

#### 1.4 Authorial Intention and the *Bianwei* Tradition

The idea of unitary authorship has long shaped perspectives of Chinese text making and the concept of authorship. We further understand this need for a concept of unitary authorship when reviewing the basic traditional hermeneutics found in the *Odes*. This need is outlined in a debate between Mencius (ca. 372–289 BC) and his interlocutor Xianqiu Meng 咸丘蒙 in the *Mengzi* 孟子, when the former identifies the author’s intention (*zhi* 志) as a determinate factor in the interpretation of an ode. Shun 舜 is portrayed as a filial son who unconditionally obeyed his father and would not make his father his servant even after Shun succeeded Yao to be the king. Nevertheless, it states in the *Odes* that a king is to be a ruler of all other human beings. It is against such a contradiction that Xianqiu Meng raised his question to Mencius: “If, as it is said in the *Odes*, ‘Under the heaven there is no land that belongs not to the

<sup>56</sup> For Owen’s words on the formation of early Chinese poetry, see Owen 2006: 20.

<sup>57</sup> Stillinger 1991: v.

king/ On the land there is no one who is not the king's subject' (普天之下/莫非王土/率土之濱/莫非王臣),” Xianqiu Meng questions, “Dare I say that Shun's father Gusou 瞽叟 (blind old man) was not Shun's subject after Shun became the king?”<sup>58</sup>

Xianqiu Meng cleverly sets a trap for Mencius in his question. If Mencius agrees with Xianqiu Meng's proposition that Shun's father was not Shun's subject, then he negates the pronouncement in the cited *Shi* lines. If he disagrees with Xianqiu Meng, then the *Shi* lines stand as Gusou remains Shun's subject, but, in legitimizing the authority of the *Shi* lines, Mencius undermines Shun's reputation as a filial son. Instead of offering a direct answer to Xianqiu Meng's question, Mencius first challenges Xianqiu Meng's understanding of this ode, saying:

是詩也，非是之謂也；勞於王事，而不得養父母也。曰：此莫非王事，我獨賢勞也。

This ode does not mean what you suggest it does. It speaks of someone laboring in the king's affairs and that for that reason, he is not able to support his parents. These lines try to convey, “Nothing is not the king's business, but only I am worthy and labored.”<sup>59</sup>

Mencius does not stop after correcting Xianqiu Meng's understanding, but he solidifies his own understanding by placing it in the context of a general interpretive strategy for the *Odes*:

故說詩者，不以文害辭，不以辭害志。以意逆志，是為得之。如以辭而已矣，雲漢之詩曰：周餘黎民，靡有子遺。信斯言也，是周無遺民也。

Thus, one who explains an ode cannot use words to obstruct phrases, nor can he use phrases to obstruct the Poet's intention. If the interpreter's mind is able to meet the poet's intention, it means that the interpreter understands the ode. If he tries to interpret it based upon nothing but the phrases—the ode “Yunhan” says, “Of the Zhou multitudes/ Not a single one has survived;”—if he believes in these words literally, it would mean that none of the Zhou people has survived.<sup>60</sup>

Mencius's interpretative strategy employs two major tactics. First, any interpretation of an ode must consider the relation of a part to the overall meaning of the ode. As clearly demonstrated, the understanding of individual words or phrases must remain consistent with the overall meaning of a poem. Mencius, accordingly, takes issue with Xianqiu Meng's incomplete reading of the poem and his failure to consider how the lines he quotes relate to the two lines Mencius identifies as central. The second tactic grows out of the first, which equates the poet's intention

<sup>58</sup> Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 2010b:198–199; the lines that Xianqiu Meng cites is from the ode “Beishan” 北山; see *Maoshi zhengyi* 13.797.

<sup>59</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 198–199.

<sup>60</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 199.



to the overall meaning of a poem. Mencius argues that the only effective way to reach the meaning of a poem is to let the lines guide the interpreter's mind (*yi* 意) to meet the poet's intention lodged between lines. This privileges the poet's intention over a literal interpretation, which may obstruct the meaning. Mencius illustrates this with two lines from "Yunhan," demonstrating the impossibility of taking hyperbolic language literally when reality obviously contradicts their suggestions.<sup>61</sup> That is to say, an individual line must be read within the context provided by the whole poem, which thereby indicates a plausible understanding of the intention that has shaped the whole, and to which individual lines are necessarily subordinate.

Mencius is not alone in equating an ode's meaning with the poet's intention; we can also observe this hermeneutic thought in the "Great Preface to the *Odes*" ("*Shi da xu*" 詩大序). One of the most quoted passages says,

詩者，志之所之也；在心為志，發言為詩。

Poetry is that to which the intention goes; what is called intention in heart is called poetry when it takes the form of words.<sup>62</sup>

A similar idea is also found in the "Shundian" 舜典 chapter of the *Documents*:

詩言志，歌永言。

Poetry articulates the intentions, songs intone the articulations.<sup>63</sup>

Whether these two passages underscore a compositional model or a pedagogical purpose is unclear, but I am confident that interpretation is central to both statements. In a compositional model, the articulated intention no doubt belongs to the purported poet. Mencius's suggestion that the interpreter of an ode needs to meet the poet's intention supports a compositional model in which the poet composes a poem to voice his intentions. Even if the *zhi* in the "*Shi da xu*" and "Shundian" contexts is considered the intention of a performer—say, a diplomat delivering an official message through the citation of some *Shi* lines—the authority that the *Shi* lines add to the message must be generated from a well-defined meaning. In the *Maoshi* and other pedagogical traditions, interpretative authority automatically derives from the founders of those exegetical traditions, each of whom claimed their orthodox status by being linked to the scholarly lineage of

<sup>61</sup> Stephen Owen also discusses this passage, see Owen 1992: 24–26.

<sup>62</sup> *Maoshi zhengyi* 1.6.

<sup>63</sup> *Shangshu zhengyi* 3.79.

Confucius, who was thought to have coded new meanings in the odes through his compiling and editing of them during a time when their original meaning had been abandoned. In this way, Confucius was actually elevated to the author's position. No matter how different the *Qi Shi*, *Lu Shi*, and *Mao Shi* exegetical traditions might be, as long as they claimed to be Confucius's followers, they accepted the meaning intended in the odes by Confucius, and thus their interpretations of the odes all claim to reflect Confucius's intentions.

However, the concept of authorship in the formation and transmission of early Chinese texts seems to have been long misunderstood. The nominal author who should mainly function as a guide to text formation and interpretation is considered retrospectively as the originator and writer of the text. When a text's hermeneutical value is historicized as the function of the author who created the text, authorship is naturally considered a determinative factor in differentiating authentic from forged texts (*bianwei* 辨偽). We see this tendency especially in works produced in the early twentieth century under the influence of the "doubting antiquity" (*yigu* 疑古) movement. The essence of such approach suggests that, if the author of a text can be determined, the text becomes dateable and analyzable based on the author's biography. The *Gushu zhenwei jiqi niandai* 古書真偽及其年代 (On the Authenticity and Dating of Ancient Writings) by Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929 AD), the *Weishu tongkao* 偽書通考 (Comprehensive Investigation of Forged Writings) by Zhang Xincheng 張心澂 (1887–1973 AD), and Gu Jiegang's 顧頡剛 (1893–1980 AD) preface and postface to Yao Jiheng's 姚際恒 (1674–1715 AD) *Gujin weishu kao* 古今偽書考 (Investigation of Ancient and Present Forged Writings) all illustrate how the issue of authorship was handled and related to the cause (as well as the history) of the forging of early Chinese texts.<sup>64</sup> These works classify texts according to three types of authorship in order to discern the authentic from the forgeries. The three classifications include (1) anonymous texts whose author may never be identified; (2) texts composed in the name of an attributed author who did not actually write the text; and (3) texts whose authors simply plagiarized the work of others.<sup>65</sup> This taxonomy of texts betrays assumptions regarding the relationship between author and text upon which this method relies for identifying forged texts; namely, (a) the contents of a text should be consistent with the author's personal experience and historical background, and (b) only when an entire text accords with that author's personal experience and historical context can it be considered the work of a singular author. These two

<sup>64</sup> Liang Qichao 梁啟超 1997: 150–162; Zhang Xincheng 張心澂 1954: 2–4. Yao Jiheng 姚際恒 1994: 342–363.

<sup>65</sup> Zheng Liangshu 鄭良樹 1986: 12.

assumptions, in practice, become a gauge for the authenticity of all early Chinese texts. The authenticity of almost all pre-Qin work is thrown into doubt when filtered through such standards as those of the early twentieth century.

The limitation of these working assumptions becomes obvious when applied within the context of pre-Qin text making. As Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 (1884–1955 AD) demonstrates, the writers of most pre-Qin works are unknowable. The reason, he surmises, is related to textual production within early Chinese teaching lineages. A text attributed to the master of a certain lineage not only consists of the master's teachings as documented by his disciples, but also of what those disciples taught to their own disciples. A lineage's body of knowledge would grow over time, but it would inevitably be grouped and traced to a founding master. According to Yu Jiayi, when an author is identified in a postface, a phenomenon rarely seen in pre-Qin texts, he is either a writer of a text who did not have disciples, a writer who presented his work to court to make his name known, or a writer whose contemporaries did not want his name to be forgotten.<sup>66</sup>

The gist of Yu Jiayi's observation is based on received texts, but it finds support in recent archaeological discoveries. Although most of the excavated texts clearly correspond to those larger categories recorded in the "Yiwen zhi" chapter of the *Hanshu*,<sup>67</sup> none of them is identified by an author's name.<sup>68</sup> These works, ranging from the Warring States to Eastern Han periods, represent the nature and form of early Chinese texts. Because of these discoveries, texts once regarded as later forgeries by scholars using the author-based *bianwei* methodology, have been proven to be of early origin.<sup>69</sup> These findings have been so astonishing that a number of leading Chinese scholars now are proposing a reexamination of the formation of early Chinese texts, and the rewriting of early Chinese intellectual history which has long been heavily influenced by the "doubting antiquity" and *bianwei* traditions.<sup>70</sup>

Certainly, no movement accomplished more toward liberating thinking from the bonds of canonical scholarship than "doubting antiquity," but the movement's adoption of *bianwei* methods developed by late Qing scholars such as Cui Shu 崔述

66 Yu Jiayi 1996: 170–178.

67 Pian Yuqian 駢宇騫 and Duan Shu'an 段書安 2006: 176–294.

68 Li Ling 1988: 109.

69 Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 takes the *He Guanzi* 鶡冠子 as an example to argue for this point; see Qiu Xigui 2004: 87. For other examples, also see Qiu Xigui 2004: 79–91; Li Ling 1988: 108–113.

70 What the trend of "doubting antiquity" criticizes is "trusting antiquity" (*xingu* 信古). The newly discovered early texts prompt a recent discourse, dubbed as "explaining history" (*shigu* 釋古) by Li Xueqin 李學勤, showing the confidence of some leading scholars in this field in offering a better understanding of early Chinese writing culture by reevaluating and analyzing transmitted texts in light of newly discovered materials. Li Xueqin 2001: 3–14; 28–33; Xie Weiyang 謝維揚 2007: 3–13; 14–29.

(1740–1816 AD), Kang Youwei 康有為 (1858–1927 AD), and Yao Jiheng, failed to provide a valid chronology of transmitted early Chinese texts. Unfortunately, this movement’s innovative reconstruction of ancient Chinese history almost entirely relies upon this invalid chronology. As referenced above, problems in the chronology stem from incorrect assumptions about the relationship between early Chinese authors and texts. The assumptions themselves failed to account for how the concept of authorship in early China was influenced by the complexity of early Chinese text formation and transmission. The lack of archeological discoveries from the *bianwei* method kept their working assumptions in place,<sup>71</sup> marring many of the ideas that “doubting antiquity” scholars sought to prove.

Such author-based *bianwei* methods, however, still play a major role in projects concerned with the dating of texts and the verification of authenticity. Although some notions of the text as the author’s property are evident in Eastern Han texts,<sup>72</sup> we must bear in mind that a strict correlation between author and text is a product of China’s modern conceptions of literary history. Before the modern era, there existed a conceptual gap between an author and a writer. Pre-modern Chinese text could have had both an author and a writer, or even multiple authors and multiple writers. Early Chinese authorship of this nature, then, is an unsuitable means of dating early Chinese texts.

## 1.5 The Nature of This Study

Having defined the key terms and methodology, now it is necessary to return to elaborate on the question of whether authorship meant anything to early Chinese who did not usually emphasize the author as the originator of text. For traditional hermeneutics focusing on authorial intent, the author functioned as an interpretive cue to stabilize the meaning of a text. And examination of the concept of early Chinese authorship will thus enable us to trace the motives behind the fixing of the meanings of early Chinese texts. At a minimum, we should be able to improve our understanding of what early Chinese writings were intended to convey.

It is unclear whether traditional hermeneutics succeeded in stabilizing the meanings of texts. As a linguistic form of communication, a written text is generally intended for posterity, thereby preserving both its material manifestation and the

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<sup>71</sup> In the preface to the seventh volume of the *Gushi bian* 古史辨, Gu Jiegang notes the necessity of applying other approaches, such as modern archaeology, to the reconstruction of ancient Chinese history, but for various practical reasons, the group of “doubting antiquity” scholars had to largely rely on transmitted texts. For Gu Jiegang’s preface, see Gu Jiegang 2011: 145–148.

<sup>72</sup> For example, in works by Ban Gu, Yang Xiong, and Wang Chong.

meaning that it contains. But unlike the immediacy of communication that could be conveyed in speech through verbal and emotional expressions, writing alienates itself through its detachment from the context of speech.<sup>73</sup> Writing allows words to circulate free from the bondage of a voiced speaker and that speaker's context. Accompanying such freedom, however, is the fluidity of the meaning supposedly deposited into the written words by the author and understood by the assumed original reader, or audience, to whom the author addresses his intention. This fluidity results from what Paul Ricoeur describes as "a double eclipse of the reader and the writer" caused by the absence of the reader when the writer writes and the absence of the writer when the reader reads.<sup>74</sup> Understanding written words, therefore, does not merely arise through the physical transportation of words. Rather, as Gadamer suggests, understanding words is similar to translating one language to another. The autonomy of reading determines that "[t]he horizon of understanding cannot be limited either by what the writer originally had in mind or by the horizon of the person to whom the text was originally addressed."<sup>75</sup> Accordingly, we should abandon the notion of restoring an original meaning encoded into a text by the author, as well as that of identifying an original reader for whom the meaning was intended.

Diminishing the concept of the "original author" is inherent to literary tradition. As Gadamer argues, if we define literature as something transmitted, "a person who copies and passes on is doing it for his own contemporaries. Thus the reference to the original reader, like that to the meaning of the author, seems to offer only a very crude historico-hermeneutical criterion that cannot really limit the horizon of a text's meaning."<sup>76</sup>

The negation of the concept of the "original reader," however, does not imply the loss of meaning. On the contrary, it is how meaning is generated. In a literary tradition in which "a person who copies and passes on is doing it for his own contemporaries," as mentioned above, the meaning of literature is under continual construction. Thus, reading and understanding become both historical and present. The understanding of a text amounts to an intellectual history focusing on this text. This is why Gadamer states the following:

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73 Gadamer 2006: 392.

74 Ricoeur 1981: 147. I agree with Ricoeur that the immediacy between the writer and the reader is lost in the text, but this does not legitimize an inference leading to the complete emancipation of the text, like the notion of textuality developed in Jacques Derrida's and Roland Barthes's works. See Derrida 1979; Barthes 1979.

75 Gadamer 2006: 396.

76 Gadamer 2006: 397.

A written tradition is not a fragment of a past world, but has already raised itself beyond this into the sphere of the meaning that it expresses. The ideality of the word is what raises everything linguistic beyond that finitude and transience that characterize other remnants of past existence. It is not this document, as a piece of the past, that is the bearer of tradition but the continuity of memory. Through it tradition becomes part of our own world, and thus what it communicates can be stated immediately. Where we have a written tradition, we are not just told a particular thing; a past humanity itself becomes present to us in its general relation to the world. That is why our understanding remains curiously unsure and fragmentary when we have no written tradition of a culture but only dumb monuments, and we do not call this information about the past “history.”<sup>77</sup>

This passage suggests that not only can a written tradition be understood, but also that we who work on this tradition belong to a “continuity of memory.” Though this work focuses on a small section of this “continuity of memory” of textual tradition, it represents a type of readership following Gadamer’s description.

In sum, this work is not intended to be a direct reading of early Chinese texts, nor is it a comprehensive study of the history of any transmitted text. Rather, it is an investigation into the authorship of a few representative early Chinese texts in relation to how those texts were understood in early China. These texts belong to a long textual tradition which has been constantly reinterpreted, but newly discovered early texts have revealed the need to reconsider the concepts of author, text, and reader as they pertain to this textual tradition. If the author of an early Chinese text has been functioning as a normative reminder directing its readers to an intended reading, then questioning this authorship is equated with challenging an age-old hermeneutical tradition shaping and representing the field’s “continuity of memory” both past and the present. This work attempts to reveal how an authorial attribution was chosen via a consideration of the social and intellectual situations leading to those attributions. However provocative, it does not aim to disapprove attributions of early Chinese authorship, nor does it reject the readings of early Chinese texts envisioned in those early authorial attributions. From this perspective, even when early Chinese authorial attributions result from a misunderstanding, those misunderstandings constitute part of the intellectual history of those texts.

## 1.6 Summary

This study must be founded on an understanding of the form and formation of early Chinese texts. In comparing the formation of these texts with modern book

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<sup>77</sup> Gadamer 2006: 392.

making, this chapter offered a summary of several major features of early Chinese textual culture in the light of recent discoveries of early writings. The absence of authorial information contained in these newly discovered early writings suggests that authorship was not a major concern in early text making. The authors to whom the transmitted texts have been attributed should be viewed not as the writers of those texts, but as signs of textual categories under which those texts were grouped. The concept of the early Chinese author, therefore, is different from its modern connotation related to Western theories of literature, philosophy, economics, and social-cultural trends and must be analyzed in its own writing culture. Unlike the concept of the author which portrays the author as one constantly struggling in the transcendental/impersonal impasse, the role of the early Chinese author is clearly defined by Xu Shen and the “Xici” passage as that of a scribe, not simultaneously a creator actually generating a text. Nevertheless, the nature of early Chinese textual culture and authorship has long been misunderstood, especially by the problematic methodology of the *bianwei* tradition. In closing, this chapter uses Gadamer’s words to define this study as part of the effort to shape the “continuity of memory” of the human past, which happened to be accessible, however partially and vaguely, in both transmitted and newly discovered early writings.

## 2 The Author as Cultural Hero: The Yellow Emperor, the Symbolic Author

A cultural hero is a legendary or mythical inventor of the culture of an ethnic or religious group. In a Warring States ritual text, cultural heroes are identified as ancient sage-kings who have been commemorated in ritual for their devotion to and invention of governance for the public good.<sup>1</sup> As the extant early textual records demonstrate, by the late Warring States period (475–221 BC), the legends associated with the Yellow Emperor<sup>2</sup> and his cultural creations occupied such a significant place in Chinese history that veneration of his cultural inventions continues to influence modern Chinese culture.<sup>3</sup> Despite his many contributions to the culture of the Warring States, the Yellow Emperor did not invent writing, according to reconstructed versions of the *Shiben* 世本 (Origins of Descent Lines), a source documenting various cultural inventions and their inventors. Rather, the inventors of writing were Cang Jie and Ju Song 沮頌, alleged ministers of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, myths related to the Yellow Emperor portray him as a recipient of texts rather than as a writer.<sup>5</sup> Yet this did not prevent nearly two dozen early Chinese texts from being attributed to him in the earliest extant Chinese bibliography, the “Yiwen zhi” (Treatise on Literature) chapter of the *Hanshu*.<sup>6</sup>

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1 *Liji zhengyi* 46.1307; Chang Kwang-chih 張光直 1983b: 41–43.

2 Huangdi is also rendered as the Yellow Thearch, an effort to differentiate the usage of *di* here from the translation of *huangdi* 皇帝, the title of an imperial ruler. Nevertheless, here I follow the conventional translation to avoid unnecessary confusion since Yellow Emperor has been widely known as the standard rendering of 黃帝.

3 Qi Sihe 齊思和 1941.

4 Qin Jiamo 秦嘉謨 et al 2008, *passim*. For a discussion of contents of the *Shiben*, see Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 2005: 191–197.

5 The text allegedly given to the Yellow Emperor by a mysterious female, Xuannü 玄女 or Yunü 玉女, is a military treatise. In another version of the same story, it says that the mysterious female gave him a tally instead of a treatise. See quotations in the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 15.140, 79.677. For examples of sayings portraying the Yellow Emperor as a receiver of other texts, see *Taiping yulan* 15.138, 79.677, 79.680.

6 *Hanshu* 30.1730–1731, 30.1733, 30.1744, 30.1759, 30.1761, 30.1763, 30.1765, 30.1767, 30.1771, 30.1776–1779. This statistic does not include the Yellow Emperor’s ministers’ writings, which are usually categorized as “the Yellow Emperor’s writings” (*Huangdishu* 黃帝書) by scholars not only because of their authors’ close relationship with the Yellow Emperor, but also because of their similar style with “the Yellow Emperor’s writings.” See Li Ling 1998b: 278–290, especially 278–284; Lin Jingmo 林靜茉 2008: 116–118.



Attributing a text to a cultural hero is not unusual; what is unusual is that the number of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor vastly outnumbers those attributed to other cultural heroes. This is even more remarkable when considering that the Yellow Emperor is not classified as one of the Confucian sage-kings. For example, Shennong 神農, or the Divine Farmer, a sage-king who allegedly predates the Yellow Emperor according to some accounts,<sup>7</sup> is considered as the author of six texts (including one “co-authored” with the Yellow Emperor).<sup>8</sup> Another sage-king, Fuxi 伏羲,<sup>9</sup> the inventor of the *bagua* 八卦 (eight trigrams), has only two works ascribed to him, if the *Yi* 易, or *Book of Changes*, is included.<sup>10</sup> Attributions to the famous Confucian sage-kings Yao 堯, Shun, and Yu 禹 are even fewer: Yao and Shun are associated with only a single inner-chamber (*fangzhong* 房中) text allegedly co-authored by the two.<sup>11</sup> Yu is considered as the author of merely one text, but a note following this text’s entry in the “Yiwen zhi” indicates that even this single attribution could have been a false one.<sup>12</sup> Although the sage-king Ku 嚳 outshines the Yellow Emperor as an inventor in the *Shanhajing* 山海經 (Guideways through Mountains and Seas), the “Yiwen zhi” does not attribute a single text to his name.<sup>13</sup> By comparison, the “Yiwen zhi” credits the Yellow Emperor with twenty-three texts.<sup>14</sup>

Of these texts, however, the editorial notes are careful to point out “false attributions,” the Chinese expression *tuo* 托 (or 託) or *yituo* 依托 (or 依託). This keyword, however, connotes much more about the nature of the “Yellow Emperor’s writings” than it does about authorship.<sup>15</sup> In a *bianwei* discourse the term *tuo* or *yituo* is used to distinguish forgeries of presumably authentic ancient Chinese texts. For instance, since the forty-*pian* long *Huangdi shuo* 黃帝說 (Sayings of the Yellow Emperor) is noted as “unrealistic, bizarre, and falsely attributed [to the

7 *Shiji* “Wudi benji,” 3–5.

8 *Hanshu* 30.1742, 30.1759, 30.1767, 30.1773, 30.1777, 30.1779.

9 Written as “宓戲” in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. See *Hanshu* 30.1779.

10 *Hanshu* 30.1704, 30.1779. The *Book of Changes* is a result of a longtime development and Fu Xi seems only to be the initiator; Allegedly King Wen of Zhou 周文王, the Duke of Zhou 周公, and Confucius all had a hand in the formation of this text. Though indisputably the initiator, Fu Xi can only claim partial authorship of this text.

11 *Hanshu* 30.1778.

12 *Hanshu* 30.1740.

13 The information is scattered in the “Dahuang dongjing” 大荒東經, “Dahuang nanjing” 大荒南經, “Dahuang xijing” 大荒西經, and “Haineijing” 海內經 of the *Shanhajing*; for a list of those passages about Zhuan Xu, see Xu Bingchang 徐炳昶 1946: 56–58.

14 For the list of these attributions according to their categories and sub-categories, see the form that will be discussed in detail in next section.

15 *Hanshu* 30.1731, 30.1744, 30.1759.

Yellow Emperor]” (*yudan yituo* 迂誕依托), it must be a forgery of an authentic work written by the Yellow Emperor. The assumption of the possible existence of an authentic text creates a standard that undermines the acceptance of the existing text, beyond the issue of authorship. Since such a presumed authentic work may have never existed, a classification as a forgery is especially detrimental: not only is the Yellow Emperor dismissed as author, but the value of such texts as historical sources is undermined.

In considering the vague and often conflicting representations of the Yellow Emperor and many other cultural heroes in early writings, few today still accept the authenticity of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwen zhi.” The Han scholars who left the notes stating that those texts were “unrealistic, bizarre, and falsely attributed [to the Yellow Emperor],” however, must have thought that some of these texts were authentic, since they made the effort to single out other texts as being “falsely” attributed to the Yellow Emperor. Accepting the sincerity of the bibliographic notes suggests that Han and pre-Han scholars acknowledged the validity of at least some of the attributions to the Yellow Emperor.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in his writings on the Five Emperors (*wu di* 五帝), Sima Qian traces the descent of the Han people and the origin of the Han civilization to the Yellow Emperor. In the *Shiji*, Sima Qian selects available materials that he considers reliably portray the Yellow Emperor as a historical figure, although he notes the strangeness of some of the Huangdi materials he encountered in the writings of the One Hundred Scholarly Lineages (*baijia* 百家).<sup>17</sup>

These issues of authorship raise another question deserving attention: Why did the Yellow Emperor receive so many more attributions than other cultural heroes? To answer this question, this chapter will first examine the types of texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor and his ministers in the “Yiwen zhi.” I will then examine the Huangdi myth by discussing how the Yellow Emperor is portrayed in various sources and the relevant Han-dynasty scholarship on these sources, aiming to explore what led to the popularity of attributing authorship to the Yellow Emperor through a consideration of the types of writings attributed to him. This exploration will reveal how Eastern Zhou religious, ritual, and cosmological thinking influenced those attributions to the Yellow Emperor.

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<sup>16</sup> It is true that, when they left those “false attribution” notes, perhaps the Han scholars had no evidence to support their perceived inconsistency between these texts and those they considered to have been from the authentic Huangdi textual tradition, but what enabled them to do so was none other than the authority they presumed came from the Yellow Emperor, whom they conceived as the originator of that tradition.

<sup>17</sup> *Shiji* 1.46.

## 2.1 The Yellow Emperor as an Author in the “Yiwen zhi”

In his widely cited classical work on the format of early Chinese writings, Yu Jiayi argued that later readers gave titles to most early Chinese texts. Moreover, when texts—originally circulating in the form of brief *pian* 篇 (bound wood or bamboo strips)—were combined with other *pian* textual units into a larger text, the compiler would attribute the new composite text to the supposed initiator of the text’s school of thought, even though this ascribed initiator may not have actually written anything therein contained. As a result, the name of an individual, especially one regarded as the wellspring of a textual lineage, is simultaneously used to identify author and title.<sup>18</sup> For this reason, Li Ling considers the dual author-title of early Chinese writings as an indication of the categorical principles behind the compiler’s amalgamation of short *pian* chapters.<sup>19</sup> This assertion also explains why Li Ling treats the Yellow Emperor’s “Yiwen zhi” writings as texts associated with each other in a larger category called the “Huangdi shu” 黃帝書 (writings of the Yellow Emperor). The titles attributed not only to the Yellow Emperor but also to his ministers and later followers form a compendium of writings loosely grouped around the character of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>20</sup>

Although there are uses for broadly grouping the writings associated with the Yellow Emperor and his ministers, such categorization oversimplifies the issue of textual authorship. Due to the sparsity of these writings, it is impossible to compare those attributed to the Yellow Emperor with those of his ministers. Nevertheless, the specific attributions may reflect different textual traditions, each with texts of distinct form and content, now unified under the heading of “Huangdi shu.” Fortunately, the very act of ascribing different texts to different figures offers clues to how Han scholars regarded the authors of the texts they organized. In this light, it is reasonable to consider that all the attributions posited in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter highlight features of the texts, otherwise the Han scholars would not have endeavored to differentiate one text from another by ascribing them to different authors. The attributions made by the Han scholars, then, were not groundless, no matter how unconvincing they seem to modern scholars.

Evidence assembled through archaeologically recovered texts is increasingly confirming Yu Jiayi’s assertion that the majority of early Chinese texts lacked both the titles and author attributions that were later attached to them.<sup>21</sup> Late

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18 Yu Jiayi 1996: 179–185.

19 Li Ling 1998a: 25–31.

20 Li Ling 1998b: 278.

21 Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006: 87–146.

Western Han scholars, led by Liu Xiang 劉向 (ca. 77–6 BC), Liu Xin 劉歆 (ca. 50 BC–23 AD), and others, in their rearrangement of the imperial collection of texts confronted this problem when charged to identify and categorize the brief *pian* or *juan* 卷 (rolled silk) textual units and combine them into the much longer texts enumerated in the “Yiwen zhi.” The “Yiwen zhi” chapter does not directly describe how the Han scholars achieved this, but related information indicates that the Western Han scholars working with the imperial collection may have had means to ascertain the authorship, oral or written, of the collected texts. It is less clear how information pertaining to authorship had been passed on, but it seems not to have been a completely insurmountable problem for the Han scholars to overcome.

I suggest that the connections among various scholarly groups engaged in textual production and transmission, including the Han scholars who participated in the project of arranging the texts in the imperial library collection, may have played a significant role in distinguishing and categorizing the authorial attributions of the imperial collection. In fact, some of those who presented their texts to the imperial courts were themselves fond of collecting and making texts. For instance, Liu An and Liu De 劉德 (?–130 BC), two famous Western Han princes and bibliophiles, are recorded as having presented texts to the imperial court. Both are well-known for drawing scholars to their local courts and forming their own scholarly circles engaged in the collection and production of texts.<sup>22</sup> Of course, the texts produced in such circles contained attributions when presented to the imperial court. Similarly, the scholars of the imperial court also belonged to circles of their own. For example, in the postfaces, which record information about the edited texts, Liu Xiang usually notes that the final version of a text was the result of the consideration of a number of versions, only some of which were indexed in the imperial collection at the time, while others were held elsewhere.<sup>23</sup> Those different versions consulted by Liu Xiang and his team not only helped in collating the final version presented to the emperor, but they would have also provided hints for grouping texts together and for determining their authorship.

Since both the imperial and local intellectual circles consisted of individuals associated with specific traditions of textual learning, the authorship of the texts presented to the imperial court may have not confused Han scholars. In the remaining postfaces composed and presented by Liu Xiang to the emperor, Liu does not express difficulty in identifying and ascribing texts to specific individuals. Nevertheless, this does not mean that attributions were easily made or that titles were

<sup>22</sup> *Hanshu* 53.2410; 44.2145.

<sup>23</sup> Yan Kejun 嚴可均 1995: 331–335; Sun Deqian 孫德謙 1972: 9–12.

fixed. One scenario is as follows: although some works lacked titles altogether and other works were not necessarily known by the same titles to the imperial scholars, Han scholars were able to find enough information to reach a consensus.

Attributions to texts associated with the Yellow Emperor were also very carefully given, as Han scholars attempted to expose texts “falsely” ascribed to him. Some of the “*Yiwen zhi*” notes unambiguously claim that texts entitled with the Yellow Emperor’s name should rather be attributed to Warring States individual(s).<sup>24</sup> In consideration of this, using the general “*Huangdi shu*” category to denote texts attributed both to the Yellow Emperor and to his ministers, though taxonomically convenient, ignores the nuances of early Chinese text formation and transmission at its critical stages.

In addition, using the term “*Huangdi shu*” so broadly may cause confusion, as this term is also used to denote other texts in different contexts. For example, the terms “*Huangdi shu*” or “*Huangdi zhi shu*” 黃帝之書 in the *Liezi* 列子 were likely associated with the specific type of Huangdi writing that embodies the same thought and style as that of the *Laozi*.<sup>25</sup> Some scholars also use the term “*Huangdi shu*” in their discussion of the four manuscripts found in Mawangdui 馬王堆 Tomb 3.<sup>26</sup>

It is for all these reasons that I mark those texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor’s ministers in the following table and will not consider them as belonging to the more general “*Huangdi shu*” category, even though they might be associated with the Yellow Emperor in terms of their narrative scheme, as Li Ling suggests.<sup>27</sup> Li Ling has reason to coin the term ‘*Huangdi shu*’ to facilitate his discussion of those texts that he considers share some common features. My discussion in this chapter, however, does not embrace the broader “*Huangdi shu*” categorization. I intentionally separate the titles attributed to the Yellow Emperor from that attributed to the ministers to avoid the kind of confusion mentioned above. Also, in doing so, this chapter avoids the insurmountable task of comparing the titles attributed to the Yellow Emperor and that to his ministers since those texts had long been lost.

Except where noted, the following table was compiled on the basis of the texts listed in the “*Yiwen zhi*.”

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24 For an example, see *Hanshu* 30.1733.

25 Yang Bojun 1979: 207–208; Yang Bojun 1979: 3–5, 18–21.

26 Li Xueqin 2001: 287–296; Qiu Xigui 2008: 360.

27 Li Ling 1998b: 278.

Tab. 2-1: Texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor and his ministers

Categories	Subcategories	Texts and their <i>pian</i> or <i>juan</i> numbers	Notes given in the “Yiwen zhi”
Zhuzi lüe 諸子略 (6/9)**	Daojia 道家 (4/5)**	<i>Huangdi sijing</i> 黃帝四經 4 <i>pian</i>	
		<i>Huangdi ming</i> 黃帝銘 6 <i>pian</i>	
		<i>Huangdi junchen</i> 黃帝君臣 10 <i>pian</i>	Appearing in the time of the Six States, the text resembles the <i>Laozi</i> (起六國時，與老子相似也).
		<i>Za Huangdi</i> 雜黃帝 58 <i>pian</i>	Composed by a worthy man during the time of the Six States (六國時賢者所作).
		* <i>Li Mu</i> 力牧 22 <i>pian</i>	Composed during the time of the Six States, this text is attributed to Li Mu. Li Mu was the Yellow Emperor’s minister (六國時所作，託之力牧。力牧，黃帝相).
	Yinyangjia 陰陽家 (1/2)**	<i>Huangdi taisu</i> 黃帝泰素 (20 <i>pian</i> )	Composed by the various Han noble sons during the time of the Six States (六國時韓諸公子所作).
		* <i>Rong Chengzi</i> 容成子 (14 <i>pian</i> )	
	Zajia 雜家 (0/1)**	* <i>Kong Jia pan yu</i> 孔甲盤盂 (26 <i>pian</i> )	[Composed by] the Yellow Emperor’s scribe. Some say by the Xia Thearch Kong Jia. It seems that both attributions are not true (黃帝之史，或曰夏帝孔甲，似皆非).
	Xiaoshuojia 小說家 (1/1)**	<i>Huangdi shuo</i> 黃帝說 (40 <i>pian</i> )	Unrealistic, bizarre, and falsely attributed [to the Yellow Emperor] (迂誕依托).
Bingshu Lüe 兵書略 (2/9)**	Bing xingshi 兵形勢 (0/1)**	* <i>Chiyou</i> 蚩尤 (2 <i>pian</i> )	See the <i>Lü xing</i> (見呂刑).
		<i>Huangdi</i> 黃帝 (16 <i>pian</i> )	Including charts 3 <i>juan</i> (圖三卷).

Categories	Subcategories	Texts and their <i>pian</i> or <i>juan</i> numbers	Notes given in the “Yiwen zhi”
	Bing yinyang 兵陰陽 (1/7)**	* <i>Feng Hu</i> 封胡 (5 <i>pian</i> )  * <i>Feng Hou</i> 風后 (13 <i>pian</i> )  * <i>Li Mu</i> 力牧 (15 <i>pian</i> )  * <i>Jia Yezi</i> 鷓冶子 (1 <i>pian</i> )  * <i>Gui Rongqu</i> 鬼容區 (3 <i>pian</i> )  * <i>Di Dian</i> 地典 (6 <i>pian</i> )	[Feng Hu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (黃帝臣，依託也).  Including charts 2 <i>juan</i> . [Feng Hou was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (圖二卷。黃帝臣，依託也).  [Li Mu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (黃帝臣，依託也).  Including charts 1 <i>juan</i> (圖一卷).  Including charts 1 <i>juan</i> . [Gui Rongqu was] the Yellow Emperor’s minister; false attribution (圖一卷。黃帝臣，依託).
	Bing jiqiao 兵技巧 (1/1)**	<i>Cuju</i> 蹴鞠 (25 <i>pian</i> ) <sup>28</sup>	
Shushu lüe 數術略 (6/7)**	Tianwen 天文 (2/2)**	<i>Huangdi zazi qi</i> 黃帝雜子氣 (33 <i>pian</i> )  ( <i>Huangdi</i> ) <i>taijia liufu</i> (黃帝) 泰階六符 (1 <i>juan</i> )	
	Lipu 曆譜 (1/1)**	<i>Huangdi wujia li</i> 黃帝五家曆 (33 <i>juan</i> )	
	Wuxing 五行 (2/3)**	<i>Huangdi yinyang</i> 黃帝陰陽 (25 <i>juan</i> )  <i>Huangdi zhuzi lun yinyang</i> 黃帝諸子論陰陽 (25 <i>juan</i> )  * <i>Feng Hou guxu</i> 風后孤虛 (20 <i>juan</i> )	
	Zazhan 雜占 (1/1)**	<i>Huangdi Changliu zhanmeng</i> 黃帝長柳占夢 (11 <i>juan</i> )	

28 Wang Yinglin 王應麟 2011: 268.

Categories	Subcategories	Texts and their <i>pian</i> or <i>juan</i> numbers	Notes given in the “Yiwen zhi”
Fangji lüe 方技略 (9/12)**	Yijing 醫經 (2/3)**	<i>Huangdi neijing</i> 黃帝內經 (18 <i>juan</i> ) <i>Waijing</i> 外經 (39 or 37 <i>juan</i> ) * <i>Bian Que neijing</i> 扁鵲內經 (9 <i>juan</i> ) <sup>29</sup>	
	Jingfang 經方 (2/2)**	<i>Taishi Huangdi Bian Que Fu Yu fang</i> 泰始黃帝扁鵲俞拊方 (23 <i>juan</i> ) <i>Shengnong Huangdi shijin</i> 神農黃帝食禁 (7 <i>juan</i> )	
	Fangzhong 房中 (1/3)**	<i>Huangdi sanwang yangyang fang</i> 黃帝三王養陽方 (20 <i>juan</i> ) * <i>Rong Cheng yindao</i> 容成陰道 (20 <i>juan</i> ) * <i>Tian Lao zazi yindao</i> 天老雜子陰道 (25 <i>juan</i> )	
	Shenxian 神仙 (4/4)**	<i>Huangdi zazi buyin</i> 黃帝雜子步引 (12 <i>juan</i> ) <i>Huangdi Qi Bo anmo</i> 黃帝岐伯按摩 (10 <i>juan</i> ) <i>Huangdi zazi zhijun</i> 黃帝雜子芝菌 (18 <i>juan</i> ) <i>Huangdi zazi shijiuja fang</i> 黃帝雜子十九家方 (21 <i>juan</i> )	
23/37**	23/37**	212/319** ( <i>pian</i> ); 263/337** ( <i>juan</i> )	

\*texts allegedly written by the Yellow Emperor’s ministers.

\*\*a/b: “a” denotes the number of text(s) or *pian* or *juan* attributed to the Yellow Emperor and “b,” the number of text(s) or *pian* or *juan* attributed to both the Yellow Emperor and his ministers.

We may make a few observations based on the information included in this table. First, if entitling a work with the name of a certain figure also suggested its authorship to the Han scholars, the texts clearly attributed to the Yellow Emperor are only placed in four of the six main categories under which all the texts available to them were organized. Indeed, none of the twenty-three texts ascribed to the Yellow

<sup>29</sup> Wang Yinglin 2011: 299.



Emperor are included in the Confucian *liuyi* 六藝 (six arts) or the *shifu* 詩賦 (poetry and *fu* rhapsody) category.

Also, the table indicates that the majority (15 out of 23) of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor belong to the *shushu* 術數 (methods and calculation) and *fangji* 方技 (recipes and techniques) categories, with the exact statistics of attributions as follows: of the 23 attributions, 6 are classified as *zhuzi* 諸子 (various masters), 2 are designated as *bingshu* 兵書 (military writings), 6 are grouped into the *shushu* category, and 9 are labeled as *fangji*. Another factor to consider when interpreting the distribution of the Huangdi writings is the total number of *pian* or *juan* in each category. Although there is no standard length for a *pian* or a *juan* as a textual unit, the *juan* is generally longer than the *pian*. One *juan* can contain multiple *pian* writings. The *shushu* and *fangji* texts contain 263 *juan* and 33 *pian* in total, suggesting that the amount of writing in these two categories could have been significantly longer than that of the 179 *pian* categorized into the *zhuzi* and *bingshu* groups.

Finally, if the measure words *pian* and *juan* indeed indicate the writing medium—bamboo strips and silk, respectively—then the *shushu* and *fangji* texts can be further differentiated from the rest by their medium, silk.<sup>30</sup> Ying Shao 應劭 points out in his *Fengsu tongyi* 風俗通義 (Comprehensive Meaning of Customs and Habits) that when Liu Xiang undertook to rearrange the Han imperial text collection, he “first wrote the rearranged texts on bamboo strips” (*xian shu zhu* 先書竹).<sup>31</sup> It has been recognized that making corrections on bamboo strips through scraping characters from the surface of the strips or by rearranging strips is accomplished much more easily than on silk or cloth. Only when the form of a specific text was finalized could Liu Xiang order that the text “be written on plain silk or cloth” (*shang su* 上素).<sup>32</sup> Liu Xiang’s practice became a convention that continued through the Eastern Han. Consequently, Ying Shao observed that even in his time the texts in the Eastern Pavilion (Dongguan 東觀) “had both their bamboo strip and silk copies” (*zhu su ye* 竹素也).<sup>33</sup>

If the *Fengsu tongyi*’s depiction of textual collocation and editing is accurate, it seems that most of the *shushu* and *fangji* texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor were not preserved on bamboo strips. This implies that most of the *shushu* and *fangji* texts did not undergo as much editing as the other texts did. Significant editing could have taken place before relatively stable texts were presented to the imperial court. It is also possible that the content of the texts presented certain

30 Sun Deqian 1972: 34.

31 Wang Liqi 王利器 2010: 494.

32 Wang Liqi 2010: 494.

33 Wang Liqi 2010: 494.

formatting challenges—such as extensive use of charts, graphs, and diagrams—that were most easily resolved by using silk or cloth rather than bamboo strips. Or, the expensive medium of silk might suggest that the *shushu* and *fangji* texts were produced by and circulated among more affluent circles. In this case, owning or consulting such texts itself was a marker of wealth and prestige. Unfortunately, the total loss of those *shushu* and *fangji* texts makes it difficult to determine precisely why those writings were predominantly preserved on silk or cloth.

This leads us to question why the Yellow Emperor texts were excluded from the Confucian Classics, and why the majority of the Yellow Emperor's writings address *shushu* and *fangji* contents. Additionally, these questions help us understand why so many more works were attributed to the Yellow Emperor than to the other cultural heroes. Although the contents of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor appear alien to the Confucian texts, the Yellow Emperor sometimes appears in anecdotes collected in such texts as the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Zuo Commentary) and *Liji* 禮記 (Records of Rites). Reading between the lines, these anecdotal passages interestingly betray an attempt to rationalize the figure of the Yellow Emperor, and such rationalization suggests an effort to portray this figure in a manner radically different from its previous forms.

In the following section, I address the virtual exclusion of the Yellow Emperor from the Confucian Classics and examine what the anecdotes suggest regarding how the rationalization occurred.

## 2.2 The Yellow Emperor with Four Faces

As a legendary figure, the Yellow Emperor is portrayed as a strange looking man. For example, a number of sources describe him as a man with four faces. According to the *Shizi* 尸子 (Master Shi), Confucius's disciple Zigong 子貢 once asked the Master, "Is it true that in the past the Yellow Emperor had four faces?"<sup>34</sup> Confucius dismissed the question by indicating that Zigong misunderstood the term *si mian* 四面 (four faces). The Master suggested a different, rational reading of this expression:

黃帝取合己者四人，使治四方，不謀而親，不約而成，大有成功，此之謂四面也。

The Yellow Emperor summoned four persons who agreed with him and dispatched them to govern the four quarters. They did not confer with but remained close to one another, did

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34 古者黃帝四面信乎? Li Shoukui 李守奎 and Li Yi 李軼 2003: 67.

not arrange to do anything but accomplished all the goals, and achieved great success and merits. This is what the term “simian” means.<sup>35</sup>

However bizarre Zigong’s question may sound, the notion that the Yellow Emperor had four faces does not seem to have materialized from nothing. There is no transmitted narrative about a four-faced mythical Yellow Emperor, but the Zigong anecdote forces one to believe that such a narrative was circulating at the time. Confucius’s answer reflects not only the Master’s wit, but also highlights the central role of rationalization in discourse during the time this anecdote formed. Through the rationalization, a mythical figure is transformed into a realistic sage-king documented in an historical account. In other words, once such historicization has been accomplished, the mythical figure becomes an historical fact, which would continuously influence people’s understanding this mythical figure in a historical context accordingly.<sup>36</sup>

The rationalization at work in the transmission of Huangdi stories makes understanding a coherent depiction of the Yellow Emperor difficult. Such a depiction requires not only the rationalization of all Huangdi myths, but also the eradication of all pre-rationalized myths so that incompatible accounts may be removed. Moreover, the reinterpretation of the Huangdi stories that resulted from such rationalizations made by different groups in different circumstances further complicates the consistency of the Huangdi lore.<sup>37</sup> The diversity of sources seems to have confronted the Grand Historian when he compiled the Yellow Emperor’s biography.

In terms of structural organization, the *Shiji* account of the Yellow Emperor begins with the protagonist’s genealogy and his extraordinariness as a youth. It then sketches an account of his achievements, before closing with information regarding the Yellow Emperor’s death and progeny. Although the narrative is included in the “Benji” 本紀 (“Basic Annals”) section of the *Shiji*, the structure of the Yellow Emperor narrative is typical of *Shiji* biographical accounts. The *Shiji* uses this biographical structure to present the first comprehensive image of the

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35 Li Shoukui and Li Yi 2003: 67.

36 Compared with their Greek counterparts, who, as William Boltz points out, “have mythologized their history, Chinese historicized their mythology.” Therefore, to restore Chinese myths means a process of “reverse euhemerization,” that is “to peel away, so to speak, the Juist [Confucian] overlay.” Boltz 1981: 141–142.

37 Nakajima Toshio 中島敏夫 mentions 39 Han and pre-Han texts in which the Yellow Emperor’s name appears at least once. Liu Baocai 劉寶才 also lists 39 major texts (dated from pre-Qin to the Qing dynasty) including information pertaining to the Yellow Emperor in a conference paper. See Nakajima 2001: 2–5; Jiang Linchang 2001: 83.

Yellow Emperor, depicting him as the founding father of the Chinese culture surviving through the Han Dynasty, a depicted continuous culture that had flourished during the time of the *Shiji* compilation. Sima Qian recounts the Yellow Emperor's military accomplishments, i.e., his defeat of the Yandi 炎帝 (Flame Emperor) and Chi You 蚩尤, as actions responsible for saving a large domain from the chaotic rule of his predecessor, the Divine Farmer. To the grand Historian, these events carry great significance for the making of a well-ordered society. This is why the defeat of Chi You becomes the starting point for human history as explored by the Grand Historian.<sup>38</sup>

The Grand Historian's comments after this chapter, however, indicate that the historicized Yellow Emperor represents only one perspective. The Yellow Emperor indeed had other "faces" preserved in those materials that the Grand Historian intentionally excluded from his writing. The Grand Historian's reasoning for this editorial choice is as follows:

學者多稱五帝，尚矣。然尚書獨載堯以來；而百家言黃帝，其文不雅馴，薦紳先生難言之。孔子所傳宰予問五帝德及帝繫姓，儒者或不傳。余嘗西至空桐，北過涿鹿，東漸於海，南浮江淮矣，至長老皆各往往稱黃帝、堯、舜之處，風教固殊焉，總之不離古文者近是。予觀春秋、國語，其發明五帝德、帝繫姓章矣，顧弟弗深考，其所表見皆不虛。書缺有間矣，其軼乃時時見於他說。非好學深思，心知其意，固難為淺見寡聞道也。余并論次，擇其言尤雅者，故著為本紀書首。

Men of learning frequently mention the Five Emperors and consider them ancient. Nevertheless, the *Documents* merely records what had occurred since Yao. As for what the Hundred Lineages have said about the Yellow Emperor, their writings are neither elegant nor refined, and thus are difficult for gentlemen to talk about. As for what Confucius transmitted in replying to Zai Yu's question on the virtues of the Five Emperors as well as the "Descent Lines of the Ancient Sage Rulers," they have not been transmitted among some Confucians. I once reached Kongtong to the west, visited Zhuolu to the north, approached the sea in the east, and floated along the Yangzi and the Huai rivers in the south, arriving at those places often mentioned by the seniors and elders as where the Yellow Emperor, Yao, and Shun lived. The customs and teachings of those places are surely different, but in general what does not deviate from the ancient texts is close to the truth. I have observed that the *Spring Autumn Annals* and *Discourses of the States* have noticeably elucidated the "Power of the Five Emperors" as well as the "Descent Lines of the Ancient Sage Rulers," even though I have not examined them in depth; what they present is not empty at all. The *Documents* has remained incomplete for some time, yet what is not included in the *Documents* frequently appears in other sayings. Unless one is fond of learning, thinks deeply, and understands the meanings of the sayings with his heart, it is indeed difficult to talk about

38 *Shiji* 1.1–10. For the Grand Historian's own voice revealing his ambition of "exploring the edge between humans and heaven" (*jiu tian ren zhi ji* 究天人之際), see the letter to Ren An preserved in Sima Qian's biography in the *Hanshu*; see *Hanshu* 62.2735.

them with those who lack experience and knowledge. I have discussed them all in order. Choosing those with words that are fine and elegant, I place them in the beginning of my writings as the Basic Annals.<sup>39</sup>

This passage reveals how the Grand Historian selected data to present in his Yellow Emperor writings. From this passage, we learn that the Grand Historian had access to both “elegant” and “inelegant” materials, but he left out the “inelegant” materials for lacking the canonicity of the more “elegant” Confucian Classics. We learn that the inelegant passages consisted of sources related to the teachings of the Hundred Lineages, as well as legends and myths circulated orally by elders. Bizarre details, such as the belief that the Yellow Emperor had four faces, may have been found in the “inelegant” sources at the Grand Historian’s disposal. Moreover, the heterogeneity of the sources must have resulted in inconsistent descriptions of the Yellow Emperor. The Grand Historian unambiguously chooses texts featuring “words that are fine and elegant” to portray his version of the Yellow Emperor.

The second principle applied to the selection of sources is closely associated with the first, and requires the Grand Historian to offer further explanation. The Grand Historian’s decision to base the Yellow Emperor’s biographical account on the “Wudide” 五帝德 and the “Dixixing” 帝繫姓—the authoritative teachings supposed to have been passed down from Confucius through his disciples—requires the additional support of related information regarding an historical Yellow Emperor from other Confucian Classics, especially the *Documents*, in which several chapters were considered the most reliable collection of materials documenting ancient rulers and their ministers.<sup>40</sup> There, we need to take heed of the fact that the Yellow Emperor is not mentioned in the transmitted *Documents* at all. Instead, this collection of speeches and documents ascribes the beginning of civilization to the innovations of ancient sage-kings, rather than to the Yellow Emperor. In contrast to the *Shiji*’s attribution of the Yellow Emperor as the founder of civilization, the *Documents* attributes such activities to Yao, another sage ruler who greatly postdates the Yellow Emperor according to the genealogy described in the “Wudide.” This puts the Grand Historian’s historicization of the Yellow Emperor on unstable ground: his painstaking effort to exclude “inelegant” sayings is rendered moot due to contradictory genealogy in the *Documents*, regardless of his having consulted “ancient texts” (*guwen* 古文) to identify words that were neither “fine”

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<sup>39</sup> *Shiji* 1.46.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see Shaughnessy 1999, especially 292–299; David Schaberg argues that these texts should not be treated as historical sources, but rather as mysterious sorts of artifacts without clearly identified historical information; see Schaberg 2001b: 477–481, 487–490.

nor “elegant.”<sup>41</sup> This dilemma inevitably compromises the Grand Historian’s methods for evaluating and selecting materials to present an historical account of the Yellow Emperor.

Aware of the above-mentioned dilemma, the Grand Historian offers a two-fold rationale: “The *Documents* has remained incomplete for a while.” This confirms the Grand Historian’s trust in the “Wudide,” and his belief that the Yellow Emperor is indeed the starting point of Chinese history despite the lack of evidence in the *Documents*. In this way, the Yellow Emperor’s absence in the *Documents* is conjectured to be due to the lack or the loss of written records.

Alternatively, the Grand Historian also found that “what is not included in the *Documents* frequently appears in other sayings” of reliable texts such as the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the *Discourses of the States*, which “have noticeably elucidated the ‘Power of the Five Emperors’ as well as the ‘Descent Lines of the Ancient Sage Rulers.’” In linking the “Wudide” to historical sources like the *Chunqiu* and the *Guoyu*, the Grand Historian manages to justify his historicization of the Yellow Emperor without the support from the more authoritative (according to this passage) *Documents*.

The Grand Historian’s historicization of the Yellow Emperor has not only influenced the interpretation of the Yellow Emperor stories, but has also shaped the conception of the origin of Chinese ethnicity and civilization. The Yellow Emperor is the root of almost all ancestral lineage trees upon which the whole system of ancient Chinese history is reconstructed. Those texts used by the Grand Historian—the “Wudide,” the “Dixixing,” and the *Guoyu*, among others—are still accepted as historical evidence and are fundamental in structuring, depicting, and interpreting an historically undocumented past.

Furthermore, it is also observable that although historians of the “doubting antiquity” persuasion have pointed out that the Yellow Emperor is a legendary or mythological figure, his stories are still referenced to interpret archaeological finds. Surely, today the Yellow Emperor’s existence as an historical individual seems less credible to many scholars of ancient Chinese history, who tend to conceive of the Yellow Emperor as a collective term denoting a group of people, a society, or a culture that may be archaeologically traceable. The basic premise

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<sup>41</sup> According the commentaries, the term *guwen* denotes to the “Wudide” and the “Dixixing.” Nevertheless, if the word *gu*, or archaic, does plays a role in this context, the writings collected in the *Documents* certainly look more archaic than the former two. For the *Shiji* commentaries on the term *guwen*, see *Shiji* 1.46.

of this view, however, undoubtedly still rests upon the historicization of the Yellow Emperor initiated in the *Shiji*.<sup>42</sup>

Despite its lasting influence, the Grand Historian's approach to documenting the Yellow Emperor has a noticeable limit. His method for omitting the "inelegant" sources when trying to historicize the Yellow Emperor results in an incomplete image of this figure. This inevitably affects the search for an explanation of the Yellow Emperor's sudden cultural proliferation, which had been ongoing since the Eastern Zhou period. Furthermore, the Grand Historian failed to reconcile competing images of the Yellow Emperor. One of the sources, the "Wudide," at times betrays the historicized Huangdi image presented in the *Shiji*. For example, we find a problematic description of the Yellow Emperor initiated in this text, contained in a passage where Zaiwo 宰我 questions Confucius on the Yellow Emperor's abnormal lifespan:

昔者予聞諸榮伊言黃帝三百年。請問黃帝者人邪？亦非人邪？何以至於三百年乎？

In the past, I heard from Rong Yi that the Yellow Emperor lived for three hundred years. May I ask whether the Yellow Emperor was a human being or not? How could he have lived for three hundred years [if he was indeed a human]?<sup>43</sup>

Zaiwo's question is comparable to Zigong's question regarding the Yellow Emperor's four faces, as both figures questioned the superhuman characteristics of the Yellow Emperor. Here, once again, Confucius interprets his disciple's question within an ethical framework. Confucius explains:

生而民得其利百年，死而民畏其神百年，亡而民用其教百年，故曰三百年。

When [the Yellow Emperor] was alive, people benefited from him for a hundred years; after he died, people stood in awe of his spirit for a hundred years; when [his spirit] disappeared, people applied his teachings for a hundred years. For this reason, people say that [the Yellow Emperor lived] for three hundred years.<sup>44</sup>

In answering his disciples' questions, Confucius uses the same tactics to rationalize the lore referenced by his disciples; that is, he transforms the literal strangeness of the sayings into a figure of political wisdom that comments on the Yellow Emperor's governance and merits. It is also worth noting the persuasive power of Confucius's

<sup>42</sup> Many works approach both related textual and archaeological data in this similar vein, however different some of details might look. Cf. Xu Shunzhan 許順湛 2005; Liu Qiyu 劉起鈞 1991: 1–73; Yin Shengping 尹盛平 2005: 115–118.

<sup>43</sup> Fang Xiangdong 方向東 2008: 689.

<sup>44</sup> Fang Xiangdong 2008: 690.

rationalizations for historicizing and moralizing the old sayings. For instance, in demythicizing the lore that the Yellow Emperor had four faces, Confucius interprets the Yellow Emperor's four faces into "four persons who agreed with him." Such rhetoric links the strangeness of the Yellow Emperor with his governing skills and his virtue of being willing to share power with others. Similarly, in explaining how the Yellow Emperor could have lived for three hundred years, Confucius reinterprets a person's life span into the lasting influence of his contributions to society, which further facilitates the euhemerization of the Yellow Emperor. In both cases, the rhetoric privileges the figurative over the literal.

But it is undeniable that, beyond this rationalized image of the Yellow Emperor, there was indeed the widespread notion of a four-faced Yellow Emperor. Not only did Zigong reference it, but the Yellow Emperor is depicted as having four faces in a text preceding one of the versions of the *Laozi* 老子 discovered on one of the silk manuscripts found at Mawangdui Tomb 3. According to this account, these four faces enabled the Yellow Emperor to observe the four quarters of the Earth and to collect information more efficiently than normal people, thereby allowing him to make more informed policies and to conduct the affairs of state with greater understanding of the conditions of the people. "For this reason, he was able to act as the model of all under heaven."<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, it is not surprising that, in various sources, the Yellow Emperor appears as a god-like figure associated with the command of dragons, monsters, beasts, ghosts and spirits, or wind- and rain-gods either in ritual occasions or in battles.<sup>46</sup> Even the *Shiji* preserves this image of a divine Yellow Emperor in the "Fengshan shu" 封禪書 (Writings on Ceremonies of Presenting Sacrifices to Heaven on Mt Tai). In that chapter, Gongsun Qing 公孫卿, a *fangshi* 方士 (master of prescription), describes to Emperor Wu of Han 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 BC) how the Yellow Emperor ascended to heaven as an immortal. This account also reflects different images of the Yellow Emperor proliferated in different circles of learning.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> 是以能為天下宗. Chen Guying 陳鼓應 2011: 196.

<sup>46</sup> Scattered information pertaining to different images of the Yellow Emperor is still available in a number of sources, especially in the *Shanhaijing* 山海經, the *weishu* 緯書 writings, and the *zhuzi* 諸子 writings considered inelegant by the Grand Historian. For examples on how the *Shanhaijing* depicts the Yellow Emperor, see Mori Yasutarō 森安太郎 1970: 149–174; for a summary of information in the *zhuzi* texts, see Xu Shunzhan 2005: 69–78; for the depictions of the Yellow Emperor arrange according to different categories, see Huangdiling Jijinhui 黃帝陵基金會 2008: 1–220; for related information text by text, see Nakajima Toshio 2001; for the analysis of the Yellow Emperor's appearing in different sources as the god of rain, storm, and fog, see Lewis 1990: 179–183.

<sup>47</sup> *Shiji* 28.1393–1394.



In fact, Yang Kuan 楊寬 asserts that the name “Yellow Emperor” (Huangdi 黃帝), was derived from the general term *huangdi* 皇帝 (august god), due to the similar Old Chinese pronunciations of “yellow” 黃 \*wân and “awe-inspiring” or “august” 皇 \*(g) wân; therefore, the stories surrounding the Yellow Emperor and other sage kings all evolved out of the myth of an “august god.”<sup>48</sup>

The image of a mythical Yellow Emperor, therefore, must be included in considerations of this figure as the author of many texts. In fact, the mythical side of the Yellow Emperor is closely related to the nature of the texts attributed to him. The supernatural powers that the Yellow Emperor displayed as a god would certainly lend authority and credibility to the texts under his name, since his divine powers are directly relevant to the contents of the texts attributed to him: the majority of the Huangdi writings are categorized as recipes and techniques. Connecting such texts with a supernatural figure not only enhances credibility, but is also necessary. One who does not have divine connections cannot write a text elucidating principal numbers, patterns, and issues of divinity and immortality. In this sense, it is mostly the mythical aspects of the Yellow Emperor that qualifies him as the author of the *fangji* and *shushu* writings.

Alternatively, the historicization of the Yellow Emperor contributed to both the credibility and the reception of the Huangdi writings. To be sure, a god possesses secret knowledge, but such knowledge can only circulate in the human domain once it has been revealed to a human being. Furthermore, it is only likely to survive if the knowledge proves efficacious. In the few surviving texts associated with the Yellow Emperor, such as the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (The Yellow Emperor’s Classic of Internal Medicine) and texts dealing with sexual intercourse and immortality, the Yellow Emperor is depicted as an interlocutor with those who have secret knowledge or access to the supernatural world. On one occasion, he is even the recipient of a sacred text from a goddess.<sup>49</sup> The presence of the Yellow Emperor as a human being in these texts is not only associated with the revelation of secret words, but also attests to their practicability in order to increase their authority and credibility. The texts’ need for a simultaneously divine and human Yellow Emperor is noticeable.

Since the historicization of the Yellow Emperor played a role in the attributions of texts to him, it becomes necessary to explore the occurrence of this phenomenon in a larger context. This context can only be provided by examining the various sources related to the Yellow Emperor and by considering the dating of such

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<sup>48</sup> Yang Kuan 1941: 195–206.

<sup>49</sup> *Taiping yulan* 15.140, 79.677.

sources.<sup>50</sup> Although providing a dating for a text, or for a passage within a text, often amounts to an estimation, close analysis usually benefits our understanding of both the text and its contents. Thus, the following section analyzes the most oft-cited passages regarding the Yellow Emperor.

## 2.3 The Yellow Emperor in Persuasion

One frequently cited passage regarding the Yellow Emperor appears in the *Discourses of the States*. The passage states that on the eve of the Jin 晉 Prince Chong'er's 重耳 (r. 636–628 BC) return to power, he and his entourage were in the state of Qin 秦 seeking military and political aid. The king of Qin attempted to form an alliance with the Jin by having Chong'er marry his daughter, Huaiying 懷嬴, who had some time earlier been married to, but abandoned by, Chong'er's nephew, the current Jin ruler (Lord Huai 懷), whom Chong'er was planning to overthrow. Learning that Chong'er intended to refuse the King of Qin's offer, Sikong Jizi 司空季子, one of Chong'er's followers, persuaded him not to do so. Sikong Jizi suggested that a marital tie between Jin and Qin would not only help the exiled Jin prince return to power, but that marrying a woman from a non-Jin clan would also yield many offspring. Taking the Yellow Emperor as an example, Sikong Jizi says:

昔少典娶于有蟠氏，生黃帝、炎帝。黃帝以姬水成，炎帝以姜水成。成而異德，故黃帝為姬，炎帝為姜，二帝用師以相濟也，異德之故也。異姓則異德，異德則異類。異類雖近，男女相及，以生民也。

In the past Shao Dian married the daughter of the You Qiao clan and she gave birth to the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor. The Yellow Emperor succeeded by the Ji River, and the Flame Emperor succeeded by the Jiang River. They both succeeded, yet their virtues differed. Therefore, the Yellow Emperor was surnamed Ji, and the Flame Emperor was surnamed Jiang. That the two Emperors used their armies to conquer each other resulted from

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<sup>50</sup> The earliest extant textual source on the Yellow Emperor is the *Guoyu*, in which the Yellow Emperor is mentioned in different occasions. In the “Zhouyu” 周語 it is said that Gun 鯀, Yu 禹, Gonggong 共工, Siyue 四岳, and the rulers of a number of states “were all the descendants of the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor” (皆黃炎之後也); in the “Jinyu” 晉語 it says that the Yellow Emperor had twenty-five sons but only two of them inherited his surname Ji 姬; and in the “Luyu” 魯語 the Yellow Emperor is mentioned as the sacrificial receiver of several states. The Yellow Emperor's name is also found on a Warring States bronze vessel named “Chenhou Yinqi dui” 陳侯因齊敦, which will be discussed later. The story of the Yellow Emperor's battling Chi You is also mentioned on the back of an Eastern Han bronze mirror, see Zhang Jinyi 張金儀 1981: 75–83, 144.

their differing virtues. Those who are surnamed differently differ in virtue; those different in virtue are different in kind. Those that differ in kind, even though they live close, will successfully generate offspring when their men and women match each other.<sup>51</sup>

This passage, likely one instance of the euhemerization of the Yellow Emperor, names both the Yellow Emperor's posited biological parents and the location where he actively governed. The identities of Shao Dian and You Qiao are difficult to trace, but they are generally regarded as two different ancient tribes located in the western highland region of modern-day China. This inference is derived from the belief that the Ji and Jiang rivers, which were close to the bases of the Shao Dian and You Qiao tribes, were in western China. Scholars have confidently located the Jiang River, but the location of the Ji River has long been debated.<sup>52</sup> Since the Zhou 周 later rose to power in the west with the help of its major ally, the Jiang clan, the location of the Ji River is closely related to the origin of the Ji Zhou 姬周 tribe. A long-held idea considers that the Zhou culture originated from the Jing 涇 and Wei 渭 River valley. Following Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895–1990 AD), however, many scholars are now inclined to believe that the Zhou had lived in present-day Shanxi 山西 province, at least from the time of Hou Ji 后稷.<sup>53</sup> Later this Ji tribe migrated from Shanxi to Bin 邠 and then to a place called “Zhouyuan” 周原 (Plain of Zhou) in modern-day Shaanxi province. This became Ji's new base from which it threatened the western border of the Shang 商 (ca. 1600–1046 BC) domain as it grew in power.<sup>54</sup>

Many other sources are consistent with, and expand on, the *Guoyu* passage.<sup>55</sup> For example, both the *Shiji* and “Wudide” suggest that the Yellow Emperor was also called Xuanyuan 軒轅. Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐 (215–282 AD) explains that he was named such because he was born on Mt. Xuanyuan.<sup>56</sup> Based on phonological similarities between the Chinese terms *gui* 龜 \*kwrə and *ji* 姬 kə (\*kjə), *xuanyuan* 軒轅 \*hŋan wan and *tianyuan* 天鼃 \*thîn ŋwan, as well as on the provenance of some of the bronzes marked with the symbol *tianyuan* 天鼃, which is interpreted as the family emblem of the Yellow Emperor, some modern scholars (for instance,

51 Xu Yuangao 徐元誥 2002: 336–337.

52 Liu Qiyu 1991: 1–73, 161–197; Yin Shengping 2005; Xu Bingchang 1946: 26–36; Zou Heng 鄒衡 1980: 297–356; Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎 1997: 13–44.

53 Han Jianye 韓建業 and Yang Xin'gai 楊新改 2006: 53–54. Hou Ji was the alleged ancestor of the Zhou according to the song “Shengmin” 生民. See *Maoshi zhengyi* 17.1055–1078.

54 *Maoshi zhengyi* 17.109–1123; *Maoshi zhengyi* 16.979–995; Han Jianye and Yang Xin'gai 2006: 53–54.

55 Cf. Wang Hui 2009: 9–11; Guo Moruo 2002a: 16–22; Guo Moruo 2002b: 114; Yang Xiangkui 1992: 21–23; Zou Heng 1980: 297–356.

56 Fang Xiangdong 2008: 689; *Shiji* 1.5.

Guo Moruo 郭沫若 and Yang Xiangkui 楊向奎) have proposed that the Huangdi tribe originally lived northeast of the Luo River (*Luoshui* 洛水) of Shaanxi before moving to northern Shaanxi and finally migrating south to the Zhouyuan area.<sup>57</sup>

The *Guoyu* passage cited above also references the conflict between the Ji and Jiang tribes, which seems to denote the battle between the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor<sup>58</sup> referred to as the Battle of Banquan (*Banquan zhizhan* 阪泉之戰) in both the “Wudide” and the *Shiji*. According to the “Wudide,” the Yellow Emperor “taught his army of bears, leopards, and tigers to fight against the Flame Emperor in the field of Banquan and was able to carry out his aim after three battles.”<sup>59</sup> The animal troops are interpreted as the names of the Yellow Emperor’s armies, possibly distinguished by different banners emblazoned with bears, leopards, and tigers. Such an interpretation is influenced by the tendency to historicize the Yellow Emperor as an ancient sage-king.<sup>60</sup> In the narrative describing the Battle of Zhuolu, Chi You, often depicted as a beast-like war hero in several sources, was captured and killed in the field of Zhuolu for his disobeying the Yellow Emperor.<sup>61</sup>

The Yellow Emperor’s two adversaries, the Flame Emperor and Chi You, who are confronted separately according to the *Shiji*, are united into a single narrative preserved in the “Changmai” 嘗麥—a piece related to the writing of punishments (*xingshu* 刑書)—in the *Yi Zhoushu* 逸周書 (Scattered Zhou Documents). The story, which forms part of the Zhou king’s speech to his Grand Corrector, the official in charge of punishment, is recounted as follows:

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57 Wang Hui 2009: 11–13; Zou Heng 2001: 310–312. For the discussion of the connection between the Huangdi clan and the “tianyuan” emblem, see Guo Moruo 2002a: 16–22; Guo Moruo 2002b: 114; Yang Xiangkui 1997: 21–23. Another scholar, Chen Ping 陳平, inspired by Su Bingqi 蘇秉琦 and others, traces the origin of the Huangdi tribe even further to the east. He considers that the Yellow Emperor is associated with the Hongshan 紅山 culture in northeastern China. He suggests that it was from the Hongshan cultural base that the Huangdi tribe expanded and gradually moved to the west highland, becoming one of the groups later known as the Ji Zhou 姬周 of Zhouyuan. He also argues that the legendary “Battle of Zhuolu” (*Zhuolu zhi zhan* 涿鹿之戰) occurring in present northern Hebei 河北 province was caused by the westward migration of the Ji tribe out of the Hongshan culture base rather than by the expansion of the Huaxia 華夏 ethnic groups from the west highland. Chen Ping 2003: 352–360.

58 Sometimes also referred to as Chidi 赤帝, the Red Emperor, as seen in the cited sentence that follows.

59 教熊羆貔豹虎，以與赤帝戰於阪泉之野，三戰然後得行其志。Fang Xiangdong 2008: 689.

60 It is also possible, however, that in the legend the Yellow Emperor indeed commanded animals in battle. The *Shiji* account about the Battle of Banquan accords with the “Wudide” passage, but narrates the details of another battle—the Battle of Zhuolu—immediately following its account of the Battle of Banquan. See *Shiji* 1.5.

61 *Shiji* 1.5.

昔天之初，X<sup>62</sup>作二后，乃設建典，命赤帝分正二卿，命蚩尤宇于少昊，以臨四方，司XX<sup>63</sup>上天未成之慶。蚩尤乃逐帝，爭于涿鹿之河，九隅無遺。赤帝大懼，乃說于黃帝，執蚩尤殺之于中冀，以甲兵釋怒。用大正，順天思序，紀于大帝，用名之曰絕饗之野。乃命少昊請司馬鳥師，以正五帝之官，故名曰質。天用大成，至于今不亂。

In the past at the beginning of heaven, two rulers were established by X; as a result, norms were also set up and laid out. The Red Emperor was ordered to assign the governing duties to two ministers; Chi You was ordered to live with Shao Hao, in charge of the four quarters and the work that had not been accomplished by heaven above. Chi You then expelled the Emperor and the two competed by the Zhuolu River,<sup>64</sup> leaving nowhere within the nine corners unaffected. The Red Emperor was greatly frightened and thus persuaded the Yellow Emperor to capture Chi You and kill him in Central Ji. The Yellow Emperor unleashed his wrath [toward Chi You] with armor and weapons, therefore he achieved his governance greatly. He followed the order of Heaven and Heaven recorded his achievements. For this reason Central Ji was also called the Field without War Horse Bridles. Then Shao Hao, i.e., Qing,<sup>65</sup> was appointed as Minister of War and Master of Birds to command the officials of the five elements;<sup>66</sup> therefore he was also called Zhi. Heaven thus greatly accomplished [its work], lasting till nowadays without being disturbed.<sup>67</sup>

Despite its vague wording and poor organization, this passage clearly attests that the Battle of Zhuolu was initiated by the dispute between the Red Emperor and Chi You. Initially defeated by Chi You, the Red Emperor had to seek assistance from the Yellow Emperor, who was able to capture and kill Chi You in Central Ji. Contrary to the *Shiji* account, in the *Yi Zhoushu* it is not the Yellow Emperor but the Flame Emperor—usually equated with the Red Emperor as commentators suggest—who plays the major role in the Battle of Zhuolu against Chi You. The above passage indeed states that the Red Emperor and Chi You were the two rulers. The reason that scholars now identify the *erhou* 二后 as the Red Emperor and the Yellow Emperor has to do with the modern syncretization of a Huangdi lore, which elevated the Yellow Emperor to the role of the central protagonist in Chinese legendary history.<sup>68</sup> No doubt, in assisting the Red Emperor to punish Chi You, the Yellow Emperor accomplished what Heaven had commanded the *erhou*

62 Character missing.

63 Two characters missing.

64 Some commentators suggest “河” a mistaken rendering of “阿,” denoting the Zhuolu mount instead of the river. See Huang Huaixin 黃懷信 et al 2007: 732–733.

65 Most commentators tend to consider “請” as “清,” name of Shao Hao. See Huang Huaixin et al 2007: 734–736.

66 The term “五帝” is interpreted as the five elements with the reference from Shanzi’s 剡子 speech recorded in the *Zuozhuan*. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 Zhao 17.1386–1388.

67 Huang Huaixin et al 2007: 730–736.

68 Huang Huaixin et al 2007: 731.

to undertake. Violence, be it punishment or even war, was henceforth legitimized as a means to establish the “norms” of good government and to achieve peace. This theme—that violence is necessary for the restoration of peace from chaos—remains consistent with the ideology of Shang and Zhou statecraft. The founding fathers of both the Shang and Zhou dynasties established their rule by overthrowing the final king of the preceding dynasty. This principle of statecraft is evoked in the Zhou king’s reference to the Yellow Emperor’s defeat of Chi You in the “Changmai” (Sacrifice of Tasting the Wheat) *pian* of the *Yi Zhoushu*.

The “Changmai” version of the Yellow Emperor’s story is considered to be of early origin. Li Xueqin observes that the wording of the “Changmai” greatly resembles early Zhou bronze inscriptions. This prompts him to suggest that the “Changmai” could have taken its written form by King Mu’s 穆王 reign (r. 956–918 BC), if not quite as early as King Cheng’s 成王 time (r. 1042/35–1006 BC), as suggested in the postface of the *Yi Zhoushu*.<sup>69</sup> Li’s article aims to place the “Changmai” among Western Zhou legal writings, particularly those mentioned in the *Zuozhuan* as the Nine Punishments (*jiu xing* 九刑). Yet, unfortunately, Li’s article does not provide substantial evidence; his dating of the “Changmai” to King Mu of Zhou is especially doubtful as there is not enough detail in the “Changmai” linking it to the early Western Zhou King Zhao’s 周昭王 (r. 995–977 BC) southern campaign, which is held by Li as an important piece of evidence to date this piece of writing.<sup>70</sup> Li acknowledges those expressions anachronistic to Western Zhou writing conventions, but this undermines his early dating of the passage.

A final blow to Li’s dating is delivered by the *Zuozhuan* passages indicating the later creation date of legal writings. The strong disagreement uttered in Shu Xiang’s 叔向 letter to Zichan 子產 for the latter’s drafting of legal writings seems to suggest that at that time the making of legal writings was rather innovative. Those earlier legal writings mentioned by Shu Xiang in his letter, such as the *Yu xing* 禹刑 (Punishments of Yu), the *Tang xing* 唐刑 (Punishments of Tang), and the *Jiu xing* 九刑 (Nine Punishments) that Li Xueqin tends to believe as the Western Zhou legal writings, make more sense to the overall debate in the *Zuozhuan* context if we understand them as rhetorical devices rather than historical documents.<sup>71</sup> The use of the phrase “rectifying writings of punishments” (*zheng xingshu*

69 Li Xueqin 1999: 575. For the related information in the postface of the *Yi Zhoushu*, see Huang Huaixin et al 2007: 1133.

70 Li Xueqin 1999: 575.

71 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 6.1274–1277.

正刑書) in the “Changmai” appears to be an Eastern Zhou phenomenon when considering the more concrete evidence of its historical context in the *Zuozhuan*. This dating accords with Li Xueqin’s dating of the less archaic expressions in the chapter, though he considers these to be Eastern Zhou interpolations. I contend that the *Zuozhuan* narratives suggest that those less archaic expressions are not later interpolations at all; instead, they betray the later date of the composition of the “Changmai” piece.

Attesting to the reliability of Sikong Jizi’s statement regarding the Yellow Emperor in the *Guoyu*, Wang Hui 王暉 embraces Li Xueqin’s argument. In examining the usage of the character *zhong* 中 in a variety of sources, including oracle bone inscriptions and the “Baoxun” 保訓 text found in the Qinghua University collection of Warring States bamboo strip writings, and comparing it with its use in the “Changmai” of the *Yi Zhoushu*, Wang Hui argues that both the “Changmai” and the “Baoxun” are written records passed down from the Western Zhou dynasty. Moreover, by linking the “Changmai’s” phrase “officials of the five elements” to related oracle bone inscriptions as well as Shao Hao’s convention of naming his officials with the names of birds as mentioned in the *Zuozhuan*, Wang Hui further traces the five-numbered official system to the pre-Shang period and suggests that not only was the “Changmai” text written down early, but that what is depicted in this text is also incredibly early and historically reliable.<sup>72</sup>

Despite his strong convictions, Wang Hui’s argument is flawed. To interpret the character *zhong* as a burial banner based on information in such later texts as the *Liji* (Records of Rites) and *Yili* 儀禮 (Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial) proves neither the “Baoxun” nor the “Changmai” to be an early text. Moreover, Wang Hui himself is aware of the conflict surrounding the interpretation of the character *zhong*. Indeed, the different uses of the character within the “Baoxun” only reflect how complex this issue is, which compromises the “Baoxun” as evidence of the reliability of the “Changmai” as an early source. Also, the connection of the “Changmai” to oracle bone inscriptions and the legendary associations with the number five in Wang Hui’s argument is the result of forced interpretation rather than careful consideration of how the number five had been used, or how its meaning changed over time. An analysis of how the number five is related to the development of the theory of “five elements” in the Warring States period may have been more fruitful.

Finally, Wang Hui’s argument asserts that the *di* 禘 sacrifice could only be performed by hegemonic rulers. Wang Hui employs this argument to explain

72 Wang Hui 2009: xi–xvii; for Shao Hao’s naming his officials, see *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 17.1386–1388; for the “Baoxun” bamboo strips and text, see Li Xueqin 2010: 8–9; 55–62; 142–148.

why the Chen 陳 rulers had not offered the *di* sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor before they usurped the Jiang Qi family.<sup>73</sup> The *Zuozhuan* suggests otherwise. The *di* sacrifice consisted of two seasonal and ancestral offerings, and the right to present the *di* sacrifice to one's ancestor was not strictly limited to hegemonic rulers of the time.<sup>74</sup> For example, the state of Lu had never achieved hegemonic status, but its rulers presented *di* sacrifices to its deceased lords.<sup>75</sup>

Rather than comparing versions of the Huangdi story from conflicting sources and emphasizing their historical value, I prefer to read them in their proper context. Historical authenticity may not have been prioritized in some contexts, such as the two Yellow Emperor stories related in speeches attributed to Sikong Jizi and the King of Zhou in the *Guoyu* and the *Yi Zhoushu*. Sikong Jizi's speech states that the Yellow Emperor and the Flame Emperor developed different virtues because they grew up in different places, despite being brothers. Because of these different virtues, they were led to use force against each other. When related to the Battle of Banquan, a decisive battle won by the Yellow Emperor, it tells us that the defeated Jiang clan submitted itself to the Ji clan. Certainly, the "Shengmin" describes the Ji Zhou and the Jiang as longtime allies and praises the Jiang for supporting the ascendancy of the Zhou,<sup>76</sup> but no sources recount how submissive the Jiang clan was, nor do they detail how dominant the Ji clan was, especially in its early stage when establishing a base in Jiang clan's traditional territory of Zhouyuan.

If we interpret Sikong Jizi's story within the context of the situation prompting his speech, his purpose is to liken the relationship between the Ji and Jiang to that between the Jin and Qin. The following table illustrates the parallel relationships:

**Tab. 2-2:** Parallel Relationships of the Ji-Jin and Jiang-Qin Pairs:

	Parallel 1		Parallel 2	
Polities/Groups	Ji (姬)	Jin (晉)	Jiang (姜)	Qin (秦)
Protagonists	Huangdi	Chong'er	Yandi	King of Qin
Living Places	Ji River	Jin	Jiang River	Qin

<sup>73</sup> Wang Hui 2009: 8–9. Here Wang Hui refers to the contents of the bronze inscriptions on the "Chenhou Yin Qi *dui*," which is to be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

<sup>74</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 15.1369; see both the main text of the *Zuo Commentary* and the notes by Yang Bojun.

<sup>75</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Min 2; Zhao 15; Zhao 25; Ding 8.

<sup>76</sup> *Maoshi zhengyi* 17.1055–1078.



	Parallel 1		Parallel 2	
Surnames	Ji	Ji	Jiang	Ying
Virtues of	Ji	Jin	Jiang	Qin
Conflicting with	Jiang	Qin	Ji	Jin
Married with	Jiang	Qin	Ji	Jin

As shown, every point in the myth corresponds to a parallel relationship between the states of Jin and Qin. Moreover, this correspondence highlights the thrust of Sikong Jizi's speech for his intended audience: Sikong Jizi argued that the advantages of obtaining Qin's support through marriage to the king's daughter should trump any concerns about clan differences and occasional conflicts between the states. And his account of the Ji and Jiang clans underscores his point: Ji and Jiang lived in different areas, had different virtues, and fought against each other, but when the two groups established marriage ties, their descendants prospered. As with many *Zuozhuan* speeches, the function of relating the success of the Yellow Emperor in dealing with the Flame Emperor anticipates the Jin prince's success should he follow Sikong Jizi's advice.

Myths regarding the Yellow Emperor were never meant to convey factual, historical truth, however. When relaying information regarding the Yellow Emperor, Sikong Jizi was concerned about the persuasive effect of relating the Yellow Emperor to the situation facing Chong'er, regardless of historical accuracy. Some scholars insist Sikong Jizi's statements on the Yellow Emperor constitute historically accurate oral transmission extending back to a distant past. It is impossible to determine, however, how far into the past this chain extends. Furthermore, it is unclear whether Sikong Jizi's narrative would have had much in common with such a narrative. Lacking explicit connections explains the multiplicity of attempts to locate the Yellow Emperor's domain and the difficulty in pinpointing the area of the Ji River where the Yellow Emperor supposedly resided. Such difficulty is largely due to flawed assumptions that all sources record historical facts—in this case, about the Yellow Emperor—and that these facts can be pieced together without regard for their textual contexts to create a unified and accurate historical image of the Yellow Emperor.

The conflicting information presented in these different sources, however, leads us to question the validity of such assumptions. If we try to extract historical or geographical information on the Yellow Emperor from Sikong Jizi's telling of the story, the location of the Ji River must be in the State of Jin, since Sikong Jizi

has equated the territory of the Yellow Emperor near the Ji River within the territory of Jin. In other words, the precise location of the Ji River plays no part in Sikong Jizi's persuasion.

As with Sikong Jizi's story, the narratives recounting the Yellow Emperor's battles against Chi You and the Flame Emperor present a labyrinth of nominally concrete information on the battles of Banquan and Zhuolu. For example, both the "Wudide" and the *Shiji* reference the Yellow Emperor's fight against the Flame Emperor, but unlike the latter, the "Wudide" is silent on the Battle of Zhuolu. The *Shiji* describes the "Battle of Banquan" and the "Battle of Zhuolu" as separate events, with the Yellow Emperor appearing as the initiator and the eventual victor of both. In the "Changmai" *pian* of the *Yi Zhoushu*, however, the Flame Emperor and Chi You, i.e., the two rulers appointed by Heaven, are the central characters. The Yellow Emperor is portrayed merely as an assistant of the Flame Emperor, and there is no indication that the two engaged in a major battle with one another at Banquan. Nevertheless, another chapter in the *Yi Zhoushu*, the "Shi ji jie" 史記解 (Explanations to the Scribe's Records), suggest that it was Chi You, rather than the Flame Emperor, who fought the Yellow Emperor at the Battle of Banquan. This would explain why the chapter refers to Chi You as a "man of Banquan" (*Banquan shi* 阪泉氏).<sup>77</sup> Moreover, the *Shuijing zhu* 水經注 (Commentaries on the Water Classic) cites an earlier text to confirm this notion that Banquan was closely related to Chi You.<sup>78</sup> Other geographical sources suggest that Banquan was also called Huangdi Quan 黃帝泉 (Spring of the Yellow Emperor), while Zhuolu was the Yellow Emperor's capital city.<sup>79</sup> In synthesizing all the information, some scholars conclude that Banquan was located in the same area as Zhuolu, and that the Battle of Banquan is another name for the Battle of Zhuolu.<sup>80</sup> Indeed, what all these sources preserve is simply a narrative framework for ancient sage rulers, war heroes, and battles in which the line between the memory of events real and imagined is nearly impossible to draw.<sup>81</sup>

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77 Huang Huaixin et al 2007: 965–966.

78 Yang Shoujing 楊守敬 and Xiong Huizhen 熊會真 1989: 1184–1186.

79 *Shiji* 1.5.

80 Qian Mu 錢穆 1991: 10; Liang Yusheng 梁玉繩 1981: 3–4.

81 Some scholars attempt to solve this problem with the support of archaeological data. For example, Han Jianye and Yang Xin'gai believe that the Miaodigou 廟底溝 and Hougang 後崗 archaeological cultures in modern Zhuolu area correspond with the Huangdi and Chi You groups, respectively. The conflicts between the Huangdi and Yandi clans are archaeologically reflected in the interaction between the Zaoyuan 棗園 culture in Shanxi and the Banpo 半坡 culture at Guanzhong 關中 area. This kind of match accepts the interpretation on the locations of the three ancient groups provided by textual information as pre-knowledge. Archaeological cultures do

If, however, we read the myth of Chi You, the Red/Flame Emperor and the Yellow Emperor as a rhetorical strategy, all the elements that seemingly conflict with each other when trying to reconstruct the history of the Yellow Emperor suit the import of the speech, especially given that the “Changmai” is a work devoted to the establishment of a series of legal punishment. Since the true aim of the King’s speech is to issue the “nine *pian* writings on punishment” (*xingshu jiupian* 刑書九篇), it is not surprising he advocates for the legitimacy of violence as a means to achieve good governance. Subsequently, the story is set in the time of an imperfect world waiting to be brought to perfection by two heavenly-appointed rulers, the Red Emperor and Chi You. Unfortunately, shared rule soon leads to a chaotic situation: Chi You breaks the balance of power by exiling the Red Emperor. To end the chaos and restore peace, the Red Emperor seeks the aid of the Yellow Emperor. The Yellow Emperor uses military force to eliminate Chi You’s threat, and then establishes the rule of law. Only through violence is Heaven’s work perfected and peace restored.

Viewed from this perspective, the Zhou king’s telling of these particular events is not done to recount historical facts, but to justify the king’s own promulgation of new laws. Citing the Yellow Emperor’s use of punishment to pacify the world, the king evokes a connection between his current actions and those of the legendary sage-kings.

As has been illustrated, anecdotes regarding the Yellow Emperor should be read as persuasive devices rather than as statements of historical fact. Even the Yellow Emperor’s biographical account in the *Shiji* fails to reach the level of “history”, as it is a rearrangement of scattered, historicized information within a fixed narrative framework. As K. C. Chang infers, the primary approach to the Shang and Zhou myths should be to view them as myths created to fill the needs of their own times. Contrary to their claims, these myths do not reflect the life of earlier societies.<sup>82</sup> In the case of the *Shiji*, we see a reflection of the Western Han scribes’ view in their portrayal of the Yellow Emperor. Likewise, the sources upon which the Han Grand Historian relied are more a record of how Eastern Zhou people viewed the Yellow Emperor than they are a portrait of Yellow Emperor himself. Rather than studying an “historical” Yellow Emperor, we are better off examining how such a figure was received during

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not explain specific historical events or heroic biographies. For this reason, K. C. Chang laments that most of the pre-Shang legendary history cannot be proved by archaeological data. Chang 1983: 287; for Han’s and Yang’s idea, see Han Jianye and Yang Xin’gai 2006: 154–156

<sup>82</sup> Chang Kwang-chih 1983a: 288. A similar approach is held to the analysis of the Eastern Han construction of teaching and learning lineages by Michael Nylan and Marc Csikszentmihalyi; see Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003.

the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods. The remaining sections of this study attempt to clarify the connection between the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor and the historical context of the Eastern Zhou invention of this figure, particularly focusing on the Eastern Zhou's changing socio-political environment, religious mentality, and way of thinking.

## 2.4 The Yellow Emperor, Violence, and Statecraft

One of the earliest mentions of the Yellow Emperor appears on a *dui* 敦 bronze vessel made by King Wei of Qi (Qi Weiwang 齊威王) (r. 357–320 BC) for his deceased father. In the inscriptions on this bronze, King Wei of Qi is referred to as “Chenhou Yinqi” 陳侯因齊 (Marquis Yinqi of Chen), the donor of the vessel. These inscriptions, which have been intensively studied since the 1920s, are still frequently cited as one of the most important sources for the study of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>83</sup>

This vessel is dated to the mid-fourth century BC by Xu Zhongshu 徐仲舒, who first recognized the reference to Huangdi in the inscriptions.<sup>84</sup> What the inscriptions reveal, according to the most widely accepted interpretation, is the Tian Qi 田齊 ruling family's intention to identify themselves as the Yellow Emperor's descendants in order to legitimize their usurpation of the Jiang Qi 姜齊 ruling house. The Tian Qi family were the descendants of the former Chen 陳 ruling house, which saw itself as descendants of Shun, who is connected to the Huangdi lineage according to the “Dixi” of the *Da Dai liji* 大戴禮記 (Records of Rites Adapted by the Elder Dai).<sup>85</sup> Therefore, by claiming to be the progeny of the Yellow Emperor, the newly enthroned Tian Qi family aimed to evoke the legend of the Yellow Emperor's subduing the Flame Emperor, allegedly the ancestor of the Jiang lineage. Accordingly, the Battle of Banquan as narrated in the *Shiji* insinuates the Tian Qi ruling house's inevitable succession to power.

A connection between the emergence of the Huangdi myth and the Jixia 稷下 scholars under the patronage of Tian Qi family is also suggested; the Huangdi myth

<sup>83</sup> For example, Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 1998; Ding Shan 丁山 2005: 154–178; Guo Moruo 2002c: 464–466; Wang Hui 王暉 2009: 7–9.

<sup>84</sup> Xu Zhongshu 1998: 412–431, 438. We need to be aware of the typo appearing in the Zhonghua shuju version of this article, erroneously stating that the Yinqi *dui* was commissioned in 375 BC (p. 434). In consulting with what Xu says in its previous section, the Yinqi *dui* should be dated in the year of 357 BC. See Xu Zhongshu 1998: 425, 427.

<sup>85</sup> Fang Xiangdong 2008: 737; *Shiji* 46.1879–1904.

may have been invented by the Jixia scholars to legitimize Tian Qi's usurpation.<sup>86</sup> According to this view, the Huangdi myth, although claimed to be ancient, was not very old at all. People's memory of the past, in this case, became a myth itself: no more than the byproduct of the political propaganda planned by the Tian Qi ruling family and carried out by the Jixia scholars. However sophisticated this manipulation of memory and myth may seem, the cornerstone of the argument is Yinqi's identification of the Yellow Emperor as his high ancestor:

其惟因齊揚皇考，紹統高祖黃帝，弭嗣桓文，朝問諸侯，合揚厥德。

Now may I, Yinqi, praise my august deceased father, continue the line originating from my high ancestor the Yellow Emperor, closely follow Lords Huan and Wen, have the various lords visit the Qi court, and conform to and praise our virtues.<sup>87</sup>

The assertion of the Yellow Emperor as the ruling house's progenitor is obvious in this inscription, but there remains difficulty in accounting for the sudden need for the Tian Qi ruling house to make such a claim. According to the extant sources, none except for this *dui* vessel connects the Gui-surnamed (媯) Chen to the Ji-surnamed Yellow Emperor if we agree with Xu Zhongshu's interpretation. The *Zuozhuan* only traces the Chen family to Zhuan Xu 顓頊, who was a grandson of the Yellow Emperor according to the "Dixi."<sup>88</sup> In the *Shiji*, the ancestral origin of the Chen only begins with Shun.<sup>89</sup> Considering that even the Zhou royal family, which shared the Yellow Emperor's surname, did not recognize the Yellow Emperor as its progenitor—its ancestry was only traced to Ji 稷,

<sup>86</sup> Cf. Xu Zhongshu 1998; Ding Shan 2005: 154–178; Zhong Zongxian 鍾宗憲 2005: 127–178; Lewis 1990: 165–212; Mori 1970: 149–174; Lin Jingmo 2008: 118–120.

<sup>87</sup> This translation is mainly based on Xu Zhongshu's transcription, punctuation, and interpretation, see Xu Zhongshu 1998: 409–412. The Chinese characters are standardized by the author.

<sup>88</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 8.1304–1305; Fang Xiangdong 2008: 737.

<sup>89</sup> *Shiji* 36.1575–1587. Wang Hui tries to explain why the Yellow Emperor suddenly appeared in the Chen ritual by arguing that the Chen could have gained the right to present sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor only after the Chen ruling family seized power. He attempts to prove that the Tian Qi ruling family's identification of themselves as the descendants of the Yellow Emperor was in accordance with the change of their status: the Tian Qi, in Wang Hui's view, had achieved actual hegemonic status among the Warring States polities, and had to present the *di* 禘 sacrifice to the Yellow Emperor, otherwise the Tian Qi would encounter disaster. However, if, as he argues, only the king had the right to present *di* sacrifice, any enfeoffed state, including one that had achieved hegemonic status, would violate the sacrificial rule by performing the *di* sacrifice. Moreover, Wang's argument rests upon the shaky presupposition that the Zhou ritual stipulations were consistently enforced over seven hundred years of eroding Zhou power. For Wang's argument, see Wang Hui 2009: 7–9.

the God of Millet—we must weigh carefully when considering why the “Dixi” and the *Shiji* exalt the Yellow Emperor as the ancestor of almost all the Eastern Zhou states. Even given the notion that the Yellow Emperor was the forefather of all states, formed long ago, the available evidence suggests that each state preferred to trace its own ancestry back to a unique progenitor. The Yellow Emperor additionally had his own descendants who sacrificed to him. A number of sources confirm that after conquest of the Shang, King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (r. ca. 1046–1043 BC) enfeoffed the offspring of the Yellow Emperor in Zhu 鑄 (or 祝) or Ji 蕪 to maintain their ancestral sacrifices, just as he had also done for the descendants of Shennong, Yao, and other sage-kings, to preserve their sacrifices by awarding their descendants lands for ancestral temples.<sup>90</sup> One must wonder what effect evoking the Yellow Emperor would really have, when any other clan could rightfully claim the Yellow Emperor its ancestor. Since all extant textual sources lack evidence for a direct link between the Chen ruling house and the Yellow Emperor, the reading of “gaozu Huangdi” as Yinqi’s means to legitimize the Tian Qi ruling family’s usurpation of the Jiang Qi is compromised.

Additionally, the above rendering of the passage regarding the Yellow Emperor in the Yinqi *dui* inscriptions merely reflects one reading. Guo Moruo offers a different reading by challenging the interpretation of the term *gaozu* 高祖 as “high ancestor.” Instead, he considers the phrase *gao zu Huangdi* 高祖黃帝 to be parallel to *mi si Huan Wen* 弭嗣桓文.<sup>91</sup> This entails that the character *zu* is a verb meaning “to follow;” and *gao*, an adverb modifying the verb *zu*, denoting “highly” or “distantly.” The phrases *gao zu Huangdi* and *mi si Huan Wen* thus denote that Yinqi strives to follow the ancient model of the Yellow Emperor and the more recent exemplars, Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (685–643 BC) and Lord Wen of Jin 晉文公 (636–628 BC).<sup>92</sup> In short, this reading indicates that Yinqi is not claiming to be a direct descendant of the Yellow Emperor but is instead expressing his political ambition to accomplish as much as the legendary Yellow Emperor. Guo’s interpretation better fits the context and, thus, is more convincing than Xu Zhongshu’s reading. The following translation of the whole inscription thus reflects this alternative interpretation:

<sup>90</sup> *Shiji* 4.127; Chen Qiyou 1984: 844; *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 39.1134–1135; Xu Weiyu 1980: 96.

<sup>91</sup> Elsewhere Guo transcribes that character as “邇” instead of “弭,” but there is no significant change of meaning between these two renderings; see Guo Moruo 1996: 156.

<sup>92</sup> Guo Moruo 2002c: 464–466.

唯正六月癸未，陳侯因齊曰：皇考孝武桓公恭哉，大慕克成。其惟因齊，揚皇考昭統，高祖黃帝，弭嗣桓文，朝問諸侯，合揚厥德。諸侯寅薦吉金，用作孝武桓公祭器敦，以蒸以嘗，保有齊邦，世世萬子孫，永為典尚。

It is exactly on the *guiwei* day in the sixth month that the Chen Marquis Yinqi announces: My august deceased father, the filial Lord Wuhuan, was reverent and had accomplished greatly. Now may I, Yinqi, praise the bright tradition that my august deceased father had established, from the remote past I follow the [model of] the Yellow Emperor, from the recent past I inherit [the merits of] Lords Huan and Wen, so that I can have the various lords visit the court to conform to and praise the sage rulers' virtues. The various lords are respectfully presented the auspicious metal, I thus made for the filial Lord Wuhuan this *dui* sacrificial vessel to carry out the *zheng* and *chang* sacrifices and to protect and preserve the State of Qi. May the ten thousand sons and grandsons from one generation to another<sup>93</sup> forever regard this as their canon and guide.<sup>94</sup>

In comparison with Xu Zhongshu's interpretation of the line referencing the Yellow Emperor, Guo's rendering deemphasizes the blood relationship between the Tian lineage and the Yellow Emperor. The Yellow Emperor becomes, like the former hegemon Lord Huan of Qi and Lord Wen of Jin, emblematic of the virtue needed to consolidate various groups under a unified power. Furthermore, Guo's interpretation emphasizes the political basis of power rather than the ethnic basis. Indeed, Yinqi dedicated the vessel not to claim a birthright, but rather to declare his political ambition by invoking the Yellow Emperor and other powerful lords as his exemplars. This is especially poignant if we consider that the term "Huan Wen" 桓文 refers to the Jiang-surnamed Lord Huan of Qi and the Ji-surnamed Lord Wen of Jin.<sup>95</sup>

The inscriptions provide additional evidence supporting Guo's reading when Yinqi asserts that the metal used to make the bronze vessel was presented by various lords. This flamboyant declaration directly alludes to the great sage-king Yu, founding father of the Xia dynasty, who was said to have cast the legendary

<sup>93</sup> Similar expression appears in the "Tangong xia" chapter of the *Liji*, which explains the bronze inscription "up 世 low 立." *Liji zhengyi* 10.294.

<sup>94</sup> The rendering basically follows Guo Moruo's interpretation; however, changes are made when necessary. The characters are standardized by the author. For Guo's transcriptions and interpretation, see Guo Moruo 2002c: 464–466. For a different translation opposing Guo's reading "高祖黃帝，弭嗣桓文" as parallels, see Doty 1982: 617.

<sup>95</sup> Tang Yuhui 湯余惠 suggests that the term "桓文" denotes "the cultured Huan [of Qi]," i.e., Yinqi's father Wu 午. However, as Gao Xinhua 高新華 points out, Tang's reading of this term is rather a forced one, for it is not in accordance with the convention. See Tang Yuhui 1993: 13–14; Gao Xinhua 2008.

nine *dīng* 鼎 tripods with metal offered by tributary states.<sup>96</sup> Similar expressions also appear on three other bronze vessels commissioned by Chen Marquis Wu 午 (374–357 BC), Yinqi’s father.<sup>97</sup> It is difficult to ascertain to whom the expression “various lords” refers, not to mention the question of whether or not they truthfully offered bronze metal to the Tian Qi rulers as tribute, but this recurring claim reveals the Tian Qi rulers’ political ambition. If the legend of the nine *dīng* tripods was indeed a constitutive part of Warring States political philosophy, as K. C. Chang and Wu Hung have suggested, the claim of casting commemorative bronze vessels with tributary metal becomes politically symbolic, highlighting the entrance of the Yellow Emperor’s exemplary rule into the Warring States political rhetoric of those pursuing hegemonic power over the various states.<sup>98</sup> If we understand the import of the Yellow Emperor in the Warring States context, it becomes clear that the invocation of the Yellow Emperor is a rhetorical device conveying Yinqi’s political aim.

Despite the problems with Xu Zhongshu’s argument, which asserts that the Tian Qi ruler Yinqi attempted to claim the Yellow Emperor as his ancestor, Xu is nevertheless correct in stating that the Yinqi *dui* is the earliest datable evidence illustrating the Yellow Emperor’s significant role in the political culture of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. References to the Yellow Emperor are absent in both transmitted literature and excavated materials predating the mid-Warring States period, so it is worth exploring the reasons for the Yellow Emperor’s seemingly sudden emergence and popularity during this period.

Guo Moruo, like Xu Zhongshu, considers the Yellow Emperor an invention of the Tian Qi rulers and the Jixia scholars they patronized: the historicization of the Yellow Emperor lies in the Tian Qi intention to adopt the *Huang Lao zhi shu* 黃老之術 (Techniques of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi).<sup>99</sup> This argument is of interest when considering why there are so many more texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor than to other sage rulers.

In Guo Moruo’s opinion, the Yellow Emperor’s status as an invention supporting the Tian Qi rulers’ political rhetoric is largely based on an interpretation of the *Guanzi* 管子. According to this argument, the texts included in the *Guanzi* were created by the Jixia scholars, who were patronized and controlled by the

<sup>96</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xuan 3.669–672.

<sup>97</sup> These three bronze vessels, a *gui* 簋 and two *dui*, and the *dui* commissioned by the Chen Marquis Yinqi are discussed by Xu Zhongshu as the “four vessels by the Chen Marquises.” For the inscriptions on three vessels, see Xu Zhongshu 1998: 406–409.

<sup>98</sup> Chang Kwang-chih 1983: 63–65; Wu Hong 巫鴻 1995: 1–16.

<sup>99</sup> Guo Moruo 1996, 156–191.



Tian Qi rulers. Thus, the *Guanzi*'s advocacy of the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary ruler is political propaganda supporting the ambitions of the Tian Qi ruling family. While it is true that the Yellow Emperor is mentioned as a sage-king in a number of *pian* included in the *Guanzi*, a careful reading of these chapters reveals that the Yellow Emperor is generally listed among other sage kings without any specific connection to the Tian Qi rulers.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the Yellow Emperor's appearance at this time is not exclusive to the *Guanzi*; we see various aspects of the Yellow Emperor in different texts.<sup>101</sup> Even though the argument that the *Guanzi* is a text pertaining to the Tian Qi rulers' political ambition is convincing, the evidence does not support the claim that the Yellow Emperor was solely an invention of the Tian Qi ruling family. Michael Puett has suggested that the presence of the Yellow Emperor in a variety of Warring States texts shows that this figure was shared among different groups as an embodiment of teachings on the connection between violence and statecraft.<sup>102</sup> We should doubt Guo Moruo's conclusion connecting the Yellow Emperor and the *Guanzi*, understanding that the *Guanzi* does not exclusively promote the Yellow Emperor, nor is the development of the image of the Yellow Emperor exclusive to the *Guanzi*. The Yellow Emperor was not an invention by the Jixia scholars to support the Tian Qi rulers' desire for hegemonic status.

Even if the Yellow Emperor was an invention of Jixia scholars, he was not exclusively manipulated by the Tian Qi ruling family. An explanation is needed to determine how the Yellow Emperor became a common motif shared by a variety of Warring States period writings, especially when considering those texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the "Yiwen zhi", which have been largely neglected in studies. A review of how scholars have handled the myths presented in Warring States texts is foundational to our understanding of the Yellow Emperor as an author.

There are two scholarly approaches for interpreting the emergence of the Huangdi myth. One tends to view the Huangdi myth as a historical development, while the other, dubbed as the structuralist approach, prefers to explore the symbolic meanings of the Huangdi myth by analyzing its structural elements while avoiding embroilment in debates on the putative oral transmission upon which

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**100** Gao Xinhua 2008.

**101** The Yellow Emperor appears in a whole range of transmitted sources in addition to the *Guanzi*, for example, in various *pian* of the *Shangjun shu* 商君書, the *Wei Liaozi* 尉繚子, the *Liutao* 六韜, the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the *Wenzi* 文子, the *Liezi* 列子, the *Lüshi chunqiu*, and the *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策. Michael Puett also offers a good summary of the Huangdi narratives in the Warring States writings. See Puett 2001.

**102** Puett 2001: 113.

the historical approach relies.<sup>103</sup> The historical approach consists of two main arguments: one, represented by Yang Kuan, suggests that the myth of the Yellow Emperor as presented in Warring States writings was primarily the product of a tradition of oral transmission extending back to a distant past, when belief in the Supreme Being (*shangdi* 上帝) first appeared. According to Yang Kuan, this supreme being was called the August Emperor (*huangdi* 皇帝), which became a general term shared by many regionally-worshiped gods during the Eastern Zhou period. Since the character *huang* 皇 is phonetically identical to the character *huang* 黃, the term August Emperor was thus rendered later as the Yellow Emperor. Because of this, the myths of other god-like figures—Yao, Shun, and Yu, for instance—also contain hints of the later historicization of the Yellow Emperor.<sup>104</sup> Following Yang Kuan, Mark Lewis examines the Warring States myths regarding Huangdi and Chi You against the ancient tradition in which those myths were rooted, reconstructed, and interpreted to argue that they are closely associated with the philosophy of Warring States warfare and statecraft.<sup>105</sup>

The second school of the historical approach, represented by Michael Puett, accepts that the emergence of the Huangdi myth concerns Warring States history, but disagrees with the contention that the Huangdi myth was connected to any earlier tradition. For Puett, connecting the Warring States Huangdi myth with an early mythical tradition not only takes the already scattered information on the Huangdi myth out of context and leads to the reconstruction of an early tradition that is historically meaningless, but it also fails to explicate diverse and even conflicting narratives.

Puett also takes issue with the structuralist approach to the Huangdi myth: while the approach avoids the pitfalls associated with the reconstruction of a purported mythological tradition, it cannot account for the differences among the various Yellow Emperor narratives. Puett feels that, by pursuing the “ultimate symbolism” in the structure of the Huangdi narratives, the structuralist approach fails to provide a contextual reading. Puett also suggests that, in order to avoid decontextualizing the myth, one must abandon reconstructing a composite Huangdi myth based on materials scattered in different texts. On the contrary, we must situate the Huangdi myth only in the Warring States debates pertaining to the use of warfare in the creation of statecraft.<sup>106</sup>

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**103** Le Blanc 1985–1986; Jan Yün-hua 1981.

**104** Yang Kuan 1941: 189–99. For related arguments identifying the Yellow Emperor as Yao or Yu, also see Sun Zuoyun 孫作雲 2003, Chen Mengjia 1936.

**105** Lewis 1990: 165–212.

**106** Puett 2001: 92–101.

Partly inspired by Lewis's study of the Huangdi myth, which focuses on how social violence was sanctioned when such violence related to the emergence of the early Chinese state, Puett examines how Warring States intellectuals conceived of statecraft. With the creation of a state as a cue, Puett first divides the relevant texts, transmitted and excavated, into two temporal strata—the fourth-century-BC and the third-century-BC—that reflect the major concerns regarding the relationships between rebel and sage, or nature and state, expressed by the individual authors of those texts.<sup>107</sup> Puett understands the two layers as the direct product of the writers' response to their contemporary sociopolitical "tensions and concerns,"<sup>108</sup> and these writings as historically reliable sources for reconstructing a long lasting debate that had taken place during that time. In examining those exemplary passages from the selected texts, Puett finds that only those falling in his second stratum (dated to the third century BC) refer to the Yellow Emperor and his adversaries. When comparing the nature of the debates taking place in both strata, Puett finds that the second stratum increasingly emphasizes the emergence of violence in the creation of statecraft. Authors of the second-stratum texts deliberately introduce the Yellow Emperor into the debate due to his association with the use of force, including violent usurpation, and not because he was considered an historical figure connected to the emergence of the state. Therefore, the appearance of the Yellow Emperor in fourth-century references, such as the Chenhou Yinqi *Dui* inscriptions and the *Zuozhuan*, is largely irrelevant to the third century BC intellectual debate: the Yellow Emperor's appearance in fourth century works is merely referential.<sup>109</sup> What these debates reflect, in Puett's view, is that Warring States thinkers were concerned about the relationship between nature and culture.<sup>110</sup>

While I agree with Puett's suggestion that one should examine the Huangdi myth in its due context, I question his approach to Warring States texts. Puett's method for dating and dividing the texts he examines into two temporal layers is underdeveloped. Since he stresses the authors' response to the actual tensions and concerns of the Warring States intellectual world, the dates of composition for these texts should be central to his categorization, and to our understanding

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**107** Texts categorized in Puett's first stratum include the "Lüxing" *pian* of the *Shangshu* 尚書, the *Mozi* 墨子, and the *Mengzi* 孟子, those in his second stratum consist of the *Shangjun shu* 商君書, the "Jingfa" 經法 and the "Shiliujing" 十六經—two of the four manuscripts attached to the *Laozi* excavated from Mawangdui Tomb 3, the *Lüshi chungqiu*, the *Da Dai Liji*, and the *Guanzi* 管子. See Puett 2001: 101–133.

**108** Puett 2001: 101.

**109** Puett 2001: 112, 113, 134, and *passim*.

**110** Puett 2001: 134–140; Puett 2002.

of the actual debates that Puett endeavors to reconstruct. Unfortunately, Puett offers little evidence justifying the dates of the texts categorized in those two strata. Nor does he provide a benchmark based on datable texts with which the differently grouped texts are comparable. His sophisticated argument is undermined, then, by the lack of a more detailed discussion of his methods for dating. In most cases, Puett avoids the perplexing dating issues, and assumes an acceptance of the dates commonly ascribed to the texts by traditional scholarship. Nevertheless, the traditional way of dating an early Chinese text, mostly based on the author to whom the text is attributed, is untenable. In consideration of this complexity, categorizing texts into the two strata Puett constructs is very challenging, if not impossible.

Moreover, Puett's reconstruction of the Warring States debates pertaining to the creation of state is not convincing. Without more precise dating of the texts he refers to, it is impossible to trace the history of such putative debates. Furthermore, there is little evidence that the debates described in Puett's argument indeed occurred. Puett assumes that the passages he examines exist in response to concerns about the creation of state. Nevertheless, what we know about the formation of early Chinese texts contradicts this evidence. Most early writings were transmitted as discrete, anonymous, and rather brief *pian* units, only later being reassembled, edited, and grouped into the larger texts that we now use;<sup>111</sup> it is therefore an arduous and difficult task to sort through and to restore the authors' original inputs when merely relying on the reassembled texts under discussion. Even though the Han scholars managed to find clues to help categorize these texts, their labels for different textual traditions were more the result of retrospective grouping. This observation also presents problems for understanding scholarly traditions during the Warring States.

Additionally, the making and transmission of an early Chinese text is far more complicated than is assumed in traditional dating methods. The differences between Warring States textual traditions are not as distinct as their Han labels suggest: early extant texts reveal that different scholarly circles were influenced by each other. Also, the teachings associated with what are labeled as distinct Warring States textual traditions were not fixed. When teachings were written down, they could not verify with certainty the dates when those ideas originated and circulated. Accordingly, the discrepancy among the various Huangdi narratives that Puett painstakingly explains through classification into putative debates is more likely the result of variation arising during transmission or later editing work, if not both. In short, Puett's reconstruction of the two-century-

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<sup>111</sup> For example, the most famous event of rearranging the Western Han imperial collection of texts led by Liu Xiang, later his son Liu Xin, and many others. *Hanshu* 30.1701–1776.

long debates situates Warring States intellectual framework upon an unverifiable textual foundation.

Finally, in following Lewis's emphasis on the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary figure symbolizing the use of force in the making of statecraft, Puett seems to have overstated this aspect of what the Yellow Emperor represented in the Warring States intellectual world. If we consider how the Yellow Emperor is portrayed in Warring States and early imperial writings as a whole, he is a much more colorful figure than depicted in those putative debates. He was the creator of many things, including weapons, ritual objects, and daily utensils.<sup>112</sup> Additionally, he was portrayed not only as a sage of governance and warfare, but also as a sage making contributions to astrology, cosmology, calendar making, divination, medicine, sexual arts, and recipes and techniques for pursuing immortality.<sup>113</sup> Regardless of how scattered information on the Yellow Emperor appears in those early texts, there is no doubt that the body of lore is far richer than that represented in his portrayal as the inventor of warfare and statecraft. Overemphasizing this side of the Yellow Emperor inevitably limits our view of both the Huangdi figure and the context that produced him. This is especially pertinent if we consider that the texts on military art attributed to the Yellow Emperor make up less than one tenth of the overall texts attributed to him, while nearly two thirds are regarding recipes and techniques related to cosmology, longevity, and immortality. A more holistic context is needed to understand the Yellow Emperor's popularity.

## 2.5 The Yellow Emperor and Ritual, Religious, and Cosmological Thinking

In addition to the aspect of state-making emphasized by Lewis's and Puett's works, there are two other perspectives often taken on the Huangdi narratives. The first pertains to ritual and religious context, especially the change in people's ritual and religious thinking during the Eastern Zhou. Such change is observable, for example, in people's understanding of the Mandate of Heaven. Once considered a supreme power granting awards to the good and issuing punishments to the bad, Eastern Zhou heaven morphed into an impersonal entity represented with abstract patterns of numbers or the forms of constellations.<sup>114</sup> Behind this change was an increased role of humanity in the workings of the cosmos: heaven now responded to the

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<sup>112</sup> Qi Sihe 1941.

<sup>113</sup> *Hanshu* "Yiwen zhi," as listed in Table 1 of this chapter.

<sup>114</sup> Tao Lei 陶磊 2008: 117–129.

human manipulation of those patterns and forms in which the Mandate of Heaven was believed to manifest itself. Under such mentality, people still presented sacrifices to all spirits, deities, and constellations to avoid disasters and seek blessings, but the causality between the heaven and human realms now became explicable and predictable according to those forms and patterns.

Numerous passages in the *Zuozhuan* strikingly demonstrate this trend. For example, from the ninth to the eighteenth year in the reign of Duke Zhao of Lu 魯昭公 (r. 542–510 BC), a series of predictions were made on the basis of the predictors' astrological and cosmological knowledge. In the ninth year of Duke Zhao, the Zheng 鄭 official Pi Zao 裨竈 not only predicted when the state of Chen was to be relocated and how long it would last thereafter, but also explained how his knowledge of astrology as well as the Theory of the Five Elements (*wuxing* 五行) allowed him to make such a prognostication.<sup>115</sup> In the next year, Pi Zao predicted and explained the exact date when the Jin lord would die.<sup>116</sup> In the eleventh year, Chang Hong 萇弘 predicted the assassination of Marquis of Cai.<sup>117</sup> In the seventeenth year, Pi Zao of Zheng, along with two Lu officials—Shen Xu 申須 and Zi Shen 梓慎—foresaw the coming fires that would occur in the fifth month of the following year. Pi Zao urged Zi Chan, the Zheng prime minister, that the disaster could be avoided if Zi Chan would grant him the right to use certain vessels in ritual.<sup>118</sup> In the next year, the fires occurred in those four states exactly as predicted.<sup>119</sup>

Certainly, not all predictions in the *Zuo Commentary* are confirmed. For instance, among Pi Zao's failed prophecies is a warning in the eighteenth year that Zheng would suffer from another conflagration if Zi Chan would not heed his warning.<sup>120</sup> It is also true that we cannot consider *Zuozhuan* narratives to be exact historical records. But these narratives reflect a change in the way of thinking, which is illustrated by the attention devoted to explaining the type of knowledge that rationalizes predictions. Zi Chan resists this change in thinking when he expresses doubt that Pi Zao could penetrate the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道), for, according to Zi Chan, the Way of Heaven is too distant for men to approach.<sup>121</sup> When we compare

115 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 9.1310–1311.

116 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 10.1314–1315.

117 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 11.1322.

118 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 17.1390–1392.

119 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 18.1394–1395.

120 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 18.1395.

121 Zi Chan explains his not granting Pi Zao the ritual vessels to avoid the fire by arguing that “The Way of Heaven is distant, the Way of Man is close. Since the former is not what the latter can reach, how could the latter know the former? How could Zao know the Way of Heaven?” 天道遠，人道邇，非所及也，何以知之，竈焉知天道? *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 18.1395.

Zi Chan's words with his response to the fire, however, his actions reflect the changing perspective on religion and ritual. His actions contradict his previous rejection of Pi Zao's suggestion to use certain ritual vessels.<sup>122</sup> Ritual, as employed by Zi Chan in this context, no longer conveyed a petition to avert evil or to seek blessings, but to perform practical routine that had been widely accepted as a means to restore order in the wake of the disaster.<sup>123</sup> This illustrates the aspect of the Eastern Zhou way of thinking more and more emphasizing the modern sense of instrumental rationality, as documented in the *Zuozhuan*.

Both ways of thinking represented by Zi Chan and the examples above existed in parallel according to the *Zuo Commentary*. In some cases, the *Zuozhuan* narrator deliberately presents these different lines of thinking side by side, suggesting that truth could be approached through different directions, and valid predictions could be made based on various bodies of knowledge. Take, for example, the two clusters of predictions regarding the Battle of Pingyin 平陰 and the attack on Zheng launched by the Chu army recorded in the eighteenth year of Duke Xiang of Lu 魯襄公 (r. 573–542 BC). In the Battle of Pingyin, the Jin generals successfully frightened the Qi lord at night by tricking him into believing that the Qi army was overwhelmingly outnumbered by the Jin troops. The next morning, three Jin officials used different bodies of knowledge to declare the withdrawal of the Qi army:

師曠告晉侯曰：鳥鳴之聲樂，齊師其遁。邢伯告中行伯曰：有班馬之聲，齊師其遁。叔向告晉侯曰：城上有烏，齊師其遁。

Shi Kuang reported to Marquis of Jin, "The chirps of birds and crows sound happy, indicating that the Qi army had fled." Earl of Xing reported to Earl of Zhongxing, "It sounds like the horses were torn away [referring to what says in the *Changes*], indicating that the Qi army had fled." Shu Xiang reported to Marquis of Jin, "On the city walls there stop crows, indicating that the Qi army had fled."<sup>124</sup>

The second occasion eliciting predictions occurred when the Chu army marched north after being solicited by the Zheng prime minister Zi Kong 子孔, who sought its help to break Zheng's alliance with the state of Jin by removing the Zheng leaders who supported such an alliance. Upon hearing of this news, three Jin officials,

<sup>122</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Zhao 18.1396.

<sup>123</sup> Another fairly illuminating example is recorded in the fifth year of Lord Cheng (r. 590–573 BC), when Mount Liang collapsed. What strikes the reader is the cart driver's attitude to ritual. It seems that ritual performance had been viewed as a kind of routine in dealing with natural disasters, an attitude very similar to Zichan's. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Cheng 5.822–823.

<sup>124</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xiang 18.1038.

again including Shi Kuang and Shu Xiang, pronounced their judgments on the Chu military action:

晉人聞有楚師。師曠曰：不害。吾驟歌北風，又歌南風，南風不競，多死聲，楚必無功。董叔曰：天道多在西北，南師不時，必無功。叔向曰：在其君之德也。

The Jin people had heard that the Chu army was approaching. Shi Kuang said, “They will not do any harm. I have on various occasions sung the northern tunes, and then the southern tunes; the southern tunes were not strong and included considerable sounds of death. The Chu will certainly not achieve any merits.” Dong Shu said, “The Way of Heaven<sup>125</sup> is largely located in the northwest. The southern army came in an inappropriate time and certainly will not achieve any merits.” Shu Xiang said, “[Whether the army will win or not] depends on their ruler’s virtue.”<sup>126</sup>

As with the predictions before the Battle of Pingyin, the judgments of all three officials were correct: having suffered considerable losses due to bad weather, the Chu army failed to move further north to confront the Jin army. On both occasions the narrative confirms each prediction. Although the predictions rely on different forms of knowledge and observation—Shi Kuang, on sounds; Earl of Xing, on divination; Dong Shu, on astrology; and Shu Xiang, on his observation of natural phenomena in the first occasion and on his understanding of appropriate rulership in the second. Although it is unclear whether these different bodies of knowledge competed with one another in claiming the validity and accuracy of predictions, the *Zuozhuan* narratives demonstrate how people of the Eastern Zhou understood the Mandate of Heaven to have readable and rational associations with the human realm.

These interpretations of the world are associated with the early Chinese cosmology generally labeled as correlative thinking. Although various sources present differences on the intricacies of correlative thought, such thought relies on a basic recognition that correlations exist between all facets of the cosmos—heaven, earth, man, one’s state, and the myriad things—and that these correlations can be known by using techniques such as the manipulation of the hexagrams and the arrangement of the Five Elements.<sup>127</sup> In this context, heaven is no longer a mysterious commander and supreme judge issuing mandates according to the virtues of the living, but rather a spatial and temporal complexity consisting of

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125 According to Yang Bojun, the “way of heaven” here denotes the orbit of Jupiter. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Xiang* 18.1043.

126 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu Xiang* 18.1043.

127 Henderson 1984; Needham 1956: 216–389.



both celestial bodies, as well as the markers of the passages of time. This understanding of heaven not only characterized Eastern Zhou correlative thinking, but also shaped Eastern Zhou ritual and religious conventions.

Our understanding of the Yellow Emperor narratives exists in such a context. Indeed, one of the earliest sources explaining the naming of the Yellow Emperor relates it to *wuxing* cosmology:

凡帝王者之將興也，天必先見祥乎下民。黃帝之時，天先見大蟪大蠖。黃帝曰：土氣勝。土氣勝，故其色尚黃，其事則土。及禹之時，天先見草木秋冬不殺。禹曰：木氣勝。木氣勝，故其色尚青，其事則木。及湯之時，天先見金刃生於水。湯曰：金氣勝。金氣勝，故其色尚白，其事則金。及文王之時，天先見火，赤鳥銜丹書集於周社。文王曰：火氣勝。火氣勝，故其色尚赤，其事則火。代火者必將水，天且先見水氣勝，水氣勝，故其色尚黑，其事則水。水氣至而不知，數備，將徙于土。

In general, when a thearch or a king will rise, Heaven must reveal prior to his arrival the omens for the people below. In the time of the Yellow Emperor, Heaven had revealed enormous mole crickets and worms before he rose. The Yellow Emperor said, “The Force of Earth will prevail.” The Force of Earth indeed prevailed, therefore the color of Yellow was revered and what he did was related to Earth. At the time of Yu, Heaven had revealed grass and woods that in autumns and winters did not wither. Yu said, “The Force of Wood will prevail.” The Force of Wood indeed prevailed, therefore the color of Blue was revered and what he did was related to Wood. At the time of Tang, Heaven had revealed metal blades produced in water. Tang said, “The Force of Metal will prevail.” The Force of Metal indeed prevailed, therefore the color of White was revered in his time and what he did was related to Metal. At the time of King Wen, Heaven had revealed fire and the vermilion birds had gathered around the Zhou altar, carrying cinnabar writings. King Wen said, “The Force of Fire will prevail.” The Force of Fire indeed prevailed, therefore, the color of Red was revered in his time and what he did was related to Fire. That which will replace Fire must be Water. Heaven will first reveal [omens telling] that the Force of Water will prevail. When the Force of Water indeed prevails, the color of that time will thus be Dark and what is to be done will be related to Water. If the Force of Water arrives but is not recognized, once the number [of five] is fulfilled, the Force will move to Earth.<sup>128</sup>

This passage links the Yellow Emperor to the color Yellow and the Force of Earth, both as manifestations of the Theory of the Five Elements. In this theory, the Elements of Earth, Wood, Metal, Fire, and Water are each overcome by the ensuing Element to form an unending circular system.<sup>129</sup> The formation and employment of the Theory of the Five Elements in explaining the world facing the Eastern Zhou

<sup>128</sup> Chen Qiyou 1984: 677.

<sup>129</sup> What the *Lüshi chunqiu* describes is a specifically Qin religious cult to the emperors of the Four/Five Directions, in which Huangdi was included, even though Huangdi may also have had a separate existence outside this cult (and perhaps before its rise).

people crystalized the change of their thinking from the previous periods. In this system, season rotation, ruling legitimacy, and political change were all put in a controllable pattern. The Yellow Emperor plays his due role assigned to him in this pattern of thinking. In the “Zuo Luo” 作雒 *pian* of the *Yi Zhoushu*, the Five Elements are arranged according to a spatial scheme, in which the color Yellow is positioned in the center.<sup>130</sup> The “Guiyi” 貴義 (Cherishing Rightness) *pian* of the *Mozi* 墨子 provides a schematic correlation between time, colors, and directions, indicating that the *di* 帝 (the arch or emperor) is correlated with the Yellow Dragon (*Huanglong* 黃龍) on the *wuji* 戊己 days in the center.<sup>131</sup> The “Jixia ji” 季夏紀 of the *Lüshi chungqiu* 呂氏春秋 (Mr. Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals) and the “Shize xun” 時則訓 of the *Huainanzi* also include several identical passages addressing correlative thinking. This suggests that by late Warring States period the Five Elements theory had developed into a system in which all elements, along with time, space, numbers, musical scales, smells, flavors, sacrifices, and so forth, were integrated as guides for governing according to correlative theories.<sup>132</sup>

Although most literature closely associates the Yellow Emperor with this form of Eastern Zhou cosmological thinking, some scholars maintain that the key to understanding the Yellow Emperor in his social and historical context is exploring the Yellow Emperor as he existed in earlier myths, which are considered as the sources later being incorporated into Eastern Zhou *wuxing* thinking. Hsu Chin-hsiung’s 許進雄 argument serves as a good example in this regard. He argues that the Yellow Emperor greatly predates the formation of the Theory of the Five Elements based on the following: the character *huang* in the name Huangdi means either yellow or jade decoration *huang* 璜. By disproving that yellow could have been the most revered color during the Yellow Emperor’s actual reign, he posits that the character *huang* in the name of Huangdi must be associated with jade decoration and the invention of clothes. He then continues to link the invention of clothes to the creation of social institutions; hence, he categorizes the Yellow Emperor as a legendary ruler who created institutions, beginning the second stage of Chinese civilization, a stage symbolized by sage-kings’ creating utensils and tools in the first stage, and the third stage is characterized by the documentation of history.<sup>133</sup>

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130 Huang Huaixin 2007: 534–535.

131 Wu Yujiang 吳毓江 2006: 674.

132 Chen Qiyou 1984: 312; He Ning 何寧 1998: 405–410.

133 Hsu Chin-hsiung (James Hsu) 1981.

Although Hsu advances the discourse,<sup>134</sup> his argument leaves several questions unanswered. First, when analyzing textual information from various sources to prove that the term Huangdi appeared earlier than the formation of the *wuxing* system, Hsu, like Puett, relies on the traditional method of dating texts on the basis of attributed authorship. This method, however, lacks sufficient evidence. Second, Hsu does not provide an explanation for how the Yellow Emperor as an institution-creator relates to the central sage-king associated with Warring States *wuxing* thinking, or an immortal especially popular in late Warring States and early imperial periods. Although Hsu attempts to reconstruct a perspective on the Yellow Emperor that existed prior to the Warring States, his argument does not explain the necessity of linking the Warring States Yellow Emperor to an unknown earlier legend. Finally, the weakest point of Hsu's argument is its disregard of the context of Eastern Zhou cosmological thinking. Since the construction of an "earlier" Yellow Emperor relies primarily upon Warring States writings, removing the Yellow Emperor from a Warring States context is counterproductive to our understanding of what the Huangdi narratives really convey. We might conclude, therefore, the Huangdi story should be viewed as an Eastern Zhou myth.

The preference for antiquity is not just a phenomenon of modern scholarship. When considering the context of the Yellow Emperor myth, it is also necessary to understand the Eastern Zhou and early imperial trend of emphasizing antiquity in one's argumentation. As has been previously discussed, the Yellow Emperor, along with other sage-kings such as Fuxi and Shennong, becomes a component of the teachings of various Warring States textual traditions, as seen in texts such

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**134** For example, Ding Shan and others suggest that the Yellow Emperor can be identified in oracle bone inscriptions. In his article on the "Chenhou Yin Qi *dui*," after comparing the "Chenhou Yin Qi *dui*" inscriptions with relevant passages scattered in a number of transmitted texts, Ding Shan confidently infers that the preserved myths of Huangdi and other legendary thearchs, as we see in those texts, should be considered as reliable historical sources. He then confronts Yang Kuan's argument that the Yellow Emperor derived from god—the "august thearch"—and argues for the opposite: originally a human king, the Yellow Emperor was later deified as one of the gods included in the *wuxing* system. See Ding Shan 2005: 154–178. In an article discussing the deceased Shang kings and ruling lineages preserved in oracle bone inscriptions, Ding identifies the term *di huang* 帝黃 in oracle inscriptions as Huangdi, so named after the ecliptic, a surmise remaining yet to be substantiated. See Ding Shan 2005: 93. For more discussions on the identification of the Yellow Emperor in oracle bone inscriptions, also see Li Yuanxing 2010: 26–29, 36–44. The problem with these suggestions is their assumption that the graphic meaning of the character *huang* contains or reflects considerable historical and social information; therefore, deciphering the meaning of the graphic to some extent equals detecting traces of ancient social life. In fact, the graphic form itself does not transmit any specific information regarding ancient social life, especially if we consider that the moment of the invention of a specific graph may never be recovered.

as the *Guanzi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Han Feizi*, *Lüshi chunqiu*. This inclusion of the sage-kings was recognized early as a rhetorical device to enhance the power of persuasion, as we see in the *Huainanzi*:

世俗之人多尊古而賤今，故為道者必托之于神農黃帝而後能入說。亂世暗主，高遠其所從來，因而貴之。為學者蔽于論而尊其所聞，相與危坐而稱之，正領而誦之。此見是非之分不明。

Common people mostly revere antiquity and despise the current; therefore, those who forge doctrines must attribute them to the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor; only then can they present their teachings. Muddle-headed rulers of chaotic eras, in considering that those teachings originated from the ancient past, thus esteem them. Those who study them are deceived by such argumentation and venerate what they have heard, sitting reverently with each other to praise the doctrines, and straightening their necks to recite them. This reveals that one does not understand the distinction between the right and the wrong.<sup>135</sup>

This passage clearly illustrates that, by the time these comments were made, revering antiquity and despising the contemporary had become popular. Catering to such convention, a thinker intentionally presented his arguments in the name of the ancient sages, even when promoting something contemporary. By claiming the antiquity of his argument, the thinker was not only able to solicit the patronage of those who held power, but he was also able to attract the attention of the audience that would learn and disseminate his doctrines. The *Huainanzi* passage depicts the veneration of an ancient past as a widely accepted practice not limited to a particular group of people or social strata, as both the ruling and the ruled and both the masters and the disciples all followed these conventions. The exaltation of antiquity became a necessary component in the creation of state ideology. However contemporary a teaching might be, it needed to be coated with the patina of antiquity to be accepted, patronized, and transmitted.

Although this passage does not specifically ascribe these comments to a particular era, it hints that this trend was prevalent in contemporary literature, such as that attributed to the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor. The extant Shang and Western Zhou literature (for instance, the *Odes* and the oracle bone inscriptions) reveres the ancestors of the Shang and Zhou ruling families. Such purported ancient figures as the Divine Farmer and the Yellow Emperor carry significant persuasive force only in writings associated with the Eastern Zhou and thereafter.

The *Huainanzi* passage states that venerating antiquity had become a widely embraced social convention, but does not describe how antiquity became a major concern of the Eastern Zhou. Although there is little information on what led to

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135 He Ning 1998: 1355.

the veneration of antiquity in Eastern Zhou society, recently excavated materials have finally shed light on this question. Following David Keightley's description of Shang ancestral beliefs based on Shang oracle inscriptions and Lothar von Falkenhausen's observations on the restructuring of Middle Spring and Autumn ritual practice based on Eastern Zhou burial remains, I contend that the phenomenon of venerating antiquity was connected with early Chinese ritual practice and religious thinking, which created the foundation on which the emphasis of antiquity in Eastern Zhou literary discourse was built.

According to Keightley, Shang ancestral veneration constitutes the core of the Shang religious conceptions that "were the conceptions of Shang life as a whole."<sup>136</sup> Ancestral veneration was not a religious practice divorced from social realities, but it permeated all aspects of Shang life politically, economically, and ideologically, and it facilitated a "pragmatism that drew power from the past, legitimized the current state of affairs (including all the inequities in rights and privileges), and charted a course for the future."<sup>137</sup> A deceased king did not obtain his ancestorship by default, as it was only assigned to the deceased through a gradually perfected sacrificial ritual system, but once assigned that role, the ancestor was able to continue to exercise his authority through the changing depth of time, albeit in a different domain. Archaeological evidence suggests that Shang ancestor veneration is grounded in the Neolithic Chinese burial ritual, which can be traced to the fifth millennium BC, but the structure of the Shang pantheon reflected in its sacrificial ritual system, as seen in Shang oracle inscriptions, sheds specific light on how antiquity played its role in ancestral veneration.

Keightley classifies those who could receive sacrifices in the Shang pantheon into six groups: (1) *di* or *shangdi*, or the Supreme God; (2) Nature Powers, such as the River or Mountain Powers; (3) Former Lords, like Nao 夔 and Wang Hai 王亥, specific demigod figures associated with the Shang dynasty; (4) pre-dynastic ancestors; (5) dynastic ancestors; and (6) the dynastic ancestresses, mainly the consorts of Shang kings.

Keightley considers the members of groups (2), (3), and (4)—namely, Nature Powers, Former Lords, and pre-dynastic ancestors—"the High Powers" and differentiates them from the dynastic ancestors and ancestresses in terms of the ritual treatment they received and the functions assigned to them. Functioning as mediators, the High Powers "presumably occupied a middle ground, between *Di* [or the Supreme God], on the one hand, and the ancestors on the other, unable to emulate *Di* by commanding (*ling*) 令 natural phenomena, but still having large impact on the

136 Keightley 2004: 4; Keightley 1978: 212.

137 McAnany 1995: 1.

weather and crops.”<sup>138</sup> The *di* Supreme God, lofty and distant, issued commands that none of the other groups could; the ancestors and ancestresses, however, were placed closest to the living and were most associated with their descendants’ personal welfare.

The arrangement of the Shang pantheon in the sacrificial system displays both temporal and relational depth to the living. According to this scheme, the closer the Powers were to the living, the more bargaining power the living might possess when negotiating for their benefit; on the contrary, the more distant the Powers, the less influence the living would have on them. At the farthest end of the pantheon, the command of the Supreme God was almost unchangeable. In short, as Keightley summarizes, “the Shang conceived of the Nature and the Ancestral Powers as occupying a hierarchy of negotiability, with the close ancestors and ancestresses of the pantheon being most open to this kind of pledging, and the higher Powers, both ancestral and natural, being less approachable in this way.”<sup>139</sup>

Although the more distant Powers in the Shang pantheon were less malleable, the Shang ritual system enabled the living to reach them through a chain of “ancestralization.” Among the six groups of Powers classified by Keightley, the *di* and the Nature Powers were the least ancestral. Yet we see in the Shang oracle inscriptions that the Nature Powers were ancestralized occasionally by being entitled as the “ancestor” (*zu* 祖) of the Shang kings.<sup>140</sup> As for the *di*, although few or no cults directly worshipped him, he was nevertheless approachable through the ancestralized Nature Powers. Such ancestralization ran throughout the pantheon: the Nature Powers were connected to the Former Lords by the same token; the Former Lords to the pre-dynastic ancestors; and at last, the pre-dynastic ancestors to the dynastic ancestors and ancestresses. Although the degree of ancestralization dwindled along this chain extending from the lower ancestors and ancestresses to the Supreme God, the nexus between the two ends—the living and the Supreme God—was established. Since the most powerful end was drawn into this unified religious system by connection to the most remote of ancestors and ancestralized powers, we begin to see how antiquity achieved veneration. In the Shang ritual system, antiquity not only aided the living in approaching the distant Supreme God, but the concept of antiquity itself also obtained deep authority due to its association with the most powerful echelon in the Shang pantheon.

Ancestral veneration continued in the Western Zhou, but textual and archaeological evidence presents a more complicated picture of the Western Zhou

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138 Keightley 2004: 7–8.

139 Keightley 2004: 11.

140 Keightley 2004: 8.

ancestral cult and its associated religious beliefs and practices. A commonly held view maintains that Western Zhou rulers diminished the importance of the Shang ancestral cult and strategically privileged Heaven by emphasizing Heaven's Mandate in order to legitimize the Zhou's overthrow of the Shang.<sup>141</sup> While this might be the case from a propagandistic perspective, extant Zhou material culture, on the contrary, highlights continuity in the Shang-Zhou transition. The Zhouyuan 周原 corpus of oracle inscriptions convincingly demonstrates the close connection between early Western Zhou and Shang ritual and religion. Rather than an abrupt departure from Shang traditions, the inscriptions indicate that, after the conquest of the Shang, Zhou traditions gradually evolved during a period when the Shang and Zhou cultures coexisted and shared a range of similarities.<sup>142</sup>

The Zhou religious and ritual framework for organizing the ancestral cult was known as the *zhao-mu* 昭穆 system. Although this system's method for arranging lineages by alternating generations differs from the arrangement of the Shang ancestral pantheon,<sup>143</sup> the Shang and Zhou ancestral cults nevertheless share the basic characteristic of venerating ancestors through a broad range of material manifestations: ancestral temples, bronze vessels and objects, blood sacrifices, music, dance, chants, and so on.

Another feature the Western Zhou ancestral cult shares with that of the Shang is that power and authority were the focus of the sacrificial system. As Lothar von Falkenhausen states:

Continuity of descent from as prestigious as possible an ancestral figure in the distant past—and seniority among those descended from that ancestor—entailed access to privilege and power. The ancestral cult provided a platform for the iterative reconstruction of the lineage and its self-representation both to the human and to the supernatural realm. It enabled living lineage members to reaffirm their ties with one another, to reaffirm their own position in the history of their lineage, and thereby to create and shape collective memory.<sup>144</sup>

Such “collective memory” was both the result of and the means for the negotiation of power among the living. The power tied with more ancient ancestors hints at the religious mentality of the Shang: it was the closeness, both temporal and relational, to the Supreme Power—*di* in the Shang and *tian* 天 (heaven) in the Zhou—that enabled one's distant ancestor to occupy a powerful position. As later Zhou literature elucidates, the *tianming* 天命 (Heaven's Mandate) bestowed to a

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141 For example, Hsu and Linduff 1988; Tao Lei 2008.

142 Eno 2009: 96–102; Keightley 2004: 43; Wang Hui 1998: 5–20; Zhang Maorong 張懋鎔 2005: 1–25.

143 Eno 2009: 98; Keightley 2004: 20–26.

144 Falkenhausen 2006: 71.

certain lineage was largely determined by the *de* 德 (virtues) of the lineage ancestors. In other words, the descendants continued to enjoy the Heaven's Mandate initially obtained by their distant ancestors as it was passed on through the generations.<sup>145</sup> What differentiated the Zhou ancestral cult from the Shang was the Zhou's simplified way of organizing lineages, which, according to Falkenhausen's observation, may have been related to their enlarged population.<sup>146</sup>

After the Zhou royal court was forced to move eastward, the Eastern Zhou period witnessed a change in its prominent political position. The rapid downgrade of the royal court was accompanied by diminishing control over the local vassal polities, some of which seized the opportunity to claim hegemonic status by force. The internecine wars among the numerous vassal polities, originally established by the Zhou founding fathers to support the royal court, inevitably further degraded Zhou royal power as the larger and stronger polities annexed the smaller and weaker ones and multiple political centers arose to contend for dominance. As a result, the distinct Western Zhou ritual system finalized through the Late Western Zhou Ritual Reform could no longer provide the means for the Zhou royal family to hold all its vassal states enmeshed in the net of Zhou power. Accordingly, the traditional ancestral cult was attenuated, powers ascribed to ancestors diminished, and the tiered aristocratic ranking system, once the backbone of ritual and religious practice, came to its historic end. The old religious thinking that regarded death and connections with the afterlife as its core was transformed to a practice focusing on individual grandeur. Such profound change is visible archaeologically in the development of tomb structure and the universal utilization of *mingqi* 明器 items exclusively for burial purpose throughout the Zhou cultural sphere.<sup>147</sup>

The Warring States writings, such as the *Laozi*, the “*Neiye*” 內業 chapter of the *Guanzi*, and the excavated *Taiyi shengshui* 太一生水 (The Great Oneness Produces Water), also reflect this fundamental change in Eastern Zhou religious beliefs. According to Michael Puett's observation, this change was the outgrowth of a lasting debate between ritual specialists and cosmologists, the latter finally gaining the upper hand in courts by the fourth century BC. He suggests that these cosmologists, the writers of the above-mentioned texts, proposed “the One, the ultimate ancestor from which everything—all spirits, all natural phenomena, and all human—were generated,” as a self-generating model against the traditional sacrificial models

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145 For example, see Wangsun Man's explanation of the Mandate of Heaven; *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu* Xuan 3.669–672.

146 Falkenhausen 2006: 64–70.

147 Falkenhausen 2006: 293–325.



that “operated by working from the recently deceased and less powerful local spirits toward more distant and more powerful deities,” as evidenced in the Shang pantheon.<sup>148</sup> According to this new model, the living could become gods by “returning to and holding fast to the One” that “generated them and continue[s] to underlie them” or by “rearranging the pantheon of the day into a series of lineal descendants from the One” that allowed them to “claim that they alone understood the workings of the cosmos.”<sup>149</sup> Puett also argues that this self-divinization model as the alternative to the traditional sacrificial model resulted from the age-old tension caused by discontinuity between man and God.<sup>150</sup> Setting aside the concept of tension between man and God, Puett’s model indeed accords with the changed religious *geist* centering on individual grandeur.

This ritual and religious transformation, however, was by no means accomplished in a single swoop, but gradually developed over centuries. It is observable in Spring and Autumn burials and is evident in almost all areas of the Zhou during the Warring States period. Moreover, the new system’s incorporation of at least part of the old system is also a noticeable factor in its development. For example, in the middle Spring and Autumn period, around 600 BC, a ritual restructuring occurred that quickly expanded throughout the Zhou cultural sphere to harmonize the previous ritual system with new social realities.

This ritual restructuring is seen in the funerary goods in tombs of social elites. Examples of such goods appear in the “Special Assemblages” of spectacular objects and in “Ordinary Assemblages” to signify the tomb occupant’s social rank. By augmenting the privilege of the top echelons of the social hierarchy, this ritual restructuring “would have reduced the ritual prerogatives of the lower elite, prefiguring the even more drastic reductions that were to occur during the Warring States period” and downplayed the social importance of the ancestral cult.<sup>151</sup> From this perspective, the Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring was both an updated version of the Later Western Zhou Ritual Reform and a response to the changed social realities.

Yellow Emperor narratives can be understood in the same context, yet their lack of homogeneity remains a source of intrigue. Even those remaining fragmentary passages in transmitted and excavated sources provide a variety of depictions of the Yellow Emperor. The *Guoyu*, the *Shiji* and the *Da Dai liji* all consider him the founder of both lineage and state; questions raised by Confucius’s disciples, Zigong and Zaiwo, in the *Shizi* and the *Da Dai liji*, indicate that he was a mysterious figure

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148 Puett 2002: 318.

149 Puett 2002: 318.

150 Puett 2002: 122–200.

151 Falkenhausen 2006: 326–369.

with an abnormal appearance who achieved an incredible lifespan; and he is also portrayed as a great warrior battling Chi You and the Flame Emperor as well as the inventor of weapons, utensils, ritual apparatuses, and statecraft. The texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwen zhi” also correspond to his various characteristics. He appears in four large categories—*zhuzi* (writings of various masters), *bingshu* (military writings), *shushu* (writings on methods and counting), and *fangji* (writings on recipes and techniques)—each further consisting of a number of subcategories that variously present him as head of a scholarly lineage, a military master, and a master of esoteric methods, recipes, and techniques.

The diversity of images associated with the figure of the Yellow Emperor not only suggests his reception by different textual traditions, but also indicates the complex ritual and religious background in which he was situated. The complex figure as it appears in Warring States and Han texts was forged by both the legacy of ancestral veneration dating back to the Neolithic period, as well as the evolving Eastern Zhou ritual and religious thoughts which developed alongside the period’s social needs.

From one perspective, the creation of the Yellow Emperor seems closely associated with Eastern Zhou cosmological thinking. The image of a sage-king or god seated in the prominent cosmological position—the *cosmic axis* featured as a yellow center—convincingly links the Huangdi narratives with such thinking. The name and characteristics of the Yellow Emperor are so compelling in respect to this point that the vestiges of earlier Huangdi myths, if they existed at all, were almost completely supplanted by the Warring States versions. This explains why the attributions in the “Yiwen zhi” to the Yellow Emperor primarily feature him as a master associated with knowledge of astronomy, the calendar, divination, *wuxing* theory, and the secrets to achieving immortality.

From an alternate perspective, I argue that the description of the Yellow Emperor as an ancient sage-king in Warring States myths was grounded in conventions associated with ancestral veneration, rather than a surviving component of transmitted ancient myth. Claiming great antiquity conforms to the Eastern Zhou thinking manifested in the cosmological self-divinization model proposed by Puett. According to this model, the Yellow Emperor was the ultimate link to the One and was the ancestor of the body of esoteric knowledge through which the living could commune with the One and become an immortal. Connecting oneself to the ultimate power through remote ancestors is reminiscent of ancestral veneration seen in Zhou ritual and religious practice, only the Yellow Emperor had displaced the dominance of the ancestors of the Zhou royal family as its power declined throughout the Eastern Zhou period. The increasingly prevalent practice of constructing genealogies in the Eastern Zhou period may reflect the ritual reality associated with a weakened royal family.

Nevertheless, none of the constructed ancestors of other Eastern Zhou polities were able to fill the void left by the deterioration of the Zhou royal family, even though a super-powerful figure was desperately needed to connect the living to the One. It must have been against such backdrop that the Yellow Emperor, interpreted as a figure occupying the *axis mundi*, rose as the ancestor of all powerful Eastern Zhou families. This is what we see in extant genealogical literature such as the *Da Dai liji*, the reconstructed *Shiben*, and the *Shiji*.

The discussion above may also be helpful in explaining why the Yellow Emperor is nearly absent in the lists of sages in Confucian writings. Like the Huangdi narratives, the writings later canonized as the Confucian classics were produced against the backdrop of Eastern Zhou cosmological thought. Whereas the Huangdi myth focuses on a self-divinization model, Confucian writings stress those aspects of ancestral veneration allegedly reflecting Western Zhou ritual practice. Archaeological findings reveal that what Confucian writings attempted to convey accords with the ritual system reflected in the Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring, which was an effort to restore the early Western Zhou ritual.<sup>152</sup> In comparison with the Huangdi myth, Confucian writings value ritual over self-divinization; accordingly, the sages promoted as models in Confucian writings are those who represented the appropriate rituals, especially the Western Zhou sage-king King Wen 文王 and sage-minister the Duke of Zhou. From this perspective, although both the Huangdi narratives and the Confucian writings were grounded in the Eastern Zhou social and religious need of restructuring its contemporary ritual system, their emphases differed. While the Huangdi narratives represented a model deposing the ancestors of the Zhou royal house in favor of a more powerful sage-god with the ability to help individuals become gods, the Confucian writings proposed to restore the early Western Zhou rituals. Such a fundamental difference inevitably led to the exclusion of the Yellow Emperor as an exemplary figure in Confucian writings. This we can also clearly see in the attributions to the Yellow Emperor listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. None of the texts, either attributed to the Yellow Emperor or to his ministers, can be found in the category of Confucian writings.

These points also provide an explanation as to why the Huangdi narratives and the Laozi textual tradition were sometimes juxtaposed and called the *Huang Lao zhi shu* 黃老之術 (Techniques of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi), especially in the late Warring States and early Western Han discourses.<sup>153</sup> Li Ling astutely asserts that the

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152 For concrete examples regarding the Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring, see Falkenhausen 2008.

153 *Shiji* 63.2784, 74.3132, 12.456, and *passim*.

juxtaposition of the two indicates that the bodies of knowledge generating from both writings were akin to each other, and both rooted in the categories of *shushu*, methods and calculation, and *fangji*, recipes and techniques, to which the majority of the Huangdi attributions belong.<sup>154</sup> Nevertheless, to say that these two traditions arose from the same background does not answer why Confucian writings also shared a similar background with the other two traditions.<sup>155</sup> The explanation lies in a radical, transcendent approach to Heaven, gods, immortality, and longevity taken by the Huang and Lao strands of thinking, which are opposed to the age-old ritual system upheld by Confucian propaganda. Here, we may consider that both the *Laozi* and a number of Huangdi attributions are closely related to cultivating life, pursuing longevity, and achieving immortality.<sup>156</sup> Accordingly, the textual traditions labeled as Huangdi and Laozi stemmed from the understanding that texts attributed to these two figures both advocate the Eastern Zhou self-divinization model as well as the early imperial political theory—*xingming* 刑名 focusing on punishment and law—associated with this model.<sup>157</sup>

## 2.6 The Yellow Emperor's Four Classics

Here, we must consider the four manuscripts preceding one of the two versions of the *Laozi* discovered in Mawangdui Tomb 3. In this manuscript, the *Dao pian* is preceded by the *De pian*, reflecting the opposite of the order organized in the transmitted text. The four manuscripts preceding the Mawangdui *Laozi* include the *Jingfa* 經法, the *Shidajing* 十六經 (or *Shiliujing* 十六經), the *Cheng* 稱, and the *Daoyuan* 道原. The coincidence between the number of these manuscripts and the *pian* number listed after the text *Huangdi sijing* 黃帝四經 (*The Yellow Emperor's Four Classics*) in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* inspired Tang Lan 唐蘭 (1901–1979 AD) to conclude that these four Mawangdui manuscripts are indeed the long-lost *Huangdi sijing*. Tang's argument rests on three pieces of evidence: the cohesive message that the four manuscripts convey, the dating of the manuscripts, and the circulation of these four manuscripts over time,<sup>158</sup> but his conclusion is mainly supported by a passage from the “Jingji zhi” 經籍志 (Treatise on Confucian Classics and Other Texts) chapter of the *Suishu* 隋書. It documents the following:

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154 Li Ling 1998b: 288.

155 Li Ling 1998b: 288–289.

156 Li Ling 1998b: 286–288.

157 There are numerous works on the connection of the *xingming* thought with the “Huang Lao zhi shu;” for examples, see Li Ling 1998b: 284–286; Tang Lan 唐蘭 1975; Guo Moruo 1996: 156–191.

158 Tang Lan 1975: 8–10.

漢時諸子道書之流有三十七家，大旨皆去健羨，處沖虛而已，無上天官符籙之事。其黃帝四篇，老子二篇，最得深旨。

In the Han time under the category of *zhuzi*, the trends of Daoist writings amounted to thirty-seven textual traditions, the essence of which was all related to the abandonment of strength and surplus in order to live a humble and plain life, and there were no such things as the above-mentioned Heavenly Officials or tallies. Among the Daoist texts, the four *pian* of the Yellow Emperor and the two *pian* of Laozi most obtained the essence in depth.<sup>159</sup>

This passage encourages Tang Lan to equate the four Mawangdui manuscripts with the *Huangdi sijing* due to the astonishing coincidence between the total number of mentioned *pian*—the four *pian* by the Yellow Emperor (i.e. the *Huangdi sijing*, according to Tang) and the two *pian* by Laozi—and the layout of the six Mawangdui manuscripts (four manuscripts preceding the two-*pian* Laozi). While Tang bases his argument upon the number of *pian*, the content of the manuscripts as described in the “Jingji zhi” passage above is omitted from Tang’s citation.

Qiu Xigui believes that the “Jingji zhi” commentary on the Han Daoist writings, which are omitted from Tang Lan’s quotation, retracts from Tang’s argument. As Qiu points out, these comments on Han writings contradict the message conveyed by the four Mawangdui manuscripts. The *xingming* governmental philosophy reflected in the four Mawangdui manuscripts is, according to Qiu, far more aggressive than the *Suishu* commentary on the essence of Daoism being found in “the abandonment of strength and surplus in order to live a humble and plain life.” This interpretation of Daoist thinking gained currency only after the Han dynasty. Qiu also highlights the widely divergent lengths of the four Mawangdui manuscripts, as well as the lack of presence of the Yellow Emperor in three of them, to suggest that the four manuscripts could not have formed an integrated text such as the *Huangdi sijing*. Moreover, the fact that none of the Huangdi quotations in extant texts can be found in the four Mawangdui manuscripts also lends credence to Qiu’s contention. Therefore, Qiu argues, the four *pian* writings attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the *Suishu* passage cannot be the *Huangdi sijing*.<sup>160</sup>

There are also other opinions on the attribution of the four manuscripts, but Tang’s argument and Qiu’s rebuttal represent the two major positions that

159 *Suishu* 隋書 35.1093.

160 Qiu Xigui 1993.

continue to exert influence.<sup>161</sup> Since most of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter have been lost,<sup>162</sup> Tang’s and Qiu’s arguments rely greatly on secondary sources. The *Suishu* passage, for instance, is the key source for both scholars, however biased it may be. Additionally, its comments on Han Daoist writings do not fully reflect the nature of the thirty-seven textual traditions, as Qiu Xigui insightfully notes.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, even though those comments are more applicable to post-Han Daoism, the information regarding the Yellow Emperor’s four *pian* and the Laozi’s two *pian* may still indicate the form of a text suggested by Tang Lan.

However, an evaluation of the merits of both arguments is difficult based on current evidence, since neither is verifiable. The flaw of Qiu’s argument is its insistence that the different lengths of these four manuscripts prevent them from being incorporated into the single text, *The Yellow Emperor’s Four Classics*, as it is not unusual to see textual units of different lengths within a text. For example, the last chapter of the *Lunyu* is well known for its glaring brevity in comparison with other chapters, but its position in the *Lunyu* is fixed regardless of how much doubt has been cast on its authenticity. The assumption that all textual units should match each other in terms of length should be considered an anachronistic projection.

Qiu also problematically suggests that if the four manuscripts under discussion were indeed the *Huangdi sijing*, passages or paraphrases of them should be found among the dozen extant quotations available in the handful of transmitted texts. The “Yiwen zhi” lists several dozen texts associated with the Yellow Emperor, including more than three hundred *pian* and almost four hundred *juan*, so why must passages from the relatively short *Huangdi sijing* be among those to survive in the dozen quotations pertaining to the Yellow Emperor that could have been drawn from hundreds of *juan* and *pian*?

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161 Gao Heng 高亨 and Dong Zhian 董治安 1975; Chen Guying 2011: 33–36; Yu Mingguang 余明光 1987; Li Ling 1998b.

162 Li Ling notes that the *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 and other fragmentary textual portions may be related to those listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter, but the information is too limited to amount to any substantial conclusion. As for the *Huangdi neijing*, although we have a text with the same title edited by Wang Bing 王冰 in the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907 AD), whether or not there are any parts, with or without variation, from the text mentioned in the “Yiwen zhi” is hard to tell. Even if some earlier portions may have been preserved in the version edited by Wang Bing, the hope to identify them remains dim. See Li Ling 1998b: 280; Leo 2011: 22–36.

163 Qiu Xigui 1993: 253. Li Ling thinks that the Daoist writings in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter can be grouped in four categories: writings on strategies, the pre-Qin Daoist canons, the Huangdi writings, and the Western Han Daoist writings. The *Suishu* comments on the thirty-seven Daoist textual traditions may merely work for the category of the pre-Qin Daoist canons. See Li Ling 1998b: 284–285.

Questioning Qiu's argument, however, does not amount to upholding Tang's perspective. The three pieces of evidence supporting Tang Lan's equation of the four Mawangdui manuscripts with the *Huangdi sijing* are not tenable. Tang's dating of the manuscripts and his assignment of their authorship is also flawed.<sup>164</sup>

This debate has been outlined to highlight some of its questionable assumptions and flawed methodologies. It is surprising that, throughout this debate, few have questioned whether the four-*pian* *Huangdi sijing* could be completely different from the four Mawangdui manuscripts. It is possible that the title *Huangdi sijing* may not have been in use prior to the completion of the imperial text collection efforts led by Liu Xiang, Liu Xin, and others. The discoveries of early Chinese texts written on bamboo or wood strips and silk inform us that titles were not necessarily provided in early Chinese writings.<sup>165</sup> To group multiple *pian* or *juan* textual units under one title was the result of later editing work. So far as early Chinese writings are concerned, their titles must refer to the first Chinese bibliographic work completed under Liu Xiang's direction and preserved with likely editing by Ban Gu 班固 (32–92 BC) in the "Yiwen zhi." Although it is possible that some of the titles appearing in the bibliographical work compiled by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin might have circulated orally, and although some of the titles might have become available slightly earlier than 26 BC, the first year of the imperial project, extant evidence suggests that it was through Liu Xiang and his editors that most of the texts listed in the "Yiwen zhi" obtained their multi-*pian* or *juan* forms, complete with titles and identified authors.

Indeed, the purpose of rearranging the Han imperial text collection was to provide authoritative editions that, under the painstaking efforts of the editing group, would include the most complete writings on any given topic, teaching, author, and tradition. To accomplish this goal, the imperial editors collected all the writings relevant to these topics, omitting duplicate versions and preserving those that had not been previously included in the imperial collection. As for the Confucian Classics, even those duplicates were preserved side by side with other versions of the same text.<sup>166</sup>

In short, the *Huangdi sijing* listed in the "Yiwen zhi" could have been the synthesis of a number of Daoist writings attributed to the Yellow Emperor, with or without the inclusion of the four Mawangdui manuscripts. Even if the Mawangdui manuscripts were included, it is possible that they had been reassembled in

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164 Tang Lan 1975: 10–12.

165 Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu'an 2006: 87–146.

166 Yu Jiayi 2010: 239–240.

consultation with similar writings. The assumption that the *Huangdi sijing* in the “Yiwen zhi” list must correspond to a four-*pian* text (such as the four Mawangdui manuscripts) that existed prior to the rearrangement of the Han imperial text collection certainly ignores the typical process of making, circulating, collecting, and remaking of early Chinese writings. To equate any early Chinese text with one listed in the “Yiwen zhi” merely on the coincidence of their number of *pian*, therefore, is methodologically misleading and practically irrelevant to the exploration of the nature of a text.

Qiu Xigui also doubts Tang Lan's conclusion because only one of the four manuscripts, the *Shidajing*, mentions the Yellow Emperor.<sup>167</sup> Building upon Qiu Xigui's differentiation of the *Shidajing* from the other three manuscripts, Li Ling divides all the “Yiwen zhi” attributions to the Yellow Emperor and his ministers into two types: those that were allegedly written by the Yellow Emperor and those that consisted of dialogues between the Yellow Emperor and his ministers.<sup>168</sup> Those writings directly attributed to the Yellow Emperor, according to Li Ling, are essays rather than dialogue. Essays and dialogues were not likely included within a single text, according to Li Ling. Therefore, to uphold the principle of consistency within a text, the *Shidajing* must be separated from the other three manuscripts.

Both Qiu's and Li's observations are helpful in exploring the different layouts of the four Mawangdui manuscripts, but the feature of consistency in early Chinese writings derives from the editing process. Consistency would not be as controversial as it is now if texts were transmitted in the form of brief, single *pian* units. The grouping of a number of writings, as in the case of the rearrangement of the Han imperial book collection, served the purpose of providing an inclusive body of knowledge related to a certain theme, topic, or textual tradition. To make the body of knowledge more inclusive was a primary working principle. While conceding that, in the “Yiwen zhi,” there are traces suggesting that some texts were grouped into categories on the basis of style,<sup>169</sup> I argue that the consistency of genre and writing style were not a determinative factor when multiple *pian* texts were created. For example, if we follow Li Ling's theory, the *Huangdi junchen* 黃帝君臣 (*Ruler Huangdi and his Ministers*) listed in the “Yiwen zhi” as a text including ten *pian* would at the first glance appear to be a collection of the Yellow

<sup>167</sup> Qiu Xigui 1993: 251.

<sup>168</sup> Li Ling 1998b: 280.

<sup>169</sup> For example, in the “Zhuzi lue” of the “Yiwen zhi,” “Xiaoshuo jia” 小說家 as a subcategory seems to differentiate itself as a textual tradition by its specific contents: hearsay, gossip, and rumors. *Hanshu* 30.1744–1745.



Emperor's dialogues with his ministers. Yet it was most probably a text resembling the *Laozi*, as the notes following this title indicate.<sup>170</sup> To rebut Qiu's rebuttal of Tang Lan's argument, we may also use the *Laozi* as an example: the *Laozi* does not mention Laozi in the main text at all, but this did not prevent the text's being attributed to him. In sum, whether or not the main text mentions the figure to whom the text is attributed has little to do with the authorial attribution.

## 2.7 Summary

In explaining what might have resulted in the incomparable number of authorial attributions to a "prolific" Yellow Emperor, I have navigated various aspects of the Huangdi myth, including its euhemerization, historicization, and its connection to Eastern Zhou ritual, religious, and cosmological thinking. The Yellow Emperor is portrayed as the most "prolific" author by the "Yiwen zhi" due to his significance to the changed socio-political structure, ritual context, and religious mentality. The concept of Yellow Emperor as a proto-Daoist figure, who knew techniques for achieving immortality (as indicated by the majority attributions to him) probably have led to the exclusion of him as an author of any Confucian text, as reflected in the two different approaches to the changed Eastern Zhou world. Accompanying this change was the flourishing of a text culture spreading to, and deeply impacting, Eastern Zhou societal perspectives on governing patterns and religious thinking. It is in this trend that the Yellow Emperor was invoked.

Nevertheless, we cannot accept the "Yiwen zhi" attributions as reality, due to our understanding of the actual text-making process of the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods. After all, the "Yiwen zhi" attributions resulted largely from the late Western Han project of rearranging the imperial text collection, and we have found that text culture during the Eastern Zhou and early imperial times was more complex than that which previous scholarship has contended. Thus, as our review of the newly excavated texts labeled *The Yellow Emperor's Four Classics* has shown, we cannot simply identify an undocumented piece of early writing based only on the bibliographical information preserved in the "Yiwen zhi" or "Jingji zhi".

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<sup>170</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1731.

### 3 The Author as the Head of a Teaching Lineage: Confucius, the Quotable Author

Here I examine the bond between Kongzi 孔子 (551–479 BC), or Confucius, and the *Lunyu*—the text long been considered to be the most important source for understanding the Master. Indeed, even the Master’s official *Shiji* biographical account replicates much of the material found in the *Lunyu*.<sup>1</sup> And yet, the *Shiji* account is sometimes criticized for its reliance on materials outside of the *Lunyu*. Through history scholars have criticized the *Shiji* for containing the “words of the eastern Qi bumpkins” (*Qidong yeren zhi yu* 齊東野人之語), alluding to the *Shiji*’s controversial description of Confucius as *sangjia gou* 喪家狗, meaning “an abandoned dog” or “a dog owned by a mourning family,” depending on how one interprets the character *sang* 喪.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the *Lunyu* has exerted almost exclusive authority over shaping the understanding of Confucius. Even the *Shiji*—a text that includes the earliest biographical account of the Master and has long been hailed as one of the most reliable sources on early Chinese history—is challenged when its depiction of Confucius departs from the words and anecdotes included in the *Lunyu*.

The presence of Confucius—speaking, conversing, teaching, and acting—is palpable everywhere in the *Lunyu*, and many tend to read it as such even in the present day.<sup>3</sup> However, it is not a biographical text. We are reminded of Confucius’s presence with the ubiquitous appellations Zi 子, Fuzi 夫子, or Kongzi, all used to convey the disciples’ reverence toward their master. Even when Confucius is physically absent in anecdotes, his presence persists through the words of his students, who speak the messages taught or inspired by the Master.

Although the “*Yiwen zhi*” clearly states that the *Lunyu* is posthumously composed from disciples’ notes,<sup>4</sup> there are many who still believe that all the words included in the *Lunyu* were “cut from Confucius’s writing brush” (*Kongzi bixue* 孔子筆削)<sup>5</sup> and that every word in the *Lunyu* “was decided by the sage himself”

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1 *Shiji* 47.1905–1947.

2 Cui Shu 崔述 1983: 298. If read as *sang* with the fourth tone, it means “disowned;” if read as *sang* with the first tone, “mourning family.” Mainly for convenience, this chapter uses the former reading unless specifically noted.

3 For example, Christoph Harbsmeier reminds us of “the smiling Confucius,” who “has always been privately and quietly appreciated by congenial readers and scholars, East and West.” See Harbsmeier 1990: 131.

4 *Hanshu* 30.1717.

5 Liao Yan 廖燕 1999: 412.

(*Shengren qinding* 聖人親定).<sup>6</sup> Following the same line of argument, others suggest that even if Confucius did not write the physical text, all the words were “prepared before being recorded” (*yulu* 預錄) in textual form and “sealed with Confucius’s approval” (*Kongzi yinke* 孔子印可).<sup>7</sup> In fact, although the Master describes himself in the *Lunyu* as one who “transmits yet does not create” (*shu er buzuo* 述而不作),<sup>8</sup> a Tang bibliography discovered in a Dunhuang 敦煌 cave claims that “Confucius created” (*Kongzi zuo* 孔子作) the *Lunyu*.<sup>9</sup> Clearly, we see in these comments the authorial power Confucius possessed over his text.

Not all scholars adhere to the idea that Confucius wrote, edited, or supervised the making of the *Lunyu*. Many find the “Yiwen zhi’s” conclusion on the *Lunyu* authorship to be reasonable, so most studies rather attempt to identify a singular author or a few definite authors to historicize the text. This trend began in the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD), and debates surrounding the identification of potential authors have raged ever since.<sup>10</sup> In presupposing the conclusions of the “Yiwen zhi,” recent scholarship also aims to reveal the nature of early Chinese Masters Writings (*zishu* 子書) from the perspective of their authorship. It proposes that the author has a passive role in shaping the *Lunyu*, the starting point of Masters Writings, since the author acts as a scribe recording what the Master said rather than as a creator exerting authorial control over every aspect of the text. When viewed from the perspective of authorship, the evolution of early Chinese Masters Writings in the Warring States period is characterized by a process by which disciples gradually escape the Masters’ presence to allow for increasing expression of their own authorial voices. This trend is evident as Masters Writings shifted from the use of dialogues to the use of treatises.<sup>11</sup>

Basic questions regarding the *Lunyu*’s textual history remain, and may help us shape our understanding of the development of Masters Writings and Confucius’ own role in his textual canon. For example, we do not know whether Confucius’s disciples wrote the *Lunyu*, nor can we distinguish between the biographical Confucius and the one mythologized in the *Lunyu*. Through considering these and other issues surrounding the *Lunyu*’s textual history, we hope to deepen our understanding of both the *Lunyu* and the tradition of Masters Writings in general.

6 Li Gong 李璩 1966: 24.

7 Huang Kan 黃侃 1937: 1.

8 Yang Bojun 2010a: 65.

9 In Paul Pelliot No. 2721 manuscript, see Zhou Pixian 周丕顯 1991: 418.

10 Zhao Zhenxin 趙貞信 1936; Zhao Zhenxin 1961; Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚 1986; Guo Yi 郭沂 1999; Yang Zhaoming 楊朝明 2004.

11 Lewis 1999; Denecke 2010.

Li Ling's recent works have opened up an academic debate over the manner in which the text should be understood.<sup>12</sup> And, although my study does not directly address the central concerns currently occupying many specialists in this field, I consider questions raised by both sides of this debate when relevant to this study, such as Li Ling's reading of the metaphor of the unfortunate dog.

### 3.1 Sage, Abandoned Dog, and the Problem of Interpretation

According to the *Shiji*, Confucius left the Lu 魯 court for Wei 衛 in 497 BC, when he was fifty-five years old. After a few years in Wei, the Master realized that Lord Ling of Wei 衛靈公 (r. 534–493 BC) was unable to employ him. He then left Wei in 493 BC, still attempting to peddle his teachings to other lords of the various states. Time and again, he failed to find the favor of a lord. He often encountered haughty indifference or even malicious threats during his travels. For example, when he was on his way to the capital of Song 宋, a Song general cut down the tree under which Confucius and his students rehearsed the rites they were promoting. The act was meant as a strong warning forcing the Master to turn and flee to the State of Zheng. The Zheng lord, however, was unwilling to grant the Master an audience. On one occasion, the Master lost contact with his disciples.<sup>13</sup> When the disciples were reunited with Confucius at the eastern gate of the outer city wall of the Zheng capital city, they found him standing alone, as recorded in the *Shiji*,

孔子適鄭，與弟子相失，孔子獨立郭東門。鄭人或謂子貢曰：東門有人，其類似堯，其項類皋陶，其肩類子產，然自要以下不及禹三寸。纍纍若喪家之狗。子貢以實告孔子。孔子欣然笑曰：形狀，末也。而謂似喪家之狗，然哉！然哉！

When Confucius arrived at the Zheng capital, he lost contact with the disciples. For a moment Confucius stood alone at the eastern gate of the outer walls of the Zheng capital city. A man of Zheng said to Zigong, "At the eastern gate there is a man, whose forehead looks like Yao's, neck like Gao Yao's, shoulders like Zichan's, yet his height to his waist is three *cun* shorter than Yu's. Haggard, he seems like a stray dog." Zigong told Confucius what he heard from the man of Zheng. Smiling agreeably, Confucius said, "One's appearance is trivial. However, his saying that I look like a disowned dog is indeed so! Indeed so!"<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> For example, his *Sangjiagou—Wo du Lunyu* 喪家狗：我讀《論語》 published by Shanxi renmin chubanshe in 2007, and *Qu sheng nai de zhen Kongzi: Lunyu zongheng du* 去聖乃得真孔子：《論語》縱橫讀 published by Sanlian chubanshe in 2008.

<sup>13</sup> *Shiji* 47.1918–1921; Kuang Yaming 匡亞明 1985: 440–442.

<sup>14</sup> *Shiji* 47.1921–1922.

Although not included in the *Lunyu*, this passage appears without significant variations in other transmitted texts—namely, the *Baihu tongyi* 白虎通議 (Unified Explanations to the Confucian Classics Formed at the White Tiger Pavilion Meetings), the *Lunheng*, and the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語 (Family Sayings of Confucius).<sup>15</sup> A similar description of Confucius’s appearance using the phrase *sangjia gou* is also found in a *Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 (Master Han’s Exoteric Traditions of the *Odes*) passage, though its narrative structure differs from the text referenced above.<sup>16</sup> It is worth noting here that, even though all four of these texts are considered to be of later origin than the *Shiji*, the similarities between the *Shiji* passage and its renditions do not prove the *Shiji* passage to be the ancestral version of the other four. The fact that the same sagacious and canine features are used to describe Confucius’s appearance in different texts suggests that this anecdote was widely circulated and taken to be historically accurate in certain circles. This is one explanation for why the text is tailored by the Grand Historian to reconstruct Confucius’s biography in the *Shiji*.

The perceived historical accuracy of these physical descriptions leads Li Ling to entitle his book with the phrase *sangjia gou* in order to accentuate the “living” (*huo* 活) and “real” (*zhen* 真) Confucius, rather than a “dead” (*si* 死) and “fake” (*jia* 假) one.<sup>17</sup> According to Li Ling, the most noticeable preserved traits of the real Confucius are probably his dedication to teaching an unprecedentedly large body of students, as well as his being one who “acts though knowing that nothing will come to pass”<sup>18</sup> in attempting to restore an old, dying social and political system.<sup>19</sup> A Confucius so defined, according to Li Ling, strongly resembles Edward Said’s definition of the modern intellectual “as exile and marginal, as amateur, and as the author of a language that tries to speak truth to power.”<sup>20</sup> Therefore, in comparison with Confucius’s image as an exile and a marginalized figure, his portrayal as a sage metaphorically “kills” the true Confucius. By aiming to reinterpret the image of Confucius as an ancient Chinese intellectual against his sanctification—especially in the current Chinese social, cultural, and political context—this title voices its major departure from contemporary trends.

15 Chen Li 陳立 1994: 393; Huang Hui 1990: 123; Yang Zhaoming and Song Lilin 宋立林 2009: 270.

16 Xu Weiyu 1980: 323–324.

17 The title of this book is *Sangjia gou: Wo du lunyu* 喪家狗：我讀《論語》，Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2008. Li Ling talks about the reason that he chooses “Sangjia gou” as the title in a number of occasions, for example, Li Ling 2008a, especially 12–14 and Li ling 2008b, especially 127–138.

18 知其不可而為之. Yang Bojun 2010a: 155.

19 Li Ling 2008a: 12–14.

20 Said 1994: xvi.

Li Ling's clever use of a seemingly negative term to convey his critique of the mainstream understanding of Confucius as the greatest sage in Chinese history has incited controversy and heated exchanges between Li Ling and his opponents.<sup>21</sup> Li Ling's original goal was to draw readers' attention to the "lies" (*huangyan* 謊言) and "rumors" (*yaoyan* 謠言) that have enveloped the image of Confucius by inspiring readers to read the original Confucian texts.<sup>22</sup> Li quickly realized, however, that the attacks on his research were targets on his intentions, and had little relevance to his methodology. This surprised Li, even as he anticipated some objections to his use of a term surrounded by controversy for centuries: Cui Shu's comments on the *Shiji* disowned-dog anecdote illustrate the intensity of this age-old debate.<sup>23</sup>

余按：鄭在宋西，陳在宋南，自宋適陳，必不由鄭。且子產，鄭相，其卒不久，鄭人或猶有及見者；堯、禹、皋陶千七百余年矣，鄭人何由知其形體之祥，而分寸乃歷歷不爽矣乎？至比聖人於狗，造此言者，信此說者，皆聖門之罪人也！此乃齊東野人之語，故今皆削之，而并為之辨。

I note: The State of Zheng is to the west of the State of Song, while the State of Chen, to the south of the State of Song; travelling from the Song to the Chen, one will certainly not pass the Zheng. Moreover, Zichan, minister of the Zheng, had not passed away for long, so some Zheng people might have had the chance of seeing him when he was alive. Nevertheless, Yao, Yu, and Gao Yao had been gone for one thousand seven hundred years. How could the man of Zheng know their forms and bodies with such detail as to include precise measurements? As for those who compare the Sage to a dog, those who have invented such a saying, and those who believed it, they are all reprehensible followers of the Sage. These are the words of bumpkins who live east of Qi. I therefore cut them all and make the point clear here.<sup>24</sup>

21 For examples, see articles by Yang Lihua 楊立華 ("Sangjia gou yu 'huazhongquchong'" 喪家狗與「嘩眾取寵」), Chen Jiesi 陳杰思 ("Li Ling *Sangjia gou—Wo du Lunyu Zixu miuwu ershi ti*" 李零《喪家狗—我讀論語·自序》謬誤二十題), Li Cunshan 李存山 ("Sangjia gou: Yinshi yan zhong de Kongzi" 「喪家狗」: 隱士眼中的孔子), Chen Bisheng 陳壁生 ("Kongzi de shuang-chong fuhao hua—Ping *Sangjia gou jiqi zhenglun*" 孔子的雙重符號化—評《喪家狗》及其爭論), Huang Yushun 黃玉順 ("Ye shuoshuo Li Ling zhe ben shu" 也說說李零這本書), Qiufeng 秋風 ("Fan jingdian de jingdian jiedu biaoben—Ping *Sangjia gou—Wo du Lunyu*" 反經典的經典解讀標本—評《喪家狗—我讀〈論語〉》), Li Ling ("Sangjia gou' kao" 「喪家狗」考 and "You hua haohao shuo, bie yi ti kongzi jiu ji—Gen Lihua tanxin" 有話好好說, 別一提孔子就急—跟立華談心), and so forth, in the "Zhongguo Ruxue Wang" 中國儒學網: <http://www.confuchina.com/redian/index.redian.htm> (Accessed 01/16/2018).

22 Li Ling 2008b: "Zixu" 1–7.

23 Li Ling mentions Cui's comments in different places in his works, see Li Ling 2008a: 16; Li Ling 2008b: 137.

24 Cui Shu 1983: 298.

Aiming to reconstruct Confucius's life based on "reliable" sources, Cui Shu painstakingly examines a number of transmitted texts from which information on Confucius can be distilled, including the *Analects* and Confucius's *Shiji* biography. He concludes by presenting a Confucius that accords with the image of the sage already in his mind. For this reason, an anecdote disparaging Confucius's sagehood—like the *sangjia gou* passage in the *Shiji*—is unacceptable and must be excised from reliable sources. Although Cui Shu's opening remarks eloquently debunk the "factual" information in this anecdote, establishing the veracity of "factual" information is beside the point. What matters most to Cui Shu is whether or not evidence can be applied to Confucius's sagely image. Even if this passage was factually accurate, it would be wrong to integrate Confucius's canine features into his sagely image. For this reason, the *Shiji* anecdote is, to Cui Shu, nothing more than the untrustworthy "words of bumpkins who live east of Qi."

Cui Shu is certainly not the first person to denounce the reliability of the selected *Shiji* accounts shaping the image of Confucius. The phrase "words of bumpkins who live east of Qi" used by Cui Shu to assess the *sangjia gou* anecdote echoes a judgment made by Mencius (372–289 BC) in the *Mengzi*: Shun has long been considered one of the ancient sages in the Confucian tradition,<sup>25</sup> but one text describes him as a dictator, who forced his own father and the sage-king Yao to serve in his court.<sup>26</sup> When Xianqiu Meng, one of Mencius' interlocutors in the *Mengzi*, raised a question on Confucius's comment "At that (Shun's) time, how overwhelmingly dangerous it was in the world,"<sup>27</sup> Mencius dismisses his question by simply pointing out that "This is not a statement of a gentleman; these are words of eastern Qi bumpkins."<sup>28</sup> Mencius' argument proceeds by first establishing that the sage king Shun would neither have the sage king Yao (from whom he inherits power) nor his own father serve as his subordinates; it then follows that Confucius

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25 A number of scholars bring up issues on such terms as "Confucius," "Confucian," and "Confucianism," all of which stem from the Latinized equivalent of "Kongfuzi" 孔夫子 (Master Kong) by Jesuits when they began to introduce the Chinese master's teachings to the West from late sixteenth century, and consider them problematic or even misleading in clearly conveying the rather complicated usages of those terms in their specific contexts. Some even suggest that they should be abandoned and use their *pinyin* forms instead, for instance, Kongzi, *ruzhe* 儒者, *rusheng* 儒生, *nujia* 儒家, *ru* 儒, or even "ruists," "ruism," and so forth. For scholars' wrestling with these words, see Zufferey 2003, especially 15–20; Jenson 1997, especially 3–28; Eno 1990. This study, however, follows the convention of using "Confucian tradition" to denote *ru* or *nujia* unless specifically noted.

26 Yang Bojun 2010b:198.

27 於斯時也天下殆哉岌岌乎。Yang Bojun 2010: 198.

28 此非君子之言齊東野人之語也。Yang Bojun 2010: 198. Similar passages on Confucius's comments on Shun's governance can also be in the *Mozi* and the *Han Feizi*; see Wu Yujiang 2006: 433; Wang Xianshen 王先慎 1998: 466.

would not have made those negative comments regarding Shun's governance; finally, it reaches the conclusion that details contradicting the images of the sages must be considered "words of eastern Qi bumpkins." In testing the reliability of sources, both Cui Shu and Mencius apply the same touchstone: a description of a sage must accord with the defining attributes of a sage. In other words, any description that contradicts suitable moral standards cannot be considered historically reliable.

Such a touchstone is not only applied to Confucius, but to his disciples as well. In another anecdote included in the *Shiji*'s biographies of Confucius's disciples, Youruo 有若 was chosen to succeed to Confucius's position after the Master's death because of his facial resemblance to Confucius. He was later removed from the position because he could not predict rain as Confucius allegedly had.<sup>29</sup> In discussing the authorship of the *Analects*, Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819 AD) cites this *Shiji* passage to explain why Youruo also receives the respectful appellation *zi* 子 (master) in the *Analects*.<sup>30</sup> However, scholars such as Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200 AD) and Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223–1296 AD) reduce this passage to "a shallow tale of a tub by the Historian"<sup>31</sup> or "a mistake resulting from the Grand Historian's collecting miscellaneous sayings,"<sup>32</sup> even though a slight variation of this anecdote also appears in the *Mengzi*, the very work upon which their denunciation of this anecdote is based.<sup>33</sup> Using a forced interpretation of *Mengzi*'s version of the anecdote, Cui Shu even goes further to argue that the *Shiji* version of this anecdote has to be a "far-fetched, unwarranted" (*fuhui* 附會) one created by some "busybodies" (*haoshizhe* 好事者).<sup>34</sup>

These examples should illustrate the age-old touchstone used to assess the materials pertaining to Confucius as a subject. It seems that once he became a sage, Confucius could only be interpreted as a sage; therefore, anything that did not contribute to the reconstruction of his wise image must be "cut out" (*xue* 削) of his biography.<sup>35</sup> There are contemporary political and cultural reasons for the recent trend of sanctifying Confucius, but the sanctification is no doubt deeply anchored

<sup>29</sup> *Shiji* 67.2216.

<sup>30</sup> Liu Zongyuan 1974: 68–69.

<sup>31</sup> 史氏之鄙陋無稽. Zhu Xi 2002.

<sup>32</sup> 太史公采雜說之謬. Wang Yinglin 2008: 923.

<sup>33</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 114–115. Different from the *Shiji* passage, the *Mengzi* version of this anecdote does not mention whether Youruo accepted Confucius's position or not and the attempt of raising Youruo's status to the Master failed because of Zi Si's 子思 (483–402 BC) disapproval, but both versions preserve the part that Youruo was to take the position of Confucius after the latter's death.

<sup>34</sup> Cui Shu 1983: 383.

<sup>35</sup> Cui Shu 1983: 298.



in a tradition of revering and worshiping Confucius as a flawless, inviolable sage. Hidden within this tradition is the concomitant method by which all materials related to Confucius and his sagacity are judged and interpreted. Mencius, Cui Shu, and other pre-modern thinkers were all moored in this tradition, and so too are the contemporaries of Li Ling who have challenged his argument and method.

Li Ling believes the *Shiji* account to be the most comprehensive and reliable source for understanding Confucius and his disciples as historical figures. According to Li Ling, the skeptical attitudes toward information in the *Shiji* version of Confucius's biography reflects an underappreciation of Sima Qian's efforts to depict Confucius as objectively as possible.<sup>36</sup> In fact, not only the *Shiji* account, but also other sources long considered unreliable, such as the *Kongzi jiayu* and the *Kong congzi* 孔叢子 (The Kong Family Masters' Anthology), need to be reappraised in light of recent archaeologically recovered texts that have resulted in the reevaluation of early Chinese texts once labeled "forgeries."<sup>37</sup>

Along with a reassessment of whole texts, the conventional ranking of source materials related to Confucius's life and teaching should also be reordered. In the traditional view, the *Analects* has long been appraised as the most trustworthy record of the true words of Confucius. Closely following the *Analects* in importance are the *Zuo Commentary*, the *Mengzi*, and the ritual texts compiled by the Dai uncle and nephew. By comparison, the masters' writings all are untrustworthy, but are still better received than the texts considered most unreliable: those writings by Han writers, including the *Shiji*.<sup>38</sup>

Recent studies and archaeological discoveries threaten to upend this order. For example, recent archaeological finds in Hebei and Anhui provinces are confirming other Han texts such as the *Kongzi jiayu* and the *Kong congzi* to be reliable representatives from the heart of the Confucian tradition.<sup>39</sup> In comparison, the

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**36** Li Ling 2008a: 1–2.

**37** Yang Zhaoming 2005: 3–7, 593–631. For Western scholarship on the *Kongzi jiayu* and the *Kong congzi*, see Kramers 1950, Ariel 1989, and especially van Ess 2011 and 2013. In his detailed research on the Confucius narratives included in the *Shiji*, van Ess compares all the stories related to Confucius in the *Shiji* with those that reappear in the *Kongzi jiayu*. He concludes that almost all the duplicated cases in *Kongzi jiayu* are probably later than those included in the former. This seems to complicate Yang's argument by suggesting that many parts of the *Kongzi jiayu* and *Kong congzi* were indeed composed late, although newly discovered texts confirm that some of the *Kongzi jiayu* and *Kong congzi* passages are reflected in earlier versions.

**38** Li Ling 2008a: 2.

**39** Boltz has even proven that certain biographical facets in a Ming-period illustrated didactic text about Confucius are historically reliable. See Boltz 2006.

significance of canonical materials, including the *Lunyu*, has diminished.<sup>40</sup> For example, Li Ling clearly states the principle guiding his reading of the *Analects* in his *Sangjia gou*, which accords with Mencius's own method of reading the *Documents*:<sup>41</sup>

盡信書，則不如無書。吾與武成，取二三策而已。

It would be better not to have the *Documents* than to completely trust in it. Even for the “Wucheng” [*pian* chapter included in it], I merely adopt two to three strips and that's all.<sup>42</sup>

Li Ling continues to explain that in order to find a “true Confucius” 真實的孔子, one must read the *Analects* “without [the Han] politicizing, [the Song] moralizing, or [the modern] sanctifying.”<sup>43</sup>

It is worth noting that Sima Qian interprets and incorporates some of the passages from the *Analects* into his biography of Confucius. Statements uttered by Confucius in the *Analects* are woven into the biographical narrative, and thereby contextualized.<sup>44</sup> Such contextualization enables readers of the *Analects* to transform its passages into vivid scenes directly connected to Confucius's life, even though not all of the passages excerpted from the *Analects* are historically accurate.<sup>45</sup> In fact, Sima Qian's closing comments in Confucius's biography describe how his admiration for Confucius leads to his empathetic reading of Confucius's writings.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, we should consider Sima Qian's own idealized image of the Master into his biographical account.

Zheng Xuan's 鄭玄 (127–200 AD) commentaries also seem to employ Sima Qian's empathetic method of reading and contextualizing the *Analects*. Manuscripts unearthed at Dunhuang and Turfan 吐魯番 have provided us with more

40 Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所 1981; He Zhigang 何直剛 1981; Hu Pingsheng 胡平生 2000; Yang Zhaoming and Song Lilin 2009.

41 Li Ling 2008a: “xu” 12.

42 Yang Bojun 2010b: 301.

43 去政治化，去道德化，去宗教化. Li Ling 2008a: “xu” 12.

44 For examples, see Sun Shiyang 孫世揚 1933: 93–94.

45 This does not mean, however, that we should deny Sima Qian's efforts of collecting materials—including his visiting Confucius's hometown and consulting as many textual resources as he could access.

46 *Shiji* 47.1947. It says: In the *Odes* there are these lines: The high mountain, we look up to it; the long way, we travel it. Even we cannot reach them, our hearts go out to them. By reading Mr Kong's writings, I think of and see him as a man (詩有之：「高山仰止，景行行止。」雖不能至，然心鄉往之。余讀孔氏書，想見其為人).

than half of Zheng's long-lost commentaries on the *Analects*. Using these recovered manuscripts, Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 identifies one of Zheng Xuan's primary approaches to the *Analects*. Many of Zheng's commentaries, Kanaya observes, are astonishingly different from later commentaries and annotations: Zheng Xuan reads the *Analects* much like Sima Qian, even though in many cases his interpretations differ. Kanaya suggests that Zheng's approach, especially as seen in his negative interpretations, is closely connected with his own life, personal experiences, and moral and political views.<sup>47</sup> As was the case with Sima Qian, Zheng Xuan identifies with a Confucius who is largely a construct of Zheng's own mental and emotional projections. Thus, the Confucius of Sima Qian and Zheng Xuan has not escaped being politicized and moralized. Their interpretations are only different from later movements insofar as they do not regard Confucius as a demigod.

These problems with Sima Qian's Confucius are not much of an issue for Li Ling, since following Sima Qian's reading of the *Analects* in order to create his own Confucius is not a central goal of his works. Rather, his focus is counteracting the contemporary sanctification of Confucius. Here, we examine how Li Ling alerts us to the historical Confucius—an ancient Chinese scholar who refused to be sanctified. We start by considering the *Analects* as a biographical source for the modern Confucius.<sup>48</sup>

Li Ling attempts to identify the historical Confucius in the *Lunyu*, though he seems less interested in confirming the historical validity and appropriateness of the materials he references, acknowledging the complexity of *Analects'* textual history, and insightfully positioning the *Analects* not as a collection of original records but rather an abstraction and abridgement of other textual units.<sup>49</sup> Yet the image of an historical Confucius must be supported with applicable materials containing historically verifiable information. How can the biography of an historical Confucius be written using scattered textual units removed from their original contexts, and how should the anecdotes that these textual units convey be defined, categorized, and interpreted? The nature of the *Analects* as tied to its inclusion of these anecdotes needs to be considered before a reconstruction of the historical Confucius can be made. Otherwise, any reconstruction is, at best, simply another manufactured Confucius.

This chapter does not offer an alternative interpretation of Confucius in relation to Li Ling's reconstruction of the life of Confucius. A number of recent works

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47 Kanaya Osamu 金谷治 1991: 204–242, especially 221–237.

48 Li Ling 2008a: “xu” 12.

49 Li Ling 2008a: 30–31.

have filled this scholarly lacuna.<sup>50</sup> Nor does it engage in the discussion of those timeless concepts labeled as Confucian values to promote, for instance, a model of self-cultivation.<sup>51</sup> Rather, the major goals of this chapter are to address the issues related to the nature of the *Analects* and, then, to consider how the *Analects* functioned in the Western Han portrayal of Confucius as the author and creator of the body of the Confucian canon.

The *Analects* have indeed been hailed as one of the most trusted sources for studying and understanding Confucius.<sup>52</sup> Such an appraisal deserves careful reconsideration as increasing evidence comes to light undermining its absolute reliability. In the following pages, I investigate the textual history of the *Analects*, explore the formation of the text, and analyze the elevation of *Lunyu*'s status in relation to the *Chunqiu* and other Confucian classics supposedly authored by Confucius. I argue that the name of Confucius endows anecdotal materials from a variety of sources with coherent meanings that subsequently enrich the image of the Master. Furthermore, it is argued that the *Lunyu*'s representation of Confucius as a great transmitter of his teaching satisfied the need for a tangible and quotable Confucius to position the *Gongyang* 公羊 myth as the Western Han ideology. It is my hope that in exploring how the *Lunyu* was formed, transmitted, and interpreted, we may expose the fluidity undermining a long-held view on the relationship between the text and the author. This allows us to examine the establishment of an interdependent relationship between the two, allowing for a more inspiring reading of both Confucius and the Confucian Classics.

### 3.2 The *Lunyu* prior to the Western Han

Today, when we think of the *Analects*, we commonly see a bound book with the Chinese characters or language of the translation printed on paper pages, and the content divided neatly into twenty chapters. Among the most authoritative editions is He Yan's 何晏 (195?–249 AD) *Lunyu jijie* 論語集解 (Collected Explanations of the *Analects*) annotated with sub-commentaries by Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010 AD) and contained in the Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764–1849 AD) edition of the *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經注疏 (Commentaries and Sub-Commentaries on the Thirteen Confucian Classics), published by Zhonghua shuju 中華書局.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, most

<sup>50</sup> For example, Creel 1949; Chin Anping 2007, Nylan and Wilson 2010.

<sup>51</sup> For example, Tu Weiming 杜維明 1998.

<sup>52</sup> Zhu Weizheng 1986: 40.

<sup>53</sup> *Lunyu zhushu*. There is also a simplified, punctuated version of the *Shisanjing zhushu* edition published by Beijing Daxue Chubanshe in 1999.

modern editions of the *Analects* follow He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*. Although a very well-preserved edition, the *Lunyu jijie* by He Yan is not the earliest collection of expositions of the *Analects*, but, rather a “florilegium of the best [explanations] from various schools,”<sup>54</sup> including those of “Kong Anguo 孔安國, Bao Xian 包咸, Zhoushi 周氏, Ma Rong 馬融, Zheng Xuan, Chen Qun 陳群, Wang Su 王肅, and Zhousheng Lie 周生烈.”<sup>55</sup> To trace the earliest versions of the original texts of the *Analects*, we must untangle the complexities of its different transmitting lineages.

Although John Makeham has filled a void of historic Confucius scholarship in the English academic world by introducing the basic framework of the textual issues surrounding the *Analects*, we can further refine our knowledge based on materials that have only recently become available.<sup>56</sup> In the following sections, I consider questions of whether there existed a text identified as the *Lunyu* at all in the Western Han, and if so, whether it differed from the *Lunyu* that has been transmitted to us today.

One of the earliest clues to our understanding is provided in the “Yiwen zhi,” which includes a partial preservation of the late Western Han project of arranging the texts in the imperial collection.<sup>57</sup> It states,

論語者，孔子應答弟子時人及弟子相與言而接聞於夫子之語也。當時弟子各有所記。夫子既卒，門人相與輯而論纂，故謂之論語。

The *Lunyu* includes the words said by Confucius when responding to his disciples and contemporaries as well as the words that the disciples said they directly heard from their master. At that time the disciples each had their own notes. After the Master died, together his disciples collected, discussed, and compiled [the notes to make a text]. Therefore, the text is called *Lunyu*.<sup>58</sup>

54 集諸家之善。 *Lunyu zhushu* 6. It needs to be pointed out, however, that this pre- or post-face is not for the *Lunyu zhushu*, but made by He Yan for his *Lunyu jijie*. For this point, consult *Lunyu zhengyi* 論語正義 24.771.

55 This is according to Xing Bing's sub-commentaries; see *Lunyu zhushu*.6.

56 John Makeham laid out a solid framework by bringing in various opinions to the discussion. He also successfully connects the framework he introduces to some new archaeological finds in related to this topic. Nevertheless, a more detailed investigation on the remaining parts of the *Lunyu* text carved on stones in the Eastern Han and Zheng Xuan's annotations on the *Lunyu* partly recovered from manuscripts excavated from Dunhuang and Turfan may shed more light on these early versions. Part of this section is inspired by his article; see Makeham 1996.

57 Ban Gu does mention that he did some editing work on the *Qiliè* 七略, which had been compiled by Liu Xin mostly based on the summaries of the texts rendered by his father, Liu Xiang, but nowadays we cannot identify the parts edited by him; see *Hanshu* 30.1701.

58 *Hanshu* 30.1717.

This passage does not explicitly state when the *Lunyu* text was formed, but its attribution of authorship to those disciples of Confucius who lived shortly after the Master's death indicates that it should be a text from the period of the early Warring States.<sup>59</sup> The rationale behind this dating presumes that the date of a text should fall near the time of its authorship, even though in this case the concept of authorship signals subordination rather than authorial control, as Mark Lewis insightfully notes.<sup>60</sup> According to this understanding, the authors of the *Analects* are nothing more than scribes, who, in a passive way, jotted down the words of the master and the conversations in which the Master engaged, and editors, who later collected and compiled the words and conversations to form a longer text. As a result, to date the *Lunyu* means to identify the period in which both the textual idea and the physical form of the *Analects* emerged. This seems to indicate that Han scholars considered the *Lunyu* an early Warring States period (475–221 BC) text.

Although the “Yiwen zhi” presents plausible circumstances surrounding the compilation of the *Analects*, many scholars are dissatisfied with its vagueness, especially due to its failure to identify the disciples responsible for the compilation of the text. These scholars have attempted to further the discussion on the authorship of the *Analects* by centering their exploration on a few seemingly datable passages and keywords, such as the appellations *zi* and *Kongzi*. For example, according to a Qing 清 (1633–1911AD) reconstruction of the “*Lunyu xu*” 論語序 (preface to the *Analects*) allegedly written by Zheng Xuan, the *Analects* “was composed by Zhonggong, Ziyou, Zixia, and others.”<sup>61</sup> Kang Youwei, however, objected to the authorship proposed in the “*Lunyu xu*,” also based on how *zi* is used in the *Lunyu*. He contends that the application of this respectful appellation to Zengzi 曾子 (505–432 BC) is a strong indication that the *Lunyu* was compiled by Zengzi's students rather than by any of Confucius's students.<sup>62</sup> Indeed, this whole debate began with Liu Zongyuan's “*Lunyu bian*” 《論語》辨 (On the *Analects*), which, as summarized by Cui Shu, is based on previous scholars' interpretations of certain

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59 Even though Zhu Yizun 朱彝尊 (1629–1709 AD) opines that there is a distinction between the term *dizi* 弟子 and *menren* 門人 based on the expressions in some of the passages, other scholars, Jiang Boqian 蔣伯潛 (1892–1956 AD), for instance, points out that Zhu's suggestion is the result of cherry-picking. See Jiang Boqian 1948: 284–286; Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 1–2; Zhao Zhenxin 1961: 11–16.

60 Lewis 1999: 53–97.

61 仲弓子游子夏等所撰. *Lunyu zhengyi* 792. The Song scholar Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1193 AD) holds a similar idea, also by highlighting the use of the appellation *zi* in the *Lunyu*.

62 Kang Youwei 康有為 1984: “xu” 1.

*Lunyu* passages related to the use of *zi* and other appellations.<sup>63</sup> The problem with all these arguments is that they assume a conclusion for a portion of the text can be extended to the text as a whole.<sup>64</sup>

Regardless of their differences, all these arguments accept that the *Analects* as a text appeared no later than the time of Mencius (372–289 BC), because the *Mencius* frequently quotes Confucius in ways remarkably similar to passages that now appear in the *Lunyu*.<sup>65</sup> Such an assumption is directly linked to the “Yiwen zhi” description of the *Analects*. The “Yiwen zhi” establishes a *terminus post quem* by assuming the pedagogical culture in the Eastern Zhou was one where the Master spoke and the students took notes. Once the Master’s messages had been delivered, they were immediately historicized. The only question remaining, then, is when exactly the Master’s messages were compiled together into a longer text.

To answer this final question, those passages from which drops of historical information may be distilled become pivotal in dating the text. Since Zengzi was said to be the youngest among Confucius’s students, and because the *Analects* contains descriptions of an aged Zengzi offering instruction to his students from his sickbed,<sup>66</sup> the idea that Zengzi’s students finalized the text has remained influential.<sup>67</sup> This dating method reflects a view assuming that the *Lunyu* text was formed by and transmitted through the Confucian teaching lineage. Therefore, there is no reason not to use the writings of one of Confucius’s disciples to discuss the *terminus ante quem* of the *Lunyu* and, indeed, the *Mencius* was chosen. In this case, it is meaningful that the chosen text has survived to the present day and that it is entitled with the name of the known historical master, Mencius. The bond between the historical figure and the text bearing his name makes the dating of the *terminus ante quem* of the *Analects* possible. This provides an explanation as to why the *Analects* is said to have been completed within a period between 479 BC and 289 BC, the two dates marking the death of the two masters—Confucius and Mencius, respectively.<sup>68</sup>

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63 Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 1974: 68–69; Cui Shu 1983; Makeham 1996; Ogyū 1994; Yasui 1872; *Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註 1992; *Lunyu zhengyi* 1990; amongst others.

64 Also consult Zhu Weizheng 1986: 43–44.

65 Li Ling 2008a: 31; Zhao Zhenxin 1961: 11–16.

66 Yang Bojun 2010a: 78, 78–79.

67 Liu Zongyuan 1974: 68 – 69; Cui Shu 1983; Zhao Zhenxin 1961.

68 Li Ling 2008a: 31; also see Hu Zhigui 1965a, 1965b, 1965c. Hu sees in the extant *Lunyu* text two different parts—the first part consists of the first ten chapters and the second part, the remaining ten chapters—completed in two different periods, but as a whole the *Analects* were compiled in a period lasting almost two hundred years after Confucius’s death.

Unfortunately, this traditional dating is supported by little additional evidence. If the *Analects* formed during the Warring States period, one would expect to see references to the title in other pre-Han texts. For texts within the Confucian tradition, one would expect to see many passages often cited from the *Analects*. These conditions unfortunately are not present. None of the pre-Qin *zhuzi* (various masters) texts mention the title *Lunyu*, a term that is quite unique among the titles of other texts attributed to various Eastern Zhou masters. Although it appears in a *Liji* passage, scholars have convincingly shown that this belongs to a later interpolation.<sup>69</sup> This should not be a surprise as scholars such as Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738–1801 AD) and Yu Jiayi have demonstrated that most early Chinese texts originally lacked titles, with the titles known to us today beginning in late Warring States and being affixed by later editors in the Han dynasty.<sup>70</sup> According to recent discoveries of early Chinese writing, although few early texts have “book” titles, many unearthed texts, especially administrative documents, have *pian* titles, and some even have titles for their *zhang* 章 passages.<sup>71</sup> In the case of the *Analects*, however, neither the “book” title nor the *pian* titles can be traced in either transmitted or excavated pre-Qin texts.

In addition to the absence of references to “book” and *pian* titles, pre-Qin texts also include a paucity of passages that can be definitively linked to *Lunyu* passages. Although putative pre-Han texts contain numerous sayings identified as the words of Confucius by being preceded with expressions such as *Zi yue* 子曰 (the Master says) or *Kongzi yue* 孔子曰 (Master Kong says), only a very few can be directly associated with the *Analects*. The author of the *Xunzi* 荀子 (313–238 BC), which is named after the Warring States Confucian thinker, seems ignorant of the existence of both the title and contents of the *Lunyu*. Among the many passages pertaining to Confucius, none is even nearly identical with any *Lunyu* passage.<sup>72</sup> In the *Mengzi*, scholars locate twenty-eight passages recording words “said by Confucius,” but only eight of them have connections to *Lunyu* passages. More specifically, only three of these eight passages are nearly identical to their *Lunyu*

69 For a summary of scholars’ opinions on this point, see Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 1–5. Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 suspects that the interpolation of the term *lunyu* may have accidentally originated from a marginal note added by a later reader. This is highly possible if we consult Yu Yue’s 俞樾 *Gushu yiyi juli* 古書疑義舉例, in which Yu Yue gives several examples as such. See Takeuchi Yoshio 1979; Yu Yue 2010, 95–98.

70 Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 2011; Yu Jiayi 2010; Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 25. For a study of titles based on newly discovered writings, see Lin Qingyuan 林清源 2004.

71 See Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006: 87–114; Lin Qingyuan 2004: 201–244; Cheng Pengwan 程鵬萬 2017: 140–177, 309–343.

72 Hu Zhigui 1965a: 26.



counterparts.<sup>73</sup> The remaining five display some correspondences to certain *Lunyu* passages, but the similarities are not enough to conclude that the *Analects* were available to the author of the *Mengzi* at that time. As a matter of fact, the differences between these similar passages highlight the high degree of textual variation. For example, a similar passage appearing in the two texts may have different addressers and addressees—what Confucius says in the *Analects* becomes the words of someone else, or the disciple to whom Confucius directs his comments in the *Analects* becomes another person in the *Mengzi*. If the *Mengzi* passages are indeed from the *Lunyu*, and if the *Lunyu* had indeed been a fixed text by Mencius' time, we would not expect to see such variations.<sup>74</sup>

Of course, given the expense and material forms of early texts as well as limited spread of literacy of the time, we should not expect the *Lunyu* to have disseminated so widely immediately after its compilation that everyone would have read it. Moreover, at that time, much knowledge might have been transmitted orally,<sup>75</sup> so it is fair to say that there may not have been a copy of the *Lunyu* available to Mencius if the text was indeed completed during the early to mid-Warring States period. Although this is a somewhat defensible argument for explaining the textual variation as we see in the purported *Lunyu* passages cited in the *Mengzi*, I have reservations with this line of thinking, especially when dealing with a text like the *Analects*.

First, as it is acceptable that Zengzi's disciples participated in compiling the *Lunyu*, especially in its final phase, we have good reason to believe that a physical *Lunyu* should have been accessible to the core of the Zengzi teaching lineage. Mencius is alleged to have had close relations with the Zengzi lineage—after all, Mencius was taught by a student of Zisi 子思 (483–402 BC), who was Zengzi's disciple—so we would expect the citations of the *Lunyu* passages in the *Mengzi* to match the *Lunyu* text circulating within this group, as it is hard to believe that Mencius would confuse Confucius's words as recorded in the *Lunyu* for those of a disciple if the text was available to him.<sup>76</sup> It is even more unbelievable that Mencius

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73 Zhao Zhenxin 1961: 17–19; Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 2010: 443–444.

74 Zhao Zhenxin 1961: 19.

75 As Ruth Finnegan demonstrates, oral transmission does not necessarily result in more variations than textual transmission. The Southern Dynasties monk Sengyou 僧佑 (445–518 AD) suggests that oral transmission is even more stable than writing, at least in the discourse of Buddhist teaching. Finnegan 1996; Shi Sengyou 釋僧祐 1995: 221–222.

76 In Mencius' *Shiji* biography, it says that Mencius was a student of one of Zisi's disciples; but various passages in the *Kongcongzi* suggest that Mencius met Zisi and asked him questions. For Mencius' *Shiji* biography, see *Shiji* 74.2343; for the *Kongcongzi* passages, see Fu Yashu 傅亞庶 2011: 111, 114, 131, and so on. Luo Genze 羅根澤 argues that it would be impossible for Mencius

would have actually claimed in a meeting with King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 (r. 319–301 BC) that he did not know anything about Lord Huan of Qi and Lord Wen of Jin because such knowledge was not taught among Confucius’s disciples. This claim would certainly be untrue for someone familiar with the *Lunyu* since Confucius’s comments on these two lords in the *Lunyu* are too obvious to overlook.<sup>77</sup> The argument that Mencius knew the *Lunyu* very well contradicts the evidence that suggests either that Mencius was obviously unfamiliar with the *Lunyu* or that the *Lunyu* which was available in Mencius’s day must have been considerably different from the version that has reached us.

My second concern with the efforts to explain away the variations in the *Mengzi*’s use of purported *Lunyu* passages is that these dismissals fail to confront Mencius’s perspective on the state of knowledge about and the dissemination of Confucius’s sayings and teachings. According to some *Mengzi* passages, there was an urgent need for the whole Confucian tradition to spread the words of Confucius. For example, in the previous section, I cite a conversation between Mencius and Xianqiu Meng, allegedly one of Mencius’ students. Xianqiu Meng had asked his teacher how Confucius could have made unflattering comments on the rule of the sage-king Shun. In answering this question, Mencius explains that Confucius’s commentary “is not what a gentleman would have said but the words of bumpkins who live east of Qi.”<sup>78</sup> On another occasion, when Wan Zhang 萬章, another interlocutor in the *Mengzi*, asked whether it was true that Confucius lived with eunuchs during his stay in Wei and Qi, Mencius again strongly rebuked such hearsay by saying, “No! It was certainly not like that! The busybodies made it up.”<sup>79</sup> The *Xunzi* also contains similar types of passages indicating the need to eliminate false sayings. In the “Ruxiao” 儒效 chapter, for example, when a retainer cites Confucius’s words to praise Duke Zhou, the Master chastises him: “This probably is not what Duke Zhou did, nor is this what Confucius said.”<sup>80</sup>

If these passages accurately reflect late Warring States discussions, they suggest that Confucius anecdotes were being freely circulated to the extent that there was the need to distinguish Confucius’s “real” words from those falsely attributed to him, either orally or in written forms, by “bumpkins who live east of Qi” or other

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to meet Zisi, for Mencius was born ten years after Zisi’s death; thus, he concludes that the whole *Kongcongzi* is a forgery. See Luo Genze 1930: 189–195.

77 Yang Bojun 2010a: 148, 149.

78 非君子之言，齊東野人之語也。Yang Bojun 2010b: 198.

79 否，不然也。好事者為之也。Yang Bojun 2010b: 210.

80 是殆非周公之行，非孔子之言也。Wang Xianqian 王先謙 2010: 134.

“busybodies.” Judging by the reactions of Mencius and Xunzi, the apocryphal sayings were damaging to the image of Confucius that the Confucian tradition wanted to present, and thus, threatening to the reputation of the groups trying to spread the influence of his teachings. Under such circumstances, the best weapon to combat profane Confucius anecdotes would be a collection of Confucius’s “authentic” words, such as those included in the *Lunyu*. In both the *Mengzi* and the *Xunzi*, however, we cannot find sufficient evidence of an authoritative collection of Confucius’s words, even though both texts vehemently rebuke false sayings.<sup>81</sup> The absence of such evidence undermines the assumption that the *Analects* had been completed by Mencius’ time, if the *Mengzi* indeed reflects the life of the historical Mencius.

Even if Confucius’s words were compiled into a written form prior to the Han dynasty, there are other possible reasons for the discrepancies we see among his sayings and anecdotes. Certainly, some alterations to the *Lunyu* could have been introduced during the long process of editing and transmitting the text. It is possible that, when Mencius used the term “busybodies,” he was criticizing other Confucian groups, just as the author of *Xunzi* criticizes Mencius in the “Fei shi’er zi” 非十二子 (Faulting the Twelve Masters) chapter.<sup>82</sup> Noteworthy are the differences among the early versions of the *Lunyu*, which appeared soon after the text was taught in different groups—such as the Lu and Qi groups mentioned in the *Hanshu*. Variations even appeared within individual teaching lineages, as demonstrated later in this chapter when examining the *Zhanghou lun* 張侯論, the only version of the *Analects* passed down to the present day. Even though the *Zhanghou lun* belonged to the Lu *Lunyu* textual lineage, it differs from the *Lu Lunyu* 魯論 (Lu version of the *Lunyu*) as it was modified in consultation with both the Qi and archaic *Lunyu*. Could, then, today’s modified version of the *Lunyu* have been unavailable to Mencius and other masters, thus explaining the glaring difference between the transmitted *Lunyu* passages and the citations of Confucius’s words in the *Mengzi* and other Masters Writings?

In the following account of the long history of transmission, we shall make it clear, based on available evidence, that the modifications in the *Zhanghou lun*

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<sup>81</sup> Zhao Zhenxin is probably correct in pointing out that even many of Confucius’s words cited in the *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* are actually created by the authors of the two texts, a phenomenon that further suggests that an authoritative Confucius’s voice may have not been established then. See Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 22.

<sup>82</sup> Wang Xianqian 2010: 94–95. It also mentions in the *Han Feizi* that after Confucius passed away, the learning and teaching tradition founded by him was divided into eight groups; see Wang Xianshen 1998: 456–457. For the discussion on the social nature of and interactions among these different groups, see Eno 1990.

mainly consisted in replacing auxiliary or dialectal words, and thus could not have resulted in the many significant variations such as those discussed above. At present, there is no evidence in either transmitted or excavated texts suggesting that later editing work on the *Lunyu* played a significant role accounting for all those variations.<sup>83</sup> A more convincing explanation for these differences will be elaborated on later in this chapter, but it posits that all the words of and stories regarding Confucius included in the *Lunyu* merely constitute a small portion of the repository of the Confucian lore drawn upon by various early texts. In this lore, the words, deeds, and images of Confucius may differ from, and even contradict with, one another along similar lines as we see in various transmitted texts such as the *Zhuangzi*, the *Huainanzi*, and the *Hanshi waizhuan*.

In short, evidence pertaining to the availability of the *Lunyu* in early China is scarce, even though the “Yiwen zhi” suggests a pre-Qin origin. Even the *Mengzi*, the text of the Master directly linked to the alleged compilers of the *Lunyu*, contains negligible evidence. If the *Lunyu* was indeed available during Mencius' time, the quotations of Confucius's words in the *Mengzi* would not have been so different from those corresponding passages included in the *Lunyu* passed down to us.<sup>84</sup> The lack of textual evidence supporting the early existence of the *Lunyu* text contradicts the report that the *Lunyu* was discovered in the walls of Confucius's old mansion, an event that will be discussed in the following pages.

### 3.3 In the Walls of Confucius's Mansion: The Archaic, Lu, and Qi Lunyu

Information on the compilation and transmission of the *Lunyu* is provided in the earliest extant bibliographical records and other Han texts. The “Yiwen zhi” mentions three different versions of the *Lunyu*:

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<sup>83</sup> In those newly excavated Han and pre-Han texts, not only the title “Lunyu” has not been mentioned, passages that look similar to the *Lunyu* passages are also few, even though words and stories about Confucius as well as his disciples are many.

<sup>84</sup> Two recent studies reach the conclusion that the *Lunyu* belongs to a Han construction and, therefore, unsuitable to be the material for the reconstruction of a historical Confucius. Through in-depth examinations of both intertextual relations within the *Lunyu* and its connections with other texts available in the Han, these two works help us better understand the nature of the *Lunyu* text against various assumptions of previous scholarship. Their analysis of the structure and contents of *Lunyu* and other related texts have provided more examples to enhance my argument in this chapter. See Weingarten 2009; Hunter 2017.

論語古二十一篇。出孔子壁中，兩子張。

齊二十二篇。多問王、知道。

魯二十篇，傳十九篇。

The *Lunyu* [includes]: its archaic version, consisting of twenty-one *pian* (coming out of the walls of Confucius's mansion, with two "Zizhang" *pian* chapters),

its Qi version, consisting of twenty-two *pian* (having two extra chapters "Wenwang" and "Zhidao"),

and its Lu version, consisting of twenty *pian*, with nineteen *pian* of commentaries.<sup>85</sup>

Because the "Yiwen zhi" states that it is an abridged version of the *Qiliue* 七略 (Seven Summaries) by Liu Xin, we may infer that the three versions of the *Lunyu* listed above had been available by the late Western Han dynasty when the imperial collection was rearranged and the *Qiliue* written. It is worth noting that the small-character notes accompanying the listings for the archaic and Qi versions of the *Lunyu* seem to try to align the number, and even the layout, of the *pian* of these two versions with the Lu version of the *Lunyu*.<sup>86</sup> Even though we know nothing about the content of the two "Zizhang" chapters, i.e., whether they are identical to the corresponding chapter in the Lu version,<sup>87</sup> it is clear that the note taker here views the Lu version as the standard by which to weigh the other versions. If the two "Zizhang" chapters are merged into one, as is the case in the Lu version, then the archaic version of the *Lunyu* has the same number of *pian* as the Lu version. Similarly, that the "Wenwang" and "Zhidao" are identified as two "extra" chapters in the Qi version can only be explained by the assumption that the twenty-*pian* Lu *Lunyu* is considered the standard form of the *Lunyu*, even though the contents

<sup>85</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1716. Guo Yi considers the nineteen *pian* commentaries another version of the *Lunyu*, see Guo Yi 2001: 347–348.

<sup>86</sup> Huang Kan mentions in the introduction to his *Lunyu yishu* that the *pian* units of the archaic *Lunyu* are arranged differently from the Lu *Lunyu*, for example, "the 'Xiangdang' is the second *pian*, and the 'Yongye,' the third *pian*" (以鄉黨為第二篇雍也為第三篇); moreover, he also states that passages or sentences within those *pian* are also put in a different order from the Lu *Lunyu*. See Huang Kan "Lunyu jijie yishu xu."

<sup>87</sup> He Yan says that the second "Zizhang" chapter is actually part of the "Yaoyue" 堯曰 chapter, but Ru Chun 如淳, a contemporary of He Yan, suggests that the second "Zizhang" chapter is called "Congzheng" 從政. For He Yan's saying, see *Lunyu zhengyi* 24.777; for Ru Chun's suggestion, see *Hanshu* 30.1716.

of the versions' twenty *pian* could differ.<sup>88</sup> The reason that the Lu *Lunyu* serves as the standard is related to the popularity of another version of the *Lunyu* rearranged by Zhanghou 張侯 (Marquis Zhang), a version we will discuss in a coming section.

We now know that by the late Western Han these three versions of the *Lunyu* were available to those who arranged the imperial collection. The “Yiwen zhi” gives some clue on how the Qi and Lu versions were transmitted:

漢興，有齊、魯之說。傳齊論者，昌邑中尉王吉、少府宋畸、御史大夫貢禹、尚書令五鹿充宗、膠東庸生，唯王陽名家。傳魯論語者，常山都尉龔奮、長信少府夏侯勝、丞相韋賢、魯扶卿、前將軍蕭望之、安昌侯張禹，皆名家。張氏最後而行於世。

When the Han rose, there were the Qi and Lu versions of the *Lunyu*. Those who transmitted the Qi *Lunyu* include the Changyi Commandant-in-ordinary of the Nobles Wang Ji, Chamberlain for the Palace Revenues Song Ji, Censor-in-chief Gong Yu, Director of the Imperial Secretariat Wulu Chongzong, and Yong Sheng of Jiaodong, among whom only Wang Yang (i.e., Wang Ji) became a famous specialist.<sup>89</sup> Those who transmitted Lu *Lunyu* include the Changshan Commander-in-chief Gong Fen, Chang Xin Chamberlain for the Palace Revenues Xiahou Sheng, Counselor-in-chief Wei Xian, Fu Qing of Lu, former General Xiao Wangzhi, and the Anchang Marquis Zhang Yu, all of whom were famous specialists. Mr Zhang came the latest and his teaching of the *Lunyu* became popular in the world.<sup>90</sup>

Based on the biographical information preserved in the *Hanshu*, the *floruit* of all the transmitters of the *Lunyu*, except for that of Gong Fen, whose birth and death dates cannot be identified, fell in the middle of the Han Emperor Wu's reign (141–87 BC)

<sup>88</sup> The He Yan “*Lunyu xu*” points out that, in comparison with the Lu version, the Qi *Lunyu* “includes more passages and sentences than the Lu *Lunyu*.” (章句頗多於魯論) See *Lunyu zhengyi* 24.774. It is also worth noting here that John Makeham applies the same method when arguing for Takeuchi's assumption that both the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* were actually the *jinwen* 今文 (current script) versions of the archaic *Lunyu*, a point I will discuss later in this section. See Makeham 1996: 20–21. It has long been held that there had been an lasting struggle between the *jinwen* and *guwen* 古文 (archaic script), also rendered as New Text/Old Text, schools, each claiming the authority of their interpretation of the Confucian canons. Recent scholarship tends to dispute the actual existence of such struggle, but a consensus has not been reached. The debate between Michael Nylan and Hans van Ess serves as a good example in this regard. For this debate, see Nylan 1994; van Ess 1994; Nylan 1995; van Ess 1999.

<sup>89</sup> In He Yan's “*Lunyu xu*” it mentions the names and official titles of the transmitters of the Qi *Lunyu*, “The Langye Wang Qing and the Jiaodong Yong Sheng as well as the Changyi Commandant-in-ordinary of the Nobles, Wang Ji” (琅邪王卿及膠東庸生昌邑中尉王吉), and that of the Lu *Lunyu*, “Grant Mentor of the Heir Apparent, Xiahou Sheng, the former General Xiao Wangzhi, Counselor-in-chief Wei Xian as well as his son Xuancheng” (大子大傅夏侯勝前將軍蕭望之丞相韋賢及子玄成). See *Lunyu zhengyi* 24.771–775.

<sup>90</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1717.

or thereafter.<sup>91</sup> If these dates approximately match the time periods when the men were taught, then they are helpful for identifying the time the Lu and Qi versions of the *Lunyu* formed. Furthermore, the above passage opens by stating that both the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* appeared after the rise of the Han dynasty.

The question here, then, becomes which version of the *Lunyu* appeared earlier: the Lu or the Qi. We must consider the provenance of the archaic *Lunyu*. Interestingly, even as commentary mentions the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu* in the walls of Confucius's mansion, it does not specify the time of the alleged discovery. Fortunately, other portions of the *Hanshu* provide additional information in this regard.

This discovery involved a Han prince Liu Yu 劉餘 (r. 155–128 BC), Prince Gong of Lu (Lu Gongwang 魯恭王), whose brief biography is included in the *Hanshu*. It records that he was enfeoffed as the Prince of Huaiyang (Huaiyang Wang 淮陽王) in 155 BC, second year of Jingdi's 景帝 reign (157–141 BC),<sup>92</sup> and then as Prince of Lu the next year (i.e., 154 BC). He died in 128 BC, first year of the Yuanshuo 元朔 era (128–123 BC) in Wudi's reign. His biography describes him as a stutterer and a sybarite, fond of luxurious palaces, gardens, horses, dogs, and, in the late years of his life, music. The discovery of the ancient texts in the walls of Confucius's mansion, according to his biography, had something to do with his luxurious hobbies:

恭王初好治宮室，壞孔子舊宅以廣其宮，聞鐘磬琴瑟之聲，遂不敢復壞，於其壁中得古文經傳。

In his early years Prince Gong was fond of building palaces and chambers. He attempted to destroy Confucius's old mansion in order to expand his own palace. [When he started the demolition work,] he heard the sounds of bells, chime stones, as well as *qin* and *se* zithers; thus he dared not to make further damage. From the damaged walls of Confucius's mansion some Confucian Classics and their commentaries, both written in archaic scripts, were discovered.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Makeham 1996: 19–20; Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 12–20. A legitimate suggestion holds that we probably cannot take for granted the historical reliability of the constructed teaching and learning lineages posited by Eastern scholars, for these constructions may have well served the Eastern Han scholars' contemporary political and social needs rather than simply preserving in a disinterested fashion reliable historical records. In the case of the *Lunyu* teaching and learning lineage, however, this construction is often cross-referenced in different contexts and, more importantly, it does not—although it could—trace the head of the lineage to an earlier, more authoritative figure, a normal practice in the cases discussed in Csikszentmihalyi's and Nylan's study. See Csikszentmihalyi and Nylan 2003.

<sup>92</sup> Emperor Jing of Han, Liu Qi 劉啟, ascended to the throne in 157 BC, but 156 BC is considered the first year of his reign. See Fang Shiming 方詩銘 2007: 35.

<sup>93</sup> *Hanshu* 53.2414.

The above passage takes a prominent position toward the end of the Lu prince's biography before a brief description of the history of his fiefdom, an obvious placement to signal to readers this unusual event. The same anecdote is also mentioned in two other chapters of the *Hanshu*—Liu Xin's biography and the "Yiwen zhi" chapter—when the *Documents* is described.<sup>94</sup> When we compare the three descriptions, what stands out as relevant to the present discussion is the discrepancy between the times of the texts' discovery. The above passage records that this event happened in Liu Yu's early years as the Lu Prince, some time in Jingdi's reign or the early years of Wudi's reign, but the "Yiwen zhi" chapter specifies the date as toward the "end of Wudi's reign" 武帝末, approximately four decades later than the year mentioned in Prince Gong's biography.<sup>95</sup> Liu Xin's biography in the *Hanshu* does not indicate the year in which Prince Gong of Lu damaged the walls, but it mentions a specific era and a notorious event that provides some clues:

及魯恭王壞孔子宅，欲以為宮，而得古文於壞壁之中，逸禮有三十九，書十六篇。天漢之後，孔安國獻之，遭巫蠱倉卒之難，未及施行。

When it came to the time Prince Gong of Lu damaged Confucius's mansion to build his own palace and obtained some ancient texts from the damaged walls, those texts included thirty-nine *pian* of previously lost ritual texts and sixteen *pian* belonging to the *Book of Documents*. After the Tianhan era, Kong Anguo presented them to the imperial court, but it happened that the court suffered from the unexpected calamity caused by witchcraft and the texts were not put in use.<sup>96</sup>

Since Kong Anguo presented the ritual texts and the *Documents* after the Tianhan years (100–97 BC), the discovery of these texts from Confucius's damaged mansion must have occurred before 97 BC, the year when the Tianhan era ended. The event alluded to as the cause of the texts' damage was a scandal occurring late in Wudi's reign, when Emperor Wu, his heir apparent, the Empress, a princess, and several other royal families engaged in witchcraft.<sup>97</sup> Based on the two dates mentioned in this passage, Kong Anguo might have presented the two texts sometime between 97 BC and 91 BC, a period falling toward the "end of Wudi's reign."<sup>98</sup>

<sup>94</sup> *Hanshu* 36.1969; 30.1706.

<sup>95</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1706.

<sup>96</sup> *Hanshu* 36.1969.

<sup>97</sup> For studies of this event, see Loewe 1974; Poo Mu-chou 1986; Cai Liang 2014.

<sup>98</sup> There is a problem in this passage, however, if we consider the date of Kong Anguo's death. His birth and death dates have long been debated. Some scholars, based on his biography attached to the *Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語, tend to date him between the tenth year (170 BC) of Wendi's 文帝 reign and the Yuanding 元鼎 era (116–111 BCE) of Wudi's reign, but others, such as Wang



On the timing of this, the passages in Liu Xin's biography and the "Yiwen zhi" agree. But this then conflicts with the dating presented in Liu Yu's biography: since Prince Gong of Lu died in 128 BC, he could not have recovered the texts if the discovery of those ancient texts was indeed the outcome of the Lu Prince's remodeling of his palace.

This apparent oversight may be explained with the help of the Qing scholar Yu Yue's discussion on some unusual grammatical features observable in early Chinese texts. Yu warns us of the danger of using modern grammar and syntax to read Han and pre-Qin texts, and illustrates the kinds of misunderstandings that arise when we read early texts anachronistically.<sup>99</sup> According to Yu, it is not unusual for early texts to have two subjects begin a compound sentence with a series of coordinate verbs. Modern readers interpret the series of verbs as being performed by both subjects, when in fact, classical Chinese grammar allows for different subjects for the verbs subsequent to the initial verb in the series.<sup>100</sup> For example, the *Mengzi* says that "Yu and Ji undertook the task of pacifying the world and thrice passed their doors without entering them" 禹稷當平世三過其門而不入.<sup>101</sup> The translation of this passage follows a modern reading that sees both Yu and Ji as the subjects of all the verbs—to order 平 (*ping*), to pass 過 (*guo*), and to enter 入 (*ru*). However, Ji did not participate in any of the events listed. The correct

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Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722–1797 AD) and Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927 AD), doubt the reliability of his biographical information in the *Kongzi jiyu*, since the dating contradicts the *Shiji* record that says Kong Anguo "died young" (蚤卒). Wang Mingsheng suggests that Kong Anguo lived between 150 BC and 110 BC, while Wang Guowei suspects that Kong died around 130 BC. Zhao Zhenxin accommodates all the information and provides approximate dates of Kong Anguo's birth and death—160 BC and 120 BC. In any case, Kong Anguo could not have lived to the years after the Tianhan era. However, based on Wang Su's 王肅 preface to the *Kongzi jiyu*, which mentions that Kong Anguo died at home at the age of sixty, Hu Pingsheng suggests that Anguo lived to the Tianhan era when he died in 98 BC. However, dying at the age of sixty in the Western Han would not have been regarded as "dying young," and Hu's suggestion obviously contradicts the *Shiji* account. One possible explanation to this contradiction is that Kong Anguo presented the *Lunyu* on a date earlier than the Tianhan era and the phrase "after the Tianhan era" refers to the events surrounding "the calamity caused by witchcraft." This is not unusual in early Chinese writings, as we will see in the following discussion inspired by Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907 AD). In other words, this problem is simply caused by the difference between modern and early Chinese grammars. The problem is solved if we read it using conventions of early Chinese grammar. For the *Shiji* information, see *Shiji* 47.1947; for Zhao Zhenxin's estimation, see Zhao Zhenxin 1936: 12–14; for Hu Pingsheng's argument, see Hu Pingsheng 2000: 526–527.

<sup>99</sup> Yu Yue 2010: "introduction".

<sup>100</sup> Yu Yue 2010: 10–11.

<sup>101</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 183.

reading recognizes that only Yu is the subject for the clause that includes the information “passing their doors...”<sup>102</sup>

Yu Yue’s explanation can be applied to the “Yiwen zhi” phrase, “Wudi’s final years”. The scope of this time phrase is more limited than a modern reading would have it be. In other words, it does not cover both the time the texts were discovered in Confucius’s walls and the time the witchcraft scandal precluded the texts’ official support; “Wudi’s final years” only applies to the latter event. This explanation eliminates *Hanshu*’s discrepancy regarding the date when the archaic version of the *Lunyu* was discovered. As the biography of Prince Gong of Lu is the only one indicating a time frame for the prince’s partial destruction of Confucius’s mansion, the discovery of the archaic texts probably occurred during Jingdi’s reign, if not the early years of Wudi’s reign; i.e., sometime between 154 and 128 BC.<sup>103</sup> The *Lunyu* had probably never been transmitted as a complete text prior to this. Moreover, if we define a pedagogical text as a collection of teaching materials passed down from teacher to student, the textual units included in the *Lunyu* seem not to have been used pedagogically, which sheds some light on the limited citation of the *Lunyu* before the Western Han.

### 3.4 Hidden in the Walls: Function of the Would-be *Lunyu*

Comparing the dating of the archaic *Lunyu* with that of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*, we find a connection between the discovery and the transmission of the three texts.<sup>104</sup> It is unlikely that both the Lu and Qi lineages as well as their respective versions of the *Lunyu* first appeared around the time of the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu* by coincidence. Takeuchi Yoshio 武内義雄 has suggested that both the Lu and the Qi *Lunyu* were *jinwen* 今文 (current script) versions derived from

<sup>102</sup> Yu Yue 2010: 11.

<sup>103</sup> Wang Chong mentions in the “Zhengshuo” chapter of the *Lunheng* that it was during Wudi’s reign that people opened the walls of Confucius’s mansion and obtained the *Lunyu* with twenty-one *pian*, but when addressing the archaic *Shangshu* 尚書 text, he dates the same event back to Jingdi’s time. Elsewhere when discussing the *Zuozhuan*, he again proposes that Prince Gong of Lu damaged the lecture hall of Confucius’s mansion in Wudi’s reign. But in any case, this must have happened before 128 BC, in which year the Prince died. See Huang Hui 1990: 1136, 1125, 1161–1162.

<sup>104</sup> According to Liu Xiang’s *Bielu* 別錄, cited by Huang Kan 黃侃 (1886–1935 AD) in his preface to the *Lunyu yishu* 論語義疏, “What the Lu people had learned was called the Lu *Lunyu*, what the Qi people had learned was called the Qi *Lunyu*” (魯人所學謂之魯論齊人所學謂之齊論). Huang Kan 1937: “*Lunyu jijie yishu xu*”.

the archaic *Lunyu* discovered at Confucius's mansion.<sup>105</sup> Although partly accepting Takeuchi's assumption, John Makeham challenges Takeuchi by questioning the connections he makes among the three texts on the basis of differences in the arrangement of their longer *pian* and their smaller textual units, *zhang* 章 (passage) and *ju* 句 (sentence). In doing so, Makeham argues that all these differences are related to, and, therefore, can be explained by the reinterpretation of the number of *pian* in the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*.<sup>106</sup>

Takeuchi's assumption is inspiring because it bridges the three *Lunyu* versions, but the argument relies exclusively on secondary sources, as all three *Lunyu* mentioned in the *Hanshu* have long been lost. The actual differences among the three versions may have been much more complicated than described. Further, besides the two objections to Takeuchi's theory as discussed by Makeham, additional sources point to other significant differences, deserving our attention.<sup>107</sup> An additional complication to the picture of the early *Lunyu* text was the existence of other versions: Wang Chong lists a few more, in addition to those three mentioned in the *Hanshu*. Moreover, Wang Chong's description of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* seems fundamentally different from that provided in the "Yiwen zhi," as we see below.

至武帝發取孔子壁中古文，得二十一篇，齊、魯二、河間九篇，三十篇。至昭帝女讀二十一篇。宣帝下太常博士，時尚稱書難曉，名之曰傳；後更隸寫以傳誦。初，孔子孫孔安國以教魯人扶卿，官至荊州刺史，始曰《論語》。今時稱《論語》二十篇，又失齊、魯、河間九篇。本三十篇，分布亡失，或二十一篇。〔篇〕目或多或少，文讀或是或誤。

When it came to the time of Emperor Wu, people opened the walls of Confucius's mansion and obtained the *Lunyu* written in archaic script, twenty-one *pian*. If we add to it the two *pian* from Qi and Lu and the contents from Hejian, for a subtotal of nine *pian*,<sup>108</sup> the *Lunyu*

105 Takeuchi Yoshio 1979: 69.

106 Makeham 1996: 20–22.

107 For example, in the *Xinlun* 新論 attributed to Huan Tan 桓譚 (c. 23 BC–56 AD), it says that "the archaic *Lunyu* consists of twenty-one *juan*, with six-hundred-and-forty-some characters different from the Qi and Lu *Lunyu*" (古論語二十一卷與齊魯異六百四十餘字) (*Xinlun* 9.35); their differences can also be observed in terms of their *pian* number and order. He Yan, for instance, points out that "the *pian* order [of the archaic *Lunyu*] is not the same as the Qi and Lu *Lunyu*" (篇次不與齊魯) (*Lunyu zhengyi* 24.777); another commentator, Huang Kan 黃侃, takes the "Xiangdang" 鄉黨 and the "Yongye" 雍也 *pian* as examples to elaborate how different the archaic *Lunyu* was from the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* in terms of the layout of their *pian* (Huang Kan 1937: "*Lunyu jijie yishu xu*"); Huang also reveals that "within the *pian* textual units the disordered passages (in comparison with the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*) are so numerous that they cannot be exhausted" (內倒錯不可具說) (Huang Kan 1937: "*Lunyu jijie yishu xu*").

108 Su Shiyang 孫世揚 suggests that the number "nine" here should be "seven" in order to match the total thirty *pian*. Since it says clearly later in this passage that the Qi, Lu, and Hejian

includes thirty *pian*. When it came down to the time of Emperor Zhao, he began to read the *Lunyu* with twenty-one *pian*.<sup>109</sup> Emperor Xuan put it in the charge of the Erudite of the Chamberlain for Ceremonials, but at that time people still complained that the writings were difficult to understand, and called it a textual tradition. Later the writings were transcribed with official script so that they could be transmitted and recited. In the beginning, Kong Anguo, one of Confucius's descendants, taught it to Fu Qing of Lu, whose highest official position was Jingzhou Regional Inspector and who began to call it *Lunyu*. Nowadays people claim that the *Lunyu* includes twenty *pian*, having lost the nine *pian* of Qi, Lu, and Hejian. Originally the *Lunyu* included thirty *pian*; suffering from being scattered or lost, some versions contain twenty-one *pian*, others include more or less than twenty-one *pian*, within each the right and wrong characters and transcriptions are mixed.<sup>110</sup>

According to Wang Chong, the Qi and Lu *Lunyu*, along with that from Hejian (perhaps a product associated with the bibliophile Prince Xian Liu De), were different from the *Lunyu* found in Confucius's walls. Moreover, the *Lunyu* read by Wang Chong's contemporaries was an adapted version of the *Lunyu* transcribed from the archaic version, and was unrelated with the Lu, Qi, or Hejian *Lunyu*. This passage clearly testifies that the latter, constituting nine *pian*, had been lost. If there is any truth in Wang Chong's description, the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* mentioned in the "Yiwen zhi" of the *Hanshu* need to be distinguished from the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* referred to by Wang Chong.

Accordingly, the Lu *Lunyu* and the Qi *Lunyu* mentioned in the "Yiwen zhi" must be redefined. The transmission of several ancient texts written in archaic scripts found in Confucius's walls can be traced to this figure, for it says in the *Hanshu* that it was he who "obtained all the writings [discovered in the walls]"

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*Lunyu* numbered nine *pian* and does not specify the number of *pian* from Hejian or Qi or Lu, I speculate that the number "二" here was originally a punctuation mark, as we often see in excavated manuscripts written on bamboo strips, and was transcribed incorrectly as a number describing the number of *pian* of the Qi and Lu *Lunyu*. This sentence also grammatically works well in its current form: two *pian* from the states of Qi and Lu and the text from Hejian, which is unnumbered but we know it must have seven *pian* based on the context, together number 9 *pian*. These two readings do not contradict each other. For Sun Shiyang's suggestions, see Huang Hui 1990: 1136–1137; for punctuation marks used between parallel words or short phrases in newly discovered texts, see Cheng Pengwan 2017: 188–199.

**109** The "Basic Annals" of the *Hanshu* records an imperial edict by Emperor Zhao, mentioning his reading the *Lunyu*, the *Xiaojing*, and the *Documents* without totally understanding them. The character "女" here could be a corrupted form of "始." Otherwise, mentioning Emperor Zhao's daughter seems irrelevant to the context, especially if we consider that two other Han emperors appear in this passage before and after him as time markers. For Emperor Zhao's edict, see *Hanshu* 7.223–224.

**110** Huang Hui 1990: 1136–1139.

悉得其書。<sup>111</sup> In the case of the *Lunyu*, Kong Anguo taught Fu Qing the twenty-one *pian* found in the walls of Confucius's mansion. Additionally, the above passage tells that only from the time of Fu Qing's instruction was this text called the *Lunyu*. Therefore, those nine *pian* labeled as Qi, Lu, and Hejian did not belong to the *Lunyu* but possibly to *Lunyu*-like texts, similar to the “*yi Lunyu*” 逸論語 (“scattered *Lunyu*”) passages mentioned in the *Shuowen jiezi* or the “three-*pian* Ming, resembling the *Liji* but also like the *Erya* and *Lunyu*” unearthed from a Ji tomb (Jizhong 汲冢), allegedly belonging to King Xiang of Wei 魏襄王 (r. 318–296 BC) or King Anli of Wei 魏安釐王 (r. 277–243 BC).<sup>112</sup> By comparison, the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* recorded in the “*Yiwen zhi*,” having nearly the same number of *pian* as the archaic *Lunyu* can only be explained as two different versions of the archaic *Lunyu*, if the two texts had indeed originated after the discovery of the archaic *Lunyu*.

Liu Xiang, however, defines the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* by relating them to their transmitting lineages, not to the archaic *Lunyu*: “What the Lu people had learned is called the Lu *Lunyu*, what the Qi people had learned is called the Qi *Lunyu*.”<sup>113</sup> Liu Xiang's description would suggest that the difference between the archaic *Lunyu* and the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* is not a matter of the scripts used for the texts, as Takeuchi and Makeham suggest, but rather a matter of the different teachings of the transmitting lineages. If the Lu *Lunyu* was basically a *jinwen*-script transcription of the archaic *Lunyu*, it would seem unlikely that the archaic *Lunyu* was still incomprehensible and in need of another transcription into the official script during the reign of Emperor Xuan (74–49 BC), approximately half a century after Kong Anguo taught it to Fu Qing of Lu. More likely, the Lu and Qi *Lunyu* remained in their archaic forms for some time before being transcribed into *jinwen* script. Nevertheless, there is no evidence confirming the details surrounding the transcriptions.

The nature of textual transmission and teaching lineages offers a better explanation for the different number of *pian* in the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*. Wang Chong's description demonstrates the instability of early Chinese texts. So far as the *Lunyu* is concerned, it seems that a teacher could change a text passed down to him according to his preferences and his students' needs, as we will see in Zhang Yu's biography cited below.<sup>114</sup> Because both the Lu and the Qi groups used the same

<sup>111</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1706.

<sup>112</sup> 名三篇似禮記又似爾雅論語。 *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 1.15; *Jinshu* 51.1433–1434.

<sup>113</sup> 魯人所學謂之魯論齊人所學謂之齊論。 Huang Kan 1937: “*Lunyu jijie yishu xu*.”

<sup>114</sup> *Hanshu* 71.3352. For details of this passage and discussions on it, see the discussion of the “Zhanghou lun” below.

ancestral text, the core of each textual tradition remained relatively stable, even though variation may have arisen in the ordering of the *pian* as well as in the use of certain characters, especially those associated with the distinct dialects. We have many examples of this type of alteration in Zheng Xuan's notes preserved in He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*.

Lu Deming 陸德明 (ca. 550–630 AD) writes that “When Zheng collated Zhou's version of the *Lunyu*, he used the texts of the Qi and archaic versions to correct Zhou's; altogether there were fifty examples.”<sup>115</sup> Wang Guowei is able to locate twenty-seven out of the fifty examples in Lu Deming's *Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文 (Textual Explanations of Classics and Canons), all of which demonstrate Zheng Xuan's efforts to replace some words in the Lu *Lunyu* with those found in the archaic version.<sup>116</sup> From Lu Deming's account of the nature of the changes made, we can also infer that, in spite of a different ordering of the *pian*, the contents of the archaic and Lu *Lunyu* were mostly the same, only differing in some wording or limited arrangement of certain contents.

Accepting the veracity of the claims above raises some questions: why were ancient texts hidden in the walls of Confucius's mansion, and by whom? Scholars usually avoid these questions, no doubt aware of the lack of evidence. Nevertheless, Yan Shigu's 顏師古 (581–645 AD) commentary to the “Yiwen zhi” indicates that the concealment of the texts may be associated with the notorious event of “Burning of the Books” (*fenshu* 焚書) during the reign of the First Emperor (r. 247–210 BC):

家語云孔騰字子襄，畏秦法峻急，藏尚書、孝經、論語於夫子舊堂壁中，而漢記尹敏傳云孔鮒所藏。二說不同，未知孰是。

It says in the [*Kongzi*] *Jiayu* that Kong Teng, courtesy name Zixiang, fearing the severe and strict Qin law, hid the *Shangshu*, the *Xiaojing*, and the *Lunyu* in the walls of the Master's old hall.<sup>117</sup> However, in the biography of Yin Min recorded in the [*Dongguan*] *Hanji*, it says that those texts were hidden by Kong Fu. These two sayings differ; we hardly distinguish which is correct.<sup>118</sup>

The “severe and strict” Qin law mentioned in the *Kongzi jiayu* is none other than the law forbidding commoners to possess their own “copies of the *Poetry*, the *Documents*, as well as the words of various textual specialists” (*Shi Shu baijiayu* 詩書百家語) that was promulgated in 213 BC.<sup>119</sup> However, because Yan Shigu cites

115 鄭校周之本以齊古讀正凡五十事。 *Jingdian shiwen huijiao* 經典釋文彙校 24.695.

116 Wang Guowei 1961: 166–172.

117 Yang Zhaoming and Song Lilin 2009: 580.

118 *Hanshu* 30.1707; this is clearly stated by Kong Yingda in the “*Shangshu xu*,” see *Shangshu zhengyi* “*Shangshu xu*”, 11.

119 *Shiji* 87.2546.

the postface (attributed to Kong Anguo) to the *Kongzi jiyu*, a source that has long been suspected as a forgery, few scholars take it seriously. Yan Shigu's other source, the *Dongguan Hanji*, had been lost by the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368 AD), and all that remains is Qing reconstruction using passages preserved in later anthologies. Although Yin Min's biography is included in reconstructed texts of the *Dongguan Hanji*, neither of the reconstructed versions by Yao Zhiyin 姚之駟 (a Metropolitan Graduate in 1721 AD) nor Wuyingdian 武英殿 contains any information on Kong Fu's concealment of the texts. In the *Dongguan Hanji jiaozhu* 東觀漢記校注 (Collations and Annotations of the Eastern Pavilion Records of Han), Wu Shuping 吳樹平 attempts to offer more information upon the previous reconstructions. As a result, Yan Shigu's commentary to the "Yiwen zhi" is woven into Yin Min's biography.<sup>120</sup> There is no additional evidence to determine whether Kong Fu or Kong Teng hid the ancient texts in the walls.

We recognize the question as textual hairsplitting if we consider the following account. According to Kong Anguo's postface to the *Kongzi jiyu*, Kong Teng was Kong Fu's brother. They both lived under the rule of the First Emperor, and both hated the Qin law. This explains why "the Confucian scholars of Lu carried the Kong family's ritual vessels to serve the King of Chen" and why Kong Fu served the court of Chen Sheng 陳勝 (?–208 BC) as Erudite.<sup>121</sup> Whoever was responsible for hiding these texts, his purpose was to save them from destruction during the "Burning of the Books." We can only imagine that Kong Fu and Kong Teng together decided to hide the texts, as it was done in communal family property inherited from their famous ancestor.

Knowing that the concealment of the archaic *Lunyu* is tied to a well-known historical event merely reflects a moment of the transmission of the text, but it does not clarify when and how the text was formed. Whereas Han and pre-Han texts sealed in tombs have their burial contexts to aid us in analyzing them, there is little context to help us understand a text hidden in a wall. Scholars refer to the notorious event of "Burning of the Books" to provide explanation, nevertheless, this is a connection hardly verified.

There are other anecdotes of texts surviving the "Burning of the Books" policy. In the *Lunheng*, for example, Wang Chong reports that a woman living in Henei 河內 prefecture (part of present-day Henan province) found one *pian* of each of the *Changes*, the *Rituals*, and the *Documents* (possibly the "Taishi" 泰誓) in an old house

120 Liu Zhen 劉珍 et al 2008: 831–833.

121 魯諸儒持孔氏之禮器往歸陳王. *Shiji* 121.3116.

(*laowu* 老屋) during the reign of Emperor Xuan 漢宣帝 (r. 74–49 BC).<sup>122</sup> On the discovery of the “Taishi” chapter, there is another account of documents being hidden in walls. It is said, according to Liu Xiang’s *Bielu*, that a commoner found the “Taishi” in the walls of a house and presented it to the imperial court.<sup>123</sup> Another well-known example is also related to the transmission of the *Documents*. The *Shiji* reports that Fu Sheng 伏生 (ca. 260–161 BC) hid the *Documents* in the walls to save the text from being burned during the reign of the First Emperor.<sup>124</sup>

These various accounts seem to be following conventional formulae for describing ancient texts without provenance. Moreover, the narratives tend to mythicize the antiquity of the texts and their original owners, using the name of Confucius or Laozi, for instance, to increase the value and potential reward for presenting the texts to the imperial court. Many of the narratives are anchored in the reign of the First Emperor and his notorious law banning classical and literary studies. Such a setting immediately connects the discovered texts to pre-Qin periods and, accordingly, their value increased in an age aiming to reconnect itself to a textual tradition severed by the Qin law banning private possession of selected texts.

While this interpretation may partially explain many of these accounts, we lack conclusive evidence to tie all the received narratives exclusively to the Qin “Burning of the Books.” It is possible that recent archaeological insights into the practice of burying texts within tombs can shed some light on the practice of framing texts within walls. Perhaps, as was the case with tomb texts, enclosing texts within walls conveyed specific meanings that may not necessarily be associated with the event of “Burning of the Books.”

In a study on social rankings in Chu tombs, Lothar von Falkenhausen explains that the burial of bamboo-strip manuscripts is one among many signifiers in increasingly sumptuous Warring States tomb furnishings that reflect changing social and religious concerns associated with burial customs during that time.<sup>125</sup> In an article discussing the authority of texts in their burial and ritual context, Michael Nylan also argues that texts, together with the other burial objects, “were presumed to confer blessings and avert evil, in this life and the next.”<sup>126</sup> Poo Mu-chou’s argument that the

<sup>122</sup> The term “*laowu*” is sometimes interpreted as “Laozi’s house,” which seems to further historicize or archaize the texts found in those walls without necessary supportive information linked to Laozi. Huang Hui 1990: 559–561, 1124–1125; *Shangshu zhengyi* “Shangshu xu”, 12–13; *Suishu* 32.914–915.

<sup>123</sup> *Shangshu zhengyi* “Shangshu xu”, 12–13.

<sup>124</sup> *Shiji* 121.3124–3125. In the “zhengshuo” *pian* of the *Lunheng*, however, Wang Chong says that “Fu Sheng held the one hundred *pian* and hid them in the mountain” 伏生抱百篇藏於山中; see Huang Hui 1990: 1124.

<sup>125</sup> Falkenhausen 2003: 487.

<sup>126</sup> Nylan 2005: 9.



search for personal welfare reflects the core of early Chinese religious mentality also helps to contextualize texts hidden in walls. According to Poo, most early Chinese, irrespective of social class, engaged in religious practices designed to promote personal and familial welfare, i.e., the health, safety, and material comfort of family members, including their ancestors.<sup>127</sup> Placing texts within walls would be a logical action for one operating under such a religious mentality.

In fact, there is textual evidence, although of a later date, explicitly attributing texts with the power to ward off evil, an important aspect of ensuring one's personal welfare. Many of the texts later canonized as Confucian Classics seem to be particularly efficacious in this regard. For example, it is said that Emperor Wu of Han tested the power of a trusted Yue 越 witch by having the witch curse Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC), an ardent critic of witchcraft. While the witch attempted to harm Dong, “Zhongshu wore his official suits, faced the south, recited and chanted the classics and treatises.<sup>128</sup> The witch could not harm him. Instead, it was the witch who died.”<sup>129</sup> Another story tells how Zhi Boyi 鄧伯夷, an Eastern Han Local Inspector, fought against a goblin fox who had been haunting an inn and harming travelers. Boyi “dressed himself up, sat, and recited the texts of the *Liuji*,<sup>130</sup> the *Xiaojing*, and the *Changes*” before battling the monster.<sup>131</sup> The *Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚 (Collection of Literature Arranged by Categories) and the *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽 (Imperial Readings of the Taiping Era) cite the *Han Xiandi zhuan* 漢獻帝傳 (Biography of Emperor Xian of Han) and the *Dongguan Hanji* (both lost), both telling a similar story of how Wang Yun 王允 (137–192 AD) used the *Xiaojing* and corresponding rituals to “dispel evil” (*que jianxie* 卻奸邪).<sup>132</sup> Another reference preserved in the *Sanguozhi* 三國志 (Records of the Three Kingdoms) records Guan Lu's 管輅 (209–256 AD) explanation of what he learned from the Classics:

始讀詩、論、易本，學問微淺，未能上引聖人之道，陳秦漢之事，但欲論金木水火土鬼神之情耳。

[I] just start to read the texts of the *Poetry*, the *Lunyu*, and the *Changes* and my knowledge is too shallow to quote the way of the Sage to explain the Qin and Han events; I merely

127 Poo Mu-chou 1997.

128 I translated “論” as “treatises” here, but it can also denote the *Lunyu*, as this character *lun* is the short form for the *Lunyu* in other references (*Zhanghou lun*, for instance); for another example, see the passage about Guan Lu's use of the *Lunyu* below.

129 朝服南面誦詠經論不能傷害而巫者忽死。Wang Liqi 2010: 423.

130 It may be the *Feng gu liujia* 風鼓六甲 with twenty-four *pian* or the *Wenjie liujia* 文解六甲 with twenty-eight *pian* recorded in the “*Yiwen zhi*.” See *Hanshu* 21.1768–1769.

131 整服坐誦六甲孝經易本。Wang Liqi: 425–433.

132 *Yiwen leiju* 69.1204; *Taiping yulan* 709.

attempt to discuss the modes of the metal, wood, water, fire, earth, ghosts, and spirits, and that is it.<sup>133</sup>

Here, it is worth noting that the material on which early Chinese texts were written—bamboo—was also said to have the power to ward off evil. According to the almanacs found in a Qin tomb at Shuihudi of Yunmeng 雲夢睡虎地 in Hubei province 湖北省, bamboo is mentioned along with other materials—peach wood 桃, thorns 棘, mulberry wood 桑, and reeds 葦, to name a few—as being able to exorcise ghosts and drive out harmful animals:<sup>134</sup>

人臥而鬼夜屈其頭，以若便擊之，則已矣。鳥獸蟲豸甚眾，獨入一人室，以若便擊之，則止矣。

If ghosts twist a person's head when he or she is sleeping at night, beat the ghosts with the root of indocalamus, a reed-like kind of bamboo, and then the ghosts will stop. If multitudes of wild birds, beasts, animals, or insects tend to only enter one person's room, beat them with the root of indocalamus, then they will stop.<sup>135</sup>

Moreover, the home figures prominently in almanacs as a place susceptible to attack by evil influences unless precautions are taken to secure its safety. For example, almanacs specify the dates when a house should not be built, the locations where a house should not stand, as well as certain orientations to avoid when situating a house.<sup>136</sup> Disregarding such taboos invites evil forces into the home and brings disaster to the household. Although the whole house is open to attack, the almanacs portray walls as the place where ghosts dwell. It is especially interesting to note this in relation with the practice of hiding texts in walls of houses that were considered to be haunted by harmful ghosts. For example, to expel a ghost causing nightmares, one would stamp the four corners of the house with a peach wood cane, and scrape its walls with a thorn knife while cursing the ghost and threatening to peel its skin and use it to make clothes.<sup>137</sup> Bamboo texts may

**133** This appears in Pei Songzhi's 裴松之 (372–451 AD) notes, said from the *Guan Lu biezhuan* 管輅別傳; see *Sanguozhi* 三國志 29.812.

**134** Wu Xiaoqiang 吳小強 2000: 128–139.

**135** Wu Xiaoqiang 2000: 133–134.

**136** Wu Xiaoqiang 2000.

**137** Wu Xiaoqiang 2000: 132. All these examples may reflect, as Robin Yates suggests, a culture of purification from polluting elements, ghosts included. Writings, often applied on specific materials for certain rituals, may have functioned as one of the many ways to dispel pollution. Indeed, in both Dong Zhongshu's and Zhi Boyi's cases mentioned above, the power of the Chinese Classics was unleashed in a ritualized, formal setting closely associated with the rites of purification. See Yates 1997: 479–536.

have been built into walls as a prophylactic against evil influences and as a talisman of good fortune. A Dunhuang manuscript on protecting dwellings, for instance, states that writing a “Dong Zhongshu charm” (*Dong Zhongshu fu* 董仲舒符) on a peach wood tablet one *chi* long and burying it in a specific corner of a house will bring fortune to the household.<sup>138</sup> These exorcistic practices allow us to understand why texts might have been hidden in walls, regardless of the Qin “Burning of the Books”.

Considering the concealment of the archaic *Lunyu* in the walls of Confucius’s mansion as an action done for the welfare of the family helps us see the limit of traditional explanations that unjustifiably tie the text to the Qin law. If Kong Fu or Kong Teng had hidden the texts to protect heirlooms from destruction by the Qin, it is hard to explain why the Kong family did not remove the texts after the Qin was toppled, especially when we consider that Kong Teng was still living when the Qin law of banning books was abolished and served Emperor Hui 惠帝 (r. 195–188 BC) as his Erudite.<sup>139</sup>

The religious function of this text also undermines the previously discussed assumption that the archaic *Lunyu* was primarily used for pedagogical purposes. Although the materials incorporated in the *Lunyu* may have formed during the Warring States, there is little evidence of their circulation for teaching purposes before the Han dynasty. That they were buried in the walls of Confucius’s mansion and appreciated for their supernatural powers before being widely circulated may well explain this phenomenon. That being said, it is unlikely that Confucius’s words were intended for ghosts; it is more possible that Warring-States texts in general could be used as talismanic objects—the supernatural power was not necessarily generated from what those written words literally meant, but was ascribed to the material and conceptual forms of a text and of the words within.

In the case of excavated *Lunyu*, it may have originally been created to preserve the sayings of Confucius and his students, until later used as a talisman. We may even assume that those sayings were collected, written down, preserved, and intended to serve as teaching materials or references, but were buried in walls before being passed down as a set of integrated texts. This assumption can be attested in recent archaeological finds: texts could not be transmitted once they ended up in tombs for two thousand years before being brought to light again by archaeologists.

Although we have not found a Warring States or Han dynasty building with texts in its walls, due to the easily perishable nature of early Chinese buildings,

138 Chen Yuzhu 陳于柱 2007: 170–171.

139 *Hanshu* 2.90; *Shiji* 47.1947.

we do have a more recent example comparable to the talismanic use of the Confucian classics under discussion. According to the *Huaxi Metropolitan Newspaper* (Huaxi dushi bao 華西都市報), a local Sichuan newspaper, there was a building in the Bazhong district of Sichuan province 四川巴中, which, after being damaged by the 2008 earthquake, revealed thirty-six books from the walls of a Liu 劉 family shrine, including the Four Books: the *Daxue* 大學, the *Zhongyong* 中庸, the *Mengzi*, and the *Lunyu*. The shrine was over a hundred years old, and the books, over a hundred and fifty years old.<sup>140</sup> We can compare this modern text hiding with the discovery of texts in the walls of Confucius's mansion over two thousand years ago. Unfortunately, many questions on the authorship and transmission of the *Lunyu* remain unanswered, pending future relevant discoveries.

### 3.5 *Xiping shijing*, the Dunhuang and Turfan Manuscripts, and the *Zhanghou lun*

The *Lunyu* that has survived to the present day is not directly developed from any of the three versions mentioned in the “Yiwen zhi,” but from another text called the *Zhanghou lun*, an adaption of the *Lunyu* by Zhang Yu (?–5 BC). Zhang Yu's biography in the *Hanshu* describes how the *Zhanghou lun* was formed:

初，禹為師，以上難數對己問經，為論語章句獻之。始魯扶卿及夏侯勝、王陽、蕭望之、韋玄成皆說論語，篇第或異。禹先事王陽，後從庸生，采獲所安，最後出而尊貴。諸儒為之語曰：欲為論，念張文。由是學者多從張氏，餘家寢微。

In the beginning, Yu was a teacher of the future Emperor. Because the future Emperor had difficulty in enumerating and replying to the Classics that Yu asked about, Yu made exegetical explanations to the passages and sentences of the *Lunyu* and presented the text to the future Emperor. In the beginning, Fu Qing of Lu as well as Xiahou Sheng, Wang Yang, Xiao Wangzhi, and Wei Xuancheng all taught the *Lunyu*, but their orderings of some of the *pian* of the *Lunyu* may contain differences. Yu first served Wang Yang [as his student] and later followed Yong Sheng, selecting the *Lunyu* textual units he felt comfortable with [to form his version of the *Lunyu*]. His version of the *Lunyu* came out the latest, but was revered and cherished. Many Confucian students commented on his version, saying, “One who wants to study the *Lunyu* had better read Zhang's text.” For this reason, the students of the *Lunyu* mostly followed Mr Zhang, and the other textual traditions gradually faded away.<sup>141</sup>

This passage enables us to understand the *Lunyu* from several points of view. First, unlike the “Yiwen zhi” passage, in which the author strictly distinguishes

<sup>140</sup> See Liu Xiangui 劉先貴 and Yang Qingsong 楊青松 2008.

<sup>141</sup> *Hanshu* 81.3352.

the Lu *Lunyu* tradition from that of the Qi without mention of Zhang Yu having learned from masters of both lineages, this passage finely details how Zhang Yu acquired his knowledge on the *Lunyu* and presents a more complex picture of the transmission of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*. Second, this passage further reveals that the text of the *Lunyu* was far from fixed, even within a single teaching lineage, at the time Zhang Yu studied the *Lunyu*. In particular, we see transmitters disagreeing with one another on the proper arrangement of the *pian* units. Third, a master could not only change the ordering of the *pian* units, he could also make changes to passages and sentences. In this case, for example, Zhang Yu formed the *Zhanghou lun* by selecting those passages he thought suitable from available sources to make his own version. Fourth, since Zhang Yu's text served as a textbook for a very young student (less than seven years old),<sup>142</sup> we have reason to infer that his *Lunyu* was simplified in both its script and contents. Finally, this passage indicates that the popularity of this simplified version resulted in the gradual demise of the *Lunyu*'s transmission among its other teaching lineages.

The *Zhanghou lun* was able to gain so much popularity that it ultimately superseded the archaic Qi and Lu *Lunyu*. This is due to several reasons. First, both the success of this text and that of Zhang Yu's political career relied on his student, the Heir Apparent, who later became Emperor Cheng 成帝 (r. 33–7 BC). The Emperor's edicts frequently cited *Lunyu* passages from the *Zhanghou lun*, thereby lending it an air of supreme authority.<sup>143</sup> Those who sought official positions naturally chose the version promoted by the Emperor as their textbook, a choice which helped to speed the ascendancy of the *Zhanghou lun*.

Secondly, Zhang Yu's simplification of the *Lunyu* for the Heir Apparent was certainly another factor leading to its triumph. While simplification did not require dramatical change of the contents of the archaic version, it may have involved rearrangement of passages and the elimination of archaic characters. Zhang Yu's primary goal in making his version was to improve the ability of the Heir Apparent to understand and even memorize the *Lunyu* passages. To achieve this goal, Zhang Yu broke down the *pian* chapter into passages and sentences that could be better explained. Zhang Yu's work of simplifying the *Lunyu* must have aided its increasing popularity, for the simplification facilitated the reading, comprehension, and even memorization of the text.

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<sup>142</sup> Emperor Cheng was born in 51 BC; Zhang's biography says that he began to teach the *Lunyu* for the then Heir Apparent in the Chuyuan 初元 era (48–44 BC) of Yuandi's 元帝 reign (r. 49–34 BC). See *Hanshu* 81.3347.

<sup>143</sup> For example, see *Hanshu* 10.313.

Finally, the success of the *Zhanghou lun* is also attributed to Zhang Yu's consolidated format. Being able to consult existing versions of the Lu *Lunyu* as well as the Qi *Lunyu* when compiling the textbook for the Heir Apparent, Zhang Yu was able to merge the Qi and Lu versions into a unified text. Because his version does not include the "Wenwang" and "Zhidao" chapters only found in the Qi *Lunyu*, the *Zhanghou lun* is said to have followed the layout of the Lu *Lunyu*. As a result, the popularity of the *Zhanghou lun* in late Western Han made the Lu *Lunyu* more prestigious than the Qi and archaic versions.<sup>144</sup> This offers one explanation for why the author of the "Yiwen zhi" uses the form of the Lu *Lunyu* as the benchmark by which to describe the other two versions.

Due to its popularity, Zhang Yu's adapted version of the *Lunyu* naturally became the most authoritative text for later scholars to use when writing their explanatory works, as we see in He Yan's *Lunyu jijie*. According to He Yan's preface, two explanatory works by a Mr. Bao (包氏) and a Mr. Zhou (周氏), respectively, appeared after the *Zhanghou lun*.<sup>145</sup> These two works now have been completely lost, so it is not clear whether either of them rearranged the *Zhanghou lun* upon which their explanations were based. Nevertheless, their works must have been consequential, for a note in the *Jingdian shiwen* clearly states that Zheng Xuan's influential commentary on the *Lunyu* also stemmed from Mr. Zhou's work.<sup>146</sup> Elsewhere in the *Jingdian shiwen*, Lu Deming states that Zheng Xuan made his notes "based on the *pian* and *zhang* arranged by Zhang, Bao, and Zhou, the textual traditions belonging to the Lu *Lunyu*, while also consulting the Qi and archaic

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**144** Zhu Weizheng suggests that although Zhang Yu had studied both the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*, he still followed the layout of the Lu *Lunyu* to write the textbook for Emperor Cheng, because he knew very well that when Emperor Cheng's father, Emperor Yuan, was the Heir Apparent, he studied the Lu *Lunyu*. Zhang Yu is described as a sycophant and would not risk his fortune by teaching the prince with a version different to the one used by the current Emperor. See Zhu Weizheng 1986, 46–48. This may be the case, but a more reasonable explanation is provided by the reputation of the Lu *Lunyu* transmitters: in comparison with those who studied and transmitted the Qi *Lunyu*, all the Lu *Lunyu* teachers were "famous specialists" 名家, as stated in the "Yiwen zhi." Certainly, the fact that Lu was Confucius's home state may have also weighted the importance of the Lu *Lunyu*. Nevertheless, we must keep in mind that neither the Lu nor the Qi *Lunyu* had been completely stabilized by the time Zhang Yu compiled his textbook. It says clearly in Zhang Yu's biography that he had the freedom to adopt whatever he preferred. Taking all these factors into consideration, I suggest that the contents of the *Zhanghou lun* includes material from both the Lu and the Qi *Lunyu*, even though the layout of the *pian* chapters relies more on the Lu *Lunyu*. See *Hanshu* 30.1717; *Hanshu* 81.3352.

**145** Both of them focus on the understanding of specific *Lunyu* passages and sentences (*zhangju* 章句) included in the *Zhanghou lun*, *Lunyu Zhengyi* 24.780.

**146** *Jingdian shiwen huijiao* 24.695.

*Lunyu*.<sup>147</sup> The “Jingji zhi” of the *Suishu* explicitly states that the main *Lunyu* text used by Zheng Xuan was the *Zhanghou lun*.<sup>148</sup> In fact, most secondary sources agree that Zheng Xuan’s commentary was based on the *Zhanghou lun*.<sup>149</sup>

Accepting this scholarly agreement, the *Lunyu* text version that Zheng Xuan commented on is directly linked to the *Lunyu* that we read today as preserved in He Yan’s *Lunyu jijie*—a comprehensive collection of explanations and comments based upon several explanatory works, especially upon Zheng Xuan’s notes. Viewed retrospectively, the *Lunyu* that we read today is the final link in a long chain of textual adaptations beginning with the archaic *Lunyu*, undergoing many different transformations as being transmitted along the Lu and Qi lineages, passing through the *Zhanghou lun*, to the explanatory works by Mr. Bao and Mr. Zhou, to Zheng Xuan’s notes on the *Lunyu*, and finally arriving to He Yan’s *Lunyu jijie*. Along this chain of transmission, most of the texts have suffered severe loss. Fortunately, fragments of the *Lunyu* inscribed on pieces of broken stone slabs and parts of Zheng Xuan’s notes on the *Lunyu* recovered from Dunhuang and Turfan enable us to glimpse some of the moments in the long history of the formation of the *Lunyu* text passed down to us. The newly recovered materials also lend credence to the assertion that the *Analects* transmitted to the present day descends from the *Zhanghou lun*.

The stone slabs on which the Confucian Classics were inscribed are generally referred to as the *Xiping shijing* 熹平石經 (Xiping Stone Classics) because they are the outcome of a state-sponsored project initiated in the Xiping era (172–177 AD). More specifically, this project lasted from the fourth year of the Xiping era to the sixth year of the Guanghe 光和 era (178–183 AD) during the reign of Emperor Ling 靈帝 (r. 167–189 AD). The purpose of this project was to provide standardized versions of the seven Confucian Classics, including the *Lunyu*.<sup>150</sup> The biographies of Cai Yong 蔡邕 (133–192 AD) and Lü Qiang 呂強 (?–184

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147 就魯論張包周之篇章考之齊古. *Jingdian shiwen huijiao* 1.26. The “Lulun” in this passage can be understood as one of the versions of the *Lunyu* that Zheng Xuan consulted, it can also denote that the Zhang, Bao, and Zhou *Lunyu* all belonged to the Lu *Lunyu* transmitting lineage. Considering the textual fluidity in the transmission of the *Lunyu* even within the Lu group, as mentioned in the above passage, the second interpretation sounds better.

148 *Suishu* 32.939.

149 Both He Yan and Huang Kan propose that the Lu *Lunyu* was what Zheng Xuan used. This does not contradict the argument that *Zhanghou lun* was the main text for Zheng Xuan’s notes, however, for Zhang Yu was one of the “famous specialists” in the lineage of the Lu *Yunlu* transmitters. For He Yan and Huang Kan’s suggestion, see *Lunyu zhushu* 24.783; Huang Kan 1937 “*Lunyu jijie xu*”.

150 The other six classics are the *Changes*, the *Odes*, the *Documents*, the *Yili*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Gongyang Commentary*. The seven Classics have been mentioned as the “Five

AD) explain the rationale behind such standardization: the imperial examination. Those taking the imperial examinations on the Confucian Classics were using so many conflicting versions of the texts that “it reached the point that there were those who offered bribes to change the painted characters of the Classics stored in the Orchid Pavilion, the imperial library, to have the official versions accord with their own writings.”<sup>151</sup>

After their completion in AD 183, the stelae were erected in front of the National University, open to the public. At first, those who visited the slabs “filled the streets and lanes” (*tian sai jiemo* 填塞街陌).<sup>152</sup> Unfortunately, the destruction of Luoyang in the late Eastern Han soon led to the demise of the stelae as they were moved to various locations, scattered, broken, reused as building material, or otherwise lost. Although a few Tang sources mention the discovery of some pieces of the Xiping stelae, it was the substantial recovery of pieces in the Song 宋 (960–1279 AD) and the Republican periods (1912–1949 AD) that enabled the reconstructions of the Han versions of those Classics.<sup>153</sup> The *Lunyu* is among these reconstructions.

Many scholars believe that the *Lunyu* inscribed on the Han stelae follows the Lu *Lunyu* rather than the transmitted version.<sup>154</sup> Proponents of this view offer three main observations supporting this argument. First, the text on the surviving stone fragments clearly states that the inscribed *Lunyu* includes twenty chapters, just as the Lu *Lunyu*. Additionally, there are many differences between the transmitted and the inscribed versions of the *Lunyu*. Finally, Ma Heng 馬衡 observes that one of the formal conventions in making the *Xiping shijing* is that an inscribed Classic is usually followed by a text comparing it with other versions. According to Ma Heng, the primary inscription must be the Lu *Lunyu* since it is not listed with

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Classics,” the “Six Classics,” and “Seven Classics” in different sources. Those that call them “Five Classics” do not count the *Gongyang Commentary* and the *Lunyu* as Classics; those who call them “Six Classics” combine the *Gongyang Commentary* and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* together; and those who call them “Seven Classics” simply consider all the seven texts Classics. See Ma Heng 1957: 1.

151 至有行賂定蘭臺漆書經字以合其私文者。 *Hou Han shu* 後漢書 78.2533. Also see related information in Cai Yong’s biography, *Hou Han shu* 60.1990.

152 *Hou Han shu* 60.1990.

153 Lü Zhenduan 呂振端 1975: 1–13.

154 Ma Heng 馬衡 1957: 56; Lü Zhenduan 1975: 50–52; Qiu Dexiu 邱德修 1990b: 123–125.



the Zhang 張, He 盍, Mao 毛, Bao 包, and Zhou 周 versions when these comparisons are made.<sup>155</sup>

These observations, however, do not conclusively eliminate the possibility that the inscription follows the *Zhanghou lun* version. It is uncertain whether the *Zhanghou lun* is referenced in the recovered section of the inscribed *Lunyu*. Reconstructions of this section follow Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866–1940 AD) in taking *gong* 弓 to be the remaining part of the damaged character *zhang* 張. Having identified the damaged character, scholars then interpret *zhang* to refer to the *Zhanghou lun*. The identification of this partial character as the expression of the *Zhanghou lun* excludes it from being the inscribed *Lunyu*. Furthermore, the assumption that the Lu *Lunyu* was different from the *Zhanghou lun* and other versions prompts the inference that the inscribed version must be the Lu *Lunyu*. Nevertheless, the reconstruction of the partially preserved character is speculation, since *gong* could form the left part of any number of characters. Even accepting *zhang* as the proper reconstruction, and that *zhang* refers to the *Zhanghou lun*, it is not clear how the *Zhanghou lun* is related to the inscribed version of the *Lunyu*. Therefore, we can not ascertain that the *Zhanghou lun* was merely used to collate, but could not be identified as, the version of the *Lunyu* preserved on the stone. The information on the fragments is simply too limited to reach a definitive conclusion on the source of the inscription, let alone notions of it potentially being the lost Lu *Lunyu*.<sup>156</sup>

Another problem with the identification of the inscription with the Lu *Lunyu* is that the differences between the inscribed and the transmitted *Lunyu* have been exaggerated.<sup>157</sup> Of the 1,370 recovered words, most of the discrepancies with the transmitted version are related to auxiliary words such as *ye* 也 and *hu* 乎.<sup>158</sup> As Hong Kuo 洪适 (1117–1184 AD) once stated, “when collated with the current version of the *Lunyu*, [the inscribed *Lunyu*] does not look much different from it.”<sup>159</sup> Such differences between these two versions of *Lunyu* can be easily explained by their history of transmission. After all, the inscribed version was made more than two hundred years after the *Zhanghou lun*, and the transmitted version, over two

155 He, Mao, Bao, and Zhou are referred to together according to the Song reconstruction; Zhang, He, and Mao are mentioned together according to Ma Heng’s reconstruction; see Hong Kuo 洪适 1985: 155; Ma Heng 1957: 55.

156 For this fragmentary piece, see Ma Heng 1957: 55; for the attempt of putting this piece into context, see Lü Zhenduan 1975: 121.

157 For example, Ma Heng emphasizes that the inscribed *Lunyu* “contains so many discrepancies” (異文特多) with the transmitted *Lunyu* that it certainly cannot be identified as the latter. Ma Heng 1957: 56.

158 Lü Zhenduan 1975: 35–37; Hong Kuo 1985: 153–156.

159 以今所行板本校之亦不至甚異. Hong Kuo 1985: 155.

thousand years after. It is only natural to see such minor differences between them.

If we examine the two more closely, we see that their similarities far outweigh their differences. For example, in addition to having most of their words in common, both the inscribed and the transmitted *Lunyu* include twenty *pian* chapters. One of the fragments specifically mentions that the inscribed *Lunyu* “altogether consists of twenty *pian* chapters” (*fan nian pian* 凡廿篇).<sup>160</sup> Moreover, based on the surviving parts of the inscribed *Lunyu*, its *pian* order is identical to that of the transmitted *Lunyu*.<sup>161</sup> Most important of all, each *pian* of the inscribed *Lunyu* seems to consist of the same number of passages as the transmitted *Lunyu*. In sections surviving from the “Bayi” 八佾 and “Yanghuo” 陽貨 *pian*, there are lines enumerating the number of passages included in the chapter, and for each *pian*, the number of passages is identical to the number in the corresponding *pian* of the transmitted *Lunyu* text.

This volume of formal evidence, in my opinion, suggests that the inscribed *Lunyu* preserves the *Zhanghou lun* version as it existed in the Eastern Han dynasty. Additional evidence preserved in the inscribed *Lunyu* regarding its collation corroborates this conclusion. As far as can be deciphered from what survives, the group responsible for making the *Xiping shijing*, led by Cai Yong, edited the *Zhanghou lun* into an authorized version before it was inscribed on stone.<sup>162</sup> Arguments positing that the inscribed *Lunyu* preserves the Lu *Lunyu* are mostly speculative, and there lacks a confirmed copy of the text of the Lu *Lunyu* that matches the inscription. Since there is no indication of the existence of an authorized, fixed version of the Lu *Lunyu* before the appearance of the *Zhanghou lun*, it is unlikely such a text will be easily found. Even if there had been a relatively stable Lu *Lunyu* circulating before the *Zhanghou lun*, it would have been quickly superseded by the latter version.

One of the most important discoveries for the study of the *Lunyu* was the recovery of manuscripts containing the *Analects* with Zheng Xuan’s commentary. Zheng Xuan’s commentary steadily increased in popularity after its completion in the latter half of the Eastern Han. By the Tang dynasty (618–907 AD), it was the most celebrated explanatory work for the *Lunyu* in the northwestern part of China, until it was lost during the Five Dynasties 五代 (907–960 AD). Its significance

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160 Hong Kuo 1985: 155.

161 Qiu Dexiu 1990b: 125.

162 This may also explain some of the wording differences between the inscribed and the transmitted *Lunyu*, as described.

further diminished in the Song dynasty, before it vanished from the written record after that. Scholars had been unsuccessful in reconstructing Zheng Xuan's notes, using the limited citations preserved in works such as the *Jingdian shiwen*. Nevertheless, our understanding of his notes and the version of *Lunyu* upon which the notes were based has greatly improved thanks to a series of discoveries at Dunhuang and Turfan beginning in the early twentieth century. Prominent scholars such as Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei have studied some of the early fragments acquired by Japanese and French collectors.<sup>163</sup>

Since the late 1950s, more than two dozen fragments of the *Lunyu* with Zheng Xuan's commentary have been found in Turfan tombs.<sup>164</sup> Among these manuscripts, the most famous preserves long sections of the *Lunyu* clearly dating to the Jinglong 景龍 era (707–710 AD) during the reign of the Tang Emperor Zhongzong 中宗 (r. 684 AD, 705–710 AD). Found in Tomb 363 at Astana 阿斯塔那, Turfan, this manuscript includes four chapters handwritten by one Bu Tianshou 卜天壽.<sup>165</sup> The order of the four chapters is identical to that of the transmitted *Lunyu*. For example, it clearly states that “Bayi,” “Liren” 里仁, and “Gongye Chang” 公冶長 are the third, fourth, and fifth chapter, respectively, in the “Text of Mr. Kong annotated by Mr. Zheng” (*Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu* 孔氏本鄭氏注).<sup>166</sup> Similar textual information is also found in other surviving manuscripts, such as the Pelliot chinois ms. 2510 (henceforth: Pelliot 2510), as well as the manuscript discovered in Tomb 184 at Astana, Turfan, now in the Ryūkoku 龍谷 University collection in Japan.<sup>167</sup> Although we have not recovered every chapter of the *Analects* used by Zheng Xuan, current available evidence demonstrates that the arrangement of the chapters in his *Lunyu* conforms to that of the transmitted text.

The emergence of the manuscripts has raised a perplexing question: what exactly is the “Text of Mr. Kong” to which Zheng Xuan added his notes? Contradictions between the text as described in the uncovered manuscripts and as described by citations in secondary sources (in particular those preserved in the *Jingdian*

**163** Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 1991: 151–152; 153–156; Wang Guowei 1961: 168–174; for other scholars' study, also see Wang Su 王素 1991.

**164** Wang Su 1991: 1–12; Zhu Yuqi 朱玉麒 2007: 47–50; Xinjiang Wenwu Kaogu Yanjiusuo 新疆文物考古研究所 and Turfan Diqu Wenwuju 吐魯番地區文物局 2004.

**165** Bu is identified as a twelve-year-old school boy. See Xinjiang Weiwuer Zizhiqu Bowuguan 新疆維吾爾自治區博物館 1972: 7–12; Wenwu Chubanshe 文物出版社 1972, 13–15; Wang Su 1991: 13–55.

**166** Wang Su 1991: 18, 33, 41.

**167** Wang Su 1991: 56, 93, 104, 119, 145. For a description of the Pelliot 2510, see Drège and Constantino 2014.

*shiwén*) puzzled Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei, but they nonetheless offered insufficient explanations to account for the divergences. Both Luo Zhenyu and Wang Guowei consider that the number and arrangement of the chapters in Zheng Xuan's *Lunyu* conform, for the most part, to the transmitted *Zhanghou lun*; but when differences do occur, Luo and Wang consider these differences as resulting from Zheng Xuan's adherence to the archaic *Lunyu*. References to the "Kongshi ben" 孔氏本 are taken as an indication that Zheng Xuan collates the *Zhanghou lun* with the archaic *Lunyu*. This leads both Luo and Wang to a series of unsubstantiated claims conflating one text with the other. First, both scholars consider the "Kongshi ben" as the archaic *Lunyu* arranged by Kong Anguo, arguing that Zheng Xuan was said to have consulted the archaic *Lunyu*. Additionally, both identify the *Zhanghou lun* with the Lu *Lunyu*, although the text that Zheng Xuan annotated was the *Zhanghou lun*.<sup>168</sup> Similar confluations are also present in the study of the partially preserved *Lunyu* copied by Bu Tianshou. The 1972 Wenwu chubanshe's article on the Bu Tianshou manuscript generally mirrors the explanations of Luo and Wang.<sup>169</sup>

This textual history blurs the difference between a text used during collation and the final product of collation. In other words, if Zheng Xuan's collation primarily supplements the *Zhanghou lun* with the archaic *Lunyu*, how can the "Kongshi ben," which Wang and Luo equate with the archaic *Lunyu*, also be the product of Zheng Xuan's collation? Additionally, this account identifies the *Zhanghou lun* as the Lu *Lunyu*, ignoring their obvious differences. The *Zhanghou lun* may have been closely associated with the Lu *Lunyu*, but it is inappropriate to equate one with the other.

Realizing the logical inconsistencies of this widely-accepted analysis, Kanaya Osamu offers another explanation, regarding the note "Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu" to be the product of the textual transmission of Zheng Xuan's commentary on the *Lunyu*. He supposes that somewhere along the line of transmission, there was a *quidam*, an unknown individual who, seeing similarities between the "Kongshi ben" (i.e., the archaic *Lunyu*) and the version of the *Lunyu* used by Zheng Xuan, labels Zheng Xuan's version as the "Kongshi ben."<sup>170</sup> This attribution, according to Kanaya, likely occurred at a point in the transmission when the archaic *Lunyu* was no longer available to verify the accuracy of the label. He further suggests that the "Kongshi ben" is related to the record in the "Jingji zhi" of the *Suishu* on a lost

168 Wang Su 1991: 151–152; 153–156; Wang Guowei 1961: 168–174.

169 Wenwu Chubanshe 1972: 14.

170 Kanaya Osamu 1991: 238.

“ten-juan archaic *Lunyu* with Zheng Xuan’s commentary” that was in circulation during the Liang 梁 dynasty (502–557 AD).<sup>171</sup>

Inspired by Kanaya Osamu’s assumption, Wang Su 王素 re-examined passages on textual format included in the Tang manuscripts, and found that some manuscripts include the note “Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu” while others do not. He considers this evidence of the existence of two forms of manuscripts with Zheng Xuan’s commentary, and hypothesizes that these two forms may be related to the transmission of the *Lunyu* in the southern and northern kingdoms of the time, surmising that the manuscripts referencing the “Kongshi ben” were associated with the southern kingdoms, and those without this description were associated with the northern kingdoms. When explaining how a southern manuscript ends up in Turfan, he assumes that the southern version was transported to Turfan as the result of cultural and political communication between the Liang dynasty and the kingdom of Gaochang 高昌 (460–640 AD), the regime in control of Turfan at that time. The *Weishu* does verify that one of the kings of Gaochang sent a messenger to the Liang asking for the Five Classics (although the *Lunyu* is not among them), as well as teacher who could teach them in Gaochang.<sup>172</sup> Ignoring the fact that the *Lunyu* is not one of the Five Classics, Wang Su argues that the Turfan manuscripts including the note “Kongshi ben Zhengshi zhu” originated with the Liang *Lunyu* that is recorded in the “Jingji zhi” of the *Suishu*.<sup>173</sup>

Although neither Kanaya nor Wang falls into the trap of equating the archaic *Lunyu* with the *Zhanghou lun* version, neither really explains the nature of the “Kongshi ben.” As a matter of fact, they accept the Luo and Wang assumption that the “Kongshi ben” was the archaic *Lunyu* arranged by Kong Anguo. In explaining how the archaic *Lunyu* was equated with the *Zhanghou lun*, however, they reductively introduce a mystery person and consider such an equation as this person’s mistake.<sup>174</sup>

Wang Su further undermines his argument by directly connecting the *Lunyu* of the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts to the ten-juan *Lunyu* described in the “Jingji zhi” of the *Suishu*. This assertion ignores the difference in the number of fascicules in these versions. Kanaya notices that both the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts seem to preserve a four-juan version of the *Lunyu*. For example, at the end of “Xiangdang” 鄉黨 (the tenth *pian* of the transmitted twenty-*pian Lunyu*) seen in the Pelliot 2510 *Lunyu* manuscript discovered at Dunhuang, there is a note

171 古文論語十卷鄭玄注. *Suishu* 32.935.

172 *Weishu* 101.2245.

173 Wang Su 1991: 244–249.

174 Kanaya Osam 1991: 238; Wang Su 1991: 249.

clearly stating that the end of “Xiangdang” *pian* is also the end of the second *juan* of the *Lunyu*.<sup>175</sup> This suggests that in this text five *pian* chapters are grouped together to form a *juan* fascicle. Indeed, the copier of the Bu Tianshou *Lunyu* from Turfan lists the names of the first five *pian* chapters in order at the end of “Gongye Chang” 公冶長, the fifth chapter. This strongly indicates that these five *pian* chapters were considered to have been included in one *juan* fascicle.<sup>176</sup> The different layouts of *juan* units in the manuscripts and in the version of the *Lunyu* described in the “Jingji zhi” of *Suishu* disprove Wang Su’s argument that the two are the same. For this reason, we must look for a different explanation to understand the “Kongshi ben.”

A possible explanation lies in the brief booklist preserved in the Pelliot chinois ms. 2721 (henceforth: Pelliot 2721) manuscript.<sup>177</sup> This bibliography lists texts followed by their authors and/or commentators. The entry for the *Lunyu* says it was “created by Kongzi and annotated by Zheng Xuan.”<sup>178</sup> This bibliography is included in a collection of texts for readers of lower social status;<sup>179</sup> and the form of the discovered *Lunyu* manuscripts suggests that they were associated with elementary education. The annotated *Lunyu* listed in the abovementioned booklist is evidently similar to the equally annotated versions preserved in the Dunhuang and Turfan manuscripts. Therefore, the “Kongshi ben” note in the Bu Tianshou manuscript and the Pelliot 2510 should not be understood as “Kong Anguo’s version of the *Lunyu*,” as generally held; instead, we should follow the authorial attribution of the *Lunyu* in the Pelliot 2721, and interpret the “Kongshi ben” as an authorial attribution of the text to Confucius.<sup>180</sup> To correct this long-held misinterpretation, we should translate the term “Kongshi ben” as “the text of Confucius.” Thus, the version of *Lunyu* annotated by Zheng Xuan was not the “archaic *Lunyu*” compiled by Kong Anguo, but the *Zhanghou lun* annotated by Zheng Xuan surviving to the present day. Clearing away this misunderstanding further enhances our understanding that the *Lunyu* annotated by Zheng Xuan is none other than the *Zhanghou lun*.

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175 “*Lunyu*, *juan* 2” 論語卷第二.

176 Wang Su 1991: pl.s 11, 48.

177 For a description of the Pelliot 2721, see Drège and Constantino 2014.

178 Zhou Pixian 1991: 418.

179 Zhou Pixian 1991: 415–417.

180 Confucius is referred to as “Kongshi” 孔氏 in his *Shiji* biography, see *Shiji* 47.1936.

### 3.6 The Formation of the *Lunyu* and Re-creation of Confucius

This survey of the *Lunyu*'s textual history has thus far aimed to answer the questions of whether a pre-Qin *Lunyu* text existed, and if so, what principal versions of the *Lunyu* existed during its transmission, and how are they related to the *Lunyu* we now have. Although the complicated history is full of conflicting evidence and contradictory interpretations, this analysis of the details has provided us with a general picture of the emergence and the transmission of the *Lunyu*.

Contrary to the long-held opinion, prior to the Han dynasty there was no text called the *Lunyu* similar to that which we have today. Such a statement does not mean, however, that anecdotes of Confucius and his sayings, like those in the present-day *Analects*, were not in existence or not being circulated. Indeed, there is plentiful evidence to demonstrate that a Confucian lore began to develop in the Warring States period and served as the source for the compilation of the *Lunyu*. According to Wang Chong, the *Lunyu* text appeared only after Kong Anguo taught the text to Fu Qing, so probably in the early years of Emperor Wu's reign, as is consistent with the records on *Lunyu*'s transmission recorded in the *Hanshu*.

Secondly, instead of accepting the speculation that the three *Lunyu* texts noted in the "Yiwen zhi" had different origins, this study contends that the archaic *Lunyu* was the ancestral text of the Lu and Qi *Lunyu*. The Qi *Lunyu* and the Lu *Lunyu* should not be defined as texts independent from the archaic *Lunyu*, nor could they be separated from each other; all three were closely related in terms of their textual proximity. The major differences among the texts should be better understood as the result of the transmission of the archaic *Lunyu* in different groups at different places. The Lu and Qi dialects along with the transmitters' individual preferences contributed to various kinds of textual variations.

Additionally, the archaic *Lunyu* can be dated as a pre-Han text, but whether or not its limited circulation, as shown in pre-Qin literature, was related to the Qin law banning personal possession of writings is open to further debate. The widely accepted theory that the archaic *Lunyu* was hidden in a wall of Confucius's former residence as a response to the harsh Qin law toward Confucian texts is speculative, and insufficiently explains why the text was put in the walls. Many similar accounts regarding the hiding of texts in walls, if not merely narratives designed to lend an air of antiquity to recovered texts, indicate that this phenomenon was related to a larger religious context rather than a single historical event, namely the "Burning of the Books" in 213 BC. Like texts buried in tombs, texts hidden in walls may reflect the religious thinking of those who had concealed them. Enclosing the *Lunyu* within the walls may have been related to the practice of averting evil influences, a practice well attested to in both transmitted and archaeologically recovered texts.

Furthermore, prior to its discovery in the walls, the archaic *Lunyu* was likely not a pedagogical text, but a text serving other needs, such as the need to record anecdotal knowledge or to respond to the unknown supernatural forces pervading people's lives. Distinguishing the functions of the text in this way eliminates the contradiction we see between the lack of evidence demonstrating the pre-Han existence of a pedagogical *Lunyu* and the proclamation made in all early accounts that the archaic *Lunyu* was formed in the Warring States period. Evidence confirms that the *Lunyu* began to be taught in the Early Western Han. Therefore, it is reasonable to say that the *Lunyu* became a pedagogical tool only after it was accidentally rediscovered, rearranged by Kong Anguo, and passed down to the Lu and Qi groups of scholars as part of Confucian teachings. In other words, the shift in the usage of the *Lunyu* after it was rediscovered has shaped our understanding of the *Lunyu* as a pedagogical tool.<sup>181</sup>

Finally, it bears repeating that none of the three earliest versions of the *Lunyu* have survived to the present day. The surviving modern *Lunyu* stems from the *Zhanghou lun*, a product by a Han emperor's tutor meant as a textbook for his young pupil. The compilation of this textbook helped to standardize a *Lunyu* text that had been fairly fluid in its transmission along different lines. Zhang Yu's streamlined version of the *Lunyu* became such a huge success for both the text and his own career, as it had the support of its intended audience, the future Emperor Cheng. Not surprisingly, it soon eclipsed the position of its predecessors, and they subsequently faded from view. Although it is inevitable that some changes were introduced into Zhang Yu's original text during its long course of transmission, thanks to the information preserved in Dunhuang and Turfan and in explanatory works like the *Lunyu jijie*, we see that the *Zhanghou lun* has been passed down to us without major changes. The *Zhanghou lun* is the tip of an iceberg, with the archaic, Qi, and Lu *Lunyu* hidden from our view beneath the water.<sup>182</sup>

We can explore the *Lunyu*'s hidden history through an analysis of the formation and assembly of the text. The following analysis will show that, upon the

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**181** In contrast to their transmission within the stable surroundings of the inculcation of a *paideia* after the rearrangement by Kong Anguo, the materials that formed the *Lunyu* were probably collected, in the first place, for more competitive rhetorical purposes. I refer the reader to my discussion of their origins in this section.

**182** Some scholars consider a passage on a bamboo strip from the recently discovered Marquis Haihun's 海昏侯 tomb in Jiangxi province as a remaining part of the "Zhidao" 知道 *pian* of the alleged Qi version of the *Lunyu*. See Yang Jun, Wang Chuning, and Xu Changqing 2016. Nevertheless, we must wait until the publication of all the excavated contents related to the *Lunyu* to find out whether this is the Qi *Lunyu* or not, and, if it indeed is, how it is different from other versions of the *Lunyu* text.



rearrangement by Kong Anguo, the *Lunyu* was forever transformed from a collection of anecdotal materials into an authoritative text that provides a fixed image of its master. In turn, we will see how this powerful image has added authority to the text itself and made it the most reliable biographical source for the historical figure.

When considering the *Lunyu*'s emergence, we must cast doubt on the "Yiwen zhi" proposal stating that the text was originally a collection of Confucius's actual words written down or memorized by students and compiled posthumously.<sup>183</sup> Regardless of different opinions on the principal compilers of this *Lunyu* text, scholars tend to accept the "Yiwen zhi" account as their working presupposition for the discussion of the text's nature and early transmission. Such a presupposition, however, demands consistency in the format and wording throughout the *Lunyu*, and that anecdotes are consistent with relevant historical events. The *Lunyu* is anything but a homogeneous work. Various theories have been developed to resolve contradictions between the nature of the text and the presupposition about its formation, but the most common method is to identify inconsistent passages and consider them as later additions or interpolations.<sup>184</sup> In order to identify these textual discordances, the core of the text needs to be settled. Unfortunately, this is usually done in a methodologically flawed, arbitrary manner. In this regard, the work of E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks serves as an example.<sup>185</sup> Their methodology for dating and categorizing passages on the basis of scattered and minimal historical information is highly problematic, and, consequently, their dating and categorization of passages can be neither conclusive nor convincing, which further undermines their identifications of later interpolations. Their accretion theory for the formation of the *Lunyu*, which argues that the *Lunyu* passages were produced and collected in the different periods of its long formation, should therefore be questioned.<sup>186</sup>

Another influential method for dealing with the heterogeneous nature of the *Lunyu* is to divide the text into two parts—the first ten chapters referred to as the "Shang lun" 上論 and the second ten chapters referred to as the "Xia lun" 下論.<sup>187</sup> The principle for this division depends on how Confucius is addressed, namely,

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183 *Hanshu* 30.1717.

184 Jiang Boqian 蔣伯潛 1948: 290–294.

185 Brooks and Brooks 1998, especially Appendix 1 on their accretion theory, 201–248.

186 Also consult David Schaberg's and Li Zehou's reviews on their methodology, see Schaberg 2001a: 131–139; Li Zehou 李澤厚 1998: 448–450.

187 Cui Shu 1983; Hu Zhikui 1978; Zeng Xiuqing 曾秀景 1991; Wang Bo 王博 2001; Zhao Zhenxin 1961.

whether he is called Zi 子 or Kongzi 孔子. The argument maintains that those passages using the Zi appellation must have been compiled by the first generation of Confucius's disciples, while those that use Kongzi were by later generations. The rationale is that the use of the Master's family name is considered less respectful, according to this theory.

Based on this assumption, the first part of *Lunyu* becomes the original, earliest textual stratum while passages included in the second part are nothing but later compilation(s).<sup>188</sup> As a result, the “Shang lun” and “Xia lun” theory divides the *Lunyu* into earlier and later strata. Statistics examining the use of appellations in these two parts, however, hardly support this claim. As a matter of fact, the appellations used to distinguish the “Shang lun” from the “Xia lun” are by no means exclusive to either half. For example, Kongzi, the designation used to define the “Xia lun” chapters, is also applied to Confucius in the “Shang Lun” chapters.<sup>189</sup> Recent finds also suggest that the usage of Zi and Kongzi in the *Lunyu* is flexible.<sup>190</sup> The subtle difference between the two appellations may simply result from anachronistic speculation.

Besides anachronism, studies on the early formation of the *Lunyu* to some extent ignore that our transmitted version today does not derive from the earliest texts, but rather the *Zhanghou lun*. When analyzing the text of *Lunyu*, some take the transmitted *Analects* to reflect exactly the format and layout of the “original” *Lunyu*, or, at least, a version no later than the archaic *Lunyu* arranged by Kong Anguo.<sup>191</sup> This ignores evidence supporting the fluidity of the *Lunyu* textual transmission, especially before the appearance of the *Zhanghou lun*. Even if we suppose that the *Zhanghou lun* did not introduce significant changes to the form and contents of the archaic text, evidence demonstrates that auxiliary words and appellations, among other expressions, were constantly subject to alteration.<sup>192</sup> The notion of the *Lunyu* as a fixed text immune from temporal or spatial change misleads those exploring the formation of the *Lunyu* text.

I propose an alternative to the “Yiwen zhi” explanation, that the *Lunyu* is a compilation of actual words and anecdotes spoken by Confucius and his disciples.

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**188** Qian Mu 1968; Hu Zhikui 1978; Wang Bo 2001.

**189** Jiang Boqian 1948: 289–290.

**190** Liang Tao 梁濤 2002; Yang Zhaoming 2004: 63–64.

**191** Such a notion can be traced to the Liang (502–557 AD) commentator Kuang Kan and lasted till the time of Liao Yan 廖燕 (1644–1705 AD) and thereafter. They believe that every word of the *Lunyu* passed down to us has been either written or approved by Confucius himself. See Zhao Zhenxin 1961: 1.

**192** Jiang Boqian 1948: 290; Hong Kuo 1985: 155.

The passages included in the *Lunyu* were not necessarily spoken by an historical Confucius, nor were they necessarily written down by Confucius's disciples. They were most probably extracted and compiled from anecdotal sources that had already become available during the Warring States period. As a result, those *Lunyu* passages containing information relating to Confucius's life should not be treated as sheer historical records. More anecdotal than historical, they belong to a narrative tradition of Confucian lore. The formation of this tradition may have been associated with or inspired by the Zhou court culture, as depicted in the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu*, where anecdotal materials were created, ornamented, and circulated in their oral or/and written forms.<sup>193</sup> These anecdotal materials are usually related during banquets, debates, diplomatic meetings, as well as other situations calling for ritual performance. Kaizuka Shigeki 貝塚茂樹 observes that the anecdotes included in both the *Zuozhuan* and the *Guoyu* began as rhetorical debates in Eastern Zhou courts, and may have partly been transmitted by blind reciters, to be only gradually collected and crafted into teaching materials.<sup>194</sup> In other words, the Warring States *yu* 語 (discourse) and *shuo* 說 (saying) developed out of stories and songs, and were transmitted by court scribes and musicians.<sup>195</sup>

Additionally, there are often variations on anecdotes, which indicate the storyteller's freedom in adapting an anecdote to suit his own purposes. Evidence suggests that raconteurs usually cared more about their power of persuasion than about the historical accuracy of the information in their anecdotes.<sup>196</sup> Although anecdotes might be related to certain historical events or historical figures, we should consider fabrication at work in the making of anecdotes, especially when they were delivered through verbal speech.<sup>197</sup>

At least some of the words and anecdotes of Confucius collected in the *Lunyu* were derived from this tradition. If we accept his depiction as someone actively engaged in the philosophy and praxis of government, it is not surprising that Confucius figured prominently in the debates of Eastern Zhou aristocrats.<sup>198</sup>

What differentiates Confucius from other figures appearing in anecdotes is that he was not only a political figure but also a successful teacher of a large group of disciples who became transmitters of the texts later promoted as the Chinese Classics. It is natural that stories surrounding Confucius, usually positive, were

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**193** Schaberg 2001c: 315–324.

**194** Kaizuka Shigeki 1976a, 1976b.

**195** Xu Zhongshu 1980: 60–85.

**196** For a more elaborate example of this sort, see my discussion on the Yellow Emperor's persuasive power in Chapter Two of this work.

**197** Schaberg 2000c: 315–324.

**198** *Shiji* 47.1905–1947.

created and disseminated through his students.<sup>199</sup> It is also reasonable to imagine, however, that Confucius's political and philosophical opponents portrayed him negatively and used anecdotes to question his credibility as a thinker, teacher, and orator. In short, when compared with the creation and transmission of the *Zuozhuan* and *Guoyu* anecdotes usually confined to court circles, there were more channels through which anecdotes pertaining to Confucius and his disciples were invented and circulated.

Even though they might have been derived from certain historical events or historical figures, many anecdotes must have departed from their source of history in favor of their narrative purpose. Moreover, the invention of persuasive anecdotes usually surpasses the disinterested historicity possibly contained within. Take, for example, the different versions of the anecdote in which Confucius is called “an abandoned dog” discussed in the beginning of this chapter. The differences among the wordings of the same anecdote preserved in the *Shiji*, the *Baihu tongyi*, the *Lunheng*, and the *Kongzi jiayu* are negligible. Following the *Shiji*, this passage has long been contextualized in Confucius's biographical account as an historical fact reflecting the hardship Confucius and his disciples endured during their exile. The *Hanshi waizhuan* version, however, portrays this episode more as a story about physiognomy than Confucius's real life. Contrary to the *Shiji*, the *Hanshi waizhuan* version does not contextualize the episode as part of Confucius's exile: it is instead set in the state of Wei where Confucius had been very well received. Nor does Confucius lose contact with his disciples in this version, as he predicts for his fellow students that Gubu Ziqing 姑布子卿, a famous physiognomist, is going to tell his future by reading his physical appearance. Meanwhile Gubu Ziqing also senses that he is going to come across a sage. Gubu Ziqing's reading of Confucius's appearance leads to the section, similar to that in the other versions, in which Confucius's physical appearance is compared to that of other sages and worthies to denote that Confucius is a sage (although not as sagacious as Yao or Shun), and thus like a *sangjia gou*. Here it is Confucius who offers a positive interpretation of this term—instead of taking it to mean “an abandoned dog” as done in the *Shiji*, it refers to the dog of a family in mourning that attempts to perform the sacrificial ritual for the dead. This interpretation would indicate that Confucius would be the savior of the chaotic Spring and Autumn world.<sup>200</sup>

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**199** For example, Zigong is said to be the first among Confucius's students who intentionally portrayed Confucius as a sage. See Li Ling 2009. For information from Confucius's disciples as well as other individuals who may have been connected to Confucius, see Li Ling 2008a: 17–29.

**200** Xu Weiyu 1980: 323–324.

Here, we face a problem of interpretation when offered with conflicting records of the past. Some have linked the *Hanshi waizhuan* version to Confucius's disciple Zigong and his desire to transform his master into a great sage,<sup>201</sup> and because of this connection, there is reluctance to treat the account historically. This story, however, is not any less "historical" than the *Shiji* version, as the *Shiji* author also contextualizes the anecdote within his own design of Confucius's biography. There is no evidence supporting the historicity of one version of the tale over the other, although one version could be accepted as being true in a certain context while another was not.

Another illuminating example deals with the differing accounts of Confucius's exile as recorded in the *Lunyu* and the *Mozi*. In contrast to the *Analects*' depiction of Confucius as a "gentleman who sticks to his principles in facing hardship" 君子固窮, the *Mozi*, although setting this story in the same context, mocks him for his hypocrisy in facing difficulties.<sup>202</sup> An anecdote in the "Zilu" *pian* further illustrates how narratives are adapted to suit the argument. The following story addresses individual integrity and the ethics of the father-son relationship:

葉公語孔子曰：吾黨有直躬者，其父攘羊，而子證之。孔子曰：吾黨之直者異於是：父為子隱，子為父隱，直在其中矣。

The Lord of She said to Confucius, "Among my kinfolk there are those who behave uprightly, to the extent that if a father steals a lamb, the son bears witness to his father's misdeed." Confucius said, "Among my kinfolk those who are upright behave differently: the fathers conceal their sons' misdeeds, the sons conceal their fathers', and uprightness is contained within their mutual concealment."<sup>203</sup>

This short exchange on uprightness took place between the Lord of She, a Chu aristocrat, and Confucius. In addition to revealing Confucius's notion of uprightness by contrasting it with that of the Lord of She, this passage also highlights the subtlety of Confucius's rhetorical skill. He adopts the form of the lord's argument and turns it on its head to deflate any pride the Lord of She may have about his governance. In the *Lunyu*, there are two other dialogues between the Lord of She and Confucius, but in one case Confucius's student, Zilu, stands in for the voice of the Master.<sup>204</sup>

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201 Li Ling 2008a: 16.

202 Yang Bojun 2010a: 159; Wu Yujiang 2006: 432–433.

203 Yang Bojun 2010a: 137.

204 Yang Bojun 2010a: 137, 70.

Of course, our understanding of these anecdotes has been shaped by how Confucius's *Shiji* biography has historicized and contextualized them, and without the biography, we would probably regard them as three unrelated anecdotes. According to the *Shiji*, in order to escape turmoil in the state of Chen 陳, Confucius and his disciples left Chen in 489 BC for the northern Chu domain, then governed by the Lord of She.<sup>205</sup> The short conversation translated above has, therefore, been interpreted as a real dialogue between Confucius and the Lord of She. Read historically, the import of the passage is that the states of Chu and Lu had different conceptions of uprightness, or different ideas of how it should be weighed against the obligations to one's family and one's state. What the son does to his father, however, becomes problematic in the *Han Feizi*:

楚之有直躬，其父竊羊而謁之吏。令尹曰：殺之。以為直於君而曲於父，報而罪之。以是觀之，夫君之直臣，父之暴子也。

There was a Chu person who behaved uprightly. When his father stole a lamb, he reported it to the official. The minister said, "Kill him (the father)." What the Chu person considers upright to the ruler is crooked to the father. When he reported his father's misdeed, his father was blamed for what he did. Viewed from this perspective, a ruler's upright subject could be a father's cruel son.<sup>206</sup>

What remains consistent between the two passages is the son's reporting of his father's theft to an official. In comparison with the *Lunyu* passage, however, the *Han Feizi* passage emphasizes the outcome of the son's upright deed—his uprightness results in his father's death. The passage conveys a strong sense of ethical irony in the son's uprightness, and indicates a failure of filial piety. The irony in the *Han Feizi* passage becomes more ridiculous in this *Lüshi chungiu* passage:

楚有直躬者，其父竊羊而謁之上。上執而將誅之。直躬者請代之。將誅矣，告吏曰：父竊羊而謁之，不亦信乎？父誅而代之，不亦孝乎？信且孝而誅之，國將有不誅者乎？荆王聞之，乃不誅也。孔子聞之曰：異哉直躬之為信也，一父而載取名焉。故直躬之信，不若無信。

There was a man of Chu who behaved uprightly. When his father stole a lamb, he reported it to the ruler. The ruler detained his father and was to put him to death. The person who behaved uprightly requested to replace his father with himself. When he was to be put to death, the Chu person said to the official, "My father stole a lamb and I reported it, am I not trustworthy? My father was to be put to death and I replace him, am I not filial? I am trustworthy and filial, but you will execute me, is there anyone in the state who will not be put

205 *Shiji* 47.1928; Kuang Yaming 1985: 443.

206 Wang Xianshen 1998: 449.

to death? The Chu king heard of this and stayed his execution. Hearing this, Confucius commented, “It is strange that the Chu person who had behaved uprightly in this way is considered trustworthy: from one father he obtained his fame twice.” Therefore, the trustworthiness of the upright man of Chu is worse than being untrustworthy.<sup>207</sup>

In comparison with the *Lunyu* and the *Han Feizi* passages, the *Lüshi chunqiu* passage further complicates our understanding. With more episodes added to this narrative, the irony in the *Han Feizi* passage occupies the center of the debate. The son reported his father’s misconduct, but upon hearing of his father’s death penalty, he asked to be killed in his father’s place. By both reporting his father’s misconduct and being willing to die in order to save his father’s life, the son demonstrates both his trustworthiness and his filial piety. How could a citizen be punished for his trustworthiness and filial piety, the virtues supposedly promoted by every ruler? Confucius is introduced into the narrative to comment on such irony. According to his view, the son cannot be considered virtuous by simultaneously betraying his father and displaying his filial piety as a result of the betrayal. The irony originates from considering the son’s betrayal of his father’s misdeed as an example of trustworthiness; once this initial irony is exposed, the whole chain of ironies is broken, and the son’s renown for virtue is exposed for what it really is.

Comparing the *Lunyu* anecdote as recorded across different texts helps to confirm two points regarding the formation of early texts and their intertextual relationships.

First, these relationships show how a particular narrative can be developed in different texts. The narrative is flexible to the needs of the argument. This accords with what is known about the early Chinese narrative tradition. In this tradition, it seems that an event was allowed to be tailored for rhetorical purposes and the interpretation of the event to a large extent depends on its context. In this case, we cannot be certain of the historicity of a son reporting the crime of his father. Nevertheless, debates on human virtues such as trustworthiness, uprightness, loyalty, and filial piety are traceable in transmitted texts. For example, the *Hanshi waizhuan*, the *Xinyu* 新語 (New Sayings), and the *Shiji* all contain another story that can be closely related to the *Lunyu* passage under discussion. It relates that when Shi She 石奢, an official of King Zhao of Chu 楚昭王 (?–489 BC) in charge of public safety and famous for his integrity, discovered that the murderer he had been investigating was his father, he could not simultaneously be filial to his father and loyal to the king, so he chose suicide to maintain his integrity.<sup>208</sup>

<sup>207</sup> Chen Qiyou 1984: 596.

<sup>208</sup> Xu Weiyu 1980: 48–49; Lu Yuanjun 盧元駿 1987: 243; *Shiji* 119.3102.

Casting Shi She's father as a murderer fits the pattern of the criminal father/upright son narratives we see above. Viewed from this perspective, this story, like the others, was probably crafted for rhetorical, rather than historical, reasons. Recognizing rhetorical motives should prevent us from immediately reading *Lunyu* passages as accurate records of the historical Confucius or as a depiction of an actual pedagogical scene.

Secondly, the differences between the three versions of the father-son narrative suggest that they may have been independently adopted from a repository of common knowledge—including anecdotes, stories, aphorisms, divination methods, and agricultural tips—that had accumulated over time. Though the three passages may give us the impression of a genetic relationship, with the *Lunyu* passage serving as the prototype for the more complex passages in the *Han Feizi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu*, it is inappropriate to claim that the *Lunyu* passage is ancestral to the other narratives. It is a further stretch to conclude that, as the source for other texts, the *Lunyu* must have been compiled and circulated by the late Warring States period. This understanding of the interrelationship among texts is misleading because it ignores other possibilities (for instance, the role of oral transmission in passing knowledge down from one generation to another), and thus excludes the possibility that textually related passages could have been independently taken from a body of lore. It additionally fails to consider how later editing work influenced and reshaped the form of early Chinese texts.

The *Lunyu* passage under discussion here is not the only one of its kind; the *Lunyu* contains numerous passages sharing similar anecdotes with at least one other passage either within the *Lunyu* or in other texts.<sup>209</sup> The large number of shared textual units shows how sayings and narratives can be applied to different contexts with slight alterations. The number of passages shared between the texts and the *Lunyu* also suggests how closely associated these texts are in terms of theme and content. The shared textual units do not, however, distinguish how many times other texts directly quote the *Lunyu*, for the concept of direct citation presupposes the existence of a stable *Lunyu* and is contrary to the nature of texts in this early period. For example, the *Xunzi* has several passages associated with the *Lunyu*, but none are direct quotations. Additionally, no sayings attributed to Confucius in the *Xunzi* are similar to those in the *Lunyu*. Once again, shared textual units in different texts are associated with the complex nature of formation of early Chinese texts, the role of oral transmission, access to the repository of

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**209** In this regard, Yang Shuda 楊樹達 aptly demonstrates how hundreds of *Lunyu* passages are textually related, in one way or another, to dozens of other early Chinese texts; see Yang Shuda 1974.



common knowledge, as well as later editing work. With all these factors taken into consideration, a general picture regarding the formation of the *Lunyu* text emerges: the *Lunyu*, like many other similar texts referenced by Wang Chong and Xu Shen, as well as those texts unearthed from the Ji tomb,<sup>210</sup> is a collection of anecdotes and alleged sayings that was likely circulating in various circles connected to the Warring States' court culture, methods of persuasion, textual traditions, and Confucian lore.

Table 1 lists the number of repetitive passages appearing in different chapters of the *Lunyu*. Although not comprehensive, the list representatively demonstrates the frequency with which passages and textual units repeat themselves in different locations of the *Lunyu* text. In my view, the repetitions suggest not only what the original form of the *Lunyu* might have been, but also how editing might have shaped the text. These repetitions usually appear in different *pian* of the *Lunyu*.

**Tab. 3-1:** Repetitive passages within the *Lunyu* (repetitions are grouped by row):

	<i>pian</i> and their numbers	passages	<i>pian</i> and their numbers	passages
A	學而 (1)	子曰：巧言令色鮮矣仁。	陽貨 (17)	子曰：巧言令色鮮矣仁。
B	學而 (1)	子曰：主忠信，無友不如己者，過則勿憚改。	子罕 (9)	子曰：主忠信，無友不如己者，過則勿憚改。
C	學而 (1)	子曰：君子…敏於事而慎於言。	里仁 (4)	子曰：君子欲訥於言而敏於行。
D	為政 (2)	孔子對曰：舉直錯諸枉，則民服。	顏淵 (12)	子曰：舉直錯諸枉，能使枉者直。
E	里仁 (4)	子曰：三年無改於父之道可謂孝矣。	學而 (1)	子曰：三年無改於父之道可謂孝矣。
F	雍也 (6)	子曰：君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫。	顏淵 (12)	子曰：君子博學於文，約之以禮，亦可以弗畔矣夫。
G	泰伯 (8)	子曰：不在其位，不謀其政。	憲問 (14)	子曰：不在其位，不謀其政。
H	鄉黨 (10)	(子)入太廟，每事問	八佾 (3)	子入太廟，每事問。

<sup>210</sup> Huang Hui 1990: 1136–1139; *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 1.15; *Jinshu* 51.1433–1434.

	<i>pian</i> and their numbers	passages	<i>pian</i> and their numbers	passages
I	憲問 (14)	子曰：邦有道，谷；邦無道，谷，恥也。	泰伯 (8)	子曰：邦有道，貧且賤，恥也；邦無道，富且貴焉，恥也。
J	衛靈公 (15)	子曰：已矣乎！吾未見好德如好色者也。	子罕 (9)	子曰：吾未見好德如好色者也。
K	子張 (19)	子張曰：士見危致命，見得思義。	憲問 (14)	(子)曰：見利思義，見危授命。
L	堯曰 (20)	子曰：不知禮，無以立也。	季氏 (16)	(子曰：)不學禮，無以立。

To explain these repetitions, Liu Baonan 劉寶楠 (1791–1855 AD) deduces that the *Lunyu* was compiled by Confucius’s students. Following this assumption, the repetitions are notes on the same saying or event by a different student. Since the *Lunyu* is no more than a compilation of student notes, Liu feels it is not surprising to see the teacher’s lessons appearing in identical, or nearly identical, forms in students’ notes.<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, if this were actually the case, we should wonder why there are so few repetitive passages. Thus Wang Bo follows a similar train of thought to offer two possibilities to explain both the presence of repetitions and their paucity, and so describe processes which jointly shaped the current form of the *Lunyu*: first, that the disciples met to create a masterplan for the compilation of the *Lunyu*, and then divided the work by theme, assigning each to particular individuals; second, that later editing subsequently removed most of the repetitions from students’ notes contained in the original text.<sup>212</sup>

Wang Bo’s explanation accepts the “*Yiwen zhi*” statement that the *Lunyu* consists of notes that Confucius’s disciples “collected, discussed, and compiled [into a text]” after Confucius died,<sup>213</sup> a theory that has already been demonstrated as unconvincing elsewhere in this chapter. Moreover, the likelihood of an editorial meeting held before the compilation of the *Lunyu* is pure speculation, and it has become increasingly improbable that such a meeting could ever have occurred, since recent archaeological discoveries suggest that most of the excavated early Chinese texts were transmitted in the form of short, single *pian* and longer texts emerged no earlier than the late Warring States period. Current evidence, then,

<sup>211</sup> *Lunyu zhengyi* 1.1.

<sup>212</sup> Wang Bo 2001: 303–307.

<sup>213</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1717.

does not support the existence of a twenty-*pian* text resulting from a planned editorial meeting as the “Yiwen zhi” suggests. Wang Bo’s second proposition is more plausible, but unverifiable. Furthermore, blaming Confucius’s disciples’ poor editing skills for the repetitions underrates their ability in reading and memorizing texts. It is unlikely that the identical passages listed in Table 1 (A, B, E, F, G, H, J, L) could have escaped the eyes of an editorial board so easily. These repetitions are simply too glaring to be ignored, even for first time readers of the *Lunyu*.

These observations complicate the assumption that the *Lunyu* was produced exclusively by Confucius’s students. As has been demonstrated, the form of the *Lunyu* we have today is indeed the result of a series of editorial efforts. It began with Kong Anguo after the materials were removed from the walls of Confucius’s mansion, and it was largely finished after Zhang Yu reorganized the materials to make a textbook for the young Heir Apparent. If the contents of the *Zhanghou lun* remained consistent with the long lost archaic *Lunyu*, it seems that the early editors were not at all troubled by the repetitions in the text.

I suggest that all the *pian* included in the *Analects* were initially compiled by Kong Anguo. Before this compilation, all the *pian*, whether in their current form or not, had been formed and had circulated independently. Individual *pian* chapters do not exhibit repetitions, so repetitions did not exist and thus were never considered problematic by later scholars. In other words, the repeated passages in the *Lunyu* only appeared as repetitions once the *pian* units were brought together. This explanation is supported with evidence regarding other *Lunyu*-like texts that are referenced in the *Lunheng* and the *Shuowen jiezi*, as well as evidence included in the bamboo strips excavated from a Ji tomb of the Western Jin dynasty. All these *Lunyu*-like texts were not included in the transmitted *Lunyu*, but the accounts consider the writings to consist of Confucius’s words and deeds. Furthermore, this type of writing was considered as part of the *Lunyu* tradition. For example, the *Lunyu*, according to Wang Chong, encompassed more *pian* than contained in the transmitted version. In his mind, the *Lunyu* was more a concept than a finite text. It represented a body of lore surrounding Confucius and his words, and was not limited to the content transmitted in the *Zhanghou lun* or the Kong Anguo version.

The recently unearthed bamboo strip texts have shed more light on pre-Han writings. The Warring States writings excavated from Tomb 1 at Guodian 郭店<sup>214</sup> include, among others, three sections named “Yucong” 語叢 (Collections of Sayings) 1, 2, and 3, titled as such by modern scholars. These sections consist of pithy passages, mainly proverbs and aphorisms, resembling other such collections as

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214 Hubei Sheng Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1997; Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998.

the “*zhuan yue*” 傳曰 quotations in the *Xunzi* 荀子, the “*Tancong*” 談叢 (Collections of Talks) chapter of the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Sayings), and the “*Shuolin*” 說林 (Forest of Sayings) chapter of the *Huainanzi*.<sup>215</sup> Those passages, if introduced by the phrase “*Zi yue*” 子曰 (the Master says), could be mistaken for Confucius’s words in the *Lunyu*. Indeed, a few passages in the “*Yucong*” sections are nearly identical to the *Lunyu* passages:

志於道，狎於德，依於仁，遊於藝。

Be devoted to the Way, stay close to virtues, lean toward humaneness, and take pleasure in the arts.<sup>216</sup>

毋意，毋固，毋我，毋必。

Take nothing for granted, not stubborn, not selfish, not conceited.<sup>217</sup>

These two passages resemble the following *Lunyu* passages from the “*Shu’er*” and “*Zihan*” chapters respectively:

子曰：志於道，據於德，依於仁，遊於藝。

The Master says, “Be devoted to the Way, rely upon virtues, lean toward humaneness, and take pleasure in the arts.”<sup>218</sup>

子絕四：毋意，毋必，毋固，毋我。

The Master refuses to do four things: he takes nothing for granted, not conceited, not stubborn, not selfish.<sup>219</sup>

A reordering of the listed items and the addition of an introductory “The Master says” would render the “*Yucong*” passages identical to the two *Lunyu* passages. In addition to these examples, other Guodian texts contain passages seemingly associated with the *Lunyu*.<sup>220</sup> Instead of considering such textual similarities as

<sup>215</sup> Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998: 193; Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 2009: 383–409; He Ning 1998: 1169–1236; for a summary of the “*zhuan yue*” passages, see Kodama 1988: 569–597.

<sup>216</sup> Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998: 101, 211.

<sup>217</sup> Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998: 102, 212.

<sup>218</sup> Yang Bojun 2010a: 67.

<sup>219</sup> Yang Bojun 2010a: 86.

<sup>220</sup> For example, the “*Yucong*” (2) passage “小不忍則亂大勢” (Small impatience may put the whole situation in disorder) resembles “小不忍則亂大謀” (Small impatience may put the whole plan in disorder), a *Lunyu* passage in the “*Wei Lingong*” *pian*. For the “*Yucong*” (2) passage, see Jingmen Shi

testimony to the claim that the *Lunyu* had already been compiled in the Warring States period,<sup>221</sup> I suggest they demonstrate that the *pian* units to be incorporated into the *Lunyu* shared the same form and origin as other Warring States-period writings. Archaeological finds illuminating the formation and transmission of early Chinese texts as individual *pian* undermines the argument that the *Lunyu* was compiled earlier than texts like the Guodian “Yucong.” It is worth noting, however, that even though there was probably not a twenty-*pian* *Lunyu* during the Warring States period, the *pian* that were to be combined into such a text might have already been formed as separate textual units. In other words, various types of writings on Confucius developed in the Warring States period. Confucius’s voice as presented in such texts as the Guodian “Ziyi” 緇衣 suggests that written tradition centering on Confucius had already been fostered in the Warring States period.

In this regard, texts on the bamboo strips of the Shanghai Museum collection are even more telling. For instance, in the “Kongzi shilun” 孔子詩論 we encounter a Confucius making comments on the *Odes* pieces; we find a “Ziyi” text closely associated with a similar piece excavated from a Guodian tomb;<sup>222</sup> there is a “Min zhi fumu” 民之父母 piece that employs a writing style similar to that used by the “Kongzi xianju” 孔子閒居 of the *Liji* and the “Lunli” 論禮 of the *Kongzi jiyu*; we also find that the “Lubang dahan” 魯邦大旱 and the “Congzheng” 從政 pieces share textual similarities with both the Guodian and the Shanghai Museum “Ziyi” writings;<sup>223</sup> the “Junzi wenli” 君子問禮 and “Dizi wen” 弟子問 with passages similar to those found in the *Lunyu*<sup>224</sup>; the “Zi dao e” 子道餓 depicts Confucius’s travels during exile; the “Zhonggong” 中弓 describes a dialogue between Zhonggong and Confucius;<sup>225</sup> similarly, the “Xiangbang zhi dao” 相邦之道,<sup>226</sup> the “Kongzi jian Jihuanzi” 孔子見季桓子,<sup>227</sup> and the “Yan Yuan wen yu Kongzi” 顏淵問於孔子<sup>228</sup> record a conversation between

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Bowuguan 1998: 93, 205; for the *Lunyu* passage, see Yang Bojun 2010a: 165. It is also worth noting that the “Ziyi” 緇衣 text comprises numerous passages related to Confucius and his words. See Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 2005: 15–20, 127–138. Wang Bo also detects some similarities between some *Lunyu* passages and that of the “Zun deyi” 尊德義 Guodian text, see Wang Bo 2001: 330–332, for the “Zun deyi” text, see Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1998: 53–58, 171–176.

221 Wang Bo 2001: 329–336; Yang Zhaoming 2004: 65.

222 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源 2001: 11–42; 43–68; 119–168; 169–214.

223 Ma Chengyuan 2002: 15–30; 49–56; 57–84; 149–180; 201–210; 211–238.

224 Ma Chengyuan 2005: 79–96; 97–124; 251–264, especially 253–255 and 261; 265–284, especially 267, 270–271, 274, 277, and 279.

225 Ma Chengyuan 2003: 71–102; 261–284.

226 Ma Chengyuan 2004: 83–88; 231–238.

227 Ma Chengyuan 2007: 31–60; 193–236.

228 Ma Chengyuan 2011: 13–20; 21–36; 117–136; 137–166.

Confucius and other interlocutors. In short, these pieces describe Confucius's diverse knowledge on the interpretation of the *Songs*, ritual performance, and the art of governing. Anecdotes such as the "Kongzi jian Jihuanzi" and the "Zi dao e" also include information on Confucius's life that helps us picture the body of the lore that was later consulted by Sima Qian when compiling Confucius's biography. If the bamboo strips in the Shanghai Museum collection are indeed Warring States texts, they again confirm that writings on Confucius (and other writings like them) were usually formed and transmitted as relatively short units in comparison with later multi-*pian* works, such as the *Lunyu* arranged by Kong Anguo.

Additional archaeological evidence demonstrates the early origin of the phenomenon of collecting stories related to Confucius and his disciples. A wooden board excavated from a Western Han tomb associated with Xiahou Zao 夏侯竈 (r. 171–165 BC), the Western Han Marquis of Ruyin 汝陰, at Shuanggudui of Fuyang in Anhui province 安徽阜陽雙古堆, includes some clues related to the anecdotal Confucius.<sup>229</sup> Hu Pingsheng's 胡平生 study on this board shows that these anecdotes belonged to a body of Confucian lore shared by a number of transmitted texts including the *Lunyu*.<sup>230</sup> The majority of the cues are closely associated with the Confucius anecdotes found in the *Shuoyuan*, *Kongzi jiayu*, and *Hanshi waizhuan*.<sup>231</sup> In another Western Han tomb (probably belonging to Liu Xiu 劉修 (?–55 BC)) located at Bajiaolang, Ding Xian, Hebei province 河北定縣八角廊, archaeologists have found a *Lunyu* buried together with writings (called the "Rujiazhe yan" 儒家者言 by the excavators) containing texts similar to the Shuanggudui wooden board, both of which have been classified as texts of *shuo* (sayings) or *yu* (discourses).<sup>232</sup> This latter find indicates that additional Confucius anecdotes continued to circulate even after the *Lunyu* had been compiled by Kong Anguo and promoted by the Han imperial court.<sup>233</sup>

**229** Wenwuju Guwenxian Yanjiushi 文物局古文獻研究室 and Anhui Sheng Fuyang Diqu Bowuguan 安徽省阜陽地區博物館 Fuyang Hanjian Zhenglizu 阜陽漢簡整理組 1983: 21–23; Hu Pingsheng 2000: 517–523.

**230** Hu Pingsheng 2000: 519.

**231** Hu Pingsheng 2000: 519.

**232** Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所 1981: 1–10; Guojia Wenwuju Guwenxian Yanjiushi 國家文物局古文獻研究室, Hebei Sheng Bowuguan 河北省博物館, and Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo 河北省文物研究所 Dingxian Hanmu Zhujian Zhenglizu 定縣漢墓竹簡整理組 1981: 11–12; Guojia Wenwuju Guwenxian Yanjiushi, Hebei Sheng Bowuguan, and Hebei Sheng Wenwu Yanjiusuo Dingxian Hanmu Zhujian Zhenglizu 1981: 13–19; He Zhigang 1981: 20–22.

**233** Another testament to the popularity and longevity of Confucian lore is seen in one of the *bianwen* 變文 pieces discovered at a Dunhuang cave, the "Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu" 孔子項託相問書. This develops the story of Confucius and Xiangtuo that can be seen in the *Zhanguoce* 戰國策, the *Huainanzi*, the *Liezi* 列子, the *Shiji*, among others. In the "Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu," it is

In short, all the *pian* of the *Lunyu* evolved out of a Confucian lore that circulated through written and/or possibly oral forms during the Warring States period. Just as these *Lunyu pian* units were originally influenced by the contents of this Confucian lore, they ultimately exerted their own influence on other *Lunyu*-like writings. This model of transmission contributed to the appearance of similar or identical passages in different *pian* of the *Lunyu* as well as other transmitted or excavated texts. Moreover, based on the archaeological evidence suggesting that most Warring States texts were transmitted as a single *pian* consisting of the number of bamboo strips ranging from a few to a few dozen, the *pian* chapters included in the *Analects* were probably discrete textual units. Viewed from this perspective, the *Lunyu* that Kong Anguo arranged out of a group of archaic texts recovered from the walls of Confucius's mansion was a new text to the Han people. It was the first time that a number of single-*pian* writings, maybe found as individual and unbroken bundles, were combined into a whole text focusing on Confucius and his disciples. This outline of the text's early history remains consistent with Wang Chong's assertion that the title "Lunyu" began with Kong Anguo.<sup>234</sup>

Accepting this new view of the text's early history over the traditional account, which sees it as the deliberate product of Confucius's disciples, raises new questions: who wrote the shorter *pian* units that were ultimately combined into the *Lunyu*, and why? Currently available evidence does not allow the attribution of the early *pian* to any specific individuals, but I would suggest that these early writings on Confucius might have first been associated with the Warring States culture of persuasion. As Wiebke Denecke observes, the *Shiji* accounts on Confucius and his disciples do not portray them as significant text makers. Zigong, the most successful propagator of Confucius's legacy, is depicted as a great persuader, whom, ironically, Confucius criticizes as being *bian* 辯, or smooth-tongued in this context, in Zigong's *Shiji* biographical account.<sup>235</sup> Moreover, Denecke points to the connections between the chapter on Confucius's disciples and the two chapters almost immediately following them, on the famous Warring States persuaders Su Qin 蘇秦 and Zhang Yi 張儀. The textual connections lead her to propose a connection between Confucius's legacy and Warring States persuasion.<sup>236</sup> It is plausi-

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said that Confucius killed Xiang Tuo for being outwitted by him. For the *bianwen* piece of "Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiangwen shu," see Xiang Chu 項楚 1989: 363–373; for a study on the origin of this piece of *bianwen* literature, see Zhang Hongxun 張鴻勳 2002: 222–244.

234 Huang Hui 1990: 1136–1139.

235 *Shiji* 67.2195.

236 For Denecke's argument, see Denecke 2010: 65–67; for the biographies of Su Qin, Zhang Yi, and Confucius's disciples in the *Shiji*, see *Shiji* 67.2185–2226; 69.2241–2277; 70.2279–2300.

ble that anecdotes on Confucius and his disciples were collected as part of persuasive materials for the purpose of enhancing the persuasive power of speech or writing. Indeed, a large number of the words and sayings in the Confucian lore are rhetorically oriented and would appeal to those interested in persuasion. Moreover, that similar anecdotes are woven into different narratives can be attributed to their nature as persuasive documents.

Connected with the interest in persuasion, those who sought court appointments and patronage would also identify with Confucius. Although the Confucian lore portrays the Master himself as failing to achieve his political ambitions, the lasting impact of his teachings and disciples on court life and governance is undeniable. Confucius's own frustration with his political career was later taken as an exemplary approach to maintaining principles when confronting the power of the Eastern Zhou monarchs who rejected Confucius's teaching. Confucius's career provided a rhetorical veneer to the market for talent in which the value of Eastern Zhou intellectuals had been reassessed. Yuri Pines emphasizes the link between this Warring States market for talent and the haughtiness of the Warring States intellectuals.<sup>237</sup> Warring States intellectuals enjoyed unprecedented flexibility of employment thanks to the geopolitical environment of the time that enabled them to travel from one state to another in search of employment. Confucius's frustration was reinterpreted as a kind of loftiness and was used for a manifesto on talent, arguing that one should seek a better position elsewhere when not appreciated by a ruler. Position seekers, who wanted to avail themselves of the Master's reputation, collected Confucius's words and anecdotes to rebuild his reputation and reinterpret him as a model figure for the flourishing Warring States intellectual market.

A third group of collectors of Confucian lore were likely a subset of this broader group of intellectuals. They were adherents of Confucius's teachings who also had to compete in the new Warring States market for talent and would likely collect the sorts of anecdotes that would help position them favorably. A pedagogical interest in disseminating the Master's teachings explains anecdotes with the Master's words on poetry and ritual, but this does not account for the many anecdotes in Confucian lore pertaining to holding office and serving the state listed first among the various ways proposed by Mark Lewis for Warring States schoolmen to earn money.<sup>238</sup> In spite of the rhetorical loftiness coloring the Confucian lore, numerous anecdotes indicate that Confucius's students were interested in being engaged in the affairs of state. In this sense, Confucius's frustration as presented in the lore

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237 Pines 2009: 168–172.

238 Lewis 1999: 73–83.



reflects his desire to participate in government. As persuasion became more critical for securing a government job during the Warring States period, collecting anecdotal information on the head of their teaching lineage was necessary.

The final possible motive for those originally engaged in gathering Confucius's words into written form may have been associated with the competition among Warring States scholarly groups.<sup>239</sup> Some were likely keen on defending the image and reputation of Confucius against attacks from other textual groups and teaching traditions. Passages from *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* discussed earlier in the chapter illustrate the urgency to distinguish Confucius's "true" words from "false" attributions. This need may have prompted Confucius's followers to extract out of the Confucian lore the words and deeds helpful in elevating Confucius's reputation, thus refuting the disparaging remarks on the Master being propagated by other textual traditions.

We see both tendencies in the *Kong congzi*. In addition to the positive assembly of anecdotes in the first five chapters, the text also includes the "Jiemo" 詰墨 (Interrogating Mohists) chapter refuting Mozi's words for his attacks against Confucius and Confucian ideas.<sup>240</sup> This "Jiemo" chapter comprises a series of nine rebuttals responding directly to the Mohist anecdotes criticizing Confucius and his ideas that are for the most part preserved in the "Feiru" 非儒 (Blaming Confucians) *pian* of the *Mozi*.<sup>241</sup> Each rebuttal shares the same form: it opens with an account of what "Mozi says" or what "Mozi claims" (*Mozi yan* 墨子言 or *cheng* 稱), and then offers a critical reading of the Mohist allegation to expose it as groundless. Scholars disagree about the date of the *Kong congzi*, but it is fair to say that it is not the kind of forgery the *bianwei* tradition has considered it to be.<sup>242</sup> However late when all the materials were combined into a large text, at least part of the *Kong congzi* writings are rooted in the Warring States' social and textual context;

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239 The *yu* and *shuo* types of writings, according to Qiu Xigui, are a product of the polemical atmosphere of the Warring States. The *Shuoyuan* and *Kongzi jiyu* as well as newly discovered texts, such as "Rujiazhe yan" found in Bajiaolang and the "shuo lei" 說類 (Category of Saying) text excavated in Fuyang, are all witnesses of the Warring States polemical culture. *Yu* and *shuo* writings were not limited to Confucius, Qiu suggests, as other textual traditions also compiled their own *yu* and *shuo* types of writing, as preserved in the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 fables and anecdotes, the "Chushuo" 儲說, "Yulao" 喻老, and "Guanxing" 觀行 chapters of *Han Feizi*, the "Feiru" 非儒, "Luwen" 魯問, and "Gongmeng" 公孟 chapters of *Mozi* 墨子, and the excavated materials on persuaders like Su Qin. See Hu Pingsheng 2000: 532.

240 Fu Yashu 2011: 1–110, 391–409.

241 Six of the nine cited anecdotes can be found in the "Feiru" *pian* of the *Mozi*. The other three are available in the *Yanzi chungqiu*. The reason for the absence of the three anecdotes in the "Feiru," Zheng Liangshu suspects, must be related to the latter's textual corruption. See Zheng Liangshu 2001: 259.

242 Zheng Liangshu 2001: 252–264; Fu Yashu 2011: 605–614.

the compilation and transmission of all these materials in the form of a unified text have prevented earlier materials from being lost. Moreover, the defensive tone observable in the *Kong congzi* also appears in the “*Fei shi’er zi*” and other chapters of the *Xunzi*. The *Xunzi*’s efforts to distinguish the “true” words of Confucius by citing transmitted aphorisms, the *zhuanyue* passages, could have been instigated by the desire to counter the criticisms of Mohists and other groups.<sup>243</sup> In short, debates between the Confucian teaching lineage and other textual traditions must have also been part of the impetus for producing collections of Confucius’s words and anecdotes in their written form.

At present, we cannot track the trails of the individual *pian* units from the time of their formation to the time they were concealed with other archaic-script texts in the walls of Confucius’s residence, but it was a fortunate event that Prince Gong rediscovered the texts when partially destroying Confucius’s residence to expand his own. Regardless of who (Confucius’s descendants, Confucius’s adherents, or outsiders) hid the texts and why they were hidden (to avert evil or to escape confiscation), the discrete *pian* were forever transformed when Kong Anguo began to treat the units as parts of a single collection, called the *Lunyu*, and to teach it as such to his student, Fu Qing of Lu. The reorganization of the *pian* entailed a reconceptualization of the material: the anecdotes originally used for a variety of purposes were redefined as snippets capturing real moments of Confucius’s life. This redefinition especially elevates the status of the anecdotal conversations between Confucius and his disciples, as they become the core which shapes the image of Confucius as a great educator, the head of the Confucian teaching lineage. New pedagogical groups developed soon after the compilation of the *Lunyu*, and the text’s reputation grew along with the political successes of those who studied and taught it. Its status was promptly elevated following the Han imperial promotion of Confucian teaching and learning marked by Emperor Wu’s establishment of the positions of the Erudites of the Five Confucian Classics. The *Lunyu* is distinguished from the collections of writings on the various masters in the “*Yiwen zhi*” by being listed with the classics—the *liuyi*, or six arts. It also became a text read by Han emperors and taught to crowned princes, or future emperors, as part of their early education. The authority and high status that this text quickly obtained has lasted ever since its emergence, and the persistence of its authority perpetuates belief in the reliability of the text as a collection of accounts truly reflecting Confucius’s life and thoughts, so much so that it has become the most reliable source for studying Confucius, his life, and his thinking.

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243 For example, see Wang Xianqian 2010: 340, 408, 409, 451.

Seeing how the texts in the walls were transformed after their discovery helps us trace the ascendancy of the *Lunyu* thereafter. It also allows us to trace the general nature of Warring States master writings back to an earlier period before the ascendancy of the *Lunyu* obscured our vision of the texts from that time. Previous scholarship tends to describe pre-Qin master writings as following an evolutionary path. The path began with Confucius and his *Lunyu*, with a style of writing dominated by the presence of the Master and his words. By the time of Mozi, the extended treatise began to replace the short dialogues of the *Analects* as the preferred format for presenting the Master's ideas. The treatise influenced the subsequent writings of Mencius, Zhuangzi, and logicians until it fully matured in the perfected legalist texts, the *Han Feizi* and the *Lüshi chunqiu*.<sup>244</sup> As Mark Lewis notes, this evolutionary model of pre-Qin master writing condenses three hundred years of textual history into the victory of treatise-writing over dialogues and quotations. This convenient model must now be recast to account for the new understanding of the *Lunyu* and new knowledge of excavated texts.

The *Lunyu* is not a compilation of class notes recording the statements of Confucius. It is a text formed much later than assumed. Moreover, newly discovered bamboo strips have revealed that collections of aphorisms and short narratives similar in form to those in the *Lunyu* coexisted with the lengthier prose writings (treatises). Finally, the abovementioned evolutionary model of pre-Qin master writing is based upon the form in which we read pre-Qin master writings today, yet the tomes preserving pre-Qin writings are largely a creation of the late Western Han, the result of the rearrangement of the Western Han imperial collection of texts. Certainly, that project prevented the loss of many texts, but preservation succeeded at a price, as those engaged in the project altered the texts by compiling individual *pian* into larger unified texts. These new, multi-*pian* textual units reflect Western Han thought and cannot be considered completely a product of the pre-Qin period. As such, we are reminded of the anachronistic trap that transmitted texts may lead us into, if we neglect the complexity surrounding the formation and authorship of early Chinese works.

### 3.7 The *Lunyu*, the *Chunqiu*, and the Quotable Author

The elevation of the *Lunyu*'s status would not have become possible without the Western Han reformation of the various discrete *pian* into an integrated collection of the words and deeds of the Master. Further explanation is needed, however,

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<sup>244</sup> Luo Genze 1985; Denecke 2010.

to determine why these accidentally discovered and deliberately rearranged texts were able to obtain credibility and fame in a relatively short period of time, especially when this newly formed text was first transmitted via small scholarly circles (i.e. the Lu and Qi teaching lineages). Even though some of the members associated with those lineages were officials before the *Lunyu* played a significant role in the Han dynasty, this does not explain its rapid rise in popularity. Here, our study demands further analysis of the *Lunyu*'s position as a text for educating the imperial heirs from the mid-Western Han onward.

The promotion of the *Lunyu* is related to the significant role held by the *Chunqiu*, a text long considered to have been “created” (*zuo* 作) by Confucius and important to Western Han governing ideology. An author of such an important text, a text believed to be encoded with heavenly principles, must have a concrete form which would consist of a discernable voice, recognizable manner, and characteristic action. The newly assembled *Lunyu* helped to rectify Confucius, as it contained information needed to reconstruct the historical Confucius, especially when considering that its passages presented the words spoken by the Master and the stories relating to the Master as recorded by those closest to him.

As the Western Han arose following the downfall of the Qin Empire, their newly founded dynasty inherited the Qin legacy, including its overall geopolitical structure and governing apparatus for ruling an empire. Moreover, the retrospective view of the fleeting Qin glory caused early Western Han people to identify the causes of the Qin downfall. As we see in Jia Yi's 賈誼 (200–168 BC) writings,<sup>245</sup> it was widely accepted that the cruelty of Qin's harsh laws had brought about the ruin of the first Chinese empire. In order to avoid the fate of its predecessor, the Western Han dynasty searched for an alternative governing philosophy to distinguish the “Han way of governance” (*Handao* 漢道)<sup>246</sup> from the Qin way.

The claim of adhering to the Zhou feudal system, however nominal, served as wartime propaganda to mobilize remnant forces of the local polities against the unified Qin. This is clearly seen in the *Shiji* writings which document the various rebel forces allied under the descendant of the former Chu ruling family and the rebel leaders who quickly divided the Qin Empire into a number of local polities once they had captured the Qin capital city.<sup>247</sup> Similar thoughts may have also resulted in the early Western Han's application of a dual system featuring the co-existence of a centralized government and multiple principalities. The early Western Han political landscape was largely the outcome of a compromise between

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245 For example, the “Guo Qinlun” 過秦論.

246 For the term *Han dao*, see *Hanshu* 87.3582, 4237.

247 *Shiji* 7.295–339.

imperial governance and an enfeoffment system, i.e., the Qin imperial system and the Eastern Zhou political structure. In early Han political discourse, the restoration of the Zhou enfeoffment system and the search for a more humane way of governing to differentiate itself from the Qin is considered the hallmark of early Western Han political thinking and practice.

It was against this historical backdrop that the *Chunqiu* and its alleged author, Confucius, rose to prominence and greatly influenced early and mid-Western Han political ideology. The *Chunqiu* as transmitted to us consists of brief historical records arranged according to the chronology of the Lu ruling family. Following those “scribal records” (*shi ji* 史記) that Confucius might have had access to, the *Chunqiu* outlines 242 years of history from the first year of Lord Yin 隱公 (722 BC) to the fourteenth year of Lord Ai 哀公 (481 BC).<sup>248</sup>

Notwithstanding its historical nature, the *Chunqiu* became a highly moralized text once it was attributed to Confucius, for it was said that Confucius had subtly encoded his criticism of the chaotic world in which he lived within the text. He reproached those who caused the chaos in the past as his message to future ages, in hopes that social and political order could be restored. This formulation of the *Chunqiu* and Confucius’s contributions to it is clearly presented in the *Mengzi*:

世衰道微，邪說暴行有作，臣弑其君者有之，子弑其父者有之。孔子懼，作春秋。春秋，天子之事也；是故孔子曰：知我者其惟春秋乎！罪我者其惟春秋乎！

When the world declined and the Way became obscure, heretical sayings and violent acts arose and there appeared subjects who assassinated their rulers and sons who killed their fathers. Fearing (such deterioration), Confucius created the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Spring and Autumn Annals* relates to the matter of the son of heaven. Therefore, Confucius said, “Will it be that those who recognize me will do so through the *Spring and Autumn Annals*? Will it be that those who blame me will do so through the *Spring and Autumn Annals*?”<sup>249</sup>

Put in its context, this passage is part of Mencius’s response to Master Gongdu’s 公都子 question of why Mencius was fond of debate. Mencius said that he did not really like debate at all, but the contemporary intellectual atmosphere forced him to do so: he must confront the forces of disorder in a chaotic world in order to restore order, just as the former sages and sage-kings confronted chaos: Yu tamed the floodwaters, the Duke of Zhou assisted King Wu to conquer the dissolute King Zhou of Shang 商紂王, and Confucius completed the *Chunqiu* to deter those

<sup>248</sup> *Shiji* 47.1943.

<sup>249</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 141.

“treacherous subjects and villainous sons”亂臣賊子。<sup>250</sup> For Mencius, however, Confucius’s encoded messages for remedying the chaotic world were being obstructed and obscured by such Warring States thinkers as Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mo Di 墨翟, who proposed alternative methods to govern the world. By engaging in debates against his opponents, Mencius thus continued the sages’ endeavor to bring order to this world. From Mencius’ perspective, this duty had been passed down from the sage Yao to Confucius, and then to Mencius himself, the “disciple of the Sage” 聖人之徒, as he labels himself elsewhere as such in the *Mengzi*.<sup>251</sup>

It should be clear, then, why Confucius created the *Chunqiu*. According to this passage, the *Chunqiu* was a weapon to terrify rebellious ministers and villains. In responding to the chaos of his times, Confucius crafted the *Chunqiu* as his means to restore order, just as former sage-kings had created methods for dealing with the natural or social disasters of their times. But how could the *Chunqiu* be such a powerful text? The answer is by no means obvious. It seems that when Mencius states “the *Chunqiu* related to the matter of the son of heaven,” he implies that the *Chunqiu* reflects the true Mandate of Heaven. Furthermore, he suggests that Confucius’s writing of the *Chunqiu* is itself “a matter of the son of heaven.” Confucius was not a king and could not be called “the son of heaven,” but he acted as a king in a chaotic age by delivering a kingly message through the *Chunqiu*. By authoring the text, Confucius faced the predicament of being blamed for his actions, even though he also expected that the enlightened would recognize and appreciate his efforts.

The portrayal of the *Chunqiu* as a matter of the son of heaven also appears in another passage of the *Mengzi*, as follows:

王者之迹熄而詩亡，詩亡然後春秋作。晉之乘，楚之檮杌，魯之春秋，一也。其事則齊桓、晉文，其文則史。孔子曰：其義則丘竊取之矣。

The extinction of the king’s messengers<sup>252</sup> in charge of gathering odes led to the dying out of the *Odes*; the dying out of the *Odes* led to the creating of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The *Sheng* of the State of Jin, the *Taowu* of the State of Chu, and the *Chunqiu*<sup>253</sup> of the State of Lu, are all the same: their contents related to Duke Huan of Qi or Duke Wen of Jin, the

<sup>250</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 141–142.

<sup>251</sup> Yang Bojun 2010b: 142.

<sup>252</sup> I follow Zhu Junsheng 朱駿聲 in considering the character “迹” as a wrong rendering of the character 迓 denoting the Zhou kings’ Messengers in charge of collecting songs. *Shuowen tongxun dingsheng* 185. Also see Yang Bojun 2010b: 177–178.

<sup>253</sup> Based on the context, this *Chunqiu* is not the *Chunqiu* created by Confucius but more like the other historic works listed.

words were left by the scribes. Confucius said, “I, Qiu, dare to borrow the model of the songs [in my creating of the *Chunqiu*].”<sup>254</sup>

This passage makes two comparisons to define how Confucius’s *Chunqiu* is different from other historical records. First, the writing of the *Chunqiu* is compared to the gathering of odes, through which the Zhou king was able to reach his people.<sup>255</sup> By sending out the royal messengers to collect odes throughout the Zhou domain, the Zhou king at least symbolically demonstrated his communication with his people while also claiming his authority over the territory where the odes were collected. That the *Chunqiu* ensued from the cessation of ode collection suggests that the king’s authority is transferred from the *Odes* to the *Chunqiu* created by Confucius. Moreover, comparing Confucius’s *Chunqiu* to the *Odes* distinguishes the *Chunqiu* from the historical records written by the scribes of Lu, Jin, and Chu. The records left by the scribes of these states, however, cannot be compared to Confucius’s work, for the “model” that Confucius adopted from the ode collection carried out by the king’s messengers is missed in the contents and words left by the scribes. In other words, Confucius imbued his *Chunqiu* with the principles of the Zhou’s orderly governance.<sup>256</sup>

Both comparisons confirm Mencius’s writing on the *Chunqiu* in the previous citation from *Mengzi*: the *Chunqiu* should be read as a kingly text and Confucius, its author, should be considered not only a sage, but also a king comparable to the former sage-kings. Nevertheless, what makes Confucius unique among the sage-kings is that he achieved his status merely through authoring the *Chunqiu*, a singularly important text, as can be seen in the *Mengzi* passage distinguishing the *Chunqiu* from other historical texts due to the specific Confucian “model” it offers. The argument may seem circular, but the interdependence between Confucius and the *Chunqiu* is emphasized to an extreme degree in the *Gongyang zhuan* 公羊傳 (Gongyang Commentary), which exerted tremendous influence on early and mid-Western Han politics.

According to the *Gongyang Commentary*, the completion of the *Chunqiu* signaled a revolutionary change in governance. The text immediately became canonical because of its treatment of governance. However, because Confucius himself was not a king when he was alive, the new Mandate of Heaven encoded in this text had to be recognized and carried out by a future king:

254 Yang Bojun 2010b: 177.

255 Yang Bojun 2010b: 177–178.

256 For discussion on the *Gongyang* hermeneutics and Confucius’s importance during the Han, see Gentz 2001, Gentz 2007, and Cheng A. 1985.

君子曷為為春秋？撥亂世，反諸正，莫近諸春秋。則未知其為是與？其諸君子樂道堯、舜之道與？末不亦樂乎堯、舜之知君子也？制春秋之義以俟後聖，以君子之為，亦有樂乎此也？

Why did the gentleman make the *Spring and Autumn Annals*? To dispel the chaotic world and reset it to the right, nothing works better than the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Perhaps some do not know that he (the gentleman) had made this (in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*)? Maybe the gentleman took pleasure in talking about the Way of Yao and Shun? Isn't it also a pleasure that Yao and Shun knew the gentleman? In establishing the model of the *Chunqiu* to await future sages, is there anything else more pleasant than what the gentleman did?<sup>257</sup>

The “gentleman” referred to in this passage is none other than Confucius, who is said to have created the *Chunqiu* to restore the order out of chaos. Confucius was able to “make the *Chunqiu*” not only because he understood and took pleasure in the Way of the sage-kings Yao and Shun, but also because Yao and Shun were able to predict the coming of Confucius so they could have him transmit their way to future ages. Such a mysterious mutual understanding between the sage and the sage-kings made Confucius an eager transmitter of the Way established by the former sage-kings.

The notion that Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu* for future kings is also echoed in the postface of the *Shiji*. In answering the Han Senior Grand Master Hu Sui's 壺遂 question on the same topic, the Grand Historian<sup>258</sup> replies that the *Chunqiu* reflects the “gathering and scattering of myriad things” (*wanwu zhi sanju* 萬物之散聚), i.e., the running of this world, and the pursuit of truth. According to the Grand Historian, people of all walks were to read it, as it contained instructions on every aspect of life; it is not only “that which is significant about the kingly Way” (*wangdao zhi da zhe* 王道之大者), but is also the “great model for ritual propriety and rightness to follow” (*liyi zhi dazong* 禮義之大宗).<sup>259</sup> As Hu Sui summarizes,

孔子之時，上無明君，下不得任用，故作春秋，垂空文以斷禮義，當一王之法。

In the age of Confucius there were no bright rulers above, below he could not be appointed to govern, therefore Confucius created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to transmit empty words to define ritual proprieties and rightness, and have it serve as the law of the one and only true king.<sup>260</sup>

257 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 春秋公羊傳註疏 28.626–628.

258 I discuss the identity of the Grand Historian in more detail in Chapter Five. Nevertheless, whether he was Sima Tan, Sima Qian, or someone else, does not matter. It suffices to know that this Grand Historian embraces the ideas preached in *Gongyang Commentary*.

259 *Shiji* 130.3297–3299.

260 *Shiji* 130.3299.



Here, we see that Confucius created the *Chunqiu* and made it a kingly law, but scholars have been puzzled by the information that Confucius “created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* to transmit empty words.” According to Dong Zhongshu, one of the leading *Gongyang* scholars in the Western Han, there is no doubt that “the *Chunqiu*, in correspondence to heaven, does the business of the new king,”<sup>261</sup> For Han *Gongyang* scholars, Confucius became the new king, replacing the Zhou kings by writing the *Chunqiu* based on the Lu chronology instead of that of the Zhou. Nevertheless, Confucius was not able to exert the power of a king in his lifetime and could only be considered an Uncrowned King (*su wang* 素王).<sup>262</sup> To Confucius, the *Chunqiu* might seem nothing more than “empty words” since he himself could not act as king and carry out the kingly law established in the text. This is why he had to “await future sages.” In this sense, Confucius served as both the creator and the transmitter of the law of kings.

To bolster the claim that the Mandate of Heaven fell upon Confucius, the *Gongyang* scholars created a myth centering on the capture of a unicorn (*lin* 麟) and Confucius’s writing of the *Chunqiu*. According to the *Zuo Commentary*, the capture of a unicorn occurred in the spring of the fourteenth year of Lord Ai of Lu 魯哀公 (r. 494–468 BC). Confucius recognized it as a unicorn and took it with him.<sup>263</sup> Neither the concise *Chunqiu* entry nor the *Zuo Commentary* further comments on this event. The *Gongyang Commentary*, however, interprets the capture of the unicorn as an omen foreshowing the coming of the king, since “unicorns are humane animals, who only appear when there is the king and do not appear if there is no king [governing the world].”<sup>264</sup> This seemingly auspicious portent, according to Confucius, however, predicts his tragic destiny. Upon recognizing the captured unicorn, Confucius sighed, “My Way is exhausted” (*wu dao qiong yi* 吾道窮矣).<sup>265</sup> He then felt the urgency to reveal his Way to later generations and created the *Chunqiu*, as narrated in Confucius’s biography:

弗乎弗乎，君子病沒世而名不稱焉。吾道不行矣，吾何以自見於後世哉？乃因史記作春秋。

261 春秋應天作新王之事。Su Yu 2002: 187.

262 *Hanshu* 56.2509.

263 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Ai 14.1682.

264 麟者仁獸也。有王者則至，無王者則不至。 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 28.619–621.

265 *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 28.624.

“No! No! A gentleman regrets passing away from this world without his fame being recognized. My Way surely will not be carried out, how can I reveal myself to later generations?” He then created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* based on the scribal writings.<sup>266</sup>

In addition to the *Chunqiu*, the Han *Gongyang* scholars also ascribed other classics to Confucius, considering him the author and transmitter of the Six Arts, as we see in Confucius’s *Shiji* biography. Accordingly, when Confucius saw that the Zhou royal house was so weak that “ritual proprieties and music were abandoned, and songs and documents were imperfect,”<sup>267</sup> he felt the obligation to “trace the rituals of the Three Dynasties and put the documents and commentaries in order.”<sup>268</sup> He not only arranged but also transmitted the ritual texts and the documents, as it says, “therefore the documents and commentaries as well as the records of ritual originated from Mr. Kong.”<sup>269</sup> Confucius also “set the music right” (*yue zheng* 樂正) after returning to his home state Lu from the State of Wei 衛.<sup>270</sup> To perfect ritual music, Confucius again edited the odes. He “deleted the duplications” (*qu qi chong* 去其重),<sup>271</sup> condensed the collection of lyrics from over three thousand to about three hundred, and made all the three hundred and five odes “in accord with the music of the *Shaowu*, *ya* and *song*.”<sup>272</sup> The *Shiji* account continues to relate Confucius’s fondness for the *Yi* 易 (Changes). It says that the *Yi* text was so frequently read by the Master that “the cords stringing together the bamboo strips broke many times” (*weibian sanjue* 韋編三絕).<sup>273</sup> More importantly, it claims that Confucius contributed a number of writings—“the Preface, the Tuan, the Xi, the Xiang, the Shuogua, and the Wenyan”—to the *Yi* textual body.<sup>274</sup>

In short, the notion that Confucius authored the Six Arts, especially the *Chunqiu*, is thus associated with the idea of Confucius as an Uncrowned King emphasized in the *Gongyang Commentary*. It is true that we can see the ennobling of Confucius in a number of texts, in particular the *Mengzi*, which elevates Confucius to an unprecedentedly high position,<sup>275</sup> but the *Gongyang Commentary* clearly state that the *Chunqiu* served as the king’s law and it is the *Gongyang* scholars who

266 *Shiji* 47.1943.

267 禮樂廢詩書缺. *Shiji* 47.1935.

268 追迹三代之禮序書傳. *Shiji* 47.1935.

269 故書傳禮記自孔氏. *Shiji* 47.1936.

270 *Shiji* 47.1936.

271 *Shiji* 47.1936.

272 合韶武雅頌之音. *Shiji* 47.1936.

273 *Shiji* 47.1937.

274 序彖繫象說卦文言. *Shiji* 47.1937.

275 For the summary, see Leng Dexi 冷德熙 1996: 166–168.

considered Confucius a king. This notion greatly influenced Western Han governance, as Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990 AD) has noted. “In the Han dynasty, the *Spring and Autumn Annals* seemed like a constitution [as in a modern society],” so much so that the Han imperial courts always sought recourse to the *Chunqiu* for important political and legal issues.<sup>276</sup> Indeed, Han intellectuals believed that Confucius wrote the *Chunqiu* exclusively to “establish the law for the Han dynasty.”<sup>277</sup>

Michael Loewe suggests that Western Han intellectual, religious, and political changes should be understood in a framework of two attitudes—Modernist and Reformist, each serving as dominant ideologies in the first and second centuries of the Western Han dynasties, respectively. According to Loewe, the Modernist attitude was rooted in the belief of a unified empire headed by the emperor directing people’s attention to the problems of the contemporary world. The Reformists, however, suggested that solving contemporary problems required the Han rulers to seek recourse to the past; to the governing philosophy and socio-religious system of the Zhou.<sup>278</sup> These two attitudes were also associated with different texts. The Modernists were sponsors of texts written in contemporary scripts and were especially fond of the *Gongyang Commentary*. The Reformists, by comparison, favored those texts written in archaic scripts and preferred to use the *Guliang Commentary* 穀梁傳 first and then the *Zuo Commentary* to counter the influence exerted by the *Gongyang Commentary* on the Han imperial court.<sup>279</sup> Loewe’s description of the two political forces does provide a general, if oversimplified, view on the dynamic of the power struggles throughout the Western Han dynasty. In this description, the ensuing popularity of and struggles between the three *Commentaries* to the *Chunqiu* text would not have existed had the *Chunqiu* not first established itself as a dominant text in shaping Western Han governing ideology.

Besides the *Chunqiu*, other classics considered to have been edited or written by Confucius also began to achieve canonical status during the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han. It seems that *Gongyang* scholars had success in persuading Emperor Wu to enact the “Kingly Way” that Confucius was unable to accomplish in his own lifetime. Confucius’s vision was taken up ideologically and politically, bringing great influences upon major policy makings, judicial decisions, as well as the education of the ruler and his subjects.<sup>280</sup> The sage had never before been so big a part of statecraft and people’s everyday life.

276 在漢朝，《春秋》彷彿一部憲法。Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 2001: 51.

277 為漢制法。Huang Hui 1990: 857.

278 Loewe 1974: 11.

279 Loewe 1974: 12–13.

280 *Shiji* 130.3298.

It is in the historical context of the Han Empire that the formation and transmission of the *Lunyu* and its sudden increase in credibility and authority should be understood. In this context, nothing else could provide a better tangible image of the sage than the *Lunyu*, which not only presents numerous pithy and quotable sayings by Confucius, but also depicts various “actual” scenes contextualizing Confucius as a great teacher transmitting his teaching.

The values represented by the Confucius portrayed in the *Lunyu* also accord with the Han *Gongyang* scholars’ argument that Confucius had prepared a humane way of governing for the Han rulers to follow.<sup>281</sup> The prominence of Laozi’s notion of non-determined action in the governing philosophy of the early Western Han was partly an antidote to the instability engendered by the cruelty of Qin law. Nevertheless, the newly founded Han dynasty, to a large extent, inherited the Qin law. Dissatisfied with the Qin legacy of social and political abuses, early Western Han Confucian scholars offered alternative governing principles. Aiming to remedy the defect of early Han governance, Dong Zhongshu stressed the importance of humaneness (*ren* 仁), virtues (*de* 德), and ritual propriety in governance.<sup>282</sup> The political success of Dong Zhongshu provided a foothold for these core values to be the future operating principles of the government. The depiction of Confucius as a strong champion of these values certainly fit the *Gongyang* scholars’ approach to a more humane governance.

Moreover, the image of Confucius portrayed in the *Lunyu*, according to Kai Vogelsang, is that of a revolutionary figure who advocated a new ethical system to suit the unprecedented social complexity of the Spring and Autumn period.<sup>283</sup> This image of Confucius agrees with the *Gongyang* scholars who regarded Confucius as an Uncrowned King. To them, Confucius replaced the Zhou king and became the king of the chaotic Spring and Autumn world.<sup>284</sup> This was viewed as a dramatic precursor of the Han’s (considered the continuation of Confucius’s “Kingly Way”) conquest of the Qin. In short, the timely emergence of the *Lunyu* text not only filled the need for a text describing Confucius as a person, but the contents of the *Lunyu* also reinforced the ideas of the *Gongyang* scholars.

The demand for a tangible Confucius reflects how authorship was used to lend credibility to the *Gongyang Commentary*. The *Lunyu* provided just such a tangible

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**281** He Xiu interprets the *Gongyang* commentary “to await future sages” (以俟後聖) as “to await the Han sage kings to make it (the *Chunqiu*) the law” (待聖漢之王以為法). See *Chunqiu Gongyang zhuan zhushu* 28.628.

**282** Chen Suzhen 2001: 98–194.

**283** Vogelsang 2010.

**284** Leng Dexi 1996: 173.

Confucius. Without the various teaching scenes depicted in the *Lunyu*, Confucius would have remained a myth created by the *Gongyang Commentary* to explain how the *Chunqiu* was written. The text of the *Chunqiu* still existed in the Western Han dynasty, but the existence of the unicorn myth and Confucius had receded in the minds of people. To demonstrate the credibility and applicability of the *Chunqiu* as a law left by a sage, the *Lunyu* helped anchor the myth of Confucius as a person in the real world: the sage was a real man. Once the author of the text was proven to be real, the credibility of the text was consequently enhanced.

In the *Shiji* account of Confucius's biography, we can also see this effort to reframe the *Gongyang* myth on Confucius's writing of the *Chunqiu* into a narrative focusing on the text's authorship:

顏淵死，孔子曰：天喪予！及西狩見麟，曰：吾道窮矣！喟然歎曰：莫知我夫！子貢曰：何為莫知子？子曰：不怨天，不尤人，下學而上達，知我者其天乎！不降其志，不辱其身，伯夷、叔齊乎！謂柳下惠、少連降志辱身矣。謂虞仲、夷逸隱居放言，行中清，廢中權。我則異於是，無可無不可。子曰：弗乎弗乎，君子病沒世而名不稱焉。吾道不行矣，吾何以自見於後世哉？乃因史記作春秋。

When Yan Yuan died, Confucius said, "Heaven has forsaken me!" When a unicorn appeared during a hunting campaign in the west region, Confucius said, "My Way is exhausted." "Alas!" sighed he, "no one recognizes me!" Zigong asked, "What do you mean no one recognizes you?" Confucius answered, "I do not resent Heaven, nor do I blame the people. I devote myself to learning below, I reach the Mandate of Heaven above. Isn't it Heaven that recognizes me? Neither lowering their aims nor humiliating their bodies, only Boyi and Shuqi were able to make it. If we talk about Liuxia Hui and Shaolian, they lowered their aims and humiliated their bodies. As for Yu Zhong and Yi Yi, they lived a reclusive life, gave up talking, acted without losing purity, and abandoned themselves without losing balance. I, however, am different from all of them, neither accords yet neither does not accord with my Way." Confucius said, "No! No! A gentleman regrets passing away from this world without his fame being recognized. My Way surely will not be carried out, how can I reveal myself to later generations?" He then created the *Spring and Autumn Annals* based on the scribal writings.<sup>285</sup>

Although this passage does reiterate the *Gongyang* myth describing the connection between the capture of the unicorn and Confucius's self-awareness of his fate, it does not emphasize, as the *Gongyang Commentary*, how Confucius encoded a "kingly law" in the *Chunqiu* text. In the conversation between Confucius and his disciple Zigong, Confucius's response to Zigong's question focuses on a philosophical understanding instead of a mysterious connection between his fate and the Mandate of Heaven. The Master's frustration is immediately transformed into a kind of satirical enlightenment: it does not matter if others fail to recognize me;

285 *Shiji* 47.1942–1943.

Heaven will know me as long as “I devote myself to learning below, and I reach the Mandate of Heaven above.” The Master then compares himself with three types of famous men: those who stick to their principles, such as Boyi and Shuqi, those who are apt to change positions like Liuxia Hui and Shaolian, and those who choose to be hermits, such as Yu Zhong and Yi Yi. The Master does not align himself with any of them. In fact, he is holding himself to a higher standard, although his words sounding ambivalent and even cynical.

Rejecting these examples, Confucius’s actions suggest that he is to be judged by his writing. Disappointed in realizing that his “way was exhausted,” Confucius still exhibited hope that his writing would help transmit his fame to future generations via his authorship of the *Chunqiu*. However, Confucius’s concern for recognition contrasts with his acknowledgment that he was misunderstood by the world. This inconsistency in Confucius’s thought can be viewed as a reflection of the struggle to have his teachings passed down. Elsewhere in the biography, we learn that Confucius believed that he was chosen to be the transmitter of culture (*wen* 文).<sup>286</sup> Confucius thus became desperate when his favorite disciple Yan Yuan died young, and when he saw the unicorn omen predicting his own death. On both occasions, Confucius recognized the threat of a sudden cultural breakdown. Toward the end of his life, as this passage reveals, Confucius overcame his fear by authoring the *Chunqiu* and a number of other texts.

Connecting Confucian teachings with a now-historicized Confucius successfully carried Confucianism through generations. Han dynasty readers would have eagerly imagined the historical Confucius while reading his works. The following line in the Grand Historian’s “Encomium” to Confucius’s biography serves as a good example:

余讀孔氏書，想見其為人。

I, in reading Mr. Kong’s writings, imagine him being a [real] person.<sup>287</sup>

<sup>286</sup> It says that during the Master’s exile, the people of Kuang were hostile to Confucius and his entourage and tried to capture him. Confucius’s disciples felt frightened when the people of Kuang besieged them. To ease his disciples’ fears, Confucius says, “After King Wen passed away, isn’t the culture with us? Had Heaven wanted this culture to die out, those who die later could not have been with this culture; if Heaven does not want this culture to die out, what can the people of Kuang do to me?” (文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與于斯文也。天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予何！) See *Shiji* 47:1919; same words can also be seen in the *Lunyu*, see Yang Bojun 2010a: 87.

<sup>287</sup> *Shiji* 47.1947.

We also know that, in order to have a more fixed image of the Master, the Grand Historian visited Confucius's hometown, "observed Zhongni's (Confucius's) temple, hall, chariot, clothes, and ritual objects," and meditated on what the Master was like.<sup>288</sup>

For the Grand Historian, authorship was inseparable from the understanding of a text. Once a text had been granted to its author, the meaning of a text was stabilized, and the interpretation of the text in relation to its author became fixed. Similarly, the *Lunyu* fulfilled the *Chunqiu* by providing the text its historical author, and allowed it to become primary document on governing principles in the early and middle Western Han dynasty.

The many pithy words in the *Lunyu* attributed to Confucius and his fellow disciples are by no means univocal; the various anecdotal accounts also remain far from consistent, but overall this collection provides information, however scattered, to reconstruct the real life of Confucius as a great teacher and transmitter of his Way. This image of Confucius was immediately linked to the *Gongyang* myth regarding Confucius's creating a text to convey his heavenly mission of restoring order to the world for a future king, who was the Han emperor according to the *Gongyang* reading. Bound to a vivid image of Confucius, the ethereal unicorn myth became credible in the intellectual and religious atmosphere of the Han. Certainly, the timely emergence of the *Lunyu* not only substantiated the myth, but it also re-created Confucius. It is no surprise that, over time, the *Lunyu* passages that cause problems for the maintenance of a consistent image of Confucius have been gradually worked out through the circular author-text hermeneutic mechanism. Our reading of the Confucian Classics and understanding of Confucius become interdependent and will remain so as long as such an author-text hermeneutical reading continues.

Viewed from this perspective, we may view the *Sangjiagou: Wo du Lunyu* as Li Ling's attempt to break the author-text eisegetic circle and relocate the construction of Confucius within a modern intellectual discourse. The physiognomic passage from which the title of his work derives is, however, closely associated with the *Gongyang* myth transforming Confucius into a sage king. To translate the term *sangjia gou* as "an abandoned dog" is misleading if we consider the physiognomically positive overtone of that anecdote as well as the parallel passages in other texts. Indeed, according to the similar anecdote preserved in the *Hanshi waizhuan*, Confucius does consider *sangjia gou* as a complimentary term. In explaining to Zigong why he declines this rather flattering designation, Confucius interprets this

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288 觀仲尼廟堂車服禮器。Shiji 47.1947.

term to be very much like the title of Uncrowned King, which is certainly linked to the *Gongyang* scholars' sanctification of Confucius in the unicorn myth.<sup>289</sup>

### 3.8 Summary

I consider the broader issues associated with the image of Confucius as the author of the *Chunqiu* and other texts. How are we to account for the disparity in the fame awarded to Confucius during his lifetime and thereafter?

It is indisputable that Confucius occupies a prominent position in the tradition of the Chinese Classics. It is equally accepted that Confucius played an insignificant role in his contemporary social and political world, despite rising to such remarkable fame after his death. This occurrence can only be understood through an exhaustive investigation of all available sources, both historical and anecdotal. Here, I merely pose two additional questions: Why did Confucius become one of the most quotable figures during the Warring States period, despite contradictory appearances in different textual traditions? And how was Confucius's fame established in the Western Han, and continuously enhanced thereafter?

The question of Confucius's sustained fame relates to the *Gongyang* myth and the Western Han official promotion of Confucian teachings. The invention of Confucius as the author of a kingly law codified in the *Chunqiu* and the timely emergence of the *Lunyu* provided information to reify the originator and anchored Confucius's fame in the Confucian Classics, then being established as the foundation of the Han imperial ideology. This occurred in a court-sponsored educational system based on the classics, and in imperial institutions that employed officials educated in the court-sponsored system.

By comparison, to the issue of Confucius's fame in the Warring States period is not as easily answered. Earlier in this chapter, when discussing the formation of the *Lunyu*, I proposed the existence of a large body of Confucian lore as providing the materials for those collecting Confucian sayings and anecdotes. Even though Confucius may have had enough contact with the courts of Lu and other states during his lifetime to be one of the subjects of the court setting debates, we may ask why such an insignificant figure would continue to be featured in those debates and be quoted by different thought schools long after his death. There must be a reason accounting for Confucius's fame, however delayed, in the Warring States period.

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<sup>289</sup> Xu Weiyu 1980: 323–324.



Confucius's social status may have been too low to exert any direct social and political influence in his time;<sup>290</sup> his teachings, however, may have been radical enough not only to attract people's attention in court debates, but also to have gradually been recognized as a realistic solution to the problems facing the Eastern Zhou period. The problems facing Warring States people were largely the same in kind, but probably worse in degree, to what had confronted people in the late Spring and Autumn period, the crux being that the political order reflected in a ritual practice that was devised during the "Late Western Zhou Ritual Reform" (occurring around 850 BC), had ceased to function.<sup>291</sup> Archaeological finds from the early sixth century BC (around a half century before Confucius's lifetime), demonstrate an attempt—referred to as the "Middle Spring and Autumn Ritual Restructuring"—to restore social order by instituting a burial and ritual code.<sup>292</sup> The code was a recent phenomenon for Confucius and his followers, but in evoking a dimly remembered past as the golden age of Western Zhou culture, Confucius's teaching was immediately colored with a sense of antiquity and could be easily misunderstood, as it is even today, as a stubborn call for the maintenance of the then outdated ritual practice supposed to have originated from the founding fathers of the Western Zhou.

If we discount the idea that the idealized ritual practice promoted by Confucius and his followers had been maintained from the beginning of the Western Zhou until Confucius's time,<sup>293</sup> we may seek other explanations for the selective invention of an ancient Zhou culture presented in the Confucian classics in light of the archaeological evidence illuminating the "new" ritual and social context in which Confucius taught. The "new" context is probably associated with, as Lothar von Falkenhausen puts it,

how the Zhou ritual system expanded both horizontally to encompass an ever vaster territory, and vertically to encompass ever more segments of the social hierarchy—reaching, in Warring States period, the point at which the barrier between ranked élite and commoners had become largely meaningless.<sup>294</sup>

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**290** Confucius has long been considered a member of the Eastern Zhou *shi* class that had fundamentally shaped the Eastern Zhou culture, but according to Gassmann, Confucius's social status was even lower than the *shi* strata. Hsu Cho-yun 1965; Gassmann 2003.

**291** Falkenhausen 2006; Rawson 1999.

**292** Falkenhausen 2006.

**293** Falkenhausen 2006: 403–404.

**294** Falkenhausen 2006: 402.

Confucius's teachings were then a response to the evolved socio-political structure that had thrown the old ritual institutions into disorder. By connecting the current ritual restructuring to the very beginning of the Zhou dynasty, Confucius and his followers were propagating a new system which evoked a past sense of order and unity while being firmly rooted in the social complexity of his times. Despite wrapping his approach to contemporary social problems in an antiquarian ethos, Confucius presented fundamentally new information to his contemporaries. In this sense, "we must begin," as Fingarette points out, "by seeing Confucius as a great innovator rather than as a genteel but stubbornly nostalgic apologist of the *status quo ante*."<sup>295</sup>

Accordingly, it warrants reading *Lunyu* against the Warring States social and ritual background. Kai Vogelsang's recent publication offers a positive example. He considers the increasing social complexity of Confucius's time as the driving factor leading to the appearance of Confucius; therefore, in order to better understand the *Lunyu*, we must read it against the specific historical conditions that produced it. Examining the *Lunyu* in the light of rituals, morals, and education associated with the changing Eastern Zhou society, Vogelsang shows that the information conveyed by *Lunyu* passages reflects the need for communication skills to help the educated class navigate their increasingly complex society.<sup>296</sup> In this sense, the contents of *Lunyu* remain historically consistent with Eastern Zhou social life. This consistency would also confirm that the *Lunyu*, far from being a Han forgery, was assembled with Warring States writings discovered in the walls of Confucius's mansion.<sup>297</sup>

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**295** Fingarette 1972: 60.

**296** Vogelsang 2010.

**297** Here it is noteworthy that the argument, mainly based on parallels of wording between the *Lunyu* and the texts arranged in the Han, states that the *Lunyu* was an early Western Han forgery. To rearrange a number of bundles of shorter texts into a relatively longer one called the *Lunyu* in the Western Han and to forge a new text called the *Lunyu* are different matters. It is possible that a forgery could be perfected beyond detection, and if this is the case with the *Lunyu*, an extremely sophisticated method must be developed to detect exactly how the *Lunyu* was forged, by whom, and for what reason. It also requires those who hold the forgery theory to find and compare the forgery with another example to observe how the *Lunyu* as a forged text could remain consistent with the motivation behind the forgery and with Warring States historical and social conditions reflected in it, while at the same time preventing the inclusion of any materials betraying the Han social and historical reality in which the text was forged.

I have also proposed in this chapter that the smaller textual units collected by the Confucian teaching lineage<sup>298</sup> and later compiled into the *Lunyu* were put in the walls of Confucius's mansion together with other ancient texts for religious purposes, likely for warding off evil influences. In order to prevent any negative influence that the dead may bring to the living, the living constructed tombs resembling actual living quarters to pacify (or to fool) the dead in the afterlife. To ensure that the dead stayed away, the living also used talismans to dispel the evil influence that the dead may bring about. While burial practices and usage of talismans varied across early China, it is conceivable that hiding texts in walls served a talismanic function in the context of the Warring States religious mentality.<sup>299</sup>

The usage of texts as talismans in early China certainly resulted in the loss of many texts. But this practice also preserved a number of early writings otherwise destined for oblivion. The *Lunyu* writings accidentally found in the walls of Confucius's mansion were probably hidden for some talismanic purposes, but once rediscovered, the texts were edited to satisfy the Western Han political and ideological need for materials to portray a tangible Confucius as the creator of the Han model of governance described in the *Chunqiu* allegedly authored by him.

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**298** It is worth noting that the Confucian teaching is to a large extent characterized as a sort of family tradition, for, according to Hans Stumpfeldt, “roughly one third of them (Confucius’s disciples) we know or can assume that they were related to Confucius and that they continued his teachings and their own teachings as a family tradition.” See Stumpfeldt 2010: 6.

**299** Also consult Stein 1990.

## 4 The Author as a Patron: Prince of Huainan, the Owner-Author

The term *Huainanzi* (Master of Huainan) simultaneously denotes a historical figure and a text attributed to him. Although there were four individuals granted the title “Prince of Huainan” (Huainan Wang 淮南王) during the Western Han, only one has been ever connected to the text entitled *Huainanzi*.<sup>1</sup> He was Liu An 劉安 (179–122 BC), grandson of the Western Han (206 BC–9 AD) founding father Liu Bang 劉邦 (r. 206–195 BC). He had inherited this title from his father, Liu Chang 劉長 (198–174 BC; Liu Bang’s seventh son), who had died young when in exile for allegedly plotting a rebellion against the imperial court during Emperor Wen’s 文帝 reign (r. 180–157 BC).<sup>2</sup>

As a text, the *Huainanzi* consists of twenty-one chapters in its present-day form and has been considered one of the most voluminous of the early Western Han. Often, the life of Liu An has been key to scholarly understandings of the history of this text. And, simultaneously, for over two thousand years, the *Huainanzi* has served as the primary source for characterizing Liu An as its author. Unfortunately, despite this codependent relationship, we do not know for certain whether Liu An really participated in writing or editing the *Huainanzi*. In this chapter, we will review the various perspectives on the *Huainanzi* authorship and scrutinize relevant evidence supporting this text’s long held history.

First, it will be argued that Liu An did not, in fact, write the *Huainanzi*, and nor did he likely present the text to the imperial court. Instead, this discussion proposes that the attribution of the *Huainanzi* to Liu An has been intertwined with the growth of a Liu An lore centering on his literary talents and esoteric knowledge, in which text-making is closely associated with the legend of his having achieved immortality.

Secondly, the complexity of the authorship of the *Huainanzi* as presented in the “*Yaolüe*” 要略 (Summary of the Essentials), the last chapter of the current *Huainanzi*, is discussed for what it reveals about the editing process and editorial voice. I argue that the *Huainanzi* was formed after Liu An’s death, even though its incorporated chapters may have been formed in the Huainan court before his death.

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<sup>1</sup> The four Princes were Ying Bu 英布 (?–196 BC), Liu Chang 劉長 (198–174 BC), Liu Xi 劉喜 (?–144 BC), and Liu An. See *Shiji* 91.2598–2608; *Shiji* 118.3075–3094; Loewe 2000: 651–652; Major 2010: 4–5.

<sup>2</sup> *Shiji* 118.3075–3081. For an almost identical account, see *Hanshu* 70.2135–2144.

Finally, I examine the formation and authorship of the *Huainanzi* in the context of early Chinese text culture, from its physical creation to its burial context. Through this analysis, I shall explore the connection between the *Huainanzi* and early texts discovered in tombs, confirming that author and writer were often separate entities in early Chinese text-making. Liu An as the author of the *Huainanzi* reflects a type of authorship defined by patronage, rather than literal authorship.

#### 4.1 The Author and Its Function in Defining the *Huainanzi*

Most discussions on the authorship of the *Huainanzi* follow a similar line of assumptions: authorship not only provides biographical and historical background for dating the text and identifying textual variants, but also serves as the foundation for interpreting the text. This is especially the case in pre-modern Chinese literary studies: to analyze a text requires the determination of relevant authorial information, so that specific biographical details and historical moments can be used to put a text into a historical context. It is true that certain authorial information may enhance our understanding of a text, but the author as a hermeneutical device is a double-edged sword. An interpretation of a text which relies too much upon authorial information makes the text secondary to that characterization of the author and consequently restricts the field of interpretation. Moreover, the current stage of our knowledge of the nature and functions of early Chinese authorship suggests that an interpretive framework oriented by author would be unwise. Attributing a text to a cultural hero or head of a teaching lineage was frequently practiced in early China, and the person to whom a text is attributed may have nothing to do with the actual composition or subsequent compilation of the text.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, we must separate the concept of “the creator” of a text from its author; the author to whom a text has been attributed was not necessarily the writer of it.<sup>4</sup>

Much scholarship, however, operates under the simplistic assumption that the supposed author serves as the key to date and interpret an attributed given text.

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<sup>3</sup> Consult with the three models of composition and their according three types of authors in her introduction to *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*; see Queen, Sarah and Michael Puett 2014: 4–5.

<sup>4</sup> See Falkenhausen 2003: 439–526; Giele 2003: 409–438; Boltz 2005: 50–78; Yu Jiayi 2010; Qiu Xigui 2004: 79–91; Li Ling 1998: 105–136; Li Ling 2004; Xie Weiyang 2007a: 3–13.

Before analyzing the *Huainanzi* freed from labouring under such a misapprehension, we shall be well-served in reviewing the previous scholarship that has fallen to this assumption.

One general theory of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship relies on relevant information in Liu An's *Hanshu* biography. The theory proposes that Liu An and his entourage of scholars are the writers of the *Huainanzi*. According to the *Hanshu*, Liu An "invited several thousand retainers and masters of prescriptions and techniques to create an 'interior text,' which includes twenty-one *pian* units."<sup>5</sup> The late Eastern Han commentator Gao You 高誘 (fl. 205–210 AD) offers more details in his postface (*xumu* 敘目) attached to the *Huainanzi*. Of the thousands of retainers proposed as writers of the *Huainanzi* in the *Hanshu*, Gao You specifies the "eight elders" (*bagong* 八公) and a few Confucian scholars, such as Dashan 大山 and Xiaoshan 小山.<sup>6</sup> Gao's identification, though occurring centuries after Liu Xiang's *Bielu* 別錄 (Separate Records) as preserved in the "Yiwen zhi," has been widely accepted down to the present day.<sup>7</sup> Many scholars agree that Liu An was not only the patron of this text, but he also participated in planning, discussing, writing, editing, and formatting it together with his entourage (especially those mentioned in Gao You's postface). Once finished, Liu An presented it to the imperial court during a visit in 139 BC, apparently in hopes of providing governing advice and winning the favor of the newly enthroned Emperor Wu.<sup>8</sup> Current information is, however, insufficient for determining the precise roles Liu An and other members of the writing team played in compiling each chapter.<sup>9</sup>

Dissatisfied with the vagueness of this synthesis, Charles Le Blanc proposes that the precise role Liu An played as the author of the *Huainanzi* must be scrutinized in order to define its compositional mode and to make the text more understandable. He examines three types of data in his attempt to settle the question

5 招致賓客方術之士數千人作為內書二十一篇. *Hanshu* 44.2145.

6 He Ning 1998: 5. Gao's postface is incorporated in the *Huainanzi jishi* by He Ning and will be discussed more intensively later.

7 If Gao You finished his commentaries in 212 AD, seventeenth year of the Jian'an era, as he says in his postface, there is a gap of around 200 years between Gao's postface and the arrangement of the Han imperial library directed by Liu Xiang and, later, his son Liu Xin. If we trace the *terminus ante quem* of the *Huainanzi* to the year of 139 BC when Liu An visited the imperial court, then the gap expands to 350 years. The reason that I hesitate to take 139 BC as the *terminus ante quem* of the *Huainanzi* will be explained below.

8 It says in the *Shiji* that "in the second year of the Jianyuan era (140–135 BC), the king of Huainan paid his visit to the imperial court" 建元二年，淮南王入朝。Many scholars believe that it was in this year that Liu An presented the *Huainanzi* to the Han imperial court. See *Shiji* 118.3082.

9 Roth 1992: 18–23; Major et al 2010: 7–13; Xu Fuguan 2001: 108–113; Mou Zhongjian 牟鍾鑿 1987: 154–162; Chen Jing 2004: 19–27.

of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship, which he terms "external and internal evidence": (1) the direct testimony of Han bibliographers, historians, and writers; (2) the psychological plausibility that Liu An wrote such a book; and (3) the intrinsic nature of the work, its unity and diversity in design, thought, and style.<sup>10</sup> After examining scholarship from the Han, Song, and modern periods, Le Blanc proposes that it is Liu An who "appears directly responsible for the conception of both form and content, for the composition of some parts thereof and for the overall editorship."<sup>11</sup> This argument emphasizes Liu An's role in the making of the *Huainanzi*; it was Liu An rather than his scholarly entourage who played the largest role in both writing and editing this text. Liu An should therefore be considered the author of the *Huainanzi*.<sup>12</sup>

It is worth noting, however, that Le Blanc not only interprets the "Han testimony" too literally, but, as pointed out by Harold Roth, reads Gao You's prefatory comments on the text's authorship in a way that especially favors his argument.<sup>13</sup> The rationale behind his reading actually remains consistent with his study's promise to reject the notion of the *Huainanzi*'s unoriginality and to prove the intrinsic consistency within this text.<sup>14</sup> This intention lays the foundation for further analysis of the text based on Liu An's biographical information, which is an assumption Le Blanc attempts to prove applicable to the reading of the *Huainanzi*. By attributing the *Huainanzi* to Liu An, Le Blanc opens the way for Griet Vankeerberghen and Chen Jing 陳靜 to historicize and analyze the *Huainanzi* in conjunction with Liu An's life and the contemporary socio-political atmosphere. Such an attribution overestimates the significance of both the early Western Han political struggles and Liu An's tragic life in the making and interpreting of this text.<sup>15</sup>

According to Sarah Queen and Michael Puett, the *Huainanzi* represents a "Corporate Model of Textual Production." According to this model, by definition, there can thus be no question that the *Huainanzi* belongs to "a product of multiple writers and/or compilers who were brought together by and worked under the auspices and direction of an official patron."<sup>16</sup> What perplexes scholars, however,

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10 Le Blanc 1985: 25.

11 Le Blanc 1985: 41.

12 Le Blanc 1985: 24–41.

13 Le Blanc 1985: 25–30; Roth 1992: 21. The "Han testimony" includes, for example, passages from the *Lunheng* and the *Xijing zaji* 西京雜記 (Miscellaneous Records of the Western Capital).

14 Le Blanc 1985: 6–8.

15 Vankeerberghen 2001, especially 2–5 in the introduction part, and Chen Jing 陳靜 2004, especially 112–171.

16 Queen, Sarah and Michael Puett 2014: 4.

is the role that Liu An played in the formation of this text. Realizing the inconsistency of what Le Blanc would categorize as the “external evidence” regarding Liu An’s role in the formation of the *Huainanzi*, the translation team of the *Huainanzi* turns to the text itself to search for what Le Blanc would call “internal evidence.” The team detects patterns observable in the chapter titles, literary form and genre, rhetorical styles, organizing principles as well as contents, crystalized in the root-branches structure, in this text proposed by Andrew Meyer.<sup>17</sup>

The *Huainanzi*’s embedded root-branches structure, according to Meyer, demonstrates that this text “is a very deliberate and carefully structured treatise that maintains a highly unified and consistent perspective throughout.” He extends this argument to assert that this structure betrays Liu An’s intention to influence the Han governing philosophy and practice through his text. Nevertheless, “[t]hose who objected to the ideological stance of the *Huainanzi* would feel threatened by the rhetorical elegance with which it forwarded its case, and even those who had no strong ideological objections to its perspective might well see in its polemical achievements a gross act of *lèse-majesté*,” and, as a result, this text cost Liu An’s political demise and even his life.<sup>18</sup>

The revealing of the root-branches structure in the *Huainanzi* undoubtedly helps with our understanding of this text as a whole, but how pervasively this structure is built in each and every chapter as well as the text as a whole still awaits further evaluation. In addition, how to measure the degree of this unifying feature still remains problematic. Scholars have been exploring some possible organizing principles guiding the composition or compilation of this text, but inconsistency and even contradictions are noticeable throughout this text and cannot be explained away by the claim of the text’s wholeness and seamlessness made in the “*Yaolüe*.”<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, whether or not the *Huainanzi* is a structured text is not an indispensable factor determining its authorship. Even if we agree that the root-branches structure is indeed present in the *Huainanzi*, such a structure may have resulted from efforts that went into compilation, and Liu An did not necessarily participate in this compiling process. To identify the connection between the text and Liu An’s role in its formation, such “internal evidence” alone is insufficient. In fact, Meyer contextualizes the *Huainanzi* against early Western Han political

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<sup>17</sup> Queen, Sarah and Michael Puett 2014: 8–9.

<sup>18</sup> Meyer, A. 2014: 23–39.

<sup>19</sup> For example, for the comments of the inconsistency of the *Huainanzi*, see He Ning 1998: 1504, 1518; Mu Zhongjian 1987: 161–171. For the claim of the wholeness of the twenty chapters as well as the purpose of the composition of each single chapter, see He Ning 1998: 1439–1454; Nylan 2014a.



and intellectual history through the *Hanshu* narration, which states that Liu An presented the *Huainanzi* to the imperial court.

In comparison to the above arguments emphasizing Liu An's role in writing and/or compiling the *Huainanzi*, Martin Kern proposes the "Summary of the Essentials," the last *pian* of *Huainanzi* in its extant form, as a performative piece defining the *Huainanzi*'s authorship. He suggests that Liu An can be regarded as the author of the *Huainanzi* only in so far as the work is conceived as such in the "Yaolüe," which he considers a *fu* 賦 rhapsody presented by Liu An to Emperor Wu in 139 BC. The remaining twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi*, Kern proposes, may have been made by groups of scholars from different traditions over different periods of time, but they united as a whole only at the moment when they were presented to the emperor by Liu An. In other words, the *Huainanzi* is a compilation brought together for the specific historical occasion of 139 BC; without this historical conjunction, the incorporated individual chapters would have remained scattered.<sup>20</sup> The term "authorship," in this sense, is defined by this historical occasion of performing the text. The author, then, is not necessarily the person who wrote the physical text but rather the person who presented the text and created coherence among the incorporated chapters in his performance. From this perspective, the author still functions as a helpful factor in understanding the text, though he is no longer the fundamental element guiding the analysis of the text, and instead becomes a keyword under which texts written by various persons are grouped; the meaning of the text may be related to, but does not necessarily depend on, the socio-political background indicated by the author's biography.

This approach is indeed inspiring to the study of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship, especially since it shifts the focus away from Liu An's role in writing or compiling the text to his role in presenting it. Nevertheless, the contradicting information regarding the presentation of this text to the court suggests that it is wise not to argue that the "Yaolüe" was actually performed before the Han Emperor in 139 BC. Furthermore, we need to give a second thought to the assumption that the "Yaolüe" is truly a *fu* rhapsody written for the purpose of that historical performance.

Kern proposes that the interpretation of the "Yaolüe" should be based on the trend of promoting literary writing and the popularity of the *fu* rhapsody, in particular both in Liu An's local court and in the imperial court under Emperor Wu. In order to argue that the "Yaolüe" is a *fu* piece for performance, he examines its rhyming schemes as evidence. To be sure, rhyming can indeed be a euphonic and

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<sup>20</sup> Kern, 2010: 436–451. This is the Chinese translation of his article that later appeared in Queen, Sarah and Michael Puett 2014: 124–150.

mnemonic device useful for performance, though not all rhymed lines were actually performed, nor were all the words for performance rhymed. It should come as no surprise that writers employ euphonic patterns for other reasons besides performative purposes. For example, no matter how rhyming was connected with word performance originally, tidy wording and rhyming patterns would be adopted for aesthetic purposes even in silent reading. The pervasive existence of rhyming patterns throughout the *Huainanzi* chapters does not necessarily denote that all of them were pieces that had been performed.

Moreover, the belief that the performance must have been delivered by Liu An to Emperor Wu during the former's court visit in 139 BC needs further substantiation. The *Hanshu* does say that Liu An visited the imperial court and presented an "interior *pian*" (*neipian* 内篇) to the Emperor,<sup>21</sup> but it neither mentions that this "interior *pian*" was indeed the *Huainanzi* to which the "Yaolüe" is attached nor does it indicate that Liu An's presentation of those writings involved any performance. Without substantial evidence supporting a connection between these two events, it is legitimate to rethink the validity of the assumption that Liu An performed the "Yaolüe" as a *fu* piece even when he did present his writings to the Emperor. In fact, if we carefully examine the *Hanshu* account, there are issues undermining a direct connection between the *Huainanzi* of today and any text presented during a court visit in 139 BC. A reexamination of relevant evidence thus becomes necessary as all of the arguments above rely on the same set of data preserved in a few texts.

## 4.2 Liu An's Presentation to the Emperor

The body of materials used most frequently in discussing the *Huainanzi*'s authorship includes passages from Liu An's biography and the "Yiwen zhi" chapter of the *Hanshu*, the "Yaolüe" chapter of the *Huainanzi*, Gao You's postface attached to his commentaries on the *Huainanzi*, and related passages in other transmitted texts, such as the *Lunheng* and the *Xijing zaji*. What follows is an examination of these materials regarding the text Liu An presented to the emperor during one of his visits to the Han imperial court.

Among the abovementioned sources, the two *Hanshu* chapters compiled by Ban Gu are the earliest. Liu An's *Hanshu* biography resembles his *Shiji* biography, but in no place does the *Shiji* biography mention Liu An's fondness for literary study and writing, nor does it reference the *Huainanzi*. The silence of the *Shiji* on

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<sup>21</sup> *Hanshu* 44.2145.

the *Huainanzi* and Liu An's other writings prompts us to reevaluate how Sima Tan 司馬談 (165–110 BC) or Sima Qian (ca. 145/135–86 BC), both contemporaries of Liu An, could have neglected such a critical aspect of Liu An's life. The *Shiji* "oversight" also makes the *Hanshu* passages more interesting and deserving of careful scrutiny when used as the key evidence in discussing the *Huainanzi*'s authorship. The following passage is found in Liu An's *Hanshu* biography:

淮南王安為人好書，鼓琴，不喜弋獵狗馬馳騁；亦欲以行陰德拊循百姓，流名譽。招致賓客方術之士數千人，作為內書二十一篇，外書甚衆，又有中篇八卷，言神仙黃白之術亦二十餘萬言。時武帝方好藝文，以安屬為諸父，辯博善為文辭，甚尊重之。每為報書及賜，常召司馬相如等視草乃遣。初，安入朝，獻所作內篇，新出，上愛祕之。使為離騷傳，且受詔，日食時上。又獻頌德及長安都國頌。每宴見，談說得失及方技賦頌，昏莫然後罷。

An, Prince of Huainan, was a person fond of texts, drums, and zithers, and not willing to take delight in shooting and hunting, raising dogs and horses, or galloping. He also intended to cater to the people and to spread his fame by secretly doing good for them. He invited several thousand retainers and masters of prescriptions and techniques to create an "interior *shu*,"<sup>22</sup> which includes twenty-one *pian*,<sup>23</sup> as well as many *pian* of "exterior *shu*." They also wrote eight *juan*<sup>24</sup> of "central *shu*," amounting to over two hundred thousand words discussing the techniques of achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver. At that time Emperor Wu was fond of art and literature. Because An was among the uncles of the Emperor, and because An was eloquent, erudite, and good at literary expression, the Emperor respected him greatly. Whenever responding to An's letters or rewarding him, the Emperor often summoned Sima Xiangru and others to inspect the draft before sending it out. Sometime earlier, when An visited the court, he presented the "interior *pian*" that he created, which was new, the Emperor liked and put it in his collection.<sup>25</sup> The Em-

**22** The Chinese character *shu* 書 here can be rendered as "writing," but in order to clearly distinguish the several texts mentioned in this passage, this character intentionally remains untranslated.

**23** A *pian* consists of a certain number of consecutive *jian* 簡, bamboo or wood strips on which one or more columns of characters are written; it is approximately like *zhang* 章 of its modern meaning, or chapter, in the sense of its being a unit of written contents. Excavated manuscripts suggest that the length of a *pian* had not been standardized during the Warring States and Han periods. Also consult Loewe 1997: 167–169; Li Junming 李均明 2003: 135–168; Wilkinson 2000: 444–447; Tsien Tsuen-Hsui 2004: 120–125; Sun Deqian 1972: 34–35.

**24** A *juan*, or "volume," is a completed *pian* that is rolled and bound together by strings. But Tsuen Hsui Tsien contends that *pian* and *juan* should have been applied to different writing materials: the former was used for bamboo strips and the latter, silk. Sometimes titles of the texts were written on the reverse surfaces of one or more of the strips, as attested by excavated literary or administrative texts. Loewe 1997: 167–169; Li Junming 2003: 135–168; Wilkinson 2000: 444–447; Tsien Tsuen-Hsui 2004: 120–125; Sun Deqian 1972: 34–35.

**25** My translation is based on the awkward punctuation of this part. I shall return to the topic below.

peror asked An to write commentaries on the “Lisao” (Encountering the Sorrow); An received this imperial order early in the morning and presented his commentaries by breakfast time. He also presented two pieces called “Songde” (Praising Virtues) and “Chang’an duguo song” (Encomium on the Inner and Outer Cities of Chang’an). When meeting An or inviting An to banquets, the Emperor liked to talk with him about successes and failures, recipes, techniques, *fu* rhapsodies, and encomium writings. They would not end their conversations until nightfall.<sup>26</sup>

In comparing the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* accounts of Prince of Huainan, we find several critical pieces of information regarding Liu An’s writing which is missing from the *Shiji* account, although the sentences stressing Liu An’s preference of texts and music over shooting and hunting remain identical in both accounts. It is this *Hanshu* passage which provides the details on the writings allegedly composed by Liu An and his retainers. It is also this passage that describes how Emperor Wu respected Liu An’s ability to compose literary works and how well Liu An was received by the Emperor during his visit to Han imperial court. Most important of all, it is in this passage where scholars locate the key—the “interior *pian*” presented to Emperor Wu by Liu An—to explain the authorship of the *Huainanzi*. It has long been held that this “interior *pian*” was indeed what was included in the text later called the *Huainanzi*.

The link between this “interior *pian*” and the *Huainanzi* is by no means clear on the basis of this *Hanshu* account; instead, the identification of the “interior *pian*” as the *Huainanzi* results from a synthesis of a few isolated pieces of information, including the mention of a “central *pian*” in both Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography, as we see above, and the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. First of all, the “interior *shu*” mentioned in Liu An’s *Hanshu* biographical account is considered the same as the “Huainan *nei* 淮南内” (interior [text] of Prince of Huainan), a text with twenty-one *pian* attributed to “Wang An 王安” (Prince An) as listed in the “Yiwen zhi.”<sup>27</sup> Few dispute taking “Wang An” as an abbreviated form of “Huainan Wang Liu An” 淮南王劉安, or “Prince of Huainan, Liu An.” The synthesis argues that the “Huainan *nei*” of twenty-one *pian* is none other than the current *Huainanzi*.<sup>28</sup> Once the “interior *pian*” alleged to have been presented to the Emperor by Liu An is equated with the “interior *shu*” without further scrutiny, it becomes natural to conclude that the “interior *pian*” is indeed the *Huainanzi*. The synthesis can be illustrated by the following series of equations:

<sup>26</sup> *Hanshu* 44.2145.

<sup>27</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1741.

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Zhang Shunhui 張舜徽 1990: 184–185.

interior *pian* (*neipian*) = interior *shu* (*neishu*)

= interior text of Prince of Huainan (Huainan *nei*) = *Huainanzi*.

In order to clarify how the *Huainanzi* is linked to the “interior *pian*,” an explanation is needed as to why the *Hanshu* passage translated above only appears in the *Hanshu*, and not in the *Shiji*. My proposal differs from Vankeerberghen’s suggestion, as I argue that the information on Liu An’s writings was added into Liu An’s biography when the *Hanshu* compiler made his version of Liu An’s biography, rather than the inverse.

In an attempt to explain the inconsistencies between Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies, Vankeerberghen proposes that Liu An’s *Shiji* biography is a severely biased one and, by comparison, Liu’s *Hanshu* biography is a more objective counter to this bias that is closer to a presumed “third” text ancestral to both the *Shiji* and *Hanshu*. She also suggests that Sima Qian might have written a more objective version of Liu An’s biography; nevertheless, this version was altered by official scribes under imperial censorship, unfortunately leaving us the version we have today.<sup>29</sup> Vankeerberghen’s argumentation assumes that more objective information in the proposed ancestral biography was better known than what was recorded in the *Shiji* and passed down to the *Hanshu* compiler. It is the efforts made by the *Hanshu* compiler to correct the bias of the inherited *Shiji* biography that help explain the inconsistencies between the two versions.

Inquiries regarding consistency constitute a crucial part of modern scholarship, but it is questionable whether the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* compilers weighed issues of consistency in the same manner that modern scholars might. Although both biographies have a certain degree of consistency, neither the *Shiji* nor the *Hanshu* elevated consistency to the level modern scholarship demands in presenting its materials. While bearing this in mind, we must consider that the cause of the inconsistencies between the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* are far more complicated than simply assumed governmental censorship. I suggest that their discrepancies are best understood by considering the nature of early Chinese text formation and transmission, rather than by presuming the existence of a third, more objective version ancestral to Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies. The compilers of the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* do not have to agree with one another; furthermore, transmitted texts could be altered, new materials could be added, and both transmitted and newly added materials could be synthesized. In this complicated process of making and remaking early Chinese texts, inconsistency should be viewed as a normal and

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<sup>29</sup> Vankeerberghen 2001: 67–78.

natural phenomenon, not an aberration. When seen against this background, textual alteration, however severe, was not necessarily linked to systematic political and cultural control.

Moreover, in this case, we do not have convincing evidence of the existence of a more objective version of Liu An's *Shiji* biography, nor is there any record demonstrating that a rewriting of Liu An's biography, let alone any other biography, occurred under the Han imperial order. In fact, related sources demonstrate that the *Shiji* was not intended to be presented to the imperial court and that this was only done several decades after Sima Qian's death and the end of Emperor Wu's reign.<sup>30</sup> The imperial court's late access to the *Shiji* does not eliminate the possibility that scribes were commanded to alter Liu An's biography, but it reduces the likelihood of such an occurrence. After all, such censorship would have more likely occurred during the strict reign of Emperor Wu, an era closer and more sensitive to Liu An's alleged rebellion.

Rather than trying to imagine some alternative *Shiji* version of Liu An's biography—one more consistent with the *Hanshu* biography—I would suggest that we search for other explanations for the discrepancies between Liu An's *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies. In terms of the additional information on Liu An's writings included in the *Hanshu*, I suggest that such information was probably not available to the *Shiji* compiler of Liu An's biography, but was later added into the *Hanshu* account. In general, our discussion on the different accounts of Liu An's writings should be guided by the widely accepted opinion that Ban Gu and those who worked on the *Hanshu* consulted relevant portions of the *Shiji* when making the *Hanshu*, and not the other way around. The absence of those records on Liu An's writings in the *Shiji* that nevertheless appear in the *Hanshu* is better explained as later addition than as the result of being excised from an imagined ancestral text.<sup>31</sup>

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**30** *Hanshu* 62.2737.

**31** Nienhauser 2002: xiii–xiv. Nienhauser opposes the trend of thinking that considers the *Hanshu* a primary source upon which some of the *Shiji* chapters were reconstructed. A. F. P. Hulswé is one of the famous representatives of this trend. In a paper published in 1975, applying the method of textual criticism, he compares Chapter 123 of the *Shiji* and Chapter 61 of the *Hanshu*, both of which describe a region called Dayuan 大宛, a northwestern polity strategically crucial to the Western Han in the Han imperial court's dealing with the Huns. He concludes that some long Chinese texts, such as the *Shiji*, were somehow lost and were reconstructed between 100 AD and 400 AD based upon surviving texts usually postdating the original *Shiji*. In the case of the *Shiji*, the *Hanshu* served as the primary source in reconstructing long texts during that period. David Honey studies the “Xiongnu liezhuan” 匈奴列傳 of the *Shiji* with its *Hanshu* parallel in the same vein in his 1999 article, and reaches a similar conclusion. Using the same method, Nienhauser's comparison of “Gaozu benji” 高祖本紀 of the *Shiji* and “Gaodi ji” 高帝紀 of the

I suspect that at the time Liu An's *Shiji* biography was written, the texts mentioned in Liu An's *Hanshu* biography were unavailable to Sima Qian, Sima Tan, or whoever the compiler could have been. If those texts, including the *Huainanzi*, were already stored in the imperial library, it seems likely that the Simas would have had access to Liu An's texts when they prepared to compile his biography. A more plausible explanation is that the additional information in the *Hanshu* account emerged after Liu An's *Shiji* biography was written; this additional information possibly derived from Liu Xiang's arrangement of the Han imperial library, as the "Yiwen zhi" chapter suggests.

In the "Yiwen zhi" chapter of the *Hanshu*, Ban Gu groups Liu An's works, besides his poetic pieces, under two categories—"The interior [text] of Prince of Huainan" and "The exterior [text] of Prince of Huainan," which correspond to the "interior *shu*" and "exterior *shu*" mentioned in the *Hanshu* account of Liu An's biography. The fact that both the "interior *shu*" and "The interior [text] of Prince of Huainan" include twenty-one *pian* apparently supports such an equation.

It is noteworthy, however, that the author of the "Yaolüe" chapter of the *Huainanzi* mentions three times that the *Huainanzi* consists of only twenty *pian*, even though both the "Yiwen Zhi" and Liu An's *Hanshu* biography claim that the "interior [text] of Prince of Huainan" includes twenty-one *pian*.<sup>32</sup> One explanation for this discrepancy is that Liu Xiang already considered the "Yaolüe" an integral part of the "interior text of Prince of Huainan" when arranging the imperial library. If the information on Liu An's writings listed in the "Yiwen zhi" chapter precisely reflects the results of Liu Xiang's arrangement of Liu An's works, and if "the interior [text] of Prince of Huainan" and the extant *Huainanzi* indeed refer to the same text, then we have reason to believe that the "Yaolüe" chapter had been integrated into the "twenty *pian*" by Liu Xiang's time. In any event, based on Gao You's postface to the *Huainanzi*, the "interior *shu*" and "the interior [text] of

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*Hanshu* yields a conclusion opposite to Hulsewé's and Honey's: "What in general can be assumed from the texts compared (and from other passages that have been read carefully in preparation for the translations which follow) is that in most cases it is impossible to view the often shorter, less detailed *Hanshu* texts as primary here. In cases where more information is provided in the *Hanshu* parallel, it is usually because Pan Gu is correcting an error or omission in the *Shih chi*. Although admittedly it is difficult to *prove* that even this chapter of the *Shih chi* is the primary text, the conclusion that can be drawn from the comparisons above are overwhelmingly in support of that assumption." See Nienhauser 2002: xiii–xlvi; similar idea, see van Ess 2014; for Hulsewé's argument, see Hulsewé 1975: 83–147; for Honey's view, see Honey 1999: 67–97; for the primary sources mentioned, see *Shiji* 123.3157–3180; *Hanshu* 61.2687–2698; *Shiji* 110.2879–2920; *Hanshu* 94.3743–3835; *Shiji* 8.341–361; *Hanshu* 1.1–84.

32 He Ning 1998: 1439, 1454, 1456.

Prince of Huainan” had been viewed as the same text with two different titles at least since the late Eastern Han dynasty.<sup>33</sup>

It is in the “Jingji zhi” chapter of the *Suishu*, however, that the *Huainanzi* is for the first time listed as the title of a text containing twenty-one *juan*.<sup>34</sup> Both the title and the number of chapters suggest that the *Huainanzi* is the same as “the interior [text] of Prince of Huainan.” To trace the earlier use of the term “Huainanzi” as a book title, a passage in the *Xijing zaji* gives some insight:

淮南王安著鴻烈二十一篇。鴻，大也。烈，明也。言大明禮教。號為淮南子，一曰劉安子。

The king of Huainan, An, wrote the *Honglie* in twenty-one *pian*. The character *hong* denotes “great,” and *lie*, “clear.” Put together, the term means making the ritual teachings greatly conspicuous. The text is called the *Huainanzi* (Master Huainan), or the *Liu Anzi* (Master Liu An).<sup>35</sup>

The *Xijing zaji* is considered a problematic text in terms of its date and authorship, but if the postface of the *Xijing zaji* was indeed written by Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343 AD) as alleged, we may say that the name “Huainanzi” had been applied to entitle Liu An’s “interior *pian*” by the early Eastern Jin 東晉 dynasty (317–420 AD).<sup>36</sup>

So far, we have examined how the “interior *pian*” mentioned in Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography is connected with “the interior [text] of Prince of Huainan” listed in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter, and the *Huainanzi* mentioned in the *Xijing zaji*. Questions arise, however, when the phrase “interior *pian*” is considered interchangeable with the phrase “interior *shu*.” As there is not sufficient evidence to make such an equation, we cannot simply take for granted that there is no difference between *neishu* (“interior texts/writing”) and *neipian* (“interior *pian*/chapter”) in this context, even if the two are sometimes used interchangeably. Generally speaking, the term *shu* 書 emphasizes what is written, while *pian* 篇 provides more information on the material form of textual organization. Consisting of more than one bamboo strip, a *pian* is a literary unit of varying lengths, but more akin to a “chapter” of a modern book. By contrast, *shu* may denote a larger piece of writing, such as a book that contains multiple *pian* chapters, as is the case of its usage in this *Hanshu* passage.<sup>37</sup> A *pian* could be a book-

33 He Ning 1998: 5–6.

34 *Suishu* 34.1006. Also, the difference of *pian* and *juan* in this case seems not to affect the length of each of the textual units but merely indicates the different materials on which the twenty-one textual units were written.

35 Xiang Xinyang 向新陽 and Liu Keren 劉克任 1991: 146.

36 For the date and authorship of the *Xijing zaji*, consult Xiang Xinyang and Liu Keren 1991: 1–4; Yu Jiayi 2007b: 1007–1017; Lao Gan 勞幹 1962: 19–34; Hong Ye 洪業 1981: 393–404; for the discussion on the different titles of the *Huainanzi*, see Chen Jing 2004: 16–19; Roth 1992: 55–78.

37 Tsien Tsuen-Hsuei 2004: 120–121; Pian Yuqian and Duan Shu’an 2006: 87–114.



length text, but to understand *pian* automatically as a book-length text may be misleading. As a result, we cannot equate “interior *shu*” with “interior *pian*” by default.

Apart from the historical uses of *pian* and *shu*, *neishu* and *neipian* very likely refer to different matters as they are mentioned in different contexts. The “Yiwen zhi” chapter divides the texts attributed to Prince of Huainan into “interior” and “exterior” texts, and this suggests that both *neishu* and *waishu* 外書 are editorial categories established by the editors for classifying different kinds of writing. Sun Deqian 孫德謙 (1869–1935 AD) believed that *nei*/interior and *wai*/exterior are two terms famously applied by Liu Xiang to differentiate the sources of texts: those found in the imperial library are classified as *nei* or “interior” texts, while those from outside collections are considered *wai* or “exterior” texts.<sup>38</sup> Yu Jiayi agreed that *nei* and *wai* was used by Liu Xiang to group different texts, but he went further and pointed out that *nei* and *wai* can also differentiate styles and contents.<sup>39</sup> Without any extant “exterior [text] of Prince of Huainan” we cannot compare the styles and contents of the two groups of texts, but the suggestion that *nei* and *wai* were originally editorial categories stands.

Whereas *neishu* most probably refers to a category, the *Hanshu* reference to *neipian* likely denotes a specific text—consisting of one or more *pian*, but probably short in length—presented to the Emperor on a court visit occasion. This observation is supported by the fact that the *Hanshu* passage indicates that other texts presented to the emperor or written to fulfill the emperor’s request are all likely short pieces suitable to be called individual *pian* and are clearly not comparable to the *neishu* or *waishu* categories. Moreover, adjusting the unconventional punctuation of this passage in the *Zhonghua shuju* edition, we gain a better understanding of what this term means: *neipian* here should be considered a single piece, rather than a set of writings, that Liu An created and presented during his visit to the court. The translation reflects the altered punctuation used below:

初，安入朝獻所作。內篇新出，上愛祕之。使為離騷傳，且受詔，日食時上。又獻頌德及長安都國頌。每宴見，談說得失及方技賦頌，昏莫然後罷。

Sometime earlier, Liu An went to the court to present his writings. When the “Interior *pian*,” in its fresh form, was produced, the emperor liked and put it in his collection.<sup>40</sup> The emperor asked An to write commentaries on the “Lisao” (Encountering the Sorrow); An received this imperial order early in the morning and presented his commentaries by breakfast time. He also presented two pieces called “Songde” (Praising Virtues) and “Chang’an duguo song” (Encomium on the

38 Sun Deqian 1972: 35.

39 Yu Jiayi 2010: 244–250.

40 The underlined translation is based on the new punctuation.

Inner and Outer Cities of Chang'an). When meeting An or inviting him to banquets, the emperor liked to talk with him about successes and failures, recipes, techniques, *fu* rhapsodies, and encomium writings. They would not end their conversations until nightfall.<sup>41</sup>

Reading the passage punctuated in the manner underlined above, we interpret a single occasion when Liu An visited the court, with the pieces presented to the court highlighted as the focus. It seems that all these pieces, being improvisational in nature, are mentioned to demonstrate Liu An's writing talents and broad knowledge. The improvisational nature of the works would also explain their relative briefness. As for their styles, the "Chang'an duguo song" and the "Songde" most certainly belong to the categories of "*fu* rhapsody" and "encomium writing." The "Lisao *zhuan*" also probably belongs to one of these categories, especially if we believe that the "Lisao *zhuan*" should be "Lisao *fu*," as Gao You states in the postface to the *Huainanzi*.<sup>42</sup>

*Neipian* may have categorically been related to political history ("successes and failures"), life-nourishing techniques ("recipes and techniques"), or literary writing ("*fu* rhapsody and *song* encomium")—all the topics which the emperor is reported to have enjoyed discussing with Liu An. However, according to Gao You's postface to his commentaries on the *Huainanzi*, the piece that "the emperor liked and put in his collection" is a *fu* rhapsody:

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41 *Hanshu* 44.2145.

42 According to Gao You, it was the "Lisao *fu*" rhapsody 離騷賦, instead of the "Lisao *zhuan*," commentaries on the "Lisao." Scholars notice this difference between the *Hanshu* and Gao You's postface as well as relevant information preserved in Xun Yue's 荀悅 (148–209 AD) *Hanji* 漢紀. Some suggest that the *Hanshu* passage is more reliable than this postface, others argue for the opposite. For instance, the late Qing scholar Wang Niansun 王念孫 (1744–1832 AD) suggested that the character *zhuan* 傳, as in the "Lisao *zhuan*," belongs to an erroneous rendering of *fu* 賦, which is interchangeable with *fu* 賦 because of the similarities of their pronunciations. Yang Shuda, however, opposes Wang's idea by arguing that throughout the *Hanshu*, especially in its "Yiwen zhi" chapter, *fu* 賦 has been consistently referred to as the literary genre *fu* rhapsody and the character *zhuan* in the "Lisao *zhuan*" is not a scribal mistake as Wang Niansun and others propose. A newly excavated text—the "Shen wu *fu*" 神鳥傳, or the "Fu Rhapsody of the Divine Crow"—from a Western Han tomb at Yinwan 尹灣, however, rather convincingly demonstrates the interchangeability of the two *fu* (傳 and 賦) characters. Although it is still possible, as Yang Shuda contends, that Liu An wrote a short interpretive piece about the "Lisao" called the "Lisao *zhuan*" in the *Hanshu*, it is more likely that that piece attributed to Liu An belonged to a rhapsodic work known as a *fu*. See He Ning 1998: 5; Yu Jiaxi 2010: 37–38; Yang Shuda 2007: 396–404; Wang Niansun 2000: 296; Qiu Xigui 1999: 6–7.

初，安為辨達，善屬文，皇帝為從父，數上書，召見。孝文皇帝甚重之。詔使為離騷賦，自旦受詔，日早食已。上愛而秘之。

Sometime earlier, because Liu An was discriminative, incisive, and good at composing literary works, because the emperor was his uncle, and because he wrote to the emperor several times, the emperor summoned him to a meeting. Emperor Xiaowen thought highly of him. He issued an edict, asking Liu An to create a “*Lisao fu* rhapsody.” Liu An received this imperial order in the early morning and finished writing the rhapsody by breakfast time. The emperor liked and put it in his collection.<sup>43</sup>

Readers of this short passage cannot help but notice its syntactic and lexical similarities to the *Hanshu* passage translated above. They both describe an occasion when Liu An visited the imperial court, won the emperor’s respect, and composed a very well-received work related to the “*Lisao*.” In unfolding the narrative regarding this occasion, both Gao You’s postface and Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography use the word *chu* 初, or some time earlier, to establish a time frame. Then, the two sources narrate the details of the visit with similarly structured sentences. The following table provides a side-by-side comparison of these two passages.

Tab. 4-1: A Side-by-Side Comparison of Gao You’s Postface and the *Hanshu* Passage:

Passage in Gao You’s postface (in its original order)	The <i>Hanshu</i> passage (with slight change in the sentence order to facilitate the comparison)
初，	初，
安為辨達，善屬文，皇帝為從父，	時武帝方好藝文，以安屬為諸父，辯博善為文辭，
數上書，召見。	安入朝，獻所作。
孝文皇帝甚重之。	甚尊重之。
詔使為離騷賦，	使為離騷傳，
自旦受詔，日早食已。	旦受詔，日食時上。
上愛而秘之。	上愛祕之。 <sup>44</sup>

The similarity of these two passages should not be a surprise, as it is generally accepted that Gao You based the account in his postface on the earlier *Hanshu* source. Nevertheless, it is not clear why Gao You did not follow the *Hanshu* when identifying the text that the emperor “liked and put in his collection”—Gao You identifies this

<sup>43</sup> He Ning 1998: 5.

<sup>44</sup> The pronoun *zhi* 之 here denotes the *neipian* instead of the “*Lisao zhuan*.”

text as the “Lisao fu” instead of the *neipian*—nor is it clear why Gao You set Liu An’s visit to the imperial court during the reign of Emperor Wen, rather than Emperor Wu. By replacing the *neipian* with the “Lisao fu,” Gao You’s postface does imply that the *neipian*, like the “Lisao fu,” was a well-crafted piece that evoked such great pleasure and fondness in the emperor that he made it part of the imperial collection. The characters *ai* 愛 and *mi* 秘 (or 祕 in the *Hanshu* passage) also highlight the emperor’s aesthetic appreciation of such pieces, that is, this kind of appreciation allowed him to consider literary works as fun and playful things, just as the Chinese terms *wanwu* 玩物 (plaything) and *nongqi* 弄器 (playful object) imply.

Changing the setting of this scene to Emperor Wen’s time also gives us clues as to whether the *Huainanzi* was indeed presented to the imperial court or not. Immediately after recounting Liu An’s composition and presentation of texts to the emperor during this visit, Gao You’s postface continues to explain the *Huainanzi*’s creation:

天下方術之士，多往歸焉。於是遂與蘇飛、李尚、左吳、田由、雷被、毛被、伍被、晉昌等八人，及諸儒大山、小山之徒，共講論道德，總統仁義，而著此書。

Many of the masters of recipes and techniques under Heaven went to join Liu An. Therefore he, with Su Fei, Li Shang, Zuo Wu, Tian You, Lei Bei, Mao Bei, Wu Bei, Jin Chang, and so on, altogether eight individuals, as well as various scholars such as Dashan and Xiaoshan, discussed the way and its virtues, summarized and unified ideas on humaneness and righteousness, and wrote this text (i.e., the *Huainanzi*).<sup>45</sup>

According to Gao You, this passage suggests that the writing of the *Huainanzi* occurred after Liu An’s meeting with Emperor Wen. By ordering the narrative as he does, Gao You seems to believe that the tremendous fame generated following Liu An’s court visit attracted “those masters of recipes and techniques under Heaven” to his Huainan court. As far as the formation of the *Huainanzi* is concerned, Liu An’s Huainan court served as the writing room where debates took place and syntheses were reached among the “masters of recipes and techniques” and “various scholars.” Accepting this sequence of events, it becomes clear that the *Huainanzi* was not among the pieces that Liu An presented to the court.

Nevertheless, after his visit to Emperor Wen, could Liu An have visited the court again and presented this *neipian* to Emperor Wu, as Liu An’s *Hanshu* biography tells? To reconcile this question, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908 AD) and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家 (1911–1966 AD) accepted the sources at face value and propose that the *Hanshu* and Gao You’s postface depict two different occasions when

<sup>45</sup> He Ning 1998: 5.

Liu An visited the imperial court: once in Emperor Wen's era and again during Emperor Wu's reign.<sup>46</sup> Many others accept such reconciliation. For example, according to Chen Jing, Liu An visited the Han imperial court in Emperor Wen's reign when he was sixteen years old, the year in which he was enfeoffed as Prince of Huainan. To synthesize the uncomfortable similarities presented in these two narratives, she speculates that Liu's literary talent must have been widely known by then, so that Emperor Wen's request for the "Lisao *fu* rhapsody" accords with the context. Chen Jing also imagines that Liu An's literary reputation must have been greatly enhanced by this meeting with Emperor Wen, thus Liu An was able to attract masters of various learning traditions to his Huainan court to write the *Huainanzi* — a project which began during the final years of Emperor Wen and was not finished until the end of the reign of Emperor Jing. Finally, in the second year of Emperor Wu's reign, i.e., 139 BC, Liu An paid another visit to the imperial court. Again, his writing skills were tested, but by a different emperor, again he wrote something on the "Lisao" within a few hours, which was described almost identically in both sources—and again each emperor "liked and put it in his collection."<sup>47</sup>

To be sure, as a Han royal family member, Liu An may have had the privilege to visit the imperial court more than once.<sup>48</sup> It is also possible that both Emperor Wen and Emperor Wu thought highly of Liu An's writing skills, but it seems too coincidental that Liu An's talent for quick composition was twice tested, that both times he received an edict to write on the same topic, which he did at exactly the same time of day, and that the emperors' response was identically positive. And if these coincidences are not enough to strain reason, how are we to accept that two different events are described by different writers using such similar syntax and lexicon?

If we do not accept that these different accounts actually describe two different occasions, then we must determine the court in which Liu An was tested on his literary talents. I propose that, if we take the above two conflicting accounts too literally, this question may never be answered in its definitive terms based on current evidence. Liu An could have visited the court of either emperor. Liu An may

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<sup>46</sup> For example, Sun Yirang and Chen Jing strongly argue for this point. See He Ning 1998: 5; Chen Jing 2004: 27–31.

<sup>47</sup> Chen Jing 2004: 30. Others, though not specifically referencing Liu An's possible two different visits to the Han imperial court, agree on Chen Jing's theory about the writing time of the *Huainanzi*; for examples, see Major et al 2010: 7–13; Li Xueqin 1996: 166–167; Xu Fuguan 2001a: 110.

<sup>48</sup> It does say in Liu An's *Shiji* biography that Emperor Wu granted Liu An the right not to pay the visit to the imperial court as normally required from 126 BC. *Shiji* 118.3082–3083.

have visited the imperial court once or more than once in his lifetime, but it is impossible to know whether any of his visits involved presenting texts to the emperor.<sup>49</sup>

More importantly, here I propose a different reading of these two sources. They cannot be read as solid historical accounts but instead merely as narratives connected to Liu An lore. That is to say, those scenes depicting the presentation of texts to the imperial court belong to a body of anecdotes that arose sometime after Liu An's death. While this lore may be remotely linked to the actual happenings surrounding Liu An, his court, and his entourage, it is not necessarily historical fact. In this light, the desire to reconcile the details in Gao You's postface with that in Liu An's *Hanshu* biography stems from a misreading of these two accounts. The series of unbelievable coincidences demanded by a reconciliation reveals the fallacy of reading anecdotal sources as historical accounts. Nevertheless, in spite of the dismissal of these accounts as historical records, their status as lore does not invalidate them as important sources for understanding the authorship of the *Huainanzi*. After all, our knowledge on the *Huainanzi*'s authorship has to a large extent been shaped not by who actually composed this text, but by our conception of its author.

### 4.3 Authorship Defined by Esoteric Writings and the Lore of Liu An

To demonstrate how Liu An lore shaped understandings of the *Huainanzi* and its authorship, it is necessary to examine those passages that have been accepted as historical records. These passages are closely tied with the Liu An lore from the early Eastern Han period, if not earlier. The lore, in which writing plays a significant role, also deeply affects our reading of the *Huainanzi*.

As noted, the *Shiji*'s silence on Liu An's writings could have resulted from the unavailability of Liu An's works of the time. The *Huainanzi*, in particular, was first seen to have been available to us by the time Liu Xiang or Liu Xin rearranged the Han imperial library towards the end of the Western Han, although it is highly possible that the contents of the *Huainanzi* might have already been available before Liu An died. The absence of information on Liu An's writings in his *Shiji* biography is rather associated with the minimal influence exerted by the Liu An lore (as later manifested in the *Hanshu*) at the time Liu An's *Shiji* biography was

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<sup>49</sup> Hans van Ess holds a similar view on this point. See van Ess 2014.

written. We do not know exactly when and how this Liu An lore began to proliferate, but we can see how it influenced the historical writing in the *Hanshu*, as Liu An's *Hanshu* biography shows.

The *Hanshu* version of Liu An's biography not only adopts the typical narrative of Liu An's legendary genius in writing, but also includes information regarding his writing that caters to the trend of describing him as a magician and an immortal. A close examination reveals a short passage regarding the “central *pian* in eight *juan*” (*zhongpian bajuan* 中篇八卷) that seems out of place in the context. The “central *pian*” that follows the “interior *shu*” seems an unnecessary category in grouping Liu An's writings. As a matter of fact, *zhongpian*, as a title or category under which texts are grouped, appears neither in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* nor any other bibliographical writings in Chinese dynastic histories.<sup>50</sup> Based on related information found in a number of texts (for instance, Liu Xiang's biography in the *Hanshu*,<sup>51</sup> the *Fengsu tongyi*,<sup>52</sup> the *Baopuzi* 抱樸子,<sup>53</sup> the *Lunheng*,<sup>54</sup> and the *Shenxian zhuan* 神仙傳<sup>55</sup>, Pan Mengbu 潘猛補 suggests that the term *zhongpian* is actually the abbreviation for the “Zhenzhong hongbao yuanmi” 枕中鴻寶苑秘 (The Rare, Keep-Inside-of-the-Pillow Collection of the Garden of Great Treasure),<sup>56</sup> a text on “techniques of achieving divine immortality and abstracting gold and silver from other ingredients” (*shenxian huangbai* 神仙黃白). The *Shenxian zhuan* notes:

作內書二十二篇；又中篇八章，言神仙黃白之事，名為鴻寶；萬畢三章，論變化之道；凡十萬言。

(Liu An) composed the “interior *shu*” consisting of twenty-two *pian*; he also wrote the “central *pian*” in eight chapters, discussing techniques for achieving divine immortality and making gold and silver, and it is called the “great treasure.” He wrote the “exhausting ten thousand matters” in three chapters, discussing the way of change and transformation; altogether they amount to one hundred-thousand words.<sup>57</sup>

50 Fu Xuan's 傅玄 biography in the *Jinshu* 晉書 references a text named *fuzi* 傅子 (Book of Master Fu), which consists *nei* 內, *wai* 外, and *zhong* 中 *pian*, but the “zhong” *pian* in this context likely means the “middle” rather than “central” *pian*. The contents of these three categories, according to the *Jinshu*, are relatively similar as they all discuss “nine ways of governing a state as well as the previous events included in the three histories 經國九流及三史故事.” *Jinshu* 47.1323.

51 *Hanshu* 36.1928–1929.

52 Wu Shuping 1988: 87.

53 Wang Ming 王明 2002: 21–22, 285.

54 Huang Hui 1990: 319–320.

55 Li Fang 李昉 1961: 51–53.

56 Pan Mengbu 潘猛補 1991: 52–53.

57 Li Fang 1961: 51.

Compare the *Shenxian zhuan* passage with the *Hanshu* passage on the “central *pian*,” which reads as follows:

中篇八卷，言神仙黃白之術，亦二十餘萬言。

They also wrote the “central *pian*” in eight *juan*<sup>58</sup>, discussing techniques for achieving divine immortality and abstracting gold and silver from other ingredients, also amounting to over two hundred thousand words.<sup>59</sup>

The similarities of the two passages are obvious, yet it is unclear whether we can make the argument that the *Shenxian zhuan* passage is based on the *Hanshu*. Even if we take textual corruption into consideration, the assumed argument still seems problematic for the following reasons: First, the *Hanshu* lists a number of texts, but a word count is not provided for any of the texts except for the “central *pian*.” The “central *pian*” passage becomes all the more suspicious when we consider the presence of the adverb *yi* 亦, or “also”, which indicates that the line regarding the “central *pian*” is paralleled with a line on another text that also provides a word count.

Secondly, if the *Shenxian zhuan* passage had indeed referenced the *Hanshu*, it should not have mistaken the twenty-one *pian* “interior text” as having twenty-two *pian*, nor should it have omitted the number of words included in the “central *pian*,” information that seems important to the writer, as he provides the sum of characters in all the listed texts.

Finally, the length of the “central *pian*” mentioned in the *Shenxian zhuan* seems much shorter than that referred to in the *Hanshu*. Compared to the eight-*juan* *Hanshu* “central *pian*,” the *Shenxian zhuan* “central *pian*” only has eight *zhang*, a unit which is usually considered much shorter than a *pian* or *juan*. The sum of characters for the three mentioned texts given at the end of the *Shenxian zhuan* is also considerably smaller than the number contained in the single “central *pian*” mentioned in the *Hanshu*.

An alternative explanation for the similarities between the *Hanshu* and *Shenxian zhuan* passages is that they may both have been influenced by the Liu An lore that evidently increased in popularity in the Eastern Han, as suggested by a passage found in the *Fengsu tongyi*:

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<sup>58</sup> A *juan*, or “volume,” is a completed *pian* that is rolled and bound together by strings. But Hsuen-Hsuein Tsien contends that *pian* and *juan* should have been applied to different writing materials: the former was used for bamboo strips and the latter, silk. Sometimes titles of the texts were written on the reverse surfaces of one or more of the strips, as attested by excavated literary or administrative texts. Loewe 1997: 167–169; Li Junming 2003: 135–168; Wilkinson 2000: 444–447; Tsien Tsuen-Hsuein 2004: 120–125; Sun Deqian 1972: 34–35.

<sup>59</sup> *Hanshu* 44.2145.



俗說淮南王安招致賓客方術之士數千人，作鴻寶苑秘枕中之書，鑄成黃白，白日升天。

According to the vulgar sayings, the Prince of Huainan, Liu An, invited several thousand guests and masters of recipes and techniques to create a keep-inside-of-the-pillow text called the “collection of the garden of great treasure,” successfully abstracted gold and silver from other ingredients, and ascended to Heaven in daylight.<sup>60</sup>

This passage clearly states that the rumors regarding the writing of esoteric texts attributed to Liu An and his retainers are nothing but “vulgar sayings” in need of correction. Ying Shao 應劭 refutes these vulgar sayings by citing evidence from the *Hanshu*, indicating that Liu An did not become an immortal, but instead ended up committing suicide. Ying Shao also suggests that such sayings may have originated from hearsay fabricated purposely by some of Liu An’s retainers, who evaded the death penalty despite their involvement in Liu An’s alleged rebellion.<sup>61</sup> Such “vulgar sayings,” according to Wang Chong’s 王充 (27–97 AD) critiques recorded in the *Lunheng*, must have been in circulation at least from the beginning years of the Eastern Han period, around the time Ban Gu compiled the *Hanshu*.

In the “*Daoxu pian*” 道虛篇 Wang Chong cites sayings similar to those listed in the *Fengsu tongyi*:

儒書言：淮南王學道，招會天下有道之人。傾一國之尊，下道術之士，是以道術之士，並會淮南，奇方異術，莫不爭出。王遂得道，舉家升天。畜產皆仙，犬吠於天上，雞鳴於雲中。此言仙藥有余，犬雞食之，並隨王而升天也。好道學仙之人，皆謂之然。

A scholarly text says: when Prince of Huainan studied the Way, he invited and gathered those who had achieved the Way under Heaven. He condescended as the ruler of a state to the masters of techniques of the Way. For this reason, the masters of techniques of the Way all gathered at Huainan, none of whom did not strive to invent rare recipes and strange techniques. The prince therefore was able to achieve the Way, his entire family was also able to ascend to Heaven, and the animals on his property all became immortals: his dogs barking in the sky and his roosters crowing in the clouds. It is said that this was because there was some leftover elixir that the dogs and roosters ate, and together they followed the prince and ascended to Heaven. Those who are fond of the Way and study immortality all believe that this is true.<sup>62</sup>

Wang Chong criticizes these tales as “groundless sayings” 虛言, and we see that sayings related to “recipes and techniques” and immortality were especially popular in the Liu An lore. The most important information in the “*Daoxu pian*” is that it reminds us of how these sayings affected writing: these “groundless”

<sup>60</sup> Wu Shuping 1988: 87.

<sup>61</sup> Wu Shuping 1988: 87.

<sup>62</sup> Huang Hui 1990: 317–318.

words created and possibly believed by those who were fond of the Way had, by the early years of the Eastern Han, already been written down into texts that belonged to a scholarly teaching tradition. What drove Wang Chong to fight against these sayings was possibly their popularity among both common people and Han scholars.

These “groundless sayings” also help explain how the information regarding the “central *pian*” was inserted into Liu An’s biography in the *Hanshu*, and why in Gao You’s postface the *Huainanzi* is attributed to the “eight elders.” Toward the end of Wang Chong’s refutation, he again references those writings related to “recipes and techniques,” the texts that have not survived but have long been esoterically colored in the legends regarding Liu An and his retainers. He concludes by explaining how such “groundless sayings” arose and spread:

世見其書，深冥奇怪；又觀八公之傳，似若有效，則傳稱淮南王仙而升天，失其實也。

When people of this world saw their writings, which were abstract, mysterious, rare, and strange, and furthermore observed that what had been transmitted of the “eight elders” seemed to be valid, they spread the rumors that Prince of Huainan achieved immortality and ascended to Heaven. These sayings failed to recognize the truth.<sup>63</sup>

We may try to understand the eight authors mentioned in Gao You’s *Huainanzi* postface in the same vein. I would not argue, as Wang Chong and Ying Shao do, that the eight elder authors were completely fabricated by the “groundless sayings” or that they themselves were among the fabricators of those “groundless sayings.” They were, however, situated in the formation and transmission of the Liu An legend, in which the prominence of his literary talents and esoteric writings were understandably exaggerated. When viewed as part of the Liu An lore, both Gao You’s attribution of the *Huainanzi* to the eight authors as well as the depiction of Liu An’s writings in his *Hanshu* biography, become reasonable. The *Huainanzi*’s authorship has long been rooted in the Liu An lore characterized by its esoteric teaching.

The attribution of the *Huainanzi*’s authorship to the “eight elders” reflects the development of the Liu An lore. One of the earliest examples of using the term *bagong* is found in the “*Daoxu pian*” passage of *Lunheng*. This passage, however, does not specify who the “eight elders” are. Gao You does reference eight names grouped together in his postface, but it is unclear whether these eight men were the *bagong* or not.<sup>64</sup> The *Shenxian zhuan* includes an anecdote telling of how the eight elders shocked Prince of Huainan by turning themselves into teenage boys

63 Huang Hui 1990: 320.

64 He Ning 1998: 5.

and later helping Liu An ascend to Heaven from a mountain top.<sup>65</sup> Nevertheless, the *Shenxian zhuan* does not specify who the eight elders were. It was not until the middle Tang 唐 commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞 (activ. 713–741 AD) that the term *bagong* was linked to the eight names mentioned in Gao You's postface. According to Sima Zhen's commentary,

淮南要略云安養士數千，高才者八人，蘇非、李尚、左吳、陳由、伍被、毛周、雷被、晉昌，號曰八公也。

The “Yaolüe” chapter of the *Huainanzi* says that Liu An supported several thousand retainers, eight of whom were highly talented. They were Su Fei, Li Shang, Zuo Wu, Chen You, Wu Bei, Mao Zhao, Lei Bei, Jin Chang and were called the “eight elders.”<sup>66</sup>

The passage's identification of the eight named individuals who constitute the “eight elders” is, however, not without problems. Two of the names (Chen You 陳由 and Mao Zhou 毛周) slightly differ from the names (Tian You 田由 and Mao Bei 毛被) in Gao You's postface. Additionally, we cannot find either the term *bagong* or any group of eight names listed in the current “Yaolüe” chapter. Although there exists the possibility that all the above information may have been lost due to textual corruption, scholars tend to agree with the Qing scholar Hong Yixuan 洪頤煊 (1765–1833 AD) that Sima Zhen mistook Gao You's postface for the “Yaolüe” chapter. The reason for this mistake is that Gao You's postface was placed immediately after the “Yaolüe” chapter in the Tang version of the *Huainanzi*, so Sima Zhen may have considered Gao's postface as part of the “Yaolüe” chapter.<sup>67</sup>

Despite not distinguishing Gao's postface from the “Yaolüe” chapter, Sima Zhen, for the first time, connected the eight elders directly with the eight persons appearing in Gao You's postface. Once this connection was made, it was widely accepted thereafter. It is undoubtedly reasonable to believe that Gao You may have implicitly considered the eight men listed as the eight elders. After all, the term *bagong* had been circulating long before Gao's postface was written, so he may have chosen to list exactly eight names in the postface.

Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123–1202 AD) adds another layer of mystery to the Liu An lore in his explanation of Gao You's selection of the eight names. In the “Huainan wang” entry of his *Rongzhai suibi* 容齋隨筆 (Random Jottings of the Embracive Study), Hong Mai argues that the legendary eight elders, unmentioned in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, would have never existed had Gao You not invented their names

65 Li Fang 1961: 51–53.

66 *Shiji* 118.3082.

67 Hong Yixuan 洪頤煊 1937: *juan* 16; Chen Jing 2004: 23.

simply based on the name of Bagong shan 八公山, a mountain located in Shouchun 壽春 (then the capital city of the Huainan principality) area where, according to the legend, Liu An met and hosted his retainers.<sup>68</sup> It says in this entry:

壽春有八公山，正安所延致客之處，傳記不見姓名，而高誘序以為蘇飛、李尚、左吳、田由、雷被、毛被、伍被、晉昌等八人。然唯左吳、雷被、伍被見於史。

In Shouchun there is a Bagong Mountain. It is there where Liu An invited and hosted his retainers. In commentaries or notes we do not see the names of the eight elders, yet in his postface, Gao You thinks that they are Su Fei, Li Shang, Zuo Wu, Tian You, Lei Bei, Mao Bei, Wu Bei, and Jin Chang, altogether eight men. However, among them, only Zuo Wu, Lei Bei, and Wu Bei can be identified in history.<sup>69</sup>

According to Hong Mai, the name of Mt Bagong certainly predates that of the eight elders listed in Gao You's postface. In other words, before Gao You listed the eight names under the term *bagong*, it had also been the name of a mountain. It is unclear what source Hong Mai's argument relies upon, but he seems reluctant to interpret *bagong* as eight elders because no names are associated with it in vaguely referenced "commentaries and notes." Since sources like Gao You's *Huainanzi* postface do not belong to this category, it is likely that these "commentaries and notes" are narrowly defined as dynastic histories, such as Liu An's biographies in the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*. This inference is supported by the fact that Hong Mai merely mentions three names of the alleged elders; his lack of success in locating the other five of the eight names in official histories suggests that the remainder of the five might have been fabricated by Gao You.

It is hard to tell based on current evidence whether the eight elders were named after Mt Bagong or vice versa. One of the earliest references to the mountain in the dynastic histories is found in the account of the famous Battle at the Fei River 淝水之戰, fought between the Eastern Jin (316–420 AD) and the Former Qin 前秦 (351–394 AD) armies in 383 AD.<sup>70</sup> Yet this is hardly helpful for determining when the term *bagong* was adopted as the name of this mountain. Earlier records on Mt Bagong are found in the *Zuozhuan* accounts referencing a local polity called Zhoulai 州來, likely established in later Western Zhou (1046–771 BC) and appearing sporadically in the *Zuozhuan* as a place marking the changing boundaries of Wu 吳 and Chu 楚 as well as the relationship among the southern states

<sup>68</sup> Hong Mai 2005: 299.

<sup>69</sup> Hong Mai 2005: 299.

<sup>70</sup> *Weishu* 95.2077; *Jinshu* 113.2893 114:2918; and *passim*.

Wu, Chu, and Cai 蔡.<sup>71</sup> The mountain, later named Bagong, was then located in Zhoulai's southern border, yet how the Zhoulai people referred to it is unclear. We do know, however, that it was called Feiling 肥陵<sup>72</sup> (probably because it is located by the Fei river) by the time the *Hanshu* was compiled, as the *Hanshu* records that Liu An's father murdered and buried one of his retainers at this mountain.<sup>73</sup> Since this mountain was called Feiling in the early Eastern Han dynasty, then the renaming of this mountain must have occurred later than the time the *Hanshu* was compiled in the late first century AD. This indicates that the Mt Bagong featured in the Liu An lore was not incorporated into the lore until after Liu An's *Hanshu* biography was compiled. Yet according to Wang Chong's *Lunheng*, legends of Liu An and the "eight elders" had already influenced Han scholarly writings.

Weighing the evidence, it seems that the renaming of Mt Feiling as Mt Bagong was inspired by the story of the "eight elders" as well as the rise of religious Daoism in the Eastern Han. Nevertheless, the relationship between local culture and historical records is muddled. For example, it is possible that the *Hanshu* compilers simply adopted the old or formal name "Feiling" to name this mountain, overlooking the fact that it was locally called Mt. Bagong.

Establishing whether the name of Mt. Bagong predates the legend of the eight elders or vice versa is not essential for my argument, but the examination of this dynamic is important for revealing how folkloric information had influenced the authorship of the *Huainanzi*. It tells how the lore surrounding Prince of Huainan, his entourage, and the literary or esoteric writings formed in the center of Huainan had been localized and simultaneously spread to groups of different traditions during the Eastern Han, as seen in Liu An's *Hanshu* biography, the *Lunheng*, and finally Gao You's *Huainanzi* postface.

When understood in this light, the extant evidential materials regarding Liu An and the *Huainanzi* become a mixture of at least two different layers of information: historical and folkloric. Any argument that puts its claim on a specific historical occasion (for example, Liu An's visit to the court in 139 BC) would benefit from considering the historical validity of its sources. To distinguish folklore from history pertaining to the *Huainanzi*'s authorship opens up a new interpretation of the text itself. In the section that follows, I discuss the "Yaolüe" chapter of the *Huainanzi*, not confined to any specific historical event, but more so as

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71 Yang Bojun and Xu Ti 徐提 1985: 258–259; for relevant *Zuozhuan* entries, see Yang Bojun 1990: 835, 1122, 1256, 1307, 1338, 1361, 1404–1405, 1445, 1618.

72 Also rendered as Feiling 肥陵, both 肥 and 淝 denote the same river.

73 *Hanshu* 44.2141.

an editorial effort that aims to combine multiple discrete texts together to create a certain sense of coherence and stability.

#### 4.4 Editorial Voice in the “Yaolüe” Regarding Multi-pian Text Formation

A rereading of the “Yaolüe” becomes necessary in response to the widely accepted interpretation of this chapter, which sees the twenty different chapters of the *Huainanzi* as coherent and meaningful by taking the role of Liu An as its single author for granted. For many, Liu An oversaw and directly participated in the writing of the twenty chapters and penned the “Yaolüe” by himself; or, even though Liu An might not have written every word by himself, every word was written with his approval. The purpose of the “Yaolüe,” according to this theory, is also well planned—it is to be related to Liu An’s personal reflection on his relationship with the emperor in regard to his own principality as well as his political ambition. This assumption naturally leads to the conclusion that the *Huainanzi* must be a text through which Liu An addressed the emperor, either in its written form as a letter or performed at court as a *fu* rhapsody, so that he might be able to exert his influence on the imperial court, perhaps by playing the role of the emperor’s mentor.<sup>74</sup> Nearly all the previous arguments prefer to read the *Huainanzi* by tailoring the text to conform to Liu An’s biographical details as reconstructed on the basis of Liu An’s *Shiji* and *Hanshu* biographies, as well as the early Western Han socio-political condition.

This biographical information, however, is not credible enough to support the assumption that the “Yaolüe” was intended to directly address to the emperor, or that the text Liu An presented was indeed the *Huainanzi*. Additionally, while available historical sources fail to determine what was presented, folklore presents many different and conflicting stories pertaining to the *Huainanzi*’s transmission and authorship. These conflicts alert us to the presupposed coherence of all the *Huainanzi* chapters upon which other scholarly inquiries into the *Huainanzi* rest<sup>75</sup>,

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<sup>74</sup> Chen Jing 2004; Jiang Boqian 1948: 505; Major 2010: 5, 7, 9–12; Kern 2010; and *passim*.

<sup>75</sup> This can especially be seen in the scholarly wrestling with those differing portions of the text when scholars attempt to reconcile ideas to make them coherent within this single text. For example, Chen Jing proposes that, even if it is obvious that the *Huainanzi* is a text consisting of different traditions of thinking prevalent in the Early Western Han period, the analysis of the whole text still ought to focus on the perspective that this is a Daoist (this is merely the convenient way to translate the Chinese term *daojia* 道家: there is no specific religious connotation in this rendering) work, simply because the Daoist perspective provides a promising theoretical

or to the presumed presence of an emperor as the audience for whom the “Yaolüe” was performed.<sup>76</sup>

The alternative approach to viewing the *Huainanzi*'s authorship proposed here departs from these convenient presuppositions. Rather than seeking to align the text with Western Han political context and Liu An's biographical information, this approach takes into consideration the formation of a text both in its material sense and as a part of early Chinese intellectual history. To question the methodology of tailoring the text to fit the author's biography does not imply that I embrace the opposite extreme of completely denying the connection between the text and its author. Instead, this approach aligns with D. F. McKenzie's stance, that an absolute separation of the text from the author is a misconception of their relationship, although it is equally impossible to reconstruct the author's intention simply by eliciting needed information from the received text. In fact, through the process of its being produced, reproduced, transmitted, edited, interpreted, reinterpreted, or even misinterpreted, a text means different things and conveys different information to its readers with each instance that its form is changed.<sup>77</sup> The material form of a text also, to some extent, determines how it is read. It not only reveals how a text was formed, but it also reflects why a text was formed in such a way, how it was related to the intellectual history of the time, and how it impacted the society where it was produced. Viewed from this perspective, the meaning of a text is not fixed by its received form; a text has its own history, and it is only through the investigation of the whole history of a text that its meaning can possibly be reconstructed.

It is through such an understanding of texts that we approach the “Yaolüe.” While the “Yaolüe” does provide valuable insight into the key moment of the formation of the *Huainanzi* as a single, integrated text, it also explains why it was written as such, helping unravel the hidden meaning of the *Huainanzi*'s received form, in addition to providing clues addressing the issue of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship.

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framework for answering the question of why Liu An did not take either a thorough Daoist or complete Ruist (this is a convenient way to translate *rujia* 儒家) stance. Besides, this perspective also provides necessary convenience for the implication of Liu An's life in the analysis of the text. Chen Jing 2004: 149–171, especially 170–171. Xu Fuguan also sees the Daoist and Ruist bipolar arguments each encapsulated in a number of chapters of the *Huainanzi* (which in fact inspires Chen Jing in her writing about the *Huainanzi*); based on such observation, he argues that the *Huainanzi* has two summaries: one of them is the “Yaolüe,” which was written by a Daoist retainer of Prince of Huainan, and the other is the “Taizu” chapter by a Ruist scholar among Liu An's intellectual entourage. Therefore, understanding the *Huainanzi* merely by studying the “Yaolüe” is misleading. Xu Fuguan 2001a: 116–118.

76 Kern 2010.

77 McKenzie 1999.

One theme throughout the “Yaolüe” is its repeated testimony to the *Huainanzi*'s voluminousness and comprehensiveness. In fact, the whole “Yaolüe” is structured on the basis of these repetitions. In discussing the major principle guiding the making of *shu lun* 書論 (text and argumentation) in the beginning of the “Yaolüe” text, the main contents of the *Huainanzi* are listed and explained chapter by chapter:

夫作為書論者，所以紀綱道德，經緯人事，上考之天，下揆之地，中通諸理。雖未能抽引玄妙之中才，繁然足以觀終始矣。總要舉凡，而語不剖判純樸，靡散大宗，懼為人之昏昏然弗能知也，故多為之辭，博為之說，又恐人之離本就末也。故言道而不言事，則無以與世浮沉；言事而不言道，則無以與化游息。故著二十篇，有原道、有倣真、有天文、有墜形、有時則、有覽冥、有精神、有本經、有主術、有繆稱、有齊俗、有道應、有汜論、有詮言、有兵略、有說山、有說林、有人間、有脩務、有泰族也。

To make texts and treatises is the means to manage the Way and its Power, to order human and affairs, and then above to investigate them in Heaven, below to evaluate them on Earth, and in the middle to comprehend them via principles. Even if unable to draw out the core essence of the Profound Mystery, the texts and treatises should be abundant enough for one to observe how it ends and begins. In summarizing the essentials and listing general matters, if the words are unable to either analyze or distinguish the pure and simple, and consequently disintegrate and scatter the great origin, then one should be afraid that the reader would be confused and unable to recognize what the texts and treatises aim to convey. However, if for this reason one writes many words and make plentiful explanations, he would fear that the reader may leave the basic for the trivial. Therefore, if a text discusses the Way without mentioning affairs, then there is no means by which it can follow the ups and downs of the world; if a text discusses affairs without mentioning the Way, then there is no means by which it can catch the changes of the time. Therefore, twenty *pian* chapters were created in this text, including “Originating the Way,” “Generating the Truth,” “Heavenly Patterns,” “Earthly Forms,” “Seasonal Rules,” “Examining the Mystery,” “Essences and Spirits,” “Basic Classics,” “Techniques for Rulers,” “Inappropriate Expressions,” “Equating Customs,” “Responding to the Way,” “Overflowing Discourses,” “Explanatory Words,” “Military Strategies,” “A Mountain of Speeches,” “A Forest of Speeches,” “In the World,” “Cultivating Duties,” and “The Great Lineage.”<sup>78</sup>

Several points in this passage deserve further attention. First, the syntax of the statement on the purpose of writing texts and treatises indicates the formation of a specific writing style used for summation. The description on how to evaluate the writings—“above to investigate them in Heaven, below to evaluate them on earth, and in the middle to comprehend them via principles”—is quite similar to what we find in the

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78 He Ning 1998: 1437–1439. This passage is hereafter followed by the summaries of the contents of the twenty chapters, see He Ning 1998: 1439–1457.



“Xuyi” 敘意 (“Narrating the Intention”) of the *Lüshi chunqiu* (*Mr. Lü’s Spring and Autumn Annals*). The “Xuyi” also begins with an extended “者…也” structure, as follows:

凡十二紀者，所以紀治亂存亡也，所以知壽夭吉凶也。上揆之天，下驗之地，中審之人。

Altogether the Twelve Records serve as a means to record order, chaos, perpetuation, and extinction, and as a means to conceive longevity, premature death, the auspicious, and the inauspicious, and then above to evaluate them in Heaven, below to test them on Earth, and in the middle to examine them via human.<sup>79</sup>

The *Lüshi chunqiu* has long been considered one of the earliest Chinese texts to include a postface which informs readers of the principles in forming the main text and its overall structure. We cannot determine from current evidence whether the “Yaolüe” writer consulted the “Xuyi” chapter or a third source ancestral to both texts, but it is reasonable to speculate that in the late Warring States period (475–221 BC), a specific writing format resembling the postfaces to the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi* began to form. For now, it suffices to know that the “Yaolüe” belongs to this kind of writing.

Additionally, before naming the chapters included in the *Huainanzi*, the “Yaolüe” writer thoughtfully explains why the *Huainanzi* chapters are arranged as such. The tone of justification is lodged in the explanation regarding the concern over the voluminousness of the work leading to misunderstandings of the main point of the whole. Ideal writing should be focused on the Way, its Power, human, and human affairs efficiently and in accordance with the principles of the universe; but if this ideal is difficult to achieve, an abundance of writing with broad coverage, appropriate for ordinary people’s insufficiency of understanding, is also desirable. The abundance, however, leads the writer to fear that the readers may not grasp the central ideas and will be led astray from the main point by the trivial; therefore, both the abstract Way and concrete affairs should be taken into consideration. The “Yaolüe” writer boasts that the *Huainanzi* follows this ideal.

The tone of justification reveals an editorial effort to articulate the coherence unifying the chapters into a whole, countering the idea that the chapters are a collection of random, discrete texts. This editorial tone is instituted from the very beginning of the “Yaolüe.”

Finally, it is worth noting that the titles of the twenty *Huainanzi* chapters follow a rhyme scheme. As explicitly highlighted by Martin Kern (who is inspired by Luo Changpei’s 羅常培 and Zhou Zumo’s 周祖謨 study on the rhyming patterns

79 Chen Qiyou 1984: 648.

of the *Huainanzi*), these twenty titles were consciously composed to serve specific purposes.<sup>80</sup> Kern argues that the rhyming patterns, as well as the list of titles, establishes the layout of the contents of the *Huainanzi*.<sup>81</sup> Kern’s ultimate goal in this regard is to prove that the rhyme scheme, characteristic of the Han *fu* rhapsody, actually served as a means to facilitate the oral performance of the “Yaolüe.” While the rhyme scheme was created consciously and may have indeed been used as a mnemonic tool, the notion of a purely performative nature is questionable. The case that the rhyme scheme is the product of editorial effort is more compelling. Relating the use of rhyme to the “Yaolüe’s” concern for cohesiveness, the rhyming patterns were created to highlight the seeming connections among the twenty chapters; those connections, if not suggested by the carefully crafted titles, may have been overlooked. Indeed, the rhyme scheme not only connects the chapter titles aurally, but also sequences the individual chapters into a set order.<sup>82</sup> In other words, an editor may have consciously created the chapter titles to support a vision for how discrete treatises could be grouped together in a cohesive way, although they are not necessarily composed as a whole.

Furthermore, in summarizing the contents, each chapter is practically interpreted to demonstrate how all chapters fulfill the wholeness of the text. This is yet one more means to create cohesion among the individual chapters.<sup>83</sup> For each chapter, its summary begins with its two-character title followed by a *zhe* 者, a particle here reminding that what follows will be a definition or description for the title. Without exception, the depictions of the contents of the chapters emphasize how the information can be put to practical use by employing such patterns as *suoyi* 所以 (that by which)... or *shiren* 使人 (enable a person to)... *ye* 也, or the like, as listed in the table below:

**Tab. 4-2:** Patterns Used to Depict the Usefulness of the Twenty Major *Huainanzi* Chapters:

Chapters	Patterns of expression
Originating the Way	“使人...矣”
Generating the Truth	“使人...也”

<sup>80</sup> Kern 2010; Luo Changpei 羅常培 and Zhou Zumo 周祖謨 1958: 76–83; 246–266.

<sup>81</sup> Kern 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Kern 2010.

<sup>83</sup> It should be borne in mind that, different from dealing with the rest of the twenty chapters, “A Mountain of Speeches” and “A Forest of Speeches” are described together in a brief passage. He Ning 1998: 1450.

Chapters	Patterns of expression
Heavenly Patterns	“所以...”“使人...者也”
Earthly Forms	“所以...”“使人...者也”
Seasonal Rules	“所以...”“使君人者...”
Examining the Mystery	“所以...”“所以令人...”
Essences and Spirits	“所以...”“所以使人...”
Basic Classics	“所以...”“所以使人...”
Techniques for Rulers	“所以...”“所以使人主...”
Inappropriate Expressions	“所以...”
Equating Customs	“所以...者也”
Responding to the Way	“而以...者也”
Overflowing Discourses	“所以...”“所以使人...者也”
Explanatory Words	“所以...也”“所以...者也”
A Mountain of Speeches	“所以...者也”
A Forest of speeches	
In the World	“所以...”“使人...”
Cultivating Duties	“所以...”“所以使學者...也”
The Great Lineage	“所以...”“乃以...”

The syntax used to explain each title highlights that these statements are not summarizing contents as much as interpreting the purposes and usefulness of the contents. However theoretical some of the chapters may seem to be,<sup>84</sup> the summaries refer to various perspectives on how to guide one's life or rule. This is another editorial strategy for encompassing all the individual chapters into a single work. The coherence within the work can be demonstrated only through invented practical functions that are barely related to the chapters to which they are applied. The summary to the chapter on the “Earthly Forms,” one of the more theoretical chapters, serves as an example to show how these patterns work. The summary of the “Earthly Forms” reads,

陸形者，所以窮南北之脩，極東西之廣，經山陵之形，區川谷之居，明萬物之主，知生類之眾，列山淵之數，規遠近之路，使人通迴周備，不可動以物，不可驚以怪者也。

The “Earthly Forms” is that by which one can fathom the length from north to south, comprehend the width from east to west, investigate the landforms of mountains and

<sup>84</sup> Le Blanc divides the *Huainanzi* into three parts based on the contents: basic principles (Chapters 1–8), applications and illustrations (9–20), and summary and outline (21). See Le Blanc 1985: 2–4.

hills, locate the positions of rivers and valleys, understand the quintessence of the myriad things, realize the multitude of the living kinds, list the numbers of mountains and abysses, and gauge the roads far and near; it enables a person to travel with full preparation, not to be shaken by deities, and not to be shocked by devils.<sup>85</sup>

The “Earthly Forms” chapter discusses a few geographical categories, introduces some species of animals and plants, and records other forms of mythological knowledge similar to what we see in the *Shanhaijing* (Guide Ways to Mountains and Seas), but the material is not structured in the manner of a textbook as promised by the *suoyi* 所以... and *shiren* 使人...*zheye* 者也 patterns used in the chapter summary. As is the case with all chapters, the contents of the “Earthly Forms” are not structured to form an argument, let alone indicate a “how-to” format employed in manuals—the chapter itself is rather more akin to an assemblage of blocks of material from various sources. Even though the contents may not have been randomly assembled together, we can hardly detect the organizing principle described by the chapter summary. Nevertheless, it is because there is such a lack of organization in contents of the main text that the summary becomes so crucial in creating cohesion within the individual chapters and within the *Huainanzi* as a whole. Without a summary for each chapter title, it would be difficult to find meaningful cohesion within a chapter. The chapter summaries, however, are merely the first step for creating cohesion in the *Huainanzi*. It is the self-referential chains following the chapter summaries that tie the chapters together as a whole textual body.

These self-referential links employ the following pattern: except for the first, the rest of the chapters each serve as a necessary reference for their previous chapter, i.e., “knowing Chapter 1 yet (*er* 而) without understanding Chapter 2, then (*ze* 則) one will not know (*buzhi* 不知) the function of Chapter 2. Knowing Chapter 2 yet without understanding Chapter 3, then one will not know the function of Chapter 3,” and so on. For example, the relationship of the first three chapters is addressed as so:

故言道而不明終始，則不知所倣依；言終始而不明天地四時，則不知所避諱。

Therefore, if one discusses the Way yet without knowing how it ends and begins, then one will not understand what to imitate and rely on; if one discusses how it ends and begins without knowing Heaven, Earth, and the four seasons, then one will not understand what to escape and avoid.<sup>86</sup>

85 He Ning 1998: 1442.

86 He Ning 1998: 1454.

Such connections continue until the twentieth chapter, which is linked together as illustrated below:

1←2←3←4←5←6←7←8←9←10←

11←12←13←14←15←16←17←18←19←20

These referential chains are created, as the “Yaolüe” author claims, to serve the purpose of articulating writings (*zhushu* 屬書).<sup>87</sup> This way of text-making provides inspiring clues to study how early Chinese texts were written or created (*zhushu* 著書).<sup>88</sup> The *Huainanzi* serves as a good example in this regard. The early pronunciations of the two Chinese characters *zhu* 屬 \*tok and *zhu* 著 \*trakh sound similar, and in the *Huainanzi* the two characters both mean “to create texts.”<sup>89</sup> But as far as their connotations are concerned, the latter denotes “placing texts,” or “putting texts in order,” and the former emphasizes “connecting texts,” or “attaching one text to another.” Both terms refer to the intellectual activity involved when forming texts in the early stage of Chinese writing: in terms of the layout of their contents, forming a text means putting relevant textual units in order; in the material sense, forming a text also means stringing the bamboo or wood strips together. Indeed, as we see among the chapters and within each chapter of the *Huainanzi*, early Chinese text assembly is not dissimilar to using building blocks<sup>90</sup>: a shorter piece with (usually) a single theme forms a *pian* chapter; multiple *pian* chapters, with or without a common theme, form a text, or a “book.” In the case of the *Huainanzi*, the “Yaolüe” writer must have confronted the question of how to make the twenty chapters a cohesive entity. In adding titles for those individual *pian* chapters and in leveling and squaring their contents, he must have also recognized their heterogeneous nature. This might have resulted in the tone of justification taken when the “Yaolüe” writer stresses the voluminousness and comprehensiveness of this piece, which appears again after the description of the referential chains:

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<sup>87</sup> He Ning 1998: 1453.

<sup>88</sup> He Ning 1998: 1454.

<sup>89</sup> Wang Li 王力 2000: 240, 1069; Schuessler 2007: 627, 629.

<sup>90</sup> The concept of “textual building block” is proposed by William Boltz, but this term here is different from Boltz’s definition. For Boltz’s definition, see Boltz 2003; it is also more detailedly discussed later in this chapter.

故著書二十篇，則天地之理究矣，人間之事接矣，帝王之道備矣。其言有小有巨，有微有粗；指奏卷異，各有為語。今專言道，則無不在焉，然而能得本知末者，其唯聖人也。今學者無聖人之才，而不為詳說，則終身顛頓乎混溟之中，而不知覺寤乎昭明之術矣。

Therefore, twenty *pian* writings were created, in which the principles of Heaven and Earth are studied, human and human affairs are connected, and the ways of thearchs and kings are completed. Its words are either big or small, either subtle or coarse; its denotation and presentation, different from one another among those chapters, are expressed one by one. Now if only the Way is discussed, there is nowhere it does not exist; nevertheless, only the sage is able to obtain the basic and know the trivial. Now those who are devoted to learning do not have the talents of a sage; if one could not discuss the Way in detail for them, then they would for their entire life stumble in confusion and would not know how to waken themselves with the techniques of achieving brightness and illumination.<sup>91</sup>

Earlier, the “Yaolüe” writer begins with a statement on the purpose of writing. After presenting each chapter as meaningful in the summary of contents and developing the needed coherence among the twenty chapters, he returns to his previous point, concluding that all the goals of this text have been accomplished—principles are established regarding the understanding of Heaven, Earth, human affairs, and the ways of ancient thearchs and kings. The explanatory voice, however, arises immediately after this promising conclusion in arguing for the necessity to engage in the “detailed discussions” (*xiangshuo* 詳說) provided by the *Huainanzi*. According to this argument, the rationale for the provision of details is situated in scholars’ contemporary need: only sages could infer the details based on their knowledge on the basic; contemporary students needed to be illuminated through discussions on all of the details provided in this text, because they are not comparable to sages. Through this, the text’s voluminousness is justified.

The explanatory voice not only addresses the need of lowering writing standards to meet the needs of a less sagacious readership that is unable to penetrate complexity though simplicity, but it also argues for the necessity of elaboration in learning. Intellectual activity, thereby, inevitably causes voluminous writing. To defend this point, the author attempts to demonstrate the inevitability of going into details by comparing writing to the development of the more complex *yi* 易 system, the increasing delicacy in musical composition, and the display of the full form present in dragon drawings.<sup>92</sup> Then returning to the writing of the *Huainanzi*, the writer extols its voluminousness and comprehensiveness in an ostentatious way, as follows:

91 He Ning 1998: 1454.

92 He Ning 1998: 1455.

今謂之道則多，謂之物則少，謂之術則博，謂之事則淺，推之以論，則無可言者，所以為學者，固欲致之不言而已也。夫道論至深，故多為之辭以抒其情；萬物至眾，故博為之說以通其意。辭雖壇卷連漫，絞紛遠緩，所以洸汰滌蕩至意，使之無凝竭底滯，捲握而不散也。夫江、河之腐蝕不可勝數，然祭者汲焉，大也。一盃酒白，蠅漬其中，匹夫弗嘗者，小也。誠通乎二十篇之論，睹凡得要，以通九野，徑十門，外天地，捍山川，其於逍遙一世之間，宰匠萬物之形，亦優游矣。若然者，挾日月而不凋，潤萬物而不耗。曼兮洸兮，足以覽矣！藐兮浩兮，曠曠兮，可以游矣！

Now the twenty chapters include so many words that we cannot say that they exclusively discuss the Way; they contain such insufficient amount of words that we cannot say that they are all about matters; they are too abundant to be considered as writings on methods; they are too narrow to be viewed as writings on human affairs. Following this reasoning, we may argue that none of the above can be employed to describe the twenty chapters. Therefore, those who are devoted to learning should essentially understand that the twenty chapters cannot be described as any of the above. Since the theory of the Way is extremely profound, one needs to make sufficient expressions to illustrate all its aspects. Since the myriad things are tremendously many, one needs to make extensive explanations to comprehend their meanings. The expressions gather and roll without end, winding, accumulating, and steadily far-reaching. Yet this is the means by which one elaborates the meanings with enormous expressions, makes the expressions flow without coagulation or obstruction, and grasps them without letting them be scattered. Now rotten carcasses in the Yangzi and Yellow rivers are countless, yet those who present sacrifice still draw water from them, because they are big; a cup of wine may be sweet, yet if a fly is immersed in it, a commoner would not taste it, because it is small. If one indeed comprehends the advocacy of the twenty chapters, see the general matters, and obtain the essentials to penetrate the nine fields, pass through the ten gates, go beyond Heaven and Earth, and surpass mountains and rivers, then wondering freely in the whole universe to govern and craft the forms of the myriad things will be like travelling with leisure. If achieving this, one could carry the sun and the moon without being burned and moisten the myriad things without being exhausted. How vast! How abundant! Then there is enough to view. How far-reaching! How magnificent! How boundless! There one can wonder.<sup>93</sup>

Although continuing to focus on the voluminousness and comprehensiveness of these twenty chapters, this passage defines the text with an unprecedentedly positive tone. As provoked by the “Yaolüe” writer, this is not a text specifically discussing the Way, matters, methods, or human affairs, but a text that encompasses all the themes and cannot be narrowly categorized or gauged by any single measure. Its comprehensiveness enables the transformation of this text into a new form of knowledge, the sort of knowledge unspeakable with old, limited language. Moreover, the writer slightly twists his previous argument that the Way itself is simple by proposing here that the Way itself needs to be elaborated upon due to its profundity. The myriad things certainly also require numerous words

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93 He Ning 1998: 1455–1457.

to describe and explain. All this inevitably leads to the voluminousness of this text. At this point the tone of justification appears again: yes, the words are many, and sometimes they scramble around the themes and may seem far-fetched, but they are necessary to provide complete explanations. Comprehensiveness is seen as the new form of knowledge. On this point, the writer uses metaphorical examples to make the enormous coverage of this text an instinctive need. This is exactly the point where the twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi* should be situated and the significance of comprehensiveness in its relation to the Way should be recognized. It turns out that it is for the purpose of obtaining the simple Way that the *Huainanzi* becomes such an enormous volume. The complexity of the *Huainanzi* enables the scholars to surpass it and reach the Way beyond such complexity. The voluminousness and comprehensiveness are thus treated as representative of the profundity and boundlessness of the Way.

The last part of the “Yaolüe” references history to explain the voluminousness and comprehensiveness of the *Huainanzi*. In comparing the *Huainanzi* with the texts of the past created to meet specific historical needs, such as those of the Confucian tradition, the texts of the Mohist tradition, the writings of Guanzi, the remonstrations of Yanzi 晏子, the strategies of the persuaders, the Legalist texts, texts of Logicians, and the Qin laws made by Shang Yang 商鞅, the “Yaolüe” writer not only stresses the *Huainanzi*’s comprehensiveness once again, but also boasts its timelessness and usefulness. This thread is invented by the “Yaolüe” writer to make the twenty chapters cohesive and coherent.<sup>94</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that the claim of the *Huainanzi*’s usefulness appears again toward the end of the “Yaolüe”:

若劉氏之書，觀天地之象，通古今之事，權事而立制，度形而施直；原道之心，合三王之風，以儲與扈冶，玄眇之中，精搖靡覽，棄其畛挈，斟其淑靜，以統天下，理萬物，應變化，通殊類；非循一迹之路，守一隅之指，拘繫牽連之物，而不與世推移也；故置之尋常而不塞，布之天下而不窳。

Liu’s text is as such that observes the images of Heaven and Earth, comprehends the affairs of the ancient and present, balances business and establishes institutions, and measures the forms to carry out the responsibilities appropriately. It examines the core of the Way and synthesizes the customs of the Three Kings to promote the immense achievement. In the center of the mysterious distance, every movement of the essentials is revealed in the text. Discarding boundaries and limits and considering the pure and tranquil, this text unites the world, arranges the myriad things, responds to changes, and comprehends things of different categories. It does not follow the path with merely a single track, nor does it adhere to the intention merely of a single corner, nor is it confined to related matters, nor

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94 For how the texts were created to correspond their times, see He Ning 1998: 1457–1462.



can it be pushed or moved with the age. Therefore, put in a tiny place, this text will not block the Way; disseminated under Heaven, this text will not leave anything unreplenished.<sup>95</sup>

Two points are worth noting in this closing passage. The first is the interpretation of *Liushi zhi shu* 劉氏之書. In contrast with the most popular rendering, “this book of the Liu clan,”<sup>96</sup> I translate it as “Liu’s text.” Early commentators hold that *Liushi zhi shu* is the term Liu An used for referring to his own work.<sup>97</sup> This reading was not widely accepted until recently, and now has dominated the interpretation of both this chapter and even the whole *Huainanzi*. Such interpretation is built on the argument that the *Huainanzi* was a work presented to the Han imperial court in 139 BC, and that the performance of “Yaolüe” as a *fu* rhapsody constituted part of the scene of Liu An’s court presentation. Since we cannot be certain whether or not this court presentation happened historically, the term *Liu shi* 劉氏 should be read as a third-person designation, as it stands, rather than as a first-person appellation that one might use in a court performance. The restoration of the normal connotation of this term frees the interpretation of the “Yaolüe” from its bond with a supposed historical event. It requires an alternative explanation, however, to show how this term was used contextually. I propose that the term’s usage has to do with the editorial process of trying to stabilize the text and establish its textual authority. The term allows editors to encompass all the textual units within a large textual nutshell as a cohesive whole. At the moment the term *Liushi zhi shu* was written down, the “Yaolüe” writer attributes a group of texts to a specific person, and in doing that, successfully injects personality and authority into the text.

We must also note the triumph of synthesis in the closing passage. All the texts listed before Liu’s text in the “Yaolüe” were responses to the problems of specific eras. Liu’s text apprehends the universe, history, and societal systems. It removes all the boundaries and limits that may confine its omniscient understanding, comprises all the ways and intensions responding to the needs of the age, and thus “cannot be pushed or moved with the age.”

This claim indeed conforms to the intellectual trend of textual synthesis that started in the late Warring States period and reached its zenith in the Western Han dynasty. Such a trend logically presupposes the availability of both a fair number of texts and the agents who produced those texts. Both imperial and local courts, from late Warring States period through the Qin to the Han dynasties,

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<sup>95</sup> He Ning 1998: 1462–1463.

<sup>96</sup> Major et al 2010: 867.

<sup>97</sup> He Ning 1998: 1462.

served as the platforms where scholars were attracted and texts were collected, arranged, and synthesized—as far as the wealth, power, and interests of such courts permitted. As a result, separate, individual texts were assembled and enlarged. This process partly explains why such voluminous texts as the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi* emerged in this period. The enlarged body of texts, usually stemming from various sources, naturally required a certain coherence to make the whole text meaningful. The summary of contents and the explanation of their connections were thus created to meet these needs. The “Yaolüe” was, then, the result of an editorial effort in keeping with the trend of textual synthesis occurring from the late Warring States period through the Western Han dynasty.

#### 4.5 Composition of the “Yaolüe” and Early Postface Writing

It is worth examining the time during which the “Yaolüe” was written, especially given the text’s close association with the formation of the *Huainanzi*. The “Yaolüe” frequently references that the *Huainanzi* consists of twenty *pian*, which remains consistent with the number of the chapters listed in the “Yaolüe.” If the text referred to in the “Yiwen zhi” as the “Huainan *nei*” is indeed the *Huainanzi* that has survived to the present day, it becomes clear that the “Yaolüe” was added to the “Huainan *nei*” as the twenty-first chapter by the time when the “Yiwen zhi” was completed. It has been generally considered that the convention of writing a *xulu* 敘錄—a summary attached to an arranged text regarding its contents as well as its authorship—had been established at least by the time Liu Xiang was assigned to arrange the Han imperial collection of texts.<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, exactly when the “Yaolüe” was incorporated into the main text of the *Huainanzi* as one of its chapters is not made clear. It seems that the “Yaolüe” must have been included in the *Huainanzi* at least since the time the “Yiwen zhi” was commissioned, otherwise the “Yiwen zhi” entry would not refer to the “Huainan *nei*’s” inclusion of twenty-one chapters. The incorporation of the “Yaolüe” into the twenty-chapter original text could also have occurred during Liu Xiang’s time, since the bibliography in the “Yiwen zhi” was based on Liu Xin’s “Qilüe.”<sup>99</sup> The identification of earliest date for the incorporation of the “Yaolüe” into the main text of the “Huainan *nei*” depends on whether or not the “Huainan *nei*” was recorded as including twenty-one *pian* in the “Qilüe.” If it was indeed listed in the “Qilüe” as a twenty-one *pian*

<sup>98</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1701; Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 “Qilu xu”; Sun Deqian 1972: 72–75; Yu Jiayi 2009: 36–77; Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬 1985: 59–73.

<sup>99</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1701.

text, we have reason to believe that the “Yaolüe” was already available toward the end of the Western Han.

The date the “Yaolüe” was incorporated into the main text of the *Huainanzi* is not the same as the date it was written. We remain uncertain about Liu Xiang’s hand in the arrangement of the *Huainanzi* since the reconstruction of Liu Xiang’s long lost *xulu* is far from complete. However, we must rely on these events to explain a possible composition date of the “Yaolüe.” Liu An’s *Shiji* biography is another valuable source of information. If the silence on Liu An’s writings in his *Shiji* biography indicates that the *Huainanzi* was not available at the time of its writing, we have reason to surmise that the *Huainanzi* may have been compiled as a whole text at least several decades after Liu An’s death—although it is possible that some, if not all, of the twenty chapters incorporated into the *Huainanzi* may have already been completed as individual chapters and gathered in the Huainan court. What is certain is that the date of the “Yaolüe” and that of the formation of the *Huainanzi* as a twenty-chapter text are directly linked. While the “Yaolüe” seems to be a product responding to textual compilation aiming to form a larger text, it was the “Yaolüe” that proclaimed the birth of the multi-*pian* voluminous *Huainanzi*. The ranges where both texts may be dated overlap.

The completion of Liu An’s *Shiji* biography, the rearrangement of the imperial collection of texts starting in 26 BC, and the compilation of the “Yiwen zhi” bibliography are the three most relevant events providing the necessary temporal markers to allow for two approximate dates of the “Yaolüe.” Since extant sources only permit rudimentary dating for all three events, I choose years close to the death of the three figures who were responsible for the three projects: 90 BC, for Sima Qian (145/135–87 BC) death; 1 AD, for Liu Xiang (77–6 BC); and 90 AD for Ban Gu (32–92 AD). Thus, we have two approximate dates assigned to the completion of the “Yaolüe” text: 90 BC–1 AD or 1–90 AD. The earlier date range is based on the assumption that the “Huainan *nei*” was listed in the *Qilüe* with twenty-one *pian*, and the later range on the assumption that the “Huainan *nei*” was not included in the *Qilüe* or included as a twenty-chapter text if at all. But in either event, the “Yaolüe” was composed after Liu An’s death following the formation of the Liu An lore during the late Western Han or early Eastern Han.

The dating of the “Yaolüe” is associated with the identification of its authorship. The authorship of the “Yaolüe” is usually linked to the assumption that it had been written to or performed before an emperor during one of Liu An’s visits to the imperial court. Such an argument indicates that Liu An himself may have been involved in the writing of the “Yaolüe”: if this postface had not been exclusively written by Liu An himself, he was at least the person who presented it to

the emperor. The presentation scene, however, is not firmly supported by our reading of the sources. Moreover, the “Yaolüe” itself does not offer any observable authorial information directly linking it to Prince of Huainan. All we can detect in the “Yaolüe” is the strong promotion of the *Huainanzi* through its defensive appraisal of the voluminous text’s comprehensiveness.<sup>100</sup>

I propose that the compiler or editor of the *Huainanzi* composed the “Yaolüe,” doing so to promote the *Huainanzi* for its comprehensiveness and universal applicability. Such an effort was not only related to the synthesizing trend dominating Han thinking that inspired a number of projects generating composite texts voluminous in size, but it also helped to stabilize the group of texts incorporated into the larger text. Once the list of titles was set, as we see in the “Yaolüe,” it became more difficult to alter the composite text, and as later readers began to accept the contents as something given by the author, misconceptions about the formation of the text affect interpretations of it. The Qing scholar Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 (1717–1796 AD) observed the danger of accepting content lists as something intrinsic to and original in a text:

史記漢書書前之有目錄，自有版本以來即有之，為便於檢閱耳。然於二史之本旨所失多矣。夫太史公自序，即史記之目錄也；班固之敘傳，即漢書之目錄也。乃後人以其艱於尋求而復為之條列以繫於首。後人又誤認書前之目錄即以為作者所自定，致有據之妄訾警本書者。

The lists of contents preceding their main texts in the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* have already been there ever since the existence of their printed editions; these have been included no more than for the convenience of checking and reading the main contents. In so doing, however, much has been missed in regard to the original aims of the two scribal writings. As for the self-narration by the Grand Historian, it is indeed the list of contents of the *Records of the Grand Historian*, while the biographical narration by Ban Gu is indeed the list of contents of the *History of the Han*. It is because later readers tried to avoid the difficulty of looking into Sima’s self-narration and Ban’s biographical narrative that they rearranged the lists

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**100** Based on a dichotomous reading of the “Yaolüe,” Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 suggests that the writer of the “Yaolüe” is someone who attaches himself more to the Daoist textual tradition; hence, he cannot lift the Confucian tradition to the same level as the Daoist elements included in the “Yaolüe.” His suggestion becomes even less convincing when he proposes that the “Taizu” 泰族 chapter is another summary of the *Huainanzi* from the Confucian perspective. This results from his marshalling the sources to favor his overall assumption that Liu An himself struggled between the Daoist and Confucian textual traditions and between their different values and ways of thinking. Nevertheless, whether the writer of the “Yaolüe” adheres to the Daoist textual tradition or not has little to do with this discussion about the writer’s intended message in the postface. Xu Fuguan 2001a: 117–118, 163–177, especially 176–177.

and attached them before the main texts. Readers of even later ages, however, again mistook the list of contents preceding a text as the work of the author himself, so much so that there appear those who falsely criticize the main text based on the added list of contents.<sup>101</sup>

In this passage, Lu Wenchao identifies two kinds of mistakes made by later readers: first, they misconstrue extant versions of the two texts as the original forms handed down since the texts' conception; second, readers mistake the compilers of the content lists placed ahead of the main texts as the authors of the main texts. As a matter of fact, earlier versions of the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* did not have such lists. The "Self-narration by the Grand Historian" attached to the *Shiji* and the "Biographical Narration" of the *Hanshu* actually functioned as content lists. Consequently, there is no value to analyze the main text of a work on the basis of the content lists added at some point later in the history of the text. The cause of such misunderstanding, Lu continues, is ignorance of the stylistic form of early Chinese texts:

古書目錄往往置於末，如淮南之要略，法言之十三篇序皆然。吾以為易之序卦傳非即六十四卦之目錄歟？史漢諸序殆昉於此。

The contents of ancient texts are listed at the end of the main texts. The "Yaolüe" of the *Huainanzi* and the postface to the thirteen *pian* of the *Fayan* are two examples of this sort. I think: isn't the "Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams" in the *Changes* the list of contents of the sixty-four hexagrams? The writing of various postfaces, such as that of the *Records of the Grand Historian* and *History of the Han*, may have originated here.<sup>102</sup>

Taking the "Yaolüe" and the postface to the *Fayan* as examples, Lu Wenchao points out that in early Chinese texts, contents are listed after the main texts, so the "Self-Narration by the Grand Historian" and the "Biographical Narration" are by no means exceptions to the form of early texts. Moreover, Lu proposes that this format may have been modeled upon the "Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams" of the *Changes*.

Lu's observation helps to clarify that the contents arranged before the main texts of the printed versions of the *Shiji* and *Hanshu* were not present in earlier versions until added by later editors, but it does not make further efforts to trace the origin of postface writing. Among the five texts Lu mentions, the attributions of the postfaces to the Eastern Han writers Yang Xiong and Ban Gu have been widely accepted. This is because scholars living after the project of rearranging the imperial text collection had Liu Xiang's model to imitate in connecting multiple *pian* text units to make a larger text. For the postfaces associated with earlier

101 Lu Wenchao 盧文弨 1939: 67.

102 Lu Wenchao 1939: 67.

periods, however, their attributions are much less easily determined. If, as Sun Deqian argues, Liu Xiang invented postface writing as the means to connect discrete textual units to make larger texts, we may want to reconsider the previous attributions of postfaces predating Liu Xiang, at least we cannot take for granted an attribution of postface dated before Liu Xiang.<sup>103</sup>

We should consider the attribution of the “Yaolüe” in the same light. Although we need to avoid sweeping conclusions that all early Chinese postfaces were written by later editors, the writer of the “Yaolüe” is most likely a later editor. Earlier in this chapter, we saw that the silence of the *Shiji* regarding the *Huainanzi* and other works attributed to Liu An in the *Hanshu* indicates the unavailability of those works to the compiler of Liu An’s biography at the time when it was written. According to the *Shiji*, Liu An died in 122 BC, but the *Shiji* was likely not completed until around 90 BC. Even though the individual chapters of the *Huainanzi* might have been available before Liu An’s death, the *Huainanzi* as an entity, whether called *Neishu* 內書 or *Huainan nei* 淮南內, probably had not been compiled by 90 BC. Kanaya Osamu and Michael Loewe also consider the formation of the *Huainanzi* to be the result of a process not finished until after Liu An’s death, even though some of the *Huainanzi* chapters may have been completed before his death. As a result, the “Yaolüe” must be a summation of the entire *Huainanzi* provided by a later editor.<sup>104</sup>

Lu Wenchao’s attempt to trace the writing of postfaces back to “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams” also brings to our attention some other aspects of a convention of early Chinese postface writing. The date of the *Commentaries of the Changes* (*Yizhuan* 易傳) (which includes “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams”) has been debated from the time when Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007–1073 AD) challenged the conventional idea that Confucius was the writer of these commentaries. Now it is generally held that the *Commentaries of the Changes* were composed much later than Confucius’s time; furthermore, it is recognized that the seven pieces included in the commentaries are probably not the product of a single time, with the “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams” being

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**103** Sun Deqian 1972. This does not mean, however, that Liu Xiang could have created this method out of thin air. Some of the techniques used to connect small textual units together must have been available to him by the time the project started.

**104** Kanaya Osamu 1960: 457–459; Loewe 2000: 244. They both consider that the *nei pian* mentioned in the *Hanshu* version of Liu An’s biography and the *Huainan nei* with twenty-one chapters, as recorded in the “Yiwen zhi,” are not completely the same. The latter was a later edition including the presented chapters and those added after Liu An’s death. Even though they have not made clear on this point, it seems that both of them tend to believe that the *Huainanzi* was a result of Liu Xiang’s arrangement of the imperial collection of texts.

among the latest pieces.<sup>105</sup> Li Jingchi 李鏡池 (1902–1975 AD) considers that it could not predate the reign of Emperor Zhao of Han 漢昭帝 (86–74 BC).<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, in the “Miucheng” 繆稱 (Inappropriate Expressions) chapter of the *Huainanzi* there is a citation that may indicate an earlier existence of the “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams” or, at least the existence of a piece of writing that very much resembled it. The relevant passage reads,

今夫夜有求，與瞽師併，東方開，斯照矣。動而有益，則損隨之。故易曰：剝之不可遂盡也，故受之以復。

Now in looking for something at night, one is the same as a blind musician; when the eastern sky opens, the thing one has been looking for at night is lightened. If one acts and benefits from the action, then loss follows it. Therefore, in the *Changes* it says: “One can decorticate it, but cannot in the end exhaust it, thus one accepts and restores it.”<sup>107</sup>

The passage clearly states that the words describing changes between the *bo* and *fu* hexagrams in this passage are cited from the *Changes*. We can find a similar passage in “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams”:

剝者，剝也，物不可以終盡剝，窮上反下，故受之以復。

The *bo* hexagram means decortivating. Yet things cannot end by being completely decorticated: when the top is exhausted, the bottom returns. Thus one accepts and restores it.<sup>108</sup>

The similarities between these two passages are obvious. If the *Huainanzi* citation from the *Changes* is indeed crafted on the basis of the passage from “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams,” or something akin to it, we have reason to believe the “Yaolüe” writer had examples of summaries and content lists to follow when composing the “Yaolüe.” Those “Commentaries on the *Changes*,” especially the “Ordering the Commentaries on the Hexagrams,” the “Commentaries on the Hexagrams” (*Tuan zhuan* 彖傳), and the “Commentaries on the Images” (*Xiang zhuan* 象傳), were probably among those examples. While the “Commentaries on the Hexagrams” and the “Commentaries on the Images” define each of the sixty-four hexagrams from two different perspectives—word and image—the “Ordering

<sup>105</sup> For a summary of this on-going debate, see Dai Lianzhang 1989, especially 1–14; Wang Bo 2003; Li Xueqin 2006: 94–176; Gao Heng 1979: 35–53; 1970, 1–7; Li Jingchi 李鏡池 1978: 11–19, 292–324, 398–406, and *passim*.

<sup>106</sup> Li Jingchi 1978: 301–324.

<sup>107</sup> He Ning 1998: 725.

<sup>108</sup> Li Daoping 1994: 722–723.

the Commentaries of the Hexagrams” articulates the sixty-four hexagrams as an organic chain with the individual hexagrams as the links. Although the linguistic patterns used in these commentaries somewhat differ from those in the “Yaolüe,” their overall layout clearly uses a similar design. For example, the “Ordering the Commentaries of the Hexagrams” also relies on a self-referential sequence to connect the sixty-four hexagrams as a logical entity. It begins with the *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤 hexagrams, then moves to the *tun* 屯, *meng* 蒙, *xu* 需, and so on, until arriving at the *weiji* 未濟, the last of the sixty-four links, to complete a circle and predict the next step, the start of a new circle. If we number the hexagrams in the sequence from 1 to 64, the logical unity can be illustrated as the following:

$$1 (qian) \rightarrow 2 (kun) \rightarrow 3 (tun) \rightarrow 4 (meng) \rightarrow 5 (xu) \rightarrow \dots$$

$$\rightarrow 23 (bo) \rightarrow 24 (fu) \rightarrow \dots \rightarrow 64 (weiji) \rightarrow 1 (qian) \rightarrow \dots$$

The self-referential patterns are not merely limited to postfaces mentioned above. Taking the excavated “Wuxing” 五行 text as an example, Dirk Meyer discusses how, in early Chinese philosophy, specific references were established within the text proper through such self-referential chains. As opposed to the other way of constructing meaning (see, for example, the “Ziyi” 淄衣), which relies on the “textual communities” to articulate authoritative statements outside of the text proper, the “Wuxing’s” cross-referential webs represent a more sophisticated method for generating meaning. Put simply, the former is more authority-based and the latter, more argumentative.<sup>109</sup> This typical method of argumentation resembles what the “Yaolüe” writer does to present the twenty *pian* as a meaningful whole: first defining each category under discussion from a certain perspective and then stringing all the categories together within the cross-referential framework.<sup>110</sup> Additionally, the “Wuxing” manuscript is among a number of texts excavated from Guodian Tomb 1 dated to late Warring States period.<sup>111</sup> This suggests that the major techniques applied to early Chinese postface writing have their roots in the Warring States argumentative techniques. We may even speculate that writing of early Chinese postfaces was a subset of the latter. In reading through the *Huainanzi* and its postface, the comprehensiveness claimed for the

<sup>109</sup> Meyer, D. 2012: 77–130.

<sup>110</sup> For detailed textual analysis of this type of meaning construction represented by the “Wuxing” manuscript, see Meyer, D. 2012: 90–100.

<sup>111</sup> Hubei Sheng Jingmen Shi Bowuguan 1997; Tu Zongliu 涂宗流 and Liu Zuxin 劉祖信 2001: 9–15.



text might be a result of the cross-referential argumentative form rather than from the intrinsic nature of the text's contents.

The comparison between a postface and an argumentative essay should not be pushed too far, as the writing of a postface ultimately has a different function from that of an argumentative essay such as the "Wuxing." Such literary techniques may have inspired early postface writing, but a postface primarily stresses the unity and comprehensiveness of the text to which it is attached. I suspect that the endeavor of explaining the contents of each chapter, as we see in the "Yaolüe," is the ramification of some farther-reaching contemporary intellectual and social activities. Indeed, we can observe this form of writing in other early works, including the postfaces of *Book of Documents* and *Maoshi* (Mao version of the *Odes*). In the extant versions of these texts, commentaries have been separated from one another and placed right before each document or poem, but originally these commentaries were actually each compiled in single *pian* forms. In other words, they can be viewed as the postfaces to the *Shangshu* and the *Maoshi*, respectively.<sup>112</sup> Scholars disagree on when exactly these writings started to be written, but recent archaeological discoveries, such as the "Kongzi shilun" 孔子詩論 (Confucius's Comments on the *Odes*), suggest that this type of writing had already appeared by late Middle Warring States period. Scholars also tend to agree that this type of writing was associated with the early Chinese pedagogical tradition of focusing on a few Classical works passed down from the past, such as the *Shi*, the *Shu*, and the *Yi*.<sup>113</sup> The adoption of this type of writing, labeled in late Warring States and early Western Han periods as post- or preface writing, may have been associated with a conscious attempt to imitate the text formation model exemplified by the Classical works. This accords with the overtones of the "Yaolüe," which aims to promote the *Huainanzi* as a universal masterpiece by praising its comprehensiveness and usefulness.

In summary, we have seen that the "Yaolüe" functions as a means to string the individual *Huainanzi* chapters together into a coherent unity expressed by the cross-referential framework. Additionally, we have seen that this style of postface writing calls attention to the authority of the *Huainanzi* by borrowing a format related to an early Chinese pedagogical tradition emphasizing Classical works.

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<sup>112</sup> For details, Cheng Yuanmin 程元敏 2005 and Cheng Yuanmin 1999.

<sup>113</sup> For the inscriptions of the "Kongzi shilun" on bamboo strips and its transcriptions, see Ma Chengyuan 2001: 3–41, 121–168; for some of the discussions on the nature of the "Kongzi shilun" writing, see Peng Lin 彭林 2002: 93–99; Jiang Linchang 江林昌 2002: 100–117; Huang Ren'er 黃人二 2002b: 74–92; Zhu Yuanqing 朱淵清 2002: 118–139; Li Xueqin 2002: 51–61.

These two points merge into the “Yaolüe’s” promotion of the *Huainanzi* as a universal work serving all times.

#### 4.6 The Nature of Early Chinese Writing and the Authorship of the *Huainanzi*

While the various types of authors we see associated with early Chinese texts—the author as legendary figure, as founder of a teaching lineage, or as patron, for example—are not truly the creators of their textual canons, they have historically been viewed as authors. This is due to the nature of early Chinese textual formation and transmission. However, as discussed earlier in this chapter, removing the “writer” from the concept of authorship has opened up new lines of interpretation for early Chinese texts. Questions remain regarding the composition of the *Huainanzi*, including Liu An’s survival as the text’s “author” even as scholars have long detected the dubiousness of this claim. However, an exploration of this scenario will help confirm what kind of role writers played in forming texts, and allows us to explain the significance of authorial attribution to voluminous early Chinese texts such as the *Huainanzi*.

Lothar Ledderose has discerned the modular structure and mass production of Chinese art and culture in his study. He identifies various modules serving as building blocks to produce and reproduce Chinese material culture in shaping and reshaping Chinese society. His investigation covers the nature of production in a number of fields, including printing, pottery, bronzeware, architecture, and even bureaucracy.<sup>114</sup> Nevertheless, he does not apply this theory to the formation of early Chinese texts. It is Dirk Meyer who, in a study on the composite nature of early Chinese texts, carries forward Ledderose’s method. He applies Ledderose’s thesis to the analysis of “Zhong xin zhi dao” 忠信之道, a newly excavated text from a Guodian tomb dated to late Warring States period, and discovers that the textual components in that text serve as a structural device to convey meaning.<sup>115</sup> Relying on both recently excavated manuscripts (for example, the Mawangdui *Yijing* 易經, Guodian *Laozi*, and Guodian “Ziyi”) and transmitted texts, William Boltz makes a similar suggestion that the formation of early Chinese texts resembles an assemblage of individual textual units, which he calls “textual building

114 Ledderose 2000.

115 Meyer, D. 2003, and 2005.

blocks.”<sup>116</sup> That is to say, not only the excavated manuscripts, but also the transmitted texts in general are made up of self-contained, movable textual units. This provides “a rather good indication of one of the ways that the scholar-editors of the third century BC, and the early Han, went about their compositional, editorial, and revisionist tasks.”<sup>117</sup> This also indicates that early Chinese writers to a large degree acted as editors. As a result, we must revise our thinking on the way we consider early Chinese authorship, especially in regard to those lengthy, literary texts with single authors.

The noticeable intertextual relations between the *Huainanzi* and other early Chinese textual traditions, for instance, the *Zhuangzi*, *Laozi*, *Wenzi* 文子, *Lüshi chunqiu*, and *Han Feizi*, have long attracted attention.<sup>118</sup> For those who emphasize the integrity and originality of the *Huainanzi* or even consider it a work directly written by Liu An, it is unlikely to be seen as an anthology or encyclopedia of pre-Han philosophical and literary work.<sup>119</sup> Le Blanc is right in pointing out that the *Huainanzi* is not merely a collection of pre-Han philosophical and literary writing, as it shares numerous textual similarities with a number of pre-Han texts. Admitting these textual similarities, however, does not necessarily negate the *Huainanzi*'s efforts to make itself a comprehensive, cohesive work. Moreover, the assemblage of textual building blocks that may appear in a number of extant early Chinese works can also be involved in the construction of new meanings. The editor-writers may even make some revisions of those textual building blocks to fit their specific arguments and persuasions. While there were innovative and original texts produced in this manner, we cannot take for granted the automatic connection between the writer and the originality and unity of the text. As both transmitted and excavated materials demonstrate, early Chinese writers did not necessarily require much creativity. Reliance on preexisting materials (i.e., those textual building blocks), to produce new texts was the norm. This process may have been responsible for popular aphorisms, anecdotes, and other short pieces of material preserved either orally or in written form. In order to understand how this process affected the writing of the *Huainanzi*, we may demonstrate how freely a textual building block could move around and be fitted into different texts.

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**116** Boltz 2005: 58. Either called paragraphs or *zhang*, those textual building blocks are similar in form and structure, usually self-contained and self-standing, and can move freely in different texts and serve as their organic components. Also see Wagner 1999: 32–56.

**117** Boltz 2005: 59.

**118** Zheng Liangshu 1964; Le Blanc 1985: 79–98; Liu Dehan 2001; Ding Yuanzhi 丁原植 1999a, Ding Yuanzhi 1999b; He Ning 1998.

**119** Le Blanc 1985: 79–80.

We can see the textual building blocks theory as it applies to the *Huainanzi* emphasized in several stories involving Xi Fuji. The first of these is contained in the “Responding to the Way” 道應 (“Daoying”) chapter of the *Huainanzi*:

晉公子重耳出亡，過曹，無禮焉。釐<sup>120</sup>負羈之妻謂釐負羈曰：君無禮于晉公子。吾觀其從者，皆賢人也。若以相夫子反晉國，必伐曹。子何不先加德焉？釐負羈遺之壺飯而加璧焉。重耳受其飯而反其璧。及其反國，起師伐曹，克之。令三軍無入釐負羈之里。

The Jin noble son Chong'er went out in exile. When he visited the Cao, the Cao did not meet him with ritual propriety. Xi Fuji's wife said to him, “The Lord of Cao did not treat the Jin noble son with ritual propriety. I observed that Chong'er's followers are all worthy men. If they assist their master to return to the state of Jin, for sure they will attack Cao. Why don't you show some generosity to them in advance?” Xi Fuji then presented pots of drink and food, and also put some jade *bi* disks within the containers. Chong'er accepted Xi Fuji's food but returned his *bi* disks. When Chong'er returned to his state, he raised troops to attack Cao and conquered it. He commanded that none of the three armies should enter the neighborhood of Xi Fuji's residence.<sup>121</sup>

In the *Zuozhuan*, there is a similar story referenced during the narrative of Chong'er's exile, although the character of Xi Fuji's last name is rendered differently in the *Zuozhuan*. The *Zuozhuan* provides more details about the kind of mistreatment the Cao showed to Chong'er and his followers:

及曹，曹共公聞其駢脅，欲觀其裸。浴，薄而觀之。僖負羈之妻曰：吾觀晉公子之從者，皆足以相國。若以相，夫子必反其國。反其國，必得志於諸侯。得志於諸侯，而誅無禮，曹其首也。子盍蚤自貳焉？乃饋盤飧，寘璧焉，公子受飧反璧。

When [Chong'er and his followers] arrived at Cao, Lord Gong of Cao heard that Chong'er had doubled ribs and desired to observe his naked body. He approached to observe Chong'er when the latter had a bath. Xi Fuji's wife said, “I have observed that the followers of the Jin noble son are all capable enough to assist governing a state. If assisted by them, the master must be able to return to his state; if returning to his state, he must be able to obtain his aim among the various lords; if able to obtain his aim among the various lords and reproach those who do not observe ritual proprieties, then Cao will be the first. Why aren't you shifting your allegiance early?” Xi Fuji then presented dishes and food to Chong'er and his followers. He also put some jade *bi* disks there together with the food. The Jin noble son accepted the food but returned the *bi* disks.<sup>122</sup>

But in the “In the World” 人間 (“Renjian”) chapter, the improper behavior of the Lord of Cao differs from what it is described in the preceding passage.

120 釐 and 僖 are interchangeable in this case.

121 He Ning 1998: 857–858.

122 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* Xi 23.407.

晉公子重耳過曹，曹君欲見其駢脇，使之袒而捕魚。鰲負羈止之曰：公子非常也；從者三人，皆霸王之佐也。遇之無禮，必為國憂。君弗聽。重耳反國，起師而伐曹，遂滅之。身死人手，社稷為墟，禍生於袒而捕魚。齊、楚欲救曹，不能存也。聽鰲負羈之言，則無亡患矣。

When the Jin noble son Chong'er visited Cao, the Lord of Cao wanted to see Chong'er's doubled ribs and made him bare his upper body to catch fish. Xi Fuji tried to stop the Lord of Cao, saying, "The Jin noble son is not an ordinary man; his three followers could all be assistants to a hegemon. Treating them without ritual propriety will inevitably become the worry of the state." The Lord did not listen to him. When Chong'er returned to his state, he led his army to attack Cao and destroyed it. The disaster of dying in others' hands and that of turning the state into ruins arose from making Chong'er bare his chest to catch fish. Even if Qi and Chu wanted to save Cao from perishing, they could not do it. Had the Cao lord listened to Xi Fuji's words, then he would not have suffered the disaster of being extinguished.<sup>123</sup>

Besides the different renderings of Fuji's surname in the two accounts, the "Renjian" version departs from the *Zuozhuan's* in three respects: first, instead of spying Chong'er's unusual ribs when he was bathing, the Lord of Cao forces Chong'er to bare his upper body when fishing. This detail of having Chong'er bare his torso to fish is echoed in the "Shangde" chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu*. It says,

去齊之曹，曹共公視其駢脅，使袒而捕池魚。

When [Chong'er and his followers] left Qi for Cao, in order to observe Chong'er's doubled ribs, Lord Gong of Cao made him bare his chest when fishing at a pool.<sup>124</sup>

Second, the conversation that takes place between Xi Fuji and his wife in the *Zuozhuan* is recorded as happening between Xi Fuji and the Lord of Cao in the "Renjian" chapter. The warning delivered by the wife in one passage and by Xi Fuji in the other is, nevertheless, the same. Finally, because this conversation occurs in a court setting, the "Renjian" anecdote does not mention how Xi Fuji gave food and gifts to Chong'er, as it does in the *Zuozhuan*. Interestingly, the *Guoyu* 國語 and the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 are able to incorporate the differences between the *Zuozhuan* account and the "Renjian" version into a single narrative which includes the court setting and the conversation between Xi Fuji and his wife:

昔者晉公子重耳出亡，過於曹，曹君袒裻而觀之。鰲負羈與叔瞻侍於前。叔瞻謂曹君曰：臣觀晉公子非常人也。君遇之無禮，彼若有時反國而起兵，即恐為曹傷。君不如殺之。曹君弗聽。鰲負羈歸而不樂。其妻問之曰：公從外來而有不樂之色，何也？負羈曰：吾聞之，有福不及，禍來連我。今日吾君召晉公子，其遇之無禮，我與在前。吾是以不樂。

123 He Ning 1998: 1284.

124 Chen Qiyou 1984: 1256.

其妻曰：吾觀晉公子萬乘之主也，其左右從者萬乘之相也。今窮而出亡過於曹，曹遇之無禮。此若反國，必誅無禮，則曹其首也。子奚不先自貳焉。負羈曰：諾。盛黃金於壺，充之以餐，加璧其上，夜令人遺公子。公子見使者再拜，受其餐而辭其璧。

In the past when the Jin noble son Chong'er left Jin in exile, he visited Cao. The Cao ruler made Chong'er bare his torso and observed him. Xi Fuji and Shu Zhan attended the scene. Shu Zhan said to the Cao ruler, "I have observed that the Jin noble son is not an ordinary man. Now you meet him without ritual propriety; if some time later he returned to his state and raised troops, I am afraid that the state of Cao will be harmed. Your majesty should have him killed." The Cao ruler did not follow his advice. Xi Fuji went back home and did not feel happy. His wife asked him, "Why do you look so unhappy after coming back from outside?" Fuji said, "I have heard that if I cannot reach the blessings available to me, then disasters will come and embroil me. Today our lord summoned the Jin noble son but treated him without ritual propriety when I attended the meeting in the front. For this I do not feel happy." His wife said, "I have observed that the Jin noble son shall be the ruler of a state of ten thousand chariots and his followers on the left and right, ministers of a state of ten thousand chariots. Now he has no choice but leaving Jin in exile. He visited the state of Cao, but the Cao ruler had met him without observing ritual propriety. If he returns to his state from here, he will certainly reproach those who met him improperly; then Cao will be the first [to be blamed]. Why don't you shift your allegiance in advance?" Fuji answered, "Yes." Putting gold in a *hu* container, filling it with food, and putting some jade *bi* disks on it, he sent someone to present this to the noble son. The noble son met the messenger, made obeisance to him twice, accepted the meal, but refused to take the *bi* disks.<sup>125</sup>

Of the two conversations recorded in this anecdote, the *Han Feizi* version emphasizes the conversation between Xi Fuji and his wife, but the *Guoyu* version gives more prominence to the communication between Xi Fuji, Shu Zhan and the Lord of Jin, especially Xi Fuji's and Shu Zhan's long speeches.<sup>126</sup> In the *Lienü zhuan*, however, it is the speech of Xi Fuji's wife that is again put in the spotlight:

晉公子重耳亡，過曹，恭公不禮焉。聞其駢脅，近其舍，伺其將浴，設微薄而觀之。負羈之妻言於夫曰：吾觀晉公子，其從者三人皆國相也。以此三人者，皆善戮力以輔人，必得晉國。若得反國，必霸諸侯而討無禮，曹必為首。若曹有難，子必不免。子胡不早自貳焉？且吾聞之：不知其子者，視其父；不知其君者，視其所使。今其從者皆卿相之僕也，則其君必霸王之主也。若加禮焉，必能報施矣。若有罪焉，必能討過。子不早圖，禍至不久矣。負羈乃遺之壺飧，加璧其上，公子受飧反璧。及公子反國，伐曹，乃表負羈之閭，令兵士無敢入。

The Jin noble son Chong'er left Jin in exile. When he visited Cao, Lord Gong did not observe ritual proprieties: hearing that Chong'er had doubled ribs, Lord Gong approached Chong'er's lodge; taking advantage of the time the latter was bathing, Lord Gong set up a

125 Wang Xianshen 2006: 76.

126 Xu Yuangao 2002: 327–331.

thin curtain to observe him.<sup>127</sup> Fuji's wife said to Fuji, "I observed that the three followers of the Jin noble son could all be ministers of a state. If these three men all try their best to assist Chong'er, he must be able to obtain the power of the state of Jin. If able to return to his state, he will certainly be a hegemon among the various lords and will punish those who did not observe ritual proprieties, and Cao will certainly be the first [to be punished]. If Cao is going to meet such disaster, you will certainly not be spared from it. Why don't you shift your allegiance early? Moreover, I have heard that if one does not know what kind of person a son is, one should look at his father; if one does not know what kind of person a ruler is, one should look at whom he employs. Now since the followers of the Jin noble son are all like the servants of the highest officials and ministers, then their ruler will certainly be hegemon. If one treats them with ritual propriety, surely they will repay his favor; if one treats them wrongly, surely they will punish him for his mistakes. If you do not plan for yourself, the disaster will arrive soon. Xi Fuji then presented them a *hu* container with food and some jade *bi* disks in it. The noble son accepted the food but returned the *bi* disks. When the noble son returned to his state and punished the Cao, he then marked the gate of the alley where Xi Fuji lived and ordered that none of his military men should enter."<sup>128</sup>

There are yet other versions of the Xi Fuji anecdote appearing in the "Guan Cai shijia" 管蔡世家 and the "Jin shiji" 晉世家 of the *Shiji* and other Han and pre-Han works.<sup>129</sup> The differences among all these narratives, however, seem related to the same set of details.

First, there is variation in the manner by which Lord of Cao is able to see Chong'er's unique ribs. In the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the "Renjian" chapter of the *Huainanzi*, the Cao ruler forces Chong'er to catch fish with a bared torso, but the *Zuozhuan*, *Guoyu*, and other sources record that the Cao ruler spied on Chong'er when he was bathing. The fact that two chapters, the "Daoying" and the "Renjian" chapters, within the *Huainanzi* follow different versions in reporting this detail would seem to suggest that the *Huainanzi* is a compilation of pieces from different oral or textual traditions instead of a monograph planned, supervised, or written by a single writer.

Second, the versions vary the focal point. Some versions (*Lienü zhuan* and *Zuozhuan*, for instance) pay more attention to the speech given by Xi Fuji's wife, while others (the *Guoyu* passage, for example) focus more on the court setting where Xi Fuji and Shu Zhan offered their remonstrance and advice to the Cao

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<sup>127</sup> The similar syntax is also seen in the *Guoyu* passage: "Hearing that Chong'er had doubled ribs, Lord Gong wanted to observe what they looked like. He stopped by Chong'er's lodge, spied on the latter when he took a bath, and set up a thin curtain to observe him (聞其駢脅，欲觀其狀，止其舍，謀其將浴，設微薄而觀之)." See Xu Yuangao 2002: 327.

<sup>128</sup> Liu Xiaodong 1998: 27.

<sup>129</sup> *Shiji* 35.1572; *Shiji* 39.1568.

ruler. In the “Renjian” chapter’s version, we even find that the conversation between Xi Fuji and his wife becomes that between Xi Fuji and the Cao ruler: a wise woman’s and a wise official’s speeches converge.

Finally, versions render Fuji’s surname differently, Xi 僖 \*hə or Xi 釐 \*rə. The inclusion of both 僖 and 釐 in the *Huainanzi* is another reminder indicating that this is a compiled text rather than the product of a unified vision provided by a single writer. The value of these variations is that they help us to distinguish the influence of what may be different textual traditions. For example, the *Lüshi chungiu* and the “Renjian” passages may be grouped together as both mention that the Cao ruler asked Chong’er to catch fish; the *Guoyu* and the *Lienü zhuan* passages are tied together for sharing the same phrase “設微薄而觀之.” The different renderings of Fuji’s surname could also be evidence as useful for distinguishing and grouping the sources.

Notwithstanding the various differences, the basic plot of this narrative remains consistent throughout the sources. The story goes that, before Chong’er returned to the Jin to assume power after his long exile, he passed through Cao, where he did not receive the proper respect from Lord Gong of Cao. Lord Gong’s impertinent observation of Chong’er’s unusual ribs outrages the Jin exiles. Xi Fuji’s wife recognizes the potential fallout from Lord Gong’s disrespectfulness, so she asks her husband to present the Jin exiles food and gifts in order to avoid any repercussions once Chong’er obtains power in Jin. Xi Fuji follows his wife’s advice and presents both food and some jade *bi* disks to Chong’er. Chong’er accepts the food but returns the *bi* disks. Not long after this incident, Chong’er indeed punished Cao for the insults he received from the Cao ruler. Yet he announces that Xi Fuji’s family should be spared from his attack as Xi Fuji had treated him differently when he was in Cao. All the sources citing this anecdote follow this basic plot.

The variations of details do not alter the main plot in any version. Not only does the plot remain stable, but similar phrases also appear in all the narratives, a phenomenon indicating the close textual connection among different texts, which prompts some explanation. Certainly, some variation naturally occurs in the course of transmission. But this variation may also indicate deliberate choices regarding the presentation of different aspects of the short narrative for purposes of persuasion and argumentation. For example, the *Han Feizi* uses this story to demonstrate the danger of the ruler of a small state not observing ritual proprieties or listening to his officials’ admonition.<sup>130</sup> By contrast, the *Lienü zhuan* highlights Xi Fuji’s wife’s speech and demonstrates her farsightedness and wisdom in

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130 Wang Xianshen 1998: 76.



dealing with the Cao ruler's impertinence toward the Jin noble son.<sup>131</sup> Using the same anecdote for different persuasive purposes can even be observed within a single text, as we see with the *Huainanzi*. The “Daoying” chapter is a collection of anecdotes used to explain different passages of the *Laozi*. Xi Fuji's story is quoted to illustrate the *Laozi* passage *qu ze quan wang ze zheng* 曲則全，枉則正” (Bending himself, then one saves himself; distorting himself, then one achieves correctness).<sup>132</sup> It emphasizes Xi Fuji's “bending” himself to offer food and gifts to the Jin exiles and how this action spares him from Chong'er's actions against Cao after he seized the power of Jin. In the “Renjian” chapter, however, this same story is used as an example to prove that “preventing disasters from arising is easier than fixing a disaster, and if he cannot devote himself to the former, then he is not the right person with whom techniques should be discussed.”<sup>133</sup> In the “Miucheng,” it emphasizes Xi Fuji's virtue,<sup>134</sup> while in the “Qisu” 齊俗 (Equating Customs), it underlines Xi Fuji's “honest heart” (*chengxin* 誠心), or sincerity.<sup>135</sup>

In short, the examination of how Xi Fuji's narrative is assembled in Han and pre-Han texts shows that, as one of the many kinds of textual building blocks, the basic narrative of Xi Fuji could be revised and circulated in different texts. With each revision, we also see a glimpse of the different purposes at work in the formation of the *Huainanzi* and other early Chinese texts. It is also worth noting that besides the Xi Fuji narrative, there are many other types of textual building blocks. For instance, Liu Dehan 劉德漢 identifies at least 95 citations from the *Laozi* in the *Huainanzi*, some are directly quoted and others are integrated into the *Huainanzi* without explicit citation.<sup>136</sup> These quotations from *Laozi*, especially those included in the “Daoying” chapter, can also be viewed as textual building blocks arranged according to the needs of the *Huainanzi* editor-writers. There are

131 Liu Xiaodong 1998: 27.

132 He Ning 1998: 875.

133 夫使患無生易於救患而莫能加務焉，則未可與言術也。He Ning 1998: 1284.

134 He Ning 1998: 723. It says: “Xi Fuji was able to have the gate of his alley marked because of a *hu* container of food he presented and Zhao Xuanmeng was able to avoid death because of a bundle of dried meat he offered. This is not because the presents they gave were numerous, but because their virtues are abundant (僇負羈以壺餐表其閭，趙宣孟以束脯免其軀，禮不隆，而德有餘).”

135 He Ning 1998: 779. The passage reads: “Therefore, a *hu* container of food offered by Xi Fuji is worth more than the Chuiji jade owned by Lord Xian of Jin; a bundle of dried meat given by Zhao Xuanmeng is better than Zhibo's big bell. Therefore, the abundance of gifts is not enough to present one's love, but an honest heart is able to pacify the remote (故釐負羈之壺餐，愈于晉獻公之垂棘；趙宣孟之束脯，賢于智伯之大鍾。故禮豐不足以效愛，而誠心可以懷遠). Comparing this passage with the “Miucheng” one, we easily find how the Fuji-Xuanmeng textual building block works in both passages.

136 Liu Dehan 2001.

also large numbers of identical or similar passages shared between the *Huainanzi* and the extant *Wenzi*. Whether one of the texts is derived from the other has long been a disputed issue, but Ding Yuanzhi 丁原植 introduces a new theory that may shed some light on the formation of the extant *Wenzi*, which, according to Ding's theory, consists of an original *Wenzi* text along with many later additions and interpolations. As to the later additions, Ding determines that three-fourths of them come from an abbreviated version, not to be confused with the extant version, of the *Huainanzi*. Nevertheless, those passages appearing in both texts may actually derive from other sources consulted by the *Huainanzi* editor-writers when its chapters were composed.<sup>137</sup> This helps to explain why the *Huainanzi* spreads so many variants of a single anecdote (Xi Fuji, for instance) across its chapters, and why the messages or arguments conveyed within this text and even individual chapters, could contradict one another so glaringly.

Flexibility in assembling textual building blocks no doubt characterizes one of the major features of textual formation in early China and it pertains to the *Huainanzi* in particular. These textual building blocks were usually drawn from a common repository of wisdom and knowledge transmitted orally and/or in written form and, in one way or another, shared by different groups either participating in the formation of those textual blocks or connected with those who formed or circulated them. Multiple textual building blocks were selected (and altered if needed), mixed, and kneaded into longer pieces, such as *zhang* 章 or *pian* 篇, with themes shaped for the purpose of persuasion, argumentation, or categorization. These longer pieces were further compiled to form longer texts, usually consisting of multiple *pian*, as the means to categorize and preserve knowledge, to display economic, social, and political prestige, or to express philosophical or political ideas. The issue of authorship is present at each phase of this three-phase model of early Chinese text making. Unfortunately, the authorship involved in the first two phases—the formation of textual building blocks and that of *pian* or *zhang* units—is usually beyond identification. Our interest in the issue of the author or authorship, as in the case of the *Huainanzi*, concerns the third stage—the formation of multi-*pian* texts through compilation and rearrangement, such as those resulting from the later Western Han project of rearranging the imperial text collection.

The presence of Liu An as “author,” then, remains necessary for modern scholars due to the needed biographical information it provides for interpreting the text. When the text is tied to its social and political backdrop as well as the personal life of the author, it can be historicized and analyzed. This perspective

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<sup>137</sup> Ding Yuanzhi 1999a: 1–27; Ding Yuanzhi 1999b.

on the relationship between a text and its author is an ahistorical modern twist of the concept of authorship in early China, and the nature of this relationship has been heavily influenced by the Romantic construction of authorship, which advocates the idea that texts are the exclusive product of their authors' creativity. When such thinking is applied in the analysis of early Chinese writings, such as the *Huainanzi*, however, the anachronistic context immediately betrays the flaws of this literary methodology: texts are inevitably subordinated to the biographical information that provides the primary context in which the text is understood. Not surprisingly, the method results in many forced sociopolitical interpretations. We see this clearly in studies on the *Huainanzi*, as most prefer to accept the account about *Huainanzi*'s formation being associated with the presentation of the text to the imperial court by Liu An, despite the problems with assuming such an event. Regardless, scholars remain focused on this event, as it attaches Liu An to the text, allowing for explorations of Liu An's political ambition, early Han court struggles, or the ambivalence of Liu An's philosophical and political thought. Unfortunately, interpretations following these issues overlook many other issues surrounding this voluminous early Han text.

Even though the text was ultimately attributed to Liu An, we should ask whether the compilers of the *Huainanzi* were concerned with what now interests modern scholars for their interpretation of the text combined with biographical information about Liu An.<sup>138</sup> This question can be answered through an understanding of their contemporary understanding of the concept of authorship. In

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**138** The following discussion on the *Huainanzi* authorial attribution is based on this assumption, which cannot be verified but allows us to look at the author issue from a different perspective. The discussion attempts to demonstrate that even if we follow the conventional argument that Liu An indeed organized the compiling of the *Huainanzi*, we should not take for granted that Liu An participated in the actual writing or editing of this work, nor should we advance speculations that Liu An presented this work to the imperial court. For a useful comparison of the nature of literary production within a "learned" court-setting, we might consider the words of the king of Castile-León in the second half of the thirteenth century, Alfonso X, who, whilst commenting upon Moses' involvement in the divinely-inspired Pentateuch, observed, "Our Lord composed the ideas for the Commandments, and authority and authorship of it was his, such that he ordered them to be written down, but Moses wrote them down; thus as we often say: *the king makes a book*, not because he writes it with his own hands, but because he puts together the ideas for it, and corrects them, and balances them out, and inserts things, and shows the way in which it ought to be done [...]. Moreover, when we say that the king makes a palace or some other work, it is not meant that he should make it with his own hands, but because he ordered that it be done and gave the material which was needed for it. And whoever fulfills this requirement, the name of being the [author] of the work is his, (Alfonso X 2001: 477b, ll. 2–9, "compuso Nuestro Sennor las razones de los mandados, e porque ouo ell auctoridad e el nombre d'el por que

early Han and pre-Han writings, authors did not have to be, and usually were not, writers. Moreover, even early Chinese writers were not the originators of the text they composed, but more likely acted as editors and transmitters, as Boltz and others have demonstrated. One of the skills the editor-writer acquired was a capability to edit and assemble textual building blocks to form new texts, as illustrated by the example of the Xi Fuji narrative.

Forming texts in this manner could not have happened without the accumulation of knowledge, the collection of fair number of texts, and the patronage that brought together editor-writers to produce new texts. In the case of the *Huainanzi*, Liu An is considered the person who brought the editor-writers together and provided them a platform—his Huainan court at Shouchun 壽春—where texts of different traditions could be collected, discussed, and reorganized by students from different textual traditions to produce a more comprehensive work. Without his fondness of literature and patronage of literary scholarship, the individual chapters contained in the extant *Huainanzi* may have never come into being. There is little doubt that Liu An was the simultaneous patron and “owner” of these texts.

Even though it is possible that all the twenty *pian* chapters of the *Huainanzi* were composed in the Huainan court, the *Huainanzi* as a whole, single text may not have come into being until sometime later. After all, the earliest information on the text that describes twenty-one chapters in Liu An’s name appears in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu* compiled over two hundred years after Liu An’s death. The assumption that the *Huainanzi* as a single text appeared after Liu An’s death helps to explain the *Shiji*’s silence on the writings which are subsequently attributed to Liu An in later sources. So far there is no evidence to support a speculation that information on the *Huainanzi* was removed from the *Shiji* version of Liu An’s biography by Western Han imperial censorship. In light of what we now know about text formation in early China, it seems more likely that the compilation of the *Huainanzi* into a unified whole had not yet happened when Liu An’s *Shiji* biography was being written. It is also likely that the lore eventually portraying Liu An and his intellectual entourage as the authors of a number of texts, especially esoteric texts, had yet to take shape by the time the *Shiji* was written. Based on the available evidence, we infer that the compilation of the *Huainanzi* occurred between the time

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las mando escriuir, mas que las escriuio Moysen; assi como diximos nos muchas uezes: el Rey faze un libro, non porque él escriua con sus manos, más porque compone las razones dél, e las enmienda, et yegua, e interesçá, e muestra la manera de cómo se deben fazer [...] Otrossi quando dezimos el rey faze un palacio o alguna obra, no es dicho quelo el fiziesse con sus manos, mas por quel mando fazer e dio las cosas que fueron mester para ello. E qui esto cumple, aquel a nombre que faze la obra”). My thanks are due to Professor Anthony Lappin for suggesting the text and providing the translation.

when the *Shiji* version of Liu An's biography was written and the time when the "Yiwen zhi" chapter of the *Hanshu* was written.

The information regarding the text called the "Huainan *nei*" does not completely bring the *Huainanzi* to light. Even if we consider it to be equivalent to the present-form of the *Huainanzi*, we still cannot verify who recorded this information. Of course, the "Yiwen zhi" chapter is based on Liu Xin's *Qilüe*, the result of the arrangement of the Han imperial library first under the direction of Liu Xiang, Xin's father, and then, Liu Xin himself.<sup>139</sup> However, there is also indication that Ban Gu may have updated some of the information included in the *Qilüe* based on what he knew about certain texts.<sup>140</sup> After all, he held the position of imperial Editor (*jiaoshu lang* 校書郎) and worked in the imperial library when he compiled the *Hanshu*.<sup>141</sup> Nevertheless, it is difficult to distinguish Ban Gu's editing work from the information provided by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin in the *Qilüe*, because the *Qilüe* had been lost by the late Tang dynasty (618–907 AD).<sup>142</sup> It seems unlikely that the *Qilüe* served as a source for the number of *pian* attributed to the *Huainanzi* in the "Yiwen zhi," as the "Yaolüe" writer stresses that the main text of the *Huainanzi* consists of twenty *pian*, but the "Yiwen zhi" describes it as a text with "twenty-one *pian*." It is possible, however, that some later compilers, including Ban Gu himself,<sup>143</sup> considered the postface left by Liu Xiang or others (whoever wrote the "Yaolüe") to be the twenty-first and final chapter of the *Huainanzi*, and the "Yiwen zhi" entry on the *Huainanzi* reflects this newer understanding of the text.<sup>144</sup>

The writing style of the "Yaolüe," however, does not completely accord with reconstructed postfaces allegedly written by Liu Xiang. Unlike Liu Xiang's postfaces, the "Yaolüe" omits the information pertaining to the text's authorship, instead emphasizing the text's comprehensiveness.<sup>145</sup> The tone of justification suggests that the author was an advocate of it, but this is inconsistent with the objective voice usually employed in extant postfaces attributed to Liu Xiang.

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139 *Hanshu* 30.1701.

140 Zhong Zhaopeng 1985: 67.

141 Based on the Ruan Xiaoxu's postface to the "Qilüe" quoted by Yao Zhenzong, Liu Xiang's and Liu Xin's arrangement of the imperial library set up a tradition for the Eastern Han imperial library. Ban Gu's "Yiwen zhi" is the direct result of such tradition. Yao Zhenzong 1936: "Qilüe yiwen" 1; Zhong Zhaopeng 1985: 60.

142 Zhong Zhaopeng 1985: 69–73.

143 Liu Dehan 2001: 290.

144 *Hanshu* 30.1701.

145 For the reconstructed postfaces allegedly written by Liu Xiang, see Yan Kejun 1995: 330–335.

The above difference, however, does not deny the possibility that Liu Xiang and his team arranging the imperial collection wrote the “*Yaolüe*.”<sup>146</sup> First, the reconstructed postfaces follow a single format that may have not been able to clearly reveal how Liu Xiang composed the postfaces. In fact, we are even unsure of the validity of the few reconstructed postfaces, and unconfident as to whether the reconstructions truly reflect Liu Xiang’s style. The extant postfaces surviving in the printed editions are dated to the Song or thereafter. Whether or not these reconstructed postfaces reflect their original versions is still an on-going debate. For example, the Qing scholar Wang Xianshen 王先慎 doubts that the *Han Feizi* postface included in its current version is the original postface, as it is almost totally identical with Han Fei’s biography in the *Shiji*.<sup>147</sup> Moreover, Liu Xiang has generally been associated with this postface since Gao You’s time, as Gao You’s postface clearly states that “Liu Xiang, the Grand Master for Splendid Happiness, collated, edited, and compiled it, naming it *Huainan*” 光祿大夫劉向校訂撰具，名之淮南。<sup>148</sup> It is well known that the postfaces written by Liu Xiang (or others in his team) were attached to the rearranged texts before they were presented to the emperor.<sup>149</sup>

Additionally, it is worth considering the limited access one would have to the kinds of texts incorporated in the *Huainanzi* at the time when the “*Yaolüe*” was written. Liu Xiang was among the few who would have had the opportunity to see such texts. Liu Xiang’s *Hanshu* biography states that Liu Xiang’s father, Liu De 劉德 (?–57 BC), participated in handling the case of Liu An’s rebellion and was able to obtain Liu An’s collection of texts. Although this passage does not specifically reference the *Huainanzi*, it does indicate that Liu Xiang was fascinated by the texts his father acquired from Liu An’s collection.<sup>150</sup> It is a possibility that this connection between Liu Xiang and Liu An’s collections is a product of the lore that began to develop a few decades after Liu An’s death, but the association may not be completely groundless. We know that there could be a connection between

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**146** Such possibility is based on currently available information. The purpose is to explore an alternative explanation to the formation of the *Huainanzi*. A full search of the possible historical figure who put the twenty *pian* together deserves a more detailed study. Here it suffices to mention one of such possibilities.

**147** See Wang Xianshen 1998: 16. For an outline of the discussion on the reconstructed postfaces, Xu Xingwu 徐興無 2005: 199–207.

**148** He Ning 1998: 6.

**149** In his preface to the reconstruction of the “*Qilüe*,” Yao Zhenzong quotes Ruan Xiaoxu 阮孝緒 that Liu Xiang’s postfaces were attached to the main texts. See Yao Zhenzong 1936: “*Qilue yuwen*” 1; also see Zhong Zhaopeng 2001: 554.

**150** *Hanshu* 70.1928–1929.

the “grand” 鴻 writings attributed to Liu An and Liu Xiang’s fascination with al-chemic writings as follows:

上復興神僊方術之事，而淮南有枕中鴻寶苑秘書。書言神僊使鬼物為金之術，及鄒衍重道延命方，世人莫見，而更生父德武帝時治淮南獄得其書。更生幼而讀誦，以為奇，獻之，言黃金可成。上令典尚方鑄作事，費甚多，方不驗。上乃下更生吏，吏劾更生鑄偽黃金，繫當死。

The Emperor (Emperor Xuan r. 74–48 BC) again promoted affairs related to gods, immortals, recipes, and techniques. There was a text call the *Rare, Keep-Inside-of-the-Pillow Collection of the Garden of Great Treasure* attributed to the Prince of Huainan. The text describes the techniques with which gods and immortals commanded ghostly creatures to make gold as well as the recipes by which Zou Yan valued the Way and prolonged his life. Few people in the world had seen it. Yet during Wudi’s reign, Gengsheng’s (Liu Xiang’s original name) father Liu De was in charge of the Prince of Huainan’s legal case, and obtained the An’s books. Gengsheng began to read those writings from his early age. He thought that the *Rare, Keep-Inside-of-the-Pillow Collection of the Garden of Great Treasure* was rare and presented it to the Emperor, saying that gold could be made [based on what says in this text]. The emperor ordered him to be in charge of the Directorate for Imperial Manufactories to cast gold. This cost a great deal, yet the recipes failed the attestation. The emperor then issued an order to have Gengsheng tried. The judge impeached Gengsheng for his casting fake gold, imprisoned him and sentenced him to death.<sup>151</sup>

Here, we are drawing an inference from the assumption that Liu An did provide a platform in the court of his Huainan principedom for the editor-writers of different traditions to make texts. The efforts resulted in the production of multiple texts yet to be formed as a larger text known as the *Huainanzi*, at least three decades after Liu An’s death. Our interpretation of the above passage follows the same assumption. Although this passage centers on the secret text of techniques and recipes, it nevertheless betrays that Liu Xiang’s father obtained Liu An’s writings when handling An’s legal case. The secret text of techniques and recipes, remaining consistent with the formation of the Liu An lore, was among the texts that Liu De took from the Huainan court. This passage also describes how Lu Xiang began to read these texts when he was young and how he would venture his life to promote them, as shown in the case of presenting the *Rare, Keep-Inside-of-the-Pillow Collection of the Garden of Great Treasure* to the emperor.

Consequently, we may conjecture that Liu Xiang compiled the extant *Huainanzi* from the *pian* found in Liu An’s collection, and then wrote the “Yaoliüe” postface to make his compilation a cohesive text. To be sure, the *Huainanzi* is not mentioned in the above passage, which mainly focuses on the secret text that almost cost Liu

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151 *Hanshu* 70.1928–1929.

Xiang's life. It is possible that the various *pian* chapters we see in the *Huainanzi* were among the texts obtained by Liu Xiang's father. The strong justification of the *Huainanzi*'s comprehensiveness can thus be explained in connection with Liu Xiang's admiration for those texts—alchemic writings in particular—attributed to Liu An.

Moreover, we do find the similarities between the postface to the *Zhanguo* allegedly written by Liu Xiang and the last part of the “Yaolüe.” While it is true that these two pieces serve different texts, they both praise the culture established by King Wen, King Wu, and Duke Zhou, a culture promoted by Confucius, and condemn the decline of this culture during the Eastern Zhou period. Moreover, these two pieces also share the same narrative structure. More interestingly, the two also share some wording similarities. For example, when discussing the chaotic political situation of the “later generations” (*wanshi* 晚世), the “Yaolüe” describes the following:

晚世之時，(a)六國諸侯，溪異谷別，水絕山隔，各自治其境內，守其分地，握其權柄，擅其政令。(b)下無方伯，上無天子，力征爭權，勝者為右；(c)恃連與國，約重致，剖信符，結遠援，以守其國家，持其社稷，(d)故縱橫修短生焉。(e)

In the time of later generations, (a) the lords of the six states, differentiated from each other by crooks and valleys and separated from each other by waters and mountains, each governed their own territories, guarded their shares of lands, held their power and authority, and arrogated to themselves the right of governing and commanding. (b) Below there were not dukes governing the local; above there was not a Son of Heaven. The lords used force to attack each other, fighting for authority, and those who won became superior. (c) By relying upon their allied states, forging solemn covenants by exchanging hostages, cutting bamboo to make tallies, and making distant allies, the lords aimed to protect their own states and families and continue the sacrifice to their gods of Land and Millet. (d) Therefore, the Vertical-Horizontal Strategy and the Short-Long Scheme grew out there. (e)<sup>152</sup>

Liu Xiang's postface to the *Zhanguo* shares the same sentiment and wording with the above “Yaolüe” passage:

晚世益甚，(a')萬乘之國七，千乘之國五，敵侔爭權，蓋為戰國。貪饕無耻，競進無厭；國異政教，各自制斷；(b')上無天子，下無方伯；力功爭強，勝者為右；(c')兵革不休，詐偽並起。當此之時，雖有道德，不得施謀；有設之強，負阻而恃固；連與交質，重約結誓，以守其國。(d')故孟子、孫卿儒術之士，棄捐於世，而游說權謀之徒，見貴於俗。是以蘇秦、張儀、公孫衍、陳軫、代、厲之屬，生從橫短長之說。(e')

152 He Ning 1998: 1461–1462. I underline and number the passages for the purpose of comparison.



The situation became even worse in later generations. (a') Seven states of ten-thousand chariots and five states of a thousand chariots, matching each other in power, fought for authority. They are called the Warring States. They were greedy and shameless, striving for advantage without satiation. Governing and teaching differed among the states, each having its own system and legal codes. (b') Above there was not a Son of Heaven; below there weren't dukes governing the local. The lords used force to attack each other, fighting for power, and those who won became superior. (c') Military campaigns operated without stop; fraudulence and schemes rose at the same time. In such an era, even the Way and its power could not be planned or applied. They owned strong devices, proud of their defense and relying upon its strength. They aimed to protect their states by making allies, exchanging hostages, forging solemn covenants, and being bound with swears. (d') For this reason, such Confucian scholars as Mencius and Sun Qing were abandoned by their contemporaries, and those who paddled their persuasions on power and schemes were honored by the mundane world. For this reason, persuaders like Su Qin, Zhang Yi, Gongsun Yan, Chen Zhen, Dai, and Li produced theories about the Vertical-Horizontal Strategy and the Short-Long Scheme. (e')<sup>153</sup>

Both of these passages describe how the Vertical-Horizontal Strategy and the Short-Long Scheme grew out of the political chaos in the era of “later generations” (a, a'). More specifically, during the chaotic period, the previous vassals of the Zhou king were more and more independent from the Zhou court and became the various lords—the actual kings—of their own territories (b, b'). This inevitably led to the collapse of the traditional Zhou governing system and to the former vassals' ignoring the royal Zhou family in fighting for their own power and authority (c, c'). In order to survive the internecine wars, the forging of covenants and the forming of alliances among the lords became necessary (d, d'); as a result, strategy and scheming characterized this era (e, e').

These similarities alone do not prove that Liu Xiang was the writer of the “Yaolüe.” Those who tend to believe that it was Liu An who composed the “Yaolüe” would argue, without the support of any specific evidence, that Liu Xiang might have consulted the “Yaolüe” before writing the *Zhanguo* postface. As discussed earlier, the *Huainanzi* had not been formed as a single text by the time of the completion of the *Shiji*, let alone during Liu An's life time. The *Hanshu* passage on how Liu Xiang's father obtained Liu An's texts when in charge of the latter's legal case is very suggestive of the history of those texts. The similarities examined between the above passages further confirm the inference that the various *pian* writings later incorporated in the *Huainanzi* were among the texts that Liu Xiang studied and admired when he was young, and that Liu Xiang possibly penned the “Yaolüe” at a certain point in combining the separated twenty *pian* into a longer text.

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<sup>153</sup> Fan Xiangyong 2006: 2. I underline and number the passages for the purpose of comparison.

Regardless, sometime after the “*Yaolüe*” was written (no later than the completion of Ban Gu’s “*Yiwen Zhi*”), it became considered part of the main text as the last chapter. The assignment of an author to the main text of the *Huainanzi* functions, much like the “*Yaolüe*” functions, to unify the text into a whole. Furthermore, the attribution of authorship reflects the ownership and patronage of this text.

The *Lüshi chunqiu*’s similarities with the *Huainanzi* warrant comparison. Like the *Huainanzi*, the *Lüshi chunqiu* is named after a powerful political figure, the Qin minister Lü Buwei (ca 290–235 BC), and consists of multiple essays arranged according to a pattern emphasizing its comprehensiveness. Read as encyclopedic texts, both the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Huainanzi*, according to Mark Lewis, claim their authority not only through a comprehensive pattern of arranging the contents, but also through their efforts to synthesize different thought traditions.<sup>154</sup> Such endeavors needed both monetary and political support, and certainly required the patronage of high ranking figures like Lü Buwei and Liu An. The motivations behind such patronage, whether personal fascination or political ambition, are difficult to detect. Nevertheless, in a retrospective sense, the patrons are repaid when the texts that they have sponsored are attributed to them. We can certainly see this point through the bibliographic works (such as the “*Yiwen zhi*”) by writers of the Han and subsequent dynasties, but it may have already been a convention that the patrons were given the authorship of the texts made by their intellectual entourages in the late Warring States period or earlier. Recent archaeological finds, especially those located in the southern region long considered the area of the state of Chu 楚, enable us to glimpse the role of patronage in the process of early Chinese text formation.

In a study on Chu social ranking in the Eastern Zhou period focusing on mortuary data, Lothar von Falkenhausen examines the ranks of tomb occupants whose tombs have yielded bamboo-strip manuscripts.<sup>155</sup> Of the sixteen Warring States tombs for which analyzable archaeological information is available, six belong to the category of high aristocrats, three belong to that of Magnates, five belong to that of Gentlemen, and only two belong to that of Commoners.<sup>156</sup> Despite the limited sample size and issues of precise social rank, the available data reveals that Warring States tomb manuscripts are most often connected to individuals of a relatively high social status.

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154 Lewis 1999: 302–308.

155 Falkenhausen 2003: 439–526.

156 Falkenhausen 2003: 484–485, 490–494.

The data also indicates that the burying of manuscripts in Warring States tombs had little to do with the prescriptions of burial rituals. There is no correlation between the ranks of the tomb occupants and the quantity or contents of the manuscripts found in the tombs, which suggests that manuscripts have a similar function to the other kinds of luxury funerary goods. Namely, they are a better reflection of the tomb occupants' individual preferences and the economic wealth of their families than of the contemporary sumptuary rules.<sup>157</sup>

This understanding inspires us to connect the text making of the Qin and early Han periods, as reflected in the extant *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Huainanzi*, with the burial of manuscripts during the Warring States. It is not without reason to think that some of the Warring States high ranking officials, noblemen, or even princes and rulers behaved much like Lü Buwei and Liu An in collecting and forming texts. Among these officials, noblemen, princes, and rulers, some likely had demonstrable literary talent (Liu An, for instance), while others were ridiculed for being “vulgar merchants” (Lü Buwei, for instance). Actual literacy is difficult to prove, hence Falkenhausen hesitates to associate the presence of manuscripts in Warring States tombs with the generation and transmission of textual knowledge. He opines, however, that they are comparable to the *Lüshi chunqiu* and the *Huainanzi* when viewed as cultural productions for their patron.<sup>158</sup> Although cultural production of this sort can involve any number of people from a variety of social classes—from the emperor to whom the products are presented to the commoners preparing the writing materials—it was usually only those of high rank who had the financial means to patronize the intellectual activity required to produce such texts.

From the point of view of those receiving patronage, it seems that the Warring States period provided enough opportunity for figures from different textual traditions to earn their livelihood by “selling” their literary skills. Seeking patronage from royal courts, high officials, local principalities, or powerful families became a common way for the educated men to earn a livelihood.<sup>159</sup> Their service to their patrons is traceable in the writings of the Grand Historians. The formation of the *Weigongzi bingfa* 魏公子兵法 (listed in Liu Xin's “Qilüe” as a text including twenty-one *pian* essays and seven *juan* illustrations) serves as a good example. The *Shiji* biography clearly states that “the text is popularly referred to as the *Weigongzi bingfa*,” even though it is well known that all the individual pieces included in this text were presented by the retainers to the Wei prince Wuji 無忌, one of the

157 Falkenhausen 2003: 485–486.

158 Falkenhausen 2003: 495–596.

159 Lewis 1999: 53–97.

four princes famous for supporting a large assembly of retainers in the Warring States period.<sup>160</sup> In short, one of the services provided by the intellectual retainers seeking patronage from the noblemen, officials, princes, or rulers was the formation and presentation of texts to the patron, who would then own the text and receive the honor of its being named for him. Recognizing this, we see that whether or not the patrons were actually engaged in the composition of the texts they patronized—a question consuming those investigating the *Huainanzi*—becomes secondary. Viewed in this context, writing was only one of the many skills—sword fighting, tax collecting, or even “cock-crowing and dog-snatching” (*jiming goudao* 雞鳴狗盜),<sup>161</sup> for instance—obtained by early Chinese job seekers to serve their patrons.

We may further the discussion by addressing what motivated a patron to support text making and why those texts ended up being buried in tombs. There are no easy answers to these questions. They could have simply been associated with a patron’s individual preference, or have something to do with what Michael Nylan calls the “culture of display.”<sup>162</sup> This culture of display is often seen as the backdrop against which Warring States political, social, and ritual discourse related to the negotiation of power, social communication, and ritual performance among the living as well as between the living and the dead is set. Generally speaking, attracting talented people from all walks of life, including the educated, to serve as retainers not only displayed the economic wealth that enabled a patron to host large group of retainers, but also spread reputation, virtue, and influence in a positive way, thereby, helping the patron reap more social, political, and economic benefits. The display of the texts produced under a patron’s patronage, together with other burial goods associated with his life and ritual propriety, then, reflected the patron’s life again in a positive way that would bring further benefits to his descendants. From this perspective, it is fair to say that the pieces included in the *Huainanzi* may not have survived without the unnatural death of Prince of Huainan, although the compilation and circulation of the twenty pieces as a whole text had to wait for another hundred years after his death.

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160 世俗稱魏公子兵法。 *Shiji* 77.2384.

161 *Shiji* 75.2363.

162 Nylan 2005: 3–49.

## 4.7 Summary

The attribution of the *Huainanzi* to Liu An has long been misunderstood to mean that Liu An actually planned and participated in the writing of the *Huainanzi*. Such an understanding of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship legitimizes the reading of the *Huainanzi* as the carrier of Liu An's political ambition. Central to this is the emphasis made by scholars such as Martin Kern and others asserting that the *Huainanzi* was a performance piece, presented and recited to the emperor by Liu An.

In carefully examining the sources upon which these above arguments rely, this chapter finds that the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is deeply rooted in a Liu An lore that began to develop decades after Liu An's death. Once formed, this lore's emphasis of Liu An's literary talents, undetectable in earlier sources (for example, An's *Shiji* biography), began to dominate writings on Liu An and the texts attributed to him. The significance of the attribution of the *Huainanzi* lies neither in Liu An as the writer nor his role as the performer of this text; rather, we may understand the *Huainanzi*'s authorship historically embedded in early Chinese text formation and transmission. This is best emphasized through our understanding of the "Yaolüe" author.

As a central piece through which the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is defined, the "Yaolüe" employs a set of literary devices to create a sense of cohesiveness among the twenty chapters of the *Huainanzi*. There is also a clear editorial voice advocating the text's comprehensiveness. The effort to make the *Huainanzi* a comprehensive text synthesizing and unifying all knowledge was part of a Han dynasty trend best illustrated by the project to rearrange the texts in Han imperial collection in the late Western Han. It was through this project that many voluminous multi-chapter texts came into being. During this process, it was also recognized that authorship could function as a device to build consistency across larger texts.

Another noteworthy element in the text making culture of the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods was the sponsorship of *shi* retainers (*yangshi* 養士) in both state and local levels. These concepts of patronage and ownership should be considered as the key to explain why the twenty *pian* included in the *Huainanzi* have been attributed to Liu An. As patron of the retainers who composed the individual *pian* in the Huainan court, Liu An became the owner of the texts. When those single *pian* were combined to form a multi-*pian* text under Liu An's name, patronage, ownership, and authorship of the *Huainanzi* merged together.

## 5 The Author as an Individual Writer: Sima Qian, the Presented Author

In an inspiring article on the *Shiji*'s connection with its author, Sima Qian, Michael Nylan discusses three major ways of reading this text—the social scientific, the lyric/romantic, and the religious.<sup>1</sup> The social scientific reading stresses Sima Qian's objectivity in dealing with his sources and his principle of “transmitting those things that are doubtful as doubts.”<sup>2</sup> For example, though Ban Gu criticized Sima Qian for abandoning classical learning and lacking consistency in his accounts of the past, he ultimately followed Liu Xiang and Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC–18 AD) in considering Sima Qian “having the talents of a good historian.”<sup>3</sup> Further, we read that Ban Gu admired Sima Qian “for his being good at ordering events and principles, his being insightful yet without being extravagant, and his remaining stylistically simple yet without being vulgar in his writing,”<sup>4</sup> and praised his writing, claiming that “its composition is straight, its events are accurate, it does not leave out the good, nor does it hide the bad; for this reason people consider it a dependable record.”<sup>5</sup>

By comparison, the lyric/romantic approach focuses on the author's intent in compiling this voluminous work. In searching and relating such motifs as the author's frustration, his pursuit of fame, and his intention to seek revenge for his humiliation of being castrated to the understanding of the *Shiji*, this approach suggests the whole *Shiji* text can be analyzed on the basis of a small portion of the *Shiji* text containing Sima Qian's autobiographical information.

Satisfied with neither of the above approaches, Nylan proposes a religious reading of the *Shiji* by emphasizing the key word “filial piety,” which is not only referenced in the “scene of the author” depicted in the postface, but also reflected in the main text of the *Shiji* as the most effective thread to connect the entire work. According to this reading, the whole *Shiji* text had been attempted as a project to achieve immortality for Sima Qian himself, his father Sima Tan, their family tradition of holding the *shi* 史 position, and the entire culture of the Central States.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nylan 1998–1999.

2 疑則傳疑. *Shiji* 13.487.

3 有良史之材. *Hanshu* 62.2738.

4 服其善序事理，辨而不華，質而不俚. *Hanshu* 62.2738.

5 其文直，其事核，不虛美，不隱惡，故謂之實錄. *Hanshu* 62.2738.

6 Nylan 1998–1999: 203–215.

These three approaches, no matter how sophisticatedly differentiated, apply information (especially information considered to be of authorial significance) representing only a small portion of the *Shiji*. Authorial intent is the key focus of all the three readings. In this sense, the lyric/romantic reading serves as the cornerstone for all three readings. A widely received argument views the *Shiji* as the very vehicle through which Sima Qian, the seemingly undisputable author of the *Shiji*, was able to vent his anger and frustration at his contemporary political atmosphere and overcome the shame brought about by the punishment of castration he had suffered after an unfortunate political event. Closely related to this argument is the exposition of Sima Qian's intention to imitate Confucius, as seen through close examinations of the lines and passages interpreted as Sima Qian's authorial voice.

Consciously or not, the presupposition of equating Sima Qian with the *Shiji*'s author in its modern definition features centrally in this line of argumentation.<sup>7</sup> Such arguments are sustained by a willing recognition of a transparent author-text linkage, which holds that the author and the text explain each other. Following this premise, it is no surprise that the “Taishigong zixu” 太史公自敘 (Grand Historian's Self-Narration), the last chapter of the *Shiji* transmitted to us, and the “Bao Ren An shu” 報任安書 (Letter in Response to Ren An), a letter preserved in Sima Qian's *Hanshu* biography and said to have been written by Sima Qian to his peer Ren An when the latter was in prison, have constituted the two major sources for the study of the authorship of the *Shiji*. To be sure, both the “Taishigong zixu” and the “Bao Ren An shu,” together with a few other *Shiji* chapters on the biographies of Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, Confucius, Qu Yuan, and Jia Yi, are important materials for studying this issue, but one must consider whether these two documents were truly written by Sima Qian.<sup>8</sup>

This consideration is critical not only for defining the relationship between the *Shiji* and Sima Qian, but also for extending our understanding of the whole

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7 For example, Stephen Durrant is well aware and would wisely remind his readers of the complexity of such issues as the *Shiji*'s authorship and transmission, but in relating the *Shiji* to Sima Qian, especially dealing with matters pertaining to Sima Qian's subjective intention or authority-claims embedded in this *Shiji*, he chooses to avoid disentangling the issues and directly attributes this work to Sima Qian as a premise for his discussion. See Durrant 1995; Durrant 2005: 93.

8 Four established scholars of Early China Studies, Stephen Durrant, Wai-Yee Li, Michael Nylan, and Hans van Ess, had a seminar exclusively focusing on the issues surrounding the “Letter in Response to Ren An” and, as a result of the seminar, produced a book including four articles and an English translation of the letter in Durrant et al 2016. Their work cites a number of the arguments that I had presented in my Ph.D. dissertation on this topic, and I will examine their generously-offered and gratefully-received critiques where appropriate in this chapter.

*Shiji* project, as well as early Chinese text formation in general. In the following pages, I will offer a careful re-reading of the above-mentioned two texts and an analysis of relevant textual evidence, including some of the Grand Historian's comments and encomia incorporated in the main text of the *Shiji*. Rather than reinforcing the presupposed authorial connection between these two texts and Sima Qian, I will dispute it. For example, the authorial voice and persona seen in the "Taishigong zixu" and the "Bao Ren An shu" are shown to be projections of later editorial efforts, and their long-standing interpretations as representations of the voice of Sima Qian's political frustration take this later projection for historical reality. Through the scrutiny of the long-held premise that Sima Qian unveiled his intentions for making the *Shiji* in the "Taishigong zixu" and the "Bao Ren An shu," this chapter reminds *Shiji* readers of the inefficiency of a plausible presupposition of the text's authorship, and the necessity of the investigation of what various authors, writers, editors, and/or compilers intended at various stages in the formation and transmission of the *Shiji*.

To begin the study, I first examine how the understanding of the authorship of the *Shiji* has been shaped by the reading of the above two sources as autobiographical writings. Then a careful reading of the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An follows. In this reading, we discuss a series of questions in connection with previous scholarly handling of those points that are apparently against the presupposition that both the "Taishigong zixu" and the "Bao Ren An shu" are autobiographical writings. At the end, this chapter will propose a new interpretation of these two pieces. I will argue that either the *Shiji* postface or the letter to Ren An has conclusively been written by Sima Qian himself.

The search for the author who composed or compiled either of these two essays may be compromised by the insufficiency of available information, but the voice that these two essays aim to convey is clear. It echoes a collective voice of the Han intellectuals seeking to express their restricted political intentions and their yearning for freedom to seek employment that their Eastern Zhou predecessors enjoyed. In this sense, Sima Qian's story and the work he compiled, like that of other frustrated authors catalogued in both the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An, are modeled and transformed into a collective voice crying out for court recognition. This very voice simultaneously reflects the painful revelation that, in the newly established imperial power structure, intellectuals as a social group had forever lost the freedom, however limited, of their Warring States predecessors—the freedom of choosing which ruler to seek to influence.



## 5.1 Early Literature of Individual Frustration and Authorial Voice

Considered as author of the two autobiographical pieces, the “Taishigong zixu” and the “Bao Ren An shu,” Sima Qian is aligned with the literary tradition of frustrated authors that began with the *Odes*. Mark Lewis recognizes the “observing author” through the use of the third-person voice in some of the *Daya* 大雅 (Greater Elegantiae) poems.<sup>9</sup> The switch of the point of view from the first person, featured in the *Song* 頌 (Eulogia) portion of the *Odes* lyrics, to the third person in the *Ya* 雅 (Elegantiae) poems, according to Lewis, not only distinguished a change of function of the lyrics from recording ritual liturgies (the *Song* poems) to evoking collective memory (the *Daya* poems), but also marked a transitional moment to the “emergence of an implied author” from the ritual context in which the Eulogia poems functioned.<sup>10</sup> The implied author is associated with the voice of frustration and resentment conveyed through the poems grouped in both the Greater and Lesser Elegantiae, and a further break from the lyric’s ritual context. This voice, although a reflection of a variety of attitudes toward social life, was ultimately contextualized largely with the decline of Zhou court and its political power. Behind this politicized voice in the *Maoshi* (Mao version of the *Odes*), therefore, stands an alienated or abandoned individual, named or not, voicing his suffering and grievance. Indeed, five out of seven of the *Shi* poems with authorial attributions feature strong critical voices, tempting a close association of the alienated poetic character with the author. However, the remaining two poems authored by a Yin Jifu 尹吉甫 do not support the generalization that the emergence of the author is linked to feelings of isolation and frustration, for those two poems celebrate the Zhou King Xuan’s reign in which the author also played a praiseworthy role.<sup>11</sup>

It is the *Chuci* 楚辭 (*Songs of Chu*) that has been widely held as the first example in which an author’s persona is tied to the impression of an isolated individual. The *Chuci* is an anthology compiled by the Eastern Han scholar Wang Yi 王逸 (ca. 89–158 AD). Although a collection of southern style songs of different periods ranging from the Warring States period to the Han dynasty, the *Chuci* is mainly famous

<sup>9</sup> Lewis 1999: 150–151.

<sup>10</sup> Lewis 1999: 150–151.

<sup>11</sup> See “Song gao,” in *Maoshi zhengyi* 18.1206–1218; and “Zheng min,” in *Maoshi zhengyi* 18.1218–1225.

for its inclusion of the twenty-five songs attributed to Qu Yuan (340–278 BC).<sup>12</sup> In his anthology, by attaching a brief preface to each of the songs relating to the authorship and the circumstance under which a song was composed, Wang Yi creates a coherent Qu Yuan narrative that portrays him as an exiled political dissident. Certainly, Wang Yi did not invent Qu Yuan; the Qu Yuan in the *Chuci* is anchored to his biography in the *Shiji*. In fact, Wang Yi provides a short biography for the attributed author Qu Yuan in the preface of the “Lisao” (Encountering the Sorrow) based on the *Shiji*.<sup>13</sup> In this biography, Qu Yuan’s reasons for composing the song are explained: political slander against Qu Yuan led to his estrangement from the Chu king. To express his frustration and “admonish the ruler” (*feng jian jun* 風諫君), the alienated minister resorted to poetic composition, as Wang describes:

屈原執履忠貞而被讒邪，憂心煩亂，不知所愬，乃作離騷經。

Qu Yuan behaved himself and carried out his duties with loyalty and honesty, yet he came under the insult of slander and false accusation. Worried, annoyed, and disturbed in his heart, Qu Yuan did not know what to resort to, and so he composed the *Classic of Encountering the Sorrow*.<sup>14</sup>

However, the king of Chu would not listen to Qu Yuan, and instead adopted the foreign policy that Qu Yuan’s political enemies proposed. This failed policy soon cost the life of the Chu king. Nevertheless, the Chu king’s successor continued to heed those slanderers, and exiled Qu Yuan to the desolate south. Here Wang Yi contextualizes another work, the “Jiuzhang” (Nine Declarations), in pointing out that Qu Yuan composed them “to prove and demonstrate [his loyalty and honesty] on his own behalf” (*yi zi zhengming* 以自証明) to the new Chu ruler. Eventually realizing that he would never be trusted, the lyricist drowned himself in the Mi River (Miyuan 汨淵).<sup>15</sup>

Connected to a biography of an upright minister in his attempt to demonstrate his loyalty to two successive rulers, the songs attributed to Qu Yuan were

12 The songs assigned to Qu Yuan in Wang Yi’s *Chuci zhangju* 楚辭章句 include the “Lisao” 離騷 (Encountering the Sorrow), “Jiuge” 九歌 (Nine Songs) (consisting of 11 *pian*), “Tianwen” 天問 (Heavenly Inquiries), “Jiuzhang” 九章 (Nine Declarations) (consisting of 9 *pian*), “Yuanyou” 遠遊 (Distant Roaming), “Buju” 卜居 (Divining Dwelling), and “Yufu” 漁父 (Fisherman). The *pian* number (25) of the songs attributed to Qu Yuan is in accordance with that recorded in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*.

13 離騷經者屈原之所作也。 *Chuci zhangju* 1.1.

14 *Chuci zhangju* 1.1.

15 Known as the Miluo River (Miluojiang 汨羅江) located in modern-day Hunan province.

successfully historicized in the light of the political frustration and sorrow that he encountered. While the “Lisao” is considered to be addressed to the Chu king who later died in Qin, the remainder of the collection is contextualized by Qu Yuan’s exile under the watch of the newly enthroned king. Accordingly, all the songs attributed to Qu Yuan demand their due allegorical interpretations, as exemplified by Wang Yi’s discussion of the wording in the “Lisao”:

離騷之文，依詩取興，引類譬諭，故善鳥香草以配忠貞，惡禽臭物以比饒佞；靈修美人以媲於君，宓妃佚女以譬賢臣；虯龍鸞鳳以託君子，飄風雲霓以為小人。

The wording of the “Lisao” follows the *Odes* to make evocations and applies analogies to demonstrate and admonish, thus good birds and fragrant grass are used to match loyalty and honesty; wicked fowl and putrefaction are employed to figure slander and flattery; spiritual, fine, and beautiful human beings are compared to rulers; tranquil goddesses and beautiful ladies are likened to worthy subjects; dragons and phoenixes are metaphors for gentlemen; and blinding winds, clouds, and secondary rainbows are tropes of petty men.<sup>16</sup>

The above allegorical tropes not only confirm a biographical reading of the “Lisao,” but they also stipulate a similar understanding of the other songs ascribed to Qu Yuan. As a result, the reading of the “Lisao” with over three hundred and seventy lines is no doubt governed by a minister’s self-revealing expression of his loyalty to the ruler who turned away from him. The narrator naturally becomes Qu Yuan himself, and the dazzling spiritual traveling to the ethereal realm, accordingly, becomes the efforts that Qu Yuan made to get close to the befuddled king.

The meanings of the other songs are anchored in the same allegorical tropes. No matter how different these songs are in terms of their origin and style, they are all interpreted in the same narrative framework: Qu Yuan’s anger toward the slanderers, his frustration at being misunderstood, and his persistent loyalty to the state of Chu and the Chu kings.

Under this hermeneutical structure, the songs and the biography explain each other. The songs demand an author to define and stabilize their meanings, and Qu Yuan as a named author with an established historical biography became “a set of attitudes, recurring images, and rhetorical tropes” associated with an abandoned, virtuous man providing “a time, a place, and a human core to which readers could attribute the stances and gestures in the text, and with which they could identify.”<sup>17</sup> To Mark Lewis, this identification was significant in the Han political and intellectual milieu, for it enabled the constitution of new social groups

<sup>16</sup> *Chuci zhangju* 1.2–3.

<sup>17</sup> Lewis 1999: 189.

which aligned themselves with feelings of being misunderstood and excluded, as evidenced in the writings of the Han scholar Jia Yi preserved in the *Shiji* and other songs included in the *Chuci zhangju* anthology. In this sense, the “Lisao” and other *Chuci* songs attributed to Qu Yuan functioned as a common touchstone providing common vocabulary to all Han literati who felt politically underappreciated.<sup>18</sup>

In an article on the authorship concept reflected in the *Shiji*, Martin Kern notes that the attribution of the “Lisao” to Qu Yuan betrays Wang Yi’s and other Han intellectuals’ anachronistic reading of the “Lisao.”<sup>19</sup> This reading may now be properly labeled as biographical fallacy, a voluntarily distorted projection of the problem Han literati faced in their own time. Kern argues that Qu Yuan as an author did not create, but instead was created by, the “Lisao” and other songs, even though the *Chuci* has been read and analyzed through Qu Yuan the authorial figure from the Han onward. In such a willful misreading of the *Chuci* songs, questions on real and virtual authorship are no longer significant. According to Kern, the first-person narrator as well as the protagonist of the songs, deeply-rooted and functioning in a culture of performance, claimed his own authorship amidst his cries of frustration. In making the self-revealing heroic author recognizable, the Han intellectuals who identified themselves with Qu Yuan, both dissidents and loyalists of his state and rulers, filled the void themselves, albeit indirectly, by attributing the “Lisao” and other songs to Qu Yuan.<sup>20</sup>

The attribution of the “Lisao” and other similar songs to Qu Yuan was well-received in the Han intellectual world. Viewed from the above perspective, Qu Yuan, the author, served as the medium linking the frustrated protagonist to Han intellectuals, and enabled them to voice their politically dilemmatic situation: in comparison with the Warring States multi-state discourse, in which the persuaders would still have other opportunities to peddle their talents and ideas to others if refused by one of the many states, the Han imperial system reduced the choice of career-seekers considerably.

It did not take long for the Han imperial career-seekers to realize that their fortunes were no longer under their own control, but were entirely bound to their ruler’s single-handed manipulation. Attempts to be recognized by the ruler became desperate. One person’s success meant the failure of many others in the race through the narrow gate to the imperial power. Furthermore, those who failed could no longer travel to another state for employment as their Warring States

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**18** Lewis 1999: 190.

**19** Kern 2016: 51–57.

**20** Kern 2016.

predecessors did, but had to remain loyal to the emperor hoping that their loyalty might be appreciated someday—if not by the current ruler, then by the future one. As a result, the loss of choice in serving the court and the feelings of failure after having been ignored or abandoned by the ruler was the catalyst for literature expressing individual frustration and resentment. Following this understanding, it is not far-fetched to identify the authorial voice in the *Chuci* with that of those Han intellectuals who felt that their talents and loyalty had not been duly, fully appreciated.

The Qu Yuan persona voices more than merely the author's frustration, though. It also voices an implied solution to overcome this frustration. This solution is death, Qu Yuan's suicide setting an extreme yet understandable example. By choosing death to spare his virtue and purity from being polluted by the “muddy-witted” (*zhuo* 濁) world, Qu Yuan declared his sublime intention to the *junzi* 君子 (gentlemen), and transformed himself into an exemplary loyal dissident who was fully devoted to moral principles and public good even at the cost of his own life.<sup>21</sup> In this light, the devotional integrity seen as “the ground of individual authorship” presented in the Qu Yuan persona “was sanctioned by the willingness to die.”<sup>22</sup>

## 5.2 Reading the *Shiji* through Frustration, Fame, and Filial Piety

It is both the motif of frustration and the notion of identifying oneself with the future *junzi* gentlemen who would fully understand and appreciate the hero-author that bring Sima Qian to this tradition of venting resentment through writing, according to the widely received reading of the “Postface by the Grand Historian” and the “Letter in Response to Ren An.” Indeed, in a passage appearing almost identically in both the postface and the letter to Ren An, the supposed narrator Sima Qian willingly aligns himself with those frustrated individuals in history who have left significant writings that are considered to be the product of their frustration:

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21 For Qu Yuan's declaration of being willing to die and aligning himself with the *junzi* gentlemen, see the coda part of the “Huaisha” 懷沙 (Embracing the Sands), one of the pieces included in the “Jiuzhang” and cited in the *Shiji*. See *Shiji* 84.2490.

22 Lewis 1999: 190.

蓋西伯拘而演周易；仲尼屨而作春秋；屈原放逐，乃賦離騷；左丘失明，厥有國語；孫子臠腳，兵法修列；不韋遷蜀，世傳呂覽；韓非囚秦，說難、孤憤。詩三百篇，大氏賢聖發憤之所為作也。此人皆意有所鬱結，不得通其道，故述往事，思來者。

Now that the Earl of the West was arrested then he developed the *Changes of Zhou*, Zhongni was in difficulty then he created the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, Qu Yuan was banished then he composed the *Encountering the Sorrow*, Zuo Qiuming lost his sight then there was the *Discourse of the States*, Master Sun had his feet amputated then the *Military Tactics* was arranged, Lü Buwei was demoted to Shu then the *Overviews of Mr Lü* was transmitted through generations, Han Fei was imprisoned in Qin then he wrote the *Difficulties of Persuasion* and *Solitary Frustration*, the three hundred pieces of the *Odes* were mostly created by the sages and worthies in expressing their frustrations; all the men listed here belonged to those whose minds were pent up and could not find their way to vent and thus narrated the past affairs in expectation of the recognition of those who will come in the future.<sup>23</sup>

The context of this passage is deeply associated with the narrator Sima Qian's notion of fame, which he applies in defense of his choosing the shame of castration rather than an honorable suicide following the Li Ling 李陵 (?–74 BC) political catastrophe. By choosing emasculation over death, a decision he knew would bring shame to his family and his own reputation during his lifetime, Sima Qian meant to pass his name on to future generations and obtain his fame through his “literary talents” (*wencai* 文采).<sup>24</sup> It is not wealth or high social status that brought men fame, for history had told Sima Qian that, “In the past, those who were rich and noble and whose names nevertheless went to oblivion are countless.”<sup>25</sup> Only writing the *Shiji* could properly guarantee his fame.

What is more telling about the above listed exemplary figures, according to the narrator Sima Qian's theory, is that their writings, which had successfully enabled their names to endure in history, directly resulted from their tribulations. Such difficulties were understood in the framework that the Qu Yuan persona reveals. Those who received the punishments or dealt with the difficulties were exemplary men of unshakeable virtue, willing to sacrifice their life for the public good. In the implication of numbering himself with those exemplary figures, narrator Sima Qian proposes a reinterpretation of his case in this framework, which not only declares the punishment that shamed his family and his own reputation injustice, but also extends his fame to the future.

<sup>23</sup> From the “Letter in Response to Ren An” preserved in the *Hanshu*, see *Hanshu* 62.2735. For a repetition of this passage in the “Postface by the Grand Historian,” see *Shiji* 130.3300.

<sup>24</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2733.

<sup>25</sup> 古者富貴而名摩滅不可勝記. *Hanshu* 62.2735.

If aligning Sima Qian with Qu Yuan makes him a martyr, then comparing Sima Qian to Confucius portrays him as a sage. The notion that Sima Qian intentionally imagined himself as Confucius in his writing of the *Shiji* prompts Stephen Durrant to call Sima Qian “the Second Confucius.” Following Wolfgang Bauer’s appraisal of Sima Qian as “the first author of a truly autobiographical self-testimony in China,” Durrant remarks, “what we know of Sima Qian derives almost exclusively from his own hand; he creates himself, much as he creates China’s past, through his written word. Moreover, the text that is his life and the text that is his history resonate with one another, contain parallel themes, and reflect similar tensions.”<sup>26</sup> The cornerstone for both Bauer’s and Durrant’s claims is, unsurprisingly, the information given by the *Shiji* postface narrated by the Grand Historian and the letter to Ren An, which both consider Sima Qian as the author who “speaks extensively of himself.”<sup>27</sup> Following this interpretational strategy, we find that Durrant’s equating Sima Qian with “the second Confucius” convincing, considering Sima Qian’s own declarations in the postface attributed to him:

太史公曰：先人有言，自周公卒五百歲而有孔子。孔子卒後至於今五百歲，有能紹明世，正易傳，繼春秋，本詩書禮樂之際，意在斯乎！意在斯乎！小子何敢讓焉。

The Grand Historian says, “A predecessor of mine once said, ‘Five hundred years after Duke Zhou died there was Confucius.’ After Confucius died, till the present day, there have been five hundred years. If there is a moment when one can continue the bright age, rectify the tradition of the *Changes*, follow the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and set the *Odes*, *Documents*, *Rites*, and *Music* as the root, is it meant to be the present time? Is it meant to be the present time? How do I, the youngster, dare to decline this?”<sup>28</sup>

**26** Durrant 1995: 1. For Bauer’s appraisal of Sima Qian, see Bauer 1990: 79. The translation of Bauer’s words follows Durrant’s, see Durrant 1995: 1.

**27** Durrant 1995: 1.

**28** *Shiji* 130.3296. It is worth noting that the conventional interpretation of these words is not without question. First, I identify the “Taishigong” here as Sima Tan instead of Sima Qian, a reading that will be explained later in more detail. Second, I consider the conventional rendering of the term *xianren* 先人 to be misleading. A careful examination of the term *xianren* or *xian* (the shortened form of *xianren*) suggests that, instead of translating it specifically as Sima Tan, it is better to understand it in a more general sense as one’s predecessor(s) or ancestor(s). For example, see how this term is used in the following sentences: 重為鄉黨戮笑，汗辱先人，亦何面目復上父母之丘墓乎？(*Hanshu* 62.2736); 余先周室之太史也 (*Shiji* 130.3295); 僕之先人非有剖符丹書之功 (*Hanshu* 62.2736); 太上不辱先 (*Hanshu* 62.2372); 行莫醜於辱先 (*Hanshu* 62.2727); 請悉論先人所次舊聞 (*Shiji* 130.3295). Finally, I would question some of the punctuation in this short passage given by the Zhonghua shuju 中華書局 version of the *Shiji*. The Zhonghua shuju version breaks the sentence “有能紹明世，正易傳，繼春秋，本詩書禮樂之際，意在斯乎！意在斯乎！” into

Here the term “Grand Historian” is understood as Sima Qian and the “predecessor” whose words are referred to by Sima Qian in this passage, Qian’s father Sima Tan. This short passage, then, has been interpreted as an iteration of the scene in which the elder Grand Historian, Sima Tan, lying in his deathbed, asked his son, the future Grand Historian, to imitate Confucius and write history, so that the four hundred years after Confucius’s death would not pass into oblivion.<sup>29</sup> The five-hundred-year myth referenced by the Grand Historian *père* resonates with the famous

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two parts and refers them to different speakers, Sima Tan and Sima Qian, respectively. The reason that I consider it a whole sentence is twofold. First, there is no break of meaning throughout this expression. In the context dealing with time and writing with a strong sense of Mandate of Heaven, the above narrative nicely lays out the following two parallels:

Speakers of those words	Beginning	End	How many years	Writing
A Predecessor of the Grand Historian	Death of Duke Zhou	Death of Confucius	500	<i>Changes, Spring and Autumn Annals, Documents, Rites, and Music</i>
The Grand Historian	Death of Confucius	Present day (jin 今 or si 斯)	500	<i>Changes, Spring and Autumn Annals, Documents, Rites, and Music</i>

If we translate this table into narrative, the parallels go like this: (1) Five hundred years had passed from the death of Duke Zhou to that of Confucius, who had made those texts in order to continue the bright age; (2) again another five hundred years have passed since the death of Confucius, is the present day meant to be the time for someone to continue Confucius’s work? To end the sentence with a question mark after the character *ji* 際, as the Zhonghua shuju version does, obviously ignores the above parallel and, consequently, makes the reading awkward. Second, reading the above sentence as an integrated textual unit fits the context well. Put into the context, the above passage is obviously the starting point of a new section of the postface and the beginning of a debate between the Grand Historian and a High Official Hu Sui (Shangdafu Hu Sui 上大夫壺遂), in which Hu Sui challenges the Grand Historian’s opinion that “the present day” was the time meant to continue Confucius’s enterprise. The Grand Historian’s response to Hu Sui, while taking a modest stance expressing that his work is not comparable to Confucius’s, confirms otherwise that it is not the Grand Historian’s predecessor but he himself who makes the argument in the above parallel that, since another five hundred years passed after Confucius’s death, now it is the time for him to continue the tradition established by Confucius.

<sup>29</sup> *Shiji* 130.3295.



*Mengzi* saying that a sage appears every five hundred years.<sup>30</sup> By recounting his father's words alluding to Mencius, another sage-like figure, Sima Qian was well aware that he was assuming the role of the sage.

Imitating a sage by writing history has apparent associations with fame and the transmission of fame; evoking the five-hundred-year myth further indicates the involvement of mysterious, unchangeable forces comparable to the Mandate of Heaven in Sima Qian's undertaking. It is the clear awareness of such heavenly command, a moral call from the depths of history, that urged him not to commit suicide,<sup>31</sup> but instead to choose castration, the most humiliating punishment in both Sima Qian's own view and that of his contemporaries.<sup>32</sup> Such understanding demands a reappraisal of Sima Qian's choice and that immediately transforms his humiliation into a noble deed and others' condemnation into praise. From this aspect, it was the heavenly noble command of writing history that had given him the strength to endure the insurmountable humiliation.

The Grand Historian also reminds the readers of his letter on this point, hoping that they would understand that he was not afraid of death, but instead of passing away "lighter than a goose feather" (*qing yu hongmao* 輕於鴻毛) by means of suicide, he would rather have a death "heavier than Mount Tai" (*zhong yu Taishan* 重於泰山), leaving behind him a fruitful, meaningful life.<sup>33</sup> For Sima Qian, his choice not to die was a choice to live though humiliation in order to accomplish a sage's responsibility:

僕竊不遜近，自託於無能之辭，網羅天下放失舊聞，考之行事，稽其成敗興壞之理，凡百三十篇，亦欲以究天人之際，通古今之變，成一家之言。草創未就，適會此禍，惜其不成，是以就極刑而無愠色。僕誠已著此書，藏之名山，傳之其人通邑大都，則僕償前辱之責，雖萬被戮，豈有悔哉！然此可為智者道，難為俗人言也。

I myself venture—not being modest, but being shallow<sup>34</sup>—to rely on my incapable words to put together the abandoned, scattered old hearings under Heaven, examining them based

**30** In his conversation with the interlocutor Chong Yu, likely derived from a proverb, Mencius says that "every five hundred years there must be a true king rising" 五百年必有王者興. See Yang Bojun 2010a: 100.

**31** For relevant discussion on why a suicide death was a more honorable way to end one's life in the Han, see Knechtges 2008: 78–80.

**32** It is mentioned in the letter to Ren An, saying, "among humiliations, none is worse than that brought by castration" 詬莫大於宮刑. *Hanshu* 62.2727.

**33** *Hanshu* 62.2732.

**34** I suspect that the character *jin* 近 could be an interpolation or copy error; nevertheless, since this character could also denote "being shallow," a meaning close to what *buxun* 不遜 contains, I consider it being read together with *buxun* instead of with the sentence following it.

on historical deeds, and investigating those deeds for the patterns of accomplishment, failure, rising, and decline. Altogether there are one hundred and thirty *pian* chapters, in an attempt to explore the border between Heavenly realm and human affairs, to comprehend the changes from the ancient to the present, and to create a teaching lineage of my own. Before completing the project launched earlier, I encountered this catastrophe. It would be a pity to die without having it finished, therefore I chose the extreme penalty of being castrated with no expression of anger. When I indeed have finished writing this text, had it stored in a famous mountain, and had it passed down to the right men, who would make it be circulated in towns and cities, then I would have fulfilled the responsibility associated with my previous humiliation; then even if I suffer ten thousand deaths, how could I feel any regret? Nevertheless, this can only be told to those who are wise and can hardly be explained to a vulgar man.<sup>35</sup>

It becomes clear in this passage that the noble mission of accomplishing a sage's work enabled Sima Qian to go through the most degrading humiliation of the time and to overcome death once the text was completed. But again, Sima Qian expresses his rather pessimistic estimation of people's reactions that truly frustrated those who earned their fame through monumental works that they had left behind. He indicates that vulgar people would not understand why Sima Qian chose the punishment of castration, nor could they understand why his writing project was so important. The application of the word *zhizhe* 智者 (wise man) in this context resonates with the expression of "expecting the recognition of those who will come in the future" (*si laizhe* 思來者) in the *Shiji* postface, or the *junzi* gentleman in the *Chuci*, while the term "vulgar people" is evidently linked to the "muddy-witted" (*hun* 溷) world that Qu Yuan refused to cope with. Even if Sima Qian did not consider his friend Ren An a wise man, he still hoped that Ren An would understand him and his choice, for, as he says in this letter, Ren An was facing an "unfathomable penalty" (*buce zhi zui* 不測之罪)<sup>36</sup> at that moment and would soon be abandoned by this world. From this perspective, Sima Qian and Ren An would be joined by the recognition of future ages.

Unlike Qu Yuan, who committed suicide after finishing his work, Sima Qian had to defer his death by enduring "defilement" (*gou* 垢). The time he managed to win for his history writing, therefore, was time spent in humiliation, as described in the letter to Ren An:

雖累百世，垢彌甚耳！是以腸一日而九回，居則忽忽若有所亡，出則不知所如往。每念斯恥，汗未嘗不發背露衣也。

35 *Hanshu* 62.2735.

36 *Hanshu* 62.2726.

Even after the accumulation of a hundred generations, the defilement would only get heavier. For this reason, my guts are wrenched nine times every day. At home, I become absentminded as if I have lost something; going out, I often forget where to go. Whenever I think of this shame, sweat never fails to effuse from my back and wet my clothes.<sup>37</sup>

The extraordinary pain that the Grand Historian endured daily during the compiling of his monumental work is vividly depicted here, so much so that the image of a suffering author inevitably rises from his work and becomes necessary for an autobiographical reading of the *Shiji*. For this reason, it is no surprise that many read the *Shiji* as Sima Qian's revenge for the humiliation he had received, and, consequently, in such an allegorical reading, the text becomes a strong criticism and triumph over the cruelty of a whimsical Emperor Wu, who ordered Sima Qian's castration.<sup>38</sup>

Such a reading may find its reference from another passage in the letter to Ren An:

所以隱忍苟活函糞土之中而不辭者，恨私心有所不盡，鄙沒世而文采不表於後也。

The reason that I patiently bore to barely remain alive and placed myself in soil without complaints, is that I hate not to fully express what is in my own heart and loathe leaving this world without presenting my literary talents to later generations.<sup>39</sup>

While elsewhere in this letter the author reveals his desire for fame, his imitation of the sage Confucius, and his claim of moral purity by evoking the frustration of the authors of the past and aligning himself with them, the above passage emphasizes the expression of his private world. Linked with his theory that great writers wrote due to the frustration they suffered and his own agony brought on by his humiliating punishment, what took root deep in Sima Qian's mind certainly carries a strong sense of admonition and criticism. Such linkage also unsurprisingly invites an explanation of the *Shiji* as a project for revenge, allowing, for example, the interpretation of the inclusion of such contents as *fengshan* 封禪 and pursuing immortality in the “Xiaowu benji” 孝武本紀 (Basic Annals of Filial Emperor Wu)

<sup>37</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2736.

<sup>38</sup> Such reading of the *Shiji* started rather early. For example, according to a *Hou Hanshu* account, *Shiji* was considered a “slandorous book” (*bangshu* 謗書) by Wang Yun 王允 in his explaining why he did not think it was a pity to kill Cai Yong, who many of his contemporaries expected would continue the former scribes' enterprise to write history. According to Wang Yun, “in the past Emperor Wu did not kill Sima Qian and gave him a chance to create a slanderous book, the *Shiji*, transmitted to later generations” 昔武帝不殺司馬遷，使作謗書，流於後世。See *Hou Hanshu* 60.2006. Such reading is also echoed in modern scholars' reading of the *Shiji*, for example, see Lewis 1999: 313–315; Lévi 1995.

<sup>39</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2733.

as an insinuated message conveying the author's anger at and criticism of the emperor.<sup>40</sup>

Nevertheless, these motifs of humiliation, fame, and self-expression cannot be separated from Sima Qian's filial obligation to his father in the autobiographical reading of the *Shiji* postface. Filial piety, according to Knechtges, is one of the most important key words revealing Sima Qian's authorial intent of completing the *Shiji* to fulfill his filial duty, and contains convincing explanatory strength in the understanding of other motifs, such as Sima Qian's frustration and his strong feeling of being humiliated.<sup>41</sup> This "key word" also inspires Nylan to open a new way—through the "religious thrust of the *Shiji*"—to interpret the *Shiji* as a whole entity. The whole *Shiji*, as Nylan argues, serves as a special form of sacrifice to the Sima lineage, including his father, the Grand Historian, and Sima Qian himself, for the purpose of pursuing longevity and immortality in a unified Central States culture that the *Shiji* creates and promotes.<sup>42</sup>

What draws people's attention to the consideration of the role that filial piety played in the writing of the *Shiji* is the scene before the deathbed of the elder Grand Historian, who entrusts his son with the task of writing and finishing a history which seems to have already been in the making at the time. It is said, based on the *Shiji*'s postface, that around 110 BC, the year in which Emperor Wu of Han performed the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices on Mount Tai and its adjacent area, Sima Tan, the then Grand Historian, was stopped at Zhounan 周南 either by illness or other reasons. As a result, he was not able to participate in the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies. He was "so disappointed and resentful over this matter that he nearly reached the point of death."<sup>43</sup> It was at that moment that Tan's son, Qian, on his way back from an official trip, met his father. Lying in the deathbed, Sima Tan left his will as follows:

余先周室之太史也。自上世嘗顯功名於虞夏，典天官事。後世中衰。絕於予乎？汝復為太史，則續吾祖矣。今天子接千歲之統，封泰山，而余不得從行，是命也夫，命也夫！余死，汝必為太史；為太史，無忘吾所欲論著矣。且夫孝始於事親，中於事君，終於立身。揚名於後世，以顯父母，此孝之大者。夫天下稱誦周公，言其能論歌文武之德，宣周邵之風，達太王王季之思慮，爰及公劉，以尊后稷也。幽厲之後，王道缺，禮樂衰，孔子脩舊起廢，論詩書，作春秋，則學者至今則之。自獲麟以來四百有餘歲，而諸侯相兼，史記放絕。今漢興，海內一統，明主賢君忠臣死義之士，余為太史而弗論載，廢天下之史文，余甚懼焉，汝其念哉！

<sup>40</sup> Lewis 1999: 314–317; Nylan 1998–1999: 205.

<sup>41</sup> Knechtges 2008.

<sup>42</sup> Nylan 1998–1999: 208–215.

<sup>43</sup> 發憤且卒. *Shiji* 130.3295.

Our ancestors were the Grand Historians of the Zhou house. From the earliest generations they had once demonstrated their merits and fame during the Yu and Xia periods, in charge of the affairs of Heavenly Officials; in later generations our family declined; might this tradition terminate with my death? If after me you will also make yourself Grand Historian, then the tradition of our ancestors continues. Now the Son of Heaven has inherited the thousand-year heritage to perform the *feng* sacrifice on Mount Tai, but I have not been able to follow him to go. Is it my fate? It is indeed my fate! After I die, you must make yourself Grand Historian; when you make yourself Grand Historian, you must not forget what I have been studying and writing about. Moreover, being filial begins with serving one's parents, meets the halfway of it by serving one's ruler, and ends with establishing oneself. To expand one's fame to later ages to glorify one's parents is considered the major obligation of being filial. The reason that the whole world extols Duke Zhou is that he is said to be able to explain and sing praises of the virtues of King Wen and King Wu, proclaim the customs of Zhou and Shao, reach the concerns of Taiwang and Wang Ji, further trace that of Gong Liu, and pay respect to Lord Ji. From the reigns of King You and King Li onward, the kingly way had fallen short, and ritual and music had declined. Confucius put the old way in order, brought the abandoned system back to life, expounded the *Odes* and the *Documents*, and wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*; for this reason, to the present day men of learning still follow his way. From the capture of the unicorn onward, it has been over four hundred years, during which the various lords annexed one another's territories and the scribes' writings were abandoned and perished. Now the Han rises and the world is united, but for those bright monarchs, worthy rulers, loyal ministers, and knightly gentlemen who died for rightness, I, as Grand Historian, have not yet studied and wrote about them, which means abandoning the annals and literature of this world; I am so afraid of this. You should keep this in your mind!"<sup>44</sup>

The three stages of fulfilling one's filial piety laid out by Sima Tan in the above passage, according to the notion that emphasizes filial piety as a significant force driving Sima Qian's writing of the *Shiji*, indeed constitute the core of Sima Tan's will. First, Grand Historian Sima Tan thought highly of his scribal family tradition and thus feared to see the decline of his family tradition which had been passed down from ancient ages. In order to prevent it from being discontinued, he requested his son not only to seek official assignment as Grand Historian after his own death, but also to finish the project of compiling a history he had left unfinished. This is the first stage of filial piety in the will; that is to say, to obey the parents and, further, to extend this obedience to the family tradition, in which filial piety and one's responsibility are connected.

Additionally, Sima Tan considered serving the ruler a higher level of being filial, carrying more significance than merely obeying one's parents. This consideration goes beyond praise of the ruler for the continuation of the Sima family tradition, in which it was a matter of course to serve the ruler, almost entirely depended on that

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44 *Shiji* 130.3295.

ruler's acknowledgement of the value of their service. This explains the record of Sima Tan's disappointment upon being unable to participate the *feng* and *shan* ceremonies with the Emperor. Sima Tan's resentment, therefore, was not toward the Emperor, but was more likely the outcome of an unexpected incident, such as being ill on his official trip, which frustrated his strong will to accompany the Emperor in a significant event. Sima Tan's fear of failing to preserve a record for the Han emperors and ministers mentioned toward the end of his will also testifies to this notion. Additionally, this point weakens the reading of the *Shiji* as the expression of Sima Qian's frustration from the perspective of his father's resentment. Moreover, as Sima Qian's response to his father's wish will show, the composition and compilation of the *Shiji* had started long before Sima Qian's castration.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, in Sima Tan's eyes, to establish himself successfully and have his fame spread to later generations was the highest expectation for a man in fulfilling his filial obligations. For those who carried their family tradition like the Sima clan, nothing could bring about more efficacy in extending their family tradition than being successful in providing their service as scribes and spreading their reputation as "good historians." To achieve this, Sima Tan aligned the work of Grand Historian with that of Duke Zhou and Confucius in terms of their studying, composing, and transmitting a patterned past – the endeavor of keeping the culture alive and continuing the tradition. In this sense, the success of a Grand Historian in his recording and transmitting the past served the best interest of establishing their fame and keeping their family tradition alive.

The would-be Grand Historian Sima Qian, upon hearing his father's wish, "bowed his head and wept" (*fushou liuti* 俯首流涕), promising:

小子不敏，請悉論先人所次舊聞，弗敢闕。

I the youngster am not intelligent, but I request to study all the old hearings put into order by my predecessors and dare not to fall short.<sup>46</sup>

Sima Qian not only demonstrates full acceptance of his father's teaching on filial piety, but also takes responsibility for the *Shiji* and validates a close link between the text and its authorial intent. All the motifs (the Grand Historian's family tradition and fame, for instance) are placed under the banner of filial piety tinted

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45 The Qing scholar Zhao Yi 趙翼 also points out this trend of overestimating the role of the castration penalty that Sima Qian suffered in the composition of the *Shiji*. Based on Zhao Yi's calculation, till the year Sima Qian received his punishment, he had already worked on the *Shiji* for ten years; see Zhao Yi 1984: 1.

46 *Shiji* 130.3295.

with religious color, and encourage a reading of the *Shiji* based on authorial intent. That is to say, both the religious and lyric/romantic readings originate from the prerequisite of the *Shiji*'s authorial intent, which is readily provided almost exclusively by the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An. But setting aside the issue of biographic fallacy, we must consider whether the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An were actually written by Sima Qian.

Many take it as truism that Sima Qian wrote both.<sup>47</sup> After all, the *Shiji* postface is included in Sima Qian's own work as the last chapter, and the letter to Ren An is included in Sima Qian's *Hanshu* biography compiled in the beginning of the Eastern Han dynasty, not very distant from Sima Qian's time. Moreover, both the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An, self-revealing in nature, are among the earliest of their respective genres in Chinese literary tradition. The *Shiji* postface, rendered as "Zixu" 自序 (Self-Narration), has long been considered not only among the earliest authorial writings, but also the precursor of the Chinese autobiography.<sup>48</sup> The letter to Ren An, unprecedented in its length and self-revealing nature, is also one of the earliest significant Chinese epistolary writings.

The notion that Sima Qian was the author of both the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An, once established, becomes the preconception guiding readers' understanding of both these two essays and the *Shiji* as a whole, even when doubts arise questioning its authenticity. Take, for example, the question of why the letter to Ren An is not included in the autobiographical *Shiji* postface, although the letter has every reason to be a part of the postface given that it contains vivid authorial information on Sima Qian's life, work, and thought. A common explanation for this exclusion focuses on some of the sensitive issues touched upon in that letter that may have threatened Sima Qian's life if disclosed. For instance, in this letter Sima Qian recounts the Li Ling political affair that had brought to him the punishment of castration.

If Sima Qian was indeed afraid of being caught rebutting the emperor's order of having him castrated, however, he would not have written this letter in the first place. It is evident that sending a letter of that length (requiring around one hundred bamboo strips for the writing of all the words, according to one scholar<sup>49</sup>) to a convict waiting for execution in prison was very dangerous. One supposition

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47 For some examples, see Gu Jiegang 2005, Zhao Shengqun 趙生群 1983, Zhang Dake 張大可 1983a.

48 Wu Pei-yi 1990: 42–48; Wells 2009: 30–32.

49 Lu Yaodong 遼耀東 2008: 314–315. Certainly, Sima Qian could write the letter on silk to make it less noticeable. But under that situation, even writing and delivering a letter of this sort on silk was a very risky move.

holds that Sima Qian's letter to Ren An may have never been sent, despite having been carefully drafted,<sup>50</sup> and it was probably made public for the first time only in the time of Yang Yun 楊惲 (?–54 BC), Sima Qian's grandson, who, according to Ban Gu's *Hanshu* biography, was responsible for making the *Shiji* known to others by circulating Sima Qian's work among scholarly circles of the time.<sup>51</sup>

But a supposition like this is inconclusive. As Kern also observes, throughout the Western Han dynasty, the letter to Ren An was incomparable in terms of its length and contents. It is hard to imagine how this confidential, politically dangerous letter had been circulated and ended up in Ban Gu's hands nearly one hundred and fifty years later after Sima Qian's death. It is especially suspicious that the catalogue of those authors stimulated by their frustration appears almost identically both in the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An. Although the passage is well written, it is unlikely that Sima Qian would have written it twice. Kern does not, however, hypothesize an alternative attribution, and instead only highlights its significance in Han textual culture. By associating this letter with early Chinese text formation, he suggests that the letter's author is unimportant, and instead focuses on the Han intellectuals search for an author-hero who dared to challenge imperial authority, just as Wang Yi had done so in attributing the "Lisao" to Qu Yuan. To Kern, both Qu Yuan's and Sima Qian's authorship is performative in nature, but what differentiates Sima Qian from Qu Yuan is that Qu Yuan was an actor who did not write, while Sima Qian was an author who actually wrote.<sup>52</sup>

The attributed *Shiji* author is not necessarily its writer. If Sima Qian indeed wrote the letter to Ren An, Sima Qian's authorial intent must play a significant role in the reading of the *Shiji*, as shown above; analysis and emphasis on such motifs as frustration, fame, and filial piety are consequently entailed. If the letter was not necessarily written by Sima Qian, why had such an attribution been made to Sima Qian? Our examination of these issues begins with a reading of the *Shiji* postface, focusing on its textual nature authorship. The "Letter to Ren An" will then be discussed both in conjunction with our examination of the *Shiji* postface and in the context of the Western Han epistolary writing.

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<sup>50</sup> Lu Yaodong 2008: 30; Knechtges 2008: 83.

<sup>51</sup> Lu Yaodong 2008: 31; Knechtges 2008: 83. A very interesting coincidence in Yang Yun's case is that he was sentenced to death partly because of the letter he wrote to his friend Sun Huizong 孫會宗. The style, tone, and basic structure of that letter are interestingly comparable to the letter to Ren An. This letter is preserved in Yang Yun's *Hanshu* biography; see *Hanshu* 66.2394–2396.

<sup>52</sup> Kern 2016.



### 5.3 Authorial Intent and Textual Chaos in the *Shiji* Postface

Both the format of the “Grand Historian’s Self-Narration” and its position in the *Shiji* resemble that of the brief statements written by Liu Xiang on the texts in the Han imperial collection. These brief statements (called “xulüe” 序略, or ordered summary, and later attached to the corresponding texts arranged by Liu Xiang and his team) each include two major parts: a brief biography of the author and an explanation on how many *pian* or *juan* textual units are incorporated in the text, as well as how those textual units were obtained.<sup>53</sup> As with the *Huainanzi*, this summary information functions to keep the originally disconnected textual units together as a whole. Including the author’s biography in such summary further secures the stability of the text through such author-text connection.<sup>54</sup> As commonly seen in the reconstructed versions of this type of writing, a bibliographer would often directly incorporate an author’s official biography into the postface of the text he arranged.<sup>55</sup>

Biographic historical accounts are usually considered an invention of the *Shiji*.<sup>56</sup> There is no biographical information in other early postface writings, such as the “Xugua” 序卦 (Ordering the Hexagrams), the “Shixu” 詩序 (Ordering of the Songs), and the “Yaolüe” chapter of the *Huainanzi*. The emergence of postface writing was rather the product of textual compilation combining multiple originally separated texts to form larger bodies of text. The main body of an early Chinese text may have appeared and been transmitted early on, but the postface attached to it usually appeared later. The writing of the postface of the *Shiji*, an unprecedentedly voluminous text, must be considered in this context. As we see, this method of postface writing became standard for compiling large texts in the court-sponsored project of rearranging the imperial library, taking place from the late Western Han dynasty to Wang Mang’s reign (9–23 AD).

The *Shiji* postface consists of biographical information as well as a summary of contents. The consistency of the narrative in this postface, however, is frequently interrupted by several long and relatively independent textual units or “text blocks.” Although these text blocks have been understood as integral components

53 For example, see Liu Xiang 1995a; Liu Xiang 1995b.

54 In a talk with Wan Zhang 萬章, Mencius says that in order to understand a piece of writing, one must understand its author, saying, “reciting his poems, reading his writings, yet without knowing what kind of person the author is—is it permissible?” 頌其詩，讀其書，不知其人，可乎？ See Yang Bojun 2010b: 231–232.

55 Yu Jiayi 2010: 40–41.

56 Wu Pei-yi 1990: 4, 42–43.

of the narrative, their independence from the remainder of the postface is noticeable. As the following table shows, the *Shiji* postface can be divided into eight parts based on its contents.

**Tab. 5-1:** Eight Parts of the “Grand Historian’s Self-Narration” Based on Its Contents:

	Section start- ing from	Section ending at	Page number(s)	Summary of contents
1	昔在顛頊	太史公仕於建元元封之閒	3285–3288	The Sima genealogy and Sima Tan
2	愍學者之不達其意而師悖，乃論六家之要指曰	不先定其神〔形〕，而曰我有以治天下，何由哉	3288–3292	Sima Tan’s essay on the six major scholarly traditions with evident favor of Daoist thinking
3	太史公既掌天官，不治民	天曆始改，建於明堂，諸神受紀	3292–3296	Sima Tan’s official responsibility; Qian’s early life, Tan’s death, and the beginning of Qian’s writing of the <i>Shiji</i>
4	太史公曰：先人有言	非所謂作也，而君比之於春秋，謬矣	3296–3300	The Grand Historian’s conversation with Hu Sui on why it was necessary to compile the <i>Shiji</i>
5	於是論次其文	於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始	3300	After receiving his punishment of castration, Qian imitated frustrated writers in history to write the <i>Shiji</i>
6	維昔黃帝	作貨殖列傳第六十九	3301–3319	Table of contents from chapters 1 to 129
7	維我漢繼五帝末流	第七十	3319–3320	The reason for writing the <i>Shiji</i> , contents and meaning of the <i>Shiji</i> categories (“benji,” “biao,” “shu,” “shijia,” and “liezhuan”), and the goal the <i>Shiji</i> tries to achieve
8	太史公曰	百三十篇	3321	The Grand Historian’s remarks

The postface (part 1 in the table) begins with the genealogy of the Sima family from the legendary Thearch Zhuan Xu, followed by a relatively detailed biography of Sima Tan:

太史公學天官於唐都，受易於楊何，習道論於黃子。太史公仕於建元元封之閒。

The Grand Historian studied Heavenly Officials (astrology) with Tang Du, received the knowledge on the *Changes* from Yang He, and learned the discourse of the Way from master Huang. The Grand Historian had been an official between the eras of Jianyuan (140–135 BC) and Yuanfeng (110–105 BC).<sup>57</sup>

The narrative is interrupted here by the recounting of a long essay on the essentials of six scholarly traditions, which includes the thought schools of Yinyang 陰陽, Ru 儒, Mo 墨, Ming 名, Fa 法, and Daode 道德. It (part 2 in the table) is a well-organized, self-contained essay. The author comments, one by one, on both the merits and limits of the first five traditions listed above before expressing his pro-Daoist thinking. Nevertheless, this segment intrudes into the middle of the introduction of the Grand Historian's official duties, a passage immediately following Sima Tan's long essay:

太史公既掌天官，不治民。有子曰遷。

The Grand Historian, since taking the Heavenly Official position (astrology), did not govern the people. He has a son called Qian.<sup>58</sup>

This passage (part 3 in the table) explains the Grand Historian's official duties as mentioned in the description stating that “the Grand Historian was officially employed between the eras of Jianyuan and Yuanfeng.” By comparison, the contents of the intruding text block offer no direct explanation to the key word *shi* 仕 in the first half of the sentence and instead twist the narrative to a less relevant direction. If we remove the intruding essay out of the surrounding material and follow the grammar of postface writing, the sentence flows naturally:

太史公仕於建元元封之間，既掌天官，不治民。

The Grand Historian had been an official between the eras of Jianyuan and Yuanfeng; since he was in charge of the Heavenly Official position (astrology), he did not govern the people.<sup>59</sup>

The essay on the six scholarly traditions is also inconsistent in content. If, as the common reading has it, this essay indeed represents Sima Tan's thinking, he considered the Dao tradition superior to the Ru. The teaching of the Dao, according to this essay, is a comprehensive, ideal way of achieving good governance in all aspects, for it includes all the merits of other traditions while rejecting their limits. Meanwhile, the Six Arts (*liuyi* 六藝) that represent the Ru tradition were thought

57 *Shiji* 130.3288.

58 *Shiji* 130.3293.

59 *Shiji* 130.3292.

to have become so voluminous that a learner could not grasp the teachings even through his entire life. The *Ru*, according to this critique, is “broad, yet it lacks the essential; laborious, yet it enables one to achieve little merit,”<sup>60</sup> which contrasts the Daoist approach of “doing nothing” (*wu wei* 無為) yet “nothing will not be done” (*wu bu wei* 無不為).<sup>61</sup> With such sharp contrast of the two approaches, it is baffling why, on his deathbed, the father Historian willed his son to continue Confucius’s enterprise of putting the Six Arts in order by compiling the *Shiji*.<sup>62</sup>

The brief biography of Sima Tan ends where Sima Qian’s biography begins: the linking sentence “He had a son called Qian” turns readers’ attention to Sima Qian hereafter, and the biographical part of this narrative continues. It relates Sima Qian’s birth place, his learning ability shown at an early age, his immense travelling experience, and his official duties as Gentleman of the Interior. The most cited passage is the description of the emotional scene in which the dying father Historian talked with Sima Qian. Sima Tan’s wish for his son to be the second Confucius enables the identification of the contradictory “intruding essay.” More important, the above scene provides an explanation for Sima Qian’s motive in writing the *Shiji*. The narrative explains that, to fulfill his father’s wish, Sima Qian took his father’s position in order to resume the enterprise initiated by his father, as follows:

卒三歲而遷為太史令，紬史記石室金匱之書。五年而當太初元年，十一月甲子朔旦冬至，天曆始改，建於明堂，諸神受紀。

Three years after Tan’s death, Qian became the Grand Historian, studying the scribes’ records and the writings preserved in the stone rooms and the metal caskets.<sup>63</sup> Five years after Qian became the Grand Historian, i.e., the first year of the Taichu era (104–101 BC), on the *jiazi* day, the first day of the eleventh month as well as the Winter Solstice, the heavenly

60 博而寡要，勞而少功。 *Shiji* 130.3290.

61 *Shiji* 130.3292.

62 *Shiji* 130.3295.

63 According to Ru Chun, the meaning character *chou* 紬 leans more toward “extracting materials from” or “compiling,” indicating that Sima Qian already started his writing the *Shiji* then. Yet a later passage does say that this happened two years later. On this point, I agree with Su Xiaowei’s suggestion that in this context 紬 is better understood as “reading,” indicating a period of preparation before his writing. And the meaning of “reading” in this context is very close to that of “studying,” a rendering I prefer in the translation. See *Shiji* 130.3296; Su Xiaowei 蘇曉威 2007: 38–39. Also, according to the Tang commentator Sima Zhen 司馬貞, both the “stone room” and the “metal casket” denote the places where the Han imperial book collection was kept; see *Shiji* 130.3296.

calendar began to be changed; this was established in the Bright Hall and the various spirits received the new era.<sup>64</sup>

The above passage provides the information on what Sima Qian did after he succeeded to his father's position, a position that allowed him not only to have access to the scribes' records and other sources kept in the imperial archives, but likely also to legitimize his attempt to write a history for the dynasty in which he lived as well.<sup>65</sup> Logically, the next point in this narrative would describe Sima Qian's writing the *Shiji*.

The next passage (part 4 in the table), however, describes a rather long conversation between a Grand Historian and Hu Sui 壺遂, who, according to the biography of Han Changru 韓長儒 and the Grand Historian's remarks at the end of that chapter, was a contemporary of both the father and the son Grand Historians.<sup>66</sup> The main purpose of introducing this conversation to the postface is to give the Grand Historian, either the father or the son, an opportunity to defend his writing of the *Shiji*. It starts with the words of an ambitious Grand Historian aiming to continue the work of Confucius with the enlightenment of the five-hundred-year myth. It continues with an ardent exaltation of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, among other Confucian Classics, as the great achievements of Confucius due to their undisputed authority, suggesting that the Grand Historian's own work is modeled on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. It ends with the Grand Historian's defense of his position by claiming that, in comparison with Confucius's enterprise, his own writing could only be considered secondary, serving not the purpose of criticizing the world but rather serving to praise the emperor and worthy ministers, by recording their tremendous virtues, merits, and achievements.

This section of the text, while not completely unrelated to the flow of the narrative, is redundant in terms of its contents and function, and similar to the words Sima Tan left to Sima Qian on his deathbed. The basic messages conveyed through such narrative themes as Confucius's arranging the classics, the five-hundred-year myth on the transmission of sagely message, and the Historian's fear of not being able to write down the merits and achievements of the Han ruling class, which all

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<sup>64</sup> *Shiji* 130.3296.

<sup>65</sup> According to Ban Gu's biography, before Ban Gu was granted to the right to write the Han dynastic history in Emperor Ming's reign (r. 57–75 AD), he had been accused, charged, and imprisoned because of his writing of a history for the current dynasty. This example indicates that one must have special permission to write a dynastic history, and could face death as a penalty for ignoring this law. It seems that Sima Qian was authorized to continue his father's undertaking only after he took his father's position. See *Hou Hanshu* 40.1333–1354.

<sup>66</sup> *Shiji* 108.2963, 2865. Therefore, we cannot be sure whether the Grand Historian here is the father or the son, although it has long been held that it should be Sima Qian, Historian *filis*.

appear to be unfulfilled wishes of Sima Tan, reappear in the Grand Historian's conversation with Hu Sui. The significance of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* is singled out and deliberately exalted, evidently under the strong influence of the *Gongyang* 公羊 tradition. It serves, as its counterpart in Sima Tan's words, no more than an explanation of why the *Shiji* must be written.

I would further argue that, in this conversation, the Grand Historian who has long been considered to be Sima Qian is more likely Sima Tan. My argument is based on the following observation: in comparing sections of what Sima Tan said on his deathbed with its counterpart in the Historian's conversation with Hu Sui, we find that not only their contents, but their narrative structures and tones, are primarily the same in both passages:

今漢興，海內一統，明主賢君忠臣死義之士，余為太史而弗論載，廢天下之史文，余甚懼焉。

Now the Han rises and the world is united, but for those bright monarchs, worthy rulers, loyal ministers, and knight gentlemen who died for rightness, I, as Grand Historian, have not yet studied and wrote about them, which means that I will abandon the annals and literature of this world, and I am so afraid of it.<sup>67</sup>

漢興以來至明天子獲符瑞，封禪，改正朔，易服色，受命於穆清，澤流罔極，海外殊俗，重譯款塞，請來獻見者，不可勝道。臣下百官力誦聖德，猶不能宣盡其意。且士賢能而不用，有國者之恥；主上明聖而德不布聞，有司之過也。且余嘗掌其官，廢明聖盛德不載，滅功臣世家賢大夫之業不述，墮先人所言，罪莫大焉。

From the time the Han rose to the time the bright Son of Heaven obtained those auspicious omens, presented the *feng* and *shan* sacrifices, rectified the beginning of the year, changed the color of court dress, and received the Mandate from solemn and pure Heaven, his blessings flow boundlessly: those who come from beyond the seas with different customs, with multiple-language translators travelling through the presses and requesting imperial audiences by presenting gifts, are countless. Even the subjects and officials, with all their best efforts to praise the emperors' sagely virtue, still cannot claim that they have exhausted their praises to the emperor. Now if a man is worthy and able yet cannot be employed, it is the shame of those who own their princedoms; if the monarch is bright and sagacious yet his virtue is not being spread and heard, it is the fault of those who hold the offices. Besides, I was once in charge of the office of the Grand Historian; if the bright sagaciousness and magnificent virtue were abandoned for not being written down, if the achievements of those ministers of merits, hereditary families, and worthy high officials perished for not being transmitted: then would I let my ancestors' words scatter—no guilt is more serious than this.<sup>68</sup>

67 *Shiji* 130.3295.

68 余嘗掌其官。 *Shiji* 130.3299.

Although the second passage is longer than the first, the comparison shows the overlap between the two passages in terms of their contents and structure. Both passages begin with the same temporal phrase denoting “the rise of Han” (*Han xing* 漢興), then praise the emperor and his ministers with the same adjectives “bright” (*ming* 明) and “worthy” (*xian* 賢), respectively, and close with the same self-driven motive for writing history: if this duty cannot be fulfilled, the Historian should feel fearful (*ju* 懼) or guilty (*zui* 罪), which reflect the Historian’s strong awareness of his obligation.

An even more telling expression indicating that Sima Tan was the Historian speaking with Hu Sui is the language in the second passage, stating with “I was once in charge of the office of the Grand Historian.” This is one of the few expressions in the *Shiji* postface betraying the identity of its speaker. The character *chang* 嘗 unmistakably denotes the narrator’s past experience: he used to serve actively as Historian, but now, or in the near future, he would not continue to remain in that position. This cannot be Sima Qian, for, as traditionally held, he would continue to serve the emperor as Historian for many years after the time this conversation is thought to have occurred. In other words, Sima Qian would not use the word *chang* to express that he would not remain in his newly acquired position. Through this, we can infer that the narrator of this passage is Sima Tan.

I suspect, however, that this long conversation between the Historian and Hu Sui was another intruding textual block in the *Shiji* postface narrative. This can further be confirmed by the improved quality of the narrative when removing the textual block. The passage prior to this one describes the beginning of Sima Qian’s political career as Grand Historian and his writing of the *Shiji*: three years after his father’s death, Sima Qian inherited his father’s position; five years later after he had become the Grand Historian, the Western Han calendar was changed and Sima Qian participated in that project. If we skip the intruding textual block and extend the narrative directly to the passage immediately following the conversation with Hu Sui (part 5 in the table), the narrative flows as shown:

卒三歲而遷為太史令，紬史記石室金匱之書。五年而當太初元年，十一月甲子朔旦冬至，天曆始改，建於明堂，諸神受紀。(Skip the textual block and move to part 5) 於是論次其文。七年而太史公遭李陵之禍，幽於縲紲。

Three years after Tan’s death, Qian became the Grand Historian, compiling the scribes’ records and the writings preserved in the stone rooms and the metal caskets. Five years after Qian became the Grand Historian, i.e., the first year of the Taichu era (104–101 BC), on the *jiazi* day, the first day of the eleventh month as well as the Winter Solstice, the heavenly calendar began to be changed; this was established in the Bright Hall and the various spirits received the new era. [Skip the textual block and move to part 5] From then on, he began to

study and put those writings in order. Seven years later, the Grand Historian encountered the calamity of the Li Ling political affair and was shackled and put into prison.<sup>69</sup>

If we follow the flow of time marked in the above reconstructed narrative, we are tempted to claim the feasibility of such reconstruction: the Historian *père*'s death serves as the starting point of the *fil*'s new career trajectory, and all the numbers of the years mentioned after that—three, five, and seven, each taking the previous one as its starting point to count—neatly articulate the events associated with Sima Qian's writing of the *Shiji*. The insertion of a Historian's conversation with Hu Sui claiming the necessity of writing the *Shiji* not only unbalances the overall narrative structure, but also causes unnecessary confusion in understanding.<sup>70</sup>

The narrative (part 5 in the table) continues to focus on Sima Qian's writing of the *Shiji* after the Li Ling political affair, which is recounted with more detail in the letter to Ren An. In response to the punishment of castration, Sima Qian delivers a famous argument that monumental writings result from great personal frustration. From King Wen of Zhou, Confucius, and Qu Yuan to the authors of the *Odes*, the long list of historical figures on whom Sima Qian models himself is almost identically repeated in the letter to Ren An, creating one of the most important cross-references shedding light on our understanding of the *Shiji*. This passage, while warranting further discussion later in this study, here serves the purpose of explaining why Sima Qian continued to write the *Shiji* after his political misfortune. This passage ends with a concluding announcement:

於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始。

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69 *Shiji* 130.3296–3300.

70 In an article on the “Letter in Response to Ren An,” Michael Nylan considers that “Zhang’s standard for stylistic and narrative coherence is almost certainly anachronistic for genuinely early products of manuscript culture.” I would clarify that my reading of this postface follows its own flow of narration, simultaneously consulting with the general understanding of the presentation of contents in other parts of the *Shiji*. Rather than on the basis of an anachronistic standard for stylistic and narrative coherence, I follow the *Shiji* standard of narration to identify those textual blocks discussed in the main text. It is true that his type of textual making may not have been unique in “genuinely early products of manuscript culture,” but the formation of this type of “intruding” textual block reveals a possible editing process, in this case affecting the flow of narration indicated by the text itself. This chapter aims to explain this possible editing process in the context of both early Chinese text making and the changed political discourse in early imperial China. For Nylan’s comments and related article, see Nylan 2014a; Nylan 2015; Nylan 2016: 143.



Therefore, he completed narrating the accounts from the time of Tao Tang all the way to the time of the appearance of the unicorn. The narration begins with the Yellow Emperor.<sup>71</sup>

The part (part 6) that follows this passage lists the outlines of all the *Shiji* chapters. According to Cui Shi, this outline resembles the *xiaoxu* 小序 (lesser postface) writing of the Mao version of the *Odes*. He considers all the parts (parts 1–5) prior to the above passage belonging to the writing resembling the *daxu* 大序 (greater postface), a section usually consisting of authorial information.<sup>72</sup> Viewed from this perspective, the above short passage serves as a transition bridging the two parts of the *Shiji* postface.

Nevertheless, this short passage is problematic for the information it provides. It first states that the narration of the *Shiji* starts from the time of Tao Tang, which is the rule of Yao, yet simultaneously claims a different narrative starting point—beginning with the Yellow Emperor, who, according to the *Shiji* itself, lived and ruled generations before Yao. Moreover, this passage further contradicts the last part of the *Shiji* postface, in which the Grand Historian makes his final remarks (part 8 in the table):

余述歷黃帝以來至太初而訖，百三十篇。

I have narrated and examined the period starting from the Yellow Emperor and ending in the era of Taichu, including one hundred and thirty *pian* chapters.<sup>73</sup>

It is obvious that according to this remark, both the starting and the ending points of the *Shiji* narrative are different from the above-mentioned biographical part of the *Shiji* postface. The year in which a unicorn appeared has long been considered to be the first year of the Yuanshou 元狩 era (122–117 BC), while the first year of the Taichu years (104–101 BC) was approximately two decades later. The list of contents, i.e., the other part of the *Shiji* postface immediately following the biographical part of the *Shiji* postface indeed begins with the account of the Yellow Emperor,<sup>74</sup> and the preface to the chronology of Western Han princes surely confirms that the ending point was the Taichu era.<sup>75</sup> How could the messages conveyed be so different, especially when we consider that these messages were delivered by a Historian with the reputation of devoting himself to facts? These discrepancies surely demand an explanation.

<sup>71</sup> *Shiji* 130.3300.

<sup>72</sup> Cui Shi 2005: 227–228.

<sup>73</sup> *Shiji* 130.3321.

<sup>74</sup> Also seen in the preface to the “Sandai shibiao,” see *Shiji* 13.488.

<sup>75</sup> *Shiji* 17.803.

In response to the contradictory message delivered in the sentence preceding the list of contents, Cui Shi notes that the phrase “自黃帝始” is apparently an interpolation that originally might have been a marginal annotation.<sup>76</sup> The time of Yao and the year in which the unicorn appeared, according to Cui, are indeed the beginning and ending dates of the *Shiji* narrative.<sup>77</sup> However, even if this phrase was accidentally incorporated into the main text in the long history of this text’s transmission and can be removed from the main text, the claim that the *Shiji* narrative begins with Yao remains problematic. In fact, the content list that follows this narration unmistakably begins with the Yellow Emperor. To explain such unequivocal contradiction, Cui Shi suggests that an interpolator arbitrarily changed a “Tao Tang Benji” that originally included in the *Shiji* to the “Wudi Benji” 五帝本紀, a suggestion that can hardly be verified.<sup>78</sup> In other words, identifying the clerical mistake and accusing the interpolator does not satisfactorily explain why these two distinct statements are so ostensibly juxtaposed.

Cui Shi’s explanation is merely one in an array of theories prompted by debates on the starting and ending dates of the *Shiji* narrative, provoked by the text’s own contradictory records.<sup>79</sup> A recent consensus in *Shiji* study suggests that these two differing statements were posted by Sima Tan and Sima Qian, respectively.<sup>80</sup> This suggestion maintains that the *Shiji* project was initiated by the Historian *père* with a timeline existing from the time of Yao to the appearance of the unicorn. Nevertheless, by the time the son resumed his father’s writing project, he felt the need to alter his father’s original framework under the influence of a changed social and political milieu. In comparison with the time of Yao and the appearance of the unicorn that mattered greatly to his father, Sima Qian felt the role of the Yellow Emperor and the change of calendar to be more appropriate. Zhao Shengqun argues that the preservation of his father’s original time frame in the final postface was Sima Qian’s deliberate rendering, not only revealing his father’s original plan, but also expressing his gratification for finally carrying out his father’s will.<sup>81</sup>

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**76** Cui Shi 2005: 227. Liang Qichao maintains a similar argument: he considers the dates given by the Grand Historian’s remarks a later interpolation; see Liang Qichao 1997: 25.

**77** Cui Shi 2005: 16–18.

**78** Cui Shi 2005: 20. Since this kind of alteration, if indeed as such, appears in multiple contexts of the *Shiji*, a convincing explanation on the motive of such comprehensive interpolation is required. Cui Shi does not offer substantial evidence to support his argument.

**79** For a summary of those main theories in this regard, see Zhao Shengqun 2000: 89–93.

**80** Zhao Shengqun 2000: 93. Zhao admits that the three scholars, Zhang Dake, Wu Ruyu 吳汝煜, and Zhao himself, reached the same conclusion in 1983 without consulting each other prior to their writing their articles; see Zhao Shengqun 1983; Zhang Dake 1983a; Wu Ruyu 1983.

**81** Gu Jiegang 2005: 226–233; Zhao Shengqun 2000: 98–99.

This line of argument, however, relies merely on what Sima Tan wrote about his intent of imitating Confucius, even though Sima Tan's words have little to do with either the starting or the ending date of the *Shiji* narration. While the story of the unicorn capture did appear in Sima Tan's writing, there is no implication that Sima Tan had fixed the year in which "the unicorn stopped by" (*lin zhi* 麟止) as the ending point of his project. Indeed, the gap of 360 years between the two events (481 BC–122 BC) is inconsistent with the gap of time in the *Shiji* postface.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, considering the ubiquity of Sima Qian's voice that seldom hesitates to clarify any confusion, it is difficult to explain why Sima Qian would have intentionally created such a maze regarding the time line of the *Shiji* narration.

When put into its context, the subject of the Chinese sentence "於是卒述陶唐以來，至于麟止，自黃帝始" is not obscure at all: it is unmistakably Sima Qian. There is no reason for him, a filial son who had been faithfully observing his father's teachings, to have undermined his father's authority. The implication of the filial motif is so strongly conveyed that it entails the inference that even a tiny alteration of his father's will would demand a serious explanation. The silent juxtaposition of the Sima Tan time frame (from Yao to the appearance of a unicorn) and the Sima Qian timeframe (from the Yellow Emperor to Taichu era) is not a promotion of Sima Tan's original plan; it is, contrary to Zhao Shengqun's speculation, an offense to Sima Tan's will.

Considering Zhao's assumption unlikely, we must explore why these two distinct time frames came to be juxtaposed in the *Shiji* postface at all. Another problematic passage (part 7 in the table) provides a clue. The passage is the summary of the contents considered to belong to the seventieth chapter, the *Shiji* postface, under the *zhuàn* 傳 category. The passage is strange due to its odd form in comparison with the summaries of the preceding one hundred and twenty-nine chapters, which remain brief, synoptic, and highly consistent in form. Many outlines use formulaic quadrisyllabic sentences to summarize the contents, and all but the one hundred and thirtieth chapter end with the syntax of "作 X 第 Y," or "writing X (title of that chapter), the Yth chapter." For example, the outline of the one hundred and twenty-ninth chapter (the sixty-ninth chapter of the *liezhuan* 列傳 (arrayed traditions) section), a typical *Shiji* chapter summary, states:

布衣匹夫之人，不害於政，不妨百姓，取與以時，而息財富，智者有采焉。作貨殖列傳第六十九。

<sup>82</sup> According to the *Shiji* postface, Sima Tan says that "since the event of capturing the unicorn, over four hundred years have passed" 自獲麟以來 四百有餘歲. See *Shiji* 130.3295.

Those ordinary people who wear coarse clothes, doing no harm to the government, nor disturbing the masses, buy and sell goods at the right time to increase their wealth, from which even those who are wise have something to draw upon. I write the “Growing Trade,” the sixty-ninth of the arrayed traditions.<sup>83</sup>

In contrast, the supposed outline of the one hundred and thirtieth chapter is far lengthier than an ordinary chapter summary, approximately ten times as long as the outline of the “Growing trade.” Moreover, it does not follow the outlines of the other chapters ending with the syntax of “作 X 第 Y.” In fact, the ending phrase “第七十,” or “the seventieth [arrayed tradition],” is barely attached to the rather long passage to show that it belongs to the list of contents.<sup>84</sup>

The content of the seventieth arrayed tradition further betrays its oddity. If it were to follow the format of the outlines of other chapters, the seventieth arrayed tradition would have been a summary of the “greater postface” of this chapter, which begins with the family tradition, continues with the biographies of both the Grand Historians *père* and *filis*, and concludes with the completion of this work. The actual outline of the seventieth arrayed tradition, however, goes far beyond this and apparently makes itself the summary of the whole *Shiji*. The narrator begins this passage with a description of a desolate and chaotic scene of early Western Han literature, which, according to the narrator, resulted not only from the decline of a tradition initiated by the Five Thearchs, but also from the burning of classics in the Qin dynasty. The rise of the Han dynasty enabled Xiao He 蕭何 (257–193 BC), Han Xin 韓信 (?–196 BC), Zhang Cang 張蒼 (253–152 BC), and Shusun Tong 叔孫通 (ca. ?–194 BC) to arrange legal codes, military writings, governmental rules, and rituals, respectively; the promotion of literary learning further activated various lines of thinking that once flourished in the Eastern Zhou period.

The nurturing of culture and literature in the first one hundred years of the Western Han dynasty set up the foundation for the Grand Historians, father and son, to write a comprehensive history of their own time. By taking advantage of those collected “lost words and ancient events” (*yiwén gùshì* 遺文古事) and “abandoned old hearings” (*fang shi jiuwen* 放失舊聞), they compiled a history that stretched from Xuanyuan, or the Yellow Emperor, to the Grand Historians’ own time.<sup>85</sup>

The narrative continues as an explanation of the contents of the five *Shiji* categories—the Basic Annals, Chronological Tables, Treatises, Hereditary Houses,

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<sup>83</sup> *Shiji* 130.3319.

<sup>84</sup> *Shiji* 130.3319–3320.

<sup>85</sup> *Shiji* 130.3319.

and Arrayed Traditions—in which the syntax *zuo/zhu X* 作/著 X (writing X) is employed; the number of the chapters, the overall number of words, and the title of this text are also provided. The end of this passage inexplicably provides information that is largely repeated in the letter to Ren An:<sup>86</sup>

凡百三十篇，五十二萬六千五百字，為太史公書。序略，以拾遺補藝，成一家之言，厥協六經異傳，整齊百家雜語，藏之名山，副在京師，俟後世聖人君子。

Altogether the text is comprised of one hundred and thirty *pian* chapters, including five hundred and twenty-six thousand and five hundred words, called the “Writings of the Grand Historian.” These were compiled to collect the lost texts, remedy the Six Arts, create teachings of (the Grand Historian’s) own, make the Six Classics and those strange textual traditions concordant, and tidily arrange those miscellaneous sayings of the various teaching lineages. He hid this text in a famous mountain and placed a copy in the capital, in order to await the sages and gentlemen of later ages.<sup>87</sup>

Why such verbal repetitions occur in both the so-called outline of the seventieth arrayed tradition and the letter to Ren An will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter. Here, we note that this rather long passage, in terms of both its format and contents, cannot be seen as the outline of the last chapter of the *Shiji*, despite having been labeled as such. This may be due to the rearranging and cataloging of the texts that occurred after the *Shiji* was completed.

What we know about the overall number of *pian* chapters included in the *Shiji* is ascribed to the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*, which provides a number of one hundred and thirty. In the previous chapter, when discussing the “Yaolüe” postface, we learned that the main text of the *Huainanzi* consisted of only twenty *pian* chapters, yet the “Yiwen zhi” catalogue records that the *Huainanzi* is a text with twenty-one *pian* by adding the “Yaolüe”—its postface—to its total number of *pian* chapters. We thus have reason to believe that the “Yiwen zhi” records went through a similar process regarding the *Shiji*’s overall *pian* number: the present one hundred and thirtieth chapter is not originally integrated in the *Shiji* body of text, but added later as a generic *Shiji* chapter by those who cataloged

<sup>86</sup> The similar passage in the letter to Ren An goes: 僕竊不遜近，自託於無能之辭，網羅天下放失舊聞，考之行事，稽其成敗興壞之理，凡百三十篇，亦欲以究天人之際，通古今之變，成一家之言。草創未就，適會此禍，惜其不成，是以就極刑而無愠色。僕誠已著此書，藏之名山，傳之其人，通邑大都，則僕償前辱之責，雖萬被戮，豈有悔哉！然此可為智者道，難為俗人言也。(*Hanshu* 62.2735). All the underlined sentences or syntaxes, which constitute the backbone of this passage, have their identical counterparts in the outline of the seventieth arrayed tradition.

<sup>87</sup> *Shiji* 130.3319–3320.

this text—a tradition followed by the “*Yiwen zhi*” compiler. Based on this understanding, the phrase “第七十” can be taken as an interpolation intentionally made under the influence of a record on the *Shiji pian* number in an attempt to make the outlines included in the content list part of the postface match the overall one hundred and thirty *pian* number.<sup>88</sup>

By the same token, we may also explain the inconsistent starting and ending dates of the *Shiji* narration. The inclusion of a final remark at the end of the *Shiji* postface must be associated with the attempt to imitate the format of a regular “arrayed tradition” chapter, which usually consists of the main text and the Grand Historian’s remarks. Now that the phrase “第七十” is added in the content list part of the postface to make it a new “arrayed tradition” chapter, the postface must be modified to fulfill this need. An ending with the formulaic phrase “The Grand Historian remarks” (*Taishigong yue* 太史公曰), which always appears at the end of an arrayed tradition chapter, would certainly be a forceful reminder of the postface being one of the chapters incorporated in the main text. Moreover, if Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography faithfully copies the “*Taishigong zixu*,” the fact that the “*Taishigong yue*” passage does not appear in Sima Qian’s biography indicates that this passage may have not been included in the “*Taishigong zixu*” at all. This is why Cui Shi confidently infers that this passage had to be an interpolation based on the beginning passage of the second part of the *Hanshu* postface.<sup>89</sup>

As for the inconsistent starting and ending dates of the *Shiji* narration which are referenced and juxtaposed in the same piece of writing, that is due to the complicated issues related to the formation, transmission, and authorship of this piece. Indeed, this and other questions raised in our examination of the *Shiji* postface not only reveal the complexity of this piece of writing in terms of the different voices involved in its formation and transmission, but they also put forward the doubt of the long-held notion that the *Shiji* postface was truly written by Sima Qian. As a result, the widely received conventional explanation centering on Sima Qian’s authorial intent must be reconsidered. This constitutes the focus of the remainder of this study.

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**88** It is interesting to note that the *Hanshu* postface does include the postface as the seventieth *pian* chapter, saying “narrating the postface as the seventieth chapter” (*shu xu zhuan di qishi* 述敘傳第七十). Unlike the “*Taishigong zixu*,” the outline of *Hanshu* postface and the tidy, rhyming format of this outline remain consistent with the rest of the “lesser postface.” Although there is no direct evidence showing that the phrase “第七十” might have been added under the influence of the *Hanshu* postface, Cui Shi suggests that the Grand Historian’s remarks on the “*Taishigong zixu*” were a later interpolation based on the *Hanshu* postface. Cui Shi 2005: 229.

**89** Cui Shi 2005: 229; *Hanshu* 100.4235.

## 5.4 “Author of” or “Authored by” Biographical Information

Based on the basic structure of early Chinese postface writing discussed in the beginning of previous section—consisting of a biographical part and a content list part—I have attempted to identify those chunks of text that, when gauged by this structure, considerably obfuscate necessary information generally provided by a postface. The section on the essentials of the six teaching lineages and the long conversation between the Grand Historian and Hu Sui, for instance, represent such textual blocks. In both cases, the narrative proceeds naturally when these textual blocks are removed. Nevertheless, I would not argue that these chunks of text were necessarily later interpolations inserted in an originally composed postface by Sima Qian. In my view, it is doubtful that Sima Qian had ever played a role in the writing of the *Shiji* postface.

The rationale underlining this argument lies in the genesis of postface writing. Postface writing stemmed from the formation of multiple *pian* textual units and was usually associated with text cataloging, especially in such projects as the rearranging of the imperial collection led by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. The main purpose of such text cataloging was to provide an authoritative edition comprising of as many pieces of content as possible within a certain category. The extant postfaces attributed to Liu Xiang make this point very clear: what constitutes an arranged text is the sum of a specific text collection from which those overlapping units were removed.

The *Yanzi* 晏子 provides an example. The *pian* chapters associated with Yanzi in the collection that Liu Xiang had access to numbered thirty *pian* chapters, or eight hundred and thirty-eight *zhang* 章 passages, a sum of textual units from different sources: the imperial collection, the Grand Historian’s collection, Liu Xiang’s own collection, and another official *Can* 參. The final *pian* number that the *Yanzi* included was the result of the sum of thirty *pian* deducting the twenty-two overlapping *pian* units.<sup>90</sup> This example is by no means an isolated one. Rather, this tendency was commonly observed based on what we see in Liu Xiang’s writing. As a result, the volume of a certain text is enlarged—usually maximized—based on the available repository of text, and the lines among different textual bodies or textual properties attributed to different individuals, either historical or imaginary, are drawn. Thus, postface writing was the product of textual transformation from the agglomeration of single-*pian* units into multiple-*pian* chapters, and the means needed to bind independent textual units together to form larger

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<sup>90</sup> Liu Xiang 1995c.

text bodies. We clearly see this in the “Yaolüe” chapter via its relationship with the main *Huainanzi* text of twenty *pian* discussed previously.<sup>91</sup>

The *Shiji* postface is of the same nature,<sup>92</sup> which infers that the writer of the main text is separated from the writer of the postface, and that the writer of the postface wrote for a purpose similar to that which motivated Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. The volume of an early text, as reflected by those extant postface writings, is usually not the same as that of the text by its original writer, whoever he was or whatever the original form of that text might have taken. It is usually enlarged as the consequence of later text rearrangement, as shown by the scattered postface writings resulting from the late Western Han project of text rearrangement. The convergence of these two separated types of writings, i.e., a main text and a postface by the same writer, was related with the following two factors: (1) the recognition of the special power of postface writing with an established format ready to be imitated and (2) the self-awareness of the significance of writing to the writer himself, which was strong enough to stir the writer’s fear of the loss of his writings as well as the fame associated with the writings. As far as earliest postfaces are concerned, such as those belonging to the *Odes* and *Changes* and those written by Liu Xiang, they were invented by the Western Han scholars, appreciated and adopted by scholarly circles of local princedoms early, and then by the imperial court toward the end of the Western Han dynasty. Most important of all, all early postfaces were involved in text reassembly that is idiosyncratically different from the type of writings so strongly associated with its author’s self-expression.

It seems plausible that Sima Qian could have possessed an awareness that writing a postface could have further bound his large volume of writing, but this is an assumption that takes for granted Sima Qian’s authorship of the *Shiji* postface. The problem of this sort of reading is its negligence of the contradictions and

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91 The *Lüshi chunqiu*, as mentioned in the *Shiji*, is an anthology of the writings made by Lü Buwei’s intellectual entourage. A corrupted passage immediately following the “Shi’er ji” 十二紀 main texts is sometimes considered the postface to the *Lüshi chunqiu*. However, the remaining information found in that corrupted passage is too limited to enable a meaningful discussion on early postface writing based on it. The “Yaolüe” chapter of the *Huainanzi* and the “Taishigong zixu” of the *Shiji* are usually considered the earliest examples of Chinese postface writing.

92 The idea that the *Shiji* postface may have imitated that of the *Changes*, the *Documents*, the *Odes*, and the *Yi Zhoushu* is sometimes seen in such brief comments as in the *Zhongshan zhaji* 鍾山札記 by Lu Wenchao 盧文弨, as discussed in the previous chapter, Li Jingxing’s 李景星 *Shiji pingyi* 史記評議, and Yu Yue’s 俞樾 *Hulou bitan* 湖樓筆談; see Lu Wenchao 1939: 67; Li Jingxing 2008: 225; Yu Yue 2002: 388.



warnings revealed by the postface itself, which are irreconcilable with the assumption of projecting Sima Qian's authorship. Below, we discuss some of the major issues pertaining to the *Shiji* postface text.

One such issue that has not been discussed sufficiently is the *Shiji* postface's narrative stance. The least disputable point in this regard is that this postface is a third-person narrative. What requires some explanation is how a third-person narrative can be considered the Grand Historian's "self-narration," as suggested by its current title. Nevertheless, that the *Shiji* postface is a piece of self-revealing writing resembling Sima Qian's autobiography has so far been taken as a matter of course.<sup>93</sup> In an illuminating work on traditional Chinese autobiographical writings, Wu Pei-Yi insightfully links traditional Chinese autobiography with Chinese biographical writing, which he considers an invention of the *Shiji*.<sup>94</sup> The *Shiji* postface, called by Wu "the authorial self-account," although not an autobiography in its strict sense, is considered as the earliest recognizable autobiographical writing. Since a third-person, impartial, and unobtrusive narrator characterizes traditional Chinese historiography in which biographical and auto-biographical writings are situated, the third-person stance adopted in the *Shiji* postface, argues Wu, is mostly a burden to satisfy the dictates of traditional Chinese historiography, which restrains self-expression in order to achieve objectivity. He assumes that Sima Qian was well aware of the tradition that valued objectivity and impersonality; the third-person voice, therefore, was Sima Qian's conscious choice.<sup>95</sup>

While identifying the self-restrictive nature of Chinese autobiographical writing, Wu has not fully answered why he considers the *Shiji* postface as a self-account, for in his definition the difference between a biographical account and a self-narration is almost undetectable. Viewed from this angle, those that have been traditionally considered as early autobiographical writings face a definition problem. In fact, whether a "self-narration" is a piece of autobiographical writing or not precisely relies on one's assumption, rather than any definable features that has led the Grand Historian's "self-narration" to be regarded as such. Moreover, if examined in the context of early Chinese postface writing, the authorial information included in a postface functions more as the means of stabilizing and categorizing the text rather than as self-expression or catharsis. In this case, there

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<sup>93</sup> For instance, in explaining why the *Shiji* postface is called the "Grand Historian's Self-narration," Zhang Dake mentions that "since the *Shiji* was originally entitled as the *Taishigong shu*, or the *Writings of the Grand Historian*, therefore its postface is called the "Taishigong zixu" 《史記》原名《太史公書》，故稱《太史公自序》，an explanation indicating that the "Self-Narration" part does not need further clarification. See Zhang Dake 1986: 380.

<sup>94</sup> Wu Pei-yi 1990: 3.

<sup>95</sup> Wu Pei-yi 1990: 4–5; 42–43.

is no urgency for the postface writer to use a third-person narrator as narrative disguise for his self-expression, because the postface writer and the writer of the text proper are not the same; the third-person stance plainly functions to satisfy the need of the author until a later author who writes a postface for his main text mistakes the earlier third-person postface as the self-narrative model.

We also do not see the kind of self-restraint supposedly associated with the enhancement of the postface’s objectivity and impersonality preventing the Grand Historian from expressing his own voice in his writing. The first-person narrator not only makes remarks on a chapter either in its beginning or at its end, but it also appears in the main body of the text. For example, the Grand Historian as a witness frequently emerges from the remarks attached to the main text. Such phrases as “When I read Confucius’s writings” (*yu du Kongshi shu* 余讀孔氏書) and “Respectfully, I lingered there and could not bear to leave” (*yu zhihui liu zhi buneng qu* 余祇迴留之不能去), certainly enable the Grand Historian to portray himself as a participant in his writings: in these cases the Grand Historian does not employ a third-person perspective; he asserts, instead, his perspective through his own presence and observations.<sup>96</sup>

An even more illuminating example of this appears in the first “arrayed tradition,” in which the Grand Historian appears as the first-person narrator in the main text. He says, “I am very confused by it” (*yu shen huo yan* 余甚惑焉): who says that Heaven is always in favor of benevolent people? If it is so, why would Heaven not have let the virtuous ones have a natural death and leave the wicked punished?<sup>97</sup> Such a powerful first-person presence by the author is by no means restrained by the principles of objectivity and impersonality imagined to have been faithfully observed by the Grand Historian.

The Grand Historian’s strong presence in the *Shiji* narrative is well-known to scholars. For example, Li Changzhi 李長之 (1910–1978 AD) associates this with Sima Qian’s unique personality, which Li considers a romanticist tendency; Stephen Durrant sees it as the result of tension between Sima Qian’s pursuit of literary accomplishment and the spirit of self-restraint promoted by the Confucian teachings; Andrew H. Plaks holds that the Grand Historian as the first-person narrator appearing in his remarks functions similarly to the epic author.<sup>98</sup> Indeed, such impressions are partly based on the reading of the *Shiji* postface as Sima Qian’s self-account, but it is also undeniable that the first-person stance adopted without hesitation in the Grand Historian’s remarks clearly conveys that the Grand

<sup>96</sup> *Shiji* 47.1947.

<sup>97</sup> *Shiji* 61.2124–2125.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Li Changzhi 李長之 1968; Durrant 1995; Pu Andi (Andrew Plaks) 1996: 14–15.

Historian presented himself before the reader in explaining what he has chosen to write and why.

It is worth noting, however, that the first-person pronoun *wo* 我 (*I, me, my, we, us, our*)<sup>99</sup> does appear once toward the end of the *Shiji* postface, as follows:

維我漢繼五帝末流，接三代（統）〔絕〕業。

It is only our Han that inherits the late stream of the Five Thearchs and continues the discontinued enterprise of the Three Dynasties.<sup>100</sup>

It becomes clear that the first-person pronoun here does not carry any information pertaining to the author; rather, it is the apposition of the noun “Han,” meaning the Han dynasty. If carefully read, the character *wo* in this case is not even a singular first-person pronoun, for once juxtaposed with the character denoting the Han dynasty, the room for the character *wo* to be interpreted as *my* becomes extremely narrow: in fact, only a Han emperor was qualified to say “*my* Han dynasty.” Since the author of this passage is not a Han emperor, *wo* immediately turns into a collective first-person pronoun, and the term *wo Han* does not mean *my Han dynasty*, but *our Han dynasty*. Yang Shuda 楊樹達 (1885–1956 AD) observes this grammatical point and dubs it “the expansionary usage of *wo* (*I, me, or my*)” 我之擴張用法, arguing that *wo* in such occasions usually denotes *our state* or *our army*, stressing that the addresser is a first-person collective rather than an individual.<sup>101</sup>

Even interpreted as such, the phrase *wo Han* is rarely seen in Han texts. In contrast to the tint of nationalism that it carries today, this term still requires that those who spoke it in the Han dynasty discourse were so close to the Han imperial family or the imperial court that they could share in the imperial power. In fact, this term is rarely seen in the entirely extant corpus of Han historical writing.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>99</sup> The first-person pronoun *wo* appeared as early as in Shang oracle bone inscriptions and has continued to function as a first-person pronoun thereafter. In Shang oracle bone inscriptions, *wo* serves mostly as a plural first-person pronoun (*we, us, or our*), but, as we see in early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, *wo* also began to denote singular first-person pronoun *I* (or *me* and *my*); the frequency of using *wo* as a singular first-person pronoun continued to increase during the Eastern Zhou, and, by the late Western Han dynasty, *wo* largely became a singular first-person pronoun when used solely; it usually went with such a particle as *shu* 屬 or *cao* 曹 to form a plural phrase. See Hu Wei 胡偉 and Zhang Yujin 張玉金 2010.

<sup>100</sup> *Shiji* 130.3319.

<sup>101</sup> Yang Shuda 1955: 58–59; He Leshi 何樂士 1984: 114.

<sup>102</sup> This term appears also in the “Encomium” attached to the “basic annals” of the first Eastern Han emperor Liu Xiu 劉秀 (r. 25–57 AD), but that encomium was supposed to be composed by Fan Ye 范曄 (398–445 AD), a Southern Dynasty official-scholar. According to the Tang commentators Li Xian 李賢 (654–684 AD) and others, Fan should not have identified himself as a Han

Among the few examples where this term is applied in such context, with little exception, it is used as the apposition of such noun as *guo* 國 (state) or *jia* 家 (house), and is associated with the speakers obviously within the power circle of the Han ruling house: Wang Mang (r. 8–23 AD), who at the time of using the word *wo Han guo* 我漢國 (our Han state)<sup>103</sup> modeled himself on the Duke of Zhou,<sup>104</sup> Empress Dowager Yuan 元皇太后 (71 BC–13AD), who used *wo Han jia* 我漢家 (our Han imperial family) to specifically distinguish the Han ruling family from Wang Mang.<sup>105</sup> Although Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography states that he was appointed as Palace Secretary and enjoyed great honor and favor in that position, it is unlikely that he would have addressed himself in the *Shiji* postface as if he were an imperial family member.

Nevertheless, among extant Han literary works, there are examples of Han writers who would identify themselves with the Han culture. For example, in the *Hanshu* postface, Ban Gu praises Emperor Wen’s (r. 180–157 BC) rulership by saying that this emperor was able to “rectify our Han way of governing” (*deng wo Han dao* 登我漢道), which, according to Ban Gu’s appraisal, was associated with Emperor Wen’s frugality, his policy of light levies and taxation, as well as his lenience toward those who broke the laws.<sup>106</sup> Such usage of *deng wo Han dao* is similar to the expression *shi wo Han xing* 示我漢行 (to show our Han way of doing things) in Ban Gu’s *Piyong shi* 辟雍詩 (A Poem on the Piyong Building). In the “Lu Lingguangdian fu” 魯靈光殿賦 (A *Fu* Rhapsody on the Lingguang Palace of Lu) attributed to Wang Yanshou 王延壽, an Eastern Han writer active during a certain time between Emperor Shun’s 順帝 (r. 126–144 AD) and Emperor Huan’s 桓帝 (r. 147–167 AD) reigns, the author uses “wo Han shi” 我漢室 (“our Han imperial house”), although Wang was not a Han imperial family member.<sup>107</sup> In the *Yang Sigong song* 楊四公頌 (A Eulogy to Yang Sigong) attributed to the late Eastern Han scholar Zhang Chao 張超, it

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dynasty person by using the term “wo Han,” and suspect that Fan might have simply copied that term from a Han dynasty work. *Hou Hanshu* 1.87.

**103** We need to remain cautious in this case not to anachronistically interpret *guo* as “country” or “nation.” The nuance that the rendering of “state” attempts to convey is that, like what we may savor from the word “house” or “family,” the word “state” here is rather narrowly limited to the connotation of the ruling family’s territory; or we may simply regard it as a synonym of the “ruling house” or “imperial family.”

**104** *Hanshu* 84.3429–3431.

**105** *Hanshu* 98.4032.

**106** *Hanshu* 100.4237.

**107** Wang Yanshou 王延壽 1995.

says that “Yang’s family of our Han dynasty, has in his generation been the dynasty’s ridge beam” (*wo Han Yangshi, zuo dai dongliang* 我漢楊氏，作代棟梁).<sup>108</sup>

How such identification with the Han culture had been developed over time is an interesting question deserving further discussion, but for the purpose of this chapter, suffice it to mention that all the sources in this regard suggest that such a cultural identity might have emerged late: even the earliest example of this usage comes from around two centuries after Sima Qian. It is also interesting to note that although the term *Han jia* 漢家 (Han imperial house) appears several times in different contexts in the *Shiji*, it has never been modified by the first-person pronoun. As a matter of fact, the first-person pronoun *I* and the word *Han* denoting the Han dynasty appear together only in the above passage from the *Shiji* postface, a usage alien not only grammatically but also in its overtone, to the image and thinking of Sima Qian reconstructed mainly on the basis of the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An. Might this rather exceptional usage of the phrase “our Han” in the *Shiji* be a flashing red light over the “authenticity” or the date of this passage, or even the whole *Shiji* postface? It is unlikely, though not impossible, that the *Shiji* postface was composed in the Eastern Han. Nevertheless, we can say with confidence that this postface is less likely to have been written by Sima Qian as a result.

In short, the Grand Historian’s presentation of himself as the first-person narrator does not agree with the assumption that the author’s personal voice has to yield to the impartial, objective third-person stance in this authorial self-account. In my opinion, if the *Shiji* postface had meant to be written by Sima Qian, he had no need to restrain himself from employing the first-person narrative, especially when we consider his willingness to offer his comments on a variety of issues either in his chapter remarks or in the main text. The idea that the *Shiji* postface was a “self-narration” is especially unconvincing when we consider that the term “Taishigong” is applied to both Sima Qian’s father and Sima Qian himself.

It has long been understood that more than one “Taishigong” is speaking and spoken of in the *Shiji* postface. According to Wang Mingsheng 王鳴盛 (1722–1797 AD), the “Taishigong” making the remarks attached to the chapters in the *Shiji* main text is Sima Qian, the author of the *Shiji*; the “Taishigong” present in the *Shiji* postface, however, could be related to either Grand Historian, and in some cases, denote both. As shown in the following table, in the first six cases (1–6 referring to the table), the appellation of “Taishigong” is used for the father, Sima Tan; in the next four cases (7–10 referring to the table), it is applied to the son, Sima Qian; and

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108 Zhang Chao 張超 1995.

among the remaining four cases, in no. 11 and no. 14 it refers to father and son, respectively, and in the other two, it refers to both father and son.<sup>109</sup>

**Tab. 5-2:** The term “Taishigong” used in the “Grand Historian’s Self-Narration:”

	Passages with the term “Taishigong”	Denotations
1	喜生談，談為太史公	Tan
2	太史公學天官於唐都	Tan
3	太史公仕於建元元封之間	Tan
4	太史公既掌天官，不治民	Tan
5	是歲天子始建漢家之封，而太史公留滯周南，不得與從事	Tan
6	太史公執轡手而泣曰	Tan
7	太史公曰：先人有言	Qian
8	太史公曰：余聞董生曰	Qian
9	太史公曰：唯唯，否否，不然	Qian
10	七年而太史公遭李陵之禍，幽於縲紲	Qian
11	百年之間，天下遺文古事靡不畢集太史公	Tan
12	太史公仍父子相續纂其職	Tan & Qian
13	凡百三十篇，五十二萬六千五百字，為太史公書	Tan & Qian
14	太史公曰：余述歷黃帝以來至太初而訖，百三十篇	Qian

The appellation, “Grand Historian,” is understood as either an honorific term, as suggested by Wang Guowei and others, or merely the official title of the position occupied by both the father and the son.<sup>110</sup> As an honorific appellation, it is unlikely that Sima Qian would apply it to himself in this postface. To overcome this difficulty in interpretation, many would adopt what Wei Hong 衛宏 (fl. 25 AD) notes in the *Han jiuyi* 漢舊儀 (Old Han Rituals), and contend that the term “Taishigong” was an official title rather than an honorific term.<sup>111</sup> According to that *Han jiuyi* account cited by Ru Chun 如淳, a scholar probably living in the Three Kingdoms

**109** Wang Mingsheng 2005: 42.

**110** Wang Guowei 1961: 492–497; Huang Chaoying 黃朝英 1986: 53–54; Zhang Dake 1983b.

**111** Such a contention apparently started very early, as reflected in the *Shiji* commentaries. Wei Hong, the Three Kingdoms (220–280 AD) period *Shiji* commentator Ru Chun 如淳, Yu Xi 虞喜 (281–356 AD), and the Tang 唐 (618–907 AD) *Shiji* commentator Zhang Shoujie 張守節, are among the earliest who hold that “Taishigong” was an official title; see *Shiji* 130.3286–3288. For later contenders in this regard, see Liang Yusheng 1981: 26–27; Xu Wenshan 徐文珊 1973: 35; Zhao Shengqun 2000: 121–132.

era, “Taishigong” was an official title for a position established by Emperor Wu of Han, a position enjoying even higher prestige than that of Counselor-in-Chief in the time when the Sima held the office, though it had lost most of its power after Sima Qian died.<sup>112</sup> The problem with this statement, however, is the lack of reliability of the *Han jiuyi* account itself. Following Ru Chun’s citation, the Western Jin (265–316 AD) scholar Chen Zan 臣瓚 recognizes that “Taishigong” as such a prominent position is not documented in the table of Han official titles preserved in the *Hanshu*; moreover, records pertaining to the Sima family’s household register unambivalently demonstrate that the real titles held by Sima Tan were “Taishicheng” 太史丞 and “Taishiling” 太史令 rather than “Taishigong.”<sup>113</sup> While various sources, including the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An, suggest that the terms “Taishiling” and “Taishicheng” were relatively low official titles, the claim of the *Han jiuyi* that the “Taishigong” as a position was even more prestigious than Counselor-in-Chief, indeed becomes highly questionable. By comparison, the argument that the appellation of “Taishigong” was an honorific term appears to be a relatively superior interpretation.<sup>114</sup>

Since “Taishi” 太史 was a governmental position, those who argue that “Taishigong” should have been an honorific term apparently hold that it is the character *gong* 公 following the title “Taishi” that makes “Taishigong” an honorific appellation.<sup>115</sup> The key to such an interpretation is certainly the premise that Sima Qian was the author of the postface, and the addition of the honorific word *gong* to the official title, “Taishi,” was meant to honor his father. It is worth noting, however, that the meaning of the word *gong* is by no means univocal but is fairly flexible within different contexts. The term *gong* is evidentially related to those who in the Western Zhou cultural sphere enjoyed high social status, and were usually referred to as aristocrats, royal family members, high officials, or feudal

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112 *Shiji* 130.3286–3288.

113 *Shiji* 130.3288.

114 In order to validate Wei Hong’s claim, Yu Xi and Yu Shenxing 于慎行 (1545–1608 AD) interpret the word “wei” 位 as a sitting place in court instead of an official position, suggesting that, even though “Taishigong” was a lower position than Counselor-in-Chief, the specialty of this position (i.e., to record the emperor’s words) allowed the Historian to sit closer to the emperor than the Counselor-in-Chief; nevertheless, as Wang Guowei observes, the Han official system, which mostly imitated the Qin, did not have a place for such a position, actual or nominal. On this issue, in an article published in the 1980s, Zhang Dake lists ten different arguments, in which the two notions above provide two of the major planks. The other arguments are all related to these two notions. See *Shiji* 130.3296–3298; Yu Shenxing 1996: 58; Wang Guowei 1961: 494–495; Zhang Dake 1983b.

115 For example, see Zhang Dake 1983b.

lords, but over time it gradually lost its original denotation and, toward the end of the Zhou, was mostly applied to mark an honorific form. These two branches of meaning continued in the Han dynasty, but became more complicated. In Han discourse, the term was not even necessarily an honorific marker; it might even carry negative connotations. Indeed, some argue that the word *gong* as in the term “Taishigong” has nothing to do with an honorable appellation.<sup>116</sup> Nevertheless, if Sima Qian were the author of this postface, there would be no reason for the word *gong* to have carried a negative connotation. The projection of Sima Qian as the author of the *Shiji* postface, therefore, secures the positive interpretation of the word *gong* as an honorific suffix.

If the word *gong* following the term “Taishi” is an honorific mark of the “Taishi” official title, the narrator of the “Taishigong zixu” must be reconsidered, for it is implausible that Sima Qian would have occupied this honorific title and lifted himself side by side with his father. Huan Tan 桓譚 (ca. 23 BC–56 AD) and Wei Zhao 韋昭 (204–273 AD) were among the earliest who touched upon this issue: Huan Tan maintains that the appellation of “Taishigong” was given to Sima Qian by Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154–93 BC); but Wei Zhao holds that it should be by Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun.<sup>117</sup> Wang Guowei considers Wei Zhao’s suggestion especially credible, as Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography states that it was Yang Yun who began to circulate the *Shiji* and would have used the *gong* honorific form for both his grandfather and great-grandfather.<sup>118</sup> This line of reasoning, however, is criticized for being too specific; as the late Northern Song (960–1127 AD) scholar Huang Chaoying 黃朝英 argues, others besides Yang Yun could also use the *gong* honorific form to refer to Sima Qian.<sup>119</sup> To avoid this problem, some attribute the text to “someone of later generation” (*hou ren* 後人), who replaced Sima Qian’s name originally put in the postface with the honorific term that Sima Qian used for his father.<sup>120</sup> But whatever stance the above scholars take on this issue, none has moved further to disentangle this age-old debate by questioning Sima Qian’s authorship of the *Shiji* postface. Even those who have realized the inappropriate usage of the term “Taishigong” in referring to Sima Qian, still hold that Sima Qian wrote the *Shiji* postface. I shall propose that this honorific term may not be a later

**116** For a good discussion on the word *gong*, see Yuan Tingdong 袁庭棟 2007: 199–204.

**117** *Shiji* 12.461.

**118** Wang Guowei 1961: 494. Here Wang Guowei somewhat twists Wei Zhao’s opinion by saying that Yang Yun also called Sima Tan “Taishigong,” an idea actually opposed by Wei Zhao. For Wei Zhao’s idea, see *Shiji* 12.461.

**119** Huang Chaoying 1986: 53–54; Wu Renjie 吳仁傑 1983.

**120** Wang Guowei 1961: 494.



addition but a long-neglected reminder of the invalid attribution of this postface to Sima Qian.

This question connects with the two juxtaposed pairs of starting and ending points of the *Shiji* raised previously: one opinion holds that the narrative of the *Shiji* starts from the time of Yao and ends in the year of the appearance of the unicorn; the other, from the reign of the Yellow Emperor to the era of Taichu. It is also said that the former is a timeframe planned by the father, and the latter, by the son. The reason that both are preserved in the postface is, as Zhao Shengqun has argued, due to Sima Qian's respect to his father. I have argued against this theory by questioning its reasoning, as Sima Qian would not have altered his father's unfulfilled wish (which is so strongly presented in the scene of a dying father speaking to a filial son) in order to demonstrate how he followed his father's will.

But why are these inconsistent statements allowed to stand side by side in the postface if they were not intentionally arranged as such by Sima Qian? In an article emphasizing the role that Sima Tan may have played in the writing of the *Shiji*, Gu Jiegang suggests that these two different quotations reflect the father's and son's different temperaments, varied degrees of attachments to the Confucius *Chunqiu* myth, and distinct views on how to present the significance of their own times. By linking the change of calendar from the Taichu era with the contemporary ritual and political trend towards archaism, Gu Jiegang can explain Sima Qian's introduction of a new time-frame to replace the one his father had provided. As for why the postface narrative has preserved both timeframes, Gu explains that it results from Sima Qian's carelessness. According to his observance, in addition to a number of *pian* chapters that can be attributed to Sima Tan with clear evidence, the *Shiji* postface was also written by the Grand Historian *père*. When Sima Qian edited this postface, however, he was not able to spot the inconsistency between his father's and his own versions on this matter, and consequently failed to delete his father's.<sup>121</sup>

Although Gu Jiegang's argument involves much speculation, especially in its comparison and estimation of the periods of time used to compile the *Shiji* and the *Hanshu*, it is inspiring: it opens the way to question the age-old assumption that the *Shiji* postface was written by Sima Qian. The speculation of Sima Tan's role in forming the *Shiji* text to some extent also reflects the recognition of those contradictions found in the *Shiji* narrative. The solution that Gu Jiegang offers in this case is sophisticated, but not enough to answer all the questions it poses. For example, if a postface is a summary of a multi-*pian* text produced after it is written,

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121 Gu Jiegang 2005: 226–233. For a more elaborate discussion on those chapters possibly written by Sima Tan, see Zhao Shengqun 2000: 69–88.

it is unlikely that the postface would be produced before the work was finished. Furthermore, we would not diminish Sima Qian’s role in order to exalt his father’s in the formation of the *Shiji*; nor would we reduce Sima Qian’s contribution to the *Shiji* to merely editing and piecing together his father’s work. Such inferences are unverifiable.

Based on the above discussion, I would carry Gu Jiegang’s and Wei Zhao’s arguments a step further by suggesting that the *Shiji* postface was written neither by Sima Qian nor his father Sima Tan, but by a later author in an attempt to form and maintain the *Shiji* as a cohesive whole, while simultaneously expressing his understanding of this text and his deep sympathy with its author Sima Qian. Wei Zhao posits that this later author might have been Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun. However, Wei Zhao estimates that Yang Yun merely added the honorific appellation “Taishigong” to the postface, while considering it a piece written by Sima Qian. Yet Yang Yun may well have crafted the entire postface. The rationale of this inference to a large extent lies in a *Hanshu* account pertaining to the transmission of the *Shiji*, as follows:

遷既死後，其書稍出。宣帝時，遷外孫平通侯楊惲祖述其書，遂宣布焉。至王莽時，求封遷後，為史通子。

After Qian had passed away, his writings gradually appeared. In Emperor Xuan’s reign (r. 74–49 BC), Qian’s grandson Yang Yun, Marquis Pingtong, followed and transmitted Qian’s writings, thus his writings were widely spread to other people. Later, in Wang Mang’s reign, Mang sought out Qian’s descendants and enfeoffed them as Masters of Comprehending History.<sup>122</sup>

This short passage provides three different eras marking the gradual transmission of the *Shiji* text and its increasing influence on the court. After Sima Qian’s death, the text had remained obscure, although the *Shiji* postface states that Sima Qian “placed a copy in the capital” (*fu zai jingshi* 副在京師), generally understood as the imperial library. The work’s proliferation also remains unclear. It has been generally held among scholars that writing history was not the responsibility of the position held by Sima Qian. Moreover, the *Shiji* was considered as a dangerous text<sup>123</sup> and writing history could be a life risking task.<sup>124</sup> It would be more reasonable to

<sup>122</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2737.

<sup>123</sup> According to a *Hanshu* account mentioned both in the biography of Prince Si of Dongping 東平思王 (r. 52–19 BC) and the *Hanshu* postface, when Prince Si requested the *Shiji* from the imperial court, the General-in-Chief Wang Feng asked the Emperor not to grant him the text because its contents were dangerous to the imperial court. See *Hanshu* 80.3324–3325.

<sup>124</sup> According to a *Xijing zaji* account, Emperor Wu was angry for what Sima Qian wrote about Emperor Jing and himself in the “Basic Annals of Emperor Jing” and ordered him to remove

infer, under such circumstances, that the *Shiji* was a private rather than court-sponsored text by the time of its completion.<sup>125</sup> This inevitably leads one to doubt the credibility of the quotation indicating that Sima Qian actually presented a copy of the *Shiji* to the Han imperial court. The copy that the imperial library finally possessed, then, did not come directly from Sima Qian, but probably from Yang Yun a few decades after Sima Qian's death, for, according to the above passage, it was during Yang Yun's time that the *Shiji* had become gradually known to the world.

Consequently, we have reason to believe that the study of the *Shiji* in the first several decades after Sima Qian's death remained largely as a Sima family tradition. This reflects what is said in the *Shiji* postface—the *Shiji* author wrote to “create the teachings of his own” (*cheng yijia zhi yan* 成一家之言). Although we do not know exactly how the Sima family teaching lineage operated, Yang Yun would have been included in that learning and teaching circle, as Yang “followed and transmitted Qian's writings” (*zu shu qi shu* 祖述其書), the word *zu* literally meaning to study the *Shiji* as the textual ancestor, or highest position, of that teaching lineage. What Yang Yun accomplished was the extension of the study of the *Shiji* beyond the Sima family to a much broader scope—to *xuanbu* 宣布, or to widely spread the Sima family teaching. It is also highly possible that the influence of the *Shiji* reached the Han imperial court through such efforts made by Yang Yun.<sup>126</sup> A passage in Yang Yun's biography may also shed light on this point:

惲始讀外祖太史公記，頗為春秋。以材能稱。好交英俊諸儒，名顯朝廷，擢為左曹。

In the beginning Yun studied the *Grand Historian's Records* by his maternal grandfather, spent a lot of time on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and was well-known for his talents and capability. He liked to make friends with talented, brilliant people and various students

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the chapter. Later when Sima Qian was punished for his defense of Li Ling, Sima Qian was sentenced to death. See Zhou Tianyou 周天遊 2006: 267.

**125** Gu Jiegang 2005: 232; Liang Qichao 1997: 21; Wu Zhongkuang 吳忠匡 suggests that there is evidence indicating that Sima Qian originally tried to make his writings be recognized by the imperial court, but soon realized that this was impossible due to his castration. See Wu Zhongkuang 1988: 76–77.

**126** Yang Yun's father, Yang Chang 楊敞 (?–74 BCE), began his official career as a military commander (Division Commander), and then was promoted to be Chamberlain for the National Treasury, Censor-in-Chief, and finally, Counselor-in-Chief in 75 BC. Although portrayed as a timid man, he may have helped his son build the latter's linkage to the highest Han aristocracy that enabled him to occupy important positions close to the court and the emperor. For Yang Chang's information, see *Hanshu* 66.2888–2889.

of Confucian learning; his fame was prominent in the imperial court; and he was promoted to Head of the Left Section.<sup>127</sup>

This short passage provides key information linking the *Shiji* with the Han imperial court, through Yang Yun as the necessary medium. While studying the *Grand Historian's Records* had not solely enabled Yang Yun to achieve his success, such learning experience must have been quite helpful to him in mastering the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, which served as the canon that had greatly influenced the Han ideology of governing. The knowledge that Yun acquired through his learning these two texts made him a talented and able person, and furthered his reputation in the imperial court, resulting in his promotion as Head of the Left Section. This position was responsible for presenting documents composed by the Imperial Secretaries to the Emperor, and was usually granted by the Emperor to one or more of his favored companions.<sup>128</sup> Since Yang Yun actively involved himself in Emperor Xuan's purge of the Huo 霍 family political faction around 67 BC, he was enfeoffed as Marquis of Pingtong 平通侯 and was promoted to be Leader of Court Gentlemen, in charge of the Three Corps of expectant officials in the imperial entourage who were collectively called Gentlemen.<sup>129</sup> A few years later, in 61 BC, Yang Yun was again promoted for his administrative ability and efficiency, this time as the Chamberlain for Attendants, one of the major official positions of the Han central government in overall charge of all Court Gentlemen and the Emperor's personal counselors and bodyguards.<sup>130</sup> It was during this time that the wide distribution of the *Shiji* may have begun, thanks to Yang Yun introducing the text to Emperor Xuan's court.

Little information remains surrounding the *Shiji*'s presentation to the imperial court. As the Sima family's learning and teaching tradition centering on the *Shiji* was continued after it was presented to the imperial court, there would have been considerable efforts in making other copies of the writings left by the Grand Historian. Copying the original would not mean merely copying the more than one hundred *pian* chapters word by word, but it was also initiating the deeper editing process, in which it might become necessary to compile a postface introducing the author(s) and promoting the text.

Based on relevant information, Yang Yun is the most noticeable potential author of this piece of writing. The materials he utilized to compile this postface, however, were not of his own invention. Based on the flow of the narrative, the

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127 *Hanshu* 66.2889.

128 Hucker 1985: 526.

129 *Hanshu* 66.2889; Hucker 1985: 191.

130 *Hanshu* 66.2890; Hucker 1985: 288.

insertion of those textual blocks, and the anecdotal nature of the materials examined in the second portion of this chapter, it is possible that the materials adopted to construct the postface narrative were provided by the Sima family learning and teaching tradition, and also that the composition of the postface might have been related to the family learning and teaching circle. The finalization of the postface to some extent resembles the consensus reached through discussions occurring in the present-day editorial board meeting in which different concerns, questions, and suggestions are carefully considered before a piece of writing is finally presented.<sup>131</sup>

Admittedly, although the above inference is plausible based on available evidence, it remains indefinite. However, my final conclusion is not dictated by the inference that Yang Yun must be the author of the *Shiji* postface. Rather, I have presented evidence favoring this argument to show the complexity of its authorship issue. The widely accepted truism emphasizing Sima Qian's authorship of this piece of writing is untenable. The farther-reaching significance of this issue is connected to the late Western Han and early Eastern Han intellectual world in general: the *Shiji* postface was not composed by Sima Qian, but was produced later when the *Shiji* was presented to the imperial court after Sima Qian's death.

Even though included in the imperial collection, ten of the *Shiji* chapters had already been reported as lost a few decades later, when the imperial text collection was rearranged and cataloged by the Western Han scholars led by Liu Xiang and others.<sup>132</sup> What those ten lost chapters were has been a keenly disputed issue, although a third-century scholar lists a number of *pian* as the lost chapters.<sup>133</sup>

We can only speculate how those chapters were lost. According to the “*Yiwen zhi*,” since the rise of the Han, especially from the time of Emperor Wu, the imperial library had acquired a large amount of texts. Until the time of Emperor Cheng,

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**131** There is no guarantee that the *Shiji* postface we have received through a long, complicated history of transmission (over two thousand years) is or even remains close to the original writing. It is imaginable that considerable alterations and interpolations occurred in the process of its being copied, studied, and later, printed. A basic assumption held in this discussion is that this piece largely remains its original structure and format unless pointed out otherwise.

**132** The “*Yiwen zhi*” states that the among the 130 *pian* of the *Shiji*, “the writings of ten *pian* on the catalogue have been lost” (*shi pian you lu wu shu* 十篇有錄無書); see *Hanshu* 30.1714; for the year in which the rearrangement of the imperial library started, see *Hanshu* 10.310.

**133** Zhang Yan 張晏, a Three Kingdoms (220–280 AD) period scholar and the author of the *Hanshu yinshi* 漢書音釋, provides a list of the ten lost *pian* *Shiji* chapters. For the list of the lost ten *pian* *Shiji* chapters, see *Hanshu* 62.2724–2725. For a summary of this debate, see Yu Jiayi 2007a.

however, “many of those texts had been scattered or disappeared” (*shu po sanwang* 書頗散亡), leading to the initiation of the decades-long project of rearranging the imperial collection.<sup>134</sup> The *Shiji* textual loss may have occurred before the late Han rearrangement of the ill-maintained Han imperial collection.

It is possible that more than ten *Shiji* chapters had been lost from the imperial collection. As discussed, Liu Xiang was charged to recover the lost texts to form more inclusive versions of those texts while rearranging the imperial text collection. It was the table of contents included in the *Shiji* postface (which happened to have survived) that reminded him and his team of how many chapters had been included when the text was presented to the court.

The *Shiji* was able to reach a larger group of readers and even enabled the Sima family to obtain great prestige in the imperial court. We realize the existence of an enlarged reader group based on a variety of records of those who attempted to obtain a part of the *Shiji*, tried to recover those lost chapters, or tried to add the writings of recent eras to the *Shiji*. The story that Liu Yu 劉宇, Prince of Dongping 東平 (r. 52–19 BC), submitted a memorial to the throne requesting the Grand Historian’s writings is referenced in both his own biography and the *Hanshu* postface.<sup>135</sup> It is also known that a number of Han literati emulated the *Shiji* by writing about the eras not covered by the *Shiji*, or added contents for those lost chapters, including Feng Shang 馮商 (ca. 53 BC–18 AD), whose writings (also entitled as the writings by “Taishigong”) are listed in the “Yiwen zhi,” and Chu Xiansheng 褚先生 (Mr. Chu, a *boshi* 博士 erudite who lived between the reigns of Emperor Yuan (r. 48–33 BC) and Emperor Cheng, whose writings were nearly integrated into the *Shiji* and have consequently survived to the present day.<sup>136</sup> Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 (661–721 AD) lists Liu Xiang, Liu Xin and Yang Xiong among the fifteen writers who had attempted to continue the writing of the *Shiji* before Ban Biao 班彪 and Ban Gu compiled the *Hanshu*.<sup>137</sup> Moreover, although the *Han jiuyi* notes that, beginning from the time of Emperor Xuan, the Grand Historian’s descendants could no longer inherit the position that their ancestors had held, the Sima family were enfeoffed during Wang Mang’s reign (r. 9–23 AD), albeit for a short while, thanks to the influence of the *Shiji*. The title that Wang Mang granted to them—“Master of Comprehending History”—indicates that the Sima family learning tradition based on the *Shiji* might have continued through the time they were enfeoffed.

<sup>134</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1701.

<sup>135</sup> *Hanshu* 80.3324–3325; *Hanshu* 100.4203.

<sup>136</sup> *Hanshu* 30.1714; according to Zhang Yan, Chu Xiansheng added four *pian* into the *Shiji*; Liu Zhiji 劉知幾 1978: 337.

<sup>137</sup> Liu Zhiji 1978: 338.

From the time of its being known little by people outside the Sima family to the time of its proliferation, and then to the time when the Sima family was enfeoffed, the *Shiji* had existed for nearly a century after Sima Qian's death and was still to exert great influence on the writing of Chinese history thereafter. The catalyst for this process was its reaching the Han imperial court possibly through Yang Yun, who was both educated in the Sima family learning and teaching tradition and a prominent court figure with tremendous influence upon the emperor and his inner circle.

One question remains, however, in regard to the common perspective on the *Shiji* postface as Sima Qian's. The *Hanshu* author Ban Gu believed that this postface was written by Sima Qian, as he refers to it as such in Sima Qian's biography.<sup>138</sup> It is unlikely that Ban Gu did not know how postfaces emerged and functioned in the formation of the multi-chapter texts, especially when we consider that Ban Gu's father, Ban Biao, also participated in the late Western Han rearrangement of the imperial collection directed by Liu Xin. It is possible that Ban Gu willfully mistook the *Shiji* postface as being written by Sima Qian, a Qu Yuan-like figure who carried his political wounds that had broad ramifications on late Western and early Eastern Han intellectual thinking. The following section explores this issue.

## 5.5 Authorial Intent and Han Intellectual Self-Identification

In early Chinese text formation, authors functioned not only as efficient agents for cataloging and stabilizing multi-chapter texts, but also as important means to theorize and interpret texts. Although autobiographical readings may sometimes be considered fallacious in the literary criticism of the twentieth-century, they have been taken as a powerful approach to the dating, examining, and interpreting of early Chinese writings.

Author and text are mutually dependent in this two-dimensional framework, which in many cases suffers from the pitfalls of circular interpretation and intentional fallacy. Notwithstanding such limitation, the author-text interpretative framework has been and continues to be the major approach to the *Shiji*. The approach insisting upon the validity of authorial intent in the history of Chinese narratology, as Yang Yi puts it, has always been a "productive" method, and thus,

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<sup>138</sup> Toward the end of Sima Qian's biography, Ban Gu adds, "Qian's 'Self-Narration' says so" 遷之自敘云爾。See *Hanshu* 62.2724.

the hallmark of the study of Chinese literature.<sup>139</sup> As a result, seeking Sima Qian's intent by building cross-references between the *Shiji* postface and the accounts from other sources still serves as a major method of *Shiji* study. The authorship of the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An that have inevitably become the most valuable primary sources are rarely, if at all, critically scrutinized.

As shown in the above discussion on the *Shiji* postface, we should for the same reason remain cautious not to take the claim of Sima Qian's authorship of the letter to Ren An for granted. Considering the letter as supplementary evidence regarding Sima Qian's authorial intent, few would question its veracity.<sup>140</sup> In an interpretive framework focusing on authorial intent, an inquiry on the purpose of Sima Qian's letter is fundamental. According to this kind of reading, the purpose of this letter was to vent Sima Qian's resentful feeling toward the punishment of castration; further, the author's confession that his enduring such great humiliation was to finish writing the *Shiji* that conveys his critical view on the Han imperial court, especially Emperor Wu who ordered the castration. Nevertheless, it is certain that the contemporary political atmosphere would not allowed Sima Qian to freely express his frustration and resentment toward the emperor. As is mentioned in this letter, "I (Sima Qian) encountered this disaster for the words that I spoke," an expression strongly indicating the serious risk involved in criticizing the Emperor.<sup>141</sup> Since such expressions would have been dangerous in the Han imperial climate, a careful consideration of this letter's contents and the political situation under which this letter was allegedly composed mars the credibility of the seemingly undisputable notion that Sima Qian wrote the letter to Ren An.

The earliest reference to this letter is the *Hanshu*, in which it is attached to a minimally revised version of the *Shiji* postface viewed as Sima Qian's and presented as supplementary material for Sima Qian's biography. The *Hanshu* author does not mention how he obtained this letter, but records that the letter was written in response to Sima Qian's friend Ren An who, in an earlier correspondence to Qian, had admonished him to work to promote talented officials for the Han empire at a moment when Sima Qian enjoyed the emperor's "honor and favor" (*zunzhong* 尊寵) as Secretariat Director after being castrated.<sup>142</sup> According to the narrator of the letter, Sima Qian did not respond to Ren An's earlier letter until Ren An was accused of an unidentified "unfathomable crime" (*buce zhi zui* 不測

139 Yang Yi 楊義 1997: 199–202.

140 For example, see Zhao Yi 1984; Wang Mingsheng 2005; Wang Guowei 1961.

141 僕以口語遇遭此禍。 *Hanshu* 62.2736.

142 *Hanshu* 62.2725.



之罪), with his execution imminent.<sup>143</sup> Sima Qian crafted this letter so that Ren An could read it before death, and in the meantime to “release (the narrator’s own) resentment and frustration to make those around him understand [his opinions].”<sup>144</sup> It is interesting that Sima Qian chose to write such a letter to Ren An at a moment when the latter was under a similar situation to the one he had been in previously.

The focus of this letter is the punishment of castration that Sima Qian had suffered. The punishment not only brought humiliation to Sima Qian himself, but also to his family; not only degraded him as a lesser human being in this world, but also in the netherworld when facing the spirits of his ancestors.<sup>145</sup> The letter goes on to say that the insurmountable humiliation had caused his self-negation and self-detachment from regular life, and deterred him from carrying out his official duties.<sup>146</sup> Nevertheless, what had led to such great humiliation, as carefully explained in this letter, was not the crime he had committed, but the emperor’s mistaking his honesty and good intent for disobedience. Here, in demonstrating his own innocence, Sima Qian once again defends Li Ling, a Han general surrendering himself to the Xiongnu 匈奴 ruler Chanyu 單于 when being defeated in battle.<sup>147</sup> The strongest defense in this letter is related to his choice of receiving castration as punishment for “deceiving the Emperor” (*wu shang* 誣上), as suicide would have been a more honorific choice to make.<sup>148</sup> The reason given for accepting the worse of the two punishments was not his extreme devotion to filial piety emphasized in the *Shiji* postface, but his determination of living through this frustration, as those exemplary “extraordinary people” (*feichang zhi ren* 非常之人) had achieved, to vent his resentment and have all the sufferings repaid.<sup>149</sup> The letter ends with a strong criticism upon both the imperial court and the world it governed, indicating that this was a “mad, delusional” (*kuang huo* 狂惑), and self-destroying world that did not deserve his service. Sima Qian explains that he was living to see the “day of his death” (*si ri* 死日) on which “the right and wrong be finally determined” (*shifei nai ding* 是非乃定).<sup>150</sup> The overall defensive tone throughout this letter is so evident that its negative connotation toward the emperor and his rulership cannot be mistaken.

143 *Hanshu* 62.2726.

144 舒憤懣以曉左右. *Hanshu* 62.2726.

145 *Hanshu* 62.2732, 2736.

146 *Hanshu* 62.2725, 2727–2728, 2732–2733, 2736.

147 *Hanshu* 62.2729–2731.

148 *Hanshu* 62.2730, 2732.

149 *Hanshu* 62.2735.

150 *Hanshu* 62.2736.

Unless Sima Qian was ready to risk his and his family's lives to bring further humiliation to his ancestors, it is unlikely that this letter was ever sent. Sima Qian had been accused of "deceiving the emperor" and was originally sentenced to death, simply for defending Li Ling by positing that Ling's surrender could have been a strategic move to "repay his debt to the Han" (*bao Han* 報漢) in the future.<sup>151</sup> Sima Qian would have been well aware of the consequences of this letter, and would not have risked his family's well-being.

Yang Yun's death serves as another example illustrating the danger of epistolary writing during the Han. According to the *Hanshu*, Yang Yun lost all of his power and the emperor's favor due to making "inappropriate comments," which were collected and held against him by his political opponents. In a reply to his peer Sun Huizong 孫會宗, who, like Ren An, wrote an admonishing letter to Yang Yun when the latter was demoted, Yang Yun merely argues that he had the right to enjoy his life (although satirically).<sup>152</sup> Yang's argumentation in that letter is similar to Sima Qian's in the letter to Ren An. Nevertheless, when Yang Yun was later investigated, his letter to Sun Huizong became proof of his guilt. "Emperor Xuan read and disliked it" (*Xuandi jian er wu zhi* 宣帝見而惡之), and consequently Yang was sentenced to death by "being cut in two at the waist" (*yao zhan* 要斬) for his "monstrous crime of insubordination" (*dani wudao* 大逆無道) as expressed in the letter. The punishment was not merely limited to Yang Yun, but was applied to his family. His wife and children were exiled to the border. Even Sun Huizong, the addressee of Yang's letter, was not spared from the "crime" caused by Yang's letter: Sun and a number of other officials remotely involved in this matter were also consequently removed from their official posts.<sup>153</sup>

There is little doubt that Sima Qian and his family would not have survived once this letter reached Emperor Wu, who, to ensure his unchallengeable authority, resolutely ordered to kill his crowned prince for the unwarranted charge of witchcraft.<sup>154</sup> According to Mr. Chu's writing preserved in the *Shiji*, Ren An was sentenced to death because Emperor Wu suspected that Ren An might have been involved in that event.<sup>155</sup>

151 *Hanshu* 62.2729–2730.

152 *Hanshu* 66.2894–2897.

153 *Hanshu* 66.2897–2898.

154 This was a notorious political event occurring in Emperor Wu's late years. It began in 92 BC, reached its climax in 90 BC, and may have caused a series of changes in governing policies during Emperor Wu's late reign. Information on this event is scattered in several accounts and it is narrated from different aspects. For a sketchy description of this event, see *Hanshu* 66.2877–2879; *Hanshu* 63.2742–2749; *Hanshu* 45.2175–2179.

155 *Shiji* 104.2782–2783.

Moreover, even if Sima Qian wrote this letter, it was unlikely that he would venture to deliver it. It would not be easy to deliver a letter of this length and have it known only by Ren An, whether it was written on silk or bamboo strips, when we consider that Ren An was in prison pending his execution. At that moment, Ren An's acquaintances and previous colleagues "dared not to say a single word for him" (*bu wei yi yan* 不為壹言), and he "alone had to stay with the officials of law" (*du yu falü weiwu* 獨與法吏為伍).<sup>156</sup> In the following citation, Sima Qian specifies the helplessness of being held in prison during the Han:

交手足，受木索，暴肌膚，受榜箠，幽於圜牆之中。

[The prisoner] crossed his hands and feet, bound with shackles and ropes; exposed his muscles and skin, paddled and whipped; and was confined within enclosed walls.<sup>157</sup>

This indicates that once being put in prison, a prisoner was deprived of all his freedom, and his communication with the outside world was considerably limited. Since Ren An was involved in an alleged *coup d'état* against the emperor, he was the emperor's prisoner, and was understandably under heavier court surveillance. This only made it even more difficult to deliver a letter to Ren An without being noticed.

Rationalizing the difficulty of delivering such a letter to the imprisoned Ren An, Lu Yaodong 遼耀東 (1933–2006 AD) suggests that the letter was never intended to reach Ren An; instead, Sima Qian merely adopted this epistolary form, intending Ren An to serve as a mere silent addressee for Sima Qian's catharsis monologue. The reason that Sima Qian did so, according to Lu Yaodong, lies in his intention of having this letter transmitted together with the *Shiji*, so that his future readers would understand the *Shiji* by consulting the letter to Ren An.<sup>158</sup>

Lu Yaodong's consideration of the letter to Ren An as Sima Qian's catharsis rather than a generic correspondence is inspiring, but his argument that the letter is Sima Qian's last words, intended for only later generations to read, is questionable on the following points.<sup>159</sup> First, while acknowledging the danger of delivering

<sup>156</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2730.

<sup>157</sup> *Hanshu* 62.2732.

<sup>158</sup> Lu Yaodong 2008: 314–316.

<sup>159</sup> Wang Chunhong 汪春泓 argues in the same vein that, in the name of his maternal grandfather, Yang Yun wrote both the "Grand Historian's Self-Narration" and the "Letter in Response to Ren An" for the purpose of his own political calculation, attempting to bring the Emperor's attention to his case and forgive him of his previous offence. See Wang Chunhong 2011: 131–133. I should thank Stephen Durrant for bringing my attention to Wang's article, of which I was not aware at the time of writing my dissertation. I should also emphasize that I suggest that Yang Yun might play a role

this letter, Lu's argument overlooks the danger of writing it. Moreover, Lu does not explain why a letter was still needed when the Grand Historian's self-narration had been made available, for Lu believes that the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An serve the same purpose. Finally, the idea that Sima Qian thoughtfully left this exegetical letter to his future readers for interpretative purposes is both anachronistic and speculative. Epistolary writing may have emerged very early in the history of Chinese literature, as we see in the *Zuozhuan* and other early transmitted texts, but it has functioned mainly as a private form of communication. It is true that seeking recognition constitutes an important motif in both the *Shiji* postface and the letter to Ren An, but the suggestion that this letter was intended to be an explanatory message secretly passed to the *Shiji*'s future readers is misleading. Based on what is said in both the postface and the letter, the targeted readers of the *Shiji* are a selective audience: sages and worthies; a letter as such would be considered redundant to these ideal readers, for they would recognize the author's intention simply by reading his work.

Differing from Lu Yaodong and many others, I would propose a reading of this letter as a piece of literature. In my opinion, even if this letter may to some extent represent Sima Qian's feelings, it is imaginative in nature. Like Ren An, the purported recipient of this letter, Sima Qian is another character assigned to this letter. Sima Qian is not the author of, but is authored by the letter to Ren An; he is created as both an agent spreading the invisible author's voice out and the subject responsible for what is said in this letter. Indeed, both Ren An and Sima Qian as historical figures are fictionalized in this letter, which, as a result, turns from a practical document into a piece of fictional writing.

The function of this letter as the means of private communication is also correspondingly changed: it represents the voice of a like-minded group and is meant for the public. Such a clever way of manipulating the form of epistolary writing not only enables the real author of this letter to vent his own frustrations in Sima Qian's name, but also allows the author to remain behind the narrative, avoiding the potential danger that the contents of the letter may bring about, especially in an unfavorable political situation. From this perspective, the Sima Qian in the "Letter to Ren An" represents an invisible author, just like Qu Yuan in the *Chuci* representing Wang Yi, if Wang was the first person who attributed those songs in

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in the formation of both the "Grand Historian's Self-Narration" and the letter to Ren An from a different perspective, which de-emphasizes the role of authorial intent in textual interpretation. Moreover, I do not insist that Yang Yun *must* be the author of either of the two pieces of writings, but wish, rather, to stress the collective frustration of the Western Han intellectuals veiled by the figure of Sima Qian, to whom both writings under discussion are attributed. See Durrant 2016: 136.

the *Chuci* to Qu Yuan. The evident similarity between the two is that the authorship obtained by Qu Yuan and Sima Qian, respectively, is none other than an attribution willingly given by either a writer (in the case of the “Letter to Ren An”) or an editor/compiler (in the case of the *Chuci*) projecting his thought and feeling to a well-known figure with whom the writer or editor identifies himself.

The hidden author of the “Letter to Ren An” may be found by considering a role possibly played by Yang Yun in the text’s formation. According to the *Hanshu*, Yang Yun wrote a letter bearing considerable similarities with the letter to Ren An. The letter attributed to Yang Yun by the *Hanshu*, known as “The Letter in Response to Sun Huizong” (*Bao Sun Huizong Shu* 報孫會宗書), is considered a piece of private writing between Yang Yun and his confidant Sun Huizong. Since it is said that Yang Yun’s death was associated with this letter, we may identify Yang Yun as its actual author.

Based on the account on Yang Yun’s legal case, we infer that this letter was taken from Yang Yun’s home.<sup>160</sup> We do not know why Yang’s letter was found before being sent, but the uncomfortable coincidence that neither the letter to Ren An nor the letter to Sun Huizong had ever reached its receiver somewhat leaves the conventional attribution open to question. Since I will return to this point later in this section, we first focus on the similarities between these two letters.

According to the *Hanshu*, Yang Yun lost his rank and official appointment due to slanders targeting the emperor. Yang retired from his political position and lived a luxurious life at home. Upon hearing the rumors of Yang’s living style, Sun Huizong wrote a letter to Yang, admonishing him as a close friend that, rather than making profit, supporting retainers, and befriending errant knights, Yang should restrain himself from being engaged in any of the above ostentatious activities and show his obedience to the emperor by living in solitude and penitence.<sup>161</sup>

Yang Yun’s response to Sun Huizong’s message is shorter than the letter to Ren An, but it contains several major points noticeably seen in the latter. As in the letter to Ren An, Yang Yun strongly defends his stance in his writing to Sun Huizong. It begins with a formulaic self-negation and a satirical appreciation of Sun Huizong’s admonition; immediately following his appreciation is a tactful implication that Sun’s admonition results from his misunderstanding of Yang. Yang’s contention exactly follows the rationale presented in the letter to Ren An. As Sima Qian explains in the letter that he did not accomplish anything even at the peak of his power, and thus could not still retain the ambition Ren An referred

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160 *Hanshu* 66.2897–2898.

161 *Hanshu* 66.2894.

to,<sup>162</sup> Yang Yun argues that since the emperor has taken away his titles of Marquis of Pingtong and Chamberlain for Attendants, he should only obey the emperor's order to feel satisfied with being a commoner and bear no moral or official obligations. After demonstrating Sun Huizong's admonition to be irrelevant, Yang asks a rhetorical question: "Now how could you reprove me with the requirements for ministers and high officials?"<sup>163</sup> This letter ends with some pointed remarks against Sun Huizong's personality, indicating that the transcendent quality that Sun originally possessed is gone and, therefore, he and Sun no longer share the same "aim" (*zhi* 志).<sup>164</sup>

Although we should not take the entire contents of this letter at face value, such elements as self-defense, self-negation, misfortune caused by words, experience of being jailed, and most prominently, feelings of frustration, complaint, and insinuation, can be seen in both letters. In fact, the contents of these two letters are comparable passage by passage. The following tables show how the contents of Sun Huizong find their counterparts in the letter to Ren An both in connotation and in wording.<sup>165</sup>

**Tab. 5-3:** "The Letter to Sun Huizong" and its paired passages in "The Letter to Ren An:"

"The Letter to Sun Huizong"	Passages from "The Letter to Ren An"	Similar Elements and Connotations
憚*材朽行穢(1), 文質無所底, *幸賴先人餘業(2)得備宿衛, 遭遇時變以獲爵位, 終非其任, 卒與禍會。足下哀其愚, *蒙賜書(3), 教督以所不及, *殷勤甚厚(4)。然竊恨足下不深惟其終始, 而*猥隨俗之毀譽也(5)。言鄙陋之愚心, 若逆指而文過, 默而息乎, 恐違孔氏 "各言爾志" 之義, 故敢*略陳其愚(6), 唯君子察焉!	曩者*辱賜書(3), 教以慎於接物, 推賢進士為務, *意氣勤勤懇懇(4), 若望僕不相師用, 而*流俗人之言。僕非敢如是也(5)。雖罷驚, 亦嘗側聞長者遺風矣。顧自以為*身殘處穢(1), 動而見尤, 欲益反損, 是以抑鬱而無誰語。諺曰: "誰為為之? 孰令聽之?" 蓋鍾子期死, 伯牙終身不復鼓琴。何則? 士為知己用, 女為說己容。若僕大質已虧缺, 雖材懷隨和, 行若由夷, 終不可以為榮, 適足以發笑而自黜耳。	Self-negation; appreciation of admonition; pointing out the need of explanation.

<sup>162</sup> *Hanshu* 66.2895.

<sup>163</sup> 今子尚安得以卿大夫之制而責僕哉. *Hanshu* 66.2896.

<sup>164</sup> *Hanshu* 66.2897.

<sup>165</sup> It is worth noting that, as seen in Table A, the similar wordings between the two letters are not located completely in accord with their paired passages.

## "The Letter to Sun Huizong"

## Passages from "The Letter to Ren An"

## Similar Elements and Connotations

惲家方隆盛時，乘朱輪者十人，位在列卿，爵為通侯，總領從官，與聞政事，\*曾不能以此時有所建明，以宣德化(7)，又不能與羣僚同心并力，陪輔朝廷之遺忘，已\*負竊位素餐之責(8)久矣。懷祿貪勢，不能自退，\*遭遇變故，橫被口語(9)，身幽北闕，妻子滿獄。當此之時，自以夷滅不足以塞責，豈意得全首領，復\*奉先人之丘墓(10)乎？伏惟聖主之恩，不可勝量。君子游道，樂以忘憂；小人全軀，說以忘罪。竊自思念，過已大矣，\*行已虧(11)矣，長為農夫以沒世矣。是故身率妻子，戮力耕桑，灌園治產，以給公上，不意當復用此為譏議也。

夫人情所不能止者，聖人弗禁，故君父至尊親，送其終也，有時而既。臣之得罪，已三年矣。田家作苦，歲時伏臘，烹羊飪羔，斗酒自勞。家本秦也，能為秦聲。婦，趙女也，雅善鼓瑟。奴婢歌者數人，酒後耳熱，仰天拊缶而呼烏烏。其詩曰：「田彼南山，蕪穢不治，種一頃豆，落而為其。人生行樂耳，須富貴何時！」是日也，拂衣而喜，奮袂低卬，頓足起舞，誠淫荒無度，不知其不可也。惲幸有餘祿，方糴賤販貴，逐什一之利，此賈豎之事，\*汗辱之處(12)，惲親行之。\*下流之人，衆毀所歸，不寒而栗(13)。雖雅知惲者，猶隨風而靡，尚何稱譽之有！董生不云乎？

“明明求仁義，常恐不能化民者，卿大夫意也；明明求財利，常恐困乏者，庶人之事也。”\*故“道不同，不相為謀。”今子尚安得以卿大夫之制而責僕哉(14)！

夫西河魏土，文侯所興，有段干木、田子方之遺風，漂然皆有節槩，知就就之分。頃者，足下離舊土，臨安

\*僕賴先人緒業(2)，得待罪輦轂下，二十餘年矣。所以自惟：上之，不能納忠效信，有奇策材力之譽，自結明主；次之，又不能拾遺補闕，招賢進能，顯巖穴之士；外之，不能備行伍，攻城(戰野)〔野戰〕，有斬將擐旗之功；下之，不能累日積勞，取尊官厚祿，以為宗族交遊光寵。四者無一遂，\*苟合取容，無所短長之效，可見於此矣(8)。鄉者，僕亦嘗廁下大夫之列，陪外廷末議。\*不以此時引維綱，盡思慮(7)，今\*已虧形(11)為掃除之隸，在闕茸之中，乃欲叩首信眉，論列是非，不亦輕朝廷，羞當世之士邪！嗟乎！嗟乎！如僕，尚何言哉！尚何言哉！

且\*負下未易居，下流多謗議(13)。僕以\*口語遇遭此禍(9)，重為鄉黨戮笑，\*汗辱先人(12)，亦何面目復\*上父母之丘墓(10)乎？雖累百世，垢彌甚耳！是以賜一日而九回，居則忽忽若有所亡，出則不知所如往。每念斯恥，汗未嘗不發背露衣也。身直為閭閻之臣，寧得自引深臧於巖穴邪！故且從俗浮湛，與時俯仰，以通其狂惑。\*今少卿乃教以推賢進士，無乃與僕之私指謬乎(14)。今雖欲自彫琢，曼辭以自解，無益，於俗不信，祇取辱耳。要之死日，然後是非乃定。

書不能盡意，故\*略陳固陋(6)。

Self-negation; experience of being jailed; explaining why Sun Huizong's blame was groundless.

Self-negation; self-approval; further explaining why all the blame on him is baseless.

Formulaic ending.

“The Letter to Sun Huizong”	Passages from “The Letter to Ren An”	Similar Elements and Connotations
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定，安定山谷之間，昆戎舊壤，子弟貪鄙，豈習俗之移人哉？於今乃睹子之志矣。方當盛漢之隆，願勉旃，毋多談。

\*underlined passages also appear in Table 5-4.

**Tab. 5-4:** Pairing similar wordings appearing both in “The Letter to Sun Huizong” and “The Letter to Ren An:”

	“The Letter to Sun Huizong”	“The Letter to Ren An”
(1)	材朽行穢	身殘處穢
(2)	幸賴先人餘業	僕賴先人緒業
(3)	蒙賜書	辱賜書
(4)	殷勤甚厚	意氣勤勤懇懇
(5)	猥隨俗之毀譽	而流俗人之言
(6)	略陳其愚	略陳固陋
(7)	不能以此時有所建明，以宣德化	不以此時引維綱，盡思慮
(8)	負竊位素餐之責	苟合取容，無所短長之效，可見於此
(9)	遭遇變故，橫被口語	以口語遇遭此禍
(10)	奉先人之丘墓	上父母之丘墓
(11)	行已虧	已虧形
(12)	汗辱之處	汗辱先人
(13)	下流之人，衆毀所歸，不寒而栗	負下未易居，下流多謗議。
(14)	“道不同，不相為謀。”今子尚安得以卿大夫之制而責僕哉！	今少卿乃教以推賢進士，無乃與僕之私指謬乎！

The obvious resemblance between the two letters demands explanation. According to Lu Yaodong’s theory, Sima Qian wanted to pass down his letter as an exegetical piece to his *Shiji* readers, so he left this letter together with the *Shiji* to his grandson Yang Yun. The feeling and wording expressions in the letter to Ren An, as Lu Yaodong suggests, must have deeply influenced Yang Yun, explaining the similarities between the letter to Ren An and the letter to Sun Huizong. Lu even infers that Yang Yun was mentored by Sima Qian, educated by him, and knew well how the trauma of castration had impacted Sima Qian’s life. As a result, it is not surprising that Yang had developed an enmity toward Emperor Wu and the



Han imperial court in general. This also allegedly accounts for the loss of Emperor Wu's biography. According to Lu, the feeling of dislike for Emperor Wu resulted in Yang's intentionally destroying Emperor Wu's biography, which, among other nine *pian* chapters, was lost by the time of the rearrangement of the imperial collection of texts.<sup>166</sup>

The assumption that the letter to Ren An was written and passed down to Yang Yun by Sima Qian is essential to the above type of argument. This assumption, however, has not been verified. Since Sima Qian had likely not written the letter to Ren An, the speculation that Yang Yun's letter to Sun Huizong imitates the style and wording of the letter to Ren An becomes irrelevant. As a result, the imaginary scene of transmission depicted by Lu Yaodong becomes implausible. The suggestion that Yang Yun's feeling of dislike for the Han court, as reflected in his letter to Sun Huizong, had been nourished from his early age in observing his grandfather's frustration and humiliation, neglects Yang Yun's active participation and huge success in governmental affairs as well as his close relationship with the emperor prior to his being estranged from the court.

Without the assumption that the letter to Ren An was an exegetical piece intended by Sima Qian, I propose the following three possibilities. First, the similarities shown in these two letters in terms of their writing style, structure, motif, and wording, suggest that Yang Yun is likely the author of the letter to Ren An, if he is indeed the author of the letter to Sun Huizong. Second, the astonishing likeness of the self-defensive overtone conveyed by means of pretended self-negation in both letters makes it plausible that these two letters might have been composed around the same time—possibly after Yang Yun's deposition. Finally, that Yang Yun wrote the letter to Ren An from the voice of his grandfather may have been due to the political situation confronting Yang Yun at the time.

Nevertheless, the linkage of textual similarities, authorial intent, and historical as well as political background between these two letters, however plausible, does not prove that only Yang Yun could have written the letter to Ren An, even if we accept the *Hanshu* account stating that Yang wrote the letter to Sun Huizong. After all, another possibility exists. Even if "The Letter to Ren An" was not written by Sima Qian but by an unknown author, Yang Yun may have had access to it and imitated it when he composed his letter to Sun Huizong. Compared with the

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166 Lu Yaodong 2008: 316–319. Zhang Weifang 張偉芳 believes that the "Letter to Sun Huizong" was directly influenced by but achieved less in its literary value than the "Letter to Ren An" written by Sima Qian. See Zhang Weifang 2004. For more detailed discussions on Yang Yun's life and work, see Wang Chunhong 2011 and Kroll 2015.

first, this second theory appears even more difficult to be substantiated. By assigning “The Letter to Ren An” to an unknown author, further examination of the two letters’ authorship becomes impossible.

Following the *Hanshu* account, which states that Yang Yun is the author of the letter to Sun Huizong, serves as the prerequisite for both possibilities. If Yang Yun did not write the letter to Sun Huizong, the question is dismissed. Such dismissal means a new search for different approaches to the authorship issues of these two letters. An alternative, more meaningful approach, I propose, goes beyond the discussion of individual authorship of the two letters to project the identification of their authorship onto the background of Han intellectual history and the function of epistolary writing as literature in the Han dynasty.<sup>167</sup>

However different the above three theories appear to be, they all agree that epistolary writing in the Han served as more than a generic means of exchanging private information of involved parties: indeed, it had been developed by the time of late Western and early Eastern Han as a literary form in which fictional elements played a significant role. For example, in the case of “The Letter to Ren An,” its writer—whether it was Yang Yun or not—assumes the role of Sima Qian as the narrator and fabricates a framework that enables him to assume Sima Qian’s persona and speak in his voice as part of the created dialogue. It is true that neither Sima Qian nor Ren An is an imaginary figure; instead, both are nodes within a series of historical events available in Chinese historical narratives. The historical context,

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**167** Stephen Durrant 2016 and Hans van Ess 2016 suggest that I overestimated Yang Yun’s role in the making of both the “Grand Historian’s Self-Narration” and the “Letter in Response to Ren An.” While Durrant agrees that Yang Yun may have had a hand in creating the letter, he also emphasizes Ban Gu’s role in the process of the letter’s formation. In comparing relevant passages in the *Shiji*, the *Hanshu*, and the letter, van Ess suggests that whoever the author of the letter may have been, Ban Gu rewrote it to portray Sima Qian as a dissident against Emperor Wu and the *Shiji* as an opponent of the Han dynasty. As I have tried to prove in this work, the making of early texts is a long process, in which editors took an active part and the texts could be altered to fulfill specific purposes at every step of this process. From this perspective, I do not disagree with the two scholars. We know of this letter thanks to the *Hanshu*’s inclusion of it. It is only natural that Ban Gu, as the compiler of the *Hanshu*, edited or even created this letter for his own use. The reason that I bring to people’s attention to Yang Yun’s role in the making of the letter should be understood in the same vein. I do not insist on Yang Yun’s authorship regarding either the letter or the “Grand Historian’s Self-Narration.” Rather, by introducing another possibility for this letter’s attribution, I suggest that the view which naively interprets the letter at face value is untenable. Rather than forcing a posited authorship on the two pieces of writing, I wish to cast light on an important *type* of authorship in early imperial China, namely that of a projected author used to vent the Han intellectuals’ collective frustration.

however, serves merely as a narrative device and entails neither that this letter was actually written by Sima Qian nor that what is written in this letter represents real history. This is a skillful application of both historical knowledge and literary imagination as vehicles to pass on the writer's own feelings. Such artful manipulation enhances the rhetorical and persuasive power meant to be achieved by putting the contents in an apprehensible, meaningful historical context, while also enabling the actual writer to avoid exposing himself to the public and shun the attention and danger that could otherwise be brought about by such exposition.

The development of such epistolary writing can be seen through an investigation of the evolution of early Chinese literary and historical writings in relation to the socio-political changes in which they were situated. One thread that is especially worth considering, at least for the purpose of this chapter, is the changed status of the Han intellectual group in its relation to the emperor as the result of the rapid fading of the Warring States period tradition that had allowed the predecessors of the Han intellectuals to have more freedom in choosing the rulers they would like to serve. The imperial social structure and governing model established by the First Emperor abruptly terminated the practice of selecting rulers to serve in Warring States social and geopolitical environment. It is true that in the early years of the Western Han dynasty the dual governing systems allowed the coexistence of local princedoms with the central government, which to some extent resembled the Zhou system, but when the power of those princedoms grew strong enough to challenge the central government, the imperial court acted quickly and strategically to weaken the power of the local princedoms by dividing their territory into smaller pieces, depriving them of their privileges, and reducing the number of enfeoffed princedoms. Finally, the imperial court was able to subordinate the local princedoms to the central government and secure the gradual formation of a unified empire in its socio-political, cultural, and ideological terms. The enterprise of such consolidation was initiated from the era of Emperor Jing and was mostly accomplished several decades later during Emperor Wu's reign. Viewed from this point of view, the emergence of epistolary writing as an artful narrative device to convey the hidden author's voice after Emperor Wu's death may not have been coincidental.

It may not have been coincidental, either, that authorship became a primary category in text-arranging and text-cataloging, accompanying the above process, as seen in the late Western Han court-sponsored project of rearranging the imperial collection of texts. The chaos in text-making prior to the period when such a large scale of text rearrangement occurred was effectively prevented by assigning authors to those previously anonymous texts, stabilizing their forms, clarifying their meanings, and further positioning them in the imperial ideological system.

In such a new system characterized by its demand for strict order and central control, authorship not only enabled a previously chaotic textual tradition to be sorted and classified, but also efficiently bound the author and the text together and made the author be responsible for the text attributed to him. The author, viewed from this point of view, represented both his responsibility to the text and the coercive power that he was subjected to, symbolizing and functioning as the means of imperial control.

The manipulation of epistolary writing, the least confusing form in terms of its authorship, reflected the Han intellectuals' reaction to the aforementioned imperial control. By yielding one's own position as author temporarily to a historical figure, the actual author of a letter was able to hide and voice himself behind a straw man without being submitted to coercive imperial power. Such a tactical change to the usage of epistolary writing aimed not merely to avoid punishment, but also to break through imperial control: claiming the writer's authorship by hiding his own identity.

Besides putting his own words to the name of another, the author sometimes reminds the reader of his stance by identifying himself with multiple historical figures that can be lined together on the basis of their shared characteristics. In the letter to Ren An, for example, the author clearly points out that he aligns himself with King Wen of Zhou, Confucius, Qu Yuan, Zuo Qiuming, Sunzi, Lü Buwei, Han Fei, and the sages and worthies who composed the odes, because these figures of the past, mostly of the Eastern Zhou period, encountered their misfortunes but were able to vent their frustrations through writing.<sup>168</sup> These figures are portrayed as a group bearing various sufferings, but are also exemplary figures known for their literary achievements. Writing is viewed here as a response to misfortune, frustration, and isolation, the agent through which their voices are able to reach far into the future to those who would understand, recognize, and appreciate them. Writing becomes a weapon to confront and overcome political injustice, misery, and grief. Since most cases deal with the relationship with the ruler, writing, by conveying the voice of the frustrated, immediately becomes political dissent and balances the overwhelming odds against the writers in the ruler–minister relationship. This is why, from the imperial point of view, writing had to be held accountable under the inspection by imperial power. The notorious “Burning of the Books” under the First Emperor's rule and the late Western Han's reorganizing and cataloging of the imperial collection of texts, for instance, both resulted from the need for imperial control.

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168 *Hanshu* 62.2735.

The list of those frustrated historical figures repeated in the *Shiji* postface can also be understood in the same light, although the postface is a different genre from epistolary writing. Like in the letter to Ren An, these words are said through Sima Qian in a different context by the author behind the narrative, be it Yang Yun or some unknown individual(s). The authorial intent indicated by this list of exemplary figures, rather than from Sima Qian himself, reflects the hidden author's interpretation of the *Shiji*, and has exerted tremendous influence on people's understanding of the *Shiji*, including on the Han scholars who took the liberty to rewrite the *Shiji* or add to it with sequels. Within such an explanatory framework, the *Shiji* would be interpreted as a text written by Sima Qian in revenge for the punishment of his being castrated. Such interpretation, while providing meaning to this rather complex, voluminous text by simplifying it, is at odds with the issues surrounding the author(s) and sequel writers, the textual inconsistencies, and formation of the text and its subsequent transmission. I propose a reading in which individual authorial intent is connected with the core of Han intellectual thinking—the thinking that was deeply imbedded in a Han intellectual's search for personal dignity, recognition by others, and social prestige within a forever-changed social and power structure. The former Warring States period that was viewed nostalgically as the Heaven for travelling career seekers was gone, and the newly established imperial era would endure for the coming two millennia. As a result, the Han intellectual's view on merits and value, especially on such virtues as loyalty to the ruler in relation to the freedom of choice that their predecessors once possessed, however limited, would have to be readjusted and reshaped in this newly established imperial system.

## 5.6 Summary

Venting personal frustration or resentment is an expression of resistance to a powerful other, be it an individual or collective name. As Mark Lewis observes, this was the discourse in which the earliest Chinese author was born, evidentially seen in some of the *Daya* poems and the *Chuci* anthology. Sima Qian has long been aligned with Qu Yuan, Confucius, and other historical figures associated with text making despite failed political careers. Accordingly, the *Shiji* has long been interpreted as an important part of this literary tradition of frustration. Such alignment and interpretation, as shown in the main text of this chapter, has mostly rested upon the authorial attribution of Sima Qian to two major pieces: “The Grand Historian's Self-Narration” and “The Letter in Response to Ren An.” As the narrator of both pieces, Sima Qian strongly defended his aim to finish the *Shiji*, even at the cost of accepting the humiliation of being castrated.

A careful reading of these two pieces, however, suggests that Sima Qian can not be their author. This reading prompts the search for the real writer or writers who adopted the Sima Qian persona to vent their own frustrations and resentments. While some textual evidence indicates that Sima Qian's grandson Yang Yun could have played a role in disseminating and promoting the *Shiji*, as well as possibly playing some role in composing the two pieces of literature attributed to Sima Qian, it is more likely that both writings belonged to the tradition of Han postface and epistolary writings, respectively, which facilitated the expression of personal opinions and venting of individual frustrations in a social and political atmosphere that did not otherwise allow this by employing the voice of another. From such a perspective, Sima Qian became the presented author, behind whom the real writer was able to disguise his identity and so avoid the consequences of his expression of dissatisfaction with the world in which he lived.

## Conclusion

Menard has (perhaps unwittingly) enriched the slow and rudimentary art of reading by means of a new technique—the technique of deliberate anachronism and fallacious attribution. That technique, requiring infinite patience and concentration, encourages us to read the *Odyssey* as though it came after the *Æneid*, to read Mme. Henri Bachelier’s *Le jardin du Centaure* as though it were written by Mme. Henri Bachelier. This technique fills the calmest books with adventure. Attributing the *Imitatio Christi* to Louis Ferdinand Céline or James Joyce—is that not sufficient renovation of those faint spiritual admonitions?

—“Pierre Menard, Author of the *Quixote*” by Jorge Luis Borges<sup>1</sup>

From its early emergence in the Neolithic societies of China’s east coast, writing steadily developed along with the increasing social complexity of the Shang and Western Zhou societies. It was during the Eastern Zhou and early imperial periods, however, that Chinese literacy made the most considerable advancements.<sup>2</sup> Literacy spread with the expansion of writing for administrative, ritual, and communication purposes. In the meantime, literature developed thanks to its idiosyncratic function of recording, preserving, and transmitting memory, knowledge, and human experiences. Literacy had reached the point when dicta and aphorisms could be accumulated over time, thinking and teaching could be appreciated in absence of the speakers, knowledge could be jotted down and physically carried from one place to another, and, as a result, the human past became more traceable and recognizable and the depth of history more fathomable and appreciable. This more advanced stage that witnessed the revolution and proliferation of Chinese literature provides the context to situate this study.

This work has presented four case studies endeavoring to illustrate four different types of authorship observable in early Chinese writings: Huangdi, the author

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<sup>1</sup> Borges 1999: 95.

<sup>2</sup> Keightley 1989: 197. For more discussions on the early Chinese writing and literacy, see Bagley 2004, Wang Haicheng 2007 (or Wang Haicheng 2014, the monograph based on his dissertation), Smith 2008, Li Feng and Branner 2011, Meyer, D. 2011, especially 227–244.

as a cultural hero; Confucius, the author as the fountainhead of a teaching tradition; Liu An, the author as a patron; and Sima Qian, the presented author. Given the complexity of the inherited repository of early Chinese texts, these four examples are, needless to say, insufficient to fully represent the rich culture of early Chinese texts. This insufficiency becomes even more apparent when we recognize that our inherited texts represent only a small part of the textual body as represented in the “Yiwen zhi” chapter of the *Hanshu*. Although textual loss may make it impossible for us to have a complete picture of every aspect of early Chinese text-making, reception, transmission, and interpretation, we can glimpse part of this lost culture by studying a few carefully chosen samples among the texts that have survived the turmoil of Chinese history. The goal of this work, accordingly, has been to analyze the above-mentioned four types of authorship in order to expose the complexity of the issues surrounding early Chinese authorship, and, whenever possible, to probe such questions as why an author was needed, how he functioned, and what he means to our understandings of early Chinese texts.

This work does not aim to disapprove early Chinese authorship. It also does not negate the readings of early Chinese texts envisioned in those early authorial attributions. Instead, it attempts to participate, using Gadamer’s words, in the shaping of the “continuity of memory” both in the past and the present by revealing how an authorial attribution was chosen and under what social and intellectual situations such an attribution was made. In this sense, this study can also be contextualized with the three modern academic discourses (i.e., trusting, doubting, and explaining antiquities) that have dominated how early texts are evaluated. It is hoped that this study encourages potential alternative frameworks to reevaluate those texts.

The study of the Yellow Emperor as an author in Chapter Two considers the investigation of the Huangdi myth. Among the many faces of the Yellow Emperor transmitted by different traditions, he was mainly thought of as one who mastered the secrets of immortality, as especially emphasized by the texts attributed to him in the “Yiwen zhi.” We may never know for certain how exactly the Yellow Emperor was represented in the now-lost texts attributed to him, but the titles and classifications of the many texts at least give us clues to a possible representation—A clear majority of the texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor are classified as writings of *shushu* (techniques and calculation) and *fangji* (recipes and techniques). The religious connotations of these attributions along with the surviving textual evidence that consistently traces the Yellow Emperor to high antiquity links the figure to two aspects of early Chinese society and culture: the age-old tradition of ancestor veneration and the development of Eastern Zhou cosmological thinking. Contextualizing the Huangdi attributions through these two dimensions enables the



interpretation of the Yellow Emperor as a figure who, occupying the *axis mundi* in Eastern Zhou cosmology, emerges as the ancestor of all the powerful families of the Eastern Zhou.

The Yellow Emperor's position as the center of the cosmos explains why the majority of "Yiwen zhi" attributions indicate him to be a master of astronomical, calendrical, divinatory, and *wuxing* knowledge as well as a sage knowing various secrets for achieving immortality. This also contributed to the development of what Michael Puett calls a self-divinization model that viewed the Yellow Emperor as the ultimate link to the mythical, cosmological origin of divine power and as the ancestor of the body of esoteric knowledge through which living individuals could understand the secrets of the One and become immortals. This study views the rise of the Yellow Emperor partly as the result of the decline of the Zhou royal family's ability to maintain a governmental system that depended on lineage and familial connections for stability. Instead of embracing a divine cosmological figure to fill the lacuna left by the diminishing influence of the royal Zhou family, the textual tradition with Confucius as its nominal fountainhead proposed to strengthen the ancestral veneration allegedly central to Western Zhou ritual. This explains why writings authored by the Yellow Emperor are excluded from the category containing the texts of the Confucian textual tradition. It is in this cosmological and ritual context that we can better understand the combination of the Huangdi narratives and the Laozi textual tradition into what is sometimes called the "Huang Lao zhi shu" (methods of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi). The key reason for such a combination, I suggest, is the radical, transcendent approach to Heaven, god, and immortality shared by the Huang and Lao strands of thinking in opposition to the age-old ritual system upheld by Confucian propaganda.

In comparison with the almost total loss of those texts attributed to the Yellow Emperor listed in the "Yiwen zhi," Chapter Three considers the Confucian Classics alleged to be either written or edited by Confucius surviving to the present day. Among the body of Confucian writings, the *Lunyu* is a unique work that enables us to tackle the issue of Confucius as author of the Confucian classics and allows for a reconsideration of how inherited texts, like the *Lunyu*, were shaped through the process of text formation and transmission in early China. Through a detailed survey of the *Lunyu*'s textual history, Chapter Three provides a new foundation for understanding how and why the *Lunyu* has functioned since the Western Han dynasty.

In examining this textual history, I exposed the problem with the conventional account, namely, that the *Lunyu* emerged at a much later date than traditionally held. Scholars usually embrace the "Yiwen zhi" account that the *Lunyu* was a text

compiled by Confucius's disciples after his death. A careful scrutiny of all the available materials relevant to this issue reveals that the *Lunyu* as a whole text comprising multiple chapters like our inherited version appeared only in the early part of the Western Han dynasty as a result of an accidental discovery from the damaged walls of Confucius's old mansion. It is worth noting that, on the one hand, no evidence suggests that the discovered contents had ever been compiled into an integrated text, and, on the other hand, the transmission history of the *Lunyu* begins with the discovery that initiated efforts to “reconstruct” a text.

The early known lineages transmitting the *Lunyu* were two groups consisting of scholars from Lu and Qi, respectively. The *Lunyu* transmitted through the Lu lineage was more esteemed. But it is unclear whether either of the two groups had an integrated *Lunyu* text resembling its modern version. The immediate ancestor of the present-day *Lunyu* is the *Zhanghou lun*, written by Zhang Yu for his student, a six-to-seven-year-old imperial heir apparent of the time. The *Zhanghou lun* became so influential that it superseded all other versions in a relatively short time. All subsequent collations of the *Lunyu*—including the *Xiping shijing* version carved on stone stelae by imperial order in the Eastern Han, the main body of the text serving as the basis for Zheng Xuan's annotations, and the version preserved in the *Lunyu jijie* compiled by He Yan—stem from the *Zhanghou lun*. Clarifying the complicated textual history of the *Lunyu* not only helps us to focus on the issues relevant to the formation, transmission, and variation of the *Lunyu* per se, but also enables us to answer how and why discrete textual units were transformed into something soon recognized, valued, and supported by the imperial court in perpetuity.

The contents of the *Lunyu* had been part of a body of Confucian lore that included various kinds of anecdotal materials circulating in oral and written forms and put to various uses in the Warring States' ritual and intellectual environment. This original lore, however, never exerted the influence that the *Lunyu* would come to have in the Han dynasty. The main reason for the *Lunyu*'s expansion of influence in the Han dynasty is related to Confucius's role as author of the Confucian Classics, especially the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, that were established as the ideological foundation of the Han Empire in the early Western Han dynasty. It was no coincidence that the *Lunyu*, as a unified text, emerged after the ascendancy of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and the myth created by the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* in Western Han governance. The sweeping victory of the *Spring and Autumn Annals* and other Confucian Classics over other teachings on governmental affairs required an historically verifiable and tangible Confucius to solidify the victory, and the *Lunyu* fulfilled this need as its collec-

tion of Confucius's words and deeds allowed for the reconstruction of an historical Confucius. The *Lunyu* was thus read as the most authoritative biography of Confucius's life as a thinker, teacher, and the one who knew and transmitted the Mandate of Heaven in a corrupt age. Once this interpretative framework was in place, the author-oriented hermeneutics regarding the *Lunyu* and Confucius took root and would continue to dominate the *Lunyu* readings.

Chapter Four focuses on Liu An's status as author of the *Huainanzi*. Like the Yellow Emperor and Confucius, Liu An was connected to a body of lore, but unlike the other two, the Prince of Huainan was more closely connected to the writings attributed to him in that he may have sponsored the writing of the chapters incorporated into the *Huainanzi* and may have actually owned them. As author of the *Huainanzi*, Liu An represents a different type of authorship.

The attribution of the *Huainanzi* to Liu An has long been misunderstood to imply that Liu An actually planned and participated in the writing of the *Huainanzi*. Such an understanding of the *Huainanzi*'s authorship legitimizes reading the *Huainanzi* as the carrier of Liu An's political ambition. Martin Kern discounts Liu An's role as a writer of the *Huainanzi*, but he instead recognizes a role for Liu An as the presenter of the text to the Han imperial court. He takes the "Yaolüe," the postface to the text's twenty chapters, as a performative piece and suggests that Liu An actually read or recited it before the Han emperor at court.

By carefully examining the sources of the arguments used to present Liu An as an author, I find that the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is deeply rooted in the Liu An lore that developed after his death to emphasize his literary talent. This legendary material dominates the scholarship on the *Huainanzi* and Liu An, and yet this text is not presented in earlier sources written closer to the time of Liu An's death, such as his *Shiji* biography. I contend that the significance of the attribution of the *Huainanzi* lies neither in Liu An as the writer nor in his role as the performer of this text; rather, it lies in that the "Yaolüe" is a central piece through which the authorship of the *Huainanzi* is defined. The editorial information contained within the text defending the text's comprehensiveness and employing a set of literary devices to create a sense of cohesiveness among the chapters of the *Huainanzi* shows the effort to make the *Huainanzi* a comprehensive text synthesizing and unifying knowledge. This was part of a trend in the Han dynasty, as the accumulation of written knowledge grew.

This trend is best illustrated by the project to rearrange the Han imperial text collection in late Western Han, and by the production of other voluminous multi-chapter texts similar in form to the transmitted texts that we have inherited, such as the Masters Writings. In producing these comprehensive texts, conventions emerged as part of the text-making process to define the nature of the texts and

their authorship. Recognizing these conventions gives us insight into the authorship of early Chinese texts produced in this manner. Part of the culture contributing to text making in the Eastern Zhou and early imperial period was the sponsorship of *shi* retainers in both state and local principedom courts, and this sponsorship certainly contributed to the making of the *Huainanzi*. Whether the “Yaolüe” was performed or not becomes a secondary question in defining the *Huainanzi*’s authorship: patronage and ownership should be seen as the primary rationale for the authorship of the twenty *pian* included in the *Huainanzi* being attributed to Liu An. As a result of his patronage of the retainers engaged in the writing of the *Huainanzi*, Liu An became the text’s owner.

While the three cases above deal with persons known for much else besides their writings, Sima Qian has long been celebrated as one of the greatest individual writers in early Chinese writing culture. He has been portrayed and understood mostly through his own voice expressed in his writing, in particular the Grand Historian’s candid autobiographical narration attached to the *Shiji* and a letter addressed to Ren An incorporated into Sima Qian’s *Hanshu* biography. These two well-known pieces describe how Sima Qian, like other famous authors before him, uses writing to vent his political frustrations. Such a reading encourages a direct link between the *Shiji* and Sima Qian’s personal sufferings and frustrations—the aftermath of being punished with castration. The text and the author interpret each other in confronting misfortune and humiliation. The text was both a response to Sima Qian’s misfortune and the means through which the humiliation brought about by such misfortune could be overcome. The author, by accomplishing this great work, was able to align himself with other frustrated historical figures like Confucius and Qu Yuan, who were remembered through their writings. Individual voice, especially when expressing one’s complaints, frustrations, and misfortunes, is thereby associated with the emergence of authorship.

What is at stake in regard to this longstanding argument, however, is the assumption that both the Grand Historian’s self-narration and the letter to Ren An were truly written by Sima Qian himself. After a substantial review of this traditional reading of Sima Qian and his writing, Chapter Five finds that the Grand Historian’s self-narration contains problematic passages challenging the idea that Sima Qian wrote this piece. Issues undermining his authorship include large blocks of text disrupting the flow of the autobiographical narrative, contradictory sets of starting and ending dates appearing almost side by side in this narrative, the abnormal format of summary of the last chapter that substantially differs from that used for the summaries of the other chapters, and the honorific appellation “Taishigong” apparently applied to both the Grand Historians, father and son.

I propose that the *Shiji* postface was not written by Sima Qian, nor by his father Sima Tan, but was composed by “someone of a later generation.” This person is possibly Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun, who attempted to form and maintain the *Shiji* as a cohesive whole (just as the author of the “Yaolüe” did for the *Huainanzi*) while simultaneously expressing his understanding of this text and his deep sympathy for its author Sima Qian. Since the *Shiji* was undertaken as a private writing project rather than as a state-sponsored one, it was presented to the court only decades after Sima Qian’s death. Looking into the relevant accounts in the *Hanshu*, it appears that Yang Yun was the most likely candidate to facilitate this presentation; not only was he immersed in the Sima family teaching tradition, but he was also a prominent court figure with tremendous influence upon the emperor and his inner circle. In presenting the *Shiji* to the court, Yang Yun likely rearranged the *Shiji* when making new copies, and composed the *Shiji* postface, which may have been the product of the collective efforts of the Sima family teaching circle. Once composed and presented together with the main text of the *Shiji* to the court, this postface, like the “Yaolüe” chapter of the *Huainanzi*, has been transmitted with and gradually integrated into the *Shiji* and has been mistakenly interpreted as a piece written by Sima Qian to express his authorial intent.

A reexamination of the letter to Ren An in light of the mid-Western Han socio-political context suggests that Sima Qian is not likely the author of this letter. It would have been nearly impossible for the letter to have been delivered to Ren An, and it was unlikely that Sima Qian would have written such a letter after being castrated for expressing himself. This letter must have been composed after Sima Qian’s death, and again, Yang Yun could have been associated with its composition since it shows remarkable similarities in diction and tone to a letter that Yang Yun wrote to Sun Huizong, which has been preserved in Yang Yun’s biographical account. It is plausible that these two letters were composed around the same time—possibly after Yang Yun’s deposition—as both convey a tone of self-defense through the use of feigned self-negation.

Regardless of the plausibility of these factors linking Yang Yun to the composition of the letter to Ren An, we cannot ultimately prove who wrote the letter. Identifying the actual author, however, is less important than recognizing what distinguishes the letter to Ren An from the surviving examples of early Chinese epistolary literature, namely, its innovative use of ahistorical figure as a substitute for the writer himself. The emergence of such fictional authorship enabled the writer to voice his opinions by hiding behind the substitute to whom the letter was attributed so that he could avoid the consequences his words might provoke. This phenomenon is ascribed to the specific early imperial socio-political environment: it was a way for Han intellectuals to respond to coercive imperial power.

In a summarization of the main points on the still on-going theoretical debate on the issues of author and authorship, Christian Schwermann and Raji C. Steineck emphasize three aspects of the author-function in textual analysis: origination, responsibility (including authority), and interpretation.<sup>3</sup> More aspects can be added to this three-dimensional framework according to the actual need of textual analysis or theoretical construction.<sup>4</sup> The author-text dichotomy in the conceptualization of author and authorship, however, was lacking in China prior to the influence of the discourse of Western modernity. The separation of the roles of writer and author, the absence of originator, and the composite nature of early Chinese text-making, as this and other studies convincingly demonstrate,<sup>5</sup> call for a reconsideration of more sophisticated theoretical and operational understandings of the concept of the author and authorial function in early China. Viewed from this perspective, my present work is both an extension of the modern discourse to a remote past and in the meantime a revision of the definition of some key concepts, as well as their focus for the purpose of understanding early Chinese literature and the backdrops that generated it. In this part of conclusion remarks, besides the seemingly unconnected specific issues addressed in the abovementioned case studies, I would like to highlight the following points characterizing this project.

Although the debate on whether the genesis of Chinese writing is religious or administrative in nature still rages on,<sup>6</sup> it is relatively clear that a public discourse dominated by a sage-narrative as an understanding of the author concept had been formed by the Eastern Zhou period. This discourse was disconnected from the author-function emphasized by Schwermann and Steineck due to the disfunction of the two dimensions of origination and interpretation. In the sage-narrative, the sage's role (as an author who creates), merges with and tends to be replaced by its role as transmitter. This leads to its avoidance of the theoretical dilemma caused by the dichotomous author in Western Classical and Medieval traditions, but in the meantime strips itself of the role as the originator of the text, and which consequently further causes its loss of the power and credibility of historicizing and interpreting the text. Nevertheless, the author-function in early Chinese literature can still be connected with its modern definition through the dimension of responsibility, especially in lending authority to the text attributed to him. It is true that the concept of author and authorial function in early China are different to their modern counterparts, but they are analyzable in a modern

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3 Schwermann and Steineck 2014: 2–19.

4 For example, see Winko and Detering 2002.

5 For example, see Harbsmeier 1999; Schwermann 2014.

6 Boltz 1994; Bagley 2004; Smith 2008; Wang Haicheng 2014.

framework which also emphasizes authorial responsibility. The author as a concept without the dimensions of origination and interpretation turns into a set of authorial attributions, which sets up the theoretical base on which this study is situated.

The main thrust of this study is to go beyond the discussion of the author-function to explore the rationalities behind different types of authorial attributions. Although it sounds like a plain truism that textual attribution lent authority to the text, it is the exploration of what prompted the attribution and how it was made that reveals the textual, social, religious, and/or political richness beyond the authorial attribution. Besides showing the variety and complexity of authorial attribution in early China, the four types of authorship examined in this work also present a historical depth that links the attributions to the backdrops in which they were situated. The rise of the Yellow Emperor and Confucius as textual authorities reflects the Eastern Zhou to early Western Han phenomena of ritual and religious shifting and restructuring. The authority of both figures was closely associated with the responses to the declining influence of Zhou royal house, whose power was based on a patriarchal system based on the ritual practice of ancestor veneration. As a form of materialized religious thinking, such practices can be traced to the Shang dynasty. The rise of the Yellow Emperor as a prolific, symbolic author of the *shushu* and *fangji* types of writing represented a change of religious thinking from ancestral worship to self-divination, while Confucius as the head of a teaching lineage was well-known for his efforts to restore an idealized ancient society in reality by transmitting classical knowledge supposedly containing the patterns of the past. Crucially, although an Eastern Zhou phenomenon, Confucius as a textual authority became mythicized in Early Western Han to deal with the legitimacy of the newly founded dynasty. Following the sanctification of Confucius by the *Gongyang Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals* came the promotion of the *Analects*, a text portraying Confucius as a transmitter of text, knowledge, and political authority. Viewed from this perspective, the textual attribution to the Yellow Emperor as a legendary figure sought authority from the depth of history far before the Eastern Zhou, while Confucius became a quotable author in early Western Han to fulfill a political need of the time.

Textual authority and the lore of authorship mutually supported and strengthened each other. The *Lunyu* did not exist prior to Early Western Han as the most authoritative text to portray Confucius as the fountainhead of a teaching and learning school, nor was the Prince of Huainan described in his earlier (*Shiji*) biography as a talented writer of both esoteric knowledge and literary works. Little evidence shows Confucius as an important figure during his life time. But a lore evidently developed, as extant anecdotes indicate, that portrays

Confucius as a teacher and transmitter of classical knowledge. It is in this lore that Confucius became the editor, transmitter, or even creator of part or all of the classical texts later labeled as the Confucian Classics. The texts were considered an access to Confucius's intention hidden between lines, and the texts, because they were carrying Confucius's intention, achieved their canonical status following the sanctification of Confucius. Similarly, Liu An appears in his later (*Hanshu*) biography intentionally addressing his literary talents due to the promotion of him as such in a lore that began to be formed soon after his scandalous death. At least partly politically motivated in the beginning, this lore emphasizes the aspect of him not as a rebel against Emperor Wu of Han, but rather and especially as a learned man who not only escaped death, but also achieved immortality through alchemical elixir, an achievement Emperor Wu failed to copy. For this reason, most of his works are read with a Daoist tint. Such reading, in reverse, further increases the credibility of the lore of Liu An as a prolific esoteric author.

The discovery of authorial lore further extends our understanding on the role of author in the formation of early voluminous texts. The authorial information detected in the lore had never been meant to identify the writer or the creator of the text. Rather, it disconnects the text with the two dimensions, i.e., origination and interpretation, of the author-function, and replaces them with the function of making voluminous texts, such as the *Huainanzi*, the *Shiji*, and the Masters Writings. The authorial information, usually included in the postface, attached or unattached to the main text, serves as the cue or category through which multiple-*pian* textual units are gathered and arranged as a textual entity. Postface writing should be understood from this perspective: it was an invention to provide a means of combining together multiple smaller units of the texts that in the past circulated as single-*pian* textual units. The authorial information, a major part constituting much of a postface, is thus deeply embedded in the lore of the author.

The formation of voluminous texts would not have happened without the expansion of literacy, proliferation of writing, and accumulation of texts, which accompanied with the emergence of the Qin and Han Empires and the concentration of power and wealth. The rearrangement of the collected texts in the Han imperial library epitomized such inference. Liu An's Huainan court, where his literary retainers gathered to form texts according to the lore, served as a similar model of creating and collecting texts prior to the imperial project led by Liu Xiang and Liu Xin. This model featured the patron of textual writing also as its owner. The Han imperial court became the patron of written knowledge and the major sponsor of literary talents by employing them. Within this new system, although the status of writing was lifted to an unprecedented level to deal with the operation of the complicated imperial system, the Han intellectuals lost for ever



the freedom of seeking employment in a multi-state political environment, the freedom their Warring States period predecessors used to enjoy. In this sense, imperial sponsorship of textual knowledge simultaneously functioned as the means of controlling those who owned the knowledge.

Against this background, authorship is often associated with vent given by the author to political frustration and career failure. However, in giving vent to his dissatisfaction, the author did not expose himself and jeopardize his safety before the imperial coerce, but hid himself behind an impersonation of himself to avoid possible punishment caused by his writing. In the *Shiji* postface titled “The Grand Historian’s Self-Narration” and the letter supposedly written by Sima Qian to Ren An, Sima Qian is taken as a tactical nom-de-plume for the actual writer, arguably by Sima Qian’s grandson Yang Yun, who probably had a hand in the making of both the postface and the letter. In this case, the author is presented as a historical figure, a deceased person freed from textual responsibility though both appearing in the postface and the epistle. The emergence of these two genres, one being open to the public and the other convenient for individual expression, seems to link more tightly authorial intent and text, but the interpretation of either must go through the disguise adopted by the actual writer. The co-existence of an imperial court and many principdoms that to some extent resembled the Warring States period’s local polities died away toward the middle of the Western Han. When the imperial court replaced the courts of local principdoms to be the sole patron of literary writing, it followed only logically that censorship seriously curtailed individual political expression. Authorial impersonation thus developed and, consequently, the blurry line between the public and private worlds in literary writing complicated the seemingly tightly connected author-text relationship.

The above investigation of a few types of authorship demonstrates that the study of authorship serves as a productive approach to understand the whole body of early Chinese texts. The reconsideration of the author concept as well as its function in early China clarifies some of the confusion caused by the methodology of trusting and doubting antiquities. Authorship is central to the working methodology of the highly debated discourses—trusting, doubting, and, recently, explaining antiquities—that have dominated the evaluation of all early Chinese texts. All the three discourses simplify authorship as a device to historicize and synthesize the targeted texts, and in the end, fall in the *bianwei* framework to identify fakes from the authentic. The rationality of both the trusting and doubting antiquities trends is dominated by the textual authority given by the author. What differentiates the trend of doubting antiquities from that of trusting antiquities is that the former challenges such textual authority by examining inconsistencies in the text and corresponding authorial information. As a result, this trend throws doubt on

almost all early Chinese texts. Focusing on newly excavated textual evidence, the discourse dubbed “explaining antiquities” adopts an approach similar to the “method of dual attestation” (*erchong zhengju fa* 二重證據法) proposed by Wang Guowei 王國維,<sup>7</sup> but, in correcting the trend of doubting antiquities, that of explaining antiquities aims to prove the credibility of some textual attributions provided by the tradition of trusting antiquities. Viewed from this perspective, “explaining antiquities” is still part of the trusting-doubting dialogue. This new trend accepts textual fluidity and complexity in text formation and transmission, but what these new discoveries meant to authorship in the early textual world has not been adequately studied. Now, it is my hope that this alternative dialogue made through the re-examination of the concept of the author and its early context in which both author and text were situated, can contribute, in however limited a fashion, to the understanding of the early literary world.

Toward the end of the book, I would like to mention that this study does not allege the death of the author, of the text, nor that of the author-text relationship. It should not be viewed as a complete negation of traditional interpretation of any of the above, especially as a discouragement to the effort of searching the author for the text. The impetus of pursuing the truth propels our study into different directions. This study merely constitutes one of the many directions. It strongly holds that the perpetual enthusiasm of exploring the author-text relationship entails any adventure related to the past literary world and its product. In this sense, Borges’ story on Menard and the authorship of *Quixote* serves as a perfect ending for this book.

Jorge Luis Borges’ Menard strove to write a *Quixote* verbally identical with the *Quixote* attributed to Miguel de Cervantes, yet simultaneously new and idiosyncratically of his own. How could he do so? “If I could just be immortal, I could do it.” Menard answered.<sup>8</sup> This seemingly ironic answer reflects a certain truth with respect to the authorship of a text: if Menard could outlive people’s memory regarding the attribution of *Quixote* to Cervantes, Menard would succeed Cervantes as author of *Quixote* and his *Quixote* would be a totally different text, as his *Quixote* would be interpreted distinctively based on Menard’s personal experiences. Because of this re-identification of the authorship of a text as its original attribution fades into oblivion, the meaning of the text is radically altered. If a boat on the sea is the metaphor of textual meaning, then the author is likened to the boat’s anchor. The change of authorship relocates meaning; the loss of authorship makes meaning anchorless. This is why Borges says that the destabili-

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7 Wang Guowei 1994: 1–58.

8 Borges 1998: 91–92.

zation of authorship “fills the calmest books with adventure.” Anonymous writing and circulation of texts filled the text culture of early China with adventure, too, and authorship was intended to anchor the anchorless and establish order in a chaotic textual culture. Nevertheless, over time, the original intention behind those attributions has been forgotten, and the bond between the text and the author is taken for granted. The aim of this work has been to rewind the history of early Chinese texts so that we can see their own adventures as they drifted along the current of the perpetual desire to relocate meaning.

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